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H E SAYYID BADR HAMAD AL BUSAIDI, FOREIGN MINISTER, HELD AN ONLINE MEETING WITH HIS YEMENI COUNTERPART AHMAD AWAD BINMUBARAK. THE TWO SIDES REAFFIRMED SUPPORTING ENDEAVOURS OF THE UN ENVOY TO YEMEN.

Oman jumps 11 places to 44th in Network Readiness Index 2020

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has improved its ranking in the Network Readiness Index, jumping from 55th place to 44th in 2020.

COVID-19 and lockdown strategies have accelerated digital transformation not just in Oman but around the world, according to the Network Readiness Index (NRI) Report 2020.

The rankings of the latest edition of NRI were released by Portulans Institute, the Washington DC-based think tank which took over from the World Economic Forum in 2019 to publish the annual rankings assessing how countries are ready to leverage information technologies to be future-ready. In the latest edition - titled *Accelerating Digital Transformation in a Post-COVID Global Economy* - 134 economies are covered.

Sweden, Denmark and Singapore top the rankings while Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Yemen have the lowest overall ranking.

The objective of the index is to assess how countries are leveraging information tech-



OMAN

Score	55.33
Overall rank	44
Technology rank	63
People rank	56
Governance rank	35
Impact rank	44

nologies to be future-ready. When it comes to regional distribution, the UAE (30) is the best performing Arab state, followed by Qatar (38), Saudi Arabia (41), Bahrain (42), Oman (44) and Kuwait (53) among others.

The NRI model recognises the pervasiveness of digital technologies in today's networked world and therefore rests on four broad categories: Technology, People, Governance and Impact.

Oman has done remarkably well in sub categories of Internet

access in schools (Rank 1), gender gap in Internet use (3), Cybersecurity (18), government promotion of investment in emerging technologies (23), and government online services (24), among others.

Elsewhere, Mauritius (61), South Africa (76) and Kenya (82) have the highest NRI in Africa. In the Asia-Pacific region, the highest ranked countries are Singapore (3), Australia (12) and South Korea (14), whereas in Europe, in addition to Sweden and Denmark, the Netherlands (4) holds the third place.

The USA (8), Canada (13) and Uruguay (47), hold the first three places in the Americas. In the CIS region, Russia (48), Armenia (55) and Kazakhstan (56) ranked the highest.

Soumitra Dutta, co-founder of Portulans Institute and co-author of the report, said, "The main concept underlying the new NRI model is that our collective future will require a harmonious integration of people and technology. People and technology will increasingly interact as collaborators and partners in most parts of society and business."

SAYYID ASAAD RECEIVES AMBASSADOR OF CYPRUS



Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received in his office on Tuesday Andreas Nikolaides, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the sultanate. The meeting reviewed the good bilateral relations and aspects of existing cooperation between Oman and Cyprus in several fields to serve the common interests of the two friendly countries and peoples. The meeting was attended by the Secretary General and the two advisers at Sayyid Asaad's office (ONA)

ODB gives RO19.2mn in emergency loans to 8,000 beneficiaries in 2020

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Development Bank (ODB) has granted RO19.2mn under the emergency loan programme launched in 2020, which was distributed among 8,000 beneficiaries, amounting to an average of RO2,400 per borrower.

The emergency loan pro-

gramme accounted for just 28 per cent of the total volume of loans granted by ODB in 2020.

ODB granted more than 11,800 development and emergency loans in 2020, worth approximately RO68.8mn, in comparison to RO60.75mn loans that were granted in 2019, marking a marginal increase of 13 per cent.

An order was passed in June

2020 to adopt an emergency loan programme without interest to help businesses most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, in 2020, the bank implemented a loan deferral programme to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on the beneficiaries of its services. This programme benefitted about 2,800 borrowers.

ODB stated that working capital loans constituted the largest value-share of the granted development loans, with a total value of RO13.9mn for 420 loans, out of more than 3,784 regular development loans, with a value of about RO49.53mn.

This was followed by micro-loans with a total value of RO13.4mn.

Continued on Page 02

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Experts caution youth as 4 online blackmailers held

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In two separate incidents, four people have been arrested for blackmailing girls and electronic fraud. An expert said youth should be extra careful while using social media and dealing with strangers.

On January 24, ROP arrested a person on charges of blackmailing girls and impersonating a security employee to gain access to their social media accounts. Having gained access to their accounts, he forced victims to pay large sums of money.

On January 21, ROP arrested three people on charges of fraud, electronic blackmail and extortion.

The ROP said, 'Three people were arrested on charges of fraud, blackmail and extortion after the accused impersonated a girl and communicated with the victims on a social media website and asked to send private pictures of them. After they obtained the pictures, they blackmailed the victims to pay large sums of money.'

To avoid such tricks and not to be victims the youth should be prudent in using social media and not share personal data with anyone, said Khalid Ahmed Ali Tabook, head of the Family Counselling and Guidance Department in Dhofar at the Ministry of Social Development.

"Job openings in Oman ap-

pear on reliable sites. Make sure of any jobs offered on social media and the source of the news," he said.

As per Tabook the blackmailers usually exploit the weaknesses of the victim. "Social media helps the blackmailer use different methods to delude the victim in his ability to satisfy their needs. Family plays a big role in youngsters not falling prey to any kind of blackmail."

Tabook added that people who are exposed to fraud are weak in character and usually have a desire to reach their goals in any way, as well as are poorly informed and unaware of the misuse of social media.

"They have blind trust in others," he said.

Asked about possible solution to end such cases, he said, "Young people should obtain information from reliable sources, not be fooled by false promises, improve interaction with social networking sites, and not share personal information with others."

He confirmed that parents have a big role in keeping their children safe by instilling religious and ethical values, customs and community traditions in them, satisfying their psychological needs, communicating and having open and effective dialogue, besides being positive role models.

The ROP has urged everyone to be alert when dealing with unknown persons, especially online.

Eco-friendly plastic bags promoted in Fanja

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to spread awareness on the importance of using eco-friendly plastic bags, the Environment Authority has launched campaigns in several parts of the sultanate.

As the part of the drive, the Environment Authority, in cooperation with Bidbid Municipality and Omani Women's Association, held awareness meetings for merchants and visitors to the Fanja market, an official said.

The authority's officials explained to them the decision to ban single-use plastic bags and replace them with eco-friendly ones in order to preserve the environment.

On January 25 and 26, the officials distributed environmen-



(Supplied photo)

tally friendly plastic bags to customers in department stores, shops and pedestrians on the street.

For the awareness campaign, the authority cooperated with several bodies such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the Consumer Protection Authority, and the

Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, added the official.

The Environment Authority banned the use of single-use plastic bags from January 1.

The violators of the decision are liable for a fine of no less than RO100 and no more than RO2,000.

Oman Air first to land as Sri Lanka reopens airport

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sri Lanka has greeted with elation the first arrival of an international flight - Oman Air WY 371 - after a ten-month hiatus due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The Bandaranaike International Airport - the main international airport on the island nation - opened from January 21 for international tourists, HE Omar Lebbe Ameerajwad, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Oman, said, adding that the first airline to land on its soil after the reopening was 'Oman Air, WY 371 from Oman carrying 50 passengers in the morning'.

As precautionary measures due to the coronavirus pandemic, only special flights for repatriation were operated in the past few months, while all other commercial flights remained suspended.

"We are happy to again reopen Sri Lanka for tourists," the Ambassador said.

As per the latest norms, all visas must be applied online through the Immigration ETA portal. Before applying for visa, one must have a confirmed hotel booking, pre-purchased PCR tests and a mandatory COVID-19 insurance cover when making hotel booking.

The hotel will issue a reference number which will be needed to be included in visa form under the section 'contact details'.

"One can visit Sri Lanka for even three or four days and there is no 14-day quarantine," HE



One can visit Sri Lanka for even three or four days and there is no 14-day quarantine

HE OMAR LEBBE AMEERAJWAD

Ameerajwad said, adding, "People from all countries are welcome unless otherwise specified."

Travel restrictions are in force only for the visitors from the United Kingdom, where the new strain of the virus is said to be spreading faster.

Many tourists have arrived in Sri Lanka mainly from Europe for tourism immediately after this opening, according to reports.

'Bookings are on the rise. The government has been ensuring that every precautionary measure has been set in place to make trips safe, secure and serene as possible,' reports said.

The authorities in Sri Lanka have advised tourists to visit www.srilanka.travel/helloagain to know about 'things you need to know' to ensure that they 'have an amazing time' there.

RO19.2mn granted in emergency loans

Continued from Page 01

The total value of loans granted to large companies surpassed RO12.5mn for 18 development loans. The number of loans granted to the small and medium enterprises sector was 192 with a total value of RO9.6mn. The bank granted 41 seasonal loans with a total value of RO190,000.

Last year, the bank granted 3,000 industrial loans to the manufacturing sector, with a total value of RO22.4mn, followed by the professional and public services sector, which obtained the largest number of loans (5,588), worth more than RO17.1mn.

The tourism sector comes third in terms of the value of approved loans in 2020. The bank granted 470 loans for tourism projects with a total value of approximately RO8.7mn, followed by the fisheries sector with 1,277 loans with a total value of about RO8.1mn.

The loans granted to the educational sector amounted to more than 1,151 with a total value of RO6.9mn. The bank granted 569 loans to the agricultural and livestock sector, with a total value of RO3.9mn. It granted 44 loans to the health sector, with a total value of RO1.4mn, and 16 loans to the mining sector, with a total value of RO300,000.

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Cyclist rides 1,000km to promote tourism



Our Correspondent
Muscat

To promote tourist sites and the importance of sports, cyclist Faisal al Battashi, 25, from the wilayat of Mudhaibi in North Sharqiyah, has pedalled through several wilayats covering a distance of close to 1,000km in the process.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Battashi said, "The trip started on January 10 and covered the wilayats of Ma'abella, Muscat, Fanja, Samail, Izki, Nizwa, Bahla, Ibri, Yanqul, Quriyat, Sohar, Liwa, Shinas, Musandam, Saham, Suwaiq, Rustaq and Barka before ending in Ma'abella on January 22."

Battashi started long-distance cycling in 2018 and has been on four trips covering various governorates so far. "However, the latest this month was the longest. I cycled from 7am to 6pm every day, covering distances of 80km to 100km daily. I visited popular tourist sites - forts, castles, old markets and aflaj."

The tourists sites he visited include Falaj al Khatmeen, Bait al Marah Castle, Shinas Fort, Bahla Fort, Ibri Fort, Liwa Fort, Khasab Fort, Kmzar Fort, Bakha Fort, Saham Fort and Al Hazm Fort.

Battashi prepared for two months before setting off on the



(Supplied photos)

Such activities are helpful for social causes. I urge Omani youngsters to take part in such voluntary campaigns for the betterment of society

FAISAL AL BATTASHI

trip. "I worked on my fitness level and cycled at different times in the day. I cycled for four hours daily during the preparations." While on the trip, he carried along safety equipment, a tent, water, beverages and

canned food.

"Cold, strong winds were the biggest challenge I faced during my trip. I used to take breaks to eat sandwiches and drink water to hydrate myself during the trip. It was tough but I was deter-

mined to complete the trip," he said, adding that such activities need financial support

While he will continue to embark on such trips to promote domestic tourism, he is also keen to raise awareness on beach cleanliness. "Such activities are helpful for social causes. I urge Omani youngsters to take part in such voluntary campaigns for the betterment of society."

Battashi is also planning a cycle trip across the GCC states to promote tourism and cycling in Oman.

1.557mn vehicles registered in 2020, rise of 0.6% over 2019

Muscat - The total number of vehicles registered in the sultanate in 2020 was 1.557mn, an increase of 0.6 per cent compared to 2019, according to a recent update from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Private vehicles topped the list of vehicles registered - 1,221,302 - followed by 239,639 commercial vehicles and 29,931 taxis.

Registration of rental, government (excluding military vehicles) and motorbikes dropped by 5.3 per cent, 2.3 per cent and 3.1 per cent, respectively, over the 2019 numbers.

There were 15,351 vehicles with temporary registration, including export and import vehicles, marking an increase of 27 per cent over the 2019 figures in the same category.

Among vehicle colours, white was the most preferred in the Sultanate, with as many as



671,606 white vehicles registered. Silver was the second most preferred colour (199,519), followed by gray (121,621).

Categorised on engine capacity, the NCSI report revealed that the majority of vehicles - 832,578 - were between 1,500cc and 3,000cc, while 353,489 vehicles had engine capacity between 3,001cc and 4,500cc. There were 200,993 vehicles with engine capacity of 4,500cc or more, while 118,907

vehicles had capacity of less than 1,500cc and 51,486 vehicles functioned without engines and were designed to be towed by another vehicle.

In terms of weight, the report stated that the majority of the vehicles - 1.1mn - weighed less than three tonnes, 45,717 vehicles weighed between three tonnes to seven tonnes, 38,357 vehicles between seven tonnes to ten tonnes, and 72,003 vehicles weighed more than ten tonnes.

AL TASNIM ENTERPRISES JOINS MUSCAT DAILY RECYCLING DRIVE



Joining *Muscat Daily's* initiative to spread environmental awareness, Al Tasnim Enterprises recently collected a sizeable amount of paper as part of its efforts to raise awareness and encourage recycling activities in Oman. *Muscat Daily* has so far joined forces with over 560 organisations, including ministries, corporate firms, schools and colleges. There are co-branded recycling boxes available from *Muscat Daily* to be prominently displayed at reception areas. *Muscat Daily's* recycling team empties the boxes placed at these locations on a regular basis. As part of Apex Media's corporate social responsibility, the paper is collected and recycled for free (Supplied photo)

Indian Embassy celebrates 72nd Republic Day of India

Muscat - The Embassy of India in Muscat celebrated the 72nd Indian Republic Day on Tuesday. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the event was limited to embassy officials and staff. However, it was telecast live, enabling the Indian community to join the celebration virtually. Before the commencement of the event, a video highlighting the COVID-19 cooperation with India's friends and partners across the world, including the delivery of life saving medicines and COVID19 vaccines was played.

The event started with the unfurling of the Indian flag by H E Munu Mahawar, Ambassador of India to Oman, followed by the national anthem. H E Mahawar delivered a brief speech and read out excerpts from the address of President Ram Nath Kovind of India. The ambassador greeted the Indian community in Oman and thanked them for their out-



standing support during the COVID-19 pandemic and for strengthening India's friendly relations with Oman.

H E Mahawar highlighted the recent initiatives of the Government of India, including the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan and stated that the Indian diaspora in

Oman would have an important role to play in it. The ambassador also thanked the Oman government for taking good care of the Indian nationals during the pandemic and stated that India can be a strong and resilient partner in all priority areas under Oman Vision 2040.

Videos of patriotic songs by students of Indian School Muscat and by Neha Vishal Shah were played after the speech by H E Mahawar, adding to the sense of patriotism and enthusiasm in the celebration. Indian nationals joined the online celebration.

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Tender No. :	RFP 21-002	
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National Research Award winners talk about findings and societal benefits

Muscat - The 7th Annual Research Forum, organised by the Research and Innovation Sector of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, ended on a successful note, with 12 winners announced for the National Research Award.

With hopes of enhancing innovation and encouraging research in Omani society, the winners of the National Research Award from different fields have shared their insights regarding their success.

Education and human resources

In regards to international research cooperation, Prof Constantinos Chryssou (Muscat University), whose project 'University-industry interactions in the Sultanate of Oman: Challenges and opportunities' won in the PhD category, said, "International collaborations for research are extremely important not only for Oman, but also for the whole world. It is important not only because we transfer knowledge from region to another, but also because that makes other regions in the world understand the challenges that a specific country, nation or a region goes through."

