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KHAZAEN LAND PORT BEGINS OPERATIONS

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His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik visited the Special Task Force Command of ROP in the wilayat of Seeb on Wednesday



NEWS BRIEFS

PDO FUNDS RO3.7MN FOR 170 SCHOLARSHIPS

Muscat - The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) signed an agreement of cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to fund 170 scholarships for General Education Diploma (GED) graduates of the 2020/2021 academic year on Wednesday.

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Rahma Ibrahim al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and Abdulamir Abdullhussain al Ajmi, director of External Affairs and Value Creation at PDO.

The agreement allocates a sum of RO3,774,000 provided by PDO to fund Bachelor's degree scholarships for students from concession areas.

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate's economy is recovering speedily from the pandemic-induced slowdown, thanks to the government's stimulus packages and nationwide vaccination programme which enabled economic activities to fully reopen.

H E Dr Said Mohammed Ahmad al Saqri, Minister of Economy, has confirmed that economic recovery is taking place "with initial indicators suggesting reassuring and constant improvements in the economy".

In a statement to Radio Oman, he pointed out that there is clear growth also in the labour market, which is expected to witness employment of additional 32,000 Omanis this year.

Referring to the ten per cent



growth in the sultanate's nominal GDP recorded in the first half of 2021, H E Saqri said, "This positive growth in economic performance is a significant improvement compared to the same period of last year when the sultanate's economy contracted."

He also noted that interna-

tional credit rating agencies have upgraded their outlook on the sultanate's sovereign ratings which indicate that there is an initial improvement in economic performance despite repercussions of the pandemic.

H E Saqri explained that the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-

2025) will work to restore economic growth, accelerate economic activities and achieve balanced economic and social development through the implementation of several programmes, initiatives and projects proposed by his ministry and relevant government agencies.

Oman, Saudi sign MoU to train 1,000 nationals in IT, IoT

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of communications and information technology on Wednesday in Riyadh.

The MoU was signed by H E Said Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Abdullah Amer al Swaha, Saudi Minister of Communication and Information Technology.

The agreement stipulates co-operation in the fields of digital transformation, investment in digital economy, and nurturing



H E Said Hamoud al Ma'awali and Abdullah Amer al Swaha at the MoU signing ceremony in Riyadh on Wednesday (ONA)

talent and technology companies. It also covers the scope of cooperation in exchanging best practices and expertise, as well as participating in meetings, joint

work sessions and implementing joint programmes and initiatives.

The joint initiatives will include a training programme for 1,000 participants in the field of cyber-

security, digital transformation, web development, Python programming and the Internet of Things (IoT). Additionally, 25,000 participants will benefit from the Digital Giving Webinar.

The Oman and Saudi sides also held a session of talks in Riyadh on regulating air transport services. The Omani side was headed by Naif Ali al Abri, chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, whilst the Saudi side was led by Abdulaziz Abdullah al Duailiej, president of the General Authority of Civil Aviation.

The talks reviewed air traffic between the two countries, as well as investment and logistic opportunities in the civil aviation sector.

"Raising the efficiency of public finance management will help achieve and address the current economic conditions which were caused by a drop in oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic."

H E Dr Saqri informed that an electronic programme is being developed with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology that will link the Ministry of Economy with other government agencies to monitor performance and implementation of the Tenth Five-Year Plan programmes.

3.5% GDP growth sought in 10th Five-Year Plan

The Tenth Five-Year Plan seeks to achieve real GDP growth rate of 3.5 per cent and increase private sector investments to about 60 per cent. The plan also seeks

to achieve real growth rate of non-oil activities within the range of 2.3 per cent and increase investments to reach about 20 per cent of GDP.

Speaking about the sultanate's Medium-Term Fiscal Plan, H E Saqri said, "The plan aims to address the challenges resulting from the decline in oil prices, collapse of public revenues, higher deficit, increase in public debt and decrease in sovereign credit ratings. The plan also aims to maintain overall economic performance, including growth and the purchasing power of the Omani rial."

According to the minister, the contribution of small and medium enterprises to the sultanate's GDP has reached 17 per cent. "We seek to increase the contribution of SMEs to GDP to 30 per cent by the end of 2025."

WHO grants approval to India's Covaxin jab

Geneva, Switzerland - The World Health Organization said on Wednesday it had issued an emergency use listing (EUL) for Covaxin, a vaccine against COVID-19 produced by India's Bharat Biotech.

Found to have 78 per cent efficacy after two doses spread over four weeks, the vaccine "is extremely suitable for low- and middle-income countries due to easy storage requirements," the UN body said in a statement.

Covaxin is the first vaccine completely developed and manufactured in India to receive WHO approval.

Based on inactivated coronavirus antigens, it becomes the eighth vaccine against COVID-19 on the WHO's list, including



others from Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Sinopharm and Sinovac.

WHO emergency approval, which includes an assessment of clinical trial data, can speed up international recognition of vaccines.

AFP



On-campus classes of KG to Grade 8 in ISM to start Nov end



US gives final nod to Pfizer's vaccine for kids aged 5-11



Pact signed to purchase wheat from farmers

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed an agreement on Wednesday with Oman Flour Mills Company to purchase wheat crop from Omani farmers following the 2022 harvest season.

The agreement aims to enhance food security and support farmers.

"The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has distributed 30 tonnes of wheat seeds to farmers in the Najd area of Dhofar governorate as part of a programme to encourage wheat cultivation in the sultanate," a ministry official said.

Wheat production grew by 19 per cent in Oman during the 2020/2021 agricultural season to 2,649 tonnes, he informed. The total area under wheat cultivation in the 2020/2021 season was 2,449 acres - a 19.6 per cent growth over the previous season.



(Supplied photo)

"The ministry accords much attention and exerts efforts to enhance the wheat crop in co-operation with several international, regional and local organisations and research centres through programmes to develop local wheat cultivars and also by importing samples to be tested in the sultanate," the official said.

"The Directorate General for Agricultural and Animal Research prioritises developing new cultivars that are resistant to environmental challenges, such as heat and plant pathogens, to cover the produc-

tion gap, as well as finding solutions for genetic deterioration resulting from repeated cultivation."

The official added that average production during the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 seasons was one tonne per one acre of cultivation.

The wilayat of Bahla topped production - 710 tonnes from 445.6 acres of cultivated land - followed by Ibri (437 tonnes from 363 acres), Thumrait (360 tonnes from 537.6 acres), Nizwa (287 tonnes from 225 acres) and Manah (239 tonnes from 225.8 acres).

Muscat international film fest on Dec 12-18

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat International Film Festival (MIFF) will be back this year and movie buffs and filmmakers are celebrating following the announcement.

Organised by Oman Film and Theatre Society (OFTS), the event will take place from December 12 to 18. Filmmakers and movie buffs from Oman will attend the event as no foreign guests are being invited in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The festival will take place on a small scale unlike past editions when several international cine stars graced the multi-day event. The local guest list for this year's event is yet to be confirmed by the organisers.

Besides the three regular categories - short films, animation and documentaries - this year will see the addition of another category of films on Cyclone



Shaheen. This will put the spotlight on the devastation caused by the cyclone and the hardships it caused.

Dr Saif Nasser al Mawali, director of OFTS, said, "This is the first time that we are having the festival since the outbreak of COVID-19. We are confident of making it a hit though we are yet to confirm some of the star guests for the opening and clos-

ing days. There will be cash prizes for the winners of the various categories."

He informed that all films submitted - Arabic and any other language - must have English subtitles. Entries will be judged by a panel of experts. The festival will take place under strict COVID-19 measures, including wearing face masks and maintaining social distancing.

10 new COVID-19 cases, one death reported

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced ten new cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday, in addition to one related death.

"The total number of COVID-19 positive cases now stands at 304,318, including 4,112 deaths," an MoH statement said. Following recovery of seven COVID-19 patients, the total number of recoveries has now reached 299,670.

According to MoH, six COVID-19 patients are admitted in healthcare institutions, including three in intensive care units.

The recovery rate currently stands at 98.5 per cent.

Ministry holds talks to improve communication channels with youth

Muscat - Represented by the Government Communication Centre, the Ministry of Information organised the 15th Outreach Gathering on Wednesday aimed at bringing together operators of government media and communication departments.

Attended by Dr Abdullah Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, the forum titled 'Communicating with Youth - Listening to them & Engaging them' sought to enhance the role of the government departments responsible for maintaining and sustaining communication with the youth.

The forum follows Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and reviewed the basic pillars of effective communication with youth, incentives to foster their role in the



Dr Abdullah Nasser al Harrasi

development process, and engaging and rewarding them for their efforts.

A discussion was held on specific ways of carrying out the Royal directives and selecting the right mode of communications to address matters of youth concern. The forum also explored engaging Omani youth in decision making and realising national goals.

ONA

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company S.A.O.C Invites Interested Companies To Participate In The Following Request:

Description	Last Date to Participate
Request for Prequalification Voltage & Current Transformers for Energy Meters	18-Nov-2021

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Executive Summary	MEDC intend to invite manufacturers of current/voltage transformer to prequalify their product for the use in MEDC metering network. This document will cover minimum technical requirements required for the product to prequalify the product for the use in metering circuit under MEDC network and only products which are prequalified will be allowed to use in MEDC network after prequalification process.(For new connection and replacements). For any upcoming requirement for products, contractors/customers will be requested to purchase product from approved list of manufactures.
Participation	Bidder/Manufacture may participate by following the below instruction: - To obtain the document, please contact us via e-mail sabra.jahdhami@medcoman.com - Documents can be shared at the official working time between 08:00 – 13:00 hours
Enquiries	Any inquiry can be sent using clarification, please contact us via e-mail sabra.jahdhami@medcoman.com one week before bid submission date
Email/Tele No.	24588600, Ext: 8685 sabra.jahdhami@medcoman.com

On-campus classes of KG to Grade 8 in ISM to start Nov end

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Indian School Muscat (ISM) has decided to start classes in a hybrid mode (online and physical) for Kindergarten (KG) to Grade 8 from the third and fourth week of November.

A circular issued by ISM stated that the classes will be held in a hybrid mode until further intimation or guidelines from the Ministry of Education.

The school will start physical classes twice in a week in a phased manner for all the classes from Class 1 to 8.



'The online classes will continue for the rest of the week (three days) for all students. The detailed schedule will be intimated to the respective classes soon,' the circular said.

The physical classes for the KG section will begin by the third week of November.

'The classes will be conducted in a hybrid mode for the KG section with either online or physical classes. Parents will have the option of choosing either physical or online classes as per their convenience for KG1 and KG 2 students,' the circular stated.

However, for the other classes, ISM said all students will be expected to attend classes - physical and online - as per the directives.

ROYAL NAVY OF OMAN MARKS ANNUAL DAY



The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) marked its Annual Day at the military parade ground in Said bin Sultan Naval Base on Wednesday. The ceremony was held under the patronage of Abdulsalam Mohammed al Murshidi, chairman of Oman Investment Authority. The day, which falls on November 3 every year, is in memory of November 3, 1990, when RNO received its banner from the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said (ONA)

Rustaq Fort to be offered to investors after restoration



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) is planning to offer Rustaq Fort in South Batinah to investors after its ongoing restoration work is complete.

The ministry announced that almost 40 per cent of the work is complete. This initiative is part of the ministry's efforts to preserve historical monuments and attract tourists, a statement said.

Amjad bin Ahmed al Mukhaldi, director of Department of Restoration and Maintenance in MHT, said, "The restoration of the fort will extend

for two-and-a-half years due to its large area. The work includes restoration of structural parts which were damaged by natural elements.

"The ministry will offer Rustaq Fort for investment after the completion of its restoration. Such historical assets of great cultural and heritage value will attract local and foreign investors and help make tourism a vital sector that hosts various events and activities."

In this context, he informed that the ministry is exerting great efforts to restore archaeological and historical monuments - such as castles, forts and old houses -

spread across all governorates.

The ministry is also implementing a comprehensive restoration project for Nakhl Fort in South Batinah.

Forts and castles in Oman attract a large number of tourists for their unique place in the history of the region.

There were as many as 366,360 visitors to forts and castles in 2018 compared to 319,163 in 2017, registering an increase of 14.8 per cent, according to the ministry.

The sultanate welcomed 3,506,441 tourists in 2019, which was 8.2 per cent more than the 2018 figure of 3,241,757.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	33	21
Doha	32	21
Kuwait City	33	21
Manama	32	23
Riyadh	33	17

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.57am
Sunrise	6.14am
Duhr	11.55am
Asr	3.08pm
Maghrib	5.32pm
Isha	6.44pm

CPA to use latest technology, AI to monitor markets

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has announced the deployment of latest technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), to monitor markets in Oman through a system integrating consumers, wholesalers and retailers.

The total amount collected in fines from violators was over RO3mn in nine years, while over RO16mn was recovered from businesses as compensation to consumers during the same period.

Hamoud bin Said al Jabri, director general of consumer services and market monitoring, CPA, said, "The initiative will facilitate market control and save time and



efforts."

According to Jabri, since CPA's establishment in 2011 until the third quarter of this year, the number of complaints received was 96,042.

He stated that the total amount recovered in compensations was RO16,237,562, while

the fines imposed by the authority amounted to RO3,517,957 during the period from January 2012 to June 2021.

The number of violations recorded by CPA since its establishment till Q3 2021 and referred to the Public Prosecution for decisions was 53,882.

Student study underway to build water turbine for energy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A group of students from the Mechanical Engineering Department of University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Sohar is preparing a detailed study for the design and construction of water turbines to produce electrical energy in cooperation with Majis Industrial Services Company and Sohar Port Company.

The project aims to exploit the run-off water in the cooling drainage channel in Sohar Port to produce electrical energy in an economically viable manner.

Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Sa'eedi, head of the Mechanical Engineering Department and



project supervisor, said, "This project aims to engage young graduates in ambitious projects that contribute to sustainable development, and to realise the university's vision derived from the goals set in Oman Vision 2040."

Project design, initial engineering drawings and techno-

economic feasibility study will be completed by the end of the current semester.

"Prototyping and pilot operations will be completed by the end of the next semester, and the project will be evaluated by academics in the specialty and technicians from the industrial sector," Sa'eedi informed.

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MARKET WATCH

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FOREX RATES

(ROI equals)	
Indian Rs	193.57
Pakistani Rs	442.87
Bangladeshi Taka	222.79
Philippine Peso	131.69
Sri Lankan Rs	523.36

*Rates as on November 03
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

German industry says supply situation improving slightly

Material shortages facing German industry as a result of current global supply chain bottlenecks eased in October, a survey showed on Wednesday, but businesses still expect the situation to remain difficult for months to come.

Overall, 70 per cent of companies surveyed by the Ifo institute reported difficulties in getting their hands on raw materials and components in October, a drop of seven percentage points from the previous month.

Businesses nonetheless continued to face significant constraints, with suppliers of electrical equipment, carmakers and the mechanical engineering sector most impacted.

On average, companies expected the shortfall to continue for eight months, with the car industry seeing the shortages lasting as long as ten months.

"It's too early to speak of an easing. Especially because businesses expect shortages to continue into the new year," Ifo survey head Klaus Wohlrabe said.

The bottlenecks have increased in severity over the course of the year.

GCC economies rebound as COVID-19 retreats, oil surges

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As the COVID-19 pandemic induced challenges subside and non-oil sectors return to their pre-pandemic levels, the GCC countries are primed for swift economic recovery this year, according to PwC.

