

Road accidents down 60%

Traffic accidents caused 434 deaths, 1,621 injuries in 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The latest data released by National Centre for Statistics and Information shows tangible improvement in traffic safety in the last five years, highlighting a reduction in road accidents.

The statistics reveal the number of accidents in Oman decreased 60 per cent in the last five years - from 3,845 in 2017 to 1,539 in 2021.

In 2017, there was an accident every three hours which reduced to one every six hours at the end of 2021.

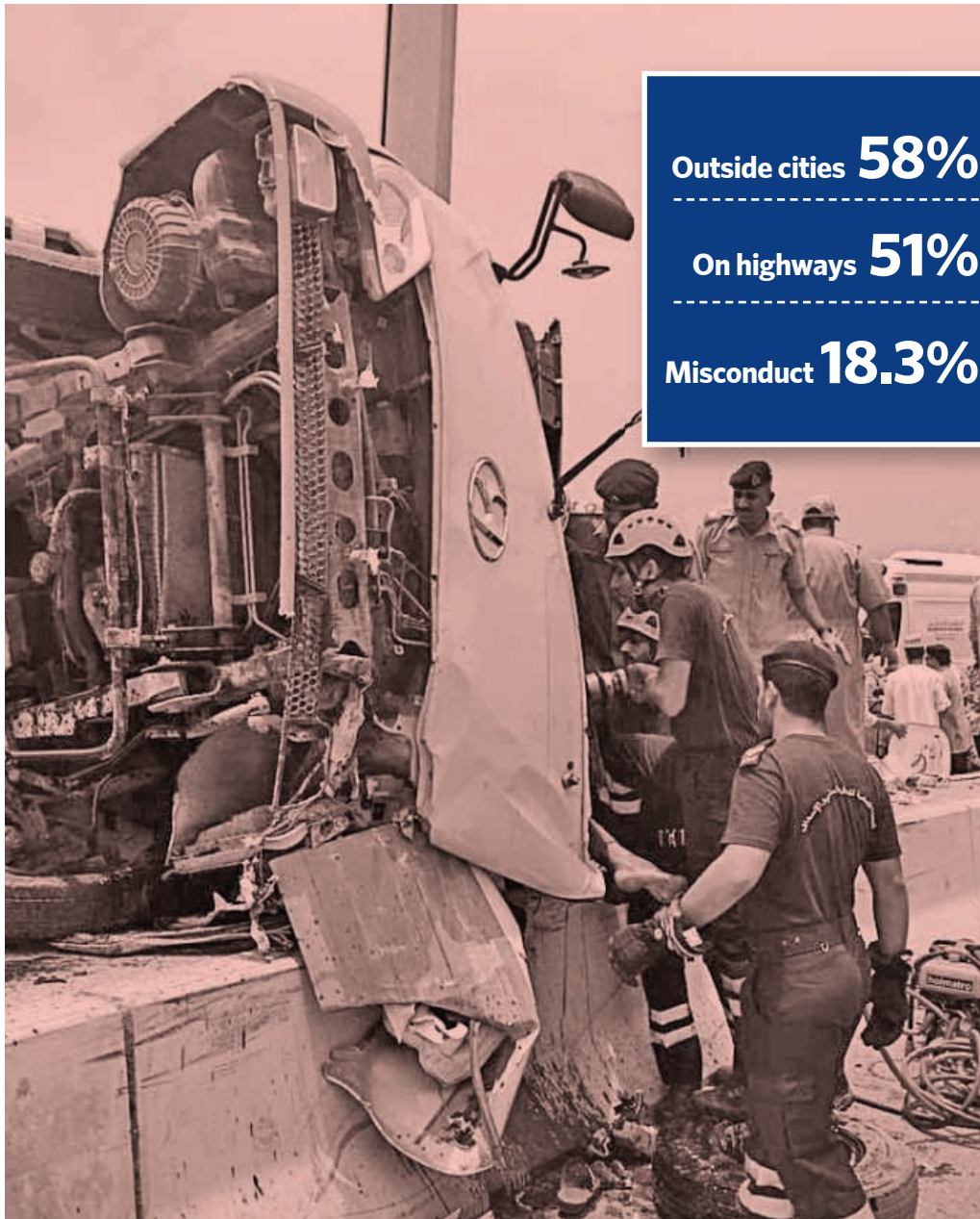
In 2021, traffic accidents resulted in 1,621 injuries and 434 deaths. Omanis accounted for 76 per cent of the total injuries and 66 per cent of deaths.

Past figures show 640 people were killed in traffic accidents in 2017, 637 in 2018, 511 in 2019 and 371 in 2020.

The data for 2021 indicates collisions between vehicles constituted the most common type - 41.1 per cent - of all traffic accidents.

Speed was the biggest cause of accidents, with 820 caused by speeding vehicles, constituting 53.3 per cent of the total traffic accidents.

Other causes of accidents include misconduct while driving (282 accidents), negligence



ACCIDENTS

Outside cities **58%**

On highways **51%**

Misconduct **18.3%**

Collision **41.1%**

Speed **53.3%**

Negligence **10%**

(153), failure to leave appropriate safe distance between vehicles (122), overtaking (56) and vehicle defects (41). Sixty-five traffic accidents occurred as a result of other reasons in 2021.

The data revealed 58 per cent of accidents occur outside cities, and most on highways, accounting for 51 per cent of the total accidents. While 809 accidents occurred during night, 730 happened during day.

Additionally, the data indicated 1,553,000 vehicles were registered in Oman in 2021, down 0.3 per cent from 2020. Private vehicles constituted 79.4 per cent of the total vehicles registered in the sultanate. The people-to-vehicle ratio was three to one, while density of vehicles per square kilometre was five vehicles per kilometre.

Antibiotic resistance in pediatric cancer patients high: Study

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A three-year study in Oman reveals there is an alarming level of antibiotic resistance in pediatric cancer patients in Oman.

Bloodstream infections (BSI) are serious and difficult oncologic complications, resulting in high morbidity and mortality. The study found that gram-negative organisms (bacteria) dominate BSIs among pediatric oncology patients in Oman, with *Klebsiella* (a type of gram-negative bacteria) being the most prevalent culprit, stated the study co-authored by five Omani researchers led by Abeer al Battashi, Department of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology at National Oncology Centre in The Royal Hospital.

Abeer elucidated the study found that resistance to multiple antibiotics existed in gram-negative and gram-positive bacterial groups, "which is worrisome because these antibiotics are commonly used as frontline treatment in managing febrile neutropenic cancer patients. There is a high level of resistance of gram-negative bacteria towards piperacillin-tazobactam (antibiotic)".

The study, published in the July edition of *Infection and Drug Resistance Journal*, reviewed the profile and susceptibility of bac-



teria associated with infections in children under 13 years of age receiving chemotherapy in Oman.

Prospective cohort study of pediatric oncology patients was conducted at The Royal Hospital. A total of 74 episodes of positive bacterial blood cultures were detected in 38 oncology patients (positive blood culture rate of 51 per cent). Fifty-seven per cent were positive for gram-negative organisms with *Klebsiella* (21 per cent) being the most common gram-negative organism cultured, while the most common gram-positive organism was *Staphylococcus* (coagulase negative *Staphylococcus* and *S. Aureus*) - accounting for 30 per cent of the positive cultures.

The majority of patients had gastrointestinal complaints (74 per cent), and almost half (51 per cent) had prolonged periods of neutropenia (having too few neutrophils - a type of white blood cells).

Continued on Page 02

NEWS BRIEF

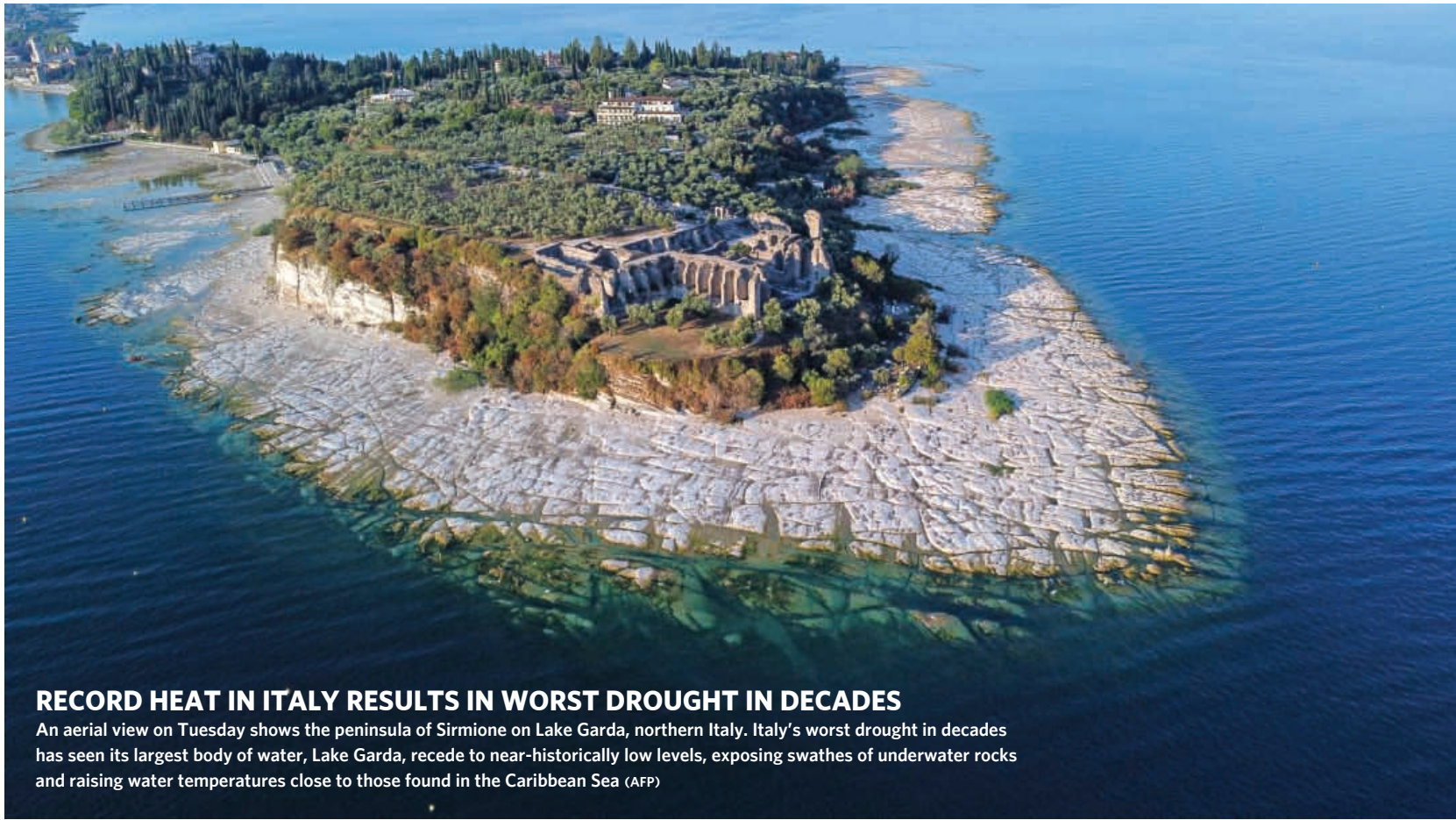
OMAN OIL DROPS
\$2.96 TO \$92.30

Muscat - The price of Oman crude continued to fall on Tuesday as it saw a drop of US\$2.96 to reach US\$92.30 for October 2022 delivery.

The average price of Oman oil for August stabilised at US\$112.93 per barrel, which is US\$5.71 per barrel higher than July delivery.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude fell one per cent to US\$94.16 per barrel on Tuesday, while US benchmark West Texas Intermediate was down 1.1 per cent to US\$88.45 per barrel.

Signs that Iran is moving towards a nuclear deal added to the downward pressure on prices, with an agreement seen as allowing the country to restart oil sales into the world market.



RECORD HEAT IN ITALY RESULTS IN WORST DROUGHT IN DECADES

An aerial view on Tuesday shows the peninsula of Sirmione on Lake Garda, northern Italy. Italy's worst drought in decades has seen its largest body of water, Lake Garda, recede to near-historically low levels, exposing swaths of underwater rocks and raising water temperatures close to those found in the Caribbean Sea (AFP)

WHO turns to public for monkeypox name change

Geneva, Switzerland - The World Health Organization, which is looking to rename monkeypox, called on Tuesday for help from the public in coming up with a less stigmatising designation for the fast-spreading disease.

The UN health agency has for weeks voiced concern about the name of the disease that emerged onto the global stage in May.

Experts warn the name can be stigmatising to the primates it was named after, but who play little role in its spread, and to the African continent that the animals are often associated with.

Recently in Brazil, for instance, there have been reported cases of people attacking monkeys over disease fears.

"Human monkeypox was given its name before current best practices in naming diseases," WHO spokeswoman Fadela Chaib told reporters in Geneva.

"We want really to find a name that is not stigmatising," she added, saying the consultation is now open to everyone through a dedicated website: <https://icd.who.int/dev11>

Monkeypox received its name because the virus was originally identified in monkeys kept for research in Denmark in 1958, but the disease is found in a number of animals, and most frequently in rodents.

The disease was first discovered in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with the spread among humans since then mainly limited to certain West and Central African countries where it is endemic.

AFP

World food crisis about to get worse: World Bank

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Record high food prices have triggered a global crisis that will drive millions more into extreme poverty, magnifying hunger and malnutrition, while threatening to erase hard-won gains in development, the World Bank has said.

The war in Ukraine, supply chain disruptions, and the continued economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic are reversing years of development gains and pushing food prices to all-time highs, the bank said in its August 15 dated *Food Security Update*.

'Rising food prices have a greater impact on people in low- and middle-income countries, since they spend a larger share of

their income on food than people in high-income countries.'

Domestic food price inflation remains high around the world, the report stated. 'Information from between April and July 2022 shows high inflation in almost all low- and middle-income countries; 92.9 per cent of low-income countries, 92.7 per cent of lower-middle-income countries, and 89 per cent of upper-middle-income countries have seen inflation levels above five per cent, with many experiencing double-digit inflation,' the World Bank stated.

The share of high-income countries with high inflation, it added, has also increased sharply, with about 83.3 per cent experiencing high food price inflation.



'As of August 11, 2022, the Agricultural Price Index was one per cent higher than two weeks ago. Both maize and wheat prices are two per cent higher compared to January 2022, while rice prices are about six per cent

higher. Compared to the January 2021 average, maize and wheat price indices are 20 per cent higher, while the rice price index is 16 per cent lower.'

According to the World Bank's April 2022 *Commodity Markets*

Outlook, the war in Ukraine has altered global patterns of trade, production, and consumption of commodities in ways that will keep prices at historically high levels through the end of 2024 exacerbating food insecurity and inflation.

Following the start of the war in Ukraine, trade-related policies imposed by countries have surged. The global food crisis has been partially made worse by the growing number of food trade restrictions put in place by countries with a goal of increasing domestic supply and reducing prices.

As of August 11, at least 23 countries have implemented 33 food export bans, and at least seven have implemented 11 export-limiting measures.



E-payment transactions rose
81% in 2021: CBO



Fitch projects Oman's GDP
growth at 4.4% for 2022

Dar al Atta'a extends help to flood-hit families in Rustaq

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Continuing its charity initiatives, Dar al Atta'a has adopted the case of Abdullah and his family of 11, and other families, in the wilayat of Rustaq as part of the association's Disaster Relief Programme.

Abdullah is a brave young man, living in difficult conditions and struggling to meet the medical requirements of his special needs siblings and old parents.

Abdullah and his family's only source of income was a grocery store where he worked, which was completely damaged in the rains that hit Rustaq recently. Abdullah lost his livelihood as a result of the rains.

Dar al Atta'a visited Abdullah's family and the shop, and found out that the family urgently needed medical help for his siblings, in addition to repairs in the shop.

The association promoted Abdullah's case in its mobile application to collect donations, and with the support of the community, collected a significant



(Supplied photo)

God brings our society together every time we experience such adverse climatic conditions and other challenging situations in life

DR SHAMSA AL HARTHY

amount within two days. The donations totalled RO16,500, which will be utilised to repair and restock the shop. A café attached to the shop will also be build.

In addition, efforts are being coordinated with Sultan Qaboos University Hospital for appropriate treatment for his family members.

