



THURSDAY, 21 JANUARY 2021

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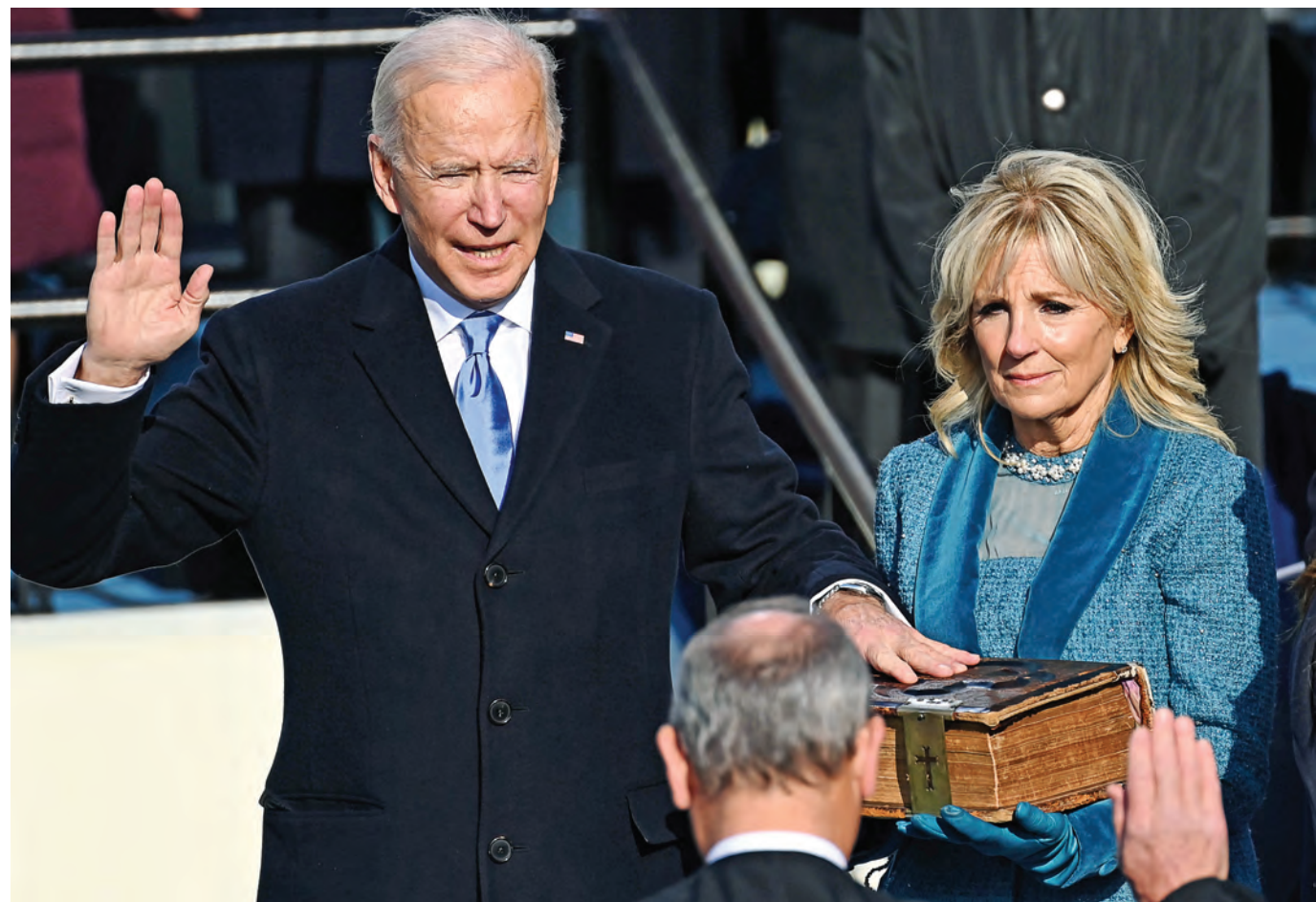
BALL IN AMERICA'S COURT, SAYS IRAN

GO TO PAGE 09 WORLD

BIDEN BEGINS

Addresses rise in domestic terrorism and alliances with other countries in inaugural speech

To kick off his term with orders to restore the US to the Paris climate accord and WHO



Washington, US - Democrat Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th president of the United States on Wednesday, ending a tumultuous four-year term in the White House of Republican Donald Trump.

Biden (78) took the oath of office from Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts at a solemn ceremony at the US Capitol which was snubbed by the outgoing president and took place in the shadow of a raging coronavirus pandemic.

Kamala Harris too was sworn

in making history as she became the first female, first black and first South Asian vice president in the nation's history.

The new president led a moment of silence for the 400,000 American victims of the coronavirus. "We need all our strength to persevere through this dark winter. We're entering what may be the toughest and deadliest period of the virus," Biden said in his inaugural address.

The US faces "a rise of political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism, that we must

confront, and we will defeat", he said on the steps of the US Capitol. Biden used his inaugural speech to send a message to the rest of the world about the US. "America has been tested, and we've come out stronger for it. We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again," he said, vowing a change from the isolationist policies of his predecessor.

"We'll lead, not merely by the example of our power, but by the power of our example. We'll be a strong and trusted partner for

peace, progress and security," he added. In his closing remarks, Biden vowed he will commit to being transparent to the American people. "My fellow Americans, I close today where I began, with the sacred oath before God and all of you, I give you my word. I will always level with you."

Biden plans to kick off his new administration with orders to restore the US to the Paris climate accord and the World Health Organization, aides said.

Agencies

See also Page 09

Energy Development Oman appoints Haifa al Khaifi as CEO

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The board of the newly formed state-owned energy company Energy Development Oman (EDO) has named Haifa al Khaifi to lead the company's executive team, making her the first woman to hold such a position in the energy sector in Oman.

In a statement, PDO said that it was pleased to announce that the EDO Board has ratified appointments of transitional key personnel to the new company's leadership team. 'PDO finance director Haifa al Khaifi has been selected as CEO. We are proud that key appointments are from PDO and look forward to the multiple growth opportunities that the creation of EDO will bring about,' PDO stated.

Others from PDO in the leadership team include Moutaz al Riyami as chief strategy and commercial officer, Ibrahim al Waili as corporate planning and services officer, and Saif al Harthy as board secretary. Ibrahim al Eisri, who worked at Oman Investment Authority, has been appointed as chief financial officer.

Riyami held the position of gas director at PDO, Waili was PDO planning and deal lead, and Harthy was PDO finance controller.

Royal Decree No 128/ 2020 issued in December 2020 ordered the establishment of EDO. According to the decree, the principal commercial objectives of the new energy company are to 'own a shareholding in PDO and an interest in Block 6 petroleum agreements, and



We are pleased to announce the Energy Development Oman Board has ratified appointments of transitional key personnel to EDO's leadership team

PDO

undertake hydrocarbon exploration and production operations in Oman in accordance with such agreements'.

As per the Royal Decree, EDO will also undertake any other project, operation and activity directly or indirectly related to the exploration, development, extraction, production, transportation, ownership, sale, storage and delivery of hydrocarbons. Additionally, the new company will undertake

any project, operation and activity directly or indirectly related to renewable energy in Oman.

The headoffice of the new energy company will be located in Muscat.

'The company can also borrow or raise money and/or financing of any nature or secure, guarantee or discharge any debt or obligation of the company and/or any third party in any manner whatsoever,' the Royal Decree stated.

NEWS BRIEFS

OHRC REFUTES CLAIMS BY HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Muscat - Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has refuted claims made in a recently published report by Human Rights Watch (HRW), which addressed certain human rights issues in the sultanate during the year 2020.

In a statement, OHRC said that it wishes to confirm that the sultanate took tangible and significant steps to reinforce human rights as per His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's Royal Decrees.

The most notable among them was the Royal Decree on the promulgation of the Basic Law of the State with its new amendments which guarantees freedom, human dignity, equality in rights and responsibilities.

This is in addition to a number of other Royal Decrees on restructuring the state administrative apparatus in line with Oman Vision 2040 with the aim of achieving more of the citizens' aspirations during the coming time.

ARTIFICIAL REEFS COME TO LIFE IN SUR



An agreement worth RO90,000 was signed for the second phase of an artificial coral reefs project on Wednesday.

Report on Page 02

Sayyid Shihab receives GCC Secy General

Muscat - H H Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq bin Taimour al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Al Murtafaa Camp Dr Nayef Falah al Hajraf, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, on Wednesday.

The meeting exchanged cordial conversations and discussed

matters of common concern. Hajraf praised the sultanate's role in supporting peace and stability in the GCC region and the world at large. He also commended the sultanate's endeavours and its constructive stances in extending bridges of understanding and cooperation among various countries of the world.

The current visit of the GCC Secretary General to the sultanate was in connection of his lecture at the National Defence College (NDC) in the Ministry of Defence.

The meeting was attended by Air Vice Marshal Eng Saleh Yahya al Maskari, NDC Commandant.

H H Sayyid Shihab also received in his office H E Renaud Salins, Ambassador of the French Republic to the sultanate, on Wednesday. The two sides exchanged cordial conversations and reviewed the bilateral relations between the sultanate and France.

ONA

Online medical consultation app to launch on Jan 26

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A smartphone app providing remote medical consultation for patients will be launched on January 26 by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

Called 'Tabibk Jnbk' - 'Your doc by your side' - the app will be launched under the patronage of Eng Reda bin Juma al Saleh, chairman of OCCI, at its headquarters in Ruwi.

The app will provide remote online medical evaluation for patients without leaving home. It includes a database of medical and health services, and provides easy and quick access to these services.

Tabibk Jnbk will make it easy for citizens, residents, visitors and tourists in the sultanate to find a doctor anywhere in Oman at the click of a button.

The app has a map of the sultanate displaying all healthcare establishments - hospitals, health complexes and centres, clinics, pharmacies and mobile health services - for services categorised under Your Doc by Your Side, Your Doc for Consultation, Home Healthcare, and Your Doc for Emergency.

Tabibk Jnbk includes seven sections - basic data of healthcare facilities including pharmacies, opticians and medical laboratories; Your Doctor for Consultations allows users to conduct online conversations with doctors with the provision to send photographs.

The third section is a window for medical practitioners to register themselves as willing to provide home healthcare, while the fourth section allows allied health professionals such as nurses, physiotherapist and cupping therapists to provide continuous and comprehensive care and follow-up.

The fifth section allows life coaches to carry out conversations with patients (confidentiality assured) to help them define goals and encourage them to effect change in their life.

The sixth section is designed for emergency doctors; it provides quick assistance by listing the nearest paramedics, doctors, hospitals or ambulances.

The last section is educational and includes awareness videos and tips for emergencies. It also has reliable health publications and announcements of the Ministry of health and external health organisations.

Notice

This is for the notice of our CRT customers that the "Authority for Public Services Regulation" has announced the statement of change for "Cost Reflective Tariff" (CRT) for the year 2021 with some critical changes which are very critical for your forward planning and decision. The main and critical changes in the statement for 2021 are as below:

1. The CRT tariff will include all the non-residential Customer Segments (Government, Commercial, Industrial, Tourism, Agriculture and Fisheries) with high consumption (whose consumption reach 100 MWh per annum)
2. The threshold for the customer consumption for the applicability of CRT tariff changed from 150MWh (in 2020) to 100MWh per annum (in 2021).
3. There are 2 options for bills calculation:
Option 1: CRT-Time of Use (Existing approach)
Option 2: CRT- Fixed Rate (New Approach)
4. CRT customer has the right to select his preferable option to bill his consumption and he has to confirm the preferred option by sending an email confirmation E-mail address: crtcommunication@medcoman.com (with the requirements mentioned below) and customer has one selection for the option every year.
5. MEDC's opens the window for customers to confirm their preferred option during the period "from 15 January to 25 January 2021" and through the above Email.
6. If no confirmation received from Customer during the above mentioned period and through the above-mentioned email, MEDC will automatically choose option 2 for the year 2021.
7. For all new connected accounts during the year, bills will be calculated according the option 2 until next year.
8. Customers with prepaid Meters whose consumption is exceeding the above consumption threshold will be applicable for Option 2 only unless they request for Meter Change to Postpaid Meter.

Options Details:

Option 1 : Cost Reflective Tariff - Time of Zone (CRT -TOU)

Total Cost = Bulk Supply Charge (BSTt) + Transmission Charge (Tt) + Distribution System Charge (Dt) + Supply Charges (St).

2021 Cost Reflective Tariff (for Muscat)

CRT component	Charge	Type of Charge	Calculation of Change
BSTt	See table 1 below	Energy	Applied to hourly MW consumption
Tt	16,630 RO/MW	Demand	Charge per annum applied to customer's contribution to average system peak
Dt	4 Bz / KWh 5 Bz / KWh 11 Bz / KWh	Energy	Applied to each MWh consumption based on customer connection to each respective distribution voltage level
St	50 RO/customer	Standing	Change per account per annum for administering each customer account

Table 1-Bulk Supply Charge tariff changes (BSTt):

Months	Off-Peak* 2:00 to 11:59 & 16:00 to 21:59 (All days)	Week-day-peak* 12:00 to 15:59 (from Sunday to Thursday)	Night-Peak* 22:00 to 1:59 (All days)	Week-end-Peak 12:00 to 15:59 (Friday & Saturday)
Jan to March	12	12	12	12
April	15	15	15	15
May to July	18	67	26	37
Aug & Sep	18	29	24	22
Oct	15	15	15	15
Nov & Dec	12	12	12	12

Note: *All prices in Baiza per KWh.
*Details of time zone is same as last years.

Option 2 : Cost Reflective Tariff - Fixed Rate (CRT - Fixed Rate)

Seasonal tariff according to the level of connection.

Period	High voltage (132KV, 220KV, 400KV)	33KV and 11KV	0.415KV (LT)
Winter tariff (from 1st October to 30th April)	17 Bz / KWh	22 Bz / KWh	25 Bz / KWh
Summer tariff (from 1st May to 30th September)	30 Bz / KWh	35 Bz / KWh	38 Bz / KWh

Requirements in Email:

1. Account number/Numbers
2. Selected Option (1 or 2)
3. Customer Name (Company, Govt, Person)
4. Focal Point Details (Name, Mobile, Email)

* The above information can be send on
Email: crtcommunication@medcoman.com



NATION

02 | MUSCAT DAILY | THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2021

Artificial reefs to help marine life flourish in Sur

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To increase fish stock and biodiversity in the sultanate, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has signed an agreement with the Korean firm Haejoo to implement the second phase of an artificial coral reef project in the wilayat of Sur.

To be built at a cost of RO90,000 and funded by the Oman Indian Fertilizer Company, the project aims to design, manufacture and unload units of purpose-built artificial reef and follow up on the results of its installation in order to create an appropriate environment for fish and marine species to flourish.

The agreement was signed by H E Eng Yaqoob Khalfan Khamis al Baisadi, Undersecretary for Fisheries at MAFWR, and Ryan Paik, general manager of Haejoo. Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Paik said that the project will be spread over an area of four hectares and comes after the successful hand-over of the first phase of the project to the ministry.

"The first phase has been very successful. We did a two-year joint monitoring with the ministry and found that the biomass of the site increased ten times and biodiversity 12 times."

According to Paik, the seabed at the site was a marine desert. "The project turned into a marine forest."

An artificial coral reefs project of the ministry recently won the top prize at the Arab Scientific Society Organisation Awards for the best project in the Arab world in the field of environment in 2020. A total of 90 projects submitted by individuals and in-



A colony of corals following the first phase of the project (top) and signing of the pact (Supplied photos)

The first phase has been successful. We did a two-year joint monitoring with the ministry and found that the biomass of the site increased ten times and biodiversity 12 times

RYAN PAIK

stitutions from 13 Arab countries vied for the awards.

The MAFWR has implemented large-scale artificial coral reef projects in 14 wilayats of the sultanate. A total of 13,906 artificial reefs were grown in these

sites from 2003 to 2019. The development of these projects aims to increase fish stock, provide an environment conducive for fishing and, consequently, increase income of fishermen.

The ministry also seeks to de-

velop the tourism sector by creating an environment ideal for diving and related tourist activities, besides creating an environment suitable to carry out scientific studies.

In 2019, the ministry inaugurated its largest artificial coral reef off the coast of Suwaiq spread over an area of 20km x 7km. The project, called Suwaiq Marine Farm Artificial Reef Complex, has 4,280 coral reef units. Besides benefitting Suwaiq's fishermen, it will boost tourism.

Lecture at NDC discusses GCC aspirations, challenges

Muscat - The National Defence College (NDC) organised a lecture titled 'GCC Aspirations and Challenges' on Wednesday.

The lecture was delivered by Dr Nayef Falah al Hajraf, GCC secretary general as part of the curriculum of NDC's eighth batch.

Air Vice Marshal Eng Saleh Yahya al Maskari, commandant of NDC, welcomed the GCC secretary general and the rest of the gathering.

