



Water supply disconnection fee reduced to RO7.5

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) has announced a reduction in the water disconnection service fee.

Salem bin Nasser bin Saeed al Afi, chairman of the Board of Directors of APSR, issued a decision (No 2022/25), amending some provisions of the regulations for potable water services.

The decision states that an amount of RO7.5 will be charged for disconnection and an additional RO7.5 for restoration of service.

Earlier, the fee for disconnection was RO30 and RO30 for reconnection.

The decision is based on a law ratified via Royal Decree 78/2004 and Royal Decree 131/2020 regarding the water and sanitation sector, and regulation of potable water issued by Resolution No 6/2019, with approval of the Council of Ministers, including the Ministry of Finance.

The revised fee will be effective from Monday, September 5.

► NEWS BRIEF

SIXTH ISSUE OF 'OMANI MUSIC MAGAZINE' RELEASED

Muscat - Oman Classical Music Centre, an offshoot of the Diwan of Royal Court's Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, released the sixth issue of *Omani Music Magazine* on Sunday.

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN ARAB PARLIAMENT CONFERENCE

Cairo, Egypt - The sultanate, represented by the State Council, is taking part in the ninth conference of the Arab Association of Secretary Generals of Parliaments being held in Egypt. Oman's delegation to the conference is headed by Khalid Ahmed al Sa'adi, Secretary General of the State Council. The two-day conference will discuss a variety of topics.



OQ's \$463mn ammonia plant begins production



Mirbat: Where time stands still

Student killed in road accident on first day of school

Our Correspondent
Muscat

On the first day of the new academic year, a Grade 10 student died when she was run over after alighting from her school bus in Seeb, Muscat, on Sunday.

Confirming the incident to *Muscat Daily*, an official of Royal Oman Police (ROP), said, "A tenth-grade girl of Um Waraqah al Ansriah School died after being run over in the Mabelah area of Seeb."

'The school administration mourns the death of Hoor Hatem al Sadiyah, who passed away today. The school extends its deepest condolences and sympathy to her family and relatives,' Um Waraqah al Ansriah School stated.

ROP urged all commuters to slow down and take more care and caution when driving in the vicinity of schools. It also called on all school bus drivers to abide by safety measures while transporting students to their schools



(Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)

and back home.

On Sunday, the beginning of the 2022-23 academic year, 729,331 students returned to 1,242 schools. Of these, students, 368,184 (50.9 per cent) are male and 361,147 (49.5 per cent) female.

According to the Ministry of Education (MoE), 57,033 teachers and 10,834 administrators and technicians returned to work all over the sultanate on August 28.

As part of its efforts to pro-

vide security and safety for school students, especially students from Grades 1 to 5, MoE launched a short film titled *Forgetting a Child on the Bus*.

The two-minute film addresses students, drawing their attention to a situation of being left behind in a school bus. 'If you slept on the bus and didn't get off with your friends to go to school, you have to open the windows, press the bus horn constantly, and try to open the door,' it advises students.

Ambitious plans to boost tourism in Dhofar, make it all-season destination

Immediate plans include a mountain race in mid-Sept and an Iron Man event from Sept 22 to 24

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism will organise several events and programmes in the next few months as part of its efforts to make Dhofar governorate a tourist destination for all seasons.

Khalid bin Abdullah al Abri, director general in Directorate of Heritage and Tourism, Dhofar, informed that the ministry, in cooperation with Dhofar Municipality and Oman Cycling Association, will organise Salalah Cycling Tour - a mountain race in mid-September and an Iron Man event from September 22 to 24.

Abri added that more than 750 contestants from 78 countries will participate in Iron Man, featuring three races - swimming 1.9km, cycling 90km, and running 21km.

According to Abri, the ministry launched a promotional campaign for khareef this year and supported many youth marketing initiatives, hosting influencers on social media, as well



IRON MAN EVENT

SALALAH CYCLING TOUR

EVENT FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

FOCUS ON CONFERENCE TOURISM

FRANKINCENSE SEASON EVENT

EMPTY QUARTER FESTIVAL

New tourism projects in Dhofar include the Hamreer Talalat project, Ain Garziz development project, Ittin Gardens camping sites project, and the Al Mughsail Beach project

KHALID AL ABRI

Zelensky warns Europeans to brace for bleak winter



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (L) and Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal inspect a military honour guard in Berlin on Sunday (AFP)

Berlin, Germany - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told Europeans to expect a difficult winter as the Russian assault on his country leads to cuts in oil and gas exports by Moscow.

Zelensky was speaking on Saturday night after Moscow shut down a main pipeline that supplies Russian gas to the continent. "Russia is preparing a decisive energy blow on all Europeans for this winter," he said in his daily video address.

A day later on the Sunday, Ukraine Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal brought Kyiv's plea for more weapons to Germany, saying his country needed additional help in its battle against Russia.

Shmyhal is the first high-level Ukrainian official to visit Germany in months, in a sign of eased tensions between Kyiv and Berlin after a rocky patch.

The first stop of his trip was a meeting with President Frank-

Walter Steinmeier, where Shmyhal "discussed the military situation, strengthening sanctions and the need to provide weapons for Ukraine", he said on Twitter.

Shmyhal, who later meet Chancellor Olaf Scholz, also thanked Germany "for solidarity with Ukrainians and support".

Germany will "continue to stand reliably by Ukraine's side", Steinmeier reassured Shmyhal, according to the German president's spokeswoman.

Shmyhal's visit marked a sharp change in tone, after a row erupted in April when Kyiv rebuffed Steinmeier's offer to travel to Ukraine.

Steinmeier, a former foreign minister, had been shunned over his years-long detente policy towards Moscow - something which he has admitted was a mistake following the outbreak of war.

Agencies



How safe is school transport?



Santosh Verma
Accountant

Yes, I do remain little worried for the transportation for my son. There have been many instances where bus drivers have been callous and that caused several accidents. Though the school takes all the effort to educate all drivers and look into the condition of their buses, I remain little worried and so does my wife.

Anwar Abdullah
Private company employee

I don't trust some of the drivers. They are very rash ones, mainly the young ones. I hope and expect schools to take more care while recruiting drivers. Yes, I remain worried at times.

Saada al Naamani
Housewife

My children's school is near our home and so we don't need transportation. But I know many of my family members, who opt for transport, remain worried. We had bad instances of accidents in the past and often news about accidents haunt us.

Iqbal Khan
Businessman

Normally, I drop my children to school but I have many friends whose children go in private transportation. I must say that often such drivers manage multiple jobs and so they hurry and rush to school; this is actually scary and we need to be wary of such transporters.

On the first day of the 2022-23 academic year on Sunday, a Class X student of a school in Mabela died when she was hit by a speeding car while she was getting off the school bus. Safety of school transport is an issue that often comes to the fore when there is an unfortunate accident involving school children. With over 700,000 students returning to 1,242 schools for the new academic year on Sunday, it is pertinent to talk about the issue as many parents fret every day about the safety of their children taking school buses. Here is what Muscat Daily readers had to say on what do they think about school transportation:

Mohammed al Balushi
Private sector employee

I am not very worried about the school transport system. I trust the drivers very well as I have known them since the last few years. Also, the school authorities take good care of the children and their respective transportation.

Sulaiman al Abri
Businessman

I am more worried about the traffic and the peak hours more than school transportation issue. Sometimes other vehicles engage in rash driving mainly in the morning that is what concerns me. But the drivers are very good professionally as well as personally.

? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is readying a 'greater city' concept. What are the facilities you would want to see in Greater Muscat?

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

SEND YOUR COMMENTS

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

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MUSCAT DAILY



MoE's training programme for managing sports events begins

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education has started a five-day long training programme in managing sports events and tournaments at Al Amal Club in Muscat on Sunday. The training programme, which will continue till Thursday, is being provided by the Directorate General of Administrative

Affairs and the Department of Training and Rehabilitation, in cooperation with the Omani School Sports Federation and the Ocean Institute.

'The implementation of this training programme comes in light of the increase in the number of events organised annually by the sports committees in the governorates,' MoE stated. 'Around hundred sports

events are organised across all governorates, which require specialists for managing these events. The programme targets 34 employees from the Office of the Omani School Sports Federation to provide them with effective management skills and accurate planning.'

Participants in the programme will obtain necessary qualification to work in the management of

sports events, through several themes, including methods of organising, evaluating, financial and account management, management of sponsorship, financiers, designers, suppliers, stakeholders and the public, and attracting, managing and training employees and volunteers to work in sporting events, marketing sports events, and managing risks related to sports events.

Oman taking part in ongoing Amman International Book Fair

Amman, Jordan - Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, is taking part in the ongoing Amman International Book Fair in Jordan, which will run till September 10.

The participation comes within the framework of activating Oman's presence in international book fairs to promote Omani books, as well as highlighting various features of Oman's intellectual, historical and literary aspects. The participation, which is



viewed as a reflection of the co-operation between Oman and Jordan, aims to enhance areas related to writing and publishing

books through communication among Omani and Jordanian publishing houses. ONA

GFOW invites blood donors at MGM camp

Muscat - General Federation of Oman Workers (GFOW) gave a clarion call to public for blood donation at a camp being organised at Muscat Grand Mall on Monday.

The federation is seeking at least 150 donors to turn up at the venue where the camp would be functioning from 10am to 1pm and 4pm to 8.30pm for the noble cause. Blood banks in Oman need about 7,000 units per month, and the Central Blood Bank in Bausher requires over 120 donors a day.

'It really is all about the story'

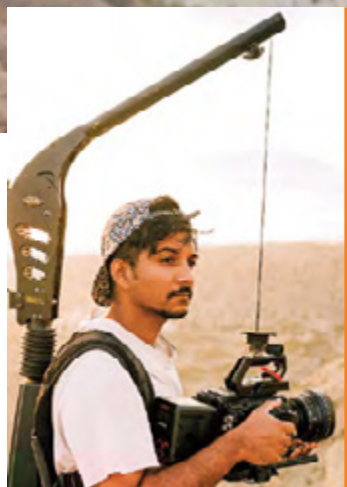


Our Correspondent
Muscat

Filmmaker Omar al Zadjali is experimenting with documentaries that are just under one-minute long.

Zadjali's films on youth - focusing on what attracts them to the job or sport they pursue - bring to the fore various aspects of Omani society.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Zadjali said, "I started making these short films in the middle of August (2022). So far, I have made five documentaries, with



All I want is to be able to tell stories of incredible people. It's not about the recognition at all. But, yes, when I see comments from people talking about how they loved my video, that makes me happy

OMAR AL ZADJALI

more in the pipeline."

He described the genre of his one-minute documentaries as 'unique'

"Documentaries are usually anywhere between five minutes

to an hour long, but I wanted my films to get straight to the point, as these are targeted for social media consumption.

"I wanted to find out why people do what they do, be it

skateboarding, modelling, running, jumping or playing football. One day, after a long and tiring video shoot, I found myself asking why I endure the exhaustion, exertion and

sometimes defeat. In that state of introspection, I started asking myself why other people take the pains to do what they do," Zadjali said.

Referring to the challenges encountered, he said he hasn't faced any so far. "I'm a very organised person, which is key to getting things done smoothly and successfully. My films require very specific lighting, which is available for just about two hours in the day. So being prepared is extremely crucial. If I have to meet someone three hours before we need to shoot

and wait till the light is right, then that's what needs to be done."

Though Zadjali has had little local or international attention to date, he said he's fine with that.

"I'm not looking for that. All I want is to be able to tell stories of incredible people. It's not about the recognition at all. But, yes, when I see comments from people talking about how they loved my video, that makes me happy," Zadjali said.

He loves what he does and will never stop making films, he

declares.

His advice to aspiring filmmakers is "just go out and start making films, whether it's on your phone or an entry level camera. It really doesn't matter what you use".

Some of his favourite films have been made on no budget at all. "It really is all about the story."

The documentaries feature skateboarder Haitham al Wahabi, footballer Malak al Zadjali, athlete Aliya al Mughairi, model Arna Hiraeth and painter Mays al Moosawi.

MAFWR issued 1,042 water licences in August 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A total of 1,042 water licences were issued in August 2022, according to statistics released by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR).

In a statement, MAFWR said, 'The licences issued include requests for registering wells, dams and aflaj, for drilling wells, and development projects in various governorates.'

The ministry informed that in the last two years, it updated regulations based on water availability and likely changes in the situation. MAFWR has framed conditions and controls related to issuing water licences factoring in the requirements of community members.

The ministry strives to facilitate and simplify the procedures



for granting water licences while preserving aflaj as a natural water resource.

According to MAFWR data, the maximum number of licences - 306 - were issued in Dakhliyah, followed by 193 in Dhahirah, 149 in North Batinah,

145 in North Sharqiyah, 108 in South Batinah, 58 in Muscat, 41 in South Sharqiyah, 25 in Buraimi, nine in Musandam, seven in Al Wusta and one in Dhofar governorate.

"The ministry deals with licence requests based on techni-

cal requirements and gives conditional approvals in coordination with other government agencies," a ministry official said.

Oman received average rainfall of 123mm in 2020 and 183mm in 2019, according to MAFWR data.

New batch of recruits join ROP



Muscat - A new batch of citizens joined Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Sunday.

A statement issued by ROP said, 'In continuation of the efforts to employ citizens, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, a new batch of citizens who have post-General Education Diploma qualification, have joined Royal Oman Police.'

Divers remove 250kg of waste in Buraimi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To spread environmental awareness and encourage the culture of volunteerism to keep natural sites like wadis clean, eight volunteers of Al Salam Diving Team removed a quarter of a tonne of waste in Buraimi governorate.

The group is conducting a series of clean-up drives, the most recent being held on September 1 in Wadi al Qahfi in the wilayat of Mahdah with participation of the eight volunteers.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Hamed Mohammed al Amri, head of Al Salam Diving Team, informed that this was the tenth clean-up campaign organised by the group in 2022.

"The latest campaign in Mahdah resulted in the removal of 250kg of iron pieces, plastic and empty cans from the wadi. The campaign started at 4pm and ended at 7pm."



The clean-up drive aimed at spreading awareness on the importance of preserving wadis, preventing the dumping of waste, and encouraging volunteer work among people in Mahdah

HAMED MOHAMMED AL AMRI

According to Amri, the clean-up drive in Mahdah aimed at spreading awareness on the importance of preserving wadis,

preventing the dumping of waste, and encouraging volunteer work among people in the wilayat.

"Prior to physically removing the waste, some members of the team did a reconnaissance dive at the site and wrote a report. Later, the report was discussed at a meeting and work delegated to each member," Amri said.

Referring to future campaigns, he informed that 15 divers of the group, in cooperation with Oman Fishermen's Association, will conduct a campaign to clean coral reefs in the wilayat of Shinas on September 9 and 10.

The campaign aims to get rid of fishing activities waste, raise awareness of the importance of preserving coral reefs, and urge fishermen to abide by fishing laws.

The group is enthused to continue the important work of cleaning Oman's seas. "The sultanate has many beautiful sites for diving which attract tourists from all over the world. We urge young people to keep the country clean," Amri said.

