MUSCAT DAILY

AN APEX MEDIA PUBLICATION

Wear a mask... always!

ISSN 2075-1575

@muscat_daily
@muscatdaily
@muscatdailyonline
@Muscat Daily

SUNDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2021
www.muscatdaily.com
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om
To subscribe, call toll free no: 80076000

33°C/24°C

OIL PRICES WON'T DECLINE UNTIL 2023: WB

GO TO PAGE 04 BUSINESS

Unpardonable negligence

Call for stricter action as student is forgotten in bus again

Our Correspondent
Muscat

(Image for illustrative purpose)

To prevent repetition of incidents involving students left abandoned in school buses, citizens and experts are demanding harsher penalties for school bus personnel for failing to follow safety rules.

On Thursday, Royal Oman Police arrested the driver and supervisor of a school bus on charges of negligence after a child was forgotten in a school bus. The child needed hospitalisation following the incident.

The Ministry of Education took cognizance of the incident and issued a statement. 'The ministry confirms that it is conducting an investigation and will initiate legal measures against those responsible for the accident. The ministry urges everyone to adhere to security measures for the safety of students.'

Many parents and citizens, who spoke to *Muscat Daily*, demanded stricter action against the bus driver for the negligence.

Nasser al Hosni, manager of Happy Line Transport, said, "This is not the first time a child has been left unattended in a school bus. Unfortunately, children have died in similar cases in the past. Negligence leads to such accidents."

> *Similar incidents have become frequent lately. These incidents create fear among children and their families*
>
> **KHALID AHMED ALI TABOOK**

Hosni informed that introduction of modern technology on all school buses, especially private schools, will help prevent repetition of such cases. "Oman has many companies that provide such services. Buses are fitted with sensors that prevent locking of the door until all the students have got off."

Ahmed al Balushi, parent of a school student, suggested harsher punitive action on the bus driver and supervisor as deterrent for such negligence. "Additionally, parents and school officials must teach children the rules of security and safety inside buses."

Noting the recurrence of these accidents that have claimed the lives of children in recent years, Ali al Shayadi, a teacher, said, "The tragedy is not only the death of the student, but the psychological impact on the parents of such victims. Increasing the penalty for negligence and providing measures of safety on buses are a couple of important steps needed to avoid repetition of such tragedies."

Describing these incidents on school buses as 'frequent' lately, Khalid Ahmed Ali Tabook, head of the Ministry of Social Development's Family Counselling and Guidance Department in Dhofar, said, "These incidents create great fear among children and their families."

These incidents create a phobia of school or vehicles for some children. "It can affect them psychologically and complicate their life."

Continued on Page 02

4,500-year-old incense burner found in Saham

Our Correspondent
Muscat

(Supplied photo)

Incense burners have been used in Oman for more than 4,500 years. This was proved following the discovery of an incense burner dating back to 2300-2200 BC.

A group of archaeologists found the antique in the village of Dahwa, 24km west of Saham, North Batinah, making it the oldest known incense burner to be found in Oman.

The discovery was made by the Archaeology Department of the College of Arts and Social Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) working in association with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The artefact was unearthed from an eight-year-old excavation site in Dahwa where forts, aflaj, cemeteries, mines and human settlements dating back thousands of years spanning different periods, from Stone Age to the late Islamic Era, have been found.

The archaeology team is studying the area of Wadi As'Sakhn to explore human activity during the early Bronze Age, notably the culture of Um An-Nar Era dated 2700-2000 BC (an intermediary between Mesopotamia and Indus Valley cultures).

The team started excavation work in 2014 under the supervision of Prof Nassir al Jahwari, Dr Khalid Daglas and other SQU researchers.

Continued on Page 02

MoL announces over 1,000 job openings

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In implementation of Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to speed up the execution of employment initiatives, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) announced the availability of 1,114 positions in government units on Thursday.

According to the announcement, 587 jobs will be made available as a result of vacancies as well as through replacement of expatriates. This is in addition to the availability of 286 existing vacancies and 241 to be made available through replacement of expatriates, taking the total to 1,114.

