

Oil windfall, fiscal prudence ease debt

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The windfall oil revenues from higher-than-budgeted oil prices and prudent fiscal management under the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan have eased debt pressure on Oman's government and provided economic buffers, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has reported.

Oman's fiscal position came under severe stress during the COVID-19 pandemic largely due to a significant drop in oil prices. This led to a decrease in GDP growth and an increased need for borrowing, putting pressure on the country's debt sustainability.

'Following the pandemic, economic activities have rebounded, benefiting from higher-than-budgeted oil prices. This, coupled with prudent fiscal management under the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan, has supported the government to reduce its debt by around RO4bn by the end of the first quarter of 2023,' CBO said in its Financial Stability Report 2023, which was released on Wednesday.

The central bank noted that the reduction in Oman's debt levels and the higher GDP have alleviated debt pressures. As a result, there has been a notable improvement in Oman's debt sustainability.

The country's debt-to-GDP ratio, which had reached the tipping point of 66% in 2021, has



'Economic activities have rebounded, benefiting from higher-than-budgeted oil prices. This, coupled with prudent fiscal management, has supported the government to reduce its debt by around RO4bn'

now decreased to around 40%, according to the CBO report.

'With the government's fiscal space showing improvement, it is expected that the issuance of new debt will decrease significantly in the near future compared to the previous years of fiscal distress (2015-2021). This

positive trend reflects the government's ability to rely less on borrowing as its financial situation strengthens.'

Low risks to financial stability

The report stated that the Omani financial system exhibited 're-

markable resilience' to the heightened volatility and liquidity stress that permeated a large part of the global financial system.

The central bank reaffirmed that 'the short-term risks to financial stability in Oman remain muted and that the Omani finan-

cial system remains strong and well-poised to support the economy'.

The report said the interplay of elevated interest rates globally and bank failures in the US and Europe has put the global financial stability to test.

'Going forward, threats from outside the financial system, including the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy stance, geopolitical developments particularly in Europe, and the OPEC+ agreement will continue to weigh on the macroeconomic outcomes and financial stability in Oman.'

Oil on upward trajectory; Oman oil rises to \$86

Muscat - Omani oil price on Monday headed to the highest level in three months, achieving the largest monthly gain in more than a year, amid expectations that Saudi Arabia will extend the voluntary production cut to September and tighten global supply.

The official price of Oman oil on Monday for September delivery rose 78 cents to US\$86.04. Further, the monthly average price of Oman crude oil for July delivery amounted to US\$74.94 per barrel, down US\$8.34 compared to June delivery price.

Saudi Arabia is expected to extend a voluntary oil output cut of 1mn barrels per day (bpd) for another month to include September, analysts said. 'Oil prices are up 18% since mid-June as record high demand and Saudi supply cuts have brought back deficits, and as the market has abandoned its growth pessimism,' Goldman Sachs analysts said on Sunday.

'We still expect the extra 1mn bpd Saudi cut to last through September, and to be halved from October.'

The bank maintained its Brent forecast at US\$86 a barrel for December and expects prices to rise to US\$93 in the second quarter of 2024.

Monthly average price of Oman crude oil for July delivery was US\$74.94 per barrel, down US\$8.34 compared to June delivery price

Goldman analysts estimate global oil demand climbed to an all-time high of 102.8mn bpd in July and see solid demand driving a larger-than-expected 1.8mn bpd deficit in the second half this year and a 0.6mn bpd deficit in 2024.

SAYYID SHIHAB BIDS ALGERIAN ENVOY FAREWELL



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Al Murtafaa Garrison on Monday Filali Ghouni, Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. Sayyid Shihab thanked the ambassador for the efforts he exerted to enhance relations between Oman and Algeria and wished him success in his future assignments (ONA)

Iraq's stability a priority for GCC

Muscat - Jassem Mohamed al Budaiwi, Secretary- General of Gulf Cooperation Council, has stated that Iraq's stability is a top priority for the GCC countries, emphasising the mutual benefits of strengthening Gulf-Iraqi relations.

Budaiwi made the remark in his meeting with Fuad Muhammad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, on Monday in Baghdad.

The meeting delved into a wide range of issues, while the central focus was on fortifying the bonds between the GCC and Iraq across various sectors.

Budaiwi informed that the two reviewed the joint action plan for the period of 2019 to 2024 during the meeting. An electrical interconnection project between the GCC countries and Iraq is also under consideration.

The secretary-general high-



Jassem Mohamed al Budaiwi with Fuad Muhammad Hussein on Monday

lighted the significance of this project, stating that it symbolises the fraternal ties between the two entities. He further underscored that Iraq's stability is a top priority for the GCC countries due to their shared cooperative bonds.

Reiterating a call from the GCC state leaders, Budaiwi stressed the need to enhance cooperation with Iraq across all

fields. He highlighted the importance of supporting Iraq in safeguarding the integrity of its lands, ensuring full sovereignty, preserving its Arab-Islamic identity, its social fabric, and maintaining national unity.

In another development, the Iraqi Foreign Minister met his Kuwaiti counterpart Salem al Sabah in Baghdad on Sunday, both agreeing to work towards

reaching a definitive agreement on demarcating their borders, including a contested maritime area of the Gulf.

The de facto land and maritime borders between the neighbouring states were established by the United Nations in 1993, three years after Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait.

While Iraqi officials have previously expressed a readiness to recognise Kuwait's land border, the maritime border remains a point of contention.

Baghdad insists that the delin- eation should provide it unhindered access to Gulf waters, a lifeline for its economy and oil exports.

Owing to the long-standing dispute, Kuwaiti coastguards regularly detain Iraqi fishermen and seize their vessels for entering Kuwaiti territorial waters 'illegally'.

Agencies

National Museum launches series on historical figures

Our Correspondent
Muscat

National Museum of Oman has released a six-part book series titled *The Sultanate of Oman in Time and Place*. Aimed at young readers, the series spotlights significant figures from Omani history, from the 2nd to the 20th century.

Each story, accompanied by imaginative illustrations by Syrian writer, illustrator and artist Lujaina al Aseel, was thoroughly vetted by a team from the National Museum and other researchers and writers.

The museum's aim in launching this series is to familiarise the youth with these historical icons who made indelible imprints in Oman's history. By doing so, it

hopes to inspire future generations, instil noble Omani values, and deepen their connection with their homeland, heritage and culture.

The series includes stories about diverse personalities, like Al Khalil bin Ahmad al Farahidi, dubbed the 'Smartest Arab' who compiled the first Arabic dictionary, and Ahmed bin Majid al Saadi, known as 'Lion of the Seas'.

One volume features the life and work of Talib bin Mishmal al Manhi, famed for his calligraphy and engraving.

The series includes *Skilled Doctor* on Rashid bin Omaira al Ayni al Rustaqi, which traces the significant milestones in his life, from his formative years to emergence as a proficient doctor,



Each story, accompanied by illustrations by Syrian writer and artist Lujaina al Aseel, was thoroughly vetted by a team from the National Museum and other researchers and writers

pharmacist, scientist and poet. Acknowledging his scientific contributions, Unesco named him the most influential Omani per-

sonality in the fields of medicine and pharmacy in 2013.

One book - *Mama Fatima* - chronicles the journey of a con-

temporary figure, Dr Fatima bint Salem al Maamari, a pioneer in Omani education and the first woman from Oman and the Gulf

to receive a doctoral degree in 1955. *Saeed Oman and Zanzibar* tells the story of Said bin Sultan al Busaidi, ruler of Oman and Zanzibar for over half a century. His significant contributions include the introduction of clove cultivation in Zanzibar and the establishment of an impressive commercial and military fleet with nearly a hundred vessels of varying sizes, capacities and armaments.

National Museum exhibits artefacts associated with these notable figures.

As part of its community outreach programme, the museum's learning centre is collaborating with local organisations to make the series accessible in various governorates of Oman.



'Al Zeeg' from Oman at Arab Film Festival in South Korea



Communication is key, says psychologist Sahar Salmanian

Rare animals documented by camera traps in Buraimi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Camera traps installed in various regions of Buraimi governorate have successfully captured images of rare animals, according to an official from the Environment Authority (EA).

The camera traps have documented the presence of Arabian deer, red foxes, ibex, reptiles and rare birds.

An EA official informed that these hidden camera traps, equipped with smart sensors, are strategically placed in rugged areas and wadis. These monitor animal movement in the dark, facilitating the collection of wildlife data by the environment management team across different wilayats of the governorate.

"After retrieving the images from the cameras, these are sorted, analysed and categorised based on the location from where retrieved. The compiled data is then submitted to the authority for inclusion in its database. This valuable information serves as a foundation for projects and plans aimed at protecting wildlife in the sultanate," the official said.

Camera traps play a significant role in accurate monitoring of wildlife, ensuring effective im-



(Supplied photos)

National Biodiversity Survey provides information which serves as a foundation for projects and plans aimed at protecting wildlife

ENVIRONMENT INSPECTOR



plementation of protective policies. Highlighting the efforts of EA, an environment inspector

said, "In June 2023, the first phase of the National Biodiversity Survey in Buraimi Gover-

norate was completed. Preliminary field surveys revealed the existence of 11 bird species, three

wild mammal species and six reptiles."

The survey also found remains of wild mammals, including sand cats, Arabian tahr and lynx.

A similar survey in Dhahirah indicated the presence of 12 bird species, two wild mammal species, three reptiles, as well as footprints and remains of four wild mammal species like mountain foxes and wild rabbits.

Elaborating on the National Biodiversity Survey project, the official explained its objective of building a comprehensive national database of species, particularly focused on wild mammals. "The project aims to document and update data on the distribution of animals and the changes they undergo due to economic and urban activities. With a census plan encompassing all medium and large wild mammal species, the project emphasises the provision of accurate statistics."

The use of camera traps and the National Biodiversity Survey project contribute significantly to the preservation and understanding of Oman's wildlife. By capturing rare animal sightings and compiling essential data, these efforts serve as crucial foundations for conservation and informed decision-making.



(Supplied photo)

Muscat Municipality, SQU to collaborate on building systems

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), represented by its College of Engineering, have forged a cooperation agreement to explore modern building systems. The partnership aims to leverage the university's academic and scientific capabilities to enhance the architectural and structural engineering systems across Muscat.

The contract was signed by H H Sayyid Dr Fahd bin al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University, and Ahmed bin Muhammad al Hamidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality. Under the agreement, the university will extend its technical expertise in examining and studying contemporary building materials and systems. The collaboration will strengthen the municipality's endeavours in modernising and expediting the approval process for such systems.

The municipality, with the help of experts from the College of Engineering, will scrutinise these

systems for compliance with safety and environmental standards in Oman. Once confirmed, building owners will be awarded the necessary approvals for employing the new systems.

Hamidi stated that the signing is a testament to the municipality's commitment to stay abreast of global advancements in the construction and architectural sector. By leveraging cutting-edge technology and materials, the municipality aims to speed up urban development in Muscat while ensuring harmony with the local lifestyle and environment.

He added that these systems are environmentally friendly, heat insulating and produce a lower volume of construction waste. Moreover, these present job opportunities for Oman's skilled engineers and technicians interested in launching startups and SMEs to cater to this crucial sector.

The college will also offer technical advisory services, technical support and expertise, and advanced facilities empowering the municipality to improve quality assurance procedures.

Consumer authority clamps down on price gouging in Salalah

Salalah - In a recent campaign, the Consumer Protection Department's Judicial Enforcement Team in Dhofar seized several coconut shops in Salalah. These shops had reportedly refused to provide services, didn't display their official price list, and hiked prices ahead of khareef season.

This operation was part of the Consumer Protection Authority's (CPA) strategy to maintain market stability, aimed at ensuring vendors comply with the Consumer Protection Law and its regulations, particularly during the khareef season when price stability is crucial.

During the campaign, the enforcement team issued 15 violation notices to various shops. The violations ranged from re-



fusal to provide service, price list concealment to hiking prices. CPA described these actions as clear violations of the Consumer Protection Law.

CPA arrested the offenders, issued violation notices and initiated legal procedures. The authority emphasised that its

inspection campaigns are designed to regulate and monitor market practices and ensure adherence to all relevant commercial laws and regulations.

The objective of these campaigns is not just to identify and stop violations, but also to detect any form of malpractice. CPA has expressed its commitment to confront those failing to fulfil their obligations under the relevant laws. It will intensify its inspection efforts to keep check on violations, a statement said.

Additionally, the authority has confirmed that all violators will be referred to the appropriate authorities. This step is aimed at ensuring suitable action is taken against violators to uphold consumer rights.

Gen Nu'amani, commanders of RNO and RAO receive Indian Navy chief

Muscat - Adm R Hari Kumar, Chief of Indian Naval Staff, who is currently visiting the sultanate, met several high-ranking ministry, military and naval officers on Monday.

The Indian Navy chief and his accompanying delegation were received by H E Gen Sultan Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office.

Maj Gen Mattar Salim al Balushi, Commander of Royal Army of Oman (RAO), and Rear Admiral Saif Nassir al Rahbi, Commander of Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), also received Adm Kumar separately in their offices at Al Murtafaa Garrison.

During the meetings, the two sides exchanged views and dis-



cussed various military and naval matters of mutual interest.

The meetings were attended by senior RAO and RNO officers,

the Indian Ambassador to Oman and the military attaché at the Indian Embassy in Muscat.

During the day, Adm Kumar

visited the Maritime Security Centre and the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum.

ONA

TRUSTED SINCE 1920

COST-EFFECTIVE BANK TRANSFERS AWAIT

INDIA	BANGLADESH	PHILIPPINES
UP TO OMR 250 SERVICE FEE OMR 1 ONLY	UP TO OMR 250 SERVICE FEE OMR 1 ONLY	UP TO OMR 250 SERVICE FEE OMR 1 ONLY
ABOVE OMR 250 SERVICE FEE OMR 1.5 ONLY	ABOVE OMR 250 SERVICE FEE OMR 2 ONLY	ABOVE OMR 250 SERVICE FEE OMR 1.5 ONLY

Affordable Money Transfers with PK Exchange! Send money to India, Bangladesh, or the Philippines for just OMR 1 with transfers up to OMR 250. Experience seamless transactions, whether it's a gift or family support. Your satisfaction is our priority.

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE شركة برشوتم كانجي للصرافة

Download it NOW!

+968: 91787829 | 99849289 | 91787829
www.pkexchange.com

Free home delivery & timely service

Free home delivery & timely service

Oasis Water Co. SAOC, PO Box 87, Rusayl 124, Sultanate of Oman. www.omanoasis.com

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

Winner of His Majesty's Cup Award in 2012 & 2013 for Best Free Facilities

Obtain birth, death papers at the earliest: MoH

Muscat - The Ministry of Health (MoH) has urged both citizens and residents to obtain birth and death certificates at the earliest possible to avert violations of the Civil Status Law.

The appeal comes in the wake of delays in issuing these documents, which in turn obstructs the execution of the national strategy for digital transformation.

MoH has outlined a three-step approach for the timely issuance of these critical documents.

In the first step, individuals should promptly request birth or death certificates from the institution under whose jurisdiction the event took place, even if considerable time has lapsed since the event.

Secondly, in the future, it is incumbent on individuals to immediately secure a birth or death certificate upon the event's occurrence. They can do so by contacting the health institution where the event occurred via available communication channels.

Thirdly, personal information in the national health file, particularly civil number and contact number, must be kept up-to-date.

MoH is making a concerted effort to streamline these procedures, providing multiple communication channels for individuals to reach out, including email, phone calls and WhatsApp.

The ministry has cautioned that any delay in completing these procedures is a breach of Articles 13 and 27 of the Civil Status Law, as set out by Royal Decree No 66/99.

Pacts signed with Indian firms to boost tourism

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism completed a road show across India on Monday, securing numerous partnership agreements to boost tourism in the sultanate.

Kicking off in New Delhi on July 24, the promotional events were held in Jaipur and Kolkata before ending in Mumbai on July 31. The concluding event in Mumbai drew participation of approximately 200 tourism entities, marking significant attendance of tourism firms and the Indian press.

Asmaa bint Salim al Hajri,

There was high level of engagement from Omani tourism businesses and their Indian counterparts. This led to the signing of multiple agreements that aim to enhance tourism in Oman

ASMAA BINT SALIM AL HAJRI

Deputy Director General for Tourism Promotion at the ministry, remarked on the favourable



(Supplied photo)

outcome of the shows, stating these saw a high level of engagement from Omani tourism busi-

nesses and their Indian counterparts. "This led to the signing of multiple agreements that aim to

mutually enhance tourism in the sultanate," she added. The ministry's objective be-

hind these promotional tours and road shows in global tourism markets like India, is to appeal to

a broad spectrum of potential visitors, Asmaa added. The events help understand the specific needs of these markets better, and to present Oman's potential as a compelling tourism and entertainment destination to travel agencies and media outlets.

Event participants affirmed the promotional initiative's success in India and applauded the ministry's efforts to elevate Oman's tourism industry. They highlighted the ministry's effective services and offers and appreciated the numerous meetings held to discuss potential partnerships across the tourism sector to boost its competitiveness.

Omani documentary 'Al Zeeg' debuts at Arab Film Festival in South Korea

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Omani documentary *Al Zeeg* has been selected for screening at the 12th Arab Film Festival. This event, organised by the Korean-Arab Society, is taking place in South Korea.

Al Zeeg is among ten films, representing nine Arab nations including Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, Palestine, and Oman. It marks a milestone for Omani cinema with *Al Zeeg* being the first film from Oman to participate in the festival since its inception in 2008.

The film has already been screened in Busan and is scheduled for two shows in Seoul on August 3 and August 6.

Expressing his satisfaction with the documentary's inclusion in the festival, director Salah al Hadhrami said, "This is a source of pride for the entire team, given that Omani films have not previously participated in this festival. I congratulate the crew for this



This is a source of pride for the entire team, given that Omani films have not previously participated in this festival. I congratulate the crew for this achievement.

SALAH AL HADHRAMI

achievement." Produced by Oman Film Society, *Al Zeeg* delves into the intimate relationship between Omanis and sugarcane cultivation. The film details the challenges involved in producing sugarcane syrup.

