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AN APEX MEDIA PUBLICATION

MONDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2020

16 PAGE ISSUE

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OWYA 2020 WINNERS - NADIA AL SHAMSI & ILHAM AL HAMAID
GO TO PAGES 09 & 16

Pandemic shakes up passport hierarchy

Omani passport jumps two places up to 62nd rank

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended the seemingly unshakable hierarchy of global mobility that dominated the last few decades, resulting in significant changes in the strength of the passports of many countries.

According to the latest Henley Passport Index: Q4 2020 Report, at the beginning of the year, the US passport was ranked sixth and Americans could travel hassle-free to 185 destinations around the world. Since then, that number has dropped dramatically by over 100, with US passport holders currently able to access fewer than 75 destinations.

The Henley Passport Index ranks all of the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Oman's ranking, however, has improved by two places since the January 2020 report - from 64th

earlier to 62nd now. Omani passport holders could travel to 79 countries without a prior visa before January 2020 and can travel to 80 nations now.

In the GCC, UAE tops the index with a global rank of 18th, having access to 170 nations, followed by Kuwait (53rd, access to 96 nations), Qatar (54th, access to 95 nations), Bahrain (61st, access to 83 nations), Oman (62nd, access to 80 nations), and Saudi Arabia (64th, access to 78 nations).

Coronavirus-related travel restrictions are beginning to lift in some countries after more than six months of panic and uncertainty. The resumption of interna-

The Henley Passport Index ranks all of the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa



'Unsurprisingly, those countries whose coronavirus responses have been criticised for being inadequate have taken the greatest knock when it comes to the travel freedom of their citizens,' stated the report. Brazilian passport holders were able to access 170 destinations without acquiring a visa prior to January. Currently, approximately only 70 destinations are accessible.

The decline in mobility and passport power for countries such as India and Russia have been less dramatic, but nevertheless indicative of an overall shift. Russian citizens had access to 119 destinations prior to the COVID-19 outbreak but can currently travel to fewer than 50. At the beginning of the year, Indian passport holders could travel to 61 destinations without a visa but due to virus-related restrictions, they currently have access to fewer than 30.'

Without taking the various pandemic-related travel bans and restrictions into account, Japan continues to hold the No 1 spot on the Henley Passport Index, with a visa-free/visa-on-arrival score of 191. Singapore remains in second, with a score of 190.

Muscat airport earns ACI Airport Health Accreditation

Muscat - Muscat International Airport, managed and operated by Oman Airports, has become the first airport in the Middle East to achieve the Airports Council International (ACI) Airport Health Accreditation. The certification is based on a programme designed to assist airports by assessing new health measures and procedures introduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It recognises Muscat International Airport's commitment to prioritising health and safety measures in accordance with industry best practices and international health and safety protocols.

"Health and safety have always been a top priority for Oman Airports. In achieving this global health accreditation, Muscat International Airport once again demonstrates its team's commitment to taking the appropriate steps to reduce the risk of exposure at our airports," said Saud bin Nasser al Hobeishi, deputy CEO of Oman Airports. "We are delighted to have



achieved the ACI Airport Health Accreditation, which demonstrates the company's ongoing commitment to deliver safe and healthy travel experience at all times and in all circumstances."

The Airport Health Accreditation programme was established to restore confidence in travellers about the safety of airport facilities and the effectiveness of the precautionary measures implemented to prevent any risk to their health. This accreditation is recognition of all the COVID-19 measures that Oman Airports has been implementing at Muscat International Airport since the onset of the pandemic.

OMANI PHOTOGRAPHER WINS AWARD IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEST

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Photographer Ghaith Sultan al Battashi has won a diploma award in Photo Click Circuit 2020 held in Albania and Montenegro.

Hailing from the wilayat of Quriyat, Battashi's photograph titled 'Iranian student' won the Salon Diploma award in the online competition. Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Battashi said over 400 photographers from 38 countries participated in the competition. "I participated with 15 pictures," he informed.

Battashi started photography in 2017 and joined the Photographic Society of Oman in 2019. He is keen to promote domestic tourism and showcase Oman's beauty and diversity to the world through his photographs. "I love taking photos of nature, especially stars."

He takes the difficulties he faces while shooting in his stride. "Reaching some locations while doing wildlife photography need trekking for long over difficult terrain or climbing mountains."

About future plans, Battashi said he will continue to capture Oman's natural beauty in photographs. "This is my contribution to improve domestic tourism in my beloved country."



Ghaith Sultan al Battashi



New decision on selling real estate to non-Omanis issued

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Dr Khalfan bin Said bin Mubarak al Shu'aibi, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, has issued Ministerial Decision No 357/2020 regarding regulations on selling residential real estate units under the usufruct system to non-Omanis in multi-storey commercial and residential buildings in some locations in Muscat governorate.

The decision pertains to non-Omanis - whose stay in the sultanate is not less than two years - submitting a usufruct application.

It comes as part of a package to stimulate investments in the real estate sector to achieve specific growth rates to enhance performance of related activities and achieve sustainable development.

The decision states that the seller will pay three per cent of the residential real estate unit's value, and the buyer five per cent, upon its registration. Usufruct agreements are valid for 50 years, renewable for a period not exceeding 99 years.

The decision aims to create a competitive business environment attractive to investors in the real estate sector while also injecting cash into the market.

The usufruct system is one of the measures employed to diversify the economy during the current oil price slump. It also aims to keep pace with global trends and investments in the real estate sector in the sultanate.

Student team project wins top prize at Arab Innovation Hackathon

Our Correspondent
Muscat

An online platform created by five Omani students of Gulf College to help parents find suitable preschool educational institutions for their children placed first in the recently concluded Arab Innovation Hackathon.

The virtual hackathon, called 'Innovation in the time of COVID-19', was conducted by

the Bahraini Researchers and Inventors Society (Brains) from August 9 to October 10.

Marwa al Rubaie, Suzan al Saifi, Mohammed al Habsi, Saeed al Habsi and Salim al Habsi created the platform called 'Wesaya'.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Salim said, "Over 50 innovators from various Arab countries, including Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, participated in the

competition. Twenty-two teams reached the finals."

The hackathon focused on creative ideas to counter the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, inviting participants to develop technological and innovative solutions, involving hardware and software, to achieve economic stability.

It covered aspects of the pandemic in fields including the economy, health, education, ad-

ministration, agriculture and food security, awareness and community participation, and entertainment.

"The Wesaya platform connects preschool educational institutions (the service provider) and parents (beneficiaries of the service) for children aged six months to six-and-a-half years," Salim said.

While creating the platform, the team took into account the

problems parents face in giving their preschool children's education they need.

"Some parents find it difficult to identify suitable schools for their children. Working women don't have enough time to be with their children at home. There's no integrated system for communication and follow-up between parents and preschool institutions. These are some of the issues we want to tackle,"

Salim said.

The team's challenges in creating Wesaya included finding contact details of some nursery school to obtain information on their facilities and admission formalities.

"The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion came to our rescue, while Gulf College provided us with computers to design the platform," Salim said.

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TOUGH TIMES, TOUGH MEASURES

Are you hopeful that the night curfew that is currently in effect will curb the spread of COVID-19?

Bhaskara Rao
Attorney

I am optimistic that the night curfew will have the desired effect. During the day, the mercury rises and people are occupied with work. Most violations of the Supreme Committee directives like gatherings, dense shopping, roaming around, etc can happen only at night. The night curfew definitely deters violators. This step can curb the spread of COVID-19.



Reema Bhatia
Teacher

The return of night curfew is a preventive measure at all levels, be it individual, family or social. This is a precautionary step to maintain the security and safety of all citizens. Prohibiting beach gatherings is a must. People don't comply with the requirements set by the authorities on beaches.



A R Srinivasan
Government employee

The government is taking all precautions and we hope that the night curfew will reduce the spread of infection, but it is for the general public to follow the rules and guidelines. If only everyone had followed the experts' advice, we would have never had to face these lockdowns.



Nasser al Hosni
Businessman

Yes, I'm hopeful that the night curfew that is currently in effect will curb the spread of COVID-19. This is because, after work everyone goes home and there is no interaction with others. Night curfew stops people from roaming around. It will have a huge impact on the number of cases.



Aiman Khalaf
Bank employee

It is unclear if the night curfew will fully stop the spread but it will surely help reduce the number of cases. Closure of public places and preventing family visits is ideal to reduce the spread.



Hassaan Sanadi
Lecturer

Every aspect of this pandemic is unprecedented so what will work or what may not be debatable. But having a night curfew will for sure bring some discipline amongst people which is lacking. People fail to realise that it's everyone's fight and we all have to fight it together to win.



Jayatee Choudhury
Student

I hope that the night curfew will curb the spread of COVID-19 as there will be home-confinement and fewer congregations at public places. But night curfew alone won't lessen the pandemic. We need to follow the SWW code - social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands.



Mohan Anandan
Banker

Despite repeated appeals and stringent fines from authorities, the public has not been adhering fully to the prescribed safety norms. Under the circumstances, the re-imposition of night lockdown will help stem the spread of the virus and also send out a clear message to the public that "unless everyone is safe, no one is safe".



Muthumari Pandian
Homemaker

Yes, of course, the night curfew will be effective in curbing the spread of COVID-19. After work, everyone would prefer to meet their friends, or take part in activities like walking, jogging and shopping at night. The night curfew prevents these activities. This approach will be very effective in curbing the spread of infection.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Do you think naming and shaming will prompt people to adhere to the precautionary measures against COVID-19?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by Muscat Daily. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om Log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue

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COVID-19 is no joke: Recovered doctor

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is not a joke, it can result in hospitalisation in intensive care unit (ICU) for weeks, warned Dr Anas bin Nasser al Kamyani, family and community physician at the Ministry of Health, who has recovered from the disease.

"I was hospitalised for five whole weeks, mostly in the ICU under anaesthesia," Dr Kamyani told the press on Thursday.

He added, "I was in mechanical ventilation support with feeding tubes. The symptoms were distressing like breathing difficulty, high body temperature and acute pneumonia. We should be aware, careful and deal with everyone as if they were infected."

He described his brush with the disease as terrible.

"The worst thing is that I had been lying in the ICU for a long time, unable to move. The general anaesthesia can cause terrible muscular atro-



I was hospitalised for five whole weeks, mostly in the ICU, under anaesthesia and ventilation support

DR ANAS AL KAMYANI

phy (loss of muscle mass). In the beginning, it was hard for me to move. My voice also

changed because of the mechanical ventilation. I got out of the situation by having physical therapy."

He explained that the disease is new, so the world and healthcare workers have no prior experience and no treatment for it yet.

"It is never easy for anyone when their relative is on a ventilator. I am still suffering from some complications, such as difficulty in breathing and a change in my voice. There may be other complications that could last for months," said Dr Kamyani.

He warned people not to underestimate the disease.

"It has been spreading beyond our expectations. I want to thank all my colleagues in the health sector as I know their enormous efforts in countering this pandemic. My advice to all is to never underestimate the severity of this virus. We don't have an option but to counter it by being careful and taking all precautions," said Dr Kamyani.

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.50am	Duhr	11.57am	Maghrib	5.43pm
Sunrise	6.06am	Asr	3.15pm	Isha	6.53pm

Logo design contest opens to celebrate role of women

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Blessed Renaissance and to highlight the role of Omani women in the development of the nation, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has launched a logo design competition.

The competition was launched as the sultanate celebrated Omani Women's Day on October 17.

The ministry said the competition is open to Omani individuals, local institutions and entrepreneurs in creative fields.

The ministry also stated that the logo must be inspired by the role of women in building and developing society.

"The logo should be easy to use in various electronic and print media, and each participant can send up to three designs," the ministry said, adding that it has the right to amend the design.

The designs should be in AI or EPS formats and participants need to explain the idea of the logo and the colours used.

The winner of the competition will get RO2,000. Participants must send their designs by email to logo@mosd.gov.om before November 30.



(Photo for illustrative purpose)



(Supplied photo)

By women, for women: Fitness studio launched

Muscat - An all-Omani women-owned and managed fitness centre called 'Let's Evolve Studio', opened its doors in Muscat on Omani Women's Day, making it the first of its kind in the country.

The studio, which is run by three citizens, aims to "support and empower women in becoming the best versions of themselves".

According to 28 year old founder Adhra al Yahyai, it was her own personal experience as a trainer that inspired her to start the project.

"Having experienced firsthand - as an Omani woman athlete and trainer - the chal-

lenges women face when entering the health and fitness industry, I thought what better way to shed light on this issue, than through emphasising the importance of an Omani women-only team. That is precisely what I have gone ahead and ensured. We have all-Omani women staff, at every level of Let's Evolve Studio," she said.

The women's-only studio offers a range of classes from Zumba and body attack to yoga and cardio plus resistance. Private sessions and personal training are also offered.

(Contributed by Liyana al Abdulsalam)

SAYYID THEYAZIN MEETS US ENVOY



H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, received in his office on Sunday morning H E Leslie M Tsou, Ambassador of the United States to Oman. H H Sayyid Theyazin and the US envoy discussed bilateral relations and aspects of joint cooperation in the fields of culture, sports and youth (ONA)

More 'family time' amid COVID-19 night curfew as ROP thanks public for support

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted the way families live, has brought some good news in Oman. People who are staying at home are turning crisis into opportunity by spending more time with their families and developing more fruitful relationships.

With night curfew on, many parents are happy to be able to spend more time at home with their children and say it was something that had been neglected until now due to daily rush.

Oman is currently into a second two-week night lockdown prohibiting movement, and closure of all public places and commercial outlets from 8pm to 5am every night until October 24.

While some say the lockdown offers a variety of opportunities for parents to improve their relationships with their children, who in most cases go out in the evening to meet their friends, others say homes are now filled with joy.

"Due to the curfew, we get to see each other more often and spend more time with our children. My bond with my children has increased a lot as we do many things together during this time. I am glad both my sons, who are in their 20s, are home by 8pm now. We sit and discuss



My bond with my children has grown as we get to do many things together during this time. I am glad both my sons, who are in their 20s, are home by 8pm now

ABDULLAH NASSER

many issues pertaining to our family," said 66 year old Abdullah Nasser, a retired oil sector employee.

