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Oman's youth in focus at Expo 2020

Sayyid Asaad presides over National Day celebrations at Expo 2020

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, led Oman's delegation taking part in the cel-

ebrations of the 51st National Day at Oman Pavilion in Expo 2020 Dubai.

At the event, Sayyid Asaad and his accompanying delegation received Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence and Commissioner General of Expo 2020 Dubai.

The ceremony, held at Al Wasl Plaza at the expo, began with raising the Omani flag. A military band of the Royal Guard of Oman and Royal Cavalry performed at the concert square of the expo that attracted a sizeable number of participants and visitors to Expo 2020.

Sayyid Asaad said in a speech on the occasion, read by Qais

Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, that Oman's participation in the international event stems from the deep-rooted relations between the two countries.

"Through participation in this major global event, the sultanate presents to visitors to Oman's pavilion the aspirations of government institutions and private establishments, their innovations and the contributions of Omani youth, considered the mainstay of the nation's future.

"We are proud that the Omani Pavilion embodied the spirit and capabilities of young people, as its organisation, management and development were done 100

per cent by young Omanis," Sayyid Asaad said.

He added that Oman Pavilion will take visitors on an inspiring journey that highlights the making of the future and tells the contemporary story of the sultanate as well as showcases the opportunities and bright future envisaged in the Oman Vision 2040.

On his part, Sheikh Nahyan, said in his speech, "Today, at Expo 2020 Dubai, we celebrate the National Day of Oman. I convey my congratulations to the sultanate, the government and the people on the occasion of the 51st National Day, wishing His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people continued progress."

Existing Oman-UAE relations reviewed



Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, met Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the UAE, at the Leadership Pavilion in Expo 2020 Dubai.

The two sides reviewed relations between Oman and UAE, as well as aspects of existing cooperation in several fields to serve the joint interests of the two brotherly countries and peoples.

NEWS BRIEFS

SHURA DISCUSSES STATE BUDGET WITH FM

Muscat - The Majlis A'Shura discussed the draft budget of the state for the fiscal year 2022 with H E Sultan Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, on Sunday.

The discussions, held behind closed doors, covered items of the draft budget, including estimates of general revenues and expenditure, and the management of public debt. These also covered subsidy policies, the position of government investments, economic diversification programmes, foreign direct investments and privatisation programmes.

The discussions were held under the chairmanship of H E Khalid Hilal al Ma'awali, Chairman of Majlis A'Shura.

Muscat 8th best city to relocate

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat is among the top ten cities in the world ideal for relocation, according to a new international study on the best cities to relocate.

Conducted by the British finance site Money, 84 cities around the world are ranked in its *Relocation Report*, which was released last week.

The study analysed factors that are often taken into consideration when deciding where to relocate, including house prices, living costs, average salary, weather conditions, number of restaurants and green spaces, Internet speed and life expectancy.

Among the top ten, six are American cities while three are from the GCC.

Austin, USA, with a Relocation Score of 6.02/10 is the best city in the world to relocate. Austin has the third-best Internet speed among the cities in the ranking at 87.5 Mbps. Additionally, the city scores high in terms of average

British finance site Money ranks 84 cities around the world in its *Relocation Report*

- 1 Austin
- 2 Tokyo
- 3 Charleston
- 4 Dubai
- 5 Los Angeles
- 6 Abu Dhabi
- 7 Miami
- 8 Muscat
- 9 San Francisco
- 10 Las Vegas



temperature (20.4°C), and average monthly salaries at £3,984.

Tokyo, Japan with a score of 5.98/10, is the second-highest scoring city. It is the largest city in the world with a population of over 37mn people, suggesting its mass appeal. Tokyo scores well for its number of restaurants and green spaces, besides having the

best average life expectancy with residents living to 84.

Charleston, USA, with a score of 5.68/10, is the third best city to relocate. With average Internet speed of 106.5Mbps, it is by far the fastest in any city on the list. Additionally Charleston has a high-ranking average monthly salary of £3,147.

Charleston is followed by Dubai (UAE) in fourth, Los Angeles (USA) in fifth, Abu Dhabi (UAE) sixth, Miami (USA) seventh, Muscat (Oman) eighth, San Francisco (USA) ninth and Las Vegas (USA) in tenth spot.

GCC cities also rank among the top five when it comes to weather conditions, with Muscat

placed fifth overall. Dubai is on the top and is followed by Abu Dhabi, Manama and Doha.

The three most expensive cities to relocate are in Switzerland - Basel, Zurich and Lausanne.

The annual cost of living in Basel is £53,748, which is over £25,000 more a year than the average annual living cost of Money's study - £28,716.

Istanbul in Turkey is the most affordable place to relocate where average annual living cost is only £12,753. This is £40,995 less a year than Basel, and £15,963 less than the average.

Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, make up the top three.

The GCC cities of Doha, Abu Dhabi and Dubai make up the top three coastal relocation destinations.

The Qatari city is the top relocation destination located on the coastline, scoring 7.53/10 in this criterion. Water temperatures in Doha are 24.83°C on average and the city has high annual salaries of £41,033.

HM's visit to Qatar reflects robust bilateral ties

Our Correspondent
Muscat

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's state visit to Qatar today reflects the robust bilateral relations binding the two countries at all levels, according to Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman al Thani, Qatar's ambassador to the sultanate.

The ambassador told ONA that the visit will pave the way for a new stage to meet aspirations of the two peoples. It will open possibilities of several projects to contribute to promoting political, economic and cultural relations.

"Qatari-Omani relations will witness further strengthening through the state visit of His Majesty the Sultan and will receive a great welcome from the Qatari people," said Sheikh Jassim.

In a statement, the Diwan of Royal Court said that the visit is in response to an invitation from Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar.

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Karwa Motors rolls out first made-in-Oman bus

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Oman's inflation rate goes up to 3.35% in October

MoCIIP grants patent to device producing energy from water molecules

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has granted patents to two citizens in its efforts to create a competitive environment for the private sector and to develop the national economy.

H E Qais Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, granted patents to Dhahi bin Jamal al Barwani, creator of a device that produces energy from water molecules, and Ali bin Salim al Busaidi, creator of Musif, a device to speed up response



Patent also awarded to high-tech device to speed up response time during traffic accidents

Musif (right) speeds up response time during accidents and Dhahi al Barwani's device produces energy from water molecules

time during traffic accidents.

Khalid bin Hamoud al Hinai, head of Patents and Industrial Designs in MoCIIP's National Intellectual Property Office, said, "Musif aims to reduce the num-

ber of victims of traffic accidents, and speed up response time through rapid communication with emergency teams in the sultanate. It will also allow automated and accurate reception of acci-

dent information, reducing human error in determining accident locations, and enhancing coordination with emergency services required to assist in such events."

Musif works by sending a text



message automatically from the vehicle driver to emergency services, in the case of an accident, as well as to a close relative to keep them informed. "The message also contains a location link, allowing emergency services to quickly reach the site of the accident," said Hinai.

The device to produce energy from water molecules will help reduce dependence on existing energy sources and also reduce cost of its production. "This device has been practically tested to produce energy from the interaction of water molecules."

According to Hinai, the ministry plays a major role in spread-

ing awareness on intellectual property rights and providing services related to facilitating and registering patent applications. The ministry also focuses on inventions that feature technologies addressing problems related to meeting the needs of changing markets.

"The ministry provides initial research for an inventor's idea to be able to gauge its feasibility and the possibility of protecting it by searching for documents similar or close to the idea in databases to save effort, money and time, avoid repetitive ideas and focus on new and qualitative ideas," said Hinai.



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4 tonnes of debris removed in Masirah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fifty-one divers and 127 volunteers recently came together to remove about four tonnes of marine debris from around Masirah Island.

The Environment Authority, in cooperation with the Oman Fisheries Co and Quriyat Divers team, ran the clean-up campaign from November 4 to 8 with the participation of volunteers.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Juma Khamis al Amri, head of Quriyat Divers, said the campaign in Masirah Island resulted in the removal of debris comprising fishing nets, iron pieces, plastic and empty cans.

"The dive started at 8am and ended at 1pm. Volunteers and divers from several wilayats came together for this task to clean the marine environment



We hope fishermen abide by fishing laws and use modern methods to preserve marine wealth. They shouldn't discard unwanted nets in the sea

JUMA KHAMIS AL AMRI



(Supplied photos)

and protect coral reefs around the island. Divers spotted dead fish in those nets, which is a waste of marine wealth in the sultanate. The waste of marine resources also affects the liveli-

hood of fishermen," he said.

According to Amri, the clean-up in Masirah Island aimed at spreading awareness on the importance of preserving the marine environment, and

encouraging volunteer work among people in the wilayat.

"Prior to physically removing the waste, some members of the team did a reconnaissance dive at the site and wrote a report.

Later, the report was discussed at a meeting and work delegated to each member," Amri said.

Quriyat Divers was established in January 2019 and since then has conducted several

clean-up dives across Oman.

The biggest challenge for divers when carrying out clean-up efforts is the same which entangles and kills marine creatures - fishing nets. Getting entangled in nets in the depths of the sea is a diver's worst nightmare. "Occasionally, we also encounter poisonous fish, aggressive sharks and get stuck in coral reefs. But we are determined to continue our clean-up campaigns."

The team is enthused to continue the important work of cleaning Oman's seas. "We hope fishermen abide by fishing laws issued by the competent authorities and use modern methods of fishing and technology to preserve marine wealth. They shouldn't discard unwanted nets in the sea. We thank everyone who participated in supporting our campaigns."

MOHAMMED RIAZ & PARTNERS GROUP ORGANIZED 51ST OMAN NATIONAL DAY GOLF TOURNAMENT AT GHALA GOLF CLUB

On the auspicious day of 18th November, the 51st National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, a day when the country revels in its nationalism with dazzling displays of Red, Green & White, representing the National Flag showcased all over Oman in its entirety from North to South. This day is extremely sacred and revered for it symbolizes all that is great in Oman.

Mohammed Riaz & Partner Group was able to take part in the nationwide celebrations by sponsoring a golf tournament. Mohammed Riaz is one of the leading Building Materials Organizations here in the Sultanate of Oman specializing in Wood, Glass, Hardware, Steel, Aluminum and has since diversified into retail with the widely popular Home Mart International chain of malls, Supermarkets (Salam Fresh), FMCG Distribution, 3PL Logistics, ACP Factory, Bottled Drinking Water Plant (Sarooj Water). Mohammed Riaz & Partners' 1st tournament was attended by a record number of ambassadors and dignitaries in 2016.

The golf tournament sponsored by Mohammed Riaz is the brainchild of its managing director Faiz Mohammed Riaz who himself a passionate golfer and Oman's National team player is looking at ways in which to grow the game of golf. The Chairman of Mohammed Riaz & Partners also believes that contributing to sports events, especially golf events is the building of individual decision making and likewise leaders. He is a strong believer that golf teaches us individual leadership, how to make decisions under pressure and its contribution is a very healthy aspect. On top of that the aim of these events is to contribute to society through the medium of golf.

The event started in the early morning with golfers starting at 6:30 am in the morning. The afternoon tee time started at 12:00 pm, where there was a turnout of 83 golfers that took advantage of the excellent change in weather and signifying the onset of the cooler months. As usual, the evening ended with a wonderful prize giving and presentation.



Cake Cutting with Mr. Faiz Mohammed Riaz - Managing Director of Mohammed Riaz & Partner Group, Board Director of Ghala Golf along with Mr. Ziyad Al Zubair - Vice Chairman Ghala Golf Club & Mr. Khalil Al Wahaibi - General Manager Ghala Golf Club

Finally, the 18th November tournament sponsored by Mohammed Riaz is a celebration of the success of His Majesty in making Oman a nation that in-spite of its modernization is sustainable, and is a home away from home for its millions of expatriates living in the Sultanate of Oman. It is with this in mind that the 18th November Golf Tournament is a celebration in praying to the Almighty Allah to safeguard His Majesty and grant him good health and long life as well as wishing everyone in Oman everlasting happiness.

SCORES

Winner:	William Acebedo
1st Runner Up:	Gurpreet Singh
2nd Runner Up:	Kaiser James Acebedo
Ladies:	Jacky Franssen
Junior:	Yousuf Al Rumhy
Nearest to the Pin:	Paul Adamson
2nd Best Shot:	Hamood Al Harthi

MoH holds conference on nutrition, cancerous diseases

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Clinical Dietary Department at Al Nahdha Hospital, organised on Sunday the Nutrition and Cancer Diseases Conference at Kempinski Hotel Muscat.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal al Sabti, executive president of Oman Medical Specialty Board, in the presence of Dr Hamad al Harthi, director, Al Nahdha Hospital, in addition to the attendance of directors and heads of departments, and a number of university students.

Dr Eiman al Hinai, head of Clinical Dietary Department at Al Nahdha Hospital, explained that a balanced diet provides the body with the appropriate amount of energy and calories available in foods and drinks to maintain energy balance. This means that the energy derived from food must be equivalent to what is needed by the body in order to perform its various functions such as walking and movement, and other vital processes.

She added that in 2018, the World Health Organization recorded 18.1mn new cases of cancer worldwide. WHO expects the number to reach between 29mn and 37mn cases by 2040, and that cancer cases will increase by 81 per cent by 2040 in low- and middle-income countries due to insufficient resources for prevention.

The conference aimed at addressing current issues in nutrition and cancerous diseases to alleviate the suffering of patients by promoting excellence in oncology. Additionally, it aimed to establish partnerships and enhance knowledge and cooperation to develop research and launch initiatives to combat the disease more effectively in the region. Also, it sought to exchange knowledge and experiences with oncologists specialised in oncology adapted nutrition, as well as reviewing recommendations regarding common nutrition and cancerous disease issues, and raising dietary awareness among community to reduce incidence of these diseases.

The conference highlighted a spectrum of topics including the role of nutrition in colorectal cancer causation in Oman, childhood and adulthood cancer, and nutrition management for paediatric and adult patients.

Karwa Motors rolls out first made-in-Oman bus

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Coinciding with the country's 51st National Day celebrations, Karwa Motors has rolled out its first Karwa-branded bus proudly bearing the 'Made in the Sultanate of Oman' tag called 'Salam'.

The company has a manufacturing facility in the Duqm Special Economic Zone.

The event also marks the start of manufacturing operations for the joint investment project between Oman and Qatar, which in its first phase aims to produce 500 buses annually.

Karwa Motors is a joint venture between Mowasalat Qatar, the state-owned transport company of Qatar, and Oman Investment Authority's sovereign wealth fund.

"This partnership is, however, only one pearl in a string of economic ties between our two nations; ties that have been positively reflected in a wide range of successful cooperation projects over the years," stated a press release.

The first phase of operations at the Karwa Motors facility will focus on manufacturing buses for the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Doha next year.

Due to its strategic location close to the regional market, the project is well positioned to contribute to the success of this global event by reducing workload, shipping time and storage costs. Moreover, this develop-



(Supplied photos)

The first phase of ramp-up will be focused on producing the first of three Karwa-branded buses - Salam - which will be used at the FIFA World Cup 2022

DR IBRAHIM AL BALUSHI

ment reflects Qatar's vision of enhancing the contribution of neighbouring countries to the success of this global event.