The opportunities are open for a variety of educational qualifications - 11 for holders of Master's degree, 746 for holders of Bachelor's degree, 109 for post-General Education Diploma holders, 56 for GED holders and 192 for artisans and ancillary workers.

Registration for the jobs is open till November 18 during which time candidates can apply through MoL's website.

This is the eighth announcement of employment opportunities in the public sector in 2021. Other announcements will follow in accordance with actual needs of the government, as per a ministry statement.

Pfizer vaccine 90% effective in younger children

Washington, US - Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine is more than 90 per cent effective in preventing symptomatic disease among children aged five-to-11, the company said in a document released on Friday that put forward its case for authorisation.

The new data was published on the website of the Food and Drug Administration, which has called an advisory panel of independent experts to meet on Tuesday to vote on whether to green light the shot.

The analysis was based on around 2,250 trial participants, randomised to receive either the vaccine or a placebo, with data accruing until October 8. Most positive cases occurred when the Delta variant was dominant in the US and globally.

"VE (Vaccine Efficacy) against laboratory-confirmed symptomatic COVID-19 occurring at least seven days after Dose 2 in evaluable participants without evidence of prior SARS-CoV-2 infection was 90.7 percent," the document said.

The vaccine was tested with a 10 microgram dose, while older age groups have received 30 micrograms. The doses were administered three weeks apart.

There were no cases of severe COVID-19 and no cases of multi-system inflammatory syndrome in children, a rare but serious post viral condition. Overall, 158 children aged five-to-11 have died from COVID-19 in the US.

AFP

CYCLONE SHAHEEN CREATES RARE LAKES

Cyclone Shaheen that struck Oman on October 3 created rare lakes in the deserts of Dhahirah governorate. Social media has been awash with such pictures. Photographer Shihab al Shandoudi, who took pictures of such lakes in the aftermath of Shaheen, told *Muscat Daily*, "The cyclone was an exceptional event affecting the sultanate. This opportunity encouraged us to document the changes it brought about in Oman." According to Shandoudi, a nature photographer, he has taken many photos during his career spanning decades, "but the latest images of the cyclone and the images of the Al Safa lakes in Dhahirah governorate are unlike anything captured earlier". His images of the lakes in the desert have won him rave reviews.

'Squid Game' continues to top Netflix charts in Oman

Muscat - Dark, eye-opening and twisted, *Squid Game* has been topping Netflix charts for weeks, and Oman is no exception. The Korean show has become Netflix's biggest show ever, gripping the attention of its 80+ million viewers from the day it was released on Netflix, alongside boasting a Rotten Tomatoes rating of 91 per cent.

Squid Game unfolds primarily in the eyes of protagonist Seong Gi-hun, a man who is soft at heart, but deep in debt thanks to his horse-betting problem. He is constantly beaten up due to his crippling debt. He meets a mysterious man at the train station who gives him the silliest proposition: Every time Seong flips the man's *ttakji*, he gets 100,000 South Korean won. *Ttakji* is a popular Korean game where two people take turns flipping origami disks by slapping one on top of the other as hard as they can.

After continuously losing, a red-faced and defeated Seong is ready to give up. At this point, however, the mysterious man offers a card to Seong, and from that point start the games that *Squid Game* is known for. Without any spoilers, the show is known for taking children's games played in Korea and turning them into survival, fight-for-your-lives games.

Being a show set completely in Korea, subsequently using the Korean language to communicate, it is surprising to see such an incredibly dark story almost surpassing Oscar-winning film *Parasite*'s popularity in just a few days.

A few Omani students spoke about why they thought the show had an iron grip on Oman.

Shadha al Rawahi, a student of College of Banking and Financial Studies, said, "The idea of desperate people consenting to a dehumanising game for the sake of money is so depressing. But the overall storyline still kept me in progressive suspense with every episode. I noticed that there is some similarity between it and *Escape Rooms* as well as *Alice in Borderland*, which also I enjoyed watching."

Ahmed Abdul Amir al Ajmi, a sales promoter, said, "I liked the *Honeycomb* episode. It seemed pretty simple but intense. I didn't like when Seong Gi-Hun was separated from his daughter, but all in all, I enjoyed the show a lot and can't wait for the second season if there ever will be one."

