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MEET THE WINNERS... WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2021
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HM issues Royal Decree appointing non-resident ambassadors

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 61/2021 on Wednesday appointing two non-resident ambassadors, reading as follows:

Article (1) appoints Abdullah Nasser Musallam al Rahbi, Oman's Ambassador to Egypt, as the sultanate's extraordinary and plenipotentiary non-resident Ambassador to Djibouti.

Article (2) Appoints Moosa Hamdan Moosa al Taei, Oman's Ambassador to the United States of America, as the sultanate's extraordinary and plenipotentiary non-resident Ambassador to Cuba, Canada and Mexico.

Article (3) states that the decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

► NEWS BRIEFS

HM GREETES EMIR OF KUWAIT

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Sheikh Nawaf al Ahmed al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait on the anniversary of his accession to the throne.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to Sheikh Nawaf, praying to the Almighty Allah for the return of this and similar occasions on him and the brotherly Kuwaiti people.



Oman's senior citizens not affected by digital divide



Vodafone Oman signs 5G deal with Ericsson

Long-term residency visas launched

Residence visas granted to 22 investors of various nationalities at launch; applications will be received from October 3 through MoCIIP's Investment Services Centre

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) launched the Investors Residency Programme that grants foreign investors and retirees long residency in Oman on Wednesday. The ministry stated that applications will be received from October 3 through the ministry's Investment Services Centre.

The launch also saw the handing over of residence visas to 22 investors of different nationalities. "The Investors Residency Programme focuses on qualitative investments that contribute to the growth of domestic products, localisation



The launch of the Investors Residency Programme by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on Wednesday (Supplied photo)

INVESTORS RESIDENCY PROGRAMME

CATEGORY I 10-year extendable visa

Who can apply

- Any applicant who owns one or several fully constructed housing units worth RO500,000
- Anyone who owns a public/closed joint-stock or any other company or its shares with a market value of not less than RO500,000
- Anyone who owns a company employing not less than 50 Omani employees
- Anyone who has purchased RO500,000 worth of Omani governmental bonds

CATEGORY II Five-year extendable visa

Who can apply

- Any applicant who owns one or several fully constructed housing units worth RO250,000
- Anyone who owns a company or its shares with a market value of not less than RO250,000
- Anyone who has purchased RO250,000 worth of Omani governmental bonds

Retirees

- Should be at least 60 years old when applying
- The applicant must provide proof of work in Oman with employment of not less than two years
- Submission of a personal account statement from a bank in Oman of not less than six months showing monthly income of at least RO4,000
- Submission of a house deed or a residential lease under the applicant's name

BENEFITS FOR CATEGORY I, II

- Resident cards to be renewed every three years for Category I, and every two years for Category II
- The right to reside with family members (first degree) without limiting the number of individuals for both the categories but limiting the age of children to 25 years for Category II
- Ownership of a single property outside of ITC projects for residential, commercial or industrial purposes for Category I. This right is transferable to others, with the exception of owning land prohibited for non-Omanis
- Employ up to three people for private (domestic) work
- The possibility of engaging in economic activities or working in Oman
- Possibility to issue visitor visas for relatives
- Use of the queues designated for Omanis at airports and other facilities

of industries, transfer of modern technologies, and promotion of economic diversification sectors in the sultanate," said H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

"The programme aims to attract investments from different countries for which the sultanate provides a conducive environment. Today, we have granted investor residence visas to more than 20 investors in the sultanate. Some of them have employed more than 4,000 Omanis in their companies. We have received many requests from investors to obtain residency, and we will announce them next week," said H E Yousef.

Kiran Asher, founder and group managing director of Al Ansari Group of Companies, who was among the 22 investors to be granted residency, said, "I feel over the moon and I consider myself fortunate. One is privileged to be recognised for the contribution made to this beautiful nation. I commend the leadership for offering this option as it will not only attract more foreign investors but also allow many to make this beautiful and peaceful gem of a country their home."

Continued on **Page 02**

England cricketers to hold ten-day camp in Oman

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Pakistan's loss is Oman's gain. In a major development that is expected to go a long way to boost Oman's profile in the cricketing world, it has been learnt that the ICC T20 World Cup-bound England team will hold a camp in Muscat from October 5-15. The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be played in Oman and the UAE from October 17-November 14.

Former T20 World Cup champions, England were scheduled to play two T20Is (October 13 and 14) in the lead up to the World Cup in Pakistan but England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) took a decision on September 20 to abandon the tour because of security concerns, which has led to souring of relationship between Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and ECB.

Confirming the tour of last edition's runner-up team England to Oman, a senior Oman Cricket (OC) official, on condition of



anonymity, said that the 'England team is coming to Oman ahead of the T20 World Cup'.

The OC official said, "The team will remain protected during the tour of Oman in a secure bio-bubble, which was one of the key pre-requisites for their visit. We are delighted to host the former champions here.

"There wouldn't be a chance for Oman to play against them as our team will play against Sri Lanka two warm-up games on October 7 and 9 before travelling

to the UAE for other warm-up games prior to the tournament."

Led by Eoin Morgan, England are one of the fancied teams in the fray, and hope to acclimatise to the weather conditions that they will experience in the UAE.

Meanwhile, it has been confirmed that Bangladesh, which are in Group B along with hosts Oman, Scotland and Papua New Guinea (PNG) will arrive in Oman on October 3.

The OC official said that there is a possibility of Bangladesh

playing a practice game against Oman 'A' team but Bangladesh media reports on Tuesday said that they have turned down the offer as the 'team wouldn't risk breaking a bio-bubble'.

As teams in the same group can't play against each other in warm-up games, the practice match against Bangladesh would have featured only Oman A squad. A final decision is yet to be taken on the practice game.

Oman are also expected to feature in two scheduled warm-up matches in the UAE after the matches against Sri Lanka. The hosts take on PNG in the World Cup opener on October 17.

England are placed in Group 1 and begin their campaign from the second round - Super12 stage - starting on October 23. They are placed along with defending champions West Indies, South Africa and Australia. Two teams from the first round will join the group to complete the six teams in a group.

@ashokmuscat



Nadhirah al Harthy atop Mt Manaslu in Nepal, the eighth highest mountain in the world at 8,163m above sea level (Supplied photo)

Nadhirah al Harthy scales 8,163m Mt Manaslu

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's most famous mountaineer and the first Omani woman to scale Mt Everest, Nadhirah al Harthy has successfully scaled Mt Manaslu in Nepal, the eighth highest mountain in the world at 8,163m above sea level.

Nadhirah, who raised the Omani flag atop the mountain for the first time in the history of the sultanate, began her technical preparations for the new personal record several months ago.

She took three days to reach the final camp while the ascent from the final camp to the summit took 15 hours.

"I am very happy to reach the summit after overcoming many difficulties and challenging climatic conditions," said Nadhirah.

She added that this mission was an extension of her previous

trips, which began with scaling Mt Everest in 2019, and reaching the summit of Mt Ama Dablam, also in Nepal, at an altitude of 6,812m in January 2021.

"The climb to the top of this mountain confirms that Omani women are capable of great achievements in sports and in all other fields," said Nadhirah.

She climbed Mt Everest with three other Arab women, and their entire journey was filmed and documented by Canadian adventurer and filmmaker Elia Saikaly.

She was inspired to take up this challenge by the late Khalid al Siyabi, the first Omani to climb Mt Everest in 2010, and underwent rigorous training for over two years before venturing out for her mission.

Being an ultra athlete, Nadhirah has participated in the Muscat Marathon twice, as well as the 90km Oman UTMB race.

Expo 2020 Dubai: Six-month extravaganza starts today

Dubai, UAE - Millions of people will begin converging on Dubai this week as the COVID-19 delayed Expo 2020, the world's biggest event since the pandemic, finally unveils its gleaming pavilions in the desert.

The expo site in the dusty Dubai suburbs has remained strictly off-limits during its year-long postponement but the wraps will come off on Thursday at an opening ceremony attended by Emirati royalty.

Architectural marvels and a long list of technological innovations will feature among the ex-



hibits, or pavilions, showcasing the ingenuity of more than 190 countries.

The first world fair was held in London in 1851, when it was housed in the purpose-built Crystal Palace, and it featured the Eiffel Tower - intended as a temporary attraction - in Paris in 1889.

The expo will be indelibly tinged by the pandemic, however, with masks and social distancing mandatory on site. Visitors will need to be vaccinated or have a negative PCR test to enter.

AFF

Oman's senior citizens not affected by digital divide

'Digital Equity for All Ages', theme of 2021 International Day of Older Persons

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

The International Day of Older Persons 2021 - themed 'Digital Equity for All Ages' - affirms the need for access and meaningful participation in the digital world by older persons.

On the occasion, which is celebrated on October 1, *Muscat Daily* spoke to a few elderly people who vouched that senior citizens in Oman are digitally equipped and don't feel lagging behind.

Oman is safe with regards to discrimination associated with digitalisation, said Obaid al Khaldi, a 69-year-old Barka resident. "The government has left no stone unturned to make sure everyone in Oman is well taken care of and as compared to our youth days, Oman is now more digital than ever. I may be almost 70 years old but am very active when it comes to using technological devices. I connect with all my family and friends digitally and as an older person, I feel I am not left behind," he said.

On December 14, 1990, the United Nations General Assembly voted to establish October 1 as the International Day of Older Persons as recorded in Resolution 45/106.

According to the United Nations (UN), the objectives of the 2021 theme for the International Day of Older Persons is to bring awareness of the importance of digital inclusion of older persons, while 'tackling stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination associated with digitalisation, taking



(For illustrative purpose)

If everything can happen online, why not our traditional activities? We are blessed with technology and we can still gather for either joyful or sombre moments online

MOHAMMED AL HARTHY

into account sociocultural norms and the right to autonomy'.

This is in addition to highlighting policies to leverage digital

technologies for full achievement of the sustainable development goals, the UN states.

While Oman's elderly popula-

tion has access to Internet, the UN states that one-half of the global population is off-line, 'with the starkest contrast between the most developed countries (87 per cent) and the least developed countries (19 per cent)'.

Recent reports by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) indicate that women and older persons experience digital inequity to a greater

extent than other groups in society; they either lack access to technologies, or are often not benefiting fully from the opportunities provided by technological progress.

However, according to Mohammed al Harthy, 67, things are going in the right direction in Oman.

"While more and more people escape to the virtual world as they realise that digital life must go on, the elderly have embraced it fully too. If everything can happen online, why not our traditional activities? We are blessed with technology and we can still gather for either joyful or sombre moments online. In the past months, we held events and meetings digitally, and this shows how Oman has progressed," Harthy said.

Meanwhile, as efforts to connect more people are currently under way, new risks have become apparent. For example, cybercrimes and misinformation threaten human rights, privacy, and security of older people.

The rapid speed of adoption of digital technology has outpaced policy and governance at the national, regional, and global levels.

"I have access to technology even though I am not tech-savvy. I try to limit the use of technology because sometimes I feel if overused, I may be prone to misinformation and it may deprive me privacy. I still do not fully trust the digital world. So, I am very careful," Abdullah Nasser, 68, said.

@shadadm

Ihsaan Association helps over 19,000 S Batinah elderly

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ihsaan Association has said that it supported around 19,000 elderly people from 471 villages in South Batinah governorate in 2020.

Yousef bin Mohsin al Lamki, chairman of the association's branch in South Batinah, said, "The association provides services in areas like health, psychological issues, social and living care for the elderly in partnership with the competent authorities, in addition to creating a healthy and safe environment for them in the various wilayats of the governorate."

The association is also working on organising community visits with an aim of having constant communication with the elderly and younger people,



Yousef bin Mohsin al Lamki

he said.

"The association organises programmes with clear goals, including training family members to provide appropriate care for the elderly through the implementation of practical training workshops for them on using supportive devices."

MoL announces 331 jobs in North Batinah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has announced 331 job opportunities in several private sector institutions in North Batinah governorate.

"The Directorate General of Labour in North Batinah has announced the launch of the third package of vacancies," MoL stated.

The job opportunities are for various specialities and qualifications and are available on the ministry's website - www.mol.gov.om

The ministry stated that during the first quarter of 2021, it facilitated provision of 10,196 jobs in both the government and private sectors. This is 31.6 per cent of the number of jobs targeted to be offered by the end of the year.

This was achieved, the ministry stated, through various measures to fulfil its commitment to its executive plan announced in January this year.

In January, MoL announced that 32,267 jobs will be available for jobseekers this year, including 7,602 opportunities in government sector units.

COVID-19: Free jobs for expats in North Sharqiyah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Expatriates will be vaccinated with the second dose of free Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from October 2 to 7, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in North Sharqiyah governorate has stated.

"The Directorate General would like to inform the expatriates who received the first dose of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in the medical fitness examination centre in Ibra or Mudhaibi Sports and Cultural Club hall, that they can go to the approved immunisation centres in the governorate to receive the second dose, from October 2 to 7, timings for which will be from 8am to 2pm," DGHS said in a statement.

'Proof of appointment for the second dose, proof of receiving first dose, and a resident card is mandatory,' the statement added.

33 new cases

Thirty-three new cases of coronavirus were registered in Oman, in addition to one new death, on Wednesday.

This brings the total number of positive cases to 303,738 in the sultanate. The total number of deaths reached 4,096, the Ministry of Health stated.

Pact signed to support over 1,000 orphans

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MARA) signed an agreement with Injaz Oman on Wednesday to support orphans in the sultanate to provide them with financial help.

The agreement will support the 'Kahatain' initiative, which targets more than 1,000 orphans in the age group of 16-18 years.

'The two-year programme will help them organise their finances,' MARA said.



(Supplied photo)

The agreement was signed by the H E Dr Mohammad bin Said al Maamari, Undersecretary in MARA, and Khawla al Harthiya,

CEO of Injaz Oman, in the presence of Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank.

The programme will provide

orphans with counselling as well as ongoing care.

The ministry stated that the initiative is among a series of

programmes it offers to raise awareness on the importance of supporting orphans and contributing to ensure their future

for the sake of a better life, as well as to encourage community cooperation to ensure solidarity among all classes of society.

H H SAYYID THEYAZIN RECEIVES MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR



H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, received in his office on Wednesday H E Tariq al Hussaisan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the sultanate. The meeting reviewed the relations binding the two brotherly countries and touched on several topics of common interest. The meeting also discussed aspects of existing cooperation in cultural, sports and youth fields (ONA)

MoCIIP launches Investors Residency Programme

Continued from Page 01

On the occasion, H E Abdul-salam Mohammed Abdullah al Murshidi, executive president of Oman Investment Authority, said, "At this stage, we need a foreign partner who must be treated as a member of society. The foreign investor will bring his money and expertise and will support the Omani economy."

Dr Mohammed Ali of Galfar Engineering and Contracting, who was among the recipients, described being granted the ten-year resident visa as an 'honour'.

"The programme will go a long way in promoting an investor-friendly environment and attract more and more prospective investors to Oman. This makes me feel more responsible in serving this beloved country and being part of its socio-economic develop-

ment, and working to realise Oman Vision 2040," Ali said.

According to MoCIIP advisor Khalid al Shuaibi, "the residency programme will strengthen the sectors of economic diversification according to a well-studied plan that enhances the investment environment and takes into account security, legal, social and economic aspects".

Several citizens and businessmen welcomed the decision. Hamed al Ruhili, CEO of Al Safwah Education Group, said, "The programme is an invitation to safe investment in the sultanate and achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040."

Nasser al Hosani, director of Happy Line Transportation, said, "This is an excellent step to create job opportunities. The programme will work to attract more investors from around the world and make them feel safe."

400 SMEs to enrich Oman's pavilion

EXPO 2020 DUBAI

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Four hundred Omani small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are set to take part in the sultanate's frankincense-inspired pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, which starts on Friday, October 1, and will continue for six months.

"The participation of Omani enterprises and companies in this event demonstrates the level and high quality of national products and services. The enterprises and companies that will participate in the expo went through rigorous evaluation to ensure compliance of their products and services with international standards to be eligible to take part in such a big global event," Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) stated in a press release.

The participation of Omani companies in such international events enhances trust in the quality of their products and specifications. "It also opens doors for Omani companies to enter new international markets as Expo 2020 Dubai will receive

a huge number of exhibitors and visitors from different countries."

The OCCI is participating in the Omani pavilion in its essential role of driving sustainable economic development in the sultanate. "OCCI continuously strives to represent the private sector, both locally and internationally, in an effort to serve the best interests of the sector through innovative ways for the benefit of businesses."