Commenting on the roll out of the first-ever Karwa-branded bus, Hisham Ahmed al Sheedi, acting director of Economic Di-

versification Investments, said, "The Karwa facility represents one of the most important strategic projects between Oman and Qatar. The two countries continue to seek potential investment opportunities across several vital and promising sectors, underlining the strong ties between them and the shared interests that have been addressed regularly by both governments and people.

"The Oman Investment Authority invests in such projects to not only support Oman's economic diversification efforts but also move us closer towards realising our vision of developing Oman's logistics sector and establishing the sultanate as an industrial hub for the region. Moreover, the project will help us as a nation enhance our technical

expertise in the automotive sector and develop supplementary industries that will support its growth, including several new small and medium-sized businesses."

Commenting on the new facility, Dr Ibrahim al Balushi, chief executive officer of Karwa Motors, said, "Located on a 600,000sqm site, the manufacturing facility is outfitted with the latest in technology. It also houses several key sections, including a large warehouse to store raw material, core workshops for cutting and welding, dyeing, and equipment and motor assembly, a full-fledged inspection yard and testing facility, and a vast number of other auxiliary facilities. Our factory will also create job opportunities for Omanis, whether they are regular job-seekers or have experience in the

automotive field.

"The first phase of ramp-up will be focused on producing the first of three Karwa-branded buses - Salam - which will be used at the FIFA World Cup 2022. These buses are extremely advanced and can handle a variety of road conditions, as well as withstand the harshest weather conditions. Next year, we will introduce the Intercity Coach and the City Bus with an annual production of 500 to 700 buses. Additionally, we have a strategic partnership in place with Higer, one of the world's leading manufacturers of buses."

Karwa Motors, in cooperation with Oman Investment Authority, is currently exploring the possibility of manufacturing electric buses and vehicles.

Two cruise ships bring over 3,000 tourists

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Over 3,000 tourists aboard two cruise ships visited Port of Khasab and Salalah Port in the past few days, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism said.

The first cruise ship arrived on November 17 after a gap of more than a year due to the spread of COVID-19 and the resultant disruptions in tourism activities across the world.

The winter cruise tourism season began in the sultanate with the arrival of *Mein Schiff 6*, carrying more than 2,100 tourists to the Port of Khasab in Musandam governorate.

On November 19, Salalah Port received the Italian cruise ship *AIDAbella* carrying 1,104 tourists.

Passengers of *AIDAbella* visited popular archaeological and historical landmarks in Dhofar, including the Museum of the Land of Frankincense, Samharam



Archaeological Park and popular markets in Salalah.

Oman recorded a 45 per cent increase in the number of cruise ship visitors from 193,000 in 2017/2018 to 283,000 in 2018/2019.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism will host an event titled Oman Connections from November 22 to 24. The event aims to showcase the best luxury tourism products with the participation of 30 international travel and tourism agencies.

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YOUR SAY

BOUNCING BACK

**What changes did you see in the National Days between 2020 and 2021?
What changes would you like to see before the next November 18?**

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Amer Nasser
Tour guide

On National Day in 2020, COVID-19 had affected celebrations negatively, but this year, the celebrations were livelier. Peace and calm continues to prevail in Oman and people are more appreciative of it. By the next National Day, I hope to see the country's economy improve and living standards rise.



Khalid al Kharusi
Radio engineer

The main change I noticed was the massive contribution of many private companies and public entities in this year's National Day celebrations. The attention to detail in decorations and design of visual presentations to celebrate the day was evident this year. Next year, I would like to see more activities and events.



Ahmed al Busaidi
Retired government employee

I have seen several National Days, including military parades and functions. The 50th was supposed to be very big, but we could not do anything because of COVID-19. However, things are slowly returning to normal and this year we were able to celebrate the day. The past was better but the future will be better.



Mohammed al Hajri
Operations manager

Since the passing of Sultan Qaboos bin Said, we haven't been able to gather and celebrate the great achievements of the last 51 years. We look forward and are determined to continue to collectively work to keep the momentum of progress under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.



Hesham Talaat
Teacher

The main change in the sultanate this year was empowering the youth through education, health-care and a safe environment. Next National Day, I am eager to witness more advances, especially in digital knowledge and economy as it develops rapidly all over the world.



Deepa Punjabi
Homemaker

This National Day was amazing compared to 2020. I saw happiness everywhere. People are getting back to their normal routine and celebrated in their own small ways. I wish and hope that in the coming years, National Day celebrations will be grander.



Saif Salim al Harrasi
Businessman

The government has done well since the last National Day with numerous reforms and restructuring to improve the economy. Had it not been for the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation would have been much better. Next National Day, I look forward to seeing an Oman that is strong and economically diverse.



Farouk Ahmed
Private sector employee

We were happy to celebrate National Day this year after the disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The celebrations this year were simple but joyful. I look forward to more celebrations and events next year.



Vinod Raghavan
PR executive

After the lull in 2020 due to the pandemic, this year National Day was celebrated with high spirits. Roads were adorned with national flags and fancy lights. Buildings and commercial establishments, too, were lit up. People are the soul of a nation, and they are brimming with a sense of responsibility and gratitude.



? **NEXT ON
YOUR SAY**

With hotels/resorts offering packages to boost local tourism, has holidaying in Oman become more affordable now?

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 muscatedaily@apexmedia.co.om Log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue

Invest in Oman Forum organised at Expo 2020 in Dubai

Dubai - Underlining the importance of the special economic zones and free zones as a key attraction for foreign investments to the sultanate, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) presented the investment opportunities available in these zones during the 'Invest in Oman Forum'.

The event was held as part of other activities, commemorating Oman's celebration of the 51st National Day at Expo 2020 in Dubai.

The forum, organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, attracted potential businesspersons, interested corporates and international media, according to a press release.

A number of government and private bodies took part in the forum, including OPAZ, Asyad Group, Madayn and

HSBC Bank.

During his presentation delivered in the Invest in Oman Forum, Yousuf al Reesi, from OPAZ, highlighted the package of advantages and incentives of the special economic zones and free zones offered for investors.

Further, he touched on the different investment opportunities available in various sectors, such as oil, petrochemicals, logistics, fisheries, tourism, mining and others.

Post the 'Invest in Oman Forum', the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, arranged several meetings that brought together representatives of the participating entities, businesspersons and those interested to invest in Oman.

Various business opportunities have been brought to discussion between the officials and potential investors.

Oman's inflation rate goes up to 3.35% in October

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's annual inflation rate further increased in October after a sharp rise in prices of fish products, vegetables and transportation during the month.

The sultanate's inflation rate, which is based on the consumer price index (CPI), increased to 3.35 per cent in October 2021 from 2.46 per cent recorded in the previous month, according to CPI data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The consumer price inflation in October 2021 remained 0.75 per cent higher compared to September of this year, the data showed.

An increase in Oman's inflation rate was expected this year after the implementation of value added tax (VAT) in April. Sharp price increases in transport group, fish and seafood, vegetables and tobacco products largely contributed to the overall inflation growth in October.

The inflation rate in food and non-alcoholic beverages group, which has nearly 24 per cent weight in Oman's CPI, jumped to 3.42 per cent in October this year compared to the same



Vegetable prices rose 7.6 per cent in October on year-on-year basis (Muscat Daily)

month a year ago. Consumer prices in food and non-alcoholic beverages group in October increased by 1.43 per cent compared to the previous month.

Within the food items, fish and seafood recorded a 14.8 per cent jump in October prices

compared to the same month a year ago, while prices for vegetables rose 7.6 per cent on year-on-year basis. Prices for fruits also increased by 2.87 per cent year-on-year in October.

On the other hand, prices in transport group - which has

more than 19 per cent weight in the CPI - jumped by 9.6 per cent in October compared to the same month a year ago. Furnishing, household equipment and household maintenance group also witnessed an year-on-year price increase of 1.37 per cent in

October.

Prices in the group of housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuel items remained 1.01 per cent higher in October compared to the same month of 2020.

The sultanate's annual inflation averaged under 1 per cent over the six years to 2019 and was negative during 2020. The inflation rate returned to positive territory in April 2021 after remaining negative for more than a year.

The average inflation rate during the January-October period of 2021 stood at 1.12 per cent, according to NCSI data.

International institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and global credit ratings agencies were expecting Oman's inflation to rise above 3 per cent level this year.

As per the IMF's forecasts, Oman's annual average inflation is expected to rise to 3.8 per cent in 2021, mainly due to the implementation of VAT and increase in global prices.

Similarly, the World Bank in its latest economic outlook for Oman said the inflation is projected to pick up to over 3 per cent in 2021, reflecting the recovery of domestic demand and the introduction of VAT.

CMA gives go-ahead for crowdfunding activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Sunday announced that the legislative system for launching crowdfunding platforms has been approved and ready for anyone wishing to engage in crowdfunding activity in Oman.

The regulations and controls for the crowdfunding activity are characterised by a high level of flexibility and adequate facilities, the CMA said in a statement.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, H E Abdulah al Salmi, executive president of the CMA, said that the decision to allow crowdfunding activity in the sultanate comes in response



H E Abdulah al Salmi (Muscat Daily)

to the requirements of dealers in the capital market and entrepreneurs.

Earlier this year the Minister of Finance and chairman of the Capital Market Authority approved a resolution (No

151/2021) to amend some provisions of the Executive Regulations of the Capital Market Law to allow the activity of crowdfunding platforms in Oman.

As per the recent amendments to the provisions of the

Executive Regulations of the Capital Market Law, the companies wishing to engage in this activity are exempted from licensing and activity fees (amounting to RO155,000) until January 1, 2023.

"This exemption comes in the context of the government's efforts to facilitate business and economic recovery. Our aim is to support the establishment of national crowdfunding platforms of various types and attract global crowdfunding platforms to Oman.

This new activity will provide support for the growth of entrepreneurs and innovative SMEs in the country," H E Salmi said.

He said that the regulatory

provisions for crowdfunding platforms are sufficiently flexible and provide incentives to establish this type of platforms and contribute to supporting SMEs.

H E Salmi said the regulations allow the crowdfunding platform operators to provide financing through four ways: Donation-based financing, product-based financing, equity-based financing, and counterpart financing.

"It is an opportunity for Omani youth and a support for launching various national financing platforms to finance investment initiatives in any of the promising economic and productive sectors," he added.

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Omani biodiesel fuels construction of first gas well-pad for PDO

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has completed the construction of the first ever well-pad where all construction equipment utilised were fuelled by locally produced biodiesel.

This accomplishment was attained in collaboration with Sarooj Construction Company and Synergy Biodiesel. The constructed PDO gas well-pad is in the Saih Rawl region and was constructed by Sarooj, according

to a press statement.

The biodiesel used by the construction equipment was produced by Synergy Biofuels in the first commissioned biodiesel plant in Oman. Using biodiesel in the construction of the well-pad lead to a reduction of approximately 11 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.

"We are proud of this achievement which was the result of innovative and collaborative work with Sarooj and Synergy BioFuels. We hope that it will pave the way for similar initiatives and projects as we con-

tinue to explore and develop new solutions to decarbonise our business," said Abdullah al Jabri, chief commercial projects officer at PDO.

"We are very proud to be part of this collaboration with PDO and Synergy Biofuels to deliver this project while reducing CO₂ emissions. Sarooj has been committed to invest in transformative solutions to reduce emissions and greenhouse gases, and this project is one step in that direction," Simon Karam, chairman of Sarooj Construction Company said.

Sarooj has become the first construction company in the MENA region to utilise the first Omani-produced biodiesel to construct an oil and gas well-pad.

"We thank PDO and Sarooj for collaborating with Synergy to utilise its first batch of Omani-produced biodiesel in the oil and gas and construction sectors," said Anthony Helou, CEO of Synergy.

Synergy had commissioned the first biodiesel plant in Oman earlier in July 2021 in Samail industrial estate.

US Fed should quicken stimulus pullback due to inflation: Official

Washington, US - The sharp rise in US inflation even as the labour market rapidly improves means the Federal Reserve should remove stimulus from the economy more quickly, a central bank official said.

The Fed this month began slowing the pace of bond purchases it started early in the pandemic to provide liquidity to the economy, but has expressed caution over when it will increase interest rates even as consumer prices hit a 30-year high.

Fed board member Christopher Waller said, "The rapid improvement in the labour market and the deteriorating inflation data have pushed me towards favouring a faster pace of tapering and a more rapid removal of accommodation in 2022."

As the world's largest economy has made a rapid recovery from the deepest downturn on record, prices have soared due to global supply bottlenecks and shortages, as well as labour constraints.

The annual consumer price index in October hit 6.2 per cent - its highest level in more than three decades and well beyond the Fed's 2 per cent goal.

Prices have 'escalated substantially this year', Waller said, and 'despite the highest wage gains in years, inflation this year has wiped out any real wage increase for the average worker'.



"High inflation is painful to Americans who have little choice about the goods and services they buy for everyday living," he said in a prepared speech.

His comments were the strongest yet from a top central banker, as Fed chair Jerome Powell has repeatedly said that while inflation is higher than expected, most of the factors driving it are transitory. But Waller noted that 'price pressures are no longer concentrated in a few categories, they appear to have broadened', and it is 'very concerning' that consumer surveys show the public is worried the rate will stay above 2 per cent.

The central bank slashed the

benchmark borrowing rate to zero in March 2020 to help ward off a deeper economic crisis, and has said it will not raise rates until the economy is at maximum employment and inflation is on track to stay at or a bit above 2 per cent.

Waller said the criteria for inflation to hold at or above two percent has been met, and the economy 'making great strides towards achieving the employment leg of our mandate'.

The Fed this month started reducing the pace of its monthly purchases of Treasury securities and mortgage-backed bonds, but has said it could cut back more quickly.