In his lecture, Hajraf outlined the GCC's role in tackling regional and international developments, elements of power and challenges influencing the



council's methodology of functioning as it performs its mandate of promoting member states.

The lecture also touched on the impact of the GCC's moves

on regional and international security, as well as its ability to explore and anticipate future developments and address the concomitant challenges to stay

as a politically and economically influential entity in the region.

The lecture was attended by Dr Ali Qasim al Lawati, advisor of Studies and Research at the Diwan of Royal Court, Sheikh Ahmed Mohammed al Nadabi, secretary general of the Majlis A'Shura, Khalid Ahmed al Sa'eedi, secretary general of the State Council, Saud Ahmed al Barwani, head of the GCC Department at the Foreign Ministry, and Dr Zainab Ali al Qasmi, head of the Diplomatic Institute at the Foreign Ministry, besides NDC faculty members and personnel.

ONA

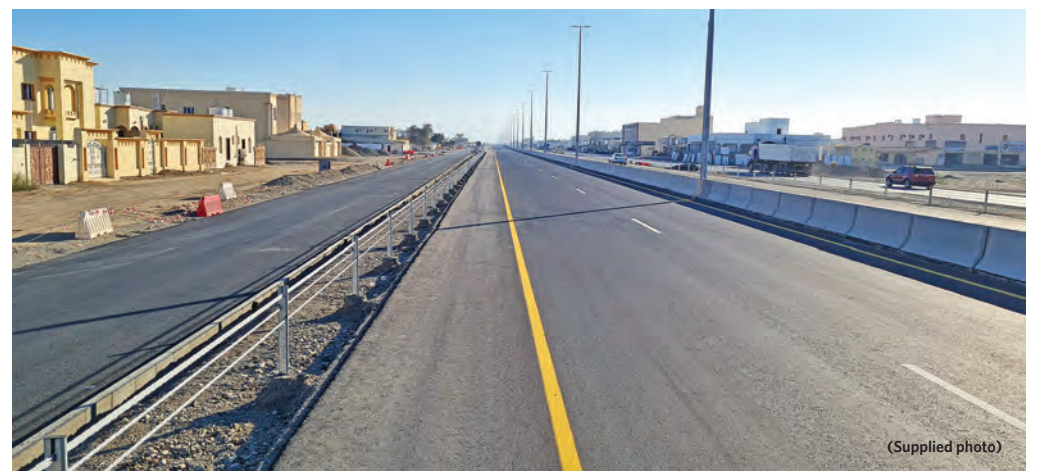
Suwaiq-Al Hoqain dual carriageway now open

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has completed and opened the 20km Suwaiq-Al Hoqain dual carriageway for traffic.

The road links the Batinah Expressway with the Batinah dual carriageway and is therefore vital in serving the fast-paced development in both North and South Batinah governorates.

The ministry said in a statement, 'This project will fully utilise the strategic Batinah Expressway by establishing upgraded road links between it and the Batinah dual carriageway. New interchanges will be con-



(Supplied photo)

structed to keep up with the growing traffic between North and South Batinah governorates.'

The project features a dual carriageway with two 3.75m-wide lanes on each side,

2.5m-wide external asphalt road shoulders and 1.5m-wide internal asphalt road shoulders.

Additionally, it has 10.5km of service roads stretching along the main road.

It comes with traffic safety facilities, including concrete protective barriers, iron fences, iron wire barriers, pavement floor painting, road reflectors and informative signboards.

Phase 1 of Maysan Square project in Duqm launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Maysan Properties has announced the launch of Phase 1 of the Maysan Square - Duqm project. It includes an office complex, residential apartments, a business hotel and entertainment venues that will be constructed in stages depending on demand in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm.

The announcement was made at an event held in Muscat City Centre under the patronage of Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Deeb, deputy chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones.

At the event, Sadiq bin Jaffer Sulaiman, CEO of Maysan Properties, stated that Phase 1 of construction will commence in April and completion is expected in the last quarter of 2022. Phase 1 of the development includes the office complex, consisting of three wings comprising 229 commercial units and retail stores available for ownership under the usufruct system.

The complex will be built on 12,000sqm, while the building



(Supplied photo)

area spread over 30,000sqm.

Sulaiman said that the growth witnessed by the Special Economic Zone in Duqm encouraged the company to invest in the region, and that real estate activity is expected to increase due to the growth of Duqm.

"The growth of real estate market in any region requires business opportunities, growth in company establishments and population growth. All of these factors are available in the Special

Economic Zone in Duqm. So Duqm is seen as a promising real estate market for the next five years," Sulaiman said.

On the occasion, Eng Yahya bin Khamis al Zadjali, in-charge of operations of the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, noted that the project is consistent with the vision of the Special Economic Zone in Duqm in encouraging Omani companies to invest in it.

Eng Zadjali informed that over the past few years, Duqm has attracted many real estate projects

that are characterised by innovative designs and that contribute to meeting the demand for office space and housing solutions.

The Maysan Square project is strategically located in the centre of Duqm, ten minutes from the port and 15 minutes from Duqm Airport. Offices are priced between RO27,000 and RO50,000 depending on floor space varying between 45sqm and 75sqm.

Oman's cricket fans shower praises on Indian team

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The historic win of the Indian cricket team against Australia on the latter's home turf on Tuesday has opened the floodgates of praises and accolades from the cricket fans from across the world, including those in Oman.

The stunning win in Brisbane, said to be the fortress of the host team for never losing a match there in the last three decades, got the visiting team retain the celebrated Border-Gavaskar trophy for the third consecutive time with rookies scoring a massive 324 runs on the fifth day of the Test match when most of the top players missed the match due to injuries.

Cricket fans in Oman did not hide their excitement while discussing the match that is now considered one of the best in cricket history.

"The victory has been very remarkable for Indians as well as cricket lovers all around," Dad Mohammad, a board member of Oman Cricket said.

"All around the world now it is time for youngsters to take over responsibility with grace and composure. The new brand of young India displayed this spirit



with diligence," he said.

Prabhakar Bhamdarkar, an IT expert added, "It was a welcome relief particularly in a difficult time, when India is fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and is reeling from its impact on the economy.

"Australia have always been a tough team for India because of its sharp bowling. Indeed, we saw how our players got injured while facing their pacers. But at the end, our boys managed to keep their focus on and come out victorious. It also reflects life in general: one must never ever lose the composure in dire straits."

The win in Brisbane comes exactly a month after India was bowled out for a lacklustre 36 in

the first Test.

Santosh Patil, a semi-professional cricketer who regularly plays at the Amerat Ground, said, "Most of the players are new and to have such an inexperienced team win against the giants on a foreign soil must be appreciated. Tests require more stamina and focus unlike T20 and to display this much level of focus and that too after a disastrous lowest score loss is praiseworthy."

The BCCI (cricket board) must give preferences to these new comers, Patil said, while pointing out that "most of them (youngsters) come from a very humble background" and that "they must be provided with every facility to excel to their best".

National awareness campaign on NCDs kicks off today

Muscat - The Department of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) at the Ministry of Health (MoH), in cooperation with AstraZeneca Company, will launch on Thursday a national awareness campaign - *Hemtak Maana* - to control chronic diseases.

The campaign aims to raise awareness among patients living with chronic diseases and their families. It will focus on the role the patients play in controlling

Non-communicable diseases cause 72% of all mortality in the sultanate

their diseases through self-monitoring, and adopting healthy lifestyles.

Non-communicable diseases are diseases that are not conta-

gious in nature, chronic and often progress slowly. The four main non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory disease) lead to 72 per cent of all mortality in Oman and 18 per cent of these mortalities are premature, occurring in the 30-69 year old age groups.

Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of all non-communicable disease deaths accounting for 36 per cent of these deaths in Oman. This is followed by cancer (11 per cent), diabetes (8 per cent) and chronic respiratory diseases (2 per cent).

The campaign will rely on the use of various tools to educate patients and their families, which include broadcasting educational videos and instructions on social media platforms, TV channels, applications and electronic pages. The campaign also tar-

gets health workers, for whom workshops and webinars will be conducted to discuss various topics related to the management of chronic diseases.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having an impact on those living with non-communicable diseases, given that patients with chronic diseases are more likely to develop severe symptoms and disease when infected with COVID-19.

Temperatures to drop during 3 days

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Temperatures will drop by a few degrees starting from Thursday evening until Saturday. It is caused by northwesterly and northerly winds coming from the Arabian Sea and south Iran respectively, Meteorological Department said.

An official at the Met said, "This is a normal phenomenon of the year and temperatures fluctuate in this time of the year. The

skies will be clear in most parts of the country with chances of late night to early morning low clouds or fog patches over parts of North and South of Sharqiyah. There is no forecast for rains though."

The sea waves will be moderate to rough along the Musandam governorate coasts with a maximum wave height of 1.5m, and a maximum of 1m in the rest of the sultanate.

HOTLINES

24-hour pharmacies

Scientific Pharmacy: Qurum
24566601, Ruwi 24702850
Muscat Pharmacy: Ruwi
24702542, Salalah 23291635
Al Hashar Pharmacy: Ruwi
24783334

Hospitals and Clinics

Al Hayat International Hospital, Al Ghubra-
22004000, 94267068 /
97049520
94442000 (Emergency)
Al Raffah Hospital: Muscat -
24618900/1/2/3
Sohar - 26704639/49/50
Apollo Hospital Muscat,
Hamriya: 24787766,
24782666, 24787780
Abeer Hospital, Ruwi, Muscat
24770800, 90999335,
90999334 (Emergency)
Starcare Hospital: 24557200
Emergency number: 24558333
Dr Harub's Clinic:
24563217, 2456381,
99254940 (Emergency)
Emirates Medical Center:
24604540
KIMS Oman Hospital:
24760105
Lama Polyclinic: CBD
24799077, 24788881,
24788577, 24707566,
24799655, Al Khuwayr
24478817, 24478818,
Sohar 26751128
Muscat Eye Laser Centre:
24691414
Muscat Private Hospital:
24583600
Health4All Medical Centre:
24486005, 24483009
Dr Maurice al Asfour
Specialised medical
centre - 24560673/74
Lifeline Hospital, Sohar -
26651111
Lifeline Hospital, Salalah-
23212340
Muscat Municipality:
80077222



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Send your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (2/2021)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tenders documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated a below:

Tender No.	No E- Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/20/131	2020/MM/QS-57	Repair & Maintenance of Culvert at Ruwi St. Opposite to Al Nahda Hospital (E- Tender)	Rial 25	18/02/2021	28/02/2021	Excellent
PRE/21/116	2020/MM/QS-58	Maintenance of Water Falls at Hill near Qurum Natural Park (E- Tender)	Rial 25	18/02/2021	28/02/2021	Specialist

Tender Conditions :-

- 1- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- 2- Original Tender Bonds are to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Ground Floor at the reception .
- 3- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- 4- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+96824166670).

2021 NISSAN X-TERRA

THE TAMING OF THE XTERRA

Tridwip K Das
Muscat

Nissan's garage tool that apparently said 'treat me rough' is back after a five-year hiatus, now looking more like a city slicker rather than harking back to its famed ruggedness. It's back with a hyphen, too, probably suggesting its considerably bigger dimensions - 4.9m long, 2.1m wide and 1.9m tall as opposed to 4.5m long, 1.85m wide and 1.8m tall.

Launched in Oman by Suhail Bahwan Automobiles in December 2020, the 2021 X-Terra could well be considered an entirely new SUV in the Nissan range. There is really no identical physical characteristic, no resemblance at all to the second generation Xterra that was discontinued in 2015. You could be forgiven for mistaking it for a Patrol, albeit a smaller one.

Some of the design elements borrowed from the Patrol become obvious at the first glance. Its front fascia resembles the Patrol's V-motion grille. It also has C-shaped LED signature headlamps, similar to those on the Patrol. There are similarities at the rear end, too, with the X-Terra's bumper having squared-off shapes like its bigger sibling suggesting stability and strength.

Additionally, the X-Terra is still built body-on-frame like the Patrol - reinforced for greater rigidity - giving it more ground clearance (243mm) to tackle more varied terrain. But barring the increased ground clearance, the X-Terra's off-road an-



(Photos: Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)



SPECS

Engine	2.5lt four-cylinder
Displacement	2,488cc
Transmission	Seven-speed automatic
Max power	165hp @ 6,000rpm
Max torque	241Nm @ 4,000rpm
Dimensions (LxWxH)	4.9m X 2.1m X 1.9m
Ground clearance	243mm
Fuel economy	11.4km/ltr

tecedents aren't so obvious in its looks. It's a far cry from the SUV that was originally designed to look better dirty than clean.

However, despite a smaller engine - 2.5lt four-cylinder as opposed to the 4lt V6 in the 2015 Xterra - the SUV doesn't fuss when you punish it on the twisty undulating roads of Yeti. It'll only let out a delicate purr when you floor the accelerator as you exit Al Bustan Street gunning the engine to Qantab and further on. The poise and reserve stand out for

an SUV billed to 'go anywhere, beyond boundaries'. Mated to a seven-speed transmission, it produces 165hp and 241Nm of torque.

While these numbers pale in comparison to 261hp and 386Nm of its earlier avatar, the 2021 X-Terra is equipped with an enviable kit for off-roading, including Electronic Locking Rear Differential, Limited-Slip Differential, Hill Descent Control and Hill Start Assist systems. These technologies offered alongside Nissan's Intelligent Around View Monitor

with Moving Object Detection (camera displays split-screen close up views of the front, rear and sides as well as a bird's eye view of the SUV's surroundings, while looking out for moving objects) make it a trusty partner off road.

Another feature in the 2021 X-Terra that is rather handy when off roading is the off-road meter that'll help you see the tilt of the vehicle and tyre angle on a seven-inch TFT display located in the centre of the instrument cluster.

In Oman, all three trims of the 2021 X-Terra - SE, Titanium and range-topping Platinum - are available in 4WD configuration. Features exclusive to the Platinum grade include 18-inch machine cut alloys and a nine-inch user-friendly infotainment system with navigation among others.

The domestication of this once built-for-the-wild creature to city roads has been achieved with driver assists such as Lane Departure Warning, Blind Spot Warning, Intel-

ligent Forward Collision Warning, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Intelligent Driver Alertness and Intelligent Emergency Braking, all available in the Platinum grade we test-drove.

Creature comforts in the 2021 X-Terra that one can get easily used to include a Bose Premium Audio System, which produces a sound that can touch the heart, climate control for each row of passengers and Zero Gravity second and third row seats. Co-engineered with NASA, these were introduced in the 2013 Altima. The Zero Gravity seats are inspired by the weightlessness of space. Built with 14 different pressure points to put the passenger in a neutral position, the seats' shape and patented structure provide continuous support from the hips all the way up to the shoulders.

While on the seats, the second row has a remote fold-down feature, while the third row has a single action fold-down to make more cargo space - enough space to lug around kit for a whole soccer team. And at the weekend on a drive to Nizwa and back, you can turn the 2021 X-Terra into a cinema. There's an optional 11-inch flip down monitor with HDMI connectivity to mirror your smartphone. You couldn't ask for more in the transformation of Nissan's maverick adventurer into a family car.

But for all the - inevitable - comparison of the 2021 X-Terra with the discontinued Xterra, its distributor in Oman doesn't speak of both in the same breath. This is, after all, an entirely new car that will go everywhere and take you there comfortably.

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OQ, Kuwait's Q8 launch Duqm Refinery brand

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's OQ and Kuwait Petroleum International (Q8) on Wednesday unveiled OQ8, the new brand identity for the Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company.

The Duqm Refinery project – a mega refinery, petrochemicals plant and pipeline – is a joint venture between OQ and Q8 which is owned by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation.

The new brand logo represents the close relationship between the sultanate and Kuwait and the inherent brotherhood between the two nations.

Sheikh Nawaf Saud al Nasser al Sabah, CEO of Kuwait International Petroleum and chairman of Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company, said, "The consistency between Q8 and OQ strategies in managing the Duqm Refinery project is a strong evidence on the collaboration of our efforts to achieve development and growth for our nations. Since the launch of this project, we have seen the constant growth and development of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and being one of the key industrial hubs in the Gulf region. Such partnership will ensure us a safe channel for exporting the



Kuwaiti oil besides creating considerable number of job opportunities for Omani and Kuwaiti youth."

"Despite the tough economic conditions ripping the world markets, we will spare no efforts to turn our aspirations into reality and become a model success stories for everyone," he added.

The design of the Duqm Refinery, which has a capacity of 230,000 barrels per day, is based on the hydrogen cracking unit and the delayed coker unit. The refinery has the capability to process all types of oil. Once

completed, the refinery will produce liquefied petroleum gas, naphtha, jet fuel, diesel, sulphur and coke.

