



MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2021
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'WHY CAN'T WE STUDY?'
GO TO PAGE 09 WORLD



H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth (fourth from left), Royal Family members, senior ICC and BCCI officials at the opening of the tournament in Amerat

DREAM REALISED

OMAN COULD NOT HAVE ASKED FOR A BETTER START TO THE ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP AT THE LUSH GREEN OMAN CRICKET ACADEMY GROUND ON SUNDAY AS THEY CANTERED TO A TEN-WICKET WIN OVER PNG AND MADE HISTORY BY BECOMING THE FIRST ASSOCIATE MEMBER TO HOST AND COMPETE IN THE ICC WORLD CUP



The all-women Royal Cavalry band performs at the opening ceremony of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup on Sunday

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

"It is like living a dream. A dream start to our campaign and a dream realised of bringing the ultimate event in the shortest format of the game to Oman."

These were the words of none other than Pankaj Khimji, chairman of Oman Cricket (OC), on a day when the sultanate made history by becoming the first ICC Associate member to host the ICC Men's T20 World Cup on Sunday and also competing in the event.

Oman were off to a dream start as they steamrolled Papua New Guinea by ten wickets in the opening match of the tournament at the lush-green Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Amerat on Sunday.

Savouring the one-sided win,

Khimji said "the dream of hosting a World Cup has been realised and what a dream victory to kick start our campaign at home".

Earlier, the brief opening ceremony ahead of the First Round Group B match witnessed the attendance of H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Royal Family members, Board of Control for Cricket in India chairman Sourav Ganguly, International Cricket Council CEO Geoff Allardice and other dignitaries.

The ceremony also marked Omani Women's Day with Royal Cavalry's all-women mounted band performing for nearly 20 minutes as 16 Royal Cavalry women riders held the participating teams' flags on the boundary of the ground.

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 Trophy was brought

near the pitch on horseback and unveiled in distinct Omani style, as the all-women Royal Cavalry band performed classical Omani, Western and Bollywood numbers and completed the ensemble with ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 anthem just minutes before the first ball of the World Cup was bowled.

Oman's ten-wicket victory later in the opener was "an icing on the cake" and the OC chief said that "if Oman make it to Dubai for the Super 12 stage, it will be a vindication of the hard work of all who burnt the midnight oil to ensure that we host the World Cup".

The top-two teams from each of the First Round groups advance to the Super 12 stage with Bangladesh and Scotland also eyeing the berth from Oman's pool.

Khimji said, "I am overwhelmed by the presence of H H Sayyid Theyazin and other Royal Family members along with the who's who of BCCI at the opening ceremony. We couldn't have asked for anything more to launch the World Cup in Oman.

"The eyes of millions of viewers were on Oman today and it is testimony to the years of sweat and hardwork of the cricketing fraternity here. It was a dream of all our boys to make it a perfect night," Khimji added.

"We are confident that this World Cup in Oman will contribute to building an enduring legacy for the game in the country, and I thank the ICC and the BCCI for their trust and cooperation and thank everyone who has contributed to the organisation of this event here."

@ashokmuscat



Honourable Lady sends greetings to Omani women

Muscat - The Honourable Lady has sent a message and greetings on the occasion of Omani Women's Day celebrated on October 17 as follows:

"On the occasion of Omani Women's Day, we would like to express thanks and appreciation for every woman who advocates good deeds and elevates the values of tolerance, amity and benevolence. Our greetings go to every woman who contributes to building this dear country from her position as an active participant delivering her social, national and humanitarian duties in all fields and under all normal and unfavourable circumstances undergone by the country.

"I pray to the Almighty Allah to grant every woman in this dear homeland success and efficient participation in building this country and safeguarding its gains and accomplishments."

ONA

Job security fund benefits over 10,000 Omanis who lost jobs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following Royal Decree No 82 issued in 2020 to create a job security fund that was implemented on November 1, 2020, the fund has taken on a role to protect Omani employees whose services have been terminated.

According to the Pubic Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), the total number of beneficiaries of the job security benefit is 10,133. "There are more males than females - 73 per cent males and 27 per cent females are supported under the scheme," an official of PASI told Muscat Daily.

The fund effectively applies a levy on all employers in the sul-

tanate to cover Omani employees in the private sector and PASI has the overall role of administering the fund.

Starting January 2021, employers must deduct contributions of one per cent of the basic monthly salary of its insured employees and make an equivalent one per cent contribution from their side. Employers should deposit the contributions in a bank account, as instructed by PASI. In the future, job seekers will also be eligible to benefit from the fund. By Royal Directive, RO10mn was donated to the fund.

According to PASI, the insured employee's benefit eligibility will be limited to monthly payments for a maximum of six months.

Continued on Page 02



Iran to resume nuclear talks on Thursday: MP



Qurum Natural Park - Spared by Shaheen

Sultanate leads Global Health for Peace Initiative

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is leading a global 'Health as a Bridge for Peace' initiative, under the aegis of World Health Organization, which recognises the importance of health facilities in promoting and fostering peace in areas of conflict across the world.

A high-level panel discussion on the Health For Peace - From Theory To Action was held on the inaugural day of the 68th session of the Regional Committee for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region on October 11 virtually, facilitated from WHO's regional office in Cairo, Egypt.

From Oman, H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and H E Dr Ahmed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, participated in the panel discussion.

H E Sayyid Badr shed light on the basic relationship between health and peace, and stressed the importance of international cooperation to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and provide vaccines to all in a fair manner.

WHO has long recognised its vital and central role in fostering and promoting peace through health. In a joint effort by Oman, Switzerland and the Regional Director for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, the Health for Peace Initiative (HPI)



H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi

was launched in 2019. This landmark event took place in Geneva and was attended by more than 50 representatives of 24 WHO member states and partners.

GHPI will promote advocacy globally among member states and other stakeholders to turn to health as a bridge for peace in conflict affected countries

Member states of other regions expressed their willingness to join the initiative and consequently it was renamed the Global Health for Peace Initiative (GHPI). A follow-up meeting

hosted by Oman in May 2021 emphasised the need to formalise a structural framework for the initiative, which is going to be presented at the 150th session of the WHO Executive Board in January 2022.

The discussion on October 11 allowed panellists to exchange ideas on peace building through health, touching on a range of topics including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, natural and man-made crises and displacement, among others.

H E Dr Sa'eedi said that there is an increase in conflict and violence around the world, and "in our region in particular it affects the livelihoods of millions of peo-

ple, displacing them and depriving them of their most basic rights of health and wellbeing".

He added that in addition to serious health costs, the worst burden comes from the indirect costs caused by disruption of economic and social systems, violence and disempowerment of individuals.

The health minister outlined that GHPI will promote advocacy at national, regional and global levels among member states, partners and other stakeholders to turn to health as a bridge for peace in conflict affected countries and as a tool to strengthen international collaboration during health emergencies.



NO ONE IS SAFE UNTIL EVERYONE IS SAFE

Is everybody in your family vaccinated? If not, why?

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Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

Yes, everybody in my family is vaccinated with two doses. Based on the number of vaccines administered already, we can feel confident that the vaccine has a really good safety record. The reality is that not getting vaccinated puts you at a much higher risk of severe COVID-19, which can make you seriously sick for a long period of time and possibly cause lasting damage.



Sultan al Rawahi
Private sector employee

My family and I got vaccinated because it is very important to protect our family and community. We hope the Ministry of Health makes vaccines available to all. It is crucial to combat COVID-19 and I urge all to get vaccinated because it is the only solution to beat the disease and get to back to normal life.



Jasim Jamil
Private sector employee

Yes, thankfully all my family members have taken both doses of vaccine. Vaccines provide active immunity to disease, and reduce risk of severe infection. Additionally, it protects people around us, particularly people at increased risk, from getting infected.



Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

All members of my family are vaccinated, as it is the need of the hour. People throughout the world have suffered because of COVID-19. Without vaccination, the risks of severity and complications are too high. To make sure one is safe, all members of the family must be vaccinated. We are now awaiting a booster dose.



Srinivas Sutrapu
Nutrition consultant

When our immunity is poor and we are unable to fight new pathogens, these enter our body and cause antigen-antibody reactions that lead to infection. The COVID-19 virus attacks our immunity first; vaccines provide better protection by improving our immunity. So get vaccinated and get the immunity. All vaccines are good and there is no doubt about their efficacy.



Mohan Anandan
Banking sector employee

Vaccination is the only defence against the COVID-19 virus and there is no question of doubting its efficacy. We gladly availed of the vaccination service when it was made available and feel greatly relieved now. We also follow prudently all the prescribed safety norms and keep abreast of all the potential challenges that the virus variants could throw up.



C M A Siddhique
Deputy manager

Yes. If not, it would be a crime. The possibility of not getting vaccinated may be due to unavailability or not being educated about the importance of the vaccine. Now, expats too can get the vaccine in the Ministry of Health's nationwide vaccination programme. If the vaccine has not been taken intentionally, then immediate action must be taken on such a person.



Yusuf Khan
Senior manager

Vaccination is the need of the hour to stay safe and keep everyone around you safe. By the grace of God and the support of the authorities, all in my family are fully vaccinated.



Dr Eltantawi Gabr Moustafa
MoH employee

I believe vaccination is the way to protect and increase immunity. My family and I are all vaccinated. I think vaccination is the only safe way to protect our community. Everyone should get vaccinated to be able to go back to normal life



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

How can Oman prepare for future storms or heavy rains?

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

FORESIGHT



SYED ADIL ABBAS

Abbas, an MBA graduate from Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK), is currently based in Muscat, and has over 20 years of international experience working with the public and private sectors in the Middle East, Far East, Africa and India

"Water is the driving force of all nature," Leonardo da Vinci had said. Due to scarcity of this driving force in the country, Oman spends heavily on the energy-intensive water desalination processes that convert seawater into 'fit-for-use' water. Carbon-emitting fossil fuels are being burnt to power such water desalination installations.

According to experts, Oman together with other Middle Eastern countries, accounts for more than 60 per cent of the world's total desalination capacity. No other region on Earth desalinates so much water.

Though 70 per cent of the planet Earth is made up of water, only 3 per cent of the world's water is available for our use as freshwater. Extreme weather linked to global climate change is adding to concerns about water scarcity. It is worth mentioning that the UN estimates that more than 800mn people lack access to safe drinking water globally and about 3mn people die every year for the same reason. Extracting salt from water looks like an easy fix to a global problem, but ex-

isting desalination processes are expensive and negatively affect the environment.

Scientists around the world have been trying to develop clean water-desalination technologies. One of the recent innovations has been reported at the Ural Federal University (UrFU) in Yekaterinburg, Russia where the researchers have developed a simple, cost-effective, highly efficient and an environment-friendly water desalination technology. The Case Studies in Thermal Engineering journal has published the

SOLAR-POWERED WATER DESALINATION

results of this research that uses solar energy for the distillation of water.

In a simple design, a solar-powered DC motor slowly rotates a hollow cylinder housed inside an oblong basin that acts as a solar distiller. This rotating cylinder fast-tracks the water evaporation in the vessel by forming a thin film of water on its outer and inner surface that is constantly renewed with each turn, while the water below the cylinder is heated employing a solar collector.

The test rig used for this research showed the performance of the solar dis-

tiller to go up by 400 per cent (during the months of September and October) and a cost saving of 5 per cent (for each litre of water produced) when compared to the currently available commercial solar stills. The water produced using this technology has passed the TDS, pH and electrical conductivity tests according to the international standards. The researchers at the UrFU are aiming to further improve the performance of the solar distiller and lowering the running costs.

Such a technology could be in great demand in Oman in the coming years, as the country has a high solar energy capacity. Moreover, with not so bright future of the fossil fuels and sharp decline in the installed photovoltaic (PV) and battery costs together with longer-range batteries being developed, the future of this technology looks very promising.

In the short to medium-term, solar-powered installations could complement the traditional gas-based water desalination plants but in the long-term, large-scale solar-thermal systems may eventually lead to providing clean water all over the country. Furthermore, our focus should be on the advances in renewable energy-powered desalination systems.

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES UK AMBASSADOR



H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq bin Taimour al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Al Murtafaa Camp on Sunday H E William Murray, Ambassador of the United Kingdom appointed to the sultanate. Sayyid Shihab wished the ambassador success in his tour of duty (ONA)

Prophet's Birthday celebrations on Oct 18

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs will mark the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at Al Latif Mosque in the wilayat of Bausher under the patronage of H E Ahmed bin Saud al Siyabi, secretary general of the Office of the Grand Mufti of the sultanate, on Monday

evening.

The ceremony will include recitation of a collection of poems, inshad and other performances reflecting the meaning and significance of the occasion, in addition to a presentation detailing the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The ceremony will also see the opening of the Al Latif Mosque.

MCSY sets up Omani Women's Club for Sports, Cultural Creativity

Muscat - H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, issued a ministerial decision to set up the Omani Women's Club for Sports and Cultural Creativity

on the occasion of Omani Women's Day.

With the formation of the Omani women's club, the ministry seeks to stimulate women's role in the sports and culture.

Over 10,000 Omanis who lost jobs benefit from job security fund

Continued from Page 01

The benefit will be 60% of the average contributions made during the 24 months before termination or, if the period is less than two years, the average contributions of that lesser period. In any event, the benefit will not be less than the minimum wage for citizens, currently set at RO225 basic salary and RO100 in allowances. "The scheme does not cover Omanis whose salaries were reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It covers only those who lost their jobs," the official said.

Most beneficiaries of the fund are from North Batinah (27%), followed by Muscat (17%) and Dakhliyah (7.2%).

Text by Syed Fasiuddin

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of *Muscat Daily* or *Apex Press & Publishing*

Over 250 mosques damaged during Shaheen in North Batinah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

More than 1,000 volunteers came together to help the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs clean and restore mosques that were damaged by cyclone Shaheen in the wilayats of Khabourah, Saham and Suwaiq in North Batinah.

According to Najeeb al Ruhaili, assistant director of the Awqaf Department in the governorate, floodwaters inundated and damaged many religious facilities.

"The ministry formed a team after the cyclone struck Batinah region. The team conducted a field survey and identified the mosques that were affected. The cyclone damaged over 250 mosques, some Quran memorisation schools and Eid prayer grounds," Ruhaili informed.

"Some mosques were inundated with floodwaters and mud, others needed repair works of air conditioners, and still others had to have the prayer hall carpets changed. One mosque was completely washed away in the Sana'a Bani Ghafer area in



(Supplied photo)

Some mosques were inundated with floodwaters and mud. One mosque was completely washed away in the Sana'a Bani Ghafer area in Khabourah

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

Khabourah."

Volunteers participated in the cleaning and repair works, helping refurbish and reopen 50 mosques for prayer so far. "The team responsible is taking care of maintaining health and hygiene standards in the mosques."

The ministry has announced that it will build a mosque in Sana'a Bani Ghafer to replace the one that was washed away at a site in a valley far from the flow of wadi waters.

"We thank all the volunteers who participated and made great efforts to restore the affected mosques. We are working to reopen all mosques as soon as possible," Ruhaili said.

MHUP invites bids for housing complexes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) has called on local and international real estate developers to compete for five new integrated residential complexes to be developed in Muscat, Dakhliyah and South Batinah governorates.

The ministry has issued an expression of interest (Eoi) document for the development of complexes in Amerat, Bidbid, Seeb and Nakhal.