The curfew is also said to be time for couples to foster and mend their relationships.

"We both work and now we are at home by 8pm; we get enough time together as husband and wife. We also get to do all things together and I think by

doing so we develop a stronger bond," Samya al Naamani, private sector employee, said.

Brig Said bin Sulaiman al Asmi, director general of operations at Royal Oman Police (ROP), expressed his gratitude to citizens and residents who cooperate in implementing the decisions of the Supreme Committee.

"Some fines have been set for

offenders who violate the lockdown or fail to wear masks in public places. The offenders will be apprehended, interrogated and made to sign undertakings to pay or face transfer to the Public Prosecution," he said.

H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, said these legal measures had been taken to stress the importance of following regulations during these testing times.

"Any person reported to have violated the night movement ban will be held accountable," he said. The minister said people should report any violations.

"Reporting violations is a national duty," he added.

@shadadm

Navratri festivities begin online

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The nine-day Indian festival Navratri is a time of celebration. It is also a time for family bonding. Due to the pandemic this year, the celebrations in the sultanate are being held online with traditional music and dance events being organised over nine nights from October 17 to 25.

During Navratri, Ekata Muscat is where renowned artistes presented their performances in Karnatic and Hindustani compositions in earlier years.

Aravind, president of Ekata Muscat, said, "Every year we have a gathering in Muscat where as many as 200 people come on a daily basis for nine days. This year we have not stopped the practice and have

gone online.

"We will not disappoint anyone and we have the signature programme, Navratri Sangeetholsavam, nine consecutive days of classical concerts with various performers from Oman and abroad."

The event is being live-streamed on Ekata Muscat's Facebook page, YouTube channel and Zoom from 7pm to 9pm.



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Bank Muscat ACCA scholarship holders excel

In line with its commitment to the continuous development of Omani human resources, Bank Muscat joined hands with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in 2019 to provide scholarships for 50 bachelor's degree holders to complete the Chartered Certified Accountant course by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). The bank has announced that the training has been progressing well.

The ACCA course prepares entry and mid-level professionals to work in any aspect of finance or management. The bank's strategic initiative is thus helping Omani youths obtain internationally-recognised educational qualifications to achieve their true potential.

Through its training partners, ACCA and Kaplan Publishing, UK, the bank has been making all efforts to ensure that the selected candidates are able to excel in their training ahead of a successful career. A monthly stipend based on the academic performance of the candidates and continuous progress is being provided to all trainees during the training programme. The bank has been greatly encouraged by the exceptional results

achieved by the students. In particular, Fajer al Akhzami and Zulekha al Kiyumi have made excellent progress in their studies with Fajer achieving the second highest score globally in the Taxation paper (and topping the paper regionally), while Zulekha is the joint topper from Oman in the Performance Management paper.

Bank Muscat has always accorded top priority for human resources development and earmarks substantial funding every year for the training and development of its employees across all job functions and roles. The bank's Jadara Academy provides a comprehensive platform and framework for all staff learning and development programmes. Bank Muscat has also adopted innovative strategies to equip Omani employees to take up leadership positions in tandem with future challenges.

The bank has developed a comprehensive Learning & Development strategy for skill and knowledge enhancements vis-à-vis the requirements of its various departments. Continuous investments are being made to build human capacity in an effort to derive maximum mileage out of its HR processes.

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OAB National Day campaign receives widespread acclaim

Oman Arab Bank announced the successful implementation of its 'The Power of 50' promotional campaign, which was launched on September 15. The campaign was introduced to celebrate Oman's 50th National Day, set to take place in November, and has seen immense positive feedback from the public.

Commenting on the success of the campaign, Rashad al Shaikh, acting head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "We are delighted to witness the incredible number of people that have taken part in this campaign, especially since our main objective is spreading happiness, to all our valued customers and the citizens within the sultanate. With the rise in participants and referrals, we believe that we are on the right path in carrying out this campaign, as we proudly celebrate the achievements of our country over the last 50 years, together with all of the Omani people. On behalf of everyone here at OAB, I would like to wel-



come our new customers to the OAB family and look forward to enriching your experience with us."

As part of the promotional campaign, the first 500 existing customers to refer a friend, acquaintance or family member to open an account at OAB via the OAB Online App will each receive a guaranteed cash prize of RO50.

The first 500 customers to open an account with OAB and transfer their salary of RO500 or more will receive a guaranteed

cash prize of RO50.

In November, every OAB customer will have the opportunity to be a part of a special Hasaad draw for a chance to win one of the 50 prizes of RO500 each.

He added, "I would like to encourage all our customers to continue in their efforts of referring their family members and friends, so that they can enter into the exclusive Hasaad draw during National Day, alongside new OAB account holders. Through this special draw, we aim to add value to our ongoing scheme, by not only inculcating a savings culture but giving more opportunities to a wider segment of new customers.

"I wish every one of you the best of luck. Additionally, I urge people within the community, who currently do not have an OAB account, to take advantage of this occasion and sign up during this campaign period. This way, they too can benefit from our integrated services and pioneering products."

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Promoted Cadiz stun Real; Barca suffer shock loss



Cadiz's Anthony Lozano (left) vies with Real Madrid's Raphael Varane during the Spanish League game on Saturday

SPANISH LEAGUE
Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid and Barcelona will each head into the Clasico next weekend on the back of a defeat after La Liga's two title favourites were punished for slack performances on Saturday.

Zinedine Zidane made four substitutions at half-time but could not spark a lethargic Madrid into life as his team fell 0-1 at home to newly-promoted Cadiz. Then two hours later on the opposite side of the city, Ronald Koeman tasted his first competitive loss as coach of Barcelona as they followed Madrid's example by being beaten 1-0 by Getafe at the

Coliseum Alfonso Perez.

Madrid's was perhaps the more concerning display, the reigning champions managing just two shots on target against Cadiz, who could have scored more after Anthony Lozano's early strike.

But Barca were not much better, with Lionel Messi strangely quiet and the team failing to rebound after Jaime Mata's penalty gave Getafe the lead in the second half.

For Madrid, there was an injury concern too as Sergio Ramos spent the second half in the stands with ice strapped around his left knee.

Even if Barcelona were unable

to capitalise, Atletico Madrid had earlier beaten Celta Vigo 2-0, with Luis Suarez opening the scoring at Balaídos.

"There is no explanation," said Zidane. "If they scored two or three goals in the first half, we couldn't have complained. There are no excuses."

This is Cadiz's first season in the top flight in 14 years and their first victory over Real Madrid in 29. Their reward is second place in the table, denied top spot by their opponents only due to goal difference.

Atletico climb to fourth, two points behind Real Madrid and one ahead of Barcelona. Celta, meanwhile, sit 13th.

OTHER RESULTS:
Sunday: Eibar 0 Osasuna 0, Athletic Bilbao 2 Levante 0, Villarreal 2 Valencia 1.
Saturday: Granada 1 Sevilla 0.

ITALIAN LEAGUE
Sassuolo up to second
Milan, Italy - Sassuolo moved to second place in Serie A on Sunday behind leaders AC Milan after a thrilling 4-3 comeback win at Bologna.

Roberto de Zerbi's side had been trailing 3-1 after an hour, but three substitutions, including a first start for French midfielder Maxime Lopez, rescued three points for the visitors. Francesco Caputo set up Filip Djuricic to make it 3-2 after 64 minutes and six minutes later Caputo nodded in the equaliser following a poor clearance from Bologna forward Rodrigo Palacio. Sassuolo have ten points from three games and move two points behind AC Milan, who beat city rivals Inter Milan 2-1 on Saturday thanks to a Zlatan Ibrahimovic double.

Atalanta drop to third after Saturday's 4-1 defeat to Napoli in fourth equal on points with champions Juventus, who playing without quarantined Cristiano Ronaldo, settled for a 1-1 draw at Crotone.

OTHER RESULTS:
Sunday: Spezia 2 Fiorentina 2, Torino 2 Cagliari 3.
Saturday: Sampdoria 3 Lazio 0.

FRENCH LEAGUE
Sunday: Strasbourg 2 Lyon 3, Angers 1 Metz 1, Monaco 1 Montpellier 1, Nantes 3 Brest 1, Saint-Etienne 1 Nice 3.
Saturday: Reims 1 Lorient 3, Marseille 3 Bordeaux 1.
Friday: Dijon 1 Rennes 1, Nimes 0 Paris Saint-Germain 4.

GERMAN LEAGUE
Sunday: Cologne 1 Eintracht Frankfurt 1.
Saturday: Hoffenheim 0 Borussia Dortmund 1, Freiburg 1 Werder Bremen 1, Hertha Berlin 0 Stuttgart 2, Mainz 0 Bayer Leverkusen 1, Augsburg 0 RB Leipzig 2, Arminia Bielefeld 1 Bayern Munich 4, Borussia Mönchengladbach 1 Wolfsburg 1.

AFF



Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane (second from left) scores against West Ham United on Sunday (AFP)

A DAY OF DRAWS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
London, UK - West Ham ruined Gareth Bale's Tottenham Hotspur return with a stunning late fightback from three goals down to rescue a thrilling 3-3 draw, while Fulham's Aleksandar Mitrovic endured a penalty nightmare in a 1-1 draw at Sheffield United on Sunday.

Also, Alexis Mac Allister's first EPL goal gave Brighton a dramatic 1-1 draw at rivals Crystal Palace on Sunday.

Tottenham were leading 3-0 when Bale came on as a 72nd minute substitute for his first appearance since joining on a season-long loan from Real Madrid.

The Wales star was one of the main Tottenham culprits as he missed a golden opportunity to wrap up the points before West Ham's Manuel Lanzini snatched a stoppage-time equaliser.

West Ham's Fabian Balbuena nodded in from Aaron Cresswell's cross after 82 minutes and Davinson Sanchez's headed own goal from Vladimir Coufal's delivery three minutes later left Tottenham panicking.

At Bramall Lane, Fulham's Mitrovic fired over with his second half penalty after Jack Robinson handled.

On-loan Leipzig winger Ademola Lookman put Fulham ahead in the 77th minute. But Serbia international Mitrovic was penalised for a high foot on Robinson in the 85th minute following a VAR check and Billy Sharp made him pay as he scored the penalty.

Mitrovic is the first player to commit the unwanted penalty double in the same EPL game since Mikel Arteta for Arsenal against Fulham in 2012.

At Crystal Palace, Palace took the lead in the 19th minute Ivory Coast forward Wilfried Zaha sent Brighton keeper Mat Ryan the wrong way from the spot.

But, after a poor clearance from Palace defender Joel Ward, Argentine substitute Mac Allister fired home via a slight deflection from the edge of the area in the 90th minute.

Harry Maguire enjoyed sweet moments of redemption in their side's 4-1 win at Newcastle on Saturday.

Also late on Saturday, Pep Guardiola said that Manchester City need time to hit top form after they ground out a 1-0 win over Arsenal.

Van Dijk faces lengthy lay-off
Liverpool's Premier League title defence was rocked on Sunday with the news Virgil Van Dijk must undergo knee surgery amid reports the Dutch defender could miss the rest of the season.

"Liverpool FC can confirm Virgil van Dijk will undergo surgery on the knee injury he sustained during Saturday's 2-2 draw at Everton," Liverpool said in a statement.

"No specific timescale is being placed upon his return to action at this stage."

The 29 year old has started every league game for the past two seasons as the Reds won the Champions League in 2019 and ended a 30-year wait to win a league title earlier this year.

AFF

Clarke leads All Blacks to easy win over Wallabies

Auckland, New Zealand - Wing Caleb Clarke enjoyed a storming first Test start as an aggressive All Blacks downed Australia 27-7 with a rollicking second half in Auckland on Sunday to answer their critics after last week's draw.

After the dramatic, 16-16 Bledisloe Cup series opener, the All Blacks led 10-7 at half-time and scored three quick tries after the restart as they piled on 17 unanswered points in the second period.

Bruising wing Clarke, who had the crowd on the edge of their seats every time he touched the ball, skittled defenders and evoked memories of Jonah Lomu as the All Blacks played with a renewed physical presence and cohesion.

It was the seventh time in the



New Zealand's Caleb Clarke makes a break during the second Bledisloe Cup rugby Test against Australia at Eden Park in Auckland, on Sunday

past 13 years that the three-times world champions have started the annual Bledisloe Cup series with a loss or a draw and immediately bounced back.

"It was tough, but we're so damn happy," said All Blacks

captain Sam Cane. "There was a lot of pressure this week for a relatively new squad in a lot of ways and I'm really proud of the way we stuck to our plan. "We worked really, really hard and in the end

we managed to break them."

The four-tries-to-one victory extended the All Blacks' impressive record at Eden Park, where they have not lost in 44 Tests since 1994 and where Australia have not won since 1986.

They now need to win only one of the two remaining games in the Bledisloe Cup series, which will be played in Australia as part of the upcoming Tri-Nations tournament, to retain the trophy they have held since 2003.

"They were better this week, they raised the bar and got ahead of us," said Australia captain Michael Hooper.

"We'll go back home now, getting a couple of days off and regroup. You know, we're building. A hit to the confidence a bit today, but we'll go again."

