

Tourism income grows 47% to RO1.9bn, fuels economy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman witnessed an impressive 47.3% increase in tourism income in 2022, growing to RO1.9bn from RO1.3bn in 2021.

Figures released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information highlight the sector's direct added value, which stood at RO1.1bn, up 33% from 804.9mn in 2021. Additionally, tourism's contribution to the GDP touched 2.4%.

Domestic tourism played a pivotal role in these figures. The Tourism Statistics Bulletin shows domestic tourism contributed a substantial 68%, accounting for RO1.3bn in 2022.

Visitor footfall provided another reason for optimism. In 2022, the sultanate welcomed 2.9mn visitors, a staggering 348% surge from the previous year's 652,000. Most of these visitors hailed from the GCC



RO1.1bn
Direct added value

RO1.3bn
Domestic tourism

RO592.4mn
Tourists' spending

countries, recording 1.6mn, followed by Asia and Europe with 651,000 and 360,000, respectively.

Breaking up the figures further into the purpose of these

visits, leisure and recreation led the numbers with 43.5%. Visiting family and friends followed at 35.7%, while business-related travel accounted for 10.5%.

Visitors who stayed for just one day totalled 861,000, while 2.1mn opted for extended stay beyond a single night - collectively 15.6mn nights.

Tourists collectively spent ap-

proximately RO592.4mn in 2022.

While inbound tourism grew, there was also a spike in outbound tourism. The number jumped 166.2%; 5.2mn tourists from Oman travelled abroad in 2022, compared to 1.9mn in 2021.

Significantly, 67.3% or 3.5mn of these were Omani nationals, 64% of who chose to spend multiple nights at their chosen destination.

Total spend of outbound tourists also underwent a significant change - up 243.8% from RO281.1mn in 2021 to RO966.6mn in 2022.

This burgeoning outbound tourism led to a ballooning deficit in Oman's tourism balance, which grew 566.6% in 2022 to RO374.2mn, primarily fueled by the amplified outbound tourism expenditure. This is in contrast to a RO56.1mn deficit in 2021.

Freelancers told to open separate bank accounts to curb money laundering

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Freelancers and independent professionals are required to open separate bank accounts in order curb the risks of money laundering and terror financing,

the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has stated.

In a notice issued on Monday, CBO stated that instructions have been issued to banks to facilitate the opening of bank accounts for freelancers and independent professionals, and

to provide the necessary credit facilities for this category.

CBO informed that businesses that enable an individual to provide services or products without establishing a workplace or obtaining a commercial licence are classified as freelancers or inde-

pendent professionals.

It also notified such professionals who use their personal accounts for commercial purposes of the requirement to open a separate account.

In a note to banks, CBO urged provision of credit facilities for

this category and their inclusion within the percentage it has specified for financing as small and medium enterprises. 'The decision gives self-employed and independent professionals the same benefits granted to small and medium enterprises.'

H M issues four Royal Decrees

Decrees to establish embassy in Australia, committee for cooperation with Palestine

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued four Royal Decrees on Monday.

Royal Decree No 56/2023 ratifies an agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and Government of the State of Palestine signed in Ramallah on July 7, 2023 on establishing a Committee for Consultations and Bilateral Cooperation.

Article 1 states that the above-mentioned agreement will be ratified in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article 2 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No 57/2023 ratifies an agreement on air services between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and Government of the Republic of Senegal signed in Muscat on June 21, 2023.

Article 1 states that the above-mentioned agreement will be

ratified in accordance with the version attached to this decree. **Article 2** states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No 58/2023 endorses the Sultanate of Oman joining the Convention on Establishing the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation signed in Paris on January 27, 2021.

Article 1 endorses the Sultanate of Oman joining the Convention on Establishing the International Organization for Marine Aids in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article 2 instructs the departments concerned to deposit the ratification document for the abovementioned convention in line with its provisions.

Article 3 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No 59/2023 establishes the Sultanate of Oman's Embassy in Australia. **Article 1** states that the Sultanate of Oman's Embassy will be established in Australia.

Article 2 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

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GCC education ministers discuss future of learning

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Held in Muscat on Monday, the seventh meeting of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Ministers of Education focused on contemporary topics, including the role of artificial intelligence in education and the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on learning paradigms. A pivotal discussion centred on including financial literacy in curricula for students in the region.

H E Dr Madiha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniya, Minister of Education and President of the current session, highlighted the steady progress and shared vision in the educational sector of the GCC countries. "Our educational systems have played a pioneering role in aligning with sustainable development goals," she noted.

She emphasised that GCC nations are witnessing tangible outcomes in the school education sector, as international metrics affirm the region's positive trajectory. "We remain dedicated to ensuring our youth are equipped with the knowledge and skills essential for global competitiveness," H E Dr Madiha stated.

The emphasis of our leaders on joint action and the frequent reference to education in GCC summits reveal our collective belief in empowering our youth for a prosperous future

JASSIM MOHAMMED AL BUDAIWI

Discussing technological advances, she observed, "The swift evolution of information technology has facilitated human progress and socio-economic prosperity. But it's imperative that our educational systems uphold the moral and religious values that bind our Gulf societies." She also acknowledged UNESCO's recent guidelines on technology in education, which align with the objectives of GCC states.

Financial literacy, H E Dr Madiha said, remains a priority, and emphasised on teaching financial skills, given the relevance of these in today's world. She



(Supplied photos)



We remain dedicated to ensuring our youth are equipped with the knowledge and skills essential for global competitiveness

H E DR MADIHA BINT AHMED AL SHAIBANIYA

cited studies demonstrating the positive influence of such education on students' everyday financial decisions.

Jassim Mohammed al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of GCC, commended the education ministries for their resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, lauding their ability to ensure continued education amidst global challenges. "The emphasis of our leaders on joint action and the frequent reference to education in GCC summits reveal our collective belief in empowering our youth for a prosperous future," Budaiwi stated.

The ministers also reviewed Oman's proposal regarding the exchange of expertise among GCC nations, emphasising the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving the United Nations' fourth Sustainable Development Goal: quality education.

The ministers underscored the significance of preserving moral, religious and familial values in Gulf societies. They advocated collaborative efforts across sectors to reinforce these principles, recognising the family as the foundational unit for societal progress and well-being.



Oman Health Exhibition and Conference to begin on Sept 18

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Health Conference will feature discussions on the future of healthcare, modern medicine and investment strategies

In a move reinforcing Oman's commitment to advancing healthcare, organisers announced details of the upcoming Oman Health Exhibition and Conference (OHEC) at a press conference on Monday.

Key figures, including Dr Qamra al Sariri, Director General of Quality Assurance Centre, Dr Said Mohamed al Mughairi, Director of Quality Assurance and Patient Safety, Directorate of Private Health Establishments, and Ashley Roberts, Managing Director of CONNECT, outlined the event's significance.

Scheduled from September 18 to 20 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, it is an initiative by CONNECT in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

Besides showcasing the latest in healthcare technologies and practices, OHEC will focus on collaborations and trade promotion. Running simultaneously, the Oman Health Conference will feature discussions on the future of healthcare, modern medicine and investment strategies.

Notably, World Patient Safety Day will be observed on the second day of the event, focusing on patient engagement and community involvement.

"Bringing together national and international healthcare experts allows us to exchange knowledge and experiences, which is crucial for the development of Oman's healthcare sector," Dr Qamra said about the event.

OHEC's alignment with Oman's Health Vision 2050 underscores its role in positioning the sultanate as a prime destination for medical tourism. The event promises diverse participation, including representatives from India, Iran, Malaysia, Thailand, Poland, Pakistan, the UK and Lebanon.

An additional highlight is a VIP delegation from Malaysia, led by Farizal B Jaafar, Acting CEO of Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council, which alongside major Malaysian hospitals, aims to showcase its healthcare offerings and explore collaboration avenues in the Middle East.

OHEC will also put a spotlight on a dedicated Malaysian pavilion. Commenting on this, Jaafar said, "We're committed to offering our medical expertise to the Middle East. I invite industry stakeholders and potential healthcare travellers to visit our pavilion and discover Malaysian Healthcare. We aim for meaningful dialogue and potential collaborations to enhance our presence in the region."

Environmental violations up during khareef: EA

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Inspectors of Environment Authority (EA) documented 719 cases of violations in Dhofar in August. According to an EA official, these mostly involved 'encroachment on vegetation cover'.

The authority also received 37 reports from concerned citizens during the ongoing khareef season last month.

These statistics emphasise the



(Supplied photo)

need for the recently launched Environmental Protection Initiative in Dhofar. The initiative's pri-

mary focus is preservation of wildlife and the broader environment, especially considering the increase in visitor and tourist footfall during khareef. "The goal is to curtail practices and behaviour detrimental to the environment and Dhofar's greenery," the EA official informed.

Shedding more light into the initiative, the EA official said, "In a strategic move, a 40-member field team, called the Environmental Protectors, was set up

this year. This team's mandate is clear: to oversee tourist locations during khareef in Dhofar for any environment-related offences. These include littering, felling trees and damaging green spaces."

The Environmental Protectors' objectives aren't limited to monitoring, but also raising environmental consciousness. "Our mission is aimed at enlightening individuals on the significance of safeguarding green spaces and

promoting responsible behaviour."

To facilitate community involvement, the official urged visitors to natural sites to report any violations they may witness immediately on the hotline 80071999.

"We earnestly appeal to citizens, residents and tourists alike to respect and adhere to the Wildlife Law and help us in our mission to preserve the environment," he added.



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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health – Ibri Regional Hospital -invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tender: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of tenders Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
3310/2023	Replacement,Supply, Installation And Commissioning Of Main Steam Pipeline And Fittings	MONDAY 25/ SEP/ 2023	Before 8 am on THURSDAY 12/ OCT /2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board.	R.O 25/= Per set
3311/2023	Bio Medical Equipments Duodenum Scope Gastrointestinal Scope,Colon				
3312/2023	Supply, Installation , Commissioning And Training Of New Ro Plant				

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Ibri Regional Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Any Clarification, you may contact via

Telephone: 24402200

Email id etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.



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Invitation to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of National Life and General Insurance Company SAOG are pleased to invite the shareholders for the Company's Extraordinary General Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 20 September 2023, at 3p.m. through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository Company ("MCDC") website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum for the first Extraordinary General Meeting is not met, a second Extraordinary General Meeting shall be held on Sunday, 24 September 2023, at 3 p.m, to discuss the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the proposal of amending Article 1 of the Company's Articles of Association, related to the commercial name of the Company as detailed in the amendment deed-Annexure 1.

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

(a) A juristic person, exclusively, has the right to authorize a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.

(b) Voting on any of the items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date set for the Meeting until the end of the voting process on the day of the Meeting, and in the event that the shareholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be invalid, and he must re-vote again on the day of the Meeting.

"For any questions relating to this notice, please contact

Telephone no: +968 95299234 or email: hamad@nlicgulf.com"

Our Correspondent

Muscat

H E Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrooqi, Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation, emphasised the meeting's significance.

She went on to underline the vital role of collaborative GCC actions in higher education and voiced her aspirations for outcomes that resonate with the collective goals of the GCC nations. She stressed the continual endeavours of the Secretariat General to refine and implement

Jassim Mohammed al-Budaiwi, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, spotlighted key agenda items. Foremost among them were decisions centring on digital transformation, the aforementioned

After welcoming the guests, H H Sayyid Fahd expressed his appreciation for the efforts they have been undertaking to develop education, higher educa-

H H Sayyid Fahd termed education as the basic pillar of progress and prosperity of any nation. Hence, investment in the field of education and research figures among the top priorities

GCC ministers expressed their thanks to the Sultanate of Oman, chair of the current session of the GCC, for hosting these two meetings. They valued the good preparations for the meetings which, they said, contributed to achieving a positive outcome.



Our Correspondent

Muscat

According to officials, 50 medical and assistant medical

The Health Technology Assessment Course has been conducted following the successful completion of the first part, which was focused on building capacities of the health practitioners in HTA (Specialised Medicines) as accredited by the Oman Medical Specialties Board.

Our Correspondent

Muscat

'There is no truth in what has been circulated about the government lifting fuel subsidies for the beneficiaries; the subsidy remains unchanged,' a notice is-

The National Subsidy System said that the government is dedicated to maintaining the integrity of the subsidy programme and urged upon people to dial its call centre number (24174000) for any questions, inquiries, or assistance with technical problems.



Advertisement No.(29 / 2023)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (**<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>**) starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/23/153 87/2023/MM/QS-55 Re-Call-01	Maintenance Works at different locations at Muscat Governorate (Re-Tender)	11/09/2023	19/09/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/184 2023/MM/HQ-51	Consultancy & Branding Services For Muscat Municipality	24/09/2023	15/10/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/178 2023/MM/HQ-52	Supply and fixing of Shades Near Kalbhu Park	24/09/2023	15/10/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/157 2023/MM/HQ-53	Supply and fixing of Solar Lights at Umq-Ribakh	24/09/2023	15/10/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/158 2023/MM/HQ-54	Supply and replacement of lights to Solar Lights at Al Aalam	24/09/2023	15/10/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/151 2023/MM/HQ-55	Consultancy Services for Master Planning For Al Amerat Park	24/09/2023	15/10/2023	First
PRE-23-168 2023/MM/HQ-56	Design and Construction of Internal Roads in Al Seeb and Boshier 2023 - 2024	24/09/2023	15/10/2023	Excellent
PRE/23/141 2023/MM/QS-63	Beautification Works in Al Qasabiy Area at Al Wadi kabir	24/09/2023	15/10/2023	Second
PRE/23/142 2023/MM/QS-64	Beautification Works in Alnoor Area at Ruwi	24/09/2023	15/10/2023	Second
PRE-23-179 2023/MM/QS-65	Maintenance of Arches Fountain at Sultan Qaboos Street	24/09/2023	15/10/2023	Specialist

- 1- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
- 2- Clarification and Support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
 - For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call **(+96824402200)**.



MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,774.54
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FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian	214.86
Pakistan	795.66
Bangladesh	285.51
Philippines	146.96
Sri Lanka	831.07

Rates as on September 04

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

IMF chief hails 'productive' China talks

The head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday praised "productive and substantive" talks with top officials in China as she wrapped up a visit to the country.

The IMF warned in July that the overall global economic recovery from the pandemic was slowing, despite slightly upgrading its outlook for world growth this year. In China, the IMF has forecast 5.2% expansion in 2023, slightly higher than Beijing's target of around five percent.

However, growth in the Asian nation has stuttered in recent months as weak consumer demand, high youth unemployment and a crisis in the crucial property sector have chipped away at an already lukewarm post-Covid rebound.

IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said she had "very productive and substantive discussions with the Chinese leadership", including Premier Li Qiang, Vice Premier He Lifeng, central bank governor Pan Gongsheng and Finance Minister Liu Kun.

OQGN IPO expected to open for subscription in September

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) on Monday announced its intention to proceed with an initial public offering (IPO) and listing on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

The IPO subscription period is expected to commence in September, after receiving the required approval from the Capital Market Authority (CMA). The listing of OQGN shares on the MSX is expected to take place in October 2023, as announced by OQGN during an event.

The selling shareholders expect to sell up to 49% of the total issued share capital of OQGN in the IPO. Following the offering, OQ will continue to hold a minimum of 51% shareholding, according to a press statement.

OQGN's listing on the MSX will provide investors with access to the growth of the company, which holds a natural monopoly over essential gas transportation in Oman.

The offering is available to eligible investors in Oman and qualified institutional and other investors in several countries (Category I) and retail investors in Oman (Category II).

OQGN said that the IPO will be conducted in the manner approved by the CMA and will be offered in two tranches. Category I represents 70% of the



OQGN announced its intention to float the IPO during a strategic announcement ceremony on Monday (Supplied photo)

OQGN – which intends to sell up to 49% of share capital in the IPO – expects to pay the first dividend distribution of RO33mn for the first nine months of 2023 around January 2024

Dividend policy
According to the company's statement, OQGN intends to adopt a semi-annual dividend distribution policy to pay dividends in cash after the offer.