Eng Ahmed bin Saleh al Jahdahmi, CEO of refineries and petrochemicals at OQ and deputy chairman of OQ8, said, "Our synergy in OQ and Q8 and successful strategy can be referred to united visions of the leaderships of the two countries to achieve maximum benefits which will return back to the people of the two countries. The project has the attention and support from the leaderships of the two countries and

the groundbreaking event of the project was held under the patronage of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in April 2018. This puts more responsibility on us to overcome all challenges to achieve the success of this strategic partnership."

"Due to the strategic location of Duqm and its easy access to international markets, we at OQ believe on the promising future of Duqm to attract more petrochemical projects which will create more job opportunities and businesses in the future," Jahdahmi added.

Oman's RO100mn bonds issue oversubscribed

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's government has received an overwhelming response from investors for this year's first development bonds issuance worth RO100mn.

Announcing the auction result for the 66th government development bonds issue, the Central Bank of Oman on Wednesday said that the new development bonds issuance has been oversubscribed by nearly 1.5 times.

The 66th government development bonds issue, which received overwhelming response from investors, has received applications in excess of over RO49.619mn at RO149.619mn against the issue size of RO100mn,' the central bank said



in a statement.

The value of the new development bonds issue was fixed at RO100mn with a maturity period of three years and the bonds carry a coupon rate of 4.75 per cent per annum.

The bonds issue was open for subscription from January 10 to January 17, 2021. The bonds were issued on Wednesday.

The average yield came at

4.86 per cent at an equivalent price of RO99.695, while the highest yield was 5.03 per cent at an equivalent price of RO99.230 and the lowest was at 4.55 per cent at an equivalent price of RO100.555.

The interest on the 66th government development bonds will be paid semi-annually on July 20 and January 20 every year until maturity date on January 20, 2024.

The bonds issue was offered to all investors, residents and non-residents (irrespective of their nationality).

The government development bonds are direct and unconditional obligations of the government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance.

Asyad reports robust growth in imports

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Despite the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Asyad and Marafi have reported a robust growth in direct imports to the sultanate to meet the country's needs for basic commodities in 2020.

Asyad managed ports – Port Sultan Qaboos, Ports of Khasab, Suwaiq and Shinas – witnessed a 17 per cent increase in direct im-

ports in 2020 compared to 2019. These four ports handled 1.722mn tonnes of general cargo from January to December 2020, according to a press statement issued by Asyad.

'At the outset of the pandemic Asyad managed to maintain an efficient supply chain to sustain the delivery of critical and essential cargo to the local market, particularly the food supply,' the statement said.

With the opening of new mar-

kets as well as direct imports and exports, goods were delivered cheaper and faster and Oman has become well connected to the major trade hubs, Asyad added.

The surge in the volume of direct imports in 2020 included 245,000 tonnes of fruits and vegetables and 954,000 heads of cattle handled through Marafi, recording growths of 381 per cent and 181 per cent, respectively.

INTERVIEW

KATE HESK, CO-FOUNDER AND GLOBAL HEAD OF COACHING, COGNOMIE

'Employee mental health is critical to business success during pandemic'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Kate Hesk is the co-founder and global head of coaching for Cognomie. The UK-based Cognomie works to develop a foundation of mental fitness and wellbeing within large organisations across the globe. The firm measures the link between mental fitness and performance in companies and, via cutting edge technology, provides accredited coaching to allow people to perform at their best. Prior to founding Cognomie, Kate built a number of leadership development and coaching consultancies following a successful leadership career in global pharmaceutical and healthcare organisations. She will be speaking at the Wellbeing @ Work Middle East Summit that will take place between February 22-24, 2021.

Can you tell briefly about yourself and Cognomie that you co-founded?

Over the last twenty years I have founded, built and sold a number of businesses in the coaching and leadership arena. My background leading up to this was sales, marketing, leadership and general management across the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors. Cognomie was founded with a vision to develop mental fitness across the globe. Mental fitness is another term for psychological and emotional wellbeing and is the foundation of personal effectiveness, impact and sense of wellbeing.

Cognomie offers individuals and organisations the opportunity to evaluate, track and develop mental fitness in order to reach potential and be at one's best. Our proprietary technology platform supports the data capture, benchmarking, analysis and tracking as well as managing and reporting on the impact of our mental

fitness development solutions. Our global community of accredited coaches and practitioners are matched to individuals and projects to provide personalised mental fitness development support.

How important is mental health and wellbeing to the success of any organisation? Is it really an area that companies need to take seriously and invest in?

Mental fitness (i.e. mental health and wellbeing) is critical to the success of any individual and therefore every organisation. Increasingly, and particularly in the current pandemic, organisations are seeing their duty of care to employees to support them to become aware if their mental fitness is slipping and to offer development support to enable them to stay at the peak of their emotional and psychological performance. Without this, organisations will start to see more lost days to work-related stress, greater strain on internal resources to manage through absence and reduction in productivity and engagement.

COVID-19 has significantly changed the way we work and do business. Do you think the pandemic has accelerated the problems of workplace stress/anxiety and mental health? If so, how do these changes affect overall wellbeing for employees and employers?

The exponential growth in stress and anxiety in the workplace and the staggering rise in absenteeism from mental health challenges makes it clear that organisations should be taking a more proactive and preventative approach to supporting employees to stay well.

At Cognomie we capture data on global trends through our Global Mental Fitness Index. What's interesting is that, whilst, yes, there is a



Mental fitness is critical to the success of any individual and therefore every organisation

KATE HESK

greater degree of anxiety, lack of work-life balance and stress reported increasingly over the last year of the pandemic. The organisations who are taking a proactive approach to caring for the mental fitness of their employees are those who are showing lower levels of stress and anxiety and increased levels of confidence, optimism and happiness.

How do you advise businesses to provide a mentally healthy work environment, to make sure everyone stays physically and mentally healthy during the pandemic? What measures do you recommend?

It starts with generating awareness of

the current levels of mental fitness, through surveys, through individual and collective questionnaires and data analysis. Taking a pulse check at an individual or organisational levels shows you care and also provides insight into areas of strengths and areas which require further development. Encouraging conversations and developing supportive solutions are the key. A mentally healthy, or mentally fit working environment is developed by building on the individual and collective awareness of these areas of strength and areas of development and offering self-development solutions (one-on-one coaching, group coaching and training

events and programmes and access to relevant, tailored resources) to enable transformational and sustained change.

Most businesses have faced disruption, slowdown and loss of revenues amid the COVID-19 crisis. As the pandemic drags on, do you think companies can still thrive by adopting a positive approach to employee wellbeing?

I think it is essential and the best way for an organisation to survive. It is already clear that the organisations with wellbeing and positive mental health strategies, which are embedded into the leadership, HR, talent development and organisational development strategies, are the ones who are thriving and will be able to maintain engagement, loyalty and motivation.

The public interest in workplace wellbeing has been on the rise in the western countries in recent years. How do you see this interest in workplace wellbeing picking up in the Gulf region?

Over the past couple of years, workplace wellbeing in the Gulf and the UAE in particular has become a topic of interest, although more attention is needed in that area. In 2019, right before the COVID-19 pandemic ensued, a survey conducted by AETNA, which included businesses and employees in the UAE, revealed important insights. Despite the vast majority of businesses (94 per cent) agreeing that they want employees to prioritise physical and mental health over work, most employees don't believe the support they are offered is good enough. As many as 51 per cent of workers rated their company's support for stress in the workplace as poor, compared to just 16 per cent of bosses. Over half (56 per cent) of

workers feel like they don't get enough sleep and this impacts their productivity at work. Stress was the main reason people were struggling to sleep. As we collectively move through the pandemic and plan a return to the 'new normal' there needs to be more openness, discussion and focus on these topics and to provide the tools to employees. This is where the Wellbeing @ Work Summit Middle East 2021 is a great initiative to stimulate and provide a forum for discussion.

The pandemic has brought challenges in every corner of every business. How is the field of coaching on mental health and wellbeing being shaped?

The field of coaching is definitely expanding into the area of wellbeing and positive mental health. The global coaching community at Cognomie has developed in recognition of this and constitutes traditional, accredited coaches as well as psychologists and therapists. More and more organisations are understanding that the historical model of executive coaching, offering coaching only to C-Suite members and supporting conversations about strategy and tactical implementation is coaching in the past. Coaching increasingly offers a more holistic and whole-person approach. Enabling individuals to explore their self-awareness and individual performance to a new depth and with greater possibility of significant personal, behavioural and performance shifts.

Now is the time for organisations to wake up to the need for a strategic approach to developing mental fitness in order to thrive and survive.

(For further details and to register for Wellbeing @ Work Middle East Summit go to www.fowinsights.com)

MSM continues its upward trend

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) rose by 0.98 per cent to close at 3,715.81 points on Wednesday.

While turnover declined by 14.78 per cent to RO2.48mn, volumes rose 9.6 per cent to 15.96mn shares.

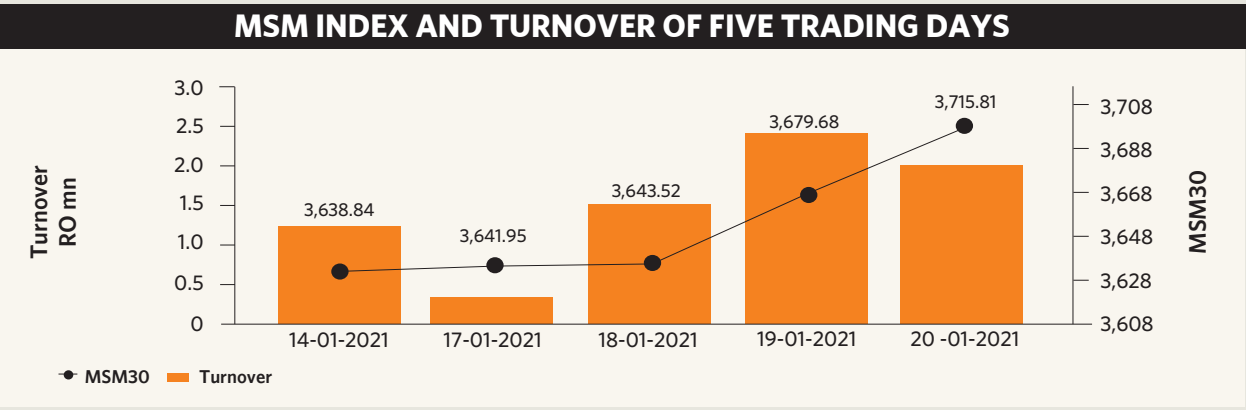
The gains in the main index were supported by all the subindices. Financial index rose 0.74 per cent, Industrial index climbed 1.38 per cent and Services index rose 0.24 per cent. The MSM Shariah index closed up by 0.47 per cent to close at 531.95 points.

Market breadth remained positive as 16 companies closed up, while 8 companies closed down. The rest 18 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Al Madina Investment (9.09 per cent), Galfar Engineering & Contracting (8.16 per cent), Oman Qatar Insurance (5.68 per cent) and Ren-



aissance Services (4.71 per cent). Top losers were Phoenix Power (3.7 per cent), Oman National Engineering & Investment (-3.13 per cent), Sembcorp Salalah (-2.06 per cent) and National Aluminium Products (-1.12 per cent).



Emirates, Etihad to pilot virus ‘travel pass’

Dubai, UAE - Emirates and Etihad, two of the Middle East’s biggest airlines, said on Tuesday they would be among the first companies to test an application that allows pre-travel verification of coronavirus tests and vaccinations.

The UAE carriers have partnered with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to be among ‘the first airlines’ worldwide to trial the IATA Travel Pass, both airlines said in separate statements.

The IATA said the mobile app would enable passengers to create a ‘digital passport’ to verify their pre-travel test or vaccination meets the requirements of the destination.

‘They will also be able to



share the test and vaccination certificates with authorities and airlines to facilitate travel,’ it said in a statement.

In November, the association

warned that ‘the COVID-19 crisis threatens the survival of the air transport industry’, with 2020 likely to go down in history as its ‘worst’ year ever.

It also said that to get things moving again, systematic virus testing was required, and that it was working on an application to help guarantee the authenticity of tests and vaccination certificates.

Emirates said initial implementation of the IATA Travel Pass in Dubai - where the company is based and which has largely reopened its borders to foreign tourists - was expected to begin in April.

‘Emirates customers travelling from Dubai will be able to share their COVID-19 test sta-

tus directly with the airline even before reaching the airport through the app, which will then auto-populate the details on the check-in system,’ it said in a statement.

Etihad, based in the capital, said the initiative would ‘initially be offered to Etihad’s guests on selected flights from Abu Dhabi in the first quarter of 2021’.

‘If successful, the pass will be extended to other destinations on the Etihad network,’ it added.

The UAE launched a COVID-19 vaccination campaign in December, and health officials say it has already inoculated over 1.8mn of its approximately 10mn-strong population in the country.

AFF

US to stand against China trade abuses: Biden’s Cabinet picks

Washington, US - US President-elect Joe Biden’s picks to lead economic and foreign policy signalled on Tuesday that there would be no letup in Washington’s efforts to combat China’s trade abuses.

The comments from the incoming administration reflect an unusual area of common ground with outgoing President Donald Trump, who over the past four years unleashed an aggressive and costly trade war that imposed billions of dollars in punitive tariffs on Chinese goods.

Janet Yellen, Biden’s pick for Treasury secretary, and Antony Blinken, who was tapped to lead the State Department, nonetheless emphasised areas of difference, particularly the incoming administration’s commitments to working with US allies and promoting investments to make American firms and workers more competitive against Beijing. Responding to questions from the Senate Finance Committee at her confirmation hearing on Tuesday, Yellen called China ‘our most important strategic competitor’.

She accused Beijing of ‘undercutting American companies’ by offering illegal subsidies, dumping products at below-market prices, stealing intellectual property and erecting barriers to US exports.

“We need to take on China’s abusive unfair and illegal practices,” she said, adding ‘we’re prepared to use the full array of tools’ to address those issues.

Speaking the day before Biden is due to take office, she also vowed to be watchful of the national security implications of China’s theft of ‘trade secrets’ and ‘illegal efforts to acquire critical technology’.

Biden’s transition team pushed for her ‘swift confirmation’ in a statement after her testimony, saying Yellen ‘demonstrated that she is the bold, experienced leader needed at the helm of the Treasury to begin building our economy



US President-elect Joe Biden speaks during day two of laying out his plan on combating the coronavirus in Delaware on January 15 (AFP)

back better’.

Blinken told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, “President Trump was right in taking a tougher approach to China,” but added, “I disagree very much with the way he went about it in a number of areas.”

Investing in America

Unlike Trump, who pulled back from multilateral organisations and attacked the trade policies of US partners and adversaries alike, Yellen stressed that it will be important ‘to work with our allies’ to combat the challenge posed by China.

Democrats have for years complained bitterly about the exodus of jobs and manufacturing to the Asian country. Trump, a Republican, doubled down on those complaints and won the support of many workers.

In a farewell address on Tuesday, the outgoing president defended his record, saying he had brought unprecedented international pressure on Washington’s communist rival.

“We revitalised our alliances and rallied the nations of the world to stand up to China like never before,” Trump said, according to excerpts released by the White House.

But he in fact consistently acted unilaterally, while both re-

treating from and crippling the WTO, which enforces global commerce rules.

Biden, a Democrat, also has pledged to defend American workers and manufacturing, and under his slogan ‘Build Back Better’ is expected to soon propose a stimulus plan that includes massive infrastructure investments.

Yellen said that policy would help fend off Beijing’s economic challenge.

Washington needs to ‘make investments that allow us to compete with China... by investing in our infrastructure, investing in our people and creating a more competitive economy’, she said.

Trump, like other administrations before him, also accused China of keeping its currency artificially low as a way to make its products cheaper and gain a trade advantage, and Yellen underscored Washington’s opposition to that practice.

The US dollar’s value against other currencies ‘should be determined by markets’, Yellen said, while also promising ‘to oppose any and all attempts by foreign countries to artificially manipulate currency values to gain an unfair advantage in trade’.

AFF

Alibaba’s shares surge as founder Jack Ma reappears

Beijing, China - Shares of Internet giant Alibaba soared more than 8 per cent on Wednesday after billionaire founder Jack Ma made his first public appearance since November, ending weeks of speculation about his whereabouts after the company took a kicking from Chinese regulators.

Ma - one of Asia’s richest people with a fortune estimated at around US\$58bn - disappeared from the public eye after he was hauled in front of regulators for an October speech critical of China’s financial system.

Shortly afterwards, the record-breaking US\$37bn IPO of his financial group Ant was spiked at the last minute by mainland officials in a shock move that some saw as retaliation for Ma’s outspokenness.

China’s finance authorities have since ordered Ant to change its business model and hack back its lending, insurance and wealth management services, while Alibaba is also the subject of an anti-monopoly probe.

The disappearance of Ma from the public eye set tongues wagging on his whereabouts.

