

► NEWS BRIEF

FRENCH PRESIDENT TO VISIT ALGERIA TO RELAUNCH TIES

Paris, France - French President Emmanuel Macron will visit Algeria later this week in an effort to improve strained ties between Paris and Algiers, the French presidency said in a statement on Saturday.

"This trip will contribute to deepening the bilateral relationship looking to the future... to reinforce Franco-Algerian cooperation in the face of regional challenges and to continue the work of addressing the past," the presidency said after a call between Macron and his opposite number Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Macron is expected to be in Algeria from Thursday to Saturday this week.

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Electricity subsidy decreased 7.5% to RO569mn in 2021

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Rangrez presents 'Avenues of Wonder' virtually

Tracking of trucks to curb illegal dumping

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To reduce illegal dumping of construction waste, the government will soon make it mandatory for all owners of construction waste transport vehicles to instal tracking devices, according to Dr Mohammad Majid al Kasbi, director of Environment Authority's Department of Chemical Materials.

In an exclusive interview with *Muscat Daily*, Kasbi informed that in May, a team was formed comprising personnel of EA, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Ministry of Interior, and be'ah to ensure owners of construction waste transport vehicles instal In Vehicle Monitoring System (IVMS) devices.

"The aim is to have IVMS devices installed in more than 100,000 trucks used in transportation of construction waste in Oman."

According to Kasbi, the initiative will curb the practice of ran-



The aim is to have IVMS devices installed in more than 100,000 trucks used in transportation of construction waste in Oman

DR MOHAMMAD MAJID AL KASBI



dom dumping of construction waste in undesignated and residential areas and monitor trucks while transporting waste.

"It also aims to empower the private sector to manage this waste, recycle and benefit from it economically, and take legal measures against violators."

The new system will help be'ah dispose waste in the ap-

propriate way, besides generating data on the amount and type of waste. "This will help to re-sort the waste and find integrated solutions for its management and recycling."

The team formed in May, in cooperation with Royal Oman Police, will ensure licences of construction waste transport vehicles are not renewed until con-

firmation of installation of the IVMS devices.

Kasbi informed that random dumping of waste and the consequent impact on the environment are big challenges. "We hope to overcome this by spreading awareness in society in cooperation with all concerned authorities and municipalities."

The team has also discussed a project to set up weighbridges for vehicles that transport waste outside the sultanate at the land borders with the objective of monitoring the quantity of waste - including paper cartons, oils and chemicals - exported.

"We appeal to Royal Oman Police to quickly establish these weighbridges at land borders to prepare accurate data on export waste and benefit from these economically and environmentally," Kasbi added.

"We call on all members of society to cooperate with the concerned authorities to reduce indiscriminate dumping of waste and to report any violations. Proper disposal of waste is essential for a healthy environment."

Oman plays crucial role in on-going Iran nuclear negotiations

Muscat - As the European Union and the United States finalise their stance to Iran's final draft agreement on reviving a 2015 nuclear accord with major powers it presented at talks in Vienna earlier in the month, Oman is facilitating crucial back channel negotiations on the deal.

H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, spoke over phone with Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Robert Malley, the US Special Envoy for Iran, on Thursday.

H E Sayyid Badr received a phone call from Amir-Abdollahian in which they exchanged views on the latest developments in the negotiations to resume the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear agreement and several regional and international issues.

In the call made by H E Sayyid Badr to Malley, they discussed efforts to resume the JCPOA.

The European Union said on Tuesday it was studying Iran's response to a "final" draft agreement on reviving the 2015 nuclear accord. On Monday, the US said that it was informing EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell of its response to the text he sub-



H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi

mitted on August 8.

The possibility of a deal which might lead to the lifting of US sanctions on Iran's oil output of 2.5mn barrels per day has already helped trigger a fall in prices in world markets, with US oil futures dropping nearly three per cent to finish below US\$90 a barrel.

A spokesperson for Borrell - who coordinated talks to bring Iran and the US back into the deal - said the Iranian response was received late on Monday. "We are studying it and are consulting with the other JCPOA participants and the US on the way ahead," the spokesperson said.

On Tuesday, Iranian news agency IRNA reported that 'an agreement will be concluded if the US reacts with realism and flexibility' to Iran's response.

RO30mn housing aid for low-income families in 2021, up 85%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning provided over RO30mn as assistance to build houses for low-income families in 2021, 85 per cent more than the amounted given in 2020.

The Housing Assistance Programme implemented by the



ministry provides low-income families help to build a house worth RO20,000 or buy a house or flat at a cost of RO25,000.

Last year, the ministry approved 103 applications in Muscat (RO2.5mn), 249 applications in Dhofar (RO5.8mn), 41 applications in Musandam (RO950,000) and 102 applications in Buraimi (RO2.5mn).

The ministry also approved 64

applications in Dakhliyah (RO1.5mn), 113 applications in North Batinah (RO3mn), 86 applications in South Batinah (RO2mn), 278 applications in South Sharqiyah (RO6.6mn), 126 applications in North Sharqiyah (RO3mn), 102 applications in Dhahirah (RO2.4mn) and 12 applications in Wusta (RO300,000).

The total assistance of

RO30,640,945 was for 1,276 applicants, compared to RO16,565,191 provided to a total of 693 applicants in 2020.

In May this year, the Council of Ministers announced that citizens who benefit from the Housing Assistance Programme - for families earning less than RO450 in monthly wages - would be exempted from paying outstanding dues.

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Our Correspondent

Muscat

The festival will feature a variety of entertainment and tourism events that shed light on the unique tourist potential of Jabal Akhdar, encouraging domestic tourism and attracting

The event is in line with the objectives and pillars of Oman Vision 2040, through emphasis on social welfare programmes

"Twenty SMEs and produc-

There are plans to make the festival bigger and better in the future, Rawahi informed. "Next year, we are planning to hold the festival twice; one will be a rose festival and the second will focus on the pomegranate season."

(Supplied photo)

The forum touched on indices and statistics on people with disabilities in the country as well as efforts made by government and private establishments to help this segment of society address issues that they may face in the labour market.

The project aims to ascertain the extent of the impact of coastal facilities on the marine environment and to measure the

For the purpose, the authority,

The project includes an assessment of the quality of marine environment at selected sites, and an inventory of the factors that lead to the rise of heavy metals and hydrocarbons.

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National campaign on breastfeeding attempts to remove misconceptions

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Nutrition Department of the Directorate General for Primary Health Care, in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO), organised a conference on breastfeeding for child and mother's health on Thursday at Avani Muscat Hotel.

The opening ceremony was attended by Dr Saeed al Lamki, Director General of Primary Health Care, Dr Alaa Hashish, public health specialist in the WHO office in Oman, senior ministry officials, and several mother and child healthcare providers, including doctors, nurses, and nutritionists.

In a welcome note, Dr Salima al Mamary, director of nutrition, said that the rate of exclusive breastfeeding of children in



(Supplied photo)

Oman is only 23 per cent, therefore priority has been given to identifying reasons for this low rate, relying on various methods, including research studies, focus groups, and field visits in the governorates.

"As rates of exclusive breast-

feeding are low, a national campaign for exclusive breastfeeding is needed. A campaign was thus launched to correct misconceptions related to breastfeeding as well as recognising perceptions in all religions and cultures on the importance of breastfeeding for

the child, which is confirmed by studies as being the ideal and safe food to help prevent many common childhood diseases," Dr Salima said.

She elaborated that the ministry, in collaboration with Al Jisr Foundation, carried out a one-

year National Campaign for Exclusive Breastfeeding under the slogan 'Best for Child and Us' that concluded on Thursday.

On the events and efforts exerted during the campaign, Dr Salima outlined that a measurement of the knowledge, attitudes

As rates of exclusive breastfeeding are low, a national campaign for exclusive breastfeeding was needed

DR SALIMA AL MAMARY

and behaviours was done before and after the campaign to gauge any improvements, noting that all concerned parties demonstrated innovative participations to create the necessary impact.

Dr Hashish stated that increasing the breastfeeding rate by at least 50 per cent by the year 2025 is one of the global goals that WHO seeks to achieve for children under six months of age.

WHO is actively supporting

exclusive breastfeeding programmes within integrated work programmes at local and global levels, the most important of which are the Country Cooperation Strategy 2021-2025 and the Country Support Plan 2022-2023, in line with the Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 13) 2019-2023 and the Eastern Mediterranean Region Vision 2023.

Dr Hashish added that MoH has also established specialised centres and clinics that provide awareness and counseling services to mothers, in addition to prohibiting the distribution and acceptance of free samples of breast milk substitutes in health institutions. The ministry, represented by the Department of Nutrition, he confirmed, is currently working on formulating policies supporting programmes that promote breastfeeding.

Browser extension threats significant

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Kaspersky researchers have analysed the risks innocent-looking browser extensions pose to users and the activities of cybercriminals hiding threats under add-ons.

In the first half of 2022, more than 4,000 users were affected by threats, hiding in browser extensions, at least once, which is over 19 per cent of the number of users affected by the same threat throughout the whole of 2021 - with still another half of the year to go.

Mimicking popular apps, such as Google Translator or extensions with useful functionality like PDF Converter or Video Downloader, threats in browser extensions can insert advertisements, collect data about users' browsing histories and even search for login credentials, making it one of the most desirable tools for cybercriminals.



In the first half of 2022, over 4,000 users were affected by threats, hiding in browser extensions, at least once - with still another half of the year to go

KASPERSKY

Since the beginning of 2020, Kaspersky products have prevented approximately 6mn users from downloading threats disguised as browser extensions. The most prominent threat spread under the guise of browser extensions has been adware - unwanted software designed to throw advertisements up on the screen. Such advertisements are usually based on the browsing history to catch users' interest, embed banners in web pages or to redirect them to affiliate

pages that the developers can earn money from, instead of legitimate search engine ads.

From January 2020 to June 2022, Kaspersky experts observed more than 11,000 unique users faced adware hiding in browser extensions, which means approximately 84 per cent of all affected users have encountered this threat.

"Even browser extensions that do not carry a malicious payload can be dangerous - for example, when the developers of these

add-ons sell gathered user data to other companies, potentially exposing their data to someone who was not supposed to see it. Users may wonder whether it is worth downloading browser extensions at all when they can carry so many threats. I am an active user of browser extensions myself and believe that add-ons improve the online experience.

"Some extensions can even make devices a lot safer, for example, password managers. It is much more important to keep an

eye on how reputable and trustworthy the developer is and what permissions the extension asks for. If you follow the recommendations for safe use of browser extensions, the risks of encountering any threats will be minimal," said Anton V Ivanov, senior security researcher.

For protection from threats hiding in browser extensions, the use of trusted sources to download software is recommended. Malware and unwanted applications are often distributed through third-party resources where no one will check their security in the same way as official web stores do.

These applications may install malicious or unwanted browser extensions without the user knowing about it and can perform other malicious activities. Extensions add extra functionality to browsers and require access to various resources and permissions, for which a careful examination of requests is needed.

Ibri's first-ever film festival in October

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A large number of entries have been received for the first-ever film festival in Ibri, scheduled for October 23-26.

Open to all nationalities, over 100 short films from around Oman were submitted before last submission date on Thursday. Al Dhahirah International Film Festival will also screen foreign films and include workshops on various aspects of filmmaking.

Elaborating on the festival, its coordinator Jamil al Yaqoubi said, "This is the first time ever that such an event of films is happening in Ibri. We will have guests and cine artists from all over the Gulf. We are currently awaiting some government permissions."

He added that the festival has received a significant number of short films of five- to 25-minute



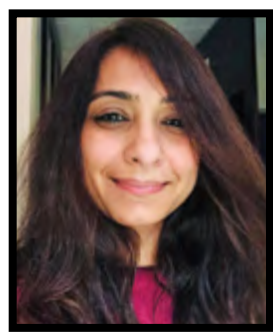
Jamil al Yaqoubi

duration. "We are very happy with the response. We have plans to make it an annual event with an aim to attract more filmmakers from Oman and the region."

The shortlisted films will be awarded prizes in several categories, including best film, best director, best actor, best cinematographer, best editor, best animation and best script.

Yaqoubi conducted a workshop on scripting and direction at Sultan Qaboos Youth & Cultural Centre in Salalah on Wednesday.

BEYOND WORDS



VAISHALI HAMLAI

The columnist is a certified MBTI coach and author, and writer who delves into the complexities of the mind and soul to guide and interpret social behaviour

Have you always been noticed? Do you meet eyes with strangers accidentally?

We all know that one person who can't be overlooked; he is always noticed, is always in the eye of the crowd. We give them different names - people pleaser, chatterbox, attention seeker, control freak, happy, dramatic and so many more. But maybe there is something in them that makes the others interested in their eccentricity. Some halo around them that makes others want more of them. Get a slice of them!

Why is it that some people who are seen in a crowd are unlike others who inadvertently manage to walk away unnoticed? These people, even if they try, cannot be ignored.

Is it the light within them that shines brighter? Or is it some unknown energy?

What is the source of that energy? Do they possess a mysterious halo around their head, like an angel or do they have a unicorn horn, or is it the shine/pain in their eyes... perhaps the way they move? What is it that

makes them unmissable? The mystery needs to be solved.

How is it possible that the presence of someone being around brings peace, and someone else provokes? What is that invisible ray that shines around them? Why do you feel like you should listen to them, why does one feel like being around these energies? What is it that brings you peace, is it their aura?

THE AURA DRAMA

Have you been always randomly picked from a crowd, what is it that shines around you, that makes them see you and not the others? Do heads turn when you walk around? It's probably the energy one carries. Why does a merit holder sometimes not get his due credit, while an average rank holder shines his way to the top? Why is someone selected for a job instead of someone else, when both have similar credentials?

Millions of people move countries, travel across seven seas, walk miles and miles to see a famous monument, to listen to peace preachers, to see the leaders in action. It isn't because they are in awe of that person, it's the aura they carry which is unmissable.

So, the question is a simple one. How does one create that energy around them? How does one possess this energy - is it attainable? Well, I don't know much and have little experience in it, but being the optimist that I am, I believe it's attainable.

Everything is possible and attainable, by first accepting ourselves the way we are. And after acceptance comes being in the present, living and breathing in the 'now'. I think this is good for starters. Because acceptance will bring happiness and happiness will bring peace and shine our souls. And then when you stop worrying about tomorrow and yesterday, you will give your hundred per cent in the present, bringing a brighter tomorrow invariably.

