



MUSCAT DAILY

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HM presides over National Day military parade

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Supreme Commander, presided over a military parade staged at the military parade ground of Al Murtafaa Camp on the occasion of the 51st National Day on Thursday.

Units representing the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), Sultan's Special Force (SSF), Royal Oman Police (ROP), Royal Court Affairs (RCA) and a joint military band took part in the parade.

As His Majesty the Sultan, Supreme Commander, arrived at the parade ground, Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of Royal Office, and Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Ra'eisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) were honoured to receive His Majesty.

Upon His Majesty the Sultan's ascension to the Royal Box, the parade columns gave the military salute and the Royal Anthem was played by the joint military band while the artillery unit fired



a 21-gun salute.

Thereafter, the commander of the parade column approached the Royal Box requesting permission from His Majesty the Sultan to start the military parade. The parade began as the joint military band, representing the corps of RAO, RAFO, RNO, RGO, ROP, Royal Cavalry and the Royal Camel Corps marched before the Royal Box.

Afterwards, columns of the Protocols Guard, represented by RAO, RAFO, RNO, RGO, SSF and ROP, paraded accompanied by musical pieces of the joint military band, passing before the

Royal Box and saluting His Majesty the Sultan.

After that, the joint military parade band performed various musical pieces and columns of Protocols Guard chanted the military anthem 'Fal Taslami Oman' (Oman, Live in Peace).

The Protocols Guard chanted a call of loyalty and allegiance and proclaimed a long life for His Majesty the Sultan thrice.

The Royal Anthem was played and the columns of the Protocols Guard saluted His Majesty the Sultan, signalling the conclusion of the military parade.

On the occasion, His Majesty

the Sultan accepted a gift from the armed forces, which was presented by Sayyid Shihab, following which His Majesty the Sultan left the parade ground.

During the parade, His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied by, among others, members of the Royal Family, chairmen of State Council and Shura Council, ministers, under-secretaries, advisers, commanders of SAF and other military and security departments, and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the sultanate.

ONA

See also Page 02



Priority sectors exceed growth target

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Most priority sectors targeted in the sultanate's tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025) have exceeded the government's targets for 2021.

Oman's tenth Five-Year Development Plan, which started on January 1, 2021, targets six priority sectors - manufacturing, transport and logistics, tourism, fisheries, mining, and education - to enhance the economic diversification of the country.

'Many of the economic diversification sectors targeted in the tenth Five-Year Development

SECTORAL GROWTH

Sector	Actual (H1 2021)	Targeted (2021)
Manufacturing	34.2	8.7
Transport	15.8	7.9
Fisheries	21.9	9.0
Mining	7.7	6.8

Figures in %

Plan have achieved remarkable increase in growth rates (at current prices) between the 2021 target and the actual growth as of June 2021,' the Ministry of Economy tweeted on Thursday.

Manufacturing industries recorded a robust 34.2 per cent

growth during the first half of 2021 against the target of 8.7 per cent for 2021, the ministry's data showed.

The transport, storage and communications sector also recorded a 15.8 per cent growth for the first six months of the year, exceeding the government's target of 7.9 per cent for 2021.

Fisheries, which is one of the top priority sectors in the current plan, grew by 21.9 per cent during the January-June period of 2021, nearly 13 percentage points above the full year target of nine per cent.

The mining recorded an actual growth rate of 7.7 per cent by the

end of June, surpassing the 6.8 per cent targeted growth for the sector in the 2021-2025 development plan.

'There is remarkable increase in the contribution of some economic diversification sectors in the first year of the tenth Five-Year Development Plan,' the Ministry of Economy said.

The current development plan is the first within the strategic Oman Vision 2040 under the patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The plan focuses on economic diversification mechanisms and programmes to raise the contribution of non-oil activities.

Merck COVID-19 pill cleared for emergency use in EU

The Hague, Netherlands - The EU's drug watchdog on Friday backed Merck's anti-COVID-19 pill for emergency use ahead of its formal authorisation and started reviewing Pfizer's antiviral treatment as cases soar across Europe.

The two pills by the US pharma giants represent a potentially groundbreaking step in the fight against coronavirus as studies show they cut the risk of hospitalisation and death in high-risk patients.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) said that while the Merck pill was not yet ap-

proved, it had 'issued advice' so that individual countries in the 27-nation EU could decide whether to use it in case of a surge in infections.

'The medicine, which is currently not authorised in the EU, can be used to treat adults with COVID-19 who do not require supplemental oxygen and who are at increased risk of developing severe COVID-19,' the EMA said in a statement.

'EMA is reviewing currently available data on the use of Paxlovid, an oral treatment for COVID-19 developed by Pfizer.'

AFP

HM to visit Qatar on Monday

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will head to Qatar on Monday on a state visit. In a statement, the Diwan of Royal Court said that the visit is in response to an invitation from Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar.

'The visit will strengthen the strong relations between Oman and the State of Qatar. It confirms the keenness of the countries' leaderships to advance bilateral ties to wider horizons at various levels.'



Armed forces swear allegiance to HM

Units representing RAO, RAFO, RNO, RGO, SSF, ROP, RCA, other armed wings and a joint military band take part in military parade on the occasion of 51st National Day at Al Murtafaa Camp



Oman has Talent

PRESENTING THE POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS...

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abdul Aziz Issa Khamis Issa Al Balushi Abdullah Al Zakwani Adil Al Balushi Adnan Nasser Said Al Kalbani Ahmad Al AbdulSalam Ahmed Al Mahrami Akif Alkathiri Al Mataz Al Rahbi Ali Abadin Yaqoub Al Balushi Ali Al Busaidi Ali Alajmi Ali Hamza Al Balushi Arafat Saloom Sulaiman Al Tali Arwa Albalushi Asad Khalfan Suwaid Al Harrasi Asama (Osama) Anwar Al Balushi Ayaat Albalushi Badr Al Amri Bushra Al Saadi Fahad Al Zadjali Faisal Ali Salim Al Zawaidi Faisal Khalid Mohammed Al Zadjali Faiza Nasser Rashid Al Wahaibi Faris Al Kiyumi Hamed Humaid Hashil Al Mawali Hamoud Al Suleimi Hisham Al Abri | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humaid Al Fahdi Hussain Al Riyami Issa Saleh Al Shabibi Issam Issa Al Balushi Khamis Faraj Khamis Al Ghailani Khulood Juma Khaif Al Busaidi Laila Ahmed Mohammed Al Ajmi Laith Alajmi Loay Adil Mubarak Bahwan Mahir Al Balushi Mahmood Al Wahaibi Mahmood Al Zadjali Mahmood Salim Said Mohammed Al Alawi Maiysa Al Busaidi Majid Juma Murad Al Balushi Mandhr Al Balushi Miaad Mohammed Al Siyabi Mohammad Abdullah Al Omairi Mohammed Al Zadjali Mohammed Ali Al Wahaibi Mohammed Mansoor Darwish Al Raisi Mohammed Taha Al Musawi Muhnnad Al Bulushi Munir Al Balushi Nadhim Talal Nasser Al Ismaili Najiya Rashid Abdulla Al Mughairi Najwa Thani Moosa Baroot Al | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mushaifri Nasr Musallam Nassr Al Zakwani Nawaf Hamed Salim Hamed Al Balal Noora Zahir Mohammed Al Nabhani Omar Al Daghari Omran Al Balushi Rabah Said Al Yaarubi Rashid Salim Rashid Al Abri Saif Rashid Humaid Al Salehi Salim Abdullah Salim Al Anqoodi Salim Al Harthy Shaima Abdullah Hilal Al Balushi Shakir Doshambah Safar Al Balushi Shamis Mohammed Al Balushi Shamsa Alwardi Talal AIMazrouai Talib Al Balushi Tareq Al Adawi Waheed Awadh Musabah Al Yaqoubi Warda Al Wardi Zakariya Saleh Habush Al Saadi Zeyana Al Abdulsalam Zubair Al Balushi |
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Industry leaders who have nominated their champions...



Time to remember Sultan Qaboos

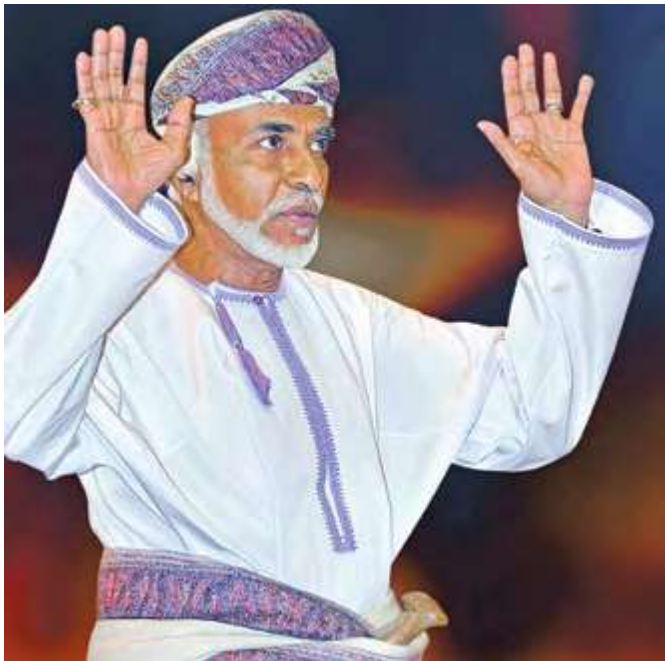
Shaddad al Musallamy
Muscat

While the sultanate celebrated the 51st National Day, saluting the exemplary development of the past and with an eye on the future, it is also a time to remember the founder of modern Oman and its Blessed Renaissance, the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

His thoughts are fresh in the heart of every Omani man and woman, who continue to pray for him and thank him for the good deeds to the nation and its loyal people.

In his first speech on January 11, 2020, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik said, "The will of the Almighty Allah on His be-ings is inevitable and to Him we shall all return. It was the Almighty Allah's will that we have lost the best of men, the forgiven one, God willing, Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour; a man who cannot be served right by such a speech, as no words can describe what he achieved and accomplished. He set up a modern state from scratch, a country that is now recognised by all, far and near. He established a deeply rooted renaissance whose features have crystallised into a raft of laws and legislations that fortified this country and channelled the progress of its march towards the blossoming future that he wished."

The achievements accomplished by the late Sultan Qaboos are stark and manifest in every sphere of life. He sowed and cultivated true faith in people. "We must bow down in respect to our beloved late Sultan Qaboos. It was his wisdom, hard work and tolerance that built the



nation and it is still following in the same path led by the new generation. We miss his presence and more so on such days like the National Day," said Bader al Harthy, a government employee.

The late Sultan Qaboos, who passed away on January 10, 2020, is a father figure to the nation and his footsteps will always show the way forward. "We miss our beloved leader Sultan Qaboos every day but today even more so in every corner of the country. He was not only a visionary but also a very kind-hearted man. He was far ahead of his time and invested all his thoughts and energies in the education and health of every Omani," said Salim bin Amour al Tauqi, a private sector employee.

Citizens and residents of Oman are yet to come to terms with his demise more than a year later and the National Day - his birthday - is a day of prime importance to many. "It was the day when the late sultan was

born. The country witnessed change and progress in a very short span of time. We owe all of our developments to him and I am very glad to say that this is ably carried forward by His Majesty Sultan Haitham," said Mohammed al Harthy, a retired government employee.

For others like Abdullah al Musallami, a retired accountant, Sultan Qaboos will forever be remembered as the moderniser of Oman. "In 1970s, life in Oman was in a mess but now the sultanate is like heaven on earth."

He continued, "Over five decades, Sultan Qaboos brought about a radical transformation in Oman, in the life of each individual. Hardships, and lack of basics, transportation and communication are things of the past thanks to him."

In 50 years under the late Sultan Qaboos, Oman raced ahead in every aspect of human and infrastructure development and in every sector.

Malaysian and Costa Rican varsities get Sultan Qaboos prize for environmental care

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The 2021 Unesco Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation has been awarded to Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and University for International Cooperation (UIC), Costa Rica, following recommendations of the international jury of the prize.

The award ceremony was held at the Unesco headquarters in Paris, France, on November 17 as part of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme during the 41st General Conference of Unesco.

H E Dr Madiha Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, while giving away the award affirmed that Oman is committed to its pledge to protect the environment and preserve its resources. For this purpose, Oman adopts a comprehensive policy that ensures placing the environment on top of priorities of development plans.

Awarded every other year since 1991, the Unesco Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation was established through a generous donation by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Winners are awarded US\$50,000 each, a diploma and a medal.

FRIM has been awarded in recognition of initiatives to monitor and preserve endangered



H E Dr Madiha Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, gives away the award to representatives of Forest Research Institute Malaysia and University for International Cooperation, Costa Rica, at the Unesco headquarters in Paris, France, on Wednesday (Supplied photo)

Awarded every other year since 1991, the Unesco Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation was established through a donation by the late Sultan Qaboos

species of national interest, producing publications such as the Malaysian Plant Red List in efforts to monitor the conservation of critically endangered species, and documenting the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities.

FRIM is one of the leading institutions in tropical forest re-

search in the world. It has conducted significant research activities on biodiversity, forest ecosystems management and restoration, and sustainable forest products, while contributing significantly to biodiversity conservation at the national level.

FRIM also contributes to the inclusion of environmental edu-

cation in curricula and training teachers in Education for Sustainable Development.

UIC has been recognised for its support to create new biosphere reserves in Latin America such as Sumaco (Ecuador), Cabo de Hornos (Chile) and Aguay Paz (Costa Rica) and the promotion of regenerative practices in the biosphere reserves.

UIC's main areas of action are the conservation of biodiversity, territorial management, local development, food safety from farm to table, regenerative agriculture and livestock, sustainable tourism and project management

using a transversal ecosystem regeneration approach. Through its Latin American School of Protected Areas, UIC has contributed to capacity building across Latin America and the Caribbean to train protected area managers. It is also contributing to reverse effects of climate change and biodiversity loss on ecosystems through its initiatives in the Regenerative Communities Network.

The jury also recognised both institutions' stellar public outreach and awareness initiatives, such as outdoor activities for students and development of community farms and eco-tourism.

Muscat Derm IV to assemble 250 dermatologists

Muscat - The Oman Dermatology Society, in collaboration with the Dermatology Department of Al Nahdha Hospital, is organising a hybrid event bringing over 250 health professionals under one umbrella to exchange views on different aspects of skin disease, as well as hair and nail complaints.

The event, titled Muscat Derm IV, will address medical as well as the aesthetic part of dermatology on both physical and virtual platforms. The physical conference and exhibition will take place on December 3 and 4 at the Grand Millennium Hotel in Muscat.

Dr Aisha Abdullah al Ali, HoD of Dermatology at Al Nahdha Hospital and president of Oman Dermatology Society, told *Muscat Daily* that the hybrid conference "is a scientific platform where speakers from all over the world will meet and exchange their opinions on different aspects of dermatology", including medical and cosmetic dermatology, besides the use of laser by the experts in the field.

"We will have CME-accredited scientific lectures, and live demonstration workshops about soft tissue augmentation with injectables and fillers. Topics on skin health, paediatric dermatology, dermatologic therapeutics, atopic dermatitis and psychology will be covered," she said.

"We aim to bring scientific evidence and updates on dermatology to increase awareness about local dermatologists and attract residents, medical officers, health professionals and young medical students seeking a ca-

The conference is a scientific platform where speakers from all over the world will meet and exchange their opinions on different aspects of dermatology

DR AISHA AL ALI

reer in the field," Dr Aisha added.

Dr Asma Nasser al Naamani, general secretary of Oman Dermatology Society and member of the organising committee of the event, said, "The conference aims to educate health professionals by creating a platform for international dermatologists to share their experience, learn about important updates in the sector, and give regional speakers a chance to present their papers, lectures and ideas. Pharmaceutical partners are given a chance to exhibit the latest innovations and technology."

Dr Asma further informed that "medical and cosmetic dermatology is quickly growing to be a sought after topic among people of all age groups, especially the younger generations".