Commenting on the chamber's participation in the event, Eng Redha bin Juma al Saleh, chairman, said, "The OCCI has sought to have a clear footprint in the activities of Expo 2020 Dubai not just as a participant in the pavilion but also to educate and motivate entrepreneurs in various governorates to take part in one of the most important international events that will attract businesses from across the world.

"Our participation is aimed at extending bridges of cooperation between OCCI and organisations specialised in business development. We also endeavour to provide real opportunities for Omani companies to cooperate with other companies participating in



Expo 2020."

Participating companies will be able to review business oppor-

tunities through seminars, exhibitions and personal meetings.

"Additionally, the expo will

witness the launch of new products and the display of innovative and future-oriented products. For

these reasons, I call upon entrepreneurs in the sultanate to make use of their participation in this

international event to develop their businesses. This will help them find practical and innovative solutions for their entrepreneurial projects, particularly in the fields of emerging technologies, clean energy, food packaging and the service sector," Eng Saleh informed.

Through its participation in the expo and by collaborating with relevant authorities, OCCI will raise visitors' awareness on investment opportunities in the sultanate, the scope for trade and the potential of establishing effective business partnerships in various economic fields.

The chamber will respond directly to questions and queries of investors and businesspersons on opportunities in the sultanate through its information centre set up at the pavilion.

Oman's participation in the expo is expected to enhance the brand of Omani artisanal products and its industries. Other activities planned include an Omani products exhibition, an SMEs expo and Omani Investment Week. OCCI will also hold a special event in the pavilion to mark Omani Women's Day.

Winners of 48-hour Manafa'a Ideathon 2021 announced



Muscat - Five winning teams of the 48-hour Manafa'a Ideathon 2021 were announced on Wednesday by Mawarid - Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre - of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), in partnership with the Environment Authority.

The five winning projects - Cordiamotive, Furat, Qatrah, Fateel Oman and Talaa - were selected from 15 others that made it to the finals.

Cordiamotive, created by Bashar Said al Amri, is an antioxidant that increases shelf life of fruits.

Furat, by Nebras Hamdan al Shekailia, is a device with built-in units that filter grey water using local raw materials.

Qatrah, by Ahmed Amer Saud al Jabri, is a smart irrigation product that automatically irrigates crops based on actual water re-

The five winning projects of Manafa'a Ideathon - Cordiamotive, Furat, Qatrah, Fateel Oman and Talaa - were selected from 15 others that made it to the finals

quirements without human intervention.

Fateel Oman, by Aysha Juma Mohammed al Balushi, produces a nutritious agricultural medium for plants and soil that is characterised by an ability to retain water for longer periods of time and keep insects and pests away.

Talaa, by Nusseibeh Khalifa al Amrania, is an organic pesticide - sourced from one of the most widespread plant species in Oman - to eliminate a pest that infects palm leaves which causes newly formed fruits to fall.

Najah Mohammed al Rashdi,

director general of MoHERI's Innovation Centre, said, "The number of winners in the programme has increased from four in the past to five this year. The grant has also increased from RO2,500 to approximately RO10,000 per winner."

Talking about the significance of the programme, she said, "Among the most important achievements of past winners, Rihan and Rataq have already reached the final prototyping stage, while some others have initial prototypes and are in the incubation stage."

On behalf of the Environment Authority, Thuraya al Sariria, as-

sistant director-general for Nature Conservation, said, "We are committed to search for innovative solutions that balance our ambitions, environmental considerations and the preservation of resources, especially as the sultanate adopts the National Innovation Strategy.

"The programme succeeds in encouraging innovative ideas that contribute to the country's environment, economy and the education sector."

The theme for Manafa'a 2021 was 'National Initiative for Plantation of 10 Million Trees'.

The programme is implemented within a strategic partnership with the Innovation and Technology Transfer Centre at Sultan Qaboos University and Falha Investment Company, and is sponsored by Petroleum Development Oman, SGS Company and Oman India Fertiliser Company.

Depression likely to form in Arabian Sea

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A low pressure condition is likely to develop near Gujarat in India and move to northeast Arabian Sea and become a depression in the next couple of days.

The Directorate General of Meteorology on Wednesday said that it is monitoring the activity in the northeast of the Arabian Sea where a tropical weather situation is expected to arise. "It is expected that a tropical situation will form and emerge in the Arabian Sea within the next 36 hours," it stated.

Jason Nicholls, lead international forecaster and senior meteorologist at AccuWeather, said, "Well-marked low pressure

Well-marked low pressure in Gujarat will enter the northeast Arabian Sea on Thursday and can become a depression

in Gujarat will enter the northeast Arabian Sea on Thursday and can become a depression in the next couple of days. The system can bring some rain to south Pakistan on Thursday.

"Another well-marked low pressure will continue to bring heavy rain to West Bengal,

Bihar and Jharkhand in India on Thursday."

Oman's Met office in its forecast for Thursday stated that clear to partly cloudy skies are expected along the coastal areas of Dhofar governorate and adjoining mountains.

"Mainly clear skies will prevail over the rest of the sultanate with chance of medium and high clouds formation. Chance of convective clouds formation and occasional rains and wind over Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas towards afternoon and evening is also expected."

Late night to early morning, low level clouds or fog patches will appear along the coastal areas of the Arabian and Sea of Oman, it added.

Minister issues decision to set up Duqm College in SEZAD

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrooqi, Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation, has issued a ministerial decision to establish Duqm College in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) in Al Wusta governorate.

The college is subject to the

laws, regulations and decisions regulating universities and private colleges in force in the sultanate, the decision stated.

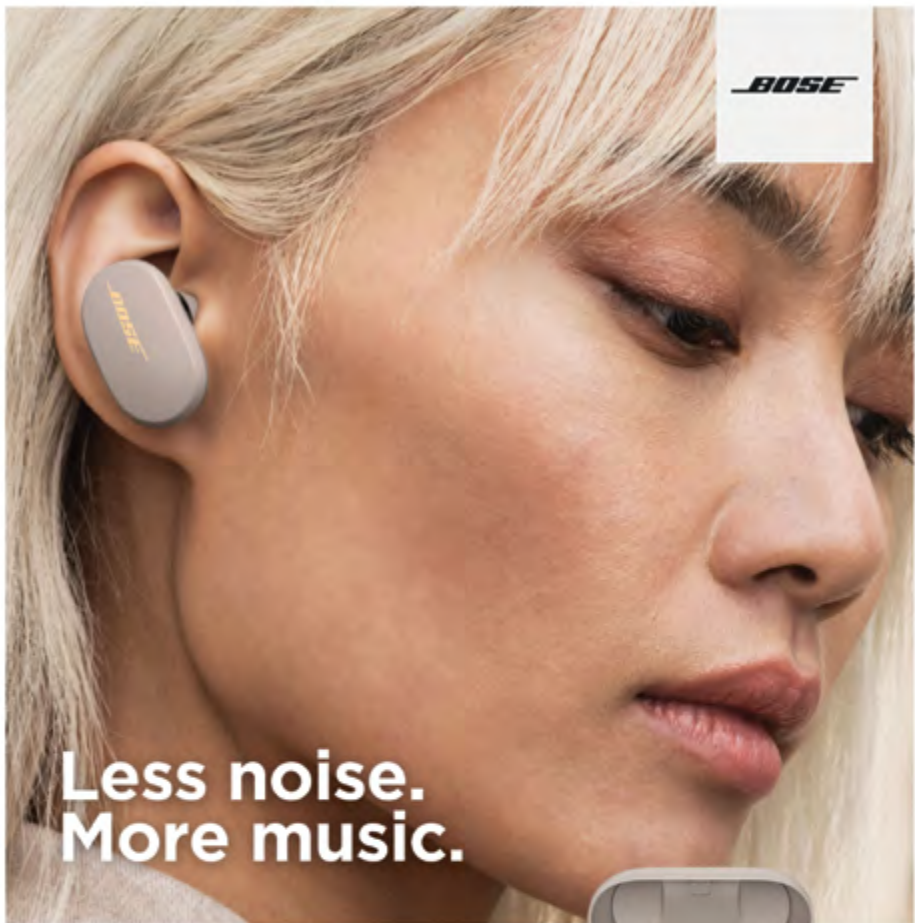
The college intends to offer academic programmes in the fields of humanities, engineering, science and technology, as well as form a vocational studies department that will focus on training in the fields of logistics, marine sciences, sustainability

and emerging technologies, urban development and construction.

Duqm College is currently working to complete all the academic requirements which include the approvals related to the academic regulations and obtaining a licence for academic programmes in accordance with the procedures followed by the ministry.

REGIONAL WEATHER		
	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	39	27
Doha	37	25
Kuwait City	40	27
Manama	37	27
Riyadh	38	23

PRAYER TIMINGS	
Fajr	4.41am
Sunrise	5.58am
Duhr	11.57am
Asr	3.21pm
Maghrib	5.55pm
Isha	7.25pm



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Oman wins US trade case on aluminium product exports

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Global law firm Curtis announced that its international trade practice delivered a significant victory for the government of Oman and local aluminium sheet and foil producer, Oman Aluminium Rolling Company (OARC), in a year-long investigation by the US Department of Commerce into allegations that the sultanate unfairly subsidised OARC's operations.

The pivotal issue in the US trade case was the charge that the sultanate directed banks in Oman to provide OARC with preferential lending.

In a press statement, Curtis said its international team, comprising lawyers in Muscat, Geneva, and Washington, successfully beat back the allega-

tions. The result was a 'negative' finding on the banking issue by the US Commerce Department and only minimal duties for OARC, preserving its access to the US market.

This is Curtis' second major victory in Oman involving allegations of unfair subsidies led by partner Matthew McCullough, who specialises in US countervailing duty law. In 2015, McCullough directed a sultanate defence representing both the government and a local PET resin producer to a complete victory in a similar US proceeding.

"Such cases give a government the opportunity to demonstrate internationally that its economy works on competitive, transparent, market-oriented terms," McCullough said. "A successful result like this helps to preserve and attract inward

investment and deters new cases by showing the allegations to be baseless."

Curtis' Muscat managing partner Simon Ward said, "This case also demonstrates Curtis' ability to provide immediate legal support in Oman, while drawing on our international team to deliver effective, practical, and efficient legal services in highly specialised areas of international and commercial law such as US countervailing duty law."

The Curtis team in US case was led by partners Matt McCullough (Geneva/Washington) and Mehdi Mohamed al Lawati (Muscat), and included associates James Beatty (Washington), Arthad Kurlekar (Geneva), Amrane Medjani (Geneva) and Reem al Mahrizi (Muscat).

Vodafone Oman signs 5G deal with Ericsson

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Vodafone Oman, the sultanate's third telecom operator which plans to rollout its services soon, on Wednesday signed an agreement with Ericsson to deploy, operate and maintain a new 4G and 5G core and radio access (RAN) greenfield network.

Ericsson, one of the world's leading information and communication technology companies, will supply a complete core network solution based on Ericsson Cloud Core, NFVI and Cloud VoLTE as well as an end-to-end transport network solution, the companies announced at a signing ceremony on Wednesday.

The greenfield network includes other Ericsson Radio System products and solutions such as the antenna-integrated radio and Ericsson Spectrum Sharing. The end-to-end solution range will deliver a cost-efficient, energy-efficient, and flexible layered architecture design to support 5G from network launch.

Vodafone Oman and Ericsson also signed a five-year management services agreement. This will result in an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered data-driven network and IT operations and optimisation, enabling Vodafone to enrich its customer experience, drive efficiency and facilitate innovation.

Vodafone Oman said it will benefit from Ericsson's AI tools and data-driven model to drive efficiencies and a shift from reactive to proactive IT and network operations. In turn, Vodafone



customers will get an enhanced user experience with improved network quality and performance.

As per the agreement, Ericsson will take responsibility for the design, rollout, operations, management, optimization, and maintenance of Vodafone Oman's network. The move will support the service provider's goal to offer a wide range of new and differentiating services to its

RAN technologies and AI, automation, and analytics to further accelerate operational transformation through our partnership. Ericsson has the knowledge and understanding of our requirements.

"Our goal is to offer customers an exceptional customer experience as well as upscale the Omani youth to ensure that Vodafone is able to meet its commitment of bringing superior

ration will lead to Vodafone launching its new mobile broadband service and providing Oman with an additional nationwide mobile network. We are pleased to implement the latest in radio access and core technologies, as well as utilising the latest in automation, and artificial intelligence software to run the network and secure great user experience."

Ericsson will deliver the complete core equipment for Vodafone's network as well as radio network equipment including the Ericsson Radio System antenna-integrated radio, and Ericsson Spectrum Sharing to utilise spectrum in the most efficient way possible, by instantly - on a millisecond level - share spectrum between 4G and 5G.

The greenfield network will feature Ericsson Cloud VoLTE, Ericsson Cloud Packet Core, Ericsson NFVI, Ericsson Network Manager, Ericsson Orchestrator and Ericsson Cloud Deployment Engine.

Ericsson will take responsibility for design, rollout, operations, management, optimisation, and maintenance of Vodafone Oman network

customers.

Bader al Zidi, CEO of Vodafone Oman, said, "Our focus is to ensure that we offer our customers a wide range of differentiating services that will add value to their lives, as well as redefining customer service in the country. We expect high-performing Core and

quality network and mobile communications to the people of Oman through Omani local talent in the long term"

Fadi Pharaon, president of Ericsson Middle East and Africa, said, "We are proud to be chosen by Vodafone Oman to deploy and run their entire greenfield network in Oman. This collabo-

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S&P affirms Saudi rating at 'A-' with stable outlook

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Global credit ratings agency S&P has updated Saudi Arabia's credit rating report affirming its rating at 'A-' with a stable outlook.

S&P expects a rebound in Saudi Arabia's economic growth in 2021. It also expects a return in the current account level to surplus with the reduction of deficit rates in the public finances in 2021 and a sharp rebound in non-oil economic activity in the second half of 2021. The agency highlighted the improvements in the real estate, manufacturing, and wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels sectors.

Moreover, S&P estimated that the budget deficit for the fiscal year 2021 to reach about 4.3 per cent compared to 5 per cent expected in its report published in March, considering the quality of the sovereign assets of the central bank and the Public Investment Fund (PIF).

In addition, S&P also esti-

mated that the current account will achieve a surplus of 3.3 per cent of GDP for the fiscal year 2021 and 2.5 per cent in the period between 2021-2024.

Furthermore, S&P expects the size of the public debt as a percentage of GDP for the year 2021 to be around 30.2 per cent compared to 4.1 per cent contraction in the year 2020.

S&P expects Saudi Arabia's real GDP growth to be 2.4 per cent in the period between 2021-2024. It also indicated that the kingdom is one of the few countries in the region that has implemented strong structural reforms at the public finances level, which contributed to the growth of non-oil revenues.

The agency highlighted Saudi Arabia's unique position in the oil market and among OPEC members which provide it with supply-side pricing power and financial flexibility.

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\$80 oil price sparks mixed fortunes for world economy

London, UK – Oil prices jumped above US\$80 this week for the first time in almost three years, handing a major boost to producers - but fuelling more inflationary pain for consumers, analysts say.

The price of European benchmark Brent North Sea crude for delivery in November hit US\$80.75 per barrel on Tuesday, attaining the highest level since October 2018, but edged lower on Wednesday.

The market has surged on expectations for strong demand and concerns about tight supplies as the world slowly emerges from the pandemic crisis.

Global supplies have been disrupted because US production remains hampered by ongoing fallout from Hurricane Ida in the Gulf of Mexico and Louisiana. The US is both the world's largest consumer and producer of crude oil.

Oil demand has also leapt in recent weeks due to soaring natural gas prices around the world, and coal supply disruption in China.

Winners and losers

"Higher oil prices will benefit the net producers of petroleum products by boosting their export and tax revenues," Capital Economics analyst Simon MacAdam said.

"Net consuming economies will lose out, since higher fuel costs will eat into the real value of disposable incomes and could



impinge on production just at a time when businesses are facing a plethora of mounting cost pressures."

Crude oil greases the wheels of the world economy, boosting the coffers of major producer nations both inside and outside the OPEC exporters' cartel.

The soaring market also lifts the profits of energy majors like BP, ExxonMobil, Shell and Total.

However, runaway oil prices threaten the global recovery and stoke inflationary pressures because they lift manufacturing costs - which translates into higher consumer prices.

Inflation is already soaring higher on the back of a worldwide supply crunch, record-high

natural gas prices and reopening economies.

