



TUESDAY, 02 MARCH 2021
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27°C/19°C

H E SAYYID BADR AL BUSAIDI, FOREIGN MINISTER, SPOKE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF PALESTINE AND ISRAEL OVER PHONE ON MONDAY. OMAN SUPPORTS ACHIEVING COMPREHENSIVE PEACE THROUGH DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS AND A TWO-STATE SOLUTION WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE.

HM sends written message to Sheikh Mohammed



Dubai, UAE - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a written message to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai. The message deals with bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.

The message was handed over by Dr Sayyid Ahmed Hilal al Busaidi, Oman's ambassador to the UAE, when Sheikh Mohammed received him on Monday. During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed greetings of

His Majesty the Sultan to Sheikh Mohammed along with His Majesty's best wishes of good health and happiness to him and further progress and prosperity to the brotherly people of UAE. His Majesty the Sultan also sent a cable of greetings on Monday to President Milorad

Dodik, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on his country's independence anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his best wishes to President Dodik and the friendly people of his country. ONA

Commercial activities from 8pm to 5am suspended

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Supreme Committee in charge of tackling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has decided to suspend all commercial activities across Oman between 8pm to 5am, from Thursday, March 4, to Saturday, March 20.

In a statement, the Supreme Committee said, 'The suspension includes restaurants and coffee shops within tourist centres and home delivery services. Fuel stations, health institutions and pharmacies are excluded from this suspension.'

The Supreme Committee also decided that students of government schools will continue to receive distance education from Sunday, March 7, to Thursday, March 11. 'The decision on schools will be evaluated in light of the epidemiological situation in the sultanate,' it said.

March 4-20 suspension prompted by data indicating lab-confirmed cases linked to new strains of virus

The Supreme Committee stated that it took the latest measure to suspend commercial activities between 8pm and 5am

due to an increase in hospitalisation of COVID-19-related cases all over the sultanate. 'These numbers exceed the severity indicator,' it stated.

The committee confirmed that the spike in infections is related to travel. 'Data also indicates lab-confirmed cases linked to new strains - among them the South African variant - that caused a local spillover and the emergence of hotbeds in the sultanate's governorates.'

The committee urged all members of the public to take maximum precaution and protect themselves and their families, with special attention to the elderly, children and people suffering from chronic conditions.

Omanis working in UAE included in target groups for vaccination

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In efforts to complete the first phase of the national immunisation campaign against COVID-19, the Ministry of Health expanded the target groups for vaccination on Monday to include individuals aged 60 years and older for all vaccines as well

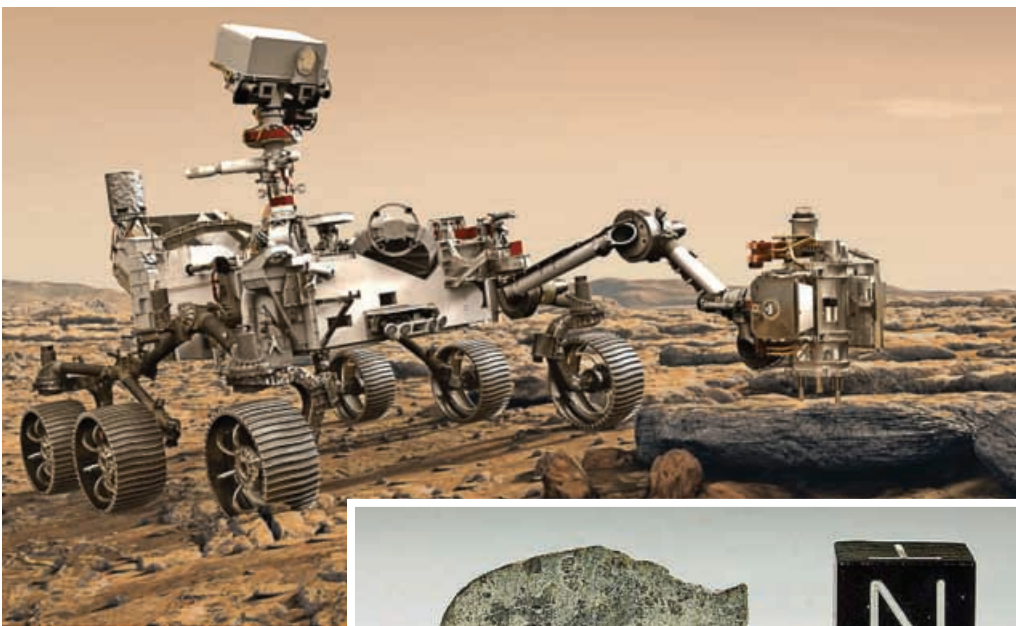
as Omanis working in the United Arab Emirates who are required to cross the border frequently.

Additionally, ambulance crewmembers of Royal Oman Police in all governorates have been included in the target groups.

The vaccines will continue be administered at the previously announced immunisation centres

in the governorates. The national immunisation campaign will be carried out using vaccines available for both healthcare workers and non-medical community members. The period between the first and second doses will be ten weeks, whether vaccinated with the Pfizer-BioNTech or Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines.

A first in the world, meteorite found in Oman returned to Mars



NASA's Perseverance rover which took 'Sayh al Uhaymir 008' (inset) back home to Mars

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a significant scientific development, a Martian meteorite documented as 'Sayh al Uhaymir 008', which was found in the wilayat of Haima, Al Wusta governorate, in 1999 has flown back to its original home. It was sent back aboard NASA's Perseverance rover which safely landed on the Red Planet on February 18.

The meteorite is the first rock sent back by humans to Mars. There is no precedence of such a scientific endeavour and the effort is aimed at learning about the history of the Solar System and its components during various stages since the formation of the Sun and the planets around it. There is proof of meteorites presenting evidence of the geological structure of Mars, according to a press release.

Weighing over 8kg, 'Sayh al

Uhaymir 008' formed about 450mn years ago due to a cosmic event resulting from the collision of an asteroid or comet with Mars, parts of it flying into space and landing on Omani territory.

Through its Arabic language account @Arabic_Nasa, the US' aeronautics and space administration tweeted that after detailed chemical examination in the Max Planck laboratory in Germany, researchers found evidence that Sayh al Uhaymir 008 originated in Mars rather than Earth. Following the finding, it was chosen to be carried back to Mars to be used as a calibration target.

The meteorite will be used by the Perseverance rover's SHERLOC (Scanning Habitable Environments with Raman and Luminescence for Organics and Chemicals) instrument as test material for on-site calibration.

According to NASA, initially

geologists did not plan to return the meteorite to Mars. 'However, when work started to progress on the Mars ranger Perseverance, scientists suggested using a Martian meteorite found on Earth to be in the ranger. The idea was that this Martian meteorite will help in processing the images captured by the ranger in their true colours and textures, without being affected by any natural conditions.'

The meteorite found in Oman was preserved in the Natural History Museum of London, which includes diverse meteorites from around the world. Only 424 Martian meteorites found on Earth have been recorded.

Malik bin Mohammad al Dohani, a member of the Board of Directors of Oman Astronomical Society, said that meteorites are of great scientific importance.

Continued on Page 03

MOBILE BANKING

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f t i s l n y

Three-month campaign launched to raise awareness on human trafficking

Muscat - As part of its continuous endeavour to combat crimes against humanity, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking announced the launch of its second awareness campaign - titled 'Insan' - on Monday.

Through the campaign, the committee seeks to promote and spread awareness among various segments of society about human trafficking crimes, how to detect these and ways to support governmental efforts to deal with these cases.

The campaign was launched at a ceremony organised by the committee under the auspices of Hon Nasr Khamis al Sawai, attorney general and deputy chairman of the committee.

Insan will run for a period of three months till May 31, and include messages in several languages targeting different segments of society. This is to ensure that the messages reach the target audience, specifically vulnerable groups who are most



(Supplied photo)

likely to fall victim to human trafficking, which is condemned as per Omani law, according to a press release issued by the committee.

Why Insan?

The committee chose the title

Insan (human) to convey a clear message to all that the campaign focuses on human values, regardless of race, colour or religion. Being human means everyone should be treated and respected equally.

On the occasion, Hon Sawai

said, "The sultanate believes in the need to support global efforts in combating human trafficking, which is a danger to society, both in the short and long term. Oman is also one of the first countries to issue special legislation to eliminate this criminal act

through the Anti-Trafficking Law mandated through Royal Decree (No 126/2008)."

Article 22 of the law directed the formation of a national committee with members from several government institutions responsible for creating a high-

level national plan to combat human trafficking.

Highlighting the achievements of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, Hon Sawai said that among others it was able to ratify international agreements. The most recent of these is Royal Decree No 46/2020, which endorsed the sultanate joining the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

"Another milestone is reforming the sponsorship system by cancelling the No-Objection Certificate (NOC) and granting expatriate workers the right to move from one employer to another who has a licence to recruit workers. Other achievements include the allocation of a shelter for victims of human trafficking."

Insan builds on the successes of the first campaign, 'Ehsan', launched by the committee in 2017. These campaigns are a reflection of the sultanate's strategy to combat human trafficking through a wide range of measures

undertaken to eliminate these criminal practices, the committee said in the press release.

The event on Monday also included the launch of a new website (www.nccht.om) for the committee, which is available in both Arabic and English. Through the website, victims of human trafficking can request help in 12 international languages.

Sayyid Ammar Abdullah al Busaidi, first secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and supervisor for human trafficking in the committee, said, "Combating human trafficking is not a task for just a specific entity. It depends on the collective efforts of all parties, including individuals and institutions. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to everyone who has been a part of the Insan campaign. I thank Muscat Municipality, BP Oman and Oman Airports for their efforts in supporting this campaign and enabling it to achieve its strategic objectives."

Oman, Mauritania sign MoU on records and archives management

Muscat - The sultanate and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Monday in the field of historical documentation and records and archives management.

The MoU was signed by Dr Hamad Mohammed al Dhawyani, chairman of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), and Dr Mohammed al Mukhtar, director of National Records of Mauritania.

Signing of the MoU came within the framework of the current official visit of a Mauritanian delegation headed by Dr Is'haq Said Syed al Amin, assistant secretary general of the Mauritanian government.

The memorandum reflects the relations between the sultanate and Mauritania, and the desire of the two countries to strengthen and develop cooperation in the fields of records and archives to serve the mutual interests.

In addition, signing such



memoranda reflects the efforts of the NRAA to establish an integrated system of cooperation with institutions at the local and international level in order to contribute and support its approach and achieve its vision.

The MoU includes agendas such as encouraging cooperation in the field of copying records, printing and exchanging manuscripts and books, preserving and maintaining documentary records and accompanying tech-

nologies, and cooperation in the field of publishing documentary, cultural, literary and historical publications along with organising activities.

The MoU also encourages participation in conferences, exhibitions and workshops in the field of records and archive management, enhancing the exchange of experiences, providing training for staff, and conducting scientific researches. ONA

Over 3,400 fire incidents recorded in 2020; 12% decrease, says PACDA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulances (PACDA) recorded over 3,400 fire incidents in 2020, it was revealed as PACDA celebrated the World Civil Defence Day on Monday.

The annual event which is marked on March 1, this year came under the theme 'Civil Defence for the Protection of the National Economy'.

Gen Salim bin Yahya al Hinai, director general of Civil Defence, in a statement said that the 3,409 fire incidents recorded in 2020 however was a 12 per cent decrease on the previous year's figures of 3,864.

Gen Hinai said, "The ambulance centres in all governorates of the sultanate dealt with 11,834 cases in 2020, compared to 12,892 cases in 2019. Land rescue teams dealt with 1,397 complaints in 2020, compared to 1,973 cases in 2019."

He added, "Our search and rescue teams also help people who are stranded on mountains, or have fallen into wadis.

"Water rescue teams in various governorates of the sultanate in 2020 dealt with 361 such cases, compared to 369



(Supplied photos)



The ambulance centres in all governorates of the sultanate dealt with 11,834 cases in 2020. Land rescue teams dealt with 1,397 complaints while water rescue teams dealt with 361 cases

GEN SALIM BIN YAHYA AL HINAI

cases in 2019."

Gen Hinai confirmed that a specialised team dealing with radiological, chemical and biological accidents dealt with seven accidents in 2020, compared to four accidents in 2019.

The authority also recorded 24 incidents of building collapses in 2020, compared to 18 acci-

dents in 2019.

Gen Hinai stressed that the authority follows up and studies various construction plans and projects, clarifies safety requirements, and makes field visits to residential, commercial and industrial establishments, and public and private facilities, to ensure the implementation of

safety requirements and civil protection requirements and issue licences according to the type and size of the facility.

Meanwhile, the statistical indicator related to civil protection licences for commercial, industrial and residential establishments registered 53,657 licences in 2020.

Royal Office Minister receives Tunisian envoy

Muscat - H E Gen Sultan Mohammed al Nu'mani, Minister of Royal Office, received in his office on Monday H E Azzedine el Tayse, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to the sultanate, and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged conversation on the march of fraternal relationship between the sultanate and Tunisia.

The meeting reviewed several areas of joint cooperation and means of promoting them to serve the mutual interests. It also touched on a number of matters of common concern.

ONA

ECONOMY MINISTER MEETS SENEGALESE ENVOY



H E Dr Said bin Mohammed bin Ahmed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, received H E Sirin Ali Dam, Senegal's Ambassador to the sultanate, to discuss bilateral economic relations (Supplied photo)

mi
STORE



حملة إستدعاء هواتف ايفون 11



2021/03/02
هواتف ايفون 11
الشاشة
ايفون 11

تاريخ الحملة
نوع الحملة
قطاع الاستدعاء
وصف المنتج

طراز المنتج	فترة الانتاج	رقم التسلسل	عدد الهواتف المتأثرة
iPhone 11	نوفمبر 2019 حتى مايو 2020	لا يوجد	أي جهاز تم بيعه خلال الفترة من نوفمبر 2019 حتى مايو 2020

الوصف	الإجراءات	للمزيد من المعلومات	بيانات الاتصال
وجود عيب تصنيعي يتمثل في حدوث توقف عن الاستجابة للمس بسبب مشكلة في وحدة الشاشة	استبدال الشاشة المتأثرة متى ما انطبقت عليها الشروط	مراجعة مركز الصيانة بجمع أفينيوز مول الخوير أو التواصل بـ https://support.apple.com/en-sg/iphone-11-display-module-replacement-program	22063930

Pact signed for leadership development programme



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) on Monday signed an agreement with the University of Arizona (UA) and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) to work on a national programme to improve the efficiency of government functioning.

The agreement signed under the auspices of H E Dr Mahad Ba'owain, Minister of Labour and Chairman of the IPA Board of Directors, paves the way for the implementation of the National Programme for Leadership Development and Future Foresight - one of the projects under the Partnership for Development Programme (also called Offset) supervised by the MoF.

According to a press statement, the agreement was signed by Dr Dhafir al Shanfari, CEO of Omani Authority for Partnership for Development (OAPFD), Sayyid Zaki al Busaidi, CEO of IPA, and Joe Carella, dean of Eller Executive Education at the UA, in the presence of Nasser al Jashmi, secretary general of

MoF and other officials.

The programme will be conducted at the IPA, which will supervise its implementation with the aim of improving government performance through building the capacity of directors of various government units and by providing them with managerial and leadership skills needed for policy-making and to effi-

and 120 employees from various government units.

Fifteen participants will be enrolled in the Advanced Government Leadership Programme to be conducted at the campus of UA. The intellectual property rights of the programme will be transferred to the IPA.

As per the agreement, the UA will contribute towards the es-

with the recent trends in the government's working methods," Dr Shanfari said.

"Through the programme, we seek to build leadership capacity that helps advance economic growth. The UA is a leading university in providing executive education programmes," the OAPFD CEO said.