Organised by InfoPlus Events, the event will have "over 256 delegates, 40 exhibitors, 53 speakers and faculty from seven different countries", said Musallam al Habsi, managing director of InfoPlus Events.

(Contributed by Akshaya Pavanje)

Over 40 SMEs to participate in handicrafts exhibition in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To support the handicrafts industry and craftsmen, the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) will hold an exhibition in Dhofar governorate.

Handicrafts help preserve a country's beautiful cultural aspects. Traditionally designed items made of ceramic, pottery pieces and baskets made of palm and date tree leaves are popular and rooted in Omani culture and heritage.

"More than 40 small and medium enterprises will participate in the exhibition of craft industries. The exhibition will be held from November 23 to 26 in the wilayat of Al Mazayouna in Dhofar. The exhibition aims to support craftsmen and craft in-



dustries and celebrate Oman's 51st National Day," an official at ASMED said.

He added, "The exhibition will include a corner for SMEs, and another for the Omani Women's Association. The handicrafts exhibition will include manufacturers of textiles, leather, palm fronds products, and incense, while the corner of the Omani Women's Association will include products of families, such

as popular food items."

The ASMED official added that there were more than 24,000 craftsmen in the sultanate at the end of 2020. Of the total, more than 88 per cent were female craftsmen.

The number of craftsmen in the Governorate of Dhofar was 7,247, followed by North Sharqiyah with 5,454, North Batinah with 3,534, Dakhliyah with 2,148, Al Wusta with 1,534, South Batinah with 1,357 and South Sharqiyah with 1,186.

The latest statistics show that the number of craftsmen in Muscat is 608, in Dhahirah 482, in Musandam 405 and in Buraimi 236.

"The authority urges craftsmen to participate in the exhibition to promote their products and also gain experience," the official said.

eMushrif signs MoU with Schoolvoice

Muscat - eMushrif has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Schoolvoice to collaborate on future projects with the objective of expanding in Oman and the UAE.

The MoU was signed by Adnan al Shuaili, CEO of eMushrif, and Ali bin Yahya, founder and CEO of Schoolvoice, in Dubai at GESS 2021, a leading education conference and exhibition in the Middle East region. GESS allows educators to explore solutions that meet the requirements of modern classrooms.

eMushrif is an Oman-based artificial intelligence and Internet of Things company with a growing presence in the MENA region. The company's product line



covers transport, corporate and health verticals. eMushrif's vision is to create products that are simple, safe and smart.

Schoolvoice is a platform designed for schools looking to op-

timise, overview and organise communication within the school community, as well as amplify engagement. Schoolvoice's mission is to spread education development globally.



Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tender:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable)	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
PDEN/2021/11/14	Construction of a New Filling Station at Wadi Al Maawil Al Lajal In Al Batinah Governorate	100.000	25.11.2021	02.12.2021	07.12.2021
Bank Name & Account Number		Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)			

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om. The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling **24610289/24610287/24610355**

India's Reliance ditches \$15bn Saudi Aramco deal

Mumbai, India - India's Reliance oil-to-telecoms giant is abandoning a US\$15bn deal for Saudi Aramco to buy a 20 per cent stake in its oil refining and chemicals unit, it said, as the firm pivots towards renewable energy.

The deal was announced more than two years ago by Reliance chairman Mukesh Ambani, Asia's richest man, and touted as the biggest foreign investment in the conglomerate's history.

But Reliance and other major Indian firms have since poured billions of dollars into green power as the government pushes to reduce its dependence on imported fossil fuels and as the country's cities are assailed by pollution.

Saudi Aramco is the world's biggest oil-producing company and vies with Apple for the title of the most valuable firm on the planet.

Ambani in June this year pledged to invest US\$10bn in renewable energy over the next three years.

Reliance said in a late-night



Mukesh Ambani

Reliance recently announced it would build four 'giga factories' at Jamnagar to create one of the largest integrated renewable energy manufacturing facilities in the world

statement on Friday that due to its 'evolving' portfolio of busi-

nesses, the two firms had 'mutually determined that it would be beneficial for both parties to re-evaluate the proposed investment'.

It was withdrawing a legal application that would have paved the way for Saudi Aramco to take the stake in its oil-to-chemicals division, it added.

The unit includes Reliance's refining, petrochemicals and fuels marketing businesses, among them the giant Jamnagar refinery in Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's political powerbase.

Reliance recently announced it would build four 'giga factories' at Jamnagar making solar panels, storage batteries, and hydrogen-related products to create one of the largest integrated renewable energy manufacturing facilities in the world.

The Mumbai-headquartered firm's rise was powered by its oil and petrochemicals businesses but in recent years it has diversified into areas ranging from telecoms to retail.

AFP

OQ posts \$777mn profit for H1, revenues surge to \$10bn

Our Correspondent
Muscat

OQ Group, Oman's global integrated energy company, has reported a net profit of US\$777mn for the first half of 2021 compared to a net loss of US\$1.183bn in the corresponding period of 2020.

The group returned to profits this year as higher oil prices and increased output from upstream and downstream operations boosted its revenues. Recovery in demand and prices for all products within the downstream spectrum helped OQ Group improve its bottomline.

OQ Group's total revenues increased by 40 per cent to US\$10.043bn in the first half of 2021 compared with US\$7.195bn in the same period of 2020.

"As the world is beginning to emerge from the shadow cast by the COVID-19 pandemic, OQ Group too is moving forward and has begun reaping the benefits of not only its investments, but also its financial and operational initiatives," OQ Group chairman, Mulham Basheer al Jarf, said in the company's Mid-Year 2021 report released on Thursday.

"Our aim is to achieve the required balance for financial and economic sustainability," he said. "With this sustainability, we can boost the national economy and enhance the added value from refinery projects as well as maximise return from Oman's hydrocarbon resources."

Jarf said the group is nearing the completion of its key strategic projects, namely Liwa



Plastic Industries Complex, OQ LPG, OQ Ammonia, and Bisat B.

"These operations will open wider prospects that will increase returns on group investments, as well as contribute towards supporting the government's economic diversification policies and enhance in-country value," he added.

OQ Group, according to Jarf, has also maintained its focus on further boosting in-country value by investing US\$374mn in purchasing goods and services locally, a remarkable 27.8 per cent increase compared to the previous year.

Furthermore, the group has also allocated US\$10mn to cor-

porate social investment project and additionally achieved a 79 per cent Omanisation rate.

"We are optimistic about the future as we observe our aspired potentials, national indicators, and most notably the developments in the national economy, accelerated economic diversification policies and efforts to attract foreign investment through structured incentives and benefits," Jarf said.

He expressed confidence that OQ Group's efforts coupled with rapid growth in global energy demand and increase in oil prices will play an important role in reviving the sultanate's national economy.

"At OQ, we will continue our

efforts to translate government directives on economic diversification and improve Oman's investment climate- especially in value-added projects in the energy sector."

"We also aspire to boost Omani petrochemical exports, enhance in-country value, augment social investments and embrace innovation," Jarf added.

OQ is operating in 17 countries around the world and covering the entire value chain from exploration and production to marketing and distribution of end-user products. The group's fuels and chemicals are sold in over 60 countries worldwide, making it a prominent player in the energy sector.

Omani Biodiesel fuels the construction of first gas wellpad for PDO



Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) completed the construction of the first ever wellpad where all construction equipment utilized were fueled by Biodiesel. This accomplishment was attained in collaboration with Sarooj Construction Company (Sarooj) and Synergy Biodiesel. The constructed PDO gas wellpad is in the Saih Rawl region and was constructed by Sarooj. The biodiesel used by the construction equipment was produced by Synergy Biofuels in the first commissioned biodiesel plant in Oman. Using biodiesel in the construction of the wellpad lead to a reduction of -11 tons of CO2 emis-

sions. "We are very proud of this achievement which was the result of innovative and collaborative work with Sarooj and Synergy Biofuels. We hope that it will pave the way for similar initiatives and projects as we continue to explore and develop new solutions to decarbonise our business," said Abdullah Al Jabri, Chief Commercial Projects Officer in PDO.

"We are very proud to be part of this collaboration with PDO and Synergy Biofuels to deliver this project while reducing CO2 emissions. Sarooj has been committed to invest in transformative solutions to reduce emissions and

greenhouse gases, and this project is one step in that direction", indicated Simon Karam, Chairman of Sarooj Construction Company. Sarooj is the first construction company in the MENA region to utilize the first Omani-produced Biodiesel to construct an Oil & Gas wellpad.

"We thank PDO and Sarooj for collaborating with Synergy to utilize its first batch of Omani-produced biodiesel in the Oil & Gas and construction sectors," indicated Anthony Helou, CEO of Synergy. Synergy had commissioned the first biodiesel plant in Oman earlier in July/2021 in Samail industrial estate.

ADVERTORIAL



TENDER NOTICE

SUBJECT: INVITING QUOTATION FOR SALE OF USED FURNITURE/OFFICE EQUIPMENT/SCRAP & OTHER ITEMS OF OUR SALALAH BRANCH

Sealed tenders are invited for sale of used furniture/office equipment/scrap & other items etc. on "as is where is" basis from the firms/Institutions/Individuals. The items for disposal are located in the premises of Bank of Baroda, Salalah with stickers thereon mentioning "AFS" (List is available with Branch Head). Date & Time of inspection of items: All working days between 21 November, 2021 to 30 November, 2021 from 8:00 AM to 2:30 PM.

Last date of submitting the tender: 30 November, 2021 from 8:00 AM to 2:30 PM. Contact person: Saksham Agarwal (Senior Manager, Bank of Baroda, Salalah Branch, Tel: +968-23360042)

Please note that the items shall be sold to the highest bidder.

Also, please note that the discretion of the Bank will prevail in all terms in case of any dispute regarding the tender, bids, items etc. and Bank also reserves the right to cancel the tender anytime as per its discretion.

Warm Regards

Branch Head
Bank of Baroda
Salalah Branch

Outlook for global energy revised by Moody's

Muscat - Moody's Investors Service has changed its outlook for global energy to stable from positive, based on its expectation that the pace of improvement in fundamental conditions across the industry will ease over the next 12-18 months.

'After a rapid rise in oil and gas prices in 2021, the expansion in earnings and cash flow generation in the industry will moderate next year, even as prices remain elevated,' Moody's said.

It said the companies will consider increasing investments necessary to support existing production and modest growth, while also racing to meet heightened demands for shareholder distributions and improvement in returns on capital employed.

Moody's stable global outlook stems from the earnings directions for the exploration and production and integrated oil sectors, which will be little changed in 2022, after delivering a strong rebound in earnings.

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Japan unveils \$490bn stimulus package to boost COVID recovery

Tokyo, Japan – Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced a record US\$490bn stimulus for the world's third-largest economy on Friday as he looks to shore up the country's patchy pandemic recovery.

The 56tn yen injection, the third since the COVID-19 crisis struck last year, 'is enough to deliver a sense of safety and hope to the Japanese people', Kishida said.

The vast spending plans reportedly include cash and coupon handouts to families with children under 18 who meet an income cap, as well as pay rises for nurses and careworkers.

It comes after Japan's economy shrank far more than expected in the second quarter as leaders struggled to overcome virus surges by imposing containment measures in Tokyo and other cities.

Former prime ministers Yoshihide Suga and Shinzo Abe poured 40tn yen and 38tn yen respectively into the economy in 2020, although some analysts have raised doubts over how effective that stimulus has been.

"We have been able to build economic measures that will lead to a new society after the pandemic," Kishida said at policy talks between the Cabinet and ruling coalition.

He said the 56tn yen in spending - roughly 10 per cent of Japan's total GDP - was expected to rise as high as 79tn yen including other elements such as loans from private funds.



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida speaks to the media at his office in Tokyo on Friday (AFP)

Kishida triumphed in a general election last month, having pledged to deliver a huge spending programme after Suga stepped down, partly over his government's virus response.

Businesses, especially restaurants and bars, have endured months of on-off restrictions on opening hours and alcohol sales since the pandemic began. Japan's borders also remain shut to tourists.

Government data showed this week that Japan's economy shrank 0.8 per cent in the three months to September - far worse than market expectations - as a record surge in virus cases hit spending and supply-chain issues hampered business.

However, daily cases have nosedived in recent months, and more than three-quarters of the population are now fully vaccinated, with most restrictions now lifted nationwide.

AFP

IMF renews \$50bn flexible credit line for Mexico

Washington, US – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced on Friday it has renewed a two-year credit line for Mexico for US\$50bn.

The Mexican economy remains exposed to risks, including from the impact of COVID-19,

and the flexible credit line (FCL) will provide insurance against those risks and bolster market confidence, the IMF said.

The government considers the credit line 'precautionary' and has gradually reduced the amount since 2017, when it to-

taled nearly US\$90bn, the IMF said.

"The Mexican economy is rebounding from its deepest recession in decades, spurred by strong US growth and rising vaccination rates," said Geoffrey Okamoto, the IMF's first deputy

managing director.

"The authorities have successfully maintained external, financial, and fiscal stability, despite the pandemic-related challenges."

The IMF first approved the FCL for Mexico in 2009, and it is

one of five countries that has received the backstop along with Colombia, Chile, Peru and Poland, which exited the arrangement in late 2017.

None of the countries has drawn on the funds, the IMF said. AFP



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SMN POWER HOLDING SAOG

Unaudited Consolidated Financial Statements For the nine-month period ended 30 September 2021

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors ("the Board") of SMN Power Holding SAOG ("the Company"), I have the pleasure to present the Unaudited Consolidated Financial Statements for the nine-month period ended 30 September 2021.

Operations

Providing a safe working environment is a key priority and the Board is pleased to share that during the nine-month of 2021, the Health & Safety ("H&S") performance was excellent with no Lost Time Accident ("LTA") in line with previous years.

The commercial performance of both plants, SMN Barka and Al Rusail, is measured by their reliability which is the ability to deliver the declared capacity as per the contract.

During the nine-month of 2021, the reliability at SMN Barka Plant was 96.2% (97.6% in 2020) for power and 98.2% (96.2% in 2020) for water. The power reliability at Al Rusail Plant was 99.5% (99.4% in 2020) for the same period.

The Company over the nine-month period of 2021 produced an aggregate net power volume of 3,081 GWh (2,267 GWh in 2020) and a total volume of 22,955,000 m³ of potable water was delivered (25,191,000 m³ in 2020).

All necessary maintenance activities of key equipment were performed in accordance with Original Equipment Manufacturers' recommendations, while applying the best industry standards and practices for health & safety and maintenance, during the period.

The Company and its O&M contractor Suez Tractebel Operations and Maintenance Oman LLC (STOMO) have taken all necessary precautionary measures to deal with the spread of Covid-19 in close coordination with Oman Power and Water Procurement (OPWP), Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) and other stakeholders. The Company and STOMO continue to implement the business continuity plan and steps on social distancing, hand wash, mask wearing and health check-up. Moreover, the Company and STOMO team are closely monitoring the situation to ensure plant availability and reliability.

Financial Results

Total Revenues for the nine-month period of 2021 amount to RO 70.7 million (RO 64.5 in 2020), representing an increase of RO 6.2 million compared to 2020. Total Revenues include variable revenues (Fuel Charge and Variable Operating & Maintenance Charge) and fixed revenues (Fixed Capacity Fees).

The Company generated a consolidated net profit of RO 8.78 million during the nine-month period of 2021 compared to a net profit of RO 8.41 million for the same period in 2020. The increase in net profit of RO 0.37 million is mainly due to the following favorable variances compared to the same period in 2020:

- Prior year was negatively impacted by two technical issues at SMN Barka plant: (i) Repair costs related to GT1 Generator and (ii) GT3 premiss spider replacement;
- Reduction in finance costs following the scheduled repayments of the term loan facilities for the two project companies and due to lower interest rates having a favorable impact on the unhedged portion of the loans.

These upswells were partially offset by the following negative variances compared to the same period in 2020:

- Lower power commercial availability at SMN Barka.

The reduction in **Non-Current Assets** is driven by the depreciation of the plant (fixed assets), receipts of the finance lease and the payment of the senior debt installment and interests as scheduled.