According to the ministry, the proposed complexes are expected to offer up to 4,800 housing units to Omanis eligible to receive residential land.

"These complexes will be able to accommodate 24,000 people," the ministry said.

In Amerat, two plots of land will have 750 residential units to accommodate 3,750 people, while another with 1,100 residential units will be able to accommodate 5,500 people.

In Seeb, 600 residential

units are being planned for 3,300 people, 750 residential units targeting 3,750 people in Dakhliyah in the wilayat of Bidbid and 600 residential units targeting 8,000 people in the wilayat of Nakhal.

The ministry confirmed that the last date for submitting the Eoi documents is November 16, 2021.

The call for development of the residential complexes comes as part of the Surouh initiative, which aims to promote various viable alternatives to provide adequate and affordable housing for different segments of Omani society.

The initiative also enhances the role of the private sector and its involvement in creating such integrated and sustainable urban setups.

The initiative also aims to achieve the objectives and requirements of the Oman National Spatial Strategy and Oman Vision 2040 to create sustainable living that meets the aspirations of all.



(Supplied photo)

Energy ministry, Opal unveil book highlighting VAT achievements

Muscat - The Ministry of Energy and Minerals, in cooperation with Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL), on Sunday unveiled a new book on VAT achievements made by firms operating in the energy and minerals sector.

Published by 4D.media establishment for press, publicity, advertising and publishing, the book was launched at Grand Millennium Muscat under the auspices of Nassir Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance.

Abulrahman Humaid al Yahya'ee, CEO of OPAL, said that foreign investments in the oil and gas sector "are considered strong evidence of our ability to adapt to change."

"These are testimony to the investment community's confidence in the business climate in the sultanate and stability in the oil and gas sector," he said.

The Ministry of Energy and

Minerals launched the first national VAT programme in 2013 to reorient the greatest segment of procurements and contracts linked to national economy operating companies.

Yahya'ee pointed out that the value of VAT rose from 18 per cent in 2018 to 28.7 per cent in 2020. As a result, the total business reoriented via the above-mentioned VAT programme could streamline business worth more than RO2bn into the local economy and provide more than 18,000 jobs for citizens in the private sector, the OPAL CEO said, noting that the VAT Committee intends to raise this percentage (28.7) to 36 or more in the near future.

The inaugural ceremony included a visual presentation about the achievements of companies operating in the VAT field, including facts and figures of the performance and reports.

ONA

Divers remove marine debris from cyclone-affected seas in N Batinah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Eight environmentally conscious divers of Oman have joined hands to remove marine debris from the areas lashed by tropical cyclone Shaheen in North Batinah governorate.

"Divers of Oman Team and Al Khabourah Diving Team, in cooperation with Majan Electricity Company, launched an initiative to remove marine debris from areas affected following the landfall of cyclone Shaheen in the wilayat of Khabourah," said Salim Juma al Hosni, founder of the two diving teams.

Speaking to Muscat Daily, Hosni said, "The campaign removed a large amount of marine debris, including electricity poles and palm tree trunks. Divers worked from 6.30am to 3.00pm at depths ranging from 5 to 13m."

The Divers of Oman Team was established in 2017, while the Al Khabourah Diving Team was founded in 2019.

"The teams conducted a field survey and found many electricity poles that fell into the sea due to the cyclone," Hosni said, giving a brief background of what prompted them to undertake the task.

"The team of eight divers initially found it difficult to remove



(Supplied photo)

We have also set up a hotline to receive reports from citizens to help them in rescue operations and help fishing boats that break down

SALIM JUMA AL HOSNI

the poles with the wires available with them. But with the cooperation of Majan, we used boats to pull the poles out of the sea."

A professional diver himself, Hosni said that the biggest challenge that the divers faced while carrying out the clean-up drive

came from the discarded fishing nets, which are also responsible for the deaths of many marine creatures.

"Getting entangled in nets in the depths of the sea is a diver's worst nightmare," he said. "But we are determined to continue our clean-up campaigns with the support and encouragement of our families."

Giving an insight into the process, Hosni said that prior to physically removing any waste, some members conduct a reconnaissance dive at the site and prepare a report. Later this is discussed at a meeting and tasks delegated to each member.

The two teams, consisting of more than 50 divers in all, have conducted more than 50 diving campaigns in various governorates of the sultanate. "We aim to spread environmental awareness among members of society and promote volunteer work in the field of diving and protection of the marine environment," said Hosni.

"We have also set up a hotline to receive reports from citizens to help them in rescue operations and help fishing boats that break down."

Hosni informed that the divers will continue clean-up dives until life in the coastal returned to normal.

Winter tourism starts in Dhofar with arrival of first European charter

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dhofar has declared the advent of winter tourism with the first international charter flight touching down on its tarmac on Saturday evening.

After a gap of almost two years, international charter flights are now returning to Salalah marking the tourism season beginning in October and running until the end of April.

While the first charter flight of the season carrying 173 passengers arrived in Salalah from Slovakia late Saturday evening, another one from the Czech Re-



(Supplied photo)

public with 185 passengers is landing on Sunday evening, the Ministry of Heritage and

Tourism (MHT) said.

"Within the framework of the ministry's efforts and implemen-

tation of the recovery plan for 2021-22, which include stimulating and enabling international

tourism by attracting charter flights, the winter tourist season in Governorate of Dhofar has

started with the arrival of the first charter to Salalah Airport," MHT stated.

The ministry, led by H E Salim Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, in August launched a recovery plan for the tourism sector in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in Dhofar.

The plan includes 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 previous levels as soon as possible.

"Plans have been approved

and agreements will be concluded shortly with travel and tourism operators to ensure opening of direct and regular airline routes between Dhofar and other parts of the world," H E Mahrouqi had said then.

According to ministry statistics, altogether 196 charter flights operated during the 2018-19 season compared to 186 in 2017-18.

Charter fights from countries such as Germany, Russia, Italy, Czech Republic, Slovakia and France brought 51,950 tourists during the 2018-19 season as compared to 44,420 in the 2017-18 season.

NBO posts over 39% growth in profits for nine months

Our Correspondent
Muscat

National Bank of Oman (NBO) has reported a 39.4 per cent year-on-year growth in net profit for the nine months period ended September 30, 2021.

The bank's net profit jumped to RO23.5mn in the first nine months of this year as compared with RO16.9mn net profit reported in the corresponding period of 2020, according to the preliminary financial results announced by NBO to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

NBO's net interest income and income from Islamic financing remained almost stable at RO67.8mn for the January-September period of 2021 compared to RO67.89mn recorded in the same period of last year.

The bank's other operating income grew by 19.5 per cent to RO24.24mn for the first nine months of 2021 from RO20.28mn in the same period a year ago.

Operating expenses for the nine months ended September 30, 2021 stood at RO46.4mn compared to RO48mn for the corresponding period in 2020, a decrease of 3.3 per cent.

NBO said operating expenses decreased despite the bank's



(Muscat Daily)

NBO's loan-book grew by 4.5 per cent as net loans and advances [including Islamic financing] rose to RO3.033bn as of September 30, 2021 as compared to RO2.903bn a year ago

continuing investments made for growth. 'The reduction year-on-year is due to various efficiency initiatives undertaken across the bank,' the bank said.

The bank's loan-book grew by 4.5 per cent as net loans and advances [including Islamic financ-

ing] rose to RO3.033bn as of September 30, 2021 as compared to RO2.903bn a year ago.

NBO's customer deposits and unrestricted investment accounts reached at RO2.750bn as of September 30, 2021 as compared to RO2.577bn recorded a

year ago, recording an increase of 6.7 per cent.

In terms of deposit composition, NBO said its CASA (current account and savings account) deposits as a proportion to total deposits, have increased to 66.5 per cent as of September 30, 2021 compared to 60.8 per cent a year ago.

Total assets of NBO grew by 7.5 per cent to reach at RO3.917bn at the end of third quarter of 2021 from RO3.645 a year ago. The bank added that its preliminary results are subject to review by the external auditors and approval by the board of directors.

ACME Group selects KBR tech for its \$3.5bn Duqm project

Our Correspondent
Muscat

India's leading clean energy company ACME Group has selected the US-based technology firm KBR for its large-scale green hydrogen and ammonia project in Oman.

KBR, on its website, announced that its leading ammonia technology has been selected by ACME Group for its breakthrough green ammonia project to be built in Oman.

ACME Group is building a major green hydrogen and ammonia project in Duqm with an estimated investment of US\$3.5bn. The project would be developed in phases and the first phase is likely to be commissioned by the end of 2022.

Under the terms of the contract, KBR will provide technology licence, engineering, proprietary equipment, catalyst, and commissioning services for a plant to produce 300 metric tonnes per day of ammonia. The plant will be an integrated facility using solar and wind energy to produce green ammonia.

"We are honoured to be selected by ACME Group for this ambitious project," said Doug Kelly, KBR president - technology. "Energy transition driven by green ammonia is a reality and KBR will play a pivotal role in



ACME Group is building a major green hydrogen and ammonia project in Duqm

helping innovative companies like ACME establish early-mover advantages through our industry leading technology."

Manoj K Upadhyay, founder and chairman of ACME Group, said, "This [Oman] facility, aimed towards exporting green ammonia to Europe and Asia, will be the first project of this scale. We selected KBR technology because of its high yields and lowest energy consumption and look forward to a successful project implementation."

KBR is the world leader in am-

monia technology with around 50 per cent share of licensed capacity and holds the industry records for the largest capacity plants with a single converter, best energy-efficiency and longest runs without shutdowns. KBR delivers science, technology and engineering solutions to governments and companies around the world.

ACME Group and Oman's Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) in August signed a land agreement to set up one of the world's largest green ammonia projects in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

ACME Group said its plant in Duqm will be an integrated facility using 3GWp of solar and 0.5GWp of wind energy to produce 2,400 tonnes per day of green ammonia with an annual production of approximately 0.9mn tonnes.

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Energy crisis boosts oil demand: IEA

Paris, France - Shortages of natural gas and coal have triggered a switch to oil, boosting demand for crude and fuelling a rise in prices, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said.

The IEA, which advises governments on energy policy, said it now expects global oil demand for this year and 2022 to be higher than in its previous forecast.

'Oil prices are scaling multi-year highs as a shortage of natural gas, LNG (liquefied natural gas) and coal boosts demand for oil, which could keep the market in deficit through at least the end of the year,' the Paris-based agency said.

'Record coal and gas prices as well as rolling black-outs are prompting the power sector and energy-intensive industries to turn to oil to keep the lights on and operations humming,' it said in its monthly review of the oil market.

Gas prices are soaring as the winter approaches in the northern hemisphere, adding to inflationary pressure and raising concerns that it could harm economies recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oil prices have also increased to multi-year peaks in recent days.

The IEA said global oil demand is now forecast to rise to 96.3mn barrels per day (bpd) this year, up by 5.5mn from its previous report. It will increase by 3.3mn bpd next year.

World oil supply, meanwhile, is expected to rise sharply in October as US output recovers from the fallout of Hurricane Ida, which severely disrupted operations in the Gulf Coast in late August.

Supply is also getting a boost as OPEC and its Russian-led allies continue to unwind production cuts, the IEA said.

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MSX rises 0.43%; volumes down

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose 0.43 per cent to close at 3,973.69 points on Sunday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 20.75 per cent to RO1.23mn and volumes fell 36.29 per cent to 6.96mn shares.

Financial index rose 0.41 per cent, Industrial index climbed 0.86 per cent and Services index rose 0.38 per cent. The MSX Shariah Index closed



traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Al Jazeera Steel Products (9.82 per cent), Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co (5.2 per cent), Gulf Mushroom Products (5.02 per cent), Dhofar Generating Co (3.45 per cent) and Muscat Finance (3.33 per cent).

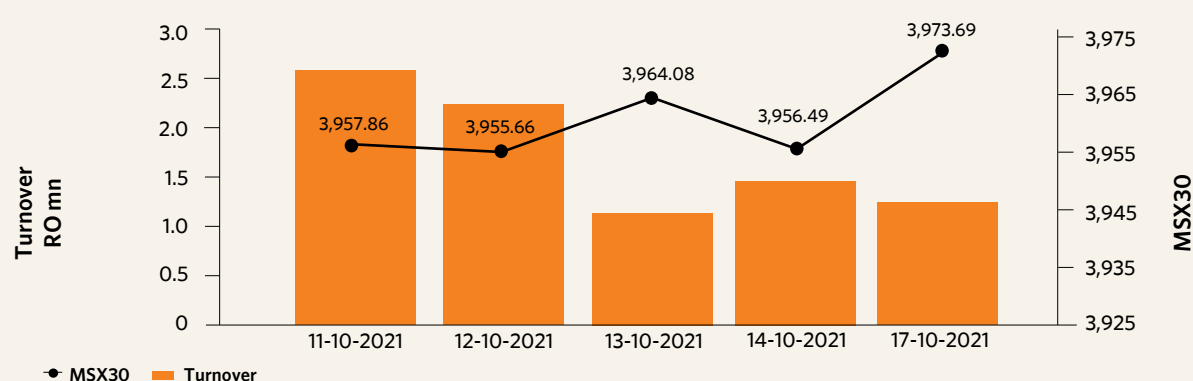
Top losers were A'Saffa Foods (-9.88 per cent), Oman and Emirates Investment Holding (-6.67 per cent), Vision Insurance (-4.94 per cent), National Gas (-3.57 per cent) and Takakful Oman (-3.16 per cent).

down by 0.72 per cent at 573.16 points.

Market breadth remained

positive as 17 companies closed up, while 12 companies closed down. The rest 15

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Saudi PIF launches world's first offshore tourism rig

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), has announced the launch of a new tourism project THE RIG, which will be the world's first tourism destination on offshore platforms.

Inspired by offshore oil platforms, THE RIG will be located in the Arabian Gulf and will span a combined total area of more than 150,000 sqm and provide a multitude of hospitality offerings, adventures, and aquatic sporting experiences, the PIF said on its website.

THE RIG is a project in the tourism and entertainment sector, one of PIF's key strategic sectors, and is expected to be a significant value-add to the local economy. Additionally, to ensure the sustainable preservation of the environment in the project's vicinity, the project will follow leading global standards and best practices, further supporting the kingdom's broader efforts on environmental protection.

This project is a unique tourism attraction, expected to attract tourists from around the world, while being especially



An artist's impression of 'THE RIG' tourism project

popular with citizens and residents of the GCC countries in the region.

THE RIG will feature a number of touristic attractions, including three hotels, world-class restaurants, helipads, and a range of adventurous activities, including extreme sports.

The new tourism project is in line with PIF's strategy (2021-2025) to drive innovation in Saudi Arabia's tourism and entertainment sectors, providing

promising development opportunities to achieve economic diversification in line with the Saudi Vision 2030 objectives.

To support Saudi Arabia's efforts to become a leading global tourist destination, PIF has established several major projects and companies in various regions within the country, including the Red Sea Development Company, Alsoudah Development Company and the Cruise Saudi Company.

