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OMAN SPONSORS 'OSCARS OF JOURNALISM'

GO TO PAGE 03 NATION

Muscat friendliest city in the world

5th in Getting Settled Index and 7th in Finance & Housing Index in InterNations’ Expat City Ranking

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat is ranked 17th out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021, receiving excellent results in the Getting Settled Index (fifth). The city ranks first worldwide for both the general friendliness of its local residents (88 per cent happy vs 69 per cent globally) and friendliness towards foreign residents in particular (85 per cent vs 67 per cent globally).

Five cities in the GCC states are featured in the ranking by InterNations, the world’s largest expat community with over 4mn members. Dubai ranks third, followed by Doha (15th), Abu Dhabi (16th), Muscat (17th) and Riyadh (44th).

All cities have an average to poor performance in the Urban Work Life Index, but each has its own highlights to offer. Dubai and Muscat rank among the top ten worldwide for the ease of getting settled, while expats in Dubai and Abu Dhabi point out the high quality of life. However, Muscat, Riyadh and Doha outperform them in the Finances & Housing Index.

Kuala Lumpur (first), Málaga, Dubai, Sydney, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, Prague, Mexico City, Basel and Madrid (tenth) are the top ten cities for expats to live in 2021.

The Expat City Ranking is based on the annual Expat Insider survey by InterNations, which is one of the most exten-



sive surveys about living and working abroad, with 12,420 respondents in 2021. This year, 57 cities around the globe are analysed in the survey, which offers in-depth information about five areas of expat life: Quality of Urban Living, Getting Settled, Urban Work Life, Finance & Housing, and Local Cost of Living.

Easy to get settled, find affordable housing

“The local people are so kind and friendly,” said an expat from India in the survey. It is hardly a surprise that 73 per cent of expats feel at home in Muscat (vs 65 per cent globally), while 69 per cent find it easy to get used to the local culture (vs 65 per cent globally).

Muscat’s top ten rank in the

Finance & Housing Index (seventh) is mainly due to the Housing Subcategory (fourth). In fact, 80 per cent of expats face no difficulty finding housing in Muscat (vs 60 per cent globally), and 48 per cent consider it affordable (vs 42 per cent globally).

But the city performs below the global average in the Finance Subcategory (37th): 54 per cent are happy with their financial situation (vs 64 per cent globally).

Another 29 per cent said that their disposable household income is not enough to cover expenses (vs 23 per cent globally) - even though Muscat ranks 15th in the Local Cost of Living Index, with 53 per cent rating this aspect positively (vs 48 per cent globally).

With a below-average result in the Quality of Urban Living Index (44th), Muscat is rated poorly for its public transportation system (41 per cent unhappy vs 20 per cent globally) and the quality of medical care (22 per cent vs 14 per cent globally).

On the upside, 95 per cent of expats feel safe in Muscat (vs 84 per cent globally). Lastly, the city does poorly in the Urban Work Life Index (47th). Expats are particularly unhappy with their job security (33 per cent vs 20 per cent globally) and local career opportunities (47 per cent vs 33 per cent globally). In fact, Muscat ranks second to last worldwide for the latter, only ahead of Rome (57th).

SAYYID THEYAZIN ATTENDS FIFA ARAB CUP OPENING CEREMONY



H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, attended the opening ceremony of FIFA Arab Cup 2021 held at Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor in Doha, Qatar, on Tuesday evening, ahead of the football match between Qatar and Bahrain. Oman tied with Iraq in a 1-1 draw in a match earlier in the evening (AFP)

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Omani inventors create remote foetus monitor

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Two Omanis have created a device that can enable a doctor to check the heartbeat of a foetus sitting anywhere in the world.

Called Pulse, the innovative device was developed by Badr al Habsi and Nabris al Shukaili. They participated and won the third place and 100,000 QAR in Challenge and Innovation Forum (CIF) Qatar 2021 recently for the device.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Habsi said, “CIF Qatar is a one-of-its kind forum in the region. It includes a number of competitions



Badr al Habsi

with the aim of motivating and encouraging inventors from around the world.”

CIF Qatar 2021 had two main competitions - an exhibition for inventions and a hackathon. Inventors showcased their projects

on the first two days, following which the participants were divided into groups and competed to develop their unique ideas from scratch within just 48 hours.

He described Pulse as “very small and can be carried easily by expectant mothers”.

“The device is supported by an app that can help a pregnant woman track her foetus’ heartbeat and temperature, which can be monitored by a doctor from anywhere in the world. We thought about designing this device because there are many women, especially in poor countries, who have no access to hospitals to get the required

health checks during pregnancy. Many expectant mothers and their unborn children die for lack of proper monitoring of health.”

Habsi informed that the competition was very difficult as there were many contestants from different parts of the world.

Pulse was appreciated by many investors who welcomed the project and were ready to support it. “We are currently working on producing commercial quantities of the device and sell it in Oman and abroad,” Habsi said.

Pulse will be prized around US\$50.



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LOCAL STRATEGY

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

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Mohan Anandan
Banking sector employee

The news that Oman has been listed as the seventh must-visit country in world has added yet another feather in the hat. In addition to the packages that hotels/resorts are offering to boost local tourism, what is required is an all out marketing campaign to publicise the uniqueness of Oman, its culture and beauty.



Sultan al Rawahi
Private sector employee

Tourism in Oman has always been rich in historical and cultural heritage and it is very affordable for all to enjoy. However, there are so many areas of improvement. There is a need for more emphasis on developing tourism spots further so as to attract more people. Also, we need more services at these locations.



Ruskeen S
Sales manager

More small hotels are needed near popular tourist sites in the country. Room rates are currently more affordable compared to earlier but we'll know if it's been a good tourist season only later.



Sulaiman Abdullah
Private sector employee

Tourism is now affordable. Hotels/resorts are offering packages to boost tourism but there must be proper marketing campaigns to publicise where to go and what to do.



Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

Tourism in Oman is distinguished by its rich historical and cultural heritage, warm hospitality of the local population, and natural diversity. In the Capital Cities Index, Muscat ranks sixth best in the world to visit. More and more people want to explore the sultanate to know about its culture and nature.



Jayatee Choudhury
Student

Tourism is now affordable with hotels and resorts offering special packages. Schools and offices should encourage educational as well as local heritage tours. Social media, along with attractive brochures and catalogues, can be efficiently used for propagation of adventurous tourism.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

How concerned are you about the new COVID-19 variant Omicron? What can be done to prevent the situation from deteriorating again to the pandemic's peak period that we witnessed earlier this year?

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

Tracing the footsteps of forefathers

Our Correspondent
Muscat

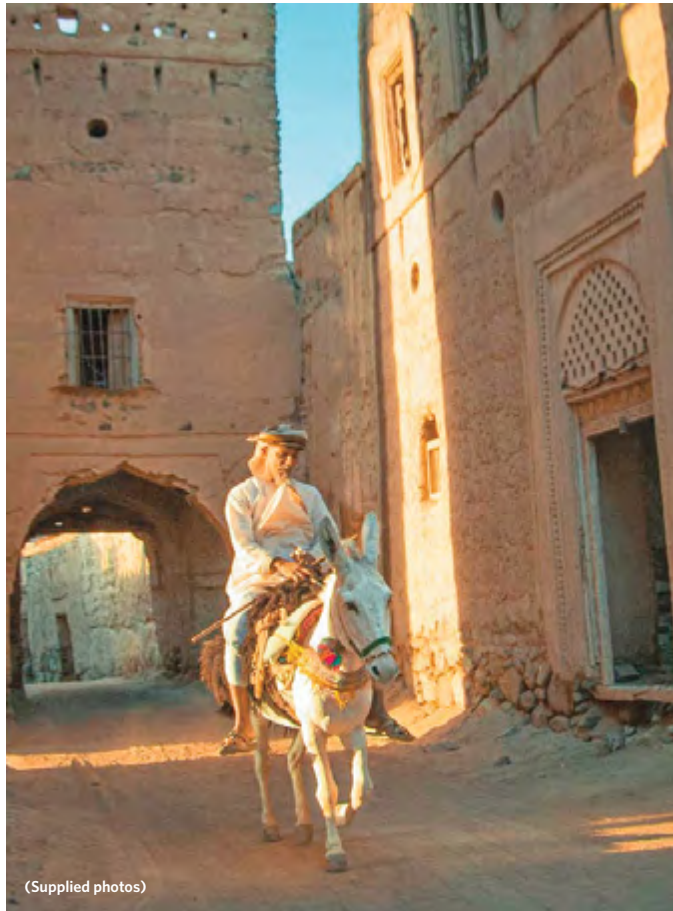
To celebrate the 51st National Day, 51 people rode donkeys in a symbolic 22km journey from the wilayat of Ibra to Al Qabel in North Sharqiyah on November 27.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Fahr al Farsi, head of media of a group called Generations Team that organised the event, said, "Men and women from different governorates participated. It took a day to complete the 22km journey."

Participants camped in Ibra a day before embarking on the journey. "They set off at 7am from Ibra to Mudharib Souq in the wilayat of al Qabel. The journey retraced the footsteps of our grandparents who travelled from Ibra to Al Qabel. While some participants walked, others rode donkeys," Farsi said.

"Besides the event's main objective of celebrating the 51st National Day, it also aimed to rekindle the spirit of exploration of our ancestors, while spreading the culture of preserving the environment, promoting archaeological sites, and inculcating the habit of physical fitness among people," said Farsi.

He informed that each mem-



(Supplied photos)

ber of Generations Team was assigned a special responsibility for the event, led by Salem al Balushi, assisted by Traq al Hajri and he himself involved in planning and mapping.

"The team plans well before embarking on any trip. The route and site of the activity is chosen

after much deliberation and research. An advance team is also sent to study the place and the weather conditions. We are also careful when deciding the number of people in any particular trip," Farsi added.

The programme on November 27 included activities such as



fencing with sticks and reciting poems – Aazi. Donkeys carried supplies needed during the event, while all participants carried safety equipment.

Participants were briefed on several tourist sites along the route, traditional markets and Omani customs in practice in the

villages and markets they visited.

"Participants recalled the struggles and sufferings of their forefathers who traversed difficult terrain, fighting harsh weather conditions as they travelled," Farsi said, adding that the team will continue to organise similar events in the future.

35 new COVID-19 cases; Omicron variant not detected in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced 35 new COVID-19 cases reported in the past five days. There were no related deaths during the same period.

This brings the total number of positive cases to 304,554 in the sultanate. 'The total number of COVID-19-related deaths stands at 4,113,' MoH said in a statement.

One patient was admitted to

a hospital in a 24-hour period on Tuesday, accounting for a total of four cases in health institutions, including one in ICU.

MoH also confirmed that it has not detected the Omicron variant in Oman contrary to what was circulated in social media.

'The ministry confirms that it has not detected the presence of this mutation so far, and that the epidemiological surveillance system is effective and monitors the situation in the sultanate,' the ministry stated.

Sultanate's consulate alerts Omani students in Australia

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Consulate General of the Sultanate of Oman in Australia issued a notice for Omani students studying in the country that the reopening of Australian borders will be postponed till December 15.

A statement issued by the Consulate General of the Sultanate of Oman in Australia said 'All Omani students on scholarships to Australian universities are informed of the recent decision of the Australian Federal Government to postpone the re-

opening of Australian international borders until December 15, 2021.'

All travellers to Canberra, Victoria and New South Wales will be subject to a home quarantine for a period of three days, while travellers to the remaining Australian states will be subject to the quarantine laws in force in the respective Australian states.

The Consulate General urged Omani students to contact the academic department at the Consulate General of the Sultanate of Oman in Australia via academic@oman.org.au for further inquiries.

Campaign launched to clean up Sharqiyah Sands after National Day holiday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in cooperation with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, will kick off a voluntary clean-up campaign in North Sharqiyah governorate on December 2 to spread awareness on the importance of keeping tourist sites clean.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Hamad Saif al Badawi, director general of Tourism Promotion in North Sharqiyah, said, "The cam-

paign will last two days and target about 50 volunteers."

The volunteers will gather on December 2 to receive instructions and be presented gifts for participating in the activity. "The cleaning campaign will be held on December 3 from 5am to 5.30pm," said Badawi.

The clean-up campaign will be conducted in tourist camps in Shagat al Rakah, Shagat al Yarisiyah, Shagat al Jawfa, Shagat al Amaia, Shagat al Safa, and Shagat Shabak in Sharqiyah Sands. "We chose this particular

time as these places witnessed a big turnout of visitors during the 51st National Day holiday. Unfortunately, some visitors left behind a lot of trash, polluting the environment," Badawi said.

Besides raising awareness on the importance of cleanliness at tourist sites, the campaign aims to enhance cooperation between all government and private sectors, and preserve the sultanate's natural beauty in order to attract more tourists. "Participation is open to citizens and residents. We call on people to preserve

Oman's environment and commit to putting trash in waste bins."

Badawi informed that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism will continue to organise volunteer campaigns to spread awareness of the importance of preserving tourist sites in North Sharqiyah in the wilayats of Bani Khalid, Dima Wa al Taien, Ibra and Mudhabi, among others.

In December 2019, the Minister of Tourism issued a decision (No 75/2019) declaring three locations in Sharqiyah Sands as tourist areas.



(File photo)

EA to develop facilities at Mahut reserve

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA) has announced a plan to develop the wetland reserve in the wilayat of Mahut, Al Wusta governorate.

Mahad Mohammed al Omari, director of ED in Al Wusta, said, "The authority aims to achieve environmental sustainability and attract investments for tourism in the reserve through the development plan. The plan is expected to be completed next year."

The wetland reserve in Mahut was set up via Royal Decree No 51/2014.

Omari explained that the authority plans to set up several facilities to stimulate tourism in the reserve.

"An information centre, that will present an introduction to the reserve and its environmental importance, will constitute the main building. Addition facilities like sites for bird watching and photography will also be established."

EA will also implement a project to plant mangroves to provide a natural environment suitable



for the growth of marine organisms and formulate a national programme to monitor pollution in the marine environment.

Additionally, EA will carry out surveys to determine the chal-

lenges to the marine environment in the governorate, find appropriate solutions for these, and assess air quality in concession areas.

The authority will also estab-

lish nurseries in Haima and Duqm and implement a programme to plant 100,000 indigenous species, such as sidr, samar and ghaf, as part of the national initiative to plant 10mn wild trees

Ministry invites bids for investment in three archeological, tourist sites

Muscat - With the aim of stimulating tourism, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is offering three tourist sites for investment.

An official said, "The ministry has called on bidders for leasing and operating three archaeological and tourist sites at Dibba Fort in the wilayat of Dibba in Musandam governorate, Harat al Jama in the wilayat of Adam in Dakhliyah governorate, and Harat al Raml in the wilayat of Ibri in Dhahirah governorate."

The ministry said it aims to invest in heritage and tourism sites, and seeks to empower the local community and ensure a permanent partnership with it. The last date for submission of bids is De-



cember 23.

In an effort to conserve Oman's cultural heritage, the ministry continues to restore and maintain castles and forts that are distinguished for their architectural diversity.

Recovery plan

In August, the ministry started a recovery plan for the tourism sector in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The plan included the implementation of safety procedures, health protocols and directives issued by the departments concerned to overcome the crisis and bring the tourism sector back to its earlier levels as soon as possible.

Oman sponsors 'Oscars of Journalism' awards in London

London, UK - Oman sponsored the 2021 Foreign Press Association Media Awards held in London on November 29.

