

Omanisation gathers steam

Rate of replacing expats with Omanis high in five sectors - communications, commercial banking, oil and gas, insurance and hospitality

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

The government's Omanisation efforts to replace expatriate workers with locals is progressing in earnest and the Ministry of Labour (MoL) has in recent past intensified a long-standing programme to create employment opportunities for citizens by training and equipping them with additional skills.

According to figures of the 2021 Statistical Year Book re-

leased by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the rate of replacing expat employees with Omanis has risen remarkably in five sectors - commercial banking, oil and gas, communications, insurance and hospitality.

Commercial banks have maintained a lead in Omanisation, with 94.4 per cent of jobs held by Omanis at the end of last year against 93.7 per cent at the end of 2020; 11,477 Omanis worked in banks, compared to 680 expatriates.

In the oil and gas sector, Omanis accounted for 88.1 per cent - or 17,565 - of the total workforce at the end of 2021 compared to 85.5 per cent in 2020.

In the communications sector, there were a total of 3,764 workers in 2021, 3,479 of these being Omanis, while Omanisation in the insurance sector rose to 81.9 per cent in 2021 against 78.8 per cent in 2020. There

were a total of 3,006 insurance workers - 2,463 Omanis and 543 expatriates.

The hospitality sector employed 4,243 Omanis among a total of 11,650 employees. Omanisation in the sector rose from 33.8 per cent in 2020 to 36.4 per cent in 2021 amid efforts to increase the number of Omani employees.

Earlier this year, H E Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, stated that the ministry is working towards providing 35,000 job opportunities through recruitment, replacement and training for citizens in 2022.

According to the minister, the government is exerting efforts to ensure the wellbeing of youth in the labour market. Towards this goal, it negotiated terms with a number of private sector establishments that were considering termination of services of Omani workers last year. He also informed that a new



(Image for illustrative purpose)

10,017 job opportunities created for Omanis in Q1 2022, constituting 29 per cent of the target - 35,000 jobs - set for 2022

Labour Law is in finalisation stages, currently awaiting approval of the Council of Ministers.

The total number of employment opportunities created, including replacement of expatriates with Omani citizens, in the public and private sectors was 10,017 in the first quarter of 2022, constituting 29 per cent of the target - 35,000 - for 2022.

Out of the total - 10,017 - 2,573 positions were created in the public and private sectors by replacing expatriates.

A total of 23,271 citizens were employed in the first six months of 2022, according to Salim Said al Badi, director general of Labour Welfare, MoL. Of the 23,271 citizens appointed in H1 2022, 10,454 appointments were in the government sector and 12,817 in the private.

In July this year, MoL issued a decision to Omanise 207 professions.

NEWS BRIEF

OMAN CHAIRS ARAB AUDIT INSTITUTION CAPACITY BUILDING MEETING

Muscat - Oman is chairing the 20th meeting of the Institutional Capacity Building Committee affiliated to the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI).

The three-day meeting, held via video-conferencing, discusses a variety of issues, including the outcome of this year's training programmes of ARABOSAI committee's action plan, an assessment report on its meetings between 2019 and 2021 and a briefing about a consultation meeting held to draft ARABOSAI strategic for 2023 through to 2028.

It also reviewed ARABOSAI's training project for 2023 to 2025.



CDAA cautions as hiking accidents rise



Omani fencers claim 15 medals in Jordan

Our Correspondent
Muscat

For the first time, Oman's fencing team made a rich haul of medals - 15 in all - at the West Asian Fencing Championships hosted by the Jordanian Fencing Federation in Al Hussein Youth City in Amman.

The team bagged four medals on the opening day of the championship being held from August 23 to 31. Of the 15 medals it claimed, eight are gold, four silver and three bronze for performance in U-13 and U-15

age categories.

The championship is witnessing stiff competition with the participation of 150 male and female fencers from 11 countries - Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and Iraq, besides hosts Jordan and Oman.

The Omani delegation travelled to Amman with a squad of nine fencers and coach Hisham Karshood.

The squad comprises the best national fencers, including Israa al Siyabi, Ahmed Kaskaas, Said al Shuaibi, Omar al Harthi,

Al Harith al Harthi, Ali al Busaidi, Ammar al Azizi, Jana al Sharji and Salma al Dughaisi.

In the U-13 category, Oman's fencers demonstrated great confidence. Fencer Jana won gold in the Epee category competition; Salma claimed silver in the same category.

At the Mediterranean Fencing Championship also held in Jordan in May, Oman's fencers produced a top performance, managing to claim five medals, including one gold, one silver and three bronze.

Sultanate exerts efforts to address climate change

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is adopting several measures in its efforts to address the phenomenon of climate change. Besides formulating a national strategy, the sultanate is also in the process of drafting a climate change legislation.

The sultanate is currently updating climate affairs management regulations to keep pace with local and international developments. The regulations aim to monitor the performance of companies and establishments tasked with climate affairs, either by moderating or adapting to climate change.

Steps are also underway to devise a climate change legislation in cooperation with the departments concerned, so that such a statute serves as a regulatory code for drafting general provisions about climate affairs in all sectors of development in Oman. In the process, preliminary steps include drafting a national strategy for alleviation and adaptation to climate change. 'This serves as a springboard for action plans and projects across all sectors,' a report by ONA stated.

'Preparation of a database to follow up the realisation of na-

tionally-determined contributions has been among measures undertaken towards compliance with the proportion of emissions as of the year 2030 based on (envisaged) seven per cent reduction of emissions.'

A database has also been formed to enumerate all projects on adapting with climate change in Oman. This is in addition to the preparation of a greenhouse gases database for basic sectors, which facilitates the annual emissions control process.

Among other efficient endeavours, a technical team of specialists has been formed comprising representatives of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), public sector establishments and private sector firms. The team operates under the purview of the Ministerial Committee for Climate Change and Ozone Layer Protection. The team proposes and executes policies and plans of action to alleviate greenhouse gas emissions and contain their negative impacts in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Oman will take part in the Twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to climate change pacts (COP27), scheduled for November 6 to 18 in Egypt.

12 dead as cleric Sadr supporters storm Iraq's Republican Palace

Baghdad, Iraq - Twelve supporters of Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr were killed and 270 others wounded on Monday, medics told AFP, as clashes broke out in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone.

A nationwide curfew was declared and the UN mission in Iraq called for "maximum restraint" after angry Sadr supporters stormed the Republican Palace, a ceremonial building inside Baghdad's fortified Green Zone of government buildings, following the cleric's announcement that he was retiring from politics.

"A full curfew in the capital

Baghdad affects all vehicles and citizens," the Joint Operations Command said in a statement.

Hours earlier, Sadr announced he was quitting politics, after a nearly year-long political stalemate that has left the country without a new government.

"I've decided not to meddle in political affairs. I therefore announce now my definitive retirement," said Sadr, a longtime player in the war-torn country's political scene, though he himself has never held a government post.

He made the announcement on Twitter, where he added that

"all the institutions" linked to his Sadrist movement will be closed, except the mausoleum of his father, assassinated in 1999, and other heritage facilities.

His latest statement came two days after he said "all parties" including his own should give up government positions in order to help resolve the months-long political impasse.

Since legislative elections in October last year, a political deadlock has left the country without a new government, prime minister or president, due to disagreement between



Supporters of cleric Moqtada Sadr swim in the pool of the Government HQ in Baghdad's Green Zone on Monday

factions over forming a coalition.

His bloc emerged from last year's election as the biggest, with 73 seats, but short of a majority. In June, his lawmakers quit in a bid to break the logjam, which led to a rival Shiite bloc, the pro-Iran Coordination Framework, becoming the largest in the legislature.

Since then, Sadr has engaged in other pressure tactics, including a mass prayer by tens of thousands of his followers on August 5.

AFP

See also Page 09

'Oman-Sri Lanka share centuries-old bond'



Our Correspondent Muscat

A book chronicling the relations between Sri Lanka and Oman was launched at the Diplomatic Institute of the Foreign Ministry in Muscat on Monday.

Authored by H E Omar Lebbe Ameer Ajwad, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Oman, the 164-page book titled *Sri Lanka-Oman Relations: Past, Present and Future*, is published by Black & White Media and Services.

Gracing the launch ceremony as chief guest, H E Sheikh Khalifa al Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry, released the book in the presence of senior officials of the Foreign Ministry, ambassadors, diplomats, representatives of the Sri Lankan community in Oman, and the media.

The book is a "testament not only to the strength of Oman and Sri Lanka's friendship, but also Sri Lankan Ambassador H E Ameer Ajwad's strength of character and the enthusiasm and diligence with which he undertakes each and every one of life's



The book sketches Sri Lanka-Oman relations in five chapters that bring out its past, illustrate its present and forecast its future

H E OMAR LEBBE AMEER AJWAD

pursuits," H E Sayyid Badr al Buisaidi, Foreign Minister, wrote in the book's foreword.

Centuries-old bond

"Sri Lanka and Oman's diplomatic journey spans just over four decades. However, the tales in this book show that our bonds go back centuries, if not millennia, into the mists of time. H E Ameer Ajwad presents a com-

prehensive review of collaborations between our countries, from hockey to fruit, International Tea Day to cricket tournaments, fisheries to technology.

"His book demonstrates that every step of our countries' journey together has been underpinned by a deep-rooted connection between our peoples," H E Sayyid Badr commented.

The objective behind the book is to "reinvigorate the past, highlight the present, and to chart pathways for the future by providing relevant information with a view to fostering deeper economic engagement between the two countries," H E Ameer Ajwad wrote in the book's preface.

"The book sketches Sri Lanka-Oman relations in five chapters that bring out its past, illustrate its present and forecast its future."

The book was released to mark the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and Oman which was commemorated on February 17, 2021.



Honey production up record 55% in 2021

Our Correspondent Muscat

Honey production in the sultanate increased 55 per cent in 2021 to 947,841kg from 611,678kg in 2020, according to data released in the statistical yearbook issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The highest production in 2021 was recorded in North Batinah (368,150kg), followed by North Sharqiyah (259,945kg), Dhahirah (153,729kg) and Dakhliyah (130,376kg) among other governorates.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ahmed Abdullah bin Said al Maamari, a beekeeper from the wilayat of Ibri, said, "The big jump in production is due to several factors, including increase in rainfall, which led to the emergence of many green spaces suitable for the establishment of beehives in several regions of the sultanate, including the Empty Quarter."

He added that beekeeping ac-

A beekeepers' association will also help in promoting Omani honey locally and abroad

AHMED ABDULLAH AL MAAMARI

tivities have spread, encouraging many new apiarists to raise bees in farms and homes.

Maamari noted a need for the establishment of an association for beekeepers to address their problems and promote their products, and establishment of private veterinary clinics to support apiarists. "A beekeepers' association will also help in promoting Omani honey locally and abroad."

He urged the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) to reduce the import of honey to promote Omani honey and motivate beekeepers to produce more.

According to Ahmed al Saidi,

another beekeeper, agreements signed by MAFWR with several private companies to promote Omani honey and its efforts to open promotional outlets to sell honey have also led to the increase of honey production.

MAFWR has been organising honey markets annually since 2014. It recently signed an agreement with Oman India Fertiliser Company with the aim of supporting the honey industry.

Under the agreement, beekeepers receive training through a series of multi-stakeholder workshops to encourage sustainable and economic beekeeping.

The agreement also aims to enhance the technical skills of beekeepers, including those belonging to low-income families.

Honey worth RO14.25mn was sold in Oman in 2020. According to ministry statistics, there were 6,231 beekeepers in the sultanate, with a total of 137,600 beehives, that produced 712,551kg of honey in 2019.

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MUSCAT DAILY

Muscat Municipality tows away abandoned vehicles in Seeb

Our Correspondent Muscat

Muscat Municipality started removing abandoned vehicles parked in commercial and residential areas in the wilayat of Seeb on Monday.

A statement said, 'The municipality in Seeb carried out a campaign to remove abandoned vehicles in the wilayat after the time period permitted to take them away lapsed.'

According to the municipality, the practice of abandoning vehicles is illegal and it called on vehicle owners not to leave their cars unattended in commercial and residential areas.

'Muscat governorate is an important tourist destination. Abandoning cars in public squares and streets is an uncivil practice that mars the aesthetics and security of the city,' the civic body stated.

Leaving vehicles unattended for an extended period of time violates Administrative Decision No 171/2018 issued on the regulation of neglected vehicles in public places in Muscat governorate.

'Article 4 states that the municipality can tow away abandoned vehicles from public places, at the expense of the owner 14 days after a warning notice is left on it, without responsibility for any damage caused during the towing process to the yard,' the municipality stated.

(Supplied photo)

(Supplied photo)

Intensive clean-up removes 800t of waste from Bausher

Our Correspondent Muscat

In a massive clean-up operation, Muscat Municipality has removed about 800 tonnes of waste from the wilayat of Bausher.

'With the participation of 100 determined workers, Muscat Municipality in Bausher cleared waste weighing about 800 tonnes from the wilayat in an intensive clean-up campaign covering roads and public squares, sweeping internal streets, trimming trees, and cleaning up aflaj and tourist sites,' the civic body said in a statement.

The campaign was carried out in areas of Azaiba, South Ghubra, Qurm and Al Ilam. Efforts are continuing to cover all areas of the wilayat, it added.

The clean-up drive is a result of Muscat Municipality's efforts to promote public hygiene and to maintain the aesthetics of urban areas.

CDAA cautions as hiking accidents rise

CDAA calls for registration of trips via NIDAA app

Our Correspondent
Suhar

With the number of accidents related to hiking and mountaineering rising, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department (CDAA) has called on citizens and residents to follow safety procedures and register via the NIDAA app before setting out on outdoor adventures.

CDAA's personnel in North Batinah rescued a citizen who was injured on a mountain in Suhar on Monday.

In a statement, CDAA said,

'Teams were able to rescue a citizen and provide him emergency medical care; he was in critical condition.'

On Sunday, rescue teams of CDAA rescued a woman who was injured while climbing a mountain in Wadi Mibam, South Sharqiyah. On Saturday, a citizen died and another was rescued in a critical condition from Jabal Samhan in Dhofar.

The two set out on a hiking trip in Jabal Samhan in the wilayat of Sadah on Friday and fell from the top of the mountain.

CDAA called on citizens and residents to follow safety procedures and avoid taking risks when hiking. It also asked hikers and mountaineers to register their details via the NIDAA app prior to venturing out.

'Before you start your adventure, register the location and the participants in the NIDAA app.

Adventure seekers should take advantage of the app as it is meant to ensure that rescue teams arrive faster in the event of an emergency.'



CDAA personnel rescued a citizen injured in Suhar on Monday

The app can be downloaded from <https://t.co/UTfDUsJHUK>



Shrimp fishing season begins on Sept 1

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A three-month shrimp-fishing season in the sultanate will start on Thursday. The season is particularly important for three governorates - South Sharqiyah, Dhofar and Al Wusta.

The season starts in September and ends in November every year.

Twelve species of shrimp are found in the sultanate, of which four - white Indian shrimp, white shrimp, tiger prawns and dotted shrimp - are caught using traditional nets.

Shrimp fisheries are found in the waters of the sultanate in Masirah Island, Mahout, the coastal areas of Al Wusta and South Sharqiyah governorates.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, shrimp are one of the most important marine resources available in the sultanate due to their nutritional value and increased demand in



local and international markets.

In May, Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) announced the first commercial harvest of the Shrimp Aquaculture Project in Qurun, Jalan Bani Bu Hassan in South Sharqiyah.

Production capacity of the project is estimated to increase to 400 tonnes monthly, with production varying according to weight - 45 per cent 31-40gm, 50 per cent 41-50gm and 5 per cent 51-60gm.

The farm is growing Pacific white shrimp, (*Litopenaeus vannamei*), using specific pathogen free brood stocks imported from the United States. The entire production operation is carried in a highly bio-secure and hygienic environment without the use of drugs, antibiotics or any chemicals of public health concern, a press release stated.

On attaining market size, the shrimp are harvested mechanically, chilled to maintain the highest freshness and delivered to a pre-processing plant within 30 minutes. The project is built along the coast of the Arabian Sea in Qurun on an area of 500 hectares at a cost of RO20mn. Full production capacity is expected to be reached by 2023.

The shrimp harvest in 2022 is expected to be 2,100 tonnes.