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

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

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	57/2021	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of 132kV, 2000/1A outdoor Y phase CT at Thumrait Grid Station	01/11/2021	30/11/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	39/375
2	58/2021	Provide Consultancy Services for Information Communications & Technology (ICT) Strategy.	01/11/2021	30/11/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	157/500

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity of sending a valid Tender Board certificate in the same required field.
Buying the Tender:	The documents required for the purchase of the tender are sent by e-mail to the Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department, to ensure the authenticity of the documents before purchasing the tender during the official working days from 8.00 hr am - 01.00 pm hr.
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document (Payment Through Bank Transfer)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	Each bid should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to The Chairman of tender committee mentioning Tender Number and Name on the top of the envelope.
Terms and conditions:	- No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The complete bid documents should be deposited in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 423 O Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 92217856 - 93201558
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com



Oman Electricity Transmission Company S.A.O.C.
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إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية :

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	لنم الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (رغ)
1	٢٠٢١/٥٧	توريد وتركيب وتشغيل محول تيار (CT) طرف (٧) الخارجي A1 132KV/2000 في محطة ثمرت	٢٠٢١/١١/٠١	٢٠٢١/١١/٣٠	الشركات اأغلبية العامة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول	٣٩/٣٧٥
٢	٢٠٢١/٥٨	توفير الخدمات الاستشارية لإستراتيجية تكنولوجيا المعلومات والإتصالات.	٢٠٢١/١١/٠١	٢٠٢١/١١/٣٠	الشركات اأغلبية العامة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول	١٥٧/٥٠٠

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة مع ضرورة إرسال شهادة مجلس المناقصات سارية المفعول وفي نفس المجال المطلوب .
طريقة الشراء	يتم إرسال المستندات المطلوبة لشراء المناقصة عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني إلى دائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود . وذلك لتأكيد من صحة المستندات قبل شراء المناقصة وذلك في أيام العمل الرسمية من الساعة ٨:٠٠ ص - ٠١:٠٠ م .
الرسوم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد - (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العروض	تقدم العروض في مغلف مغلقة ومعونة بإسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات مع تحديد رقم وعنوان المناقصة فقط
الشروط و الضمانات	- عدم تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المغلف. - أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . - إرفاق تأميناً في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (٢٪) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوما من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ومعنوياً بإسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء . - كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه . - الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر.
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع العروض في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات.
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - الموالج رقم السكّة ٢١٥٣ - مبنى رقم ٤٢٣ - تفاصيل التواصل ٩٢٢١٧٨٥٦ - ٩٢٢١٥٥٨
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Al Mouj Muscat celebrates Omani Women's Day

Al Mouj Muscat, the sultanate's premier lifestyle destination, celebrates Omani Women's Day, an annual event which honours the essential role women play in society.

Now in its 13th year, Omani Women's Day was introduced by the Late HM Sultan Qaboos Bin Said (may God rest his soul) as part of a nationwide renaissance that set out equal opportunities, rights and duties for all. His vision has helped shape a culture that empowers women to excel in the workplace and where both their economic and social significance is recognised. Today, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik (may God protect him) champions the rights of women to serve their country and society as we work towards fully realising the Oman Vision 2040, a press release said.

Al Mouj Muscat is focusing the day on giving thanks to the accomplishments of women and where in its management team alone, four out of the nine positions are held by female members of staff.

As part of its commitment to Oman Vision 2040, it provides an extensive programme of training and professional development, and actively encourages diversity with women now employed in all departments from architecture and engineering to project management and marketing.

"When it comes to being an inclusive organisation, we've a lot to celebrate and Omani Women's Day provides an ideal opportunity to do so," said Nasser al Sheibani, CEO, al Mouj.

"A nation can only truly thrive when the talents of all its citizens are recognised and in Oman, women are at not only nurturing the next generation but are at excelling in every sector. It is why we are delighted to share our gratitude on a day that honours the life-enhancing contributions women will make this day, and every day in the sultanate."

Ooredoo pledges iPhone 13 profits towards cyclone relief

Ooredoo Oman has celebrated the arrival of the new iPhone 13 with a special event held at Al Arahimi Boulevard, where shoppers enjoyed an outdoor movie on the mall's rooftop, as well as a host of raffle draws and prizes.

Providing access to the latest and most sought-after technology on the market, customers have the option to purchase their device in instalments or even trade in their old handsets with the iPhone 13 at attractive prices. What's more, all profits will be donated to families in the Al Batinah region who were affected by Cyclone Shaheen, a press release said.

The latest in Apple's iPhone line-up, the new device is fitted with a beautifully crafted dual 12MP camera system, edge-to-edge Super Retina XDR displays for a more immersive viewing experience, the biggest jump in durability with the Ceramic Shield front cover, and Apple-designed A14 Bionic chip, the fastest chip in a smartphone to date.

Oman Air bags three awards at World Travel Awards 2021

Oman Air has won three awards - Middle East's Leading Airline, Middle East's Leading Airline: Customer Experience, and Middle East's Leading Airline: Economy Class at the prominent World Travel Awards 2021, voted for by air travellers based on their own experiences.

The awards were announced online this year and recognise Oman Air's excellence for its on-board products and services, customer care and passenger experience. This year's award for Middle East's Leading Airline: Economy Class follows consecutive wins in the same category from 2014 to 2020, a press release said.

Abdulaziz al Raisi, CEO of Oman Air, said, "Oman Air is delighted to once again be recognised for our outstanding products, services, and customer care, both in the air and on the ground. Our commitment to deliver a truly exceptional journey for all our valued guests has always been a priority, and these latest accolades from the World Travel Awards let us know that we're delivering on that promise. They inspire us to keep innovating our product offering and elevating our service levels which consistently reflect the premium flying experience that Oman Air is renowned for."

Abdulaziz al Rashdi, Vice President Marketing, Oman Air, added, "Winning these awards confirms once again that our valued guests appreciate our suite of innovative products and the authentic Omani hospitality offered by all our staff. Oman Air consistently ranks high for onboard comfort, luxury and service, and for the level of customer care received on the ground, whether arriving, transiting or departing. We are committed to a premium flying experience for all our guests and to maintaining service excellence throughout their entire journey - it's what Oman Air does best."

Alizz Islamic Bank wins best banking app

Alizz Islamic Bank's mobile banking application won the prestigious 'Best Rated Mobile Banking App' at the recently concluded Oman Banking & Finance Awards. This award comes as an acknowledgement of the Bank's growing excellence in enhancing the customer experience via timely and convenient technological enhancements.

Organised by Oman Economic Review, and held under the patronage of H E Tahir Salim Abdullah Al Amri - executive president of Central Bank of Oman, at the Al Bustan Palace - a Ritz Carlton Hotel, the annual award ceremony has set a new tempo for the banking sector to emulate and follow. The proceedings were witnessed by CEOs of major financial and banking institutions in the country and professionals from the industry, alongside digital teams of various banks.

For Alizz Islamic Bank, the recognition of 'Best Rated Mobile Banking App' stems from the growing popularity of its mobile app. The award committee tabulated the number of ratings by users of all mobile banking applications in Oman. The app is available on the Apple App Store, Google Play store and Huawei Gallery store, and evaluated on the basis of user experience and the ease of completing banking transactions. The algorithm of the mobile app ensured its efficacy and established it as an easy, simple and convenient tool for its growing users.

Commenting on winning the award, Asaad bin Hilal al Kharusi, head of Strategy and Transformation of Alizz Islamic Bank, said, "The shift from traditional avenues of banking to smart mobile devices has enhanced the customer experience. Today, our customers can conduct banking transactions with ease from the comfort of their homes, offices or even public places - at any time of the day or night. Constant updates to the app have also contributed in upholding the Bank's image as a pioneer in adopting innovative technologies. It has reestablished customer experience as a core business strategy."

Describing the 'Best Rated Mobile Banking App' award as a true reflection of the technological changes going on in the banking and financial sector, Kharusi added, "Alizz Islamic Bank's electronic channels, such as the mobile app, ATMs and the Interactive Teller Machines, are all designed to provide a different and distinctive experience for customers. We constantly strive to create and implement digital banking services that enhance the experience of our customers by facilitating all banking transactions using digital technology."

Alizz Islamic Bank has demonstrated its priority of enhancing customer experience and ensuring total satisfaction through a bilingual and easy and convenient app that is suitable for their banking needs. The app is crafted to give customers the freedom to manage their money easily and smoothly and even open accounts and transfer funds.



Desert Challenge celebrates 30th anniversary

The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge reaches a new milestone next month when the Middle East's longest running cross country rally takes place under the patronage of H H Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed al Nahyan, the ruler's representative in Al Dhafra Region.

Marking its 30th anniversary from 5-11 November, the Desert Challenge welcomes back the sport's top drivers and riders for another classic examination of skill, nerve and navigational awareness, with a cluster of world titles at stake, a press release said.

Forming the penultimate round of the 2021 FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Rallies for cars, which it joined in 1993, two years after its launch, the event can have a big influence on this year's series, which reaches its conclusion in Saudi Arabia a month later.

Testing the best on two wheels as well as four since 1995, the Desert Challenge is also the concluding round of the FIM Cross-Country Rallies World Championship for bikes, following earlier excursions in Kazakhstan, Russia, Brazil and Morocco.

"While there have been many changes in motor sport since the event was introduced, it has stood the test of time," said Mohammed Ben Sulayem, president of the Emirates Motorsports Organisation (EMSO) and FIA vice president for Sport.

"This would not have been possible without the enormous support we have received from our strategic partners, the UAE authorities and we would like to thank HH Sheikh Hamdan for his consistent backing and encouragement. We're extremely grateful for this, and proud that the Desert Challenge still inspires so much interest and excitement 30 years on."

Ben Sulayem's intention from the beginning was to set the standard in cross country rallying, attract international attention for the UAE, and allow Emiratis and other local-based competitors to share a world stage with the elite of cross country rallying.

The Desert Challenge is one of Middle East motor sport's biggest success stories in the desert terrain of Al Dhafra.



Khedmah launches mobile tap machines

Committed to diversify its unique services and expand its reach, Oman Investment and Finance Co - Khedmah - recently released mobile tap machines, a new addition to its wide array of digital payment methods. These portable machines will be placed in selected areas across the sultanate based on customers' needs.

The new machines are easy to transfer from one place to another providing greater flexibility to attend for customers' needs in their suited areas.

Through these machines, Khedmah can be pre-sent in various events and activities to serve its customers.

With the addition of the new machines, Khedmah network now boasts 68 branches and 56 kiosks across the sultanate. Through these channels and other digital platforms such as the website and Khedmah mobile app, clients can easily pay their electricity, water and telecommunications bills, recharge phone and electricity prepaid meters.



NBO launches cyclone relief programme

Supporting the nation in the aftermath of Cyclone Shaheen, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has implemented a wide-reaching relief programme to allow affected account holders to defer loan payments for 3 months until December 31.

NBO has also allocated an additional RO10mn in interest free loans. The bank will also be offering a hassle-free renovation loan for existing home loan customers of up to RO5,000.

As part of a nationwide call to action, NBO has also partnered with leading retailers to offer its customers a discount of up to 50% on essential household appliances such as stoves, refrigerators, and washing machines, to help replace items lost to water damage.

A core part of NBO's culture is to lend support and make meaningful contributions to those who need it the most. The bank rallied up staff volunteers to help with clean-up efforts in their local community along with a donation drive, encouraging them to contribute too. As for impacted employees the bank provided them with the support required.

NBO's growing range of digital and contactless services are ready to support customer's day-to-day banking needs, wherever they are 24x7.

MHD - ITICS helps in post Shaheen clean-up

A large group of volunteers from MHD-ITICS, the Infrastructure, Technology, Industrial, and Consumer Solutions cluster of Mohsin Haider Darwish, comprising members of its staff, led by their chairperson, Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, and accompanied by the cluster's CEO and individual division heads, took part in a clean-up drive in some areas within Muscat Gov-

ernorate, in the aftermath of tropical cyclone Shaheen. The clean-up effort on October 4 was also addressed by H E Mohammad al Kindi, Deputy Governor of Muscat, who expressed his appreciation for the initiative by the volunteers, a press release said. Commenting on the clean-up, Honourable Lujaina Darwish said, "As a proud Omani com-

pany we feel it is part of our wider community responsibility to offer our assistance in such a time of need. Such worthy efforts from all volunteers on the day are certainly commendable and remind us of our collective sense of responsibility towards our society." The clean-up effort saw the volunteers safely clear debris left in the wake of the cyclone. By

doing so, they hope to speed up the recovery process and return the capital to normal as soon as possible. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those suffering from the unprecedented impact of tropical cyclone Shaheen. This clean-up is only part of our effort and the full MHD-ITICS team stands ready to assist those hit hardest by this storm," she added.



Mercedes-Benz Oman offers 'Drive a Dream'

Raising the bar on luxury vehicles, Mercedes-Benz Oman is offering an exclusive package on its unrivalled range of high-performance cars. From October 10 till December 19, customers can experience timeless elegance and unmatched comfort with the new Mercedes-AMG and Mercedes-Benz range, plus benefit from four years/60,000km service package, three years unlimited mileage warranty, four years Mobile on road assistance,

and free registration for the first year. From the classic and chic Mercedes-Benz CLA Coupé to the showstopping Mercedes-AMG GLE 53 4MATIC+ Coupé and everything in between, there's no better time to be part of the Mercedes-Benz family, press release said. "We are thrilled to be able to offer this fantastic package, adding to the benefits of owning one of our iconic vehicles. Combining next-level luxury and ad-

vanced technology with our excellent after-sales care, it is part of our commitment to offer the best possible driving experience to our customers," said Shaun Michael, CEO at Mercedes-Benz Oman. The offer is available across the new Mercedes-AMG and Mercedes-Benz Cars and SUVs, excluding the AMG G-Class. Customers can drive away in one of the brand's iconic, high-performance sedans or epitomise cool with one of its bold SUVs.

OIH welcomes OQIC cardholders



Oman International Hospital (OIH) has joined hands with Oman Qatar Insurance Company (OQIC) to welcome its health insurance cardholders for all treatments and services. This alliance opens doors for thousands of OQIC health insurance card holders to access OIH's state-of-the-art technology, facilities and the expertise of an international team of special-

ist doctors at affordable charges, a press release said. Manuel Carvalho, COO of OIH who signed the pact, said, "As an international healthcare provider in Oman bringing our European hospital management expertise, we offer quality healthcare, cutting-edge technology and medical expertise to the people of Oman. Our goal is to provide world class services

and treatments at affordable cost so that our patients return home happy and healthy. We are glad to have joined hands with OQIC, one of the leading healthcare insurance providers in Oman, which will enable more people of Oman to access our bespoke services and be introduced to global medical innovations right here in Oman." Hasan al Lawati, CEO of OQIC said, "Oman Qatar Insurance Company is one of the fastest growing insurance providers, focused on delivering quality and prompt service to its customers setting high standards in service delivery using state-of-the-art systems, apps and robust healthcare network. OQIC is happy to offer its eligible members high quality healthcare services at Oman International Hospital."

