

► NEWS BRIEF

EUROPEAN MEDIA DELEGATION TOURS OMAN

Muscat - H E Dr Abdullah Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, received a group of journalists and media persons representing news agencies, TV channels and newspapers from the European Union, on Tuesday.

Welcoming the guests, H E Harrasi outlined the role of Oman's media institutions and the message of balance and rationality that they disseminate. He spoke about Omani media's objectiveness when dealing with domestic and international events and issues.

The meeting covered various economic aspects, notably the encouraging investment climate in Oman, including entrepreneurship-friendly laws and incentives, logistic hubs and tourism facilities, backed by natural resources and modern establishments.

H E Harrasi said that commercial exchange forms an integral part of Oman's history. He underscored the role of commercial exchange in propagating Oman's culture in Africa and Asia.

The EU team will meet several Omani officials and visit key economic projects and tourism landmarks.

Public spending up 12.5%

Budget surplus widens to RO1.123bn; net oil revenue up 37%

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman's total public spending has increased 12.5 per cent this year as higher revenues enabled the government to spend more on development projects, subsidies and other contributions and schemes.

Helped by higher revenues, the sultanate's budget surplus also increased to RO1.123bn for the January-September period of 2022 against a deficit of RO1.03bn in the same period of 2021, data released by the Ministry of Finance showed on Monday.

Earlier this year, the ministry had said that the surplus will be utilised for strengthening economic recovery by increasing spending on priority development projects and reducing public debt.

Total public spending rose to RO9.444bn during the January-September period of 2022 against RO8.398bn in the corresponding period of last year, recording an increase of more than RO1bn, the data showed.



Current expenditure, which is the biggest part of Oman's public spending, increased 10.1 per cent to RO7.07bn in the first nine months of 2022 compared to the corresponding period of 2021. Development expenditure amounted to RO657mn in this period of 2022.

Total contributions and other expenses (including government

subsidies) increased massively - 148 per cent - to RO1.434bn in the January-September period of 2022, as opposed to RO578mn in the same period of 2021.

'By the end of September 2022, oil products and food commodity subsidies amounted to RO563mn and RO18mn, respectively,' the ministry said.

The Ministry of Finance paid

the private sector an amount of RO827.5mn at the end of Q3 2022.

Oil & gas income jumps 52%

On the back of robust growth in oil and gas income, the government's total revenues rose 43.4 per cent to RO10.567bn in the first nine months of 2022 compared

to RO7.368bn in the same period a year ago.

Oman's hydrocarbon revenue increased nearly 52 per cent to RO8.102bn during the January-September period this year compared to RO5.331bn registered in the same period in 2021. Such increase is supported by higher average oil price of US\$94 per barrel as well as an increase in oil

Oman oil rises to \$93.08

Muscat - Oman oil price for January 2023 delivery went up by 84 cents to reach US\$93.08 on Monday.

The average price of Oman oil for November delivery has stabilised at US\$90.80 per barrel, which is US\$6.20 per barrel lower than October delivery.

Internationally, oil prices stabilised on Monday around US\$100 a barrel as support from a weaker dollar and recovering Chinese crude imports met renewed demand concerns linked to China's stringent COVID-19 containment approach.

Brent crude futures were down one cent, or 0.1 per cent, to US\$98.56 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude rose by four cents - or 0.04 per cent - to US\$92.65.

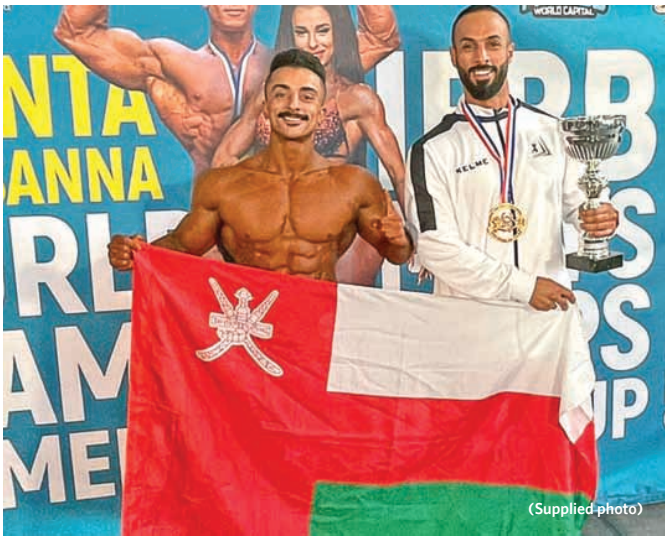
Bodybuilders clinch six medals at world championship in Spain

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman's national bodybuilding team members clinched six medals at the International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness (IFBB) World Bodybuilding Championships 2022, held in Barcelona, Spain, from November 2 to 7.

Speaking to Muscat Daily from Spain, Mohamed al Siyabi, national coach, said, "More than hundred countries participated in this tournament. Oman was successful in winning two gold medals, three bronze and one silver."

He thanked Oman Bodybuilding Committee (OBC) for making sure that the team participates in regional and continental championships. "This



gives the team invaluable experience to compete globally."

He added that the technical staff of OBC did a great job of selecting talented bodybuilders from the local tournaments for

the national team.

"At the six-day championship in Santa Susanna in Barcelona, Omani bodybuilders put on an impressive show in the 'Physique' competition, winning

two golds in the category," Siyabi informed.

Al Muhannad al Maawali claimed a gold in the Men's Physique (up to 182cm), and Munir al Luwaihi in the Muscular Physique category.

Zaim Talib al Fazari added a silver medal for the sultanate in Classic Bodybuilding category. In the Men's Bodybuilding category, Omar Mohammed al Maskari won a bronze in the 90kg category. Mohammed Ali al Ajmi and Abdullah Saeed al Jabri claimed bronze medals in the 95kg and 70kg categories respectively.

Besides the winners, Oman's team in the competition included Imad Abdul Hamid al Balushi, Ghanem Salim al Maamari, Malik Issa al Kasbi and Muayyad Tariq al Balushi.

Oman is a peacemaker: IPU president

Shaddad al Musalmey Muscat

Oman has distinguished itself as a peacemaker and mediator making it a role model of peaceful co-existence, emancipator of women and youths' rights champion, according to the head of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the global organisation of national parliaments.

Duarte Pacheco, President of IPU, who is visiting the sultanate, welcomed Oman's efforts to pave the way for a permanent ceasefire in Yemen.

"A word of gratitude to Omani authorities for everything done in peace process to achieve a ceasefire in Yemen. Oman's role



is important and 'thank you' is not enough for trying to put an end to the Yemen war, going on for seven years," he said.

He valued the tireless efforts undertaken by Oman to enhance security and stability in the region, which are respected by all international institutions and organisations.

Pacheco said that Oman and the IPU might have different ways of promoting cooperation, but they serve a common goal. "For instance, Oman has experience in promoting dialogue and cooperation among countries. We don't always think the same about everything. We need each other. With dialogue it is possible to resolve any issue to go forward and this is where Oman plays a role," Pacheco said.

On IPU's cooperation with Oman, he said, "There is strong cooperation with Oman's Majlis A'Shura, which has been supportive of IPU."

One of the oldest multilateral organisations in the world, it was established in 1889.

Tender Announcement

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tenders:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Type of work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
11/2021/PEIE /HQ-11 (RE-TENDER	Consultancy Services to prepare the Guide of Design & Build for Development of Infrastructure & buildings Facilities at Madayn's Industrial Cities	21-11-2022	15-12-2022	Consultancy Offices	first	50
5/2022/PEIE/ HQ-5	Consultancy Services for Utilities Gap Analysis and Cost Estimation for Both, Rehabilitation Works of Existing Infrastructure and Proposed Facilities phase (1-6) in Suhar Industrial City	21-11-2022	15-12-2022	Consultancy Offices	second and above	100

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.**
- eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om and +968 24402200 Note: Bid Submission will be online only.**

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening.

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.



Guterres warns against 'collective suicide' on climate



England overwhelming favourites in Group B

Shaddad al Musalmi
Muscat

Omani women have been at the forefront of building the nation for over 50 years of the Blessed Renaissance. Their eagerness to see Oman grow and prosper in various fields has been vital in the development of the sultanate and today, in what could only be termed a paradigm shift, it is common to see women's participation in every field.

Among the many women setting examples are Areej Mohsin Haider Darwish, Chairperson of the Automotive, Construction Equipment & Renewable Energy (ACERE) cluster of Mohsin Haider Darwish, Siham al Harthy, Co-founder of Siham Development & Investment, and Dr Amaal Rashid al Abrawi, CEO of Falha, who are standing in the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) elections.

'The path to success is not a straight line'

"As an individual and business leader, I have always believed that we need to contribute to nation building and serve the community to achieve the nation's goals. My extensive experience in the business sector as Chairperson of MHD ACERE, as well as being a member of Sharaka from 2019 to 2020 and Chairperson of Oman Business Forum, gave me the impetus to stand for OCCI elections as I want to contribute to the developmental plans through active participation," Areej told Muscat Daily.

She added that OCCI is seeking strategic partnerships with both public and private sectors and is eager for growth of businesses across economic sectors. "It is also playing a crucial role in positioning Oman as an attractive destination for foreign direct investment, and promoting SMEs and innovative ways of doing business. These are goals which I would like to work on to further accelerate the economic growth in Oman. I would like to work on the long-term goals on a national scale with OCCI to take Oman's economy to greater heights."



My first and foremost objective is contributing to the development of Oman and its economy to achieve strategic goals

AREEJ MOHSIN
HAIDER DARWISH

On how she can make a difference, Areej said her objectives are and always have been in line with the vision laid out for Oman by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

"My first and foremost objective is contributing to the development of Oman and its economy in general to achieve its strategic goals as outlined in the national development plans and visions," she said.

"Also, on my agenda are supporting the economic sectors with the aim of creating a balanced growth and development between oil and non-oil sectors, empowering women across the country, creating an attractive business climate to encourage foreign investments and joint partnerships between Oman and other countries," she added.

On the challenges she is ready to face as a woman, Areej said that the path to success is not a straight line. "It's very often a curved one with challenges along the way. I embrace challenges with positivity as I am a very positive person and have the opinion that we can overcome challenges by attuning our perception



OCCI ELECTIONS

A step forward for women in Oman

Women have excelled in many fields; this time they are contesting to bring a paradigm shift in business relations

and with the right approach to a challenge.

"Challenges help build our leadership skills and make us realise that anything is possible. Every challenge is an opportunity to take us to the next level," she said.

Areej stated that the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said stressed on Omani women playing their due role in Oman's society and economy and presented them equal opportunities in education, employment and social development.

"Complementing this approach, His Majesty Sultan bin Haitham has also laid special emphasis on women as he considers us a pillar of development. He has empowered and given women a platform to grow and fulfil our career aspirations and participate in various aspects of the economy," she said.

"Omani women have carved a niche for themselves across all sectors. It is commendable that we have Omani women at the helm and key positions. They are making a key contributions to the growth and development of the nation."

Areej noted that the women of today are breaking barriers and the sky is the limit to what they can achieve.

"It takes time, perseverance and determination to succeed; patience is the key. Having more women on the Board of OCCI will demonstrate the strides being taken by Oman in women empowerment. This will encourage and inspire other young Omani women to new milestones and greater heights."

'OCCI needs clear strategy'

For Siham al Harthy, Co-founder of Siham Development & Investment, a shift from the government to private sector revealed the gap that exists as a result of OCCI's lack of a clear strategy in the role it plays as an advisory platform representing the private sector internally and externally.

"I hope to start creating a clear strategy and objectives for the chamber for the coming years by setting regional and global performance indicators to measure its performance," she said.

125 IN FRAY FOR OCCI ELECTIONS

A total of 125 candidates, including 116 Omanis and nine expatriates, are in the fray for the Board of Directors of OCCI and BoD of OCCI branches. The elections are scheduled for November 22.

The elections have witnessed an enthusiastic response in all 11 governorates. A total of 27 candidates are in fray for the five seats in Muscat governorate. The ten remaining governorates will each send a board member to OCCI. There are 11 candidates in contention in Dhofar, followed by ten each in South Sharqiyah and North Batinah.

There are nine candidates in South Batinah, eight candidates each in North Sharqiyah, Buraimi and Dhahirah, seven candidates in Musandam and six each in Dakhliyah and Wusta.



I don't believe that there are differences between men and women in management; it is the ability to lead and the vision of the leader that matter

SIHAM AL HARTHY

"OCCI should be a strategic partner with the government in formulating laws and regulations that attract investment. Forming a council of businessmen and women which meets periodically with decision-makers in the government, through which opportunities and challenges are discussed in a transparent manner for real solutions, will enhance the business environment."

Siham noted the need to follow up on the growth of small startups and support their development to turn into medium and large companies, which in turn will support the economy and provide job opportunities to young people. "We need to create opportunities for Omani companies to enter the global market and to attract foreign investments," she said.

Siham's other strategic plans include gaining the confidence of senior businessmen to contribute to the chamber's activities and participate in the Board of Directors by providing distinguished services of added value to its affiliates. Additionally, she plans to initiate raising the indicators of the private sector's contribution to the various development sectors, especially tourism, energy, logistics, knowledge economy and foreign investment, and issue periodic statistical and analytical bulletins for various economic sectors to help public and private decision-makers make appropriate investment decisions.

On gender gap, Siham said, "I don't believe that there are much differences between men and women in management; it is the ability to lead and the vision of the leader that matter. You can lead only by creating a team that has the same goals and passion to succeed. The challenges are the same, how these are managed make the difference.

"The agenda for OCCI also promotes wider community and sector participation. This is seen in my campaign messages across social media and media interviews. This is not about one candidate but about increasing the diversification of the OCCI board members."

Siham said OCCI's healthy balance sheet suggests it can also act as a significant investor in the community it represents. "Additionally, OCCI needs to work in close coordination with other business chambers in the GCC," she said.

'There is no gender discrimination in Oman'

Dr Amaal Rashid al Abrawi, CEO of Falha, said the recent Royal Decree regarding OCCI board membership has given equal opportunities to men and women. "We are fortunate that there is no gender discrimination. I, being a woman, am fortunate and privileged to contest in the OCCI elections equally along with the other male contestants. I strongly believe that there is no cerebral difference between men and women in facing the challenges regardless of who they are. The credentials and experience of an individual are all that matter to contribute to the agenda placed by the OCCI Board. I strongly believe in the talent regardless of the gender," she said.

"Women being appointed as leaders and decision makers in various government and private sector institutions reflect that we are privileged and fortunate to be given equal opportunities in sultanate. I urge all women to come forward fearlessly and participate in the growth of the nation. I also advocate equality in empowerment of both men and women based on credentials, not on gender," she added.

Amaal said the economic challenges that the nation has been encountering because of various reasons helped her gain adequate experience. "Being the owner of a private business entity and having closely witnessed and experienced challenges for the past ten years, besides being a member of OCCI for the past eight years, as well as the board member of ASMED (Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development), I understand the dynamics of the market in general and have a thorough overview of the OCCI Board, its responsibilities and the accountabilities of a board member," she said.



The OCCI structure needs amendments. My aim is to equip, facilitate and support startups to place themselves strategically in the market

DR AMAAL RASHID AL ABRAWI

She said that her vision is to contribute, not only to the economic growth of the private industry, but also for its sustainability in sync with the Oman Vision 2040. "The OCCI structure needs amendments to reach the next stage to align with Oman Vision 2040 in giving equal rights to voters as given to OCCI members. My aim is to equip, facilitate and support startups to place themselves strategically in the market," she said.

Reasoning why she is the right candidate for the OCCI Board, she said, "I am passionate about business and I understand and have experienced the challenges that business owners encounter on a daily basis in running a business. I have comprehensive knowledge about OCCI and liaisoning with private business entities.

"I am equipped with adequate qualifications, and I take the privilege to state that I have a Master's degree in Business Administration, and am certified as an Industrial Innovation Technology Specialist. Additionally, I am qualified as a digital finance expert, which gives me an edge as a contestant," she added.

@shadadm

WHEN YOU REALLY CARE,
SAY IT WITH BARILLA.

DAL 1877

Barilla®

Distributed by
CATERING SOLUTIONS TRADING LLC

Please contact +968 22060236/237

5,000-year-old jewellery found in North Batinah

Ring likely made in Mesopotamia with silver from Anatolia found in Dahwa

Our Correspondent Muscat

A team of international archaeologists working under the auspices of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has recovered an exceptional collection of silver jewellery from a prehistoric grave of the 3rd millennium BC in Dahwa in North Batinah.

The collection includes parts of necklaces with beads and several rings.

Researchers involved in the study also found a silver ring, likely made in Mesopotamia (Iraq), made of silver from Anatolia (Turkey) for an individual who had links with the Indus Valley Civilisation (Pakistan and western India). "This shows the complexity of commercial and cultural interactions in Eurasian prehistory, which can definitely be regarded as the prototype for modern global exchanges," said Dr Dennys Frenez, an Italian expert in ancient trade between the Indus Valley and Oman and a



(L) Silver seal ring with the image of an Indian bison typical of Harappan merchants active in foreign trade; and (R) stone seal from Mohenjo-Daro (Sindh, Pakistan) with the same image of an Indian bison with the head lowered on a manger (Supplied photos)



This discovery confirms that Bronze Age peoples were much more ingenious and technically advanced than previously thought

PROF JONATHAN MARK KENOYER

collaborator with the ministry.

The international team is led by Prof Kimberly Williams from Temple University, Philadelphia, US, and includes Prof Nasser al Jahwari and Prof Khaled Douglas from Sultan Qaboos University.

Interestingly, one of the silver rings has an image of an Indian bison (*Bos gaurus*), a characteristic motif found in the Indus Val-

ley (or Harappa) Culture that indicates merchants were active in interregional trade.

This image quite frequently appeared on circular stone seals in Iran, Bahrain, Mesopotamia and also Oman. "It has been found in Oman engraved on stamp seals made from local softstone at Salut and Al Moyassar. However, this is the first time this image was found on a metal

finger ring," researchers stated.

According to Prof Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, an expert of ancient technologies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, US, seal rings are typical of much later periods. "But this discovery confirms that Bronze Age peoples were much more ingenious and technically advanced than previously thought. They introduced at a very early stage administrative solutions that allowed economic growth in the later millennia."

What makes the discovery even more intriguing is the fact that the jewellery found is made of silver that most likely came from Anatolia in Turkey.

