



MONDAY, 12 APRIL 2021
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HONOURABLE LADY RECEIVES MESSAGE FROM EMINE ERDOGAN



The Honourable Lady has received a written message from Emine Erdogan, wife of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Turkey. The message was handed over by Ayse Sozen Usluer, Ambassador of Turkey to Oman, when the Honourable Lady received her at Al Barakah Palace on Sunday. The ambassador conveyed greetings of the Turkish president's wife along with best wishes for good health, happiness and a long life to the Honourable Lady. The Honourable Lady asked the ambassador to convey her greetings and best wishes of good health and well-being to Emine Erdogan (ONA)

222,600 jabs by April end: MoH

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has signed several agreements to purchase 5.20mn doses of vaccines of which 222,600 will be procured in April.

Of the total, Oman will import 552,840 doses in May, and over 1.7mn doses in June. The MoH is negotiating additional 1mn doses of the Pfizer vaccine that are likely to arrive during the months of July, August and September.

In an interview with *Oman Arabic Daily*, Dr Nusaiba Habib bin Mohammed, Director General of the Directorate General of Medical Supplies at the MoH, said "Oman has received 254,740 doses of vaccines, including 111,540 from Pfizer and 143,200 from AstraZeneca so far."

The sultanate has contracted with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, for the supply of ten per cent of its vaccine requirements. The first batch of 43,200 doses of AstraZeneca arrived recently.

A statement issued by MoH said, 'The National Strategy for



- **3,544 NEW CASES, 29 DEATHS IN THE LAST THREE DAYS**
- **AS OF SUNDAY, A TOTAL OF 733 PATIENTS WERE IN HEALTH INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING 229 IN INTENSIVE CARE, AFTER 105 NEW ADMISSIONS**
- **THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES IN OMAN NOW STANDS AT 171,549, WHILE THE NUMBER OF DEATHS IS 1,776**

Immunisation with the COVID-19 vaccine aims to immunise 3.2mn people, equivalent to 70 per cent of the total population.'

It further said that the total number of vaccine doses needed is estimated at 5.4mn. 'One dose will be given to those who have previously had the disease as it would be enough to provide sufficient level of immunity from the disease.'

The national strategy is set to two phases. The first phase that started in December 2020 running till June this year, aims covering 30 per cent of the population, which includes the most vulnerable groups. These include individuals who are 60

years and older, providers of basic services on the frontlines such as health workers, military personnel, employees in the educational sector, basic service providers of government agencies, patients with chronic diseases aged 18 to 50, and patients with immunodeficiency diseases.

The second phase targets 40 per cent of the population, including the least vulnerable groups, starting July to December this year. This phase will include students under 18 years, travellers on official missions, pilgrims and umrah performers, and individuals in the 18-50 years age group.

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New ministry project to benefit over 60 beekeepers

Our Correspondent
Muscat

More than 60 individuals involved in beekeeping will benefit from a project launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, it was revealed during a recent virtual workshop.

The workshop was held under the patronage of H E Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Undersecretary for Agriculture in the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources, with the participation of 14 entities from various government institutions, representatives of the private sector, the beekeepers' association and beekeepers.

H E Dr Bakri said, "The implementation of the project to promote and develop honey bee products in the sultanate, which is funded by the Oman India Fertilizer Company, comes as a continuation of the ministry's efforts in developing this sector."

"The project aims to address some of the challenges facing the growth of this sector, such as providing programmes to develop the organisational and technical capabilities of those involved in apiculture, enhancing the technical skills of beekeepers and developing capabilities in production and marketing of Omani honey, in addition to working on developing a technical platform for knowledge exchange and experience among those working in this sector."

He added that over 60 people will benefit from this project, including breeders, marketers and



(Supplied photo)

The project aims to address some of the challenges facing the sector, such as providing programmes to develop the organisational and technical capabilities of those involved in apiculture

H E DR AHMED BIN NASSER AL BAKRI

sellers of honey bee supplies registered with Riyada, as well as breeders registered with the ministry and individuals from social security and limited income families.

"The project will provide a

permanent source of income for the participants, supply the Omani market with about 72 tonnes of high-quality honey, cover the beekeepers' needs with about 5,000 queen bees, and increase the number of bee-

hives to 8,000 annually," said H E Dr Bakri.

"Statistics for the year 2020 indicate that the number of beekeepers in the various governorates of the sultanate reached 7,165 breeders. The total number of hives was approximately 138,000 with a total production of 6mn kg, and marketing value reaching more than RO12mn. This gives a clear indication of the success of the ministry's efforts and policies in supporting this sector," H E Dr Bakri added.

Malware hiding in devices cause 34% of cyberattacks

Muscat - There is a common misconception that the most dangerous threats in the modern users' digital journeys are encountered during Internet surfing. The reality, however, based on the most recent analysis of cyberattacks in Oman in 2020 by Kaspersky experts, is that users are in fact more likely to face attacks from malware hidden within their devices.

Such threats are classified as 'local', which means they are detected on users' devices or on portable data storage devices, such as flash drives. In 2020, 34 per cent of Kaspersky private users and 24 per cent of all corporate users in Oman were attacked by such threats. To compare, web attacks affected only ten per cent and four per cent, respectively.

Unfortunately, there has been an increase in the sophistication of such threats - which may be hiding on the user's device within a seemingly legitimate file for a while, to fly under the radar, and only strike later.

"The cyberthreat landscape across Oman is constantly evolving," said Denis Parinov, a cybersecurity expert at Kaspersky.



A few years ago, there were many more drive-by attacks - when different malicious software is downloaded and run while the user simply browses the Internet. Nowadays, most web-threats stay in the browser, specialising in content replacement, browser locking or click-jacking, online-skimming, cookie stuffing, etc.

"Now the situation when the user could download a malicious file directly is not too frequent. It's more common for a malware to be disguised as something else to hide from the security solutions, remaining an unseen threat to users," Parinov said.

"The good news, however, is that modern security solutions are too advanced for such malware to fly below radar - it is more likely to be blocked either during the initial scan of the file by a security solution that happens by default, or at the very moment such programmes attempt to launch."

To protect against cyberthreats, including malware, Parinov has a few guidelines, including not following dubious links from letters, messages in instant messengers or SMS; regularly installing updates for the operating system and applications; installing applications only from official stores; and using complex and different passwords for accounts.

Additionally, Parinov suggests regularly copying important data from one's device to the cloud, to a USB flash drive or hard drive, and not giving applications access to those functions that they do not need.

488 food commodities exempted from VAT

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In line with the measures prescribed by the Social Security Scheme announced on April 8 and endorsed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Tax Authority has issued a new list of food commodities that are zero-rated for Value Added Tax (VAT).

Saud bin Nasser al Shukaili, head of the Tax Authority, issued Decision No 65/2021 listing food commodities subject to zero per cent VAT. The decision was issued on April 8, and comes into effect from April 16.

The list includes 488 commodities, including fruits, legumes, spices, vegetable oils, fresh and frozen fish, fresh and frozen poultry, fresh and frozen meat, cheese and other dairy products, eggs, grains, flour, tea, coffee, salt and sugar. The list includes fresh and frozen vegetables such as onions, tomatoes, potatoes, green leafy vegetables, carrots, eggplant and cucumbers.



(Supplied photo)

Commerce ministry starts receiving 'Busoor' date crop

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has started receiving 'Busoor' date crop for the year 2020 from all governorates.

The process, which began on April 11, will run till May 13. The ministry said it will receive Mabsali, Madlouki and Abu Naranja dates from all governorates at its storage facility in Wadi Kabir.

The harvesting season (or Al Tabseel) of Mabsali and other varieties of dates has started across governorates in the sultanate. Mabsali dates are boiled when yellow in colour and called Busoor.

The ministry said its warehouses in Wadi Kabir receive

Busoor every year from all over the sultanate. It also provides support to farmers supplying their crops and gives subsidies for farmers who export their Busoor production to encourage them to find alternative and new markets.

The ministry has urged farmers to pay attention to the quality of date products they supply to the ministry or export directly to foreign markets. They should take care of cleanliness and keep these free of impurities to maintain the reputation and compete in local and foreign markets.

The ministry, in partnership with Oman Dates Production and Packing Company, carries out the handling, processing, marketing and sale of the harvest.

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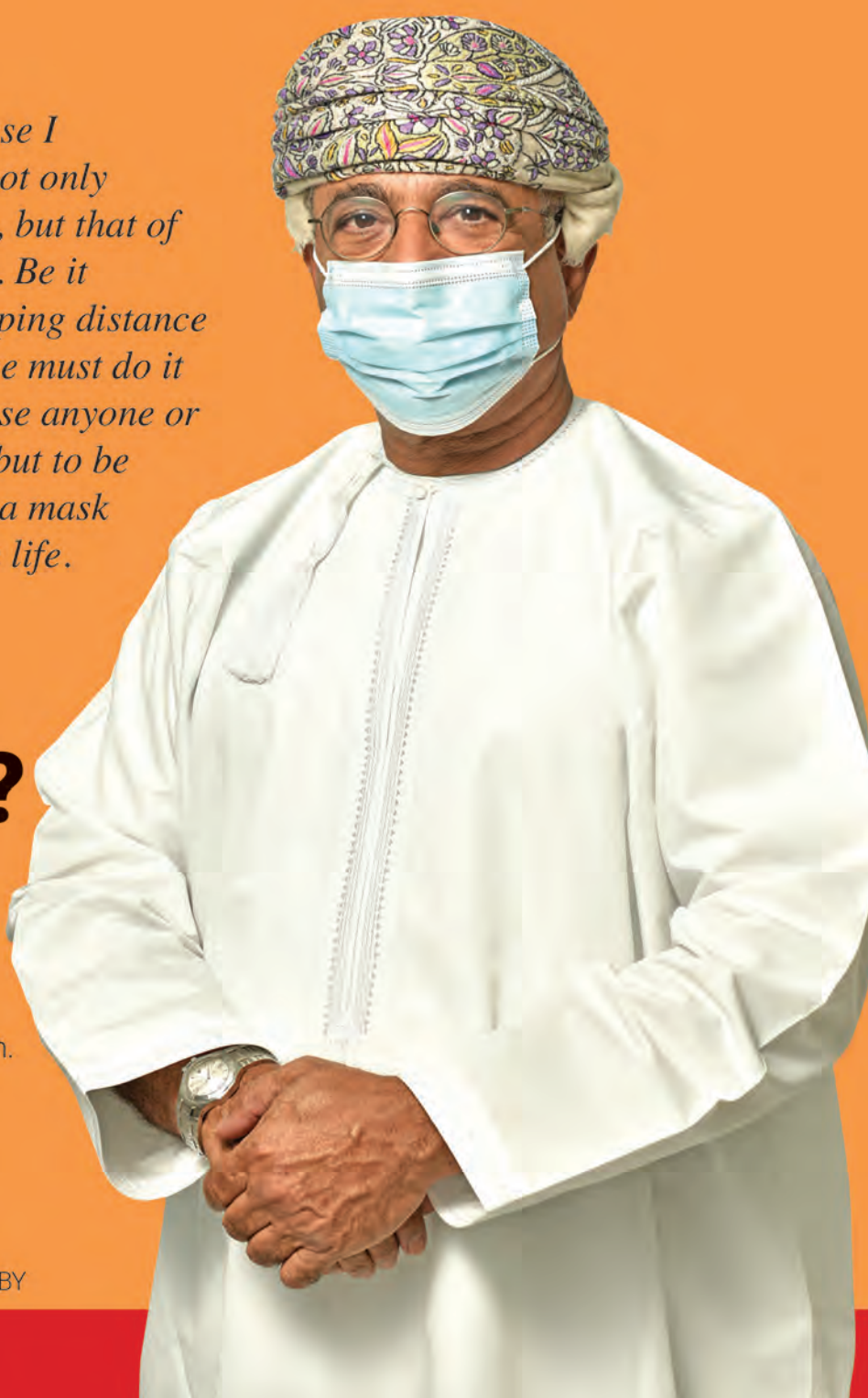
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VACCINE CAMPAIGN IN BAUSHER, MAWALEH



The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the Directorate General of Scouts and Guides, began its national campaign for immunisation against COVID-19 in the wilayahs of Bausher and Mawaleh on Sunday. The campaign included the provision of the first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to the targeted groups of citizens and residents (Supplied photo)

Taxi drivers feel the pinch

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The nightly suspension of commercial activities and movement restrictions as a result of a spike in COVID-19 cases has left taxi drivers across the city in crisis. Their worries multiply many times over at the thought of Ramadan which is just around the corner when there are inevitably fewer customers.

Ibrahim Khamis, a taxi driver from Ruwi said, "Earlier, the stand used to be filled with people, mostly expatriates, travelling as far as Seeb and Mawaleh. They went to every corner of the city. But now things are so challenging. There is hardly anyone at the taxi stand, so passengers have to wait long for the taxi to fill up. Passengers, obviously, get impatient."

He added that with Ramadan starting soon, most people will rush home to be with their families leaving taxis with no passengers.

The night curfew impacted taxi drivers' livelihood as most



(Muscat Daily)

people avoided visiting malls and meeting friends in the evening even before curfew hours.

"We had good business at night. People assume we do not have work at night, but there are many passengers at night, as late as midnight. Muscat has several places that attract crowds at night. Even families hired us to visit these places," another taxi driver said.

Malls and markets are popular outings which are now affected as a result of suspension of commercial activities and

movement restrictions at night.

Some companies also provide transport for their staff to ensure their health and safety. While considered a good step by companies to safeguard their staff, it left taxis with fewer passengers.

"Earlier, there were many office goers and employees working in Ruwi who came to the taxi stand after work. At 6.30pm everyday, we used to struggle to accommodate so many passengers. Now you hardly see any people opting for our services," said taxi driver Mohammed who

prefers to be known only by his first name.

According to Khamis, raising fares is the least of their priorities under these circumstances. "These are tough times for all of us and we need to stand by one another. The virus has affected all of mankind. Most of our passengers do blue-collar jobs. Hiking the fare to even 200bz will impact them," he said.

"Besides, many of these people have been without salaries for months. If we increase fares now, it won't be fair on them."

Arabian leopard found in new area in Dhofar: OCE

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A recent study carried out by the Office for Conservation of Environment (OCE) at the Diwan of Royal Court, represented by the Environmental Affairs Department in Salalah, has revealed a new scientific breakthrough, confirming the presence of the Arabian leopard in the Harweeb region, north of Jebel al Qamar, in Dhofar governorate.

This scientific documentation is considered a success and a continuation of the relentless efforts made for conservation of this rare and critically endangered animal, stated OCE.

"This registration represents an increase in geographical spread of the Arabian leopard in Dhofar governorate, a sign of positive indicators on the survival of the species," it said.

The office said that during the past 50 years, there was no evidence of the presence of Arabian leopard in these areas with the exception of Jebel Samhan, but in



(Supplied photo)

2014 the team from OCE was able to monitor the presence of it in Al Najd in the area north of Jebel al Qara.

The Arabian leopard is a rare breed of feline that inhabits the Arabian Peninsula and has been classified by International Union for Conservation of Nature as being critically endangered.

This rare animal is found in the sultanate in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The field studies carried out by the OCE for the last many years confirmed the presence of

the Arabian leopard along the mountains of Dhofar from Hasik in the east to the wilayat of Dalkhut in the west, in addition to spotting it in the previous years in some areas of Najd, north of the Dhofar mountains.

The sultanate, represented by the Diwan of Royal Court, is making great efforts to preserve and protect the Arabian leopard from extinction. These relentless efforts have contributed to the stability of its numbers and the preservation of the sustainability of its natural habitats in Dhofar.

Ministry ensures supply of livestock for Ramadan, Eid

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Adequate measures have been taken to ensure constant supply of red meat in the market, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The ministry said it recently facilitated the import of 57,120 sheep and 1,970 cattle while 60,000 more sheep and 6,700 cattle are expected to arrive during the month of Ramadan.

Dr Yahya bin Amer Abdullah al Ma'wali, director general of



Animal Wealth at the ministry, said that with the approaching month of Ramadan and the festive period, efforts have been made to import adequate numbers of cattle and sheep.

"About 40 import permits

have been issued for the purpose," he said.

He said the ministry has taken a number of measures to maintain food security and make available adequate sources of food items to ensure smooth

food supply. The ministry is also working on offering incentives and facilities to ensure the steady inflow of food items to the local markets.

Local production amounted to 51 per cent of red meat, 54 per cent of poultry, 57 per cent of table eggs and 67 per cent of dairy products, he added.

The ministry, in coordination with the national companies operating in import of sheep and cattle, is working on offering all facilities to such companies in order to meet the requirements of the local market.

Workshop held to fight Parthenium in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to eradicate the invasive species Parthenium in Dhofar, the Environment Authority, in cooperation with its partners from government agencies and the private sector, held a workshop on the authority's office premises on Sunday.

The Parthenium plant is harmful to nature, causes soil erosion and has the ability to grow in large areas.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, chairman of Dhofar Municipality, said that the field team has made great efforts in the past to eliminate the plant. "Official efforts joined together with community efforts in most regions of Dhofar to eradicate and remove it from various residential and pastoral areas, in an attempt to protect Dhofar's environment from harmful invasive plant species, and to reduce impact of this plant on the environment," he said.

Dr Ali al Subhi from Sultan Qaboos University gave a pres-



Dr Ahmed al Ghassani

entation on the preparation of a map of the spread of the plant in Dhofar governorate.

H E Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar, recently issued Ministerial Decision No 189/2020 to form a joint working group to deal with the Parthenium plant in the governorate.

The team undertakes research study on the invasive species, the mechanism of dealing with it, and will coordinate with the private sector to ensure the integration of community efforts.

The team, headed by Dr Ghassani, includes a number of officials and experts.