Besides Abdullah's family, Dar

al Atta'a has supported five underprivileged families whose houses were damaged, providing five electrical appliances each as well as food rations and other supplies.

The association is also supporting seven families with house repair works after their homes were damaged as a result of heavy rains and overflowing wadis.

Omantel announces aid for flood-hit areas in S Batinah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) has announced a contribution of RO 150,000 in aid of flood-hit communities in South Batinah.

In a disclosure, Omantel said its Board of Directors has approved a donation that will help in bringing back normalcy in some of the wilayats of South Batinah affected by heavy rains on August 1, 2022.

'The Board of Directors has approved a donation of RO150,000 to help restore services and those affected by the heavy rains,' the disclosure said.

It added that the donation is part of the company's commitment to support government efforts in such extraordinary circumstances. 'The amount will be distributed through the approved official channels,' it said.

The next Annual General Meeting of the company, scheduled for the first quarter of 2023, will be notified of the donation.

Bank Nizwa is also providing help to those directly affected by the rains and has pledged RO40,000 to support flood-hit



people and companies in these wilayats.

Earlier this month, officials visited several villages in South Batinah to inspect the damage caused by the rains. H E Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General of Ministry of Finance, and several undersecretaries also met a group of citizens whose homes and properties were damaged.

The citizens were briefed on the efforts exerted by the relevant authorities to restore basic services affected by the rains and overflowing wadis. The officials' visit included the villages of Wadi Bani Kharus in the wilayat of Al Awabi, and Wadi Bani Awf, Al Ghushab and Al Tekha in the wilayat of Rustaq.

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H E HARTHY RECEIVES CREDENTIALS OF UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE



H E Shaikh Khalifa Ali al Hartthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in Foreign Ministry, received the credentials of Sumaira Chowdhury, Representative of Unicef. H E Hartthy wished Sumaira success in her mission in Oman (ONA)

Dust storms prevail along Adam-Thumrait road



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Meteorology has warned that dust storms will prevail due to active winds on the Adam-Thumrait-Salalah road on Wednesday and Thursday.

In a statement, Oman Mete-

orology said, 'There are chances of dust storms due to the movement of active winds on the Adam-Thumrait road leading to Salalah that may reduce horizontal visibility'.

It added that people should be cautious of flying unstable objects.

Drug resistance in pediatric cancer patients

Continued from Page 01

'One third of gram-negative organisms were resistant to four or more antibiotics with a major resistance of 31 per cent to piperacillin-tazobactam. Of the gram-positive organisms, 38 per cent were resistant to at least four antibiotics and 30 per cent were pan-resistant (except for vancomycin).'

The study concluded that undertaking antibiotic stewardship rounds to provide a clear path for limiting the use of broad-spectrum antibiotics, especially in low-risk cases, and over-seeing the handling of antibiotics would be invaluable. 'Strict infection-control and prevention practice is another cornerstone for improvement of the outcome of patients.'

E-payments rose 81% in 2021

CBO is making efforts to develop affordable and easily accessible e-payment systems

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The growth of e-payment systems in Oman has contributed to boosting economic development by facilitating fast, real-time and advanced e-payment operations while supporting the National E-Commerce Strategy implemented by public and private sector institutions to enhance the National Digital Economy Programme.

Available data indicates an increase in the use of retail e-payment gateways in Oman in 2021, according to H E Tahir bin Salim al Amri, executive president of Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

He asserted that CBO is pushing ahead with its efforts to develop affordable and easily accessible e-payment systems with cutting-edge technology supported by a safe infrastructure that contributes to achieving Oman's digital economy objectives.

H E Amri stated that the number of automated transactions between banks crossed the 14mn mark and was valued at over RO9bn, a 39 per cent increase in 2021 compared to 2020 in overall transactions.

ATM cash withdrawals de-



creased - accounting for 19 per cent of all card transactions in 2021 compared to 26 per cent in 2020. In contrast, POS and on-line payment transactions rose from 66 per cent in 2019 to 81 per cent in 2021.

Speaking at the launch of CBO's Tawasul programme in Dhofar which is aimed at instilling a set of values related to the banking sector, H E Amri said the apex bank is focused on raising

awareness in the community on the importance of saving and the principles of responsible financing through a series of lectures and specialised workshops by a group of institutions in Dhofar. Discussions were also held on the banking sector's top developments and highlights of CBO's roles and responsibilities.

The launch event was held under the auspices of H H Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Gover-

ment systems that contribute to boosting economic development in the sultanate, in addition to supporting the National E-Commerce Strategy implemented by various public and private sector institutions to enhance the National Digital Economy Programme.

nor of Dhofar.

The Tawasul programme also aims to enhance active communication between institutions and the community, creating a dialogue with community members to discuss their feedback on the sector's performance.

The Tawasul programme's first stop in the Governorate of Dhofar will witness discussions of several topics, mainly responsible borrowing and the e-pay-

Minimal invasive procedure performed in heart patients



Our Correspondent
Muscat

A surgical team at Salalah Cardiology and Surgery Centre successfully implanted watchman devices in two patients who suffer from recurrent strokes as a result of atrial fibrillation.

The watchman device is an acorn-shaped device that is implanted in the left atrial appendage of the heart in order to permanently close off this small area of the heart. More than 90 per cent of clots develop in the left atrial appendage which can

cause stroke in patients with atrial fibrillation.

Dr Saeed bin Musalam al Ma'ashani, director of Salalah Cardiology and Surgery Centre, informed that this was the first time the minimally invasive catheterisation procedure was performed in the governorate.

He added that the device is implanted in patients who cannot be given blood-thinning treatments due to frequent bleeding.

The two operations were performed on patients over the age of 60.

Urgent call for donations of negative blood types

Muscat - The Department of Blood Bank Services (DBBS) has urged people with negative blood types to donate.

In a statement, DBBS said, 'Blood banks are facing difficulty in providing negative blood types (A-, O- and B-).

'If your blood type is negative, do not delay your donation. There are patients in urgent need of blood.'



OPINION

SALEH MIRI, MUSCAT DAILY COLUMNIST, IS AN ARCHITECT WHO CAME TO OMAN IN THE EARLY 1980S

The first story relates to a Persian king who asked his minister a simple question: "As the ruler of this country - possessing everything imaginable and deciding on every matter - why am I not happy whilst those who work for me, having far less, appear to have a smile on their face?"

The minister told the king that this shows that he did not know the 99 per cent rule! The king asked, "What is this so-called 99 per cent rule?"

The minister asked him to put 99 golden coins into a bag, write '100 coins' on it and give it to one of the servants. When the servant reached home, he opened the bag and began counting the coins. In no time, the servant was shocked to discover that one coin was missing! He hurriedly asked his family to help search for the missing coin.

The next day, not having slept, the tired and nervous servant came to see the king. The minister whispered in the king's ear: "See, Your Majesty, people spend their time looking for something that they do not have, and do not see what they have. This is the 99 per cent rule."

The second story relates to a company in Sweden that wanted to hire a fresh staff member. They prepared a questionnaire, expecting an answer to the following question: 'You are driving down the road in your car on a wild and stormy night. The weather is like a hurricane, with heavy rains, high winds, and lightning flashing



THREE LESSONS OF LIFE

constantly. While driving, you come across a partially-covered bus stop where you see three people waiting for a bus -

- An old woman who looks like she's about to die.
- An old friend who is a doctor and once saved your life.
- The perfect partner you have been dreaming of (your soul mate).

'Knowing that you have room for only one passenger in your car (it's a really small car), who will you choose to offer a ride? And why?'

Many responses came with a variety of solutions. The person who was selected had the following response: 'I would give the car keys to my old friend, the doctor, and let him take the old woman to the hospital, while I stay behind and wait for the bus with the partner of my dreams.'

The third story is about an American businessman observing a man sitting next to a ridiculously small boat catching two small fish. When asked what he was doing, the man

answered, "I came to catch two fish, which I will take home and eat with my family."

The businessman asked him, "Why don't you spend more time and go further up the river and catch bigger fish?"

The fisherman asked, "Why would I do that?" The businessman said, "You could sell the bigger fish and make money."

"And then what will my reward be?" asked the fisherman again. The businessman was beginning to get a little irritated with the fisherman's questions. "You could buy a bigger boat and hire some people to work for you!" he said. "And then what will my reward be?" repeated the fisherman.

By now, the businessman was getting angry. "Don't you understand? You could build a fleet of fishing boats, sail all over the world, and let all your employees catch fish for you!"

Once again, the fisherman asked, "And then what will my reward be?"

The businessman was red with rage and shouted at the fisherman, "Don't you understand that you could become so rich that you never have to work for your living again! You could spend the rest of your days sitting by this river, looking at the sunset. You wouldn't have a care in the world!"

The fisherman, still smiling, said, "And what do you think I'm doing right now?"

Many stories exist in life. All we need to do is open our eyes, ears and hearts and begin listening to them.



Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tender

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable)	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
TENDER/2022/08/ENG/001	External Road Works at Qarn Al Alam New Filling Station	100.000 OMR	23.08.2022	29.08.2022	01.09.2022
Bank Name & Account Number		Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)			

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM - 03:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
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*Rates as on August 16
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

UK wages decline on record inflation
Britain's unemployment rate remains close to 50-year lows, but wage values are falling at a record pace with inflation at the highest level in decades, official data showed. Unemployment stood at 3.8 per cent in the three months to the end of June, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement, AFP reported.

This was unchanged compared with the three months to the end of May.

Darren Morgan, director of economic statistics at the ONS, said that although the latest data pointed to the number of job vacancies remaining "historically very high, it fell for the first time since the summer of 2020" when the UK briefly exited a Covid lockdown.

He added that excluding bonuses, real pay "is still dropping faster than at any time since comparable records began in 2001".

It comes with UK inflation at a 40-year high of 9.4 per cent on surging energy and food prices.

Fitch projects Oman's GDP growth at 4.4% for 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Global credit ratings agency Fitch Ratings has projected Oman's real GDP growth at 4.4 per cent for 2022, up from 3.0 per cent in the previous year, mainly driven by higher crude oil and gas production.

Fitch on Monday upgraded Oman's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating to 'BB' from 'BB-' with a stable outlook.

The Ministry of Economy on Tuesday said the rating upgrade by Fitch embodies the success of Oman's financial and economic policies and measures adopted during the past period. The rating upgrade – which reflects the commitment to achieve strategic objectives of the 10th five-year plan – would enhance the confidence of foreign investors, the ministry said in a tweet.

The rating upgrade reflects significant improvements in Oman's fiscal metrics, a lessening of external financing pressures and ongoing efforts to reform public finances, Fitch said in its statement.

'Oman's real GDP growth will accelerate in 2022 to 4.4 per cent from 3.0 per cent in 2021, driven largely by the oil sector as the sultanate increases crude oil production alongside the OPEC+ taper,' the ratings agency said.

Non-oil GDP growth, Fitch said, should strengthen mildly to



around 3.0 per cent, given loosening pandemic-related restrictions, renewed population growth and a mild loosening of fiscal policy.

Fitch, however, forecasts the sultanate's growth to slow to 2.8 per cent in 2023 and to around 2 per cent in 2024-2025 as gains in hydrocarbon production level off, oil prices fall and the government pursues its Medium-Term Fiscal Plan.

The agency forecasted Oman's inflation to rise in 2022 but remain contained at 3.5 per cent on average, helped by government price controls, before moderating to under 2 per cent in 2023-2024.

Fitch on Monday upgraded Oman's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating to 'BB' from 'BB-' with a stable outlook

First surplus since 2013
As oil revenue growth due to higher crude prices this year easily outweighs additional spending, Fitch expects Oman to post budget surpluses of 5.5 per cent and 3.4 per cent of GDP in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

As per Fitch's forecasts, Oman's public spending will be nearly 6 per cent higher than

barrels per day. Favourable prices will also boost budget revenue from gas,' Fitch said.

The ratings agency forecasts Oman's debt-to-GDP ratio to fall to 46.7 per cent in 2022 and 44.9 per cent in 2023, from around 70 per cent in 2020, on the back of better budget performance and oil-fuelled nominal GDP growth of 24 per cent in 2022.

Fitch said that external financing pressure for the sultanate have eased this year. The government has fulfilled its external financing requirement for 2022 and has reduced the size of maturities in 2023 to US\$1.7bn, the agency noted.

CBO issues RO10mn treasury bills
Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tender of the government treasury bills (issue number 142) was issued this week by the Central Bank of Oman.

Total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO10mn, for a maturity period of 28 days, from August 17, 2022 until September 14, 2022. The average accepted price reached RO99.830 for every RO100 treasury bill, while the minimum accepted price also arrived at RO99.830.

The average discount rate and average yield reached 2.21607 per cent and 2.21985 per cent, respectively. The interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 3.00 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with the central bank is 3.5 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance. These instruments provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman acts as the issue manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (repo).

Treasury bills promote local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term rates. Government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.

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MUSCAT DAILY

OPAZ launches e-service for SMEs

Duqm – Oman's Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) on Tuesday announced the opening of electronic service for registering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the One-Stop Shop, through the Digital Investment Portal of the authority.

Through this service, entrepreneurs registered with the SMEs Development Authority, holding Riyada card, can get more opportunities in procurement, tenders, and works assigned to SMEs from the projects operating in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and the free zones.

Abdulaziz bin Mohamed al Hinai from OPAZ said, "There are many prospects and opportunities in SEZAD and the free zones affiliated to the authority for entrepreneurs to benefit



from. This service which has been converted to e-service in the One-Stop Shop aims to create a database that facilitates reaching out to entrepreneurs, with Riyada card and those registered in the zones affiliated to

the authority."

Hinai said that these enterprises can benefit from the opportunities offered, which represent 10 per cent of the value of the projects implemented in the zones.

Through its digital transformation plans, OPAZ seeks to automate its procedures for the benefit of entrepreneurs and to facilitate OPAZ access to entrepreneurs by creating a database that classifies the types of activities offered by SMEs. Through this database, SMEs will have the opportunities to take part in the tenders and contracts of the projects implemented in OPAZ's various zones through the Digital Investment Portal of the authority.

OZPA also intends to achieve continuous development in all electronic services offered to entrepreneurs.

The works assigned to SMEs in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm from 2016 to 2022 amounted to RO68mn, and more than 230 SMEs have benefited from these amounts which registered with OPAZ.

Oil majors' climate visions 'inconsistent' with Paris deal temperature targets

Paris, France – Global decarbonisation scenarios envisioned by oil and gas majors are incompatible with the Paris climate deal temperature goals aimed at averting devastating heating, according to research published Tuesday.

The landmark 2015 accord saw nations commit to limit planetary heating to "well below" two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels and to work towards a safer 1.5-C warming cap.

Writing in the journal Nature Communications, an international team of experts analysed six emissions scenarios from three European energy giants – Equinor, BP and Shell – as well as those produced by the Interna-

tional Energy Agency.

They then compared the analysed pathways to scenarios outlined in a special report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on 1.5C of warming.

The team used these to evaluate peak and end-of-century temperatures under each scenario, noting that average global temperatures may decline by 2100 in some scenarios after peaking.

They also assessed the underlying energy system changes that drive emissions and could lead to a given scenario meeting – or failing to meet – the Paris temperature goals.

"Most of the scenarios we evaluated would be classified as

inconsistent with the Paris Agreement as they fail to limit warming to 'well below 2C', let alone 1.5C, and would exceed the 1.5C warming limit by a significant margin," said Robert Brecha of the Climate Analytics think tank and co-lead author of the study. "Energy system transformation is critical to reaching the Paris Agreement warming limit, and decision makers need sound and transparent scientific assessments. This paper adds to that transparency."

The analysis found that Shell's Sky scenario would lead to warming of 1.81C by 2069 – a far cry from 1.5C.

A Shell spokeswoman told AFP that the Sky pathway was just one of several envisaged by

the company.

The team responsible for modelling scenarios "makes assessments based on plausible assumptions and quantifications, which are not intended to be predictions of likely future events or outcomes, let alone our energy transition plan", she added.

Equinor's Rebalance scenario would see warming peak at 1.73C above pre-industrial levels by 2060, according to the study.

BP's Rapid scenario would see peak warming of 1.73C by 2058, while its Net Zero scenario would see median warming peak at 1.65C, the analysis found.

Equinor declined to comment, while BP did not respond to a comment request.

AFP

Oil prices extend losses but gas hits six-month high

London, UK - Oil prices extended losses Tuesday but European gas prices hit near six-month highs, in both cases fuelling fears of recession.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude fell 1.0 per cent at US\$94.16 per barrel on Tuesday, while US benchmark West Texas Intermediate was down by 1.1 per cent at US\$88.45 per barrel.