AFP

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tenders:

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	61/2021	Construction of 132/33 kV Grid Station at Al Jawabi along with associated 132kV OHL from JBB Hassan to Al Jawabi GS.	06/12/2021	25/01/2022	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate, OETC Registration Certificate & DCRP Registration Certificate	8,271,000
2	62/2021 (International)	Provide consultancy services for Insulation Coordination Study	06/12/2021	04/01/2021	Local & International companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate, Except International companies.	105,000
3	31/2021 (Refloat)	Firefighting System Equipment's Refurbishment at Dhofar Region Grid Stations	06/12/2021	04/01/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid Tender Board Registration Certificate & Certified by CDAA (ROP) to carry out this project	65,630

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity of sending a valid Tender Board certificate in the same required field.
Buying the Tender:	The documents required for the purchase of the tender are sent by e-mail to the Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department, to ensure the authenticity of the documents before purchasing the tender during the official working days from 8.00 hr am - 01.00 pm hr.
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document. (Payment Through Bank Transfer)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	Each bid should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to The Chairman of tender committee mentioning Tender Number and Name on the top of the envelope.
Terms and conditions:	- No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The complete bid documents should be deposited in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 423 O Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 93515198 - 93201558
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إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية :

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	نمذ الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (رغ)
١	٢٠٢١/١١	إنشاء محطة كهرباء الجوابي جهد ٣٣/١٣٢ ك.ف. وخط الكهرباء جهد ١٣٢ ك.ف. المصاحب لها بين محطتي جعلان بني بو حسن والجوابي	٢٠٢١/١٢/٠٦	٢٠٢١/٠١/٢٥	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال والمسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول . شهادة تسجيل الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء و DCRP شهادة تسجيل	٨,٢٧١,٠٠٠
٢	٢٠٢١/١٢ (دولية)	تقديم خدمات استشارية لدراسة توافق عازلية النظام الكهربائي	٢٠٢١/١٢/٠٦	٢٠٢٢/٠١/٠٤	الشركات المحلية والدولية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول بإستثناء الشركات الدولية	١٠٥,٠٠٠
٣	٢٠٢١/٣١ (إعادة طرح)	تأهيل معدات نظام مكافحة الحرائق لمحطات نقل الكهرباء الرئيسية بمحافظة ظفار	٢٠٢١/١٢/٠٦	٢٠٢٢/٠١/٠٤	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال والمسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول . ومرخصة من قبل هيئة الدفاع المدني والإسعاف	٦٥,٦٣٠

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة مع ضرورة إرسال شهادة مجلس المناقصات سارية المفعول وفي نفس المجال المطلوب .
طريقة الشراء	يتم إرسال المستندات المطلوبة لشراء المناقصة عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني إلى دائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود . وذلك لتأكد من صحة المستندات قبل شراء المناقصة وذلك في أيام العمل الرسمية من الساعة ٨:٠٠ ص - ١:٠٠ م .
الرسم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد . (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العروض	تقدم العروض في مظاريف مغلقة ومعونة بإسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات مع تحديد رقم وعنوان المناقصة فقط
الشروط و الضمانات	- عدم تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف. - أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . - إرفاق تأميناً في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (٪١) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ومعوناً بإسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء . - كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه . - الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقبولة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر.
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع العروض في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات.
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - الموالج رقم السكّة ٢١٥٣ - مبنى رقم ٤٢٣ - تفاصيل التواصل ٩٣٥١٥٩٨ - ٩٣٥١٥٩٨
البريد الإلكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com
الموقع الإلكتروني	www.omangrid.com



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Oman Post exhibition commemorates legacy of H H Sayyid Tarik



Oman Post opened an exhibition at the Opera Galleria, commemorating the remarkable life and legacy of the late H H Sayyid Tarik bin Taimur al Said and his contributions to the progress of Oman over the years.

Capturing landmark moments in H H Sayyid Tarik's life and Oman's rich history, the exhibition

is divided into four display sections, covering specific periods and milestones in his decorated life.

The first section features photographs highlighting H H Sayyid Tarik's work before 1970 as one of the most prominent Omani political figures that have emerged during the last

millennia.

The second display focuses on his contributions to Oman's diplomatic and international relations' history after 1970.

Another section is dedicated to his work at the United Nations, namely, delivering Oman's first speech at the organisation on October 7, 1971.

The final section includes images capturing key and candid moments of his life as well as rare bank notes signed by H H Sayyid Tarik during his time as president of the Central Bank.

The exhibition will be open for the public at the Opera Galleria for the next two weeks.



Oman Air Holidays inks pact with Saudi travel company

Oman Air Holidays, the Sultanate of Oman's leading provider of flight and hotel packages, has signed a strategic partnership with Saudi International Travel Company (SITC), a leading provider of travel and tourism services since 1983, with the aim to promote domestic tourism offerings in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman.

The partnership reflects both organisations' commitment to provide an extensive range of bespoke tours and packages that combine the very best hospitality, leisure, and tourism experiences in the Middle East. The agreement paves the way for Saudi International Travel Company (SITC) to offer its travel and tourism services to passengers traveling to Saudi Arabia on

Oman Air for business, leisure or investment purposes.

The strategic partnership will focus on offering wide-ranging recreational options and turnkey travel and tourism services for visitors arriving to the kingdom from Oman and strengthening cooperation between both countries.

Mundher al Shaikhani, senior manager at Oman Air Holidays, said, "The partnership between Oman Air Holidays and Saudi International Travel Company (SITC) will strengthen the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the delivery of innovative holiday products and services, and will contribute to the tremendous growth potential of both countries' tourism ecosystems. This aligns closely

with the objectives of Oman's Vision 2040 and the kingdom's Vision 2030."

Sultan Suleiman, chief executive officer of Saudi International Travel Company, said, "The partnership enhances strategic cooperation based on the innovative approach followed by private companies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to expand investment opportunities across markets with the aim of developing and providing a series of distinctive, high-efficiency tourism services in both the Saudi and Omani markets."

Since June 2021, Saudi International Travel Company has been providing institutional quarantine accommodation for Oman Air Holidays' guests who arrive in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Oman Air flights.



Bank Nizwa announces exciting National Day offers

As Oman celebrates its 51st National Day, Bank Nizwa is marking the occasion with the launch of a number of offers for its customers. As the leading Islamic bank in the sultanate, Bank Nizwa has been recognised for its premium customer service, seamless banking procedures and exciting offers.

Under the National Day offers, customers can enjoy a financing rate starting from 4.95 per cent on all home, auto and personal finances, complemented by a waive off on the processing fees of any such finance. The offer also includes the first finance instalment to begin after two months of availing the finance facility.

With a diverse portfolio of products and services, Bank Nizwa ensures that it has specialized solutions to cater to the differential needs and demands of its various customers.

"The National Day is a very dear occasion for everyone living in Oman, and on behalf of the Bank Nizwa family I would like to congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman for achieving remarkable progress, growth and prosperity through the years," said Khaled al Kayed, CEO of

Bank Nizwa.

"As a bank revered for its customer-centric approach and strong customer relations, we decided to offer them something which resonates well with the excitement and spirit of the 51st National Day. We are happy to celebrate this glorious occasion with our prized customers."

Over the years, Bank Nizwa's innovative campaigns, thoughtful offers and unfaltering customer service have been instrumental in its success.

Complementing this with a well-diversified retail and corporate portfolio, the bank has been consistently exceeding customer expectations while setting new benchmarks in the Islamic banking sector.

Bank Nizwa constantly endeavours to boost customer engagement and enhance the overall banking experience whether it is through its seamless digital media platforms, well-knit network of branches across Oman, or its efficient customer service channels.

Aligning itself to the objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040, Bank Nizwa has remained steadfast in its vision to be the leading Islamic financing institution in the country.

Omantel's webinar series to highlight role of 5G in driving global growth

Omantel has established itself as the undisputed market leader in integrated telecom services by virtue of its efficiency and ecosystem. The company has always been offering the people and businesses of Oman world-class services and access to the latest digital technologies that has enabled them keep pace with the changing world.

Omantel was the first to make 5G possible in the sultanate. Since the late 2019 roll-out, Omantel has grown its 5G footprint through infrastructure, network coverage and device compatibility, bringing the benefits of this new-gen communications technology to individual users, businesses, corporations and the government.

To further highlight Omantel's role in creating more awareness among people on 5G capabilities and opportunities, the company



will be hosting a series of webinars focused on this frontier digital technology, which will see the participation of telecom sector consultants, Omantel experts, members of the academia and international and local

Omani experts.

Heads of ICT/IT departments of Omantel's enterprise customers in the government and private sector, stakeholders from the public and private sector and academia, journalists and social

media influencers will attend the webinars, the first of which will be held tomorrow on the topic, '5G Beyond Speed'.

It will feature noted personalities as speakers. The first webinar can be attended online by

registering via the link [H E Dr Ali bin Amur al Shidhani](#), Undersecretary for Communications at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, will participate as a keynote speaker of the first webinar, where he will highlight how 5G will help achieve Oman Vision 2040 objectives related to digital transformation.

5G offers increased download and video call speed, enables Internet of Things (IoT), uninterrupted connections on the move, multiple-device connections, telemedicine, remote learning solutions, enhanced virtual reality and augmented reality among a slew of other benefits.

With its 5G speeds reaching multiple gigabits, Omantel is empowering and enabling internet users as well as Oman's economy.



ISC Oman Open Badminton Championship concludes

The finals of the Modern Exchange - ISC Oman Open Badminton Championship concluded at the ISC courts on November 13.

Chief official Mathew Thomas, joint facility enhancement secretary along with Faigee and Sanjit, joint sport secretary took all initiatives to conduct the event in a systematic and professional touch.

The tournament saw participants from Sohar, Sur and Barka in addition to the Muscat governorate.

Almost 300 entries received including women and children and took almost three full days to complete the tournament.

The awarding and closing ceremony were held right after the final, making a perfect end of the ISC Badminton

Championship.

The function observed one minute silent prayer in memory of hockey legend Syed Naqvi.

The closing ceremony witnessed a couple of cultural performances from Kerala and Malayalam Wings.

Sports secretary Saji Abraham thanked all the officials, tournament committee, staff, coach and parents for their sup-

port and dedication in conducting the tournament successfully. ISC chairman Dr Sathish Nambiar while addressing the gathering emphasised the importance of such events which will help talented shuttlers to showcase their skills on such a large platform.

He appreciated the efforts of sports committee and asked to organise such sports events on

regular basis to channelise youth energy in the right perspective.

Philip Koshy, general manager of Modern Exchange was the guest of honour and the trophies were distributed to the winners.

Karanjeet Singh Matharoo, vice chairman, Babu Rajendran, general secretary, Suhail Khan, entertainment secretary were also present during the ceremony.

OCCI honours Bank Muscat for its pioneering CSR role

In recognition of its pioneering role in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Bank Muscat was recently honoured by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) at a grand event held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Assistant Secretary General of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs. The ceremony was attended by a number of their excellencies as well as senior officials from institutions and corporates in Oman.

On this occasion, Khalifa Abdullah al Hatmi, assistant general manager - International Branches, Bank Muscat, said, "It is a great honour to receive this accolade, which confirms the bank's pioneering role in social responsibility and its partnership with the community in Oman. The bank's activities are aligned to Oman's development goals, especially the pillar of CSR and partnership in Oman Vision 2040. We are working tirelessly to serve everyone better, every day, not just in banking, but also in serving the larger community through humanitarian and sustainable initiatives."

Hatmi pointed out that receiving this honour is a great inspiration to Bank Muscat to continue to launch new programmes and initiatives which will further strengthen cooperation and Public-Private Partnership in the service of the nation and Omani society. It must be noted that every year, the bank sets aside a portion of its profits for its different CSR and sustainability activ-



ities to serve various segments of society including the youth and children, people with special needs, social welfare families, entrepreneurs, students and communities across the country.

For the past four years, the bank has extended its support to the Fak Kurba initiative launched by the Oman Lawyers Association to help secure the release of those who have been jailed for failing to clear financial obligations. The total number of cases the bank has secured releases in the last four consecutive years has reached 826 cases, including 250 cases in 2021.

Bank Muscat's landmark Green Sports programme has supported 143 teams across various governorates in the sul-

tanate till date. Over 36,900 members from different communities have benefitted from the programme. Till date, 95 teams have received support for installation of artificial turf or natural grass on their fields, while 40 teams have received support for floodlighting and eight teams for water desalination plants. As a 'one of its kind' programme, Green Sports is contributing majorly to developing the sporting skills and talents of Omani youth. Bank Muscat has been encouraged by the tremendous success of the programme in transforming sports infrastructure across the country.

The bank's Tadhmun programme, which is organised in partnership with the Ministry of

Social Development, has benefited 1,691 families since it was first launched in 2013. In 2021, the programme distributed 790 household appliances to 150 social welfare families across Oman. Earlier this year, the bank also provided laptops and tablets to 1,240 students from low-income families with the aim of supporting the government's efforts to make online education available for all students in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, the Bank Muscat's Jesr Al Mustaqbal programme has provided scholarships to a number of young people from social welfare families to pursue their higher education, while its Al Wathbah

SME Academy continues to train and equip Omani entrepreneurs with business skills and help them acquire internationally-accredited certification.

The bank also spends a lot of effort on building infrastructure and public facilities as part of its emphasis on CSR and sustainability. Previously, the bank has joined hands with the Ministry of Tourism and Heritage to develop the old village of Misfat al Abriyeen in Al Hamra to boost heritage tourism and preserve the cultural heritage of Oman, while also contributing to the creation of new jobs and allied benefits for the local community. In 2020, the bank also celebrated the completion of the 15,000sqm Al Khoudh Park project in Seeb.



'Springboard' workshops empower women

Continuing its journey to empower Omani women and help them fulfil their ambitions and aspirations, Ooredoo recently cooperated with the Omani Women's Association, which comes under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Development, to provide a 'Springboard' programme for graduates of its women's incubator training across the country. The initiative includes a series of training workshops offering a variety of skills such as problem solving, enhancing confidence, setting goals, relationship building, and managing stress.

The Springboard workshops began in August at Omani Women's Associations in Samail, Mussanah, Manah, as well as Rustaq, Al Kamel W'Al Wafi and Ibri. Led by Ayesha al Shoihi, certified trainer and head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Ooredoo, a judging panel will evaluate and select the winning projects from each association to qualify as finalists. The winning projects, which will be announced in November.

Raed Mohammed Dawood, director of Branding, Communi-

cations and Corporate Affairs at Ooredoo, said, "Based on the vision that all people are equal members of society, we continue to empower Omani women and help them achieve their personal and professional goals through our training incubators across the country. We are pleased to be able to provide them with access to these world-renowned courses, to expand their network and provide them with the necessary tools to enter the labour market with confidence."

Aya al Khasibiya, a member of the Omani Women's Association in the wilayat of Manah, added, "Ooredoo's Springboard programme plays a major role in empowering Omani women to achieve success, offering us a unique opportunity for self-development through open dialogue between the participants and the trainer."

"It has also helped us to build confidence in ourselves and set out a clear path towards achieving our goals."

Over the years, Springboard has become one of Ooredoo's core activities under its CSR programme, Ooredoo Goodwill.



OOC takes part in OCA General Assembly

Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) participated in the 40th General Assembly (GA) of Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), which was held in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates on Sunday. The event was held in the presence of representatives of 30 Asian NOCs, while representatives of 14 committees took part online due to travel restrictions and health protocols.

The delegation was headed by Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Bu-

saidi, OOC president, and Taha bin Sulaiman al Kishry, OOC secretary general - member of OCA Executive Office, who participated in the meeting of the Executive Office held on Saturday in Dubai.

The meeting witnessed visual presentations by the organising committees of the next four Asian Games: Hangzhou 2022, Aichi - Nagoya 2026, Doha 2030, and Riyadh 2034.

The latest developments of

other courses organised by OCA which is the Asian Youth Games, Thailand, were also reviewed. It will be held from November 17-26, 2023, and the Asian Games for Futsal and Martial Arts in China, in addition to the Organising Committee of the 4th Asian Youth Games to be held in Tashkent in Uzbekistan in 2025.

The attendees reviewed the work reports of OCA permanent committees.

Indian School Seeb holds blood donation camp

Indian School Seeb in keeping with its policy of commitment towards society and to sensitise the students accordingly organised a blood donation camp on November 13 in the school premises.

The camp was conducted in association and collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Sultanate of Oman.