But a video clip released by Chinese financial news outlets



Jack Ma

on Wednesday showed him in a recording giving a speech to rural teachers as part of an awards ceremony organised by his charity.

Shares in Alibaba soared 8.5 per cent to HK\$265 in Hong Kong.

In the speech, Ma praised China’s poverty alleviation efforts, a central target of the Communist leadership, and vowed to dedicate more efforts towards helping rural teachers.

“My colleagues and I... are even more determined to devote ourselves to education and public welfare,” he said, according to a transcript of his speech published by news site Tianmu News.

“China has... entered a new stage of development, and is moving towards common prosperity.”

A spokesperson for the Jack Ma Foundation, his charitable arm, confirmed he ‘participated in the online ceremony of the annual Rural Teacher Initiative event’.

Both Alibaba and Ant said they will cooperate with regulatory requests.

Ma, a charismatic former teacher turned Internet entrepreneur, retired as chairman of Alibaba in 2019 but has long attracted attention for his outspokenness and flamboyant antics, performing as a rockstar at company conferences.

The continued squeeze on one of China’s most influential companies is the latest sign that the leadership is ready to deflate the ambitions of big tech firms in a runaway internet sector.

Beijing has a history of disappearing, investigating and imprisoning financial tycoons who do not toe the party line.

Last year, outspoken real estate tycoon Ren Zhiqiang was jailed for 18 years on alleged corruption charges.

AFF

GM teams up with Microsoft for EVs

San Francisco, US - General Motors (GM) announced an alliance on Tuesday with Microsoft on its Cruise autonomous driving venture, combining forces to challenge Tesla and others in an electric car market expected to rev with Joe Biden’s environment-friendly administration in the White House.

The companies have established ‘a long-term strategic relationship’, and Microsoft will join GM, Honda and institutional investors in a new US\$2bn equity investment round, GM and its Cruise subsidiary said in a press release.

“This is a major shot across the bow from Microsoft to Tesla and Waymo and other EV (electric vehicle) autonomous players that Redmond is on its way,” said Wedbush analyst Dan Ives.

“There is an arms race in the EV world and this is the latest collaborative deal with many more on there way, speaking to this trillion dollar market over the next decade.”

Ives and others think Apple is poised to begin putting its technology to work in self-driving, electric cars although the iPhone maker has remained mum on the subject.

Microsoft Azure is a powerhouse in the cloud computing market, so synching GM electric



Satya Nadella

vehicles with Azure computing and artificial intelligence capabilities promises a boon for the car maker, Ives reasoned.

Microsoft also will provide hardware and software engineering support to GM as part of the alliance, which values Cruise at some US\$30bn.

“Our mission to bring safer, better, and more affordable transportation to everyone isn’t just a tech race - it’s also a trust race,” Cruise chief executive Dan Ammann said.

“Microsoft, as the gold standard in the trustworthy democratisation of technology, will be a force multiplier for us as we

commercialise our fleet of self-driving, all-electric, shared vehicles.”

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said the venture will help GM and Cruise to ‘scale and make autonomous transportation mainstream’.

Last week, GM announced plans to build a fleet of new electric vans.

The partnership comes on the heels of a series of GM announcements to reposition the Detroit giant to compete with Tesla and other newer players.

“It makes a lot of sense,” said Edmunds executive director of insights Jessica Caldwell.

“Microsoft and General Motors, both massive, historical American companies, tackling a problem that companies around the world are working on.”

Companies such as GM are still trying to figure out what the self-driving car of the future looks like, Caldwell added.

Perhaps seats will face each other as in train cars, or there will be no need for front windows or driver seats.

Electric vehicle maker Rivian separately said it raised US\$2.65bn in a new funding round valuing the Amazon-backed US firm at US\$26.7bn.

AFF

Bank Muscat opens more sports fields

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, continues to open new sports fields across the sultanate as part of its flagship Green Sports programme.

The bank recently opened four new sports fields in North Batinah in line with the bank's commitment to community development and promoting Oman as a sporting nation. The opening of the Al Faw Sports Team's field in the wilayat of Suwaiq was attended by Abdul Mohsin al Ajmi, chairman of the team.

The bank also inaugurated the Al Bareek Sports Team's sports field in the wilayat of Khabourah, in the presence of Hilal bin Ali al Rubaei, a member of the board of directors of the team. Another field was handed over to the Al Muntaser Sports Team in the wilayat of Suwaiq at an event attended by Musabbah bin Hashel al Suli, vice chairman of the team.

The fourth sports field was handed over to the Al Nusoor Sports Team in the wilayat of Suwaiq in the presence of the Jassim bin Hassan al Awadi, treasurer of the team.

Abdul Rahman Abdullah al Shizawi, regional manager - North Batinah, Bank Muscat,



handed over project completion certificates to the teams at the handover events, which were organised in full compliance with COVID-19 norms.

The total number of teams, which have benefitted from the programme until the end of last

year has now reached 123, confirming the great success of the programme.

On this occasion, Shizawi congratulated all the teams and their members for this achievement and for what they have done during the recent past.

The bank has already handed over 118 sports fields and more will be inaugurated soon. He added that Green Sports fields add to the green spaces across the country and are also used by local communities for a number of activities apart from sports.



The scope of support under the Green Sports programme included installation of artificial turf or natural grass on sports fields, floodlighting and water-desalination systems. There is no doubt that it has been greatly contributing to further build Omani

sporting talent.

The programme is providing an excellent means to channelise the energy and talents of Omani youth in a productive way, besides helping local communities develop stronger bonds. Importantly, it is building a pipeline of

talented players who can represent the country at all levels in the future. There is no doubt that it also has a positive impact on the environment. Bank Muscat's longest running CSR programme will continue to support and serve the community.

Bank Nizwa staff among top 300 influential women



Oman's pioneering and most trusted Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa, has been a frontrunner in promoting gender diversity at workplace, giving equal opportunities to women employees to prove their mettle. In recognition of these efforts, three of the bank's employees have featured in the Woman 2020 report's list of 300 most influential women in Islamic business and finance globally, released by the prestigious Cambridge Institute of Islamic Finance.

The three employees, holding senior positions in the bank, are Haifa Abdul Ali al Lawati, head of HR; Sayyida Wisam Jaifer al Said, head of Marketing and Corporate Communications, and Amal Said al Juma, chief manager - Wealth Management.

Speaking about empowering Omani women as a key focus area for Bank Nizwa, Khalid al Kayed, CEO, Bank Nizwa, said, "Banking and finance is growing to be a preferred career choice among women. We have seen an increased interest from female candidates in Islamic fi-

nance jobs as well. To that effect, we believe it is our duty to provide the necessary impetus to aspiring women of Oman, creating an environment for them to learn, skill and take on leadership roles as well. The bank places great value and responsibility in its female staff members and believes in encouraging our women employees to achieve new milestones, accolades, and appreciation, both locally and internationally."

Bank Nizwa considers its employees as a key driving force behind its success. Paying keen attention to developing the Omani workforce, Bank Nizwa conducts various programs that are tailored especially for their employees, thus encouraging them to lead the way and drive change in the industry.

"We are indeed proud of the three Omani women in our organisation who have been recognised as among the top 300 most influential women in the field of Islamic business and finance. They have earned their place by demonstrating utmost

perseverance, professionalism, and dedication in their respective fields of specialisation."

Sayyida Wisam is the head of Marketing and Corporate Communications and holds 14 years of experience as a marketing and communications professional. She has a Bachelor's degree in Corporate Communications from the American University of Paris with a Master's degree in Strategic Marketing from Cardiff University, UK.

Heading the Human Resource Department in Bank Nizwa with 25 years of experience, Haifa has previously worked in reputed organisations like PDO and Oxy Oman. She has an MBA degree from Bedfordshire, UK and BSc degree from Sultan Qaboos University along with other professional accounting certifications.

The chief manager of Wealth Management, Amal holds over 20 years of experience and has established and managed several branches of Islamic banks in Oman. She has headed and led the direct sales team of Bank Nizwa.

Dhofar Automotive celebrates anniversary

Dhofar Automotive (DA), recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, since its establishment within the Omani automotive market. The company is the official distributor for Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Fiat, RAM, and Alfa Romeo vehicles, Mopar brands and the official provider of spare parts and after sales services for Fiat Chrysler Automobiles in the sultanate.

The anniversary marked its progress in achieving its strategic objectives at all levels, including the training and forming of the working teams, investing in human resources and achieving the target Omanisation percentage. Additionally, the investment and growth in its showrooms, service centres and customer service facilities over the last decade was also highlighted. By bringing in the best and widest range of models from famous international brands that it represents in the local market, Dhofar Automotive provides only the

highest quality services to deliver unmatched customer satisfaction. The celebration also recognised key members of the team, who have been a part of Dhofar Automotive since its inception, highlighting their efforts over their 10 years of dedicated service.

Commenting on this occasion, Hatem el Naggar, general manager at Dhofar Automotive, said, "We are happy to celebrate the 10th anniversary since the establishment of Dhofar Automotive. A decade of success and achievements that could not have been possible without the patience, perseverance and tireless efforts of each and every team member. I would also like to thank our partners, who are the renowned brands that we represent, for their immense support in providing us with the best models and services which adds on to our accomplishments. I am also grateful for our valued customers for placing their trust

in us and consider them as a part of our family.

"We express our appreciation for their continuous loyalty, by continuing to provide them with high-quality services. With their support, we have gone from strength to strength and continue to introduce new and modern vehicles and services to the local automotive market."

Dhofar Automotive was established in 2010 as a joint venture between The Zubair Automotive Group and Shanfari Automotive, becoming the only authorised distributor for Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, RAM, Fiat, Fiat Professional, Alfa Romeo, and Mopar brands in Oman. Over the years, Dhofar Automotive has built a strong reputation by delivering on its robust commitment of providing innovative and exceptional customer service in both sales and after sales.

The company continues to invest heavily on network expan-

sion and facility enhancement, currently comprising of a network of six showrooms and nine service stations across the county, positioning itself amongst the strongest dealership networks in the country.

"Ten years since our beginning, we can proudly say that we have made immense steps forward in achieving our long-term plans. We continue to deliver on our commitment to provide even better sales and after sales services, in line with international standards, to provide our customers with a satisfying ownership experience to exceed their expectations. We aim to further invest in our human resources by implementing learning and training programmes for the team in developing their performance. This is coupled with our constant efforts to expand our facilities, service centres and showrooms to meet all the aspirations of our valued customers," Naggar added.



Jaguar Land Rover MENA offers customers warranty extension



Jaguar Land Rover MENA has announced a new optional warranty extension to ensure longer lasting peace of mind for its customers. The initiative forms part of Jaguar Land Rover's efforts to minimise any concerns typically associated with owning an older vehicle.

The warranty on Jaguar Land Rover vehicle's existing five-year contracts can now be extended to up to 10 years of ownership or 275,000km. This extension will offer lasting peace of mind as customer vehicle change cycle trends indicate that more and more customers are keeping

their cars for longer periods of time.

The programme offers four levels of coverage ranging from "basic" to "comprehensive", with customers able to choose from a period of 6 to 36 months of coverage.

Paul Lane, customer service director, Jaguar Land Rover MENA, said, "Vehicle ownership trends are changing and we at Jaguar Land Rover are underlining our commitment to our customers by ensuring they are well-protected and cared for should they choose to keep their vehicles longer. The new Ex-

tended Warranty Options will not only allow our customers to enjoy longer lasting peace of mind, knowing should they experience a major component failure, they will be covered by their extended warranty, but also help them safeguard their vehicles' residual values."

The extended warranty is applicable on vehicles that are currently three and a half years or older.

For more information about these extended warranty options and purchase queries, please contact your local authorised Jaguar Land Rover retailer.

Nissan Navara pickup boasts durability, reliability features

Combining a tough, working pedigree, with premium ride comfort, smart technologies and modern styling, Nissan Navara pickup pushes the boundaries of innovation further. Adding to this, Nissan Navara pickup delivers an enhanced level of safety, comfort and driving pleasure, while continuing to bring durability, reliability and versatility.

A senior official of Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) said, “A dependable partner for work or travel, the new Nissan Navara comes with many best-in-class technologies, including an array of Nissan Intelligent Mobility features and safety systems, making it among the most advanced yet. Nissan has a long history of building strong, dependable pickups. With each new model the boundaries of innovation have been pushed, providing drivers with everything they need to get the job done. Nissan Navara pickup helps get all the job done.”

Engine

The Nissan Navara is powered by the latest generation of Nissan engines and is designed to give the right amount of power when and where you need it most. The legendary Nissan Navara is available with two transmission options with both 2-wheel drive and 4-wheel drive options. The 2.5t engine used in the Navara has a displacement of 2488 cc producing up to 168hp/244nm torque.

Navara Diesel

Navara also comes with a diesel engine option. This has been developed for excellent fuel efficiency and emissions ratings, yet with impressive power output and acceleration. Diesel engine



option is available with YD25 engine, a 2.5lt unit producing 161hp/403nm torque. This variant comes with PDO specifications for use in desert operations.

Being a pickup one can trust right down to its core, Nissan Navara's full-length fully boxed ladder frame provides solidity and strength one can rely on. With its steel double-wishbone front suspension and rigid leaf suspension, drivers and owners are sure to experience a smooth and comfortable ride on and off the road.

Enclosed on all four sides, the fully boxed ladder frame is reinforced in strategic areas with high-tensile strength steel for improved structural rigidity. Stronger than conventional steel, it provides increased torsional stiffness, offering a marked improvement over traditional steel

C-section frames. All of which ensures it performs impressively in the toughest driving conditions. In addition, all cross members are welded, not riveted, which helps resist flexing and increases durability.

Shift-on-the-fly 4-wheel drive

The 4WD system is electronically controlled via an easy-to-reach rotary switch on the dash. At the driver's command is the shift-on-the-fly 4WD system that switches between 2WD and high range 4WD (4H) with the twist of a dial at speeds of up to 100 km/hr. Its Limited Slip Differential (LSD) controls each of the four wheels to optimise traction in challenging conditions.

When 4WD isn't enough, drivers can push the button to activate the Electronic Locking

Rear Differential, which delivers equal power to both rear wheels to boost traction and helps keep you moving forward.

Hill Start Assist and Hill Descent Control

The Hill Start Assist feature can help keep from rolling backwards when accelerating up a hill from a stop and Hill Descent Control helps maintain a steady speed and braking, so one can get down a steep grade more safely.

Load it up

Nissan Navara's ample tray gives one loads of options to carry absolutely anything and everything for work or play. All dual cab pickup models feature a long, deep and wide rear cargo bed, giving one a huge and versatile load space.

Even in the toughest condi-

tions, the Nissan Navara pickup delivers comfortable interiors. Every seat is spacious and pleasant. In the front, the fatigue-reducing all day comfort seats create a neutral posture that improves blood flow to make long rides considerably more pleasant. In the back, passengers will enjoy plenty of legroom plus their own air-conditioning.

Smart tech

Nissan Intelligent Key with remote keyless entry allows to lock and unlock the doors without taking the key out of the pocket. Once inside the Nissan Navara pickup, drivers can take control of the environment with a few smooth moves - everything just seems to be in exactly the right spot.

For test drive options call Nissan Toll free 80050011.



Ahli Islamic unveils its 2021 prize scheme

In line with its vision to increase the chances of winning for its customers and help them realise their dreams and enhance their financial stability, Ahli Islamic unveiled details of its new 2021 Qitaf prize scheme, which is Sharia'a compliant and based on the Islamic Mudaraba principle.

With the new scheme, the bank seeks to reward its customers with prizes totaling more than RO1,250,000, enabling more customers to win from its branches across the sultanate.

During the joyous ceremony which was streamed live on Ahli Islamic's social media platforms and was attended by a number of bank's officials, the bank announced the winner of the last quarter of 2020 Qitaf draw, wherein Yaqoob al Amri from Samail branch won a whopping RO100,000.

In 2020, Qitaf provided various categories of customers with the opportunity to win prizes totaling more than RO1mn.

Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, deputy general manager and head of Ahli Islamic Bank said, “The Islamic Qitaf account, launched in early 2020, reflects the bank's vision to offer innovative banking solutions to its customers across the sultanate. We are delighted with the wide ac-

ceptance that the account has garnered since its launch, reflected in the increased rate of demand and deposit ratio, which further confirms that we are on track to achieve our customers' aspirations to change their lives for the better.”

Qitaf aims to provide unique savings opportunities to suit customer's needs, thereby instilling a culture of wise savings among them and reward them for their commitment by holding weekly, monthly and quarterly prize draws and special event draws.

In its new draw programme for 2021, the bank has added new categories, including weekly draws for all customers in the bank's new branches, as well as weekly draws for children in both existing and new branches.

In order to honour and appreciate the active role and efforts of the teacher to prepare future generations and support the country's development journey, the bank has dedicated February 25, 2021 to conduct draws for Oman Teacher's Day.