Oman was represented by the Ministry of Information, with the participation of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-Up Unit and the Embassy of Oman in the United Kingdom, at the annual awards ceremony known as 'Oscars of Journalism'.

Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harassi, Minister of Information, stated in a speech via videolink that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik considers youth the wealth of the nation and its inexhaustible resource, and that Oman is a country on the path of development in various fields.

Dr Harassi expressed Oman's pride in the strong diplomatic and cultural ties with the UK, and valued the role of the Foreign Press Association (FPA), which, established in 1888, is the oldest media organisation of its kind in the world.

The minister affirmed that Oman is pressing ahead with its



Oman's envoy to the United Kingdom Shaikh Abdulaziz al Hinaï presenting one of the awards (ONA)

economic diversification programme (Oman Vision 2040). "We are pushing forward with an ambitious programme of diversification to build a sustainable economy for future generations. Our future will be powered by innovation," he said.

During the ceremony, Robert Moore was declared the Journal-

ist of the Year for 2021. He saw Oman's sponsorship of the ceremony as a message that highlights the "importance of supporting the press and providing the necessary tools to practise the profession".

Kate McCure, president of FPA, and Deborah Bonetti, director of the association, hailed

Oman's support for local and international press.

According to the Ministry of Information, the sponsorship of the FPA awards highlights the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and introduces the sultanate and its tourism, economic, investment and cultural potential to the world.



(Image for illustrative purpose)

New initiative to support SMEs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to empower entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises, the Authority for SME Development (ASMED) has launched a new initiative.

"The new initiative Start-up Kit is a step to empower entrepreneurs," according to an official at ASMED.

He explained, "The launch of Start-up Kit is part of the efforts to enhance entrepreneurs' knowledge in areas related to the establishment and management of their enterprises. It also seeks to achieve the first objective of

the labour market and employment priority of the Tenth Five-Year Plan."

Start-up Kit is a specialised training and qualification programme for entrepreneurs, implemented according to sectors and in cooperation with the concerned authorities. The programme aims to provide the labour market with highly skilled and productive entrepreneurs.

The programme also aims to provide sector-specific specialised training and qualification programmes for entrepreneurs and those interested in entrepreneurship in cooperation with concerned authorities.

The total number SMEs regis-

tered in ASMED till the end of August 2021 stood at 56,687, compared to 45,706 in August 2020, constituting an increase of 24 per cent, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and information. The total number of SMEs till the end of September 2021 stood at 58,683, with an increase of 26 per cent compared to same period of 2020.

Among the governorates, Muscat topped the list, marking an increase of 25.2 per cent compared to the same period in 2020 to reach 19,187 SMEs, followed by North Batinah which registered an increase of 23.7 per cent to stand at 8,945 SMEs.

African penguin born at Oman Aquarium

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mall of Muscat's aquarium recently welcomed a new member - a baby African penguin. It's the first-ever penguin born there.

Born recently, the baby penguin belongs to the species *Spheniscus demersus* from the rocky south-western coast of Africa.

Oman Aquarium now has a colony of 12 African penguins. The species is also known as black foot penguins.

Mahmood Mohamed Ali al Jarwani, chairman of Tamani Trading and Entertainment, the operator of Oman Aquarium said, "We are extremely thrilled to welcome the new member to the colony of penguins. African penguins are an endangered species, and we are proud to play an active role in the efforts to protect them. Visitors can learn more about this breed of penguins at the aquarium."

In the first few weeks following its birth, the baby penguin



(Supplied photo)

was kept under the constant care of its parents and aquarium caretakers. Considering the species is endangered, every birth boosts its survival.

Oman Aquarium is open from 10am to 10pm on weekdays and till 11pm on weekends. The country's first indoor aquarium, it is located on the ground and first floor of Mall of Muscat, Ma'abala, spread over 8,000sqm.

The aquarium is themed on the adventures of the 15th century Arab explorer Ahmed bin Majid and features aquatic creatures he encountered during his travels.

CDAA gets new chairman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Maj Gen Abdullah Ali Hamad al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations, has issued a decision (No 21/202) regarding the appointment of a chairman of the Civil Defence

and Ambulance Authority (CDAA).

The decision stipulates that Brig Gen Salim bin Yahya al Hinaï is appointed chairman of CDAA for a period of two years.

The decision was issued on November 16, and will come into force from Wednesday.

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Royal Oman Police

Directorate of Public Relations

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Royal Oman Police - Public Relations Department - announces the holding of an auction for the sale of canceled police vehicles through closed envelopes (each vehicle separately).

Vehicles can be inspected in the yard of the Transportation Department during official working hours, starting from 05/12/2021 until 16/12/2021, provided that offers are sent in closed envelopes to the Department of Administrative and Financial Affairs, during the inspection period. The successful bidder shall abide by the following:

- Pay the value of the vehicle electronically.
- Transporting the vehicle within a maximum period of three days from the date of awarding the auction, and a fine of RO (5) is calculated for each day of delay after the specified period.
- The buyer is responsible for paying the vehicle registration fees in his name in the traffic system before receiving the vehicle.

MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,000.34
BSE Sensex	57,064.87

FOREX RATES

(ROI equals)	
Indian Rs	194.79
Pakistani Rs	457.79
Bangladeshi Taka	222.86
Philippine Peso	130.76
Sri Lankan Rs	526.63

*Rates as on November 30
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

WTO reschedules meeting for March

The World Trade Organization (WTO) said on Tuesday it had rescheduled to March a ministerial conference that would have tackled thorny trade issues including fisheries and intellectual property because of the pandemic.

The meeting, the first at this level since 2017, was to have run from Tuesday to Friday and bring together some 4,000 figures including heads of state and more than 100 government ministers.

The WTO proposed a postponement to next year given 'the deterioration of the epidemiological situation and ensuing travel restrictions' with the emergence of the latest Omicron virus variant.

It is now proposed the meeting go ahead 'during the first week of March 2022, if conditions allow'.

Gazprom reports record profits

Russian gas giant Gazprom on Monday said its net income rose to a record 582bn rubles (US\$7.8bn) in the third quarter on the back of soaring gas prices in Europe.

Europe receives a third of its gas supplies from Russia and has seen energy prices surge to record highs as economies have come back online after the end of pandemic lockdowns.

In a statement, Gazprom deputy chief executive Famil Sadygov linked the company's record quarterly profits to Europe's gas crisis and said he was expecting even better results in the fourth quarter.

"Clearly, the price of our supplies to Europe will be significantly higher in the fourth quarter, which will have a positive effect on results for the entire year," the statement said.

Nissan plans 50% EV sales by 2030

Automaker Nissan wants half its global sales to be electric or hybrid vehicles by 2030 and plans to plough billions of dollars into the effort, it announced on Monday.

Unveiling its new long-term plan, Nissan said it will launch 23 new models, including 15 new electric vehicles, in a bid to reach the 2030 goal.

Last year, only around 10 percent of Nissan's global sales were EVs or hybrids, and the firm said the new target would help it achieve carbon neutrality across the lifecycle of its products by 2050.

Oman's ports achieve robust growth in commercial operations, volumes

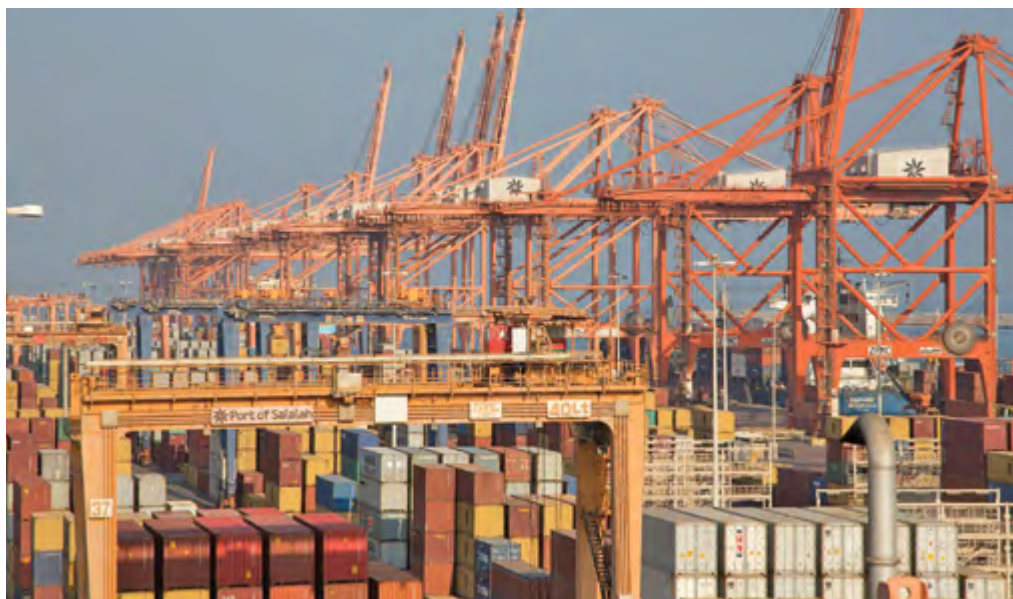
Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's ports achieved robust growth in commercial operations and volumes of direct import during the first nine months of 2021, handling nearly 4mn shipping containers as well as 41mn tonnes of general cargo.

According to Asyad Group's statement to Oman News Agency, Omani ports' commercial operations and volumes of direct import recorded a 5 per cent increase over the first nine months of 2021.

'The number of containers handled reached 3.9mn TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) in the first nine months of 2021, a 3 per cent rise compared to the same period in 2020. General cargo volume grew by 7 per cent to 41.2mn tonnes. Volume of liquid commodity handling also saw a steady increase of 8 per cent compared to 2020, reaching 15mn tonnes,' the statement said.

Asyad noted that the sultanate's ports have proved their resilience against a challenging economic backdrop as they continued to sustainably meet the country's food and medical needs.



It said, 'Port operations and efficiencies remained at an all-time high while new strategic partnerships were forged with a growing list of global shipping lines. Today, Sohar Port, Port of Salalah and Port of Duqm have become gateways into Oman and important destinations on global trade routes that connect the country to Asian, European and African markets.'

Oman's medium size ports – Suwaiq, Shinas, Khasab and Port of Sultan Qaboos – have also played a crucial role in providing local produce with access to

markets in the region, the statement added.

Shipping line shows solid performance

Asyad Shipping and Asyad Drydock have also recorded a solid performance, further highlighting the successful integration of Asyad Group's service offering to achieve global competitiveness.

Asyad Group currently owns a growing fleet of more than 60 state-of-the-art vessels with a total capacity of 9mn tonnes, offering dynamic shipping solutions to its customers.

As result of its strategic vision, Asyad's container shipping line saw a 19 per cent growth in commercial activities over the first nine months of 2021, shipping 261,686 containers, and connecting Oman to markets in the GCC, Indian sub-continent and East Asia.

Aiming to better serve the local and regional markets, Asyad also purchased 9,600 new containers of which 100 are refrigerated, a sound decision which successfully allowed for the import of food and medical products directly from producing

countries.

Today, the Oman Container Line is amongst the Alphaliner's top 100 largest container and liner operators in the world based on capacity.

Asyad Group has been paving the way for Oman's logistics drive since 2016. By implementing best practices and adopting the latest technologies and solu-

in the Middle East. It owns a diversified fleet of 60 vessels, supported by a sea transport network that connects Oman to 86 commercial ports in 40 countries worldwide through an average of 200 direct lines weekly.

Building a strong reputation in the market, Asyad Drydock serves customers from 35 countries around the world. The

Asyad Group says port operations and efficiencies remained at an all-time high while new strategic partnerships were forged with a growing list of global shipping lines

tions, the group has been able to transform the sultanate's logistics sector and increase its contribution to the national GDP to 4 per cent in 2020.

Asyad Group – the sultanate's global integrated logistics service provider – was ranked as the fourth biggest logistics company in the Middle East and North Africa by *Forbes Middle East* magazine for the year 2021.

The group operates three deep ports, two free zones and an economic zone in addition to providing full maritime services with one of the largest drydocks

group's services recorded a remarkable year with a 35 per cent increase in ship repair during the first nine months of 2021. Total projects procured were 143 in comparison to 106 for the same period in 2020. With its eye on the future, Asyad has been continuously building on its Drydock capacities and capabilities.

Today it provides ship building solutions in addition to maintenance and general vessel repair services, further positioning the group and Oman as a one-stop-integrated-logistics-shop.

Bank Muscat wins Best Private Bank Award from The Banker

Muscat – Bank Muscat has once again won the prestigious 'Best Private Bank in Oman' award from Professional Wealth Management and *The Banker* in 2021.

This year's award is a tribute to the exceptional depth and breadth of the bank's wealth-management solutions and investment options covering all types of asset classes across the globe, Bank Muscat said in a press release.

Abdulnasir al Raisi, deputy general manager – Premier Banking at Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat Private would like to thank Professional Wealth Management and *The Banker* for consistently recognising the bank as the Best Private Bank in Oman. The bank has carved a name for itself over the last two decades with its high-end lifestyle benefits, private banking facilities and global investment options, which are unmatched in the sultanate. This prestigious award reflects the consistency of performance, innovative strategies and the highest standards of professionalism achieved by the bank."

Bank Muscat offers private banking clients a complete suite of investment options in global asset classes through its wealth management platform and tie-ups with international counterparties. Its robust execution plat-



Abdulnasir al Raisi

form is backed by a team of experienced and dedicated relationship managers and a strong products team, which provide options to customers based on their individual preferences and market conditions.

The range of solutions offered to its clients includes stocks, bonds, exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and mutual funds across global markets. Bank Muscat Private Banking also offers selective exposure to private equity funds, real estate funds and commodity ETFs; offshore Banking and portfolio management through globally reputed counterparties.

Private Banking clients also receive regular research reports and briefings covering investment ideas, global macroeconomic outlook and updates on key economic and geographic events impacting performance of various asset classes.

OPEC+ to meet as new Omicron variant sparks oil price turmoil

London, UK – OPEC and the oil cartel's allies hold a key output meeting on Thursday facing new challenges as the Omicron coronavirus variant has roiled markets and other US-led nations decided to tap their strategic reserves.

The OPEC+ alliance has resisted US-led pressure to step up production to bring down surging energy prices, and the emergence of the new variant has complicated the equation.

The meeting 'is shaping up to be one of the most significant since the pandemic demand recovery began, and the key signal will be how much more oil will be added to supply to start the new year', said Peter McNally, an analyst at the Third Bridge think-tank.

The detection of the new variant on Thursday caused crude prices to plunge more than 10 per cent, a first since the massive drops of April 2020.

After bouncing back on Monday, oil prices fell again on Tuesday as the head of US pharmaceutical company Moderna warned that current vaccines might be less effective at fending off the Omicron variant.

Carsten Fritsch of Commerzbank said, 'there is much to suggest that OPEC+ will not initially step up its oil production any further' in an effort to maintain current prices at around



US\$70 a barrel.

OPEC+ countries began slowly boosting output in May.

The group has been adding 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) to the markets every month, even though its capacity is ten times higher than that.

The alliance will discuss its output levels for early 2022 at the meeting.

No 'hasty' moves

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, the Kremlin's oil pointman, warned on Monday against any 'hasty decisions', according to Russian news agencies.

A technical meeting was set for Tuesday ahead of the meeting but was postponed to Thursday as experts seek more information on the 'current situation', Novak said.

The conference also comes a week after the United States, China, India and Japan decided to dip into their strategic reserves to help bring down crude prices, after a surge that has undermined economic recovery.