Additionally, it underscores the nutritional and economic importance of sugarcane, while exploring the social implications of embracing change and modernisation.

Having earned numerous local and international awards, *Al Zeeg* has been chosen for screening at several local and international events, putting the spotlight on Omani culture.



(Supplied photo)

Pact signed to future-proof women workforce

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Lahunna Oman and Salalem, a workplace readiness company, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to complement the development of participants in Sidrah 2.0, a youth leadership programme for Omani Women. The partnership will provide an unprecedented opportunity for Sidrah participants to catalyse their personal and professional growth through a highly engaging learning experience.

Phase II of Sidrah will run for three months and will see participants immersed in gamified challenges to stimulate their learning and growth. The online programme is carefully curated to align with Sidrah's objectives, and it will include weekly micro-learning courses that cover soft skills, personal development, digital literacy, financial literacy and leadership principles. The customised curriculum, online exams and competitions will equip young women with the necessary competencies to thrive in an increasingly dynamic and digital world.

"We are pleased to collaborate with Salalem in our shared vision to nurture Omani youth for the future,"

said Shatha al Maskiry, founder of Lahunna Oman and Director of Phase II of Sidrah 2.0. "This partnership will offer our participants an engaging learning experience with instant recognition to boost their confidence and also gain essential knowledge of soft skills, personal development, business conduct and digital literacy."

On his part, Amin al Hussein, Chairman of Salalem, said, "The synergy between our AI-powered solution and the Sidrah programme will create a unique capacity building approach that will help unleash the intrinsic potential in Omani youth and create the next generation of inspiring leaders."

Through this collaborative effort, Lahunna Oman and Salalem are eager to support the preparation of youth for the future of work, and to become the next generation of innovative leaders and problem-solvers.

Lahunna is an independent initiative formed in 2020, with potential universal reach and application.

It aims to plant a seed to inspire, first locally, then regionally and internationally, the infinite possibilities of a woman's value in society.

N Batinah Municipality begins renovation of Sohar Friday market

Our Correspondent
Muscat

North Batinah Municipality has embarked on a renovation project of Souq al Juma (Friday Market) in the wilayat of Sohar. The market's strategic location in the centre of the wilayat, in proximity to the historic Fort of Sohar and other public markets, makes it a significant local and tourist hub.

The objective of the project is to increase the market's capacity, thereby simplifying showcasing of local products and enhancing infrastructure to minimise overcrowding. An additional benefit will be ensuring seamless market operations during inclement weather conditions such as rain and flooding.

Sulaiman bin Hamad al

Sunaidi, Director General of North Batinah Municipality, confirmed the market's renovation is aimed at diversifying the market landscape and ensuring its continued presence as an economic contributor to the community.

The project includes expanding the market to cover an area of 2,276sqm, paving 1,655m of road, extending asphalt area to 17,260sqm, and a 1,050m channel for rainwater drainage.

Sunaidi underscored that revitalisation of the market will boost commercial and economic activities in the wilayat and the governorate at large. "Traditional markets, such as this one, attract numerous visitors from both within and outside the governorate, providing them access to local commodities."

Ironman Salalah on Sept 21-23 set to boost sports, cultural tourism

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dhofar Municipality unveiled the logo of the second edition of Ironman 70.3 Salalah on Monday.

The highly anticipated event, planned in partnership with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and numerous other government and private sector entities, will take place in Dhofar from September 21 to 23.

Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghasani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, emphasised the event's role in energising both sports and cultural tourism in the governorate.

The Ironman competition underscores the region's robust tourism and cultural potential, drawing international attention



through a host of engaging activities and events.

Ironman 70.3 Salalah draws participation of champions from around the world and garners global interest.

With its competitive spirit, the event presents a prime opportu-

nity to showcase Dhofar's tourism attractions and natural beauty. Furthermore, it allows local businesses, small and medium enterprises and productive families to participate and reap the benefits of this international event.

The event's programme includes a children's race and a race village featuring diverse tourist and recreational activities. The main event, the Ironman 70.3 race - a challenging 113km triathlon involving swimming, cycling and running - will culminate on September 23.

Ironman 70.3 Salalah is among several events and activities lined up by Dhofar Municipality for 2023 after the khareef season, demonstrating the governorate's commitment to sports and cultural promotion.

A QUALITY RANGE OF GRINDERS TO...

all purpose

chilli & garlic

garlic flakes

himalayan

peppercorn

salt

Inspire the taste buds

Distributed by

Please contact +968 22060236/237

ZOI, du collaborate to expand services across nine countries

Dubai, UAE - Zain Omantel International (ZOI), the Middle East's premier international wholesale powerhouse, has recently formed a strategic wholesale international agreement with du, from Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company (EITC).

The partnership guarantees exceptional voice, messaging, and data roaming services powered by advanced 5G technology connectivity, an official statement said.

The collaboration is expected to significantly improve the customer experience for ZOI and du end-users across two continents. The partnership aims to expand and enhance international roaming services across nine countries - the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan and South Sudan.

"This agreement between two innovative entities further demonstrates our commitment to transforming the business and creating synergies while extending our reach and capabilities to provide the highest quality services to our customers," said Sohail Qadir, CEO of ZOI.

"By leveraging our combined expertise and resources, we are confident that we can deliver enhanced connectivity and convenience for customers in the UAE



Sohail Qadir, CEO of ZOI

By leveraging our combined expertise and resources, we are confident that we can deliver enhanced connectivity and convenience for customers in the UAE and across ZOI's operational countries

SOHAIL QADIR

and across ZOI's operational countries."

du CEO Fahad al Hassawi commented, "The partnership between ZOI and du signifies a pivotal move in our joint pursuit

of providing exceptional telecommunication services to our valued customers. With the substantial roaming traffic exchange in the UAE, our collaboration enables us to harness each



Fahad al Hassawi, CEO of du

other's unique strengths, positioning us at the forefront of shaping the future of roaming. This partnership is dedicated to delivering a seamless and effortless experience for travellers throughout the region, surpassing their expectations and setting new industry standards."

The partnership with du marks a significant milestone in the consolidation of Zain and Omantel's wholesale business through ZOI, aimed at achieving group synergies and creating value for partners.

ZOI is revolutionising the wholesale telecommunications sector by offering a unique proposition that combines the strengths of both parties to deliver unparalleled service and support to customers worldwide.

It further solidifies ZOI's position as the only truly pan-regional network connecting all countries in the Middle East to a vast international network and offering a comprehensive portfolio of services and solutions to meet the increasing demands of wholesale customers.



CBO releases RO27mn against Treasury Bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman released RO27mn against Treasury Bills this week, official news agency reported.

The value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to RO5mn, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached RO99.660 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 99.660 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.43214% and 4.44726%, respectively.

Whereas, the value of the allotted Treasury Bills amounted to RO22mn, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached RO98.740 for every RO100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at

RO98.710 per RO100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.05202% and 5.11649%, respectively.

Treasury Bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00% while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50%.

Treasury Bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates.

Added value of enterprises in Oman exceeds RO8.9bn

Muscat - The added value of active private enterprises during the first quarter of 2023 amounted to RO8,941.1mn, constituting a growth of 11.4% compared to the corresponding period in 2022, according to the data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The contribution of active enterprises, which stands at 221,346, to the gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices fell to 77.2% during the first quarter of 2023 compared to 82.6% during the first quarter of 2022, the NCSI reported. The added value of large enterprises amounted to RO6,261.8mn - comprising a rise by 3.7% compared to the corresponding period in the previous year.

Further, the value of medium enterprises amounted to



RO731.5mn (6.3%), comprising an increase by 18.5%, while the value of small enterprises reached RO863.6mn (7.5%), constituting a 36.6% rise.

The added value of micro enterprises reached RO1,084.1mn (9.4%), going up by 47.1%.

The NCSI data also reported 14.2% increase in number of workers in active private enterprises in Oman, which now stands at 1,749,974 till the first quarter of 2023 compared to 1,532,227 during the same period in 2022.

ahlibank reports 'impressive results' in H1 driven by growth

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With its ongoing comprehensive digital transformation, ahlibank has established itself as a progressive banking institute that helped it record impressive results during the first half of the current financial year ending in December.

"Key performance indicators for the six-month period ending on June 30, 2023, reveal the bank's impressive results," the bank stated, adding that its results reflect a strong performance driven by its growth strategy.

ahlibank's total assets recorded a 4.5% growth, reaching RO3.2bn. Customer deposits increased by 9.0 %, reaching RO2.4bn, while net loans and financing grew by 6.8%, reaching RO2.7bn compared to the same



Said Abdullah al Hatmi

period in 2022.

"The results emphasise the bank's long-term competitive success and sustained operational excellence, with a portfolio of innovative products and services," the bank added.

The bank's operating income rose by 9.7%, reaching RO49mn as of the end of June 2023, while operating expenses increased by 1.3%. Net Profit for H1 2023 at

RO19.9mn increased by 26%, primarily due to higher net interest income and fee income.

Commenting on the bank's first half results, Said Abdullah al Hatmi, CEO of ahlibank, stated, "The key financial indicators demonstrate our commitment to maintain the trust and confidence placed in us by our stakeholders. Our focus has always been in maximising shareholder value and ensuring customer satisfaction through efficient delivery of results and good corporate governance. This approach has enabled us to drive business successfully and establish new benchmarks for innovation in customer service and stakeholder engagement."

Hatmi added, "Our commitment to strategic innovation doesn't merely involve the pursuit of novelty but is deeply

rooted in our unwavering dedication to a customer-centric ethos.

"We recognise that the heart of our success lies in understanding and anticipating the evolving needs of our valued clients. This customer-focused approach permeates every aspect of our operations, as we strive to deliver tailored solutions that address their unique requirements."

Also, in its continuing endeavours towards social responsibility, the bank launched a special initiative during the first half of 2023 with the aim of supporting underprivileged families during the holy month of Ramadan, under 'ahlicares' umbrella.

Concurrently, it introduced the ahlibank Souq, a unique initiative that provided a platform for 40 SMEs from different sectors to showcase their products and services.

China announces consumption-boosting measures as data disappoints

Beijing, China - Chinese authorities announced new measures to boost consumption on Monday, as fresh economic data suggested that the country's post-COVID recovery is running out of steam and growth is slowing.

Official figures released on Monday showed factory activity contracting for the fourth straight month in July, adding to a run of dismal economic data that has ramped up calls for government support measures.

A sluggish job market and general uncertainty over the future mean consumer confidence is low.

China's State Council released on Monday a 20-point plan to increase consumption across the board, touching on housing, culture and tourism, as well as green consumption such as electric vehicles.

The measures aim to increase the supply of subsidised rental accommodation and try to solve other problems around housing, particularly for young people.

Once a driving force behind the economy, a crisis in the real estate sector means many developers are now fighting for their survival, exacerbating a crisis of confidence among potential buyers.

The State Council also said it would support the expansion of large-scale festivals and sporting events both on and offline, as well as an increase in spending on services involving catering and healthcare.

Infrastructure in rural areas will be improved to boost digital and green consumption, it added.

Officials told reporters they would "unleash consumption potential by optimising policy



A worker produces automotive bearings at a factory in Hangzhou, in Zhejiang province on Monday (AFP)

and institutional design" in the second half of the year.

Earlier on Monday the official manufacturing purchasing man-

agers' index (PMI) - a key measure of factory output - came in at 49.3, below the 50-point mark that separates expansion and

contraction, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

July's reading was slightly

higher than June's 49.0 figure and was better than forecasted in a Bloomberg survey.

"The overall level of manufacturing prosperity continued to improve," NBS statistician Zhao Qinghe said in a statement.

The non-manufacturing PMI, which measures business sentiment in the services and construction sectors, fell to 51.5 in July from 53.2 in June, as activity in capital market services and real estate shrunk.

"The data release showed mixed messages," Zhiwei Zhang, an analyst at Pinpoint Asset Management, wrote in a note, adding "it seems the economic momentum is still quite weak".

China this month said its economy grew 6.3% in the second quarter, much weaker than the 7.1% predicted in an AFP survey of analysts.

The country's top leaders, known as the Politburo, have warned that the economy faces "new difficulties and challenges" as well as "hidden dangers in key areas".

Zhao also pointed to a low volume of overseas orders, describing a "complicated and severe external environment" and lacklustre demand as major challenges for Chinese manufacturers.

In June, exports dived 12.4%, their biggest decline in three years, according to customs figures.

"The Politburo meeting acknowledged the challenge the economy faces," said Zhang, the analyst.

"The key issue is what policies will be launched after the meeting and how effective they will be."

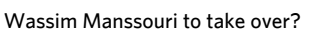
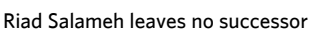
AFP

Beirut, Lebanon - The central bank chief of crisis-torn Lebanon, Riad Salameh, who is wanted for alleged financial crimes in several European countries, handed over his post on Monday with no designated successor in place.

First vice-governor Wassim Manssour, who will temporarily take over, warned that 'we are at a crossroad' and urged politicians to implement reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund in return for a

“This is the country’s last chance,” Manssour said at a press conference, as Lebanon has endured a four year economic crisis that the World Bank has labelled one of the worst in modern history.

Lebanon’s deeply divided political class has failed to agree on a permanent replacement for Salameh (73) creating another power vacuum in a country that also has no president and is ruled



by a caretaker government.

Salameh, who held the post for 30 years, is a key figure of the Lebanese political elite widely blamed for the country's economic meltdown that has seen the currency collapse and poverty rates soar.

The central bank has extended credit lines from its depleted coffers to the cash-strapped state mainly to pay government employees, subsidise some medicine and finance the country's

security forces.

Manssouri proposed to cut all central bank funding for the state while reforms are implemented, to save what is left of its depleted cash reserves.

"We can either stick to the old policies, and we have seen the result...or adopt a new approach and stop funding the state completely," he said.

Manssouri said halting funding was crucial to preserve the central bank's depleted reserves,

which according to the IMF have plunged from US\$36bn in 2017 to US\$10bn.

Authorities must meanwhile implement reforms, including passing a 2023 budget, a capital control law and bank restructuring in the next six months, Manssouri said. Reforms should be rolled out as part of a six-month 'transitional plan', to be approved by parliament and the government, he said.

AFP



London, UK - The UK government said on Monday it would issue 'hundreds' of new oil and gas licences in the North Sea to secure energy reserves while still aiming for net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The announcement angered environmental groups and comes amid an internal debate within the ruling Conservative party on green policies.

The main opposition Labour party has said it will not issue any new North Sea drilling licences if it regains power in a general election due next year.

'Investment in the North Sea will continue to unlock new projects, protect jobs, reduce emissions and boost UK energy independence,' Downing Street said in a statement.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine in February last year saw a global surge in energy prices as Western nations imposed sanctions against Moscow, targeting in particular its massive oil and gas exports.

On a visit to Scotland, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the licensing decision was 'entirely consistent with transitioning to net zero'.

He said that even if Britain achieves net zero by mid-century, around a quarter of its energy needs will still come from oil and gas. "What is important then is that we get that oil and gas in the best possible way. And that means getting it from here at home better for our energy security, not reliant on foreign dictators, better for jobs... but also better for the climate," Sunak added.

A study released on Monday by the North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) said the carbon footprint from domestic UK gas production was one-fourth the footprint from imported liquefied natural gas.

But the licensing announcement prompted a backlash from environmental groups with Greenpeace calling it a "deliberate attempt to polarise the climate debate in the UK and score cheap political points".

Hugo Tagholm, director of Oceana UK, an ocean advocacy organisation, said the decision was a "betrayal of the British people" showing "no regard for a future for our children and generations to come".

AFP

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Crisis-hit Sri Lanka's inflation moderated to 6.3% in July, official figures showed on Monday, its lowest rate in nearly two years.

national Monetary Fund in March.

Last month, the government unveiled a debt restructuring plan which offered a 30% haircut for international sovereign bondholders, who account for more than a quarter of Sri Lanka's outstanding foreign obligations.

The IMF said last month that Sri Lanka's economy showed 'tentative signs of improvement' but warned Colombo still needed to pursue painful reforms.

Last year's economic crisis sparked months of civil unrest which eventually toppled then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

His successor Ranil Wickremesinghe has doubled taxes, removed generous subsidies on energy and sharply raised prices to shore up state revenue.

AFP

المدينة تكافل

Al Madina Takafal

Everything in harmony

Chairman's Report

Dear Shareholders,

Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhi!
(May the Peace, Mercy and Blessing of Allah be with you!)

On behalf of the Board of Directors, and Management team of Al Madina Insurance Co ("Al Madina"), it gives me great pleasure to present to you the financial results achieved by your company for the period ending on 30th June 2023.

The financial results delivered by your Company reflect its intent to deliver consistent surplus from Insurance operations so that the Policyholder's interest is safeguarded while we continue to reward our shareholders.

Al Madina continues to maintain a healthy and well-balanced portfolio across all lines of business. Your Company is constantly enhancing its customer's experience by ongoing process enhancements, efficient claims servicing, and by adopting best international practices in the field of insurance operations.

Operating Environment

The economic environment continues to be challenging where pressure on pricing prevails in the insurance market. Whereas the global insurance & reinsurance markets have also been witnessing rate corrections and insurers operating margins are shrinking. In these tough circumstances your Company achieved a Gross written contribution of RO 18.23 million as of second quarter of 2023 as against 17.77 million during the same period of 2022. This was due to the application of a focused sales strategy adopted by the Company by focusing on profitable business and weeding out certain loss-making accounts which contribute negatively to the Company's profitability. This is evident by a 3% increase in profit after tax as compared to corresponding period of 2022.

Results from Operations

Your Company continues to deliver stable growth while strengthening the adequacy & sufficiency of its reserves. The Company registered a 3% growth in Net Earned Contributions amounting to RO 7.58 million in the 2nd Quarter of 2023 as compared to RO 7.38 million in the corresponding period of 2022. The Company also took corrective measures to control the increase in Claims, as a result of which a 2% reduction was achieved in the net incurred claims as of Q2-2023 as compared to the corresponding period of 2022. Furthermore, an actuarial validation of reserves was performed, and the reserves were found to be adequate.