Qitaf prize scheme reflects Ahli Islamic's commitment to establishing a culture of savings among its customers and rewarding them for their commitment and loyalty.



Raed Dawood, director - branding

Ooredoo expands its Fibre Home Internet

Ensuring even more people across Oman enjoy high-speed Internet from the comfort of their homes, Ooredoo has recently expanded its Fibre Home Internet to Nizwa Hay al Ain, Rustaq (Ph-1) Hey al Sarah, Musannah al Maladah, Barka City Centre and Buraimi City Centre. Those living in the areas can now access speeds of up to 1Gbps and a whole host of benefits with Ooredoo's great value plans, starting from RO28 per month.

Available to an ever-growing number of areas throughout the sultanate, Ooredoo's Fibre Home Internet is perfect for uninterrupted downloading or streaming movies, TV shows and music, offering remarkable speeds even with the whole household connected.

Residents in areas with new coverage can order via WhatsApp by sharing their ID and location to 95009500, or by calling the Fibre team on 1514. Look out, new areas are being added all the time!

Sohar International announces RO400,000 draw prize winners

Concluding Sohar I Prize Scheme 2020 that encouraged a prudent savings culture in Oman and enabled winning journeys for many of its customers, Sohar International announced the lucky winners of its biggest draws with a total prize of RO400,000.

During the dedicated virtual event, which took place at the Barka Castle, and was streamed live on the bank's official Instagram page on January 19, two customers from the General segment and two Wealth Management account holders won RO100,000 each.

Sohar International also shared the celebration with its valued followers who tuned into



the live stream on Instagram, by giving them the opportunity to win cash prizes worth a total of RO2,000 simply by answering

questions during the stream. Receiving an overwhelming response, the event witnessed a live audience of around 5,000

followers, the highest ever for any virtual grand draw.

Highlighting the importance of the Bank's Prize Scheme Grand Draws, Khalil al Hedaifi, chief retail banking officer, said, “Ever since its launch, Sohar International's prize scheme has extensively contributed in raising awareness on the importance of savings, and in adding an evolved and progressive customer base to the bank's premium service offering. The unforeseen challenges of 2020 have reasserted the importance of savings, making people realise the benefits of financial prudence and security.

“At Sohar International, our programmes and schemes have

supported customers in making the right choices to secure their future, urging them to start their journey of saving, particularly to prepare for tough times. On behalf of Sohar International, I would like to congratulate each of the winners of the year-end grand draws and would also like to highlight that with our new prize scheme for the year 2021, customers will now have even bigger chances of winning if they continue with their saving habits and make the most of the coming prize draws.

“So, stay tuned for the reveal of 2021 campaign, which will have more winners and more chances for our customers.”

With the purpose of ‘winning’ and vision of helping people ‘win’, Sohar International would like to encourage its customers to maintain with their habit of saving judiciously to help them realise their aspirations and dreams.

Such positive habits allow them to plan ahead and invest in the well-being of their families as well as provide an uplift to the socio-economic scenario of their community.

During the event, Khalil spoke about the bank's successful journey and its achievements as well as the Sohar I Prize Scheme 2020 along with benefits of cultivating the habit of saving.

OC Chairman's team retains Camel Trophy

Oman Cricket Chairman's XI retained the Camel Trophy by beating Dromedary Club, a team of British expats in Oman, by 16 runs in a nail-biting finish to the annual exhibition game at Oman Cricket Academy's floodlit Turf 1 in Amerat on Monday.

The two teams play the match once every year to uphold the sportsman's spirit the gentleman's game so vividly espouses across the world.

OC Chairman's XI, led by Janab Sayyid Qais Khalid al Said, in the absence of team captain Pankaj Khimji, posted an imposing 216 for 4 on the board in 25 overs with the help of major contributions from Duleep Mendis (33 off 25), Qais (31 off 13), Hemal Mehta (28 off 17), Wilson



Burboz (20 not out off 9) and Mazhar Qayyum (20 off 25). Craig and Williams claimed two wickets each.

The carpet-like picturesque ground that enjoys Test status from ICC was lit up by lovely strokes from former Sri Lankan

great Mendis who topscored before retiring in line with the match rules that require a batsman to close his innings after he has faced 25 balls or scored 30 runs, whichever comes first.

Despite his age, the 68 year old Mendis reproduced his cus-

tomary cuts and flicks and lovely drives that made him one of the most elegant batsmen of his time.

“Although I was playing after a gap of ten years it felt good to be in the middle holding a bat. It was a pleasure to play for the OC

Chairman's XI for the first time and I look forward to our next outing,” said Mendis.

Determined to alter the course of history and take the Camel Trophy home for the first time since its inception in 1918, Dromedary made a whirlwind start to its innings, racing to first hundred for two inside the first 10 overs before its opponent started to make amends.

OC Chairman's XI fought back in great style with a flurry of wickets to slow down the run rate for a close finish. Requiring 22 to win the final over, Dromedary could manage only six before getting dismissed for 200 in 24.4 overs. Luke topscored with 49, batting twice, while captain James Lansdell hit up 36. David

was the third main scorer with 21.

Mazhar Qayyum was the pick of OC bowlers, taking 2 for 16. Alkesh Joshi picked up 2 for 29 while Wilson took 2 for 37 with Qais claiming 1 for 25.

The teams were served a scrumptious dinner with the courtesy of Khimji Ramdas, which has been a regular sponsor of the annual event.

Dromedary captain thanked Oman Cricket for its hospitality and wonderful facilities at OCA.

“It was great game of cricket made more special by the spirit in which it was played. We wish to thank the ground staff too for providing an excellent track to play on as more than 400 runs were scored in 50 overs.”

BIDEN ERA

US to review Huthi terror label, end Saudi support

Washington, US - US President-elect Joe Biden's administration will quickly revisit the designation of Yemen's Huthi rebels as terrorists and end support to the devastating Saudi offensive on the country, his pick for secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said on Tuesday.

At his confirmation hearing, Blinken said he would 'immediately' review the outgoing Trump administration's labelling of the Iran-linked insurgents, fearing the move was worsening a humanitarian crisis.

"At least on its surface, (the designation) seems to achieve nothing particularly practical in advancing the efforts against the Huthis and to bring them back to the negotiating table while making it even more difficult than it already is to provide humanitarian assistance to people who desperately need it," Blinken told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Donald Trump's administration announced the move on January 11, nine days before Biden takes over on Wednesday.

Trump has been a staunch ally of Saudi Arabia, offering US logistical help and military sales for its six-year campaign to dislodge the rebels who have taken over much of the neighbouring country.

Blinken said that the Saudis have 'contributed to what is by most accounts the worst hu-



Antony Blinken speaks during his confirmation hearing to be Secretary of State before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in Washington, DC, on Tuesday (AFP)

manitarian situation anywhere in the world'.

"The Huthis bear significant responsibility for what's happened in Yemen, but the way the campaign has been conducted has also contributed significantly to that situation. And so our support should end," Blinken said.

The United Nations and aid groups have warned the terrorist designation risks worsening the plight of a country where millions depend on aid to survive.

The designation took effect

on Tuesday, with the Huthis warning they would respond to any action against them. "We are ready to take all necessary measures against any hostile act," they said in a statement.

Pro-Huthi members protest in Sanaa

On Wednesday, hundreds of supporters of the Huthi rebels took to the streets of the capital Sanaa to protest against the terror designation.

"We've come out to say the United States is the mother of

terrorism and doesn't have the right to classify anyone as terrorist," a demonstrator told AFP.

Hizam al Assad, a member of the Huthis' political office, condemned 'the continued aggression against the Yemeni people by US administrations'.

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

The US Department of the

Treasury, however, has issued humanitarian exemptions under which it would be permissible for aid organisations to deal with the Huthis, according to its website.

The Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, responsible for overseas sanctions, had 'issued four general licenses to facilitate the uninterrupted flow of humanitarian assistance and certain other critical commodities to the people of Yemen'.

Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, called on the United States to reverse the Trump administration's move.

"Our position on this has not changed," Dujarric said. "We call on the government to reverse that decision."

"Our concern from the beginning, that we expressed very clearly, is the impact on the commercial sector," he said.

"The vast majority of food and other basic supplies that comes into Yemen comes in through the commercial sector."

Outgoing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in announcing the designation, pointed to an attack on the airport in Yemen's second city Aden in late December targeting the new Yemeni government that was blamed on the Huthis. Blinken said the United States remained 'clear-eyed about the Huthis'.

AFP



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani chairs a Cabinet meeting in the capital Tehran Wednesday (AFP)

Ball in America's court, says Iran

Tehran, Iran - Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday hailed the White House departure of 'tyrant' Donald Trump, saying that 'the ball is in America's court' to return to a landmark nuclear deal and lift sanctions on Tehran.

Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th President of the United States on Wednesday, ending the tumultuous four-year term in the White House of Republican Trump.

A 'tyrant's era came to an end and today is the final day of his ominous reign', Rouhani said in televised remarks to his Cabinet. He labelled Trump 'someone for whom all of his four years bore no fruit other than injustice and corruption and causing problems for his own people and the world'.

During his presidency, Trump led a campaign of 'maximum pressure' against Iran, pulling Washington out of a landmark nuclear deal with Tehran in 2018 and reimposing punishing sanctions.

The sanctions targeted Iran's vital oil sales and international banking ties, plunging its economy into a deep recession.

The nuclear deal, agreed between major powers and Iran in 2015 when Biden was vice president under Barack Obama, imposed clear limits on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for relief from international sanctions.

Since 2019, Tehran has suspended its compliance with most of the limits set by the agreement in response to Washington's abandonment of sanctions relief and the failure of the other parties to make up for it.

Rouhani said Trump's political career had 'died ... but the JCPOA is alive', referring to the agreement's official name, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"He did all he could to destroy the JCPOA but could not."

"We expect (the Biden administration) to return to law and to commitments," he added.

AFP

Russia says better ties with US up to President Biden, his team

Moscow, Russia - The Kremlin said on Wednesday that any improvement in Moscow's tense relationship with Washington would depend on Joe Biden when he enters the White House, while former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev urged both the countries to repair their strained relations, hours before President Joe Biden entered the White House.

The United States recently blamed Kremlin-backed hackers for a massive cyberattack that breached government institutions, adding to a long list of grievances plaguing ties between the former Cold War rivals.

"Russia will live as it has lived for hundreds of years: Seeking good relations with the United States," the Kremlin's

spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said. Whether or not Washington works towards achieving the same goal 'will depend on Mr Biden and his team,' he added.

Despite disagreements surrounding conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, as well as US election meddling and hacking allegations against Russia, the countries will be in a race to extend a landmark nuclear weapons ac-

cord as Biden was sworn in.

"The current condition of relations between Russia and the United States is of great concern," Gorbachev said in an interview with state-run news agency TASS.

"But this also means that something has to be done about it in order to normalise relations," the last Soviet leader said.

"We cannot fence ourselves off from each other."

Gorbachev (89) reiterated that it was necessary to preserve the New START Treaty, a 2010 arms reduction accord that limits Russia and the United States to 1,550 nuclear warheads and is set to expire February 5.

Peskov said on Wednesday that President Vladimir Putin

has 'consistently' advocated for the preservation of the treaty and that it was now up to Washington to preserve the pact.

Negotiations under the administration of President Donald Trump stalled as Washington pushed for China to join the agreement even though Beijing said it had no intention of joining.

Biden's aides have indicated

that the incoming US leader will work towards extending the treaty, but he also vowed to take a tougher stance on Russia during the campaign.

Peskov said on Wednesday that the change in the US presidency will make no difference to Russia and that the Kremlin was not making any preparations for Biden's inauguration.

AFP

3 dead in Madrid gas blast

Madrid, Spain - At least three people were killed on Wednesday when a huge explosion ripped through a building in Madrid, with officials confirming it was caused by a gas leak.

Images from the scene showed the walls on the top four or five storeys of the residential building in the heart of the La Latina neighbourhood had been blown out, with debris littered far and wide.

Government representative Jose Manuel Franco said that the blast occurred as a team of workers were repairing the building's boiler.

Images broadcast on Spanish television showed cars destroyed by the force of the explosion and smoke billowing from the top floor of the six-storey building which housed local priests.

Franco confirmed it was a 'gas explosion' and said there were three people dead and one missing, indicating the toll could rise further. At least one person sustained serious injuries, although no-one was hurt in a neighbouring elderly care home, he added.

AFP

Israel invites bids for 2,500 new settler homes

Jerusalem - Israel has invited tenders for 2,500 new settler homes in annexed east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank, a watchdog said on Wednesday.

On Sunday, Israel approved 780 new settler homes in the West Bank ahead of a March general election in which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to face a fierce challenge from the right from pro-settler candidate Gideon Saar.

Peace Now said the government had now invited tenders for a further 2,112 units in the West Bank and 460 in east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians hope to make the capital of a future state.

It accused the government of a 'mad scramble to promote as much settlement activity as possible until the last minutes before the change of the administration in Washington'.

"By doing so, Netanyahu is signalling to the incoming president that he has no intention of giving the new chapter in US-Israel relations even one day of grace, nor serious thought to how to plausibly resolve our conflict with the Palestinians," Peace Now said in a statement.

For the Palestinians, Nabil Abu Rudeina, a spokesman for Presi-



This file photo shows new houses under construction in the Nokdim settlement in the Israeli occupied West Bank, on October 13 last year (AFP)

dent Mahmud Abbas, said the Israeli move was equivalent to a 'race to eliminate what remains of the two-state solution, while posing more and more obstacles to the new US administration'.

All Jewish settlements in the

West Bank are regarded as illegal by much of the international community.

But Trump's administration, breaking with decades of US policy, declared in late 2019 that Washington no longer consid-

ered settlements as being in breach of international law.

Biden has indicated that his administration will restore Washington's pre-Trump policy of opposing settlement expansion.

But on Tuesday his nominee for secretary of state, said the incoming administration will not reverse Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

"The only way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish, demo-

cratic state and to give the Palestinians a state to which they are entitled is through the so-called two-state solution," Antony Blinken said.

Electioneering

Beyond the change in Washington, experts say Netanyahu also has domestic political reasons for pushing settlement expansion.

Electioneering is intensifying ahead of Israel's March 23 vote, in which the country's longest-serving premier faces a new challenge from Saar, a prominent pro-settler voice who split with Netanyahu's rightwing Likud party late last year.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967 and has increasingly expanded the size and number of its settlements there, particularly under Netanyahu's leadership since 2009.

There are currently some 650,000 Jews living in east Jerusalem and the West Bank amid an estimated 3.1mn Palestinians.

Governments around the world see the settlements as one of the biggest obstacles to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC



This file photo shows Bolivia's President Luis Arce speaking during the signing ceremony of the agreement with the Serum Institute of India for the purchase of 5mn of COVID-19 vaccines from the AstraZeneca laboratory, at the Casa Grande del Pueblo palace, in La Paz on January 13 (AFP)

UK strain spread to over 60 countries, says WHO

Geneva, Switzerland - The UK coronavirus strain has spread to at least 60 countries, the World Health Organization reported on Wednesday, after US President-elect Joe Biden led a moving tribute to American victims. COVID-19 has claimed more than two million lives globally since it was first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan more than a year ago, while the total number of reported cases is edging towards 100mn, according to an AFP tally.

The arrival of mass inoculation drives in the United States, Europe and Asia had brought hope that the end of the epidemic was in sight. But deep concern over new variants of the deadly pathogen has triggered governments around the world to toughen constraints on restriction-weary populations as officials grapple with how to slow infections until vaccines become widely available.



A healthcare worker provide oxygen to a patient, at Steve Biko Academic Hospital, in Pretoria on Tuesday (AFP)

In its weekly update, the WHO announced the strain first found in the UK was now in ten more countries than seven days ago. It said the South African variant - which similarly is believed to be more transmissible - has been reported in 23 countries and territories. The number of new deaths climbed to a record high of

93,000 over the previous week, it added, with 4.7mn new cases reported over the same period. The US is by far the worst-hit nation with more than 400,000 deaths, and incoming Commander-in-Chief Biden focused on healing at a memorial for victims on the eve of his inauguration. AFP

'Pharmacy of the world' India exports vaccines

New Delhi, India - India exported its first batch of locally produced coronavirus shots on Wednesday, officials said, as the world's biggest vaccine manufacturer scrambled to meet requests from other countries desperate to protect their populations. The Maldives and Bhutan will be the first recipients of India's coronavirus vaccine, while Brazil and South Africa are also among those on the waiting list. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said on Twitter that the 'Pharmacy of the World will deliver to overcome the COVID challenge'. In January, Indian regulators approved two vaccines - one, Covishield, developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University and produced by India's

A short while ago, a flight from India with a 100,000 doses of the CoviShield vaccine arrived in the Maldives. Our heartfelt thanks for this most generous gift

IBRAHIM MOHAMED SOLIH
Serum Institute, and the other Covaxin, made by local firm Bharat Biotech. 'A short while ago, a flight from India with a 100,000 doses of the CoviShield vaccine arrived in the Maldives, renewing our hopes for a resolution to the Covid 19 crisis soon. Our heartfelt thanks to PM @narendramodi, government and people of India for this most generous gift,' The Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih tweeted after vaccines

reached his country. India also gifted 150,000 Covishield vaccines to Bhutan, its neighbour on the northeast. 'Our profound gratitude to the Gol [government of India] for the generous gift of 150,000 doses of Covishield vaccines that Bhutan received today. Deeply grateful to Gol for its abiding friendship and unconditional support to Bhutan's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic', Bhutan's Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji wrote on Twitter.

Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles will follow shortly, New Delhi said. India plans to offer 20mn doses to its South Asian neighbours, Bloomberg News reported last week, with others in Latin America, Africa and Central Asia next in line. The Serum Institute, the world's biggest vaccine maker by volume, also plans to supply 200mn doses to Covax, a World Health Organization-backed effort to procure and distribute inoculations to poor countries. Meanwhile, Covaxin's maker Bharat Biotech last week signed a deal with a Brazilian firm and is ramping up annual production to 700mn doses, a spokesperson told financial outlet the Mint Daily on Wednesday. With AFP inputs

Partial lockdown in Beijing as UK virus variant detected

Beijing, China - About 1.6mn residents were banned from leaving Beijing on Wednesday as two COVID-19 cases linked to a new UK virus variant were found in the Chinese capital. China has lauded its response to the pandemic, which emerged in the central city of Wuhan just over a year ago but has been broadly brought to heel, officially killing fewer than 5,000 Chinese people. Authorities have been swift to stamp out local clusters of cases with lockdowns, mass testing regimes and travel restrictions. With the Lunar New Year Holiday looming, officials had been keen to avoid an outbreak in Beijing, the heart of political power.

But a handful of cases have been detected in the capital in recent days, with six more reported Wednesday in southern Daxing district. Officials said that the two cases in Daxing were linked to a UK variant believed to be a more transmissible form of the virus and were first detected on Sunday. The cases had 'no genetic correlation with previously reported local cases and imported cases in Beijing', the head of the Beijing health authority Pang Xinghuo told reporters, but are 'considered to be variants of the new coronavirus discovered in the UK'. All 1.6mn residents of Daxing are barred from leaving Beijing unless they have received special permission from the author-

ities and tested negative for COVID-19 in the past three days, the district said. Residents of five neighbourhoods, where the recent cases were detected, were ordered to remain indoors. Meetings of 50 or more people in the district have been banned, while 'weddings should be postponed and funerals simplified', the Daxing government said. It also ordered all kindergarten, primary and secondary students in the district to study at home. Daxing includes one of the city's two international airports. The latest restrictions in the capital come as the government races to tackle the highest number of cases in nearly a year. AFP



This file photo shows US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (left) with Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in the Qatari capital Doha on November 21 last year (AFP)

Talks at 'snail's pace' due to Taliban: Afghan govt

Kabul, Afghanistan - Afghan authorities lambasted the Taliban on Wednesday for failing to actively participate in peace talks seeking to end the country's long-running war. Following months of deliberations and a first round that failed to achieve any major breakthrough, the Afghan government and Taliban are meeting again in Qatar - but so far only discussing the agenda for round two. "Unfortunately, the talks are going at a snail's pace," Waheed Omar, media advisor to President Ashraf Ghani told reporters. "The Taliban have no clear vision. We see no changes in them."

Kabul is pushing for a permanent ceasefire and to protect governance arrangements in place since the ouster of the Taliban by a US-led invasion following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks. But since the second round of talks began on January 6 in Doha there has been no significant announcement about how negotiations were proceeding. The talks have been marred by a surge in violence, with a recent spate of high-profile killings of officials, judges, journalists and activists leaving the war-weary country reeling. Omar said there was no plan to release more Taliban prison-

ers to help spur the talks along, saying the government's previous experience of releasing insurgents failed to reduce fighting. "The Taliban not only did not reduce the violence, but they increased the violence," Omar said. Before the start of the peace talks on September 12, authorities released more than 5,000 Taliban inmates as demanded by the group in a deal with Washington last year. In return, the Taliban agreed to give some security guarantees and participate in peace talks aimed at ending the country's war. AFP

China dismisses Pompeo Uighur genocide claim as 'outrageous lies'

Beijing, China - China on Wednesday dismissed Washington's allegation that Beijing was committing genocide against Uighurs and other minorities as 'outrageous lies' and 'poison' in a rancorous epilogue to a combative period in relations between the superpowers. Under the administration of outgoing President Donald Trump, the US has butted heads with China over trade, security, technology, the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic and rights from Hong Kong to Xinjiang, home to the Uighur minority. In the dying days of Trump's administration, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo launched his final broadsides against China. America's top diplomat said Beijing's sweeping incarceration of mostly Muslim minorities in the far western Xinjiang region amounted to genocide and crimes against humanity. "We are witnessing the systematic attempt to destroy Uighurs by the Chinese party-state," Pompeo said on Tuesday. In a rebuttal typifying the strained language between the rivals, a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman in Beijing hit back on Wednesday, accusing Pompeo of fabricating 'sensational false propositions' throughout his term in office.



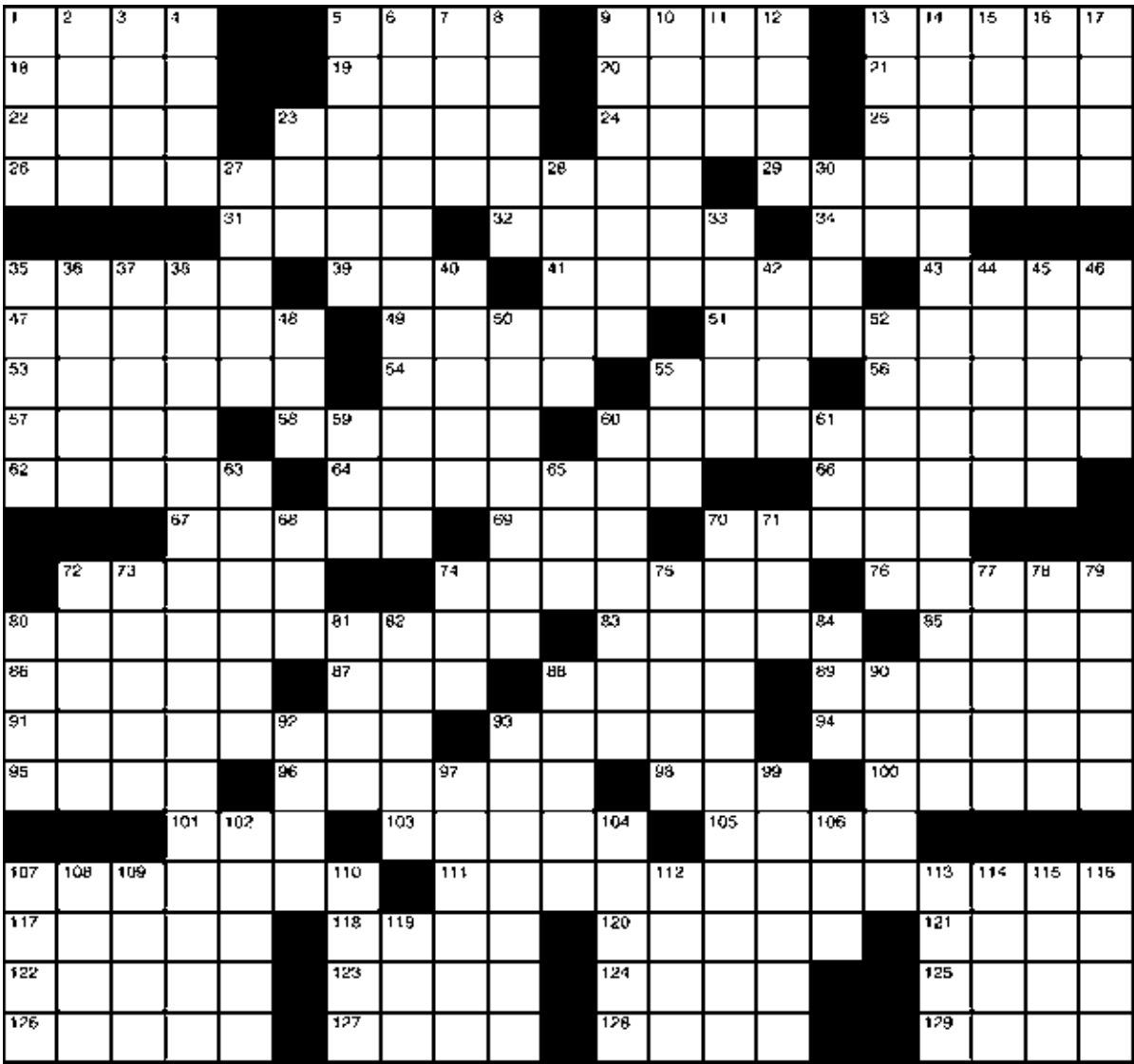
This file photo shows Chinese Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun speaking during a United Nations Security Council meeting, at the UN Headquarters in New York on August 20, 2019 (AFP)

Genocide had 'never happened in the past, is not happening now and will never happen in China', spokeswoman Hua Chunying said in her last public joust with Pompeo, a regular target of the ministry's anger throughout the Trump administration. Rights groups say at least one million Uighurs and other Turkic-speaking Muslims have been incarcerated in camps in Xinjiang. Independent access to the sensitive area is highly restricted, making reporting and verification

of the allegations near impossible. But witnesses and activists say that China is seeking to forcibly integrate the Uighurs into the majority Han culture by eradicating Islamic customs, whilst imposing a regime of effective forced labour. Pompeo's vociferous criticism of Beijing has been a hallmark of his tenure, but he had earlier danced around directly alleging genocide - although he repeatedly stated his view the treat-

ment of Uighurs was reminiscent of Nazi Germany's policies. Pompeo urged all international bodies including courts to take up cases over China's treatment of the Uighurs and voiced confidence that the United States would keep raising pressure. China denies wrongdoing and contends that its camps are vocational training centres meant to reduce the allure of extremism in the wake of attacks. AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Be easy with yourself. Yesterday's cosmos were full of fires to put out and you may still be feeling the burn from them! Thursday's skies are more easygoing, but still push some of those stories along for further processing, as the moon glides through Taurus. Fortunately, Luna's pleasant link to affectionate Venus and dreamy Neptune takes the edge off things, come nighttime.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It's fair to say that things have been a bit much lately. Thursday's skies try to scrape some excess activity off your plate, as the moon roams through Taurus. Luna spends the day in a smooth alignment with soothing Venus and boundary-blurring Neptune, making it easy to make amends on the work front. This should be especially helpful if things got a bit derailed yesterday!



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Does it feel like a bomb went off at your desk? Today's skies send in a much needed clean-up crew to help you get your workload back on track. The moon meanders through easygoing Taurus all afternoon, casually syncing up with bond-sweetening Venus and inspirational Neptune. These pairings should help you smoothly patch up any damage done.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Lavish yourself with some extra attention. You may still feel a little shaken up by the energetic overload delivered by yesterday's cosmos. But the nurturing moon helps settle you back down. Luna's presence in your sign signals a pressing need to take care of your needs first, and her pleasant link to sweet Venus and Neptune should help you do that with ease.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Thursday's skies work to help you regain a sense of equilibrium. The moon marches through calm Taurus all afternoon, forming a supportive link to bond-building Venus and soothing Neptune. While you're not completely out of the woods with cleaning up yesterday's messes, it should be easier to invoke a fresh perspective and digest that news in a smoother way.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You hold yourself to some dangerously high standards. Thursday's skies arrive with a simple message: It's time for some vacation. Yesterday's skies had the heat all the way up—so much so that it was probably hard to enjoy yourself. Today's Taurus moon allows you to go full speed ahead into indulgence, joy, and pleasure—as she links up with sweet Venus.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Your quiet Twin needs a break from the noise today. Let yourself pull away from everyone and get some rest, as the simplicity-seeking Taurus moon works to slow things down. The narratives stirred up by yesterday's overactive skies are continuing to be digested today, but the moon's helpful link to soothing Venus and non-reality Neptune should soften that process.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Thursday's skies work to put you back on the mend. Your relationships may be left a little singed after yesterday's cosmos set things ablaze. But fortunately, today's skies make it easy to patch things back up. The moon meanders through Taurus, forming supportive aspects with Venus and Neptune. This offers up the perfect opportunity for healing, vulnerable conversations.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Surviving yesterday's skies was no easy feat. You had to wrestle with some turbulent emotions and try to stand firm with shaky footing on the home and family front. Today's skies work to soothe and patch up anything that may have gone awry. The Taurus moon spends the day receiving support from Venus and Neptune, helping you digest or express whatever is left to deal with.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You don't have to be an island. The cosmos are working to remind you of the beauty and importance of having a solid social network to fall back on, as the moon moves through emotionally-steady Taurus. While you're not quite out of the woods with yesterday's dramas, Luna's supportive link to romantic Venus and dreamy Neptune should help to take the edge off.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Partnership matters play a powerful role in Thursday's skies. Yesterday's skies unleashed some difficult energies into that arena, so much so that you may still be reeling from them. Things look a little sweeter on today's horizon. The moon coasts through Taurus, linking arms with lover Venus and Neptune. This creates an ideal time to patch things up and reconnect.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You tend to hold your tongue more often than you should. The universe has been working to help you express yourself more openly, but that may have gotten a little out of hand under yesterday's explosive influence. Fortunately, today works to help you patch up any areas of miscommunication, as the Taurus moon aligns with bond-smoothing Venus and poetic Neptune.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The ozone layer restricts
a. visible light
b. infrared radiation
c. x-rays and gamma rays
d. ultraviolet radiation
2. The Secretary-General is required to submit an annual report on the work of the UN to
a. the General Assembly
b. the Security Council
c. the Trusteeship Council
d. All of the above simultaneously
3. The site of the third oldest civilisation after the Sumerian and Egypt, Mohenjo-daro, was built in
a. 2500 BC
b. 2500-2000 BC
c. 2300 BC
d. 2200 BC

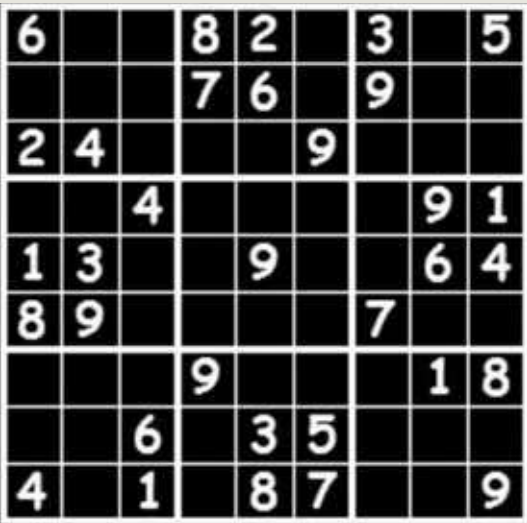
Answers: 1: d, 2: a, 3: a

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



BOGGLER



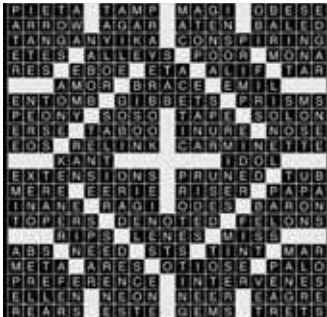
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JANUARY 20)



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





Exercises for heel pain

Heel pain can be caused due to numerous reasons, from wearing faulty footwear to having uric acid disorders. However, it is quite a discomforting condition which presents itself, not just during daytime activity but also immediately after a good night's sleep. After proper diagnosis of the condition, some exercises can be helpful in reducing pain as well as leading to quicker recovery.

The wall and book stretch
Put a phone book or a couple of thick books on the floor about two feet away from a wall. Stand on the books so that your arches are supported but your heels overhang the back edge of the books. With your hands to either side of your face at shoulder width, slowly lean forward so that your hands are supporting your weight against the wall in front of you. Hold this position for fifteen seconds.
After the fifteen seconds are up, straighten your back while still supporting yourself with

your hands on the wall. Lift up and down gently on the balls of your feet ten times. Next, change your position so that you are standing on your right foot only. Lean toward the wall, hold fifteen seconds, straighten up and do ten lifts on your right foot only. Finally, switch to your left foot and repeat the exercise.
This heel pain exercise gently stretches the plantar fascia ligaments, the Achilles' tendon and the calf muscles, promoting better elasticity and healing. The Wall Stretch also has the added bonus of helping you build new, strong muscle tissue in your calves.