The decrease in **Current Assets** is due to the receipts of the finance lease and the payment received from OPWP of the outstanding Fuel Charges for the financial year 2020 under the fuel settlement arrangement agreed with OPWP for both SMN Barka and Al Rusail plants, part of which has been converted into cash and cash equivalent. As per the Natural Gas Sale Agreement (NGSA) signed by the Company with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals ("MEM"), the Company will pay the gas invoices to MEM once OPWP releases the corresponding Fuel Charge payments. The Company is therefore protected due to these back to back arrangements, as the increase in receivables is offset by a corresponding increase in payables.

Despite the challenges caused by the spread of Covid-19, the Company has been able to maintain good plant availability and in turn pay the scheduled installments of its long-term loans.

Future Outlook

In terms of plant operations and performance, although the Covid-19 situation is improving, the Company will maintain its full vigilance during this unprecedented period to protect the health of its employees and the interests of all stakeholders. The Company has taken necessary legal steps in accordance with the PWA contractual terms to cover any adverse impact on its operations and mitigate any losses caused by the Covid-19 situation.

The Company will continue its focus on H&S and maintain the excellent plant reliability at both plants. Management will continue to proactively liaise with OPWP, APSR and the Load Dispatch Centre with the aim to reduce the cycling of the plants.

In terms of the latest development on the initiatives to prepare for the future of Al Rusail and SMN Barka power plants:

- For Al Rusail, as foreseen in the Power Purchase Agreement between Al Rusail Power Company SAOC and OPWP and as disclosed to the market and in SMN Power Holding SAOG Annual Report 2021, Gas Turbine 1 to Gas Turbine 6, which were erected between 1984 to 1987, have retired from operation on 30th September 2021. The revised installed capacity of Al Rusail Power Plant has gone down from approx. 665 MW to approx. 184MW.
- As disclosed to the market, Al Rusail has received a letter from OPWP regarding the Power 2022 tender in which the Company participated. OPWP has issued a formal notice to the Company on the annulment of the Power 2022 procurement process. Thus, there will be no extension of the PPA between OPWP and the Company and the PPA will terminate on 31 March 2022 in accordance with the existing PPA terms and conditions.
- Specifically for Al Rusail, in assessing all the feasible alternatives available, the Company engaged an independent consultant to carry out an assessment of the revenue that the Company can expect to generate from the Spot Market that OPWP is developing for the wholesale trading of electricity which is expected to go live by end of 2021. This in-depth analysis concluded that the level of revenue that Al Rusail can expect to generate, in the short and medium terms, from the Spot Market will be negligible and therefore under the current Spot Market rules it will not be economically feasible for Al Rusail to participate in the Spot Market post PPA termination.
- For SMN Barka, the Company will work closely with APSR, OPWP and all stakeholders of the power and water sector on any opportunity to extend the PWA agreement. A letter was sent to OPWP on possibility of Power 2024 tender. OPWP's feedback is awaited.
- The spot market is expected to go live by end of 2021. While both Al Rusail and SMN Barka will participate in the implementation of the spot market, such implementation will have no impact on the Company's cash-flows during this financial year as both Al Rusail and SMN Barka will remain under the P(W)PA framework and will be remunerated based on their capacity and availability. The profitability and ability to generate cash flows are independent of market demand throughout the P(W)PA term.

In terms of dividend distribution, as previously disclosed and in line with the financing arrangements during the IPO, the excess cash generated by the SMN Barka is now paid to the lenders and will not flow to the Shareholders until the loans are fully settled or until the time the loans can be restructured. The P(W)PA extension for SMN Barka will be a key factor to potentially restructure the debt in the coming years, remove or defer the cash sweep and allow further dividend distribution.

As Chairman of the Board, I would like to thank our Shareholders, not only for their confidence, but also for their continued support and for the expertise they bring into the Company. The Board of Directors expresses its gratitude to OPWP, APSR, the Capital Market Authority ("CMA") and other governmental and non-governmental bodies for their guidance and support.

In light of the Covid-19 crisis, I also take this opportunity to thank all the operational staff working at SMN Barka and Al Rusail plants as well as the team at our corporate office for their remarkable efforts to ensure reliable power and water supply to the residents of Oman.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I would like to extend our deep appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and His Government for their continued support and encouragement to the private sector by creating an environment allowing us to contribute effectively to the growth of the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr. Abdullah Al Yahya'ey
Chairman of the Board

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Statement of financial position as at 30 September 2021 (Unaudited)

	Parent Company		Consolidated	
	30 Sep 2021	31 Dec. 2020	30 Sep 2021	31 Dec. 2020
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Finance lease receivables	-	-	-	168
Property, plant and equipment	-	-	141,213	147,316
Right of use assets	-	-	324	376
Long term prepayment	-	-	53	133
Investment in subsidiaries	27,405	27,405	-	-
Goodwill	-	-	15,739	15,739
	27,405	27,405	157,329	163,732
Current assets				
Inventories	-	-	2,952	3,002
Trade and other receivables	36	65	45,677	46,757
Finance lease receivables	-	-	635	4,434
Fixed term cash deposits	-	-	250	4,825
Cash and cash equivalents	37	13	5,917	2,768
	73	78	55,431	61,786
Total assets	27,478	27,483	212,760	225,518

EQUITY AND RESERVES AND LIABILITIES

EQUITY AND RESERVES

	Parent Company		Consolidated	
	30 Sep 2021	31 Dec. 2020	30 Sep 2021	31 Dec. 2020
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Share capital	19,964	19,964	19,964	19,964
Statutory reserve	6,522	6,522	6,691	6,691
Retained earnings	923	923	41,270	32,489
Hedging Reserve	-	-	(3,365)	(5,307)
Net equity	27,409	27,409	64,560	53,837

LIABILITIES

Non-current liabilities

	Parent Company		Consolidated	
	30 Sep 2021	31 Dec. 2020	30 Sep 2021	31 Dec. 2020
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Term loans	-	-	64,790	84,895
Lease liabilities	-	-	385	383
Derivative financial instruments	-	-	1,798	4,182
Provisions for end of service benefits	-	-	82	99
Provisions for site restoration	-	-	2,982	2,835
Deferred operating income	-	-	808	808
Deferred tax liability	-	-	15,505	15,505
	-	-	86,350	108,708

Current liabilities

	Parent Company		Consolidated	
	30 Sep 2021	30 Sep 2020	30 Sep 2021	30 Sep 2020
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Term loans	-	-	13,795	15,237
Lease liabilities	-	-	28	64
Derivative financial instruments	-	-	2,161	2,061
Trade and other payables	69	74	42,914	43,360
Current tax payable	-	-	2,952	2,251
	69	74	61,850	62,973
Total equity and liabilities	27,478	27,483	212,760	225,518
Net assets per share (RO)	0.137	0.137	0.340	0.296

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 September 2021 (Unaudited)

	Parent Company		Consolidated	
	30 Sep 2021	30 Sep 2020	30 Sep 2021	30 Sep 2020
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Revenue	-	-	70,705	64,521
Operating costs	-	-	(56,405)	(49,714)
Gross profit	-	-	14,300	14,807
General and administrative expenses	(183)	(223)	(879)	(944)
(Loss)/Profit from operations	(183)	(223)	13,421	13,863
Finance charges	-	-	(3,408)	(4,544)
Investment income	-	-	-	-
Other income	183	223	402	593
Profit before tax	-	-	10,415	9,912
Income tax	-	-	(1,634)	(1,507)
Net profit for the year	-	-	8,781	8,405

Other comprehensive income

Items that may be reclassified to profit or loss in subsequent periods:

	Parent Company		Consolidated	
	30 Sep 2021	30 Sep 2020	30 Sep 2021	30 Sep 2020
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Fair value of cash flow hedge adjustments - net	-	-	4,408	919
Reclassification to profit or loss - gross	-	-	(2,124)	(1,889)
Deferred tax liability-current period change	-	-	(342)	146

Total comprehensive income/expense for the year	-	-	10,723	7,581
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.042

Bank Muscat marks National Day with Al Mazyona draw

Bank Muscat conducted a special draw coinciding with the sultanate's 51st National Day celebrations on November 18 at its head office, which was attended by Abdullah Tamman al Maashani, deputy general manager - Institutional Sales and Product Development, and Saleh Mohammed al Maini, assistant general manager - Capital Regions, Bank Muscat.

The special Al Mazyona draw gave away a total of RO102,000 to 51 lucky winners, with each winner walking away with RO2,000 each. All customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO1,000 in their Al Mazyona account were eligible for the special draw by the leading financial services provider in the sultanate.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah Tamman al Maashani said, "Bank Muscat is honoured to extend our warmest greetings and congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman on the occasion of the glorious 51st National Day. To celebrate this special and grand occasion, the bank will reward 51 customers



with special prizes.

"Bank Muscat always participates in national events in order to bring joy and happiness to its customers and will continue to hold special prize draws."

He called upon all customers to continue saving more in their accounts to get more opportunities to win exciting financial prizes.

Al Mazyona has succeeded in

inculcating a strong savings culture in Oman.

For nearly three decades, Al Mazyona has rewarded numerous customers and enriched their lives. Bank Muscat encourages everyone to save for the future with the objective of creating a life-changing experience for winners and improving the well-being of their families. Oman's flagship savings scheme

continues to reward a prudent and financially responsible savings habit among millions of customers with a massive RO11mn to be won by 7,470 winners over the course of the year.

Al Mazyona is designed to transform the lives of prudent savers and the number of winners has gone up by 12 per cent in 2021 over the previous year.

Bank Muscat recently cele-

brated the holding of the Omani Women's Day Draw during which RO25,000 was distributed to 25 lucky winners.

Also during the recently held Shababi draw, 25 youth won prizes of RO500 each on the occasion of the Omani Youth Day. The upcoming End-of-Year draw will offer high value prizes totaling over RO1.5mn including two mega prizes of RO250,000 each.

The Al Mazyona scheme is targeted to accommodate all nationalities and segments, including ladies, youth, children, high-savings balance customers and salary account holders, thereby inculcating a strong savings habit among citizens who will be financially responsible.

The bank has invited all its customers to take maximum advantage of all the opportunities it offers to win exciting prizes by increasing the savings in their accounts.

For more information on Al Mazyona saving scheme, please visit <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/accounts/Pages/details.aspx#saving>.

Sahlani named cluster GM for Atana Hotels

Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) announced the appointment of Tariq Ali al Sahlani as the new cluster general manager for its own hospitality brand 'Atana Hotels and Resorts' - Musandam.

Sahlani is the first Omani to hold the position of cluster general manager for Atana Hotels & Resorts in Musandam, which include Atana Musandam Resort, Atana Khasab Hotel and Dibba Beach Resort.

Commenting on the new appointment, Hilal bin Masoud al Jadidi, Omran Group's chief human capital officer stated, "We are delighted to welcome Tariq onboard. He is a senior hospitality professional who brings excellent credentials to this key position in the group's hotels. This step is in line with the Omran's commitment to appoint qualified national talent, with rich experience, diverse backgrounds, and professional expertise to our senior leadership positions, that will enable us to accomplish our National Tourism Strategy goals.

"We look forward to attaining even greater success for the



hotel brand 'Atana' under the leadership of Sahlani."

"I am delighted to join the Atana Hotels and Resorts, and I look forward to harness my experience and capabilities to boost competitiveness and deliver a luxurious experience for all Atana Resorts and Hotels' guests. I am looking forward to working with the team to create a unique tourism experience," Sahlani stated.

In his professional career spanning over 33 years, Sahlani has acquired extensive knowledge and expertise in the fields of hospitality, real estate, and human resources. From 2006 to 2020, he was deputy general manager at the Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa in Muscat.

UN-powered panel on education to headline ABLF Talks at expo

With tolerance and inclusivity being the key themes of the Expo 2020 Dubai in the month of November, the ABLF Talks will add to the narratives, hosting industry stalwarts and humanitarians in powerful conversations at the second edition of the Hybrid Conclaves that will be held on November 22 at the Expo 2020 Dubai, as part of the 15th edition of the ABLF Series.

Following on from the success of the first conclave held in October, the focus of the ABLF Talks in November will be on enhancing inclusivity in education and society through the effective use of technology.

The ABLF, as always, is held under the presence and patronage of Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak al Nahayan, Cabinet Member and Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, UAE and in association with UAE Ministry of Economy and Dubai Cares, the world's largest NGO for Education for marginalised children.

The highlight of the event will be a keynote address by Sheikh Nahayan, to spotlight the expo's role in catalysing multiculturalism and the need to further advocate interconnectedness on the global stage.



Adding the humanitarian touch to the conversations, there will be a special UN-powered panel featuring experts Dr Tariq al Gurg, CEO and vice chairman, Dubai Cares, Dr Dena Assaf, UN resident coordinator and deputy commissioner general of the UN at the Expo 2020 Dubai and Majid al Usaimi, Unicef national ambassador and president, Asian Paralympic Committee to call attention to the role of technology in building online learning ecosystems conducive to fostering inclusivity and diversity.

The monthly leadership series is supported by a prestigious line-up of industry heavy weights including the India-based Aditya Birla Group, a US\$45bn con-

glomerate, Zand, the first digital bank in the world to provide retail and corporate banking, UAE's DP World and Etisalat, the world's fastest mobile network in the world.

The event will be streamed virtually to an audience of 30,000 through the ABLF City, the cutting-edge virtual platform, while the in-person sessions will have a well curated audience comprising top industry leaders from the GCC and beyond.

The ABLF is brought to you by a line-up of partners, CNBC Arabia (Broadcast Partner) and *Hindustan Times*, *Khaleej Times*, *Arab News*, *Muscat Daily*, *Al Bayan* (Media Partners), Unicef and FICCI (Strategic Partners).

Al Hayat collaborates with Health Care Global Enterprises to deliver cancer care

Al Hayat International Hospital, Oman, has joined hands with Health Care Global Enterprises Limited (HCG Hospitals) - the specialist in cancer care, India, to offer comprehensive cancer care in Oman. This collaboration will enable Al Hayat International Hospital and HCG chain of hospitals to leverage their respective healthcare competencies and insights to serve the larger cause of patients through comprehensive treatment and quality care programmes.

This tie-up will also help address the growing need for cutting-edge cancer care in the region through enhanced accessibility and actionable insights.

According to the Ministry of Health, Oman, and statistics of cancer incidence recorded from 1996 to 2015 in the sultanate - the cancer cases detected among Omanis had reached 21,002 cases, including 10,723 (51.1 per cent) among males and 10,279 (48.9 per cent) among females. It is worth mentioning that tobacco use, physical inactivity, and unhealthy food habits etc are the main risk factors for cancer.

Dr K P Raman, MD & chief cardiologist, Al Hayat International Hospital, said, "The idea to



associate with HCG cancer hospital is to deliver holistic care to the people of Oman. And address the growing need for expertise and quality medical services in the country. Together, we will be offering cancer care with a multi-disciplinary approach through specialist doctors in medical, surgical, and radiation oncology along with a team of experienced clinicians."

Dr B S Ajaikumar, executive chairman, HealthCare Global Enterprises Ltd, said, "As specialists in value-based cancer care, HCG has been at the forefront of the fight against cancer. Our part-

nership with Al Hayat International Hospital is a key step forward in our mission to make high-quality cancer care accessible to all, irrespective of geographic barriers. By virtue of this collaboration, we are keen to extend our innovative treatments, methods, and technologies to improve patient outcomes and supportive care in the region."

"Al Hayat has been rendering its medical services to thousands of peoples from different nationalities since 1995 onwards. To increase our service coverage further and to provide effective contribution to our society, we

are inducting Oncology segment in collaboration with HCG Group of Hospitals India Ltd in order to widening our scope of services," Suresh Kumar, CEO of Al Hayat International Hospital & Polyclinics, added.

HCG is redefining the cancer treatment paradigm in India by focusing on the science of Precision Medicine. Being at the forefront of the fight against cancer requires pioneering innovative treatments, methods, and the introduction of technologies that transform the industry, which has benefited not only the patients but also medical experts.