Omani Coast Guard arrests infiltrators: ROP

Muscat - Royal Oman Police (ROP) arrested a group of foreigners for attempting to enter the sultanate illegally on Monday.

In a statement, ROP said, 'Coast Guard Police Command patrol boats arrested a group of infiltrators of Asian nationality in Omani territorial waters as they were trying to enter the country illegally.' It added that legal procedures are being completed against the infiltrators.



Women's Arab forum stresses on digital empowerment

Salalah - Digital empowerment of working women and female entrepreneurship took centre stage in recommendations issued at the conclusion of the Working Women's Second Arab Forum held in Salalah on Monday.

Organised by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Arab Labor Organization (ALO), the forum was attended by 170 participants from Oman and abroad.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of H E Shaikh Nasr Amer al Hosni, Undersecretary for Labour.

The recommendations laid emphasis on achieving equality between men and women in terms of their 'digital inclusion'. 'This entails drafting a legal framework that secures the rights of entrepreneurs (and working women) within the context of digital economy,' the forum recommended.

ONA

Corrigendum

The general manager of Alila Hinu Bay in Mirbat is Juan Paolo Alfonso and not Martin Persson, as wrongly printed on Page 16 of the issue dated August 29.

The error is regretted.

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(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	No E-Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/22/047	2022/MM/QS-45	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Quriyat (E- Tender)	Rail 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/048	2022/MM/QS-46	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Al Amarat (E- Tender)	Rail 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/049	2022/MM/QS-47	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Bousher B (E- Tender)	Rail 40	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/050	2022/MM/QS-48	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Bousher A (E- Tender)	Rail 57	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/095	2022/MM/QS-49	Supply of Lighting Materials (Re-Tender)(E- Tender)	Rail 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent
PRE/21/001	2022/MM/HQ-08	Construction of Drainage Structures and Remedial Measures at Sultan Qaboos Street, Phase 1C & 2A (E- Tender)	Rail 250	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent
PRE/22/085	2022/MM/HQ-09	Development of one way road system in Al Khuwair (E- Tender)	Rail 230	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent
PRE/20/046	2020/MM/QS-027 Re-Call-01	Supply & Install of Playground Equipment's for Public Park at Boushar (Re-Tender-1)(E- Tender)	Rail 25	06/09/2022	13/09/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/030	2022/MM/QS-28 Re-Call-01	Design and Construction of Steel Bridge for Walkway at Bausher (Jail) (Re-Tender-1)(E- Tender)	Rail 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Specialist

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1- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.

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MARKET WATCH

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Philippines	146.08
Sri Lanka	933.11

Rates as on August 29

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Emirati women invest AED35bn at ADX in 2022

Emirati women have invested AED34.6bn at the Abu Dhabi bourse since the beginning of the year until mid-August, figures by the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) have revealed.

This represents a 74.7 per cent growth over the corresponding period last year, when their trading value was around AED19.8bn, ADX said in a statement marking the Emirati Women's Day.

"Emirati women completed transactions over 9bn shares during the reference period, up 42 per cent from 6.3bn share during the same period last year," added the statement.

Owning AED3.9bn of shares at ADX, there are 219,000 Emirati women investing at ADX until mid-August 2022, accounting for 89.8 per cent of the total number of women trading at the bourse.

Oil income boosts GCC bank deposits

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bank deposits in the GCC countries witnessed robust growth during the second quarter of 2022, thanks to increased oil income and the post-pandemic economic recovery in the region. Consistently elevated oil prices since the start of the year was reflected in the latest customer deposit numbers for listed banks in the GCC. Aggregate deposits of GCC banks recorded a solid 9.4 per cent year-on-year growth to reach US\$2.2tn in the second quarter of 2022, according to Kamco Investment.

'The oil-price-led economic recovery in the GCC resulted in higher deposits in local banks that increased by US\$83.7bn to reach US\$2.2tn at the end of second quarter,' Kamco Investment said in a research report.

The gains in oil prices came as a windfall gain for the governments and companies in the upstream sector, enabling most governments in the region to report their first fiscal surplus in several years.

'This provided additional support to the economy enabling the government to spend on new projects and was reflected in the growth in banking credit facilities during the second quarter,' the report said.

Banks in Saudi Arabia and the UAE recorded the biggest quarter-on-quarter growth in customer deposits during the second quarter at 6.1 per cent



and 5.5 per cent, respectively, while the year-on-year growth stood at a strong 16.2 per cent and 8.4 per cent, respectively.

'Higher deposits also reflected higher income seeking depositors as interest rates offered by GCC banks increased after the central banks followed US Fed monetary tightening policy aimed at taming inflation,' the report noted.

Bank lending activity, on the other hand, remained robust in the GCC during the second

Total assets of GCC banks reached a record high level of US\$2.8tn after increasing by 2.9 per cent during the second quarter of 2022 as compared to the previous quarter

quarter further strengthening the loan books at the end of the quarter.

Aggregate gross loans of GCC banks reached US\$1.8tn at

customer deposit growth and a slightly smaller loan growth was a steep decline of 160 basis points in the aggregate loan-to-deposit ratio at the end of second quarter. This was one of the highest sequential decline in the ratio that reached a multi-quarter low level of 79.1 per cent, Kamco Investment estimated.

Profits at record level

GCC banking sector net profits reached another record level of US\$11.1bn for the second quarter

of 2022, registering an year-on-year growth of 31.9 per cent.

The increase in aggregate profits, as per the Kamco report, was mainly led by higher revenues for the sector coupled with a slight drop in provisions during the quarter.

'Quarterly net income reached a record high of US\$11.1bn backed by growth in all GCC countries, barring Kuwait that reported a small drop of 0.6 per cent led by higher cost-to-income ratio. Omani banks reported the strongest quarter-on-quarter growth of 13.9 per cent followed by Qatari and Bahraini banks with growth slightly above 3 per cent,' Kamco Investment said.

The profit growth came mainly on the back of higher bank revenues further supported by a slight drop in provisions while cost-to-income ratio remained flat.

Total assets of GCC banks reached a record high level of US\$2.8tn after increasing by 2.9 per cent during the second quarter of 2022 as compared to the previous quarter.

'Both conventional and Islamic banks witnessed similar pace of asset growth during the quarter reflecting strong economic growth as seen in the Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) figures for Saudi Arabia and UAE that remained consistently and strongly above the growth mark of 50 during each month of the April-June quarter,' Kamco Investment added.

Sohar Aluminium and GE sign 10-year power services contract

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sohar Aluminium has signed a services contract for GE Gas Power to provide repairs, maintenance, and parts for ten years for four GT13E2 gas turbines and four generators installed at their site in Sohar.

GE Digital will also provide its Asset Performance Management (APM) software for the term of the contract.

The four units have a generation capacity of up to 696MW and the electricity produced is used to power Sohar Aluminium's smelter.

The solutions provided by GE are expected to enhance the reliability of the units, increase the availability of each gas turbine, decrease costs, and reduce operational risks, ultimately improving productivity at the smelter, Sohar Aluminium said in a press statement.

Said al Masoudi, chief executive officer at Sohar Aluminium said, "Stable electricity supply is a key input for our manufactur-



ing processes and essential for continuous operations at Sohar Aluminium. The GT13E2 units at our site have provided critical power output since they were first installed in 2009, supporting our growth and enabling us to keep meeting customer commitments. Now, we are delighted to continue our collaboration with GE to maintain the sustained, reliable performance of these essential assets to support our business in the decade ahead."

Sohar Aluminium's state-of-

the-art 1,000MW power plant excels by achieving highest levels of efficiency ensuring low emissions, operating costs, and environmental impact meeting the stringent requirements set out by the local authorities. The plant also includes a seawater pumping station for delivering cooling water as well as a desalination station to supply water to the smelter and other facilities.

Joseph Anis, president and CEO of GE Gas Power Europe, Middle East, and Africa said,

"Diversification efforts through the expansion of non-oil and gas sectors are an important component of Oman Vision 2040. Sohar Aluminium is one of the key industrial contributors in the country to realising the aspirational goals of this plan. At GE, we are honored to work closely with them on their growth journey and remain committed to bringing our industry-leading solutions to Sohar Aluminium and the Sultanate to further support the national development agenda."

Oil prices increase over persistent supply woes

Ankara, Turkey - Oil prices rose on Monday over ongoing fears that OPEC will squeeze output to stabilize the market while data shows demand rising in Asia, Europe, and the US.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at US\$99.67 per barrel at 10.08am in London, up 0.66 per cent from the closing price of US\$99.01 a barrel in the previous trading session.

American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was at US\$93.75 per barrel at the same time for a 0.74 per cent gain after the previous session closed at US\$93.06 a barrel.

After Saudi Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman pointed to production cuts to stabilise the market, another OPEC member, Oman, supported his warnings.

"Oman supports OPEC+ efforts to maintain market stability in the face of distortions and volatility," Oman's oil ministry said in a Friday tweet.

The OPEC group will also in-



roduce a new production scheme, with a possible reduction in output as the current production cut pact will expire at the end of September.

Supply-side concerns further increased over ongoing violence in Libya, which may cause disruptions in the country's oil production and exports. At least 32 people were killed and dozens injured in clashes between rival militias in the capital Tripoli.

Also, reports that Kazakhstan's crude exports may be impacted for months exacerbated mounting supply fears.

Supply-side concerns came amid signs of stronger demand and soaring natural gas prices, which, experts say, is pushing power generators and industrial users to consume more diesel and fuel oil.

"The most recent Congestion Index data from TomTom shows Asia Pacific, European and North American traffic levels all posting strong weekly growth in the week to August 24," Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ) commodity strategist Daniel Hynes said in an emailed note.

Anadolu Agency

India's airline industry takes off after pandemic turbulence

New Delhi, India - A consistently ascending trajectory of India's aviation sector has paved the way for a competition-driven acceleration amongst the country's airliners.

Akasa Air, the country's latest entry into an established and competitive airline industry, last week set off its commercial operations with its first flight on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad route.

Backed by the late billionaire investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, Akasa has a 72 Boeing aircraft fleet on order and is set to compete directly with other budget carriers like Indigo, Spicejet and

Go First. Akasa launched operations with an aim to connect India's metropolitan cities with smaller towns.

Their strategy was created in line with the government's regional connectivity UDAN scheme, which was designed to make airline travel available to common citizens at affordable prices.

Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia recently said, "In the last five years, we have grown from 2013-14 almost 60mn passengers to almost 145mn passengers. We forecast by 2027 India will have 400mn



passengers per year. That's the kind of phenomenal growth and if that phenomenal growth has to

be made possible it can only be made possible by a number of players coming into the sector."

Currently, there are nine scheduled airlines operating in India, the biggest being Air India, IndiGo, SpiceJet, Air Asia India, Go First and Vistara.

In a major challenge to the existing players, in January this year, the Tata Group secured control of the state-run carrier Air India in a US\$2.4bn equity and debt deal, ending years of struggle trying to privatise the financially-troubled airline.

Three years after being grounded due to a cash crunch, Jet Airways is also back in business as well. The airline is expected to resume its commercial

operations from September.

The Ministry of Civil aviation, which has welcomed such growth and expansion, expects the fresh competition to generate 100,000 new jobs in the next two years.

Travel restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic had severely affected the industry. With the easing of restrictions, India's domestic air travel has made a sharp recovery with airlines flying over 57mn passengers in the first half of this year, up by 238 per cent from last year.

G P Rao, former general man-

ager of Air India said, "India is seeing a phenomenal revival post COVID restrictions though the industry started very slow but it picked up the momentum and is in a full swing. If you see the Indian aviation market, it is the fourth largest next to the US, China and the UK."

He added, "Now soon, we are expecting that India will overtake the UK. Now, because of the UDAN scheme, airlines started operating more than 600 routes and because of this there are more than 10mn people benefited."

ANI

EU plans emergency action to halt energy price rise

Brussels, Belgium - The European Union is preparing to take emergency action to reform the electricity market and get a grip on energy prices that have soared since Russia invaded Ukraine, senior officials said Monday.

Energy ministers from EU member states will hold urgent talks in Brussels on September 9.

High gas prices have been followed by disruptions in the nuclear and hydroelectric sectors amid a heatwave blamed on climate change - threatening businesses and households with massive bills.

"The skyrocketing electricity prices are now exposing the limitations of our current electricity market design," EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen told a forum in Bled, Slovenia.

"It was developed for different circumstances. That's why we are now working on an emergency intervention and a structural reform of the electricity market."

Separately, Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz also called for action.

Speaking at a press conference after talks with Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala, Scholz said that "we are in complete agreement that rapid action has to be taken" to reform the market.



"My impression is, I think our common impression is, that this will now succeed more quickly across Europe than under other framework conditions," he said.

The Czech Republic holds the rotating presidency of the European Union, and it was Czech Industry and Trade Minister Jozef Sikela who announced next week's emergency talks.

"We must fix the energy market. Solution on the EU level is by far the best we have," he said on Twitter.

The European Commission has yet to publish a detailed plan for market reform, but some member states have been pushing for a temporary cap on

wholesale gas prices.

EU officials are also considering measures to split electricity price setting from the gas price and take into account other energy sources.

Some member states have launched price reduction measures of their own, but Brussels believes EU capitals working together will be more effective.

The move comes as the 27-nation bloc is trying to shed dependence on supplies of Russian oil and gas following Moscow's assault on Ukraine.

Reduced supplies and anxiety over the future have sparked rocket growth in energy prices across Europe.

Private pools

On Friday, Germany and France reported record electricity prices, with the German year-ahead contract jumping to 995 euros (US\$995) per megawatt hours while the French equivalent soared past 1,100 euros - compared to 85 euros in both countries last year.

Nicolas Berghmans, an expert at the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations in Paris, told AFP that Brussels had already been working on a plan to reform the electricity market before the crisis hit.

"A year ago there were only a few countries in favour of these

measures -- and some that were very sceptical of a change in the architecture of the electricity market. That's changing. Today we have proposals that are beginning to be on the table," he said.

Germany, heavily dependent on Russian gas, has notably put aside its scepticism.

The European Commission is planning to cut EU dependency on Russian gas by two-thirds this year and end its reliance on Russian supplies of the fuel before 2030.

The EU has targeted the Russian energy sector in its sanctions, banning coal imports from Russia. Its plan to cut gas consumption across the bloc by 15 per cent to cope with the energy price crisis came into effect earlier this month.

The aim is for the EU to be able to bolster its reserves of gas in time for what is likely to be a very tough winter.

Some EU nations are launching power saving drives, including measures to cut back on air conditioning, switch off illuminated advertising screens at night and banning the heating of private swimming pools.

Germany said on Sunday it was replenishing its gas stocks more quickly than expected and should meet an October target early.

AFP



Fatih Birol

Russia is not winning energy war: IEA

Ankara, Turkey - Russia is not winning the energy battle, and it has lost one of its strategic energy partners, said Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) on Monday.

Birol, who spoke during the ONS 2022 International Energy Conference held in Stavanger, Norway, said that Russia's goals of bringing 30bn cubic meters of LNG capacity by 2030 will have to go back to the drawing board.

He said that there is a misconception when it comes to incomes.

"Russia is not winning

the energy war,' Birol said, adding, 'I think that's a myopic view of the situation. Russia has lost one of its strategic energy partners. Moscow has lost great trust among customers around the world.'

He also pointed out that many people complain that it is late for clean energy after the negative developments in the energy market.

"There is a drought. Half of the nuclear power plants in France are not operational. This crisis has nothing to do with being late for clean energy options," Birol said.

Anadolu Agency

Japan vows to work for 'more resilient' Africa

Tunis, Tunisia - Japan will cooperate closely with African countries to promote "more resilient" economies, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told the final session of an investment conference in Tunisia.

He also promised Japan would use its place on the United Nations Security Council next year to push for a permanent African seat on the world body, a day after announcing US\$30bn in public and private finance for the continent.

Japan wants "to create an environment where African people can live in peace and security so they can develop," Kishida said, speaking via live video from Tokyo after testing positive for Covid-19 days earlier.

Senegalese President Macky Sall, chair of the 55-member African Union, backed Kishida's call for the continent to have a seat on the UN Security Council.

Conflicts "that destabilise us and prevent us from developing must be taken into account by the Security Council" whose mission it is to promote international peace and security, Sall said.

