



HM SENDS MESSAGE TO SAUDI KING



His Majesty the Sultan leaves for UK

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq left for the United Kingdom on a private visit on Tuesday. His Majesty the Sultan also sent a written message to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday. The message deals with the relations binding the two countries and their peoples and was handed over by Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Ambassador of Oman to Saudi Arabia, when he met Waleed al Khurajji, Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister (ONA)

MoH working to control sugar level in beverages

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) is in the process of developing standards to limit the sugar level in sweetened beverages produced locally.

Represented by the Nutrition Department of the Directorate General of Primary Healthcare in partnership with the World Health Organization Office in Oman, MoH held a meeting on Tuesday to discuss reformulation of sugar-sweetened beverages under an operational plan of the National Nutrition Strategy.

The meeting was described as the 'starting point' for the implementation of the sugar reduction programme as well as developing standards for sugar levels in beverages produced locally.



Six spoons of sugar are found in one can of sweetened drink. It is necessary to start reducing the amount of sugar intake

DR SALIMA
AL MAAMARI

The meeting was followed by a workshop with stakeholders, including manufacturers. 'The workshop aimed at emphasising the importance of reformulating food products, setting targets for sugar levels in different foods and beverages, and agreeing on these within a specific timeframe.'

The meeting was held under the patronage of H E Dr Mo-

ammed Saif al Hosni, Undersecretary for Health Affairs in MoH, in the presence of Dr Jean Jabbour, WHO representative in Oman.

Dr Jabbour stressed on the significance of the meeting in implementing the National Nutrition Strategy. He commended Oman's success in reducing salt in bread through voluntary agree-

ments with major bakeries in the country.

According to MoH, reformulation of food products to reduce sugar levels is urgently required to ensure the availability of healthy and sustainable diets for all.

The 2017 Oman National Nutrition Survey revealed that 66.2 per cent of adults are overweight and obese. The number of overweight or obese children under the age of five increased from 2.4 per cent to 4.2 per cent from 2009 and 2017.

The 2020 Annual Health Report found 17 per cent of seventh to tenth grade students overweight or obese.

To address the growing health crisis, food product reformulation in being implemented to reduce sugar content.

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RO30mn 3,000t capacity finfish farming project to come up in Seeb

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed an usufruct contract to establish a project for finfish farming in the wilayat of Seeb in Muscat on Tuesday.

The contract is worth RO30mn and the project will

spread over an area of 1.5mn sqm. Production capacity in the first phase of the project using floating cages is projected to be 3,000 tonnes.

The project will be implemented during 2022, targeting production of high-quality and economically valuable fish, including European long-finned sea bream (locally known as kofar),



barramundi and sea bass.

The project will have ancillary infrastructure built on an

area of 7,548sqm, including fish packaging and canning facilities, feed store, warehouse for

equipment, a site for equipment and assembling cages, and washing nets.

Similar finfish farming projects, using floating cages, are currently being operated by Blue Waters, a fully owned subsidiary of Fisheries Development Oman, in Quriyat and Musandam.

In April this year, Blue Waters signed an agreement to increase

production capacity of its existing floating cage farm in Quriyat to 5,000 tonnes from the current 3,000 tonnes in the next three years.

According to the agreement, the project will be expanded by exploiting a new site spread over 3.75mn sqm in the Ramla area of Quriyat with an investment of RO8.6mn.

04

Galfar wins RO73mn contract for national road project in Duqm

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Omantel to digitally empower major projects in Dhofar

Providing state-of-the-art ICT solutions for Dhofar Municipality, Dhofar University, Salalah Port and Dhofar Integrated Services



Talal bin Said Al Mamari, CEO

July 05, Muscat, 2022 - Omantel is boosting Oman's march towards a digitally enabled and flourishing society with its ICT offerings driving digital transformation in important sectors. Smart solutions riding on Omantel's expertise, experience and integrated ecosystem are enhancing the efficiency of operations in these vital cogs of the economy and leading to faster growth and amplified returns.

As the nation's digital transformation enabler, Omantel inked a number of agreements in Dhofar governorate with important national entities to implement customized smart solutions.

"It gives us immense pleasure to be chosen as the partner of choice in projects of national importance. Omantel has been the main enabler for the country's digital transformation. Over the years, it has consolidated its capabilities to deliver Smart City solutions through



technological and infrastructural acquisitions. We have been the first in the market to make smart solutions accessible, and have proved their efficacy in different sectors," said Talal Said Al Mamari CEO of Omantel.

He further added, "These MoUs are a testament of the trust the nation puts in Omantel and further reiterate our solid established presence in the ICT sector. We are grateful and proud for being chosen as partners in growth."

Omantel's scalable smart solutions have

been achieved through the establishment of mOmkin, a dedicated company for IoT solutions and acquisition of NXN to provide Smart City consultancy and solutions in the country and in the region. Omantel is the first operator to launch a nationwide IoT network with leading use cases.

Omantel believes in the importance of innovation and the provision of new products and services that meet the needs of its customers and is constantly investing in the latest technologies such as data centers, cloud services, IT solutions, blockchain, IoT, SDWAN wide area network, big data, analytics, cybersecurity and participatory services. Omantel has been able to respond quickly to the requirements of new emerging markets and has reduced the time it takes to innovate ICT solutions and put them into action for the usage of both, individuals and organizations.

Dhofar Municipality



As part of the MoU, Omantel will provide Dhofar Municipality with Smart City solutions and innovative digital services. Commenting on the cooperation, Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen Al Ghasani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, said, "We are delighted to sign this Memorandum of Understanding with Omantel as part of our joint efforts to achieve objectives towards digital transformation and smart cities. Through this agreement, we seek to replace conventional processes



with modern technologies to improve efficiency in several areas like traffic control, population density control at some locations. Together, we will adopt new systems and programs that will boost our push towards creating great experiences for people through digitization and humanization of cities."



Dhofar University

Under the MoU, Omantel will offer Dhofar University tailor-made ICT services that suit its requirements. Professor Dr. Amer bin Ali Al Rawas, President of Dhofar University, said, "The fields of higher education, scientific research and innovation

have greatly benefited from ICT technologies, and we at Dhofar University, are keen to keep pace with the latest develop-



ment and adopt solutions that promote a knowledge-based society. The University, through this strategic partnership with Omantel, will implement innovative solutions, like smart libraries, that will significantly contribute to the advancement of higher education and scientific research, thus further enhancing the quality of education at Dhofar University."



Port of Salalah

Through its accumulated expertise in IoT and artificial intelligence, Omantel will enable Port of Salalah to utilize smart solutions in its upcoming projects; this will boost productivity and provide enhanced safety for the port's workers.

"Port of Salalah is Oman's largest and among the biggest in the Middle East. As a result of continued efforts, the port has been able to achieve the global recognition of being ranked



second in the world in terms of productivity," said Mohammed Al Mashani, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Port of Salalah." He also added, "Our partnership today with Oman's leading telecommunications company, Omantel, will enhance our regional position and will enable us to use Omantel's 5G and AI technologies in the port's day-to-day operations which will enhance productivity and improve safety."



Dhofar Integrated Services

Under the MoU, Omantel will provide Dhofar Integrated Services with smart digital solutions; enabling it to offer an unmatched experience in Dhofar Governorate.

Eng. Ali bin Issa Shammas, CEO of Dhofar Integrated Services, said: "Dhofar Integrated Services provides essential services to the people of Dhofar. We are keen to harness Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies to further improve the services offered to our clients. This agreement will provide pioneering smart digital solutions to upgrade call center services through the integration of AI-powered Chat Bot, introducing smart meter application, drone surveillance of the company's stations and remote locations and smart helmets. All these will enhance the experience of our sub-



scribers while improving safety in the work environment. To continue the growth and development of Dhofar Integrated Services, we are delighted to partner with Omantel, which, through its innovative solutions and services as well as network efficiency and wide coverage, has proven to be the right digital partner."

Omantel is Oman's first and leading integrated telecommunications services provider, enabling the digital society to flourish, allowing new ways of doing business and delivering a world of information, news and entertainment. While striving to ensure optimum customer satisfaction, Omantel plays a key social role to provide the required support and subsidy to all sectors of the Omani society.

152,400sqm Mabela Park being built

Muscat - Occidental Oman is constructing Mabela Park in the wilayat of Seeb. Spread over 152,400sqm, in a lively location full of urban, residential and commercial facilities, the project is Occidental Oman's effort to fulfil its role in community partnership, a press release said.

The park will be supervised by Muscat Municipality and was designed according to quality and sustainability standards. While serving people with special needs, it will also have a 3.2km sports and bicycle path, overhead bridges for pedestrians and bicycles, games for children, exercise equipment and sitting areas.

Additionally, Mabela Park will have multi-use sport pitches, skateboarding ramps, cafés, areas for mobile vendors, prayer

rooms and parking lots.

'It is hoped that implementation of this project will continue for 24 months,' the release said.

Muscat Municipality's cooperation with Occidental Oman stems from its efforts to strengthen partnership with the private sector through implementation of projects, services and shared facilities that serve the community.



(Supplied images)

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES JAPANESE AMBASSADOR



H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison H E Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan to Oman. The two sides reviewed relations between the two countries and exchanged views on several matters of common interest

Dhahirah Municipality invites bids for 10 development projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dhahirah Municipality has invited bids for ten development projects in the governorate, including public parks, internal roads and markets.

An official of Dhahirah Municipality informed that tenders are now open for projects to construct public parks in the wilayats of Ibri and Dhank.

Bids are also being invited for construction of a municipal market and Friday market in Yanqul, and development of a municipal market and a harat in the wilayat of Ibri.

The municipality's upcoming projects include a rainwater drainage canal in Ibri's Al Murtafa'a area and several roads in the wilayat.



The last date for submission of bids is August 23.

The development projects are being financed from the RO20mn allocation for each governorate under the Governors' Development Programme.

The Ministry of Economy confirmed that the directives of His

Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to increase the allocation for each governorate from RO10mn to RO20mn in the current Five-Year Plan will support the implementation of strategic programmes, helping priority development of governorates and sustainable cities.

SalamAir to operate 2 weekly flights from Suhar to Calicut

Muscat - Oman's value-for-money airline SalamAir has announced non-stop flights from Suhar to Calicut, India. The flights on the route will operate on Tuesdays and Fridays starting from July 22.

Capt Mohamed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir, said, "In line with our network expansion plan, it is with great pleasure that we announce the first international direct flights from Suhar Airport to India."

He added that SalamAir is the first airline to use Suhar Airport as an international hub by operating direct international flights to Shiraz, Calicut, Trabzon and domestically to Salalah.

"On this occasion, I would like to thank Oman Airports Management Company for extending Suhar airport operation hours to the night to enable good connectivity to these flights. With the growing demand, we are now exploring more connectivity between Suhar and international destinations.

CAPT MOHAMED AHMED

tourists."

Capt Ahmed added that the airline's strategic cooperation with Oman Air enables it to serve the Indian market and augment demand and traffic volume, thus fulfilling Oman Vision



(Supplied photo)

With the growing demand, we are now exploring more connectivity between Suhar and international destinations

2040.

SalamAir recently announced its strategic cooperation with Oman Air, which expanded a codeshare agreement to facilitate dynamic and smooth passenger movement to the sultanate to promote tourism.

While Oman is home to a large Indian community, India is one of the top trading partners of Oman. SalamAir hopes its flights will continue to facilitate and strengthen these solid ties and bilateral relations.

SalamAir recently announced flights from Salalah to Calicut and has been operating on this route on Fridays and Sundays since April 3.

Hot air balloons get type certification

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has issued type acceptance certificate for hot air balloons in Oman.

'In the context of supporting sources of economic diversification in the civil aviation sector, CAA issued the first certificate of type acceptance for hot air balloons in Oman, in accordance with international standards and recommendations set by the International Civil Aviation Organization,' a statement said

It added that the development is in efforts to attract investors in the field.



(Image for illustrative purpose)

Muscat Municipality closes 2 parks temporarily

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has announced the closure of Amerat Park and Naseem Garden in preparation of special activities during Eid al Adha holidays.

A statement issued by Muscat Municipality said, 'The Municipality will close Amerat Park and Naseem Garden starting from July 5 to July 9. This closure comes within the framework of ongoing preparations for Eid al Adha events.'

MoH working to control sugar level in beverages

Continued from Page 01

Taxes were imposed on soft drinks (50 per cent) and energy drinks (100 per cent) in 2019 to encourage reformulation with reduced sugar content.

Dr Salima al Maamari, director of nutrition in the Nutrition Department, stated that sugar consumption in the community

is currently high. "WHO recommends consumption should not exceed six spoons of sugar per day for an adult. This amount of sugar, or close to it, is found in just one can of sweetened drink. Therefore, it is necessary to start reducing the amount of sugar intake gradually with the cooperation of beverage manufacturers."

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Muscat	32	29
Abu Dhabi	39	31
Doha	38	31
Kuwait City	45	32
Manama	38	29
Riyadh	42	27

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	3.59am
Sunrise	5.25am
Duhr	12.17pm
Asr	3.35pm
Maghrib	7.03pm
Isha	8.25pm

Send your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,118.76
Sensex	53,134.35
FOREX RATES	
(RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	206.19
Pakistani Rs	536.55
Bangladeshi taka	243.02
Philippines peso	144.17
Sri Lankan Rs	932.06
*Rates as on JULY 05 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

Crude prices fall 5% on recession fears

The two global crude oil contracts tumbled by more than five per cent on Tuesday on mounting concerns about recession in oil-consuming nations.

At 1340 GMT a barrel of Brent oil, the main international contract, was down 5.6 per cent at US\$106.93 per barrel, while main US contract, WTI fell 5.1 per cent to US\$102.91 per barrel.

Crude oil has been hit by fears of a global recession, and this continued Tuesday after the Bank of England said the global economic outlook has “deteriorated materially” after surging commodity prices pushed up inflation, posing a further downside risk in months ahead.

Crude oil could collapse to US\$65 a barrel by the end of this year and slump to US\$45 by end-2023 if a demand-crippling recession hits, Citigroup warned.

Additionally, S&P Global’s composite purchasing managers index for the Eurozone fell to a 16-month low, implying growth of around only 0.2 per cent in the quarter.



Galfar wins RO73mn contract for national road project in Duqm

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company, the biggest construction firm in the sultanate, has been awarded a major contract for national road project in Duqm by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

'We are pleased to inform our esteemed shareholders that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones has awarded to Galfar the tender for the construction of dual national road project (NR32) in Duqm (phase one),' Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company said in a disclosure submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Tuesday.

Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company said that the letter of award was accepted by the company on Monday.

'The value of this project is approximately RO73mn with execution period of 36 months', it added.

'We take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones for the confidence vested in Galfar through the award of this project,' the company said.

Earlier this week, Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company was also awarded a contract worth more than RO16mn for road construction by the Ministry of Defence.

The Ministry of Defence awarded the tender to Galfar En-

gineering and Contracting Company for the construction of the dualisation of Al Murtafat street phase 2 project.

'The value of this project is RO16.145mn with execution period of about 18 months, effective from July 2022', Galfar announced to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Sunday.

As per Galfar Engineering and Contracting Company's first quarter financial report, the company received new project awards worth RO91mn during the first quarter of 2022.