The blood donation camp was inaugurated by Shaikh Nayim, vice president, School Management Committee.

The inauguration ceremony was also graced by the presence of the convenor Naveen Manzoor, chairperson Staff Welfare Philip Abraham, and the other distinguished members of the School Management Committee, parents, principal Dr Leena Francis and staff.

A total of 82 benevolent donors had registered for this noble cause. Fitness of the



donors was checked and 55 of them were eligible for the donation including parents, well-wishers and Sanjay, a student from class XII along with six staff members of Indian School Seeb.

The donors were asked to fill

a medical form to give details about their health-related information and were directed for medical check-up.

The school cooperated greatly with the medical team sent by the Ministry of Health.

The team was also very satisfied with the honourable venture undertaken by the school.

The camp was coordinated by Lincy Joseph, Infirmary in charge of Indian School Seeb.

The principal Dr Leena Francis thanked the Ministry of Health and all the people involved in the blood donation camp.

R Ranjith Kumar, president SMC, was highly supportive for the event and provided the guidelines for the same.

Indian School Seeb under the adept guidance of directors in charge of Indian School Seeb, from the Board of Directors Dr C M Najeeb and Gajesh Kumar Dhariwal has always strived to educate children so that they discover and develop their abilities and full moral excellence to serve society better.

This blood donation camp was a part of this initiative.

Renault Dokker combines best features of space, comfort and dynamic performance

A practical commercial vehicle, Renault Dokker combines the best features of space, comfort, and dynamic performance. Its functional utility vehicle and great design has found Renault Dokker many a fan in Oman.

Created to be exceedingly functional Renault Dokker is a harmonious and dynamic utility vehicle with great design. Offering easy loading, quick access to objects, side door, on-board multimedia system, and more Renault Dokker combines the best features of space, comfort, and dynamic performance.

Pragmatic and spacious, functional utility vehicle Renault

Dokker has found many fans in Oman. Renault Dokker Van has everything to make owner's work easier. Its 1.6 MPI 85 hp engine is efficient both in consumption and cost of usage. The engine allows for a very dynamic driving at a cost that is amongst the most frugal, 4x20W radio, audio streaming and Bluetooth hands-free calling.

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles said, "Renault Dokker is a very efficient and dynamic vehicle. This is the reason why it loved so much."

Abdulla Jabri says, "Renault Dokker Van proficiently rises to

the task of meeting his day-to-day needs. Its 750kg payload is invaluable for a businessman like me."

Ghadeer al Adi likes the easy loading feature of the Dokker Van. He says, "I find it functional because it comes with one or two sliding side doors and the loading width stands at 703mm. The asymmetrical rear doors, meanwhile, open to a width of 1.08m which is especially useful. Its lashing rings on the floor holds fragile items perfectly in place."

Ahmed al Awaisi is captivated by its generous loading space and comfort. He says, "The 'Easy Seat' is foldable and removable;



the passenger seat shows its full inventiveness when the backrest folds down to form a temporary desk. When fully removed, it frees up extra space, increasing the loading volume to 3.9m³."

Rizwan Abbas says the "best part of Renault Dokker is that it acclimates to all circumstances. Its features including ABS & BA, ESP, TPMS, dual airbags make it a top range car." He also adds, "The 1.6lt 85hp Euro 4 engine that powers Dokker shows consumption levels among the lowest in its class, without having to resort to expensive and complex technologies or sacrificing performance."

Egypt makes Gaza comeback with post-war reconstruction efforts

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - Posters of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi beam out over a site in the war-battered Gaza Strip where labourers and bulldozers are hard at work re-building.

After years of retreat, Egypt is making its presence felt again in the neighbouring Palestinian enclave, emerging as a key benefactor in the aftermath of the last bout of fighting between Hamas and Israel in May.

In the weeks following the deadly violence, a number of Egyptian workers crossed the border on a mission to lay down a coastal road in the Gaza's northern city of Beit Lahya.

"The president's instructions are to reconstruct the Gaza Strip. We are about 70 engineers, civil servants, lorry drivers, mechanics and workers," said a worker who preferred not to give his name.

He added that he was 'happy to help Palestine'.

During the 11-day conflict that erupted between Israel and armed Islamist factions in Gaza last May - the worst since 2014 - Egypt worked behind the scenes to mediate a ceasefire.

Cairo also pledged a US\$500mn package to reconstruct the enclave which borders Israel and Egypt.

Relations between Cairo and



An excavator clears land at a road section undergoing expansion north of Gaza City on October 30 (AFP)

Hamas - an offshoot of Egypt's veteran Islamist opposition Muslim Brotherhood group - have been sour, particularly after the 2013 military ouster of late president Mohamed Morsi, also of the Brotherhood.

The sight of Egyptian workers rebuilding Gaza as Egypt invests millions in the enclave was 'unexpected, unimaginable', Palestinian economist Omar Shaban said.

"Egypt and Hamas are not friends, but they have common interests," he explained in his office in Al-Rimal, a Gaza district that was heavily bombarded by Israel in May.

"Egypt wants to maintain the ceasefire by engaging in the after-war reconstruction efforts."

Hamas is in desperate need of international aid for reconstruction, while positive relations with Egypt are an added benefit as it

controls the Rafah border, often the only access point for much-needed construction material to the enclave.

Egypt, meanwhile, 'understands that it doesn't have a lot of options' in Gaza, where Hamas still holds firm, Shaban said.

Qatar vs Egypt?

Over recent years, Qatar has become the prime donor of aid for

the impoverished territory, but in the aftermath of the May fighting, the flow of cash came to a halt.

The energy-rich Gulf country - considered to be sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots - has dispensed tens of millions of dollars in aid to poor families in Gaza.

But a dispute arose over the distribution of salaries to Hamas officials as Israel objected to cash

payments, suggesting that the Islamist movement could divert the money to its armed faction.

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid as a result urged Egypt and the United Arab Emirates - both of which have formal ties with Israel - to step in to reconstruct and develop Gaza.

Hamas estimates the damage at about US\$479mn.

This comes on top of US\$600mn it says is needed for rebuilding efforts after previous combat that have yet to be realised, said Naji Sarhan, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works in Gaza.

This is excluding considerations for the development needs of Gaza, including electricity, water and infrastructure. The territory is considered one of the most impoverished in the region.

"The Qatari aid is welcome and so is that of Egypt... We are coordinating between the countries," Sarhan said. Doha announced on November 17 an agreement with Cairo 'to supply fuel and basic building materials for the Gaza Strip'.

Sarhan added that the road being built by Egypt in the north will join with another funded by Qatar, creating a corridor along the coast between the north and the south of Gaza.

AFP

Lebanon stops boat carrying 90 people

Beirut, Lebanon - The Lebanese army said on Saturday it had stopped a boatload of 91 people including Syrian and Palestinian refugees from departing Lebanon illegally.

Women and children were among the group intercepted Friday by a navy patrol off the coast of Qalamoun in northern Lebanon, the army said.

It said the boat almost sank in bad weather and that all on board were rescued and taken to shore.

The statement did not specify their intended destination.

The Republic of Cyprus, a European Union member just 160km away, is a common destination for would-be migrants trying to flee Lebanon, which is mired in economic and political crisis.

On Friday the Lebanese security forces said they had thwarted an attempt by 82 people to illegally cross by sea from the Lebanon into Europe.

The Internal Security Forces said they raided a 'tourist resort' in the Qalamoun area on Thursday after being tipped off.

They found '82 people, including men, women, and children, who were planning to head to Europe via sea in an illegal manner for a fee of US\$5,000 per person', without specify their nationality.

The number of people attempting to make deadly sea crossings out of Lebanon has surged since the country's financial crisis began in 2019.

Most of the would-be migrants are already refugees who fled the war in neighbouring Syria, but an increasing number of Lebanese nationals are also attempting the perilous journey.

Around 80 per cent of Lebanon's population is estimated to be living under the poverty line, as defined by international organisations, and the Lebanese pound has lost 90 per cent of its value against the dollar on the black market.

Lebanon says it hosts more than 1.5mn Syrians, nearly a million of whom are registered as refugees with the UN.

AFP

One dead in Jerusalem shooting, attacker killed: Police

Jerusalem - A militant of the Palestinian Islamist Hamas movement opened fire on Sunday in Jerusalem's Old City, killing one person and wounding three before he was shot dead, Israeli officials, police and medics said.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett ordered security to be boosted and called for people to be on 'heightened alert' over the risk of further attacks.

The wounded, who included two civilians and two police officers, were rushed to Jerusalem's Hadassah hospital. One of them, a man in his 30s, died of his injuries, medical sources said without giving further details.

"This morning there was a serious shooting attack in the Old City of Jerusalem," Bennett said in a statement. "At the moment we have one dead and three wounded. Two policewomen and one policeman quickly neutralised the terrorist."

Police said the attacker had



Israeli security forces clear the way for first responders transporting the body of a victim from the scene of a shooting in the old city of Jerusalem on Sunday (AFP)

fired a 'Carlo-type weapon', a type of submachine gun.

The Old City is in the Israeli-annexed eastern part of Jerusalem, which Palestinians claim as the capital of their future state.

Israel captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War and

later annexed it, in a move not recognised by most of the international community.

After the shooting, dozens of police officers deployed on the narrow streets of the historic walled city, as workers hosed down large pools of blood from the cobblestones, said an AFP re-

porter.

The body of the attacker, who died at scene, was carried away on a stretcher.

'Premeditated' attack

Israel's Public Security Minister Omer Bar-Lev said the attacker

was a Palestinian living in the Shuafat neighbourhood in east Jerusalem.

"He was a member of Hamas, the political branch not the armed wing," Bar-Lev told Israel's Kan television channel, saying he had been wearing long robes to hide his weapon.

"It appears he was wearing a large galabiya (robe) or that he had disguised himself as an Orthodox Jew," Bar-Lev said, adding the gunman's wife had travelled abroad three days ago, while his son was also out of the country.

"It seems that this attack is premeditated," Bar-Lev said.

Hamas, in power in the Gaza Strip, congratulated the gunman and hailed the 'continuation' of the fight to 'liberate' Jerusalem, but without specifically claiming the attack.

It comes six months to the day since the end of an 11-day war in Gaza with Israel in May.

On Friday, Britain said it in-

tended to follow the United States and European Union in placing an outright ban on Hamas as a terror group, saying it was not possible to distinguish between the Islamists' political and military wing.

Attacks targeting Israeli security forces are common in the Old City as well as in the occupied West Bank.

They are often carried out by individual young Palestinian men in so-called lone-wolf attacks.

On Wednesday, Israeli security forces shot dead a 16 year old assailant who stabbed and wounded two police officers in the Old City.

"This is the second recent terrorist attack in Jerusalem," Bennett said, adding he had ordered the security forces to 'be alert... over concern for copycat attacks'.

Some 200,000 Israelis live in east Jerusalem, alongside 300,000 Palestinians.

AFP

Seven Turks held in Libya for almost two years return home

Istanbul, Turkey - Seven Turkish citizens held in eastern Libya for almost two years were released and returned home after intense diplomacy, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said on Sunday.

The Turks were released after joint efforts between Turkey and its regional ally Qatar, the ministry said in a statement. Turkish media said most of them worked in the restaurant business.

The North African country has been mired in civil war and strife since the overthrow of dictator Moammar Gadhafi in a 2011 uprising.

The bloodshed has drawn in competing Libyan factions and Islamist groups as well as foreign powers.

Turkey has sent troops as well as pro-Turkish militia units from Syria to shore up the UN-recognised government in Tripoli, while Russia and other countries support eastern-based strongman Khalifa Haftar.

In 2019, Turkish officials said the Turks were detained by eastern Libya forces loyal to Haftar.

'The situation of our citizens were closely monitored during this process by our embassy in Tripoli and the National Intelligence Organisation,' the foreign ministry said.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also placed telephone calls to the citizens who returned home, it added.

AFP

US police hunt felon after 'accidental' gun discharge

Washington, US - Police were hunting a convicted felon who fled Atlanta's international airport after his gun accidentally discharged during a security search and sparked panic.

The incident on Saturday sent dozens of passengers scurrying for cover, and resulted in three injuries, none of which were caused by the discharge.

"We are actively pursuing this individual," Atlanta Police's Major Reginald Moorman said in a press conference after identifying the suspect as 42 year old Kenny Wells.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) said the incident occurred after a 'prohibited item' was identified inside a passenger's baggage by an X-Ray machine.

As a security officer opened the compartment containing the item, 'the passenger lunged into



This file photo shows travellers at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, in Atlanta, Georgia (AFP)

the bag and grabbed a firearm, at which point it discharged'.

'The passenger then fled the area, running out of the airport exit,' the TSA said, adding that the officer had told the passenger not to touch the item.

One person was injured in a fall in the ensuing panic and two

others complained of shortness of breath, police said.

Shortly after the incident at around 1:30pm (1830 GMT), the airport said on Twitter that there was no active shooter, and 'there is no danger to passengers or employees'. Police gave the all-clear just before 3pm.

The loud noise sent many people ducking and running, knocking over suitcases and stanchions as they scrambled to escape, footage aired by CNN showed. People could be heard shouting 'Get down! Get down!' while others slid across the floor. Some took shelter in airport

restaurants, while others ran onto the tarmac.

The incident came on one of the busiest travel weekends of the year, just days before the Thanksgiving holiday.

Since the beginning of the year, the TSA has detected more than 450 firearms at checkpoints in the Atlanta airport alone.

A controversial Georgia law passed in 2014 allows people to carry permitted guns into airports although not past screening checkpoints, as well as into bars, schools and churches.

Under federal law, it is illegal to carry a weapon into a TSA screening area.

Passengers may travel with firearms in checked bags when they are unloaded, locked and stored inside a hard-sided case.

The weapon must additionally be declared.

AFP

Border crisis 'greatest' attempt to destabilise Europe, says Polish PM

Bohoniki, Poland - Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki on Sunday called the migrant crisis on the Belarusian-Polish border, the EU's eastern frontier, the 'greatest attempt to destabilise Europe' since the Cold War.

The premier issued his strong remarks as he prepared to meet with EU leaders at a time when Warsaw is facing not only a border crisis but heightened tensions with Brussels over allegations it is breaching its commitment to the bloc's democratic principles.

The West accuses Belarus of artificially creating the crisis by bringing in would-be migrants - mostly from the Middle East - and taking them to the border with promises of an easy crossing into the European Union.

Belarus has denied the claim, instead criticising the EU for not taking in the migrants.

Caught in the middle, migrants often report being forced to cross the border by Belarusian officials, then being pushed back into Belarusian territory by Polish authorities.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko launched a hybrid war against the EU. This is [the] greatest attempt to destabilise Europe in 30 years', Morawiecki said on Twitter.

'Poland will not yield to black-



Migrants receive food at a transport and logistics centre near the Bruzgi border point on the Belarusian-Polish border on Saturday (AFP)

mail and will do everything to defend the EU's borders.'

He linked to a video statement in which he cautioned that 'today the target is Poland, but tomorrow it will be Germany, Belgium, France or Spain'.

He also claimed that

Lukashenko had the 'back-room support of Vladimir Putin', the Russian President and an ally of the Belarusian regime.