In the Young Researcher's category, Dr Hafida al Barashdi (Ministry of Education), one of the members of the research team for 'The Effectiveness of Using the Course Lab Programme for Teaching and Assessing Sciences in Improving Grade Ten Students' Academic Achievement and their Attitudes towards it in Oman' project,



Dr Maha al Riyami



Dr Chaham Alalouch



Dr Hafida al Barashdi



Dr Rashid al Shidi



Dr Tahereh Jafary



Prof Constantinos Chryssou



Dr Thamra al Ghafri

added that winning the award for her team meant "recognition by the most important research institution in the sultanate of our research efforts; a testament to the quality of these efforts we take pride in, and a strong incentive for the continuation and development for the better as researchers".

Information systems and communication technologies

Two projects were tied in the PhD category for this particular field. Dr Hedi Haddad (Dhofar University) of the project titled 'Transportation Service Redundancy from a Spatio-Temporal

Perspective' maintained that his research team members being from different Omani universities "proves that the sultanate has many capacities that are capable of creativity when granted the opportunity".

Dr Ahmed al Maashri (Sultan Qaboos University), one of the members of the second winning team in this category for the project 'Cooperative Cruise Controller for Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Vehicle Platoon System', added that "collaboration between scholars from different parts of the world provides a platform for exchanging ideas and sharing experiences. This of course helps in localising tech-

nologies in the country and building capacities in research fields".

Environmental and biological resources

The award in this PhD category went to 'Enhanced power generation and desalination rate in a novel quadruple microbial desalination cell with a single desalination chamber' by Dr Tahereh Jafary (SQU, International Maritime College Oman), who maintained that "science and knowledge has no borders. However, in each country, research should be improved and supported through a tight collaboration among researchers around the world".

Two teams won in the Young Researcher's category for this field: 'Fungal Diversity in Tomato Rhizosphere Soil under Conventional and Desert Farming Systems' by Dr Elham Kazerooni (SQU) and 'Detecting Dubas bug infestations using high resolution multispectral satellite data in Oman' by Dr Rashid al Shidi (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources). Dr Elham mentioned that "cooperation between researchers locally and internationally bring together researchers with distinct capabilities which result in positive outcomes, help reflect the perception accurately and minimise mistakes".

Dr Shidi further stated that the "award is an incentive for more contribution to research studies that can contribute in solving the main issues/constraints faced in agriculture productivity or other sectors".

Health and social services

When it comes to societal benefits, Dr Maha al Riyami (SQU), who won in the PhD category with her project 'Clonal copy-number mosaicism in autoreactive T lymphocytes in diabetic NOD mice', believes that the findings of her research project "offer novel avenues for decrypting and understanding Type 1

Diabetes and autoimmunity in general. It also opens new possibilities for future individualised treatment through specifically targeting the disease-causing cells".

In the Young Researcher's category, the award went to 'MOVEdiabetes: A cluster randomised controlled trial to increase physical activity in adults with Type 2 diabetes in primary health care in Oman' by Dr Thamra al Ghafri (Ministry of Health), who "strongly believes that a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach in research is a significant approach towards effective positive healthy behaviours that can improve wellbeing through prevention of diseases and promoting health".

Energy and industry

Winning in the PhD category with his project 'Energy saving potential for residential buildings in hot climates: The case of Oman', Dr Chaham Alalouch (SQU) suggested that societal benefit of his research for Oman is two-fold.

"First, it contributes to enhancing the awareness on energy efficiency buildings in Oman, which is not only a need, but also a way forward. Second, it contributes to less electricity consumption, which will reduce the cost on households. Although the cost of building houses might be a bit higher, but in the long run, this will pay back through saving the climate of Oman as well as contributing to the reduction of the global warming."

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Over 50 apiarists to take part in honey market from Jan 28

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As many as 53 beekeepers from different parts of the country will offer over 10,000kg of honey at the 15th Omani Honey Market that will be conducted from January 28 to 31, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The ministry will also provide the apiarists the opportunity to sell and promote their products on two electronic platforms - Al Nahal and Asal Oman.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Dr Hassan Talib al Lawati, head of Honey Bee Research Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said, "The market will continue for four days at Muscat Grand Mall. The objective of this market is to popularise Omani agricultural products, reach out to foreign markets and open up new markets."

He added, "We have invited 53 beekeepers from different parts of the sultanate to partici-



(File photo)

pate in this market. They will present many varieties of honey produced in the lowlands, mountainous regions, as well as desert and coastal areas. The beekeepers will offer about 10,500kg of honey to the visitors.

"Some private companies will also participate in the exhibition to display beekeeping tools such as beehives and gloves."

He said that the market aims to bring together apiarists and Omani honey sellers at one place to present their products and highlight one of the most important products in the agricultural sector. Apiarists usually inherit

the profession from their parents and grandparents. The market allows visitors to know about different types of honey. It will also showcase methods of packaging and marketing the product as per the modern methods."

During the exhibition all health guidelines will be followed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Lawati said.

The market will be open from 10am to 10pm.

The ministry has organised honey markets since 2014.

Sales from the Omani Honey Market held in December 2019 accounted for RO142,026.

KNOW THE LAW



Attack on human body, organ trafficking crimes under Omani law

The inviolability of the human body is stressed in Article 32 of the Basic Law.

As per the Public Prosecution, 'Any attack, disfigurement or deformation of a human body is a crime punishable under the law.'

It also said that organ trafficking or conducting a medical or scientific experiment on any human being without his or her free consent in the manner described by the law is prohibited.

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Vision 2040: Madayn to create world-class business cities in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) on Tuesday celebrated the launch of Madayn Vision 2040 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the patronage of H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Madayn Vision 2040 aims at creating world-class business cities while maintaining the Omani identity to contribute to the sultanate's economic growth. The vision revolves around promoting comprehensive and sustainable economic and social development through strengthening public-private partnership, developing and operating business cities with integrated services, and keeping pace with the variables and adopting best solutions and technologies to meet business requirements while conforming to the environmental standards.

Speaking at the ceremony, H E Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, and chairman of Madayn's board of directors, stated that Madayn Vision 2040 comes in implementation of the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the government bodies to develop long-term strategies and plans in pursuance of Oman Vision 2040.

"Madayn Vision 2040 is a re-



sult of the efforts that lasted more than a year of analysing the vision, national priorities and strategies of Oman Vision 2040 in order to build institutional goals that contribute to enhancing the sultanate's competitiveness. We aim through the outputs of Madayn Vision 2040 to enhance the sultanate's competitiveness in attracting foreign investments, localising domestic investments and enhancing industrial production," Masan said.

Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn, pointed out that Madayn Vision 2040 is derived from the national priorities and goals of Oman Vision 2040 for the coming period.

"Madayn Vision 2040 outlines 26 institutional goals and policies, through which we intend to implement 42 programmes and 384 scheduled projects. Through this vision, we aim at achieving RO15bn of investment volume, and localising projects that shall touch 10,000 projects in various fields towards the end of the plan. Of these

projects, we aim at localising 6,500 industrial projects (factories) that shall provide around 270,000 job opportunities," Hasani elaborated.

He added that the key projects of Madayn Vision 2040 include completing the development of the industrial cities in Sur, Buraimi, Suhar, Raysut, Nizwa, Al Mazunah Free Zone and Knowledge Oasis Muscat.

"New industrial cities are also coming up in Ibri, Thumrait, Shinas, Al Mudhaibi and Al Rawdah, in addition to specialised industrial complexes such as the plastic industries complex in Suhar Industrial City, precision manufacturing and nanotechnology in Sur Industrial City, and pharmaceutical industries complex and food industries complex in all the industrial cities, as well as metal works industries in several industrial cities," Hasani informed.

The vision also incorporates the establishment of specialised logistics complexes, light industries complexes, workforce and residential townships, facility complexes, and alternative en-

ergy projects in the industrial cities.

New projects

During the event, Madayn announced its upcoming major projects, which include the Motcar Project. Motcar Project is an integrated city specialised in car trading, car spare parts, accessories and services to be established in Suhar Industrial City. Motcar aims at presenting a regional centre for the import and re-export of cars, machinery and related services to and from various countries with a focus on the Middle East and North Africa region.

Madayn also announced Nafith Oman Project, which is an integrated system that aims at managing and facilitating the entry and exit of vehicles to/from the current and future industrial cities of Madayn. This project represents a key pillar of the infrastructure development strategy of the industrial cities to keep pace with the technology trends and provide value-adding services.

Sultanate initiates TIR system to boost trade

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has initiated the implementation of the coveted International Road Transport System (TIR) by registering companies through Sinyar, a member of Asyad Group.

TIR is an international customs transit system enabling goods to flow across borders. TIR facilitates the movement of goods from country of origin, through transit countries, to a country of destination in sealed compartments that are controlled by customs prior to an approved and recognised system. This transit system allows the transport operators and customs authorities to save time and money.

The TIR system is considered an enabler for facilitating Oman's private sector trade, via direct transit to the markets of the Gulf, India and Africa.

Sinyar is the guaranteeing association overseeing the registration of transport companies wishing to benefit from the TIR system. The company will oversee the issuance and monitoring of TIR cards in collaboration and coordination with Royal Oman Police - Directorate of Customs.



Badr al Nadabi

Badr al Nadabi, acting CEO of Sinyar, said that the company will act as guaranteeing association for both local and international companies; train TIR card holders, manage the implementation of precautionary measures and monitor the movement of cards.

Nadabi said that the implementation of the TIR system is expected to contribute to enhancing and facilitating the movement of trade and the transit of goods at border crossings, while also simplifying customs procedures in a manner that promotes imports and exports.

"The TIR system secures customs duties and taxes and provides a robust guarantee

mechanism, reducing trade transaction costs and minimising time spent waiting at borders, smoothly and seamlessly, without border checks," he added.

Nadabi iterated that the system will ensure the safe arrival of freight containers according to best practices, as well as allow the pre-clearance of goods and the electronic submission of data prior to arrival at crossings. This is in addition to enhancing risk management by linking the system to a global network, optimising time and costs and eliminating the need for evaluating goods or negotiating the value of guarantees.

Oman had recently conducted a successful trial for transporting the first shipment from Saudi Arabia to the sultanate through the TIR system, which reduced the journey time between the two countries by 72 per cent.

The adoption and rollout of the TIR system may very well play a key role in establishing Oman as one of the most important logistics hubs. Another value added is that the implementation of TIR, combined with other measures, will certainly help reach the goal of more effective GCC trade integration.

CBO raises RO76mn from treasury bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tender of the government treasury bills (issue number 531) was announced this week by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

Total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO76mn, for a maturity period of 91 days, from today until April 28, 2021. The average accepted

price reached RO99.803 for every RO100 bill, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.800.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.7890 per cent and 0.7905 per cent, respectively. The interest rate on the repo operations with the CBO is 0.5 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with CBO is 1

per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The CBO acts as the issue manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities.

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

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

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (RO)
1	03/2021 (Extended)	Supply, Installation & commissioning of new electrical elevator at AL Salam (AL Mabila)	04/02/2021	16/02/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	88/=
2	05/2021 (Extended)	Upgradation of testing kits and procurement of software for test reports	04/02/2021	16/02/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	63/=

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity of sending a valid Tender Board certificate in the same required field.
Buying the Tender:	The documents required for the purchase of the tender are sent by e-mail to the Tenders. Procurement and Contracts Department, to ensure the authenticity of the documents before purchasing the tender through the official working days of the hour from 8.00 am - 01.00 pm .
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document.(Payment Through Bank Transfer)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	Each bid should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to The Chairman of tender committee mentioning Tender Number and Name on the top of the envelope.
Terms and conditions:	- No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The complete bid documents should be deposited in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 - GSM: 93201558, 92217856
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com

إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية :

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	ثمن الوثيقة (رغ)
١	٢٠٢١/٠٣ (تجديد)	توريد وتركيب مصعد كهربائي في محطة السلام بالمعبية	٢٠٢١/٠٢/٠٤	٢٠٢١/٠٢/١٦	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول	٨٨/ـ
٢	٢٠٢١/٠٥ (تجديد)	ترقية أنظمة أجهزة الفحص وشراء برنامج لإعداد التقارير	٢٠٢١/٠٢/٠٤	٢٠٢١/٠٢/١٦	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول	٦٣/ـ

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة مع ضرورة إرسال شهادة مجلس المناقصات سارية المفعول وفي نفس المجال المطلوب.
طريقة الشراء	يتم إرسال المستندات المطلوبة لشراء المناقصة عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني إلى دائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود . وذلك لتأكيد من صحة المستندات قبل شراء المناقصة وذلك من خلال أيام العمل الرسمية من الساعة ٨:٠٠ ص - ١:٠٠ م .
الرسم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا تزيد (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ (آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات)
تقديم العروض	تقدم العروض في مغلفات مغلقة ومعونة باسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات مع تحديد رقم وعنوان المناقصة فقط.
الشروط والخصومات	- عدم تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المغلف. - أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء. - إرفاق تأميناً في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (١٪) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ومعوناً باسم الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء - كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه - الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع العروض في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - الموالح رقم السكة ٢١٥٣ - مبنى رقم ٤٢٣٠ - هاتف : ٩٢٢١٧٨٥٦, ٩٣٢٠١٥٥٨
البريد الإلكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com
الموقع الإلكتروني	www.omangrid.com

الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء ش. م . ع . م
ص . ب : ١٣٨٩، الخوض الرمز البريدي : ١٣٢، سلطنة عمان
الهاتف : +٩٦٨٢٤٢٨٣٠٠ / الفاكس : +٩٦٨٢٢٣٠٩٠٤٦
الموقع الإلكتروني : www.omangrid.com

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أحد شركات مجموعة نام
Member of Nama Group

MSM falls 0.56%; activity improves

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) fell 0.56 per cent to close at 3,677.84 points on Tuesday.

Trading activity improved from the previous session as turnover rose by 4.42 per cent to RO1.18mn and volumes increased 8.47 per cent to 9.05mn shares.

All the sectoral indices closed in red territory. Financial index fell 0.83 per cent, Industrial index declined 0.97 per cent and Services index fell 0.58 per cent. The MSM Shariah index closed down by 0.7 per cent at 529.61 points.

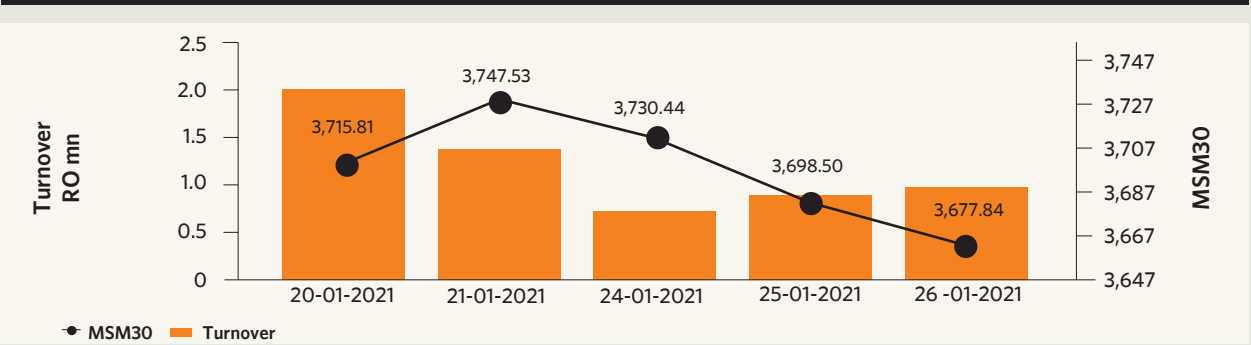
Market breadth remained negative as six companies closed up, while 23 companies closed down. The rest 12 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Phoenix Power (1.96 per cent), Voltamp Energy (1.94 per cent), Oman Fisheries (1.16 per cent) and



Al Madina Takaful (1.14 per cent). Top losers were Muscat Finance (-9.52 per cent), Al Kamel Power (-7.88 per cent), Global Financial Investment (-7.27 per cent) and Galfar Engineering & Contracting (-5.77 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Biden's 'Buy American' order aims to spur US manufacturing sector



US President Joe Biden signs an executive order related to American manufacturing in the South Court Auditorium of the White House complex on Monday (AFP)

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden signed an executive order on Monday giving American companies and products priority in contracting with the federal government, as the new administration attempts to spur domestic manufacturing.