Major stock markets mostly rose on bets that the Federal Reserve would not lift borrowing costs by 75 basis points for a third straight time next month after decades-high inflation eased in the United States.

However, "a slick of worry is growing about the darkening prospects for global growth as economies slow around the world, pushing down oil prices in expectation of lower demand", noted Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

Both main crude contracts dropped, having lost about three per cent Monday, as demand expectations decline in light of a string of soft economic indicators in major economies, notably China.



Signs that Iran is moving towards a nuclear deal added to the downward pressure on prices, with an agreement seen as allowing the country to restart oil sales into the world market.

Analysts said Tehran could provide 2.5mn barrels a day, giving a much-needed shot in the arm to supplies, which have been hammered by sanctions on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine.

Libya has also boosted production, helping prices drop to

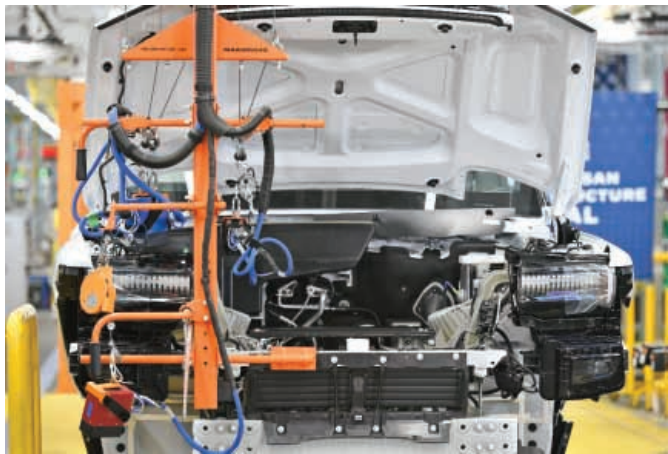
six-month lows and wiping out the gains seen after the Ukraine war started. But analysts warned that there might still be some way to go on an Iran agreement, owing to upcoming US elections.

"A deal with Iran would likely not be popular with US voters and so is hard to envisage before the November mid-terms," said National Australia Bank's Ray Attrill. "Markets are currently prone to optimism, though, and hopes for a deal... have added to downward pressure on oil

prices." The European Union on Tuesday it was studying Iran's response to a "final" draft agreement on reviving a 2015 nuclear accord with major powers it presented at talks in Vienna. The United States on Monday said it was informing EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell of its response to the text he submitted on August 8. In Europe Tuesday, the natural gas reference price Dutch TTF rallied 4.7 per cent to 230.50

In Europe Tuesday, natural gas reference price Dutch TTF sharply rose by 4.7 per cent to 230.50 euros per megawatt hour – the highest points since the start of March

euros per megawatt hour – the highest points since the start of March, or not long after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday accused Washington of drawing out the war, as explosions rocked a Russian military facility on the Kremlin-controlled peninsula of Crimea. Washington is "using the people of Ukraine as cannon fodder", he said, lashing out at the United States for supplying weapons to Kyiv. AFP



A GMC Hummer EV is seen on an assembly line at the General Motors Factory ZERO electric vehicle assembly plant in Detroit, Michigan (AFP)

American industrial output jumps in July

Washington, US - A solid rebound in American manufacturing, especially vehicles, following two months of declines, help push overall industrial production up in July, the Federal Reserve said Tuesday.

A massive 6.6 per cent surge in motor vehicle and parts production was a key driver the 0.7 per cent rise in manufacturing, which was the biggest gain since March, the data showed.

That boosted total industrial output by 0.6 per cent last month, which was double the consensus forecast among economists.

The gain contrasted with the massive decline in a regional survey by the New York Fed for the first week of August, which

briefly spooked investors on Monday.

"Manufacturing activity is cooling, but retains some momentum; no indications of a massive pullback," said Gregory Daco, chief economist of EY Parthenon.

"I'd downplay the huge drop in the Empire State survey & focus on the ISM readings pointing to cooling activity," Daco said on Twitter, referring to a nationwide survey that showed a slowdown but continued growth last month.

Mining production also rose 0.7 per cent, on "gains in coal mining and in oil and gas well drilling," while utilities fell 0.8 per cent, the Fed said. AFP

Europe gas link to be a reality 'soon'

Madrid, Spain - Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Tuesday he hopes a gas pipeline linking the Iberian Peninsula to central Europe through France could soon become a reality.

Europe is currently undergoing an energy crisis as it struggles to rapidly reduce its dependence on Russian gas following the invasion of Ukraine.

Russia has reduced deliveries and nations are scrambling for supplies to avoid a possible shortage this winter, while prices for gas and electricity have soared.

"Spain has a lot to contribute to help Europe reduce its energy dependence on Russia thanks to our immense regasification capacity," Sanchez said on a visit to La Palma in the Canary Islands.

Spain currently has six liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals for processing deliveries made by huge sea tankers back into gas and injecting them into its pipeline network.

But the country has only two low-capacity links to France's gas network, limiting its current ability to act as a conduit to boost EU gas imports.

Last week, German Chancellor



Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez holds a press conference at Palacio Salazar in Santa Cruz de La Palma during his visit to the Canary island of La Palma (AFP)

Olaf Scholz said a pipeline bringing gas from the Iberian Peninsula through France to central Europe could make "a massive contribution" to easing the supply crisis, in remarks hailed by Madrid and Lisbon.

Madrid has for years championed the idea of a pipeline across the Catalan Pyrenees with France to significantly increase transfer capacity and insisted such link could be built within months.

"This is something the Spanish

government has been demanding from Europe for a long time now... and we hope we can soon make this dream into a reality," Sanchez said.

Spain is already showing solidarity with its European partners by exporting energy "and we will do so even more when we improve the energy interconnections", he added.

The pipeline would be similar to the defunct MidCat project, which sought to link Spain to

France, but which was halted in 2019 over opposition from environmental groups and a lack of funding.

Spain's gas network operator Enagas said last week it could have the Spanish section of the pipeline ready within "eight or nine months".

Sources familiar with the project said it would initially transport natural gas, but would ultimately switch to hydrogen. AFP

Huawei revenues decline 6% to \$45bn in first half of 2022

Beijing, China - Huawei's revenue dipped by just under six per cent in the first half of 2022, company figures showed, as the Covid-19 pandemic and US-China trade rivalry hit sales.

The Chinese telecom giant brought in 301.6bn yuan (US\$44.8bn), according to the data, a slip of 5.9 per cent on the previous year.

"While our device business was heavily impacted, our ICT infrastructure business maintained steady growth," Ken Hu, Huawei's rotating chairman, said in a statement.

Weak global demand due to the pandemic, as well as a 2019 US blacklisting that snarled its supply chains, have hurt the company's device business, which sells smartphones and laptops, a Huawei spokeswoman told AFP.

In the second quarter, Huawei lost its position among the top five global smartphone sellers, according to industry data provider Canalys.

A supplier of networking equipment, phones, and other state-of-the-art gear, Huawei



has struggled in the wake of a crackdown by the administration of former US president Donald Trump, which cited cybersecurity and espionage concerns.

The Biden administration has added to the pressure on the firm with the recently passed US Chip Act, which could threaten its access to global semiconductor supply chains.

Profit growth for the first half slowed to five percent, down from 9.8 per cent over the same period last year, Friday's figures showed. The company's smartphone sales have also slowed after the United States barred it from using Google's Android services, continuing to decline in the first half. The firm has

launched its own Harmony operating system, which is now being used on 300mn Huawei devices mostly in China, but it is yet to be rolled out internationally.

The company's global 5G infrastructure expansion plans have also faced a backlash in major economies including the UK, Australia and India over security concerns.

In the wake of US sanctions, the tech giant has tried to shore up other parts of its business.

It has refocused on the Chinese market and diversified to enterprise and cloud computing, designing smart car components and energy efficiency systems. AFP

Net zero, Russia war driving nascent hydrogen economy

Birmingham, UK - Kevin Kendall pulls up at the only green hydrogen refuelling station in Birmingham, Britain's second-biggest city, and swiftly fills his sedan with clean gas.

Green hydrogen is in sharp focus as governments seek to slash carbon emissions amid record-high temperatures and to safeguard energy supplies hit by the invasion of Ukraine by oil and gas producer Russia.

But the "hydrogen economy" has not fully kicked into gear awaiting significant uptake from high-polluting sectors like steel and aviation.

For Kendall, being an early user of green hydrogen means he does not have to queue during his lunchtime trip to what resembles a petrol pump.

"There is very little green hydrogen being produced in Britain at the moment," the professor of

chemical engineering tells AFP. "It needs now to move forward."

In Birmingham, central England, it costs about £50 (US\$60) to fill Kendall's Toyota Mirai with the green hydrogen that is produced at a plant next to the refuelling station.

That is around half the bill for a similar-sized diesel car after the Ukraine war sent fossil fuel prices rocketing.

Despite the price benefit, Britain is home to around only a dozen hydrogen refuelling stations.

While hydrogen is the most abundant element on Earth, it is locked in water and hydrocarbons such as natural gas, meaning "it's difficult to make", according to Kendall's daughter, Michaela Kendall.

Together they founded Adelan, a small-sized business producing box-shaped fuel cells



similar to the metal-encased devices used to help power the Toyota Mirai.

Set up 26 years ago, Adelan is the longest-running maker of fuel cells in Britain - which work also with liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) - while the company also offers a leasing service for the

Japanese automaker's hydrogen cars. 'Increasingly attractive'

"Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the economics of green hydrogen have become increasingly attractive," Minh Khoi Le, head of hydrogen research at

Rystad Energy, told AFP.

"Coupled with many incentives in the second half of 2022 globally, green hydrogen looks to satisfy the trilemma of the energy system: energy security, affordability, and sustainability."

Fallout from the war has caused the European Union to bolster its gas reserves by slashing consumption 15 per cent.

The bloc is also seeking to significantly increase supplies of green hydrogen, which is made from water via electrolysis and with renewable energy.

This is in contrast to the more available blue hydrogen, which environmentalists oppose as it is produced from natural gas in a process that releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

At Adelan's Birmingham workshop, a quaint brick building surrounded by houses, staff are testing the company's so-called

solid oxide fuel cells that are replacing diesel generators.

Overseeing the work, company chief executive Michaela Kendall says she expects "hydrogen capacity to really increase but it will take time".

"Hydrocarbons will still be used for the foreseeable future," she predicts "because the hydrogen economy has not really evolved, it's just at the early stage".

Britain's government says £9bn of investment is needed "to make hydrogen a cornerstone of the UK's greener future" as it targets net zero carbon emissions by mid-century.

In Birmingham, the plan is for about 10 hydrogen refuelling stations in the next few years following the arrival of 120 hydrogen buses to the city in 2023. Other UK cities, including Aberdeen in Scotland, are travel-

ling the same road.

However, "only Los Angeles has been reasonably successful with something like 9,000 hydrogen vehicles and 40 hydrogen stations", says Kevin.

"That's what we'd like Birmingham to be."

Electric surge

The Toyota, resembling a standard vehicle inside and out, is powered by electricity. This has been produced by green hydrogen combining with oxygen in a fuel cell.

The only waste emitted from the vehicle, which has a range of 400 miles (640 kilometres), is water vapour.

Adelan's solid oxide fuel cell, so-called because its electrolyte is ceramic, is described as "an electric device", generating power for batteries. AFP

ahli islamic’s cash reward for salary transfer customers

ahli islamic’s ongoing initiative to enhance value-added benefits for its growing clientele has set in motion its ambitious ten per cent cash-back reward for salary transfer customers. Launched earlier this year, the popular scheme continues to support ahli islamic’s commitment to offering its patrons and potential customers newer avenues to grow and enhance their experience.

As per the scheme, ahli islamic offers a ten per cent cash reward on the total salary, reaching up to a maximum of RO500. The one-time offer applies to all the existing and new customers, both Omanis and expatriates, whose monthly salaries are RO1,000 and above. The one-time cash reward continues to translate the ahli islamic’s intent to provide customers with Islamic banking products that comply with the changing market trends and choices of customers from diverse backgrounds.

Dentons names Yasser Taqi as first Omani partner

Dentons, the world’s largest law firm, has strengthened its Energy, Transport and Infrastructure team in Oman and the Middle East with the promotion of Yasser Taqi to Partner.

Yasser is an England and Wales qualified lawyer, who joined Dentons as one of the firm’s first trainees from the Middle East region. After over ten years in Dentons’ offices in London, Dubai and Muscat, Yasser is now the first Omani lawyer to be promoted to Partner at Dentons.

Yasser has advised on numerous significant and high-profile mandates including drafting the rules for the region’s first spot market for the wholesale of electricity; developing Oman’s largest utility-scale solar PV IPP; handling construction sector arbitrations as well as construction contracts; and negotiating concession agreements in the oil and gas, mining and ports sectors. He is an expert in the regulatory framework for power and water in both Oman and Saudi Arabia.

Instant transactions in NBO’s Corporate Internet Banking

Providing its corporate customers with the tools to achieve their business objectives, National Bank of Oman’s Corporate Internet Banking continues to offer a seamless way to carry out an ever-increasing number of everyday financial tasks from the comfort of the office.

The award-winning platform allows users to make instant transactions, payments and transfers in local and foreign currencies, as well as view account updates in real time, make on-the-spot enquiries, and upload files for vendor and salary payments including Wage Protection System (WPS) files. In addition, due to its Straight-Through-Processing nature users no longer need to follow up for transaction statuses as the platform provides real-time updates and bank statements, available for download in different formats.

Nissan Patrol Super Safari available on special scheme



Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) is offering a special promotion on Nissan Patrol Super Safari. With its proud heritage, composed of power, determination and strength, the Nissan Patrol Super Safari transcends one’s expectations of any vehicle.

As part of the special scheme Nissan Patrol Super Safari customers can enjoy special EMI, free periodic vehicle service package (three years/60,000km), free insurance and free registration. Customers can also avail additional benefits on purchase of second Nissan in the family.

The offer, which is available on Nissan Patrol Super Safari model purchased for personal use, will go on till August 19.

ZAG hosts certificate distribution ceremony for English programme



The Zubair Automotive Group, recently lauded the first batch of 36 graduates of its English language programme. The ceremony was conducted by the Human Resources Department of the Zubair Automotive Group on June 29 this year, under the patronage of the COO, Mohammed Yahya al Farei, alongside General Managers of the group.

Commenting on the ceremony, Jamal al Balushi, Group General Manager HR & Admin said, “The Zubair Automotive Group is committed to developing and enriching the skills of its employees through the implementation of various programmes. Through this step, we are keen to upskill the existing proficiencies of our staff to be able to provide a superior customer experience.

“We extend a warm congratulations to the graduates of the English language programme and wish them all the best for their future. We also look forward to welcoming the new batch of talented individuals as they take part in the programme to enhance their capabilities and contribute to our efforts in delivering an unmatched customer experience.”

English Language Training course for a period of 8 weeks, was conducted in the Zubair Automotive prem-

We extend a warm congratulations to the graduates of the English language programme and wish them all the best for their future. We look forward to welcoming the new batch of talented individuals as they take part in the programme to enhance their capabilities in delivering an unmatched customer experience

JAMAL AL BALUSHI

ises in coordination with a Training Institute in Oman.

The Zubair Automotive Group is one of the largest companies in the Sultanate. It was founded in 1973 with the beginnings of the blessed Renaissance, under the umbrella of The Zubair Corporation and was initially a company that specialised in vehicle imports. Following the implementation of development plans, it later became a pioneer in the automotive distribution sector in the Sultanate. With the introduction of marketing and after-sales services, the Zubair Automotive Group witnessed immense development over the past decades, positioning the Group at the forefront of the automotive industry, capable of meeting all customer needs across the sultanate.

The Zubair Automotive Group hosts a network of showrooms, customer service centers and spare parts outlets, providing high standards of services for the most famous global auto brands.

The Zubair Automotive Group is committed to enhancing the integrated experience of its customers throughout the sultanate and always seeks to enhance the growth and knowledge of the national workforce in the automotive sector by continuing to invest in training programmes and specialised workshops, establishing and developing modern services and repair facilities, and providing original auto spare parts. It aims to achieve the highest levels of customer satisfaction at all times.

Do I have a heart problem after COVID infection?