Fuely by Al Maha powers race karts at MENA Karting Nations Cup 2021

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company has announced its participation as the Silver Sponsor and Official Fuel Supplier of the recently held MENA Karting Nations Cup 2021.

The championship, now in its second edition, was hosted by the Oman Automobile Association (OAA). As part of its sponsorship, Al Maha used its newly launched Fuely trucks for the trackside refuelling of all race karts for the duration of the championship.

Speaking on Al Maha's sponsorship of the karting championship, the CEO of Al Maha Petroleum, Eng Hamed al Mahgdri commented, "The MENA Karting Nations Cup is

the region's premier karting championship and one that we were pleased to be a part of.

"By doing so, we had the opportunity to not only support the racing dreams of so many talented racers but also help the country raise its profile as an international destination for sports tourism."

The championship which kicked off on November 16 at the Muscat Speedway sees over 200 racers from 19 countries participate in races spanning eight race categories.

The championship took place over the course of five days with the finals taking place on November 20.

The entire championship



was aired live on Oman Sports TV.

As the official fuel supplier of the event, Al Maha had one of its recently launched 'Fuely' on-demand fuel delivery trucks trackside for the duration of the championship.

Eng Hamed al Mahgdri added, "We launched Fuely just under a month ago in order to fill a gap we saw in the market, offering our services to customers who feel stressed about visiting a station, instead, bringing the fuel to them with our new 'Fuely' on-demand fuel delivery service."

Fuely, is a first-of-its-kind service in Oman, offering customers the convenience of ordering high-quality fuel from Al

Maha to be delivered directly to your vehicle while you stay relaxed at home or office.

The service is currently available to customers in Mawaleh South, Al Hail North and South, Ma'abela, Al Khoudh, Ghubrah, Azaiba, MSQ, Al Khuwayr, and Qurm, with more to come soon.

That's not all, Al Maha also has plans to grow this service beyond just fuel, adding some innovative value-added services as well as extending the service to corporate clients at a later date.

For more information about Fuely, please visit your nearest Al Maha Service Station. You can also visit the Al Maha website.

Al Mouj Muscat wins three regional awards for customer experience

Al Mouj Muscat is celebrating the news that it has won three prestigious regional awards recognising the high standards of Customer Experience (CX) present throughout Oman's leading lifestyle destination.

The Best Voice of Customer (VoC) award in real estate and hospitality, Best Customer Journey Mapping Real Estate & Hospitality and CX Leader of the Year was announced at Customer Experience Live Middle East 2021, a two-day conference for organisations across the Middle East which took place this week at the Meyden Hotel in Dubai.

Featuring 50 keynote speakers who covered all aspects of CX, the event was attended by some 200 senior executives and business leaders including Al Mouj Muscat's head of Customer Experience, Hawra al Lawati who was also invited to take part in a panel discussion on 'Reimagining CX by creating hype and excitement'.

Hawra leads a team of 22 CX staff and has been instrumental in ensuring Al Mouj's approach to putting the customer first at every touch point is organisation-wide and community-related. Commenting on the award, she



says, "As a representative of an organisation that wholly embraces the importance of exceptional customer experiences, it is an honour to have accepted this award on Al Mouj's behalf.

"Creating great moments every day is at the heart of everything we do and it is also at the centre of any sustainable approach to improving the cus-

tomers experience. It is why attending this conference and learning from experts in their field as well as the experiences of other brands and organisations from across our region sits so well with our culture of continual improvement."

Research carried out this year by CX Live shows that 82 per cent of organisations believe

good CX customer service is the number one differentiator of strong corporate performance and can drive organisational growth.

Also commenting on the new accolade is Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat who says, "It really is an honour to have received this award and is an opportunity to celebrate how

great customer service is now firmly embedded at the core of our identity.

"At Al Mouj Muscat our 7,000 residents live life together and as an organisation we have a collective desire to make truly excellent customer service a reality, at every customer touch-point, every day. And we're not just talking about the sales

process although the customer journey when it comes to owning a home here at Al Mouj Muscat is one we are particularly proud of. What is just as important are the interactions every member of our community has with another person every day, for example, the extra mile a security guard goes to help someone in need, the welcome our Community Hub staff give to any one of our 3.9mn annual visitors.

"We also value the support our residents give to each other as it adds to our culture of positivity and a strong sense of community which is why this year, to show our appreciation, we introduced an annual Citizen of the Year award where we recognised two residents who contribute so much to our thriving community."

A warm and diverse community at the heart of Oman's capital, Al Mouj Muscat has people from 85 nationalities who now call it home. With a vibrant dining and retail district with 85 outlets, a championship golf course as well as a 400-berth luxury marina, residents and visitors alike are able to enjoy an exclusive lifestyle in a lively oceanfront setting.

Blood donation camp today

The Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman and the Embassy of India, Muscat are organising a blood donation camp at Indian School Ma'abala on Sunday from 9am to 1.30pm as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav - India@75 Celebrations.

Extensive arrangements are being done by the School Management to attract maximum number of donors for this noble cause. Members of the faculty, embassy and school officials and parents have registered to donate blood and the organising committee is campaigning to create awareness among the public on the need to donate blood.

"It is imperative to replenish depleting blood banks with more units of blood," said Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman.

"The organising school is doing everything possible to ensure that all COVID-19 protocols are adhered to during the process."



Ahli Islamic draws reward fifty-one winners with RO102,000

Celebrating Oman's 51st National Day, Ahli Islamic announced special draws, offering cash prizes totaling RO102,000, for 51 lucky winners (RO2,000 per winner).

Ahli Islamic has called on all its customers to continue saving, while maintaining a minimum balance of RO100 in their Qitaf accounts. Through this simple scheme, the bank aims to expand the base of winners and reach the largest possible number of eligible customers who can qualify to enter the draw and win valuable prizes.

Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, deputy general manager and head of Ahli Islamic, said, "At Ahli Islamic, we share joy with the citizens and residents of the country. We are pleased to celebrate with our esteemed customers the anniversary of National Day by providing them even greater opportunities to win cash prizes, which will motivate them to save more and achieve their dreams and aspirations of a more stable future - for themselves and their families.

"On this glorious occasion, I extend my heartiest congratulations to our leader His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, and to the Omani people. May Allah secure this glory for many years

and may our country enjoy the rewards of safety, stability and prosperity."

He further affirmed that the bank would continue to offer innovative services and products that live up to customers' expectations, and contribute to widening its customer base with provisions of faster and easier banking solutions that are consistent with their needs.

He also pointed out that the Qitaf prize scheme, which includes draws for a variety of customers, has, since its launch, been instrumental in changing the lives of many winners. It has become an inspiring and motivating event for account holders to continue saving and planning for their future, he maintained.

Qitaf not only aims to raise awareness on the importance of savings in the society, but also provides investment opportunities. Ahli Islamic seeks to reward more than 4,200 customers from all branches of the bank, with prizes totaling more than RO1,250,000, throughout the year.

Qitaf offers weekly and monthly cash prizes, along with a cash prize of RO100,000 per quarter, for one winner. Qitaf cash prizes are withdrawn through an electronic draw system.

Businessgateways spotlights Oman's investment opportunities

Businessgateways recently launched an exciting webinar series - Connecting the international community to Oman's Procurement & Investment Opportunities - intended to help Omani MSMEs and large businesses connect with a global audience of investors. Regarded as one of the sultanate's most dynamic IT companies, businessgateways is an IT organisation enabling and implementing nationwide technology-driven platforms of strategic importance for Governmental stakeholders.

The webinar series is hosted on an online knowledge-sharing platform, The Stage, an initiative of businessgateways. Through these webinar-based presentations, stakeholders, suppliers, operators and embassies engage, discuss and share information on business prospects, with emphasis on showcasing procurement and investment opportunities in Oman to select international markets. The webinars are designed to empower Omani MSMEs and garner international visibility while also promoting and encouraging B2B partnerships. Adding significant



appeal to the event is the presence of key stakeholders representing promising new investment destinations in the sultanate, and prominent public and private sector organisations in the target market.

The webinar series connecting the international community to Oman's procurement & investment opportunities has garnered praise for its tangible success in shedding light on Oman's immense portfolio of procurement and investment opportunities to the world.

China, given its unrivalled status as the global economic powerhouse, was the first international market to be featured in the series. Supported by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China (Oman), the webinar introduced China to Oman's market, upcoming projects and prospective B2B part-

nership ventures.

Next in the series was the United Kingdom which, as the biggest contributor of foreign direct investment into the sultanate, made for an impactful presence. Conducted under the patronage of Oman's Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), the webinar titled 'Connecting UK to Oman's Procurement & Investment Opportunities' was a resounding success from all standpoints, with the backing from the Department for International Trade (UK), which is Britain's top policymaking body for trade and investment, in addition to the British Embassy in Muscat.

Opening remarks by H E Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, Undersecretary of MoCIIP, set the stage for roughly two hours of engaging presentations and discussions centring on a key message: 'Oman is open for business'. An overview of Britain's longstanding trade and economic partnership with Oman was presented by Gareth Stevens, director of International Trade & First Secretary Defence & Security, British Embassy - Muscat.



EY lifts the Auditors Cup cricket trophy

EY has won the 19th edition of Auditors Cup. The tournament concluded on November 13 in Muscat.

It was a very well contested and fought out tournament between eight teams across audit firms. Every individual demonstrated true spirit of teaming and sportsmanship throughout the tournament.

The final was played between EY and BDO.

EY lead by Alkesh Joshi won the toss and elected to bat first and scored 46 runs in 6 overs. In reply, BDO fell 1 run short of the target. Omar Sarfraz from EY

was declared the man of the match in the final.

Standings:

1. Champions: EY
2. Runners-up: BDO
3. 2nd Runners-up: KPMG
4. 3rd Runners-up: PwC

Individual prizes:

1. Best dressed team (Moore)
2. Best bowler: Upasak (BDO)
3. Best batsman: Yahya (BDO)
4. Best wicketkeeper: Krishnan Karthik (EY)
5. Player of the tournament: Mohamed Nayaz (PwC)

Deccan XI wins Deccan Premier League tourney

Indian Social Club, Oman - Deccani Wing organised its fourth edition of cricket tournament, Deccan Premier League (DPL) played on November 5 and 12 at Al Hail Cricket Ground, Ma'abala. Ten teams participated over two days for qualifying league stage and knockout semi finals were played between Deccan XI vs Deccan Stars and Deccan Challengers vs Deccan Royals. Deccan XI and Deccan Royals reached the final.

Final match was keenly fought where Deccan XI after winning the toss scored 88 runs for 3 wickets in 10 overs. Junaid 28, Malik Rashid 23, Javed 18 and Irfan 2/16 were the stand out performers.

In reply, Deccan Royals made 76 runs for 6 wickets in 10 overs. Munavar 19, Farhaan 14, Irfan 14,



Ravi 3/26, and Malik Rashid 2/9 contributed significantly. Man of the Match award went to Malik Rashid.

Following were the tournament award winners: Man of the Series - Junaid, Best Batsman - Junaid and Best Bowler - Ravi.

Deccani Wing office bearers Dr Wasifuddin - convenor, Ismail Baig - co-convenor, Mansoor

Sabri - treasurer and Zaheer al Deen - head of Organising Committee welcomed the chief guest Venkatapathy Raju, famous Indian cricketer and guest of honour Syed Anwar Ahsan, chief selector Oman Cricket.

Sathish Nambiar, chairman ISC Oman, Babu Rajendran, general secretary and Suhail Khan joint secretary, Avishkar Salve,

fast bowling consultant to Oman Cricket and Asif Sultan, ex-cricketer were also present at the event.

Chief guest Raju handed over the champions trophy to winning captain Ismail. Guest of honour Ahsan gave the runners-up trophy to Munavar. Nambiar and Rajendran distributed individual medals and other awards.

The organising committee headed by Zaheer al Deen and members, Naimath and Mirza Zulkhader received accolades for holding a hugely successful event with full COVID-19 protocols in place.

Deen, Syed Fasiuddin and Mohammed Saleemudeen thanked the sponsors of the event Bin Muqadam Enterprises LLC, Dar al Arab al Wataniya LLC, HST Signs, National Distribution Company LLC, (Al Wazir and Al Wali), Deccan Darbar & Café Desire, Arab Carvers, Abu Jammuna Trading LLC, Bait al Khair Furnishing, Al Safa - The Uniform Makers, Oasis Ideal Trasing LLC, Sahara Furnishing, Asia Furnishing, Nizam Restaurant, Sikandar Restaurant, Al Kazmi Laboratory and Scintillant Infotech.

Time shrinking for Iran nuclear deal: US envoy

‘Iran’s advances are spreading alarm across the region... that’s what’s making the clock tick faster’

Manama, Bahrain - The US Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley warned on Friday that Tehran was approaching the point of no return for reviving a nuclear deal after it boosted its stocks of enriched uranium before talks resume this month.

Malley said Iran risked making it ‘impossible’ to gain any benefit from resuming the agreement, which has been on hold since then president Donald Trump withdrew the US from it in 2018.

Last week, with Iran set for talks with world powers in Vienna on November 29, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Tehran had again increased its stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

“The time will come if Iran continues at this pace with the advancements they’ve made, [it] will make it impossible even if we were going to go back to the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) to recapture the benefits,” Malley told the 17th IISS Manama Dialogue conference in Bahrain.

The JCPOA was the agreement struck in 2015 under which Iran agreed to clear limits on its nuclear activities in return for an easing of sanctions.

“Iran’s advances are spreading alarm across the region... that’s what’s making the clock tick faster and making all of us say that the time is short for a return to the JCPOA,” Malley said.

On Wednesday, the US and its Gulf Arab allies accused Iran of causing a nuclear crisis and destabilising the region with its ballistic missile programme and support for armed militias.

Malley said the US shared a ‘commonality of purpose’ with rivals Russia and China ‘because we want to avoid that crisis, all of us, the crisis that would be sparked if Iran continues on its



US Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley speaks during a media briefing on the sidelines of the opening of the 17th IISS Manama Dialogue in the Bahraini capital Manama on Friday (AFP)

current path”.

“And I want to be clear, because there’s no ambiguity about what they seem to be doing now, which is to drag their feet on the nuclear talks and accelerate the progress in their nuclear programme.”

The US envoy said he was not encouraged by the statements from the new Iranian government of President Ebrahim Raisi, which earlier on Friday accused Washington of conducting a ‘propaganda campaign’ against the country. “If they stick to their public pronouncements, unfortunately we’re not headed in the right direction... but let’s wait to see what happens,” he said, pledging that President Joe Biden would honour a revived deal.

“Our intent, our clear intent in coming back into the deal is to stick with the deal because we don’t want to see a nuclear crisis,” Malley said.

Iran had reacted angrily to a US pledge to take its Gulf Arab allies’ interests into account in any revived nuclear deal with their arch rival.

“The US government, which is responsible for the current situation after withdrawing from the nuclear deal, is once again trying to provoke a crisis,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh charged.

In a tweet later, Malley said he had a ‘very constructive’ phone call with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Ma Zhaoxu on the Iran talks. “Our three countries are in strong agreement on the need for a return to full compliance with the JCPOA,” he said.

“We are working together to achieve it by aligning our approaches as we head to the 7th round of talks,” he said.

AFP

US unwavering in ‘strong’ ME security commitment

Manama, Bahrain - The US warned on Saturday it was capable of deploying ‘overwhelming force’ in the Middle East as it faced questions about its willingness to use its military power in the region.

US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin told the 17th IISS Manama Dialogue conference in Bahrain’s capital that all options would be open if diplomacy fails to halt Iran’s nuclear programme, but he was also forced to rebut claims the US has become reluctant to use force.

The Pentagon chief was asked why Washington did not respond to last month’s drone-and-artillery attack on a base used by the US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group in Syria.

“The United States of America maintains the right to defend itself. And we will defend ourselves and our interests, no matter what, at the time and place of our choosing,” he replied.

