



TUESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2021

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30°C/21°C

SEEB EDGE RUSTAQ TO STAY ON TOP

GO TO PAGE 16 SPORTS

HM appoints army, navy, air force chiefs

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued two Royal Decrees on Monday reading as follows:

Royal Decree No 10/2021 appoints a Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence.

Article 1 appoints Dr Mohammed Nasser Ali al Za'abi as Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence with the rank of a minister.

Article 2 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue.

Royal Decree No 11/2021 refers to military promotions and appointments.

Article 1 promotes Rear Admiral Abdullah Khamis Abdullah al Ra'eesi to the rank of Vice Admiral and appoints him Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces.

Continued on Page 04



SAF Chief: Abdullah Khamis Abdullah al Ra'eesi



RAFO Chief: Khamis Hammad Sultan al Ghafri



RNO Chief: Saif Nasser Mohsen al Rahbi



Commandant NDC: Saleh Yahya Mas'oud al Maskari



Secy General, Ministry of Defence: Mohammed Nasser Ali al Za'abi

24-year-old creates micro weather device

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Saud al Mukhaini from the wilayat of Sur, South Sharqiyah, has designed a micro weather station device for use by outdoor workers and adventure enthusiasts. Billed as the smallest weather station in the world, the device is being manufactured by BRQ Advanced Technology and will be launched in June 2021.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, the 24-year-old mechanical engineering alumnus of Sur College, said, "I am interested in the weather. The idea for this device emerged following my need for a micro weather station that I could carry around with me. My study of mechanical and electronics engineering was useful in developing and designing the device."

Mukhaini established BRQ Advanced Technology in November 2020 and the device has been branded 'BRQ-Micro weather station'.

The micro weather station provides accurate data, including temperature, pressure, humidity, dew point and heat index. The device works without Internet



Saud al Mukhaini

connection; it has nanometric sensors and a screen displaying weather data required by outdoor workers and adventurers.

Mukhaini's biggest challenge in designing the device was downscaling it. "Sourcing parts and raw materials was another problem."

Additionally, there were shipment delays as a result of COVID-19 movement restrictions.

"This micro weather station device is a great opportunity to let the world know more about Oman and the pioneering role it played in the field of navigation and weather forecast."

SAYYID THEYAZIN OFFICIATES ANNUAL RESEARCH FORUM

The seventh Annual Research Forum was held under the patronage of H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, on Monday. Twelve winners of the National Research Awards were announced at the event (ONA)



Sayyid Shihab receives invitation from ruler of Dubai



Muscat - H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik bin Taimour al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received a written message from Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister, Ruler of Dubai and Minister of Defence of the United Arab Emirates, inviting him to attend the 15th International Defence Exhibition and Conference (IDEX) and the Naval Defence and Maritime Security Exhibition (NAVDEX 2021) in February.

The invitation was delivered by Mohammed Sultan al Suwaidi, UAE's Ambassador to

the sultanate, when he visited H H Sayyid Shihab in his office at Al Murtafaa Camp on Monday.

The meeting reviewed the fraternal relations binding the two brotherly countries and discussed a number of issues of common concern.

H H Sayyid Shihab also received H E Ayse Sozen Usluer, Ambassador of Turkey to the sultanate, at Al Murtafaa Camp on Monday. The two sides reviewed relations between the two friendly countries and exchanged views on matters of common interest.

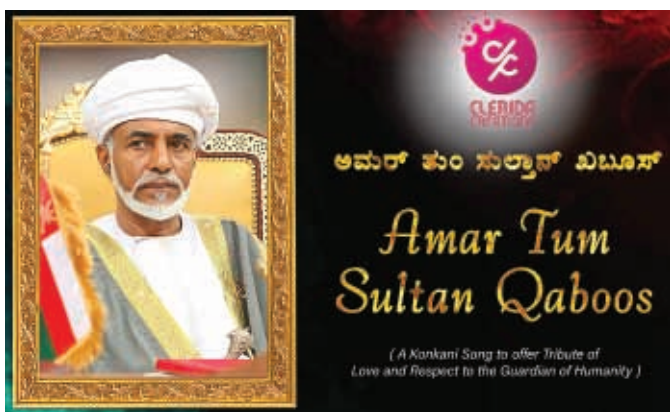
ONA

Sultan Qaboos' legacy of peace and dignity highlighted in Konkani song

The Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's legacy of peace and dignity for all continues today and the expat community in the sultanate shares the same love and respect for the beloved leader as the citizens.

Paying tribute to Baba Qaboos, an expatriate couple hailing from Mangalore, India, has released a song in Konkani.

Lyricist Clarence Pinto, who



has lived in Oman for 27 years, said, "His Majesty Sultan Qaboos was the guardian of all the people in Oman, and an inspiration to the world. He taught us the meaning of generosity and true humanity." Pinto described his death as "an immeasurable loss" for all communities in Oman.

Having experienced the love of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and the welcoming nature of the

people of Oman inspired Pinto to write *Amar Tum Sultan Qaboos*. "This is my tribute to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and expression of gratitude to the people of Oman."

Calling Oman his second home, Pinto, who works as general manager of a fire and safety company, said, "Oman has given us, our family and fellow Indians, everything that we need."

Pinto likened the lyrics of *Amar Tum Sultan Qaboos* to an outpour of emotions for the late leader, the Omani people and the country.

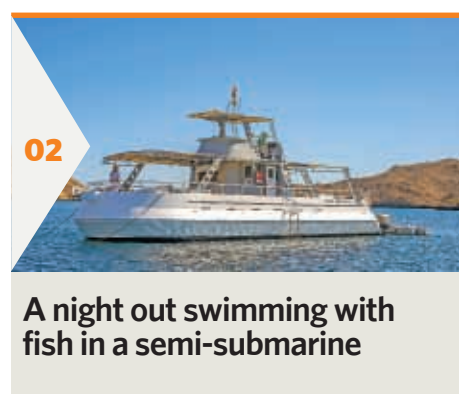
"Every person who lives or has lived in this beautiful country loves and respects Baba Qaboos. The song will be enjoyed by anyone who has a connection with Oman," Pinto said.

He added that to expand its viewership, English and Arabic

subtitles have been added to the video.

Sung by Pinto's wife Jane Ida Pais, the track is set to music by Roshan D'Souza, a renowned composer from Mangalore.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the song couldn't be recorded in Muscat as originally planned. The vocals were recorded in Muscat and sent to Mangalore for post-production. (Text by Syed Fasiuddin)



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A night out swimming with fish in a semi-submarine



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Hotels at sixes and sevens due to quarantine rule



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Tips to help take care of your nails during winter



A NIGHT OUT SWIMMING WITH FISH



Aquarius Tours & Events’ semi-submarine offers an overnight underwater experience with dinner and breakfast, besides dolphin watching and water sports



(Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tourism company led by a father-son duo has transformed a semi-submarine vessel into a luxurious underwater suite that can accommodate four people - arguably the first such facility in the region. Measuring 16m in length and more than 5m in width, the semi-submarine has three toilets - two on the top deck and one, including a shower, in the bottom deck. It also has a small kitchen equipped with modern conveniences.

On board are three staff members - one for catering services; one for safety, hygiene and cleaning; and the captain to overlook everything. “We offer an overnight underwater experience with dinner and breakfast, fun fishing, dolphin watching, beach hopping, snorkelling, kayaking and other water sports. We also have day trips for those who don’t feel comfortable sleeping in an underwater environment. We can also do small events,” Hisham Hamood al Maskari said in an exclusive interview to *Muscat Daily*.

Maskari co-founded Aquarius Tours & Events with his father Hamood Sulaiman al Maskari a year ago to showcase the hidden treasures of Oman to the world. “We concentrate mostly on sea tourism. Our semi-submarine specialises in overnight underwater experiences and small events.”

He claimed pride in the fact that Oman is likely the first country in the region to have a semi-submarine with an underwater fully furnished bedroom suite. Repurposing of the vessel was completed in December 2020 and it is now operational.

“My father and I saw an opportunity when we came across a semi-submarine that was owned by the Ministry of Tourism two years ago. We bought it and rebuilt the whole thing from scratch. The project took us about eight months to complete,” Maskari recounted how the project started.

“We started operating by providing tourists the opportunity to view the underwater marine life in Bandar al Khairan. The semi-sub is big enough to accommodate over 50 guests at a time. The project was successful

Like the rest of the world, the tourism industry in Oman was hit hard. So we had to adapt. We could no longer accommodate 50 people at a time due to the risk of spreading the virus and we needed a new concept for the semi-sub

HISHAM HAMOOD AL MASKARI

as it was the first of its kind in the Gulf region providing a glimpse of the underwater world to those who don’t know how to dive, snorkel or swim.”

Unfortunately just as the semi-sub was gaining popularity, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. “Like the rest of the world, the tourism industry in Oman was hit hard. So we

had to adapt. We could no longer accommodate 50 people at a time due to the risk of spreading the virus and we needed a new concept for the semi-sub.”

The Maskaris started renovating the semi-sub again in September, converting the underwater deck into a suite that can accommodate a maximum of four with a fully functioning bathroom.

“Oman needs this kind of projects more than ever now in these times of the COVID-19 pandemic. ‘Social distancing’ was one of the most used words in 2020 and with the semi-sub we are minimising the risk of the virus by cutting down from 50 to only two to four people. Plus it’s a unique and fresh idea,” Maskari said.

He noted that every country is looking to improve its tourism sector and he believes that “our new project will help contribute to the success of the tourism industry in Oman”.

The biggest challenge was renovating and refitting the underwater suite. “We had to make the underwater room as comfortable as possible for a one-of-a-kind experience. It is fully equipped with the comforts of a hotel room or your own home,” Maskari said.

While they have not yet sought help for their semi-sub project, Maskari said they have always had the support of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, family and friends.

“As it’s the first project like this in the Gulf region, we would greatly appreciate the support of everyone locally and internationally in spreading the word and by coming onboard and spending the day with us. If we can make this a success and have people talk about it worldwide, it’ll encourage more people to visit this amazing country and that’ll contribute to the local tourism sector.”

Hotels at sixes and sevens due to quarantine rule



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The seven-day mandatory quarantine rule has severely affected tourism and the hotel industry. Hoteliers say the present rule discourages tourists from visiting Oman as nobody wants to be stuck in a hotel for seven days.

Faisal al Balushi, owner of Muttrah Hotel, said, "We understand the situation and so welcome the rule as a precautionary measure, but at the same time we feel that seven days of quarantine has a severe effect on the hospitality industry in Oman. Nobody will travel to a country where they have to stay quarantined for seven days."

The rule has already upset vacation plans of a number

We feel that seven days of quarantine has a severe effect on the hospitality industry in Oman. Nobody will travel to a country where they have to stay quarantined for seven days

FAISAL AL BALUSHI

of tourists.

George, from an Eastern European country, who wanted to spend New Year's Eve in Oman, was disappointed when he came to know about the rule.

At Muscat International Airport immigration, he said, "I was unaware of the rule and thus got trapped in a hotel, but soon I decided to leave for Dubai. It makes no sense to be locked up in a holiday for seven days."

He added, "People must un-

derstand that on a trip, we cannot afford to spend a long time in hotel rooms. It's my mistake that I didn't check the rules properly but a seven-day quarantine is discouraging."

Though there has been an increase in staycations and some business during holidays like Eid and Christmas, the lack of international tourists has impacted the hospitality business significantly.

Surya Muduli, general manager of Royal Crown Hotel in Al Khuwayr, said, "The hotel industry is badly hit as guests, mostly corporates, cannot leave the hotel during quarantine. Hotel tariffs have drastically gone down and taken a heavy toll on the hospitality sector. It is difficult to run day-to-day operations now."

"Guests are not allowed to venture out for meetings or day trips because of the GPS tracking system, which is compulsory during the quarantine period."

An industry expert added that Oman also attracts short-stay travellers, but with the seven-day rule, they would definitely reconsider their travel plans. This denies the already struggling industry some earnings during a tough time.

Commercial fishing vessel launched to boost production

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Al Wusta Industries Company (AWFI), an affiliate of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), marked the commissioning of a new vessel *Jawharat al Wusta* in its fleet which docked at the Port Sultan Qaboos in Muttrah on Monday.

The new commercial fishing vessel was launched under the auspices of H E Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Abdulsalam bin Mohammed bin Abdullah al Murshidi, head of Oman Investment Authority.

The vessel takes the fleet at AWFI to three with a total production capacity augmented to 70,000 tonnes per year of small pelagic fish.

The company will invest in the vessel to operate in the high seas outside the traditional fishing areas in accordance with the approved environmental and commercial standards, which will



(Supplied photo)

contribute to raising fish production in the sultanate, support economic diversification, and enhance the level of competitiveness of Omani fish products in global markets.

Jawharat al Wusta is 99m by 16m and has a capacity of 1,600 tonnes. It is distinguished for its hi-tech equipment and designed to serve as a fisheries processing, freezing and packaging unit. The vessel comes as a continuation of a number of projects carried out by FDO and its subsidiary companies, including

shrimp cultivation projects in the wilayats of Jalaan Bani Bu Hasan and Jalaan Bani Bu Ali, and a shrimp aquaculture project in Barr al Hikman.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the total quantity of fish landed in the sultanate was 608,000 tonnes at the end of October 2020. Artisanal fishing contributed 580,000 tonnes of fish, while coastal fishing contributed about 3,000 tonnes and commercial fishing around 25,000 tonnes.

TENDER NOTICE

The Internal Tender Committee of Port of Duqm Company SAOC, hereby announces the following Tender:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of receiving Specifications	Date of Bid Submission	Suppliers	Tender Fee OMR	Place of Submission
ITC/T/001/2021	Design, Fabrication, Supply, and Commissioning of Mobile Steel Hoppers. 02 Nos	02nd Feb 2021	23rd Feb 2021	Only Specialized Companies	355/- OMR Non Refundable	Port of Duqm Company 3rd floor

Taking into consideration the following:

All specialized companies that wish to participate in the tender must deposit the tender amount into the bank account of the Company (details of the bank account is set out hereunder) and submit the original payment receipt of the tender along with a copy of the Commercial Registration Certificate and the contact details of the authorized individual (business card) to the address presented below.

From 08:00 - 13:00 and 14:00 (Sunday - Thursday).

Payment Information:

1. Bank Transfer:

Account Name	Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C
Account Number	0423047518510013
Bank Name	Bank Muscat
Branch	Ghala Corporate Branch
Bank ID Code	BMUSOMRXXXX

2. Credit/Debit Card at Port of Duqm Muscat Office.

Complete Tender documents should be submitted in sealed envelope with red wax with tender number and title and addressed to the "Chairman of Internal Tender Committee". The envelope should not make any reference to the bidder details.

All applicants are required to submit the Tender in the Tender box in the main office of Port of Duqm Company at or before 02:00 PM on the assigned date for submission of the Tender. Tenders submitted after the above mentioned date and time shall not be considered.

- * The company is not obliged to accept the lowest offer or any other offer without any justifiable reasons.
- * The company reserve the right to issue the order either in part or full for the quoted items without any justifiable reasons.
- * The company reserve the right to reject the tenders not complying with the tender documentation requirement.

For any clarification, please contact us through tenders@portduqm.com

Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C.

