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SHORT FILM CONTEST TO PROMOTE OMAN
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'PANDEMIC IS STILL HERE'

The current situation in Oman is reassuring, but the virus has not disappeared: H E Dr Sa'eedi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, stated on Monday that the COVID-19 pandemic is still here and hoped that another lockdown, movement ban or closure will not be necessary in Oman. He also stressed that vaccination is not sufficient protection against the virus.

Addressing a press conference, H E Dr Sa'eedi said, "It seems the pandemic is here to stay. The current situation in Oman is reassuring, but the virus has not disappeared and there are reports of new variants, especially in European countries. We have been through difficult times and we do not want to go back to where we were. We still need to wear masks, maintain physical distance and follow hand hygiene."

The minister said that he continues to receive news of people hugging and shaking hands at funerals and other occasions. "We hope we don't have to close down or impose a movement ban again. Imams in mosques should call on worshippers to maintain physical distance and take pre-



H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi receives his third dose of COVID-19 vaccine on Monday (ONA)

cautionary measures," he added.

H E Dr Sa'eedi informed that failure in observing social distancing in mosques is a concern. "It is unfortunate that there is no staff in mosques to ensure that everyone who enters is vaccinated. This is the responsibility of everyone. None of us will be safe until all of us are safe."

He stressed that the ban on holding events is still in effect, and the concerned regulatory au-

thorities must adopt necessary measures to ensure that the Supreme Committee's guidelines are followed.

H E Dr Sa'eedi urged everyone to continue to adhere to the precautionary measures and those over 65 years - in particular cancer patients, organ transplant patients, AIDS patients and those receiving immunosuppressive drugs - to take the third dose of vaccine if it has been six months

since the last shot.

On COVID-19 passports, H E Dr Sa'eedi said, "There is no consensus on issuing health passports for citizens of Gulf countries."

He clarified that currently there is no intention of closing airports or stopping flights from any destination. On PCR tests, he informed that Oman has submitted a request to exempt citizens of GCC countries from the test. "No

We have been through difficult times and we do not want to go back to where we were. We still need to wear masks, maintain physical distance and follow hand hygiene

H E DR AHMED AL SA'EEDI

decision has been taken yet. The rates for PCR tests in Oman are cheap compared to many countries. The Ministry of Health is trying to reduce prices further," he said.

The ministry announced eight new COVID-19 cases on Monday, taking Oman's total to 304,437 cases. No deaths were reported in a 24-hour period on Monday, keeping the death count at 4,113.

Action against those who violate vaccination rule

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Authorities will soon announce measures against those who violate the rule restricting entry of unvaccinated individuals in government and commercial institutions, according to H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health.

"A decision will be issued soon on the penalties to be imposed on anyone who enters government and commercial institutions without taking the vaccine. The decisions of the Supreme Committee are still valid for those coming to the sultanate - two doses of vaccine, PCR tests before leaving the country of origin or upon arrival in Oman," he elaborated.

Addressing a press conference with H E Dr Sa'eedi on Monday, Brig Mohammed bin Nasser al Kindi, Director-General of Operations, said

Royal Oman Police continues to ensure implementation of Supreme Committee's decisions. "We confirm the presence of police at all locations to monitor compliance with the decisions. Our hotline (1099) is open 24 hours to report any violations," he said.

Also speaking at the press meet, Dr Amal al Maani, senior consultant in pediatric infectious diseases and infection prevention and control at the Ministry of Health, informed that there is an increase in incidence of influenza this year.

"We have noticed a steady increase in influenza cases, especially Influenza A. There have been outbreaks of up to 100 individuals. We are monitoring deaths due to it as well," Dr Amal said.

She attributed the incidence likely due to lapses in observing preventive measures like wearing masks this year.

► NEWS BRIEFS

DR MADIHA TO HAND OVER SULTAN QABOOS PRIZE FOR ENVIRONMENT

Muscat - Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Dr Madiha Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education and Chairperson of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, will hand over the Unesco-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation on November 17.

The award presentation ceremony will be held on the sidelines of Unesco's 41st session of the General Conference in Paris.

Initiated in 1989, it is awarded for outstanding contributions by individuals, groups of individuals, institutes or organisations in the field of the environment.



No need for OPEC+ to raise production faster: Oman



Pro-hijab campaign: Beauty is in diversity

'Must-win game against Japan'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman takes on heavyweights Japan in the third round of AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to Qatar Group B at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex today. The match kicks off at 8pm.

At a press conference on Monday, Oman manager Branko Ivankovic of Croatia said that the home game against Japan is a must-win.

Ivankovic, who took up the job in January 2020, said that Oman is stepping up for a difficult task. "We are playing at home and will give our best to make the Omani people happy."

He added that the Japanese team is one of the best in Asia, stressing the readiness of Oman to give it its best shot to win.

"We are ready for the game; we don't have any injury concerns. We play at a high level and have good players who will do everything to win the match. We beat Japan in the first match and proved that we can face any team. Of course, the Japanese team will strive to win, but we do not have any other option but to win."

National team player Salah al



Branko Ivankovic

Yahyai said, "The match is very important for us. The players are ready and our ambition is to repeat the victory over Japan."

September 2, 2021 will go down as one of the most important dates in the history of Oman's football as it shocked fancied Japan in a 1-0 win in the opening game of the 2022 World Cup final Asian qualifying round. It was the first time that Oman defeated Japan, Asia's highest-ranked and world No 24 team.

Issam al Subhi scored the 88th-minute winner four minutes after coming off the bench at a rainy Panasonic Stadium in Suita, Japan.

Oman is currently in fourth place in Group B with seven points. Japan is placed second, Australia third and Saudi Arabia first.

'DUBAI IS BACK AGAIN'



"Dubai is back again. Welcome everybody," said Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, as he declared Dubai Airshow 2021 open on Sunday. On the first day of the event, deals worth more than Dh137bn were signed. The biennial show will run till December 18 (AFP)

MHT sets new conditions for establishing hotels in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has set new conditions for establishing hotels in various governorates based on the needs of a wilayat and the potential of future growth.

The ministry, in a statement, said that it was pleased to an-

nounce the introduction of controls for the establishment of new hotel facilities with the aim of guiding and enabling tourism development in various governorates to achieve a balance in the quality of hotel facilities available to guests.

MHT will start receiving requests to set up hotels on private land according to the new regu-

lations starting from December 12, 2021.

A statement issued by MHT said, 'The ministry has issued a decision to stop granting permission to establish hotels with ratings of less than three stars in the wilayats of Muscat, Muttrah, Amerat and Quriyat, and to allow the establishment of only luxury hotels in Bausher.'

It further added that in Bausher, hotel apartments of excellent and luxurious classification, heritage hostels and green hostels are allowed.

In the wilayats of Muscat, Muttrah, Amerat, and Quriyat, hotels of one and two stars, hotel apartments of normal rating and guest hostels in Seeb. Five-star hotels, hotel apartments of excellent and luxurious classification, her-

itage hostels and green hostels will be allowed.

The ministry also announced the suspension of permission to build hotels with one and two stars in Dhofar, Dhahirah, Buraimi, South Batinah, North Sharqiyah and South Sharqiyah. It confirmed that establishment of all types of hotels are allowed in Musandam.

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Short film contest to promote Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To promote tourism and showcase the natural beauty of Oman, the Ministry of Tourism and Heritage (MHT) has launched a short film competition called 'Oman Bi uyoonek'.

The competition will encourage talented youth to produce short promotional films of one to two minute-duration highlighting the beauty of the sultanate.

"The ministry urges talented youth to present high-quality, short films with new and innovative ideas that have promotional messages and reflect the beauty of Oman, defining the country's tourism and cultural heritage," a

ministry official said.

The competition has three categories - nature and adventure tourism, marine tourism, and culture and heritage tourism.

Prizes will be presented to the top three in each category, with first place winners receiving RO2,000. Second and third placed participants will win RO1,500 and RO750 respectively.

The official explained that films on nature and adventure tourism must showcase a wide range of natural sites, including mountains, sand dunes and valleys where adventure sports activities such as hiking and biking are carried out.

Films on marine tourism must include sports and water sports



COMPETITION CATEGORIES
1 NATURE AND ADVENTURE TOURISM
2 MARINE TOURISM
3 CULTURE AND HERITAGE TOURISM

activities, including snorkeling, dolphin watching trips, diving, fishing, windsurfing, kayaking and sailing.

Films on culture and heritage tourism must showcase the diversity in activities such as visiting castles, forts, mosques, Royal Opera House Muscat, popular souqs and cultural festivals available to tourists.

Informing about the conditions of participation, the MHT

official said, "The competition is only open to Omanis, and the films can be shot in a variety of devices - digital cameras, smartphones and tablets." The films can be presented in MP4, MOV, HD 720p, Full HD 1080p or any other format suitable for viewing.

Copyright of the winning films will be the property of the ministry for use in local and international media outlets and other promotional tools.

Participants can upload their film in any online platform and fill out the registration form with an attachment of the link to the platform on the website www.experienceoman

December 5, 2021, is the last date of submission.

MINISTRY CELEBRATES OMANI WOMEN'S DAY



The Ministry of Social Development celebrated Omani Women's Day at Kempinski Hotel Muscat on Monday. The celebration was held under the auspices of H E Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, who honoured a number of Omani women (ONA)

MHT opens Oman Geological Heritage Exhibition in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman and Geological Society of Oman, opened Oman Geological Heritage Exhibition at the Frankincense Land Museum in the wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar governorate, on Monday. The exhibition will run till December 15.

Muati bin Salim al Muati, assistant director general for museums in MHT, informed that the exhibition includes displays related to the geology of Oman, including unique fossils from different geological periods that



were found in a number of other governorates.

"The exhibition will also display bones of extinct animals discovered in the sultanate, in addition to models of these ani-

mals made based on scientific data. The exhibition aims to shed light on the diversity of Oman's geological heritage and introduce it to a wider audience."

The exhibition will also raise

awareness on the importance of preserving the sultanate's geological heritage in accordance with Oman Vision 2040 and its strategic objectives and programmes to enhance national identity.

The exhibition targets academics, teachers, university and school students, as well as job-seekers and those interested in geology.

"The ministry seeks, through this exhibition, to invest in community partnership to ensure the sustainability and maintenance of the national heritage and enhance contributions of the heritage sector to economic activities through executive programmes," said Muati.

FORESIGHT



SYED ADIL ABBAS

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

One of the trends that COVID-19 has accelerated is the way business models and the entire value chain in many industries are broken up - and put together in new ways. British technology analyst Benedict Evans calls it "The Great Unbundling".

Traditional value chain elements such as production, marketing, sales, customer service, website, data analysis and distribution are being reconfigured in many different ways thereby opening up new players and services. The ongoing pandemic has probably brought forward such changes by five to ten years.

Now, more and more brands are choosing to sell directly to consumers through the Web. Direct relationship with customers require a different physical organisation giving advantage of gathering a diverse set of data about who buy and why they buy your goods.

An example is Nike, which in 2017, after trying to sell through Amazon, decided to focus on selling directly to customers. Today, 40 per cent of Nike's sales go through its own stores or their website.

Nike.com is the world's largest online fashion site, accounting for 22 per cent of Nike's sales. This allows Nike to retain a much larger share of revenue, and they have access to more data.

This 'Unbundling' offers completely new possibilities - not easy to grab. It is equivalent to a publisher wanting to run a bookstore. It is not certain that they have the skills. The result - an explosion in the number of services that help manufacturers with every link of the value

chain. Amazon's Marketplace is the service that gives third parties access to sell through Amazon's website. Today, it accounts for 60 per cent of Amazon's total sales, and in the US, 45 per cent of sales through the Marketplace are made up of Chinese manufacturers who, by being present on Amazon's site, can sell directly to customers everywhere, rather than through store chains.

THE GREAT UNBUNDLING

It has also meant that in just a few years, Amazon has conquered a large share of all digital marketing budgets. Amazon is expected to sell placement and visibility on their website for over US\$25bn by Q1 2022. Amazon has also taken over the distribution, today a third of all packages are delivered by Amazon's own delivery.

Another service that is growing even faster than Amazon is Shopify, which provides a range of tools that make it very easy for a brand to build its own webshop - complete with design, order management, social media marketing and analytics data.

Shopify is used by over a million brands, and many of them are 'online-only' or 'online-first' brands, whose focus from the beginning has been online sales rather than traditional stores.

Five years ago, Shopify was a niche platform. Today it mediates sales equivalent to 40 per cent of what Amazon me-

diates through their Marketplace. Last year, Shopify grew by 40 per cent, and today it is the most valuable listed Canadian company.

The Omani business ecosystem is also experiencing the effects of this 'Unbundling' and companies need to rethink their role and core expertise. This applies to everything from retail to banks to the media industry.

Amouage, an ultra-niche luxury fragrance maker based in Oman, has put in place direct-to-customer digital channels as part of its expansion plans and has reported 107 per cent increase in sales in the first six months of 2021.

Another Omani success story is the Muscat Livestock, an online delivery service for premium meat products. Hypermarkets such as Lulu and Carrefour are also pushing hard to get a pie in the new business configuration.

Are other brands listening?

Can we have Omani versions of Amazon Marketplace or Shopify?

This 'Unbundling' will certainly open new avenues for Omani companies involved in marketing & sales, IT enabled services, data analysis, distribution/logistics and new payment options such as digital wallets and mobile payments.

The threshold for starting a business and reaching millions of customers has been lowered. You can outsource and get help for all links in the value chain. This shift has opened up the possibility of building new, large companies and it is not necessarily the producers who are thriving but also the platforms on which such companies thrive.

Online fundraiser 'Art for a Cause' helps in COVID-19 relief

Muscat - As the fight against COVID-19 continues and many pitch in to help, the art world too has stepped into the ring in Oman.

'Art for a Cause Oman' is an ongoing online art fundraiser organised by Amani al Zawawi. The project raises funds for COVID-19 relief through sales of digital prints of pieces of art.

All funds raised through online auctions are donated to the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 department assisting in its work.

Describing the initiative, its founder and manager Amani said, "It took quite a bit of planning. I wanted to ensure that it didn't look like I was keeping the money, so instead I formatted the fundraiser in a way to encourage others to donate to organisations set up by the government for COVID-19 relief."

The logistics involved in the initiative needed ironing out, for which she had help from family.

"I needed to make sure we could distribute art pieces in a COVID-19 friendly way. The process had to be quick and efficient," Amani added.

She selected contributors by examining the artists in her Advanced Placement art class at The American International School of Muscat. "I had just submitted my art portfolio, and I felt a bit useless because I had nothing to sell to raise enough money on my own. So I thought of asking others and making it a fundraiser. Besides, I have been making digital art, which requires zero contact between the customer and seller. So I thought it made the most sense to auction digital art."

She explained that art as a product has customers every-



Amani al Zawawi

where, and individual artists have their distinct styles that provided variety in the pieces on the block.

The initiative has the support of young artists, who previously or currently reside in the country and sell digital prints both in Oman and internationally.

Expressing her reasons for donating her art on Instagram,

Maren Lee said, "This fundraiser is aiming to support this wonderful country that many call home, and I am honoured to be able to share my art to support this cause."

A variety of art formats is on auction, including photographs and sketches.

Jeff Kim started photography in Oman "and it has been a huge part of my identity. It is truly a privilege to be part of this fundraiser and use my artwork to support the current circumstances in Oman."

Special bundles that include multiple art pieces by individual artists sell are sold at a cheaper price.

The art pieces available for sale can be viewed at 'art_for_a_cause_oman' on Instagram.

Contributed by Zara Saldanha

Work starts at heritage souq, Al Hafa waterfront

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat National Development and Investment Company (Asaas) has started enabling works for construction at the Al Hafa waterfront project and a traditional heritage market in the wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar governorate. The project is expected to start full operations in the fall of 2023.

Al Hafa waterfront is vital to Salalah and is one of the most important and popular tourist attractions in Dhofar.

A statement issued by Asaas said, 'The company has started construction work to develop the waterfront in the Al Hafa area on an area of more than 60,000sqm. It has also appointed the main contractor for construction of the heritage market.'

The project features a heritage souq, developed as an alternative to the current souq, reflecting local architectural design elements. It will also house several small and medium enterprises.

The general master plan to develop the area includes provision of parking spaces for visitors to



(Supplied image)

The preliminary work of the project started in May. The commercial identity of the project is being designed. It will be announced at a later stage

AHMED SALEM AL BUSAIDI

the market as well as Al Hafa beach. More facilities will be implemented in successive stages.