The company expects to pay the first dividend distribution of RO33mn for the first nine

months of 2023 around January 2024 and expects to pay the second dividend distribution of RO11mn for the last three months of 2023 around April 2024.

OQGN currently expects to pay a dividend for the fiscal year ending on December 31, 2024, which will be the higher of 90% of the company's profit for the year or a 5% increase on the aggregate dividends paid for 2023. For 2025, the company expects to pay a dividend, which will be the higher of 90% of the profit for the year ending December 31, 2025, or a 5% increase on the dividends paid for 2024.

Mansoor al Abdali, managing

director of OQGN, said, "OQGN provides critical infrastructure to deliver gas that supports the industries and economy of Oman. This listing, which we are proud to conduct on the Muscat Stock Exchange, will allow us to advance the company into its next growth phase. The core focus of OQGN will remain on delivering vital resources supporting the growth of our customers and Oman. Our work is underlined by a commitment to reliability, efficiency, safety, and sustainability."

Talal al Awfi, OQ Group CEO and OQGN chairman, said, "The IPO of OQGN is part of a broader

divestment program envisioned by the government and being implemented by Oman Investment Authority. This marquee offering is an opportunity for Omani and international investors to participate in Oman's Vision 2040, the long-term national development plan that aims to make Oman a prosperous, competitive, and sustainable nation and to rapidly diversify its economy."

He added, "The listing of OQGN is in line with this ambition while enriching the dynamically developing Omani stock market. We look forward to the listing on the MSX and are excited for what's to come."

Al Ahlia Insurance, NLGIC rebrand as Liva to drive growth of insurance industry

Muscat - Al Ahlia Insurance Company and National Life & General Insurance Company (NLGIC) have come together to form a new brand - Liva - with the aim of revolutionising the insurance landscape.

These two dynamic and award-winning companies started their integration journey in July 2022 with an ambition to build the region's leading multi-line insurer that delivers value to its customers, while generating sustainable and profitable earnings for its shareholders. Liva aims to deliver on this mission.

In a press release, Hanaa al Hinai, CEO of Al Ahlia Insurance (to rebrand as Liva), said, "Liva marks a powerful evolution that draws upon the rich heritage of NLGIC and Al Ahlia Insurance, all aimed at revolutionising insur-



ance to meet today's dynamic realities. The name 'Liva', encompassing 'protection' and 'life', perfectly mirrors our commitment to safeguarding our customers' lives, enabling them to embrace every moment."

"Through a combination of our strengths, we've crafted a robust brand identity that propels us forward, powering our journey towards ambitious growth," he added.

Liva builds on the strong

blend local knowledge with global expertise to safeguard all aspects of people's lives. The new brand reinforces the company's purpose of instilling confidence in people to live the lives they want, well prepared for the unexpected, by creating an ecosystem beyond insurance that has its customers' needs at its core.

NLGIC brings specialism in health and life insurance products as first and largest insurance company in Oman with a large network of sales and service touch-points across the country, while Al Ahlia Insurance is a leading general insurer in Oman with a portfolio of award-winning products and services. The integration of the two companies' portfolios into the new entity Liva makes the new brand a strong multi-line insurer.

CBO issues treasury bills worth RO30mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Monday announced the issuance of two tenders of the government treasury bills worth a total RO30mn.

In the first tender, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO9mn, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached RO99.660 for every RO100 bill, while the minimum accepted price also arrived at RO99.660.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.43214% and 4.44726%, respectively.

In the second tender, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO21mn, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached RO98.704 for every RO100 bill,



while the minimum accepted price arrived at RO98.700.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.19805% and 5.26630%, respectively.

The interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 6.00% while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with the central bank is 6.50%.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance.

Asyad launches direct LCL solution from India to Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Asyad Group, Oman's global integrated logistics provider, has unveiled a competitive Less-than-Container Load (LCL) solution powered by the group's logistics arm, and delivered on board of its maritime and container fleet.

The LCL solution will connect India's Nhava Sheva Port with Oman's Khazaen Dry Port (KDP) via Sohar Port, Asyad Group said in a press statement.

The new offering aims to empower Oman's private sector by providing it with enhanced access to thriving global markets

and the right tools to develop its service offering. The LCL solution is also set to facilitate Omani freight forwarders' access to Khazaen Dry Port's world-class infrastructure, storage facilities and advanced container handling capabilities.

Local importers and SMEs utilising the LCL service will be in a prime position to import their goods from India at reduced costs, shortened transit-times and with a reliable direct weekly service.

The direct solution will see Asyad Logistics act as a consolidator and position itself as a partner to freight forwarders by leveraging its integrated logistics



ecosystem, highly efficient container freight station (CFS) at Khazaen Dry Port, and Asyad Line's popular weekly India Express Service (IEX), as well as

Oman's proximity to the Indian subcontinent.

With a logistics powerhouse by their side and a world-class logistics ecosystem at their dis-

posal, freight forwarders can guarantee their clients enhanced reliability and cost efficiency, as well as expedited connectivity with India's large export market and Oman's major business and consumer hubs.

Juma al Maskari, Asyad Logistics director, highlighted the importance of this addition to empowering the private sector. He said, "The private logistics sector is playing an increasingly significant role in the national supply chains. In our capacity as Oman's global integrated logistics service provider, we have always gone above and beyond to support this trend, constantly introducing services tailored to

local businesses of all sizes."

"The latest LCL addition from India is pivotal, as it offers freight forwarders fast, reliable and cost-efficient access to the doorstep of key business and consumer centers in Oman through KDP, in a fully integrated Asyad journey. Therefore, our new LCL offering stands out as a strong, superior option against the existing services in other regional hubs," he said.

Expected to stimulate further growth in trade volume between India and Oman, Asyad's LCL solution is another testament to the group's role as a key trade enabler and driver of Oman's economy. This role is projected to

become more prominent as Asyad plans to unlock more Indian origins via an expansive network of inland container depots and expand the LCL service to cover imports from Indonesia and Singapore through the recently upgraded Far East Express (FEX) service.

By introducing additional direct LCL solutions later this year and continuously expanding its direct lines, logistics and port capabilities, Asyad Group reaffirms its position as a true partner and key enabler of the private sector, supporting its growing role in logistics and realising the group's mission to cement Oman's standing as a global logistics hub.

Stock markets rise as US Fed seen pausing over rate hikes

London, UK – Global stock markets rose and the dollar weakened against the euro and pound Monday as US jobs data firmed expectations that the Federal Reserve would stop raising interest rates.

While the 187,000 new US jobs in August was more than forecast, the figures for the previous two months were revised significantly lower, while wage growth cooled.

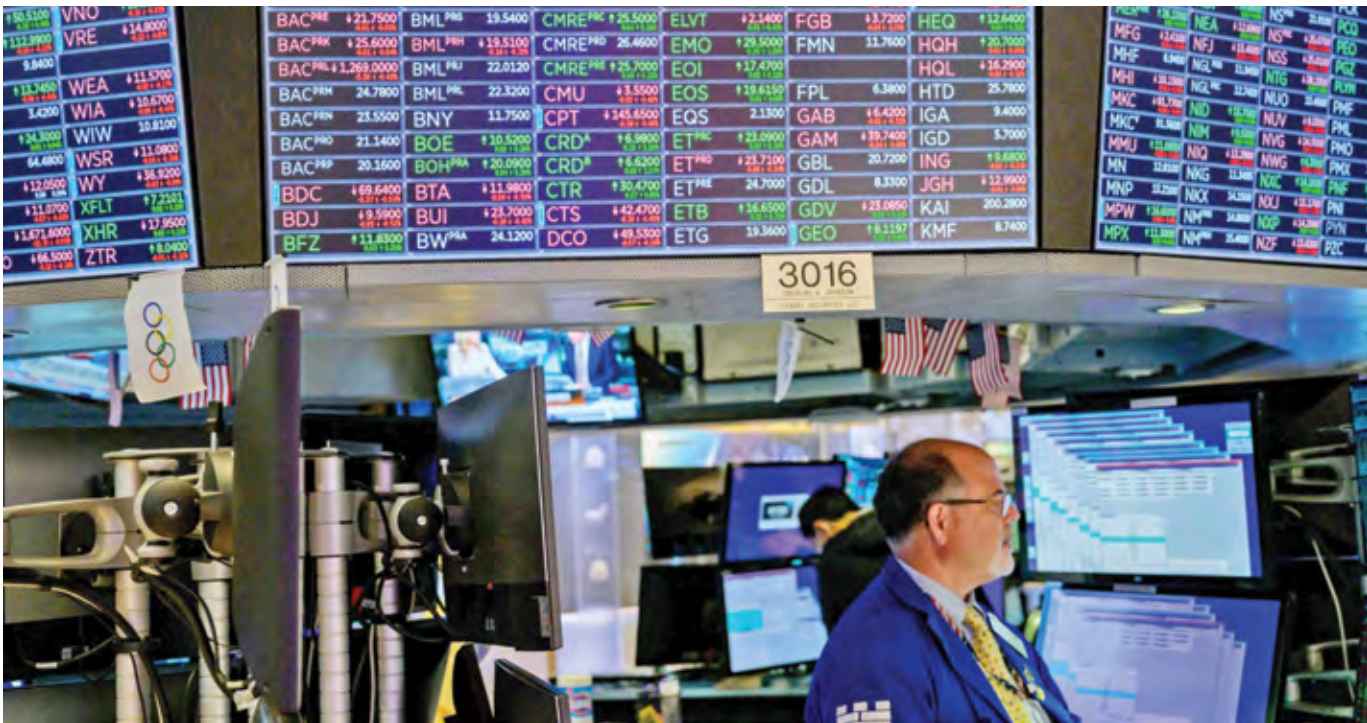
Friday's readings suggested that the world's biggest economy was not in danger of tipping into recession.

Yet it was slowing enough to justify no further rate rises – a so-called "Goldilocks" scenario.

"Fed chair (Jerome) Powell, or President (Joe) Biden for that matter, probably couldn't have scripted a better August employment report if they'd tried," said Ray Attrill at National Australia Bank.

"The Goldilocks metaphor is much used and abused in economic and financial circles, but in relation to the various 'soft landing' signals emanating from the report, on this occasion it does seem entirely appropriate."

Michael Hewson at CMC Markets added: "From the Fed's point of view this is exactly the type of report they would have



After a broadly positive Friday on Wall Street, Asian and European equities enjoyed a healthy start to the week

wanted to see to justify keeping monetary policy unchanged this month.

"If that trend continues, and there's no reason to suppose it won't then it's quite reasonable to assume that we could well have seen the last of Fed rate hikes for this economic cycle."

After a broadly positive Friday on Wall Street, Asian and European equities enjoyed a healthy start to the week.

Hong Kong jumped more than two per cent as investors played catch-up with Friday's regional advance after being closed because of a typhoon.

Shanghai and Tokyo exchanges gained 1.4% and 0.7%, respectively, on Monday. In Asia, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Mumbai, Taipei, Manila and Jakarta markets were also in the green.

London and Paris were up 0.4% and 0.5%, respectively,

heading toward the half-way stage, while Frankfurt was also up 0.5% as data showed German exports fell less than expected in July.

China signals

Investors were keeping an eye also on China, hoping for more measures to stimulate the world's second largest economy after a number of announcements last week, including re-

ducing mortgage down payments and tax incentives.

"While these individual easing measures may not appear substantial, their collective implementation clearly signals policymakers' intentions to stabilise the property market, spur economic growth, and boost overall sentiment," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

AFP

Oil declines as traders capitalise on rising prices

Muscat – Oil prices recorded a limited decline on Monday as investors profited from the highest oil prices seen since November and on expectations that Saudi Arabia and Russia's curbs would continue through October.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$88.48 per barrel in morning trade in London, a 0.08% loss from the closing price on Friday of \$88.55 per barrel.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at the same time at \$85.45 per barrel, down 0.11% from the previous session close of \$85.55 per barrel.

Brent trade on Friday saw prices reach the highest level since last November at \$88.99 a barrel on concerns that Saudi Arabia and Russia will maintain production curbs throughout October.

Concerns were amplified after Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on Thursday that OPEC+ countries agreed on fresh supply curbs.

"Yes, we agreed. But we will announce the basic parameters next week, publicly," Novak was quoted as saying by Russian media outlets.

Earlier last month, Saudi Arabia stated that it would extend



its existing 1 million barrels per day (bpd) of output cutbacks through September. The country originally reduced output in July and extended it through August.

Likewise, Russia announced it would continue to voluntarily reduce oil exports. It said it would reduce exports by 500,000 bpd in August and cut 300,000 bpd in September.

Data suggesting some symptoms of softening in the employment sector further bolstered bearish market sentiment.

The American economy added 187,000 jobs in August, higher than market estimates of 170,000, while the unemployment rate jumped to 3.8% from 3.5% in July, the US Labor Department announced earlier.

Agencies

Turkey's inflation nears 60%, piling pressure on new central bank team

Istanbul, Turkey – Turkey's annual inflation approached 60% last month, official data showed Monday, putting pressure on the central bank to further hike interest rates at the risk of angering President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The state statistic agency said prices rose by 58.9% over 12 months ending in August compared to 47.8% in July.

The latests data will test the limits of how much leeway Erdogan's new market-friendly team has to raise borrowing costs.

"Pretty awful inflation prints," emerging markets economist Timothy Ash remarked in emailed comments.

"This will heap pressure on the (central bank) to further significantly hike policy rates from 25% at present."

The Turkish leader has been a lifelong opponent of high interest rates due to his unorthodox conviction that they cause inflation.

His decision to push policymakers to slash rates in the face of rising consumer prices saw inflation soar to 85% last year.

The economic crisis nearly cost Erdogan his re-election in May.

He won after showering his supporters with massive pay increases and introducing an early retirement programme that cost the government billions of dollars.

Analysts feared that Turkey would enter a systemic crisis un-



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

less Erdogan radically changed course after the vote.

He did just that by overhauling his government and tapping a handful of respected Wall Street veterans to top economic posts.

Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek and new central bank chief Hafize Gaye Erkan have begun to carefully dismantle Erdogan's economic legacy and win over foreign investor trust.

Erkan initially caused consternation by raising the central bank's policy rate from 8.5% to 17.5% over two months – far less than analysts had hoped.

But she thrilled the markets by lifting it to 25% last month.

The lira briefly gained nearly eight percent against the dollar and the cost of insuring Turkish

government debt against default sharply fell.

Erdogan followed the rate hike by declaring full support for the course taken by his team.

But analysts question how long Erdogan will continue supporting the policy shift.

Turkish media reported that he signed off on last month's rate decision after being convinced that it would only remain in place "for a while".

Analysts think the current policy rate remain far too low to get inflation under control.

"Risks will remain high for as long as President Erdogan stays in power," Capital Economics emerging markets economist Liam Peach wrote in a report.

Inflation is being driven by increases in taxes and fuel prices

that Simsek imposed to pay for Erdogan's campaign pledges and a massive reconstruction effort launched after a major earthquake claimed more than 50,000 lives in Turkey's south-east.

Official data showed transportation prices rising by 70.2 percent and those of restaurants and hotels by 89.3%.

This has fuelled suspicions among many that the government was underreporting the scale of Turkey's problems.

A separate study from economists at the ENAG group showed the inflation rate rising to 128.1% from 122.9%.

"These figures have nothing to do with reality," pensioner Ibrahim Kaya said while shopping in a conservative working class district of Istanbul – the type that forms the bedrock of Erdogan's political support.

"I don't believe them," added fellow pensioner Zerrin Guclusu. "Nothing they say is true." Simsek on Monday appealed for patience and hinted that more interest rate hikes were in store.

"We know that the fight against inflation will take some time. We are in the transition period," he said on social media.

"We will do whatever is necessary (monetary tightening, credit and incomes policies) to control inflation and then lower it."