"We are delighted to implement this programme - the 18th project under the Partnership for Development Programme that brought together more than 40 local and foreign partners in order to provide projects aimed at enhancing the military and security capacity. The programme aims to develop human resources, facilitate knowledge-transfer and strengthen the private sector."

The CEO of the IPA said, "The Leadership Development Centre reflects a distinct form of partnership between local and foreign entities."

"It also represents a paradigm shift in the working method of the IPA as the centre will bring about scientific impact," Busaidi added.

Through the programme, we seek to build leadership capacity that helps advance economic growth. The UA is a leading institute in providing executive education programmes

DR DHAFIR AL SHANFARI

ciently achieve Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Throughout the agreement period, the UA will train 150 directors from various government units, and will conduct training courses for national trainers so as to ensure the sustainability of the programme, the statement added.

In addition, it will provide short courses for 80 participants from higher management levels

establishment of the Leadership Development Centre for the preparation of leaders, affiliated to the IPA through the centre's action plan and supervising its management during the first year of its establishment.

In addition, it will also train the centre's management personnel.

"The National Programme for Leadership Development and Future Foresight is consistent



UN Population Department lauds Oman's eCensus 2020

Muscat - The United Nations Population Division hailed the efforts exerted by the sultanate when conducting Electronic Census 2020 of Population, Residences and Establishments (eCensus 2020) and the publication of its results in record time amid exceptional conditions that prevailed in the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On December 14, 2020, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik endorsed the results of eCensus 2020, which showed that Oman's population stood at

4,471,148 as of December 12, 2020, the same day on which the electronic portal of the eCensus was launched and made available to the public.

Dr Khalifa Abdullah al Barwani, CEO of National Centre for Statistics and Information, and chairman of the Census Technical Committee, said that despite e-census involving the least human resources - compared to earlier census - and the challenges posed by COVID-19, which compelled many countries to postpone their census, the sultanate managed to carry

out eCensus 2020 as scheduled. "Its results were approved and published within less than 48 hours from reference date set at December 12, 2020."

Dr Barwani told Oman News Agency that the sultanate has set an example at the regional and international levels in the shift from traditional censuses to e-census.

He added that eCensus 2020 collected information directly and simultaneously by accessing national administrative records, utilising a methodology known as 'Register-based Census'.

Meteorite found in Oman returned to Mars

Continued from Page 01

These must be taken care of and studied in local universities by researchers and experts to contribute to international scientific efforts to understand and learn about the origin and history of the Solar System.

"Scientific research on these

meteorites is important. This is in addition to using them for tourism by placing them in national museums to attract tourists. The Martian and lunar meteorites found in the sultanate are considered rare."

Dr Saud bin Humaid al Shuaali, head of the National Space Programme's management team in

the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said, "Meteorites are closely related to space science, astronomy and earth sciences."

"The research and study centres in Oman related to space should take keen interest in these meteorites."

February saw more COVID-19 cases, deaths

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) continues to remind people to wear masks and maintain physical distancing as COVID-19 cases climbed in February after the daily death toll declined in January.

According to MoH figures, the total deaths in the country due to COVID-19 in February alone was 41. January reported only nine deaths.

On Sunday, seven people lost their lives after eight people succumbed to the virus the previous three days.

The number of infections too has been increasing.

On Monday, 312 new cases were reported, taking the total to 141,808.

'While the number of deaths has reached 1,577, the number of recoveries has reached 132,685,'

an MoH statement said, adding that the number of patients admitted in health institutions was 198, including 66 in ICU.

Last week, H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, said a surge in COVID-19 infection cases that began in mid-January this year, was still continuing.

"With cases of infection and hospitalisation picking up, we are in for another spate," he said.

"Within a period of less than two months, the number of intensive care patients has increased and these units are under constant pressure as deaths are continuing," he added.

He said that people must realise the seriousness of the situation and take responsibility.

"Everyone should be aware of the gravity of the situation and help prevent the spread of the virus," H E Dr Sa'eedi said.



Callback Campaign for Apple iPhone-11

Date of the Campaign:

Campaign Type:

Campaign Section:

Product Description:

02/03/2021

iPhone-11

Screen

Apple iPhone-11

The Number of Affected Apple watch	Serial Numbers	The Year of Production	Apple Watch Model
Devices that are sold during November 2019 to May 2020	NA	November 2019 to May 2020	Apple iPhone-11

Description	Screen gets irresponsive while touching due to manufacturing defect on the screen unit.
Actions	Replacement of defected Screen when ever eligible as per terms.
For More Information	Contact Mi Care at Avenues Mall or check eligibility by logging in to https://support.apple.com/en-sg/iphone-11-display-module-replacement-program
Contact Details	22063930



NDC hosts special representative of UN secretary general for Iraq



Muscat- The National Defence College (NDC) hosted Jeanine Hennis, special representative of the UN secretary general for Iraq and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) on Monday.

Air Vice Marshal Eng Saleh Yahya al Maskari, NDC commandant, welcomed the guest, who gave a lecture within the

framework of the general curriculum for the eighth batch of the NDC.

During the lecture, the UN official highlighted the key regional and international issues and reviewed some of the UN's charters and their roles in maintaining international peace and security.

She also praised the sultanate's commitment to peaceful

dialogue and diplomatic endeavours in solving regional and international issues, as well as its distinguished partnership through various roles in supporting the UN's efforts to achieve international peace and stability.

The lecture was attended by a number of senior officials and officers.

ONA

NOW ON WHATSAPP

Share your comment in not more than 50 words along with your full name, profession and front facing photo before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp

Send us on WhatsApp
71509370



STOP THE FIRE

With rising incidence of fires, is it time to rethink about using unsafe electrical equipment? How can we prevent such fires?

Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

Fire incidents are common as the temperature rises with the onset of summer. But fires can be avoided by following simple rules. Family members must be educated on how to deal with fires, especially kids. It is not enough to just install a fire extinguisher. Its validity must be continuously checked to ensure its readiness and effectiveness.



Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

We have to look out for overloaded and damaged circuits, and ensure proper grounding, insulation and wiring of cables. Fire hydrants must be strategically placed for effective use to prevent a fire from spreading.



Jasim Jameel
Private sector employee

A few seconds is all it takes for a fire to break out because of poor wiring and defective equipment. We must maintain all electric cords and make sure that these aren't frayed or chewed to avoid human and material losses.



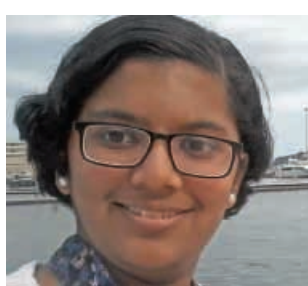
Harib Abdulla al Barwani
Retiree

Fires break out not only because of unsafe electrical equipment but also bad workmanship. I would blame 70 per cent of fires on poor workmanship.



Jayatee Choudhury
Student

The need of the hour is to ensure the safety of all electrical equipment to prevent fires. Electrical equipment must be checked on a regular basis by the authorities. Fines can be imposed for non-compliance.



Mohamed al Maskari
Senior project engineer

We can prevent fires by educating consumers on how to choose safe electrical equipment and penalising all suppliers of unsafe electrical equipment.



Rubeesh Rashid
Manager

Quality and price is one of the important things to be considered. For good quality, price may be higher. Smoke detectors should be mandatory for all small and big buildings, and only certified electrical equipment should be allowed for use. Strict action must be taken against violators.



Mohan Anandan
Banking sector employee

It is indeed alarming that a spate of fire incidents has occurred in the city. Preventive measures such as conducting fire drills at fixed intervals, strict enforcement of safety norms and inspection and re-certification of fire fighting equipment must be enhanced. Besides, regular servicing of equipment, using quality products and following safety norms will help.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

As the number of COVID-19 cases increase, do you think the closure of commercial activities from 8pm to 5am will help curb the spread of the virus? How can we as individuals help prevent a spike in infections?

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

REGIONAL WEATHER

ABU DHABI

Max 33°C

Min 20°C



DUBAI

Max 32°C

Min 19°C



MANAMA

Max 23°C

Min 17°C



DOHA

Max 26°C

Min 17°C



KUWAIT CITY

Max 23°C

Min 14°C



RIYADH

Max 26°C

Min 13°C



PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr

5.13am

Duhr

12.24pm

Maghrib

6.15pm

Sunrise

6.28am

Asr

3.45pm

Isha

7.25pm

Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles SAOG

P O Box : 143 PC :118 Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Tel : 24649091- 24649093 Fax: 24649097
email : ceramics@omantel.net.om web site : alshams.org

Extra Ordinary General Meeting and Annual Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of **Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles Company SAOG** ("Company") is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the extraordinary general meeting and the annual ordinary general meeting of the company, which are scheduled to be held at 5 pm on Tuesday, 23/3/2021, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can accessed through the website of the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om) if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second extraordinary general meeting and / or a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held at 5 pm on Monday 29/3/2021 to discuss the following agenda:

First: the Extra Ordinary General Meeting

- To consider and approve the reduction of the company's paid up capital from OMR 29,621,368 to OMR 22,000,000 with excess funds available after providing for the company's need.
- To discuss and approve authorizing the company's board of directors, or any person to be authorized by the board to undertake the capital reduction procedures.
- To amend article (5) of the company's article of association after the registration of the capital with the registrar.

Second: Annual Ordinary General Meeting

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended on 31/12/2020.
- To consider and approve the board of directors on the company's Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended on 31/12/2020.
- To consider the auditor's report and approve the balance sheet and profit and loss account for the financial year ended on 31/12/2020.
- To consider and approve the proposed cash dividend to the shareholders, as on the date of the meeting, amounting to 13.5 balsa for each share for the financial year ended 31 /12/2020
- To approve sitting fees to the board of directors' meetings and its sub-committees for the financial year ended on 31/12/2020 and to determine the fees for the forthcoming financial year ending on 31/12/2021.
- To consider and approve the proposal of distributing the total sum of RO 10,000 as remuneration for the Board of Directors of the Company for the year ended 31 /12/ 2020.
- To consider the amounts allocated and spent for the company's social responsibilities for the year ended on 31/12/2020.
- To consider and approve the allocation of an amount of RO (20,000) for corporate social responsibility programs, for the year ending on 31/12/ 2021.
- To elect a new Board of Directors for the Company from amongst Shareholders or non- shareholders. Any person who wishes to be nominated to the Board of Directors of the Company is required to fill in a Director's Nomination Form. Such a form can be obtained from the Company. The completed Form should be delivered to the Company at least five (5) days prior to the date of the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Company (no later than the end of the business hours on Wednesday, 17 /3/ 2021). The candidate must satisfy the company's board membership requirements.
- The appointment of the Auditors for the Company for the financial year ending 31/12/ 2021 and approve their fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority , we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information please contact Mr Khalfan Al Sabahii, contact phone number 25449966.

Chairman
Auditors
Legal consultants

Sifr

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C.R. No.: 136545/2

MARKET WATCH

MSM30	3,622.11
BSE Sensex	49,849.84

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	191.17
Pakistani Rs	410.77
Bangladeshi Taka	220.64
Philippine Peso	126.33
Sri Lankan Rs	505.86

*Rates as on March 01
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Italy debt soars on virus impact

Italy's public debt soared last year, rising more than 20 percentage points as the coronavirus pandemic savaged the economy, official data showed on Monday.

Total accumulated national debt jumped to 155.6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) last year from 134.6 per cent in 2019.

Italy had by the end of 2020 accumulated a colossal debt of €2.57tn, up from €2.41tn in 2019, according to national statistics agency Istat.

GDP in the eurozone's third-largest economy fell 8.9 per cent last year, thanks to restrictions imposed by the government to stem a devastating coronavirus outbreak that has killed almost 100,000 people.

Istat also published figures on provisional inflation data on Monday, showing consumer prices in February rising by 0.1 per cent compared to the previous month, and 0.6 per cent year-on-year.

China factory activity grows at slowest pace in 9 months

Factory activity in China grew at the slowest pace in nine months in February, as business operations slowed over the country's Lunar New Year holiday, according to official data.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a key gauge of manufacturing activity, fell to 50.6 last month from 51.3, said the National Bureau of Statistics, with slowdowns seen in production, new orders and foreign trade.

Although this was the lowest reading overall since last May, when manufacturing PMI also came in at 50.6, the figure remains above the 50-point mark separating growth from contraction.

"Lunar New Year fell in mid-February this year, and the holiday factor showed a greater impact on the production and operations of enterprises last month," said NBS senior statistician Zhao Qinghe.

CMA issues regulation for public joint stock companies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Sultan Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance and chairman of the board of directors of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), has issued a decision approving the Regulation for Public Joint Stock Companies.

The regulation covers all the regulatory aspects related to the public joint stock companies focusing on providing a legislative framework for all their operations and activities, a statement issued by the CMA said on Monday.

The decision issued by H E Habsi states that the regulation shall have effect on the day following its publication in the Official Gazette except the provisions related to appointment of the internal auditors and legal advisors which will be effective after six months.

The issuance of the regulation was based on the provisions of the Commercial Companies Law enacted by Royal Decree No 18/2019 to achieve legislative adequacy and readiness that would enhance the confidence of investors in the Omani capital market and make it a sustainable engine of economic growth and wealth creation.

Commenting on the importance of regulation for the listed companies, H E Abdullah Salim al Salmi, executive president of



The issuance of the Regulation for Public Joint Stock Companies coincides with comprehensive structural review of the legislative framework of the Omani capital market after more than 30 years

H E ABDULLAH SALIM AL SALMI

the CMA, said the issuance of the regulation coincides with comprehensive structural review of the legislative framework of Omani capital market after more than 30 years, to configure it to be a key financing tool to achieve national priorities of Oman's 2040 Vision.

To improve the investment

environment in the country and encourage the initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of private sector in sustainable development, H E Salmi said the CMA prepared the regulations taking into account easing the processes and limiting its role to supervision and follow up and to allow the companies the free-

dom of implementing their plans and strategies within a clear legislative framework.

According to H E Salmi, the regulations embraced a number of provisions and rules including the rules for election of the directors of public joint stock companies and their responsibilities. "The key change was that the candidates will only be natural persons for the stability of the boards of directors and to limit the changes in composition of the board. Also, the limit for annual remuneration of directors has been increased to RO300,000 in accordance with specific rules."

The Regulation for Public Joint

KV Group to set up polyethylene packaging factory at Khazaen

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Khazaen Economic City has signed a landmark agreement with KV Group International to set up a polyethylene packaging factory and a commercial facility in the city.

KV Group International will invest RO7mn to build a state-of-the-art polythene packaging plant in the industrial zone on a total land area of 40,000sqm and also to construct the first hypermarket in the city, spread over 5,500sqm in the commercial block. The hypermarket will cater to the Khazaen community as well as early commercial tenants.

In a press statement, Khalid al Balushi, CEO of Khazaen Economic City, said, "Khazaen con-



tinues to grow with the arrival of more investors thus reiterating its status as the most promising economic hub. Khazaen is gaining in position as an emerging and preferred location for the establishment of different types of businesses due to its strategic location. We have an excellent pipeline of investors who are eager to lease out different types of plots at the city. We are looking forward for a positive 2021

despite the continuous impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy."

During 2020, Khazaen announced growth-oriented incentive packages for local and foreign investors to support government initiatives aimed at diversifying and stimulating the national economy.

"Being one of its kind, Packovic targets to meet Oman's industrial packaging requirements

as a major part which is currently being internationally sourced. The factory will have best-in-class European plant and machinery, superior grade raw materials, sound technical know-how of the process, products and markets, thus giving it an edge over its competition," said Abdul Wahid, managing director of KV Group.

"Packovic - the brand name of the polyethylene packaging factory products - is part of the KV Group's vision 2025 to have sourcing hubs and packing houses in different countries to achieve its 'Farm to Fork' philosophy, thus contributing towards Oman's food sustainability by mobilising significant new capital to fund its expansion," Abdul Latheef, director of KV Group, said.