Ahmed Salem al Busaidi,

chairman of the Board of Directors of Asaas, said, "The company started the preliminary work for the project, including

leveling the land and preparing infrastructure for the site in May. The commercial identity of the project is being designed. It will be announced at a later stage."

He added that while full operations are expected to start in the fall of 2023, partial operations will begin in 2022. Efforts are on to implement the project according to a planned schedule.

"We affirm the continuity of

our strategic partnership with the government sector to achieve a common national goal in advancing the tourism sector and making the sultanate a popular tourist destination for all. I thank all concerned parties, including the Office of the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar and Dhofar Municipality, for their cooperation and support to implement this project," Busaidi said.

Over 270 violations of Marine Fishing Law reported in Sept

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As many as 272 Marine Fishing Law violations were reported in September 2021, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR).

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, an MAFWR official said specialists in the ministry arrested 46 expatriates for violating provisions of the Marine Fishing Law and Protection of Living Aquatic Resources in September.

"Among the 272 violations registered, there were 139 fishing licence regulation violations, 81 cases of use of prohibited fishing methods and possession of unauthorised equipment, 14 cases of employment of unlicensed expatriate workers, 24 instances of non-compliance in the placement of licence plates on boats and ships, and 14 other violations," he added.

According to the official, 203 pieces of equipment were seized, including boats, engines and nets.

In line with efforts to reduce violations, the MAFWR official said, "The ministry organises monitoring campaigns in cooperation with the relevant authorities, such as the Coast Guard of Royal Oman Police, the Royal Oman Navy, the Maritime Security Centre and the Ministry of Labour in all fishing location."

The campaigns aim to ensure compliance with laws and regulations. The ministry's Fisheries Control Operations Room also uses modern technology, including satellites, and applies a remote sensing system to monitor the movement of commercial and coastal fishing vessels.

"The Marine Fishing Law pro-



(File photo)

hibits the practice of fishing or any activity after the expiry of the licence period. The law stipulates that the violator will be levied a fine of RO1,000 and/or imprisoned for a month. The punishment will be increased in the event of repetition of violations."

Meanwhile, on October 27, the fisheries control team in Al Wusta governorate seized two artisanal fishing vessels and a coastal fishing vessel in the wilayat of Duqm engaged in fishing at a distance less than legally permissible.

MAFWR's activities include monitoring fishing vessels, coastal and commercial activities, marketing of live aquatic resources in the local markets, controlling fish exports through land, sea and air ports, and monitoring commercial fishing fleet through an electronic tracking system linked to satellites.

Tourism forum to be held in North Sharqiyah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a move to stimulate domestic tourism, the office of the Wali of Dima Wa al Taien in North Sharqiyah governorate will hold a tourism forum on December 2.

The economic team of the Wali of Dima Wa al Taien's office held its second meeting this year under the chairmanship of Tariq bin Mahmoud al Busaidi, wali, recently.

An official of the wali's office said, "The meeting discussed

holding the first two-day tourism forum. It aims to introduce tourist sites in the wilayat of Dima Wa al Taien, including valleys and rocky mountains, Omani villages with distinct architecture and an ever-flowing aflaj."

According to the official, the

forum will help showcase the cultural heritage of Dima Wa al Taien - Omani arts, songs and handicrafts made by craftsmen of the White Mountain.

"The forum will include a variety of activities, including an exhibition of items made by

craftsmen families, sports activities tailored for the mountainous terrain of the wilayat, such as hiking and rock climbing, 4WD motor sports events, a classic cars exhibition, and children's competitions and games," the official said.

SAYYID THEYAZIN RECEIVES BAHRAINI ENVOY



H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, received in his office H E Dr Juma Ahmed al Kaabi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Oman, on Monday. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing these to serve joint interests. The meeting also discussed aspects of existing cooperation in the fields of culture, sports and youth (ONA)



ELECTRONIC TENDERS

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation announces the re-launch of the tender shown in the following table:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for purchasing Tender	The deadline for submission of tenders
(13/2021)	Design And Supervision For Proposed Construction Of Marine Safety Center At Al-Khaborah Vocational College For Marine Sciences.	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade: First	25 /= RO	05/12/2021	25/12/2021

The purchasing of the tender documents by E-Tendering system will start on Tuesday 16/11/2021 at 07:30 am. To purchasing, please visit the following link:

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Preference will be given to companies' or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that includes the largest proportion of its tender Organization.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Chairman of tender committee
Ministry of Higher Education
Research & Innovation



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Oman says no need for OPEC+ to raise oil production faster

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's Minister of Energy and Minerals, H E Mohammed al Rumhi, on Monday said there was no need for OPEC+ group to accelerate oil-production increases, according to a Bloomberg report.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE also signaled OPEC+ will continue raising oil output cautiously, signaling at least some members of the group will continue to resist US pressure for more crude supplies.

OPEC+ is already raising daily supply by 400,000 barrels per month and that's enough, H E Rumhi said in a Bloomberg interview in Abu Dhabi, where he is attending the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference (ADIPEC).



H E Mohammed al Rumhi

OPEC+, the 23-nation group led by Saudi Arabia and Russia and which includes Oman, is not concerned about the US potentially releasing oil from its Strategic Petroleum Reserve, H E Rumhi said. That wouldn't oversupply the market, he added.

H E Rumhi last week also said



Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman

that the sultanate does not see a need to increase oil supplies beyond what is agreed upon [under the OPEC+ agreement].

Speaking to CNN Arabic on November 7, he said, "We do not see the need to pump more oil than what was agreed upon. The market does not need [more supplies] either from re-

serves or from oil fields."

US President Joe Biden has recently called on OPEC+ group to increase the production and bring down oil prices.

OPEC+ is currently increasing daily output by 400,000 barrels per month.

"That should be enough," UAE's Energy Minister Suhail al Mazrouei said in an interview in Abu Dhabi, according to Bloomberg.

Mazrouei said the oil market will switch from a supply deficit to a surplus early next year and that's one of the main reasons for OPEC+ not to be more aggressive.

"All what we know and what all the experts in the world are saying is that we will have a surplus," he said. "So we need not panic. We need to be calm."

H E Rumhi's and Mazrouei's

comments were echoed by Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman.

Oil inventories have fallen rapidly since OPEC+ began deep supply cuts in early 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. "But they will begin to rise again from next month. OPEC+ is fulfilling its duty," Prince Abdulaziz said in a separate interview at ADIPEC, as per the Bloomberg report.

H E Rumhi added that OPEC+ group will probably decide at its December meeting to stick with monthly hikes of 400,000 barrels.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and partners next meet on December 2. Crude prices have climbed around 60 per cent this year to more than US\$80 a barrel.

UAE says world still needs to invest billions in oil and gas

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The UAE, one of the world's top crude exporters, said a recent UN climate summit in Glasgow was a 'success' but that the world needs to keep investing billions in oil and gas.

Nearly 200 countries at the COP26 summit pledged Saturday to speed up the fight against rising temperatures, after two weeks of negotiations.

But they failed to secure a consensus to keep coal in the ground, and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has warned that 'climate catastrophe' is still knocking at the door.

The summit 'was indeed a success', said Sultan al Jaber, the UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology.

But he forecast that the oil and gas industry would have to invest 'over US\$600bn every year until 2030 just to keep up with the expected demand'.

"While the world has agreed to accelerate the energy transition, it is still heavily reliant on oil and gas," he told the opening session of the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference.

"As economies bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic at the fastest rate in 50 years, demand has outpaced supply."

Both the United Arab Emirates and neighbouring Saudi Arabia, the world's number one oil exporter, have announced net zero carbon goals, despite plans to ramp up oil production.

Net zero refers to emissions



Sultan al Jaber

created within a country, not by products sold and consumed abroad.

The UAE, Saudi Arabia and other major oil producers have defended their plans to continue investing in fossil fuels.

"The future is coming, but it is not here yet," said Jaber, whose country is set to host COP28.

"We must make progress with pragmatism. If we are to successfully transition to the energy system of tomorrow, we cannot simply unplug from the energy system of today."

Also at the Abu Dhabi conference, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman hit back at critics questioning Riyadh's net zero ambitions.

"I can understand the scepticism, but I also would refer those sceptics to what we've agreed to just two days ago," he said, referring to the COP26 summit.

AFP

Shell to move headquarters from Netherlands to UK

London, UK - Energy giant Shell on Monday announced plans to move its headquarters from the Netherlands to the UK and drop Royal Dutch from its name in a major shakeup that angered the Dutch government.

The plan, seen as a post-Brexit boon for London, will see the company switch its tax residence to the UK.

Shell's plan to end its Anglo-Dutch structure also follows pressure by activists in the Netherlands for the company to slash its harmful emissions.

"We are unpleasantly sur-

prised by this. The Cabinet deeply regrets this intention," Economic Affairs Minister Stef Blok said in a statement on Twitter.

Royal Dutch would be dropped from the name for the first time in 130 years.

"We are in talks with Shell about the implications of this move for jobs, critical investment decisions and sustainability. Those are hugely important," Blok added.

Shell said it plans to relocate to the UK its chief executive Ben van Beurden and chief financial



officer Jessica Uhl on condition of shareholder approval in a vote due December 10.

The company has been incor-

porated in the UK with Dutch tax residence since the 2005. This followed the unification of Koninklijke Nederlandsche Petroleum Maatschappij and The Shell Transport and Trading Company under a single parent company.

Shell said in Monday's statement that it 'is proud of its Anglo-Dutch heritage and will continue to be a significant employer with a major presence in the Netherlands'.

The company said its projects and technology division, global upstream and integrated Gas businesses and renewable ener-

gies hub would remain located in The Hague. Shares will continue to be listed in Amsterdam, London and New York, it added.

The group however plans to 'align Shell's tax residence with its country of incorporation in the UK, where it will hold board and executive committee meetings, and locate its chief executive and chief financial officer'.

The proposal will meanwhile 'establish a single line of shares to eliminate the complexity of Shell's A/B share structure', it added.

AFP

MSX rebounds with 0.74% gains

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Monday rebounded with a gain of 0.74 per cent and closed at 4,030.57 points. Trading activity at the bourse improved compared to the previous session.

The gains in the main index were supported by all the sectoral indices.

Financial, Services and Industrial indices increased by 0.46 per cent, 0.08 per cent and 0.52 per cent, respectively. MSX Sharia index rose 0.34 per cent to close at 546.69 points.

Trading activity increased on Monday as volumes nearly doubled to 10.83mn shares compared with 5.42mn shares traded in the previous trading session.

Market turnover also increased 47.4 per cent to RO1.88mn compared with RO1.27mn in the previous session.

Market breadth at the MSX remained positive with 11 advancing stock to eight decliners. As many as 19 traded stocks remained flat for the day.

Top gainers for the day were Ooredoo (3.37 per cent), Al Batinah Power (1.96 per cent), Al Suwadi Power (1.96 per cent), Ahlibank (1.85 per cent) and Bank Muscat (1.66 per cent).

Top losers were Al Anwar Investment (-3.96 per cent), Al Omaniya Financial Services (-3.39 per cent), Oman National Engineering and Investment (-2.08 per cent), Global Investment Holding (-1.59 per cent) and Taageer Finance (-1.35 per cent).

Bank Nizwa, IFSB join hands to support Islamic finance growth

Muscat - In line with its mission to spread awareness and boost interest in the community about Islamic banking practices, Bank Nizwa recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Islamic Financial Service Board (IFSB) at the 15th IFBS Summit held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was signed between Sheikh Saif Hilal Nasser al Mawali, board member of Bank Nizwa and Dr Bello Lawal Danbatta, secretary general of IFBS.

On signing the MoU, Mawali said, "We are indeed delighted to be an IFBS member bank and we look forward to working closely with IFBS to attain new milestones through thoughtful, well-strategised and prudent collaborations that serve our mutual benefits and objectives. The growing popularity of Islamic finance in the region has led to an increase in demand for innovative Sharia'a-compliant products and services that meet the varying needs of the industry."



To enhance their relationship and collaborate to further the institutional synergy for the overall development of Islamic finance in Oman and the region, Bank Nizwa and IFBS will jointly undertake several initiatives to achieve its goals.

Dr Bello Lawal said, "We at IFBS are delighted to join hands with Bank Nizwa for enhanced capacity building, awareness and development of Islamic Finance in Oman and region. We are very positive that enhanced this synergy between two prestigious entities shall prove fruitful in achieving joint objectives."

Ever since its inception, Bank Nizwa has demonstrated an unfaltering commitment to spreading awareness about Islamic finance while continuing to spearhead changes in the sector.

Bank Nizwa is an observer member of the Islamic Financial Services Board. This collaboration comes as part of Bank Nizwa's strategic efforts to strengthen its relations with the world's leading institutions in the sector such as the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions and the General Council for Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions.

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China launches new Beijing Stock Exchange for SMEs

Beijing, China – A new Chinese stock exchange focused on SMEs began trading in Beijing on Monday, boosting support for smaller-scale firms as economic growth slows and Beijing cracks down on domestic tech giants.

More than 80 companies started trading on the Beijing Stock Exchange, which is expected to complement two main bourses in Shanghai and Shenzhen by catering to smaller enterprises, which have long faced difficulty getting funding from banks.

Chinese media reported on Monday that shares of ten newly listed companies on the exchange rose by more than 60 per cent, triggering temporary suspensions.

Auto parts maker Henan



People walk past the Beijing Stock Exchange on its first day of trading in Beijing, China on Monday (AFP)

Tongxin Transmission Co made the biggest gains, surging about 494 per cent by the close, and media reported that the ten new stocks rose an average of almost 200 per cent from their issue prices. But the 71 other

firms migrated from an existing board posted mixed performances.

Stocks will not be allowed to rise or fall more than 30 per cent in a single trading day on the exchange, although earlier reports

said there would be no cap for the first day of listing.

The new exchange is vital for 'improving financial support for SMEs, as well as promoting innovation-driven development', Yi Huiman, the chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, said at an opening ceremony.

The Beijing exchange provides a capital-raising conduit for SMEs and takes in companies on the top tier of China's existing National Equities Exchange and Quotations (NEEQ), founded in 2012.

The NEEQ is an entry-level, over-the-counter stock trading platform allowing firms to raise funds before listing on a stock exchange.

AFP

COVID-19 hit Japan economy harder than expected in Q3

Tokyo, Japan – Japan's economy shrank far more than expected in the three months to September, as a surge in virus cases hit spending and supply chain issues hampered business, data showed on Monday.

The world's third largest economy shrank 0.8 per cent quarter-on-quarter, much worse than the 0.2 per cent economists had forecast.

The contraction was driven in part by a 1.2 per cent dip in household consumption that tracked the imposition of a virus state of emergency over the summer, when Japan saw its worst-ever COVID surge.

Also weighing heavily was a drop in non-residential investment, which plunged 3.8 per cent on a chip shortage and supply chain issues that weighed on factory output.

Exports, another key factor driving Japan's economy, were also down, with vehicle exports stalling over a shortage of semiconductor components, though imports of goods and services also dropped, making net trade a slight positive overall for GDP growth.

The data, issued by the Cabinet Office, revised the figure for the second quarter to June to 0.4 per cent growth.

Virus cases surged in Japan over the summer, after a slow start to the country's vaccination campaign, and the government imposed a virus state of emergency that limited restaurant and bar opening hours and alcohol sales. The Olympics went ahead during the period, despite calls for its cancellation, but foreign spectators and almost all domestic fans were barred.

Analysts said that the slow-down was likely shortlived as Japan's vaccination programme has picked up speed, with the government lifting virus restrictions in October.

"For the fourth quarter, if the virus cases are kept low, consumption will probably bounce back strongly," said Takashi Miwa, economist at Nomura Securities. He warned though that 'some companies say the impact on production from the supply issues may continue until December'.

New Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has vowed to shore up economic growth after a series of hits from the virus.

He is expected to announce an economic stimulus package worth hundreds of billions of dollars this week.

AFP



شركة عمان والإمارات للاستثمار والقابضة (ش.م.ع.)
OMAN & EMIRATES INVESTMENT HOLDING CO. SAOG

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E-mail: oeioman@omantel.net.om
Website: www.omanemirates.com

Board of Directors' Report – 30th September 2021

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board, I take this opportunity to present the financial performance of Oman & Emirates Investment Holding Co SAOG for the nine months period ended 30th September 2021.