AFP



US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo

Talking to China is no sign of weakness: US trade chief

Washington, US – Holding talks with Beijing officials is not a sign of weakness by Washington, the US commerce secretary said, adding that not talking can lead to greater tensions and misunderstanding.

"It's in the US interest. It's in China's interest. Indeed, it's in the world's interest for the US and China to have a stable and significant commercial relationship," Secretary Gina Raimondo told CNN's "State of the Union," days after returning from Beijing.

"I do not accept the premise that talking and communicating is a sign of weakness" toward China, she added.

Raimondo met with top officials during her Beijing visit, including her counterpart Wang Wentao and Prime Minister Li Qiang.

The visit came as the Biden administration has been working to restore a more effective working relationship with Beijing at a time of deep and continuing strains.

It was the fourth visit by a senior US government official since early summer, each of them on a fraught mission amid severe challenges – including Raimondo's recent allegation that

China-based actors had hacked her email.

"I want it to be clear with them that we aren't foolish," she told CNN. "We aren't closed eyes to the reality of what of what they're trying."

She added: "I put it on the table and let them know... that it's hard to build trust when you

Washington maintains that the export curbs on China are a matter of national security in the face of China's growing military power and expanding global footprint

have actions like that."

Raimondo said her Chinese counterparts recognized "that we have plenty of tools in our toolbox. In my case, export controls, outbound investment, screening, tariffs, countervailing duties – we do have sticks if you will – and we are very ready, willing and able to use those as nec-

essary."

She nonetheless emphasized that it was in both sides' interest, "indeed, it's in the world's interest, for the US and China to have a stable and significant commercial relationship."

The bilateral relationship faces a litany of problems, from trade disputes to Taiwan's future to the expansive Chinese presence in the South China Sea.

Officials in Beijing have chafed in particular over restrictions imposed by the United States on the export to China of certain products, notably high technology.

Washington maintains that the export curbs are a matter of national security in the face of China's growing military power and expanding global footprint. But Beijing sees them as an attempt to hinder its economic rise and development.

During a Beijing visit last month, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen sought to reassure Chinese authorities about the impact of the trade restrictions.

In July, the US presidential envoy for climate John Kerry visited China for three days in an effort to restart bilateral climate talks.

AFP

Italian economy contracts in second quarter

Cernobbio, Italy – Italy's gross domestic product (GDP) fell 0.4% in the second quarter compared to the previous three months, national statistics agency Istat said, fuelled by falling domestic demand.

The figure is worse than Istat's preliminary estimate of a contraction of 0.3%, and fol-

lows solid 0.6% growth in the first quarter.

By contrast the wider eurozone, which includes the 20 countries that use the EU's shared currency, recorded growth of 0.3% in the second quarter.

Against a backdrop of continuing high inflation, Istat said

household consumption was stagnant and public administration spending was down.

Investments fell by 1.8% quarter-on-quarter, while exports were down 0.4%.

However, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government is still hoping for an increase of GDP of 1.0% for the whole year.

In other bad news, unemployment rose to 7.6% in July, up 0.2 points on the previous month, Istat said. By contrast the wider eurozone, which includes the 20 countries that use the EU's shared currency, recorded growth of 0.3% in the second quarter.

AFP

Jindal Shadeed, OHA for long partnership

Powered by Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel (JSIS), a leader in the steel industry, the Oman Hockey Association (OHA) aims to inspire young athletes to pursue their dreams, instilling in them the values of teamwork, dedication, and fair play.

By nurturing the growth of hockey in Oman, this partnership will contribute to the overall development of the nation's sports ecosystem, aligning with the goals of Oman 2040.

In a remarkable ceremony held on August 30, at the prestigious Sultan Qaboos Stadium in Salalah, the heart of the Asia Cup, JSIS and OHA solidified their shared commitment to Oman's sporting ambitions. This powerful alliance demonstrates JSIS's dedication to the well-being and advancement of Oman's youth and establishes the nation as a gracious host for future international sporting events.

This collaboration between JSIS and OHA signifies a significant milestone in the journey towards establishing Oman as a global sporting destination for hockey. By hosting international events like the Asia Cup Qualifiers, Oman welcomes athletes, officials, and spectators from around the world, fostering cultural exchange and unity through



sports. As the partnership takes shape, both JSIS and OHA are excited about the potential for future endeavours and the profound impact they can have on the lives of young athletes in Oman. By creating opportunities for them to showcase their skills and compete on an international stage, this collaboration paves the way for outstanding achievements. It showcases the immense talent within Oman's

sporting community. JSIS and OHA invite everyone to join them on this exhilarating journey as they work together to strengthen communities through sports. With their shared vision and unwavering commitment, they are set to make a lasting impact on Oman's sports landscape and leave a legacy that will inspire generations to come. "Sports have the ability to transcend boundaries and bring

nations together through friendly competition. At JSIS, we firmly believe that by promoting unity and sportsmanship through our partnership with OHA, we are not only improving the lives of Oman's youth but also sharing the international passion for athleticism," said Harsha Shetty, Chief Executive Officer of JSIS. "This collaboration is a testament to our unwavering commitment to making Oman a beacon

of international sportsmanship and camaraderie." This strategic partnership exemplifies JSIS's commitment to fostering youth-centric sports programs, encouraging public participation in local sports events, and forming alliances with like-minded organisations that share their visionary ideals. The alignment of OHA's dedication to youth sports development and its broader commitment to

global unity makes this collaboration a natural and powerful alliance. Dr Marwan bin Jumaa al Jumaa, chairman of the OHA, expressed happiness at signing this favourable agreement. "We are pleased to sign this agreement and establish a strategic partnership with Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel. We express our gratitude for their unwavering trust and appreciate their com-

mitment to supporting OHA. This partnership will focus on improving various technical aspects of competition championships, developing our human resources, and enhancing the administrative work environment of the Association. It will enable us to achieve even greater success in the coming period." He added, "The agreement marks the culmination of the Oman Association's aspirations and its commitment to forging strategic partnerships across various sectors to further the development of the sport. It also reflects our dedication to achieving positive outcomes. The signing of this partnership aligns with OHA's strategy to foster local game development. It lends crucial support to the men's and women's national teams for the 2024 World Cup of Hockey Fives, scheduled in Muscat in January 2024. Additionally, it strengthens the Oman Hockey Association's collaboration with private sector companies, establishing a sustainable partnership that encompasses program development and utilisation. This partnership will refine and conduct courses for coaches, players, referees, and administrators, ultimately elevating the technical standards of the sport."

Chery Automobile chooses Saud Bahwan as partner

Chery Automobile - China's one of the largest automobile manufacturer - signed a distribution agreement with Oman's renowned corporate house Saud Bahwan Group.

Attending the signing ceremony were Chery International president Zhang Guibing, vice president Qin Chao, general manager - Chery MENA - Shen Xiantian, Saud Bahwan Group chairman Mohammed Saud Bahwan and the group's managing director - Corporate - Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan.

At the event Zhang Guibing placed high hopes on Chery's return to Oman's vibrant automotive market and said that, with the iteration of the technology and the expansion of its global business, Chery will provide Oman's market with more competitive products and it is believed that this cooperation will achieve remarkable results.

Saud Bahwan Group chairman Mohammed Saud Bahwan

asserted confidence in Chery's brand concept and product strength. He said that in the future, the group will fully support Chery in quickly opening up Oman's auto market utilizing the Group's various strengths. As one of the largest business houses in Oman, Saud Bahwan Group has an impressive portfolio of globally renowned automotive brands. The group also has a very strong sales and after-sales service network throughout Oman, and has built a strong reputation for offering some of the finest customer experiences. After 26 years of development, Chery adheres to the brand concept of technology, green, family and companionship. With the corporate vision of building an auto brand with international competitiveness and influence, Chery has ranked first in China's auto exports for

20 consecutive years and its brand strength has continued to rise. From January to June 2023, the total export volume of Chery Automobiles is 394,000. Up to now, Chery's cumulative global users have exceeded 12 million, and overseas users have exceeded 2 million. Chery's auto products have won the title of "Most Popular Chinese Automobile Brand" in many countries around the world. By establishing a partnership with Saud Bahwan Group, Chery Automobile will not only further expand its overseas sales network, but will also promote localized operations with the help of the Group's experience. In the future, Saud Bahwan Group will establish Chery showrooms and after-sales service agencies in major cities in Oman to promote enriching customer experiences.

KR Group, Bank Muscat hold workshop on 'Global Financial Market Trends'

The Khimji Ramdas Group's (KR Group) Corporate Finance department recently hosted an enlightening workshop, focusing on the intricate dynamics of the 'Global Financial Market', in collaboration with Bank Muscat.

The session held at KR Infra's multipurpose hall, proved to be a remarkable opportunity for the group's finance professionals to gain invaluable insights into the prevailing economic landscape in Oman and the catalysing factors driving global economic transformations. With a keen emphasis on broadening perspectives beyond the realms of daily operations, the workshop aimed to equip attendees with a comprehensive understanding of international financial dynamics. Finance representatives from various business units across the KR Group, converged at the venue, making the session a comprehensive platform for cross-functional learning and knowledge exchange. The session featured an in-



depth exploration of the current economic conditions in Oman, shedding light on the key elements influencing global economic shifts. Bank Muscat's experts delved into predictions and anticipated scenarios regarding the global economy, arming attendees with the knowledge to anticipate and navigate potential challenges and opportunities. Expressing his perspective on

the collaborative initiative, Mayur Sanghani, Group Head - Corporate Finance, KR Group mentioned, "At KR Group, we are committed to fostering continuous learning and professional growth. This session exemplifies our dedication to equipping our finance teams with the tools and insights necessary to excel in an ever-evolving financial landscape." Mony Subramony, Acting

Head of Treasury and Global Financial Institutions from Bank Muscat stated, "We are delighted to have partnered with KR Group's Corporate Finance department to deliver this insightful workshop. It is through such collaborative efforts that we can collectively strengthen the financial acumen of professionals and contribute to the growth of the financial sector in the Sultanate and beyond." This initiative stands as a testament to KR Group's commitment to fostering a culture of continuous learning, collaboration, and knowledge sharing within its organisation. The workshop saw senior leaders from the KR Group's corporate office extend their gratitude to the presenters from Bank Muscat, acknowledging their role in enriching the knowledge base of the attendees. Tokens of appreciation were awarded to the Bank Muscat team as a symbol of the Group's recognition and appreciation for their valuable contribution.

ISWK holds software development competition

Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (ISWK) orchestrated a captivating software development competition that united emerging programmers in a showcase of their coding prowess and inventive thinking.

The event held on August 28, witnessed students from different Indian schools in Oman collaborating, competing, and unveiling their ingenious software projects centred around network security.

Distinguished guest Dr Sulaiman al Hasani, Deputy Dean of Administration and Resources at the Global College of Engineering and Technology, inaugurated the competition.

In recognition of the burgeoning role of technology in today's global landscape, the competition aimed to inspire students to explore the realm of software development and nurture their adeptness in problem-solving. Participants were granted the



autonomy to choose their project domains, leading to a diverse spectrum of software solutions addressing the complexities of network security. D N Rao, the Principal of the host school, appreciated the remarkable IT talents showcased by all participants. A distinguished panel of judges, comprising Dr Anjum

Zameer Bhat, a senior faculty member at the Middle East College in the Department of Computer and Electronics Engineering; Dr Basant Kumar, Associate Professor at the Modern College of Business and Science; and Dr Deevyankar Agarwal, from the Computer Engineering Department at the University of Technology & Applied

Sciences, meticulously evaluated projects based on the criteria encompassing originality, creativity, problem-solving acumen, and presentation. The judging process was an intricate endeavour due to the exemplary quality of work presented by the students hailing from 9 Indian Schools including Indian School Salalah, Indian

School Sohar, Indian School Maabala, Indian School Bousher, Indian School Al Seeb, Indian School Al Ghubra, Indian School Ibra, Indian School Darsait, and Indian School Wadi Kabir. "The path to honing your skills and embracing the world of Computer Science is paved through such competitions," remarked the judges, addressing those passionate about the field. At the closing ceremony, certificates of participation were distributed to all the contestants and winners. Indian School Sohar emerged as the triumphant champion, receiving a certificate, memento, and a cash prize of RO250, while Indian School Wadi Kabir secured the runner-up position, obtaining a certificate, memento, and a cash prize of RO150. The monetary rewards were generously sponsored by the Global College of Engineering and Technology.

ahlibank makes kids' account opening easy through app

As part of its commitment to increasing its diverse portfolio of banking products and provide innovative solutions, ahlibank is the first bank in the Sultanate of Oman to introduce opening children's savings accounts through its mobile banking app. This comes as part of the bank's efforts to facilitate its operations digitally and to making the banking experience easier and more accessible to its customers. This new feature has been designed to meet the customers' needs, as it seamlessly integrates modern technology with the bank's extensive expertise to provide a unique and rewarding experience. The user-friendly interface has been crafted to allow users to effortlessly open their children's account instantly through mobile devices. These easy and secure steps will enable parents to manage their children's finan-

cial future from the comfort and safety of their homes with utmost ease and security. Commenting on the new feature in the mobile banking app, Taher al Balushi, general manager - Strategy & Transformation and Project Management at ahlibank, said, "At ahlibank, we strive to keep up with our customers' requirements by devising innovative methods and digital solutions to serve and meet their diverse banking needs. "Today, digitisation has become an integral part of the banking sector's demands, and this is where our role comes into play in responding to the sector's evolving landscape. "We aim to provide banking services that align with the principles of sustainability, firmly believing that we are moving forward on the right path to realise our vision to transform the banking experience."

Putin says Russia ‘open’ to grain deal talks as key Ukraine port hit

Moscow, Russia - President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that Russia was ‘open’ to talks on restoring the landmark Black Sea grain export deal, hours after Moscow pounded one of Ukraine’s key grain-exporting ports overnight.

The UN and Turkey-brokered deal, which aimed to ensure safe navigation for civilian ships through the Black Sea, collapsed after Russia pulled out in July.

Moscow has since repeatedly attacked Ukraine’s port infrastructure in what Kyiv says is a cynical attempt to damage its exports and undermine global food security.

The Russian drone attack on Monday damaged a grain export hub on the Danube river, officials said, adding that warehouses and agricultural equipment were damaged.

The regional governor Oleg Kiper announced that air defence systems had downed 17 drones.

Hours later Putin met his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Sochi, amid hopes the two could restore the deal, with Erdogan promising he would make a ‘very important’ announcement on grain exports after the talks.



Russian President Vladimir Putin meeting with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Sochi on Monday (AFP)

“I know you intend to raise the issue of the grain deal. We are open to negotiations on this issue,” Putin said in televised comments alongside Erdogan.

Defence minister resigns

Ukraine’s foreign ministry claimed on Monday that some of the drones in the attack had

fallen on Romanian territory, although Bucharest ‘categorically’ denied the claim. While most fighting during Russia’s offensive has taken place within Ukraine’s

borders, Kyiv has occasionally claimed Russian munitions have fallen into European countries, claims that its NATO allies have largely dismissed.

“At no time did the means of attack used by the Russian Federation pose a direct military threat to Romania’s national territory or territorial waters,” the Romanian defence ministry said.

Ukraine’s military said Russia had used Iranian-made Shahed drones in the ‘massive’ overnight attack. The strikes come a day after Ukraine fought off a barrage of Russian drones in the same re-

ian leader removed senior military recruitment officials across the country. “It was an honour to serve the Ukrainian people and work for the (Ukrainian army) for the last 22 months, the toughest period of Ukraine’s modern history,” he added.

His departure comes during a highly-scrutinised Ukrainian counteroffensive in the south and east of the country, which of-

The UN and Turkey-brokered deal, which aimed to ensure safe navigation for civilian ships through the Black Sea, collapsed after Russia pulled out in July

gion, with Russia’s army claiming the assaults targeted fuel storage facilities in the nearby port of Reni.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov meanwhile announced on Monday he had handed in his resignation to parliament after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for ‘new approaches’ to face Russia’s offensive.