This is a familiar question now a days. With acute cases of COVID-19 coming down, the concern now has shifted to the so called ‘long COVID’ and its impact on health in general. Some of the symptoms like shortness of breath, palpitations, dizziness and chest pain in a person having had coronavirus may be due to heart problems or just having being ill with COVID. How can one know whether COVID has affected my heart?

Yes, coronavirus can damage your heart. Acute infections with COVID can cause blood clots to form in your heart blood vessels and can cause a heart attack. Similar blood clots can happen in the blood vessels of the lung and can lead to what is called as pulmonary embolism. Apart from blood clots, lack of oxygen from a diseased lung can also lead to heart muscle injury. Viruses can also cause inflammation of the heart muscle, myocarditis. This



Dr Mohammed Sakib
Interventional Cardiologist
Aster Al Raffah Hospital, Sohar

can lead to a decrease in heart pumping function, cardiomyopathy and may lead to heart failure in the future.

Scary stuff aside, how can I know if COVID has affected my heart? As pointed to earlier there is a lot of overlap between symptoms of COVID per say and that of heart problems. One should see his doctor if he develops pal-

pitations, excessive shortness of breath, chest pain or dizziness during or after having being infected with coronavirus. If you did have a severe or a moderate coronavirus infection it is always prudent to have your cardiac health assessed before you return back to your normal self. A word of caution to people with preexisting heart disease, as they can develop worsening of their heart condition.

Now some good news. COVID is on the decline and as we have seen the vaccines are very effective in preventing severe disease. Only a very few with coronavirus infection develop heart problems and majority of them recover if advise is taken early enough.

What you can do? Check on your symptoms, seek medical advice if in doubt. Always better to get your heart health assessed after COVID before you get back to your normal self.

PAKISTAN SCHOOL MARKS INDEPENDENCE DAY

Pakistan School Buraimi celebrated their country’s 75th Independence Day with a colourful programme to show their innate love for their beloved mother land. A friendly cricket match between Kings 11 and Zalmi 11 was organised in Al-Nadi Stadium, Buraimi to mark the occasion. SMC Buraimi President Mahmmud Muizuddin was the chief guest of the event that was attended by the Pakistani community in Buraimi.



Bank Muscat launches Trade Portal for Corporate customers



Fatma Khalifa al Maskiry

In line with its vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’, and the commitment to digitalisation for enhanced banking services and solutions, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, has launched the Bank Muscat Trade Portal for online initiation of trade transactions such as issuance/amendment of Letters of Credit, Guarantees and Trade Financing. The portal is an e-channel that also helps customers access required information / reports online. Instead of customers visiting branches and submitting their requests in person, the same can now be sent to the bank online.

“Global Trade Services play an important role in facilitating trade and economic development across the globe. As one of the leading Trade Finance providers in the region, Bank Muscat has been continually digitising services and has now launched this new portal that will enable speedier, efficient and highly-secure trade-financing solutions for our corporate clients,” said Fatma Khalifa al Maskiry, Senior Assistant General Manager - Global Trade Services, Bank Muscat.

Bank Nizwa holds multiple Islamic finance sessions



ernorates of the sultanate.

The sessions witnessed a fruitful engagement amongst attendees. The Bank organised the first session on Islamic Finance for the Ministry of Religious Affairs staff in Salalah, under the patronage of Firas al Naqbi, Director General of Endowments and Affairs in the Governorate of Dhofar, in the presence of a number of officials and employees of the Ministry.

Sheikh Dr Majid al Kindi, chairman of the Sharia'a Board at the bank presented the programme to a large audience, highlighting the benefits of Shari'ah-compliant financial tools and services to the attendees. The bank held as well two parallel sessions at Jalan Bani Bu Ali and Jalan Bani Bu Hasan in the Governorate of South Sharqiyah, conducted by Mustafa al Naabi, Sharia'a Training Assistant Manager at Bank Nizwa.

Dhofar’s khareef fest with Ooredoo’s Tourist Pack

Dhofar’s khareef season is in full swing and what better way to share every magic moment than with Ooredoo’s great value Tourist Pack! For just RO5, customers can enjoy 6GB of data, 50 minutes and 50 SMS, as well as unlimited Snapchat to use for ten days. Or, for RO10, users can get 100 minutes and 100 SMS as well as 15GB of data and unlimited Snapchat to use for 15 days, Ooredoo said.

What’s more, included minutes and SMS are available for local and international use. Available until October 5, it’s the perfect way to keep connected and stay social in Salalah.

Ooredoo is celebrating the three-month-long khareef season with a host of offers and freebies for its customers. To sign up for the Khareef Tourist Pack, visit any Ooredoo store in Muscat International Airport, Salalah International Airport, and across the Governorate of Dhofar. Customers can check their usage using the Ooredoo App or by dialling *555*800#.

Thawani Technologies ready to launch FinTech products



Thawani Technologies held a meeting with its project management team to evaluate and develop its existing products and discuss the company’s directions for its upcoming projects.

In line with the company’s vision to provide smart, simple, and secure e-payment services, the team drew strategic plans, that emulate the developments in the FinTech industry, to meet the needs of the local market and ensuring the ultimate customer satisfaction. Continuously providing innovative services, the sultanate’s pioneering digital payments platform also seeks to study the current gaps in the payment industry and provide smart solutions that underline the objectives of the government and Oman Vision 2040 for digital transformation.

“According to a study conducted by the Payment Orchestration for Global Commerce, the global market for payment orchestration platforms (POPs) is expected to grow by 20 per cent annually until 2026. To keep pace with the growth, we refer to the data shared by our project and product management teams and measure its compatibility future indicators of the sector,” said Omar al Alawi, Project Team Manager at Thawani Technologies.

Founded in 2016, Thawani Technologies holds a global certificate in card security.



Kateb Maktub competition of Emirates Literature Foundation enters 2nd year

Following the huge success of the Arabic edition of the competition in 2021, the Emirates Literature Foundation and Wikimedians of the UAE User Group have launched the Kateb Maktub competition in English.

The organisers called on all the Wikipedia editor and enthusiasts to create English articles about Arab authors before the deadline of Thursday (August 18).

The competition aims to introduce Arabic literature and Arab writers to the English-speaking global community by increasing the number of articles available on Wikipedia. The winners will be eligible for cash prizes, with the person in the first place receiving US\$500, the runners-up receiving US\$400 and US\$300 is up for grabs for the third place.

The competition is divided into two categories and will be judged by a panel of experts and certified editors from the Wikimedia community. The first category (Experts) is for Wikipedia users who are registered on the platform for at least four months prior to the start of the competition (July 18) and have



Close to hitting the target of 15,000 Wikipedia pages, the initiative continues to drive visibility of Arab authors on the Internet

edited 500 articles within the competition duration. The second category (Beginners) is for users who

are registered for less than four months prior to the start of the competition and have edited less than 500 articles within the competition duration.

To facilitate the participants, the user group has composed a list of notable Arab author names like Ahlam Basharat and Ahmed Qandil and Arabic book titles like Memory of the Flesh. Contributors have 24 hours, from the time they select an author, to upload the article to Wikipedia to ensure there are no duplicates. Contributors can also choose to recreate an existing Arabic article in English.

Launched in 2020, the Kateb Maktub project is an initiative organised by the Emirates Literature Foundation in collaboration with the Wikimedians of the UAE User group to drive significant increase in the number of Arab author pages on Wikipedia in both Arabic and English, bringing Arabic literature the attention and appreciation it deserves.

To date, Kateb Maktub has successfully increased the number of pages on Wikipedia by more than 500 per cent.

Rage on the Red Sea fight week kicks off with boxers' first media appearance

Fight Week for Rage on the Red Sea got underway in Jeddah on Monday, with Anthony Joshua and Oleksandr Usyk in front of the cameras for the first time just days out from their rematch at the King Abdullah Sports City Arena on Saturday.

Local, regional, and international press alike attended the first media interaction with the two main event fighters at the Shangri-La Hotel this evening, with Saudi dignitaries also in attendance to cut the ribbon on a seismic week for boxing.

Usyk defends his WBA ‘Super’, IBF, WBO and IBO belts against the man he won them from, while Saturday’s winner will also take home the Ring Magazine title after Tyson Fury vacated the gold just last week.

With Heavyweight supremacy at stake, both fighters are relishing the prospect of making history in Saudi Arabia.

“I’m very happy to have the opportunity to be fighting here in Saudi Arabia against Anthony Joshua.” Usyk commented, “Training for this fight has gone extremely well and we are ready for whatever comes our way on fight night. For a fighter, mindset is particularly important and ahead of ‘Rage on the Red Sea’, I have the mindset needed to win this fight.

“Of course, we are going to be embrace everything that accompanies fight week because this is a huge event, but we will remain focused in the days ahead before entering the



Anthony Joshua (left) and Oleksandr Usyk

ring on Saturday.”

Joshua added, “Preparations have been tough and challenging, but we’ve done different things to make the training camp as easy as possible and we’re in a good place heading into Saturday night, which is heavyweight history in the making.

“Fans around the world simply have to tune in for this one. For me, this is to become three-time heavyweight champion of the world. It’s number one against number two; the unified titles, the Ring Magazine belt, it doesn’t get any bigger than this in our sport.”

The mouth-watering rematch is shaping up to be one of the biggest nights that boxing has ever seen and Matchroom Sport’s Eddie Hearn this

week compared the Rage on the Red Sea to iconic predecessors the Rumble in the Jungle and the Thrilla in Manila.

The significance of Saturday’s event hasn’t been lost on the media that has travelled from all over the world to cover Fight Night and its build-up.

Alex Krassiyuk of K2 Promotions, also spoke to the media earlier on Monday, adding: “Usyk vs Joshua 2 ranks among the biggest, most historic fights in history. The reigning and former unified world heavyweight champions are colliding for the second time.

“We know AJ and his team have worked hard, making the adjustments they feel are necessary for victory, while we too have prepared as best as possible. For us, Oleksandr has to stick

to the gameplan, listen to those in his corner, and remain disciplined. Anything can happen in boxing and the outcome is not pre-determined, which is precisely why the whole world will be tuning for this fight on Saturday.”

Eddie Hearn, the Matchroom Sports Chairman, has made his predictions clear but earlier today discusses what each boxer needs to do to win.

“For AJ, he has to be more aggressive and let his hands go more.” Hearn analysed, “For Usyk, he’s a genius, so he’s going to be very difficult to beat, but I believe AJ can do it by using his size to impose himself in this fight. He’s in a great frame of mind, a great place, and is ready to go.”

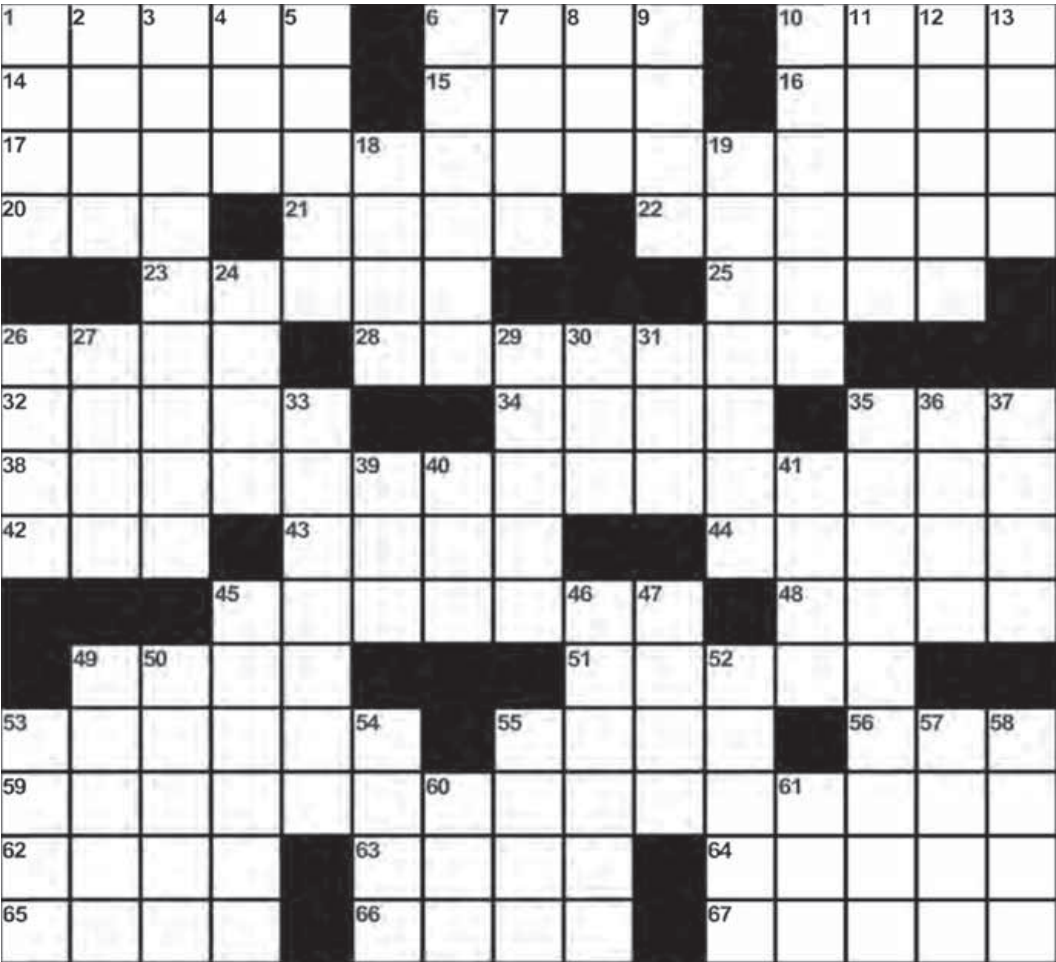
Fight Week continues with more media interactions and a public workout for all the fighters at the Saudi Airlines Club on Tuesday before the entire card returns to the Shangri-La Hotel on Wednesday, 17 August for the full pre-fight press conference.

The public weigh-ins will then take place on Friday at the King Abdullah Sports City before the fighters return to the stadium on Saturday for Fight Night.

The Rage on the Red Sea card starts at 17:00 AST and Usyk vs. Joshua is slated to get underway at 00:54 AST, with the infamous ring walk slightly earlier.

US Superstar Russ will add to the night with a special performance in between the undercard fights to enliven the crowd ahead of the main event.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) More impolite
6) Peter's cottontail?
10) Seance noises
14) Japanese port
15) What a nurse provides
16) Cornell of university fame
17) The majors
20) Small salamander
21) News tidbit
22) Steep slopes
23) Enthusiasm
25) Harp and Bass
26) Fairy-tale giant
28) Synthetic
32) Gets dimmer
34) Settle comfortably, as into a chair
35) Regal emblem
38) Hardly a short film
42) Guileful
43) Abu Dhabi honcho
44) Put into office
45) Ones with iron hands
48) Gets under the skin of
49) Racket part

51) Biblical king
53) Unimportant facts
55) Trunk of a tree
56) Sales agent
59) A place without restrictions
62) Jazz singing
63) Healing houseplant
64) Pop stars?
65) Candidates, in brief
66) Fancy wheels
67) Inferior wheat

DOWN

1) Prizefighter's wear
2) Amer. military fliers
3) Malicious
4) Barely achieve (with "out")
5) Extremely zealous
6) Eyeball coat
7) Like the eye of a storm
8) Web address
9) Golf pegs
10) Entertain lavishly
11) Cloudless sky's hue
12) Gets ready for surgery
13) Talk back
18) Supercollider collider

19) College world
24) Rural dance
26) Kills, slangily
27) Caesar's France
29) The "N" of UNCF
30) "Welcome" bearer
31) Burning result
33) Don't get up?
35) Fifth gear, often
36) Moranis of "Ghost-busters"
37) Casino actions
39) Maximum limits?
40) A small drink of liquor
41) Bit of this and a bit of that
45) Golf course holes?
46) Oar holders
47) Unload, on Wall Street
49) EL (Spanish painter)
50) Qatari money
52) Jockey's controls
53) Cooking meas.
54) First of all?
55) Where to speak your piece online

57) And others, in a bibliography
58) "Hey, Mac!"
60) By way of
61) Janitor's implement

NOTE PAD

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

 **ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You've been firing on all cylinders lately, and this mad pace must stop, and soon. Now would be the perfect time to take a break. Deadlines can wait, and there aren't going to be any emergencies erupting any time soon. Relax your mind and stay close to home (or any other place where you feel you can be totally yourself). Although it's tempting, avoid vegetating in front of the TV. Instead, work on a fun project or dig your way through a compelling book.