HSBC, Outward Bound Oman launch new programme for youth

HSBC Oman and Outward Bound Oman have announced the launch of a new programme that aims to build confidence and resilience amongst young people who have been negatively affected by the global pandemic and social isolation. 'Build Your Resilience' programme was launched on October 10, World Mental Health Day, and is a continuation of the long-standing partnership between HSBC and Outward Bound Oman in developing and supporting young people, a press release said. Using the mountains and deserts of Oman, the four-day programme is designed specifically to promote resilience, reconnect young people to reality,



help build self-esteem, and improve mental well-being. The courses are particularly relevant for young people experiencing such issues as anxiety, depression, trauma or bereavement as a direct or indirect result of the pandemic. "At HSBC we believe that mental health and wellbeing

should be at the top of everyone's agenda. We hope that this course will create a space for the participants to talk about and share their concerns, exchange ideas and identify strategies on how best to overcome the challenges that they face," said Melika Betley, CEO, HSBC Oman. The course also aims to en-

hance the employability of the participants through the development of key soft skills such as adaptability, creativity, communication and teamwork. Mohamed al Zadjali, CEO, Outward Bound Oman, said, "Whether it is through investing in young people through their innovative social investment programme, or through the development of the emerging talent and graduate leaders amongst their own staff, HSBC has been a valued partner of Outward Bound Oman since we started in 2009. These courses will make a real difference to the lives of the young people lucky enough to take part. We are very grateful to HSBC for their continued support."



Ilham al Hamaid

As a result of its excellent HR practices, women employees work across different departments and at all levels including the bank's senior management. The bank provides a professional work environment based on a fair and equal opportunity to all, state-of-the-art technology and global best practices in the financial services sector. Bank Muscat has affirmed that the bank will continue to provide more educational opportunities and 'on the job training' to Omani women to reach the highest levels in their career in the coming years.



Ola al Talei

the banking sector and their contributions to the progress of the Bank. "Omani women have proven their abilities and leadership skills and this is reflected in the new organisational structure of the bank, which will come into effect from 1 January 2022. The bank is keen to continue supporting Omani women and give them more opportunities to grow and rise to the top-most levels as well as contribute to achieving the goals of the landmark Oman Vision 2040. I extend my sincere appreciation, thanks and greetings to each and every Omani



Rabab al Ajmi

tributing to the nation's progress and development. My own journey at Bank Muscat is an excellent example of how the bank encourages and promotes its women employees to do well in their careers. I was able to gain good experience over the years and reach the position of branch manager. Speaking about the importance of the day for Omani women, Rabab Abdullah al Ajmi, manager, Saham Corniche Branch, North Al Batinah, said, "We are proud to be honoured on this day which have motivated Omani women to



Sumaya al Hasni

exert more efforts in nation-building and contribute more to the success of the Sultanate in different sectors. The strong participation of Omani women will be an engine of strong growth that helps achieve the ambitious goals of Oman Vision 2040. With regards to the excellent opportunities that have been provided to me in my career, there is no doubt that Bank Muscat has played a major role in helping me grow and build my skills." Sumaya Khalifa al Hasni, manager, Al Kamil Branch, South Al Sharqiyah, said, "Thanks to the many opportunities provided by the Blessed Renaissance, Omani women have been steadily proving their compe-

Cisco launches first global Hybrid Work Index

Cisco unveiled its first Hybrid Work Index (HWI) based on millions of aggregated and anonymous customer data points. The Index, which will be updated quarterly, examines how people's habits and technology interactions have permanently reshaped work a year and a half into the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings show hybrid workers expect greater flexibility, accessibility and security, while businesses grapple with meeting these increased technology demands, a press release said. "We're truly at a unique time, with the ability to redefine work," said Reem Asaad, vice president, Cisco Middle East and Africa. "All employees around the world want a workplace that enables



them to do their best, and it is our responsibility as business leaders to learn how best to support and enable our employees, however and wherever they work." Cisco has the unique ability to glean insights from a wide range of tools enabling hybrid work across networks, endpoints and applications from millions of customers globally. This set of

anonymised and aggregated data combined with customer surveys provide the unique insights powering the HWI. Several key themes have emerged from the HWI that can help business leaders understand the approach they need to take to make hybrid work a long-term success. The key findings for HR personnel include the fact that people want choice and the hybrid workplace increases employee loyalty. Around 64% agree that the ability to work remotely instead of coming into an office directly affects whether they stay or leave a job. However, there is also uncertainty whether employers will realise the potential of hybrid work.

Sadat’s nephew negotiates way out for Egypt’s political prisoners

Cairo, Egypt - The fate of dissidents languishing in Egypt’s prisons has long been under scrutiny, but one veteran is leveraging his political prowess in a bid to have them released.

Mohamed al Sadat (66), nephew of former president Anwar al Sadat, the first Arab leader to strike peace with Israel, has long been a fixture of Egypt’s political scene.

Now, he has become an unofficial negotiator advocating on behalf of figures imprisoned under the uncompromising administration of President Abdel Fattah al Sisi.

“Dialogue with the state’s institutions isn’t just a one-man job, there are many others in close contact... but lately we’ve been successful in using a language that is being listened to,” he told AFP in his plush office in an upscale Cairo suburb.

“This has been effective in some cases [of political prisoners] being re-examined,” he said.

Forty-six prisoners were freed in July, including prominent activists such as rights lawyer

Mahienour el-Massry.

But as many as 60,000 political prisoners are serving time in Egyptian jails, according to human rights defenders.

Sisi, a former army chief, became president in 2014 after leading the military ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi a year earlier.

He has since overseen a sweeping crackdown on dissent.

Those jailed for criticising the political status quo have included academics, journalists, lawyers, activists, comedians, Islamists,



Mohamed al Sadat, nephew of former Egyptian president Anwar al Sadat, speaks during an interview at his office in the capital Cairo (AFP)

presidential candidates and MPs.

“There’s a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes in these security agencies where they undertake an examination of specific cases that we’ve raised, whether from a humanitarian or legal perspective,” he explained.

Sadat describes himself as an ‘honest broker’ and ‘messenger’ but not the decision-maker.

“We’re told by judicial officials that some inmates will be released after looking over their case files again. We then tell their families. That’s the process in a nutshell,” Sadat said.

For one former detainee unable to leave Egypt because he is on a no-fly list, Sadat’s role has been crucial in negotiating his case with the Interior Ministry.

Describing him as ‘genuinely sympathetic’, the detainee, who requested anonymity, said, “He’s treading a very delicate line... He’s interfacing with security agencies and civil society activists”.

“He’s the man of the hour.”

AFP

Iran to resume nuclear talks on Thursday: MP

Tehran, Iran - Iran is to resume nuclear negotiations with world powers on October 21 that were suspended in June, an Iranian lawmaker said on Sunday after a meeting with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

“Talks with the 4+1 Group will restart on Thursday in Brussels”, Ahmad Alirezabeigui told the ultra-conservative news agency Fars after a closed-door session with Amir-Abdollahian.

The lawmaker was referring to four UN Security Council permanent members - Britain, China, France and Russia - along with Germany.

Iran and these five nations opened talks in Vienna in April with the European Union (EU) also attending while the United States has taken part in indirect negotiations.

The United States, China, Russia, Germany, France and Britain struck an accord in Vienna with Iran on its nuclear programme in 2015.

But then-US president Donald Trump pulled America out of the deal in 2018 and reimposed biting sanctions.

Since then, Tehran - which insists its nuclear programme is for civilian purposes only - has also retreated from many of its commitments under the accord.

Trump’s successor Joe Biden has said he is ready to return to the agreement if the Islamic republic re-adheres to its nuclear



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian speaks to the media in Damascus, Syria (AFP)

commitments.

The Vienna talks aimed at reviving the deal were suspended in June, when Iran elected ultra-conservative Ebrahim Raisi as President.

The EU’s diplomatic chief Josep Borrell said on Friday he was ‘ready’ to meet Iranian leaders in Brussels as part of efforts to revive the faltering deal.

Another Iranian lawmaker, Behrouz Mohebbi Najmabadi,

said on Twitter on Sunday that negotiations would resume ‘this week’.

Pirate attack

An Iranian warship on Saturday repulsed an attack by pirates against two oil tankers that it was escorting in the Gulf of Aden, the country’s naval chief said.

“Navy commandoes were successful in repulsing this morning the attack by pirates

against an Iranian commercial convoy in the Gulf of Aden,” said navy commander Admiral Shahram Irani, quoted on Saturday by the official IRNA news agency.

“The destroyer *Alborz* was escorting two oil tankers when they were attacked by five pirate ships,” he said, noting that Iranian shots were fired, forcing ‘the attackers to leave the area’.

AFP

Coalition says killed 160 Yemen rebels in Marib

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The Saudi-led coalition supporting Yemen’s government said on Saturday it had killed 160 Houthi rebels in strikes south of the strategic city of Marib, where loyalists say rebels have made advances.

“We carried out 32 strikes... in Abdiya over the past 24 hours,” the coalition said, cited by the official Saudi Press Agency, adding that ‘11 military vehicles were destroyed and more than 160 terrorist elements eliminated’.

The rebels rarely comment on losses and the toll could not be independently verified by AFP.

The coalition has said that since Monday, more than 700 Iran-backed rebels have been killed in air strikes in the battle for Marib.

Abdiya lies about 100km from Marib, the internationally recognised government’s last toehold in the north.

Despite the Houthis’ losses in recent days, they are now ‘at the centre of Abdiya district after a four-week siege’, a loyalist source told AFP.



A Yemeni government fighter fires from a vehicle-mounted weapon at a frontline position during fighting against Houthi fighters in Marib (AFP)

Despite the Houthis’ losses in recent days, they are now at the centre of Abdiya district

LOYALIST SOURCE

Twitter that the rebels had faced ‘elements linked to Al Qaeda and Daesh (Islamic State group) which are linked to the forces of aggression (the coalition)’ in Abdiya.

Yemeni Information Minister Moammar al Eryani accused the rebels of targeting residential areas.

The Houthis began a major push to seize Marib in February

and, after a lull, they have renewed their offensive in recent weeks. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced in the province this year, nearly 10,000 of them in September alone, according to the UN migration agency.

The UN called for a halt to fighting in Abdiya, where it said the movement of aid and some 35,000 people has been ‘extremely restricted’, including for 17,000 ‘extremely vulnerable’ people who found refuge there from conflict in other areas of Yemen. With about 139 refugee camps in Marib province, according to the government, hosting around 2.2mn people, many displaced civilians have become caught in the line of fire once again.

AFP

Erdogan says talks under way with US to buy F-16s

Istanbul, Turkey - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday said Turkey was in talks with the United States to buy F-16 fighters after it was kicked off the F-35 programme for purchasing a Russian missile defence system.

Washington excluded Ankara from NATO’s F-35 stealth fighter jet programme in 2019 after Turkey purchased Russian S-400 defence air systems in defiance of warnings from its Western allies.

The acquisition has imperilled Turkish-US relations and blocked Turkey’s plans to purchase about 100 of the F-35 fighters.

Turkey is now seeking compensation for its ouster from the US-led programme, including for a US\$1.4bn payment it had made before its removal.

Turkey’s purchase of F-16 jets from America is ‘of course linked to the F-35s issue’, Erdogan said before embarking on an Africa tour.

He said the US had offered

Turkey in return to sell F-16s to upgrade its air force fleet.

“We have said we’ll take whatever step is needed to meet our country’s defence needs,” Erdogan said, adding that Turkey was working to modernise its warplane fleet.

Any such sale by the Americans however would need to be approved by Congress.

Last month, Erdogan said Turkey still planned to buy a second batch of S-400 missile defence systems from Russia.

The US warned Turkey of further risks to bilateral ties if it bought more weapons from Russia.

Erdogan on Sunday said Washington needed to compensate Turkey for its US\$1.4bn payment.

“We raised this issue in our talks. We attach importance to dialogue for a solution to this problem,” he said.

“We are working to further develop our fleet from the modernisation of the F-16s in our possession to new additional F-16 purchases,” the Turkish leader said.

AFP

Pro-army protesters rally again in tense Sudan

Khartoum, Sudan - Hundreds of pro-military Sudanese protesters rallied for a second day on Sunday, aggravating what Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok called the ‘worst and most dangerous crisis’ of the country’s precarious transition.

The protesters rallying in Khartoum are demanding the dissolution of Sudan’s post-dictatorship interim government, saying it has ‘failed’ them politically and economically.

“The sit-in continues, we will not leave until the government is dismissed,” Ali Askouri, one of the organisers, said.

“We have officially asked the Sovereign Council’, the military-civilian body that oversees the transition, ‘not to interact with this government anymore’, he added.

The protests come as Sudanese politics reels from divisions among the factions steering the rocky transition from three decades of iron-fisted rule by Omar al Bashir.

Bashir was ousted by the army in April 2019 in the face of mass protests driven by the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), a civilian alliance that became a key plank of the transition.



Sudanese protesters dance on the second day of a demonstration demanding the dissolution of the transitional government in the capital Khartoum on Sunday (AFP)

The latest demonstrations, left undisturbed by security forces, have been organised by a splinter faction of the FFC. Critics allege that these protests are being driven by members of the military and security forces, and involve counter-revolutionary sympathisers with the former regime.

The protesters have converged on the presidential palace

where the transitional authorities are based, shouting ‘One army, one people’ and demanding ‘a military government’.

Poverty stricken Sudan has undergone dramatic changes since the ouster of Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, where a conflict that began in

2003 killed 300,000 people.

The United States removed Sudan from its state sponsors of terrorism blacklist in December 2020, eliminating a major hurdle to much-needed aid and investment.

‘Scenario of a coup’

But domestic support for the transitional government has waned in recent months amid a

tough package of IMF-backed economic reforms, including the slashing of fuel subsidies and a managed float of the Sudanese pound.

The latest developments come after the government said on September 21 it had thwarted a coup attempt which it blamed on both military officers and civilians linked to Bashir’s regime.

On Friday, Hamdok warned that the transition is facing its ‘worst and most dangerous’ crisis. Hamdok’s Minister of Finance Jibril Ibrahim on Saturday addressed the crowd demanding the resignation of the government.

The mainstream faction of the FFC said the crisis ‘is engineered by some parties to overthrow the revolutionary forces... paving the way for the return of remnants of the previous regime’.

Jaafar Hassan, spokesman for the FFC, called the pro-military sit-in ‘an episode in the scenario of a coup d’etat’.

Its aim, he said, was “to block the road to democracy because the participants in this sit-in are supporters of the former regime and foreign parties whose interests have been affected by the revolution”.

AFP



I wanted to study, see my friends and have a bright future, but now I am not allowed. This makes me feel awful: Amena

Kabul, Afghanistan - Afghan teenager Amena saw dozens of classmates killed when her girls' school was targeted by an Islamic State bomb attack in May, but she was determined to continue her education.

Now, like most secondary school girls in the country, she is banned from lessons altogether after the Taliban's hardline government excluded them from returning to class one month ago.

"I wanted to study, see my friends and have a bright future, but now I am not allowed," 16 year old Amena said at her home in western Kabul.

"This situation makes me feel

awful. Since the Taliban arrived, I am very sad and angry."

On September 18, Afghanistan's new Islamist rulers ordered male teachers and boys aged 13 and over back to secondary schools, picking up an academic year already cut short by violence and the pandemic.

However, there was no mention of women teachers or girl pupils.

The Taliban later said older girls can return to secondary schools, which were already mostly split by gender, but only once security and stricter segregation under their interpretation of Islamic law could be ensured.

Reports have emerged of girls going back to a few high schools - such as in Kunduz province where the Taliban promoted the return with a stage-managed rally.

The de facto Taliban education minister told the UN children's body that a framework to allow all girls to go to secondary school will be announced soon, a senior UNICEF executive said on Friday.

But for now, the vast majority are barred from lessons across the country of about 39mn people, including in the capital Kabul.