Zelensky’s decision to remove Reznikov comes after several corruption scandals rocked the defence ministry, and the Ukrain-

officials said on Monday had made limited progress.

“The enemy is on the defensive in the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson sectors,” Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar said, referring to two southern regions that Moscow claimed to have annexed last year.

She added that Ukrainian forces had also captured three square kilometres (around one square mile) near Bakhmut, a town in the east captured by Russia this May.

AFP

Abaya ban imposed on first day of school across France

Paris, France - French authorities were on Monday imposing a newly-announced ban on the abaya Muslim dress for women in schools, with over 500 establishments under scrutiny as children across the country returned to class.

The government announced last month it was banning the abaya in schools, saying it broke the rules on secularism in education that have already seen Muslim headscarves banned on the grounds they constitute a display of religious affiliation.

The move gladdened the political right but the hard-left argued it represented an affront to civil liberties.

“Things are going well this morning. There is no incident for the moment, we will continue all day to be vigilant so that the students understand the meaning of this rule,” said Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne as she visited a school in northern France.

But she added that there was a ‘certain number’ of schools where girls had arrived wearing an abaya.

“Some young girls agreed to remove it. For the others, we will have discussions with them, and use educational approaches to explain that there is a law that is being applied,” she added.

The hard-left has accused the government of centrist President Emmanuel Macron of trying with



Children arrive with their guardians at the Pergaud Elementary School in Mulhouse, eastern France, on Monday (AFP)

the abaya ban to compete with Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally and shifting further to the right.

Education Minister Gabriel Attal told RTL radio that authorities had identified 513 schools that could be affected by the ban at the start of the school year.

There are around 45,000 schools in France, with 12mn pupils going back to school on Monday.

He said work had been done ahead of the start of the school year to see in which schools this could present a problem, adding

that trained school inspectors would be placed in certain schools.

Attal however said he was against imposing a ban on parents wearing clothes that had religious significance when they accompanied their children on school outings.

“There is a difference between what happens in school and what happens outside school. What matters to me is what happens in school,” he said.

Some leading figures on the right have called on the government to make children wear

school uniform in the state schools and Attal said that he would announce a uniform trial in the autumn.

“I am not sure it’s a miracle solution that will solve all school problems. But I think it merits testing,” he added.

A law introduced in March 2004 banned ‘the wearing of signs or outfits by which students ostensibly show a religious affiliation’ in schools.

These signs or outfits included large crosses, Jewish kippas and Islamic headscarves.

AFP



A damaged section of highway is seen in the aftermath of Typhoon Haikui in Taitung County on Monday (AFP)

Weakened Haikui heads to China after double landfall in Taiwan

Taitung, Taiwan - Typhoon Haikui toppled hundreds of trees, damaged coastal roads and dumped torrential rain across Taiwan Monday before it weakened into a severe tropical storm and headed for southern China.

Haikui had initially appeared to depart the island but made a second landfall early on Monday in southwest Kaohsiung before moving out into the Taiwan Strait. There were no reports of deaths. More than 100 people suffered injuries during the typhoon, according to authorities, though they were minor - mostly due to fallen trees and car accidents.

Destruction was seen in

coastal Taitung, a mountainous county in lesser-populated eastern Taiwan where the storm directly hit the day before. “This is the first time I have seen such a big typhoon in my life,” said Chen Hai-feng, 55, a village chief in Taitung’s Donghe township.

Although Haikui is considered less severe than previous storms, Chen told AFP it felt more powerful as he surveyed an early-morning work crew removing trees from a road.

“It came like an arrow straight at us,” he said.

Workers carefully manoeuvred diggers to move downed tree branches and snapped power cables from the road.

Further north in Changbin township, workers ferried massive concrete blocks to a coastal highway that had partially collapsed because of powerful waves, hoping they would absorb the impact.

Heavy orange-coloured barriers were placed near the edge to prevent cars from skidding on slippery roads.

Kirin Chen pitched in to help a work crew clear branches from a pathway leading to a school in Taitung county.

“So many trees have fallen,” she said. “We are trying to remove the trees on the sidewalk so that the children can safely come to school tomorrow.”

AFP



This file photo shows Bangladeshi boatmen navigating through dense water hyacinths over the Buriganga river in Dhaka on August 21, 2014 (AFP)

World losing high-stakes fight against alien species

Paris, France - Invasive species that wreck crops, ravage forests, spread disease, and upend ecosystems are spreading ever faster across the globe, and humanity has not been able to stem the tide, a major scientific assessment said on Monday.

The failure is costing well over US\$400bn a year in damages and lost income - the equivalent to the GDP of Denmark or Thailand - and that is likely a ‘gross

underestimation’, according to the intergovernmental science advisory panel for the UN Convention on Biodiversity (IPBES).

From water hyacinth choking Lake Victoria in East Africa, to rats and brown snakes wiping out bird species in the Pacific, to mosquitoes exposing new regions to Zika, yellow fever, dengue and other diseases, the report catalogued more than 37,000 so-called alien species that have

taken root - often literally - far from their places of origin. That number is trending sharply upward, along with the bill for the damage multiplying fourfold per decade, on average, since 1970.

Economic expansion, population increase and climate change ‘will increase the frequency and extent of biological invasions and the impacts of invasive alien species’, the report concluded.

Only 17 per cent of countries

have laws or regulations to manage this onslaught, it said.

The hyacinth that at one point covered 90 per cent of Lake Victoria - crippling transport, smothering aquatic life, blocking hydroelectric dam intake and breeding mosquitoes - is thought to have been introduced by Belgian colonial officials in Rwanda as an ornamental garden flower before making its way down the Kagera River in the 1980s.

The Florida Everglades is teeming with the destructive offspring of erstwhile pets and house plants, from five-metre (16-foot) Burmese pythons and walking catfish to Old World climbing fern and Brazilian pepper. More often, invasive species are accidental arrivals, hitching rides in the ballast water of cargo ships, the containers in their holds, or in a tourist’s suitcase.

AFP

Fukushima discharge to face lawsuit

Fishermen and locals living near will file a lawsuit this week seeking to stop the release of wastewater

Tokyo, Japan - More than 100 fishermen and locals living near Fukushima will file a lawsuit this week seeking to stop the release of wastewater from the stricken Japanese nuclear plant, they said on Monday.

Twelve years after one of the world's worst nuclear accidents, Japan began on August 24 discharging treated cooling water diluted with seawater into the Pacific, insisting it was safe.

Many Japanese fishermen have been against the release, fearing that it will undo years of efforts to improve the industry's image in the wake of the 2011 catastrophe. The more than 100 plaintiffs in Fukushima and neighbouring prefectures will file the lawsuit in the Fukushima District Court on Friday, Sugie Tanji, a member of the group's secretariat, told AFP.

"The government failed to keep to its promise of gaining agreement from fishermen before taking such a decision to release," she said.

"This is a wrong policy as it ignores strong opposition from not only the Fukushima fishermen's cooperative but also from cooperatives across the country," a



Fishery workers unload seafood caught in offshore trawl fishing at Matsukawaura port in Soma City, Fukushima prefecture on September 1 (AFP)

group statement said. "The release to the ocean can never be tolerated as it brings about further suffering to victims of the nuclear accident," it added. The water release has generated a fierce backlash from China, including a blanket ban on

Japanese seafood imports.

Japanese government offices and business have also been bombarded with thousands of nuisance calls from Chinese phone numbers.

The Tokyo city government alone received 34,300 calls from August 24-31, it says.

Japanese government officials have made efforts to reassure the public that fish and other pro-

nobu Yoshihashi's business has seen shipments of items including oysters, sea urchins and splendid alfonso to some Asian neighbours 'more than halve'.

"We're having it quite rough," Yoshihashi told AFP at the huge Toyosu fish market on Saturday.

"Especially in places like Hong Kong and Macau, the damage is quite acute. We're hearing from our clients there that their cus-

The government failed to keep to its promise of gaining agreement from fishermen before taking such a decision to release

SUGIE TANJI

duce from Fukushima is safe to eat.

Last week, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and the US envoy to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, among others, ate Fukushima fish in front of TV cameras.

'Ours is the best'

Before the water release, China was Japan's biggest export destination for seafood and Beijing's ban has people in the sector worried. Tokyo wholesaler Yoshi-

tomers aren't coming in any more, and that they are shunning Japanese fish," he said.

The Japanese government 'should have done more to communicate globally the safety of the water before releasing it. There are some people even within Japan who say they're scared', he said.

"I have always been and still am proud of Japanese fish. Ours is the best."

AFP

Pope visits homeless shelter in Mongolia

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia - Pope Francis capped the final day of his diplomatically tinged visit to Mongolia preaching charity, with a visit to a Catholic shelter for the homeless and domestic violence victims.

The visit to inaugurate 'The House of Mercy', which also includes a clinic, in a poor area on the outskirts of the capital Ulaanbaatar suits the pope's long-standing practice of reaching out to marginalised, overlooked communities. Francis' voyage to the Central Asian nation - the first by a pope - has been overshadowed by his overtures to its powerful neighbour China.

Some Chinese Catholics have travelled to Mongolia to catch a glimpse of Francis up close, and outside the shelter on Monday, a group of women sang in Mandarin, wiping away tears as the pope's black car passed.

"Dear Pope, our best wishes for you," they sang.

The pontiff directly addressed Catholics in China on Sunday in impromptu comments following a mass, telling them to be 'good



Children in traditional dress welcome Pope Francis arriving for a meeting with charity workers and for the inauguration of the House of Mercy in Ulaanbaatar on Monday (AFP)

Christians and good citizens', in an apparent attempt to ease tensions with Beijing.

Many travelling Chinese Catholics told authorities at home they were travelling to Mongolia for tourism, according to interviews with AFP.

After the mass, attended by many of Mongolia's tiny Catholic population numbering just 1,400, Francis sent 'a warm greeting to the noble Chinese people'.

"To the people I wish the best," he said, flanked by the bishop and bishop emeritus of

Hong Kong. It was the second apparent overture to the Chinese Communist Party in two days, following Francis telling a gathering of missionaries on Saturday that governments had 'nothing to fear' from the Catholic Church.

The pope's plane took off shortly after midday, with his account on X - formally called Twitter - hailing the Mongolian 'friendship' he received over the four-day trip.

"Dear brothers and sisters of Mongolia, thank you for the gift of friendship that I received in these days. Bayarlalaa [Thank you in Mongolian]! May God bless you," the account posted.

"You are in my heart, and in my heart you will remain. Remember me, please, in your prayers and in your thoughts."

China's government, which is officially atheist, is wary of the Catholic Church on its territory, and exercises strict control over all recognised religious institutions. The Holy See has sought a rapprochement with China for years, and renewed a contentious 2018 deal last year that gives both parties - and not just the Church - a say in appointing bishops in China.

Critics have called the move a dangerous concession in exchange for a presence in the country.

AFP

Bomb attack on Myanmar border hub kills 5 officials

Yangon, Myanmar - A bomb attack on a government compound in the Myanmar border hub of Myawady killed five government and security officials and wounded 11 policemen, sources told AFP on Monday.

The town on the border with Thailand has seen sporadic clashes between the military and anti-junta fighters since a coup in 2021 plunged the country into turmoil.

Early on Sunday evening two 'drop bombs' fell into a compound containing the district police office and general administration office, a military source told AFP.

As officials took 'security measures' after the blasts, another two bombs were dropped, killing five and wounding 11, they said, requesting anonymity as they

were not authorised to talk to the media.

The dead included a military officer, two police officers and two officials from the administration department, they said. Eleven 'junior and senior' police officers were wounded, five critically, they added.

A local police source who also requested anonymity confirmed the incident and casualty figures.

Neither source said who was responsible for the attack.

The junta said 'some security members and government staff' were wounded in the attack, without giving a figure.

It blamed anti-coup 'People's Defence Forces' and the Karen National Liberation Army, an established ethnic rebel group that has fought the military for decades.

AFP

Malaysia court drops graft charges against deputy PM

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - A Malaysian court on Monday approved a prosecution request to drop all graft charges against the country's deputy prime minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, state news agency Bernama reported.

Zahid was facing 47 charges of criminal breach of trust, corruption and money laundering related to the misuse of funds at a charity he founded.

They were part of a raft of charges levelled at leading figures of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party after it was defeated at the polls in 2018, including former prime minister Najib Razak over massive corruption at state fund 1MDB.

Prosecutors in Zahid's case said they wanted more time to investigate his case 'in more depth', Bernama reported.

Zahid, wearing a dark suit, hugged his supporters and family



Malaysia's deputy PM Ahmad Zahid Hamidi smiles as he leaves the High Court after a corruption trial in Kuala Lumpur on Monday (AFP)

members who sat inside the packed courtroom when the decision was announced by the presiding judge.

"My family and I are grateful that the court has discharged me of all 47 charges," Zahid told a press conference.

The court said Zahid's discharge did not amount to an ac-

quittal. He was appointed deputy PM after November's election when his UMNO party joined the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar was forced to ally with his former foes after falling short of an outright majority to form government.

AFP

Rain leaves thousands stranded at Burning Man

Black Rock City, US - Tens of thousands of festivalgoers were stranded on Sunday in deep mud in the Nevada desert after rain turned the annual Burning Man gathering into a quagmire, with police investigating one death.

Video footage showed costume-wearing 'burners' struggling across the wet gray-brown site, some using trash bags as makeshift boots, while dozens of vehicles became stuck in the sludge. Many events at the counterculture festival, which drew some 70,000 people, were canceled when rain tore down structures for parties, art installations and other entertainment.

Police said they were probing one death, without giving further details. Fear set in among some attendees desperate to flee the muddy site.

"I got scared with what happens when so many people run out of toilet paper and water and food, so I felt I had to get out," Pascale Brand, a 40-year-old who arrived from the Netherlands, told AFP. Brand said she



Attendees look at a rainbow over flooding in Nevada's Black Rock desert on September 1 (AFP)

had been 'crying a lot', before deciding on Sunday that 'I am leaving no matter what'.

She got a seat in a neighbour's vehicle and they made it down a muddy road without any problems. "There were people yelling at you, 'You can't leave... Go back! The gates are closed,'" she said,

but the vehicle made it past an unmanned gate, and to a paved road. "I felt like I was breaking out of something," Brand said.

Others made the strenuous journey on foot. "It was an incredibly harrowing six-mile (10km) hike at midnight through heavy and slippery mud, but I got safely

out," lawyer Neal Katyal said on social media.

Organisers asked festival crowds to hunker down at the Black Rock City venue after the heavy rains started Friday night. Scattered showers continued throughout the weekend.

AFP

G20 SUMMIT

China says Premier Li Qiang will lead its delegation, not Xi Jinping

Beijing, China - Premier Li Qiang will lead China's delegation to the G20 summit in India this weekend, Beijing said on Monday, all but confirming President Xi Jinping will snub the meeting of the world's biggest economies.

Speculation and media reports have swirled for the past week that Xi would snub the event, but China had remained silent on the issue.

US President Joe Biden has said he would be 'disappointed' to see Xi skip the gathering of world leaders in New Delhi.

Beijing's foreign ministry confirmed Monday that Li would be at the G20 Leaders' Summit on Saturday and Sunday, which it described as an important forum for economic cooperation. "In attending this meeting, Premier Li Qiang will convey China's thoughts and positions on G20 cooperation, pushing for the G20 to strengthen unity and cooperation, and working together to combat global economic and development challenges,"



This file photo shows China's Premier Li Qiang speaking during a press conference after the closing session of the National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 13, 2023 (AFP)

spokeswoman Mao Ning told a regular news briefing.

Asked whether the announcement meant Xi would not travel to New Delhi, Mao said: "I made an announcement about this just now. Premier Li Qiang will lead a delegation to New Delhi, India, to take part in the G20 Leaders' Summit."