So maybe the mantra to live by is - acceptance and living in the now.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Press & Publishing

Bidding

جامعة التقنية
والعلوم التطبيقية
University of Technology
and Applied Sciences

University of Technology and Applied Sciences Bidding Announcement

The Internal Tender Committee at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Salalah Technical College) announces the electronic local bidding based on the following table:

M	Bidding number	Bidding name	Companies that are eligible to participate	Document's Price	Last date bid submission
1	01/2022	Renting and operating a restaurant and cafe at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Salalah Technical College), the English language building and the female students' cafe.	Companies and institutions specialized in this field and registered with the Tender Board	(25) Twenty five Riyal Omani	04/09/2022 at 10:00 am
2	02/2022	Leasing and operating a restaurant and café at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Salalah Technical College) in the staff club and students' cafe.	Companies and institutions specialized in this field and registered with the Tender Board	(25) Twenty five Riyal Omani	04/09/2022 at 10:00 am

- Specialized companies and institutions registered with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and wishing to obtain the documents of any of the bids mentioned above, may refer to the Administrative Affairs Department in the building No(1), ground floor, as of the date of publishing this announcement and during official working hours.
- The bid that meets the conditions and technical specifications shall be submitted, accompanied by a bank guarantee from a local bank of (1%) of the bid value, valid for a period of (90) days from the date of its submission.
- The bid shall be submitted in closed envelopes addressed to the name of the head of Tenders Committee, and written on it the number and name of the bid, provided that the name of the company or any reference to it is not written. The bid envelopes shall be placed in the bid box in the main building on the ground floor before 10am in the morning from the date indicated in the table is above, and no bid submitted after this time will be considered, for whatever reasons.
- The university shall not be bound to accept the highest or any other bid.

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Electricity subsidy decreased 7.5% to RO569mn in 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Total electricity subsidy provided to the consumers in Oman decreased by 7.5 per cent to RO569mn for the year 2021 as compared to RO615mn recorded in the previous year, according to Nama Group.

The subsidy per customer stood at RO418 in 2021, a decrease of 10.5 per cent from RO467 subsidy per customer in the previous year, Nama Group said in its recently released annual report.

As per the group's report, the subsidy per unit of electricity decreased to RO15.9 per MWh in 2021 from RO18.6 per Mwh in 2020.

Nama Group said it supported the government's tariff reform programme implementation in January 2021, in addition to further adjustments of customer bills based on the changes of the regulation and tariff during the summer months.

The electricity sector, it said, grew by 3.3 per cent in 2021 reaching customer numbers to 1,359,738 as compared to 1,316,822 in 2020. The electricity supply sales increased by 7.6 per cent to 35,674 GWh in 2021 compared with 33,156 GWh in the previous year.

The water and wastewater sector grew by 5 per cent in 2021 reaching customer numbers to 998,666 as compared to 952,911 in 2020. The sales volume for water and wastewater increased



To meet growing demand of electricity and water, Nama Group invested RO435mn in critical network and efficiency related projects in 2021

by 7 per cent in 2021.

'The economic slowdown witnessed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 public health response measures and slide in oil price has shown sign of modest recovery in 2021,' Nama Group noted.

In keeping with the growth in electricity, water and wastewater demand, efficiency targets and more importantly to meet our customer service targets, Nama Group invested

RO435mn in critical network and efficiency related investments in 2021.

Nama Group revenues rise to RO1.4bn

In terms of financial performance, Nama Group's gross operating revenue increased by 5.9 per cent to RO1.4bn in 2021 from RO1.3bn in the previous year.

'Due to the non-finalisation of

regulatory framework and price control mechanism, the water and wastewater sector was not able to fully recover its costs such as depreciation, employees, and other related expenses. This has resulted in the net losses of approximately RO144.7mn for 2021,' Nama Group said.

However, if the impact of net losses from water and wastewater sector excluded, the group's net profit would have been approximately RO70.4mn for 2021, it added.

Nama Group's total assets increased by 42.6 per cent to RO9.5bn during 2021 from RO6.7bn in 2020, mainly due to the inclusion of water and wastewater companies in the group.

Omantel boosts 5G coverage in Muscat and Batinah

Muscat - Omantel has come a long way in leading the 5G deployment in Oman. In a breakthrough achievement, the company has now covered the populated areas in the governorates of Muscat, South Batinah and North Batinah with real 5G speeds.

"We have successfully rolled out a large number of new 5G sites in the populated areas of Muscat, North Batinah and South Batinah governorates. These new sites will serve home internet and mobile internet alike, and users will get an optimum speed even at the edge of the coverage range," Aladdin Baitfadhil, chief commercial officer at Omantel, said in a press release.

Omantel has poured massive efforts into rolling 5G sites in the populated areas across the country. The city of Salalah is one among many other locations that the company has targeted due to the high demand for an ultra-fast internet connection.

"We managed to ensure a fast and steady connection everywhere within the coverage range, even for mobile users, through smaller 5G cells that



Aladdin Baitfadhil

connect to the main tower," Baitfadhil explained.

He further said, "5G is an integral part of Omantel's ecosystem and we have the widest coverage of the network in Oman. We see 5G as the key enabler for Industry 4.0 technologies, like IoT, cloud computing, big data and analytics, augmented reality and artificial intelligence, with its massive network capacity and ultra-low latency. Our role, at Omantel, is to lay the groundwork to help our partners in the public and private sectors to tap into the growing opportunities that arise as technology advances."

Due to demographic and geographic factors, 5G is the way

forward to ensure a high-speed and low-latency internet connection in North Batinah and South Batinah governorates and other locations where 'fiber' is technically challenging and financially unviable, Baitfadhil said.

"Therefore, we are keen on enhancing our 5G footprint in Al-Batinah and elsewhere to build on our main role of connecting the society within Oman and with the world to the utmost level," he noted.

Omantel was the first operator in Oman to announce the commercial launch of 5G for fixed home broadband and mobile. Today, the company continues to bolster its 5G's leadership in the country with enhanced network coverage, versatile offerings, and strong partnerships.

5G offers a seamless internet experience and it takes home and mobile services to a whole new level of excellence. With the high throughput and ultra-low latency, customers can experience immersive gaming, cloud gaming, virtual reality, augmented reality capabilities and much more.

Oman attends GCC economic affairs meet

Muscat - Oman, represented by the Ministry of Economy, took part on Thursday in the 5th meeting of the Senior Officials Committee that stems from the GCC Economic and Development Affairs Authority.

The meeting, held via video-conferencing, was organized by the GCC Secretariat General.

Dr Nasser Rashid al Ma'awali, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy, represented Oman at the meeting.

The meeting discussed a spectrum of topics, including previous recommendations, the budget of the authority and ways to enhance the authority's work system and governance.

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MUSCAT DAILY

Oil prices fall to six-month low

London, UK - Oil prices have dropped by a quarter since June and could fall further if a nuclear deal is reached with Iran as it would bring more crude to the market, yet global inflation remains stubbornly high.

Crude prices soared to US\$140 per barrel in early March after Moscow invaded Ukraine, raising fears that Western sanctions would drastically cut supplies from Russia, a major producer and exporter.

But traders are now concerned about demand due to various factors, including fears of recession, a strong dollar and weak Chinese oil imports during the country's Covid lockdowns, said Giovanni Staunovo, commodities analyst at UBS bank.

Oil prices are set in dollars, so any rise in the currency makes barrels more expensive for importers using other currencies.

In China, "oil demand has taken a hit as processing of crude imports were weak in July" although stockpiles still rose, said Geordie Wilkes, analyst at Sueden.

Oil prices dropped to almost six month low last week. The price of Brent, the international benchmark, has dropped to US\$95 while WTI, the main US contract, is at around US\$90 - and fuel prices at the pump have fallen in the United States.

But UBS expects Brent prices to climb back to around US\$125 by the end of the year as Russia exports fall, Chinese imports rise and Western countries stop tapping their strategic reserves, Staunovo said.

Iran wildcard

The market, however, could fall again if Tehran reaches a nuclear deal that would allow the country to raise its exports, which are currently restricted by sanctions.

This could add around one million barrels per day to the market.

"Iran was able to bring capacity back online fast last time and this shocked the market," Wilkes said.

The European Union and United States said Tuesday they were studying Iran's response to a "final" draft agreement on reviving the 2015 nuclear accord with major powers.

"Our view continues to be that a deal is still unlikely in the short term," said experts at investment firm Goldman Sachs in a note, adding that Tehran can live with a reduced volume of exports as long as prices remain high.

"An announcement by Iran indicating willingness to enter-

tain nuclear talks is likely intended to draw out further ongoing discussion in our view, before more disruptive counter-measures are potentially taken by the US and its allies," the Goldman Sachs experts said.

"The US is similarly incentivised to draw out negotiations given stricter sanctions enforcement would exacerbate the oil shortage."

Iran's return to the market would lower prices by US\$5 to US\$10 per barrel in 2023, according to the experts.

While lower crude prices have eased the pain at the pump, analysts say it may not be enough to tame inflation that has reached decades high in many countries and raised fears of recession.

Natural gas prices have surged as Russia has slashed supplies to Europe.

Inflation in Britain accelerated to 10.1 per cent in July, pushed up by rising food prices. They rose by 8.9 per

cent in the eurozone in July.

While consumer prices have eased in the United States - slowing to 8.5 per cent in July from 9.1 per cent in June - they remain at an elevated level.

"The world has changed," Andrew Kenningham, Europe analyst at research firm Capital Economics, told AFP.

"We used to have a very simple way to look at the price of energy and electricity in Europe based on the price of oil. Now we have a much more complex equation with different trends for oil, gas and electricity," he said.

In Europe, the recent drop in crude prices should take 0.5 percentage points off inflation, said Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg.

Small drops "mattered" when inflation was under two percent "but not when inflation is at nine per cent", Kenningham said.

AFP

US Fed says more rate hikes coming, but pace could slow

Washington, US - US central bankers remain committed to raising interest rates further to quell rising prices, but they agreed it would be appropriate to slow the pace of the hikes "at some point".

The central bank has raised the benchmark borrowing rate four times this year, including two massive three-quarter-point increases in June and July as it tries to cool demand to lower prices that have surged at the fastest pace in more than 40 years.

The aggressive moves took on more urgency after US annual inflation spiked to 9.1 per cent in June.

In the minutes of the July policy meeting, which produced a second massive rate increase of 75 basis points, Fed officials said it will take some time to bring "unacceptably high" inflation back down near the two per cent goal.

Polymakers are trying to tread a narrow path and avoid pushing the world's largest economy into recession, and many officials at the meeting cautioned that there is a "risk" the Fed could go too far.

Since the last Fed meeting, financial markets have been cheered by hopes that a slowing economy will allow the central bank to dial back or even halt the rate hikes, especially after comments from Fed Chair Jerome



The US central bank has raised the benchmark rate four times this year, including two massive three-quarter-point increases in June and July as it tries to cool demand to lower prices that have surged at the fastest pace in more than 40 years

Powell, who signaled that the rapid increases eventually would give way to more normal steps.

But Fed officials have tried to dispel some of that excess optimism, stressing in recent speeches that the central bank is committed to pursuing its battle on inflation - a message echoed in the minutes on Thursday.

And economists see no sug-

gestion of a pivot from the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) any time soon.

After the benchmark rate was slashed to zero at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, it now sits in a range of 2.25 to 2.5 per cent.

"Even if the FOMC decides to scale back its rate hike to 50bps

on September 21, we look for another 125bps increase in the fed funds rate by year-end," said Kathy Bostjancic of Oxford Economics.

And the central bankers said even when the rates hit a "sufficiently restrictive level," they may keep them there for some time to ensure that inflation falls.

Signs of easing?

There have been some positive signs in the economic data, as consumer inflation slowed in July to 8.5 per cent, and soaring gas prices, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, have fallen in recent weeks.

FOMC members noted the recent decline as well as some

signs that supply constraints have eased, which also should work to bring down prices.

However, they said falling oil prices "cannot be relied on" to lower overall inflation, and instead, slowing demand will be a key factor in curbing price pressures, the minutes said.

Some officials warned against "complacency."

Still, the rapid, aggressive moves by the central bank have started to have an impact, and while officials say the US economy should continue to expand in the second half of the year, "many expected that growth in economic activity would be at a below-trend pace," the minutes said.

While the labor market remains strong, many noted "some tentative signs" that job conditions have started to soften.

Last month, the world's largest economy still had nearly two job openings for every unemployed person in the labor force.

Meanwhile, American consumers have continued to spend despite high prices, drawing on a stockpile of savings, though data indicate a shift towards services and away from cars and other big-ticket items, while rising mortgage rates have started to slow activity in the housing sector.

AFP



Sri Lankan university students take part in a demonstration in Colombo on Friday (AFP)

Sri Lanka warns of record 8% economic contraction

Colombo, Sri Lanak - Crisis-hit Sri Lanka's economic meltdown will result in a record contraction of at least eight per cent this year but the public could soon expect some relief from runaway inflation, the head of the country's central bank said.

The island nation defaulted on its US\$51bn foreign debt in April and is seeking an International Monetary Fund bailout after months of food, fuel and medicine shortages.

The IMF said Friday a team will travel to Sri Lanka next week to resume aid talks that were interrupted amid the unrest that led to the resignation of the nation's president.

The country's 22mn people have also suffered through lengthy blackouts and spiralling cost-of-living pressures after scarcity and a currency crash drove up prices.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka had already projected the economy could shrink a painful 7.5 per cent for the calendar year, dwarfing the previous record 3.6 per cent contraction in 2020 as the pandemic raged.

"But now we think it will exceed 8.0 per cent," governor Nandalal Weerasinghe told reporters in Colombo.

He said inflation - officially running at 60.8 per cent - will

peak at "about 65 per cent" in September, followed by a gradual easing caused by lower demand and improvements in supplies.

The foreign exchange shortage that sparked the economic crisis had eased thanks to better currency inflows and lower imports, he added.

"We are now able to finance the most essential imports such as petrol and diesel and medicines," Weerasinghe said.

At the peak of Sri Lanka's fuel shortages, motorists had to wait for days and sometimes weeks to top up, but strict fuel rationing has shortened queues.

Months of protests over the collapsing economy culminated in the resignation of president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was forced to flee his official residence after it was stormed by a huge crowd last month.

Rajapaksa is accused of mismanaging the island nation's economy to the point where it was unable to finance even the most essential imports.

He has since travelled to Thailand and close associates have said he was desperate to return home, where he faces corruption charges that had been suspended because of his presidential immunity.

AFP

Euro area economy grew 0.6% in second quarter

Brussels, Belgium - In the second quarter of 2022, seasonally adjusted GDP increased by 0.6 per cent both in the euro area and in the EU, compared with the previous quarter, according to a flash estimate published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the

European Union.