The company said despite the economic situation and reduction of spending in public projects, Galfar continues to maintain significant projects pipeline of RO473mn as of the end of first quarter 2022.

Al Hassan wins RO12mn contract from Oman LNG

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Al Hassan Engineering Company has been awarded an engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract worth RO12.5mn by Oman LNG.

In a disclosure to submitted the Muscat Stock Exchange on Tuesday, Al Hassan Engineering Company said it signed a contract on Sunday with Oman LNG for the EPC commissioning and performance testing for new sea cooling water outfall project at Oman LNG facility in Qalhat.

'The value of the project is RO12.5mn. The execution period will be 18.5 months starting from



June 12, 2022. The company expects resealable earning from this project,' Al Hassan Engineering Company said.

CBO issues treasury bills worth RO111mn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tender of the government treasury bills (issue number 562) was issued by the Central Bank of Oman this week.

Total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO111mn, for a maturity period of 91 days, from July 6, 2022 until October 5, 2022. The average accepted price reached RO99.450 for every RO100 bill, while the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.430.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 2.2078 per cent and 2.22 per cent, respectively. The interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 2.25 per cent, while the discount rate on the treasury



bills discounting facility with the central bank is 2.75 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman acts as the issue manager and provides the added advan-

tage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (repo).

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. The government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.



Shell's CEO Ben van Beurden speaks during a signing ceremony at QatarEnergy headquarters in Doha on Tuesday (AFP)

Shell joins Qatar's \$29bn gas project

Doha, Qatar – Shell joined Qatar Energy's US\$29bn project to expand production at the world's biggest natural gas field on Tuesday, becoming the fifth and final international partner.

The British-based company took a 6.25 per cent stake for an undisclosed sum, joining TotalEnergies, Eni, ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil in the North Field East project.

The North Field expansion is the biggest liquefied natural gas (LNG) project ever seen, Qatar Energy said. It comes at a time of intense geopolitical tensions over energy supplies.

The US\$28.75bn development is predicted to increase Qatar's production from the current 77mn tonnes a year to 110mn tonnes by 2027.

"As one of the largest players in the LNG business, (Shell) have a lot to bring to help meet global energy demand and security," said Qatar's Energy Minister Saad Sherida al-Kaabi, who is also the Qatar Energy president and CEO.

Qatar Energy estimates that the North Field, which extends under the Gulf sea into Iranian territory, holds about 10 per cent

of the world's known gas reserves.

The project's LNG – the cooled form of gas that makes it easier to transport – is expected to come on line in 2026.

The project has taken on growing international importance after Europe's energy supplies took a hit following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. South Korea, Japan and China have been the main markets for Qatar's LNG.

But since an energy crisis hit Europe last year, the Gulf state has helped Britain with extra supplies, and also announced a cooperation deal with Germany.

Europe has in the past rejected the long-term deals that Qatar seeks for its energy, but the Ukraine war has forced a change in attitude.

Qatar's gas is among the cheapest to produce and has fuelled an economic miracle in the tiny archipelago, which boasts the world's highest GDP per capita.

Qatar is also expected to announce details of another expansion, the North Field South, in coming months.

AFP

Al Mouj drives tourism growth with over 2,000 hotel rooms upon completion

Muscat – Al Mouj Muscat welcomes 3.9mn visitors annually and through outstanding leisure experiences, Oman's first Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) is delivering on its promise of developing tourism in the sultanate, thus contributing to major economic growth.

Al Mouj Muscat attracts local, regional and international tourists through its award-winning golf course, lively marina and an array of oceanfront culinary experiences. This comprehensive destination is home to leaders in the hospitality industry with international hotel names basing their properties in the heart of the mixed-use destination.



Leaders in hospitality

Hotels are a key feature of Al Mouj's sophisticated tourism infrastructure, with two international hotels now operational, the Kempinski Hotel Muscat and Mysk by Shaza that together, offer 582 rooms. As well, the 5-star St. Regis Resort is in opening phase and set to offer 440 rooms, along with the Al Mouj Rayhaan by Rotana which will have 251 rooms. Three additional hotels are in planning phase and with a total of seven hotels on project completion, the total number of rooms and suites available will rise to over 2,000.

Carsten Wiegandt is the general manager of the Kempinski Hotel Muscat which opened its doors in 2018. Kempinski Hotels is Europe's oldest luxury hotel group and Carsten explains why Al Mouj was the right location for the brand. He said, "Al Mouj Muscat has created the perfect balance of authentic Omani hospitality, memorable leisure experiences and lifestyle aspiration.

Our travellers tell us that they appreciate the natural beauty of Oman, and that Al Mouj offers a true sense of community. This environment is unique, and I am confident that it will attract growing numbers of regional and international visitors."

Championship golf course

Al Mouj Golf is a travel and tourism success story in its own right, with the Greg Norman-designed course earning global recognition as a World 100 Championship course and consistently being placed in the top two in the Middle East owing to its exceptional playing attributes and magnificent oceanside setting. As well, it is the nation's first PGA course and has hosted the Oman Open, a European Tour golf tournament, for three years and is on the European Tour.

Building on its popularity with local golfers, across the Middle East and internationally, the club is investing in a series of major facility and building upgrades that will lift the playing experience even higher. Given the estimated total economic impact per annum of golf travel to Oman has the potential to exceed RO1.7mn, Al Mouj is confident it will play a major part in driving interest, helping to develop the sector further.

Gold Anchor Marina

Another jewel in Al Mouj's crown is its show-stopping Gold Anchor Marina which surrounded by luxury residences, is also expanding and upon completion will accommodate 400

berths. It provides an unrivalled setting for yacht owners and boating enthusiasts, who have a superb team of experienced marina staff and support services at their disposal.

In addition to being able to welcome more vessels, Al Mouj Marina established the marine tourism industry and is currently home to 17 sea tour operators. These local independent enterprises benefit from the vibrant destination's footfall and overall support for them has been instrumental in growing the highly popular area of marine tourism.

Sailing, diving and snorkelling enthusiasts are well-served by the accredited businesses that are strategically located in the vibrant destination. Al Mouj Muscat's supportive and pioneering approach has both created jobs and resulted in over 1,850 marine tour trips departing annually from the marina.

growing and increasingly important feature of Oman's tourism sector. It has hosted several prestigious events including Al Mouj Muscat Marathon which attracts over 10,000 runners from over 100 countries, and stages of the America's Cup and the Extreme Sailing Series.

The Tour of Oman, hosted the Final Stage of the professional road bicycle race in the sultanate, which featured 102 riders from 29 nations and gained worldwide recognition and media coverage.

Al Mouj Golf is ranked as one of the top two golf courses in the Middle East, thus attracting events such as the European Tour serving as an excellent showcase for the course's incomparable location helping to put Oman on the global sports tourism map.

Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "Tourism is a key pillar of Oman Vision 2040 as it boosts job creation, in-country spend and creates new avenues for enterprise. Since inception, we have seen the development and growth of the sector through the attraction of world renowned hotel chains, championship golf course, award winning marina and exceptional culinary experiences, bringing in tourists from around the world."

"Al Mouj Muscat is a key destination, attracting international events such as the Louis Vuitton America's Cup World Series, which generated a total economic impact of RO10mn. Through every rial that was spent during this prestigious event, there was a return of 11 rials and the event itself was broadcasted live to 140 territories," he said.

Saudi Arabia to hand out billions to ease inflation pain

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia announced Monday it was disbursing billions of dollars directly to citizens to ease the effects of inflation amid growing online expressions of frustration over rising prices.

"A generous royal order was issued approving the allocation of financial support in the amount of SAR20bn (around US\$5.3bn) to face the repercussions of rising prices globally," the official Saudi Press Agency reported, attributing the decision to King Salman.

Roughly half that amount would come via direct cash transfers to social security beneficiaries, the SPA report said.

Earlier on Monday, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman "stressed the need to take into account the neediest citizens in the face of international developments that resulted in rising costs of some basic needs", a separate SPA report said.

Chairing a meeting of the kingdom's economic affairs council, Prince Mohammed, the de facto ruler, reportedly made



Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

The most recent consumer price index for Saudi Arabia showed an annual increase of 2.2 per cent in May, with prices up 4.2 per cent for food and beverages and 4.0 per cent for transport

the point that government offices must respond to global supply chain issues and rising prices to protect consumers' interests.

Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, has not been hit as hard by inflation as other coun-

tries in the region.

The most recent consumer price index for Saudi Arabia showed an annual increase of 2.2 per cent in May, with prices up 4.2 per cent for food and beverages and four per cent for trans-

port.

Nevertheless, the kingdom's tightly controlled social media landscape has featured more frequent griping about rising prices in recent weeks, including Twitter hashtags calling for a boycott of eggs and a well-known dairy company.

Saudi Arabia's economy has generally performed well this year, especially since Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent energy prices soaring.

GDP is expected to grow by 7.6 per cent in 2022, the International Monetary Fund said in April.

In early May, the Gulf monarchy reported its fastest economic growth rate in a decade, as a surging oil sector fuelled a 9.6 per cent rise in the first quarter over the same period of 2021.

Saudi Arabia's announcement came as the United Arab Emirates similarly said it was doubling the budget for its social security programme to AED28bn (about US\$7.6bn) after a rise in fuel prices.

AFP

Euro hits 20-year low against US dollar on recession risk

London, UK – The euro on Tuesday slumped to its lowest level since 2002 and European stock markets sank as growing recession risks sent shockwaves around the region.

The shared currency fell as low as US\$1.0298, threatening a push towards dollar parity.

It also dived as investors eyed aggressive interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve in its fight against inflation, in contrast with the European Central Bank which plans more modest increases.

Stocks indices in Frankfurt, London and Paris shed more than one per cent in late morning deals on heightened fears of a prolonged economic downturn across Europe.

Economic growth in the eurozone floundered in June, a key survey showed Tuesday, hit by soaring consumer prices.

S&P Global's closely-watched monthly purchasing managers' index (PMI), which measures corporate confidence, fell to 52.0 in June from 54.8 in May.

Nevertheless, the reading, which was a 16-month low, remains above the 50-point level signalling expansion.

"Growing fears of a recession are hammering the euro lower, whilst the dollar is soar-



ing on bets that the Fed will keep hiking rates aggressively to tame inflation," City Index analyst Fiona Cincotta told AFP.

"Today's PMI data from Europe have highlighted the risk of slowing growth at the end of the second quarter and raise the prospect of a contraction in activity in the coming months."

By contrast, most Asian stock markets closed higher on growing speculation that US President Joe Biden is about to roll back some of the Trump-era tariffs on Chinese goods.

The mood on trading floors has nevertheless become in-

creasingly gloomy in recent months as observers warn that sharp interest rate hikes aimed at curbing price rises could cause a contraction, compounding uncertainty caused by Russia's war in Ukraine.

Oil prices were mixed as traders assessed the market with demand outstripping supplies.

Investors were keeping tabs also on fresh Covid outbreaks in China that have triggered City lockdowns.

US markets were set to reopen later Tuesday following July 4 celebrations.

AFP

Strike threatens to cut Norway gas exports by nearly 60%

Oslo, Norway – A Norwegian oil and gas industry group said Tuesday that a strike by oil and gas workers, which has already closed three fields, could cut Norway's gas exports by more than half by Saturday.

"Almost 60 per cent of gas exports from the Norwegian continental shelf (NCS) will be affected when the strike action is stepped up further from Saturday," the Norwegian Oil and Gas Association said in a statement.

The strike comes at a time when energy prices have already soared as a result of the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and associated sanctions.

"Norwegian deliveries account for a quarter of European energy supplies, and Europe is entirely dependent on Norway delivering as a nation at a time when Russian supply cuts have created a very tight market for natural gas," the association said.

"A strike on this scale poses huge problems for countries



This file photo shows the field centre of Johan Sverdrup oil field in the North Sea west of Stavanger, Norway (AFP)

which are wholly dependent on filling up their gas stores ahead of the autumn and winter," it added. Workers walked out after members of the Lederne union voted no to a proposal brought by mediators during wage negotiations. Earlier on Tuesday, Norwegian energy giant Equinor said it had shut down production at three oil and gas fields after oil workers walked out following

failed wage negotiations, and warned that more closures were expected.

The three fields Gudrun, Oseberg South and Oseberg East, have a combined production of "around 89,000 barrels of oil equivalent (boe) per day, of which 27,500 boe per day is natural gas," Equinor said in a statement.

AFP

Sri Lanka admits bankruptcy, warns of crisis through 2023

Colombo, Sri Lanka – Sri Lanka is bankrupt and the acute pain of its unprecedented economic crisis will linger until at least the end of next year, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told parliament Tuesday.

The island nation's 22mn people have endured months of galloping inflation and lengthy power cuts after the government ran out of foreign currency to import vital goods.

Wickremesinghe said the once-prosperous country will go into deep recession this year and acute shortages of food, fuel and medicine will continue.

"We will have to face difficulties in 2023 as well," the premier said. "This is the truth. This is the reality."

He said Sri Lanka's ongoing bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund depended on finalising a debt restructuring plan with creditors by August.

"We are now participating in



A cyclist peddles past gas cylinders placed by people queueing to buy fuel in Galle, Sri Lanka on Monday (AFP)

the negotiations as a bankrupt country," Wickremesinghe said.

"Due to the state of bankruptcy our country is in, we have to submit a plan on our debt sustainability to them separately. Only when (the IMF) are satisfied with that plan can we reach an agreement."

The IMF last week said more work was needed to set the nation's finances right and repair its runaway fiscal deficit before a

deal could be struck on a funding arrangement to address its balance of payments crisis.

It has also told authorities to do more to fight corruption and bring an end to costly energy subsidies that had long been a drain on the government budget.

Sri Lanka is almost entirely without petrol and the government has shut down non-essential public services in an effort to conserve fuel.

There have been clashes outside the few petrol stations still selling fuel, with tens of thousands lining up for the slim chance of securing limited supplies and no fresh stocks expected for at least two weeks.

The United Nations estimates that about 80 per cent of the public are skipping meals to cope with food shortages and record prices. Wickremesinghe said the IMF expects Sri Lanka's economy to shrink by seven percent this year, even worse than the dire forecasts issued by the country's central bank.

He said inflation could climb above 60 per cent, and rapid currency depreciation over the past few months had wiped out the value of savings by half.

"Think about how this situation affects our senior citizens," the 73-year-old premier said. "Poverty is spreading among all of them."

AFP

Wheat war: Russia-Ukraine conflict raises hunger fears

Paris, France – Russia's invasion of agricultural power Ukraine has severely disrupted the global wheat market, prompting warnings that the conflict could lead to hunger in some countries.

Why is wheat irreplaceable?

Wheat is milled into flour to make a huge range of foods, from bread to pasta to desserts.

"Everyone eats wheat, but not everyone is capable of producing it," says Bruno Parmentier, an economist and author of the book "Feeding Humanity".

Only around a dozen countries produce enough wheat to be able to export it, too.

China is the world's top producer but is also a major importer of the commodity to feed its 1.4bn people.

Russia, the United States, Australia, Canada and Ukraine are the world's top exporters.

Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey are among the top importers.

Why are wheat prices high?

Grain prices were already high before Russia began its invasion of Ukraine in February.

There were several factors behind the increases:

Energy prices soared as economies bounced back from Covid lockdowns, sending costs for nitrogen-based fertilisers higher.