28 archaeological sites to be explored this season: MHT

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) will start work on 28 archaeological exploration sites in the 2022/2023 season in cooperation with local and international scientific institutions.

In a statement, MHT said, 'The work of these missions will focus on conducting archaeological surveys and excavation of sites dating from the Stone Age to pre-Islamic times. Archaeological artefacts found during previous seasons will also be studied.'

Dibba

For the seventh consecutive season, the ministry will carry out archaeological excavations at the site dating back to the Iron Age, which was discovered ten years ago. The excavation will be done in cooperation with an Italian mission from Sapienza University. This is the last season of the Mass Grave excavation (CG2).

Qamira, Dhank

The ministry will continue excavations at the site located in Dhank in Dhahirah in cooperation with a Polish mission from the University of Warsaw. Through the study, the mission hopes to know the nature of the settlement that prevailed in the area, in addition to learning the chronological history of the site.

Nufon, Duqm

In cooperation with the Institute



(Supplied photo)

of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, MHT studied and identified archaeological sites in the wilayat of Duqm. Archaeologists and specialists of the institute have been studying several archaeological sites and human settlements in Duqm in general and Nufon village in particular, located in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

The team of scientists have identified 155 archaeological sites in Nufon. The ministry has started its survey and documentation work at the site for the third season. Findings so far indicate that it was a place of ancient commercial exchange.

Al Tekha, Rutstaq

Archaeological excavations in Al Tekha in the wilayat of Rustaq, South Batinah, have revealed a large and sophisticated settlement, dating back to more than 4,000 years ago, and include a number of large buildings and tombs.

It was excavated by the joint

archaeological mission of the Department of Archaeology at Sultan Qaboos University and the Italian University of Pisa. In the current (second) season, the settlement's buildings and archaeological contents will be revealed.

Bat, Al Khutm and Al Ayn

The ministry, in cooperation with an American mission from New York University, is working on the excavations at the archaeological sites of Bat, Al Khutm and Al Ayn in the wilayat of Ibbri, Dhahirah. These sites belong to the Bronze Age and are associated with the copper trade.

MHT will also continue surveys and excavations at several other sites, including Al Khashba in the wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, Ras al Jinz in the wilayat of Sur, Al Fulaij in North Batinah, Wadi Bani Khaled in North Sharqiyah, and archaeological surveys in Jabal Akhdar.

Conference on united human values on Nov 16

Muscat - The international conference 'United Human Values and Sustainable Development for All' will kick off on November 16 in Muscat, marking the International Day for Tolerance.

The conference, which comes within the framework of the projects 'Towards United Human Values' and 'Message of Peace' of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, aims to promote mutual acceptance and peaceful coexistence among different communities and groups through activities in scientific, cultural, artistic and communications fields.

H E Dr Mohammed Said al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, in a press conference held on Monday, said that the conference in-



H E Dr Mohammed Said al Ma'amari

cludes four panels.

The panels include 'From Theory to Practice: United Human Values, Connecting Cultures and Supporting Sustainable Development', 'Pushing the Wheel of Sustainable Development: Prac-

tical Examples of United Human Values and Cultural Diversity', 'The Role of Women in Fostering United Human Values and Accelerating Sustainable Development' and 'The Role of Youth: Consolidating United Human Values and Leading Sustainable Development'.

H E Ma'amari informed that other programmes marking the International Day for Tolerance include the 'Photovoice' programme with the participation of a group of Omani and international youth (Muslims and Christians). The programme aims to train young people in effective dialogue between religions and cultures using photography.

Additionally, an event called Youth Programme will see the participation of 20 young men

and women from different countries and backgrounds. The programme will focus on intercultural dialogue.

H E Ma'amari further said that the conference includes a campaign called 'Act of Tolerance' that aims to promote united human values through various arts. It comprises two exhibitions - 'Message of Peace' that seeks to deliver a cultural experience of Oman and 'Shadow Art', displaying artistic works that employ light and shadow to create images expressing united human values.

On the occasion, H E Dr Abdullah Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, affirmed that the international conference reflects the innate human values of the sultanate.

WEATHER WATCH

	Max	Min
Muscat	33	23
Abu Dhabi	36	22
Doha	34	24
Kuwait City	28	20
Manama	34	24
Riyadh	34	18

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.59am
Sunrise	6.16am
Duhr	11.56am
Asr	3.07pm
Maghrib	5.30pm
Isha	6.42pm

SEND YOUR COMMENTS TO

muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

Huge cache of Captagon tablets seized in N Batinah

Muscat - Royal Oman Police (ROP) seized large quantities of Captagon tablets in North Batinah governorate on Monday.

In a statement, ROP said, 'Coast Guard Police in North Batinah arrested three smugglers on a boat at sea with 1,822,000 Captagon tablets.'

Legal procedures have been taken against them, it stated.

According to drugs.com, Captagon was first manufactured in 1961 as an alternative to amphetamine and methamphetamine used at the time to treat narcolepsy, fatigue, and the behavioural disorder 'minimal brain dysfunction'. But by the 1980's the US government declared it a controlled substance with no currently accepted medical use. Manufacturing of the drug ceased in the 1980s.

However, illegal manufacture has continued, and has escalated in the past few years in Europe and the Middle East. Some sources suggest Captagon is one of the more popular recreational drugs among youth in the region.

Bring Home your Exchange

Download our App Today!

Available on the Google Play | Download on the App Store

99101314, 99849289 | customersupport@pkexchange.net

www.pkexchange.com | pkexch | @pkexchange1

Facebook | Instagram | Twitter | YouTube | LinkedIn

Subscribe Muscat Daily and get a chance to win Domino's coupons

R024
1 YEAR
(Actual price: R052)

R015
6 MONTHS

Toll free no: **80076000**

E-mail: customercare@apexmedia.co.om

Call Ramu Sutram: **99853450**

an apex media PUBLICATION

www.apexmedia.co.om

MUSCAT DAILY

www.muscatdaily.com

MARKET WATCH

MSX30

4,407.86

Sensex

61,185.15

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian

213.07

Pakistan

576.11

Bangladesh

264.91

Philippines

151.88

Sri Lanka

948.02

*Rates as on November 07

Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Kazakhstan aims to expand oil exports via Caspian Sea

Kazakhstan aims to increase oil exports via the Caspian Sea to 20mn tonnes annually, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said during a speech at the port city of Aktau, the capital of the southwestern Mangystau region.

"We need to activate all the available capacities of the Aktau and Kurik ports in order to increase the oil transport volume (on this route) to 20mn tonnes per year," Tokayev said during his speech, adding that the development of the Trans-Caspian International Route is of "particular importance."

As reported by Anadolu Agency, Tokayev further noted that the city of Aktau and the role of the Caspian Sea has increased dramatically due to changes in global logistics chains, further calling the city "the sea gate of Kazakhstan."

"We plan to implement a number of measures aimed at attracting investments in the development of port infrastructure, the creation of containers and transport and logistics hubs," Tokayev added.

Profits of GCC banks to reach pre-pandemic levels in 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The earnings performance of the GCC banks will recover almost to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022, thanks to the strong economic recovery in the region, S&P Global Ratings said on Monday.

'We expect GCC banks' profitability to improve and almost reach pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022, helped by stronger economic growth and higher interest rates,' S&P said in a report.

GCC banks, the ratings agency said, are also getting a boost from high oil prices, improving confidence, and for some countries - specifically Saudi Arabia - large government-sponsored projects.

'We expect cost of risk to return to normalised levels for most GCC countries and higher interest rates to support banks' bottom-lines and foresee no major regional mergers or acquisitions on the horizon,' S&P noted in the report, titled 'GCC banks will enter an uncertain 2023 on solid footing.'

But things look less certain for 2023 and S&P sees three main sources of risk: The expected slowdown of the global economy, which could affect the region primarily through commodity prices; banks' exposure to riskier countries; and potential liquidity constraints to fund growth as local and global liquidity becomes less abundant.

'Despite these risks, at October 15, 2022, our outlook bias was firmly positive, with about



35 per cent of ratings carrying positive outlooks either for potential improvement in their respective sovereign's creditworthiness or idiosyncratic reasons,' S&P said.

The remaining 65 per cent of ratings had a stable outlook, mirroring banks' expected resilience and still-supportive operating to high oil prices.

'The economic backdrop for 2023 appears less certain as the global economy slows, and we assume the Brent oil price will average US\$85 per barrel in 2023,' S&P noted.

The rating agency further said that the GCC banks' asset quality indicators held up fairly well

Despite global economic uncertainty, GCC banks will start 2023 on solid footing, S&P says

environment. Nevertheless, risks to global and local economic prospects are increasing, the rating agency added.

Based on the data reported by the top 45 GCC banks, S&P said lending growth accelerated slightly in first-half 2022 to an annualised 9.5 per cent, compared with 7.8 per cent in 2021, due to greater economic activity and improving sentiment related

compared to the magnitude of the pandemic's economic shock.

It said, 'Regulatory forbearance measures and timely liquidity support for the banking system helped affected corporates during the pandemic and they are now in a position to start repaying their debt as these measures are lifted. Some of this exposure has been restructured and could slip to non-perfor-

mance in 2022.'

S&P expects the overall impact on GCC banks' financials to remain contained. It said that write-offs and increasing real estate prices have helped in 2021-2022.

'Nevertheless, interest rate increases will contribute to weaker indicators in 2023, partly mitigated by our expectations that banks will pay close attention to the trade-off between the positive impact on profitability and asset quality deterioration. Under our base-case scenario, we expect non-performing loan (NPL) ratios to increase but not exceed 5 per cent by year-end 2023 unless the global economic slowdown proves more severe than our expectations,' S&P said.

The rating agency said support from GCC regulators helped avoid the worst for asset quality indicators, but it still foresees a slight deterioration from pandemic-related imbalances.



Construction of Duqm Materials Market in SEZAD 70% complete

Duqm - Duqm Materials Market in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) has recorded around 70 per cent completion rate.

Duqm Materials Market is one of the major projects in the China-Oman Industrial Park in SEZAD. The project is being jointly developed by Oman Wanfang, developer and operator of the China-Oman Industrial Park in Duqm, Al Thabet Holding Company and Tatweer.

Tatweer is implementing and managing the project and supervising the construction work.

Eng Ahmed bin Hamood al Sawafi from Tatweer said, "The project consists of building materials showroom, in addition to 5 buildings that consist of workshops and four stores with a total built-up area of 31,138 square meters.

The project includes relevant infrastructure works such as roads, electrical works, sewage network, water network, irrigation and landscaping works."

Duqm Materials Market aims to provide a new concept for commercial centers in the building materials sector.

The market aims to operate a style that differs from other commercial centers and complexes in Oman, in addition to showrooms and wholesale and retail stores.

The market will focus on light manufacturing and assembly activities through specialized workshops.

It will also focus on bringing Chinese goods and manufacturing technologies to Oman, and deal with wholesale demands for local and international markets.

Duqm Materials Market is expected to attract many local and international companies specialized in the fields of building and construction.

Musk defends paid blue badge plans for Twitter

San Francisco, US - Twitter's new owner Elon Musk has defended his much-criticised launch of a paid subscription service to verify user accounts.

"Widespread verification will democratize journalism & empower the voice of the people," he tweeted, responding to concerns from associations, advertisers, and even the United Nations, who fear a surge of hate speech and misinformation on the network.

Under the new plan, users paying US\$8 per month for the platform's subscription service, Twitter Blue, would receive the network's famous blue checkmark that signals a verified account.

That feature is currently offered only to eligible accounts, such as public figures, an approach Musk described as a "lords & peasants system."

On iPhones, the social network's app already mentions the new service but its launch has been postponed to Wednesday, the day after the US midterm elections, according to the New York Times.

"Blue checkmark: Power to the people. Your account will get a blue checkmark, just like the celebrities, companies, and politicians you already follow," Twitter detailed in the app up-



date's description.

"Twitter needs to become by far the most accurate source of information about the world. That's our mission," Musk tweeted Sunday.

But many observers fear the eruption of fake accounts.

Platform user Kyle Grantham said Musk's new policy would "let anyone (who) gives me money appear to be a legitimate source of news, rather than just ensuring all legitimate sources of news are confirmed to be who they say they are."

Musk also targeted those impersonating others on the platform, as several users who changed their username to variations of "Elon Musk" appeared to have their accounts suspended.

AFP

CBO chief visits Iran central bank



Muscat - A delegation of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) recently visited the Central Bank of the Republic Islamic of Iran in Tehran.

During the visit, the delegation headed by H E Tahir Salim al Amri, executive president of the CBO, met with Dr Ali Salehabadi, governor of the Central Bank of Iran.

'The delegation visit is expected to yield a positive outcome and raise aspirations to boost economic cooperation and open up new and broad horizons of mutual work between the two countries,' the CBO said in a press release.

The visit is a continuation of the two countries' efforts towards enhancing their strong bi-

lateral relations and promising trade prospects.

According to December 2021 statistics, the volume of bilateral trade between Oman and Iran reached approximately RO254.3mn. The volume of Oman's exports to Iran exceeded RO155.58mn and the sultanate's imports from Iran stood at RO89.72mn.

oman OASIS

BALANCED DRINKING WATER

sifr

SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER

mal alkaline

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

THIS SEASON

BUY MORE WIN MORE

Get a chance to win amazing prizes when you shop from your nearest hypermarket.

Find the raffle coupon inside the carton/pack and register the unique number at www.omanoasis.com/winmore

OFFER VALID FOR

Oman Oasis : 1.5 Ltr, 500 ml, 330 ml carton & pack, 200 ml pack.

SIFR : 200 ml carton, 1.5 Ltr & 500 ml pack.

Mal Alkaline : 1.5 Ltr & 500 ml pack.

400 PRIZES ON RAFFLE DRAWS

iPhone 13 128 GB, 20 pcs

Laptop, 10 pcs

Gold Coin 10 GH, 10 pcs

Gold Coin 5 GH, 10 pcs

350 ml Omani Petrol Coupons RO 50, 350 pcs

Offer valid from 1st October to 31st December 2022. Raffle draws will be held at Oasis Water Company, Azabla with a total of 3 raffle draws. Dates: 3rd November, 5th December 2022 and 4th January 2023. Winners will be intimated directly. Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Gifts shown are for illustrative purpose only. Actual may vary. Promotion at Lulu, Nesto, Carrefour, Makkah Hypermarkets & The Sultan Center.

MM/06/1028/2022
CR. No: 1365452

SCAN & REGISTER

CALL TOLL-FREE 800 71 222 or GSM: 9275 5522

Winter Offers

Offer valid from 14th August to 13th November 2022. Existing Oman Oasis 5 Gallon returnable bottle customers and Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible for the offer.

RO 50 ONLY

HOT & COLD DISPENSER

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 30 REFILL COUPONS

RO 20 ONLY

WHITE TAP DISPENSER OR TAP DISPENSER OR MANUAL WATER PUMP OR CRADLE WITH TAP

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 15 REFILL COUPONS

oman OASIS

BALANCED DRINKING WATER

CALL TOLL-FREE 800 71 222 or GSM: 9275 5522

CR. No: 1365452 | MM No: 06/059/2022

Apple says iPhone production hit by China COVID lockdown

Beijing, China – Apple warned customers would face longer wait times for iPhones with the holiday season approaching, after Covid restrictions in central China “temporarily impacted” production at the world’s largest factory producing the smart-phone.

Foxconn, Apple’s principal subcontractor, locked down its massive factory in Zhengzhou last month after a spike in infections – in line with China’s zero-Covid policy.

In a separate statement Monday, the Taiwanese firm said its fourth quarter earnings this year would take a hit from the coronavirus lockdowns.

Panicking workers last week had fled the site on foot in the wake of allegations of poor conditions at the facility, which employs hundreds of thousands of workers.

“Covid-19 restrictions have temporarily impacted the primary iPhone 14 Pro and iPhone 14 Pro Max assembly facility located in Zhengzhou, China,” California-based Apple said in a statement late Sunday.

“The facility is currently operating at significantly reduced capacity.”

Despite strong demand for Apple’s products ahead of the



Workers on iPhone production line at the Foxconn factory in China

holiday season, “we now expect lower iPhone 14 Pro and iPhone 14 Pro Max shipments than we previously anticipated”, it said.

“Customers will experience longer wait times to receive their new products.”

Foxconn is China’s biggest private sector employer, with more than a million people working across the country in about 30 factories and research institutes. But Zhengzhou is the Taiwanese company’s crown jewel, churning out iPhones in quantities not seen anywhere else.

“In a normal situation, almost all the iPhone production is hap-

pening in Zhengzhou,” Ivan Lam, an analyst with specialist firm Counterpoint, told AFP.

The company was initially “cautiously optimistic” about its fourth quarter earnings, it said.

“But due to the pandemic affecting some of our operations in Zhengzhou, the company will ‘revise down’ the outlook for the fourth quarter,” Foxconn said in a statement.

“Foxconn is now working with the government in (a) concerted effort to stamp out the pandemic and resume production to its full capacity as quickly as possible,” the company said.

It did not give any statistical projection for how badly it expected earnings to be hit.

“This is a dark sign of the zero-Covid policy in China impacting production for Apple with Foxconn,” Dan Ives, analyst at Wedbush Securities, told AFP.

“It confirms the Street’s fears with Apple this quarter and will be an albatross on the tech market this week.”

'We are drowning'

Local authorities locked down the area surrounding the factory on Wednesday, but not before reports emerged of a lack of ad-

equated medical care at the plant.

Multiple workers have recounted scenes of chaos and increasing disorganisation at Foxconn’s complex of workshops and dormitories, which form a city-within-a-city near Zhengzhou’s airport.

“People with fevers are not guaranteed to receive medicine,” a 30-year-old Foxconn worker, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP.

“We are drowning,” he said.

China is the last major economy wedded to a strategy of extinguishing Covid outbreaks as they emerge, imposing snap lockdowns, mass testing and lengthy quarantines despite the widespread disruption to businesses and international supply chains.

And authorities poured cold water on speculation that the policy could be relaxed Saturday, with National Health Commission (NHC) spokesperson Mi Feng saying that Beijing would “stick unwaveringly to... the overall policy of dynamic zero-Covid”.

“At present, China is still facing the dual threat of imported infections and the spread of domestic outbreaks,” Mi said at a press briefing.