He also called for a greater role for African peacekeepers in



(From left) Tunisia's President Kais Saied and Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi give a press conference after the closing session of the eighth TICAD conference in Tunis on Sunday (AFP)

Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) took place in Tunisia, one of many import-dependent countries battered by global supply disruptions and price spikes unleashed by the war in Ukraine

resolving conflicts.

"Without security there can be no development," Sall said.

The eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) took place

in Tunisia, one of many import-dependent countries battered by global supply disruptions and price spikes unleashed by the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Some 20 African heads of state and government took part in the summit in the North African nation, which brought together around 5,000 people from business and other sectors and shut down major roads across Tunis, causing weekend traffic chaos.

Tunisian host President Kais Saied called for a "new approach" towards Africa, noting that many countries which had racked up large foreign debts since independence were also net exporters of human re-

sources - taking skills gained in Africa to be used in the global North.

"Who is lending to whom?" he asked.

Sall called for African debts to be rescheduled or cancelled, as well as for the implementation of a promise by the G20 group of nations to suspend interest payments.

"Given the double crisis we're facing, these measures are necessary to relaunch our economies," he said.

The conference came as Japan's rival China cements its influence on the continent with its "Belt and Road" infrastructure initiative, and as experts express concern about the long-term sustainability of some African nations' borrowing from Beijing.

Kishida also announced that Japan would appoint a special envoy to the Horn of Africa, where a long and devastating drought in parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia has prompted the UN's weather agency to warn this week of an "unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe".

AFP



Pedestrians walk past an electronic share price board showing the closing numbers on the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo on Monday (AFP)

Stocks extend losses after Fed's rates warning

Paris, France - Global stock markets slid further Monday and the dollar rallied as traders continued to digest US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell's warning of more interest rate hikes to fight inflation.

Wall Street's main indices opened lower, extending losses of between three and four per cent on Friday immediately following Powell's speech where he clearly stated his priority is bringing inflation down from four-decade highs, even at the expense of economic growth.

New York Stock Exchange opened 0.8 per cent lower, while London's FTSE was closed for a holiday. Euro Stoxx 50 was down 1.1 per cent while Japan's Nikkei 225 lost 2.7 per cent on Monday.

"Restoring price stability will take some time and requires using our tools forcefully to bring demand and supply into better balance," he told the Jackson Hole gathering of global monetary policymakers.

The comments dealt a blow to markets, which had in recent weeks enjoyed a bounce from June lows as weak economic data and a slowdown in price rises fanned hopes the Fed would temper its interest rate hike

drive and bring down rates next year.

Powell "didn't splash some cold water on the stock market's face," said market analyst Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com. "He dumped a whole bucket of ice water on it and the stock market wasn't ready for the ice bucket challenge."

Yanxi Tan of Malayan Banking said: "The game of assessing the Fed outlook has shifted from guessing how high the peak rate might be to also understanding how long it might stay there for."

Analysts said the chances of a third successive 75 basis-point increase next month had risen, with US Treasury yields - a gauge of future interest rates - surging. That in turn helped propel the dollar higher.

The dollar closed in on the 140 yen mark not seen since 1998, but an easing in European gas prices helped the euro recoup its losses.

"Powell sent the dollar rallying ... on the back of a solid divergence between the decidedly hawkish Fed, and more hawkish, but increasingly worried other central banks," said Swissquote Bank analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya.

AFP

Honda, LG to invest \$4.4bn in US battery plant

Tokyo, Japan - Japanese auto giant Honda and South Korean battery maker LG Energy Solution announced a joint venture Monday to invest US\$4.4bn in a new US electric car battery plant.

The move comes after California last week ruled that all new cars sold in America's most populous state must be zero-emission from 2035, with other US states expected to follow suit.

In a joint statement, the firms said they expected construction of the plant to begin next year, aiming for "mass production of advanced lithium-ion battery cells by the end of 2025".



The tie-up was decided "based on the shared belief that expanding local electric vehicle production and ensuring the timely supply of batteries would put them in the best position to target the rapidly-growing North

American EV market", the companies added.

Last month, Japanese electronics giant and Tesla supplier Panasonic announced its own US\$4bn investment to build a new battery factory in the United

States for electric vehicles.

Panasonic CEO Kazuo Tadanobu said the new plant, the company's second electric battery operation in the United States, was "critical to help meet demand".

Earlier this year, Honda said it planned to invest nearly US\$40bn in electric vehicle technology over the next decade as it works towards switching all sales away from traditional fuel cars.

It wants to launch 30 EV models by 2030, with an annual production volume of more than two million units, and aim to

have electric and fuel cell vehicles account for 100 per cent of all sales by 2040.

The success of Elon Musk's Tesla, built solely on electric vehicles, and growing government pressure to move away from cars with combustion engines, are pushing traditional automakers to speed up the transition to electric.

Washington state's governor has backed a move similar to California, while the European Union has taken steps to ban the sale of gas- or diesel-fuelled cars - and even hybrids - by 2035.

AFP

‘Bushra’ first choice for returns on savings: Alizz Islamic Bank



Alizz Islamic Bank continues to enhance the lives of the bank’s customers by providing them with the ability to save their money and receive expected cash profits on their savings with the sharia’a compliant ‘Bushra’ savings account.

Currently, Alizz Islamic Bank offers Bushra Savings Account based on the Sharia’a principle of unrestricted ‘Mudarabah’, where the customer is the owner of the money, and the bank manages the ‘Mudarabah’ by investing the pool of customer funds in joint ‘Mudarabah’ transactions.

All profits are divided between the customer and the bank, based on a profit-sharing ratio determined by the bank. Profit rates based on each category will be applied to the deposit balances kept in the Bushra Account with profits of up to 3.5 per cent according to the amount deposited in the Bushra savings account.

Based on each customer’s account balance, the bank will deposit their profit shares on a monthly basis. Customers can get more details on profit rates by visiting the bank’s official website at (<https://alizzislamic.com>) or walking into their nearest bank branch across Oman.

ISWK hosts inter school hindi quiz ‘Gyan Ganga’



The department of Hindi, Indian School al Wadi al Kabir added one more feather to its cap by organising Gyan Ganga - an Inter-school Hindi Quiz Competition on August 17.

Avid quizzers from 12 Indian schools in Oman participated in the exciting competition with great zeal and enthusiasm, a press statement said.

The event was conducted by Anil Bartare, head of the department of Hindi and Nowshad Firoz, senior faculty of the department, the statement added. The questions were based on Hindi grammar and literature. A variety of questions were asked ranging from MCQs to the ones based on audio-visual clues.

The participants showcased their vast knowledge by rapidly answering most of the questions.

Indian School Ibra was declared the winner whereas Indian School Sohar and Indian School Salalah jointly bagged the First Runner-up position. Indian School Nizwa emerged as Second Runner-up.

The event was a grand success and the participants enjoyed while they gathered new information, the statement added.

Jumeirah Muscat Bay to hold Cacao ‘spiritual’ ceremony

Performed for thousands of years by the indigenous tribes of Central America, Jumeirah Muscat Bay will be hosting a special spiritual Cacao Manifestation Ceremony in the magnificent surroundings of its Pearl Ballroom on Wednesday.



A facilitator of self-reflection and spiritual awakening, join renowned philanthropists Juan Pablo Barahona and Regan Hillyer as they gracefully bring this ancient healing practice to life, providing a unique, stimulating way to explore spirituality and benefit from the opportunity for emotional and energetic healing.

According to a press statement, the event will start at 7.00pm and will run until 9.00pm at Pearl Grand Ballroom of Jumeirah Muscat Bay. Tickets are priced at RO15 each and can be booked online at <https://www.salaamspace.com/retreat-workshop>.

Spaces are available on a first come basis so book early to avoid disappointment, the statement added.

Al Mouj Muscat’s marine leisure tour operators win Tripadvisor Travellers’ Choice Award



The awards come from the people who matter most, the customers, so others may book with confidence, safe in the knowledge that they can expect a high-quality experience all of which helps to grow marine tourism in the sultanate

NASSER AL SHEIBANI

Two of Al Mouj Muscat’s sea tour operators have earned Tripadvisor Travellers’ Choice Award status for the second and third years running, demonstrating their consistently high standards and the leisure destination’s ongoing success as a base for international marine tourism.

MolaMola Diving Center and Daymaniat Shells have each been awarded the accolades which place them in the top ten per cent of attractions worldwide, MolaMola for the third consecutive year and for Daymaniat Shells it is the second year it has achieved recognition.

They are among 15 sea tour enterprises to be based at Al Mouj Marina, a 400-berth facility surrounded by luxury homes, from which residents, visitors and tourists can enjoy ocean-based adventures.

MolaMola offers daily snorkelling and diving trips to the nature reserves of the Daymaniat and Fahal islands, and this year they also received the PADI 5 Star Dive Center Award for the courses they run for novice and experienced divers. Daymaniat Shell’s experiences include dolphin and whale shark watching, snorkelling trips and sunset cruises as well as overnight camping and private charters.

The Sea of Oman is rich with an abundance of underwater life and all of Al Mouj’s marine tour operators (SMEs) provide safe and environmentally responsible trips matched by high standards of customer service. It is an ethos shared by Al Mouj Marina which is one of only four in the Gulf to have earned Five Gold Anchors which is a benchmark for quality of service, and it is the first to earn International Marine Cleanliness status.

Al Mouj Muscat was established in 2006 as Oman’s first integrated tourism complex and today it attracts around 4mn people a year, with marine leisure opportunities integral to the appeal and the sea tour SMEs able to capitalise on high daily footfall all year round.

Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, congratulate Daymaniyat Shells and MolaMola for “once again earning these important accolades, demonstrating the consistency

of their service and presenting them and Al Mouj so positively to global audiences”.

“Tripadvisor Travellers’ Choice Awards come from the people who matter most, the customers, so others may book with confidence, safe in the knowledge that they can expect a high-quality experience all of which helps to grow marine tourism in the sultanate,” Al Mouj Muscat chief asserted.

“Creating a place where SMEs can thrive is central to our philosophy that supports the growth and diversification

of Oman’s economy and where tourism is a key priority,” Sheibani pointed out, while underlining the strengths of Oman in the tourism sector.

“Whilst our country has the most incredible natural resources, it is the people with local knowledge and sea-going expertise who make our beautiful environment accessible to others,” he said, adding, “We are proud to be part of their ongoing success and delighted to have helped establish marine tourism as a new area of growth and employment within the local economy.”

“What is also rewarding is that our commitment to sustainable eco-friendly tourism supports wider conservation efforts whilst making it possible for people from all over the world to enjoy our ocean,” Sheibani said.

Set along 6km of beautiful coastline, Al Mouj Muscat is the sultanate’s leading leisure and lifestyle destination, a joint venture between Majid Al Futtaim Properties, OMRAN, and Tanmia and home to 8,000 people from 85 nationalities.

High praises for Renault Megane: SBA

Blending striking good looks and stunning performance, Renault Megane, the vibrant and chic saloon, has been making a statement in Oman.

Admired for its driving performance, owners are praising Renault Megane for its driving comfort, technology and safety features, said the company.

Tariq al Khalil who has been driving Renault Megane for the last three years says, “The charismatic Renault Megane is a real head-turner. With its sedan body, dynamic lines and generous proportions, it has a style of its own, both lively and elegant.”

Khalid al Salmi appreciates Renault Megane for its daring expressive design and assertive style. He says, “With its sleek silhouette, high-tech cockpit and sophisticated styling, Renault



Megane combines elegance and versatility.”

Sulaiman al Amri likes the car for its driving comfort and safety features. He explains, “Attractive and dynamic, Renault Megane makes a bold statement, unveiling its performance excellence and high-tech interior.”

Mansoor Sami compliments Renault Megane for its evolu-

tionary look. He says, “With this vehicle you will enjoy the benefits of a host of advanced technologies.”

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) said, “Its energetic lines and substantial proportions add to its increasing popularity with car aficionados in Oman. Megane

presents a high-class driving experience, thanks to its technologies, design, and roominess.”

Renault Megane, which is available in 2.0 litres engine configuration along with 1.6 litres variant, “is a popular car and much-loved car in the sultanate”, the spokesperson added.

Renault’s designers have drawn upon their acclaimed expertise to seamlessly incorporate 503 dm3 VDA of boot storage capacity without compromising the vehicle’s aesthetic appeal.

Its generous dimensions (4.63m long and 1.81m wide, with a record wheelbase in its class of 2.71m) underscore its status-enhancing credentials and provide additional room for occupants.

Megane is available in a choice of eight exterior colours.



LuLu finserv’s 250th branch

Thirteen years, 250 branches, ten countries. The numbers speak volumes about the ambitious rise of Abu Dhabi based LuLu Financial Holdings (LFH) – a global leader in the financial services industry, which opened its 250th global branch in Dubai’s Silicon Central Mall on Monday.

The branch, which adds to the company’s growing network across the UAE and nine other nations, was inaugurated by Dr

Aman Puri, Consul General of India, in the presence of the holding company’s Managing Director Adeeb Ahamed and other senior management staff members.

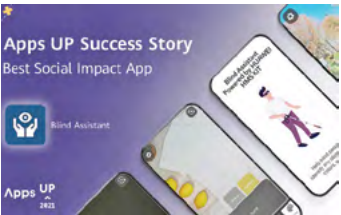
Congratulating the team on their achievement, Adeeb Ahamed said, “It is a celebration of the amazing journey we have had as a team, and the many opportunities we have converted to emerge as a trusted brand.”

“As one of the leading players

in the financial services sector, not just in the UAE but also in our other markets, we have been credited for being attuned to the sector’s needs.

“Our efforts to bridge the gap between our consumers and our various physical & digital touch-points are a key part of our growth story, and the 250th branch is a mark of our determination and perseverance to disrupt the global payments ecosystem,” Ahamed added.

Huawei encourages ‘socially impactful’ app developments



Blind Assistant, a mobile app developed by a team of Tunisian engineers, helps the visually impaired and blind community to recognise objects, texts and colours around them using the integrated voice-over features in the app. The tech giant introduced a ‘Best Social Impact’ category as part of the Huawei Global App Innovation Contest (Apps UP), in order to facilitate the development of experiences such as Blind Assistant that positively impact communities.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 2.2bn people worldwide have near or far vision impairment. The app’s goal is to make visually impaired individuals more independent by assisting them in identifying objects, faces, colours, and texts with the tap of a button. A visually impaired person can use Blind Assistant to easily orient themselves, eliminating the need for a visual embossed print.

“We were inspired to work on the ‘Blind Assistant’ project once we learned about Apps UP in 2021. We were able to launch the app on time for the competition,” said the developers of Blind Assistant Kassis Bassem and Wajih Sakka.

Pakistan Festival held to mark country’s Independence Day

Under the patronage of Pakistan Embassy, Pakistani expatriates in Oman celebrated their country’s 75th Independence Day by holding Pakistan Festival, which was graced by several renowned members of their community.



With the collective efforts of famous poet Qamar Riaz and his team, famous and highly recognised personalities of Pakistan, consisting of poets, journalists, authors, youtubers and musicians made the event memorable, said a press statement.

The dignitaries of Pakistan Festival included Ata ul Haq Qasmi, Abbas Tabish, Ustad Raees Khan, Yasir Pirzada, Dr Sughra Sadaf, Dr Pervaiz Chaudhry, Ehsan Shahid Chaudhry, Farrukh Shahbaz Warraich, Makhdoom Shahab Ud Din, Gul-e-Nokhaiz Akhtar, Uzair Ahmad, Nasir Katra, Sheikh Tahir Waseem, Razaqat Junaid Mirza, Saqib Tabassum Saqib, Kashif Mustafa and Ajmal Shahdeen. H E Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, the Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce also graced the occasion with his presence.

While addressing the gathering, Pakistan Ambassador H E Muhammad Imran Ali Chaudhry said that his country’s independence was a watershed moment in the history, while highlighting the milestones achieved by Pakistan since its independence.

It was a delightful sight to experience the wittiness of Ata ul Haq Qasmi who captivated the audience with his subtle humorous anecdotes. He was the chief guest of that evening.

Trend Micro to accelerate digital agendas of SMEs



Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity solutions, announced the launch of a strategic initiative to bolster the cyber security stance of small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in Oman, through its Worry-Free services - a suite of SMB-specific security solutions. The company aims to strengthen the nation’s SMBs in their digital transformation journeys through dedicated cybersecurity to protect them in the modern-day digital era.