The end of Covid restrictions also led to major disruptions to global supply chains as demand surged for all sorts of products.

In addition, a heatwave in Canada led to a dismal harvest in the country last year.

Why did the war worsen things?

Wheat prices surged even



higher after Russian troops stormed Ukraine, exceeding 400 euros (US\$418) per tonne in May on the European market, double its level last summer.

The higher costs are dramatic for developing countries. More than 30 nations depend on Russia and Ukraine for 30 per cent of their wheat import needs, ac-

cording to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

The two countries, considered the breadbaskets of Europe, accounted for 30 per cent of global grain exports before the war. Their production has increased in recent years, with Russia becoming the top exporter and Ukraine closing in on third place.

What are the consequences for Ukraine?

A Russian naval blockade has prevented Ukraine from shipping out 25mn tonnes of grain that are now stuck in farms or silos at ports.

While some quantities have been transported via rail and road, exports are still six times smaller than by sea.

Ukrainian farmers faced a dangerous planting season, with some having to work with flak

jackets and rely on specialists to remove mines and other ordnance from fields.

Ukraine's wheat harvest is expected to fall by 40 per cent this year, the country's grain association says.

Has wheat become a war weapon?

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has branded Russia's blockade as "blackmail", saying it was a deliberate strategy by Russian President Vladimir Putin to force the rest of the world "to give in to him" and drop sanctions on Moscow.

"In times of war, big producing countries literally hold the fate of others in their hands," Parmentier said.

Turkey has spearheaded efforts aimed at resuming grain deliveries across the Black Sea and said on June 22 that four-way talks with Russia, Ukraine

and the United Nations could be held in the coming weeks.

What's the future?

China is not expected to release wheat stocks while India has imposed a temporary ban on its exports after a heatwave hit harvests.

Global wheat production is forecast to reach almost 775mn tonnes in 2022-2023, 4.5mn lower than the previous year, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

Reduced production in Ukraine, Australia and Morocco will "only partly" be offset by increases in Canada, Russia and the United States, the department said. But prices have fallen in recent weeks as harvests have started, markets have priced in the Ukraine conflict and concerns rise of a looming recession, according to experts.

AFP

Mazoon employs best farming practice

As part of its aim to enhance quality standards and provide fresh and healthy products to the local market and the region, Mazoon Dairy is working to implement the highest international standards in managing its dairy cow farms by employing the latest technologies in the field of animal care.

Mazoon's farm in the Wilayat of Al Sunainah, in Buraimi Governorate, contains an integrated set of facilities equipped with the latest technologies that guarantees a fresh, high-quality product from raw milk. These facilities include a number of uniquely designed barns that ensure the temperature remains stable throughout the year at 25°C, which is ideal for cows, a press release said.

Dr Khalfan Ali al Tamsi, farm support manager at Mazoon, said, "Our farm has 16 barns equipped with the latest technologies. Each barn accommodates 600 dairy cows. In



addition to the barns, there is an integrated automated milking parlour, which has a capacity of 1,000 cows per hour, which is characterised by an automated sterilised production line without human intervention during the various stages of milking. There is also an integrated laboratory which supervises the examination of fresh milk samples to ensure its high quality before sending it to the manufacturing stage.

"On the other side of the farm, there is a feed depot with the latest automated equipment to mix the feed and nutritional supplements that the cows need for balanced healthy growth, which is ultimately reflected in the quality of the milk. Next to the feed depot, there are calve incubators, which take care of young calves and raises them as required until they grow and reach the stage of insemination."

Abdulhamid al Sarmi, Quality

Assurance and Quality Control manager, said, "Our strategy is based on enhancing our market share by providing high quality products without any harmful industrial inputs to health, which has in turn contributed over the past few years to enhancing the company's reputation among competitors. This is in line with our aspiration of enhancing food security in this sector through a totally local company such as Mazoon Dairy."

The company's operations began in 2019, and during this period, the size of the company's cattle herd grew from 3,400 heads to more than 10,000 heads by the end of May 2022, which enabled the company to cover the needs of the local market. The company also plans to increase the size of this herd to 25,000 heads by 2028 to cover the increasing demand in the local market, in addition to the company's plans for regional expansion.

Cisco study reveals benefits of wearable technology

A seamless and integrated digital experience is essential for consumers to maximise the potential of smart wearable health and wellbeing devices, according to new research conducted by Cisco across the EMEA region.

The research was carried out by Cisco AppDynamics and questioned 4,000 people across in the UAE, the UK, France and Germany. It discovered that 83 per cent of those polled believe smart wearable technology has the potential to positively transform the health of individuals and improve public health services in general, a press release said.

Wearables are increasingly popular - 38 per cent of people currently use at least one wearable technology device, while 71 per cent plan to increase their use of such products and related applications over the next 12 months. Thus, wearable technology has reached a defining moment in its evolution, moving from the early adopter stage through to mass adoption.

The pace of innovation in wearable healthcare products is high, and users have clear preferences for what they want their devices to do. Around 84 per cent expect their devices to indicate early warning signs of illness and the same percentage



want to improve fitness goals. In addition, 78 per cent look to wearables to help manage chronic health conditions, 79 per cent to identify the spread of infectious diseases, and 77 per cent to support healthy eating.

Around 83 per cent of consumers believe that having reliable, real-time access to health data and accuracy of this data is critical to a good user experience. In fact, the quality of the experience is so important that 76 per cent of those questioned said they would stop using a specific wearable device or application if they had a bad digital experience.

More worryingly for smart wearable manufacturers and app developers is the fact that 59 per cent of respondents said a bad digital experience with one wearable device or application would put them off trying other health or wellbeing wearable technology.

The biggest causes of bad digital experiences are device crashes (54 per cent), slow or unresponsive performance (51 per cent) and data privacy concerns (51 per cent). For 84 per cent of people, trust is a critical factor when choosing a wearable medical device or application brand.

Al Maha offers free vehicle checks for khareef visitors



Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company, in association with Precision Tune Auto Care, has announced the launch of their 'Drive Safe' campaign.

Under the campaign, khareef visitors driving along the Nizwa - Salalah road will now have the opportunity to get a free 9-point vehicle safety check and report

to ensure their vehicle is in proper health to undertake the trip safely, a press release said.

Hafidh Bait Hadid, head of Sales Division, said, "As a customer-centric company, we are indeed happy to present this free public safety service to motorists whose vehicles will cover a long distance to reach Salalah. All

motorists are welcome to take advantage of our 'Drive Safe' campaign and get their vehicles checked."

The Drive Safe checkpoints will be available at Al Maha stations in Ghaba and Haima beginning July 5. The service will progressively be extended to cover Al Maha stations at Bahjat,

Haima, Thumrait, and New Salalah during this khareef season. Vehicle owners will be able to see a temporary facility set up specifically for this purpose as they drive into these stations.

The 9-point safety check covers engine oil, transmission fluid, wiper fluid, brake fluid, coolant, battery, tyres, lights and wipers.

Ahli credit card holders get 20% cash back at Shell stations

As part of its continuous efforts to provide exclusive benefits under its Credit Card profiles, Ahli Islamic has announced a collaboration with Shell Oman Marketing to offer exciting cash rewards to its credit card holders.

Scheduled to run in the fourth week of each month for five days, starting from June until December 2022, all Ahli Islamic credit card holders will get 20 per cent cash back when fueling at shell Service stations or shopping at Shell Select stores, a press release said.

Commenting on the promotion, Yousuf al Rawahi, deputy general manager and head of Ahli Islamic, said, "We recognise the importance of meeting customers' needs and providing them with Shariah-compliant banking solutions consistent with their evolving lifestyle.



Hence, Ahli Islamic has always strived to create products and services that help all our customers achieve their goals and earn value-added benefits.

"This objective is also reflected in the cash back offer for the Ahli Islamic credit card holders, who can access a range of services and benefits provided by our third-party partners from

across different sectors. It is also indicative of our digital transformation journey and encouraging cashless transactions across the country, as part of Oman 2040 objectives."

As part of the collaborative promotion, Ahli Islamic customers can avail a discount of up to RO10 at Shell Oman service stations and Select outlets.

"This offer is in line with the bank's objective to keep providing excellent customer-centric services that are innovative, secure, and convenient. It also demonstrates our in-depth understanding of clients' needs and our keenness to adapt these learnings to meet customer expectation and current market requirements," Rawahi added.

The cash back campaign represents Ahli Islamic's commitment to its strategy, which focuses on achieving the ideal balance of sustainable growth goals with that of meeting customer demands. At a time when the Islamic banking sector is experiencing significant growth in operations and increased customer demand. Such initiatives are expected to have a more positive impact on the country's economic development.

G42 Healthcare expands clinical genetics in UAE

G42 Healthcare, an Abu Dhabi-based leading healthcare company transforming the UAE's healthcare landscape with AI and advanced medical technologies, has scaled up efforts to offer its clinical genetic testing solutions in the UAE.

The company has launched over 250 comprehensive clinical genetic testing panels that use state of the art sequencing technologies, with the shortest turnaround time, a press release said.

Dr Fahed al Marzooqi, COO of G42 Healthcare, said, "As part of our efforts to support the health of future generations and provide better healthcare every day, Biogenix Labs is expanding its clinical genetics offering in the region and

reinforcing its reputation as the regional testing provider of choice. We will soon be expanding this offering to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the wider GCC region as well."

These diagnostic tests or biomarkers help assess high-risk patients and aid in the early detection of diseases, their prognosis, therapy selection, response to treatment, and chances of recurrence. With the enhanced offering of more than 5,000 whole-genome sequencing per week and over 50,000 whole-exome sequencing per week, it unlocks the possibilities for preventive and precision therapies that will transform the healthcare landscape in the UAE, enabling it to transition from sick care to healthcare.

The current clinical testing portfolio of Biogenix Labs includes screening for cancer, rare and metabolic diseases, newborn genetic conditions, as well as carrier screening tests to determine a couple's risk of passing inherited disorders to future generations and non-invasive prenatal testing.

The clinical genetic solutions, to be offered through Biogenix Labs - part of G42 Healthcare, are part of the company's mission to provide insights and facilitate early diagnosis and treatment of cancer, rare and metabolic diseases and other genetic conditions in the region.

The clinical genetics offering will soon be followed by the consumer genomics testing equivalent.

Omran launches 4th edition of 'WithinOman' tourism campaign

As part of its ongoing efforts to boost the local tourism, Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) has launched the fourth edition of its 'WithinOman' tourism promotion campaign, which provides a wide array of special packages for all citizens and residents to enjoy leisure experiences across Omran's hotels and resorts.

The emphasis of this year's edition is on inspiring individuals, families, and groups of friends to enjoy and discover new places and things to do, as well as take part in leisure and adventure activities at 21 hotels and resorts throughout the sultanate.

The campaign's deals are available to visitors till the end of September, and there are four major packages with flexible accommodation options and hospitality services to choose from.

Commenting on the campaign launch, Mohammed bin Khamis al Ghufaili, Chief Operations Officer of OMRAN Group, said, "The 'WithinOman' campaign aims to boost domestic tourism and attract tourists to spend the peak summer travel period at the Group's hotel assets around Oman.

"The variety of perks and services offered at participating hotels and resorts will make the tourist season enjoyable for both individuals and families," the



OMRAN COO added.

The Group, Ghufaili said, provides well-turated and special offers to make the most of Oman's distinctive accommodations, hospitality services, and facilities in order to promote local tourism.

"Revive, Enjoy, Relax, and Chill are the four packages offered

under the promotion," Ghufaili elaborated.

'Revive' package (RO30) is part of the campaign and is available at Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC, City Hotel Duqm, Sohar Beach Resort, Atana Stay Ashkhara, Atana Khasab Hotel, Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve, Barcelo Mussanah Resort and

Sifawy Boutique Hotel.

'Enjoy' package (RO45) is available at Atana Musandam Resort, DusitD2 Naseem Jabal Akhdar and Masirah Island Resort. 'Chill' package (RO65) can be availed at Intercontinental Hotel Muscat, Crowne Plaza Duqm, Salalah Rotana Resort, Crowne Plaza Salalah, Alila Hinu

Bay and Fanar Hotel & Residences.

'Relax' package (RO75) is available at W Muscat Hotel, Alila Jabal Akhdar and Al Bustan Palace, A Ritz Carlton Hotel.

Visitors can make hotel reservations directly or on the 'WithinOman' campaign's website: <https://omran.om/withinoman>.

Sehwag, Pathan brothers to play in Legends League Cricket in Muscat

After the success of season 1, Legends League Cricket is back with 2nd season from September 20 to October 10 this year, which would feature 4 Privately owned Franchisees. Virender Sehwag, Irfan Pathan and Yusuf Pathan to play in the upcoming Legends League Cricket, second season will be played in Muscat, Oman.

The first season of Legends League Cricket had former cricketers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia, England, among other cricket nations divided into 3 Teams representing India, Asia and Rest of the World. Cricket fans all across the world saw the Legends of Cricket sweat it out at their competitive best during the first season.

Virender Sehwag said, "I love to be in the Cricket field. I missed the playing 1st season of LLC but it would be great to go back into the field with the LLC season 2."

Irfan Pathan said, "Excited to announce that I'll be back in action playing Legends League Cricket in September. *Aur iss baar kuch naya bhi hone wala hai...* (And this time something new is going to happen too...) so I am really looking forward to be in Oman."

His brother Yusuf Pathan said, "Practice makes you perfect. And I'm perfecting my shots for action packed season 2 of the

Legends League Cricket. It was fun in January, and I am getting ready for September."

Raman Raheja, CEO, Legends League Cricket said, "We have 4 Franchisee-owned teams, playing 15 matches in Oman. Currently we have 110 Top class players in the pool who would be put in 4 teams through a Player Draft process in early August 2022. So about 80 top players, essentially Legends of Cricket, would be playing in the upcoming season. Players like Sehwag, Irfan and Yusuf Pathan amongst others from India, Australia, England, Pakistan, SA, Sri Lanka, etc are going to play together. The format is such that it would make us an International T20 League with highest number of International Cricketers in the playing eleven." On Sehwag and Pathan brothers confirming their participation, he said, "We are happy to have them in the league."

Ravi Shastri, Commissioner of Legends League Cricket said "The Carnival of Legends is back. Top Cricketers from around the world would be seen coming together. These players have contributed immensely to cricket throughout their career. I am looking forward to watching them play the Legends League Cricket second season."



WikiArabia's first conference in Gulf to be held in UAE

The Wikimedians of UAE user group has issued an open invitation to the public to attend the sixth edition of the WikiArabia conference, a calendar highlight for the Arabic Wikimedian community.

To be hosted from October 28-30, the 2022 WikiArabia conference will be the first-ever edition in the UAE and the Gulf region.

Organisers say that the conference will be an essential catalyst for bridging the gaps and increasing quality content on Arabic Wikipedia.

The conference will serve as a platform for the Arabic Wikimedia community to communicate and share ideas, opinions, and experiences through a packed programme.

It is expected that these conversations will eventually contribute to the growth of a sustainable society that uses Wikimedia projects as a vital asset in its strategies.

"The UAE is one of the leading nations in the field of data devel-

opment, and hosting the WikiArabia conference, one of the annual highlights for the Arabic Wikimedia community, is an important step towards emphasising the need to make quality online data free and accessible," said Ahlam Bolooki, Director of the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature and Leading Manager of the Wikimedians of the UAE User Group.