AFF



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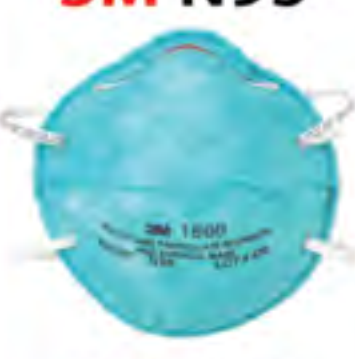
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PRE/20/096	(2020/MM/QS/46)	Protections Work for Asphalt Roads AL Amerat	Rial 25	16/11/2020	26/11/2020	First
PRE/20/099	(2020/MM/QS/47)	Manufacture, Supply, Replacement of Condenser Coils And Commissioning Of The Air Conditioning Unite.	Rial 25	16/11/2020	26/11/2020	Excellent

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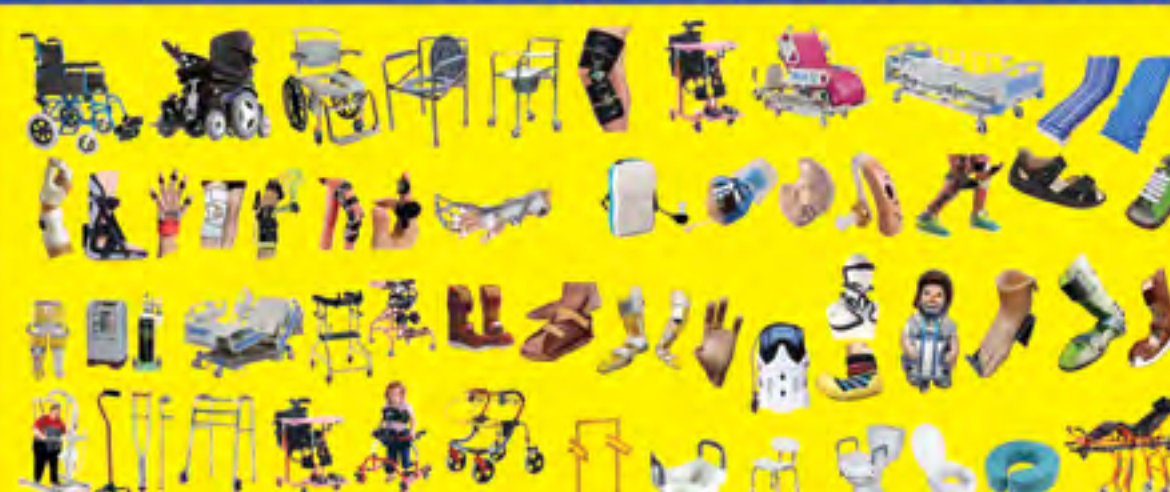
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IPL 2020





QUOTE OF THE DAY

For Lockie to come in and perform in both phases was outstanding. Today we were competitive.

Eoin Morgan
Kolkata Knight Riders' skipper, after his team's win over Sunrisers Hyderabad, on Sunday

FANTASTIC FERGUSON

New Zealand pacer sets up Kolkata Knight Riders' Super-Over win over Sunrisers Hyderabad



Lockie Ferguson
3 WKTS
15 RUNS

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS		
S Gill	c Garg b Rashid Khan	36 (37)
R Tripathi	b Natarajan	23 (16)
N Rana	c Garg b Shankar	29 (20)
A Russell	c Shankar b Natarajan	9 (11)
E Morgan	c Pandey b Thampi	34 (23)
D Karthik	not out	29 (14)
Extras	(lb 2, nb 1)	3
TOTAL: 163 for five		
Fall of wickets: 1-48, 2-87, 3-88, 4-105, 5-163		
Bowling: S Sharma 4-0-27-0, B Thampi 4-0-46-1, T Natarajan 4-0-40-2, V Shankar 4-0-20-1, Rashid Khan 4-0-28-1		
SUNRISERS HYDERABAD		
J Bairstow	c Russell b Varun	36 (28)
K Williamson	c Rana b Ferguson	29 (19)
P Garg	b Ferguson	4 (7)
D Warner	not out	47 (33)
M Pandey	b Ferguson	6 (7)
V Shankar	c Gill b Cummins	7 (10)
A Samad	c Gill b Mavi	23 (15)
Rashid Khan	not out	1 (2)
Extras	(lb 7, nb 1, w 2)	10
TOTAL: 163 for six		
Fall of wickets: 1-58, 2-70, 3-70, 4-82, 5-109, 6-146		
Bowling: P Cummins 4-0-28-1, S Mavi 3-0-34-1, C Varun 4-0-32-1, A Russell 2-0-29-0, L Ferguson 4-0-15-3, Kuldeep Yadav 3-0-18-0		
(Kolkata won the one-over eliminator)		

TODAY'S MATCH

ABU DHABI, 6PM



CHENNAI
SUPER KINGS

VS



RAJASTHAN
ROYALS

POINTS TABLE

TEAMS	P	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
DC	9	7	2	0	14	+0.921
MI	9	6	3	0	12	+1.201
RCB	9	6	3	0	12	-0.096
KKR	9	5	4	0	10	-0.607
SRH	9	3	6	0	6	+0.008
KXIP	9	3	6	0	6	-0.262
CSK	9	3	6	0	6	-0.386
RR	9	3	6	0	6	-0.778

P: Played, W: Won, L: Lost,
NR: No Result, PTS: Points,
NRR: Net Run-Rate

CSK: Chennai Super Kings

RCB: Royal Challengers Bangalore

DC: Delhi Capitals

KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders

KXIP: Kings XI Punjab

MI: Mumbai Indians

RR: Rajasthan Royals

SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad



KKR's Narine's action cleared

Dubai, UAE - West Indies spinner Sunil Narine has been taken off the warning list for suspected bowling action in the IPL, the tournament's organisers said on Sunday.

The Kolkata Knight Riders off-spinner was reported for suspected chucking during a game on October 10 and another report would have resulted in a bowling ban from this season's tournament.

Kolkata appealed to the IPL's suspect bowling action committee to review Narine's action.

"KKR requested for an official assessment of Mr Narine's action from the IPL Suspect Bowling Action Committee, submitting action footage in slow motion with back and side angles," the IPL said in a statement hours before Kolkata's game against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"The Committee carefully reviewed all the deliveries of action footage sent of Mr Narine with the naked eye and has come to the conclusion that the elbow-bend appears to be within the range of permissible limits."

"Narine should reproduce the same action going forward in the IPL 2020 matches as presented to the Committee in the video footage," the statement added.

The committee comprises Rahul Dravid, ICC match referee Javagal Srinath, former ICC umpire K Hariharan and BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal.

Narine was not selected against Hyderabad on Sunday. The 32 year old has been reported for chucking several times during his international career. He was barred from bowling in 2015 by the ICC but came back with a re-modelled action. His action was also under scrutiny in the 2018 Pakistan Super League.

AFP

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Two mid-table sides separated by just two points. Two misfiring middle orders. Two squads unable to use their reserve overseas players in the best possible way. Two teams that were neck and neck with three wins each against each other since 2018. What happened when they met on Sunday evening? A Super Over, of course.

Lockie Ferguson made that one-over face-off a one-sided affair though.

Playing his first match in over seven months, Ferguson, in the space of three balls, first removed David Warner's off stump to hand him a golden duck and then hit the base of Abdul Samad's middle stump with a full and slower delivery, with only two runs allowed in between.

A single from Eoin Morgan and two leg-byes off Dinesh Karthik's pads with a fumble at short-fine leg gave the Kolkata Knight Riders two points from the third Super Over of the season to keep them on fourth

place on the points table.

Ferguson had earlier dented the Sunrisers Hyderabad chase of 164 with a spectacular spell of fast bowling that read 4-0-15-3 without conceding a single boundary. He did the damage against a tweaked Sunrisers line-up that saw Kane Williamson open with Jonny Bairstow, and Warner push himself down to No 4.

Ferguson allowed just seven in the 18th over when the Sunrisers needed 37 from 18. With 30 to win from 12, Samad and Warner targeted Shivam Mavi on the off side for two fours before the former fell off the last ball of the over - another dismissal that featured Ferguson.

Samad had clubbed a full toss to deep midwicket where Ferguson pouched the ball right inside the rope before carefully lobbing it to Shubman Gill when he lost balance. Warner had struck only two fours in his 28-ball 33 when the last over started with Andre Russell bowling a big wide outside off to Rashid Khan from

around the wicket which was later called a no-ball.

Once Warner got strike, he first found the cow-corner boundary, then hammered a length delivery past the bowler and then whipped an innocuous-looking leg-stump delivery for the third four in a row. With four to get off two, Warner took a double but couldn't get bat on the last ball and settled for one leg-bye when Russell nipped the ball into his pads. It was time for a Super Over.

Williamson experiment

Williamson, who was carrying a hamstring niggle, took charge at the top with fluent strokeplay, hitting consecutive fours off Mavi, while Bairstow muscled Varun Chakravarthy off the back foot. The duo also attacked Russell and Pat Cummins together to finish the sixth over on 58, of which 46 came in boundaries, and was the Knight Riders' fourth consecutive powerplay without a wicket.

But then came Ferguson in the seventh over. Williamson upper cut his first ball to third man to end an enterprising 19-ball 29 that saw Priyam Garg come in at No 3. Garg couldn't last more than seven balls as Ferguson's slower delivery rammed into his stumps and, four balls later, Bairstow found long-off against Chakravarthy.

Warner got a life on the first ball he faced from Kuldeep Yadav when Karthik missed a stumping after a loopy delivery deflected off the batsman's pad.

At the other end, Manish Pandey was removed by a 148kmh Ferguson yorker. The duo combined for 18 dots from their seven overs together, which featured no boundaries. Warner saw them off and saved his boundaries for the end, which eventually tied the scores.

Knight Riders slow off the blocks

In what was a start-stop-start innings, the Knight Riders struggled to get going properly be-

cause Shubman Gill couldn't find the gaps and ate up 17 dots in his 37-ball 36. Apart from his three consecutive fours off Basil Thampi in the fifth over that helped the Knight Riders register their best opening stand this IPL, it was mainly Rahul Tripathi's attacking strokes that relatively drove up the run rate. However, Tripathi's dismissal on the last ball of the powerplay, for 23 off 16, slowed them down again as Rashid Khan came on in the eighth over.

Before Rashid, though, the seventh over was given to Vijay Shankar, who dried up the runs further with his clever use of length and pace variations. But it was neither Rashid nor Shankar who pushed Kolkata back as much as Garg. Two running catches - one at the long-off boundary to remove Gill in the 12th over and the other running in from deep midwicket inside the circle when Nitish Rana top-edged Shankar three balls later, left them on 88 for three with just under eight overs left.

Punjab prevail after two Super Overs



Mayank Agarwal of Kings XI Punjab celebrates after hitting the winning run in the second Super Over against Mumbai Indians on Sunday

Dubai, UAE - About three inches. That's all that stood between the Kings XI Punjab and an outright victory over the Mumbai Indians. But they eventually got there. After two Super Overs.

A see-sawing game came down to the last ball. Chris Jordan dug out a yorker to long-on and sensed the opportunity to get the two runs he needed to end the game.

But he turned in a giant circle, adding to the distance he needed to cover. Distance on which this entire game was riding on. In the end, he was about three inches short. Jasprit Bumrah allowed only five runs off his bowling to set up a seemingly straightforward Super-Over chase, but Mohammed Shami had other ideas.

With a nothing target behind him, he nailed yorker after yorker after yorker, to push this obscene match into a second Super Over; and three for the day in total.

A piece of KL Rahul brilliance kept Quinton de Kock from completing the match-winning run.

Then it was Mayank Agarwal's turn in the spotlight, leaping high on the edge of the mid-wicket boundary, he saved a definite six to bring down the Kings XI's target from 16 to 12 in the second Super Over.

As if he had massive FOMO (fear of missing out), he even walked out and helped chase it down - poor Trent Boult, these tie-breakers never seem to work out for him - as one of the most memorable nights in the IPL came to a close. No one - at least from the Kings XI's camp - is gonna' be sleeping much though.

Speaking after the match, Punjab skipper Rahul said: "We will take the two points in the end. "It doesn't always happen the way you plan so you don't really know how to stay balanced. I was just hoping we get over the line because the boys have been working really really hard. In the games that we have lost, even then we have played well and just not been able to get over the line."

"We know we need to win everything from here, but we

can't forget the processes that lead to a win."

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD		
MUMBAI INDIANS		
Rohit Sharma	b Singh	9 (8)
Q de Kock	c Agarwal b Jordan	53 (43)
S Yadav	c Ashwin b Shami	0 (4)
I Kishan	c Ashwin b Singh	7 (7)
K Pandya	c Hooda b Bishnoi	34 (30)
H Pandya	c Pooran b Shami	8 (4)
K Pollard	not out	34 (12)
N Coulter-Nile	not out	24 (12)
Extras	(b 4, lb 2, w 1)	7
TOTAL: 176 for six		
Fall of wickets: 1-23, 2-24, 3-38, 4-96, 5-116, 6-119		
Bowling: G Maxwell 4-0-24-0, M Shami 4-0-30-2, A Singh 3-0-35-2, C Jordan 3-0-32-1, M Ashwin 3-0-28-0, D Hooda 1-0-9-0, R Bishnoi 2-0-12-1		
KINGS XI PUNJAB		
KL Rahul	b Bumrah	77 (50)
M Agarwal	b Bumrah	11 (10)
C Gayle	c Boult b Chahar	24 (21)
N Pooran	c Coulter-Nile b Bumrah	24 (12)
G Maxwell	c Rohit b Chahar	0 (2)
D Hooda	not out	23 (16)
C Jordan	run out	13 (8)
Extras	(w 4)	4
TOTAL: 176 for five		
Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-75, 3-108, 4-115, 5-153, 6-176		
Bowling: T Boult 4-0-48-0, K Pandya 2-0-12-0, J Bumrah 4-0-24-3, N Coulter-Nile 4-0-33-0, K Pollard 2-0-26-0, R Chahar 4-0-33-2		
(Kings XI Punjab won the one-over eliminator in the second Super Over)		





Oman Racing Team with TF Sport's Ahmad al Harthy and Tom Canning celebrate their title win in Pro-Am class of the opening race of the International GT Open at the Spa-Francorchamps on Saturday. Photo right: Ahmad drives his Aston Martin Vantage GT3 at Spa

DREAM DEBUT

Oman Racing Team with TF Sport duo of Ahmad al Harthy and Tom Canning clinch Pro-Am title and also secure overall podium finish in opening race of International GT Open at Spa

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium has been one of the favourite tracks for Oman's Ahmad al Harthy. The 39 year old driver achieved his 'biggest win of his career' last year when he took the Pro-Am title at the annual Total 24 Hours of Spa in the Blancpain Endurance Cup.