PO Box: 2409, PC: 111, Sultanate of Oman, Almahreq Building, 18 November Street, N. Azaiba, T: (+968) 24342800 | F: (+968) 24587343 | www.portofduqm.om



Sultanate takes part in WHO Executive Board meet

Muscat - The sultanate is participating in the virtual meeting of the World Health Organization's 148th session of the Executive Board with a delegation being led by H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health and First Deputy Member of the Executive Board of WHO.

The meeting commenced on Monday. Its nine-day session will focus on the main pillars including '1bn more people benefitting from universal coverage, 1bn more people better protected from health emergencies, 1bn more people enjoying better health and well-being, and a more effective and efficient WHO providing better support to countries'.

The meeting will review reports of the regional committees to the Executive Board and consider their recommendations and comments. The meeting on Monday highlighted health emergencies, including preparedness and response, particularly regarding COVID-19, where updates on activities to combat the pandemic were provided.

The board also noted a report on strengthening WHO's global emergency preparedness and response.

In an address, H E Dr Sa'eedi commended the WHO on the elaborate yet streamlined framework structure of the Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021-2030 having seven global strategic objectives, five strategies, six principles and five milestones.

He added that this action plan would no doubt represent a comprehensive reference for member states to develop their national strategies and operational plans towards enhancing patient safety.

He stressed that global action on patient safety is at the core of many other global health issues and Sustainable Development Goals. It relates not only to people-centredness, but also to hygiene, expanded access to information and technology, innovation, expanded health-care coverage, adequate infrastructure, and international cooperation.



OPINION

SALEH MIRI, MUSCAT DAILY COLUMNIST, IS AN ARCHITECT WHO CAME TO OMAN IN THE EARLY 1980S



Apartment living is a Western way of living, and not much appreciated by Middle Eastern people. The sultanate is presently using only nine per cent of its land, with the rest being deserts, wadis, mountains, hills, etc.

The population of Oman is around 2.739mn, out of which 70 per cent are aged below 30 years. These future active citizens will require housing.

Apartment living is a Western way of living, and not much appreciated by Middle Eastern people. The sultanate is presently using only nine per cent of its land, with the rest being deserts, wadis, mountains, hills, etc.

Housing is, therefore, a vital need; but what type of a need? It is often mentioned "affordable" and understood that it is cheap housing. The price is not really relevant. What is being offered is more important. 'Cheap' does not satisfy the need, but properly designed housing, offering the same guidelines as a standard house is a more correct offer.

There are several aspects which make a house a place to live. It has to be practical, offering good views, and easily accessible. And most importantly, allowing the residents of the house to be able to express their identity or adapting the house to the growing needs of the family.

Additionally, architecture in the Middle East is quite different from the Western world. In this part of the world, we use three divisions within the house - the inner, private spaces which are not accessible to people outside of the family, the public areas of the house and the service areas. The symmetry of these spaces is quite difficult to master, given the fact that

the external expression has to be in line with the global perception of a very fine line from which the spaces are carved in, not allowing any protrusion.

A balcony in the Middle East is a space carved in from the façade and not an additional space protruding from the façade.

If all these centuries these principles have been implemented, why try to implement something which is alien to the local culture.

Unfortunately many designs, which are cut-and-paste copies of other areas, are being implemented in Oman and preventing people to evolve in their natural environment.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A house is not a car that one changes often; it is an environment in which the families grow and as such worth spending time and analysing.

The identity of a country needs to be respected; the overall image of a country largely depends on its buildings. When you mention New York or Dubai, one thinks automatically of high-rises; when you think of Japan, you see small houses next to each other, etc. Proper identity will allow respect and economic growth.

Middle Eastern architecture is so rich that it is worth learning more about it.

In the Middle East, architectural language talks to us, suggests environments, clarifies relations, and the Western world has copied just some details from our culture. Let us revive our existing culture and make the people proud of what they achieve.

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

Over 18,000 register for soft skills training project

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour has announced that 18,134 jobseekers registered for the Khibrat Programme in three days and added that it hopes to train 1,000 jobseekers with soft skills during January.

In a statement, the ministry said Khibrat is a collaboration between ministries and is aimed at enhancing the employability skills of higher diploma holders and graduates and preparing

Khibrat targets jobseekers in five governorates: Muscat, North Batinah, South Batinah, South Sharqiyah and Dakhliyah

them for work as well as job interviews. 'Soft skills, including time management, working as part of a team, work ethics and

communication skills are also delivered in the five-day intensive Khibrat programme,' the ministry said. The programme targets jobseekers in five governorates: Muscat, North Batinah, South Batinah, South Sharqiyah and Dakhliyah.

The ministry said applicants need to have met certain conditions, including being a job-seeker, having not obtained any training at government expense and obtained a bachelor's degree, higher diploma or general education diploma.

Municipality to lead beach clean-up drive in Seeb



(Supplied photo)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality, in cooperation with the Muscat Gas Company and volunteers, will launch a campaign on Wednesday to clean the beaches of Seeb.

An official at the municipality said the clean-up will begin at 4pm in Sur al Hadid beach, taking into account the COVID-19

precautionary measures to ensure the safety of all participants.

He added that the campaign is part of the 'Your environment is your responsibility' initiative.

The campaign aims to spread community awareness on the importance of effective partnership in preserving the environment, and taking care of natural resources, tourist sites, beaches

and public places.

"The campaign also aims to consolidate the partnership between the municipality and the community, instil a culture of volunteering, and involve community members," he said.

"The campaign stimulates the community to care about the beaches, and to preserve them in light of the spread of some unacceptable practices."

Ministry rejects distance-learning certificates

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said it will not accept certain certificates acquired through distance learning.

The ministry said three certificates obtained via distance learning - basic training certificate, certificate of proficiency in advanced fire fighting, and certificate of proficiency in survival craft and rescue boats - will not be recognised when submitting

applications to obtain a certificate of competency or a certificate of proficiency. The ministry added that these courses require the participants to engage in practical training in addition to gaining theoretical knowledge to reach the required competency.



Indian school talent fest

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Indian Author & Social Worker



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Indian Film Actress &
Classical Dancer



Kalaimamani Mr. Tippu
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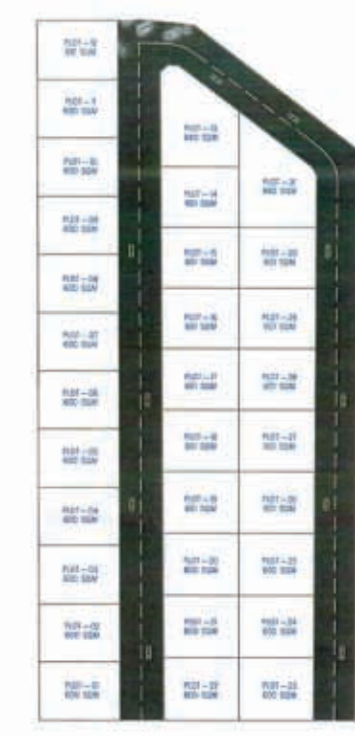
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HM appoints army, navy, air force chiefs

Continued from Page 01

Article 2 promotes Air Commodore Khamis Hammad Sultan al Ghafrri to the rank of Air Vice Marshal and appoints him Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman.

Article 3 promotes Commodore Saif Nasser Mohsen al Rahbi to the rank of Rear Admiral and appoints him Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman.

Article 4 promotes Air Commodore Eng Saleh Yahya Mas'oud al Maskari to the rank of Air Vice Marshal and appoints him Commandant of the National Defence College.

Article 5 states that this decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue.

ONA

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	5.32am
Sunrise	6.51am
Duhr	12.23pm
Asr	3.28pm
Maghrib	5.49pm
Isha	7.03pm

Bank Muscat hands over three Green Sports fields



Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, recently opened three new sports fields in South Sharqiyah in line with the bank's commitment to community development and promoting Oman as a sporting nation.

The hand over ceremonies were attended by Salim bin Rashid al Shidi, regional manager - South Sharqiyah, Bank Muscat. The opening of the Al Jawabi Sports team's field in the wilayat of Jalaan Bani Bu Ali was done in the presence of Yusuf bin Abdullah al Kasbi, the team's chairman and a number of team officials.

The opening of the Al Qahwan Sports field in the wilayat of

Jalaan Bani Bu Hasan was attended by Saleh Ali Saif al Dar'i, the team's chairman, while the opening of the Hadri Bilad Sports stadium in the wilayat of Al Kamil W'Al Wafi was held in the presence of Nasser bin Hamad al-Rasbi, the team's chairman.

Project completion certificates were handed over to the respective teams at all the events, which were organised in compliance with COVID-19 norms.

The scope of support under the Green Sports programme included installation of artificial turf or natural grass on sports fields, floodlighting and water-desalination systems.

The opening of the three

sports fields are a pointer to the success of the bank's longest running corporate social responsibility and sustainability programme.

On the occasion, Shidi said, "We congratulate all the teams for the successful opening of these Green Sports fields, which will help in creating more green spaces and also protect our environment."

"With the latest openings, the bank has handed over 114 Green Sports fields to teams across different governorates in the sultanate. Bank Muscat will be announcing the names of a new set of beneficiaries for this year, thereby continuing to build upon its flagship initiatives and programmes in the field of corporate social responsibility."

The number of beneficiaries till end-2020 reached 123 sports teams spread across the length and breadth of the sultanate, of which 114 Green Sports fields have been handed over to the respective teams.

Registration for the 2021 programme was closed recently and saw the participation of a large number of applicants. The bank will announce the names of the new beneficiaries from across Oman later this year to continue its strategy of public-private participation in building an excellent sports infrastructure across Oman and helping develop Omani sports talent.

AJIA celebrates new year with exclusive MINI offer

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC (AJIA), the official importer of BMW Group in Oman, kicks off the new year with an exclusive offer on its MINI vehicles.

Valid until March 31, customers can now kick off 2021 with new thrills as they drive home in an iconic go-kart inspired MINI. Providing a seamless buying experience for MINI enthusiasts, AJIA will include MINI Service Inclusive PLUS for five years or 100,000km (whichever comes first) and MINI Repair Inclusive (MINI warranty) for five years or 200,000km on all models. AJIA will provide complimentary vehicle registration for the first year and free vehicle insurance for two years.

Salim Sabbagh, acting chief executive officer of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles said,



"MINI has always stood out in a crowd, characterised by its dependability and versatility. As a leader in the compact segment, MINI's diversity has made it a favourite amongst people worldwide, especially here in Oman."

He added, "As our valued MINI customers journey into the new year, we challenge them to embark on a new adventure. Whether they plan to travel to a scenic mountain range or cruise

through the bustling city, MINI has something for everyone. Our customers remain our top priority, and it is our duty and promise to provide them with an incredible service coupled with best deals. With this in mind, we are confident our MINI lovers will enjoy this limited-time offer."

For more information, visit mini-oman.com or call 96178383, 96179393, or toll-free on 800 50008.

Tulip Inn Muscat changes its name to Garden Hotel

Tulip Inn Muscat reverted to its original trading name, Garden Hotel, with effect from January 15.

"This is as a result of the excellent feedback from our customers; our staff remains the same and is ready to continue providing you with good service and very clean hygiene hotel."

The hotel is still contactable on the same phone numbers but the website, email and social media addresses have changed.

Contact details are as follows:- Main telephone: 24471500; room reservations: 24471555 - 95492046; website: www.gardenhotel.om; email: reservations@gardenhotel.om

Additionally, you can book at our new brand, Garden Hotel, through on-line hotel bookings agents such as Booking.com, Expedia, Laterooms.com, TripAdvisor, Hotels.com, etc.,

Facilities and services:
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►Executive Floor Lounge and Executive Rooms
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New 2021 Infiniti QX80 brings added stylish features, tech and luxury status

Infiniti Oman has launched the 2021 Infiniti QX80 full-size luxury SUV, featuring added equipment, innovative new technologies and stylish features befitting its luxury status, in addition to a new 'Black Edition' grade.

Key additions to the flagship model include the new generation Infiniti InTouch infotainment, Premium In-Vehicle-Infotainment (P-IVI) System featuring two HD display screens, 3D maps, Apple Car Play and Android Auto capabilities. A further notable addition to the model is the BOSE Performance Series with 17 speakers for high fidelity audio experience with surround sound technology.

The new 'Black Edition' grade features dark chrome and black exterior accents highlight the front grill and fascia, side fender vents, door mirror caps and rear tailgate strip. The commanding stance is heightened with the addition of dark chrome 22-inch forged alloy wheels. Three stylish interior trim colours are also available; including 'Graphite', Saddle Brown' and 'Wheat' with a revised Charcoal Ash Wood accent trim.

A senior spokesperson at Infiniti Oman said, "We are pleased to announce significant enhancements to our flagship QX80 model for our customers in Oman. The new 2021 Infiniti QX80 vows to present drivers



with even more style and luxury. The Black Edition grade has been designed keeping in mind the distinctive tastes and preferences of our customers."

The 2021 QX80 features a range of available drive-assist technologies. Blind Spot Intervention (BSI), Lane Departure Prevention (LDP), Distance Control Assist (DCA), and an updated Intelligent Cruise Control system are all included, while Android Auto and Apple CarPlay continue to bring enhanced con-

nectivity across the QX80 range. With a powerful 5.6lt V8 engine driving the rear or both axles, the QX80 is a consummate performer in all driving conditions.

A smooth-shifting seven-speed automatic transmission seamlessly channels the engine's ample power and torque reserves for an assured feeling of control behind the wheel. From travelling on the highway, towing a heavy load, or traversing tough off-road passes, the QX80

brings hand-crafted luxury, utility and sophistication for up to eight passengers.

The Infiniti QX80 is a full-size luxury SUV – the flagship of the Infiniti range. It combines bold proportions and a commanding exterior design with a spacious, high quality cabin with room for seven or eight passengers. Effortless performance, advanced drive-assist technologies and taut yet refined dynamics allow for a relaxing and confidence-inspiring drive.

Safety features

The safety features of Infiniti QX80 8S Luxe Sensory includes Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS), Infiniti VDC, Vehicle Dynamic Control, Electronic Brake Force Distribution (EBD), B-LSD with Hill Start Assist, Driver & Assist seat & curtain Airbags & Side Airbags, Advanced Airbag, Driver seat 3 point ELR with double pre-tensioners and load limiters, Assist seat 3 point ELR with double pre-tensioners and load limiters, Rear Seat Belt RH&LH:3

point ELR, Center:3 point ELR", 3rd Row seat belt, RH&LH:3 point ELR, Tire pressure monitoring system, Child anchors (with ISO-FIX), High mounted stop lamp with LED in RR spoiler, Crash sensitive door unlock, and Around view monitor, Trailer Stability assist, Predictive Forward collision warning and Remote Engine Starter.

In addition to the features of Infiniti QX80 8S Luxe Sensory, the safety attributes of Infiniti QX80 8S Luxe Sensory+ Proactive and Infiniti QX80 8S Luxe Sensory+ Proactive Black Edition include Front Pre Crash Seat Belts, Back up Collision Intervention, Smart beam (high, auto, low), with Forward Emergency braking (FEB), Pedestrian detection with Predictive forward collision warning (PFCW), Blind Spot Warning (BSW) and Intervention (BSI), Lane Departure Warning (LDW) & Prevention (LDP) and Distance Control Assist.

Produced in Kyushu, Japan, Infiniti sold more than 23,000 QX80s in 2019, with top-selling regions including North America (20,260 units), the Middle East (1,650) and Eastern Europe (1,216).