In the first quarter of 2022, GDP had grown by 0.5 per cent in the euro area and by 0.6 per cent in the EU.

Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, seasonally adjusted GDP in-

creased by 3.9 per cent in the euro area and by 4.0 per cent in the EU in the second quarter of 2022, after 5.4 per cent growth in the euro area and 5.5 per cent in the EU in the previous quarter.

The number of employed

persons increased by 0.3 per cent both in the euro area and in the EU in the second quarter of 2022, compared with the previous quarter. In the first quarter of 2022, employment had increased by 0.6 per cent in the euro area and by 0.5 per cent in

the EU.

Compared with the same quarter of the previous year, employment increased by 2.4 per cent in the euro area and by 2.3 per cent in the EU in the second quarter of 2022.

WAM

Global ratings agencies upgrade Ukraine rating



Volunteers clear the rubble of a house destroyed as a result of shelling in the city of Chernihiv on Friday (AFP)

Washington, US - S&P joined Fitch in upgrading Ukraine's credit rating on Friday after the war-torn nation last week secured a two-year reprieve on its foreign debt from creditors.

Boosting the country's credit score of foreign debt to CCC+ "reflects strong committed international financial support to Ukraine, coupled with eroding, albeit still relatively high, foreign exchange reserves," S&P Global Ratings said in a statement.

"As a result, the near-term risks to the government's liquidity position and, more broadly, its capacity to honor commercial debt, including in foreign currency, appear manageable."

But S&P said that is based on the assumptions that donors like

the United States and European Union will continue to provide funding to Kyiv in coming months.

A loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund also could ease pressures on Ukraine.

Ratings agency Fitch raised Ukraine's credit score on Thursday, after both agencies downgraded it to default territory due to the restructuring deal.

However, even with the upgrade S&P warned that "given the ongoing conflict with Russia, Ukraine's ability to stay current on its debt is highly dependent on factors largely outside of government control."

The agency projects the country's economy will contract by 40 per cent this year.

While Fitch upgraded Ukraine on Thursday from RD to CC, the rating means the risk of some kind of default appears probable.

Fitch said the August 11 agreement gives Kyiv breathing room on almost US\$6bn in principal and interest owed on Eurobonds, "alleviating external debt servicing pressure, in the context of weakening international reserves and acute war-related spending needs."

"Despite this debt servicing relief, the 'CC' rating reflects unresolved debt sustainability risks resulting from Russia's attack and Ukraine's highly stressed public and external finances and macro-financial position," Fitch said.

AFP



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DAMAC Properties unveils super luxury residential units

DAMAC Properties has announced the launch of its Skylofts Collection, a range of penthouses and super luxury residential units at three of its most upscale and highly sought-after developments – Safa One de GRISOGONO, Safa Two de GRISOGONO and Cavalli Tower.

The concept represents yet another innovation for Dubai’s leading developer of luxury properties. “It is a fresh approach to differentiating our ultra-luxury portfolio for end-users and property investors. The Skylofts Collection is the embodiment of a luxurious lifestyle unlike any other in Dubai, defined by opulent design aesthetics and access to über premium amenities,” said Niall McLoughlin, Senior Vice President of DAMAC. Situated on the 40th to 61st floors of the property, residents will have access to the Tropical Garden and a rain forest on the top floor.

Danube lighting solutions add sparkle to every home

Great interiors need great lighting - and choosing the perfect style for your room may prove a difficult task when faced with typical lighting options. As a central piece in every interior, lighting is often one of the first things people notice as they enter a room, and can make or break the intended effect of the design. Danube Home understands every home’s need for great lighting and offers a range of stunning solutions to compliment every style of decor, and home layout.

The wide range of lighting solutions include ambient lighting, task lighting and accent lighting for the indoors, and a great range of outdoor lighting solutions as well to add sparkle to outdoor spaces. The lighting solutions are available as ceiling lights like chandeliers, hanging lights, panel and spot lights, table and floor lamps, wall lights including wall sconces and picture or mirror lights. The outdoor lighting range includes landscape lights, outdoor wall lights, flood lights and spike lights and underground lights.

Hisense unveils customised products for the Qatar 2022

Hisense, a leading global technology enterprise, held its first live-stream Hisense’s Customised Products for the FIFA World Cup 2022 Launch and unveiled its innovative premium products. At the Event, Hisense revealed its latest product, including Hisense U7H TV, Hisense L9H Laser TV, and display home appliance products. The launch showcased Hisense’s premium technology and innovative breakthroughs, which fully demonstrated the enterprise’s values and commitment to using technology to establish better and more premium life for global consumers.

“Over the past 53 years, Hisense has grown into an international technology leading enterprise,” said Candy Pang, the Deputy General Manager of Brand Management Department of Hisense Group. “As an Official Sponsor of FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, we are more than privileged to launch Hisense’s Customized Products for the FIFA World Cup to celebrate the fabulous FIFA Moments with the world.”

Indian schools celebrate 76th Independence Day in style

Indian School Darsait and Indian School Bousher celebrate their country’s 76th Independence Day in their respective campuses on Monday.

ISD organised the 76th Independence Day celebration with patriotic zeal and zest coupled with enthusiasm to mark ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’, said a press statement. Ajit Vasudevan, Convenor, Head Academic and Staff Welfare and Grievances Subcommittee, School Management Committee was the Chief Guest on the occasion. The programme witnessed the benign presence of other esteemed Members of SMC, Principal, various dignitaries, staff, students, parents and well-wishers of ISD. The celebration commenced with a patriotic rendition of the National Anthem.

The day was celebrated with great enthusiasm and patriotic fervour in Indian School Bousher as well. It was a Red-letter Day in the history of ISB as the Chief Guest the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, His Excellency Amit Narang and Divya Narang along with Indian Navy’s Contingent from INS Chennai under Commander Praveen Mathur, Lieutenant Commanders Abhay Dwivedi and Gulshan Kumar graced this momentous occasion.

MoHERI joins Omantel, Huawei for ‘Seeds for the Future’ programme



The 2022 edition of the annual Huawei’s Seeds for the Future has opened in Oman, offering college undergraduates and fresh graduates the opportunity to join an online experience around technology innovation and cross-cultural exchange.

Held under the patronage of H E Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrooqi, Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and supported by Omantel, the initiative will see Oman’s youth access Huawei’s cutting-edge ICT, experience traditional and modern Chinese culture, and hone their professional development.

Huawei will also hold the Tech4Good global competition for the second year running, inviting young people to explore how digital technologies can address social issues. Through group projects, Tech4Good aims to increase social entrepreneurship, build problem-solving and leadership skills through teamwork, and deepen the sense of social responsibility.

The opening ceremony in Muscat was attended by top officials from the MoHERI and executives from Omantel and Huawei. H E Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrooqi, Minister of MoHERI, reiterated the government’s support for public-private sector partnerships to drive ICT skills development.

“The National Digital Economy Program is one of the main pillars of Oman Vision 2040, our long-term plan to achieve economic expansion and diversification. The Vision’s success relies on an effective ICT skills development strategy to match. Initiatives such as Seeds for the Future equip our youth with the capacity to make a

difference while contributing to the socio-economic growth of our nation,” H E Mahrooqi added.

Aladdin Baitfadhil, the Chief Commercial Officer of Omantel said, “As Oman’s leading enabler of innovation, we take pride in initiatives that help advance our country’s capabilities in the ICT domain. We are again glad to collaborate with our long-term partner, Huawei, in this year’s Seeds for the Future as we continue to support Oman’s digital transformation agenda.”

Chen Jianhan, the Huawei Oman CEO said, “Oman

and ensuring they have access to the technical expertise to take full advantage of these digital innovations.”

During the eight-day Seeds for the Future programme, participants will receive entry-level and advanced courses on key technologies, including 5G, cloud computing and AI. They will also experience virtual tours of Chinese scenic spots or fast-growing companies and a glimpse at Huawei’s history and technological developments, including virtual exploration of Huawei exhibition halls, campus and stores. Huawei experts, entrepreneurs, professors and scientists will also be at hand to share perspectives on a wide range of topics, from cybersecurity to the aerospace industry.

Seeds for the Future is built around communities so participants can immerse themselves in interactive and dynamic classrooms where group discussions, debates, and round table dialogues will be arranged to ensure cross-cultural exchanges with global peers. Meanwhile, an eventful alumni calendar features year-long exclusive webinars, round table dialogues, celebration events, and more to strengthen community spirit. Oman students also have an opportunity to compete for prizes in a global contest that pits their innovations against technological projects from their global peers.

Since Seeds for the Future was launched in 2008, more than 12,000 students have participated from 137 countries and featured 180 endorsements from top government and non-government officials. Last year’s event attracted 25 Oman students shortlisted from different universities from across the sultanate.

Initiatives such as Seeds for the Future equip our youth with the capacity to make a difference while contributing to the growth of our nation

H E DR RAHMA BINT IBRAHIM AL MAHROOQI

students have been enthusiastic participants in our skills development initiatives over the years. They have repeatedly demonstrated creativity and problem-solving skills, with the quality of their contributions continuously rising year after year. We will continue to support Oman organizations achieve their digital transformation goals by providing cutting edge technologies

EMi for Changan EADO Plus RO104 spread over 8 years

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC (AGAE), which is part of Bahwan International Group, has announced a low EMI on Changan EADO Plus model 2023.

Customers can now avail an exceptionally low EMI rate of RO104 on Changan EADO Plus model (terms and conditions apply). EMI is calculated based on 20 per cent down payment for eight years loan tenure. It is subject to credit approvals from banks and applicable on vehicles purchased for personal use.

The Changan EADO Plus (2023 model) comes with 1.4 Turbo engine is equipped with 7-speed dual clutch transmission.

The ‘beyond your expectation’ Changan EADO Plus is a compact yet aggressive family sedan with premium styling, luxurious interior, and plenty of safety features. With intelligent safety features to assist, EADO Plus lets drivers be at peace when on the road.

The top variant EADO Plus Limited comes with Dual 10” screens for driving convenience, adaptive cruise control, panoramic sunroof, 360°camera, side airbags, navigation, dual exhaust features available mostly in luxury sedans.

A spokesperson for AGAE said, “We are pleased to offer a low EMI on the 2023 model of Changan EADO Plus. It is truly beyond one’s expectation. It is stylish, energetic, and practical and has

a perfect design that integrates fashion with function. As a family car it impresses with its appealing exterior, luxurious and spacious interior, interactive dashboard, driver-assist features for utmost safety.”

Some of the standout features of Changan EADO Plus 1.4 Turbo are

S t a r



Changan EADO Plus 1.4 T 7 DCT Limited

With an engine of 1.4 Turbo, the Changan EADO Plus sport edition offers power of 155hp, Nm torque and transmission of 7 speed DCT.

The model offers a dimension of 4730x1820x1505 mm (LxWxH), a wheelbase of 2700 mm, fuel tank of 53 litres.

The highlights of Changan EADO Plus 1.4 T 7 DCT’s limited edition includes EADO Plus 1.4 T 7 DCT SPORT features and some extra features. The exterior has dual tone 17” alloy wheels, sportier front grille, ORVM - electrically folding, panoramic sunroof.

The interior features includes sporty red interior, front seats ventilation, six-way driver seat electrically adjustable, rear armrest and 60:40 rear seat split.

Bank Muscat offers ‘attractive’ Shahadati education financing

Bank Muscat has announced Shahadati Education Financing to help its customers meet the aspirations and needs in attaining higher education.

Shahadati Educational Finance comprises of Higher Education Finance and Fees Finance. Under Higher Education Finance, Omani nationals can get financing up to RO75,000 for completing their higher education with a repayment period of up to seven years at a competitive interest rate.

The Shahadati Fees Finance on the other hand is designed for assisting in the payment of private school fees, summer courses and professional certificates. It offers a maximum finance amount of RO 10,000 with a repayment tenor of up to 1 year.



Abdullah Tamman al Mashani

“Throughout its history, the bank has always been keen to support the efforts of Omani youth to obtain certification and qualifications that are in tune to the needs of the job market. We look forward to developing more products that meet their aspirations and needs,” said Abdullah Tamman al Mashani, Bank Muscat General Manager - Products.

SBA highlights importance of choosing Nissan genuine parts

Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) offers a broad range of Nissan genuine parts which are designed, tested and manufactured to the same exacting standards to fit perfectly for optimum performance, durability and safety.

By fitting Nissan Genuine Accessories customers can rest easy knowing its high quality standards ensure the perfect fit, increased safety, and reliability, allowing them to future-proof their car.

SBA, the exclusive distributor of Nissan genuine parts in Oman, over the years has become a trusted name in Oman automotive market and is renowned for its customer service excellence, fostering enduring customer relationships. The company leads the way across the region as a value adding partner and has been recognized globally by Nissan. SBA regularly conducts campaigns to educate their customers on the importance of using genuine parts.



Ooredoo’s Sabbahi plan offers 10GB data for RO2

With holiday season upon us, what better way to enjoy long summer nights than sharing with friends! Ooredoo’s Sabbahi plan is now available for just RO2, giving Hala prepaid customers 8GB of night-time data (between 11.00pm and 8.00am) plus 2GB for the rest of the day - that’s 24 hours of snapping, posting, chatting and sharing. Valid for two months, it’s one of a number of great value offers available from Ooredoo.

Customers can subscribe to the offer through the Ooredoo App or by dialling *555*28#.

Pakistan School celebrates country’s Independence Day



The 75th Independence year of Pakistan was observed with high spirit in Pakistan School Sohar on the eve of August 14, said Sohar Campus Principal Mazhar Bokhari in a press statement.

“We are a nation, built on harmony, development, prosperity and peace, achieving milestones for a better future,” the statement added, informing that the school building was fully illuminated in green and white on August 13 and 14 to mark the occasion.

Saeed bin Muhammad al Raisi, supervisor of international schools in Sohar (Ministry of Education, Oman) as the chief guest together with Hamad bin Muhammad al Sarhi (In-charge Football Association Hi Alrafa) graced the event by their auspicious presence. Parents and children beautifully clad in white and green also attended the ceremony.

The ceremony started with the holy name of Allah followed by the national anthem of Pakistan and Oman, along with a cake cutting ceremony and Dua for the welfare of the country respectively.

Volkswagen Oman unveils exclusive summer offers

Premium Motors, the exclusive dealership of Volkswagen in Oman, is committed to providing great experiences to its customers and has announced a summer offer on the brand’s popular models, which ends on September 25.