It has been 14 months since the epic win but Spa remains the venue as Ahmad achieves for more career milestones.

On Saturday, it was yet another stellar win for the Oman Racing with TF Sport driver, as he along with his teammate, Tom Canning, clinched the Pro-Am title and finished third overall on

their debut in the opening round of the International GT Open Championship on Saturday.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily* after his win last year in July, Ahmad had said that 'Spa is one of my favourite tracks' and 'the win at the Total 24 Hours of Spa is my biggest so far.'

His liking for the track at Spa was evident, yet again, as he and Canning came up with a sensational debut display.

"It is a dream debut for us," remarked Ahmad on Saturday after his second stint behind the wheels complimented Canning's superb first run for them to claim an overall podium and class honours in the five-round GT Open championship.

Ahmad was returning to

driving for the first time since last September but showed no signs of rustiness as he took to the wheels in the 70-minute race after Canning had bagged a class pole and overall second spot in the qualification.

"It is an amazing result," said Ahmad. "I'm so proud of everybody, the guys at TF Sport and the amazing job Tom [Canning] did in qualifying and the hard work so many people have put in behind the scenes to enable us to be here this weekend at Spa."

"I want to say a massive thank you to everyone."

"It really was a great race. Tom had a solid stint and when I got into the car, the focus was to put our head down, concentrate

as hard as we could and race well. It felt so good to be back and I'm so proud we were able to be this competitive after being away so long. To take the Pro-Am win, and a double podium is honestly, amazing."

Canning took driving duties for the race one qualifying session on Saturday morning and delivered a solid performance.

He was third fastest overall when the session was red flagged with just under ten minutes remaining. After the resumption, the Briton pumped in quicker and quicker times.

He ended the session second overall with a lap of 2m14.783 seconds (187.0 km/h), just 0.178 seconds shy of the outright pole position but secured a

memorable Pro-Am pole.

Starting the afternoon's race, Canning was edged back to third into La Source and after being held wide on the exit, the

change pit-stops started but Canning stayed on track and moved up into third overall. He eventually pitted at the end of lap 18 to hand over the Aston Martin

Ahmad quickly climbed to fourth on lap 19 and on lap 22 produced a beautiful pass around the outside into the Bus Stop to brilliantly take the Pro-Am lead. Running in third overall, Ahmad managed to stave off any further danger to clinch the class honours with a last-lap overtake.

Louis Prette and Vincent Abril of AF Corse APM Monaco Ferrari 488 won the overall race title while TMM McLaren's Miguel Ramos-Henrique Chaves came second. Valentin Pierburg and Nicholas Foster (SPS Automotive Mercedes) and Brendan Iribe and Ollie Millroy (Optimum Motorsport McLaren) rounded off the Pro-Am podium.

@ashokmuscat

It really was a great race. Tom [Canning] had a solid stint and when I got into the car, the focus was to put our head down, concentrate as hard as we could and race well.

AHMAD AL HARTHY

lost momentum dropped him to fifth overall and third in Pro-Am class.

With around 40 minutes remaining, the mandatory driver

car to Ahmad. Joining the race with around half an hour on the clock, the Omani ace driver held third in Pro-Am and fifth place overall.

Spain's Rins wins Aragon MotoGP

Alcañiz, Spain - Alex Rins held off compatriot Alex Marquez to win the Aragon MotoGP on Sunday with another Spaniard Joan Mir finishing third to take the championship lead from Fabio Quartararo. Rins gained

his first victory at MotoGP and is the eighth winner in this season's ten races. Frenchman Quartararo, who started from pole, struggled and retired after falling out of the points.

AFF



Rawahi keeps second spot in MERC after Cyprus Rally

Omani rally driver overcomes brake issues to finish overall tenth



Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi in action during the Cyprus Rally on Saturday

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Oman's talented rally driver Abdullah al Rawahi and his Jordanian navigator Ata al Hmoud overcame technical hiccups in their Ford Fiesta to end tenth overall but finished second in the FIA-Middle East Rally Championship (MERC) at the 49th International Cyprus Rally that concluded in Nicosia on Sunday.

Rawahi ensured picking valuable points by managing to complete the rally on Sunday despite facing problems with his car. The second-place finish in MERC meant Rawahi and Hmoud also retain their second place in the MERC standings behind defending champion Nasser Saleh al Attiyah and his French navigator Matthieu Baume, who won the Cyprus Rally for the seventh time.



Abdullah al Rawahi (right) and Ata al Hmoud with their trophies after finishing second in MERC at the Cyprus Rally in Nicosia on Sunday

Meshari al Thefiri from Kuwait and his Qatari co-driver Nasser al Kuwari in a Mitsubishi Lancer EVO X, finished third in MERC and overall 14th.

Attiyah started the day with a twelve and a half minute cushion ahead of his closest rival and with only 72km of special stages until the finish, the Qatari star settled down to drive his VW Polo conservatively, although still clocking second fastest times on the four competitive sections

and arriving at the finish a full 17 minutes clear of second-placed Panayiotis Yiangou of Cyprus in a Hyundai i20.

A steady drive saw Cyprus' Christos Demosthenous finish third in his Mitsubishi Lancer EVO IX, with countryman Savvas Savva, in a similar car, coming home fourth. The top-five was rounded off by Cypriot Sofianos Rousos in a Lancer EVO X.

A total of 21 crews from Cyprus, Qatar, Oman, Jordan,

Kuwait and France took part in the rally, which began on Friday.

The rally included a total of 11 special stages which were 97 per cent gravel but the last stage was cancelled on Sunday. Six special stages took place on Saturday.

Besides being the fourth round of the MERC, the rally was also one of the rounds of the Pancyprrian Rally Championship.

With the coronavirus pandemic halting the races over the past six months, the Cyprus Rally was only the second round of the MERC 2020 to be held as the Qatar International Rally (April 9-11) and Jordan Rally (September 24-26) were cancelled.

The inaugural MERC round was held in Muscat with Rally Oman in February where Rawahi had finished behind Attiyah.

In Cyprus, Rawahi began well as he maintained good pace on the opening day but on the second day brake issues forced him to slow down and on Sunday, there were further technical glitches in the car.

Rawahi was forced to switch his strategy on the final day and he made sure to finish the rally rather than push for better timings. The strategy worked as he came tenth overall and second in MERC. The podium ceremony took place at the Service Park in Nicosia, where, in line with the FIA's restrictions for the pandemic, spectators were not allowed.

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BA FINED OVER DATA BREACH

British Airways (BA) has been fined £20m by UK's Information Commissioner's Office for a data breach which took place in 2018 and affected more than 400,000 customers

BUSINESS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2020 | MUSCAT DAILY | 09

Transport minister asks to speed up work on Sharqiyah Expressway

Our correspondent
Muscat

A delegation led by H E Eng Said bin Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on Sunday visited the second phase of Sharqiyah Expressway project and the proposed port site for Sur Industrial City.

H E Ma'awali was accompanied by H E Eng Saleem bin Mohammed al Nuaimi, undersecretary for transport at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and a number of specialists.

The minister inspected the remaining 40km part of Sharqiyah Expressway project between Wilayat of Al Kamil wa Al Wafi and Sur. He was briefed by those in-charge of the project about the work progress, action plan, the reasons for construction delay, and time-frame of the project. H E Ma'awali directed to speed up the work on remaining part of the expressway project and open it soon for traffic.



Earlier this year, the ministry opened 206km part of the 246km-long Sharqiyah Expressway project

Earlier this year, the ministry opened 206km part of the 246km-long Sharqiyah Expressway project. The project includes two underpasses, bridges, flyovers, lighting poles, and all the required traffic safety components.

Sharqiyah Expressway is a major national road project linking Muscat Governorate with the governorates of Al-Sharqiyah North and South, passing through Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The project has been constructed due to the growing

traffic on the old single road.

The minister and accompanied delegation also visited Sur Industrial City to inspect the location of the proposed port project in the city. H E Ma'awali was briefed by specialists from the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) on the location and components of the proposed port and its associated services. The minister was accompanied by Hilal bin Hamad al Hassani, CEO of Madayn.

Sohar International posts 29% decline in net profit

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sohar International Bank reported a 29.2 per cent year-on-year decline in its net profit for the first nine months of 2020. The bank's net profit for the nine months period ended September 30, 2020 decreased to RO17.75mn compared to RO25.06mn recorded in the same period of last year.

Sohar International's operating income dropped 5 per cent to RO70.31mn during January - September period of this year against RO74.02mn in the same period of 2019, according to the bank's disclosure submitted to the Muscat Securities Market (MSM). Its operating expenses decreased by 4.7 per cent at



RO32.1mn in the first nine months of 2020 against RO33.67mn in the same period of 2019.

The reduction of bank's net profit includes an increase in net impairment charges and other credit risk provisions for the period in response to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lower oil prices, Sohar International said in its filing to the MSM.

The bank's loan book growth

remain flat this year as net loans and advances marginally increased by 0.4 per cent to RO2.467bn as of September 30, 2020 compared to RO2.477bn a year ago.

'Total assets increased 10.3 per cent with net loans and advances growth flat as Sohar International exercised prudence in its growth strategy given the current economic conditions,' the bank said.

Sohar International recorded a sharp increase in customer deposits which reached to RO2.348bn as of September 30, 2020 from RO1.994bn a year ago. 'Customer deposits increased by 17.8 per cent reflecting Sohar International's strengthening funding and liquidity position,' the bank said

CBO's foreign assets rise 6.1% to RO6.3bn

Muscat - The total foreign assets of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) rose 6.1 per cent in the end of July compared to the same period a year ago.

The CBO's total foreign assets reached to RO6.28bn as of July 2020 compared to the same month of 2019 when it stood at RO5.92bn.

The effective exchange rate index of Omani rial fell by 1.4 per

cent to 104.1 points as of the end of July 2020 compared to 105.6 points in the same period of 2019.

In terms of money supply, the sultanate registered an increase in narrow money supply by 7.8 per cent to RO5.57bn at the end of July 2020. Meanwhile, the broad money supply rose 10 per cent to RO19.06bn during the period as against RO17.33bn a

year ago, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total currency issued at the end of July 2020 stood at RO1.96bn compared to RO1.65bn issued in the same period of 2019, marking a rise of 18.9 per cent, according to NCSI data. ONA



Category: Fashion

And the winner is...

Nadia al Shamsi

Nadia al Shamsi, founder and designer of Mazayen Jewellery, was always an artistic child - even at a young age she would make things instead of playing. Most of her spare time is spent crafting things, and she currently, makes jewellery, paints, designs furniture and creates wall motifs.

After earning her BS in Management, in 2009 Nadia started making jewellery with beads and gemstones, using Oman's heritage and culture to influence her designs, and decided to take her hobby to the next level. She began selling her jewellery from her home studio after attending different courses on jewellery design and silversmithing. She also earned a Diploma in Creative Jewellery from London.

Nadia has taken her creations to different exhibitions, including the 2015 edition of the International London Jewellery Exhibition, Wonders of East in UAE, and Handmade in Oman Exhibition. Her company was selected to feature in the Italian movie 'Il Carnevale della vita' wherein the lead actress wore Mazayen jewellery in two scenes. Mazayen jewellery has also featured in Catwalk SS20 at the International Jewellery London Show, in September 2019, and is currently displayed in luxurious boutiques across Oman, Kuwait, London, Paris, and Melbourne.

HEADLINE PARTNER



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MSM up 0.25% amid weak trading

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) on Sunday rose 0.25 per cent to closed at 3,602.46 points.

Trading activity remained weak during the session. Market turnover dropped nearly 80 per cent to RO795,290 from RO3.9mn recorded on Thursday, while trading volume fell 75 per cent at 5.84mn shares against 23.5mn in the previous session. Market breadth remained slightly negative on Sunday as ten stocks advanced and 12 declined. As many as 16 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

While Financial and Industrial indices decreased by 0.17 per cent and 0.06 per cent respectively, Services index recorded a gain of 0.63 per cent. MSM Sharia index increased 0.55 per cent and

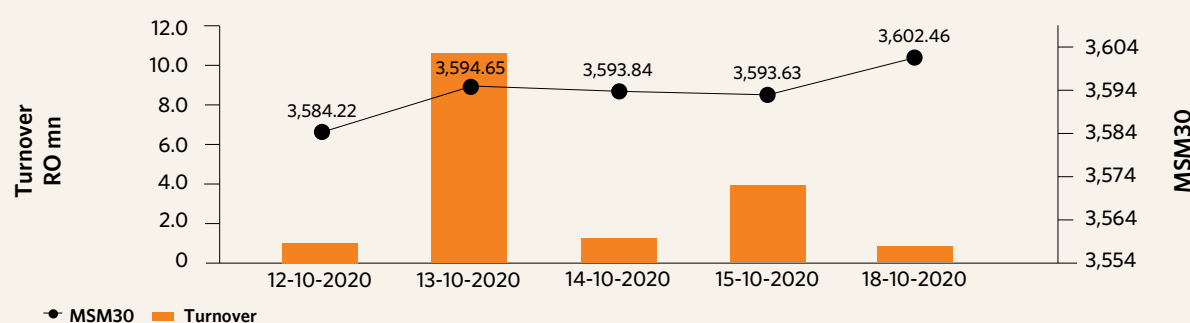


closed at 518.74 points.

Top gainers were Al Jazeera Services (5.59 per cent), SMN Power Holding (5.13 per cent) and BankDhofar (3.88 per

cent). Top losers were United Finance (-8.77 per cent), Gulf Investment Services Holding (-8.51 per cent) and Muscat Finance (-6.98 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Creditors back plan to get India's Jet Airways flying again

New Delhi, India - Creditors on Saturday backed a surprise plan by a consortium to revive Jet Airways 18 months after India's biggest private airline went bankrupt with US\$1.2bn in debt.

London investment fund Kalrock Capital and Dubai-based tycoon Murari Lal Jalan proposed the rescue that was 'duly approved' by a creditors' committee, Jet Airways said in a statement to the Bombay Stock Exchange.