HSBC tops survey for trade finance service in Oman

Muscat - Businesses across the sultanate have voted HSBC the best bank in Oman for domestic trade finance services in the 2021 Euromoney trade finance survey.

As the pandemic swept across the world in 2020, HSBC worked closely with clients and responded quickly to minimise disruption to their supply chains by equipping them with the tools to use HSBC's digital channels and maintain the flow of essential goods around the world. At the present, around 81 per cent of HSBC's trade transactions in Oman are completed digitally.

"Being recognised by our clients for having the Best Trade Finance Services in Oman demonstrates our strong position and our ability to connect

Oil prices cross \$65 per barrel mark

Muscat - Global oil prices climbed on Monday to cross US\$65 per barrel mark on optimism in the global economy thanks to progress in a huge US stimulus bill and on hopes for improving oil demand as vaccines are rolled out.

Oil prices also rebounded with focus on a key meeting of OPEC and other major producers on Thursday, when they will discuss the huge output cuts that have provided much-needed support to prices. Russia is said to be keen to turn on the taps again but Saudi Arabia prefers to keep the status quo.

Brent North Sea crude rose 1.2 per cent on Monday afternoon in London at US\$65.22 per barrel, its highest level since January 2020 before the oil market collapsed as the coronavirus pandemic battered demand. In the US, West Texas Intermediate benchmark traded 1.3 per cent up at US\$62.32 per barrel.

Oman crude contract price closed at US\$64.23 per barrel at Dubai Mercantile Exchange on Monday.

Agencies



Huawei, controversial in the West, is going strong in the Gulf

Dubai, UAE - Chinese telecoms giant Huawei is enjoying an extended honeymoon with oil-rich Gulf nations, despite being criticised in the United States and Europe as a potential security threat.

Arab Gulf countries - strategic partners of Washington that are seeking to diversify their economies - are investing heavily in the sector as their appetite for technology grows.

Huawei has struggled in recent years in the face of US sanctions, as Washington claims Huawei has close ties to China's military and that Beijing could use its equipment for espionage - accusations the company denies.

Britain and Sweden have banned the use of Huawei equipment in their 5G networks, while

France has also imposed restrictions.

Yet Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have not only chosen Huawei for their 5G roll-outs, but have also partnered with the company to develop 'smart cities'.

These feature enhanced digital services and security surveillance - a Huawei speciality Gulf states value highly for monitoring their populations.

Gulf countries' 'use of technologies for population surveillance is closer to the practices of China than those of Western countries', said Camille Lons, of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Concerns about Huawei voiced in the US and Europe 'weren't convincing' in the re-



A delivery person rides a motorcycle along a road past the Huawei Building in Dubai Knowledge Park (AFP)

gion, she told AFP.

Mitigating 'political pressures'

While the telecoms giant has

had a strong presence in the Gulf since the 1990s, its deals and big announcements there have multiplied in recent years.

In January, Saudi Arabia an-

nounced it would open the largest Huawei store outside China in Riyadh, a few months after a deal with the company on developing artificial intelligence

to support public and private sector growth.

Last summer, Saudi investment firm Batic cemented a deal with Huawei to work on 'smart city' projects in the kingdom, where it is already a main partner in the Yanbu Smart Industrial City project on the Red Sea.

Huawei has also developed apps and digital infrastructure to support Muslim pilgrims visiting Mecca and Medina.

"By gaining the trust of our partners in the Middle East, we have been able to mitigate external political pressures like those pursued by the US," Charles Yang, Huawei's Middle East chief, told AFP from the company's headquarters in Dubai.

In the high-tech emirate, one

of seven that make up the UAE, Huawei has launched projects ranging from data storage to on-line payment services for public transport networks.

Dubai-based Emirates, the Middle East's largest airline, last year chose Huawei to build a centre to boost the company's surveillance and security capabilities.

China remains one of the Gulf's leading trade partners.

UN figures show its 2019 trade with Saudi Arabia - the world's largest exporter of crude oil - reached about US\$36.4bn, while with the UAE it exceeded US\$50bn.

"Digital infrastructure has become a key pillar of [Gulf states'] national transformation strategies," Yang said.

AFP

MSM rises 0.27% as activity improves

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) rose 0.27 per cent to close at 3,622.12 points on Monday.

Trading activity improved from the previous session as turnover jumped by 34 per cent to RO978,788 and volumes increased 43.49 per cent to 8.8mn shares.

While Services index fell 0.18 per cent, Financial and Industrial indices rose 0.72 per cent and 0.77 per cent, respectively. The MSM Shariah index closed up by 0.47 per cent at 543.08 points.

Market breadth remained positive as 17 companies closed up, while eight companies closed down. The rest 20 traded

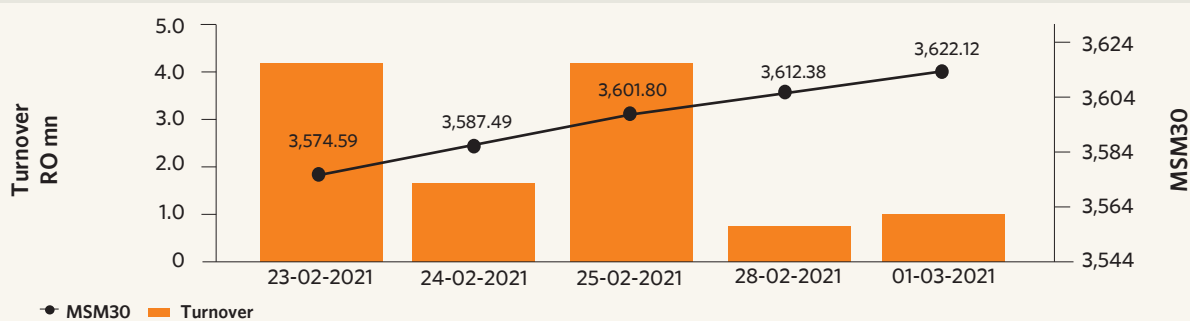


stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Voltamp Energy (9.71 per cent), Muscat Finance (8.57 per cent), Al Anwar Investment (7.35 per cent) and United Finance (7.32 per cent).

Top losers were Dhofar International Development and Investment (-7.0 per cent), Oman REIT Fund (-3.09 per cent), Raysut Cement (-2.58 per cent) and Al Sharqiyah Desalination (-2.1 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



FAB approves AED8bn cash dividends for 2020

Abu Dhabi, UAE - First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) has approved the distribution of 74 per cent cash dividends (AED0.74 per share, implying total cash dividends of AED8.08bn) for the financial year ended December 31, 2020, after concluding its general assembly meeting (GAM). Owners of FAB shares registered on March 10, 2021 (i.e. buyers on March 8, 2021) are entitled to cash dividends.

All items on the agenda for the GAM were discussed and approved, including the appointment of André Sayegh as a new board member. Shareholders also approved FAB's financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2020.

Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed al Nahyan, chairman of FAB, said, "FAB's position as the UAE's safest and strongest bank enabled us to power economic growth, provide significant support to communities, and maximise returns to shareholders. I am proud of what we achieved against the challenging backdrop of 2020, as we made significant



progress on our strategic agenda and delivered on our promise to create value for all stakeholders. We are pleased to announce the distribution of 74 per cent cash dividends, totalling AED8.08bn for the year 2020."

Nahyan said, "The appointment of Hana al Rostamani as FAB Group CEO is a historic milestone both for FAB and for the industry, and symbolises the UAE leadership's vision and commitment to embracing our nation's great potential. As we enter a new dynamic era, I look forward to working with Hana to deliver the opportunities in front us, and powering lasting pros-

perity for future generations."

Hana said, "FAB showed strength, resilience and transformation in 2020. In difficult times, we were there for our customers, employees, and communities, and quickly adapted to new market dynamics. We also strengthened our position as the leading and most profitable bank in the UAE, delivering a full year 2020 net profit of AED10.6bn. We will continue to build on that momentum and our expertise to accelerate our digital transformation and meet our customers' evolving needs through agility and innovation."

WAM

'Qatari banks' profits resilient despite provisioning costs

Dubai, UAE - Coronavirus pressures will keep provisioning costs high for Qatari banks this year as loan quality worsens, despite resilient 2020 results, Moody's Investors Service said in a report published on Monday.

Banks' total operating profit rose by 4 per cent to QR43.9bn in 2020, up from QR42.1bn the previous year, boosted by higher net interest income of 9 per cent. However, earnings were squeezed by an 11 per cent decline in non-interest income.

"Although Qatari banks reported resilient earnings in 2020 with the pandemic's added pressure on profits, we expect provisioning costs to remain high in 2021," said Nitish Bhojnagarwala, vice president - senior credit officer at Moody's Investors Service. "This will be driven by a slow economic re-



covery that will make it harder for borrowers in sectors such as real estate, construction and contracting to repay debt."

Provisioning costs rose to 32 per cent in 2020 from 20 per cent in 2019, due to the impact of the coronavirus and subsequent global economic shock. Moody's expects total income to remain subdued in 2021 as lower business volumes strain profits.

While loan quality has largely

stayed stable, problem loans are set to emerge across sectors most vulnerable to the pandemic such as hotels and restaurants, airlines, tourism and retail. Despite this, Qatari banks hold strong capital buffers that have been supported by lower dividend pay-out ratios and firm earnings. These strong buffers, coupled with an oil price recovery and greater political stability, will support banks' financial performance this year.

'Ready to go': Hope for new momentum as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala takes WTO reins

Geneva, Switzerland - Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said she was eager to get straight to work as she took up her role on Monday as the first woman and first African to lead the beleaguered World Trade Organization (WTO).

"I am coming into one of the most important institutions in the world and we have a lot of work to do," the former Nigerian finance and foreign minister said as she arrived for her first day on the job in Geneva.

"I feel ready to go."

Hopes abound that the 66 year old will be able to help the WTO address a range of towering challenges, including navigating through the global economic crisis triggered by the pandemic.

"The WTO is too important to allow it to be slowed down, paralysed and moribund," she



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

told AFP a day after her nomination last month.

Known as Dr Ngozi, she is taking the helm after the WTO was left adrift for six months following the sudden departure of Brazilian career diplomat Roberto Azevedo last August, a year ahead of schedule.

Following a lengthy selection process, Ngozi, a development

economist who spent 25 years at the World Bank, was finally anointed by the WTO's 164 members on February 15.

From an initial eight candidates, Ngozi was the clear favourite among the last two standing in November. However, her appointment was delayed by former US president Donald Trump blocking her nomination.

The arrival of his successor Joe Biden made it possible for her to receive the consensus backing required to end the impasse.

Ngozi is hitting the ground running, with her first day on the job in Geneva coinciding with the annual meeting of the WTO's General Council.

"I am hoping to be able to listen in and see what delegations have to say, what ambassadors

have to say, about the key issues," she told journalists about her expectations for her first day.

Delegates were expected to agree that the organisation's next ministerial conference, which had been scheduled for last year but was postponed due to the pandemic, will be held in Geneva in December.

Questions remain as to whether the new WTO chief, considered a strong-willed trailblazer, will be able to mould the organisation in her image before then.

While some observers voice hope that Ngozi will inject much-needed energy, others stress she has little wiggle room to make dramatic changes, given that WTO decisions are made by member states - and only when they can reach consensus.

AFP

COVID-19: What will the US economic recovery look like?

Washington, US - The US economy is rebounding faster than expected from the COVID-19 recession, outperforming the most pessimistic estimates. But some areas remain largely shut down. So what will recovery look like?

How fast will the economy grow?

The International Monetary Fund estimates the GDP of the United States will expand by 5.1 per cent this year, after contracting by 3.5 per cent in 2020 as the pandemic forced lockdowns that shuttered businesses nationwide.

But economists think the growth rate could accelerate further.

The nearly US\$3tn in government stimulus programmes last year, including a US\$900bn measure approved in late December, were key to helping the US economy bounce back.

And Congress is moving toward approving President Joe Biden's US\$1.9tn rescue package, which will provide more support for businesses, families and state and local jobs.

Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell acknowledged growth could hit 6 per cent, while private forecasters like Gregory Daco of Oxford Economics said it could break 7 per cent.



A woman enters a clothing store in Midtown Manhattan in New York City on February 26 (AFP)

The quick recovery has raised concerns that price increases could spiral higher, but Powell tamp down those fears, saying inflationary spikes in coming months are unlikely to last. And the Fed has pledged to keep interest rates low until employment recovers and inflation stays above 2 per cent for some time.

When will the jobs come back?

As businesses were able to re-open and adapt to new COVID-

19 restrictions, the country regained about half of the 20mn jobs lost in the early weeks of the pandemic.

Many of the remaining 10mn jobs are in the hardest-hit service sectors like hotels and restaurants - losses that fell especially hard on Black and Hispanic workers.

And millions more have seen their hours cut or have left the labour force entirely, including large numbers of women who are taking care of children.

Those jobs and hours likely will not come back until the vaccine rollout reaches a critical mass of Americans, allowing people to resume normal activities without fear so businesses and schools can fully reopen.

The official unemployment rate - known as U-3 - hit 6.3 per cent in January, a dramatic worsening from 3.5 per cent a year earlier. For Black workers the rate was 9.2 per cent.

But when including individuals who have been discouraged

from looking for work, or who are working part-time but want a full-time position, the broader U-6 rate was 11.1 per cent.

"The aid and stimulus are critical to bridging COVID-tainted waters, stemming employment losses... and priming the pump for a more robust recovery once social distancing measures are lifted," economist Diane Swonk of Grant Thornton said.

Moody's Analytics estimates Biden's stimulus plan would create 7.5mn jobs this year alone.

Which sectors are rebounding fastest?

The housing market, strong before the pandemic, paused only briefly before roaring back hotter than before.

Fueled by rock-bottom mortgage rates - and with remote work perhaps starting a trend of people moving out of congested areas - sales of new and existing homes have jumped about 20 per cent above the pre-pandemic level.

But supplies have fallen as homebuilders struggle to keep up with demand, driving prices higher.

Manufacturing, too, has recovered steadily since last summer, although output remains below where it was in early 2020.

And even as consumers have been forced to curtail activities, they have opened their wallets to spend freely on autos, electronics, furniture, and building and gardening supplies.

Online retailers have been the big winners, with a sales increase of just under 30 per cent over the year.

Where is the damage still visible?

The most visible impact of the recession is in the travel, hospitality and entertainment indus-

try, which likely will come back to life quickly once people are able to take vacations and enjoy concerts, movies or plays.

But economists have warned about the potential for more permanent scars on the economy in the wake of the pandemic.

Thousands of shops and restaurants have closed permanently, and there is a risk of a wave of bankruptcies if the recovery doesn't come soon enough for some heavily indebted firms.

State and local governments, which typically cannot borrow to finance their operations, are facing the possibility of slashing teachers, police and firefighters from the payroll to compensate for massive relief spending.

And homeowners and renters currently are protected by moratoriums on foreclosures and evictions, but their fate will depend on what happens to their past-due mortgage and rent payments once those moratoriums expire.

"We must continue to provide economic support to our citizens, creating a bridge to the end of the pandemic," US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said last week.

AFP

Alizz Islamic's mobile banking app makes customers' life easy

With a strong belief in enhancing the online and digital customer experience, Alizz Islamic Bank's mobile banking application gives customers the ease of banking everywhere and anywhere.

The bi-lingual mobile banking application is available for Android, Huawei and iOS devices, and features the very latest in mobile banking technology with advanced security capabilities.

The Alizz Islamic Bank Mobile Banking application has a simple in-app self-registration process. The app is biometrically enabled so customers can log in with FaceID or TouchID. The app is available for download in the Google Play store, the Apple App store and the Huawei App Gallery.

Through this app, the customers are being offered the convenience of applying for a new account or card, processes instant transfers, pays all their monthly bills simultaneously with one tap of button, requests for a cheque book, issues account statements and other benefits through the app.