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MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. 13 /2021

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following biddings :

Serial	Bidding No.	Bidding description	Document fee	Deadline for obtaining bidding docs.	Deadline for inquiry submission	Deadline for submission
1	RE-BB/01/2021	Car Cleaning Service at the Parking of Muscat Municipality Head Office	25/- OMR	2/5/2021	3/5/2021	10/5/2021
2	RE-AB/08/2021	Investing Plot Number (271) At Muttrah	500/- OMR	9/6/2021	20/6/2021	11/7/2021
3	AB/09/2021	Investing & Operating of the building on plot number (1023) at Qurum	450/- OMR	9/6/2021	20/6/2021	11/7/2021
4	AB/10/2021	Rental & Operating of the building on plot number (115) located at Al-Qurum, wilayat Boushar	90/- OMR	9/6/2021	20/6/2021	11/7/2021
5	BB/11/2021	Rental & Operating A coffee shop located at Muttrah Market for Fishes, Fruits & Vegetables	25/- OMR	9/6/2021	20/6/2021	11/7/2021

Registered companies with Muscat Municipality which are Specialized in above bids are invited to participate in the biddings as per the following:

- Pay the specified document fee for the requested bid via bank deposit to Muscat Municipality's Bank account as follows:

Bank Muscat	0423010702710024
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- A copy of the transaction's receipt MUST be sent to the following e-mail (MM.PC@mm.gov.om), provided with the company data (name and bid number, delegate name, office phone number, mobile number, email address approved by the company and commercial registration number of the company).
- The tender document will be provided to the company via email.
- 2:00 PM on the above mentioned dates, is the last timing for obtaining Bidding Documents. Any bid's document request received after the specified time will not be considered, even if the fee of the document is paid.

Submitted offers must be accompanied with a bond mentioned in the tender document valid for a period not less than (90) days issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat Municipality. Bidding that do not meet the required bond **will not be accepted**.

Documents must be enclosed in a plain envelope sealed with red wax (without any company information). box's locations are As follows:

Bidding at The Serial	The box's location
2-3-4	Third floor at Directorate General of Quantity Surveying and Contracts in Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsat
1-5	Muscat Municipality Ruwi Building (Main Entrance), located on Capital Market Street

NOTES:

- Companies which are not registered in Muscat Municipality or their registration has been expired shall register through the municipality's website (www.mm.gov.om). For technical support, please contact Muscat Municipality through email (crm@mm.gov.om).
- If the bidders have any inquiries regarding the scope of the work, they have to send their inquiries through the following e-mail (MM.PC@mm.gov.om).
- 10:00 AM on the above submission mentioned dates, is the last timing for receiving bids. Offers submitted after the above mentioned date & time shall not be accepted for any reason.
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'VACCINATION ONLY SOLUTION'

Is night lockdown helping in curbing the spread of COVID-19? Will a more aggressive vaccination campaign prevent infections?



Asgar al Balushi
Businessman

Too many people converge on supermarkets and hypermarkets during the opening hours, which does not help in the efforts to curb the spread of the virus. Vaccination may be the only solution at the moment and I think the government should accelerate the immunisation campaign.



Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

Night lockdown will help reduce the number of cases as there will be no family gatherings. Vaccines provide protection after receiving two doses. This means that despite receiving the vaccine, many people may still get infected. Therefore, you need to continue wearing a face mask to protect yourself from exposure to the coronavirus.



Hussam al Musallami
Bank supervisor

In my personal opinion, night lockdown is not a helpful way to stop the spread of COVID-19. The best solution is conducting a vaccination campaign to ensure maximum immunisation of the population.



Naif al Balushi
Private sector employee

Night lockdown, especially during Ramadan, will help reduce the number of cases. However, we need to focus more on immunisation as it is difficult to control gatherings. Until we get enough vaccine shots, we need to continue wearing masks to protect ourselves from exposure of the virus.



Sonia Kumar
Pranic healer

Lockdowns put restrictions and people have started moving out more and more in the day when malls are getting crowded. When we know we can move out anytime, we tend to do things when we need to or else in the fear of restrictions we tend to compulsively do things which are not required. After a year of restrictions, I have observed people don't really care.



Hamoud al Hadhrami
Private sector employee

I think there is need to accelerate the immunisation campaign. It is the only way to reduce transmissions. I also hope every one cooperates and makes sure they come forward for vaccination as soon as the shots are available.



NEXT ON YOUR SAY

What is the best way to observe Ramadan under night lockdown? Are you affected by the decision in any way?

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

Lulu announces second draw winners of Dream Drive 2021

Muscat - Lulu Oman has announced winners of its second Dream Drive 2021 promotion draw. As per a statement, the winners were picked through an e-raffle draw held at Lulu Hypermarket Darsait recently.

'Like the previous years, the registration and draws are completely digital and the winners are selected through the e-Raffle Winner Management System under the supervision of Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion officials. Lulu's initiative to go digital demonstrates its social responsibility towards the community and the environment,' the



statement said.

To be part of this promotion, customers need to purchase products worth RO10 at any Lulu outlet. With every single receipt of RO10, customers become eligible to be part of lucky draws to win Nissan Patrol 4WD SUVs and a range of products from Ikon. The Ikon gifts include 55" smart TVs, refrigerators, cooking ranges, washing machines and freezers. Raffle coupons for valid claims are sent by email and SMS within 48 working hours.

Muzna al Balushi was the winner of the second Nissan Patrol 4WD of the promotion this year.

Five other winners took home gifts from Ikon. Shawqi Kalaf won a 55" smart TV; Animole Thomas won a double-door refrigerator; Joji Varghese won a cooking range; Anvarsha Sulaiman took home a washing machine, and Sunil Kumar Rajan Kurup won a freezer.

Commenting on the campaign, Shabeer K A, regional director - Oman, said, "I congratulate all the winners of the second draw of our Dream Drive promotion. It's really heartening to see the warm response to the promotion despite the challenging environment. The Dream Drive promotion still con-

tinues to be our customers' favourite and is a big draw. Every year, we organise this promotion during Ramadan to offer customers a more rewarding experience while shopping at Lulu. We hope our shoppers make use of all the offers and deals available on Ramadan essentials too," he added.

All Lulu malls are designed and tailored to offer a completely satisfying experience and to attract visitors every day. With about 208 stores globally, Lulu is among the most preferred shopping destinations for the multi-ethnic communities of the sultanate.

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Sohar - 26704639/49/50
Apollo Hospital Muscat,
Hamriya: 24787766,
24782666, 24787780
Abeer Hospital, Ruwi, Muscat
24770800, 90999335,
90999334 (Emergency)
Starcare Hospital: 24557200
Emergency number: 24558333
Dr Harub's Clinic:
24563217, 2456381,
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Sohar 26751128

MSX begins trading on a positive note

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Muscat Stock Exchange began trading on a positive note on Sunday in its first trading session after rebranding and changing its name from the MSM (Muscat Securities Market) to the MSX.

The sultanate's stock exchange completed its transformation on Saturday and was converted into a closed joint stock company under the umbrella of the Oman Investment Authority.

The first trading session of the MSX after rebranding concluded on a positive note with the 30-share benchmark MSX30 index rising by 0.3 per cent to close at 3,720.07 points on Sunday.

The MSX recorded a sharp increase in trading activity with market turnover surging by over 80 per cent to RO4.12mn against RO2.28mn in the previous session on Thursday. Around 18.15mn shares exchanged hands on Sunday, over 65 per cent higher compared to the trading volumes



recorded on Thursday.

A launch ceremony for the newly introduced brand of the Omani stock market was organised at the Muscat Stock Exchange on Sunday which was attended by Sheikh Abdullah bin Salem al Salmi, executive president of the Capital Market Authority (CMA) and other senior officials of the

MSX and the CMA.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Salmi said that the launch of the MSX is a quantum leap for Oman's economy in general and capital market sector in particular. He added that Oman's stock exchange and capital market have potential to play an important role in financing the economic development projects

in the sultanate.

Expressing his hope about the future listing of new companies on the Muscat bourse, Salmi further said that some government-owned companies may be offered for public subscription and listing on the MSX in the future.

In a statement issued on Saturday, Salmi had said that the



The 30-share MSX30 index ended higher by 0.3 per cent at 3,720 points on Sunday (Muscat Daily)

transformation of Oman's stock exchange into a closed joint stock company is the first step towards the transition of the MSX into becoming a publicly listed company in the future, keeping in line with the global best practices.

With its transformation into a closed joint stock company, the MSX aspires to take a leading

role in the regional and international securities arena through various innovative initiatives aimed at developing the stock exchange with transparency, governance, improved companies performance, increased operational effectiveness and the issuance of new investment opportunities and instruments. The Oman Investment Au-

thority on Thursday announced the formation of a new board of directors for the MSX. Mohammed bin Mahfoudh al Ardhi has been appointed as the chairman of the newly-formed board of directors of the MSX. Ardhi is the executive chairman of Investcorp, a global financial institution specialising in alternative investments.

Sohar Port and Freezone selects IFS for digitisation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

IFS, a global enterprise applications company, on Sunday announced that Sohar Port and Freezone has selected IFS' Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), service management and project management to fully digitise, automate and centralise the finance, supply chain and HCM departments into one platform.

As a major contributor to trade in Oman, it is important that Sohar Port and Freezone makes adequate investments to ensure that they are future ready to adapt and meet the emerging

business requirements of the ports industry, IFS said in a press statement.

Commenting on signing of the contract, Bader al Ghaithi, IT manager, Sohar Port and Freezone, said, "With multiple solution requirements, the need to have them operating on a unified platform that is fully integrated and to work with an organisation that has relevant industry experience were two of the main reasons that we chose IFS. We are confident that the combination of the solution's unique features, ease of use and quick implementation will help us meet our future digital transformation requirements."

Khazaen inks RO17mn deal to set up industrial projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Khazaen Economic City (KEC), Oman's first integrated economic city, on Sunday signed an agreement with Sabeen Group for setting up a diverse portfolio of projects in the city.

The agreement, worth RO17mn, is yet another testimony of Khazaen's position as the preferred investment destination for different types of investors, KEC said in a press statement.

Under the agreement, Khazaen will lease 100,000 sqm of industrial land to Sabeen Group to set up factories for manufacturing of greenhouses materials, smart-home assembly and man-

ufacturing of solar panels, fish food as well as an assembly line for environmentally-friendly electric cars. These projects will not just be a great value addition to those already located in Khazaen Economic City, but will also directly contribute towards economic diversification and creating job opportunities for Omanis.

The agreement was signed by Eng Salim bin Suleiman al Thuhli, CEO of Khazaen and Ibtisam Khamis al Jashmiya, executive partner at Sabeen Group.

Sabeen Group has been active in Oman since 2007 with business interests in marketing, construction, technology and tourism sectors. The group, which also specialises in food se-



The agreement was signed by Eng Salim bin Suleiman al Thuhli (right) and Ibtisam Khamis al Jashmiya (supplied photo)

curity, seeks to build partnerships and joint ventures that give added value to the Omani market and boost national economic growth.

Thuhli said that these strategic projects being implemented in Khazaen are a result of the

continued efforts being made to attract more local and international investments to the city. He further noted, "The setting up of these projects in Khazaen underscores the confidence of Omani investors in KEC and its rapid growth capacity, besides world-

class facilities and various attractive incentives it provides to all types of investors."

Ibtisam said, "Khazaen Economic City is strategically located near the capital, Muscat. The city is known for its high quality and modern infrastructure. We are keen to establish these strategic projects in this promising city to benefit from the wide range of incentives, amenities and not to mention the competitive edge it offers."

Sabeen Group also plans to build an integrated industrial complex pertaining to businesses in various sectors which will serve the government's direction to diversify the economy and enhance the contribution to the national GDP.

Middle East 'early inoculators' to recover by 2022, says IMF

Dubai, UAE - The economies of 'early inoculating' countries in the Middle East and North Africa will bounce back to pre-pandemic levels next year, the IMF said on Sunday, after raising its 2021 MENA growth forecast.

The region, which includes the Arab countries and Iran, saw its real GDP growth shrink by 3.4 per cent in 2020 due to lower oil prices and sweeping lockdowns to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

But with rapid vaccination campaigns underway particularly in the Gulf countries, the International Monetary Fund earlier this week predicted that GDP growth would rise to 4 per cent this year, an upgrade of 0.9 per cent from the last projection.

"This recovery is moving on a diverging path with the vaccine rollout and the policy response playing an important role in the quality and the depth of the recovery," Jihad Azour, director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the IMF, told AFP in an interview.

"This multi-speed recovery is on different levels, one between those who are fast in inoculating the vaccine and who will rapidly reach a level of full coverage of their population or 75 per cent or so, and those who will be slow in vaccinating, and those who will



be late," he added.

In its latest Regional Economic Outlook Update report released on Sunday, the IMF said it expects early inoculators' GDP to reach 2019 levels in 2022.

By contrast, slow and late inoculators will happen recover sometime between 2022-23, it said.

Many countries in the region, especially in the wealthy Gulf, have launched vast vaccination campaigns and are administering some of the fastest per capita deliveries in the world.

By contrast, access to adequate vaccine supplies remains a challenge for many others due to worldwide shortages, internal conflicts or political troubles, and weak finances.

After a 4.8 per cent contraction in 2020, oil-rich Gulf states are now expected to grow by 2.7 per cent this year, an upgrade of 0.2 per cent from October.

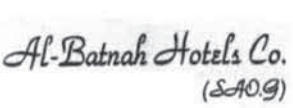
Lebanon, hit by economic, social, and political crises, is the only country in the region where activity is expected to contract

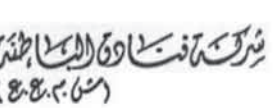
further after its GDP shrank by 25 per cent in 2020.

The country, which for months has been struggling to form a new government, held talks with the IMF over financial support last year but they quickly hit a wall over lack of political consensus on the reforms needed.

"In the absence of a government, it's very difficult for us to provide other than technical assistance and policy support," said Azour.

AFP





NOTICE FOR ANNUAL ORDINARY AND EXTRA ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of AL BATINAH HOTELS (the "Company") has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held at 03:00 PM on 22/04/2021, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting shall be held at 03:00 PM on 25/04/2021, to discuss the following agenda:

Extra Ordinary Agendas:

1. Restructure the company's capital through: a. Reducing the issuer's capital from 3,621,863 Om ani Rials to 2,074,477 Omani Rials to write-off part of the accumulated losses on the company as on December 31, 2020. B. Using the legal reserve of the company in full amounting to RO 319,241 to amortize the remaining part of the accumulated losses of the company as of December 31, 2020.
2. Approving the authorization of the company's board of directors or any person duly authorized by the board to take all necessary measures to implement the reduction process.
3. Amending Article (5) of the articles of association of the company, after registering the new capital with the registrar
4. Study a proposal to amend Article 6 of the Articles of Association for approval.

Ordinary Agendas Annual:

1. To consider and approve the Board of Director's Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
2. To consider the Auditor's Report and to approve the Financial Statements (Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account) of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
3. Ratification of the allowance for attending the sessions of the Board of Directors and the subsidiary committees that were paid by the members of the Board of Directors for the past financial year, and determining the amount of the allowance for the next fiscal year.
4. Electing new board members for the company from both shareholders and nonshareholders, and everyone who wishes to nominate himself must fill out the form prepared for this purpose and deliver it to the company, at least five (5) days before the date of the assembly, no later than the end of work on Friday corresponding to 16 / 4/2021, and the candidate must fulfill the requirements for membership of the company's board of directors.
5. Appointing auditors for the fiscal year ending on December 31, 2021, and determining 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:

1. 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.
2. 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 on telephone No **95099001** or email: yahyaalhinai1@gmail.com

Chairman Hafid Al Hadhrami	Legal Advisor Rajab AlKathiri & Associates	Auditor Crowe Mak Ghazali LLC
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Powering the future: Global race for 'green' hydrogen

Paris, France - It's seen as the missing link in the race for carbon-neutrality: 'green' hydrogen produced without fossil fuel energy is a popular buzzword in competing press releases and investment plans across the globe. Europe in particular is anxious to get a handle on the new and still costly fuel, having missed the boat on solar and battery technology, which is dominated by China.

Clean burning hydrogen - its combustion produces water vapour - could give a renewed lease on life to polluting heavy industry.

Hydrogen-powered fuel cells could also solve the key problem with battery electric vehicles - the long recharge times - as filling up a tank with hydrogen takes just a bit longer than putting in petrol.

But countries face more than just the engineering challenge of producing emissions-free hydrogen. They also have to develop the demand for the fuel and the infrastructure to transport it.

The world's richest countries have announced various strategies - producing 'green hydrogen' using electricity from solar and wind. Others plan to use electricity from nuclear plants.

Still others plan to generate it as a byproduct of natural gas, which is 'gray' hydrogen, or 'blue' if the CO₂ produced is somehow captured and stored.

"We are referring to this as the Hydrogen Wars," said Gero Farruggio, co-founder of Sustainable Energy Research Analytics at Rystad Energy.

He said of the 76GW of production projects they are track-



ing, 40 were announced in 2020.

"Governments are racing to incentivise projects for domestic and export green hydrogen markets - working hard to attract the billions of dollars expected to be invested over the coming years."

The United States has a hydrogen road map. Germany plans to invest €9bn while for France and Portugal the figure is €7bn each.

Britain plans to spend £12bn, Japan US\$3bn, and China US\$16bn by 2020 to green up their industries, according to consultancy Accenture.

Asian domination?

With their huge energy needs and reliance on imported fossil fuels, Asian industrial heavyweights China, Japan and South

Korea are keen on the prospect of green hydrogen.

"Given China's needs, it's trying everything including hydrogen, especially when it comes to mobility," said Nicolas Mazzucchi of France's Foundation for Strategic Research.

China is working on a hydrogen production model that relies on electricity from its growing number of nuclear reactors, although its current supply is produced using coal, which releases lots of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

Its hydrogen is being bought up by fuel cell and filling station builders from all over the world, from Canadian firm Ballard to French companies Symbio and Air Liquide.

Rystad Energy's Farruggio said China's desire to decarbonise its economy and its ability

to lower costs means it could come to dominate the manufacturing of electrolyzers - devices that use electricity to split water into hydrogen and oxygen.

But Europe isn't throwing in the towel yet.

Charlotte de Lorigeril, of management consultancy Sia Partners, described Germany as being ahead in using hydrogen in transportation, France in production, while the Netherlands already has strong gas infrastructure thanks to its natural gas fields.

The European Union is aiming to push hydrogen's share of its energy supply from 2 per cent currently to 12-14 per cent by 2050 and is encouraging cooperation.

Mazzucchi said he worries that the European Union will pay

for its lack of a global energy strategy which risks turning hydrogen into nothing more than a momentary 'pet project'.

Energy industry actors meanwhile are trying to gain a foothold by acquiring startups or developing consortiums.

French petrol giant Total and electricity provider Engie have come together to develop the country's largest green hydrogen production site.

"Their strategy is to compete with historical hydrogen actors who are trying to become energy providers," said Mikaa Mered, a lecturer at the HEC business school in Paris.

New energy pathways

As the euphoria takes hold, hydrogen could upend the world's energy map with new alliances and interdependencies already taking shape.

Germany is approaching Morocco to use solar power to make hydrogen.