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Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Qatar to build world's biggest blue ammonia plant

Qatar announced that it will build the world's biggest plant making blue ammonia - one of the new fuels being touted as a cleaner energy source. Energy Minister Saad al Kaabi said the plant would cost US\$1.2bn and start production in early 2026, according to an AFP report. State-owned Qatar Energy said the plant would produce 1.2mn tonnes of ammonia a year "making it the world's largest such facility". "We see increasing interest in using ammonia as fuel, driven by the need to reduce CO2 emissions in the energy ecosystem," said Kaabi, who is also Qatar Energy's CEO. "Potential customers have expressed a desire for low-carbon fuels and we have reacted in a pragmatic and meaningful manner and with scale," he added. Ammonia is already a huge part of the global fertiliser industry. CO2 is captured and stored as part of the production of blue ammonia.

Number of UAE bank employees surge to 34,000

The Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE) announced that the number of banking sector employees surged by 2.5 per cent in the first half of 2022. In its June 2022 statistical report, CBUAE noted that the number of employees in the country's banking sector increased to 34,332 at the end of the first half of 2022. A total of 27,545 employees work in national banks and 6,787 employees for foreign banks operating in the country. The central bank added that the number of licensed commercial banks reached 60 at the end of the first half of this year, including 23 national banks, two digital banks and 37 foreign banks. The number of bank branches reached 582 during the same period, distributed among 508 branches of national banks and 74 branches of foreign banks.

OQ's \$463mn ammonia plant begins production

Salalah - OQ, the sultanate's global integrated energy group, on Sunday announced that its newly built US\$463mn ammonia plant in Dhofar Governorate has begun production. The ammonia plant is one of the key strategic projects fully owned by OQ Group with an investment cost of US\$463mn. The plant has a designed capacity of 1,000 metric tonnes per day of ammonia. OQ Trading, the trading arm of OQ Group, also announced the export of the first shipment of the liquid ammonia from the plant through Salalah Port. In a press statement, Hilal al Kharusi, CEO of commercial and downstream unit at OQ, said, "The ammonia project comes within OQ's efforts to enhance the added value of natural re-

sources and support the Omani government's economic diversification plans. The plant will export its products to targeted

This situation renders the project highly feasible," he added. Kharusi noted that OQ's am-

monia plant is fully integrated with the group's existing 1mn tonnes per year capacity methanol plant in Salalah which will enable OQ Group to rationalise the cost and optimise performance and production efficiency. The new ammonia plant has been designed to retain the hydrogen-rich purge gas generated by OQ's methanol plant as feed-

stock for the ammonia plant. Ammonia is used as a key ingredient in the production of fertilizers and is an important intermediate chemical in the manufacturing of synthetic resins, detergents, coolants, synthetic fibers, and polyurethanes, among other applications. Ammonia is also used in the production of green hydrogen which is a key component of OQ's energy transition agenda. OQ is a global integrated energy company and has operations across 17 countries. The group covers the entire value chain from exploration and production to marketing and distribution of end-user products. OQ's fuels and chemicals are sold in over 60 countries worldwide, making it a pioneer in the energy sector.

OQ Trading also announced the export of the first shipment of liquid ammonia from the plant through Salalah Port

global markets, especially in Asia, further contributing to the enhancement of the Omani exports. "The start of production operations at the plant is a key milestone that enhances the contribution of OQ Group. The demand for ammonia products in the global markets is witnessing constant growth leading to higher returns.

Microsoft to create 36,000 jobs in Qatar

Lusail, Qatar - Technology giant Microsoft announced that it will create 36,000 jobs in Qatar to boost the Gulf state's efforts to move away from reliance on its oil and gas industry. Created with support from the Qatar government, the new cloud data centre will be one of the US firm's biggest international projects. Microsoft Qatar general manager Lana Khalaf said it will help the tiny Gulf state become a "digital hub for the region and the world". "We are adding more than US\$18bn to the economy over the next five years and we are also adding more than 36,000 new jobs over the next five years," she said at a launch ceremony. The growing number of cloud

data centres around the world act as giant warehouses full of servers that help store and process information for companies, governments and institutions. Amazon, Microsoft and Google are the leading operators of cloud data services. Officials said the Qatar oper-

ation would make the country more self-sufficient in information technology and speed up processing. "We have to be careful with what we send outside the country," AT Srinivasan, chief information officer for Qatar Airways, said at the ceremony, speaking about the need to store data do-

mestically. Qatar, which will host this year's football World Cup, has been reaping record profits from its natural gas and oil in recent years, but has also been investing massively in diversifying the economy as part of its national plan for 2030.

AFP

MSX winning streak continues for third month

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) continued its winning streak for the third consecutive month during August. The MSX30 index gained 1.2 per cent during the month to close at 4,585.3 points. The MSX Shariah index, on the other hand, showed a relatively stronger monthly gain of 5.03 per cent during August. However, the MSX30 index on Sunday declined 0.44 per cent to close at 4,584.61 points. 'Consistent gains over the last three months pushed the MSX30 index at the number three position in the GCC in terms of year-to-date returns that reached double digits at 11 per cent at the end of August 2022,' Kamco Investment said in a research note on Sunday. In terms of sectoral performance, all three sectors at the MSX closed in the green during August. Industrial index topped the monthly performance with a gain of 14.2 per cent followed by financial and services indices with gains of 1.05 per cent and 1.03 per cent, respectively. In terms of year-to-date performance, financial index topped with a gain of 11.8 per cent followed by industrial and service indices with gains of 7.3 per cent and 3.3 per cent, respectively. In terms of company performance, shares of Asaffa Foods more than doubled during the month with a gain of 118.6 per cent. Raysut Cement was next with a gain of 51 per cent followed by Oman Cables Industry and Gulfair Engineering and Contracting with gains of 50 per cent and 25.9 per cent, respectively. On the decliners side, Barka Water and Power reported the biggest decline of

50 per cent followed by SMN Power Holding and Muscat Thread Mill with declines of 34.9 per cent and 22.9 per cent, respectively.

Trading activity improves

Trading activity at the MSX showed strong recovery during August with gains for the second consecutive month. Monthly value of shares traded reached a four-month high level of RO77.7mn during August as compared to RO53mn during July, a gain of 46.6 per cent, according to Kamco Investment. Monthly volume of shares traded also reached a four-month high at 314.3mn shares during August as compared to 219.9mn shares during July. Bank Muscat topped the monthly value traded chart for the month with trades at RO13.6mn followed by Omantel and Ooredoo Oman with total trades at RO10.7mn and RO4.6mn, respectively. Within the GCC markets, Dubai was the best performing market in the GCC with a return of 3.2 per cent in August followed by Abu Dhabi and Oman with monthly returns of 2.2 per cent and 1.2 per cent, respectively. The GCC aggregate index showed flattish performance with a marginal gain of 0.3 per cent during August after initial gains during the first half of the month were almost fully offset by consecutive declines during the second half. 'Most markets in the region remained range-bound during the month and ended with mostly positive performance. In terms of year-to-date performance, the MSCI GCC index showed one of the best returns when compared to other global markets with a return of 7.7 per cent,' Kamco Investment noted.

A cap on Russian oil prices? G7 eyes untried, risky plan

New York, US - Capping the price of Russian oil, an approach G7 members said Friday they want to pursue "urgently," would be an unprecedented move and one which some analysts say could backfire.

How would a cap work?

Russian oil would be purchased at a discount from prevailing market prices, to limit Moscow's profits as it prosecutes its war against Ukraine; but it would keep the price above the cost of production to ensure incentive for its export. The discounted rates, calculated separately for crude oil and refined petroleum products, could be regularly revised, according to a US Treasury official. There have been international systems aimed at preventing a nation from exporting oil - such

as those now targeting Iran and Venezuela - or at limiting trade, as in the UN "Oil-for-Food" program which, from 1995 to 2003, allowed Iraq to sell oil but only to pay for food, medicine and humanitarian needs. But there has never been an attempt to impose a differentiated price on a country.

Will others join G7 plan?

G7 members - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States - have already limited or suspended their Russian petroleum purchases. But for the plan to be effective, other countries will have to take part - particularly big countries like India and China, some of Russia's most important clients. While the G7 plan offers the prospect of lower prices, "China

and India are already getting cheaper - cheap enough - oil," said Bill O'Grady of Confluence Investment. "Russia could say, 'Look, we're just going to sell this oil at this price. We're not going to sell it to Europeans.'" John Kilduff of Again Capital agreed. "I don't think that the Chinese or the Indians or the Turkish will go on" with the G7 plan, he said, noting that those countries had not joined in Western sanctions punishing Russia for the Ukraine war. "I think the flows to those countries from Russia will continue."

How will Russia react?

For the price cap to work, Rus-

sia will have to yield to the pressure and continue exporting to the participating countries. But Russia's deputy prime minister Alexander Novak warned Thursday that Moscow would not sell petroleum products to countries capping their price, Russian news agencies reported. Global oil prices rose Friday. Kilduff attributed that at least partly to the G7 announcement. He said it had raised fears of a contraction in world supply and thus a damaging new surge in prices. If petroleum prices have declined from their peaks shortly after the Russian invasion in February, they remain historically high, and extremely volatile. The European Union (with the exception of three members) is preparing not only to

ban Russian petroleum imports as of December 5, but also to block European insurers from covering transport costs to non-EU destinations. "I do think that Washington is really uncomfortable" with those insurance restrictions, said O'Grady, adding that they would "really be a big deal." Roughly 90 per cent of maritime petroleum transport is insured by EU and British parties. "I think the administration's afraid that if that (the insurance ban) gets put into place, that Russian supplies will really fall," O'Grady said. The price-capping plan, initiated by the US and then endorsed by the G7, would exempt from the embargo the transport of cargoes sold at reduced price - limiting its impact.

AFP

Germany unveils €65bn relief package amid energy crisis

Berlin, Germany – The German government on Sunday unveiled a new multi-billion euro plan to help households cope with soaring prices, and said it was eyeing windfall profits from energy companies to help fund the relief.

German businesses and consumers are feeling the pain from sky-high energy prices, as Europe's biggest economy seeks to extricate itself from reliance from Russian supplies in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Rapid measures to prepare for the coming cold season will ensure that Germany would "get through this winter," Chancellor Olaf Scholz said at the unveiling of the 65bn-euro (US\$65bn) package.

The latest agreement, which brings total relief to almost 100bn euros since the start of the Ukraine war, was hammered out overnight into Sunday by Germany's three-way ruling coalition of Scholz's Social Democrats, the Greens, and the liberal FDP.

Among the headline measures are one-off payments to millions of vulnerable pensioners and a plan to skim off energy firms' windfall profits.

The government's latest relief package came two days after Russian energy giant Gazprom said it would not restart gas deliveries via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline on Saturday as planned after a three-day maintenance.

The government had made "timely decisions" to avoid a win-



(From left) German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Finance Minister Christian Lindner address a press conference on the government's relief plan to cope with soaring energy costs, on Sunday at the Chancellery in Berlin (AFP)

ter crisis, Scholz said, including filling gas stores and restarting coal power plants.

But preventative measures, including a drive to reduce consumption, have done little to break a sharp increase in household bills.

Third package

The latest announcement follows two previous relief packages totalling 30bn euros, which included a reduction in the tax on petrol and a popular heavily subsidised public transport ticket.

But with the expiration of many of those measures at the end of August and consumer prices soaring, the government

has been under pressure to provide new support.

Inflation rose again to 7.9 per cent in August, after falling for two straight months thanks to previous government relief measures.

The take-off in energy prices is expected to push inflation in Germany to around 10 per cent by the end of the year, its highest rate in decades.

Scholz said however that not everyone is suffering from the high consumer prices.

Some energy companies which may not be using gas to generate electricity were "simply using the fact that the high price of gas determines

the price of electricity and are therefore making a lot of money," he said.

"We have therefore resolved to change the market organisation in such a way that these random profits no longer occur or that they are skimmed off."

The trimming of windfall profits would create "financial headroom that should be used specifically to relieve the burden for consumers in Europe," the government said in its policy paper.

The move could potentially bring "double-digit billions" of euros in relief, finance minister Christian Lindner estimated in the press conference.

The government said it would push for the move to be implemented across the European Union, before going ahead with the measure on its own.

Brussels on Monday said it would prepare "emergency" action to reform the electricity market and bring prices under control.

Scholz said he expected the EU to "deal quickly" with the issue, adding that it was "very clear that we need rapid changes in this area".

Repeating his mantra that Germans will "never walk alone" through the energy crisis, the chancellor unveiled a raft of measures, including a one-off payment of 300 euros to millions of pensioners to help them cover rising power bills.

The government will also target students with a smaller one-time transfer of 200 euros, and an heating cost payment for people receiving housing benefits.

Berlin also set aside 1.5bn euros for work on a successor to the wildly popular nine-euro monthly ticket on local and regional transport networks.

The relief package as a whole should be financed without planning to take on further debt, Lindner said.

"These measures are included within the government's existing budget plans," covering 2022 and 2023, he said, with the remainder covered by the windfall energy profit measures.

AFP



EU 'well prepared' if Russia turns off gas supplies

Cernobbio, Italy – EU Economy Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said Saturday that the European Union was "well prepared" in the event of a total halt in Russian gas deliveries, thanks to storage capacity and energy-saving measures.

"We are well prepared to resist Russia's extreme use of the gas weapon," he told reporters on the sidelines of an economic forum organised by The European House - Ambrosetti.

"We are not afraid of Putin's decisions, we are asking the Russians to respect contracts, but if they don't, we are ready to react," he said.

Russian gas giant Gazprom said Friday that the Nord Stream pipeline linking Russia to northern Germany, which was due to resume service Saturday after a three-day interruption for maintenance operations, would be "completely" stopped until a turbine is repaired.

Moscow was reacting to a decision announced Friday by the G7 countries to target Rus-

sia's energy windfall by agreeing to cap the price of its oil.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said Friday that "it would be time" to put a ceiling on the price of gas imported via the pipeline from Russia, backing a measure advocated by Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi.

In the European Union, "gas storage is currently at about 80 per cent, thanks to the diversification of supplies," even if the situation varies from one country to another, Gentiloni said.

He said Brussels had "done a lot in recent months" but "today it is possible to do more".

The aim is to "pursue the strategy of a united Europe that works against the invasion of Ukraine using economic weapons," he explained.

"We are not participating in the war, we are not participating in the military escalation," he said.

"We are supporting Ukraine. We have to do it now more effectively."

AFP

US hiring slows sharply in August, joblessness rises

Washington, US – American employers slowed the pace of hiring in August after the surprising surge in the prior month and the jobless rate edged up, according to the latest government data, which could offer the central bank some relief that its inflation-fighting efforts are working.

The US Federal Reserve is paying close attention to the progression of the hot job market, looking for signs of easing as it tries to cool the economy with steep interest rate hikes to tamp down inflation which has reached a 40-year high.

While the data showed wages continued to rise, the unemployment rate ticked up as more workers joined the labour force, a welcome development that could allow the Fed to opt for a smaller move later this month after two consecutive super-sized rate increases.

President Joe Biden, who has been riding a wave of legislative and economic victories, cheered the latest report.

"More great news: Our jobs market remains strong. Even more Americans are coming back to work," Biden tweeted.

Even with the slowing pace, the job gains bring employment above the pre-pandemic level, the Labor Department said in the closely watched monthly report.