The app also offers location information of Alizz Islamic Bank branches and ATM and provides reminders for monthly bill and credit card payments that are



due in addition to information on account balance. Additional information are also provided such as prayer times, Qibla direction, Zakat calculation and currency rates updates.

Since its inception in 2013, Alizz Islamic Bank has breached the gap between customers and the bank using the latest technology solutions built on the solid infrastructure that the bank has

developed to provide its customers with innovative financial solutions and responsive customer services via its corporate website, online banking, mobile banking, short message service,

call center, ATM, ITM, and branch banking. Alizz Islamic Bank is here to deliver exceptional and sustainable results to our stakeholders by providing superior Sharia'a compliant solutions.



Kempinski Hotel Muscat celebrates 3rd anniversary

The month of March 2021 marks the exceptional third anniversary of Kempinski Hotel Muscat's presence in the city.

In celebration of this exciting milestone, the hotel decided to welcome guests to the five-star property to enjoy a range of enticing offers from ultimate staycation deals to special dining discounts.

We invite you to come and experience the remarkable European flair of Kempinski inspired by Omani hospitality. There may never be a better time to stay at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat than right now!

Treat your family to the ultimate staycation with unrivalled rates, including breakfast for three different rooms and suites.

Also, you can choose our 'buy three get one free' voucher to savour signature cuisine at a se-

lection of chic dining hotspots, including The Kitchen themed nights, Countdown lunch offer and Ramadan exquisite iftar buffet.

Nestled within Al Mouj Muscat's community and encompassing over 6km of stunning coastline, Kempinski Hotel Muscat is an unparalleled luxury destination in the capital of Oman.

With 310 rooms and suites, state-of-the-art meeting facilities, eleven authentic restaurants and lounges, a fully-equipped fitness centre and a luxury spa experience, guests can immerse themselves in the finer things in life.

A gateway to an authentic Omani adventure, Kempinski Hotel Muscat provides a blend of local traditions and world-class European luxury.



MG Motor embarks on new journey in Mideast

MG Motor has announced details of its new strategic brand positioning for the Middle East, celebrating the company's achievements and rich history, as it embarks on the next stage of its adventurous, technology-focused journey. By implementing this fresh new approach, the first time MG has developed a bespoke position for the Middle East, the brand is demonstrating its commitment to the region as it sets itself on a sustainable and technologically innovative course towards the future.

Through this new campaign the brand aims to connect with, empower and inspire its young and millennial customers by reflecting their active mindset. Developed following extensive research, MG's new positioning is encapsulated by the 'Do More' tagline, which highlights how the British-born brand has been continuously pushing boundaries since its foundation in 1924.

The announcement comes just five years after MG made its return to the region, during which time the brand has made a significant impact on the car market, building on its reputation for timeless style, innovative technology and iconic designs. Last year it recorded a remarkable 72 per cent increase in sales, breaking into the GCC's top ten of car makers for

the first time.

The brand's fresh new positioning highlights how high-tech connectivity and mobility are key to providing a holistic experience, as it blazes its way into a cutting-edge, highly advanced future. This will be reflected through authentic, adventurous and bold digital content produced by MG and its current and future customers.

The 'Do More' campaign will reflect MG's product line-up, which is equipped with state-of-the-art technology. New models will also go through a fundamental transformation that will help bring the brand closer towards its vision for a better connected, safer environment. The campaign will tap into the simple realities of a Millennial-driven region. It will recognise the hard work, daily grinds and breakthroughs consumers have to offer to their communities.

The new brand design began in February and will be implemented across digital, social and traditional mediums, and on both regional and local levels across the nine markets in which MG is present. This will allow MG to offer a more modern and authentic brand experience.

The brand's new visual identity will adopt brighter colour schemes and bold, sleek lines, with mood boards that will exude dynamism, energy and

fun. MG is looking to inspire millennials to bring their own unique elegance to the MG community.

Founded by William Morris and Cecil Kimbers in 1924, MG has always pursued innovation and sought to break barriers. The iconic brand was best known for its two-seat open-top sports cars, having also created the first-ever street legal and affordable sports car.

Today, MG cars are particularly renowned for their expressive design and exceptional specification levels. MG cars offer the latest smart and innovative technologies, all at highly competitive prices. In the Middle East, the brand's current line-up consists of both sedans and SUV crossovers.

The sedan range includes the Middle East's 'Best Sub-compact Sedan' for 2020, the MG5, and the stylish MG6. The SUV's include the seven-seater MG RX8 as well as the MG RX5, MG ZST, MG ZS EV and the 2020 'Middle East Car of the Year', the MG HS.

With its regional head office in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, MG has recently expanded into additional markets, such as Jordan and Iraq. MG is now active in nine countries across the GCC and Middle East: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

Meethaq launches first Sharia'a compliant co-branded credit card

In line with the bank's commitment to offering an attractive value proposition for its customers, Meethaq the pioneer of Islamic banking in Oman from Bank Muscat, has announced the launch of the first Sharia'a-compliant co-branded cashback credit card in Oman.

The new credit card is being launched in association with leading hypermarket chain, Lulu Hypermarket, to offer a number of exclusive benefits such as loyalty points/cashback, special discounts and flexible payment options. Cardholders will be eligible to earn up to 2 per cent cashback on their transactions, which can then be redeemed when buying products from Lulu hypermarkets across Oman.

Meethaq has enabled various options to make secure payments worldwide and is a preferred electronic payment services provider in Oman's Islamic banking sector. Offering the best deals and rewards, Meethaq credit cards are a big



attraction with customers, providing them with the convenience and flexibility in making day-to-day transactions at shopping malls, restaurants or at international destinations. The bank encourages the use of credit cards, which allows individuals to spend in a disciplined manner and keep track of all their transactions through electronic monthly statements.

Meethaq Credit Cards also come with an array of features and benefits, which include wide acceptance, contactless pay-

ments, 24/7 customer service, OTP service for online transactions SMS alerts for transactions and up to 52 days of payment grace period.

In addition, Meethaq offers a range of credit cards with different features and benefits suitable for the needs of its various personal banking customer segments. These include the Meethaq-Lulu co-branded credit card, Hafawa Visa Signature credit card, the Titanium Mastercard credit card and the Standard Mastercard credit card. All

Meethaq credit cards are based on the concept of Ujrah without any interest charges as per Sharia'a rules and principles.

Meethaq extends support to all key economic sectors with innovative Sharia'a-based products. It is well positioned to provide Islamic financial expertise to all segments and thereby promote the good of society as a whole.

Meethaq Islamic Banking, which has been recognised as the Best Islamic Bank in Oman in 2019 by Islamic Finance News, has adopted the best practices in Islamic banking and finance worldwide.

Every Meethaq product goes through the process of Sharia'a-compliance certification by the Sharia'a Supervisory Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

For more details, please go to <https://www.meethaq.om/en/meethaq-cards/Pages/cards-new-landing-page.aspx> or call 24656666.

Oman Oil signs agreement with O-Taxi

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with O-Taxi, Oman's on demand transportation service, to provide more than 1800 O-Taxi drivers with access to a range of exclusive benefits and features when refueling and shopping at OOMCO service stations across the sultanate.

The deal is the latest in a string of partnerships OOMCO has secured, as it continues to build on its reputation for providing high-quality fuel services, while being the most customer-centric fuel marketer in the region.

Ali Muqaibal, general manager Retail International at OOMCO, said, "As the sultanate's leading fuel marketer we continue to build long-term and fruitful partnerships with local companies and SMEs. Our latest



agreement with O-Taxi is a great addition to this portfolio and we look forward to providing them with their growing fuel needs, while adding a host of benefits for their team. We will be the only fuel marketer to provide such a service in Oman and look forward to adding even more value to our customers' lives."

Harith al Mqbali, chief execu-

tive officer of O-Taxi, added, "We are delighted to have this partnership with Oman Oil Marketing Company, one that will improve the experience for both O-Taxi guests and drivers, while helping us drive our business forward. Combining our services with OOMCO's large network of service stations will allow us to provide better services to a much

wider customer-base, especially because both O-Taxi and OOMCO place high value on quality and customer-centricity."

The partnership underscores OOMCO's long-term strategy to offer more than just fuel. Equipping people for their journeys since 2003, the fuel marketing company offers a one-stop shopping experience.

Overwhelming response to all-new Nissan X-Terra 2021

The all-new Nissan X-Terra 2021 which has been particularly designed for adventure and the outdoors has received an overwhelming response from new buyers in Oman. Ever since its launch recently, Nissan showrooms have been receiving huge footfalls to check out the all-new Nissan X-Terra 2021 which empowers owners to go anywhere, beyond boundaries. Impressed auto enthusiasts have been booking the tough yet sophisticated vehicle which promises to be an ideal partner for customers seeking exciting outdoor adventures.

Noted personality, Basma al Issa is very particular when it comes to the comfort and styling of her vehicle. Being an adventure enthusiast, she is keen on a car with its off-roading capabilities.

Basma says, "I test-drove the Nissan X-Terra 2021 and found it to be more than a perfect car. Most importantly, being a mother of three, I was particularly happy with the host of safety features it offers. It is equipped with an active safety suite, which comprises blind-spot warning, lane departure warning, intelligent driver alert, and intelligent forward collision warning. The SUV also has multiple airbags and a digital rear-view mirror. Nissan has even debuted a segment-first 'zero gravity' seats on the X-Terra, which elevate the comfort level for the front and middle row passengers with reduced fatigue over longer distances. I was very impressed with it."

Adel al Shahab, who recently bought the Nissan X-Terra, says the vehicle demonstrates how sophistication and ruggedness can co-exist.

He says, "It allows us to confidently 'Go Anywhere' together. It has been a close companion, especially in the COVID-19 con-



text, accompanying me in long drives across various terrains. Its off-road capabilities must be experienced to believe it."

Hilal al Maskri is excited that the vehicle has come back after 4.5 years to Oman.

He says, "Nissan Oman recently launched the all-new Nissan X-Terra 2021 in Oman further solidifying the brand's presence. Created for adventures, with a roomy interior and advanced technologies it ensures safety and comfort. Nissan Intelligent Mobility features add to its attraction."

Powering the all-new X-Terra is a 2.5lt four-cylinder petrol engine with a seven-speed automatic transmission. The petrol engines deliver 124kW /165 hp and 241Nm of torque that ensures an exciting drive of speed and acceleration.

Stressing that X-Terra is meant for adventure lovers, So-hail A B says, "It is a 7-seater, spacious, comfortable vehicle. The all-new X-Terra is a catalyst for new experiences, allowing owners to connect with the people in their lives, and to confidently 'Go Anywhere' together. It addresses a variety of needs and all types of terrains as it is both, good for city use and great for an adventure with family and friends. Developed in line with the "unbreakable" frame vehicles design philosophy, it combines masculine solidity with sleek and modern execution."

A senior official of Nissan Oman said, "The all-new X-Terra delivers a robust four-wheel drive system, including a four-wheel lock, brake limited slip differential and electronic locking rear differential - while leading

the class in interior room and comfort."

Built on 70 years of unmatched Nissan SUV expertise, the all-new Nissan X-Terra 2021 reflects the evolution of four-wheel adventure travel and a growing consumer desire for connection. It effortlessly combines impressive strength with bold new design and built-for-comfort roominess. Underlining this is breakthrough engineering and a suite of cutting-edge Nissan Intelligent Mobility (NIM) technologies to offer a superior driving experience and adventure-ready confidence for drivers to explore new places.

The SUV's rugged frame facilitates its durability and practicality, while the future-forward aesthetics are exhibited in the quad LED projector lamps and a bold new V-motion grille. The re-

vised rear and new LED taillights add to the all-new X-Terra's athletic look, reflecting the Nissan Design team's dynamic and modern philosophy.

A design for today's adventures

The styling of the all-new X-Terra was developed at the Global Design studio in Japan. At 4.9m in length, 1.9m in height and just over 2.1m in width - with a ground clearance of 243 mm - the X-Terra looks right at home next to its bigger sibling, the Patrol, and borrows some design elements.

The front face resembles the Patrol with the powerful new V-motion grill, with its thick frame contrasting with the refined horizontal chrome bars within. The proportions of the all-new X-Terra are strong and bold. The hood is tall and horizontal, the body is muscular, and the driver sits up high for a commanding road presence.

The overall image is imposing and rugged, but designers have also added expressions of sophistication and technology. This is underlined by the unique C-shaped LED signature headlamps, similar to those of the Patrol, but evolved and interpreted in a new way for the all-new X-Terra. The quad LED projector lamps, like ice-cubes, have a high-tech vibe. Each one is intricately framed in its own bezel, showing off an attention to detail. The front bumper with its unique layers overlapping each other creates an overall protected, yet sophisticated feeling. Combined with sleek, high tech headlamps and a powerful grill creates a distinctive front face that looks tough, modern and upscale.

For test-drive options call Nissan Toll free 80050011. For more details visit www.nissanoman.com



Qatar Airways named world's best airline

Qatar Airways has been acknowledged for its performance during the global pandemic as the best airline in the world by eDreams, one of Europe's largest online travel agents. The accolade drew on feedback from over 61,000 customers across 667 airlines awarding marks for service quality not only on board, but throughout each customer touchpoint, including flight refunds, reliability, ticket flexibility, value for money, overall experience and safety.

Qatar Airways topped the rating with a score of 4.4/5, reflecting the range of measures to support customers and trade partners during the pandemic, including the most flexible booking and refunds policy.

Qatar Airways' chief commercial officer Thierry Antinori welcomed the award from eDreams saying, "We are thankful and very honoured to receive this award coming from one of the leading global trade distributors. This reflects the uninterrupted and full commitment of Qatar Airways to our customers

and the trade since the first day of the pandemic. We have worked hard to be the most trusted and reliable airline for our travel trade partners.

"At Qatar Airways fulfilling our mission and being there for the people needing us is paramount. When the pandemic began we were there to bring people home when many other airlines stopped flying, and since then we have kept flying, resuming and rebuilding our network using our varied fleet of modern, fuel-efficient aircraft. We currently offer more destinations and frequencies than any other carrier in the Middle East region to Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas with more than 130 destinations and even launched seven new destinations during the pandemic - Abuja, Accra, Brisbane, Cebu, Luanda, San Francisco and Seattle - to meet demand so that passengers can travel with an airline they can rely on. Qatar Airways looks forward to continuing our strong relationship with eDreams and well as with all our trade partners in general."

Park Inn by Radisson gets new F&B manager

Park Inn by Radisson Muscat appoints Ajay Dhoundiyal as the new F&B manager in-charge of Food & Beverages and Kitchen departments.

With over two decades experience in the culinary industry, he operates seamlessly to enhance the dining experience for hotel guests. Dhoundiyal, an Indian national, is also the executive chef of the hotel since September of 2012.

His career has taken him across various hotel brands like Hyatt, Kempinski, Starwood, and Radisson. As the executive chef of the hotel, he leads the culinary team, preparing and managing the operations of the hotel's dining outlets and banquets. He specialises in international cuisine and strives to create interesting menus. In line with the Radisson Hotel Group's brand



promise 'Every Moment Matters', it is simply to ensure the success of hotel team members around the core beliefs "We grow talent and talent grows us". Dhoundiyal's current role is to oversee the food and beverages department with three outlets under him - the coveted Sama Terrazza rooftop lounge, the signature restaurant the RBG Grill, The Palm Restaurant, drive Meetings & Events and overall guest dining & service satisfaction.

Techno Plastic Industry wins His Majesty's Award

Techno Plastic Industry LLC, the first manufacturer of PPR pipes and fittings in the sultanate has bagged the prestigious His Majesty's Award for Industrial Excellence 2020 In Environment, Safety and Community Service.

Techno Plastic Industry LLC was founded in 1998 and is currently an ISO 9001:2008 certified serving construction and industrial markets in Middle East and Africa with a wide range of experience in the plastic industry.