Markets have wobbled this year over concerns that central banks will withdraw stimulus measures and hike record-low interest rates to tame rising prices.

Inflation threat

"Rising oil prices add yet further upwards pressure on inflation," noted Josie Dent, economist at UK-based research group the Centre for Economics and Business Research.

"Businesses and households in Europe and the United States [are] set to experience rising costs associated with using oil and energy." Many businesses

had already been hit hard by lockdown-related closures and ongoing supply-chain disruption.

"This comes at a time that most countries are still early in the recovery phase from the coronavirus pandemic, with many households in a vulnerable financial position due to higher unemployment rates over the past 18 months," Dent added.

Oil has rebounded strongly since April 2020 when prices collapsed at the outset of the pandemic as economic activity was disrupted by lockdown measures.

The market had also tumbled on evaporating demand, chronic oversupply, scarce storage and a Saudi-Russia price war.

Brent tanked to a record-low US\$15.98 per barrel around 18 months ago, while New York crude even briefly turned negative at -US\$40.32.

Prices have since enjoyed a healthy rebound but remain far from record heights of almost US\$150 struck in 2008.

OPEC now expects global oil demand to exceed its pre-pandemic level in 2022 thanks to COVID vaccines and recovering economies. The cartel members and their allies (OPEC+) will hold an output meeting next Monday.

OPEC+ cut production last year to boost prices, but are starting to raise output to meet strengthening demand.

AFF

Evergrande to sell \$1.5bn worth stake in Chinese bank

Beijing, China - Embattled property developer Evergrande on Wednesday said it will sell a US\$1.5bn stake in a regional Chinese bank to raise much-needed capital, as it struggles to make interest payments while being choked by debts and ratings downgrades.

The stake sale to a state-owned group is Evergrande's first major asset disposal as it attempts to claw its way back from the brink of collapse.

Evergrande is saddled with more than US\$300bn in debts.

The Shenzhen-based conglomerate agreed to sell 1.7bn non-public shares in northeastern China's Shengjing Bank to Shenyang Shengjing Finance Investment Group, Evergrande said in a Hong Kong exchange filing.

"The company's liquidity issue has adversely affected Shengjing Bank in a material way," the filing said, adding that the agreement would still need to be approved by the bank's board of directors.

AFF

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MSX falls 0.22% as activity improves

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) fell 0.22 per cent to close at 3,943.39 points on Wednesday.

Trading activity improved from the previous session as turnover rose by 59.69 per cent to RO4.03mn and volumes increased 9.45 per cent to 16.91mn shares.

While Financial index fell 0.44 per cent, Industrial and Services indices rose 0.57 per cent and 0.17 per cent, respectively.

The MSX Shariah index closed up by 0.55 per cent at 580.53 points.

Market breadth remained positive as 14 companies closed up, while 12 companies closed down. The rest 17 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Oman



Qatar Insurance (9.46 per cent), Taageer Finance (3.95 per cent), Renaissance Services (3.52 per cent) and Oman Cement (2.25 per cent).

Top losers were Oman Oil (-9.83 per cent), Oman United Insurance (-2.7 per cent), Oman and Emirates Investment Holding (-2.67 per cent) and Sohar International Bank (-2.15 per cent).

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RO290,000 awarded in NBO draws

Rounding up another month of its exciting prize scheme, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has given away RO290,000 in the latest Al Kanz Draw. Held at the bank's headquarters in Azaiba, 63 customers were rewarded with various cash prizes to help them boost their savings.

RO25,000 each was given to three winners in the Sadara draw, RO10,000 each was given to four winners in the Mazaya Exclusive draw, RO500 each went to 50 winners in the Salary Transfer draw and RO25,000 each was given to six winners in the quarterly regional draw.

The bank is now gearing up for next month's event, which will see the addition of the Women's and Youth draws, giving away prizes of RO1,000 and RO100 respectively.

Tariq Atiq, chief retail and digital banking officer at NBO, said, "We know that for our cus-



tomers, there is nothing more important than securing a comfortable future for themselves and their children. Our Al Kanz Savings account was designed with that in mind. We are delighted that our prize draw

scheme has offered that little extra security for over 800 customers so far this year alone and look forward to next month's event, when we will be rewarding even more segments and helping them on their financial

journey." With monthly prizes ranging from RO100 to RO250,000, customers are eligible to win by maintaining an average minimum balance of RO100 in their Al Kanz Savings account. Every RO100 provides

an extra chance, so the more money kept in the account, the more the chance of winning. Customers simply have to transfer their salary to NBO to be in for the chance of winning in the Salary Transfer draw.

Joy Alukkas receives Oman's long-term residency card

Joy Alukkas, chairman, Joy-alukkas Group, added another first to his incredible milestones by becoming one of the first investors to receive a long-term residency card in Oman.

Alukkas along with other 21 investors received the long-term residency card from H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotions, at a ceremony held in Muscat.

Elated by the honour, Alukkas said, "This is a milestone moment of my journey in Oman, which has seen many highs during the last decade. It's an honour to be recognised among the best entrepreneurs in the region. I would like to thank the Ministry of Commerce and Omani authorities for extending this kind privilege.



"This further strengthens our vision for Oman and gives us more confidence to invest aggressively in the region. As a group, we are looking forward to creating more employment opportunities for Omani nationals and contribute to the diversification of the economy."

Joyalukkas Group has a significant investment in Oman.

Occidental Oman supports 3D printing programme

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE), Occidental Oman representatives recently attended the launch event for the 3D Printing Educational Program and competition, under the brand name Awtad, which the company has exclusively sponsored.

Awtad aims to introduce teachers and 10th grade students to 3D printing technology, in order to develop their skills in the field. The programme is organised by InnoTech, an Omani SME in the 3D printing and technology field.

The launch event was held at the Ministry of Education, with the attendance of H E Majid bin Said al Bahri, Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs in the Ministry of Education, and Stephen Kelly, president and General Manager at Occidental Oman, along with senior representatives of the company.

As part of the academic year, Awtad will feature a series of workshops to engage students in North Sharqiyah governorate, and teachers from across the country, in a practical environment to learn how to create 3D



printed designed products and objects. Awtad aims to create high level awareness of 3D printing across schools in the sultanate, as well as its uses and benefits.

The workshops will cover topics such as 3D design fields, 3D design software, 3D design solutions, group projects, and printing projects via 3D printers. The course will run from October to November, ending with a 3D Printing Competition for participants.

"We are excited to sponsor the 3D Printing Program Awtad,

as Occidental Oman continues to support programs which advance innovation and educational excellence," said Kelly.

"We are eager to see the utilisation of 3D printing in schools, such that they transform ideas into real-life projects that will positively impact our local communities in Oman."

This sponsorship is part of Occidental Oman's endeavour and long-term commitment to support programmes that enhance knowledge and creativity, and encourage innovation and excellence.

The Business Year team meets OCCI boss

The Business Year, a global media group that has been providing investors, businesses, and governments with first-hand insights into the world's most dynamic markets for over a decade, recently sat down with Eng Redha bin Jumal al Saleh, chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

Saleh discussed the role of OCCI in mitigating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for businesses in Oman, the prospects of the private sector in the current environment, and the path to Oman Vision 2040.

TBY's team, led by Elena Barreiro, TBY regional director for Oman, Andrea Tsiachtsiri, TBY country director for Oman, and Gergana Georgieva, TBY country editor for Oman, illustrated the goals of *The Business Year: Oman 2021*. The project, supported by The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, will have a special focus on Oman Vision 2040 and the steps Oman is taking toward a more sustainable future.

With regard to the OCCI's commitment to Vision 2040, Saleh underlined that the chamber is laser focused on achieving sustainable economic develop-

ment across the country via modern methods, including the effective representation of the private sector and the creation of an active business community.

The strategy is based on working to crystallise the chamber's role and bring about a radical transformation in its strategies in line with Vision 2040, and striving toward financial sustainability for the chamber in view of economic crises. The chamber also aims to boost international trade links as well as benefit from the partnerships and cooperation agreements signed between the chamber and international bodies, organisations, and other chambers of commerce.

The strategy is based on work-

ing to crystallise the chamber's role and bring about a radical transformation in its working strategies in line with the course of achieving the future Vision 2040, and striving toward achieving financial sustainability for the chamber in view of economic crises, and finding a mechanism for how to deal with it.

It also looks to strengthen trade links with the outside world through benefiting from the partnerships and cooperation agreements signed between the chamber and international bodies, organisations and chambers of commerce, and diversifying the tools of participation with the private sector based on innovation and creativity in services, activities, and events that contribute to

its development and serving all companies, institutions, and associates of the chamber.

Earlier this month, the Ministry of Economy (MoE) released the 'Strategic Programmes Folder' for the 10th Five-Year Development Plan 2021-2025, which emphasises the main strategic programmes and policies of Oman Vision 2040 and covers all areas relevant for a sustainable future. Six priorities and 165 strategic programmes were outlined under the Economy and Development theme to ensure a long-term vision and medium-term development.

TBY's research reaches key international investors and members of the global business community.



Customers laud Renault Duster, Koleos and Megane for functionality, safety

Customers in Oman have extolled popular Renault models Duster, Koleos and Megane for the host of features they offer. While Renault Duster has been praised for its functionality and strength, Koleos has been acclaimed for its space and safety and Megane for its design and technology.

Praising Renault Duster for its functionality, Abdul al Ajmi from Ibra said, "With its demonstrated power to handle all challenges, the Renault Duster equipped with multiple exceptional features and technology enhancements, continues to set high standards in Oman. Renault Duster 2WD and 4WD's impressive exteriors, elegant interiors and advanced equipment reiterate the maker's commitment for setting new standards in the SUV segment."

Tariq al Lawati from Shinas likes Renault Koleos for its powerful, efficient engines, safety attributes and on-board technologies. He says, "Renault Koleos impresses car enthusiasts who value distinctive design, safety technology, great space, and superior performance."

Explaining the features of Koleos, car enthusiast Ahmed Mansur from Muscat says, "The

2.5lt petrol engine in Koleos is an atmospheric, four-cylinder, 16-valve powerplant with double overhead camshafts. Power is 170hp (126kW) at 6,000rpm, with a peak torque of 233Nm at 4,000rpm. Care has been taken to minimise friction for enhanced performance and optimised fuel consumption. With 233Nm torque available from as low as 1,800rpm, it is extremely responsive at low and mid-range engine speeds and is particularly suited to towing (up to two tonnes)."

Admired Megane for its driving performance, Hasan Fazal from Nizwa applauds Renault

Megane for its design, driving comfort, technology and safety features. He says, "The enigmatic Renault Megane electrifies with its sedan body, dynamic lines and generous proportions. With its smooth silhouette, high-tech cockpit and sophisticated styling, Renault Megane combines style and flexibility."

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, said, "Featuring a host of impressive features, Renault Duster has won the admiration of customers for being a perfect package in terms of looks, performance, strength,

functionality and safety. With a robust and high-end design, comfort and outstanding performance, Renault Koleos has found a place in the heart of customers. Renault Megane presents a high-class driving experience, thanks to its technologies, design, and roominess. Its energetic lines and substantial proportions add to its increasing popularity with car aficionados in Oman.

Renault Duster

Renault brand's celebrated model the aspirational SUV Duster, is about strength, functionality, and safety. Consisting of a powerful

engine, an attractive modern design, a comfortable and spacious cabin, Renault Duster is available as 1.6lt 2WD and 2.0lt 4WD or the Urban and Sports variants.

Reflecting Renault's inherent characteristics of strength and SUV capability, the Duster's variants feature a powerful engine, an attractive modern design, a comfortable and spacious cabin, in addition to strength, functionality and safety to meet the aspirations of buyers.

Renault Koleos

With its athletic profile, robust front end, roomy seats, taut lines

underscored with chrome, Renault Koleos allows owners to take their journey with confidence.

Renault Koleos LE model has LED fog lamps with chrome borders, new 19-inch Kavea alloy wheels and resplendent new front grill. Renault Koleos SE has been augmented with Sand Grey leather seats, tilt adjustment front headrests, one touch easy folding rear seats with two step reclining and power seats, electric power seats for driver and passenger, 18-inch Argonaute two tone alloy wheels, auto folding rear view mirrors with door lock, auto-dimming rear view

mirror. It also supports Apple car play and android auto.

Renault Koleos fully embodies the values of the top of the Renault line-up.

Renault Megane

Combining striking good looks and head-turning performance, Renault Megane, the vibrant and chic saloon, is appreciated for its daring expressive design and assertive style. Acclaimed for its performance credentials, Renault Megane is extolled for its best-level low fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions.

Its energetic lines and substantial proportions add to its increasing popularity with car aficionados in Oman. Recognised worldwide for its performance excellence and looks, head turner Renault Megane has a style of its own, which is both lively and elegant. It presents a high-class driving experience, thanks to its technologies, design, and roominess. Renault Megane is available in 2.0lt engine configuration along with 1.6lt variant.

Renault's designers have drawn upon their acclaimed expertise to seamlessly incorporate 503dm³ VDA of boot storage capacity without compromising the vehicle's aesthetic appeal.



Alfardan Motors highlights Ferrari personalisation programme

Alfardan Motors, the official Ferrari importer in Oman, highlighted Ferrari's unparalleled Personalization Program through the showcase of three unique creations - two 488 Pista Spiders and an 812 GTS. Through the Marque's Personalization Program, customers have the ability to create a car as unique as they are and showcase their personalities however they choose.

The exclusive Ferrari Tailor Made programme helps Ferrari clients fully customise their cars, choosing from a vast selection of exclusive materials and finishes, in order for their car to stand out and be truly one of a kind. Rooted within the very first phase of the legendary history of the Prancing Horse, it is fuelled by its never-ending research and is imbued with the Marque's core values of passion, innovation and elegance.

The 488 Pista Spider created through the Ferrari Tailor Made programme is nothing short of eye-catching with Italian Tricolore accents throughout. Featuring a striking Viola Dino exterior with the Tricolore Livery with



Fade Effect and accented with Bianco dream lines on the lower carbon fiber parts of the car. The contrasting Alcantara Nero interior is highlighted with a Tricol-

ore Fade effect in the middle part of the seats, finished with Bianco Pelle piping. The whole look of the car is brought together with the steering wheel and sports

paddle shifts that boast Tricolore accents.

Designed in the special Atelier Ferrari, this bespoke 488 Pista Spider was created. This power-

ful model boasts a Giallo Modena exterior with a Blu Nart Racing Livery and stunning Blu Lucido carbon fiber accents. The impressive interior is a beautiful Blue Medio Alcantara with Giallo accents on the seats, dashboard and stitching, complete with Tricolore touches throughout, as an ode to Ferrari's birthplace.

Conceptualised with Alfardan Motors' dedicated experts in the Atelier at Ferrari's newly renovated showroom, a dream was turned into reality with this 812 GTS. This remarkable V12 spider showcases a Verde Abeton exterior with eye-catching Verde Lucido carbon fibre and finished with ORO Livery. The interior is personalised with Daytona racing seats in Cuio and Verde leather with Verde Lucido full carbon fiber interior and Tricolore touches throughout.

These three stunning models are a showcase of what's possible through the Ferrari Personalization Program which includes a range of programmes that enable customers to select every last detail of their car tailored according to their own personal tastes.

Tanweer ends first phase of its Smart Meters project

As part of Nama Group and its companies' efforts to raise the efficiency of billing processes and provide a better experience to its customers, the Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer), member of Nama Group, announced the successful completion of the first phase of the Smart Meters (AMR & Prepaid meters) installation project.

The national project aims to replace conventional analogue meters with Smart Meters by 2025 to allow a better customer experience by offering an accurate and instant overview of the actual consumption of electricity for each customer, which in turn will eliminate the human error factor associated with some cases of physical meter readings. The project's first phase included installing about 4,000 meters by the end of September this year.

Tanweer has also taken in-

tensive steps to spread awareness and highlight the advantages and importance of Smart Meters and ways to achieve maximum benefits.

And how Smart Meters can help customers optimally manage their electricity use and participate in reducing carbon emissions.

Through the Smart Meters project, Tanweer adopts the latest world-class technologies to obtain accurate meter readings and automatically calculate the consumption of each customer, which improves the quality of meter reading and billing accuracy to achieve higher customers satisfaction.

The new meters will not only allow customers to get detailed and accurate consumption reports but will also help them use electrical resources more efficiently by enabling them to monitor and control the use of electricity.

Bank Muscat supports Najahi customers on MarkeetEx

In line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday', and commitment to supporting and developing Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in Oman, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, is continuing its successful partnership with MarkeetEx.com, an e-commerce platform dedicated to promoting the products and services from local MSMEs.