 **LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

The very first step to getting what you want is to express it. Saying it out loud makes it real and lets the Universe know that you have some expectations it can help fill. Now might be the right time to get rewarded for all those karma points you've earned, so feel positive about asking. Remember that you deserve the happiness that you see other people enjoying right now. Discuss your strategies and obstacles with a close friend who has been through it all.

 **SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

There's a lot to be said for being direct, but the more rewarding type of communication for you to explore will be much more subtle: eavesdropping. Without invading anyone's privacy or personal space, you can put yourself in the right place at the right time and hear some amazing things. We're talking about insider info, flattering comments, and even a juicy secret or two. Sharpen your ears and get ready to be entertained and surprised.

 **TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

There's been a strong self-confidence brewing deep inside of you, and it's about to start showing itself. Put yourself in as many challenging situations as possible and you will shine brighter than ever before. This is merely the tip of the iceberg for you as you enter into a bigger, more powerful phase than you've ever known. Romantically, this is an opportunity to try a new technique or idea to move things to the next level.

 **VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

This day should roll along at a fairly leisurely pace that fits your mood quite nicely. It's a day to savor the sweet little aspects of the people and places around you. Your small victories will make you just as proud as the big ones. Celebrate the little gifts that will be coming your way all day. You are in the right frame of mind to appreciate them.

 **CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

The games people play can get highly competitive, but everyone's machinations will be harmless and collaborative. Step into the middle of the action and just focus on having fun! It's not worth your time to get stressed out over competitions or deadlines, so forget the "win at any cost" idea. It is definitely all about how you play the game. Your life is entering a positive phase of easy conversations and nonjudgmental relationships.

 **GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's going to be a day of exaggerated reactions to everyday situations. If someone cuts in front of you in line, it will feel like a personal attack. If someone smiles in your general direction, it will feel like love. As you can imagine, things could get out of hand pretty quickly. Composure is the key to keeping your cool and not doing anything you might regret later. As long as you disregard the smaller interactions you have with people, you'll be fine.

 **LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're coming out of an introspective period. As you emerge from your cocoon, encourage more communication with the people you love. Try to answer all your phone calls. Send out a few emails to faraway friends to see how they're doing and share the most recent details of whatever you've been up to, no matter how boring you might think it is. It's time to reconnect with the people who make your life so pleasant. Life so pleasant.

 **AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Working behind the scenes might not be as glamorous or exciting as taking center stage, but it's also nowhere near as nerve-wracking. Consider yourself lucky if you're relegated to support staff in someone else's big project or life event right now. The time you spend making things come together will be well spent (and easier on your schedule). A low-stress environment is just the ticket for you right now.

 **CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

If you feel like you've been through an emotional wringer, take heart. You're due for a break soon. Your exceptional attitude has made everything go much more smoothly than it could have, so good for you! Tempers are cooling, fortunes are turning, and you're set for a traveling opportunity. You will be able to learn more about a culture you've always been curious about. Fill today with exploration and feed your curiosity.

 **SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You and everyone around you have been involved in a lot of positive discussions, but there's been little progress in the areas that really need it. Connecting with other people and sharing ideas is a wonderful thing, but at a certain point someone needs to take the ball and run with it. You should be that person. Use your charm to get people motivated. All you need to do is swing into action, show everyone else how much fun it is, and they will follow right along.

 **PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You will have a nourishing effect on anything you come into contact with, because your words and actions can help things grow a lot more quickly. Speak the truth in every situation and good things will result. If you sense something new starting, give it your total attention. Push it gently forward, keep encouraging it, and watch its progress. Soon enough, you'll be looking at a beautiful, healthy blossoming relationship.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. What literary character was portrayed by Cliff Richard in a 1990s stage musical?

A. Scrooge
B. Heathcliff
C. Eeyore
D. D'Artagnan

02. Pierre Poivre, an eighteenth-century French horticulturalist and government administrator in the French islands of the West Indian Ocean, may have sparked what saying?

A. He who has the pepper may season as he lists.
B. Pepper is small in quantity and great in virtue.
C. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper
D. Peter Peter pumpkin eater

03. Which cricketer has scored the most first class centuries in history?

A. Sachin Tendulkar
B. Jack Hobbs
C. Michael Slater
D. Ricky Ponting

Answers: 1. B 2. C 3. B

KIDS COLOURING

BOGGLER

M	A	D	E
R	R	S	T
C	B	P	D
A	U	O	T

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

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

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

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

EU studies Iran's reply to nuke deal draft

Iranian response was received late on Monday and the EU was consulting with US and other parties

Tehran, Iran - The European Union said on Tuesday it was studying Iran's response to a 'final' draft agreement on reviving a 2015 nuclear accord with major powers it presented at talks in Vienna.

The United States had already said on Monday that it was informing EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell of its response to the text he submitted on August 8. The possibility of a deal which might lead to the lifting of US sanctions on Iran's oil output of 2.5mn barrels per day has already helped trigger a fall in prices on world markets, with US oil futures dropping nearly three per cent to finish below US\$90 a barrel.

A spokesperson for Borrell - who coordinated talks to bring Iran and the United States back into the deal - said the Iranian response was received late on Monday and the EU was consulting with the United States and the other parties 'on the way ahead'. "Everybody is studying the response and this is not the time for the moment to speculate on timing," Borrell's spokesperson Nabila Massrali later told a press briefing.

Iran's official IRNA news agency reported earlier on Tuesday that 'an agreement will be concluded if the United States reacts with realism and flexibility'



This file photo shows representatives from Iran and the European Union attending a meeting of the joint commission on negotiations aimed at reviving the Iran nuclear deal in Vienna, Austria on December 3, 2021 (AFP)

to Iran's response.

Iran's ISNA news agency cited an 'informed source' as saying that Tehran 'expects to receive the response of the other side in the next two days'.

IRNA had said on Friday that Iran might accept the 'final' text drawn up by the European Union to save the deal, which aimed to curb Iran's nuclear programme in

return for sanctions relief.

The deal has been moribund since the 2018 withdrawal of the United States under then president Donald Trump whose administration reimposed crippling sanctions.

An unidentified Iranian diplomat said, according to IRNA, that 'the European Union's proposals are acceptable provided that

they provide assurances to Iran on various points, related to sanctions and safeguards' as well as pending issues with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Three issues

IRNA said that the remaining differences centred on three issues.

"The United States has expressed flexibility on two of them

verbally but that needs to be incorporated into the text," the news agency said without elaborating. "The third issue has to do with a guarantee that the deal will be lasting, and that depends on realism from the United States to reassure Iran."

None of the parties have spelt out in details the points of contention that are still blocking a

deal. Iran's demand for an end to US blacklisting of its ideological army, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, as a 'terrorist organisation' has been dropped from the discussions and will instead be handled after the deal, a senior EU official said earlier this month.

The official said progress had also been made on Tehran's call

for guarantees that there will be no repeat of Washington reneging on the deal as it did under Trump in 2018. Tehran and Washington still have to agree on 'issues related to sanctions lifting and a couple of nuclear questions that did not exist in March as the Iranians advanced their programme', the EU official said.

AFP

Taliban add more compulsory religion classes

Kabul, Afghanistan - Afghan university students will have to attend more compulsory Islamic studies classes, education officials said on Tuesday while giving little sign that secondary schools for girls would reopen.

Many conservative Afghan clerics in the hardline Islamist Taliban, which swept back into power a year ago, are sceptical of modern education.

"We are adding five more religious subjects to the existing eight," said Abdul Baqi Haqqani, minister for higher education, including Islamic history, politics and governance.

The number of compulsory religious classes will increase from one to three a week in government universities.

He told a news conference that the Taliban would not order any subjects to be dropped from the current curriculum.



Afghanistan's Taliban Minister for Higher Education Abdul Baqi Haqqani (centre) arrives to address a press conference in Kabul on Tuesday (AFP)

However, some universities have altered studies on music and sculpture - highly sensitive issues under the Taliban's harsh

interpretation of sharia law - while an exodus of Afghanistan's educated elite, including professors, has seen many subjects dis-

continued.

Officials have for months insisted that schools will reopen for girls, swaying between technical

The number of religious classes will increase from one to three a week in government universities. Five more religious subjects will be added to the existing eight

and financial issues as reasons for the continued closures.

Abdulkhaliq Sadiq, a senior official at the education ministry, on Tuesday said families in rural areas were still not convinced of the need to send girls to secondary school.

Under the Taliban's last regime between 1996 and 2001,

both primary and secondary schools for girls never reopened.

"We are trying to come up with a sound policy in coordination with our leaders... so that those in rural areas are also convinced," he said.

Since seizing power on August 15 last year the Taliban have imposed harsh restrictions on girls and women to comply with their austere vision of Islam - effectively squeezing them out of public life.

Although young women are still permitted to attend university, many have dropped out because of the cost or because their families are afraid for them to be out in public in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, without a secondary school certificate, teenage girls will not be able to sit future university entrance exams.

AFP

Pakistan road crash inferno kills 20 people

Lahore, Pakistan - At least 20 people were killed when a bus caught fire after colliding with an oil tanker in Pakistan on Tuesday, police said.

The passengers were a couple of hours into a long journey when their vehicle crashed on the outskirts of the central city of Multan. Photos of the scene show the burnt-out wreckage of the bus after it smashed into the back of the tanker.

"I can confirm 20 people have been killed in the incident due to the fire," Rao Zulfiqar Ali, a senior police official, told AFP.

Six other people were injured in the incident, he said.

Pakistan has a dismal record of fatal traffic accidents due to poor roads, badly maintained vehicles and reckless driving.

AFP

Cairo church blaze: Twins, triplets among victims

Cairo, Egypt - Mourners in Egypt attended a memorial service on Tuesday for victims of a Coptic church fire in Cairo that killed 41 people - among them many children, including twins and triplets.

The electrical fire on Sunday ripped through the Abu Sifin church in Imbaba, a working class district west of the Nile River, part of Giza governorate in greater Cairo.

At least 10 of those killed during Sunday mass, when families flock to the church and its daycare services, were minors aged under 16, according to a list from just one hospital circulated by local media.

Coptic Bishop Martyros led a 'third day' service on Tuesday in central Cairo's Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary to commemorate the resurrection of Christ and honour the souls of the dead.

"The entire country is ail-

ing," the bishop told the bereaved, two days after the blaze rocked Egypt's 10mn-strong Coptic community, the Middle East's largest Christian population. Among those killed were six members of the same family, one mourner, Sandy George, told AFP.

'My aunt Magda and her daughters, Merna and Irina, and Irina's three kids' died of asphyxiation, George said.

Irina's children who were killed were the five-year-old twins Barthinia and Mariam and their brother Ibram, aged four. Also killed were five-year-old triplets Mehrael, Youssef and Filopateer Bassem Amir, according to the hospital list.

Hundreds attended another service in a nearby church, for Father Abd al-Messih Bekheit, who reportedly died trying to save members of the congregation.

AFP

'Extreme heat belt' to cover middle of US by 2053

Washington, US - An area of intensely warm weather - a so-called 'extreme heat belt' - with at least one day per year in which the heat index hits 125 Fahrenheit (52C), is expected to cover a US region home to more than 100mn people by the year 2053, according to a new study.

The research, carried out by nonprofit First Street Foundation, used a peer-reviewed model built with public and third-party data to estimate heat risk at what they called a 'hyper-local' scale of 30sqm. First Street Foundation's mission is to make climate risk modeling accessible to the public, government and industry representatives, such as real estate investors and insurers.

A key finding from the study was that heat exceeding the threshold of National Weather Service's highest category - called 'Extreme Danger', or above 125F - was expected to impact 8.1mn people in 2023 and grow to 107mn people in 2053, a 13-fold increase. This would encompass a geographic



This file photo shows plants growing from an exposed lakebed cracking and drying out during low water levels on Lake Mead along the Colorado River in Boulder City, Nevada on June 28 this year (AFP)

region stretching from northern Texas and Louisiana to Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin - inland areas far from the more temperate weather often seen near the coasts.

Heat index, also known as the

apparent temperature, is what the outside temperature really feels like to the human body when relative humidity is combined with air temperature.

To create their model, the research team examined satellite-

derived land surface temperatures and air temperatures between 2014 and 2020, to help understand the exact relationship between the two measurements. This information was further studied by factoring in elevation,

how water is absorbed in the area, the distance to surface water and the distance to a coast. The model was then scaled to future climate conditions, using a 'middle of the road' scenario envisaged by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in which carbon dioxide levels start falling by mid-century, but do not reach net zero by 2100.

Beyond 'Extreme Danger' days, areas across the whole country are expected to experience hotter temperatures, with varying degrees of resilience.

"These increases in local temperatures result in significant implications for communities that are not acclimated to warmer weather relative to their normal climate," the report said. For example, a 10 per cent temperature increase in the northeastern state of Maine may be as dangerous as a 10 per cent increase in the southwestern state of Texas, despite the higher absolute temperatures seen in Texas.

AFP

Chinese ‘dual-use spy ship’ docks in Sri Lanka

Yuan Wang 5 entered port Hambantota despite concerns from India and the US about its alleged spying activities

Hambantota, Sri Lanka - A Chinese research vessel bristling with antennas and communication gear docked at Sri Lanka’s Chinese-run port of Hambantota on Tuesday despite concerns from India and the United States about its alleged spying activities.

The Yuan Wang 5 entered the deep-sea port after securing permission to enter Sri Lankan waters on the condition it would not engage in research, port officials said.

It was originally due to arrive last week, but Colombo asked Beijing to defer the visit following objections by India, which shares Western concerns about Chinese activities in the region.

But on Saturday, after intense negotiations, Sri Lanka announced a U-turn, saying permission was restored to dock at the southern port and remain for six days for refuelling and taking in other supplies.

“We are granting the same facilities that we extend to all other



Workers wave China’s and Sri Lanka’s national flags upon the arrival of China’s research and survey vessel at Hambantota port on Tuesday (AFP)

countries,” government spokesman Bandula Gunawardana told reporters. “All these countries are important to us.”

Chinese ambassador to Sri Lanka Qi Zhenhong said the visit of Yuan Wang 5 was part of ‘normal exchanges between the two countries’.

“China and Sri Lanka enjoy outstanding friendship,” Qi told reporters at a ceremony to welcome the ship.

Shipping analytics websites

described the Yuan Wang 5 as a research and survey vessel, but according to Indian media it is a dual-use spy ship.

There was no customary military band to welcome the vessel, but a small group of traditional Kandyan dancers and drummers performed on a red carpet.

Also dockside were several lawmakers, but there were no senior politicians or other dignitaries in attendance.

“Long live China and Sri Lanka

friendship,” read a red-and-white banner on an upper deck of the vessel, which had at least four satellite dish antennas pointed skywards.

Men in white shirts and black trousers stood on deck waving Chinese and Sri Lankan flags as the vessel was pushed alongside the main jetty.

The Hambantota port has been run by the Chinese since 2017, when they took it on a 99-year lease for US\$1.12bn, less

than the US\$1.4bn Sri Lanka paid a Chinese firm to build it.

New Delhi is suspicious of Beijing’s increasing presence in the Indian Ocean and influence in Sri Lanka, seeing both as firmly within its sphere of influence.

Both India and the US have raised security concerns over the ship’s visit to Sri Lanka, with New Delhi lodging a complaint with Colombo.

China has said it was ‘completely unjustified for certain

countries’ to cite ‘security concerns’ to pressure Sri Lanka, especially at a time when the island is facing an unprecedented economic crisis.

The vessel’s activities were ‘in line with international law and international practice, and do not affect any country’s security or economic interests’, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters.

“They should not be interfered with by third parties.”

A day before the arrival of the vessel, India gifted a Dornier 228 surveillance aircraft to Sri Lanka in a bid to bolster the island’s maritime surveillance capabilities. The Chinese ship was allowed into port on the condition it keeps its Automatic Identification System (AIS) switched on while in Sri Lankan waters and does not carry out scientific research.

According to Indian reports, the Yuan Wang 5 could be employed for space and satellite tracking and has specific uses in intercontinental ballistic missile launches.

Chinese debt

Sri Lanka borrowed heavily from China between 2005 and 2015, and in 2017 relinquished control of the Hambantota port, which is located on major East-West shipping lanes.

Sri Lanka said it could not afford to repay China for building the port and handed over the facility on a 99-year lease.