"Since 2021, the Wikimedians of the UAE user group has had the ambitious goal of increasing the number of Wikipedia pages about literature, and so far, we have successfully achieved a 500 per cent increase in that section."

This, along with our noteworthy education and outreach programmes that have been recognised by the global Wikimedia community, makes our user group eligible for hosting the annual event with grants from the Wikimedia Foundation.

All Arabic user groups are welcome to apply for participation, organisers said.

TII to host GLOBALEM conference in Abu Dhabi

The Technology Innovation Institute (TII), a leading global research center and the applied research pillar of Abu Dhabi's Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC) on Tuesday announced that its Directed Energy Research Center (DERC), will organise the upcoming edition of GLOBALEM, a definitive high power electromagnetic (HP) conference.

Set to run from November 13 to 17 at St Regis Abu Dhabi, the conference marks the first high-profile event DERC is hosting after the launch of its prequalification testing facility at Tawazun Industrial Park in Abu Dhabi ded-



icated to a specific high-energy physics domain.

Dr Chaouki Kasmi, Chief Researcher, Directed Energy Research Center, will offer expertise as General Chair of the organising committee of GLOB-

ALEM. Other expert members include Dr Bill Radasky, of Metatech Corporation USA, and Dr Nicolas Mora from DERC as joint Technical Program Committee co-chairs, as well as Dr Felix Vega from DERC, Dr Lars Ole

Fichte from the Helmut-Schmidt University in Hamburg, Germany, and Dr Jane Lehr, from the University of New Mexico, USA, as conference advisors.

Unpacking the challenges and opportunities that currently exist as well as those evolving everyday in the crucial field of electromagnetics, the conference is set to draw the interest of experts from fields as diverse as pulsed power technologies, high voltage generator, microwave radiation, covering analytical and numerical modeling as well as experimental validation

All eyes will be trained on the Best Student Paper Award

(BSPA), with award recipients receiving a certificate and a cash prize of US\$500.

Likewise, the Young Scientist Award (YSA) recognises a young researcher under 35 who has made innovative contributions in fields related to HP. Researchers keen to participate in the contest can nominate themselves during the submission process.

For both awards, the last date for the submission of extended abstracts online is July 1. Acceptance confirmations and nominations will be completed by August 15, and September 15 is the last date for the final review.

Mass International achieves ISO 14001:2015 certification



Mass International Co LLC has been awarded ISO 14001:2015 Certification for Environmental Management System. This certification has been awarded by globally renowned SGS under the consultancy of JD Institute of Health & Safety.

Mass International is an exclusive distributor of Schindler Elevators and Escalators in the Sultanate of Oman and has a historical reputation of being the oldest Elevator & Escalator company in the sultanate. Over the years the management has adopted the principles of work-

ing in a safe way and has stressed the importance of quality on all executed works.

This focus on safety and quality has led to a very disciplined workforce that caters to operational excellence with a commitment to follow and improve the processes. Mass International's appetite to develop and invest in training their workforce has allowed it to become eligible to receive internationally recognised certifications.

Mass International's quest with regards to the fulfilment of their core values started very

early in the company. The certification process started in the year 2015 and Mass International went on to attain the ISO 9001:2015 (for Quality Management System) & ISO 45001:2018 (for Occupational Health & Safety) certificates in the year 2019. The endeavour to get certified continued and the latest certification of ISO 14001: 2015 was awarded in 2022.

Hence, it is with great pride and joy Mass International announces that it is now a fully Integrated Management System based company.

belN gears up for an exciting summer of women's sport

belN Media Group has announced the lineup of women's and mixed sport events this summer, featuring some of the best women athletes in the world, in 24 countries across the Middle East & North Africa, and globally.

UEFA Women's Euros 2022

belN MEDIA GROUP is gearing to showcase the very best of European football across 24 countries in the MENA region starting this week with the UEFA Women's Euros 2022, ensuring Europe's best footballing talent gains maximum exposure. The tournament will be shown on belN SPORTS Premium 1 & Premium 2 for Arabic, and belN SPORTS English 1 & English 2 for English.

Comprising a total of 31 matches, the UEFA Women's Euros 2022 runs from the 6 until 31 July, with the group stage culminating 18 July. Clashes to watch out for include the kick-off match between England and Austria at Old Trafford on Wednesday, with headlining en-

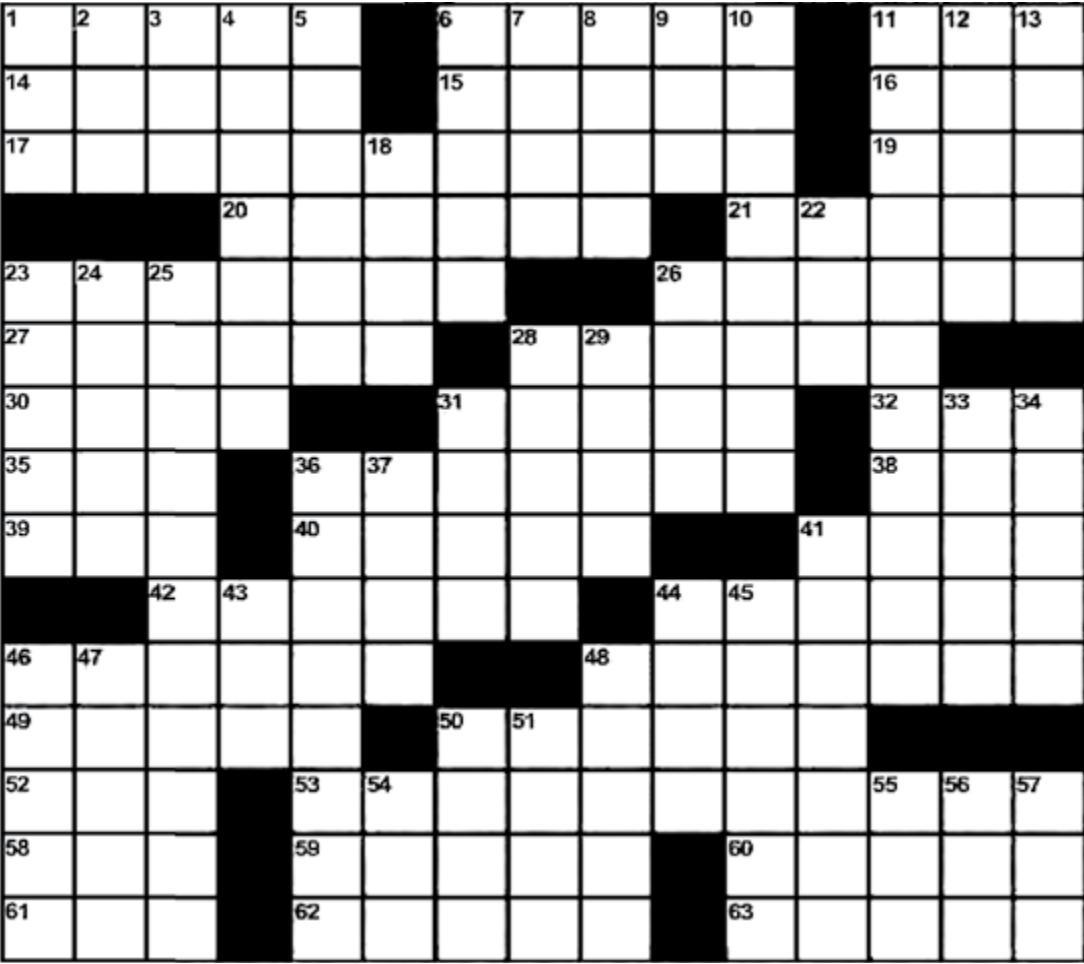
counters between Germany and Denmark on July 8, then Iceland and France on July 18.

Wimbledon, AFCON, and more

Women at Wimbledon are taking centre stage this summer. Tunisia's own Ons Jabeur plays the Quarter-Finals at Wimbledon today, having beaten the likes of Mertens, Parry, Kawa, and Bjorklund already. Winner of the 2019 Arab Woman of the Year Award, the 27-year-old has been a staple on the WTA Tour for half a decade, winning the 221 Birmingham open and the 2022 Madrid and Berlin.

belN SPORTS is also delighted to broadcast the Tour de France Femmes, the inaugural women's cycling showpiece, taking place from 24-31 July. Further afield, the mixed IAAF World Athletics Championships in Oregon will be broadcast on belN SPORTS in the MENA region from 15 - 24 July. Finally, belN are also showing the CAF Women's Africa Cup of Nations this summer in over 40 territories around the world.

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1) Bedouin, for one
6) Grain husks
11) Blazing
14) TV studio sign
15) They form central angles
16) "How_ you?"
17) Boisterous celebration
19) ATM need
20) Haberdashery item
21) Waited and wanted
23) Infant Native American
26) Antiknock fluids
27) Doles out
28) Insistence on traditional correctness
30) Scotsman
31) Argument
32) Move back, as a tide
35) Zeta's follower
36) Like Mona Lisa
38) Second-smallest st.
39) _ Plaines, Ill.
40) Be quiet, in scores
41) Royal honorific
42) "At the_ Core" (Burroughs novel)
44) Make harmonious

46) Out-of-date
48) Feeling such a fool
49) Martin's partner in classic
TV
50) Less difficult
52) "Do_ say, not ..."
53) Welcoming warmly
58) "_ the Good Times Roll"
59) Like many a Poe tale
60) Winter wanner-upper
61) Cry in "A Christmas Carol"
62) Parks, Bonheur and Ponselle
63) Abrasive board
DOWN
1) _ de plume
2) Common tip jar item
3) Disfigure
4) Reduce engine heat
5) Timber problem
6) Have a hankering for
7) Maori war dance
8) Way in for a miner
9) Fish propeller
10) Engaged in combat
11) What an arbitrator

hopes to find
12) Corbeled bay window
13) Guards, as a hockey goal
18) A pope may lead it
22) Surprise cries
23) Called by loud-speaker
24) Get_ start (run behind)
25) Happy about
26) "_ go bragh"
28) Whines
29) Feet or tons, e.g.
31) Having a fortune
33) Swiss capital, to the Swiss
34) Run, as a dye
36) Less familiar
37) Actor Dillon
41) Hollywood hopeful's hope
43) "It just came to me!"
44) Where to find most humans
45) From that point on
46) Big name in dental products
47) "_ turn" (unlucky board game

activity)
48) " ..._ dust to dust"
50) They're good listeners
51) Hit ballad for Sarah

McLachlan
54) Summer zodiac sign
55) Beverage cooler
56) Neither go-with
57) Writer Talese

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You're moving up when it comes to the career ladder, and it couldn't be more timely. Keep in mind, however, that "moving up" doesn't necessarily mean a corner office and a raise (although those things aren't out of the question). It could also mean more time off, a change to a different office, fewer working hours, or being able to work from home, any of which add up to a much better quality of life. In the end, that's what truly counts.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile. In other words, your luck is about to take a spectacular turn for the better, and you can happily put away any lingering problems that have been on your mind for far too long. Before you pack everything in mental bubble wrap and put it away forever, make sure you examine each of these past conundrums and remember the lessons they taught you. You don't want to have to learn them again!

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Nix any wallflower tendencies right now, no matter what. You may not be totally at ease in the spotlight, but the spotlight sure loves you, especially during a moment like this. You've been working behind the scenes for far too long, and it's time to step out on center stage and take your bows. You don't have to stay there long. Just give the people who love you a chance to acknowledge how fantastic you are!

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Confident comes close to describing you right now, but it's not enough. You're so self-assured that people just assume you've got most of the answers and defer to you in nearly all matters. It's a lucky thing that you've got the goods to back up the attitude. The stars help you shed the last traces of hesitation and take a leap of faith. Your willingness to lay it on the line and leap into a make-or-break decision will reward you handsomely.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Your passions heat up deliciously and just in time to revive a cool period. However, along with those heightened emotions comes a hair-trigger temper. Remember to keep the heat where it belongs (raising the temperature of your relationship) and don't let it rage out of control or leak over into areas where it'll cause a lot of easily avoidable havoc. Try to keep your jealousy in check and it will keep your love from flaming out.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
A loved one might be grumpier than usual and determined to pick a fight. Don't let yourself be bullied. Just because they're in a bad mood doesn't mean you should have to suffer. Tell them kindly but firmly that they need to deal with their emotions in an appropriate manner. It's time to hold people accountable for their behavior. If you keep getting walked all over, now is the moment to get up and stand up for your rights.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
It's vitally important that you believe in yourself in order to achieve success, especially during times like these. Why now? Because you might be surrounded by those who adore wallowing in negativity or whose "objective" opinions are actually marked by their own agendas. The stars are drafting a blueprint of your future, and paying attention is of paramount importance, especially when it comes to the details.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Your imagination is one of your richest assets, but it's important that you not let it spiral out of control, especially when it comes to romantic matters. It's pretty easy to get so caught up in a fantasy that you convince yourself it's real. Take some deep breaths and ground yourself in reality before you make any decisions or commit yourself to something that could have many more layers to it than you think.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Take the direction you know is best for you, and leave behind all self-destructive paths. In fact, go ahead and erect barriers and "no trespassing" signs if that helps remind you not to tread in ways that ultimately proved to be unhealthy for you. Some might accuse you of being "too good" for your old friends or old ways, and they're right. You're far too good to waste yourself on behaviors that wreck your potential. Your instincts are wiser than any outside influence.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
It's extremely frustrating when you feel like major decisions are in other people's hands, but what you may not realize is that this actually works in your favor right now. If those offers involve unfamiliar terms or tempting extras, you're better off having steadier heads working for you in strange territory. Go ahead and frankly discuss your needs with your representatives, have some faith, and wait to see what they come back with.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
The situation is stellar right now thanks to your own efforts and those of your lucky stars. Work is gratifying, your wallet is full, and you're in love (or about to be). However, the one surefire way to tempt fate is to take things for granted or let your ego get out of control (yes, your hard work and effort had a lot to do with this, but not everything). Remember to be humble and remain diligent so you can stay ahead of the game.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
If you haven't learned this romantic lesson yet, the stars are about to make you write it on the chalkboard a hundred times now to drill it into your head. It's time to speak up for yourself in relationships and not ignore your needs. Aren't you tired of being "nice" and "good" to get someone to love you? Wouldn't you rather be your own honest, funny, intelligent self and be loved for that? How liberating! Uncomplicate a romance and level with your partner.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which of these is primarily known as a scientist?

- A. Léon Foucault
- B. Guy Fawkes
- C. Bob Fosse
- D. Fouad Abiad

02. Freestyle swimming means...?

- A. Front crawl
- B. Any style for individuals, any style but breaststroke, butterfly, or backstroke for medley relays
- C. Dog paddle
- D. Backstroke

03. What does "safari" mean in its parent language?

- A. Voyage
- B. Overland journey or travel
- C. Adventure
- D. Hunt

Answers: 1.A 2.B 3.B

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	L	D	A
L	I	E	S
V	V	E	E
U	A	Qu	E

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Sydney floods force thousands more to flee

Emergency workers carried out 142 flood rescues in New South Wales over 24 hours

Sydney, Australia - Rain-swollen rivers spilled mud-brown waters across swathes of Sydney on Tuesday, swamping homes and roads while forcing thousands to flee.