The Green Spider and Green Flamingo projects are developing maritime highways for hydrogen and gas pipelines to link Spain and Portugal to northern Europe.

"It is the creation of those new logistics chains that will allow imports from the Chilean or Saharan deserts where there is a lot of solar power," said Sia Partners's Lorigeril.

Mikaa Mered said the 'question of the decade' is whether the development of hydrogen will result in a decentralisation or a new set of dependencies like with oil exporting and consuming nations.

AFP



China factory gate price jump raises inflation concern

Beijing, China - Chinese factory prices hit a more than two-year high in March, data showed, highlighting the country's strong recovery but feeding concerns it could filter through to the global economy just as central banks battle to maintain ultra-loose monetary policies and low interest rates.

Having largely navigated the pandemic crisis early last year, China has enjoyed months of improvement across the board and was the only major economy to expand in 2020.

And now the rollout of vaccines in major markets is gathering pace, demand for China's goods continues to rise, putting upward pressure on prices in the world's biggest exporter.

China's producer price index (PPI), which measures the cost of goods at the factory gate, expanded a forecast-beating 4.4 per cent on-year last month, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said.

The figure was 'due to factors such as rising international commodity prices' including crude oil and iron ore, and boosted by an 'increase in domestic industrial production and investment demand', said NBS senior statistician Dong Lijuan.

Analysts had expected the rise in PPI given the low base of comparison last year, when lockdowns and strict movement controls were imposed to stamp out COVID-19.

Observers said that with China the leading exporter in the world, the rises could cause a headache for global central banks, which are already trying to temper worries that an expected surge in economic activity this year will fan inflation and force them to wind back their accommodative monetary policies.

But Nomura chief China economist Lu Ting noted that this time, surging commodity prices have been 'mainly driven by monetary easing and huge fiscal stimulus - especially in the US - outside China'.

"As the world's largest exporter of manufactured goods, higher PPI inflation in China will be inevitably passed to other economies," he said.

Raymond Yeung at Australia and New Zealand Banking Group said, "The higher-than-expected PPI data could impact people's judgement of inflation pressure in the US and globally, and this impact shouldn't be underestimated."

AFP

IMF, WB begin push to swap debt relief for green projects

Washington, US - The idea of forgiving debt held by poor countries in exchange for 'green' investments gained ground this week during the spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank (WB), with concrete proposals expected in time for a global climate summit this fall.

Low-income countries face a double crisis - they are under pressure to pay down their debt while also confronting environmental problems.

That makes them 'highly, highly vulnerable', Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said this week, adding that it thus 'makes sense' for the world to pursue so-called 'green debt swaps'. A World Bank spokeswoman underscored that point.

"The COVID-19 crisis has made it significantly harder for developing countries to tackle the rising risks posed by climate change" and environmental disasters, said the spokeswoman, who declined to be named.

With already tight budgets, these countries have had to use emergency financial assistance to address the severe impact of the pandemic and the resulting economic crisis. "By enlarging the debt burdens of governments - which were already at record levels on the eve of the crisis - it has left them with fewer resources to invest in a recovery that will also put the planet on a more sustainable footing," the spokeswoman told AFP.

'Creative options'

A technical working group - bringing together representa-



Kristalina Georgieva

tives not only of the IMF and World Bank but also of the United Nations and the OECD - was launched this week to examine 'creative options to help countries tackle these simultaneous challenges', the World Bank spokeswoman said.

"This work has only just begun," she said, "But we think a proactive approach is essential: We must look closely at how potential solutions to the challenges of climate and debt can be integrated to address the key development issues of our time."

While there is no timeline yet for announcing concrete measures, all parties involved are clearly pointing toward the COP26 climate summit to be held in November in the Scottish city of Glasgow.

"We are going to work with the World Bank. And by COP26 we will advance that option" of a debt swap, Georgieva said, adding that it will then be up to creditors and debtors to decide whether to take part.

For Thierry Deau, the founder and CEO of the Paris-based

Meridiam group, which specialises in developing and financing infrastructure projects, if the green debt-swap option is pursued, it will have to be linked to clear 'conditionalities' to ensure that debt relief in fact leads to the launching of green projects.

Job opportunities

"The primary responsibility there on this debt relief is between the countries that are on both sides," he said. "There's a lot of politeness about this topic, and I think we have to stop that and create real true partnerships." The IMF and World Bank will also have to consider the plight of several island nations with middle-income economies that receive less economic support but face daunting environmental challenges.

Their heavily tourism-dependent economies have seen revenues dry up as the coronavirus pandemic severely curtails world travel. At the same time, their low-lying territories are often the victims of extreme weather events, including devastating cyclones or hurricanes.

Georgieva said this week that vulnerability to climate shocks should be taken into account when the international agencies allocate financial aid.

She also stressed that countries launching 'green' projects can see the added benefit of heightened employment.

"There are opportunities for job creation," she said. 'Just take, for example, renewable energy - seven jobs to one in the traditional coal energy sector', even if some training is required.

AFP

Dubai's non-oil external trade rebounds

Dubai, UAE - Dubai's non-oil foreign trade strongly rebounded from the challenges posed by the global economic repercussions of COVID-19 and the suspension of business activity by countries across the world in the first half of last year to record high growth in 2020.

Boosted by its resilience to global headwinds, as well as its rapid economic recovery and revitalised growth in the second half of the year, Dubai's foreign trade in 2020 touched AED1.182tn. Total trade volume in 2020 reached 100mn tonnes, driven by a 6 per cent year-on-year volume growth in the second half of the year. Overall value of exports in 2020 grew 8 per cent to AED167bn while imports accounted for AED686bn and re-exports totalled AED329bn.

Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council, said, "The exceptional growth performance of Dubai's external trade sector reflects the emirate's impressive resilience and its ability to recover and grow amidst international crises. Dubai has set an example for the world in dealing with both the economic and health repercussions of the pandemic. We were able to quickly renew our momentum of growth and reestablish our global leadership in various sectors."

"This growth has been made possible by robust governance and the stimulus packages the Dubai government launched under the directives of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. The stimulus packages in-



cluded a number of initiatives to support the foreign trade sector and enable it to continue playing its important role in national economic growth. The strong trade performance signals a positive start to the 'Year of the 50th' and the efforts to achieve the goals of the UAE Centennial Plan 2071," noted Sheikh Hamdan.

"The external trade sector's distinctive growth in 2020 will boost the implementation of Dubai's five-year plan to expand its external trade to AED2tn, consolidating the emirate's position as a leading regional and global trade and investment hub. Dubai's new international trade map will see an expansion in air and sea navigation routes, with 200 new cities set to be added to the emirate's existing network of 400 cities," he added. The Prince said Dubai will continue its efforts to generate new practical and creative solutions to tide over challenges and turn them into new opportunities.

Sultan bin Sulayem, DP World group chairman & CEO and

chairman of Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation said, "Dubai's external trade sector impressively overcame the impact of a global trade downturn in 2020. With the gradual opening of borders, Dubai's trade volumes started recovering and growing quickly in the second half of 2020. In the third quarter, Dubai's trade surged 34 per cent compared to the second quarter, and in the fourth quarter, trade grew by 7 per cent to AED326bn compared to the third quarter.

"Trade volumes in the second half of 2020 expanded by 6 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2019. Overall, 100mn tonnes of goods were traded in 2020, which reflects the rapid recovery of this sector. This rebound is now spurring greater growth in 2021. The resumption of trade with Qatar, the start of trade engagement with Israel, the positive spin-offs from hosting EXPO 2020 and the launch of the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan will all contribute to accelerating the emi-

rate's growth momentum."

Dubai's direct trade in 2020 totalled AED711bn, while trade through free zones reached AED464bn and customs warehouse trade weighed in at AED7bn. Airborne trade accounted for AED559bn. Sea trade reached AED421bn while land trade touched AED203bn.

China maintained its position as Dubai's largest trading partner in 2020 with AED142bn worth of trade. India came in second with AED89bn, followed by the US in third place with AED61bn. Saudi Arabia continued to be Dubai's largest Gulf and Arab trade partner and its fourth largest global trade partner with AED54bn worth of trade, followed by Iraq in the fifth place with AED41bn.

Gold topped the list of commodities in Dubai's 2020 external trade at AED213bn, followed by telecoms at AED153bn. Diamonds came third with AED64bn, followed by petroleum oils with AED57bn and jewellery with AED47bn.

WAM

Bank Nizwa supports education sector in Oman

Oman's most trusted Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa has demonstrated utmost commitment in supporting the local communities through quality sponsorship campaigns. In its most recent endeavour, Bank Nizwa has extended its support to the Directorate General of Education in South Batinah by sponsoring various educational activities for the academic year 2020-2021.

Today, under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman's Vision 2040 recognises education as the cornerstone for the nation's ever-growing developments and change for a better tomorrow. For this purpose, it outlines, 'a national system that empowers human capabilities in the educational sector and nurtures scientific research, innovation, and creativity to build a knowledge-based economy and society'.

The Oman Vision 2040 stresses on improving educational outcomes that have become necessary to build Omanis' confidence in their identity and commitment to their social values.

A focus on the future of this sector is only imminent, keeping in mind the ever-changing world, and the magnitude of the limitations that economies are currently going through.

This requires us to shift our thinking fundamentally about the purpose of education. In line with the sultanate's Vision 2040, Bank Nizwa endeavours to support the Ministry of Education's initiatives to enhance the quality of education in the South Batinah region. With over a hundred schools and 10,000 employees in the region, the bank believes that such efforts would greatly benefit the students as well as the teaching faculty in the area.



"Education has been regarded as one of the most important pillars to achieve sustainable growth. By investing in quality education today, we can prepare our youth to compete in the open international economic markets in the future," said Khaled al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa.

"By investing in its education sector, we endeavour to help each Omani individual hone the skills and capabilities to deal with global challenges and pave the way as leaders of change. Our efforts to support the educational sector will encourage the local youth to not just contribute to a progressive economy, but even society at large."

Oman's Vision 2040 stresses on improving educational outcomes that have become necessary to build Omanis' confidence in their identity and commitment to their social values.

Bank Nizwa's latest social initiatives which are geared at the education sector are aimed at enhancing the various academic activities in South Batinah region. The bank and the Ministry of Education have shared various meaningful partnerships that have benefited the educational sector in the sultanate.

A leader in Islamic banking, Bank Nizwa has shown utmost dedication in its efforts to give back to the community.

Over the years, the bank has undertaken various CSR initiatives to extend its support to various sectors, organisations and individuals, thus honouring its commitment to contribute to the nation's progressive march.

Instilling the values of compassion, responsibility and community spirit among all its employees, Bank Nizwa consistently strives to bring about positive, sustainable and beneficial changes in the community.



Luxurious hotels in Oman celebrate World Health Day

On the occasion of the World Health Day, the InterContinental Muscat, Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC, and Crowne Plaza Duqm celebrated this global event by engaging staff and guests in various activities to increase one's awareness on the importance of physical and mental health.

The hotels celebrated the employees by giving each and every one of them a thank you card and served healthy dishes at the staff canteen. Throughout the day, employees and staff participated in a health check-up, meditation, and a fitness awareness session, among other activities. Guests also received nutritious dishes made from Omani produce.

InterContinental Hotels Group has seven properties across three brands in Oman, including InterContinental Muscat, Crowne Plaza Muscat, Crowne Plaza Oman Convention, and Exhibition Center, Crowne Plaza Sohar, Crowne Plaza Duqm, Crowne Plaza Salalah, and Holiday Inn Seeb.

Bank Muscat invites customers to use Mobile Banking features

In line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to customer-centric services, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in Oman, has invited its customers to try out the new features that have been added in its Mobile Banking app.

These include a single click facility for Eidiya (Eid gift) transfers, charity contributions for Zakat and Sadaqah as well as donations to the Ministry of Health (COVID-19). Customers can download the latest version of the Bank Muscat Mobile Banking app from Apple App Store, Google Play or Huawei AppGallery.

Speaking on the occasion, Amjad al Lawati, AGM - Cards and eBanking, said, "Bank Muscat is happy to share with our valued customers the opportunity to spread joy among young children by sending Eidiya through the mobile application. Customers can also use the app for Zakat, Sadaqah and Ministry of Health (COVID-19) donations. The bank is happy to continuously launch new features within the app, which adds to customer convenience, ease of use and safety. I also take this occasion to wish Ramadan Mubarak to all our esteemed customers during this holy month."

Using the new features in the app is both easy and convenient. For example, using the single click option, a customer can make Eidiya transfers to up to 10 beneficiary accounts at a single time.

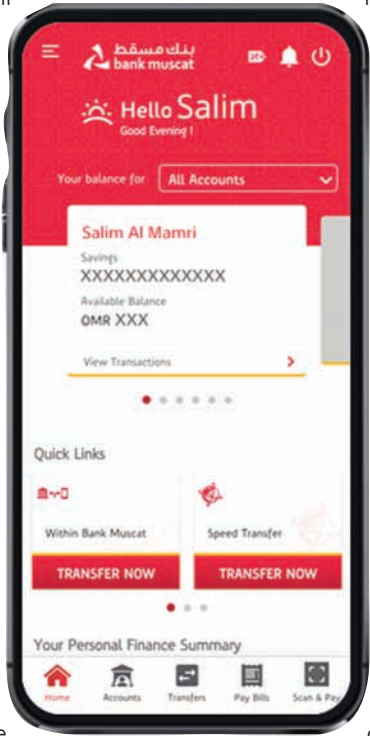
To use the feature, a customer simply needs to click on 'Transfer > Eid Gift' after logging in. The customer will be taken to a page with the options to 'Initiate a Transfer' and 'Manage Your Groups'. The 'Manage your Groups' option allows the viewing / modification / deletion of all the groups created, while the 'Add Groups' option will allow new groups to be added. Group names and beneficiary details can be viewed under the details of each group.

Customers can create multiple groups and select up to 10 beneficiaries in each group. The 'Initiate Group Transfer' feature allows the user to select a group of beneficiaries and transfer to all the accounts at a single time. The users can make multiple Group Transfers in a day.

Similarly, the new facility makes it easy to transfer Zakat and Sadaqah as well as contributions to the Ministry of Health (COVID-19). All transactions are made in Omani rials and the amount will be debited from the account chosen by the customer.

The customer will get SMS notifications for the amounts transferred to each beneficiary and the process of making donations is highly intuitive thanks to the state-of-the-art technology used in the Mobile Banking application.

Today, Bank Muscat customers extensively use the various digital options which are available to them through Mobile or Internet Banking such as bill payments, mobile top-ups, payments within Bank Muscat and Oman and international transfers.



Chedi Muscat and Amouage host fragrance session

The Chedi Muscat, one of Muscat's most luxurious properties, recognised for its perfect mix of Omani heritage and profound Asian Zen-style, hosted an exclusive masterclass in partnership with luxury fragrance house, Amouage.

The ladies-only afternoon took place at the chandelier-lit indoor dining area at The Restaurant where guests uncovered generations-old art of fragrance layering by exploring the richness within the world of scent directly from one of the most prestigious perfume houses. Amouage experts provided attendees with insights on how to perfect a harmonious composition of scents using an array of pure oils and select Amouage fragrances.

While perfume experts from Amouage highlighted the various notes and layers within each fragrance, The Chedi's mixologist, Chanaka, curated signature mocktails, infused with the flavours of the hero scents of the masterclass - Saffron and Rose. Following the masterclass, guests were treated to a lavish Afternoon Tea at one of The Chedi's private dining areas.

The Chedi Muscat's understated elegance and tranquil setting, combined with Amouage's beautifully crafted fragrances, created the perfect synergy for all participating guests.

Perched between the Al Hajar mountains and the Gulf of Oman's serene waters, The Chedi Muscat rises amidst an elegantly landscaped twenty-one-acre garden oasis featuring a private beach, eight dining options, a spa, a health club and three swimming pools.

Amouage is an international luxury fragrance house renowned for creating some of the most finely crafted perfumes in the world. Founded in the Sultanate of Oman in 1983 to be 'The Gift of Kings', the house has redefined the Arabian art of perfumery and garnered a global reputation for bringing innovative modernity and true artistry to all its creations.



Mercedes-Benz Oman offers Actros owners added peace of mind this Ramadan

Keeping commercial vehicles working at their optimum, Mercedes-Benz Oman is offering 20 per cent off on Preventive Maintenance Service Package for its Actros trucks this Ramadan.

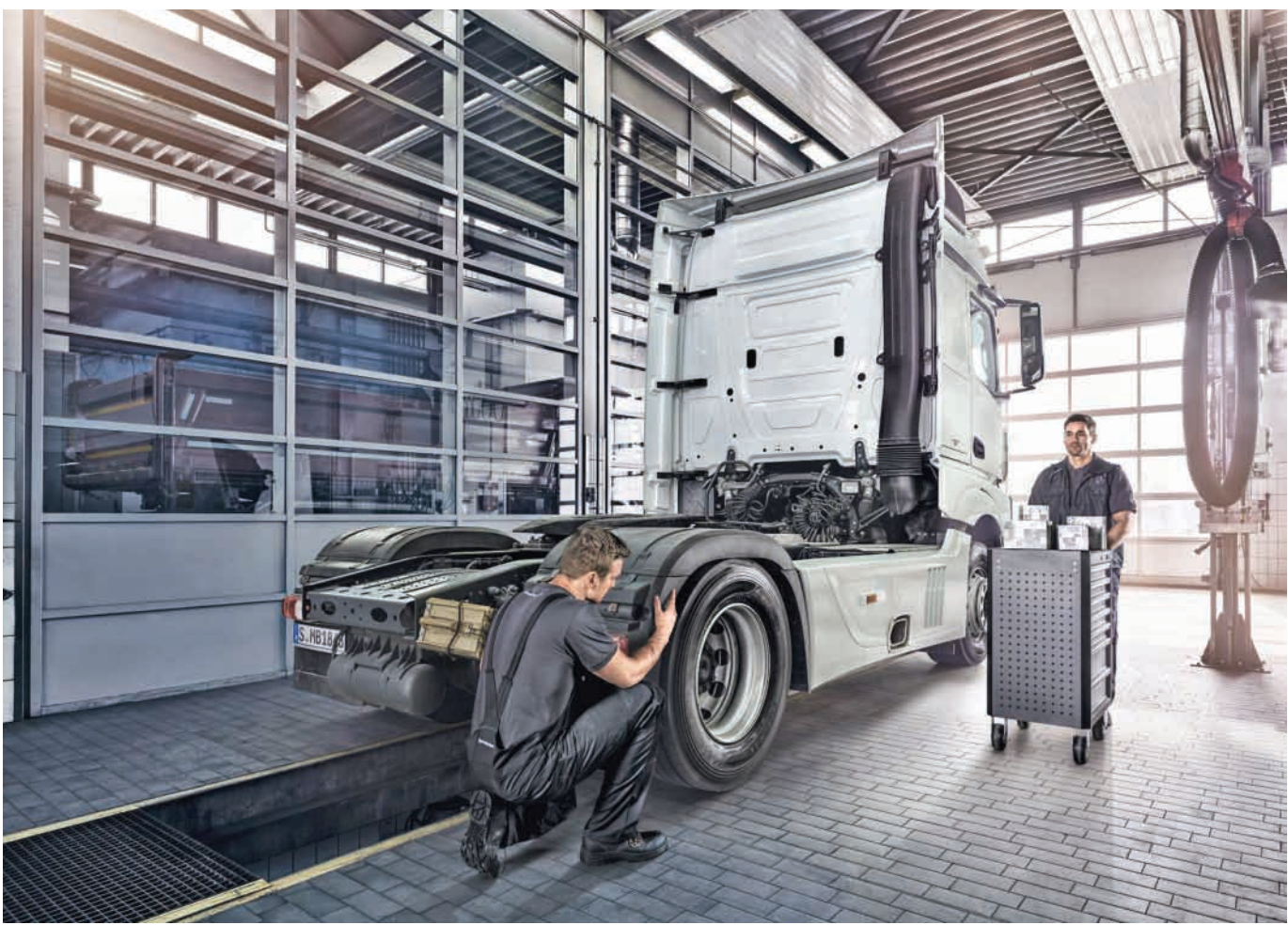
The Service Partner offer, available exclusively from April 11 to May 11, is designed to specifically target those components that are prone to wear and tear. The comprehensive and specially customised service is available for 4x2 with 6-cylinder engines for just RO300, 6x4 with 6-cylinder engines for RO354, and 6x4 with 8-cylinder engines for RO372, plus applicable VAT extra (post VAT introduction). at Mercedes-Benz Service Centres in Muscat, Haima, Salalah, and Sohar.