AFP

Facebook-parent Meta plans massive layoffs: Report



San Francisco, US – Facebook-parent Meta will become the latest tech firm to scale back its workforce, with plans to layoff thousands of employees this week, US media reported Sunday.

The Wall Street Journal, citing people familiar with the matter, reported that the layoffs could impact “many thousands” of Meta employees and that an announcement was expected as soon as Wednesday.

As of September 30, Meta had about 87,000 employees worldwide across its different platforms, which include social media sites Facebook and Instagram as well as messaging platform Whatsapp.

In his announcement of Meta’s disappointing third quarter results, CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the firm’s staff would not increase by the end of 2023, and might decrease slightly.

The latest plans from Meta follow recent announcements by other tech firms to freeze hiring or cut their workforce as the industry fights economic headwinds.

Last Thursday, Silicon Valley firms Stripe and Lyft announced large-scale layoffs while Amazon said it would freeze hiring in its corporate of-

fices.

Twitter, freshly acquired by Elon Musk, abruptly fired about half of its 7,500 employees last week.

Ad-supported platforms such as Facebook and Alphabet’s Google are suffering from advertisers’ budget cuts as they struggle with inflation and rising interest rates.

Meta in the third quarter saw its profits fall to US\$4.4bn, a 52 per cent decrease year-over-year.

Meta’s stock price took a major hit on the disappointing results, falling 25 per cent in one day.

The company’s market value over the past year is down to US\$600bn.

In addition to its ad-supported business woes, investors have been worried about Zuckerberg’s decision to devote major funds into developing the metaverse.

AFP



This aerial photo taken on Monday shows containers stacked at a port in Lianyungang in China’s eastern Jiangsu province (AFP)

China exports fall in October, first decline since 2020

Beijing, China – China’s exports shrank in October, the first such decline since mid-2020, customs authorities said Monday, as a domestic slowdown and the threat of global recession hit international trade.

Exports fell 0.3 per cent year-on-year in October, according to the General Administration of Customs, a steep drop from September’s 5.7 per cent increase and well below analysts’ expectations.

Year-on-year imports were down 0.7 per cent in October, negative for the first time since March this year and down from September’s 0.3 per cent growth.

The slowdown in trade comes as global demand for Chinese products weakens, with energy prices soaring and the United States facing the threat of recession.

Sporadic Covid-19 lockdowns have also hurt consumer enthusiasm and business confidence in the world’s second-largest economy. Analysts surveyed by Bloomberg forecast export growth of 4.3 per cent in October, but expected only 0.1 per cent growth in imports in the face of weakening demand at home.

“The recent decline in export volumes appears to reflect a reversal in the pandemic-era surge in global demand for Chinese goods,” Capital Economics analyst Zichun Huang said in a note on Monday.

Import volumes are “likely to continue weakening given the challenging domestic outlook”, Huang said.

Domestic challenges

Nomura analysts on Monday said they expected China’s export downturn to extend in the next two months.

“As strong export growth has been the single-largest GDP growth driver in China since spring 2020, the contraction of exports will inevitably weigh on growth, employment and investment,” they said.

China’s factory activity shrank in October, official data showed last week, which the National Bureau of Statistics blamed on virus outbreaks last month.

Factory activity has been in contraction territory for six months of the year so far, as sweeping Covid restrictions paralysed major industrial cities such as Shanghai, Shenzhen and Chengdu.

Apple on Monday warned of delayed shipments after Covid restrictions “temporarily impacted” production at its massive factory in Zhengzhou, central China.

Chinese leaders have set out an annual economic growth target of about 5.5 per cent, but many observers think the country will struggle to hit the target, despite announcing a better-than-expected 3.9 per cent expansion in the third quarter.

AFP

WTO urges countries to lift trade barriers for green goods to fight climate change

Geneva, Switzerland – The World Trade Organization on Monday urged countries to abolish trade barriers in environmental goods and services in order to help fight climate change.

In its annual World Trade Report, the WTO says international commerce should not be pitted against combating the climate crisis.

The report comes as global leaders gather in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh for COP27, the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference which opened Sunday and runs until November 18.

The WTO said it was misleading to think that trade was nothing but a source of green-



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

house gas emissions, arguing that trade could also enable the spread of green innovations and technology.

“Trade is a force for good for climate, and part of the solution for achieving a low-carbon, resilient and just transition,” WTO

director-general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said in the report’s foreword.

“The WTO estimates that reducing tariffs and non-tariff measures on energy-related environmental goods could increase total exports of these

products by five percent by 2030 and, at the same time, lead to a net reduction in carbon emissions,” the former Nigerian finance and foreign minister said.

According to the global trade body’s economists, the resulting improvements in energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy could reduce net carbon emissions by 0.6 per cent. Although tariffs on environmental goods are, on average, lower than those on other goods, they remain relatively high in low-income countries, the report said.

“While trade itself does generate emissions from production and transport, trade and trade policies can accelerate the dis-

semination of cutting-edge technologies and best practices, and enhance incentives for further innovation while creating the jobs of tomorrow,” said Okonjo-Iweala.

She said trade had already played an important role in the global climate response, citing how the cost of solar panels had plummeted over the past three decades.

“About 40 per cent of the cost decline has been attributed to scale economies made possible, in part, by international trade and value chains,” the WTO chief said.

“Further opening up trade in environmental goods and services could do more.”

AFP

EU to propose more flexible spending rules



Brussels, Belgium – The European Commission will propose reforms to EU fiscal rules on Wednesday, hoping to strike a new balance between allowing members to invest to beat the slowdown while bolstering scrutiny of public accounts.

EU economy commissioner Paolo Gentiloni has said that now is the time to act on the issue.

The EU’s Stability and Growth Pact seeks to put a lid on how much the bloc’s member states can borrow, but was suspended in early 2020 to prevent the European economy crumbling under the Covid pandemic.

Rather than see the EU slip into a historic recession, Brussels allowed deficits to pile up.

But now the storm has passed and - despite added pressures on Europe from Russia’s war in Ukraine - the pact is due to be reactivated late 2023.

The stability pact was adopted by the EU countries belonging to its eurozone in 1997, ahead of the single currency coming into being two years

later.

It responded to German concerns that, without it, some EU countries might pursue loose fiscal policies, weighing on all euro-using nations.

The basic constraints of the pact were that eurozone countries should not allow their public deficit to go above three percent of GDP, and debt would stay below 60 per cent of GDP.

If those ceilings were breached, the pact would trigger deficit-reining procedures that theoretically could have led to massive fines.

But those sanctions were

never applied. Part of the worry was that they could drag down an already struggling EU country’s finances, worsening its situation.

The eurozone crisis of 2008 - when Greece teetered at the exit door - also taught some tough lessons.

To bring back fiscal responsibility, it was decided that wayward countries should set out a plan to the European Commission on how it would bring debt back within the agreed lanes.

Any debt level above 60 per cent was to be reduced by one twentieth each year, but that

measure too was considered unworkable as it could impose destructive austerity on indebted countries.

The pact also limited the “structural” deficit - taking into account cyclical corrections - to 0.5 per cent of the amount of debt exceeding the 60-per cent ceiling.

Any amount beyond that limit needed to be reduced by 0.5 percentage points per year.

Why a reform?

Broadly, there are two camps in the EU. One, termed the “frugals” and de facto led by Germany, believes the stability pact hasn’t been applied strictly enough.

The other, including indebted southern EU countries such as Italy, whose debt is over 150 per cent of GDP, see the pact’s straitjacket as too tight.

They think it penalises public investment at a time that European countries need to spend massive amounts to mitigate climate change, transition to a more digital future and rearm

amid the Russian threat.

“These two sides which demand, on one hand, automatic rules, and on the other, more flexibility, are defining the outlines of the expected reform,” said Andreas Eisl, a researcher at the Jacques Delors Institute.

Both camps criticise the current rules.

The new framework will be designed to be simpler and easier to put into action, with Gentiloni arguing that should aim to guarantee both “sustainable debt and durable growth”.

The main proposal is to make EU countries sign on to a medium-term plan calculated on spending, rather than on debt levels. That goal would be easier to scrutinise, while giving countries more room to manoeuvre on investment.

Brussels, though, would wield both carrot and stick. Respecting the new rules would unlock the possibility for adjustment over a longer term, while violations would usher in more severe limits.

AFP

Air travel: Passenger demand stays strong

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced passenger data for September 2022 showing that the recovery in air travel continues to be strong.

Total traffic in September 2022 (measured in revenue passenger kilometers or RPKs) rose 57 per cent compared to September 2021. Globally, traffic is now at 73.8 per cent of September 2019 levels.

Domestic traffic for September 2022 was up 6.9 per cent compared to the year-ago period. Total September 2022 domestic traffic was at 81 per cent of the September 2019 level.

International traffic climbed 122.2 per cent versus September 2021. September 2022 international RPKs reached 69.9 per cent of September 2019 levels. All markets reported strong growth, led by Asia-Pacific.

"Even with economic and geopolitical uncertainties, the demand for air transport continues to recover ground. The outlier is still China with its pursuit of a zero COVID-19 strategy keeping borders largely closed and creating a demand roller coaster ride for its domestic market, with September being down 46.4 per cent on the previous year. That is in sharp contrast to the rest of Asia-Pacific, which, despite China's



2019 levels.

US domestic traffic climbed 16.8 per cent in September compared to September 2021, pushing it to 0.4 per cent above the September 2019 level. The 85.4 per cent load factor was the highest among the domestic markets.

The Bottom Line

"Strong demand is helping the industry cope with sky high fuel prices. To support that demand in the long-term, we need to pay attention to what travelers are telling us. After nearly three years of pandemic travel complexity, IATA's 2022 Global Passenger Survey (GPS) shows that travelers want simplification and convenience. That's an important message for airlines but also for airports and governments. They own many of the facilitation processes that let passengers down at some key airports over this year's northern summer travel season. According to the GPS, a majority of passengers want to use biometric data rather than passports for border processes. And 93 per cent of passengers are interested in traveler programmes to expedite security screening. Modernizing the facilitation experience will not only help alleviate the choke points, it will create a better experience for all," said Walsh.

dismal performance, posted a 464.8% increase for international traffic compared to the year-ago period," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General.

International Passenger Markets

Asia-Pacific airlines saw a 464.8 per cent rise in September traffic compared to September 2021, the strongest year-over-year rate

among the regions. Capacity rose 165.3 per cent and the load factor was up 41.5 percentage points to 78.3 per cent.

European carriers September traffic climbed 78.3 per cent versus September 2021. Capacity increased 43.8 per cent, and load factor moved up 16.3 percentage points to 84.1 per cent, second highest among the regions.

Middle Eastern airlines posted

a 149.7 per cent traffic rise in September compared to September 2021. September capacity increased 63.5 per cent versus the year-ago period, and load factor climbed 27.6 percentage points to 80 per cent.

North American carriers had a 128.9 per cent traffic rise in September versus the 2021 period. Capacity increased 63 per cent, and load factor climbed 24.6 per

centage points to 85.4 per cent, which was the highest among the regions for a fourth consecutive month.

Latin American airlines' September traffic rose 99.4 per cent compared to the same month in 2021. September capacity climbed 73.7 per cent and load factor increased 10.8 percentage points to 83.5 per cent.

African airlines saw a 90.5 per

cent rise in September RPKs versus a year ago. September 2022 capacity was up 47.2 per cent and load factor climbed 16.7 percentage points to 73.6 per cent, the lowest among regions.

Domestic Passenger Markets

Japan's domestic RPKs rose 127.9 per cent in September and are now at nearly 75.6 per cent of

Bank Muscat offers special rates to first-time borrowers

Bank Muscat has announced discounted offers on Baituna and Personal Finance loans for first time borrowers till 31 December.

In line with its customer-centric strategy of developing and offering the best services and facilities possible for its customers, the special offer features highly-competitive interest rates starting at just 4.25 per cent for Baituna home loans and 4.5 per cent on personal loans. It is available to Omani employees of government and quasi-government institutions as well as Tier 1 companies with salaries of RO1,000 or more.

Also on the occasion, the bank has announced reduced interest rates on short term personal loans starting at just 4 per cent for 12 months, and home loans with attractive interest rates starting at 4.5 per cent for other customers who would like to top



up their loans, a press release said.

Abdullah Tamman al Mashani, general manager - Products, Bank Muscat, said, "The latest offers featuring some of the most attractive interest rates was launched as part of the bank's ongoing efforts to reach out to the maximum number of customers and help them realise their dreams. Our valued customers will be able to take ad-

vantage of various offers with reduced interest rates as per their changing needs. Bank Muscat is delighted with their strong support and confidence in the bank and will continue to be responsive to customer needs and global financial trends."

Both first time borrowers and existing customers can easily apply for home finance by visiting any of the Bank's Baituna Sales Centres in Qurm, Maabelah, Barka, Sohar, Saham, Sur, Ibra, Nizwa, Ibri, Buraimi and Salalah or any Bank Muscat branch in Oman. Financing up to RO 500,000 and for a period up to 25 years is available to customers to construct or purchase new homes as well as to buy land for residential construction. Baituna is one of the best home finance options in Oman, thanks to its fast processing, documentation and prompt disbursal.



Madayn organises safety and health seminar

Nizwa Industrial City, which pertains to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates 'Madayn', organised an 'Occupational Safety and Health Seminar' under the auspices of H E Sheikh Rashid bin Said al Kalbani, Wali of Nizwa on Monday.

The seminar topics included employee safety in the workplace, technical standards of industrial units, firefighting and fire prevention practices, and waste management methods, a press release said.

Speaking at the seminar, Ahmed al Hajri, director general of Nizwa Industrial City, said,

"This seminar reflects Madayn's efforts to enhance security and safety requirements in its industrial cities, and instill awareness on occupational safety among the employees. In fact, Madayn prioritises the significance of maintaining a safe and risk-free workplace in the industrial cities and it is, therefore, essential to provide practical and theoretical training programmes to the investing companies to enhance awareness on occupational safety."

Hajri added that Madayn has made significant efforts in the field of occupational safety,

health and security during the past years. Safety requirements and controls have been included within the investment regulations and the list of violations and administrative penalties. Madayn has also appointed engineers and inspectors who carry out periodic field visits and provide advice to the industrial units to avoid occupational accidents to ensure the safety of lives and property.

Several presentations on a variety of related topics were delivered at the seminar, which included 'Occupational Health, Safety and Security Strategy'

delivered by Brig Gen (Rtd) Said al Asmi of Security and Safety Services, 'Human and Environment Safety in Industrial Units' presented by Eng Salam al Busaidi of Schlumberger Oman, 'Technical Standards in Factories' by Eng Basim al Zadjali of Madayn, 'Firefighting Techniques and Fire Prevention Methods' by Lt Wahab al Sulaimi of Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, 'Waste Management in the Sultanate of Oman' by Eng Mohammed Hardan of Environment Authority, and 'Bank Muscat Products and Services' by Haitham al Hashmi.

Ooredoo offers prizes for National Day

Gearing up for Oman's 52nd National Day, Ooredoo is back with the nation's favourite drinks brand, Mountain Dew. Together, the companies have teamed up to give customers the chance to win a range of fun and exciting prizes, including the up to 5GB data, on-net minutes, endless WhatsApp data and even the latest smartphones

Customers can look out for the specially branded National Day cans of Mountain Dew. They just need to check under the ring-pull for the eight-digit code, type that



code into the Ooredoo App and enjoy instant rewards. Running until December 3, the offer is part of Ooredoo's celebration of Oman's National Day and yet

another way to give customers more of what they enjoy.

All instant prizes are valid for 24 hours from the time of redemption.

School Table Tennis training held at sports complex

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, in cooperation with the Oman Table Tennis Association, has organised a training programme in specialised applications in school sports.

The training programme seeks to raise the level of competency of school sports supervisors in the game of table tennis by spreading its culture and acquiring specialised skills that enable them to perform their supervisory role, in addition to modelling experiences and applications related to this game in teaching and supervisory situations, a press release said.

The Ministry of Education targets a total of 29 participants of

school sports supervisors in educational directorates, in addition to school sports specialists in the Directorate General in the Ministry of Education's General Diwan. The training programme is on in the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, in Bausher, between November 6 and 8.

Trainer Abdullah al Hajri, in charge of this training, said, "This

training programme is about the basics of table tennis, some basic skills that a table tennis player needs, the basics that the teacher begins with his students - from the racket grip, and the movements of the feet. The training also includes a set of laws of table tennis, the most important of which is how to organise matches and arbitration."



Omani students receive Academic Excellence Award in Bahrain



Under the patronage of H E Dr Majid bin Ali al Nuaimi, Minister of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain, a ceremony was held for the Academic Excellence Award for General Education Students in the Member States of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, in its 15th session in Bahrain,

The event, held with the support of Al Marai Company, felicitated 84 outstanding students in view of their last academic year's

results in the member states, with 12 students from each country. The 12 participating students from the sultanate represented the stages of general education and basic education as well as the stage of post-basic education in this celebration, a press release said.

Raya bint Amer al Jabri, assistant director of the Department of Educational Activities, and the supervisor of the participating students, said, "The Academic

The Academic Excellence Award of the Arab Education Bureau focuses on those who show excellence

RAYA BINT AMER AL JABRI

Excellence Award of the Arab Education Bureau for students of general education, in its fifteenth session held in Bahrain, focuses on students who demonstrate high abilities in academic achievement in various subjects in order to highlight that these abilities are refined and honoured to enhance continuous excellence.

"The sultanate had hosted the award in its fifth session in 2011, as well as its eleventh session in

2017. I would like to thank all the outstanding students, their parents, and heads of educational activities departments in the governorates for their efforts."

The award aims to celebrate outstanding students, enhance their sense of the importance of science, show their country's interest in them, encourage them to continue on the path of excellence, and motivate the rest of the students to follow their example.



ROHM to host 'An evening with Chris Botti'

The Royal Opera House Muscat announces its upcoming concert with Chris Botti, an American musician and trumpet player of astonishing renown.

Since the release in 2004 of his critically acclaimed album, When I Fall in Love, he has been hailed as the bestselling American instrumental artist of all time and counts Grammy awards, platinum, and silver records to his name.

Performing worldwide and selling more than four million albums, Botti has developed a form of creative expression that is rooted in jazz but expands beyond that single genre and celebrates a blend of pop and balladic music. Over the past three decades, Botti has

recorded and performed with top superstars such as Sting, Lady Gaga, Yo-Yo Ma, Paul Simon and Joshua Bell. He has also performed with many of the finest symphonies at the world's most prestigious venues, from Carnegie Hall to Sydney Opera House and Teatro San Carlo in Naples.