China is Sri Lanka’s biggest bilateral creditor, owning over 10 per cent of the island’s foreign debt. Beijing’s support is essential for Colombo to restructure its external borrowing to qualify for an International Monetary Fund bailout.

On August 4, President Ranil Wickremesinghe ‘reiterated Sri Lanka’s firm commitment to the one-China policy’ after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, calling for ‘non-interference in the internal affairs of countries’.

AFP

Armenian blast death toll rises to 16: Ministry

Yerevan, Armenia - The death toll from an explosion at a bustling market in the Armenian capital Yerevan rose to 16, Armenia’s emergency situations ministry said on Tuesday.

Sunday’s blast at the Surmalu wholesale market also injured 60 people after it caused a fire and the collapse of a building.

“Sixteen bodies were found during search and rescue efforts,” the ministry said in a statement, adding that 18 people were still missing.

Officials said more than 350 rescuers are at work on the ground.

The cause has not yet been established, but local news reports, citing witnesses, said the explosion went off at a place that stored fireworks.

Local authorities have excluded the possibility that it was a terror attack and the prosecutors have already launched a probe into the violations ‘on stocking inflammable goods’, breaches in fire safety standards and the death of people ‘due to negligence’.

The disaster comes as the country of three million people is still recovering from a 2020 war with Azerbaijan, which ended in a heavy defeat and sparked a political crisis.

Shortly after Sunday’s blast, officials evacuated people from Yerevan metro stations after a bomb threat, but the authorities found no explosive device.

AFP

China unveils perks to boost birth rate

Beijing, China - China on Tuesday announced a slew of perks aimed at encouraging families to have more babies, as birth rates hit a record low and officials warned that the population will start to shrink by 2025.

The world’s most populous country has been grappling with a looming demographic crisis as it faces a rapidly ageing workforce, slowing economy and its weakest population growth in decades. Although Beijing ended its draconian ‘one-child rule’ in 2016 and last year allowed couples to have three children, birth rates have slipped over the past five years.

The policy guidelines issued by the National Health Commission on Tuesday urge both the central and provincial governments to increase spending on reproductive health and improve childcare services nationwide.

They require local governments to ‘implement active fertility support measures’, including offering subsidies, tax



A man carrying a child on his shoulders along a street in Beijing early this month (AFP)

rebates, and better health insurance, as well as education, housing and employment support for young families.

All provinces must also ensure they provide enough nurseries for children aged two to

three by the end of the year in a bid to reduce a severe shortage of childcare services.

Richer Chinese cities have been doling out tax and housing credits, educational benefits and even cash incentives to encour-

age women to have more children, and the latest guidelines seek to push all provinces to roll out such measures. China’s birth rate slipped to 7.52 births per 1,000 people last year.

AFP

Human remains ‘found in suitcases’ sold at NZ auction

Wellington, New Zealand - New Zealand police have begun a homicide investigation after human remains were allegedly found stashed in suitcases that were bought at an auction in the country’s largest city Auckland.

An undisclosed number of remains are believed to have been stored in suitcases auctioned as part of storage unit sale, and brought home by an unsuspecting family after their winning bid.

Residents at a home in South Auckland called police last Thursday after making the grisly discovery, police official Tofilau Faamanuia Vaaelua confirmed.

Police do not believe the family were involved in the suspected homicide.

“The priority for police is to confirm the identification of the deceased so that we can

establish the full circumstances behind the discovery,” Vaaelua added.

A post-mortem examination was underway and forensic investigators were trying to determine the number of victims, police said.

The auctioning of abandoned contents is a common practice for storage units with unpaid bills.

The owner of a storage unit in Papatoetoe, South Auckland, told news website Stuff that the business is cooperating with police in relation to the investigation.

Media outlet Newshub reported that police could be dealing with remains from multiple bodies.

Vaaelua added that police believe ‘there is no immediate risk to the public in regards to this incident’.

AFP

Court rejects retrial for Malaysia’s Najib, grants final appeal hearing

Putrajaya, Malaysia - Malaysia’s highest court said on Tuesday it would hear former leader Najib Razak’s final bid to overturn his 12-year jail sentence for corruption, with an acquittal potentially clearing the way for his return to power.

The appeal is the last high stakes court gambit left open to Najib - but if he is unsuccessful he will have to start serving his jail sentence after years of legal wrangling.

The Federal Court’s decision to proceed with an appeal, which will begin on Thursday, came after it rejected the former prime minister’s plea for a retrial.

Najib, 69, and his ruling party were unceremoniously tossed out of office in 2018 elections following allegations of their involvement in a multi-billion dollar scandal at state fund 1MDB.

The former prime minister

I will continue to do my best on behalf of my party to visit and listen to the people and help the government of the day to explain issues. Right now I am just focusing to clear my name

NAJIB RAZAK

and his cronies were accused of stealing billions of dollars from the country’s investment vehicle and spending it on everything from high-end real estate to pricey art.

Following a lengthy High Court trial, Najib was found guilty of abuse of power, money laun-



Malaysia former PM Najib Razak removes his face mask before giving a press conference at the federal court in Putrajaya on Tuesday (AFP)

dering and criminal breach of trust over the transfer of 42mn ringgit (US\$10.1mn) from a former 1MDB unit to his bank account.

He was sentenced to 12 years in jail in July 2020, and an appellate court last December rejected his appeal, prompting him to

mount a final plea before the Federal Court, where any ruling will be final.

Najib had been hoping the court would grant a full retrial but that request was unanimously rejected by a panel of five judges on Tuesday.

“There is, to our minds, no

miscarriage of justice,” Chief Justice Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat said, adding Najib had ‘failed to cross the high threshold’ of new evidence needed for a retrial.

‘Justice delayed is justice denied’

Najib’s lawyer asked for the court to adjourn for three to four months before starting the hearing but the panel, after some deliberation, rejected it.

“Justice cannot be unduly delayed. Justice delayed is also justice denied to others,” she added.

The judges set the appeal hearing for eight days from Thursday.

If the conviction is upheld, Najib, will begin serving his jail sentence immediately, lawyers said.

An acquittal, however, could propel him into contention for his former post, as he remains pop-

ular in Malaysia despite the huge 1MDB scandal that plagued his administration.

A charismatic and compelling speaker, Najib has about 4.6mn Facebook followers and was recently seen pressing the flesh with leaders and supporters of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party.

Until its dramatic defeat in 2018 off the back of the 1MDB scandal, UNMO had been the main governing party since Malaysia achieved independence in 1957

“I will continue to do my best on behalf of my party to visit and listen to the people and help the government of the day to explain issues,” Najib told AFP ahead of his appeal.

“(But) right now I am just focusing to clear my name in the courts.”

AFP

Putin accuses US of trying to ‘prolong’ Ukraine conflict

Kyiv, Ukraine - Russian President Vladimir Putin accused Washington on Tuesday of drawing out the war in Ukraine, as explosions rocked a Russian military facility on the Kremlin-controlled peninsula of Crimea.

The first UN-chartered vessel laden with grain meanwhile left Ukraine for Africa following a hallmark deal brokered by Turkey and the UN to relieve a global food crisis.

“The situation in Ukraine shows that the US is trying to prolong this conflict,” Putin said, addressing the opening ceremony of a security conference in Moscow. Washington is ‘using the people of Ukraine as cannon fodder’, he said, lashing out at the United States for supplying weapons to Kyiv.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February, anticipating little military resistance and hoping for a lightning takeover that would topple the government in Kyiv within hours. But after failing to capture the capital, Russia’s military instead has become entrenched in a protracted bout of attrition with the sprawling front line in the east and south.

The United States has provided key economic and military backing to Kyiv, in particular supplying Ukraine with long-range, precision artillery that has allowed it to strike Russian supply facilities deep inside Moscow-controlled territory.

Huge fireballs erupted at the site in Crimea early on Tuesday where ammunition was temporarily being stored and clouds of black smoke billowed into the air, images posted on social media showed.



A local resident collects belongings from his destroyed house after a night missile strike in Kramatorsk, Donetsk region, on Tuesday (AFP)

The situation in Ukraine shows that the US is trying to prolong this conflict. (Washington is) using the people of Ukraine as cannon fodder

VLADIMIR PUTIN

The defence ministry said the blaze began at around 6:15am local time (0315 GMT) at a temporary military storage site near the village of Mayskoye in the Dzhankoi district, causing ammunition to detonate.

The blasts on Tuesday came one week after at least one person was killed and five more injured in similar explosions at a

Russian airbase in Crimea. Ukraine has not directly claimed responsibility for either of the incidents in Crimea, but senior officials and the military have implied Ukrainian involvement.

‘Catastrophe’

Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said on Tuesday the latest blasts in Dzhankoi

were a ‘reminder’ that ‘Crimea occupied by Russians is about warehouses explosions and high risk of death for invaders and thieves’.

He said the blasts were ‘demilitarisation in action’ - using the same term used by Russia to justify its invasion of Ukraine.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and has used the Black Sea region as a staging ground for its invasion.

Meanwhile in the eastern Donbas region, which has seen most of the fighting, Ukraine said Russia had launched a ‘massive’ offensive from an oil refinery in the recently-captured city of

Lysychansk in Lugansk province. Ukraine’s presidency said one woman was killed and two more injured in Donetsk province, which together with Lugansk makes up the industrial Donbas that is now mostly controlled by Russian forces.

Kyiv and Moscow have also traded accusations over a series of strikes this month on Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine - Europe’s largest.

On Monday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned a ‘catastrophe’ at the Russian-controlled facility would threaten the whole of Europe.

AFP



Kenya’s defeated presidential candidate Raila Odinga (centre) waves as he leaves a press conference in Nairobi on Tuesday (AFP)

Kenya’s Odinga vows to pursue all ‘legal options’

Nairobi, Kenya - Kenya’s veteran politician Raila Odinga on Tuesday vowed to pursue ‘all constitutional and legal options’ after rejecting the outcome of last week’s election that handed the presidency to his rival William Ruto.

“I do not want to fully address our strategies going forward but... we will be pursuing all constitutional and legal options available to us,” he told reporters a day after the results were announced, without specifying if he would issue a court challenge.

Odinga, who described the outcome of the August 9 poll as ‘a travesty’ at Tuesday’s press conference, has previously claimed to have been cheated of victory in the 2007, 2013 and 2017 presidential elections.

Last week’s closely fought race saw Odinga lose to Ruto by a narrow margin of around 230,000 votes, sparking protests by his supporters in some areas as well as triggering a split within the electoral body overseeing the poll.

“What we saw yesterday (Monday) was a travesty and a blatant disregard of the constitution of Kenya,” the 77-year-old former prime minister said.

“We totally and without reservations reject the presidential results.”

The poll’s aftermath is being keenly watched as a test of democratic maturity in the East African powerhouse where previous elections have been tarnished by claims of rigging and bloodshed.

On the campaign trail, both frontrunners pledged to deal with any disputes in court rather than on the streets.

Violent protests nevertheless erupted in Odinga’s strongholds in Nairobi slums and the lakeside city of Kisumu on Monday evening, although the situation was calm on Tuesday.

Odinga on Tuesday commended his supporters ‘for remaining calm and keeping the peace’.

“Let no one take the law into their own hands,” he said.

AFP

Death toll from floods in Sudan rises to 75

Khartoum, Sudan - The death toll from flooding triggered by torrential rains in Sudan has risen to 75 and destroyed or damaged tens of thousands of homes, police said on Tuesday.

“The number of people killed by the floods rose to 75, and left 12,551 houses completely destroyed, and another 20,751 partially damaged,” a National Council for Civil Defence statement said.

It also said that around 30 people had been injured.

Heavy rains usually fall in Sudan between May and October, and the country faces severe flooding every year, wrecking property, infrastructure and crops.

The eastern state of Kassala, North and South Kordofan state, River Nile state, and South Darfur were among the most badly affected, according to the UN.

On Sunday, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), citing government figures, estimated that around 136,000 people had been affected by rains and flooding since this year’s rainy season began.

It also said the number of people and localities affected as of August 14 ‘has doubled’ compared with the same period last year. About 314,500 people were affected across Sudan during entire rainy season in 2021.

AFP

Iraq’s Sadr backtracks on call for huge protest

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraq’s firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr backtracked on Tuesday after earlier urging his supporters to join a massive rally as a standoff with his political rivals appeared to be getting worse.

The populist cleric’s announcement came amid behind the scenes talks aimed at steering Iraq out of crisis, with the country’s two branches of Shiite Islam jockeying for supremacy.

More than 10 months on from elections, Iraq still has no government, new prime minister or new president, because of disagreement between factions over forming a coalition.

Sadr wants parliament dissolved to pave the way for new legislative elections, but his rivals the pro-Iran Coordination Frame-



Supporters of Iraq’s Coordination Framework gather during a sit-in in Baghdad on Monday (AFP)

work want to set conditions and are demanding a transitional government before new polls.

The cleric’s bloc emerged from last October’s elections as parliament’s biggest, but still far short of a majority.

Sadr, whose supporters have been staging a sit-in protest outside parliament in Baghdad’s high security Green Zone for more than two weeks, had called for a ‘million-man demonstration’ in the capital on Saturday.

But on Tuesday he announced on Twitter ‘the indefinite postponement of Saturday’s protest’.

“If you had been betting on a civil war, I am betting on preserving social peace. The blood of Iraqis is more precious than anything else,” Sadr said.

Late on Monday, a committee

organising demonstrations in support of the Coordination Framework also announced new gatherings, but without setting a date. The Coordination Framework launched their own Baghdad sit-in on Friday, camping out on an avenue in the capital.

The Coordination Framework comprises former paramilitaries of the Tehran-backed Hashed al-Shaabi network and the party of former premier Nuri al-Maliki, a longtime Sadr foe.

So far the rival Shiite protests have been peaceful, with attempts at mediation ongoing. Hadi al-Ameri, leader of a Hashed faction, has also called for calm and for dialogue. He has had a series of meetings with political leaders.

AFP

Spain firefighters battle to control huge Valencia wildfire

Madrid, Spain - Some 300 firefighters spent a difficult night battling a huge wildfire in southeastern Spain that has burnt through nearly 10,000 hectares in an area notoriously difficult to access, officials said on Tuesday.

The fire began when lightning hit the Vall de Ebo area in the province of Alicante late on Saturday and has since spread rapidly, fuelled by strong winds, forcing the evacuation of more than 1,000 people, Valencia’s regional government said.

“At the moment, we are talking about more than 9,500 hectares burnt with a perimeter of 65km,” regional president Ximo Puig said late on Monday, describing the blaze as ‘absolutely huge’.



An aerial view of a wildfire in the Moncayo Natural Park, Spain (AFP)

“It’s a very complicated situation... The fire is creating enormous difficulties that are absolutely impossible to tackle with the speed we would like.”

Regional interior minister Gabriela Bravo told Antena 3 television some 300 firefighters were battling the flames, backed by 24 planes and helicopters.

Firefighters elsewhere in the region were also battling two other wildfires north of Valencia, with hundreds of firefighters and at least 10 planes engaged in the operation, officials said.

Further north, firefighters in the Aragon region were battling another major blaze that broke out Saturday and has burnt more than 6,000 hectares of land, forcing at least 1,500 people from their homes.

Worse than 2021

Meanwhile, a huge wildfire in central Portugal that raged for a week in a UNESCO-designated natural park and was finally brought under control on Friday night, flared up again on Tuesday, the civil protection authority said.

More than 1,200 firefighters had been drafted in to tackle the blaze, which has already consumed some 15,000 hectares and was ‘burning fiercely’ with the flames whipped up by strong winds, the authority said.

So far this year, Spain has suffered 391 wildfires, fuelled by scorching temperatures and drought conditions, which have destroyed a total of 271,020 hectares of land, according to the latest figures from the European Forest Fire Information System

(EFFIS). This year’s fires in Spain have been particularly devastating, destroying more than three times the area consumed by wildfires in the whole of 2021, which amounted to 84,827 hectares, the figures show.

Portugal has suffered 195 wildfires so far this year, which have ravaged 84,717 hectares of land, EFFIS figures show.

Scientists say human-induced climate change is making extreme weather events, including heatwaves and droughts, more frequent and intense. They in turn increase the risk of fires, which emit climate-heating greenhouse gases.

Fires have blazed across Europe making 2022 a record year for wildfires on the continent.