US President Joe Biden called it a 'major initiative', with analysts estimating the injection at between 65mn and 80mn barrels, including 50mn from the United States alone.

Oil prices rose despite the move, but they fell after Omicron emerged.

Iran's possible re-entry into OPEC will be another key element in the OPEC calculus.

Iran was sidelined from OPEC in 2018 when then US president Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the 2015 nuclear accord with the Islamic republic.

After a five-month hiatus, negotiations resumed on Monday in Vienna.

Iran produced nearly 4mn bpd in 2017 – an output that dropped to around 2mn bpd last year.

AFP

Season Greetings!

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Omicron variant raises fears for world economy

Washington, US - Just as it was recovering from the body blow of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy has taken yet another hit from the Omicron variant of the virus, which has led to a raft of new travel restrictions.

First reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) in South Africa less than a week ago, the new strain has rapidly spread everywhere from Africa to the Pacific, and from Europe to Canada, causing dozens of countries to announce travel restrictions.

The severity of the economic impact will depend on how dangerous the variant proves to be, and how well existing vaccinations stand up to it.

That has meant that even with the most favourable scenarios in mind, economists are already revising their 2022 forecasts downwards.

The International Monetary Fund, which expects growth of 4.9 per cent for the next year, has been insisting for months that the coronavirus and its variants remain the main threat.

The economic impact could be 'modest', in the order of 0.25 percentage points on global growth in 2022, if Omicron causes 'relatively mild symptoms' and the vaccines are 'effective', said Gregory Daco, chief economist at Oxford Economics.

In the worst-case scenario, in which Omicron proves extremely dangerous and large swaths of the world are in lockdown again, 2022 growth could fall to around 2.3 per cent, as compared to the 4.5 per cent ex-



Staff members stand by in an empty arrival hall at Tokyo's Haneda international airport on Tuesday, a day after Japan barred all new foreign arrivals over the Omicron COVID-19 variant (AFP)

pected by Oxford Economics before the variant emerged.

And in such a scenario it is not certain that governments, which have stumped up trillions of dollars in aid since the start of the pandemic, would be willing to put in place further fiscal stimulus packages, especially if vaccines are available, Daco said.

Those aspects 'are going to be really key to how it affects the global economy and people's behaviour', said Erik Lundh, an economist at The Conference Board.

Beyond government measures to contain the new strain, fear of infection could lead people to limit their own travel and economic activities, such as going to restaurants and reducing consumption, which will in turn impact growth, Lundh said.

Another risk is the exacerbation of the global supply chain crunch. Lundh pointed out that 'a lot of air cargo is stored basically in the belly of passenger planes...It's not just all sorts of FedEx planes'.

"So if there are cancellations, if there's a lapse in demand for commercial flights for passengers, it does run the risk of limiting the route of trade," which could in turn worsen inflationary pressures as goods become more scarce.

In addition, a wave of Omicron infections 'could cause some workers to temporarily exit the workforce, and deter others from returning, making current labor shortages worse', said Neil Shearing, chief economist at Capital Economics in a note.

However, the threat of a po-

tentially more serious variant will complicate the task of central banks which could 'postpone plans to raise interest rates until the picture becomes clearer', said Shearing.

The US Federal Reserve is due to meet on December 15, with several others, including the European Central Bank and the Bank of England meeting the day after.

Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said it will be a few weeks before drug makers know most of what they need to know about the new strain.

In the meantime, 'uncertainty is damaging', said economist Daco. "Every time you come back to a climate of uncertainty and fear, it slows down the recovery of the world economy."

AFP



A truck drives past under a line of cable trolleys transporting coal at Sonbhadra, India on November 19 (AFP)

India reports 8.4% quarterly growth on COVID recovery

Mumbai, India - India maintained its pandemic bounceback with 8.4 per cent growth in the July-September quarter, official data showed on Tuesday, boosted by a broad-based recovery after a deadly infection surge earlier this year.

Asia's third-largest economy was hammered in 2020 by sudden COVID lockdowns that saw most industrial and manufacturing activity grind to a halt for months.

Infections skyrocketed again earlier this year in an outbreak that overwhelmed hospitals and crematoriums.

But the latest on-year expansion shows the economy returning to its pre-virus size.

"Growth is on expected lines but it has been helped largely by the base effect. The growth over 2019 is only marginal," CARE Ratings chief economist Madan Sabnavis said.

The economy grew by a

record 20.1 per cent in the April-June quarter, compared to a contraction of 24.4 per cent during India's most stringent virus lockdown last year.

The latest figures come as concern grows over the spread of the highly infectious Omicron COVID variant, which has weighed on global market sentiment.

"Growth seems to be on the road to 9.1 per cent for the full year but a new COVID wave would put that estimate in danger," Sabnavis said.

"If not for Omicron, we could have upgraded the growth forecast."

"India has yet to detect any cases of the variant, Health Minister Mansukh Mandviya told parliament on Tuesday.

Compared to the previous quarter, India's economy expanded by 10 per cent at constant prices, according to an AFP estimate.

The government does not release quarter-on-quarter economic data.

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund slashed growth forecasts for India earlier this year after the huge COVID outbreak in April and May that killed more than 200,000 people. But some analysts had raised their expectations in recent weeks in the wake of rising consumption and with new virus infections falling.

The World Bank's most recent India forecast in October predicted 8.3 per cent growth for the 2021-22 fiscal year, after a record contraction of 7.3 per cent in the pandemic's first year.

The Reserve Bank of India has maintained an accommodative stance on inflation to support the economy despite rising prices.

It is expected to hold key interest rates steady at its meeting next week.

AFP

Fed's Powell warns Omicron poses risks to US economy

Washington, US - The Omicron variant of COVID-19 could slow the recovery of the US economy and labour market and also heighten uncertainty regarding inflation, Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell said in testimony.

Powell has consistently said the recent spike in inflation would be transitory, but acknowledged that the factors pushing US prices higher will 'linger well into next year'.

The comments were to be delivered to the Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday indicate the Fed chief is growing more concerned about this year's price increases, which has put pressure on the central bank to raise interest rates more quickly.

The Fed slashed interest rates to zero in the early days of the pandemic and flooded the financial system with liquidity, which together with government aid helped to prevent a more damaging economic downturn.



Jerome Powell

"The recent rise in COVID-19 cases and the emergence of the Omicron variant pose downside risks to employment and economic activity, and increased uncertainty for inflation," Powell said. "Greater concerns about the virus could reduce people's willingness to work in person, which would slow progress in the labour market and intensify supply-chain disruptions."

AFP

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UNITED GCC FUND

INVITATION TO ATTEND THE EXTRA ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Dear Investors,

The Management body of United GCC Fund is pleased to invite the unit holders to attend the fund's Extra Ordinary general meeting, which is scheduled to be held at 3:00 pm on Sunday 19/12 2021, in United Securities head office premises in Ghala, if the quorum not satisfied, a second Extra Ordinary general meeting will be held on Monday, 20/12/2021, at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

- To discuss and approve the amendment of Para (3) of article (14) of the Fund's Article of Association.

Pursuant to the Articles of Association of the fund, any unit holder has the right to appoint a proxy in writing to attend and vote on decisions taken on his behalf. The proxy must carry the authorized proxy card attached with the notice to attend the general meeting. If the unit holder is a natural person, he is required to attach with the proxy card, a copy of ID for adults, passport for females and minors who don't have an ID card and resident cards or passports for expatriates. If the unit holder is a juristic person, the proxy card shall be signed by an authorized signatory and sealed with the company's seal and submitted together with a copy of the commercial registration certificate and authorized signatories' form

Shareholders are requested to come at least half an hour before meeting time.

For any further queries regarding the Extra Ordinary General Meeting, kindly contact: Mr Ashishkumar Prajapati on phone No- +968 99038993

Regards

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NBO ties up with Oman International Hospital

Delivering services that go beyond banking, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has signed an agreement with Oman International Hospital (OIH) whereby all NBO cardholders, including Credit, Debit, Badeel prepaid and Muzn Islamic Banking, can access a range of discounted treatment packages, plus an additional 5 per cent off on regular promotions at the multi-speciality hospital located in Ghubra, Muscat.

Under the agreement, customers can also take advantage of the Easy Payment Plan (EPP), which allows them to pay off their total bills in six and twelve-month instalments when they use their credit card, at 0 per cent interest. It's the latest in a number of unique benefits and rewards that NBO cardholders can tap into, simply by using their cards.

Tariq Atiq, chief retail and digital banking officer at NBO, said, "We believe that banking should



extend beyond mere transactions and add genuine value to people's lives, and our cards are great example of this.

"With a growing number of tie-ups with well-liked brands, we continue to tune into our customers' spending preferences and lifestyles, while offering a whole host of benefits that make

the experience even more worthwhile."

Marcelo Pereira, CEO at OIH added, "At OIH we offer the highest international quality standards, combining the skills of renowned local and international medical teams to provide excellent healthcare services.

"We are delighted to

partner with the National Bank of Oman in line with our objective to increase healthcare accessibility and encourage people to take care of their wellbeing."

Oman International Hospital presents a concept that integrates culture with science, safety with comfort, and aesthet-

ics with functionality.

This holistic approach will be felt not only on the spatiality but on how each and every client is assessed according to their individuality.

With world-class doctors, advanced medical equipment and 5-star hotel-class hospitality, patients are offered a solution for all

of their health needs.

As one of the leading banks in the sultanate, NBO's suite of credit, debit and prepaid cards offer cashless convenience, tailor-made to meet the needs of its customers locally and internationally.

Providing excellent spending power and a faster and more se-

cure alternative to cash, cardholders can enjoy movie tickets, dining and hotel discounts, free travel insurance, airport lounge access, as well as exciting promotions throughout the year.

Moreover, customers will earn NUQATI points on each rial spent using their credit card.

OABC hosts event on state of logistics

On November 22, the Oman American Business Center (Am-Cham Oman) hosted an event titled 'The State of Logistics in Oman, Past, Present, and Future', sponsored by the Port of Salalah, at the Grand Hyatt Muscat.

The event included a panel discussion, moderated by OABC board member, Shayan Sumar, and featured panelists Sunil Joseph, CCO, Port of Salalah, Omaima Bahajaj, marketing and communication manager, Salalah Free Zone, and Aisha al Saifi, director Market Intelligence at Asyad Group. During the discussion, the panelists talked about significant changes in Oman's logistics sector over the past five years and shared their viewpoints of current logistics trends in the sultanate and the GCC region, and their expectations of what may occur within the sector in the years ahead.

The panel discussion included three themes: the global shipping crisis and its impact on Omani businesses, Oman's Vision 2040, and opportunities in the Omani logistics sector.

Panelists touched on crucial



topics such as fostering further utilisation of the Free Trade Agreement between Oman and the US, various services that Port of Salalah now offers such as sea air cargo solutions and Flexhub, as well as Salalah's value proposition, focused on a strong integrated ecosystem.

A big part of the Salalah Value proposition is the collaborative efforts of Port of Salalah, the Free Zone, Asyad, Salalah International Airport, and various government entities to work collectively towards highlighting Salalah as a hub to attract foreign investment to the country. To

improve ease of doing business, these entities have worked hard in recent years to provide a one-stop-shop-solution.

Towards the conclusion of the panel discussion, the floor was opened to attendees for a Q&A session. Many eagerly asked engaging questions that were relevant to various sectors in Oman and private sector members found it highly beneficial to have direct discussion with government stakeholders to analyse logistics challenges and suggest solutions.

"We've received incredible feedback following this event,"

says Rebecca Olson, executive director of the OABC.

"Attendees were extremely grateful for the opportunity for both the private and public sector to have in-depth discussion about the sector's goals, Oman's Vision 2040, past obstacles, and ideas for the way forward. The main takeaway mentioned repeatedly that we need more opportunities for key conversations like this. All of these business leaders want the same thing -- an incredible but possible goal -- which is to make Oman, with its unique location in the region, a world leader in logistics.

Oman Oasis conducts final draws

Oman Oasis, the nation's leading water brand, has been a popular choice amongst consumers because of its unfaltering commitment to producing high-quality bottled water and its ongoing customer-centric promotions, and rewarding raffle draws. Produced and distributed by Oasis Water Company, Oman Oasis recently concluded the final round of draws of its 5 Gallon Special Discount Promotion.

The first draw that took place on September 20 had 111 winners while the second draw held on October 20 saw another 105 winners. The final draw which was conducted on November 21 witnessed 94 more winners being added to its existing list of 216 winners. The Oman Oasis 5 Gallon Special Discount Draws gave away a total of 310 prizes through three successful draws. The prizes from the draws included ten 22 carat 8g gold coins, twenty 22 carat 4g gold coins, two hundred 10 Oman Oasis 5 Gallon water coupons, and eighty Lulu gift vouchers worth RO10.

The 5 Gallon Special Discount



Promotion, which began on August 20 and ended on November 19, received an overwhelming response from the market. Ensuring that everyone who participated had more chances to win, the draws saw a total of 310 winners walking away with lucky prizes.

Oman Oasis has been steadfast in coming up with creative ways to engage with their consumers and reward them for their loyalty. By rolling out innumerable promotions, contests, and awareness campaigns that are shaped keeping the consumers' benefits in mind, Oman

Oasis has become the preferred choice and a household name.

Complementing its marketing strategies and excellent levels of customer service are its international product quality certifications like the IBWA membership, NSF, ABWA, and WQA that serve as a testament to the brand's commitment to quality. With over 25 years of experience in providing quality drinking water, a deep understanding of the local market, and its customer-first approach, Oman Oasis has successfully created an ever-growing consumer base.

Mazoon Dairy launches new 'long-life' orange juice product

Mazoon Dairy Company launched its new 'long-life' orange juice product, which is the company's first product in the 'long-life' category of juices, as it contains the nutritional values necessary for consumers' health.

Long-life juices are also a suitable choice for all consumers in terms of convenient storage for periods of up to six months, in addition to being easy to present as a healthy option for all family members. Moreover, the orange juice product is prepared from the finest natural fruits and is rich in vitamin C. The juice is also free of sugar, colours, and preservatives. The new orange juice is in a one-litre capacity, and soon it will be launched in (200 ml) capacity with other long-life juice products.

Mazoon Dairy continues it is unveiling of new products range under highest standards of quality and food safety in accordance with the Gulf standards followed in the sultanate, and under the direct supervision of the regulatory authorities, led by the Food Safety and Quality Centre.

All production processes are carried out in the company's plant under the direct supervision of the quality assurance and



control team, and each production process is subject to a number of laboratory tests (before, during and after), conducted in modern and advanced laboratories within the factory facilities in the wilayat of Al Sunaia.

Mazoon Dairy is working at an accelerated pace to launch its various products and meet the needs of the local market and the region.

Thus, strengthening the ranges of Mazoon products, which includes fresh milk, fresh yogurt, flavoured milk, long-life

milk, long-life flavoured milk, flavoured yoghurt, natural juices, cheese, fresh cream, labneh and ice-cream. All of this is taking place in accordance with the strategic plan for expansion, as export operations have begun to a number of countries in the region.

It is worth noting that Mazoon Dairy recently launched a number of new products, such as 'HarBarid' juice, a traditional local drink made of dried lemons and dates, besides strawberry and mango yogurt products.

Porsche hosts one of the region's largest car culture gatherings

With over 7,000 attendees from the region gathered at The Slab in Dubai Design District and more than 1,000 Porsche cars onsite across the weekend, the first ever "Icons of Porsche" festival made history as one of the biggest public events held by an automotive manufacturer in the Middle East region.