Asked about Xi reportedly not

In attending this meeting, Premier Li Qiang will convey China's thoughts and positions on G20 cooperation

MAO NING

The Group of 20 major economies consists of 19 countries and the European Union, making up about 85 per cent of global GDP and two-thirds of the world's population.

The summit has taken on additional importance this year as many countries wrestle with high inflation and economic turbulence amid a slowing recovery from the COVID-19

pandemic. China, the world's second-largest economy, has set an annual growth target of around five per cent but has its own problems including weak consumer demand, soaring youth unemployment and a crisis in the crucial property sector.

planning to join the gathering in New Delhi, Biden told reporters on Sunday: "I am disappointed, but I am going to get to see him", without elaborating. Xi has attended every G20 summit since coming to power except Rome in 2021, when he participated by video link.

Xi's likely absence from New Delhi stands in contrast to his grand reception at a key summit

of major developing economies last month.

The Johannesburg meeting of the so-called BRICS nations - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - saw the Chinese President take centre stage as six new countries were admitted into the bloc.

Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates will become full members from January 1, in a decision that Xi hailed as 'historic'.

"The expansion is also a new starting point for BRICS cooperation. It will bring new vigour to the BRICS cooperation mechanism and further strengthen the force for world peace and development," Xi said at the time.

China has long campaigned to expand and strengthen BRICS as a counterweight to US and Western dominance of world affairs, especially as tensions have grown over technology, trade, human rights and other issues.

AFP

Nigeria President Tinubu plans to attend, considering applying for membership

Abuja, Nigeria - Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and the continent's largest economy, is considering applying to join the G20 group of nations, the presidency said.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who took office in May,

plans to attend the G20 summit in India this week, where trade, the global economy, climate and the Ukraine war will be on the agenda.

Since assuming the presidency, Tinubu has launched an ambitious set of reforms his

government says will bring Nigeria's economy back on track and also attract much-needed foreign investment.

In a statement on Sunday, presidential spokesman Ajuri Ngelale said membership of G20 was desirable, but the

government was in discussions to assess the benefits of joining.

"Once consultations are concluded, the government will decide whether or not to apply to join as appropriate," it said.

"The participation of Presi-

dent Tinubu at the G20 Summit in India is, in part, in furtherance of this objective."

It said Tinubu was attending the summit at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He will also participate in a roundtable of

Indian and Nigerian CEOs and industrialists.

In New Delhi, Tinubu and ministers will hold bilateral meetings to push for more foreign investment in Nigeria, one of the continent's top petroleum producers.

The Group of 20 major economies consists of 19 countries and the European Union (EU), making up about 85 per cent of global GDP and two-thirds of the world's population.

AFP

Indian government offices on alert mode

New Delhi, India - As G20 week begins, all government offices are on alert mode considering a warning circulated earlier from a designated wing of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) from any 'misleading, fake and counterfeit' emails being circulated by ill elements.

The move is part of extra vigilance to avoid any unprecedented situation as the two-day G20 Leaders Summit is scheduled to be held on September 9-10 in the national capital.

On August 24, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the MHA had warned that 'the misleading emails are targeted to various

government offices, and individuals and falsely accuse them of cybercrimes, urging them to respond'. Focussing with a header of 'Scam alert', the warning pointed that 'fake emails are in circulation impersonating CEO I4C'.

"This is an important alert about the circulation of counterfeit emails impersonating CEO-I4C Rajesh Kumar, bearing the subject 'Urgent Notification!', 'Court Notification'," mentions the alert.

These emails employ the logos of the I4C, Intelligence Bureau (IB), and Delhi Police and wrongfully associate with the names of the undersigned and

the particulars of this unit, it reads.

"The logos and emails in question are intentionally fake, deceptive and created with malicious motives."

In the warning, the I4C wing said: "It is important to clarify that neither the undersigned nor this unit has initiated such emails. Furthermore, no authorisation has been granted by the undersigned for the production or dissemination of such content. Appropriate measures are being taken to address this issue."

Officials in various crucial departments under the Central government said 'reminders' are

being circulated internally to not respond to malicious mail and raise the matter immediately after they find anything similar to it.

The 18th G20 Summit in New Delhi will be a culmination of all the G20 processes and meetings held throughout the year among ministers, senior officials, and civil societies.

A G20 Leaders' declaration will be adopted at the conclusion of the G20 Summit, stating Leaders' commitment towards the priorities discussed and agreed upon during the respective ministerial and working group meetings.

ANI



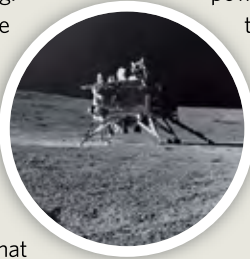
The international convention centre 'Bharat Mandapam', the venue for the upcoming G20 Summit, in New Delhi is seen all set to welcome the delegations from various countries (AFP)

Vikram Lander is set into sleep mode: ISRO

New Delhi, India - The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) announced that the 'Vikram Lander' has been set into sleep mode at around 8am (Indian Standard Time) on Monday morning.

ISRO said that the data collected by the payloads is received at the Earth and the payloads are now switched off. It is expected by ISRO that Vikram Lander and Pragyaan will awake again on around September 22.

"Vikram Lander is set into sleep mode around 08:00 Hrs. IST today. Prior to that, in-situ experiments by ChaSTE, RAMBHA-LP and ILSA payloads are performed at the



new location. The data collected is received at the Earth. Payloads are now switched off. Lander receivers are kept ON. Vikram will fall asleep next to Pragyaan once the solar power is depleted and the battery is drained. Hoping for their awakening, around September 22, 2023," ISRO posted on X.

On August 23, Chandrayaan-3 lander module successfully landed on the moon's South Pole, making it the first country to have achieved the historic feat and bringing to an end the disappointment over the crash landing of the Chandrayaan-2.

ANI

Africa seeking to tap investment on climate action

Nairobi, Kenya - Kenya's president opened a landmark African climate summit on Monday saying the continent had an 'unparalleled opportunity' to benefit from action to tackle global warming.

The inaugural Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi comes ahead of a flurry of diplomatic meetings leading to the November COP28 climate summit in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates, which will likely be dominated by clashing visions for the world's energy future. The three-day event is billed as bringing together leaders from the 54-nation continent to define a shared vision of Africa's green development - an ambitious aim in a politically and economically diverse region whose communities are among the most vulnerable to climate change.

"Delivering prosperity and wellbeing for Africa's growing population without pushing the



Kenya's President William Ruto delivers his opening remarks during the Africa Climate Summit 2023 in Nairobi on Monday (AFP)

world deeper into climate disaster is not an abstract proposition, or mere wishful thinking. It is a real possibility, proven by science," President William Ruto said in his opening address.

"The overarching theme... is the unparalleled opportunity that climate action represents for Africa," he said. "For a very long time we have looked at this as a problem. It is time we flipped and looked at it from the other side.

"We must see in green growth not just a climate imperative but also a fountain of multi-billion-dollar economic opportunities that Africa and the world is primed to capitalise."

Africa, he said, had the potential to be entirely energy self-sufficient through renewable resources, noting that Kenya itself aimed to be '100 per cent renewable' by 2030.

Ruto has said that the international community must help un-

block financing for the continent of 1.4bn people and ease the mounting debt burden on African countries.

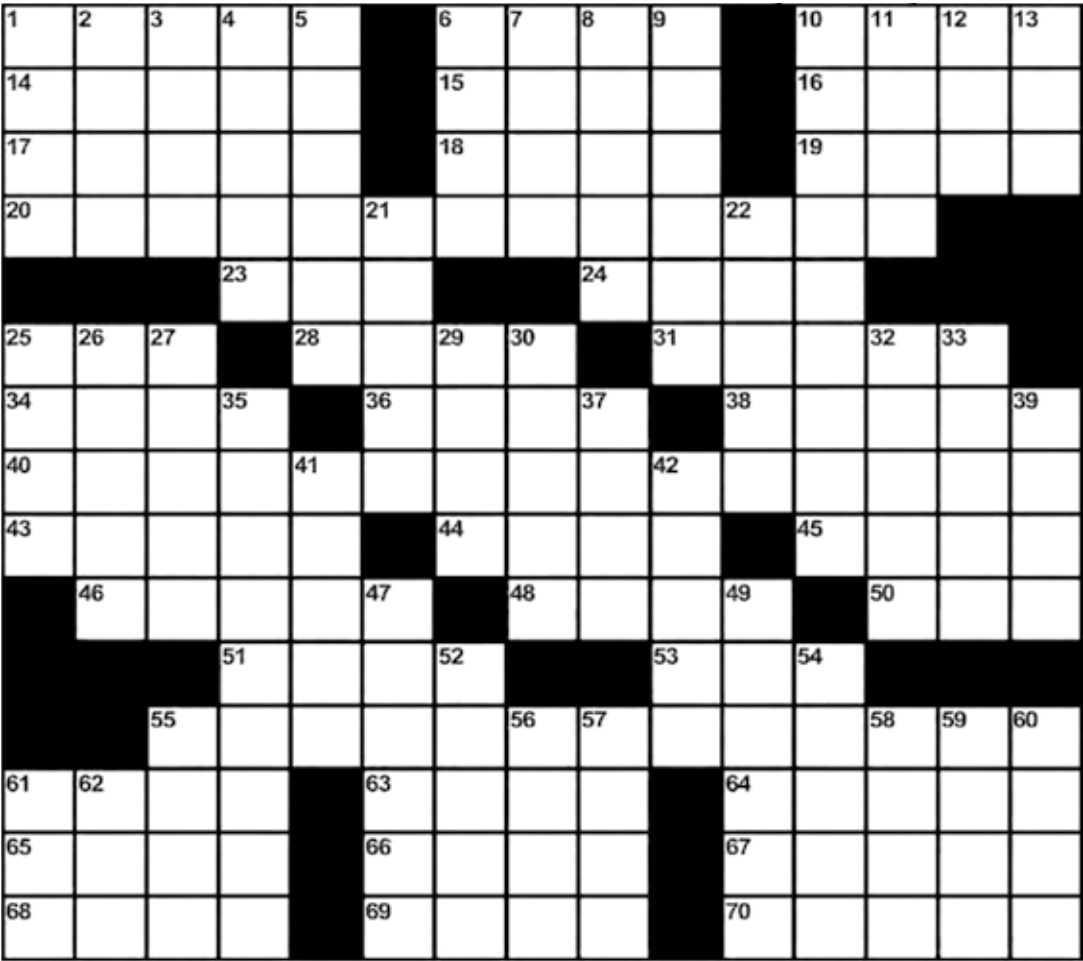
Joseph Nganga, Ruto's appointee to head the summit, said the conference would demonstrate that 'Africa is not just a victim but a dynamic continent with solutions for the world'.

Security has been tightened and roads closed around the summit venue in central Nairobi, where the government says 30,000 people have registered to attend the event.

Civil society groups are expected to protest near the conference against what they call its 'deeply compromised agenda' and focus on rich-nation interests. A draft version of the final declaration seen by AFP puts the spotlight on Africa's vast renewable energy potential, young workforce and natural assets.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS
- 1) Purple flower

6) Bugs on a hill

10) Dreadful day for Caesar

14) Preserved or reserved

15) Bimonthly tide

16) Evening hour

17) Enjoyed dinner at home

18) Chihuahua bull

19) Again from the start

20) Angry fit on Everest?

23) Diamond, e.g.

24) Counterfeit token

25) "Be Prepared" org. for boys

28) Some farm critters

31) Promotes one's music

34) Bedevilers

36) Ardor

38) Barely perceptible amount

40) Sailing vessels are fans of Lassie?

43) Search, as for talent

44) State with confidence

45) "Sweater Girl" Turner

46) Elephant's quartet

48) "Phew!" inducer

50) Like a debtor's ink

51) Hawk among gods

53) Born, in the society pages

55) Exclusive circle of insects?

61) Ceramic piece

63) Pakistan language

64) Eddy or Allman of music

65) A good way away

66) Breakfast choices

67) Van Halen on guitar

68) Delivery org.

69) Wine sediment

70) Things done by 25-
- DOWN

1) Rich, dark soil

2) "And lead us not_ ... "

3) In _ of (instead of)

4) Breezing through, as a test

5) Shaq played it

6) Prefix with "skid" or "the-sis"

7) Gas light

8) Infield coverings

9) Pampered to a fault (var.)

10) Address every four years

11) Eat well

12) Compass point between N and S

13) Start on one's wardrobe?

21) Astonish

22) Repeat word for word

25) Lobster eaters' accessories

26) Kiss sound

27) Cook's cover-up

29) Clifflike, flat-topped elevation

30) Twenty-one-gun salute, e.g.

32) Air-traffic control device

33) Scottish quick bread

35) Rats

37) Wasn't truthful

39) "Ods bodkins!"

41) Areas of human development

42) Danish currency

47) "Rocky II," e.g.

49) Like a usable clarinet

52) Protector in the office

54) Conservatory assignment, maybe

55) Appreciate a performance

56) Result of honing

57) Press lips

58) Put on, as cargo

59) "Idylls of the King" char-
- NOTE PAD

CONDO

OCTET

HAH

ONAIR

ALIVE

ERA

NONPARTISAN

AIL

COHO

PERSE

RECALLS

TWITTER

ENAMEL

BRANCH

SORES

GUESS

ERG

ACTS

EARTH

SCAR

WHO

LOLLS

COATI

OPENLY

TOLLED

CANVASS

THRILLS

EPICS

BURN

AHS

HEART

OF

GOLD

SIT

EMCEE

EERIE

ESS

SUEDE

DEEDS

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES

MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Someone who claims to be an expert in something actually doesn't know what the heck they're talking about. But is it up to you to set them straight? Not if it would make you look bad. Your reputation should be your concern today, which means that you might need to do things you wouldn't normally do or avoid doing things you think you should do. Just let the chips fall where they may and avoid getting your hands dirty in the process.



LEO

JULY 23-AUGUST 22

When you're confident about yourself, the arrogance of other people won't bother you a bit. So in a competition, just have faith in yourself and you'll be fine. Sure, there could be some trash talkers trying to psych you out or make you insecure by bragging about their own accomplishments or going on and on about who they know. It's all hot air, and you know it. Just smile and be amused by the fact that you make them shake in their shoes!



SAGITTARIUS

NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Take the sales pitch one of your friends gives you today with a grain of salt. Sure, they might sound a hundred percent positive about something, but your intuition is telling you that this thing isn't all it's cracked up to be. Do your best to alert your friend to your concerns in a diplomatic way. You don't want them to think you're attacking them. Help them see things more conservatively. Show them that they should be more careful in the future.



TAURUS

APRIL 20-MAY 20

Share some helpful words with someone in your life who's struggling right now. They don't have the patience it takes to get through this rough patch and could really use a pep talk. Speak from your experience and tell them what you think they should do. Be wary of sounding too preachy. That's not like you. You shouldn't judge. You should only encourage them to keep going. Remind them that every step they take means they're one step closer.



VIRGO

AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your healthy ambition needs more room to play, so you can expect it to stop being such a big part of your professional life and start becoming a bigger motivator in your personal life. If you've wanted to make changes in your romantic situation, this is the day to start. Whether you download a new dating app, ask that fascinating person out for coffee, or schedule some special alone time with a partner, the action you take should be bold.



CAPRICORN

DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

This is a great day to resolve a conflict within your family or circle of friends. There's a lot of energy circulating among your friends, all of it focused on compromise and collaboration. Everyone wants to be on the same page as you, which means they'll be willing to do things your way, at least for the time being. You deserve a lot of the credit for getting everyone aligned, though you might not get it. Just be grateful that harmony is returning to your life.



GEMINI

MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you feel you're in the wrong situation at work or school, you should talk to someone who's been through it before. Get some insight from a friend or coworker who's always been willing to help you in the past. Find out what they think you should do. Avoid talking to anyone who's too close to your situation. They aren't likely to be objective about the situation and could use your trust as an opportunity to advance their own issues and hidden agendas.