The US economy added 315,000 jobs last month, the report said, which was in line with what economists were expecting after 526,000 hires in July.

The unemployment rate moved back up to 3.7 per cent, after dipping to 3.5 per cent in the prior month, according to



In this file photo taken on July 8, a family walks past a 'Hiring' sign at a McDonald's restaurant in Garden Grove, California (AFP)

the data. And the labour force participation rate rose three-tenths to 62.4 per cent.

But wages continued to climb in August, as average hourly earnings rose another 10 cents, or 0.3 per cent, to US\$32.36 – slower from the pace in recent months. Over the past 12 months, worker pay has increased by 5.2 per cent.

Continued upward pressure is a cause for concern since the Fed fears it could lead to a wage-price spiral and push inflation higher.

Surging inflation, exacerbated by high energy prices due to Russia's war in Ukraine, as well as supply chain struggles and Covid-lockdowns in China, has prompted the Fed to raise the benchmark borrowing rate four times this year, including giant 0.75 percentage point increases in June and July.

However, the latest data "may tip the scale towards a 50-basis point rate hike" at the September 20-21 meeting, said Rubেলা Farooqi of High Frequency Economics, although the next report on consumer price inflation also will be a key

factor.

Soft landing possible

US GDP contracted in the first two quarters of 2022, which is commonly viewed as a sign of a recession, but the robust job market defies that definition.

Companies have faced a labor shortage for months, prompting them to offer higher wages, which is in turn driving up prices. And there are signs firms are "hoarding" workers – holding onto seasonal employees for fear they might not be able to replace them later.

Fed officials have made it clear in repeated statements that they will continue to raise interest rates to cool the economy, even if monthly data show some signs of progress.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell hammered home this point last week at a conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, warning of "pain" ahead for American households and businesses.

The concern is that the aggressive actions will tip the world's largest economy into recession.

AFP

Global food prices continue to drop: UN

Paris, France – World food prices have fallen for a fifth consecutive month, partly thanks to the resumption of exports from Ukraine's Black Sea ports, a UN agency said.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) food price index, which tracks the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, has been falling steadily since hitting an all-time high in March following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

There was a moderate decline of 1.9 per cent in August.

Vegetable oils have fallen below their level a year ago, after



a 3.3 per cent drop.

The FAO cereals index fell by 1.4 per cent, driven by a 5.1 per cent drop in international wheat

prices.

It came off the back of "improved production prospects in North America and Russia as

well as the resumption of exports from the Black Sea ports in Ukraine for the first time in over five months of interruption", the FAO said.

Global wheat prices were still 10.6 per cent above their values in August last year, the FAO said.

Exports from Ukraine – one of the world's biggest suppliers of wheat, corn and sunflower oil before the war – had ground to a trickle due to a Russian blockade of the Black Sea.

The shipments resumed in early August under a deal brokered by the UN and Turkey.

AFP

Factories in Spain cut production amid soaring energy prices

Ankara, Turkey – Steel giant ArcelorMittal confirmed that the company will not reopen its factory in Bilbao, Spain as planned this week due to high energy prices.

"The price of energy is high, and it eats into our margins, so the idea is to not restart production because we would probably lose money," said Borja Maestre, a spokesperson from the ArcelorMittal Sestao plant.

That is only one announcement that could lead to the loss of employment and output of the Spanish industry.

For the first time, paper producer Saica Group announced that it would close three of its four factories in Spain "given that the price of gas has gone up by 300 per cent in Spain in just eight months."

Other companies recently announcing production pauses or factory closures in Spain include Pamesa, Ferroglobe, and Michelin, which could lead to



hundreds of layoffs.

In August, electricity prices hit a record high in Spain despite price caps on natural gas that the government says reduced the cost by around 15 per cent.

On Thursday, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez an-

nounced that the government will soon slash taxes on natural gas bills from 21 per cent to 5 per cent in October.

While the Spanish government has ruled out any energy rationing this winter due to the country's low reliance on Russian gas, businesses say they

cannot stay competitive amid record-high energy prices.

Spain has already passed two economic packages to ease the financial blow of inflation and the Russian war in Ukraine that cost around 25bn euro (US\$24.9bn) combined.

Anadolu Agency

Mercedes-Benz Oman offers benefits with all-new C-Class

Unlocking a world of limitless comfort, Mercedes-Benz Oman is offering an exclusive package with its all-new C-Class. From September 11 until November 10, customers can purchase the iconic C 200 or C 300 and get a four years/60,000km service package, four years of Mobilo on-road assistance service, three years unlimited mileage warranty, and free registration for the first year.



With innovative comfort highlights and updated digital elements that allow drivers to be fully connected and in complete control, it is easier than ever to step away from the chaos and focus on enjoying this extraordinary vehicle.

Shaun Michael, Chief Executive Officer of Mercedes-Benz Oman said, "The C-Class Sedan continues to charm drivers across the world, setting new standards for providing ultimate comfort, agility, and luxury. With this fantastic package combined with our excellent aftersales care, customers are assured complete peace of mind when they choose their dream vehicle and long afterwards." The offer extends over the new Mercedes-Benz C 200 and C 300 stock range (for the 2022 and 2023 model years).

Ooredoo's Mesh technology to boost home Internet



Ooredoo is offering its customers a new way to boost their home connectivity with high-speed WiFi using state-of-the-art Mesh technology. For a limited time only, subscribers to Ooredoo's 4G, 5G and Fibre Home Internet can purchase two Linksys Velop Mesh

WiFi modems for the low price of just RO8 per month on a 12-month contract and RO4 per month on a 24-month contract.

WiFi Mesh technology offers more consistent speeds across the network, increased coverage and easy plug-and-play set up, giving customers simple and secure high speed home Internet.

The new offer from Ooredoo allows users to get the latest technology with zero deposit and extend the power of Ooredoo's fantastic network throughout their property.

Ooredoo's 4G, 5G and Fibre Home Internet plans are available to suit every need and every budget with speeds of up to 1Gbps and unlimited usage, up to unlimited Ooredoo fixed minutes and discounted international minutes. Selected Fibre Home Internet plans also offer complimentary access to the OSN streaming app to keep up with the latest movies and shows.

Samsung Galaxy Z Flip4, Galaxy Z Fold4 in Oman

Samsung Gulf Electronics on Sunday announced the launch of the next generation of groundbreaking foldable smartphones: Galaxy Z Flip4 and Galaxy Z Fold4.



Both devices feature customizable form factors, tailored experiences, and upgraded performance, the company statement said.

Now in its fourth generation, Galaxy Z series continues to break from convention to deliver new, impactful interactions that enhance everyday life, it added.

Seong Hyun Lee, President of Samsung Gulf Electronics said, "Continuing the Galaxy smartphone legacy of innovation, the Galaxy Z series is now available in Oman to offer users iconic design, cutting-edge experiences and convenient features that users know and love. Each of these devices have a unique design identity - Z Flip4 is the ultimate self-expression tool inside and out, and Z Fold4 is a multitasking powerhouse with ultimate performance. Samsung has added even more features and accessories to expand smartphone possibilities and create versatile devices for the modern era."

The Galaxy Z Flip4 builds on the success of Samsung's iconic form factor, adding key features, including an upgraded camera experience. The Galaxy Z Fold4 delivers Samsung's most comprehensive smartphone experience to-date.



Bank Muscat lauded for supporting Omani youth, local sports teams

A number of sports club leaders from teams across the sultanate have appreciated and praised Bank Muscat for its very important role in supporting the youth and local communities across Oman.

In particular, they hailed the bank's pioneering role in enhancing sports, social and community bonding and youth empowerment in Oman. The leaders were reacting to the recent announcement of 20 winners for the 2022 edition of Green Sports whereby Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, continues to develop new Green Sports Fields.

The scope of Green Sports support for sports teams include greening of football fields with natural or synthetic turf as well as installation of floodlights and water desalination equipment in areas facing problems of water salinity. Bank Muscat's long-running CSR programme continues to benefit many sports teams across the sultanate even as the annual programme brings together different generations on the popular platform of sports.

This year's results were announced at the end of a thorough evaluation process, which saw large numbers of teams from across the Sultanate of Oman submitting their applications for the prestigious programme. With the announcement of the 2022 winners, the total number of Green Sports benefi-



Khalifa al Hassani



Sulaiman al Kharousi



Yousuf al Maskari

aries has now reached 163 sports teams covering more than 50,000 team members since its inception in 2012.

Pioneering initiative

Speaking after the bank announced the winners for 2022, Sulaiman bin Abdullah al Kharousi, head of the main committee supervising the Green Sports project of the Al Ittihad Sports Team from the wilayat of Bahla, expressed his heartfelt joy and happiness on receiving the news that the team had emerged a winner in this year's programme.

Speaking on behalf of the committee and the team members, he expressed great appreciation and sincere gratitude to the Board of Directors of Bank Muscat and its employees for this excellent CSR initiative, which has a positive impact on tens of thousands of youth and

families across Oman.

He added that the bank's efforts in this direction were a clear indicator of the interest and commitment by the bank's management to support various social and sporting activities in the sultanate.

Kharousi added that Al Ittihad team would be implementing lighting system thanks to the support from the bank. He added that Bank Muscat, which has been setting benchmarks in providing the best banking services in the sultanate, is also well known for its pioneering CSR initiatives and programmes.

Khalifa bin Hamad al Hassani, deputy head of the Azaiba Cultural and Sports Team from the wilayat of Bousher, said, "We are thrilled to be selected as a winner in Bank Muscat's Green Sports Programme for 2022. Our team will

implement a new lighting system on the field thanks to this support. On behalf of the entire management and members of the Azaiba Cultural and Sports Team, I would like to sincerely thank Bank Muscat on this great occasion. There is no doubt that the bank is leading the way in supporting youth teams and promoting sports in the country. We wish the bank great success in all its projects and all the very best for the future.

Hasani described Green Sports as one of the most important programmes which is empowering Omani youth as well as strengthening sports infrastructure across the Sultanate of Oman.

Yousef bin Saeed al Maskari, head of the Al Yahmadi Sports and Cultural Team from the Wilayat of Ibra, expressed the happiness of the management and members of the team for being chosen as a winner by the Green Sports 2022 programme.

He thanked Bank Muscat on behalf of the entire team for the support which will help implement an artificial grass project for the team's sports field. He noted that the achievement constitutes an important pillar of support to the team and to the residents of Al Yahmadi village as well as other neighbouring villages. He stressed that the project would serve the community as a whole, thus achieving Bank Muscat's goal to support different communities across the Sultanate of Oman.

Khedmah concludes first round of 'Growth Programme' with 15 graduates

The Oman Investment and Finance Company (OIFC) Khedmah, the pioneer in the collection of public utility bills in the sultanate, has concluded its skill development initiative, 'Growth Programme'.

The programme equipped 15 employees with the needed knowledge, skills and capabilities required to thrive in a competitive market. A graduation ceremony was held at the Modern College of Commerce and Science, which has been running the programme for two years. Several representatives attended the event from the college and OIFC Khedmah.

Furthermore, it aimed to instil a 'culture of continuous learning' as it is one of the most important fundamentals of the work envi-



ronment. In addition, it focused on encouraging employees to augment their experiences, diversifying their tasks and training them to transform challenges into inspiring opportunities.

Shamsa al Hatali, one of the programme graduates, said, "I extend my sincere gratitude to

Khedmah for providing my colleagues and me this great opportunity to participate in the 'Growth Programme'. I am proud to be one of the first batches to graduate from this talent development initiative. It has helped me think critically and has encouraged me to strive for the

best. Despite the challenges of commuting from the place of my residence to the programme venue, I was keen on completing the task, which yielded favourable results. The knowledge and skills I gained positively influenced my career and personal life."

Alizz Islamic Bank's car finance

Alizz Islamic Bank is now offering an enhanced experience for its customers looking to finance their new car at any approved car dealership in the Sultanate. Auto Finance starts at a profit rate of just 4.75% with the possibility of completing the process in 10 minutes in some dealerships that have the IFIN Instant Financing service in place, which is becoming more popular due to its ease and flexibility and its compliance with Sharia'a principles.

Customers that are interested in getting instant finance for their new cars in just 10 minutes can do so at the local dealerships of Nissan, Infiniti, Toyota, and Mazda. The car dealership, uses a flexible FinTech solution that will fetch all the customer's details, verify their eligibility for finance, and then initiate the process immediately.



Alizz Islamic Bank Auto Finance is based on the Sharia principle of Murabaha. Auto Murabaha is available for both Omanis and residents and the financing is up to 80 per cent of the car value with competitive profit rates and a repayment period of up to 84 months. Additionally, Auto finance is available to everyone, including employees and private business owners, as it requires only simple docu-

mentation and approvals. Alizz Islamic Bank has set a minimum salary of RO300 for government sector employees and RO350 for private sector employees.

To apply, a customer must obtain a quote issued by the dealership and addressed to Alizz Islamic Bank, and then he/she will undertake purchasing the car from the bank. The bank accordingly buys and collects the car from the seller.

OPPO Find X5 Pro brightens up in ‘Billion Colour Bionic Display’

The OPPO Find X5 Pro has the most advanced display ever seen in an OPPO phone: The 1 Billion Colour Bionic Display. It uses a 120Hz Dynamic Refresh Rate with multi-brightness colour calibration, 8192-level bionic dimming and support for HDR10+, among other highlights.



A phone screen is a portal through which you watch movies, but does your phone's display let you experience the twinkling stars of the night sky or the lush verdant greens of a rainforest as the director intended?

These reasons are why the quality of the 6.7-inch 1 Billion Colour Bionic Display of the OPPO Find X5 Pro matters. In this generation of the Find series, OPPO has taken a renewed focus not just on display quality, but how our eyes see.

This went further with the global technology brand creating its very first self-designed cutting-edge Imaging NPU, MariSilicon X.

OPPO also points out that to make the content look its best, they needed to get the best colour impact. Just as an artist might spend years learning colour theory to realise their pieces on canvas, the OPPO Find X5 Pro carefully selects its colour tones to offer the optimal balance of vividness and accuracy, it said.

The OPPO Find X5 Pro 1 Billion Colour AMOLED display is capable of rendering 100 per cent of the colours in the DCI P3 gamut, the standard used by Hollywood colourists to perfect movies for big-screen reproduction.

OSN+ lines up ‘exclusive and unbeatable’ series in Sept



This September, OSN+, the region's leading streaming service for premium entertainment, promises an exciting lineup of exclusive and unbeatable new and returning series.

Leading OSN+'s exciting content lineup this month is the entertainment industry's biggest event of the year, the 74th Primetime Emmy Awards, which will be made available on the platform on

September 13.

OSN+ currently boasts an impressive list of 10 Emmy-nominated series representing over 100 Emmy nominations; exclusively on OSN+, Multi-Emmy Award-winning series, The Handmaid's Tale, returns with its long awaited fifth season and a weekly rollout from September 15th, bringing a highly-anticipated premiere after last season's cliffhanger that left viewers wanting more. For the medical drama genre fans, New Amsterdam returns with the premiere of its fifth and final season on September 20, giving fans the chance to say goodbye to the series as it comes to an end. Transplant complements the lineup with its returning third season premiering on September 24.

The hotly anticipated finale of The Real Housewives of Dubai will be available on September 8 on the platform.