Thousands of enthusiasts, Porsche owners and families flocked to the two-day event on November 19 and 20 for the first Porsche event in the Middle East celebrating classic cars, art and culture, designed to bring communities together.

With many classic and iconic cars on display, the event was the largest gathering of legendary vehicles from the Porsche Museum outside of Germany this year. In addition, the event saw the visionary design studies from the Porsche Unseen series on display for the first time at a public event outside of Germany.

The celebration featured several local and international contemporary art from the likes of Chris Labrooy, live entertainment, musical performances, food vendors such as the Porsche infused DRVN Coffee



and presentations on stage by Grant Larson, director Special Projects & Style at Porsche AG, Achim Stejskal, director Porsche Museum, and several well-known car collectors.

Hundreds of classic car owners from across the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Oman made the journey to Dubai to visit the event and display their own beloved icons at the festival, while Porsche owners participated in Porsche parades featuring some rare and customised cars.

Dr Manfred Bräunl, chief executive officer of Porsche Middle

East and Africa, was impressed with the response from the public. "We know that the region is home to a variety of rare and unique classic Porsches, and we wanted to bring them together with the local community in an event focused on car culture in a family-friendly environment. Our dreams were big and so were our plans but the outcome has astonished us all."

"The passion was felt right from the beginning when we announced the Icons of Porsche. It was incredible to see more than 7,000 car collectors, brand fans, enthusiast clubs, Porsche own-

ers, families and friends come together for a big celebration of motoring culture, and we plan to make this an annual event moving forward," he added.

Larson commented, "This is my first visit to the Middle East and I have been overwhelmed by the interest and enthusiasm in our brand and products in this region. I think the guests truly appreciated that this was not another motor show or product display, but simply a space for them to have a good time, connect with each other and learn more about the brand's heritage first-hand."



Exciting all-new BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé arrives

Sport, elegance and pure power come together in the all-new, second generation BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé, which has arrived in Oman.

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles (AJIA), exclusive importers of BMW in Oman, announced the introduction of

this stunning new addition to the BMW fleet in the country and invite customers to see the car in all its glory at their Qurm showroom.

Designed for everyday driving and longer journeys, the beautifully aerodynamic four-door Gran Coupé ensures not only

comfort with its five full seats, premium interiors and driver technology, but also excitement with its sport seats and steering wheel, frameless windows, and spoiler lip on the tailgate.

A trio of four-cylinder models are joined by a six-cylinder performance version of this Gran

Coupé that is low slung and muscular yet classy and contemporary. Visit the AJIA BMW Group showroom to experience this thrilling new BMW model. The AJIA showroom is open Sunday to Thursday, 8.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 7pm, Saturday 9.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 9pm.

TBY plans launch of its 8th annual publication at Oman Vision 2040 event

The Business Year (TBY), a global media group that has been providing investors, businesses, and governments with first-hand insights into the world's most dynamic markets for over a decade, has been present in the Sultanate of Oman for eight consecutive years and is gearing up to launch its annual publication, *The Business Year: Oman 2021/22, Special Vision 2040 Edition*, in partnership with the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, at its Oman Vision 2040 and the Future of Investments event at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on December 12.

The event will be attended by around 150 top CEOs, who will gather to discuss the future of investment in Oman.

The event will kick off with an address by H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and followed by a speech by Abdullah al Hakmani, head of Projects Management Office at the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

The Business Year aims to present Vision 2040 to the international community as a wide-ranging blueprint for economic and social development over the next two decades. It will be a key opportunity for the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit to further expand on the vision and debate with top-level executives the interactions between various public and private entities.

It will also allow the Omani business environment to raise challenges it expects to encounter in the future and understand how those challenges will be tackled by the strategic roadmap outlined by the government.

A panel discussion will also take place, where speakers from public and private entities will address their sector of the economy to provide a broader outlook of the policies and programs that are being

tracked to attain shared goals.

Crucial topics will include commitments to diversification, sustainable growth, the circular economy, the role of SMEs, human development, Omanisation, strategies for capital preservation and robust investment returns.

The government hopes Vision 2040 will place Oman alongside the world's most developed economies.

The Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025) represents the executive plan for Vision 2040, and is aimed at overcoming various challenges to ensure high economic growth rates.

The Business Year: Oman 2021/22, Special Vision 2040 Edition features interviews with 150 business leaders from across the economy.

It is available online now on all major business information platforms, including Bloomberg Terminal, Refinitiv Eikon, Dow Jones Factiva, and FactSet, as well as on PressReader and Google Books and at thebusinessyear.com.

'Time to take action to attract top talent in hospitality sector'

New, independent research conducted by CatererGlobal.com – the leading global hospitality job board – has revealed its 2021 insights into the hospitality sector. Surveying over 1,000 respondents globally, hospitality industry workers in the UAE made up 21 per cent of respondents.

Launched during CatererGlobal's Annual Insight Event, as a digital series, the findings focus on key themes currently affecting the hospitality industry, including the fight for talent, talent mobility, training and development, and increased digitisation in the recruitment process.

The digital sessions within the series include passionate discussions, driven by industry-leading panelists: Vaibhav Garg, area talent & culture manager, Accor Maldives; Peppy Dosanjh, vice president of Talent Acquisition & Employer Brand for EMEA, Marriott International; and Gabrielle Mather, CEO and founder, Restaurant Secrets Inc and Cornerstone 61.

CatererGlobal's survey demonstrates the need for companies to handle their recruitment objectively, innovatively and transparently, to attract and retain talent while creating a positive and lasting impact on all hoping for a career in the hospitality industry.

The survey shows that improved salary and stronger benefits are two of the most important attributes to candidates when applying for a job within the hospitality industry, while half (50 per cent) of those surveyed stated career progression as the main factor that attracts them most to a job role. 95 per cent of respondents currently working in the UAE hospitality sector stated their plans to pursue a career in hospitality, however a high number of these respondents (80 per cent) outlined they had been looking for a job within the hospitality sector over the past 12 months.

Commenting on the results, Jeremy Vercoe, sales manager,



Jeremy Vercoe

CatererGlobal.com, said, "The influences that made staffing challenging pre-COVID-19, as defined by the "war for talent", have not disappeared just because there are more workers to choose from. The industry has to emphasise that jobs in the hospitality sector can readily become life-long careers. While that message may secure new candidates through the door, creating concrete career development and advancement opportunities is the only way to keep those candidates."

Out of recruiters surveyed, 65 per cent confirmed changes have been made to pay and benefits packages in order to attract more talent. A further 80 per cent confirmed the recruitment process has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic with increased use of technology in the hiring process, adjustments to company's talent management processes, and increased internal cross functional hiring. 67 per cent of recruiters found video interviewing to be the most effective tool that they have utilised in the recruitment process since the pandemic.

Employers also stated their biggest employment challenge currently is reaching the right candidates, followed by retention, reduced budgets, and geographical hiring restrictions. Those surveyed also anticipate that these will continue to be the biggest challenges over the next year.

The majority of respondents hold a positive view when it comes to the use of technology and remote recruitment.

Danube Properties promotes its assets at Cityscape Global exhibition at Expo 2020

Danube Properties' latest project, the Dh475mn Skyz provides an ideal investment opportunity for investors who want to benefit from the current low price and a higher premium in two years' time when prices appreciate to a high level.

The company expects greater investor interest in the new project, which will be the focus of its marketing and sales campaign at the Cityscape Global exhibition that takes place at the Dubai Exhibition Centre within the Expo 2020 district.

With prices starting from Dh399,000 for a studio, Dh599,000 for a one-bedroom apartment and Dh799,000 for a two-bedroom flat, buyers can expect to receive the keys after paying half of the amount through a 1 percent monthly payment scheme – meaning they can start earning rents after paying only 50 per cent of the property.

In other words, buyers can own the property with only 50 per cent of the price – the rest 50 per cent they can pay from the rental income!

Buyers can approach Danube Properties sales team at their Stand No C61 at the Dubai Exhibition Centre in order to benefit from the opportunity.

"The Skyz Tower is an ideal property for end-users and investors who want a second home in Dubai as prices of properties have started to appreciate due to higher investor demand,"



Rizwan Sajjan, founder and chairman of Danube Group, said.

"Buyers of the properties can expect to benefit from 20 per cent premium if they sell the property after two years when we will hand over the building to the buyers. This translates to a straight 15 per cent annual profit – making it a very high return on investment."

Residential property prices in Dubai increased 4.4 per cent on average in the first eight months of the year, registering the highest annual growth since February 2015, according to real estate consultancy CB Richard Ellis (CBRE). Average apartment prices increased 2.5 per cent and average villa prices increased 17.9 per cent, CBRE said in its third quarter market report recently.

"But those shy away from investing – might miss the boat. Think of those who bought properties last year when the prices and market sentiment was the lowest in the middle of the pandemic – and made a killing by selling them at 30-40 per cent premium earlier this year – a solid return in just six months," Rizwan Sajjan says.

"I urge the investors not to miss the boat this time. It is a golden opportunity – as property price now are still 36 per cent lower than the previous peak of 2014. So, prices are still low and attractive. You may not make the same profit if you buy later."

Average home prices are rising at the fastest pace since February 2015, with transaction volumes surging nearly 77 per cent in August from a year earlier -- up over 56 per cent when compared with the same period

in 2019, before the pandemic hit, according to CBRE.

"The demand for new supplies and the demand for new homes will continue to rise. Therefore, it is the perfect time to buy a new home – to benefit from the surge in prices – in order to make good money either through re-sale or rent – that is expected to rise from 2023 onwards," Sajjan says.

Danube Properties, the UAE-based affordable housing pioneer and one of the most dynamic and popular private real estate developers in the UAE, recently launched Skyz Tower, a Mediterranean-themed high-rise residential tower with elegantly-designed apartments, retail outlets and recreational facilities with a development value exceeding Dh475mn.

The project will be developed

at the Arjan master-planned community in Dubai, close to the Miracle Gardens, opposite to Motor City, Dubai Hills Estates and Dubai Hills Estate Mall with the easiest access to Mohammed Bin Zayed highway.

The affordable homes come with Danube Properties' trend-setting 1 per cent payment plan that helps middle income tenants and end-users to easily acquire their dream homes.

The launch of the new residential tower comes a few days after land transaction value exceeded Dh100bn mark in less than nine months this year – as announced by Dubai Land Department – fuelled by strong investor interest in Dubai's real estate.

Danube Properties has recently delivered Bayz and Miraciz, while its largest project Lawnz is currently being completed for delivery will take the number of delivered units to 4,281 with sales value exceeding Dh3.5bn by the end of this year.

This will help to reinforce Danube Properties' reputation as one of the most successful developers in the UAE with the highest launch-to-delivery ratio.

Skyz will be developed at an 67,837.39 square feet plot of land at Arjan, close to the Miracle Garden with easy access to Mohammed bin Zayed Highway.

The tower overlooks Miracle Garden, Arabian Ranches and Motor city communities.

Himachal Wing celebrates Diwali

Himachal Wing under the aegis of Indian Social Club Oman organised a cultural event to celebrate Diwali festival at Crowne Plaza, Muscat.

The event was graced by H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Sultanate of Oman, and his wife, Divya Narang.

The Indian Ambassador in his introductory address conveyed his best wishes and hon-

oured the parents of the members at the event.

Himachal Community in the Sultanate of Oman presented a colorful cultural programme in traditional fervour to mark the occasion which was well received by all guests.

The convener of the Himachal Wing of Indian Social Club Oman, Sanjeev Sharma, said that over 130 people participated in

the event.

The guests were welcomed by a group of children in a traditional way.

The event was moderated by committee members, Arti Luthra and Shalini Kaundal.

The committee members of Himachal Wing, Gaurav Sood, Sudhir Sharma, Surinder Singh, Dhian Chand and Pratap Chauhan welcomed all the guests.



Iran’s President says ending sanctions key to Vienna talks

Tehran, Iran - Iran’s president has assured his French counterpart that his government is serious about resumed talks on reviving a 2015 nuclear deal but stressed that lifting US sanctions is the absolute priority.

President Ebrahim Raisi’s comments in a phone call with Emmanuel Macron on Monday evening were his first after the reopening of the talks in Vienna earlier in the day.

Raisi said that Washington has a special responsibility to rebuild confidence in the agreement as it was then US president Donald Trump who had brought it to its knees in 2018 by pulling out and reimposing sweeping sanctions.

“Those who have started to violate the nuclear deal must gain the confidence of the other party for the negotiations to proceed in a real and fruitful manner,” he said.

Raisi said Iran was serious about the talks on reviving the agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and expected its negotiating partners to be so too.

“Sending a full team to the talks shows Iran’s serious will in



Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi (AFP)

these talks,” he said. “If the Americans lift the sanctions and the Europeans honour their commitments... Iran will meet its obligations too.”

Raisi said Iran stood ready to resume ‘full cooperation’ with the UN nuclear watchdog, which was tasked with monitoring Iran’s implementation of the strict limits on its nuclear activities it agreed to in 2015 in return for the lifting of international

sanctions.

‘Resume obligations’
A statement issued by the French presidency after the phone call said that France’s goal in the talks was to ‘see Iran return to full respect for all of its commitments under the JCPOA and that the United States return to the agreement’.
Macron ‘underscored the need for Iran to engage con-

structively in this direction so that the exchanges allow a swift return to the agreement’, it said.
‘Iran must return without delay to compliance with all its commitments and obligations... and quickly resume cooperation that allows the [UN atomic] agency to fully carry out its mission.’
In a separate phone call with UN chief Antonio Guterres on Monday evening, Iranian Foreign

Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian promised that Iran would resume its obligations under the nuclear deal as soon as the other parties did so too.
“The other parties must resume their obligations in full,” he said. “When that happens, Iran will halt its compensatory measures.”
He was referring to Iran’s tit-for-tat suspension of key undertakings in the 2015 deal that has seen it enrich uranium in larger quantities and to higher levels of purity than it had originally promised.

The talks in Vienna are the first since Iran paused them after Raisi’s election in June and then ignored Western appeals to restart them for several months.
The remaining parties to the 2015 agreement Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia are participating directly. At Iran’s insistence, the United States is doing so only indirectly.
The EU chair of the talks, Enrique Mora, said after the first session on Monday that he felt ‘extremely positive’, although he acknowledged that ‘difficult issues’ had yet to be tackled.
AFP



Seif al Islam Gadhafi (AFP)

Libya, UN warn intimidation stopping Gadhafi son’s appeal

Tripoli, Libya - Libya’s government and the UN expressed concern on Monday over an intimidation campaign that has shut the court where the son of slain dictator Moammar Gadhafi is appealing his rejected presidential bid.

The elections on December 24 come as Libya seeks to turn the page on a decade of violence since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed Gadhafi in 2011.
Last Wednesday, Libya’s electoral commission announced the rejection of the candidacy of his son Seif al Islam Gadhafi, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes.
Unsuccessful applicants were given 48 hours to appeal in court.