Primary schools, meanwhile, have reopened for all children



An Afghan girl (top) returns to her home after attending school in Chashma Dozak area of Badghis province on Saturday; school teacher Nasrin Hasani (left) poses for photos during an interview in Kabul (AFP)

why boys are allowed to study and girls are not.

"Half of the society is made up of girls and the other half is made up of boys. There is no difference between them," she said.

"Why can't we study? Are we not part of society? Why should only boys have a future?"

After US-led forces ousted the Taliban in 2001, progress was made in girls' education.

The number of schools tripled and female literacy nearly doubled to 30 per cent, but the change was largely limited to the cities.

"Afghan women have made great achievements in the past 20 years," said Nasrin Hasani, a 21 year old teacher at a Kabul

secondary school who now helps out with primary pupils.

But the current situation has 'lowered both our and the students' morale', she said, questioning the Taliban's reasoning.

"As far as we all know, the religion of Islam has never hindered the education and work of women."

Hasani said she has not experienced any direct threats from the Taliban.

But Amnesty International reported that one high school teacher received death threats and was summoned for prosecution because she used to teach co-educational sport.

AFP

Angela Merkel vows continuity on her last visit to Turkish President

Istanbul, Turkey - Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday vowed continuity in Germany's relations with Turkey that included both cooperation and criticism of Ankara as she paid her final visit to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Merkel and Erdogan developed complex but close relations over the German chancellor's 16-year term that navigated the perils of Turkey's tumultuous ties with the West.

Their personal bond was instrumental in helping Europe manage a refugee crisis in 2016 and calm simmering tensions in the east Mediterranean last year.

The two leaders had lunch and private talks in a presidential villa overlooking the Bosphorus on the latest leg of Merkel's parting foreign tour.

"I have always said that our collaboration was very good in the years that I worked with Erdogan," Merkel told reporters after the talks.

"I criticised Turkey on the



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) with German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the Huber mansion on the latest leg of her parting foreign tour, in the Turkish capital Istanbul on Saturday (AFP)

issue of human rights and individual freedoms. We looked for solutions. We could have differences, but we depended on each other," she said.

Merkel said her 'advice' to Turkey today was to expect 'the same thing for the coming government in Germany'.

"The relationship between

Turkey and Germany, with its negative and positive sides, will go on. It will be recognised by the next government," she said.

Erdogan referred to Merkel as his 'dear friend' twice during the closing media event. But he also hinted at the difficulties Turkey might have in promoting its interests after Merkel formally

gives way to a new coalition government taking shape in Berlin following elections last month.

"If there had been no coalition government, [Germany's] relations with Turkey might have been easier. Of course, it is not easy to work with a coalition government," Erdogan said.

AFP

Britain's Justice Minister takes aim at European rights court

London, UK - Britain's Justice Minister on Sunday laid out his plans to reform key rights legislation to stop the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) from 'dictating' to the UK.

Justice Secretary Dominic Raab said in an interview with *The Sunday Telegraph* that the ECHR was imposing too many 'obligations on the state'.

The UK Human Rights Act passed in 1998 incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. This was not directly impacted by Brexit as neither the convention nor the court are part of the EU.

The minister, himself a lawyer, said he is formulating a mechanism to allow the government to introduce ad hoc legislation to 'correct' ECHR judgements when British ministers believe they are 'incorrect'.

Raab, who served as foreign minister until a September reshuffle, announced an overhaul of the UK rights act at the Conservative Party conference this



I don't think it's the job of the European Court... to be dictating things to, whether it's the NHS, our welfare provision, or whether it's our police forces

DOMINIC RAAB

AFP

month, calling it 'nonsensical'.

He said at the time that the reforms could be achieved without the UK pulling out of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Raab cited cases to *The Sunday Telegraph* where foreign criminals have avoided deportation by citing their right to family life under the rights act.

He also listed obligations imposed by the ECHR on military operations overseas and complained that under the current rights act, judges are required to take into account ECHR decisions when considering cases involving institutions such as the NHS state-funded health service.

"I don't think it's the job of the European Court... to be dictating things to, whether it's the NHS, whether it's our welfare provision, or whether it's our police forces," Raab said. He said he expected his planned reforms to be submitted for consultation in the next two months.

AFP



Zaghari-Ratcliffe's (inset) husband, Richard Ratcliffe (right), has been leading a campaign to get his wife released from prison (AFP)

Zaghari-Ratcliffe loses appeal on second Iran jail term

London, UK - British-Iranian mother Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has lost an appeal against a second jail term in Iran after spending more than five years in detention, her supporters said on Saturday.

The 43 year old project manager, who lived in London with her husband and now seven year old daughter, has been held in Iran since 2016 and served a five-year sentence.

In late April, she was sentenced to another year's imprisonment and banned from leaving the country for a further 12 months.

Nazanin's Iranian lawyer was told in a phone call on Saturday that 'the appeal on her second case failed', according to the #Free Nazanin Twitter account run by her supporters.

Her husband Richard Ratcliffe told the BBC his wife was now 'traumatised at the thought of having to go back to jail'.

The judge made the ruling without a court hearing, her supporters said, adding that so far there is no summons date for her return to prison.

Labour MP Tulip Siddiq, who represents the constituency where Zaghari-Ratcliffe's husband and daughter live, tweeted that she 'could now be returned to prison at any time'.

The MP urged Prime Minister Boris Johnson to 'act now to #Free Nazanin'.

Ratcliffe told the BBC that he did not expect her to be reimprisoned immediately 'but I think it's only a matter of time. She's being used as a bargaining chip'.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe is one of a number of Western passport holders being held by Iran in what rights groups condemn as a policy of hostage-taking aimed at winning concessions from foreign powers.

The project manager for the

Thomson Reuters Foundation, the news agency and data firm's philanthropic arm, was arrested in April 2016 while visiting family.

She was convicted of plotting to overthrow the regime, a charge she strenuously denied.

She completed that sentence in March this year, only to be slapped with a fresh one-year jail term for 'propaganda against the system'.

AFP

UK says will beef up MPs' security

The decision comes after a lawmaker was stabbed to death as he held a public meeting with constituents

Leigh-on-Sea, UK - Britain's interior minister on Sunday said MPs' security would be beefed up, after a lawmaker was stabbed to death as he held a public meeting with constituents, in the second such attack in five years.

Veteran Conservative MP David Amess (69) was talking with voters at a church in the small town of Leigh-on-Sea, east of London, when he was killed on Friday. The attack has spread fear among MPs, coming just over five years after the similar killing of Labour MP Jo Cox in the febrile run-up to the Brexit referendum.

Police have said they are investigating a potential motivation linked to religious extremism. The investigation is being led by Scotland Yard's Counter Terrorism Command.

Home Secretary Priti Patel has ordered a review of security measures for lawmakers and told Sky News that 'we need to close any gaps' in security provision for MPs, whose work includes regular meetings with constituents, called 'surgeries'.



Members of the public including a veteran pay their respects at the scene of the fatal stabbing of British lawmaker David Amess, at Belfairs Methodist Church in Leigh-on-Sea, on Sunday (AFP)

She said that police and parliamentary authorities were implementing 'immediate changes and measures that are actively being put in place, and discussed with MPs'.

This includes MPs sharing information on their whereabouts with police. Close protection at surgeries was also 'in consideration right now', she added.

The *Sunday Telegraph* reported that uniformed police were guarding some surgeries following the attack, which prompted calls from some MPs for a pause in face-to-face meetings.

Police said late on Saturday that detectives had until Friday to question the suspected attacker

after he was detained under the Terrorism Act, which allowed them to extend his detention.

He has not been charged.

British media, citing unnamed official sources, identified the suspect as Ali Harbi Ali.

Reports said he was a British national of Somali descent who had been referred to Prevent, the

UK's official counter-terrorism scheme for those thought to be at risk of radicalisation.

Ali is believed not have spent long on the programme, which is voluntary, and was never formally a 'subject of interest' to MI5, the domestic security agency, said the BBC.

The Prevent programme is

currently under independent review. "We want to ensure it (the Prevent programme) is fit for purpose, robust, doing the right thing, but importantly, learning lessons," Patel told Sky News.

'Fast-paced investigation'

Detectives said they have been

carrying out searches at three addresses in the London area in a 'fast-paced investigation'.

Police and security services believe the suspected attacker acted alone and was 'self-radicalised', *The Sunday Times* reported, while adding he may have been inspired by Al Shabaab, Al Qaeda-linked extremists in Somalia.

Ali's father, named as Harbi Ali Kullane and said to be a former advisor to the prime minister of Somalia, confirmed to *The Sunday Times* that his son was in custody, adding: "I'm feeling very traumatised."

Patel nevertheless stressed to the BBC that, "We have the best security and intelligence agencies in the world."

The government stepped up security for MPs following the 2016 murder of Labour MP Jo Cox (41), who was shot and stabbed outside her constituency meeting near Leeds, northern England.

House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle in *The Observer* wrote that 'we need to take stock' and review whether security measures introduced after Cox's murder are 'adequate to safeguard members, staff and constituents, especially during surgeries'.

Tobias Ellwood, a Conservative MP who tried to save a stabbed police officer during a 2017 terror attack near the Houses of Parliament, on Saturday urged a temporary pause in face-to-face meetings with constituents, until the security review is complete.

AFP

Sri Lankan flotilla protests against Indian poaching

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka's fishermen launched a flotilla of boats on Sunday demanding that the government block Indian trawlers from 'poaching' in the island's northern waters.

Boats flying black flags and carrying opposition legislators travelled 100km from the north-eastern fishing town of Mullaitivu to the island's northernmost tip, Point Pedro.

"We have come in boats to protest bottom trawling by Indian fishermen," M A Sumanthiran, a legislator for the main Tamil opposition party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), told reporters in Point Pedro.

Bottom trawling - which was banned from Sri Lankan waters in 2017 - involves dragging heavy nets across the sea floor to catch a large volume of fish. It causes severe damage to the marine ecosystem.

The TNA said it was protesting against Sri Lankan authorities' failure to stop poaching by Indians and protect the impoverished local fishing communities.

There was no immediate comment from the government.

India and Sri Lanka are separated by the narrow Palk Strait, a rich fishing ground known for jumbo prawns, and poaching has led to tensions between the South Asian neighbours.

Sri Lankan fishermen were not allowed to venture out during much of the island's decades-long Tamil separatist war that ended in May 2009.

But there have been increasing tensions over poaching since Sri Lankan fishermen have been allowed to venture out again.

Sri Lanka has regularly detained large numbers of Indian fishermen and seized their boats, according to local fishermen.

AFP

Jailed Turkish philanthropist awaits fate under President Erdogan's rule

Istanbul, Turkey- Jailed without a conviction since 2017, Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala says he feels like a tool in President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's attempts to blame a foreign plot for domestic dissent against his mercurial rule.

A gaunt and bearded intellectual who once patronised culture and the arts, the 64 year old Kavala makes a striking foil for Erdogan, who has governed Turkey with an increasingly iron fist since 2003.

While tens of thousands have been jailed or stripped of their jobs on tenuous charges since Erdogan survived a coup attempt in 2016, it is Parisian-born Kavala whose fate is creating particular tensions in Turkey's frayed ties with the West.

The Council of Europe, a human rights body Turkey joined in 1950, has warned it could launch the first infringement proceedings against Ankara if



A file photo of Parisian-born Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala (AFP)

Kavala is not released by the end of the month.

Facing a barrage of alternating charges, including espionage and attempts to topple the state, Kavala does not expect to walk out of his Istanbul prison cell any time soon.

"I think the real reason behind my continued detention is that it addresses the need of the government to keep alive the fiction that the (2013) Gezi protests were the result of a foreign conspiracy," Kavala said in a written, English-language response to questions from AFP. "Since I am accused of being a part of this conspiracy allegedly organised by foreign powers, my release would weaken the fiction in question and this is not something that the government would like."

Kavala was referring to spontaneous rallies that broke out against plans to pave over a little park near Istanbul's Taksim Square that morphed into the first serious challenge to Erdogan's rule.

Some Turkey watchers see the 2013 protests, which were violently suppressed, as the original source of Erdogan's authoritarian streak.

Kavala was acquitted of the Gezi charges in February 2020, only to be re-arrested before he could return home and thrown back in jail over alleged links to the 2016 coup plot.

Well-versed in history, Kavala compares the current case against him to the treason charges faced by French captain Alfred Dreyfus in the late 1800s - long discredited as an anti-Semitic plot - and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, a US couple controversially executed for espionage in 1953.

AFP

Bill Clinton to spend one more night in hospital

Washington, US - Former US president Bill Clinton will spend another night at a hospital in California being treated for an infection, his spokesman said on Saturday.

Clinton (75), who led the United States from 1993 to 2001, was admitted Tuesday evening to the UCI Medical Center in Irvine, south of Los Angeles, with a non-COVID-related blood infection.

Spokesman Angel Urena said on Twitter that Clinton will remain at the hospital overnight 'to continue to receive IV antibiotics before an expected discharge tomorrow'.

Clinton is 'in great spirits and has been spending time with family, catching up with friends, and watching college football', Urena tweeted.

The *New York Times* reported the former president developed a urinary tract infection that turned into sepsis.



A police car is seen outside the health institute, where Bill Clinton is recovering, in Orange (AFP)

Sepsis is an extreme bodily reaction to infection that affects 1.7mn people in America every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It kills 270,000 of those infected every year.

The infection was the latest health scare for America's 42nd president. In 2004, at age 58, he underwent a quadruple bypass operation after doctors found signs of extensive heart disease.

AFP

Russians return to Earth after 12 days filming first movie in space

Moscow, Russia - A Russian actress and a film director returned to Earth on Sunday after spending 12 days on the International Space Station (ISS) shooting scenes for the first movie in orbit.

Yulia Peresild (37) and Klim Shipenko (38) landed as scheduled on Kazakhstan's steppe at 0436 GMT, according to footage broadcast live by Russia's Roscosmos space agency.

Shipenko appeared distressed but smiling as he exited the capsule, waving his hand to cameras before being carried off by medical workers for an examination.

Peresild, who plays the film's starring role and was selected from some 3,000 applicants, was extracted from the capsule to applause and a bouquet of



flowers. The actress said she is 'sad' to have left the ISS.

"It seemed that 12 days was a lot, but when it was all over, I didn't want to leave," she told Russian television. "This is a one-time experience."

The team was ferried back to terra firma by cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky, who had been on the space station for the past six months.

21st century space race

The filmmakers had blasted off from the Russia-leased Baikonur Cosmodrome in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan earlier this month, travelling to the ISS with veteran cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov to film scenes for *The Challenge*.

If the project stays on track, the Russian crew will beat a Hollywood project announced last year by *Mission Impossible* star Tom Cruise together with NASA and Elon Musk's SpaceX.

The Russian movie's plot, which has been mostly kept under wraps along with its budget, centres around a surgeon who is dispatched to the ISS to save a cosmonaut.

Shkaplerov (49) along with the two Russian cosmonauts who were already aboard the ISS are said to have cameo roles in the film.

The mission was not without small hitches.

As the film crew docked at the ISS earlier this month, Shkaplerov had to switch to manual control.

And when Russian flight controllers on Friday conducted a test on the Soyuz MS-18 spacecraft the ship's thruster fired unexpectedly and destabilised the ISS for 30 minutes, a NASA spokesman told the Russian news agency TASS.