TOD live action from Premier League, La Liga, Bundesliga

TOD is without a doubt the preferred OTT platform for sports enthusiasts in the MENA region. Even more so for football fans, especially given the action-packed and entertaining days that lie ahead of them. The UEFA Champions League returns early next week on TOD, after a weekend packed with matches, including the longest-running top-flight derby in England, La Liga, and Bundesliga.



TOD enjoyed great participation of football fans when it streamed Borussia Dortmund versus Hoffenheim in Bundesliga on Friday. On Saturday, it showed Merseyside derby - Everton versus Liverpool from the Premier League; and Union Berlin versus Bayern Munich and Eintracht Frankfurt versus RB Leipzig from Bundesliga.

On the same, it offer live action between Sevilla and Barcelona at La Liga. The biggest game that comes on Tuesday is between Paris Saint-Germain and Juventus.

Majees Technical Services enters into partnership with Oman Cricket



Youth are the future of any sports and Oman Cricket (OC) is a firm believer in grooming the youngsters in the country.

With an aim to provide a strong foundation, Oman Cricket has roped in an energetic partner in Majees Technical Services (MTS), a press release said.

Oman is all set to host the prestigious ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup (CWC) Division 2- Asia from September 29 to October 7 and the partnership agreement between OC and MTS comes as a perfect boost for the national team.

Speaking at the signing ceremony held at the OC headquarters on Thursday, Ishrath Habibulla, MTS managing director, said, "It is a matter of great pride to join the Oman Cricket family. We are a young company and have been in service for past 15 years. So our focus and aim is to associate ourselves with a similar age-group bracket. The U19 cricket development perfectly matches our ambitions and we are happy to join the journey with Oman Cricket."

Habibulla, who himself has been an active cricketer in domestic league during his young days, said 'the remarkable growth of Oman Cricket has made all cricket fans proud'.

"We have also fielded team in the Oman Cricket Premier Division last season and had a decent outing. Our love for the game is now further strengthened by our association with U19 cricket," he said.

The MTS top official said that 'the



The support we will get for the U19 team from Majees will help us nurture more players in the future. We thank them for their partnership as our boys prepare for the ICC U19 Men's CWC-Division 2 tournament in Oman later this month

PANKAJ KHIMJI

journey with Oman Cricket' and supporting the youth [U19] is the way forward for his company.

Oman Cricket chairman Pankaj

Khimji termed the partnership 'a positive development for the youth cricket'.

After signing the agreement in the presence of the OC board treasurer

Alkesh Joshi, OC board member Kiran Asher and OC chief development officer Duleep Mendis, Khimji said, "U19 cricket is a very important stage in the development of the game and for the future of our national team. We have witnessed the talent of our U19 players who have went on to become our national team stars. The likes of Jatinder Singh, Aqib Ilyas, Sufiyan Mahmood and Wasim Ali have proved their credentials.

"The support we will get for the U19 team from Majees will help us nurture more players in the future. We thank them for their partnership as our boys prepare for the ICC U19 Men's CWC-Division 2 tournament in Oman later this month."

Khimji said, "Oman cricket's rise at the global stage is evident and in cricket parlance, we are now a recognised commodity. This has been a result of the success in hosting successfully the ICC Men's T20 World Cup last year and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier earlier this year. Our national team's success at international level has got the corporates notice the value of supporting the game. We hope to give our partners the value in investing with us."

On this occasion, Mendis said, "The U19 squad acts a feeder for the national team. To get a partner for the young team is an encouraging development that will go a long way in giving a boost to the youth cricket structure in the country."

Kairali Ruwi Unit holds free medical camp

Kairali Ruwi Unit organised a free medical camp in collaboration with Badr Al Sama Hospital and Ruwi Lulu HyperMarket Ruwi.

More than 200 people benefited from the camp which was held on Friday from 2pm to 8pm at Ruwi Lulu Hyper Market Hall. Free eye check-up, dietician and general medicine were all available as part of the camp.

Also the services of three doctors were available in these departments. The eye exam was more impressive.

Kairali Ruwi Unit secretary Riyaz Kottappurath welcomed the opening ceremony and Sugathan presided over it. Member of the Lok Kerala Sabha and Director of Expatriate Welfare Board P M Jabir officially inaugurated the event.

Kairali social activists Balakrishnan, Shaji Sabastian, Santhosh



Kumar, Raji Shahul, Sunil Kumar, Shajahan, General Manager of

Lulu Hypermarket Ruwi, Sam Varghese, Operation Manager of

Badr Al Sama Ruwi, and various doctors spoke on the occasion. Nidheesh Kumar gave a formal vote of thanks.

The examination was mainly conducted in the categories of eye examination, blood pressure, sugar, dieting and general medicine.

Kairali has been organising social activities unmatched in Oman for ages. The organisers said in a press release that such camps and other social welfare activities will be organised extensively in the coming days in other parts of Oman as well.

The officials of Kairali said that they would like to express their special thanks to the Badr Al Sama Hospital authorities who worked for the success of this camp and the management of Lulu Hypermarket for providing the facility.

OETC, REN sign MoU to boost technical cooperation

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), a member of Nama group, has signed a memorandum of understanding with a Portuguese company to boost work mechanisms, joint technical cooperation and knowledge sharing in the field of transmission of electricity.

Redes Energéticas Nacionais (REN) operates in transmission of electricity in high voltage in Portugal and transmission of high-pressure natural gas, said a press statement.

In the presence of Nama Group CEO Omar al Wahaibi, the MoU was signed by OETC's CEO Saleh al Rumhi and REN CEO Rodrigo Costa.

This MoU aims to enhance cooperation between the two



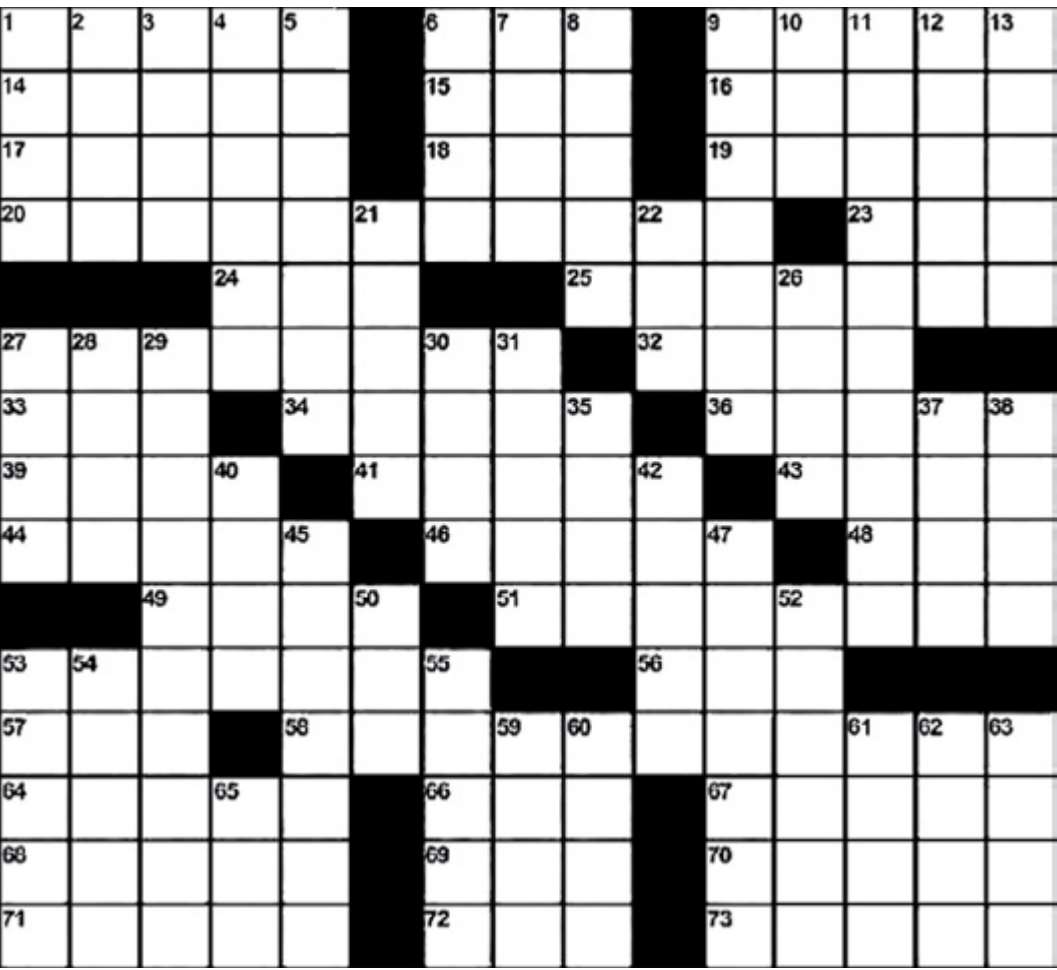
parties, to share knowledge, exchange experiences and best practices on Technical and Technology Field, said the statement.

OETC chief Rumhi said, "Signing this MoU is an important step towards achieving the company's vision to have a world class smart transmission grid. We are confident that coopera-

tion with REN will contribute to upgrading the sultanate electricity transmission grid by benefiting from the REN's experience in this field."

As per the MoU, the two parties will cooperate to carry out training activities in fields related to electricity transmission, studies and research.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Archaeological find
6) Beaver's work
9) Is spellbinding
14) Courage or spunk
15) Tokyo, formerly
16) Divide the deck again
17) Lyric poem
18) "Have some"
19) Animator Tex
20) Large sailing ships
23) Drone, e.g.
24) Boy
25) Became gradually smaller
27) Ambling
32) "... No. 1!"
33) Ashes holder
34) Oscar category
36) TV genre
39) Folk singer Redbone
41) Great balls of fire
STORM WARNING
43) Make asymmetrical
44) Let down
46) Trades
48) In-flight info, for short
49) Cause serious injury to

51) Dangerous long-tailed fish
53) Heavy hydrogen, e.g.
56) Affectionate utterance
57) Well-used pencil
58) Discharge of lightning
64) "All My Children" vixen
66) Took charge
67) Young snakelike fish
68) Another archaeologi-cal find
69) Gay Nineties, for one
70) Superman Christo-pher
71) Milk-Bone biscuit, e.g.
72) "Rob..." (Sir Walter Scott novel)
73) Wander off

DOWN

1) Old World duck
2) Arizona Indian
3) Impulse transmitter
4) Enigma
5) They play music for parties
6) Consider to be
7) Sandler of Hollywood
8) Bach composition
9) Comprehended

10) Gun, as an engine
11) Arctic ship
12) Blender button
13) Penned up the pigs
21) "Bye"
22) Cold and wet
26) Blows it
27) Ponder (with "over")
28) Popular cookie
29) Leisure-time winter vehicle
30) Some party treats
31) Chews like a chip-munk
35) "Dang!"
37) Intro to physics?
38) "Off with you!"
40) Tidy
42) Paprika, e.g.
45) It's read to a misbe-having child
4 7) Makers of dins at inns
50) Dash abbr.
52) Fancy drinking glass
53) Dead to the world
54) More likely
55) Calculus pioneer
59) Infamous fiddling emperor
60) "Saving Private Ryan"

re-enactment
61) Far from under
62) Bulgarian dollars

63) Deuce topper
65) Cloak-and-dagger U.S. org.

NOTE PAD

APART ADAMS BAD
LOGIA DICOT LEU
BLACKCOMEDY ARC
EEL REM CIA
INGRAIN BRISKET
MAO IMAM NETS
AIL MAMAS DAMUP
GADS XENON GIBE
ODELL ROPER TOE
NOIR ROWE HAL
PREENED RECASTS
LEA APE SOD
ENG GOLDSTUDDER
BEL ESTOP PONGO
EWE SEAMY SNAOS

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Okay, it's true that the boss doesn't always know best, but it's still not a great time to go toe-to-toe even if you've got right on your side. While it's tempting to tell them exactly what they're doing wrong, bite your tongue. Instead, tend your own garden and concentrate on ways to change things from the ground up. It's the only way to get up the career ladder without tripping on a crucial rung or two, especially right now.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Agreeing just to try and get along with everyone doesn't really help and usually just hurts. It's time to know your own mind and voice your opinions. What are you agreeing to? What do you really want to do? Do you believe in what's being said, or do you have a completely different take on the situation? Think about these questions and start asserting yourself. Others may be startled initially, but they'll respect you more.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Renewed energy arrives, and just in the nick of time. A flagging relationship or work project is revived thanks to this influx of celestial high spirits. In fact, you can expect progress or movement in any areas of your life that have felt stalled recently. Obstacles will seem to disappear as you move steadily toward a long desired goal. Keep up the good work and let your record speak for itself.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

It feels especially difficult to go back to your usual routine when you've just had such luscious moments of pure pleasure. Why not extend the party for just a little while longer? There's really no harm, and the stars are giving you a wink and a smile. In fact, they're practically ordering you to go ahead and indulge in some sybaritic delights. Just make sure that you don't overindulge. After all, you do have some responsibilities to attend to (eventually).

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You can't hurry love. Sometimes you just have to wait. Be patient when it comes to your relationships, especially if you and a loved one have dealt with a lot of turbulence in the recent past. What's important is that you don't view this as a make-or-break time. While the energies you're encountering now might be quite dramatic, it doesn't mean that you have to settle things now once and for all. Remain open-minded.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Pause and remember some words you uttered not too long ago. Fast-forward a little bit and review the effects of those hastily spoken sentences. Your impatience isn't benefitting a complicated relationship, one that needs a little more time and TLC in order to truly blossom into its full potential. Beating yourself up won't help. Forgive yourself and move on. Resolve to communicate and you've got a chance to start over.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You've got what it takes to impress the powers that be. In fact, your sparkling personality is so charming that you can turn the head of just about everyone who crosses your path. That may include someone that a friend of yours thinks of as expressly their property, so make sure that your intentions are clear. After all, you have no interest in poaching on your friend's territory. Use your natural charisma to smooth over the situation.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Do you feel like your private world is the most delightful place to be? That's understandable, especially when your head is abuzz and awirl with so many ideas and delightful fantasies. Believe it or not, there's a way to discipline your unbelievably fertile and rich imagination without cutting off this flow of creativity. You simply have to be willing to channel it in the right direction. What you come up with will change people's minds and open their eyes.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You've got an intensely devoted, loyal heart and a questioning, independent spirit that just won't be tied down. This is a tough combo for some people to get, but rest assured there are those out there who cherish this quixotic and delightful mixture. Someone who wants to blend their life with yours will understand why it is that you possess both these qualities in abundance and won't ask you to get rid of one or the other to satisfy them. Hang in there.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Is it a case of mistaken identity, or are you just really seeing this person's true colors for the first time? Play detective when it comes to the past. In light of their recent behavior, you may no longer dismiss some erratic or inconsiderate behaviors as "just one of those things." In fact, it could be part of a pretty clear pattern. Now that you have the evidence assembled in front of you, you have to decide what to do next. Let your conscience be your guide.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're feeling ambitious and might become preoccupied with a new goal that's just slightly out of your current skill set. While you always hit the ground running, don't overestimate your abilities, or your pursuit of this task could become unnecessarily risky. Instead, focus on beefing up your skills, completing unfinished projects, and otherwise cleaning house. These details might just hold the key to your golden future.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

As overwhelmed as you might currently feel, try to get past a self-imposed sense of inadequacy that may be nothing more than your fears in a clever disguise. Your friends and coworkers see a superstar, and rightly so. You're about to be handed an opportunity that's tailor-made for your skills and gifts. Don't let strong (and misguided) feelings of uncertainty prevent you from taking what's rightfully yours.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Winchester was the capital of which Anglo-Saxon kingdom?