The order is aimed at boosting national production and saving industrial jobs by increasing investments in factories and workers, and comes after Biden promised on the campaign trail to 'build back better' as the US economy struggles through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Washington spends US\$600bn each year on contracts, and the order tightens loopholes that allow federal agencies to buy products stamped 'Made in America' but which are often manufactured by companies that only produce a small portion of their products in the United States.

"American manufacturing was the arsenal of democracy in World War II and it must be part of the engine of American prosperity now. That means we are going to use taxpayer money to rebuild America," Biden said.

But the order risks running up

against the country's outsourced supply chains and also ranking American trading partners, most notably Canada.

The US and its northern neighbour Canada along with Mexico are all part of a free trade agreement that took effect last year, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau raised the 'Buy American' policy in a recent phone call with Biden, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said on Monday.

However she noted 'the United States sells more to Canada than it does to China, Japan and the UK combined. And what we are really going to focus on in our work with the Biden administration is those win-wins'.

Less than a week after his inauguration, Biden has so far used executive orders to push through his agenda, though this latest order is similar to ones made by his predecessors, particularly former president Donald Trump.

Trump had issued an executive order urging the federal government to purchase more US-made products and also turning tariffs into a weapon against imports - with mixed re-

sults. Biden has said he doesn't immediately plan to tweak Trump's trade policies or issue new tariffs, instead using the federal government's massive purchasing power to tighten spur domestic industry.

The Buy American Act of 1933, still in force, requires federal agencies to prioritise purchasing goods produced on US soil, but Biden said 'big corporations and special interests have long fought for loopholes' to that law.

"That is going to change on our watch," he said, adding that he will create a position at the White House to find ways to get American factories federal government contracts.

The administration will also alter the definition of what is considered a US-made product and reduce the possibilities for exemptions, while also reviewing waivers already granted.

"We'll work with small American manufacturers and businesses to give them a shot to raise their hand and say, 'yeah, I can do that here in my shop, in my town'," Biden said.

AFP

World lost equivalent of 255mn jobs in 2020

Geneva, Switzerland - The coronavirus pandemic took a huge toll on global jobs last year, the United Nations said on Monday, with the equivalent of more than a quarter of a billion lost.

In a fresh study, the UN's International Labour Organization (ILO) found that a full 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost in 2020, compared to the fourth quarter of 2019.

That is equivalent to 255mn full-time jobs, or 'approximately four times greater than the number lost during the 2009 global financial crisis', the ILO said in a statement.

"This has been the most severe crisis for the world of work



A pedestrian walks past a closed down shop space advertised to let in East London, UK on October 13, 2020 (AFP)

since the Great Depression of the 1930s," ILO chief Guy Ryder told reporters in a virtual briefing.

Since surfacing in China just

over a year ago, the virus has killed more than 2.1mn people, infected tens of millions of others and hammered the global econ-

omy.

The UN labour agency explained that around half of the lost working hours were calculated from reduced working hours for those remaining in employment.

But the world also saw 'unprecedented levels of employment loss' last year, it said.

Official global unemployment shot up by 1.1 per cent, or 33mn more people, to a total of 220mn and a worldwide jobless rate of 6.5 per cent last year.

Ryder stressed that another 81mn people did not register as unemployed but 'simply dropped out of the labour market'.

AFP

S Korea posts worst growth in 2 decades

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea recorded its worst growth in more than two decades in 2020, the central bank said on Tuesday, but it is expected to be among the best-performing OECD economies in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The country's gross domestic product contracted 1 per cent in 2020 from a year earlier, the Bank of Korea said, citing weak private spending and exports.

It marks the worst annual growth since 1998, when the South Korean economy shrank 5.1 per cent in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis.

Still, South Korea is expected to be among the countries in the OECD group of developed economies least affected by the pandemic in 2020.

In the fourth quarter of 2020, the South's economy - the world's 12th-largest - grew 1.1 per

cent from the previous quarter, data showed, marking a second consecutive quarter of growth amid the pandemic.

The central bank said exports expanded 5.2 per cent in the fourth quarter from three months earlier, offsetting a slump in private consumption due to toughened social distancing rules in recent weeks.

South Korea has shown signs of recovery from the virus downturn and the central bank in November forecast the economy to grow 3 per cent in 2021.

The South has largely contained its coronavirus outbreak - while the pandemic has killed more than 2mn people worldwide - with widespread testing and contact-tracing.

But authorities tightened social distancing rules late last year after case numbers began to rise.

AFP



A woman walks past a sale sign at the Myeongdong shopping district in Seoul, South Korea on Tuesday (AFP)

Janet Yellen confirmed as first female Treasury secretary in US history

Washington, US - The US Senate on Monday voted by a wide margin to confirm Janet Yellen as the first woman to lead the Treasury Department, giving her a key role in Congress negotiations over a huge COVID-19 economic relief package.

Yellen is not new to the role of trailblazer, as she also was the first woman to lead the Federal Reserve, from 2014 to 2018, and previously the White House Council of Economic Advisors.

Her immediate job in the first weeks of the new administration will be to help win Congress approval for President Joe Biden's US\$1.9tn rescue package to secure US economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

That will entail convincing sceptical lawmakers that the benefit of more spending outweighs concerns about the country's soaring debt level.

"Neither the President-elect, nor I, propose this relief package without an appreciation for the country's debt burden," Yellen told the Senate Finance Committee at her confirmation hearing last week.

"But right now, with interest rates at historic lows, the smartest thing we can do is act big."

Earlier on Monday, Biden said that while he would prefer bipar-



Janet Yellen speaks during a Cabinet announcement event in Delaware, US on December 1, 2020 (AFP)

tisan support for his stimulus plan, time is of the essence.

"If we don't invest now, we're going to lose so much altitude in terms of our employment base and our economic growth, it's going to be harder to re-establish it," he said.

"We can afford to do it now. As a matter of fact... we can't afford not to invest now."

But Democrats control the Senate only with the tie-breaking vote of Vice President Kamala Harris, so getting the package through may require support from Republicans.

Democratic senator Ron Wyden, chairman of the Finance Committee, called Yellen an 'exceptional economist' who is 'supremely qualified' to lead the Treasury at a critical time.

And even Kentucky senator Mitch McConnell, the Republican minority leader, supported Yellen's nomination, despite opposition from more than a dozen members of his party.

But McConnell has steadfastly expressed scepticism about large aid packages and favoured more limited steps.

Yellen also will have a role in

enforcing trade rules, and repairing relations after the multifront trade wars pursued by former president Donald Trump.

In the most contentious relations with China, Yellen last week pledged to use all available tools to address 'China's abusive unfair and illegal practices' that undermine the US economy.

She said Beijing has been 'undercutting American companies' with a series of policies, including illegal subsidies, dumping of products, theft of intellectual property and barriers to US goods.

But while Yellen agreed that "China is clearly, our most important strategic competitor," unlike Trump, she stressed that it will be important 'to work with our allies' to combat the challenge.

Biden is having to push Congress for funding while simultaneously getting his government confirmed - Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin won Senate approval on Friday - and bracing for turmoil from Trump's impeachment trial.

The Senate was set to vote on confirmation of Antony Blinken, Biden's choice for secretary of state, on Tuesday before senators are sworn in as jurors in the trial.

The House of Representatives presented a single article of impeachment to the Senate on Monday accusing Trump of inciting the storming of the Capitol, setting in motion the first-ever impeachment trial of a former president.

Biden, who is eager to make progress in fighting the coronavirus pandemic and reviving the economy, has taken a hands-off approach to the impeachment.

More than 25mn COVID-19 cases have been recorded in the US since the pandemic began, and more than 420,000 deaths.

AFP

Bank Muscat offers 4,350 prizes totalling RO3.3mn



In line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to partnership in promoting a strong savings culture in Oman, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, has announced that 4,350 prizes worth RO3.3mn has been reserved for winners from all the governorates of the country.

The 2021 edition of Bank Muscat's landmark Al Mazyona savings scheme was recently launched by the bank and will see the country's biggest savings scheme provide a large number of prizes to its customers across the country with a total of RO11mn.

Saleh Mohammed Ali al Maaini, assistant general manager - Capital Regions, Bank Muscat, said, "Al Mazyona gives the largest segment of its customers an opportunity to win prizes and achieve their dreams and aspirations with regular draws for all governorates. With the largest network in Oman with over 140



branches, the bank provides various services and facilities to customers in all parts of the country.

"By allocating these financial prizes to customers across different governorates, the bank aims to appreciate and reward the good savings habit of its customers. We invite all our customers to increase their savings and get more chances to win with the Al Mazyona savings scheme."

The monthly draws for different governorates in 2021 will see 420 winners win RO500 each every month while a monthly mega draw will reward one lucky winner with RO50,000.

Seventy prizes of RO5,000 each will be given away to win-

ners from different governorates during the special Mid-Year draw. Similarly, 70 prizes of RO5,000 each will be given away to winners from all governorates during the End of Year draw. Customers need to maintain a minimum balance of RO100 to be entered into the monthly draws.

Those who maintain a minimum balance of RO1,000 will be automatically entered into the monthly mega draw as well as the special Mid-year draw and the End of Year draw.

With innovative customer segmentation based on geographic, lifestyle and demographic segmentation ensuring more chances of winning for all customers across the sultanate, Al Mazyona is the longest-run-

ning savings scheme, offering the largest total prize money in the country. The scheme will offer RO11mn to 7,470 winners throughout 2021, with the number of winners up by 12 percent compared to last year.

It will feature several special draws including an Eid al Fitr draw, a National Day draw, Mid-year draw and an End of Year draw.

Special prizes have been reserved for high savings customers as well as for women, youth and children.

Bank Muscat has been playing a major role in popularising the concept of savings by conducting the draws transparently and promoting them across media as well as social media on a regular basis.

Ooredoo announces Samsung Galaxy S21 Series 5G pre-orders

Ooredoo announced that the all-new Samsung Galaxy S21 Series 5G is now available for pre-order for customers across Oman until February 4. Every customer who places their pre-order for devices, part of the latest next-generation product range, will also receive a free gift worth up to RO109.80, in addition to a Samsung 25w Super-Fast Charging Travel Adapter and Samsung Care+ coverage for one year, to further enhance their Galaxy experience.

"The operators we work alongside have always been fundamental partners during the pre-order and rollout phases of our newest flagships. Their support and invaluable contributions are very much appreciated, and we are excited once again to share our success with them in the countries where we operate," said Osman Alhora, senior director - Mobile Division, Samsung Gulf Electronics.

"At Samsung, we are eager to begin 2021 by presenting Galaxy enthusiasts with brand new products and offers that they deserve and expect. As such, we are delighted that everyone can now place their pre-orders for the Galaxy S21 Series 5G, which combines iconic design, pro-grade camera capabilities, premium viewing, and powerful connectivity to make everyday epic."

"Ooredoo strives to deliver the latest, most coveted devices that enhance our customers' lifestyles. As such, we're delighted to introduce the combination of Samsung technology and our incredible 5G network,



and we expect to see phenomenal demand for the new Samsung Galaxy S21 Series 5G among our discerning customer base," said Raed Mohammed Dawood, director of Branding, Communications and Corporate Affairs at Ooredoo.

Specially made for the way we live today, the Galaxy S21 Series 5G empowers consumers to share their world and connect with the things and people that matter most. Comprising the Galaxy S21 5G, Galaxy S21+ 5G, and Galaxy S21 Ultra 5G, these next-generation flagships bring together innovative technology and features from the Galaxy Ecosystem to make every moment epic and ensure life is easier for everybody.

Galaxy S21 5G & Galaxy S21+ 5G

Delivering intelligent displays, all-new video innovations, design, and streamlined experiences powered by SmartThings, the Galaxy S21 5G and Galaxy S21+ 5G represent a new chapter

in immersive smartphone experiences.

The very best viewing experience and super-smooth scrolling is offered throughout every single interaction with an edge-to-edge Dynamic AMOLED 2X 120Hz display, and the dynamic refresh rate adjusts automatically from 48-120Hz, optimising power consumption based on the content being viewed at any given time.

When shooting 8K video, moments will never be missed as photos can still be taken in 33MP high resolution.

Photos and videos can be captured simultaneously using Single Take, backed with AI processing. What's more, the Contour Cut Camera Design is totally new, iconic, and seamlessly integrated into both devices' frame.

In addition to that, Galaxy devices can be tracked and located with Smart Things Find app - even when they are offline.

For more details, please visit www.samsung.com



W Muscat's iconic restaurant shakes up social scene

Welcoming 2021 with a renewed love for life, W Muscat's dazzling rooftop paradise, Siddharta Lounge by Buddha-Bar is promising guests' unmissable events that tap into the brand's flair for the unexpected, kicking it all off with a new Asian-inspired menu.

Since hitting the scene in 2019, the iconic restaurant and lounge has shaken up Muscat's social scene with internationally renowned and brand-new events, from hosting the Ibiza Global Radio and an impressive line-up of Buddha Bar official DJs. With its elegant design, vibrant atmosphere and jaw-dropping views, Siddharta Lounge by Buddha-Bar continues to cement its reign as Muscat's trendiest destination.

"Since its highly-awaited opening, Siddharta Lounge by Buddha-Bar has set the standard for entertainment in Oman, with a number of one-off international events and some, like the Friday Brunch, that have become permanent fixtures. But the best is yet to come, and moving into 2021 we're getting ready for more bold experiences, while continuing to

showcase the stunning surroundings that makes it such an extraordinary place," said Gerald Chevasson, general manager of W Muscat.

Combining an artistic spirit, vibrant atmosphere, and unbeatable views of the ocean over Muscat's only rooftop infinity pool, guests can feast their eyes and stomachs.

Showcasing the chefs' culinary prowess new items have been added to the menu including crunchy shrimp volcano, coconut crusted lamb chops and salmon tacos. Guests can of course still get their hands on their favourite signature sushi mini burgers. From mixing and mingling with signature sips near the DJ booth to soaking it all in at the elevated infinity pool, Siddharta Lounge by Buddha-Bar is the ultimate tipping point to wind down or play hard. As night transcends the place comes alive as Muscat's place to see and be seen.

For more information on what's happening at W Muscat, visit www.wmuscat.com or get social with W Muscat on Instagram @wmuscat and @siddhartaloungemuscat.

NDC achieves an impressive growth in profits

Oman's local marketing and manufacturing company NDC has achieved an increase in annual sales of 3.6 per cent and an increase in profitability of 43 per cent in 2020 over 2019 according to NDC's preliminary report submitted to the Muscat Securities Market.

"The increase in sales is attributed to the consumers' response to the high quality of NDC's products including Bahar Powder Laundry Products, Bahar Dishwashing Liquid and Farah brand of Hand wash liquid and hand sanitisers all produced 100 per cent in Oman," says A K Shaji, head of Sales for NDC.

The sales of the new and



higher quality Bahar and Farah branded products contributed very positively to the performance of the company in

the period.

"NDC is honoured to be recognised by consumers with Bahar winning the Most

Trusted Brand Award," says Anish Kumar, head of Marketing.

The production team also

succeeded in reducing the costs in key areas more than offsetting certain increasing costs.

P Babu, head of Operations highlights NDC's new effluent treatment plant that reduced costs and emissions providing excellent environmental stewardship.

Bill Hunt, CEO of NDC says he is very proud of the performance of the NDC team in difficult and uncertain times.

That the company has remained almost completely COVID-19-free during this time is a compliment to the company strictly following the procedures set out by the Ministry of Health in the Sultanate of Oman.

Mercedes-Benz Oman ensures safety of Actros

Mercedes-Benz Oman is keeping its trucks reliable, safe and economic with a new Actros Health Check offer. Valid during Service Week, February 7-11, at the Mercedes-Benz Service Centre in Muscat, Sohar and Salalah, the Health Check is available at RO98 or RO105 for the Actros 6-cylinder and 8-cylinder engines respectively.