The team's landing, which was documented by a film crew, will also feature in the movie,

Konstantin Ernst, the head of the Kremlin-friendly Channel One TV network and a co-producer of *The Challenge*, told AFP.

Russian firsts

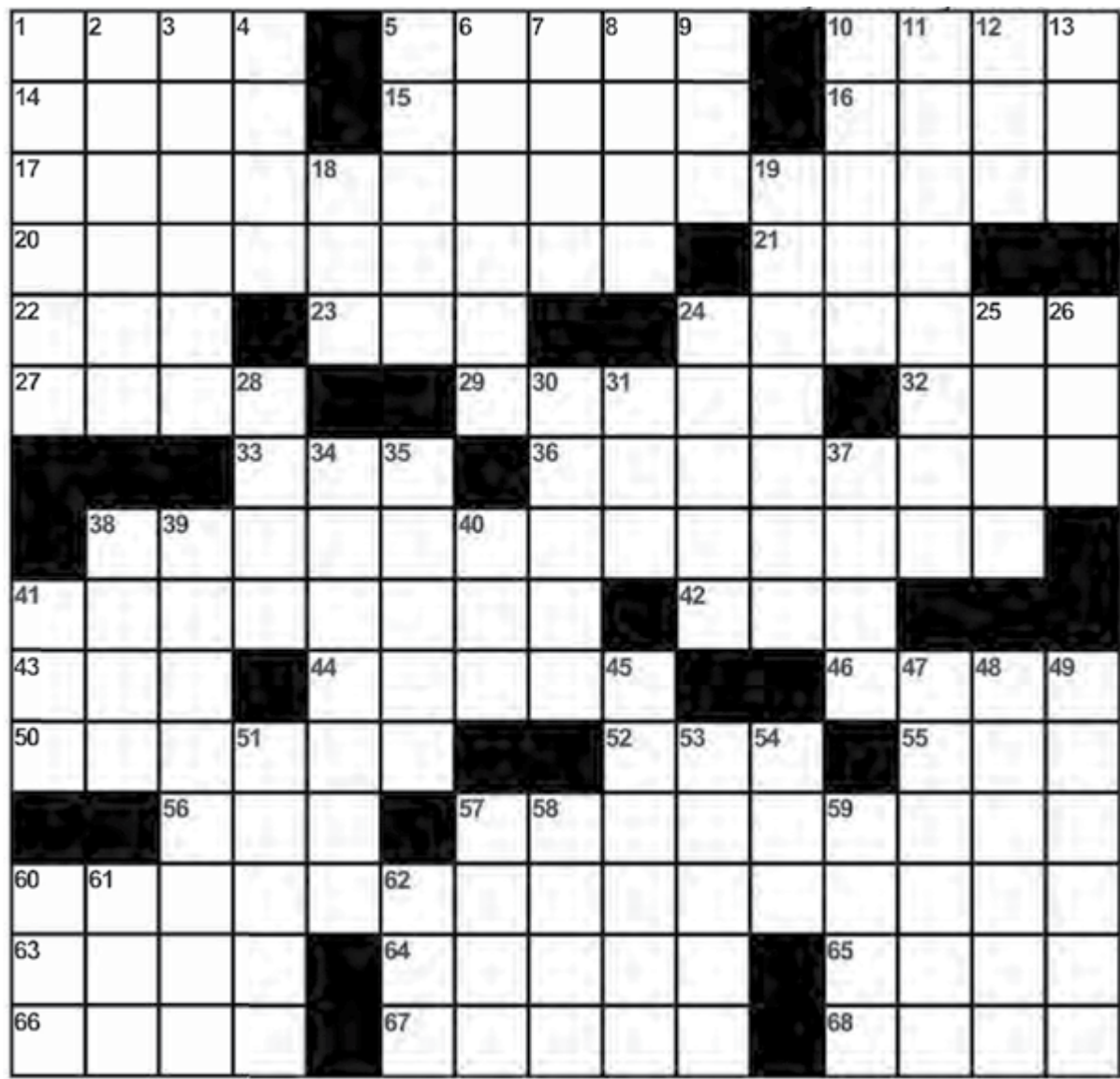
The mission will add to a long list of firsts for Russia's space industry.

The Soviets launched the first satellite Sputnik, and sent into orbit the first animal, a dog named Laika, the first man, Yuri Gagarin and the first woman, Valentina Tereshkova.

But compared with the Soviet era, modern Russia has struggled to innovate, and its space industry is fighting to secure state funding with the Kremlin prioritising military spending.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Framing 2x4
 - 5) Middle ear bone
 - 10) Birthday topics
 - 14) Jason's ship
 - 15) Makeup option
 - 16) Hatcher of TV
 - 17) Almost have in-laws
 - 20) Official government pardons
 - 21) Golfer's aspiration
 - 22) Old TV "Squad"
 - 23) "Just a..." ("Wait!")
 - 24) In an optimistic way
 - 27) It's south of Turkey
 - 29) Housing projects?
 - 32) Gaming cube
 - 33) Dream Team team
 - 36) Farthest toward the sunset
 - 38) Instruction to an actor, sometimes
 - 41) Animal that preys on others
 - 42) Highest non-face card
 - 43) Draft contents
 - 44) Like interstate highways
 - 46) Mouth off at
 - 50) One who makes a point
 - 52) Work unit
 - 55) Fond du_, Wisconsin
 - 56)_ in xylophone
 - 57) Like good obedience school candidates
 - 60) Avoid the public
 - 63) Frank with a famous diary
 - 64) Slender watercraft
 - 65) Rope entanglement
 - 66) Pricey opera house seating section
 - 67) Way the wind blows
 - 68) Male heirs
- DOWN**
- 1) Italian deli item
 - 2) Low number on the Richter scale
 - 3) Lake George is there
 - 4) Bird of peace
 - 5) Ready to spit nails
 - 6) Observe
 - 7) Like baby monkey
 - 8) They are uttered with shudders
 - 9) Gloater's shout
 - 10) Legendary reference book?
 - 11) Trash
 - 12) Closer's stat
 - 13) Walter Scott or Walter Raleigh
 - 18) Curvaceous one of 26
 - 19) Disciple of Jesus
 - 24) Go back to the default settings
 - 25) Santa checks it
 - 26) Up to the present
 - 28)_ pro quo
 - 30) Conscious of
 - 31) Really relax, in slang (with "out")
 - 34) Furthest from the freshest
 - 35) "When you wish upon_..."
 - 37) Clothing store section
 - 38) Musician Clapton
 - 39) Making copies in the office
 - 40) Heavy measure
 - 41) Outdoor sound blasters, briefly
 - 45) Certain church official
 - 47) Lacking pigmentation
 - 48) Wild West drinking hole
 - 49) Potpourri offerings
 - 51) One spelling for an Indian princess
 - 53) Irritated
 - 54) Large African antelope
 - 57) Any old Russian ruler
 - 58) Jeweler Lalique or Hollywood's Russo
 - 59) Inquires
 - 60) Cowpoke's sweetheart
 - 61) Yoko of the music world
 - 62) Mo. of colorful foliage

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

- ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Each person is responsible for his or her own happiness, so do not feel an obligation to put a bright smile on the face of a notorious sourpuss. Some people are happier when they have something to complain about, you can't cheer up someone who wants to be miserable. Stick to your optimism and your happier outlook. You have things in the right perspective.
- TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20
You're definitely up for broadening your horizons, in a number of ways. It might be education, a more public way of expressing your political or religious views or even travel that beckons you. But one way or the other, you'll be quite busy for the next six weeks. So much so, by the way, that you might want to warn your dear ones now. Just so they won't worry you've been kidnapped.
- GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21
You've been telling yourself for weeks that this is right - that it's time to take that one giant step toward intimacy. Now that the official moment seems to have arrived, however, you're not quite so sure. Well, nothing has been written in stone to start with - and you can always decide against this if it doesn't feel right. Don't be afraid to stop the process right where it is.
- CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22
You've been waiting for the universe to send you someone. Not a guardian angel, exactly, but someone who'll be able to give you advice and the benefit of their experiences - not to mention a couple of phone numbers to call when you get where you're going. Don't turn down any of these offers. Whatever is extended to you now is done with an open hand and a generous heart.
- LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22
It's time to stop riding that one particular person so hard. Their methods may not be similar to yours - in fact, they may be entirely different from your own - but that doesn't mean they're wrong, or that they're doing anything underhanded. Let up a bit and consider having a nice, honest heart-to-heart. You both might learn something from it.
- VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Passion is on the agenda - serious passion. Now, this can go either way. It might mean you're so infatuated with someone that you can't even stand the thought of breathing if they're not in the room. It might also mean you're so furious with someone that you can't stand the thought of sharing the same air with them. Either way, you have to find a way to deal with this.
- LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Family members and old, dear friends will begin to play a far more serious part in your life now in the sense that they'll need more of your time than they have in quite a while. You, of course, won't mind. You'll do everything that you can to help. Just be sure you don't hurt yourself in the process. You can't be any good to anyone else if you're not healthy and happy.
- SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Every word that falls from your lips now will sound like a direct order to a well-organized army and the effect will be pretty similar, too. It's not that you're going to be barking out orders like a drill sergeant, your tactics would never, ever be that crass. One or two well-placed syllables, however, will have the same effect.
- SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
The endless dilemma is upon you. Do you buy it now, when it's not on sale, because now is when you want it, or wait a while and risk losing your enthusiasm for the entire project? The answer is obvious, at least, in your mind. You want it now, so you'll go out after it now. The good news that you'll definitely find the very best deal.
- CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
This is a wonderful opportunity to figure out what you don't want your life to be, and how you can avoid letting it get that way. So take a good look in the mirror this morning and remind yourself that while you might not be the hottest person on earth, you are definitely right up there! Stay in control of where your life is headed, and you will always end up in the right place.
- AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
You're ordinarily quite fond of being up front and entirely rational, in all your dealings with others. It's what makes your sign famous for being the very best friend anyone could possibly ask for. For the next several weeks, however, intrigue may well be the name of the game. Does this mean you'll become involved in a secret love affair? Maybe not.
- PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You were so looking forward to relaxing, weren't you? To blending into the background and letting someone else lead the charge? Well, guess what? Whatever that project was, someone is about to shirk their responsibilities and guess who'll be asked to step in and take over? Yep. Now smile and accept it graciously. You'll do a fine job of it. You might even enjoy it.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Lata Mangeshkar holds the world record for maximum number of ____
- a. song recordings
 - b. singing songs
 - c. songs composing
 - d. None of the above
2. John F. Kennedy was
- a. one the most popular Presidents of USA
 - b. the first Roman Catholic President
 - c. writer of Why England slept and Profile in Courage
 - d. All the above
3. Nalanda is located at
- a. Gujarat
 - b. Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
 - c. Near Patna, Bihar
 - d. Near Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Answers: 1.a 2.d 3.c

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

E	T	E	T
A	Y	D	R
W	M	H	I
B	A	I	E

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

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

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

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

QURUM NATURAL PARK

SPARED BY
SHAHEEN



Hubert Vaz

The buttercups and blossoms in the flowerbeds remained untouched, the interlocking pavers across all walkways were intact, a vast array of old trees withstood the fury of strong winds, the artificial lake received a welcome infilling... Qurum Natural Park, which had faced severe devastation at the behest of tropical storm Gonu in 2007, somehow, was spared the wrath of tropical cyclone Shaheen this time round.

Fourteen years ago, the scene had been different, when the entire park was engulfed with over one-metre high floodwaters which dumped tonnes of slush and sand into the park, numerous trees and shrubs had been destroyed, huge concrete pots got overturned, and other facilities within the park were totally damaged beyond redemption. After months-long clearance and salvage operations, the park was, years later, renovated and given a totally new look - sturdy and strong. And it did stand the test of time when Shaheen came around a fortnight ago.

Civic workers in the park said a large number of trees did get uprooted in the park due to the strong winds which also ripped through one of the huge canvas canopies at the food court. However, while the trees were cleared up in the week that followed, no tell-tale signs (except the torn canopy) could be seen, neither was the park closed to visitors. If you take a round of the park, you see that it was surprisingly left in good

condition, despite the fact that floodwaters had devastated some sections in Qurum in much the same manner as Gonu had done in the past.

Officials at the park confirmed that the park was spared much of the fury of the cyclone, thanks to the well-planned renovation of the park done in the aftermath of Gonu. Most of the installations, the pavements, and the skirting around the artificial lake had been constructed taking into consideration the defects and damages that the park had suffered in preceding years, they said, adding that the renovated park was now stronger to withstand such weather conditions.

On October 3, while the torrential rains led to water-logging in some sections, this did not affect the pavements and seating arrangements, neither the children's play areas which has rides and slides. However, there was some flooding in the rear section, towards the City Amphitheatre end, since a section of the park is adjacent to a stream from across the Sultan Qaboos Street which always gets flooded when there is a heavy downpour.

A park official said, "Water flowed into the left side of the park, not completely flooding but causing slight damage to a section of the park. The wadi nearby overflowed due to the rain and a few trees in the park also got uprooted."

In the Marahland amusement park, ride technicians said, "Water overflowed into the bumper cars station, as well as a few other rides, but no other major damage oc-

curred." The main park and the amusement park had to be kept closed for 3 days to facilitate clearance works and minor repairs, after which it was opened up for the public, he said.

Visitors to the park were seen enjoying their morning/evening strolls as usual all of the past week while many were also seen camping in the shade for afternoon picnic lunches in the open. Most visitors said they had feared extensive damage to the park, having witnessed the same during Gonu, but thanked their stars that the park remained safe during the inclement weather.

Mohammed Sayeed, a resident of the area opposite the park, who was seen with his young children enjoying playing in the park, said, "I have seen what had happened to this park during Gonu...it was a terrible sight and the municipality must've spent a huge amount to renovate the park. They have done a great job, that's why nothing got damaged this time.

Ashokan, a senior resident of Shatti Qurum, who has been visiting the park for the past two decades for his daily constitutional, was also all praise for the civic authorities for reconstructing the park on sound lines. "This is the right way things are to be done. The fact that the park stood the test of time when another severe cyclone came by itself shows that thorough planning and engineering was given due emphasis. I am really happy that the park was in a good condition that people could visit it again in the same week."

(With inputs from Rianna Lobo)

WHAT GOT **DAMAGED**



- Many old trees got uprooted

► Some map installation blocks got defaced

► Water logged in the left side of the park

► Water logged in the lake theatre foyer
- A food-court canopy got ripped apart

► Some lamp-posts got tilted/damaged

► Main gate plants got watered down

► Some shrubs got damaged

WHAT WAS **SPARED**



- The park office interiors

► Flower-beds and lawns

► All paved sections in the park

► Seating arrangements and parapets

► Amusement park installations

► Lake theatre infrastructure - rungs and railings
- Wall binding the artificial lake

► Pergolas with creepers at different sections

► Elevated seating with decorative domes around the lake

► Food court enclosures

► Most ancient trees within the park



Photos: Syed Fasiuddin

Norrie, Basilashvili set up title showdown at Indian Wells



Cameron Norrie of Great Britain in action against Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria during the semifinals on Saturday (AFP)



Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia plays a backhand against Taylor Fritz of the US during their semifinal match on Saturday (AFP)

INDIAN WELLS TENNIS

Indian Wells, US - Britain's Cameron Norrie dominated Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-4 on Saturday to book a title clash with Nikoloz Basilashvili at the ATP Indian Wells Masters.