In its latest Middle East Economy Watch report released on Wednesday, PwC said the economic recovery is accelerating across the GCC despite the concerns about inflation.

'A combination of factors are contributing to recovery across the region. Non-oil growth is a pivotal driver of this recovery; sectors such as financial services have emerged from the pandemic in a position of strength,' the report said.

The recovery in oil prices to their highest sustained level since 2014 and the tapering of production cuts by OPEC+ are also helping drive a solid improvement in GCC public finances, PwC said. The IMF has forecasted that the GCC as a whole will return to a fiscal balance in 2023, for the first time since 2014.

'Even Oman, which was struggling with a large structural deficit before COVID-19, is expected to return to surplus in 2022 as a result of significant reforms on top of the rebounding oil price,' PwC noted.

'While buoyant oil and non-oil sectors are pivotal for economic growth across the GCC, there has been much speculation on a global scale that the easing of stimulus measures enacted to



Over the last few months, COVID-19 has retreated across the GCC due to widespread vaccination in the region (Muscat Daily)

mitigate the impact of the pandemic, combined with increased oil prices, will lead to an increase in inflation, however indicators suggest this is less of a concern in the GCC than in other territories,' it said.

Richard Boxshall, Middle East chief economist at PwC said, "Economic diversification has been a core focus of GCC governments in recent years. As we see signs of growth in both non-oil and oil sectors, the region looks set to achieve a swift recovery. However, travel and tourism, a critical industry, is lagging in terms of its recovery but the reopening of travel looks set to boost this and all eyes are on Dubai Expo 2020, which will be an important milestone within the travel sector's recovery."

Oman is expected to return to surplus in 2022 as a result of significant reforms on top of the rebounding oil prices

PwC said that leading indicators from the third quarter of 2021 suggest economies in the region continue to build momentum and are now firmly on the road to return to pre-pandemic levels.

'This coupled with robust purchasing managers indexes (PMI) across the region recording levels above 50-points showcasing economic expansion, recovery is undeniable. The PMI, one of the best proxies for non-oil private sector activity, reached a record level of 60.6 in Qatar in September and a 7-year

high of 58.6 in Saudi Arabia, with the UAE reporting a third quarter average of 53.7, its strongest in over two years,' the report said.

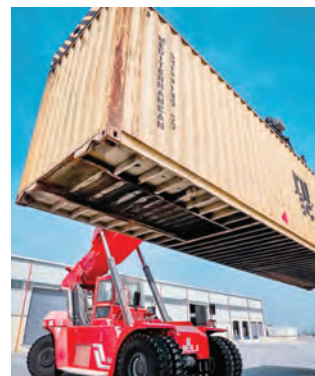
Flurry of IPO activity

Following a scarcity of initial public offerings (IPO) activity across exchanges in the GCC region, 2021 has seen a surge of major IPOs with Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi leading the pack.

The current shift shows growing confidence in the region, as a result of high oil prices and the COVID-19 recovery, together

with high global equity valuations as well as the need for government entities to raise financing. Increased investor confidence and appetite is a positive indicator in trust in a continued economic recovery, PwC said.

Stephen Anderson, Middle East clients and markets leader at PwC, said, "Signs of recovery for the remainder of 2021 remain strong, with key leading indicators showcasing growth. As oil prices help rebalance fiscal budgets for GCC governments this will further support economic growth. The increasing activity of capital markets in the region, particularly around IPOs is testament to investor confidence and the growth potential of companies across the region."



Khazaen Land Port begins operations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Khazaen Land Port, which is located in the Khazaen Economic City in Barka, has started its operations on Wednesday.

Asyad Group, in coordination with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Royal Oman Police, announced the start of operational work at the Khazaen Land Port and receiving various commercial goods through the port.

Khazaen Land Port has obtained an international character licence and accreditation as an official customs port bearing the international coding OMKDB, Asyad Group said.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Abri, CEO of Asyad Ports, explained that the start of the operational work of Khazaen Land Port is a new addition to the sultanate's logistics system. He said the land port will act as a link and a land logistics centre between Oman and other countries of the region.

The start of operations at the port will raise the efficiency of the logistics movement in the sultanate.

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Private finance eyes net zero by 2050

Glasgow, UK - Hundreds of financial groups are working to mobilise funds to help countries achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, former Bank of England governor Mark Carney told a UN climate conference on Wednesday.

The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero brings together some 450 banks, insurers and pension funds with US\$130tn in assets.

Carney said the alliance would help the world reach net-zero emissions by 2050 'at the latest' and to deliver 'their fair share of 50 per cent of emissions reductions this decade'.

The former Bank of England governor said the alliance would finally provide the capital flows needed after years of broken promises from rich emitters.

"The architecture of the global financial system has been transformed to deliver net zero," he said.

AFP

Bank Muscat signs agreement with Saudi Arabia's Export-Import Bank

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Saudi Export-Import Bank, (Saudi Exim Bank) to enhance cooperation between the two institutions and support investment between Saudi Arabia and Oman.

The agreement was signed by H E Saad A al Khalb, chief executive officer, Saudi Exim Bank and Ahmed Faqir al Bulushi, chief corporate banking officer, Bank Muscat.

Saudi Exim Bank is the leading export and investment financing promotion agency set up by the government of Saudi Arabia.

Under the terms of the MoU, Bank Muscat and Saudi Exim Bank have agreed to mutually co-operate in a broad range of business opportunities relating to exports of goods and services from Saudi Arabia to the Sul-



The agreement aims to enhance cooperation between the two institutions and support investment between Saudi Arabia and Oman

tanate of Oman or other destinations and financing projects tied to exports from Saudi Arabia. Bank Muscat is the only Omani bank operating in Saudi Arabia through its branch in Riyadh, offering full-fledged banking services to its corporate customers.

The MoU was facilitated through the bank's treasury and global financial institutions team that specialises in enhancing trade opportunities across developed, developing and emerging

global markets.

Bank Muscat, which accounts for over a third of Oman's banking sector assets, posted a net profit of RO140.16mn for the nine-month period ended September 30, 2021 compared to RO113.21mn reported during the same period in 2020, an increase of 23.8 per cent.

Bank Muscat is the leading financial services provider in the sultanate with 174 branches and more than 800 ATMs, CDMs and other devices spread across the country making it the bank of choice for millions of customers.

Saudi Exim Bank was established in February, 2020 and has completed its first year of operations. It was established as part of the Saudi government's Vision 2030 to raise the share of contribution from non-oil exports to the economy. It aims to provide export financing, guarantees, credit insurance and different facilities with competitive advantages to enhance exports from Saudi Arabia.

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Britain unveils plan for first 'net-zero' financial centre

Glasgow, UK - Finance Minister Rishi Sunak said on Wednesday he plans to make Britain the world's first net-zero financial services centre, even as environmental campaigners quickly criticised the proposals.

"Today I'm announcing that the UK will go further and become the first-ever net-zero aligned financial centre," the Chancellor of the Exchequer said at the COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow.

"This means we are going to move towards making it mandatory for firms to publish a clear, deliverable plan" as the UK aims for a net-zero economy by 2050.

The government wants this to be in force by 2023 and an independent task force will be set up



UK's Finance minister Rishi Sunak (AFP)

to 'define what's required', he said.

Nevertheless, environmental campaigners criticised the plans, with Greenpeace saying it allowed financial institutions 'plenty of wiggle room... to continue with business as usual'.

"At the moment, the UK's financial sector is at the very heart of the global fossil fuel industry," said Tommy Vickerstaff, spokesman for green campaign group, 350.org.

The UK financial sector's carbon emissions exceeded the net

annual output of most countries in 2019 as a result of worldwide investments, according to a study by environmental groups, including Greenpeace, in May.

Firms will not be legally obliged to commit to net-zero and they could have different targets, while investments in carbon-intensive activities will still be allowed.

More detailed government policies and interim targets will be published next year.

Sunak insisted on the need to mobilise the private sector to tackle climate change, calling more than US\$130tn to help fund global carbon reduction a 'historic wall of capital' for the transition.

AFP

MSX rises 0.15%; volumes down

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose 0.15 per cent to close at 4,061.43 points on Wednesday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 61.09 per cent to RO756,682 and volumes fell 43.39 per cent to 6.78mn shares.

All the subindices closed in red territory. Financial index fell 0.03 per cent, Industrial index declined 0.27 per cent and Services index fell 0.25 per cent. The MSX Shariah Index closed down by 0.09 per cent at 553.91 points.

Market breadth remained negative as seven companies closed up, while 15 companies closed down. The rest 18 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were National Aluminum Product Company (6.38 per cent), Construction Materials Industries & Contracting Co (2.86 per cent), Omantel (2.17 per cent), Bank Nizwa (1.05 per cent) and Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles (0.92 per cent).



Top losers were Oman Fisheries (9.33 per cent), Al Jazeera Services (2.22 per cent), Oman Investment & Finance Co (2.17 per cent), Al Sharqiya Investment Holding Co (2.15 per cent) and Al Jazeera Steel Products (2.06 per cent).

Decision on Fed chair coming 'quickly': Biden

Glasgow, UK - A decision on whether Jerome Powell will serve a second term as Federal Reserve chair or be replaced will come soon, US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a press conference following the COP26 summit in Glasgow, Biden declined to discuss the decision over who will lead the US central bank, but said he would be 'making those announcements fairly quickly'.

He said he has 'a lot of good choices but I'm not going to speculate now' on who he will pick to run the institution charged with steering US monetary policy as the world's largest economy bounces back from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biden's Republican predecessor Donald Trump appointed Powell, who took office in 2018



Jerome Powell

for a four-year term as Fed chair that expires in February.

Biden, who must pick a Fed chair from among the board members, also has to fill an open position, decide whether to reappoint vice chair Richard Clarida, whose term expires as governor at the end of January, and select a governor to serve as vice chair in charge of bank supervision.

The central bank chief presided over a series of rate hikes prior to the March 2020 start of the pandemic, when the central bank swiftly slashed its interest rate to zero.

The Fed also rolled out stimulus policies including massive monthly asset purchases, and on Wednesday following its two-day policy meeting is expected to announce it will start to taper those purchases.

While Powell, a Republican, has won praise from some of Biden's fellow Democrats, some from the party's progressive wing have called on the President to name a comparatively liberal candidate who will do more to tighten oversight of banks and address climate change and systemic racism.

AFP

ECB interest rate rise 'very unlikely' in 2022: Lagarde

Frankfurt, Germany - The European Central Bank (ECB) is 'very unlikely' to raise its interest rates in 2022, president Christine Lagarde said on Wednesday, amid pressure on central bankers to respond to soaring prices.

"Despite the current inflation surge, the outlook for inflation over the medium term remains subdued," Lagarde said in a speech in Lisbon.

And the ECB's conditions for a possible rate increase 'are very unlikely to be satisfied next year', she said.

Previously, the ECB has stated that it will not increase borrowing costs until it sees inflation reaching its 2 per cent target 'well ahead' ahead of a projected timeframe.

Inflation would have to be at that level, or higher, on a durable basis throughout the remainder



the forecast period and be supported by data on underlying price pressures.

The ECB's 25-member governing council last week held interest rates at historic lows, including a negative bank deposit rate which means lenders pay to park excess cash at the central bank.

In its most recent forecast in

September, the ECB is pencilling in an inflation rate for the euro area of 1.7 per cent in 2022 and 1.5 per cent in 2023.

But the recent high pace of inflation has turned pressure on the Frankfurt-based institution, with annual inflation hitting 4.1 per cent in October, according to Eurostat.

In view of the surge in inflation, central banks are under pressure to row back the vast financial support put in place at the start of the coronavirus pandemic to support the economy.

While some have already lifted borrowing costs, the main focus is on the US Federal Reserve, which is expected to say when it will begin tapering its own massive bond-buying programme, with particular attention on rates.

AFP



Al Hassan Engineering Co. SAOG

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR Q3 2021

Dear Shareholders,
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present to you the Unaudited Financial Statement for Al Hassan Engineering Co. SAOG for the nine months ending on 30th Sep 2021.

	Jan to Sep 2021 RO in 000's	Jan to Sep 2020 RO in 000's	% Change
Contract Income	8,928	18,104	(51%)
Other Income	3,250	78	
Total Expense	(13,283)	(18,587)	(29%)
Loss for the period	(1,085)	(405)	

Operating Performance

The Company has incurred an operational loss of RO 3M for the period ended Sep 2021 before accounting of for one off other income achieved through final settlement of long pending overdue payments to legacy vendors. The Turnover has declined from previous period due to substantial completion of ongoing projects and lack of award of new major projects.

Cash flow:

RO 8.98M has been received in nine months ending Sep 2021 from Clients and judiciously used to support on-going projects and make critical payments.

Settlement of Legacy Vendors:

The Company has managed to reduce its legacy vendor outstanding by RO 8.8M by reaching full and final settlement.

Ongoing Projects:

- The 6 ongoing projects are progressing as per the plan:
1. Liwa Plastics, CCJV: Company is providing commissioning support to CCJV on supply basis.
 2. Salalah LPG, Petrofac: Company is providing commissioning support to Petrofac on supply basis.
 3. Haima West, PDO: is 96% completed and substantial completion is expected by Q4 2021 (delayed due to Covid-19) and hand over in Q1 2022.
 4. Qarn Alam Cogeneration Power, PDO: Current progress is about 40%. This project is expected to be completed by Q 2, 2022.
 5. L&T CS Pipe and Laying & Earth Work- Current progress is about 45%. This project is expected to be completed by Q2 2022.
 6. Shutdown support to SPMP: This is shutdown support. This project will be completed in Q4 2021.

Outlook

The Company has Carry Forward Turnover of RO 9.02M at end of Q3 2021. The Company's Inflows from the Ongoing Projects are sufficient to take care of the Cash requirements of those projects till completion.

Company has bid for number of projects and eagerly seeks award of new projects as this remains critical to the survival of the Company.

The Board expresses its gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Hailham Bin Tarik and to his Government, Banks, Clients, Sub Contractors and Suppliers for their ongoing support & understanding. I would like to also thank the management and all the employees for their commitment, loyalty and dedication during this difficult period.