As the 2020 International Truck of the Year, the health check package optimises maintenance for the Actros, offering engine oil and filter change, diagnostic check of electrical systems, multi-point inspection and retightening of lug nuts on two/three axles, and much more.

"Mercedes-Benz Trucks are number one in the region and we've spent decades pioneering in the fields of safety, efficiency and ergonomics to optimize our performance on difficult terrains," said Gary Brown, general manager of Commercial Vehicles at Mercedes-Benz Oman.



"It's particularly important to address wear at the right time and the health check package keeps the Actros operating at the level intended by our engineers, reducing downtime and maximising productivity while delivering on a reputation of exemplary trustworthiness."

Mercedes-Benz Trucks have

been a hallmark of reliability and performance for over one hundred years, becoming synonymous with value retention, groundbreaking innovations and comprehensive expertise in service quality.

Meeting growing demands for enhanced efficiency, the Actros Health Check package in-

cludes engine oil (mineral oil) and filter change, replacement of diesel filter, vehicle check for oil leaks on major components, check and adjustment of fluid levels, electrical system diagnostics, engine compression test with diagnostic tool that determines engine condition, multi-point inspection, retight-

ening of lug nuts on two/three axles, and vehicle washing and greasing.

Valid from February 7-11, the Actros Health Check package maintains the brand's sturdy, proven components sustaining a trustworthy and robust truck.

With a 'Best Customer Service' attitude continuing to guide aftersales care, Mercedes-Benz Oman Commercial Vehicles offer an unrivalled range of tailor-made and reliable transport solutions.

This includes local service and parts supply throughout the wide national network of Mercedes-Benz branches as well as expert technical and driver support.

To book an appointment in Muscat call 99375876 or email eraido.d Cunha@mercedes-benz.co.om; in Sohar call 91397950 or email younis.alfarsi@mercedes-benz.co.om; and in Salalah call 99299021 or email prabhakaran.vk@mercedes-benz.co.om.

MG smashes sales records in 2020 to enter GCC top ten of car manufacturers



MG Motor broke into the GCC's top ten of car manufacturers for the first time in 2020, during a year in which the British-born brand's sales increased by a remarkable 72 percent across the region. With total sales of 27,595 units, the company's achievements were all the more impressive considering the challenging market conditions caused by the global pandemic.

This success has been driven by the brand's line-up of sedan and SUV models, and in particular its top two sellers, the MG5 compact sedan and MG ZS compact SUV.

The year saw MG launch operations in several new regional



markets, including Jordan and Iraq, but it is in Saudi Arabia that customers have most evidently taken to the British brand. MG is now the 8th biggest-selling car brand in the Kingdom, which reinforced its position as MG's biggest market in the Middle East, just three years after the brand was reintroduced to the country. MG now enjoys a 4.2 per cent market share in Saudi

Arabia, with total sales up by 89 percent in 2020.

Core to MG's popularity has been the quality and breadth of its model line-up, which has been completely refreshed over recent years. The brand's biggest sellers were its compact sedan models, the MG 5, which accounted for a third of all 2020 sales. The stylish MG6 sedan continued to prove popular, with year-on-year

sales up by 15 per cent.

MG's mid-size SUV models, consisting of the MG ZS, MG HS and MG RX5, totalled 39 per cent of the total figure. Meanwhile the brand's first seven-seater SUV, the RX8, shifted 12 per cent contribution in its first full year of overall sales.

Tom Lee, managing director of MG Motor's Middle East operations, commented, "Even be-

fore the current pandemic, we had set ourselves an ambitious goal to break into the top 10 of manufacturers by the end of 2020, so we are delighted to have achieved this despite the challenges we have all faced. It clearly demonstrates the growing awareness, understanding and popularity of the brand among Middle East car buyers.

"We are keen to continue to

provide our customers with a fantastic range of high-quality cars, and we are focused on ensuring our customers get the highest service levels from the exceptional list of local partners we have," Lee continued.

"Currently we have 33 exclusive retail showrooms and 33 service centres across the region, and we are looking at expanding further in 2021. This has been

supplemented by the introduction of our new e-commerce service to offer our customers the best possible virtual shopping experience."

The brand has not only experienced success in the Middle East and Levant countries, but equally around the world. In 2020 the brand increased its market share in its birthplace, the United Kingdom, as well as the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, France, Australia, and South America, whilst increasing overseas production in North-East Asia.

In the face of market adjustments and the industrial transformation, and in keeping with its promise to deliver innovation and practicality in all of its cars, MG is set to introduce MG HS and MG 6 (PHEV) plug-in hybrid cars as well as intelligent connectivity and 5G in the MG HS PHEV.

Furthermore, MG will continue to enhance its services as it tends to its customer's needs, while its 6 years / 200,000km warranty on all models, combined with exceptional offers available to new and current customers, will ensure peace of mind in difficult times.

Islamic Finance News rates Muzn among best banks

In recognition of its pioneering role in the sultanate's rapidly growing Islamic finance industry, Muzn has been named among the Best Islamic Banks in Oman 2020 by Islamic Finance News.

Receiving the prestigious accolade for the fourth time, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Islamic banking window and the first-of-its-kind in the sultanate continues to pursue innovation and the provision of modern Sharia'a-compatible services, products and solutions that meet the requirements and aspirations of its customers. Marking the publication's biggest and broadest poll yet, the awards name the best of the Islamic finance industry, as voted by its readers.

Salima al Marzuqi, head of Muzn Islamic Banking, said, "We



are delighted to have been recognised once again as one of Oman's top Islamic banks. Despite a uniquely challenging year, we were able to rise to the occasion, offering our customers more choice and more value than ever. Playing a leading role in Oman's Islamic banking sector over the last seven years, we continue to meet the needs

of an ever-evolving market, promote digital transformation in the banking industry, and contribute to the sultanate's overall economic growth and development."

Established in 2013, Muzn provides an all-encompassing range of Sharia'a-compliant banking services to deliver financial solutions to a growing customer base. The bank offers innovative, competitive and quality Islamic banking products and services while ensuring they are accessible to all.

The Islamic Finance News award marks the latest in a string of achievements for the bank, as it continues to focus on innovation and digital transformation, while providing the best customer experience possible.

Mastercard announces it's applying latest quantum technologies for safe payment

Mastercard announced that it is applying the latest quantum-resistant technologies to develop the next generation of contactless payments.

The new Enhanced Contactless (Ecos) specifications are an industry-first and will help ensure that as our dynamic digital landscape evolves, and new technologies like quantum computing are introduced, contactless technology is future-proofed to ensure consumers will continue to enjoy the same high levels of security and convenience they do today, in the decades to come.

The demand for faster, more convenient, safe and now cleaner ways to pay has driven the transition to contactless and this trend will only continue to grow.



In fact, in the third quarter of 2020, contactless penetration represented 41 per cent of in-person purchase transactions globally, up 30 per cent from a year ago.

Mastercard has been spearheading the transition to contactless payments for years and developing specifications like Ecos to support industry standardization efforts and help ensure the entire ecosystem benefits from higher levels of



security. "Contactless is the present and future of in-person payments," said Ajay Bhalla, president, Cyber & Intelligence at Mastercard.

"2020 brought with it a rapid acceleration of digitisation and reinforced the importance of digital solutions - like contactless - to help meet our everyday needs. As the ecosystem continues to evolve, more connected devices and the Internet of Things are going to create more user demand and an even greater need for constant innovation to build next-generation capability, helping to ensure that technology never outpaces trust."

As the new specifications are activated over the coming years, consumers and merchants can expect a seamless transition.

Raise romance to new heights at Anantara

To celebrate Valentine's Day this year, Anantara al Jabal al Akhdar Resort is welcoming guests to its cool mountain haven for a cloud nine escape. Leave the bustling cities behind and head over to Oman's leading luxury resort to enjoy a myriad of wonderful and cherished moments with your partner. From special rates on private pool villas to intimate dinners, spa packages and recreation experiences, this esteemed resort is the best place to celebrate the day of love.

Complete with cool mountain climes that are best described as the perfect "weather for two", sit back and let the serene atmosphere inspire your love story.

Love above the clouds

Raise romance to new heights at Oman's elevated mountain resort, Anantara al Jabal al Akhdar, for an intimate and unforgettable lover's retreat.

With special rates on private pool villas and other savings, available through the month of February, guests can cuddle up with their most cherished companion and experience the true meaning of Omani hospitality at



the secluded luxury destination.

Kick off your special time toasting your partner with a complimentary bottle of sparkling wine or date juice on arrival and take advantage of many other benefits, from daily breakfast at the resorts' casual dining restaurant, Al Maisan, to a romantic dinner set against the breathtaking scenery from your private villa.

Available from February 1-28
Price: From R198++, inclusive of the below;

Daily buffet breakfast served at Al Maisan for two persons

One in-villa set menu dinner for two people per stay, inclusive of food and soft beverages only

One bottle of sparkling wine or date juice on arrival
50 per cent savings on Anantara Spa treatments, including packages, during stay
50 per cent savings on Luxury Transportation

Bella Vista

Mark this special occasion with a specially curated four-course set menu dinner for two at Bella Vista, the resort's gorgeous casual dining restaurant that re-

imagines traditional Italian cuisine with a contemporary flair.

When: Available on February 14. Price: RO70 for two

Chocolate fondue at Diana's Point

From 1pm to 6pm, guests can enjoy some chocolate fondue for two at Diana's Points, overlooking the grand views.

When: Available from February 11-19, from 1pm to 6pm
Price: RO15 per person

Dining By Design

Also available for couples on Valentine's Day is the most ideal and unique dining experience, Dining by Design, allowing guests to delight in an intimate dinner for two at either Diana's Point or the newly opened The Royal Edge, an exclusive platform which presents guests an incomparable grandiose canyon view. Price: RO100 per person at The Royal Edge or RO75 per person at Diana's Point.

For more information, call +968 2521 8000, visit the website at jabal-akhdar.anantara.com or email aljabal-akhdar@anantara.com

Burjeel Hospital aims to offer cleft lip and palate surgeries

Leading healthcare and medical services provider - Burjeel Hospital aims to become the sultanate's first private facility to offer - single stage cleft lip and palate surgery, and neonatal cleft lip repair in the year 2021.

Cleft lip and palate are openings in the upper lip, the roof of the mouth (palate) or both. The condition occurs when facial structures that are developing don't close completely in an unborn baby. Cleft lip and palate are among the most common birth defects and most commonly occur as isolated birth defects, but sometimes can be associated with other inherited genetic conditions or syndromes.

Burjeel Hospital will provide multidisciplinary surgery and a full range of treatments of the highest standard, for babies and young adults, through its team of highly experienced craniofacial and cleft-care specialists in 2021. Their medical team will include ENT surgeons, orthodontists, pediatricians, speech therapists, anesthesiologists that will be led by internationally renowned



Plastic and Craniofacial Surgeon - Dr Taimoor al Bulushi, MD, FRCS, FEBOPRAS, FACS.

"In general, when children have cleft lip and palate, they have problems nursing their mother's milk and this is a problem for the development of the child. Both cleft lip and palate can be corrected with a series of surgeries that restore normal function and achieve a regular appearance with minimal scarring in children as well as young adults. We, at Burjeel Hospital are pleased to provide the routine opportunity of corrective, safe, and timely surgery to children and young adults who have endured challenges as a result of

being born with a cleft lip, cleft palate, or both, courtesy our multidisciplinary team, led by an able and experienced hand such as Dr Taimoor," said Dr Rohil Raghavan, regional CEO, VPS Group, Oman.

"The cause of a cleft lip opening is not fully understood, but there are several risk factors," averred Dr Bulushi. "The older the mother, the higher the risk of cleft lip or cleft palate. In addition, obesity, diabetes, and smoking during pregnancy, all increases the risk of having a baby with a cleft lip and palate."

He added, "Usually cleft lip and palate surgery is done in multiple stages soon after a child's birth, until 18 months. However, having introduced and mastered single stage cleft lip, nose and palate surgery in the sultanate, at Burjeel we will be able to even perform neonatal cleft surgery which is performed immediately after birth, as a significant addition to the hospital's transformative surgeries."

For further information please call 22085252

Moscow, Tehran call for 'rescue' of Iran deal

Moscow, Russia - Moscow and Tehran called for the rescue of the Iran nuclear deal on Tuesday, as their top diplomats held their first talks since Joe Biden's election raised hopes of Washington returning to the agreement.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said ahead of the talks in Moscow that 'one of the most pressing topics is the task of rescuing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)'.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif thanked Moscow for its efforts to repair the JCPOA after the US exit in 2018 and for Russia's 'constructive and principled' position on the deal.

Zarif urged unity between Moscow and Tehran 'in order to save the JCPOA from the risks and fears that arose after the United States left this plan'.

The talks in Moscow come days after Zarif urged the United States to make the 'fundamental choice' to lift sanctions and reverse the 'failed policies' of the previous administration, which took a hard line on Tehran.

He cautioned that any efforts from Washington to extract additional concessions would ultimately end in failure.

'Iran wants the nuclear deal it made,' Zarif wrote in an op-ed in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine.

The agreement was largely left in tatters after former US presi-



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif, in Moscow on Tuesday (AFP)

dent Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew and ordered officials to reimpose tough penalties against Tehran as part of his administration's 'maximum pressure' policy.

The deal was agreed in 2015 among Iran, the US, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany.

It offered sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Iran's nuclear ambitions and guarantees it would not seek an atomic bomb.

Iran maintains it has only pursued a civilian nuclear energy

programme. A new wave of US sanctions have hit hard Iran's vital oil sector and its international banking ties, plunging the economy into a recession.

But Tehran has signalled it could be willing to engage the new White House administration while rhetoric from officials in Moscow has suggested a change in tack in Washington from the Trump administration.

Joe Biden's pick for secretary of state, Anthony Blinken, said at

a Senate confirmation hearing this month that Trump's policies had made Iran 'more dangerous'.

While Blinken confirmed Biden's desire for Washington to return to the nuclear agreement, both sides have said the other must return to full compliance before the accord is implemented again.

Since the deal began unravelling with the US exit, Russia and European signatories have advocated efforts to salvage the accord and cau-

tioned Iran against bolstering its nuclear enrichment.

Moscow appears cautiously optimistic over the fate of the deal under the new White House administration after its arms negotiator described Washington's position as 'businesslike and pragmatic'.

"It means there is a chance to move forward," Mikhail Ulyanov told state-run television last week.

AFP

In 'energetic' talks with US over New START: Russia

Moscow, Russia - Russia and the United States are holding 'energetic' discussions over the extension of a key nuclear accord that expires next week, the Kremlin said on Tuesday.

The New START treaty, signed in 2010, caps to 1,550 the number of nuclear warheads that can be deployed by Moscow and Washington, who control the world's largest nuclear arsenals.

Negotiations to extend the treaty stalled as US President Donald Trump's administration insisted that China should join the deal, despite Beijing flatly rejecting the idea.

"Contacts now are indeed under way, energetic contacts," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, adding that extending the treaty was 'in the interests of both countries and the whole world'.

Last week, the Kremlin welcomed indications from the team of new US President Joe Biden that they would work

towards a five-year extension.

Russia's Security Council confirmed on Monday that its chief Nikolai Patrushev had spoken to US National Security adviser Jake Sullivan about the mooted extension.

The Trump administration withdrew from several weapons treaties, including the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty with Russia.

Relations between Moscow and Washington soured during Trump's tenure over allegations of cyber hacking and election meddling, and failure to negotiate an extension to New START would confirm the tattered state of bilateral ties.

Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who brokered the INF treaty with US president Ronald Reagan in 1987, urged both countries to extend New START and work together to agree further cuts to nuclear stockpiles.

AFP

Israel hails new first in relations with Sudan

Jerusalem - Israeli Intelligence Minister Eli Cohen has led a delegation to Khartoum, a spokesman said on Tuesday, months after Sudan and the Jewish state struck a deal to normalise ties.

The Monday visit marked the first time an Israeli minister headed a delegation to the African state, Cohen's office said.