Investment Income

The Company prudently manages its investment portfolio, while ensuring that all the investments are well diversified and are constantly monitored for Shariah Compliance. The investment performance of your company has improved where 2% growth was achieved and Investment income of RO 774 K was reported for Q2-2023 as against RO 758K for the corresponding period.

Profitability of the company

Your Company reported a 3% increase in profit after tax of RO 728K as compared to RO 706K for the corresponding period.

Risk Management

Your Company constantly evaluates its risks associated with the insurance business as well as its investments and adopts necessary measures to manage these risks.

Company's Outlook & Vision

As we embark into the post-pandemic era, we are extremely optimistic about the year 2023, as the Insurance industry in Oman is poised for a period of stable growth and the overall outlook appears to be positive, as markets have witnessed some stability in the oil prices.

Our emphasis will be on stability and sustainable growth, while keeping the focus on some key drivers such as customer service, launching of new products, technological innovations, and regulatory changes. Much will also depend on how the global reinsurance market responds to the rapid frequency of natural catastrophic events in Oman, subsequently impacting reinsurance pricing in addition to the availability of reinsurance capacities and issues of risk concentrations. Apart from these, public spending, foreign investment, market credit issue and cashflow will also be crucial factors for the growth of the Insurance industry. Our position in the market, combined with strong underwriting fundamentals will enable us to continue our endeavor to provide sustained growth and profitability to all stakeholders in FY2023. We expect to maintain our market position in line with our projection for FY2023 by strengthening the distribution channels and supply chains. Furthermore, mandatory health insurance is expected to be launched soon and it is expected to give a thrust to the Health Insurance market. Al Madina has fulfilled the licensing requirement and awaits further instructions from the Capital Market Authority.

The Company continues to maintain its steady track record of having always been driven by and supportive of national objectives, such as in job creation and Omanization.

Al Madina will focus on its mission of Superior Customer service with many technology-driven innovation and consumer centric strategies. The Company, with its well-planned growth strategy and business continuity plan is well positioned to achieve stable growth and Operational Profit in 2023 through disciplined underwriting, Process efficiency, Expense management and focused sales planning.

Al Madina will continue to invest in IT upgrades, Process automations and digitization of Insurance processes which is expected to provide the necessary platform for a positive engagement with customers and grow on the back of superior customer service.

The Company will also keep looking at growing opportunities within the Islamic finance space to generate stable yield on its investment book and to achieve the targeted investment returns for shareholders and policyholders.

Acknowledgements

It gives me immense pleasure to express appreciation on behalf of the Board. We extend our thanks to our customers, business partners, shareholders, Sharia Supervisory committee, and staff members, for their support and contributions. We also thank and appreciate the Capital Market Authority for their constant support and their initiatives oriented towards the Insurance market, with a special emphasis on the development of Takaful Insurance in the country.

On behalf of the Board, I take this opportunity to express my most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Al Said, for his dynamic and progressive leadership. We are confident that under the leadership of His Majesty, the Sultanate will continue to march toward further progress, development, and prosperity.
May God Bless you all.

Dr. Mohammed Ali Al Barwani
Chairman of the Board.

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2023

	Shareholders' fund				Participants' fund						Grand total			
	Unaudited		Audited		General takaful		Family takaful		Total participants' fund		Unaudited		Audited	
	30 June 2023	31 December 2022	30 June 2023	31 December 2022	30 June 2023	31 December 2022	30 June 2023	31 December 2022	30 June 2023	31 December 2022	30 June 2023	31 December 2022	30 June 2023	31 December 2022
	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO
ASSETS														
Cash and bank balances	798,132	1,043,047	5,263,977	5,196,834	294,353	430,625	5,558,330	5,627,459	6,356,462	6,670,596				
Investments carried at fair value through profit or loss	577,442	857,080	-	-	-	-	-	-	577,442	857,080				
Takaful balance receivable	-	-	11,511,858	17,214,787	1,334,496	953,717	12,846,354	18,168,504	12,846,354	18,168,504				
Retakaful / reinsurance balance receivable	-	-	810,364	309,936	372,080	597,561	1,182,444	907,497	1,182,444	907,497				
Receivable from participants' fund – family takaful	-	-	506,221	711,304	-	-	506,221	711,304	506,221	711,304				
Receivable from participants' fund	2,554,287	2,743,573	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,554,287	2,743,573				
Due from retakaful / reinsurance companies in connection with takaful liabilities	-	-	52,696,111	53,834,700	1,468,872	1,454,586	54,164,983	55,289,286	54,164,983	55,289,286				
Deferred policy acquisition cost	868,717	780,483	38	164	-	-	38	164	868,755	780,647				
Other receivables and takaful assets	960,449	602,830	1,704,994	2,147,944	718,653	633,607	2,423,647	2,781,551	3,384,096	3,384,381				
Investments at fair value through equity	2,148,580	2,068,442	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,148,580	2,068,442				
Bank deposits	4,300,000	4,300,000	8,625,000	12,897,500	1,475,000	1,475,000	10,100,000	14,372,500	14,400,000	18,672,500				
Investments carried at amortised cost	5,210,738	5,710,977	1,460,697	460,519	100,000	100,000	1,560,697	560,519	6,771,435	6,271,496				
Deferred tax asset	299,137	299,137	-	-	-	-	-	-	299,137	299,137				
Investment in real estate	5,170,000	5,170,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,170,000	5,170,000				
Property and equipment	602,049	611,927	-	-	-	-	-	-	602,049	611,927				
Total assets	23,489,531	24,187,496	82,579,260	92,773,688	5,763,454	5,645,096	88,342,714	98,418,784	111,832,245	122,606,280				
LIABILITIES, PARTICIPANTS' FUND AND SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY														
LIABILITIES														
Takaful liabilities	-	-	64,881,078	66,228,713	1,874,136	1,803,877	66,755,214	68,032,590	66,755,214	68,032,590				
Unearned retakaful commission	-	-	224,906	163,979	-	-	224,906	163,979	224,906	163,979				
Retakaful/reinsurance payables	-	-	11,395,081	17,899,454	445,015	443,971	11,840,096	18,343,425	11,840,096	18,343,425				
Accounts and other payables	1,559,170	1,725,552	5,297,209	7,398,300	1,167,290	1,170,808	6,464,499	8,069,438	8,023,669	10,294,990				
Charity fund payable	21,738	21,738	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,738	21,738				
Payable to shareholders	-	-	483,955	902,896	2,070,332	1,840,677	2,554,287	2,743,573	2,554,287	2,743,573				
Payable to participants' fund – general takaful	-	-	-	-	506,218	711,303	506,218	711,303	506,218	711,303				
Employees' end of service benefits	538,674	510,630	-	-	-	-	-	-	538,674	510,630				
Total liabilities	2,119,582	2,257,920	82,282,229	92,593,672	6,062,991	5,970,636	88,345,220	98,564,308	90,464,802	100,822,228				
PARTICIPANTS' FUND														
Surplus / (deficit) in participants' fund – net	-	-	297,031	180,016	(299,537)	(325,540)	(2,506)	(145,524)	(2,506)	(145,524)				
Total participants' fund	-	-	297,031	180,016	(299,537)	(325,540)	(2,506)	(145,524)	(2,506)	(145,524)				
SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY														
Capital and reserves														
Share capital	17,500,000	17,500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	17,500,000	17,500,000				
Share premium	1,380,151	1,380,151	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,380,151	1,380,151				
Legal reserve	1,332,220	1,273,697	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,332,220	1,273,697				
Investment fair value reserve	395,595	315,457	-	-	-	-	-	-	395,595	315,457				
Retained earnings	761,983	1,460,271	-	-	-	-	-	-	761,983	1,460,271				
Total shareholders' equity	21,369,949	21,929,576	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,369,949	21,929,576				
Total liabilities, participants' fund and shareholders' equity	23,489,531	24,187,496	82,579,260	92,773,688	5,763,454	5,645,096	88,342,714	98,418,784	111,832,245	122,606,280				

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' REVENUE AND EXPENSES FOR THE SIX-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	General takaful		Family takaful		Total	
	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)
	30 June 2023	30 June 2022	30 June 2023	30 June 2022	30 June 2023	30 June 2022
	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO	RO
Takaful revenue						
Gross contributions	16,860,510	16,147,631	1,370,706	1,624,544	18,231,216	17,772,175
Retakaful/reinsurance share	(9,649,500)	(8,948,562)	(958,631)	(1,226,598)	(10,608,191)	(10,175,160)
Retained contributions	7,210,950	7,199,069	412,075	397,946	7,623,025	7,597,015
Movement in unearned contributions reserve	8,436	(136,575)	(54,629)	(80,817)	(46,193)	(217,392)
Net earned contributions	7,219,386	7,062,494	357,446	317,129	7,576,832	7,379,623
II Income earned from retakaful contracts	231,368	216,066	7	-	231,375	216,066
	7,450,754	7,278,560	357,453	317,129	7,808,207	7,595,689
Takaful expenses						
Gross claims settled	(5,706,259)	(9,465,033)	(981,930)	(1,014,491)	(6,688,189)	(10,479,524)
Claims recovered from retakaful/reinsurance	1,658,275	4,830,281	838,503	856,333	2,496,778	5,686,614
Net claims settled	(4,047,984)	(4,634,752)	(143,427)	(158,158)	(4,191,411)	(4,792,910)
Net movement in outstanding claims	200,610	707,724	(1,344)	2,146	199,266	709,870
Net claims incurred	(3,847,374)	(3,927,028)	(144,771)	(156,012)	(3,992,145)	(4,083,040)
Commission expense	(126)	(9,756)	-	(567)	(126)	(10,323)
	(3,847,500)	(3,936,784)	(144,771)	(156,579)	(3,992,271)	(4,093,363)
Surplus from Takaful operations	3,603,254	3,341,776	212,682	160,550	3,815,936	3,502,362
Takaful income / (expense) – net	(205,680)	28,259	228	103	(205,452)	28,362
Provision for impairment of receivable	(60,000)	(60,000)	-	-	(60,000)	(60,000)
Surplus from takaful operations before investment income, mudarib share and wakala fees	3,337,574	3,310,035	212,910	160,653	3,550,484	3,470,688
Investment income – net	337,680	229,242	41,553	31,114	379,233	260,356
Mudarib share	(186,137)	(126,083)	(22,854)	(17,112)	(208,991)	(143,195)
Wakala fees	(3,372,102)	(3,229,526)	(205,606)	(234,909)	(3,577,708)	(3,554,435)
Surplus / (Deficit) from takaful operations	117,015	183,668	26,003	(150,254)	143,018	33,414

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE SIX-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	Shareholders' fund	
	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)
	30 June 2023	30 June 2022
	RO	RO
Wakala fees	3,577,708	3,554,435
Investment income – net	394,915	497,904
Mudarib share	208,991	143,195
	4,181,614	4,195,534
General and administrative expenses	(2,496,349)	(2,533,257)
Commission expense	(1,000,093)	(889,282)
Other income	63	113
	(3,496,379)	(3,422,426)
Profit before tax	685,235	773,108
Taxation	(100,000)	(100,000)
Profit for the period	585,235	673,108
Other comprehensive income		
Items that may be reclassified to profit or loss		
Net change in fair value of investments at fair value through equity	80,138	(157,405)
Total comprehensive income for the period	665,373	515,703
Earnings per share - basic and diluted	0.003	0.004

Honor phone unveils H90 and H90 Lite models

Leading global technology brand - Honor has announced the much-awaited launch of its H90 Series in Oman at an event held at the Crowne Plaza Muscat Hotel recently.

The event witnessed the presence of over 200 Honor channel partners from across Oman, and featured engaging presentations and interactive sessions, highlighting the unique selling points and functionalities of the new devices.

Equipped with remarkable camera advancements, display solutions focused on human needs, top-of-the-line hardware for lightning-fast performance, and intelligent operating software, the Honor H90 series includes two exceptional models: the H90 and H90 Lite.

The H90 model is available in two versions, 13GB (8+5) + 256GB and 19GB (12+7) + 512GB; both versions are equipped with an ultra-clear 200 MP Back Camera, 50 MP Front Camera, and Eye-Comfort 380 Hz PWM Dimming.

The H90 Lite is available in a



13GB (8+5) + 256GB, with a 100 MP Back Camera, and 6.7 Inch Edgeless Eye-Comfort Display.

Speaking on the sidelines of the launch, House Ma, GCC CEO

of Honor, said, "We are proud to extend our range of innovative product offerings to the Omani market. The launch of the Honor H90 series mark a significant

step forward in our commitment to providing the most advanced technology to consumers.

"Representing our dedication towards delivering exceptional

user experiences, the devices are designed to meet the evolving needs of tech-savvy consumers, and offer a seamless combination of innovative features, sleek de-

sign, and superior performance."

Accompanying House Ma at the launch event were Russell Huo, GCC Retail Manager of Honor; Kuermanbieke Musha,

GCC Channel Manager of Honor; Muhammad Zubair Nazir, Training Manager of Oman and Qatar, Honor; Rizwan Khan Mumtaz, Oman Channel Manager of Honor; and Akendra Bhandari, Oman Retail Manager of Honor. The distinguished gathering of industry leaders, technology experts and senior management members from both companies was a testament to the significance of the Honor H90 series' launch.

To add to the excitement of the day's proceedings, a lucky draw was organized for the attending dealers, giving them a chance to win amazing smart-phones from Honor; namely H90, H90 Lite, and X5 devices.

MHD-ITICS are the official distributors of Honor in Oman; and its Consumer Division is committed to providing customers with the latest technologies and products. The company's strategic partnership with Honor supports this objective by offering customers the most advanced and innovative solutions at affordable prices.

Tejarah Talks unpacks the next Internet revolution

Back from its summer break, the next Tejarah Talks session tackles one of the most transformative tech developments yet: Web 3.0, the next generation of Internet technology.

Decentralising power from platforms and improving security, privacy and scalability, this digital disrupter builds on the foundations of Web 2.0, taking its concepts up a notch by incorporating advanced technologies like AI, blockchain, augmented reality and the Internet of Things.

Being organised by Oman Business Forum in association with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, 'Web 3.0: Opportunity Unchained' will be held at the Zain Auditorium, Omantel Head Office, in Airport Heights on September 13.

Tejarah Talks is sponsored by Jindal Shaded, Sustainable City Yiti, Nortal, Omantel and Oman FM.

"This Tejarah Talks session is not just about keeping pace with tech trends, it is about discussing an equitable, user-centric digital future that breaks from the traditional, centralized paradigms," explained Maymuna al Adawi, Director, Public-Private Partnerships, Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion and Tejarah Talks organiser.

The MoCIIP Director added:



Jamal al Asmi

"With a focus on the future of the Internet, we will be exploring the challenges and opportunities presented by Web 3.0 technologies for business here in Oman and what it can offer our entrepreneurs. We will also delve into security and privacy issues, how it is transforming finance, logistics, healthcare, entertainment, what is going on with cryptocurrencies and more."

It is expected that Web 3.0 will deliver an Internet that is easier to use, one that supports increasing personalisation and ramps up user experience, helping businesses understand their customers better, enabling them to tailor marketing campaigns to specific groups, increasing conversions, impacting reach and boosting brand awareness. For online shoppers, Web 3.0 augmented reality technology will allow users to look, feel and interact with all kinds of products

in the virtual space, mimicking the customer shopping experience in a real-world store with purchases paid for with digital tokens, taking away the need for intermediaries such as banks and credit card companies and along with them transaction fees.

'Web 3.0: Opportunity Unchained' will be moderated by Jamal al Asmi, Executive Producer, RealityCG. Expressing his expectation of an especially informative and impactful discussion. "Web 3.0's impact will be far-reaching and profound, not just enhancing the experience but reshaping the way we interact with the digital world. Giving users more control, privacy and freedom, it will allow buyers and sellers to interact directly once again, without a third-party, and likely topping Web 2.0 giants like Amazon and eBay," he said.

"I have to say, I am very much looking forward to what the panellists have to share and what I am sure will be a particularly lively audience question and answer session. This is a Tejarah Talks that must not be missed."

Joining Asmi on stage to talk about their own Web 3.0 experiences, will be Ghada al Kharusi, Manager, Innovation Department, Central Bank of Oman; Azzan al Kindi, CEO and Co-founder, Rihai Data Migration & Services; among others.



McLaren Artura scripts new era in high-performance hybrid cars

McLaren Automotive celebrates the presence of the epitome of performance and style in Oman, the McLaren Artura.

This high-performance hybrid supercar stands testament to McLaren's relentless pursuit of technological advancement and revolutionary design.

"Artura is the harmonious blend of art and future. With its advanced aerodynamics, exceptional power, and unrivalled driving experience, the Artura not only redefines the supercar

arena but also showcases our commitment to innovation," stated Michael Leiters, a CEO of McLaren.

Designed with grace and minimalism, the Artura sets a new standard in McLaren's design language. The interior boasts of modern craftsmanship and pioneering design, with a fine selection of materials and vibrant colour detailing, providing a personal space like no other.

Beneath its sleek exterior, the Artura boasts an innovative

McLaren Carbon Fibre Lightweight Architecture (MCLA) and a super-light McLaren V6 twin turbocharged petrol engine. The 8-Speed Seamless Shift Gearbox, using electric power for reverse, underscores Artura's unique blend of power and innovation.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, remarked, "The McLaren Artura signifies a leap into the future. Its blend of speed, elegance, and technology resonates with our clientele's expectations of high performance

and luxury".

MHD ACERE (Automotive, Construction Equipment and Renewable Energy) is one of the largest and most successful privately owned business conglomerates in the Sultanate of Oman and the Gulf region.

It boasts of a diversified portfolio of products and services and brand partnerships from across the continents and is the exclusive distributor of some of the finest automotive brands in the world.

Khedmah continues support to charitable, community initiatives

In its unwavering commitment to serving the community, Oman Investments and Finance Company Khedmah persists in supporting various community initiatives under its corporate social responsibility programme.