"Prevention is better than cure and our Preventive Maintenance Service Packages are designed to maximise the operating life of components while decreasing stress on other parts," said Gary Brown, general manager for Commercial Vehicles at Mercedes-Benz Oman.

"As their partners, we wanted to help companies minimise costs and downtime and keep their vehicles on the road as planned. Actros owners can rest assured that they will continue to get supreme power, reliability, safety and economy from our trucks."

The Preventive Maintenance Service Package is designed to ensure that each vehicle remains in peak mechanical health.

It includes engine oil (Mobil mineral oil) and filter change, manual transmission oil change, rear axle oil change, general valve lash adjustment and replacement of valve cover gaskets, replacement of diesel filter, replacement of water separator filter, replacement of air dryer filter as well as vehicle checks on oil leaks, fluid levels, diagnostic check-up of vehicle electrical system, engine compression test with diagnostic tool that gives indication on engine condition, multi-point inspection (periodic maintenance safety



check), general lubrication, retightening of lug nuts on two/three axles, and vehicle washing and greasing.

With a rigorous prioritisation of providing all customers with the very best customer experience, Mercedes-Benz Oman Commercial Vehicles offer an unrivalled range of tailor-made and reliable transport solutions, local service and parts supply throughout the wide national network of Mercedes-Benz branches, as well as expert technical and driver support.

To book an appointment for a Preventive Maintenance Service Package, customers in Muscat can call 99375876 or email eraldo.dacunha@mercedes-benz.co.om, while those in Haima can call 92735350 or email ali.alfarsi@mercedes-benz.co.om. Customer in Salalah can call 99884515 or email mohamed.reshal@mercedes-benz.co.om and those in Sohar should call 91397950 or email younis.alfarsi@mercedes-benz.co.om.

ABQ Education Group hosts Shell Oman CEO at speakers' series

ABQ Education Group, the largest private school operator in Oman, officially launched the Career Experience Program (CEP) in a live webinar with special guest Dr Mohammed al Balushi, CEO of Shell Oman Marketing Company. The Career Experience Program is an exciting and unique initiative that links industry professionals with ABQ staff, parents and students to bring rare insight and inspiration into what it takes to succeed in various industries throughout the sultanate.

The Career Experience Program was developed as part of ABQ's pioneering mentorship platform, the Discovering You Program (DYP), where mentees between Grades 3 to 12 learn and develop essential 21st century skills (21CS). In addition, DYP provides mentees the agency and inspiration to choose a career path that best suits their needs, wants, strengths, creativity and talents. With this in mind, the Career Experience Program is predicated on three major goals, as illustrated below.

The first of the Distinguished Speakers' Series hosted Dr Mohammed Mahmood al Balushi, CEO of Shell Oman Marketing, who delivered an enriching talk on professional career development, leadership, and other im-



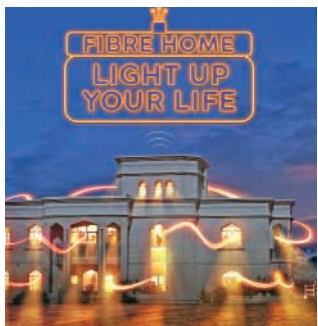
portant topics. The interactive session offered inside knowledge into what it takes to prepare, succeed and lead from an inspiring leader and true professional. Humayun Kabir, CEO of ABQ Education Group said, "We were delighted to have someone of the calibre of Dr Mohammed Balushi as the first guest at our Distinguished Speakers' Series forum, which is part of the ABQ Career Experience Programme. This programme aims at preparing students from a young age to plan ahead for their careers, understand the job

market and equip them with the set of skills and awareness to face future challenges. It always brings me joy to engage with the future leaders of Oman and contribute to developing those local talents. I would like to thank the ABQ Educational Group for this wonderful opportunity, and as a parent, it makes me proud seeing educational institutions in Oman leading such initiatives and programmes that will reflect positively on the future of our children and youth. "On the other hand, being a

practitioner, I deem it a responsibility to guide and mentor our youth and help prepare them for their careers and the different challenges they may face, and such programmes act as the foundation stone that will eventually contribute to achieving the long-term goals of Oman Vision 2040." Rayed Darwish, DYP Mentorship director at ABQ Education Group, said, "We are excited that ABQ is first educational group to establish an initiative like the Career Experience Program as part

of our curriculum and syllabus. 300 participants including parents, students, teachers, and mentors attended the lively virtual distinguished speakers' session which lasted over one hour and 15 minutes. It focussed on how to find your passion in life while allowing parents and student mentees to raise relevant questions."

Continuing to invest in its network, Ooredoo has added even more areas to its Fibre Home Internet service. Those living in Ruwi Expansion in Muscat and in Samiel Industrial Area are now among the growing number of customers that can enjoy great value high-speed broadband in their homes. Starting from just RO28 per month, Ooredoo's Fibre Home Internet plans come with speeds of up to 1GB, plus a whole range of unique benefits like unlimited data, 10 per cent discount on international calling, unlimited national minutes, and free modem and installation. With more areas being added all the time, Ooredoo's Fibre Home Internet is perfect for uninterrupted downloads or streaming movies, TV shows and music. Residents in areas with new coverage can order via WhatsApp by sharing their ID and location to 95009500.



Ooredoo adds more areas to its Fibre service



Makkah Hypermarket opens its latest branch in Seeb

Makkah Hypermarket, the renowned retail chain, has become stronger in its presence in the capital area of Oman with the grand launch of its hypermarket in Seeb on April 9. It is the 31st branch globally. The new store, which is spread over an area of about 64,500sq ft in a double level, was inaugurated in the presence of the local community. The new store offers a wide range of high-quality products

under categories like food, home furnishings, fashion, footwear, household and much more. On the occasion, Muhammed Kunhi K P, managing director of Makkah Group, expressed his happiness and gratitude to the all concerned authorities. On the launch of the new store, Saif Mohammed Abdullah al Naumani, local sponsor of Makkah Group - Oman expressed his gratitude and support to the people and the

society. Executive directors Hilal Muhammed and Sinan Muhammed also expressed their sincere thanks to all and revealed their dream of establishing more outlets within the Sultanate of Oman to cater the needs of the local community. Salim Sajith, general manager of Makkah Group also spoke on the occasion to cater the quality product available to the people in Oman.

beIN to introduce edutainment programmes for children this Ramadan through its channel

beIN Media Group, the global sports and entertainment broadcaster, has unveiled its set of educational and entertainment programmes for children during the holy month of Ramadan on its Jeem TV and Baraem channel. The line-up includes a series of diverse programmes and cultural and historical shows that will be broadcast around the clock to suit the ages and tastes of all viewers. It is a mix of cultural drama that entrenches human and Islamic values and a variety of international animations that strengthen children's attachment to their Arab and Islamic identity.

Tijan Annour, the international Q'uran recitation competition sponsored by the General Administration of Endowments at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, will return to Jeem TV this year during the holy month. Now in its ninth edition, the competition will feature reciters from various countries. The Young Muezzin competition is also held on the sidelines of Tijan Annour. The jury consists of a group of recitation scholars known for their knowledge and extensive experience as judges in international Q'uran recitation competitions. Ramadan programmes on Jeem TV this year also include 'Winners', which will be broadcast live daily at 4pm Mecca time. Host Marwa Khamis presents a series of competitions and games, the winners of which receive valuable prizes. A weekly



question is also asked on social media platforms where followers will have to name the chapter of the Q'uran from which a given verse is taken and the number of the verse. Jeem TV programming also includes 'The Journey', a 3-D graphic animation series suitable for all family members in general and children in particular. The series links reality and fiction in terms of space and time to teach

ethics through Hadith explained in a simple and useful way. The program is broadcast daily during the month of Ramadan at 5pm Mecca time. The third season of 'Habib Allah', which cites the most important events in the Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) journey and how his message constituted an important transformation in human history, will also be aired during Ramadan. Presented in an appealing style, the series attracts children and teaches them the unique characteristics of Prophet Mohammad. It will be presented daily at 5.45pm Mecca time. Jeem TV also announced a new public competition for television reporting under the name 'Jeem Correspondents'. It gives every child the opportunity to become a distinguished reporter by covering events and activities in his or her country, reporting on his or her own artistic and creative skills, or introducing charity Iftar tables and popular dishes from his or her country, speaking in standard Arabic.

Bold adventurer Bear Grylls is back for National Geographic new season

World-renowned survivalist Bear Grylls returns to National Geographic for a new season of Running Wild with Bear Grylls. Hollywood's fan-favourites come along for another adventurous ride to join Grylls in new challenges that make even the bravest shudder. The newest season premieres on April 23 at 9pm UAE and 8pm KSA on National Geographic. Each week, a new celebrity guest leaves the luxury of their homes to venture into some of the most extreme environments in the world to conquer fears, test their limits and sometimes dabble in nature's not so tasty delicacies. Continuing to push superstars' comfort levels this season,

Grylls travels the globe from the deserts of Utah to the Dolomites of Italy to the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California for more epic, life-changing adventures. This season's line-up of celebrity guests includes (in alphabetical order): ►Bobby Bones and fiancée Caitlin Parker - award-winning and influential American TV and radio personality and bestselling author (*The Bobby Bones Show, Breaking Bobby Bones, American Idol*) ►Terry Crews - Emmy Award-nominated actor and former NFL line backer (*Brooklyn Nine-Nine, Deadpool 2, The Expendables*); ►Keegan-Michael Key - Emmy Award-winning actor and comedian (*Brain Games, The Prom,*



Friends from College) ►Anthony Mackie - award-winning actor (*Avengers: Endgame, Altered Carbon, Captain America: Civil War*, highly anticipated Disney+ series *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier*) ►Danica Patrick - former professional racing driver and the only female winner of an IndyCar Series race—the 2008 Indy Japan 300 ►Danny Trejo - award-winning actor (*Machete, Sons of Anarchy, From Dusk Till Dawn: The Series*) ►Raiin Wilson - actor, writer and producer (*The Office, Utopia, Star Trek: Discovery*) Running Wild with Bear Grylls was developed by Bear Grylls and Delbert Shoopman. The series is produced by

Electus, a Propagate Company and The Natural Studios. For Electus and The Natural Studios, Bear Grylls serves as executive producer along with Chris Grant, Drew Buckley, Ben Silverman, Howard Owens, Liz Schulze, Rob Buchta and Delbert Shoopman. For National Geographic, Bengt Anderson is executive producer. Bear Grylls has become known worldwide as one of the most recognised faces of survival and outdoor adventure. Trained from a young age in martial arts, Grylls spent three years as a soldier in the British Special Forces as part of 21st SAS Regiment. It was here that he perfected many of the survival skills.

Lloyd Austin in Israel amid Iran nuke talks

Israel under hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been a fierce critic of the Iran nuclear deal

Tel Aviv, Israel - Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin was in Israel on Sunday on the first high-level visit from the new US administration, after talks restarted on reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Austin's visit comes just days after Washington said it had offered 'very serious' ideas on reviving the hobbled agreement that is staunchly opposed by Israel. Austin's first scheduled stop on the two-day trip was a meeting with Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz.

Israel under hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been a fierce critic of the Iran nuclear deal, dating back to when it was being negotiated during Barack Obama's administration.

Netanyahu applauded when Trump withdrew from the deal and imposed sanctions on Tehran, which responded by stepping back from several of its commitments under the deal.

In the latest breach of its undertakings in the troubled agreement, Tehran announced on Saturday that it had started up advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges.



US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin (centre, left) with Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz (centre, right) during an honour guard ceremony at Israel's military headquarters, in Israel's capital Tel Aviv on Sunday

President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated a cascade of 164 IR-6 centrifuges for producing enriched uranium, as well as two test cascades - of 30 IR-5 and 30 IR-6S devices respectively - at Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment

plant, in a ceremony broadcast by state television.

An 'accident' took place at Natanz on Sunday but caused no casualties or damage, the Fars news agency reported.

In an address marking the eve

of Holocaust Remembrance Day, Netanyahu said on Wednesday that Israel would not be bound to a nuclear deal that would enable the Islamic republic to develop nuclear weapons.

"An agreement with Iran that would pave the way to nuclear weapons - weapons that threaten our extinction - would not compel us in any way," said the veteran rightwing Prime Minister.

Accident at Iran nuclear facility, no casualties: Fars

Tehran, Iran - An 'accident' took place at an Iranian nuclear facility on Sunday but caused no casualties or damage, the Fars news agency reported, citing the spokesman of Iran's nuclear agency.

Behrouz Kamalvandi said there had been 'an accident in part of the electrical circuit of the (uranium) enrichment facility' at the Natanz complex, a day after Iran announced it had started up advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges at the site in a breach of its undertakings under a troubled 2015 nuclear deal.

There were 'no casualties nor pollution', he said, adding that 'the causes of the acci-

dent are under investigation and more details will be released later'.

The accident follows an explosion at a factory for advanced centrifuges at Natanz last July.

The authorities blamed that incident on 'sabotage' by 'terrorists', but have not released the results of their investigation into it.

President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday inaugurated a replacement factory at Natanz as well as a cascade of centrifuges for enriching uranium and two test cascades, in a ceremony broadcast by state television.

AFP

Biden has said he is prepared to return to the agreement, arguing the deal had - until Washington's withdrawal - been successful in dramatically scaling back Iran's nuclear activities. But Washington has de-

manded Iranian movement back towards compliance while Tehran has insisted on an end to all US restrictions, with each side demanding that the other make the first move.

AFP



A fighter with forces loyal to Yemen's Saudi-backed government holds a position against Huthi rebels in the province of Marib, on April 6 (AFP)

70 dead in fighting over Yemen's Marib

Dubai, UAE - Fierce fighting for Yemen's strategic city of Marib has killed 70 pro-government and Huthi rebel fighters over the past 24 hours, loyalist military officials said on Sunday.

The Huthis have been trying to seize oil-rich Marib, the government's last significant pocket of territory in the north, since February. Two officials from pro-government forces told AFP that battles are raging on three fronts outside Marib city as the Huthis mount a concerted push.

The new toll comes after officials on Saturday announced 53 killed on both sides. The 70 dead included 26 members of the pro-government forces and 44 from Huthi ranks, they said.

One of the officials said that the rebels 'are launching simul-

taneous attacks' in the areas of Kassara and Al-Mashjah, northwest of the city, and Jabal Murad in the south.

"They have made progress on the Kassara and Al-Mashjah fronts, but they have been thwarted on the Jabal Murad front," he told AFP.

The other official said that warplanes from the Saudi-led military coalition, which entered the Yemen conflict to support the government in 2015, launched airstrikes that 'destroyed 12 Huthi military vehicles, including four tanks and a cannon'.

The Iran-backed rebels in late 2014 overran the capital Sanaa, 120km to the west of Marib, along with much of northern Yemen.

AFP

Today's crisis worse: Lebanon civil war survivors

Beirut, Lebanon - During the civil war that ended over 30 years ago Abla Barotta survived shelling and clashes, but she now fears a 'slow death' from Lebanon's worst economic crisis in decades. The 58 year old mother of three is a survivor who worries she will soon join the more than 50 per cent of Lebanese today living in poverty.

Echoing a common refrain on television and at public gatherings, Barotta said even the worst days of the war weren't this tough. "We used to hide in houses or basements every time we heard shelling during the war, but today, where can we go to hide from hunger, the economic crisis, the coronavirus pandemic and our political leaders?" she said. "We used to fear death from bombardment or sniper fire, but now we fear everything: illness, poverty and hunger."

Her voice lowering to a whisper, she added, "To die from shelling is better, at least there is no suffering... while today, we suffer and die slowly every day."

Lebanon on Tuesday marks 46 years since clashes erupted in Beirut between Lebanese Christians and Palestinians backed by leftist and Muslim factions, marking the start of a 15-year conflict that drew in regional powers Israel and Syria.



Civil war survivor Abla Barotta lights a candle at a shrine in her home in Lebanon's capital Beirut, on April 6 (AFP)

At the time, the country was divided into warring sectarian fiefdoms. But many still managed to preserve a semblance of normal life between bouts of heightened violence and kidnappings.

The wheels of Lebanon's economy kept turning, bolstered by money and weapons sent to warring parties from abroad.

But after the conflict ended in 1990, with 150,000 people killed and 17,000 missing, bitter political divisions continued to plague Lebanon.

Endless political deadlock, as

well as alleged corruption and negligence, finally gave way to a financial slump now sounding the death knell for a fragile middle class.

Since 2019, the Lebanese pound has lost more than 85 per cent of its value against the dollar on the black market, and prices have soared.