“And let no country, let no individual be mistaken about that. We are committed to defending ourselves and our interests and that includes our partners as well,” said Austin.

“And we’re also committed to not allowing Iran to get a nuclear weapon.”

Iran and world powers are set for talks on November 29 aimed at reviving an accord that placed restrictions on its nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief. Tehran has always denied it is seeking nuclear weapons.

Austin said Washington’s major goal was to strengthen its ‘unmatched’ alliances in the Middle East, but said military force remained an option with tens of thousands of its troops stationed in the region.

After ending its 20-year occupation of Afghanistan in August, the US is poised to withdraw its combat troops from Iraq by the end of the year.

This month, Iraq’s Prime Minister escaped an assassination attempt two days after security forces clashed with supporters of Iran-backed parties that lost support in recent elections.

‘we will win and we will win decisively’

The US and Israel accuse Iran of using drones and missiles to destabilise the region.

In brief remarks to the forum, senior Saudi figure Turki bin Faisal al Saud called for ‘demonstrative action’ in the region, including the ‘total enforcement’ of the arms embargo on Yemen’s Iran-supported Houthi rebels, who are fighting a Saudi-led coalition.

Austin said that “America’s commitment to security in the Middle East is strong and sure.”

“Ultimately, our mission is to support diplomacy and to deter conflict and to defend the United States and our vital interests,” he said. “If we’re forced to turn back aggression, we will win and we will win decisively.”

“We remain committed to a diplomatic outcome of the nuclear issue,” Austin said. “But if Iran is not willing to engage seriously, then we will look at all the options necessary to keep them the United States secure.”

Iran’s Gulf neighbours are concerned that concessions could be made to the Islamic republic in the nuclear talks.

AFP



US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin speaks at the 17th IISS Manama Dialogue in the Bahraini capital Manama on Saturday (AFP)

Libyans protest against Haftar, Gadhafi



People protest against the candidacy of Seif al Islam Gadhafi in the December presidential polls at the Martyrs' Square in Tripoli on Friday (AFP)

Tripoli, Libya - Hundreds of Libyans protested in Tripoli on Friday against ‘war criminals’ running in next month’s presidential election, after eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar and a son of ousted dictator Moammar Gadhafi announced bids.

Demonstrators stamped on posters of Haftar and Seif al Islam Gadhafi, and voiced anger over a controversial electoral law criticised for bypassing due process and favouring a bid by Haftar.

One speaker called for ‘all those who have committed crimes against the Libyan people’ to be disqualified from the race.

“The blood of our martyrs wasn’t spilt in vain,” said another.

The protests come at the end of a week that saw both Haftar and Gadhafi register to run in the December 24 election, which is part of a United Nations-led process attempting to draw a line under a decade of conflict since the fall and killing of Gadhafi senior in a 2011 revolt.

But the runup to the vote has been marred by bitter divisions over the legal and constitutional framework, and many in western Libya have rejected any run by Haftar, who led a devastating but ultimately unsuccessful campaign to seize the capital before he was pushed back in 2020.

One demonstrator on Friday carried a placard reading ‘No to elections without a constitutional basis!’

Several hundred people attended a similar protest in the port city of Misrata, Libyan television showed.

Protesters shouted, ‘Yes to elections, no to criminals!’

The head of the High Council of State, the parliament’s upper house based in Tripoli, said he would boycott the vote and warned against holding elections without a legal framework agreed by all sides.

“The process we’re seeing today in Libya is bizarre. There’s no constitutional basis or clean electoral list,” Khalid al Mishri said in a video on Facebook.

“We’re aware of the strong desire among all Libyans for change.”

“But we want elections governed by a constitution or a constitutional basis.”

Parliament speaker enters race

Libya’s parliament speaker Aguila Saleh on Saturday joined Haftar and Gadhafi in the presidential bid.

Saleh is the 24th candidate to sign up at the offices of the electoral commission, the HNEC, with the 77 year old registering his details in the eastern port of Benghazi.

“I came to the HNEC office in Benghazi to submit the documents necessary for my candidacy,” said Saleh, appealing to Libyans to take part in the vote, in a speech broadcast by the Libya Tantakheeb station.

AFP

Turkish authorities free Syrian singer Omar Souleyman

Ankara, Turkey - Celebrated Syrian singer Omar Souleyman was released late on Friday in southeast Turkey after being detained over alleged links to Kurdish fighters, an AFP photographer said.

Souleyman was freed at 10:30pm (1930 GMT), the photographer said, after a confusing day during which he was released in the morning before being taken back to a detention centre. Souleyman was detained on Wednesday in Sanliurfa, where he has been running a bakery after escaping Syria’s civil war which began in 2011.

Police questioned Souleyman over reported claims he had ties to the People’s Protection Units (YPG), which Turkey says is the Syrian offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).

The PKK, blacklisted as a terrorist group by Ankara and its Western allies, has been waging an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984.

The YPG spearheaded the fight against the Islamic State extremist group under the Syrian Democratic Forces banner with the support of the US-led international coalition.

Souleyman was accused of



Syrian singer Omar Souleyman poses at his home after his release, in Sanliurfa, southeast Turkey on Friday (AFP)

I love Turkey. The Europeans offered me asylum, but I love this country and I want to stay here

OMAR SOULEYMAN

‘terrorist propaganda’ but it was not immediately clear whether any formal charges were brought against him despite his release.

Souleyman returned to his home in Karakoprü district, where his family and fans were waiting.

“I love Turkey. The Europeans offered me asylum, but I love this country and I want to stay here,” he said after arriving home, according to the photographer.

The lawyer and manager told AFP earlier on Friday that local officials in Sanliurfa province ordered Souleyman’s release but needed the approval of the Interior Ministry which never came.

He was then taken back to a detention centre before he was finally released on Friday night.

Souleyman has won international recognition for his melodic mix of dance and folk music, collaborating with artists such as Björk and the Blur’s frontman Damon Albarn.

An official video for his 2013 song *Wani Wani* has received nearly 95mn views on YouTube.

The singer is a native of north-eastern Syria who sings in Arabic and Kurdish, and has become a cult favourite of fans of international beats.

AFP

Biden declared healthy and ‘fit’ for presidency after extensive check-up

Washington, US - President Joe Biden got a clean bill of health from the White House doctor on Friday after undergoing an extensive, routine check-up during which his powers were briefly transferred to Vice President Kamala Harris.

‘The President remains a healthy, vigorous, 78-year-old male, who is fit to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency, to include those as Chief Executive, Head of State and Commander in Chief,’ Kevin O’Connor, the White House physician, wrote.

The detailed report said that Biden did have ‘perceptibly stiffer and less fluid’ motion while walking than a year ago, and suffered ‘increasing frequency and severity of ‘throat clearing’ and coughing during public speaking engagements’.

However, these two symptoms were not considered of immediate concern and did not appear to result from serious conditions, O’Connor’s letter said.

On a raft of tests, Biden came out with high marks.

He has ‘no signs of heart failure’, ‘no dental issues’, has no ‘suspicions for skin cancer’, and his eye health ‘is reassuring’.

One reason for that solid report may be the doctor’s finding that ‘the President does not use any tobacco products, does not drink alcohol, and he works out at least five days a week’.

Biden, who turns 79 on Saturday and is the oldest president



US President Joe Biden walks off Marine One after returning to the White House from Walter Reed Medical Center, in Washington, DC on Friday (AFP)

in US history, takes three common prescription medications and two over-the-counter medicines, as well as wearing contact lenses, the letter revealed.

He measures 1.82m, weighs 83.46kg and has a body mass index of 25.

A smiling Biden returned to the White House from his checkup at Walter Reed hospital earlier, saying “I feel great.”

“We’re in great shape,” he

said, wearing his trademark aviator sunglasses.

Historic 1.25 hours

While the annual visit to Walter Reed hospital was routine for a President, the requirement for Biden to transfer power while sedated during a colonoscopy exam made history.

For one hour and 25 minutes, Harris was the first woman to hold presidential power in the

United States. She is already the first woman vice president.

The White House press office said that official letters to Congress declaring the temporary transfer of power were sent at 10.10am. ‘The president resumed his duties at 11:35 am,’ the White House said.

“Today that was another chapter in that history for many women, young girls across the country,” Press Secretary Jen Psaki said, noting Harris’ trail-blazing role.

Harris made an unsuccessful bid for the Democratic Party nomination in 2020, before being picked as Biden’s running mate. While holding the temporary presidential reins she continued to ‘work from her office in the West Wing’, Psaki said.

Psaki noted that a similar temporary transfer of power, ‘following the process set out in

the Constitution’, had been carried out when president George W Bush underwent the same procedure in 2002 and 2007.

The details on Biden’s health were being closely watched, given speculation on whether he will stand by his stated intention to seek a second term in 2024.

Crucial moment in presidency

The positive medical assessment mirrored an earlier letter from Biden’s physician during his election campaign in December 2019, when he was described him as ‘a healthy, vigorous, 77-year-old male, who is fit to successfully execute the duties of the presidency’.

He was vaccinated early on against COVID-19, and received a booster shot in September.

The health check comes at a crucial moment in his presidency, with the House of Representatives voting to send Biden’s huge ‘Build Back Better’ social spending agenda to the Senate for approval.

Earlier this week, Biden signed into law another package to fund the biggest national infrastructure revamp in more than half a century.

The twin victories come after weeks of falling approval ratings for Biden and setbacks for his Democratic Party ahead of next year’s midterm elections when the Republicans are widely predicted to take control of at least the lower house of Congress.

AFP

‘Foreign’ smuggling boat seized: Iran Guards

Tehran, Iran - Iran’s Revolutionary Guards said on Saturday they had seized a boat smuggling diesel in the Gulf and arrested its 11 foreign crew members.

“Thanks to our intelligence services and in a co-ordinated operation, our navy seized a foreign vessel with 11 crew members in our territorial waters,” said Guards’ Col Ahmad Hajian, according to state television’s Iribnews website.

Hajian did not specify either the date of the seizure, the nationality of the boat or its crew, or further details about the vessel and its origin.

“After the inspection, more than 150,000 litres of contraband diesel were seized and the 11 foreign crew members were brought before a court,” he added.

The incident comes in the wake of a series of attacks on commercial vessels in the sea lanes serving the Gulf, where a large portion of the world’s oil is produced and shipped.

On November 10, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps announced the release of the Vietnamese-flagged *MV Sothys* tanker which they had seized in October in the Sea of Oman.

AFP



Migrants relax in the transport and logistics centre near the Bruzgi border point on the Belarusian-Polish border in the Grodno region on Friday (AFP)

Belarus has changed tactics on migrant crisis: Poland

Sokolka, Poland - Poland said on Saturday that Belarus has changed tactics in their border crisis by now directing smaller groups of migrants to multiple points along the European Union’s eastern frontier.

Though there have been signs of the crisis easing, Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said he expected the border showdown to be long drawn out.

Polish border guards reported new attempted crossings by several groups mostly consisting of dozens of migrants, even if there was one crowd of 200 people hurling rocks and using tear gas.

“We have to prepare for the fact that this problem will continue for months. I have no doubt that that will be the case,” Blaszczak told the commercial RMF FM radio station.

“Now a bit of a new method has been taken on by the migrants and Belarusian services... Smaller groups of people are trying to cross the border in many places,” he said.

He added that ‘there is no question that these attacks are directed by Belarusian services’.

The West accuses Belarus of artificially creating the crisis by bringing in would-be migrants - mostly from the Middle East - and taking them to the border with promises of an easy crossing into the EU. Belarus has denied the claim, instead criticising the EU for not taking in the migrants.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko told the BBC on Friday that it was ‘absolutely possible’ his forces had helped people cross into the EU but denied orchestrating the operation.

“We’re Slavs. We have hearts. Our troops know the migrants are going to Germany... Maybe someone helped them,” he said.

“But I didn’t invite them here.”

Migrant funerals

There were indications this week that the crisis was abating after several hundred migrants were repatriated to Iraq, while 2,000 others left a makeshift border

encampment for a nearby warehouse.

Poland’s border guards said that on Friday there had been 195 attempted illegal crossings.

‘Eighty-two foreigners were ordered to leave Polish territory. Two Ukrainian citizens and one German citizen were detained for aiding and abetting,’ the guards tweeted on Saturday.

They added that there were multiple attempts to cross at the stretch of border guarded by the unit in the eastern village of Dubiczce Cerkiewne.

‘The largest group consisted of around 200 foreigners, the others each numbered several dozen people,’ the guards tweeted. ‘The foreigners were aggressive - they threw rocks, firecrackers and used tear gas.’

The migrants have abandoned everything in their countries, spending thousands of dollars to fly into Belarus on tourist visas, determined to reach the European Union.

AFP

ICC halts probe into Philippines ‘war on drugs’

The Hague, Netherlands - The International Criminal Court has suspended its investigation into suspected rights abuses committed under Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte’s ‘war on drugs’ following a request from Manila.

The Hague-based court in September authorised a probe of the campaign that has left thousands of people dead, saying it resembled an illegitimate and systematic attack on civilians.

Duterte was elected in 2016 on a campaign promise to get rid of the Philippines’ drug problem, openly ordering police to kill drug suspects if officers’ lives were in danger.



President Rodrigo Duterte (AFP)

At least 6,181 people have died in more than 200,000 anti-drug operations conducted since July 2016, according to the latest official data released by the Philippines.

ICC prosecutors in court pa-

pers estimate the figure to be between 12,000 and 30,000 dead.

According to court documents, Philippine ambassador Eduardo Malaya requested a deferral.

‘The prosecution has temporarily suspended its investigative activities while it assesses the scope and effect of the deferral request,’ ICC prosecutor Karim Khan wrote in a court notification dated November 18.

He said the prosecution would request additional information from the Philippines.

Duterte pulled Manila out of the ICC in 2019 after it launched a preliminary probe, but the court says it has juris-

diction over crimes committed while the Philippines was still a member.

After long refusing to admit the court had any power to intervene and refusing to cooperate, Duterte backtracked in October to say he would prepare his defence.

Despite its request to the ICC, Manila said it maintained that the court had no jurisdiction.

‘We reiterate that it is the position of the Philippine government that the International Criminal Court has no jurisdiction over it,’ Duterte’s spokesman Karlo Nograles said in a statement on Saturday.

AFP

California wildfires killed giant sequoias

Los Angeles, US - Wildfires that tore through California’s forests this year killed thousands of giant sequoia trees, officials said on Friday in the first full-scale assessment of the toll on the rare species.

Two huge lightning-sparked blazes burned up to 3,600 of the trees, each of them more than 120cm in diameter, leaving them dead or expected to die within the next five years.

The figure represents five per cent of the planet’s entire reserve of the trees - the largest species by volume in the world - and comes after up to 14 per cent of them were wiped out by fires a year earlier.

“The sobering reality is that we have seen another huge loss within a finite population of these iconic trees that are irreplaceable in many lifetimes,” said Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Superintendent Clay Jordan.

California and other parts of the western United States were ravaged by huge, hot and fast-



This file photo shows the historic General Sherman Tree, estimated to be around 2,300 to 2,700 years old, wrapped with fire-proof blankets in California’s Sequoia National Park, on September 16 this year (AFP)

moving wildfires this year, driven by years of drought and a warming climate.

Scientists say human activity, including the unchecked burning of fossil fuels, is a major contrib-

utor to this planetary heating.

Images of General Sherman - the world’s largest tree - being wrapped in foil by firefighters to protect it from flames spread around the world.

The tree, which looms 83m above the forest floor, was unscathed.

The imposing giants are well adapted to fires, with thick bark that protects them from heat.

In their lifetimes, which are measured in thousands of years, they typically endure lots of blazes, the heat from which helps their cones to open, allowing the seeds to disperse.

But longer, hotter and more aggressive fires can damage them, sometimes irreparably.

Two major fires this year tore through 27 groves of the trees, which are only found in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Forest officials say the intensity of some of these blazes was worrying.