Recognising the significance of this aspect in contributing to the advancement of economic and social development, the General Assembly, Board of Directors, and Executive Management of the company allocate a portion of its revenue to cover these facets, standing hand in hand with initiatives and community projects that benefit diverse segments of society.

Within this context, Khedmah continues to back the activities of the Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) as part of its annual financial contribution, following the effective collaboration agree-



ment in place.

As per the agreement, the organisation allocates these contributions to support designated programmes, including aid to underprivileged families in the sultanate and assistance for emergency cases that require support.

Recently, Khedmah has also provided financial assistance to Al Noor Association for the Blind



to fund educational courses for its members and to the Oman Diabetes Association to aid pa-

tients with their specific medical devices.

This gesture reflects

Khedmah's dedication to collaborating with these non-governmental organisations in humanitarian aspects.

Khalid bin Khoor al Balushi, Head of the Corporate Social Responsibility team at Oman Investments and Finance Company Khedmah stated, "Our firm belief in the crucial role played by charitable institutions in driving sustainable development within local communities and their active participation in empowering individuals and families, promoting societal balance, fuels our commitment at Khedmah to renew and expand our collaborations with various entities to implement diverse initiatives for deserving beneficiaries.

"This is a rooted part in our social responsibility goals, backed by the company's Board of Directors and employees, as

we endeavor to instill the values of giving and cooperation to overcome challenges. These initiatives also represent our appreciation for the significant role played by charitable institutions and associations in supporting community projects and aiding deserving cases."

It is worth mentioning that Oman Investments and Finance Company khedmah is the leading company in the sultanate in the field of billing and collection for four decades.

It offers a central point for customers to pay all their public service bills through its network of 68 branches, covering various governorates and regions in the sultanate, in addition to kiosks scattered across the country, as well as its electronic platforms such as Khedmah mobile application and website.

Ooredoo celebrates enhanced 5G Home Internet

Ooredoo is taking pride in having 5G Home Internet services without slowdown or limits on gaming, downloading, or streaming in ultra-high definition.

Ooredoo's unlimited data offer has been made available for three months from Sunday (July 30). Its 5G Home Internet plans are known for great connectivity and superfast speeds, the company stated. On top of that, customers who subscribe to, or upgrade, to the 80Mbps or 200Mbps plans can now enjoy unlimited data for 12 months without having to pay anything extra.

France plotting intervention, says Niger junta

Niger’s new junta accused France of seeking to ‘intervene militarily’ to reinstate the deposed president

Niamey, Niger - Niger’s new junta on Monday accused France of seeking to ‘intervene militarily’ to reinstate deposed President Mohamed Bazoum as tension mounted with the country’s former colonial power and neighbours.

Bazoum, a western ally whose election just over two years ago was a watershed in Niger’s troubled history, was toppled on July 26 by the elite Presidential Guard.

Guards chief General Abdourahmane Tiani declared himself leader - but his claim has been shunned internationally and the West African bloc ECOWAS has given him a week to hand back power.

On Sunday, French President Emmanuel Macron vowed ‘immediate and uncompromising’ action if French citizens or interests were attacked after thousands rallied outside the French embassy.

Some of them tried to enter the compound but were dispersed by tear gas.

The junta on Monday accused France of plotting an intervention. “In its search for ways and means to intervene militarily in Niger, France with the complicity of some Nigeriens, held a meet-



Supporters wave Nigerien’s flags as they rally in support of Niger’s junta in front of the National Assembly in Niamey on Sunday (AFP)

The Economic Community of West African States has demanded that Bazoum be reinstated within a week

ing with the chief of staff of the Nigerien National Guard to obtain the necessary political and military authorisation,” it said on national TV.

The putschists also said six people needed hospitalisation after the embassy security services fired tear gas against the rally. On Sunday, the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS) sounded a tough warning.

The bloc demanded that Bazoum be reinstated within a week, failing which it would take ‘all measures’ to restore constitutional order, which ‘may include the use of force’.

“No more time for us to send a warning signal... It’s time for action,” said ECOWAS chair-

man Bola Tinubu, president of Nigeria - Niger’s neighbour to the southeast and the regional superpower. Russia called for the swift return of ‘the rule of law’ and ‘restraint from all parties so that this doesn’t result in human casualties’.

Crucial ally

Niger became the third Sahel

country in less than three years, following neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso, to be shaken by a military coup.

In all three nations, a militant insurgency strained fragile governments, stoked anger in the military and rained economic blows on some of the world’s poorest countries.

The overthrow of elected presidents has been accompanied by anti-French, pro-Russian demonstrations.

Protestors say France, the country’s traditional ally, has failed to shield them against the militants, whereas Russia would be a stronger ally.

In Mali, a 2020 putsch led to a bustup with France which last year withdrew its troops as the junta brought in Russian paramilitaries. France also quit Burkina Faso after two coups last year brought in a junta that adopted a nationalist line.

The withdrawals prompted France to reconfigure its decade-long anti-militant strategy in the Sahel, concentrating its efforts in Niger, where it has 1,500 troops and a major air base near Niamey. The latest coup, according to the putschists, was a response to ‘the degradation of the security situation’ linked to the mili-

tant conflict, as well as corruption and economic woes.

International critics have ratcheted up pressure, targeting trade and development aid.

ECOWAS has suspended all commercial and financial transactions, while France, the European Union and the United States, which has about a thousand troops in Niger, have either cut off support or threatened to do so. Germany suspended financial aid and development co-operation on Monday, and UN humanitarian operations have also been put on hold.

The landlocked Sahel state has experienced four coups since independence from France in 1960 and numerous other attempts, including two previously against Bazoum.

The 62-year-old is a former interior minister and right-hand man to erstwhile president Mahamadou Issoufou, who voluntarily stepped down after two terms.

Their handover in April 2021, after elections won by Bazoum in a two-round contest against former president Mahamane Ousmane, marked Niger’s first peaceful transition of power since independence.

AFP

Myanmar’s junta extends state of emergency, signalling delay to poll

Yangon, Myanmar - Myanmar’s junta announced a six-month extension to a state of emergency on Monday, signalling a delay to elections they had pledged to hold by August.

The Southeast Asian nation has been ravaged by deadly violence since a coup deposed Aung San Suu Kyi’s government more than two years ago, unleashing a bloody crackdown on dissent.

Thousands of civilians have been killed and injured as the junta battles a clutch of new and established rebel groups opposed to military rule.

Acting president Myint Swe told a meeting of the junta-stacked National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) that the ‘state of emergency period would be extended another six months starting from August 1st, 2023’.

Myanmar’s military-drafted 2008 constitution, which the junta has said is still in force, requires authorities to hold fresh



U Myint Swe (centre), Myanmar’s acting president speak during a defense and security council meeting in Naypyidaw on Monday (AFP)

elections within six months of a state of emergency being lifted.

The junta had previously promised fresh polls by August of this year. Army Chief Min Aung Hlaing explained to the council meeting that fighting and attacks were still happening in Sagaing, Magway, Bago and Tanintharyi regions as well as Karen, Kayah and Chin states.

“We need for a time to continue our duty for systematic

preparation as we shouldn’t hold coming elections in a rush,” he told the gathering.

‘Not yet normal’

The junta had already extended the emergency ordinance this year, a day after the NDSC said that the situation had ‘not returned to normalcy yet’.

Min Aung Hlaing said at the time that the military did not ‘fully control’ more than a third of

Myanmar’s townships.

Anti-coup ‘People’s Defence Forces’ that sprang up to overturn the coup have surprised the junta with their effectiveness, analysts say, and have dragged the military into a bloody quagmire.

Junta groups have torched villages, carried out extrajudicial killings and used air strikes and artillery bombardments to punish communities opposed to its rule, opponents and rights groups say.

Min Aung Hlaing hinted in July the military might further extend a state of emergency and delay promised elections, saying greater efforts were needed to end unrest.

After her government was deposed, Suu Kyi, 78, was convicted in a series of trials that rights groups slammed as a sham, and sentenced her to 33 years in prison. Thailand’s foreign minister said this month that he met with Suu Kyi, her first known meeting with a foreign envoy since the 2021 coup.

AFP

Renewed clashes in Palestinian refugee camp in south Lebanon

Sidon, Lebanon - Automatic weapons and anti-tank fire shook south Lebanon’s Ain al-Helweh Palestinian refugee camp on Monday, after fighting killed six people over the weekend, an AFP correspondent said.

The clashes between members of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas’s secular Fatah movement and Islamists have forced dozens of frightened residents to flee their homes in the camp, which has gained notoriety as a refuge for extremists and fugitives.

Limited skirmishes erupted again on Sunday night, escalating into heavy clashes with gunfire and shelling on Monday, said the AFP correspondent in the southern city of Sidon, where the camp is located.

“Things are supposed to go back to normal soon,” an official involved in the ceasefire negotiations told AFP, asking for anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

The official added that they



Smoke billows during clashes between the Fatah movement and Islamists inside the Palestinian refugee camp, in Sidon on Monday (AFP)

were working on ‘preventing further escalation’.

Palestinian factions said they had reached a ceasefire on Sunday, but the truce did not hold.

On Monday morning, Lebanon’s official news agency NNA reported ‘increased clashes’ using heavy weaponry, with exchanges of gunfire concentrated in the al-Tawarek neighbourhood - a stronghold for Islamist extremists.

Dozens of residents, mostly women and children, fled the camp carrying light luggage, while others took refuge in a nearby mosque, AFP’s correspondent said.

Fighting began overnight on Saturday, killing an Islamist and injuring six others, a Palestinian source inside the camp had told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

AFP

Haiti hails Kenyan offer to lead multinational force

Port-Au-Prince, Haiti - Haiti has welcomed ‘with great interest’ a Kenyan offer to lead a 1,000-strong multinational force to bolster security in the violence-torn Caribbean country.

“Haiti appreciates this expression of African solidarity,” a statement from Foreign Minister Jean Victor Geneus said on Sunday, ‘and looks forward to welcoming Kenya’s proposed evaluation mission’.

Kenya announced on Saturday that it was prepared to deploy 1,000 police agents to help train and support their Haitian counterparts in combating the violent gangs that have taken control of much of capital Port-au-Prince.

“Kenya has accepted to positively consider leading a Multi-National Force to Haiti,” said the Kenyan statement, posted by Foreign Minister Al-

fred Mutua.

A Kenyan-led deployment would still require a mandate from the United Nations Security Council, as well as formal agreement by local authorities.

The council has asked Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to present by mid-August a report on possible options for Haiti, including a UN-led mission.

US diplomats have been actively seeking a country to head a multinational force.

Mutua said Kenya would send an ‘evaluation mission’ to Haiti in coming weeks.

Kenya, seen as a democratic anchor in East Africa, has participated in peacekeeping operations in its own region, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia.

AFP

3 years of anguish for family of Iran death row German

Paris, France - Frustration as other foreign nationals were set free. Occasional phone calls, months apart. And the constant fear that the executioner’s noose could be tightened any day.

The family of Jamshid Sharmahd have endured three years of torment as each day they await a breakthrough, while always fearing the worst, for the German citizen sentenced to death in Iran.

Sharmahd was abducted three years ago in late July 2020 by the Iranian authorities and sentenced earlier this year to be hanged for ‘corruption on earth’. Iran’s Supreme Court in April confirmed the death penalty.

Activists regard him as one of more than a dozen foreign passport holders held by Iran as hostages in a bid to extract concessions from the West.

His family says that Tehran-born Sharmahd, 68, a software developer who immigrated to Germany in the 1980s but then



Jamshid Sharmahd (AFP)

moved to live in the United States, was kidnapped by Iranian security services in the United Arab Emirates in July 2020 and taken to Iran for trial.

Iran has never confirmed how Sharmahd was detained, saying only he was seized in a ‘complex operation’.

Amnesty International has

Phone calls are a reason for concern. They always have a purpose. It could be either a window of opportunity to save his life or a goodbye call. Was this to make us shut up before they execute him?

GAZELLE SHARMAHD

said he was subjected to ‘enforced disappearance’ followed by a ‘sham trial’ and torture in detention.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has classified his detention as arbitrary and confirmed the family’s details on his abduction.

His family, who say he only

holds a German passport, are urging stronger action from the German and other Western governments to earn his release.

Berlin expelled two Iranian diplomats in response to the death sentence, which it called ‘unacceptable’.

A protest is planned outside the German foreign ministry in Berlin on Monday afternoon to mark three years since Iran announced Sharmahd’s capture.

‘Was this goodbye?’

“There is no pressure. A German citizen was kidnapped and nothing happened,” his daughter Gazelle Sharmahd, who lives in the United States, told AFP.

“It’s a game - they push and you push. The push for them is to hang my dad,” she said.

Sharmahd earlier in July was allowed to call his wife, also based in the US, for the first time in five months. He was also permitted to speak to Gazelle Sharmahd, the first time she had

spoken to her father in two years.

But Gazelle Sharmahd said the one-hour conversation, in which he sounded tired, raised more questions than answers.

“Phone calls are great but also a reason for concern,” she said. “They always have a purpose. It could be either a window of opportunity to save his life or a goodbye call.”

“Was this to make us shut up before they execute him? Was this a goodbye?” she said.

The Mizan Online news agency of Iran’s judiciary reported in February that a Tehran court sentenced Sharmahd ‘on the charge of corruption on earth through planning and directing terrorist acts’ including a 2008 bombing in Shiraz which killed 14 people.

His family ridicule these accusations, saying a ‘long series of baseless charges’ were laid against him in addition to the mosque bombing.

AFP

Briton in Cyprus who killed ill wife gets jail, freed on time served

Nicosia, Cyprus - A British pensioner in Cyprus who killed his terminally ill wife was sentenced on Monday to two years' jail but then released because of time already served, his lawyer said.

David Hunter, 76, was initially tried for the premeditated murder of his 74-year-old wife Janice, who suffered from blood cancer, on December 18, 2021.

But he was convicted last week of the lesser charge of manslaughter for what the court heard was the mercy killing of his wife of more than half a century.

Factoring in the time Hunter has already spent behind bars since his arrest and good behaviour, he was being freed immediately, his defence lawyer said.

"David Hunter was given a two-year sentence which means that he will be released from custody immediately," said British lawyer Michael Polak of the group Justice Abroad.

"We are very pleased with the sentence of the court today."

The Paphos Criminal Court decision was unanimous, with the three judges saying they had taken into account the personal circumstances as well as the need to send a deterrent message.



Retired British miner David Hunter enters a police van as he leaves the court, after a mitigation hearing, in Paphos on July 27 (AFP)

Hunter, a retired miner from the English region of Northumberland, and his wife had been teenage sweethearts and married for 52 years.

In December 2021, Janice, who was suffering from advanced leukaemia, begged her husband to end her life, the court heard.

Hunter said he had finally acquiesced to his wife's wishes, smothering her to death in their sitting room in Tremithoussa, near Paphos, on the Mediterranean island's west coast.

Police found Hunter after he overdosed on prescription pills

and alcohol in an attempt to take his own life.

'An impulsive act'

In Cyprus, a largely Christian Orthodox country, euthanasia is taboo and there is no law on assisted suicide.

The judges agreed with the defence case that Hunter had not committed premeditated murder but had acted spontaneously to end the life of his wife, who had been begging him to do so because of the pain she suffered.

"The way the accused acted at the material time does not show premeditation for his illegal act but, on the contrary, an impulsive act without a clear mind," said presiding Judge Michalis Drousiotis.

"Murder must be the result of planning and committed in cold blood."

Towards the end of her life, Hunter said his wife was so unwell that she could no longer walk upstairs, and they had to sleep in a lounge chair on the ground floor of their home.

During repeated blood transfusions for cancer, Hunter said she repeatedly asked him to end her life.

AFP

Beijing on alert with 2 killed as rain batters north China

Beijing, China - Heavy rains battered northern China on Monday, killing at least two people in Beijing while washing away cars and forcing the capital to issue its highest alerts for flooding and landslides.

Storm Doksuri, a former super typhoon, has swept northwards over China since Friday, when it hit southern Fujian province after scything through the Philippines.

Emergency personnel recovered two bodies from waterways in Beijing's Mentougou district on Monday, the state-run *People's Daily* said.

AFP reporters saw tree branches and dented cars, left by receding floodwaters, strewn on riverbanks in Mentougou on Monday afternoon.

"This morning it was crazy, the water overflowed the Mentougou river and the whole avenue was flooded," Guo Zhenyu, a 49-year-old resident, told AFP.

Yellow bulldozers, workers in orange mackintoshes and residents cleared away the mud and debris during a period of lighter rain on Monday afternoon.

"I'm old but I've never seen flooding like this before in my life," Mentougou resident Qin Quan said.

She showed AFP a video on her phone, shared among residents of the area, of workers attempting to resuscitate an unconscious man, as well as footage of a man desperately clinging to a pole with one hand as water washes over him.

The much larger and still swollen Yongding River in the



A local person stands by the overflowed Yongding river, after heavy rains in Mentougou district in Beijing on Monday (AFP)

This morning it was crazy, the water overflowed the Mentougou river and the whole avenue was flooded

GUO ZHENYU

same district churned up debris in brown torrents as residents looked on in shock from a bridge.

Chen Hong, a resident of the southern Fengtai district, shared footage with AFP that showed a parked van half-submerged in fast-flowing brown water on

Monday morning as the rain continued to fall.

Residents in Chen's neighbourhood cleared mud outside their homes with shovels during a brief respite from the downpour. "Once it starts raining the road turns into a drain, and there's water on the first floor inside houses," said Chen, 52.

"The houses here are all old houses, so there are definitely concerns about safety," she said.

A section of road surface in the outer Fangshan district caved in under rising water, local media reported.

Hundreds of bus services in the capital were suspended, according to state news agency Xinhua, while the city govern-

ment issued the highest flood warning for the suburban Dashihe River.

Social media users uploaded footage of vehicles swept away by muddy torrents and thoroughfares turned into rapids on the outskirts of the city.

Murky water can be seen in one clip posted on the Instagram-like Xiaohongshu platform on Monday swamping a large intersection in the outer Mentougou district next to high-rise apartment blocks. The clip was geolocated by AFP.