Techno has its head office in Muscat with representative of-



fice in Dubai (UAE), Riyadh (KSA) and Doha (Qatar). Its production facility is in Sohar and centralised warehouse in Rusayl. Techno piping systems are made of the highest quality raw materials, which are best suitable for hot and cold liquids at high pressure point.

Techno piping systems are manufactured under German Institute for Standardisation (DIN) quality control measures at our state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. As the motto "Quality is our Strength" suggests, quality is an integral part in manufacturing

of techno products. At Techno Plastic Industry, we aim to deliver highest quality assured products with better durability and reliability while maintaining the high-quality standards.

The company's Mission is "To provide best quality product and service to the society," while its Vision is "To be a renowned and leading provider of world class piping system solution".

The company has some exciting products - PPR, PPRCT and UV Monolayer Pipes and Fittings for use for construction and industrial markets.

Ashok Leyland unveils smart transport solutions in Oman

Ashok Leyland, the flagship company of the Hinduja Group and a transnational transportation and mobility solutions leader, unveiled two smart passenger buses in Oman at a virtual launch.

Ashok Leyland, a company which has over seven decades of experience in manufacturing passenger transport vehicles, showcased two products - Falcon Super and Gazl - which will join the fleet of its 1000+ buses already on the roads of Oman, reinforcing expanding market share of its products. The launch of Falcon Super and Gazl was done in partnership with Ashok Leyland's dealer in Oman, Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC, who has a five-decade long presence in the sultanate.



"Falcon Super and Gazl are the products of our state-of-the-art manufacturing base in Ras al Khaimah, UAE. The Ras al Khaimah plant which exports buses to Europe, Africa and the Middle East was established in 2007. It has manufactured over 20,000 buses so far, a large

share of it plying on the roads of GCC countries, including in Oman. Our plant in RAK and increasing market share in GCC countries, will play a key role in achieving our Vision to be in the Top 10 Global CV makers," said Nitin Seth, chief operating officer, Ashok Leyland.

Speaking on the occasion, Sanjay Saraswat, head - International Operations, Ashok Leyland said, "Falcon Super and Gazl come from Ashok Leyland's state-of-the-art manufacturing base in Ras al Khaimah. Falcon Super is a 70-seater and Gazl is a 25-seater that come with in-

built advanced technology and safety solutions, for a comfortable journey. They are designed to meet the specific demands of the GCC countries and to provide a comfortable journey. Both the products have opened up new segments for the company in the region."

Speaking at the launch, Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said, "Our long and fruitful partnership with Ashok Leyland will continue to flourish as we aim to be the market leaders in the commercial vehicles segment in Oman. MHD is the market leader in the staff bus transportation segment in Oman.

With these new products, we look forward to improving our success story in the market. We have recently invested in state-of-the-art exclusive Ashok Leyland 3S facility in Ghala, Muscat to enhance customer satisfaction, efficiency, and output. In addition to this, we have facilities across Oman in Sohar and Salalah.

"Moreover, we are exploring

opportunities for expanding our network across interior locations to enable easier access to our customer base in the sultanate."

The 70-seater Falcon Super is from the Falcon league of buses acknowledged for its sturdiness blended with comfort has been in use in the region by corporate entities as well as schools for over three decades. Gazl, which is sleek, stylish and with a smiling fascia, is a new and contemporary entrant to the market with a seating capacity for 25 passengers. Both the models are focussed on delivering lower total cost of ownership to customers.

Falcon Super is equipped with the world's first inline fuel injection pump engine and complies to both Euro III and Euro IV markets (with its IEGR technology).

Iran inspections can't be 'bargaining chip': IAEA

Vienna, Austria - The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog appealed on Monday for its inspection work in Iran not to become a 'bargaining chip' as world powers mull negotiations to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

"The inspection work of the IAEA must be preserved... (it) should not be put in the middle of a negotiating table as a bargaining chip," International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi told a press conference at the start of the agency's quarterly meeting of its board of governors.

On February 23, Iran suspended some IAEA inspections in response to the US refusal so far to lift sanctions imposed by former president Donald Trump.

Grossi described the suspension of those inspections as a 'huge loss', but when asked if the agency could still reassure the international community that the Iranian nuclear programme was exclusively peaceful, he replied: "So far, so good."

Grossi said the IAEA would continue to have the means to verify the amount of uranium enriched by Iran.

On February 21 Grossi announced after two days of talks with Iranian officials in Tehran that Iran and the IAEA had struck an interim three-month deal to mitigate the impact of the suspended inspections.

Recordings from monitoring equipment the IAEA installed at Iran's nuclear sites will be kept by Iran for three months and provided to the IAEA if US sanctions are lifted.



The Iranian national flag flutters outside the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) headquarters during the agency's Board of Governors meeting, in the Austrian capital Vienna on Monday (AFP)

The inspection work of the IAEA must be preserved... (it) should not be put in the middle of a negotiating table as a bargaining chip

RAFAEL GROSSI

European states are considering putting forward a resolution at this week's meeting condemning Iran's decision to suspend some inspections.

Iran has said that the introduction of such a resolution would push it to abandon the temporary agreement with the

IAEA. Grossi refused to be drawn on the utility of a critical resolution.

"My appeal to all is to have constructive discussions and to preserve the work of the agency," Grossi said.

"The Europeans have started a wrong move by supporting the

US in the board of governors," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday.

"We think this move will lead to the situation becoming disorganised," he said, according to the official Irna agency.

While President Joe Biden has said he is willing to bring the United States back to the 2015 deal, on Sunday Iran said the time was 'not suitable' to hold an informal meeting with the US and the remaining parties to the accord - France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia.

AFP

Netanyahu blames Iran for ship attack, Tehran denies charge

Jerusalem - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday accused Iran of a recent attack on an Israeli-owned ship, noting his country was regularly 'striking' its arch-foe in comments that followed an overnight raid on Syria.

Iran has denied any role in the explosion last Thursday that hit the MV *Helios Ray* in the Gulf of Oman, leaving two holes in its side but causing no casualties.

The latest escalation between the sides came as the international community has been trying to salvage the troubled 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

"It is indeed an Iranian act, that's clear," Netanyahu told public broadcaster Kan.

"As for a reaction - you know my policy," he continued.

"Iran is Israel's greatest enemy, I'm determined to block it, we're striking at it throughout the region."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh responded swiftly to dismiss Netanyahu's claims.

"We strongly deny this accusation," Khatibzadeh told reporters, adding that "the source of this accusation itself shows how invalid (the claim) is."

Syria strikes

Netanyahu's remarks came hours after Syrian air defences intercepted what they said were Israeli missiles over Damascus.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said the strike hit the area of Sayyida Zeinab south of Damascus, where Iranian Rev-



A file photo of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (AFP)

olutionary Guards and Lebanese Hezbollah forces are reported to be present.

There was no immediate report of casualties.

The Israeli army refused to confirm its involvement in the attack.

It was not clear what caused the blast on the MV *Helios Ray*, a vehicle carrier travelling from the Saudi port of Dammam to Singapore, which punctured the boat's hull but did not cause any casualties among the crew or damage to the engine.

Israel has long accused Iran of trying to acquire nuclear weapons, a charge always denied by Tehran.

Following the election of US President Joe Biden, Washington, the European parties to the deal - France, Germany and Britain - and Tehran have been trying to salvage the troubled 2015 nuclear accord, which granted Iran international sanc-

tions relief in return for restrictions on its nuclear programme.

The accord has been nearing collapse since former president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew in 2018 and reimposed crippling sanctions as part of a 'maximum pressure' campaign against Tehran.

On Sunday, Iran dismissed a European offer for an informal meeting involving the US.

In his remarks on Monday, Netanyahu reiterated the Israeli line that it was his country's top priority that 'Iran won't have nuclear weapons, with or without an agreement'. "That's what I also told my friend President Biden," the Israeli leader added.

Critics have questioned if Netanyahu, who supported Trump's move to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, would be able to coordinate the Israeli position on the volatile issue with Biden.

AFP



Left party activists scuffle with police during a demonstration in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka on Monday (AFP)

New protests in Bangladesh as UN calls for overhaul of security law

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Hundreds of Bangladeshi activists staged a fourth day of protests on Monday over the death of a writer in detention as the UN rights chief called for a review of a digital security law used against opposition figures.

Students tried to march to the Home Ministry in Dhaka demanding action over what they called the 'murder' of Mushtaq Ahmed in a high-security jail, as well as the repeal of the Digital Security Act (DSA).

Riot police stopped them 100 metres from the government complex that houses all major ministries.

Ahmed, one of hundreds detained under the DSA since it was enacted in 2018, died last Thursday at a jail where he had been held since May.

The protesters also demanded the release of more than a dozen activists detained during clashes with police since the

There needs to be an overhaul of the Digital Security Act under which Ahmed was charged - and all those detained under this act must be released

MICHELLE BACHELET

death. Student leader Masud Rana said there could be a 'revolt' against the government.

More groups also planned protests during the day over the death of Ahmed, and to demand the release of cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore, who was detained with the writer.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on Monday urged Bangladesh to ensure a transparent probe into

Ahmed's death.

"There needs to be an overhaul of the Digital Security Act under which Ahmed was charged - and all those detained under this act for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and opinion must be released", she said in a statement.

Ahmed was detained for publishing an article and sharing Facebook posts critical of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Bachelet also expressed 'serious concern' at allegations that Kishore has been subjected 'to torture or other ill treatment'.

"The government must ensure that its investigation into Ahmed's death is prompt, transparent and independent, and that any allegations of ill-treatment of other detainees are also immediately investigated," Bachelet said.

AFP

Crowds protest outside court as Hong Kong dissidents charged

Hong Kong, China - Hundreds of democracy supporters gathered outside a Hong Kong courthouse on Monday chanting slogans and flashing protest symbols as some of the city's best-known dissidents appeared in the dock charged with subversion.

Beijing is battling to stamp out dissent in semi-autonomous Hong Kong after swathes of the population hit the streets in 2019 in huge and sometimes violent democracy demonstrations.

It has blanketed the once free-wheeling finance hub in a national security law, while anti-coronavirus measures ban public gatherings of more than four people.

Police on Sunday charged 47 leading dissidents with conspiracy to commit subversion in the largest use yet of the security legislation.

Monday's hearing sparked a resurgence of defiance from members of the public in a city where protest has been all but outlawed. Hundreds queued up outside the law courts in one of the biggest gatherings in months as police maintained a heavy presence.

Some chanted slogans including 'Release all political prisoners' and 'Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times' - the latter a slogan authorities have seemed illegal under the security law.

Others flashed the three-finger 'Hunger Games' salute that has been embraced by fellow democracy campaigners in Thailand and Myanmar.

Tensions rose and fell throughout the afternoon as police raised banners warning that an illegal gathering was taking place and that protesters' chants were breaking the national secu-



Pro-democracy supporters protest outside the West Kowloon court, ahead of court appearances by dozens of dissidents charged with subversion, in Hong Kong on Monday (AFP)

Police on Sunday charged 47 leading dissidents with conspiracy to commit subversion in the largest use yet of the security legislation, ahead of their court appearance on Monday that sparked a resurgence of defiance

city law. Rows of officers later dispersed those outside the courtroom citing anti-coronavirus restrictions.

The crowds largely complied with the order, some heckling officers and chanting as they left the scene.

Local district councillor Kwan Chun-sang was one of dozens who camped overnight to bag a spot at the front of the queue for the court's public gallery.

"Soon after the charges were laid yesterday I decided to come and spend the night here," he told AFP. "I would like to show my support for the pro-democ-

racy activists."

A small group of pro-Beijing protesters held banners welcoming the subversion charges.

"Punish the traitors severely, enact the national security law and throw them all behind bars," one sign read.

The defendants represent a broad cross-section of Hong Kong's opposition, from veteran former pro-democracy lawmakers to academics, lawyers, social workers and a host of youth activists.

So many have been charged that officials had to open up three other courtrooms to ac-

commodate the overspill.

After a brief appearance by the charged, proceedings were adjourned to later in the afternoon.

The alleged offence of those arrested for subversion was to organise an unofficial primary last summer to choose candidates for the city's partially elected legislature, in the hopes that the pro-democracy bloc might take a majority for the first time and block government legislation.

Chinese and Hong Kong officials viewed the primary as an attempt to 'overthrow' the city's government and therefore a threat to national security.

They were arrested in a series of dawn raids in January and charged on Sunday with 'conspiracy to commit subversion' - one of the new broadly defined national security crimes. They face up to life in prison if convicted.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Modi gets Covaxin jab as India expands vaccine drive

Glitches in online booking systems, fears contribute to slow pace of inoculation

New Delhi, India - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was vaccinated against COVID-19 Monday, but a glitch in an online booking system caused hassles as the authorities expanded inoculation programme across the country.

India's 11.1mn coronavirus case total is topped only by the United States.

The government - which has set a target of vaccinating 300mn people by the end of June - has opened up the jabs to all over 60 years and anyone over 45 years with serious illnesses.

Since the vaccination drive launched in January, 14mn people have had jabs, mainly health workers and security forces.

Modi received a domestic developed vaccine - Covaxin, India's first indigenous COVID-19 vaccine developed by Bharat Biotech - at the All India Institute Of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi.

The vaccine, developed by Bharat Biotech, is one of two approved for use in India even though the late stage data from trials on 25,800 volunteers have not yet been released.

Despite doubts raised by some doctors and health workers, India's drug regulator and the company insist it is safe for use.

Fears over vaccines have



People queue up to register for inoculation at the MS Ramaiah Hospital, in the southern Indian city of Bengaluru on Monday (AFP)

contributed to the slow pace of inoculation and Modi said on Twitter: 'I appeal to all those who are eligible to take the vaccine. Together, let us make India COVID-19 free!'

Problems with online registration did not help on the first day of the new drive.

Nilanjana Gupta, who took her lawyer father Sunil Gupta to the Max Smart Super Speciality hospital in Delhi, said it took more than 30 attempts to get a registration number on the gov-

ernment app.

"I expected this but it's still very frustrating," she added.

An uncle of US Vice-President Kamala Harris was also among those affected.

Balachandran Gopalan, an academic, told AFP he got onto the government portal and received a registration number and an appointment at a hospital in New Delhi's Malviya Nagar area.

"Once I got there, they checked my registration details

and said they have no record of it," the 79 year old said.

Gopalan said hospital officials could not tell him when his turn would come. "I understand the doctors are stressed," he said. "But why put the patients under stress?"

Some, like 69 year old Vijaya Shankar, were happy after they got the inoculation, which cost just US\$3.40. "I have waited for so long and the day is now finally here. I think the government has done a great job," she

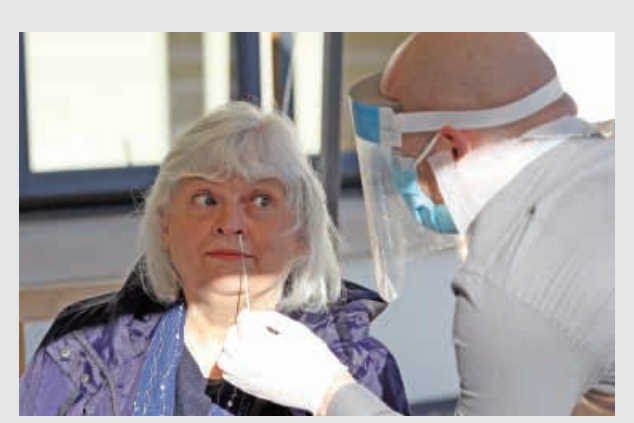
said. "The vaccine is cheap, I don't mind paying."

Firhad Hakim, mayor of the eastern city of Kolkata, acknowledged 'some technical glitches' but said the operation was generally going well.

"Security has been beefed up in and around hospitals to control the crowd," he said.

The vaccination drive has been stepped up as India sees a surge in new cases after a dramatic fall in recent months.