The statement did not give details of the plan but media reports said they had offered to make a payment of about US\$115mn to creditors and equity in the new firm which they wanted to concentrate on international routes.

Creditors, mainly Indian public sector banks, took over Jet Airways in early 2019 but failed to keep it operating as its cash crunch grew. It was finally grounded in April 2019.

On top of its US\$1.2bn debt to



the banks, the airline also faces huge claims from 20,000 former staff, airports and suppliers. Total liabilities could top US\$4bn.

Kalrock Capital, founded by German entrepreneur Florian Fritsch, focuses on real estate and venture capital and has a major investment in electric car maker Tesla. Murari Lal Jalan has built up his fortune from mining, paper manufacturing and trading across several countries.

The consortium will need approval from a government tribunal and India's aviation ministry before sealing the deal to purchase the airline which would

have to reclaim flight slots since given to other airlines.

The move comes despite the crippling blow dealt to the global aviation industry by the coronavirus pandemic which this year brought international flights to a near standstill.

India is still only allowing a slow resumption on domestic routes and very limited international flights.

Bad investments, financial mismanagement, competition from low-cost carriers, high oil prices and a weak rupee led to the collapse of Jet Airways.

AFP

US budget deficit hits record \$3.1tn

Washington, US - The US budget deficit surged 218 per cent to a record US\$3.1tn in the fiscal year ended September 30 due to a massive increase in spending to help the economy weather the coronavirus pandemic, the government announced.

That was more than double the previous record deficit of US\$1.4tn hit in 2009 during the

global financial crisis.

As spending ramped up and tax receipts fell due to the widespread business shutdowns, the Treasury Department said total government US debt soared to US\$26.9tn - larger than the size of the economy which shrunk in the second quarter to less than US\$20tn. The budget gap under President Donald Trump already had been on the rise prior to the

pandemic and hit US\$1tn this year for the first time since 2012 following the massive tax cut passed in late 2017.

Administration officials tried to put a positive spin on the figures, crediting Trump with acting quickly to deploy resources to ease the economic damage for American businesses and families.

AFP

Zoom opens platform for paid events, following Facebook

New York, US - The fast-growing online video app Zoom said it would open its platform to paid events to help performers, teachers and others monetize their activity.

The announcement of the new service called OnZoom comes after a similar initiative by Facebook to help people and groups unable to hold in-person events because of pandemic restrictions.

"The difficult period we are going through has taught us that it's possible to work remotely," said Zoom founder and chief executive Eric Yuan, who announced the new service at the company's Zoomtopia conference.

"The future of communications will be a hybrid of the best physical and virtual practices."

OnZoom will allow users to host and monetize events like yoga classes, concerts, comedy shows and music lessons, according to the company which has seen a surge in usage since the start of the pandemic.

"We were humbled and inspired by all of the amazing ways the world adapted to a literal shutdown of in-person events,"



Zoom founder and chief executive Eric Yuan

Zoom product manager Aleks Swerdlow said.

Among those participating in the beta launch are WW (formerly Weight Watchers); which will host virtual workshops, and Life Rolls, which specializes in adaptive surf and skate events for people with disabilities.

The OnZoom service, which is being launched in the US market ahead of a wider rollout, will allow for paid or free tickets, with an option to donate some of the proceeds to philanthropic organizations.

For the initial launch period, Zoom said it would take no commission on ticket sales.

The company said separately it would begin allowing developers of third party apps for collaboration and productivity to integrate into Zoom under an initiative called Zapps. Initial apps include the online education platform Coursera and the polling app SurveyMonkey.

Zoom has seen a 650 per cent surge in its share price this year, and says it now hosts an average

of more than 300mn users daily including 125,000 schools.

In response to security concerns raised over Zoom in recent months, the company said it would begin a test rollout of end-to-end encryption. "We announced in May our plans to build an end-to-end-encrypted meeting option into our platform, on top of Zoom's already strong encryption and advanced security features," said Zoom's chief security engineer Max Krohn.

AFP

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NAV Date	Oct 15, 2020
NAV (OMR)	1.007
Adjusted NAV** (OMR)	1.327
Cash Dividend paid since inception (OMR)	0.03
Unit Dividend paid since inception	28%
YTD Performance	10.74%
Performance since inception	38.27%

* First NAV was issued on 4th March 2010
** Adjusted for cash and bonus dividends

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China passes export law

Beijing, China - China has passed a new law restricting sensitive exports to protect national security, a move that adds to policy tools it could wield against the US as tensions - especially in technology - continue to rise.

The law, which China's top legislature passed on Saturday, comes into effect on December 1

and allows Beijing to 'take reciprocal measures' against countries that abuse export controls and pose a threat to national security.

Technical data related to items covered will also be subject to export controls, according to the published text of the law.

AFP

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Israel, Bahrain formalise diplomatic ties

Israel’s normalisation deals with the UAE and Bahrain have outraged the Palestinians for obvious reasons

Jerusalem - Israel and Bahrain are officially establishing diplomatic relations on Sunday at a ceremony in Manama as the wealthy Gulf region continues to open up to the Jewish state.

An Israeli delegation arrived from Tel Aviv for a one-day trip that will see Israel and Bahrain formalise a US-brokered agreement they signed at the White House on September 15.

The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain became only the third and fourth Arab states to agree to normalise ties with Israel, following Israel’s 1979 peace deal with Egypt and a 1994 pact with Jordan.

A flurry of diplomacy between some of Washington’s key regional allies has handed US President Donald Trump a key foreign policy win as he campaigns for re-election ahead of polls in November.

Bahrain and Israel will ink a ‘joint communique (that) is the establishment of full diplomatic relations’, an official from the Israeli side, led by National Security Council chief Meir Ben Shabbat, told reporters in Manama.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Trump’s special assistant for international negotiations, Avi Berkowitz, travelled



The Bahraini, Israeli and US flags are placed in front of El Al plane ahead of the flight to Bahrain’s capital Manama for a formal launch of diplomatic relations, at Israel’s Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv on Sunday (AFP)

to Tel Aviv before joining the Israeli delegation’s flight to Manama.

“Bahrain is obviously very tied to the Saudi economy and this

gives them, I’m sure, an even broader vision,” Mnuchin told reporters on the Israeli aircraft which flew over Saudi Arabia.

The two sides will be free to

open embassies in each other’s countries after a ceremony scheduled for Sunday evening, the Israeli official said, adding that an Israeli Embassy in Man-

ama could open within months.

“The agreement represents a historical step... to achieve security, peace and a flourishing region,” Bahrain’s Foreign Minister,

Abdullatif al Zayani, said upon the delegation’s arrival.

Israeli delegation chief Shabbat said in Arabic it was a ‘great day’, adding these relations will ‘most likely benefit both sides’.

Before takeoff, he said the aim was ‘to translate into practical plans and concrete agreements the peace declaration that was signed on the White House lawn’.

maintain unity against Israel.

Like Israel, both Manama and Abu Dhabi have vehemently anti-Iran foreign policies and Tehran has slammed the normalisation.

The Gulf monarchies have broken decades of Arab consensus that there would be no relations with the Jewish state until it had made peace with the Palestinians.

Bahrain, unlike the UAE, has a history of open politics and civil society movements, although rights have been curtailed in the past decade.

In a rare display of dissent in the small oil-rich kingdom last month, dozens took to the streets in Abu-Saiba, a Shiite village near Manama, to protest the government’s decision.

In the wake of the Arab Spring protests in 2011, the Sunni monarchy accused thousands of dissidents from the Shiite majority of receiving orders from Iran.

Shabbat said the visit would focus on ‘finance and investments, trade and economy, tourism, aviation, communication, culture, science, technology, agriculture and additional issues’.

Israel said it expected to sign six to eight memorandums of understanding with Bahrain.

AFP

The two sides will be free to open embassies in each other’s countries after a ceremony scheduled for Sunday evening. An Israeli Embassy in Manama could open within months

AN ISRAELI OFFICIAL

The normalisation deals with the UAE and Bahrain have however outraged the Palestinians, who have repeatedly protested and called on Arab states to

UN arms embargo on Tehran gets automatically terminated, says Iran

Tehran, Iran - Iran said a long-standing UN embargo on arms sales to and from the Islamic republic expired on Sunday in line with a 2015 landmark nuclear deal with world powers from which Washington has withdrawn.

Tehran, which could now purchase weapons from Russia, China and elsewhere, has hailed the development as a diplomatic victory over its arch enemy the United States, which had tried to maintain an indefinite freeze on arms sales.

K’As of today, all restrictions on the transfer of arms, related activities and financial services to and from the Islamic Republic of Iran... are all automatically terminated,’ the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The embargo on the sale of conventional arms to Iran was due to start expiring progressively from Sunday, October 18, under the terms of the UN resolution that blessed the 2015 nuclear deal between the Islamic republic and world powers.



This file photo shows Iranians visiting a weaponry and military equipment exhibition organised on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Iranian revolution, in the capital Tehran on February 2, 2019 (AFP)

‘As of today, the Islamic Republic may procure any necessary arms and equipment from any source without any legal restrictions, and solely based on its defensive needs,’ the ministry added in the statement sent out on Twitter.

It insisted that under the terms of the deal, struck with the United States, China, Britain,

France, Germany and Russia, ‘the lifting of arms restrictions and the travel ban were designed to be automatic with no other action required’.

US President Donald Trump withdrew his country from the nuclear deal in 2018 and has unilaterally begun reimposing sanctions on Iran.

But Washington suffered a

setback in August when it failed to win support from the United Nations Security Council to indefinitely extend the arms embargo. It was ‘a momentous day for the international community’, the Iranian ministry said on Sunday, adding the world had stood with Tehran ‘in defiance of the US regime’s efforts’.

AFP

Egypt releases satirist after two years in jail: Family

Cairo, Egypt - An Egyptian activist and satirist detained for more than two years has been released, his family has announced.

Shady Abu Zeid was arrested in May 2018 and held in pre-trial detention over charges of ‘membership of a banned group’ and ‘disseminating false news’, according to rights group Amnesty International.

‘Shady was released under judicial supervision, and is now at home with us,’ his sister Rola Abu Zeid wrote on Facebook on Saturday.

The Cairo-based Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) said a court specialising in terrorism made the decision on October 10.

Pre-trial detention can last up to two years under Egyptian law, but the period is often extended.

Abu Zeid was part of a satirical television talk show before the authorities halted its broadcast, and he also posted videos on social media.



This file photo shows Shady Abu Zeid flanked by security personnel as he stands to receive condolences after the death of his father

In 2016, he courted controversy with a video that showed him giving balloons made out of condoms to security forces in Cairo’s Tahrir Square on Egypt’s national police day.

Rights groups say the government of President Abdel Fattah al Sisi has been curtailing freedoms since he took office in 2014, after the army’s ouster of

late Islamist president Mohamed Morsi the year before. Comedians, academics, bloggers, journalists, political dissidents, lawyers and activists are among those who have been jailed.

Earlier this year, Egypt faced international condemnation for the death in custody of 24 year old film-maker Shady Habash.

AFP

Turkish Cypriots vote amid eastern Mediterranean tensions

Nicosia, Cyprus - Turkish-held northern Cyprus, a breakaway state recognised only by Ankara, was voting on Sunday for a new leader in a run-off election held amid heightened tensions in the eastern Mediterranean.

The presidential vote pits incumbent Mustafa Akinci (72) - who supports reunification with the majority Greek-speaking Republic of Cyprus in the south - against the rightwing Turkish nationalist Ersin Tatar.

Tatar (60), who advocates a two-state solution, now holds the title of prime minister in the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). He has controversially received the open backing of Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Under Erdogan, Turkey has become an increasingly assertive regional power that is now engaged in a bitter dispute with EU states Greece and Cyprus over

oil and gas reserves in eastern Mediterranean waters.

The European Union has deplored Turkey’s move and warned Ankara against further ‘provocations’ while multiple countries have staged military drills in the region in recent months.

One voter, Said Kenan (76) said Sunday’s election was ‘very important for me and for the community and for the Turkish Cypriots’, adding that he backed Akinci’s hopes for a ‘federal solution’ for the island divided since 1974.

Sunday’s second-round ballot was triggered after Tatar won 32 per cent of the vote on October 11 ahead of Akinci, who garnered just under 30 per cent in a field of 11 candidates.

But Akinci was seen to be in a stronger position now, having won the backing of Tufan Erhurman, a fellow Social Democrat,



Turkish-Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci and his wife Meral cast their ballots at a voting station in the northern part of Nicosia, during the second-round of the presidential election on Sunday (AFP)

who came third last time around.

The 738 polling stations were due to close at 6.00pm.

The polls come amid an economic crisis deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has largely shuttered the tourism

sector and led to the closure of Ercan airport in the north and crossing points to the south.

The TRNC, now with a population of about 300,000, was established after the north was occupied by Turkey in 1974 in re-

action to a coup that aimed to annex Cyprus to Greece.

Earlier in October, Turkish troops angered the Republic of Cyprus by reopening public access to the fenced-off seaside ghost town of Varosha for the

first time since Turkish forces invaded the north. That move drew EU and UN criticism and sparked demonstrations in the Republic of Cyprus, which exercises its authority over the island’s southern two-thirds, separated from the north by a UN-patrolled buffer zone.

On the eve of the vote, Greek-Cypriot protesters again massed, at a checkpoint along the so-called ‘Green Line’, holding signs that read ‘Cyprus is Greek’ and demanding the return of northern territories.

Turkey has repeatedly said it seeks to defend Turkish and Turkish Cypriots’ rights in the eastern Mediterranean against a group of nations including Greece and Cyprus. But Akinci’s relationship with Ankara has come under strain, especially after he described the prospect of the north’s annexation by Turkey as ‘horrible’ in February.

When Akinci took office in 2015, he was hailed as the leader best placed to revive peace talks.

But hopes were dashed in July 2017 after UN-mediated negotiations collapsed in Switzerland, notably over the question of the withdrawal of tens of thousands of Turkish soldiers stationed in the TRNC.