Note :

1. Due to operational and logistical difficulties resulting from Covid-19 situation
 2. Other income includes RO 3.15 million discounts earned on global settlement of long pending overdue payments to legacy vendors during 2021
- The complete unaudited financial statements of the Company are available from the Trading & Listing Dept. of the Muscat Securities Market
- Full accounts may be handed or sent by mail to any stockholder or beneficiary upon his request and in Arabic or English language of his choice within seven days from the date
- The request may be sent to : Al Hassan Engineering Company SAOG, P.O. Box 1948, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman

Unaudited Financial Statements for the nine months ended 30.09.2021

Amount in RO '000

Balance Sheet As At		
Particulars	Sep 2021	Sep 2020
Fixed Assets		
Property, Plant & Equipment	3,891	4,352
Retentions Receivable	1,179	1,020
Right-of-use-asset	685	269
	5,755	5,641
Current Assets		
Inventories	384	647
Work In Progress	3,644	4,495
Contract & Other Receivables	6,659	7,384
Due from related party	255	255
Bank Balances & Cash	3,675	3,240
	14,617	16,022
Current liabilities		
Short Term Borrowings	-	-
Current portion of term loans	3,018	22,523
Current portion of lease liabilities	39	14
Accounts & Other Payables	13,983	19,931
Payable to Related Parties	1,264	1,320
Accrued interest on borrowing	3,914	2,718
	22,218	46,506
Long Term Liabilities		
Long Term Loan from Banks	42,002	18,636
Employee Terminal Benefits	1,932	2,078
Lease Liabilities	672	266
	44,606	20,980
Net Assets	(46,452)	(45,823)
Shareholders' Funds		
Share Capital	7,521	7,521
Legal Reserve	1,859	1,854
Retained Earnings / (Accumulated losses)	(63,780)	(63,146)
Subordinated Loan from shareholders	6,700	6,700
Revaluation Reserve	1,248	1,248
Other Reserves	-	-
	(46,452)	(45,823)
Profit & Loss account		
Particulars	Jan to Sep 2021	Jan to Sep 2020
Contract Revenue	8,928	18,104
Contract Costs	(11,099)	(14,767)
Gross Profit / (Loss) before exceptional expenses	(2,171)	3,337
Exceptional Expenses (refer note 1 below)	-	(889)
Gross Profit / (Loss) after exceptional expenses	(2,171)	2,448
Other Income (refer note 2 below)	3,250	78
General & Administration Expenses	(987)	(1,112)
Operating Profit	92	1,414
Finance Charges	(1,177)	(1,819)
Net Loss for the Period	(1,085)	(405)

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Lulu Oman receives PCI DSS certification

Lulu Hypermarket Oman has received the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) Certification of Compliance from Crossbow Labs, the leading Cyber security compliance and certification body, for prioritising customer data security through its various cyber security initiatives.

Lulu Group is one of the leading hypermarket chains in Oman to achieve the PCI DSS certification, which is one of the most stringent and comprehensive payment security certification standards in the world, in the retail sector, a press release said.

Shabeer K A, regional director of Lulu Group, received the certification during the award ceremony held in Muscat. The standards ensure secure storage, transmission, and processing of data, aiming for better data security and privacy. The award is a result of Lulu's rigorous security standards and its commitment to assure customers about the safety of their payment card data at all times across all its channels and stores.

Commenting on the certification, Ananth A V, director – Oman, Sri Lanka and India, LuLu Group, explained, "with the evolution of technology, systems have become more vulnerable to external security threats. Hence protecting sensitive information becomes crucial to business



growth and ensuring customer trust. The PCI DSS certification is proof of our commitment to provide our customers with maximum protection and to process all information at the highest possible security level.

"Our services adhere to PCI DSS requirements, offering our

entire customer base an additional security boost. Independent experts regularly review our processes to ensure we uphold the PCI DSS compliance requirements."

Speaking after the event, Shabeer said, "We are indeed honoured to have received the

PCI DSS certification. This certification is an enhancement on Lulu's already robust security practices to prevent security breaches and payment card data theft and reaffirms the group's commitment to data protection and security. This compliance helps protect our customer data

and safeguard information in a secure environment through global standard for payment card security. This certification highlights the value we give to secure our customers' sensitive data."

The PCI DCS is aimed at enhancing security for consumers by setting guidelines for any

company that accepts, stores, processes, or transmits credit card information, regardless of the number of transactions or the size of those transactions. The PCI DSS is designed to provide necessary framework for developing a complete payment card data security process that

encompasses the prevention, detection, and appropriate reaction to security incidents. An independent body created by Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, and JCB, the PCI Security Standards Council (PCI SSC) administers and manages the PCI DSS.

Bank Nizwa records stellar performance in Q3

With an eye on innovative banking procedures and products, seamless customer service and a progressive mindset to bring about change, Bank Nizwa has been leading the way as the most trusted Islamic bank in the sultanate.

While aligning itself to Oman Vision 2040, Bank Nizwa has also remained abreast of the changing market demands and recorded commendable growth as reflected in its financial results for the third quarter ended September 30, a press release said.

Despite the after-effects of the pandemic and the various uncertainties that governed the market, Bank Nizwa recorded a 6% growth in net profit. Attributing this to the bank's ability to adapt to the economic realities, including the competitive environment in which it operates, the

figure is a testament to the bank's resilience. The bank's total assets also grew by 22% from RO1,138mn to reach RO1,384mn during the period.

Deeply invested in its drive to create more value for clients and shareholders, Bank Nizwa has achieved continued growth in its core business and recorded a 51% growth in shareholder's equity. With the successful completion of the rights issue of RO70mn, the bank is geared up for the next phase of growth and aims to further increase returns for shareholders. Driven by healthy activities across both its wholesale and retail businesses and prudent control on costs, the bank has also registered a 15% growth in operating income when compared to the same period in the last year.

With a vision to expand its



Sheikh Khalid Al Khalili

reach, Bank Nizwa has earned its place as the preferred Islamic banking partner for both retail and corporate customers. This is evident from its gross financing portfolio that grew by 19% to reach RO1,130mn, while the total customer deposit portfolio reached RO1,073mn, recording a growth of 18% compared to the same period last year. This growth has provided the neces-

sary momentum needed to continue the bank's growth trajectory and achieve long-term objectives.

The bank has also recorded an increase in operating income which stands at RO4.3mn (15% YoY) and an increase in operating expenses by RO2.2mn (16% YoY) which reflects dedicated and strategic efforts to cost management. This has led the bank to achieve a net profit after tax of RO9mn for the nine months ended 30 September 2021.

"We have achieved yet another milestone in our journey to improve performance and uphold our position as the leading Islamic bank in the country. Bank Nizwa has once again recorded stellar growth throughout its departments as is reflected in our latest financial result. Adhering to our core values of achieving

business excellence through Sharia-compliant financing, we have been able to fulfill our commitments to our shareholders while delivering the highest level of customer satisfaction to our clients. Our resilient performance, robust strategies and focus on innovation have been instrumental in paving the way forward," said Sheikh Khalid Abdullah Ali Al Khalili, chairman of Bank Nizwa.

"We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our shareholders, business partners and customers who have bestowed immense faith in our strategies and have continued to lend their unending support to all our initiatives. As a leader in the sector, Bank Nizwa will continue to be an advocate of Islamic banking and contribute to the economic prosperity of Oman."

Oman Post postcard to mark cyclone relief efforts

In the aftermath of cyclone Shaheen, Oman Post issued a new postcard depicting the national and civil society relief efforts in South and North Al Batinah region.

The company will allocate the profits received from selling the postcard to the affected communities in collaboration with Al Ithar voluntary group, which operates under the umbrella of the Committee for Social Development in the Ministry of Social Development in the wilayat of Seeb. The Group is also known for their Ramadan and orphans' related support activities, a press release said.

In addition to providing a wide range of competitive postal services, Oman Post is committed to delivering stamps that reflect key



domestic and international topics and causes. The Cyclone Shaheen postcard will be available starting November 3. Customers can order the new stamp via WhatsApp on +968 97730684 or visit the recently opened Stamps and Collections Shop at the Opera Galleria in Muscat.

Omela offers Omani Tea to cyclone affected



FrieslandCampina, one of the largest dairy cooperatives in the world, launched an initiative to help comfort volunteers who are supporting the families and individuals affected by cyclone Shaheen in the Sultanate of Oman.

The company quickly mobilised relief efforts in the aftermath of the cyclone to support victims staying at assigned relief camps by providing hot Omani tea made with its popular brand

Omela Milk.

The distribution of Omela Omani milk tea started on April 3, in collaboration with Global Hand, a non-profit brokerage firm that is designed to bring together people who want to volunteer for and address global issues related to for-profit organisations, non-profit organization, foundations, trusts, and governments.

Sumeet Mathur, managing di-

rector of FrieslandCampina Middle East, said, "During these difficult times, we wanted to express our appreciation to the sultanate of Oman and its people by standing next to them and contributing with the least we can. Our colleagues worked day and night to serve Omani tea to families and people affected. We wish everyone affected by the exceptional climatic conditions of cyclone Shaheen a speedy recovery."

PSM achieves 100% results in FBISE SSC-I and HSSC-I exams

Pakistan School Muscat has achieved another hallmark by producing 100 per cent results in the FBISE SSC-I & HSSC-I annual exams, 2021 despite the severe circumstances brought about by the pandemic.

Muhammad Basim achieved the first position by scoring 513/520 marks, Raneem Ishtiaq second position with 512 marks and Samra Imran third position with 511 marks in the FBISE SSC-I annual examination 2021. Both, Muhammad Omar and Bisma Shafqat have achieved the first position by securing 494 (97.8%) marks, Anas Hameed second position with 491 (96.3%) marks, and Ayza Amjad third position with 481 marks (94.3%) in the FBISE HSSC-I annual examination.

Pakistan School Muscat has been implementing cutting-edge strategies to increase students' achievement levels since its inception. It aims to spark a pursuit of knowledge in students so that they may keep on learning.

Ooredoo elevates its Digital Tutorial app with new content

Ooredoo has upgraded its Digital Tutorial application. The update includes the addition of new content, approved by the Ministry of Education, and the accompanying materials for different grades and subjects, including mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, information technology, Arabic, Islamic education and more.

Students from fifth to twelfth grade can also utilise mind-maps, an additional feature designed to guide them with their studies. To further motivate university students and job seekers, they can now access four new courses, certified by some of the most prestigious universities such as Harvard University, a press release said.

Raed bin Mohammed Daoud, director of Branding, Communications and Corporate Affairs at Ooredoo, said, "With students returning to school after an academic year spent in distance learning, we still see a large number of users that choose our app as it helps



with time management, organisation skills, homework, collaboration and so much more. Building on the Ministry of Education's ongoing efforts, our aim is to enhance students' knowledge and prepare our youth with the right set of skills that are required to thrive in a fast-changing world."

At the forefront of digital educational technology since its launch in 2018, Ooredoo's Digital Tutorial App has received

more than 48 million views in the last year. The average number of active users on a daily basis was approximately 14,000 during peak hours, with an average view time of 21 minutes per student. Since the start of this academic year, over 808,000 students accessed the learning materials available and the number of registered students currently stands at 188,277.

This digital initiative falls under the umbrella of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility programme, Goodwill. The application offers a wide variety of training courses on HTML and programming, English and IELTS tests, as well as specialised topics from grade one to grade twelve. It also contains a number of courses and lessons on Java, information security, cloud computing, and IC3 global accreditation. Users can even learn about the Fourth Industrial Revolution and self-development courses.

Oman Sail's Mussanah Race Week kicks off



Mussanah Race Week got underway in perfect conditions at the Barceló Resort in Al Mussanah Sports City, Oman. Running until November 5, with racing every day, fifty young sailors in Optimist, Laser Radial, Laser 4.7 and, for the first time at week, para sailors using the RS Venture Class, took to the waters for the first practice round.

Sailors from five countries will compete throughout the week alongside classroom ses-

sions to improve technique and learn from professional sailors and coaches. Alongside a strong home contingent, young sailors from Malaysia, Egypt and Abu Dhabi join the fleet to put their skills to the test, a press release said.

Mussanah Race Week 2021 has seen the debut of para sailing, which is a big step forward for the event, with eight sailors from Oman Sail's SailFree programme taking part. This introduction comes in the same

week that World Sailing launched its 'Back the Bid' campaign to reinstate para sailing to the 2028 Paralympics in Los Angeles, USA.

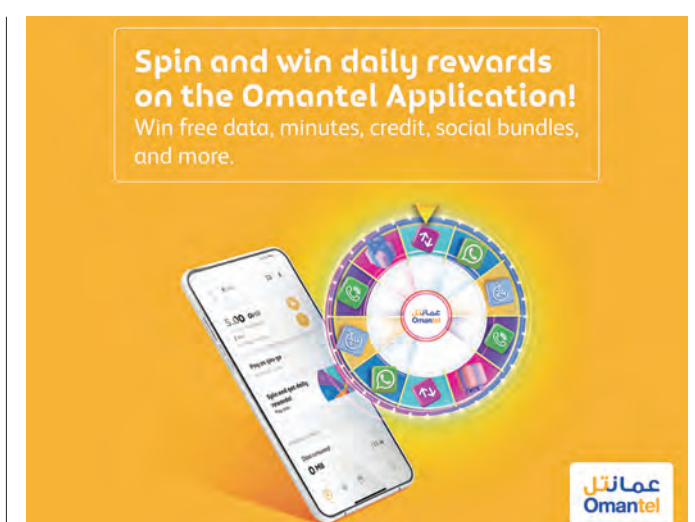
SailFree was launched in 2019 in partnership with BP Oman, and it is the first of its kind in the Middle East's for people with disabilities. Prior to the event, SailFree Para-Sailing National Team travelled to Palermo, Italy, to represent the nation at the Hansa World Championships 2021, joining

180 athletes from 25 countries.

Shaima al Asmi, Mussanah Race Week Project Manager, said, "For more than a decade, Mussanah Race Week has been the proving ground for promising young sailors to develop on and off the water, learn from each other and the coaches and experience the Sultanate of Oman's famed hospitality. We're delighted with the depth of the fleet this year considering the challenges much of the world is still facing and in par-

ticular with the introduction of sailors from SailFree. Mussanah Race Week is the first step for many towards a successful career in sailing and we look forward to an exciting week."

The event is supported by Oman Air, OQ and the Barcelo Mussanah Resort as official partners, and Be'ah as environmental supporter and Salsabeel Water from National Mineral Water Company and medical support from Naval Medicine Said bin Sultan Naval Base.



Omantel app offers 'Spin the Wheel'

Omantel App, which proved to be a one-stop shop for the company's valued customers especially at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, is now taking things up several notches.

The go-to App has upped the excitement and engagement for users by introducing Spin the Wheel, a game that gives users a chance to win exciting prizes from Omantel. Each action on the App as well as playing games like Spin the Wheel, Daily Entries and Special Bonus, will open the chances of winning, a press release said.

This is the first time that Omantel has incorporated gameplay into the Omantel App as a way of engaging and interacting with its one million-plus users, connecting with the younger audience and rewarding loyal customers.

In addition, the rewards included in Spin the Wheel promote use of the App, and in a way, push Omantel's effort to-

ward digitalisation, which is a key element in Oman's future economic development, and is an objective to be achieved by the government to take digital technology to people and organisations alike.

Customers stand to win rewards by logging into the App, purchasing service bundles using their bank card, making an add-on purchase and for App top-up. Daily rewards include 10MB to 1GB of free data, 5-10 minutes (on net), free WhatsApp, free social media, free SMS, and bonus credit from 10%-20%.

Ammar al Lawati, senior manager of Digital Channels at Omantel, said, "Omantel App is not just a digital service platform. It is a link to taking internet-based technology and access to information. What better way than making the access easier and free through gamification? This way, Omantel will be serving its multiple duties of keeping the one million-plus users happy.



ISC Salalah celebrates Unity Day

The Indian Social Club Salalah, in association of Embassy of India, organised an Indo-Oman cultural event to mark Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and National Unity Day of India on October 29.

Engineer Ali Salem Omar Fadhil, vice president, Dhofar Municipality, was present as the chief guest and Irshad Ahmed, counsellor for Labour and Community Welfare, was the guest of hon-

our, a press release said.

Dr Sandeep Ojha, general secretary, in his inaugural speech welcomed all the guests and said that recreation is a natural medicine to overcome problems.

Rakesh Kumar Jha, president of ISC Salalah, enlightened the relevance of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and National Unity Day which was in line with the long cultural and trade relations.