The Israeli Intelligence Ministry said members of the delegation met head of state General Abdel Fattah al Burhan and Defence Minister Yassin Ibrahim for talks on 'diplomatic, security and economic issues'.

'A first-ever memorandum on these topics was signed between the Sudanese defence minister and Cohen,' it said.

The sides also discussed 'deepening intelligence cooperation'.

'The Sudanese authorities briefed the Israeli delegation on their progress on cancelling the law boycotting Israel, and amending the law imprisoning Sudanese migrants, including to Israel, who return to Sudan,' the ministry added.

Sudan agreed to normalise ties with Israel in October last year and an Israeli delegation visited Khartoum the following month.

On January 6, Sudan signed the 'Abraham Accords' normalising ties with Israel, making it the third Arab country to do so after the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain last year.

Morocco also normalised its ties with Israel in December.

Khartoum signed the accords less than a month after Washington removed it from its 'state sponsors of terrorism' blacklist as part of a quid pro quo.

But protests against normalisation have continued in Sudan. On January 17, dozens of protesters gathered outside the cabinet office in Khartoum and burned the Israeli flag.

Until last year, Egypt and Jordan were the only Arab countries to have recognised Israel, in bilateral peace deals struck decades ago.

Other Arab governments refused to normalise relations until Israel reached a comprehensive peace agreement with the Palestinians and its other neighbours.

Cohen said his visit to Khartoum 'laid the foundations for many important collaborations that will help Israel and Sudan, boost regional stability, deepen our ties with Africa and lead to more agreements with states in the region'.

AFP

Italy PM quits to seek new government

Rome, Italy - Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigned on Tuesday in the hope of forming a new government after weeks of turmoil in his ruling coalition, leaving Italy rudderless as it battles the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

He tendered his resignation to President Sergio Mattarella, the ultimate arbiter of Italian political crises, who invited him to stay on in a caretaker capacity pending discussions on what happens next.

The uneasy coalition that has led Italy since September 2019 was fatally weakened earlier this month by the withdrawal of former premier Matteo Renzi's small but crucial Italia Viva party.

Ahead of a key vote in parliament this week that he looked set to lose, Conte informed his cabinet on Tuesday that he would quit in what supporters said was a move to form a new government.

After the meeting with Mattarella, a spokesman for the president said he 'reserves the right to decide (what to do next) and invited the government to stay in office in a caretaker capacity'.

Mattarella will open discussions with party leaders on Wednesday afternoon which are likely to lead into Thursday -



The car carrying Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte arrives at the Presidential Quirinale palace ahead of his meeting with the President to tender his resignation, in Rome on Tuesday (AFP)

leaving a vacuum at the top of the eurozone's third largest economy at a crucial time.

Italy was the first European country to face the full force of the COVID-19 pandemic and has since suffered badly, with the economy plunged into recession and deaths still rising by around 400 a day. Parts of the country remain under partial lockdown, the vaccination programme has slowed and a deadline is looming to agree plans to spend billions of euros in European Union recovery funds.

Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, one of the leaders of the populist Five Star Movement (M5S), the largest in parliament, earlier said it was time to rally around Conte.

"The country is going through one of its worst ever periods due to the pandemic," he tweeted late Monday. "Now we need unity, we all have to gather around Giuseppe Conte."

Conte's government had been on the verge of collapse since Renzi pulled out on January 13 in a row over the premier's handling

of the pandemic.

Renzi in particular warned he risked wasting the EU funds with a €220bn spending plan that he said failed to address Italy's long-term structural issues.

The prime minister survived a vote of confidence in parliament last week but failed to secure an overall majority in the upper house, the Senate.

Despite days of talks with senators to seek their support, he looked set to lose a crucial vote on judicial reform in the coming days.

Conte's calculation

"Conte's calculation is that by moving early, and thereby avoiding a humiliating defeat in the Senate later this week, he would increase his chances of securing a mandate from Mattarella to form a new government," noted Wolfango Piccoli of the Teneo consultancy.

Nicola Zingaretti, leader of the centre-left Democratic Party (PD), the other main partner in the coalition, so far is backing Conte.

He tweeted that he was 'with Conte for a new government that is clearly pro-European and supported by a broad parliamentary base'.

But other lawmakers will be needed to form a viable new government - and 'it is currently unclear whether Conte can succeed in such an effort', Piccoli noted.

If he cannot, the M5S and PD could 'ditch Conte and look for another candidate' to head a new coalition government.

They are keen to avoid snap elections, which opinion polls suggest would lead to victory for the centre-right coalition.

Conte, a once obscure law professor, has proved himself remarkably adept at navigating the famously choppy waters of Italian politics.

AFP

'I feel like I am reborn': Rescued Chinese miners speak of relief

Beijing, China - Two Chinese miners who were dramatically rescued after being trapped underground for two weeks described on Tuesday their joy and relief at being free.

Eleven men out of a group of 22 were pulled out alive by rescue workers on Sunday after a January 10 mine blast in east China's Shandong province entombed them hundreds of metres underground.

"I feel like I am reborn," one of the miners, surnamed Du, was quoted as saying by state broadcaster CGTN Tuesday, wearing pyjamas as he spoke to reporters from his hospital bed.

"We had no food to eat for the



A miner is being carried on a stretcher after rescue in Qixia, in China's Shandong province on Sunday (AFP)

We had no food to eat for the first nine days. There are no words to describe the feeling (of being rescued). So relieved

A RESCUED MINER

first nine days," he added.

"There are no words to describe the feeling (of being rescued). So relieved."

Du was part of a group of 11 miners who first made managed to make contact with rescuers on

January 17 by sending up a note though a long shaft drilled down into the rock.

They were then sent food and medicine and phones to communicate.

"We knew clearly how hard it was to drill that deep. We were trapped nearly 600 metres below ground. It was a daunting task," another survivor surnamed Wang told CGTN. "We are so happy."

One of the first group died last week of head injuries sustained from the explosion, while a further nine workers found in a different part of the mine were confirmed dead on Monday, according to local officials.

Rescue teams are searching for one further miner, who remains unaccounted for.

The survivors are currently all in 'stable' condition and receiving hospital treatment, local officials said on Monday.

"We comforted each other with encouraging words. That's how we pulled through," said Du from his hospital bed, adding that some of the group were 'pessimistic, while others were hopeful'.

Emergency workers had been battling difficult conditions, including high waters in parts of the mine, to drill several holes to reach the trapped miners.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19 vaccine firms must deliver, says EU chief



This video grab taken shows European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen speaking during an all-virtual World Economic Forum on Tuesday (AFP)

Brussels, Belgium - Companies producing COVID-19 vaccines ‘must deliver’, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Tuesday as tensions mounted between her European Commission and pharmaceutical firms over delayed deliveries.

“Europe invested billions to help develop the world’s first COVID-19 vaccines,” she said in a live video address to an on-line-only version of the annual World Economic Forum usually held in Davos, Switzerland.

“And now, the companies must deliver. They must honour their obligations,” she said.

The Commission is demand-

Europe invested billions to help develop the world’s first COVID-19 vaccines. And now, the companies must deliver. They must honour their obligations

URSULA VON DER LEYEN

ing answers of British-Swedish group AstraZeneca and US company Pfizer about delays both have announced to their deliveries to the European Union.

In a sign of concern that pharmaceutical groups might be selling the earmarked doses to higher bidders outside the

bloc, it is making a move to require the companies to notify authorities of any exports to outside the European Union.

Von der Leyen underlined that initiative in her speech, saying ‘we will set up a vaccine export transparency mechanism’ to ‘ensure’ the firms meet their contractual obligations to the

EU. The issue is sensitive for von der Leyen, who spearheaded efforts to have the Commission procure more than two billion doses of potential COVID-19 vaccines for the bloc’s 27 member states, home to 450mn people.

Last week - after Pfizer’s announced delay but before AstraZeneca’s - von der Leyen vowed the aim was to inoculate 70 per cent of adults in the EU by the end of August. That goal now looks in jeopardy.

The pace of the EU rollout has lagged behind the United States, Britain and Israel, though member states including Malta,

Denmark and France have started to accelerate their programmes.

In her speech, von der Leyen said the Commission’s vaccine procurement was not for the EU alone but also for poorer non-EU countries who are to be supplied through a COVAX vaccination alliance co-led by the World Health Organization.

As part of a longer-term strategy to head off this and future health crises, von der Leyen said the EU would propose a public-private entity under a new European Health Emergency Response Authority.

AFP



Firefighters douse a fire after riots, in Rotterdam on Monday (AFP)

Dutch police arrests nearly 200 after riots

The Hague, Netherlands - Dutch police arrested at least 184 rioters after protests against a coronavirus curfew turned violent for a third night, police said on Tuesday, in the worst unrest to hit the Netherlands in four decades.

At least ten police officers were injured in the latest clashes, which left a trail of looted shops and burned cars in cities including Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague on Monday night.

While a majority of Dutch people have peacefully observed the country’s first curfew since World War II, the riots have spread since the 9.00pm to 4.30am restriction came into effect on Saturday. “We can confirm that at least 184 arrests were made,” police spokesman Sherlo Esajas told AFP. Police added that more arrests could follow.

Dutch police chief Henk van Essen strongly condemned the rioters, saying ‘it has nothing to do any longer with the right to demonstrate’.

‘I have respect for those colleagues who have a hard

time the past few nights,’ Van Essen said on Twitter.

Police unions said it was the worst rioting in four decades, referring to clashes between law officials and squatters in the 1980s as they were evicted from illegally-occupied buildings.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Monday condemned the riots, saying they were ‘unacceptable’ and that normal people regarded it ‘with horror’.

Clean-up operations started for a second day in many city centres across the country including in the port city of Rotterdam and Den Bosch to the south, where images showed shops being looted by mobs of rioters.

Police used water cannon against rioters in Rotterdam.

Mayors of several cities reacted with anger, with Rotterdam’s Ahmed Aboutaleb calling rioters ‘shameless thieves’, the NOS national newscaster reported.

The Dutch government announced the curfew last week in order to further bring down numbers of infections.

AFP

Protesting farmers battle police after storming Indian capital

New Delhi, India - Thousands of Indian farmers battled police across New Delhi on Tuesday as they took protests against agriculture reform into the capital during a giant Republic Day military parade.

Police laid on one of their biggest security operations in years in a bid to keep protesters away from Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he oversaw a parade full of pomp.

Police manned barricades at intersections around the centre of the city, while soldiers with machine guns patrolled metro trains.

But after barging through barricades on the city’s main arteries, convoys of farmers on tractors sped wildly around city roads, forcing police and bystanders to leap for safety.

At the 400 year old Red Fort, protesters raised the emblem of their movement on flagpole where India’s tricolour normally flies.

Hundreds also gathered outside the Delhi police headquarters and fought with officers.

Across the city, security forces fired tear gas and staged baton charges, but the protesters laid into police with their own weapons - and hijacked buses that had been used to block their convoys.

Two months of protests against agricultural laws that deregulated produce markets have turned into the biggest challenge faced by Modi’s na-



Protesters climb a flagpole to place their flag at the ramparts of the Red Fort as farmers continue to demonstrate against the federal government’s recent agricultural reforms, in India’s capital New Delhi on Tuesday (AFP)

tionalist government since it came to power six years ago.

The government had opposed the rally saying it would be a ‘national embarrassment’ at a time when it should be celebrating Republic Day.

Barricades breached

Police, however, said they would allow the demonstration if farmers waited until after the military parade, and kept to a route away from central Delhi.

But barricades were breached while Modi and other ministers were watching tanks and troops

pass along the Rajpath boulevard as newly acquired Rafale fighter jets flew overhead.

Some protesters reached a major intersection just 3km from the parade. Modi was driven back to his residence barely 30 minutes before the farmers took over the city centre.

Thousands of farmers have camped on the outskirts of the capital since November, protesting against the new laws which the government says will boost rural incomes.

Union leaders say they will not allow private conglomerates

to take over the agriculture industry - the rockbed of the economy - and end guaranteed prices for most of their produce.

Farmers’ leaders say they have enough supplies to keep their protest camps going for at least a year.

The government says the farmers have been manipulated by opposition parties, which have largely backed the rural campaign.

Ten rounds of talks between farm unions and ministers have failed to break the deadlock.

AFP

Blast shakes Riyadh three days after projectile intercepted

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - At least one loud explosion shook Riyadh on Tuesday, AFP correspondents reported, three days after the kingdom intercepted a projectile over the Saudi capital.

There was no immediate reaction from authorities in Saudi Arabia, which has come under repeated missile or drone attack from Huthi rebels in neighbouring Yemen since 2015.

An explosion rattled windows across the Saudi capital at about

1.00pm, local residents said. Some residents reported hearing two blasts on social media.

On Saturday, the Saudi-led coalition, which backs Yemen’s internationally recognised government against the Huthis, said it had intercepted and destroyed a ‘hostile air target’ heading towards Riyadh, state television reported. The brief statement did not identify the source of the target and the Huthis said they were not involved.

Riyadh’s King Khaled International Airport said there were a number of flight delays following Saturday’s incident.

Saudi Arabia has led a military intervention against the Huthis since 2015 and has repeatedly been targeted with cross-border attacks. It is rare, however, for drones or missiles launched by the Huthis to reach the kingdom’s capital - about 700km from the border.

AFP

Myanmar army raises prospect of coup after voter-fraud claims

Naypyidaw, Myanmar - Myanmar’s powerful military on Tuesday raised the spectre of staging a coup as it ramped up demands for an investigation into alleged voter fraud during last year’s election, swept by Aung San Suu Kyi’s ruling party.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) won November’s poll in a landslide, but has been much criticised by rights groups for its disenfranchisement of voters in conflict-wracked regions.

The military-aligned opposition disputed the results, while the army has for weeks alleged widespread voter irregularities, claiming to have found 8.6mn cases of fraud.

Military spokesman Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun on Tuesday re-



Myanmar’s military spokesperson Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun in Naypyidaw on Tuesday (AFP)

newed calls for the country’s embattled election commission to provide final voter lists for cross-checking - a demand that so far has not been met.

“Not resolving this in line with the law means this is a political crisis,” he told reporters in Myanmar’s capital Naypyidaw.

Zaw Min Tun added that mil-

itary chief Min Aung Hlaing - arguably Myanmar’s most powerful individual - has already pointed out ‘dishonesty and unfairness’ during the election.

When pressed on the possibility of a coup, the spokesman refused to be drawn, but did not rule it out.