LIBRA

SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You have your limits, and today you might have to remind someone of that fact. Be on the lookout for someone who's trying to take advantage of you. They want more of your time or money than they truly deserve. Don't feel like a grumpy miser if you want to tell them to bug off. You've been far too generous with them for too long. Today, it's time to cut the strings and let them float off on their own. They'll be just fine. You'll be doing them a favor.



AQUARIUS

JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

If people are trying to put restrictions on what you can do today, ask yourself what their motivations might be. Your goals are important, and you should be able to follow any path you think is right. If someone is telling you to go another way, they might have a vested interest in slowing down your progress. Keep that in mind. There's no need to assume that everyone has bad intentions, but you don't have to believe every word they say.



CANCER

JUNE 22-JULY 22

Things have been pretty heavy between you and another person, though not unpleasantly so. But today you need to balance that energy out. Stick to lighter topics and trivial matters. Instead of having a heart-to-heart talk for hours, just go for a walk or watch a movie. Not every exchange has to be profound to be important. Show this person that you're multifaceted and capable of being goofy as well as intellectual. They're curious about every part of you.



SCORPIO

OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Don't change your ambitions to match those of others. Always be sure you're focused on reaching your goals, not someone else's. Today, some powerful personalities are pushing their agenda, and it might be hard to push back. But you can do it! All you have to do is refocus on what it is you want to do. If it doesn't line up with what this person is suggesting, then tell them thanks, but no thanks. Let them tackle their goals on their own while you tackle yours.



PISCES

FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Don't feel guilty if you're buzzing along effortlessly today while everyone else just doesn't seem to be able to get the hang of things. Everyone has their own skill set, and yours is completely in sync with the tasks for the day. It's okay, and healthy, if things are easy for you from time to time. After all, you deserve to feel confident in one or two or ten areas of your life. Having to work and learn all the time just gets tiring after a while.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which of these National Parks was created last?

- A. Yellowstone, USA

B. Kakadu, Australia

C. Peak District, UK

D. Pyrénées, France

02. Which of these is a tragic heroine in Irish mythology?

- A. Ydun

B. Flora

C. Deirdre

D. Demeter

03. In the number 255 how many digits are there?

- A. 4

B. 1

C. 2

D. 3

Answers: 1.B 2.C 3.D

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

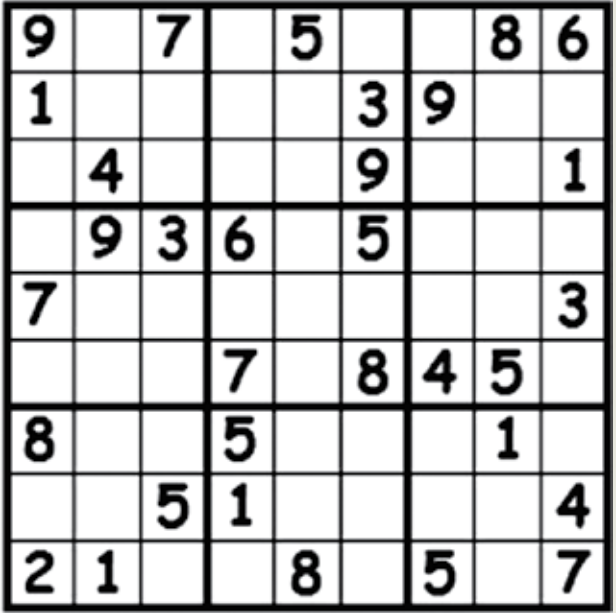


Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



'I had nothing to lose'

Ostapenko sends Swiatek crashing out of US Open

New York, United States - Jelena Ostapenko's "nothing to lose" mindset delivered the biggest upset of the US Open on Sunday as the hard-hitting Latvian sent defending champion Iga Swiatek crashing out.

The 26-year-old 20th seed had never lost to Swiatek in three previous meetings and made it four-out-of-four with a brilliant 3-6, 6-3, 6-1 victory on the Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The shock result sends Ostapenko into a quarter-final date with American sixth seed Coco Gauff on Tuesday, while Swiatek was left wondering where it all went wrong.

The defeat also ensures that Aryna Sabalenka will end Swiatek's 75-week reign as world number one at the end of the tournament.

Ostapenko had been the butt of jokes earlier in the tournament after making 80 unforced errors in a fitful second round win.

But the Latvian had the last laugh with Sunday's win, saying she had been inspired by the packed 23,000-capacity arena.

"I just honestly love to play on big courts with full stadiums and a lot of crowd," Ostapenko said.

"It's really the thing that we are working for and playing for.

"I had nothing to lose today. I knew it was going to be a tough match. I was ready for a battle."

Ostapenko proved more than up for the fight, responding superbly after dropping the open-

ing set against an opponent who had barely broken sweat on her way to the last 16. "I'm really glad, even the first set I couldn't find my game that way, but I was fighting and trying to find my game and be aggressive," Ostapenko said. "In the end I managed to win the match."

Adjusting to pressure
"The main thing, again, I was trying to go for the shots. Maybe today in the second and third set I was a little bit more consistent and didn't go for, like, crazy shots.

"I was going for shots when I

I just honestly love to play on big courts with full stadiums and a lot of crowd

JELENA OSTAPENKO

had a chance of doing that."

Ostapenko's victory came six years after she announced herself to women's tennis with a breakthrough victory in the 2017 French Open final just after her 20th birthday.

She has never been back to a Grand Slam final since that win at Roland Garros, and admitted on Sunday it had taken her time to get used to the pressure that accompanied that triumph.

AFP



Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia celebrates after defeating Iga Swiatek of Poland on Sunday (AFP)



Novak Djokovic hits a return to Borna Gojo

Djokovic eases past Gojo into quarters

New York, United States - Novak Djokovic swept past Croatia's Borna Gojo in straight sets on Sunday to book his place in the quarter-finals of the US Open.

The 23-time Grand Slam singles champion out-classed world No.105 Gojo to win 6-2, 7-5, 6-4 in 2hr 26min on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court.

Djokovic will now face American ninth seed Taylor Fritz on Tuesday for a place in the semi-finals as he chases a record-extending 24th Grand Slam title.

The 36-year-old Serbian star had been given a scare in the third round on Friday, forced to recover from a two-set deficit before beating compatriot Laslo Djere in five sets. But there never looked like any chance of Gojo causing Djokovic similar difficulties on Sunday, with the Croatian earning just one break point throughout the match.

Djokovic made only 12 unforced errors throughout the match compared to Gojo's tally of 40, and broke his opponent five times on his way to a clinical victory.

"I knew that Borna has a big game...he's a big shot player, serve and forehand, big weapons, and moves pretty well for a big guy," said Djokovic after reaching his 13th US Open quarter-final.

"The key to match was to try and neutralise his serve. Just glad to get through in straight sets."

Djokovic is meanwhile looking forward to the challenge of facing Fritz in the last eight on Tuesday.

Fritz is one of three American men in the quarter-finals along with Frances Tiafoe and Ben Shelton, the first time since 2005 three Americans have reached the last eight at the US Open.



Taylor Fritz of the United States celebrates winning a point against Dominic Stricker of Switzerland (AFP)

Broken record: American Fritz seeks fix to Djokovic woes

New York, United States - Taylor Fritz knows he'll have to rewrite the record books against Novak Djokovic in order to keep his US Open dream alive after setting up a quarter-final with the 23-time Grand Slam champion on Sunday.

The 25-year-old Fritz became the third American to reach the men's quarter-finals at Flushing Meadows after a straight-sets win over Swiss qualifier Dominic Stricker.

His reward for a 7-6 (7/2), 6-4, 6-4 victory against the world number 128 is another crack at

Djokovic, who has won all seven meetings including a one-sided affair in Cincinnati last month.

Fritz has lost in straight sets each time with the exception of a five-set third-round defeat at the 2021 Australian Open, their lone Grand Slam encounter to date. "Novak's Novak. It's tough. I said it on court: he's gotten me seven times," said Fritz.

"There's no one on tour that has any kind of a record like that against me, so I'm hoping one of these times I've got to get him. US Open quarters would be a pretty good time to get him."

"I think the toughest thing is just convincing yourself that it's, like, just play within yourself," he added.

"I don't need to find myself trying to hit serves bigger or aiming closer to the lines, stuff like that, because it's Novak.

"I think I need to play within myself and trust that if I'm playing well, then that's going to be enough, and I don't need to kind of do anything extra."

Fritz, the ninth seed, is through to his second Grand Slam quarter-final after making the last eight at Wimbledon a

year ago.

He lost to Rafael Nadal in a five-set epic on that occasion, one he rates as the biggest of his career along with the impending Djokovic clash.

"It's on par with quarter-finals, Rafa, Wimbledon, then maybe finals Indian Wells, Rafa. I'd say it's in the same ballpark. They're definitely top three," said Fritz.

He joined compatriots Frances Tiafoe and Ben Shelton in the last eight after emulating his mother Kathy May's run to the US Open quarter-finals in 1978.

Gauff ends Wozniacki run to reach last eight

New York, United States - American teenager Coco Gauff ended Caroline Wozniacki's fairytale return to the US Open on Sunday, booking her place in the quarter-finals with a three-set victory.

Sixth seed Gauff, regarded by many as one of the favourites for the title after two tournament wins in August, advanced to the last eight with a 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 victory on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court.

The 19-year-old will face either defending champion Iga Swiatek or Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko in Tuesday's quarter-finals.

"I knew going in I had to play aggressive," Gauff said after her victory. "I'm happy that I was able to get back and focus.

"She's a player you have to be mentally tough with every single point." The defeat ended former world number one Wozniacki's impressive showing at the tournament.

The 33-year-old retired after



Coco Gauff of the US hits a return to Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki

the 2020 Australian Open to start a family, and this year's US Open was only the third event the mother-of-two has played since returning to the tour in Montreal last month.

Gauff, who was only one when Wozniacki made her debut on the WTA in 2005, paid tribute to the Dane's performance in

defeat.

"Caroline is back, it's like she's never left," Gauff said. "The level she played today was amazing, and she's been an inspiration for me growing up.

"I grew up watching her win the Australian Open...to be out on the court with her today was an honour."

After dropping the first set, wild card entrant Wozniacki had raised the prospect of a mammoth upset after punishing an error-strewn second set by Gauff to level at one set apiece.

A rattled Gauff was then broken in the opening game of the third set to deepen the jitters amongst the teen's fans.

But Gauff rallied to break back immediately and then turned up the pace to break Wozniacki for leads of 3-1 and 5-1 up before holding to clinch victory.

Cirstea in quarters

Veteran Romanian Sorana Cirstea reached the quarter-finals of a Grand Slam for the first time in 14 years on Sunday, defeating Switzerland's Belinda Bencic in straight sets to advance to the last eight.

Cirstea, 33, who last played in the quarter-finals of a Grand Slam at the French Open in 2009, prevailed 6-3, 6-3 to ease past her 15th-seeded opponent.

AFP

Shelton tames Paul to reach first US Open quarter-final

New York, United States - Unseeded American Ben Shelton took down 14th-seeded compatriot Tommy Paul in four sets on Sunday to reach his second Grand Slam quarter-final of the year at the US Open.

The 20-year-old Shelton avenged his loss to Paul in the last eight of the Australian Open, winning 6-4, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 to become the youngest American to reach the men's quarter-finals in New York since Andy Roddick in 2002. "Being at home here in front of an American crowd, I felt the love all week," said Shelton.

"It's hard to believe that I'm playing on Arthur Ashe right now with the stands completely full."

The world number 47 plays 10th seed Frances Tiafoe for a place in the semi-finals.

"Frances as a player is electric. He's kind of been like a brother to me since I've been out here on tour," said Shelton.

"Just a great guy off the court.



Ben Shelton of the US celebrates after defeating compatriot Tommy Paul

But on the court a nightmare to deal with. He does so many things well. One of them being engaging the crowd.

"He's just one of those guys where it's must-see TV. You want to watch him play all the time. "He kind of has that Carlos Alcaraz effect, especially here in New York. This is his place where

he really wants to show up."

Shelton arrived at his second US Open with a tour-level record of 12-20 this season, having failed to win multiple matches at any of the 18 events he had played since Melbourne.

Nine of his 16 victories in 2023 have now come at Grand Slams.

AFP

MBAPPE STRIKES AGAIN

French superstar scores twice as ruthless PSG hammer Lyon

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe scored twice as Paris Saint-Germain romped to a 4-1 win away at Lyon on Sunday to leave their crisis-hit opponents bottom of Ligue 1.

Mbappe's two goals in the first half sandwiched strikes by Achraf Hakimi and Marco Asensio as PSG produced a ruthless performance that augurs well for the rest of the season.

Corentin Tolisso pulled one back with a penalty for Lyon but the seven-time former French champions are enduring a miserable start to the campaign and are bottom with just one point from four games.

Laurent Blanc's side prop up the division on goal difference behind last season's runners-up Lens and Clermont.

PSG, meanwhile, are up to second, two points behind early league leaders Monaco, after a second straight win to follow draws in their opening two games. "It is a great result. It is not easy to come and win here, regardless of what the opposition are going through," said PSG captain Marquinhos.

"We are not yet playing exactly the way the coach wants us to but we are making great progress.



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

"He is very demanding, very hard with us. He has said there is still room for improvement."

Luis Enrique's team are building towards the start of their Champions League campaign which will see them come up against Borussia Dortmund, AC Milan and Newcastle United in the group stage.

They still have Randal Kolo Muani to come into the team after the France striker joined from Eintracht Frankfurt in a reported 90 million-euro (\$97m) deal just before the transfer window closed on Friday.

This game came too soon for Kolo Muani to make his debut, but there was a first appearance

for Bradley Barcola after he joined from Lyon on Thursday for a fee that could reach 50 million euros.

Barcola came off the bench late on to a chorus of jeers and whistles from the home support, but the game was well and truly over by then.

PSG went ahead in the fourth

We are not yet playing exactly the way the coach wants us to but we are making great progress. He is very demanding, He has said there is still room for improvement

MARQUINHOS

minute as Mbappe netted a penalty after Manuel Ugarte's pressing led to him being brought down in the box by Tolisso. Hakimi made it 2-0 on 20 minutes, following in to score

after Lyon goalkeeper Anthony Lopes had turned a low Ousmane Dembele cross out into his path.

The visitors needed Gianluigi Donnarumma to make fine saves

from Rayan Cherki and Tolisso, while in between that Hakimi hit the bar at the end of a lighting PSG counterattack.

They scored again on 38 minutes in clinical fashion, Ugarte releasing Asensio for the former Real Madrid man to score his second goal in as many games. AFP

Lewandowski late penalty earns Barcelona tight win at Osasuna

Barcelona, Spain - Robert Lewandowski rolled home a late penalty to earn Barcelona a hard-fought 2-1 win at Osasuna in La Liga on Sunday.

The striker won the penalty when he was tugged back in the box by Alejandro Catena, who was sent off.

Barcelona took the lead through Jules Kounde's header in the first half but Chimy Avila drilled the hosts level with less than 15 minutes remaining.

Xavi brought on new loan signings Joao Cancelo and Joao Felix in the second half as Barcelona, third, stayed on league leaders Real Madrid's tail - they are two points behind their arch-rivals after four games.

The coach started 16-year-old Lamine Yamal on the right wing again after his impressive display last weekend and his first call up to the Spanish national team on



Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski (R) celebrates after scoring against Osasuna on Sunday (AFP)

Friday. However it was veteran forward Lewandowski's penalty which was crucial for Barcelona this time.

"I think we lacked some good

play, some patience, and we have to generate more in attack," Barca coach Xavi told DAZN.

"The team worked hard, we really had to today, and the team

suffered, but we won. We had the personality to suffer until the end and it's always difficult to win at El Sadar. "I'm happy with the team's attitude ... they are a very intense opponent. I'm content and satisfied with the victory."

Barca should have taken the lead early on but Lewandowski fired wide with the goal gaping after Frenkie de Jong's effort rebounded off the post into his path.