A. Wessex
B. Sussex
C. Essex
D. East Anglia

02. Who painted "Portrait of Adele Bloch Bauer", which sold at auction for \$US135 million in 2006?

A. Gustav Klimt
B. Jackson Pollock
C. Willem de Kooning
D. Pierre-Auguste Renoir

03. Which of these was never the name of a prison in the USA?

A. Folsom
B. Brixton
C. San Quentin
D. Joliet

Answers: 1.A 2.A 3.B

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

E	Y	R	E
O	P	O	H
A	L	O	T
H	U	S	S

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Palestinians executed for Israel ‘collaboration’

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - The Hamas Islamist movement ruling the Gaza Strip announced on Sunday that it executed five Palestinians, including two for ‘collaboration’ with Israel.

The executions for collaboration are the first carried out in the Palestinian coastal enclave for more than five years.

“On Sunday morning, the death sentence was carried out against two condemned over collaboration with the occupation (Israel), and three others in criminal cases,” Hamas said in a statement.

It added that the defendants had previously been given ‘their full rights to defend themselves’.

Hamas’s interior ministry provided the initials and years of birth of the five executed Palestinians, but did not give their full names.

The two executed over ‘collaboration’ with Israel were two men born in 1978 and 1968.

The older of the two was a

resident of Khan Yunis in the south of the blockaded Gaza Strip. He was convicted of supplying Israel in 1991 with ‘information on men of the resistance, their residence... and the location of rocket launchpads’, Hamas said.

The second was condemned for supplying Israel in 2001 with intelligence ‘that led to the targeting and martyrdom of citizens’ by Israeli forces, the statement added.

The three others executed had been convicted of murder, the statement said.

Omar Shakir, Israel and Palestine Director at Human Rights Watch, described the executions as ‘abhorrent’.

“Death as government-sanctioned punishment is a barbaric practice that has no place in the modern world,” he wrote on Twitter.

First executions in years

Gaza’s Palestinian Centre for



Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas (right) next to Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh, posing with his new biometric passport registration at the Ministry of Interior in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Thursday (AFP)

Human Rights meanwhile said the executions were ‘in violation of Palestine’s international obligations’. The Palestinian centre said it ‘demands the authorities in the Gaza Strip do not use the death penalty, and replace it with life imprisonment with hard labour’.

Hamas has in recent years sentenced numerous people to death for ‘collaboration’ with Israel, but the executions announced on Sunday are the first carried out since May 2017.

On Sunday, the death sentence was carried out against two condemned over collaboration with occupation and three others in criminal cases. The defendants had previously given their full rights to defend themselves

HAMAS

Three Palestinians - Ashraf Abu Leila, Hisham al-Aloul and Abdallah al-Nashar - were executed then over their involvement in assassinating a Hamas military leader.

The men were publicly executed, with hundreds of people allowed to watch the sentences being carried out.

They had been arrested just weeks earlier over the killing of Mazen Fagha, who was allegedly shot dead on behalf of Israel. While Hamas keeps the death penalty on the statute books, Palestinian officials in the occupied West Bank have not carried out such a sentence in recent years.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, seated in the West Bank city of Ramallah, has signed up to the United Nations’ treaty opposing the death penalty. Abbas’s Fatah movement and Hamas have been divided since 2007, following the outbreak of fighting between the Palestinian factions.

The Palestinian Authority operates in the West Bank, home to nearly three million Palestinians who live alongside 475,000 Israeli settlers. Hamas, meanwhile, rules over 2.3mn Palestinians who have lived under a crippling Israeli-led blockade for 15 years.

AFP



Members of Israeli security forces and emergency services inspect the site of a reported attack on an Israeli bus, east of Tubas village in the north of the occupied West Bank, on Sunday (AFP)

Five wounded in shooting on Israeli bus in West Bank

Jerusalem - Five people were wounded on Sunday in a shooting attack on an Israeli bus in the occupied West Bank, medics said.

“We saw two gunshot victims outside of the bus who were being treated by IDF (Israeli military) medics and other people who were at the scene,” said paramedic Matti Carmi, from the Magen David Adom emergency medical services.

Those shot in the northern West Bank incident were both conscious and were airlifted to

Rambam hospital, in the Israeli city of Haifa. Three others were hit with glass fragments and subsequently transferred by road to another hospital in northern Israel, MDA said.

A photograph published by a union representing bus drivers showed the vehicle’s windscreen peppered with bullet holes.

Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz said security forces ‘immediately went in pursuit and got their hands on suspects in the attack’.

Sunday’s incident follows a

shooting spree last month targeting an Israeli bus in occupied east Jerusalem.

Eight people, including several American citizens, were wounded in that pre-dawn attack near the Old City of Jerusalem.

Following an hours-long manhunt, police said a suspect had handed himself in.

Israel has controlled east Jerusalem and the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War, when it seized the territories from Jordan.

AFP

Iraq parliament staff resume work after weeks-long hiatus

Baghdad, Iraq - Staff at Iraq’s parliament returned to work on Sunday for the first time since powerful Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr’s supporters stormed the legislature in late July, an assembly official said.

The development came as speaker Mohammed al-Halbasi suggested an agenda for an upcoming national dialogue session following an 11-month political paralysis that sparked deadly clashes in Baghdad last week.

‘All parliament staff have returned to work,’ following orders issued on Saturday night, the parliament official told AFP, on condition of anonymity because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

“Operations in parliament had been suspended since protesters stormed the legislature’s building,” he said.

The protesters had staged a sit-in outside the assembly for weeks after initially storming it to demand fresh elections and the dissolution of parliament.

They pulled out last Tuesday



Supporters of Iraq’s Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr perform the Friday prayer in the central Iraqi city of Najaf (AFP)

at Sadr’s orders following nearly 24 hours of violence pitting them against the army and Iran-backed factions that left more than 30 Sadr supporters dead.

The battles that started when Sadr supporters stormed the government palace in the capital’s fortified Green Zone marked one of the deadliest episodes of street violence in the country in nearly three years.

In a statement posted on Twitter on Sunday, Halbasi suggested an agenda for a second national dialogue session, following a previous round that was held on August 17.

The dialogue sessions are part of a bid to end a political stalemate that has left Iraq without a new government, prime minister or president since elections last October.

The first session was boycotted by Sadr representatives.

Halbasi did not set a timeframe for the upcoming talks but said they should ‘set a date for early parliamentary elections’ and discuss the election of a new president and formation of a government.

It was not immediately clear who would attend the talks.

AFP

Iran to counter biological, radiological threats

Tehran, Iran - Iranian authorities have introduced defence systems in 51 cities to counter ‘biological, radiological and chemical threats’, deputy defence minister Mehdi Farahi has announced.

The defence ministry has ‘provided 51 cities in the country with the necessary installations and equipment for passive defence’, Farahi was cited as saying on Saturday by Iribnews, the state broadcaster’s website. He added that the ministry is ‘now able to identify the threats thanks to the infrastructure put in place to confront all sorts of biological, radiological and chemical threats’.

The announcement comes as Iran is engaged in negotiations to revive its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers that granted the Islamic republic much-needed sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.

As momentum builds to restore the deal, Israel has been waging a last-minute push to convince allies to halt talks.

On August 28, Israeli PM Yair Lapid said instructions had been given to the army and the Mossad agency to ‘prepare for any scenario’ in the event that the deal is passed. In March 2021, Iran’s former defence minister Amir Hatami had said that the Islamic republic should be ready to defend itself against nuclear, chemical and biological attacks. “We must be ready to defend our nation against all threats and anything that the enemy could one day use as a tool for attack,” he said at an event commemorating a 1987 chemical attack against Iranian Kurds by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. “These include (attacks using) chemical, nuclear and biological weapons,” Hatami added, according to Fars news agency.

During the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, Saddam’s forces launched numerous chemical attacks on Iran, including the 1987 strike on the Kurdish town of Sardasht in northwestern Iran.

AFP

Pope Francis beatifies ‘Smiling’ John Paul I

Vatican City, Holy See - Thousands of people gathered in St Peter’s Square on Sunday as Pope Francis presided over the beatification of John Paul I, the so-called ‘Smiling Pope’ who led the Catholic Church for just 33 days before dying in contested circumstances.

John Paul I, the son of a bricklayer from the Dolomite mountains and a particularly warm and pastoral figure, was elected pope on August 26, 1978, at the age of 65.

He died just 33 days later, on September 28, 1978, of a heart attack, making him the shortest serving pontiff in modern church history. A crowd of several thousand including Italian President Sergio Mattarella gathered under umbrellas through a thunderstorm to listen to the beatification mass - a step before canonization and becoming a ‘saint’.

“With a smile, Pope John Paul managed to communicate the goodness of the Lord,” said Pope Francis during Sunday’s mass.

“How beautiful is a Church with a happy, serene and smiling face, that never closes doors,



Pope Francis presides over beatification mass of Pope John Paul I, at St. Peter’s square in the Vatican on Sunday (AFP)

never hardens hearts, never complains or harbours resentment, does not grow angry or impatient, does not look dour or suffer nostalgia for the past.”

A wall hanging representing the late pope was hung on the front of St Peter’s basilica.

The death of John Paul I death sparked intense speculation as to the cause, from suicide - he seemed reluctant to take on the position of pope - to murder, allegedly by those who opposed his plans to reform the

church, particularly the powerful Vatican bank.

Many have since discounted this and biographer Christophe Henning said the swirling rumours can be explained by the sudden nature of his death and the ‘calamitous communication’ by the Vatican at the time.

No autopsy was conducted to determine the cause of death, and the Vatican issued inconsistent and false information about what happened.

For example, his lifeless body

- sitting in bed, his reading glasses on his nose and typewritten documents in his hand - was found by a nun.

However, the Vatican did not want to acknowledge the presence of a woman in his bedroom, so said his secretary found him.

‘For me it does not seem that there is really a doubt’ about his death by natural causes, particularly given ‘we know that he was in fragile health’, Henning told AFP.

A man of consensus, humility

The Vatican announced in October 2021 that it had recognised a miracle attributed to John Paul I, allowing him to become beatified, a process when a person becomes ‘blessed’ and the final step before becoming a saint. The miracle was the sudden healing of a gravely ill 11-year-old girl in Buenos Aires in 2011, after a local priest prayed to the late pontiff. Under the rules of the Catholic Church, in most cases a second miracle needs to be recognised before someone can be made a saint.

Born as Albino Luciani on October 17, 1912, in the northern Italian town of Canale d’Agordo, John Paul I rose to become Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal and then head of the Catholic Church.

The last Italian pope, he was seen as a man of consensus, of humility and simplicity and a strong sense of pastoral duty.

“Open to dialogue and listening, he gave priority to pastoral visits and direct contact with the faithful,” the Vatican said in a beatification brochure.

AFP

NASA unsure next Moon rocket launch attempt possible this month

Florida, US - After scrapping a second attempt to get its new 30-story lunar rocket off the ground due to a fuel leak, NASA officials said on Saturday it may not be possible to try again this month.

The current launch window for NASA's Artemis 1 mission to the Moon ends on Tuesday and is 'definitely off the table', said Jim Free, associate administrator for Exploration Systems Development, at a press conference on Saturday. The next possible launch window is September 19 to October 4, and failing that, October 17 to 31, NASA said.

The ability to take off during those windows 'will really depend on the options that the team comes back with likely on Monday or early Tuesday morning', said Free.

Millions around the globe tuned in to live coverage and crowds gathered on beaches in Florida on Saturday hoping to witness the historic blastoff of the Space Launch System (SLS).

But a leak near the base of the rocket was found as ultra-cold liquid hydrogen was being pumped in, forcing a halt.

The Artemis 1 space mission hopes to test the SLS as well as the unmanned Orion capsule that sits atop, in preparation for future Moon-bound journeys with humans aboard.

The first launch attempt on Monday had also been halted after engineers detected a fuel leak and a sensor showed that one of the rocket's four main engines was too hot.



The Artemis I sits on launch pad 39B after its launch was postponed, at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida, on Saturday (AFP)

The current launch window ends on Tuesday. The ability to take off will depend on the options that the team comes back with likely on Monday or early Tuesday morning

JIM FREE

"This is a whole new vehicle, a whole new technology, a whole new purpose of going back to the moon and preparation to go to Mars," said NASA administrator Bill Nelson. "Yes, it's hard."

Artemis mission manager Mike Sarafin described the hydrogen leak as 'large,' and said one of their 'leading suspects' was a seal on a fueling tube.

Engineering teams believe they will have to replace the seal,

either directly on the launch pad or after taking the rocket back to its assembly building a few miles away. It was 'too early' to entirely rule out a launch before the end of September, said Sarafin, who promised a status update next week.

NASA has previously said that the early October period would be complicated to coordinate because a crew of astronauts will be using the Kennedy Space

Center for a rocket launch to the International Space Station.

In addition to the leak, another problem facing the SLS is its emergency self-destruct system.

Designed to explode in case the rocket deviates off course, the system will likely need to be reexamined before the next launch, which can only be done in the assembly building.

Bringing the rocket in and out of the building will take 'several weeks', Sarafin said.

Once launched by SLS, the Orion capsule will take several days to reach the Moon, flying around 60 miles (100km) at its closest approach.

The capsule will fire its engines to get to a distant retrograde orbit (DRO) of 40,000

miles beyond the Moon, a record for a spacecraft rated to carry humans.

Mannequins equipped with sensors are standing in for astronauts on the Artemis 1 mission and will record acceleration, vibration and radiation levels.

The trip is expected to last around six weeks and one of its main objectives is to test the capsule's heat shield, which at 16 feet in diameter is the largest ever built.

On its return to Earth's atmosphere, the heat shield will have to withstand speeds of 25,000 miles per hour and a temperature of 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit (2,760 degrees Celsius) - roughly half as hot as the Sun. AFP



A man repaints the inscription of a commemorative plaque in the former Olympic Village in Munich, southern Germany, on August 17 (AFP)

Israeli president travels to Germany for 1972 Olympics Sept 5 memorial

Jerusalem - Israeli President Isaac Herzog departed on Sunday for Germany, where he will attend a memorial for 11 Israeli athletes killed by Palestinian militants at the 1972 Munich Olympics.

"I am leaving this morning on a state visit to Germany, at the invitation of the President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier," Herzog said in a statement.

"The main part of the visit will be the memorial marking the 50-year anniversary of the terrible massacre of the 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972," he added.

The president's trip to Munich follows a last-minute compensation deal reached last week between Germany and the families of the Israeli victims.

The bereaved relatives were offered US\$28mn by Berlin, in addition to US\$4.5mn previously granted.

Around 70 family members of victims are due to attend Mon-

day's memorial, Ankie Spitzer, whose husband Andre Spitzer was killed, told AFP.

The Israel Olympic Committee confirmed it would send a delegation to the September 5 memorial.