ISWK hosts 3rd edition of WKMUN-2021

For seven consecutive years, Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir, hosted the Wadi Kabir Model United Nations, the second time in the virtual medium. With more than 150 delegates, from 16 Indian Schools across Oman, this crew of stunning and ambitious delegates shared a vision for a 'New World Order' that is based on freedom and equality. They believe that it can eradicate war, poverty, disease, among many other problems around the world, and create a world, one that truly cares for its people.

The event was graced by the presence of Kiran Asher, founder and managing director of the Al Ansari Group of Companies, as the chief guest. Inaugurating the

event, Asher spoke about the importance of having consensus when decisions are being made, and lauded the motto of the event - From Argument to Consensus. He further highlighted the relevance of the UN, as we fight various battles, right from COVID-19 to the various socio-economic problems our world faces.

WKMUN 2021 was organised by the Department of Social Science on October 25 and 26 to engage students in authentic simulations of the United Nations and to develop a wide range of skills in its participants, including the development of having a global outlook and vision towards different issues,

education of social responsibility, tolerance, research, confidence and self-esteem. Student Delegates from various schools took part in two Committees - the Model UN General Assembly, discussing the future of drones, and the Model UNESCO, discussing the Preservation of Cultural Heritage during war-like situations.

With both committees producing a wide range of ideas, to solve the issues involved in such detailed topics, each delegate proved to be more distinguished than the other.

D N Rao, principal of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir, was the chief guest for the valedictory ceremony. While addressing the

virtual gathering, he spoke in great depth about the opportunities awaiting each and every student in the new World, right from the UN, to the various governments, where their skills of negotiation would be of great importance.

He also emphasised in great detail about the vast volume of opportunities and information available to students in today's world, and encouraged all participants to take part in various events including Model UNs in the future to hone their skills and talents.

The declaration of the result, for which every Delegate had been waiting for, was made at the end of the session.

 Gulf Mushroom Products Co. (S.A.O.G.)			
REPORT ON MATERIAL EVENTS & SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOR THE PERIOD OF NINE MONTHS ENDED ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2021		Unaudited Statement of financial position as at 30 September 2021	
	30/09/2021 RO	30/09/2020 RO	
MATERIAL EVENTS	12,552,516	12,986,493	
Company's overall profitability has overcome the negative impact of covid19 pandemic with improved performance during the current period as compared to the corresponding period before the pandemic.			
MATERIAL CHANGES IN FIGURES			
Sales - During the period the company achieved a sales turnover of RO 5.651 million compared to RO 4.396 million for the same period last year, an increase of 29%.			
Gross Profit - During the period the company made a Gross Profit of RO 2.499 million compared to a Gross Profit of RO 1.960 million for the same period last year, an increase of 27%.			
Selling & Distribution Expenses - During the period the company incurred RO 442,000 as Selling & distribution expenses compared to RO 453,000 for the same period last year, a decrease of 2%.			
General & Administration Expenses - During the period the company incurred RO 699,000 as General & administration expenses compared to RO 580,000 for the same period last year, an increase of 20%.			
Profit before tax - During the period the company earned Profit before tax of RO 692,000 compared to Profit before tax of RO 181,000 for the same period last year, an increase of 283%.			
Income tax - During the period Company provided Income tax of RO 104,000 compared to RO 27,000 for the same period last year, an increase of about 280%.			
Total Comprehensive Income (after tax) - During the period the company earned a total Comprehensive Income (after tax) of RO 588,000 compared to a total Comprehensive Income (after tax) of RO 153,000 for the same period last year, an increase of 284%.			
Chief Executive Officer			
The complete accounts of Gulf Mushroom Products Co. SAOG will be delivered to any shareholder or other interested party who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of written request.			
M/s Gulf Mushroom Products Co. SAOG P.O. Box: 383, Postal Code: 320, Barka, Sultanate of Oman, Fax: 00968 26883955, Email: info@gulfmushroom.com			
Unaudited Statement of comprehensive Income for Nine months ended 30 September 2021			
	9 Months ended 30/09/2021 RO	9 Months ended 30/09/2020 RO	
Turnover/Revenue	5,650,834	4,396,011	
Direct Expenses	(3,151,792)	(2,435,578)	
Selling & distribution expense	(442,070)	(452,843)	
Indirect expenses	(698,974)	(580,304)	
Other Income	25,886	8,898	
Profit before depreciation & net financing costs	1,383,884	936,184	
Depreciation	(464,028)	(484,317)	
Profit before net financing costs	919,856	451,867	
Net financing costs	(227,646)	(271,202)	
Profit before tax	692,210	180,665	
Income tax	(104,141)	(27,385)	
Profit for the period	588,069	153,280	
Other comprehensive income	-	-	
Total comprehensive income for the period	588,069	153,280	
Profit per share (RO)	0.014	0.004	

Iraq's activists find voice in House

Nasiriyah, Iraq - For the first time in Iraq, a new breed of representatives is entering parliament, born from a civil society movement fed up with the corruption that has long tarnished politics.

Among the newcomers is pharmacist Alaa al Rikabi (47), whose party Imtidad (Extension) emerged in the aftermath of the October 2019 protest movement against the entrenched political elite. Imtidad positions itself as the 'opposition' to governments that have emerged through an informal ethno-sectarian quota system that has been in place since the US-led invasion of 2003, Rikabi told AFP.

Despite campaigning with extremely limited finances, the party secured nine of the 329 seats in the Iraqi Council of Representatives in the October 10 election, according to preliminary results.

"I'm aware that our size in parliament will not allow us a lot of leeway" to push a political agenda, Ribaki said, stressing that his party instead aims to perform a watchdog role.

"We will not participate in any government set up on the basis of quotas, so that we will be able to hold leaders to account," Rikabi said in his home in Nasiriyah, a flashpoint of protests in Iraq's mainly Shiite south.

Overall, big political blocs retained their dominance in the election, which was marked by a record abstention rate.

The biggest winner was the Sadrist movement, led by fire-brand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr. It took 70 seats, according to the results that are expected to be finalised within a few weeks.



Demonstrators march towards Al-Haboubi Square in the Iraqi city of Nasiriyah to commemorate the second anniversary of the October protest movement, on October 25 (AFP)

Search for allies

Behind the scenes, there have been discussions over the formation of blocs to create a parliamentary majority that would distribute the upcoming cabinet posts.

But it is specifically against this system that the protest movement, and by extension Imtidad, was forged.

Imtidad is seeking its own alternative alliance to make its presence felt.

We will not participate in any government set up on the basis of quotas, so that we will be able to hold leaders to account

ALAA AL RIKABI

With only nine seats, the party 'will not be able to extend its influence in parliament', said Saleh al Alawi, a judge and a political scientist.

Rikabi pointed out that, 'ac-

ording to the constitution, we need at least 25 MPs to be able to question a minister'. To this end, he said, 'we are trying to come to an understanding' to team up with other parties.

In particular, Imtidad has been in talks with a small Kurdish party, the New Generation Movement, which has similar leanings and also holds nine seats.

Protest movement

The unprecedented protest movement that broke out two years ago railed against the political class running the oil-rich but poverty-stricken country where youth unemployment is

soaring.

The streets of Nasiriyah still bear witness to the anger, and posters of the 'martyrs' adorn the walls, honouring many of the hundreds of activists who paid with their lives.

Factions of the Hashed al-Shaabi - a paramilitary group integrated into the armed forces and represented by the pro-Iran Fatah (Conquest) Alliance in parliament - have faced accusations of targeting activists.

Hussein Ali (28) said he has been in a wheelchair for two years since being shot in the back during a demonstration.

"I voted for Imtidad because I hope they can fight for the rights of the demonstrators," he said. "Ever since I was injured, I haven't received any compensation from the government."

Changing 'stereotypes'

Unlike many established Iraqi politicians, newcomers like Rikabi have little money and had to run low-cost campaigns.

Imtidad spent four million dinars (US\$2,700 approx) for posters and events in the province of Dhi Qar, of which Nasiriyah is the capital - a fraction of the tens of millions often spent by larger parties.

In a bid to break with what he calls the 'stereotype of the representative', who is out of touch with voters and with reality, Rikabi drives his own car and does not have an office.

Others have been even more frugal, such as Mohammed al Anouz, who came to be known on social media for putting up his own campaign posters in the Shiite shrine city of Najaf.

For him, opposition is the only option, he told AFP.

"The big parties have contacted me to find out my position," he said.

"I will not form an alliance with the parties that have led the country in past years."

"It is they who got us into this situation where there are no public services and corruption reigns," he added.

AFP

Israeli, Palestinian olive growers face same climate challenge

Asira al-Shamaliya, Palestinian Territories - During the recent olive harvest, Palestinian farmer Dalal Sawalmeh raked her fingers through the silvery green leaves of her family's trees but said there weren't as many olives cascading to the ground.

Like many farmers across the occupied West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel, she blames climate change for impacting the iconic gnarled trees that have shaped the Holy Land for centuries.

This year her trees produced less than half their usual yield and 'not all the trees bore fruit', the 38-year-old said near her West Bank village of Asira al-Shamaliya.

Palestinian and Israeli farmers both say the once reliable two-year olive cycle - where a bountiful harvest is typically followed by a weaker one the next year - has been disrupted.

Last winter was exceptionally warm and dry, the spring brought an uncommon cold snap, and through the year rain fell in spurts or downpours.

"The changes are very obvious," said Hazem Yaseen, the mayor of Asira, where olives have been cultivated for at least 500 years. Israeli and Palestinian olive growers are now trying to adapt to a heating planet - each in their own way.



Olives are being processed for oil in a farmers cooperative in the West Bank town of Asira al-Shamaliya (AFP)

Suri strain originally from Lebanon, produces quality but not quantity when the sun beats down, he said.

"We still didn't identify one super cultivar that shows resistance in all parameters," he said at the institute where he is also testing the benefits of added shade or irrigation during critical growth stages.

"It's not that the olive is so sensitive suddenly," Ben-Ari said. "Other fruit trees are much more sensitive to temperature."

"However, the olive in general is planted in marginal lands and therefore from the beginning it doesn't have ideal conditions, and therefore every change also affects the yield."

Already, Israeli olive growers have begun irrigating their trees. Olive expert Reuven Birger said about a quarter of the 33,000 hectares of Israeli olive groves

are supported with extra water, mostly using drip irrigation.

'Tree of the poor'

West Bank growers say climate change compounds the challenges they already face from Israel's military occupation.

To cope, some aim to do more with less. In Asira al-Shamaliya, 52 farmers have banded together to buy a US\$300,000 Italian olive press to cut down on oil lost to leaky old machines.

One of the investors, Abdul Salam Sholi (63) said he has also pruned his trees to help them thrive with less water.

"The olive tree is the tree of the poor," he said. "You can have a tree with no expenses."

Only about five per cent of the 88,000 hectares of olive trees farmed by Palestinians are irrigated, said Fares Gabi, a retired Palestinian olive expert.

Farmers say they can't afford the high prices caused by Israel's military restricting Palestinian drilling for water in the West Bank. Mayor Yaseen also said about a fifth of Asira's land is in the so-called Area C, where Israel holds full control under the 1995 Oslo Accords.

The Israeli military built a base on those lands and Yaseen said he was wounded last year during clashes with Jewish settlers.

"The two are a threat," Gabi said. "The settler influences the land and so does climate change."

Some Palestinian farmers are experimenting with irrigation despite the high cost.

Mohammed Amer Ham-moudi (67) said US assistance helped him start irrigating in 2010, and he kept up the practice even after the Trump administration cut aid to Palestinians.

AFP

India ramps up defences after clashes with China

Tawang Town, India - On the winding road up to India's Himalayan frontier is a postcard view of gushing streams and tranquil lakes - punctuated occasionally by the sight of artillery barrels and military bunkers.

A year after deadly high-altitude clashes with Chinese soldiers, India is ramping up its border defences along a treacherous mountain range that has long been a flashpoint between the two countries.

Arunachal Pradesh straddles the other side of the Himalayas from Tibet and shares a common Buddhist cultural heritage with its northern neighbour.

The Dalai Lama fled through the state in 1959 after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in his homeland and has lived in India ever since.

Beijing also claims ownership of Arunachal Pradesh - which it refers to as South Tibet - and briefly occupied most of the territory, three years after the Buddhist leader's flight, in a short but bloody war.



An Indian army soldier on an anti-aircraft gun in Tawang, near the Line of Actual Control, in the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (AFP)

Tensions have flared again since mid-2020 when troops from both nations fought a hand-to-hand battle further west along their shared frontier in Ladakh, leaving at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead.

Each side routinely sends patrols into areas claimed or controlled by the other, and India has also accused China of establishing permanent settlements near

the border.

"We have observed some infrastructure development on the Chinese side," Lt Gen Manoj Pande told journalists during a rare press tour through the region last month.

"That has led to (a higher) number of troops that are now located or placed there," the Indian Army official said.

AFP

Iran says stopped US navy seizing tanker in Sea of Oman

Tehran, Iran - Iran said on Wednesday that it had thwarted an attempt by the US navy to seize a tanker in the Sea of Oman carrying its oil, state television reported.

It gave no details of the date of the incident or the country where the vessel is registered.

The report comes amid faltering efforts to revive Iran's nuclear deal with world powers that would see a lifting of US sanc-

tions on its oil exports.

The sequence of events reported by the television report left key questions unanswered.

'The United States stopped a tanker exporting Iranian oil and transferred its cargo to another tanker which it directed towards an unknown destination,' it said.

'The naval arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards then captured the tanker with air support,' it said, without specifying which

vessel it was referring to.

'US forces again tried to block the passage of the tanker using a warship and several helicopters but again failed.

'The tanker is now in Iranian territorial waters.'

Under the 2015 nuclear deal, Washington had lifted its sanctions on Iran's oil exports in return for strict limits on its nuclear activities.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

US gives final nod to Pfizer's vaccine for kids aged 5-11

Washington, US - The United States can now start giving children aged 5-11 the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, US health authorities said on Tuesday in a move hailed by President Joe Biden as a 'turning point' in the fight against the pandemic.

Days after gaining authorisation from the Food and Drug Administration, the vaccine was endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, clearing the way for the vaccination of up to 28mn children.

The government was well ahead of the decision, procuring enough doses for the children in the 5-11 age group and beginning to ship them across the country.

"Today, we have reached a turning point in our battle against COVID-19," Biden said in a statement released by the White House.

Vaccinating younger children will 'allow parents to end months of anxious worrying about their kids, and reduce the extent to which children spread the virus to others. It is a major step forward for our nation in our fight to defeat the virus', the president continued.

The government has already secured enough vaccine for every child in America, he said, adding that over the weekend officials began the process of packing and shipping millions of doses. "The programme will ramp up over the coming days, and [be] fully up and running



A child high fives a pharmacist after receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for kids at Hartford Hospital, in Connecticut on Tuesday (AFP)

during the week of November 8," he said.

The vaccine will still be given in two injections, three weeks apart. The dosage has been adjusted to 10 micrograms per injection, compared to 30 micrograms for the older age groups.

The caps on the children's vials will be orange, making them easily recognisable compared to the purple caps on the vials for older groups.

"As a mom, I encourage parents with questions to talk to

their pediatrician, school nurse or local pharmacist to learn more about the vaccine and the importance of getting their children vaccinated," CDC director Rochelle Walensky said in a statement.