The special offer is available on Volkswagen models - Passat Trendline 2021, Golf GTI 2021, Teramont 2.0 L Trendline 2021, and T-Roc 2022.

The starting price for the Passat Trendline is RO7,999 (VAT excluded). The summer offer includes three years of unlimited warranty mileage, three years’ service or 45,000km, and three years roadside assistance. The summer offer on the Golf GTI 2021 includes a warranty of six years or 200,000km, seven years’ service or 105,000km, five years roadside assistance, free registration for the first year, luxury car care protection and lifestyle accessories.

The starting price for the Teramont 2.0 Trendline 2021 is RO11,990 (VAT excluded). The summer offer includes three years of unlimited warranty mileage, three years’ service or 45,000km, three years roadside assistance, and free window tint.



Football-themed education toolkit launched during build-up to Qatar 2022

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, Education Above All Foundation (EAA) and the Generation Amazing Foundation have announced a collaboration to develop a ‘Football 4 Development Playbook’ (F4DP), a new toolkit that aims to support some of the world’s most vulnerable, forcibly displaced children.

The F4DP toolkit is a practical guide that uses football-themed physical games, activities and training drills to teach and develop life skills for children like teamwork, resilience, discipline and social integration.

It aims to improve social inclusion, cohesion and wellbeing, and will be used in existing UNHCR and EAA projects that support out-of-school children at the primary level, as well as displaced populations in Chad, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda.

The partnership to develop the F4DP tool was signed in Geneva by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, the Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy and Chairman of the Generation Amazing Foundation, H E Hassan al Thawadi, and the CEO of EAA, Fahad al Sulaiti.

“This project aims to harness the transformative power of football, to empower refugee children and youth, and provide them with life-long skills that can help them and their local host communities,” said Grandi.

The Generation Amazing Foundation,



This project aims to harness the transformative power of football, to empower refugee children and youth

FILIPPO GRANDI

a FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 legacy initiative which specialises in creating football for social change programmes is developing the materials in collaboration with UNHCR to build upon its existing ‘Sports for Protection’ toolkit.

Thawadi said, “Generation Amazing’s mission is to ensure that the heart and soul of football reaches people that

need it the most. UNHCR and EAA are engaged with and assisting refugee communities around the world and we are pleased to contribute to this critical work through this partnership. Football (and sport) alone can’t change the world, but ensuring that its incredible power to inspire and unite is harnessed is a responsibility we must deliver on, especially in places where populations battle with innumerable obstacles and challenges.”

Improved mental agility, attention span and decision-making, alongside self-confidence, self-efficacy and resilience, are just some of the associated advantages of sport, all vital skills for children and young people, particularly those who have been forcibly displaced and living in refugee camps or otherwise disadvantaged.

“Although education is a human

right, refugee communities host some of the largest out-of-school child populations,” said EAA’s Sulaiti. “We are all too aware of the role well designed sports interventions can play within existing education programmes in reaching the most marginalised children to improve multiple areas of development. We look forward to welcoming these new football-focused materials to better help us ensure that when it comes to education, no child is left behind.”

“We value the role of our partners, the UNCHR and GA in developing the ‘Football 4 Development Playbook’. We also thank our strategic partner - Qatar Fund for Development, for their support of the main project, using sport as a tool to enhance humanitarian and development efforts and to consolidate peace in countries underdeveloped and fragile societies,” Sulaiti added.

SriLankan Airlines transports medical donations from Kuwait

SriLankan Cares, the corporate social responsibility arm of SriLankan Airlines, takes on the cause of airlifting essential medicines gifted by Kuwaiti donors to hospitals in Sri Lanka, free of freight charges.

SriLankan Cares has teamed with SriLankan Cargo to implement the long-term humanitarian project which aims to channel medical product donations from the Middle East and other regions to hospitals in Sri Lanka that are struggling to cope with the ongoing drug shortage in the country.

The project is also representative of the Sri Lankan national

carrier’s enduring commitment to espouse national causes in the country’s hour of need.

Consequently, SriLankan Cares has already airlifted a consignment of life-saving medicines that has been generously donated by the Kuwait Humanitarian Friendship Society.

The medical supplies were flown free of freight charges on SriLankan Airlines and distributed to medical establishments across Sri Lanka.

SriLankan Cares organised the logistics of the consignment from its point of origin by obtaining necessary documents, approvals and bookings that help

fast-track the process with the support of SriLankan Cargo. With more donations expected, SriLankan Cares will continue to deliver consignments of donated medicine and medical equipment from the Middle East and the rest of the world in the months ahead.

“SriLankan Airlines strongly believes in giving back to the community, and we owe it to our customers and shareholders to be a socially responsible company. We have flown an astounding 45,000 kilograms of medical supplies from multiple donor countries including Kuwait, to Sri Lanka at no cost to



date. We are sincerely grateful to the Sri Lankan Embassy in Kuwait for facilitating the donations and their usual cooperation with the national carrier. Our greatest reward from this project

will be the enhanced quality of life it bestows on every beneficiary, patient,” stated Richard Nuttall, Chief Executive Officer of SriLankan Airlines.

Time and again, SriLankan Cares has risen to the occasion to aid those in need, especially children. The healthcare sector in Sri Lanka is currently facing its most acute medicine shortage in the history of the country, putting at peril the very lives of those who depend on its services.

SriLankan Cares’ compassionate move to bring vital medication to the sick and vulnerable is therefore an opportune and life-saving intervention.

DAILY CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1) At a good clip, poetically

6) Belinda Carlisle's all-girl group

11) White House URL suffix

14) Hurling entangling weapons

15) Apt rhyme for "anticipate"

16) Feeling of rage

17) Noisemaking bug

19) Common soccer score

20) Works the soil

21) Mooched

23) Job hunter's handout

26) Some large wine containers

27) "The Wizard of Menlo Park"

28) Sit-down affair

29) Put two and two together

30) Emergency paper money

32) Native of Israel

35) Mortgage, for instance

37) It's wrecked

39) Sweetheart

40) Butte relatives

42) San Diego athlete

44) Conclude

45) Husband and brother of Isis

47) Main course in a restaurant

49) Not upset

51) Selected

52) Small hand-drums

53) "Balderdash!"

55) Make a sheepshank

56) Give in to decay

61) The first to hear "Madam, I'm Adam"

62) Fine with the Stooges

63) Mourning band

64) Make calls on the court, briefly

65) Bring joy to

66) Flanges

DOWN

1) Major broadcaster

2) Campaign pro

3) Ryan's "Love Story" co-star

4) Desert growth

5) Mukluk wearers

7) Highlander

7) Has a payment booklet

8) B-movie shooter

9) Container with a spout

10) The "S" in T.S. Eliot

11) Some spicy drinks

12) Corbeled bay window

13) South African grassland

18) Flinch or cringe

22) View with anxiety

23) The sea, to Poseidon

24) The youngest Munster

25) What Rocky sparred with

26) Certain rifle stand

28) Many opera headliners

31) Like rushing white water

33) One spelling for a Hindu princess

34) Beauty expert Elizabeth

36) Like some voices

38) Nativity representation

41) Pretty big

43) Add some pizzazz to

46) Cap again

48) Not away from

49) Complete and total

50) Green, so to speak

53) Role

54) Eyelid problem

57) Part of history

58) Move one's tail, as a dog

59) Orangutan, for one

60) Positive answer

NOTE PAD

LOFTS OPALS ELF
AVAIL AERIE NOR
WAYBACK WHEN TWO
EVA AGA REG
RAFTERS TETRA DS
OAR ROCS SOON
URI SLOTS RECAP
SOTS SORER SERE
ENTER PIPET WOE
EXES PITH ASP
PARTNER AYEAYES
ABATERA PIC
ROW WAY OF ESCAPE
IRA EPODE TRITE
STY DENEB SARAN

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES

MARCH 21-APRIL 19

All signs are pointing to a fantastic new beginning for you, and a long journey or geographical change could be coming soon. If a trip is already planned, expect it to go incredibly well. An upgrade might be involved. Prepare yourself for a little unexpected luxury. A financial payoff is due today too, one you should share with the people you love. Invite a few friends out to dinner and surprise them by footing the bill.



LEO

JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Are you being watched? If you feel like you're being evaluated by a coworker, boss, or even a potential date today, why not turn the tables? Do your own evaluation of whoever you feel is evaluating you. It's time to forget what other people think about what you do and focus more on what you think about them. This isn't about judging people. It's about trying to discern which relationships in your life need to grow and which need to diminish or even end



SAGITTARIUS

NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

If you have been itching for a progress report, here it is: the things you've been working on are well on their way toward success, although you might need to nudge them along today. You did a good job of lining things up and letting momentum do most of the work, but you need to get more involved. Shine up your managerial skills and coordinate your people into a more focused unit. Could it be time to trim some waste?



TAURUS

APRIL 20-MAY 20

Give yourself the gift of peace and quiet today. It's not selfish to want to be by yourself. It's healthy. You're in an inward phase of life, which will help you recharge your emotional batteries, center yourself, and get better prepared to be there when the people you love need you. Be honest with your needs, and as long as you keep your people in the loop, they'll be cool with you pulling back from the social scene for a while. Everyone needs a break once in a while!



VIRGO

AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

If you're starting a new situation today, don't put pressure on yourself to be a superstar right off the bat. You need to give yourself all the time you require to get a handle on your new routine, new environment, or new group of folks around you. The empathy shown you today will encourage you to relax and just be yourself. There is a freedom in letting go of the expectations you put on yourself. Your job today is to learn, not impress.



CAPRICORN

DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

An everyday choice could carry additional weight for you today. Be careful not to make any of your decisions too quickly, because other people are involved in the outcome of your situation. You're at one of those critical points when it seems like wrong decision aren't possible and everything is win/win. But that isn't necessarily the case. You need to think everything through and do what's best for the largest group of people.



GEMINI

MAY 21-JUNE 21

Taking care of your health isn't something you can do only once in a while. It's something you have to integrate into your life every single day. The good news is that once you learn how to eat better and exercise more, it becomes easier to stick with it. Your self-discipline is stronger than ever, so you're in the best frame of mind to start a new fitness routine, join a gym, or invest in some new exercise equipment. It won't take much to get you hooked on feeling good.



LIBRA

SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Today your life is all about the journey, not the destination, and you'll have a nice first-class seat. Enjoy the perks of your superior position and just relax until someone tells you that you've arrived at your destination. Letting your mind be quiet for a day will enable all sorts of brilliant new ideas to fly right in. Get ready for important revelations about someone in your life who might be putting pressure on you to go somewhere you're not ready to go.



AQUARIUS

JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

If you're waiting for the hectic energy of your life to calm down so you can spend more time with the people you love, stop waiting! The fact is that's simply not going to happen. You have to make the time, and you have to make it today. Luckily, some flexibility will enter your life today. There's someone who wants to lend you a helping hand. If you can reorganize a few things, you can schedule in some quality time. Make it a regular event if possible.



CANCER

JUNE 22-JULY 22

It can be hard to be totally objective when your feelings are at stake, but if you can separate your emotions from what you need to do right now, you will be able to swing it with little if any difficulty. Organization could be a surprising aid for you right now. Getting your life together will give you a complete overview of your issues, making your first move obvious. Prioritization will be key to staying on top of things and staying strong.



SCORPIO

OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Recent flashbacks have you feeling nostalgic. Have you been curious about what an ex has been up to? Today would be a good day to get back in touch with them. They're open to hearing from you. If face-to-face communication is too intimidating, pick up the phone and settle in for a long conversation. Overall, freeing up your time should be a bigger goal today. You need some extended time by yourself to regroup and reflect on the progress you've made.



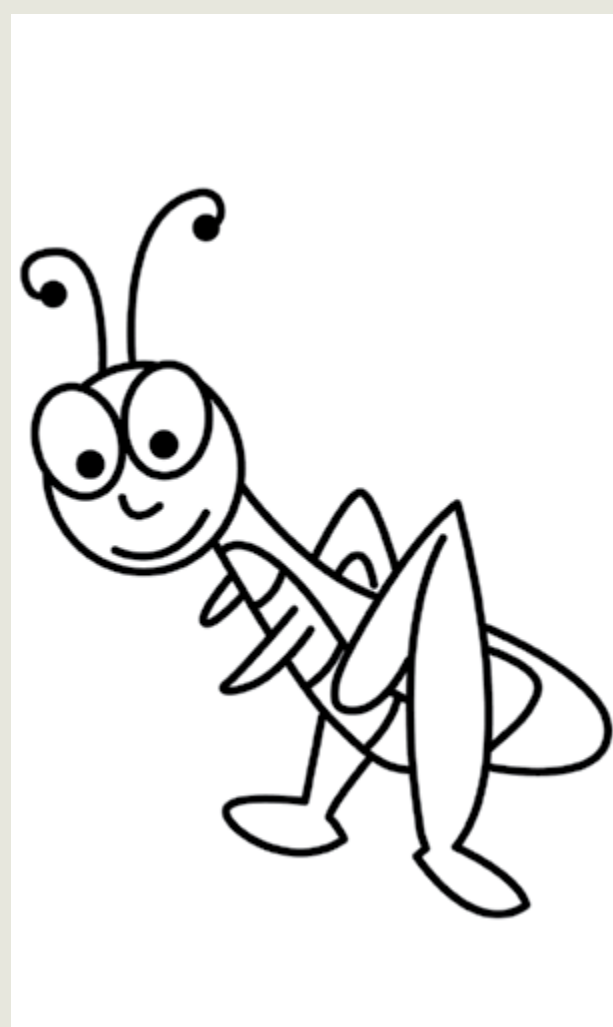
PISCES

FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It's finally time to take your latest endeavor to the next level. If you're in a burgeoning romantic relationship, plan a date where the two of you can really let loose and confess your real feelings for each other. Go beyond the old dinner-and-movie routine. How about cooking a meal together? If you're still settling into a new job, the timing is perfect for you to deliver your latest new idea. Plan to bring it up in the next meeting you attend.

Answers: 1. D 2. D 3. B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	O	S	A
A	G	I	R
C	U	S	T
N	T	I	P

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

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

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

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

13 people dead as Somali security forces battle Al-Shabaab at hotel in Mogadishu

Mogadishu, Somalia - At least 13 civilians have been killed and dozens wounded in an Islamist militant attack on a hotel in the Somali capital, officials said on Saturday, as security forces battled gunmen barricaded inside many hours after the siege began.

Fighters from the Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Shabaab stormed the Hayat Hotel in Mogadishu on Friday evening in a hail of gunfire and bomb blasts. Scores of people were trapped inside but officials said many including children have since been rescued.