Financial Results:

The Company (Group & Parent) recorded Net Profits of RO 538,784 and RO 567,123 respectively during January to September 2021, compared to (Group & Parent) incurred Net Losses of RO (1,805,178) and RO (1,623,175) respectively during January to September 2020. The Break-up details are as under:

Particulars	Equity Holding %	Jan– Sep 2021 RO	Jan – Sep 2020 RO
Profit/(Loss) before share of results of Subsidiaries and Associates		(9,905)	(1,164,285)
FINCORP Al Amal Fund	24.33%	250,531	(156,475)
FINCORP SAOG	51.20%	462,969	(185,101)
Oman Hotels and Tourism Co. SAOC	31.72%	(249,509)	(193,363)
Oman Fiber Optic Co. SAOC	20.97%	113,017	66,019
Net Profit/(Loss) – Parent		567,123	(1,623,175)
Oman Food Industries Co. SAOC	80.84%	(23,339)	(182,003)
Net Profit/(Loss) – Group		538,784	(1,805,178)

Stock Market Indices:

During the period January to September 2021, MSM, ADX and DFM increased by 7.75%, 52.59% and 14.19% respectively (January–September 2020: MSM, ADX and DFM declined by (-)11.68%, (-)15.56% and (-)25.30% respectively.

Net Equity, Investments and Borrowing:

The Net Equity of the Group and the Parent Company increased by 2.8% and 2.8% respectively during the year ended September 2021. The Net Equity of the Group reached RO 20,090 Million at 30.9.2021 (30.09.2020: RO 19,392 Million) up from RO 19,551 Million at 31.12.2020. The Net Equity of the Parent reached RO 20,846 Million at 30.9.2021 (30.9.2020: RO 19,991 Million) up from RO 20,279 at 31.12.2020.

The total investment values of the Group and the Parent Company were RO 40,631 Million and RO 38,288 Million respectively as at 30.9.2021 (30.9.2020: Group RO 44,743 Million and Parent Company RO 42,791 Million).

The total borrowing of the Group and the Parent Company have reduced to RO 24,427 Million and RO 20,706 Million respectively as at 30.09.2021 (30.09.2020: Group RO 30,011 Million and Parent Company RO 25,965 Million).

Future Outlook:

Improved vaccination rates with fiscal stimulus may be heralding a return to a gradual recovery and global growth is forecast by the IMF for the year. The spread of the new virus variants constitutes a lingering risk to global equity markets.

Oman's outlook remains vulnerable, despite improving oil prices, due to its poor fiscal position and foreign reserve pressures. Although market yields are improving and regional markets are well positioned under increasing oil prices, the investment environment remains challenging. It continues to affect the stability of financial markets, dampen investor sentiment and will continue to remain subdued with tight liquidity and strained cash flows. The effects will depend on global control of the health crisis, government actions and oil price movements.

Acknowledgement:

I take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Governments of the Sultanate of Oman and United Arab Emirates for their support to our Company. I also thank the stock market authorities, banks, shareholders and employees of the Company for their guidance, cooperation and efforts.

Mohamed Darwish Al Khoori
Chairman

4th November 2021

CONDENSED INTERIM CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

	30 September 2021 Group RO	(Restated) 30 September 2020 Group RO	31 December 2020 Group RO	30 September 2021 Parent RO	(Restated) 30 September 2020 Parent RO	31 December 2020 Parent RO
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	1,007,754	1,191,116	2,452,454	121,940	114,628	104,763
Trade and other receivables	1,297,444	1,562,740	1,250,957	436,687	95,298	143,295
Inventories	367,107	447,046	463,472	-	-	-
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	20,935,548	23,976,858	22,748,973	16,554,682	20,277,290	19,811,465
Investment in associates	17,583,221	18,643,211	18,501,821	15,660,044	16,942,106	17,133,033
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	-	3,960,924	3,718,216	2,120,652
Financial assets at amortised cost	2,112,656	2,123,345	2,120,652	2,112,656	2,123,345	3,497,936
Property, plant and equipment	2,607,966	2,895,942	2,821,981	540,162	640,702	615,985
Investment properties	3,135,900	3,260,100	3,229,050	2,835,900	2,960,100	2,929,050
Right-of-use asset	116,190	26,260	116,190	-	-	-
Deferred tax asset	420,755	337,561	401,105	-	-	-
Total assets	49,584,541	54,464,179	54,506,655	42,222,995	46,601,685	46,356,179
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES						
Equity attributable to the owners of the parent						
Share capital	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500	12,187,500
Legal reserve	4,921,214	4,921,214	4,521,214	4,062,500	4,062,500	4,062,500
Retained earnings	2,980,899	2,283,563	2,442,115	4,596,225	3,741,284	4,029,102
Equity attributable to the owners of the parent	20,089,613	19,392,277	19,550,829	20,846,225	19,991,284	20,279,102
Non controlling interest	3,596,140	3,144,791	3,161,543	-	-	-
Total equity	23,685,753	22,537,068	22,712,372	20,846,225	19,991,284	20,279,102
LIABILITIES						
Bank overdrafts	1,280,624	2,576,916	2,307,610	1,212,281	2,184,682	2,180,858
Trade and other payables	1,332,012	1,889,807	2,424,085	670,729	645,166	626,023
Lease liability	139,392	26,835	139,392	-	-	-
Term loans	5,693,760	8,780,553	8,270,196	5,693,760	8,780,553	8,270,196
Loans from Governments	15,776,692	16,721,575	16,976,692	12,123,692	13,165,250	13,323,692
Deferred Government grant	1,676,308	1,931,425	1,676,308	1,676,308	1,834,750	1,676,308
Total liabilities	25,898,787	31,927,111	31,794,283	21,376,769	26,610,401	26,077,077
Total equity and liabilities	49,584,541	54,464,179	54,506,655	42,222,995	46,601,685	46,356,179
Net assets per share	0.165	0.154	0.160	0.171	0.164	0.166

CONDENSED INTERIM CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE NINE-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

	Jan – Sept 2021 Group RO	(Restated) Jan – Sept 2020 Group RO	Jul – Sept 2021 Group RO	(Restated) Jul – Sept 2020 Group RO	Jan – Sept 2021 Parent RO	(Restated) Jan – Sept 2020 Parent RO	Jul – Sept 2021 Parent RO	(Restated) Jul – Sept 2020 Parent RO
Interest income	-	15,281	-	-	-	15,281	-	-
Rental income	33,860	67,188	14,321	22,689	33,860	67,188	14,321	22,689
Brokerage/commission income	72,001	127,663	17,988	25,014	-	-	-	-
Realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets	390,252	(323,852)	112,432	52,752	335,350	-	60,822	-
Dividends income	819,067	1,285,555	91,024	182,723	718,028	1,133,333	74,136	173,445
Unrealised gain/(loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss – net	520,220	(920,234)	(103,940)	580,273	(77,018)	(1,100,248)	(212,836)	308,770
Gross profit on sale of food products	223,209	68,688	64,960	9,020	-	-	-	-
Share of profit/(loss) from associates & subsidiaries – net	387,290	(473,955)	25,803	379,737	577,026	(458,890)	82,068	438,016
Management fees	99,780	98,590	32,790	4,177	-	-	-	-
Other income	35,801	56,271	16,302	25,374	18,029	32,409	-	-
Total income/(loss)	2,581,480	(18,805)	271,680	1,281,759	1,605,275	(310,927)	18,511	942,921
Expenses								
Staff costs	(618,803)	(716,104)	(172,859)	(211,425)	(271,048)	(325,991)	(77,237)	(103,439)
Administrative expenses	(472,113)	(594,114)	(147,078)	(197,593)	(284,542)	(380,907)	(83,473)	(127,486)
Amortisation of placement charges	(7,995)	(8,025)	(2,694)	(2,894)	(7,995)	(8,025)	(2,694)	(2,694)
Total expenses	(1,098,911)	(1,318,243)	(322,631)	(411,712)	(563,585)	(714,923)	(163,404)	(233,619)
Net operating profit/(loss)	1,482,569	(1,337,048)	(50,951)	870,047	1,041,690	(1,025,850)	(144,893)	709,302
Finance costs	(528,840)	(587,394)	(160,401)	(184,473)	(474,567)	(478,739)	(137,860)	(146,977)
Impairment charge for receivables	-	(118,586)	-	(118,586)	-	-	-	(118,586)
Profit/(loss) for the period before tax	953,729	(2,042,728)	(211,352)	566,988	567,123	(1,623,175)	(282,753)	443,739
Income tax	19,652	37,038	(8,669)	(858)	-	-	-	-
Profit/(loss) for the period after tax	973,381	(2,005,690)	(220,021)	566,130	567,123	(1,623,175)	(282,753)	443,739
Attributable to:								
Owners of the parent company	538,784	(1,805,178)	(305,954)	375,886	567,123	(1,623,175)	(282,753)	443,739
Non-controlling interest	434,597	(200,512)	85,933	190,244	-	-	-	-
	973,381	(2,005,690)	(220,021)	566,130	567,123	(1,623,175)	(282,753)	443,739
Basic earnings per share	0.0044	(0.015)	(0.003)	0.003	0.005	(0.013)	(0.002)	0.004

CONDENSED INTERIM CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE NINE-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

	Jan – Sept 2021 Group RO	(Restated) Jan – Sept 2020 Group RO	Jul – Sept 2021 Group RO	(Restated) Jul – Sept 2020 Group RO	Jan – Sept 2021 Parent RO	(Restated) Jan – Sept 2020 Parent RO	Jul – Sept 2021 Parent RO	(Restated) Jul – Sept 2020 Parent RO
Profit/(loss) for the period after tax	973,381	(2,005,690)	(220,021)	566,130	567,123	(1,623,175)	(282,753)	443,739
Other comprehensive income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the period	973,381	(2,005,690)	(220,021)	566,130	567,123	(1,623,175)	(282,753)	443,739
Total comprehensive income/(loss) attributable to:								
Owners of the Parent Company	538,784	(1,805,178)	(305,954)	375,886	567,123	(1,623,175)	(282,753)	443,739
Non-controlling interest	434,597	(200,512)	85,933	190,244	-	-	-	-
	973,381	(2,005,690)	(220,021)	566,130	567,123	(1,623,175)	(282,753)	443,739

Note: The complete Financial Statements of the Company in Arabic or English will be made available to any shareholder on request.

Khimji's Sparkle celebrates first Omani Tug Masters

As part of its ongoing efforts to lend continuous support to national talent and help them realise their true potential, Khimji's Sparkle Marine Services take pride in announcing their first Omani Tug Masters - Thabit al Alawi and Sameeh al Rasadi.

This is a first of its kind achievement in the industry. Thabit and Sameeh are currently serving on board the tugboats Dorat Al Behar, Ameerat Al Behar, and Zahrat Al Behar at Asyad Drydock in Duqm, a press release said

The tugs stationed at Asyad drydock handle some of the world's largest oil tankers, gas tankers, ore carriers, container ships, aircraft carriers and submarines, amongst other vessels.

The efforts of Khimji's Sparkle are aimed at skilling individuals to work in critical fields that require advanced skills and extensive training in dealing with various types of giant ships, especially under challenging scenarios.

Over the past seven years, both, Sameeh and Thabit, have proven their mettle, dedication



and willingness to operate as tug masters. They have been exposed to extensive on-the-job training at Duqm and have also been a part of the international training conducted at the Ocean's Sparkle Tug Simulator Training Center in India.

In the simulator, the tug masters faced various scenarios that included bad weather, engine failure, heavy waves and wind

conditions.

Such simulations contributed towards enhancing their skills and competencies in handling large vessels and manoeuvring them into the dry dock.

Standing tall in the face of challenges, Sameeh and Thabit also exhibited their commitment, and perseverance during the COVID-19 pandemic when a substantial number of Khimji's

Sparkle staff were unable to commute between regions due to the imposed movement ban. At this critical juncture, the duo rose to the occasion and took on the task of handling the tug operations independently.

This reaffirmed confidence in their on-the-job capabilities.

Commenting on this achievement, Pankaj Khimji, director, Khimji's Sparkle Marine Services,

said, "We believe that the youth are the building blocks for a bright future for Oman. Our objectives resonate with the national priorities and the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040 that aim to create a pool of highly skilled Omani talents.

We are delighted with what Sameeh and Thabit have accomplished and admire their persistence and hard work. Realising this dream would not have been possible without the continuous support of our strategic partners, Asyad Dry Dock and Ocean's Sparkle."

Expressing his delight at this accomplishment, Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi, CEO of Asyad Shipping and Dry Dock, said, "I would like to congratulate both Sameeh and Thabit on earning the title of 'Tug Masters'.

This is a laudable achievement that highlights their capability to take on higher leadership roles. We also commend the efforts exerted by Khimji's Sparkle team in providing the necessary training for them and giving the Omani youth more opportunities to excel in their fields.

Now is the time to shop with Carrefour

Carrefour, owned and operated by Majid Al Futtaim in Oman has announced its shopping extravaganza, Carrefour Friday.

Following its yearly success, Carrefour has extended the duration of this years' campaign from one month to five weeks to cater to everyone, starting from November 1.

Running until December 5, Carrefour Friday customers will have the opportunity to purchase a range of quality items at discounted prices through exceptional promotions.

These include discounts of up to 40 per cent, weekly super sales across different brands such as Tefal, Anker, Power, Masafi, and Comfort, as well as across numerous categories including groceries, electronics, home appliances, and health and beauty products.

Carrefour Friday savings will be available both online and through the MAF Car-

refour App as well as all stores across Oman.

Carrefour is keen on facilitating easy shopping experiences for its customers through exceptional services such as Mobile Scan and Go, Self-Service and Scan & Go at Mall of Oman, Valet Trolley and Carrefour Now, the online shopping service that gives customers access to everyday items, delivered directly to their doors within 60 minutes.

Also, Online shoppers can start benefiting from discounts when they pay with their credit card from Bank Muscat during the second and third week of November.

This campaign underlines Carrefour's commitment to delivering exceptional value through unrivalled deals.

Customers will enjoy guilt free shopping with unbeatable prices and the highest quality for the most sought-after items for the upcoming holiday season.

M&S launches cafe in Oman

Leading British retailer Marks & Spencer, operated by the Al-Futtaim Group, has launched a brand-new store in Mall of Oman accompanied with the first ever M&S Café in Oman, as part of its ongoing strategy to grow its presence in Muscat.

Trading across one floor, the new 26,166sqm store offers customers an inspiring, international shopping experience by showcasing its trusted quality, confident styles for the whole family. Customers can choose from an extensive range of its latest Autumn/Winter collections across womenswear, lingerie, menswear and kids' wear, as well as accessories, footwear and special edit of home and beauty products, a press release said.

For the first time in Oman, customers have access to the best of Marks & Spencer's mouth-watering food featuring its unrivalled Food Hall, with a wide range of its popular innovative and quality food products, as well as an in-store bakery with 50 items to look forward to and an M&S Café which can seat 60 customers.

The store also offers over 200



grocery lines and more than 150 chilled products as well as fresh fruit and vegetables.

Nick Batey, general manager, Marks & Spencer MENA, Al Futtaim Retail, said, "We're delighted to welcome our brand-new store in Mall of Oman this month showcasing our first ever

M&S Food Hall and Café in the country, offering customers a chance to try our popular product selection. With the newly opened M&S in Mall of Oman, we are committed to showcasing our quality, stylish fashions and unrivalled food for a truly inspiring shopping experience."

Occidental Oman sponsors camel racing season in sultanate

Occidental Oman recently announced the signing of a sponsorship agreement with the Oman Camel Racing Federation, continuing its support for the sport of camel racing in the sultanate. Under this sponsorship agreement, Occidental Oman will sponsor four camel races within the 2021-2022 camel racing season.

The sponsorship agreement signing ceremony was held at the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, under the auspices of H E Basil bin Ahmed bin Amer al Rawas, Undersecretary for Sport and Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. Stephen Kelly, president and general manager of Occidental Oman, and Sheikh Said bin Saud al Ghufili, chairman of the Oman Camel Racing Federation, were signatories for their respective organisations.

Occidental Oman will award each of the 20 winners of the four sponsored races with a pickup truck. Four pickup trucks will go to the winners of the first



race, taking place in Adam, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. Four pickup trucks will go to the winners of second race, taking place in Ibri, Al Dhahirah Governorate. Four pickups will go to the winners of the third race, taking place in Haima, Al Wusta Governorate. The remaining eight pickup trucks will go to the winners of the 4th Main Race, taking place in Sohar, Al Batinah North Governorate.