As a musician, he is difficult to classify - he is as happy improvising on a jazz number with a jazz legend such as Herbie Hancock, as he is riffing with Sting or performing classical tunes with Andrea Bocelli.

Chris Botti has thoroughly established himself as one of the most important, innovative figures of the contemporary music world.

NBO Muzn migrates card services to Visa

National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Muzn Islamic Banking has continued to unlock opportunities for its customers by migrating all card services to Visa, the world's largest payment network.

The move will offer customers an enhanced banking experience with a Visa card, including exclusive lifestyle and travel benefits, dining deals, preferential rates and discounts at over 70 million merchant locations in more than 200 countries worldwide, whilst proudly adhering to Shari'a law practices, a press release said.

Salima al Marzouqi, assisting general manager and chief Islamic banking officer, at NBO Muzn Islamic Banking, said, "At Muzn we understand your ambitions and by working together, we provide the latest Shari'a-compliant solutions, while exploring new possibilities with our customers in mind. Our partner-



ship with Visa offers secure and seamless payments, both in-store and online, and makes the everyday banking experience as simple and convenient as possible. Visa's global expertise will help our customers reach new heights with a growing range of Islamic banking products, serv-

ices and lifestyle benefits while staying true to our shared values."

Launched as Oman's first Islamic window, NBO Muzn has continued to be at the forefront of a fast-growing banking sector by offering a range of fully Shari'a-compliant banking solutions.

Nufoon Sculpture Forum kicks off in SEZAD

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones has organised a Sculptures Forum in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, to be held from November 12 to December 3 in the village of Nufoon, in Duqm.

A group of international sculptors from Spain, Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, and Tunisia are taking part in this forum, in addition to Omani sculptors. It is anticipated that each artist will produce one sculpture that reflects the natural and geological vocabulary of the Zone.

The forum aims to enrich the artistic movement in the Special



Economic Zone at Duqm, and to use the sculpture outputs to furnish the extended public spaces

and give them an aesthetic character.

The forum was organised to include a number of events, recreational activities, cultural nights, and tours for artists in order to highlight the components of Duqm and the aesthetics of the Sultanate of Oman.

It is worth noting that the forum will be implemented as part of the Amad Duqm 22 event, which is implemented by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth from November 25 to December 3.

IDC to host Middle East's ICT Partner Ecosystem networking

International Data Corporation (IDC) believes that one of the most notable outcomes of the pandemic for the technology industry has been the realisation of improved results as a direct consequence of partnerships and collaboration, with the events of the last three years opening up even more opportunities for businesses to form multiple partnerships.

Against this backdrop, the Middle East's ICT partner

ecosystem will be gathering at the UAE's InterContinental Fujairah Resort on November 9-10 for the region's inaugural installment of IDC Alliance. Showcasing the very latest in channel and alliance trends, this unique event will provide an unrivaled platform for ICT vendors and partners to enhance their relationships, explore emerging opportunities, and develop new leads, a press release said.

"At a time when end-user

organisations across all industries are shifting towards 'digital-first' strategies to help build resilience and navigate a changed world, technology vendors, distributors, service providers, and other players are increasingly collaborating and co-creating through connected ecosystems to deliver digital value to customers," says Ranjit Rajan, IDC's vice president of research for the Middle East, Turkey, and Africa.

"I'm delighted to be opening the region's first ever IDC Alliance event, where I will be examining the impact of tech ecosystems, partnership models, and partner transformation priorities, and discuss forces that will shape IT channels and alliances for the next 12 months and beyond."

The event will feature a dynamic agenda of informative presentations and networking opportunities.

Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2022 published

Switzerland, Singapore and Denmark are the most talent competitive countries, according to the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) 2022. Switzerland and Singapore firmly retain their leading position while Denmark makes it into the top 3.

United States ranks 4th, and many European economies continue to dominate - Sweden (5th), Netherlands (6th), Norway (7th), Finland (8th) and the United Kingdom (10th). France (19th), managed to retain its spot from last year (its highest position ever). The non-European countries which rank among the Top 25 are Australia (9th), Canada (15th), New Zealand (18th), Israel (23rd), Japan (24th) and the United Arab Emirates (25th).

Titled 'The Tectonics of Talent: Is the World Drifting Towards More Talent Inequalities?' the GTCI 2022 is published by INSEAD.

Training of Trainers workshop in health promotion underway

A training workshop to train certified trainers in health promotion is currently in progress for the second day at the Continuing Professional Development Center in Wattayyah.

Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, director general of Primary Health Care, attended the opening of the workshop along with a number of family medicine physicians on Monda, a press release said.

The training workshop aims to train trainers in the field of health promotion to be certified trainers in their governorates and to equip them with the necessary skills to assess the community's needs.

During the workshop, Dr Lamki launched the E-Guideline for Health Promotion.

The workshop includes lectures, visual presentations, and panel discussions highlighting several related issues such as health education strategy, planning for awareness campaigns,

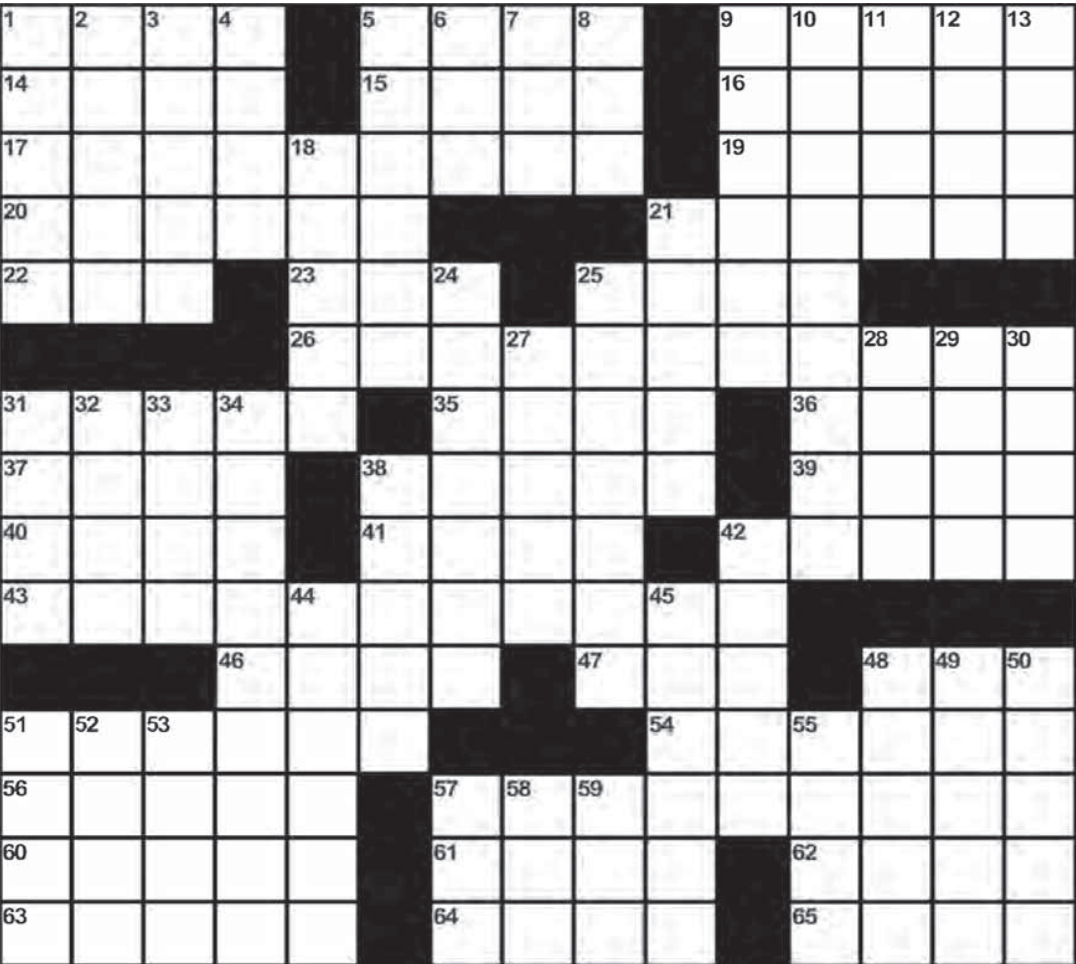


practical communication skills, building a strategic plan, assessing the society and its needs, models used for planning, the difference between health and wellness, health determinants, and others.

Dr Nawal al Rashdi, director of Education & Awareness Pro-

grammes at the Ministry of Health, pointed out that the main means to promote health is by improving public health policies that address the basic requirements of health, such as income, housing, food security, workforce, and quality of working conditions.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Femme fatale
- 5) Sax type
- 9) Indianapolis football team
- 14) Commodore Perry victory site
- 15) Be frightened of
- 16) Be of service
- 17) Stellar plea to quit fooling around?
- 19) See the old gang
- 20) San_ (Texas city, casually)
- 21) Watched over
- 22) Utter
- 23) Archipelago unit (Abbr.)
- 25) Karate weapons
- 26) Stellar Scotch brand?
- 31) Latin percussion stick
- 35) Needing straightening
- 36) "Hello,_" (cell company slogan)
- 37) Apiary home
- 38) Belgrade natives
- 39) Amor, to the Greeks
- 40) Cast out
- 41) Celestial bear

DOWN

- 1) "The City Without Clocks," for short
- 2) Match locale
- 3) Walter the day-dreamer
- 4) Colombian currency
- 5) From square one
- 6) Fragrant neckwear
- 7) Letter after sigma
- 8) Surgery ctrs.
- 9) Life's work
- 10) Kitchen device that rings
- 11) Heap kudos upon
- 12) Trident prong
- 13) Wheelless vehicle
- 18) How fish may be packed
- 21) Reasons to cram
- 24) Word on a quarter
- 25) Beliebers, collectively
- 27) Biblical passage
- 28) Wound at the corrida
- 29) Bond's alma mater
- 30) Take a licking
- 31) Hayes' "South Park" character
- 32) Succotash bean
- 33) Tel_, Israel
- 34) Bill-killing ability
- 38) High-level execs, slangily
- 42) Prefix with "mural"
- 44) Hoses down
- 45) Org. supported by trick-or-treaters
- 48) Trailing behind
- 49) Loma_ cookies
- 50) NO RIGHT_
- 51) Many Wall St. hires

- 52) Vogue competitor
- 53) Earring spot
- 55) Norse port
- 57) Priests (Abbr.)
- 58) Bit of baloney
- 59) Fashion monogram

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Follow any urge you have to seek alone time right now. Even if everyone else is in the mood to paint the town red or plan an elaborate outing, you don't necessarily need to join in. Listen to what your heart is telling you to do, then do it. Yes, it sounds too simple to work, but it isn't. Try it out early today when a friendly yet unwanted invitation arrives. Politely say no, and remind yourself that you and only you are in charge of your time.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You are chock-full of clarity today, and you're able to get a handle on scheduling and other details with little (if any) guidance. This is a great day to start a new job, move to a new home, or travel internationally, because you'll get the gist of what's going on and what you need to do in the blink of an eye. Foreign situations will seem comfortable right away, and you'll be able to thrive in stimulating environments.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

There are many changes happening in and around you right now, because this is a strong period of growth and understanding for you. New facts should start leading you to revise your conclusions about someone's recent behavior, and an apology might be in order. Now is the time to act on what you think you should do and not be paralyzed by overanalyzing things. If you want things to keep moving forward, you have to keep moving forward.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You are better than ever at looking at complicated situations and making them simple. That's why today is a great day for negotiating, signing legal documents, digging into a challenging novel, and other tasks that require a great deal of focused brainpower. Don't worry if a sudden barrage of information leaves you temporarily overwhelmed. Sort through things and you'll uncover a real gem.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You're making incredible progress right now, but you'll have to be careful not to push things too far too fast. Not everyone is on the same page as you are right now, and you need to be aware of that. Plus, there's a bit of instability around you right now (but nothing to be concerned about) that could put you off track for a few days if you aren't prudent. Spend and act modestly and be frugal with your energy.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

The days ahead are full of unknowns, but there are several sure things that you can depend on. Use these known events as tent poles for your planning. If you take the time to put together a thorough schedule today, you'll be rewarded with more free time than you know what to do with. (Although you'll find something to do with it, won't you?) Things in a close friend or partner's life are changing, and they might affect your relationship. Stay flexible.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

After a series of odd surprises, you might have to adapt your plans. Luckily, you'll be with people who aren't too set in their ways, and an alternate set of plans can easily be improvised. Where you end up at the end of the day is probably going to be far from where you thought you'd be but nicer than you'd hoped for. This could be the Universe tapping you on the shoulder and saying sometimes an unexpected journey is the most rewarding.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

The silent treatment won't get you anywhere today, so if you're using that tactic, you'd better come up with something else. Here's a crazy idea: how about conversation? It can be hard to start the discussion, but it won't be hard to continue it once you know you're being heard. There is no communication without an exchange of ideas, so break down your wall of silence and open up. You'll prove a bigger point by talking than you ever could by being silent.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

It's high time for one of your most promising ideas to come out of your mental incubator and into the real world. As the proud parent of this fledgling idea, you'll naturally feel nervous about how well it will fare in the big, bad world, but that's no reason to deprive the world of its brilliance! Shut your eyes, take a deep breath, and push this new plan out of the nest. Whether it succeeds or fails, you will learn something.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You can't make two people like each other, so don't get frustrated if a matchmaking scheme goes awry. Step back, extricate yourself from the situation, and let them figure it out on their own. It isn't your business, and you don't really have a stake in the outcome. A little bit of privacy could work wonders for them. Just as a watched pot never boils, a watched couple never quite connects. Pat yourself on the back for creating an opportunity, but leave it at that.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Whether you realize it or not, you are your own best friend -- and today you should evaluate this relationship. Are you taking care of yourself well enough? Or do you follow the path of least resistance and put yourself at the bottom of the list most of the time? Today, start your relationship with yourself in a new way and put yourself first! You should still honor your commitments to other people, but you should start standing up for your own wants and needs more.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

A trendy nightclub might not seem like the best place to start a new business venture, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try. Your consistent behavior makes merging your personal and professional lives a breeze. You can see what needs to be done to make the deal happen, and your ideas will help make things better for everyone, not just you. You're thinking generously, and your ideas are bright.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01.What jersey is awarded to the "King of the Hill", the best climber in the Tour de France?

- A. Polka dot
- B. Green
- C. Yellow
- D. Blue

02. What does recent research suggest as a function of the human appendix?

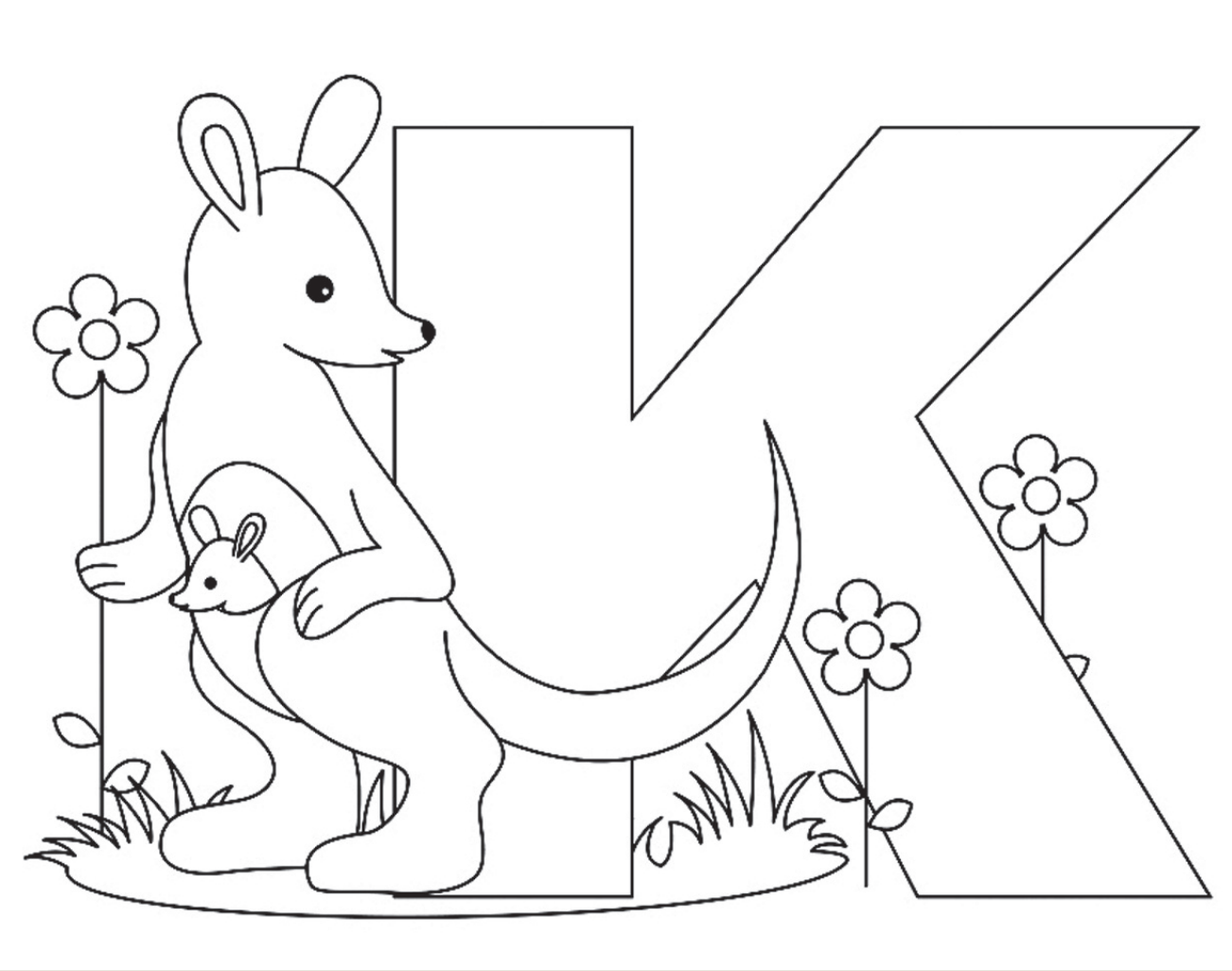
- A. To house and cultivate beneficial gut flora to repopulate the digestive system when needed
- B. None, it is a left-over from functions overtaken by evolution
- C. To draw, and deal with, infection in the digestive system
- D. To function in place of the digestive system when it is diseased

03. The Bible Belt is a name commonly given to which parts of the USA?

- A. The West Coast
- B. The religious southern states
- C. The New England area
- D. Northern Alaska

Answers: 1.A 2.A 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

T	S	P	C
L	E	E	E
A	I	E	R
G	U	A	S

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

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

N Korea vows 'overwhelming' response to US-S Korea drills

Seoul, South Korea - The North Korean military said its response to US-South Korean war drills would be 'resolute and overwhelming', state media reported on Monday.