Morning heel pain exercises
This is a series of three exercises intended to be performed before you get out of bed in the morning. First, sit up in bed with your legs together and fully extended in front of you. Slowly point your toes outward and downward ten times. Next, maintain your sitting position and wrap a belt, scarf or towel

around the ball of your right foot, holding the ends of the item in each hand like the reins of a horse.
Sitting up straight, use your arm strength to gently tug the ball of the foot toward your body, flexing the muscle. Hold the position for twenty to thirty seconds. Be sure you are using the strength of your arms – not your foot – to create the necessary stretch. Then, perform the exercise with your left foot.
Finally, use your thumbs and fingertips to gently massage the sole of your foot for several minutes. This is where your plantar fascia ligament is located and by doing a simple massage, you will warm up the ligament to help it bear your weight when you first get out of bed.
One of the most common symptoms of Plantar Fasciitis is heel and foot pain upon first stepping out of bed. These exercises warm up the muscles and ligaments of the feet preventing morning heel pain.



The water bottle stretch

Take a seat in a comfortable chair. Put a water bottle, tennis ball or rolling pin on the floor. Slowly roll the sole of your foot over the object from the ball of your foot to the heel of your foot for about a minute. If you are suffering from pain in both heels, you can do this stretch on both feet.
This exercise slowly stretches the plantar fascia ligament. Additionally, if you freeze the water bottle prior to doing this heel pain stretch, you can ice your foot while you exercise to minimise the pain and inflammation that is common in Plantar Fasciitis.

The stair stretch

Stand with the balls of both feet on the edge of a step or curb (or a medium-sized phone book). With at least one hand, hold onto something solid for balance, such as a banister or handrail. Keeping your affected leg straight, slowly let that heel hang down off the step or curb until you feel a stretch in the back of your calf and/or Achilles area. Some of your weight should still be on the other leg. Hold this position for at least 15 to 30 seconds.
Repeat 2 to 4 times a session, up to 5 times a day or whenever your Achilles tendon starts to feel tight. This stretch can also be done with your knee slightly bent.



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BIRTHDAY WISHES

TEHREEM UMAIR

January 21

My dear wife, may your birthday be as happy as you have made me. Happy birthday! From Umair

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ACHILLES TENDINITIS – CAUSES AND TREATMENT

Have you recently taken up a fitness regimen that involves a lot of walking/running? It is important to progress slowly rather than overdoing it to avoid common problems involving the heel, says Dr Biswajit Dutta Baruah, consultant orthopaedic surgeon, KIMS Oman Hospital



DR BISWAJIT DUTTA BARUAH
Consultant orthopaedic surgeon, KIMS Oman Hospital

Heel pain is particularly common among those who are active in exercises that involve walking, running or jumping. There are two major causes of heel pain based on their site of occurrence. One affects the back of the heel related to Achilles tendon and the other affects the undersurface of the heel in relation to the plantar fascia. Today, I will elaborate on the Achilles tendon as a source of heel pain - archilles tendinitis.

Philip Verheyen, a Dutch surgeon was the first in 1693 to name the Achilles tendon after the venerated Greek hero Achilles. Thetis the Greek goddess dipped the body of her son Achilles into the River Styx seeking to make him invulnerable to injury. As she held him by his heel, it was left untouched by the magical water leaving the region vulnerable. Eventually he was killed by a poison arrow that struck the heel. Thus giving rise to the phrase Achilles heel referring to weakness in spite of overall strength.

Achilles tendon is a thick cord-like structure serving to connect the powerful calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus) at the back of the leg to the heel bone (calcaneum). The tendon is a conduit for the force generated by the calf muscles and helps a person to push the ground during an activity. The tendon is subjected to about four times the body weight when walking and about seven times the body weight when running.

With a repetitive activity like walking and running the tendon is subjected to manifolds of this magnitude of load during a single day's exercise. Curiously among the bipeds - those who walk on two legs, a human is uniquely distinct in having a strong Achilles tendon in comparison to the chimpanzee or the ape. Human heels were designed naturally for walking and running.

Sudden enthusiasm for exercise
It's not surprising therefore, to see walkers and runners present to the clinic with heel pain. Mostly it is seen in those who started an exercise recently because their physician frowned at their high cholesterol levels. In their zeal and enthusiasm to keep their physician happy, and over-estimation of their physical capacity, often patients end up over-doing exercise leading to injury.

In trying to do too much in too soon a time, and by the nature of repetitiveness, loads exceed the physical strength of the tendon leading to injury. Doctors refer to this as overuse injury. Most common region to be affected is at the site of attachment of the tendon onto the heel bone.



Achilles tendon is a thick cord-like structure serving to connect the powerful calf muscles at the back of the leg to the heel bone. The tendon is a conduit that helps a person to push the ground during an activity

Clinical analysis
Although it was common to refer to this as tendinitis, these days surgeons refer to this as insertional tendinopathy. At times, severe bouts of inflammation is accompanied by calcium salt deposits. This often results in severe swelling, pain and redness at the back of the heel. Bumps may become visible at the back of the heel. A few patients with high uric acid levels are prone to having salt deposits.

There is a fluid filled sac that separates the tendon from the heel bone. Inflammation may predominantly affect the bursa rather than the tendon itself. In such cases, pain and inflammation is a little higher than at the site of attachment of the tendon. Physicians refer to this as bursitis. It takes clinical acumen to differentiate between the two.

Pain along the length of the tendon is possible when there is inflammation of the membrane that covers the tendon (tenosynovitis). This is commonly seen among those who stand for prolonged periods of time.

Uncommonly, when patients ignore the pain and continue to aggressively pursue running and jumping, the tendon may tear out of its attachment. Tendon degeneration in a middle aged person also contributes to a tear easily. This is obvious by the loss of strength in the calf muscles

and inability to walk.

Most patients with heel pain can be diagnosed by ultrasound scans. Scans help to identify the site of inflammation and thereby differentiate between tendinopathy, bursitis and tenosynovitis. Calcification can be picked on a simple xray. When a tear is suspected, especially partial tears, MRI scan may be performed.

Remedies
Most of the patients respond well to anti-inflammatory medications, both oral and topical. Icing the back of the heel and elevating the limb over a pillow can help reduce the swelling. Resting the leg is necessary to control inflammation. Inflammation weakens the tendon attachment to the bone, therefore it is important to avoid running and jumping to prevent tears or ruptures.

Those with calcific deposits may continue to have the bumps permanently. This may necessitate wearing one size bigger footwear to avoid friction of the skin over the bump. Those with high uric acid levels will do well by hydrating by the clock, which means you drink water or juices on an hourly basis rather than waiting till you get thirsty. This may mean more trips to the washroom but your kidneys will ensure that the extra uric acid is flushed out with urine.

Reducing protein intake in the form of chicken,

mutton, beef, fish, eggs for meat eaters and, dal, paneer and cheese for vegans, will ensure decreased production of uric acid. Medication may be necessary to bring down high levels of uric acid as well.

Physiotherapy is usually prescribed for 6-8 weeks. Shockwave therapy is known to be helpful. This involves applying a pulsatile (series) of low intensity sound waves to the site of involvement. Eccentric loading exercise is a type of exercise that can be done on a step or at the floor level to help overcome the tightness in the tendon.

For those with persistent inflammation and pain, cortisone (steroid) shots around the tendon can help control inflammation. Most patients recover well at this point. A few may continue to have bothersome pain and difficulty in walking.

Surgical intervention
Bursoscopy (keyhole surgery) is employed by a few surgeons to clean the inflamed fluid filled sac in front of the achilles tendon. This is often not successful in those with involvement of the tendon or calcification at the site of tendon attachment. Therefore getting the diagnosis right early is critical to selecting the appropriate treatment strategy.

Few patients may need cleaning up at the site of tendon attachment. In the majority of the patients this cleaning process will involve removal of calcific deposits and degenerated tendon bits, and thereby surgical reattachment of the tendon to the heel bone (calcaneum) becomes necessary.

Several methods are available to surgeons to accomplish this using absorbable screws and tendon augments. At times, adjacent tendons are used to strengthen the repair process. The ankle is often rested in a cast following surgery to allow the repair to consolidate over time. This is followed by extensive physiotherapy. A successful repair allows the patient to return to sporting activities.

In summary, Achilles tendinitis is a disabling condition that affects mostly those involved in extensive walking and running exercises. Reducing the amount of time spent in doing the exercise or reducing the intensity of exercise by decreasing speed or avoiding inclines may be the first step necessary to relieve pain. Most patients recover well to normal functions with non-operative treatments. Only a few may need surgery. A rigorous exercise regimen will help in the path to recovery.

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Leicester boss Rodgers coy about title chances

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers says talk of his side emulating the Foxes' 2016 fairytale English Premier League (EPL) title win is premature given the volatile state of the race for the crown. Leicester sit atop the table after beating a lacklustre Chelsea 2-0 on Tuesday although both the Manchester clubs can go above them if they win their respective matches later on Wednesday.

Leicester's points tally this season stands comparison to their total when they won the title. In that campaign, they were second to Arsenal with 39 points at the midway point, while they now have just one point less from the same number of matches.

Rodgers, though, is wary of any such comparisons especially as his side faded in the run in to the title race last term and lost out on a Champions League spot.

Rodgers, who went agonisingly close to lifting the trophy with Liverpool in the 2013-14 campaign, used Tuesday's opponents and their fellow London club Tottenham Hotspur as examples of what a moveable feast the race for the title is.

"I don't really think about it, it's something which gets floated about and we have seen it all season," he said. "Tottenham a few weeks ago and Chelsea themselves, five or six weeks ago everyone was talking about them. The quality of Manchester City, Liverpool are the champions and Manchester United have been great.

"For Leicester to be up with



Leicester's Brendan Rodgers (C) congratulates Timothy Castagne (left) and James Justin after the win against Chelsea

the level of teams who are there makes me really happy.

"It's going to be a huge challenge to be up there but we are happy to take on that challenge."

Rodgers is reportedly one of Chelsea's targets should Roman Abramovich fire Frank Lampard after a poor run of form.

However, Rodgers - who was on the Chelsea coaching staff from 2004-08 - is focussed on the great unity within his present side which has been one of their strengths.

"You have seen the real spirit of the side tonight," said the 47 year old Northern Irishman.

"We were a real threat going forward. "The performance and maturity of the team was pleasing. I knew we were playing against a talented team and we had to be right on our game."

Frank Lampard criticised the attitude of some of his Chelsea players after admitting the Blues were easily beaten by the 'better side'. A fifth defeat in eight league games piles more pressure on Lampard's position as a US\$300mn spending spree in the transfer market has failed to reap instant reward.

"We were beaten by the better team," said Lampard. "I thought they were sharper than us, ran more than us, showed moments of quality. They looked like a team in form and we looked like a team out of form."

First-half goals from Wilfried Ndidi and James Maddison put Leicester in command they could have inflicted a more embarrassing scoreline on Lampard had they taken their chances after the break.

West Ham win

David Moyes insisted it is too early to dream of a place in Europe after West Ham extended their hot streak with a 2-1 victory that pushed West Bromwich Albion deeper into relegation trouble on Tuesday. Moyes' in-form side took the lead through Jarrod Bowen's first-half goal at the London Stadium.

Matheus Pereira equalised for West Brom after the break, but Michail Antonio's clinical finish sealed West Ham's fourth successive victory in all competitions.

West Ham are unbeaten in six games in all competitions and have won their opening four matches of a calendar year for the first time since 1958.

They are up to seventh place

in the Premier League and look capable of qualifying for the Europa League.

FA CUP

Saints to face Arsenal

Southampton, UK - Southampton will be at home to holders Arsenal in the fourth round of the FA Cup following a 2-0 win over coronavirus-hit Shrewsbury on Tuesday. Dan N'Lundulu marked his first senior start for the Saints with a maiden goal for the club in the 17th minute at their St Mary's ground before England's James Ward-Prowse put the result beyond doubt a minute from time.

The Saints will have little time to enjoy this victory as their tie with Arsenal, a repeat of the 2003 FA Cup final won 1-0 by the Gunners, takes place at St Mary's on Saturday.

SPANISH LEAGUE

Suso lifts Sevilla

Madrid, Spain - A magnificent long-range strike from Suso secured Sevilla a 2-1 victory at Alaves on Tuesday that sent them up to fourth in La Liga and within a point of Barcelona. Real Valladolid recovered from two goals down to draw 2-2 at home to Elche while Cadiz and Levante also ended two apiece.

OTHER RESULTS

GERMAN LEAGUE

Tuesday: Borussia Moenchengladbach 1 Werder Bremen 0, Mainz 0 VfL Wolfsburg 2, Hertha Berlin 0 Hoffenheim 3, Bayer Leverkusen 2 Borussia Dortmund 1.

AFP

Bayern to face Al Ahly or Al Duhail in Club World Cup

Zurich, Switzerland - Bayern Munich will face either African champions Al Ahly or Al Duhail of Qatar in the semifinals of the Club World Cup next month, following the draw at FIFA's headquarters in Zurich on Tuesday.

The semifinal will be played on Monday, February 8 at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan, just outside the Qatari capital Doha. Before that Al Ahly and Al Duhail will meet on February 4 at the nearby Education City Stadium. The final will be played at Education City on February 11.

Cairo giants Al Ahly, coached by South Africa's Pitso Mosimane, are Africa's most successful club having been continental champions nine times.

Meanwhile Al Duhail, whose manager is the former France international and ex-Rennes and Nottingham Forest coach Sabri Lamouchi, qualify as the reigning champions of the host nation.

On the other side of the draw, Mexican club Tigres UANL, the CONCACAF Champions League winners, will take on Asian champions Ulsan Hyundai of South Korea on February 4 for the right to take on the Copa Libertadores winners in the first semifinal on February 7.

Brazilian clubs Santos and Palmeiras will clash in the delayed South American showpiece at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana on January 30.

Bayern are now looking to add the FIFA title to the five trophies they won in 2020, namely the Bundesliga, German Cup, Champions League, UEFA Super Cup and German Super Cup. The 2020 edition was initially scheduled for December last year but was delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

AFP

QUICK RUN

Tokyo Olympics 'unlikely', says 2012 Games official

The Tokyo Olympics look 'unlikely' to go ahead as the coronavirus pandemic continues to paralyse large parts of the world, a senior official from the London 2012 Games has said. Keith Mills, who was deputy chairman of the London 2012 organising committee, said Tokyo officials should be making plans to cancel. Japanese and International Olympic Committee (IOC) officials remain adamant the 2020 Games, already postponed for a year, will go ahead in July and August despite the ongoing health crisis.

"Personally, sitting here, looking at the pandemic around the world, in South America, North America, Africa and Europe, it looks unlikely," Mills told the BBC. "If I were sitting in the shoes of the organisers, I would be making plans for a cancellation and I'm sure they do, but I think they will leave it until absolutely the last minute in case the situation improves dramatically. "But it is a tough call." But World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said he still thought the Games would go ahead. "I don't think it will be cancelled," Coe told Sky News. "It'll be a challenge, we know. It's pretty self-evident. There will be adaptations." "I think the Games will take place but they will look different," he added.

Woods undergoes back surgery for fifth time

Tiger Woods has recently undergone microdiscectomy surgery to remove a pressurised disc fragment that was pinching a nerve, the 15-time major winner's foundation announced on Tuesday. A posting on Woods's Twitter page said the 45 year old golf star would not play upcoming US PGA Tour events at Torrey Pines or Riviera, but doctors expect him to fully recover. "I look forward to begin training and am focused on getting back out on tour," Woods said in the statement, which did not reveal an exact date for the operation. Woods was experiencing discomfort after playing in last month's PNC Championship at Orlando, Florida, where he competed alongside son Charlie. Woods still plans to handle hosting duties at the Genesis Invitational next month at Riviera for the PGA event that benefits his charity foundation. But there was no timetable given for when Woods might return to PGA play. It marks the fifth back surgery for Woods, who had four from 2014-2017, and his first since a spinal fusion in April 2017.

AFP



India's Prannoy stuns Christie

THAILAND OPEN
BADMINTON

Bangkok, Thailand - Indonesia's seventh seed player Jonatan Christie has been knocked out of the Thailand Open badminton tournament in a mesmerising high-intensity upset against India's H S Prannoy, who hung on despite a late shoulder injury.

Christie started out strong in the three-set marathon against the world No 28, claiming the first set 21-18 before Prannoy fired back in the second 21-16.

Both players showed flashes of brilliance and sloppiness in the topsy-turvy deciding set of high drama. Christie gave away two match points, and right at the tail end Prannoy dislocated his left shoulder and needed medical attention, but within minutes he marched back on court to win the game 23-21.

A disappointed Christie acknowledged he wasted several chances of victory in the 75-minute showdown.

"The first game, I controlled it. In the second, I think I made some mistakes. In the third I was



India's H S Prannoy reacts after his win against Indonesia's Jonatan Christie in the Thailand Open badminton tournament in Bangkok on Wednesday

leading, but I think it wasn't good today," he said.