"We are proud to continue

our support of camel racing in the sultanate, and particularly in our concession areas.

This sponsorship reflects the company's long-standing support for camel racing initiatives, as it is a sport and cultural tradition that is well regarded by local communities," said Kelly.

"Occidental Oman is committed to supporting projects which directly impact communities located within our concession areas, and to enhance social de-

velopment through long term projects in the region," he added.

Occidental Oman has supported 26 camel races during the last eight years, as the initiative engages with a sport historically tied to the culture of local communities. In addition, the company has supported the renovation of the Haima Camel Race track, which is considered the main camel race track serving the Wilayats of Al Wusta Governorate.

MG Motor service can be booked by phone

MG Motor vehicles are renowned the world over for their quality and reliability. Getting behind the wheel of one of these exceptional models brings with it a level of peace of mind that you are investing in a vehicle that is durable and sturdy. Hence, it will only be reasonable that your MG car is maintained in its best condition through quality servicing by an official distributor.

Keeping this in mind, MG Motor has taken some new initiatives to cater to their customers and to ensure their utmost comfort and peace of mind. The MG Motor customers can now book their car service simply over a phone call. They can also send their detailed feedbacks and requirements through an email to mg.customer.service@mhd.co.om, a press release said.

The MG customer service team will get back to the cus-



tomers as soon as possible and identify any areas of concern and detail any work that is required in their cars. This way the customer will be able to identify and resolve any issue with much convenience and little fuss.

Apart from this, MG Motor service is known for its value for money. Whether customers

choose to take a service package to ensure that the costs of servicing remains affordable or simply choose to pay on a service-by-service basis, they can be rest assured that value for their money is guaranteed. After all, MG as a brand understands and cares about the needs of the cars owners and nothing is more

important than their satisfaction.

A senior spokesperson of MHD ACERE, the sole distributor of MG Motor in Oman, said, "We are very confident of the quality of MG cars and that's why we recommend servicing your MG vehicle every 10,000km or 6 months, whichever comes sooner.

"We also recommend getting the cars serviced from an authorized service centre as MG Motor has an experienced team of technicians that will carefully analyse and resolve vehicle performance according to a rigorous checklist."

He further said, "While regular servicing is critical to the continued performance and enjoyment of your MG vehicle, there are a number of additional benefits of having your services completed by your local MG distributor. We have a highly skilled team of technicians on hand and the finest facilities available."

Starcare launches Advanced Laser Proctology Institute

Proctology problems affect 50% of the population, both male and female, at some time in their life. And Starcare Laser Proctology Institute brings together all the modern technologies and techniques that are available in this field to benefit the people of Oman.

Laser has dramatically changed the treatment of problems like haemorrhoids, fistula and sinus. Laser treatments are very simple and effective with much less discomfort after treatment than traditional proctologic surgery.

Apart from Laser, Starcare institute in Barka is also gearing up to provide several other modern video-assisted technologies like VAAFT, LIFT, LAFT, EPSiT, Stapler and Botox.

The lively launch function conducted at Starcare Hospital Barka was inaugurated by Dr

Nasser al Shekaili, director of Ministry of Health Rustaq Hospital. "I am happy that Starcare has chosen South Batinah to launch such a unique service which is needed all over the country. Lot of people, both men and women suffer these types of problems in silence and now we have hope to get treatments in a very simple way. I am happy to meet the expert panel of surgeons who lead this service," he said. The function was attended by several community members apart from Directors and staff from across Starcare group.

"Starcare in India is very popular for Laser treatment or Varicose veins and Proctology conditions. This motivated us to open such a centre in Oman. The beauty of Laser treatments for Proctology problems is that the procedure avoids cutting skin and is almost a bloodless proce-

dures. Patients can go home on the same day after few hours of rest. Unlike old type of surgeries, prolonged bed rest is not needed after Laser treatments for conditions like haemorrhoids, fissure and fistula.

We are a team of two Laser surgeons and two more surgeons are joining very soon," said Dr Sukumaran Vengail, medical director and consultant surgeon at Starcare Barka who leads the Institute.

"Treatment for many proctology issues can be as simple as the right diet and lifestyle changes or medicines to control bowel movements. Surgery or Laser are only needed when such measures alone are not adequate," said Dr Alfred Augustine, director of surgical services at Starcare Hospital, Muscat and consultant surgeon at both, Starcare Muscat and Barka.

NBO app helps digital business

In line with Oman’s 2040 Vision to promote nationwide digitalisation and the latest government requirement for commercial outlets to switch to electronic channels as part of its cashless payment scheme, National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) Merchant App enables quick and seamless payments on a single trusted platform.

As the first such service in the Sultanate of Oman, and part of the bank’s forward-thinking digitalisation strategy, the mobile-based solution is especially designed to suit SMEs and home businesses, making payments easier for both customer and merchant, a press release said.

Transforming the buying and selling experience, the app is a simple, convenient and reliable alternative to cash and POS machines.

The merchant app is available for any small or home business with a business or personal bank account and has no set-up fee. Moreover, it does not require registration through the ministry, companies can simply visit any Sanad office for their business license and then proceed to the closest NBO branch to activate the app.

“The last year has changed the way our customers interact



with banking and we have seen an exponential growth of online services and e-commerce platforms. NBO has been at the top of this growth as an important part of our journey towards becoming a fully digitally-enabled bank,” said Tariq Atiq, chief retail and digital banking officer at NBO. “Our Merchant App is not just about making transactions easier - we are trying to empower businesses, helping them become more digitally-enabled, improve their customer journey, while freeing up time for them to focus on their growth.”



Zain Property Development, SPAR sign pact

Zain Property Development has announced the signing of a partnership agreement with SPAR Company to open a new branch. Zain Property Development, the leading Property Development company, announced the signing of an agreement with SPAR Company in the heart of Al Muna Gardens complex project located in the Wilayat of Bawshar, in Al Muna area, a press release said.

The opening of the SPAR supermarket represents a new step added to a series of recent achievements witnessed by the Al Muna Gardens project, which is keen to provide an environment of luxury and luxury worthy of the residents of the distinguished real estate project. Commenting on the agree-

ment, Moosa Mohamed al Raisi, executive director, said, “In high-end places, residents are distinguished by their own tastes and also expect to find an environment that meets their needs. Therefore, we are very pleased to welcome the opening of the SPAR supermarket in Al Muna Gardens and we are confident that our luxurious and growing project will contribute to the popularity of the SPAR store, in which we trust the quality of their services.

Chirayu Khimji, director of SPAR Oman, said, “SPAR stores have witnessed a wide spread and today we announce the opening of our 25th branch in Oman in one of the distinguished projects of Zain Property Development Company.”

Ooredoo offers revamped add-ons

Ooredoo’s revamped Internet add-ons for Hala customers is perfect for staying connected for less. By simply logging into the award-winning Ooredoo App, users are spoilt with choice and can select their preferred package with a touch of a button. What a better way to enjoy, surf and chat on the internet without the fear of running out of data, a



press release said. Making it even more exciting, new and existing customers can choose from daily data plans starting at a fantastic price of 0.500 Bz, or those looking for a longer commitment, can get 12-week plane for RO20 and receive 25GB of data. Users are now spoilt for choice when it comes to selecting a suitable plan.

Oman Re facilitates workshop to cover Natural calamities



Under the guidance of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), Oman Re organised a workshop for senior leaders within the insurance community in Oman, part of the Oman Insurance Association, on November 10, to progress on the journey towards building a NAT CAT Insurance programme for Oman.

The workshop discussed local, regional and international insights with discussions and interactive sessions, and was conducted by Oman Re in collaboration with Willis Re, which is a leading global consultancy firm with in-depth technical expertise and possessing comprehensive experience within NAT CAT Insurance programmes, a press release said. Speaking at the event, Ahmed

Bin Ali al Mamari – vice president, Insurance Sector, CMA, said, “This is a positive step in the right direction towards building a NAT CAT program for Oman as directed by the royal decree issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

The strong response to the workshop in ‘Building Resilience’ underlines the urgency towards the industry’s collaborative efforts to arrive at solutions that protect the insurer and the insurance companies. “We believe this programme would help narrow the gap between insured and economic losses and contribute to the stable growth of Oman towards Oman Vision 2040. On behalf of CMA, I would like to thank all participants from the insurance com-

munity and Oman Re for taking the initiative to help build a secure future.”

Romel Tabaja – CEO, Oman Re, said, “We thank the CMA for their guidance, and all the members of Oman Insurance Association and other participants for their time and efforts to participate in this workshop.

We are grateful to see the strong response to the proposed plans for developing the NAT CAT programme and we are excited to collaborate with the industry to make it a success.

The recent cyclonic storm that impacted the country severely is a reminder of the immediacy for such a framework, and we are confident that together, we will build a resilient future for Oman.”

NATIONAL MINERAL WATER COMPANY (SAOG)				
Post Box No. 2740, Ruwi, Postal Code: 112, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: +968 24628900, Fax: +968 24628990 Email: contact@tanufwater.com, Web: www.nmwc.om				
DIRECTOR'S REPORT 11 NOVEMBER 2021				
Dear Shareholders,				
On behalf of the Board of Directors, the Company hereby reports the unaudited financial results for the nine-month period ended 30th September 2021.				
Review of Operations:				
The consolidated financial statements include the results and the financial position of the parent company, National Mineral Water Company SAOG ("Company" or "Parent Company") and its subsidiary Valuedeel Trading LLC (which trades in manufactured bottle preforms), for the nine months ended 30th September 2021 (together referred to as the "Group").				
Sales and profits:				
The Parent Company's sales revenue for the nine months ended 30th September 2021 is RO 5,134,262 compared to RO 5,573,610 in the previous year during the same period. The Parent Company's net loss for the nine months ended 30th September 2021 is RO 330,021 which includes, as a precautionary measure, provisions for a substantial amount of expected credit losses that current and near future economic conditions may impact on reported performance in alignment with IFRS 9. The Parent Company had made a profit of RO 38,894 for the nine months ended 30th September 2020.				
The net sales of the Group for the nine month period ended on 30th September 2021 is RO 5,412,174 compared to RO 5,580,612 for the same duration in the previous year. The Group's net loss for the nine month period ended on 30th September 2021 is RO 326,498 and this was a profit of RO 45,471 for the same period in 2020.				
Future Outlook				
Increase in PET Resin prices and intense competition has affected the Company's financial performance. However, the Company is considering a number of initiatives to improve its profitability. The Company's management has identified that the main drivers for change are "increased output" and "greater efficiency" and with this in mind, the Company is confident that this is likely to have a positive impact on its overall profitability. Management has formulated a recovery plan intended to reverse the impact of the current business environment.				
Human Resources				
The Company is currently employing 46% Omani Staff and will continue to support this initiative of employing more Omanis. The Company recognizes the importance of human assets to achieve its objectives.				
Internal Control System				
The Board continues to review the effectiveness of its existing internal control systems and considers the current system to be adequate for the size and nature of the business operations.				
Corporate Governance Code				
The company is compliant with the CMA's directives on corporate governance.				
Acknowledgement				
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to thank our patrons, customers, bankers and shareholders for all the support they have extended to us during this year. I also take the opportunity to thank the management for their continued efforts in growing the Company.				
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimour AL Said and his Government for the support extended to the private sector. We pray the Almighty Allah to bestow His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimour AL Said with the best of health and bless him with long life to lead the Sultanate of Oman on the path of prosperity.				
Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad bin Hamoud Al Busaidi Chairman				
1) The complete accounts, in either Arabic or English as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholder within 7 days of written request at the above address.				
2) The complete accounts have been uploaded on Website of MSM.				
3) Any shareholder who is having incorrect address or not having any address in the company's register or Co. (MDSRC) may approach the registered office to register their correct address. Register maintained by Maintained by Muscat Depository Securities Registration.				
CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021				
	Parent Company	Group		
	30.09.2021	30.09.2020	30.09.2021	30.09.2020
	RO	RO	RO	RO
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	2,730,424	2,592,794	2,730,985	2,593,634
Investment in subsidiary	95,000	95,000	-	-
Right of use assets	83,016	-	83,016	-
Intangible Assets	20,049	-	20,049	-
Total non-current assets	2,928,489	2,687,794	2,834,050	2,593,634
Current assets				
Inventories	814,719	1,028,579	814,719	1,034,271
Trade and other receivables	2,689,445	3,050,011	2,764,844	3,084,952
Due from related parties	66,711	60,140	16,021	14,616
Cash and bank balances	82,393	110,539	86,166	145,326
Total current assets	3,653,268	4,249,269	3,681,750	4,279,165
Total assets	6,581,757	6,937,063	6,515,800	6,872,799
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Capital and reserves				
Share capital	2,700,304	2,700,304	2,700,304	2,700,304
Share premium	135,169	135,169	135,169	135,169
Legal reserve	478,388	475,680	478,534	475,680
General reserve	-	-	-	-
Accumulated losses	(953,685)	(609,144)	(1,021,231)	(674,945)
Equity attributable to Shareholders of parent company	2,360,176	2,702,009	2,292,776	2,636,208
Non-controlling Interest	-	-	1,443	1,519
Total capital and reserves	2,360,176	2,702,009	2,294,219	2,637,727
Non-current liabilities				
Bank borrowings - Non-current	1,040,538	923,124	1,040,538	923,124
Employees' benefit liabilities	245,333	354,495	245,333	354,495
Capital expenditure payable	126,926	294,360	126,926	294,360
Lease Liabilities - Non current	72,527	-	72,527	-
Total non-current liabilities	1,485,324	1,571,979	1,485,324	1,571,979
Current liabilities				
Bank borrowings	1,459,868	1,483,398	1,459,868	1,483,398
Trade and other payables	1,222,284	1,179,677	1,222,284	1,179,691
Lease Liabilities - Current	14,400	-	14,400	-
Due to related parties	-	-	-	-
Income tax payable	39,705	-	39,705	-
Total current liabilities	2,736,257	2,663,075	2,736,257	2,663,089
Total liabilities	4,221,581	4,235,054	4,221,581	4,235,068
Total equity and liabilities	6,581,757	6,937,063	6,515,800	6,872,799
Net assets per share	0.087	0.100	0.085	0.098
CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE QUARTER ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021				
	Parent Company	Group		
	30.09.2021	30.09.2020	30.09.2021	30.09.2020
	RO	RO	RO	RO
Revenue	5,134,262	5,573,610	5,412,174	5,580,612
Cost of Sales	(3,289,318)	(3,517,310)	(3,481,843)	(3,517,310)
Gross profit	1,844,944	2,056,300	1,930,331	2,063,302
Other income	20,810	150	20,810	150
	1,865,754	2,056,450	1,951,141	2,063,452
Expenses				
Selling and distribution expenses	(1,492,590)	(1,561,264)	(1,533,628)	(1,561,264)
General and administrative expenses	(428,945)	(392,993)	(469,771)	(393,419)
	(1,921,535)	(1,954,257)	(2,003,399)	(1,954,683)
Operating profit (Loss)	(55,781)	102,193	(52,258)	108,770
Finance costs	(124,132)	(63,299)	(124,132)	(63,299)
Provision for expected credit losses on trade receivables	(102,462)	-	(102,462)	-
Net profit (Loss) before tax	(282,375)	38,894	(278,852)	45,471
Income tax expenses	(47,646)	-	(47,646)	-
Net profit (Loss) after tax	(330,021)	38,894	(326,498)	45,471
Net profit (Loss) attributable to :				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	-	-	(326,674)	45,142
Non-controlling interest	-	-	176	329
Basic profit per share attributable to equity holders of the Parent Company	(0.012)	0.001	(0.012)	0.002

Women to sue Qatar over invasive airport searches

Sydney, Australia - A group of women subjected to invasive gynaecological searches at Doha airport will sue Qatari authorities, seeking redressal for an ordeal that sparked global condemnation, their lawyer told AFP on Monday.

Women on ten Qatar Airways flights from Doha, including 13 Australians, were subjected to the examinations late last year as authorities searched for the mother of a newborn found abandoned in an airport bathroom.

The incident caused outrage, and fuelled concerns about Qatar's treatment of women as the Gulf state prepares to receive thousands of foreign visitors for the 2022 football World Cup.

Damian Sturzaker, from Sydney-based firm Marque Lawyers, said seven affected passengers now plan legal action to 'send a message to Qatari authorities that you can't treat women... in this manner'.

"The group of women have suffered enormous distress on the evening concerned, now just over a year ago, and they continue to suffer distress and ill effects and trauma as a result of what occurred," he told AFP.