AFP



A woman gets tested as she arrives at a nursing home to visit her mother, in Edinburgh on Monday (AFP)

UK hunts for carrier of Brazil strain

London, UK - Britain on Monday appealed for a person infected with a powerful COVID-19 strain from Brazil to come forward as experts fretted about its impact on new vaccines.

The public appeal came a week before England is due to start unwinding its third COVID lockdown, with progress hinging on the vaccines' ability to curtail the pandemic. The variant that emerged in Manaus, northern Brazil, has been detected in six people in the UK, one of whom cannot be located after they failed to fill in their contact details on a form after taking their coronavirus test.

"We are working with several data points to try and locate them, not least, of course, to try and highlight anyone who has had a test on (February) 12 to come forward if they haven't had a result," vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi said.

He said community-wide 'surge testing' was starting in South Gloucestershire, western England, after two of the Manaus cases were confirmed there.

Experts warned that based on data from Brazil, the variant was both more transmissible and better at evading antibodies than the UK's predominant strain which emerged in the southeastern county of Kent last September.

Danny Altmann, professor of immunology at Imperial College in London, said the public should feel 'somewhat worried but not total panic' about the emergence in Britain of the Manaus variant.

'It's not that all immunity is gone, it's that the vaccines look so much less potent, so there'll be more people who have low antibody responses where it can break through and get affected,' he told Times Radio.

AFP

China using pandemic to obstruct foreign journalists, alleges media group

Beijing, China - China has used extra surveillance and restrictions ostensibly imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic to block the work of foreign reporters already struggling with threats of detention and punitive visa restrictions, a press group said on Monday.

As the country has largely brought the coronavirus outbreak under control since it emerged in late 2019, Beijing has raced to promote an official narrative of heroism and success in its early handling of the pandemic.

'As China's propaganda machine struggled to regain control of the narrative around this public health disaster, foreign press outlets were repeatedly obstructed in their attempts to cover the pandemic,' the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC) said in its annual report, based on a survey of 150 of its 220 members. 'China has used the pandemic as yet another way to control journalists.'

Strict COVID-19 measures have been regularly used to block or threaten reporters, the media group said, with some 42



This file photo shows police officials trying to stop journalists from recording outside the Shanghai Pudong New District People's Court, where the trial was set to begin of Chinese citizen journalist Zhang Zhan - detained for reporting on Wuhan's COVID-19 outbreak, in Shanghai on December 28 last year (AFP)

per cent of respondents saying they had been made to leave an area or denied access for health and safety reasons.

The FCCC said journalists were asked to comply with measures that were not required of others, and that the introduction of coronavirus checkpoints and contact tracing apps had created 'additional opportunities for Chinese authorities to gather data and surveil foreign journalists and their sources'.

Sources like medical staff in the central city of Wuhan were interrogated by authorities or

warned against accepting interviews, reporters said.

For a third straight year, none of the respondents said working conditions had improved.

Asked about the report on Monday, a Chinese official said that it was 'presumptuous, alarmist and has zero factual basis'. "We have always welcomed media and journalists from all countries to carry out interviews and reporting in China, in accordance with laws and regulations," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

AFP

Myanmar's Suu Kyi hit with two new criminal charges

Yangon, Myanmar - Ousted Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi was hit with two new criminal charges in a court appearance via video link on Monday, a month after a military coup triggered relentless mass protests.

Suu Kyi has not been seen in public since being detained on February 1, and her appearance came as demonstrators took to the streets again across the country in defiance of an escalation of deadly force by the junta.

At least 18 people died on Sunday as troops and police fired live rounds at demonstrators in cities across Myanmar, according to the United Nations, which cited its own credible information.

Suu Kyi (75) was already facing obscure criminal charges for possessing unlicensed walkie-talkies, as well as violating coronavirus restrictions by staging a campaign event during last year's election.

She is now also accused of breaching communications laws



A file photo of Myanmar's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi (AFP)

as well as intent to incite public unrest, her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw said.

"We can not say for sure how many more cases Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will face in this period," he told reporters in Naypyidaw.

"Anything can happen in this country at this time."

Suu Kyi has reportedly been kept under house arrest in the capital of Naypyidaw, an isolated city that the military built during a previous dictatorship.

The military has justified its takeover, which ended a decade-

long democratic experiment, with unfounded allegations of widespread fraud in last November's national elections, which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won in a landslide.

Despite Sunday's bloodshed protesters were defiant - some citing a sense of duty to their children's future.

"I'm here as a frontliner because I don't want my son to grow up in this evil era," a student called Eric told AFP, adding he has a ten-month-old baby.

AFP

US envoy Khalilzad arrives in Kabul as deadline for troop withdrawal nears

Kabul, Afghanistan - The US special envoy to Afghanistan touched down in Kabul on Monday for meetings with local officials, in a bid to revive a flagging peace process as violence soars in the war-weary country and a deadline for US troop withdrawal draws closer.

Zalmay Khalilzad's arrival marks the first time he has returned to Afghanistan since US President Joe Biden took office in January and asked him to stay in his post.

Speculation is rife over the US' future in Afghanistan, after the White House announced plans to review a withdrawal deal brokered by Khalilzad and the Taliban in Doha last year.

Under that agreement, the US is set to withdraw from Afghanistan in May, but a surge in fighting has sparked concerns that a speedy exit from the country may unleash greater chaos as peace talks between the Kabul government and Taliban continue to stall.



US special representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad (left) meets with Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation Chairman Abdullah Abdullah at the Sapedar Palace, in Kabul on Monday (AFP)

In Kabul, Khalilzad met with Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation that is overseeing Kabul's peace talks with the insurgents in Qatar.

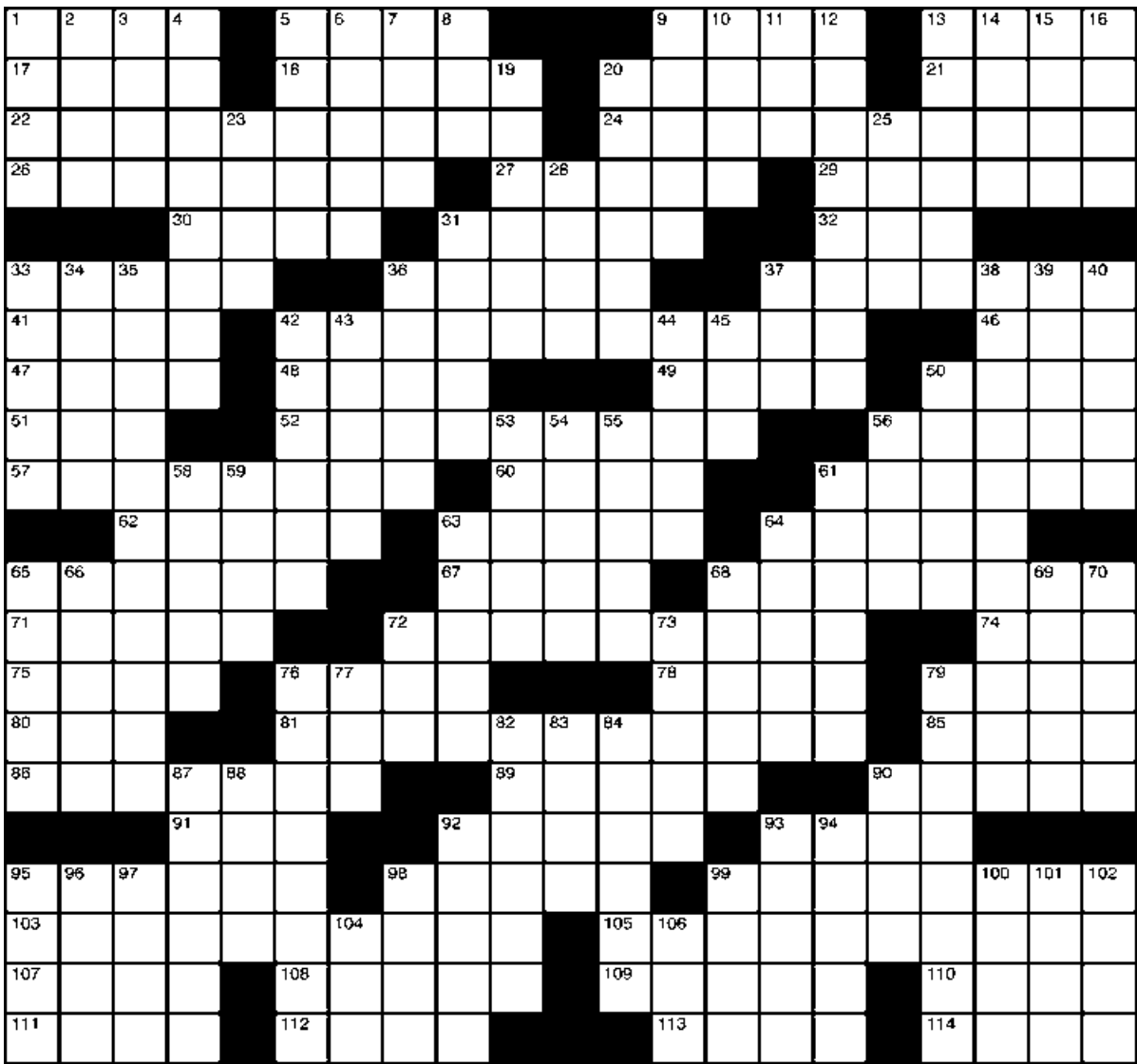
The two sides 'discussed the

talks in Doha and the review of US-Taliban deal by the US administration, ending the war in Afghanistan and ways to find political settlement through talks in Afghanistan', a spokesman for Abdullah's office said.

The envoy is also set to travel to Qatar, where he will meet with Taliban leaders along with trips to unspecified regional capitals, according to the State Department.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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- ACROSS**

1 Symbol for Ms. Nightingale

5 Jason's command

9 Sleeping in

13 Rapier

17 Author Wiesel

18 Climbing vine

20 An Astaire

21 Maestro Riccardo

22 007's antagonist in a '64 film

24 FL rose colored fish

26 No-frills ship accommodation

27 Get down to ____

29 Piece of armor

30 Impertinent talk

31 Seraglio

32 Possessive pronoun

33 "Hawaii Five O's" Caan

36 Tyrolean dialect

37 Guides

41 Arm of the Amazon

42 The 1890s

46 Anglo-Saxon money

47 Of a significant period

48 English river

49 Reduce sail

50 Habeas corpus, e.g.

51 Mitt's wife
- 52 British infantryman

56 Form

57 Considered

60 Discourteous

61 Ascended Everest, say

62 A Howe

63 Enjoyed a repast

64 Medieval village

65 Hoople and Barbara

67 Frog genus

68 Type type

71 Mistreat

72 Covered wagon

74 Ewe said it

75 Sacred Egyptian bird

76 Luzon volcano

78 Part of Q.E.D.

79 Pickens of films

80 One of the seven dwarfs

81 Oldest US national park

85 But, in Barcelona

86 Comedian Jon

89 Boca ____

90 Wisent

91 First of a Latin trio

92 Kind of terrier

93 Sun follower

95 Actress Hines

98 Dull finish

99 Of the kneecap

103 Vegetation in
- Zane

Grey title

105 Place setting need

107 Pierre's girl friend

108 Drew a bead on

109 Kind of table or engine

110 Lily plant

111 Shook a leg

112 Kind of miss

113 Brouhahas

114 Dismal cry

DOWN

1 Supports

2 Thanks ____!

3 Distance for Sebastian Coe

4 Spot for an idol

5 Jennifer Garner series

6 Saturn's orbiters

7 "Eleni" author

8 "A Chorus Line" hit

9 Revoke a legacy

10 Road or hot followers

11 Raised RRs

12 Cub Scout leader

13 Part of HRE

14 Young seals

15 Nice seasons

16 Land of Yeats

19 Penny follower

20 Maurice Leblanc's

Lupin

23 Campus grp.
- 25 Character actor

Mischa

28 Like the Gobi

31 Sanctuary

33 Asparagus unit

34 Chili

accompaniment

35 Breakfast choice

36 Enticed

37 34th US pres.

38 Southeast Florida city

39 Rubbish

40 Filled to excess

42 Gabor, and namesakes

43 Buenos ____

44 Statement of belief

45 Gaseous prefix

50 Quay

53 Footballer Foster

54 Dominick or Griffin

55 Think tank product

56 Wind driven clouds

58 At ____, bewildered

59 To laugh, in Lille

61 "... no more a-roving ____":

Byron

63 Waggish

64 US poet Louise

65 Brides trailers

66 Monastery head
- 68 Element Atomic #5

69 Where "Aida" premiered

70 Irish PM De Valera

72 White House nickname

73 Sioux member

76 Innsbruck native, e.g.

77 At the age of: L

79 Route for excess water

82 Took to the soapbox

83 Bide one's time

84 Emphasis

87 Bent out of shape

88 Starch

90 1934 world heavyweight champ

92 Basketballer

93 Philippine seaport

94 Shopping list entries

95 Fig. experts

96 Protuberance

97 One of five lakes

98 "I Remember ____"

99 Entreated

100 French composer

Edouard

101 Lined up

102 Rod's partner

104 You, in Dusseldorf

106 Call ____ day

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Are you feeling some anti-romance feelings right now? Feelings are just feelings, so don't let this worry you. If you're single, you're going to start to appreciate your independence in a whole new way. But if you're in a relationship, you might struggle with this sudden urge to be by yourself. Your partner will understand if you need your space, so don't be afraid to ask for it.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

When it comes to starting a new romance, mixed signals aren't going to stop you today. You know what you feel, and it doesn't matter that the other person hasn't returned the sentiment, or does it? Take a step back and ask yourself once and for all if you're wasting your time. And then ask your crush the same question. Your confidence in this situation is critical.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Make sure you're realistic. You must balance your optimism with caution and not believe everything you see or hear right away. Be a little bit more skeptical and don't shy away from questioning authority. This isn't the time to take anything for granted. While you want to think the best of people, sometimes it isn't smart. There is too much duality in the air.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You can reach an important agreement with an authority figure if you both agree to follow the same path no matter where it leads. Alliances with people who are more powerful than you can be extremely hard to create, but they are the most valuable alliances you can have. If you have to give a little bit more than you want to in order to win this person's trust and favour, do it.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your ego got bruised recently, and it's healthy to spend some time nursing it. But you should try to start shifting back into normal life today. Getting back into the action will help you snap out of any self-pity you've been feeling and remind you how capable you are. You have learned something from this humbling experience, so arm yourself with this knowledge.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

If you give in to someone else's demands, you will only be showing them that they can push you around. And their one simple request today could snowball into bigger and more complicated demands in the future. You need to put a stop to this growing dynamic between the two of you. Nipping it in the bud might cause some tension at first, but it's better.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

This is a good day to have some good, old-fashioned fun. You've got good people around you, and there are lot of good ideas forming about how to spend your time together. Try to do something that will cause a few laughs if you can. Activities that take people out of their comfort zone have a way of enabling people to laugh at themselves and stop taking life so seriously.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

This is a good day to celebrate yourself! At least once a year, whether it's your birthday or not, you have to give a cheer for who you are and what you bring to the world. Make some time to do something just for yourself. Have a nice lunch or dinner, enjoy a long soak in a bubble bath, or buy something you've always wanted but don't really need. Take on the possibilities of the day.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Giving in might not be something you really feel like doing, but the pain you feel in letting go of one of your hopes will be a lot smaller than the amount of pain you'll feel if you fight to the end for everything you want. Compromise is an enlightened choice for you right now. Not only will it end the growing tensions, but it will also show the other person that you're a lot more mature than they are.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Be extravagant and bold today. Now is not the time to hide your light under a bushell! Get back in touch with your more outgoing nature and stop worrying about what people might think of you. Who cares what others think anyway? You need to feel good about yourself, and the best way to make that happen is to speak up and make that joke that's on the tip of your tongue.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Use flattery to your benefit today. It's a perfectly acceptable tool to use as long as it's based in truth. People know when they're being fed a line, so instead of going on and on about how wonderful or attractive someone is, just toss out a flirty comment. Watch someone transform from mildly interested in helping you to wildly interested in continuing the conversation.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Instead of being bored by the idea of a routine, right now you could find a great deal of comfort in knowing what's going on in your daily life for the next few days. A predictable schedule isn't always so bad. Sometimes it's nice to be free of drama! There aren't any mysteries for you to solve right now. This period of stability will give you the firm foundation you need.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The unit of energy in MKS system is