The warning came after a spate of North Korean weapons tests last week - including an intercontinental ballistic missile - as the United States and South Korea conducted their biggest-ever air force exercise.

The United States and South Korea have warned that such missile launches could culminate in a nuclear test by North Korea.

The North Korean military, formally known as the Korean People's Army (KPA), said it was responding to 'Vigilant Storm' - the US-South Korean exercise - describing it as 'an open provocation', according to the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

Vigilant Storm was 'aimed at intentionally escalating the tension in the region and a dangerous war drill of very high aggressive nature directly targeting' North Korea, the KPA said.

North Korea will respond to all 'anti-DPRK war drills' with 'sustained, resolute and overwhelming' measures, it said.

The United States has dismissed criticism of the exercise as North Korean propaganda, saying it posed no threat to other nations. The KPA said it conducted operations, including the launch of tactical ballistic missiles that simulated attacks on air force bases, and practised shooting down enemy aircraft.

One ballistic missile was launched to test 'a special functional warhead paralysing the operation command system of the enemy', the KPA said, without providing any further details about that weapon.

The North Korean air force



This combination of images taken between November 2 and 5, and released on Monday by KCNA shows various missile tests being performed by the North's Korean People's Army at undisclosed locations (AFP)

also conducted a 'large-scale all-out combat sortie operation', involving 500 planes, according to KCNA.

That mobilisation prompted

Weak air force

Experts say Pyongyang is particularly sensitive about drills such as Vigilant Storm because its air force is one of the weakest links

in Seoul. "North Korea considers it important to strike and neutralise air bases first because their air power is weak," Cheong told AFP.

Compared with North Korea's ageing fleet, Vigilant Storm saw some of the most advanced US and South Korean warplanes in action, including F-35 stealth fighters.

The exercise was meant to run from Monday to Friday last week, but Washington and Seoul extended it by a day in response to the flurry of North Korean missile launches.

Two US Air Force B-1Bs - long-range heavy bombers - joined the drills in a show of force. US-South Korea joint drills have long sparked strong reac-

tions from North Korea, which sees them as rehearsals for an invasion.

Pyongyang has especially condemned past deployments of US strategic weapons such as long-range bombers and aircraft carrier strike groups.

Parts of the KPA statement, including the claim that it could counter the 'theory of superiority' of US and South Korean air forces, were domestic propaganda, said Park Won-gon, a professor at the Ewha University in Seoul.

"It is saying that North Korea responded sufficiently against the largest joint drills between Seoul and Washington and that they prevailed."

AFP

S Korea's Moon seeks to give up dogs gifted by Kim

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea's former president Moon Jae-in is seeking to give up two dogs gifted to him by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, citing a lack of support from Seoul, his office said on Monday. The white Pungsan dogs, one male named Songkang and a female named Gomi, were given to Moon by Kim after their third summit in Pyongyang in September 2018 as a token of their friendship. The pair gave birth to seven puppies during Moon's presidency, and he had taken Songkang, Gomi, and one puppy to his private residence after his term ended in May this year.

Under the Presidential Records Act, the dogs are state property to be returned to the care of the Presidential

Archives but an agreement was signed entrusting the three dogs to Moon on the last day of his term, his office said in a statement. The agreement included a provision for government support to cover the expense of keeping the dogs totalling 2.5 million won (US\$1,800) a month.

But Moon's office said the agreement had not been implemented due to an objection from the presidential office of his successor Yoon Suk-yeol, adding Moon was willing to hand over custody of his dogs.

"Looking at the progress so far, the Presidential Office seems to be negative about entrusting the management of the Pungsan dogs to former president Moon," his office said in a statement.

AFP



Philippines' Secretary of Interior Benjamin Abalos Jr. (right) with Justice Secretary Jesus Remulla during a press meet in Manila on Monday (AFP)

Philippine prisons chief accused of ordering radio journalist murder

Manila, Philippines - Philippine police accused on Monday the country's prisons chief of ordering the killing of a prominent radio journalist, whose death sparked international alarm.

Radio personality Percival Mabasa, 63, who went by the name 'Percy Lapid' in his programme, was shot dead in a Manila suburb on October 3 as he drove to his studio.

Police filed murder complaints against Bureau of Corrections director general Gerald Bantag, who is currently suspended from duty, and his deputy security officer Ricardo Zulueta.

The alleged gunman, Joel Escorial, surrendered to authorities last month out of fear for his safety after police broadcast his face from security footage, officials said previously.

"He (Bantag) will probably be the highest official of this land ever charged with a case of

this gravity," Justice Secretary Crispin Remulla said.

Bantag allegedly ordered the murder of Mabasa following the 'continued expose by the latter of the issues against the former on his show', Eugene Javier of the National Bureau of Investigation told reporters, reading from a statement.

Bantag and Zulueta have also been accused of ordering the killing of Cristito Villamor Palana, one of the prison inmates who allegedly passed on the kill order to Escorial.

Escorial had identified Palana to police.

Palana was suffocated with a plastic bag by members of his own gang, Javier said.

Criminal complaints also have been filed against 10 inmates. Prosecutors at the Department of Justice will decide if there is enough evidence to file charges in court.

AFP

Tanzania pays tearful tribute to plane crash victims

Bukoba, Tanzania - Grieving Tanzanians paid emotional tribute on Monday to 19 people killed when a passenger plane plunged into Lake Victoria in the country's deadliest air crash in decades.

The Precision Air flight from the financial capital Dar es Salaam crashed on Sunday morning while trying to land in the northwestern city of Bukoba.

Bad weather was blamed for the accident.

Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa was among hundreds of



Soldiers carry the casket of a victim, after a passenger plane plunged into Lake Victoria, at the Kaitaba Stadium in Bukoba on Monday (AFP)

people who gathered at Kaitaba Stadium in Bukoba, with Muslim

and Christian clerics leading prayers for the dead as onlookers

wiped away tears. The ceremony to hand over the bodies of the victims to their families is expected to take hours, with local broadcasters running live telecasts from the stadium.

Twenty-four survivors were plucked to safety out of the 43 people aboard flight PW 494, with investigators from Precision Air and the Tanzania Airports Authority arriving in the lakeside city on Sunday.

Precision Air, a publicly listed company and Tanzania's largest private carrier, said the aircraft

was an ATR 42-500, manufactured by Toulouse-based Franco-Italian firm ATR, and had 39 passengers - including an infant - and four crew members on board. AFP journalists saw the plane largely submerged on Sunday as rescuers, including fishermen, waded through water to bring people to safety.

Emergency workers attempted to lift the aircraft out of the water using ropes, assisted by cranes as residents also sought to help.

AFP

Biden, Trump rally troops on eve of crucial midterms

Washington, US - Joe Biden and Donald Trump headline a frantic last day of campaigning on Monday on the eve of a midterm election that will shape the rest of the US president's term - and could pave the way for a White House comeback by his predecessor.

Biden's Democrats are facing a gargantuan struggle to hang on to Congress, after a race the president has cast as a 'defining' moment for US democracy - though kitchen-table issues like inflation have largely dominated the campaign. Republicans are comfortably placed to snatch a House majority on Tuesday, and many Democrats fear the Senate also slipping away in a defeat that would see Biden's foes in near total charge of legislation during his last two years in the White House.

Polls show most Americans



Former US President Donald Trump wipes the rain from his head as he speaks during a 'Save America' rally ahead of the midterm elections at Miami-Dade County Fair and Exposition in Miami, Florida, on Sunday (AFP)

are anxious about the economy and feel the country is on the wrong track, emboldening Republican candidates in districts

that once looked out of reach.

With all 435 seats in the House of Representatives up for grabs alongside a third of the

100-member Senate and a slew of state posts, Democrats were putting a brave face on their prospects.

"The party in the White House usually loses during midterms but the reality is we still have a very strong pathway, not just to keeping the Senate but really picking up seats," New Jersey's Cory Booker told ABC on Sunday.

Democratic candidates have been lent star power on the campaign trail by the party's most popular elder statesmen, including previous presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton.

Republicans have tapped a narrower roster of their own political big hitters, with the campaign spotlight turning in recent weeks to Trump - who has been teasing a probable new run for the presidency. Biden and Trump will go head-to-head on election eve: the president with a rally near the capital in Maryland, while Trump will be campaigning in a turbulent Senate race in Ohio.

'Wake-up call'

The political landscape has been tilting away from Democrats since the summer, with polls showing Republicans odds-on for a double-digit majority in the House.

"This is going to be a wake-up call to President Biden," was the

Biden's Democrats are facing a gargantuan struggle to hang on to Congress

bullish weekend prediction of Glenn Youngkin, the Republican governor of Virginia.

The Senate is more of a toss-up but Democratic hopes of

keeping the upper chamber, which they control thanks to tiebreaking votes from Vice President Kamala Harris, hang in the balance.

Races in Pennsylvania, Nevada, Wisconsin, Georgia, New Hampshire and Ohio have narrowed to projected photo finishes, and any one of them could swing the balance of power.

Democrats have focused their closing arguments on voting rights, protecting abortion access and welfare - and in Biden's case, on the threat posed by growing support among Trump's Republicans for political conspiracy theories. The Republicans counter that a vote for Democrats means no end to soaring inflation and rising violent crime, seeking to make the midterms a referendum on the president.

AFP

UN chief Guterres warns world leaders against ‘collective suicide’ on climate

Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt - UN chief Antonio Guterres warned world leaders at a climate summit in Egypt on Monday that humanity faces a stark choice between working together or ‘collective suicide’ in the battle against global warming.

Nearly 100 heads of state and government are meeting for two days in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, facing calls to deepen emissions cuts and financially back developing countries already devastated by the effects of rising temperatures.

“Humanity has a choice: co-operate or perish,” Guterres told the UN COP27 summit.

“It is either a Climate Solidarity Pact or a Collective Suicide Pact,” Guterres said, urging richer polluting nations to come to the aid of poorer countries least responsible for the emission of heat-trapping gases.

Nations worldwide are coping with increasingly intense natural disasters that have taken thousands of lives this year alone and cost billions of dollars - from devastating floods in Nigeria and Pakistan to droughts in the United States and Africa and unprecedented heatwaves across three continents.

“We have seen one catastro-



Participants attend the leaders summit of the COP27 climate conference at the Sharm el-Sheikh International Convention Centre, in Egypt's Red Sea resort city on Monday (AFP)

phe after another,” said Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. “As soon as we tackle one catastrophe another one arises - wave after wave of suffering and loss.

“Is it not high time to put an end to all this suffering?”

But a multitude of other crises, from Russia's war in Ukraine to soaring inflation and the lingering effects of the COVID pandemic, has raised concerns that climate change will drop on the priority list of governments.

Guterres however told world

leaders climate change could not be put on the ‘back burner’.

He called for a ‘historic’ deal between rich emitters and emerging economies that would see countries double down on emissions, holding the rise in temperatures to the more ambitious Paris Agreement target of 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial era.

Current trends would see carbon pollution increase 10 per cent by the end of the decade and Earth's surface heat up 2.8C.

“We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator,” Guterres said.

‘Moral imperative’

The UN secretary general said the target should be to provide renewable and affordable energy for all, calling on the United States and China in particular to lead the way.

He also said it was a ‘moral imperative’ for richer polluters to help vulnerable countries.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping,

whose country is the world's top emitter of greenhouse gases, is not attending the summit.

US President Joe Biden, whose country ranks second on the top-polluters list, will join COP27 later this week after midterm elections on Tuesday that could put Republicans hostile to international action on climate change in charge of Congress.

French President Emmanuel Macron urged the United States, China and other non-European

rich nations to ‘step up’ their efforts to cut emissions and provide financial aid to other countries.

“Europeans are paying,” Macron told French and African climate campaigners on the sidelines of COP27. “We are the only ones paying.”

‘Loss and damage’

On Sunday, the heads of developing nations won a small victory when delegates agreed to put the controversial issue of com-

pensation for ‘loss and damage’ on the summit agenda.

Pakistan, which chairs the powerful G77+China negotiating bloc of more than 130 developing nations, has made the issue a priority. The United States and the European Union have dragged their feet for years on the proposal, fearing it would create an open-ended reparations framework.

Guterres said COP27 must agree on a ‘clear, time-bound roadmap’ for loss and damage that delivers ‘effective institutional arrangements for financing’. “Getting concrete results on loss and damage is a litmus test of the commitment of governments to the success of COP27,” he said.

Rich nations will also be expected to set a timetable for the delivery of US\$100bn per year to help developing countries green their economies and build resilience against future climate change.

The promise is already two years past due and remains US\$17bn short, according to the OECD. COP27 is scheduled to continue until November 18 with ministerial joining the fray during Week Two.

AFP



Delegates walk outside during the COP27 climate conference in Egypt's Red Sea resort city on Monday (AFP)

\$1.4bn climate boost for farmers in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia

Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt - Small-scale farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia reeling from global warming impacts got a US\$1.4bn philanthropic boost on Monday to help them adapt to a world increasingly impacted by climate change.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant, distributed over four years, is earmarked for scaling up regional innovations that build resilience against drought, heat waves and extreme flooding amplified by a warming world, said an announcement at the COP27 climate summit in Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. Extreme weather has ravaged crops and reduced yields this year across four continents.

Organisations representing some 350mn family farmers, meanwhile, released an open letter to world leaders on Monday warning that global food security is at risk unless governments boost finance for small-scale production, and calling for a shift from industrial agriculture toward more diverse, low-input methods. “The surge in hunger over the last year has exposed the fragility of a global food system’ ill-equipped for climate shocks, the letter from 70 organisations representing farmers, fishers and forest producers said.

“Building a food system that can feed the world on a hot planet must be a priority for

COP27.” Nearly a hundred world leaders are kicking off the two-week UN summit in Egypt to speed the greening of the global economy and increase financial flows to developing countries where climate impacts are already shaving GDP points off their economies. Agriculture forms the backbone of many African economies, employing on average over 50 per cent of the labour force and accounting for a third of total African gross domestic product. At least two billion people worldwide depend on smallholder farms for food and income, but currently only two per cent of global climate finance helps them adapt to climate change predicted to deepen food and economic crises over the coming decades.

“The effects of climate change have already been devastating, and every moment the world delays action, more people suffer, and the solutions become more complex and costly,” said Gates Foundation CEO Mark Suzman.

“Leaders must listen to the voices of African farmers and governments to understand their priorities and respond with urgency.” The money will be channelled to so-called climate-smart agriculture projects, including new digital technologies, innovations in livestock farming, and support for women smallholder farmers, Suzman said.

AFP

Children living in ‘open air prison’ at Syria’s Al-Hol camp

Beirut, Lebanon - Doctors Without Borders (MSF) on Monday deplored the fate of thousands of children living in ‘a giant open air prison’ at Syria's notorious Al-Hol camp.

Al-Hol is the largest camp for displaced people who fled after Kurdish-led forces backed by a US-led coalition dislodged Islamic State group fighters from their last scrap of territory in Syria in 2019.

In the country's northeast near Iraq, Al-Hol is overpopulated with more than 50,000 residents including relatives of

suspected militants, displaced Syrians, and Iraqi refugees.

Children make up 64 per cent of the Kurdish-run camp's population, and half are younger than 12, according to MSF.

“We have seen and heard many tragic stories,” the aid agency's Syria operations manager, Martine Flokstra, said.

In a report, MSF cited Al-Hol's lack of health care and incidents of violence, warning of the dangerous situation facing children. Some died ‘as a result of prolonged delays in accessing urgent medical care’, and

there are stories of ‘young boys reportedly forcibly removed from their mothers once they reach around 11 years old, never to be seen again’, Flokstra said.

Many of the camp's child detainees were born there and are ‘robbed of their childhoods, and condemned to a life exposed to violence and exploitation, with no education, limited medical support and no hope in sight’, she added.

The report mentions the case of a five-year-old boy hit by a truck and who died after waiting several hours for hospitalisa-

tion. In 2021, 79 children lost their lives, MSF said.

Some were killed in violence, including shootings inside the camp where attacks on guards or aid workers are common. The majority of camp deaths are crime related.

Among Al-Hol's detainees are more than 10,000 foreigners from dozens of countries.

Housed in a separate part of the camp called ‘the Annex’, MSF considers these foreign nationals the responsibility of their home countries which it said have failed in their obliga-

tions to repatriate them. “Insufficient progress is being made to close the camp,” Flokstra said.

Kurdish authorities have repeatedly called on countries to repatriate their citizens from crowded camps.

But nations have mostly received them only sporadically, fearing security threats and a domestic political backlash.

Last month, four women and 13 children were repatriated to Australia from Al-Hol and another camp.

AFP

Iran: 26 foreigners held over shrine attack

Tehran, Iran - Iran has arrested 26 foreigners over their alleged involvement in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group on a Shiite Muslim shrine, the intelligence ministry said on Monday.

At least 13 people were killed on October 26 in an attack on the Shah Cheragh mausoleum in Shiraz. “The intelligence ministry has identified and arrested all agents involved in the terrorist operation in Shiraz,” said a statement published on the ministry's website. According to the statement, the 26 ‘takfiri terrorists’ are from Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The term takfiri in Iran and in several other countries refers to radical Sunni Islamist groups. “These terrorists were arrested in the provinces of Fars, Tehran, Alborz, Kerman, Qom and Razavi Khorasan”, as well as along Iran's ‘eastern border’, the ministry added. The shooting at the shrine - considered the holiest Shiite site in southern Iran - came on the same day that thousands of people across the country paid tribute to Mahsa Amini, 40 days after her death in police custody.

AFP

Ukraine hails new air defences, warns power situation ‘tense’

Kyiv, Ukraine - Ukraine announced on Monday it had received more air defence systems from Western military allies, as officials in Kyiv said the situation with supplies was ‘tense’ after protracted Russian attacks on energy facilities.