Rainwater also appeared to leak onto a subway platform in western Beijing's university district in another Xiaohongshu video from Sunday that was ge-

olocated by AFP.

Extreme weather

The streets of central Beijing were quieter than usual on Monday morning as residents heeded official recommendations to work from home, with only a handful of delivery drivers braving pools of water seen in usually packed bike lanes.

The governments of Beijing and neighbouring Hebei province renewed red alerts for rainstorms on Monday. China has been experiencing extreme weather and posting record temperatures this summer, events that scientists say are being exacerbated by climate change.

AFP

Australian helicopter mishap: No hope of finding survivors

Sydney, Australia - Authorities have lost hope of finding survivors after a military helicopter plunged into the sea during war games over the weekend, Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said on Monday.

Rescuers initially clung to slim hopes they would find the four crew members alive, but those were dashed after the discovery of 'significant wreckage' from the aircraft, Marles said. The chopper had been taking part in the large-scale Talisman Sabre exercise, which brings together 30,000 military personnel from Australia, the United States and several other nations.

It plunged into the water near the Whitsunday Islands while taking part in a nighttime operation.

"There was a catastrophic impact, and that forms part of why we are now transferring this from an activity of search and rescue, to one of recovery," Marles told reporters.

Militaries from at least three nations had joined police in looking for the crew of the MRH-90 Taipan, which went down late on Friday night in subtropical waters off the northeast coast of Australia.

"The loss of these four men is as significant and meaningful as the loss of anyone who has worn our nation's uniform," Marles said, adding he was 'deeply sorry' for their families.

AFP

Ten candidates clear hurdle to seek Panama presidency

Panama City, Panama - Ten candidates qualified to vie for the presidency of Panama, meeting a deadline that set the stage for the May 2024 elections, the Electoral Tribunal said on Sunday.

The last candidates to qualify were lawyer and journalist Ricardo Lombana (centre right), legislator Zulay Rodriguez of ruling Democratic Revolutionary Party, leftist teacher Maribel Gordon and former minister of commerce Meliton Arrocha.

Lombana was chosen by the leadership of the Another Road Movement.

On Saturday, the Tribunal recognised the candidacy of Jose Alberto Alvarez, a rightist from the small Independent Social Alternative Party (PAIS).

Also aspiring to lead the nation are former presidents Ricardo Martinelli (rightist) and Martin Torrijos (centre right), current Vice President Jose Gabriel Carrizo, former foreign secretary Romulo Roux (right) and former Panama City mayor Jose Isabel Blandon (centre right).

AFP

ROYAL SHOW



Jets of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces perform above the city of M'diq marking the 24th anniversary of Morocco King Mohammed VI's accession to the throne, on Sunday (AFP)

Bolivia says huge manhunt closing in on accused drug lord Marset Cabrera

La Paz, Bolivia - Bolivia has mobilised more than 2,250 security agents in a massive operation closing in on an alleged cocaine trafficker who has ricocheted around the world to elude capture, a senior official said on Sunday.

The target of the hunt is Sebastian Enrique Marset Cabrera, wanted on drugs charges in his native Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil and the United States.

"A series of raids have been carried out in the department of Santa Cruz... (for) a drug trafficker of high value for our region and the whole world," Bolivian Interior Minister Eduardo del Castillo said.

"We have mobilised more than 2,250 police officers, more than 144 motorised vehicles, we have carried out more than 23 operations, six raids and the arrest of 12 people," Del Castillo said.

Marset Cabrera, who is 32, is believed to be in Santa Cruz, a



This photo released by the Bolivian Ministry of Government on Sunday shows Uruguayan Sebastian Marset (right) posing for a picture (AFP)

sprawling energy-producing region of southeastern Bolivia abutting Brazil and Paraguay.

Del Castillo said Marset Cabrera is accompanied by his Peruvian wife and three children.

"In the coming hours, we will achieve the detention of Mr Sebastian Enrique Marset Cabrera," Del Castillo avowed.

Heavily armed police raided a luxury home in Santa Cruz, a city of 1.9mn inhabitants that is capital of the department of the same name, and entered other properties, an AFP journalist witnessed.

Del Castillo said raids during the day netted 17 long guns, a pistol, nearly 2,000 rounds of

ammunition, bullet-proof vests and 31 vehicles.

Released from UAE prison

Authorities said they believed Marset Cabrera entered Bolivia last September, and maintained a relatively high profile, including acquiring a professional soccer club in the nation's Second Division.

As recently as two years ago, Marset Cabrera was in jail in the United Arab Emirates on charges of using a forged Paraguayan passport, but managed to obtain his freedom using Uruguayan documents.

Authorities accuse him of being one of the most powerful drug traffickers in the Southern Cone region, transporting multi-ton shipments through Uruguay.

He has been linked to former Paraguayan president Horacio Cartes's uncle, who was convicted of marijuana trafficking.

AFP

Quran set alight outside Sweden parliament

Salwan Momika and Salwan Najem stomped the Muslim holy book, set its pages ablaze

Stockholm, Sweden - Two men set the Quran alight outside parliament in Stockholm on Monday, an AFP reporter saw, at a protest similar to previous ones that have sparked tensions between Sweden and Middle Eastern countries.

Salwan Momika and Salwan Najem stomped the Muslim holy book, set its pages ablaze before slamming it shut, as they did at a protest outside Stockholm's main mosque in June - sparking outrage across the Middle East.

The duo also staged a similar protest outside Iraq's embassy in Stockholm on July 20, where they stomped on the religious text but did not burn it.

Swedish police granted a permit for the protest by campaigners hoping to see the Quran banned in the country, according to local media.

"I will burn it many times, until you ban it," organiser Salwan



Shiite Muslims shout anti-Sweden slogans during a procession on the tenth day of Ashura in the Islamic month of Muharram, in Rawalpindi on Saturday, as they protest against the burning of Quran outside a Stockholm mosque that outraged Muslims around the world (AFP)

Najem told *Expressen* newspaper.

As at earlier protests, Momika and Najem were the only participants, with a small group of counter-protesters gathering outside the police cordon, according to an AFP reporter at the scene.

Mats Eriksson, a spokesman for the Stockholm police told AFP that the event 'had been con-

ducted without any serious public order disturbances'.

During the protest Momika also stomped on a picture of Shiite Muslim cleric and political leader Moqtada Sadr - whose followers had stormed Sweden's embassy in Baghdad in response to previous desecrations. They had started fires within the compound the night before the July

protest.

'All for attention'

"We saw him standing there again and yelling stuff about the Quran and about Islam, playing with the Quran, and honestly it's all for attention and it's pretty obvious," Tamazight El Yaakoubi, an 18-year-old law student from the Netherlands, told AFP.

Quran desecrations.

Swedish police have previously stressed they only grant permits for people to hold public gatherings and not for the activities conducted during the events. Both previous protests have led to widespread outrage and condemnations.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose support is crucial for Sweden's candidacy to join the NATO defence alliance, has expressed deep anger at the Quran burnings.

texts, citing security concerns following a backlash over incidents that saw the Quran desecrated in the country.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said a similar process was already under way, while noting his country was in 'the most serious security situation since World War II'.

"Here at home we know that states, state-like actors and individuals can take advantage of the situation," Kristersson said in a post to Instagram.

Swedish and Danish envoys have been summoned in a slew of Middle Eastern nations.

Saudi Arabia and Iraq have called for a meeting, expected to be held on Monday, of the Jeddah-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to address Quran desecrations in both Sweden and Denmark.

Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said on Monday that he had been in contact with several of his counterparts among the 57 member states of the organisation ahead of the meeting and sent a letter to all members.

In a statement, Billstrom said that he had informed them about the process for granting permits for public gatherings in Sweden and that police made such decisions independently.

AFP

Here at home we know that states, state-like actors and individuals can take advantage of the situation

ULF KRISTERSSON

Tensions flare

Last week, Sweden ordered 15 government bodies including the armed forces, several law enforcement agencies and the tax office to strengthen anti-terrorism efforts.

On Sunday, neighbouring Denmark said it would explore legal means of stopping protests involving the burning of holy

Senegal restricts mobile data

Dakar, Senegal - Senegal on Monday announced that mobile data was being restricted due to 'hateful and subversive' messages on social media, following calls for protests over the arrest on Friday of opposition politician Ousmane Sonko.

The public prosecutor on Saturday announced seven new charges, including calling for insurrection, against Sonko, a presidential candidate and fierce critic of President Macky Sall.

"Due to the dissemination of hateful and subversive messages on social networks... mobile data internet is being temporarily suspended during certain hours from Monday July 31," the minister of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy said in a statement.

Sonko was scheduled to be interrogated by a judge on Monday. The judge will then decide whether or not to lay charges.

There was a strong police presence, including anti-riot vehicles and barriers, around the courthouse in the capital Dakar on Monday morning, an AFP journalist reported.

A heavy security presence could also be seen throughout the city.

Cire Cledor Ly, one of Sonko's lawyers, said it was impossible for the defence team to speak to or prepare the politician for the hearing. "It is a scandal", he told reporters outside the court.

In a separate affair, Sonko was on June 1 sentenced in absentia to two years in prison for morally corrupting a young woman, which makes him ineligible to stand in next year's election.

AFP

Five people killed in central Ukraine as Moscow says intensified strikes

Kyiv, Ukraine - A missile strike on a residential building in Ukraine killed five and wounded dozens on Monday, as Russia said it stepped up strikes against Ukrainian military facilities in response to attacks on its territory, including Moscow.

Two missiles landed close to the centre of Kryvyi Rig just after 9am (0600 GMT), Ukrainian interior minister Igor Klymenko wrote on Telegram.

Among the dead were a 10-year-old girl and her 45-year-old mother, while 64 people were injured, according to local authorities. "(Several) people may still remain under the rubble," the head of the city's military administration Oleksandr Vilkul said.

One of the strikes hit a large nine-storey residential apartment block, punching a huge hole in the facade that destroyed flats on several floors and sparked a fire.

Firefighters were using a cherry-picker crane to direct jets



Rescuers carry the body of a resident retrieved after a residential building was partially destroyed in missile strike in Kryvyi Rig on Monday (AFP)

of water at the fire, while the emergency ministry said part of the building had collapsed while rubble was being cleared.

As the toll of the strike rose, Russia said it had intensified attacks on military infrastructure in Ukraine after increasingly frequent drone assaults blamed on Kyiv.

Russia on Sunday said it had

downed Ukrainian drones targeting Moscow and annexed Crimea, the latest in a series of attacks on the capital, border regions and the peninsula on the Black Sea.

"Against the background of the failure of the so-called 'counteroffensive', Kyiv... has focused on carrying out terrorist attacks on civilian infrastructure," De-

fence Minister Sergei Shoigu said on Monday.

In response, 'the intensity of our strikes against Ukrainian military facilities... has been considerably increased', Shoigu said.

Sunday's drone attack damaged two office towers in a Moscow business district, shattering several windows and leaving documents strewn on the ground.

The capital and its environs, lying about 500km (310 miles) from the Ukrainian border, had rarely been targeted during the conflict until several drone attacks this year.

Following the strikes, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned on Sunday that war was coming to Russia.

"Gradually, the war is returning to the territory of Russia - to its symbolic centres and military bases, and this is an inevitable, natural and absolutely fair process," Zelensky said.

AFP

HONOURING A MARTYR

A man garlands a statue of Indian Sikh revolutionary Udham Singh on the occasion of his death anniversary, in Amritsar on Monday (AFP)

Australia: Object on beach identified as part of Indian rocket

Sydney, Australia - A mysterious object that washed up on an Australian beach has been identified as debris from an Indian rocket, officials said on Monday.

The bulky barnacle-encrusted cylinder was first spotted in mid-July near remote Jurien Bay, a coastal region two hours' drive north of Perth in Western Australia.

Amateur sleuths speculated online that the object might have a military origin or even be linked to the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight MH370. But the Australian Space Agency said the object was 'most likely' debris from an 'expended third-stage of a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle'.

The medium-lift launch vehicle

is operated by the Indian Space Research Organisation, the agency added. The object, which measures some two metres high and has cables dangling from the top, is being kept in storage.

Meanwhile, officials from both countries are working together to 'provide further confirmation to determine next steps, including considering obligations under the United Nations space treaties'.

It is not the first time Australia has found itself a landing ground for space junk - last August, a sheep farmer in New South Wales found a charred chunk from one of Elon Musk's SpaceX missions jutting out of his paddock.

AFP

Pakistan police comb bomb site after blast

Khar, Pakistan - Pakistan police on Monday combed through the bloody wreckage of a suicide blast that killed at least 47 people at an Islamist party's political gathering ahead of elections due later this year.

Around 400 members of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F (JUI-F) party - a key government coalition partner led by a firebrand cleric - were waiting for speeches to begin when a bomber detonated a vest packed with explosives and ball bearings near the front stage.

"I was confronted with a devastating sight - lifeless bodies scattered on the ground while people cried out for help," Fazal Aman, who was near the tent when the bomb went off, told AFP.

The attack occurred in the town of Khar in the northwestern Bajaur district, just 45km from the Afghan border, in an area where militancy has been rising since the Taliban took control of Kabul in 2021.



Security personnel stand guard at the site of a bomb blast in Bajaur district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province on Monday (AFP)

The blast has raised fears Pakistan could be in for a bloody election period following months of political chaos prompted by the ousting of Imran Khan as prime minister in April last year.

Parliament is likely to be dissolved after it completes its term in the next two weeks, with national elections to be held by mid-November or earlier.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but the Pakistan Taliban - who operate in

the area - have denied being behind it.

The local chapter of the militant Islamic State group, who have not yet commented on the attack, have in the past targeted JUI-F rallies and leaders.

Shattered family

On Monday, blood-stained shoes and prayer caps littered the site, along with ball bearings and steel bolts from the suicide vest.

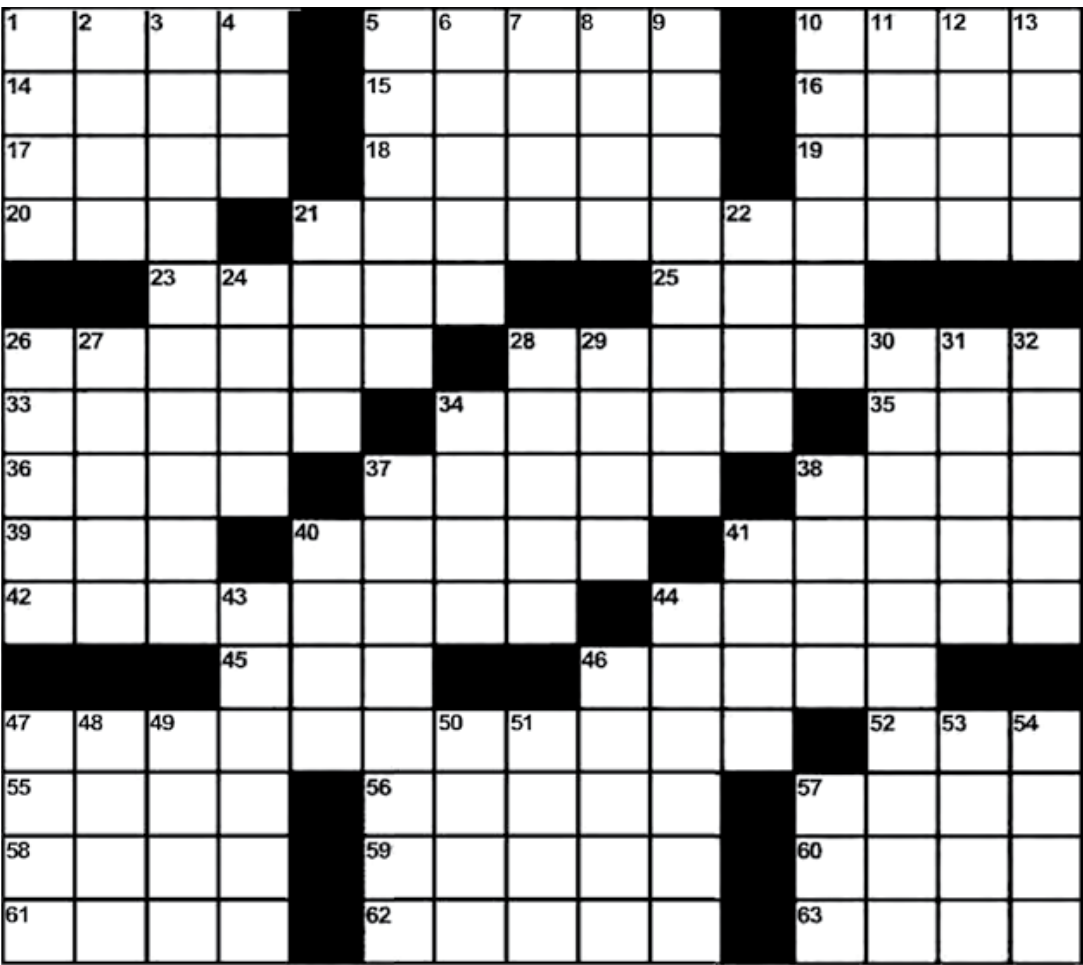
Pieces of human flesh could still be seen, blasted 30 metres (100 feet) from the stage where the bomber detonated his device. Thousands of mourners attended the first funeral ceremonies, including for two young cousins aged 16 and 17.

"It was not easy for us to lift two coffins. This tragedy has shattered our family," said Najib Ullah, the brother of one of the boys. "Our women are profoundly shocked and devastated. When I see the mothers of the victims, I find myself losing my own courage."

JUI-F's leader, cleric Fazl-ur-Rehman, started political life as a firebrand Islamist hardliner, and while his party continues to advocate for socially conservative policies, he has more recently forged alliances with secular rivals. He has operated in the past as a facilitator for talks between the government and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a rival of the militant Islamic State group.