AFP



SWEET enemy

Chocolate is rich in calories, sugar, and fat that can bust your diet if you overdo it. It feels good to get into its sway occasionally but guard against over indulgence which can undo the efforts of your workout

No one can resist the lure of chocolate yet it remains one of the biggest enemies of those on a fitness spree for the sole reason of its ability to pile on calories instantly. But ask any fitness freak and his/her favourite food would invariably be chocolate.

Chocolate contains powerful antioxidants called flavonoids, as well as some magnesium. These nutrients may help lower blood pressure and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

According to Joy Bauer, a nutrition and healthy lifestyle expert and the host of NBC's *Health + Happiness*, dark chocolate is the most nutritious form of chocolate. Compared with milk chocolate, it contains more than double the amount of heart-healthy flavonoids. To enjoy the delicious taste of chocolate and receive the benefits of flavonoids, choose a dark-chocolate variety that contains at least 70 per cent cacao, or cocoa, she

says in a recent article on her website. "Dark chocolate's potential health benefits certainly don't give you a free pass to overindulge, though. You'll still need to watch your portions. That's because even dark chocolate contains calories, fat, and sugar that will lead to weight gain if you overdo it, so be strategic about incorporating this treat into your diet," says Joy.

The best dark-chocolate varieties contain only one type of fat - cocoa butter - and do not contain added palm oil, coconut oil, or milk fat. Technically, they're all saturated fats, but cocoa butter has a neutral effect on cholesterol levels, so it won't raise your blood cholesterol the way other saturated fats will.

Try sticking with one-ounce, snack-sized portions, and be sure to account for an extra 150 calories in your daily calorie allotment. You may also enjoy a cup of low-fat hot cocoa (typically less than 100 calories per cup) or a cup of soy milk with one tablespoon of chocolate syrup or powder. These beverages are rich in calcium and can help maintain strong bones.

Unsweetened cocoa powder can be used as a flavouring in lower-calorie dessert recipes as well. Unsweetened cocoa powder is also a gluten-free food, so if you have celiac disease, it's perfectly safe to use.

Many women with PMS crave chocolate before their periods, and they often report that indulging in chocolate improves their mood, making them feel instantly better. This may be the result of the serotonin that is released when chocolate is consumed. However, experts suggest that indulging in nutrient-rich foods - particularly those containing calcium, vitamin D, magnesium, vitamin B6, and manganese - is actually more effective at relieving most PMS symptoms.

Aside from the potential to cause weight gain, chocolate does have other negative effects - It can be a powerful migraine trigger because it contains both caffeine and the amino acids tyramine and phenylethylamine. Chocolate can also trigger IBS symptoms in some people. If you experience discomfort after consuming chocolate, consider limiting your consumption or avoiding it altogether.

Dark chocolate's potential health benefits certainly don't give you a free pass to overindulge, though. You'll still need to watch your portions. That's because even dark chocolate contains calories, fat, and sugar that will lead to weight gain if you overdo it



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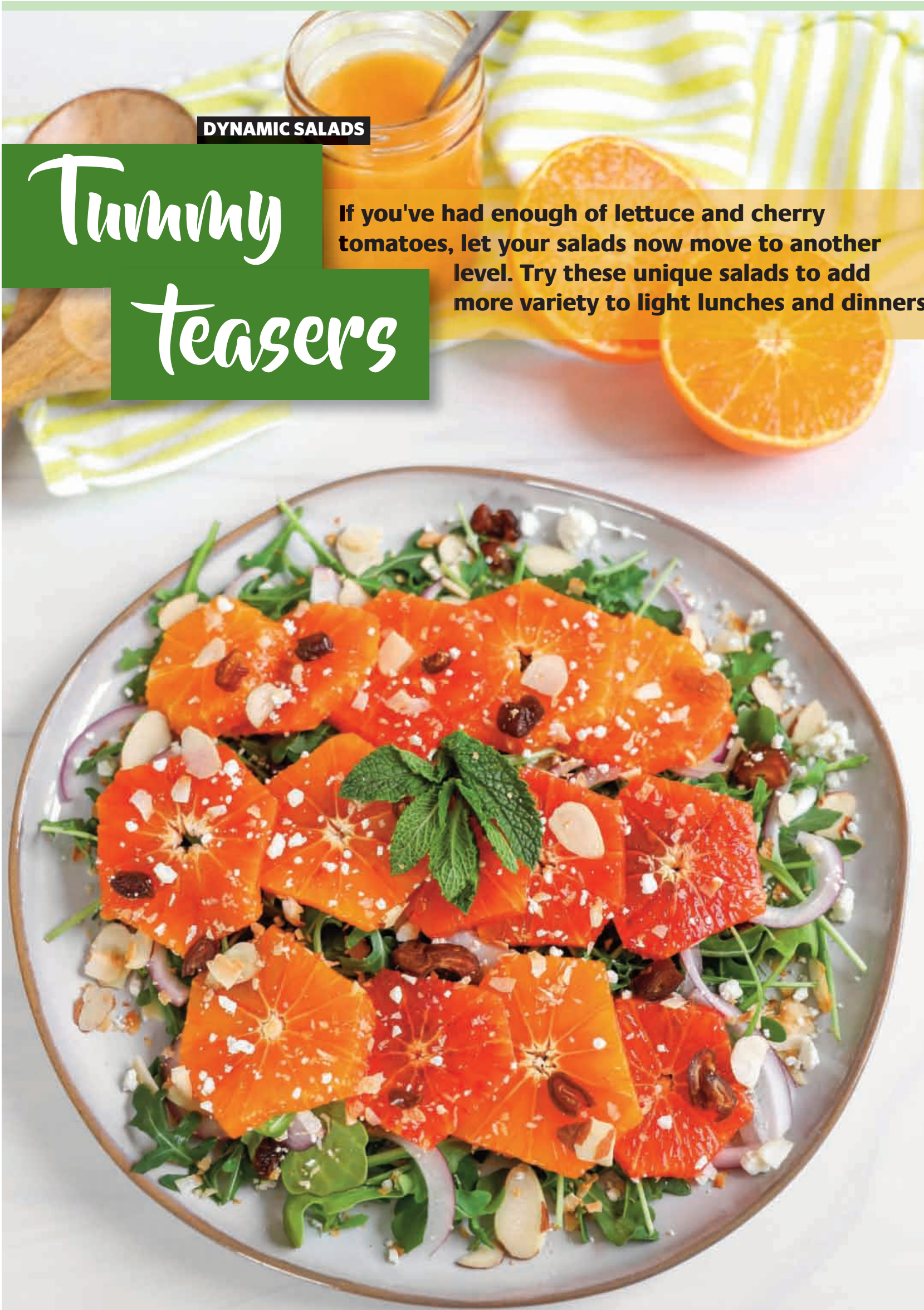
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DYNAMIC SALADS

Tummy Teasers

If you've had enough of lettuce and cherry tomatoes, let your salads now move to another level. Try these unique salads to add more variety to light lunches and dinners

Mandarosa Salad

Ingredients

- 5 Mandarosas - peeled and sliced
- ¼ cup toasted coconut flakes
- 2 cups baby arugula
- ¼ cup sliced red onion
- ¼ cup dates - chopped
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- Few mint leaves

2tbsp crumbled goat cheese

For the vinaigrette

- ¼ cup red vinegar
- ¾ cup olive oil
- 2tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 4tbsp fresh Mandarosa juice
- 1tbsp honey - optional

Method

Toss arugula, coconut flakes, onion, dates, and almonds together, and plate. Arrange Mandarosa slices on top of arugula mixture and sprinkle with crumbled goat cheese. Garnish with fresh mint. Whisk together all vinaigrette ingredients until fully combined. Drizzle over salad.



Egg and Avocado Salad

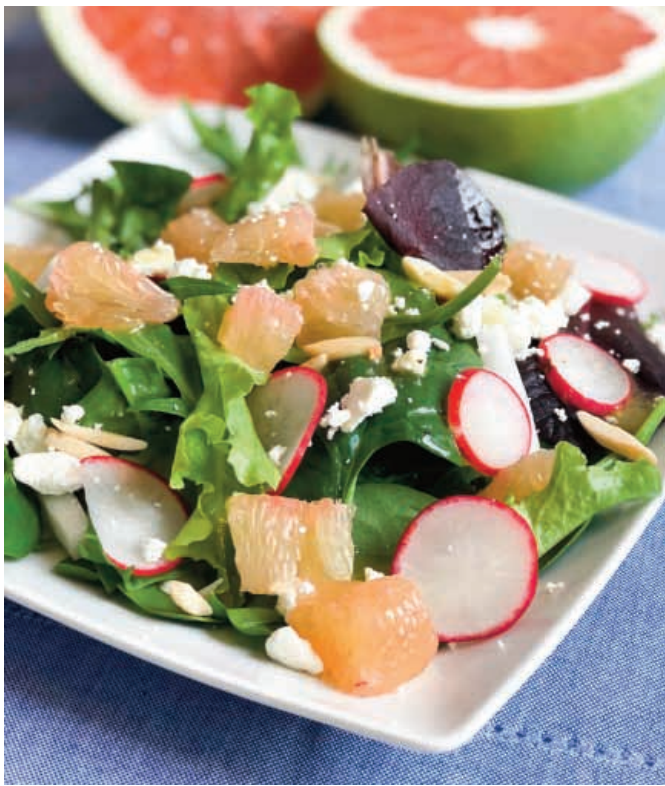
Ingredients

- 1 ripe avocado - diced
- 1tsp olive oil
- 1 pinch salt
- 4 strips beef bacon
- 4 eggs
- 1tbsp heavy cream
- ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- Sriracha, to taste
- Salt, to taste

Method

Drizzle the diced tropical avocado pieces with olive oil and add salt to taste. Cover and place in

the refrigerator for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, toast the beef bacon strips on a hot plate, ensuring even browning. Drain grease and set aside. Keep 1tbsp grease in the pan. Whisk eggs and heavy cream together in a small bowl. Pour mixture into the pan with the remaining grease. Cook over medium-low heat, whisking constantly until the eggs firm up. Plate the eggs and crumble the beef bacon on top. Sprinkle with cheese and add avocado pieces. Drizzle with Sriracha, to taste.



Pummelo and Radish Salad

Ingredients

- 1 small container baby spring mix
- 1 pummelo - cut into small segments
- 4-6 baby radishes - sliced thinly
- ½ jicama - sliced into sticks
- ¼ cup almond slivers
- ¼ cup crumbled goat cheese

- 1tsp garden seasoning
- 1tsp black pepper
- 1tsp dijon mustard

Method

Make a bed of spring mix and add pummelo, radishes, jicama, almond slivers and goat cheese crumbles. To make the dressing, combine all dressing ingredients and shake. Before serving, drizzle salad lightly with pummelo dressing.

For the dressing

- 2tbsp white balsamic vinegar
- 3tbsp olive oil
- 2tbsp pummelo juice



Mexican Street Corn Salad

Ingredients

- 6 ears corn - husks and silk removed
- 1tbsp mayonnaise
- 2tbsp butter
- 1 jalapeno - seeded and finely chopped
- ¼ red bell pepper - seeded and finely diced
- ½ red onion - finely diced
- Juice of 1 lime
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- ½tsp red chilli powder
- ¼tsp smoked paprika
- Cojita cheese, to taste

Method

Coat corn cobs with butter and mayo and grill on a grill or grill hot-plate. Rotate frequently and cook until all sides are golden brown. Remove from grill and remove corn kernels from cob. Toss the corn kernels and remaining ingredients together in a large bowl. Top with cojita cheese and serve. For an interesting option, serve in a carved out pineapple, with chopped pineapple added to the corn.

Watermelon and Cucumber Salad



Ingredients

- 3 cups watermelon cubes
- 1 cucumber – sliced into half moons
- 1tbsp lime juice
- Few mint leaves - torn into strips
- ¼ cup feta cheese
- 1 pinch sea salt

Method

In a large bowl, combine watermelon, cucumber, lime juice, and mint. Sprinkle with feta cheese and salt. Chill for 30 minutes before serving.

TURKEY'S DELIGHT

Turkey's Kenyan-born Can wins second European 10,000m title

Munich, Germany - Turkey's Kenyan-born Yasemin Can won her second European 10,000m title in Munich on Monday as a trio of world-class heavyweights guaranteed their spots in respective finals.

Fresh from sealing the Commonwealth title, Britain's Eilish McColgan forced the pace in the 25-lap race, but Can hit the front with just under 3km to go.

Can, who previously won the 10,000m title in Amsterdam in 2016, was merciless as she turned the screw at Munich's Olympic Stadium, clocking a winning time of 30min 32.57sec.

McColgan claimed silver more than 8sec behind while a second Kenyan-born athlete, Israel's defending champion and world marathon bronze medallist Lonah Chemtai Salpeter, took bronze.

In the first field medal of the Euros, world bronze medallist Jessica Schilder of the Netherlands won the women's shot put with a best of 20.24m on the second of her six attempts.

Portugal's Auriol Dongmo took silver with a national record of 19.82m, Schilder's teammate Jorinde Van Klinken claiming bronze (18.94).

That was closely followed by Croatia's Filip Mihaljevic claiming victory in the men's shot with a best of 21.53m, Serbia's Armin Sinancevic taking silver with 21.39m and Czech Tomas Stanek bronze (21.24).

Test is good

Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen kept his bid for a repeat double gold on course after winning his 1,500m heat in 3:38.48.

The Norwegian was one of the



Turkey's Yasemin Can celebrates after winning gold in the women's 10,000m in Munich on Monday (AFP)

stars of the Berlin Euros in 2018 when he went home with golds in both the 1,500 and 5,000m.

It will be a quick turnaround for Ingebrigtsen, who had to settle for silver behind surprise British winner Jake Wightman in the 1,500m at the world champs.

The 5,000m final is scheduled for 1908 GMT on Tuesday, with the 1500m final to be held on Thursday.

"Today was a first test for me and the test result is: very good," Ingebrigtsen said.

"The Olympic stadium is a beautiful arena and the track is really good and fast."

Croatia's Sandra Perkovic, bidding for a record sixth continental

title, also qualified for the final of the women's discus throw.

"The European championships are always very special to me because my first major medal was a European gold medal in Barcelona in 2010," said the two-time Olympic and world champion. "I am proud to be the number one in Europe and to represent Europe around the world. They all know who the discus girl is, and I think I want to stay in this position for a long time."

Cuban-born Portuguese triple jumper Pedro Pichardo, the reigning world and Olympic champion, also sailed through qualifying for Wednesday's final with a best of 17.36m.

Popovici clocks third fastest 200m freestyle to win gold

Rome, Italy - Romanian teenager David Popovici swam the third quickest time in history to claim the men's 200m freestyle gold at the European Championships on Monday in Rome.

Popovici, who only turns 18 next month, cruised to victory in 1min 42.97sec with Switzerland's Antonio Djakovic in second place and Austria's Felix Auboeck third, both over two seconds behind.

Germany's Paul Biedermann has held the world record of 1min 42sec since 2009, which he set in the Italian capital.

On Saturday, Popovici claimed the world record in the 100m freestyle after taking double gold at the World Championships in June.

"It was a hard race to swim and I think my time is well-earned. This is an excellent time," Popovici said.

"Finally, I could go under 1:43, which is great. The immediate



Romania's David Popovici displays his gold medal (AFP)

plans are to relax a bit tomorrow and then test the waters in the 400m."

Popovici will swim in the preliminary heats of the 400m on Wednesday.

France won the mixed 4x100m freestyle relay in 3min 22.80sec with Britain in second and Sweden in third.

"After the little disappointment in the 200m events it was

a great pleasure to win this medal," Maxime Grousset said after France earned bronze in the men's 4x200m and the women finished sixth.

"We have a great team and we are really satisfied."

Italy were fourth despite leading at the halfway mark but there was reason to celebrate for the crowd.

Home favourite Simona Quadarella added to her 800m freestyle gold by clinching the women's 1500m in 15min 54.15sec.

Hungary's Viktoria Mihalyvari-Farkas took second and Quadarella's compatriot Martina Rita Caramignoli came third.

Sweden's Louise Hansson won the women's 100m butterfly final in 56.66sec, beating France's Marie Wattel and Bosnia and Herzegovina's Lana Pudar.

AFP

Murray downs Wawrinka in Cincinnati

Cincinnati, United States - Andy Murray won his first hard-court match of the summer on Monday, defeating Stan Wawrinka 7-6 (7/3), 5-7, 7-5 in the opening round of the ATP/WTA Cincinnati Masters.