The authorities have now instructed about 50,000 people to evacuate and another 28,000 to prepare to escape the rising waters in New South Wales, officials said.

Emergency workers carried out 142 flood rescues in New South Wales over 24 hours, they said, with the support of 100 army troops deployed to the state.

Australia has been at the sharp end of climate change, with droughts, deadly bushfires, bleaching events on the Great Barrier Reef and floods becoming more common and intense as global weather patterns change.

Higher temperatures mean the atmosphere holds more moisture, unleashing more rain.

With much of the ground already sodden, the water rose rapidly in worst-hit areas and was soon lapping around the walls of some homes in the western Sydney suburbs.

"All of a sudden it just came



A flooded vegetable farm from the overflowing Nepean River is seen following torrential rain in western Sydney on Tuesday (AFP)

up so quick," said resident Gordon Lee after parts of his western Sydney suburb of Shanes Park were engulfed overnight.

"We didn't even have time to take anything, just got our pet dogs and went out to higher ground up the street there," he told AFP.

Lee said he had retired from farming about 15 years ago when flooding was less frequent.

"I see younger people move in trying to farm here but they are getting a hiding," he said. "They are losing everything."

'Risky'

Meteorologists predicted the weather front would move northwards along the east coast after dumping rain on Sydney for four days.

"Sydney is not out of danger,

this is not a time to be complacent," State Emergency Services commissioner Carlene York told a news conference.

"It's risky out there."

The federal government has declared a natural disaster in 23 flooded parts of New South Wales, unlocking relief payments to stricken residents.

Many people affected have lived through successive east

coast floods that struck in 2021 and then again in March this year when more than 20 people were killed. In the western suburb of Windsor, 62-year resident Alan Dalrymple said his home had now been flooded four times in 18 months.

"You get a bit pissed off," he told AFP.

"There's not much you can do about it, mate. You just smile and

keep going. No good whinging because no one wants to hear people whinge, that's for sure."

Staff at Windsor police station were evacuated as the floods rose, police said.

'Stay safe'

Much of the flooding has occurred in a major river system downstream of western Sydney's Warragamba Dam, which has been overspilling large volumes of excess water since Sunday.

The huge concrete dam provides most of the city's drinking water.

"People on the east coast are doing it really tough at the moment," said Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

"My heart goes out to people who have suffered again and again and again and again, and for many of those communities, they were also impacted by the bushfires," he told reporters. "I say to people, stay safe, keep vigilant."

The rain has eased in some Sydney areas but flood warnings will likely persist for days, warned Jane Golding of the state's bureau of meteorology.

AFP

Philippine schools to reopen in November

Manila, Philippines - The Philippines will fully reopen all schools in November for the first time in more than two years, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said on Tuesday, as experts warn of a growing education crisis sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The country is one of the last to resume full-time in-person classes since the pandemic began, with schools shuttered in March 2020 in tandem with lengthy lockdowns.

The UN children's agency has warned that school closures have caused enormous losses in education around the world, with some governments slow to reopen classrooms even as vaccination rates increased.

"We have a plan for full face-to-face (schooling) by November of this year," Marcos told his first news conference after being sworn in as the country's leader.

Marcos said school reopenings will start from September and ramp up rapidly over the next two months, accompanied by a vaccination campaign.

AFP

Belgian held in Iran for 'espionage'

Brussels, Belgium - Iran has been holding a Belgian man for the past four months under 'espionage' charges, Belgium's justice minister said on Tuesday, as his country weighed a controversial prisoner swap treaty with Tehran.

The man was seized in Iran on February 24 and has been in 'illegal' detention since, the minister, Vincent Van Quickenborne, told Belgian MPs without identifying him.

Belgium last year imprisoned an Iranian diplomat for 20 years after his conviction under 'terrorist' charges for plotting a bomb attack outside Paris in 2018.

While Quickenborne did not give the detained Belgian's identity, Iran International, a Saudi-financed media outlet based in London, reported that a 41-year-old Belgian former aid worker is detained in Iran.

The outlet said the Belgian's arrest appeared to be another instance of Iran 'imprisoning foreigners as hostages to exchange them with certain Irani-

ans jailed in Western countries'. Among those Iran is holding is a Swedish academic who also holds Iranian citizenship, Ahmadreza Djalali, who taught at a Brussels university. Iran also applied 'espionage' charges to Djalali and has sentenced him to death.

Quickenborne said officials from Belgium's embassy in Tehran had twice visited the jailed Belgian to give all possible assistance, and that his family had earlier on Tuesday made public his detention.

"I cannot say more, at the express request of the family," the minister said.

Belgium's parliament on Thursday is to vote on whether to ratify a bilateral treaty with Iran that would open the way for prisoners in each country to be repatriated.

Quickenborne on Tuesday said as he presented the proposed treaty to MPs for debate that 'if the bill is not fully approved, the threat to our Belgian interests and certain Belgian citizens will increase'.

Some US lawmakers, however, are pressing Belgium to ditch the proposed treaty, which was signed in March.

One, Randy Weber, a Republican representative in Texas, tweeted he was 'shocked to find out that the Belgian gov has cut a deal with the world's leading state-sponsor of terrorism and plans to send Iranian terrorists back to Iran to plot more terroristic acts'. The imprisoned Iranian diplomat, Assadollah Assadi, was convicted by a Belgian court in February 2021 of attempted 'terrorist' murder and 'participating in the activities of a terrorist group'.

He was found guilty of supplying explosives for a bomb attack on June 30, 2018 event outside Paris held by the dissident National Council of Resistance in Iran (NCRI) group.

Information supplied by several European intelligence services allowed Belgium to thwart the attack by intercepting the car carrying the bomb.

AFP

Hot dog eating champ wins again in July 4 contest in New York, fails to break record

New York, US - A man with the playful name Joey Chestnut wolfed down 63 hot dogs in 10 minutes on Monday to win the annual July 4 competitive eating contest featuring America's quintessential cookout food on Coney Island in New York.

Chestnut has now won 15 times but on Monday he fell way short of the record he set in 2020 when he downed 76 hot-dogs, buns included, also in just 10 minutes.

So he apologised to the crowd and said he would do better next year.

Chestnut told AFP he trains by eating hot dogs often and taking part in eating contests featuring them about once a week.

After Monday's virtuoso performance, he said he will not touch food again for a day.

Chestnut was the undisputed winner of the Nathan's Famous Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest, finishing far ahead of the field.

Second place went to one



Women compete to eat as many hot dogs as possible in ten minutes during the Nathan's hot dog eating contest at Coney Island in New York on Monday (AFP)

Geoffrey Esper with 47.5 franks and buns, and third to James Webb at 41.

"Joey Chestnut is a force from beyond who defies the laws of physics," said contest host George Shea.

In the women's category, Miki Sudo triumphed with 40 hot dogs in 10 minutes.

Sudo returned after sitting out last year because she was pregnant. This time she showed off her new baby. She fell short of her record of 48 franks.

Competitors from all over America and as far away as Australia tend to dunk their hot-dogs in water or soda to make them easier to swallow in such

rapid succession without gagging. "The Nathan's Famous Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest is arguably the most iconic sporting event in American history," Shea said.

"The event is a crucible through which greatness is forged."

AFP

Egypt family keeps alive tradition behind hajj centrepiece

Cairo, Egypt - Under the steady hum of a ceiling fan, Ahmed Othman weaves golden threads through black fabric, creating Q'uranic verses, a century after his grandfather's work adorned the Kaaba in Mecca's Grand Mosque.

A ceremonial hanging of the kiswa, huge pieces of black silk embroidered with gold patterns, over the cubic structure that is the centrepiece of the Grand Mosque symbolises the launch of the hajj annual pilgrimage, which starts this week.

Othman's family used to be honoured with the task of producing the kiswa.

His family's creations would be despatched in a camel caravan to Islam's holiest site in western Saudi Arabia towards which Muslims across the world turn to pray. Now, Othman keeps the tradition alive in a small workshop, tucked above the labyrinthine Khan al-Khalili bazaar in central Cairo, where

mass-produced souvenirs line the alleys. The area is historically home to Egypt's traditional handicrafts, but artisans face growing challenges.

Materials, mostly imported, have become expensive, particularly as Egypt faces economic woes and a devalued currency.

Plummeting purchasing power makes high quality hand-crafted goods inaccessible to the average Egyptian, while master craftspeople find it hard to hand down their skills as young people turn to more lucrative jobs.

This wouldn't be the case 'if there was good money in the craft', Othman sighed, hunched over one of the many tapestries that fill his workshop.

Sheets of black and brown felt are covered in verses and prayers, delicately embroidered in silver and gold.

Every stitch echoes the 'sacred ritual' Othman's grandfather was entrusted with in 1924. 'For a whole year, 10 crafts-



Egyptian embroiderer Ahmed Othman el-Kassabgy (right) supervises as another employee sews with gold thread a verse from Q'uran, onto a replica drape, to be sold to tourists, in Cairo (AFP)

men' would work on the kiswa that covers the Kaaba which pilgrims circumambulate, using silver thread in a lengthy labour of love.

Sprinkled rosewater

From the 13th century, Egyptian artisans made the giant cloth in

sections, which authorities transported to Mecca with great ceremony. Celebrations would mark the processions through cities, flanked by guards and clergymen as Egyptians sprinkled rosewater from balconies above.

Othman's grandfather, Othman Abdelhamid, was the last to

supervise a fully Egyptian-made kiswa in 1926.

From 1927, manufacturing began to move to Mecca in the nascent Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which would fully take over production of the kiswa in 1962.

The family went on to embroider military regalia for Egyptian

and foreign dignitaries, including former presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat.

"In addition to our work with military rank embroideries, my father started embroidering Q'uranic verses on tapestries," and then reproducing whole sections of the kiswa.

Clients began flooding in for 'exact replicas of the kiswa, down to the last detail'.

Though today they offer small tableaux for as little as 100 Egyptian pounds (about US\$5), massive customised orders go for several thousand dollars, such as replicas of the Kaaba door, which Othman proudly claims are indistinguishable from the originals in Mecca.

Back-breaking

But the family has not been immune to the economic turbulence that began with the coronavirus pandemic, which decimated small businesses and craftsmanship in Egypt.

Since early 2020, they have sold around 'two pieces per month', whereas before they would sell at least one tapestry a day.

Othman worries that a sense of 'worldwide austerity' makes business unlikely to bounce back. Today, there might only be a dozen or so craftsmen whose work he considers authentic, with many artisans leaving the craft for quicker cash flows.

'They can make 200 to 300 pounds a day', (US\$10-US\$16) driving a tuktuk motorised rickshaw, or a minibus, Othman said. "They're not going to sit on a loom breaking their backs all day."

But still, a century and a half after his great grandfather left his native Turkey and brought the craft with him to Egypt, Othman says he has stayed loyal to techniques learnt as a child when he would duck out of school to watch his father work.

AFP

Gunman kills six at US July 4 parade, police arrest suspect

Highland Park, US - Police arrested a suspect on Monday after a mass shooting left six dead at a US Independence Day parade in a wealthy Chicago suburb, casting a dark shadow over the country's most patriotic holiday.

Robert Crimo, 22, was identified as a 'person of interest' and became the target of a massive manhunt across the town of Highland Park in Illinois, where a rooftop gunman with a high-powered rifle turned a family-focused July 4 parade celebration into a scene of death and trauma.

Firing into the holiday crowd, the shooter caused scenes of chaos as panicked onlookers ran for their lives, leaving behind a parade route strewn with chairs, abandoned balloons and personal belongings.

Emergency officials said around two dozen people, including children, were treated for gunshot injuries, with some in critical condition.



An armed law enforcement officer patrols the scene of the Independence Day parade shooting in Highland Park, Illinois, on Monday (AFP)

After a brief car chase, Crimo was taken into custody 'without incident', Highland Park police chief Lou Jogmen told reporters.

Earlier, police had warned that he was armed and 'very dangerous'. Crimo bills himself as a musician, and goes by the online moniker 'Awake the Rapper'.

The shooting is part of a wave of gun violence plaguing the United States, where approximately 40,000 deaths a year are caused by firearms, according to the Gun Violence Archive website. And it cast a pall over America's Independence Day, in which towns and cities across the country hold similar parades and people - many dressed in variations on the US flag - hold barbecues, attend sports events and gather for firework displays.

In another July 4 shooting, two police officers were wounded when they came under fire during a fireworks display in Philadelphia, local officials said.

CBS News aired video taken

from a high-rise building showing crowds fleeing in panic as fireworks burst in the sky.

Philadelphia police commissioner Danielle Outlaw said both officers had been released from hospital after receiving treatment, and that authorities were still investigating the exact circumstances of the incident.

In Highland Park, Emily Prazak, who marched in the parade, described the mayhem.

"We were getting ready to march down the street and then all the sudden waves of these people started running after, like running towards us. And right before that happened, we heard the pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, and I thought it was fireworks," Prazak told AFP.

She added: "This is the day that we celebrate our country. This is also a day that our freedom got stolen from us - because many of us residents here, in this building even, we're all locked down."

Spectators 'targeted'

Don Johnson, who attended the parade, said he initially thought the gunshots were a car backfiring. "And finally, I heard the screams from a block down and people running and carrying their kids and everything, and we ran into the gas station, and we were in there for three hours," he told AFP.

"I've seen scenes like this over and over again on the TV and in different communities, and didn't think it was going to happen here ever," he said.

Police officials said the shooting began at 10:14am, when the parade was approximately three-quarters of the way through.

"It sounds like spectators were targeted... So, very random, very intentional and very sad," said Lake County Major Crime Task Force spokesman Christopher Covelli.

Five of the six people killed, all adults, died at the scene. The sixth was taken to the hospital

but succumbed to wounds there.

Dr Brigham Temple of Highland Park Hospital, where most of the victims were taken, said it had received 25 people with gunshot wounds aged eight to 85.

"Four or five" children were among them, he said, and that 16 people were later discharged.

Police said the shooter used a 'high-powered rifle', and 'firearm evidence' had been located on the rooftop of a nearby business.

"All indications is he was discreet, he was very difficult to see," said Covelli.

US media reported that Crimo's online postings included violent content that alluded to guns and shootings. His YouTube and other social media accounts were not viewable on Monday night.

One YouTube video posted eight months ago features images of a young man in a bedroom and a classroom along with cartoons of a gunman and people being shot, the *Chicago Tribune* reported.

A voice-over says 'I need to just do it'.

It adds: "It is my destiny. Everything has led up to this. Nothing can stop me, not even myself," the newspaper said.

'I am not going to give up'

In a statement, Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering said the town had been 'devastated' by the shooting.

"A mass shooting such as this casts a much wider net of agony than what the public is typically exposed to; it's a crisis that devastates entire families and communities in a single moment and we know will take time to heal," she said.

President Joe Biden voiced his shock and vowed to keep fighting 'the epidemic of gun violence' sweeping the country.

"I'm not going to give up," he said.

AFP

Hacker 'steals data from millions of Chinese people'

Beijing, China - A hacker claiming to have stolen personal data from hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens is now selling the information online.

A sample of 750,000 entries posted online by the hacker showed citizens' names, mobile phone numbers, national ID numbers, addresses, birthdays and police reports they had filed. AFP and cybersecurity experts have verified some of the citizen data in the sample as authentic, but the scope of the entire database is hard to determine.