“Sequoias generally regenerate well after wildfire, though reports of inadequate regeneration in high severity areas are raising concerns,” Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks said in a report.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

US authorises Pfizer, Moderna boosters for all adults, recommends for over-50s

Washington, US - The United States authorised the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine boosters for all people aged 18 and older on Friday, as the world's hardest-hit country enters a new winter wave of the pandemic.

Boosters were previously available to the immune compromised, people over 65, those at high risk of severe disease, and people in high risk occupations.

The new decision 'helps to provide continued protection against COVID-19, including the serious consequences that can occur, such as hospitalisation and death', acting commissioner Janet Woodcock of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said.

A panel of experts convened by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) then ratified the decision to broaden eligibility, while explicitly recommending boosters for all people over 50, even absent underlying conditions.

"I am really glad that we have clarity and streamlining of the recommendations so that all Americans can understand the vaccines that are recommended for them at this time," said



A sign at a hospital - designated as a COVID-19 vaccine centre, in New York City on Friday (AFP)

Camille Kotton, an infectious disease clinician at Massachusetts General Hospital.

CDC director Rochelle Walensky formally signed off on the panel's recommendations, stating that boosters 'are an im-

portant public health tool to strengthen our defences against the virus as we enter the winter holidays'.

The FDA said it based its decision on data demonstrating a strong immune response to

boosters from hundreds of people dosed with both brands of vaccines.

Pfizer also carried out a clinical trial involving 10,000 people aged over 16 which found that the booster showed an efficacy

against symptomatic infection of more than 95 per cent compared to those who did not receive a booster.

Both vaccines are available to people six months after completing their primary series.

Pfizer's vaccine is dosed at 30 micrograms, the same as the primary series, while Moderna's is 50 micrograms, half the primary series.

People who received the Johnson & Johnson one-dose

Many unknowns

Prior to Friday's decision, some outside experts had expressed misgivings over widening boosters to all adults.

The vast majority of those people becoming hospitalised or dying with COVID are unvaccinated, and the best way to control the winter wave would be to reach those people, rather than topping up the vaccinated, the critics said. A potential downside, they argued, was that vac-

assess the risks of myocarditis after third shots.

Overall, however, both health agencies took the view that the benefits outweigh the risks.

It is expected that boosters, by reducing symptomatic cases, will also help reduce community transmission, though the extent to which this might happen is not known.

It is also possible that, rather than considering the third dose a booster, the vaccines work optimally when administered three times - something that will become more clear over time as data accrues.

Experts are in broad agreement however that boosters alone can't resolve the pandemic while the poorest countries, especially in Africa, remain stuck in the single-digit percentages for people covered by their initial shots.

Last week, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus decried the fact that rich countries are administering six times more vaccine doses every day than low-income countries are delivering primary doses. This increases the risk of new variants of concern emerging in those regions.

AFP

The new decision helps to provide continued protection against COVID-19, including the serious consequences that can occur, such as hospitalisation and death

JANET WOODCOCK

vaccine were already eligible for a booster of any brand two months after their first shot.

The booster decision comes as cases are rapidly rising nationally, reaching 88,000 new infections per day on average as the country enters its fifth wave, according to the latest data.

America is officially the pandemic's hardest-hit country, with more than 760,000 deaths.

cine holdouts might conclude the shots are ineffective.

Another risk is a greater number of cases of vaccine-linked heart inflammation (myocarditis), especially among younger males. Accumulating evidence shows the risk may be greater for the Moderna vaccine compared to Pfizer, likely because of its higher dose.

Both companies are conducting post-authorisation studies to

Fresh virus demos in riot-hit Netherlands

Breda, Netherlands - Dutch coronavirus demonstrators held fresh rallies on Saturday, a day after 51 people were arrested in an 'orgy of violence' in Rotterdam that left two people in hospital with bullet wounds.

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

A few hundred protesters angered at the latest measures gathered in Amsterdam on Saturday and a similar number marched through the southern city of Breda.

It followed the Rotterdam unrest where police said they had fired both warning and targeted shots and used water cannon.

'Fifty-one people were arrested during the major disturbances on Friday evening and night on Coolsingel [street] in Rotterdam. About half of them were just underage,' Rotterdam police said in a tweet.

The rioters came from different parts of the country, they



Burnt bikes at a protest site, in Rotterdam, a port city in the Netherlands on Saturday (AFP)

said. Police were still searching for more suspects.

'Two rioters were injured when they were hit by a bullet. They are still in the hospital,' the police said, adding that the Dutch national criminal investigation department would probe 'whether the injuries were caused by police bullets'.

A policeman was also taken to hospital with leg injuries while several other officers were hurt

or suffered hearing damage because of large fireworks set off by the rioters, police said.

Police had said earlier that they fired several warning shots but that 'at one point the situation became so dangerous that officers felt compelled to shoot at targets'.

They dismissed rumours on social media that someone had died during the violence in Rotterdam.

The city's mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb denounced an 'orgy of violence', adding, "The police have felt the need to draw a police weapon in the end to defend themselves."

'All hell broke loose'

Despite the violence a day earlier, around 300 protesters marched through the southern town of Breda near the Belgian border on Saturday carrying

banners with slogans such as 'No Lockdown'.

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

A group that had called an Amsterdam protest for Saturday, United We Stand Europe, said on Facebook it had cancelled the rally because 'last night, all hell broke loose in Rotterdam'.

But several hundred flag-waving protesters still gathered in central Dam Square, watched over by police vans, according to Dutch media and images on social media.

The Dutch government condemned the violence in Rotterdam.

"The riots and extreme violence against police, riot police and firefighters last night in Rotterdam are horrifying," Security Minister Ferd Grapperhaus said on Saturday.

"The police and the public prosecutor's office are doing their utmost to track down, prosecute and punish these rioters." AFP

Iraq receives 1.2mn Pfizer vaccine doses

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraq said on Saturday it has received 1.2mn doses of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine through the Covax sharing scheme, amid fears of a fourth wave in the country.

Nearly 7mn Iraqis have received at least one dose of coronavirus vaccine, amounting to 17.5 per cent of the country's 40mn population, based on government figures.

Plagued by years of conflict, corruption and neglect, Iraq's health system has struggled to cope with the pandemic.

The Health Ministry announced on Saturday the arrival of a shipment of more than 1.2mn doses of 'Pfizer's anti-COVID vaccine through the Covax programme and UNICEF', the UN Children's Fund.

"Iraq is still facing danger from the coronavirus pan-

demic," ministry spokesman Saif al Badr said on Thursday.

"We expect to enter a fourth wave, [and] it could be a new variant," he told state television.

More than 2mn Iraqis have been infected with COVID-19 and 23,628 have died in Iraq since the outbreak of the pandemic, according to official figures.

Despite an increase in the number of people getting jabbed, Iraq's government has been unable to overcome general scepticism about vaccines and measures aimed at preventing the spread of the virus.

There is a high level of public mistrust of institutions in Iraq amid the circulation of misleading information about the pandemic.

Covax was set up to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines.

AFP

Thousands of protestors rally against vaccinations in Australia

Melbourne, Australia - Thousands of protesters decrying COVID-19 vaccinations gathered in cities around Australia on Saturday as smaller counter-rallies supporting health measures also marched.

Australia's vaccine programme remains voluntary and highly successful, with nearly 85 per cent of the population over 16 fully vaccinated and life returning to relative normality for those double-jabbed.

But protesters rallied on Saturday across several of Australia's major cities against vaccine mandates, which are not universal and have only been applied to certain occupations by state authorities.

In Melbourne, a crowd of sev-



People hold up placards during a rally against COVID-19 lockdown in Melbourne on Saturday (AFP)

eral thousand called for state leader Daniel Andrews to be jailed and voiced anger over controversial new proposed pandemic powers.

Police said up to 10,000 gathered in Sydney, where one protester dressed as Scottish freedom fighter William Wallace from the film *Braveheart* and another spoke to the crowd in costume as former US president Donald Trump.

There were no reports of clashes, nor was there any sign of the gallows or calls to hang political leaders which had been filmed at earlier Melbourne protests - sparking concerns the rallies were encouraging violence.

Although the views of the

crowd in Sydney were wide-ranging, a heavy presence of anti-vaccination and shadowy conspiratorial views were promoted by speakers and on many signs.

"In Australia where a fanatical cult runs our health bureaucracies, they say it's ok [to vaccinate children]," right-wing federal politician Craig Kelly told the Sydney crowd to large cheers.

Kelly, who is a crossbench MP in Canberra, has routinely promoted misinformation and conspiracy theories throughout the pandemic.

Around 2,000 protesters also gathered in Melbourne to oppose the anti-vaccination rally - one of the first counter-

demonstrations since the pandemic began.

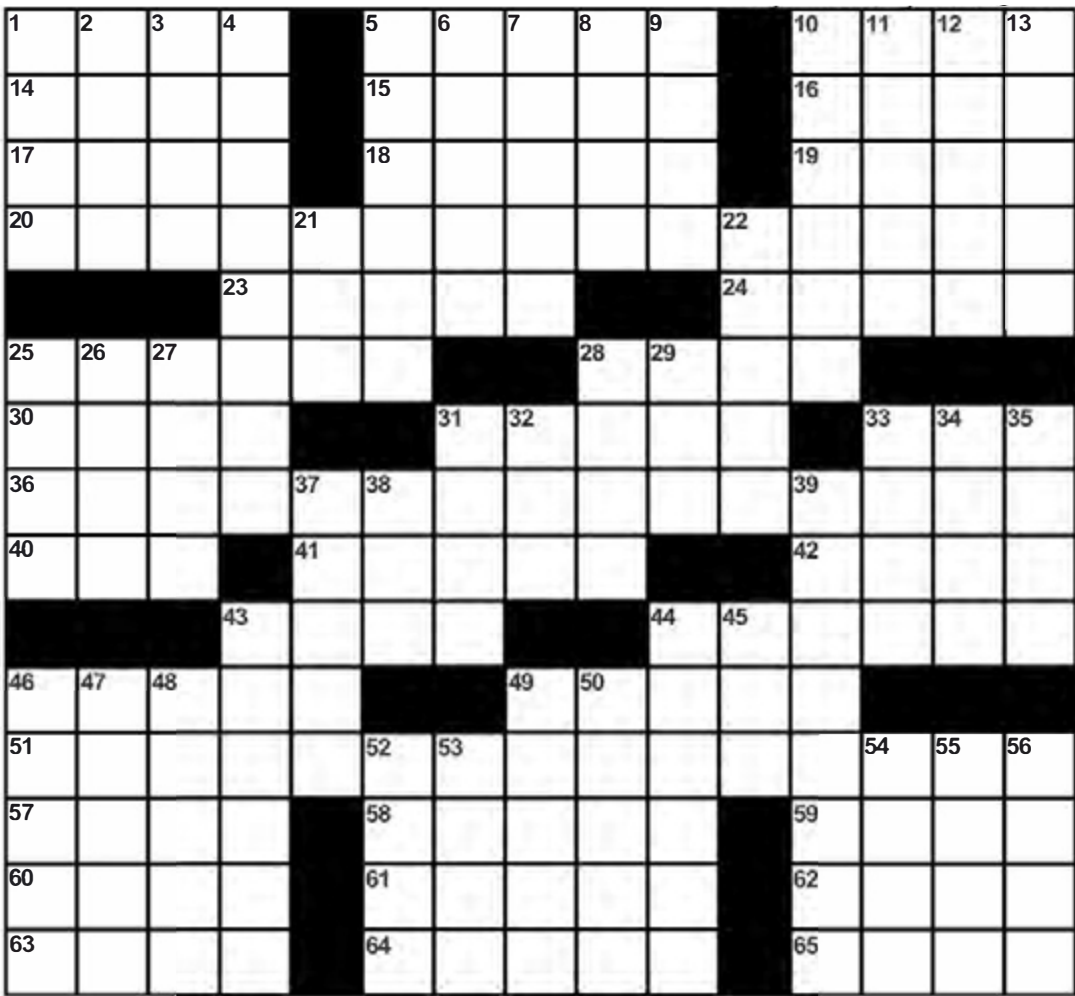
"I'm here because I am disgusted by what's going on the streets of my city, Melbourne," counter-protester Maureen Hill told AFP, referring to the anti-vaccination march.

"Everything that's been done [by the public health orders] has been done to save lives. I mean, it did upset people, and it did affect a lot of people, but it's a worldwide pandemic. What else are we supposed to do?" Hill said.

Australia has recorded over 195,000 cases and 1,933 deaths linked to the virus in a population of over 25mn since the pandemic began.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Dell competitor
- 5) Diamond surface
- 10) Lose an encounter with ice
- 14) Central part of a church
- 15) Coffee enticement
- 16) Disorderly outburst
- 17) Course with sines
- 18) Different version of a song
- 19) Change parts, often
- 20) Broadway sign make-up
- 23) Cantrell, Wood and Turner
- 24) Usher's beat
- 25) Country with the most lakes
- 28) Utilized an elevator
- 30) Word before "loving" and "lasting"
- 31) Places for human development
- 33) One tying a knot?
- 36) Couldn't care less
- 40) Nip in the bud
- 41) Year-end seasons
- 42) One of Napoleon's exile isles
- 43) It may frequently hit the bottle
- 44) Wake maker

DOWN

- 2) Not for
- 2) Psychologist Jung
- 3) Like a soap opera twin
- 4) Some men's jacket sizes
- 5) Hot breakfast fare
- 6) Venue for a big-time boxing match
- 7) Sleeping episodes that could last years
- 8) Send off, as broadcast waves
- 9) Urban vehicle
- 10) Inexpensive cigar
- 11) Step-ups from 4-

DOWN

- 12) Epitome of perfection
- 13) Follower of Western tracks
- 21) Insane
- 22) Comaneci of the balance beam
- 25) Yield, as property
- 26) Stratford's waterway
- 27) On a _-to-know basis
- 28) Accelerates, as a motor
- 29) It might require refining
- 31) Quite unattractive
- 32) Evening result?
- 33) Shed feathers
- 34) Judicial attire
- 35) Wish recipient
- 37) African antelope with spiral horns
- 38) Old, slow ship
- 39) Item that can be raised in a car's interior
- 43) Emulated a smoke detector
- 44) Most inferior
- 45) Tolkien menace
- 46) Russian monarchs no more
- 47) Eight-related
- 48) Composed, as a text

- 49) Colorful garden figure
- 50) Milk dispenser over a pail
- 52) Prefix with "physical"

- 53) Fleishy seed wrapper
- 54) "Enchanted" film girl
- 55) "... and make it fast!"
- 56) Allocate (with "out")

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

When you're determined to have some totally random fun (that is to say, most days), there's just no way to move you from your chosen path. That's even more true when the company you're in includes someone you're sure is up for the ride. At the moment, though, you're a bit torn between doing what's right and letting your more impulsive side hold the reins.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Make your reservations, and don't worry about taking the time off either! You're totally overdue for some good times, and you might be starting to think that the 'all work and no play' routine isn't doing anything for your mood. You're also wondering if your relationship could benefit from a bit of time away together. Choose your destination, and please don't forget to ask for input!



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It's not true that you're only up for fun, games, and laughter. Sure, it might be what you do best and love the most, but when what you're doing is important to you, you're just as determined and single-mindedly focused on it as anyone could possibly be. Now, as the need to stop laughing and start getting serious pops up, you tend to it seriously.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Whether you've just set eyes on them for the first time or you're just now noticing how awesome they are, you could definitely be feeling love. It doesn't matter how long you've known this person, of course. It still feels like the first time for both of you. Enjoy it! You're great at spoiling the ones you love, and goodness knows they are too!



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

There's something to be said for getting noticed, and that's exactly what's on your agenda for now, but also for a while to come. Still, for the moment, you're more than happy to satisfy yourself with simply knowing that the people who love you care enough to make you feel grounded and totally secure. Be fair, and make sure they know the feelings are mutual!