Sturzaker said the women were seeking a formal apology, compensation, and protection for future passengers transiting through the airport.

Qatar is an ultra-conservative Muslim monarchy, where sex and childbirth outside of marriage are punishable by jail.

Ahead of the World Cup, the



Several women on ten Qatar Airways flights from Doha, were subjected to outrageous examinations late last year as authorities searched for the mother of a newborn found abandoned in an airport bathroom

country has struggled to reassure critics that its promises on women's rights, labour relations and democracy are credible.

Facing potentially devastating commercial and reputational damage after the incident, Qatar vowed to guarantee the future 'safety and security' of passengers.

The country's Prime Minister also issued an apology, while an airport police officer who oversaw the searches was reportedly convicted.

But Sturzaker said the women had not been made aware of any improvements to airport procedures and their attempts to seek mediation had been unsuccessful.

They now wanted to highlight their case ahead of the FIFA tournament, to ensure other travellers were well-informed before visiting Qatar, he added.

"They should be aware that - whilst there is a guise of a highly developed, highly modernised airport and national carrier - these events have happened and there's nothing preventing them from happening again," he said.

Qatar's Embassy in Canberra and Qatar Airways did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Sturzaker said the lawsuit would be filed in Australia against the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority, Hamad International Airport, Qatar Airways and the country's government within weeks.

AFP

Iran invites UN nuclear chief Grossi to Tehran for talks

Tehran, Iran - Iran has invited the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for talks after the UN official expressed concern over a lack of contact with Iranian authorities, Tehran said on Monday.

UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi 'has been invited' to Tehran and a visit date has been put forward, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said, without providing specifics on the possible timing of the trip.

Grossi is expected to meet with Iran's Foreign Minister and the country's atomic energy chief, Khatibzadeh told journalists, adding, 'we await his response'.

Grossi had been hoping to visit Iran before the next meeting of the IAEA's board of governors starts on November 22, but on Friday described a lack of contact with the Iranian government as 'astounding'.

"I have not had any contact with this government... that has been there for more than five



Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (AFP)

months," Grossi told reporters, adding that the only exceptions had been 'technical conversations' with Iran's new atomic energy chief Mohamed Eslami.

"There's a long list of things we need to discuss," he said.

Grossi last visited Tehran in September, where he clinched a

deal over access to surveillance equipment at Iran's nuclear facilities.

Days after that visit, the IAEA complained that it had been denied 'indispensable' access to a centrifuge component manufacturing workshop where it needed to service equipment.

The invitation comes as talks are expected to resume on November 29 in Vienna aiming to revive a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

The deal, which offered Tehran relief from sanctions in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program, was torpedoed when the US unilaterally pulled out in 2018.

Talks have been on hold since June following the election of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

On Monday, Khatibzadeh reiterated Iran's demands for guarantees that the US would not pull out of the deal again, adding that progress in negotiations was contingent on the lifting of sanctions.

AFP



This file photo shows heavy bombardment in Baghuz on March 18, 2019

2019 Syria airstrike was 'legitimate self-defence': US

Washington, US - The US Central Command said on Sunday that a 2019 airstrike that killed civilians in Syria was 'legitimate', after a *New York Times* investigation said the military had concealed the death of dozens of non-combatants.

The newspaper published the results of its investigation on Saturday saying a US special task force operating in Syria - sometimes leaving its military partners in the dark to preserve secrecy - dropped three bombs on a cluster of civilians near the Islamic State (IS) bastion of Baghouz, killing 70 people, mainly women and children. The report says a US legal officer 'flagged the strike as a possible war crime' but that 'at nearly every step, the military made moves that concealed the catastrophic strike'.

Drawing from confidential documents, interviews with personnel directly involved and officials with top security clearance, *The New York Times* found that the strike 'was one of the largest civilian casualty incidents of the war against the Islamic State', albeit never publicly acknowledged by the US military.

'The death toll was downplayed. Reports were delayed, sanitised and classified. US-led coalition forces bulldozed the blast site. And top leaders were

not notified,' the report said, adding the Pentagon's independent inspector general's probe findings were 'stalled and stripped of any mention of the strike'.

In a detailed response, Central Command (CENTCOM) said an investigation found the strike was 'legitimate self-defence', 'proportional' and that 'appropriate steps were taken to rule out the presence of civilians'.

It added an investigation was launched after a military report found there had likely been civilian casualties.

Along with 16 IS militants determined to have died in the bombing, the investigation concluded at least four civilians were killed and eight wounded.

"We self-reported and investigated the strike according to our own evidence and take full responsibility for the unintended loss of life," said CENTCOM spokesperson Captain Bill Urban.

He said the investigation could not 'conclusively characterise the status of more than 60 other casualties', adding that some women and children, 'whether through indoctrination or choice, decided to take up arms in this battle and as such could not strictly be classified as civilians'.

AFP

Fighting near key Yemen port displaces over 6,000

Dubai, UAE - A recent Houthi rebel advance near Yemen's life-line port of Hodeida has displaced more than 6,000 people, the United Nations has said.

The insurgents on Friday took control of a large area south of Hodeida, a key port where the warring sides agreed a ceasefire in 2018, after loyalist forces withdrew.

'Some 700 families (approximately 4,900 people) were displaced' to Khokha, over 100km



Children play in front of an Unesco-listed building in the old city of the Yemeni capital Sanaa on Sunday (AFP)

south of Hodeida, 'while 184 other families (about 1,300 people) were displaced further south' to the Red Sea coastal town of Mokha, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said, citing Yemeni government sources.

'No displacement has been reported within the areas that came under control of the de facto authorities,' it said in a statement on Sunday, referring to the Houthis. Citing aid part-

ners on the ground, it said a 300-tent site for displaced people had been set up in the Khokha district, while the authorities were reportedly looking for another site to cope with the influx.

But the UN also said the Houthi advance could result in 'improved movement for civilians' between the provinces of Hodeida and Sanaa, and along roads connecting Hodeida city with other districts.

AFP

UN frees \$40mn funds for Ethiopia aid

Geneva, Switzerland - The United Nations (UN) said on Monday it had released emergency funds to help provide life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection to civilians caught up in Ethiopia's spiralling conflict.

UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said he had released a total of US\$40mn aimed at scaling up emergency operations in the Tigray region and the rest of Ethiopia's conflict-hit north, and as an early response to drought in the south of the country.

"Millions of people in northern Ethiopia are living on a knife-edge as the humanitarian crisis is growing deeper and wider," said Griffiths, who just returned from a visit to Ethiopia.

"Across the country, needs are rising."

A year of fighting in Ethiopia between Tigrayan rebels and government forces has left hundreds of thousands in famine-like conditions.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray last November to topple the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a move he said came in response to rebel attacks on army camps.

Though the 2019 Nobel Peace laureate vowed a swift victory, by late June the TPLF had retaken most of Tigray before expanding into the Amhara and Afar regions.

The TPLF, which has not ruled

out a possible march on the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, is demanding an end to what the UN describes as a de facto humanitarian blockade on Tigray, with no aid permitted to enter the region in the past month.

Griffiths said US\$25mn of the fresh cash injection was coming from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, while another US\$15mn was coming from the country-based Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund.

In Tigray, Amhara and Afar, the money will support aid agencies providing protection and other life-saving assistance to those affected by the conflict, the statement said.

'Women, boys and girls con-

tinue to bear the brunt of the conflict, yet their protection needs remain underfunded,' it said.

In the drought-hit southern Somali and Oromia regions meanwhile, the additional cash will help relief agencies to provide drinking water, including to prevent waterborne diseases like cholera, and to support preserving livestock.

Despite the new injection of funds, the UN said humanitarian operations throughout Ethiopia were still facing a US\$1.3bn funding gap this year, including US\$350mn still needed to respond to the crisis in Tigray alone.

AFP



Ethiopian refugees who fled the Tigray conflict rests in the shadow of a warehouse erected by the World Food Programme at Village Eight transit centre near the Ethiopian border in Gedaref, Sudan (AFP)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Britain to expand booster shots to adults aged 40-49

London, UK - Britain's booster programme for COVID-19 vaccinations is to be expanded to younger people after scientists gave the green light on Monday.

The UK government's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) said all healthy adults aged 40-49 should be offered a booster, six months after their second dose.

Previously, the booster programme was limited to those aged 50 and over, and the clinically vulnerable. Some 12.6mn Britons have received a third jab.

The JCVI also said that 16 and 17 year olds should now be offered a second dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech jab.

That age group had previously been offered only one dose in Britain, pending more data on the jab's safety in under-18s.

The expanded age groups covered by the new advice will 'help extend our protection into 2022', professor Wei Shen Lim of the JCVI said in a statement.

The UK launched the West-



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (left) stands next to a man receiving a COVID-19 booster vaccine during a visit to the Woodgrange GP Surgery vaccination centre in East London on Monday (AFP)

ern world's first mass vaccination campaign against COVID-19 in December 2020, about a year after the disease emerged in China.

But Britain's government has

been repeatedly criticised for its response to the pandemic more generally.

So far, nearly 143,000 people have died in Britain within 28 days of a positive test for

COVID-19, the second-worst toll in Europe behind Russia.

But senior Conservative politician Oliver Dowden said the public could be confident of a more normal Christmas

It is in our hands. If you get the booster when the call comes, that is the biggest wall of defence that we have against COVID-19

OLIVER DOWDEN

than last year, when the inoculation drive was still in an early stage.

"There are no plans to stop Christmas happening. The huge difference this time is the vaccine," the co-chairman of Britain's ruling party told Sky News earlier Monday.

"It is in our hands. If you get the booster when the call comes, that is the biggest wall of defence that we have against COVID-19."

AFP



Tourists take a selfie at the Taj Mahal in Agra on September 21, 2020 (AFP)

India opens to foreign tourists after 20 months

New Delhi, India - India on Monday opened to foreign tourists from countries with reciprocal agreements after a 20-month ban because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tour operators said, however, that demand was extremely sluggish due to high ticket prices and remaining restrictions on travellers from Britain, China and elsewhere.

The country famous for the Taj Mahal, desert palaces and tiger reserves barred all foreign tourists in March 2020 as the pandemic intensified.

But after a devastating spike in COVID-19 cases earlier this year, the number of known infections has fallen sharply and the government, under pressure from an industry that is an important pillar of the economy, last month announced a loosening.

Tourist visas were issued for fully vaccinated foreigners from countries with reciprocal arrangements arriving on charter flights from October 15.

This was widened to include other flights on Monday.

Visitors from the approved

countries can acquire a tourist visa online and need only monitor their health for 14 days after arrival.

But those from Britain, the European Union, China, Brazil, South Africa and elsewhere are subject to additional measures including COVID tests on arrival.

The first half a million visas were also free.

Rajeev Mehra, president of the Indian Association of Tour Operators, said that arrivals were expected to reach only around 5 per cent of pre-pandemic levels in the coming months.

"We are getting inquiries and we are giving them quotations but when they see expensive airfares, they tell us will try and come later," Mehra said.

"If things remain stable globally, we expect a full house during October 2022 season."

Goa, a popular tourist destination in southern India, will see its first charter flight from Britain land on December 13, the *Times of India* reported in late October.

AFP

Italy police target radical anti-vaccine activists

Rome, Italy - Italian police on Monday raided anti-vaccine activists alleged to have used an online chat to call for violence, including 'hangings' and 'shootings', against people supporting COVID-19 restrictions.

The 'Basta Dittatura' (Enough of the Dictatorship) chat on the Telegram app had tens of thousands of members and was used to organise demonstrations against Italy's so-called 'Green Pass', police in the northern city of Turin said.

The pass is proof the bearer has been vaccinated, has undergone a recent negative test or has had COVID-19, and is oblig-



A member of 'NoVax' takes part in a demonstration against the introduction of a mandatory 'Green Pass' in Rome on Saturday (AFP)

atory to access all workplaces, as well as social venues such as cinemas.

The searches, across 16 cities, targeted 17 of the most radical activists on the chat, which was

'characterised by a persistent incitement to hatred and to the commission of serious crimes', police said.

The suspects had threatened Prime Minister Mario Draghi 'as well as the police, doctors, scientists, journalists and other public figures accused of enslavement and collaboration with the dictatorship,' they said.

There were explicit references to 'hangings', 'shootings', 'kneecappings', as well as direct allusions to 'new marches on Rome' and terrorism.

The march on Rome was the insurrection in 1922 by which

dictator Benito Mussolini came to power, and marked the beginning of fascist rule in Italy.

Opponents of the Green Pass have denounced it as an attack on individual liberty, especially since October 15, when the government made it a requirement for access to the workplace.

However, the government insists it will help prevent further tough coronavirus restrictions in Italy, the first country in Europe to feel the full force of the pandemic in early 2019.

To date, more than 132,000 people have died of the virus in Italy.

AFP

US journalist 'pardoned' before being deported from Myanmar

Yangon, Myanmar - US journalist Danny Fenster was 'pardoned' before being deported from Myanmar where he had been sentenced to 11 years in jail and was to face further terror and sedition charges, the junta said on Monday.

Fenster was pardoned before his release on 'humanitarian grounds' following negotiations with former US top diplomat Bill Richardson and two Japanese envoys, the junta's information team said in a statement.

Photos released by the information team showed Fenster, flanked by two Myanmar military officials, signing a document in capital Naypyidaw, where he later boarded a flight to leave the country.

The United States welcomed his release, saying he had been 'wrongfully detained'.

"We are glad that Danny will soon be reunited with his family as we continue to call for the release of others who remain unjustly imprisoned in Burma," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, using Myanmar's former name.

Fenster, who spent 176 days in detention, was sentenced to 11 years in prison last week for encouraging dissent against the military, unlawful association and breaching immigration laws.

The 37 year old was due to go on trial Tuesday on charges of terrorism and sedition, which



Danny Fenster (left) poses with former US diplomat Bill Richardson next to an airplane at Naypyidaw International Airport on Monday (AFP)

could have seen him jailed for life.

Fenster, who had been working for local outlet *Frontier Myanmar* for around a year, was arrested in May as he tried to leave the country to see his family.

Andrew Nachemson, Fenster's friend and colleague at *Frontier Myanmar*, said his release was 'wonderful news'.

"But of course he never should have spent six months in jail... and all the local journalists who remain imprisoned should also be released immediately."

'Warm, friendly'

Nachemson, who left Myanmar in April due to fears of his own safety, told AFP that Fenster 'was always one of the most positive people in the room'.

"He doesn't need to be the centre of attention... he doesn't need a ton of credit," he said.

Fenster was happy working behind the scenes as *Frontier's* managing editor, he said, shaping and finessing the copy of local journalists that had earned the outlet a respected reputation.

"Everyone that's worked with him has only the best things to say about him... he was really just a warm, friendly, great presence to have around in the office," he said.

"He cared a lot about truth and combating authoritarianism."

While still in detention, Fenster's contact with the outside world was limited to visits with his partner and telephone calls with his family.

AFP

Invisible killer: Air pollution still causes 300,000 deaths every year in Europe

Copenhagen, Denmark - Premature deaths caused by fine particle air pollution have fallen 10 per cent annually across Europe, but the invisible killer still accounts for 307,000 premature deaths a year, the European Environment Agency (EEA) said on Monday.

If the latest air quality guidelines from the World Health Organisation were followed by EU members, the latest number of fatalities recorded in 2019 could be cut in half, according to an EEA report.

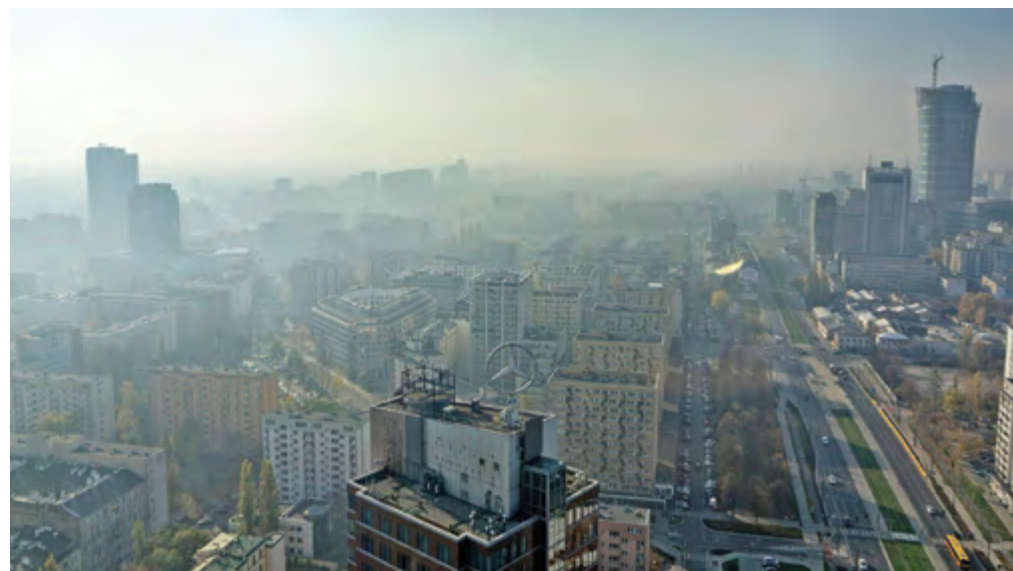
Deaths linked to fine particulate matter - with a diameter below 2.5 micrometres or PM2.5 - were estimated at 346,000 for 2018.