“The results of the first round tell us this: Half of the Turkish Cypriot community defend a federation despite all kinds of pressure,” Umut Bozkurt, vice dean and assistant professor at Eastern Mediterranean University, told AFP.

“This election was dominated more by Turkey-northern Cyprus relations than the Cyprus issue.”

The first round’s results show that a significant part of the electorate seek to be free of ‘pressure’ from Ankara and to live in a united Cyprus, she added.

AFP

Karabakh rivals trade accusations of breaking new ceasefire deal

Stepanakert, Azerbaijan - Armenia and Azerbaijan accused each other of violating a new ceasefire on Sunday, as they tried for the second time in a week to bring a halt to fighting over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The former Soviet neighbours agreed to a truce from midnight following a push by international mediators for a stop to three weeks of heavy clashes over Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian region that broke from Azerbaijan's control in the 1990s.

A previous ceasefire agreed a week ago fell apart amid mutual accusations and continued fighting that has left hundreds dead and forced tens of thousands from their homes.

The new ceasefire deal was announced after one of the deadliest attacks on civilians so far on Saturday, when a missile strike hit a residential area of Azerbaijan's second city Ganja, killing 13 people including small children.

The two sides have described the agreement as a 'humanitarian truce' to allow for the exchange of prisoners and bodies.

Armenia's Defence Ministry said Azerbaijani forces had violated the new ceasefire only minutes after it took effect, firing artillery shells and rockets in the early hours of Sunday.

Its Foreign Ministry said Azerbaijan had also launched an attack in a southern area of the Karabakh frontline 'demonstrat-



A relative mourn during the funeral of a couple and their daughter killed in a rocket attack, in the city of Ganja, Azerbaijan, on Saturday (AFP)

ing to the international community its treacherous nature, which we have been dealing with for decades'.

Decades-old conflict

Azerbaijan's Defence Ministry accused Armenian forces of firing artillery and mortar shells in various directions and of launch-

ing early-morning attacks along the frontline.

Armenia was in 'gross violation' of the ceasefire and showing 'open disrespect' for the efforts of international mediators, the Foreign Ministry in Baku said.

Azerbaijan and Armenia have been locked in a bitter conflict over Karabakh since Armenian

separatists backed by Yerevan seized control of the mountainous province in a 1990s war that left 30,000 people dead.

The region's declaration of independence has not been recognised by any country, even Armenia, and it is still part of Azerbaijan under international law.

The fighting that broke out three weeks ago has been the heaviest since a 1994 ceasefire and has threatened to draw in regional powers Turkey, which backs Azerbaijan, and Russia, which has a military alliance with Armenia.

An AFP journalist in Karabakh's main city Stepanakert

said the night had been calm on Sunday and that, unlike during previous days, sounds of explosions could not be heard coming from frontline areas.

But after the failure of other ceasefire attempts and decades of mistrust, there was little hope among city residents that a truce would take hold.

'We can't trust them'

"Our country is ready to respect the ceasefire but the others will not... We can't trust them," Sveta Petrosyan, a 65 year old with two sons at the front, told AFP outside her apartment.

Stepanakert has come under

Aliyev described the Ganja attack as a war crime and vowed his army would 'take revenge on the battlefield'.

In Azerbaijan's frontline town of Terter, residents told AFP there had been some shelling around midday but that Sunday was the quietest it had been in several days.

"I don't know if the ceasefire will last and I don't care," said Elshad Rezaev (35). "They killed our women and children. All I want to do is pick up a gun and go fight them so that this is finished forever."

The clashes over Karabakh that erupted on September 27 have left more than 700 dead, including scores of civilians on both sides.

The real death toll is probably much higher, as most of the deaths have been reported among Armenian separatist forces and Azerbaijan has not released any figures on its military casualties.

Azerbaijan says it has retaken significant territory in areas along the frontline, including two regional centres - Jabrayil and Fizuli - in a no-man's land splitting Nagorno-Karabakh proper from territory under Azerbaijani control. It also claims to have taken several areas of strategic high ground.

Analysts say its gains may be enough for Baku to declare a halt to the fighting ahead of winter.

AFP

They [Armenia] killed our women and children. All I want to do is pick up a gun and go fight them

ELSHAD REZAYEV

Bolivians fear 'upheaval' as general election starts

La Paz, Bolivia - Voters expect social upheaval for the second time in a year no matter who wins Sunday's general election in Bolivia.

Polls open at 8.00am in an election that will not feature former president Evo Morales for the first time in 20 years.

It comes a year after Morales stood for, and won, an unconstitutional fourth term in a controversial election last year that sparked weeks of protests.

Morales, who resigned and fled into exile, is barred from taking part this time around but his successor as leader of the Movement for Socialism (MAS) party, Luis Arce, has topped every poll since he was nominated in January.

Tensions have been running high with MAS warning of a pending 'fraud' and threatening to protest should they not get their way, while misinformation has been circulating freely.

"Obviously there will be social upheaval... we just hope it won't last long," Clara Quitalba (49) from the MAS bastion of EL Alto on the outskirts of La Paz, told AFP.

Last year protests broke out against Morales' victory following a 24 hour halt in the live, transparent vote count that saw the incumbent's lead jump dramatically once it resumed.

A later audit by the Organization of American States found clear evidence of fraud.

"Hopefully it will be calm because we don't want to go through what happened last year. It was terrible," said Renata Zapata (24) in La Paz.

The protests didn't end with Morales' exile as his supporters took to the streets in turn.

In total, the unrest left 36 dead and 800 injured.



Bolivian army personnel conduct flag march on the eve of general elections, in La Paz on Saturday (AFP)

'End of a cycle'

Arce is expected to win Sunday's first round but the question is whether the 57 year old can achieve the required 40 per cent with a ten-point lead to avoid a run-off.

Polls suggest centrist former president Carlos Mesa (67) will take enough votes to ensure there is a run-off, which he would be expected to win with the other four candidates likely to then endorse him.

"While the margin will be close, we remain of the view that Mesa will take the race to a 29 November runoff, which he would be favoured to win," said Eurasia Group's analyst for Brazil and Bolivia, Filipe Gruppelli Car-

valho. But there is reason to be hopeful of a return to democracy and stability after Morales tried to hold onto power despite the constitution limiting a president to two successive terms.

"It's the end of a cycle of the Evo Morales government and the political crisis," political scientist Carlos Cordero from the Catholic University, told AFP. Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, ruled for nearly 14 years.

"We hope a process to strengthen the (political) institutions will begin," added Cordero.

Observer missions from the European Union, OAS and the Carter Center will be present during the elections.

AFP

12 killed, scores hurt in Afghan bomb blast

Herat, Afghanistan - A car bomb on Sunday targeting an Afghan police headquarters in the western province of Ghor killed at least 12 civilians and wounded more than 100, officials said.

The attack took place in Feroz Koh, the capital of Ghor, a province that has not seen much violence compared to some other regions of the conflict-racked country.

The Interior Ministry said the car bomb detonated in front of Ghor police headquarters at about 11.00am.

"The terrorists detonated an explosives-filled car... as a result 12 civilians were killed and more than 100 people were wounded," the ministry said.



Security personnel and residents gather around the site of a car bomb attack that targeted an Afghan Police headquarters in Feroz Koh, the capital of Ghor Province on Sunday (AFP)

Juma Gul Yakooobi, a Ghor health official, told AFP victims also included members of security forces.

No group has claimed responsibility, but fighting between the

Taliban and government has surged in recent weeks.

"The explosion was very powerful," said Aref Abir, spokesman to Ghor governor.

"There are fatalities and casu-

alties, and people are taking them to hospitals."

He said the blast damaged nearby buildings handling affairs for women and the disabled.

AFP

Early release for murderer who used narwhal tusk to foil London attack: Media

London, UK - A convicted murderer who used a narwhal tusk to help stop a terror attack by a knife-wielding radical will likely have his sentence reduced after Britain's Queen Elizabeth intervened, according to media reports.

Steven Gallant was on day release at an event for reformed prisoners at the Fishmonger's Hall in London in November 2019 when terror convict Usman Khan went on a knife rampage, killing two people and wounding three.

Gallant and other members of the public were hailed as heroes for preventing even greater loss of life by tackling Khan with a 1.5m narwhal tusk and a fire extinguisher before police shot him dead.

The Ministry of Justice said on Saturday the Queen had employed the little-used 'Royal Prerogative of Mercy' to bring



This file photo shows a hoarding displaying a photo of Queen Elizabeth with her optimistic words on COVID-19, in London (AFP)

Gallant's case before the parole board ten months early, according to the Press Association news agency.

"The Lord Chancellor has granted Steven Gallant a Royal Prerogative of Mercy... in recognition of his exceptionally brave

actions at Fishmongers' Hall, which helped save people's lives despite the tremendous risk to his own," PA said.

The parole board will make the final decision and is likely to give Gallant his freedom, PA added.

The two killed in the London attack - Saskia Jones (23) and Jack Merritt (25) - were working on a meeting on prisoner rehabilitation that Khan attended.

Gallant had also met Merritt through the programme.

Merritt's father David (55) told the *Daily Mirror* that he 'fully deserves this pardon, or reduction in sentence'.

"It is fantastic. He was very close to Jack and he turned his life around and reformed. I am really pleased for him," Gallant was jailed for a minimum of 17 years in 2005 for the murder of a fireman outside a pub.

AFP

Their voice is vital: Thai celebrities break silence on democracy protests

Bangkok, Thailand - A K-pop superstar, beauty queens and TV personalities are among a growing wave of celebrities backing Thailand's pro-democracy movement, sending out messages of support to millions of followers on social media.

Political statements are unusual from Thai celebrities, whose lucrative endorsements rely on the billionaire clans that are a pillar of the country's establishment. But some prominent figures broke cover after police fired water cannon at peaceful protesters in Bangkok on Friday.

Thai-American K-Pop idol Nichkhun, better known as the 'Thai Prince', told his 6.9mn Twitter followers he cannot 'stand idly by' after Friday's scenes, an escalation after months of student-led protests.

"The use of violence is something I cannot watch and stand idly by," said Nichkhun, a member of ultra-popular South Korean boy band 2PM, in a message that was retweeted by tens of thousands within hours.

"Violence has never helped anything. I hope everyone stays safe... and take care of yourselves."

Friday's showdown was the first such use of force against the protesters, who are calling for the resignation of Premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha, a former military chief brought to power in a 2014 coup, and demanding reforms to the powerful monarchy.

It followed a tense week in the Thai capital when protesters defied a ban on demonstrations, and the arrests of scores of leading activists, to return to the streets in their tens of thousands.

Nichkhun wasn't the only celebrity to speak up. Amanda Obdam, the newly crowned Miss Universe Thailand, took to Instagram with pictures of a lone protester pushing against riot police wielding their shields.

'A picture says a thousand words,' the Thai-Canadian model wrote. 'Your job is to protect the people not harm them.'

Previously, many stars have remained conspicuously silent



Pro-democracy protesters give the three-finger salute at Asok during an anti-government rally as they continue for the fourth consecutive day to defy an emergency decree banning gatherings, in Bangkok on Sunday (AFP)

We've had a lot of injustice going on in Thailand for decades. People have been silenced from speaking up about the double standards and the abuse of power

WANCHALEARM SATSAKSIT

on hot-button issues in celebrity-obsessed Thailand, where their careers and income are closely tied to product endorsements.

Alienating potential employers may be a reason - especially in a kingdom where every sector hums along under the oversight of the multi-billion-dollar busi-

ness empires, traditional supporters of the ultra-wealthy royal family.

But business student Min, who arrived at Saturday's protest with a helmet and a gas mask, said celebrities have a moral obligation to speak up.

"They are in the elite alongside

the government," the 18 year old said. "Their voice is vital."

That voice grew louder this week. Another former beauty queen, TV personality Maria Poolnertlarp, said in a video on Facebook that the treatment of protesters was 'completely unjust'.

She had grown more vocal since the July disappearance of Thai pro-democracy activist Wanchalearm Satsaksit, who was kidnapped off the streets of Cambodia where he lived in self-exile.

"People have been silenced from speaking up about the dou-

ble standards and the abuse of power," she said in tears, switching between Thai and English.

"We've had a lot of injustice going on in Thailand for decades, fighting against our government for democracy," she added.

Seated next to Maria in the video was her partner Wannasigh Prasertkul, a television presenter whose parents were part of a student movement that saw a massacre in 1976 by royalist forces in Bangkok.

Even some celebrities who have mixed with Thailand's leaders have spoken out. Popular girl band BNK48 visited Prayut at

Government House in 2018, where officially released photos showed the normally gruff premier chatting cheerfully with the group.

The visit drew ire from critics who saw it as an attempt to soften the image of the former army chief, who masterminded the 2014 coup and retained power in controversial elections last year.

But BNK48 member Milin 'Namneung' Dokthian left no room for doubt about her feelings in a message urging protesters to 'stay safe' this week.

'We wouldn't have to say 'be

safe' if we had a true democracy,' she wrote on Facebook, in a post shared by fellow band-members.

The support from some celebrities, and silence from others, are not lost on the young protesters. Juggling goggles and a helmet at Saturday's protest, 25 year old Aim scoffed at those who refuse to speak up.

"Perhaps they are out of touch and have grown up in a (privileged) situation," she said, adding that the fans are paying attention. "We will abandon them because they are ignorant people and are silent."

AFP

Landslide kills 11 soldiers in Vietnam; 11 missing

Hanoi, Vietnam - Eleven soldiers are dead and a frantic search is under way for 11 others after a huge landslide hit central Vietnam on Sunday, as the country battles its worst flooding in years.

Heavy rain has pounded the region for more than a week and at least 64 people have been killed in floods and landslides, according to Vietnam's disaster management authority, with concerns mounting that waters could rise further.

Rocks rained down on the barracks of a military station in Quang Tri province, with 22 soldiers believed to have been buried underneath thick mud, an official government website said.

"From 2am, there have been four to five landslides, exploding like bombs and it feels like the whole mountain is about to collapse," said local official Ha Ngoc Duong, according to the VnExpress news site.