“SMBs are crucial components of the country’s economic development, as they generate job opportunities and cultivate an environment of innovation transforming the way citizens live and work,” said Assad Arabi, Managing Director, Gulf Cluster, Trend Micro. “This is why smaller organizations need to operate and grow their businesses with the support of stronger cybersecurity strategies that protect their digital agendas against the rapidly evolving threat landscape. We at Trend Micro remain committed to helping Oman’s SMBs reach greater milestones.”

Bank Nizwa supports beneficiaries of MoL’s ‘Sahim’ programme



Bank Nizwa, the sultanate’s most trusted and leading Islamic bank, participated in providing an induction session on Islamic finance for newly employed individuals through the Ministry of Labour’s ‘Sahim’ programme.

This programme aims to provide temporary placements in the public and private sectors to more than 2000 job seekers. The bank has pledged a comprehensive set of sharia’a-compliant banking services to the programme’s beneficiaries from various wilayats, including Sur, Sohar, Salalah and Muscat.

For job seekers and recent graduates entering the competitive labour market through ‘Sahim’, Bank Nizwa will offer timely and pertinent Islamic finance solutions. These include financing facilities and services, savings and mudaraba investment accounts, credit cards and many more banking products.

“Boosting employability is one of the main priorities of Oman’s Vision 2040, and therefore, it positions job seekers at the heart of its consideration, strategy and action,” said Bank Nizwa CEO Khalid al Kayed.

He pointed out that technical skills like financial literacy were crucial for integrating young people into the workforce. “As a result, Bank Nizwa collaborated with

Bank Nizwa collaborated with the Ministry of Labour’s Sahim Programme to mentor and assist young people in achieving financial literacy

KHALID AL KAYED

the Ministry of Labour’s Sahim Programme to mentor and assist young people in achieving financial literacy,” he added. “For young job seekers searching for a point of guidance in a complicated economic environment where they need to comprehend finances, this particular soft skill becomes an essential addition.”

To enhance its role in assisting the national economy, the Ministry of Labour is creating a strategic plan for managing the labour market and improving the ratio of the country’s employees in the public and private sectors. To help job seekers and recent graduates accomplish their institutional objectives, it introduced the

‘Sahim’ programme, which offers them temporary employment contracts.

This initiative follows Oman 2040 Vision’s goal of empowering local cadres to meet labour market demands by fostering a culture of temporary employment, flexible work schedules and community-based work. The ‘Sahim’ initiative helps Omanis who graduate find jobs, assist the sultanate’s general economic expansion and raise people’s quality of life.

Bank Nizwa, the pioneer in the Islamic banking sector, has repeatedly shown its steadfast commitment to helping local communities advance toward the inspirational Oman Vision 2040 by offering cutting-edge goods and services.

To meet the objectives of the Omani government, the bank continues to invest in community welfare. It continually works to raise awareness and provide the customers with unparalleled shari’ah-compliant goods and services. The bank offers a wide variety of Sharia’s compliant banking products, from credit cards to savings and investment accounts, all of which aim to support individual needs, choices, and aspirations by assisting individuals in realising their goals and satisfying their requirements.

Nissan Sunny perfect car for sophisticated driving

Nissan Sunny has been receiving excellent reviews from customers in the Sultanate for its modern, expressive design, fresh interiors and confidence-inspiring performance.

Praising Nissan Sunny for its advanced powertrains, Waleed Sultan from Muscat who is a long-time Nissan Sunny owner says, “Nissan comes with an expressive exterior featuring Nissan’s V-motion grille and combines a spacious interior design with harmonious materials and colours to give a fresh and renewed feel to the car.”

A spokesperson for Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) said, “Nissan Sunny is the perfect car for customers looking for a sophisticated driving experience. The car continues to be a popular choice amongst customers in the segment because of its outstanding



ing design, intelligent technology and remarkable performance.”

Rashid Mohammed from Nizwa likes Nissan Sunny for its great design, smart technological upgrades and best-in-class spacious interiors.

He says, “These features make it an ideal car for cus-

tomers looking for a superior driving experience.”

Younis al Balushi from Salalah believes Nissan Sunny continues to be a popular choice amongst customers in the segment because of its outstanding features, intelligent technology and remarkable performance.

He says, “The new generation Nissan Sunny builds on this solid foundation and reinforces Nissan’s presence in the increasingly popular B-Sedan segment that is loaded with technology and safety features not usually found in the segment.”

Amna Khalid from Sohar says,

“With its emotional design, large roominess and advanced Nissan Intelligent Mobility technology, Sunny brings a new level of style, excitement and refinement to entry-level buyers at a highly affordable price.”

The latest Sunny is an addition to the growing line-up of Nissan’s renewed sedan models and features a bold new look, advanced powertrains and technology features.

The fully upgraded model comes with an expressive exterior featuring Nissan’s V-motion grille and combines a spacious interior design with harmonious materials and colours to give a fresh and renewed feel to the car.

Safety and technology remain a top priority at Nissan. The new model comes in three trim-levels, S (MT or Xtronic), SV (Xtronic) and the sporty SL (Xtronic).

‘Back to School’ in Skechers shoes

With schools re-opening for the new academic year, everyone is slowly gearing up to return to school. And while parents stocking up on backpacks and notebooks (amongst other things), finding the right school shoes for their little ones is the top most priority.

“Look to footwear giant Skechers for an array of smart, and comfortable back to school shoe styles that your child will actually want to wear,” said a press statement, claiming that each pair of Skechers kids’ shoes ‘provide ease and comfort for kids who will be on their toes, enjoying fun-filled activities at school’.

“With a huge range of footwear styles to choose from, kids will enjoy stylish and trendy pair of shoes that will surely re-

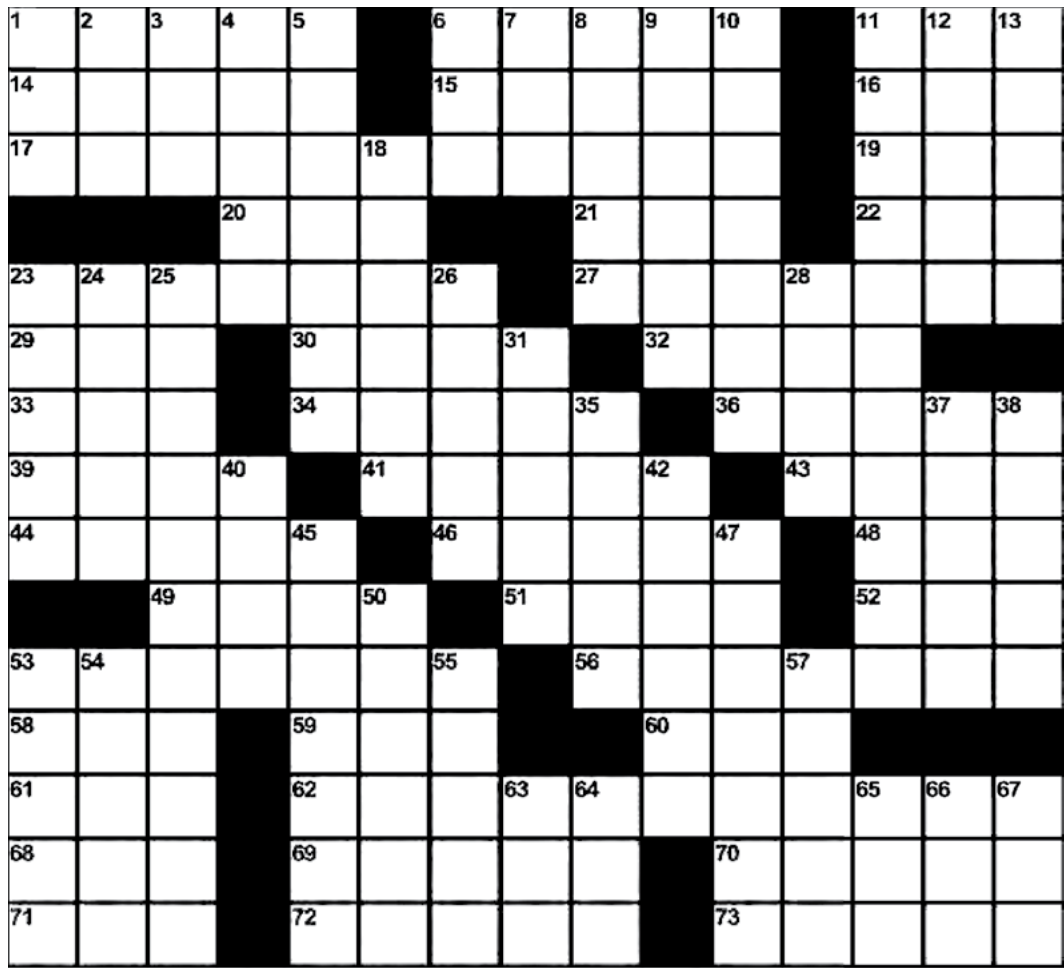


flect their own fashion sense’, it added.

Skechers says whether it’s walking through the school halls, running on the playground, getting to lunch, or doing activities in the classroom, kids are on their feet a good amount of the day.

“They need a shoe that will keep up with both their school day and beyond for after-school activities. Skechers school shoes will make sure that their growing feet are protected while they learn and play in comfort”.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Flubbed one
6) Taco condiment
11) Stage success
14) This puzzle has one
15) Campaign poster plea
16) First lady McKinley
17) Emulate a stereotypical hobo
19) Infant fare
20) Roth acct.
21) Amaze
22) _ Beta Kappa
23) Low-grade merchandise
27) Satirize
29) Luau garland
30) Balkan War participant
32) _ & Span (household cleanser)
33) Matterhorn, e.g.
34) Takes shots?
36) Hardly windy
39) Retained
41) Hardly taut
43) Stair-climbing aid
44) Digital novel
46) Shocking
48) Danson of "Becker"

49) Soprano Lily
51) Japanese wrestling
52) "_ got my eyes on you"
53) Electromagnetic energy units
56) One handling nightclub security
58) Permit
59)" is me!"
60) Lakers' org.
61) Word before "mode"
62) Played a child's game
68) Takeaway game
69) Weasel kin
70) Sister of Clio
71) Popular show fish
72) OK Corral first name
73) French Impressionist

8) Juridical
9) Unstressed vowel sounds
10) Tackle
11) Doctor's oath
12) "Famous Potatoes" state
13) Follow-up shot, in basketball
18) Superfast drivers
23) Allay
24) Short star?
25) Tough-skinned mammals
26) Food for whales
28) It's on the waterfront
31) Boyfriends
35) Clean with elbow grease
37) Spaghetti drainer
38) Church official
40) Tugboat sound
42) Teahouse cinch
45) Ability
4 7) Had qualms
50) Putting on airs
53) Dangerous board on a pirate ship
54) Prefix meaning "sun"
55) Nasal dividers

57) Mother-of-pearl
63) Collector's pride
64) Old TV screen
65) Broomstick rider
66) LAX info
67) Advisable tactics

NOTE PAD

LONG AHEMS SCOW
ODOR ROGUE PANE
PIEALAMODE INCA
ENSNARES PANDER
DDAY DAVEY
CASKET VIGILANT
EDWIN PACED PAR
LIED SLUES APSE
LEE ITALY UNLAY
OUTFRONT ENGELS
BLAME SAIL
CORONA GUTTIEST
OPEC CHEESECAKE
LEAK HINDU ASEA
ADDS STEEP NEWS

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Buckle your seat belt and put your tray table in the upright and locked position, because whatever you had penciled into your schedule will be entirely different from what actually happens. That's not to say you'll be totally distraught about it. In fact, you'll probably love it. Besides, the end result of this unexpected event will be an unexpected blessing.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Speaking of connections, expect one to develop fast and furiously, but don't get comfortable. You're due to meet someone under quite unusual circumstances, someone who'll make a major impact on your life even though they might not be around for long at all. Your best bet is to enjoy this person for as long as they're in the neighborhood and learn the lesson (about freedom) they're here to teach you. Just don't expect them to be a permanent face in your scrapbook.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You've just about had it with being so darned serious. Sure, you had work to do, but it's done. Now it's time to play, and since you've been saving all your energy for this precise moment, you'll have a great time. Your only mission is to refuse to let go of the steering wheel until you're sure whoever wants to drive knows what they're doing. At that point, have some fun.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You thought the two of you were just friends, and you've been conducting yourself accordingly. While you've been worried about discretion, caution and not jumping the gun, they've been thinking about how to lure you closer. If either of you happens to be unavailable at the moment, however, be very, very careful, even if you're sure you're just flirting. You know how quickly an attraction can take off.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

If you're in a quandary right now, turn to someone who has years of experience in the subject that's confusing you. Their insightful intelligence is greater than their communication skills, so be patient and be prepared to ask a lot of questions to clarify what they're talking about. If nothing is perplexing you right now, it's time to find someone you can help. Check in with a troubled friend and find out what you can do to cheer them up.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Expect to raise some eyebrows at work now and a few more tonight. You're in a very rare mood, so rare that your coworkers and friends are willing to bet they've never seen you like this. Rather than exercising caution, playing it safe, or avoiding confrontation, you're ready to rock. If it's reckless, you're in. If it's slightly scary, you're in. Better warn anyone you expect to be spending any amount of time with.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

A loved one who's always been less than predictable, to say the least, could suddenly call to let you know that they're at it again. Of course, you just love hearing from them, especially because you're never sure what they'll be up to and what kinds of wonderful, exciting stories they'll have to tell. Ready to hit the road and make some news yourself? See if they're game for a travel partner.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your partner seems to have gotten up on the wrong side of the bed, just like your boss. And your coworkers. And your best friend. Doesn't this mean that you might actually be the one who has the problem? Well, not to worry. It's nothing that dinner and drinks can't cure. Just be sure you're with someone who really knows how to enjoy themselves. Like you do.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

The tender issues of love and money will be quite startling to you today. In fact, they might be tied together. A dear one might decide it's time for you two to go into business together, or at least check out the possibility. Well, be sure you do your homework before you sign anything, and have a trusted professional help out with the arrangements so everything is kosher.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

If you need to get away and you can't arrange to do it right this second, find somewhere to take off to for a day or so. You're feeling pretty darned rebellious right around now, and you're not at all game to sit still and let someone think they're in control of your life. Just don't take off without letting someone know where you are. They might be irritating, but they love you and they'll worry.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You've never been big on surprises, especially if they aren't planned or executed by you. Today, however, you might need to adapt to some extremely startling situations, and you'll do just fine with them. In fact, at the end of the day, you might be even more surprised by just how much fun it was to let go and let the Universe drive for a change. Giving up control every now and then can be like a vacation. It's quite restful. And necessary.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Prepare yourself for a flood of emotions. You're quite ready to talk about that certain issue that's had you baffled for a while now, but are your dear ones ready to hear it? Better warn them before you get going, because getting you to stop will be next to impossible. Fasten your seat belt. It could be a bumpy ride, but it certainly won't be a boring one.