Some parents were not waiting, however.

At the Hartford Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut late Tuesday a group of six children were among the first in the country to receive the vaccine.

"I could cry," one mother, Liz Cronin, said. "We've all been

waiting for it for so long for our kids to ... have this almost sense of normalcy back."

Six-year-old Kareem Omar said the shot 'doesn't really hurt'. He added, "Do it for the sake of America. Because it's helping America and the world, so, life is better for each and every person on Earth."

The CDC had convened a panel of independent scientists on Tuesday to review the available data on the status of the outbreak in children, the effectiveness of Pfizer's vaccine, and

its possible side effects during a day of live-streamed discussions.

The panel unanimously recommended the vaccine, and the CDC then endorsed that recommendation.

There have been more than 1.9mn cases of COVID-19 among five to 11 year olds in the US, and more than 8,300 hospitalizations, more than 2,300 cases of MIS-C (pediatric multisystem inflammatory syndrome), and about 100 deaths. AFP



A boy gets vaccinated during the inoculation of the population aged 12-17 year, in San Juan City, suburban Manila on Wednesday (AFP)

Duterte orders army to bypass vaccine 'gridlock'

Manila, Philippines - Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte ordered military and police to airlift COVID-19 vaccines across the country's provinces to bypass 'gridlocks' in job distribution that he blamed on local governments.

While nearly 90 per cent of adults in the capital region are fully vaccinated, only about 35 per cent of adults in the country have had both jabs.

"[Supplies] will no longer pass through the provincial government because that would be another gridlock," Duterte said in a meeting with pandemic advisors on Tuesday that was broadcast on Wednesday. Duterte has leaned heavily on the armed services to fight the pandemic.

"Upon delivery by plane and

arrival at the [vaccine operations centre], the helicopters there will take over. They would be the ones to take them to the municipal governments," the President said.

"The armed forces have the lift capability," military spokesman Colonel Ramon Zagal said on Wednesday.

At the same meeting on Tuesday, Carlito Galvez, head of the country's COVID-19 task force, acknowledged that local governments needed to 'boost their capacity' to inject more people per day as well as to 'procure their own cold chain system' to store more vaccines.

On Wednesday the government rolled out vaccines for 12.7mn young people aged 12-17 years. AFP

Germany facing 'massive' pandemic of unvaccinated

Berlin, Germany - Germany is experiencing a 'massive' pandemic of the unvaccinated, Health Minister Jens Spahn said on Wednesday, calling for curbs targeting those not inoculated to tame a resurgence in COVID-19 cases.

The fourth wave is raging 'with exceptional force', Spahn said.

"We are currently experiencing mainly a pandemic of the unvaccinated and it is massive," he told reporters, warning that 'in some regions in Germany intensive care beds are running out again'.

Germany, the EU's most populous country of some 83mn people, has been grappling with a fourth wave of

COVID-19 cases in recent weeks that has pushed up the seven-day incidence rate to highs not seen since May.

The country added 20,398 cases over the past 24 hours, according to the Robert Koch health institute, while another 194 people died.

Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has called the coronavirus trend 'very worrying', signalled she was in favour of stricter curbs focussed on the unvaccinated.

"If the pandemic situations in hospitals worsens... then further restrictions for unvaccinated people are possible," Merkel said through her spokesman Steffen Seibert.

The number of COVID patients in intensive care on Wednesday climbed to 2,226, up almost 26 per cent on the previous week to reach the highest level since early June, according to Germany's DIVI registry.

More than 66 per cent of the population is fully vaccinated, but a recent survey showed that the vast majority of Germany's still unvaccinated adults have no intention of getting inoculated against COVID-19.

"For the unvaccinated, the risk is high that they will become infected in the coming months," warned RKI chief Lothar Wieler, speaking alongside Spahn in Berlin. AFP

Spain tourist numbers up but still short of pre-coronavirus levels

Madrid, Spain - Tourist arrivals in Spain leapt in the first nine months of 2021 compared with a year earlier, but remained far below pre-COVID-19 levels, official data showed on Wednesday.

During the period, Spain welcomed 19.7mn tourists, an increase of 17.2 per cent over the figures for same period in 2020, the National Statistics Institute (INE) calculated. Prior to the pandemic - when Spain was the world's number-two tourist destination and the sector accounted for some 12 per cent of its economy - nearly 70mn people visited in the first nine months of 2019, the INE said.

Although the data point to an improvement in the tourism sector, they fall far short of the government's forecast for some



People walk in the streets of Madrid, many maskless as they are no longer required outdoors in Spain despite the ongoing pandemic (AFP)

45mn visitors this year - approximately half that of 2019.

The figures 'confirm that the

recovery of international tourism is under way and that in 2022 we could return to pre-

pandemic levels', said Tourism Minister Reyes Maroto.

In September, tourist arrivals stood at 4.7mn, an increase of more than 300 per cent from the same month in 2020.

Maroto said Spain was hoping to welcome between '10.7mn and 10.9mn' visitors in the last three months of the year.

In the first nine months, the largest number of visitors were French, accounting for more than 4mn arrivals, followed by Germans who accounted for 3.4mn visits, and Britons who accounted for 2.3mn.

In the same period, the most popular destinations were the Balearic Isles, the northeastern region of Catalonia, and Andalusia in the south, the INE said. AFP

HK activist Chung becomes youngest convict under security law

Hong Kong, China - A 20 year old Hong Kong independence activist was facing life in prison on Wednesday after becoming the youngest person convicted under the city's national security law, but told the court he had 'nothing to be ashamed of'.

Tony Chung had pleaded guilty to secession in the fourth case to come to trial under the sweeping new legislation, which authorities are using to snuff out dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

"I have nothing to be ashamed of," Chung said in court as he entered his plea.

Judge Stanley Chan then immediately warned Chung that no talk of politics would be allowed

in the courtroom.

Chung is the former convenor of Student Localism, a small group that advocated Hong Kong's independence from China.

The group was founded in 2016 and disbanded its Hong Kong network shortly before Beijing imposed the security law in 2020, but it has kept its overseas chapters going.

The prosecution said the group advocated that Hong Kong 'get rid of the Chinese Communist colonial rule' and 'build a Hong Kong republic'.

They disseminated their message through social media, street booths, calling on people to join protests and selling merchandise



This file photo shows 20 year old Hong Kong independence activist Tony Chung in Hong Kong (AFP)

with independence messages.

Prosecutors said the group issued an appeal to the US to pass a law imposing sanctions on Hong Kong and China.

The organisation also opposed the teaching of Mandarin, the form of Chinese commonly used throughout the mainland, in Hong Kong schools, the court heard.

Chung was also convicted of a money laundering charge on Wednesday and in exchange the prosecution agreed to shelve a sedition charge as well as a second money laundering charge, both of which he pleaded not guilty to.

Authorities have previously said the security law is not

retroactive but prosecutors cited numerous offences said to have taken place before the law took effect.

Chung has been in custody for over a year since he was arrested in a coffee shop just metres away from the US consulate in Hong Kong last October.

A little-known group calling itself Friends of Hong Kong put out a statement shortly after his arrest saying it had been trying to arrange for Chung to enter the US consulate that day and apply for asylum.

Last December Chung was sentenced to four months in jail for insulting China's national flag and unlawful assembly. AFP

Greening deserts: India turns to solar

At Bhadla Park, robots clean dust and sand off 10mn solar panels, while a few hundred humans monitor

Bhadla, India - As camels munch on the fringes of Thar desert, an oasis of blue solar panels stretches further than the eye can see at Bhadla Park - a cornerstone of India's bid to become a clean energy powerhouse.

Currently, coal powers 70 per cent of the nation's electricity generation, but Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pledged that by 2030, India will produce more energy through solar and other renewables than its entire grid now.

"First, India will increase its non-fossil energy capacity to 500GW... Second, by 2030, 50 per cent of our energy requirements will come from renewable resources," Modi told the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow.

The arid state of Rajasthan, where Bhadla Park takes up an area almost the size of San Marino, sees 325 sunny days each year, making it perfectly placed for the solar power revolution, officials say.

Once an expanse of desert, authorities have capitalised on the sparsely populated area, claiming minimal displacement



Solar panels at the site of solar energy projects developer Saurya Urja Company of Rajasthan Limited, at the Bhadla Solar Park in Bhadla, in the northern Indian state of Rajasthan (AFP)

of local communities. Today robots clean dust and sand off an estimated 10mn solar panels, while a few hundred humans monitor.

This pursuit of a greener future is fuelled by necessity.

India, home to 1.3bn people and poised to overtake China as the most populous country, has a growing and voracious appetite for energy - but it is also on the frontline of climate change.

In the next two decades, it has to add a power system the size

of Europe's to meet demand for its swelling population, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), but it also has to tackle toxic air quality in its big cities.

"India is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world for climate change and that is why it has this big push on renewables to decarbonise the power sector, but also reduce air pollution," Arunabha Ghosh, climate policy expert from the Council on Energy, Environment and Water,

said. But experts say the country - the world's third-biggest carbon emitter - is some way from reaching its green targets, with coal set to remain a key part of the energy mix.

'Huge transformation'

Although India's green energy has increased five-fold in just over a decade to 100GW this year, the sector now needs to grow by the same proportion again to meet its 2030 goals.

"I believe this is more of an aspirational target... to show to the world that we are moving in the right direction," Vinay Rustagi from renewable energy consultancy Bridge to India, said.

"But it would be a big stretch and seems highly unrealistic, in view of various demand and supply challenges," Rustagi said.

Proponents point to Bhadla Solar Park, one of the largest in the world, as an example of how innovation, technology, and public and private finance can drive

swift change.

"We've huge chunks of land where there's not a blade of grass. Now you don't see the ground anymore. You just see solar panels. It's such a huge transformation," Subodh Agarwal, Rajasthan's additional chief secretary for energy, said.

Authorities are incentivising renewables firms to set up in the region, known as the 'desert state'. Agarwal says demand has 'accelerated' since 2019.

"It will be a different Ra-

jasthan. It will be the solar state," he said of the next decade.

If this surge is sustained then coal-fired power for electricity generation could peak by 2024, according to Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) projections.

Currently, solar power accounts for 4 per cent of electricity generation. Before Modi's announcement the IEA estimated solar and coal will converge at around 30 per cent each by 2040 based on current policies.

Empowering lives

Farmer and doctor Amit Singh's three-acre family farmland in Rajasthan's Bhaloji village was running out of water and hit by frequent power outages.

"I always saw the sun and its rays and wondered... why not harness it to generate electricity?," he said.

Singh first installed rooftop panels at his small hospital which generated half of its energy needs.

He then invested family savings into a government-linked project on his land.

The mini-solar farm cost ₹35mn (US\$450,000) and Singh sells electricity to the grid for ₹400,000 a month.

"It's the ultimate source of energy, which is otherwise going to waste... I feel I'm contributing to the developmental needs of my village," he added.

"When a farmer is able to generate power from their solar plant near their farm and pump out water - we are then able to bring the energy transition closer to the people," he added.

AFP

Senior Taliban commander killed in hospital attack



Taliban fighters stand guard near the Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan Military Hospital in Kabul on Tuesday (AFP)

Kabul, Afghanistan - A Taliban military commander was killed when his men responded to an Islamic State (IS) suicide bomb and gun attack on a hospital in the Afghan capital, officials said on Wednesday.

The Taliban spent 20 years waging an insurgency against the ousted US-backed government before seizing control of Kabul in August.

Now they face the struggle of bringing stability to Afghanistan, which has been hit in recent weeks by a series of bloody assaults claimed by rivals, the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K).

At least 19 people were killed in Tuesday's attack on Kabul's main military hospital, according to a Health Ministry official who did not want to be named.

Hamdullah Mokhlis, a member of the hardline Haqqani network and an officer in the Badri Corps special forces, is the

most senior figure to have been killed since the Taliban seized Kabul.

"When he got the information that Sardar Daud Khan Hospital was under attack, Maulvi Hamdullah [Mokhlis], the commander of the Kabul corps, immediately rushed to the scene," the Taliban media official said.

"We tried to stop him but he laughed. Later we found out that he was martyred in the face-to-face fight at the hospital," he added.

The attack began with a suicide bomber detonating his explosives near the facility's entrance before gunmen broke into the hospital grounds.

As part of the response, Kabul's new rulers deployed their special forces to the roof of the building in a helicopter captured from Afghanistan's former US-backed government.

In a statement released on its Telegram channels, IS-K said that 'five Islamic State group fighters carried out simultaneous coordinated attacks' on the site.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid played down the death toll and said the attack was put down within 15 minutes thanks to the rapid intervention.

Witnesses on Tuesday described to AFP a scene of terror, as patients and doctors tried to lock themselves in upper-storey rooms and gunfire erupted.

One woman who had been trapped in the hospital when the attack began told AFP how she and her friend 'felt we were going to die, that our lives were ending'.

"Daesh came and started firing, we were stuck. We heard firing, glass breaking. We locked ourselves in a bathroom," she said, referring to IS by its local name.

AFP

France calls leaked Macron text 'new low' in Australia subs row

Sydney, Australia - The Australia-France row over the collapse of a submarine deal reached an 'unprecedented new low' when a text message from the French President to Australia's leader was leaked, France's Ambassador to Canberra said on Wednesday.

Emmanuel Macron sent the message to Prime Minister Scott Morrison two days before Australia announced that it had torn up a decade-old multi-billion-dollar contract with France to build a new fleet of submarines.

Paris reacted furiously, and Macron added to the furore at the weekend by accusing Morrison of lying to him, a charge the

Australian has batted away.

In a fiery speech on Wednesday, French ambassador to Australia Jean-Pierre Thebault said the leaking of the private text was an 'unprecedented new low'.

"You don't behave like this on personal exchanges of leaders who are allies. But maybe it is just confirmation that we were never seen as an ally," he told Australia's National Press Club.

"Doing so also sends a very worrying signal for all heads of state: Beware, in Australia, there will be leaks."

"And what you say in confidence to your partners will be eventually used and weaponised against you one day."

In the message, Macron had asked Morrison, "Should I expect good or bad news for our joint submarine ambitions?"

Reports said the leak could have been engineered by Morrison's office in retaliation for the 'lying' charge.

Australia announced in mid-September it was abandoning the French diesel submarines in favour of nuclear-powered submarines as it joined a new defence alliance with Britain and the US dubbed AUKUS.

Thebault said Canberra's suggestion that dissatisfaction with the French conventional submarines had been communicated was 'fiction', saying Paris

could not be expected to interpret 'ambiguous attitudes'.

Thebault, who was briefly recalled to Paris over the dispute, said it was now 'up to Australia' to suggest ways to repair the damaged relationship.

"We won't buy on promises of love. Love is good. But proof of love is much better," he said.

Morrison attempted to draw a line under the episode, saying it was now time to 'move on'.

"I don't think there is any further profit for anyone in continuing down this path. Claims were made and claims were refuted, what is needed now is for us to all just get on with it," he said.

AFP

China hits back after US President Biden criticises Xi Jinping's COP26 no-show

Beijing, China - China hit back on Wednesday against criticism by US President Joe Biden, who had accused Beijing of not showing leadership after President Xi Jinping skipped the make-or-break COP26 United Nations summit in Glasgow.

Xi - who leads the planet's largest emitter of the greenhouse gases responsible for climate change - has not travelled outside of China since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and has not joined world leaders for COP26.