It will mark 50 years since gunmen from the Palestinian militant group Black September stormed the Israeli Olympics team's lodgings.

They shot two people dead and took nine others hostage, all of whom were killed. Germany was blamed for botching an operation to rescue them.

Steinmeier's office has not said whether the president will make a formal apology during the ceremony at Fuerstenfeldbruck air base, west of Munich, where the hostage-taking reached its violent end.

During his three-day visit to Germany, Herzog is also due to meet Chancellor Olaf Scholz and address parliament in Berlin. AFP

Ukraine PM visits Berlin, seeking more weapons

Berlin, Germany - Prime Minister Denys Shmygal will be the first high-level Ukrainian official to visit Germany in months on Sunday, in a sign of eased tensions after a rocky patch between Kyiv and Berlin.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz has repeatedly vowed Germany's strong support for Ukraine in its battle against Russia's invasion.

But in the immediate weeks after Russian troops marched on Ukraine, Kyiv had blasted German aid as too little and too late.

A visit by Scholz to Kyiv in June and the arrival of weapons from Germany have since led to a change in tone.

"Germany has made huge progress in its support of Ukraine with weapons," Shmygal told German media ahead of his trip, in a transcript published by his press office. But the prime minister said Kyiv needs more from



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (right) shows his way to Ukraine's PM Denys Shmyhal prior to talks in Berlin on Sunday (AFP)

Berlin, including 'modern combat tanks' like the Leopard 2. Scholz will welcome Shmygal with military honours in the afternoon.

But Shmygal will be starting his day with talks on Sunday morning with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, whose

offer to travel to Kyiv in April was rebuffed, sparking a row.

Steinmeier, a former foreign minister from Scholz's Social Democratic Party, had been

shunned over his years-long detente policy towards Moscow - something which he has admitted was a mistake following the outbreak of war.

'Special responsibility'

Germany's SPD has historically championed close ties with Russia, born out of the 'Ostpolitik' policy of rapprochement and dialogue with the then Soviet Union, devised by former SPD chancellor Willy Brandt in the 1970s. That tradition had led in part to Germany initially refusing any weapons deliveries to Kyiv, with a previous decision to send only 5,000 helmets sparking anger and mockery.

But Scholz's coalition, which also includes the Greens and liberal FDP, has since made a sharp U-turn.

Howitzers, rocket launchers and anti-aircraft missiles are among the weapons that have arrived in Kyiv.

Heavier weapons like the IRIS-T anti-aircraft systems, rocket launchers mounted on pick-ups and anti-drone equipment are due in a further military aid package worth over €500mn.

And Ukrainian soldiers are currently being trained in Germany to use the anti-aircraft Leopard tanks.

In a speech on his vision for Europe on Monday, Scholz said he saw Germany taking on 'special responsibility' to help Ukraine build up its artillery and air defence systems.

Germany, he added, will maintain its backing for Ukraine for 'as long as it takes'.

On the humanitarian level, Germany has taken in almost a million Ukrainian refugees, with some 155,000 Ukrainian children now enrolled in German schools. AFP

Two people dead after Lagos building collapse

Lagos, Nigeria - At least two people were killed and more were trapped on Sunday after a seven-story unfinished building collapsed in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos, rescue authorities said.

Building collapses are common in Africa's most populous nation where many reside in dilapidated structures and construction safety regulations are often ignored.

The seven-story building collapsed in a commercial area of Lagos, with the structure almost completely flattened, according to photographs released by rescue officials. Two bodies had

been recovered from the rubble on Sunday, Ibrahim Farinloye of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) told AFP by text. At least four other people were believed trapped inside, and operations were ongoing, local rescue authorities said.

No reason was given for the collapse. Enforcement of safety regulations and use of shoddy materials have been highlighted since November last year after a high-rise building under construction collapsed in the Ikoyi district of Lagos, killing at least 45 people. AFP

Trump brands Biden 'enemy of the state' at Pennsylvania rally

Wilkes-Barre, US - Donald Trump branded Joe Biden an 'enemy of the state' on Saturday as he hit back at the US president's assertion that the Republican and his supporters are undermining American democracy, and slammed last month's FBI raid of his Florida home.

Making his first public appearance since the August 8 raid, Trump told a rally in Pennsylvania that the search was a 'travesty of justice' and warned it would produce 'a backlash the likes of which nobody has ever seen'.

"There can be no more vivid example of the very real threats from American freedom than just a few weeks ago, you saw, when we witnessed one of the most shocking abuses of power by any administration in American history," Trump claimed, de-



Former US President Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on Saturday (AFP)

spite long-standing protocols by which the Justice Department and the FBI act independently of the White House.

Trump told cheering supporters at the 'Save America' gathering in the city of Wilkes-Barre

that the 'egregious abuse of the law' was going to produce 'a backlash the likes of which nobody has ever seen'.

He also hit back at Biden's speech this week in which the president said his predecessor

and Republican supporters 'represent an extremism that threatens the very foundations of our republic'.

Speaking in Philadelphia, the cradle of US democracy, on Thursday, the president

'most vicious, hateful and divisive speech ever delivered by an American president'.

"He's an enemy of the state. You want to know the truth. The enemy of the state is him," Trump said.

He's an enemy of the state. You want to know the truth. The enemy of the state is him. Republicans in the MAGA movement are not the ones trying to undermine our democracy

DONALD TRUMP

launched an extraordinary assault on those Republicans who embrace Trump's 'Make America Great Again' ideology - and urged his own supporters to fight back in what he billed as a 'battle for the Soul of the Nation.'

Trump slammed it as the

"Republicans in the MAGA movement are not the ones trying to undermine our democracy," continued Trump, who has repeatedly claimed the 2020 presidential election, which he lost, was rigged; and whose party has made unfounded claims of

voter fraud a central plank of their platform.

"We are the ones trying to save our democracy, very simple. The danger to democracy comes from the radical left, not from the right," Trump added.

He was appearing at the rally ahead of November's midterm elections, which could see Biden's Democrats lose control of both houses of Congress.

'Top secret' files

Even although Trump is not on the ballot, Biden, 79, is seeking to turn the vote into a referendum on his predecessor in a bid to hold on to the Senate and House of Representatives.

At the Wilkes-Barre rally - where Trump took to the stage to support his candidate in the Senate race, TV physician Mehmet Oz - Trump supporter

Edward Young said he had been 'disgusted' by Biden's speech.

"He declared war on me. He declared war on half of America," Young told AFP. The duelling visits by Biden and Trump to Pennsylvania, a key battleground state, come as the Republican is under increasing legal pressure over the documents found by the FBI at his Mar-a-Lago estate.

The Justice Department has said in court filings that highly classified government documents, including some marked 'Top Secret', were discovered in Trump's personal office during the raid. A detailed list of what was seized also showed Trump held on to more than 11,000 unclassified government records that he claims are his to keep - but legally are owned by the National Archives. AFP

INDIA

Azad to launch own party focusing on restoration of full statehood in J&K

Jammu, India - Ghulam Nabi Azad, in his first public meeting in Jammu after quitting Congress, announced the launch of his own political outfit that will focus on the restoration of full statehood in Jammu & Kashmir.

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

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

Azad said that the first unit of his political outfit would be formed in Jammu and Kashmir in view of impending assembly polls. He lashed out at Congress and said that people 'are trying to defame us (me and my supporters who left the party) but their reach is limited to computer tweets'.

Criticising the party, Azad said, "Congress was made by us by our blood, not by computers, not by Twitter. People are trying to defame us but their reach is limited to computers and tweets. That is the reason Congress is nowhere to be seen on the ground."

Ghulam Nabi Azad held his first public meeting at Sainik Colony in Jammu.

"I thank everyone who supported me through their resignations, WhatsApp messages and other mediums from across the country since I resigned from the party. I have served the Congress party holding every position for last 53 years, but never received this much of love even when I am not on any position," Azad said.

Taking a jibe at Congress, Azad said that people from Congress now 'go to jail in buses, call DGP or Commissioners, get their names written and leave within an hour'. "This is the reason Congress has been unable to grow."



Former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad addresses a meeting at Sainik Colony, in Jammu on Sunday (ANI)

Ghulam Nabi Azad resigned from the all-party post last week. Notably, he has been Chief Minister of J&K from 2005 to 2008. In his resignation letter to Sonia Gandhi, Azad had targeted party leader-

'great regret and an extremely leaden heart' and severing his 50-year association with the Congress. He was earlier Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha.

Recounting his long association with the Congress, Azad

I've not decided upon a name for my party. The people will decide the name and the flag for the party. I'll give a Hindustani name to my party that everyone can understand

GHULAM NABI AZAD

ship, particularly Rahul Gandhi, over the way the party has been run during the past nine years.

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

Azad had said he was submitting his resignation with

had said the situation in the party has reached a point of 'no return'. While Azad took potshots at Sonia Gandhi in the letter, his sharpest attack was on Rahul Gandhi and he described the Wayand MP as a 'non-serious individual' and 'immature'. With Azad signalling that he will float a new party, several leaders have resigned from the Congress in Jammu and Kashmir.

ANI

Hatred, anger rising in India, says Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi, India - Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday came down heavily on the Narendra Modi-led Central government and said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) are dividing the country and a sense of fear has engulfed the minds of people about 'their future, inflation and unemployment and that's turning them towards hate'.

"Hatred is rising in India. Fear of inflation and unemployment is increasing in India, and due to this hatred is rising," Rahul Gandhi said while addressing a massive rally 'Mehangai Par Halla Bol' held by Congress today at Ramlila Maidan in the national capital.

"BJP and RSS dividing the country and creating fear in the country. Who gets the benefit of this fear? Is it poor, farmer, or small traders who are getting any benefit from the Narendra Modi government? Only two industrialists in the country benefitting from this fear and hatred," said the Congress MP.

Rahul Gandhi further said



Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and KC Venugopal interact with each other during party's 'Halla Bol' rally, at Ramlila Maidan, in New Delhi on Sunday (ANI)

that the Modi government's policies are benefitting only two big industrialists.

"BJP giving all the benefits to two people. Now see Narendra Modi did demonetisation. Did it help the poor? The three farm laws that were withdrawn later by the govt were not for farmers but it was for those two industrialists only. But the farmers

came on the road and showed their power to Narendra Modi and when PM Modi saw this, he had to take back the three farm laws," he said.

The Congress leader further said that the Modi government broke the backbone of small and medium enterprises.

"In one way, you are being affected by unemployment and

secondly, you are hit by the price rise. Narendra Modi asks what has Congress done in seventy years. I will say this, that in seventy years, Congress has not shown such price rise to the country and when the Opposition wants to raise the issue in Parliament then Narendra Modi's government doesn't allow it. Whether it is farmers'

issue or China," he added.

Making the attack more aggressive, the Congress MP said, "The media is also of these two industrialists, the whole of media is under those two businessmen. People know whose TV it is and whom they are working for. TV and newspapers are of these two industrialists. Narendra Modi works for those two industrialists and those two industrialists work for Narendra Modi." He further said, "Narendra Modi could not be the Prime Minister without the support of the media and two industrialists."

Speaking on the misuse of Central probe agencies, Rahul Gandhi said that he is not afraid of Enforcement Directorate (ED) and their questioning.

"The ED asked me to sit for 55 hours but I am not afraid of your ED. Whether it is 55 hours or five months or five years," he said.

Rahul Gandhi said, "PM Modi's ideology says that country should be divided and the profits from it should be shared among a few industrialists."

AFP

Tata Sons former chairman Mistry dies in road accident

Mumbai, India - Former Tata Sons chairman Cyrus Mistry was killed in a road accident near Mumbai on Sunday.

According to Palghar Police, Mistry was travelling from Ahmedabad to Mumbai when his car hit the divider. There were four people in the car. Two died on the spot, including Mistry, while the other two were shifted to hospital. On Twitter, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MP Supriya Sule said, "Devastating news. My brother Cyrus Mistry passed away. Can't believe it. Rest in Peace Cyrus."

RPG Enterprises Chairman Harsh Goenka also expressed grief over Mistry's demise. "So sad to hear of the shocking news of the passing away of Cyrus Mistry in an accident. He was a friend, a gentleman, a man of substance. He was in-



Cyrus Mistry (ANI)

strumental in creating the global construction giant Shapoorji Pallonji and ably led the Tata group," tweeted Goenka.

Mistry, who was the sixth chairman of Tata Sons, was ousted from the position in October 2016. He had taken over as the chairman in December 2012 after Ratan Tata announced his retirement. N Chandrasekaran later took over as Executive Chairman of Tata Sons.

ANI

China's No 3 leader to visit Russia next week

Beijing, China - China's top legislator Li Zhanshu will visit Russia next week, state media reported on Sunday, becoming the highest-ranking Communist Party politician to travel to the country since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Beijing and Moscow have drawn closer in recent years, ramping up cooperation as part of what they call a 'no limits' relationship, acting as a counterweight to the global dominance of the United States.

Meanwhile, tensions between China and the West have risen as Beijing has refused to condemn Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and provided diplomatic cover by blasting Western sanctions and arms sales to Kyiv.

AFP

Rohingya migrants a 'big burden' on Bangladesh: Sheikh Hasina

Dhaka, Bangladesh - The Rohingya migrants are a 'big burden' on Bangladesh and the country is reaching out to the international community to ensure they return to their homeland, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said adding that she feels India could play a major role in resolving the issue.

In an interaction with ANI, Hasina confessed that the presence of lakhs of Rohingyas in Bangladesh had created challenges for her regime. "Well you know... for us it's a big burden. India is a vast country; you can accommodate but you don't have much. But in our country... we have 1.1mn Rohingya. So well... we are consulting with the international community and also our neighbouring countries, they should also take some steps so that they can go back home," Hasina said.

The Bangladesh prime minister said that her government had tried to take care of the displaced



Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina speaks to ANI in an interview ahead of her visit to India, in Dhaka on Sunday (ANI)

community keeping the humanitarian aspect in mind.

"This Rohingya, yes... on humanitarian ground we give them

shelter and providing everything but during this COVID, we vaccinated all the Rohingya community. But how long they will stay

here? So in the camp they are staying. Our environment hazard is there. Then some people engage in drug trafficking or some

arms conflict, women trafficking. Day by day it is increasing. So as quick as they return home it is good for our country and also for Myanmar. So we have been trying our best to pursue them, we're discussing with them and also the international community, like ASEAN or UNO, then other countries," Hasina said.

The Bangladesh prime minister said that her country had offered shelter to the Rohingyas when they were facing many troubles. "But now they should go back to their country. But India as a neighbour country, they can play a big role on it, I feel that," Hasina added.

Prime Minister Hasina is set to begin her four-day visit to India from Monday.

During the interview, Hasina was also asked about her country's cooperation with India on river water sharing especially with regard to Teesta river. Hasina said that while there were challenges, they were not any-

thing which could not be resolved mutually.

"It is very sad that, we are in a... you know... downstream. So water is coming from India, so India should show more broadness. Because both the countries will be beneficiaries. So sometimes our people suffered a lot because of this need of water. Especially Teesta, we could not go for harvest and so many problems take place. So I think it should be solved but, yes we found that the Prime Minister is very... you know... eager to solve this problem, but the problem is in your country. So... we hope that it should, you know... it should be solved," Hasina said.