The clear reduction in deaths for the following year were put down partly to favourable weather but above all to a progressive improvement in air quality across the continent, the European Union's air pollution data centre said.

In the early 1990s, fine particles, which penetrate deeply into the lungs, led to nearly a million premature deaths in the 27 EU member nations, according to the report.

That figure had been more than halved to 450,000 by 2005.

In 2019, fine particulate matter caused 53,800 premature deaths in Germany, 49,900 in Italy, 29,800 in France and 23,300 in Spain.



In 2019, Poland saw 39,300 deaths, the highest figure per head of population

Poland saw 39,300 deaths, the highest figure per head of population.

The EEA also registers premature deaths linked to two other leading pollutants, but says it does not count them in its overall toll to avoid doubling up.

Deaths caused by nitrogen dioxide - mainly from car, trucks and thermal power stations - fell by a quarter to 40,000 between 2018 and 2019.

Fatalities linked to ground-level ozone in 2019 also dropped 13 per cent to 16,800 dead.

Air pollution remains the biggest environmental threat to human health in Europe, the agency said.

Heart disease and strokes cause most premature deaths

blamed on air pollution, followed by lung ailments including cancer. In children, atmospheric pollution can harm lung development, cause respiratory infections and aggravate asthma.

7mn global death toll

Even if the situation is improving, the EEA warned in September that most EU countries were still above the recommended pollution limits, be they European guidelines or more ambitious WHO targets.

According to the UN health body, air pollution causes 7mn premature deaths annually across the globe - on the same levels as smoking and poor diet. In September, the alarming statistics led the WHO to tighten its

recommended limits on major air pollutants for the first time since 2005.

"Investing in cleaner heating, mobility, agriculture and industry improves health, productivity and quality of life for all Europeans, and particularly the most vulnerable," said EEA director Hans Bruyninck.

The EU wants to slash premature deaths due to fine air pollution by at least 55 per cent in 2030 compared to 2005.

If air pollution continues to fall at the current rate, the agency estimates the target will be reached by 2032.

However an ageing and increasingly urbanised population could make that more difficult.

AFP

Taliban launch operation against Islamic State

Four IS militants and two civilians were killed in the operation against IS-K in southern Afghanistan

Kandahar, Afghanistan - The Taliban said on Monday at least four Islamic State (IS) operatives and two civilians were killed in a crackdown on the group's hide-outs in southern Afghanistan after a recent increase in bloody attacks.

The operation against Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) - the local chapter of the militant group - started around midnight in at least four districts of Kandahar province and continued through Monday morning, Taliban provincial police chief Abdul Ghafar Mohammadi told AFP.

"So far, four Daesh (IS) militants have been killed and ten arrested... one of them blew himself up inside a house," he said.

A Taliban official later



A Taliban fighter stands guard in front of the rubble of a suspected Islamic State hideout following an overnight operation against Islamic State-Khorasan, in Kandahar on Monday (AFP)

tweeted that three IS operatives were killed and two civilians 'martyred' in the operation.

There was no explanation for the disparity.

Local media quoted a Taliban official as saying there had also been a blast in a western suburb of Kabul on Monday morning with no casualties.

In the three months since the Taliban came to power, IS-K has been active in Jalalabad, Kunduz, Kandahar and Kabul.

Last month the group claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack on a Shiite mosque in Kandahar that killed at least 60 people and injured scores more.

That attack came a week after another deadly mosque blast claimed by IS-K in northern Kunduz province killed over 60

people.

The group on Sunday claimed responsibility for a bomb that destroyed a minibus in Kabul at the weekend killing a well-known local journalist and up to two others.

The attack happened on Saturday in Kabul's Dasht-e-Barchi suburb, an area dominated by members of the mostly Shiite Hazara community, which for years has been the target of violence by IS.

Islamic State-Khorasan claimed the attack in a statement on its Telegram channels.

Hamid Seighani, a well-known Afghan journalist who worked for the Ariana News television network, died in the blast.

IS-K boasted it had killed and injured '20 Shiite apostates' including a journalist, saying it had placed bombs on buses.

Since the Taliban returned to power on August 15, dozens of bombs have been set off in eastern Nangarhar province - a hotbed of IS activity - but Kabul has largely escaped such violence.

Earlier this month Islamic State-Khorasan militants raided the city's National Military Hospital, killing at least 19 people and injuring more than 50 others.

The group has also claimed several attacks in the city of Jalalabad, the capital of eastern Nangarhar province and a hotbed of IS-K activity.

AFP

US, France discuss Russian military activity in Ukraine



Antony Blinken

Washington, US - Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian about 'concerning' Russian military activity taking place 'in and near Ukraine', a US official said late Sunday.

The two top diplomats addressed 'reports of concerning Russian military activity in and near Ukraine and their continued ironclad commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity', State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

Blinken and Le Drian spoke on Saturday, and also discussed 'joint efforts to address Iran's nuclear programme', Price said.

Western allies have voiced mounting alarm over recent Russian troop movements near the country's border with Ukraine.

The Ukrainian army has been locked in a simmering conflict with Kremlin-backed separatists in the Donetsk and Lugansk re-



Jean-Yves Le Drian

gions that erupted after Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula in 2014.

Kiev said two Ukrainian soldiers were killed on Friday by an explosive device in the country's separatist east, while recent social media videos show Russia moving troops, tanks and missiles towards the Ukrainian border.

After an uptick in violence at the beginning of the year, Russia amassed around 100,000 troops on Ukraine's borders in the spring, raising fears of a major escalation in the conflict.

Russia later announced a pull-back but both Ukraine and its ally the United States said at the time that the withdrawal was limited.

The conflict has claimed more than 13,000 lives.

Ukraine and its Western allies accuse Russia of sending troops and arms across the border. Moscow has denied those claims.

AFP

UK raises terror threat level after taxi blast

Liverpool, UK - Britain raised its terrorism threat level on Monday after a deadly explosion outside a hospital in Liverpool in an attack involving a homemade bomb that was reportedly foiled by a quick-thinking taxi driver.

Interior Minister Priti Patel said intelligence officials had increased the threat from 'substantial' to 'severe' - the second-highest level meaning an attack is highly likely.

Patel said the decision was made because Sunday's blast, which destroyed a taxi and killed a passenger outside the Liverpool Women's Hospital, was the second incident in a month.

Last month, veteran British MP David Amess was stabbed to death as he met constituents in southeast England, in an attack that prosecutors said had a 'terrorist connection'.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the Liverpool attack was a 'stark reminder of the need for us all to remain utterly vigilant'.

"But what yesterday showed us all is that the British people will never be cowed by terrorism. We will never give in to those who seek to divide us with senseless acts," he added.

Russ Jackson, in charge of counter-terrorism policing in northwest England, said the motive for the Liverpool attack was unclear.

But he told reporters that the improvised explosive device, which ignited in the cab, turning it into a fireball, was 'built by the passenger' who died. Jackson added that it was being treated



Police officers stand guard in a cordoned-off area outside the Women's Hospital following a car blast, in Liverpool on Monday (AFP)

as a 'terrorist incident'.

The explosion came just minutes before a Remembrance Sunday service at nearby Liverpool Cathedral, prompting speculation the event was the intended target.

"We cannot at this time draw any connection with this but it is a line of inquiry, which we are pursuing," said Jackson.

Three men aged 21, 26 and 29 were arrested under the Terrorism Act soon after the explosion in the nearby Kensington area of the city and were taken for questioning.

A fourth man, aged 20, was detained earlier on Monday, Jackson said, adding that 'significant items' had been found at a

second address in Sefton Park, near Kensington.

Remarkable escape

The blast and fireball sent thick smoke into the air just seconds before Britain fell silent in tribute to its war dead and military veterans at 1100 GMT.

There was immediate praise for the taxi driver, who reportedly locked the passenger - a man - inside the cab after growing suspicious about his intentions.

The passenger had wanted to go to the annual service at Liverpool's Anglican cathedral, according to UK media quoting investigators and friends of the cabbie. But road closures forced the taxi to detour and they ended

up at the nearby hospital, where the bomb went off just after the driver had escaped, the *Daily Mail* reported.

Johnson, who convened a government emergencies and contingencies meeting in response to the blast, said it appeared the driver 'did behave with incredible presence of mind and bravery'.

Liverpool Mayor Joanne Anderson said, "The taxi driver, in his heroic efforts, has managed to divert what could have been an absolutely awful disaster at the hospital."

"We knew that the taxi driver had stood out and locked the doors, we knew that early on," she told BBC radio.

Jackson gave few details but said the taxi driver picked up the passenger from the Kensington area.

"As the taxi approached the drop-off point at the hospital, an explosion occurred from within the car. This quickly engulfed it in flames," he added.

"Remarkably, the taxi driver escaped from the cab. He's been treated for his injuries that he sustained and he's now been released from hospital."

Some 2,000 people attended the religious service of remembrance, one of the biggest outside London, and a military parade, according to the *Liverpool Echo* newspaper.

AFP

Belarus says working to return migrants as EU readies sanctions

Moscow, Russia - Belarus is working to repatriate migrants massed on its border with Poland, President Alexander Lukashenko said on Monday, apparently aiming to defuse the crisis ahead of an EU meeting over new sanctions on the ex-Soviet country.

Migrants have been trying to cross from Belarus into EU member Poland for months, but tensions soared last week as coordinated efforts to cross were rebuffed by Polish border guards.

The EU accuses Belarus of sending the migrants to the border as retribution for earlier sanctions.

Belarusian TV showed hundreds of migrants, mostly from the Middle East and including dozens of children, crowded at a shut border crossing on Monday at the Polish village of Kuznica, after having spent the night huddling around burning logs in a makeshift camp.

Lukashenko's apparent olive

branch came as foreign ministers of the 27-nation bloc were meeting on Monday to adopt new penalties over the crisis.

He said Belarus did not want the border situation to escalate into a 'conflict' and that it was working to send home the several thousand migrants camping on its border with Poland.

"Active work is underway in this area, to convince people - please, return home. But nobody wants to go back," Lukashenko said, as quoted by state news agency Belta.

At the EU meeting on Monday, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said he had 'no reason' to believe Lukashenko.

The Belarusian leader also suggested that Minsk could take up an offer by officials in Munich to ferry the migrants via its state-run airline Belavia to Germany if Poland does not provide a 'humanitarian corridor'.

"We will send them to Mu-



Migrants gather near the Polish border crossing with Belarus, in Kuznica on Monday (AFP)

nich by our own planes, if necessary," Lukashenko said.

However, the Polish Defence Ministry said later on Monday that Belarusian forces were bringing groups of migrants to

the Kuznica border crossing.

Belarus's state border committee rejected the accusation, saying the migrants had 'self-organised' and that Belarusian border guards were present to

'ensure safety'.

Lukashenko denies accusations that he has organised the migrants on the border, saying on Monday the situation was proving 'expensive' for his coun-

try. And he repeated warnings that Belarus would defend itself if new sanctions are imposed.

Belarus has faced waves of EU sanctions in response to a crackdown on the opposition after last year's presidential elections and Lukashenko's decision to ground a Ryanair flight earlier this year over Belarus to detain an activist.

The new penalties are expected to target around 30 Belarusian officials, the state airline and travel agencies.

The EU on Monday said it had amended its sanctions policy so it could respond to 'the instrumentalisation of human beings carried out by the Belarus regime for political purposes' by targeting individuals and entities facilitating the campaign.

Lukashenko, however, has so far weathered Belarus's growing isolation with the help of his main political and financial backer Moscow.

On Monday, the Kremlin continued to defend the Belarusian

leader. "Lukashenko is not creating the situation that is taking place at the border," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Belarus says there are about 2,000 people in the migrant camp, including pregnant women and children, while Poland says there are between 3,000 and 4,000 migrants on the border.

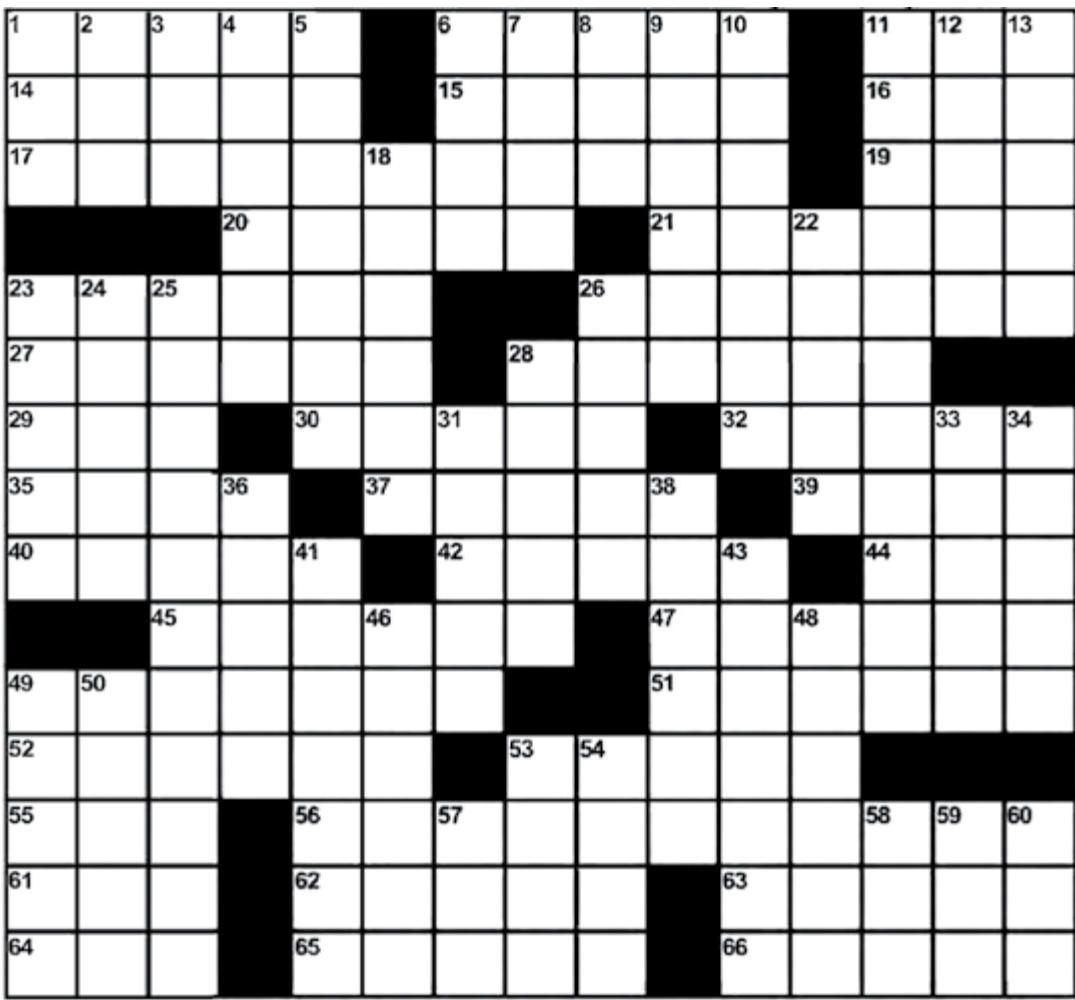
Poland has refused to allow the migrants in - detaining 50 on Sunday after they entered the country - and has accused Belarus of preventing them from leaving.

Local police in Poland's Podlasie region on Monday said four Europeans had been detained during road checks for 'aiding illegal border crossings'.