Attacks by Moscow's forces, including with Iranian-made drones over the past month, have destroyed around 40 per cent of Ukraine's power stations and the government has urged Ukrainians to maximise electricity savings. Kyiv has been rocked by barrages of Russian attacks on the first day of each week for nearly a month but air raid sirens were quiet on Monday with residents out as normal.

In a grey and foggy Kyiv - conditions that military observers say make attacks with missiles and low altitude drones more difficult - residents were unfazed by the threat of fresh strikes on Monday.

“To be honest, it's not only Mondays, it's been eight months that we know this can happen every day and we adapted. I'm not going to change my routine for that. I'm coming to work... just like every other day,” 21-year-old



Visitors eating lunch by candlelight due to a power cut at a bar in the centre of Ukrainian capital of Kyiv (AFP)

Kyiv resident Alyona Plekh told AFP.

Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov announced on Monday that Ukraine had received National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS) and Italian Aspide air defences, adding to weapons supplied by Germany.

“NASAMS and Aspide air defence systems arrived in Ukraine! These weapons will significantly strengthen the Ukrainian army and will make our skies safer,” Reznikov said on social media.

“We will continue to shoot down the enemy targets attack-

ing us. Thank you to our partners - Norway, Spain and the US,” Reznikov added.

Weeks of Russian attacks have caused sweeping blackouts and restrictions on energy use across Ukraine, and authorities in the capital have asked residents and businesses to reduce consumption.

Energy ‘struggle’

“The situation in the power system is tense. We ask all residents of the region to support energy workers in the struggle on the energy front. To do this, use electricity sparingly,” city authorities

said in a statement.

Those pleas came just one day after Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko warned of a possible total blackout in the capital, saying that city authorities were preparing for the worst and bracing for ‘various scenarios’.

The Ukrainian presidency meanwhile said on Monday that, over the last 24 hours, Russia had fired four missiles and carried out more than 24 air strikes across Ukraine.

The Deputy Head of Presidency Kyrylo Tymoshenko said one person was killed by Russian shelling in the partially Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine and another was killed in the northeastern Sumy region.

Those attacks came a day after Russian-installed authorities in the southern region of Ukraine, Kherson, said attacks by Kyiv's forces had cut power and electricity to the region's main city, also called Kherson.

But authorities said on Monday that power had been partially restored again in the city, towards which Ukrainian forces have been slowly advancing for weeks.

AFP

INDIA

HC takes suo moto of Morbi tragedy

Morbi, India - Gujarat High Court, which reopened post-Di-wali vacation, on Monday took Suo moto of the Morbi mishap, and issued notices to officials including the Home department, asking to file a report of the incident after seven days. "We expect strict action from the state government," HC ordered.

Seeing the seriousness of the Morbi mishap, which claimed the life of at least 135 people present on the century-old suspension bridge while it collapsed, Gujarat HC took self-cognizant of the case. The state High Court prior to the beginning of the proceedings paid tribute to the people, who died in the mishap.

All the judges of the High Court including the chief justice, advocate general, solicitor general, government pleader and all the government lawyers paid their respects.

High Court issued notices to departments of Home and Urban Housing, besides to the municipal commissioner and the Human Rights officials to file



The Gujarat High Court issued notices to departments of Home and Urban Housing, besides to the municipal commissioner and the Human Rights officials to file a report on the incident, on November 14 (ANI)

a report on the incident, on November 14. A notice has also been issued to the registry to take note of news reports published regarding the Morbi incident. Earlier on November 1, Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel visited the Machchu River bridge collapse site. Modi and Patel had met those who were involved in rescue and relief operations and visited the Civil Hospital to meet the injured.

At least 135 people, including women and children, were killed and over 100 are receiving treatment for their injuries sustained after the cable suspension bridge in Morbi town collapsed on October 30, plunging people into the Machchu River.

The prime minister Had also chaired a high-level meeting at Raj Bhavan in Gandhinagar to review the situation, where he was briefed on the rescue and relief operations. All aspects relating to the tragedy were discussed. Modi had emphasised on ensuring that those affected get all possible assistance, and the meeting was attended by CM Patel and Home Minister Harsh Sanghavi, besides top of-

ficials including the chief secretary, the DGP and others from the Home Department and the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority.

The PM had also assured that there would be no laxity in rescue and relief operations.

The state government, meanwhile, has constituted a five-member committee to probe the incident. Nine persons including officials of Oreva, the company that renovated the bridge, ticket sellers and security men have been arrested so far.

The search and rescue operations were called off on Thursday night, after five days into the tragic incident. While calling of the operations, State Commissioner of Relief Harshad Patel said that no more victims were reported missing.

The Gujarat High Court, meanwhile, has also issued a notice to the Morbi District Collector to file a report on the incident. The matter has been listed in the court for hearing on November 14.

ANI



The two cheetahs were on Sunday released in the bigger enclosure after completing their mandatory quarantine (ANI)

Kuno Cheetahs released to large enclosure, make their first hunt

Kuno, India - Two cheetahs who were flown in from Namibia and released in Kuno National Park made their first kill within 24 hours of being released into a large enclosure, DFO Prakash Kumar Verma told ANI.

The details about the prey are yet to be known. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had introduced the cheetahs in India on his birthday this year on September 17.

The two cheetahs - healthy and adjusting well - were on Sunday released in the bigger enclosure after completing their mandatory quarantine.

The release of the two cheetahs came after the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change received a no-objection certificate from the Ministry of Animal Husbandry for quarantine clearance to be released in a big enclosure.

As part of the efforts to revitalise and diversify the country's wildlife and habitat, they were being brought to India decades after their extinction.

Cheetahs are said to be the fastest animal. It runs at a speed of 100-120 km per hour.

The habitat that has been selected in Kuno is said to be ideal, as there are a large

tract of grasslands, small hills, and forests, very much suitable for cheetahs. Heavy security arrangements in Kuno National park to prevent poaching activities have been made.

Radio collars have been installed in all the cheetahs and monitored through satellite. Apart from this, there is a dedicated team behind each cheetah that keeps monitoring the location for 24 hours.

Under the ambitious project of the Indian government-Project Cheetah- the reintroduction of wild species particularly cheetahs are being undertaken as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines.

India has a long history of wildlife conservation. One of the most successful wildlife conservation ventures 'Project Tiger' which was initiated way back in 1972, has not only contributed to the conservation of tigers but also to the entire ecosystem.

In 1947-48, the last three cheetahs were hunted by the Maharaja of Korea in Chhat-tisgarh and the last cheetah was seen at the same time. In 1952 the Government of India declared Cheetahs as extinct.

ANI

Supreme Court upholds 10% EWS reservation

New Delhi, India - The Supreme Court in a majority judgment on Monday upheld the validity of the Constitution's 103rd Amendment Act 2019, which provides for 10 per cent EWS (economically weaker sections) reservation amongst the general category in admissions and jobs.

A five-judge Constitution bench in a 3:2 majority verdict has held that the provisions of the Amendment does not violate essential features of the Constitution. Chief Justice of India UU Lalit and S Ravindra Bhat dissented from the majority verdict and struck down the 103rd Amendment Act. "I have concurred with the view taken by Justice Bhat. The decision stands at 3:2," said CJI Lalit while pronouncing his verdict.

Majority bench - Justices Di-



A five-judge Constitution bench upheld the validity of the Constitution's 103rd Amendment Act 2019, which provides 10 per cent reservation for economically weaker sections (EWS), in New Delhi on Monday (ANI)

nesh Maheshwari, Bela Trivedi and JB Pardiwala upheld the EWS Amendment saying EWS quota does not violate the basic structure of the Constitution.

Justice Maheshwari, while reading out the judgement said, "The EWS amendment does not violate the equality code or the essential features of the Constitution." He said reservation is an instrument of affirmative action so as to ensure an all-inclusive march towards the goals of an egalitarian society.

Justice Bela M Trivedi said her judgment is in concurrence with Justice Maheshwari and that the EWS quota in the general category is valid and constitutional. She said: "The amendment as a separate class is a reasonable classification. Legislature understands the needs of people and it is aware of the economic exclusion of people from the reservation."

Justice JB Pardiwala in his separate but concurring judgement with Justices Maheshwari and Trivedi upheld the Act and said that reservation should not continue for an indefinite time.

He said, "The ones who have moved ahead should be removed from backward classes

so that ones in need can be helped. The ways to determine backward classes need a re-look so that ways are relevant in today's time. Reservation should not continue for an indefinite time so that it becomes a vested interest."

Justice Bhat in his dissent verdict struck down the 103rd Amendment saying that while reservation on an economic basis is permissible, excluding SC/STs and Other Backward Classes from EWS cannot be permitted and amounts to discrimination against them.

The Constitution bench verdict came on a batch of petitions, filed by NGOs Janhit Abhiyan and Youth for Equality, among others, challenging the Amendment.

ANI

Sexual assault: Court denies bail to Sri Lanka's Gunathilaka

Sydney, Australia - An Australian court on Monday refused bail for Sri Lankan cricketer Danushka Gunathilaka after he was charged with four counts of sexual assault.

Gunathilaka appeared wearing handcuffs by remote video link to the court in Sydney, speaking only to confirm his identity and that he could hear proceedings.

Sri Lanka Cricket said separately that it had suspended the batsman. The 31-year-old, who was arrested on Sunday just hours after his country lost to England in their final T20 World Cup match, appeared calm as he sat wearing a grey T-shirt and blue jeans in a detention centre in the city.

Gunathilaka's bail application was heard in a closed session - without journalists present - after Magistrate Robert Williams agreed with a request from the prosecutor to suppress details of the allegations and other elements of the case.

The interim suppression order, which is scheduled to be reviewed by the court on Wednesday, was opposed by

Gunathilaka's defence and by a media legal representative.

Sri Lanka Cricket said that it had suspended the player 'from all forms of the game with immediate effect'.

"Furthermore, Sri Lanka Cricket will take the necessary steps to promptly carry out an inquiry into the alleged offence, and, upon conclusion of the aforementioned court case in Australia, steps will be taken to penalise the said player if found guilty," it said.

Sri Lanka Cricket added that the board 'adopts a 'zero-tolerance' policy for any such conduct by a player and will provide all the required support to the Australian law enforcement authorities to carry out an impartial inquiry into the incident'.

Gunathilaka was ruled out during the first round of the T20 World Cup with a hamstring injury but had remained with the team in Australia.

He made his international debut in 2015 and has played eight Tests, 47 ODIs and 46 T20s.

AFP

Eight billion humans and dwindling resources

United Nations, US - Are eight billion humans too many for planet Earth? As we reach this milestone on November 15, most experts say the bigger problem is the overconsumption of resources by the wealthiest residents.

"Eight billion people, it is a momentous milestone for humanity," said United Nations Population Fund chief Natalia Kanem, hailing an increase in life expectancy and fewer maternal and child deaths.

"Yet, I realise this moment might not be celebrated by all. Some express concerns that our world is overpopulated. I am here to say clearly that the sheer number of human lives is not a cause for fear."

So, are there too many of us for Earth to sustain?

Many experts say that this is the wrong question. Instead of the fear of overpopulation, we should focus on the overconsumption of the planet's resources by the wealthiest among us.

"Too many for whom, too many for what? If you ask me, am I too many? I don't think so," Joel Cohen of Rockefeller University's Laboratory of Populations told AFP.

He said the question of how many people Earth can support has two sides: natural limits and human choices.



This file photo shows newborn babies lying in radiant warmers inside a special newborn care unit at a hospital in Amritsar, in India on October 14 this year (AFP)

'Stupid and greedy'

Our choices result in humans consuming far more biological resources, such as forests and land, than the planet can regenerate each year.

The overconsumption of fossil fuels, for example, leads to more carbon dioxide emissions, responsible for global warming.

We would need the biocapacity of 1.75 Earths to sustainably meet the needs of the current population, according to the Global Footprint Network and WWF NGOs.

The most recent UN climate report mentions population growth as one of the main drivers

of an increase in greenhouse gases. However, it plays a smaller role than economic growth.

"We are stupid. We lacked foresight. We are greedy. We don't use the information we have. That's where the choices and the problems lie," said Cohen. However, he rejects the idea that humans are a curse on the planet, saying people should be given better choices.

"Our impact on the planet is driven far more by our behaviour than by our numbers," said Jennifer Sciubba, a researcher at the Wilson Center, a think tank.

"It's lazy and damaging to

keep going back to overpopulation," she added, as this allows people in wealthy nations, who consume the most, to cast the blame for the planet's woes onto developing countries where population growth is highest.

"Really, it's us. It's me and you, the air conditioning I enjoy, the pool I have outside, and the meat I eat at night that causes so much more damage."

If everyone on the planet lived like a citizen of India, we would only need the capacity of 0.8 Earths a year, according to the Global Footprint Network and WWF. If we all consumed like a resident of the United States, we

would need five Earths a year.

The United Nations estimates that our planet will be home to 9.7bn people by 2050.

Women's rights

One of the trickiest questions that arise when discussing population is that of controlling fertility. Even those who believe we need to lower the Earth's population are adamant about protecting women's rights.

Robin Maynard, the executive director of the NGO Population Matters, says there needs to be a decrease in the population, but 'only through positive, voluntary, rights-respecting means' and not 'deplorable examples' of population control.

The NGO Project Drawdown lists education and family planning among the top 100 solutions to halt global warming.

"A smaller population with sustainable levels of consumption would reduce demands on energy, transportation, materials, food, and natural systems."

Vanessa Perez of the World Resources Institute agrees that 'every person that is born on the planet puts additional stress on the planet.' "It is a very thorny issue," she said, adding that we should reject 'this idea that the elite capture this narrative and say we need to cap population growth in the South'.

AFP

QUICK TRICKS

NO TIME FOR EXERCISE? NO TIME TO VISIT THE GYM? NO TIME FOR SLOW, BORING FITNESS REGIMES? TRY THIS NINE-MINUTE WORKOUT – IT WILL CHANGE YOUR OUTLOOK ABOUT FITNESS



9-MINUTE WORKOUT

These nine exercises have been divided into three sets of three. Before you begin each set, set a timer or place a watch within view. Do each exercise as well as you can for one minute, followed by the next, until you complete the first set. Then, take a one-minute break before moving to the next set. You can complete it in nine minutes, with two one-minute breaks in between.

Thrice a week works well. You'll soon discover it's no big deal. Try it:

SET 1

Bodyweight Squat

Do simple squats. You squat every time you sit or stand, but don't take this exercise for granted. It works your legs and your glutes, the most powerful muscle group in the body.

Be careful: Done incorrectly, squats can be hard on your knees. As you squat, keep your butt pushed out, like you are about to sit on a chair. Use the muscles in your hips and thighs to push yourself up.

Push-up

There's a reason push-ups are a go-to exercise for body builders. They effectively work the muscles in your shoulders and chest. If standard push-ups are too challenging, try them with your knees on the

floor. That will reduce the amount of weight you need to lift. Do as many as you possibly can in one minute.

Mountain Climbers

This exercise mimics the motion climbers make as they climb steep peaks, except it's done on the soft, flat surface of your floor. Mountain climbers are total body workouts, building strength in your core, back, arms and legs - not to mention your heart. If this exercise puts too much strain on your wrists, try elevating your upper body by placing your hands on a step to reduce the weight being placed on your arms.

(Now, take a one minute break)

SET 2

Plank

A commonly seen exercise, plank helps build strength in the core, shoulders, arms and legs. Plank tones your abs and builds strength in your upper body. Additionally, planks strengthen both the abdominal and low back muscles simultaneously and can have a beneficial effect for people with low back pain. Plank pose can be hard on your wrists, so, do it on your forearm.

Bodyweight Split Squat

This variation on a squat really targets the quadricep and hamstring muscles in your

legs as well as the glutes. Jumping into your starting position from the lowest point in your squat also adds a plyometric boost. If balance is an issue, you can do this exercise close to a wall, resting your hand on it for support.

Single-Leg Hip Raise

This exercise is adapted from yoga and targets the muscles in your glutes and abs. Keep your foot firmly planted on the floor as you do this exercise.

(Now, take a one minute break)

SET 3

Burpee with Push-up

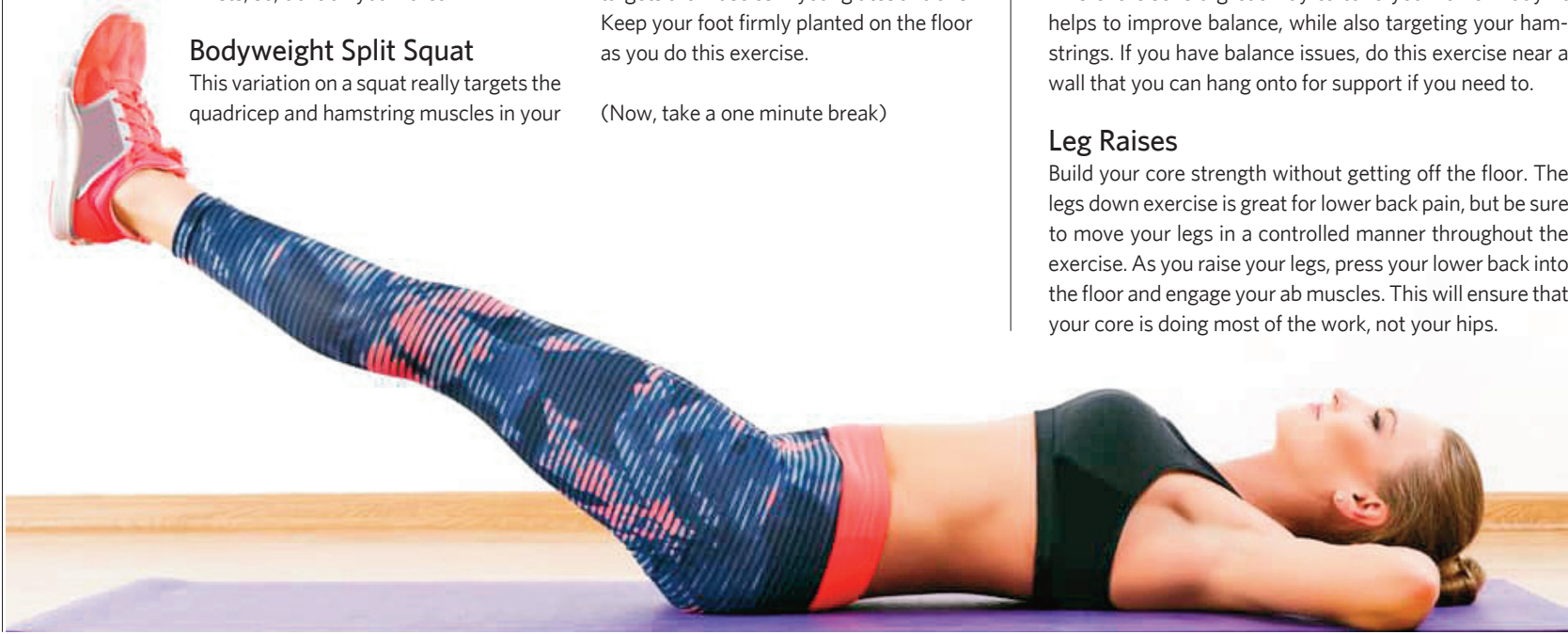
This total body exercise will get your heart pumping fast, but don't sacrifice form for speed. Keep your body in control as you move through the exercise. If you do burpees too quickly, you will soon be gasping for breath. Try to pace yourself and your breathing. Take an in breath before you squat and breathe out during the push-up.