The bank's efforts, which are coordinated through its Retail Enterprises (Najahi) unit, boosts the e-commerce sector in the sultanate and support many Najahi customers by covering their subscription and commission fees, especially during a crucial period.

Many Najahi customers have already signed up with MarkeetEx to showcase their products, promote their businesses and widen their customer base.

MarkeetEx.com currently has over 1,000 merchants from different parts of the country registered on its online platform, including 27 Najahi customers



who are active on it. It must be noted that more MSMEs are using the marketplace to sell and deliver products and services including groceries, household goods, mobiles and computers, fashion, beauty, and health products at highly-competitive prices.

Bank Muscat has been continuously supporting the MSME sector through its different initiatives and programmes that view these businesses as a primary pillar of Oman's plans for economic diversification in alignment with the landmark Oman Vision 2040. The bank's initiatives are part of its strategy to

promote Omani entrepreneurs, especially Najahi customers, to increase sales and improve their financial performance.

Bank Muscat also announced that it has managed to cross several important milestones since the beginning this partnership with MarkeetEx, earlier in 2020. The initiative continues to build on the success of the bank's exhibitions, which were an annual affair in previous years. However, with the continuation of social distancing norms at present, businesses can reach out easily to their customers through <https://markeetex.com>.

Badr Al Samaa signs MoU with OCA

On the occasion of World Heart Day, Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman Cycling Association (OCA) to become 'Official Healthcare Partner' for 2021-2022 seasons.

On behalf of Badr Al Samaa the MoU was signed by Sameer P T, CEO and K O Devassy, CMO, while as Saif Subaa al Rushaidi, president signed on behalf of Oman Cycling Association.

Badr Al Samaa will be supporting more than 25 events of OCA in this season.

In a joint statement, managing directors of Badr Al Samaa, Abdul Latheef and Dr P A Mohammed said, "On World Heart Day, Badr Al Samaa reaffirms its resolve to spread awareness on heart health and inspire people to adapt healthy practices to ensure good heart health. This association with Oman Cycling Association is one step in this regard."

Cycling is one of the important sports to improve heart health. It stimulates and improves heart, lungs and circula-



tion, hence reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Cycling strengthens heart muscles, lowers resting pulse and reduces blood fat levels.

Rushaidi expressed sincere gratitude to Badr Al Samaa for this association. He said World Heart Day is a right occasion to spread the awareness on heart health and how cycling can make a considerable difference in improving heart health.

Sameer said that Badr Al Samaa will be providing com-

plete healthcare services including ambulance, doctor, nurse, paramedics and first-aid for all events scheduled in 2021-2022 calendar of Oman Cycling Association.

He said the safety of the participants will be the utmost priority of Badr Al Samaa and they will employee appropriate resource to support the event.

Devassy said, "Badr Al Samaa has rich experience in supporting as healthcare partner in many sporting events. Badr Al Samaa

has been the official healthcare partners of Oman Football Association (OFA) since 2013. Badr Al Samaa does health screening of all FIFA matches in Oman and gives healthcare cover to more than 300 events of OFA (national and international).

"Badr Al Samaa has associated for domestic and international events of IronMan Triathlon, Oman Hockey Association, Oman Cycling Association, Oman Handball Association and many others."

Nama Group launches sixth edition of its Wiyakum volunteering initiative

Nama Group has launched the sixth edition of Wiyakum initiative for its employees of both electricity and water sectors in Oman. Wiyakum is one of many projects empowered by the communication and sustainability department within Nama Group. This project aims at promoting the culture of volunteering among the group's employees.

Wiyakum aims at encouraging the group employees to utilise the volunteering leave available as per the HR manual. The volunteering programme embraces initiatives that have implemented at least one of the sustainability pillars, which are the economic, social, and environmental, and delivered on a voluntary basis, by Nama Group volunteering formed teams.

Wiyakum should implement voluntary initiatives to serve the



community where the volunteering ideas will be evaluated as per the internal approved mechanism, the awarded volunteering ideas, then, will be financially supported to reach the implementation phase.

In previous editions of the programme, more than 1,233 of

Nama Group employees have participated in Wiyakum volunteering initiatives and activities compared to 9,460 non-employees participants and volunteers from outside the organisation.

'Combat Desertification' project in the Governorate of Dhofar, is a major volunteering project

achieved by Wiyakum initiative.

The project is achieving the environmental pillar which represents the idea of manufacturing an advanced solar-powered devices that can minimise desertification.

These devices draw in atmospheric air and convert it into freshwater that irrigates crops and trees in natural reserves.

The project targeted Dhofar governorate due to the deteriorating fertility of arable lands caused by overgrazing and soil levelling.

Wiyakum has also implemented other initiatives to provide clean electric energy by using solar panels for a mosque located in the Jebel area, where frequent worshipers are passing by. The mosque consists of a chapel for men and a chapel for women including toilets with separate wash area.

Kalyan Jewellers announces festive season offers & discounts

With the onset of the festive season, Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewellery companies, has announced exciting cashback offers on its distinctive jewellery collections. As part of this festive offer, customers will be able to maximise the value of their purchases with up to 25 per cent cashback on their jewellery purchases.

While up to 25 per cent cashback can be availed on making charges of gold jewellery, up to 20 per cent cashback offer is available on the diamond jewellery collection. On precious stone jewellery and uncut diamond jewellery, cashback is up to 20 per cent. Cashback offers can be availed in the form of instantly redeemable vouchers. These offers are valid until November 30, across all showrooms in Oman.

Customers can also avail the



benefits of the Gold Rate Protection Offer by paying 10 per cent advance of the total intended purchase amount and booking their jewellery at the current market price of gold.

This unique offer enables customers to lock-in the price of gold and stay protected from future price hikes and fluctuations.

Ramesh Kalyanaraman, executive director, Kalyan Jewellers said, "With the arrival of the festive season, we are drawing closer to a time of joy and togetherness. At Kalyan Jewellers, we want to mark the country's undying spirit of celebration by

extending the festive - discount offers to our customers, allowing them to take home the latest jewellery designs from Kalyan Jewellers and the love and happiness that come along with it."

Kalyan Jewellers has rolled out extensive measures to ensure a safe retail environment for the employees and customers. The staff is 100 per cent vaccinated and apart from common practices such as temperature check with thermal guns or providing safety gloves to customers, frequent deep cleaning, sterilisation and contactless billing have all been implemented.

COP26 summit ‘won’t be easy’, UN climate chief admits

Milan, Italy - The forthcoming COP26 summit - which could determine the viability of the Paris Agreement - will ‘not be easy’ but an outcome matching the urgency of the crisis is an ‘absolute necessity’, the UN’s climate chief said on Wednesday.

As the world faces stronger and more frequent droughts, wildfires, flooding and storm surges made worse as the planet warms, the COP26 summit in Glasgow is being billed by organisers as a key milestone for keeping the Paris goals within reach.

“The point is decisions need to be taken now, that is why Glasgow is so important,” UN climate chief Patricia Espinosa told AFP.

Struck to international fanfare in 2015, the accord commits nations to limit global temperature rises to ‘well below’ 2°C above those before the onset of the Industrial Revolution.

It also saw countries promise to stick to a safer warming cap of 1.5°C through sweeping emissions cuts.

Yet, six years on, atmospheric levels of planet-warming CO2 have risen steadily and are now at their highest concentrations in roughly three million years.

The latest round of country-by-country emission-cutting pledges - baked into the Paris deal’s ‘ratchet’ mechanism of ever-increasing ambition - put Earth on course to warm a ‘catastrophic’ 2.7°C this century.



Executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Patricia Espinosa, flanked by Italy’s Minister for Ecology Transition, Roberto Cingolani (left) and Milan mayor Giuseppe Sala at the opening plenary session of the Youth4Climate event, in Milan on Tuesday (AFP)

COP26, delayed a year due to the pandemic, will provide another chance for states to agree key outstanding elements of the Paris rulebook, or how the aspirational goals outlined in the deal function in practice.

Espinosa acknowledged to AFP that the two-week negotiations, which begin in Glasgow on October 31, ‘will not be easy’.

Speaking on the sidelines of a UN-backed gathering of some 400 youth climate activists in

Milan, she said, “I think that at this moment in time it’s an absolute necessity that we come out of the conference and present to the world a message of hope, a message of clarity on where we are going.”

‘Finance builds trust’

The laundry list for delegates in Glasgow will be daunting.

Nations will be asked again to redouble their emissions reductions plans to get them better in

line with 1.5°C, as well as to finalise the Paris rulebook and resolve the repeatedly deferred dispute over carbon markets.

Poorer nations already dealing with extreme weather supercharged by climate change have repeatedly called on wealthier nations - largely responsible for the emissions that drive global heating - to make good on a decade-old promise to provide US\$100bn annually to help out.

“The elements are clear: Fi-

nance, ambition and mitigation, adaptation and resilience, the Paris Agreement rule book,” said Espinosa.

“The difficulty is that many of them are interlinked, so if one is resolved, others can be resolved.”

But in the two years since the last UN climate summit took place in person, scant progress has been made despite several rounds of online discussions.

“Because of the fact we haven’t been able to meet in person until now, we have basically not yet started the negotiations of the documents,” said Espinosa.

The Mexican diplomat said that a concrete agreement on the yearly US\$100bn promised way back in 2009 would help galvanise talks in Glasgow.

“It would build trust and also give us the means to make progress on some other issues,” she said.

The UN says that to keep the 1.5°C Paris goal in play, emissions must fall more than seven per cent every year this decade.

Although the pandemic did see carbon pollution fall by roughly that amount in 2020, governments are once again ploughing funds into fossil fuel projects to power their economic recoveries. This means emissions are all but certain to rebound to pre-pandemic levels this year - a far cry from a 1.5°C compliant pathway.

AFP



This handout photo shows Najla Bouden during her meeting with President Kais Saied in the capital Tunis on Wednesday (AFP)

Tunisia President names Bouden as country’s first female premier

Tunis, Tunisia - Tunisia’s President on Wednesday named geologist Najla Bouden as the country’s first ever female prime minister-designate, two months after he seized wide-ranging powers.

“The President of the Republic Kais Saied charged Najla Bouden with forming a government as quickly as possible,” said a statement from his office published on Facebook.

Saied on July 25 sacked the government of Hichem Mechichi, suspended parliament, lifted MPs’ immunity and took over the judiciary, after months of political deadlock in the face of a pressing economic crisis and mounting coronavirus deaths.

He followed up last week with moves allowing him to rule by decree.

He has faced repeated calls to name a government.

Saied’s office published a video of him meeting Bouden in his office and charging her with presenting a cabinet ‘in the coming hours or days’.

He repeatedly emphasised the ‘historic’ nature of the nomination of a woman, calling it ‘an honour for Tunisia and a homage to Tunisian women’.

AFP

Saied said the new government’s main mission would be to ‘put an end to the corruption and chaos that have spread throughout many state institutions’.

Bouden will be the Tunisia’s tenth prime minister since a 2011 uprising overthrew longtime dictator Zine el Abedine Ben Ali, sparking the Arab Spring revolts.

The country has won international plaudits for its democratic transition but many Tunisians have seen little improvement in their lives and have become disillusioned with a dysfunctional and corrupt political process.

Saied’s moves placed vast executive powers in the hands of the president, who will himself head the cabinet.

His rulings on September 22 also extended the suspension of parliament.

Najla Bouden, the same age as Saied at 63, is a former director at PromESSE, a higher education reform project, and has held senior positions at Tunisia’s higher education ministry.

Originally from Kairouan, she is a French-educated geologist with a doctorate in geological engineering, and is a lecturer at Tunisia’s national engineering school.

AFP

Extremist group claims killing of Sudan intel agents

Khartoum, Sudan - A little-known extremist group on Wednesday claimed it killed six Sudanese intelligence officers in a Khartoum shootout that the authorities attributed to the Islamic State group.

The deadly gunfight erupted late on Tuesday when Sudan’s intelligence services raided a suspected IS hideout in the capital, it said in a statement.

The agency said five of its officers were killed and five wounded in the operation, which led to the arrest of 11 mil-

itants. Another four gunmen escaped.

It was the first time that Sudanese authorities have announced the arrest of IS militants in the country.

On Wednesday, however, a extremist group calling itself the Movement for Preaching and Combat claimed it killed the officers.

‘Mujahideen from the Movement for Preaching and Combat successfully managed to kill six infidels from the offensive force including three senior officers

and two soldiers,’ it said in a statement posted on Facebook.

In the statement, the group claimed responsibility for a failed assassination attempt on Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok in March 2020.

Authorities have not identified any culprits for the thwarted attack.

The group also denied it had any links to IS and that ‘cheap media tricks’ by the Sudanese authorities would not stop it from carrying out attacks in the future.

Hamdok, who became prime minister after a pro-democracy movement ousted long-time autocrat Omar al Bashir in April 2019, has been leading a transitional government battling political, economic and security issues inherited from the previous regime.

After Bashir came to power in an Islamist-backed military coup in 1989, Sudan became an international pariah for its support of Islamist extremist groups including hosting

Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda between 1992 and 1996.

The United States removed Sudan from its state sponsor of terrorism blacklist in December 2020, ushering in much-needed aid and financial investment after decades of harsh economic sanctions.

A 2019 US State Department report warned ‘despite the absence of high-profile terrorist attacks, ISIS facilitation networks appear to be active within Sudan’.

AFP

Yemeni NGO wins UN refugee award for service to displaced

Geneva, Switzerland - The United Nations said on Wednesday that a Yemeni humanitarian organisation working to help people displaced by the country’s conflict was this year’s recipient of its prestigious Nansen Refugee Award.

Praising the ‘extraordinary work’ carried out by the Jeel Albena Association for Humanitarian Development, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said the NGO was ‘an example of humanity, compassion and dedication’.

The group, founded by Ameen Jubran in 2017, won the prestigious award “for its unwavering support for displaced Yemenis, even as shifting frontlines brought gun battles and explosions to its doorstep,” the UNCHR said.

The award ‘draws attention to people displaced by conflict in Yemen, a country facing one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises’, Grandi said.

Jubran (37) had himself been displaced by fighting and nearly killed, the UN body said.

‘The areas where we work are considered to be among the



The Jeel Albena Association for Humanitarian Development won the Nansen Refugee Award for its unwavering support for displaced Yemenis

most impoverished, and also the most dangerous,’ the statement quoted Jubran as saying.

‘We felt the danger every day but, despite that, we had displaced people and others who needed our help. We couldn’t just leave them behind without providing them with assistance,’ it added.

The conflict erupted when Huthi rebels from the country’s Zaidi Shiite minority in northern Yemen entered the capital Sanaa in September 2014, seizing the government headquarters.

The rebels allied themselves with military units loyal to their former enemy, former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had been forced to quit after a 2011 uprising.

The conflict has left tens of thousands dead and, according to the UN, is causing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

Four million people have fled their homes and are in dire need of protection and assistance, but the conflict and its human suffering were often ignored, the UNHCR said.

Jeel Albena employs more

than 160 people and is supported by an additional 230 volunteers, many of whom are displaced themselves.

Based in the Red Sea port city of Hudaydah, it has provided jobs and around 18,000 emergency shelters for people who are internally displaced and living in informal sites in the provinces of Hudaydah and Hajjah.

The organisation also supports displaced women to become self-sufficient and renovates schools, benefiting both the local community and displaced populations.

The UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award honours individuals, groups or organisations for going above and beyond the call of duty to protect refugees and other displaced and stateless people.

There have been over 60 global winners from different countries since the award was first established in 1954.

Since 1979, the Nansen laureates are awarded US\$150,000, financed by the governments of Norway and Switzerland.

AFP

Refugees who sheltered Snowden reach Canada

Four Sri Lankan refugees had hid Edward Snowden in their Hong Kong apartments when he was on the run

Montreal, Canada - Four Sri Lankan refugees who hid Edward Snowden in their tiny Hong Kong apartments when he was on the run after exposing NSA spying landed in Canada on Tuesday where they were granted asylum, ending years in limbo.

Supun Thilina Kellapatha and Nadeeka Dilrukshi Nonis touched down in Toronto with their children Sethumdi and Dinath and were due to go on to Montreal to 'start their new lives', non-profit For the Refugees said in a statement.

The family were part of a group of seven poverty-stricken refugees from Sri Lanka and the Philippines living in Hong Kong who nonetheless agreed to shelter Snowden after his bombshell revelations in 2013.