Biden on Tuesday had launched blistering criticism of the Chinese and Russian leaders for not attending the summit.

"Actions speak louder than words," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin responded on Wednesday.



People commute in front of a coal-powered power station in Datong, in China's northern Shanxi province on Wednesday (AFP)

"What we need in order to deal with climate change is concrete action rather than empty words," he added. "China's actions in response to climate

change are real."

He also made a jibe at Washington by adding that the United States pulling out of the Paris Agreement under Biden's prede-

cessor Donald Trump had harmed global climate governance and the implementation of the accord.

Biden has apologised for Trump's decision.

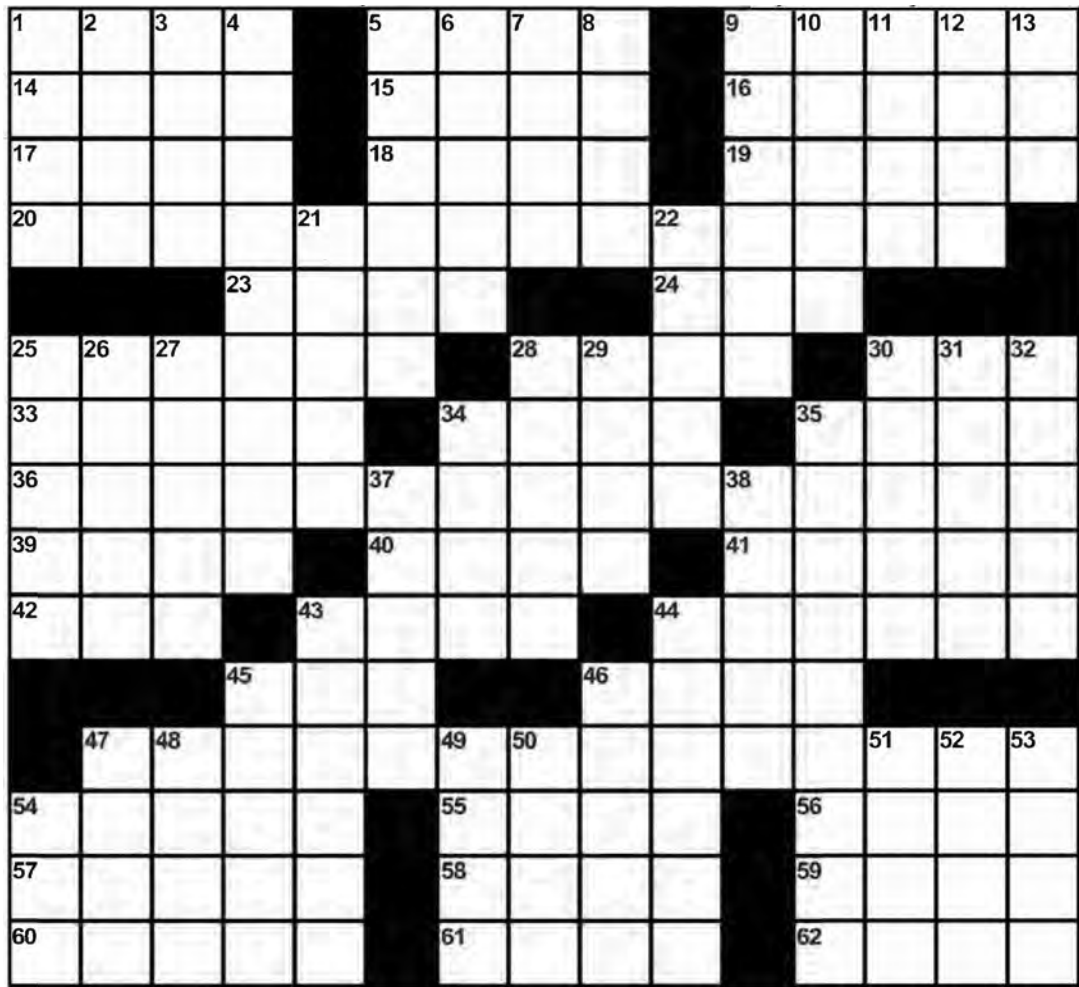
COP26 has been billed as vital for the continued viability of the 2015 Paris Agreement under which nations promised to limit global temperature rises to 'well below' 2°C, and to work for a safer 1.5°C cap.

"It just is a gigantic issue and they walked away. How do you do that and claim to be able to have any leadership?" Biden told said before flying out of Glasgow.

"It's been a big mistake, quite frankly, for China not showing up. The rest of the world looked at China and said: 'What value are they providing?'"

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

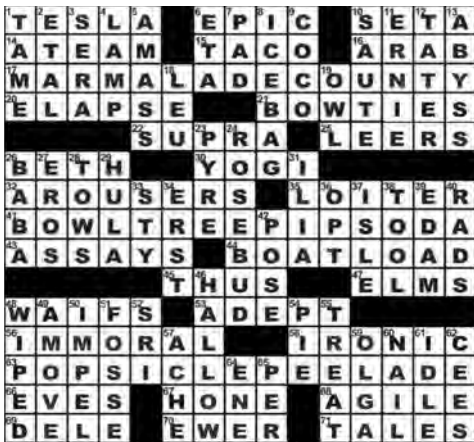
- 1) It's mounted on runners
5) Corleone in "The Godfather"
9) Illegal inducement
14) Serve the iced tea
15) _ horse (locomotive)
16) Happen again
17) Hairstyle that's picked?
18) Like a lemon
19) Love to pieces
20) Is absolutely relentless
23) Cabbagelike veggie
24) Ballpark official, briefly
25) Spars that cross a sail
28) All hail them?
30) It can be an X or an O
33) It's charged
34) Cornmeal dish
35) Search, as for compliments
36) Goes around with bad intentions
39) Bugs on a hill
40) Top-of-the-line
41) Food for frogs

- 42) "All right!"
43) Britain, to the U.S.
44) "Finally!"
45) First word said after a birth
46) Have roots in (with "from")
47) Is as stubborn as a mule
54) Winged honker
55) Vigorous enthusiasm
56) Do as one's told
57) Nasal congestion locale
58) Vending-machine offering
59) Cyrano's large feature
60) Plus column entry
61) Capsize (with "over")
62) Collectors' goals
DOWN
1) Health club features
2) Hay or choir area
3) Dollar relative
4) Old field goal attempt
5) Heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, etc.
6) Good and steamed

- 7) Utterly undecided
8) Aware of, as a scam
9) Lullaby composer Johannes
10) Get more fondue
11) Desktop graphic symbol
12) Small town
13) Bard's "before"
21) Fills to excess
22) Starchy veggie
25) Spread apart, as fingers
26) Face downward
27) Civil disturbances
28) Like a Kansan's trite joke?
29) Poker-pot starter
30) Bone or flute
31) Tropical spots
32) Word with "medicine" or "cedar"
34) Place to swim
35) Monthly lunar phenomena
37) Not true
38) Quite a bit
43) Provide evidence for
44) Hardly melodious
45) 1/12 of a subscription, often
46) Lacking freshness
47) Clark's partner

- 48) Electrically charged particles
49) A real head-turner
50) Gin flavorer
51) Woodwind with a pastoral sound
52) Bluebird's residence
53) Things that may twinkle
54) Government procurement org

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

In your private life, a conflict with a close friend or family member is finally starting to settle down. Everyone is back to loving each other again! Of course, you never really stopped loving each other, but there is a new height to the affection you have now. In your professional life, a challenge you were dreading won't be landing on your desk after all. You can thank a generous co-worker for looking out for you.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

The people around you could be behaving in some unexpected ways, but so are you! How you act depends on what type of energy is being projected toward you. And your best tactic is to just go with the flow. If someone who is usually introverted suddenly starts talking a mile a minute and trying to become the center of attention, play along. Let this person have what they're asking for.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You need to lie low at work. Things still aren't quite settled enough for your progress, so you have to be patient. Don't ask for a raise or make any big power plays just yet. They will probably backfire on you and make things difficult later. At home, all of those recent stressful situations are finally behind you. Now is a great time to catch up with the friends you put on the back burner while you were dealing with certain issues.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your intuition and empathy are powerful forces right now, and they are helping you sense that someone close to you is approaching their breaking point. Try to be there for them as much as you can today. The time you spend listening and talking to them will show them that there are good people in the world and things are better than they thought.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

There are a ton of different emotions in your heart right now, and they might be confusing you. This problem is all about location. Instead of your heart, these thoughts should be moved up into your head so you can look at them in an analytical way. Getting your emotions organized will help you understand them better and send you into a more productive phase. Instead of reacting to your feelings, start dissecting them.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

It's a good day to plan details in terms of where you want to take your future. Life could be in a state of flux right now, but that won't last forever, so you should get prepared for when things settle down. Line up activities and projects for when your calendar loosens up again. There's no need to nail down every single goal, but it would be worth a few minutes of your time to pinpoint one or two interesting items you want to explore later.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

The best way to your heart is through your head, and someone new to your life gets that. They know how to talk to you. Be open to their probing conversations, and take their questions at face value. They aren't trying to be a busybody. They're simply trying to find out what makes you tick, and that's pretty flattering, isn't it? It's safe for you to trust them with what you really want out of life. This is an excellent time to start a new relationship.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're feeling philosophical today, which means it'll be way too easy to get lost in your own thoughts. Think too much about big issues right now and you'll get overwhelmed by the sheer scope of things. Focus on keeping things simple and straightforward or you'll never get out of bed. Your mind has a tendency to overthink, which can be paralyzing. You need to stay in touch with the reality of what needs to be done.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You should be careful about starting any new business relationships or projects right now. Your resources aren't dependable and people aren't ready to come to your aid if you need them at the last minute. While you might be all excited about getting things started, you have to wait for other people to catch up to you. It's not ideal, but it won't be as bad as you think. You can easily distract yourself with other things.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

As you wrap up projects, you could suddenly realise that you don't have too many new things to move on to. You have a ton of holes in your social calendar! But before you fill them all up with dates or vacations, take the opportunity to schedule in some free time. Make it a priority to start balancing your work. You've been too busy for way too long. Connecting with others is important but not as important as connecting with yourself.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

An upcoming break or vacation has caused you to get distracted lately, but only because you're thinking about it on the sly. Today, make some time to devote to it completely. Go ahead and start planning how you're going to spend each of your days. Put together a loose itinerary. If you keep in mind that you'll be seeing things from a whole new perspective, you'll be able to gain a deeper understanding of what you're really seeing.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If someone offers to cut corners for you today, don't take them up on it. Winning by having an unfair advantage isn't really winning. If you're going to be in a competitive environment today, stay true to who you are and do things honorably and honestly. You've never been one to use other people to your advantage, and there is no reason you should start doing it now. Don't compromise your morals for a vague promise.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Wright Brothers are regarded inventors of the

- a. Balloon
b. Bicycle
c. Aeroplane
d. None of the above

2. The basic cause of World War II was

- a. an unjust Treaty of Versailles
b. rise of the Nazi Party in Germany
c. Japan's policy of expansion and imperialism of England and France
d. All of the above

3. The country, which was admitted to the membership of the United Nations in September 2002, is

- a. Macedonia
b. East Timor
c. Andorra
d. Eritrea

Answers: 1. c, 2. d, 3. b

VOX CINEMAS

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WHERE THEY BELONG

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Sooryavanshi traces the acts and serious antics of DCP Veer Sooryavanshi, the chief of the Anti-Terrorism Squad in India

NOV. 5TH

ANNAATHEE
A family drama that revolves around the strong bond between Kaalayan (aka Annaathee) and his sister, and how he goes all out to protect his sister when misfortune strikes

SPENCER
The marriage of Princess Diana and Prince Charles has long grown cold. Though rumours of affairs abound, peace is ordained for the Christmas festivities at the Queen's Sandringham Estate. This year, things will be a whole lot different

SEAL TEAM
After his best friend is killed in a shark attack, Quinn, a lovable yet tenacious seal assembles a SEAL TEAM to fight back against a gang of sharks overtaking the neighborhood

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BOGGLER

E	A	R	B
E	U	R	Y
L	S	E	K
Y	P	E	M

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

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

S

H

G

I

F

N

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

NOT THE END OF THE ROAD



BURNOUT

Burnout refers to a collection of symptoms from physical exhaustion to irritability, lack of motivation, poor performance and disillusionment. The solution lies in not letting yourself sink

Hubert Vaz

Burnout is a rather modern term which many tend to associate with sheer exhaustion – mental and physical. It can make life seem meaningless for some while others might experience inability to keep going in their present situation. It is the individual's response to burnout which actually decides what turn his/her life will take.

The World Health Organization burnout is characterised by greater cynicism and reduced effectiveness at work. 'It was a huge problem in health care long before the pandemic. But now, the short staffing and the crushing and unpredictable workload is contributing to epidemic levels of burnout.'

According to Nutaila al Kharusi, practising psychologist and founder-managing director of the Psychology Department at Al Harub Medical Center (AHMC), "The pandemic has given a rise to people experiencing higher rates of burnout. I think, it's important for people to practice self compassion, to be gentler to their thoughts and feelings, to recognise that it is perfectly okay to experience these difficult emotions and thoughts, given what the world had to go through. People should engage in more self awareness exercises so that they are less reactive to their internal processes and practice healthier behaviours."

She further advises, that it is ok to take a pause and engage in self care. "If one needs to take rest and watch Netflix, that's ok. If you need to not show up at work and spend more time with your loved ones, that's ok, too. It has been a tough time for all and it's important to engage in 'preventive measures' so that when more difficult situations occur in the future, you have the tools to overcome them."

According to a recent CNN report, surveys show that a record numbers of Americans have quit their jobs this year and more than 40% of workers are thinking about doing the same. 'After 18 months of societal turmoil, workers are burnt out.'

Jeanie Chang, a North Carolina-based licensed marriage and family therapist, was quoted as saying, "The last year and a half has had a huge effect on burnout, stress, depression around the world, really, and so we're not the same. This is a changed world, a changed workplace."

While the concept existed before the pandemic - the World Health Organization recognised workplace burnout as a legitimate medical diagnosis only in 2019 - research has found it has soared in the era of face masks, social distancing, and working from home.

Causes for burnout

Burnout can come from not feeling valued at work, like being overlooked for a promotion. It can develop from being overworked, not having clear boundaries, and be compounded with, especially for parents and caregivers. It might even stem from indirect trauma, like emotionally fraught stories in the news.

Culture can also influence burnout. Having grown up in a culture reluctant to address mental health, Chang asserts, "You can love what you do but go into burnout because you're not managing your stress effectively."

Burnout may be the result of unrelenting stress, but it isn't the same as too much stress. Stress, by and large, involves too many pressures that demand too much of you, physically and mentally. However, stressed people can still imagine that if they can just get everything under control, they'll feel better.

Being burned out, on the other hand, means feeling empty and mentally exhausted, devoid of motivation, and beyond caring. People experiencing burnout often don't see any hope of positive change in their situations. If excessive stress feels like you're drowning in responsibilities, burnout is a sense of being all dried up. And while you're usually aware of being under a lot of stress, you don't always notice burnout when it happens, say experts.



It's important for people to practice self compassion, to be gentler to their thoughts and feelings, to recognise that it is perfectly okay to experience these difficult emotions and thoughts.