She added that the two countries shared the water of the river Ganges. "Only Ganges water we share. The water, we signed the treaty. But we have another 54 rivers. Yes... So it's a long standing problem, so it should be solved," she said.

ANI

ASIA CUP

Thrilling win for Pakistan

Pakistan beat India by five wickets in Asia Cup Super Four

Dubai, United Arab Emirates - Mohammad Rizwan made 71 as Pakistan beat India by five wickets in their opening Super Four game at the Asia Cup on Sunday.

Chasing 182 for victory, a 73-run stand between Rizwan and the left-handed Mohammad Nawaz (42) helped Pakistan achieve their target with one ball to spare in Dubai.

Earlier, Virat Kohli's 60 guided India to 181-7 after being put in to bat first in the tournament, which acts as a tune-up to the T20 World Cup in October-November.

Kohli, who hit 60 off 44 balls before being run out in the final over, helped India survive a middle-order stutter to post a competitive total after being put in to bat first in Dubai.

He reached his 32nd half-century in 36 balls with a six off pace bowler Mohammad Hसनain amid chants of "Kohli, Kohli" at a packed stadium.

Leg-spinner Shadab Khan stood out with figures of 2-31 from his four overs.

India skipper Rohit Sharma



Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan plays a shot during his knock of 71 against India in their Super Four match at Asia Cup in Dubai on Sunday (AFP)

came out all guns blazing to smash pace bowler Naseem Shah for a six and four in the opening over of the match. Opening partner KL Rahul soon took the cue to whack Naseem for two cracking blows over the fence. The openers put on 54 runs briskly and attempted to make full use of the powerplay, when only two fielders are allowed outside the inner circle, by hitting lofted shots, but Rohit fell when he mistimed Haris Rauf. Khushdil Shah clung on to a sky-high catch as Rohit went back after scoring 28 off 16 balls in the sixth over. Shadab struck the next over to cut short Rahul's stay on 28 and then left-arm orthodox spinner Mohammad Nawaz removed the dangerous Suryakumar Yadav for 13.

AFP

Bagnaia extends MotoGP winning streak to heap pressure on Quartararo

Misano Adriatico, Italy - Italy's Francesco Bagnaia closed the gap on MotoGP leader Fabio Quartararo on Sunday after winning the San Marino Grand Prix to claim his fourth straight premier class triumph.

Ducati rider Bagnaia pipped Enea Bastianini by just 0.034 seconds in a thrilling victory at Misano Adriatico which moved him to within 30 points of reigning world champion Quartararo, who finished fifth.

The Italian moved into second spot in the championship standings ahead of Aleix Espargaro after the Spaniard finished a place behind Yamaha rider Quartararo.

Aprilia rider Espargaro is 33 points behind Quartararo after being overtaken by the Frenchman who had started on the grid in eighth.

Bagnaia's victory was all the more impressive for him being forced to start from fifth after a three-place grid penalty imposed during practice on Friday.

"I struggled at the start because it was not so dry so I was struggling to find some grip, but then I started to feel that the fear was going down a bit and my



Francesco Bagnaia celebrates his victory in the San Marino MotoGP (AFP)

feeling was better lap by lap," said Bagnaia.

"In the last laps I was trying to push the gap but Enea was too fast. I'm very happy to win today, it wasn't the best start from P5 but I did it."

After taking the lead on lap three Bagnaia held off first Maverick Vinales and then Bastianini to claim his sixth win from the 14 GPs completed in the 20-race season.

Bastianini will be Bagnaia's teammate on the factory Ducati bike next season and he showed why he is moving up from the

satellite Gresini team.

The 24-year-old, who had started second on the grid, pushed past Vinales and behind Bagnaia on lap 20 and then piled the pressure on his compatriot.

The pair were practically wheel-to-wheel for the final few laps and after trying to overtake with only a few turns remaining crossed the line almost alongside Bagnaia.

"The last lap I tried with everything I could to overtake Pecco but he was too good," Bastianini told Sky Sport Italia.

APX

Kohli is vital for India, don't get obsessed with statistics and numbers, says Dravid

Dubai, United Arab Emirates - Virat Kohli remains a key player for India, said head coach Rahul Dravid, who is happy with the refreshed former captain's Asia Cup form and said people should not get hung up with statistics.

The 33-year-old was again nowhere near his best but still top-scored with 60 off 44 balls in the Super Four clash against Pakistan on Sunday. He also made an unbeaten 59 in India's group win over Hong Kong.

Kohli's lean patch - he has not scored an international century in any format since 2019 - has been a constant talking point among fans and pundits.

But Dravid insisted the former captain was getting back to top form after a break from the game.

"It's nice to see that he has come back fresh," Dravid told reporters.

"He played very well in the last match, and we are happy with his performance. For us, it's not really about how many runs he makes."

"Especially with Virat, people get a little bit obsessed with his statistics and his numbers. For us, it's not really about that," said



India's Virat Kohli plays a shot during his knock of 60 against Pakistan on Sunday (AFP)

Dravid.

Kohli revealed recently that he had tried to fake his intensity after suffering mental health issues, before taking a break from cricket and skipping India's tours of the West Indies and Zimbabwe.

Kohli began the six-nation tournament, which is an important tune-up for the T20 World Cup next month, with a crucial 35 in the narrow win over Pakistan.

"For us, it's about the contributions he can make in different phases of the game and what the contribution is. It doesn't have to be in fifties or hundreds or a stat," said Dravid.

"Even small contributions mean a lot in T20 cricket, what is

the role of a player and what the team needs. Virat is pretty keen in putting in big performances. Hopefully he can keep doing that in the tournament."

Kohli, who has struck 27 centuries in 102 Tests since making his debut in 2011, endured a torrid past 12 months that also saw him replaced as national captain.

AFP

Bullish again: Verstappen wins fourth race in a row at Dutch Grand Prix



Red Bull's Max Verstappen in action at the Dutch Formula One Grand Prix on Sunday (AFP)

Zandvoort, Netherlands - World champion and runaway series leader Max Verstappen made the most of his unerring speed and reliability, and the chaotic teamwork of his rivals, to claim a dramatic victory for Red Bull in his home Dutch Grand Prix on Sunday.

The 24-year-old Dutchman took full advantage of his team's cool decision-making, as Mercedes and Ferrari appeared to make flustered choices in the heat of the moment, to come home 4.071 seconds ahead of George Russell of Mercedes and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

For several laps in the closing stages, it appeared that seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton might win until a late Safety Car resulted in him being left out on worn tyres by Mercedes, as Verstappen and Russell took softs.

Exposed and unable to defend his position Hamilton was furious, but the sea of 105,000 ebullient fans packed into the Zandvoort circuit revelled in their hero's good fortune as he passed Hamilton and pulled clear to claim a second successive Dutch triumph, a fourth consecutive win and his 10th of the season.

"It wasn't straightforward, but

I'm proud to be Dutch. It was not a straightforward race. It is incredible to win here again

MAX VERSTAPPEN

we pushed and we made the right calls," said Verstappen. "It's worked out really well and it's always special to win at home."

As the forbidden flares and fireworks were lit and smoke spilled across the track, Hamilton

came home fourth ahead of Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull and Alpine's Fernando Alonso.

In a race punctuated by interruptions and influenced heavily by strategic decisions related to tyre-wear, it was Red Bull's exploitation of their opportunity that gave Verstappen his 30th career win while, for Hamilton, it seemed defeat had been clutched from the jaws of victory.

Verstappen now has 309 points, ahead of Leclerc and Perez on 201, making it possible for him to win the title in Singapore on October 2.

AFP

ARSENAL'S RUN ENDS

Marcus Rashford's double, Antony's goal on debut help Manchester United end Arsenal's perfect start

London, United Kingdom - Antony scored on his dream debut for Manchester United as the Brazilian's clinical strike and Marcus Rashford's double inspired a 3-1 win that ended Arsenal's perfect start to the Premier League season on Sunday.

Antony was making his first appearance after signing from United manager Erik ten Hag's former club Ajax in an £82 million (\$94 million) deal on Thursday.

Full of flicks, tricks and purposeful movement, the 22-year-old forward took just 35 minutes to get on the scoresheet in a dazzling introduction to his new fans at Old Trafford.

Arsenal hit back to equalise through Bukayo Saka, but Rashford blew the leaders away with two goals in the space of nine second-half minutes after Antony was replaced by Cristiano Ronaldo.

Thanks to Antony and Rashford, United were able to celebrate a fourth successive victory that lifted them to fifth place.

Opening his reign with consecutive losses against Brighton and Brentford was a humbling experience for Ten Hag.

But since then, the Dutch coach has started to put his imprint on a United side that look far more organised than the sham-bolic unit that finished sixth in the Premier League last season.

Arsenal's first defeat this term after five successive wins was cruel on Mikel Arteta's men, who contributed plenty to an engross-



Manchester United's Marcus Rashford shoots past Arsenal's Ben White and goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale to score their second goal in their English Premier League match on Sunday (AFP)

ing encounter but paid the price for some naive defending.

Arsenal thought they had snatched the lead in the 12th minute as Gabriel Martinelli raced away from Diogo Dalot to clip a fine finish over David de Gea.

But VAR intervened to ask Paul Tierney to check for a foul in the build-up and the referee ruled Martin Odegaard pushed Christian Eriksen to steal posses-

sion.

Antony put United ahead in the 35th minute when Rashford's deft pass reached the forward, who took advantage of Arsenal's sloppy marking to sweep a composed finish into the far corner from eight yards.

Antony kissed his badge and posed for the television cameras in a flamboyant celebration that sent Old Trafford into raptures, earning a ticking off from Tierney

for sticking the ball up his shirt in front of the Arsenal fans.

Audacious Antony

Confidence clearly was not a problem for Antony and he even tried an audacious lob that kept Arsenal keeper Aaron Ramsdale on his toes.

Antony departed to a standing ovation after 58 minutes to be replaced by Ronaldo.

Saka silenced Old Trafford

two minutes later as Arsenal grabbed a deserved equaliser.

Odegaard's pass unhinged the United defence and when Dalot's tackle on Gabriel Jesus diverted the ball to Saka, the England winger slotted home with ease.

But United caught Arsenal with a brilliant counter in the 66th minute.

Playing through the Arsenal press, Eriksen found Bruno Fernandes and his superb pass sent

Rashford galloping clear to fire past Ramsdale. United wrapped up the points with a replica of their second goal as Arsenal once again left themselves open at the back and this time Eriksen fed Rashford to slot home.

In Sunday's early game, Brighton extended their superb start to the season with a 5-2 victory that left bottom of the table Leicester in turmoil.

Graham Potter's fourth-

placed side made it four wins from their first six games thanks to a second-half surge at the Amex Stadium.

In the late match on Saturday, Manchester City were held to a 1-1 draw after Leon Bailey snatched a late equaliser for struggling Aston Villa despite Erling Haaland extending his remarkable start to life in the Premier League with another goal.

Lewandowski leads Barca to win at Sevilla

Madrid, Spain - Robert Lewandowski scored again as Barcelona defeated Sevilla 3-0 in La Liga on Saturday.

Barcelona rode their lucky early on at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan as Marc-Andre ter Stegen denied Ivan Rakitic and Youssef En-Nesyri before the visitors struck against the run of play.

Raphinha headed in the rebound after Lewandowski's dinked effort was cleared off the line, but the Poland star didn't need long to get on the score-

sheet himself. Lewandowski controlled a flighted pass from Jules Kounde on his chest and volleyed past Bono for his fifth league goal in four appearances. Eric Garcia tapped in Barcelona's third five minutes after half-time after Raphinha's cross was nodded across goal by Kounde, who was sold by Sevilla for 50 million euros this summer.

"It was a very good match overall, we dominated and even had chances to score more," Barcelona coach Xavi said.

AFP



Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski celebrates after scoring against Sevilla

Mbappe stars as PSG stay on top, Marseille win

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe scored a goal in each half as Paris Saint-Germain beat 10-man Nantes 3-0 on Saturday to stay on top of the Ligue 1 table from Marseille, who beat Auxerre 2-0 with Alexis Sanchez on target.

Marseille had briefly gone to the summit with that win, but PSG responded in style later and are leaders thanks to their far superior goal difference, having scored 24 goals in just six league outings this season.

Mbappe joined Neymar at the top of the scorers' charts on seven for the campaign thanks to his brace at the Stade de la Beaujoire, with his opener coming in the 18th minute.

The France star curled a superb strike over goalkeeper Alban Lafont and into the net at the end of a breakaway after being set up by Lionel Messi.

Nantes had beaten PSG at home in this fixture last season but their hopes of taking anything from the reigning champions this time were seriously hampered when they had Brazilian full-back Fabio sent off midway through the first half.

The former Manchester United defender was shown a straight red card for a high challenge in midfield on Vitinha that



Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe celebrates after scoring against Nantes on Saturday (AFP)

forced the Portuguese player to come off hurt.

PSG scored again shortly after half-time as Messi set up Mbappe to finish at the near post, with the goal initially being disallowed for offside only to be awarded following a VAR check.

Rested at kick-off, Neymar came off the bench after that and played a part in the third goal in the 68th minute as his shot came back off the upright and Nuno

Mendes followed up to finish.

PSG now turn their attentions to the Champions League and their opening group game at home to Juventus on Tuesday, when the in-form Neymar is sure to return to the starting line-up.

"There is always the risk that you can break a player's dynamic if they are in good form but don't accept being left out of the team," admitted PSG coach Christophe Galtier of his decision

to bench the Brazilian.

"But I had a long discussion with him yesterday. I made my decision and he accepted it."

Galtier, who said Vitinha had taken a heavy knock to his kneecap, insisted his team would still have to raise their game in the Champions League.

"We are on a good run. We are scoring goals and playing well. The players are playing for each other, but the Champions

League is another level.

"I watched Juve this afternoon and this will be a different match. We cannot expect an easy game."

Sanchez on target

Runners-up in Ligue 1 last season, Marseille begin their Champions League campaign away at Tottenham Hotspur on Wednesday, and they warmed up in fine fashion by easing to victory against newly-promoted Auxerre in Burgundy.

Brazilian internationalerson scored the opener, converting the rebound after Cengiz Under hit the post.

Arsenal loanee Nuno Tavares hit the post for Marseille in the second half, before Sanchez came on and finished off a cut-back from fellow substitute Matteo Guendouzi to make it 2-0 six minutes from time.

"It has been a very positive start to the season," admitted Marseille coach Igor Tudor, appointed ahead of the campaign.

"The Tottenham match comes at a time when the players are in good shape. It is a fantastic competition. We were in pot four for the draw but we want to make a good impression."

AFP

Leao claims derby honours for Milan, Napoli retake top spot

Milan, Italy - Rafael Leao fired a warning shot to the rest of Serie A on Saturday with his brace in AC Milan's 3-2 derby triumph over Inter Milan which put his team level with league leaders Napoli, 2-1 winners at Lazio thanks to rising star Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.

Portugal winger Leao struck twice in each half in a pulsating clash at the San Siro, the first since Milan's takeover by US investment fund RedBird was completed in the week, which

put the champions a point ahead of Atalanta and Roma at the summit. Fans bounced in the stands after a thrilling match which was decided by Leao and Olivier Giroud, who after Marcel Brozovic's 21st minute opener for Inter put Milan two goals to the good on the hour mark.