Vanessa Rodel, from the Philippines, and her daughter Keana were granted asylum in Canada in 2019 with the help of For the Refugees, who have lobbied Canada to take in the others, arguing they faced persecution both in their homeland and in Hong Kong because they helped Snowden.

Kellapatha's family had faced



Supun Thilina Kellapatha (right) holding the hand of his daughter Sethumdi and Nadeeka Dilrukshi Nonis holding the hand of her son Dinath at the Pearson International Airport in Toronto, Ontario, on arrival in Canada on Tuesday (AFP)

deportation after their initial refugee claims in Hong Kong were rejected.

He spoke of his relief at finally finding a place of permanent sanctuary.

'I'm so happy this is over. I'm so happy to be going to Canada,'

the *South China Morning Post* quoted him as saying before he and his family boarded a plane in Hong Kong.

"We have a new life, our children now have a future. We're so grateful right now. Really, I am speechless... The kids are so

happy. I'm so grateful."

'One more'

Snowden welcomed the news of the family's arrival in Canada.

'This is the best news I've heard in a long, long time,' he wrote on Twitter.

'We need to bring one more home before we can say we're done, but I cannot thank you enough for bringing us this far,' he added.

A seventh member of the group, Sri Lankan army deserter Ajith Pushpakumara, remains in

Hong Kong, where 'his safety is still at risk', according to For the Refugees, which renewed its call for Ottawa to expedite his asylum claim.

"We are happy with the end result - at least for six of the seven," For the Refugees president Marc-Andre Seguin said.

"Although we welcome the arrival and start of a new chapter in the lives of this family of four, we cannot ignore that Ajith has stayed behind," he said. "We are asking that Canada (again) do the right thing and admit the last of Snowden's Guardian Angels before it's too late."

'All alone'

Robert Tibbo, Pushpakumara's lawyer in Canada, said his client has a pending application with Canadian immigration.

"The difficulty here is that Ajith is all alone right now and he's questioning why his case is taking so long," he told AFP.

Tibbo himself left Hong Kong in 2017, saying he feared for his safety after representing the Snowden refugees in the Chinese business hub.

Snowden revealed thousands

of classified documents exposing vast US surveillance put in place after the September 11, 2001 attacks. He ended up stranded in Hong Kong as media published his findings, initially in a hotel, surrounded by journalists from around the globe.

The group of refugees agreed to shelter him for about two weeks until he could fly to Russia, where he now lives.

Their role in the saga was only revealed in a 2016 Oliver Stone film about Snowden, which left them in 'constant fear and worry' in Hong Kong, said For the Refugees.

It also highlighted the plight of refugees in Hong Kong, which has one of the lowest asylum approval rates in the world.

Only around one percent of claims are granted and the tiny fraction of claimants that are approved must get ultimate sanctuary in a third country.

While cases drag on for years, asylum applicants are not allowed to work and receive a stipend of just HK\$3,000 (\$385) a month in what is one of the world's least affordable cities.

AFP



This file photo shows French President Emmanuel Macron (second from left) and the then Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull (centre) standing on the deck of *HMAS Waller*, in Sydney on May 2, 2018 (AFP)

Former Australia PM says successor 'deceitful' on submarine deal

Sydney, Australia - Former Australian leader Malcolm Turnbull said on Wednesday his successor 'deliberately deceived' France when he scrapped a multi-billion-euro submarine deal with Paris in favour of nuclear-powered US or British alternatives.

Turnbull, whose government approved the submarine deal with France in 2016, was scathing about the way Prime Minister Scott Morrison handled the switch, which was part of a new strategic alliance with the United States and Britain.

"Morrison has not acted in good faith. He deliberately deceived France. He makes no defence of his conduct other than to say it was in Australia's national interest," Turnbull told the National Press Club in Canberra.

"France believes it has been deceived and humiliated, and she was. This betrayal of trust will dog our relations with Europe for years," he added.

"The Australian government has treated the French Republic with contempt."

Turnbull said that despite the new US-Britain-Australia defence partnership, there was no contract signed for Australia to buy nuclear-powered submarines, expected to be either Britain's Astute or the larger US Virginia class.

"Australia now has no new submarine programme at all," he

said. "The only certainty is that we won't have new submarines for 20 years and their cost will be a lot more than the French-designed subs."

Morrison has said the decision to switch to nuclear-powered submarines was driven by changing dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region, where rising military power China is increasingly asserting its claims to almost the entire South China Sea.

But Paris reacted with fury to the switch, saying it was kept in the dark until the last moment as Australia withdrew from a contract originally worth A\$50bn (€31bn approx).

Describing the cancellation as a 'stab in the back', France recalled its ambassadors to the United States and Australia.

French President Emmanuel Macron has since held talks with his US counterpart Joe Biden to start patching up relations and instructed his ambassador to return to Washington this week.

There has been no announcement on the return of the French ambassador to Canberra, however, and no talks reported between Macron and Morrison.

Morrison and Turnbull are rivals within Australia's Liberal Party. Morrison took over as prime minister in August 2018 when Turnbull was ousted by a hardline conservative faction of the party.

AFP

UK Labour leader urges party unity to seize power

Brighton, UK - Keir Starmer on Wednesday vowed to revitalise the election prospects of Britain's main opposition Labour party, seeking to unite warring factions and broaden its public appeal with his first in-person speech since taking charge last year.

Starmer used the address to Labour's rank-and-file to try to rebuild its fortunes, after the party suffered its worst defeat since the 1930s at the last general election under his socialist predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn.

But he faces the unenviable task of unifying a party riven by internal factions and hard-left opposition to his leadership, even as Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government battles a damaging fuel supply crisis.

Starmer sought to introduce himself to voters as a credible alternative to Johnson's Conservatives, insisting Labour can win back traditional working-class supporters in northern England who left the party in droves two years ago.

"The voters that thought we were unpatriotic or irresponsible, or that we looked down on them,



Labour leader Keir Starmer gives his keynote speech on the final day of the annual Labour Party conference, in Brighton on Wednesday (AFP)

I say these simple but powerful words: we will never under my leadership go into an election with a manifesto that is not a serious plan for government," he pledged.

Labour's 2019 programme was widely derided as an undeliverable left-wing wish-list, which alongside Corbyn's lack of broader popularity, was blamed for contributing to its poor showing at the polls.

'Get a grip'

The Conservatives thrashed Labour in December 2019 on a pledge to 'get Brexit done' and 'level up' left-behind regions, and Johnson has since enjoyed high popularity ratings despite the coronavirus pandemic's devastating impact.

Turmoil at the petrol pumps, coming on top of an energy supply crisis, have been blamed on Britain's departure from the Eu-

ropean Union, leaving the country short of workers in various key sectors.

Labour's annual conference was seen as a way to move beyond internal squabbles and highlight perceived Tory failings, but its opening days were consumed by Starmer's eventually successful attempts to ram through internal reforms.

While his team has taken heart from the weekend election win of Labour's SPD sister party in Germany, the infighting and a high-profile resignation from his frontbench team upset a show of unity in the seaside town of Brighton.

Starmer tried to turn attention on Wednesday back on Johnson's under-fire administration.

"Level up? You can't even fill up," he said to rapturous applause and cheers, referring to Johnson's flagship domestic policy. "We have a fuel crisis, a pay crisis, a goods crisis, and a cost of living crisis, all at the same time," he added.

"Either get a grip, or get out of the way, let us step up and clear up this mess."

Complete abdication

The conference has laid bare the scale of the challenge facing Starmer uniting Labour, as he faced heckles and interruptions throughout his more than hour-long speech.

Ahead of the address, Owen Jones, a left-wing activist and commentator, said the only words he wanted to hear from him were 'I resign'.

"Whatever my differences with (Tony Blair's) New Labour, in the '90s they hammered the Tories," Jones told AFP, adding Starmer would 'go down as the worst leader in the history of the Labour party'.

"These people are abysmally failing to pin anything on them during a national crisis. It's a complete abdication."

Starmer, a lawyer who was formerly head of state prosecutions in England and Wales, replaced Corbyn in April 2020, just two weeks after Britain entered its first coronavirus lockdown.

"I am so proud to lead a party whose name is Labour," the son of a tool-maker said.

AFP

Taliban hit fairground as Afghans fear for rights

Qarghah, Afghanistan - "This is Afghanistan!" a Taliban fighter shouts on a pirate ship ride at a fairground in western Kabul, as his armed comrades cackle and whoop onboard the rickety attraction.

With AK-47 and M4 assault rifles strapped to their chests, the soldiers cling to colourful steel benches as they are flung back and forth, their scarves and headdresses flapping in the wind.

It was decided a rocket launcher one of them was earlier cradling was better left on solid ground.

The group - ranging in age from 18 to 52 - is relaxing at a small amusement park next to Qarghah Reservoir on the outskirts of the Afghan capital, where families and children normally ride the Ferris Wheel and carousel.

The scene is an incongruous one: the Taliban fighters were in a playful mood in the capital they seized less than six weeks ago.

Since then, Afghans have feared a return to the group's



A Taliban fighter carrying a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launcher stands on pirate ship ride in a fairground at Qargha Lake on the outskirts of Kabul on Tuesday (AFP)

brutally oppressive rule of the 1990s, when they banned music, photography, television - and even children's games such as

kite-flying.

The Taliban promised a more moderate rule this time, but have already curtailed Afghans' free-

doms, including excluding girls from school and sports.

Fighters from around the country flocked to Kabul after the

Islamist hardliners swept to power in mid-August and many had never been to a funfair.

Once the three-minute ride is over the battle-hardened fighters clap, grin and giggle amongst themselves - and the RPG launcher is reunited with its owner.

On the shores of the picturesque reservoir, other Taliban members hop into swan-shaped pedalos as the sun begins to set behind the hills in the distance.

Still brandishing their weapons, they set off in pairs across the water in the pink, blue, green, yellow and blue boats, laughing as the vessels bump together.

Dressed in camouflaged military uniforms and traditional Afghan clothes, they pose with their assault rifles as friends take pictures on the pebbly shore.

Nearby, a few of the more senior Taliban members take the opportunity to pray, setting down their shawls between two boats on a jetty.

AFP

In COVID-19 shadow, HIV on march in Eastern Europe

Bucharest, Romania - In a Bucharest back street, drug addicts rush towards an ambulance handing out free syringes. While the eyes of the world focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, the fight against HIV has slowed down in Eastern Europe.

Three times a week, Alina Schiau and colleagues from the Romanian anti-AIDS Association (ARAS) go out to the rougher parts of the city to hand out syringes and bandages to injecting drug users.

But their funds are running low and stocks dwindling. Come November, their ambulance might have to stay in the garage.

"What's cheaper? To buy a syringe and thus focus on prevention? Or to treat a patient for years?" says social worker Ada

Luca, indignant at government inaction.

Bulgaria and Romania are both former Eastern bloc countries, and in 2019, 76 per cent of AIDS cases diagnosed in Europe were in the East, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). "It is obvious that the number of contaminations has increased since the start of the pandemic," Schiau told AFP.

As coronavirus took hold, hospitals closed to non-COVID patients, says Davron Mukhamadiev, Regional Health and Care Coordinator for Red Cross Europe (IFRC). Quarantine requirements, travel restrictions and reduced access to rapid testing and diagnostic services all undermined efforts to roll back



Volunteers sort anti-HIV medication pills to be sent to the patients, on a restaurant terrace, in Romania's capital Bucharest (AFP)

HIV/AIDS, he said.

'We are abandoned'
UNAIDS data shows 140,000 new infections in Eastern Europe

and Central Asia in 2020, compared with 170,000 in 2019, which experts attribute to a dramatic slowdown in screening, not a drop in cases.

In 2020, for example, Romania managed to screen only 234,420 people for HIV/AIDS - down nearly a third from 334,410 the previous year.

It is a similar story in neighbouring Bulgaria.

Regional health centres were 'overwhelmed and hardly ever did any HIV testing during COVID', said Alexander Milanov, programme director at the country's National Patients' Organisation.

The pandemic has disrupted supply chains and the transport of medicines, exacerbating historic shortages in countries such as Romania despite huge scientific strides that have dramatically improved outcomes for HIV patients in rich nations.

Alexandru Tantu, a 28 year

old, HIV positive IT specialist, has seen first-hand how other European countries treat patients better, and how in Romania, it is a daily struggle to get the required drugs.

"We came to realise that we are abandoned," he told AFP. "Hence all the anger and the fear that tomorrow we might not have our treatment." Still, with his stable job, he regards himself as relatively 'privileged'.

In his advocacy work, he says, he receives calls from patients who are considering suicide.

'Fear in the stomach'
The HIV/AIDS crisis in Romania dates back to the communist years.

Around 11,000 children born in the 1980s under the commu-

nist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu were infected as a result of contaminated or unsterilised syringes or transfusions with untested blood.

Today, several doctors told AFP that hospitals have yet to receive funds from the health ministry following a budgetary correction - and in Romania, patients can only get the medication they need from hospitals, not pharmacies.

Romania's health ministry did not respond to an AFP request for a comment.

Volunteers do everything they can to fill the gaps in care.

Alina Dumitriu and her 'Sens Pozitiv' campaign group have been helping patients for 16 years, relying on donations.

AFP

UK police officer murdered woman after false arrest: Court

London, UK - A serving British police officer kidnapped a woman as she walked home, handcuffing her in a false arrest for breaking coronavirus restrictions, before raping and murdering her, a court was told on Wednesday.

The disappearance of Sarah Everard during a national lockdown in March was one of Britain's most high-profile missing person investigations and sparked protests and a debate about women's safety on the streets.

Wayne Couzens (48), who served with the elite diplomatic protection unit of London's Metropolitan Police, admitted her kidnapping, rape and murder in July. Everard, who had been visiting a friend in Clapham, south London, was strangled then set on fire, with her remains found in woodland.

At a two-day sentencing hearing, prosecutor Tom Little said Couzens targeted the 33 year old marketing executive on March 3, and accused her of breaking coronavirus rules.

Couzens, who was off-duty,



Demonstrators hold placards as they await the sentencing of British police officer Wayne Couzens for the murder of Sarah Everard (in the inset), outside the Old Bailey court in London on Wednesday (AFP)

kidnapped Everard in a 'false arrest', by 'handcuffing her and showing his warrant card', he added.

Security camera footage showed him holding up his warrant card and then handcuffing Everard before putting her into a hire car. A couple driving past in a car also witnessed this, and assumed an undercover police officer was making an arrest, the lawyer added.

But he said Couzens exploited his knowledge and experience of police patrols enforcing lockdown restrictions and knew what language to use.

A former boyfriend had given evidence that Everard was 'savvy and streetwise' and would not have got into a car with a stranger except 'by force or manipulation', he added.

Couzens sat in the dock at London's Old Bailey with his

head bowed, watched by members of Everard's family, as the judge considered whether to hand him a whole-life jail term.

The sentence was due to be announced on Thursday.

Before the hearing, the Metropolitan Police said in a statement: 'We are sickened, angered and devastated by this man's crimes, which betray everything we stand for.'

AFP

N Korea tested hypersonic missile

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea has successfully tested a new hypersonic gliding missile, state media reported on Wednesday, in what would be the nuclear-armed nation's latest advance in weapons technology.

Tuesday's launch was of 'great strategic significance', the official Korean Central News Agency said, as the North seeks to increase its defence capabilities a 'thousand-fold'.

Hypersonic missiles move far faster and are more agile than standard ones, making them much harder for missile defence systems - on which the US is spending billions - to intercept.

The launch from Jagang province 'confirmed the navigational control and stability of the missile', along with 'guiding manoeuvrability and the gliding flight characteristics of the detached hypersonic gliding warhead' and the engine, according to KCNA, which called it the Hwasong-8.

The launch was watched by top official Pak Jong Chon, it said, making no mention of leader Kim Jong Un.

The official *Rodong Sinmun* newspaper carried a picture of the weapon - with a set of guidance fins at the base of its nose cone - ascending into the morn-



Pedestrians walk along Sungri Street, crossing the Kim Il Sung Square, in North Korea's Pyongyang on Wednesday (AFP)

ing sky. There was no confirmation of the missile type from Seoul.

Hypersonic missiles are generally defined as travelling more than five times the speed of sound, or Mach 5, but South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff have not yet announced the weapon's maximum altitude and flight distance.

The South Korean and US militaries were 'capable of detecting and intercepting it', they said on Wednesday. "Based on an assessment of its characteristics such as speed, it is at an initial phase of development and will take a considerable time to be deployed," they added.