Osasuna, often hard to beat at home, offered as good as they got in the first half. Marc-Andre ter Stegen denied former Barcelona forward Jose Arnaz at his near post and then thwarted Aimar Oroz, who should have done better when well placed.

Barcelona snatched the lead just before half-time when Kounde rose to nod Ilkay Gundogan's corner across goal and beyond the dive of Aitor Fernandez.

Thuram stars as Inter join rivals Milan at the summit of Serie A

Milan, Italy - Marcus Thuram scored his first Serie A goal on Sunday as Inter Milan thumped Fiorentina 4-0 and moved level with AC Milan at the top of Serie A.

France forward Thuram opened the scoring midway through the first half and had a hand in two more strikes from Lautaro Martinez and Hakan Calhanoglu which helped continue Inter's perfect start to the new season.

"The whole team played well today, it was a good evening," said Thuram to DAZN.

"I'm really happy with my goal and key pass, I just want to help the team as much as I can."

Inter host Milan, who have also won their first three matches, in the first derby of the season immediately after the international break.

That match promises to be a blockbuster as both teams al-



Inter Milan's Marcus Thuram celebrates after scoring against Fiorentina on Sunday (AFP)

ready look like strong contenders for the league title. And Milan will be looking for revenge for a comprehensive defeat to their local rivals in last season's Champions League semi-finals.

Leading the line for Inter should be Thuram, who has slotted in brilliantly alongside Martinez since signing from Borussia

Moenchengladbach this summer and returning to the country of his birth.

Thuram, 26, was born in Parma where his World Cup-winning father Lilian played for five seasons, winning the UEFA Cup and Italian Cup in 1999 as part of a star-studded outfit. AFP

Sesko helps Leipzig condemn Union Berlin to first home loss in 18 months

Berlin, Germany - A second-half Benjamin Sesko double and a stunning goal from Xavi Simons took RB Leipzig to a 3-0 win at a ten-man Union Berlin on Sunday, the home side's first loss in the German capital in 18 months.

Surprise Champions League participants Union had not lost in the league at home since February 2022, when they suffered a 3-0 defeat to Borussia Dortmund, then coached by current Leipzig boss Marco Rose.

Leipzig, who started this season with a 3-0 Supercup thrashing of Bayern Munich, thundered out of the blocks, taking the lead shortly after thanks to a long-range Simons goal.

Union lost forward Kevin Vol-

land to a straight red card shortly after, Leipzig's Sesko scoring two goals in three minutes late in the game to wrap up the result.

Leipzig sporting director Max Eberl celebrated the "impressive style and manner" of his side's "deserved" win but conceded "the red card definitely helped us a bit." Rose toasted Simons' "beautiful goal" which "opened the game up" for his side to claim an "important win."

Union manager Urs Fischer praised his side's fight and said "it's tough, against an opponent like RB, to create something with a man down".

The battle between the only top-division teams from the former East is among the Bun-

desliga's fiercest, with Union fans staging repeated protests against Leipzig's ownership and the club's approach to German football's sacred member-ownership rules.

As has now become customary at the Alte Forsterei, Union fans greeted Leipzig with complete silence at the start of the match before roaring to life after 15 minutes. Newcomer Volland went close early for the home side, his header forcing a desperate save by Leipzig goalkeeper Janis Blaswich.

Union held firm in defence in the opening half, forcing Leipzig's Yussuf Poulsen and Xaver Schlager into long-range efforts before half-time. Leipzig found



Leipzig's Xavi Simons (L) scores against Union Berlin in their Bundesliga match on Sunday (AFP)

their fluency and precision immediately in the second half.

The visitors took the lead with Germany midfielder Benjamin Henrichs teeing up Simons to score a stunner, the Paris Saint-Germain loanee thundering in from the edge of the box.

Trailing for the first time this season, Union's push for an equaliser was derailed by a red card to Volland, the former Monaco forward sent from the field for a rash challenge on Mohamed Simakan.

Union made several changes as they pushed to keep their home record intact, but Sesko scored a double in the final five minutes - his first league goals for the club - to seal the win.

RICE AND SHINE

English midfielder on target as Arsenal stun Man Utd with late flourish

London, United Kingdom - Declan Rice scored his first goal for Arsenal and Gabriel Jesus added the icing on the cake as the Gunners scored twice in stoppage time to beat Manchester United 3-1 on Sunday.

Marcus Rashford gave the visitors the lead against the run of play at the Emirates but Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard equalised seconds later.

The home side had a second-half penalty award overturned following a VAR check and United were denied what could have been a late winner when substitute Alejandro Garnacho was ruled offside by VAR.

Last year's Premier League runners-up kept up the pressure in eight minutes of added time.

They were rewarded in the 96th minute when new midfield signing Rice controlled a deep corner at the back post and shot past Andre Onana, with the help of a deflection off substitute Jonny Evans.

There was still time for another goal as substitute Jesus burst forward, beating Onana to leave United shellshocked.

"We work and do everything we do every day for moments like this," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta told Sky, praising his side for their never-say-die attitude.

"This is sport at the top level, it is about the small margins. It could have gone either way.

"I am really happy, obviously. They are a great team, really well coached and they make life difficult for you. When we gave the goal away that we did you are al-



Arsenal's Declan Rice celebrates after scoring against Manchester United in their English Premier League match in London on Sunday (AFP)

ways up against it."

The result leaves Arsenal fifth in the table after their third win in four games, two points behind leaders Manchester City, while United are 11th. Earlier, Liverpool beat Aston Villa 3-0 to climb to third in the table.

Arsenal shot out of the blocks, pinning United back in the warm September sunshine, and should have taken the lead in the 13th minute but new signing Kai Havertz miskicked horrendously with the goal at his mercy.

Quickfire goals

The game exploded into life shortly before the half-hour mark when United took the lead against after a speedy counter-attack.

Christian Eriksen picked up a loose ball in midfield and burst forward, producing a perfectly weighted pass for Rashford, running down the left-hand channel.

The England forward, largely anonymous in the early stages, cut inside and past two defenders before unleashing a shot past the despairing dive of Aaron Ramsdale in the 27th minute.

But the Gunners were level just a minute later when Odegaard, unmarked in the area, blasted home from just inside the box after being found by the impressive Gabriel Martinelli.

Arsenal were quicker to settle after the break and were awarded a penalty just before the hour mark when Havertz tumbled in the box but referee Anthony Taylor overturned his decision following a VAR check.



Liverpool's Dominik Szoboszlai in action against Aston Villa

Three talking points from the Premier League weekend

Manchester, United Kingdom

- Manchester City maintained the only perfect record in the Premier League, but Arsenal, Liverpool and Tottenham produced impressive wins this weekend to remain just two points behind at the top of the table.

Erling Haaland's hat-trick eased City to a 5-1 win over Fulham, while Son Heung-min also bagged a treble as Spurs' continued to impress under Ange Postecoglou in a 5-2 victory at Burnley.

Liverpool swept aside Aston Villa 3-0 at Anfield.

And stoppage time goals from Declan Rice and Gabriel Jesus ensured Arsenal took the three points from a 3-1 win over Manchester United.

AFP Sport looks at three major talking points from the Premier League weekend.

RICE OFF MARK

Rice was not signed by Arsenal to score goals but his first strike for his new club could not have been better timed as the Gunners roared back to beat United.

The England international cost a club-record fee of £100 million (\$126 million) plus £5 million in add-ons from West Ham to add steel to the midfield.

But Rice, who scored 15 goals in 245 games for the Hammers, is off the mark in just his fourth Premier League game for Arsenal, turning the ball in at the back post to put his team 2-1 ahead in the 96th minute before Jesus sealed the points.

Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta hailed Rice's "tremendous performance".

"He was really dominant and then obviously he produced a magic moment to win us the game so I'm really happy with him," he said.

Arsenal have not been at their fluent best so far this season but they have three wins from four games and go into the international break with a spring in their step.

BILLION POUND BLUES

Chelsea's spending in the final week of the transfer window took their total outlay on new players to over £1 billion in little over a year since a takeover fronted by Todd Boehly.

The LA Dodgers co-owner's consortium has bet big on young players on lengthy contracts coming good in the long term.

But patience is wearing thin at Stamford Bridge as a miserable start to Mauricio Pochettino's reign has followed a disastrous campaign under four different managers last season.

Despite the huge sums splashed out in the last three

Rice produced a magic moment to win us the game, so I'm really happy with him,

MIKEL ARTETA

Sancho puts Man Utd career in doubt

London, United Kingdom - Jadon Sancho's Manchester United future could be in doubt after he took a swipe at manager Erik ten Hag for saying he had been dropped because of poor training performances.

The 23-year-old, who described himself as a "scapegoat", did not travel to London for Sunday's Premier League match at Arsenal, which United lost 3-1 after taking lead.

The England winger was conspicuous by his absence, having come off the bench in United's first three matches.

Ten Hag had few experienced attacking options at the Emirates, with debutant Rasmus Hojlund, Alejandro Garnacho and Facundo Pellistri among the substitutes.

The Red Devils appeared set for a 1-1 draw but conceded two stoppage-time goals to slump to a damaging defeat that left them 11th in the Premier League table.

Ten Hag said Sancho was



Jadon Sancho

dropped due to sub-par training.

"Jadon, on his performances in training, we did not select him," the Dutchman said after the game.

"You have to reach a level every day at Manchester United and we can make choices in the front line. So for this game he

was not selected."

However, Sancho hit back later Sunday in a strongly worded social media post.

"Please don't believe everything you read! I will not allow people saying things that is completely untrue, I have conducted myself in training very well this

I respect all decisions that are made by the coaching staff, I play with fantastic players and (am) grateful to do so which I know every week is a challenge. I will continue to fight for this badge no matter what!"

Sancho has struggled for consistent form since moving to Old Trafford from Borussia Dortmund for £73 million (\$92 million) in 2021.

He has scored 12 goals in 82 appearances in all competitions for United.

Sancho, a youth player with Manchester City, started Ten Hag's first season brightly but did not feature from late October until February - he missed out on the World Cup and completed an individual winter fitness programme in the Netherlands.

He featured in the League Cup final win against Newcastle after returning and ended the 2022/23 campaign with seven goals and three assists.

AFP

week," he posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"I believe there are other reasons for this matter that I won't go into, I've been a scapegoat for a long time which isn't fair!"

He added: "All I want to do is play football with a smile on my face and contribute to my team.

Messi assists Miami to big win over MLS champions LAFC

Los Angeles, United States - Inter Miami delivered the most impressive win of their Lionel Messi era, 3-1 over Major League Soccer champions Los Angeles FC on Sunday, with two assists from the Argentine boosting their playoff hopes.

Goals from Argentine forward Facundo Farias, Spanish full-back Jordi Alba and substitute Leonardo Campana of Ecuador earned Miami a statement victory that moves them within nine points of the playoff places with nine games remaining.

Messi's first MLS appearance in Los Angeles, attracted a capacity crowd, swollen by a host of A-List celebrities including Leonardo DiCaprio, Selena

Gomez and Prince Harry.

But the home fans left frustrated as last year's MLS Cup winners wasted a series of chances.

French-born Gabon international Denis Bouanga had the first opportunity, bursting goalwards but with Mexican Carlos Vela unmarked to his right, unwisely chose to shoot and his effort was blocked - to the fury of his teammate.

Bouanga had another great chance in the 11th minute after a fine through ball from former Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini

Goals from Argentine forward Facundo Farias, Spanish full-back Jordi Alba and Leonardo Campana of Ecuador earned Miami a statement victory that moves them within nine points of the playoff places

but Miami keeper Drake Callender pulled off an excellent save.

After surviving those early scares, Miami took the lead in the 14th minute when Tomas



Inter Miami's Lionel Messi celebrates a goal with teammates during their MLS match against Los Angeles FC

Aviles split the LAFC defence to find Farias who beat John McCarthy with a low shot on the slide. Miami struggled to contain Bouanga but the LA forward was again unable to make the most of his opportunity when he burst through the middle but fired wide.

Mario Gonzalez should have done better when he was given space for a shot but blasted into the side-netting as Miami were increasingly threatening on the counter. Paraguay midfielder Diego Gomez broke forward and played a clever back-heel to Messi but the Argentine's shot was weak and easily dealt with by McCarthy.

AFP

New Zealand hammer England

Birmingham, United Kingdom - New Zealand outplayed England as they won the third Twenty20 international at Edgbaston on Sunday by a commanding 74 runs to maintain their hopes of a shared series.

Finn Allen made 83 and Glenn Phillips 69 in New Zealand's 202-5.

Recalled paceman Kyle Jamieson (3-23) and spinner Ish Sodhi (3-33) then did the bulk of the damage, with New Zealand captain Tim Southee (2-30) also in the wickets, as England collapsed to 128 all out inside 19 overs.

There were only four double-figure scores in the T20 world champions' innings, England captain Jos Buttler top-scoring with 40 and Moeen Ali making 26.

"We asked for a better performance in all three areas (batting, bowling and fielding) and that was the kind of performance you expect to see when we play," Southee told the BBC.

"Finn showed his class today and Glenn has been outstanding for us for a long time, especially on tricky surfaces. He made it look like a completely different surface to everyone else.

"So we got a decent score and then with the ball we were more clinical and also had the advantage of having 20 overs watching England bowl."

India in Super Fours



Indian captain Rohit Sharma (L) and Shubman Gill congratulate each other after their victory against Nepal in Asia Cup in Kandy on Monday (AFP)

Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill star as India thrash Nepal

Kandy, Sri Lanka - Skipper Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill remained unbeaten as India hammered cricketing minnows Nepal by 10 wickets in a rain-hit match to enter the Super Four stage of the Asia Cup on Monday.

Chasing a DLS (Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method) revised target of 145 in 23 overs after a rain interruption, India reached home with 17 balls to spare in Pallekele.

Rohit, on 74, and Gill, on 67, stood strong. Nepal were bowled

out for 230 after Aasif Sheikh top-scored with 58.

The 50-over tournament is seen as a tune-up for the upcoming ODI World Cup in India but rain has played spoilsport, forcing organisers to discuss a venue change for upcoming matches in Colombo.

India's opening match against Pakistan, who were the first team to move into the next round, was abandoned after just one innings.

In their second outing, India

were 17-0 in 2.1 overs when heavy rain forced players out of the ground and the field totally covered. Ground staff worked tirelessly to make the ground ready for play again.

Rohit and Gill came out roaring and hit a string of boundaries to reach their respective half-centuries and race to the target. Rohit smashed five sixes in his 59-ball knock.

Nepal, who are still finding their feet in international cricket and got ODI status in 2018, put up an impressive show after Sheikh's fifty helped the team to a respectable total.

Nepal lost their way after a

strong start by Sheikh and Kushal Bhurtel (38) but the middle and lower-order fought back.

Number eight Sompal Kami smashed 48 before the innings ended in 48.2 overs. Spinner Ravindra Jadeja and fast bowler Mohammed Siraj took three wickets each.

Rohit won the toss and elected to field first, but Bhurtel and Sheikh got quick runs with help from the Indian fielders, who dropped three catches in the first five overs. Shreyas Iyer dropped a regulation catch at slip, Virat Kohli spilled a sitter at short cover and wicketkeeper Ishan Kishan let the ball through his gloves.



Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan Miraz (R) celebrates with Najmul Hossain Shanto after scoring a century against Afghanistan on Sunday

Bangladesh thump Afghanistan to keep Asia Cup hopes alive

Lahore, Pakistan - Allrounder Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Najmul Hossain Shanto smashed centuries before Bangladesh's pace bowlers shared eight wickets to beat Afghanistan by 89 runs in the Asia Cup in Lahore on Sunday.

Miraz hit a 119-ball 112 for his highest ODI score while Shanto scored a 105-ball 104 to help Bangladesh to 334-5 before they bowled out Afghanistan for 245 in 44.3 overs.

Taskin Ahmed (4-44), Shoriful Islam (3-36) and Hasan Mahmud (1-61) took wickets at regular intervals to keep Bangladesh's hopes of reaching the Super Four stage alive.