"If you want to improve you need talent and intelligence and Leao has both of those," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli.

"Every time we put him in one-on-one situations he's a

huge weapon for us."

However they also had the magnificent Mike Maignan to thank for the three points after the France goalkeeper pulled off four superb stops from Lautaro Martinez, Edin Dzeko - also a scorer - and Hakan Calhanoglu.

Leao's second came after a mesmerising piece of dribbling and close control, and with the transfer window now shut and Chelsea rumours died down he will be key to Milan's Champions League campaign which begins

at Salzburg on Tuesday.

A second defeat in five matches leaves Inter sixth and with Bayern Munich coming to town on Wednesday night.

Napoli go top

Napoli lead Milan on goal difference after new boy Khvicha Kvaratskhelia continued his sensational start to life in Italy with the winner at Lazio, seventh after their first defeat of the campaign.

The 21-year-old, who also struck the post before scoring,

has captured fans' imaginations with a series of decisive displays and will be one of Napoli's key weapons when they host Liverpool in their Champions League opener on Wednesday.

"Going into Wednesday's match with a win is a positive, we know we're facing a brilliant team and we'll have these three days to prepare... We'll look to put in a great performance on Wednesday as well," said captain Giovanni Di Lorenzo to DAZN.

AFP



AC Milan's Rafael Leao scores against Inter Milan during their Italian Serie A match at the San Siro stadium in Milan on Saturday (AFP)

Indomitable warrior

Rafael Nadal pounds Richard Gasquet in the US Open for his 18th straight victory over the Frenchman

New York, United States - Rafael Nadal demolished Richard Gasquet in ruthless fashion to march into the last 16 of the US Open on Saturday with his 18th straight victory over the French veteran.

Second seed Nadal improved his record against Gasquet to a perfect 18-0 with a clinical beat-down of his close friend on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court.

Nadal's 6-0, 6-1, 7-5 victory in 2hr 17min sees him advance to a meeting with American 22nd seed Frances Tiafoe on Monday for a place in the quarter-finals.

"He's a great player, he's very charismatic, very fast," Nadal said of Tiafoe.

"He can play very aggressive, I need to keep improving to keep playing better and better to have chances to get through."

Nadal was left with a bloody nose on Thursday when he accidentally struck himself in the face with his racquet but reported no lingering effects on Saturday.

"It's a little bit bigger than usual but it's okay," Nadal said. "The nose is still there."

Nadal and Gasquet, who came up through the ranks of junior tennis together, first met as professionals on clay in Estoril 2004, with Nadal winning in three sets.

Since that first encounter, the duo's head-to-head record has been a story of unrelenting dominance by Nadal.

Gasquet has only taken four sets off the Spanish master, the last of which came at the Canadian Masters in 2008.

Saturday's encounter again followed the same script, with Nadal showing no mercy as he raced to a crushing win.

Nadal used his blistering groundstrokes to dominate Gas-



Rafael Nadal of Spain celebrates after beating Richard Gasquet of France in the third round of the US Open on Saturday (AFP)

quet, unfurling a series of 35 pinpoint winners into the corners to torment his opponent.

Gasquet almost got an early confidence boost in the opening

set, when in the first game he grabbed three break points at 0-40.

But Nadal reeled off five straight points to hold serve and

that was pretty much as good as it got for the French world No.91, whose best performance in New York was a semi-final appearance in 2013.

After taking the first set 6-0, Nadal threatened to repeat the margin in the second until Gasquet finally held serve for the first time in the match to make it 3-1.

That earned Gasquet one of the biggest cheers of the night from the Arthur Ashe crowd, the Frenchman raising an arm aloft to acknowledge the applause.

Normal service resumed swiftly thereafter however, with Gasquet being broken again to go 5-1 down before Nadal held for the set.

Gasquet put up stronger resistance in the third, recovering to break back after dropping serve to keep the match on serve at 5-5.

But Gasquet wilted in the 11th game, with Nadal breaking for a 6-5 lead before closing out the win.

Carlos Alcaraz, widely-regarded as Rafael Nadal's Grand Slam heir apparent, claimed a season-leading 47th win despite breaking one of his shoes.

The 19-year-old third seed defeated Jenson Brooksby of the United States 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 on the back of 46 winners.

Alcaraz, a quarter-finalist in 2021, managed to break one of his tennis shoes as he slid to reach a ball mid-match.

"It's the third time that I have done this. As you can see, I do a lot of sliding," he said.

Alcaraz next faces 2014 champion Marin Cilic who fired 26 aces and 74 winners in total past Britain's Dan Evans in a 7-6 (13/11), 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 7-5 win.

British seventh seed Cameron Norrie made the fourth round for the first time with a comfortable 7-5, 6-4, 6-1 win over Danish teenager Holger Rune.

He next faces Russian ninth seed Andrey Rublev who needed five match points to see off Canada's Denis Shapovalov 6-4, 2-6, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 7-6 (10/7).

AFP



Iga Swiatek

Battling Swiatek into US Open fourth round

New York, United States - World number one Iga Swiatek made the last 16 of the US Open for a second successive year with a 6-3, 6-4 victory against unseeded Lauren Davis on Saturday.

Swiatek came back from 1-4 down in the second set to reel off five successive games against the American who called a medical time out in the first set to have her blood pressure taken.

The 21-year-old Pole will face Wimbledon quarter-finalist Jule Niemeier of Germany for a place in the last eight.

Swiatek has now won three matches in a row for the first time since capturing her second French Open in June.

Petra Kvitova defeated ninth-seeded Garbine Muguruza after saving two match points.

Kvitova came through 5-7, 6-3, 7-6 (12/10) and will take on Jessica Pegula of the United States for a quarter-final place.

Sixth seed Aryna Sabalenka, who made the semi-finals in 2021, brushed aside French qualifier Clara Burel, 6-0, 6-2. Pegula, the eighth seed, ended the run of Chinese qualifier Yuan Yue, 6-2, 6-6 (6/8), 6-0.

AFP

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Nishimoto, Yamaguchi take honours at Japan Open badminton

Osaka, Japan - Home favourites Kenta Nishimoto and Akane Yamaguchi thrilled the crowd at badminton's Japan Open in Osaka on Sunday, winning the men's and women's singles titles for the host country.

World number 21 Nishimoto stunned Taiwan's number four seed Chou Tien-chen 21-19, 21-23, 21-17 to finally claim his first international title, having lost in his previous six final appearances.

Nishimoto's win gave the home crowd something to cheer after Japan's number two seed Kento Momota lost in the first round earlier in the week.

The 28-year-old Nishimoto said he was "really happy and also a bit relieved" after landing his first title.

"I was very worried going into the third game," said Nishimoto.

"He's a veteran player with a lot of skill who knows how to play cleverly, so I had to be careful right until the end."

Kenta Nishimoto hits a return against Anders Antonsen (AFP)

Yamaguchi gave Japan another gold medal to celebrate when she beat South Korea's An Se-young 21-9, 21-15 in the women's final.

Yamaguchi retained her world title last week in Tokyo and she still had enough left in the tank to win her third tournament of the year.

AFP

Women players need better safeguarding, says Azarenka

New York, United States - Victoria Azarenka said Saturday tennis needs to do a better job of protecting women players after the former coach of French player Fiona Ferro was charged with rape.

Azarenka, who eased past Petra Martic 6-3, 6-0 to set up a last-16 clash with 2016 finalist Karolina Pliskova, said the issue of safeguarding players was a top concern for members of the WTA Tour's Players' Council, adding that exploitation of players was happening "left and right."

Earlier this week, prosecutors in France confirmed that Ferro's former coach Pierre Bouteyre had been charged with rape and sexual assault of a minor.

Ferro, 25, has said Bouteyre raped her between 2012 to 2015.

Bouteyre has denied the charges, claiming that his relationship with Ferro was consensual - a claim rejected by the player.

Azarenka, a member of the WTA's Players' Council, said the

Victoria Azarenka celebrates after defeating Petra Martic of Croatia in the third round of the US Open on Saturday (AFP)

case highlighted the need for better safeguarding practices.

"It's a very sensitive subject, because, you know, you won't hear those stories unless players come out and tell those stories," said Azarenka. "It happens right and left on the tour, which is unfortunate."

"Our job is to be better at safeguarding. You know, as Player

Council, it's almost like the number one subject to us. Because we see those vulnerable young ladies that getting taken advantage of in different situations."

Azarenka said that if she had a daughter, the issue would make her hesitant to encourage her to pursue a career in professional tennis.

AFP

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HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGES



New York's horse-drawn carriage drivers might soon have to hold their horses as this erstwhile form of fanciful city transport is now considered outdated and 'cruel' to animals

A charming, must-do tourist attraction or a cruel, outdated commercial activity? New York's horse-drawn carriages have operated since the 1800s, but lawmakers now want to replace them with electric vehicles. For some, the equine-driven rides around Central Park are part of the fabric of the Big Apple, like yellow taxis and Broadway shows. But for others, the horses-for-hire are not in keeping with the ethos of a leading progressive city in 21st century America.

"Manhattan is probably the worst place in the world to have a horse work, in traffic, in noise, with pollution, in terrible heat, and terrible conditions," says council member Robert Holden, who has introduced a bill to replace the animals with horseless e-carriages by June 2024.

Animal rights activists have for years tried

to shut down the industry, which comprises 130 drivers sharing 68 licenses for roughly 200 horses that live in stables in the city.

Their latest push was given impetus this month by the collapse of a horse on busy Ninth Avenue that sparked anger after a video showing the driver shouting at the animal to get up went viral on social media.

On Instagram, supermodel Bella Hadid urged lawmakers to pass Holden's legislation, calling the tourist rides 'barbaric'. Opponents say the horses live in cramped conditions, are often malnourished and dehydrated, get spooked by cars en route to the park, and are worked against their will.

"They're literally treated as machines, and they're not machines," says Edita Birnkrant, executive director of anti-horse carriage group NYCLASS. "This shouldn't be happening in modern-day New York City."

Operators say the horses are well looked after, noting that the industry is regulated by the city, with the equines and stables subject to inspections by the health and sanitation

departments.

"They're happy and healthy. You can't make a 1,500-pound animal do something they don't want to do," insists Christina Hansen, who has been driving carriages in New York for 10 years.

The horses are required by law to work no more than nine hours a day and not operate when temperatures hit 32° C (90° F) or fall below minus 7° C.

Migrant drivers

Forty-two-year-old Hansen, who wears a top hat when steering her horse Oreo, says each horse gets at least five weeks 'vacation' on a farm every year. She says New York would not be the same if the carriages are banned.

"We've been in movies and television. We're as iconic as the Empire State Building and Statue of Liberty," she tells AFP.

In Central Park, where 45-minute-long rides cost upwards of \$160, views are mixed among tourists.

"It's absolutely immoral," says Briton Cai-

Horse-Drawn carriage driver Christina Hansen rides her carriage through the borough of Manhattan on August 26, in New York City



ley Tyler, agreeing with a ban.

However, Marina Perry, from Argentina, doesn't have a problem with the rides as long as the horses are treated well. "It's a cultural aspect of New York City that has been going on for generations," she says.

Hansen says the industry is "predominantly an immigrant business, with drivers from 20 countries, including Italy, Ireland, Turkey, Brazil and Mexico. They can earn around \$100,000 a year."

Holden's bill has 14 sponsors and needs 26 votes to be adopted. Activists hope a vote will be held by October. Passing the law will be difficult though, with the drivers backed by the city's powerful transport workers union.

Hansen asserts, "Nobody wants to drive an electric golf cart," but Holden insists the drivers will earn more with e-carriages because they will be able to work in all weather. "It's clean technology. It's win-win," he says.

AFP

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MIRBAT - AN OLD TOWN, ONCE KNOWN FOR THE FINEST ARABIAN HORSES, NOW STANDS REPLETE WITH MEMORIES OF A VIBRANT PAST, DILAPIDATED HERITAGE STRUCTURES, AND ANCIENT DHOWS, ALL OF WHICH ARE STILL A BIG DRAW FOR TOURISTS

Anirban Ray

If you want to feel close to nature as well as revel in scenes reminiscent of Oman's history and traditions, Mirbat is the place to visit.

Once known for its exotic Arabian horses - the prized and gorgeous equine beasts had held sway here for centuries - Mirbat now continues to provide the visitor a feel of old times in Oman. Though trade in horses doesn't continue here anymore, Mirbat still carries this stamp of days bygone.

As one enters the city, located around 75km east of Salalah, one notices that the entrance is marked with stone installations of two brown stallions on either side of the road. The steeds remind the guest of the long lost memories of their domination in the green and ochre plains until a few centuries back.

An old coastal fishing town, Mirbat is among the prominent ten wilayats of Dhofar Governorate. The calm town is situated near Jebel Samhan, adjacent to the sea. Golden beaches adorn the city with occasion drizzles and breeze carrying the strong odour of fish.

The coastline is decked with an array of dhows (traditional boats) and the sight resembles a chapter from 'Arabian Nights'. The pristine coastline of the town is a cacophony of sounds



from seagulls, busy fishermen, shutter-bugs and grazing cattle.

Salim Amri, a boatman, said, "Fishing in Mirbat is a very special experience. As ones goes deep in the sea, one can feel a touch of history that has been as old as human existence itself. There is no geographical proof that I can provide but the feeling that arises in the middle of the sea is mesmerising. There is no pollution and sometimes dolphins, like old friends, pop up to greet us."

The city has many old mosques and houses. Most people have left this town for a livelihood in Salalah or Muscat. The joint family tradition has been gradually weakening - as one travels the narrow lanes of the town one can see old 'baits' (homes) wherein once huge families resided.

Most houses have an open courtyard and an array of rooms. Separate areas were also allocated for animals, like horses and camels, which later made way to park cars. Most of the di-

lapidated houses are protected by the local municipality for heritage value but some can be seen crumbling to form just a heap of stones and rubble.

Adnam, a tour guide, disclosed, "These houses have been as old as over 200 years, and when they are pulled down, the folk staying around come and bid farewell. The people here, especially the very senior citizens, feel very emotional. They are also wise and tolerant, but are resigned to the fact that the old must make way

for the new."

Before the development of hotels in Salalah, the old houses in Mirbat were very much in demand from backpacking tourists who preferred to rough it out and stay in the old houses for a nostalgic feel of life here. However, now, many of these old dwellings have been demolished to make way for new constructions.

You also encounter herds of sheep, cows and camels strolling around the lanes in Mirbat and the stench of dung has its own way of taking one back in time, in contrast to modernisation where the smell of fuel seems to indicate development.

Very close to the entrance of the town lies a whitewashed tomb of Mohammed bin Ali - a respected religious leader who died in 556H (1161 AD). There is a big graveyard around the tomb and tourists often come to pay tributes.

One of the most interesting places for a tourist close to Mirbat is the anti-gravity point. It is a magical place where one can witness a car in neutral gear moving uphill on a gradually inclined road. Known by many names - Magnetic Hill, Gravity Hill, Magnetic Point, Gravity Point and Location of Gravity - this stretch is located near Tawi Atair and Mirbat and one can visit it on the way to Mirbat.

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