 - a. volt
 - b. erg
 - c. ohm
 - d. joule
2. Tiruchirapalli is situated on river

 - a. Cauvery
 - b. Tapti
 - c. Krishna
 - d. Ganga
3. The term cover point in cricket means

 - a. a fielding position on the off-side, in front of a wicket
 - b. if the ball goes off the batsman's leg
 - c. an off-break ball bowled by a left-handed bowler to a right-handed batsman
 - d. None of the above

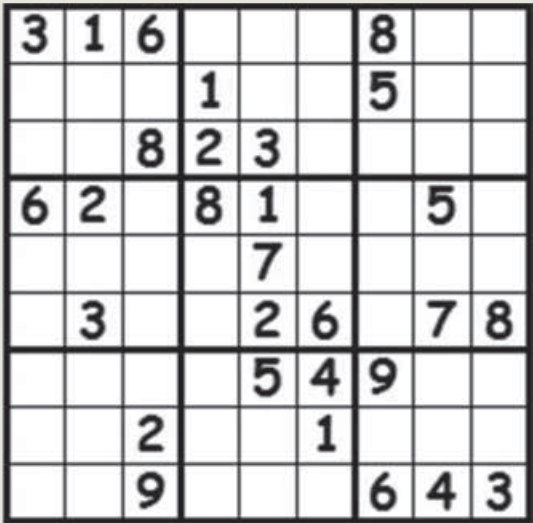
Answers: 1. d, 2. a, 3. a

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



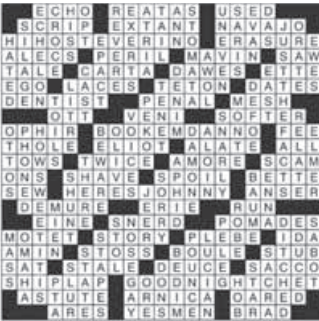
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. 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 (MARCH 01)



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



COSMETIC PROCEDURES

The lure of looking good

Cosmetic surgery sweeps Albania along with virus



Pandemic stress, the focus on faces during video chats and the convenience of hiding under a mask are fuelling a cosmetic surgery boom in Albania - but rogue operators are putting some patients at risk.

Doctors say the surge has been driven by demand from mainly young women such as Ana Kela, a 20-year-old student in Tirana who had her lips plumped in December.

"Every time I looked at my face on the screen, I couldn't even say a word, I was gripped by anguish," Kela said of seeing herself during online classes at the University of Tirana, where she studies economics.

"I thought I looked ugly, dark circles under my eyes, my nose was too big, my lips were very thin, a real disaster," she said. After an operation to increase the volume of her lips, she was pleased with the result.

But in a country where the informal economy is vast, many patients are being lured into unprofessional and ill-equipped beauty centres who are touting cheap prices and promotions.

Unqualified operators

New salons are popping up daily with offers for a range of treatments without medical approval or supervision, said Dr Monika Fida, a professor

The trend is clear. Nose operations have almost doubled" since the end of lockdown measures in July

DR BALLOMA

at the University of Medicine in Tirana.

Advertised on social media, the low-cost offers are attractive in a country where average monthly salaries hover around 420 euros. "Come as a group of four to enjoy a discount of more than 50 percent" on lip plumping and buttock lifts, reads one ad. "Life isn't perfect, but your eyebrows are," says another.

These salons "use equipment that should be handled only by specialists and licensed doctors", said Dr Brunilda Bardhi, who specialises in laser and mesotherapy treatments.

According to field surveys carried out by an association of dermatology and cosmetic doctors that Bardhi leads, around 70 salons in Tirana have laser equipment operated by unqualified personnel.



Cosmetic surgery is seen as a comfort, a way to alleviate the insecurity of our daily lives and to take refuge in a world that smooths the face

Dr Kostandin Balloma, director of the Luis Medical Centre in Tirana, estimates that 30 per cent of his clients are victims of "mistakes made by non-specialised establishments".

Albania's cosmetic sector is supposed to be regulated by a 2017 law but doctors say it is too vague, lacking specificity on who can carry out which treatments and with which products.

There needs to be "a strict regulatory framework where all the professional procedures and all the links in this chain are clearly detailed," the president of Albania's Order of Doctors, Dr Fatmir Brahimaj, told AFP.

Nose jobs doubled

Doctors say the top-selling treatments during the pandemic have been focused on the face - botox injections, facelifts and other forms of re-shaping - though breast and buttock surgeries continue to be popular. With obesity seen as a risk factor for those who contract COVID-19, liposuction is also in demand among those who hope it could help.

"The trend is clear. Nose operations have almost doubled" since the end of lockdown measures in July, said Dr Balloma. "Cosmetic surgery is seen as a comfort, a way to alleviate the insecurity of our daily lives and to take refuge in a world that smooths the face," he added.

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وزارة التجارة والصناعة وترويج الاستثمار

دائرة الملكية الفكرية

إعلان

تعلن دائرة الملكية الفكرية عن طلب تسجيل العلامة التجارية المقبولة وفقاً لإحكام قانون (نظام) العلامات التجارية لدول مجلس التعاون لدول الخليج العربية الصادر بالمرسوم السلطاني رقم 33 / 2017

طلب تسجيل العلامة التجارية رقم : 142948
في الفئة 42 من أجل السلع / الخدمات: تصميم برامج حاسوبية، تطوير البرمجيات في إطار نشر البرمجيات، كخدمات SaaS، استشارات في البرمجيات الحاسوبية، صيانة برامج حاسوب، تحميل برامج حاسوبية.

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ORIGIN AND VARIETY OF SCARVES

necessary
accessory

Some women look at scarves as 'necessary accessories' and may not dare venture outdoors without one while others might find them to be cumbersome or a redundant part of attire as they don't seem to serve any specific purpose. The truth is, scarves have evolved as a trendy modern accessory that go well with casual as well as formal attire, provided one wears it the right way.

You don't have to always wear a scarf over your hair or as a means of a total cover up for your head and face, say stylists around the world who have floated numerous ways of wearing scarves, from neatly wrapping them around the head and revealing an oval shape around the face, to lazily hanging them around the neck. Also, the shape, length as well as fabric of the scarf does dictate the way it should be worn.

The modern scarf has its origins all the way in Ancient Egypt, where the first recorded scarf was used by Queen Nefertiti who was said to have worn a tightly woven scarf topped with a conical headdress in 1350 BC. Under the Chinese Emperor Cheng, scarves made of cloth were used to mark military rank. Later on in Croatia, the scarf continued to play a role in military ranking, with higher ups wearing silk scarves and lower ranking soldiers wearing cotton.

Research, however, indicates that it wasn't until the 19th century that scarves became a popular fashion accessory. For the greatest portion of its history, the scarf was subjected to use as a sweat cloth, or to keep clean. That changed when fashion designers saw the potential to capitalise on the fabrics and designs coming out of different regions around the world.

But in Western culture, the scarf is most prominently known for its use as a fashion accessory, one that first gained widespread popularity in the 19th century. Lightweight, finely woven silk and cashmere shawls from India were one of the first fashionable scarf styles.

As scarves grew in popularity, manufacturers experimented with various types of fabrics. These included silk, cloth, cashmere, chiffon, cotton, wool mixes, muslin, and modal. The original scarves are believed to have been designed from wool fibres, with more polished versions forming in China when silk was the prized fabric.

Today, high-end fashion designers around the world produce custom printed scarves in collaboration with innovative designers. Graphics can be pulled from fresh artwork and applied to premium fabrics to create one-of-a-kind designs. Scarves are now more than just a fashion statement - they are truly a work of art.



Cotton scarves

Thin printed or plain cotton like voile is used to make pretty scarves. Because of the lightweight nature of these fabrics, they are great as a summer accessory. They stay in place and are great for tying in various styles.



Chiffon scarves

Chiffon fabric is lightweight, drapery, thin - all the better to tie around the neck without any bulk. You can add trims like lace at the short ends alone or all along the four sides.



Net scarves

Net fabrics are ideal for making scarves. You will have to choose fine and smooth net fabric like tulle instead of scratchy synthetic nets. Trims like sequins, chains or laces can be added to the edges.



Silk scarves

Silk is an expensive choice for scarves but they have a luxurious aura. Hand-painted silk scarves are much in demand and carry a premium.



Velvet scarves

Velvet is a heavy thick fabric with pile so using the whole width of the fabric as a scarf is absolutely not a good idea. Thin tube scarves in velvet are ideal.



Bandana scarves

A bandana is a square piece of printed cotton with a nice border and interesting prints. It is quite small for full coverage as a scarf but many wear it around the neck in novel ways.



Scarves with tassels

Tassels or pompoms are added along the scarf edge for a colourful and interesting look. These are popular in some cultures where scarves are an important part of attire.

Cashmere scarves

Cashmere scarves and pashminas are said to have risen in popularity because of their soft luxurious texture. They were considered exotic and rare as cashmere was woven from Cashmere goats that inhabit the mountainous regions of Kashmir, India. Their exclusivity attracted a large following that were drawn to its fine, downy texture.

In fact, the name 'Pashmina' translates

to 'soft gold' in the Kashmiri language. Traditionally the goats are reared by nomadic tribes inhabiting regions at very high altitudes where temperatures drop to -40c in the winter. For this reason, the Cashmere goat grows a thick undercoat to keep them warm. As temperatures rise into spring, this coat is shed and this is where the wool used to make pashminas is collected.

A lot of fake Cashmere scarves and shawls do come into world markets, especially in small towns where there is no way of verifying the authenticity. However, there is an easy trick to test whether the scarf is made from true pashmina wool. If the entire scarf can pass through a ring on your ring finger, then you can be sure that it's a genuine pashmina.



FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Several arrested during raid at Barcelona club: Police

Barcelona, Spain - Police raided the offices of FC Barcelona on Monday, carrying out several arrests just six days ahead of the club's presidential elections, a Catalan regional police spokesman told AFP.

Spain's *Cadena Ser* radio said one of those arrested was former club president Josep Maria Bartomeu, who resigned in October, along with CEO Oscar Grau and the club's head of legal services.

But the police refused to confirm names, saying only 'arrests are taking place' and adding that the operation was being run by officers from the financial crimes unit.

"We are in the process of carrying out an operation right now with agents of the financial crimes unit," the police spokesman said.

According to reports in the Spanish media, the operation is linked to last year's investigation

into the 'BarcaGate' scandal, in which the club denied hiring a company to criticise current and former players on social media to improve the image of the then-president Bartomeu.

Lionel Messi, Pep Guardiola and Xavi Hernandez were among those allegedly targeted by the campaign. Messi described the controversy as 'strange' in an interview with Catalan newspaper *Mundo Deportivo*.

Cadena Ser also claimed Barcelona club had paid the company, I3 Ventures, an inflated fee and put payments through in smaller, separate amounts to avoid the club's financial controls.

Bartomeu's successor is due to be elected on Sunday, when club members will choose between the final three candidates, Joan Laporta, Toni Freixa and Victor Font. AFP



Spanish lawyer Jorge Navarro leaves the offices of FC Barcelona on Monday during a police operation (AFP)

'Written off' Liverpool still ready to fight, says Klopp

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Sheffield, UK - Jurgen Klopp believes Liverpool can prove the doubters that have written their season off wrong after snapping a four-game English Premier League (EPL) losing streak to win 2-0 at Sheffield United on Sunday.

The English champions' title defence has been decimated by injuries and they face a battle just to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish.

Klopp's men remain in sixth, but are now just two points behind fourth-placed West Ham and can leapfrog Chelsea in fifth when the Blues visit Anfield on Thursday.

"Plenty of people have written us off. That's fine," said Klopp. "With all the problems we have had we're still around the exciting places."

Captain Jordan Henderson has been added to Liverpool's long-term injury list, while goalkeeper Alisson Becker was absent after he lost his father to a swimming accident in Brazil this week.

But the Championship-bound Blades proved the perfect opponents for Klopp's men to restore some confidence as Curtis Jones's second-half strike and Kean Bryan's own goal got the Reds back to winning ways.

"This was about us showing



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp watches his team play during their 2-0 win over Sheffield United in the English Premier League on Sunday

we're still there," added Klopp.

"We play Chelsea on Thursday, we have to show it again. We have to win football games, we know that. There's no way into the Champions League without results."

With Alisson's understudy Caoimhin Kelleher also absent due to injury, Liverpool's third-choice goalkeeper Adrian started in the Premier League for the first time since conceding

nine goals in two games in October to Aston Villa and Everton.

However, the much-maligned Spaniard made an important early save to prevent David McGoldrick giving Sheffield United a shock lead.

Most of the action was taking place down the other end as Aaron Ramsdale brilliantly denied Roberto Firmino, who should have teed up Jones for a

tap-in. The former Bournemouth stopper also did well to block from Mohamed Salah, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Georginio Wijnaldum, while Firmino's lack of confidence showed as he tried to tee up Sadio Mane rather than go for an open goal from a narrow angle.

Liverpool's breakthrough finally came three minutes into the second period when

Alexander-Arnold was deemed not to have run the ball out of play before his cross was turned by Firmino into the path of Jones to slot home the opening goal.

The same two players were involved again for the second as this time the Brazilian's shot took a huge deflection off Bryan.

Firmino was denied his first goal in seven games with the goal credited to the defender.

Milan bounce back against Roma

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Milan, Italy - AC Milan beat Roma 2-1 on Sunday to remain in track to chase leaders and city rivals Inter.

Inter remain four points ahead of second-placed Milan, who got back to winning ways in Rome after consecutive league losses including last weekend's derby defeat.

Champions Juventus are a further six points adrift after being held 1-1 at Hellas Verona on Saturday, but have played a game fewer.

Atalanta, equal on points with Juventus, take fourth spot two points ahead of Roma who drop to fifth following the loss to Milan.

Milan won an intense battle with rivals Roma at the Stadio Olimpico in the Italian capital, as Stefano Pioli's side push for a first league title since 2011.

A Franck Kessie penalty gave Milan the lead five minutes before the interval after Federico Fazio fouled Davide Calabria.



AC Milan's Ante Rebic (second from right) celebrates after scoring

Jordan Veretout pulled Roma level five minutes after the break with an arrowed shot, but the away side were soon back in front.

Ante Rebic drilled home the winner eight minutes later after collecting a pass from Alexis Saelemaekers following a poor clearance from Roma goalkeeper Pau Lopez.

Off-form Milan star Zlatan

Ibrahimovic had been substituted shortly before Croatia international Rebic scored the decisive goal.

Napoli's record goalscorer Dries Mertens returned from injury to help the southerners boost their own top four hopes with a 2-0 win over local rivals Benevento that puts them a point behind Roma in sixth. AFP

Atletico hold rivals at bay with tight Villarreal win

SPANISH LEAGUE

Madrid, Spain - Atletico Madrid bounced back from recent poor form with a hard-fought 2-0 win at Villarreal on Sunday that allowed the La Liga pace-setters to extend their lead to five points.

An own goal from Alfonso Pedraza and Joao Felix's powerful strike gave Atletico a precious win after a wobble which had allowed Barcelona and Real Madrid to gain ground in the title race.

Diego Simeone's side had come into the match off the back of a Champions League last-16 defeat to Chelsea and a league run in which they picked up just five points from their previous four matches.