Both Koreas are building up their weapons capabilities in

what could become an arms race on the peninsula, with ramifications for neighbouring Japan, China and the wider region.

North Korea, which invaded the South in 1950, is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its banned nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes, and earlier this month said it had tested a long-range cruise missile.

Developing the hypersonic missile was one of five 'top priority' tasks in the five-year plan for strategic weapons, KCNA said.

Since inheriting power following the death of his father nearly ten years ago, Kim has overseen rapid improvements in the North Korean arsenal.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Arrest urged in S Africa's \$10mn COVID-19 fund fraud

Johannesburg, South Africa - South African investigators on Wednesday called for a former health minister to be punished and a senior official to face criminal charges over a US\$10mn COVID-19 fund scandal.

The damning report from the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) said former health minister Zweli Mkhize oversaw contracts through Digital Vibes, a front company run by his former spokeswoman and personal assistant.

Using money meant to educate the public about how to stay safe during the pandemic, his son Dedani Mkhize bought a Land Cruiser and withdrew 'significant amounts of cash', the report said.

The SIU, an independent law enforcement agency with similar powers to the FBI, said the health ministry's former director general Anton Pillay should be criminally charged with financial misconduct.

The current director general Sandile Buthelezi was suspended over the weekend.

Investigators also urged President Cyril Ramaphosa to take 'executive action' against the former minister Mkhize,



This file photo shows a woman clad in traditional Zulu attire receiving a shot of the COVID-19 vaccine during the launch of the VaxuMzansi National Vaccine Day Campaign at the Gandhi Phoenix Settlement in Bhambayi township, on the outskirts of Durban, on September 24 (AFP)

who resigned in August, as well as six other officials. The agency said it would issue more detailed recommendations about these measures later.

The SIU report did not delve into details of how the money was spent. Local media have reported that one Digital Vibes of-

ficial took her family on a months-long trip to Turkey during South Africa's second coronavirus wave.

Other reports have highlighted spending sprees on luxury goods.

One woman who on paper supposedly ran Digital Vibes

actually worked at a gas station, while other money went to a beauty salon run by Mkhize's daughter-in-law, according to the *Daily Maverick* newspaper.

The SIU has already taken steps to recover some of the funds, which had been earmarked for public awareness

and media campaigns.

While this case is among many COVID-19-related graft investigations, the revelations have alarmed the public as Mkhize and Pillay were both seen as effective civil servants in a country marred with graft.

AFP

Russia reports record deaths for second day

Moscow, Russia - Russia on Wednesday recorded its highest coronavirus death toll for a second day running, as infections are on the rise driven by the Delta variant and slow vaccination rates.

A government tally reported 857 fatalities over the past 24 hours and 22,430 new cases. The new figure brings the country's total deaths from COVID-19 to 206,388 - the highest in Europe.

Authorities have been accused of downplaying the severity of the outbreak.

Under a broader definition for deaths linked to the coronavirus, statistics agency Rosstat reported in late August that Russia had seen more than 350,000 fatalities. The world's fifth worst-hit country with more than seven million infections, Russia has seen cases climb since last month as vaccinations stall.

Moscow, the epicentre of the outbreak, has experienced a spike over the past week with authorities warning of rising hospital admissions.

"The situation is a serious reason not only for concern but also for mobilisation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Wednesday.

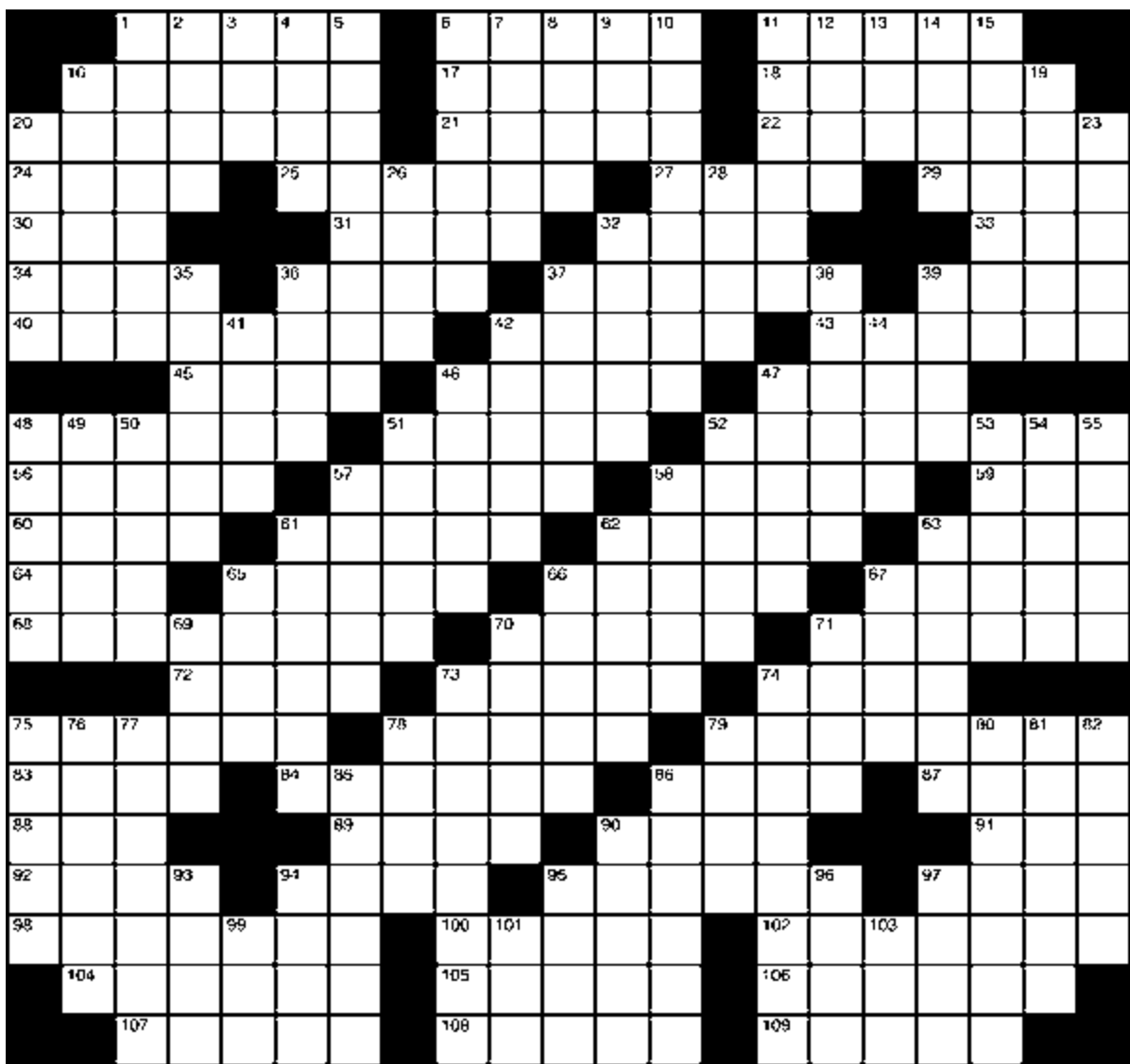
Moscow and a host of other regions introduced mandatory jabs in the summer, but the vaccination drive has since stalled.

Several Russian vaccines have been available for months, but authorities have struggled to inoculate a vaccine-sceptic population.

As of Wednesday, just under 30 per cent of the population had been fully vaccinated, according to the Gogov website, which tallies COVID-19 data from the regions.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

1 At all ____
6 Right-to-receive certificate
11 Step
16 Large drawing room
17 Suppress
18 Social groups
20 Genus of trees
21 Useful
22 Survivors
24 Baking compartment
25 Overstrain
27 ____ of Evil
29 Open lesion
30 Russian peasant commune
31 Undeified
32 Employed
33 Churchill sign
34 Puffed
36 Rich source
37 Small upright piano
39 Malt beverage
40 Lees
42 Kind of pool
43 Terminates prematurely
45 Chinese dynasty
46 Boy's catapult
47 FBI agent
48 Specimen

51 Burn with steam
52 City in Minnesota
56 Nimble
57 Intone
58 Warble
59 N.T. book, for short
60 Measuring stick
61 Center of things
62 Hackneyed
63 Italian lake
64 Wrath
65 City in Vermont
66 Small songbirds
67 City in Italy
68 Made dim
70 Render stable
71 Unruffled
72 Goals
73 Pigeon species
74 Soft mineral
75 Crystalline mineral
78 Levees
79 SRO patron
83 Gasp
84 Number on clockface
86 Burn
87 Noble Italian family
88 Miss Claire
89 Eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews
90 Riding whip

91 Sailor
92 Frog genus
94 Horse provender
95 Biblical king of Damascus
97 Underdone
98 Redactors
100 Cone-shaped domicile
102 Connected by blood
104 Bring into harmony
105 Atelier item
106 Figures of speech
107 Writer Richard ____
108 Attire
109 Irish poet
DOWN
1 Provided food
2 Pearl Buck
3 Costa del ____
4 Surpasses
5 Breaking suddenly
6 The face of a cube
7 Charming little one?
8 Check
9 Noxious
10 Gratifying
11 Walk with long steps
12 Very: Fr.

13 Trouble
14 Wading bird
15 Regain
16 English statesman
17 Della ____
19 Toothed instruments
23 Prophets
26 Litter's smallest
28 Stranger: Gk.
32 Set on end
35 Nun's head cover
36 Word on the Wall
37 Marsh bird
38 Mexican dish
39 Beethoven's birthplace
41 Distance measure
42 Slope
44 To lade
46 Frighten
47 Coarse hominy
48 Tasty
49 Greek marketplace
50 Certain race horse
51 Fragment
52 Pickle
53 French school
54 Style of type
55 Sluggard
57 Roman goddess
58 Lock of hair
61 Treat

62 Attempts
63 Ring
65 Nota ____
66 Interlaced
67 Dissolve
69 English county
70 Card game
71 River to the Moselle
73 Stripped
74 Early Boston event
75 Steeple
76 Dish with soaked bread crumbs
77 Silliness
78 Obligation
79 A ____ in the dark
80 Landed properties
81 Gazes
82 Biblical name
85 Certain contracts
86 Baskets for anglers
90 Algonquian speakers
93 ____ boy!
94 French river
95 Church part
96 Withered
97 Engrossed
99 Umpire's call
101 Sense organ
103 Mauna ____

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your financial accounts have become rather tangled, so don't pretend to yourself that everything is just peachy. Blindly ignoring the issues just makes things worse for you, but if you roll up your sleeves, you have the chance to get back on the road to fiscal well-being. Forget about risky investments, get-rich-quick plans and silly spending. Focus on saving money to get back on track.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You're on fire now -- angry dogs quiet down and relax, your worst critics start to see the truth and good luck practically lights your way. It's all quite dramatic, and you should feel no shame in enjoying it thoroughly. At the same time, try not to rub it in anyone's face! Remember to use your power wisely, or it could all go south before you realise what's happening.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Don't save pennies if it just means wasting dollars! Making your own lunch all week doesn't mean anything if you end up blowing your cash on one huge dinner. Observe your cash flow and spending habits carefully, especially if your emotions are high-strung -- you don't need retail therapy to feel better. Find some other alternative when it comes to dealing with stress.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You know you've still got it -- but did you ever really doubt it? It's actually possible that you might have been doing just that, because some recent flare-up has left you feeling that your charm might be on decline. Fortunately, you can rid yourself of that attitude and get back to causing mischief. Your energy is pumping your charisma back to where it used to be.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Someone who wasn't barely visible until now triggers an intense wave of interest in you. Who could have known that they were so talented -- or that they could complement your own strengths and weaknesses so well? Follow up on this new link and make sure to tell this person how you're feeling. A casual friendship might turn into something a lot deeper.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Changes are coming soon, and you may feel as if you're just about to start a new chapter. You should be excited, but you might also feel a bit queasy. Transitions are hard for you -- you almost never jump in headfirst, so give yourself a break and give yourself credit for working through this rough patch. If you try to foresee problems, you just make yourself crazy -- let it ride.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

A bit of haziness may be clouding your mind, but it's nothing that a little rest and relaxation can't take care of. Focus on yourself -- it's almost always the case that any time you feel that you mustn't take any time off is exactly when you need that break the most. If you work yourself to the point of exhaustion, you do nothing but hurt yourself in the long run, so walk off the job and get right again.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Could you be ignoring your primary relationships in favour of your career? A few of your people certainly think so! It's way too easy to get snagged by key projects, but it's called the rat race for a reason. Re-prioritise, making sure you pay attention to what's really essential. Are you going to wish you had spent more time at the office or hanging out with friends and family?



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Relations centred around a deep core of trust are impossible to beat. You and someone close have been through a tough (maybe traumatic) emotional event together, but now, you're proud of the fact that you're together by choice, not just because of inertia. You're able to stick together from a position of strength and genuine affection. It keeps growing and getting better, too!



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You need to jump right in and take on any major tasks at work or at home that you've been putting off for too long, because when you feel the need to socialise -- like you do tonight -- you don't want to be stuck at work catching up. Enjoy play time with a clean conscience by making sure everything is where it should be. Once that's all taken care of, get out there!



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

If your people are spinning off on crazy tangents? You need to give up trying to drag them back to reality -- it's like trying to herd cats. Let them indulge in erratic behaviour and just tend to your own business. All this madness may be a golden opportunity, actually, if you can get yourself moving. Leap on new opportunities and seize control.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Some inspiring and wonderful times lie just ahead, so keep smiling, even if you feel like Eeyore right now. Take a break from stressing out, no matter how big the stress is, and let yourself wallow in something you love. It could mean a cup of chai or a brisk walk around the lake -- whatever it is that makes you happy inside, do it to cheer up almost immediately.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The Gathering Storm is written by

- a. Winston Churchill
- b. George Washington
- c. Voltaire
- d. Romain Rolland

2. Who is the author of the book My Experiments with Truth

- a. Mahatma Gandhi
- b. Michael Anderson
- c. Winston Churchill
- d. Jarnes Morris

3. Who is the writer of Swamy and Friends

- a. Munshi Premchand
- b. Raman
- c. Max Muller
- d. R. K. Narayan

Answers: 1. a 2. a 3. d

BLOCKBUSTERS ARE BACK

WHERE THEY BELONG

Witness the magic of movies the way they were meant to be seen...on the big screen

No Time To Die
Bond has left active service. His peace is short-lived when his old friend Felix Leiter from the CIA turns up asking for help, leading Bond onto the trail of a mysterious villain armed with dangerous new technology.

The Adventures of A.R.I. - My Robot Friend
A boy repairs a broken robot and is amazed at his new robot friend's superpowers, but the robot's creators will stop at nothing to get him back.

Rudra Thandavam
The protagonist of this film Rudra Prabhakaran is a police inspector. He is a very honest police officer, wherever he joins as inspector. In this situation, he gets transferred to Chennai Harbour.

Sivakumarin Sabadham
Siva who was growing up in the warmth of his grandfather, leaves his town and goes to Chennai to his uncle's (Murugan) house due to a small dispute in his town. What happened to Siva's love life is the rest of the story.

Book your tickets at voxcinemas.com or the VOX app

KIDS COLOURING

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

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (SEPTEMBER 29)

SCOWS	WORE	MAGDA
STUDIO	AARON	SIRLOIN
PETER	USTINOV	EDBEGLEY
ELLS	PUTSON	BRAUN
MAO	ALLES	BETTEDAVIS
PERK	KARAT	USS
UBER	MENLO	SRS
HART	GAMY	BATTY
CRIBS	ARM	KATE
COLORS	GIGYOUNG	ROTS
MACAWS	POLO	TRES
FREE	OMARS	GAGY
DANE	RIANT	WELK
ARLO	ERRS	PINTOS
SLAG	JOELGREY	GROGER
ALAW	AMA	TOOTH
AMBER	TRAM	ELSE
ORB	PEALS	TIER
INI	DIVER	ORLE
HENRY	FONDA	NETO
OIL	DENIM	ALLOTS
ARIA	LEEGRANT	SUSANHAYWARD
STRIVES	SNOWS	IMAGES
SOBER	TAINS	FLAYIED



FITNESS FREAK

WORK OUT
SMART

“We are your start to work out smart”, says Saif al Rawahi a fitness coach who’s out to give people in Oman a fitter way of life with his online coaching

Dileeshiya Ilangakoan

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, life turned upside down for many as lockdowns, movement bans, and restrictions in public places, including gyms, forced many to give up their fitness regimes.