Lieutenant General Phan Van Giang, the army's chief of general staff, warned there could be further landslides in the area and said rescuers needed to find a safer way to access the site.

Eleven bodies have been recovered so far, the government



Military personnel search for missing soldiers at the site of a landslide in central Vietnam's Quang Tri Province on Sunday (AFP)

said. It comes just days after 13 members of a rescue team were found dead after a failed attempt to save workers from a hydropower plant engulfed by a landslide.

The bodies of two employees at the plant have been found but 15 are still missing.

River levels in Quang Tri had reached their highest in two decades, state media said.

The disaster management authority raised its risk alert warning to the second highest level on Sunday, warning of further flooding and landslides.

Vietnam is prone to natural disasters and regularly suffers more than a dozen storms each year, often bringing flooding and landslides.

More than 130 people were reported dead or missing in natural disasters around the country last year, the General Statistics Office said.

Cambodia has also been hit by heavy flooding and the death toll there jumped to 20 on Saturday, including six children, according to disaster management authorities.

AFP

Australia's second-biggest city eases lockdown as coronavirus cases fall

Melbourne, Australia - Lockdown restrictions in Australia's second-biggest city were eased slightly on Sunday following a steady decline in new coronavirus cases, but officials stopped short of ending a controversial 'stay-at-home' rule.

More than 100 days after the lockdown was imposed on Melbourne's five million residents to fight an out-of-control surge of COVID-19 cases, authorities said that as of midnight they were lifting a two-hour limit on the time people could spend outside their homes for permitted activities.

They also extended from five to 25km the distance people could travel from their homes for several activities, including exercise, shopping for essentials, socialising and work in essential professions.

But Daniel Andrews, the premier of Victoria state which encompasses Melbourne, rejected growing calls for an end to all limits on people being able to leave their homes and for a broader reopening of restaurants and other retail businesses.

He said the stay-at-home rule could be lifted and other business restrictions eased on No-



People have a picnic in a park after the state government announced lifting of some restrictions as the city battles a second wave of COVID-19, in Melbourne on Sunday (AFP)

ember 1 if community transmission of the virus remains under control.

"I'm not doing what is popular, I am doing what is safe, because we don't want to be back here again if there is a new wave of infections, Andrews said.

The number of new daily coronavirus cases in Victoria has fallen to low single digits for the past several days, after running at up to several hundred in August.

The outbreak in Victoria came after other parts of Australia had successfully contained the epidemic and begun to reopen their economies, notably in neighbouring New South Wales, which includes Sydney.

Conservative politicians in other states, and the federal government, have been increasingly critical of Andrews' centre-left government for maintaining the strict lockdown in Victoria, saying it was undermining national

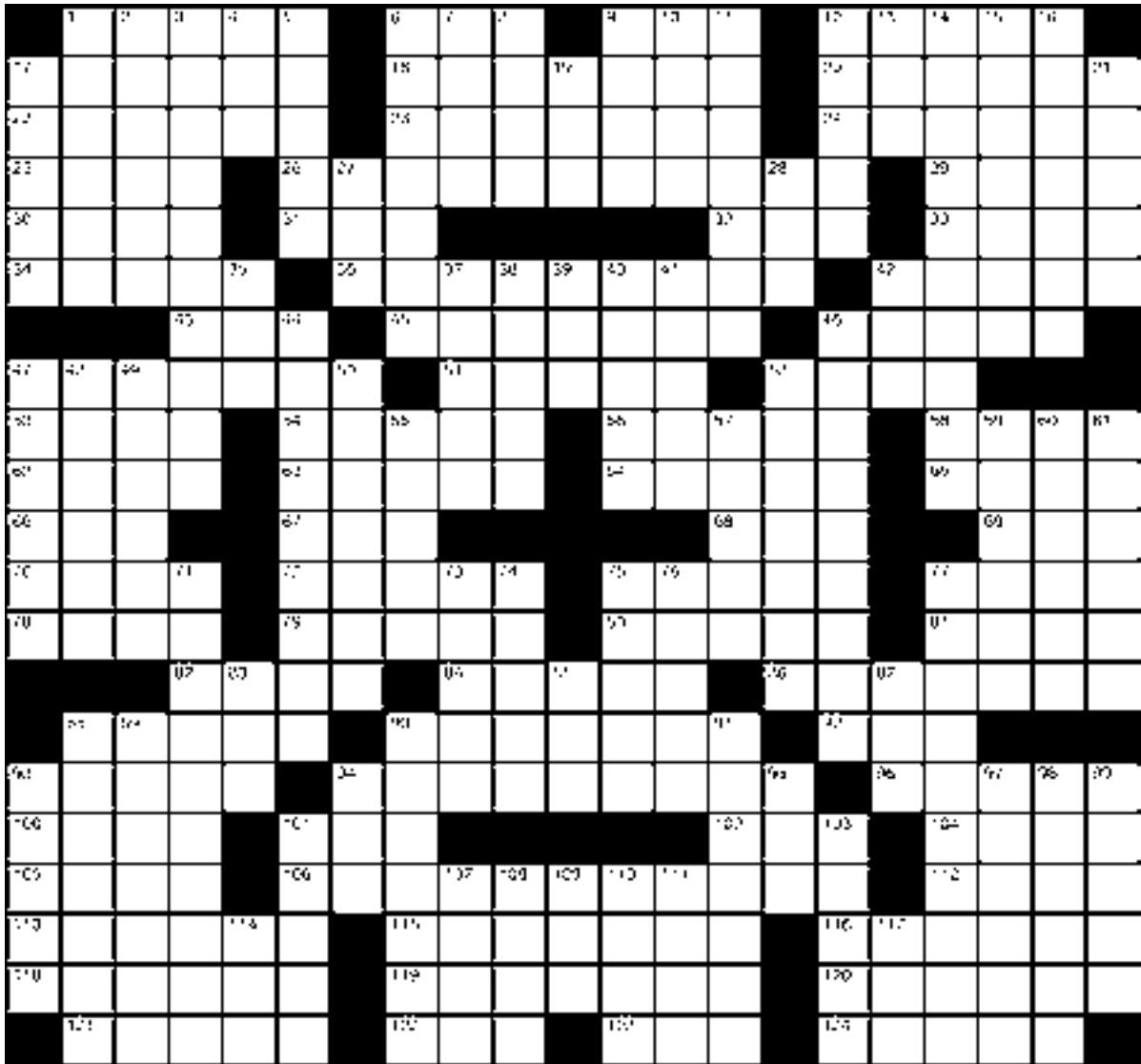
recovery efforts.

'Every day Victoria remains under restrictions... comes at a heavy cost,' Prime Minister Scott Morrison said in a joint statement on Sunday with his Treasurer and Health Minister.

They urged Andrews to speed up the reopening of businesses, particularly in the restaurant and hospitality sector, which they said was losing 1,000 jobs every day of the lockdown.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Leading lady Davis
6 Mas’ mates
9 TV alternate
12 “The Fabulous ____ Boys”
17 ____ in: liquidated
18 Site of Tallinn
20 Expressed a view
22 Former L.A. Dodger pitcher Claude
23 Nimoy of “Star Trek”
24 Journal
25 Holy Roman emperor
26 Aging star movie for 1 Across
29 Storm or Gordon
30 Baltic canal
31 Observe
32 New World org.
33 Eternities
34 Enclosures
36 Star on the skids movie for 1 Across
42 Templeton, Guinness et al.
43 Mire
45 Standing room only
46 “The Daily ____”
47 Soft-shell clam
51 Angry with

- 52 Dry stream bed
53 Sun helmet
54 Nicholas and John
56 Doctrine
58 Footless creature
62 Desertlike
63 Barbara and Anthony
64 Spells
65 Titled woman
66 “Diamond ____”
67 Flick
68 Amin
69 Neighbor of Cal.
70 Pretty soon
72 Filmings
75 Toms and bucks
77 “____ Hai”
78 ‘60’s dancer?
79 Actress Massey
80 Responsive
81 Harbinger
82 Courts
84 Duplicate
86 With irregular edges
88 Sofa
90 Emissaries
92 Comic Buttons
93 Casa dweller
94 Evil genius TV movie for 1 Across
96 Potter’s Rabbit
100 Lamarr

- 101 Family member
102 Gibson or Torme
104 Jezebel, to
1 Across
105 Samoan port
106 Twin roles movie for 1 Across
112 Metalware
113 40th Prez
115 In the customary way
116 Played the ham
118 Group of nine
119 Saloon serving
120 Crouches in fear
121 Poet Teasdale
122 Adjudicate
123 Roofer’s sealant
124 NY explorer
Hudson
DOWN
1 Corsica’s former capital
2 Persian queen
3 Unwed mother role for 1 Across
4 Links elevator
5 Ferber et al.
6 Melisande’s true love
7 Offshore
8 Small stump
9 Two-toed sloth

- 10 Bourbon Street’s Al
11 Photographic technique
12 Tree trunks
13 King Kong, for one
14 Boxer’s girlfriend movie for 1 Across
15 Busies
16 Return to office
17 After-school treat
19 Yoko
21 Little black ____
27 Headed
28 Duct
35 Aggregate
37 YWCA sign?
38 Toaster’s handful
39 Professor deg.
40 Hollywood director
Hal
41 Scandalous
42 DDE opponent
44 Pianist movie for 1 Across
46 1931 debut role for 1 Across
47 “____ 17”
48 City SW of Milano
49 Closing words
50 Certain tires
52 Garden clearers
55 Lizard
57 Banish
59 “____ Hattie”
60 Brunch favorite

- 61 Andy of Westerns
71 Sheltered spinster movie for 1 Across
73 Concluded
74 Asian antelope
75 Dull surfaced
76 Succulent plants
77 Flirtatious wife movie for 1 Across
83 Crew member
85 Highland beret
87 Sen. counterpart
88 Enhances
89 One of the Joneses
90 Finale
91 Alike
93 Portion
94 Prefix for lead or laid
95 Ship’s clock
97 10 Down, in a way
98 Queen of whodunits
99 Tall grass plants
101 Historic Vegas hotel
103 Hanger-on
107 Eskers
108 Moonstruck: var.
109 NYC winter time
110 Night, in Paris
111 A Turner
114 Motorists’ org.
117 A Stogge brother

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Today’s cosmos are packed with uplifting action. Your ruling planet, self-assertive Mars, squares off to Jupiter, leaving you to wrestle with big choices that affect your current level of growth around identity and career matters. Be mindful of biting off more than you can chew with your workload, but don’t hold back from your intuitive need for a breakthrough to greener pastures.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It’s hard not to tap into the optimism that’s permeating the day ahead. Let loose as the moon roams through Sagittarius, which gears you up to indulge in pleasurable leisure time or a cherished creative activity. At the same time, magnetic Venus and self-assertive Mars receive a supportive hand from dream-big Jupiter, helping boost opportunities around the work and financial front.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It’s hard not to feel good! Your ruling planet, bountiful Jupiter, receives a sweet caress from Venus this afternoon. This helps boost your self-confidence and can attract positive opportunities on the career front. Elsewhere, aggressive Mars also contacts Jupiter, potentially creating some friction around romantic or creative endeavours that require a balanced head to handle.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You’re likely to be feeling larger than life. Why not revel in it? Your ruling planet, Venus, aligns positively with dream-big Jupiter, helping you access an easy flow of positivity and utilise increased charm and charisma in social settings. Meanwhile, the Sagittarius moon urges you to seek intimate relations, so reach out to the special someone who’s been on your mind.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your whole body is likely to feel like it’s buzzing with an electric energy. Your ruling planet, Mercury, is to blame as it locks into a tense opposition with rebellious Uranus. Revelations and overthinking go hand-in-hand with this combination, so try to find a happy medium for letting new information seep in. Your desire for freedom is likely to be stronger than usual too.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

It’s hard to tell if you want to hide away or put your best foot forward. Charming Venus spends the day in a sweet embrace with bountiful Jupiter, helping bring a magnetised and undeniable flair to any situation that requires active self-expression. Meanwhile, hotheaded Mars squares off to Jupiter too, stirring up more issues to be dealt with on the home front.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It’s easy to feel overstimulated by your environment. Your ruling planet, Mercury, finds itself entangled in the electric field of revelation-bringer Uranus. When these two planets tango, your nervous system runs on high alert and your mind can feel like it’s been struck by lightning, as revelations come washing in. Pay attention to any changes making themselves known around work.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Let the good times roll today, Libra! Your ruling planet, bond-building Venus, harmoniously aligns with faith-instilling Jupiter this afternoon, helping you receive a much needed boost of optimism around the more trying matters you’ve been dealing with at home. Your charisma and appeal are likely to be on point as well, so don’t be shy about making an appearance!