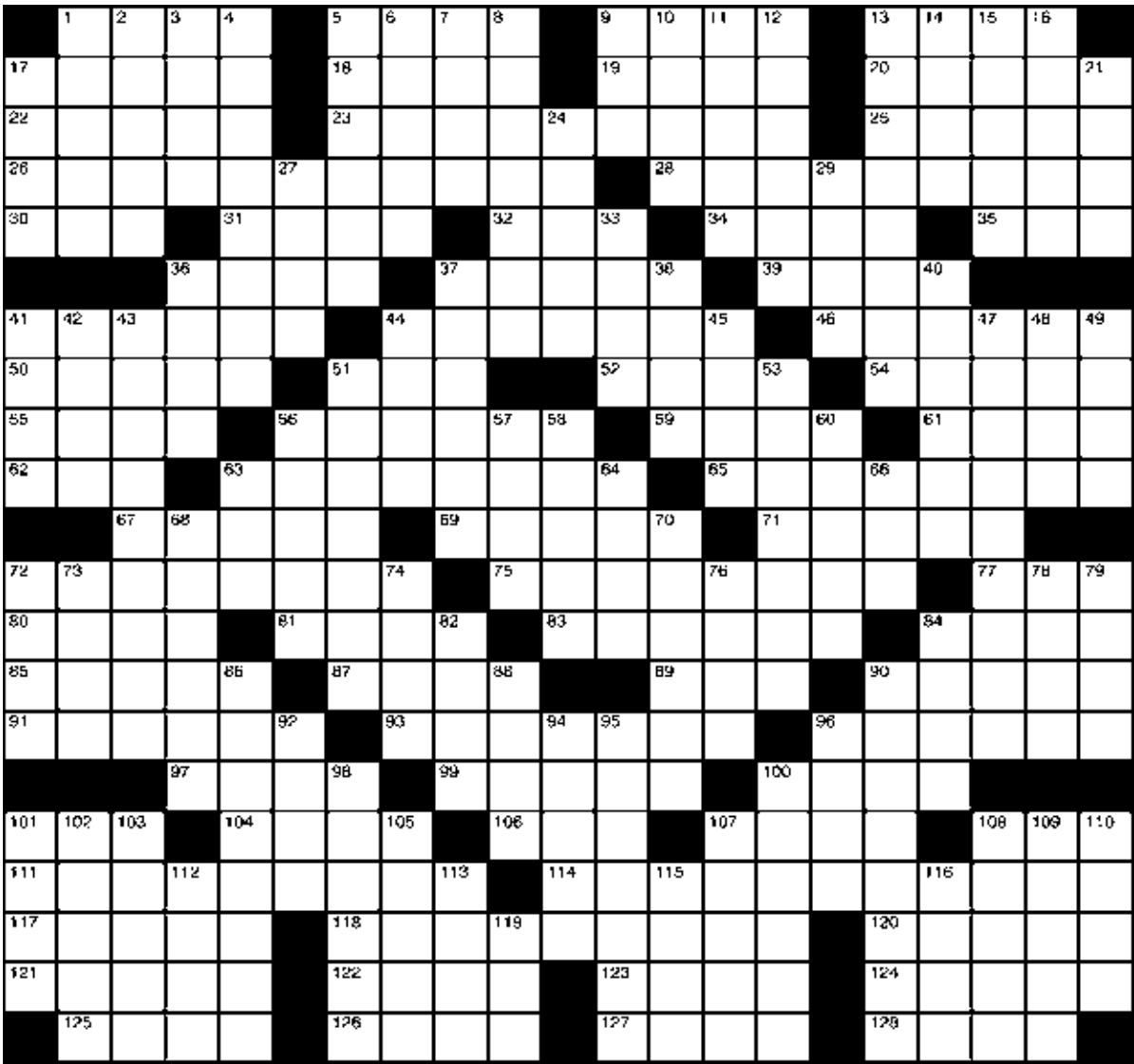
“We do not say the Tatmadaw will take power. We do not say it will not as well,” said the spokesman, using the Burmese name for the military.

“What we can say is we will follow current existing laws, including the constitution.”

The polls in November were the second openly contested elections since Myanmar emerged in 2011 after nearly 50 years of junta rule.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Greek war god
5 Male sheep
9 Army officer: abbr.
13 Attitudinize
17 Greek island
18 Healing plant
19 Et ____; and others: L.
20 Essence of roses
22 Religious superior
23 Tighten
25 Lariat
26 Tree with orange berries
28 False ideas
30 Brits' "uh's"
31 Journalists Lisa or Laura
32 Electrified particle
34 Line of juncture
35 Compass direction: abbr.
36 Yield
37 Customs
39 Polluted air
41 "The Raven" love
44 Blows chaff from grain
46 A treasurer
50 Baking chambers
51 Secure
52 Pinches
54 Anatomical networks

- 55 Affleck's "The ____"
56 Trash
59 Dole
61 Female relative
62 Shem, in the Old Testament
63 In one company
65 Masculine name: var.
67 Terra ____; fields: L.
69 The southeast wind
71 Valuable possession
72 The garden of Eden, e.g.
75 Legendary king of Alba
77 Greek terrorist org.
80 Requests
81 Bare
83 Landed property
84 "The Red"
85 Oozes
87 Japanese beverage
89 Poetic contraction
90 Goddess of peace
91 Glossy cotton fabric
93 Deserved
96 Stings
97 Liquid globule
99 A clean energy
100 Dandies
101 Rock group ____
Na Na

- 104 A rodent
106 Slight taste
107 Florence's river
108 Sheep's call
111 Restraining
114 Purposelessness
117 Garret
118 Outstanding works
120 Fortunetelling card
121 Concise
122 Rational
123 Scot's social unit
124 Musical drama
125 Back muscles: abbr.
126 Rim
127 Air: prefix
128 Soaks flax
DOWN
1 Shady resting place
2 Form of puzzle
3 English "public" school
4 Colonizers
5 Wisconsin city
6 Beside the length
7 ____ Lisa
8 Court sitting
9 Vehicle type
10 First Arabic letter
11 Size of type: pl.
12 Descriptive names
13 A lover
14 Of the ear
15 Blemish
16 Consumed
17 Arrived

- 21 Level to the ground
24 Sharp excrescence
27 Assistant
29 Noted essayist Charles
33 Las Vegas gas
36 CT abbreviation
37 Very small
38 A high school meet
40 Travolta musical
41 Building plots
42 Cry of Bacchanals
43 Town in New Hampshire
44 A spouse
45 German admiral
47 One who stammers
48 One of a Japanese race
49 Unwelcome city dwellers
51 Winged horse
53 Dire ____; band
56 French sculptor
57 Close
58 Uncanny
60 Follow
63 Small boy: inf.
64 Polishes
66 S-shaped curve
68 Grated
70 Hunting dog
72 Mountain defile

- 73 On the ocean
74 Dutch cheese
76 Foray, for one
78 Linen fuzz
79 High cards
82 Barely manages a living
84 Mesozoic, et al.
86 Keeps in repair
88 Greek god of love
90 A pretender
92 High time?
94 A Homer epic poem
95 Cassava starch granules
96 Male decedents
98 A kind of crepe
100 California city
101 Begone!
102 Traveler's haven
103 Sinus cavities
105 Inward
107 Place of sacrifice
108 French cap
109 Hindu guitars
110 Fictional dog
112 Clenched hand
113 Work crew
115 Stubborn person
116 Back of the neck
119 Born, in France: fem.

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Wednesday's skies have some intensity in store. The moon wades through family-focused Cancer, focusing your energy on the roots beneath your feet and any unaddressed realities occurring in your current situation. Luna spends the day in a tense opposition with value-setting Venus and emotionally raw Pluto, revealing any latent stresses existing between your most private and public life.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Life hasn't quite been a clean reset since 2021 began. In fact, it's only pushed you deeper into some of the themes that made themselves apparent in 2020. Continue your brave trek into change under Wednesday's skies, as the Cancer moon interacts with Venus and truth-seeking Pluto. Revelations around your right work, spirituality, and release are likely to emerge.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Wednesday's skies are shaping up to be emotionally tumultuous. The moon wades through Cancer, locking eyes with the tense pairing of Venus and Pluto. This pairing is one that works to reveal new truths—especially around your self-worth, talents, and shares resources in relationships. An honest, vulnerable approach to intimacy is suggested!

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Can you feel the changes brewing just below the surface? Wednesday's skies have an overtly emotional tone to them, as the soulfully poetic Cancer moon locks into a fraught opposition with your ruling planet, Venus, and Pluto. This planetary pairing pushes you to go deeper within yourself and acknowledge what elements of your identity and health need active change.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Major questions arrive looking for answers under Wednesday's skies. The moon glides through Cancer, locking eyes with the intense pairing of Venus and Pluto. This union is a powerful one that requests total honesty around your goals, creative vision, and the state of your heart. Emotional responses run high, but you can lean on your friend for the support you need.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
There's no use in trying to hide your hunger for change. Wednesday's skies shine that beaming spotlight down upon your heart, as the Cancer moon opposes Venus and Pluto. This is an emotionally turbulent pairing, and is likely to unsettle any established relationship patterns that have outgrown their use. Truth-seeking and honesty are needed to stay on track.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
The love lessons just keep on coming. Wednesday's skies have you diving deep into your heart of hearts, as the Cancer moon opposes Venus and Pluto. This planetary pairing is an emotionally charged one—that prompts you to openly acknowledge what needs changing in your approach to intimacy. Any stories involving shared money or debt is likely to be especially intense.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
Take a deep breath before leaping in. Your ruling planet, Venus, finds herself cuddling up to the planet of transformation, Pluto. This union is further intensified today, as it receives an unsettling visit from the sentimental Cancer moon. Issues around power, truth, individuality, and intimacy are all likely to bubble up in the course of the day, so try to approach it all with an open heart.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
The universe isn't quite done cleaning out your closets. Wednesday's skies arrive with an emotionally charged mission for honesty and release, as the Cancer moon opposes Venus and Pluto. This emotionally raw pairing makes it an ideal day for therapy, journaling, or other forms of active release. You're being asked to release relationship patterns that are inhibiting growth.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
The universe is pushing you to bravely tread deeper than ever before you're your relationship patterns. Wednesday's skies nudge this story forward, as the moon glides through your sign and forms a tense opposition with Venus and Pluto. This union is emotional and prompts you to acknowledge, as honestly as possible, any unspoken truths in your partnership story.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Your mind is gathering storm clouds under Wednesday's skies. Relationship truths are looking to emerge onto the scene, as the sensitive Cancer moon opposes lover Venus and wound-healing Pluto. You're unable to hold back your truth today and should attempt to speak up when the opportunity presents itself. The day is bound to be emotionally intense, so tread lightly.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You're something of a psychic sponge. Beware of absorbing everyone else's rattled feelings, as Wednesday's skies prompt some powerful moods. The moon glides through Cancer and locks into an potent opposition with lover Venus and transformative Pluto. Expect some intense stories that demand change to unfold with your friends, lovers, and long-term goals.

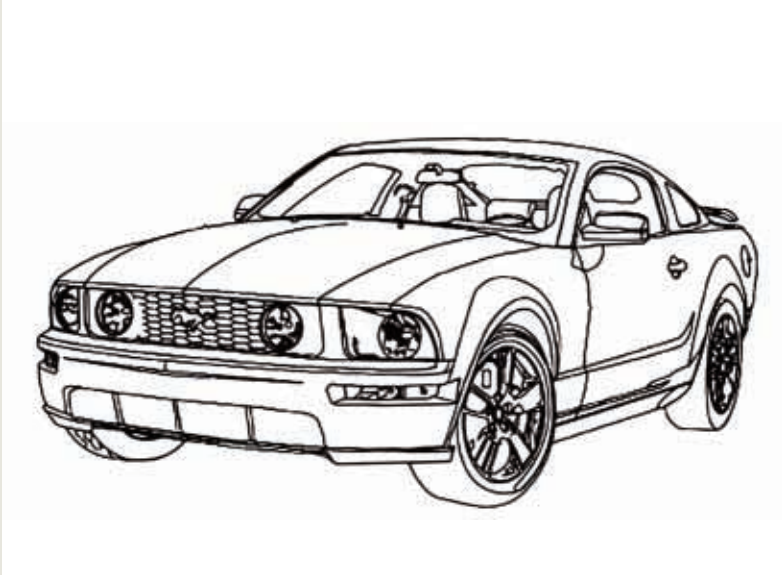


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The SAF (South Asian Federation) Game, as a part of the SAARC programme, was first held in
a. 1964
b. 1974
c. 1984
d. 1994
2. The normal threshold of hearing is around
a. 60-80 db
b. 45-60 db
c. 100-120 db
d. 25-45 db
3. The refrigerant commonly used for domestic refrigerators is
a. alcohol
b. ammonia
c. neon
d. None of the above

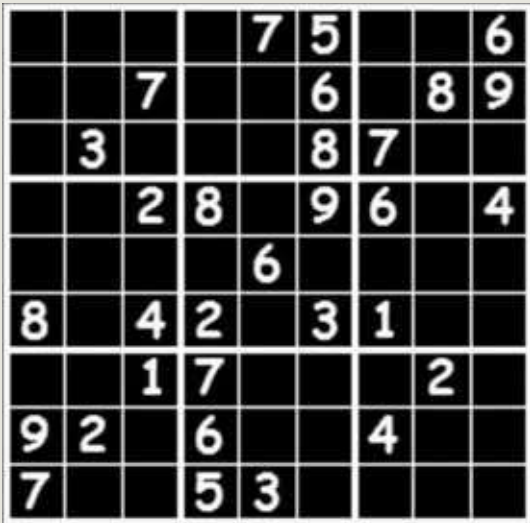
Answers: 1. c 2. d 3. b

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



BOGGLER



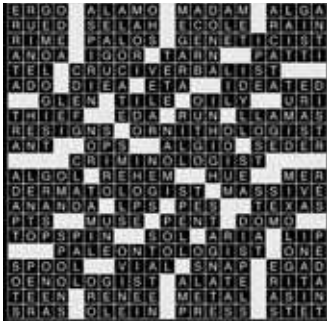
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JANUARY 26)



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



TIPS FOR ORDERING FOOD DELIVERY

Bring the restaurant home

Most people, these days, love to order food from their favourite restaurants. While visiting restaurants is a skeptical proposition for many, in view of the current pandemic and the inherent risks, ordering food is a better option for enjoying meals prepared by expert chefs on your own dining table. However, did you know that there are certain guidelines one needs to follow while ordering online food delivery?

The steady growth in food delivery trends is not due to the pandemic – in fact, it had received a setback during the past year. The growth is mostly driven by millennials and younger generations who are reliant on apps and gig economy services, says Jeremy Kuo, co-founder and director of Marketing of Menufy, an online food ordering platform serving restaurants and millions of their customers across US cities.

According to *USA Today*, recent research has found that 77 percent of millennials have used a food delivery service in the last 90 days, which is 26 percent more than all diners in the United States.

Today, getting food delivered is easier than ever, thanks to third-party ordering systems and apps which enable customers to order food from a host of restaurants from a single source. But, before you decide and dial, or login and place your order online, consider some tips that can make sure you have the best experience possible when ordering food:

Order early enough

Many people use food delivery as a backup option when they don't want to cook or are tired after work. However, avoid last minute impulses and plan ahead, so that you and your family won't be stuck hungry and waiting around for your meal.

Order your food before you leave work for the day or while you're attending to another errand. Most food delivery services provide estimated delivery times which give a rough idea of when you can expect your food to arrive.

Order healthy

Planning food delivery can also benefit your health. If you are trying to eat healthier or lose

weight, schedule your delivery in advance by ordering before you are starving. The less hungry you are, the more likely it is that you'll make a better food choice, like a salad or other lower-calorie option.

If you know of a specific restaurant that has healthy options but usually takes longer than a fast-food business, you can plan accordingly by ordering earlier.

Leave clear instructions

It's crucial to make delivery as easy as possible for the drivers delivering your food. Leave clear directions during the ordering process in case the driver isn't familiar with your neighbourhood. Include street details or landmarks close to your home.

Delivery preferences are important, too. If you have children sleeping and you don't want to wake them, leave instructions for the driver



Today, getting food delivered is easier than ever, thanks to third-party ordering systems and apps which enable customers to order food from a host of restaurants from a single source

to knock instead of ringing the doorbell. Also, if you are on your way home, call the delivery guy to inform him how far away you are.

Prep your house

It's also essential to make things easy for your driver once they get to your house. Make sure there aren't any obstacles preventing them from coming to the door (like pets, or closed barricades/gates, street diversions) and that the outside of your house is adequately lit and your house number or name plate is visible.

Drivers also want to feel safe when delivering, so proper lighting will ensure they know where to go and can see who is answering the door.

**Always tip**

Don't take pride in the thought that you have paid in advance for the food and service – be kind to the delivery guy, he will always make sure you are well served whenever you order food. Most delivery drivers rely on tips to ensure they are making a decent hourly wage.

Tipping 10-15% for large food orders (such as several pizzas or takeaways for multiple people) is standard practice. It's also polite to tip more if your delivery has been done during bad weather or on a special request for express delivery. For smaller orders (for one or two people), 500baiza – RO1 is considered a reasonable tip.

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طلب تسجيل العلامة التجارية رقم : 129678

الفئة 39 أنشطة وكالات السفر

و مشغلي الجولات السياحية.