But on Thursday morning, a ‘group of outlaws’ launched an ‘odious’ attack on the court in the southern city of Sebha, forcing it to shut hours before Seif had been due to appeal, the government in Tripoli said.
Similar incidents have been reported since, with footage broadcast on local media showing gunmen - presented as belonging to the eastern-based strongman and presidential candidate Khalifa Haftar - blocking access to the

court.
The Libyan government said in a statement late Monday that it was ‘following with great concern the tensions around the court in Sebha, which threaten the legitimacy of the judicial institution’.
‘Threatening the lives of judges or trying to influence their work risks plunging Sebha back into civil war,’ it added.
The United Nations Libya mission UNSMIL also said in a statement that it was ‘following with great concern the continued closure of Sebha Court of Appeal’ where it said ‘judges were physically prevented from conducting their legally mandated duties, directly impeding the electoral process’.
‘UNSMIL is also alarmed by increasing reports of intimidation and threats against judges and judicial employees, particularly those dealing with electoral-related complaints, as well as against candidates, in a number of locations in Libya.’
Dozens of people, including supporters of Seif, protested in Sebha on Monday to denounce an ‘attack on the work of justice’.
AFP

Morocco to push for Israeli-Palestinian talks: King

Rabat, Morocco - Morocco will push for a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, King Mohammed VI said on Monday, almost a year after his country renewed ties with the Jewish state.
“Morocco will continue its efforts, building on its position and its excellent relations with all sides and relevant international actors, to provide the appropriate conditions for a return to the negotiating table,” the monarch said in a televised address.



Morocco’s King Mohammed VI

Morocco renewed official relations with Israel in December last year, two decades after it cut ties with the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising.
The rapprochement came amid a string of normalisation deals between Israel and Arab countries, brokered by the Trump administration.
In a speech, delivered on the UN-organised International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, King Mohammed stressed Morocco’s ‘total soli-

darity with the Palestinian people’ and their right to an independent state alongside Israel.
He called for trust-building efforts and urged both sides ‘to refrain from actions that obstruct the peace process’.
The King, who heads the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation’s Al-Quds committee charged with protecting Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem, also warned against any attempt to change the city’s ‘juridical, his-

toric and demographic’ status.
Several cities across Morocco, where public support for the Palestinian cause is high, saw protests on Monday against the move to re-establish ties, according to footage posted on social media.
Authorities banned a planned protest in the capital Rabat.
Protester Mouad El Jouhri condemned the ‘betrayal and normalisation with the enemy’, referring to Israel.
AFP

Pentagon orders probe into Syria airstrike investigated by NYT



US soldiers patrol an area near Syria’s northeastern Semalka border crossing on November 1, 2021 (AFP)

Washington, US - The Pentagon launched a fresh probe on Monday into a 2019 airstrike that killed civilians in Syria, two weeks after a *New York Times* (NYT) investigation claimed the US military concealed dozens of non-combatants’ deaths.
Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin instructed Army General Michael Garrett to ‘review the reports of the investigation already conducted into that incident’ and ‘conduct further inquiry into the facts and circumstances related to it’, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said.
Garrett’s three-month review will assess ‘civilian casualties that resulted from the incident, compliance with the law of war, record keeping and reporting procedures’, Kirby added.
It will also probe whether measures taken after the earlier investigation were effectively im-

plemented, if ‘accountability measures’ should be taken and if ‘procedures or processes should be altered’.
According to a *Times* investigation published mid-November, a US special force operating in Syria - sometimes in complete secrecy - bombed a group of civilians three times on March 18, 2019, near the Islamic State (IS) bastion of Baghouz, killing 70 people, mainly women and children.
The *Times* report says a US legal officer ‘flagged the strike as a possible war crime’ but that ‘at nearly every step, the military made moves that concealed the catastrophic strike’. The *Times* found the strike ‘was one of the largest civilian casualty incidents of the war against the Islamic State’, but was never publicly acknowledged by the US military.
‘The death toll was down-

played. Reports were delayed, sanitised and classified. United States-led coalition forces bulldozed the blast site. And top leaders were not notified,’ the report said, adding findings of a Pentagon probe were ‘stalled and stripped of any mention of the strike’.
A statement released by the Pentagon after the report said the initial investigation into the incident by the US Army Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, found the strikes were ‘self-defence’, ‘proportional’ and that ‘appropriate steps were taken to exclude the presence of civilians’.
A US-led coalition and Kurdish-led allies announced the defeat of the IS proto-state, known as the ‘caliphate’, at the end of March 2019 after overcoming the last holdout of Baghouz.
AFP

Germany jails Iraqi IS militant for life for genocide against Yazidi people

Frankfurt, Germany - A Frankfurt court on Tuesday handed a life sentence to an Iraqi man who joined the Islamic State (IS) group for genocide against the Yazidi minority, in the first verdict worldwide to use the label.
Taha al Jumailly (29) was found guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity resulting in death, war crimes, aiding and abetting war crimes and bodily harm resulting in death after joining IS in 2013.
Proceedings were suspended as the defendant passed out in court when the verdict was read out.
The Yazidis, a Kurdish-speaking group hailing from northern Iraq, have for years been persecuted by IS militants who have killed hundreds of men, raped women and forcibly recruited children as fighters.
In May, UN special investigators reported that they had collected ‘clear and convincing evidence’ of genocide by IS against the Yazidis.
“This is a historical moment for the Yazidi community,” Natia Navrouzov, a lawyer and member of the NGO Yazda, which gathers evidence of crimes committed by IS against the Yazidis, told AFP ahead of the verdict.
“It is the first time in Yazidi history that a perpetrator stands in a court of law for genocide charges,” she said.
Prosecutors say Jumailly and his now ex-wife, a German



The defendant Iraqi Taha al Jumailly (left) holds up a file to cover his face as he speaks with his lawyers before the sentencing in his trial at the Higher Regional Court in Frankfurt, Germany on Tuesday (AFP)

woman named Jennifer Wenisch, ‘purchased’ a Yazidi woman and child as household ‘slaves’ while living in then IS-occupied Mosul in 2015.
They later moved to Fallujah, where Jumailly is accused of chaining the five year old girl to a window outdoors in heat rising to 50°C as a punishment for wetting her mattress, leading her to die of thirst.
In a separate trial, Wenisch (30) was sentenced to ten years

in jail in October for ‘crimes against humanity in the form of enslavement’ and aiding and abetting the girl’s killing by failing to offer help.
Identified only by her first name Nora, the child’s mother testified in both Munich and Frankfurt about the torment visited on her child.
She also described being raped by IS militants after they invaded her village in the Sinjar mountains in northwestern Iraq

in August 2014.
‘Clear message’
The mother was represented by a team including London-based human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, who has been at the forefront of a campaign for IS crimes against the Yazidis to be recognised as genocide, along with former Yazidi slave and 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner Nadia Murad.
Although Clooney did not travel to Munich or Frankfurt, she called Wenisch’s conviction ‘a victory for everyone who believes in justice’, adding that she hoped to see ‘a more concerted global effort to bring ISIS (another acronym for IS) to justice’.
Murad has called on the UN Security Council to refer cases involving crimes against the Yazidis to the International Criminal Court or to create a specific tribunal for genocide committed against the community.
Germany, home to a large Yazidi community, is one of the few countries to have taken legal action over such abuses.
The trial of Jumailly ‘sends a clear message’, according to Navrouzov.
“It doesn’t matter where the crimes were committed and it doesn’t matter where the perpetrators are, thanks to the universal jurisdiction, they can’t hide and will still be put on trial.”
AFP

US plans stronger posture towards China

Washington, US - The US military will reinforce deployments and bases directed at China and Russia, while maintaining forces in the Middle East adequate to deter Iran and militant groups, the Pentagon said on Monday, referencing results of a review.

The US Defence Department will be upgrading and expanding military facilities in Guam and Australia, underscoring its focus on China as the country's leading defense rival, officials said.

The details of the 'global posture review', commissioned by President Joe Biden's administration early this year, would remain classified, the officials added, so as not to reveal plans to rivals.

The move comes in the wake of the formation of a new defence alliance between the United States, Britain and Australia - dubbed AUKUS - to counter a rising China, which has been building up its own navy and testing decades of US military dominance across Asia.

That pact was formed as Beijing solidifies its control over the disputed South China Sea and intensifies its military threats towards Taiwan, of which the United States is a key ally and arms supplier.

The review confirmed the priority region for the US military was the Indo-Pacific, said Mara Karlin, a top Pentagon policy official.

The review "directs additional cooperation with allies and partners across the region to advance initiatives that contribute to regional stability and deter potential military aggression from China and threats from North Korea," she told reporters.

In addition, it "strengthens the combat-credible deterrent against Russian aggression in Europe and enables NATO forces to operate more effectively," she said.

The Middle East, however, remains an area of flux for the Pentagon after the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Global responsibilities "require us to make continuous changes to our Middle East posture, but we always have the capability to rapidly deploy forces to the region based on the threat environment," Karlin said.

China's foreign ministry on Tuesday hit back at the review, accusing the Pentagon of "creating an imaginary enemy," and "sparing no efforts to encircle and contain China."



A file photo shows an aerial view of the US Naval Base Guam located on Apra Harbor (US Navy)

"We firmly oppose the United States' use of the 'China Threat theory' as an excuse to increase military spending and expand military strength and hegemony," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said at a regular press briefing.

Rebuilding trust

However, a senior Pentagon official who declined to be identified

downplayed any idea of radical shifts.

"In the first year of an administration, it's not the time when we would develop a major strategic-level change to our posture," the official said.

The official added that the Biden team felt the review necessary after the disruptive approach of his predecessor Donald Trump, who altered US

commitments abruptly.

Under Trump, "there were oftentimes a devaluing of ally and partner input and engagement, which eroded US credibility and hard-won trust," the official said.

The officials declined to answer questions on how the global posture review sees US force presence in ongoing conflict zones like the Middle East, East and West Africa, and Eastern Europe.

But they confirmed previously announced plans to do more in Guam and Australia.

"In Australia, you'll see new rotational fighter and bomber aircraft deployments, you'll see ground forces training and increased logistics cooperation," said Karlin.

In Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and Australia there will also be upgrades to airports and fuel and munitions storage facilities, she said.

Asked if the review foresaw more increases in the US presence in the Pacific region, Karlin said: "We're moving the needle a bit. And what I'd like to think is, over the coming years, you will see that needle move more," she said.

AFP

Sudan security forces fire tear gas at post-coup deal protesters

Khartoum, Sudan - Sudanese security forces fired tear gas on Tuesday at protesters rallying against last month's military takeover and a subsequent deal that reinstated the Prime Minister, witnesses said.

Thousands of demonstrators gathered in the capital Khartoum and marched on the presidential palace, before security forces fired tear gas to disperse them, they said.

"I'm here to demand the fall of military rule," demonstrator Mohamed Alaaldin said.

Sudan's top general, Abdel Fattah al Burhan, seized power and detained Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok on October 25, but after international condemnation and mass protests he reinstated the premier nearly a month later.

Critics however have lambasted the November 21 agreement as 'whitewashing' and accused Hamdok of 'betrayal', with pro-democracy activists vowing to maintain pressure on the military-civilian authority.

On Tuesday, security forces were stationed around the palace to prevent demonstrators from approaching.

"No partnership, no negotiation, no legitimacy," protesters chanted, urging the military 'to go back to their barracks'.

At least 43 people have been



Demonstrators hurl tear gas canisters back at security forces amidst clashes in Khartoum on Tuesday following protests against a deal that saw the civilian prime minister reinstated after the military coup in October (AFP)

killed in anti-coup protests since last month, according to medics.

Doctors have accused security forces of using live rounds, but police denied the allegations saying it only used 'minimum force' to disperse protests.

On Tuesday, police forces were seen chasing protesters on streets near the presidential palace with 'whips', witnesses said.

The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), an umbrella of unions which called for Tuesday's protests, accused Hamdok and Burhan of seeking to 'reproduce the former regime' of autocratic president Omar al Bashir, who was ousted and jailed in April 2019 following mass protests.

"Taking to the streets is a clear and decisive response to the putschists' nonsense," said the SPA, which was also instrumental in the anti-Bashir protests.

Hamdok, who has been Prime Minister in the transitional government since the ouster of

Bashir, has defended the deal, which he signed after he was released from effective house arrest. He has said he partnered with the military to 'stop the bloodshed' and to 'not squander the gains of the last two years'.

The military has vowed to release detainees kept in custody since the coup, and several politicians have since been freed.

Burhan has also pledged to lead Sudan to 'free and transparent elections' in July 2023.

AFP

feated. We scored an unthinkable victory with the eastern command in one day... Now in the west we will repeat this victory," he said.

The announcement last week that Abiy, a former lieutenant-colonel in the military, would head to the battlefield came after the TPLF claimed to control Shewa Robit, a town just 220km northeast of Addis Ababa by road.

Fears of a rebel march on the capital have prompted the United States, France, the United Kingdom and other countries to urge their citizens to leave Ethiopia as soon as possible, though Abiy's government says

Ethiopia PM claims war gains, urges rebels to 'surrender'

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Tuesday urged Tigrayan rebels to surrender, claiming government forces were nearing victory just one week after he vowed to lead military operations at the front.

"The youth of Tigray is perishing like leaves. Knowing it is defeated, it is being led by one who does not have a clear vision or plan," Abiy, winner of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, said in comments aired on state media.

"It should surrender today to the Ethiopian National Defence Force, to the special forces, to the militias and to the people."

Tuesday's footage was the latest in a series of clips showing Abiy, in uniform with soldiers, in what appeared to be the north-eastern region of Afar.

The area has been the site of fierce fighting in recent weeks as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebel group tries to seize control of a critical highway that supplies the capital Addis Ababa.

On Sunday state media claimed the army controlled the lowland Afar town of Chifra, and Abiy said on Tuesday such gains would be replicated to the west, in Amhara region.

"The enemy has been de-



People walks next to a banner depicting Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed during a rally in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on Saturday (AFP)

feated. We scored an unthinkable victory with the eastern command in one day... Now in the west we will repeat this victory," he said.

The announcement last week that Abiy, a former lieutenant-colonel in the military, would head to the battlefield came after the TPLF claimed to control Shewa Robit, a town just 220km northeast of Addis Ababa by road.

Fears of a rebel march on the capital have prompted the United States, France, the United Kingdom and other countries to urge their citizens to leave Ethiopia as soon as possible, though Abiy's government says

TPLF gains are overstated and the city is secure.

A TPLF spokesman on Monday dismissed Abiy's deployment as a 'circus' involving 'farical war games'.

War broke out between the two sides in November 2020, with Abiy sending troops into the northernmost Tigray region to topple the TPLF - a move he said came in response to TPLF attacks on army camps.

The fighting has killed thousands, displaced more than 2mn and driven hundreds of thousands into famine-like conditions, according to UN estimates.

AFP

French far-right pundit Zemmour launches presidential bid

Paris, France - French far-right media pundit Eric Zemmour announced on Tuesday that he will run for president in next year's election, adding his controversial and fiercely anti-immigration voice to the field of challengers seeking to unseat President Emmanuel Macron.

Seen by critics as an unapologetic racist but admired by supporters as a champion of traditional French values, Zemmour surged in polls in recent months, though there have been signs this early momentum is starting to slow.

His declaration came hours before the right-wing Republicans (LR) hold their final TV de-

bate ahead of a congress to choose their candidate at the weekend, with the outline of the April 2022 field now finally taking shape.

"I have decided to take our destiny in my hands. I have decided to stand in the presidential election," Zemmour said in a YouTube video heavy on anti-immigrant warnings and pledges to restore the country's grandeur on the world stage.

"It is no longer the time to reform France, but to save it," Zemmour said, claiming that many voters 'no longer recognise your country'.