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Don’t keep to yourself. You’re craving a fulfilling connection to others at the same time that you find yourself processing some profound emotional material. Bond-building Venus aligns with faith-instilling Jupiter this afternoon, helping you mend any tricky intimacy issues that have come up. Self-assertive Mars adds some edge to your communication as it squares off to Jupiter.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

A variety of conversations paint the cosmic landscape today. Energetic Mars and charming Venus spend the day deep in talks with Jupiter—helping permeate the atmosphere with an air of opportunity around social relationships and providing a general feeling of optimism. Mercury shares an exchange with Uranus, helping you see new creative visions to apply towards your goals.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Be mindful of the financial decisions you choose to make. You might feel tempted to pull the trigger on something out of your budget, as your ruling planet, Mars, locks into an encounter with do-it-bigger Jupiter. Otherwise, good vibes permeate your social sphere with a little help from sweet Venus, but expect partnership matters to present a few surprises today too.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It’s time to push your career goals forward. Monday’s skies work to boost your visibility and enhance your social presence among people who can help make your dreams come true. This is all thanks to magnetic Venus and energetic Mars interacting with dream-big Jupiter. Put yourself out there and reap the rewards of using your voice. Do be mindful of your finances today.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. In cricket, the two sets of wickets are

- a. 18 yards apart
b. 20 yards apart
c. 22 yards apart
d. 24 yards apart

2. India’s first indigenous helicopter was successfully flown in Bangalore on

- a. August 30, 1992
b. August 30, 1982
c. August 30, 1990
d. None of the above

3. In which of the followings places was the last Winter Olympics Games held?

- a. Albertville
b. Lillehammer
c. Sochi, Russia
d. Salt Lake City (USA)

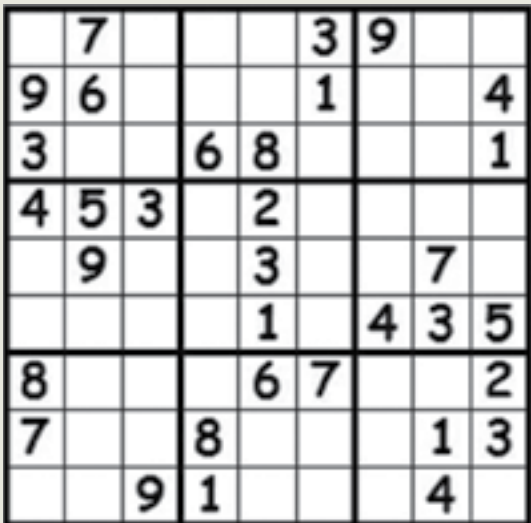
Answers: 1. c, 2. a, 3. c

KIDS COLOURING



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



BOGGLER



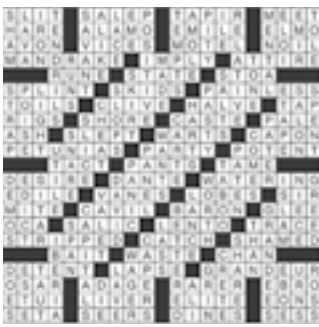
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (OCTOBER 18)

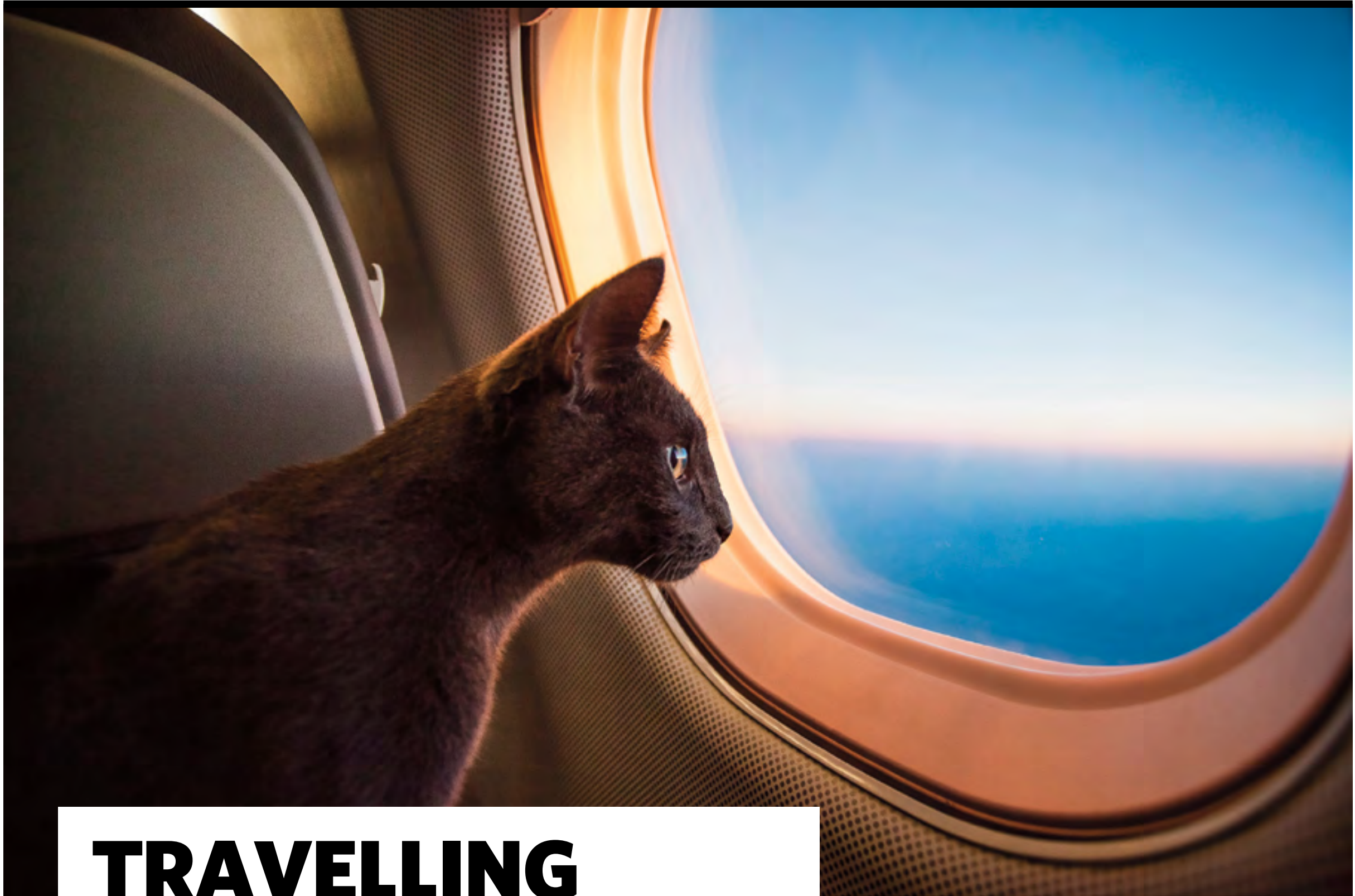


WORD BUILDER

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





TRAVELLING WITH YOUR CAT?

If you need to travel with your pet cat, because you are moving out of town or the country and have no other option, you need to plan well in advance, especially if you plan to take your pet along on the same flight. Consider these few tips to make the journey less stressful for the cat as well as yourself:

Travel by car
The first thing is to make sure that your cat is comfortable and safe, so put your cat in a large sturdy carrier in which it can stand up and stretch and turn around easily. Cover the bottom of the carrier with some type of padding and secure the carrier with a seatbelt. If you are in a car accident, you want your cat to be as safe as possible, too.
If it is a short trip, under 6 hours, then your cat will

The ideal way is to keep your cat with you, but that does add significantly to the cost on most airlines, while some airlines do not allow pets in the cabin

be just fine but if it is a longer trip, you may want to let your cat out of the carrier periodically to drink water or use the litter box. Once you have arrived at

your destination, if you are moving into a new home, try and minimise your cat's stress as much as possible by keeping it confined to just one room.

Travel by plane
There are two ways for your cat to travel by plane - in the cargo hold or in the cabin with you. The ideal way is to keep your cat with you, but that does add significantly to the cost on most airlines, while some airlines do not allow pets in the cabin.
Show up early at the airport to complete all formalities at your earliest. If you are, say, number three in queue among those with pets, and the airline allows only two pets in the cabin, then you will be forced to send your cat to cargo.
Be also sure that you have an airline approved carrier, and if in doubt, take it to the airport well before

the day of your flight to verify. Have a cloth cover that covers the openings in the carrier so your cat cannot see what is going on around - the less they see, the less stress they will experience.
Keep your cat's health certificate and other documents on your person as well as one set taped to the carrier somewhere. Also, regardless of whether your cat is traveling in the cabin or in the cargo hold, withhold food the night before and the morning of the trip, to avoid unpleasant incidents en route. Cats can usually resist the need to urinate until 48 hours, but to be assured, you may add an absorbent layer to the padding on the inside of the carrier.
Wait until you arrive at your final destination before you take your cat out of the carrier. Airline travel is extremely stressful for cats - give your cat a chance to de-stress first.

4

tips to juggle with family schedules

Due to the coronavirus' impact on our daily routines, we're juggling more than ever. From complex school schedules, to working and living in the same place - it can be difficult to control what's on our plates. In this environment, small steps to improve safety and get organised will make a world of difference. As you navigate school carpools and working remote, consider these recommendations to master the days ahead.

1 Use Sunday to plan the week's meals/ wardrobe
From meal prep to outfit prep, taking time at the beginning of the week to plan Monday-Friday will give you time back. To stay organised, consider purchasing five different colour stickers, each to represent one day of the week. After making five days' worth of lunches or hanging up outfits, stick on the designated sticker.
2 Take steps to implement safety
For confidence and control on the road, upgrade your most critical piece of safety equipment - your tyres. According to a recent study, 70% of parents are opting to drive their kids to school instead of hav-

ing them take the bus. Additionally, 39% of parents are practising more car maintenance, knowing they'll be on the roads more.
3 Utilise cleaning hacks to save time
Instead of a cumbersome cleaning session once a week, clean the house little by little. In fact, you can use products you have lying around the house in unique ways to limit additional trips to the store. For instance, polish chrome and stainless steel fixtures with shaving cream, as recommended by some, or use bleach pens to easily remove dirt from grout. By cleaning up a small amount daily, you'll save time at the weekend and live in a cleaner, healthier home.

4 Don't forget to take care of yourself
With many parents and caregivers taking on more roles and responsibilities, it is important that they take time for themselves. It can appear to be contradictory; however, technology can help with disconnecting quickly and easily. Take a walk while listening to a favourite podcast, use FaceTime to 'see' a friend or download a mindfulness app, which can help your brain stay focused and help diffuse stress. Whether it's time you can squeeze in-between daily tasks or an extra hour you take before the rest of the house wakes up, hold yourself accountable to these virtual self-appointments by adding them to your calendar.
(BPT)



JUST A CLOSER WALK WITH THESE...

Hubert Vaz

Tread softly, don't speak, don't flash a torchlight...you could be just metres away from a several million year old tradition in nature! Thousands of new lives are in the making here and you don't want to be an unwelcome intruder.

As Green Sea Turtles lay their eggs on the moonlit sands of Ras al Jinz beach, in Ras al Hadd wilayat, they aren't quite oblivious of human activity around them. And as batches of curious visitors gather around their nesting pits in the darkness of night, with a spectrum of murmurs which they think are inaudible, the huge, humble amphibians have no option but to stay put with their task.

This is one explicit activity which people from around the world flock to Oman to witness from June to September when the turtles come ashore to lay

NESTING TURTLES AT RAS AL JINZ

their eggs. Located around 250km south of Muscat, Ras Al Jinz beach is one of the largest nesting sites for endangered Green Sea Turtles in the world.

Each year, thousands of sea turtles migrate to the Arabian Peninsula to lay tens of thousands of eggs in a natural habitat which has been preserved by the authorities at the Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve. Visitors are offered a chance to witness the turtles laying eggs during the wee hours while some may even be lucky to spot other species of turtles that pass by, including the Loggerhead, Leatherback, Olive Ridley and Hawksbill turtle.

The beach lies around 60km from Sur City, the capital of A'Sharqiyah South Governorate and is said to have once been a safe haven for ships during



storms. It was proclaimed as a turtle reserve in 1996 in view of the fact that annually turtles come to the shores to lay around 10,000-13,000 eggs. The hatching season is from October to November every year when the hatchlings finally make their waves into the foamy waves to begin a new life, and by and by continue a tradition which their ancestors have been doing for millions of years.

Visitors to the reserve have

the option of either staying in the facility at the reserve or in nearby hotels in Sur. The reserve offers two guided, 1km walks to the beach daily - one late in the evening and one at dawn - which give visitors a chance to see the sea turtles up close in their natural habitat as they each lay around 100-120 eggs in the sand.

The guided tour begins in the main reserve centre before which visitors are divided into batches, and they later depart to

the beach along with guides who deliver elaborate instructions to maintain silence, not use torchlights or do anything that would disturb the habitat of the turtles.

The walk in the dark, cool sands is real fun, as one approaches the nesting site in silence, to be beckoned by the guide to form a ring around a nesting turtle. What you then see is something to be captured for posterity but one has to do it clandestinely, without flashes or

sounds, so as not to disturb the huge turtle which has to labour for hours to lay its immense batch of eggs.

While the late evening walk has its own beauty, accompanied by the sounds of insects and the waves ashore, the dawn walk has a unique charm, as one gets an opportunity to see the horizon light up in varied hues of amber, crimson and gold while seagulls announce the culmination of your trip with their shrill cries.

Dos and Don'ts

- At Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve, booking your tickets or stay in advance is highly recommended to avoid disappointment.

- The walks are usually conducted at 8:30pm and 5:30am but these timings can be changed by the authorities, depending on the prevailing situation at the beach.

- The peak turtle nesting season is from June to September but a few turtles can be spotted throughout the year.

- It is advisable to go to the beach with a guide as they know well where to spot nesting turtles. You don't want to end up trampling a pile of freshly laid eggs!

- Don't attempt to be smart and use your camera flash for a quick photo of a nesting turtle - you might end up disturbing them and compel them to abandon their task.

- Noise, too, is unwelcome at the beach. So avoid whispering or exclaiming - do that when you get back to your hotel.

- Explanation to young children may be done before or after the trip to the beach. Avoid being an ideal parent in front of the turtles, they don't applaud your parenting skills.



Category: Finance

And the winner is...

Ilham al Hamaid

Ilham Murtadha Habib al Hamaid, deputy general manager of Large Corporates at Bank Muscat, has been a banker for the past 19 years and is currently leading a team of approximately 60 people while managing large business corporate portfolios, with a portfolio size of RO 3.3bn, to maintain a successful customer relationship and services. She is involved in the decision making and the strategy planning process of the department to ensure the growth and development of the businesses.

A recipient of many awards and part of many committees within the country for sharing knowledge and experiences to contribute towards the society and economy on a voluntary basis, as well as on behalf of Bank Muscat, Ilham plays a major role in managing people within and outside her organisation.

She had also received an Appreciation Certificate for being an active participant at the SME symposium which took place at Seih Al Shamikhat in Bahla. She has also participated in the Pillar (4) Finance & Investment workshop conducted within the symposium in January 2013.

Mentoring and coaching is part of her day-to-day job, and with excellent networking skills, she not just manages professional challenges but also her own family with explicit ease.

HEADLINE PARTNER



ASSOCIATE PARTNER