SBA commitment

SBA is largely committed to supporting Infiniti Oman's growth in the sultanate through major emphasis on customer satisfaction

and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman.

With a national network of more than 40 showrooms, service centers and parts outlets, SBA has further built upon its legacy of trust, excellent customer service and providing value for money to each of its customers.

Infiniti Motor Company Ltd is headquartered in Hong Kong with representations in 50 markets around the world.

The Infiniti brand was launched in 1989. Its range of premium automobiles is currently built in manufacturing facilities in Japan, the United States, United Kingdom and China. Infiniti design studios are located in Atsugi-Shi near Yokohama, London, San Diego and Beijing.

Infiniti is in the middle of a major product offensive. The brand has been widely acclaimed for its daring design and innovative driver-assistance technologies. From the 2016 season, Infiniti is a technical partner of the Renault Sport Formula One team, contributing its expertise in hybrid performance.

More information about Infiniti and its industry leading technologies can be found at www.infiniti.com.

You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and see all our latest videos on YouTube.

NBO enhances its QR code payments capabilities

Helping more people go cashless, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has enhanced its QR code payments capabilities, with 6,500 Point of Sale (POS) machines enabled to date.

As the first bank in Oman and the GCC region to launch QR code payments through POS machines, NBO has tied up with many of the country's most widely-used merchants including Al Maha Petrol stations, Oman Oil, Nesto, Spar and MacDonald's, to offer customers easy payments through any local mobile wallet. Continuing to upgrade and expand the service, it's part of the bank's overarching digitalisation strategy, which sees it cater to the rapidly growing digital payments landscape while offering the best possible banking experience.



Maha al Raisi, head of Retail Products at NBO, said, "Contactless payments are gaining prominence in Oman, offering a more convenient, more secure, and safer alternative to cash. As part of our leading position in the market, we are constantly building on our portfolio of digital and customer-friendly solutions, one of these being our pioneering mobile wallet. Allowing cus-

tomers to make instant payments using the QR codes with the utmost ease, all they have to do is open their bank app, scan the POS machine screen after generating the barcode and pay."

Eliminating the need to physically go to branches, remember cards, or handle cash, the bank's pioneering mobile wallet offers a wide range of user-friendly features for secure and easy transactions. As well as making QR code payments, customers can send and receive money locally, check their wallet balance, top-up and withdraw, anytime and anywhere. Providing an enhanced and seamless banking experience, its products and services allow customers the freedom to manage their money as part of their lifestyle, through personalised usage settings.

Hamptons wins Tennex cricket tournament

Muscat Tennex Cricket League - Orange Ball (sponsored by DS Sports), a tournament in which 48 teams participated and has been going on for over a year, has come to a conclusion with a thrilling match between Hamptons CC and Profab Tigers.

Each of the 48 teams has their own home ground and the entire tournament was organised through an app called cricclub in a very organised manner. The final was played at Al Hail Cricket Club, which was a neutral venue for both the finalists.

Winning the toss, Hamptons decided to field in the 16 overs final, and it was rightly supported by its bowlers to reduce Profab Tigers to 47 for 7 in 8 overs. A late partnership, helped Profab to get to a respectable 130 in 16 overs.

Chasing a competitive 130, Hamptons lost 4 early wickets, but then a sensible partnership



took the game to 96/7 in 12 overs, leaving 35 to get in 24 balls. But power striker Ali Hassan had other ideas, who struck 4 massive sixes in a span of next 8 balls to finish the match with 2 overs to spare.

Captain Mohamed Ayjaz (Hamptons CC) had high words of appreciation for the organising committee for hosting such a wonderful tournament. He also

appreciated Hamptons International for all the support and backing.

When asked about why no Hamptons player won any individual awards, the captain emphasised on having a very strong balanced side and not just a few individuals. Every player at Hamptons CC is a champion match winner, he said.

Vice captain Ahmed Khan

(Hamptons) pointed the enthusiasm of the boys for not losing a single game in the year long tournament.

Runner-up captain Ishtiaq (Profab) mentioned that certainly Hamptons was the better team on the day.

"But I am more than happy for the achievement of my boys to make it so far. It was a well fought final," he said.

BAIC Motor participates in the renowned Saudi Dakar Rally

Gulf Great Sands LLC, the exclusive importer of BAIC cars and SUVs in Oman, has expressed delight in the participation of the BAIC team in the 2021 edition of the renowned and challenging Dakar Rally held in Saudi Arabia recently.

BAIC ORV, as the sole Chinese participating off-road brand, embarked on the Dakar Rally using three BJ40 racing cars. The 13 days top rally event highlighted the desert sector with total route of 7,646km and the specials of 4,767km.

Dakar Rally 2021 ushered in an even more difficult desert sectors with totally different landscapes for competitors, including large-scale sands, dunes and bushes, which presented higher technical requirements, diversity and challenges. For 40-plus years of evolution, this rally has stuck to its original intention

but frequently changed racing rules. For instance, e-map was not released till 10 minutes before the Rally 2021 kicked off, calling for the co-driver's excellent tempo control. Moreover, tyre changes were forbidden for all of race teams, which would be impossible without drivers' sound maintenance of tyres and their collaboration with the co-driver. Dakar Rally is a dream for every passionate challenger, attracting worldwide leading professional competitors each year.

A total of 321 racing cars around the world participated in the Dakar Rally 2021, including defending champion Carlos Sainz, Nasser al Attiyah, Stéphane Peterhansel, Sébastien Loeb and De Villiers.

Noteworthy, the BAIC ORV consisting of three BJ40 racing cars as well as Team 343, Team 352 and Team 361, stood as the



unique Chinese off-road competitors in this rally.

Team 343 included driver Liu Yangui and co-driver Pan Hongyu. Liu made a dent and

gained driver and team championship respectively in China Around Taklimakan Rally (CATR) 2013 and 2019.

Renowned as Golden Co-dri-

ver, Pan was consecutively rewarded with Overall Champion in CATR 2014 and 2015; and he was also honoured as annual co-driver for astonishing

performance in Dakar Rally 2014 and 2015.

Driver Zhang Guoyu and co-driver Sha He appeared in Team 352. Zhang boasts years of experience in Chinese motor sports and makes his name as versatile champion, the annual champion in Cross-Country Rally 2019 and Golden-champagne Driver Sha He was ever named as annual co-driver.

The members of Team 361 were driver Lu Binglong and Co-driver Ma Wenke. Lu is famous for all-round championship driver in lots of major rallies such as CRC, CCR, CSR and COC. He also reaped three consecutive championships for BAIC ORV in China Around Taklimakan Rally. In Dakar Rally 2020, Ma partnered with Jin Jianyun to win Newcomer Championship.

Chinese rally drivers have been benefiting from rich experi-

ence under Chinese broad and unpredictable deserts and participation in top international rallies. Significantly, BAIC demonstrates a big leap forward in the off-road vehicle technologies by putting genuine off-road models into Dakar Rally instead of general SPV. With great competitive edge in over 60-year off-road origin, several newly launched BAIC models like BJ40 Rainforest Crossing Edition and BJ40 Respect 2020 Edition reflect deep insights and leading technologies in off-road vehicles.

Gulf Great Sands has a state-of-the-art service centre in Ghala, Muscat, spread over more than 2,900sqm to provide after-sales services to BAIC customers.

For more information and to Book Test drives, call BAIC Oman Toll free number 80050800.

MARKET WATCH

MSM30	3,643.52
BSE Sensex	48,564.27

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	190.61
Pakistani Rs	417.80
Bangladeshi Taka	220.85
Philippine Peso	125.01
Sri Lankan Rs	500.84

*Rates as on January 18
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

S&P affirms Russia's rating at BBB-, outlook stable

S&P global rating agency has affirmed Russia's long-and short-term foreign currency rating at 'BBB-/A-3' with 'stable' outlook.

S&P Global Ratings affirmed its 'BBB-/A-3' long-and short-term foreign currency and 'BBB/A-2' long-and short-term local currency sovereign credit ratings on Russia. 'The outlook on the long-term ratings is stable,' the agency reported. Uncertainty over the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and US sanctions remains high, though a strong policy framework together with solid external and public balance sheets should enable Russia to absorb most possible shocks, S&P said.

'Pressure on the rating could build should materially tighter international sanctions lead to significant capital outflows and elevated financial stability risks. We could also take a negative rating action if the government's balance sheet were to deteriorate substantially,' the report said.

UK's Deliveroo targets \$7bn valuation for IPO

British meals delivery company Deliveroo, boosted by demand during the coronavirus pandemic, said Sunday it was targeting a stock market listing after a fundraising round valued the company at more than US\$7bn.

London-based Deliveroo said in a statement that it had raised more than US\$180mn from its existing investors, 'valuing the business at over US\$7bn'.

'This investment comes ahead of a potential initial public offering and reflects strong demand... given the significant growth potential in the online food delivery sector in which consumer adoption is accelerating,' the company said.

No date was set for the IPO, but Bloomberg News said it was expected in or around April.

Sohar International's profits decline 42%



(Muscat Daily)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sohar International Bank has reported a 41.8 per cent year-on-year decline in its full year net profit for 2020 as the higher provisions amid the COVID-19 pandemic and weak oil prices affected the bank's bottom line.

The bank's net profit for the year ended December 31, 2020 fell to RO20.01mn compared to RO34.41mn reported in the previous year, according to a disclosure filed to the Muscat Securities Market.

'The reduction of net profit

Sohar International Bank's net profit for the year ended December 31, 2020 fell to RO20.01mn compared to RO34.41mn reported in the previous year

after tax includes an increase in net impairment charges and other credit risk provisions for the period in response to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lower oil prices,' Sohar International Bank said in its disclosure.

The bank said its operating income decreased to RO91.99mn

for the year ended December 31, 2020 from RO104.66mn reported in 2019. Operating expenses for the year 2020 remained nearly stable at RO45.16mn against RO45.29mn in the previous year.

'Operating income decreased by 12.1 per cent compared to the same period of the previous year

driven by a decrease in other operating income. Sohar International Bank continues to manage the expense base to support its strategic objectives,' the bank said.

Sohar International Bank's loan-book grew by just 2 per cent last year as net loans and advances increased to RO2.503bn as of December 31, 2020 from RO2.454bn a year ago. Total assets increased to RO3.610bn as of December 31, 2020 compared with RO3.505bn a year ago.

'Total assets increased by 3 per cent with net loans and advances increasing by 2 per cent as the bank exercised prudence in its growth strategy given the current economic conditions,' Sohar International Bank said.

On the other hand, customer deposits rose by 14.4 per cent to RO2.399bn as of December 31, 2020 compared to RO2.097bn a year ago, reflecting the bank's strengthening funding and liquidity position.

Sohar International Bank's net profit from conventional banking dropped by 40.6 per cent year-on-year to RO19.52mn for the year ended December 31, 2020, while net profit from Islamic banking fell 67.8 per cent to RO0.49mn in 2020 compared to RO1.51mn in the previous year.



(Muscat Daily)

Bank Nizwa's net profit rises 9% to RO11mn in 2020

Our Correspondent
Muscat

December 31, 2020 compared to RO18.42mn in the same period a year ago.

Bank Nizwa's total financing to customers crossed RO1bn mark for the first time to reach at RO1.004bn as of December 31, 2020 against RO839.3mn a year ago. The bank's total assets also grew by 17 per cent to RO1.205bn as of December 31, 2020 from RO1.034bn a year ago.

The bank's total customer deposits increased by 16 per cent to RO924.2mn as of December 31, 2020 as compared with RO797.16mn as of December 31, 2019.

Bank Nizwa reported total shareholders' equity at RO159.53mn as of December 31, 2020, rising by 8 per cent compared to RO148.06 a year ago.

Bank Nizwa, the sultanate's first fully-fledged Islamic bank, has reported a 9 per cent year-on-year growth in its full year net profit for 2020.

The bank's net profit rose to RO11.06mn for the year ended December 31, 2020 compared to RO10.17mn reported for the previous year, according to a disclosure submitted to the Muscat Securities Market.

Despite the economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and low oil prices last year, Bank Nizwa managed to grow its operating income by 19 per cent to RO39.25mn in 2020 compared to RO33.01mn in 2019. Operating expenses increased by 7 per cent to RO19.65mn for the year ended

ACFE Oman nominates new president, office bearers

Muscat - The Association of Fraud Examiners (ACFE) announced that Jose Chacko, partner - forensic technology services at Crowe Oman, has taken over as the president of ACFE Oman Chapter.

Chacko has been nominated as the president after serving ACFE Oman as the vice president for five years. The newly elected officers took over from the present board from January 1, according to a press release.

Fathiya al Maskari of EY has been elected as the training director for the Chapter. The other new board members of ACFE Oman Chapter include Khalil al Rawahi as the vice president, Somya Sreedharan as secretary, Kevin Dsouza as treasurer, Salim Mushrafi as the membership director and Murad al Balushi as the director at large.



Jose Chacko

Davis Kallukaran, the outgoing president of ACFE Oman Chapter, will continue in the board as an advisor.

"ACFE is the world's largest anti-fraud organisation and premier provider of anti-fraud training and education. Together,

with more than 85,000 members, ACFE is reducing business fraud worldwide and inspiring

public confidence in the integrity and objectivity within the profession," Chacko said.

According to a new report from the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, a single case of occupational fraud costs the victim organization an average of more than US\$1.5mn, and Certified Fraud Examiners (CFEs) estimate that organisations lose 5 per cent of their revenues each year to fraud. In the ACFE's 2020 Report to the Nations, a study of 2,504 cases of occupational fraud investigated by CFEs in 125 countries, the typical fraud lasted 14 months before it was detected and caused a median loss of US\$8,300 a month.

ACFE Oman has achieved tremendous growth in terms of membership and certified members during the tenure of previous board.

REITs trading kick-starts at Dubai Financial Market

Dubai, UAE - The Dubai Financial Market (DFM) on Monday hosted a bell ringing ceremony to celebrate the commencement of trading of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) with the listing of Al Mal Capital's REIT fund.

The introduction of REITs is a key milestone in DFM's journey to diversify product offering and asset classes, broadening the scope of opportunities offered to its vast investor base of local and international investors.

Khalid bin Kalban, vice chairman and CEO of Dubai Investments and chairman of Al Mal Capital, rang the market opening bell in the presence of Essa Kazim, chairman of DFM and Hassan al Serkal, CEO of DFM.

The listing culminates the successful floating of the new fund by Al Mal Capital, a subsidiary of Dubai Investments, in



November 2020. The AED350mn proceeds of this fund will be invested by the company in a Sharia'a-compliant diversified portfolio of income generating properties that serve different sectors such as health-care, education and industrial assets, with a target annual return of 7 per cent.

DFM chairman Kazim said, "The commencement of REITs trading through the listing of Al Mal Capital REIT reinforces DFM's product offering diversi-

fication strategy, providing investors with new opportunities. Today's listing is a key foundation for this new asset class and we are looking forward to see it gaining momentum during the coming period in line with REIT's strong presence globally and to truly reflect the magnitude, quality and expansion of the real estate sector in Dubai by encouraging the establishment and listing of more REITs in the future."

WAM

Trump brand tarnished after bruising presidency, Capitol attack

New York, US - Donald Trump shot to prominence with a business empire that bears his name, but after four years of political tumult capped by his supporters' violent attack on the Capitol, the US President's brand stands tarnished, threatening his businesses, experts say.