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You know that teaching someone to fish is better than serving up one meal to them. Feeding the hungry is wonderful and important, but teaching them a skill that can keep them from ever being hungry again is far better. You've got what it takes to do that now, maybe for quite a few people. And they're willing to learn. Sit them down and teach them what they need to know.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

The word "multitasking" had to have been coined by someone who knows what it's like to hang around you as you segue merrily from one duty to another at breakneck speed, yet managing to keep track of each detail of each task while chatting to a small crowd on multiple topics. That particular skill is especially evident now to anyone nearby.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your first impulse is to walk right past that emotional storm you can tell is brewing. Of course, everyone who knows you knows that you can't let yourself do that. It's not in your nature. The people giving you those SOS signals from across the room know it too. There's no use fighting it. Stroll right over and ask if there's anything you can do to help.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Don't hold back what you're feeling inside. If a family member or friend is involved, you can't keep quiet no matter how much you might feel like you can. At the same time, they're not able to keep quiet when you're involved either. Make sure you do one thing, if at all possible: try to have the showdown in a place that's not entirely public.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your usual modus operandi is to check with your gut, sitting silently and just listening. Then, and only then, do you knock on the door of your mind, usually just to see if it's busy. If the two aren't seeing things the same way, there's just no contest. You know as the ruler of emotions for good reason. If there's a business decision to be made, guess which side wins out?



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

This is your time to play counselor. This time it's probably a pal sending out the distress calls. You're on your way over to offer assistance, silently cursing that sensitive antenna that just won't let you pretend you haven't noticed. Before you arrive, do yourself a favor and resolve to tell them what they need to hear and not what they want to hear.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If you're feeling a little moody and slow right now, don't fight it. You don't have to try to figure out why you're going through this phase. Just for today, let yourself feel what you're feeling and try not to judge yourself too harshly. There's no such thing as a "bad" emotion. All emotions are natural, and if you get too hung up on labeling feelings as bad or good, you run the risk of pushing yourself with unreasonable expectations.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The chemical name of Vitamin B is

- a. nicotinamide
- b. ascorbic acid
- c. riboflavin
- d. thiamine

2. The first Indian actress to have been nominated to the Rajya Sabha was

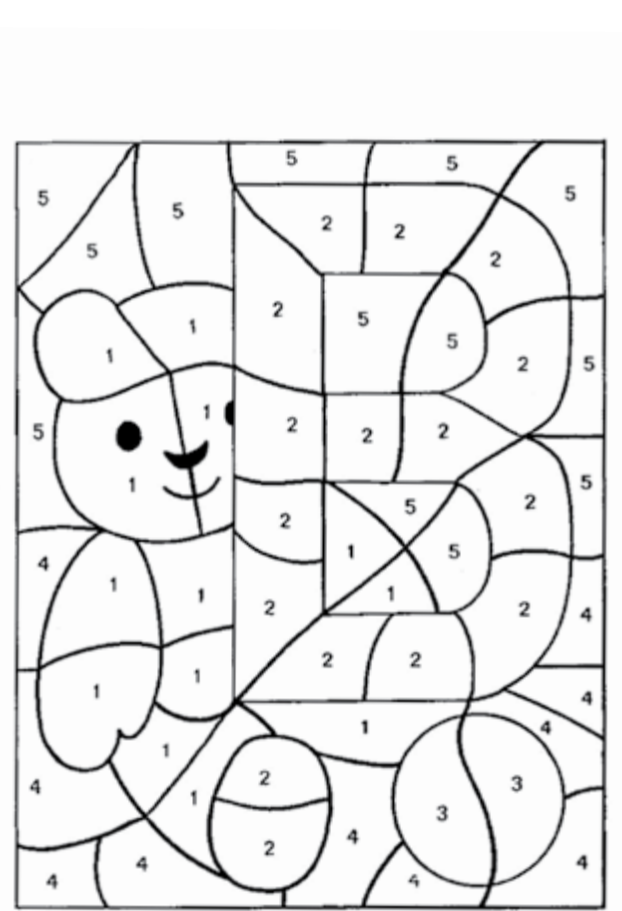
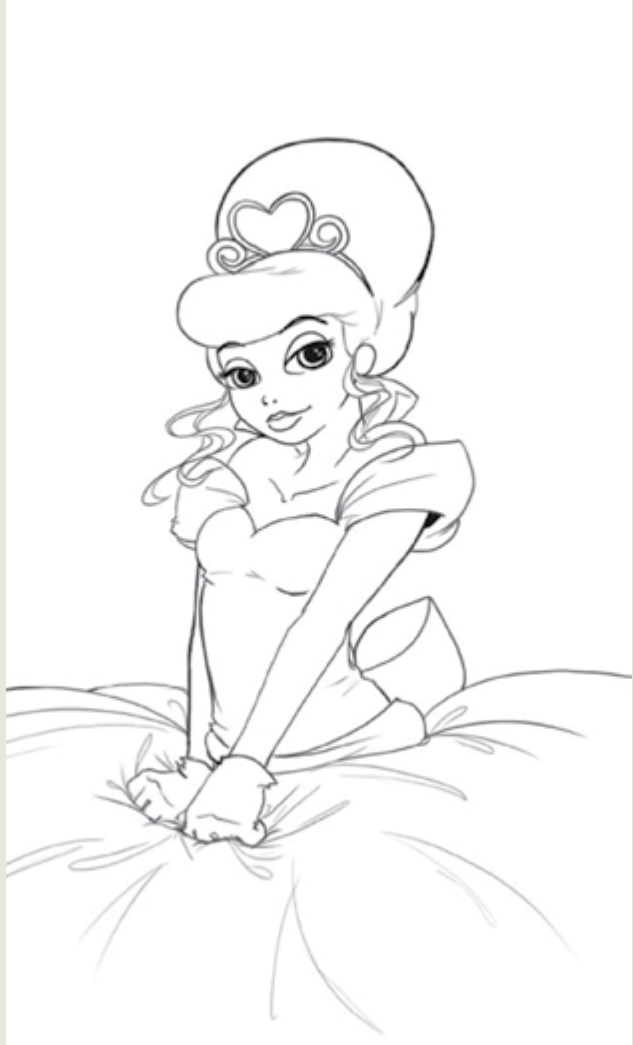
- a. Nargis Dutt
- b. Hema Malini
- c. Jaya Prada
- d. None of the above

3. The first NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) conference was held at

- a. Belgrade (Yugoslavia)
- b. Cairo (Egypt)
- c. Lusaka (Zambia)
- d. Algiers (Algeria)

Answers: 1. b 2 a 3 a

KIDS COLOURING



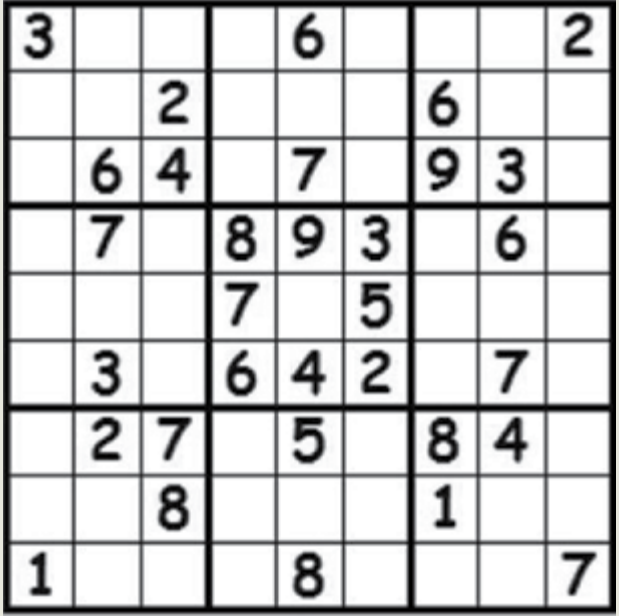
BOGGLER



Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long. Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number



WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



EKPHRASIS

NOVEL WORKS OF ART

Hubert Vaz

Rangrez, the artist group of Indian Social Club, came forth with a unique theme for their last virtual exhibition which took not just the artists but also viewers through diverse aspects of imagination based on classic books and novels read by the artists which left lasting impressions on their minds.

"Curated by Khursheed Raja, one of our most talented artists with an education in art, this exhibition showcases the work of 22 artists represented by 29 popular paperbacks. Khursheed's own work is extremely detailed and it reveals the fact that she demands very high standards from herself," says Sushmita Gupta, founder of Rangrez.

The virtual exhibition called Ekphrasis was opened by Papri Ghosh, principal of Indian School Al Ghubra who relished going through each painting as she had read most of the books that served as an inspiration for the paintings. She especially loved Shalini Varma's interpretation of A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini.

Khursheed says, "As a child, I remember how illustrations in the story books transported me to magical worlds and faraway lands. Then when I started reading novels, I often missed illustrations which were such an



It is fascinating to me as an artist, who enjoys both the visual and written arts, to see how painting and literary works can combine."

KHURSHIED RAJA

essential part of this process. The absence of illustrations often fueled my imagination and I always fantasised how the author would have conceptualised the story, the various scenes and characters.

"It is fascinating to me as an artist who enjoys both the visual and written arts, to see how painting and literary works can combine. The most magnificent cross-disciplinary manifestations are often inspired by art that crosses boundaries. Therefore, when I was asked to curate an exhibition for Rangrez, I chose a literary theme. The unique quality of literature is its ability to ignite the imagination of readers, allowing them to interpret the mood, the characters and the settings of the story."

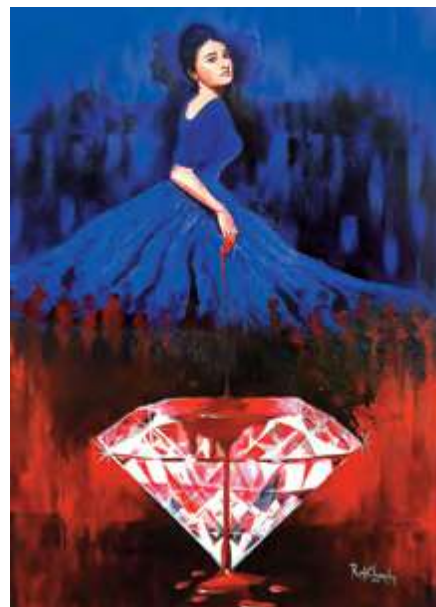
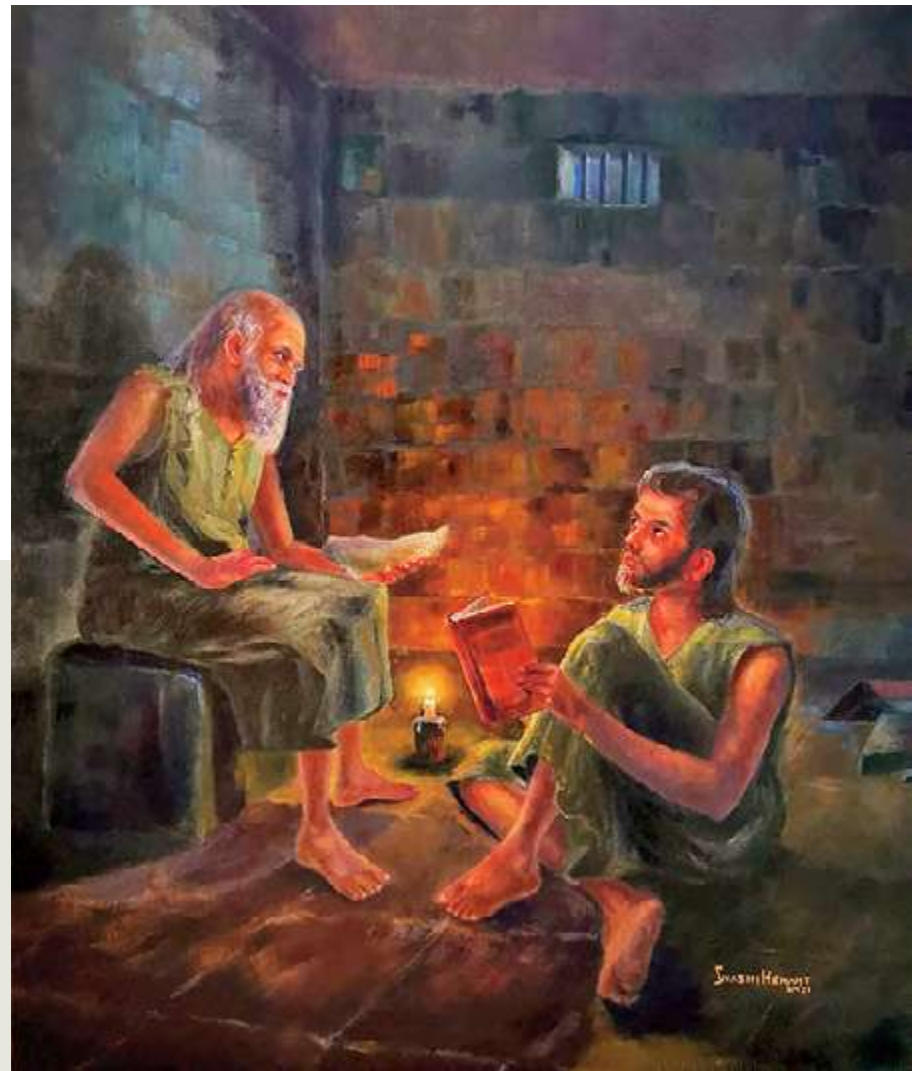
Shashi Hemant

The Count of Monte Cristo
Alexandre Dumas

Opening lines of the story begins as follows:

On the 24th of February, 1815, the lookout of Notre-Dame de la Garde signalled the three-master, the Pharaon, from Smyrna, Trieste, and Naples.

As usual, a pilot put off immediately, and rounding the Château d'If, got on board the vessel between Cape Morgion and the Isle of Rion.



Reji Chandy
Master of the Game
Sidney Sheldon

Opening lines of this well-planned story: The large ballroom was crowded with familiar ghosts come to help celebrate her birthday. Kate Blackwell watched them mingle with the flesh-and-blood people, and in her mind, the scene was a dreamlike fantasy as the visitors from another time and place glided around the dance floor with the unsuspecting guests in black tie and long, shimmering evening gowns.



Aparna Deshmukh
To the Lighthouse
Virginia Woolf

Opening lines of this book begins with a conversation: "Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay. "But you will have to be up with the lark," she added.

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition was bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch.



Shalini Varma
A Thousand Splendid Suns
Khaled Hosseini

Opening lines of this very popular book: "Mariam was five years old the first time she heard the word harami."

It happened on a Thursday. It must have, because Mariam remembered that she had been restless and preoccupied that day, the way she was only on Thursdays, the day Jalil visited her at the Kolba.



Sushmita Gupta
Sister of my Heart
Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni

Opening lines of this moving story of two cousins:

"They say in the old tales that the first night after a child is born, the Bidhata Purush comes down to earth himself to decide what its fortune is to be. That is why they bathe babies in sandalwood water and wrap them in soft red malmal, the colour of luck. That is why they leave sweetmeats by the cradle. Silver-leafed sandesh, dark pantuas floating in golden syrup, jilipis orange as the heart of a fire, glazed with honey-sugar."



Khursheed Raja
The Overstory
Richard Powers

Opening lines of this engrossing, multi-generational tale:

"Now is the time of the chestnuts. People are hurling stones at the giant trunks. The nuts fall all around them in a divine hall. It happens in countless places this Sunday, from Georgia to Maine. Up in Concord, Thoreau takes part. He feels he is casting rocks at a sentient being, with a duller sense than his own, yet still a blood relation. Old trees are our parents, and our parents' parents, perchance. If you would learn the secrets of Nature..."

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Photos Syed Fasiuddin

GLIMPSES OF A GLORIOUS VISION

A mixed bag of paintings by budding as well as seasoned artists in Oman - expatriates as well as Omanis - is currently on display at the Art & Soul gallery, in Water Front mall, at Shatti Qurm

Hubert Vaz

A special exhibition, titled 'Oman Vistas 21', the second such exhibition hosted by Art & Soul gallery (which had opened exactly a year ago) was inaugurated by Prof Ibrahim Noor al Bakry, of Sultan Qaboos University, to mark Oman's 51st National Day. The exhibition, highlighting the panoramic vision of the architect of modern Oman, the Late HM, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, will continue till November 28.