Customers have come to blows in supermarkets to secure fast-selling subsidised products, while shortages in pharmacies have made buying medicines akin to hunting for treasure.

Authorities did little

Yet authorities have done little to stem a crisis compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed more than 6,600 people, and by last year's port blast which cost more than 200 lives and ravaged swathes of Beirut.

"The war was ugly... but we never lived through anything like this economic crisis," Barotta said in her Beirut home, which was hard hit by the August 4 explosion. Her first-floor flat in an old building in the Mar Mikhail neighbourhood next to the port

has since been renovated and her neck has healed from a blast injury. But she said there is plenty left to worry about. "This anxiety over whether we will be able to eat tomorrow... we've never lived that before," she said. "Sometimes I can't sleep at night."

In the blast-strewn Karantina district, also next to the port, Jean Saliba pointed to gutted buildings awaiting renovation and listed the names of families who lost loved ones in Lebanon's worst peace-time disaster.

Karantina has since become a stomping ground for non-governmental groups spearheading the reconstruction effort.

"We haven't seen the state," said Saliba, a 63 year old former civil servant.

"If it weren't for the money and food handouts distributed by NGOs, people wouldn't have had the strength to go on."

Saliba called the monster blast a 'collective catastrophe' that made the war-time suffering look like 'a drop in the ocean'.

During the war, people could go back to work when bombardment slowed, he said. But with current unemployment rates approaching 40 per cent, many don't have jobs to return to.

"Economically, we are finished," the father of three asked. AFP

Rhino population in Nepal grows in conservation boost

Kathmandu, Nepal - Nepal's population of endangered one-horned rhinoceros has grown by more than a hundred over the past six years, officials said, with campaigners hailing the increase as a conservation 'milestone'.

The population rose to 752 across four national parks in the southern plains, up from 645 in 2015, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation said Saturday.

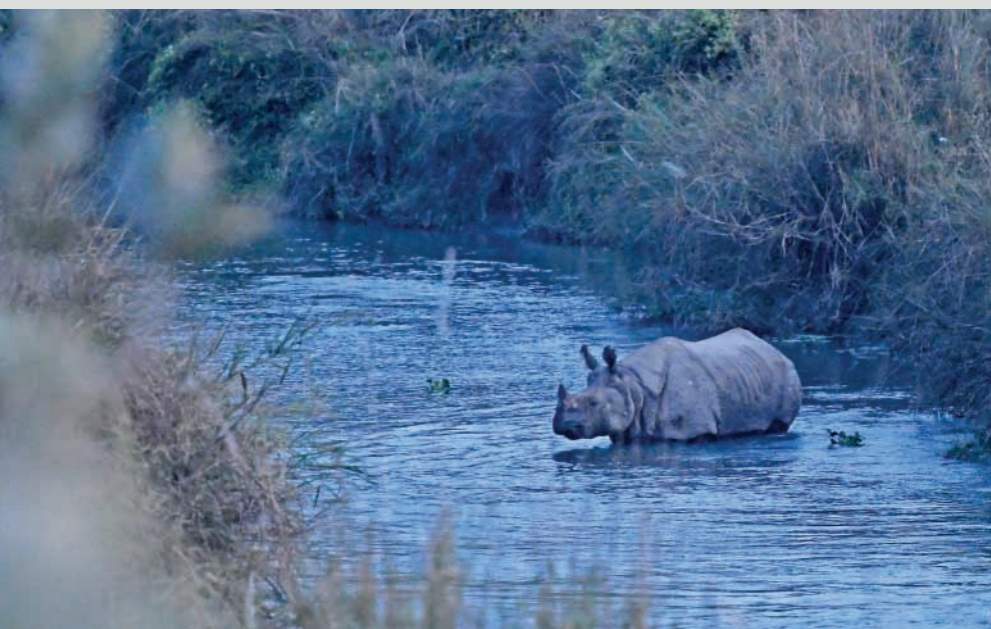
"The increase of rhinos is exciting news for us," the department's information officer, Haribhadra Acharya, told AFP on Sunday. "But we have challenges ahead to expand the habitat areas of this animal to maintain the growth."

Thousands of one-horned rhinos once roamed the southern plains, but rampant poaching and human encroachment on their habitat reduced their numbers to around 100 in Nepal in the 1960s.

Since 1994, the Himalayan nation has conducted a rhino census once every five years, as authorities stepped up their efforts to boost population numbers for the species listed as vulnerable by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

In the first census in 1994, 466 rhinos were counted.

Some 250 personnel - including enumerators, soldiers and veterinarians - rode on 57 elephants for nearly three



This file photo shows a one-horned rhinoceros crossing the Rapati River in Sauraha Chitwan, some 150km southwest of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, on January 1, 2020 (AFP)

weeks from late March to count the rhinos. The census - delayed for a year due to the coronavirus pandemic - was carried out using GPS equipment, binoculars and cameras.

"Rhinos were counted through a direct observation method, where the counting team reached as close as 100m from the wild animal," Acharya added.

During the census, an elephant mahout was attacked and killed by a tiger, authorities said. Another official was injured when a wild elephant attacked the team.

Global conservation group the World Wildlife Fund - which provides financial and technical assistance for the census -

called the population increase a 'milestone' for Nepal.

"The overall growth in population size is indicative of ongoing protection and habitat management efforts by protected area authorities despite challenging contexts these past years," the WWF's Nepal representative, Ghana Gurung, said.

The rhino population has climbed in recent years amid the government's anti-poaching and conservation initiatives.

But the illegal trade of rhino horns - prized in China and Southeast Asia for their supposed medicinal properties - remains a threat. Some 26 rhinos died in Nepal last year, including four from poaching.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

China mulls mixing vaccines to improve efficacy of jabs

Beijing, China - China is considering the mixing of different COVID-19 vaccines to improve the relatively low efficacy of its existing options, a top health expert has told a conference.

Authorities have to 'consider ways to solve the issue that efficacy rates of existing vaccines are not high', Chinese media outlet *The Paper* reported, citing Gao Fu, the head of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

His comments mark the first time a top Chinese expert has publicly alluded to the relatively low efficacy of the country's vaccines, as China forges ahead in its mass vaccination campaign and exports its jabs around the world.

China has administered around 161mn doses since vaccinations began last year - most people will require two shots - and aims to fully inoculate 40 per cent of its 1.4bn population by June.

But many have been slow to sign up for jabs, with life largely back to normal within China's borders and domestic outbreaks under control.



A man holds his arm after receiving a jab of the CoronaVac vaccine, developed by Chinese Sinovac in partnership with the Brazilian Institute Butantan, at the headquarters of Cacique de Ramos, one of the most traditional carnival groups of the city, in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro on April 8 (AFP)

Gao has previously stressed the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is vaccination, and said in a recent state media interview that China aims to vaccinate 70 per cent to 80

per cent of its population between the end of this year and mid-2022.

At the conference in Chengdu on Saturday, Gao added that an option to over-

come the efficacy problem is to alternate the use of vaccine doses that tap different technologies. This is an option that health experts outside China are studying as well.

Gao said experts should not ignore mRNA vaccines just because there are already several coronavirus jabs in the country, urging for further development, *The Paper* reported.

Currently, none of China's jabs conditionally approved for the market are mRNA vaccines, but products that use the technology include those by US pharma giant Pfizer and German start-up BioNTech, as well as by Moderna.

China has four conditionally approved vaccines, whose published efficacy rates remain behind rival jabs by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, which have 95 per cent and 94 per cent rates respectively.

China's Sinovac previously said trials in Brazil showed around 50 per cent efficacy in preventing infection and 80 per cent efficacy in preventing cases requiring medical intervention.

Sinopharm's vaccines have efficacy rates of 79.34 per cent and 72.51 per cent respectively, while the overall efficacy for CanSino's stands at 65.28 per cent after 28 days.

AFP

Global death toll inching close to 3mn

Paris, France - The novel coronavirus has killed at least 2,929,563 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1000 GMT on Sunday.

At least 135,360,240 cases of coronavirus have been registered. The vast majority have recovered, though some have continued to experience symptoms weeks or even months later. These figures are based on daily tolls provided by health authorities in each country and exclude later re-evaluations by statistical organisations, as has happened in Russia, Spain and Britain.

On Saturday, 12,860 new deaths and 703,283 new cases were recorded worldwide.

Based on latest reports, the countries with the most new deaths were Brazil with 2,616 new deaths, followed by Mexico with 2,192 and India with 839. The United States is the worst-affected country with 561,783 deaths from 31,151,493 cases.

After the US, the hardest-hit countries are Brazil with 351,334 deaths from 13,445,006 cases, Mexico

with 209,212 deaths from 2,278,420 cases, India with 169,275 deaths from 13,358,805 cases, and the United Kingdom with 127,080 deaths from 4,368,045 cases.

The country with the highest number of deaths compared to its population is the Czech Republic with 260 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Hungary with 240, Bosnia-Herzegovina 222, Montenegro 217 and Bulgaria 206. Europe overall has 995,904 deaths from 46,239,235 cases, Latin America and the Caribbean 829,491 deaths from 26,155,031 infections, and the United States and Canada 585,064 deaths from 32,202,350 cases.

Asia has reported 284,283 deaths from 19,440,404 cases, the Middle East 118,368 deaths from 6,940,672 cases, Africa 115,448 deaths from 4,342,503 cases, and Oceania 1,005 deaths from 40,053 cases. Since the start of the pandemic, the number of tests conducted has greatly increased while testing and reporting techniques have improved, leading to a rise in reported cases.

AFP

Thai provinces fear virus surge out of Bangkok ahead of holidays

Bangkok, Thailand - Almost 40 Thai provinces have brought in entry restrictions and quarantine requirements for people coming from Bangkok and other coronavirus hotspots ahead of a holiday travel period, as the capital grapples with soaring infections.

On Sunday the government announced 967 new infections, bringing the overall tally to more than 32,000.

Separately, health officials in the northern city of Chiang Mai

flagged a further 281 cases, that were likely to be included in Monday's national figures.

Bangkok appears to be the epicentre of Thailand's third wave, with more than 1,000 cases reported this month.

More than 4,000 people are in hospital with coronavirus across the country.

Bangkok has set up ten field hospitals to accommodate up to 3,000 patients for Thailand's 'most severe outbreak', according to Suksan Kittisupakorn, di-



Health workers put on full PPE before going inside a COVID-19 field hospital, on the outskirts of Bangkok on Saturday (AFP)

rector-general of the Medical Service Department.

Thai authorities have detected a highly infectious variant of the virus originally found in Britain.

Festivities for the rowdy Songkran holiday marking the Thai new year, known for its public water fights, have been curtailed, with officials cancelling Bangkok street celebrations to discourage crowds.

Thousands of Thais traditionally return to their home

provinces during the Songkran holiday period, which officially starts on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha encouraged people to stay home during the holidays.

"Please don't hold activities which will draw many people together including water fights or foam parties," he said in a podcast on Saturday.

The national government has not brought in a travel ban but, as of noon Sunday, 38 out of 77 provinces had announced their

own entry restrictions.

They are asking people from Bangkok, Nakhon Pathom, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi and Samut Prakan to self-isolate for ten to 14 days.

On Friday authorities ordered the closure off all entertainment venues in 41 provinces for two weeks.

So far only 97 people have died from coronavirus in Thailand, according to official figures.

AFP

Rescuers work to free 21 trapped in flooded China mine

Beijing, China - Rescuers were working on Sunday to reach 21 workers trapped in a coal mine in northwest China's Xinjiang region after flooding cut power underground and disrupted communications, state media reported.

The accident happened in Fengyuan coal mine in Hutubi County on Saturday evening, when staff were carrying out upgrading works at the site, the official Xinhua news agency said.

Eight of the 29 workers who were at the scene have been rescued from the mine, according to preliminary reports. Rescuers have located the miners, with 12 on one platform, eight on a second platform, and the last worker in an escape route where water had entered, broadcaster CCTV reported. 'The working platform with 12 people is 1,200m from ground level and the underground terrain is complex, making rescue difficult', it said.

Rescuers were also trying to pump water from the flooded shaft and have been piping air into the mine. Pumping equipment was

The accident happened in Fengyuan coal mine in Hutubi County on Saturday

being installed.

Mining accidents are common in China, where the industry has a poor safety record and regulations are often weakly enforced.

In January, 22 workers were trapped in a mine in east China's Shandong province after an explosion damaged the entrance, leaving workers stuck underground for about two weeks.

Eleven men were pulled out alive, ten died and one miner remained unaccounted for.

In December, 23 miners died after being trapped underground in the southwest city of Chongqing - just months after 16 others died from carbon monoxide poisoning at another coal mine in the city.

AFP

China's plans for mega Tibet dam stoke fears in India

Beijing, China - China is planning a mega dam in Tibet able to produce triple the electricity generated by the Three Gorges - the world's largest power station - stoking fears among environmentalists and in neighbouring India.

The structure will span the Brahmaputra River before the waterway leaves the Himalayas and flows into India, straddling the world's longest and deepest canyon at an altitude of more than 1,500m.

The project in Tibet's Medog County is expected to dwarf the record-breaking Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River in central China, and is billed as able to produce 300bn kilowatts of electricity each year.

It is mentioned in China's strategic 14th Five-Year Plan, unveiled in March at an annual rubber-stamp congress of the country's top lawmakers.

But the plan was short on details, a timeframe or budget.

The river, known as the Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibetan, is also home to two other projects far upstream, while six others are in the pipeline or under construction.

The 'super-dam' however is in a league of its own.

Last October, the Tibet local government signed a 'strategic cooperation agreement' with PowerChina, a public construction company specialising in hydroelectric projects.



This file photo shows the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon on which the communist country is planning a mega dam, in Nyingchi city, in China's western Tibet Autonomous Region, on March 28 (AFP)

A month later the head of PowerChina, Yan Zhiyong, partially unveiled the project to the Communist Youth League, the youth wing of China's ruling party. Enthusiastic about 'the world's richest region in terms of hydroelectric resources', Yan explained that the dam would draw its power from the huge drop of the river at this particular section.

'Really bad idea'

Beijing may justify the massive project as an environmentally-friendly alternative to fossil fuels, but it risks provoking strong op-

position from environmentalists in the same way as the Three Gorges Dam, built between 1994 and 2012.

The Three Gorges created a reservoir and displaced 1.4mn inhabitants upstream.

"Building a dam the size of the super-dam is likely a really bad idea for many reasons," said Brian Eyler, energy, water and sustainability programme director at the Stimson Center, a US think tank.

Besides being known for seismic activity, the area also contains a unique biodiversity,

The dam would block the migration of fish as well as sediment flow that enriches the soil during seasonal floods downstream, said Eyler.

There are both ecological and political risks, noted Tempa Gyaltzen Zamlha, an environmental policy specialist at the Tibet Policy Institute, a think tank linked to the Tibetan government-in-exile based in Dharamshala, India.

"We have a very rich Tibetan cultural heritage in those areas, and any dam construction would cause ecological destruction,

submergence of parts of that region," he told AFP.

"Many local residents would be forced to leave their ancestral homes," he said, adding that the project will encourage migration of Han Chinese workers that 'gradually becomes a permanent settlement'.

'Water wars'

New Delhi is also worried by the project.

The Chinese Communist Party is effectively in a position to control the origins of much of South Asia's water supply, analysts say.

'Water wars are a key component of such warfare because they allow China to leverage its upstream Tibet-centred power over the most essential natural resource,' wrote political scientist Brahma Chellaney last month in *The Times of India*.

The risks of seismic activity would also make it a 'ticking water bomb' for residents downstream, he warned.

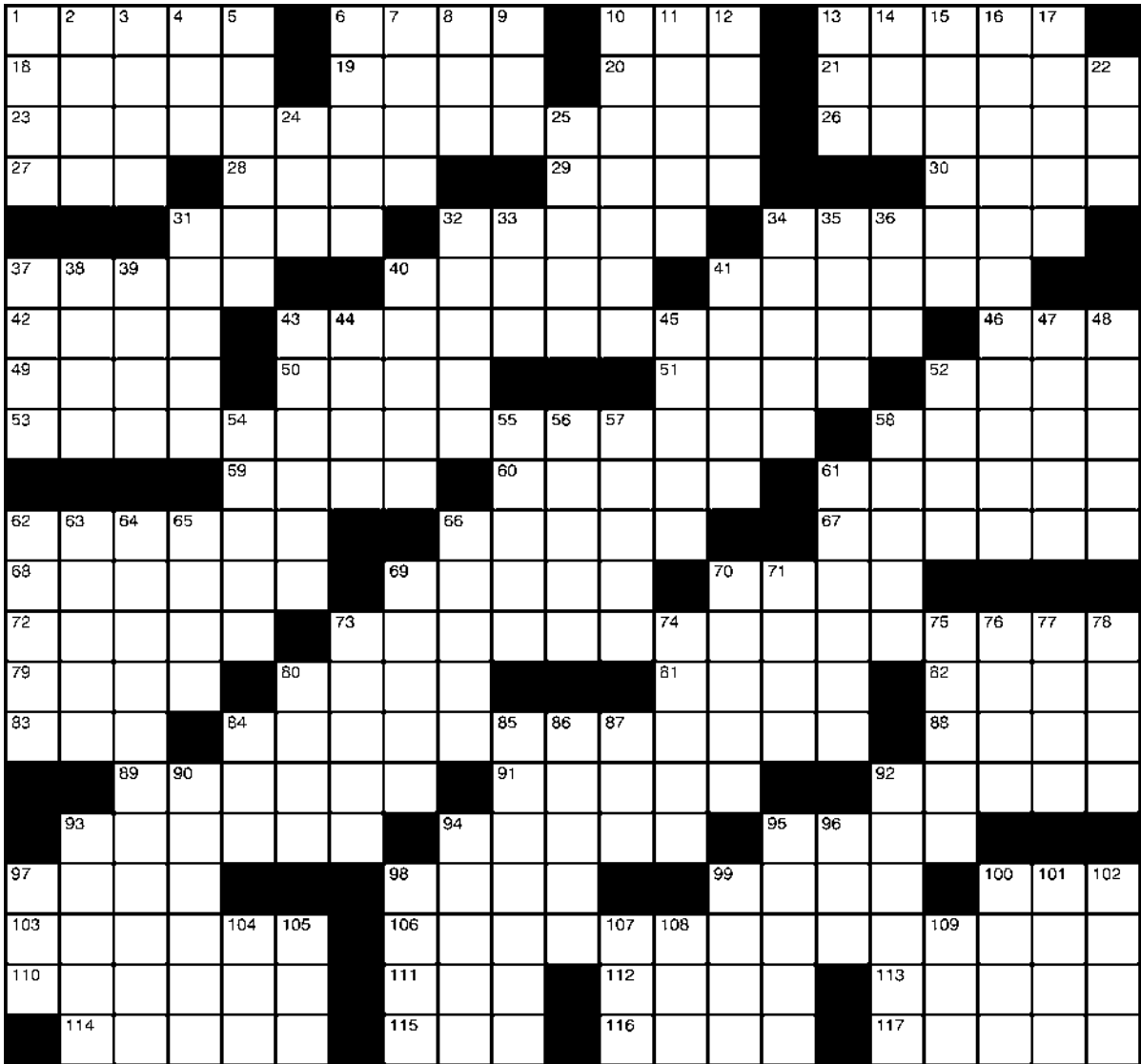
In reaction to the dam idea, the Indian government has floated the prospect of building another dam on the Brahmaputra to shore up its own water reserves.