Advertised on a forum late last month but only picked up by cybersecurity experts this week, the 23-terabyte database - which the hacker claims contains the records of a billion Chinese citizens - is being sold for 10 bitcoin (approximately US\$200,000).

"It looks like it's from multiple sources. Some are facial recognition systems, others appear to be census data," said Robert Potter, co-founder of cybersecurity firm Internet 2.0. "There is no verification of the total number of records and I'm sceptical of the one billion citizens number," he added. China maintains an extensive nationwide surveillance infrastructure that siphons massive amounts of data from its citizens, ostensibly for security purposes.

Growing public awareness of data privacy has led to stronger data protection laws targeting individuals and private firms in recent years, although there is little citizens can do to stop the state from collecting their data.

Some of the leaked data appeared to be from express delivery user records, while other entries contained summaries of incidents reported to police in Shanghai over a span of more than a decade, with the most recent from 2019.

AFP

Mali welcomes lifting of 'illegal' sanctions

Bamako, Mali - Mali's junta said on Monday it was 'satisfied' by the lifting of 'illegal and inhumane' sanctions imposed by West African states in January after two coups in the country.

The military-dominated government said in a statement it 'notes with satisfaction a convergence of views that has allowed us to reach a compromise' that led to the lifting of the embargo against Mali.

It thanked the Malian people for their 'sacrifice and resilience' in the face of 'illegal, illegitimate and inhumane sanctions' by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Bamako also praised the 'active solidarity' of neighbouring Guinea and Mauritania, whose territories and ports, in Conakry and Nouakchott, made it possible to circumvent the West African embargo. The pair allowed Mali to bypass Dakar and Abidjan where the bulk of products destined for landlocked Mali traditionally transit.

West African leaders on Sunday lifted trade and financial sanctions imposed in January on Mali, which underwent two military coups in August 2020 and May 2021.

The ruling colonels have yielded to ECOWAS demands by recently publishing a new electoral law and a timetable that includes a presidential election in February 2024, during a transition limited to two years. However, sanctions and suspension of Mali from ECOWAS bodies remain in place until constitutional order is restored.

AFP



This file photo shows women and children walk at Camp Roj, where relatives of people suspected of belonging to IS group are held, in Syria's northeastern Hasakah province, on March 28, last year (AFP)

France repatriates 16 women, 35 children from Syria camps

Paris, France - France repatriated 35 children and 16 mothers from camps in Syria holding family members of suspected Islamic State fighters on Tuesday, in the largest such operation by Paris after pressure from campaigners.

"France has today undertaken the return to the country of 35 French minors who were in camps in northeast Syria. This operation also includes the return of 16 mothers from these same camps," a statement from the foreign ministry said.

It added that the minors were handed over to child protection services while the mothers would face judicial proceedings.

Families and campaigners have long sought to draw attention to the plight of around 200 French children in Kurdish-run camps in Syria after they were either brought to IS territory by their parents or born there during the years of fighting.

One of the biggest and most overcrowded camps is Al-Hol, where malnutrition and disease are rife and around two children die every week on average, according to a report by the Save the Children campaign group last September.

Until now, France had refused to repatriate people in large numbers, arguing that its security concerns were paramount after a series of attacks from IS militants, including the November 2015 assaults on Paris that left 130 people dead.

Many of the children are being held alongside their mothers or fathers who pose a potential risk, and France has insisted that French nationals face local justice.

Before Tuesday's operation, France had repatriated 126 children since 2016 under a policy that saw requests analysed on a slow-moving case-by-case basis.

The mass repatriations came after Germany and Belgium announced that they would bring back all of their minors in camps.

"Our country has isolated itself more and more by choosing inhumanity and irresponsibility, unlike Germany, Belgium and many other European countries," the French campaign group Collective for United Families said in a statement on Tuesday.

A UN watchdog also increased the pressure in February when it said that France had violated the rights of children by leaving them for years in inhuman and life-threatening conditions.

Al-Hol is Syria's largest camp for displaced people, housing about 56,000 people including displaced Syrians and Iraqi refugees, some of whom maintain links with the Islamic State group (IS).

AFP

Italy bridge trial: Families' pain still raw

Genoa, Italy - The screams of people trapped under a collapsed bridge in Genoa in 2018 still torment those who witnessed the deadly disaster, for which 59 people go on trial this week.

The Morandi highway in the northwestern Italian city gave way in torrential rain on August 14 four years ago, flinging cars and lorries into the abyss and killing 43 people.

"The sadness is unending," Egle Possetti, who heads a committee for victims' relatives, told AFP. Her sister Claudia died in the disaster, along with her family. "My sister was so happy. She had married Andrea a few days before the tragedy. They had just returned from their honeymoon in the United States," she said.

Claudia's children, aged 16 and 12, and her new husband Andrea were in the car with her as the ground dropped beneath them.

Screams for help

The tragedy shone a spotlight on the state of Italy's transport infrastructure. Autostrade per l'Italia (ASPI), which runs almost half Italy's motorway network, is accused of failing to maintain the bridge.

ASPI belonged at the time to the Atlantia group, which is controlled by the wealthy Benetton family.

The family eventually bowed to pressure to sell its share to the



This playground area under new San Giorgio bridge in Genoa will soon be transformed into a park of memory for victims of the Morandi bridge (AFP)

state for eight billion euros (US\$8.4bn).

The former head of Atlantia, Giovanni Castelluci, is among those standing in the trial which starts on Thursday.

Possetti, 57, said she was not banking on quick justice for those responsible for the disaster.

"In Italy, trials are long and unfortunately often have unfavourable outcomes for the victims," she said.

Children play football in what will soon become a memorial

park to mark the spot where pillar number nine of the old bridge collapsed.

Not far away, a footbridge dedicated to the tragedy spans the Polcevera river, into which some of the vehicles that dropped from the bridge fell and which is now bone dry due to drought.

"The cries from under the rubble of people screaming for help, the flattened cars floating there and the bodies will stay in my memory forever," local authority

head Federico Romeo told AFP.

'Need for justice'

In the Certosa district nearby, many houses display 'For Sale' signs.

"The historic shops have almost all closed' and property prices have plummeted, says Massimiliano Braibanti, who runs the neighbourhood watch scheme. The area, which borders the site of the tragedy, was cut off for over a year due to road closures to allow the bridge to be rebuilt. It has not benefitted from the aid given to those left homeless by the collapse.

"I feel the need for justice, to know who is guilty of the deaths of my brother, nephew, sister-in-law and so many others - and that they will answer for their actions," Giorgio Robbiano, 45, told AFP. Robbiano's brother Roberto had been on his way to their father's house to celebrate his 44th birthday, along with his wife Ersilia and their eight-year-old son Samuele.

"They died because of a bridge that was never maintained, on which people were speculating to save on maintenance costs and make profits," Robbiano said.

His father died last year.

"He never got over the pain. And sadly, he'll never have the opportunity to look the person who killed his son and grandson in the eye."

AFP

Fighting rages in eastern Ukraine

Kremlin forces were pounding next key target, the city of Sloviansk in Donetsk, with ‘massive’ shelling

Sloviansk, Ukraine - Fighting raged on Tuesday in and around Ukraine’s eastern Donbas region as Russian troops tried to build on recent battlefield gains.

With the war well into its fifth month, Kyiv’s allies committed on Tuesday to supporting Ukraine through what is likely to be a lengthy and expensive recovery, agreeing on the need for broad reforms to boost transparency and tackle corruption.

The two days of talks in the Swiss city of Lugano heard that rebuilding the war-ravaged country is estimated to cost at least US\$750bn.

But on the battlefield the conflict continued to wreak devastation, with the Ukrainian president’s office reporting Russian shelling and missile strikes in several regions overnight.

Kremlin forces were pounding their next key target, the city of Sloviansk in Donetsk, with ‘massive’ shelling, the city’s mayor said on Tuesday.

At least two people were killed and seven others wounded in strikes that targeted the city’s central market, authorities said.

Donetsk is the southwestern half of the Donbas which, unlike the northeastern half - Lugansk -, has not been almost entirely



A woman holding a dog stands by a huge crater made from the hit of a rocket close to the destroyed school building in Kharkiv, on Monday (AFP)

captured by Russia.

Russian bombardments have killed at least six people and injured another 19 since Sunday in Sloviansk, which had a pre-war population of around 100,000.

In Moscow, the defence ministry reported that Russian forces had targeted the city of Kharkiv with ‘high-precision’ weapons over the past 24 hours, killing up to 150 Ukrainian servicemen.

Russia also said it was investigating the torture of Russian soldiers held prisoner in Ukraine that were recently released as part of a prisoner swap.

After abandoning its initial

war aim of capturing Kyiv following tough Ukrainian resistance, Russia has since focused its efforts on securing control of the Donbas.

Ukraine said its forces were

still defending ‘a small part’ of Lugansk province, despite Moscow saying its troops were now in full control there after capturing the strategic city of Lysychansk, near the border with Donetsk. The fall of Lysychansk on Sunday, a week after the Ukrainian army also retreated from the neighbouring city of Severodonetsk, frees up Russian forces to advance on Kramatorsk and Sloviansk in Donetsk.

“Fighting continues on the administrative borders of the region,” the Ukrainian president’s office said on Tuesday.

In a sign Moscow was trying to consolidate supply lines for its ongoing push, Ukraine’s armed forces said Russian troops in Lugansk were ‘taking measures’ to restore transport infrastructure behind the fighting lines.

Call for weapons

Russian forces heading west were also closing in on the small city of Siversk - which lies between Lysychansk and Sloviansk - after days of shelling there.

Two Ukrainian Red Cross minibuses were heading there to evacuate willing civilians, according to AFP reporters on the ground.

To the southwest, in the

Moscow-occupied Kherson region, Russia’s troops were deploying helicopters and various artillery to try to stem Ukrainian counter-attacks.

“Ukrainian aviation and missile and artillery units continue to strike enemy depots and invaders’ concentrations, in particular in the Kherson region,” Ukraine’s armed forces said.

The intensifying battles in southern Ukraine come as Kremlin-installed authorities in Kherson announced that an official from Russia’s powerful FSB security services had taken over control of the regional government there.

Kherson city, which lies close to Moscow-annexed Crimea, was the first major city to fall to Russian forces in February.

Moscow has since launched a campaign of so-called Russification, trying to introduce the ruble, giving out Russian passports and opening a first Russian bank at the end of June.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has been reiterating calls for more weapons from the West so Kyiv can keep up the resistance and its counter-offensives to regain lost territories.

AFP



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg gives a press conference at the NATO headquarters in Brussels on Tuesday (AFP)

NATO launches membership process for Sweden, Finland

Brussels, Belgium - NATO on Tuesday kicked off momentous accession procedures for Sweden and Finland, aiming to expand the military alliance to 32 countries in reaction to Russia’s war in Ukraine.

“This is an historic day, for Finland, for Sweden, for NATO, and for Euro-Atlantic security,” NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said after protocols were signed launching the required ratification process in all alliance countries.

The foreign ministers of Sweden and Finland, alongside Stoltenberg, also qualified the occasion as ‘historic’. “The membership of both Finland and Sweden will not only contribute to our own security, but to the collective security of the alliance,” said Finland’s Pekka Haavisto.

The two countries had long maintained non-alignment status, even though they have held exercises with NATO and have inter-operable weapons systems. They announced intentions to join NATO in May, triggered by Russia’s February invasion of Ukraine and ongoing war there.

In a sudden change of course, Sweden and Finland - the latter of which fought a Soviet invasion in 1939-1940 and shares a 1,340km border with Russia - asked to come under NATO’s mutual-defence umbrella.

Their bids hit a road-bump when Turkey, a NATO member, threatened to block their entry.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had accused Sweden and Finland of being havens for Kurdish militants he has sought to crush, and for promoting ‘terrorism’. He also demanded they lift arms embargoes imposed for Turkey’s 2019 military incursion into Syria.

But Erdogan dropped his objections last week, in time for a NATO summit in Spain, after negotiations resulted in concessions - and a US promise of new warplanes for Turkey.

The summit ended up extending invitations to Sweden and Finland to formally apply, leading to lightning-fast negotiations on Monday then Tuesday’s signing.

Erdogan says he could still slam the door shut if Sweden and Finland don’t follow through on their promises, which include possible extradition agreements.

The months-long period during which all NATO countries have to ratify the Nordic countries’ membership is a risky moment, not only because of Turkey’s threat but also because the NATO mutual-defence clause is not yet applicable.

Stoltenberg said: “I count on allies to deliver a quick and swift and smooth ratification process.”

He emphasised that ‘many allies have already made clear commitments to Finland and Sweden’s security’ during the interim period, and pointed out a boosted NATO presence in their region.

AFP

Rescuers gather body parts after deadly glacier collapse in Italy

Canazei, Italy - Emergency services at the scene of a deadly avalanche in the Italian Dolomites recovered what body parts they could on Tuesday, with the dangers of venturing under the partially collapsed glacier slowing the search.

Rescue teams sent helicopters and drones up for a second day after Sunday’s disaster, which saw at least seven hikers killed when a section of the country’s largest Alpine glacier gave way, sending ice and rock hurtling down the mountain.

Italy has blamed the collapse on climate change and fears more of the glacier could come crashing down have prevented access to much of the area where hikers, some roped together, are believed to be buried. Authorities have declared 14 missing but stressed the exact number of climbers at the scene when the avalanche hit was unknown.

“Operations on the ground will only be carried out to recover any remains discovered by the drones, to ensure rescuers’ safety,” the Trentino Alpine Rescue Service said on Tuesday.

Experts were surveying the



A helicopter carries tubes with remote sensors to monitorate the Marmolada glacier, on Tuesday (AFP)

area to determine how best to enable teams with sniffer dogs to get out onto the site safely on Wednesday or Thursday, said the Service’s national chief Maurizio Dellantonio.

Operations on the ground will only be carried out to recover any remains discovered by the drones to ensure rescuers’ safety

RESCUE SERVICE

Relatives of people reported missing gathered at the town of Canazei, where recovered remains were placed in a makeshift morgue at a gymnasium.

“The important finds, not just bones, are first photographed, then recovered and put onto a helicopter’ and flown to Canazei to be ‘catalogued and placed in cold storage’, Dellantonio said.

Such finds were ‘bones that have not been flayed, a piece of hand with a ring, tattoos, anything that can enable a person to be identified’, including shoes and backpacks. The disaster struck one day after a record 10 degrees Celsius was recorded at the summit of Marmolada.

AFP

French man gets life for killing student

Strasbourg, France - A French court on Tuesday sentenced a convicted rapist to life in prison for the murder of a student who he claimed until the end to have killed accidentally.

Sophie Le Tan vanished on her 20th birthday after failing to return from what was supposed to be a visit to a rented apartment outside the eastern city of Strasbourg on September 8, 2018.

She was described by those close to her as a serious and likeable young woman.

Her dismembered body was found by hikers in a forest in October 2019.

Jean-Marc Reiser, now 61, was arrested a week after she disappeared and was tracked down by police through phone records.

A search of his flat uncovered large bloodstains that had been carefully cleaned up, as well as Le Tan’s DNA on a saw in the cellar, according to court documents.

AFP

Israel PM talks on Iran, Lebanon with French president

Paris, France - Iran and its influence in the Middle East were high on the agenda of Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid on Tuesday in talks with French President Emmanuel Macron during his first trip abroad after assuming the office.