Denouncing the 'decline and decadence' of France, he said



Eric Zemmour deliver a speech to announce his candidacy for the 2022 Presidential election in a video broadcast on Tuesday (AFP)

that Macron has promised to be something new, but turned out just to be a 'synthesis of his

predecessors'.

The official announcement by Zemmour, dubbed by some

'France's Trump', suggests he believes he has the financing and backing to dislodge Macron and outshine veteran far-right leader Marine Le Pen in next April's election.

He is due to hold his first official campaign meeting on Sunday morning in Paris - anti-fascists and unions have already pledged to hold a 'silence Zemmour' protest at 1pm (1200 GMT) in the French capital.

Acid-tongued, intense and with two convictions for hate speech, Zemmour (63), is hoping his radical pitch on curbing immigration and Islam in France will appeal to conservatives in a country riven with racial and re-

ligious tensions.

Opinion polls showed support for Zemmour surging in September and October, briefly making him the best-placed rival to Macron, but his popularity appears to have faded over the past month.

The latest survey put Zemmour third in the first round of voting at 14-to-15 per cent, down two-to-three points from the start of November, according to research from the Ifop group published in the *Journal du Dimanche* newspaper on Sunday.

He trailed Macron on 25 per cent and Le Pen on 19-20 per cent. With these scores, they

would both advance to a second-round runoff that Macron would win if the vote were held now, the survey indicated.

Other influential far-right figures have distanced themselves from him, and his campaign team is said to be riven with infighting and dominated by young activists with little political experience.

"I don't support this candidacy which is tainted by desperation," former campaign aide Pierre Meurin told *L'Express* magazine on Monday. "You need to offer people some dreams, and not only blood and tears."

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WHO chief urges 'rational' measures against Omicron

Geneva, Switzerland - The World Health Organization (WHO) called on Tuesday for countries to keep calm and take 'rational' measures in response to the new, fast-spreading COVID-19 variant Omicron, which has sparked global panic.

"We call on all member states to take rational, proportional risk-reduction measures," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a briefing to countries.

"The global response must be calm, coordinated and coherent."

First reported to the WHO in southern Africa less than a week ago, the new strain has rapidly spread across continents, with dozens of countries announcing travel restrictions.

The UN health agency has cautioned against such restrictions, fearing that blocking travel from countries where new variants are first spotted could be unfair and dissuade surveillance.

"I thank Botswana and South Africa for detecting, sequencing and reporting this variant so rapidly," Ghebreyesus said, adding that it was 'deeply concerning to me that those countries are now being penalised by others for doing the right thing'.

Scientists in South Africa said they had detected the new variant with at least ten mutations, and WHO has cautioned that it poses a 'very high' risk globally.

At the same time, Ghebreyesus stressed that it remains unclear how dangerous the variant



WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (AFP)

is. "We still have more questions than answers about the effect of Omicron on transmission, severity of disease, and the effectiveness of tests, therapeutics and vaccines," he said.

The WHO chief said it was understandable that countries wanted to protect their citizens 'against a variant that we don't yet fully understand'.

"But I am equally concerned that several member states are introducing blunt, blanket measures that are not evidence-based or effective on their own, and which will only worsen inequities."

Ghebreyesus also highlighted the glaring vaccine inequity that

has seen abundant supplies in wealthy countries, which are rolling out booster shots, as even many of the most vulnerable in poorer nations are still waiting for their first jabs.

Health experts have long warned that allowing COVID to spread unabated in some places dramatically increases the chances that new, more dangerous variants could emerge, placing the entire world at risk.

"The longer we allow the pandemic to drag on, by failing to address vaccine inequity, or to implement public health and social measures in a tailored and consistent way, the more opportunity we give this virus to mu-

tate in ways we cannot predict or prevent," Ghebreyesus said.

Vaccine could get nod in four months

Vaccines specially adapted for the new Omicron coronavirus variant could be approved in three to four months if they are needed, the head of the EU's drug regulator said on Tuesday.

The decision on whether new shots are required would, however, have to be made by other bodies, European Medicines Agency executive director Emer Cooke said.

"Were there a need to change the existing vaccines, we could be in a position to have

We still have more questions than answers about the effect of Omicron on transmission, severity of disease, and the effectiveness of tests, therapeutics and vaccines

TEDROS ADHANOM
GHEBREYESUS

those approved within three to four months," Cooke told a European Parliament committee.

"That's from the start of the time when they would start to change."

Cooke said EU regulators 'don't know' yet whether the current vaccines remain effective against Omicron - which she said would take about two weeks to find out - or whether new ones are needed.

"A decision needs to be made first whether that's necessary, and that's not a decision for the European Medicines Agency."

The agency has so far approved four vaccines for use for adults in the EU: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson.

A decision on a fifth, by US firm Novavax, is expected 'within a matter of weeks', Cooke said.

AFP



A man walks past a sign of a COVID-19 vaccine site in Staten Island in New York City on Monday (AFP)

Moderna boss warns against vaccine struggle

London, UK - Existing COVID-19 inoculations will struggle against the fast-spreading Omicron variant, the head of vaccine manufacturer Moderna warned on Tuesday, as countries ramp up vaccination programmes and impose further restrictions in an effort to curb growing concern.

While no deaths have yet been reported from Omicron, and it could take weeks to know how infectious and how resistant the strain may prove to vaccines, its emergence underscores how besieged the world remains by COVID-19, nearly two years after the first cases were recorded.

Stephane Bancel, the head of US vaccine manufacturer Moderna, told the *Financial Times* in an interview published on Tuesday that data would be available on the effectiveness of vaccines in the two weeks' time, but that scientists were pessimistic.

"All the scientists I've talked to... are like 'this is not going to be good'," Bancel said, warning against a 'material drop' in the effectiveness of current jabs against Omicron.

Moderna, US drugmaker Pfizer and the backers of Russian vaccine Sputnik V have all announced that they are already working on an Omicron-specific vaccine.

Scientists in South Africa said they had detected the new variant with at least ten mutations, compared with three for Beta or two for Delta - the strain that hit the global recovery and sent millions worldwide back into lockdown.

Challenges to Winter Olympics

China warned that the fast-spreading Omicron variant would cause challenges in hosting next February's Winter Olympics in Beijing, with thousands of athletes, media and participants arriving from overseas required to enter a strict

'closed-loop' bubble.

"I think it will definitely lead to challenges linked to prevention and control," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said.

"But China has a lot of experience in responding to COVID-19," Zhao added. "I firmly believe the Winter Olympics will be conducted smoothly."

Governments, particularly in western Europe, had already struggled with rapid rises in case numbers and have reintroduced mandatory mask-wearing, social-distancing measures, curfews or lockdowns - leaving businesses fearing another grim Christmas.

Germany's constitutional court has ruled that sweeping restrictions such as curfews, school closures and contact restrictions were lawful, likely to pave the way for further curbs with hospitals, already over capacity, long sounding the alarm.

Bans for unvaccinated

'Contacts must be reduced,' said Germany's vice-chancellor-in-waiting Robert Habeck, calling for tougher restrictions such as banning unvaccinated people from 'all public facilities' apart from essential shops.

On Tuesday, Greece said COVID vaccines would be compulsory for over 60s, a day after Britain said all adults would be now eligible for a third jab. On Tuesday, Norway also said it would offer a booster shot to all adults before Easter, as preferable to lockdown.

Russia, which has the highest toll from the virus in Europe and which has not yet reported a case of the Omicron variant, on Tuesday recorded its lowest total new daily infections since October 15.

Kazakhstan has banned flights from December 3 to Egypt, a popular tourist destination, over Omicron.

AFP

Dutch find Omicron a week before S Africa flight cases

The Hague, Netherlands - Dutch health authorities said on Tuesday that the new COVID-19 variant was already present in the Netherlands a week before a cluster of cases on two flights from South Africa.

The Omicron cases were discovered on November 19 and 23 and authorities are checking whether they had links to southern Africa, and how far the new strain has spread.

The Netherlands joins other European countries including Belgium and Germany that have reported cases of the new strain before it was officially notified by South Africa to the World Health Organization on November 24.



Travellers walk at the Schiphol Airport, Netherlands on Tuesday (AFP)

The Dutch RIVM National Institute for Public Health and the Environment said it 'has

found the corona variant Omicron in two test samples that had already been taken in the Netherlands... on November 19 and 23'.

The first cases in the Netherlands were previously believed to be the 14 Omicron infections on two KLM flights from South Africa that arrived in Amsterdam on Friday, November 26.

"It is not yet clear whether the people concerned [in the earlier cases] have also been to southern Africa," the RIVM said.

It said the people had been informed that they had the Omicron strain and municipal health services had now started

contact investigations.

"In the coming period, various studies will be conducted into the distribution of the Omicron variant in the Netherlands," the institute said, adding that it would re-examine more samples from previous tests.

With 16 confirmed cases the Netherlands has one of the highest numbers in Europe of the new strain.

The airline passengers with Omicron, who were among 61 travellers on the two South Africa flights that tested positive for COVID, are currently in quarantine.

AFP

Did global vaccine inequality lead to new virus strain?

Paris, France - In October 2020, as scientists around the world raced to develop a vaccine to fight COVID-19, the leader of the World Health Organization (WHO) warned against looming 'vaccine nationalism'.

In a video address, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at the time that the only way to beat the pandemic was by making sure poorer countries had fair access to a vaccine.

"When we have an effective vaccine, we must also use it effectively," he said.

"And the best way to do that is to vaccinate some people in all countries rather than all people in some countries. Vaccine nationalism will prolong the pandemic, not shorten it."

Over a year later, vaccine inequality is undeniable.

Rich nations like France and Japan have given at least one

dose to over 75 per cent of their populations.

In South Africa - where the Omicron variant was first sequenced - only a quarter of the population has been vaccinated. And is one of the highest inoculation rates on the continent.

But is vaccine inequality the reason behind Omicron's emergence?

French experts tasked with informing their government's pandemic response say Omicron likely came from a patient with a depressed immune system and is the result of a long line of mutations that accumulated during a chronic infection.

But wherever it came from, its spread would have been 'slower, the higher the immunity of the surrounding population', Arnaud Fontanet, scientific advisory board member and epi-



A medical staff member prepares a syringe with a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, in the Lyon Gerland vaccination center (AFP)

demologist at the Pasteur Institute, told AFP.

"You can imagine that the growth of the virus during uncontrolled epidemics creates more opportunities for variants to emerge," he said.

'Shock the world'

"I would like for this new worry to shock the world into realising the importance of vaccinating people on a global scale," Fontanet said.

"The planet will only be safe

when we achieve a level of global immunity that significantly limits the spread and opportunities for new variants to emerge," he said.

The WHO sounded the alarm on vaccine inequality again in September when countries with plenty of resources began eyeing booster shots for vaccinated adults and others considered vaccines for children.

Speaking from WHO's headquarters in Geneva, Ghebreyesus called on countries to avoid giving out extra COVID jabs until the end of the year, pointing to the millions worldwide who have yet to receive a single dose.

"I will not stay silent when the companies and countries that control the global supply of vaccines think the world's poor should be satisfied with leftovers," he said.

A global vaccine-sharing system called Covax, led by WHO and the Gavi vaccine alliance among others, is meant to provide 92 low- and middle-income countries with jabs financed by rich states.

Covax says it has succeeded in administering 500mn doses in 144 countries and territories, and on Monday, Chinese president Xi Jinping promised a billion vaccine doses to Africa through donations or subsidies for local production.

But in a joint statement on Monday, the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and Covax said the quality of donations needs to improve.

"The majority of the donations to-date have been ad hoc, provided with little notice and short shelf lives," they said.

"This has made it extremely challenging for countries to plan vaccination campaigns and increase absorptive capacity."

Fontanet agrees.

"Vaccinating the world is not only a question of doses," he says.

"We have to support fragile health systems and work to persuade people to get the jabs."

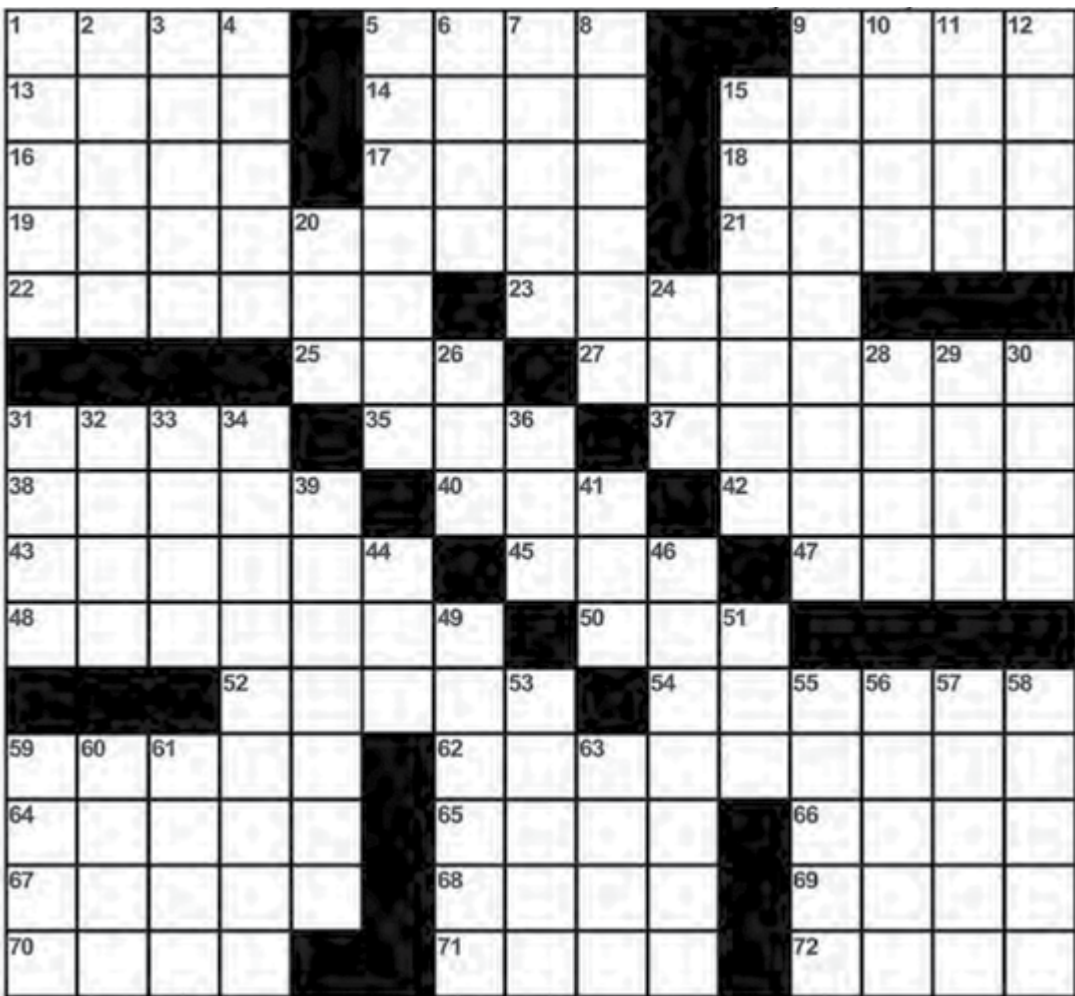
Now that Omicron has been identified, countries are taking measures to prevent its spread by banning flights from Southern Africa where it seems to have originated.

But epidemiologists say these sweeping gestures are beside the point.