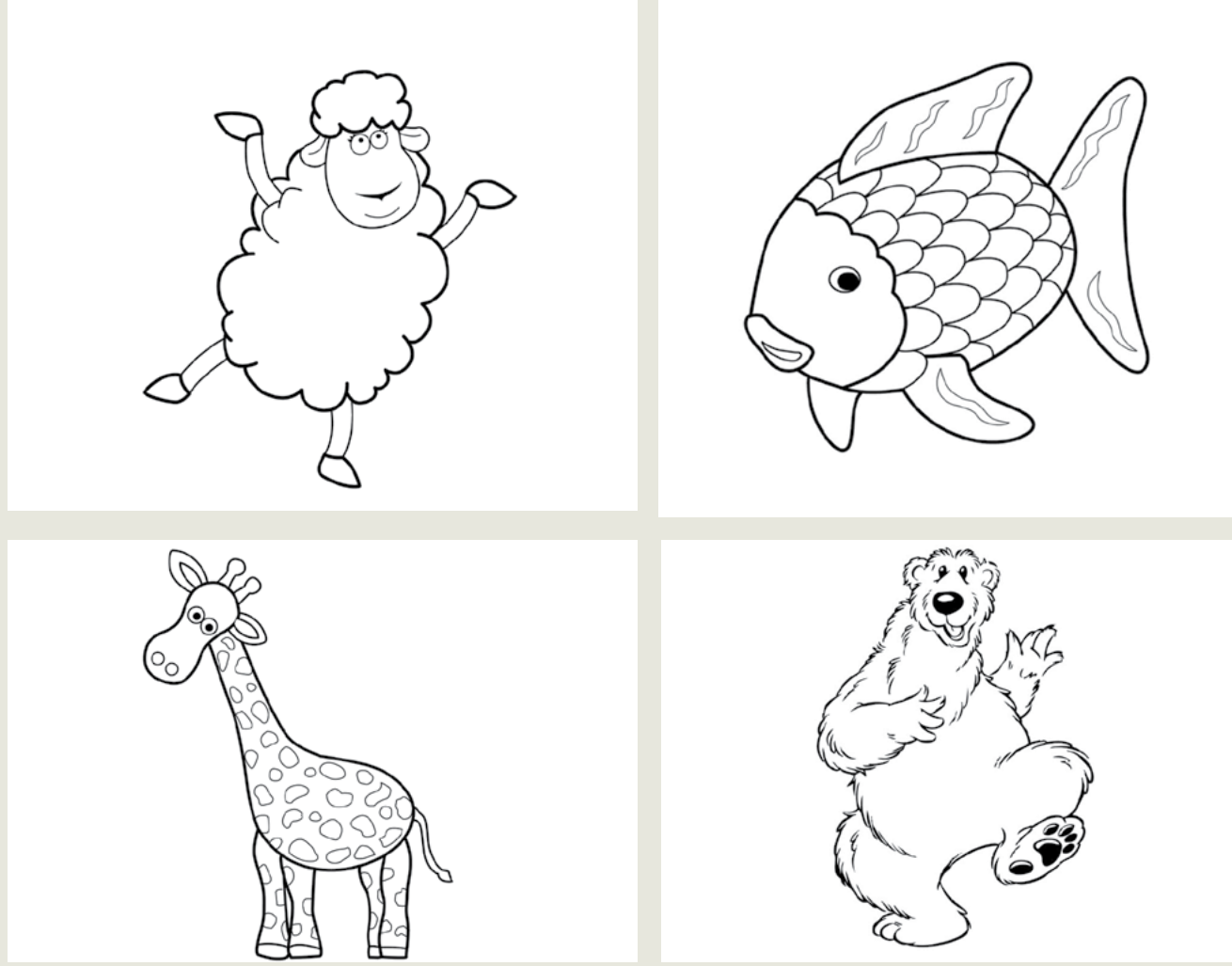


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Cynthia Harnett, Ian Seraillier, Barbara Leonie Picard, and K.M. Peyton are recognised mainly for their writing for what or whom?
- A. Children or young adults
B. Science textbooks
C. Advertisements
D. Romantic fiction
02. Which of these is by Tchaikovsky?
- A. 1812 Overture
B. When I'm 64
C. Take Five
D. The Magic Flute
03. In 2020, what became Berlin's only commercial international airport?
- A. Tegel, in Reinickendorf
B. Brandenburg, in Schönefeld
C. Tempelhof, in Berlin
D. Schönefeld, in Schönefeld

Answers: 1.A 2.A 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

N	G	O	I
I	R	I	U
O	S	O	T
D	N	W	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.

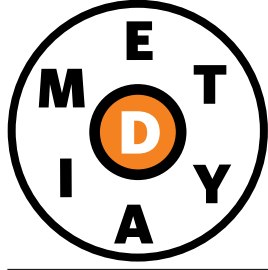
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

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

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

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

NASA calls off Monday launch of Moon rocket

Florida, US - NASA called off the test flight on Monday of its largest-ever Moon rocket because of a temperature issue with one of the four giant engines. "The launch director has called a scrub for the day," the US space agency said.

Alternative dates for launch of the Artemis 1 mission, an uncrewed flight around the Moon as part of an ambitious program to eventually go to Mars, are Friday and next Monday.

Blastoff had been planned for 8:33am (1233 GMT) but was put on hold because of a temperature problem with one of the four engines on the 322-foot (98-metre) Space Launch System (SLS) rocket.

Tens of thousands of people - including US Vice President Kamala Harris - had gathered near the Kennedy Space Center in Florida to watch the launch, which comes 50 years after Apollo 17 astronauts last set foot on the Moon.

Overnight operations to fill the orange-and-white rocket with more than three million liters of ultra-cold liquid hydrogen and oxygen were briefly delayed by a high risk of lightning.

Around 3am, another hiccup emerged: a potential leak was detected during the filling of the main stage with hydrogen, causing a pause. After tests, the flow resumed.

But NASA engineers later detected a problem with the temperature in one of the four RS-25 engines and put a hold on the countdown before eventually scrubbing the launch.

AFP

IAEA chief Grossi's team to inspect Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuke plant

Kyiv, Ukraine - International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi said on Monday he was en route to inspect Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, which has been targeted by fresh shelling over the past day, according to its operator.

The Zaporizhzhia plant - Europe's largest atomic facility - has been occupied by Russian troops since the start of the war.

Moscow and Kyiv are trading blame for shelling around the complex of six Soviet-designed nuclear reactors in the city of Energodar, in southern Ukraine.

Last week the plant was briefly cut off from the national grid for the first time in its four-decade history owing to Russian shelling of the last working power line, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

Over the weekend, Ukrainian nuclear agency Energoatom, which operates the plant, warned of the risk of a radiation leak.

Nevertheless, 'during the last day, the Russian military continued to fire at Energodar and the site of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant', the agency said on Monday morning.

Ten people were injured, including four plant workers, and as of 10am (0700 GMT) the plant 'operates with the risk of violating radiation and fire safety standards', Energoatom said on Telegram.

"The occupiers, preparing for the arrival of the IAEA mission, increased pressure on the personnel of the plant to prevent them from disclosing evidence of



International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi (centre) poses with his team of 13 people on Monday (AFP)

the occupiers' crimes at the plant and its use as a military base," it added.

Long-awaited visit

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has for months been asking to visit the site, warning of 'the very real risk of a nuclear disaster'.

On Monday Grossi said 'the day has come' and that an IAEA support and assistance mission is 'now on its way'.

On Twitter the IAEA director

The occupiers, preparing for the arrival of IAEA mission, increased pressure on the personnel of the plant to prevent them from disclosing evidence of the occupiers' crimes at the plant and its use as a military base

ENERGOATOM

general said the team from the UN nuclear watchdog would arrive at the power plant 'later this week'.

In a photograph accompany-

ing his tweet, Grossi posed with a team of 13 people wearing caps and sleeveless jackets bearing the IAEA logo.

The United Nations has called

for an end to all military activity in the area surrounding the complex. Ukraine initially feared an IAEA visit would legitimise the Russian occupation of the site before finally supporting the idea of a mission.

The G7 industrial powers on Monday demanded access 'without impediment' for the IAEA team. They must be allowed to 'engage directly, and without interference, with the Ukrainian personnel responsible for operating these facilities', the

G7 Non-Proliferation Directors Group said in a statement.

But Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said in Stockholm: "This mission will be the hardest in the history of the IAEA, given the active combat activities undertaken by the Russian federation on the ground and also the very blatant way that Russia is trying to legitimise its presence."

Last week the advisor to the Ukrainian energy minister said she was sceptical the team would even reach the plant.

Advisor Lana Zerkal told Ukraine's Radio NV that Russia was 'artificially creating all the conditions so that the mission will not reach the site', despite formally agreeing to the inspection. Ukraine was the site of the world's worst nuclear catastrophe in 1986, when a reactor at the northern Chernobyl plant exploded and spewed radiation into the atmosphere.

Experts say any leak at Zaporizhzhia would more likely be on the scale of the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan.

Energoatom warned on Monday that any leak would scatter radiation over swathes of southern Ukraine and south-western regions of Russia.

Kyiv suspects Moscow intends to divert power from the Zaporizhzhia plant to the Crimean Peninsula, annexed by Russia in 2014.

But Russia insists Ukraine is responsible for shelling around the complex.

AFP

Scholz eyes 'sovereign, enlarged European Union' including Ukraine

Prague, Czech Republic - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Monday pledged emphatic backing for Ukraine and other hopefuls to join the European Union, underlining however that enlarging the bloc to '30 or 36' would require reforms.

In a speech laying out his vision for the EU during a visit to the Czech Republic, Scholz said Russia's invasion of Ukraine requires a 'European answer to this watershed'.

The bloc needs to reduce its 'one-sided dependencies', be it on the economic, energy or defence fronts, he urged, calling for a 'geopolitical, sovereign and enlarged EU'.

The German leader also underlined that he was 'committed to' having the six nations of the western Balkans, Moldova, Geor-



Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala (right) welcomes German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at Kramar's Villa in Prague, Czech Republic, on Monday (AFP)

gia and Ukraine accede to the bloc. "Their EU accession is in our interest," said Scholz.

But as the bloc widened, each member's veto right would have to go, he said, with a transition to a 'majority voting' system so as not to slow EU decision-making

down.

The Ukraine war is already putting the system of unanimity to the test, at a time when swift action is all the more necessary, Scholz said.

"Let's seek compromises together," he added, suggesting

that majority voting could be applied to sanctions policy for a start.

Member states are also not faced with only two options of voting 'yes' or 'no', but can adopt 'constructive abstention', he said.

The EU agreed candidacy status for Ukraine and Moldova in June, while Albania and North Macedonia in July joined Balkan neighbours Serbia and Montenegro in formal negotiations for membership with Brussels.

But the road to accession was expected to be long, and in the meantime, Scholz said the European hopefuls should be included in a new political forum, as suggested by French President Emmanuel Macron 'to discuss key issues that affect our continent as a whole'.

AFP

Foreign forces arrive for joint military drills in eastern Russia

Moscow, Russia - Soldiers from several countries have arrived in eastern Russia for joint military drills that China will take part in, Russia's defence ministry said on Monday, amid tensions between Moscow and Western capitals.

Servicemen from Kremlin-friendly countries including close ally Belarus, India, Mongolia and Syria will participate in the drills. The exercises will take place between September 1 and 7, and will be spread across seven military training grounds in Russia's east as well as in the waters of the Sea of Okhotsk and Sea of Japan.

Similar drills were last held in 2018. China's defence ministry confirmed earlier this month it would be taking part but did not say how many



A Chinese convoy arrive for military exercises at the Sergeevsky training ground at Primorskiy Kray of the Russian Far East on Monday (AFP)

troops it is sending.

Beijing insisted its participation in the joint exercises was 'unrelated to the current international and regional situation'.

Over 50,000 servicemen and 5,000 units of military equipment, including 140 aircraft and 60 ships, will be in-

cluded in the military exercises called Vostok-2022, the defence ministry said in a statement. The participating soldiers arrived at the Sergeevsky training ground in Russia's Far East and have started preparing.

AFP

Protests erupt in Iraq as Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr 'quits politics'

Baghdad, Iraq - Angry supporters of Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr stormed a government palace on Monday after the powerful Shiite said he was quitting politics, as tensions soared amid a nearly year-long political stalemate.

Shortly after he made his surprise declaration, Sadr followers 'entered the Republican Palace', a government building inside Baghdad's fortified Green Zone that also houses diplomatic missions, a security source said.

Inside the palace, protesters lounged in armchairs in a meeting room, with others waving Iraqi flags and taking photographs of themselves - while others cooled off in a pool in the garden, an AFP photographer said.

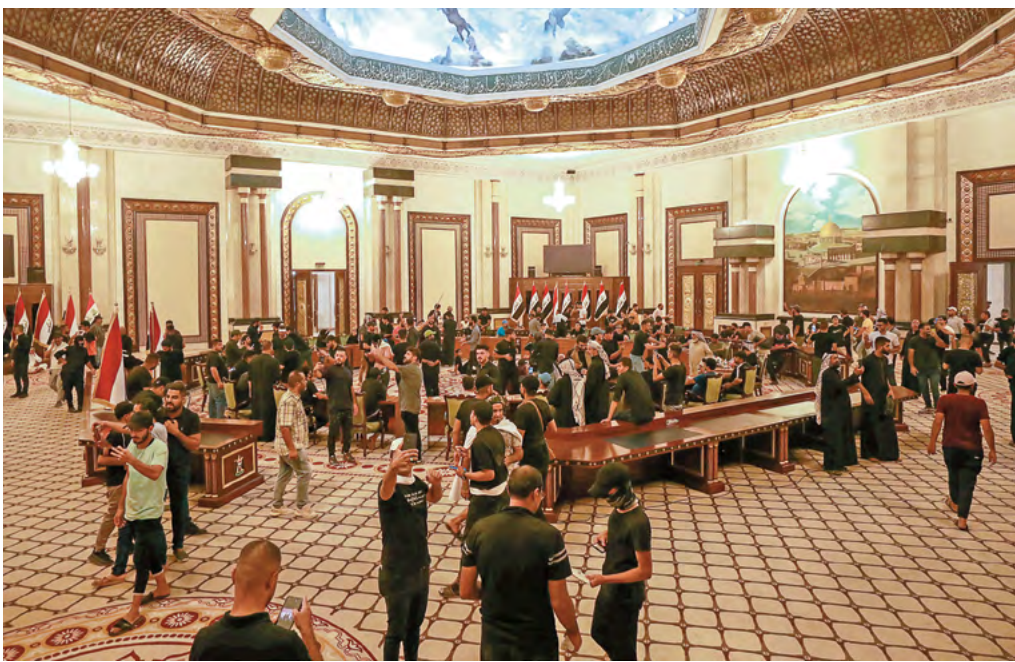
As several thousand other

loyalists - many shouting 'Moqtada, Moqtada' - headed towards the Green Zone, an AFP journalist reported, the army announced 'a full curfew in the capital Baghdad' starting from 3:30pm (1230 GMT).

Since legislative elections in October last year, political deadlock has left the country without a new government, prime minister or president, due to disagreement between factions over forming a coalition.

'Definitive retirement'

Sadr - a grey-bearded preacher with millions of devoted followers, who once led a militia against American and Iraqi government forces following the toppling of dictator Saddam Hus-



Supporters of Iraqi Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr gather inside the Government Headquarters in the capital Baghdad's Green Zone, on Monday (AFP)

sein - had announced earlier on Monday on Twitter he was stepping back from politics.

"I've decided not to meddle in political affairs. I therefore announce now my definitive retirement," said Sadr, a longtime player in the war-torn country's political scene, though he himself has never directly been in government. He added that 'all the institutions' linked to his Sadrist movement will be closed, except the mausoleum of his father, assassinated in 1999, and other heritage facilities.

His latest statement came two days after he said 'all parties' including his own should give up government positions in order to help resolve the months-long political crisis.

His bloc emerged from last

year's election as the biggest, with 73 seats, but short of a majority. In June, his lawmakers quit in a bid to break the logjam, which led to a rival Shiite bloc, the pro-Iran Coordination Framework, becoming the largest in the legislature.

Since then, Sadr has engaged in other pressure tactics, including a mass prayer by tens of thousands of his followers on August 5.

His supporters have been calling for parliament to be dissolved and for new elections, but on Saturday he said it is 'more important' that 'all parties and figures who have been part of the political process' since the 2003 US-led invasion 'no longer participate'.

AFP

Truss tipped to prevail as UK race nears end

The race for Britain’s top job is in its final week, and winner will be announced next Monday

London, UK - The race to become Britain’s next prime minister is in its final week, with Liz Truss appeared poised to secure the top job, along with daunting challenges.

Foreign Secretary Truss, 47, has consistently outrun 42-year-old former finance minister Rishi Sunak by wide margins in polls of Conservative party members who will decide the contest, which started in early July.

An estimated 200,000 Tory grassroots have been able to vote since earlier this month for their preferred candidate, before postal and online ballots close on Friday.

The winner will be announced next Monday and replaces outgoing leader Boris Johnson in Downing Street the following day - only to face immediate crises over the spiralling cost of living.

The unenviable job of leading Britain through its highest inflation in 40 years and warnings of an imminent recession arose after Johnson announced in early July that he would be standing down. It followed months of scandals that eventually triggered Sunak and dozens of other ministers to resign from government, forcing his departure.

However, some ministers and MPs - including Truss - remained loyal to the end, arguing Johnson deserved more time to turn around his controversy-tarred three-year tenure.

Nearly 10,000 Tory members are reportedly so angry at his enforced resignation they are pushing the ruling party to allow a vote over whether to accept it.