Aid agencies say at least 10 migrants have died so far and have warned of a humanitarian crisis unfolding as temperatures drop below freezing.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Reviews and corrects
- 6) Old-time anesthetic
- 11) This puzzle's 15-Across
- 14) Run slower
- 15) Crossword puzzle feature
- 16) Get a little behind
- 17) The unfolding of blossoms
- 19) Joint owners' pronoun
- 20) Enjoy a hot tub
- 21) Stand the test of time
- 23) Prior to
- 26) Eye parts with cones
- 27) Mitty of fiction
- 28) Dispatch again
- 29) "It's..." (thumbs-up reply)
- 30) Lunch meat shops
- 32) Coral islands
- 35) Front-page stuff
- 37) Removed a squeak
- 39) "Dang!"
- 40) "There_ enough hours in the day"

- 42) "Great Balls of Fire" singer
- 44) Rage
- 45) Lots of business?
- 47) "King of Queens" character
- 49) Units of current
- 51) Nativity setting
- 52) Relatives of Tahitians
- 53) Raccoon's relative
- 55) Upscale auto
- 56) Theater illuminators
- 61) Make a polygraph go nuts
- 62) Shot, as a gun
- 63) Acid type
- 64) Always, poetically
- 65) Bird-feeder filler
- 66) Makes it until the end
- 7) "... 'tis of_"
- 8) Farm female
- 9) Hosts
- 10) Come back into, as the atmosphere
- 11) Trying not to go under
- 12) Dem of TV and films
- 13) Grimm characters
- 18) Audiophile's setup
- 22) Had an elegant supper
- 23) African sir
- 24) Ready, willing and able
- 25) Hippies' '60s catchphrase
- 26) Change a hem length
- 28) Life of_ (ease)
- 31) Cheerful little tunes
- 33) Madcap comedy
- 34) Beefy bovine
- 36) Villainous expression
- 38) Bleak
- 41) Export-import duties
- 43) Having three dimensions
- 46) "The Naked Gun" actor Nielsen

DOWN

- 1) Diminutive folklore creature
- 2) Costa Sol
- 3) "What was_ think?"
- 4) Tasty flatfish
- 5) Impaled
- 6) Cut into metal

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You usually run your financial show on a tight budget even if you don't need to. And that goes for all aspects of your life, whether it's the groceries, necessities, or entertainment. So when you let the world know that you're ready to spend some money for real, don't expect them to take the news without batting an eyelash. They'll be amazed and astounded, as will the lucky person you're lavishing with attention.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It's time to show someone how you truly feel about their presence in your life. Give an extravagant gift, but keep in mind that there's more than one way to be extravagant, and not all of them involve high price tags or overdrawn bank accounts! Right now, your time is more valuable than money, so make that your gift. Plan a day for just the two of you with an organized yet flexible schedule. Make it all about that special someone.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Don't give up on finding some excitement just yet. You have a brand-new day ahead of you, and a day can make quite a difference. Everyone will be in the mood to do something unusual, something they've never done before. You being you means you'll want to take that urge to the nth degree. Just think of how interesting anyone you meet under this influence will be.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You were taken a bit off guard by a dear one's behavior yesterday, but that's nothing compared to what a family member is about to pull off today. Does that mean you should automatically give in and let them have their way? Not at all. If you feel like you won't sleep tonight unless you do what you can to help, be sure to get the whole story. That way you'll feel justified in whatever you decide.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Money can't buy happiness, or so they say. To most of us, however, it certainly can buy a rather pleasant evening, especially if we're trying to spoil a dear one who's been nothing but good to us. In your case, it's an intimate someone you want to do it up for, and nothing is out of the question. Spend a bit more than you ordinarily might. Think of the memory you'll be creating.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Feeling excessive? Impractical? Like if it's not worth a risk, it's not worth anything at all? It's not as if you've never felt this way before, but right now you have it bad. You have an ailment characterized by the inability to do anything at all in moderation. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on your perspective) it's temporary. Get busy.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's a given that whenever you open your mouth, the truth will reveal itself. It might emerge bluntly and unceremoniously at times, but it's definitely going to be the truth. When someone asks you today to let them know your thoughts about a certain issue, warn them before you answer, or at least ask them if they're sure they want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Otherwise, pass



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Someone you love has been gone for a long, long time, at least, that's what it feels like to your heart. Whether it's been a day, a week, or a year, and whether they're a few miles away or on a different continent, you need to do something to close the gap between you. Start with the phone. Grab it, and use it this time. No fair hanging up before you have a chance to start dialing. They're missing you too.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

A series of missed connections could make today less than easy, but a good, honest struggle never hurt anyone. It's time to get over your fear of discomfort! Keep moving down the path that you're on no matter what roadblocks pop up today. The longer you keep going, the more comfortable you'll start to feel. People might interrupt with seemingly irrelevant questions, but you don't have to give them any answers right now.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You're still not in the mood to do anything, not one single thing, especially if it involves anything more energetic than choosing a movie from a list of three or deciding what to do about a dinner entree from a list of two. Don't beat yourself up about it. You of all people are perfectly entitled to take a day off from the world. Do it guiltlessly. It's about time, isn't it?



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

One of several scenarios is about to unfold, so prepare yourself. One, you might receive a call from someone you haven't heard from in forever who'll beg you to just jump on a plane and visit. Two, you'll have an argument with a dear one about money, and you know how you hate those. Three, a casual encounter will result in a not-so-casual embrace. Better think about it before you make a move. Really.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Get ready for action, because you have enthusiasm to spare and enough drive to get cracking on all your projects. Still, even if you're with others who only want to play, you can put this energy to good use. Why not make a party of tackling the yard work or starting on the room you've been dying to redo? There's no time like the present to put your plans in gear.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The first Indian and Asian to receive the Noble Prize in Physics was

- a. C.V. Raman
- b. Mother Teresa
- c. Rabindranath Tagore
- d. S. Chandrasekhar

2. The command from a superior officer or a judge to a subordinate right given to a person to act in the name of another, is

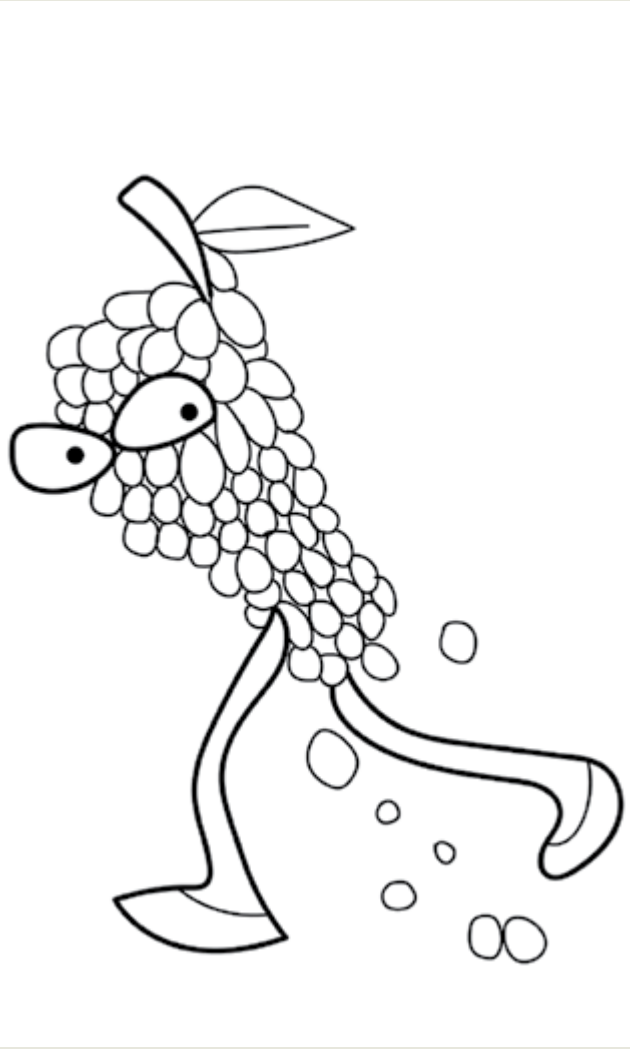
- a. Mandamus
- b. Manifesto
- c. Manifesto
- d. Modvat

3. The Awards conferred by the Hollywood Foreign press Association which is given annually for creditable efforts in film direction, are

- a. Golden Bear Award
- b. Oscar Award
- c. Owen Global Prize
- d. Golden Globe Award

Answers: 1. a 2. b 3. d

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

A	G	E	G
E	S	A	N
W	T	O	Y
M	K	A	S

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

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

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

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

MISS UNIVERSE VENUE

BEAUTY
BOYCOTT

South African Miss Universe contender denied government support over Israel being the venue of the pageant

The South African government said on Sunday it was dissociating itself from a decision by the reigning Miss SA to take part in the annual Miss Universe pageant in Israel.

The decision came after growing calls for the reigning Miss South Africa to boycott the pageant over Israel's alleged atrocities against Palestine.

Local beauty pageant organisers have been adamant that the recently crowned Miss SA Lalela Mswane should go.

"It has proven difficult to persuade the Miss SA pageant organisers to reconsider

their decision to partake in the Miss Universe event," the arts and culture ministry said in a statement. The government therefore "withdraws its support" following the organisers' intransigence, it said. The pageant is slated for Eilat, Israel on December 12.

"The atrocities committed by Israel against Palestinians are well documented and government, as the legitimate representative of the people of South Africa, cannot in good conscience associate itself with such," it said.

South Africa backs the Palestinian cause with formal diplomatic relations established in 1995, a year after the end of apartheid. It downgraded its embassy

in Tel Aviv in 2019 and pulled out its ambassador.

Miss SA pageant organisers had last week argued the Miss Universe pageant is not a "politically inspired event".

Forging ahead could, however, "prove disastrous to her (Mswane's) future and public standing as a young, black woman," warned Arts Minister Nathi Mthethwa.

In a statement, the ruling ANC party urged the organisers "to hear and listen to the overwhelming call for the Miss South Africa team to boycott the upcoming apartheid Israel hosted Miss Universe".

AFP



PRO-HIJAB CAMPAIGN



Beauty is in diversity

The pan European rights body the Council of Europe has pulled a campaign promoting diversity among women and their freedom to wear the Muslim headscarf after it sparked an outcry in fiercely secular France.

The online campaign - co-financed by the European Union - was launched last week by the Strasbourg-based institution and touched a nerve among the right in France where campaigning is ramping up ahead of next spring's presidential election.

Tweeted images showed portraits of two smiling young women spliced in half and fused together to show one with hair uncovered and the other wearing the hijab.

"Beauty is in diversity as freedom is in hijab," said one of the slogans. "How boring it would be if everyone looked the same? Celebrate diversity and respect hijab," it

added.

Initially passing largely unnoticed, the campaign was seized upon by anti-immigration extreme right contenders seeking to unseat President Emmanuel Macron in next year's vote, and who fiercely oppose hijab-wearing in public.

"This campaign is the enemy of truth," tweeted far-right commentator Eric Zemmour, who has yet to declare his candidacy, and who some polls predict could make it into a second round runoff against Macron.

"This European campaign promoting the Islamist veil is scandalous and indecent at a time when millions of women courageously fight against this enslavement," added far-right leader Marine Le Pen, Macron's main rival in the 2017 polls.

Opposite of French values

In a country where secularism is a corner-

Beauty is in diversity as freedom is in hijab. How boring it would be if everyone looked the same? Celebrate diversity and respect hijab.

stone of national values and the election campaign has been fought mostly on right-wing territory, the outcry went beyond the extreme right.

Paris region chief Valerie Pécresse, a

possible contender against Macron from the traditional right, said she was "astonished" by the campaign and added the hijab was "not a symbol of freedom but of submission".

Former EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, who is also seeking the right-wing nomination to stand for president, added, "I would have wanted the people who had the bad idea of this campaign to have asked the women of (Taliban-ruled) Kabul who are fighting precisely not to have this veil."

Macron's government also weighed in, saying it had urged the Council of Europe to pull the campaign. France is one of the 47 member states of the Council which acts as the guardian of the European Convention on Human Rights.

"I was profoundly shocked," French Minister for Young People Sarah El Haïry told LCI TV. "It is the opposite of the values that France defends, it is promoting the wearing

of the hijab.

"This is to be condemned and because of this France made clear its extremely strong disapproval, and hence the campaign has now been withdrawn as of today," she said late Tuesday, confirming Paris issued an official protest through diplomatic channels.

"We have taken down these tweet messages while we reflect on a better presentation of this project," a Council of Europe spokesman told AFP.

"The tweets reflected statements made by individual participants in one of the project workshops, and do not represent the views of the Council of Europe or its Secretary General Marija Pejcinovic Buric," he added.

The Council did not confirm that the pulling of the campaign was a direct result of French pressure.

AFP

COAT

uncoat

It's that time of the year when there is a nip in the air and you want to keep yourself warm, mostly in the mornings and the evenings. And the best solution in this part of the world is to grab hold of a jacket and keep it handy at your workplace or within reach for your evening dash to the superstore. But, it is a fact, that no matter how stylish your jacket is, what matters most in keeping you warm is the material used. You need to know when to wear your coat and when not to. After all, not all days are really chilly.

Some of us might pull out our favourite coats from that corner of the wardrobe that hasn't been touched all through the year. And some might hop across to the nearest garment store to buy something that's 'in'. However, when you buy a winter coat, always check the label to find out what materials were used. Here are some material tips that can guide your impulsive purchase:

Wool

Talk of winter and you think invariably of wool. And it is one of the best fabrics for winter. Wool comes from sheep and other animals such as goats (cashmere and mohair), rabbits (angora), and muskoxen (qiviut). Lightweight yet durable, wool also has air pockets throughout which provides natural insulation to coats and jackets. Wool is also water-resistant, which makes it an ideal material to keep you warm and dry during the cold, snowy winter months.

Faux Fur

Faux fur is a fabric made from various materials including acrylic and modacrylic polymers to imitate the appearance and warmth of real fur. It is relatively cheaper and easier to maintain than real fur. Given the proper care, your faux fur jacket can last for a long time.

Nylon

Nylon is another excellent choice for winter coats. Made entirely from synthetic materials, this versatile fabric has a number of characteristics that make it an excellent material for winter wear. Nylon is flexible and durable. It is also abrasion and water-resistant, giving added protection, if you get caught in a sudden shower.

Hemp

Hemp is a great choice if you're looking for a sustainable, cruelty-free, and eco-friendly gear this winter. Hemp's fibres make for a great insulator, hence it is considered one of the warmest coat fabrics. Hemp fabric also has antibacterial and antimicrobial properties that prevent odour. It is also an excellent choice for people with sensitive skin as its fibre is breathable and gentle on the skin.

Flannel

Flannel is a staple fabric for winter wear. It's incredibly comfortable, functional and durable. Flannel is originally made from carded wool or worsted yarn. The air pockets in its fabric help shield you from the cold even on the most frigid weather. The best thing about flannel perhaps is its versatility - flannel coats can be worn for a casual or formal occasion.

Cashmere

Long associated with luxury, cashmere is one of the warmest materials, perfect for special event coats. It is soft and silky and super warm and breathable. A cashmere coat is definitely worth the price. It is a good investment and will pull together the rest of your winter wardrobe with ease.

Mohair

With its unique frizzy look, mohair is a favourite for jackets and winter coats. Made from the fleece of Angora goats, it is second to none when it comes to natural fibre durability. It is warm and fuzzy, and it suits both men's and women's wardrobes.

Cotton

Though popular in summer, cotton can be made thick to hold up the elements of winter. It is perfect for people who have allergies to fabrics like fleece and wool. It is very soft and breathable. Cotton can absorb moisture, so you have to pair it with a good inner layer.

WINTERWEAR



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Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates on the podium after winning in Brazil's Formula One Sao Paulo Grand Prix on Sunday (AFP)

Hamilton hails brilliant Brazil win as probably 'the best'

Sao Paulo, Brazil - If Lewis Hamilton clinches a record eighth world title it will be in no small part due to Sunday's against-all-odds Brazil win he ranked as 'the best weekend I have experienced in probably my whole career'.

On Friday night that looked a fanciful idea, when he was hit with disqualification from pole in Saturday's sprint after the stewards had detected a minor infringement on his car.

Setting off 20th he produced a vintage overtaking masterclass to take fifth, which dropped to 10th in the grand prix grid after a penalty for an engine change.

With championship leader Max Verstappen on the front row alongside Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas on pole, a win looked improbable.