"I was prepared at match point in the third and then I lost my confidence when the point went the other way. Congratulations to Prannoy."

Second seed Chou Tien Chen's match against Thailand's Suppanyu Avihingsanon, who is

ranked 45 in the world, was a walk in the park in comparison.

The Taiwanese shuttler wrapped up the game in a leisurely 36 minutes 21-16, 21-4.

"I think I am more relaxed than last week. I feel I am more in control of how I want to play and I feel that is working.

"I felt less nervous. I came

mentally prepared today," Chou said.

In the women's singles, last week's tournament winner Carolina Marin came up against 37th-ranked Qi Xuefei from France in what was a repeat of last week's first round.

Qi bowed out again against the Spanish sixth seed losing the first game 9-21, but she put up a gutsy fight in the second, which ended 18-21.

Meanwhile, Thai youngster Benyapa Aimsaard, ranked 129th, beat Russia's Evgeniya Kosetskaya, ranked 25th, in a three-set thriller - 21-15, 17-21, 21-19.

Thailand is hosting three consecutive badminton tournaments in Bangkok culminating in the World Tour Finals from January 27.

The players have been facing off in a so-called biosecure bubble without spectators, although the first tournament was overshadowed by three positive coronavirus cases last week, as well as a fourth overnight on Tuesday.

AFP



AUSTRALIA VS INDIA FOURTH TEST

Mumbai, India - Catch your breath. Settle your heart. Calm your nerves. And soak in it. Let it wash over you. Luxuriate in the feeling. Bask in your good fortune, whoever you are and wherever you are: you have just had the ride of a lifetime. Sport doesn't do much better than this: this is beyond special, beyond the imagination, beyond dreams.

As sports fans we live for days such as these, when hopeless odds are beaten, when the unimaginable is achieved, when new heroes emerge and when history is scripted.

And India, what do we say to you? All through this magnificent series you have tugged at our hearts. Now you own them.

Faith, courage, belief, grit, character, spirit - in the context of the cricket at least, you have raised the bar for these words, which are often worn from overuse.

Not only have you - and I do not use these words lightly - created the greatest moment in India's Test history, you have provided a glorious hurrah to the most epic, the most layered, form of sport known to us.

Test cricket is life itself: not only is it a game of the highest skill, it is also a test of endurance and adaptability, patience and courage. There is the toil, ball after ball, session after session, day after day.

You can glide on the waves only if you have the heart to weather the storms. There is heartbreak and there is redemption: Test cricket always gives you a second chance. How well India forged steel from the debris of Adelaide, numerically the lowest point of their Test history, with their captain and best batsman, and one of their strike bowlers gone.

Given all that they had to overcome, it was appropriate that they should have finished their trial in the toughest arena.

For subcontinental teams, Australia, with its hard pitches, big grounds, tall and muscular fast bowlers, and the aura of intimidation in the air, is the hardest land.

And nothing amplifies the Australianess of Australian cricket as much as the Gabba, where the pitch, not yet a drop-in, yields bounce and movement, and where the cracks lengthen as the match wears on,

INDIA'S GREATEST MOMENT IN TESTS

The Indian win over Australia at Gabba provided a glorious hurrah to the most epic, the most layered, form of sport known to us, writes Sambit Bal



making the aforementioned fast bowlers feel even deadlier; where Australia had not lost a Test since 1988, and where India have never won one. When it emerged that India were reluctant to travel to Queensland, it was put down in some quarters to their fear of the 'Gabbattoir' rather than to legitimate concerns about the hard quarantine norms in Queensland.

And what did they have at their disposal? Barely 11 fit men to put on the park, with six of their first-choice bowlers, two of whom had made match-defining contributions with the bat, lost to injury (one more would be incapacitated in the first innings

of the match) and two middle-order batsmen, in addition to their captain, gone too. The number of wickets taken by the bowlers of the two teams read 1033 to 13, going into the game.

And their captain loses the toss, his third in a row, at a ground where no opposition team has ever mounted a successful chase of over 200. And Australia's bowling attack is one of their best ever.

Given all the fairy tales they have woven on this tour, how could India do anything but cap it with the biggest of them all: the most audacious of heists, a chase of 328 on the final day.

It's a Test they didn't need to

win; a draw would have done enough to see them hold on to the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, which they won handsomely on these shores two years ago. But just how could they not go for the win?

It was appropriate the charge was led by two young men who represent, in contrasting style, the dauntlessness of this team. Tellingly, neither played in the only Test India lost on the tour. Shubman Gill, 21 but marked out as a future star, caressed boundaries with the finesse of a Mahela Jayawardene in his prime, and took on the bouncer trap with the spirit of a pugilist.

Rishabh Pant, who came on

this tour off a horrid IPL and with questions over his attitude and fitness, and was picked over the first-choice wicketkeeper, Wriddhiman Saha, only because India needed to compensate for Kohli's absence, was able to take on the dare of the final-session chase not just because he had the wares but mainly because he was prepared to bear the cost of failure.

Or perhaps he chose never to contemplate it. Impossible odds are never beaten without a dose of audacity.

Sandwiched in between was the phlegmatic figure of Cheteshwar Pujara, whose batting through the series has

aroused many a debate. In 2018 he was the architect of India's first-ever series win in Australia, with 521 runs and three hundreds.

Australia were better prepared for him this time, and his run-scoring was reduced to a trickle even by his own standards. But he still was the hardest to dislodge, weathering 928 balls, grinding down the bowlers with each one he blunted.

Apart from two innings - the Adelaide horror show and the small chase in Melbourne - the fewest deliveries he absorbed in an innings this series was 70, and his 211-ball vigil in Brisbane, during which he copped the

nastiest blows because the Australian quicks homed in on him, gave his young partners insurance against the collapse. Every Test team needs a Pujara, one of a dying but priceless breed.

The story of India's series is that the fairy tales just kept coming. There were three match-altering partnerships involving the No 8s: in Melbourne, Ravindra Jadeja, playing his first game after being concussed in the T20I series, added 121 with Ajinkya Rahane; in Sydney, R Ashwin batted 128 balls in a 42.4-over partnership with Hanuma Vihari, who batted 161 balls on one leg.

Ashwin, who has four Test hundreds, had not gone past 25 since December 2018. He perhaps wouldn't have played the first Test, and possibly also the second, had Jadeja not been injured. Ashwin was, in the words of his wife, crawling on the hotel-room floor the night before the last day of the Sydney Test with a back injury that would deny him the opportunity of a final tilt in his best series outside the subcontinent.

And what of Mohammed Siraj, the son of an auto-rickshaw driver, who came into the spotlight through a talent-hunt contest, who stayed on the tour to honour his father, who died while Siraj was in Australia, and who made his Test debut because of an injury to Mohammed Shami. Two Tests later, Siraj was India's enforcer not only in name but in deed, hustling Australia's best with wicket-taking balls.

Or T Natarajan, who had bowled only with a tennis ball till 2010 or thereabouts, and found a place in India's T20I squad on the strength of his yorkers this IPL, who went to earn an ODI cap and then make his Test cap, having stayed back as a net bowler.

As did the three-wicket hauls from fellow debutant Washington Sundar and near-debutant Shardul Thakur, who bowled only ten balls in his first Test before pulling up with an injury.

As sports fans and writers we can usually consider ourselves fortunate if we are able to watch and write about one rousing story in a series. That this series between these two fierce rivals came down to the final hour of the final day of the final Test would have been enough. But this Indian team left us memories to keep us warm for a lifetime.

Cricinfo

ISM triumph; ISWK, MCCC Yellow win



Dhyan Deepak



Mark Mathews



Arjun Swamy

LOCAL CRICKET

Azam Ali's allround display (71 and three wickets) powered Indian School Muscat (ISM) to an 118-run victory over Boshier Sports Centre-B in an Oman Cricket U19 (50-over-a-side) clash at Al Amerat on Saturday.

Besides Azam, Ayman Ayaz (60) and Shanmugarajan Kuttiraja (47) were the main scorers as ISM made 288 for eight. Yash Yogesh (53) was the only batsman to show some resistance as BSC-B was restricted to 170.

BRIEF SCORES:

U19: ISM 288-8 (Azam 71, Ayman 60, Shanmugarajan 47; Pranjal Verma 3-40, Narayana-pura Satish 2-50) beat BSC-B 170-7 (Yash 53; Azam 3-20, Mithil 2-19, Arjun Suresh 2-31).

U16 (30-over-a-side): ISWK 272-2 (Abbas Ajay 118, Chaitra

Jitesh 78, Atul Kumar 49) beat MCCC Blue 131-6 (Prathiesh Hema 37; Siddh Mehta 2-31, Abhas 2-37).

U16: SLSM 66 all out in 28.1 overs (Puladith Medagoda 24; Aum Kanani 2-1, Mohammed Hamza 2-5) lost to MCCC Yellow 67 for no loss in 5.1 overs (Dhyan Deepak 36, Aaryan Nishit 27).

U13 (T20): ISWK-B 67-9 (Arjun Swamy 5-5) lost to MCCC Blue 71 for no loss in 7.4 overs (Mark Mathews 42).

U13: ISM 187-4 (Pachisia Ojjas 63, Patel Dhyan 51, Basharat Abyan 42; Hadi Mohammed 2-39) beat MCCC Red 89-6 (Shravan Sharat 41).

U13: PSM 125-8 (Asad Kashif 54; Saumya Bhavin 2-15, Mohammad Azeel 2-18) lost to ISWK-A 126-1 (Nilaksh Vats 50, Ayush Shetty 49).

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SHAKIB'S WINNING RETURN

Allrounder claims four-for in Bangladesh's six-wicket victory over West Indies in first ODI

**BANGLADESH VS WEST INDIES
FIRST ODI**

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Shakib al Hasan, who was serving a one-year ban for not reporting a corrupt approach from 2019, had a fruitful return to international cricket as his four for eight runs helped Bangladesh beat an inexperienced West Indies by six wickets in the first ODI in Mirpur on Wednesday.

The win gave Bangladesh a 1-0 lead in the three-match series and also earned them their first points in the World Cup Super League.

On paper, it would appear to be a one-sided win for Bangladesh, but West Indies - who were fielding six debutants - had some positives to take from the game despite being bowled out for 122.

Debutant Kyle Mayers, who struck 40, showed promise on a spin-friendly surface while left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein - also playing his first ODI - spun a web around the Bangladesh top order with his variations to finish with three for 26.

However, a target of 123 was simply too low for West Indies to keep sustaining the pressure, as Bangladesh won with 16 overs to spare.

Conditions were overcast all day in Mirpur, and captain Tamim Iqbal asked West Indies to bat first. It was a decision that



Bangladesh's Shakib al Hasan (left) celebrates with teammates after bowling out West Indies' Alzarri Joseph during the first ODI on Wednesday

gave them early success as Mustafizur Rahman bagged two for 20, using his inswinger to trap opener Sunil Ambris lbw in the second over.

After a brief rain delay, Rahman struck again to dismiss Joshua da Silva for nine when the batsman edged a drive to Liton Das at gully, who took an acrobatic catch.

Iqbal, donning the captain's

hat in a full-time capacity for the first time, then introduced Shakib, who struck almost instantly.

Andre McCarthy swept down the wrong line and had his off stump knocked back.

That was Shakib's 150th wicket at home, and he would swiftly add two more when he had Jason Mohammed (17) stumped and Nkrumah Bonner trapped

lbw for a four-ball duck.

At that stage, West Indies were 56 for five, but a 59-run stand between Mayers and Rovman Powell took them past three-figures.

After seeing off the first spell from Shakib and off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz, they pounced on pacers Rubel Hossain and Rahman and just as

it was looking dangerous, the half-century partnership was broken.

Bangladesh's own debutant, 21 year old pacer Hasan Mahmud, grabbed three for 28 and got the breakthrough.

He beat Powell for pace as the edge and found Mushfiqur Rahim's gloves. The next ball, Mahmud hit the back leg of left-hander Raymon Reifer to

SCOREBOARD		
WEST INDIES		
Sunil Ambris	lbw b Rahman	7
J Da Silva	c Das b Rahman	9
A McCarthy	b Shakib al Hasan	12
J Mohammed	st Rahim b Shakib	17
Kyle Mayers	c Das b Miraz	40
N Bonner	lbw b Shakib	0
R Powell	c Rahim b Mahmud	28
R Reifer	lbw b Mahmud	0
A Joseph	b Shakib	4
A Hosein	c Das b Mahmud	1
C Holder	not out	0
Extras:	(lb 3, w 1)	4
TOTAL: 122 in 32.2 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-24, 3-45, 4-56, 5-56, 6-115, 7-115, 8-121, 9-122, 10-122		
Bowling: R Hossain 6-0-34-0, M Rahman 6-0-20-2, H Mahmud 6-1-28-3, Shakib al Hasan 7.2-2-8-4, M Hasan 7-1-29-1		
BANGLADESH		
L Das	b Hosein	14
T Iqbal	st Da Silva b Mohammed	44
N Hossain	c Mohammed b Hosein	1
Shakib al Hasan	b Hosein	19
M Rahim	not out	19
Mahmudullah	not out	9
Extras:	(b 2, lb 10, nb 3, w 4)	19
TOTAL: 125 for four in 33.5 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-47, 2-57, 3-83, 4-105		
Bowling: A Joseph 8-3-17-0, C Holder 3-0-26-0, A Hosein 10-1-26-3, J Mohammed 8-0-19-1, A McCarthy 2-0-10-0, N Bonner 2.5-0-15-0		

last, when he got an arm ball to go through Alzarri Joseph's defence, bowling West Indies out for 122 in the 33rd over. Shakib's figures of were the best by a Bangladesh bowler against West Indies, while the visitors' total was their second-lowest against their hosts.

The way Iqbal and Liton Das began the chase, the match seemed destined for a quick finish. Chemar Holder conceded 26 runs in his first three overs. But when Joseph began operating in partnership with Hosein, run-scoring became difficult.

Between overs seven and 12, Bangladesh scored only four runs. Das was the first to go, out for an uncharacteristic 38-ball 14. He tried to defend a ball from Hosein but played on. Bangladesh's No 3 Najmul Hossain was Hosein's second victim as he was caught at midwicket.

Shakib then joined Iqbal, and together they batted conservatively. Mohammed dismissed Iqbal in his fourth over when he got him stumped for 44. Rahim and Shakib then saw Bangladesh cross 100 in the 27th over.

Hosein, however, forced a false shot from Shakib on 19, who missed a cut off a ball aimed at the stumps.

Mahmudullah and Rahim then saw off the chase with an unbeaten stand of 20.

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India's Rishabh Pant runs between the wickets on day five of the fourth Test against Australia on Tuesday

India's Pant moves up to career-high 13th

ICC TEST RANKINGS

Dubai, UAE - India's Rishabh Pant and England's Joe Root both made significant jumps in the ICC Men's Test Player Rankings, following their recent exploits in the Brisbane and Galle Tests, respectively.

Pant, the top-ranked wicketkeeper on the batting charts, climbed to a career high No 13 after his 89 not out at the Gabba sealed a famous series win for India.

Root, meanwhile, returned to the top five with his highest ratings points tally of 738 in two years, as his first innings 228 against Sri Lanka was enough to push him up six places, overtaking the likes of Cheteshwar Pujara and Babar Azam. Australia's No 3 Marnus Labuschagne also recorded a personal milestone, as his first-innings century in Brisbane took him past Virat Kohli to third spot, with a career-best 878 rating points.

Despite a disappointing series as captain, Tim Paine moved up three places as well to 42nd.

Among the Australia bowlers, Josh Hazlewood made the most significant leap, overtaking New Zealand's Tim Southee to bag fourth spot. Hazlewood claimed six wickets at the Gabba, including a haul of five for 57 in the first innings.

For India, who had several

For India, who had several players chipping in with crucial contributions throughout the series, there were quite a few personal highs

players chipping in with crucial contributions throughout the series, there were quite a few personal highs.

Opener Shubman Gill moved up 21 places to 47th after making a crucial 91 in the second innings

in Brisbane, while Pujara went up one spot to seventh following his dogged 56 off 211 deliveries.

Mohammed Siraj, who made his debut during the second Test in Melbourne, jumped up 32 spots to 45th in the bowlers rankings after he took a five-wicket haul at the Gabba.

Shardul Thakur and debutant Washington Sundar, who provided one of the first turning points in the fourth Test against Australia with their partnership of 123 in the first innings, were also rewarded with individual milestones.

Sundar reached No 82 on the batting list, while Thakur, who claimed seven wickets during the Test, shot up to No 65 in the bowlers rankings.

The other significant movers on the list were England's spinners Jack Leach (40th) and Dom Bess (50th), after they both claimed five-wicket hauls in Galle. Lahiru Thirimanne, Sri Lanka's lone centurion in the Test, moved up 12 places to take the 87th spot on the batting list.

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