The Tory hierarchy is resisting the move while Downing Street has distanced itself from the campaign, insisting Johnson will back the winner of the leadership

Foreign secretary Liz Truss, 47, has consistently outrun 42-year old former finance minister Rishi Sunak by wide margins in polls of Conservative party members who will decide the contest, started in early July

fight. Whoever that is may struggle to reunite the Conservatives, with the splits worsened by the bitter battle between Truss and Sunak.

She scraped into the final pairing on July 20 by just eight votes. However, once the run-off

fore the party’s MPs whittled that number down in five ballots. Sunak was the early frontrunner, topping all those votes of Conservative MPs while Truss repeatedly finished third.

She scraped into the final pairing on July 20 by just eight votes. However, once the run-off

She scraped into the final pairing on July 20 by just eight votes. However, once the run-off



This file photo shows British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss posing for a photograph with the Harland and Wolff shipyard cranes at a Conservative Party leadership campaign event, at Artemis Technologies in Belfast Harbour on August 17 (AFP)

‘They made me feel like nothing’: Britney Spears on conservatorship

New York, US - Britney Spears on Sunday released a lengthy audio message concerning the controversial guardianship that kept her primarily under her father’s control for more than 13 years.

A Los Angeles judge in November 2021 dissolved the conservatorship long overseen by Spears’ father - an arrangement the singer said had prevented her from having a contraceptive IUD removed despite her desire for more kids. The audio message was originally tweeted by Spears without comment but the link was then deleted. The 22 minutes of audio of Spears’ voice remain available online, however.

“I woke up this morning and I realised there’s a lot going on in my head that I haven’t shared with anyone,” Spears says in the raw, emotional recording.

She then details the conservatorship, echoing what she told a California court in a bombshell hearing last summer.

The now 40-year-old describes being forced to work and tour, and barred from seeing friends or driving her own car.

Spears says that her phone was tapped, and she felt unsafe asking for help.

“They made me feel like nothing, and I went along with it,” Spears says. “It was demoralising,” Spears says. “You also have to understand, it was like 15 years of touring and doing shows. And I’m 30 years old, living under my dad’s rules. And while all of this is going on, my mom’s witnessing this, my brother, my friends - they all go along with it.”

Spears rocketed to fame in her teens on hits like ...*Baby One More Time*, becoming one of the world’s reigning pop stars.

But she suffered a highly publicised 2007 breakdown, which included attacking a paparazzo’s car at a gas station.

The conservatorship began in 2008. It didn’t formally end until November 2021, after the pop phenom’s father Jamie Spears was removed from his position in charge of her finances and estate at a hearing in September.

Since gaining her freedom, Spears has married her boyfriend Sam Asghari. On Friday she released her first new music in six years, a duet with Elton John called *Hold Me Closer*.

He briefly grappled with a protester wearing white, as Chow approached. He then fired at Chow, hitting him in the stomach. Chow lost his right kidney and suffered wounds in his liver and spine.

He was later charged with trying to steal the officer’s firearm, obstructing police and attempting to escape custody when he momentarily freed himself and ran a few yards despite the gunshot wound.

A second student protester, Woo Tsz-kin, 22, was also charged with trying to take the officer’s weapon and obstruction. The protester seen in the video in white has never been identified.

On Monday, both Woo and Chow were convicted by District Court Judge Adriana Tse after a six-month trial.

Judge Tse found it reasonable for the police officer, who was only identified as ‘A’ under an anonymity order, to feel threatened and draw his firearm because there were people blocking the roads and verbally abusing him.

“Although both defendants were not carrying any weapon, they could still incite others at the scene and make the situation worse,” Tse ruled.

Chow wrote on social media on Sunday night that he had mixed feelings about the impending verdict.

“I only hope that my physical condition can support me to go through the upcoming bad situation. I am also worrying about the mental health of my family members,” he wrote.



This file photo shows Britney Spears with Sir Elton John at West Hollywood Park, California on February 24, 2013 (AFP)

Student protester shot by Hong Kong police convicted

Hong Kong, China - An unarmed Hong Kong man who was shot by police during democracy protests three years ago was convicted on Monday of multiple charges - including trying to steal the firearm that struck him.

Chow Pak-kwan, 23, was shot at point-blank range by a traffic officer outside a subway station in November 2019 when protesters had called a citywide strike.

The shooting was captured on a live Facebook broadcast. It showed the officer drawing his gun and pointing towards protesters blocking the road.

He briefly grappled with a protester wearing white, as Chow approached. He then fired at Chow, hitting him in the stomach. Chow lost his right kidney and suffered wounds in his liver and spine.

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Restaurant attack on women: China prosecutes 28

Beijing, China - Chinese prosecutors said on Monday they had launched criminal proceedings against 28 people suspected of assaulting a group of women in a viral incident that sparked outrage over gender-based violence in the country.

Footage of a group of men assaulting four women at a barbecue restaurant in Tangshan, east of the capital Beijing, was shared widely online, renewing debate about violence against women in China. The men carried out the assault after the women rejected their advances, the footage showed.

Prosecutors in Hebei province said they would begin legal proceedings against the suspects - including seven directly involved in the assault - after they obtained ‘reliable and sufficient’ evidence. The statement, shared on China’s Twitter-like Weibo service, did not specify a criminal charge.

Brazil’s Bolsonaro, Lula trade jabs in first election debate

Sao Paulo, Brazil - Sparks flew on Sunday as far-right President Jair Bolsonaro accused leftist rival Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of massive corruption - and drew accusations of ‘destroying Brazil’ in return - as they faced off in their first election debate.

The two front-runners, who waited until the last minute to confirm they would attend the first televised debate ahead of October’s elections, wasted no time in attacking each other.

Bolsonaro called Lula a ‘thief’ in his opening salvo of the three-hour clash, pummeling the 76-year-old ex-president over the massive ‘Car Wash’ corruption scandal centered on state-run oil giant Petrobras.

The investigation landed Lula in prison from 2018 to 2019 on controversial corruption charges - annulled by the Supreme Court last year. “Your government was the most corrupt in Brazilian history,” said Bolsonaro, 67, rattling off figures from the scandal in a rapid-fire attack.

“It was a kleptocracy, a government based on robbery... What do you want to come back to power for? To do the same thing to Petrobras again?”

Lula fired back that Bolsonaro was spreading ‘untruths’ - one of several exchanges in which they accused each other of lying. He in turn accused the incumbent of trashing his legacy of economic growth and anti-poverty initiatives. “This country has been destroyed,” Lula said in his trademark gravelly voice, attacking Bolsonaro over increased poverty and hunger, soaring prices and a surge in the destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

Dressing the part in dark suits and ties - striped blue for Bolsonaro, burgundy red for Lula - the front-runners had numerous fiery exchanges, but hewed to the rules and kept their demeanor relatively civilized.

With no audience in the studio, the tension surrounding the debate was especially palpable in the next room, where journalists and politicians followed the debate on a screen. Pro-Lula lawmaker Andre Janones and Bolsonaro’s former environment minister Ricardo Salles got into a raucous shouting match and came close to hitting each other before they were pulled away.

In all, six of the 12 presidential candidates on the ballot were on the neon-blue-lit stage in TV network Band’s Sao Paulo studios.

But all eyes in the deeply polarized Latin American country of 213 million people were on frontrunner Lula, the popular but tarnished ex-metal worker who led Brazil from 2003 to 2010, and his nemesis, Bolsonaro - the leader nicknamed the ‘Tropical Trump’ - who is vying for a come-from-behind win.

Neither appeared to score a knockout punch, and both drew criticism over their performances. Bolsonaro sparked outrage with a trademark rant in which he attacked journalist Vera Magalhaes, one of the moderators, for saying he had spread disinformation about COVID-19 vaccines.

“Vera, you think about me in your sleep, you must have a crush on me or something,” the incumbent reacted irately.

“You can’t take part in a debate like this and spread lies and accusations about me. You’re an embarrassment to Brazilian journalism.” The president, who has been struggling to win over women voters, drew accusations of misogyny on social networks after the episode.



Brazilian presidential candidates (L to R) Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Simone Tebet and Jair Bolsonaro take part in the presidential debate ahead of the October 2 general election at Bandeirantes television network in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on Sunday (AFP)

INDIA

Jaishankar to travel to UAE to co-chair joint commission meet from Aug 31 to Sept 2

New Delhi, India - India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is scheduled to visit the UAE from August 31 to September 2 to co-chair two high profile meetings that seek to strengthen ties between the two countries.

Jaishankar will co-chair the 14th India-UAE Joint Commission Meeting and the third India-UAE Strategic Dialogue with the UAE's Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan.

These meetings will provide an opportunity to review the entire spectrum of comprehensive strategic partnerships between India and the UAE against the backdrop of regional and global developments.

During the visit, the Indian minister will meet other UAE dignitaries, stated an External Affairs Ministry press release.

There has been a regular high-level interactions between India and the UAE this year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a visit to Abu Dhabi on June 28 and met UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan.

Earlier, both the leaders had held a Virtual Summit on Febru-



India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Argentina's Foreign Minister Santiago Cafiero, at San Martin Palace, in Buenos Aires on Saturday (ANI)

ary 18 during which India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed and a Vision Statement adopted.

Both the leaders also participated in the I2U2 Summit held

virtually on July 14.

The United Arab Emirates will invest US\$2bn in India to develop a series of integrated agriculture parks across the country.

In a joint statement, the

heads of the four countries including - Israel Prime Minister Yair Lapid, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden and UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan stated that the US and

Israeli private sectors will be invited to lend their expertise in India and offer innovative solutions that contribute to the overall sustainability of the project.

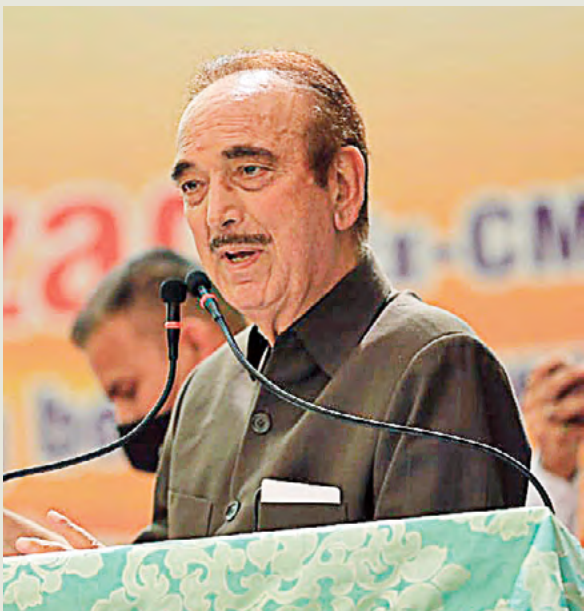
The virtual summit of India, Israel, UAE, and the USA dubbed 'I2U2' is projected as the Quad for West Asia. I2U2 aimed to encourage joint investments in six mutually identified areas such as water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.

Both India and the UAE are committed to moving forward in their partnership in diverse areas, including trade, investment, conventional and renewable energy, food security, health, skill development, education, culture, defence, space, consular issues and people-to-people ties, added the release.

These areas were also discussed at official levels during the meetings of the Sub-Committees of the JCM held on August 23-24.

Notably, India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was signed on February 18 this year. It came into force on May 1 this year.

ANI



Former Congress leader Gulam Nabi Azad (ANI)

Ghulam Nabi Azad 'forced to leave home'

New Delhi, India - Former Indian Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who resigned from the grand old party recently has on Monday lamented the treatment by various people within the Congress which 'forced' him to leave.

Speaking to media persons in the national capital, Azad said, "I have been forced to leave my home."

Taking a dig at the Congress over his resignation, he said, 'Modi is an excuse, they have had an issue with me since the G23 letter was written. They never wanted anyone to write to them, question them'.

"Several (Congress) meetings happened, but not even a single suggestion was taken," added Azad.

Azad on Friday resigned from all posts of the party citing the 'immaturity' of Rahul Gandhi whom he blamed for 'demolishing the consultative mechanism' in the party.

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

The development comes days after Azad resigned from the organisational post of Jammu and Kashmir.

Hitting out at Rahul Gandhi, Azad wrote, 'Since the 2019 elections the situation in the party has only worsened'. "After. Rahul Gandhi stepped down in a 'huff' and not before insult-

ing all the senior Party functionaries who have given their lives to the party in a meeting of the extended Working Committee, you took over as interim President. A position that you have continue to hold even today for the past three years."

Several political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday met veteran leader Ghulam Nabi Azad,

Several meetings happened, but not even a single suggestion was taken

GHULAM NABI AZAD

Junior minister holds bilateral meeting with ASEAN Secretary General Jock Hoi in Jakarta

Jakarta, Indonesia - India's junior minister for External Affairs and Education Rajkumar Ranjan Singh on Monday met with the Secretary General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Dato Lim Jock Hoi in Jakarta and held discussions to further strengthen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership.

Taking to Twitter, the minister wrote, "As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India relations, had fruitful discussions with Secretary General of @ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi in Jakarta, to further strengthen and elevate ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership as we work together to build an Asian Century."

Besides, the Minister of State also launched the ASEAN-India Network of Universities, which he said will help strengthen linkages among universities of India and the ASEAN Member States.



Rajkumar Ranjan Singh (centre) at Indian Ocean Dialogue held in New Delhi on December 15, last year (ANI)

"Launched the ASEAN-India Network of Universities along with Secretary General of ASEAN, VC of Nalanda University, and PRs of ASEAN Member States. AINU will help in developing a knowledge hub in the re-

gion by strengthening linkages among universities of India and ASEAN Member States."

AINU was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in 2018, as a

consortium of premier institutes from India and ASEAN that would build a core network of knowledge capital through partnerships among academic and research institutions in India and ASEAN member states.

AINU is being implemented by Nalanda University and ASEAN University Network from India and ASEAN, respectively. On Sunday evening, Ranjan interacted with the Indian community and expressed his gratitude for their warmth.

"Had the pleasure to interact with Indian diaspora in Jakarta this evening. Gratitude to the Indian community for their warmth and affection," he said, as he hailed the bilateral ties between India and Indonesia.

Rajkumar Ranjan Singh is on an official visit to Indonesia to attend the ASEAN Secretariat.

This is his first visit to ASEAN Secretariat and Indonesia. During the visit, in addition to engagements with ASEAN Secretariat, the MoS will also have engagements with several officials to strengthen bilateral relations.

ANI

10 Yemen soldiers killed in 'dangerous escalation'

Dubai, UAE - Ten Yemeni soldiers were killed in an overnight rebel attack near the blockaded city of Ta'ez, Yemen's government said on Monday, calling it a 'dangerous escalation' after a months-long ceasefire.

The assault, which also left several soldiers wounded, was aimed at cutting off a key route to the southwestern city of about two million, the government said.

The Iran-backed Houthi rebels have blocked main roads into Ta'ez since 2015, the same year that a Saudi-led coalition intervened in the conflict. Yemen's warring parties have been observing a ceasefire since April.

AFF

Tens of millions battle Pakistan floods as death toll rises

Sukkur, Pakistan - Tens of millions of people across swathes of Pakistan were on Monday battling the worst monsoon floods in a decade, with countless homes washed away, vital farmland destroyed, and the country's main river threatening to burst its banks.

Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman said a third of the country was under water, creating a 'crisis of unimaginable proportions'. Officials say 1,061 people have died since June when the seasonal rains began, but the final toll could be higher as hundreds of villages in the mountainous north have been cut off after flood-swollen rivers washed away roads and bridges.

The annual monsoon is essential for irrigating crops and re-

plenishing lakes and dams across the Indian subcontinent, but it can also bring destruction.

This year's flooding has affected more than 33mn people - one in seven Pakistanis - said the National Disaster Management Authority. "It's all one big ocean, there's no dry land to pump the water out," Rehman told AFP, adding the economic cost would also be devastating.

This year's floods are comparable to those of 2010 - the worst on record - when more than 2,000 people died. Flood victims have taken refuge in makeshift camps that have sprung up across the country, where desperation is setting in. "Living here is miserable. Our self-respect is at stake," said Fazal e Malik, sheltering in the grounds of a school



A family wades through a flood hit area following heavy monsoon rains in Charsadda district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday (AFP)

now home to around 2,500 people in the town of Nowshera in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

"I stink but there is no place to take a shower. There are no fans."

Near Sukkur, a city in southern Sindh province and home to an ageing colonial-era barrage on the Indus River that is vital to preventing further catastrophe, one farmer lamented the devastation wrought on his rice fields.