"There is still much time to negotiate with China about the future of the super-dam and its impacts," said Eyler.

"A poor outcome would see India build a dam downstream."

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Early weapon
6 It reddens blue litmus
10 Phones or drum
13 Ausable gorge, NY
18 Straighten
19 Nathan or Diane
20 Doctors' org.
21 Rural dialect, esp. Fr.
23 Novel by
24 Down
26 "___ Grecian Urn"
27 Table or man
28 Minute quantity
29 Bean or shot
30 Gloria Allred: abbr.
31 Pin or house
32 Polish city on the Warta
34 Tritely sentimental
37 Lucre
40 Rails
41 Front and keeper
42 Procure
43 Old Ironsides
46 Special news dispatch: abbr.
49 There ___ any more
50 To me, in Amiens
51 Soap or shoe
52 War correspondent Ernie

- 53 With 84 Across, Oscar Wilde plat
58 Gather bit by bit
59 Oklahoma Indian
60 Snake or reef
61 Authority
62 Sometimes with chango
66 Soupy
67 Hurls
68 Civil War fort
69 Goddesses of seasons
70 Scullers' command
72 Plant louse
73 Purpose of earnest money
79 Sly glance
80 Fern sporangia clusters
81 Marcia, on "Housewives"
82 Woodwind
83 Bluesman
Shannon
84 See 53 Across
88 Lessen
89 Standards of perfection
91 Frogs and farms
92 Heals
93 Animal sounds
94 Swerve
95 Expedited
97 Omen
98 Kind of moss

- 99 Mimic
100 Hand-written documents: abbr.
103 Private
106 Played Marty on film
110 Severely criticize
111 Canals, Canada and Mich.
112 He waits in ambush
113 Uncanny
114 Keep your ___ the ball
115 Screech or barn
116 Throw missiles
117 Six and South
DOWN
1 Guard or deposit
2 Actor Alda
3 Rail
4 Compass reading
5 Oscar
6 Set apart
7 Collected
8 Earnings: abbr.
9 ___ volente: God willing
10 Life is ___
11 Jordan's capital
12 Coarse file
13 Naval noncom
14 Taken
15 Military command
16 Predictors
17 Herb-flavored

- 22 ___ it isn't so
24 Greek letter
25 Brazilian palm
31 Ghana dialect
32 Affirm
33 Food scrap
34 Forceful
35 Sack
36 Grecian or coffee
37 So ___, amen
38 Impetuous
39 Sea eagle
40 Audible sleep
41 Foot or milking
43 Hostage taker
44 Melville novel
45 Employ like
47 Mat or kick
48 Seinfeld's Elaine ___
52 Fours or sign
54 Specks of dust
55 Mites
56 Director
Christopher
57 Apostles' or Nicene
58 The old gray ___ is dead
61 Wall or 42nd
62 Sacred song
63 Coin of India
64 US novelist, Nobel '54
65 Clink
66 Ferber novel
69 Fog and bull

- 70 Monsters
71 Greeks' Mars
73 Pains
74 Li'l ___ of Dog Patch
75 Motorized bicycle
76 Israeli statesman
77 Gare du ___
78 Golfers' launch pads
80 Embed
84 Jujube
85 Renewable fuel
86 Sharp rugged ridge
87 Female ruff
90 Contribute
92 Joined forces
93 Inasmuch as
94 Goat antelope
95 Car or coat
96 For each
97 Your mother's daughter
98 Legal tender in Mazatlán
99 Adam's son
100 Stick
101 Small bit
102 About, off and through
104 Greek letter
105 Cub pack unit
107 Video tape recording: abbr.
108 Blest be the ___
109 Born in Brittany

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

A new person in your life is sparking some questions in your own mind: Where are you going? How soon do you need to get there? The answers won't come easily, and they shouldn't. If they do, you're probably just telling yourself what society expects of you. So just let these questions simmer for a while, and don't put too much pressure on yourself to find answers right now.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Everywhere you go could be sensory overload. To some extent, you'll get a rush from it all, but when you need a break, you'll really need a break, so pay attention to your feelings. All the activity could challenge your ability to concentrate on a developing issue with a friend. Put off making your next move until things settle and you can figure out exactly what you want.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Whether you realise it or not, you're in the midst of some changes. Trouble is that the most productive ones usually take the longest to complete. Luckily, if you keep your eyes and ears open, you'll find a few sweet shortcuts that will help you skip all of the boring stuff and jump right to all the fun stuff. These shortcuts will require a heavy amount of bravado on your part.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Plans are shifting out of place today, but don't waste time trying to figure out why. Instead, you should direct your energy toward formulating the most effective reaction to the new situation. Simply put, you can't afford to have a "whatever" attitude about any surprises. If something is bothersome or frustrating, you can take charge, get rid of it, and put things back on track.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Everyone is taking their own journey through life, and that's liberating, but it can also be isolating, because no one else can truly understand what you are experiencing. Take this fact to heart when those "in the know" offer you unsolicited advice today. They have your best interests at heart, but in the end their thoughts are based on their own goals, not yours.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Sharing your life can be tricky, but you're handling the balancing act quite well, especially now. The only thing you might want to watch out for is spreading yourself too thin. Unless you get enough time to yourself, you could lose focus on what it takes to make yourself truly happy. Feel free to back off on social plans or reschedule events to get the downtime you need.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

When you aim at your target, switch off your emotions. Doubt, fear, even confidence must get pushed aside or else you may miss the mark. Approach everything with an analytical eye and there will be no doubts you can't explain away. Nothing in life is 100 per cent certain, but if you put your brain to work now, you can get things close enough. Passion isn't going to be as powerful as intellect.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

If social juggling were an Olympic sport, you'd snag the gold. Finalise tentative plans. This marathon game of phone tag needs to come to an end. Take out your calendar and book a date, because tomorrow you'll be grateful for the excuse to say no. Everyone else is busy too, and that will make tying up these details a lot more painless. Joy and laughter are coming your way.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You're not weak if you ask for help. Before things get to the panic phase, seek the assistance. Friends who have been there before are waiting for you to ask. They have some wise advice you need to hear. Ask for what you need. No bad assumptions will be made. Your reputation is stronger than you think! Emotionally, you are on solid ground, so be as affectionate as you want.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

The rat race could be rough, and not for the right reasons. If you're getting overwhelmed, step out. You won't miss out on any big opportunities, despite what others may say. Pressure could be driving you out of a social situation too, and that is a strong indicator that time on your own will give your batteries the recharge they need. Put yourself first this time.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Memories of an awkward moment still hang in the air. Don't you think it's time one of you reached out and made an effort to reconnect? Make the first move. You'll feel good and gain extra credit for doing so. It may take a while to get the face-to-face time you need with that special someone, but keep trying. They aren't blowing you off! Persistence will pay off in a big way.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If you reach too high for your goals, you may end up disappointing yourself. You hold yourself to high standards, and it's been working for you to a certain extent. Today, try setting more modest goals and experiment with reduced expectations. It's time you gave yourself a break. Just picture where you want to be three months from now, not a decade!

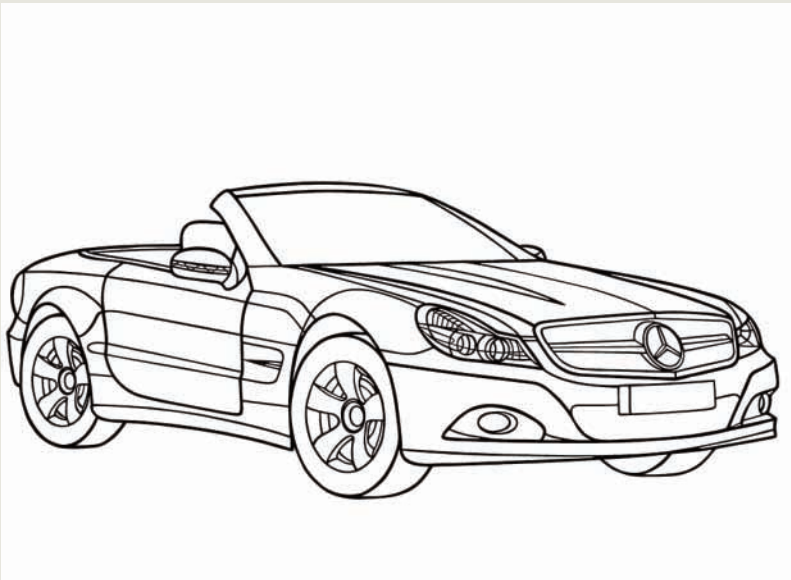
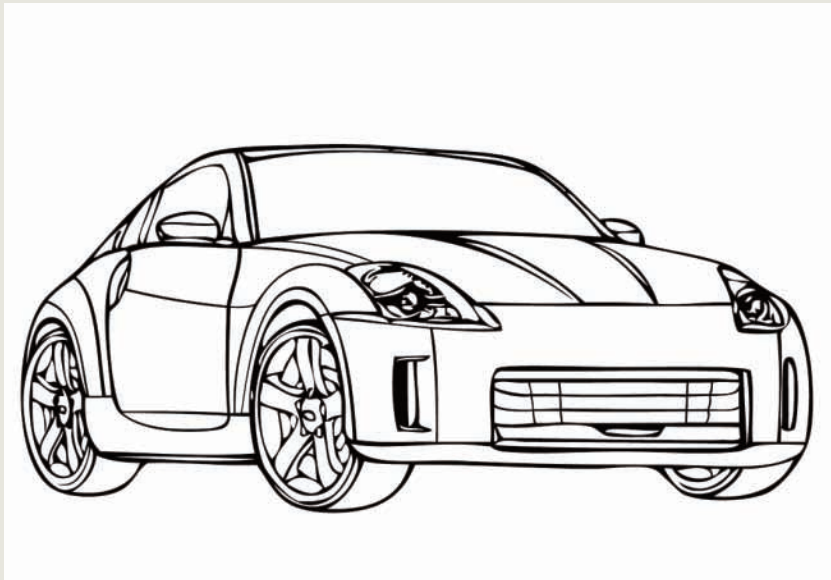


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which countries from the membership of CACM (Central American Common Market)?
a. Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua
b. Bogota, El Salvador, Honduras
c. Washington DC, Bogota, Guatemala
d. All of the above
2. Which of the following are the members of SAARC ?
a. Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan
b. Bhutan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka
c. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka
d. None of the above
3. Where is the permanent secretariat of the SAARC?
a. Kathmandu
b. New Delhi
c. Islamabad
d. Colombo

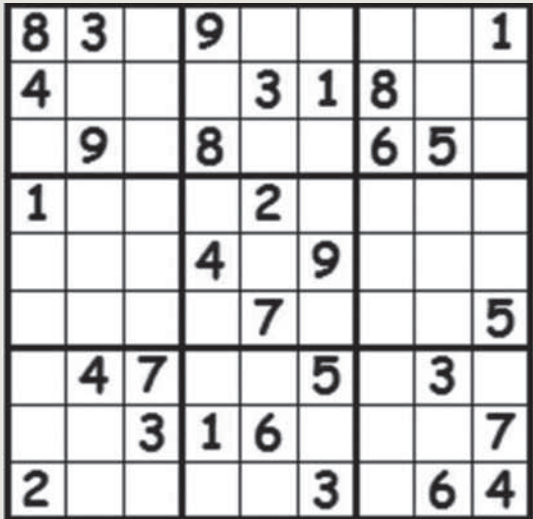
Answers: 1: a 2: b 3: a

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



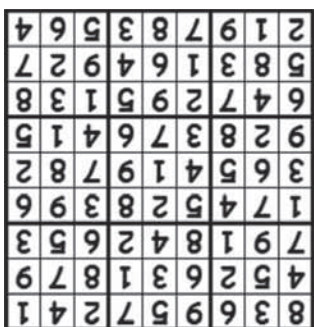
BOGGLER



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 (APRIL 11)



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



'LOST' GOLDEN CITY FOUND

Egypt unveils 3,000-year-old city near Luxor



Workers covering a skeleton at the archaeological site of the 3000 year old city

Archaeologists on Saturday showed off their finds at what they say is the largest ancient city ever found in Egypt, dating to a golden age of the pharaohs 3,000 years ago.

At the site near Luxor, home of the legendary Valley of the Kings, workers carefully carried ancient pots and showed human and animal remains dug up from the earth as members of the media toured around curved brick walls and rudimentary streets.

"This is a large city that was lost. It was connected with the god Aton and Amenhotep III," famed Egyptologist Zahi Hawass enthusiastically told reporters Saturday. "We found three major districts - one for administration, one for workers to sleep in and another for industry," he said.

Spaces include workshops for drying meat, making clothes and sandals, and crafting amulets and small statues.

Mostafa Waziri, head of the country's Supreme Council of Antiquities said the site was not limited to buildings. "We can see... economic activity, workshops and ovens," he said.

Hawass had announced earlier this week the discovery of a 'lost golden city', and the archaeological team said the find was "the

largest" ancient city ever uncovered in Egypt.

"We found one portion of the city only," Hawass told AFP. "The city extends to the west and the north."

Jewellery, golden fish

The team began excavations in September between the temples of Ramses III and Amenhotep III near Luxor, some 500km (300 miles) south of Cairo.

Amenhotep III inherited an empire that stretched from the Euphrates River in modern Iraq and Syria to Sudan and died around 1354 BC, ancient historians say.

He ruled for nearly four decades, a reign known for its opulence and the grandeur of its monuments, including the Colossi of Memnon - two massive stone statues near Luxor that represent him and his wife.

Betsy Bryan, professor of Egyptian art and archaeology at Johns Hopkins University, had said in a statement this week that the find was the second most important archaeological discovery since the tomb of Tutankhamun nearly a century ago.

"The archaeological layers have laid untouched for thousands of years, left by the ancient residents as if it were yesterday," the team's statement said.

Archaeologists have unearthed items of jewellery, coloured pottery vessels, scarab

This is a large city that was lost. It was connected with the god Aton and Amenhotep III

EGYPTOLOGIST ZAHİ HAWASS



Workers carrying a fish covered in gold uncovered at the archaeological site of a 3000 year old city

beetle amulets and mud bricks bearing seals of Amenhotep III.

Hawass said 'a large fish covered in gold' may have been venerated.

Fantastic discovery

Jose Galan, head of a separate Spanish archaeological mission near the Valley of the Kings, told AFP Saturday that the site was 'a fantastic discovery'.

"We are used to discoveries related to

temples and tombs so we know about religious life and funerary habits. But we don't know much about settlements," he said.

The team have said they were optimistic that further important finds would be revealed, noting the discovery of groups of tombs reached through 'stairs carved into the rock', a similar construction to those found in the Valley of the Kings. But since the announcement, some scholars have disputed that Hawass and his team have succeeded where others had failed by locating the city.

Egyptologist Tarek Farag posted Friday on Facebook that the area was first excavated more than a century ago by a team from New York's Metropolitan Museum.

Waziri dismissed these concerns, saying previous digs had taken place further afield to the south the site.

After years of political instability following the 2011 Arab Spring uprising, which dealt a severe blow to its tourism industry, Egypt is seeking to bring back visitors, in particular by promoting its ancient heritage.

Last week, the mummified remains of 18 ancient kings and four queens were transported across Cairo from the Egyptian Museum in iconic Tahrir Square to the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation, in a procession dubbed the 'Pharaohs' Golden Parade' watched by millions.

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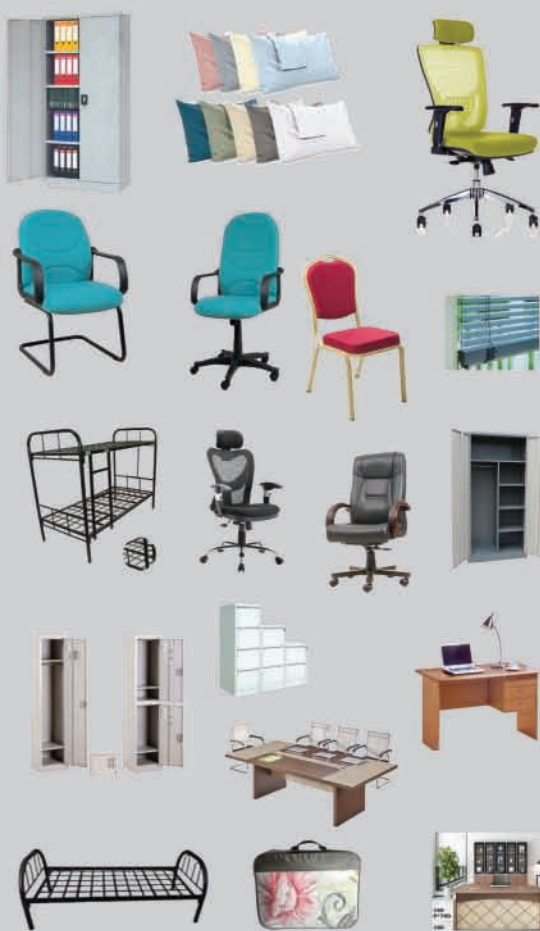
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REACH OUT TO RESCUE

You can adopt a pet, provide a foster home or donate cash or in kind for abandoned pets

Little Seren, a frisky puppy, was recently rescued from a life on the streets in MSQ...Last month, she was adopted by a loving family in Muscat. One year old Lola, another puppy, was rescued from street life in Sohar last year. She went straight into a foster home and was adopted by a family in March. Malcolm, a one year old dog, was rescued with the remainder of his pack from near the airport, some of them seriously injured, until he was adopted by a compassionate man a few weeks ago.