Lukashenko told the BBC earlier that it was 'absolutely possible' his forces had helped people cross into the EU but denied or-

chestrating the operation.

Divert attention

Brussels and NATO have previously also described the migrant crisis as a 'hybrid tactic'.

Morawiecki is visiting the Baltic states - two of which also

share a border with Belarus - on Sunday to discuss the conflict and has announced he will visit other EU capitals this week.

Some observers believe Poland is using its rhetoric on the border issue to try to distract from controversial reforms that

the EU believes limit the independence of the judiciary.

The European Commission wrote to Poland on Friday to launch a process that could lead to it being deprived of funds over threats to the EU legal order.

"While the problem on Poland's border is serious and requires Western solidarity - for example by sanctioning Belarus - Morawiecki blows it out of proportion to divert attention from Poland's violation of the rule of law," political expert Marcin Zaborowski told AFP.

The policy director at the Globsec thinktank argued that the Belarus action 'pales in comparison with the war in Ukraine, cyber attack in Estonia in 2007 and Russian support for far-right extremism in Europe'.

On Sunday, Poland's border guards reported new attempted crossings, including by a 'very aggressive group of around 100' migrants.

Poland's Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said on Saturday that Belarus has now changed tactics by directing smaller groups of migrants to multiple points along the border.

He added that he expected the border showdown to last months.

AFP

15 dead in Myanmar pagoda drowning

Yangon, Myanmar - At least 15 people drowned on Sunday while crossing a flooded causeway in Myanmar to reach a Buddhist temple for a festival, rescue workers told AFP.

The tragedy unfolded as thousands of worshippers tried to reach the Kyeik Hne pagoda, which lies on a rocky outcrop around 3km off the coast near the town of Thanbyuzayat in southern Mon state.

Local officials said some died when they tried to cross the poorly marked causeway, which is only around 4m wide, while the tide was too high.

"We normally allow the people to come at 6:30am but they would not listen to us and started trying to walk across too early," local official Nai Sahai Eain told AFP.

More drowned later when they were jostled from the crowded walkway into the sea.

Ko Kyaw Thu, an emergency responder from Thanbyuzayat, told AFP that 15 bodies had been taken to hospital and three people were still missing.

Local resident Nai Wona told AFP the causeway was not marked out clearly enough, making it hard to navigate.

AFP

Sudan PM Hamdok reinstated nearly one month after coup

Khartoum, Sudan - Nearly a month after Sudan's top general ousted the Prime Minister, they signed a breakthrough deal on Sunday to reverse the military takeover that had sparked international condemnation and mass protests.

General Abdel Fattah al Burhan appeared at the presidential palace in Khartoum for a televised ceremony with a haggard looking premier Abdalla Hamdok, who had just been freed from house arrest.

The 14-point deal restores the transition to civilian rule that had been derailed by the October 25 putsch, which threw the poverty-stricken northeast African country into renewed turmoil and set off a wave of street protests.

The agreement, which comes after weeks of crisis talks involving Sudanese and outside players, declared that 'the decision of the general commander of the armed forces to relieve the transitional Prime Minister is cancelled' and to release all political detainees.

It raised hopes Sudan will be able to return to its fragile transition process toward full democracy that started after the 2019 ouster of veteran autocratic



Sudan's top general Abdel Fattah al Burhan (left) and Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok attend a deal-signing ceremony to restore the transition to civilian rule in the country in the capital Khartoum, on Sunday (AFP)

president Omar al Bashir.

Despite the breakthrough, thousands of protesters again rallied in several cities, met by security forces who fired teargas in the capital - the latest of a series of protests that, medics say, have claimed 40 lives.

A frail looking Hamdok was seen on air extolling the virtues of the 'revolution' that brought him to power in 2019.

Standing beside him, Burhan thanked Hamdok for his service and vowed that 'free and transparent elections' would be held as part of the transitional process.

"He (Hamdok) was patient with us until we reached this mo-

ment," Burhan said before posing for photos with his deputy Hamdan Daglo, head of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, and the newly restored PM holding copies of the inked agreement.

Burhan had on October 25 declared a state of emergency and ousted the government in a move that upended the two-year transition to civilian rule and sparked international condemnation.

But after weeks of intense internal and international pressure, mediators on Sunday morning announced that the military had reached an agreement to reinstate Hamdok as premier.

AFP

600 migrants travelling in two trailers rescued in Mexico

Mexico City, Mexico - Some 600 migrants from 12 countries were rescued in Mexico as they traveled crammed into two tractor-trailers, the country's National Migration Institute said on Saturday.

The 145 women and 455 men, who hailed from not only Central America but also Africa and the Indian subcontinent, were found in the southeastern state of Veracruz, the institute said in a statement.

The vast majority were from Central America with 401 from Guatemala alone. Dozens were from Honduras and Nicaragua while a total of 37 were from Bangladesh, six were from Ghana, and one person was from India and Cameroon, the institute added.

The migrants were traveling 'crammed' into the trailers of two trucks, said Tonatiuh Hernandez, the local head of the Human Rights Commission.

"There are children, minors, I saw pregnant women, sick people," said Hernandez, adding that he had never seen 'so many' migrants traveling together in such conditions.

An AFP video showed several



Migrants heading to the US, ride on the back of a truck in El Arenal, Veracruz state, Mexico on Thursday (AFP)

hundred migrants, looking sullen and tired, crowded in a courtyard of the National Migration Institute as police in riot gear stood guard nearby.

After their names were read out by officials, migrants boarded a bus to be transported for further processing.

Child protections services have also been notified regarding families with children or minors traveling alone, according to

Hernandez.

As the corridor between Central America and the United States, Mexico has seen vast numbers of migrants flow through its territory.

Two caravans of several hundred migrants are currently making their way through southern Mexico, aiming to acquire documents that allow them to transit through the country.

The flow of undocumented

migrants has surged with the inauguration of US President Joe Biden, who has taken a more humane approach to the border crisis than his predecessor Donald Trump.

The United States has recorded 1.7mn people entering illegally from Mexico between October 2020 and September 2021, an all-time high for the period.

AFP

Sri Lanka govt ends farm chemical ban as organic drive fails

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka abandoned its quest to become the world's first completely organic farming nation on Sunday, announcing it would immediately lift an import ban on pesticides and other agricultural inputs.

The island country has been in the grips of a severe economic crisis, with a lack of foreign exchange triggering shortages of food, crude oil and other essential goods.

Authorities had already walked back restrictions on fertiliser imports last month for tea, the country's main export earner.

But ahead of planned farmer protests in the capital, Sri Lanka's Agricultural Ministry said it would end a broader ban on all agrochemicals including herbicides and pesticides.

"We will now allow chemical inputs that are urgently needed," ministry secretary Udith Jayasinghe told the private News First TV network.

"Considering the need to ensure food security, we have taken this decision."

Vast tracts of farmland were abandoned after the import ban, first introduced in May.



An activist wearing a mask of Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa takes part in a demonstration to denounce the shortage of fertiliser, cooking gas, rice and other commodities in Colombo on November 16 (AFP)

Shortages have worsened in the past week, with prices for rice, vegetables and other market staples having doubled across Sri Lanka.

Supermarkets have also rationed rice sales, allowing only 5kg per customer.

Farmers' organisations had planned to march on the national parliament in Colombo on Friday to demand the import of essential chemicals to protect their crops.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had justified the import ban by saying he wanted to make Sri Lankan farming 100 per cent

organic.

The policy was introduced after a massive hit to the cash-strapped island's economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with tourism earnings and foreign worker remittances drastically falling.

Authorities attempted to save foreign exchange by last year banning a host of imported goods, including some food and spices.

Sri Lanka also shut its only oil refinery last month after running out of dollars to import crude.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Violence erupts at protest against virus curb in Brussels

Brussels, Belgium - Violence broke out at a protest against anti-COVID-19 measures in Brussels on Sunday, in which police said tens of thousands of people took part.

The march began peacefully but police later fired water cannon and tear gas in response to a group of participants throwing projectiles.

At least two police injured in the events, as officers in riot gear charged the crowd backed by water cannon. One protester was seen being evacuated by an ambulance near the Berlaymont, the EU headquarters.

Several of the demonstrators caught up in the clash wore hoods and carried Flemish nationalist flags, while others wore Nazi-era yellow stars.

Protesters set fire to wood pallets and social media images showed rioters attacking police vans with vandalised street signs.

The stand-off with riot police took place throughout the Belgian capital's EU and government district, just metres from the US and Russian embassies.

Police said 35,000 protesters marched from the North Station in Brussels against a fresh round of COVID measures announced by the government on Wednesday.



Belgian riot police stand by a burning trash can as clashes erupt during a demonstration against COVID-19 measures, including the country's health pass, in Brussels on Sunday (AFP)

day.

The demonstration, called 'Together for Freedom', largely focused on a ban on the unvaccinated from venues such as restaurants and bars.

Europe is battling another wave of infections and several countries have tightened curbs despite high levels of vaccination, especially in the west of the continent.

Belgium, one of the countries

hit the hardest by the latest wave, on Wednesday expanded its work-from-home rules and strengthened curbs against the unvaccinated.

With an average of nearly 10,300 new infections per day over the past week, Belgium is back to a rate of spread of the virus that has not been seen for a year.

Belgium also recorded 42 deaths on Friday.

Thousands rally in Europe, Austria

Tens of thousands took to the streets in cities across Europe and Austria on Saturday as anger mounted over fresh COVID-19 restrictions imposed against a resurgent pandemic.

Europe is battling a fresh wave of infections and several countries have tightened curbs, with Austria on Friday announcing a nationwide partial lockdown - the

most dramatic restrictions in Western Europe for months.

The Netherlands went back into partial lockdown last Saturday with at least three weeks of curbs, and is now planning to ban unvaccinated people from entering some venues.

In Austria, around 40,000 came out to protest in central Vienna near the Chancellery, responding to a call from the far-right FPÖ party.

They held up banners decrying 'Corona dictatorship' and slamming the 'division of society'. "It's not normal that the government deprives us of our rights," said 42-year-old teacher Katarina Gierscher, who travelled for six hours to attend the rally.

Some protesters wore a yellow star reading the words 'not vaccinated', a nod to the Star of David many Jews were forced to wear during the Nazi era.

Austria's Interior Minister Karl Nehammer expressed his outrage, saying in a statement that it 'insults the millions of victims of the Nazi dictatorship and their families'.

From Monday, 8.9mn Austrians will not be allowed to leave home except to go to work, shop for essentials and exercise.

AFP



A policeman checks the COVID-19 health pass of a customer in front of a bar in Saint-Malo, northwestern France, on Friday (AFP)

France says 5th wave hitting at 'lightning' speed

Paris, France - Fifth-wave coronavirus infections in France are rising at an alarming rate, the government reported on Sunday, with new daily COVID-19 cases close to doubling over the past week.

The seven-day average of new cases reached 17,153 on Saturday, up from 9,458 a week earlier, according to the health authorities, an increase of 81 per cent.

"The fifth wave is starting at lightning speed," government spokesman Gabriel Attal said.

The latest seven-day increase is three times the average rise of cases recorded over the previous three weeks, indicating an exponential acceleration of infections.

For now the spike in infec-

tions has not led to a massive influx of COVID-19 patients into hospitals, with the authorities attributing the limited number of intensive care patients to France's high rate of vaccinations which appear highly effective against the most dangerous forms of COVID-19.

On Saturday, hospitals reported a total of 7,974 COVID-19 patients in their care, with 1,333 of them in intensive treatment.

This compares to 6,500 and 1,000, respectively, a month earlier.

"There is a very strong increase in infections, but we also know that in France we have a very large vaccination cover," he said.

AFP

Dutch police arrest 19 people over new coronavirus riots in The Hague

The Hague, Netherlands - Dutch police said on Sunday they have arrested 19 people over riots in The Hague after the country was rocked by a second night of violence over the government's coronavirus measures.

Officers in riot gear charged hundreds of demonstrators who set fire to bicycles and an electric moped piled in the middle of a busy intersection on Saturday night. A water cannon put out the blaze.

"The police were also pelted with heavy fireworks and stones thrown from roofs," the Hague police said in a statement.

'Officers made a total of 19 arrests for, among other things, insult.'

Riot police in one incident dragged a woman from a passing car after the occupants shouted at police, and put her

into a police van, AFP correspondents witnessed.

Five police officers were injured during the unrest while a rock thrown by rioters smashed the window of a passing ambulance carrying a patient, police said.

Riots also erupted in the central 'Bible Belt' town of Urk and cities in southern Limburg province, while angry fans disrupted two football matches being played behind closed doors because of coronavirus rules, Dutch media said.

"These people out here are protesting about 2G (restrictions on the unvaccinated) and the lockdown," Hague pizza shop owner Ferdi Yilmaz told AFP as he surveyed the damage to his shop.

"They are angry about it," said Yilmaz, who added police dragged people out of his shop



Demonstrators burn tyres and other items on a street during a protest against the Dutch government's coronavirus measures, in The Hague on Saturday (AFP)

and 'hit me on the head for no reason'.

Earlier several thousand protesters angry at the latest

measures gathered in Amsterdam on Saturday, despite one group earlier in the day having cancelled their rally be-

cause of the previous night's violence.

Another thousand marched through the southern city of

Breda near the Belgian border, carrying banners with slogans such as 'No Lockdown'.

Organisers said they opposed Prime Minister Mark Rutte's plans to exclude the unvaccinated from bars and restaurants.

"People want to live, that's why we're here," said organiser Joost Eras.

"But we're not rioters. We come in peace," he said.

Around him the mood was festive, with some protesters dancing behind floats carrying DJs, dubbed 'party buses'.

The latest demonstrations followed the Rotterdam unrest in which police said they had fired both warning and targeted shots and used water cannon.

'Fifty-one people were arrested during the major disturbances on Friday evening and night on Coolsingel [street] in Rotterdam. About half of them

were just underage,' Rotterdam police said in a tweet.

The rioters came from different parts of the country, they said. Police were still searching for more suspects.

Some of the rioters had links to football hooligans and 'groups that often have ties to other forms of organised crime', Justice and Security Minister Ferd Grapperhaus told public broadcaster NPO.

The Netherlands went back into Western Europe's first partial lockdown of the winter last Saturday with at least three weeks of curbs, and is now planning to ban unvaccinated people from entering some venues, the so-called 2G option.

The country suffered its worst riots in decades in January after the government introduced a coronavirus curfew.

AFP

Prominent journalist killed in Mogadishu suicide bombing

Mogadishu, Somalia - A prominent Somali journalist who was a staunch critic of militant group Al-Shabaab was killed by a suicide bomber as he left a restaurant in the capital Mogadishu on Saturday, officials and colleagues said.

Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the blast, which officials said killed Abdiiaziz Mohamud Guled, the director of government-owned Radio Mogadishu.

The attack wounded two other people, a director at Somali National Television named as Sharmarke Mohamed Warsame and a driver.

"May God bless my brother Abdiiaziz Mohamud Guled, he was a brave man the nation lost," Somalia's Deputy Information Minister Abdirahman Yusuf Omar said in a statement.