"If you're worried about your risk from Omicron, get vaccinated if you aren't already," US virologist Angela Rasmussen tweeted on Sunday.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) They go together
- 5) Turkey, on Broadway
- 9) Campbell of "Scream" films
- 13) University of Nevada city
- 14) Awful reporter
- 15) Piece of cave art
- 16) Popular cookie
- 17) "What's more ... "
- 18) Doesn't include
- 19) Of the highest quality
- 21) Pounded to the max?
- 22) Upholstered piece
- 23) Sign of friendliness
- 25) Itty-bitty pencil
- 27) In a clever way
- 31) Censor's target
- 35) Good friend
- 37) Shrink's topic
- 38) English pounds?
- 40) Hoover, e.g.
- 42) Carroll character
- 43) Makes it work
- 45) Whipped cream unit
- 47) Periods of history
- 48) Food preservative

- 50) Clumsy goof
- 52) Tailless night creature
- 54) _ l'oeil
- 59) Parsley unit
- 62) Second to none
- 64) Feudal subject
- 65) Keep the car running
- 66) Herr partner
- 67) Beijing baby-min-ders
- 68) Word for Abby
- 69) Battery liquid
- 70) Actor's goal
- 71) Food morsels
- 72) Silver source

DOWN

- 1) Univ. teachers
- 2) Nest high above-ground
- 3) Inactive, chemically
- 4) Bird perch
- 5) Erupt
- 6) Country singer
- McCann
- 7) Drying ovens
- 8) Introductions
- 9) "We're..."
- 10) "Great" lake for

- sailing
- 11) Large holders of wine
- 12) "If all_ fails ... "
- 15) Bread, dinero and cabbage
- 20) Yards for a first down
- 24) Poor-behaving little boy
- 26) Like 24-Down
- 28) Alpine lift
- 29) Old Italian money
- 30) Asian oxen
- 31) Card game with sevens through aces
- 32) Long skirt
- 33)_ Bator, Mongolia
- 34) Like an ace pilot?
- 36) Straggle
- 39) Larry, Moe and Curly
- 41) Sound on a farm
- 44) Title for John Giel-gud
- 46) They swing for the fences
- 49) Drive of a kind
- 51) To return?
- 53) Commemorative

- meal
- 55) Butcher's leavings
- 56) Call with a "Polo" response
- 57) Like some jackets

- 58) Cleverly avoid
- 59) High-five sound
- 60) High-quality cotton
- 61) Breed, as animals
- 63) Thin piece of wood

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You've been pushing hard, but take care that in the quest for success you don't lose sight of what's most precious to you. Are you planning to work during your free time? Instead of toiling in the trenches for an uncertain reward, why not pour equal time and energy into nurturing your family? A walk in the woods, an amusement park, or even a picnic in the backyard can make an enormous difference in everyone's spirits.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You'll have to work hard to stifle your controlling nature today when someone comes to you with a dilemma. You know exactly how you would handle a similar situation, but others must make their own decisions and their own mistakes. You can offer advice if you're asked, but putting your foot down firmly and dictating terms will only lead to conflict.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Even if you've never picked up a musical instrument in your life or taken a day of lessons, you are filled with the urge to create beautiful sounds today. Play around on a friend's piano or guitar. You may have some latent talent that's begging for development. Who knows? If you get serious about this, you could be providing the entertainment at parties before too long.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You could be traveling today. Whether it's a short hop or a longer journey, you won't have any trouble with snarled traffic or interminable flight delays. You have high hopes for this trip, either from a personal or professional standpoint, and the beginning is both pleasant and auspicious. Listen to a good audio book to relax you and help shorten your perception of the travel time.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

The only thing you want to have on your mind today is romance. Keep your focus on your partner and don't dwell on petty annoyances or minor inconveniences. So what if the lettuce on your sandwich is wilted, or the soft drinks from the convenience store aren't as cold as you like them? Nothing will spoil the mood faster than endless grouching about silly stuff. Blow it off and have some fun.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You can never get too much good news, and today the happy tidings just don't stop. Every aspect of your life, whether personal or professional, is touched with magic. But this good fortune didn't just fall out of the sky and into your lap. You know that you've worked hard to get to this peak and have every right to heave a deep sigh of satisfaction.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You won't make much progress on advancing a business plan today, so it's best to just resign yourself to jogging in place for a couple of days. You may not have the right mindset for getting down to what you need to do. Perhaps there are disturbances in your household, or maybe there's simply too much going on at work. If you need to attend to others, do so gracefully without laying on any guilt about what you would rather be doing.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your enthusiasm is at the low-water mark today, and you might be feeling a little put out because no one is asking about how you're feeling. Maybe you've been pulling this sad face a bit too often lately. If so, those close to you may have decided that their efforts to cheer you up don't do much good anyway, so they have just pulled back and expect you to deal with it on your own. Try to figure out what has put you in this state.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You've got a lot on your mind, so much so that you could feel like you're bound by handcuffs and leg chains today. No matter what you try to do, your reach simply won't extend far enough. Perhaps you're trying to take too big a stride or embrace too much in one grab. Retrench, resurvey, and re-strategize. You may need to call in reinforcements.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Sleeping late seems like a good idea even if you've got a busy day ahead of you. Your energy might be low and your motivation even lower. Maybe you're troubled by some unresolved tension in your personal life, or maybe you're just worn out from a hectic schedule. Whatever is going on, take care of yourself first. Everything else can wait.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Good control of your facial expressions helps hide your shocked surprise at today's news. You were very likely expecting to receive much less, so the munificence of the offer catches you off guard. Nevertheless, you know you deserve it and can hardly wait to share the victory with someone special. Until then, content yourself with a secret smile of satisfaction and a pat on the back.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

A guardian angel in a human guise could come to your aid today. You might not even find out about their intervention until much later. If things seem to smooth out especially quickly, or if you receive some excellent news, be aware that it could be the result of someone's advocacy on your behalf. Show the proper gratitude when the time comes. In the meantime, be an angel to someone else.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The headquarter of United Nations Fund for Programmes Population Activities (UNFA) are at

- a. London
- b. New York
- c. Washington
- d. Rome

2. The Himalayan Mountaineering Institute is located in

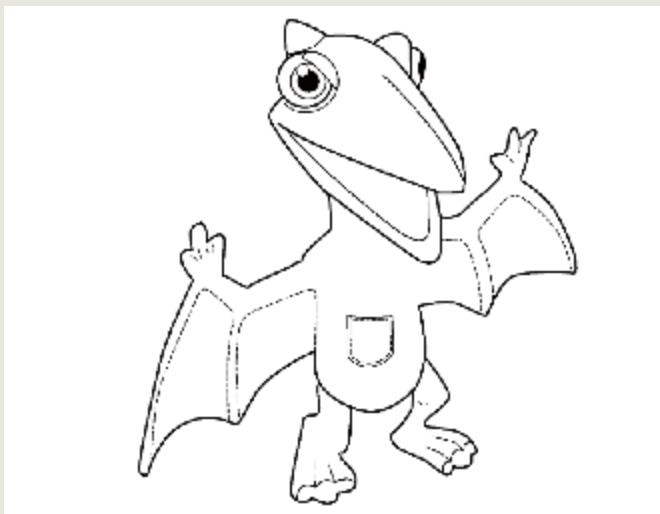
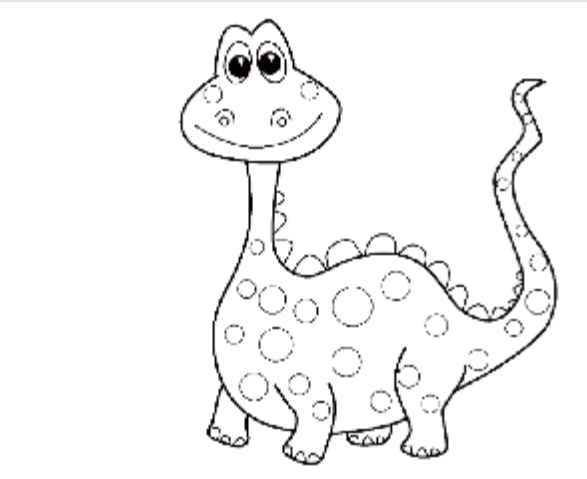
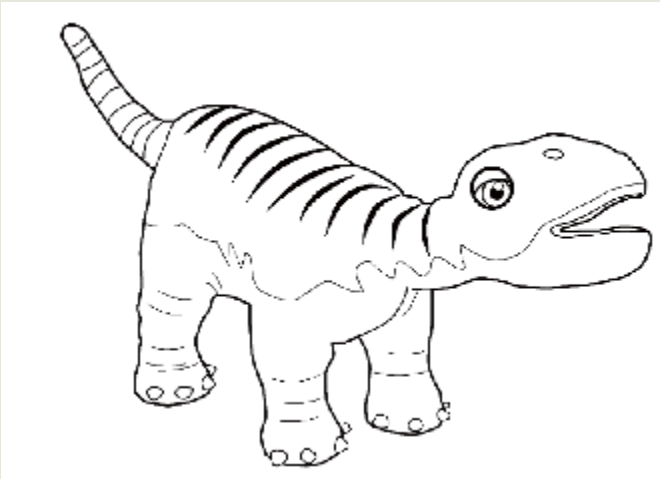
- a. Dehradun
- b. Darjeeling
- c. Uttarkashi
- d. Shillong

3. Deforestation in the uplands may cause pollution in rivers through

- a. leaching of salts
- b. erosion and silting
- c. inflow of forest material
- d. increased discharge rate

Answers: 1. b 2. b 3. b

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	S	B	S
M	C	Y	D
G	E	L	R
N	U	T	O

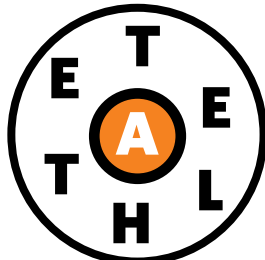
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

		4	2	9		1		
1		9	3	6	5	8		2
		3		4		6		5
5		6	1		7	2		4
4		2		3		9		
3		1	8	5	4	7		9
		7		1	3	5		

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

8	2	5	1	9	7	4	6
3	1	4	6	2	7	5	9
6	9	7	4	8	5	2	3
1	7	6	9	3	5	2	8
4	3	2	7	8	1	9	6
5	8	9	2	4	6	5	1
2	4	7	5	3	6	1	7
9	6	3	1	7	8	4	5
7	5	1	8	6	2	4	3

WINTER SOUPS

SOME

LIKE IT

hot

When the cool breeze begins to blow in wintry weather, there's nothing like a bowl of piping hot soup to warm you up in an instant. **Try these unique soups that can double up as light suppers:**



Paya Soup (lamb trotters soup)

- Ingredients
- 4 trotters

½tsp turmeric powder

Salt to taste

1tsp black pepper

2 cardamom

2tbsp oil or ghee

3 onion- finely sliced

2 green chilli - slit

1tbsp ginger garlic paste

1 tomato - finely chopped

1tsp red chilli powder

½tsp garam masala powder

A bunch of coriander leaves

Grind together

1½tbsp roasted Bengal gram dal

1½tbsp grated coconut

Method
Grind together roasted Bengal gram dal and grated coconut to a fine paste and set aside. Wash the paya thoroughly with wheat flour, vinegar and turmeric powder to remove the raw smell. Rinse with water. Pressure cook the paya with 5 cups of water, turmeric powder, salt, black pepper corns and car-

damom for 15 minutes.
While your paya is being cooked in the cooker, you can start making your masala. Heat oil in a pan and add onion and green chilli. Fry the onion till translucent. Next add in the ginger garlic paste. Fry for 30 seconds till all the raw smell vanishes.
Add the tomato and cook till the tomatoes turn soft and mushy. Now, add the red chilli powder and the ground coconut paste. Cook till oil starts separating from the masala. Remove from heat.
Now, add this prepared masala to the paya in the pressure cooker. Close the lid and again cook on medium heat for 10-15 minutes till well done. Cool and open, then add more water, if you need your soup thin. After adding water, bring it to a boil, then add in the garam masala powder and coriander leaves.
Cook on low heat till oil starts floating on top. Remove from heat and serve hot with paratha or naan.



Ox Tail Soup

- Ingredients
- 1kg ox tail - cut into segments

2tbsp vegetable oil

2tsp salt

1tsp pepper

2 onions - chopped

2 stalks celery - chopped

3 cloves garlic - minced

2tbsp tomato paste

2tbsp Worcestershire sauce

1tsp dried thyme

1 bay leaf

6 cups beef broth
- 400g carrots - sliced
- 3 large russet potatoes - cubed
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- Method
- Pat ox tail segments dry and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

In a large heavy soup pot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add ox tail segments, without crowding. Cook the meat undisturbed for 5 - 6 minutes, until a dark brown crust develops. Turn and continue searing all sides.

Transfer the meat to a clean bowl. Drain half the fat from the pan. Reduce heat to medium. Add the onion and celery, and cook until the onions and celery have softened. Then, add the garlic, cooking until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in tomato paste and Worcestershire sauce. Increase the heat to medium-high and add 1/3 cup broth. Stir to combine. Add the oxtail segments and any juice that has accumulated on the plate back into the pot. Add the thyme, bay leaf, and broth. Stir to

combine. Bring the broth to a simmer and then reduce the heat to low. Cover the pot and simmer for 2½ hours, stirring occasionally.
Add the carrots and potatoes. Cover the pot and continue cooking for another 30 minutes. The meat should fall from the bone and the vegetables should be tender.
To serve, spoon a tail segment into a large soup bowl, surround with the vegetables and ladle broth over all. Garnish with parsley.



Chicken and Rice Soup

- Ingredients
- 2tbsp unsalted butter, ½ onion - chopped

2 cloves garlic - minced, 2 stalks celery - sliced

1tsp Kosher salt

½tsp coarse ground black pepper

6 cups chicken broth - divided

2 chicken breasts skinless

2 carrots - sliced

1tsp dried oregano

1tsp dried basil

1 cup long-grain rice – uncooked

3tsp lemon juice

2 large egg yolks

Method
Add the butter to a large Dutch oven on medium heat and cook the onions, garlic, celery, salt, and pepper for 3-4 minutes or until translucent. Add 5 cups of broth, chicken, carrots, oregano, basil, and rice and bring to a boil, then switch to low heat for 20 minutes, until rice is tender. Remove the chicken and shred with two forks before returning to the soup. Add the last cup of broth to a blender jar along with lemon juice, egg yolks, and ½ cup of the drained cooked rice from the soup. Blend until smooth, about 1 minute, then pour into the soup and stir well. Cook for 2 minutes more, then serve hot.

SANCTUARY MANDELA



TASTE OF A LEGEND

Nelson Mandela's old home in Johannesburg

Late Nelson Mandela's home has been turned into a boutique hotel which serves dishes inspired by South Africa's first black president's tastes

A nti-apartheid legend Nelson Mandela liked hearty, simple meals, like oxtail stew. It was a favourite dish of South Africa's first black president and now fills ravioli served in his former home, which has been transformed into a boutique hotel.

The inside of the building, hidden on a quiet street in a wealthy suburb of Johannesburg, had been defaced by squatters. But after a floor-to-ceiling remodel, now sunlight floods in from generous skylights and bay windows. The white facade is all that remains of the original building.

Mandela lived there for eight years before moving to another home around the corner with his third wife Graca Machel. He arrived shortly after his release from prison in 1990, and promptly set about meeting the neighbours, general manager Dimitri Maritz said. "He went knocking on every door, to introduce himself and invite neighbours for

canapes and cocktails," Maritz said. "A Chinese man shooed him away. When he realised he had shut the door in Mandela's face, it is said that he moved not long after that," Maritz laughed, while noting the tale's whiff of urban legend.