The collection of artworks on display include paintings in water colours, acrylic, nail and string artworks, pencil sketches, resin and antique gold mirror work, depicting varied aspects of Oman, from panoramic views of the landscape and lifestyle of the populace to portraits



of the Late HM Sultan Qaboos as well as of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Through this exhibition, viewers can get inspiring glimpses into Oman's culture and heritage which has come a long way since the inception of its Renaissance, 51 years ago.

Participating artists said at the inauguration that it was a great pleasure as well as a privilege to showcase their work in an exhibition to mark the 51st National Day. The exhibition was held at the apt time when Oman has fully opened up with regard to organising community events, with due adherence to all precautions surrounding the pandemic, they said.

The entries received for the exhibition on the theme - Oman's Culture, Heritage & People - was overwhelming, and the



space seemed inadequate to accommodate all entries. Nevertheless, due consideration was given to those fitting best within the theme, Kethki Ambekar, director of the gallery, said, adding that there was no restrictions on the medium, though sizes of the artworks were kept within 50-100cm.

"Most of the exhibits are on sale, while the gallery will also make an effort to showcase selected paintings in different locations in Oman," she said, adding that around 65 works created by 48 artists are on display.

I have presented humble tributes to two great leaders (Late Sultan Qaboos and HM Sultan Haitham) and every minute spent on these sketches were truly fulfilling

SHASHIKUMAR MENON

HOTLINES

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Muscat Pharmacy: Ruwi
24702542, Salalah
23291635
Al Hashar Pharmacy: Ruwi
24783334

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22004000, 94267068 / 97049520
94442000 (Emergency)
Al Raffah Hospital: Muscat -
24618900/1/2/3
Sohar - 26704639/49/50
Apollo Hospital Muscat,
Hamriya: 24787766,
24782666, 24787780
Abeer Hospital, Ruwi, Muscat
24770800, 90999335,
90999334 (Emergency)
Starcare Hospital:
24557200
Emergency number:
24558333
Dr Harub's Clinic:
24563217, 2456381,
99254940 (Emergency)
Emirates Medical Center:
24604540
KIMS Oman Hospital:
24760105
Lama Polyclinic: CBD
24799077, 24788881,
24788577, 24707566,
24799655, Al Khuwayr
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Demetrius Andrade (left) reacts after declared winner in a game against Jason Quigley in the WBO middleweight title, in Manchester, US (AFP)

Andrade crushes Quigley to retain WBO middleweight title

New York, US - Demetrius Andrade retained his World Boxing Organization middleweight title in impressive style Friday with a second-round knockout of Irish challenger Jason Quigley.

Andrade dropped Quigley with a right hook in the first round of the bout at SNHU Arena in Manchester, New Hampshire, and sent him to the canvas again in the second with a punishing left.

Even as Andrade began his celebrations the gutsy Quigley beat the count, but as he went down under another onslaught referee Arthur Mercante Jr called a halt at 2:24 of the round.

"I did what I said and I felt good," said Andrade, who improved to 31-0 with 19 knockouts and reiterated his desire to take on the biggest names in the middleweight division.

"Who's next? What's next? Jaime Munguia needs to be fighting me. I want to get in with the best," he said. "Line 'em up. The fans need to demand these

fighters and ask for the best against the best."

Andrade (33) was fighting for the first time since a unanimous decision victory over Britain's Liam Williams in April.

He has made five defences of the WBO belt he won in October 2018.

Quigley, fighting in his first world title bout after beating American Shane Mosley Jr in May, fell to 19-2.

On the undercard, World Boxing Council flyweight world champion Julio Cesar Martinez's title defence against McWilliams Arroyo ended in a no-contest after two rounds after Arroyo was cut over his left eye by an accidental head butt.

Mexico's Martinez, 16-1 with 14 knockouts and 1 no-contest, retained his title.

Both fighters were knocked down in the first round and Martinez dropped Puerto Rican Arroyo in the second after the cut had opened.

AFP

Bayern suffer 'bitter' defeat at Augsburg



Bayern Munich's French defender Benjamin Pavard jumps above Augsburg's Swiss forward Andi Zeqiri vying for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga match, in Augsburg, southern Germany, on Friday (AFP)

Augsburg, Germany - Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich crashed to a shock 2-1 defeat at strugglers Augsburg on Friday without Germany midfielder Joshua Kimmich, who is back in quarantine after contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19.

Goals by Mads Pedersen and Andre Hahn put Augsburg 2-0 up and although Robert Lewandowski claimed his 14th goal in 12 league games, it was not enough to rescue Bayern.

"We deserve to fall behind in the first half," Thomas Mueller told DAZN after his 600th appearance for Bayern ended in disappointment.

"We gave away possession, dealt with crosses badly. This is a bitter setback for us and our confidence."

The Bundesliga leaders suffered only their second league defeat this season and their third in all competitions while Augsburg escaped the bottom three.

Second-placed Borussia Dortmund can now trim Bayern's four-point lead when they host Stuttgart on Saturday.

Thick fog shrouded the Augsburg Arena, but the hosts were crystal clear with their game plan.

Brazilian left-back Iago caused havoc on the flank as Augsburg, who were third from bottom before kick-off, raced into a deserved 2-0 lead.

Iago floated in a cross to

Swiss striker Andi Zeqiri, who laid the ball off to Pedersen to drill his first Bundesliga goal past Manuel Neuer after 23 minutes.

With Kimmich again watching at home having only been released from house quarantine on Tuesday, Bayern struggle in mid-field.

Augsburg doubled their lead to the joy of home fans when Kimmich's replacement Marcel Sabitzer lost possession and Iago again swung in a cross which Hahn headed home on 36 minutes.

Bayern responded when Thomas Mueller deftly flicked the ball into the path of Lewandowski who drilled his shot home despite Augsburg goalkeeper Rafal Gikiewicz getting a glove to the ball.

With Bayern 2-1 down at the break, Julian Nagelsmann plugged the pace on the flanks by bringing on right-back Alphonso Davies - who Mueller nicknamed 'Bayern's Road Runner'.

The fleet-footed Canadian stemmed Augsburg's attacks on the flank and had two clear chances, but with twenty minutes to go Nagelsmann added a second striker with Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting alongside Lewandowski.

With time ticking down, Lewandowski was denied by a great save from Gikiewicz as Augsburg held on for the first win over Bayern since 2015.

AFP

Players must be vaccinated for Australian Open: Tournament chief

Melbourne, Australia - All players at the Australian Open must be vaccinated, tournament chief Craig Tiley confirmed on Saturday, piling more pressure on world number one Novak Djokovic, who has refused to reveal if he has been inoculated.

Melbourne, where January's Grand Slam is held, has spent more than 260 days under lockdown during the pandemic and

the government of the state of Victoria made clear last month there would be no concessions for unvaccinated players.

Tiley said the playing group know they must get the jab to compete at Melbourne Park.

"There's a lot of speculation about vaccination and just to be really clear, when the (Victoria) premier announced that everyone on site... will need to be vac-

inated, we made that clear to the playing group," he told Channel Nine television.

"All the playing group understands it, our patrons will need to be vaccinated, all the staff working at the Australian Open will need to be vaccinated."

This includes nine-time champion Djokovic.

Tiley said the Serbian superstar, who would be gunning for

a record 21st Grand Slam singles title if he competes in Melbourne, 'has said that he views this as a private matter for him'.

"We would love to see Novak here. He knows that he'll have to be vaccinated to play here," he added.

"He's won the Australian Open nine times, I think he'd love to make it double digits and

win it 10 times."

Djokovic said this month he would await official confirmation on the requirements from Tennis Australia before making a decision.

"I am going to decide on whether I go to Australia after I see an official statement from Tennis Australia," he said on the eve of the Paris Masters.

AFP

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f t y i n



Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton pits during the third practice session ahead of the Qatari Formula One Grand Prix on Saturday (AFP)

Bottas, Hamilton shut out Verstappen in Qatar practice

Doha, Qatar - Valtteri Bottas and Lewis Hamilton dominated Qatar Grand Prix third practice with Red Bull's championship leader Max Verstappen off the pace ahead of qualifying later on Saturday.

Bottas topped the time sheets with a 1min 22.310, a record fastest lap at the Losail circuit's inaugural Formula One weekend.

Hamilton, who goes into this third last race of the season 14 points behind his arch rival, took second at 0.078sec.

Verstappen appears to have work to do to trouble the Mer-

cedes men as he took third but some 0.341sec off Bottas' effort.

Qualifying for the 20th race of 2021 gets underway under floodlights at 17.00 hrs with Bottas bidding for his third pole in as many weekends.

The Finn, who moves to Alfa Romeo next season, fronted the grid in Mexico and Brazil, but was overtaken around the first corner in both races by Verstappen.

The Dutch driver duly won in Mexico, but was swept aside by a Hamilton on fire in Sao Paulo last Sunday.

AFP

Fierce contention on penultimate day of the 49er, 49erFX and Nacra 17 World Championship

Muscat - The 49er, 49erFX and Nacra 17 World Championship, being held in Barcelo Mussanah Resort in Oman has entered into a phase of fierce contention on its penultimate day.

John Gimson and Anna Burnett foiling into the lead of the Nacra 17 World Championship with an impressively composed display of high-speed tactics and strategy.

Scores of 5, 1, 2 could so easily have been a string of bullets, but the British results were still the best of the fleet in light to medium, ever-shifting conditions.

The Olympic silver medallists and 2021 European Champions are now in pole position to defend their 2020 world title, having moved six points ahead of the previous championship leaders from Italy.

"That wasn't easy," said a still-wet Gimson, shaking his head as the dark covered Mussana Beach.

"It's a chip-away regatta," he added alluding to the multiple losses and gains he and Burnett had to manage.

Chip away is what the top sailors in all the fleets had to do in a breeze that barely settled in at eight to 10 knots and refused to settle down with subtle shifts all day.

Gianluigi Ugolini and Maria Giubilei have clearly benefited from being the tune-up boat to the reigning Italian gold medalists Ruggero Tita and Caterina



Banti.

However the fast-improving Italians couldn't match British consistency and sailed to respectable but unremarkable scores of 7, 4, 6 to lie two places



three points behind the Italians.

France's Tim Mourniac and Lou Berthomeu also staked their intentions for a podium spot at Sunday's prize-giving ceremony.

The French finished 2, 5, 5 to

put themselves just four points behind the Olympic bronze medallists from Germany.

The 2019 World Champions Vittorio Bissaro and Maelle Frascari worked their way

through to the front of race one for a win. It was a great comeback after a torrid previous day on the water.

Leading the final race, the Italians let Germany and Great Britain make their move to the right-hand side of the final run and dropped to third at the finish, an opportunity missed for the ambitious Italians.

With just one fleet race in the morning before the 10-boat Medal Race, time is running out for the chasing pack to make up lost ground.

At the end of the penultimate day, it's the same three nations who won Olympic medals at Tokyo 2020 in podium position in Oman - Great Britain, Italy and Germany.

Pakistan seal series thumping Bangladesh

Bangladesh managed 44 in their last 10 overs, which left them with only 108 to defend. Pakistan reached the target with Fakhar Zaman scoring 57 and Rizwan 39

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Pakistan sauntered to an unassailable 2-0 lead in the T20I series with an eight-wicket win over Bangladesh in the second game in Dhaka. Their bowlers did the bulk of the work, restricting the home side to 108 for 7 with an effective display in the second half of the innings.

Shaheen Shah Afridi and Shadab Khan took two wickets each, with excellent support from Mohammad Wasim Jr and Haris Rauf, who didn't let Bangladesh get away in the death overs.

Pakistan then took 18.1 overs to reach the total. Mohammad Rizwan and Fakhar Zaman added 85 runs for the second wicket, their partnership ending when Pakistan only needed 12 to win. Fakhar remained unbeaten on 57 off 51 balls, while Rizwan made 39 off 45. Pakistan had a straight-forward chase mainly because of how their bowlers shut down the home side. Bangladesh were 64 for 3 at the halfway stage of their innings, and only managed 44 in their last 10 overs for the loss of four wickets. That, ultimately, made all the difference.



Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan (right) and Fakhar Zaman take a single during the second Twenty20 international match against Bangladesh, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka on Saturday (AFP)

SCOREBOARD	
BANGLADESH	
M Naim	c F Zaman b M Wasim 2 (8)
S Hassan	lbw b S Shah Afridi 0 (1)
N H Shanto	c & b S Khan 40 (34)
A Hossain	c M Rizwan b S Khan 20 (21)
Mahmudullah	c M Rizwan b H Rauf 12 (15)
N Hasan	c M Rizwan b S Shah Afridi 11 (13)
M Hasan	c & b M Nawaz 3 (8)
A Islam	not out 8 (16)
T Ahmed	not out 2 (4)
Extras	(lb 8, w 2) 10
TOTAL	108/7 in 20 overs
Fall of wickets	1-1, 2-5, 3-51, 4-79, 5-82, 6-88, 7-102
Bowling	S S Afridi 4-0-15-2, M Wasim 3-0-9-1, S Malik 2-0-16-0, H Rauf 3-0-13-1, S Khan 4-0-22-2, M Nawaz 4-0-25-1
PAKISTAN	
M Rizwan	c S Hassan b A slam 39 (45)
B Azam	b M Rahman 1 (5)
F Zaman	not out 57 (51)
Haider Ali	not out 6 (8)
Extras	(lb 2, w 4) 6
TOTAL	109/2 in 18.1 overs
Fall of wickets	1-12, 2-97
Bowling	M Hasan 4-0-23-0, T Ahmed 4-0-22-0, M Rahman 2-1-0-12-1, S Islam 1-5-0-10-0, A Islam 4-0-30-1, N H Shanto 1-0-3-0, A Hossain 1-0-6-0, Saif Hassan 0-1-0-1-0

their variations superbly. It was the opposite of how Bangladesh had batted in the first game. They had scored 87 in the last ten overs on Friday, hitting seven sixes and a four.

From a fairly promising 78 for 3 after 12 overs, Bangladesh slowed down following the dismissals of Mahmudullah and Najmul Hossain Shanto. From thereon, the lower middle order couldn't even move the needle, and the last five overs only brought 23 runs.

Afridi hits Afif

Shaheen Shah Afridi may have felt he had a bit of a fan following going in Dhaka, but all of that went for a toss in the third over of the day when he struck Afif Hossain's foot with a throw towards the batter's end after picking up the ball in his follow-through. It was quite unnecessary as Afif was right back in his crease after tapping the ball towards the fast bowler. The throw was Afridi's way of showing his displeasure after Afif had

flicked him for a six off the previous delivery.

Afridi immediately said sorry to Afif, and stood around to show his concern while the physio tended to him, but the crowd would have none of it. They booed Afridi, and some even called out "Matthew Wade" from the stands to remind him of Pakistan's T20 World Cup semi-final defeat. Afridi, however, waved back, and that seemed to appease that section of the crowd quite quickly.

At 82 for 4 in the 14th over, Bangladesh were quite well-placed when Shadab Khan made a crucial breakthrough, taking a superb tumbling return catch to his left off the leading edge of Najmul Hossain Shanto, to send him back for 40 off 34 balls. This was his second wicket of a left-hand batter, having earlier removed Afif Hossain, whose attempted reverse-paddle in the ninth over ended up as a simple catch for wicketkeeper Rizwan.

Asghar's century leads Bank Muscat to defeat OCT Muscat

Muscat - An aggressive century by Asghar Khan, studded with 15 boundaries ensured that Bank Muscat easily brush aside OCT Muscat by 99 runs in the B Division match of the Oman Cricket League.

Asghar, who scored 102 off 68 balls, completely dominated the OCT bowling attack, helping Bank Muscat score 256 for the loss of seven wickets in 30 overs after winning the toss and electing to bat first.

In reply, OCT Muscat could muster only 157 before being bundled out in 30 overs.



Munthir al Balushi offered the only resistance with 40 runs while Mohsin Nazir chipped in with three wickets for Bank Muscat.



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