Government official Ismael Mukhtar Omar, also a colleague of the dead man, told AFP that police had confirmed that the



Abdiiaziz Mohamud Guled

blast had been caused by a suicide bomber.

"He came out of the restaurant and went into his car with a colleague after they had dinner and the suicide bomber ran onto the car window and detonated himself," said another colleague Ali Mohamed.

Al-Shabaab, which has been waging a violent insurgency against the country's fragile government since 2007, claimed re-

sponsibility for the attack in a statement, saying its fighters had long pursued the journalist.

Guled, also known as Abdiiaziz Afrika, was well known for his interviews with Al-Shabaab suspects detained by the Somali security forces, and his programmes attracted large audiences inside and outside the country.

Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders, known by its French acronym RSF, says Somalia remains Africa's most dangerous country for media personnel with more than 50 killed since 2010.

The Al-Qaeda linked Al-Shabaab controlled the capital until 2011 when it was pushed out by African Union troops, but it still holds territory in the countryside and launches frequent attacks against government and civilian targets in Mogadishu and elsewhere.

AFP

Venezuela sets largest orchestra world record

Caracas, Venezuela - Venezuela on Saturday locked in the Guinness record for the world's largest orchestra after thousands of local musicians performed Tchaikovsky's *Slavonic March*.

The performers were brought together by Venezuela's publicly funded 'El Sistema' programme, which was founded in 1975 and has since provided classical music training to thousands of working-class children.

Gustavo Dudamel, the music director of the Paris Opera and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, is one of its most notable alumni.

"I can confirm that this attempt has been successful, congratulations," an official in charge of delivering the verdict announced on a screen during a ceremony at the El Sistema headquarters. "You are officially amazing."

About 12,000 musicians, including both children and adults who are members of the country's main orchestra, the Simon Bolivar, played for the record on November 13. In the end, Guinness



Members of the National System of Orchestras of Venezuela play during an attempt to enter the Guinness Book of Records for the largest orchestra in the world in Caracas on November 13 (AFP)

World Records recognised only 8,573 of them as having set the record, according to a certificate issued by the organisation.

Performance of the piece was observed by around 260 auditors from the accounting firm

KPMG, charged with ensuring each musician complied with the rules to set a new record, which include not sharing instruments and playing for at least five minutes during the score.

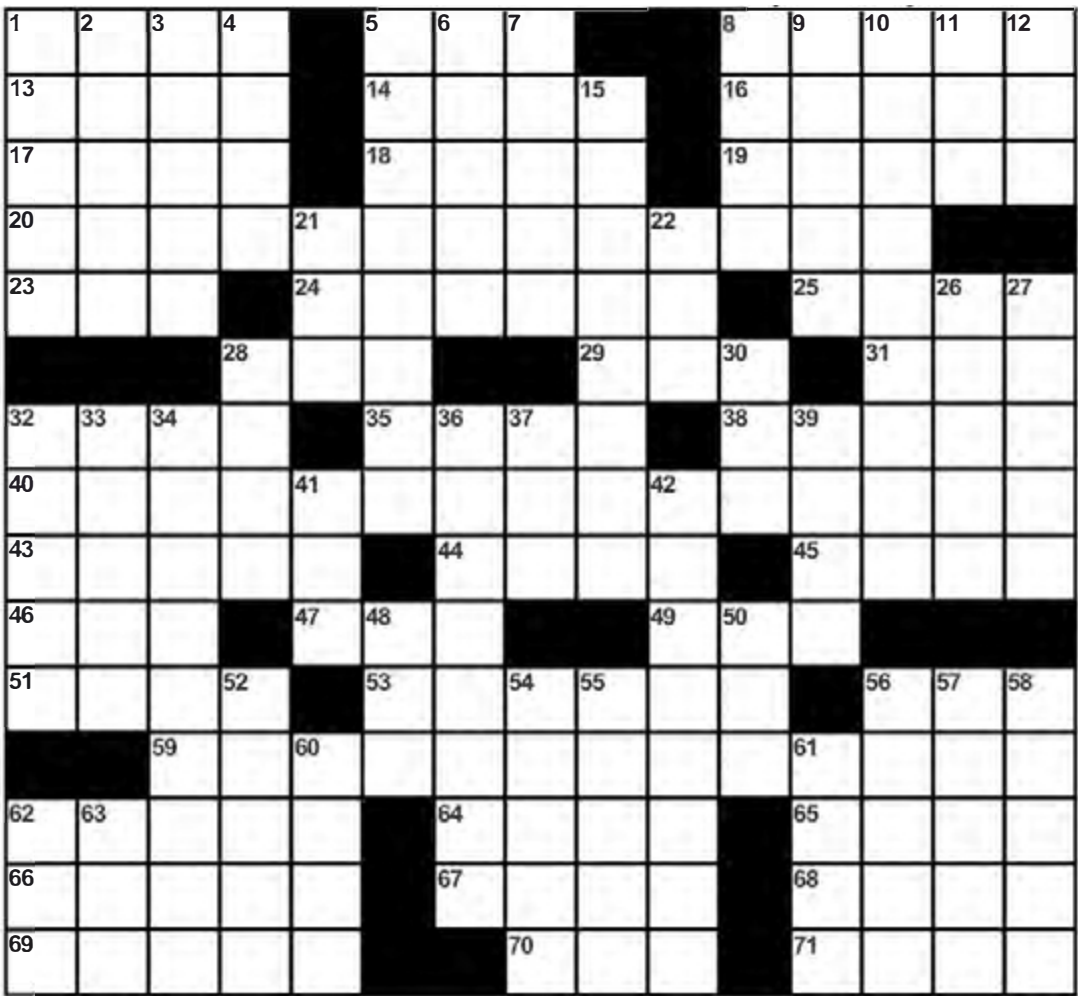
"This is a great achievement

not just for El Sistema but for our country," said programme director Eduardo Mendez.

Russia had held the previous record, set in 2019 by more than 8,000 musicians.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Hang-out buddy
 - 5) Calendar mo.
 - 8) One of two berths
 - 13) Cause some vexation
 - 14) Ignore socially
 - 16) Persona non _ (unwelcome one)
 - 17) Sicilian lava source
 - 18) Not needing to be broken
 - 19) Some Parliament members
 - 20) Ding-a-lings
 - 23) Feminine pronoun
 - 24) Brass that resembles gold
 - 25) "Pulp Fiction" character (with "the")
 - 28) Ghostly sound
 - 29) "No _ ands or butts"
 - 31) Damage
 - 32) Cable sports award
 - 35) Target of a tiny arrow
 - 38) Make amends
 - 40) Create empty-nesters
 - 43) Be reckless with a bucket
 - 44) "Dynamics" start

- 45) They may get in your hair
- 46) Dine
- 47) Parabola
- 49) Aviate
- 51) Mushroom part
- 53) Pure and virtuous
- 56) Auto group letters
- 59) Common morning fare
- 62) Expenditures
- 64) Shepard who went around and around
- 65) "Uno, dos" follower
- 66) Dislodges
- 67) Actress Campbell
- 68) Penny
- 69) Axes or cans
- 70) Like many roses
- 71) Movie locations

- DOWN**
- 1) Leafy salad green
 - 2) Unforeseen obstacle
 - 3) Some human bones
 - 4) Potatoes go-with
 - 5) Kuiper Belt object
 - 6) Render weaponless
 - 7) Louisiana dish
 - 8) Jamaican citrus fruit
 - 9) Fork feature
 - 10) Penny-pinching

- 11) Bus station announcement (Abbr.)
- 12) _ in rabbit (grade-school lesson)
- 15) Certain German
- 21) "Not a moment_ soon!"
- 22) " _ Wiedersehen"
- 26) Canine disease
- 27) Try too hard, competitively
- 28) Some tourney draws
- 30) Spotted
- 32) A lot of Mississippi?
- 33) Water balloon-hitting-cement sound
- 34) Sit-in participant
- 36) Male carriage driver
- 37) It shows George's face
- 39) Neat as a pin
- 41) "I figured it out!"
- 42) Started to melt
- 48) "His Master's Voice" of old electronics
- 50) Was in charge of everyone
- 52) Janis Joplin's "Me and Bobby _"
- 54) Having more capabilities
- 55) Toil away

- 56) Correspond, grammatically
- 57) Contract negotiator, often
- 58) Admnin. aides
- 60) "Dress For Less"

- chain
- 61) List-ending abbreviations
- 62) Not working today
- 63) Canton in Switzerland



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Your plans for the next several days won't go off exactly as you expected. In fact, they probably won't be anything you can really count on. Basically, it's going to be like Murphy's Law: whatever can go wrong will go wrong. Try not to get too frustrated with others. It's not their fault. Fortunately, if anyone is good at coming up with Plan B or C or D at a moment's notice, it's you. Start making those plans now.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
You're known for being brave, but you'd better muster up as much of that bravery as you possibly can now, because for the next several days you could be dealing with something far more stressful than a jealous lover. You'll need to handle misplaced directions, miscommunications, and mistakes, all of which could lead to misunderstandings within relationships, be they romantic, platonic, or professional. Yes, this could be tricky.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Any especially difficult decisions should be postponed until you know you're looking solely at the facts. Right now, there's a lot of exaggeration and distortion in your thinking about this matter. Wait for clarity to come in the next few days. You might be feeling a lot more than thinking, and this could cause a misunderstanding if you're not careful. Emotions magnify everyone's behaviour, and you could be feeling paranoid.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
For the next several days, you're going to feel as if the universe has it in for you personally by making you late, confused, or generally discombobulated whenever possible, causing problems with directions, and tossing everything but the kitchen sink in your way. In your case, a secret might be the problem. Sit tight and don't say a word.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You're going to need a lot of help in the patience department for the next few days, and that goes double for today. If it can possibly go wrong, it will. Quickly and big time. The good news is that if anyone can deal with a whole slew of messy, irritating little details that are trying to come between you and where you want to be, it's definitely you. Get busy dealing.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Connecting your goals with those of other people will help you make major headway today. There is power in numbers. Your place in any group depends on how well your associates understand what you're willing to do, so be sure to volunteer for as many tasks as possible. If you want to get involved (and you should), you have to let everyone know about it. Elbowing your way into a new dynamic won't be hard if you use humour.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
It definitely won't be easy for you to deal with being delayed, roadblocked, stalled, and hindered, especially if you're off on a trip, but you're famous for being versatile, so you'll manage. Just keep your eye on your schedule, double-check all plans, and follow up on confirmation calls to those hotels you've booked ahead. Make sure all your ducks are in a row and things should go off without a hitch.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Today, you'll be lucky if you don't end up in some kind of mistaken identity scheme or if a similar miscommunication doesn't come along and mess with your plans. A harmony-loving sign such as yours finds it difficult to right itself and move on, but you'll just have to make the effort to rise above it all and get things back in balance.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Being patient has never been on your list of virtues, but you've never wanted it to be either. You could be even a bit less patient for the next several days, though, and with good reason. Murphy's Law is going to be in full effect, and your best bet is to always have alternate plans figured out and ready to go. And be eminently patient.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Your attitude toward romance might be changing. Instead of replying immediately to messages and flirting up a storm, you might be looking forward to an extended period of time alone. It means that you're focusing on what you need and not on what you think you need. Listen to yourself, and give yourself the emotional distance you seek. Even if you have to cancel a social obligation, you should respect yourself enough to do so.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You really shouldn't rush things along right now, no matter how much you and everyone around you wants you to do so. Ignore them. Sometimes being patient is torture, but it's the only way to achieve what you want. Especially if it concerns a financial matter. Keep your eyes on your bank balance, wallet, and plastic, and don't spend a thing.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
A misunderstanding today could test your tolerance and force you to ask serious questions about how open-minded you really are. If people from different cultures believe or act differently from you, this isn't a problem. It's an opportunity! Harmony is a lot easier to achieve when you think the best of people and greet them with a smile instead of suspicion. Start a conversation and respect what others say.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The credit of developing the polio vaccine goes to

- a. Jones Salk
- b. Alb E Sabin
- c. J L Baird
- d. J Perkins

2. The headquarter of ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia are situated at

- a. Bangkok
- b. Geneva
- c. Santiago (Chile)
- d. Baghdad

3. The headquarter of OAU (Organization of African Unity) are in

- a. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- b. Washington DC
- c. Paris
- d. Jakarta, Indonesia

Answers: 1. a 2. a 3. a

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

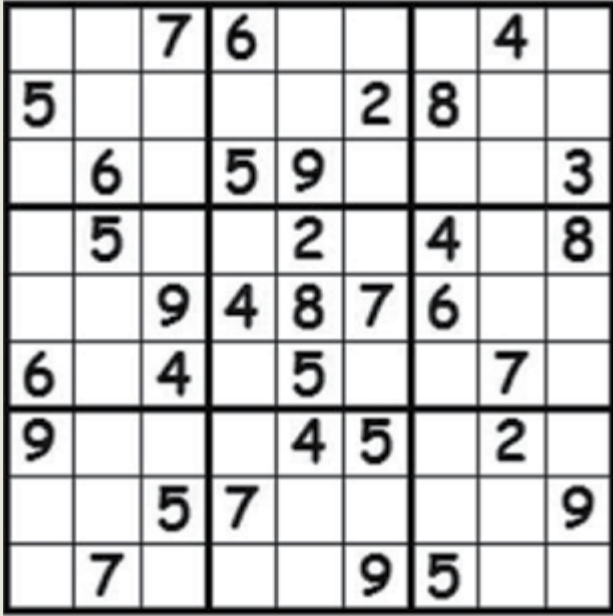


Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

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



WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



PHU QUOC

PEARL UNDISCOVERED

Vietnam's tourist island Phu Quoc, a UNESCO biosphere reserve with sugar white beaches and tropical jungles, reopens to delight tourists



Tour guide Lai Chi Phuc has been counting down the days until travellers return to the white-sand beaches and thick tropical jungle of Vietnam's Phu Quoc, a once-poor fishing island pushing to be Asia's next holiday hotspot, as pandemic restrictions ease.

On Saturday, around 200 South Koreans touched down on the island, which lies a few kilometres off Cambodia in the azure waters of the Gulf of Thailand, after a vaccine passport scheme kicked off this month in Vietnam.

Among the arrivals was Tae Hyeong Lee, who was returning to the island for a third time and keen to make a beeline for the beach.

"It's wonderful to be here. This is my first time travelling out of South Korea since the pandemic started," he told AFP. But others may skip the lazy beach break in favour of action and entertainment as they shuffle be-

tween a 12,000-room hotel complex, an amusement park, 18-hole golf course, casino, safari park and miniature Venice.

The US\$2.8bn leisure resort, part of the 'sleepless city' model, opened six months ago as COVID-19 ravaged tourism across the world - and as other Asian countries reliant on the industry, like Thailand, were rethinking their mass tourism frameworks.

For 33-year-old Phuc, who remembers a poverty-stricken childhood where "everyone wanted to escape Phu Quoc," the island's growing popularity gave him a way to return home after years of scratching out a living as a salesman in the nearby cities of the Mekong Delta.

"But it's a pity also," he said, lamenting the loss of the island's palm-fringed beaches to resorts.