Companies that stuck with Trump throughout his term are cutting ties in an 11th-hour stampede, including Signature Bank which closed Trump's personal accounts and the PGA of America which scotched a plan to hold its 2022 championship at Trump's New Jersey golf course.

Such announcements not only reflect the business community's skittishness to proximity with a widely-condemned figure, but further hem in his company, already hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic and the looming loss of US taxpayer revenue tied to Trump's visits.

The President's role in the

Capitol calamity that killed five people and drew international shock has generated withering criticism from diverse groups ranging from the Business Roundtable to the AFL-CIO labour federation.

Trump's 'name is really an albatross', said Michael D'Antonio, who authored a 2015 biography of Trump, adding that January 6 was a game-changer for the President's brand.

"He is the most disgraced president in history. This is a person who's synonymous with a mob attacking the US Capitol," he said. "I just think this went a step too far."

Tim Calkins, a marketing professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, said Trump's brand will suffer long-term damage due to the chaos.

"Before his term, Trump stood for wealth, success and over-the-top luxury," he said. "Now the



US President Donald Trump (AFP)

brand has associations with anti-government views, racism and extremism. This makes the brand fairly toxic."

Recent reports in US media, including *The Washington Post*, have chronicled low occupancy at Trump properties in Washington and Chicago as the US con-

tends with the COVID-19 crisis.

In addition, Trump owes some US\$400mn to Deutsche Bank, which reportedly also plans to halt business with Trump after the Capitol siege.

The President has dismissed business challenges, stating in an October 15 televised event that

the US\$400mn is 'a tiny percentage of my net worth'.

Assessing the state of Trump's finances is difficult because of the opaque nature of government disclosure information and the private status of the Trump Organization.

However, winning the presidency has most certainly cost the company some business, as when the Trump Organization bowed out of a luxury hotel in Soho, New York, where the President is unpopular.

The overall impact of Trump's presidency on his business is really hard to estimate, said Noah Bookbinder, executive director of the nonprofit Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW).

His sons, Don Jr and Eric, who now run the Trump Organization, had floated a pair of new hotel chains, Scion and American Idea, aimed at the 'red states' that are home to large portions

of Trump's base.

But the brothers pulled the plug on the venture in 2019, citing obstacles which they blamed on political opponents.

In spite of these setbacks, Trump's properties have enjoyed a reliable stream of taxpayer revenue courtesy of the president's regular stays at his clubs and golf courses where he is joined by White House staff, family and Secret service.

CREW estimates that Trump's properties garnered over US\$100mn from more than 500 visits by the President, according to a September report.

The document criticised Trump for some 3,400 conflicts of interest tied to hotel stays by foreign governments or lobbyists and fundraising events by other politicians, such as Representative Jim Jordan, who defended Trump during last week's impeachment debate.

Bookbinder said Trump

should have completely divested himself of his business at the outset of his term. Instead, he used his presidency to promote it, while his sons became vocal champions of his presidency, effectively 'melding' Trump's business and political endeavors.

That decision could limit the brand's ability to appeal to consumers outside his political base.

"What you have now is a smaller but extremely devoted cult following," Bookbinder said.

D'Antonio thinks Trump is likely to shift away from his legacy businesses and evolve into 'sort of a TV, political evangelist', perhaps creating his own widely-floated television network then charging fans to watch it.

Under such a scenario, Trump might sell current assets to pay off his Deutsche Bank debt.

AFP

MSM inches up on improved activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) inched up by 0.04 per cent to close at 3,643.52 points on Monday.

Trading activity improved from the previous session as turnover jumped by 293.09 per cent to RO1.9mn and volumes surged 127.08 per cent to 7.81mn shares.

While Financial index fell 0.1 per cent, Industrial and Services indices rose 1.46 per cent and 0.04 per cent, respectively. The MSM Shariah Index closed up by 0.49 per cent at 524.03 points.

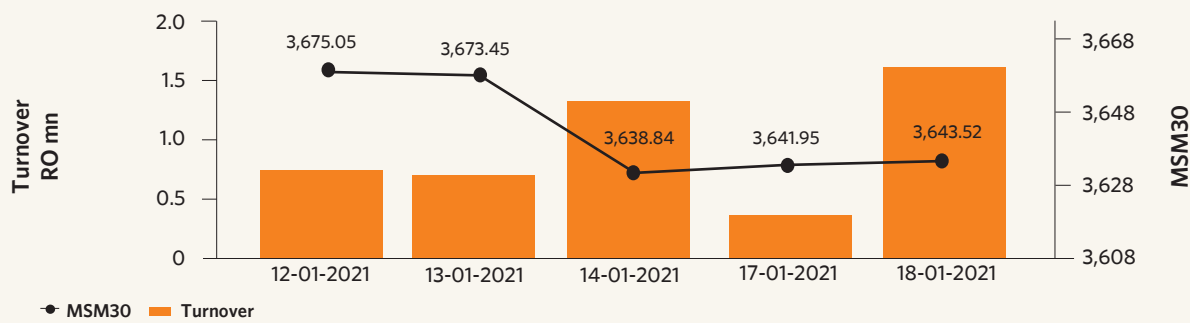
Market breadth remained positive as 11 companies closed up, while 6 companies closed down. The rest 16 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Al Jazeera Steel (8.56 per cent), Galfar Engineering & Contracting (6.98 per cent), Arabia Falcon Insurance (3.9 per cent) and Aman Real Estate (3.03 per cent).



Top losers were National Aluminium Products (-4.49 per cent), Oman & Emirates Investment Holding (-2.33 per cent), Al Sharqiya Investment (-1.39 per cent) and National Bank of Oman (-1.36 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Emirates airline vaccinates its staff to boost tourism



Dubai, UAE - Dubai-based airline Emirates on Monday launched a coronavirus vaccination programme for its staff based in the UAE, seeking to bolster the tourism sector.

"The inoculation drive began this morning, with priority being placed on its frontline aviation workforce, including cabin crew, flight deck and other operationally focused roles," it said in a statement.

It has made available the Pfizer-BioNTech and China's Sinopharm jabs.

Operations to inoculate staff will run for 12 hours a day, seven days a week, "to ensure as many essential aviation workers as

possible can get the vaccine", the airline said.

The UAE capital Abu Dhabi began vaccinations in mid-December after approving Sinopharm, while Dubai began later that month using the jab developed by US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech.

The UAE has so far recorded more than 253,000 COVID-19 cases, including 745 deaths.

According to health officials, it has already inoculated over 1.8mn of its approximately 10mn population.

As much of the world tightens lockdowns to stem the spread of the virus, Dubai reopened its

doors for tourism in July last year.

Abu Dhabi, which with large oil reserves is less dependent on tourism, has taken a more conservative approach, generally requiring quarantine on arrival.

With a negative PCR test in their home countries - and possibly another upon arrival, depending on the place of departure - tourists can freely enter Dubai, where winter temperatures average 25°C.

Tourism has long been an economic mainstay of Dubai, which welcomed more than 16mn visitors in 2019 before the pandemic struck.

AFP

UK insurers must compensate firms over lockdown losses, orders court

London, UK - Britain's Supreme Court has ruled that insurers must compensate small businesses forced into last year's initial coronavirus lockdown, potentially a total payout of £1.2bn.

The country's financial watchdog successfully appealed on behalf of the companies, arguing they should be able to claim for the impact of the first UK lockdown last year.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) estimates that a combined £1.2bn could now be paid out.

"It is estimated that, in addition to the particular policies chosen for the test case, some 700 types of policies across over 60 different insurers and 370,000 policyholders could potentially be affected by the outcome of this litigation," Judge Nicholas Hamblen said.

Sheldon Mills, executive director of consumers and competition at the FCA, said its aim throughout the test case had



'been to get clarity for as wide a range of parties as possible, as quickly as possible, and today's judgment decisively removes many of the roadblocks to claims by policyholders'.

"As we have recognised from the start of this case, tens of thousands of small firms and potentially hundreds of thousands of jobs are relying on this," he added.

The FCA was joined in the appeal by the Hiscox Action Group

(HAG), who were up against insurer Hiscox.

"This is a landmark victory for a small group of businesses who took on a huge insurance player and have been fully vindicated," said Richard Leedham of law firm Mishcon de Reya which represented HAG.

"What is important now is that Hiscox accepts the Supreme Court's verdict and starts paying out to its policy holders, many of whom are in danger of going

under."

The government welcomed the ruling.

"A very welcome decision by the Supreme Court," tweeted Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng.

"This will be a lifeline for tens of thousands of hairdressers, bars, restaurants and other small businesses that did the right thing and closed their doors to protect the health of the nation."

Huw Evans, director general of the Association of British Insurers, said it welcomes 'the clarity that the judgment will bring to a number of complex issues'.

"We recognise this has been a particularly difficult time for many small businesses and naturally regret the COVID-19 restrictions have led to disputes with some customers," he added.

Much of the UK is now under a new strict lockdown, with economists warning of a double-dip recession for the country.

AFP

French oil giant Total takes stake in Indian solar energy group Adani

Paris, France - French oil giant Total said on Monday that it would pay US\$2.5bn for a 20 per cent stake in India's Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL), a major solar energy producer, as it diversifies away from fossil fuels into renewables.

Along with the 20 per cent direct stake comes a 50 per cent holding in a portfolio of solar energy assets operated by AGEL, part of the Adani group, Total said in a statement.

The two companies have had a partnership accord since 2018, when Total acquired a stake in Adani Gas Limited.

India relies heavily on coal but has been moving into renewables and natural gas in an effort to reduce damaging pollution levels and costs.



Total described AGEL as the world's biggest solar energy developer.

It operates 3GW of renewable energy assets, with another 3GW under construction and 8.6GW in development.

AGEL is aiming for 25GW of renewable energy capacity by 2015.

"Taking a stake in AGEL is a

major step in the strategy put in place with Adani in renewable energy in India," Total's CEO Patrick Pouyanne said.

"Given the size of its market, India is the right country to put in motion our strategy for energy transition based on the two pillars of solar and natural gas," he said.

AFP

Samsung chief Lee jailed for 2.5 years over corruption scandal

Seoul, South Korea - The de facto chief of South Korea's Samsung business empire was convicted on Monday over a huge corruption scandal and jailed for two and a half years, in a ruling that deprives the tech giant of its top decision-maker.

Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, the world's biggest smartphone and memory chip maker, was found guilty of bribery and embezzlement in connection with the scandal that brought down president Park Geun-hye.

Lee 'actively provided bribes and implicitly asked the president to use her power to help his smooth succession' at the head of the sprawling conglomerate, the Seoul Central District Court said in its verdict.

"It is very unfortunate that Samsung, the country's top company and proud global innovator,

is repeatedly involved in crimes whenever there is a change in political power.'

It jailed him for two and a half years, concluding a retrial that was the latest step in a long-running legal process that has hung over Samsung for years.

The multi-billionaire Lee - who had earlier walked into court grim-faced and wearing a face-mask, without responding to reporters' shouted questions - was immediately taken into custody.

He has effectively been at the head of the entire Samsung group for several years after his father was left bedridden by a heart attack, finally dying in October.

"This is essentially a case where the freedom and property rights of a company were violated by the former president's abuse of power," Lee's lawyer, Lee In-jae, told reporters.



Lee Jae-yong (centre), vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, arrives at a court for a trial in his bribery scandal in Seoul, South Korea on Monday (AFP)

"Given the nature of the matter, I find the court's ruling regrettable."

Samsung is by far the biggest of the family-controlled con-

glomerates, or chaebols, that dominate business in the world's 12th-largest economy.

Its overall turnover is equivalent to a fifth of the national gross

domestic product and it is crucial to South Korea's economic health.

Its rise has been driven by a willingness to invest billions in

strategic bets on key technologies.

But experts say the sentence will create a leadership vacuum that could hamper its decision-making on future large-scale investments.

"It's really a huge blow and a big crisis for Samsung," said Kim Dae-jong, a business professor at Sejong University.

Samsung Electronics, the group's flagship subsidiary, declined to comment on Monday's ruling.

Like many tech firms, its shares have risen significantly during the coronavirus pandemic, more than doubling from their lows in March, but closed down 3.4 per cent on Monday.

The case centres on millions of dollars the Samsung group paid Park's secret confidante Choi Soon-sil, allegedly for government favours including ensur-

ing a smooth transition for Lee to succeed his then-ailing father.

The scandal highlighted shady connections between big business and politics in South Korea, with the ousted president and her friend accused of taking bribes from corporate bigwigs in exchange for preferential treatment.

Lee was first jailed for five years in 2017, after Park's ouster.

He walked free the following year when an appeals court dismissed most of his bribery convictions and gave him a suspended sentence, but the Supreme Court later ordered the 52-year-old to face a retrial.

In May, Lee made a rare public apology, bowing before flashing cameras for company misconduct including the firm's controversial plan for him to ascend to the leadership.

AFP

Yemen clashes near Hodeida kill 150 in a week: Sources

Hodeida, Yemen - Some 150 Yemeni pro-government soldiers and Huthi rebels have been killed in a week of fighting south of the strategic port city of Hodeida, military sources said on Monday.

Impoverished Yemen is mired in a devastating conflict between Iran-backed Huthi rebels and government forces backed by Saudi Arabia that has left tens of

The latest clashes in Hodeida are the most violent since a truce negotiated in the area by the UN came into force in 2018. The rebels, who hold Hodeida, attacked the pro-government positions in the south of the city

thousands dead and sparked a dire humanitarian crisis.

The latest clashes in the Red Sea port city of Hodeida are the most violent since a truce negotiated in the area by the UN came into force in 2018.

The rebels, who hold Hodeida, have attacked to the south of the city where pro-government forces maintain positions, pro-government military sources said.

"The toll for losses on the two



Supporters of Yemen's Huthi movement raise their fists up as they chant slogans during a demonstration in front of the closed US Embassy to reject outgoing US President Donald Trump's decision to designate the Huthi group a 'foreign terrorist organisation', in the capital Sanaa on Monday (AFP)

sides has reached around 150 dead and 260 wounded," an official of the pro-government forces told AFP.

The toll was confirmed by a local official on the rebel side.

The clashes had so far not resulted in any territorial gains for the rebels, residents said.

After fierce fighting on Saturday and Sunday, the intensity of clashes cooled early on Monday.

Pro-government forces have suffered 27 fatalities and killed

44 rebels in countering 'several assaults' by the rebels, two other pro-government sources said.

Medics and rescue workers said that military fatalities on the two sides had reached 70 between Saturday and Sunday.

Aid group Doctors Without Borders said on Twitter that its team in the Mocha Trauma Hospital was engaging a 'mass casualty plan' to respond to an influx of wounded.

"We are intensely worried for

civilians living near the frontline areas,' it added, noting 'intense fighting' along the southern Hodeida frontlines.

It was not clear whether the latest bout of fighting had so far caused civilian casualties.

In early January, five women were killed by a shell when it hit a wedding hall near Hodeida airport, located on the frontline.

Yemen's war has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions and, according to the UN, left 16

million on the brink of famine.

UN and EU officials and aid groups have warned of a worsening humanitarian crisis after outgoing US President Donald Trump's administration classified the Huthi rebels 'terrorists'.

The designation is expected to halt many transactions with Huthi authorities, including payments to medical personnel and for food and fuel, due to fears of US prosecution.