In these troubled times, the fitness conscious in Oman turned to a new concept of online coaching with Saif al Rawahi’s Smart Approach Fitness – an online personal coaching platform. Rawahi’s clientele grew rapidly but financially it was quite the opposite for him.

Not wanting to make hay while the Sun was shining, Rawahi, however, chose to offer people a solution that was free. The 29 year old coach, who is an OTA (On-line Trainer Academy) certified online trainer, felt it was his duty to help people regain/maintain their fitness levels by availing of his coaching that was not a profit-making venture.

“We believe in helping the community, the people, and our clients first. This is the reason why we still regularly provide free 30, 60, 90-day free online coaching programmes. Even though we could’ve capitalised on the situation, we chose to take a financial blow for a worthy cause,” Rawahi said.

Despite what ideas Rawahi’s dreadlocks convey, he was born and raised in Muscat. Growing up, he was always active and into fitness from a very young age. “I grew up playing all kinds of sports. I won many medals playing soccer, basketball, sprinting, volleyball, and even netball without real structured training,” he recalls.

It wasn’t, however, till his year in the US when Rawahi transitioned into resistance training and focused on body composition rather than performance. Rawahi got most of the knowledge during his first semester at the Humboldt State University, US, which ignited his passion, and got his first personal training experience when he started training people in 2013.

“I was underweight and small made, compared to the average American then. So, my mission was to enhance my physique and learn everything I could about health and fitness, training, weight gain, weight loss and nutrition,” says Rawahi who is now a full time ‘fitness guru’.

Oman hasn’t fully accepted online coaching to date

MYTHBUSTERS

Myth 1: The more you workout the better result you get

Fact: This is one misconception that’s truly damaging. Let’s assume you have a fever, and you were told to have three tablets per day. Will having six tablets be a better solution? Definitely not, you might overdose.

It’s the same with workouts, there is a maximum number of workouts you can do that is best suited to your body. Going overboard can cause damage to your body which needs enough time to rest, adapt, and progress.

Myth 2: To lose weight, you must do cardio

Fact: Losing weight mostly comes down to CICO (calories in calories out). Cardio is great for good health and the heart. But it’s not the main driver for weight loss. Studies have also proven that resistance training is much better



than cardio for weight loss. With resistance training, you can change the exercise, decrease rest time, and increase the weights/ reps/ sets/ frequency - the progressions are endless. Resistance training also regulates and boosts metabolism.

Myth 3: Protein powders are dangerous

Fact: Many people confuse protein powders with anabolic steroids. Whey protein powder is a byproduct of cheese manufacturing, it’s not a dangerous chemical like what many think it is.

Some of the most popular baby formulae have whey protein. Protein powders are very safe. However, protein powders aren’t a must to transform oneself. They are only supplements not replacements. The bottom line is, protein powders are safe but you don’t ‘need’ them to transform yourself.

Myth 4: Women shouldn’t lift weights

Fact: This is very misleading, women can and should lift weights. It doesn’t make them look like men, it only helps build muscle. Many slim women think they need to lose fat to look better, when in reality they need to put on muscle. Self remedies can lead to eating disorders. Most of the fabulous women you see and want to be like, lift weight. The other 10 per cent could be blessed with incredible genetics.

ANSWER AND WIN!

WOMEN SHOULDN’T
LIFT WEIGHTS -
TRUE OR FALSE ?

Send your answers (True / False) marked ‘Health Quiz’ with your name, age, and telephone number to:
muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om Two early birds get free ‘Two months online training and nutrition coaching’

and the Smart Approach is the first online personal training and fitness brand in Muscat, which sprouted in 2018. The platform has helped many locals as well as expats transform into healthier versions of themselves, providing tailored exercises and nutritional

coaching with many added benefits.

Rawahi’s Smart Approach Fitness also provides in-person training, though they moved to 100% online coaching following the onset of the pandemic.

“We are your start to work out smart. The way we

approach the public is by giving them a 60-day money-back guarantee.

We work on the belief that people want to transform, so we let them try our services for 60 days, risk free. With nothing but time to lose, the public are open to trying something new. Most felt they needed a coach in the gym, when in reality they needed someone outside of the gym,” says Rawahi.

Many people doubt whether online coaching is as effective as in-person training and whether they can achieve the same results. But Rawahi’s coaching doesn’t only focus on training, it also provides guidance, nutrition coaching, mindset coaching, and clarifies all doubts of participants.

“We provide a full system that takes you to where you want to be, we learn exactly where you can improve and guide you towards getting there. People achieve much more than just results - they learn what to do, how to manage their food, appetite and hunger, and run a schedule outside of the gym that is built to move them closer to their goal,” he says.

He also helps women get back in shape, post-pregnancy, and scientifically adds a few years to that person’s life, too. The two scenarios of gaining and losing weight are at the opposite ends of the spectrum and a person’s experience level, gender, health history and many more intricate details matter for a programme to be sustainable, he asserts.

“To gain weight, we’d increase your food intake. Some people can’t do that easily, so we help you choose foods that are calorically dense. To lose weight, we’d decrease their food intake - one way to do that without being hungry all the time is by selecting foods that are not calorically dense. As for the training, it would comprise 45-60 minute sessions for around 3-4 days a week,” Rawahi explained.

A great nutrition protocol promotes healthier outcomes, less gut problems, keeps you at an ideal weight, strengthen your immune system, decreases the risks of diseases such as, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, kidney stones, osteoporosis and cancer, he pointed out.

“Nutrition is a huge part of fitness. You can’t be ‘fit’ if nutrition is not within your top 3 things to focus on,” says the certified ProCoach who earned one of the most respected nutrition coaching certifications in the world from Precision Nutrition.

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

'Crazy' Sheriff stun Real

Messi makes PSG statement; Liverpool rout Porto; Atletico edge past Milan

Paris, France - Lionel Messi opened his Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) account as the French side beat Manchester City while new boys Sheriff Tiraspol shocked Real Madrid in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Messi's top-corner finish added to Idrissa Gueye's first half goal as PSG moved top of Group A with the 2-0 win over last year's runners-up. Pep Guardiola's side hit the bar twice in the first half with Portugal playmaker Bernardo Silva failing to score two metres out with PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma helplessly on the ground.

"The important thing was to win, against an immense opponent, one of the contenders for the trophy," Messi told broadcaster Canal+.

"I had only played here (Parc des Princes) once, but little by little I'm adapting and integrating to the team," he added.

In Group D, Sheriff, playing in just their second ever game in the group stage of the competition, upset record 13-time winners Real Madrid 2-1 in the Spanish capital.

Uzbekistan winger Jasur Jakhshibaev put the Moldovans in the lead before the half hour mark as Karim Benzema equalised after 65 minutes to score for a 17th different season in the competition, a feat only also achieved by 34-year-old Messi.

But the hero for Sheriff, who are based in the region of Transnistria on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, was Luxembourg attacking midfielder Sebastien Thill. The 27-year-old Thill fired home a sublime half volley with



Sheriff Tiraspol's Dimitrios Kolovos and goalie Giorgos Athanasiadis celebrate their win over Real Madrid on Tuesday



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (L) celebrates with Sadio Mane after scoring against hosts Porto on Tuesday (AFP)

62 seconds of regular time remaining at the Santiago Bernabeu two week after Sheriff had beaten Shakhtar Donetsk earlier in the month in their opening group game.

"After this match we all went crazy. There are a lot of foreigners in the club, we come from all types of countries. It's our strength," Thill told Canal+.

"We played both matches to 100%. We're all happy now," he added.

Madrid's Casemiro rued his side's lack of efficiency in front of Sheriff's Greek goalkeeper Georgios Athanasiadis. "It's football, we had 20 shots or more and we scored one, they had two shots scored both," he told Movistar+.

"We have to pay more attention, especially defensively."

Earlier in the group, Serie A champions Inter Milan remain winless in Europe this season following the 0-0 draw at Shakhtar. Ukrainian Oleksandr Usyk was a spectator in Kiev days after beating Anthony Joshua to become just the third boxer to win

both the cruiserweight and heavyweight world titles.

Salah, Firmino hit doubles in big win

In Group B, Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino scored twice as Liverpool drubbed Porto 5-1 and Luis Suarez claimed a 97th-minute winner as Atletico Madrid edged AC Milan 2-1 in Italy.

Jurgen Klopp's side wore black armbands after former Liverpool striker Roger Hunt died earlier in the day aged 83.

It was the sixth successive match that Liverpool had scored

three or more goals, only the third time in the club's history the feat has been achieved. They have scored 20 times in 17 days and have 26 goals in their first nine fixtures to equal a club record for a top-flight campaign set in 1922 and replicated only one other time in the 2016-2017 season.

Milan played an hour with ten-man after Franck Kessie's red card and the seven-time European champions were unable to claim a first win in the competition since 2013.

Earlier, Ivory Coast striker Sebastien Haller took his tally to 10

goals in as many games this season as Ajax beat Besiktas 2-0 to stay top of Group C on Tuesday.

Netherlands winger Donyell Malen also scored for his new club as Borussia Dortmund overcame Sporting Lisbon 1-0 and trail the Dutch champions on goal difference.

American Jesse Marsch lost his fifth game in nine matches in charge of RB Leipzig in the 2-1 home defeat to Club Brugge. Leipzig face a tough ask to reach the last-16 in a group alongside PSG and City.

AFP

Palmeiras in final of Copa Libertadores

Belo Horizonte, Brazil - Defending champions Palmeiras booked their place in the final of the Copa Libertadores on Tuesday, securing a battling 1-1 against Brazilian rivals Atletico Mineiro to advance on away goals.

A second-half equaliser from winger Dudu cancelled out Atletico Mineiro's opener from Chilean international Eduardo Silva to send Palmeiras through to the November 27 final of South American club football's showpiece tournament.

After the first leg in Sao Paulo ended 0-0 last week, Atletico Mineiro appeared poised to make home advantage count in Tuesday's return-leg at Belo Horizonte's Mineirao Stadium.

Palmeiras - bidding to become the first back-to-back winners of the Copa Libertadores since Boca Juniors in 2000-2001 - will play either Brazilian club Flamengo or Ecuador's Barcelona SC in the final. Flamengo lead that semifinal tie 3-1 heading into the second-leg.

AFP

We came here to win, says Sheriff captain

Madrid, Spain - Moldova's Sheriff Tiraspol pulled off one of the biggest upsets in Champions League history on Tuesday by beating Real Madrid 2-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu.

"For us this is a dream come true to have won here. We're so happy, and just enjoying it," said Frank Castaneda, the Sheriff captain. "We came here to win," said the Colombian. "We didn't just come here to sit around. We know how good our players are and luckily for us Madrid weren't able to take their chances and we took ours."

The result will go down as one of the most surprising in the history of the competition and



Frank Castaneda, Sheriff Tiraspol

delivers a significant boost to Sheriff's chances of qualifying for the last-16.

They have six points out of six

in Group D, having already beaten Shakhtar Donetsk.

"This type of game when you have total control is decided by

This type of game when you have total control is decided by the small details and that has cost us the game. We've missed out on three points and the group is wide open. We need to win our next game

CARLO ANCELOTTI, REAL MADRID COACH

the small details and that has cost us the game," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"A corner kick, a stupid foul - they cost you and now we talk about a defeat we didn't deserve." "We've missed out on three points and the group is wide open. We need to win

our next game."

Sheriff, founded in 1997, have dominated Moldovan football but this is their first season in the Champions League group stage.

"We are dreaming of getting into the last-16 and that's our objective," said Castaneda. "Our attention now turns to Inter and

we'll work hard in order to ensure we keep getting positive results."

Thill, Sheriff's match-winner, was last year playing on loan at Russian club FC Tambov, who in May were dissolved after declaring themselves bankrupt.

Sheriff appeared to be hanging on for a draw but instead delivered a knockout blow. A throw-in was hooked back to the edge of the area, where Thill unleashed a wonderful shot into the top corner.

"Thill's goal is out of this world. It's one you dream of. I thanked him at the end of the game," said Castaneda.

AFP

Arsenal's Khaka ruled out for three months

London, UK - Arsenal said on Wednesday midfielder Granit Khaka has been ruled out for up to three months after suffering a knee injury during the weekend's north London derby win against Tottenham. Khaka was injured in a collision with Lucas Moura after the Spurs forward had been challenged by Thomas Partey.

The Swiss international limped off and could now miss the rest of 2021 after a specialist examined the injury. Sunday was Khaka's first game back following a three-match ban for a red card in the 5-0 thrashing at Manchester City before the international break.

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

Advertising professional, graphic designer, expat woman with 13 years experience. Job needed full time/part-time work from home. +968 95759485



BIRTHDAY WISHES

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September 30

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be successful in whatever you do.
With Love - Shreeraj

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'I just heard the final bell'

Retirement from boxing the hardest decision of life, says Manny Pacquiao

Manila, Philippines - Boxing legend Manny Pacquiao announced his retirement on Wednesday from the sport to focus on his political career.

The multi-division world champion, who is a senator in his native Philippines, has already announced his intention to run for president in the country's 2022 elections.

The 42-year-old's final fight was a defeat by Cuba's Yordenis Ugas in Las Vegas last month.

"I just heard the final bell. Boxing is over," said Pacquiao.

In a video posted on social media, Pacquiao described retiring as the 'hardest decision' of his life, adding boxing had given him 'the chance to fight my way out of poverty' and 'the courage to change more lives'.

He also thanked his fans, friends and all those who supported him throughout his career, most notably long-time trainer Freddie Roach, who he described as 'my family, a



A file photo, dated August 21, 2021, of Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, US

brother and a friend'. "I will never forget what I have done and accomplished in my life," he said.

After growing up in poverty in the south of the Philippines, Pacquiao moved to the capital Manila as a teenager to start a boxing career that would make him one of the world's most highly paid athletes.

He won his first major title in 1998 at the age of 19, defeating Thailand's Chatchai Sasakul for the WBC flyweight title.

Within three years he was fighting in Las Vegas, beating

South Africa's Lehlohonolo Ledwaba for the IBF super bantamweight title at the MGM Grand, the venue for most of his fights in the following two decades.

He is now regarded as one of the greatest professional boxers of all time, winning 12 different titles across eight weight divisions and is the only boxer to hold world championships across four decades.

In July 2019, Pacquiao became the oldest welterweight world champion in history at the

age of 40 when he defeated Keith Thurman to win the WBA (Super) welterweight title, though he was stripped of the title in January 2021 because of inactivity.

Speaking after his defeat to Ugas in August, Pacquiao said he was '60-40' in favour of quitting.

He retires with a record of 62 wins, eight defeats and two draws.

Pacquiao entered politics in 2010 when he won a seat in the lower house of the Philippines congress, before being elected

for a six-year term in the upper chamber in 2016.

He confirmed earlier this month his intention to run for president after he was nominated as a candidate by a faction of the ruling party, PDP-Laban.

"He's gonna go down as a legend of not just boxing but of the sporting world," Ted Lerner, a US-born sports journalist in the Philippines, told said.

"In the future... his name will be sort of synonymous with greatness, in the level of Michael Jordan or people who have transcended their sport and become like mythical legends."

Pacquiao, who retired briefly in 2016 before reversing the decision, is idolised by many in the Philippines both for his punching power and rise from desperate street kid to the peak of boxing.

News of his retirement was greeted with mixed feelings in his southern hometown of General Santos, where support for the boxer runs deep.

"I am both happy and sad," Anna Rodriguez, 24, said. "I am happy because he will be able to spend more time with his family, but I'm also sad because he will no longer bring pride to General Santos."

Manila taxi driver Jerry Barilea said it was the right time for Pacquiao to bow out. "He's getting old, he really can't do it anymore," the 58-year-old said.

Agencies

Joshua rematch possible, says Usyk's promoter

Kiev, Ukraine - A rematch between Oleksandr Usyk and Anthony Joshua is possible in February or March, the promoter of the Ukrainian boxing champion confirmed on Tuesday, days after Joshua lost his world heavyweight titles to Usyk.

Usyk won by a unanimous decision, depriving Joshua of his World Boxing Association (WBA), International Boxing Federation (IBF) and World Boxing Organisation (WBO) belts in front of a home crowd in London on Saturday.

Joshua immediately voiced his readiness to face Usyk again, saying at a post-fight press conference that he is '110 per cent' likely to activate a rematch clause contained in the contract for the bout.

"The approximate time that Eddie Hearn announced at the press conference after the fight, February-March, is indeed true," Usyk's promoter Oleksandr Krasnyuk said on Tuesday at a joint press conference with the boxer in Kiev.