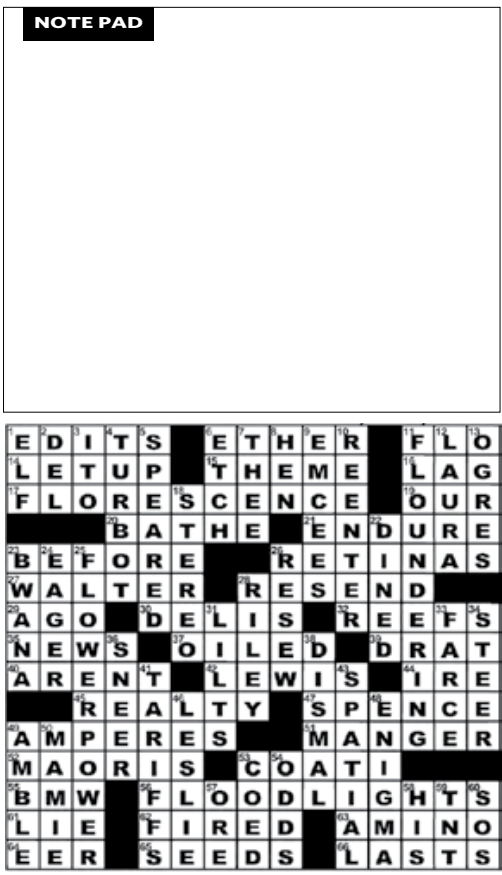
AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS
- 1) Study all weekend
5) Newton with a bump on the noggm
10) Pompous "bye"
14) Murder mystery suspect
15) Saki's real last name
16) 37-Across booking
17) Brings to a conclusion
18) Pumpkin eater of rhyme
19) "Render therefore _
Caesar
20) Org. approving new medicines
21) Well-connected kids' game
23) Western film "necktie"
25) Band-Aid necessiator
26) In style
28) High-pressure pitch
33) Glorify
34) One of the Barbary States
35) Constrictor snake
36) Ad_ (improvises)
37) Well-connected travel guide listing
38) Set edge-to-edge
39) "To Crosswords" could be one
40) Sapid
41) Garbage
42) Socializes in search of
new business
44) Submerged nets
45) It may appear after a long time?
46) Far from trailing
47) Like well-connected natives
52) Cap from Morocco
55) "This won't hurt _"
56) Gradually surrender to wind and water
57) Model builder's need
58) Chanel's famous fragrance
59) Where you look better upon exiting
60) "Encore!"
61) Acute, as vision
62) Astral objects
63) They provide easy times
- DOWN
- 1) Master of whipping, beating and stuffing
2) Violently split
3) What well-connected lookouts do?
4) Woman who made it official
5) Like a playfully naughty grin
6) Blue shoe material of song
7) Starting poker chip
8) Neighborhood
9) Farm storage site
10) Has faith in
11) Sensational rating
12) Carry-on bag
13) Run_ (go nuts)
21) One expecting an RSVP
22) They don't go "boom!"
24) Lubricates
26) Breakfast side, some-times
27) Iron_ (rust)
28) Seeks prey
29) First name in Mayberry
30) What well-connected tides do
31) Nit
32) Plasterwork backers
34) To-do list item
37) Certain British noble
38) Solo at an opera
40) Garment of old Rome
41) Like a football at kickoff
43) Like some destruction
44) Surface lusters
46) Intense feeling of love
47) It makes a stool a chair
48) Slender woodwind
49) Jambalaya ingredient
50) Old-style "Shucks!"
51) Weapon with weights

on each end
53) 100 cents
54) This puzzle has two?
57) Clock standard, briefly



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Let go of the details today. You have to face the fact that not every single one of them is going to line up neatly for you. But the good news is your overall plan will work out quite well. It won't be perfect, but what is? You have to let go of that idea. It will only stress you out and make you miss the chance to feel proud of yourself. You'll get a lot more accomplished if you just accept things the way they are and start working with what you have.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Is a parent or coach just not giving you the tough love you're looking for? Wish your boss would give you more positive reinforcement instead of negative? Looking for a little bit more affection from your sweetie? If you want your needs to be met by others, you need to do them a favor and let them know what you need! No matter how much they want to be what you need them to be, people can't read your mind. You've got the diplomatic skills to say what you want without sounding demanding

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You should have no doubts whatsoever about your abilities today. There is no room in your busy schedule for uncertainty, plus there's absolutely no reason for it. Not only will you be able to spot any potential problems or conflicts right away, but you will also lead the way in trying to fix them. It's time to step out of the shadows and into the limelight. Someone you admire is waiting for you to strut your stuff and put your own unique spin on things.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
While no one could get away with calling you lazy today, there's a strong possibility that you're not going to be very motivated. This is probably due to the perceived lack of excitement in today's activities. But what you might think sounds boring could actually turn out to be quite fun if you open your mind to it. Plaster a smile on your face and tell yourself it's going to be fun! It just might be. It's not about fooling yourself. It's about expecting the best.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
If you're shopping today, watch out for impulse purchases. Spending money on every bauble, gadget, and clothing item you see might make you feel powerful and giddy in the moment, but once you get home and take a look at your haul, you're sure to feel buyer's remorse. Save yourself the regret and the credit card bill. When you see something you want, walk away and come back to it later. If you still want it, get it, but chances are you won't.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
If you never stop to smell the roses, you'll never know how sweet life can truly be. There is no need to rush around today, despite what anyone else may say. You're in a period of fullness right now in which a lot of what you've been working for has finally been integrated into your life. But you won't realize this unless you slow down and coast for a while. There's no need to put out every fire that ignites. Sometimes the chaos of life can be enriching.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Someone's been paying a lot of flattering attention to you, but today their focus on you could start to be overwhelming. If this relationship starts bringing up some bad or confusing memories, you need to step back and give yourself more space to think things through. Don't worry that you'll be hurting the other person or spoiling the momentum. That stuff just doesn't matter as much as your comfort level. Take care of yourself first and you'll be better at helping others.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
There is going to be a ton of romantic energy flying around today, but will you really have enough time to take advantage of all of it? As much as you'd like to, you can't spend all day flirting with people. You have to focus on work now so that you can focus on fun later. Trying to combine the two is only going to make you fail at both, so make sure you prioritize things correctly today. Get the boring stuff out of the way early, then devote the rest of your day to connecting with a cutie.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Today, you'll be able to talk to absolutely anyone, even the folks who usually intimidate you or make you nervous. This is a very good day for you to ask for a raise, try to get some face time with the big boss, or ask someone out on a date. You'll give off an unmistakable air of confidence (that might be a bit stronger than what you actually feel), and this level of bravado could open up some very important doors for you. Stand up for yourself and watch how quickly people back down.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
It is natural to want to compare yourself to other people, but there really is no comparison. You have your own unique personality, and inherent in that is the fact that not every person you meet will connect with it. So what if you're not every person's cup of tea? All that matters is that the people who get you are the people you want to be around. So please stop wasting your energy trying to impress someone who just isn't worth it. Watch out for others who try to change you!

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Today, you're standing on a firm foundation of accurate awareness. You just learned some critical information. You know the real deal, and nothing anyone else says to you can change your mind. This level of conviction will help you persevere through long, boring meetings and handle people who think they know it all. It's also going to help you see certain people in a much clearer light. There has been a lot of fast talking going on and not a lot of progress.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Finding a balance between what you want and what is best for everyone involved is very important today, so before making any decisions, factor in other people's feelings and minds. This could be difficult, because you can't exactly read people's minds. Luckily, your intuition is strong, and you can sense what people want. Don't bend too far over backward to accommodate them, though. Just let them know that their feelings were considered. That will be enough to keep them happy and on board.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. In the printing industry what is a proofreader asked to do?

- A. Correct a text's errors in typography, grammar, spelling, punctuation, syntax and formatting
- B. Check a text for errors in grammar etc, consistency, continuity and fact, and for legal issues
- C. Canvass a text with focus groups
- D. Ensure that what is stated in a text is proven within the text

02. In the various Conventions for SOLAS, in 1914, 1929, 1948, 1960 and 1974, what does the second "S" stand for?

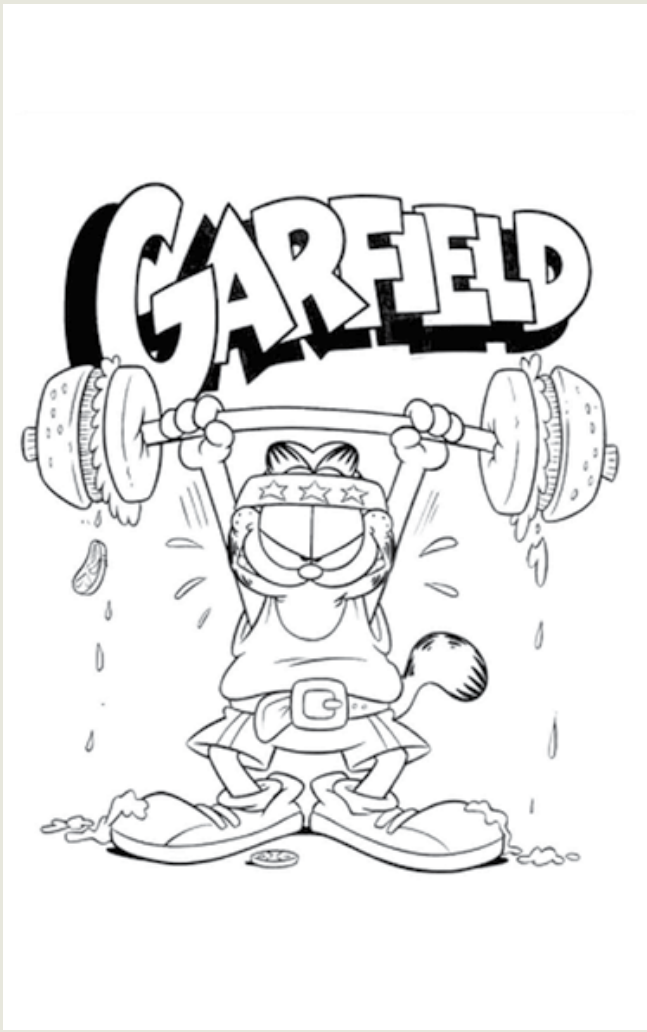
- A. Sports
- B. Sea
- C. Societies
- D. Science

03. What was the first event to be competed in the modern Olympic Games?

- A. Weightlifting
- B. Discus
- C. 100m qualifying heat
- D. Fencing

Answers: 1. A 2. B 3. C

KIDS COLOURING



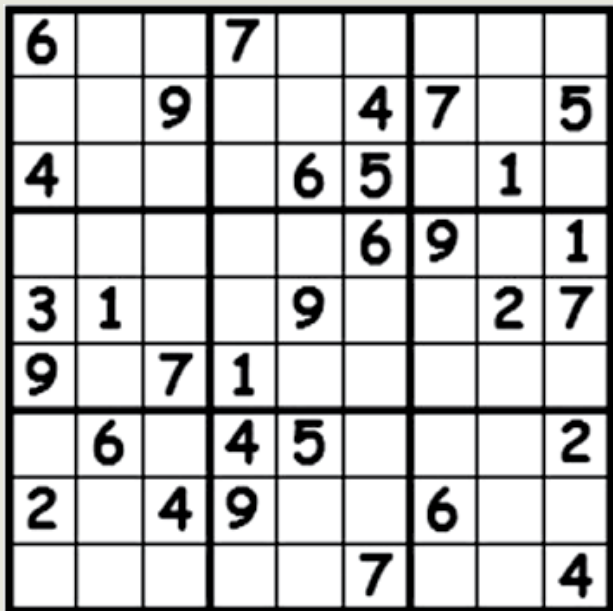
BOGGLER



Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



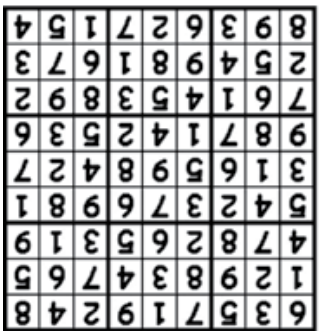
WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER





Japan's Honoka Hayashi (L) and Spain's Aitana Bonmati battle for the ball during their World Cup Group C match on Monday (AFP)

Japan thrash Spain 4-0 in Women's World Cup warning

Wellington, New Zealand - Hinata Miyazawa scored twice and set up another as Japan stunned Spain 4-0 at the Women's World Cup on Monday to set up a clash with Norway in the knockout stage. The Japanese delivered a lesson in clinical counter-attacking and led 3-0 at half-time to issue a World Cup warning against one of the title favourites. The 2011 champions Japan topped the group to play another former winner in Norway while Spain will face Switzerland in the last 16. Miyazawa's brace took her to four goals for the tournament while Riko Ueki and Mina Tanaka bagged the others for a hugely impressive Japan. Boasting a host of European club stars, Spain dominated possession in front of a crowd of 20,957 in Wellington. But they didn't create a single clear chance as Japan soaked up pressure and broke with pace, with lethal effect. It was a tactical masterclass from Japan coach Futoshi Ikeda, whose team denied space and time to Barcelona stars Alexia Putellas and Aitana Bonmati.

The Spanish team, with that kind of offence, we decided to respond with a compact defence

FUTOSHI IKEDA

"The Spanish team, with that kind of offence, we decided to respond with a compact defence," Ikeda said. "Once we recovered the ball, we tried to attack to the maximum at speed." Japan's three first-half attempts resulted in three blistering goals as their speedy front line took advantage of a disorganised Spanish defence missing injured captain Ivana Andres. It was Japan's first win in five attempts over Spain. Their 11 goals is the most by any team at the tournament while they're one of four sides

yet to concede a goal. Miyazawa is also the tournament's leading scorer, although she was denied a chance to add to her four goals when replaced at half-time. A beaming Miyazawa said leading the race for the golden boot was a surprise and a "great pleasure". "I never imagined it. All of the goals are because of the other players giving me the right passes. So it's everybody's goal, not just me," she said. With both teams having already qualified after coasting past pool opponents Zambia and Costa Rica, sixth-ranked Spain were considered the favourites to top the group. Only needing a draw to do so, the Europeans controlled the ball for long periods but they had few answers when their opponents broke with speed. Spain coach Jorge Vilda conceded he'd been out-thought tactically. "As the head coach I'm responsible for this defeat," he said. "Yes I was surprised, they were exerting a lot of pressure. "We had to break this low block that they had but we were not able to get past their lines to attack... and little by little they started scoring goals." AFP

WALTZING MATILDAS

Raso stars as Australia reach World Cup last 16 and dump Canada out

Melbourne, Australia - Hayley Raso scored twice for Australia in a statement 4-0 win over Canada as the fired-up co-hosts booked their place in the last 16 of the Women's World Cup on Monday at the expense of the Olympic champions. Tony Gustavsson's team came into the clash with their backs to the wall, needing victory to ensure they made the knock-out round after a stunning 3-2 defeat at the hands of Nigeria left them on a knife-edge. In front of a heaving Melbourne Rectangular Stadium, they thrived on the pressure to the delight of the raucous 27,706 fans, consigning Canada to an early flight home. Real Madrid's Raso put them ahead in the ninth minute, firing low into the corner after captain Steph Catley fed a teasing low cross. They had a goal controversially disallowed 10 minutes before the break, but the rampaging Matildas put it behind them and Raso made sure on their very next attack with a close-range tap-in. A shellshocked Canada made four changes at half-time, but the comeback never materialised and Mary Fowler bagged Australia's third from a counter-attack before Catley sealed victory



Australia's Hayley Raso (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Canada in their Women's World Cup Group B match on Monday (AFP)

with an injury-time penalty. The win left them top of Group B ahead of Nigeria, who drew 0-0 with Ireland in Brisbane, and set them up for a clash against the second-placed team in Group D - likely Denmark or China - in the next round. But it was the end of the road for Canada, who would have been through with a draw. All the chat ahead of the game was whether Australia's Sam Kerr would play after missing

their opening two games with a calf injury. The Chelsea star was on the bench, but wasn't risked with her team in complete charge. They home side was boosted by the return of Manchester City's Fowler - who replaced Kerr in their 1-0 win against Ireland but missed the Nigeria game with concussion - but it was livewire Raso who gave them a dream start. After a cagey opening, Catley was set free down the left and

her curling ball found Raso who took two touches before smashing it into the corner. It was called offside, but VAR awarded the goal and the stadium erupted. Canada grew into the contest, but their chances were few and far between. Australia thought they had their second when Fowler rifled home from close range, but after a long delay, VAR found that Ellie Carpenter was fractionally off-side and it was disallowed to the disgust of fans. Unperturbed, they launched straight into another attack and this time the goal counted, with Raso making no mistake from two yards out after the ball pinged off a Canadian defender from a corner. Canada made wholesale changes at the break in a bid to revive their fortunes, but Australia resumed where they left off. AFP

Draw with Ireland puts Nigeria through to last 16

Brisbane, Australia - Nigeria booked their place in the last 16 of the Women's World Cup on Monday when they drew 0-0 with Ireland to finish second behind co-hosts Australia in Group B. They will now meet the winners of Group D - which is most likely to be European champions England. The Nigerians, who upset Australia 3-2 on their last visit to Brisbane, recovered from a sloppy first half to get the draw they needed and reach the knockout stage for only the third time in nine attempts. Australia beat Olympic champions Canada 4-0 in Melbourne to top the group. The Nigerians showed little of the flair that helped them down Australia in the last match, particularly during a scrappy first half during which they were out-



Nigeria's Oluwatosin Demehin (R) celebrates with Osinachi Ohal after their match against Ireland (AFP)

fought by an Ireland side only playing for pride after two losses. They found it hard to penetrate the Irish defensive line, with

lone striker Asisat Oshoala a forlorn figure up front. Oshoala had only one chance in the first 45 minutes and should

Courtney Brosnan. But her shot just missed to the right hand post and Ireland were off the hook. The Nigerians came out with far more purpose in the second half as the Irish seemed to begin to feel the pace of the first period. Brosnan pulled off a miraculous save in the 51st minute to deny Uchenna Kanu, who hit a powerful header that bounced awkwardly in front of the keeper. Brosnan then threw herself up to somehow tip the ball onto the underside of the bar and watch it bounce back into the field of play. That signalled an all-out assault on the Irish goal, only for some desperate defending to deny the Nigerians. However, in a match lacking quality, shots on goal were scarce, seven to Nigeria and four to Ireland, all of the Irish shots coming in the first half.