AFP

Israeli warplanes hit Gaza after rocket fire: Army

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories - Israel's military said on Monday its fighter planes struck Hamas facilities in the Gaza Strip after Palestinians fired rockets at the Jewish state.

Two rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip towards the coast near the southern city of Ashdod, according to a military statement.

'In response...fighter jets struck military targets belonging to the Hamas terror organisation in the Gaza Strip, including tunnel digging sites,' the army said.

There were no reports of any damage from Palestinian rockets, with Israeli army sources indicating they had landed in the Mediterranean sea.

Palestinian security sources in Gaza said the Israeli fire hit 'farmland' in the southern Khan Yunis area of the enclave, causing damage but no injuries.

There was no immediate claim for the rocket launches from Hamas-ruled Gaza.

Palestinians in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank are heading for respective legislative

and presidential elections in May and July, the first in 15 years. The polls are part of a warming of ties between Hamas and Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas' West Bank-based Fatah party.

The dates were announced on Friday in a presidential decree by Abbas. In the last Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006, Hamas won an unexpected landslide. The polls resulted in a brief unity government but it soon collapsed. In 2007, bloody clashes erupted between the two principal Palestinian factions, with Hamas ultimately seizing control of Gaza.

Last week an Israeli tank fired at 'a Hamas military post' in the southern Gaza Strip, after shots were fired at a military vehicle working on its side of the border fence, the Israeli army said.

In late December Hamas and Islamic Jihad staged joint military exercises in the coastal territory, during which they fired rockets out to sea, in the first exercise of its kind.

AFP



This file photo shows Palestinians at the site of an Israeli attack on a Hamas position near the city of Khan Yunis on January 13 (AFP)

Saudi reports sharp drop in executions

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia on Monday reported a sharp drop in executions in 2020, as the kingdom seeks to blunt international criticism of its human rights record.

The Gulf state, an absolute monarchy, has long faced criticism for one of the world's highest rates of executions and what human rights campaigners call an opaque judicial system.

The Saudi government's Human Rights Commission (HRC) said it documented 27 executions in 2020, a decrease of 85 per cent over the previous year due in part to a moratorium on the death penalty for drug-related offences.

'The Commission welcomes this news as a sign that the kingdom and its justice system are focusing more on rehabilitation and prevention than solely on punishment,' HRC president Awwad Alawwad said in a statement.

'The moratorium on drug-related offences means the kingdom is giving more non-violent criminals a second chance.'

Saudi Arabia put 184 people to death in 2019, according to Amnesty International, which said it was the highest number ever recorded in a single year in the kingdom.

Britain-based campaign group Reprieve reported 25 executions in Saudi Arabia in 2020, saying it was the lowest figure since it began monitoring executions in 2013 but cautioned that the number could increase this year.

'The decline can partly be

attributed to the COVID-19 lockdown from February to April, when the government carried out no executions due to restrictions to control the virus,' Reprieve said in a statement.

'However, there is reason to believe that the number of executions will rise in 2021.'

'The government recommenced executions at an increased rate in the final quarter of 2020: Approximately one-third of all executions last year were carried out in December alone.'

Monday's announcement by the HRC follows a string of judicial reforms in 2020.

Last April, the HRC said the kingdom was ending the death penalty for those convicted of crimes committed while aged under 18.

Citing a royal decree, the HRC said individuals convicted as minors would receive a prison sentence of no more than ten years in a juvenile detention facility.

Last April, the HRC also announced Saudi Arabia was abolishing court-ordered floggings, in a move welcomed by campaigners.

The changes underscore a push by de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to modernise the ultra-conservative kingdom, long associated with a fundamentalist strain of Islam.

Activists, however, are sceptical that the reforms will see political prisoners released or pause a sweeping government crackdown on dissent.

AFP

Kremlin critic Navalny decries 'mockery of justice' at hearing in makeshift court

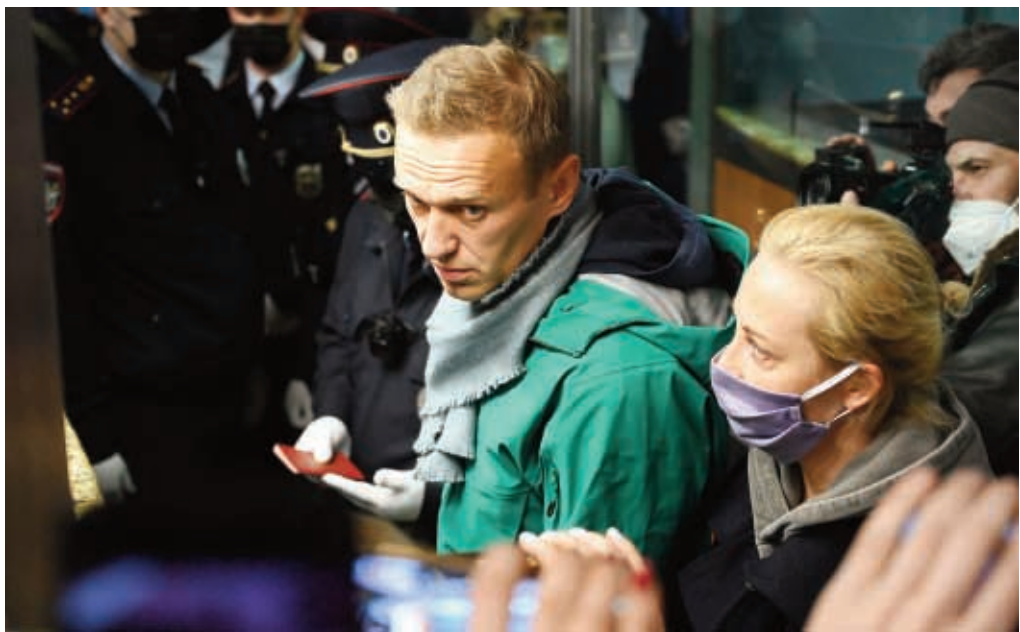
Moscow, Russia - Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said on Monday he was facing a 'mockery of justice' as police in Moscow organised a makeshift court hearing a day after his dramatic airport arrest.

With calls growing in the West for Navalny's release, he was brought into a courtroom set up at the police station in Khimki on the outskirts of Moscow where he was taken following his detention on Sunday night.

Aides said Navalny, who returned to Russia for the first time since being poisoned with a nerve agent in August, was denied access to his lawyers and notified at the last minute of the hearing. His team released a video of an incredulous Navalny at the hearing.

"I've seen a lot of mockery of justice... but they have ripped up and thrown away [Russia's criminal code]," Navalny said.

"This is impossible. It's ultimate lawlessness."



Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny and his wife Yulia at the passport control point at the Sheremetyevo International Airport, in Moscow on Sunday (AFP)

Police seized the 44 year old, the most prominent opponent of President Vladimir Putin, at a border control post at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport less than an hour after he returned to Russia, in defiance of warnings he would be arrested.

Russia's FSIN prison service said it had detained Navalny for violating the terms of a suspended sentence he was given in

2014, on fraud charges he says were politically motivated.

Navalny is also facing potential new criminal charges under a probe launched late last year by Russian investigators who say he

misappropriated over US\$4mn worth of donations.

Navalny emerged a decade ago as the leading critic of the Kremlin, with his Anti-Corruption Foundation publishing anti-graft investigations that often reveal the lavish lifestyles of the Russian elite.

He has repeatedly led large-scale street protests against Putin, most recently in the summer of 2019, and was gearing up for another challenge to authorities during elections to the lower house State Duma in September.

He was evacuated to Germany after falling violently ill on a flight over Siberia in August from what Western experts eventually concluded was a poisoning with Soviet-designed nerve agent Novichok. Navalny accused Putin of ordering the attack, a claim the Kremlin vehemently denies. Russian police did not open an investigation citing lack of evidence.

AFP

Tunisia arrests over 600, deploys troops after riots

Tunis, Tunisia - More than 600 people have been arrested and troops have been deployed after a third consecutive night of riots in several Tunisian cities, officials said on Monday.

The unrest came after Tunisia imposed a nationwide lockdown to stem a rise in coronavirus infections on Thursday - the same day as it marked the 10th anniversary of dictator Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's fall from power.

Interior Ministry spokesman Khaled Hayouni said a total of 632 people were arrested, notably 'groups of people between



Protesters stand amidst fumes during clashes with security forces in the Ettadhamen city, on the outskirts of capital Tunis on Sunday (AFP)

the ages of 15, 20 and 25 who burned tyres and bins in order to block movements by the security forces'.

Defence Ministry spokesman Mohamed Zikri meanwhile said the army has deployed reinforcements in several areas of the country.

Hayouni said that some of those arrested lobbed stones at police and clashed with security forces. "This has nothing to do with protest movements that are guaranteed by the law and the constitution," said Hayouni.

"Protests take place in broad

daylight normally... without any criminal acts involved," he added.

Hayouni said two policemen were wounded in the unrest.

It was not immediately clear if there were injuries among the youths and Hayouni did not say what charges those arrested faced.

The clashes took place in several cities across Tunisia, mostly in working-class neighbourhoods, with the exact reasons for the disturbances not immediately known.

AFP

France, UK boost vaccine campaigns, Britain closes all travel corridors

Paris, France - France and Britain on Monday joined a growing list of nations starting mass vaccinations for all elderly citizens as London began quarantining arrivals to try and halt the spread of a new COVID-19 variant.

The French drive aims to cover all people over 75 and comes after Brazil and India, which figure among the worst-affected countries, administered their first jabs over the weekend.

Health Minister Olivier Veran says more than one million vaccinations are being targeted by January and between 2.4mn and 4mn by February.

France had earlier offered vaccinations to residents of retirement homes and health workers on the frontline.

Growing concerns over different strains of the virus have prompted governments to tighten curbs to stem a global death toll that has already crossed two million.

Russia is also due to start mass immunisations on Monday using its homegrown Sputnik V vaccine while Britain imposed a 10-day isolation and negative COVID tests on all travellers.

All UK travel corridors, which allow arrivals from some countries to avoid having to quarantine, have now closed, reports BBC.

Arrivals will have to provide a negative COVID test taken within 72 hours of travel or be



French singer Line Renaud receives a jab at a vaccination centre in Rueil-Malmaison, west of Paris, on Monday (AFP)

banned from entering the UK, which on Monday also expanded its vaccination campaign to people over the age of 70.

New and highly contagious variants have emerged in Britain, South Africa and Brazil and have set off alarm bells.

Across the European Union there have been concerns that delays in the delivery of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine could further slow a campaign which critics

have condemned as less agile than in the United States or Britain, a recently-departed EU member.

US drugmaker Pfizer said it was working to 'significantly' scale up production at its major plant in Belgium in the second quarter.

After a short delay, deliveries should be back to the original schedule to the EU from January 25.

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga pledged on Monday to tackle surging coronavirus cases and restore normal life 'as soon as possible' as polls showed plunging support for his government.

The latest wave in Japan and abroad has also cast doubt on whether the pandemic-postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics can go ahead, but Suga repeated he was still committed to holding



A sign points the way to a COVID-19 testing centre at Terminal 5 at London Heathrow Airport on Monday (AFP)

the Games as 'proof of mankind's victory over the virus'.

In the world's worst-hit country, President-elect Joe Biden's goal of seeing 100mn vaccine doses injected within his first 100 days in office is meanwhile 'absolutely' achievable, top US scientist Anthony Fauci said, days before he becomes the new president's chief advisor on COVID-19.

"The feasibility of his goal is

absolutely clear, there's no doubt about it," Fauci told NBC's *Meet the Press*.

Biden has unveiled a US\$1.9tn stimulus plan to revive the economy of the US, where the new coronavirus has claimed over 397,000 lives.

Until vaccination is widespread, countries across the globe are still having to rely on lockdowns, curfews and social distancing.

Slovakia began a new round of nationwide screening and Malawi said it would impose its first restrictions, including night curfew, a cap on gatherings and mandatory face masks in public.

Nearly 3mn people in two cities in China's northeastern Jilin province were put under lockdown on Monday after a surge in coronavirus cases linked to a travelling salesman.

AFP+Agencies



This file photo shows the 'Trump Baby' blimp when it was set up by the CodePink group members ahead of the 'Salute to America' event at the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall, in Washington, DC, on July 4, 2019 (AFP)

Museum of London acquires 'Baby Trump' barrage balloon

London, UK - The infamous blimp of outgoing US President Donald Trump dressed as a baby could soon greet visitors to the Museum of London, which on Monday announced it had acquired the inflatable effigy.

'Having toured the world, the Trump Baby blimp is now heading to its final resting place, the Museum of London, where it will be conserved and potentially displayed in the museum's future new home,' the central London museum said in a statement.

The institution said in 2019 that it wanted to acquire the blimp, 'recognising its importance in the protests' that met the President during his 2018 visit to Britain. The over-sized orange balloon depicting the be-queffed US leader in a nappy flew above Parliament Square.

"From the Suffragettes of the early twentieth century to the

Having toured the world, the Trump Baby blimp is now heading to its final resting place, the Museum of London, where it will be conserved and potentially displayed in the museum's future new home

anti-austerity marches, free speech and Black Lives Matter most recently - the capital has always been the place to have your say," said Sharon Ament, Museum of London director.

"By collecting the baby blimp

we can mark the wave of feeling that washed over the city that day and capture a particular moment of resistance."

The team behind the balloon said while they were 'pleased that the Trump Baby can now be consigned to history', adding: "We're under no illusions that this is the end of the story."

"We hope the baby's place in the museum will stand as a reminder of when London stood against Trump."

The balloon will join the museum's protest collection, which includes banners, flags and tents belonging to demonstrators through the ages. The museum has also been in touch with Trump supporters about acquiring a blimp they made of London Mayor Sadiq Khan, in response to his decision to allow the original balloon to fly next to parliament.

AFP

Quake casualties overwhelm Indonesian health workers

Mamuju, Indonesia - Indonesian medics battled exhaustion and the risk of COVID-19 as they raced on Monday to treat scores of people injured by a devastating earthquake on Sulawesi island.

At least 84 were killed and thousands left homeless by the 6.2-magnitude quake that struck early on Friday, reducing buildings to a tangled mass of twisted metal and chunks of concrete in the seaside city of Mamuju.

Doctors in hazard suits treated patients with broken limbs and other injuries at a makeshift medical centre set up outside the only one of the city's hospitals that survived relatively intact - one was flattened by the violent tremor.

A handful of doctors and nurses worked 'non-stop' in the first couple of days after the quake until reinforcements arrived, but it was still barely enough amid shortages of medicine and other supplies.

"We were completely overwhelmed at one point," said Indahwati Nursyamsi, director of



A nurse attends a patient injured in Friday's earthquake at a makeshift ward outside West Sulawesi General Hospital due to concerns of aftershocks, in Mamuju on Monday (AFP)

West Sulawesi General Hospital. "My nurses were also quake victims and had to help their families."

Medics scrambled to quarantine COVID-19 positive patients in a bid to prevent an outbreak

at the crowded open-air triage centre. Some with coronavirus have been put in a prayer room at the back of the hospital.

The hospital was trying to open up more rooms for surgery and erect additional tents out-

side to treat the injured.

But fears that another quake could bring down the building adding to the challenges as patients, and some staff, refused to stay inside.

AFP

Handwritten note seeds hope for China miners

Beijing, China - At least 12 gold miners trapped hundreds of metres underground in China for more than a week have sent up a note warning that they are injured, surrounded by water and urgently need medicine.