The 26-year-old Norrie overpowered Dimitrov in their semifinal to become the first British finalist since 2009.

Norrie kept Dimitrov off guard with a strong serve, blasting four aces and hitting a number of precision forehands and backhands in the one hour, 27 minute match on the main stadium court in Southern California.

"I am so happy," said Norrie. "Unfortunately he didn't bring his best today."

"I was very solid. I went a lot to his backhand he was getting frustrated with that. I managed to serve well and in the big mo-

ments I executed when I needed to."

Several Brits have reached the final in the California desert without success, including Andy Murray, who lost to Rafael Nadal in 2009.

Tim Henman lost two finals in 2002 and 2004, and Canadian-born Briton Greg Rusedski was runner-up in 1998.

Norrie was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and grew up in New Zealand before becoming the No 1 college player in America while attending university in Texas. He has represented Great Britain since 2013.

Norrie is seeking his second career title after winning earlier this year in Los Cabos.

"I'm looking forward to the match tomorrow and really looking forward to going out and enjoying it again," he said.

He broke through in Los Cabos following a string of runner-up heartbreaks, including earlier this year in Estoril, Lyon and London.

"I've had some opportunities there to make the second week of a slam, but it's not gone my way," said Norrie who has never gone past the third round of a Grand Slam. "It's all been great learning for me."

"Hopefully with these results I can put myself in a higher seeding and maybe have some more chances."

Dimitrov was coming off a couple of upsets over top-ten seeded players. The Bulgarian battled back from a set down to beat top seed Daniil Medvedev 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in the fourth round and outlasted eighth seeded Hubert Hurkacz in the quarterfinals 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2).

There were no players ranked in the top 25 in the world in the men's semifinals. Norrie, at 26, was the highest ranked semifinalists.

Norrie easily won the first set by breaking Dimitrov on three of four service games. He got the early break in the second then held to serve to wrap up his 46th win of the season.

Norrie clinched the match on the first match point when Dimitrov hit a backhand into the net.

Norrie is going up against another surprise finalist in the 29th seeded Basilashvili, who defeated American Taylor Fritz 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to post one of the biggest wins of his career.

Basilashvili, of Georgia, is gunning for his third ATP title of the season after earlier triumphs in Doha and Munich.

'Kept focus'

He clinched the win over crowd favourite Fritz on the fourth match point, hammering a forehand winner that froze the American in his tracks.

"It is an unbelievable feeling," said the 29-year-old Basilashvili, the son of a Georgian national ballet dancer. "I am super happy. I was nervous and stressed. I got very tight, but I just tried to focus on the game." "When you focus, the stress goes away. I know I can play good tennis I just have to not get too tight."

Basilashvili saved three set points to take the opening set in a tie-breaker. The players stayed on serve throughout the match until the seventh game of the second set when Basilashvili got the break he needed to go ahead 4-3 before wrapping the win.

AFP



Su-Wei Hsieh (L) and Elise Mertens with the trophy

Hsieh-Mertens clinch WTA doubles crown

Indian Wells, US - Wimbledon champions Hsieh Su-wei of Chinese Taipei and Elise Mertens of Belgium captured another WTA doubles title, defeating Veronika Kudermetova of Russia and Elena

Rybakina of Kazakhstan 7-6 (7-1), 6-3 in the Indian Wells final. After an hour and 34 minutes of play, Hsieh and Mertens added their first WTA 1000 title as a tandem to the Wimbledon title.

Ogier made to wait as Neuville prevails in Spain



Thierry Neuville and his co-driver Martijn Wydaeghe of Belgium during the Rally of Spain in Salou, on Sunday

RALLY OF SPAIN

Salou, Spain - Sebastien Ogier's bid for an eighth world rally championship title was put on hold as Hyundai's Thierry Neuville held on to win the Rally of Spain on Sunday.

Spaniard Dani Sordo won all four stages on Sunday but Neuville's overnight lead was sufficient enough to see him finish 24.1 seconds ahead of Ogier's Toyota teammate Elfyn Evans.

Sordo's Sunday charge gave him third place, and a 50th podium in his 176 rallies, ahead of fourth-placed Ogier.

The Frenchman, who took a 24-point lead to Catalonia, saw his advantage pegged back by seven points but still holds a 17-point lead over Evans with just

the Rally of Monza in Italy to come in November.

"Coming here I was targeting higher, but for some reason it didn't happen," said Ogier, who is in his last full season in WRC. "We still took what we needed

for the championship."

Untouchable on Friday afternoon and Saturday, Neuville nursed his lead on Sunday and then had a late panic with a

starting problem before the final stage.

"Relieved to be at the end," said the Belgian after sealing victory.

"It was a tough weekend but we fought very hard. We had a

good clean run and until near the end everything was perfect.

"Unfortunately, lots of stress before the last stage - again.

"I am really disappointed

about that because otherwise the weekend would have been perfect and nice, but now it isn't."

The victory keeps Neuville in third position in the championship but he is now out of the title race, too far behind Ogier.

Five times a runner-up in the WRC championship, this was his 15th rally win.

Welshman Evans, who is the only other driver who can now deny Ogier that eighth title, admitted he was 'quite frustrated' by his second place behind Neuville.

"It wasn't a perfect weekend. Still a pretty solid job, but of course we are fighting a bit of a cause here. Not what we wanted, but there we go," Evans said.

AFP

It was a tough weekend but we fought very hard. We had a good clean run and until near the end everything was perfect

THIERRY NEUVILLE

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

New Newcastle era begins with defeat to Tottenham

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Newcastle, UK - Newcastle's new dawn under the ownership of the Saudi sovereign wealth fund got off to a disappointing start as Tottenham silenced St James' Park with a 3-2 win on Sunday. The defeat leaves Newcastle still in the relegation zone without a English Premier League win this season.

Expectations on Tyneside are high for a huge injection of funding by the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) to transform Newcastle's fortunes on the field.

PIF governor Yassir al Rumayyan was given a hero's welcome by the 55,000 crowd when he was presented before kick-off. A jubilant atmosphere was matched by the perfect start for the home side when Callum Wilson headed home Javier Manquillo's cross inside two minutes. Rumayyan celebrated wildly in the stands alongside co-owner Amanda Staveley, who has bought a ten per cent stake in the club and been the face of the takeover bid.

Spurs have had a far from ideal start to the season under new boss Nuno Espirito Santo but in Harry Kane and Son Heung-min they have the star quality Newcastle hope to have in years to come. Tanguy Ndombele smashed home an equaliser on 17 minutes from Sergio Reguilon's cross to get the Tottenham revival started.

Kane then ended his wait for a Premier League goal this season with a deft lob over Karl Darlow.

The England captain was initially flagged offside, but a VAR review proved Kane was onside from Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's ball over the top. The game was then stopped for 20 minutes due to a medical emergency for a Newcastle fan. Tottenham players alerted the need for a defibrillator and the players were taken off the pitch by referee Andre Marriner.

But the flow of the game remained the same when it resumed for seven minutes of first-half stoppage time. Kane turned provider for Spurs' third as his low cross was converted



Tottenham's Son Heung-Min (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Newcastle United at St James' Park in Newcastle on Sunday

by Son sliding in at the far post.

A red card for Jonjo Shelvey seven minutes from time rounded off a miserable day on the field for Newcastle. Eric Dier's comical own goal in the final minute gave the ten men hope. But Spurs held out to move up to fifth and level on points with fourth-placed Brighton.

Newcastle remain three points adrift of safety and much further from matching the ambitions of their new owners.

West Ham's Ogbonna sinks Everton

Elsewhere, West Ham manager David Moyes enjoyed a winning return to Everton as Angelo Ogbonna's header sealed a 1-0 victory at Goodison Park on Sunday. Moyes spent 11 years in charge of the Merseyside club from 2002 to 2013 and is still regarded fondly by Everton fans.

The victory moved West Ham above Everton into sixth place in the Premier League. Ogbonna headed home with 16 minutes to play, extending West Ham's unbeaten away record in all com-

petitions this term.

Earlier on Saturday, Thomas Tuchel saluted Edouard Mendy as the Chelsea goalkeeper's superb display sealed a hard-fought 1-0 win at Brentford on Saturday. Ben Chilwell's fiercely-struck goal in first half stoppage-time was enough to give Chelsea their sixth win in eight league games to move top, one-point clear of Liverpool.

FRENCH LEAGUE Nice suffer setback at Troyes

Paris, France - High-flying Ligue 1 side Nice were undone by a well-worked early goal as they lost 0-1 at Troyes on Sunday.

Nice were third in the table going into the game after five wins in eight matches this season, but struggling Troyes scored the only goal of the game after just four minutes. Renaud Ripart's intelligent backheel allowed Giulian Biancone to cross from the right wing and Mama Balde hammered the ball home.

Nice were unable to get a foothold in a frustrating match



West Ham defender Angelo Ogbonna celebrates after scoring against Everton at Goodison Park in Liverpool, UK, on Sunday (AFP)

for the club owned by chemical giants Ineos.

Former France defender Adil Rami, part of the squad that won the 2018 World Cup, made his Troyes debut as a first-half substitute.

"The start of the match was catastrophic and the whole match was catastrophic," Nice coach Christophe Galtier said.

English forward Stephy Mavididi scored his third goal of the

season as Montpellier defeated second-placed Lens 1-0.

Lens lost for just the second time this season, meaning Paris Saint-Germain will finish the weekend nine points clear at the top.

OTHER RESULTS
Sunday: Brest 1 Reims 1, Strasbourg 5 Saint-Etienne 1, Bordeaux 1 Nantes 1, Metz 0 Rennes 3.

GERMAN LEAGUE

Bayern crush Leverkusen to go top

Berlin, Germany - Robert Lewandowski and Serge Gnabry both scored twice as Bayern Munich rampaged to a 5-1 win at Bayer Leverkusen to return to the top of the Bundesliga on Sunday.

After suffering a shock defeat to Eintracht Frankfurt two weeks ago and losing top spot to Borussia Dortmund overnight, Bayern bounced back in style against fellow title hopefuls Leverkusen. Level on points in first and second before the weekend, the gulf in class between the two teams became apparent as Bayern put their hosts to the sword with a brutal and brilliant first-half performance.

"It sounds a bit strange when you've scored five goals, but we could have had six or seven in the first half today," Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann told broadcaster DAZN. The 31-time German champions smashed in four goals in the space of seven minutes in the first half to humiliate a young Leverkusen side and go a point clear of Dortmund at the top of the table.

It took Bayern less than four minutes to go ahead, Lewandowski converting a Dayot Upamecano cross with a brilliant backheel to net his eighth goal of the season.

On the half-hour mark, the visitors carved through their opponents on the counter-attack, with Alphonso Davies bursting into the box to set up a poacher's finish from Lewandowski.

Thomas Mueller quickly made it 3-0, deflecting a Niklas Sule shot past a helpless Lukas Hradecky. Any hope of a Leverkusen fightback was buried just seconds later, as Mueller set up Gnabry with a low cross to make it 4-0. Gnabry added a fifth on 37 minutes after a sharp one-two with Leon Goretzka.

Leverkusen rallied in the second half, Kerem Demirbay forcing a save from Manuel Neuer before Patrik Schick pulled a goal back.

In Sunday's late game, English defender Reece Oxford scored

his first ever Bundesliga goal as Augsburg were held 1-1 at home to Arminia Bielefeld.

SPANISH LEAGUE Mir on target as Sevilla go third

Madrid, Spain - Sevilla edged up to third in La Liga on Sunday after a second-half goal from Rafa Mir was enough to give them a 1-0 win away at Celta Vigo.

They edge ahead of Atletico Madrid on goal difference, three points behind early leaders Real Sociedad with a game in hand.

Celta sit 16th, with seven points from their first nine matches. Mir was linked with Atletico in the summer but the Spanish forward joined Sevilla instead on a six-year-deal and now has three goals in his last four league games.

Sevilla went close in the title race last season but struggled for goals and if Mir can sustain this form, they should push Atletico, Real Madrid and Barcelona again.

Julen Lopetegui's side now turn their attention to Lille in the Champions League on Wednesday as they hope to build on two opening draws that have left them second in Group G.

"It was a very important win," said Mir. "We have a congested calendar but the team is on a good run of form."

Mir's decisive strike came in the 54th minute and owed something to fortune as Suso cut in from the right and unleashed an effort from distance, which was blocked but deflected kindly into Mir's path. He slid the ball into the corner for the winner.

OTHER RESULTS
Rayo Vallecano 2 Elche 1
Saturday: Levante 0 Getafe 0, Real Sociedad 1 Real Mallorca 0.

ITALIAN LEAGUE
Sunday: Empoli 1 Atalanta 4, Cagliari 3 Sampdoria 1, Udinese 1 Bologna 1, Genoa 2 Sassuolo 2, Napoli 1 Torino 0.
Saturday: Spezia 2 Salernitana 1, Lazio 3 Inter Milan 1, AC Milan 3 Hellas Verona 2.
AFP

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Ulsan, Pohang in all-Korean semifinal

ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Jeonju, South Korea - Title-holders Ulsan Hyundai will play fellow South Korean side Pohang Steelers in Wednesday's semifinals as they close in on an unprecedented third AFC Champions League crown.

Substitute Lee Dong-gyeong hit a cracker in extra-time as Ulsan squeezed past another Korean team, Jeonbuk Motors, 3-2 in a thriller at Jeonju World Cup Stadium on Sunday.

Earlier on Sunday at the same arena, where a modest crowd was socially distanced because of coronavirus rules, Pohang beat Japan's Nagoya Grampus 3-0 to book their last-four spot.

The other semifinal, in the western region of Asia's top club competition, will be a Riyadh derby between Saudi giants Al Nassr and Al Hilal on Tuesday.

In a terrific clash between the top two in the K-League, Ulsan went ahead against Jeonbuk in the 13th minute thanks to a spectacular strike from Valeri Qazaishvili.

The Georgian international picked the ball on the edge of the box, danced his way past three defenders and pinged the ball

Action from the match between Ulsan Hyundai and Jeonbuk Motors

into the top corner.

Home side Jeonbuk hit back six minutes before half-time through Han Kyo-won, but Ulsan retook the lead in scrappy fashion in the first minute of injury time, with Yun Il-lok pouncing from close range.

Jeonbuk were level again however just three minutes into the second half when Japanese forward Takahiro Kunimoto chested the ball down and volleyed into the bottom corner.

The two sides went into extra-time locked at 2-2, before Lee stepped up to smash the ball into the net from outside the box in the 101st minute.

In the other quarterfinal on Sunday, Lim Sang-hyub scored twice as Pohang sealed their place in the last-four. Pohang cranked up the pressure on Nagoya in the second half, with Lee Seung-mo grabbing the other in an easy win.

Masharipov leads Al Nassr to semis

Earlier on Saturday, Uzbek winger Jaloliddin Masharipov struck a second-half brace as Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr thrashed the UAE's Al Wahda 5-1 to storm into the semifinals.

Al Nassr will now meet compatriots Al Hilal on Tuesday

in a Riyadh derby after the three-time champions saw off Iranian giants Persepolis 3-0 in the second quarterfinal from AFC's western zone.