Single-leg Toe Touches

This exercise is a great way to tone your lower body. It helps to improve balance, while also targeting your hamstrings. If you have balance issues, do this exercise near a wall that you can hang onto for support if you need to.

Leg Raises

Build your core strength without getting off the floor. The legs down exercise is great for lower back pain, but be sure to move your legs in a controlled manner throughout the exercise. As you raise your legs, press your lower back into the floor and engage your ab muscles. This will ensure that your core is doing most of the work, not your hips.



INVASIVE MALARIA MOSQUITO SPREADING IN AFRICA

New evidence has emerged that an invasive species of malaria-carrying mosquito from Asia is spreading in Africa, where it could pose a 'unique' threat to tens of millions of city-dwellers, researchers warned Tuesday.

In Africa, home to more than 95 percent of the world's 627,000 malaria deaths in 2020, the parasite is mostly spread in rural areas preferred by the dominant Anopheles gambiae group of mosquitoes.

However the Anopheles stephensi mosquito, which has long been a main malaria spreader in Indian and Iranian cities, can breed in urban water supplies, meaning it can thrive during the dry season. It is also to resistant to commonly used insecticides.

Modelling research in 2020 found that if Anopheles stephensi spread widely in Africa it would put more than 126 million people in 44 cities at risk of malaria.

Djibouti became the first African nation to detect Anopheles stephensi in 2012. It had been close to eradicating malaria with just 27 reported cases that year. However the number has skyrocketed since Anopheles stephensi's arrival, hitting 73,000 cases in 2020, according to the World Health Organization.

On Tuesday, researchers revealed the first evidence that a malaria outbreak in neighbouring Ethiopia earlier this year was caused by Anopheles stephensi.

In the eastern Ethiopian city of Dire Dawa, a transport hub between the capital Addis Ababa



and Djibouti, 205 malaria cases were reported in all of 2019.

However this year more than 2,400 cases were reported between January and May. The outbreak was unprecedented because it took place during the country's dry season, when malaria has usually been rare.

Surprising

As the numbers were rising, Fitsum Girma Tadesse, a molecular biologist at Ethiopia's Ar-

mauer Hansen Research Institute, and other researchers jumped in to investigate, he told AFP.

They quickly determined that "Anopheles stephensi mosquitoes are responsible for the increase in cases," Tadesse said.

They linked Anopheles stephensi to the infections of the patients, and also found the mosquitoes - carrying malaria - in nearby water containers.

Tadesse warned that the mosquito's preference for open water tanks, common across

many African cities, makes it unique.

The research, which has not been peer reviewed, was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene being held this week in Seattle, US.

Also presented at the conference were early findings that identified Anopheles stephensi at 64 percent of 60 test sites in nine states of neighbouring Sudan.

"In some instances, we have found that up

to 94 percent of households have stephensi" mosquitoes nearby, Hmooda Kafy, the head of the integrated vector management department at Sudan's health ministry, said in a statement.

The findings come after the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research confirmed in July it had detected Anopheles stephensi in West Africa for the first time.

Sarah Zohdy, an Anopheles stephensi specialist at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told AFP it was "surprising" that the mosquito was detected so far west, as the focus had been on the Horn of Africa.

A major threat

In the last couple of months it has been shown that Anopheles stephensi is no longer a potential threat in Africa, Zohdy said.

"In the Ethiopian context, this is a threat - we now have data to show that," said Zohdy, who also works with the US President's Malaria Initiative, a partner of the Dire Dawa study. "The evidence now exists to suggest that this is something that the world needs to act on."

Anopheles stephensi has also been reportedly detected in Somalia, according to the WHO, which in September launched an initiative aimed at stopping the spread of the mosquito in Africa.

Because Anopheles stephensi can thrive in urban water tanks, "you get a shift from a seasonal disease to one that can persist year round," Zohdy said.

AFP

KIDNEY TRANSPLANTATION – THE LAST RESORT



DR TAREK MEDHAT ABBAS ABD ELHADY
Consultant Nephrologist
Muscat Urology and Nephrology Healthcare Centre

What is kidney transplantation?
Kidney transplantation is the treatment of choice for end-stage kidney disease. A successful kidney transplant improves the quality of life and reduces the mortality risk for most patients when compared with maintenance dialysis.

What is a 'preemptive' or 'early' transplant?
Getting a transplant before you need to start dialysis is called a preemptive transplant. It allows you to avoid dialysis altogether. Getting a transplant shortly after kidneys fail is referred to as an early transplant. Both types can lead to better long-term health.

What is the most common cause of kidney disease in patients on the wait list?
Diabetes and hypertension are the most common causes of chronic kidney disease in the general population, both are the main causes of kidney disease of those on the wait list.

What is the timing of referral to prepare for kidney transplantation?
Kidney transplantation should be discussed with all patients with irreversible and progressive chronic kidney disease. Patients interested in transplantation who have no known contraindications

should be referred to a suitable transplantation programme.

How to prepare for kidney transplantation?
First, you must have an evaluation by a transplant center to decide if you are ready for the kidney transplant. The next step is to find a kidney match (donor). Your transplant team will thoroughly assess you and the donor clinically with lab, radiological, and compatibility tests [blood typing, tissue typing and cross-match]. There are other things you will need to prepare for, like paying for your transplant and for the medicines you will take after. You will also need to prepare for the transplant surgery itself.

What follow up/monitoring is required for kidney transplant recipients?
All patients will require close supervision in a nephrology/transplant clinic. The frequency of follow up differs according to the time after transplantation and the condition of the patient. Patients will undergo clinical, lab, and radiological assessment with regular follow up and modification of the immunosuppressive regimen.

Are there any downsides to living donation?
A healthy person who donates a kidney

can live a normal life with the one kidney that is left but a kidney donor must undergo major surgery to remove a kidney and give it to the recipient. Follow up in a nephrology clinic is advised.

What is immunosuppressive therapy after kidney transplantation?
The transplant recipient needs an induction and maintenance immunosuppressive regimen. Different combinations are available depending on the risk of rejection, complications, and the centre.

How often does rejection happen?
The improvement in immunosuppressive medicines reduces incidence of rejections. However, the risk of rejection is different for every person. Rejection can be stopped with special anti-rejection medicines.

What are the infectious complications after kidney transplantation?
Infections such as upper respiratory or urinary tract infection are common in kidney transplant recipients. Decongestants and nonsteroidal antiinflammatory agents should be avoided. Patients are also at risk for opportunistic infections. Strict follow up in a nephrology clinic is recommended.



Muscat Urology and Nephrology Healthcare Centre (MUNH), under Modern Healthcare company, is Oman's ambulatory daycare Centre, a super specialty medical centre offering comprehensive and efficient services in urology, nephrology and renal dialysis, and offers treatment for ailments like kidney stone, bladder stones, kidney failure and more. The Centre is a state-of-the-art daycare surgery for diagnostic and therapeutic services, fully equipped with all modern equipment. Designed as a daycare Centre to keep the Hospital Acquired Infection (HAI) at minimum and expense low while providing affordable and effective services with patient needs are always placed first here.

MOH 439/2022

Daycare Surgery Centre

Dialysis

Male Infertility Clinic and Andrology Lab

HoLEP Surgery

Rezum Surgery

MHC Pharmacy

Deema Building | Al Hail | Muscat
Sultanate of Oman
www.mhcoman.com
munh.muscat

For Appointment Please Call
+968 2258 4500
+968 7177 3222

EXOSKELETON

WALK EASY

Researchers have created a robotic leg ‘exoskeleton’ that provides personalised walking assistance under real-world conditions to assist people with mobility impairments

Millions of people have conditions that make walking difficult and millions more regularly perform strenuous movement as part of their jobs. Now, wearable robotic devices called ‘exoskeletons’ that help the legs move could benefit both of these groups. In laboratory settings, such devices have helped people to walk faster while using less energy. But various obstacles have kept these devices from being practical for everyday use, according to a recent article published by the US-based National Institutes of Health (NIH).

To get the best improvement in

walking performance, an exoskeleton has to adapt to an individual user’s needs. Doing so usually requires extensive data about the user’s movement and metabolic rate. Collecting this data takes expensive lab equipment and hours of walking on a treadmill. This would be costly and impractical to do for a consumer

This exoskeleton personalises assistance as people walk normally through the real world. And it resulted in exceptional improvements in walking speed and energy economy
DR STEVEN COLLINS

medical device. An NIH-funded research team at Stanford University, led by Dr Steven Collins, has developed an exoskeleton that can rapidly adapt to the user during normal walking. First, the researchers developed a model for estimating relative metabolic rates from movement data. This allowed the exoskeleton to get all the data it needed during walking from wearable sensors, avoiding the need to collect data in a lab. The researchers based their model on extensive movement and metabolic data collected in a previous experiment while people walked in various conditions. The team tested how well an exoskeleton based on their model could adapt to a user. They then compared it to one based on lab measurements. Both methods wound up applying similar forces at different speeds and reduced effort similarly across a range of conditions. But the model-based adaptation took only one-quarter as long as the measurement-based adaptation. Next, the researchers created a portable, ankle-worn exoskeleton that could be used in the real world. The exoskeleton was powered by a battery pack worn at the waist. With each step, a motor provided torque at the ankle, helping the user to push off. The team conducted tests of the device outdoors on public sidewalks. For one hour, the participants walked a prescribed course while wearing the exoskeleton. They walked the course in short bouts with different speeds to mimic typical real-world walking patterns. Compared with walking in normal shoes, the exoskeleton increased walking speed by 9% while expending 17% less energy on average. This is equal to the energy savings of removing a 20-pound backpack. When walking on a treadmill at a constant speed, users expended up to 23% less energy, equal to removing a 30-pound backpack. “This exoskeleton personalises assistance as people walk normally through the real world,” Collins says. “And it resulted in exceptional improvements in walking speed and energy economy.” “This opens the door to a much broader use of exoskeletons to assist individuals with physical impairments and people like fire fighters, who need to carry heavy loads,” adds co-author Dr. Scott Delp.



SKY-HIGH

India coach Rahul Dravid hails ‘phenomenal’ Suryakumar Yadav ahead of their semi-final clash against England

Adelaide, Australia - India coach Rahul Dravid labelled Suryakumar Yadav “absolutely phenomenal” after the top-ranked T20 batsman powered them into a World Cup semi-final clash with England.

Yadav’s unbeaten 61 off 25 balls on Sunday steered India to 186-5 against Zimbabwe in Melbourne and an emphatic 71-run win in their final group match.

India’s star batsman Virat Kohli has top-scored at this World Cup with 246 runs so far. Yadav is just behind with 225.

“It’s incredible,” Dravid said of Yadav, who has a strike rate of 179.63 and averages over 42 in 39 T20 matches since his India debut last year.

“That’s why he is the number one T20 player in the world at the moment... it’s not easy to be consistent with the kind of strike rate he’s going at.”

Yadav, 32, rose to prominence with his pyrotechnics for Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League and soon made it to the Indian team.

Fondly called SKY, he has smashed 12 half-centuries and one ton since his first T20, against England in March last year, and has become India’s go-to performer in the middle order.

“If I look at Surya from a couple of years ago, just to see how he takes care of his body and the amount of time he spends on his fitness, I think he’s just really earning the reward for a lot of the hard work that he’s put in,” said Dravid.



India’s Suryakumar Yadav hits a trademark six during their match against Zimbabwe in Melbourne on Sunday

He’s just a joy to watch. It’s a pleasure to watch him bat when he’s in that kind of form

RAHUL DRAVID

“I think he’s been absolutely phenomenal for us. He’s just a joy to watch. It’s a pleasure to watch him bat when he’s in that kind of form,” Dravid said after Yadav’s starring role Sunday.

“Every time it’s like he puts on a show.”

Ice-cool Yadav has England in his sights next in Thursday’s semi-final at the Adelaide Oval.

Commentator Harsha Bhogle said England should be worried.

“There isn’t a part of the ground that he cannot score and to watch Suryakumar Yadav today is to see a very talented cricketer at the very height of his powers,” he told the website Cricbuzz.

AFP

New Zealand bank on experience to end T20 World Cup pain

Sydney, Australia - Captain Kane Williamson is banking on experience to power New Zealand into a second successive Twenty20 World Cup final as they chase glory at last.

The Black Caps, who face Pakistan in the semi-finals at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday, have long been a force in white-ball cricket.

But they have failed to turn that into world titles despite coming agonisingly close in recent years, including falling at the final hurdle to Australia last year.

It was their best showing in a T20 World Cup and followed hard on the heels of final defeats in the 50-over World Cup in both 2015 and 2019.

Williamson is confident the silverware drought can end this year with Babar Azam’s unpredictable Pakistan their next challenge.

“The team’s played some good cricket. As long as the team keeps looking to improve and build on some of these perform-



New Zealand’s strike force, comprising experienced bowlers Tim Southee and Trent Boult, has played a crucial role so far in the tournament (AFP)

ances, hopefully we see ourselves in the next phase,” he said.

New Zealand started their campaign with a massive 89-run win against defending champions Australia and followed it up with a six-wicket victory over Sri Lanka, with a washed-out game against Afghanistan in between.

They crashed by 20 runs to England before hammering Ireland to book their last-four berth and top Group 1.

Williamson has long banked on experienced strike bowlers Tim Southee and Trent Boult, and the spin of Mitchell Santner, to get them over the line.

AFP

So-called minnows warn T20 World Cup shocks just the start

Adelaide, Australia - The Twenty20 World Cup in Australia has produced a series of shocks and the so-called minnows warn there are going to be more at future tournaments.

The last in a string of stunning upsets came on Sunday and was arguably the biggest of them all.

Scott Edwards’ Netherlands knocked South Africa out of the World Cup at the Adelaide Oval with a surprise 13-run victory on the final day of the Super 12.

Coupled with wins for Pakistan and India over Bangladesh and Zimbabwe respectively, the Dutch will get direct entry into the expanded 2024 World Cup in the West Indies and United States.

Ireland, with wins over two-time champions the West Indies and England, were also

giant-killers. As were Zimbabwe, who defeated Pakistan.

The first match of the tournament was a taste of things to come when Namibia thrashed Asian champions Sri Lanka by 55 runs.

Speaking on the eve of their match against the Proteas, South African-born Dutch bowler Roelof van der Merwe said these were no flukes.

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Indian male with 16 years of management experience in Airline Catering Stores, with F&B Cost Controls and hospitality experience, is looking for a suitable position. On a Visit Visa, can join immediately. Contact: +968-97662123 email: Moviferns@gmail.com

Indian male, Diploma, Degree in Civil, having 2-3 years experience including 10 months experience in Oman also having Oman Drivers licence looking for a suitable civil Supervisor job. Mobile no : 78608219 , email : shahrugh722@gmail.com

Column a well experienced indian male in building material products of reputed brands both in project sales and showroom seeks job. Contact 7944392

SITUATION VACANT

Wanted Female Marketing Executive in Rusayl Nationality: Philippines Fluent in English & Arabic Preferred : Available in Oman with own car. Contact on WhatsApp +96897859316

Wanted Staff Nurse for a Gen Clinic in Sohar area for immediate appointment. Candidate with MOH licence, release from prev Sponsor to please contact on 92264225.

MARRIAGE NOTICE

SAJITH KANNIYOTH (holder of Indian Passport No S3670452) S/o BALAKRISHNAN NAIR having permanent residence in SANDHYA NIVAS, VADUVANCHAL (PO) WAYANAD. KERALA (complete postal address in India) and presently residing at Muscat Post Box No 2218 Postal Code 133, SULTANATE OF OMAN (Complete postal address in Sultanate of Oman), intend to marry Ms. TEENA ANTONY (Holder of Indian passport bearing No U3969512, D/o ANTONY having permanent residence in NO. 429/B 3RD CROSS, IDEAL HOMES LAYOUT, RR NAGAR, BANGALURU (Complete permanent address) at Embassy of India, Muscat. I swear that I am marrying him/her at my own free will and not under any duress and intimidation. Any objection towards this marriage may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Kuwair, P.O. Box No. 1727, Postal Code No. 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman within 30 (thirty) days of publication of this newspaper advertisement.

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



JOB VACANCY

Travel Consultants / Sales Executives

Reputed Travel Company in Oman is looking for Travel Consultants, & Sales Executive having 3-4 years’ experience working on GDS.

Email ID: resumeoman2021@gmail.com



FOR RENT

Available 2100 sq meter best in class Warehouse cum office Space, fully furnished ready to use, Located at Prime area of Ghala in the heart of the city having easy access to airport & express Way.

Contact: Girish Sewani - 93893596

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: 97239696/95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur
Kumar@gccaoman.com



Liverpool striker Mohamed Salah celebrates a goal

HELLO THERE!