Twenty-two workers were trapped more than 600m from the mine's entrance after a blast eight days ago near Qixia city in eastern Shandong province.

After days without any signs of life, rescuers heard knocking sounds on Sunday afternoon as they drilled through the



This file photo shows rescue workers at the site of the gold mine where 22 miners were trapped underground, in Qixia on January 12 (AFP)

mine's shaft.

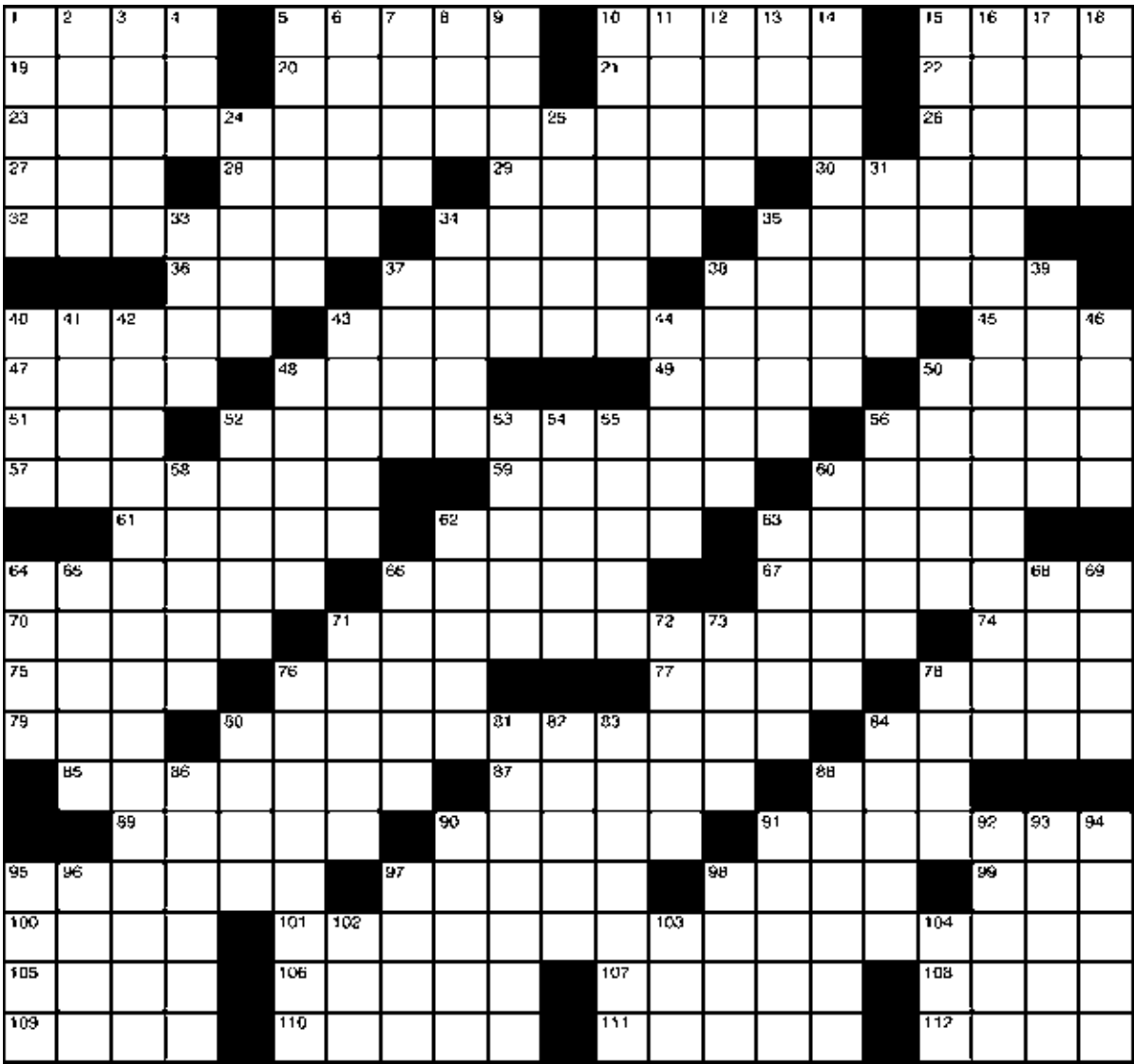
A note was sent up on a line from the depths below saying that at least a dozen of the miners are still alive, but that they urgently needed help as their health deteriorates.

'We are in urgent need of medicine, painkillers, medical tape, external anti-inflammatory drugs, and three people have high blood pressure,' the note read.

The condition of the other ten workers is unknown.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Theda of the silents
5 Not live
10 A cluster
15 Med. course
19 Iowa State locale
20 Nicholas Gage memoir
21 "Foreign Affairs" author Alison
22 Hawaiian port
23 Actor's building grounder
26 Number of epic-theme poems
27 Queen before Sophia
28 Leftovers dish
29 Call a halt
30 Ankle
32 Out of debt
34 Chisel, e.g.
35 Islamic sect
36 Sum tpta.; abbr.
37 She made pigs of men
38 Augur
40 Moral slip
43 Director's police weapons?
45 Golfer's gadget
47 Part of Q.E.D.
48 Quote
49 Times around
50 Letters from Greece

- 51 Trait carrier
52 Suffragist's revolving tray?
56 Brittany port
57 Jet Blue or United
59 Praying figure
60 Take a deep one
61 Grain-related term
62 Union unit
63 Corporate ladder action
64 Corroborate
66 Actor/WW II veteran Murphy
67 Incipient American Beauty
70 18th century patriot Silas
71 Singer's free-forall?
74 Sash for Cio-Cio-San
75 River at Rennes
76 Byzantine town
77 Before trip or house
78 Anna who played Nana
79 Sesame in Hindi
80 Flimsily constructed actor?
84 Rocket stage
85 Speech problem
87 Man-made fabric
88 Fair grade
89 Having mystical inscription
90 Percussion instruments
91 "Dark ____": occult

- TV series
95 Mite or tick
97 Cherubini opera
98 Leave out
99 One way to stand
100 Extinct big bird
101 Recently arrived singer?
105 Fulda feeder
106 Concur
107 South African village
108 Turgenev's birthplace
109 Space acronym
110 Stiff wind, old style
111 Unimpressive
112 Facility
- DOWN**
1 Cotton units
2 Acid type
3 Courtly
4 ____ Wednesday
5 Leaseholder
6 Heeling
7 Phnom ____
Cambodia
8 MIT grad
9 Reject
10 Butcher's tool
11 Academy Award winner Rainer
12 Impel
13 Gustav ____
German physicist, 1869-1957
14 Makes uneasy
15 1924-1967 Actor

- Brian
16 Checks-at-thestart comedian?
17 Matty, Felipe, or Moises
18 Turn's partner
24 Kind of song or park
25 Third csanonical hour
31 Aardvark's diet
33 Immense
34 Clls with lashing movement
35 Comic Sales
37 Part of NYC
38 Factory
39 18th cent. religious system
40 Swan lady
41 Wild water buffalo
42 Handy talk-show host?
43 Shrivel
44 Genetic replica
46 "OT" heroine: abr.
48 "Cave ____": L.
50 ____ de menthe
52 Petrol measure
53 Will ____: won't work
54 Educate
55 Despised
56 Lively
58 1937-2005 singer
Frankie
60 "____ sweat and tears"
62 1900's singer Yma

- 63 Zagreb native
64 Miner's way in
65 Cat genus
66 "____ Is Born"
68 Over, in Bonn
69 DeLaurentis
71 Spherical
72 Ceertain soft cheeses
73 Rock's partner
76 "____ and thy want as an ____": Proverbs
78 Source of growth
80 It's before bus
81 More robust
82 Scottish hillsides
83 Empties the suitcase
84 Ranch in "Giant" (1956)
86 Roman Eos
88 Fall forecast
90 A giggle
91 Slander
92 Met offering
93 Zeta-Jones' birthplace
94 Manner
95 Indian Ocean gulf
96 Musical finale
97 Engs.
98 "House" actor Epps
102 In the past
103 Spanish pelf
104 ____ the line

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

The cosmic tides are changing once again. After a month of career hustling and dream chasing, you're ready to reconnect with the people you truly care about. The sun departs from stoic Capricorn and moves forward into Aquarius, centring your attention in the month ahead around your long-term goals, your social network, and engaging with the dreams deep in your heart.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

The universe is focusing every once of your energy on partnership matters. You've only just begun to explore the new realms that lie ahead relationship-wise. The sun moves out of Capricorn this morning and slides into your opposite sign of objective Aquarius this afternoon, channeling your attention towards dating, intimacy, commitment, and everything in between.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

The world is your oyster. You need only reach out and partake! After a month-long review of your resources and abilities, you're ready to bring your skills to the table. The sun departs from Capricorn and moves forward into socially smooth Aquarius, kickstarting your need to share your voice. The month ahead is perfect for writing projects or new educational ventures!



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Tuesday's skies initiate one of the most important seasons of the year for you, Taurus. The sun moves out of tradition-centred Capricorn and moves forward into fresh-solution Aquarius this afternoon. This change of pace nudges you away from both the belief-breaking and rebuilding you've been doing; it works to help you climb the career ladder of your choosing.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

This is your time to shine. Though it may not quite seem like it, you're right at the doorstep of greatness. After a month of dabbling with new forms of self-expression, you're ready to bring your process into a larger audience. The sun moves forward into Aquarius, focusing your energy in the month ahead on organisation and developing work-flow efficiency.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

This time of year is all about getting back to basics. You've been working hard on the self-discovery aspect in these last few weeks, and now it's time to take that journey one step further. The sun moves forward into fresh-perspective Aquarius this afternoon, focusing your energy towards developing your personal resources, talents, and skills in the month ahead.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

These last few weeks haven't exactly been easy terrain for you to navigate, as you've had to do some deep digging in the intimacy department. Fortunately, you're coming out of the dark today, as the sun moves out of emotionally guarded Capricorn into Aquarius. This transition focuses your energy on learning, unlearning, and exploring new ways of being that encourage self-expansion.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're ready for what comes next. The universe is prepared to pave the way forward with your creative process, if you can firmly believe in yourself. The sun departs from overly serious Capricorn and moves forward into fresh perspective Aquarius, channeling your energy and attention to your creative self-expression. Your love life is likely to receive some extra attention too!



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Rejoice! At long last, your season finally kicks off. It's time at last to burst forth from the cocoon you've been hiding out in, as the sun moves out of heavy Capricorn and transitions into your sign. The sun's time in your sign works to help you strengthen your relationship to your own identity and individuality, and better decide who it is you wish to see yourself become in the year ahead.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Life has been dishing you out relationship lesson after relationship lesson. Your work in that arena has really only just begun, as you dislodge the blocks that stand in the way of real intimacy. The sun moves forward into fresh-perspective-seeking Aquarius this afternoon, channeling your energy in the month ahead on a psychological deep dive into the art of relationship.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Surrender is an increasingly important word in your vocabulary. You may need to repeat it to yourself a few more times in the weeks ahead! The sun moves forward into Aquarius, propelling you on a month-long journey into your personal past. The majority of your energy will likely focus around home, family, and your emotional foundations—so, be extra gentle with yourself.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

It may feel like the world is starting to melt ever so slightly around you. Don't fear the shapeshifting, however daunting it seems, for it's all a part of the plan. The sun moves forward into Aquarius, signalling a month long deep dive into the dusty corners of your mind. The weeks ahead are a prime time for release, renewal, and regeneration. Give yourself the rest you require.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The Olympic Flame symbolises
a. unity among various nations of the world
b. speed, perfection and strength
c. sports as a means for securing harmony among nations
d. continuity between the ancient and modern games
2. The reaction which converts sugar solution into alcohol is an example of
a. saponification
b. hydrogenation
c. fermentation
d. hydrolysis
3. The Scottish bacteriologist who discovered penicillin was
a. Alexander Fleming
b. Albert Einstein
c. Archimeder
d. Aryabhatta

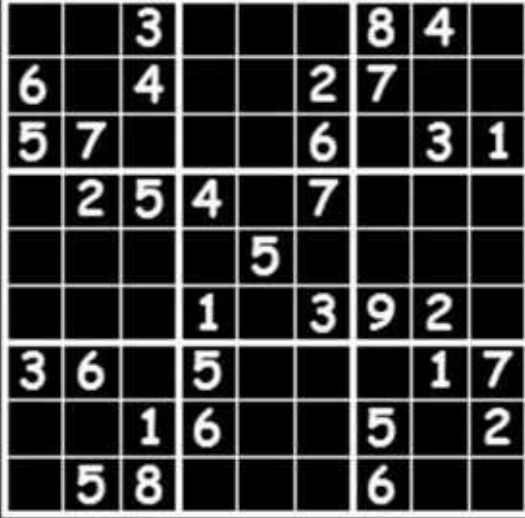
Answers: 1: d, 2: c, 3: a

KIDS COLOURING



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



BOGGLER



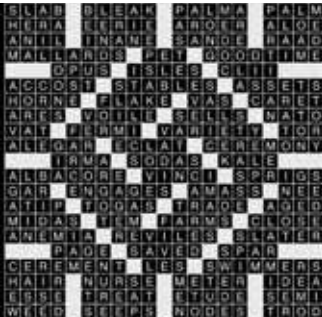
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JANUARY 18)



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



HOME DECOR FOR WINTER

SNUGGLE UP

Most of us are in the throes of winter weather right now. Of course, holiday decor typically comes out of boxes and stays through December, but when the month is over, our homes can look oddly out of sorts. Bare, even. According to Homedit.com, an extensive home-focused website that provides inspiration and information about design, there are a few minor changes we can make in our home decor to match the season and carry us through until the warmer weather returns.



Warm throws
Consider pulling out your softest, warmest throws. The chunky cable knit Afghan exudes cozy warmth during the chilly months. The more textural and neutral the throw, the more inviting it seems to be to curl up inside and sip some hot cocoa, with the promise that you'll come out when the grass turns green again. You can have different choices for each bedroom.

Crocheted throw pillows
Going along with nubby textiles and wintertime, how can you not adore crocheted textural throw pillows? In a warm colour palette, they keep the grey chill of the outdoors at bay and provide softness and warmth from a cozy nook inside. Throw pillows are one of the easiest seasonal swaps to make, and the results in the feel of a space are immediate and powerful.

Bold shades
During the winter, colder weather reminds us of snow and ice, which in turn remind us of white and silver and the cooler side of the colour wheel. A lovely and subtle way to infuse warmth is to accessorise (with artwork or other decor accent pieces) with warmer, sometimes darker colours, such as navy blue or burgundy. This provides a nice contrast to the bright winter whites and takes a little chill off the edges, even if it's just in our minds.

Warm lighting
Finally, when the days are shorter and light is less intense overall, adding lamplight creates a lovely ambience to your parlour or bedroom. Particularly when evening falls, you can see yourself curling up on this chair and pulling out a good book for the evening. The lamp must provide a necessary function as well as an aesthetic one. As the light draws us in, it gives out a warm vibe.



Warm winter rugs

Winter brings forth warm thoughts about keeping oneself cosy within one's home for the better part of each day. And, it is all the more important that the accessories within your living room add to the cosy ambience. One way to do it is to add comfortable rugs that add to the warmth within.