Given the current uncertain situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with expatriate families leaving Oman for good - often in a hurry - innocent pets are being left stranded or abandoned near residential areas or commercial establishments by their owners. While many citizens and residents in Oman feel for these animals, who often are left to suffer hunger and disease, or attacks from strays as well as road accidents, only a few have been coming forward to lend a helping hand.

There are a few organisations toiling for the welfare of abandoned pets and other animals in Oman by way of providing them with medical treatment as well as foster homes. However, with the rising number of cases of abandoned pets, most animal shelters and foster homes are full to capacity. In such a scenario there is a clarion call for people in Oman to reach out to rescue as well as provide care to these hapless pets.

What you can do

When you see an abandoned or injured pet in the streets, ignoring them and walking away is not the ideal solution. It is the duty of every citizen and resident to reach out to these animals to bring them to care giving individuals or organisations, say the animal welfare outfits in Oman which are constantly seeking donations and volunteers to join in this noble task.

As of now, a large number of individuals are providing care or foster homes to abandoned pets in their personal capacity, even taking them to veterinarian centres and paying for their treatment and food. There are also a few registered as well as unregistered groups which are also providing care in a more organised fashion. These include Omani Paws, Muscat Dog Adoption, Tiger by the Tail (Sohar), The Wave Cats & Dogs

Rescue, Muscat Animal Rescue Team and many more groups popularised on social media, all of which are either providing rescued animals with foster homes in Oman or making arrangements to send them to willing individuals/homes in Europe, USA, UK and other countries. One can either attempt to rescue the pet and take it to a veterinarian or call up any of these organisations to intervene to do the needful.

Visiting a veterinarian

Before you take an injured animal to a private veterinary hospital for treatment, be willing to assume financial responsibility for the animal. Good care for animals is not cheap in any country. Anyone who is committed to trying to save injured animals should discuss these issues in advance with the veterinarian. Veterinarians can also provide information/guidance about animal shelters and rescue organisations, in case you do want to hand over the pet and not take it to your own home.

Rescue organisations

Omani Paws Rescue, an all-volunteer, fos-

ter-based rescue organisation in Muscat, focused on improving the lives of stray cats and dogs in Muscat, has a diverse group of dedicated volunteers to help animals in need in many ways. They trap, neuter and release cats and dogs, rescue injured, sick or abandoned cats and dogs and provide full medical rehabilitation, vaccinations and preventatives, they foster cats and dogs, and raise awareness about the plight of the voiceless animals by encouraging adults and children to interact with them, besides arranging and assisting for import/export of companion pets.

Omani Paws calls on individuals to help by either being a volunteer or provide financial assistance via various outlets including those at Mackenzies at The Wave, My Cupcake in Qurum, Al Qurum Vet and Capital Vet. One can also donate household items, furniture, clothing, accessories, or anything else which can go towards raising funds for the organisation, or provide a foster home or adopt an abandoned pet.

Muscat Dog Adoption says it had effected a total of 53 successful adoptions in 2020 with some of the rescued dogs going

to homes abroad in the UK, USA and the Netherlands. Three were also sent to adoption groups in the US while many others were handed over to families willing to adopt pets in Oman till March 2021./

MDA says, if you are not in a position to adopt a dog why not sponsor one. It can make a great present for someone special. You can make a one-off donation or a regular donation and help to make life easier for one of our dogs. Donations are also accepted in the form of bedding (blankets and quilts), dog food (wet and dry), dog treats, collars, leads and toys. MDA volunteers regularly hold car boot sales and table top sales to raise money towards this end. Adult volunteers are also needed to help with socialising the dogs, walking them and giving them some attention.

The Wave Cats & Dogs Rescue (TWCDR), which started with just three volunteers, has gone from strength to strength, and now boasts of 55 committed volunteers. In partnership with Al Mouj Muscat, they work tirelessly managing the stray cats and dogs within the community, compassionately and humanely.

The TWCDR calls on pet owners at The Wave to:

- Look after your own pets – ensure they are registered, neutered and chipped
- Don't feed stray cats and dogs
- Don't tamper with the feeding stations that are discretely located within the community
- Don't harm or hurt any stray, particularly those that have a collar and are tagged
- Donations are also sought towards the running expenses which includes vet bills, food and lodging for the animals. The group calls on residents to support The Wave Cats & Dogs Rescue's weekly yard sale held at Al Mouj Muscat, outside the Project Office, by buying/donating unwanted items or by donating pet food (dry and wet, tinned cat and dog food).



Guidelines for helping abandoned pets

When you see an abandoned/lost pet that needs help to find its owner or treatment for injury/disease:

- Cautiously approach the animal. Consider both yours and the animal's safety.
- Call your local animal control facility immediately. You can report the animal, and if the

owners are looking for the pet you found, ease their worries. If possible, stay until help arrives.

- If the animal is calm, or even friendly, try to lure him or her into your car. Keep the animal there until help arrives.
- Try to check the animal for a collar with an ID tag. This will speed up the process of

determining whether or not this pet was abandoned on purpose or accidentally lost.

- Reach out to your local shelter, vet clinic, or humane society. Police departments and rescue groups are also helpful resources when reporting an abandoned pet.
- If you decide to keep a pet whose owner cannot be located, that's a

wonderful gesture but be prepared to hand over the pet to the genuine owner after publicising his/her presence with you in some manner. Prepare yourself and your family for the possibility of the original owner turning up and parting with the pet at some point.

- If the dog/cat is injured or ill or showing signs of aggressiveness,

it is better to stay near and call the authorities, so they can come and collect it. If you want to give it first aid, it is important that you know how to handle it to avoid hurting it as well as to avoid the animal hurting you in defence.

- A dog tag usually carries the name of the animal and a telephone number. If the number is up to date, with a little luck the

owner will answer you straight away and you may be able to tell them you have found their dog. Some modern dog tags have a QR code to provide access to all the information the owner of the dog has left for it to be located. Some pets have an implanted chip in the neck which can be scanned at veterinarian centres to get information about the pet's owner.

Matsuyama seizes Masters lead

AUGUSTA MASTERS

Augusta, US - Hideki Matsuyama unleashed an incredible back-nine shotmaking display to seize a four-stroke lead after Saturday's third round of the Masters, putting the Japanese star on the brink of a historic triumph at Augusta National.

Matsuyama, trying to become the first Japanese man to win a major title, fired a seven-under par 65, his career-low 18-hole Masters total and the first bogey-free round of the week, to stand on 11-under 205 after 54 holes. "It will be a new experience for me being a leader going into the final round of a major," Matsuyama said. "I guess I'll relax as best I can and do my best tomorrow."

England's Justin Rose, Australian Marc Leishman and Americans Xander Schauffele and Will Zalatoris shared second on 209.

Rose, the 2013 US Open champion and a two-time Masters runner-up who led by one when the day began, needed a long par putt at 18 to salvage a second consecutive level par 72.

"I didn't play well enough today, simple as that," Rose said.

"Of course I would have liked to have stayed with it a little better. To have a shot tomorrow, I'm delighted."

Matsuyama adapted as lightning-fast Augusta National was softened by rain, taking full advantage by going six-under in a seven-hole stretch of the back nine.

After a 78-minute storm delay, swirling winds vanished and the wet course was receptive. However, slowed greens became tricky to read - except by Matsuyama.

"After the horn blew for the restart, I hit every shot exactly the way I wanted," Matsuyama said through a translator.

The 29 year old from Sendai, who had already birdied the par-four seventh hole, sank ten-foot birdie putts at the par-four 11th and par-three 12th holes.

Matsuyama dropped his approach at the par-five 15th six



Japan's Hideki Matsuyama in action during the third round of the Augusta Masters on Saturday

feet from the hole and made the eagle putt to seize the outright lead.

Matsuyama then landed his tee shot inches from the cup and

tapped in for birdie at the par-three 16th and holed a six footer for birdie at the 17th to reach 11-under with a three-shot lead. World No 25 Matsuyama

found a fairway bunker at the 18th, then sailed a seven-iron 30 yards over the green.

With an uncanny touch, he rolled a chip to two feet and

tapped in to complete an epic round.

There was no secret Matsuyama found during the break. "I spent the hour just

sitting in my car looking at my cell phone," he said.

Matsuyama's best prior 18-hole Masters score was a 66 in the final round in 2015. He

finished fifth, his best showing so far at the event.

Japan's Tsubasa Kajitani won the Augusta National Women's Amateur last Saturday and Matsuyama said that she was an inspiration to him this week.

"What she did was fantastic," he said. "I can follow in her shoes and make Japan proud."

Matsuyama, who hasn't won since the 2017 Akron WGC event, has seven top-ten finishes in majors, including a 2017 US Open runner-up effort.

The only Asian man to win a major golf title was South Korea's Yang Yong-eun at the 2009 PGA Championship.

Of the past 30 Masters champions, 25 of them have come from the final pairing, which will see Matsuyama joined by Schauffele.

Schauffele sank a long eagle putt at 15 after making birdies at the course's other three par-five holes in a round of 68.

Zalatoris, trying to become the first player to win his Masters debut since Fuzzy Zoeller in 1979, fired a 71 while Leishman shot 70.

Canada's Corey Connors electrified the crowd with a hole-in-one at the 180-yard par-three sixth on his way to a 68 to stand sixth on 210.

It was the second ace of this year's Masters. England's Tommy Fleetwood aced the par-three 16th on Thursday for the first.

Winner gets \$2.07mn

Augusta National announced prize money figures on Saturday with the same totals as the past two years, the winner taking home US\$2.07mn from a total purse of US\$11.5mn.

Three-time major winner Jordan Spieth, who snapped a four-year win drought last week in San Antonio, struggled to a 72 to stand six off the pace.

Justin Thomas, who would become world No 1 with a victory, was undone by a triple bogey at the par-five 13th and shot 75 to stand ten shots adrift. AFP

Djokovic, Nadal begin road to Roland Garros in Monte Carlo

MONTE CARLO MASTERS

Monaco - Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal begin their clay court seasons in Monte Carlo this week, seeded to meet in the final which would likely be a dress rehearsal for another title showdown at Roland Garros in June.

Djokovic and Nadal haven't played since the delayed Australian Open in February where the world No 1 Serb claimed his ninth Melbourne title and 18th career major.

He has also since surpassed Roger Federer's record for weeks at No 1 and will start a 316th week on top of the world from Monday.

Djokovic is a two-time champion in Monte Carlo but has not got beyond the quarterfinals since his most recent title in 2015.

Nadal, who won a 13th Roland Garros title and record-equalling 20th Grand Slam by beating Djokovic in the Paris final in October, is chasing a 12th triumph in Monte Carlo.

There are concerns over the lingering back problem Nadal is carrying ahead of a gruelling clay court season which peaks at the French Open from May 30.

Nadal has 71-5 record in Monte Carlo where he has fallen



A file photo of Rafael Nadal (left) and Novak Djokovic after a match at Monte Carlo

short of the quarterfinals just once - on his debut in 2003 as a 16 year old.

Since the Australian Open, Nadal has been replaced as world number two by Russia's Daniil Medvedev.

The Australian Open runner-up was the first player outside the 'Big Four' of Djokovic, Nadal, Roger Federer and Andy Murray to reach No 2 in the world since Australia's Lleyton Hewitt in July 2005.

However, he is wary of his chances on clay. His ten career titles have all come on hard courts while he has never won a match at Roland Garros in four visits.

"Maybe in 2050 I'll manage to

get past the first round at Roland Garros," the mercurial Russian joked. Missing from the Monte Carlo line-up is Roger Federer who last played in the Principality in 2016 and has never won the tournament.

Federer, who will be 40 in August, only returned to the tour in Qatar in February after 13 months on the sidelines to recover from two knee surgeries.

The veteran Swiss plans to make his 2021 clay court bow in Madrid in the first week of May.

Also missing is world No 4 Dominic Thiem who, like Djokovic, Nadal and Federer, skipped the Miami Masters recently as he was 'not at 100%'.

The two-time runner-up to Nadal at Roland Garros opted instead to stay in Austria to practice on clay.

The 2020 Monte Carlo Masters was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic while this year's event will be behind closed doors.

Top seed Djokovic faces a tough start in Monte Carlo. After an opening round bye, he will face in-form teenager Jannik Sinner if the Italian gets past Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas.

Nadal and Medvedev are in the opposite half of the draw.

AFP

Richardson becomes sixth-fastest ever in women's 100m

Miami, US - American Sha'Carri Richardson tied the ninth-fastest women's 100m time in history on Saturday, clocking 10.72sec at the Miramar Invitational in Florida.

The 21 year old became the sixth-fastest woman ever as she signalled her status as a potential challenger to Jamaicans Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Elaine Thompson - the reigning world and Olympic champions - at the Tokyo Games.

Richardson's previous career best was 10.75, set on June 8, 2019 in the prestigious NCAA collegiate championships in Austin, Texas, where she broke the world junior record established in 1977 by German Marlies Gohr. That time had put her, at 19, among the ten fastest women in the world, tied with American Kerron Stewart.

With Saturday's time, posted in a wind of 1.6m/sec, only Florence Griffith Joyner, Carmelita Jeter, Marion Jones, Fraser-Pryce and Thompson have gone faster.

Griffith Joyner, who died in 1998 at the age of 38, holds the three best times in history of 10.49, 10.61 and 10.62. Jeter has run a 10.64, Jones 10.65



Sha'Carri Richardson

and both Fraser-Pryce and Thompson have run 10.70.

It's been 25 years since the last US Olympic gold medalist in the women's 100m. Richardson looks like the sprinter who can end that drought.

"I am who y'all think I am, and I am who I say I am," Richardson said on the track, moments after her easy win, adding later, "My season is going to be unbelievable. Something that I haven't been expecting. Something the world hasn't been expecting. It's time."

Agencies



IPL 2021



QUOTE OF THE DAY

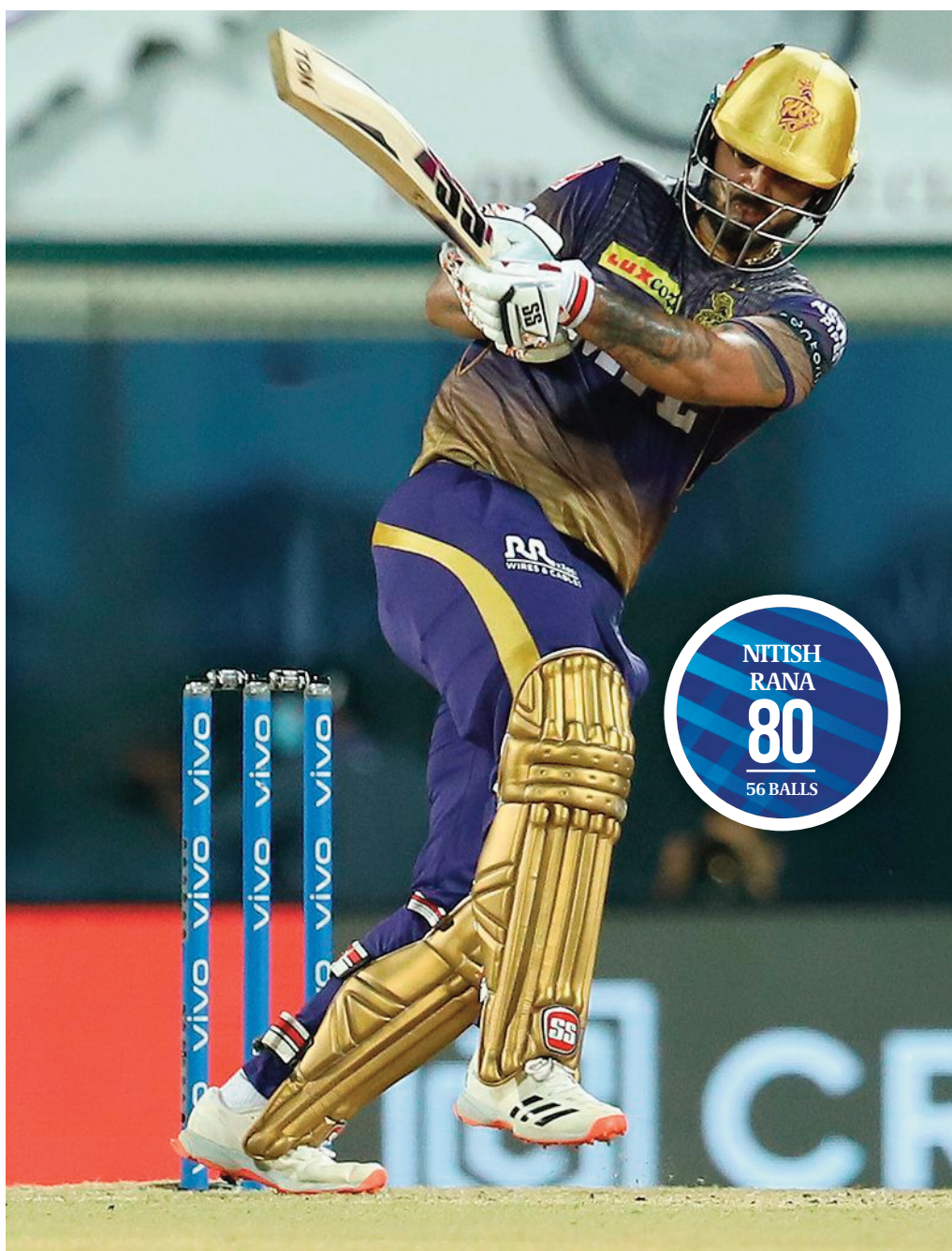
I want to break the record for most sixes in an IPL match

Jos Buttler
Rajasthan batsman on what he is looking forward in IPL 2021



Rana: The shining knight

Opener blasts 80 as Kolkata begin their 2021 IPL campaign on a winning note



NITISH RANA
80
56 BALLS

Nitish Rana of Kolkata Knight Riders plays a shot during his knock of 80 against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Sunday

KOLKATA VS HYDERABAD

Chennai, India - The Kolkata Knight Riders managed the first successful defence in the 2021 IPL despite a blip towards the end of their innings against the Sunrisers Hyderabad on Sunday. They managed just 42 in their last five overs, but the 145 for one in the first 15 proved to be good enough on a dry pitch, which their bowlers exploited.

Eighty-or-nothing Nitish Rana had that eighty night and the selfless Rahul Tripathi scored an attacking 50. Defending, the Knight Riders' fast bowlers produced the big wickets and their spinners stifled the Hyderabad batsmen to seal the game.

After Prasidh Krishna got David Warner early, Jonny Bairstow revived the Sunrisers chase with a 40-ball 55, but Pat Cummins got him out in the 13th over to leave Manish Pandey with a tall ask of getting 86 off the last seven. Pandey couldn't despite an Abdul Samad cameo.

