

AFR Cryptic (Saturday 16/5/2026) Solution

¹ R	U	² I	N	³ O	U	⁴ S		⁵ D	E	⁶ F	I	⁷ A	N	⁸ T
I		M		N		T		O		R		I		R
⁹ P	U	P	I	L		¹⁰ A	E	G	E	A	N	S	E	A
O		A		E		N		S		N		L		I
¹¹ F	O	R	W	A	R	D	S		¹² A	T	H	E	E	L
F		T		V		S		¹³ B		I				E
	¹⁴ D	I	R	E	C	T	O	R	S	C	H	¹⁵ A	I	R
¹⁶ S		A				I		I				B		S
¹⁷ M	U	L	T	¹⁸ I	P	L	I	C	A	¹⁹ T	I	O	N	
A				N		L		K		R		U		²⁰ O
²¹ S	E	²² L	E	C	T		²³ E	L	L	I	P	T	I	C
H		I		L		²⁴ G		A		C		F		E
²⁵ I	M	A	G	I	N	A	R	Y		²⁶ O	M	A	H	A
N		R		N		P		E		R		C		N
²⁷ G	A	S	J	E	T	S		²⁸ R	A	N	G	E	R	S

Across	Clue	Explanation
1 RUINOUS	One after Rugby Union talent is extremely harmful (7)	(I after RU) + NOUS
5 DEFIANT	I gave food to retired worker ready for a fight (7)	[(I + FED) reversed] + ANT
9 PUPIL	Mouthpiece excited about one with class? (5)	(LIP + UP) reversed
10 AEGEAN SEA	Age affected each couple transporting Poles in part of the Mediterranean (6,3)	Anagram of AGE + [(EA + EA) outside N+S]
11 FORWARDS	People who play football for local areas (8)	FOR + WARDS
12 AT HEEL	Athlete, losing time, manoeuvred close behind (2,4)	Anagram of ATHLETE minus T
14 DIRECTORS CHAIR	Rich actors shifted following terrible seating arrangement (9,5)	Anagram of RICH ACTORS after DIRE
17 MULTIPLICATION	Leader of major political unit organised expansion (14)	(M)ajor + anagram of POLITICAL UNIT
21 SELECT	Choose love's restrictions embraced by religious group? (6)	(L)ov(E) inside SECT
23 ELLIPTIC	Oval pill used in quote the wrong way (8)	(PILL inside CITE) reversed
25 IMAGINARY	Grain reprocessed in one month - that's unreal (9)	Anagram of GRAIN inside (I + MAY)
26 OMAHA	Some from a happy place in Nebraska (5)	frOM A HAppy
27 GAS JETS	Burners start to jam in different stages (3,4)	(J)am inside anagram of STAGES
28 RANGERS	Conclusion of hiker greatly annoys park officers (7)	hike(R) + ANGERS

Down	Clue	Explanation
1 RIP-OFF	Pop mostly used in repeated music scam (3-3)	(PO)p inside RIFF
2 IMPARTIAL	One joined with power bound by military objective (9)	I + (P inside MARTIAL)
3 ON LEAVE	Stewed veal eaten by one having a holiday (2,5)	Anagram of VEAL inside ONE
4 STANDSTILL	Stop two saints in a bad way? (10)	(ST AND ST) + ILL
5 DOGS	Setters, say, fill in empty grids? (4)	DO + G(rid)S
6 FRANTIC	Wild songbird briefly spotted in French capital once (7)	TI(t) inside FRANC
7 AISLE	Supermarket section is taken up by alcohol (5)	IS inside ALE
8 TRAILERS	Means of transport featured in concise, abbreviated advertising (8)	RAIL inside (TERS)e
13 BRICKLAYER	Builder's first stack upset early worker on site (10)	(B)uilder + RICK + anagram of EARLY
15 ABOUT-FACE	Turn around mismanaged cafe after a fight (5-4)	Anagram of CAFE after (A + BOUT)
16 SMASHING	Great serving of Paris mash in gravy (8)	pariS MASH IN Gravy
18 INCLINE	Lean mince's contents kept on file? (7)	m(INC)e + LINE
19 TRICORN	Hat we pinched from distracted town crier? (7)	Anagram of TOWN CRIER minus WE
20 OCEANS	Canoes handled rough seas (6)	Anagram of CANOES
22 LIARS	Storytellers so ignored by sailors at sea (5)	Anagram of SAILORS minus SO
24 GAPS	Piano played in wonderful openings (4)	P inside GAS