NUTAILA AL KHARUSI



Coping with burnout

Spotting the warning signs that you might be headed for burnout and taking time out to relax and unwind can help you prevent it. Make sure to:

- Take your annual leave. A lot of us haven't taken as much holiday from work as we normally do as we haven't been able to travel, but time off is important even if you are just at home. It helps one recharge.
- Get enough sleep. Turn off your screens and do something to relax before you go to bed at night. If your mental health is causing you to have problems falling asleep, try sleep tips.
- Try to finish work on time. Without the commute and with the pressures of homeschooling, it's easier to work late into the evening to try and get everything done. Once in a while this is ok, but try to make sure you finish work on time most days.
- Schedule in time for pleasant activities - Make time for relaxing, hobbies and calls with friends and family. Socialising plays a huge part in alleviating burnout.
- Ask for help if you need it. If you are struggling with burnout it may be beneficial to take a few days off work while you recover. You might want to talk to your manager or to a psychologist for help in coping
- Make exercise a priority. Even though it may be the last thing you feel like doing when you're burned out, exercise is a powerful antidote to stress and burnout. Aim to exercise for 30 minutes or more per day or break that up into short, 10-minute activities.

PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Feeling tired and drained
- Frequent headaches/muscle pains
- Change in appetite/sleep habits
- Low immunity, frequent illness

EMOTIONAL SIGNS

- Self doubt and sense of failure
- Lack of motivation
- Feeling helpless/trapped
- Increasing cynicism

BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS

- Shirking responsibilities
- Isolation from people
- Outbursts of frustration
- Using food/alcohol/drugs to cope
- Procrastinating

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Ronaldo rescues Man Utd; Bayern, Juve in knockouts

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Paris, France - Cristiano Ronaldo scored another late goal to rescue Manchester United in the Champions League on Tuesday, as his former club Juventus and Bayern Munich both secured qualification for the last-16 with two group games to spare.

Ronaldo fired in from the edge of the box a minute into injury time to snatch United a 2-2 draw with Atalanta in Italy and keep them on course to qualify from Group F.

The competition's all-time top scorer had earlier cancelled out Josip Ilicic's opener to equalise at the end of a slick team move in first-half stoppage time.

However, having lost Raphael Varane to injury before that, United went behind again in the 56th minute when Duvan Zapata ran through, evading Harry Maguire before slotting in.

The goal was initially disallowed for offside before being given after a VAR review, but Ronaldo thwarted the hosts again with his ninth goal in 11 appearances since returning to Old Trafford and his record-extending 139th goal in the competition.

"We believed until the end. I helped my team get one point," said Ronaldo. "We never give up, it's a good result for us I think."

The 36-year-old also scored an injury-time winner when United came from behind to beat Villarreal 2-1 in September and headed in late on to complete a comeback from 2-0 down to defeat Atalanta 3-2 at home two weeks ago.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side are level on seven points atop the group with Villarreal, who beat Swiss champions Young Boys 2-0 in Spain with Etienne Capoue scoring a first-half opener and then setting up Arnaut Danjuma to clinch the win late on.

Chelsea get better of Malmo

Captain Paulo Dybala's brace helped Juventus to a 4-2 win over Zenit Saint Petersburg in Turin as they kept up their 100 per cent record in Group H to secure a last-16 place.

Dybala's early opener was cancelled out when Leonardo Bonucci headed into his own net, but the Argentine international restored Juve's lead just before the hour, netting a penalty which he had initially missed before being granted a retake.

Federico Chiesa and Alvaro Morata added further goals for Massimiliano Allegri's team before Sarder Azmoun pulled one back in stoppage time.

Juve are three points clear of reigning European champions Chelsea, who beat Malmo 1-0 in Sweden with a second-half Hakim Ziyech goal.

Thomas Tuchel's side, who



Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo (L) celebrates with his teammates after scoring against Atalanta in Bergamo, Italy, on Tuesday (AFP)



Juventus players celebrate their win over Zenit Saint Petersburg



Robert Lewandowski

steamrolled Benfica 5-2 in Germany to make it four wins from four in Group E, securing their progress and leaving them requiring a single

point to clinch first place.

Lewandowski nodded in the opener and then set up Serge Gnabry for a cheeky back-heel to make it two.

Morata headed Benfica back into the game and Lewandowski then had a penalty saved right on half-time after a Lucas Verissimo handball. However Leroy Sane made it 3-1 just after the restart and Lewandowski added two more delightful finishes either side of a consolation effort from visiting substitute Darwin Nunez.

It was an eventful night for Lewandowski on his 100th Champions League appearance. He has now scored 81 times in the competition - only Ronaldo and Lionel Messi have scored more. "I never

COLLATED RESULTS

Group E

Dynamo Kiev 0 Barcelona 1 (Fati 70);
Bayern Munich 5 (Lewandowski 26, 61, 84, Gnabry 32, Sane 49) Benfica 2 (Morato 38, Nunez 74)

Group F

Villarreal 2 (Capoue 36, Danjuma 89)
Young Boys 0;
Atalanta 2 (Ilicic 12, Zapata 56)

Group H

Malmo 0 Chelsea 1 (Zieych 56);
Juventus 4 (Dybala 11, 58-pen, Chiesa 78, Morata 82) Zenit Saint Petersburg 2 (Bonucci 26-og, Azmoun 90+2)
AFP

thought I would have so many games with so many goals," Lewandowski told Amazon.

Meanwhile managerless Barcelona boosted their qualification hopes, Ansu Fati's goal in Ukraine securing a second straight 1-0 win over Dynamo Kiev to lift them up to second above Benfica. Red Bull Salzburg could have sealed progress from Group G but instead the Austrians went down 2-1 to Wolfsburg in Germany.



Manchester United 2

(Ronaldo 45+1, 90+1)

Group G

Sevilla 1 (Ocampos 15) Lille 2 (David 43-pen, Ikone 51);
Wolfsburg 2 (Baku 3, Nmecha 60)
RB Salzburg 1 (Woeber 30)



Cristiano Ronaldo

Ridle Baku and Lukas Nmecha scored for Wolfsburg either side of a Maximilian Woeber free-kick. Lille and Wolfsburg are now just two points behind group leaders Salzburg after the French side came from behind to win 2-1 at Sevilla.

Lucas Ocampos gave Sevilla the lead but Jonathan David levelled with a penalty and Jonathan Ikone secured Lille's first win in 11 Champions League games.

AFP

QUICK RUN



Platini (L) and Blatter

Blatter and Platini charged by Swiss court over payment

Disgraced ex-FIFA president Sepp Blatter and former UEFA chief Michel Platini have been indicted in Switzerland for offences including 'fraud', the Swiss Attorney General announced on Tuesday. "Both are accused of unlawfully arranging a payment of 2mn Swiss Francs (US\$2.19mn)" from FIFA to Michel Platini," said the statement from the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland (OAG). It said both men could face charges of 'misappropriation', 'criminal mismanagement' and 'forgery of a document'. Platini, 66, is also accused of 'fraud', participating in both 'misappropriation' and 'criminal mismanagement' as well as 'forgery of a document'. Both men said they expected the court to clear them. The case stems from the 2011 payment to Platini that earned both men bans from football in 2015. The Swiss statement said the payment was for consultancy work done by Platini for then FIFA president Blatter, now 85, between 1999 and 2002. The OAG said it will present its findings to the Federal Criminal Court, in Bellinzona, which will decide whether to try the two former executives. Simple fraud is punishable by five years in prison 'or a fine' under Swiss law.

England fan jailed for 'vile' Euro 2020 final racial abuse

A football fan who racially abused England's Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka after the Euro 2020 final has been sentenced to ten weeks in jail. Jonathon Best, 52, posted an 18-second video on Facebook in which he made a 'grossly offensive' rant about the players following England's penalty shootout loss to Italy in July's match at Wembley. He was sentenced at Willesden Magistrates' Court in London on Tuesday after previously pleading guilty to 'sending by public communication network a grossly offensive or indecent or obscene or menacing message or matter'. Rashford, Sancho and Saka, who are all black, received a torrent of online abuse after failing to score their penalties as England failed to win their first trophy since the 1966 World Cup.

AFP

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19-member Oman team for MENA Nations Cup

Shivali Sinha and Noof al Wahaibi are the only girls in the hosts' squad

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Defending overall champions and hosts Oman have picked a strong 19-member team for the forthcoming MENA Karting Nations Cup 2021, which will be held at the Oman Automobile Association's Muscat Speedway, from November 16-20.

This is the second time in a row that Oman Automobile Association (OAA) will be hosting the regional go-karting championship, which was launched in Muscat last year.

Over 200 racers from 19 countries - Libya, Lebanon, Cyprus, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, Palestine, Morocco, Turkey and Oman - will showcase their talent in the five-day championship.

Events will be held in eight categories including six classes in MENA Rotax Max Challenge (RMC), MENA Elite Endurance (Round One), MENA Elite Sprint 2 (Round One) classes.

Oman's team includes former top go-karting international racer and now rally driver Abdullah al Rawahi. Rawahi recently competed in the Oman National Rally. The team also includes two girls - Shivali Sinha and Noof al Wahaibi - who will be competing in RMC mini max and senior max classes respectively.

Shivali is an Salalah-based 11-year-old Indian girl and has



A file photo of go-karting action at the OAA's Muscat Speedway



Shivali Sinha

been competing at various events for the past four years

while Noof is a 23-year-old go-karting local racer.

Brigadier (ret'd) Salim al Maskari, OAA chairman, said, "It is a proud moment to host the second edition of the MENA Nations Cup. We, at the OAA, are committed to promoting motorsports and the MENA Karting Nations Cup Championship is a major event for the young generation in the region. Our dedicated team at the OAA have managed to make all arrangements for another edition of the championship in Muscat."

On November 16, drivers will get their registration done as kart

raffle draw for the championship will be held.

Two practice race days will follow (Wednesday and Thursday) with the official welcome ceremony scheduled on November 18.

The timed qualifying and three qualifying heat races will be held on November 19. The pre-final and final are scheduled the next day.

In RMC, competitions will be held in micro max, mini max, junior max, senior max, DD2 and DD2 Master, covering all age ranges from eight years and above.

Round One Elite Endurance will be a team event for the two-hour endurance race for the drivers with the minimum age of 15 years. Round One Elite Sprint is an individual event for the drivers having a minimum age of 15 years. The longest final race will determine the overall Elite Sprint rankings.

The drivers in all categories will contribute to their Nations Cup or country's ranking points based on their performance.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) karting championship is a major series for the young and upcoming drivers under the International Automobile Federation (FIA), the world body for motorsports. The inaugural edition of MENA Nations Cup was hosted by OAA from February 10 to 14, 2020.

The MENA Nations Cup is supported by the FIA Sport Grant Programme that enables any MENA country with suitable facilities and minimal annual investment to host the regional karting contest.

Oman squad: Shivali Sinha, Noof al Wahaibi, Adam Awan, Zak Sowerby, Fahad al Rawahi, Pransh Chander, Abdullah al Rawahi, Ayman Macki, Waleed al Manji, Waheeb al Kharusi, Hazza al Shahwarzi, Saleem Abdullatif, Mohammed al Balushi, Daniel Jones. **Endurance team:** Faisal al Raisi, Wade al Kharusi, Mohammed al Zadjali, Maher al Esry; **Sprint:** Zakariya al Aufi, Wade al Kharusi.

OGA appoints Peter Bailey as national team manager

Our Correspondent
Muscat



Peter Bailey

In an effort to strengthen the national team and develop the youth golf programme, Oman Golf Association (OGA) has recently appointed experienced professional Peter Bailey as the golf development and national team manager.

The UK pro has previously worked at Peter Cowen academy at Emirates Golf Club in Dubai before playing a lead role in setting up of Qatar Golf Academy at the Doha Golf Club.

A postgraduate diploma in sports coaching with the University of Birmingham, UK, Bailey is a British PGA member and hails from Sheffield, England. A widely travelled coach, Bailey has also worked as an advisor to the chairman of the Indonesia Golf Association on junior development.

Bailey joins the OGA at a time when two of sultanate's leading golfers - Azaan al Rumhy and Ahmed al Wahaibi - are competing at the Asia Pacific Amateur Championship (AAC) at the Dubai Creek Golf & Yacht Club, which began on Wednesday.

After the first round, Azaan shot a 85 while Wahaibi hit a disappointing round of 91 as the Omani pair was placed

among the last-six in a field of 120. Seven players were in joint lead with a round of 67.

Speaking after his appointment as national team manager, Bailey said, "I am delighted to be joining the team at the Oman Golf Association and to have the opportunity to guide and coach the existing national team players. Fortunately I have had some time to work with Ahmed and Azaan before the Asia Pacific event. I am also excited about seeking new ways to grow women's and junior golf though the GOLadies and GOJuniors programmes."

OGA technical director Jamie Wood welcomed Bailey and said, "Peter [Bailey] has arrived at an ideal time with travel restrictions easing and our national teams preparing to represent in various regional and international events. I am hopeful that Peter will have a positive impact on all of our players."

TENNIS ROUND-UP

Belgium upset

BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

Prague, Czech Republic - Daria Gavrilova and Storm Sanders led Australia to a surprising win over Belgium while Slovakia stunned the US at the Billie Jean King Cup final tournament in Prague on Tuesday. In the day's other ties, Russia swept Canada 3-0 and Switzerland thrashed Germany 3-0.

Canada and Germany have already been eliminated from the tournament, a rebranded version of the Fed Cup dubbed the world cup of women's tennis and staging four groups with three teams each. The group winners will play Friday's semifinals. The final is scheduled for Saturday.

Missing world No 1 Ashleigh Barty in Prague, Australia could rely on Gavrilova, the world No 412, as they beat Belgium 2-1 in Group B. Gavrilova beat 70th-ranked Belgian Greet Minnen 6-4, 1-6, 6-4. Sanders then beat Elise Mertens 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-0. Mertens and Minnen then rounded off the score by beating

Ellen Perez and Sanders 6-2, 6-4 in the final doubles rubber.

Russia eased past Canada in Group A. Daria Kasatkina swept Carol Zhao 6-3, 6-1 and Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova then beat Rebecca Marino 6-4, 4-6, 6-2, before Veronika Kudermetova and Liudmila Samsonova won doubles against Gabriela Dabrowski and Marino 6-3, 6-1.

Slovakia edged the US in Group C after a doubles decider.

Earlier on, Viktoriya Kuzmova beat Shelby Rogers 6-4, 6-4 and Danielle Collins levelled after sweeping Anna Karolina Schmiedlova 6-3, 6-2. In the doubles, Kuzmova and Tereza Mihalikova prevailed over Caroline Dolehide and Coco Vandeweghe 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 12/10.

Switzerland beat Germany 3-0 in Group D as Viktorija Golubic breezed past Andrea Petkovic 6-4, 7-5 and Belinda Bencic overpowered Angelique Kerber 5-7, 6-2, 6-2 before claiming the doubles.

AFF

Djokovic survives scare

PARIS MASTERS

Paris, France - World No 1 Novak Djokovic endured a tough return to the ATP singles circuit but battled through to beat Marton Fucsovics of Hungary 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 in the second round of the Paris Masters on Tuesday.

The 34-year-old 20-time Grand Slam champion had said on Sunday his greatest fear was lack of match practice having not played since Daniil Medvedev dashed his dreams of a Grand Slam sweep in the US Open final in September.