Sporadic gunfire and loud explosions could be heard into Saturday afternoon, but details remain difficult to verify in the chaos. It is the biggest attack in Mogadishu since Somalia's new president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, was elected in May after many months of political instability.

Al-Shabaab, which has been waging a deadly insurgency for 15 years against the fragile government in the Horn of Africa nation, has claimed responsibility.

"We are getting information about five more victims confirmed dead and that makes 13 the overall number of civilians killed by the terrorists," security commander Mohamed Abdikadir told AFP.

"The security forces rescued



Security officers patrol near the site of explosions in Mogadishu on Saturday (AFP)

dozens of civilians including children who were trapped in the building." Police officer Ibrahim Duale confirmed that more than 10 people had been killed, but said updated information would be released once the siege had ended.

"The security forces will an-

nounce any moment that the siege is over, it took a long time because of the complexity of the rescue mission," Duale told AFP.

The director of Mogadishu's main trauma hospital, Mohamed Abdirahman Jama, said the facility was treating at least 40 people wounded in the hotel attack

and a separate mortar strike on another area of the capital.

Mortar attack injures newly-weds -

Dozens of people gathered outside the four-storey hotel to discover the fate of loved ones.

"We have been looking for a

relative of mine who was trapped inside the hotel, she was confirmed dead together with six other people, two of them I know," said an anxious Muudey Ali. There has been no official comment from the government, although East Africa grouping IGAD and Turkey, which has a

military base in Somalia, both issued strong condemnations.

In another incident, a volley of mortar shells hit the seafont neighbourhood of Hamar Jajab, district commissioner Mucawiye Muddey told AFP. "Among those critically wounded are a newlywed bride and her groom and a

family of three children, a mother and their father," he said.

There was no immediate claim for that attack.

Witnesses had reported at least two powerful explosions on Friday as gunmen stormed the hotel, a popular spot for government officials in a bustling area on the airport road.

Police spokesman Abdifatah Adan Hassan had told reporters on Friday the initial blast was caused by a suicide bomber who forced his way into the hotel with other gunmen.

Witnesses said a second blast occurred just a few minutes later, inflicting more casualties as rescuers, security forces and civilians rushed to the scene.

Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility in a brief statement on a pro-Shabaab website, saying its fighters were carrying out 'random shooting' inside the hotel.

Its spokesman Abdiyaz Abu-Musab told the group's Andalusi radio on Saturday that its forces were still in control of the building and that they had 'inflicted heavy casualties'.

Al-Shabaab fighters have carried out several attacks in Somalia since Mohamud took office and have also launched strikes on the Ethiopia border, raising concerns about a possible new strategy.

AFP

IS 'Beagle' jailed for life by US court

Alexandria, US - A member of the notorious Islamic State kidnap-and-murder cell known as the 'Beagles' was sentenced to life in prison by a US court on Friday for the deaths of four American hostages in Syria.

El Shafee Elsheikh, 34, was given eight concurrent life sentences with no possibility of parole after being convicted in April of hostage-taking, conspiracy to murder US citizens and supporting a terrorist organisation.

Judge T.S. Ellis, handing down the sentence in a US District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, said Elsheikh's conduct 'can only be described as horrific, barbaric, brutal, callous and, of course, criminal'. Elsheikh, wearing large glasses, a black face mask and a prison jumpsuit with 'Alexandria Inmate' on the back, did not visibly react and declined an opportunity to speak to the court.

The trial of the former British national, which featured emotional testimony from former hostages and parents of the murdered Americans, was the most



Parents of victims speak to reporters outside the Albert V Bryan Federal Courthouse following the sentencing of El Shafee Elsheikh, in Alexandria, Virginia, on Friday (AFP)

significant prosecution of an IS militant in the United States.

Diane Foley, mother of murdered hostage James Foley, addressed Elsheikh and the court and noted Friday was the eighth anniversary of her son's 'gruesome beheading'. "You have been

held accountable for your depravity," Foley told Elsheikh. "You have lost your country, your citizenship, your freedom and your family. Love is much stronger than hatred," she added. "I pity you, Elsheikh, for choosing hatred."

The jury deliberated for less

than six hours at the end of a two-week trial before finding Elsheikh guilty for his role in the deaths of four Americans - journalists Foley and Steven Sotloff and aid workers Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller.

AFP

16 dead, 21 hurt in Turkey road accident

Istanbul, Turkey - Sixteen people died and 21 were injured in a road accident involving a bus and an ambulance in southeastern Turkey, media reported on Saturday.

The governor of Gaziantep province Davut Gul said that the deaths and injuries were sustained 'in an accident involving a bus, an emergency team and an ambulance... between Gaziantep and Nizip'.

Local media gave a higher toll than the provisional figure given earlier by the governor, reporting 16 deaths and 21 injuries.

The DHA news agency said an ambulance, a firefighting truck and a bus carrying journalists were hit by a passenger bus.

"Three firefighters, two emergency workers and two journalists figure among the dead," the Gaziantep governor said. Photos on DHA showed the back of an ambulance ripped out and metal debris strewn around it.

AFP

UN to end travel ban exemptions for Taliban officials

United Nations, US - The United Nations is set to end travel ban exemptions for 13 Taliban officials on Friday, pending any deal by Security Council members on a possible extension, diplomats told AFP.

Under a 2011 UN Security Council resolution, 135 Taliban officials are subject to sanctions that include asset freezes and travel bans. But 13 of them were granted exemptions from the travel ban to allow them to meet officials from other countries abroad.

In June, the 15-member UN Security Council's Afghanistan Sanctions Committee removed two Taliban education ministers from the exemption list over the regime's curtailment of women's rights.

At the same time, they renewed the exemption for the others until August 19, plus a further month if no member objected. Ireland objected this week, according to diplomatic sources.

China and Russia have called for an extension, while the United States has sought a reduced list of the officials allowed to travel and the destinations they can travel to.

The latest proposal on the table would allow just six officials to travel for diplomatic reasons, diplomatic sources told AFP. If no member of the Council objects by Monday afternoon, it will come into force for three months.

In the meantime, the exemptions for the 13 officials end at midnight on Friday.

Among the 13 are Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghani Baradar and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai.

They were instrumental in negotiations with the US gov-

ernment of then-president Donald Trump which led to a deal in 2020 paving the way for America's withdrawal from Afghanistan.

A spokesperson for the Chinese mission at the UN, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the Security Council, this week called the Western position linking the travel ban to human rights 'counterproductive'.

The exemptions are 'needed as much as ever', the spokesperson said, adding that if reimposing a travel ban is all other members of the Council want to do, 'clearly they have learned no lessons

Under a 2011 UN Security Council resolution, 135 Taliban officials are subject to sanctions like asset freezes and travel bans

at all'.

Despite their promises to be more flexible after they seized power in August last year, the Taliban have largely reverted to the harsh Islamist rule that characterised their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001.

In particular, they have severely restricted the rights and freedoms of girls and women, calling for them to don burkas, effectively halting girls' education and systematically removing women from Afghan workplaces.

No country has so far recognised the government.

AFP

Algeria wildfires mostly contained but new blazes force further evacuations and closure of roads

Algiers, Algeria - Wildfires which killed at least 38 people across northern Algeria have been largely contained, firefighters said on Friday, but new blazes forced further evacuations and the closure of some roads near the Tunisian border.

Fierce fires have become an annual fixture in Algeria's parched forests where climate change is exacerbating a long-running drought. "We are currently fighting 11 fires," the civil defence's Colonel Boualem Boughlef told an evening news broadcast. He said more than 1,000 families had been evacuated since Wednesday.

Fire service spokesman Colonel Farouk Achour said on Friday morning that all the fires

had been 'completely brought under control', but the service later tweeted that fires were burning in the far northeastern regions of El Tarf and Skikda.

State television showed images of an army firefighting aircraft over El Tarf, and police said several highways in the area had been closed.

Images on social media showed people evacuating homes near a forest blaze in the El Kala area, which had seen devastating fires on Thursday.

El Tarf residents were counting their losses, including the charred remains of farm animals burned alive as flames swept through the area.

The fire 'didn't spare anything', said one farmer, Hamdi



An elderly Algerian woman reacts in front of the ruins of her home, destroyed in a wildfire in the city of el-Kala, on Thursday (AFP)

Gemidi, 40, who walked in rubber sandals on the ash-covered earth where the carcasses of what appeared to be sheep lay.

"This is our livelihood... We have nowhere to go and nothing to make a living from."

Ghazala, 81, said she had been rescued along with a few animals after flames came dangerously close to her house.

"I don't know where to go now. Should I stay in the fields, forests or mountains?" she asked, on the verge of tears. "I really don't know where I should go."

Since the beginning of June, some 1,240 blazes have destroyed 5,345 hectares of forests and other woodland, Colonel Boughlef said.

AFP

North Syria violence kills 21 civilians including children

Al-Bab, Syria - At least 21 civilians including children were killed on Friday in separate bombardments in the latest flare-up of violence along Syria's northern border with Turkey, Kurdish authorities and a war monitor said.

The bloodshed comes against a backdrop of increased tensions pitting the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) against Turkish troops and their Syrian proxies.

A pre-dawn strike by a Turkish drone that hit 'a training centre for young girls' in the Shmouka area near Hasakeh in the northeast killed 'four children and wounded 11', a statement from the semi-autonomous Kurdish authorities said.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor with a broad network of sources on the ground, confirmed the toll.

In Al-Bab, a town under the control of Syrian factions loyal to Ankara, 'artillery fire on a market by pro-regime forces killed 17 civilians - including six children - and wounded another 35', the Observatory said.

An AFP correspondent said the strike on the town near the Syria-Turkey border had ripped through the market, and described a jumble of body parts,



A long-range grad rocket is launched by Turkish-backed Syrian fighters, reportedly targeting Kuweires military airfield and other points along the frontlines with areas held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in the district of al-Azraq, north of Syria's Aleppo province early on Saturday (AFP)

strewn vegetables and mangled handcarts.

Residents and first responders rushed to assist and evacuate the wounded, the correspondent said.

A spokesman for the SDF, the Syrian Kurds' de facto army, denied any involvement.

Ankara considers the main

Kurdish component of the SDF - allied with the United States in the fight against Islamic State group militants - to be a terrorist organisation with links to the Kurdish insurgency inside its own territory.

Turkey has been threatening since May to begin a new offensive in northern Syria, and Kurdish officials and the Ob-

servatory say Turkish drones have been launching more and more strikes on SDF-controlled areas.

Regime forces have deployed in areas controlled by Kurdish fighters near the border with Turkey as part of agreements intended to stem a fresh Turkish operation.

On Friday, President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan said Turkey was not looking to seize any Syrian territory, despite stepping up its attacks in the country's north.

"We do not have eyes on the territory of Syria because the people of Syria are our brothers," Turkish media quoted Erdogan as saying.

AFP



This file photo shows Jesus Murillo Karam gesturing during a press conference in Mexico City on October 22, 2014 (AFP)

Disappearance of 43 students in Mexico: Ex-prosecutor arrested

Mexico City, Mexico - Mexico on Friday arrested a former attorney general who led a controversial investigation into the disappearance of 43 students in 2014 - one of the country's worst human rights tragedies.

Arrest warrants were also issued for dozens more suspects including military personnel, police officers and cartel members, prosecutors announced.

Ex-attorney general Jesus Murillo Karam is the most senior figure detained so far in connection with the case, which shocked the nation and generated international condemnation. He is considered the architect of the so-called 'historical truth' version of events presented in 2015 by the government of then-president Enrique Pena Nieto that was widely rejected, including by relatives.

they were detained by corrupt police and handed over to the Guerreros Unidos drug cartel which mistook them for members of a rival gang, but exactly what happened to them has been hotly disputed. According to the official report presented in 2015, cartel members killed the students and incinerated their remains at a garbage dump.

Those conclusions were rejected by independent experts and the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the families.

'State crime'

On Thursday a truth commission investigating the atrocity branded the case a 'state crime' involving agents of various institutions.

It said that military personnel bore at least partial responsibility, either directly or through negligence. "Their actions, omissions or participation allowed disappearance and execution of the students, as well as murder of six other people," said the commission's head, deputy interior minister Alejandro Encinas.

Further investigations were necessary to establish the extent to which military personnel participated, he said. "An action of an institutional nature was not proven, but there was clear responsibility of members' of the armed forces, Encinas added.

The 'historical truth' did not attribute any responsibility to military personnel.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Friday that any soldiers and officials involved in the disappearance must face justice.

AFP

Death toll from Thai nightclub inferno reaches 20

Bangkok, Thailand - The death toll from a Thai nightclub inferno has risen to 20, health officials said, as victims continue to receive medical treatment.

The blaze broke out August 5 at Mountain B Club in Chonburi province - roughly 150km southeast of Bangkok. Authorities found 13 charred bodies inside the venue.

Seven others have since died from their injuries, with the latest fatality a 50-year-old man, Chonburi provincial public health office said.

All the victims were Thai nationals.

There are 25 injured who are still receiving medical treatment in hospitals, with nine on ventilators, the local health authority said.

Flammable acoustic foam on the walls of the club accelerated the blaze and it took firefighters more than three hours to bring it under control.

A Chonburi province senior police officer confirmed on Saturday that the club owners, a father and son, have been charged with causing death through recklessness and operating a pub without a licence.

"They could face more charges related to building safety and social security of employees," he told AFP.

Both have been released on bail by the local court, he said.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha has ordered an investigation into the tragedy. Thailand's lax approach to health and safety regulations - particularly in its bars and nightclubs - has long raised concerns.

AFP

Cuban firefighters killed in blaze honoured

Matanzas, Cuba - Thousands of Cubans turned out on Friday to bid a final farewell to 14 firefighters killed while battling a blaze at a fuel depot this month.

A long line of firefighters, soldiers and ordinary citizens solemnly filed past 14 coffins draped in the Cuban flag at a ceremony in Matanzas, some 100km east of the capital Havana. Also on hand were several of the island nation's top dignitaries, including leader Raul Castro, who headed an honor guard featuring President Miguel Diaz-Canel and Defense Minister General Alvaro Lopez Miera.

"A very sad day, it is very sad to say goodbye to those brothers who fought hard battles," Yunior Exposito, a 32-year-old rescue and salvage technician who escaped the fire, told AFP as he wept.



Relatives of the firefighters who died in a huge fire at an oil depot in early August cry next to the urns in Matanzas, Cuba, on Friday (AFP)

The blaze broke out on August 5 when lightning struck a tank containing 26mn litres of fuel at a depot on the outskirts of Matanzas, a city of some 140,000 people.