However despite Villarreal coming close on a number of occasions Atletico held on for a win that ensures they keep second-placed Barca at bay and crucially increase the gap between them and rivals Real



Atletico Madrid players celebrate a goal against Villarreal on Sunday

Madrid to six points ahead of next weekend's local derby.

Real Madrid can go back to within three points of Atletico when they host Europe-chasing Real Sociedad on Monday night.

"We suffered, and even after the second goal they had good chances. But we come home with a very important victory at this point in the season," said Simeone.

FRENCH LEAGUE
Lille held

Paris, France - Portugal defender Jose Fonte's late header rescued Ligue 1 leaders Lille a 1-1 draw against Strasbourg on Sunday while Lyon drew 1-1 at Marseille.

OTHER RESULTS:
GERMAN LEAGUE:

Sunday: Bayer Leverkusen 1 Freiburg 2. AFP

QUICK RUN

Crotone sack Stroppa as coach

Serie A's bottom side Crotone have sacked coach Giovanni Stroppa, the Calabrian club announced on Monday. Sunday's 2-0 defeat against Cagliari was their sixth in succession and leaves them eight points behind Torino who are one place outside the relegation zone. Crotone have won just three matches from 24 in Serie A this season.

Former Croatia coach Kranjcar dies

Former Croatia coach and Dinamo Zagreb star Zlatko 'Cico' Kranjcar died on Monday at the age of 64, the national football federation (HNS) said. He served as national team coach from 2004 to 2006 but was sacked after Croatia failed to make the knockout phase at the World Cup. Kranjcar later had an 18-month spell in charge of Montenegro and stints with Iran's Sepahan and Al Ahli of Qatar. He briefly took over Dinamo again in 2016 and then Iran's U 23 side in 2018.

Rennes coach Stephan quits

Julien Stephan, who guided Rennes to Champions League qualification for the first time in their history, has resigned following a poor run of results, the Ligue 1 club announced Monday. Philippe Bizeul, an assistant to Stephan, will take charge of the first team on a temporary basis, the club added.

Vaishali stars in OWCA's maiden win

Vaishali Jesrani topscored with 32 as she led Oman Women's Cricket Academy (OWCA) to a 30-run win over Wadi Kabir Women for their maiden win of the season in Oman Cricket's Women's League T20 game on Sunday.

Brief scores: OWCA 103-9 (Vaishali 32; Shreya Suresh 3-18, Jayavarsaa Sivakumar 2-18) **beat Wadi Kabir Women 73-6** (Shreya 31).

C Division (T20): Khalsa United 202-4 (Shrikant Akhil 66, Deepesh Mehta 39) **beat Jumbo Electronics 95 in 13.4 overs** (Saeed Mohammed 40; Jaspreet Singh 6-16, Harminder Singh 2-14).

D Division (T20): Jotun CT 143-9 (Raj Amal 50; Deepesh Unnikoru 2-8, Sooraj A Raj 2-20, Karakoikal Umesh 2-20) **lost to Ideal Technology 145-6 in 18.2 overs** (Vijesh Vijayakumaran 66, Waseem Abbas 39; Raj Amal 2-25, Joby Abraham 2-31).

Djokovic equals Federer's all-time record of 310 weeks as ATP No 1

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic matched Roger Federer's all-time record for the most weeks as ATP world No 1 on Monday, holding the top spot for the 310th week.

Djokovic's ninth Australian Open title last month ensured the 18-time Grand Slam champion will surpass Federer's record next week.

The Serb reclaimed the top

ranking from Rafael Nadal in February 2020 and finished as year-end number one for the sixth time, tying the mark set by Pete Sampras.

This is Djokovic's fifth different stint atop the rankings. He spent 122 consecutive weeks as number one between July 2014 and November 2016. That record is currently held by Federer (237).

The only change in the top-20 on Monday saw David Goffin, who won his first title in over three years at Montpellier on Sunday, rise one spot to 14th at the expense of Milos Raonic.

ATP rankings as of March 1:

1 Novak Djokovic (Serbia) 12,030 pts; 2 Rafael Nadal (Spain) 9,850; 3 Daniil

Medvedev (Russia) 9,735; 4 Dominic Thiem (Austria) 9,125; 5 Roger Federer (Switzerland) 6,630; 6 Stefanos Tsitsipas (Greece) 6,595; 7 Alexander Zverev (Germany) 5,615; 8 Andrey Rublev (Russia) 4,609; 9 Diego Schwartzman (Argentina) 3,480; 10 Matteo Berrettini (Italy) 3,480.

AFP



A file photo of Novak Djokovic (left) and Roger Federer

Woods 'touched' by show of support from fellow golfers

Los Angeles, US - Tiger Woods, recovering in hospital after surgery for serious leg injuries received in a solo car smash, tweeted thanks Sunday for a show of support from fellow pro golfers.

"It is hard to explain how touching today was when I turned on the tv and saw all the red shirts," the 15-time major champion said in a tweet.

"To every golfer and every fan, you are truly helping me get through this tough time."

A host of golfers at the World Golf Championships Workday Championship in Bradenton, Florida - and quite a few at the LPGA Tour event in Orlando, as well - took the course for their final rounds wearing Woods's signature Sunday colours of red and black.

The PGA Tour tweeted a picture of the maintenance staff at its Puerto Rico Open on Sunday all turned out in red and black.

Former world No 1 Rory McIlroy, Tommy Fleetwood and Tony Finau at the WGC and Phil Mickelson at a PGA Tour Champions event were some of the players who turned out wearing Woods's iconic colour combo.

"I guess for us it's just a gesture to let him know that we're thinking about him and we're rooting for him," McIlroy said.



Rory McIlroy

"Obviously things are looking a little better today than they were on Tuesday, but he's still got away to go. 'He's got a huge recovery ahead of him. But I think (it's) just for everyone to show their appreciation for what he means to us out here."

"If there was no Tiger Woods, I just think the tour and the game

of golf in general would be in a worse place.

"He's meant a lot to us, he still does mean a lot to us and I think that was just a little way to show that."

Collin Morikawa lifted the trophy at Concession Golf Club in Bradenton, becoming joining Woods as the only players to win

both a major title and a WGC crown before turning 25.

Thank you, Tiger

"Tiger means everything to me," Morikawa said. "Yes, he had the crash and thankfully he's okay and will make a quick recovery."

"But I don't think we say thank you enough, so I want to say



Tiger Woods

thank you to Tiger."

Woods, 45, underwent hours of emergency surgery to repair what doctors called 'significant orthopaedic injuries' to his lower right leg and ankle on Tuesday after his early morning crash on a steep, winding road in suburban Los Angeles.

He was transferred to Cedars-

Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles for further treatment and recovery on Wednesday night and on Friday was reported in a statement posted on Twitter to be in good spirits after follow-up treatment for his injuries.

Woods faces a lengthy recovery from his injuries, which include open fractures affecting

both the upper and lower portions of his lower right leg, along with injuries to the bones of the foot and ankle. Woods was already recovering from his fifth back surgery - and hoping he would be able to prepare for a run at the Masters in April - when the crash occurred.

AFP

Sri Lanka appoint Aussie Moody as director of cricket

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Australia's Tom Moody has been appointed Sri Lanka's director of cricket, a broad new role that will have Moody overseeing Sri Lanka's international programme and domestic tournaments.

The appointment was made on the recommendation of Sri Lanka's new technical advisory committee headed by Aravinda de Silva.

The role will see Moody spend at least 300 days in Sri Lanka over the next three years focusing on 'analysis of the future tour programme, focusing on the domestic tournament structure, player welfare, education and skill development, coaching and support staff structure, high performance, and data analytics'.

Moody had been Sri Lanka's coach between 2005 and 2007 - years in which Sri Lanka tasted considerable success in the Test format and became World Cup runners-up.

Since then he has been a coach at the IPL, the Caribbean Premier League's director of



Tom Moody

cricket and has had several other high-profile positions.

"Tom has worked with Sri Lanka Cricket in the past and has shown results, and I am sure with his working knowledge of the system, Tom will add greater value to our game," SLC's CEO Ashley de Silva said.

Kumar Sangakkara and Muttiah Muralitharan, who played under Moody during his tenure as coach, are also on the advisory committee.

Moody starts his role on March 1. His contract runs for three years.

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AHLI-SIDAB ARE CHAMPIONS

- Domestic heavyweights outplay Bausher 3-0 to clinch His Majesty's Cup for a record 12th time
- Seeb trounce Sohar 4-1 to claim bronze in the 50th edition of HM's Cup Hockey Championship

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Hockey powerhouse Ahli-Sidab stamped their superiority in style as they clinched the 50th edition of the coveted His Majesty's Cup Hockey Championship for a record 12th time at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex (SQSC) on Monday.

Last season's runner-up, Ahli-Sidab proved too good for their rivals Bausher, as they cruised to a 3-0 win to become the sole record-holder of the maximum number of titles.

Earlier in the third-place playoff, Seeb, who have won the prestigious trophy 11 times, had the consolation of a podium finish as they trounced Sohar 4-1.

Ahli-Sidab, under the guidance of former India women's and junior team coach C R Kumar, went into the summit clash as the fancied and favourite and expectedly dominated the match against Bausher, who were in the final for only the second time.

Coached by Saleh al Farsi, Bausher displayed early hints of a fight and did not give their experienced rivals much of an opening in the early stages of the match and held on for a goalless stalemate at the end of first quarter. However, Ahli-Sidab, who were more aggressive and displayed more attacking intent won a series of penalty corners and soon got the breakthrough in the second quarter from a short corner.

Ahli-Sidab's Indian recruit Affan Yousuf was in the thick of action and his whipping shot off a penalty corner got the opening goal in the 21st minute.

The goal spurred the blue and green jersey players as they continued to launch forays into the Bausher citadel and went ahead when Aseel al Maini, who had a brace to his credit in the

semifinal win against Seeb on Sunday, found the target with a strong flick from the right flank three minutes after the opener.

The winners led 2-0 at the interval and Bausher came back strongly in the third quarter raising hopes of a fightback.

They did earn a couple of penalty corners but failed to pierce the Bausher wall as a goal eluded the yellow shirts.

On the other flank, Bausher's goalkeeper Amjad al Hassani was a busy man and did stave off Ahli-Sidab's attacks with few good saves but the failure of finding a goal upfront put paid any hopes for Farsi's men.

Ahli-Sidab rounded off their title win with one last flourish as Ahmed Sabeel al Balushi found the back of Bausher's net.

'Something special'

For Ahli-Sidab's coach Kumar, victory was 'something special'. In his post-match remarks, Kumar, who is in his first stint with the club, said, "To win the 50th edition is something special and lift the trophy after two years is a wonderful experience.

"We had quite a few injury issues with our players and despite that to win, I am really happy. We were on top of the game from the start of the match and it was a great performance by my players."

He added, "Having been with the players for a short time, I was more of a stranger to the team but the players and the management made me feel at home.

"I have to express my deep gratitude and thanks to our club chairman Dr Marwan al Juma, who was a constant source of encouragement, attending training sessions and boosting the morale of players."

Kumar, who was part of the Indian junior World Cup winning side, said, "The win should now



Victorious Ahl-Sidab players and officials celebrate on the podium after winning the HM's Cup title for a record 12th time at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Monday



Bausher Club players and coaching staff with the silver medals after the final on Monday

help the club aspire for better standards. The support staff and my coaching staff were amazing and I thank them all for making this historic edition special."

Kumar's counterpart, Farsi was 'proud' of his boys' despite the loss in the final.

"We tried our best though we did not have a lot of time to prepare. But to reach the final and

do what my boys have done, I am proud. The difference was the experience Ahli-Sidab have playing in competitions and in finals. They were the better side and deserve to win."



Third-placed Seeb players after receiving the bronze medal at the awards ceremony at the SQSC on Monday



Ahli-Sidab's Affan Yousuf in action against Bausher in the final on Monday



Ahli-Sidab captain Salah al Saadi and his teammates celebrate the win

Seeb too strong

Earlier in the third-place playoff on Monday, there was some consolation for 11-time winners Seeb as they claimed a bronze medal with a 4-1 win over Sohar.

Seeb, who saw their joint record of title wins broken later on Monday when Ahli-Sidab won for the 12th time, proved too strong for Sohar, coached by former Seeb player Hamood al Wahabi.

Ahmed al Balushi scored the opening goal for Seeb two minutes into the second quarter and three minutes later, Ous al Zadjali made it 2-0. Seeb led 3-0 at the break with the third goal hammered by their Pakistani striker Muhammad Ateeq.

Sohar's Younus al Anqoodi reduced the margin with a goal in the 42nd minute before another Pakistani player of Seeb, Mubashar Ali completed the rout with a goal with a

minute left for the hooter.

Later, H E Dr Abdullah al Harassi, Minister of Information, who was the chief guest, gave away the trophy to Ahli-Sidab club manager Hussain Said and medals to the top-three teams and officials.

Also present to watch the final were H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, H E Rashad al Hinai, Undersecretary at the sports ministry, ministers, Tayyab Ikram, Asian Hockey Federation chief executive, Sayyid Khalid al Busaidi, Oman Olympic Committee chief, Talib al Wahabi, Oman Hockey Association chief, and other dignitaries.

Besides the trophy, Ahli-Sidab's win also fetched them a cash award of RO40,000 while Bausher got RO25,000 and Seeb took home RO15,000.

@ashokmuscat

MCSY and OHA have done a commendable job: AHF boss

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

The successful completion of the 50th edition of the coveted His Majesty's Cup Hockey Championship despite the challenges of holding it during the coronavirus pandemic has been appreciated by none other than the top boss of Asian Hockey Federation (AHF).

Tayyab Ikram, AHF chief executive and the Asian governing body's secretary general, was a witness to a couple of rounds of the prestigious competition, which concluded with Ahli-Sidab lifting the title on Monday night.

In an exclusive chat with

Muscat Daily, Ikram said, "It was great to watch some exciting games on the pitch during these challenging times where most of sports around the world have been severely hampered.

"To organise this tournament with all the standard health protocols in place for 14 clubs and managing the health and safety of all players and officials is a commendable job by the Oman Hockey Association (OHA) and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in Oman (MCSY).

"I have been very impressed with the overall organisational success and the hockey played, and I would like to congratulate H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of



A file photo of Tayyab Ikram (L) and OHA chief Talib al Wahabi

Culture, Sports and Youth, officials at the ministry and the OHA."

Ikram added, "It is a very positive step to hold this coveted tournament amid the

pandemic and it demonstrates that sports can play a key role in overcoming the challenges posed by COVID-19."

The Asian hockey boss praised the Omani clubs in

raising the standard of the game by hiring top-class players during the tournament and said that their presence 'will give an opportunity for Omani players to improve by playing along and against them'.

High-performance coaching

Ikram said that Omani clubs can improve further by focusing more on coaching as proper technology and adopting latest coaching methods will help improve the overall standard of the game.

"As Asian hockey body, we are ready to help and assist Oman Hockey Association and its clubs by facilitating high-per-

formance coaches and clinics for Omani coaches. Once the domestic level of coaching goes up, then it would reflect on the teams and we can see more improvement in Oman's hockey," said Ikram, who has previously worked as a reputed FIH Master coach.

Giving an example, Ikram said, "I was told that the presence of two Tokyo Olympics-bound FIH umpires from India - Javed Shaikh and Raghuprasad RV - has helped the local umpires. Such benefits need to be capitalised on at all fronts, be it the presence of World Cuppers and Olympians in local teams or hiring top coaches by clubs. Overall, all

these steps go a long way in improving the sport in the country.

"Oman has been the torchbearer of the game in the Middle East and AHF is happy with the interest and eagerness displayed by OHA in hosting international events in the past.

"We hope that more big events can be hosted in future. The OHA under its chairman, Captain Talib [al Wahabi], has been supporting AHF activities a lot in the past. I still have great memories of the AHF Congress and Asian Champions Trophy in Muscat and we hope to bring more events in future," Ikram said.

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