England will 'find a way' without injured Walsh in round of 16 bid

Adelaide, Australia - Coach Sarina Wiegman said Monday her England team must move on from the loss of injured midfielder Keira Walsh in order to seal their place in the Women's World Cup last 16. The European champions need just a point in Tuesday's final Group D match against China in Adelaide to confirm their place in the knockout rounds in Australia and New Zealand. Wiegman confirmed that Walsh will miss the match after hurting her knee in the win over Denmark but would not be drawn on the key midfielder's prospects at the tournament beyond that. Even though a point will be enough to qualify, Wiegman wants to go for the win and



Sarina Wiegman

knows her players cannot afford to dwell on the absence of the influential Barcelona player. "I think we have a strong

Zambia beat Costa Rica to sign off with first World Cup goal and win

Hamilton, New Zealand - Zambia won a Women's World Cup match for the first time with a 3-1 victory over Costa Rica on Monday to end their debut tournament on a high. The lowest-ranked team at the competition were spanked 5-0 by Spain and Japan as their chances of getting out of Group C ended in rapid fashion. But defender Lushomo Mweemba scored after just three minutes in their final group game against Costa Rica in Hamilton - Zambia's first goal ever at the World Cup. Then skipper and star striker Barbra Banda made it 2-0 with a penalty just after the half-hour. Costa Rica, also already eliminated and chasing a first victory



Zambia's Margaret Belelu (L) fights for the ball with Costa Rica's Priscila Chinchilla

at the World Cup, pulled one back through Melissa Herrera two minutes after half-time.

Zambia made the game safe in injury time when Racheal Kundaanji got a third.

ENTICING PROSPECT

France’s Marchand, Australian swim stars lay down Olympic marker

Fukuoka, Japan - Leon Marchand’s performances at swimming’s world championships gave a tantalising glimpse of what he could achieve at next year’s Paris Olympics, while Australia’s stars will also be confident after an impressive display.

French sensation Marchand was irresistible in Fukuoka, winning three gold medals and breaking Michael Phelps’ long-standing 400m individual medley world record.

The 21-year-old cut a relaxed figure in and out of the pool, rarely looking flustered.

The Paris Olympics will be a different matter, with the expectations of the host nation cranked up to potentially overwhelming levels.

Marchand said he was “super-happy” with what he achieved in Japan, where he was named the competition’s top men’s swimmer.

“It’s not perfect, there are always things to improve,” he said.

“But I’m super-satisfied with what I’ve done this year.”

Australia’s Kaylee McKeown took the women’s MVP award after sweeping all three backstroke events.

She was one of several outstanding performers in an Australian team that tied their best



Australia’s Kaylee McKeown (L) and France’s Leon Marchand with the best female and male swimmer awards at the World Aquatics Championships

world championships tally of 13 golds to top the medal table for the first time since 2001.

McKeown said the prize was a reward for “how well we’ve done as a collective as an Australian team”.

“For me, as proud as I am, I feel like I should have shared that with my teammates,” she said.

Australia’s Mollie O’Callaghan became the first woman ever to complete a 100m-200m freestyle world double, and won five gold medals overall.

The 19-year-old also played a part in four world records both individually and as a team, including setting a new mark in the women’s 200m freestyle.

Another Australian, Ariarne Titmus, won an epic women’s 400m freestyle final, outduelling American Katie Ledecky and Canadian Summer McIntosh in a world-record time.

Ledecky dusted herself down and went on to claim gold in both the 800m and 1500m freestyle, cementing her status as the most

decorated woman in world championships history.

The 26-year-old has said she wants to compete at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics and she is likely to be a force at the Paris Games before then.

Young Americans

Ledecky’s performances helped

It’s a really young team - the things I’m hearing at the lunch table, dinner table, people are learning a lot. We want to be better next year in Paris so I think we’ll continue to encourage each other

KATIE LEDECKY



lift an American team that only really came alive late in the competition.

Ledecky believes young Americans like men’s 50m and 100m freestyle silver medallist Jack Alexy will learn from the experience.

“It’s a really young team - the things I’m hearing at the lunch

just fine” at Paris 2024.

“After I take some time off for myself, clear my head, reflect on this very busy and weird year I’ve had, I’m going back in the pool,” he said.

“Fortunately for me, what hasn’t gone perfectly here is trainable.”

AFP



Allan Saint-Maximin

Saint-Maximin joins Saudi’s Al Ahli after Newcastle exit

Paris, France - French winger Allan Saint-Maximin on Sunday signed a three-year deal with Saudi Arabia’s Al Ahli after leaving English club Newcastle as the cash-rich and ambitious Gulf kingdom’s league snared another top-level player.

“We pick the best, and he’s one of them,” Al Ahli said on social media.

The financial terms of the deal were not revealed but English press reports have estimated it to be in the region of £30 million (\$38.5 million).

Saint-Maximin, 26, made 124 appearances for Saudi-backed Newcastle and scored 13 goals since joining from Nice in 2019.

Dortmund down sloppy Man United in Las Vegas friendly

Las Vegas, United States - Borussia Dortmund punished Manchester United’s defensive lapses on Sunday as the English Premier League giants wrapped up their North American tour with a 3-2 defeat to the Bundesliga side in Las Vegas.

A second-half strike by Dortmund substitute Youssoufa Moukoko proved the difference in an entertaining clash at the Allegiant Stadium, home of the NFL’s Las Vegas Raiders.

United manager Erik ten Hag named a virtual reserve team to start, leaving the likes of Marcus Rashford, Bruno Fernandes and new signing Mason Mount on the bench.

Yet United’s makeshift starting XI were more than a match for Dortmund in the first half, dominating for long periods before Diogo Dalot handed the Red Devils the lead on 24 minutes with a long-range strike.

But Dortmund turned the game on its head in the closing minutes of the first half, with two goals in a minute from Netherlands international forward



Thorgan Hazard of Borussia Dortmund battles for the ball with Marcus Rashford of Manchester United

Donyell Malen.

The first came when United’s defense failed to close down Karim Adeyemi’s burst down the right. Despite the attention of a cluster of United defenders, Adeyemi was able to square for Malen, who hooked in from close range.

Malen grabbed his second a minute later, this time seizing on a United howler when Victor Lindelof lost possession inside the area trying to pass out from the back. United were lucky not to go 3-1 down in the opening minutes of the second half, when another defensive slip, this time by Harry Maguire, allowed Sebastien Haller a shot on goal.

United goalkeeper Andre Onana saved and then watched in relief as Adeyemi blasted the follow-up wide with the goal gaping.

United did get back on level terms in the 52nd minute, when Brazilian forward Antony swept home a low shot from inside the area after a botched clearance by Dortmund veteran Mats Hummels.



Lee Hodges celebrates with the trophy after winning the 3M Open at in Blaine, Minnesota, on Sunday (AFP)

Hodges marches to first US PGA Tour title at 3M Open

Los Angeles, United States - Lee Hodges fired two eagles in a four-under-par 67 on Sunday to claim his first US PGA Tour title with a wire-to-wire, seven-stroke triumph in the 3M Open in Blaine, Minnesota.

Hodges finished with a 24-under par total of 260 at TPC Twin Cities, where he’d pushed his lead to as many as seven and seen it shrink to three over playing partner J.T. Poston before Poston’s disastrous triple-bogey at the final hole. That left Poston, who carded a two-under 69, tied for second with Kevin Streelman and Scotland’s Martin Laird. Streelman carded a 66 while Laird produced a seven-under-par 64 that featured five birdies and a 20-foot eagle at 18.

None of them ever really looked like catching Hodges, who started the day with a five-shot lead.

He pushed that to seven after a birdie at the second and an eagle at the sixth, where his 255-yard approach with a three-wood left him an 11-foot putt.

After a bogey at the ninth he eagled the par-five 12th in spectacular style, again using a three-wood and landing his 257-yard second shot within three feet.

“Those were two of the greatest shots I ever hit,” said Hodges, who has secured his berth in the FedEx Cup playoffs as well as an invitation to next year’s Masters.

“Anytime you win, you really set yourself up for some special stuff,” he said. “My caddie was telling me on 18, I honestly didn’t even think about it, we get to play Augusta next year. That’s something else. That was probably the coolest thing I heard all day.”

AFP

Premier League to clamp down on players harassing referees

London, United Kingdom - Premier League players have been warned they face harsher punishments for harassing referees as part of a raft of measures aimed at stamping out bad behaviour on the pitch.

English football’s authorities aim to “reset” the attitude from players and managers towards officials in the coming season.

A series of measures intended to tackle the issue were revealed on Monday ahead of the Premier League campaign kicking off on August 11.

The new ‘Participant Charter’ empowers referees to take tougher action against unacceptable behaviour, backed up by stronger disciplinary action from the Football Association.

Serious and repeat offenders can expect to face increased financial penalties, while referees will be encouraged to issue at

least a yellow card if they are surrounded by two or more players. Managers can also expect to be punished if they leave the technical area on the touchline to “enter the pitch to confront any match official at half-time or full-time”.

“We want players, managers and fans to continue showing their passion, but these new measures have been introduced to ensure that the line is not

crossed when it comes to on-field and technical area behaviour,” said Premier League chief executive Richard Masters.

FA chief executive Mark Bullingham added: “Football has the power to unite and inspire all those that play and watch the game. However, sometimes, this can be negatively impacted by a small minority of players, coaches and fans.

“Our collective approach is

to reset this behaviour on the pitch and from the sidelines, whilst giving our referees the respect and protection that they deserve.”

Off the field, clubs in the Premier League and the Football League will seek stronger sanctions against fans found to be involved in football tragedy abuse, such as chanting about the Hillsborough or Munich disasters.

COSTLY MISTAKE?

England captain Stokes drops Smith in Ashes finale

London, United Kingdom - Ben Stokes gave Australia's Steve Smith a potentially match-changing reprieve after early wickets revived England's hopes of a series-levelling win on the last day of the final Ashes Test at The Oval on Monday.

Australia were 238-3 at lunch, needing 146 more runs to reach a mammoth target of 384, but the rain swept in as the players were taking the field after the interval.

The wet weather, which forced an early tea, was good news for Pat Cummins's men, who only need to draw the fifth Test to win the series.

Officials announced there would be a pitch inspection at 1500 GMT provided there was

Australia were 238-3 at lunch, needing 146 more runs to reach a mammoth target of 384, but the rain swept in as the players were taking the field after the interval



England's captain Ben Stokes drops a catch of Australia's Steve Smith on the fifth day of their Ashes Test on Monday (AFP)

no further rain in south London.

The rain delay led to a mounting sense of frustration for England, who rued missing out on the prized wicket of Smith in the last over before lunch after he gloved off-spinner Moeen Ali.

The ball looped to England captain Stokes at leg gully, who

grabbed it one-handed above his head. But as his arm came down, his hand clipped his leg and he dropped the ball.

Star batsman Smith was initially given not out and an England review confirmed Stokes's error.

At lunch Smith, averaging

more than 93 at The Oval, was 40 not out and Travis Head unbeaten on 31.

Earlier, Chris Woakes removed Australia openers David Warner and Usman Khawaja in a dramatic burst of two wickets for one run in seven balls on an overcast morning and with a pitch

freshened by rain.

Express quick Mark Wood then had Marnus Labuschagne caught in the slips for 13 to leave Australia, who have already retained the Ashes at 2-1 up, 169-3.

The tourists, bidding for a first Ashes series win in England since 2001, resumed on 135-0. Warner

was 58 not and Khawaja 69 not out.

Broad attacks

England pace great Stuart Broad, who on Saturday made a shock announcement he would retire after the match, took up the attack as the 37-year-old sought to

dismiss Warner for the 18th time in Tests. But it was Woakes who made the breakthrough England desperately needed when a good-length ball, angled across Warner, nipped off the seam and took the outside edge to give wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow a simple catch.

Former wrestler sues Japan sumo body over forced retirement

Tokyo, Japan - A former sumo wrestler who is suing the sport's governing body in Japan after he was allegedly forced to retire for refusing to fight during the Covid-19 pandemic, said Monday he had gone public in hopes of changing the secretive sport's culture.

Daisuke Yanagihara, 25, said he told his master in January 2021 that he was reluctant to participate in a Tokyo tournament due to surging coronavirus infections in the capital.

Yanagihara, who began wrestling when he was 15, said he had undergone heart surgery a few years earlier and was worried about the risks to his health if he got sick. He said his master and the Japan Sumo Association gave him two options: fight or quit.

"I was desperate," Yanagihara told a press conference on Monday. His lawyers said a wrestler had died of Covid-19 in May 2020. Yanagihara said he felt he had "no other choice" but to leave the sport because he did not want to risk being a burden to his mother if he were hospitalised.

He filed a civil suit in March against his former master and the association, seeking 4.12 million yen (\$29,000) in compensation.

Fritz downs Vukic to win Atlanta ATP crown

Miami, United States - World number nine Taylor Fritz shrugged off a second-set wobble to claim the sixth title of his career with victory over Aleksandar Vukic in the ATP Atlanta Open on Sunday.

US number one Fritz dug deep to overpower Australia's Vukic, ranked 82nd in the world, in 2hr 16min, winning 7-5, 6-7 (5/7), 6-4. Fritz looked to be heading for a straight sets victory after taking two match points on Vukic's serve while leading 6-5 in the second set.

But Vukic showed great character to claw his way back from the brink, eventually holding serve with an ace to force a tie-break.

The 27-year-old from Sydney then relied on his thunderous serve to grab the tie-break as Fritz was left ruing a golden chance to wrap up victory. However the American regained his composure in the deciding set,



Taylor Fritz hits a shot against Aleksandar Vukic of Australia during their Atlanta Open final match on Sunday (AFP)

claiming the decisive break in the seventh game to take a 4-3 lead before holding for 5-3.

Vukic then held comfortably but there was no way back as Fritz produced a dominant service game to seal victory.

A booming ace - his 16th of the tournament - brought up three match points at 40-0, and another powerful serve left Vukic flailing with a wild return to give the American the win.

AFP

'I don't know how I did it': Popyrin overcomes cramps to win Umag title

Umag, Croatia - Australia's Alexei Popyrin fought back from a set down and overcame cramping to shatter Stan Wawrinka's hopes of a first title in six years by winning the Umag clay-court title on Sunday.

The 23-year-old Popyrin, ranked at 90 in the world, came through 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-4 after two hours and 36 minutes on court to claim a second career title to add to his 2021 Singapore victory.

Three-time major winner Wawrinka, 38, was hoping to capture a 17th career title but first since Geneva in 2017.

Wawrinka recovered from 3-5 down in the opening set before claiming the tie-breaker.

Popyrin, 15 years Warinka's junior, levelled by pocketing the second set and was a break ahead in the first game of the decider which he immediately handed back.

The young Australian suffered



Alexei Popyrin

cramping in the heavy, humid conditions and called for the physio but still carved out the key break in the ninth game before serving out for victory.

"All tournament I've been fighting battles that I don't know how I won. This one tops it all," Popyrin said on court.

"I felt cramp, I felt (the mus-

cle) strain but I managed to dig deep. I don't know how I won it.

"The physio said, 'If you go any more then it will be tough'. I said, 'There's no point in quitting now, I'm here in the final. If I lose, I lose. If I retire, I lose anyway. So I have a better chance of winning if I stay in', so that's what I decided to do."

Despite defeat, former world number three Wawrinka will return to the top 50 next week having fallen out of the top 300 after undergoing two surgeries on his feet in 2021.

Popyrin, in turn, will reach a career-high 57.

"It's an unbelievable honour to play somebody like Stan in a final," added the Australian.

"I grew up watching him, Roger, Rafa, Novak play. To play him in a final and beat him in a final, words can't describe how happy I am. It's an unbelievable feeling."

AFP

Colombian fans make Women's World Cup feel like home for Powerpuff Girls

Sydney, Australia - Colombia's World Cup team are being roared on by thousands of fans in Australia who are playing a major part in spurring their country to new heights in women's football.

A Colombian side led by 18-year-old sensation Linda Caicedo caused one of the upsets of the competition so far when they stunned Germany 2-1 on Sunday in Sydney.

Manuela Vanegas's header in the 97th minute against one of the favourites put Colombia on the cusp of the last 16 and

dreaming of winning the World Cup for the first time.

Colombia have appeared at the Women's World Cup only twice before, in 2011 and in 2015, when they reached the last 16 for the first time. But they failed to qualify for the event four years ago.

They need just a draw on Thursday against Morocco to top their group and could still reach the last 16 even with a defeat.

Dubbed 'The Powerpuff Girls', Caicedo's Colombia were driven on against Germany by a large majority of the 40,000 specta-

tors at a pulsating Sydney Football Stadium.

The stadium was a sea of yellow shirts with deafening jeers and whistles greeting every German when they touched the ball.

Germany star Lena Oberdorf said it felt like Colombia were at home. She compared it to when Germany played hosts England at Wembley in the final of the Euros last summer in front of nearly 90,000, a match they also lost 2-1.

"It's the same - but you don't expect it when you play against Colombia in Australia," said the

midfielder.

"The fact that there are so many Colombian fans travelling here shows how much women's football is progressing," Oberdorf said. Germany coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg, whose side can still reach the last 16, said she felt a few of her players shrunk a little in the face of the frenzied Colombian support.

Most Colombians in the crowd seem to be living in Australia rather than having jumped on expensive long-haul flights across the Pacific.

AFP



Colombia's players celebrate in front of the fans after their victory against Germany (AFP)

UNSTOPPABLE VERSTAPPEN IN AN F1 LEAGUE OF HIS OWN

Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium - Another masterful display and triumph from Max Verstappen ensured Red Bull finished the first half of the season, before the European 'summer' break, unbeaten after Sunday's Belgian Grand Prix.

The defending double world champion's victory was his eighth consecutive success, his 10th in 12 races this year.

AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from Sunday's race:

Toying with rivals

The 25-year-old Dutchman is so dominant that he can still win from sixth on the grid after taking a five-place penalty.