Early the next morning, a major explosion occurred when a second fuel tank caught fire - killing the firefighters already on site.

Two other firefighters had also died in the blaze. Some 130 people were injured, of whom 18

remain in hospital.

It took six more days to bring the fire under control, during which time the 14 firefighters were officially listed as missing.

Four of the depot's eight fuel tanks were destroyed. Each had a capacity of some 50mn litres (13.2mn gallons).

After missing firefighters' remains were found, officials said on Wednesday the bodies were too charred to allow for DNA identification.

The 14 were honoured on Friday on the second of two days of national mourning announced by Diaz-Canel, who offered his condolences via Twitter on Thursday to loved ones of 'these brave Cubans'.

The Matanzas depot supplies the Antonio Guterres thermoelectric plant, the largest in communist Cuba.

AFP

Literature world holds New York rally for Salman Rushdie

New York, US - Prominent literary figures including Paul Auster and Gay Talese gathered on Friday in Manhattan for a reading of Salman Rushdie's works, in solidarity with the author seriously injured in a stabbing attack.

More than a dozen acclaimed writers, including friends and colleagues of Rushdie, spoke at the steps of the New York Public Library for the event, which organisers said the novelist had been invited to watch from the hospital. One week ago Rushdie was about to be interviewed as part of a lecture series in upstate New York, when a man stormed the stage and stabbed the 75-year-old writer repeatedly in the neck and abdomen. In Rushdie's honour the American literary journalist Talese, sporting his signature fedora and three-piece suit, read an excerpt from *The Golden House* novel, while Irish writer Colum McCann read from the 1992 New Yorker essay *Out of Kansas*.

A M Homes - the American author whose own works including *The End of Alice* novel have



People listen as writers gather to read selected works of British author Salman Rushdie during a rally to show solidarity for free expression outside the New York Public Library in New York City on Friday (AFP)

triggered controversy over the years - read from Rushdie's piece *On Censorship*, which was drawn from a lecture he gave in 2012.

"No writer ever really wants to talk about censorship," she read. "Writers want to talk about creation, and censorship is anti-creation, negative energy, uncreation, the bringing into

being of non-being."

Rushdie spent years under police protection after Iranian leaders called for his killing over his portrayal of Islam and the Prophet Mohammed in his 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*.

Hari Kunzru, the British novelist and journalist, read the opening of that book.

'A hero'

Rushdie's suspected assailant,

24-year-old Hadi Matar from New Jersey, was wrestled to the ground by staff and audience members before being taken into police custody.

Matar answered to a grand jury indictment on Thursday, pleading not guilty to attempted murder and assault charges.

Rushdie's condition remains serious after emergency surgery but he has shown signs of improvement, and no longer requires assisted breathing.

"Not even a blade to the throat could stifle the voice of Salman Rushdie," said Suzanne Nossel, head of the US branch of PEN, an international organisation that defends free speech and which hosted the rally.

"Salman spoke for scores of writers who've been persecuted and tormented, and did not want their ordeals to subsume their identities or to drown out their imaginations."

Prior to her reading English writer Tina Brown addressed Rushdie directly, saying 'you never asked for the role of a hero'.

"You just wanted to be left alone to write," she continued. "But in the tenacity with which you've defended free speech, you are a hero and have paid a terrible price."

'Attack on creativity'

Writer and historian Amanda Foreman said Friday's turnout 'shows people are not afraid'.

"No matter what, we and they, we are all willing to stand up for what we are believing," she told AFP. Among the attendees was Raymond Lotta, an author and spokesperson for the Harlem shop Revolution Books, who told AFP the stabbing of Rushdie was 'an attack on critical thinking, on dissent, on creativity'.

Rushdie, who was born in India in 1947, moved to New York two decades ago and became a US citizen in 2016.

In an interview given to Germany's *Stern* magazine days before last Friday's attack, he had described how his life had resumed a degree of normality following his relocation from Britain.

AFP

15 killed in northern India after monsoon flash floods, landslides

Shimla, India - At least 15 people were killed in India after heavy monsoon rains triggered flash floods and landslides near the Himalayan foothills, authorities said on Saturday.

Flooding and landslides are common and cause widespread devastation during India's treacherous monsoon season.

Experts say climate change is increasing the number of extreme weather events around the world, with damming, deforestation and development projects in India exacerbating the human toll. Rescue officials were rushed to Mandi district in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh where a torrent of floodwater swept away two houses and killed eight people, a government statement said.

Landslides and flooding claimed seven other lives across the state, the release added.

Television news footage showed part of a railway bridge washed away by the deluge in nearby Kangra district.

In Hamipur district, flash floods stranded 19 people on the rooftops of local buildings before they were rescued by disaster response teams.

Schools were closed in the worst-affected districts.

Picturesque Himachal Pradesh is famed for its snow-capped mountains and is popular with tourists.

Last month, eight people died after flash floods triggered by a sudden downpour struck a camp for pilgrims in nearby Kashmir.

Heavy rains battered India's remote northeast in June, with nearly 40 killed in a landslide that swamped a camp housing railway workers and army reservists in Manipur state.



Villagers use a boat to commute at a waterlogged area at Badara Sanuti Village, near Allahabad on Saturday (AFP)



Elderly women cook a food on fire in the courtyard of their house in Siversk, Donetsk region on Saturday amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine (AFP)

Putin to allow inspectors to visit Russia-occupied nuclear plant

Odessa, Ukraine - Russian President Vladimir Putin has agreed that independent inspectors can travel to the Moscow-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, the French presidency said on Friday, as fears grow over fighting near the site.

The apparent resolution of a dispute over whether inspectors travel via Ukraine or Russia came as a US defence official said Ukraine's forces had brought the Russian advance to a halt.

"You are seeing a complete and total lack of progress by the Russians on the battlefield," the official said, speaking on grounds of anonymity.

According to French President Emmanuel Macron's office, Putin

No instruction at any nuclear power plant in the world provides a procedure in case a terrorist state turns it into a target

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

had 'reconsidered' his demand that the International Atomic Energy Agency travel through Russia to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear site.

The UN nuclear watchdog's chief, Rafael Grossi 'welcomed recent statements indicating that both Ukraine and Russia supported the IAEA's aim to send a mission to' the plant.

Meanwhile, UN chief Antonio Guterres urged Moscow's forces

occupying Zaporizhzhia not to disconnect the facility from the grid and potentially cut supplies to millions of Ukrainians.

A flare-up in fighting around the Russian-controlled nuclear power station - with both sides blaming each other for attacks - has raised the spectre of a disaster worse than in Chernobyl.

The Kremlin said that Putin and Macron agreed that the IAEA should carry out inspections 'as soon as possible' to 'assess the real situation on the ground'.

Putin also 'stressed that the systematic shelling by the Ukrainian military of the territory of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant creates the danger of a large-scale catastrophe', the Kremlin added.

Guterres in Odessa

The warning came just a day after Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Guterres, meeting in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, sounded the alarm over the fighting, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged the United Nations to secure the site.

"This summer may go down in the history of various European countries as one of the most tragic of all time," Zelensky said in his Friday evening address.

"No instruction at any nuclear power plant in the world provides a procedure in case a terrorist state turns a nuclear power plant into a target."

During his visit to the southern port of Odessa on Friday, the UN secretary general said that 'obviously, the electricity from Zaporizhzhia is Ukrainian electricity. This principle must be fully respected'.

"Naturally, its energy must be used by the Ukrainian people," he told AFP in separate comments.

Ethiopian Airlines suspends pilots who missed landing

Nairobi, Kenya - Africa's biggest carrier Ethiopian Airlines said it has suspended two pilots who reportedly fell asleep and missed their landing during a flight from Khartoum to Addis Ababa.

The plane overshot the runway at Bole International Airport in the Ethiopian capital on Monday before landing safely, according to flight-tracking website FlightAware.

Independent website The Aviation Herald said the pilots fell asleep during the flight and were only woken up by an alarm triggered when autopilot mode disconnected.

The plane circled back to land 25 minutes later, flight data showed.

Ethiopian Airlines said on Friday that flight ET343 had temporarily lost communication with air traffic control but landed safely after it was restored. "The concerned crew have been removed from operation pending further investigation," the airline said in a statement without saying if

the pilots had been asleep.

"Appropriate corrective action will be taken based on the outcome of the investigation," it added.

The flight between the two capitals normally takes less than two hours.

London-based aviation analyst Alex Macheras described the incident as 'deeply concerning', blaming it on widespread fatigue that poses a major threat to air safety.

"Pilot fatigue is nothing new, and continues to pose one of the most significant threats to air safety - internationally," he posted on Twitter.

In March 2019, a Boeing 737 MAX operated by Ethiopian Airlines crashed six minutes after takeoff into a field southeast of Addis Ababa, killing all 157 people on board. The disaster, five months after a similar crash in Indonesia, triggered the global grounding of the jet for 20 months, before it returned to service in late 2020.

Indonesia records first case of monkeypox virus

Jakarta, Indonesia - Indonesia has recorded its first case of monkeypox in a 27-year-old man who returned from travelling overseas, the country's health ministry said on Saturday.

The World Health Organization designated the outbreak of the virus an emergency last month - something it reserves for diseases of highest concern.

Indonesian health ministry spokesperson Mohammad Syahril said the patient had a 'high awareness and knowledge of the disease'. "So when he got the symptoms, he immediately checked it (with) the doctor. The

result came (back) positive within a day," Syahril told reporters, adding that the man was now in isolation in capital Jakarta.

Symptoms of monkeypox - which is endemic in parts of Central and Western Africa - include lesions, fever, muscle ache and chills. It has only been fatal in rare cases. The patient arrived in Indonesia on August 8 and developed symptoms of fever and rashes a week later.

The ministry spokesperson declined to identify the country from where the man had travelled to Indonesia.

UK's Gove says leadership hopeful Liz Truss taking 'holiday from reality'

London, UK - Senior UK Conservative lawmaker Michael Gove on Saturday accused party leadership contender Liz Truss of taking a 'holiday from reality' with her plans to cut taxes amid a cost-of-living crisis.

Gove, who has held a raft of cabinet roles and previously stood to be Tory leader, instead endorsed Rishi Sunak for the top job, as the summer-long contest to become the next prime minister nears its final fortnight.

Foreign Secretary Truss is the overwhelming favourite in polls to beat ex-finance minister Sunak and replace outgoing leader Boris Johnson when the result is announced on September 5.

The victor, set to formally take power the next day, faces a daunting challenge with Britain

experiencing decades-high inflation and the prospect of a recession later this year.

Liz Truss has vowed immediate tax cuts rather than direct financial handouts to help people struggling to pay their surging bills, drawing stinging criticism from Rishi Sunak, his allies and others.

"I am deeply concerned that the framing of the leadership debate by many has been a holiday from reality," Gove said in an article in Saturday's *The Times* newspaper.

"The answer to the cost-of-living crisis cannot be simply to reject further 'handouts' and cut tax."

He added Truss' plans to reverse a recent rise in national insurance taxes earmarked for the



Liz Truss speaks during a Conservative Party Hustings event in Manchester on Friday (AFP)

I am deeply concerned that the framing of the leadership debate by many has been a holiday from reality

MICHAEL GOVE

health and social care sector 'would favour the wealthy' while slashing corporation tax would help 'big businesses, not small entrepreneurs'.

"I cannot see how safeguarding the stock options of FTSE 100 executives should ever take precedence over supporting the poorest in our society, but at a

time of want it cannot be the right priority," Gove said.

The 54-year-old, who previously supported right-wing lesser known MP Kemi Badenoch in the leadership race before it narrowed to a final pair, said he now backed Sunak.

"I know what the job requires. And Rishi has it," he added.

Gove, who until July led the government's department for levelling up, housing and communities and has previously led the education and justice ministries, indicated he would likely not take on another role.

"I do not expect to be in government again. But it was the privilege of my life to spend 11 years in the cabinet under three prime ministers," he added.

PLASTIC FOOD ARTWORKS

SHOKUJIN SAMPURU

Japan's plastic food artists get creative with 'Shokuhin sampuru' (sample food products) in preparation for an exhibition hosted by Japan's Iwasaki Group in Tokyo



When dreaming up fun designs, you can use your imagination. How it ends up is totally up to you

SHINICHIRO HATASA

From a 'Leaning tower of pizza' to a fish slicing and cooking itself and a dragon emerging from a dragon fruit, Japanese artisans' quirky plastic food sculptures went on display this week at an exhibition in Tokyo.

The models were made with the same painstaking detail as the rock-solid noodle soups and crispy-looking plastic snacks that have long been displayed outside Japanese restaurants where they are called 'shokuhin sampuru', or sample food products.

Sampuru are common outside ramen shops and family restaurants across Japan a century after stores began using wax models to advertise their menu to a growing middle class.

"Normally we have to follow orders from clients. We take their views on board when we're making items," plastic food artist Shinichiro Hatasa, told AFP. But when dreaming up fun designs, you can use your imagination. How it ends up is totally up to you," he said.

For the exhibition, Hatasa crafted an ear

of corn leisurely sunbathing on a beach. Other creations on display included a deep-fried shrimp with four breaded legs roaming like a tiger on a mountain of shredded cabbage and a Tetris game made of chicken.

A Japanese breakfast dish of fermented soybeans called natto appeared to spiral in the air, resembling a powerful cyclone - nicknamed a 'nattornado'.

Around 60 sculptures were on display, some silly but others designed to showcase the artists' formidable skills.

"They are not real, but they look so real. It's wonderful," said exhibition attendee Reiko Ichimaru.

Realistic details

All the models were handmade by specialists at Iwasaki Group, Japan's leading maker of 'sampuru', which celebrates its 90th anniversary this year.

At an Iwasaki factory in Yokohama near Tokyo, artisans first take moulds of ingredients from actual meals cooked by the firm's restaurant clients. Then they begin

the meticulous work of decorating the samples to look as realistic as possible, from moisture droplets on chilled glass to subtle bruises on a fruit's surface.

"Fresh things are more difficult to make. Fresh vegetables, fresh fish. Cooked items are easier," because the colours are less complicated, factory head Hiroaki Miyazawa, told AFP. "Hamburger patties are for beginners," he added.

Fake food is a multi-million-dollar mar-

ket in Japan, but sampuru production has been hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, which reduced demand for dining out.

Sampuru makers hope more tourists will soon be allowed into the country to boost the restaurant industry, but they are also putting their unique skills to use elsewhere.