The 35-year-old Scot was facing his 37-year-old Swiss rival for the 22nd time with both treble Grand Slam champions still coming back to full form after long-term injuries over the past few seasons.

Murray lost in the first round at Washington and last week in Montreal while Wawrinka's last win came on grass two months ago at Queen's Club, London; he has not won on cement since the Australian Open last year.

Murray needed four match points to advance at a tournament he has won twice, in 2008 and 2011. The veteran was competing here for the 17th time.



Andy Murray celebrates after beating Stan Wawrinka at Cincinnati Masters on Monday

"We're not young anymore," Murray said. "Both of us gave our best right until the end."

"Matches like this are a lot tougher than when we were in

our mid-20s."

Compatriot Cameron Norrie joined Murray in the second round with his 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-4 defeat of Dane Holger Rune.

Other winners on opening day included 2016 champion Marin Cilic, who defeated Spain's Jaume Munar 6-3, 6-3, and American John Isner, the 2013 finalist against Rafael Nadal, who advanced past France's Benjamin Bonzi 7-6 (13/11), 3-6, 7-6 (7/4).

Italy's 12th seeded Matteo Berrettini, the 2021 Wimbledon finalist, lost his second straight match as his return to hardcourt stalls. The 2021 Wimbledon finalist was beaten by Frances Tiafoe 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 7-6 (7/5).

In the WTA draw, Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina defeated Egyptian Mayar Sherif 6-3, 6-2.

AFP

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International efforts needed to understand sport's dementia risk

London, United Kingdom - Coordinated international research is vital to boost understanding of the link between brain injuries in people playing sport and the development of dementia, a report said on Tuesday.

It comes after a group of former rugby players decided to sue governing bodies World Rugby, the Rugby Football Union and the Welsh Rugby Union for allegedly failing to protect them from permanent injury.

The claimants include ex-Wales captain Ryan Jones and England's 2003 World Cup-winning hooker Steve Thompson, with many of the ex-players diagnosed with early-onset dementia and other irreversible neurological impairments.

Multiple studies have shown a link between brain injuries and an increased risk of developing neurodegenerative disease, and that ex-professional athletes are at an increased risk of developing such conditions.

Previous research from Glasgow consultant neuropathologist Willie Stewart showed ex-professional footballers were 3.5 times more likely to die from neurodegenerative diseases than the general population.

The new report from Alzheimer's Research UK and the Health Policy Partnership says there is a need for an international consortium of researchers



Alkmaar's Dani de Wit (L), Sparta's Adil Auassar (back) and Mica Pinto are all in danger of clashing heads (AFP)

Alzheimer's Research UK will invest £500,000 (\$600,000) to develop the research priorities identified in the report.

and funding bodies to better understand the connection.

"There are many limits to existing research that make it difficult to compare data and draw

overarching conclusions," states the report titled "Dementia and sport: research priorities for the future".

"Studies are often not comparable, with different methodologies and definitions used for key measures. Methods of assessment and the duration of follow-ups also vary considerably.

"An international research consortium could help to coordinate research efforts and ensure consistent methodologies and definitions across different studies."

The report also recommended

setting up longer-term studies and to widen the focus of studies beyond elite male athletes to cover the risk factors to other groups including children, adolescents and women.

Alzheimer's Research UK will invest £500,000 (\$600,000) to develop the research priorities identified in the report.

TV presenter Hayley McQueen, whose father Gordon, a former Scotland and Manchester United defender, is living with vascular dementia, welcomed the report.

AFP



Suspension

FIFA suspends Indian football federation over third-party influence

New Delhi, India - FIFA has suspended the Indian football federation meaning that the country will not currently be able to host the under-17 Women's World Cup in October.

body said its council unanimously decided to suspend the All India Football Federation "due to undue influence from third parties, which constitutes a serious violation of the FIFA statutes".

Federations must be free from legal and political interference, according to FIFA rules.

The AIFF is in disarray and being run by administrators after former chief Praful Patel stayed in office beyond his term without fresh elections, which courts ruled invalid.

Fresh elections are to be held

on August 28 and the poll process began last week after India's Supreme Court approved a timeline prepared by the administrators. India is due to host the U-17 tournament on October 11-30 but FIFA said on Monday that because of the suspension it "cannot currently be held in India as planned".

FIFA said that it was "in constant constructive contact with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in India and is hopeful that a positive outcome to the case may still be achieved".

Indian men's and women's national teams also cannot play junior or senior international games during the suspension.

Former men's captain Bhaichung Bhutia called the suspension "very harsh".

"At the same time, I think it's a great opportunity to get our system right," he told Indian sports news outlet Sportstar. "And very important that all the stakeholders - the federations, state associations, sport ministry - come together to get the system right and everybody work for the bet-

terment of the sport."

India captain Sunil Chhetri had recently advised his players "not pay too much attention" to the FIFA ban threat as the situation was out of their control.

"The suspension will be lifted once an order to set up a committee of administrators to assume the powers of the AIFF Executive Committee has been repealed and the AIFF administration regains full control of the AIFF's daily affairs," FIFA said.

SA skipper Elgar sick of 'Bazball' talk ahead of Test series

London, United Kingdom - South Africa captain Dean Elgar said on Tuesday he was fed up with discussing England's new swash-buckling 'Bazball' approach to Test cricket on the eve of their series opener at Lord's.

England have won all four of their Tests under a new leadership pairing of skipper Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum.

McCullum's nickname is behind a 'Bazball' tag that has become shorthand for an aggressive style of playing the five-day game.

That 100 percent record includes a 3-0 series sweep over world champions New Zealand, with England hunting down challenging targets on each occasion.

Stokes's men then made light of a seemingly stiff target of 378 in the Covid-delayed fifth Test against India at Edgbaston, romping to victory by seven wickets.

But South Africa - top of the World Test Championship table - will be a tough proposition for England in the three-match series starting on Wednesday.

Opening batsman Elgar is confident the Proteas' pace attack can cut high-flying England down to size.

"With all due respect I am really not going to entertain that (Bazball) anymore," Elgar said at Lord's on Tuesday.

"We have chatted about it long and hard. I just want to crack on with the cricket. I think the game deserves that respect and mud-slinging is now a thing of the past for me."

Elgar, who has overseen seven wins from nine matches since becoming South Africa's permanent red-ball skipper, accepts there may be times when the tourists are on the defensive but he believes they have the resources to fight back.

"I would like to think from a bowling point of view, our bowlers are big, tall, fast and strong buggers and we have ticked the boxes in regards to the spin department."

"We are not here to play soft-natured cricket."

AFP



South Africa captain Dean Elgar takes part in a practice session at Lord's cricket ground in London on Monday (AFP)

Pakistan post 314-6 in first ODI against the Netherlands

Rotterdam, Netherlands - Pakistan got off to a slow start before posting a commanding 314-6 in the first one-day international against the Netherlands in Rotterdam on Tuesday.

Left-hand opener Fakhar Zaman carved out a run-a-ball 109 - his seventh ODI century - while captain Babar Azam hit 74 before being caught after mistiming a delivery from Dutch pacer Logan van Beek.

Pakistan won the toss and elected to bat on a hot and muggy day at the VOC cricket ground outside the Dutch harbour city in the first of a three-match series.

The home bowlers initially contained Pakistan's batting, with the visitors losing their first wicket, that of dangerman Imrul-Haq, lbw to paceman Vivian Kingma for a painstaking two off 19 balls. But Zaman and Azam eventually let loose and put on a partnership of 168 off 170 balls before Azam was caught in a soft



Fakhar Zaman (L) made 109 for Pakistan while captain Babar Azam hit 74

dismissal when he mistimed a shot into the waiting hands of Tom Cooper at mid-off.

Zaman was dismissed two overs later when he was brilliantly run out by Dutch captain and wicketkeeper Scott Edwards off a pin-point accurate throw by

Bas de Leede at deep mid-wicket.

Pakistan looked set for a larger total but the Dutch bowlers did well to restrict them on a sluggish pitch, with the spin bowling of youngsters Aryan Dutt and Tim Pringle causing problems.

AFP

Australian great Chappell ends 45-year commentary career

Sydney, Australia - Australian cricket great Ian Chappell says that he is retiring from commentating after 45 colourful years behind the microphone.

The 78-year-old former batsman went into media work after captaining his country and was known for his frank opinions.

Chappell told The Sydney Morning Herald that retiring from commentating had been on his mind for some time.

"I had a minor stroke a few years back and I got off lucky, but it just makes everything harder," Chappell, who made his Test debut in 1964 and played 75 times, told the newspaper.

"And I just thought with all the travel and walking up stairs and things like that, it's all just going to get harder."

Chappell said he had taken notice of comments by recently retired veteran rugby league commentator Ray Warren.

"He said, 'You're always one sentence closer to making a mistake,'" Chappell added.

The Australian Broadcasting



Ian Chappell

Corporation said that Chappell "commentated with a laconic tone but he became known for his forthright opinions on everything from batting technique to the way the sport was governed".

Chappell said he did not care how people would remember him.

"It's up to other people to decide what they think of me and some will think I've been all right," he told the Herald.

"Some will think I've been a prick. That doesn't bother me one bit."

AFP

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DIAZ TO THE REDSCUE



Liverpool's Luis Diaz celebrates after scoring against Crystal Palace in their English Premier League match at Anfield on Monday (AFP)

Darwin Nunez red card costs Liverpool more ground in draw with Crystal Palace at Anfield

Liverpool, United Kingdom - Liverpool fought back with 10 men to prevent a first Premier League defeat in front of fans at Anfield since 2017 as Darwin Nunez was sent off during a 1-1 draw with Crystal Palace on Monday.

Luis Diaz's sensational strike salvaged a point for the Reds

after Wilfried Zaha opened the scoring for Palace in the first half.

Just two games into the season, Liverpool trail leaders Manchester City by four points with their new 75-million-euro (£63 million, \$77 million) striker largely to blame.

Nunez had scored in his first two appearances against City in the Community Shield and in rescuing a point as a substitute in a 2-2 draw away at Fulham last weekend.

But the Uruguayan's headbutt on Joachim Andersen just before the hour mark left his side with an uphill challenge in the match and increasing ground to make up al-

only fit enough for an appearance off the bench.

Nat Phillips was forced to make his first Premier League appearance since the final day of the 2020/21 season at centre-back, while Klopp had no options to refresh his attack late in the game.

"The real feeling I have at the moment is pride," added Klopp. "With the week's preparation we had it was unbelievable."

Klopp had lambasted his side for a slow start that cost them two points at newly-promoted Fulham on the opening weekend of the season.

This time Liverpool came flying out the traps, but failed to turn their early dominance into goals.

James Milner, Nunez and Mohamed Salah were all guilty of failing to hit the target with big chances, while Harvey Elliott's goalbound shot was blocked by Andersen.

Palace had barely been in the opposition's half for the first half-hour, but Patrick Vieira's game-plan worked to perfection for the opening goal.

Of course, it was a red card. He was provoked but that is not how he should behave

JURGEN KLOPP

ready in the title race.

"He knows that now himself," said Jurgen Klopp when asked if Nunez had let his teammates down.

"Of course, it was a red card. He was provoked but that is not how he should behave."

Liverpool partly dug themselves out of a hole thanks to Diaz's brilliant equaliser and Klopp said he was bursting with pride at how the 10 men reacted after a difficult week caused by an early-season injury crisis.

Roberto Firmino, Thiago Alcantara, Diogo Jota, Joel Matip and Ibrahima Konate were all sidelined, while Joe Gomez was

Vlahovic double sinks Sassuolo, Osimhen abused in Verona rout

Milan, Italy - Dusan Vlahovic fired Juventus to a comfortable 3-0 win over Sassuolo with a brace in Monday's Serie A opener while Victor Osimhen was racially abused by Verona fans in a thumping 5-2 win for Napoli.

Serbia forward Vlahovic put Juve two ahead just before the break from the penalty spot after being fouled by Gian Marco Ferrarri, and ended the match as a contest following a smart Angel Di Maria pass six minutes after the restart.

Argentina winger Di Maria had set Juve on the road for a low-key win with his first Serie A goal, a miscued volley in the 26th minute of his debut after arriving as a free agent this summer.

"It's really a great feeling and a pleasure to play with such a great player," said Vlahovic of Di Maria, who was substituted with a thigh injury midway through the second half.

"I should thank him for the assist he gave me. I'm very happy



Juventus' Dusan Vlahovic (L) celebrates with Angel Di Maria after scoring against Sassuolo on Monday (AFP)

and hope to be on the end of others. I think we can work well together."

Massimiliano Allegri's side were missing returning hero Paul Pogba, out with a knee injury until next month, and injured starting goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny.

However Allegri gave Filip Kostic his Juve debut off the bench, a new face who along with the excellent Di Maria could reju-

venate a sluggish team who came up against the weak resistance at the Allianz Stadium.

Juve are also interested in Leandro Paredes and Memphis Depay as they try to make a proper title bid after finishing 16 points behind champions AC Milan last season.

Osimhen responds

Osimhen was among the scorers

for Napoli who before kick-off honoured their former goalkeeper Claudio Garella, a Serie A title winner in the 1980s with both southern Italy's biggest club and Verona.

An AFP reporter at the game heard a section of the home support launch monkey chants at the Nigeria forward midway through the first half, before he stretched to jab home Giovanni Di Lorenzo's knockdown in stoppage time to put the away side 2-1 ahead at half-time.

It was the latest episode of racist chanting at Verona who have a long history of far-right sympathies among their hardcore support.

After netting his first goal of the season, Osimhen took off his protective face mask and mimicked crying into a pitch-side camera, suggesting he had heard abuse before his goal even though he did not speak about it afterwards to DAZN.

AFP

Van Dijk says Nunez must 'control himself' after red card against Palace

London, United Kingdom - Virgil van Dijk said new Liverpool forward Darwin Nunez must learn to "control himself" after being sent off for a reckless headbutt during Monday's 1-1 draw against Crystal Palace.

The 23-year-old Uruguayan, who signed from Benfica in June, was shown a straight red card in the 57th minute at Anfield for his foul on Joachim Andersen and will serve a three-match ban.

Van Dijk said Nunez had the support of his teammates but must learn to stay calm.

"He's got the backing from us and he knows it should not happen again and hopefully it will be that way," said the defender.

"He has to control himself, definitely. I think that's a separate thing. He has to manage himself, he has to be knowing



Liverpool's Darwin Nunez leaves the pitch after being sent off by the referee on Monday (AFP)

that these things can happen, especially in the Premier League.

"It will be a learning curve for him and hopefully it will never happen again."

Liverpool, who have been involved in a series of tight Premier League tussles with Manchester City in recent years, are already four points behind the defending champions and leaders.

Palace defender Andersen revealed on Tuesday that he had received death threats and social media abuse since the incident. He is reported to have asked Palace's police liaison officer and the Premier League to investigate.

"Got maybe 300-400 of these messages last night," the Dane posted to his Instagram story.

AFP



Getafe's Djene Dakonam tries to stop Atletico Madrid's Alvaro Morata from taking a shot at goal (AFP)

Morata double fires Atletico to opening win at Getafe

Madrid, Spain - Alvaro Morata struck twice to secure Atletico Madrid a 3-0 victory at Getafe in their opening game of the La Liga season on Monday.

Morata, who has returned to Atletico after two years on loan with Juventus, scored a goal in each half before Antoine Griezmann wrapped up the points.

Joao Felix played a key role by setting up all three goals, the first

of which Morata swept home from the edge of the box on 15 minutes. Borja Mayoral grazed the crossbar for Getafe late in the first half, but Morata eased Atletico nerves with a clinical finish on the hour following an error by Stefan Mitrovic.

Felix then threaded the ball through for Griezmann, who cut inside and drove low into the corner to ensure Atletico made a

winning start following the departure of Luis Suarez.

The Uruguayan rejoined his boyhood club Nacional on a short-term deal in July after his contract expired at Atletico.

Athletic Bilbao drew 0-0 at home to Mallorca, while Real Betis defeated 10-man Elche 3-0 to complete the opening round of fixtures in Spain.

AFP

Bynoe-Gittens extends deal with Dortmund

Berlin, Germany - Borussia Dortmund forward Jamie Bynoe-Gittens has extended his deal until 2025, the Bundesliga club said on Tuesday.

The announcement bookends an eventful week for promising Bynoe-Gittens, who scored a goal and set up the winner in Friday's 3-1 victory over Freiburg shortly after celebrating his 18th birthday.

AFP

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