Sunrisers err, Kolkata cash in

On Sunday, Sunrisers' Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Sandeep Sharma got off to an error-filled start. While Shubman Gill struggled early to bat at T20 pace, Rana made full use of the width provided by both the new-ball bowlers. By the time Gill was out despite seemingly having picked a Rashid Khan wrong'un, Kolkata still had 53 in seven overs.

Tripathi, Rana punish Sunrisers

As often, Tripathi came out oozing intent. The second ball he faced, he went against the turn to hit Mohammad Nabi for a six over long-off. While Rashid kept things quiet at his end, Rana and Tripathi kept attacking the others. They batted together for eight overs; and took the team to 145 for one in 15 overs.

Late fightback from Hyderabad

In the 16th over, Tripathi fell trying to hit his third six, but it seemed like the perfect time for Andre Russell to walk in. He announced himself with a four first ball, but Rashid got him out in his customary one over at the death. Both Rana and Eoin Morgan fell to the off-spin of Nabi in the 18th over, but Dinesh Karthik, arrested the slide with a nine-ball 22 to help the team reach 187.

Prasidh Krishna dents the chase

Harbhajan Singh, playing his first IPL match since the 2019 final, almost had Warner the first ball he bowled to him but Cummins dropped him at point. However, in the next over, Prasidh Krishna produced a beauty angling across Warner, getting the edge through to Karthik. With the left-hand batsman gone, the Knight Riders switched immediately to the left-arm spin of Shakib al Hasan with

SCOREBOARD

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

N. Rana	c Shankar b Nabi	80 (56)
S. Gill	b Rashid	15 (13)
R. Tripathi	c Saha b Natarajan	53 (29)
A. Russell	c Pandey b Rashid	5 (5)
E. Morgan	c Samad b Nabi	2 (3)
D. Karthik	not out	22 (9)
Shakib al Hasan	c Samad b Kumar	3 (5)
Extras	(w 7)	7

TOTAL: 187 for six in 20 overs

Fall of wickets: 1-53, 2-146, 3-157, 4-160, 5-160, 6-187

Bowling: B. Kumar 4-0-45-1, S. Sharma 3-0-35-0, T. Natarajan 4-0-37-1, M. Nabi 4-0-32-2, Rashid Khan 4-0-24-2, V. Shankar 1-0-14-0

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

W. Saha	b Shakib al Hasan	7 (6)
D. Warner	c Karthik b Krishna	3 (4)
M. Pandey	not out	61 (44)
J. Bairstow	c Rana b Cummins	55 (40)
M. Nabi	c Morgan b Krishna	14 (11)
V. Shankar	c Morgan b Russell	11 (7)
A. Samad	not out	19 (8)
Extras	(b 1, lb 1, w 5)	7

TOTAL: 177 for five in 20 overs

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-10, 3-102, 4-131, 5-150

Bowling: Harbhajan Singh 1-0-8-0, P. Krishna 4-0-35-2, Shakib al Hasan 4-0-34-1, P. Cummins 4-0-30-1, A. Russell 3-0-32-1, V. Chakravarthy 4-0-36-0

TODAY'S MATCH

MUMBAI, 6PM



RAJASTHAN ROYALS

PUNJAB KINGS

POINTS TABLE

TEAMS	P	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
DC	1	1	0	0	2	+0.779
KKR	1	1	0	0	2	+0.500
RCB	1	1	0	0	2	+0.050
MI	1	0	1	0	0	-0.050
SRH	1	0	1	0	0	-0.500
CSK	1	0	1	0	0	-0.779
PBKS	0	0	0	0	0	0
RR	0	0	0	0	0	0

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

CSK: Chennai Super Kings
RCB: Royal Challengers Bangalore
DC: Delhi Capitals
KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders
PBKS: Kings XI Punjab
MI: Mumbai Indians
RR: Rajasthan Royals
SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad

immediate results, getting rid of Wriddhiman Saha first ball of the third over. The Sunrisers were ten for two in the third over.

Bairstow keeps hopes alive

With Pandey playing more of an anchor role in the chase, it was down to Bairstow to prevent being choked out by the Knight Riders' spinners; Harbhajan, Shakib and Varun Chakravarthy. He brought up his 50 in 32 balls, taking the Sunrisers to 100 for two at the end of the 12th over.

Pandey was 34 off 27 at the other end.

Cummins starts the final slide

Morgan went to his strike bowler Cummins in the 13th, and Bairstow hit the short and wide ball straight to the man at backward point. The squeeze was on after that, and in Cummins, Chakravarthy, Shakib and Krishna, Kolkata had too much quality at the end for a suspect Sunrisers middle order. Cricinfo



Kumar Sangakkara (R) with Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson

Focus on the IPL, says Sangakkara to India's World Cup hopefuls

Chennai, India - With the T20 World Cup less than five months away, Rajasthan Royals team director and former Sri Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara feels India hopefuls, Sanju Samson and Rahul Tewatia, need to focus on their performances in the IPL to book their spot for the tournament.

Samson's heroics at the IPL last season earned him a place in the India side for the T20Is against Australia, but he made just 48 runs in three games on the tour and was then left out for the series against England. Tewatia was called up for the England T20Is but he did not get a game.

Sangakkara had some advice for the two, who, according to him, have got 'great cricketing sense', on how to deal with the pressure and expectations.

"I think the pressure is always there," Sangakkara said. "You can try and forget about it but the reality is that expectations is

always there. You have various coping mechanism and techniques to deal with them. It's important to have those grand ambitions of regularly playing international cricket.

"I think Sanju and Rahul are absolutely capable of being regulars, not just that but great outstanding performers on the international stage. They've got amazing ability, great cricketing sense and both of them over the years have progressed. Sanju has been a young batting superstar for quite a while on the Indian scene and is always talked about.

"I think the real key is the process to get to the ambition, take it match by match in the IPL, and keep your focus on the IPL. Each game you play each innings and that's how you break that process down. It is important that both of them have the freedom and trust of the team to express themselves - to be Sanju Samson and Rahul Tewatia."

Cricinfo

Early start gives team bowling first an advantage, says Dhoni

Mumbai, India - Chennai Super Kings' skipper MS Dhoni has hinted at being displeased with 7.30pm (6pm, Oman time) starts for IPL games in India. His reason: when you start at 8pm, (6.30pm, Oman time) the dew has already set in, thus not giving the chasing side any real advantage. However, if you start at 7.30pm, Dhoni said one team gets a good 30 to 40 minutes of absolutely dry conditions, which can make all the difference.

Dhoni was speaking to host broadcaster Star Sports after his side failed to defend 188 against the Delhi Capitals in dewy conditions on Saturday.

He said the pitch was tacky to start off with, making batting really difficult when they started their innings, but once the dew set in, the Wankhede Stadium track became the batting beauty it is known to be.

"You have to look ahead," Dhoni said, when asked if he was happy with the recovery from a tough start.

"Especially when you have dew in your mind and you are batting first, you want to get those extra 10-15 runs - that was normally in 8pm start games.

"[Now the] 7.30 start means the opposition will have at least half an hour when there will be very little amount of dew on the field, which means it will not come on as nicely as it will in the



Chennai Super Kings skipper and wicketkeeper MS Dhoni (R) watches as Delhi Capitals' Prithvi Shaw play a shot during their match on Saturday

second innings. So you have to score those 15-20 extra runs to make it even, and after that also you have to get early wickets to make a big mark on the game."

The Super Kings managed less than a run-a-ball in their powerplay, scoring 33 for two in that period after being put in to bat.

A half-century from Suresh Raina, and some lofty hits from Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran in particular late in the innings though helped them surge to 188 for seven.

"Dew was one factor that was playing on our minds right from the start," Dhoni said. "That is the reason why we wanted to get as many runs as possible. Looking at the wicket,

our batters did a very good job to reach 188 because the first few overs the wicket was a bit tacky, till the dew set in, which was a good 45 to 50 minutes after the start of the game.

"If we keep getting dew consistently, then definitely 200 is something all the sides will have in mind [as a target]. But as I said the first half an hour is different, that's where you have to get off to a good start."

Dhoni did credit the Capitals bowlers for bowling well, but that advantage in the first half an hour is something even the Capitals batsman Shikhar Dhawan acknowledged.

The IPL switched from 8pm starts in India to half an earlier during the playoffs in 2019.

When the league was forced to move to the UAE in 2020 due to the pandemic, the matches began at 7.30pm IST.

Now, for this season, the early starts have been persisted with. The slow over rates during the competition have been a matter of concern for the organisers, with matches starting at 8pm regularly ending well past midnight.

Dhoni fined for slow over rate

MS Dhoni, the Chennai Super Kings captain, has been penalised after his team maintained a slow over rate in their IPL 2021 season opener against the Delhi Capitals in Mumbai on Saturday.

According to an IPL statement, Dhoni was fined US\$ 16,000 approx., given this was the Super Kings' first offence in this edition under the tournament's new code of conduct relating to minimum over rate offences.

In a bid to clampdown on slow over rates, the IPL made it mandatory for bowling teams to deliver their 20 overs within the stipulated 90 minutes (including strategic time-outs) for this season. "The minimum over rate to be achieved in IPL matches shall be 14.11 overs per hour (ignoring the time taken by time-outs)," the IPL had said in the updated playing conditions on March 30.

Cricinfo

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Real win El Clasico to go top of La Liga

SPANISH LEAGUE

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid climbed to the top of La Liga on Saturday after Karim Benzema's flicked finish helped them claim a thrilling 2-1 victory over Barcelona in a wild *El Clasico* at Valdebebas.

Benzema's superb piece of skill and a deflected Toni Kroos free-kick put Madrid in charge and while Oscar Mingueza pulled one back for Barca, they fell to defeat in what could be Lionel Messi's final appearance in this fixture.

Victory means Real Madrid go level on points with Atletico, with the top three now separated by a single point. Atletico, without the injured Luis Suarez, face Real Betis on Sunday night.

But Real Madrid now own the better head-to-head against both of their rivals while Barcelona and Atletico still have to play each other at Camp Nou in the run-in.

With Atletico stumbling and both Barca and Real Madrid hitting their stride, this game looked set to define, if not the title, then who would become favourites to be crowned champions in May.

The result was a riveting contest at a rain-soaked Alfredo di Stefano stadium - certainly one of the most exciting *Clasicos* in years - that saw both teams squander numerous chances, several efforts come back off the woodwork and Casemiro sent off in extra time.

With the last play of the game, Barcelona substitute Ilaix



Real Madrid's Karim Benzema celebrates after scoring during the El Clasico match against Barcelona on Saturday

Moriba rattled Real Madrid's crossbar.

"We're still in it," said Barca coach Ronald Koeman. "We've lost a game against a team who is also fighting for the league but we have eight game left and we will fight to the end."

Casemiro's red card had also given Messi a free-kick and the chance for a dramatic equaliser but instead the Argentinian made it seven games now without a goal against Real Madrid, with many wondering if his 45th *Clasico* will be his last.

Messi might yet turn the tide in the eight games still remaining but there is no doubt Madrid are in the groove after backing up beating Liverpool 3-1 on Tuesday with another crucial victory.

They can finish the job in the Champions League at Anfield next week although Zinedine Zidane admitted afterwards his players are 'physically at their limit'.

"It was a difficult game, the first half was ours, but we suffered in the second," said Zidane. "We deserved the victory, because we had a lot of chances to score the third."

A breathless first half began with chances for both sides as Marc-Andre ter Stegen's sloppy clearance almost gave Benzema a clear run at goal before Messi slipped in Jordi Alba but the cross was intercepted by Thibaut Courtois.

Real Madrid's opener came after a superb counter-attack

from Barcelona, Messi going down too easily on the edge of the area, with Madrid pouring forward on the break.

Fede Valverde powered through midfield and fed wide to Lucas Vazquez, whose cross was expertly flicked inside the near post by Benzema.

The goal shook Barca, who were unable to restrain the speed of Madrid and particularly Vinicius Junior on the break.

Vinicius was brought down by Ronald Araujo on the edge of the area and Kroos' free-kick cannoned off the back off Sergino Dest and in, evading the efforts of Alba to head away on the line. Koeman brought Antoine Griezmann on for Dest but as the rain poured down, Madrid

poured forward. Kroos and Benzema both could have scored a third and they were punished for failing to capitalise.

Griezmann jumped over Alba's cross and as the ball skidded through, Mingueza did well to shin it into the net.

Araujo deflected Vinicius' cross onto his own post and Alba was denied by Courtois. Again, Madrid tore away, again they missed the chance, Vinicius running onto Luka Modric's pass but opting not to shoot, allowing Araujo to clear.

With 20 minutes left, Zidane took off Benzema, Vinicius and Kroos.

Referee Gil Manzano had to replace his equipment because of the rain. Messi changed his shirt for a dry one.

Barcelona wanted a late penalty when Ferland Mendy clipped Martin Braithwaite with his arm but the appeal was optimistic.

Casemiro was sent off in the 90th minute for a late challenge on Mingueza, that gave Messi a free-kick on the edge of the area but Courtois saved.

With Ter Stegen up and almost the last kick of the game, Ilaix rattled the crossbar. Madrid survived.

OTHER RESULTS

Sunday: Villarreal 1 Osasuna 2, Valencia 2 Real Sociedad 2.

Saturday: Getafe 0 Cadiz 1, Athletic Bilbao 0 Alaves 0, Eibar 0 Levante 1.

AFP



Man Utd's Edinson Cavani celebrates after scoring against Tottenham

United sink Spurs, West Ham prevail

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Manchester United staged a superb fightback to shatter Tottenham's top-four bid with a 3-1 win, while West Ham climbed to fourth place in the English Premier League as the revitalised Jesse Lingard inspired a 3-2 victory against Leicester on Sunday.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side trailed to Son Heung-min's first half strike, but United scored three times after the break through Fred, Edinson Cavani and Mason Greenwood.

Second-placed United were denied a first half opener when Cavani's strike was controversially ruled out by referee Chris Kavanagh after Scott McTominay's clash with Son in the build-up. Kavanagh consulted the pitchside monitor and decided McTominay's flailing arm, which made the slightest contact with Son's face, was worthy of a foul despite his theatrical fall.

Son put Tottenham ahead in the 40th minute as the South Korean slotted home from close range after Harry Kane and Lucas Moura carved open the United defence.

But United deservedly equalised in the 57th minute when Paul Pogba played in

Cavani, whose shot was saved by Hugo Lloris, with Brazilian midfielder Fred on hand to slam in his first league goal since 2018.

In the 79th minute, Cavani netted as the Uruguay striker dived to meet Mason Greenwood's cross with a superb header. Greenwood lashed in the third in stoppage time and United are now 11 points behind leaders Man City with a game in hand.

At the London Stadium, Lingard struck twice in the first half to maintain his remarkable form since joining West Ham on loan from Manchester United in January.

The 28 year old has been reborn with West Ham, scoring eight times in nine appearances.

Jarrod Bowen scored West Ham's third after half-time as David Moyes' side moved one point ahead of fifth-placed Chelsea.

Newcastle took a big step towards securing their survival with a 2-1 win against Burnley.

Earlier on Saturday night, Kai Havertz and Christian Pulisic starred in Chelsea's 4-1 win at Crystal Palace on Saturday.

OTHER RESULTS

SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP

Sunday: Rangers 2 Hibernian 1.

AFP

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Mbappe strikes as PSG keep pressure on Lille

FRENCH LEAGUE

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe's goal set Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on their way to a 4-1 win at Strasbourg on Saturday as Mauricio Pochettino's side moved back to within three points of leaders Lille in the Ligue 1 title race.

Pablo Sarabia and Moise Kean also scored in the first half while Leandro Paredes netted the fourth from a free-kick as PSG made short work of a trip to Alsace in between the two legs of their Champions League quarterfinal tie against Bayern Munich.

Youngster Moise Sahi pulled a goal back for Strasbourg but the defending champions bounced back from losing at home to Lille last weekend and closed the gap on the leaders who beat 2-0 at Metz on Friday.

"It's an important victory for us because the three points put us in the race for the title, but it's not about pressure or being anxious," former Tottenham Hotspur boss Pochettino told Canal Plus.

"Today we showed real fight



PSG's Kylian Mbappe reacts during the match against Strasbourg

all together. We want to be more consistent but we are fighting in three massive competitions. The team showed massive faith and belief and today was a very good game for us."

Mbappe had netted twice in PSG's stunning 3-2 win away to Bayern on Wednesday which gave them the upper hand before the return-leg on Tuesday.

Pochettino made seven changes to his team from the match in Germany, with Neymar one of the players dropping out as he began a two-game domestic ban following his red card against Lille. Captain Marquinhos also missed out after coming off injured in midweek, but Mbappe kept his place and played 88 minutes.

"The best way for Kylian to be ready is to play. If he feels something is wrong he will be the first one to stop," said Pochettino, dismissing suggestions he might have rested the World Cup-winning forward.

"We would not take a risk with any player. We are all professional and we always want to take the best decision for the team. That is football. We can't make everyone happy but Kylian is a player who is happy when he is on the pitch."

OTHER RESULTS

Sunday: Rennes 1 Nantes 0, Brest 1 Nimes 1, Lens 4 Lorient 1, Nice 0 Reims 0, Saint-Etienne 4 Bordeaux 1, Monaco 3 Dijon 0.

Saturday: Montpellier 3 Marseille 3.

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Inter go 11 clear

Milan, Italy - Matteo Darmian was the unlikely hero as Inter Milan beat Cagliari 1-0 on Sunday to extend their Serie A lead to 11 points.

The former Manchester United full-back tapped home

Achraf Hakimi's cross with 14 minutes remaining to seal an 11th successive victory.

Antonio Conte's side now require 16 points from eight games to win their first league title since 2009-10.

AC Milan are second, with Juventus - who have won the past nine titles - one point behind them after a 3-1 win over Genoa on Sunday.

Dejan Kulusevski gave Andrea Pirlo's side the lead with a clever finish and Alvaro Morata made it 2-0 after Cristiano Ronaldo hit the post. Gianluca Scamacca headed in for Genoa but Weston McKennie slotted home to make the game safe.

OTHER RESULTS

Sunday: Hellas Verona 0 Lazio 1, Sampdoria 0 Napoli 2.

Saturday: Parma 1 AC Milan 3, Udinese 0 Torino 1.

GERMAN LEAGUE

Sunday: Schalke 1 Augsburg 0. **Saturday:** Werder Bremen 1 RB Leipzig 4, VfB Stuttgart 2 Borussia Dortmund 3.

AFP

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