Lapid was also expected to ask for backing in a gas dispute with Lebanon that days ago saw Israel shoot down three drones launched by Hezbollah, which it says is largely Iran-financed.

Lapid took over the premiership on Friday following the collapse of Israel’s coalition government, which will see the country return to the polls in November for its fifth election in less than four years.

The new Israeli leader was confronted with his first test a



Israel’s PM Yair Lapid (left) and French President Emmanuel Macron make a statement after their meeting at the Elysee palace in Paris on Tuesday (AFP)

day later, when Lebanon’s Hezbollah movement launched three drones towards an offshore gas field in the eastern Mediterranean.

“Israel will not sit back given

‘trying to attack us with Iranian rockets’.

Lebanon rejects Israel’s claim that the Karish gas field lies within its territorial waters.

Israel and Lebanon resumed negotiations on their maritime border in 2020, though the Karish site sits outside of the disputed area and is marked as Israeli on previous United Nations maps.

The US-backed talks have been stalled by Beirut’s demand that the UN maps must be modified.

“We will ask France to intervene to secure the negotiations that we want to lead until the end of the gas issues,” an Israeli official told journalists travelling with the premier before his arrival in Paris.

Macron, at the news briefing, said both sides should ‘avoid any action’ that could worsen relations between Israel and Lebanon.

Lapid reiterated Israel’s firm stance against international efforts to revive a nuclear accord with Tehran.

Acknowledging that France disagrees with that view, he said what was beyond dispute was that ‘Iran is violating the agreement and continues to develop its nuclear programme’.

Israeli officials fear that giving Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme could allow Tehran to boost funding to Hezbollah, as well as the Palestinian fighter group Hamas.

AFP



TYPING ART PIECES



FOR JAMES COOK, A 25-YEAR-OLD ARTIST FROM THE UK, THE KEY TO GOOD ART IS A TYPEWRITER AS HE CREATES MASTERPIECES IN HIS STUDIO IN LONDON

CLICKETY CLACK

James Cook sits calmly at his desk, with the only sound the clickety clack of his typewriter. As he works, a portrait of a boy takes shape. From Hollywood star Tom Hanks to the London Eye observation wheel, the artist can turn symbols and letters into art, earning him increasing attention. Cook (25) produces his work in a studio in London, surrounded by typewriters and artwork, with the white dome of the O2 arena visible outside. He began producing typewriter art in 2014 when he was in college studying art and came across an artist from the 1920s who produced similar work. Initially, he thought the idea was 'impossible' - until he tried it himself. "It was simply out of curiosity that I decided to go out and get my own typewriter," he told AFP. "Since 2014, I've just been slowly learning how to make drawings." Cook first thought depicting buildings would be easier because of the straight lines and the ease of moving from left to right on a typewriter. "I couldn't draw people's faces before



doing typewriter art," he said. "In fact, I probably draw people better on a typewriter than I can draw free hand in pen or pencil." Cook never set out to make it a career and went to university to study architecture but interest online encouraged him to pursue typewriter art. People donate typewriters to Cook as he gives the machines a 'second life'. 'Always a challenge' Cook can produce art anywhere, including in the shadow of the London Eye or across the river from the UK parliament,

the Palace of Westminster. As the sun shines bright in a clear blue sky, he delicately produces his images using the '@' symbol, numbers and letters including 'W' and 'P'. For a portrait, he uses the bracket symbol to recreate the curvature of the eyes' pupils or to illustrate the skin's complexion he will use the '@' symbol because 'it has a large surface area'. Methodically typing outside, he soon grabs attention. "Before the invention of Microsoft Word and the rest of it, this is what we used to type letters with," said David

Asante, who works as an IT engineer at a hospital. "For him to be able to turn it into a work of art, it's amazing." Cook says it was 'really satisfying' to use a 'limited' medium. Smaller drawings can take up to four to five days but portraits can take longer. Panoramic drawings - pieced together at the end - can take between two weeks to a month. He will host an exhibition from July until August where people can make their own typewriter art, and see his work including the signed portrait of Hanks.

It's amazing. Really satisfying to use a 'limited' medium.
JAMES COOK

He also hopes to set a Guinness World Record for the largest typewriter drawing. But while it appears seamless to the viewer, Cook says it 'never gets any easier'. "It's always a challenge." AFP



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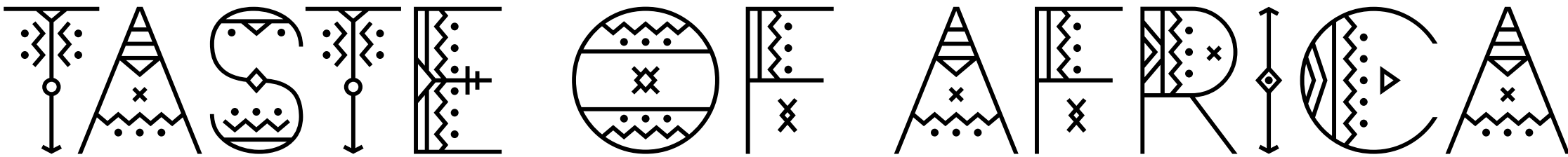
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BOLD AND FLAVOURFUL



With few ingredients yet a flavourful impact, African cuisine comes with a variety of influences in dishes that vary from bold to simple



African Chicken

Ingredients

1kg bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs or legs

Spice mix

½tbsp curry powder
½tbsp paprika powder
1tsp salt

Curry

2tbsp olive oil
1 onion - sliced
1tbsp minced ginger
3 cloves garlic - minced
1tbsp paprika powder
2tbsp curry powder
1 cup chicken stock
1 cup coconut milk

¼ cup unsalted peanut butter
¼ cup oyster sauce
2 bay leaves
400g russet potato - peeled and chopped
2 bell peppers - chopped
Chopped parsley - for garnish

Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Combine all the ingredients of the spice mix. Sprinkle on both sides of the chicken. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add 1tbsp olive oil, and chicken, skin side down. Cook until both sides turn dark brown and crispy, two to three minutes per side. Transfer chicken onto a big plate.

Turn to medium heat. Add 1tbsp olive oil, followed by onion. Cook until it becomes tender, about five minutes. Add ginger and garlic. Stir fry for 30 seconds. Add paprika powder and curry powder. Stir until the ingredients are well coated with spices, 20 to 30 seconds.

Add chicken stock, coconut milk, peanut butter, oyster sauce, and bay leaves. Stir with a spatula to dissolve the peanut butter until it's well blended with the sauce. Bring to the boil.

Add potato, peppers, and chicken to the curry. Transfer the pan to the oven. Bake until the chicken is cooked through and the skin crispy, about 45 minutes. Serve hot over steamed rice.



Shakshuka

Ingredients

1tbsp olive oil, ½ onion - diced
1 clove garlic - minced
1 red bell pepper - seeded and chopped, 4 cups diced tomatoes, 2tbsp tomato paste
1tsp mild chilli powder
1tsp ground cumin, 1tsp paprika, A pinch of cayenne pepper, A pinch of sugar
Kosher salt and pepper, to taste
6 large eggs
½tbsp freshly chopped parsley – for garnish

Method

Heat a deep, large skillet or saute pan on medium. Slowly warm olive oil in the pan. Add chopped onion, saute for a few

minutes until the onion begins to soften. Add garlic and continue to saute till mixture is fragrant. Add the diced bell pepper, sauté for 5-7 minutes over medium until softened.

Add tomatoes and tomato paste to pan, stir until blended. Add spices and sugar, stir, and allow mixture to simmer over medium heat for 5-7 minutes until it starts to reduce.

At this point, you can taste the mixture and add more spice, if required. Add salt and pepper to taste, more sugar for a sweeter sauce, or more cayenne pepper for a spicier shakshuka.

Crack the eggs, one at a time, directly over the tomato mix-

ture, making sure to space them evenly over the sauce. The eggs will cook 'over easy' style on top of the tomato sauce.

Cover the pan with a lid. Allow mixture to simmer for 10-15 minutes, or until the eggs are cooked and the sauce has slightly reduced. Keep an eye on the skillet to make sure that the sauce doesn't reduce too much, which can lead to burning.

Some people prefer their shakshuka with more runny yolks. If this is your preference, let the sauce reduce for a few minutes before placing the eggs on top. Garnish with chopped parsley and a sprinkle of feta cheese.

Mango Cucumber Salad

Ingredients

1 cucumber - thinly sliced
½ red onion - finely chopped
½tsp salt
1 garlic clove - minced
1tsp peanut oil
2 cups chopped seeded tomato
1 red or green jalapeno - seeded and minced
¼tsp cumin
A dash of cinnamon
2 mangoes - pitted and diced
3tbsp chopped, unsalted roasted peanuts
1tbsp chopped cilantro
3tbsp fresh lime juice

Method

Toss together the cucumber, onion, salt, and garlic in a colander. Let it stand for 20 minutes to drain. Meanwhile, toss together peanut oil, tomato, jalapeno, cumin, cinnamon, and mango in a large bowl. Add the cucumber mixture to the bowl and toss to combine. Garnish with peanuts, cilantro, and lime juice.



Vegetable Tagine

Ingredients

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil, more for later
2 medium yellow onions - peeled and chopped
8-10 garlic cloves - peeled and chopped
2 large carrots - peeled and chopped
2 large russet potatoes - peeled and cubed
1 large sweet potato - peeled and cubed
Salt, to taste, 1tbsp harissa spice blend
1tsp ground coriander, 1tsp ground cinnamon
½tsp ground turmeric, 1 can whole peeled tomatoes, ½ cup chopped dried apricot
1 quart vegetable broth, 2 cups cooked chickpeas
Juice of 1 lemon, 3tbsp fresh parsley leaves

Method

In a large heavy pot or Dutch Oven, heat olive oil over medium heat until just shimmering. Add onions and increase heat to medium-high. Sauté for 5 minutes, tossing regularly. Add garlic and all the chopped veggies. Season with salt and spices. Toss to combine. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes on medium-high heat, mixing regularly with a wooden spoon.

Add tomatoes, apricot and broth. Season again with just a small dash of salt.

Keep the heat on medium-high, and cook for 10 minutes. Then reduce heat, cover and simmer for another 20 to 25 minutes or until veggies are tender. Stir in chickpeas and cook another 5 minutes on low heat. Stir in lemon juice and fresh parsley. Add more salt or harissa spice blend to your liking. Transfer to serving bowls and top each with a generous drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Serve hot with your favourite bread, couscous, or rice.

TONS OF FUN!

Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow star with unbeaten centuries as England level India series after record chase in the fifth Test at Edgbaston



It is celebration time for Jonny Bairstow (L) and Joe Root as England defeated India in the fifth Test at Edgbaston, Birmingham, on Tuesday (AFP)

Birmingham, United Kingdom - Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow both hit hundreds as England continued their resurgence with a record fourth-innings chase to beat India by seven wickets in the Covid-delayed fifth Test at Edgbaston on Tuesday.

Set 378 to win, England finished on 378-3, with former captain Root 142 not out and Bairstow 114 not out - his second hundred of the match after he made 106 in the hosts' first-innings 284.

Victory saw England level this five-match series at 2-2.

No England side had previ-

ously made more to win in the fourth innings of a Test than 359, when now captain Ben Stokes' brilliant century led them to a thrilling victory over Australia at Headingley three years ago.

But that record was overhauled with ease after England's first series under a new leadership duo of Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum had seen them chase down seemingly stiff targets of 277, 299 and 296 during a 3-0 whitewash of Test world champions New Zealand.

"It's great fun at the moment," player of the match Bairstow told Sky Sports. "The last month has

It's great fun at the moment. The last month has been a fantastic month of Test cricket for all the lads

JONNY BAIRSTOW

been a fantastic month of Test cricket for all the lads."

Root was named England's player of the series - which started under his captaincy in 2021 - after amassing a mam-

moth 737 runs, including four hundreds, at superlative average of over 105.

But he preferred to pay tribute to Bairstow, whom he has known since their school-days.

"He's striking the ball so clean, he looks very calm and in control out there," Root said.

"It's great fun and it's great to see someone I've known from being 12 years old, start to realise his true potential in this format of the game."

England have now won all four Tests since Stokes succeeded Root as captain, with the all-rounder saying: "378 five-six

weeks ago would have been scary, but it was good."

India stand-in captain Jasprit Bumrah, leading the side in place of the Covid-hit Rohit Sharma, was the tourists' player of the series with 23 wickets at 22.47 - a record for an Indian bowler during a Test campaign in England.

"Test cricket is never easy," said the fast bowler. "We had three good days and we were a little short with the bat and we let the opposition in."

England had resumed on 259-3, needing just 119 more runs to win.

AFP



Shreyas Iyer was tested with a barrage of short balls

India slammed as 'timid' after loss

New Delhi, India - Cricketers and pundits slammed India's batting in the second innings as England batsmen Jonny Bairstow and Joe Root hit hundreds to thrash the tourists in the fifth Test on Tuesday.

India fell to 245 all out to hand England a record victory target of 378, which the hosts achieved with two sessions and seven wickets to spare on the fifth day and end the Covid-delayed five-match series at 2-2.

The in-form Bairstow (114) and Root (142) put on an unbeaten stand of 269 for the fourth wicket to pull out a sensational victory.

"Special win by England to level the series. Joe Root & Jonny Bairstow have been in sublime form and made batting look very easy," batting great Sachin Tendulkar wrote on Twitter.

"Congratulations to England on a convincing victory."

Veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle hit out at India.

"The 8th largest run-chase in history has been a stroll in the park. Bat hasn't

faced a challenge from the ball for the last 200 runs," he tweeted.

England resumed the day on 259 for three and romped home in the first session of the final day with both Root and Bairstow having it easy against the Indian bowlers.

Former India fast bowler Irfan Pathan tweeted: "This victory of team England should hurt Team India. That was too easy."

But it was India's second innings that faced criticism after they had posted 416 in the first innings.

Apart from Cheteshwar Pujara (66) and Rishabh Pant (57) none of the batsmen survived the English test with skipper Ben Stokes taking four wickets.

Former coach Ravi Shastri hit out at the batsmen for their defensive approach.

"They needed to bat two sessions and I thought they were defensive, they were timid today, especially after lunch," Shastri, who was coach when India led the series 2-1 last year, said after Monday's day four.

AFP

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Police probe racism claims after fan abuse at England-India Test

Birmingham, United Kingdom - Police have launched an investigation after India fans claimed they were racially abused during England's fifth Test victory in Birmingham.

The Bharat Army, the official India supporters' club, said "many" of its members at the Edgbaston ground had been targeted by "a very small minority" in Monday's fourth day of play.

A post on the group's Twitter account read: "Sad to say many of our members experienced racist abuse from a very small minority of individuals. We will work with @Edgbaston to share all your feedback."

"Thank you to those England fans who stood by us."

West Midlands Police on Tuesday said they were liaising with officials at Edgbaston to understand what happened.

Inquiries are being made to



Fans watch anxiously as England's Zak Crawley takes a catch to dismiss India's Jasprit Bumrah in the fifth Test at Edgbaston on Monday (AFP)

identify an alleged offender whose image was circulated on social media.

The England and Wales

Cricket Board said: "We are very concerned to hear reports of racist abuse at today's Test match. We are in contact with

colleagues at Edgbaston, who will investigate. There is no place for racism in cricket."