Afghanistan will now play title holders Sri Lanka -- who defeated Bangladesh in their first game -- on Tuesday in Lahore to decide who qualifies for the next round.

Set to chase their highest target in ODIs, Afghanistan got off to a disastrous start with Islam trapping the dangerous Rahmanullah Gurbaz leg-before in the second over for one.

Ibrahim Zadran, who top-

scored with 75, added 78 for the second wicket with Rahmat Shah (33) and another 52 for the third with Hashmatullah Shahidi (51) but failed to keep up the momentum.

Mahmud ended Zadran's 74-ball knock with a brilliant diving catch by wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim to hit Afghanistan hard. He hit ten boundaries and a six.

Shahidi and Najibullah Zadran (17) added 62 for the fourth wicket to keep Afghanistan in the hunt but they fell in quick succession.

With 123 needed off the last ten overs, Rashid Khan hit a 15-ball 24 but that was too little, too late.

Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan praised Miraz.

"We played very well all-round," said Shakib. "Mehidy got his chance up the order and proved himself, we always knew he had the ability. We executed our plans really well."

Afghanistan skipper Shahidi was disappointed with his team's bowling.

AFP

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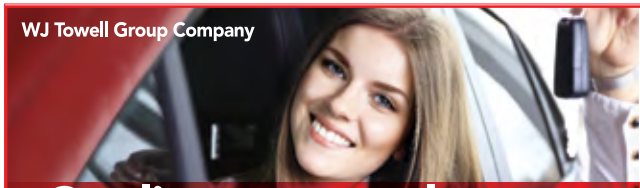
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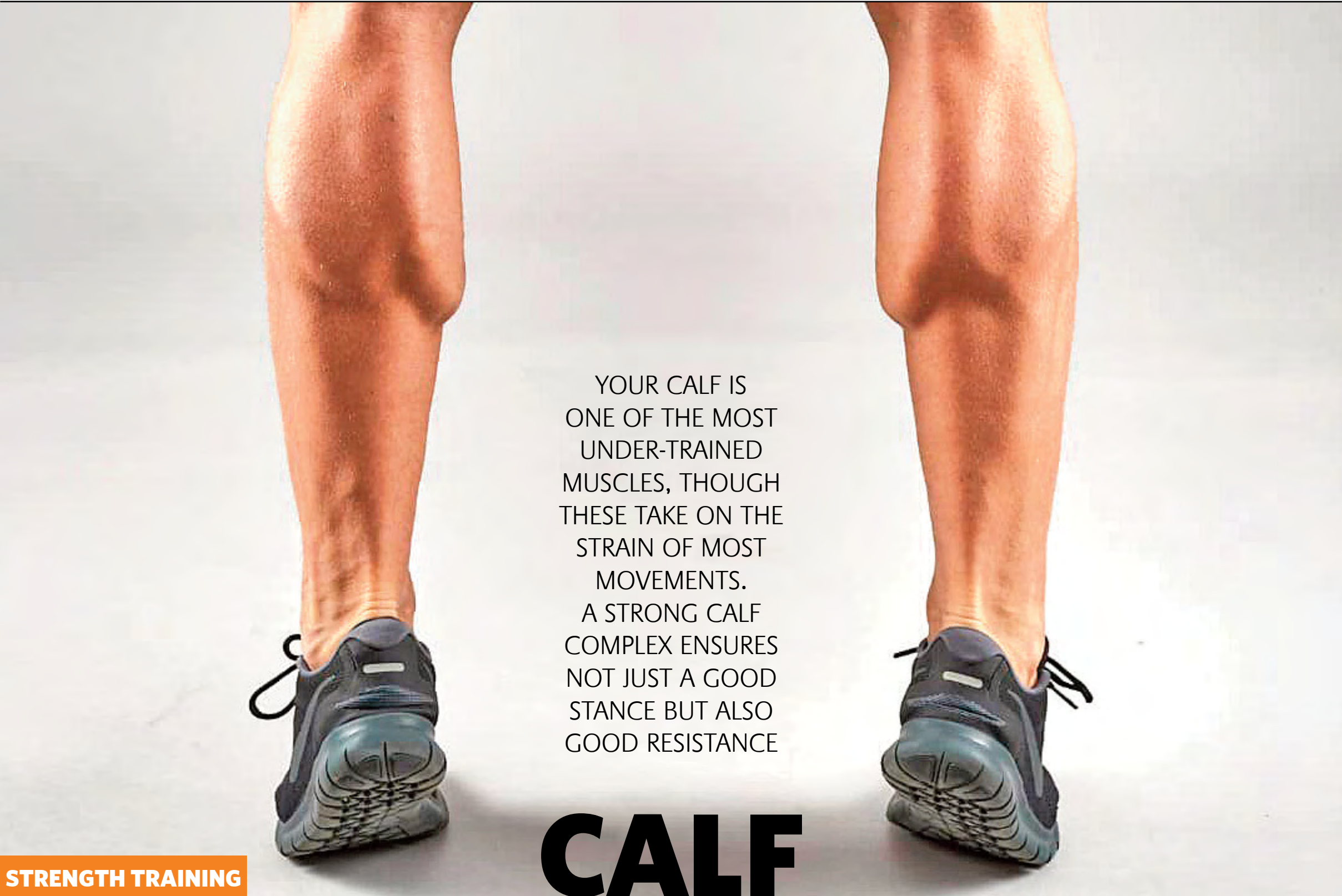
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YOUR CALF IS ONE OF THE MOST UNDER-TRAINED MUSCLES, THOUGH THESE TAKE ON THE STRAIN OF MOST MOVEMENTS. A STRONG CALF COMPLEX ENSURES NOT JUST A GOOD STANCE BUT ALSO GOOD RESISTANCE

CALF COMPLEX

Do you get easily tired after a shopping spree or a walk in the park, or avoid/dread taking the stairs instead of the elevator? Take a look at your calf muscles.

The calf muscle is usually neglected in many strength training programmes, though these need the most attention. Most people don't understand or believe the importance of keeping your calf complex strong.

Your calf muscles propel you forward with every single step, they absorb load with each impact and they support the rest of your lower limb and body. By increasing your calf strength you will be able to move around faster, be able to run for longer, maintain a more consistent pace, be able

to jump higher and stand for a longer time without getting tired.

Here are the four exercises for strengthening your calves:

DOUBLE-LEG CALF RAISE

Starting position: Stand near a wall for balance. Place your feet hip-width apart, and make sure your ankles, knees, and hips are in vertical alignment to protect your joints.

Action: Press down into the balls of both

feet to raise your body upward. Keep your abdominal muscles pulled in so that you move straight upward, rather than shifting your body forward or backward.

SINGLE-LEG CALF RAISE

Starting position: Stand on one leg near a wall for balance with the other leg bent behind you. Be sure the ankle, knee, and hip of the leg you're working are in vertical alignment to protect the joints.

Action: Press down into the ball of your

foot to raise your body upward. Keep your abdominal muscles pulled in so you avoid shifting forward or backward.

SEATED CALF RAISE

Starting position: Sit on a firm, sturdy chair with your feet flat on the floor. Keep your knees aligned directly over your feet. Don't let your knees turn in or out. Lean forward placing hands on thighs near knees pushing down to add resistance.

Action: Press slowly down into the balls

of your feet to raise your heels as high as you can. Next, slowly lower your heels. Repeat.

CALF-BUILDING SPORTS

Running, walking, and hiking are excellent calf-strengthening exercises, especially when you go uphill. The steeper the climb, the more your calves have to work.

Running sports such as soccer, basketball, and tennis demand that you run, jump, and push off your calf muscles to accelerate or change direction quickly. So they're great for toning calves.

Swimming, too, works the calves along with the rest of the legs muscles. It also avoids the impact of running or jumping.

PLANT-BASED DIETS



NUTRITION & YOU

When we hear plant-based diets, we immediately relate them to good health.

Starting from gut health to heart health, to maintaining blood sugar levels, brain health or weight loss, the benefits are many. These benefits are seen as long as foods are consumed in a minimally processed form.

For instance, wheat taken as whole wheat, or legumes, nuts, seeds, veggies, etc when taken in closest to its natural form, will give the maximum benefits. But when the same food is highly processed or taken without making careful choices or correct understanding, it may become an unhealthy food.

Let's understand how and when Plant-based diets become unhealthy:



Processed plant-based diets - The same plant-based diet when taken in a processed manner - refined grains, sweetened cereals, jam, pickles, tinned fruit and vegetables, bread and cheeses, beverages, snacks with unhealthy fats or confectionary, becomes unhealthy. These foods are plant-based but owing to the additives like salt, sugar, and saturated fats, they no longer remain healthy.

Ultra-processed foods - The food industry is not satisfied with just

processed, so we have ultra-processed foods, too. Many of these foods have come into the market under the head of plant-based foods. These include imitation processed meats, plant-based milk, cheese, and yoghurt. These foods are usually derived from starches, sugars, and fats, and along with them many flavours, colours and chemicals are added to improve appeal and shelf-life.

Sadly, there is a significant knowledge gap in the nutritional

By eating plant-based diets in its naturally occurring form, reducing meat or other animal foods to minimal amounts, and careful selection of foods, one can get the best of both worlds

benefits of these foods and much more research is needed to give a clear picture. For example, a vegan donut or vegan sausage roll may appear to be healthier than the non-vegan one, but the high amount of salt, sugar or saturated fat added to it along with innumerable additives makes it much more unhealthy. The problem is not plant-based diets but plant-based diets with additives and the way the ultra-processing is done that makes it unhealthy.

Presence of anti-nutrients in some plant-based foods - One of the commonest elements found in plant seeds like, nuts, whole grains and beans is phytic acid. This acid in the body binds with minerals to form phytates, an anti-nutrient as it affects the absorption of zinc, iron and calcium. But, soaking, cooking, fermenting or sprouting reduces its content. Hence, avoiding these foods is not the answer, but using them correctly can make them more beneficial.

Nutritional needs - Some of the nutrients, particularly proteins, are found in extremely good quality in animal foods. Therefore, proteins may be of concern, when on a purely vegetarian diet. Also, nutrients, like, iron, zinc, Vitamin B12 or Vitamin D may have poor bio-availability from vegetarian diets.

To conclude, by eating plant-based diets in its naturally occurring form and reducing meat, or other animal foods to minimal amounts, careful selection and combination of foods, one can get the best of both worlds.

(Vandana Chawla is an Online Nutrition Expert and a Registered Nutritionist-UKVRN)

Hubert Vaz

Do you stay alone due to your circumstances in Oman? Do you miss you family/hometown or social connections and often feel depressed? Loneliness is universal but the ways to tackle it are varied.

According to a 2023 Gallup Poll, loneliness affects 44 million American adults, equivalent to 17% of the population. It is nevertheless prevalent in countries around the globe in varying degrees, affecting millions of people – mostly adults under age 30 as well as aged citizens who live alone.

According to a recent article in US News-Health, older adults are at increased risk for loneliness and social isolation. A 2020 report by the US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine found that more than one-third of adults ages 45 and older feel lonely and nearly one-fourth of adults ages 65 and older are considered to be socially isolated. Living alone, losing close family members or friends and suffering from chronic diseases contributes to loneliness in older adults.

Loneliness, however, is far more than just experiencing occasional sadness. Research has shown that loneliness increases the risk of mortality as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day and more than obesity or physical inactivity. Feelings of loneliness are associated with a higher risk of heart disease, mental health issues, and premature death.

“The harmful consequences of a society that lacks social connection can be felt in our schools, workplaces and civic organisations, where performance, productivity and engagement are diminished,” stated US Surgeon General Dr Vivek Murthy in a 2023 report - Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation.

“Given the profound consequences of loneliness and isolation, we have an opportunity, and an obligation, to make the same investments in addressing social connection that we have made in addressing tobacco use, obesity and the addiction crisis,” he says.

Cause of mental/physical disorders

According to Dr Deepali Bhuyan (formerly at Royal Hospital), “Loneliness is a word which has many meanings - One can be lonely amidst a crowd while on the other hand one can be self occupied and not lonely, even when alone. Our minds and bodies are connected. A positive mind builds our immune system which can battle against many health related problems.

“So, when one is lonely, the mind brings in many negative thoughts which can lead to health issues like depression, anxiety, headache, constipation, loss of appetite, irritable bowel syndrome, etc without any organic cause.”

She suggests, to solve these problems we should keep ourself occupied with family, friends, or activities like reading, painting, yoga, meditation, musical activities – singing/dancing, outdoor activities like swimming, jogging, gardening, photography, or engaging in day to day household chores – cooking/cleaning. Pets are also great companions to drive away one’s loneliness, besides getting involved in social activities.

Dr Deepali further pointed out, “Many people in Oman are staying alone away from family or are alone at home because their spouse and children are busy in their own activities. It is expected that they can face many mental and health problems. They should try to build positive thoughts and keeping themselves occupied. We all should take responsibility of taking care of our health in whichever way it is possible.”

What is loneliness?

Loneliness is something that we all feel at some point in our lives. It’s part of being human. Loneliness is defined as being in emotional distress from a lack of close interpersonal relationships. But it’s not just young adults and older people who get lonely. People who live in big families or have been married for many years can feel lonely because of unfulfilling or unrewarding emotional connections.

“Not being married can be a risk for loneliness, but not all marriages create fulfilling relationships and sometimes lead to loneliness,” says Sally Alter, author of several books, including ‘A Practical Guide to Overcoming Loneliness’.

“You can live alone – either by choice or out of necessity – and not experience loneliness,” Alter says. “I have lived alone since my husband died from suicide in 2000. While it took me a while to enjoy my own company, I no longer experience loneliness and live a full, rewarding life.”

While social isolation and loneliness are often used interchangeably, it’s important to note that they are not one and the same and are tagged with different connotations.

Social isolation denotes that an individual has few social connections or social interactions, but that person may not necessarily experience loneliness, whereas loneliness involves the ‘perception’ of isolation or meaningful connections - the discrepancy between one’s desired and actual level of social connection.

LONELINESS

HOME

LONELINESS AND HEARTBREAK ARE A FAVOURITE TOPIC OF POETS AND LYRICISTS. THOUGH IT FANS CREATIVE FLAIR, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT LONELINESS CAN LEAD TO SERIOUS HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

ALONE



SIGNS OF LONELINESS

Decreased interest in activities
Loss of interest in hobbies, events or gatherings

Difficulty concentrating
Lack of concentration, inability to make decisions, inability to remember things

Emotional fluctuations
Feelings of sadness, moodiness, irritability, worthlessness, and unhappiness

Lack of close relationships
The person may talk more about the absence of close friends and connections

Over-reliance on technology
Excessive time spent on social media or online platforms

Physical signs
Fatigue, headaches, lack of appetite, sleep disturbance, weakened immune system

Self-destructive behaviour
Substance abuse, overeating or self-harm

Social withdrawa
Avoidance of social interactions, isolating themselves from others

Cause for drug abuse



Loneliness is a cause of many ailments – like depression, anxiety, negative thoughts/suicidal thoughts, etc. Therefore, drug abuse could also stem from loneliness

When one finds that one cannot fit among others and mixes with bad individuals and gets influenced into drug abuse to ‘fit in’ or help numb the pain one is going through caused by family concerns, bullying at school, etc. Loneliness is one of the main causes for drug abuse among young people all over the world.

DR IBTISAM AL BUSAIDI
Master practitioner in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy,
Senior student counsellor - Modern College of Business and Science

Cause for addictions



There are many reasons why people stay alone in Oman as well as all over the world – away from their families/hometowns. When you stay alone, one tends to get addicted to vices like smoking/drinking and what starts as a one-of indulgement, becomes a habit due to depression. Those who do not get involved in healthy activities or sports, go towards vices as well as overeating, etc and, thus, attract many health problems, from acute illnesses to chronic health disorders.

DR THASHLI THANKACHEN
Specialist Internist, Badr al Samaa Hospital, Ruwi



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