Millions of acres of farmland have been flooded by non-stop rain, but the Indus is threatening to burst its banks as torrents of water course downstream from tributaries. "Our crop spanned over 5,000 acres on which the best quality rice was sown and is eaten by you and us," said Khalil Ahmed, 70. "All that is finished."

AFF

KINGSIZE COMEBACK

Hardik Pandya, back from controversies and injuries, is now India’s all-round match-winner

Dubai, United Arab Emirates - With his appetite for wickets and hard-hitting batting, Hardik Pandya has come back from controversies and injuries to become India’s go-to all-rounder ahead of this year’s Twenty20 World Cup in Australia.

Pandya stood calm with an unbeaten 33 and hit the winning six in the final over of a tense pursuit of 148 to beat arch-rivals Pakistan and begin the Asia Cup T20 tournament on a high on Sunday.

With the ball in hand earlier, he took 3-25 as he and fellow pace bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar shared seven wickets to set up the victory chase at a packed Dubai International Stadium.

The Indian Express newspaper called him the “New cool king in town” and veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle tweeted there are “few better than him in this format”.

Pandya’s performance comes as no surprise after he returned from a back injury to lead Indian Premier League debutants Gujarat Titans to a fairytale title in May.

The 28-year-old flamboyant cricketer who loves his tattoos and expensive watches, had once said he likes to live life “kingsize”.

From the western state of Gu-

jarat, Pandya was in 2019 suspended for sexist comments on a TV show and written off as a brash cricketer.

But he has defied critics with his on-field performances to reward the faith shown in him by the India team management.

“Grateful that we are getting this opportunity and we are able to do this because our process is just not for this but for the upcoming World Cup,” Pandya told India’s cricket board website after the five-wicket win. “If we get another such situation, definitely we will remember this match.”

He added he had felt “no pressure” when India needed seven off the last over, even though when Pandya hit the winning six off left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz there were just two balls to spare.

Beautiful journey

“The way he has batted and bowled in the last few series, I will pray that he performs like this in the World Cup and it will be good for us,” said Kumar, who took four wickets.

Pandya put on a key fifth-wicket stand with Ravindra Jadeja as life came full circle for the player who was stretchered off the field at the same venue in



Hardik Pandya celebrates India’s victory against Pakistan in their Asia Cup Twenty20 Group A match in Dubai on Sunday (AFP)

a 2018 Asia Cup group match against Pakistan.

It was the start of Pandya’s struggle with a back injury, which forced him to play mainly as a batsman in last year’s T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

“I remembered it all. I was going out on a stretcher and it was the same dressing room,” Pandya said. “I feel a sense of achievement because of how things unfolded and the way I got this opportunity.

“The journey has been beautiful and we get the fruits but I think credit should be given to behind-the-scenes guys (physiotherapist) Nitin Patel and (strength and training coach) Soham Desai.”

India’ cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar tweeted: “It came down to fitness of the fast bowlers while put under pressure, though both teams’ pacers bowled well up front.

“Crucial knock by Hardik to stay till the end & get us over the line & ably supported by @imjadeja & Virat. Congrats on a nail-biting win.”

Pandya proved his fitness in this year’s IPL with 487 runs and eight wickets in 15 matches which earned him a recall for June’s Twenty20 series against South Africa.

After 66 one-day internationals and 68 Twenty20 matches, a fit and firing Pandya seems to have ended India’s long-time hunt for a world-class all-rounder.

AFP

Serena Williams readies farewell as US Open begins

New York, United States - Serena Williams will take centre stage as the US Open gets under way on Monday with the 23-time Grand Slam winner preparing to bid an emotional farewell to tennis.

After announcing earlier this month that the countdown to her retirement had begun, Williams will step on court at Arthur Ashe Stadium at Flushing Meadows for what could be her final appearance in a Grand Slam singles event.

The 40-year-old sporting and cultural icon won the first of her Grand Slam titles at the same venue in 1999, lifting the trophy as a fresh-faced 17-year-old.

In Monday’s sold-out night session, which starts at 7:00 pm (2300 GMT), Williams will face Montenegro’s Danka Kovinic, the world number 80.

Whether Williams is able to extend her US Open campaign beyond that match remains to be seen.

In her last outing at the Cincinnati Masters earlier this month, Williams was thumped 6-4, 6-0 by Britain’s Emma Raducanu -- who herself was



Serena Williams during a practice session at USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center on Sunday (AFP)

knocked out of the Australian Open by Kovinic in January.

Win or lose on Monday, Williams won’t be departing the US Open stage immediately.

On Saturday, organisers confirmed that she and elder sister Venus Williams had been given a wild card into the women’s doubles tournament, which starts on Wednesday.

It is the first time the Williams sisters have played doubles since 2018, reuniting a partnership that has yielded 14 Grand Slam titles and three Olympic gold medals.

Whenever Serena Williams does leave the stage, she will do so after a career that has left a lasting legacy on her sport.

“I just think she’s the biggest thing that will ever be in the

sport,” said Japan’s Naomi Osaka on Saturday.

“It’s just really an honour just to watch her play. She’s giving us a chance to watch her more.”

Elsewhere in the women’s draw, Poland’s world number one Iga Swiatek will look to claim her second Grand Slam title of 2022.

The French Open champion

won six straight tournaments earlier this season but has struggled to recapture that dominance during the North American hard-court swing, making early exits at both the Cincinnati Masters and Canadian Open.

Swiatek launches her US Open campaign on Tuesday against Italy’s Jasmine Paolini.

Nadal fitness concern

In the men’s draw, Spanish great Rafael Nadal is chasing a fifth US Open crown and 23rd Grand Slam title in a draw that is missing Novak Djokovic.

Djokovic was barred from entry to the United States over his refusal to get vaccinated against Covid-19, putting him at odds with US government travel restrictions for overseas visitors.

With Djokovic out of the picture, Nadal’s biggest opponent over the next fortnight may well be his own injury-prone body.

The Spaniard has had to sit out the US Open four times in his career and there are once again fresh doubts over his physical ability to survive a gruelling two weeks at Flushing Meadows.

AFP

Livingstone adds to England’s T20 World Cup injury concerns

London, United Kingdom - Liam Livingstone has joined an already significant list of England fitness worries ahead of October’s Twenty20 World Cup in Australia after being ruled out of the remainder of the Hundred with an ankle injury.

Birmingham Phoenix announced that hard-hitting batsman and spin bowler Livingstone, the top run scorer and most valuable player in last year’s inaugural edition, will miss their final two group games of the season plus any knockout ties.

The 29-year-old said on Twitter: “Gutted to have been ruled out of @thehundred... a tournament I have loved playing in! I’ll be doing everything I can to be back out there ASAP! But for now I’ll be supporting Birmingham Phoenix from the side!”

The extent of his injury is still unclear, but there are now just three-and-a-half weeks before England begin a T20 series against Pakistan in Karachi.

England white-ball captain Jos



Liam Livingstone

Buttler is unlikely to feature in all seven fixtures because he has a calf injury which led to him to withdraw from the Hundred.

England opening batsman Jason Roy withdrew from Oval Invincibles’ win over London Spirit on Saturday with back spasms.

Fast bowlers Chris Jordan and Tymal Mills have recently suffered finger and toe problems, respectively, while their fellow quicks Jofra Archer, Mark Wood, Chris Woakes and Saqib Mahmood are long-term absentees through injury.

AFP

Rory McIlroy wins Tour Championship to take third PGA playoff title

Washington, United States - Rory McIlroy rallied from six strokes down starting the final round to overtake top-ranked Scottie Scheffler and win his record third FedEx Cup title on Sunday by capturing the PGA’s Tour Championship.

The 33-year-old from Northern Ireland fired a four-under-par 66 to finish on 21-under 263 at East Lake in Atlanta.

Four-time major winner McIlroy took the \$18m top prize in the season-ending playoff showdown by one stroke over reigning Masters champion Scheffler, who fired a 73 on Sunday, and South Korean Im Sung-jae.

“It’s great to end the season

on a high note like this,” McIlroy said. “To do something no one else has done... and playing the golf when you needed to to get the job done - incredibly satisfying.”

Scheffler, who began the week on 10-under thanks to the season points lead and a staggered scoring system, lost out because McIlroy fired the week’s best 72-hole score, 17-under.

“Just little mental errors,” Scheffler said. “I just wasn’t swinging it well.

“I really fought hard. Rory just played a really good round of golf. He made some key putts there at the end and he definitely deserved to win.”



Rory McIlroy proudly displays the trophy (AFP)

I feel like Scottie deserves at least half of this. I feel sort of bad that I pipped him to the post

RORY MCILROY

Scheffler, a four-time winner this season, earned McIlroy’s respect.

“I feel like Scottie deserves at least half of this,” McIlroy said. “I feel sort of bad that I pipped him to the post.”

McIlroy, who has been a

major advocate for the PGA Tour in its ongoing battle with the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series, said victory was even sweeter given the tumult engulfing the sport this season.

“It means an awful lot,” McIlroy said. “This is an incredibly proud moment for me but it should also be an incredibly proud moment for the PGA Tour. They have had some hard times this year but we’re getting through it.”

Fourth-ranked McIlroy, who won the 2016 and 2019 Tour Championships, roared back from 11 strokes back late in the second round and six shots down after 54 holes.

“I just showed so much resilience to claw my way back,” McIlroy said.

“I didn’t really give myself much of a chance teeing off today. I thought six behind, it was really going to be tough to make up.

“But my good play and Scottie’s not-so-great play and it was a ball game going into the back nine,” said McIlroy, who sank a stunning birdie putt at the par-3 15th from just inside 32 feet, to match Scheffler for the lead on 21-under.

“If you’re willing to go out and earn it, this is what can happen,” McIlroy said.

AFP

THE GOAL GETTERS

Robert Lewandowski bags double for ‘blessed’ Barca, Karim Benzema strikes late for Real

Madrid, Spain - Veteran star strikers Robert Lewandowski and Karim Benzema both hit doubles on Sunday in contrasting victories for Barcelona and La Liga leaders Real Madrid.

Lewandowski scored twice for the second game in a row as Jules Kounde made his debut in Barcelona’s 4-0 thumping of Valladolid.

Later, Real Madrid struggled for 88 minutes at Espanyol. With the scores tied and time running out, Benzema put Real ahead before sealing a 3-1 victory after 10 eventful added minutes.

Real saved their perfect start to the season and climbed back to the top of the table on nine points after three games, ahead of Real Betis on goal difference.

Barcelona rose to third, two points further back.

“To have Lewandowski in your team is a blessing,” said Barca coach Xavi Hernandez.

“He’s an extraordinary player. Spectacular. A natural leader. It’s a blessing to have him with us, it’s marvellous.

“He’s a model, a born worker. He’s humble, he works for the team, he helps the coaching staff, he makes the difference.”

At the Camp Nou, Xavi handed Kounde his first start after the club was finally able to register the France defender they signed from Sevilla last month for a reported 50 million euros (\$49.8 mn).

Lewandowski hit the post with an early header.



Barcelona’s Robert Lewandowski celebrates after scoring against Real Valladolid in their Spanish League match at Camp Nou on Sunday (AFP)

Pedri then spotted the run of Raphinha in behind but the Brazilian was thwarted by goalkeeper Jordi Masip, who was well beaten moments later when Ousmane Dembele’s venomous shot clipped the crossbar.

Barca’s pressure told after 24 minutes as Raphinha whipped in a teasing cross which a gambling Lewandowski stabbed home.

A marauding Dembele tested Masip from range, and then created the second for Pedri by



Real Madrid’s Karim Benzema celebrates after scoring against Espanyol in their Spanish League match in Cornella de Llobregat on Sunday (AFP)

rolling a perfectly weighted ball for the midfielder to bury on the stroke of half time.

Lewandowski all but put the game beyond reach on 64 minutes, running onto a pass from Dembele and cleverly backheel-

ing past Masip with the help of a deflection off Joaquin Fernandez.

Valladolid nearly pulled one back but Marc-Andre ter Stegen saved well from Oscar Plano and Kounde stuck out a leg on the line to keep out the follow-up ef-

fort from Roque Mesa.

Barca grabbed a fourth in stoppage time as Roberto volleyed home after Lewandowski was denied a hat-trick after Masip, a former Barcelona player, tipped his shot onto the bar.

‘We were quite slow’

In the late game, Vinicius Junior ran on to a sharp diagonal pass in the 12th minute to slide the ball into the far corner and give Real Madrid the lead.

Espanyol fought back. Joselu levelled after 43 minutes. He burst through and when Thibaut Courtois saved his first thump at goal and the ball bounced off Eder Militao, the Espanyol striker beat both Real players to the ball and scuffed it in.

Both teams had chances in the second half before Benzema, as so often in the last year, decided the game. After a quiet game, he found space at the far post with two minutes left, met Rodrygo’s cross and volleyed home from cose range.

Deep into frantic added time, Espanyol goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte, charged out of his box to stop a Real attack and received a red card for a foul on Dani Ceballos.

Benzema fired home the free-kick.

“We were quite slow,” said Real coach Carlo Ancelotti. “We had difficulty managing the intensity of the match.”

AFP



Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang

Barcelona’s Aubameyang victim of armed home robbery

Barcelona, Spain - Barcelona striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was the victim of a violent armed robbery at his home in the early hours of Monday, the Spanish club said.

“He is ok now, scared but ok,” a Barcelona source told AFP, confirming press reports.

At least four men broke into his home in Casteldefels near Barcelona through the garden and threatened him and his wife with guns and iron bars, and hit him, daily El Pais reported. The thieves fled by car after forcing the Gabon international to open a safe and making off with jewels that were inside, the newspaper reported.

A spokeswoman for Catalan police, the Mossos d’Esquadra, confirmed they were investigating a violent robbery in Casteldefels but refused to identify the victim, citing privacy rules.

AFP



Mario Goetze (2L) celebrates his goal with team-mates

Goetze scores as Frankfurt get the better of Bremen

Berlin, Germany - Former Bayern and Dortmund forward Mario Goetze scored as Eintracht Frankfurt picked up their first Bundesliga win of the season with a 4-3 victory away at Bremen.

The goal was the 2014 World Cup winner’s first Bundesliga goal in 982 days and his first for Frankfurt since moving from Dutch side PSV Eindhoven in the summer.

“After such a long time, it was very nice (to score again)” Goetze told DAZN after the match. “It was an important goal for us - it feels good.”

Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp, who this week rejected an offer to move to Manchester United in order to play in Eintracht’s first ever Champions League campaign, joked after the game “finally Mario took a shot at goal”.

Bremen captain Marco Friedl lamented his side letting their first-half lead slip.

“We completely messed it up in the first half,” Friedl said.

“We made far too many

mistakes.”

Goetze’s goal was the first of five in a seesawing first half.

Bremen regained the lead, before the visitors snatched it back again to go into the break 3-2 up.

Djibril Sow drilled in a shot after 48 minutes to put Frankfurt 4-2 up and on track for what looked like a comfortable victory, before Bremen’s Niclas Fuellkrug converted a penalty in second-half injury time.

Bremen’s Scottish striker Oliver Burke, who secured the home side a win and a draw in their past two fixtures with injury-time goals, was unable to conjure another late Werder escape. The defeat was Bremen’s first since being promoted back to the Bundesliga this season.

Stuttgart managed a 0-0 draw away at Cologne on Sunday despite second-half red cards for Luca Pfeiffer, in his first start for the club, and American manager Pellegrino Matarazzo.

AFP

Conte backs ‘son-in-law’ Son to end goal drought

Nottingham, United Kingdom - Tottenham Hotspur manager boss Antonio Conte has said he would be happy for Son Heung-min to marry his daughter as he defended the struggling South Korea forward.

Son has failed to hit the heights he established last term as his goalless start to the season continued during Spurs’ 2-0 win away to Nottingham Forest on Sunday.

His form so far this term has been far removed from the run of

10 goals in the final nine games of last season that helped Son win the Premier League Golden Boot award.

Nevertheless, Conte said: “I understood Sonny is a really sensible player. “He’s really sensible and a top man, a really good guy. If I am to make an example, if I have to find a husband for my daughter I’d like it to be a person like him.

“In this moment maybe he’s suffering a lot that he’s not scoring. But he has to continue in this

way and trust himself because in every game he has the opportunity, the chance to score and then he has to be calm.”