"Coming here 19 points behind, only one point ahead in the teams championship, we really needed a solid, solid result, but then obviously we had all

these penalties," he said. "Mentally you can just think it's over, it's impossible, but then nothing is if you put your mind to it.

"That's really why we just cultivated a positive mental attitude and went in fighting, guns blazing," he added after climbing the podium draped in a Brazilian flag, the Interlagos fans chanting his name.

Enjoying faster speed on the straights courtesy of his new engine, the 36-year-old picked off the cars in front of him one by one - only Bottas under orders to swap places proved light work for all the racecraft knowledge the seven-time world champion has accumulated between his ears.

Verstappen inevitably proved an altogether tougher assignment. He got ahead of his arch-rival at turn four on lap 48, but Verstappen forced him wide to hold his position.

AFP



Russia's Daniil Medvedev plays a backhand return to Poland's Hubert Hurkacz during their first round singles match at the Pala Alpitour venue in Turin on Sunday (AFP)

'Zero' pressure as Medvedev wins ATP Finals opener

Turin, Italy - Defending champion Daniil Medvedev recovered from a set down to defeat Poland's Hubert Hurkacz on Sunday on the opening day of the ATP Finals in Turin but said he had felt 'zero pressure'.

The Russian second seed triumphed 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-4 over seventh seeded Hurkacz.

"I had zero break points to save, so in a way I was never under pressure," said US Open champion Medvedev who fired 15 aces in the match.

"I had only two games on Hubert's serve where I had break points. Super happy to make this work and that I managed to get both breaks."

Hurkacz has enjoyed a breakout season, winning his first Masters event in Miami and making the semi-finals at Wimbledon after beating Roger Federer in the last-eight.

He is appearing in the end-of-season showpiece for the first time.

"I'll just try to stay positive," he

said.

"I lost this match, but I'll think about the positives and what I can do better and prepare for the next one."

Medvedev has now won 23 of his last 26 matches.

Later on Sunday, sixth-seeded Matteo Berrettini of Italy saw his challenge suffer a painful end when injury forced him to retire against Alexander Zverev.

The German third seed was 7-6 (9/7), 1-0 ahead when Wimbledon runner-up Berrettini

called it quits with an apparent abdomen strain.

"I don't really know what to say, because this is the worst feeling a player can have," Zverev, the 2018 ATP Finals champion, said in his on-court interview.

"You play all year long to qualify for this beautiful tournament. For Matteo playing at home, this is the worst feeling I think he will ever have in his career."

Berrettini, who described his retirement as his 'worst moment

on a tennis court' has not yet pulled out of the event.

Should he decide to do so, then he would be replaced by another Italian in the shape of alternate, Jannik Sinner.

This year's ATP Finals are being played in Turin for the first time after being switched from London.

On Monday, world number one Novak Djokovic faces Casper Ruud while Stefanos Tsitsipas tackles Andrey Rublev.

AFP



Muguruza edges Kontaveit to set up all-Spanish semi at WTA Finals

Guadalajara, Mexico - Two-time Grand Slam champion Garbine Muguruza booked her semi-final spot at the WTA Finals on Sunday with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Anett Kontaveit that ended the Estonian's 12-match win streak.

Muguruza's victory in her final round-robin contest in the eight-woman season finale in Guadalajara denied Karolina Pliskova a place in the knockout phase.

The former world number one Pliskova battled to a gutsy 0-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory over fellow Czech Barbora Krejickova earlier in the day.

Muguruza will face fellow Spaniard Paula Badosa on Tuesday.

"It's amazing there are four players left and two of them are Spaniards. I mean, that just shows that Spain has a great

level of tennis and a great school. It's going to be a fun match," Muguruza said.

Kontaveit was assured of a semi-final berth after winning her first two matches to stretch a WTA winning streak that included titles at Moscow and Cluj-Napoca.

But it was a must-win match for Muguruza after Pliskova's afternoon victory, and the Spaniard came out firing, breaking Kontaveit in the opening game.

Muguruza saved the only three break points she faced - two as she served for the opening set and one more as she served for the match.

She exploited Kontaveit's forehand struggles, taking the first set on two forehand errors from the Estonian.

Serving for the match at 5-4 in the second she saved a break

point with an her seventh ace and claimed the match after one hour and 27 minutes with a service winner to finish second in the group behind Kontaveit.

That ended the hopes of Pliskova, who rallied from a set and a break down to beat reigning French Open champion Krejickova.

Pliskova fired 11 aces but almost undid that good work with 12 double faults.

She saved two break points in the penultimate game of the second set and broke to force the decider, which she won on her third match point.

"I just fought hard to give myself a chance," Pliskova said,

"Because she didn't really miss anything the first set. Happy I stayed in there and just waited for the chance."

AFP



Garbine Muguruza celebrates after defeating Anett Kontaveit during the WTA Finals women's singles match in Zapopan, Mexico, on Sunday (AFP)



Australia send warning with T20 triumph ahead of Ashes

Sydney, Australia - Australia hailed the nation's maiden Twenty20 triumph as 'the ultimate World Cup heist' on Monday, revelling in the team regaining their 'mojo' heading into a blockbuster Ashes series against old enemy England.

Mitchell Marsh's unbeaten 77 steered Justin Langer's side to an emphatic eight-wicket defeat of New Zealand in Dubai on Sunday to clinch a title that had long eluded them.

Chasing 173 for victory, Australia achieved their target with seven balls to spare on the back of a 92-run second-wicket stand between Marsh and David Warner, who made 53.

It was a sterling performance from a team that went into the tournament beset by poor form, having lost their most recent Twenty20 series 4-1 in Bangladesh in August, minimal game time and dressing-room discontent, with few pundits giving them much hope.

'Australia has pulled off the ultimate World Cup heist - written off as no chance, Justin Langer's men defied the odds to seal their maiden title in devastating fashion,' said *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney).

Lifting the trophy for the first time was an ominous signal ahead of the five-Test Ashes series, which starts in Brisbane on December 8, something not lost on Australian media.

England beware! Australian cricket has got its mojo back,' screamed *The Australian* newspaper.

'To say that Australia's stunning T20 World Cup win will have no bearing on the Ashes is to underestimate the rousing mental euphoria generated by such a win.

'After a winter of grumbling and years of so-so results, Australia suddenly feels alive, armed and dangerous again,' it added.

The core of the T20 team will



England's captain Joe Root arrives with team members ahead of the Ashes series against Australia, at the international airport in Brisbane (AFP)

also spearhead Australia's Ashes campaign, including Warner, Steve Smith, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood.

They are due to return to Brisbane imminently on a charter flight with England's Ashes players who were also involved in the T20 World Cup, where they lost to New Zealand in the semi-finals. According to English media, fast bowler Mark Wood said it was a journey he 'wasn't looking forward to', worried that the Australians would 'wave the trophy around'.

'Poking the bear'

While Marsh stole the headlines for his swashbuckling 77, a major factor in Australia's success in the United Arab Emirates was the return of Warner to his destructive best.

He went into the tournament after being sidelined by his Indian Premier League team Sunrisers Hyderabad and with some commentators suggesting he was past his best.

But the gutsy opener responded by plundering 289 runs over seven innings to be named player of the tournament as he

warmed up to face England in devastating style.

"I can't believe people wrote him off a couple of weeks ago saying he was done," skipper Aaron Finch told Australian reporters.

"It was like poking the bear," he added.

While Australia celebrated, New Zealand media lamented the Black Caps falling to a third straight defeat in the final of a limited-overs tournament.

But *The New Zealand Herald's* Niall Anderson said there could be no complaints, unlike the

2019 one-day World Cup loss to England, which was decided by a boundary countback after scores finished tied after 20 overs and a super over shootout.

'There is nothing controversial to point to and explain the defeat. No obscure rule, no moment where the game could have turned, no reason for New Zealand to feel aggrieved,' he wrote.

'Instead, there was a simple fact that all in the Kiwi camp had to acknowledge - Australia were simply better. Much better.'

AFP



Australian captain Aaron Finch fist bumps with New Zealand's Kane Williamson (left) after the toss in Dubai on Monday (AFP)

Finch admits toss 'big factor' in T20 Cup win

Dubai, UAE - Australia skipper Aaron Finch won six of his seven tosses on the way to his team's maiden Twenty20 World Cup trophy and admitted it played a 'big part'.

Australia thrashed New Zealand by eight wickets in Dubai after Mitchell Marsh hit an unbeaten 77 to steer the team home to their target of 173 in 18.5 overs.

The flip of the coin weighed heavily in the tournament with teams chasing having a clear advantage due to the night-time dew in the United Arab Emirates.

Teams bowling first won 12 of 13 matches played at the Dubai International Stadium.

"It did play a big factor to be honest," Finch said on being how he ensured the call of the coin fell in his favour.

"I tried to play it down as much as I could because I thought at some point in the tournament I'm going to lose a toss and we'll have to bat first.

"But it did play a big part. You saw at the end there, the dew factor, the slow balls weren't holding in the wicket as much. I don't know how I did it (win the tosses). Maybe it was just fate."

Finch got out early for five but Marsh and David Warner, who hit 53, put on 92 for the second wicket then set up the chase to perfection.

Australia came into the semi-final with four wins and a loss to England in the Super 12 stage - the only game where Finch lost the toss.

The Aussies were bowled out for 125 after being invited to bat first by Eoin Morgan's team who overhauled the target in 11.4 overs. But the result was just a blip in Australia's otherwise strong campaign that finished with two clinical chases including beating Pakistan in the semi-final with one over to spare.

However New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson did not make much of the issue and admitted to having been outplayed by a champion side.

"I mean, it did have an effect. Some dew did come in. But take nothing away from the quality of Australia," Williamson said. "They came out in the final and played superbly well. You know, credit goes to them and the way they played their cricket for the last three weeks."

AFP

Rashid backs accusations against Vaughan



England's Adil Rashid (AFP)

London, UK - England's Adil Rashid has confirmed he heard former Test captain Michael Vaughan question the number of Asian players in the Yorkshire team, supporting an accusation made by an ex-teammate who branded the club institutionally racist.

Former player Azeem Rafiq was found by an independent report to have been subject to 'racial harassment and bullying', with Yorkshire's chairman and then chief executive resigning in the fall-out. Rashid, who has played 199 times for England across all formats, issued a statement on Monday via the Cricketer website, echoing Rafiq's claims against Vaughan, who also used to play for Yorkshire, related to a match in 2009.

AFP

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WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Serbia, Spain qualify for Qatar

Lisbon, Portugal - European champions Italy and England can qualify for the 2022 World Cup but Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal will have to wait until next year to battle through the playoffs.

Spain and Croatia did secure their places in Qatar on Sunday thanks to 1-0 wins over Sweden and Russia respectively.

Spain made sure they avoided the playoffs as Alvaro Morata's goal four minutes from time ended Sweden's resistance in Seville.

The Swedes' shock 2-0 defeat to Kazakhstan on Thursday had handed Spain pole position in Group B, meaning La Roja just needed a point to qualify.

Luis Enrique's men were grateful for that reprieve as for a long time a repeat of the stalemate between the sides when they met in the group stages of Euro 2020 was on the cards.

Morata was the fall guy that night for missing a host of chances, but made his mark off the bench with a calm finish after Robin Olsen had turned Dani Olmo's blistering shot onto the bar.

"To be honest, it is a huge weight off my shoulders," said Luis Enrique. "I felt much more pressure in these games when people think it is easy to get a result than in the Euro or the Nations League."

Croatia also needed a late winner as an own goal from Fedor Kudryashov snatched qualification from Russia in a battle in boggy conditions in Split.

Finalists at the last World Cup in 2018, Croatia looked bound for the playoffs as they toiled on a



Sweden's forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic (centre) fights for the ball with Spain's midfielder Sergio Busquets (second from right) and Spain's defender Cesar Azpilicueta (right) during their qualification Group B match at La Cartuja Stadium, in Seville on Sunday (AFP)

waterlogged pitch against a resolute Russian defence.

But Kudryashov's error saw them snatch top spot from the visitors eight minutes from time.

"It was a difficult match from the beginning because of the rain. We never gave up, we were patient and I think we won deservedly. We are the best team in this group," said Croatia captain Luka Modric.

Germany had long since booked their place in Qatar, but rounded off their qualifying campaign with a 4-1 thrashing of Ar-

menia as Ilkay Gundogan scored twice. North Macedonia secured the playoff place behind the four-time world champions with a 3-1 win over Iceland.

Italy, England hope to secure places

Gareth Southgate's England have the simplest task on Monday as they will book their ticket if they avoid defeat away to minnows San Marino.

Southgate plans to rotate his team against San Marino as the Three Lions look to seal their

place at the World Cup.

The Group I leaders crushed Albania 5-0 on Friday and should have few problems with the world's lowest-ranked side in their last qualifier on Monday.

After Harry Kane's hat-trick and goals from Harry Maguire and Jordan Henderson put England five up half-time against Albania, Southgate was able to make a raft of second half changes to rest his stars.

Italy though have put themselves in a difficult position after they only drew 1-1 with Switzer-

land on Friday when Jorginho missed a late penalty.

The Italians lead Switzerland at the top of Group C only on goal difference, with only group winners guaranteed of a spot.

Roberto Mancini's side now take on the already-eliminated Northern Ireland in Belfast knowing they need to match Switzerland's result against Bulgaria, assuming the Swiss do not win with a clear enough margin to overturn the two-goal gap separating the two teams.

AFP



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo after losing the match against Serbia, at the Luz stadium in Lisbon, on Sunday (AFP)

Portugal to wait after losing 2-1 against Serbia

Paris, France - Portugal crashed to a 2-1 loss to Serbia on Sunday that sent the winners through to the finals in Qatar and forced Portugal into the playoffs in March as the second-placed team in Group A.

Ronaldo's hopes of playing in a record-equalling fifth World Cup hang in the balance after Aleksandar Mitrovic scored a vital goal just before stoppage time to give Serbia a 2-1 victory that guaranteed them a place in Qatar. Portugal slumped despite opening the scoring after just two minutes through Renato Sanches.

Serbia bounced back to dominate the remainder of the first half and deservedly levelled when Dusan Tadic's strike squeezed in off the post

after Dusan Vlahovic had hit the woodwork.

Manchester United forward Ronaldo was kept quiet as another chance to score his 800th career goal came and went. Instead the crucial goal came from Mitrovic, who a year ago was the only Serbian player to fail to score in a penalty shootout against Scotland that led to his nation missing out on Euro 2020.

"It was an amazing game," said Mitrovic. "We were the better team today in every aspect of the game."

Portugal must now navigate two tricky one-off playoff matches in March to maintain their record of qualifying for every major tournament since the 1998 World Cup.

AFP

Wave of joy as Oman Sailing Festival hits Sohar shore



The festival aims to encourage people to try a new sport and challenge themselves (Supplied photo)

Muscat - The Oman Sailing Festival raised a wave of enthusiasm in Sohar this weekend as it went about with free sailing and wind-surfing lessons for the general public, besides organising beach clean-up events to help preserve the local environment for generations to come.

The #SailWithUs festival held at the Silver Jubilee Garden attracted more than 400 people of all ages to 'take the chance to learn new skills and give back to the community', said an Oman Sail press release on Monday.

Ali al Shuhaimi, centre manager of Al Mouj Sailing School and co-manager of the Oman Sailing Festival, said, "We are really pleased that so many people came to Silver Jubilee Garden this weekend to try sailing, wind-surfing and para sailing with our SailFree programme."

The festival, he said, "aims to encourage people to try a new sport, challenge themselves and either discover a new hobby or take the first steps towards a career on the water".

Given the 'strong maritime tradition' of Oman, Shuhaimi pointed out that the organisation was taking all efforts to make "sailing accessible to the current generation".

"The events to come at locations across the country will introduce hundreds more people to the sport have a huge impact on the local environment as we inspire the community to care for the wonderful beaches in our beautiful country," he added.

The next sailing festival will be held in Musandam and Al Bassa Beach from Tuesday and will run until November 20, where local SMEs will have the chance to showcase their products to visitors over the five days.

The festival then moves to Sur al Hadeed Corniche in Seeb on November 26 and 27, before heading to Sur (December 3-4), Hawana Salalah (January 6-8) and Duqm (January 11-15).

Oman Sail is all set to host the 2021 49er, 49er FX & Nacra 17 World Championships, kicking off in Mussanah on Tuesday.



Oman Sail also organised a beach clean-up event in Sohar (Supplied photo)



The next sailing festival will be held in Musandam and Al Bassa Beach

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