"A rug is a great place to start when adding layers to your home to make it all nice and cosy for winter," says Jodi Hall, visual manager of New York-based West Elm. "It's also an easy reference when deciding on other pieces, like cushions and throws. Just work with the colours of your rug and you can't go wrong."

Choosing a rug can feel a bit daunting, but it needn't, says Jodi. Start by deciding what floor plan is best for your space. For instance, if you're looking for a living room rug there are two tried-and-tested layouts. The first is referred to as the 'classic', and it's where you have a sofa or armchairs against a wall. Here, you want the rug to be big enough to fit under the front legs of the furniture, but not stretch as far as the wall. The second is known as the 'floating' layout, where your furniture is in the centre of the room. For this, choose a rug large enough to fit under all four legs of each piece of furniture.

Both these layouts work because the furniture is connected to the rug in the right proportions to the room. So everything is visually anchored and balanced. Bedrooms often stump people, but a large rug under the bottom two thirds of the bed always looks good.

Next things to consider are colour and pattern. If the room already has lots going on, a solid colour or neutral rug will bring things down to earth. But if your sofa and other pieces are quite simple, a patterned rug will make them pop.



WINTER MANICURE

DIGITAL *Decor*

It might be interesting to note that it's not just your skin that dries out during the winter. Your nails dry out too. Many people experience dry, cracked, splitting fingernails during the winter months and have tried several methods to fix them, with little success.

Here are a few nail care routines to help you take care of your nails during the winter:

Moisturise your nails

It is important, that after washing your hands, you apply lotions and oils that contain ingredients which include natural oils such as jojoba oil, avocado oil, shea butter, etc. This helps to lock up moisture in your nails and preserve the cuticle seal and strengthen the nail itself.

Don't clip/file dry nails

Clipping dry nails can cause them to split and fracture the layered protein structure of brittle nails? Before performing any nail procedures, wet your nails to soften and make it pliable. Clipping and filing nails when they are wet can remove any rough edges.

Coddle your cuticles

Nail health largely depends on cuticle health. Therefore, rough cuticles seem to hurt easily as well as look unattractive. Manicure experts say, maintaining cuticle health is critical since these thin layers of skin actually work to shield and protect nails as they grow. They also block bacteria that invade the nail bed. One can condition cuticles and fortify nails by simply rubbing down mild natural oils.

Keep the nails short

Long nails tend to snag, crack and break easily during the winter months. So, it is a good practice in winter to trim them regularly and apply a coat of protective polish to prevent damage like splitting.

Don't use aggressive chemicals

For effective winter nail care, avoid overexposure to harsh chemical agents such as soaps, dish detergent, etc. While you can't completely get away from the usage of these products, you can wear gloves to keep your nails safe from hot water and harsh detergents.

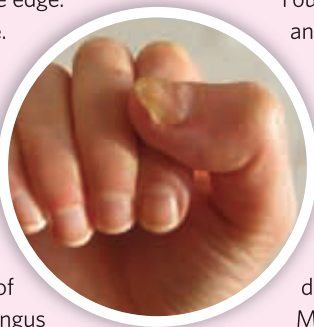


Nail infections

Nail fungus is a common condition that begins as a white or yellow spot under the tip of the finger-nail or toenail. As the fungal infection goes deeper, nail fungus may cause the nail to dis-colour, thicken and crumble at the edge. It can affect several nails at a time.

Fungal nail infections can be difficult to treat. Besides, microorganisms such as yeast and bacteria also can infect nails. Hence, knowing the cause of your infection helps determine the best course of treatment which depends on the severity of your condition and the type of fungus causing it.

Treatment options include oral anti-fungal drugs or anti-fungal creams that your doctor might prescribe to take orally or apply on the nail.



In some situations, it helps to combine oral and topical anti-fungal therapies. However, oral anti-fungal drugs may have side effects and are not suitable for all patients.

Your doctor may also prescribe an anti-fungal nail polish called ciclopirox (Penlac). You paint it on your infected nails and surrounding skin once a day. After seven days, you wipe the piled-on layers clean with alcohol and begin fresh applications. One might need to use this type of nail polish daily for almost a year.

Medicated anti-fungal creams, too, when rubbed into infected nails work better if you first thin the nails. This helps the medication get through the hard nail surface to the underlying fungus.

(Source: Mayo Clinic)

Nailcare secrets

Nails reflect our overall health, which is why proper nail care is so important. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends the following tips for keeping your nails healthy:

- Keep nails clean and dry.
- Cut nails straight across. Use sharp nail scissors or clippers. Round the nails slightly at the tips for maximum strength.
- Keep nails shaped and free of snags by filing with an emery board.
- Do not bite fingernails or remove the cuticle. Doing so can damage the nail.
- Do not use your nails as a tool, such as opening pop cans.
- Trim toenails regularly. Keeping them short will minimise the risk of trauma and injury.
- When toenails are thick and difficult to cut, soak your feet in warm salt water before cutting.

- Avoid digging out ingrown toenails, especially if they are infected and sore.
- Wear shoes that fit properly. Wear flip-flops at the pool or public showers.



'NO SPECIAL TREATMENT'

Australian authorities rebuff tennis players' quarantine complaints in Melbourne

Melbourne, Australia - Dozens of tennis stars stuck in hotel quarantine ahead of the Australian Open were told on Monday they would get no 'special treatment' to leave their rooms to train, despite complaints from some players.

Australian health authorities rejected demands for tough isolation rules to be eased, as players resorted to hitting balls off windows, walls and upturned beds in the hope of being ready for the year's first Grand Slam.

The Australian Open is due to make a delayed start in Melbourne on February 8, but its troubled build-up hit further problems after positive coronavirus cases were detected on three of the 17 charter flights that carried players and staff.

The 72 players on the three planes have been deemed close contacts of the four COVID-19 cases and barred from leaving their hotel rooms for 14 days, as largely virus-free Australia tries to prevent community transmission.

Health authorities said they discovered two more cases linked to the tournament on Monday, bringing the total for the Australian Open cluster to six. Several players have taken to social media to complain about conditions.

World No 1 Novak Djokovic - who arrived on a virus-free flight and is being allowed to train in a bio-secure bubble - reportedly sent a list of demands to tournament organisers that included allowing players to move to private homes with tennis courts.

Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews smashed back that request, saying authorities would not bend strict health rules any further for the players.



Polish player Lukasz Kubot (left), trainer Hermanus Kroes (centre) and Brazilian player Marcelo Melo (second from right) leave a tennis hotel for a training session in Melbourne on Monday

"There's no special treatment here. Because the virus doesn't treat you specially, so neither do we," he said.

The arrangements have sparked a backlash in Australia, with some social media users questioning why more than 1,000 players and staff were flown in for the sporting event, when tens of thousands of Australians remain stranded overseas. The country closed its international border in March and has since limited the number of its own citizens who can return each week.



Meanwhile the majority of players are allowed out to train for five hours a day, unlike other returned travellers who are confined to their hotel rooms for the full 14 days.

Andrews said all players knew about Australia's strict quaran-

The notion that there's been any change, the notion that people weren't briefed, I think that the argument really has no integrity whatsoever

DANIEL ANDREWS, VICTORIA PREMIER

time rules ahead of their flights.

"The notion that there's been any change, the notion that people weren't briefed, I think that argument really has no integrity whatsoever," he said.

French player Alize Cornet issued an apology to Australians

on Twitter after earlier deleting a tweet that called the quarantine 'insane'.

"Your reaction to this tactless comment made me realise what you've been through last year & how much you suffered," she wrote. "I guess I feel a bit anxious

about all this & I better have shut my mouth."

Tennis Australia has begun delivering exercise equipment to the isolated players who are concerned about the risk of injury when they finally hit the courts for a week of lead-in tournaments to start in Melbourne from January 31.

New Zealand doubles player Artem Sitak said he could hear tennis balls hitting the walls 'everywhere' in his hotel as players embraced 'creative' forms of exercise.

AFP

QUICK RUN

Champion Pogacar to ride Tour de France for UAE team

Despite the continuing COVID-19 uncertainty, UAE Emirates on Monday unveiled how they plan to deploy their array of stars in the three Grand Tours this year. The team announced three riders for each of the major three-week races. Predictably, 22 year old Slovene Tadej Pogacar will defend his Tour de France title starting on June 26. UAE also said that star winter recruit, 22 year old Swiss rider Marc Hirschi, will ride the Tour. Hirschi won the combativity award on last year's Tour. Veteran Norwegian sprinter Alexander Kristoff will also compete in the race. UAE said that Pogacar would also ride the Vuelta a Espana, which runs from August 14 to September 5, backed up by Italian Matteo Trentin and Spaniard David de la Cruz. For the Giro d'Italia, scheduled for May 8-30, UAE will be represented by 26 year old Colombian sprinter Fernando Gaviria, Italian rider Davide Formolo and another 22 year old, the American Brandon McNulty who, riding the race for the first time, was 15th last year.

FIFA upholds Trippier's ten-week ban

Kieran Trippier's ten-week ban for breaching betting rules has been upheld, after FIFA said on Monday the suspension applies worldwide. Trippier's suspension from the English Football Association had been temporarily put on hold pending an appeal from Atletico Madrid, which FIFA has dismissed. It means Trippier will be banned until February 28 and is due to miss eight La Liga fixtures, as well as Atletico's first-leg at home to Chelsea in the Champions League last-16.

Neville leaves England women's manager role

Phil Neville has left his role as England women's manager, the Football Association (FA) said on Monday, with the former Manchester United player set to take over at David Beckham's Major League Soccer club Inter Miami. The 43 year old ex-England player was previously due to leave his role in July, at the end of his contract. The FA said it would confirm the name of an interim head coach 'shortly'. The governing body last year announced that Neville's successor would be Netherlands women's boss Sarina Wiegman, but she is not due to start her new role until after the Tokyo Olympics later this year.

AFP

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Tokyo Games to cut back on athletes at ceremonies

Tokyo, Japan - Tokyo Olympics organisers said on Monday they will slash the number of athletes at the opening and closing ceremonies of this year's coronavirus-delayed Games, as a report said thousands fewer will attend.

More than 11,000 athletes are expected to compete at the Games, but anti-virus measures limiting the time they can spend in the Olympic Village mean not all will be able to attend the opening and closing festivities.

Organisers said they would also 'reconsider' how many athletes can take part in the ceremonies, and how to get them into the stadium safely. "In order to ensure the safety and security of the athletes and simplify operations at the Tokyo 2020 Games, we believe it is necessary to reconsider the number of participants at the opening and closing ceremonies and how they will enter the stadium," the organisers said in a statement.

AFP

Ali hits ton, Gopalkrishnan picks five in Pitspot victory

LOCAL CRICKET

Opener Wajid Ali slammed an unbeaten 105 off 66 and Gopakumar Gopalakrishnan picked up five for 24 to power Pitspot to a 15-run win over Al Rehwan CT in an Oman Cricket D Division (T20) game at Al Amerat on Friday.

Pitspot posted 179 for four, thanks to Ali's century and Fahad Hamsa's knock of 33. Al Rehwan were then restricted to 164 for seven. Puthen Purayil (55) and Raniz Mohammed (40) were the main scorers.

In another match of the same division, Manikandan Rajagopal's 63 guided Al Jadidi Engineering and Contracting to an eight-wicket win over Safara International, also on Friday.

Sandesh Pusalkar top-scored with 44 as Safara made 154 for six. Nikesh V claimed three for 22. Al Jadidi's chase was spearheaded by Manikandan and Dhanesh Krishnan (36 n.o.) as they reached 155 for two in the 19th over.



Gopakrishnan Wajid Ali

BRIEF SCORES:

D Division: Pitspot 179-4 (Ali 105, Hamsa 33) beat Al Rehwan 164-7 (Purayil 55, Mohammed 40; Gopalakrishnan 5-24).

D Division: Safara International 154-6 (Pusalkar 44, Imran Khan 34; Nikesh V 3-22, Gokul Gopinath 2-28) lost to Al Jadidi Engineering & Contracting 155-2 in 18.3 overs (Rajagopal 63, Krishnan 36; Syed Uzair Saman 2-35).

E Division (T20): OCT Al Hail-B 154-7 (Abdul Jalil al Balushi 38, Mohamed Issa al Balushi 24; Rajeesh Ravindran 4-27, Waqas Sohail 2-23) lost to Danmark CT

156-5 in 17.4 overs (Shankar Gayathri 66, Doresh Devender 47; Taiz Malla al Balushi 3-38).

E Division: Aflag Group CT 126 in 17.2 overs (Thiyagu Subramanian 34; Nadil al Balushi 4-22, Mohamed Haneef 2-17, Abdullah al Balushi 2-21) lost to OCT Al Nahdha 127-2 in 17 overs (Rafeeq Mohammed 51, Abdullah 30).

F Division (T20): KCA Deutag 140 in 19.1 overs (Khalid Balushi 40; Prathiesh Ramesh 3-24, Ayush Karthyic 2-32) beat Muscat Young Stars 118-6 (Roshan Kumar 31, Aaryan Nishit Punja 29; Ameer Hamza 2-18, Sultan Ali 2-20).

F Division: Mazoon Dairy Company SAOC 166-9 (Peter Shipin 54 Amir Munir 2-35, Mohammed Islam 2-34) lost to Israr Ghala 167-7 in 19.5 overs (Munir 40, Asim Shaheen 37; Ameer 3-10, Hewa Dewage 2-19).

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TOUGH, TRICKY TASK FOR INDIA

Siraj takes five as Australia set India a target of 328; thunderstorms threaten the final day of Gabba Test

AUSTRALIA VS INDIA

FOURTH TEST: DAY FOUR

Brisbane, Australia - Rain wiped out nearly all of the last session of day four on Monday soon after Australia had set India 328 to win the Gabba Test.

India's openers had only faced 11 balls, and still had a possible 23.1 overs left to negotiate before stumps, when rain sent the players hurrying into their dressing rooms for the second and final time on the day.

On a pitch where inconsistent bounce has grown into a frequent menace, Australia should still have enough time left, in theory, to bowl India out and wrap up a 2-1 series win, but the weather forecast for day five isn't encouraging.

India will have been the happier side at stumps - not so much from the standpoint of the match situation as much as the fact that the bowling attack they cobbled together for this Test match, with each of their senior options unavailable, managed to challenge Australia again and keep them from running away with the game.

For one, they bowled Australia out. This hadn't seemed likely when David Warner and Marcus Harris had extended their opening partnership to 89 and left Australia effectively 122 for no loss some 40 minutes into the day's play.

But India regrouped, with Shardul Thakur breaking the partnership on his way to an impressive four-wicket haul and Mohammed Siraj capping off a stellar debut series with a maiden Test-match five-for.

A short ball from Thakur brought the breakthrough, with Harris leaving his gloves in the way of the ball while trying to duck underneath it. Washington Sundar, Thakur's partner in crime with the bat on day three, then had Warner lbw with one that went with the arm to leave Australia 91 for two with two new batsmen at the crease.



India's Mohammed Siraj (second from right) celebrates with teammates after picking a wicket on day four of the fourth Test against Australia on Monday (AFP)

Those two batsmen, Marnus Labuschagne and Steven Smith, threatened to take the game away once more with a counterattacking stand full of daring forays down the pitch to Sundar's off-spin. But having raced to 25 off 21, Labuschagne had no answer to Siraj when he got one to straighten in the channel after angling into him, and Rohit Sharma pouched a thick edge at second slip.