For example, Iwasaki artisans have made replica bananas at different degrees of ripeness for factories to use to train new

employees. Orders have also come in from IT sales merchants who want to use mock 5G WiFi routers in their presentations.

Meanwhile, at the exhibition, the more original offerings are delighting children and adults alike.

"I think the number of restaurants using plastic food displays is decreasing," said Yutaka Nishio. "It's interesting to preserve this as art. It's really great."

AFP

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AVENUES OF WONDER

GLOBAL warming

A RECENT EXHIBITION BY 30 RANGREZ ARTISTS SHOWCASES HOW THE WORLD HAS BEEN SHAPED BY NUMEROUS, INEXPLICABLE LANDMARKS AND EXPERIENCES MAKING IT ENDEARING TO LIVE IN

Hubert Vaz

From sun-kissed, snowy peaks to man-made monuments, from celebrating nature's glory to serenading the soul, creativity took on multiple avatars as artists be-

longing to Rangrez poured out their innermost feelings to collectively portray how the world has been evolving over the years with the human element as its cynosure.

Curated by Rema Sivakumar and Nandana Kohli, two extremely talented members of the group of Indian artists in Oman, the exhibition, titled 'Avenues of Wonder', which was showcased virtually, presented 50 dynamic artworks which indicate how the world has been shaped by so many beautiful landmarks, people, and experiences which seem miraculous, and often inexplicable. It was the result of painstaking efforts by the curators who focussed on putting together a story with many layers to it - one that is filled with wonders, which often go unnoticed.

Nandana is a professional civil

engineer and a successful artist who has exhibited her artworks in various galleries as well as volunteered in art shows for different causes. Rema, too, is an accomplished artist who has been residing in Oman for more than fifteen years and has been expressing herself in acrylics, oil and mixed media in various exhibitions and galleries.

"Both our curators worked very hard to present a delightful show which was a feast to the eyes as we witnessed 50 beautiful pieces of art made by 30 talented artists in various mediums," said founder-member Sushmita Gupta.

Here are insights into some of the works displayed:



Tot Zeins
Dr Nagratna Dharmendran

'Tot Zeins' (See you later, in Dutch) is one such moment captured through my art wherein anyone would aspire to revisit fond places or recreate cherished moments, whenever possible. Herengracht is one of the 10 famous streets of Amsterdam, the city of old-world charm. Being a travel lover, my memories of the street is attached to the historic monuments aligned parallel to incredible canal houses set up along the water canal, bikes parked alongside, and coffee shops. It reminds me of my visit and my craving to go back there.



Flashback to beautiful moments
Nandana Kohli

'Flash back to beautiful moments' portrays a recollection of my most precious memories with my family. This collection of memories depicts all the places I had visited with them - Taj-Mahal, Eiffel Tower, Colosseum (Rome), London bridge, Statue of Liberty, Oman, etc. Here, I and my husband are sitting on a boat with our two daughters staring at all our precious moments unfold in front of us like a movie. To me, 'wonders of the world' are places and experiences that completely change our world view.

With support from Rangrez members, we managed to overcome challenges and curate this exhibition within a short time span. It was a learning experience

REMA SIVAKUMAR



Terror
Vaishali Sachin Thakar

The tiger is a dynamic animal who's terror lies in its eyes. I like this animal. Again, through creation of this animal, nature gives proof of its detailed design - the stripes on a tiger's body are so symmetrical, prominent, and beautiful, it is unique combination of beauty and terror. I am really amazed by this animal and so it features in my work, too.

Curation is both, challenging as well as exciting. It is a creative part of any exhibition which calls for rethinking and reviewing the theme from a wider angle

NANDANA KOHLI



Temple architecture
Rekha Ravikumar

Temples always bring a sense of calm when I visit them and also resonate a feeling of positivity. Having said that, I really enjoyed painting this temple that has a brilliant contrast of colours, and light and shade, with an interesting perspective to it's interiors. The temple also had lots of interesting elements on its facade, including dilapidated sculptures and rugged stone finishes which made it challenging to work. I always love to travel and see beautiful places and I enjoy the rich culture and architecture of the place.



Shades of blue - underwater wonders
Sarika Talwar

My medium of artwork being 'mix media', it always reflects on the diversity of creatures that exist underwater. The deep sea, being the heart of the planet where several undiscovered beings live, gave rise to a curiosity about learning more about this, as well as incorporating it into my painting for this exhibition. I can never stop being fascinated by the wonders of the underwater world.



Shashvat
Dr Dipty Shrivastava

My artwork is based on the beauty of Taj Mahal which was built by emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal. My art conveys that pure love is the 'soul of life' and that it remains forever. My painting 'Shashvat' means 'timelessness' depicting the beauty of Taj Mahal, the timeless symbol of love. Taj Mahal is India's national symbol of pride, and no doubt, it is one of the wonders of the world.



Sunrise at Mount Everest
Achal Parag Zoting

'Sunrise at Mount Everest' was created with texture, acrylic, and a little gold leaf. Sunrise at the mountain symbolises a new beginning for everything with growth that has been cherished from the beginning. As this is my first participation, it is a new beginning for me, as well. Our lives are a lot like a mountain with many ups and downs, but once we are over with it, the top view is magnificent.



Flowers
Charanjit Kaur

I love fresh flowers. I love to decorate my house with flower arrangements made of fresh flowers. Hence the same is reflected in my painting. I feel, fresh flowers bring on a feeling of calmness, comfort, and life into any room. They are a beautiful symbol of life and remind us that we need to make our own life beautiful in just the same manner as all existence in nature is beautiful.



Shaheen Shah Afridi

Pakistan fast bowler Afridi out of Asia Cup, England T20Is

Karachi, Pakistan - Pakistan's frontline fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi has been ruled out of next week's Asia Cup and the following Twenty20 international series against England with a knee injury, doctors said Saturday.

The injury to the 22-year-old is a major blow to Pakistan's chances in the six-nation Asia Cup starting in the United Arab Emirates from August 27.

Shaheen's injury has already forced him to miss the second Test in Sri Lanka last month.

The left-armer has accompanied the team to the Netherlands for a three-match one-day international series and was in rehabilitation before doctors advised him to rest for four to six weeks.

"Shaheen has been advised 4-6 weeks rest by the PCB Medical Advisory Committee and independent specialists following latest scans and reports," said a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) release.

Doctors hope the pace-man will return to competitive cricket in October with the T20 international tri-series in New Zealand, which will be followed by the ICC

Men's T20 World Cup Australia 2022.

Shaheen anchored Pakistan's upset win over India in last year's Twenty20 World Cup, also played in the UAE.

A PCB medical officer said he is expected to recover with rest.

"I have spoken with Shaheen and he is understandably upset with the news, but he is a brave young man who has vowed to come back strongly to serve his country and team," doctor Najeebullah Soomro was quoted as saying in the release.

"Although he has made progress during his rehabilitation in Rotterdam, it is now clear he will require more time and is likely to return to competitive cricket in October."

The release added that Shaheen's replacement for the Asia Cup will be announced shortly.

The Pakistan side will arrive in Dubai from Rotterdam on Monday.

The 6ft 6ins (1.98m) player - the latest product of Pakistan's fast bowling factory - has been on a rapid ascent since his debut four years ago.

AFP

SAMSON STARS IN INDIA'S WIN

Sanju Samson makes unbeaten 43 as India win second one-dayer to bag Zimbabwe series

Harare, Zimbabwe - Wicket-keeper Sanju Samson struck an unbeaten 43 to guide India to a five-wicket victory on Saturday and a series win after the second of three one-day internationals in Harare.

Zimbabwe made a modest 161 after losing the toss and India recovered from losing skipper KL Rahul leg before for one to reach 167-5 with 146 balls remaining.

The result relegates the third match on Monday to a dead rubber, but Zimbabwe will be encouraged after putting up a much better show than two days ago, when they suffered a 10-wicket hiding. Batting at number six, Samson faced 39 deliveries over 51 minutes and smashed four sixes and three fours.

Opener Shikhar Dhawan and fellow top-order batsman Shubman Gill contributed 33 runs each as India recovered from 5-1 to eventually finish comfortable winners. Vice-captain Dhawan struck four fours in a brisk innings while the more cautious Gill notched six fours.

Luke Jongwe was the most successful Zimbabwe bowler, taking the wickets of Gill and Ishan Kishan for the loss of 33 runs in four overs.

The unbeaten 43 and three catches earned Samson the player of the match award and the wicketkeeper said he enjoyed his time in front of the stumps.

"I took three catches but I missed a stumping - as wicket-keepers we are used to being told about things we did not do well," he said. "I really enjoy wicketkeeping and contributing to this win. In this match the fast bowlers picked the length much quicker and I really enjoyed that."

India won the toss, chose to field for the second successive



India's Sanju Samson plays a shot during his knock of 43 in the second ODI against Zimbabwe in Harare on Saturday (AFP)

match and Shardul Thakur took three wickets as India bowled Zimbabwe out in 38.1 overs.

The medium-fast bowler replaced Deepak Chahar in the only change from the team that won the first match by 10 wickets. Rahul did not reveal the reason for leaving out Chahar, who had taken three wickets on Thursday and won the player of the match award.

Thakur, known as the Paighar Express after the town north of Mumbai where he was born, captured the wickets of opener Innocent Kaia, captain Regis Chakabva and Jongwe.

The prized wicket of Sikandar Raza, who hit two centuries in a ODI series victory over Bangladesh this month, fell to Kuldeep Yadav after the Pakistan-born batsman scored 16.

Only former Zimbabwe captain Sean Williams and unbeaten Ryan Burl made any impact against the Indian attack, hitting 42 and 39 respectively.

Williams averaged a run a ball in his stand, compiling his total off 42 deliveries, including a six and three fours.

Burl was slightly slower, facing 47 balls, but also struck a six and three fours at Harare Sports Club. India rested several stars, including batsmen Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, for a first visit to the southern Africa nation since 2016.

Head coach Rahul Dravid also took a break after recent trips to England and the West Indies with VVS Laxman taking charge for the Harare series.

India are preparing for the Asia Cup in the United Arab Emirates this month, with their opening fixture against arch rivals Pakistan on August 28.

AFP

South Africa fast bowler Nortje grateful for skipper Elgar's 'honesty'

London, United Kingdom - South Africa fast bowler Anrich Nortje paid tribute to captain Dean Elgar's "honesty" after the Proteas' innings and 12-run rout of England in the first Test at Lord's.

Nortje finished with match figures of 6-110 as South Africa completed a crushing victory inside three days in London to go 1-0 up in a three-match series.

The 28-year-old express quick was especially effective after lunch on Friday, taking three wickets for no runs in 10 balls to have Jonny Bairstow, Alex Lees and Ben Foakes all caught behind as he repeatedly topped speeds of 90 mph (145 kph) and even surpassed 95 mph on one stage.

There was no way back for England, who were dismissed for 149 in under 38 overs, with South Africa's bowlers effectively giving themselves some unexpected, but valuable, extra rest ahead of Thursday's second Test at Manchester's Old Trafford.

South Africa were already top of the World Test Championship table before this game and they have now won eight of their 10 matches at this level since experienced opening batsman Elgar became their permanent captain in red-ball cricket last year.

"Dean is quite straight forward," Nortje told reporters after stumps. "If he thinks you're not playing your A-game, he'll tell you and the whole team respects that. We need that. You need someone to tell you and not to



South Africa's Anrich Nortje celebrates with Dean Elgar after taking the wicket of England's Alex Lees in the first Test at Lord's on Friday (AFP)

beat around the bush."

Nortje, who occasionally got carried away with short-pitched bowling at Lord's before reverting to a fuller length, added: "He will tell you if it is not good enough and at stages that is what happened."

"At stages he thought what I was doing is the right thing and

he encourages me to bring energy and bowl quick because that's my job - to bowl quick, to try to bring energy and momentum for the team."

"It paid off here and hopefully it pays off again but he does encourage me to try to express myself as a bowler."

AFP

Southee and Boult destroy Windies top order as Kiwis level series

Bridgetown, Barbados - Tim Southee and Trent Boult combined to demolish the West Indies top-order batting as New Zealand scored a series-levelling victory in the second One-Day International of a three-match series at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Friday.

After Finn Allen's 96 anchored the Black Caps to 212 off 48.2 overs batting first on another challenging pitch, Southee and Boult claimed three wickets apiece as the home side limped to 63 for seven off 22.4 overs when a second heavy shower resulted in a prolonged delay to the day/night fixture.

Set a revised target of 212 off 41 overs on the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern scoring method, Yannic Cariah's 52 in his debut ODI innings and a swashbuckling 49 off 31 balls by Alzarri Joseph gave the tourists a fright in a frenetic 85-run ninth-wicket partnership.

However Southee was summoned by stand-in captain Tom Latham and he responded immediately by bowling Joseph while Allen completed an excellent boundary catch to end Cariah's effort as the West Indies were eventually dismissed for 161 off 35.3 overs to lose by 50 runs and set the stage for the series decider on Sunday.

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WARHOLM BACK IN FORM

Norway's Karsten Warholm retains European 400m hurdles title as Bol seals double

Munich, Germany - Karsten Warholm announced his return to form as he retained his European 400m hurdles title in Munich on Friday while Femke Bol sealed an unlikely double.

Britain's Laura Muir and Zharneel Hughes bagged dominant golds in the women's 1500m and men's 200m respectively, but their teammate Dina Asher-Smith was trumped by Swiss rival Mujinga Kambundji in her bid to defend the 200m title.

Warholm's performance was all the more impressive as he makes his way back from injury, a setback that saw him come in seventh in last month's world championships in Oregon.

Warholm, who set a sensational world record of 45.94sec when winning Olympic gold in Tokyo last year, proved to be back on form in Munich, timing a championship record of 47.12 seconds for gold.

He finished well ahead of France's Wilfried Happio, in 48.56sec, and Cuban-born Turk Yasmani Copello (48.78).

Warholm's time smashed the previous European best of 47.48sec - a then-world record - set by West Germany's Harald Schmid in Athens in 1982.

"It's even more special now because I've learned these things don't come so often and you should appreciate them even more because things turn around very quickly in sport, so I'm very happy to be back," said Warholm.

"The injury has healed and I



Norway's Karsten Warholm celebrates after winning the men's 400m hurdles at the European Athletics Championships in Munich on Friday (AFP)

I've learned these things don't come so often and you should appreciate them even more because things turn around very quickly in sport, so I'm very happy to be back

KARSTEN WARHOLM

feel much more confident so today was just running and enjoying it."