Liverpool handed Real Madrid rematch in Champions League last 16, PSG draw Bayern

Paris, France - Liverpool will have the chance to avenge last season's Champions League final defeat at the hands of Real Madrid after Jurgen Klopp's side were drawn on Monday to face the holders again in the last 16. Meanwhile, the other stand-out tie saw Paris Saint-Germain drawn to play Bayern Munich in a repeat of the 2020 final which was won by the German club. Liverpool won five of their six group games but missed out on top spot to Napoli after losing 4-1 when the sides met in Italy. The Anfield club also lost the 2018 Champions League final to Real, who won their group ahead of RB Leipzig. "They are two historic teams and the tie is going to be electric, fascinating for the fans," said Emilio Butragueno, a great former Real player who is now the director of institutional relations for the 14-time European champions. Current domestic form suggests Real should be favourites, with Carlo Ancelotti's side unbeaten in La Liga while Liverpool are eighth in the Premier League despite winning away to Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday. However, both clubs will lose key players to the World Cup and Butragueno acknowledged much can change in the three months before the Champions League returns. "The World Cup is going to condition the whole season. We will see how the players are when they return," he said. PSG only missed out on topping their group because Benfica scored more away goals across

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
LAST 16 DRAW
RB Leipzig (GER) v Manchester City (ENG)
Club Brugge (BEL) v Benfica (POR)
Liverpool (ENG) v Real Madrid (ESP)
AC Milan (ITA) v Tottenham Hotspur (ENG)
Eintracht Frankfurt (GER) v Napoli (ITA)
Borussia Dortmund (GER) v Chelsea (ENG)
Inter Milan (ITA) v Porto (POR)
Paris Saint-Germain (FRA) v Bayern Munich (GER)

all matches after the sides remarkably finished level on points, goal difference, goals scored and head to head. That left the Qatar-owned club exposed to a tough draw, a year on from their painful exit in the first knockout round at the hands of Real. In terms of form they could not have got tougher than Bayern, who were the only side to win all six group matches, despite being in a section with Barcelona and Inter Milan. The 2020 final was played behind closed doors in Lisbon at the height of the pandemic, with Bayern triumphing 1-0. PSG gained revenge the following season by beating the Bavarians in the quarter-finals. Like PSG, Manchester City have never won the trophy but are also one of the leading contenders to do so this season. Pep Guardiola's side will be expected to dispose of Leipzig, who they faced in the group stage a year ago and beat 6-3 at home before a 2-1 defeat in Germany, by which time they had already secured first place in the section. AFP



Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema enjoys a training session

Barcelona draw Manchester United in Europa League

Paris, France - Barcelona and Manchester United will face each other in the Europa League knockout round play-offs following Monday's draw. Barca were eliminated from the Champions League group stage to drop into the Europa League for the second season running, while United came second in their Europa League group. The last meeting of the clubs came in the quarter-finals of the Champions League in 2018/19, with Barca winning 4-0 on aggregate. They have met in two Champions League finals and in the 1991 Cup Winners' Cup final, but this will be the first ever encounter of the sides in the Europa League. The winners of the eight

Barca were eliminated from the Champions League group stage to drop into the Europa League for the second season running, while United came second in their Europa League group.

knock-out round play-off ties will advance to the last 16, for

which the eight Europa League group winners all qualified automatically. Having also dropped out of Europe's elite club competition, Juventus were drawn to play French club Nantes in what will be a repeat of the 1996 Champions League semi-final tie won by the Italians. Sevilla, who have won the Europa League or its predecessor the UEFA Cup a record six times, will play PSV Eindhoven. Ajax were drawn against Bundesliga high-fliers Union Berlin, while Shakhtar Donetsk of Ukraine will play French side Rennes. Bayer Leverkusen will play Monaco and Jose Mourinho's Roma will take on Red Bull Salzburg. Premier League leaders Arsenal have already qualified for the last 16 along with Fenerbahce, Real Betis, Union Saint-Gilloise of Belgium, Real Sociedad, Feyenoord, Freiburg and Ferencvaros. This season's Europa League final will be played in Budapest on May 31 next year.



Paris Saint-Germain's Danilo Pereira (L) celebrates with Renato Sanches after scoring against Lorient in their Ligue 1 match on Sunday (AFP)

PSG beat Lorient to restore five-point lead

Lorient, France - Neymar's early strike and Danilo Pereira's late winner gave Paris Saint-Germain a 2-1 victory at fourth-placed Lorient that strengthened their hold on first place in Ligue 1 on Sunday. The victory restored PSG's five-point lead over Lens, who beat Angers on Saturday. PSG manager Christophe Galtier made four changes from the team that won at Juventus on Wednesday. One of the stars who kept his place, Kylian Mbappe, came off with five minutes left but Galtier said the France striker was not suffering an injury that could threaten his World Cup. "It is fatigue related to the sequence of matches," Galtier said. "It's a very busy schedule, with some anxiety. Everyone is listening to their body in this pre-World Cup period. There can be a fear."

Juve beat Inter

Juventus' long crisis showed signs of being over on Sunday after their 2-0 win over fierce rivals Inter Milan put them in sight of Serie A's top four, while Felipe Anderson fired Lazio to a 1-0 Rome derby triumph. Juve have spent almost the entire season lurching from one disaster to another but Adrien Rabiot's brilliant first-time finish five minutes after the break and a late deflected shot from youngster Nicolo Fagioli earned them a fourth straight league win.

Salah at the double as Liverpool sink Spurs

London, United Kingdom - Mohamed Salah scored twice as Liverpool beat Tottenham 2-1 on Sunday to maintain their hex over the London club, returning to winning ways after two consecutive Premier League defeats. Jurgen Klopp's men started the match 10 points behind fourth-placed Spurs, with questions growing over their ability even to mount a challenge for next season's Champions League places. But they dominated the contest from the start and took an early lead when the impressive Darwin Nunez teed up Salah, who fired into the bottom corner. The visitors' intensity dropped as the half wore on but they were 2-0 up shortly before half-time when Salah took advantage of a horrendous error by Eric Dier, who headed the ball straight into the path of the Egypt forward. Harry Kane pulled a goal back in the 70th minute as the decibel count rose among the crowd of 62,000 but Spurs could not avoid a third defeat in four league matches. Klopp celebrated the win with his trademark air punches in front of the Liverpool fans, enjoying his side's first away win in the league since May. "I got a bit carried away but it is big, absolutely big," said the German manager, whose team have been unchar-



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah scores past Tottenham Hotspur goalkeeper Hugo Lloris during their English Premier League match in London on Sunday (AFP)

acteristically inconsistent this season. "What we have to show is that we are not punched too hard when we concede a goal. "I like that tonight... We cannot be consistent by just playing all the time outstandingly well. It's all about showing the resilience we showed tonight." Spurs, who have now lost seven out of the past nine Premier League matches between

the sides, were without South Korea forward Son Heung-min, who suffered a fracture around his left eye in his side's midweek Champions League win against Marseille. Nunez, marauding down the left side of the Liverpool attack, tested Spurs goalkeeper Hugo Lloris early and was the provider of Salah's opener, controlling Andrew Robertson's pass and feeding the Egyptian, who fired home

in the 11th minute. Tottenham found their feet as the half wore on and were only denied an equaliser when Alisson Becker saved at close range from Perisic after a pinpoint Kane cross. Liverpool, who had lost their previous two Premier League matches, to Nottingham Forest and Leeds, gave Spurs a mountain to climb when they doubled their lead in the 40th minute. AFP



Holger Rune

Rune breaks into top ten after Paris Masters triumph

Paris, France - Danish teenager Holger Rune moved up eight places to break into the top 10 in the latest ATP rankings released on Monday after his victory in the Paris Masters. Rune, 19, shocked six-time champion Novak Djokovic to clinch his first Masters title in Paris on Sunday after coming from a set down to win 3-6, 6-3, 7-5. He becomes the first Danish man to break into the top 10, and will be the first replacement at the season-ending Masters in Turin from November 13-20. Rune became the youngest winner of the Paris tournament since an 18-year-old Boris Becker in 1986 after beating five top-10 players in as many days - the first to do so in the same tournament. AFP

Harry can, believe England

England overwhelming favourites in Group B but draw gives Iran, USA and Wales hope

London, United Kingdom - Clashes between England, Iran, the United States and Wales mean World Cup Group B is laced with political tension, but also boasts the highest average FIFA world ranking of any of the sections in Qatar.

Despite heading to the Middle East on the back of a six-game winless run, England undoubtedly start as favourites with Gareth Southgate's men looking to finally end a 56-year wait to claim a major international trophy.

The Three Lions have come close recently, reaching the semi-finals of the World Cup four years ago and the final of Euro 2020 on home soil.

However, a hectic schedule for Southgate's squad with their clubs and little preparation time could see them caught cold in the group stages.

Injury concerns are piling up in defence for England with Reece James and Kyle Walker doubts to make the squad, while Harry Maguire is short of match fitness after falling down the pecking order at Manchester United.

At the other end of the field, it was a lack of creativity from open play that saw England relegated from the UEFA Nations League as they twice failed to beat any of Germany, Hungary or Italy in recent months.

A goal drought was washed away in a thrilling 3-3 draw with Germany at Wembley in their

final competitive game before the tournament and the pressure is on Southgate to get the likes of Mason Mount, Phil Foden, Bukayo Saka and Jude Bellingham performing as regularly at international level as they do for their clubs.

England's hopes could though come down to keeping captain Harry Kane fit as the Tottenham Hotspur striker bears down on becoming his country's highest

Harry Kane is just two goals short of Wayne Rooney's record of 53 and is one of the favourites to walk away with another Golden Boot

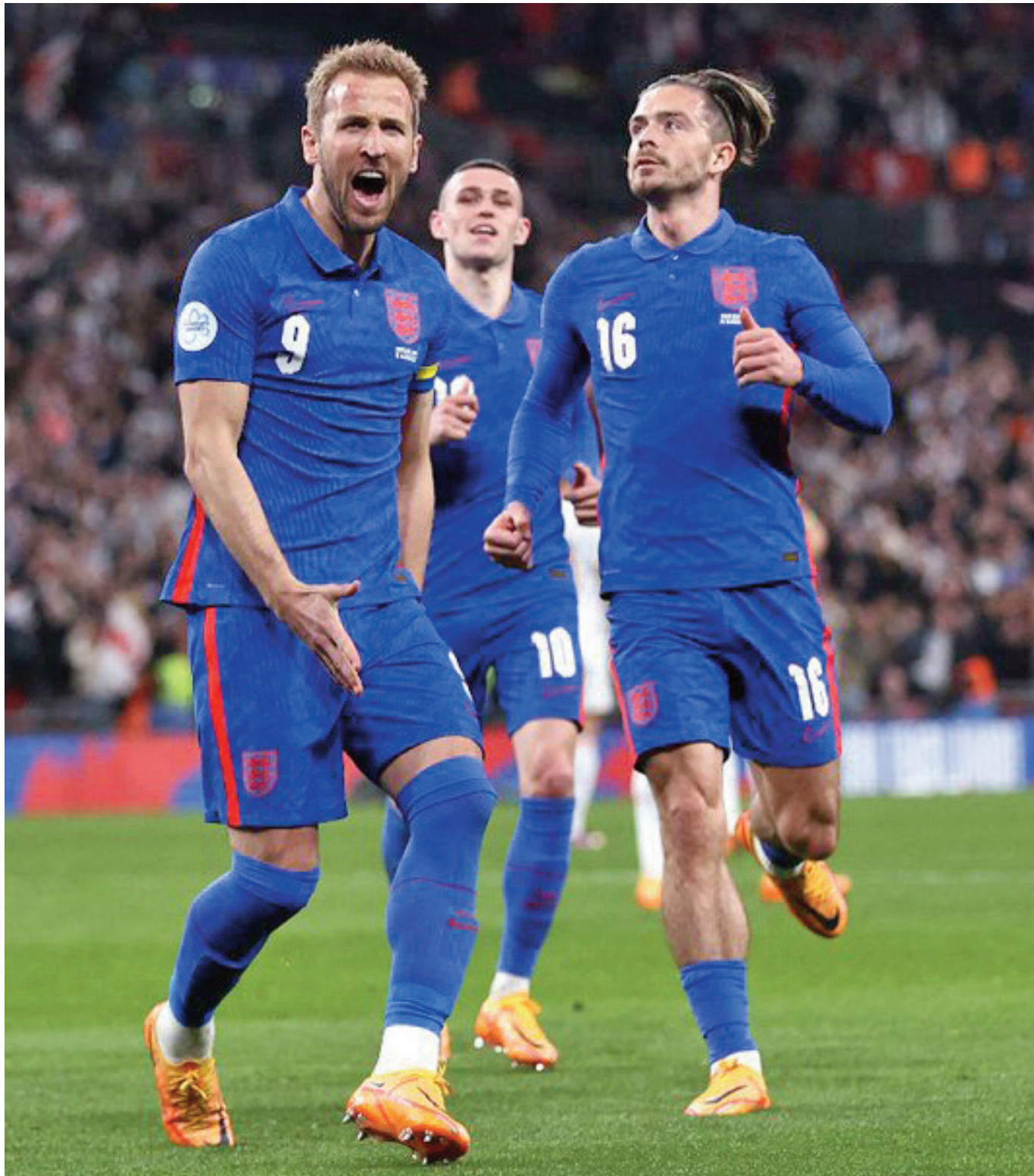
ever goalscorer at international level.

Kane is just two goals short of Wayne Rooney's record of 53 and is one of the favourites to walk away with another Golden Boot as the World Cup's top goalscorer.

Iran's troubles

Iran's preparations have been besieged by political turmoil.

Protests have swept across the nation in the wake of the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini following her arrest by the



England's chances depend a lot on the goal-scoring prowess of their captain Harry Kane (L)

country's morality police.

Activists, including former Iranian international Ali Karimi, have called on the team to make a stance in joining the protest movement with the eyes of the world upon them in Qatar.

FIFA have even been asked to throw Iran out of the competition and be replaced by Ukraine over the alleged use of Iranian drones by Russia in its war against Kyiv.

On the field, with former Real Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz back as manager, Iran beat Uruguay in a friendly in September to back up an impressive qualifying campaign.

A meeting with the United States brings back good memories for Team Melli of a 2-1 win in a politically-charged World Cup clash in 1998.

The Americans are back on the biggest stage after failing to qualify for Russia four years ago and have a squad now filled with experience at the highest level in Europe. However, manager Gregg Berhalter has been heavily criticised for a lack of spark in a run of one win in five games heading to Qatar.

Wales are back at a World Cup for the first time since 1958 in what could be Gareth Bale's farewell on the international stage. Bale has helped inspire his country to the knockout stages of the last two European Championships, famously reaching the semi-finals in 2016.

At 33 and now featuring for LAFC, Bale is no longer the force he once was and managing he and Aaron Ramsey through three group games in eight days will be a challenge for Rob Page.

AFP

FACTFILE (GROUP B)



ENGLAND

Best World Cup performance:
WINNERS IN 1966
Other honours:
None

5
FIFA
RANKING:

Main clubs: **Man City, Liverpool, Chelsea, Man United, Arsenal**
How they qualified: England finished first in European qualifying Group I

COACH

Gareth Southgate, 52, was appointed in 2016 and revitalised a previously moribund squad, leading England to the 2018 World Cup semi-finals and a runners-up finish at Euro 2020 -- their first appearance in a major final for 55 years. However, England's painful penalty shoot-out defeat against Italy in the Euro final triggered criticism of Southgate's cautious tactics that continues to haunt the coach.

KEY PLAYER



Harry Kane could become England's all-time leading scorer at the World Cup after reaching 51 goals for the Three Lions -- just two behind record holder Wayne Rooney. The Tottenham Hotspur star has never won a major trophy with club or country but his predatory instincts make him one of the world's top strikers. Keeping Kane fit and firing will be Southgate's top priority in Qatar.



UNITED STATES

Best World Cup performance:
Third place in 1930
Other honours:
European champions in 1988

16
FIFA
RANKING:

Main clubs: **LA Galaxy, D.C. United, San Jose Earthquakes, New York City FC**
The US finished third in the CONCACAF zone final qualifying standings, behind Canada and Mexico

COACH

Gregg Berhalter, 49, was appointed head coach in 2018 in the wake of the US's failure to qualify for the Russia World Cup. A former US international defender, Berhalter was a key member of the squad who reached the quarter-finals of the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea and was also an unused squad member at the 2006 World Cup. Berhalter went into coaching in 2011 after retiring as a player.

KEY PLAYER



If the US upset the odds and progress beyond the group stage in Qatar, the chances are that **Christian Pulisic** will have had a lot to do with it. The 24-year-old Chelsea star has consistently been the Americans' most important player in recent years, one of the few individuals capable of producing game-changing moments on the biggest stage. Pulisic was a crucial contributor in the US qualification campaign.



WALES

Best World Cup performance:
Quarter-finals in 1958
Other honours:
European Championship semi-finalists in 2016

19
FIFA
RANKING:

Main clubs: **Cardiff City, Swansea City**
How they qualified: Beat Ukraine 1-0 in playoff final

COACH

Rob Page, 48, was promoted to the role as national team boss due to Ryan Giggs' suspension and then resignation over allegations of domestic abuse. Page, 48, had a far more humble playing career than his predecessor as a defender in the lower leagues of English football. But he has proved an inspired leader at international level, leading Wales out of their group at Euro 2020 and to a first World Cup in 64 years.

KEY PLAYER



Gareth Bale has the crown-glorious glory he craved on an impressive CV for club and country by finally making it to the World Cup. Now playing his club football in MLS with LAFC, Bale remains the talisman for his nation. The five-time Champions League winner with Real Madrid followed up scoring twice in a 2-1 win over Austria in the playoff semi-finals with the only goal against Ukraine to send Wales to Qatar.



IRAN

Best World Cup performance:
First round in five appearances
Other honours:
Asian Cup winners in 1968, 1972, 1976

20
FIFA
RANKING:

Main clubs: **Persepolis, Esteghlal, Sepahan**
How they qualified: Iran topped Asian Group A in third round

COACH

Mozambique-born **Carlos Queiroz**, 69, thought his dreams of a fourth consecutive appearance at a World Cup as a coach had been dashed when Egypt lost to Senegal in an African play-off. But divisions in the Iran camp over Dragan Skocic led to the Croat coach's departure and the return of the former Real Madrid manager. Queiroz, who was also formerly assistant to Alex Ferguson at Man United, led Iran to the 2014 and 2018 World Cups.

KEY PLAYER



The passion of Bayer Leverkusen forward **Sardar Azmoun** for goals is matched only by his love of horses. When he is not scoring for club or country, the 27-year-old is involved in his horse racing and breeding complex in the northern town where he was born. Often called the Messi of Iran, he averages two goals from every three appearances for the national team. Azmoun played for three Russian clubs before moving to Germany this year.