More rooms for visitors

Ahead of Saturday's reopening, staff at Vin-pearl resort - where the arrivals are staying - swept beaches, arranged cutlery on tables and laid out sunbeds. Others busied them-

selves painting delicate flowers on hats.

"When we heard visitors were coming back, I was just so excited," said duty manager Ngo Thi Bich Thuong.

Before the pandemic in 2019, around five million people, including half a million foreigners - mostly from China, South Korea, Japan and Russia - holidayed on Phu Quoc.

Vingroup - the enormously powerful conglomerate behind the new complex - is pushing to make the island a new international destination on the world tourist map.

To cater for the tourist boom, 40,000 hotel rooms have been built, planned or are under construction, vice chairman of the Vietnam Tourism Advisory Board, Ken Atkinson told AFP - "That's more hotel keys than they have in Sydney, Australia."

Globally popular vacation spots, such as Thailand's Phuket, have given Vietnam something to aim for.

Atkinson took a group of senior Vietnamese government officials there in 2005, but while Phuket's vibrant international tourist scene took years to build up, Viet-

nam has a tendency of wanting to do everything all at once, he noted.

"Unfortunately I don't think there was enough attention given to what would be in the long-term benefit of the island," he added.

UNESCO reserve

Phu Quoc is a UNESCO biosphere reserve - surrounding waters are stuffed with coral reefs and its beaches were once nesting spots for Hawksbill and Green turtles. However, no nesting has taken place in recent years, the UN body said in their last assessment in 2018.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has warned of "an almost unimaginable flood of plastic" that chokes rivers, canals and sea life.

Around 160 tonnes of trash - almost enough to fill 16 trucks - is generated every day, according to WWF, which says the island's waste management is not fit to cope with the tourism explosion.

"More and more tourists are very con-

scious of the environment. They don't want to be going to places where beaches are littered or where effluent is going into the sea," Atkinson warned.

Pockets of paradise

Alongside the trash, and the garish headline attractions - including the world's longest non-stop three-rope cable car and Vietnam's first teddy bear museum - however, there are still pockets of paradise.

Chu Dinh Duc, 26, from mainland Vietnam, first saw Phu Quoc from the back of a motorbike in 2017. Speeding through dense forests and winding his way to the few remaining sleepy villages where fishermen cast their nets into the ocean as the sun came up, he fell in love with it. Two years later, he opened a simple home stay business catering to foreigners.

"My goal here is not to take a lot of their money," he said. "I want as many as possible to come. If Phu Quoc remained undeveloped, it would just be a pearl undiscovered."

AFP



BAVARIA

CHRISTMAS CAUTIONS



German states cancel all Christmas markets over exponential surge in COVID-19 infections

The German states of Bavaria and Saxony on Friday cancelled all their Christmas markets and unveiled drastic curbs on public life as the country scrambles to contain soaring coronavirus infections.

"The situation is very, very serious and difficult," Markus Soeder, premier of the southern state of Bavaria, said as he also announced a shutdown of clubs, bars and night service at restaurants.

The eastern state of Saxony unveiled similar measures and went even further by closing all sporting and cultural venues, banning tourism, public consumption of alcohol and barring the unvaccinated from

non-essential shops and hairdressers.

Saxony premier Michael Kretschmer - whose state has Germany's lowest vaccination rate at just under 60 per cent of the population - admitted that many of the restrictions would affect the vaccinated as well. He, however, said tough action was needed to keep hospitals from being overwhelmed and called for solidarity from all citizens. "We need more 'we' and less 'I' in this pandemic," he told reporters.

Bavaria and Saxony are among the hardest hit regions in the ferocious fourth COVID-19 wave sweeping Germany.

While Germany had a weekly incidence rate of 340.7 recorded infections per 100,000 people on Friday, according to the Robert Koch Institute health agency, the figure was far higher in Saxony (593.6) and

Bavaria (625.3).

Health, a priority

The Bavarian state capital of Munich on Tuesday had become the first major German city to cancel its Christmas market for the second year in a row. Saxony's cancellations means the famed Dresden Christmas market is also scrapped.

Germany hosts some 2,500 Christmas markets each year, cherished by visitors who come to savour mulled wine and roasted chestnuts, and shop for seasonal trinkets among clusters of wooden chalets.

In pre-pandemic times, they drew about 160 million domestic and international visitors annually who brought in revenues of Euro 3.5bn (US\$3.4bn to US\$5.6bn), according to the BSM stallkeepers' industry

association.

"It's a catastrophe for us," Eleonore Stiegel, who operates a stand at the Christmas market in the historic town of Bamberg, said. "We have already bought our wares and now are left with nothing for the second year in a row."

Konrad Friedrich, who also plies his trade at the Bamberg market, said he could understand the decision given the explosion in infections.

"What's more important? The market or health?" he said. "Health, of course."

In addition to the new nightlife restrictions, Bavarian sport and culture venues will be subject to a 25-percent capacity limit and retail outlets will have to restrict customer flows, Soeder said.

Parts of Bavaria with incidence rates

above 1,000 - eight districts on Friday - will face even stricter curbs with only daycare facilities, schools and shops allowed to continue until at least mid-December.

In Saxony, such hotspots will see a curfew for the unvaccinated from 10pm, the state's health minister Petra Koepping said.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and the leaders of Germany's 16 states agreed Thursday to shut the unvaccinated out of restaurants, sporting events and cultural shows nationwide after new cases soared to an all-time daily high of more than 65,000.

However, the director of the Robert Koch Institute, Lothar Wieler, told reporters Friday that with the exponential rise in infection levels, the curbs would be insufficient to contain the latest surge.

AFP

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Man Utd finally sack Solskjaer after dismal run



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer reacts at the final whistle of his last match as the team manager against Watford, in Watford on Saturday (AFP)

Manchester, UK - Manchester United ended Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's three-year reign as manager at Old Trafford on Sunday, but plan to wait until the end of the season to name the Norwegian's permanent successor.

Saturday's 4-1 embarrassment at the hands of struggling Watford was the final straw for the United board, who had stuck by Solskjaer in recent weeks despite

humiliating home defeats to Liverpool and Manchester City.

Former midfielder Michael Carrick, who was part of Solskjaer's coaching team, will take charge of the forthcoming games while the club look to appoint an interim manager.

'Manchester United announces that Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has left his role as Manager,' the club said. 'Ole will always be

a legend at Manchester United and it is with regret that we have reached this difficult decision. While the past few weeks have been disappointing, they should not obscure all the work he has done over the past three years to rebuild the foundations for long-term success.'

Solskjaer leaves with United already realistically out of the Premier League title race, 12

points behind leaders Chelsea down in seventh in the table, and having exited the League Cup.

Carrick's first game in charge will be a crucial Champions League trip to Villarreal on Tuesday. Another defeat in Spain would leave the Red Devils needing both results in the final round of matches in Group F to go their way to avoid crashing out at the group stage for a second consec-

utive season.

'Nightmare'

A run of five defeats in Solskjaer's final seven league games contrasts sharply with the anticipation that surrounded the club in August when Cristiano Ronaldo made a surprise return to Old Trafford in the final days of the transfer window.

United also spent over £100mn on Jadon Sancho and Raphael Varane as they looked to build on finishing second in the league to Manchester City last season. However, Solskjaer was unable to assemble the pieces of his star-studded squad into a collective unit despite Ronaldo's return of nine goals in 14 games.

"We don't know what to do with the ball, we don't know how to defend properly and we're conceding a lot of goals," said United goalkeeper David de Gea, whose double penalty save from Watford's Ismaila Sarr counted for nothing.

"It's not acceptable for this club and the level of players that we have. It's another nightmare."

Solskjaer had ridden out storms before in a rollercoaster but ultimately trophyless three years. However, even his credit as a club legend for scoring the winning goal in the 1999 Champions League final to win a historic treble for Alex Ferguson's side was fading as he was booed by the travelling support at Vicarage Road. "Thank you Ole. You did us proud," said former United captain Gary Neville, who has been criticised for not calling for his former teammate to be sacked in his punditry.

AFP

Bayern penalise quarantined unvaccinated players: Report



Bayern Munich's Cameroonian forward Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting (left) and midfielder Joshua Kimmich (AFP)

Berlin, Germany - Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich have docked the wages of unvaccinated players like star midfielder Joshua Kimmich who is in quarantine over contact with Covid-infected individuals, *Bild* reported on Sunday.

Kimmich was sent into a second round of isolation on Friday because of a new coronavirus exposure.

He had just been released on Tuesday from quarantine arising from contact with team-mate Niklas Suele who tested positive last week.

Kimmich (26) has sparked a heated debate in Germany since revealing he opted not to be vaccinated due to 'personal concerns'.

Bayern bosses reportedly summoned him and four other unvaccinated teammates on Thursday to inform them of the pay cut when they are in isolation because they have not taken the jab, *Bild* said.

Bayern have declined com-

ment. Under new rules taking effect from November 1, employees who miss work because of a quarantine are no longer entitled to receive compensation if they are unvaccinated.

Besides Kimmich, his teammates Serge Gnabry, Jamal Musiala, Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting and Michael Cuisance are also unvaccinated, *Bild* said.

For Kimmich, whose annual pay reaches €20mn, a week's quarantine means earning losses of about €384,000.

His absence has left his club struggling. On Friday, the Bundesliga leaders crashed to a shock 2-1 defeat at Augsburg.

Former Bayern boss Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said that if the wage cuts are confirmed, they 'should be understood as a sign that the club is now reacting. Because it must react'.

Germany's failure to shake off the pandemic also has financial consequences for Bayern, he said.

AFP

Barca edge past Espanyol to give Xavi debut win

Barcelona, Spain - Xavi Hernandez made a winning start as Barcelona coach on Saturday as a dubious Memphis Depay penalty was enough to defeat local rivals Espanyol 1-0 in La Liga.

Depay's strike at the start of the second half ensured Xavi's homecoming at Camp Nou ended in victory, but a nervy one, that will have left him under no illusions about the difficulty of the task ahead.

Raul de Tomas twice struck the post late on as Espanyol spurned a flurry of late chances that really should have seen them take a draw from a game Barca dominated for an hour and then almost let slip from their grasp.

Results, though, must come quickly and this one lifts Xavi's team from ninth in the table to sixth, six points behind fourth-placed Atletico Madrid, who earlier needed a late Felipe header to win 1-0 at home to Osasuna. Sevilla, in third, were held to a 2-2 draw by Alaves.

There was also an undeniable uplift in mood at Camp Nou, with the 74,418 attendance almost



Barcelona's forward Memphis Depay (right) vie for the ball with Espanyol's defender Leandro Cabrera, in Barcelona on Saturday (AFP)

double the 37,278 that watched Barca draw here against Alaves two weeks ago.

"They made things complicated for us in the last 15 minutes," said Xavi. "We would have deserved 2-0 but it's a good win to start the project."

At his unveiling last week, Xavi had emphasised the need for 'rules' and even before kick-off there were signs of a shift. The players rolled into Camp Nou under a plume of red smoke,

with the squad arriving all together on the team bus.

Barcelona's XI boasted eight La Masia graduates, including Ilias Akhomach, who was handed his debut. Ilias was the second 17-year-old in Xavi's first starting line-up along with Gavi and when he was replaced at half-time, on came the 19-year-old Abde Ezzalzouli.

In the warm-up, there was a more intense exercise of attack against defence and when Depay



Barcelona's Spanish coach Xavi Hernandez during the match (AFP)

scored it was perhaps not just relief that saw all 10 outfield players celebrating together in the corner.

Faster football

The football was faster and more fun. Barcelona's players seemed liberated in the final third, where passes were flicked, scooped and backheeled. The best of them, by Gavi, led to Depay winning the penalty.

They started in a 4-3-3 with

both Gavi and Ilias hugging the touchlines and stretching Espanyol's defence out wide.

As well as the additional width, there was a clear intention to hunt the ball higher up the pitch. Barca were happy to leave defenders one against one at the back if it meant more players pressing Espanyol in their own half. Nico almost scored when he stepped into to steal a pass from goalkeeper Diego Lopez but he looked, unsuccessfully, for a penalty instead of finishing.

There were 11 shots in the first 45 minutes and plenty of chances as Depay failed to catch an early volley before Ilias blazed over from close range.

The best spell of pressure came around the half-hour mark as Nico looked certain to score from Jordi Alba's cutback but was denied and Depay was put through but his smashed shot was blocked by the chest of Lopez at the near post.

De Tomas almost punished some lethargic defending by Oscar Mingueza but the deflected finish was tipped over.

AFP



SRI LANKA FLATTEN WEST INDIES ATTACK

On a surface that is expected to dry out and take turn by day three, Sri Lanka's 267 for 3 represents a substantial advantage

Galle, Sri Lanka - Dimuth Karunaratne hunkered down in the difficult first session, scored more confidently in the afternoon, and then pressed home Sri Lanka's advantage in the evening, to go to stumps at 132 off 265 balls in his first Test since May.

Pathum Nissanka and Dhananjaya de Silva also made contrasting fifties, to help their captain bookend the day with big stands. On a surface that is expected to dry out and take turn by day three, Sri Lanka's 267 for 3 represents a substantial advantage for the hosts.

West Indies will rue a number of close and missed chances, none greater than the dropped catch off Karunaratne when he was on 14. Rahkeem Cornwall, who perhaps put Karunaratne through his greatest test of the innings with his first spell, got a ball to take the outside edge as the batter attempted to open the face. It flew just wide of the wicket-keeper's gloves, and at a catchable height to the right of slip. But Jermaine Blackwood could not get two hands to the ball.

Offspin was West Indies' most effective weapon on day one, with Roston Chase removing Os-hada Fernando and Angelo Mathews, both for 3, after tea. Their best bowler, however, was Jason Holder, who delivered eight maiden overs in his total of 14, and troubled Mathews so consis-



Sri Lanka's Dhananjaya de Silva plays a shot during the first day of the first Test match against West Indies, in Galle on Sunday (AFP)

tently that it prompted the batter to take a fatal risk against Chase.

Shannon Gabriel, who was controversially preferred over Kemar Roach for this Test, was the other bowler to take a wicket, when he had Nissanka chase a wide delivery, and nick off to first slip roughly midway through the middle session. Gabriel was expensive, though, leaking 56 runs from his 12 overs.

Both frontline spinners - Cornwall and left-armer Jorrel Warrican - also delivered good spells, particularly in the morning, when the pitch had a little bite.

Karunaratne struggled in the early overs, as you might expect from a batter who has barely played any competitive cricket over the past six months. He played and missed against Gabriel and Holder, and was

pinned down by Cornwall, who used the crease to vary his angle to the left-hander from around the wicket. With the benefit of that dropped catch, though, Karunaratne survived, and began to build. He went to lunch on 32 off 75 balls, and raised the tempo after the break - the conditions having settled somewhat. He used his feet to drive the spinners through mid-off, and sometimes shuffled across to either lap or glance them through fine leg - his two most productive regions. The seamers he largely hit square of the wicket, often employing his favoured flick.