"Within this period, a rematch should take place," Krasnyuk said.

Hearn, Joshua's promoter, suggested during the post-fight press conference in London that any rematch would be in Britain.

His remarks came after Usyk, who secured most of his victories outside of Ukraine, said that he 'would love to have the rematch at Olympiyskiy Stadium in Kiev'.

Usyk's victory extended his unbeaten professional record to 19 wins and scuppered the prospects of an all-British world heavyweight title unification bout between Joshua and Tyson Fury.

It also meant that the Ukrainian became just the third cruiserweight world champion after Evander Holyfield of the United States and Britain's David Haye to also take a heavyweight title.

Usyk, 34, achieved the feat in just his third professional contest in the heavyweight ranks.

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Former Oman cricket captain Wategaonkar bids adieu

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Former Oman cricket team captain Vaibhav Wategaonkar bid adieu to Oman recently after a long innings of nearly 18 years.

A stylish left-handed batter, Wategaonkar made his international debut for Oman in 2007 against Argentina in Namibia and last played for Team Oman against UAE in September 2018.

The 39 year old played a total of 12 T20 games for Oman, including two T20Is and made his T20 debut for Oman against Italy in Dubai in March 2012. His highest score in a List A match was an unbeaten 114.

At the domestic level, Wategaonkar represented Muscat CT in the Premier Division and led them to many memorable title triumphs for his employers - Khimji Ramdas.

Recognising his long service and valuable contribution to Muscat CT's success, Anil Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas, presented him with a memento gift at a farewell dinner recently.

"Thank you Vaibhav for being

Vaibhav Wategaonkar (R) receives a gift from Anil Khimji

an integral part of not just the Muscat team but also a part of the journey of the Oman team in its formative years to the current level that we have reached on the global stage as a leading Associate nation. We wish you and your family much success and happiness in your future endeavours," said Pankaj Khimji, Oman Cricket (OC) chairman.

Madhu Jesrani, OC secretary said, "Vaibhav was not just the pillar of Muscat CT but also a big

player for Oman. He was a quality batsman and led both the teams to victories single-handedly on a number of occasions. We are going to miss his services. We wish him the very best and good luck for his future."

Wategaonkar's teammate and Muscat CT coach Wilson Burboz said that 'it was always a delight to watch him bat'. "He was one of the key batters for our team. We will miss him for a long time to come," said Burboz.

Saudi Arabia 'racing against time' to finish F1 track

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia is working overtime to prepare for its Formula One debut, an official said, with the track still under construction ahead of the race in early December.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said organisers were 'racing against time' and working 'round the clock' in the Red Sea city of Jeddah.

A visit to the track this week showed there was still much work to be done, with buildings under construction and cranes and diggers on site.

The floodlit circuit will run over 6.175km, the second longest on the calendar, and will feature 27 corners.

The race weekend is from December 3-5.

Prince Khalid bin Sultan al Faisal, president of the Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation, said there was a 'huge demand' for tickets, even at a time when travel remains difficult because of the pandemic.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY
As a team we didn't play to our potential, but these things happen when you play in such a format where you're competing really hard. It's a long tournament

Rohit Sharma
Mumbai captain, after his team's win over Punjab, on Tuesday night



BIG WIN FOR BANGALORE

BANGALORE VS RAJASTHAN
Dubai, UAE - Rajasthan Royals were in sight of a tall total when they were 100 for one in 11 overs, on the back of Evin Lewis' breakneck half-century.

However, his dismissal triggered a terminal collapse as Royals lost eight for 49 - and their heads - to be restricted to under 150 on a fresh Dubai track on Wednesday.

Royal Challengers Bangalore then hunted down the target with ease to consolidate their position in the top half of the points table, with seven wins in 11 matches.

Royals, on the other hand, subsided to their seventh defeat in 11 games. Despite the loss on Wednesday, Royals could still qualify for the playoffs if they win their remaining three games.

They might have still harboured hopes of a comeback when Devdutt Padikkal and Virat Kohli fell either side of the powerplay, but KS Bharat and Glenn Maxwell forged a 69-run partnership to dash all of that. Royal Challengers ultimately sealed victory with seven wickets and 17 balls to spare, also giving their net run-rate a leg-up.

Heavin' Lewis

With Royals having two left-handers at the top, Kohli matched them up with Maxwell's off-spin. Maxwell had won a similar match-up against Krunal Pandya at the same venue on Monday, but this time Lewis and Yashasvi Jaiswal immediately dumped



him out of the attack by taking 13 off his first over.

Lewis then cranked up to top gear, lining up debutant George Garton for two sixes and a four. In the next over, he heaved a slower ball from Harshal Patel over mid-on to rush Royals past fifty within five overs.

Jaiswal rode in Lewis' slipstream, making 31 off 22 balls in a 77-run opening partnership before Dan Christian had him scooping a catch to extra-cover.

Even that didn't slow down Lewis as he heaved his way to a 31-ball half-century - his first in

the IPL and his fifth fifty-plus score since the start of CPL 2021.

The collapse

It was Garton who began the collapse in the 12th over when he bowled a 106.3kph slower ball into the pitch. It kicked up from back of a length and drew a top edge from Lewis, with Bharat snagging the catch. Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal and left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed then took over, messing with Royals' middle order.

Chahal had Mahipal Lomror stumped with a wrong'un before

having Liam Livingstone hole out to long-on with his trademark wide, loopy leg-break. Sanju Samson and Rahul Tewatia tried to target Shahbaz, Royal Challengers' seventh bowling option, but both picked out the boundary riders in the 14th over. Patel, who had earlier taken a pasting from Lewis, tricked the lower order with his assortment of slower balls.

Maxwell's fifty

With the ball sliding onto the bat nicely in the early exchanges, Kohli and Padikkal held nothing

back, hitting four fours each in a powerplay that produced 54 runs.

Mustafizur Rahman then shook up the Royal Challengers briefly with his skillful change-ups. After he bowled Padikkal in the sixth over of the chase, Riyan Parag effected a direct hit in the seventh to leave Royal Challengers at 58 for two.

Bharat then combined with Maxwell to settle the chase. He slog-swept Chris Morris for six, pumped Lomror down the ground for four, and even reverse-swept Rahul Tewatia for

SCOREBOARD				
RAJASTHAN ROYALS				
E Lewis	c Bharat b Garton	58(37)		
Y Jaiswal	c Siraj b Christian	31(22)		
S Samson	c Padikkal b Ahmed	19(15)		
M Lomror	st Bharat b Chahal	3(4)		
L Livingstone	c de Villiers b Chahal	6(9)		
R Tewatia	c Padikkal b Ahmed	2(3)		
R Parag	c Kohli b Patel	9(16)		
C Morris	c Padikkal b Patel	14(11)		
C Sakariya	c de Villiers b Patel	2(2)		
K Tyagi	not out	1(1)		
Extras	(lb 1, w 3)	4		
TOTAL 149 for nine in 20 overs				
Fall of wickets: 1-77, 2-100, 3-113, 4-113, 5-117, 6-127, 7-146, 8-146, 9-149				
Bowling: G Garton 3-0-30-1, M Siraj 3-0-18-0, G Maxwell 2-0-17-0, Harshal Patel 4-0-34-3, D Christian 2-0-21-1, Y Chahal 4-0-18-2, S Ahmed 2-0-10-2				
ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE				
V Kohli	run out	25(20)		
D Padikkal	b Rahman	22(17)		
S Bharat	c sub (A Rawat)			
	b Rahman	44(35)		
G Maxwell	not out	50(30)		
AB de Villiers	not out	4(1)		
Extras	(lb 2, w 6)	8		
TOTAL: 153 for three in 17.1 overs				
Fall of wickets: 1-48, 2-58, 3-127				
Bowling: C Morris 4-0-50-0, K Tyagi 2-0-23-0, C Sakariya 3-0-18-0, M Rahman 3-0-20-2, R Tewatia 3-0-23-0, M Lomror 2-0-13-0, R Parag 0.1-0-4-0				

this IPL season, added, "Last two games we are going in the right direction. Slowly but surely we are getting in groove."

Rajasthan Royals, winners of the inaugural edition in 2008, are seventh in the table.

Rajasthan skipper Sanju Samson later said, "We don't have anything to lose. That kind of mindset brings a lot of freedom, have seen some funny things happen.

"We need to keep on believing and fighting till the last match" Cricinfo

Allround show by Leask as Scotland down PNG

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

ICC WCL 2

Michael Leask allround performance that included an unbeaten 51 and a three-wicket spell led Scotland to four-wicket win over a gritty Papua New Guinea (PNG) in a day-night one-day international of the ongoing ICC WCL 2 tri-series at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground on Wednesday.

Scotland's third successive win enabled them to leapfrog the USA to second position in the seven-nation series with 15 points from 11 matches with hosts Oman on top with 24 points from 16 matches.

Chasing 227 to win, Scotland were on course till the departure of their skipper Kyle Coetzer, who top-scored with 81.

Coetzer had shared 72-run second wicket stand with Calum MacLeod (28) and a third-wicket 39-run partnership with Richie Berrington after they lost opener



Michael Leask (L) receives player of the match award from ICC match referee Graeme Labrooy

Matther Cross in the first over.

Coetzer's exit left Scotland at 138 for four in 35 overs and they were down to 167 for six in 42 overs.

Needing 60 off eight overs, Leask slammed a 31-ball 51 that included three fours and three sixes along with Mark Watt (13) to reach victory

with seven balls to spare.

Earlier, Leask excelled with ball too, as he produced a sensational spell of three for 19.

PNG skipper Assad Vala made a crucial 30 on top after their middle-order failed. Norman Vanua along with Jason Kila and Soper helped PNG to reach 226 for eight. Vanua's 57 was well-supported by Soper (39) and Kila (24) after they were reeling at 97 for six in 27 overs. Scotland's medium pacer Alasdair Evans picked up three wickets for 42.

It was the 11th successive defeat for PNG in the WCL 2 campaign and they are rooted at the bottom failing to win any match so far.

BRIEF SCORES:

PNG 226 for eight in 50 overs (Vanua 57, Soper 39; Evans 3-42, Leask 3-19) **lost to Scotland 228 for six in 48.5 overs** (Coetzer 81, Leask 51 n.o., Kabua Morea 2-40, Soper 2-48).

@ashokmuscat

Khan quits as PCB CEO

Lahore, Pakistan - Wasim Khan, the CEO of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), has resigned from his position four months before the end of his contract, the third big exit since the arrival of Ramiz Raja as the new chairman of the board. Khan follows the departures earlier this month of head coach Misbah-ul-Haq and bowling coach Waqar Younis.

"When I arrived in 2019, there was a real need to build relationships and restore and enhance the global image and reputation of the PCB and Pakistan cricket," Khan said on Wednesday.

"With decisive and strategic decision-making, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, we succeeded in earning the goodwill and respect of the global cricketing family, which I am hopeful will lead to increased international cricket being hosted in Pakistan in future.

"With a five-year strategy in place, new domestic structure in its third season and the investment in women's cricket in an upward direction, I feel it is the right time to move on and reunite with my young family.



Wasim Khan

They have sacrificed a lot so that I could fulfill my dreams of contributing to Pakistan cricket, which will always remain very close to my heart."

Khan's departure continues a period of uncertainty for Pakistan, with the new chairman starting to settle down, and the pullouts of New Zealand and England. That has affected Pakistan's on-field preparations for the T20 World Cup; without the New Zealand and England T20Is, Pakistan will have played one out of the 12 games they had scheduled in the run-up to the event.

Khan had four months left on his current contract.

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The winners...



Maha Faraz al Balushi

Maha al Balushi, an airline pilot working for the national carrier (Oman Air), is also a social influencer active on different social media platforms and well known as 'Pilot Maha'.

"Flying was always my passion, so I started my career in aviation in 2010 and it's been the best 11 years of my life, so far. As they say, chose yourself a job that you don't need a vacation from," says Maha who believes that one needs to enjoy one's profession to be fully engaged in it.

Maha points out that the COVID-19 pandemic turned all the balances upside down around the world and every sector suffered losses, besides the losses suffered by individuals in different aspects of life. However, one needs to be resilient and perseverant to tide over it with determination.

"During 2020, when the economy was crashing, SME's were the most affected. It was truly heartbreaking and I thought it's time now to do something about it. Since I didn't have much resources to make big changes, I decided to start a campaign on my social media platforms for supporting SMEs for free. It was the least I could do towards my responsibility as an Omani national and as a 'local influencer', she asserts.

Maha's efforts bore fruit and soon there was a huge number of business, including home business, that added up to her list. This went on for a few months and it was hectic and time-consuming, but totally worth the effort, she said.

Her aim wasn't just to encourage the affected business holders, but also to encourage every single person in Oman to take an initiative towards effecting a change in the grim scenario.

"We can't expect better outcomes or changes around us unless we start with ourselves," she asserts, hoping that the whole world will get over the situation soon enough. "If we've gone through the night, the sun will surely rise again."

CATEGORY: EXCELLENCE IN UNIFORM



Rayan al Sulaimani

Rayan al Sulaimani, CEO of Atelier Zuhra, who took over the reins of a vibrant fashion business from her mother Mouza al Awfi, worked hard in scaling up the business to a more sophisticated level with outstanding designs and quality products that made her stand out from the rest in the fray in Oman

When she took over Mouza's Atelier from Dubai, she expanded the business by opening Atelier Zuhra in Opera Galleria at the Royal Opera House Muscat. Atelier Zuhra celebrates femininity with expertise in delicate embroidery, outstanding quality and artistic design, using unique elements that makes her dresses timeless.

Having participated in various exhibitions, Rayan has been successful in fostering her passion for fashion as well as making Atelier Zuhra an exceptional brand. Her education in reputed international universities and having acquired CIMA Certification from London has also helped consolidate her leadership position in her business.

Atelier Zuhra has a verified IG account with more than 350K followers, having dressed a string of international celebrities, from Bollywood divas like Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Kareena Kapoor to Hollywood divas like Hannah Brown and April Love Geary, besides Arab celebrities like Buthaina al Raisi, Queen Maryoum and many others.

"I put my heart and soul into whatever I do in my personal life and professional life. I strive to attain perfection in each task that I take up. I believe this is in my DNA and this makes me the successful person that I am today," says Rayan, adding that she always had the hunger to break norms and stereotypes while trying to prove to herself and the world what a woman with focus and determination can achieve.

"The moment I decided to follow my heart was the very moment that turned me from a chartered accountant to one owning a successful women's wear label. This kindled the passion that I have for creativity. It changed my life forever, and I hope to change the life of others around me positively in every way," she asserts.

CATEGORY: FASHION

Sabrina al Bakri

Sabrina al Bakri, a finance professional, who started her career in the finance department of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), says she has been fortunate to receive many opportunities in her career which helped in shaping and developing her skills.

Having worked with efficient leaders who enabled her to enhance her own potential, she believes that her strong foundation in PDO is what helped her career take off. Then, having spent 10 years in Abu Dhabi, she was exposed to a wide range of structured finance transactions and opportunities which further shaped her career on sound lines. Later, on her return to Oman, she joined Orpic, and then OQ, a national petroleum investment company of Oman, where she recently rose to the position of Acing CFO.

"I'm passionate about developing others and creating an environment that encourages people to reach their potential. I'm a greater believer that we can develop leaders of tomorrow with the right mindsets. But, we can only achieve greater milestones if we believe in our people and if we feel accountable and responsible for what we achieve," she asserts.

She observes, that her ability to smile always has made her approachable and that she enjoys everything she does which makes every task easier to do. It is important to be engaged and committed to a cause one focuses on, she says, pointing out that challenges, when broken down to smaller parts, become manageable, often with support from others.

Grateful for the support she has received from many people in her life, especially her husband, Sabrina yet has a bucket list of targets that keeps getting updated. "In life there are always new targets to aim for, new objectives you want to achieve, whether as an individual or as a family, or as a professional team," she asserts.



CATEGORY: FINANCE





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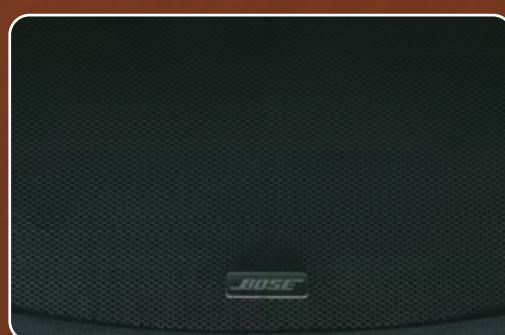
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