باسم : تاي للخدمات ش م م

العنوان : محافظة مسقط / بوشهر

ص ب 608 الرمز البريدي 112 سلطنة عمان

الجنسية : عمانية

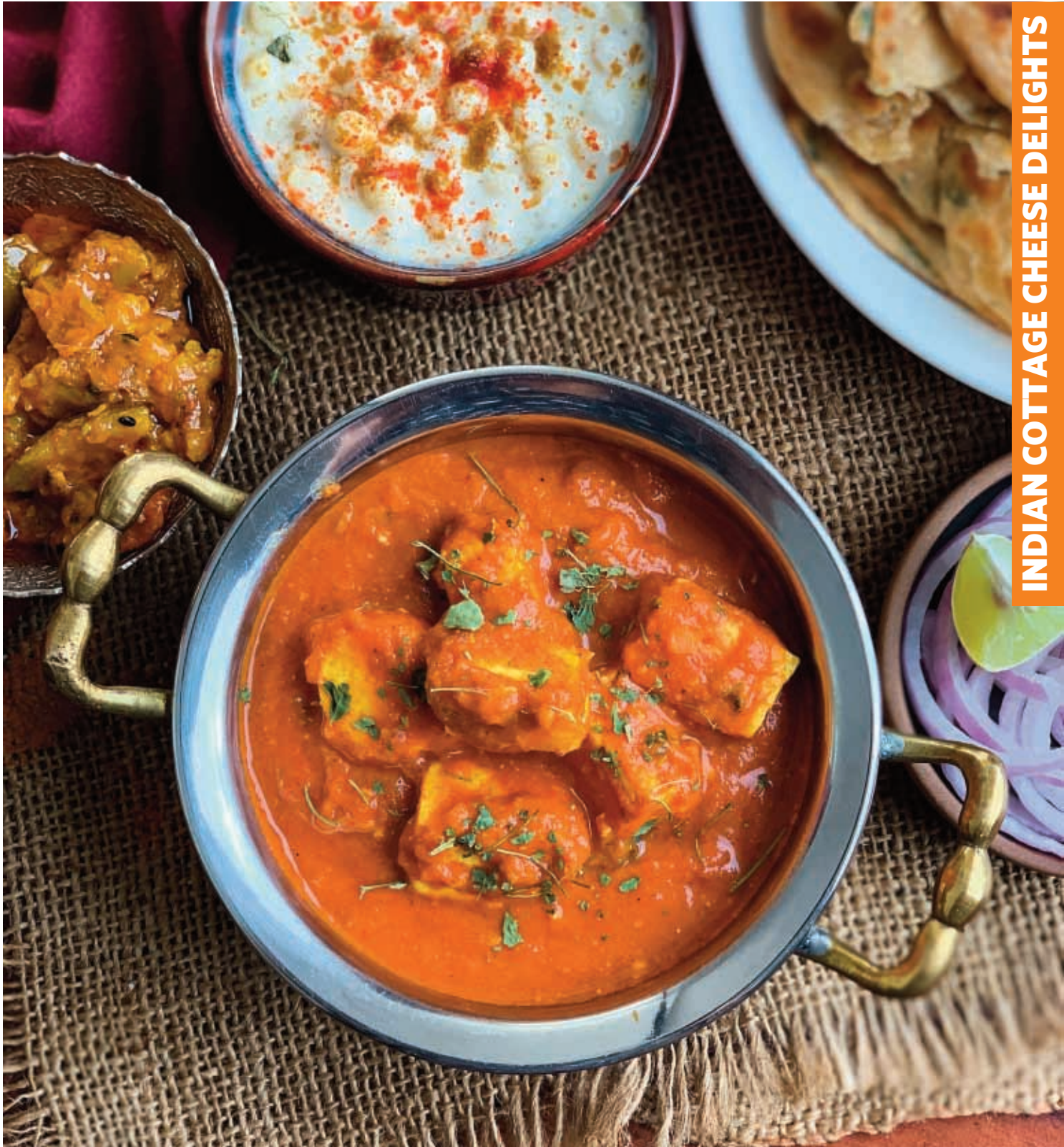
تاريخ الإيداع : 27/06/2019

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Black Rock Investments



INDIAN COTTAGE CHEESE DELIGHTS



PANEER IN YOUR PAN

Paneer is a mild Indian cottage cheese that can be prepared at home as well as bought at stores in the form of blocks or cubes. Paneer is prepared by adding either lemon juice or vinegar to hot milk to separate the curds from the whey. The curds are drained in a muslin cloth and the excess water is pressed out. It is then dipped in chilled water for 2-3 hours to improve its texture and solidify. It has to be then stored in a freezer to retain its form, if not being used immediately.

Some people simply love the soft, fluffy texture of this Indian cheese in grilled items as well as curries while there are others who dismiss it as 'tasteless', compared with other cheeses. The fact is, one has to cultivate a taste for paneer to be able to enjoy it in its multiple forms in Indian cuisine as well as in Pakistani cuisine (especially in Peshawar) and Bangladeshi cuisine (especially in Dhaka, where it is called Ponir).

Widely used in traditional Indian cuisine, paneer is often used for dishes as a substitute for non-vegetarian fare. You can enjoy 'butter paneer masala' instead of 'butter chicken' or 'paneer tikka' skewers instead of 'chicken tikka', even scrambled paneer to resemble scrambled eggs. Paneer is also used in many Indian versions of vegetarian Chinese dishes.

When you want to take a sabbatical from non-vegetarian food, yet enjoy the same flavours associated with some all-time favourites, paneer is the ideal substitute you are looking for! Given here are three popular paneer dishes that will make you forget non-vegetarian food:

Paneer Peshawari

- Ingredients**
 - 400g paneer - cut into big cubes
 - 2 onions - minced, 1 tomato - minced
 - 1 cup tomato puree
 - 2tbsp cashewnuts - soaked in warm water
 - 2tbsp fresh cream
 - 1tsp cumin seeds, 1 bay leaf
 - 1tbsp ginger-garlic paste
 - ¼tsp turmeric powder
 - 1tsp cumin powder
 - 1tsp garam masala powder
 - 2tsp Kashmiri chilli powder
 - 2tsp coriander powder
 - 1tbsp kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves)

- Method**

Soak the cashew nuts in warm water for 10 minutes. Blend the soaked cashews into a smooth paste and transfer to a bowl. Heat butter in a large pan on medium flame. Once the butter has melted, add the cumin seeds and bay leaf, and let the cumin seeds sizzle. To this, add ginger-garlic paste, chopped onions and saute for 2-3 minutes, until the onions turn translucent. Add the tomato and let it cook till soft. Then add the cumin powder, Kashmiri chilli powder, turmeric powder,

- garam masala powder, coriander powder and mix well. Stir the spices for a few seconds and then add in the tomato puree and cashew paste. Cook for about 5 minutes on medium heat until the gravy thickens and the tomato and cashews combine well along with the spices to form a creamy gravy. Add ½ cup water and cook for a minute, if the gravy thickens fast. Stir in the paneer slices, kasuri methi, and honey and simmer for another 5 minutes. Adjust the salt and spices in the gravy to suit your taste. Once done, stir in the cream into the gravy and serve hot.



Paneer Tikka

- Ingredients**
 - 150g thick yogurt, 1tbsp ginger-garlic paste
 - 2tbsp mustard oil, 2tsp coriander powder
 - 1tsp each chaat masala, Kashmiri chilli powder
 - 1tsp garam masala, ½tsp red chilli powder
 - 1tsp kasuri methi, ½tsp salt, Juice of 1 lemon
 - 2tbsp each chopped cilantro, mint leaves
 - 300g paneer cubes, 1 large onion - quartered
 - 1 large bell pepper - chopped to 2cm cubes
 - Mint chutney, onion rings - to serve

- Method**

Whisk the yogurt in a large bowl until smooth.

- Add all the ingredients for marinade to the yogurt (ginger garlic paste, mustard oil, coriander powder, chaat masala, Kashmiri red chilli powder, garam masala, red chilli powder, kasuri methi and salt). Whisk to combine everything together. Add in juice of lemon along with chopped cilantro and mint. Mix well. Stir in the paneer cubes, onion and bell peppers. Mix until all the paneer pieces and veggies are well coated with the marinade. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for minimum for 1 hour. Then, thread the paneer pieces on bamboo skewers along with petals of onion and chopped peppers, alternating with each other.

- Meanwhile, pre-heat oven to 200° C for good 15-20 minutes. Arrange all the prepared skewers on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Spray the tikka with oil spray or drizzle oil on each. (This is important so that the veggies don't dry out.) Grill at 200° C for 10 minutes, then turn on the broil and broil for 2 to 3 minutes until paneer pieces look little charred. Remove from oven, squeeze lemon juice, sprinkle chaat masala and serve with cilantro mint chutney. You may also grill the skewers on a charcoal furnace, limiting the time to just 5-6 minutes, and turning them once in between.

Paneer Schezwan

- Ingredients****For frying paneer**
 - ¼ cup all-purpose flour, ¼ cup corn flour
 - ¼tsp pepper, 1tsp schezwan sauce
 - ¼tsp salt, ½ cup water, 1 cup paneer cubes, oil for frying

- Other ingredients**
 - 2tsp corn flour, 3tsp oil, 4 cloves garlic - minced
 - 3cm piece ginger - minced, 2 green chillies - slit
 - 2 spring onions - chopped fine
 - ½ capsicum - chopped, 2tbsp schezwan sauce
 - 1tbsp vinegar, 2tbsp soy sauce
 - ½tsp sugar, ½tsp salt

- Method**

First, season the paneer cubes at room temperature with pepper, salt, and schezwan sauce. The add the flour and water and mix well so that all the cubes get a smooth coating. Heat oil in a pan and fry the coated paneer cubes until golden brown. Set aside to cool.

In a large wok, heat 3tsp oil and saute garlic, ginger and green chillies on high flame. Then add spring onion (reserve some of the green portion for garnish) and saute on high flame for 1 minute. Add capsicum and continue to saute till it slightly changes colour. Add schezwan sauce, vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, and salt. Mix well and saute for a minute. Prepare a corn-flour slurry with 2tsp corn flour and ¼ cup of water, and add. Cook till the gravy slightly thickens and turns glossy. Now, add the fried paneer and mix gently, making sure the sauce has coated all pieces uniformly. Transfer the schezwan paneer to a serving bowl and garnish with reserved spring onion greens. Serve with fried rice.



Europe's top clubs face over \$2bn coronavirus hit: Report

London, UK - The coronavirus pandemic could cost Europe's 20 highest-earning football clubs over US\$2.4bn, according to forecasts from financial experts Deloitte.

Deloitte's latest Football Money League report shows that revenues of the top-20 clubs analysed fell by US\$1.3m in the 2019-20 season due to closed stadiums and television rebates.

Some of that revenue will be recouped in the accounts for

the 2020-21 season.

The financial year at most clubs ends on June 30, meaning some prize money and broadcast income for domestic leagues and European competitions that completed beyond that date is not included in last season's figures.

However, the ongoing effects of the virus will make an even bigger dent on club finances in 2020-21 with stadia largely shut to supporters across the continent for the entire season

so far and little sign of restrictions being eased.

Even as the games have gone on behind closed doors, broadcasters have been compensated for a disruption to the original schedule and the lack of atmosphere produced by empty stadiums.

Rebates for Europe's 'top five' leagues in England, Spain, Germany, France and Italy, and UEFA's Champions League and Europa League competitions already total almost US\$1.45bn.

"We usually release our money league and talk about the growth in revenue but of course football is not immune to the COVID-19 pandemic," said Tim Bridge of Deloitte's Sports Business Group.

"The revenue that's been missed out on is driven by the lack of fans in the stadium, the lack of interaction on a matchday - fans spending in the club shop and buying food and drink - and there is an element that relates to revenue that

broadcasters have either clawed back or deferred to next year."

Spanish giants Barcelona maintained their position at the top of the revenue table despite their income falling 15 per cent to US\$868.6mn. Real Madrid remain second.

Bayern Munich leapfrogged Manchester United into third due to the latter missing out on Champions League football last season. In fourth, United are still the highest-ranking English club among seven English

DELOITTE FOOTBALL MONEY LEAGUE TABLE

(last year's position in brackets)

1	(1)	Barcelona	US\$869.3mn
2	(2)	Real Madrid	US\$869.1mn
3	(4)	Bayern Munich	US\$770.9mn
4	(3)	Manchester United	US\$705.6mn
5	(7)	Liverpool	US\$679.1mn
6	(6)	Manchester City	US\$667.7mn
7	(5)	Paris Saint-Germain	US\$657.2mn
8	(9)	Chelsea	US\$571mn
9	(8)	Tottenham Hotspur	US\$541.8mn
10	(10)	Juventus	US\$483.7mn

Premier League sides - also featuring Liverpool, Manchester City, Chelsea, Tottenham

Hotspur, Arsenal and Everton - in the top-20.

AFP

Nadal takes veiled swipe at Djokovic

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Melbourne, Australia - Rafael Nadal has taken an apparent swipe at Novak Djokovic over his requests for quarantined players preparing for the Australian Open, saying not everyone felt the need to 'advertise' how they were trying to help.

The Serbian world No 2 issued a list of suggestions to Tennis Australia last week on behalf of 72 players unable to leave their Melbourne hotel rooms after COVID-19 cases were detected on their planes to Australia.

They reportedly included moving players into private homes with tennis courts and getting them better meals.

But his requests fell on deaf ears, while Australian media portrayed players as petulant and selfish and fellow star Nick Kyrgios called Djokovic a 'tool'.

Djokovic later issued an open letter to say his 'good intentions for my fellow competitors in

Melbourne have been misconstrued'.

"We all try to help each other," Spanish great Nadal told ESPN on Tuesday from Adelaide, where he and Djokovic are quarantining ahead of the year's opening Grand Slam in Melbourne on February 8.

"Some need to make public everything they do to help others," he added, in remarks widely seen as referring to Djokovic.

"Others... do it in a more private way without having to publish or advertise everything we're doing."

While most players are undergoing a mandatory 14 days of quarantine in Melbourne, Nadal, Djokovic and other superstars of the game including Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka jetted into Adelaide, where they are due to play an exhibition on Friday.

It sparked mutterings about preferential treatment, and



A file photo of Rafael Nadal (right) and Novak Djokovic

Nadal admitted it had been smoother sailing.

"In Adelaide, conditions have been better than most players in Melbourne," he said.

"But there are players in Melbourne who have larger

rooms where they can develop physical activities, others have smaller rooms and can't have contact with their coach and their physical trainer.

"Where's the line? It's an ethical issue. Everyone has their

own opinion and they are all respectable."

'Pitiful quarantine conditions'

A Spanish player who attracted criticism for hitting out

at coronavirus quarantine rules and then testing positive has complained she is being forced to endure 'pitiful' conditions.

World No 67 Paula Badosa told Spanish newspaper *Marca* she felt abandoned in a small Melbourne hotel room after being diagnosed with the virus.

The 23 year old was among several players who complained about their quarantine ahead of the delayed, season-opening Grand Slam, before apologising on Twitter last week.

But in a new salvo Badosa, who was moved to a different hotel after testing positive, told *Marca* the Melbourne quarantine was one of the worst experiences of her career.

"I don't have windows in my room that is barely 15sqm," she said, in comments published on Monday. "It's obvious that the only thing I breathe in is the virus. I have asked for cleaning products, like a vacuum cleaner, but they haven't given me anything."

Tournament organisers previously said they were provid-

ing exercise equipment for players, many of whom turned their rooms into makeshift gyms and have been hitting balls against hotel walls.

But Badosa said she had been waiting five days for training equipment to be sent to her room. "I feel abandoned because I don't have the material to train with, that I asked for five days ago," she said.

"They don't inform me about the type of virus I have, even though after three days it is known. No information about the tournament."

Badosa was one of 72 players confined to their hotel rooms for 14 days on arrival after positive cases were detected on their flights to Australia. Other players were allowed out to train for five hours a day.

The Australian Open, delayed for three weeks over coronavirus complications, is scheduled to begin on February 8 after a series of build-up tournaments in Melbourne.