Three balls later, Matthew Wade was caught down the leg side off Siraj, his duck capping a miserable series that has put his place in doubt. Either side of tea, Smith - batting with adventurous use of feet and hands - and Cameron Green - blocking stolidly with a rather mechanical-looking forward stride - added 73



Steve Smith reacts after playing a shot as Rishabh Pant looks on (AFP)

in 23.2 overs, stretching the lead past the 200 mark.

On 42, Smith gave India a chance when he stepped out and miscued a lofted hit off Sundar, but Siraj misjudged the catch at

long-on and dropped it while off-balance. But soon after he'd moved past fifty, Siraj made up for the miss by getting a ball to leap at Smith from just short of a length. He made an impressive

effort to survive the delivery, but couldn't pull his bottom hand off the handle before the ball had struck his glove, and lobbed to gully. By the time Thakur sent Green back with an away-seamer in the corridor - it gave Rohit his fifth catch of the match - Australia's lead had passed 250.

Thakur got one to spit up at Tim Paine and hit his glove. Australia may have felt they already had enough for an early declaration, especially given the danger of the erratic bounce injuring one of their bowlers.

But they batted on, perhaps wary of having their bowlers - each of whom has played all four Tests, and all of whom have got through grueling workloads in India's second innings in Sydney

Mum's pep talk made me mentally strong, says Siraj

Brisbane, Australia - India bowler Mohammed Siraj revealed how a phone call with his mother and the memory of his late father spurred him on to a five-wicket haul in the final Test against Australia on Monday.

It has been an emotional series for the 26 year old, who lost his father in November and welled up with tears during the national anthems in Sydney. "I am very thankful that I got five wickets. It was a very tough situation for me because I lost my dad recently," said Siraj, playing only his third Test.

"I called up home and I felt strong after talking to them and to my mother. She motivated me to feel strong. "So I was mentally strong

and my focus was to make sure my dad's dream comes true."

Siraj's father, an auto rickshaw driver from the southern city of Hyderabad, died on November 20 as India prepared for the start of their tour. But the bowler, who also plays for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL, stayed in the team's secure bubble despite an offer to fly home.

On India's chances going into the final day, Siraj said, "Our batsmen are good, they are prepared for (Tuesday). We will only know tomorrow how it goes.

"Our only motive is to win the series. Despite so many injuries, the way the team fought in the first innings is a matter of pride."

AFP

SCOREBOARD

Australia 1st Innings 369	
India 1st Innings 336	
AUSTRALIA 2ND INNINGS	
M Harris	c Pant b Thakur 38
D Warner	lbw b Sundar 48
M Labuschagne	c Rohit b Siraj 25
S Smith	c Rahane b Siraj 55
M Wade	c Pant b Siraj 0
C Green	c Rohit b Thakur 37
T Paine	c Pant b Thakur 27
P Cummins	not out 28
M Starc	c Saini b Siraj 1
N Lyon	c Agarwal b Thakur 13
J Hazlewood	c Thakur b Siraj 9
Extras: (b 5, lb 2, nb 4, w 2) 13	
TOTAL: 294 in 75.5 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-89, 2-91, 3-123, 4-123, 5-196, 6-227, 7-242, 8-247, 9-274, 10-294	
Bowling: M Siraj 19.5-5-73-5, T Natarajan 14-4-41-0, W Sundar 18-1-80-1, S Thakur 19-2-61-4, N Saini 5-1-32-0	
INDIA 2ND INNINGS	
Rohit Sharma	not out 4
S Gill	not out 0
TOTAL: 4 for no loss in 1.5 overs	
Bowling: M Starc 1-0-4-0, J Hazlewood 0.5-0-0-0	

England record emphatic seven-wicket win at Galle



Dan Lawrence (left) and Jonny Bairstow celebrate the moment of victory

SRI LANKA VS ENGLAND

FIRST TEST: DAY FIVE

Galle, Sri Lanka - England won the first Test in Galle by seven wickets on Monday.

In the end, it was straightforward enough. Resuming on the final morning with 36 more runs required to win, it took England just 9.2 overs to wrap up victory.

Jonny Bairstow settled any nerves that may have been lingering by rocking on to the back foot and cutting Lasith Embuldeniya for four in the second over of the morning, while Dan Lawrence picked off singles with an ease that seemed impossible the previous evening.

Together they posted an unbeaten stand of 62 for the fourth wicket with Lawrence providing admirably assured support on debut.

Ultimately, Sri Lanka were

never able to fully repair the damage incurred by their first-innings batting debacle. To be bowled out for 135 when the surface was at its best handed England a significant advantage which they never really allowed to slip.

For England this will be an especially satisfying victory. Going into this match, they had only one day of intra-squad warm-up cricket and had a poor long-term record at the start of series having lost the first Test in five of their previous six series.

To see their captain, Joe Root, rediscover his best form with a double-century and their spinners, Dom Bess and Jack Leach, both claim a five-wicket haul would have been enormously pleasing.

It is believed to be the first time two England spinners have

taken five-wicket hauls in the same Test since John Emburey and Derek Underwood achieved it, also in Sri Lanka, in 1982.

It is England's fourth successive overseas Test victory, following the three that ended their tour of South Africa at the start of 2020. It is the first time England have achieved such a run in away Tests since 1955-57, when they beat New Zealand and South Africa twice each.

It is also England's fifth successive Test victory in Sri Lanka and their second successive victory in Galle. Prior to the 2018 tour, they had never won at the ground. It was Root's 24th victory as Test captain. Now only Michael Vaughan, with 26 wins, has more as an England captain. It was also Root's first overseas Test victory achieved without Ben Stokes in his side.

The second and final Test, also in Galle, begins on Friday.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD	
Sri Lanka 1st Innings 135	
England 1st Innings 421	
Sri Lanka 2nd Innings 359	
ENGLAND 2ND INNINGS	
Z Crawley	c Mendis b Embuldeniya 8
D Sibley	b Embuldeniya 2
J Bairstow	not out 35
J Root	run out 1
D Lawrence	not out 21
Extras: (b 4, lb 5) 9	
TOTAL: 76 for three in 24.2 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-12, 3-14	
Bowling: L Embuldeniya 12-3-29-2, D Perera 11-2-34-0, W Hasaranga 1-0-4-0	

SA impressed with Pakistan security, says de Kock

SOUTH AFRICA'S TOUR OF PAKISTAN

Karachi, Pakistan - South African skipper Quinton de Kock says top-notch security surrounding the squad since their arrival in Pakistan at the weekend has allowed them to concentrate fully on cricket.

De Kock is leading a 21-strong squad on South Africa's first tour to Pakistan in 14 years, where they will play two Tests and three T20Is. The first Test starts in Karachi on January 26.

"When we were coming here, obviously, security was a concern - if not the biggest concern," the 28 year old told a virtual news conference.

"When we landed here we saw the amount of security... we became a lot calmer. It became less of a worry and we were able to focus more on cricket."

"It looks like all corners are checked... all bases covered, touch wood," said de Kock.

"At the moment we feel safe. There is a lot of security, so now we are just worrying about cricket."

The squad are being kept effectively in a bubble at their Karachi hotel as a precaution against the coronavirus, but can train at a nearby club ground.

All matches will be played behind closed doors.

AFP

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Athletic Bilbao's players celebrate after winning the Spanish Super Cup final against Barcelona at La Cartuja stadium in Seville, Spain, on Sunday (AFP)

Messi sees red as Bilbao stun Barca

SPANISH SUPER CUP FINAL

Madrid, Spain - Lionel Messi was sent off for the first time playing for Barcelona as Athletic Bilbao stunned the Catalans to win the Spanish Super Cup on Sunday, a dramatic final finishing 3-2 after extra-time.

Moments before Bilbao's momentous win was confirmed, Messi threw an arm at Asier Villalibre, who had earlier scored a 90th-minute equaliser in normal time to deny Barca victory.

Antoine Griezmann's double looked to have sealed the trophy for Barca but Villalibre intervened before Inaki Williams' fabulous strike three minutes into extra time proved decisive.

Messi shook off a thigh problem to start in Seville and was required to play all 120 minutes as Barcelona attempted to take the game to penalties. Instead, the 33 year old lost his temper at the end of a combative contest, reacting to a late challenge from Villalibre by swiping his hands across the back of his opponent.

It meant a first ever red card for Messi in 753 appearances for Barcelona, to go with his two reds for Argentina in 2005 and 2019. "After so many years in football, Leo knows perfectly well when he is fit to play," said Barca coach Ronald Koeman. "We talked and he said he was in a good place to start. He has

survived the game, given the maximum, nothing more."

Messi's anger will take some of the limelight away from Bilbao, who had already denied the competition a Clasico final by beating Real Madrid in the semis on Thursday and now have completed the set. It means a title and the perfect start for Marcelino Garcia Toral, who only took over as coach less than two weeks ago. But there was praise too for his predecessor Gaizka Garitano, who oversaw this team reaching the Copa del Rey final last season, which earned qualification in the first place.

"This is for Gaizka Garitano and his coaching staff as well

who brought us here," said Williams.

Organisers at the Spanish Football Federation might have hoped for the global attraction of a Clasico, especially as the coronavirus pandemic had already kept the tournament in Spain rather than the lucrative Saudi Arabia, where it was played last year. Yet this was a frantic final, with a hugely surprising result.

"It is not a step back," Koeman said "Always winning titles is helpful to show that we are on the right track, but it is only one game, it is a Super Cup, and we will show in the next few games that we are on the right track."

AFP

'Perfect' Inter shock Juve to move level with Milan

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Milan, Italy - Inter Milan shocked champions Juventus 2-0 to move level on points with Serie A leaders AC Milan on Sunday, boosting their hopes of a first league title since 2010.

Arturo Vidal got his head to a Nicolo Barella cross in the 12th minute for his first league goal for Inter Milan against his former club.

Barella added the second seven minutes after the break as Inter claimed a first victory over Juventus since September 2016, ending a series of seven matches without a win.

"It was a bad defeat, we didn't expect it, we couldn't have put in a worse performance than this," said Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo after his second league defeat this season.

"Our attitude was wrong, right from the start.

"We were too passive, fearful, we only thought about the defensive phase."

Inter are equal on 40 points with local rivals Milan, who travel to Cagliari on Monday, with Juventus seven points behind the top two in fifth.

"To win against a team like Juve you have to touch perfection," said Inter coach Antonio Conte after his first win in four meetings against the club he led to the first three of their current run of nine consecutive league titles.

"I'm happy for the lads because these are games that give you self-esteem and make you understand that we're on the right path.

"I've seen a credible Inter, and

it is the greatest satisfaction after a year and a half of work".

Cristiano Ronaldo looked to have broken through for the away side after 11 minutes but Federico Chiesa was ruled off-side in the build up.

And Chilean Vidal made no mistake for last season's Serie A runners-up two minutes later off Barella's perfect cross.

A superb Alessandro Bastoni through ball to Barella paid off in the 52nd minute, with the pacy Italy midfielder shaking off Gianluca Frabotta and Giorgio Chiellini to blast home the second.

Atalanta missed the chance to move third, dropping points before next week's trip to AC Milan with a goalless draw against lowly Genoa.

AFP



Inter Milan players celebrate after a goal against Juventus during the Italian Serie A match in Milan on Sunday



Manchester City's John Stones celebrates after scoring against Crystal Palace during the English Premier League match on Sunday (AFP)

City's Stones 'quietly confident' of title success

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - John Stones says Manchester City are starting to feel 'quietly confident' after climbing to second in the English Premier League following their fifth successive top-flight win.

Sunday's 4-0 win over Crystal Palace at the Etihad lifted Pep Guardiola's men above champions Liverpool and within two points of leaders Manchester United, with a game in hand.

In all competitions Pep Guardiola's side are unbeaten in 15 games and have kept clean

sheets in 12 of them. They are also through to the League Cup final, the FA Cup fourth round and the last-16 of the Champions League.

Asked to describe the mood among the squad, England defender Stones said, "I think quietly confident - but no-one really gets ahead of themselves, no-one looks too far, which is a great quality to have.

"In previous seasons where we have won the league we have never looked further than the next game and that's all we can affect and all we can prepare for.

"We keep that mentality and hopefully we can keep on this winning run."

Stones, who scored two of the four goals against Palace, has been outstanding in City's recent run of form.

The 26 year old fell out of favour last season and appeared to be well down the centre-back pecking order when the current campaign began.

But with Aymeric Laporte and Nathan Ake affected by form and fitness issues, and Eric Garcia indicating a desire to leave, Stones has grasped an opportunity

to shine alongside new signing Ruben Dias.

Of the ten matches he and Stones have started together, City have won nine and conceded just one goal. Contributing goals has highlighted his resurgence further.

"I've been wanting to add goals to my game," said Stones, who also scored in the League Cup semifinal win over United earlier this month.

Guardiola praised Stones for his performances this season, saying he 'deserves the best'.

"Confidence is everything,"

said the Catalan. "He won his confidence for himself. As managers, we can't give confidence. He started to play alongside Ruben and they've played really well."

After Stones' opener in the 26th minute, City doubled their lead 11 minutes into the second half when Ilkay Gundogan curled into the top corner.

Stones struck again in the 68th minute, blasting home after Ruben Dias' header was saved, and Raheem Sterling made it four with an 88th minute free-kick.

AFP

Metz end Lyon's run to allow PSG take lead

FRENCH LEAGUE

Paris, France - Lyon slumped to a shock 1-0 home defeat to Metz on Sunday that ended a long unbeaten run and allowed Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) to stay top of Ligue 1.

Rudi Garcia's side had come into Sunday's late match on the back of 16 league games without defeat, knowing that a win would have put them back in the lead of France's top flight. However Aaron Leya Iseka struck in the final minute to snatch the points for resilient Metz, who had to withstand a second-half onslaught before finally prevailing and moving ninth.

"We pushed, they pushed, and we were rewarded for our efforts. We knew that we would have little of the ball and that we would have to counter well, and that's what we did," said Belgian Leya Iseka. The loss leaves Lyon third, two points behind PSG and Lille, whose own late goal from Jonathan David secured a 2-1 win over Reims.

AFP



Seeb's Abdulaziz al Miqbal (second from right) celebrates with his teammates after scoring against Rustaq on Monday

Seeb edge Rustaq to stay on top

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

2020-21 OMANTEL LEAGUE

Holders Seeb huffed and puffed their way to a narrow 1-0 victory on Monday as they staved off a determined Rustaq fight at the Seeb Sports Stadium.

The win ensured the defending champions continue to remain on top of the 2020-21 Omantel League standings after six rounds with 16 points.

The all-important goal of the match was scored by Seeb's

striker Abdulaziz al Miqbal.

In the other early match of the day, Sohar defeated Muscat 2-1 at the Sohar Sports Complex.

Al Mussanah will have a chance to climb to third spot later on Monday night when they take on Oman at the Rustaq Sports Complex.

Also in a late game, promoted Nizwa will be looking for their second win of the season at home against Bahla.

Chasing Seeb on the points table are four-time champions Al Suwaiq and 11-time winners

Dhofar who have 13 and 12 points respectively after six rounds.

Al Mussanah have ten points ahead of their game against Oman while Rustaq despite the defeat on Monday against the champions are placed fifth with nine points after registering three wins and three losses.

Five-time champions Al Nasr, who lost their game on Sunday, are sixth with eight while Oman have seven points, the same as Sohar, but with a game in hand.

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