The Italian added: “We trust him and the team-mates. You know very well the importance of this player with Harry Kane and for sure he’s a bit disappointed that he’s not scoring but no problem.

“For me, Sonny will always be a nut in my team, in my ambition of football.”

AFP



Tottenham’s Son Heung-Min reacts to a missed chance during their English Premier League match against Nottingham Forest on Sunday (AFP)



Monaco defender Benoit Badiashile (L) fights for the ball with Paris Saint-Germain’s Kylian Mbappe during their Ligue 1 match on Sunday (AFP)

PSG perfect league record ended in Monaco draw

Paris, France - Neymar scored from the penalty spot but Paris Saint-Germain’s perfect start to the French campaign was ended in a 1-1 draw with Monaco on Sunday.

The Brazilian rolled in his eighth goal in five matches this season from a penalty awarded when the VAR alerted the on-pitch referee to a foul on Neymar by Monaco defender Guillermo Maripan.

Monaco had taken the lead when Kevin Volland burst forward, holding off Presnel Kim-

pembe, before firing past Gianluigi Donnarumma 20 minutes into the game at the Parc des Princes. The principality side played well, yet PSG deserved at least the draw from a game in which they hit the woodwork three times.

Nevertheless, the result does slightly puncture the Parisians’ momentum after a start to the season in which they had won their opening three league games, scoring a staggering 17 goals in the process.

AFP

Leaders Napoli held to goalless draw at Fiorentina, Atalanta win

Milan, Italy - Napoli kept their early lead of Serie A after Sunday’s goalless draw at Fiorentina, while Atalanta’s 1-0 win at Verona ensured they moved level with the early pacesetters.

Luciano Spalletti’s Napoli were less flamboyant than in their opening two victories but had marginally the better of the opportunities in an absorbing encounter at the Stadio Artemio Franchi.

Not even the introduction in the second half of lively new signings Giacomo Raspadori, Giovanni Simeone and Tanguy Ndombele could push the away side to the win.

After the match Spalletti was angry with a group of Fiorentina fans near the away dugout who he confronted after being insulted for nearly the entire match.

“They dished out insults from behind the bench from the start to the end, right near where children were sitting,” he told DAZN.

The stalemate puts Napoli on seven points from their opening



Napoli’s Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (R) and Fiorentina’s Dodo go for a header during their Italian Serie A match in Florence on Sunday (AFP)

three matches, level with six teams including champions AC Milan and Atalanta, ahead of their match with Lecce on Wednesday as a punishing fixture pile-up looms.

Fiorentina, who are also unbeaten, sit ninth on five points.

An intense contest in Florence began with the hosts on the front foot and they went closest to taking the lead midway through the first half when after Alex

Meret spilled Riccardo Sottil’s shot, Giacomo Bonaventura flashed a low drive just wide.

Victor Osimhen had a tap-in ruled out for offside just before the break as Napoli grew into the game, and the away side should have been ahead not long after the restart.

Amir Rrahmani headed Piotr Zielinski’s cross narrowly over in the 48th minute.

AFP

DASHED HOPES

Contact from rival ends pole qualifier Al Harthy's bid for LMGTE podium in Barcelona



Ahmad Al Harthy in action at the European Le Mans Series at Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya on Sunday

Barcelona, Spain - Mid-race contact during round four of the European Le Mans Series at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya on Sunday ruined realistic hopes of an LMGTE podium return for Ahmad Al Harthy and Oman Racing and they had to settle for a frustrating 10th position. Hopes were high after Al Harthy qualified the No.69 Aston Martin Vantage LMGTE on pole position with a superb performance on Saturday. Al Harthy took the start of the race but the action fell under Safety Car conditions very quickly following an incident involving an LMGTE Ferrari and two LMP3 prototypes. After having to avoid the troubles, Al Harthy was shuffled back to sec-

It's unfortunate how things played out. We had to avoid the first corner troubles, and then I was behind the Porsche (Christian Ried)

AHMAD AL HARTHY

ond behind the No.77 Porsche of Christian Ried. Racing got back underway on lap six, with 15 minutes elapsed, and Al Harthy made his intent clear immediately by piling pressure on his rival. Swarming all over the Porsche, the Oman Racing driver pushed hard to try and regain the lead and into lap 10 he positioned himself for an attack. Further around the lap, Al Harthy went for the move on the brakes into Turn 10 but unfortun-

nately ran a bit deep. Although able to avoid entering the gravel trap, he did slip to third behind the No.93 Porsche of Michael Fassbender. Though Giacomo Petrobelli in the No.66 Ferrari also passed the Aston Martin, with some contact, Al Harthy was able to sweep through into second place a couple of laps later when the Italian tagged Fassbender. Into hour two of his double-stint, Al Harthy remained ahead of Petrobelli and the Omani then

made his first pit-stop of the race a few moments later to take fresh tyres. When the race order settled again Al Harthy was third in LMGTE and swarming all over the No.57 Ferrari with improved pace. Although able to get through, subsequent contact led to big damage for the Aston Martin. Making an unscheduled second pit-stop Al Harthy re-joined the race in 10th position and three laps down. He went on to conclude his eventful double stint around mid-distance, with De Haan climbing behind the wheel for hour three. De Haan did all he could before Sorensen took over the car for the final hour and the run to the chequered flag - taking the finish in 10th place in LMGTE.

"It's unfortunate how things played out. We had to avoid the first corner troubles, and then I was behind the Porsche (Christian Ried)," said Al Harthy. "It was always going to be difficult with the high degradation on the tyres but things opened up when we were able to regain second position after the incident between Petrobelli and Fassbender. But that's when we had real traction issues. "Our degradation was higher than the rest of our competitors, then we got new tyres at the pit stop and had the pace. Unfortunately, one of our competitors was just too defensive and it resulted in contact. After that, the plan was just to finish the race and get some points."

Red Bull's Horner says Verstappen has taken 'another step' since title win

Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium - Red Bull team chief Christian Horner on Monday said Max Verstappen has taken "another step" since winning last season's world title following his remarkable triumph in Sunday's Belgian Grand Prix. The 24-year-old Dutchman's outstanding drive from 14th on the grid, having taken a penalty for a new power-unit, to a sumptuous victory ahead of team-mate Sergio Perez, who started second, was hailed by all corners of the paddock. Horner was effusive in his praise for Verstappen who has taken a runaway 93-point lead ahead of Perez in the drivers' championship, with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc third, a further five points adrift. "You're witnessing a driver that is completely at one with the car and is in an absolute purple patch of his career," he said. "Since winning that cham-

pionship last year, Max has taken another step. It's in many ways released him and he's driving now at an incredible level. "Max was quite simply in a league of his own and not just in the race, but all weekend." Horner said Verstappen's win was one of Red Bull's "best-ever" performances, while special advisor Helmut Marko said they needed only "two or three" more wins to secure the title. "The goal for us now is clear because we want to finish first and second in the championship for the first time in our history," said Marko. "And we need to win two or three more to make sure we are safe." Both men also jokingly thanked Mercedes for pushing for the new technical directive introduced to control porpoising and bouncing which has seen Red Bull increase their dominance over their rivals. AFP



Red Bull Racing's Max Verstappen celebrates his victory on the podium of the Belgian Formula One Grand Prix on Sunday (AFP)

Hamilton, Alonso back off in war of words over Spa crash

Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium - Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso eased off to avoid a prolonged war of words on Monday following their acrimonious collision in Sunday's Belgian Grand Prix. Mercedes' seven-time world champion and his one-time McLaren team-mate crashed on the opening lap with Hamilton forced to retire after an airborne ride over his rival's Alpine car. In the heat of the moment the veteran Spaniard blasted the British driver as "an idiot". Hamilton revisited the incident on social media, writing: "First I want to apologise to my fans and especially those who came out to support me. "After almost 30 years of racing, the feeling left from a mistake cuts just as deep as the first. "My team, who work so hard, deserved more." Alonso, 41, was also more composed in his comments after the race and distanced himself from the impact of his original outburst on team radio when he said: "What an idiot! Closing the



Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes (R) collides with Alpine's Fernando Alonso at the Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday (AFP)

door from the outside. "I mean, we had a mega-start, but this guy only knows how to drive and start in first." Hamilton accepted full blame for the collision but was clearly put out by Alonso's initial fury. He suggested he had intended to speak to the Spaniard until he

"heard what he said. I know that's how things feel in the heat of the moment, but it's nice to know how he feels about me". Alonso admitted "I was angry", adding: "The radio, anyway, when you talk, you talk to your engineer and to your team. "It's a shame that sometimes

everything is broadcasted, because if it's broadcasted, it is what you say now (in the moment), this (right now) is how you behave in the media. "When you're talking on the radio, it's only a comment to your team, normally." "I was frustrated there, for

I was angry. The radio, anyway, when you talk, you talk to your engineer and to your team

FERNANDO ALONSO

sure," he continued. "Every time we started in the first couple of rows of the grid there is something going on, unfortunately, and I felt that way. "But, you know, it was a normal incident, and unfortunately Lewis had to retire the car after the incident." Alonso was seen wagging a finger at Hamilton on lap two before he settled down and finished fifth in the race. The two have had a colourful history since being team-mates at McLaren in 2007, Hamilton's rookie season, when they fell out. Alonso left the team after one year of a three-year contract. AFP

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MICRO WORKOUTS

10 MINUTE ATHLETES

If you are too busy to allocate time for workouts every day, this one's for you. *'Micro workouts'* are gaining popularity the world over these days as they are ideal for people with extremely busy schedules

Are you too busy everyday that you cannot possibly squeeze in time for a workout? And yet you want to stay fit, to be able to meet all your deadlines with ease?

Since Alladin's magic lamp is now out of stock, you need to turn to another magical solution, and 'micro workouts' is what you need to stay fit and flit around in top gear everyday. You don't need a gym, neither weights or equipment, and most of all, you don't need to hop into any workout attire – all you need is the right attitude and around ten minutes, in total, to stay fit and in shape.

Ever wondered how children stay fit and active, though they don't hit the gym everyday or spend time exercising? The fact is, they are involved in varied activity throughout the day that helps them stay fit, burn excess calories, and enjoy all-round wellness. So, by weaving fitness into your daily activity, you can walk that road, too.

Micro workouts are brief strength exercises that can be done anywhere, any time of the day. They can last seconds or several minutes. It may focus on simply one exercise or could be a circuit of exercises. Your schedule may not allow a 90 minute round trip excursion to the gym, but there are moments in the day when you can strength train.

For example, while heating food in the microwave, perform calf raises until the timer beeps. On hold with a call? Perform a wall sit. Fifteen minutes before your next Zoom meeting? Do a short circuit of lunges, push-ups, and pull-ups. These brief workouts don't seem like much, but the effects compound over time.

Micro workout sessions last for between 4-10 minutes and are best suited for individuals who are time-poor but are still looking to kick those health and fitness goals. And it helps in burning serious calories in a short time.

Another great (and efficient) component of micro workouts is that there are a wide variety of them, meaning you can tailor the session to what you enjoy and whatever equipment you have available. Many micro workouts can even be done without leaving the home and with minimal equipment.

For those who do regular workouts, doing a few micro workouts can be a good alternative for those days when they are busy.

Stair sequence

For this exercise, you'll need one flight of stairs with at least 10 steps. Walk up and down them, and each time thereafter, make an adjustment. The second and third time, increasingly pick up the pace. By the fourth, skip a step, trying to not hold onto the hand rail, and keep hands on your hips and coming back down. The fifth time, lunge to the top. Repeat the cycle over again. Doing the stairs is not only a good cardiovascular exercise, but it also works various muscles, including your quadriceps, glutes, hamstrings, calves, hip flexors and core.

4-minute butt quicker

This quick, 4-minute workout involves 40-seconds of all-out movement followed by 20 second rests. Here's how it goes:

- Squats for 40 seconds
Rest for 20 seconds
- Pushups for 40 seconds
Rest for 20 seconds.
- Mountain Climbers for 40 seconds
Rest for 20 seconds.
- Put it all together - squat, push up position, push up, left leg, right leg

Jumping Jacks

Jumping Jacks are an underrated, full-body workout and considered one of the best weight bearing exercises on the plane. This simple move offers cardio and agility and targets every muscle group. Do 30 Jumping Jacks and alternate with 30 Deep Squat Jacks. After jumping with your feet wide, return to a deep squat to target your calf, thigh, gluteal and abdominal muscles.

Street run

If you're someone who hates straight running, try this workout. Here's what you do:

- Minute 1: Light jog for 60 seconds
- Minute 2: Medium intensity run 15 seconds, light jog 15 seconds, medium intensity run 15 seconds, and light jog 15 seconds
- Minute 3: Toe taps on the curb for 30 seconds, squat for 30 seconds
- Minute 4: 15 second light jog, 15 second sprint, 10 second light jog, 20 second sprint
- Minute 5: 20 seconds left side shuffle, staying low, bring one foot to the other, turn around and jog backwards on toes.



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TOBACCO, ALCOHOL ARE MAIN CAUSES OF CANCER WORLDWIDE, SAYS A NEW STUDY, EMPHASISING ON LIFESTYLE CHANGES AS THE KEY DECISIVE FACTOR

Nearly half of cancers worldwide can be traced back to a known risk factor, primarily tobacco or alcohol, a recent global study has concluded this week. It said, behavioural changes can help reduce the threat of disease.

The Global Burden of Disease Study is a comprehensive regional and global research programme involving thousands of researchers from most countries across the world.

The study analysed the impact of 34 risk factors and confirmed what is al-

That also meant greater emphasis should be placed on prevention, the study found.

"The burden of cancer remains an important public health challenge that is growing in magnitude around the

However, around half of cancers are not attributable to a known risk factor, meaning early diagnosis and effective treatments must accompany efforts to raise prevention efforts, the study found.

AFP

CHRISTOPHER MURRAY



Liver diseases contribute a major share to the bulk of the diseases causing sufferings and mortality in the community.

Liver diseases can be acute or chronic. Acute liver diseases present with fever, fatigue, deep coloured urine, yellow eyes or jaundice and altered sensorium in a short span of days/weeks.

A classical example is acute viral hepatitis A, B, E that can cause community level outbreaks. Some of the other causes of acute hepatitis are drug induced liver disease and alcoholic hepatitis. Diagnosis at the early stage of the disease and initiating the optimal treatment is of prime importance as delay can result in



Dr Asif A S

Chronic liver diseases progress slowly and remain silent in the body for a long period of time until there is extreme liver damage, causing swelling of legs, abdominal distention due to fluid, muscle wasting, vomiting of blood, memory disturbances, etc.

coma and requirement for liver transplantation for saving the life of the patient in some cases. Early diagnosis is very important in taking measures to prevent the community spread of diseases as in the case of viral hepatitis A and B.

Chronic liver diseases progress slowly and remain silent in the body for a long period of time until there is extreme liver damage, causing swelling of legs, abdominal distention due to fluid, muscle wasting, vomiting of blood, memory disturbances, etc.

Non alcoholic fatty liver disease, alcohol abuse, viral hepati-

tis B and C are few common liver diseases that run a chronic course. These chronic liver disease patients can eventually develop liver cancer or succumb due to infections, bleeding, unless liver transplantation is done.

As part of its social commitment, Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Ruwi, has recently initiated a liver clinic. "Our objectives are to create community awareness regarding liver diseases, offer preventive measures like Hepatitis B vaccination, find out people with high risk of liver diseases like those consuming alcohol, those having family history of liver diseases, those having components of metabolic syndrome like diabetes and obesity," Dr Asif A S, specialist gastroenterologist, Badr Al Samaa Hospital, Ruwi, said.

"In established cases of liver diseases, we offer evidence-based treatment and ensure regular follow-ups to monitor changes in liver and watch for

the development of liver cancer which can be cured, if detected in initial stages. We have imaging facilities with expert radiologists for diagnosing early liver cancer. If the patient presents with life threatening conditions like bleeding, altered sensorium, and infections, we provide inten-

sive care unit (ICU) care with medical and endoscopic management," he said.

The hospital appeals to people in society to adopt a healthy diet, rich in fruits and vegetables, exercise regularly, maintain normal body weight, avoid alcohol and smoking, get proper treat-

ment for diabetes, hypertension, and hypothyroidism, and vaccinate to prevent hepatitis B. The status of your liver can be easily accessed by simple blood tests and imaging of the liver.'

"If any abnormality is detected, get expert opinion and advice," he added.

[illegible]