Stuart Cain, chief executive at Edgbaston, added: "I'm gutted by these reports as we're working hard to make Edgbaston a safe, welcoming environment for all."

"Having seen the initial tweets, I've spoken personally to the gentleman who raised them and we're now speaking to the stewards in this area to establish what happened."

"Nobody should be subject to any form of abuse at Edgbaston. So, once we've got all the facts, we will make sure this issue is addressed swiftly."

Former Yorkshire spinner Azeem Rafiq retweeted a thread detailing some of the alleged incidents along with the comment: "Disappointing to read."

AFP

Sri Lanka call on uncapped duo, Mathews cleared to play

Galle, Sri Lanka - Uncapped spinners Maheesh Theekshana and Dinuth Wellalage were on Tuesday drafted into Sri Lanka's Covid-hit squad for the second Test against Australia.

Left-arm spinner Praveen Jayawickrama tested positive for coronavirus after former captain Angelo Mathews had to pull out

on the third day of the opening Test with Covid.

Mathews has recovered from the virus and was cleared to play the second Test starting Friday, Sri Lanka Cricket said Tuesday.

"Medical clearance has been given for the player to engage in the game. Accordingly, Mathews will rejoin the team, starting

today," a statement read.

The hosts trail 1-0 in the two-match series after going down to Australia by 10 wickets inside three days last week in Galle.

Theekshana and 19-year-old Wellalage are still to make their Test debuts but played key roles in Sri Lanka's 3-2 one-day international series triumph over Aus-

tralia last month. Left-arm spinner Wellalage was the leading wicket-taker in the series with nine dismissals, one ahead of Australia's Pat Cummins.

Uncapped all-rounder Lakshitha Manasinghe is also in the squad for the match at the same Galle venue.

AFP



Divock Origi (L) with AC Milan technical director Paolo Maldini

Origi joins Italian champions Milan after Liverpool exit

Milan, Italy -Divock Origi has signed for AC Milan after being let go by Liverpool at the end of last season, the Serie A champions confirmed on Tuesday.

In a statement Milan said the 27-year-old Belgian international has “signed a contract with the club until 30 June 2026” worth a reported four million euros (\$4.23 million dollars) a season.

Origi arrives at the Serie A team after not having played enough matches to trigger an extension to his contract with Liverpool.

He was largely a bit-part

player at the Reds but scored vital goals over his eight years on Merseyside which made him a favourite of fans and manager Jurgen Klopp. Those strikes include two in an astonishing comeback against Barcelona in the Champions League semi-finals in 2019, and the second is that year’s final as Liverpool lifted their sixth European Cup against Tottenham.

Origi made 176 appearances for Liverpool after arriving in 2014, scoring 41 times.

AFP

Man City promote Borrell as Guardiola’s assistant manager

London, United Kingdom - Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has promoted Rodolfo Borrell to work as his assistant manager after the departure of Juanma Lillo.

Borrell has been at City since 2014 after spells with Barcelona and Liverpool.

The 51-year-old Spaniard joined Guardiola’s coaching staff following his compatriot’s arrival at the Etihad Stadium in 2016.

Guardiola’s previous assistant Lillo left the Premier League champions last month to take charge of Qatar Stars League



Rodolfo Borrell

club Al Sadd.

City also revealed Enzo Maresca has rejoined the club’s backroom team.

AFP

IN THE HOT SEAT

PSG name ‘proud’ Galtier as new coach after sacking Pochettino

Paris, France - Christophe Galtier said he was ready to impose himself on Paris Saint-Germain’s dressing room of superstars after being appointed as the club’s new coach on Tuesday to replace the sacked Mauricio Pochettino.

Galtier, who left PSG’s Ligue 1 rivals Nice last month, has signed a two-year deal at the Parc des Princes with the French champions confirming the appointment shortly after announcing Pochettino’s departure.

“Yes, I am emotional, yes I am proud,” Galtier said at a press conference in the French capital.

“I realise full well the responsibility that has been given to me but I have prepared for this. I wouldn’t have accepted this job if I didn’t think I was capable of it.”

Galtier may not be as well-known internationally as some of the other names who had been linked with the PSG job - most notably Zinedine Zidane - but he has an outstanding reputation in France where he won the Ligue 1 title with Lille last year.

He insisted he was not afraid of making his mark on a PSG dressing room full of star names even beyond Kylian Mbappe, Lionel Messi and Neymar.

“It is a privilege to have a dressing room full of world-class players,” he said.

“You have to talk with them but also impose yourself. There can be no compromises.

“We must have a common project but there will not be a revolution. I am going to observe and listen, and I know I will have the backing of the management if there is a player who doesn’t fall in line with the project of the club.”

The club had earlier issued a short statement confirming what



PSG’s new coach Christophe Galtier (L) and club president Nasser Al Khelaifi arrive for a press conference at Parc des Princes stadium on Tuesday (AFP)

We never spoke to Zidane. I love him as a player and as a coach but for all the respect I have for him we never spoke with him. Christophe Galtier was always the first choice for us

NASSER AL KHELAIFI

had been widely-touted for weeks - the departure of Pochettino with a year remaining on his contract.

“Paris Saint-Germain confirm that Mauricio Pochettino has

ended his role at the club,” said a club statement as the former Tottenham Hotspur coach left the Parc des Princes after 18 months in charge.

Pochettino and his backroom

staff depart having won the Ligue 1 title last season but the campaign was better remembered for a disappointing exit from the Champions League in the last 16 at the hands of Real Madrid.

“The club would like to thank Mauricio Pochettino and his staff for their work and wish them the best for the future,” added PSG’s statement.

PSG’s move for Galtier had been an open secret for several weeks and club president Nasser al Khelaifi dismissed any suggestions he had initially wanted to

appoint Zinedine Zidane.

“We never spoke to Zidane. I love him as a player and as a coach but for all the respect I have for him we never spoke with him,” Al Khelaifi said.

“Christophe Galtier was always the first choice for us. He is here and I hope that is the last question on the matter.”

Galtier is PSG’s seventh coach since the Qatari takeover of the club in 2011 and will be hoping to become the first to deliver success in the Champions League.

AFP

Ronaldo’s power play puts pressure on Ten Hag

London, United Kingdom - Cristiano Ronaldo’s shock demand to leave Manchester United has thrown Erik ten Hag’s plans into disarray as he scrambles to contain the fall-out from the Portugal star’s power play.

Just one year after returning to United in a blockbuster move from Juventus, Ronaldo has already grown so disenchanted that he is trying to force his way out of Old Trafford.

The 37-year-old is reported to have told United he wants to be sold, with his agent Jorge Mendes said to have held talks with Bayern Munich, Chelsea and Napoli as he seeks a club capable of satisfying Ronaldo’s ambitions.

Ronaldo’s frustration mounted throughout a turbulent campaign that saw United go through three managers as they finished a disappointing sixth in the Premier League.

Although Ronaldo was United’s top scorer with 24 goals in all competitions, his side ended the season trophyless and failed to qualify for the Champions League.



Cristiano Ronaldo

The prospect of playing in the Europa League is hardly appealing to a five-time Ballon d’Or winner who has lifted the Champions League trophy five times.

Ronaldo has one year remaining on his contract and United insist the former Real Madrid forward is not for sale.

Ten Hag had expressed excitement at the prospect of work-

ing Ronaldo, but might have to plan a future without his most decorated player.

If Ten Hag had hoped to persuade Ronaldo to drop his transfer demand, the former Ajax boss won’t have been encouraged by the star’s absence when the rest of United’s internationals arrived for the start of their pre-season training programme on Monday.

United are due to fly to Thailand on Friday for their tour of Asia and Australia.

If Ronaldo misses the trip, it would seem almost certain his second spell at United is destined for an abrupt end.

Gloomy presence

Chelsea’s new co-owner Todd Boehly is believed to be intrigued

by the idea of starting a new era at Stamford Bridge with the marquee signing of Ronaldo.

It remains to be seen whether Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel would be quite so amenable to the move after Ronaldo’s checkered first season back in Manchester.

While Ronaldo’s quality as a finisher remains unmatched, he rarely showed signs of wanting to engage with the high-tempo pressing game that interim boss Ralf Rangnick hoped to deploy.

Ronaldo’s lack of mobility and dubious work ethic reportedly convinced Rangnick to tell United football director John Murtough to sell him during the January transfer window.

That request was not granted and Ronaldo remained a gloomy presence around the club for the rest of the season.

He publicly clashed with Rangnick after being substituted during a match at Brentford, while there were reports of issues between the star and United captain Harry Maguire.

AFP

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WIMBLEDON ROUND-UP

NO WALK IN THE PARK

Novak Djokovic battles from two sets down to beat Jannik Sinner and reach 11th Wimbledon semi-final

London, United Kingdom - London, United Kingdom - Defending champion Novak Djokovic battled back from two sets to love down to defeat Jannik Sinner and reach his 11th Wimbledon semi-final on Tuesday.

Djokovic triumphed 5-7, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 and will face either Britain's Cameron Norrie or David Goffin of Belgium for a place in Sunday's final.

It was the seventh time in the Serb's career that he had recovered from two sets to love at the Slams.

"Huge congrats to Jannik for a big fight, he's so mature for his age, he has plenty of time ahead of him," said Djokovic.

"The first two sets compared to the next three were like two different matches. He was the better player for those first two sets.

"But at the end of the second set I took a toilet break, gave myself a little pep talk, tried to gather my thoughts.

"I broke early in the third set. I saw a little bit of doubt start to come into his movement. I have many years' experience of playing on these courts and coping with the pressure."

Djokovic is bidding to go level

with Pete Sampras as a seven-time Wimbledon champion and stand just one off Roger Federer's men's record of eight.

He appeared set for a routine afternoon when he swept into a 4-1 lead in the opener and had a break point for 5-1 against the 20-year-old Italian.

Sinner, the 10th seed, saved it and rallied to move 6-5 ahead,

cently as last year's French Open.

The second of those stunning recoveries came in the final against Stefanos Tsitsipas.

A break in the fourth game of the third set enabled Djokovic to cut his quarter-final deficit.

In control, the 35-year-old levelled the tie with a double break in the fourth set as Sinner took a worrying tumble on his ankle

The first two sets compared to the next three were like two different matches. Jannik was the better player for those first two sets. But at the end of the second set I gave myself a little pep talk

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

carving out an opportunity to serve for the set.

Djokovic saved a set point but a netted service return gave the Italian the set.

Sinner, relentlessly unleashing winners from all corners of the court, stunned the top seed again with breaks in the third and seventh games on his way to a two-set lead. However, Djokovic is no stranger to Grand Slam adversity, having twice come back from two sets to love down as re-

scrambling to the Centre Court net. Djokovic carved out two more breaks in the decider, the second off the back of a stunning, cross-court backhand on the stretch to go to 5-2 before calmly serving it out.

Earlier, Germany's Tatjana Maria came from behind to beat compatriot Jule Niemeier 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 to reach her first Grand Slam semi-final.

AFP



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates after beating Italy's Jannik Sinner in the Wimbledon quarter-finals on Tuesday (AFP)

Nadal shrugs off concerns over his fitness

London, United Kingdom - Rafael Nadal has shrugged off fresh concerns over his fitness as he targets a place in the Wimbledon semi-finals on Wednesday.

The 36-year-old Spaniard played his last-16 clash at the All England Club on Monday against Botić van de Zandschulp with strapping across his abdomen.

Only last month, he won a 14th French Open with his troublesome left foot anaesthetised before undergoing career-saving treatment.

Nadal refused to discuss whether or not his latest physical concern is a worry.

"I'm a little bit tired to talk about my body, all the issues that I am having. I prefer to not talk about that now," said Nadal.

"All respect for the rest of the opponents. For the moment I am healthy enough to keep going and fight for the things that I want."

Nadal is halfway to the first calendar Grand Slam by a man since Rod Laver in 1969.

After needing four sets in each of the first two rounds to progress, Nadal has since looked impressive, sweeping past Lorenzo Sonego and Van de Zandschulp to make the quarter-finals for an eighth time.

On Wednesday, he will seek to reach the semi-finals, also for the eighth time, when he faces in-form Taylor Fritz.



Spain's Rafael Nadal slips on the court during the match against Netherlands' Botić van de Zandschulp (AFP)

I'm a little bit tired to talk about my body, all the issues that I am having

RAFAEL NADAL

The American is in the last-eight of a Slam for the first time and has yet to drop a set. The 24-year-old defeated Nadal in the Indian Wells Masters final earlier this year when the Spaniard was

suffering from a cracked rib.

'Play freer'

That defeat ended his 20-match win streak and forced him to take a six-week rest before the clay court season.

Fritz, whose mother played Wimbledon in 1977, said facing Nadal meant all-out attack.

"I don't really second-guess shots like I would if I'm playing someone that I'm supposed to beat," he said.

"I might think like, Should I go for this, should I play it safe? Against someone like Rafa, it's

easy to always make the aggressive decision and play freer."

Waiting in the semi-final will be either controversial Australian Nick Kyrgios or Chile's Cristian Garin.

Despite the presence of Nadal and six-time champion Novak Djokovic in the draw, Kyrgios has arguably been the headline act.

He is back in the Wimbledon quarter-finals for the first time since 2014 when he made a mockery of his 144 world ranking to stun Nadal.

The 27-year-old has made the quarter-finals having played two

five-sets, thrilled and confounded spectators while picking up \$14,000 in fines.

He has also showcased some breathtaking shot-making, taking his aces count past the 100 mark and hitting a total of 257 winners over four rounds.

'Upset people'

"I sit here now in the quarter-finals of Wimbledon again, and I just know there's so many people that are so upset," Kyrgios said.

Garin, ranked 43, saved two match points to beat Australia's Alex de Minaur in a gruelling last-16 tie which lasted four hours and 34 minutes.

In the women's quarter-finals, 2019 champion Simona Halep tackles Amanda Anisimova of the United States.

Halep, working with Serena Williams's former coach Patrick Mouratoglou, lost just three games to defeat fourth-seeded Paula Badosa in the last round.

The Romanian missed the 2021 championships due to injury but she is looking in ominous form at the All England Club, making the quarter-finals for a fifth time.

Anisimova is back in the last-eight of a Slam for the first time since making the French Open semi-finals in 2019 after beating Halep in the quarter-finals.

AFP



Australia's Nick Kyrgios celebrates after beating Brandon Nakashima of the US in the round of 16 on Monday (AFP)

Kyrgios faces court over assault allegation: Australian paper

Sydney, Australia - Australian tennis ace Nick Kyrgios will appear in court over an allegation of assault, his barrister told the Canberra Times newspaper Tuesday.

The news broke as the 27-year-old, one of the most polarising figures in tennis, prepared to play in the Wimbledon quarter-finals on Wednesday.

Police in the Australian Capital Territory, where Canberra is located, released a statement without identifying the player.

"ACT Policing can confirm

a 27-year-old Watson man is scheduled to face the ACT Magistrates Court on the 2nd of August in relation to one charge of common assault following an incident in December 2021," the statement said.

Barrister Jason Moffett told the Canberra Times that his client was aware of the allegation.

"It's in the context of a domestic relationship," he was quoted as saying. "The nature of the allegation is serious, and Mr Kyrgios takes the allegation very seriously."

AFP

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