The hotel, named Sanctuary Mandela, opened in September for guests seeking to bask in the ex-president's calm and positive energy. The presidential suite was once actually the president's bedroom, though the heads of guests do not rest where his did. After the remodel, the bathroom is now where his bed once stood.

The window frames bear his nickname Madiba and his Robben Island prison number '466/64' - scratched into the wood by his grandson.

Inspired by Mandela's tastes
After Mandela's release at age 71, he yearned for the simple pleasures he had been denied during 27 years in prison: playtime with his grandchildren, the scent of a



rose, a sip of his favourite sweet Constantia wine.

"He was not a fussy person," said chef Xoliswa Ndoyiya, who served Mandela's meals for two decades. She now heads the kitchen of the hotel's restaurant, where every dish is inspired by his tastes.

"He did not want to see an oily plate, he didn't have a sweet tongue. Fruit he would eat all the time, throughout the day," she recalled. "He was more a father than a boss. He made you feel comfortable, like you were part of his family."

Like Mandela, she's ethnic Xhosa, giving her a shared food sensibility. If she tried to impress Mandela's high-profile guests with food that he didn't fancy, "he would say 'Why are you not feeding me well?' I would feel guilty for trying to please the guests instead of my boss," she said, adding that he liked to eat his chicken with his fingers, cleaning the meat to the bone.

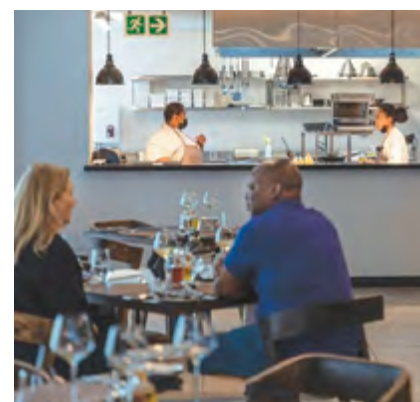
"With him, you must be humble. He taught us that people will know you for who you are. I miss him, very, very much."

Not a museum

For as much as the building has been remodelled, the management wants it to feel like a home. Images of Mandela on the walls show him playing peek-a-boo with a baby, dressed to the nines as a young lawyer, and standing, arms outstretched, to read a newspaper.

Rooms bear the nicknames, Madiba and Tata, that South Africans fondly used for him. "It is not supposed to be a museum," Maritz said. "We wish to maintain a legacy, but it needs to be self-sustaining."

The goal of financial sustainability is a key difference from other sites that memorialise the struggle against apartheid. Here, the assumption is that people are coming for the peace and tranquility that the home offers. AFP



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OMAN, IRAQ DRAW 1-1



Oman's midfielder Salaah al Yahyaei (R) shoots to score a penalty against Iraq in their FIFA Arab Cup 2021 fixture at the Al Janoub Stadium in Al Wakrah, Qatar on Tuesday (AFP)

FIFA ARAB CUP 2021

Doha, Qatar - Oman conceded a 1-0 advantage as Iraq equalised with a penalty goal in the dying moments of their FIFA Arab Cup 2021 opening fixture at the Al Janoub Stadium in Al Wakrah, Qatar on Tuesday evening.

Oman too scored through a penalty in the 78th minute when midfielder Salaah al Yahyaei shot past the Iraqi custodian Fahad Talib.

Coach Branko Ivankovic's men fought hard to hold on to the lead against the fancied Iraqi

team, the most successful team in the competition with four titles.

However, following an infringement in front of their own goal, Oman conceded a penalty only to see Hasan Abdulkareem scoring for Iraq in the 90th minute.

In the opening match of the tournament earlier Tunisia drubbed Mauritania 5-1.

In their other Group A fixtures Oman will next meet Qatar on Friday (Dec 3) before taking on Bahrain on December 6.



Iraq's defender Muntadher Mohammed celebrates the draw



Salaah al Yahyaei (L) celebrates his goal (AFP)

FIFA ARAB CUP 2021

GROUP A



IRAQ • OMAN
BAHRAIN • QATAR

GROUP B



TUNISIA • MAURITANIA
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
SYRIA

GROUP C



MOROCCO • SAUDI ARABIA
PALESTINE • JORDAN

GROUP D



ALGERIA • EGYPT
SUDAN • LEBANON

ARAB CUP HISTORY

- The Arab Cup is being organised by FIFA for the first time in the tournament's history.
- This is the 10th edition of the competition
- Morocco are the defending champions, having won the competition in its last edition in 2012 which was hosted by Saudi Arabia.
- The Arab Cup was established 58 years ago in 1963. It was a brainchild of the then president of the Lebanese Football Association (LFA), Goerges Dabbas. The idea was to organise a football tournament among the nations of the Arab World from Asia and Africa.
- The first-ever Arab Cup was held in Beirut, Lebanon where five teams participated - Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria and Tunisia. Tunisia won the maiden title with Syria finishing runners-up.
- Till date, nine editions of the tournament has been held. After three editions (1963, 1964 and 1966) there was a gap of 19 years before the next edition was organised. The tournament was initially supposed to restart in 1982 but it was postponed due to the 1982 Lebanon War.
- Iraq is the most successful team in the history of the competition with four titles to their name followed by Saudi Arabia who have won it twice. Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia have won the tournament once each.

Team France extends lead at halfway point

SAILING ARABIA - THE TOUR 2021

Muscat - Strong winds on Day 5 of Sailing Arabia - The Tour 2021 handed the advantage to Team France as the debuting crew extended their lead over the fleet to four points. Averaging 15-20 knots all day, Team France won all three races while the trailing fleet toiled in the conditions. Team DB Schenker remain in second place overall, Team Oman Sail third, Team Oman Investment Authority finished the Sur leg in fourth, Team Barceló Mussanah Resort fifth and Team Nastro Rosa of Italy in sixth.

Away from Team France's dominance, the remaining podium positions during the day were shared throughout the fleet. Oman Sail finished second in the coastal raid with Oman Investment Authority third.

Team Oman Investment Authority finished second in both in-port races but were later disqualified from the first race due to a collision. Team DB Schenker finished third in the first in-port race and Nastro Rosa equalled their best result of The Tour so



far when they finished third in the second race.

Antoine Rucard, skipper of Team France, said, "Today the races were amazing. We began the day with the coastal race, just outside of the harbour. We turned by the traditional fishing boat, and the wind was very strong. We won the race after a good fight with the Oman Sail team. There were two stadium

The competition is great; all of the Omani teams are good. It is great to be fighting with them

ANTOINE RUCARD

races with even stronger winds but we won them both. The competition is great; all of the Omani teams are really good. It is great to be fighting for the lead with them and pushing us every step of the way."

Musab al Hadi, skipper of Team Oman Sail, said, "Today it was a very long day, a big day for every team. We had a different kind of breeze later than earlier.

The coastal race was long but close between the teams. We finished second which made the team happy. Then after that we had an in-port race but suffered a collision on the start line so we were sinking, but we were strong and kept focused to finish the race. It was very dramatic but that is the sport, you have to accept it and move onto the next race. We lodged a protest against the team that damaged our boat and were given a redress to finish the day second overall."

Suliman al Manji, a local boat builder from Sur, said, "We are pleased to be onsite during Sailing Arabia - The Tour and ready to fix the boats. The maintenance team do everything necessary to prepare the boats, repair damage from the races and make sure the teams can continue. Just like today. This is a great place to sail, the teams are very strong and we are very happy to be a part of the crew for Sailing Arabia - The Tour."

Racing now shifts north to Marina Bandar Al Rowdha on Wednesday and Thursday.

Messi pockets Ballon d'Or for seventh time

Spain's Alexia Putellas crowned women's winner at Monday's ceremony

BALLON D'OR

Paris, France - Lionel Messi admitted winning the Copa America with Argentina might have been the determining factor in him claiming the men's Ballon d'Or prize for the seventh time after a turbulent year, as Spain's Alexia Putellas took the women's award.

Now 34, Messi pipped much-fancied rivals like Robert Lewandowski and Karim Benzema to take the award in a glittering ceremony on Monday in Paris, the city he now calls home after leaving boyhood club Barcelona for Paris Saint-Germain in August.

Despite his tearful goodbye from Barcelona and his relatively underwhelming start to life in France, the jury of journalists from around the world rewarded him in particular for captaining Argentina to their first major international title since 1993.

"Two years ago I thought I was coming into my final years but here I am again back here," said Messi, who won the last edition of the Ballon d'Or in 2019 before last year's awards were cancelled due to the pandemic.

Messi also won in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and in 2015.

"People were starting to ask me when I was going to retire but now I am here in Paris and I am very happy," he said at the Chatelet Theatre in central Paris, where he was joined by his wife Antonella Rocuzzo and their three children.

"I don't know how many more years I have left but I hope there will be many because I am really enjoying myself this year.

"What I achieved with Argentina was a dream come true. I think I won this trophy thanks to what we did at the Copa America, so I dedicate it to my



Lionel Messi poses after being awarded the Ballon d'Or award during the 2021 Ballon d'Or France Football award ceremony (AFP)



Alexia Putellas poses after being awarded the women's Ballon d'Or award during the 2021 Ballon d'Or France Football award ceremony (AFP)

What I achieved with Argentina was a dream come true. I think I won this trophy thanks to what we did at the Copa America, so I dedicate it to my teammates

LIONEL MESSI

teammates."

Argentina beat Brazil 1-0 in the final in Rio de Janeiro as Messi won a major title with his country for the first time. He also scored 38 goals in 48 games in his final season with Barcelona and won the Copa del Rey.

However Messi has played

just 11 times and scored four goals for PSG since joining the French club and there was a feeling that this year might see a different winner.

Poland striker Lewandowski would have been a shoe-in in 2020, when he scored 45 goals in 37 games for Bayern, only for

the awards to be cancelled.

He ended last season with a remarkable 41 Bundesliga goals but had to settle for second place in the voting for the Ballon d'Or, which is organised by France Football magazine and voted for by a panel of journalists from around the world. Lewandowski instead was given a consolation prize for the year's best goalscorer and received glowing praise from Messi.

Midfielder Jorginho, who won the Champions League with Chelsea and Euro 2020 with Italy, came third, followed by Real Madrid's Karim Benzema

and another Chelsea player, N'Golo Kante. Five-time winner Cristiano Ronaldo came sixth.

Putellas succeeds Rapinoe

This is just the third year that a women's Ballon d'Or has been awarded, with Putellas following in the footsteps of Norway's Ada Hegerberg, winner in 2018, and the United States' 2019 World Cup superstar Megan Rapinoe.

Spain international Putellas, 27, captained Barcelona to victory in this year's Champions League.

AFP

Permaul puts Sri Lanka in a spin

Galle, Sri Lanka - Veerasammy Permaul's five-wicket haul put Sri Lanka in trouble with the West Indies' batting openers already chasing down the hosts' lead on day two of the second Test in Galle on Tuesday.

Rain interrupted play half an hour before tea and it did not resume, in a match that has been plagued by inclement weather and bad light, with the tourists trailing by 135.

Permaul's first long-format match in six years helped bowl out Sri Lanka for 204 on the second day with a career-best 5-35.

"Over the years I've been working hard to get back into the team and glad it all worked today," he said.

The West Indies' decision to play two left-arm spin specialists proved a masterstroke against a side heavy with right-handed batters. Permaul and fellow left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican, who claimed 4-50, cut through the Sri Lankan order on a wicket with plenty of turn and bounce.

"Great to bowl in tandem with Jomel. He kept things tight, putting pressure. We are pretty happy with the status quo," Permaul said.

It was the fourth time in history that West Indies spinners claimed all 10 wickets in an innings. Off-spinner Roston Chase had claimed captain Dimuth Karunaratne on day one with Sri Lanka resuming overnight on 113.

"Great pitch for spinners and there is bounce as well, which makes them even more dangerous," said Sri Lanka batting coach Grant Flower.

Sri Lanka bank heavily on skipper Karunaratne and when he doesn't deliver, the team struggles against spin.

"Obviously Dimuth is our key player. If he doesn't get a big hundred, the others need to put their hands up and cash in," Flower said.

"Not a good effort by the others but I am sure they will come good in the second innings."

Openers Kraigg Brathwaite



Veerasammy Permaul

and Jermaine Blackwood stood more resolute against Sri Lanka's spin attack, which had demolished the tourists' top order in their 187-run first Test loss. Blackwood left on 44 when Praveen Jayawickrama trapped him leg before, ending a stand of 62.

Overnight batsman Pathum Nissanka had offered a couple of half chances in the morning, but his luck ran out when Permaul trapped him leg before wicket for 73 off 148 deliveries. Permaul had a second wicket in the same over when Dhananjaya de Silva was caught behind.

AFP

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA 1ST INNINGS

P Nissanka	lbw b Permaul	73
D Karunaratne	c & b Chase	42
O Fernando	c Da Silva b Warrican	18
A Mathews	b Warrican	29
D de Silva	c Da Silva b Permaul	2
C Asalanka	c Bonner b Permaul	10
D Chandimal	lbw b Warrican	2
R Mendis	c Hope b Warrican	5
S Lakmal	c Warrican b Permaul	12
L Embuldeniya	b Permaul	1
P Jayawickrama	not out	0

Extras: (lb 7, nb 3) 10

Total: (all out, overs 61.3) 204

Fall of wickets: 1-106, 2-139, 3-152, 4-154,

5-169, 6-169, 7-178, 8-187, 9-200, 10-204

Bowling: K Roach 6-2-12-0, J Holder 8-2-23-0, K Mayers 2-0-13-0, V Permaul 13-3-35-5 (nb 1), J Warrican 18.3-5-50-4 (nb 2), R Chase 14-0-64-1.

WEST INDIES 1ST INNINGS

K Brathwaite	not out	22
J Blackwood	lbw b Jayawickrama	44
N Bonner	not out	1

Extras: (nb 2) 2

Total: 69/1 in 29.4 overs)

Fall of wickets: 1-62

Bowling: S Lakmal 4-1-16-0,

L Embuldeniya 14-4-35-0, R Mendis 3-0-7-0, P Jayawickrama 8.4-2-11-1.

Ali misses second ton as Pakistan win

Chittagong, Bangladesh - Abid Ali (91) fell just shy of back-to-back centuries as Pakistan cruised to an eight-wicket win over Bangladesh in the first Test in Chittagong on Tuesday.

Ali's 151-run stand with fellow opener Abdullah Shafique helped bring play to an end before lunch on the final day, beating their first-innings partnership by five.

The duo had already made 109 overnight, chasing 202.

Bangladesh had to wait until the 10th over of the day for their first success when Mehidy Hasan trapped debutant Shafique lbw on 73 with a fuller delivery.

Shafique, who also scored a fifty in the first innings, fell after hitting eight fours and a six.

Ali, who made 133 in Pakistan's first innings, looked poised to become first Pakistani to make a Test century pair in six years, after Misbah-ul-Haq achieved the feat against Australia in 2014.

But Taijul Islam hit him in front of the middle stump with a straighter delivery, with Pakistan just 31 runs from victory.

"Our thought process was to stay at the wicket and put up a partnership. I have been playing domestic cricket and performing well. That's what I carried into this game," said man of the match Ali.

AFP

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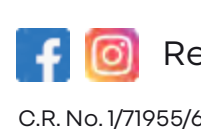


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