AFP



Undefeated MCCC are U19 champs

LOCAL CRICKET

It was a display of domination and determination by the Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre (MCCC) boys' as they emerged worthy winners of Oman Cricket 2020-2021 U19 Junior League on Saturday.

Playing in their concluding match of the six-team tournament, MCCC ended their season on a high with a seven-wicket win over Boshers Sports Centre-A (BSC-A) at Al Amerat.

MCCC's fifth successive win meant they stayed unbeaten throughout their campaign to top the standings by grabbing all the ten points at stake.

Though the remaining teams have yet to complete their engagements, MCCC's all-win record secured them the trophy. ISM have six points from four games and BSC-A have four points from three games.

On Saturday, Sameer Mohammed and Adeel Abbas excelled for MCCC as Boshers Sports Centre-A, batting first, was bowled out for 154 in 46.3 overs. Prathiesh HR and Sameer



MCCC boys after winning their fifth successive match to stay unbeaten and emerge the Oman Cricket U19 league champions

picked up four wickets each. Arjun Rajesh top-scored for BSC-A with a solid 41 while Sanin Fahad chipped in with 28.

MCCC achieved the win in the 38th over, scoring 156 for three, thanks to knocks from Adeel (42), Aaryan Nishit Punja (40 n.o.) and Sameer (36 n.o.).

BRIEF SCORES

U19 League (50-over-a-side): Boshers Sports Centre-A 154 in 46.3 overs (Arjun 41; Prathiesh 4-23, Sameer 4-25, Adeel 2-36) lost to MCCC 156-3 in 37.5 overs (Adeel 42, Aaryan Nishit 40 n.o., Sameer 36 n.o.).

U16 (30-over-a-side): ISWK 307-8 (Atharva Shrikant 95, Abhas Ajay 74, Vardhan Sameer 57; Puladith Omidu 4-64, Devin Wijayananda 2-51) beat SLSM 108-9 (Devin 41; Abhas 3-21, Krishhang Srivastava 2-8).

U13 (T20): ISWK-A 177-6

(Nilaksh Vats 84; Patel Dhyan 2-28, Khasbage Amish 2-23) beat ISM 137-9 (Pachisia Ojjas 72; Kavish Rajeshkumar 2-17).

U13: MCCC Red 27 in 14.3 overs (Abhinav Singh 3-1) lost to Boshers Sports Centre-A 28-0 in 5 overs (Ayman Shaikh 18).



A DAY OF TUMBLING WICKETS

Having bowled SA out for 220, Pakistan were a precarious 33 for four at stumps on the first day



Pakistan opener Abid Ali is castled by South Africa's Kagiso Rabada (not in photo) on the opening day of the first Test match in Karachi, Pakistan, on Tuesday

**PAKISTAN VS SOUTH AFRICA
FIRST TEST: DAY ONE**

Karachi, Pakistan - Is it possible to dominate a day and walk off demoralised, fearing the next one? That might be how Pakistan view proceedings on Tuesday after an absorbing opening day of hard-fought Test cricket that should have left them well on top, but had a nasty sting lying in wait in the fading light in Karachi.

Having bowled South Africa out in just over two sessions for 220, playing tricks on the visitors' mind with the ball and in the field, Pakistan should have

found themselves sitting pretty. Instead, having lost their openers and Babar Azam cheaply in the final hour, they are perched precariously at 33 for four.

Pakistan wanted to prepare a surface that afforded as little assistance to the quicks as possible given the way Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje tormented them after tea.

While variable bounce was an uncomfortable weapon for Pakistan's spinners, it was downright lethal when Rabada used it, removing Abid Ali with one that kept low and debutant

Imran Butt with another that reared up and took his glove.

And just when it seemed there was nothing South Africa could do to salvage an incriminatingly ordinary batting performance, Keshav Maharaj popped up to trap Babar in front, while Nortje sent the nightwatchman Shaheen Afridi on his way in the next over.

Having won the toss, South Africa had opted to bat, and it looked like they had bought Pakistan's line about this being a series dominated by spin hook, line and sinker as they prepared to field three of their own.

That Tabraiz Shamsi pulled up because of back spasms just before the toss might end up being a blessing in disguise for the impression the quicks would make towards the end of the day.

Elgar and Aiden Markram welcomed Hasan Ali back to Test cricket with five fours in his first two overs to send South Africa off to a breezy start. That approach, though refreshingly entertaining, was punctuated by a couple of wickets, with Afridi getting one to seam away from Markram, Butt diving to his left at second slip to pouch the edge.

The wicket didn't stymie

South Africa, with Elgar and Rassie van der Dussen keeping the scoreboard ticking. Well into the second hour, the batsmen had the edge before a moment of self-destruction handed Pakistan a wicket that might as well have been gift-wrapped.

Van der Dussen set off for a single Elgar hadn't agreed to, and with the non-striker only turning him down after he was halfway down the pitch, Rizwan effected the run-out.

The game was blown wide open in a frantic middle session as Pakistan ran through a South African middle order. When Faf

du Plessis was put down off the first ball after lunch, it seemed like an omen, and thus it proved when a magnificent Yasir Shah leg-break kissed his outside edge through to Mohammad Rizwan.

South Africa tried to hit their way through the looming threat without looking convincing. Quinton de Kock fell hoicking Nauman Ali to wide midwicket.

Elgar had put together a nifty little innings. When a couple of authoritative boundaries off Afridi took him to a half-century, he would have had thoughts of converting it into three figures, but poor shot selection struck

SCOREBOARD		
SOUTH AFRICA 1 ST INNINGS		
D Elgar	c Azam b N Ali	58
A Markram	c Butt b Afridi	13
R van der Dussen	run out	17
F du Plessis	c Rizwan b Shah	23
Q de Kock	c Butt b N Ali	15
T Bavuma	run out	17
G Linde	c sub (M Nawaz)	
	b H Ali	35
K Maharaj	b Shah	0
K Rabada	not out	21
A Nortje	b Shah	0
L Ngidi	lbw b Afridi	8
Extras:	(b 5, lb 1, nb 7)	13
TOTAL:	220 in 69.2 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-63, 3-108, 4-133, 5-136, 6-179, 7-179, 8-194, 9-195, 10-220		
Bowling: S S Afridi 11.2-0-49-2, H Ali 14-5-61-1, F Ashraf 5-0-12-0, N Ali 17-4-38-2, Y Shah 22-6-54-3		
PAKISTAN 1 ST INNINGS		
I Butt	c sub (K Petersen)	9
	b Rabada	
Abid Ali	b Rabada	4
Azhar Ali	not out	5
B Azam	lbw b Maharaj	7
S S Afridi	b Nortje	0
F Alam	not out	5
Extras:	(nb 3)	3
TOTAL:	33 for four in 18 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-15, 3-26, 4-27		
Bowling: K Rabada 6-3-8-2, A Nortje 7-2-20-1, L Ngidi 3-0-5-0, K Maharaj 2-2-0-1		

once more. He tried to drive Nauman away from his body, playing for the turn that never happened, and offered first slip a straightforward catch.

George Linde and Temba Bavuma provided some resistance, but the self-destruct button was never far away. Minutes before tea, Bavuma found himself calling for a suicidal extra run, and when Hasan's throw from fine leg reached Rizwan, a valiant dive didn't prove enough.

Pakistan's stranglehold would only deepen after tea, with the hosts skittling out South Africa inside the first hour of the final session.

That South Africa managed to get to 220 was thanks only to a happy-go-lucky 25-run stand between Lungi Ngidi and Rabada for the tenth wicket. Yasir ended with three while Afridi book-ended the innings by claiming No 11 Ngidi just as he had dismissed opener Markram.

Pakistan were walking off in full command. An hour later, they would walk off once more, having ceded all control to a South Africa side that had undone six hours of damage inside 18 spellbinding overs.

Cricinfo

UAE's Naveed, Anwar guilty of corruption

Dubai, UAE - The ICC has found UAE players Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman Anwar guilty of offences relating to attempted match-fixing during the 2019 T20 World Cup qualifying tournament. The verdict follows a hearing by an independent anti-corruption tribunal, with the ICC saying in a statement that 'the pair remain suspended and sanctions will follow in due course'.

The two are among UAE's most experienced international cricketers. Anwar, now 41, is their highest run-getter across the ODI and T20I formats, and 33-year-old Naveed their most prolific wicket-taker and a former captain. Naveed and Anwar were charged under the ICC anti-corruption code in October 2019, and suspended days before the start of the qualifiers in the UAE.

Naveed, in addition, was also found guilty of breaching the same two codes during the T10 League in 2019, which was also held in the UAE. ESPNcricinfo understands the two players had allegedly stood to make around US\$272,000 if they had been successful in impacting the results during the qualifiers.

Cricinfo

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Spurs survive Wycombe scare

ENGLISH FA CUP

High Wycombe, UK - Tottenham Hotspur left it late to see off Championship strugglers Wycombe Wanderers 4-1 with three goals in the final four minutes to reach the English FA Cup fifth round on Monday night.

Jose Mourinho took the chance to leave Harry Kane, Son Heung-min and Tanguy Ndombele on the bench with Spurs facing a brutal schedule across four competitions in the coming months.

But all three were needed in the second-half to get past a Wycombe side that have won just three times in 23 games in the second-tier Championship this season.

"The attitude was very good. The players I brought from the bench come with the intention of bringing something to the team, so overall I think it was a good squad performance and a good result," Mourinho told *BT Sport*.

Gareth Bale was given a rare start in his second spell at Spurs by Mourinho, but the on-loan Real Madrid winger missed three big chances early on to give the visitors the lead.

Instead, Tottenham were forced to come from behind when Fred Onyedinna swept home at the far post on 25 minutes.

Japhet Tanganga and Moussa Sissoko struck the crossbar as chances continued to come and go for Mourinho's men until Bale made amends for his earlier misses by equalising in first-half stoppage time.



Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Winks (right) shoots to score their second goal during the English FA Cup fourth-round match against Wycombe Wanderers at Adams Park Stadium in High Wycombe, UK, on Monday night (AFP)

Tottenham host Liverpool in the English Premier League (EPL) on Thursday, but Mourinho held nothing in reserve as he tries to end the club's 13-year wait for a trophy by sending on Kane, Son and Ndombele after the break.

An extra 30 minutes were the last thing Spurs needed and they

finally made the breakthrough when Harry Winks curled home from the edge of the area after Kane had been denied by Ryan Allsop.

Ndombele has been a player transformed in recent weeks after a difficult first season in England following his move from

Lyon for Tottenham's club record fee.

The Frenchman tapped home Son's pass to make it 3-1 and then showed stunning footwork to bamboozle the Wycombe defence and fire in at the near post in stoppage time.

"He's very creative. He's one

of these players that can break the balance," added Mourinho on Ndombele starting to deliver on his US\$73mn, price tag. "On top of that, if he can score a goal for us that's even better."

Spurs will face Everton away in the last-16 next month.

AFP

Bale gets a boost with praise from Mourinho

London, UK - Gareth Bale's goal-scoring performance was labelled as 'good' by Tottenham Hotspur manager Jose Mourinho after the side's win against Wycombe on Monday.

Mourinho's assessment will boost the spirits of the 31 year old Wales star, who has had an underwhelming second spell at Spurs since coming on a season long loan from Real Madrid.

He has been hampered by fitness issues, and mostly been confined to Europa League games, playing just 45 minutes of English Premier League football since early November.

Mourinho, though played him for the full 90 minutes of the Wycombe game.

The Spurs boss said his overall performance had been pleasing.

"It was good," said Mourinho. "Some good movement. Some one against one, beating people, attacking people, creating chances. Of course scoring a goal."

Mourinho had spoken ahead of the game of how Bale could not expect to be given game time and that he had to earn it on what he did on the training ground.

"Apart from that I never felt



Gareth Bale in action on Monday

he couldn't play the 90 minutes," he said. "I never felt that I needed to change him.

"Of course the Championship is a good, competitive level and the aggression is high and the intensity is good. "So I'm happy."

Mourinho's side are still involved in four competition's including the title race and face champions Liverpool on Thursday.

Should the Portuguese wish for a relaxing moment prior to that his Wycombe counterpart Gareth Ainsworth, who sings in a rock band, gave him a tantalising invite.

"He (Mourinho) said he might not be able to sing but I bet he can play a mean tambourine," said Ainsworth.

AFP



Nacho Fernandez

Spain's Nacho tests positive, says Real

SPANISH LEAGUE

Madrid, Spain - Spain defender Nacho Fernandez has tested positive for the coronavirus, Real Madrid announced on Monday.

The Spanish champions offered no further details in a statement published late on Monday evening.

Nacho did not play in Madrid's 4-1 win at Alavez on Saturday which kept Zinedine Zidane's side second in La Liga,

seven points behind city rivals Atletico Madrid having played a game more. He has played ten times in all competitions for Madrid this season.

Madrid's announcement comes three days after Zidane was revealed to have tested positive for the virus, forcing the Frenchman to miss his side's comfortable win at the weekend.

AFP

Chelsea's sacking of Lampard is no surprise, says Rangers boss Gerrard

London, UK - Frank Lampard should have been supported by the Chelsea board, said Rangers manager Steven Gerrard on Tuesday, a day after his former England teammate's sacking.

Gerrard admitted 'it was no surprise', given Chelsea's habit of sacking managers since Roman Abramovich bought the club in 2003.

Lampard was fired on Monday, the day after a 3-1 win over Championship side Luton in the FA Cup, due to a poor run of league form that had seen the Blues slip out of title contention.

However, Gerrard - who along with fellow midfielder Lampard was part of the so-called 'golden generation' of England players - said he should have been given more time.

"I'm disappointed for him," said Gerrard.

"I thought it was a very swift



Frank Lampard

exit on the back of a positive result at the weekend (3-1 win in the FA Cup).

"I did think it was an opportunity for Chelsea to really reach out and support him [Frank Lampard] during this tough period rather than do what they have done.

"But Chelsea have got history for that so it was no surprise."

Gerrard has turned round the fortunes of Rangers since he became manager in 2018 and they look set for a first league title since 2011 as they hold a 23-point lead over bitter rivals Celtic. He believes Lampard -



I did think it was an opportunity for Chelsea to really reach out and support him [Frank Lampard] during this tough period rather than do what they have done. But Chelsea have got history for that

STEVEN GERRARD

who guided Chelsea to fourth spot and the FA Cup final in his first season in charge - will bounce back.

"I'm gutted for Frank, he's someone I respect greatly," said Gerrard. "But knowing the guy, he will be back in no time.

"He will dust himself down

and get back involved. He will use this time to spend with his family. He's obviously got a young family and one on the way."

Lampard was appointed Chelsea manager in July 2019 succeeding Maurizio Sarri.

AFP

Former Wales captain Williams announces his retirement

London, UK - Ashley Williams who captained Wales to a surprise appearance at the Euro 2016 semifinals announced his retirement on Tuesday.

The 36 year old defender said the last four tie, which they lost to eventual champions Portugal, would remain in his memory forever.

Williams scored in the memorable 3-1 quarterfinal win over fancied Belgium as his country reached an international tournament for the first time since 1958.

Capped 86 times for his country, the former Swansea centre-back had a less successful time at Everton before spells at Stoke and Bristol City.

"After consideration of recent offers to continue playing, I would like to announce my retirement as a professional footballer," he said in a post on Instagram.

"Captaining Wales in a semifinal (of the) European Championships in 2016 was my greatest achievement and something I will never forget."

Williams, who made his last international appearance in June 2019, said he had lived a dream of rising through the leagues to the highest level.

"It has been an honour to play 741 games across all levels of the English football leagues and to represent some incredible teams," he said.

"It has been an unbelievable journey and one I will look back on with my family and be immensely proud of.

"Starting from non-league to playing at the highest level in the

Premier League, as well as representing my country on 86 occasions, was beyond my wildest dreams."

Williams said this would not be the end of his love affair with football, simply moving onto a new chapter.

"Football has taught me so much both on and off the field and I will take this with me into the next chapter," he said.

"I look forward to still being involved in the game in the future."

AFP



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