He is on a different plane to his rivals to such an extent seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton resorted to humour to



Max Verstappen

highlight it.

Referring to the 2002 Austin Powers film Goldmember, Hamilton accepted it all seemed too easy for Verstappen when he said that "he is having a smoke and a pancake. You know the film?"

During the race, Verstappen playfully bickered with his race engineer about tyre degradation and making a pit-stop to give the team extra practice.

Hamilton's Mercedes team-chief Toto Wolff said: "He has all reason to be a bit cheeky.... Just

driving around. On merit. Nothing else to say -- as much as it's annoying."

Battle for scraps

Ferrari, Aston Martin, Mercedes and McLaren have taken turns in mounting a brief challenge to Red Bull in the opening 12 races, but none have been successful - on Sunday it was McLaren's turn to find mounting optimism dashed after two podium finishes.

Australian rookie Oscar Piastri, who led Saturday's sprint race in the rain before being passed by Verstappen, was eliminated on the opening lap after tangling with Ferrari's Carlos Sainz.

It was left to Lando Norris, who had been impressive in finishing second in both Britain and Hungary, to bemoan their lost pace as he battled to finish sev-

enth. "We got it wrong," said Norris.

"We were way too high on down-force and it didn't help us in any way.... I was barely making eighth gear - we were so slow on the straights.

"I couldn't defend and I couldn't attack. It was impossible to overtake."

Alpine focus

The Alpine garage team remained united with Esteban Ocon finishing eighth 24 hours after Pierre Gasly's podium in the sprint - this despite shock announcements over management changes in the Renault-owned outfit.

The departures on Sunday evening of Otmar Szafnauer, the team chief, and sporting director Alan Permane, after 34 years, were announced on Friday.

Bumrah back in Indian squad for Ireland Twenty20 series

New Delhi, India - Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah has bounced back from his back injury and was selected to lead India's squad for the three-match T20I series against Ireland, India's cricket board said Monday.

Bumrah, 29, has been out of action since September and had surgery in New Zealand in March.

The skipper's clean bill of health paves the way for him to play in the ODI World Cup in India in October.

The three ODIs will start on August 18 at Malahide, Dublin, with the following matches on August 20 and 23 at the same ground.

India will then be next in action at the Asia Cup, to be jointly hosted by Pakistan and Sri Lanka from August 30 to September 17.

These will be their last assignments before India host the marquee ODI World Cup from October 5.



Jasprit Bumrah

On Saturday, the West Indies won a series-levelling six-wicket victory over India in the second One-Day International of a three-match series in Barbados.

INDIA'S ODI SQUAD:

Jasprit Bumrah (capt), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Sanju Samson (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Shivam Dube, Washington Sundar, Shahbaz Ahmed, Ravi Bishnoi, Prasidh Krishna, Arshdeep Singh, Mukesh Kumar, Avesh Khan.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

A Male with a master's degree and having 14 years of experience in core HR recruitment, succession planning, manpower budgeting, HR metrics and analytics in Oman with 10 various industry domain expertise is looking for a suitable job.
Contact: +968-98034045
email: amirfurqan.m@gmail.com

HR Admin Indian (Kerala) MBA holder - having ten years of ex-

perience in HR Admin/Secretary in Oman with driving licence and NOC - is looking for a job.
Contact: +968-97485991

Computer graduate with experience in logistics, supply chain, warehousing, air cargo and FMCG sales looking for a suitable opportunity.
Contact: +968-79069075

Male accountant, MBA Finance and a Certified SAP FICO con-

sultant with seven years work experience from Oman in Finance Department is looking for a suitable position.
Contact: +968-99685330
email: hussain_ca87@yahoo.com

FLAT FOR RENT

4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, kitchen, store, with AC and a small sea view, near the Indian School-Darsait. RO220 monthly
Contact: +968-99315986

BIRTHDAY WISHES



VIJU C THOMAS MATHEW (SHAJI)
AUGUST 01

Dear Dada we have been thinking what is the best gift we could give you, so here is a bunch of our wishes to say 'Love you always'.
May God bless you abundantly from heaven.
Happy birthday to you dear Pappa.
Susan, Sharon, Sherin & Sheril

ASHTAVAIJANYA THAKKATTU MOOSS
VAIDYARATNAM
USHADHASALA
'The cradle of ayurveda'

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي
ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC
Authorized Dealer - وكيل معتمد

The Cradle of ayurveda
For Genuine Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Yoga, Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc...
Rehabilitation, Beauty therapy & post Delivery Care

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A,
Al Khuwair Service Road, near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-king Tel:24475280,
GSM: 95371664, 92504980,
Website:www.siddhayur.com

Wadi Al Khoudh

REGISTER NOW

Registration is now open for the academic year 2023-2024

"A bright future for your child" for Kindergarten stage

From two & a half years to five years

99764111 | 99364499

Al Khoudh - Al Shabab Street, next to Al Khoudh Oasis building

PROFILE

Our Services:
Profile Dental & Orthodontist Clinic

+968 96646605
Azaiba Near Scientific Pharmacy
+968 72188999
Mawalath South Near Bhala Pharmacy
Timings : 9am - 1pm
4:30pm - 9pm

neenashik@gmail.com

TADMUR TRAVEL & TOURISM

Book your tickets at the best rates with us to your travel destinations.

+968 24830685

Ruwi high street, near Bank Muscat Opp. Al Baraka Hypermarket

tadmurturavelsllc@gmail.com

ARCHITECTURE HOUSE
Consulting Engineers & Architects

+968 99433380

PO Box : 1451 Muttrah
Postal Code : 114
Sultanate of Oman

hussainalsidi@hotmail.com

AK AL KADIR
Professional Trad

Pest Control and Extermination of Insects and Rooden General Cleaning of Building

Kishan GSM: +96897302738
Naseer GSM: +96897302739

Sultanate of Oman/ Muscat/ Al Amarat
alkadirpt23@gmail.com
Alkadirprofessionaltrad@gmail.com

VENTURE & TRAVEL FOR TOURISM

EXPLORE THE WORLD WITH US !!

+968 91378813

P.O. Box :62,
Postal Code : 117,
Wadi Al Kabir, Muscat - Sultanate of Oman

manger@vttoman.com

BARIQ

Services:
Kitchen - Supermarket - Bakery - Equipments Supply

+ 968 24831661

Showroom: Ruwi High Street
Near Bank Muscat
Factory: Wadi Kabir Industrial Area Muscat

info@gitter-gulf.com

CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

Muscat Daily offers a variety of classified listings for individuals and establishments: Situations Vacant/Wanted, Accommodation Wanted or Available, Sale of Household Items, Cars for Sale or Wanted, Matrimonial Alliances, etc. Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call: 99104346

mai alkaline
pH 9.1 to 9.5
Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

Hydrate Smartly

- Ultra-hydrating
- Revitalizing
- Energizing
- Electrolytes

800 71 222
9275 5522

OmanOasis OmanOasisOfficial OmanOasisWater



DIVORCE CASES ESCALATE

Communication is key

"The increasing divorce rates in Oman (over the past few years) indicate a shifting perspective on marriage and divorce, and emphasise the importance of family in social development," says counselling psychologist **Sahar Salmanian**, head of relationships department, Whispers of Serenity Clinic. *Excerpts from a candid chat with Hubert Vaz:*

Does the steady increase in divorce cases annually not sound the alarm bells on social order and invoke corrective action?

Divorce is a complex issue with various impacts on individuals and society not only in Oman all around the world. The increasing divorce rates indicate a shifting perspective on marriage and divorce, emphasising the importance of family in social development.

From my own experience, COVID-19 played a role in bringing underlying issues to the surface by forcing families to spend more time together at home. This situation made families confront their ability to effectively cope with challenges and exposed both strengths and weaknesses within relationships. To gain a better understanding, we must analyse factors like marital history, reasons for divorce, and the aftermath. While divorce can be a concerning matter, in some situations, it may be the right solution when all other options to salvage the marriage have been exhausted.

When divorce cases mount, it also indicates a rise in broken families and subsequent mental trauma for children, too. Comment.

Psychiatrist Murray Bowen described family as a system for the first time as it functions as a dynamic interconnected unit, where each member's actions and behaviours influence others. When significant changes occur within the family system, such as divorce, it can have major impacts on all its members.

It's essential to note that not all children from broken families will face negative experiences. Resilience, support from other family members, and access to professional help can ease mitigating the effects of family changes. Additionally, families can work together to establish open communication, provide emotional support, and maintain stable and nurturing environments to help children cope with these changes more effectively.

What, according to you, are the typical/common causes for divorce in Oman? Do you see any particular trend?

The causes of relationship conflicts can be divided into two groups:

Internal Causes: These include interpersonal disagreements between the couple, lack of trust, commitment, and intimacy, sexual problems, and issues related to infidelity.

External Causes: These involve factors such as interference from family members, financial crises, and social pressures.

Above all, the lack of effective communication is a major contributing factor to conflicts in relationships, and it can also lead to the development of other issues.

In 2022, there were over 4000 cases of divorce in Oman as against 3800plus cases in 2021. There could be many more suffering in silence...

There could be. The silent suffering is an 'emotional divorce' that refers to a situation where a married couple becomes emotionally disconnected from each other, even if they are still legally married and living together.

Emotional divorces can be challenging and painful for both partners. While they may still be living together, the lack of emotional connection can lead to feelings of loneliness, frustration, and unhappiness. In some cases, emotional divorces may eventually lead to legal divorces, while in others, the couple may seek counseling or support to address their issues and work on rebuilding their emotional connection.

Do you agree that with rapid urbanisation, education, and realisation of women's rights, more women/men are getting bolder to come out in the open to end their marital suffering?

Certainly education and advancing technology play a significant role in empowering individuals to be more

aware of their rights and act assertively in marriage conflicts.

Although, with access to information and resources there could be negative impacts such as wrong information, toxic trends, and destructive influence but both, men and women, need to be wise in making decisions independently.

On the other hand, the accessibility of online resources and platforms allows individuals to seek support and guidance when facing challenges in their marriages. Couple therapy and divorce counseling are becoming more widely accepted as means to reflect on the relationship and make informed decisions.

Can partners detect early the problems in a relationship that ultimately can lead to divorce at a later stage?

Definitely. Couples can maintain a healthy relationship through regular check-ins. They should encourage open communication, individually and as a couple, creating a safe and non-judgmental space for expressing feelings and concerns.

Paying attention to how they interact, looking for signs of respect, empathy, and active listening, while also noticing negative patterns such as criticism or defensiveness, contempt, or wall stoning is essential.

Observing body language during interactions can reveal underlying emotions. Identifying external stressors, like work, finances, or health concerns can also be helpful.

What is your advice to young working women, for maintaining harmony and peace in the family?

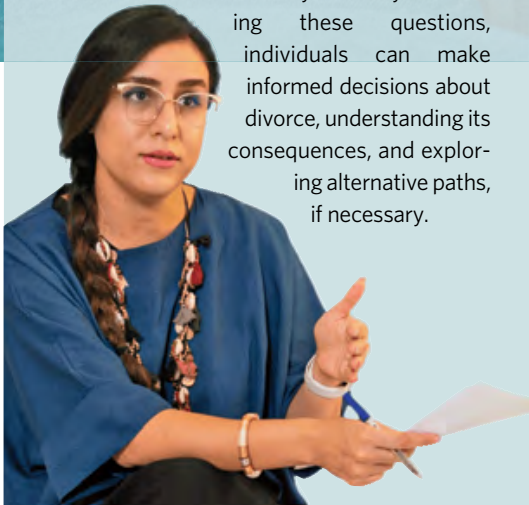
Promoting women's independence and self-reliance is crucial. But as a young working woman, maintaining harmony and peace in the family can be challenging. But, with some thoughtful strategies for the whole family, it is possible to achieve a balance between work and family. Open and honest communication with family members is important in understanding each other's needs and expectations.

Prioritising and setting boundaries to balance work and family commitments helps manage time effectively. Sharing responsibilities and promoting teamwork within the family fosters mutual support. Taking care of oneself both, physically and mentally, is vital to handle the demands of work and family life.

Remember that achieving perfect harmony might be unrealistic, but with patience, understanding, and a willingness to adapt, you can create a fulfilling and balanced life that works for you and your family.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- What pros and cons should one weigh before taking any decision?**
Before deciding on divorce, both, women and men, should consider essential questions to gain clarity about their situation:
- How did we reach this point?**
Understanding perspectives from both sides can shed light on the underlying causes of issues.
- What efforts have we made to heal the marriage?**
Reflecting on attempts to resolve conflicts can help determine if further efforts are worthwhile.
- What are my current needs and wants?**
Identifying fulfilled and unmet needs can highlight areas of concern and potential for compromise.
- What is my support system?**
Evaluating available emotional and social support is crucial during and after a divorce.
- What are my personal aspirations?**
Considering individual goals and life plans can provide insights into how divorce aligns with the future. By honestly answering these questions, individuals can make informed decisions about divorce, understanding its consequences, and exploring alternative paths, if necessary.



Does higher earning potential of women become the cause for problems in a marriage?

Not necessarily. When higher earning leads to problems in a relationship, it can often be a sign of underlying issues such as a lack of intimacy, self-esteem, and trust. In a healthy relationship, couples support each other's growth and success.

Is there any mechanism of marriage counselling available for couples?

Marriage counselling will be effective when partners are willing to work together. However, there are some instances that change the counselling plan:

Couple counselling: Here, the counselor listens to both narratives as an unbiased facilitator to ensure open communication.

Individual counselling: When only one partner is ready to attend the session, it presents an opportunity for self-growth and self-reflection.

Combination of both: A combination of couple and individual counselling sessions helps in addressing shared issues and personal concerns.

How can society tackle this problem to bring down the number of cases?

Let's promote a shift in families' perspectives on marriage, highlighting that marriage is not just a task to be done in a certain age or a solution for problems, but a critical choice made with autonomy and awareness of its consequences. Encouraging pre-marriage programmes and workshops in the education system can foster awareness among youth and enable them to make informed choices to find compatible life partners.

Is there any particular gender bias that needs to be tackled first?

Gender discrimination affects men and women differently. Women may face expectations of traditional roles, limited decision-making power, and higher rates of domestic violence and abuse. Men can encounter pressure to be primary breadwinners and may face challenges expressing emotions - they can also be victims of domestic violence.

To create a fairer society, we need to create greater awareness of individual rights and empower individuals to advocate change. It is a crucial step in promoting equality and combating discrimination.



BIOHACKING

FASHION
YOUR
PHYSIQUE

If you've been taking care of your body, and mind, with specific inputs that work well for yourself, you are, indeed, a 'biohacker'. And the experiments you undertake to shape up or rev up your appearance — be it customising sleep, exercise, diets, medication, meditation, nature walks — all fall under a broad category called 'biohacking'

The hectic pace of the modern world calls for every individual to make incremental changes to diet, lifestyle, and supplementation to optimise health, and maximise physical and mental performance. This DIY (do it yourself) biology, is called 'biohacking' - an activity that has been prevalent over the past few decades but has gained prominence lately.

Biohacking is any activity taken up by individuals to hack the parameters of their own existence in a bid to improve their life and well-being by making various small changes to their diets or lifestyles. It promises various improvements, from quick weight loss to enhanced brain function.

MONITOR YOUR MAKEOVER

Don't get disturbed about this term which may have negative connotations only if you indulge in legally banned activity or consume nutrients/supplements that are not considered appropriate. Biohacking is, basically, about eating right, sleeping, hydration, and supplementation. However, advancements have made it also about augmentation with technology.

Biohacking technology that supports biohacking activity include continuous blood glucose monitors, fitness wearables, and implanted sensors. It also includes nootropics - supplements

that improve your cognitive function, such as caffeine, nicotine, and over-the-counter nootropic pills.

THREE TYPES OF BIOHACKING

Currently, people avoid going for formal intervention and devise their own methods of staying healthy or bring about certain changes in their lifestyle that might be conducive to their well-being. That's what biohacking is all about, and there three key categories:

NUTRIGENOMICS

Nutrigenomics is a branch of biohacking that focuses on how the food that you consume interacts with your genes. It is founded on the idea that the body's genetic expression can be optimised through testing how different nutrients affect the body's health over some time.

DIY BIOLOGY

Do It Yourself (DIY) biology is the branch that is led by people who have an education and experience in scientific fields. They aim to provide tips and techniques to people who do not have the experience to conduct safe and structured experiments on themselves outside of a controlled environment.

GRINDER BIOHACKING

This category sees every part of the human body as something that can be hacked. The people interested in grinder biohacking aim to become 'cy-



Biophilia exercises

'borgs' by optimising their bodies by combining gadgets, chemical injections, implants, and anything else that they can use to advance and make their body look and work the way they want it to. This includes use of things such as implants to enhance physical function.

NEED FOR CAUTION

Some methods, ideas and experiments in biohacking, however, can prove to be unsafe, and in some cases, even illegal. DIY biology and grinder hackers may sometimes partake in ideas that aren't considered safe or ethical in established research facilities.

When it comes to law and biohacking there is no clear boundary yet. In 2019 California passed the first law in the US that prevents the sales of CRISPR gene therapy kits without warnings. These kits allow gene experiments to be done at home without regulation.

There have also been many documented benefits to biohacking. Research studies have found that one of the most beneficial biohacking methods is light therapy.

According to research studies, the human body responds positively to red and near-infrared wavelengths (600-900nm). These wavelengths penetrate through the skin and stimulate ATP production. As a result of this, cells are rejuvenated,

'Biophilia exercises, which centre around connecting to the natural world both physically and emotionally, have risen in popularity throughout 2022.

Exposure to the natural world is said to provide a range of health and wellness benefits, including improved mood, productivity, increased cognitive function, and enhanced creative thinking.

Exercising outdoors also has an impact on our stress levels. High stress levels are lowered in outside environments due to our natural affinity and comfort with nature.

and new cells are produced which speeds up the healing process. Light therapy focuses on healing the root issue rather than focusing on symptoms.

Two studies also found that light therapy is the best pain treatment for people who suffer from rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis of the knee. The benefits of light therapy can help with mental issues, while research suggests that light therapy helps with preventing seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