The indefatigable Bol of the Netherlands followed up on her

victory in Wednesday's 400m flat by totally dominating the women's 400m hurdles to seal a memorable European double.

Bol, like Warholm, clocked a

championship record for victory in 52.67sec ahead of Ukrainians Viktoriya Tkachuk and Anna Ryzhykova.

Muir sealed Britain's first gold of a fantastic night of track and field as she accelerated away at the bell for a comprehensive victory in the women's 1500m.

She retained her title from Berlin in 2018 in 4:01.08, capping a brilliant championship period that has also seen her win Olympic silver, world bronze and Commonwealth gold.

Defending champion Ramil Guliyev pulled up injured halfway through the men's 200m, Hughes stepping up to better his silver in Tuesday's 100m behind Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs as he streaked to victory in 20.07sec.

There was a second European silver for Nethaneel Mitchell-Blake in 20.17sec, with Italian Filippo Tortu taking bronze (20.27).

Asher-Smith was outstripped on the home stretch by Kambundji, who won in 22.32sec to

the Briton's 22.43.

"I am on cloud nine. I knew this race was going to be tough. I made sure to get a clean race. It is overwhelming to come home with two medals," said Kambundji.

There was a humdinger of a competition in a high-quality men's discus, Lithuanian teenager and world silver medalist Mykolas Alekna throwing a championship record of 69.78m on his fifth attempt for victory.

AFP



Gregorio Paltrinieri

Paltrinieri takes second Euro gold with 5km open water win

Rome, Italy - Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri won his second title at the European Swimming Championships the five kilometre open water on Saturday.

The 27-year-old, who also won the 800m freestyle European title in Rome, took the honours ahead of his compatriot Domenico Acerenza and France's Marc-Antoine Olivier.

The 10km open water and 1500m world champion clocked a time of 52 minutes and 13.5 seconds, 0.7sec ahead of Acerenza who also finished just behind Paltrinieri in Budapest in June. It was Italy's 21st gold medal of a European Championships they have dominated.

Paltrinieri will also be contending the 10km on Sunday in a reduced open water section of the championships which got under way two days late on Saturday due to fierce storms which whipped through Italy.

Two people were killed in Tuscany on Thursday while fragments were dislodged from the bell tower in Venice's iconic St Mark's Square.

Sharon van Rouwendaal of the Netherlands won the women's 5km, finishing ahead of Maria de Valdes of Spain and home hope Giulia Gabbrielleschi.

AFP

Medvedev enters Cincinnati semi-finals, Rybakina out

Cincinnati, United States - Daniil Medvedev and Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced to a semi-final showdown after both dismissed American opponents at the ATP and WTA Cincinnati Masters on Friday.

Top seed Medvedev fired 18 aces among 30 winners in a 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 defeat of Taylor Fritz in their Friday quarter-final.

Tsitsipas, semi-finalist at the last two editions, weathered a brief first-set rain interruption on the way to his 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-3, defeat of John Isner, playing here for the 15th time at age 37 and the oldest quarter-finalist since 1969.

In the bottom half of the draw, Croat Borna Coric crushed Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-4 to set up a semi-final against Britain's Cameron Norrie, who had to work for more than three hours for a 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (4/7), 6-4 defeat of Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz.

The tight battle ended just before midnight as Norrie com-



Daniil Medvedev

pleted what he called one of his best career wins.

He stumbled leading a set and 4-1 as Alcaraz pushed back, winning the second set to level the match.

In the women's quarter-finals, Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina saved three match points before falling 6-2, 6-4 to Madison Keys.

The Kazakh, who lifted the All England Club trophy last month against the odds, exited the pre-US Open event in 92 minutes as she went down to the American titleholder from 2019.

Keys next plays Petra Kvitova, a two-time Wimbledon champion who defeated Australian qualifier Ajla Tomljanovic 6-2, 6-3.

Second seed Aryna Sabalenka ended the dream run of Zhang Shuai with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/1), defeat after the Chinese player had put out Naomi Osaka and second seed Anett Kontaveit.

Sabalenka plays for the final against qualifier Caroline Garcia, who defeated American Jessica Pegula, the winner over US Open champion Emma Raducanu in the previous round, 6-1, 7-5 in 74 minutes.

AFP



Philippines' Princess Mary Superal celebrates after winning the inaugural Simone Asia Pacific Cup golf in Jakarta on Saturday (AFP)

Philippines' Princess is queen of Simone Asia Pacific Cup

Jakarta, Indonesia - The Philippines' Princess Mary Superal secured her first ever international golf title on Saturday, beating a tough crowd that included major winners at the Simone Asia Pacific Cup in Indonesia.

The inaugural competition, which drew a field of 40 top players, was the first event in the country since the 2012 Indonesia Ladies Open and offered a total individual prize pot of \$500,000.

Superal, 25, roared to victory with a five-under-par romp around the Pondok Indah Golf

Course in Jakarta to finish 12-under, three shots clear of South Korea's former US Open winner So Yeon Ryu and four clear of world number four, New Zealand's Lydia Ko.

World number eight Hyo Joo Kim finished 11 shots behind the Filipina winner.

"It's pretty special to me because this is my first international win as a professional," said Superal.

"I've been waiting for this moment to arrive. I'm very happy."

AFP



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THE MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Harry Kane's landmark goal fires Tottenham to victory over Wolves

London, United Kingdom – Harry Kane's 250th Tottenham goal took Spurs to the top of the Premier League with a 1-0 win over Wolves on Saturday as a 2-1 defeat to Southampton compounded Leicester's miserable start to the season.

If anyone is to rival Manchester City and Liverpool in the title race, Tottenham look well set after backing Antonio Conte heavily in the transfer market in his first full season in charge.

After a strong end to last season to snatch a place in the Champions League from north London rivals Arsenal, Tottenham have already taken seven more points than they got from their respective fixtures last season in the first three games of the new campaign.

However, Conte was still displeased with a sloppy first-half performance that could have been punished against more potent opponents.

New signings Goncalo Guedes and Matheus Nunes impressed for Wolves, but they have scored just once in three games this season as Guedes, Ruben Neves and Daniel Podence were guilty of failing to hit the target.

Spurs improved markedly after the break and got their reward when Kane bulleted home a header after Ivan Perisic flicked on Son Heung-min's corner.

Kane's 185th Premier League goal also set a record for the most scored by anyone for a single club, edging ahead of Sergio Aguero's 184 for Manchester City.

"I said that if we repeat the same results as last season we stay after three games with zero points," said Conte. "Instead to get seven points showed that this team is improving in many aspects."

At the other end of the table, Manchester United remain bottom ahead of their huge clash against Liverpool on Monday.



Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane celebrates after scoring against Wolverhampton Wanderers on Saturday (AFP)

But Leicester are only one point better off after Che Adams came off the bench to score twice and further darken the mood around the King Power.

Wesley Fofana was left out of Brendan Rodgers' squad as the Frenchman seeks to force through a move to Chelsea. Leicester are the only Premier

League club yet to spend any money in the transfer window, but may have to in the final 10 days of the window to ward off a difficult season.

James Maddison's free-kick had put the Foxes in front, but Adams twice pounced on poor defending in the absence of Fofana to give Southampton their first win of the season.

The pressure is also back on Aston Villa manager Steven Gerrard after his side threw away a perfect start to lose 3-1 at Crystal Palace.

Ollie Watkins opened the scoring for the visitors at Selhurst Park after five minutes, but Wilfried Zaha quickly levelled.

Zaha then put Palace in front at the second attempt after his penalty was saved by Emiliano Martinez.

Jean-Philippe Mateta made the points safe 19 minutes from time.

Fulham remain unbeaten on their return to the top flight as Aleksandar Mitrovic's powerful header won a thrilling west London derby against Brentford 3-2.

The home side stormed into a two-goal lead thanks to Bobby Decordova-Reid and Joao Palhinha, but for the second time this season Brentford fought back from 2-0 down through Christian Norgaard and Ivan Toney.

Mitrovic had the final say, though, when he rose highest to meet Kevin Mbabu's cross to send Marco Silva's men into fourth.

Everton secured their first point of the season thanks to Demarai Gray's late equaliser to cancel out Brennan Johnson's goal for free-spending Nottingham Forest in a 1-1 draw at Goodison Park.



Casemiro

Man United agree to sign Real Madrid midfielder Casemiro

London, United Kingdom - Manchester United said on Friday they have agreed to sign Real Madrid midfielder Casemiro in a deal worth up to a reported £60 million (\$70 million).

United manager Erik ten Hag has been desperate to land a defensive midfielder since taking charge at Old Trafford and has finally settled for Casemiro after failing to sign Barcelona's Frenkie de Jong.

Troubled United, who sit bottom of the Premier League after embarrassing defeats against Brighton and Brentford, are set to pay an initial £50 million.

The overall fee would rise by another £10 million if certain clauses in the contract are met.

Casemiro has been offered a four-year contract with the option of a further 12-month extension, with the transfer subject to the agreement of personal terms.

The 30-year-old joined Real from Sao Paulo in 2013 and has been a key figure in midfield for the Spanish club, winning five Champions League titles.

Ten Hag refused to discuss the transfer at his press conference earlier on Friday, but Real boss Carlo Ancelotti was more forthcoming when speaking to the media in Spain.

"I've discussed it with him this morning. He wants to try a new challenge, a new opportunity," Ancelotti said. "The club understand it. With all he's done for this club and the person he is, we have to respect it."

"If he doesn't stay, we'll have an enormous sense of gratitude to him for all he's done. We have replacements within the squad."

Real Madrid said they will hold a "tribute and farewell" to Casemiro on Monday which will be attended by the club's president, Florentino Perez.

In a statement, the Spanish giants called him "one of the most transcendental players in one of the most significant and successful periods in our history."

"Real Madrid are and always will be his home, and we wish him and all his family the best of luck in this new chapter of his life," it added.

Bremen stage dramatic comeback to stun Dortmund

Berlin, Germany - Werder Bremen fought back from two goals down in the 89th minute to claim a remarkable 3-2 victory at Borussia Dortmund on Saturday, with Scottish forward Oliver Burke scoring the winner.

Burke, who also scored in the fifth minute of injury time to see Bremen pick up a point at home to Stuttgart last Saturday, repeated the feat by outrunning Dortmund debutant Niklas Suele to hammer a shot past goalkeeper Gregor Kobel and give the visitors all three points.

With Dortmund nursing a comfortable 2-0 lead in the dying stages of the match, Bremen pulled one back through defender Lee Buchanan in the 89th minute, with the Englishman pouncing on a poor clearance.

Dortmund, who had looked controlled throughout the game, suddenly appeared rattled and conceded an equaliser just three minutes later as Niklas Schmidt netted.

Bremen-born Dortmund midfielder Julian Brandt had scored the opener in first-half injury time.

Making his first start of the Bundesliga season, Brandt dribbled the ball in from the right wing to the edge of the penalty area before unleashing a curling shot into the bottom corner of the net.

Portuguese wing-back Raphael Guerreiro scored in the 77th minute to give Dortmund what looked like a comfortable lead.

The loss ends Dortmund's unbeaten start to the season and manager Edin Terzic's nine-match winning streak.

Bayer Leverkusen's nightmare start to the campaign continued with a 3-0 home loss to Hoffenheim.

Tipped as an outside chance for the title before the season, Leverkusen now sit bottom of the table after three losses, alongside a first-round elimination from the German Cup.

Freiburg's strong start continued with a 1-0 win at local rivals Stuttgart.

Normally a provider, the visitors' Vincenzo Grifo tapped the ball in from close range to put Freiburg ahead in the 11th minute.

An injury-time winner from South Korean midfielder Lee Jae-sung saw Mainz defeat Augsburg 2-1. Promoted Schalke picked up a valuable point with a 0-0 draw at Wolfsburg.



Werder Bremen's Oliver Burke celebrates with team-mates after scoring against Borussia Dortmund on Saturday (AFP)

Rayo Vallecano defeat Espanyol in bad-tempered La Liga clash

Madrid, Spain - Rayo Vallecano beat Espanyol 2-0 as both sides ended with 10 men in a bad-tempered game in Spain's La Liga on Friday, as Rayo went provisionally top on four points from two games.

Madrid outfit Rayo held Barcelona to a stalemate at the Nou Camp last week, and on Friday Andoni Iraola's high energy side took all three points from Barca's city-rivals.

Isi Palazon smacked home the opener from outside the box on 40 minutes, while Senegalese midfielder Pathe Ciss tapped home from a corner on the hour to make it 2-0.

Rayo defender Florian Lejeune was sent off after just 16 minutes after a second yellow card in two minutes, while Espanyol defender Sergio Gomez was red carded for a violent foul on the half hour. Iraola brought on veteran Radamel Falcao as a late substitute and while lively, was twice caught offside.

Espanyol's Javier Puado hit the post to be denied a consolation goal in the closing exchanges.

Promoted Real Valladolid were just minutes from a first win over Sevilla in 10 years but had to settle for a 1-1 draw.

AFP

Tete double helps Lyon ease past Troyes

Paris, France - Brazilian attacker Tete scored twice as Lyon beat Troyes 4-1 on Friday to move up to second place in Ligue 1.

Tete's efforts came in the second-half after goals from ex-Arsenal attacker Alexandre Lacazette and defender Nicolas Tagliafico as they go behind champions Paris Saint-Germain on points difference.

Florian Tardieu converted a penalty for Troyes, who remain bottom of the table and are winless so far this term.

Lyon were playing their first game in a fortnight after last weekend's match at Lorient was postponed due to an unplayable



Lyon's Tete celebrates after scoring against Troyes in their Ligue 1 match at the Groupama Stadium on Friday (AFP)

surface in Brittany.

Bruno Irles' Troyes were looking for their maiden win of the season after conceding six goals in their first two fixtures.

Lacazette opened the scoring with his quickest goal for Lyon after two minutes and nine seconds.

Troyes captain and France World Cup winner Adil Rami made a hash of a pass back to his goalkeeper and Lacazette coolly side-footed home.

The visitors were then handed a chance to equalise as Lyon left-back Tagliafico fouled Thierno Balde in the box.

Midfielder Tardieu then stepped to make it 1-1 with 38 minutes on the clock, his 12th spot kick in the league since joining Troyes in 2019.

After the interval Lyon retook the lead thanks to two goals in as many minutes.

Tagliafico made up for his earlier error after 47 minutes and then Tete made it 3-1 from a rebound shortly after.

Tete, who joined Lyon from Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk earlier this year, claimed his second of the game and secured all three points firing hom from outside the box with quarter of an hour remaining.

AFP