The Serbian's fears were borne out as Fucsovics put up a sterner test than the 'rabbit caught in the headlights' one he had produced when they met in the Wimbledon quarterfinals earlier this year. "It is my return to competition after almost two months of not playing in an official tournament," said Djokovic.

"Thus it was difficult to get into my rhythm but I am happy it is a decent win."

He will play the winner of the



Novak Djokovic in action against Marton Fucsovics on Tuesday

all-French clash between Adrian Mannarino and mercurial Gael Monfis.

Earlier another seed had a tough time of it as well. Felix Auger-Aliassime set up a second round clash with Dominik Koepfer, conqueror of Andy Murray, after coming from a set down to beat Italian qualifier Gianluca Mager 4-6, 6-4, 6-1.

Auger-Aliassime will need to be on his mettle when he faces

Koepfer who saved seven match points against world No 1 Murray on Monday before sealing victory with his first.

The 18-year-old Spaniard, though, has recovered and showed real toughness in overcoming Frenchman Pierre-Hugues Herbert 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/2), 7-5 in a thrilling see-saw encounter which lasted seven minutes shy of three hours.

AFF

Every day, all day!





QUOTE OF THE DAY

Mark [Watt] was fantastic. He's been bowling extremely well for quite a while now on this whole tour that we've been on

Kyle Coetzer
Scotland captain, on his teammate and left-arm spinner, on Wednesday



ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

Guptill's 93 the difference

Kiwi opener's knock sets up big batting finish; Scotland's chase fizzles after brief dominance

GROUP TWO

N ZEALAND VS SCOTLAND

Dubai, UAE - New Zealand gained two valuable points with a solid win over Scotland, who applied themselves better than they did in the first two Super 12 fixtures.

On a fresh pitch in Dubai, New Zealand posted 172 for five, thanks largely to a 105-run fourth-wicket stand between Martin Guptill and Glenn Phillips. Guptill went on to score a 50-ball 93.

Scotland's chase was steady, and even threatening in parts, but struggled to keep up with the required run-rate.

They reached their 50 in 6.2 overs and needed 97 runs off the last ten. Mitchell Santner and Tim Southee were miserly but Scotland stayed in the hunt until close to the end.

An unbeaten 50-run stand between Michael Leask and Chris Greaves kept them in with a chance until the last over but New Zealand's experience held out.

Guptill's milestones

Guptill anchored and then accelerated New Zealand's innings and enjoyed several achievements along the way.

He became the second batter to reach 3,000 T20I runs when he sent an Alasdair Evans leg-stump half-volley over backward square leg for six. Guptill is second only to Virat Kohli in T20I runs, and is only 156 runs behind.

He also became the batter with the most sixes in this format, when he slog-swept



New Zealand's Martin Guptill plays a shot during his knock of 93 against Scotland at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai on Wednesday (AFP)

Chris Greaves onto the top tier of the stands.

That was Guptill's 150th six in T20Is and measured 102m, one short of the biggest in the tournament so far. Guptill shared in a 105-run stand with Phillips which formed the spine of New Zealand's total, and was in a good position to bring up his third T20I hundred but was out when chipped Brad Wheal to

long-on to end what looked like an exhausting innings.

Sharif's double strike

Safyaan Sharif pulled Scotland back from their worst start in this tournament - an opening over that cost 13 runs - when he gave away only a single in the second over. Then, he changed ends and pushed them ahead with a double strike in the fifth over.

With the first ball of his second over, Sharif had Daryl Mitchell trapped on the back pad.

Four balls later, Sharif bagged one of the wickets of his career when Kane Williamson followed a delivery headed down the leg side, Matthew Cross took a diving catch to his left and Williamson walked. New Zealand were 36 for two, which became 52 for three when

Devon Conway was dismissed.

Tight post-powerplay

Scotland applied a squeeze through spin in the four overs after the powerplay to put the breaks on New Zealand.

Mark Watt and Greaves gave away just 18 runs in 24 balls between overs six to ten, with only one boundary. Watt also got rid of Conway in that time to

continue a magical run at this T20 World Cup. He has taken at least one wicket in all the nine matches he has played at the men's T20 World Cup. Watt has conceded less than 24 runs in all but his debut game where he went for 30 runs.

Maiden, then plenty

The 13th maiden over at this competition came from Adam Milne,

who bowled the fourth over of Scotland's chase.

All six of his deliveries were back of a length and speedy. He reached up to 147kph and beat Matthew Cross three times in the over to complete only his second run-less over in his format.

But Milne did not have the final say on the powerplay after Cross got his own back in the sixth over when he hit five successive fours. It's only the second time we've seen five fours in an over in the men's T20I World Cup after Jacques Kallis' against Scotland's Jan Stander, in 2009.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND

M Guptill	c MacLeod	
	b Wheal	93 (56)
D Mitchell	lbw b Sharif	13 (11)
K Williamson	c Cross b Sharif	0 (4)
D Conway	c Cross b Watt	1 (3)
G Phillips	c Greaves b Wheal	33 (37)
J Neesham	not out	10 (6)
M Santner	not out	2 (3)
Extras:	(lb 5, w 15)	20

TOTAL: 172 for five in 20 overs

Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-35, 3-52, 4-157, 5-157

Bowling: B Wheal 4-0-40-2, S Sharif 4-0-28-2, A Evans 4-0-48-0, M Watt 4-0-13-1, C Greaves 3-0-26-0, M Leask 1-0-12-0

SCOTLAND

G Munsey	c Southee b Sodhi	22 (18)
K Coetzer	c Southee b Boult	17 (11)
M Cross	b Southee	27 (29)
R Berrington	c Conway b Sodhi	20 (17)
C MacLeod	b Boult	12 (15)
M Leask	not out	42 (20)
C Greaves	not out	8 (10)
Extras:	(lb 2, w 6)	8

TOTAL: 156 for five in 20 overs

Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-66, 3-76, 4-102, 5-106

Bowling: T Boult 4-0-29-2, T Southee 4-0-24-1, A Milne 4-1-36-0, M Santner 4-0-23-0, I Sodhi 4-0-42-2

England's Mills ruled out with injury

Dubai, UAE - Tymal Mills has been ruled out of the T20 World Cup, with Reece Topley taking his place in the 15-man squad.

Mills, England's joint-highest wicket-taker in the tournament, left the field midway through his second over against Sri Lanka in Sharjah on Monday, immediately calling for a substitute fielder, Sam Billings, to replace him before heading straight to the dressing room.

He subsequently underwent a scan which confirmed a right thigh strain, a similar injury to the one he sustained in 2018, which also ruled him out of the rest of that English season.

It is a cruel blow for Mills, 29, who has been dogged by injury throughout his career.

His appearances at the T20 World Cup had been his first for his country since February 2017, and came about after a long-term elbow injury to Jofra Archer had left England seeking a dependable white-ball quick to fill a massive gap in their plans.

Topley, who has been in the UAE as a travelling reserve, will step up to the main squad immediately, and could be in contention to play in England's final group game against South Africa. His pace and left-arm angle replicates that of Mills, and gives England another pace option to go alongside the existing alternatives.

AFP

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The return of Ash was a real positive, it was something he has worked really hard for. He's a wicket taker and a smart bowler as well

Virat Kohli
India skipper, on his teammate R Ashwin, after his team's big win against Bangladesh, on Wednesday



ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

Batters fire India to massive win

Rohit and Rahul shine in must-win game to keep team's hopes alive



India's Rohit Sharma plays a shot during his knock of 74 against Afghanistan on Wednesday (AFP)



India's KL Rahul celebrates after reaching his half-century on Wednesday

GROUP TWO

INDIA VS AFGHANISTAN

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Opening batsman Rohit Sharma hit a blistering 74 to set up India's first win at the T20 World Cup with a 66-run drubbing of Afghanistan on Wednesday as Virat Kohli's team avoided a shock early exit. The Indian batting finally fired with Rohit and KL Rahul, who made 69, putting on 140 for the opening wicket to guide India to 210 for two in their must-win Super 12 game in Abu Dhabi.

The tournament's highest total proved too much for Afghanistan who finished on 144 for seven. They still remain in the hunt for the semifinals along with New Zealand and India. Pakistan have already secured their place in the last-four from the group.

"It was a much better wicket today, to be fair," said India skipper Kohli. "We back the guys because they're so skillful, and sometimes it comes off like today."

India, who came in as hot favourites but crashed to two straight losses, needed to win their remaining three games and depend on others for their entry

in the semis. Returning off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin returned figures of two for 14 in his first white-ball international since 2017.

Afghanistan, who usually bat first, decided to put India in but that plan spectacularly backfired. "We wanted to bat second because of the dew, and the wicket looked really good for batting," said captain Mohammad Nabi whose team now have two wins and two losses.

"Threw wickets away"

"In the end there wasn't that much dew, but India batted really well on this pitch and put our bowlers under pressure. We threw away our wickets and got under pressure."

But Rohit remained the star with his 47-ball knock that deflated the opposition bowling after Afghanistan elected to field first. Rohit took five balls to get going with a boundary off skipper Nabi, who opened the attack with his off-spin, and then tore into the bowling attack.

India raced to 53 in the first six overs of powerplay to signal their intent. Rohit reached his fifty

with a boundary off fast bowler Naveen-ul-Haq and then hit a six to bring up the 100 for the opening stand. Rohit, who had scores of nought and 14 in India's two losses, smashed the bowlers all around the park for eight fours and three sixes in his 47-ball knock before losing his wicket to Karim Janat.

Rahul soon followed his partner to the dugout after being bowled by Gulbadin Naib on a slower yorker. Wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant and Hardik Pandya rode the momentum, putting on an unbeaten partnership of 63.

Pandya, who hit 35, and the left-handed Pant, who made 27, hit five sixes between them.

Afghanistan lead spinner Rashid Khan remained wicketless and gave away 36 runs from his four overs. Naveen-ul-Haq was crashed for 59 runs off his four-over allocation.

India's new-ball bowlers Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah took out the Afghanistan openers early in the innings.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz hit back with two fours and two sixes off Shami's third over but soon fell to

Ravindra Jadeja after his ten-ball 19. Ashwin got down to business soon after he was brought into the attack as he trapped Gulbadin Naib lbw for 18 and bowled Najibullah Zadran to leave Afghanistan at 69 for five.

Never in the chase, Nabi and

Janat, who made an unbeaten 42 off 22 balls, put on 57 runs for the sixth wicket to reduce their margin of loss. Shami broke the stand to send back Nabi and then got Rashid for nought in his final over to finish with three for 32.

AFP

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

KL Rahul

b Naib

69

(48)

Rohit Sharma

c Nabi b Janat

74

(47)

R Pant

not out

27

(13)

Hardik Pandya

not out

35

(13)

Extras:

(b 2, lb 1, nb 1, w 1)

5

TOTAL:

210 for two in 20 overs

Fall of wickets:

1-140, 2-147

Bowling:

M Nabi 1-0-7-0, S Ashraf 2-0-25-0, Naveen-ul-Haq 4-0-59-0, H Hassan 4-0-34-0, G Naib 4-0-39-1, Rashid Khan 4-0-36-0, K Janat 1-0-7-1

AFGHANISTAN

H Zazai

c Thakur b Bumrah

13

(15)

M Shahzad

c Ashwin b Shami

0

(4)

R Gurbaz

c Hardik b Jadeja

19

(10)

G Naib

lbw b Ashwin

18

(20)

N Zadran

b Ashwin

11

(13)

M Nabi

c Jadeja b Shami

35

(32)

K Janat

not out

42

(22)

Rashid Khan

c Hardik b Shami

0

(1)

S Ashraf

not out

2

(3)

Extras:

(w 4)

4

TOTAL:

144 for seven in 20 overs

Fall of wickets:

1-13, 2-13, 3-48, 4-59, 5-69, 6-126, 7-127

Bowling:

M Shami 4-0-32-3, J Bumrah 4-0-25-1, Hardik Pandya 2-0-23-0, R Jadeja 3-0-19-1, R Ashwin 4-0-14-2, S Thakur 3-0-31-0

TODAY'S MATCHES

GROUP ONE



AUSTRALIA VS BANGLADESH

Dubai (UAE), 2pm

GROUP ONE



SRI LANKA VS WEST INDIES

Abu Dhabi (UAE), 6pm

Dravid named new India head coach

Dubai, UAE - Rahul Dravid will succeed Ravi Shastri as head coach of the national men's team after the ongoing T20 World Cup in the UAE. Dravid's two-year term will begin with the upcoming home series against New Zealand, starting November 17.

"It is an absolute honour to be appointed as the new head coach of the Indian cricket team, I am really looking forward to this role," Dravid was quoted as saying in a BCCI statement. "Under Mr (Ravi) Shastri, the team has done very well, and I hope to work with the team to take this forward."

"Having worked closely with most of the boys either at NCA [National Cricket Academy], U19 and India A setup, I know they have the passion and desire to improve every day. There are some marquee multi-team events in the next two years, and I look forward to working with the players and the support staff to achieve our potential."

Dravid's appointment - made official by the cricket advisory committee comprising Sulakshana Naik and RP Singh on Wednesday - was always on the cards after he sent in a formal application for the position. This was after he was convinced to do so by Sourav Ganguly, Dravid's former teammate who is now the BCCI president, along with the board's top brass following meetings during the IPL play-offs last month.

"Rahul's effort at the NCA has nurtured several young cricketing talents who have gone on to represent the country at the international stage," Ganguly said. "I am hopeful that his new stint will take Indian cricket to new



heights. Rahul has had an illustrious playing career and is one of the greats of the game. He has also served Indian cricket as Head of National Cricket Academy (NCA) with distinction."

Dravid has been director of the NCA in Bengaluru following four years as coach of India A and India U19. Under him, India reached two U19 World Cup finals, losing one (to West Indies in 2016) and winning one (against Australia in 2018). At the NCA, Dravid helped set up a process for injury management and rehabilitation, as well as training programmes for coaches across the country, and developed roadmaps for age-group, men's and women's cricket.

In July, Dravid stepped in as interim head coach for the limited-overs series in Sri Lanka. The series was held concurrently with the Test tour of England, which was helmed by Shastri.

Dravid's support staff is set to be announced in due course. Paras Mhambrey, Dravid's colleague at the NCA, is the front-runner to replace Bharat Arun as bowling coach, while Abhay Sharma and Ajay Ratna are among those who have applied for the position of fielding coach. On Wednesday, current batting coach Vikram Rathour confirmed his re-application for the position. Cricinfo

GROUP ONE						
TEAM	P	W	L	PTS	NRR	
ENG	4	4	0	8	+3.183	
SA	4	3	1	6	+0.742	
AUS	3	2	1	4	-0.627	
SL	4	1	3	2	-0.590	
WI	3	1	2	2	-1.598	
BAN	4	0	4	0	-1.435	

GROUP TWO						
TEAM	P	W	L	PTS	NRR	
PAK	4	4	0	8	+1.065	
AFG	4	2	2	4	+1.481	
NZ	3	2	1	4	+0.816	
IND	3	1	2	2	+0.073	
NAM	3	1	2	2	-1.600	
SCO	3	0	3	0	-2.645	

AUS: Australia, BAN: Bangladesh, ENG: England, SL: Sri Lanka, SA: South Africa, WI: West Indies, AFG: Afghanistan, IND: India, NAM: Namibia, NZ: New Zealand, PAK: Pakistan, SCO: Scotland

P: Played, W: Won, L: Lost, PTS: Points, NRR: Net Run Rate

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