The 28-year-old Masharipov delivered in style, first by providing the assist for Abderazzak Hamdallah to score Al Nassr's opening goal in the seventh minute and then booting home the second seven minutes after the break. Abdulfattah Asiri added the third goal in the 56th minute before Masharipov made it 4-0 in the 65th on a pass from Hamdallah. Al Wahda conceded their fifth goal with Sami al-Naji firing home in the 75th minute.

The Emiratis managed to pull one back in stoppage time with Ismael Matar's strike.

Also in Riyadh, Al Hilal made light work of Persepolis with star striker Bafetimbi Gomis on target twice in the second half. Salam al-Dawsari put the 2019 winners ahead in the 27th minute. Frenchman Gomis made it 2-0 five minutes after the break and the former Swansea striker got his second goal in the 70th minute to put Al Hilal within two wins of a possible fourth Asian title.

AFP



QUOTE OF THE DAY

It's really important, this is a bit of a cutthroat little qualifier, you've got three games and you've got to hit the ground running without a doubt

Sri Lanka coach Mickey Arthur
on the eve of his team's match against debutants Namibia



ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

'Oman's profile as international cricket country and team is growing'



Geoff Allardice, ICC acting CEO

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

There was colour and music and there were some amazing strokeplay and bowling performances on the opening day of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground on Sunday.

Watching all of that was the International Cricket Council (ICC) acting CEO Geoff Allardice from the Royal Box along with H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of

Culture, Sports and Youth, members of the Royal Family, BCCI chief Sourav Ganguly and other dignitaries.

In an exclusive chat with *Muscat Daily* after Oman's victory over PNG in the opener, Allardice said, "Three months ago, I had visited the same venue. And today, it looks amazing. I would like to congratulate Oman Cricket for what they have done in such a short time. ICC had envisaged then that the venue should look in such a manner that it would

match the standards of a world-class event. Kudos to them [Oman Cricket] for delivering what they had promised. The venue looks just fantastic."

He added, "It has been an outstanding day for Oman Cricket with the beautiful opening ceremony followed by the national team's victory. There couldn't have been a better start for the home team."

Speaking about the opening ceremony OC had organised to mark the Omani Women's Day with the performance of an all-

Omani women's Royal Cavalry band, Allardice said, "Usually, we try to accommodate the hosts' board request. Today, we had an Omani flavour to the opening ceremony and it was well received by people in the stadium."

The ICC's top boss said that 'Oman cricket have been developing over the past ten years. The profile of Oman as an international cricket country and the team is growing. The hosting of the T20 World Cup is yet another step in that direction.

"They have been doing some astounding work on and off the field and I am very impressed with what they have achieved so far."

Likely to be watched by over 3.5bn TV viewers, the T20 World Cup is expected to put Oman in the global spotlight.

After the opening match win on Sunday, Oman will next play Bangladesh on Tuesday and conclude their group engagements with a match against Scotland on Thursday.

[@ashokmuscat](#)

Sensational Scotland

Favourites Bangladesh suffer shock six-run defeat in their opening First Round Group B match

Muscat - Scotland shook the T20 World Cup on the opening day by beating the No 6-ranked Bangladesh by six runs at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground. The margin doesn't however reflect just how well Scotland played on the second match of the First Round Group B double-header on Sunday.

The little-known Chris Greaves, playing only his second international match, rescued his side with a quickfire 45 after Scotland slipped to 53 for six. Then with his leg-spin, Greaves removed Shakib al Hasan and Mushfiquur Rahim just when Bangladesh started to make a move towards the 141-run chase.

Greaves was calm under pressure, adding 51 runs for the seventh wicket with Mark Watt. Brad Wheal took three wickets while Greaves finished with two scalps. Josh Davey and Mark Watt got one each, while Safiyaan Sharif closed out the game in the last over, even though Mahedi Hasan threatened briefly with a six.

Despite the sluggish nature of the Shakib-Rahim partnership, when they added 47 off 7.4 overs, Bangladesh always knew that they had Mahmudullah, Afif Hossain and Nurul Hasan to get the job done in the last five overs.

Afif survived a dropped catch in the 16th over, but he could strike only two fours in his 12-ball 18. Mahmudullah, Bangladesh's main finisher, kept mistiming the ball at the death. His 22-ball stay only yielded a four and a six, as he made only 23. Hasan too had little time to manoeuvre, pumping a catch to Callum



Scotland players celebrate after the dismissal of Bangladesh's Liton Das (not pictured) during the T20 World Cup match in Muscat on Sunday (AFP)

MacLeod who took three catches in the boundary line.

Sharif had to defend 24 runs in the final over, but it was only when Bangladesh required to hit only sixes in the last three balls, Mahedi swung him over square-leg for a six. Sharif kept his head in the last two balls, bringing Scotland the hard-fought win.

Coetzer's surprise for Sarkar

Off the first ball he faced, Soumya Sarkar cracked Wheal through midwicket for a beautiful four. But Scotland captain Kyle Coetzer wisely put a man at deep midwicket. But when Sarkar struck a similar shot off Josh Davey in the second over, the man at midwicket, George Munsey, didn't have to move an inch to complete the catch.

Scotland played on Bangladesh's poor start, by keeping Shakib and Rahim quiet throughout their 47-run stand. Only in the ninth over Mushfiquur hammered Leask for two sixes. Finally when Shakib did hit out at

Greaves, MacLeod took an excellent running catch around the deep midwicket boundary.

Spinners dominate Scotland

Scotland lost their way just when the aggressive Munsey was getting into his big-hitting groove. Off-spinner Mahedi took two wickets in the eighth over to stop Scotland on their tracks. He trapped Matthew Cross lbw, before he bowled Munsey, who had struck two sixes and two fours in his 23-ball 29.

Shakib followed up Mahedi's double-wicket over with one of his own, and it took him to the top of T20I's wicket-taking chart. Richie Berrington fell trying to clear long-on, where Afif took an excellent catch. When Michael Leask struck the fourth ball of the over to long-off where Liton Das had an easier catch, Shakib's tally reached 108, one more than Malinga. Mahedi further dented Scotland in the following over when he bowled MacLeod for five. From 45 for one, they

slipped to 53 for six, losing five wickets for eight runs in the space of 3.2 overs.

Bangladesh released some of the pressure when Afif went for ten runs in the 13th over. Playing only his second T20I, Greaves hammered two sixes and four boundaries in his 45, Scotland's top score in the innings. Watt contributed 22 off 17 balls with two fours, before holing out to Sarkar off Taskin Ahmed.

Greaves takes down Ahmed

But Watt's wicket didn't have any effect on Greaves, who went back to work on Ahmed. He cracked him past point for four before pasting him with an upper-cut for his second six. When Greaves struck Ahmed's next ball for a nice cover drive, Scotland felt a bit better despite being seven wickets down. Davey and Sharif hammered one six each in the last two overs and took Scotland to a fighting 140 for nine.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD		
SCOTLAND		
G Munsey	b Mahedi Hasan	29 (23)
K Coetzer	b Saifuddin	0 (0)
M Cross	lbw b Mahedi	11 (17)
R Berrington	c Afif b Shakib al Hasan	2 (5)
C MacLeod	b Mahedi	5 (14)
M Leask	c Das b Shakib al Hasan	0 (2)
C Greaves	c Shakib b Rahman	45 (28)
M Watt	c Sarkar b Ahmed	22 (17)
J Davey	b Rahman	8 (5)
S Sharif	not out	8 (2)
Brad Wheal	not out	1 (1)
Extras	(lb 4, nb 1, w 4)	9
TOTAL	140 for nine in 20 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-45, 3-46, 4-52, 5-52, 6-53, 7-104, 8-131, 9-131		
Bowling: T Ahmed 3-0-28-1, M Rahman 4-1-32-2, M Saifuddin 4-0-30-1, Shakib al Hasan 4-0-17-2, Mahedi Hasan 4-0-19-3, A Hossain 1-0-10-0		
BANGLADESH		
L Das	c Munsey b Wheal	5 (7)
S Sarkar	c Munsey b Davey	5 (5)
Shakib al Hasan	c MacLeod b Greaves	20 (28)
M Rahim	b Greaves	38 (36)
Mahmudullah	c MacLeod b Wheal	23 (22)
A Hossain	c Davey b Watt	18 (12)
N Hasan	c MacLeod b Wheal	2 (2)
M Hasan	not out	13 (5)
M Saifuddin	not out	5 (2)
Extras	(lb 2, w 3)	5
TOTAL	134 for seven in 20 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-18, 3-65, 4-74, 5-106, 6-110, 7-116		
Bowling: B Wheal 4-0-24-3, J Davey 4-0-24-1, S Sharif 3-0-26-0, M Leask 2-0-20-0, M Watt 4-0-19-1, C Greaves 3-0-19-2		

TODAY'S MATCHES

FIRST ROUND: GROUP A



IRELAND VS NETHERLANDS
Abu Dhabi (UAE)
2pm





NAMIBIA VS SRI LANKA
Abu Dhabi (UAE)
6pm



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QUOTE OF THE DAY
Our seam attack is so talented, I'll need to work my bum off to get a slot to play
Paul van Meekeren
Netherlands bowler, on the eve of his team's match against Ireland in Abu Dhabi, on Sunday



ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

CAKEWALK FOR OMAN



Oman's pacer Kaleemullah (C) celebrates with Naseem Khushi (2R), Ayaan Khan and Khawar Ali (R) after dismissing Lega Siaka (L) during their T20 World Cup match on Sunday

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

The drums played on in the stands from early afternoon. *HayyaCricket*, the anthem produced by Oman Cricket (OC) for the T20 World Cup, blared on at regular intervals at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground on Sunday.

The small group of Oman fans in the general stands didn't mind the heat as they witnessed history being made as Oman pulverised Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the opening match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup First Round Group B match.

While the fans braved the heat, Duleep Mendis' men hardly broke a sweat in their ten-wicket win to record one of the biggest triumphs at the global stage with the skipper Zeeshan Maqsood leading from the front.

Maqsood's triple-strike in the 16th over to end with four for 20, the best figures by an Oman bowler in T20 cricket, came after the hosts' pace duo of Bilal Khan and Kaleemullah removed one opener each in their first overs to have PNG tottering at zero for two.

PNG skipper Assad Vala (56) and Charles Amini (37) did come up with a strong resistance to reach 81 by the 12th over but Amini's run out changed the complexion of the match and from 102 for three in 14 overs, the debutants were down to 118 for nine in a space of 20 balls with Maqsood being the wrecker-in-chief.

Chasing a modest 130 to win,



Oman's openers - Jatinder Singh (R) and Aqib Ilyas - celebrate after their win over PNG on Sunday

Oman's openers - Aqib Ilyas and Jatinder Singh - slammed unbeaten half-centuries as they strolled to a ten-wicket win, reaching 131 in 13.4 overs to also boost their net run-rate.

It was a tough lesson for PNG on their debut and the match did witness couple of records set by the hosts.

Jatinder became the first Omani batter to slam a half-century in a World Cup and he did it in style, launching a six, to reach the milestone and his fourth of his unbeaten 73 off 42 balls had his partner Ilyas too joining the half-century club.

Jatinder score is the highest individual score by a batter in

T20Is for Oman. His innings included seven fours and four sixes, including the final one that sealed victory for the home side.

Ilyas made 50 off 43 as Oman reached the target with 6.2 overs to spare. The 131-run stand was the second highest stand for Oman in T20Is and it was the third ten-wicket win in T20 World Cups. The victory gives a big qualification boost for the hosts ahead of tougher challenge against Bangladesh (Tuesday) and Scotland (Thursday).

Nightmare start for debutants

PNG had a horror start in their first T20 World Cup match as

they lost the openers with no run on board for 11 balls. However, Vala and Amini stitched an 81-run stand to raise their hopes of a fightback before they collapsed like a pack of cards in the 16th over. After the shock start Amini and Vala gradually built the innings before disaster struck in the 12th over.

Vala faced Mohammad Nadeem and hit it straight to him on his follow-through. Amini in an attempt to take a run was way down the pitch. Nadeem turned around and sent in a direct hit to beat Amini to break the 60-ball partnership that threatened to put Oman on the back foot.

The dismissal put pressure on

SCOREBOARD		
PAPUA NEW GUINEA		
T Ura	b Bilal Khan	0 (3)
L Siaka	b Kaleemullah	0 (3)
A Vala	c Jatinder b Kaleemullah	56 (43)
C Amini	run out	37 (26)
S Bau	c Jatinder b Maqsood	13 (13)
N Vanua	b Maqsood	1 (2)
S Atai	c Ayaan Khan b Bilal	3 (5)
K Doriga	c Goud b Maqsood	0 (2)
D Ravu	c Nadeem	
	b Maqsood	1 (4)
K Morea	not out	6 (7)
N Pokana	not out	5 (10)
Extras	(lb 6, w 1)	7
TOTAL	129 for nine in 20 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-0, 3-81, 4-102, 5-112, 6-113, 7-113, 8-117, 9-118		
Bowling: Bilal Khan 4-1-16-2, Kaleemullah 3-0-19-2, A Ilyas 4-0-28-0, M Nadeem 3-0-23-0, Khawar Ali 2-0-17-0, Z Maqsood 4-0-20-4		
OMAN		
A Ilyas	not out	50 (43)
Jatinder Singh	not out	73 (42)
Extras	(lb 2, nb 3, w 3)	8
TOTAL	131 for no loss in 13.4 overs	
Bowling: K Morea 2-0-18-0, D Ravu 3-0-28-0, N Pokana 2-0-15-0, S Atai 1-0-9-0, C Amini 2-4-31-0, A Vala 1-0-11-0, L Siaka 2-0-17-0		

POST-MATCH COMMENTS



Didn't expect such an easy victory: Maqsood

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Oman skipper Zeeshan Maqsood, who triggered a PNG collapse with his devastating four-wicket spell and was later named the man-of-the-match, said that they 'didn't expect such an easy win' in the T20 World Cup opener.

Speaking at the post-match press conference, Maqsood said, "We are delighted to have got off to a winning start. Honestly, we didn't expect such an easy win." The captain added, "The run-out of Amini was one of the turning points of the game. At that stage both Amini and Vala were playing well. For us, Kaleemullah's wicket in the second over was also a crucial breakthrough as that put them under pressure."

On his four-wicket spell, Maqsood said, "It was crucial time for us. They were batting well when I got the wickets. The collapse meant that they couldn't put on a big total. Jatinder and Aqib played well and it finally turned out to be a cakewalk for us," he said.

Maqsood said that the team is used to conditions at home. "We know our home conditions well. We knew that even 140 could be chased down by us. The wicket played very well in the second half."

On the next match against Bangladesh on Tuesday, Maqsood said, "Every game is tough at this stage. We will take each match as it comes. They are a Test side and have plenty of good players. They are used to big stage but we will do our best."

The Oman skipper said there were 'mistakes on the field and we will try to improve upon them in the next match.' "We need to come stronger in the matches ahead," he added.

Oman deserved to win, says PNG skipper Vala

Muscat - PNG skipper Assad Vala said Oman 'deserved to win' and credit to them for their allround performance.

"They bowled well but the run-out of Amini was the turning point of the match. At that stage, he was hitting very well," said Vala, who himself scored a half-century. The skipper said, "We fought back well after being down at zero for two but 129 was never going to be enough on this wicket."

"We will take some positives from the match. The character we displayed despite the bad start is what we will take with us. We need a lot of improvement in the next two games. Today was not our day as, we didn't execute our plans," he added.

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