Karunaratne got to fifty soon after lunch, and had a second mild slice of fortune soon after, when he hit one low in the air through the legs of bowler Cornwall, who was not quick enough

to get down to the possible catch. But the remainder of his innings was largely fuss-free. He used the depth of the crease to punish spinners who pitched too short, and although his first attempt at a reverse sweep had prompted a big lbw appeal, he got better with that shot through the course of the day.

Karunaratne did get stuck in the nineties for 29 balls, but that was largely the doing of Holder's impeccable line and length. The hundred, which came off 212 deliveries, was the 13th of his career, and his fourth this year - his previous four innings having brought 66, 118, 244 and 75. Earlier in 2021, he'd also hit a second-innings hundred at The Wanderers.

Karunaratne's most fruitful stand of the day was with Nissanka, who hit 56 off 140 balls.

The pair made 139 together, which is a Sri Lankan record for the first wicket against West Indies. Although Karunaratne was reticent through the first session, Nissanka had been even more so, having been promoted to the top of the innings due to the elected absence of Lahiru Thirimanne.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA 1 ST INNINGS		
P Nissanka	c Cornwall b Gabriel	56
D Karunaratne	not out	132
O Fernando	c Bonner b Chase	3
A Mathews	c Holder b Chase	3
D de Silva	not out	56
Extras:	(b 5, lb 6, nb 6)	17
TOTAL:	267/3 in 88 overs	

Fall of wickets: 1-139, 2-164, 3-170

Bowling: 5 Gabriel 12-0-56-1, J Holder 14-8-15-0, R Cornwall 20-3-64-0, K Mayers 3-0-9-0, J Warrican 18-1-60-0, R Chase 17-2-42-2, J Blackwood 1-0-6-0, K Brathwaite 3-0-4-0



Injured Jeremy Solozano is being carried on a stretcher (AFP)

W Indies debutant Solozano struck on head, scans show no structural damage

Galle, Sri Lanka - West Indies debutant Jeremy Solozano was taken off the field on a stretcher and transferred to a hospital from the Galle Stadium in an ambulance for scans, after being hit on the helmet while fielding at short leg.

The incident happened just before the lunch break on the first day of the opening Test between Sri Lanka and West Indies. Solozano was taken to a hospital in Colombo, which is more than an hour away by road. Later in the evening, Cricket West Indies tweeted that Solozano's scans showed 'no structural damage' but he would be kept at the hospital overnight for observation.

He was hit on the front of the helmet near the forehead on the fourth ball of the 24th over when Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne pulled a short ball from Roston Chase. The batter had middled the ball and Solozano had barely any time to react or take evasive action.

Solozano lay still on the ground for several minutes after that but appeared conscious as he got medical attention and players of both teams surrounded him. He was also seen talking briefly before his forehead was covered with a towel, probably because of the

heat as the mid-day sun was beating down hard.

A worried-looking Phil Simmons, the head coach, came down the dressing room stairs and stood near the boundary rope before Solozano was stretchered off the field and into the ambulance near the boundary.

Solozano, the 26-year-old

No structural damage. But he would be kept at the hospital overnight for observation

CRICKET WEST INDIES

left-hand batter from Trinidad, who had played 40 first-class games before this, was earlier handed his Test cap by Simmons before play and was set to open for West Indies later in the game. He had played in the 2014 Under-19 World Cup, and has also represented West Indies A.

He scored 74 off 216 balls in the second of the two intra-squad Best vs Best matches in Antigua before the Sri Lanka tour, with lead selector Roger Harper praising his 'application, patience and composure'. Cricinfo

Three Sri Lanka women players test positive for COVID-19

Muscat - Three Sri Lanka players at the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2021 have tested positive for COVID-19 and are isolating.

According to an ICC statement, the players tested positive following a screening of all team members after one player showed mild symptoms, as per the bio-secure protocols in place to ensure the safety of all participants in the nine-team event, which got underway in Harare on Sunday.

Two of the players are experiencing mild symptoms, whilst the third is asymptomatic. All three are isolating and receiving the appropriate medical care.

The remainder of the Sri Lanka squad are negative but are currently isolating as a precaution and will be re-tested ahead of their opening match against the Netherlands on Tuesday.

ICC head of events Chris Tetley said the event would be proceeding as planned.

"We have playing squads of 15 at the event, which allows for injuries and illness, including COVID-19 to be managed, and in addition teams have had the option of bringing travelling reserves with them."

"As you would expect, the remainder of the squad are being closely monitored and they will all be re-tested ahead of taking to the field on Tuesday," he added.

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49er, 49erFX, Nacra 17 championships conclude



The Dutch scores a double and with brits defending title

Muscat - The 49er, 49erFX and Nacra 17 World Championships, organised by Oman Sail, concluded with a double for the Dutch, and with brits defending title.

Odile van Aanholt and Elise de Ruyter (NED) won the 49erFX world title, while countrymen Bart Lambriex and Floris van der Werken took matching golds in the 49er fleet.

Both teams are new pairings since this summer, both teams made it hard on themselves on the last day, and both teams came through in the medal race when they needed to.

“It’s been a few years away from the 49er but it’s great to be back,” said Floris van der Werken, who didn’t have confirmation of the win until most of the fleet had finished. “Bart did

an amazing job of putting the boat in the right place.”

In the 49erFX, the Dutch pairing proved that a new team can take on the world. Van Aanholt’s and deRuyter’s respective partners were injured leading up to the worlds. But the strong training community in Holland proved that sailors were interchangeable.

Happy and loose on shore throughout the week, and with the support of both their parents on shore, the pair made the win look easy.

“We’re so happy with what

we’ve done here,” said de Ruyter. “It’s great to be out here in Oman with my father, and Odile with her parents, to celebrate together. But I’m looking forward to going back home, even if the weather is cold, just to do normal things again.”

Helene Naess and Marie Ronningen (NOR) kept their gold medal hopes alive by gaining six points on the dutch in the last fleet race.

In the medal race, the Norwegians sailed brilliantly, smoothly gybing into the top three downwind, but it wasn’t enough to

overtake the Dutch. Double Olympic Gold medalists Martine Grael and Kahena Kunze (BRA), were also unable to mount a real challenge, despite passing half the fleet in the last downwind leg and ended up in third.

Too close to call in 49er

In the 49er, the points were exceedingly close as the flying Dutchmen won by only two points in the end. In the final fleet race of the series this morning, the Dutch lost a number of points to the Germans, Tim Fischer and Fabian Graf (GER).

A protest was lodged against the Dutch by the Danish team of Frederick Rask and Jacob Precht Jensen, who were sitting in third overall.

After considerable deliberation over the port/starboard incident, the Dutch were disqualified from the final fleet race, and went into the medal race having dropped to second.

“We weren’t happy about the protest,” said Lambriex. “But it didn’t change much, we still had to go out and sail well in the Medal Race.”

The event in Oman was supported by national carrier Oman Air, OQ and the Barceló Musanah Resort as official partners, the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) and be’ah as environmental supporter. The National Mineral Water Company Salsabeel Water provided water during the event while the Royal Navy of Oman provided medical support throughout.

Hamilton wins Qatar Grand Prix, Verstappen second

Doha, Qatar - Lewis Hamilton won Sunday’s inaugural Qatar Grand Prix with a commanding performance from pole to cut Max Verstappen’s world championship lead to eight points.

The Mercedes seven-time champion comfortably held off his arch Dutch rival’s Red Bull under the Losail circuit’s lights to leave the battle for the F1 drivers’ crown delicately poised with only two races remaining.

Fernando Alonso took third for Alpine, the former two-time world champion’s first podium since 2014.

One week on from arguably his toughest and greatest win in Brazil, Hamilton enjoyed one of his easiest. And after an unprecedented eighth world title appeared to be slipping from his grasp after Verstappen’s wins in the USA and Mexico, it is the 36-year-old Briton rather than the 12-year-younger pretender who has the momentum.

“We needed those points today. I can’t wait to watch the race replay to find out what happened behind me,” he said after his 102nd career win.

“I’m really grateful for these points, it’s been a hell of a year. Back-to-back wins here, feel good, I feel fit, fitter than I’ve ever felt. Bring on the next two!”

Verstappen, who was demoted from second to seventh on the grid for a yellow flag infringement in qualifying on Saturday, took second, and picked up a point for the fastest lap.

“Our starting position was compromised, but luckily we had a really good start,” he said.

“Of course, I know it’s going to be difficult to the end but it keeps it nice, keeps it exciting. This track was fun to drive as well. I feel good, but it’s going to be a tight battle to the end.”

Hamilton’s faster engine, fitted last weekend in Sao Paulo, will give Red Bull a likely tough time again at the ultra quick new circuit in Saudi Arabia in a fortnight’s time ahead of the season-closing race in Abu Dhabi in mid-December.

AFP



Mercedes’ British driver Lewis Hamilton with the trophy after winning the Qatari Formula One Grand Prix, on the outskirts of Doha on Sunday (AFP)



Axar Patel celebrates the wicket of Glenn Phillips (not pictured) as Martin Guptill (left) watches during the third Twenty20 International match at the Eden Gardens, in Kolkata on Sunday (AFP)

Rohit and Axar sparkle as India complete 3-0 sweep

Kolkata, India - India won the toss, opted to bat to challenge themselves against dewy conditions later, and ended up defending quite comfortably. They also ticked a fair few boxes along the way.

Their back-up opener Ishan Kishan came good. Their lower order contributed vital runs that gave them at least 20 extra to defend. Venkatesh Iyer delivered three frugal overs as a sixth-bowling option.

Axar Patel showed why he’s an aggressive left-arm spin option. Comeback man Yuzvendra Chahal overcame a forgettable start by finishing strongly with the big wicket of Martin Guptill.

Harshal Patel continued to take giant strides with his bag of slower variations in T20 cricket. Rishabh Pant displayed terrific agility and athleticism behind the stumps.

India swept the series 3-0, New Zealand at no stage showing any semblance of a fight. Not even when Guptill shellacked a breezy half-century.

Players who generally plot and plan together were up against each other. Rohit Sharma and Kishan, coming in for the rested K L Rahul, as openers. Trent Boult and Adam Milne as new-ball bowlers. And it was India who set the tone for dominance early on as the top two got them off the blocks briskly, with a pair of fours each in the first few overs.

A huge machine-mop took off as much dew as it could in the break, but it was only going to be a matter of time before it’d set in again to make it difficult for the spinners to grip the ball.

Perhaps mindful of this, Rohit introduced Axar in the third over, and the move worked as he struck twice to stun the visitors upfront. Chahal then returned after two expensive overs with a change in plan. At 70 for 4 in the 11th over, it was one-way traffic. Batter after batter came out swinging and missing and slipping and sliding as a hungry Indian bowling unit closed out the game clinically.

AFP

SCOREBOARD		
INDIA		
R Sharma	c & b Sodhi	56 (36)
I Kishan	c Seifert b Santner	29 (21)
S Yadav	c Guptill b Santner	0 (4)
R Pant	c Neesham b Santner	0 (6)
Shreyas Iyer	c Mitchell b Milne	25 (20)
V Iyer	c Chapman b Boult	20 (15)
Axar Patel	not out	2 (4)
Harshal Patel	hit wicket b Ferguson	18 (11)
D Chahar	not out	21 (8)
Extras:	(b 2, lb 1, w 6)	9
TOTAL	184/7 in 20 overs	
Fall of wickets:	1-69, 2-71, 3-83, 4-103, 5-139, 6-140, 7-162	
Bowling:	Trent Boult 4-0-31-1, A Milne 4-0-47-1, L Ferguson 4-0-45-1, M Santner 4-0-27-3, I Sodhi 4-0-31-1	
NEW ZEALAND		
M Guptill	c Yadav b Chahal	51 (36)
D Mitchell	c HV Patel b AR Patel	5 (6)
M Chapman	st Pant b AR Patel	0 (2)
G Phillips	b AR Patel	0 (4)
T Seifert	run out	17 (18)
J Neesham	c Pant b HV Patel	3 (7)
M Santner	run out	2 (4)
A Milne	c Sharma b VR Iyer	7 (6)
Ish Sodhi	c Yadav b HV Patel	9 (11)
L Ferguson	c & b Chahal	14 (8)
T Boult	not out	2 (2)
Extras:	(w 1)	1
TOTAL:	111 in 17.2 overs	
Fall of wickets:	1-21, 2-22, 3-30, 4-69, 5-76, 6-76, 7-84, 8-93, 9-95, 10-111	
Bowling:	B Kumar 2-0-12-0, D Chahar 2-0-26-1, A Patel 3-0-9-3, Y Chahal 4-0-26-1, V Iyer 3-0-12-1, H Patel 3-0-26-2	

Podium finish a tribute to mother: Shonal Kunimal

Muscat-based go-karting racer claims third place in MENA Karting Nations Cup

Muscat - Two years since his Palestinian mother passed away in a tragic accident in Al Hamra, ten-year-old Shonal Kunimal had a burning desire to excel at the MENA Karting Nations Cup while representing his mother’s nation.

On Saturday, Shonal fulfilled his dream as he stood on the podium, representing Palestine, in the 2021 MENA Karting Nations Cup at the Muscat Speedway of the Oman Automobile Association.

Shonal claimed the third place in Micro Max category at the championship organised successfully by the Oman Automobile Association (OAA) featuring 19 countries including Oman.

The Indian School Ghubra fifth grade student with an Indian father had been making a name on the regional go-karting circuit, winning consistently at the Rotax Max Challenge Series over the past few years.

Restricted life due to the COVID-19 pandemic over and above the demise of his mother had forced him to miss nearly two seasons until he returned to the tracks in October. Since then, Shonal has been making podium finishes a habit.

On Saturday, amid a strong field of ten drivers, Shonal took third place in the final race in Micro Max category behind Philippe el Hajj of Lebanon while



Shonal Kunimal with the trophy in the 2021 MENA Karting Nations Cup in Muscat on Saturday



I hope to continue my winning run and my goal will be to claim race wins that has eluded me in recent times.

SHONAL KUNIMAL

UAE’s Russian driver Maxim Boshrov took the top honours.

Speaking after his third-place finish, Shonal said, “This is for my mother [Nabrees Qandeel], who for years saw me grow here on this tracks. She was my biggest support before she left us. She would be the happiest person and I know she is always with me.

“My dad [Shojai Kunimal], coach Sanad al Rawahi, along with my technical assistants - Leonardo Abalos and Raven Abalos - have been instrumental in my success. I hope to continue my winning run and my goal will

be to claim race wins that has eluded me in recent times. With more participation, I am confident that I can clinch victories in the New Year and the season ahead.”

Shonal’s mentor and dad Shojai thanked Oman’s rallying star Hamed al Wahabi and OAA managing director Suleiman al Rawahi for their strong support.

It was heartening news for Palestine team who had arrived with three other drivers. Shonal’s podium was a first for Palestine team in the MENA Karting Nations Cup and the young driver was personally congratulated by

Palestine Ambassador’s to Oman, H E Tayseer al Farhat at the awards ceremony.

The presentation ceremony was held under the patronage of H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Bussaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat. Also present was Mohammed bin Sulayem, world motorsports governing body (FIA) vice-president and Brig (retd) Salim al Maskari, OAA chairman. The five-day MENA Karting Nations Cup witnessed 127 drivers and the OAA hosted the event for the second time in succession.

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