Amira Yaqoub al Balushi, a BCom third year student, admitted that "the plot revolving around a deathly game kept me interested me to watch".

"The characters' survival instincts were also really interesting to see," she added.

The characters picked to play these games are all miserable individuals wallowing in deep, almost deadly debt. Each round survived ultimately leads to the final game; if you lose a round, or don't complete the game within the time limit, you are shot and killed by the ominous guards in red.

The *Dalgona Candy* episode - where the participants had to carve out a shape from Korean sugar candy - especially caught the attention of many viewers, inspiring them to try the game at home as well, only without running the risk of being killed if they were unsuccessful.

The final round is the Squid game itself, which is set in a handmade shape on the ground like hopscotch, but with completely different rules, and whoever is left standing at the end takes the 46,500,000,000 South Korean won (RO15,207,850) prize home.

Text by Rianna Lobo

Call for stricter action as student is forgotten in bus again

Continued from Page 01

Tabook added that parents may also lose confidence in school transportation as a result of the anxiety arising from these recurrences. "Safety guidelines for school buses must be adopted immediately. They must be obligated to install security systems such as surveillance cameras and tracking devices. Additionally, a periodic health checkup of bus drivers is needed."

Royal Oman Police called on school bus drivers to ensure no child is left behind in vehicles at the end of a trip to prevent similar tragedies.

In a statement following Thursday's incident, Children First Association said, 'We are following up on the child's condition in hospital and wish her a speedy recovery. The association also expresses its deep concern about the recurrence of such incidents despite the availability of guidance programmes. The association urges the concerned authorities to find a permanent solution to prevent recurrence of these painful incidents.'

Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles. CO. SAOG

الشمس Al-Shams
Tiles with imagination

P.O. Box No 143, Al Harthy Complex, P.code 118, Sultanate of Oman
Tel No: 00968 24649093, 24649095, Fax: 00968 24649097
Email: ceramics@omantel.net.om, www.alshams.org

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE 9 MONTHS ENDED 30TH SEPT 2021

Dear Shareholders,

It is my privilege to present to you the operating results for the nine months ended 30th September 2021.

Review of Operations & Finance Performance:

Revenue for this period stood at RO 19.2 M and net profits at RO 4.7 M signifying an increase of 10.1% and 78.2% respectively.

Over all the performance in the first nine months of this year has been satisfactory. The imposition of the antidumping duty in KSA & UAE has resulted in strong order flows from there. We continue to be market leaders in our home market in Oman, although business in Oman was impacted due to Covid related lockdowns and manpower shortage in the construction industry. This is now getting better.

We continue to focus on cost competitiveness which we believe is the key to superior profitability.

Corporate Governance:

I am pleased to report that your company has adhered to all the regulations covering corporate governance in Oman. We remain committed and aspire to becoming model corporate citizens.

Future Outlook:

Our expansion plan is on track to be completed by February 2022. We believe that the timing is correct as the markets can absorb the additional output. This expanded capacity will help us to both reduce costs by way of better amortization of fixed costs and improve realisations by the introduction of new sizes at higher price points. Our medium term outlook continues to be encouraging.

We are grateful to the government of Oman and all the support that we receive from them and wish Oman further progress under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Hussain Ali Habib Sajwani
Chairman

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (unaudited) for the 9 months ended 30th Sept 2021

	2021 RO	2020 RO
INCOME		
Revenue from contract with customers	19,199,136	17,445,771
Cost of Revenue	(11,106,583)	(11,428,218)
Gross profit	8,092,553	6,017,553
Other income	85,584	28,289
	8,178,137	**6,045,842**
EXPENSES		
General and Administrative Expenses	(1,770,255)	(1,640,285)
Selling and distribution Expenses	(2,014,861)	(1,800,613)
Net finance charges	(8,543)	(9,651)
	(3,793,659)	(3,450,549)
Profit from Operation	4,384,478	2,595,293
Investment Income	1,206,612	572,088
Profit for the year before taxation	5,591,090	3,167,381
Taxation	(841,667)	(502,306)
Net profit for the year	**4,749,423**	**2,665,075**
Fair value changes in fair value through other comprehensive income investments	85,332	110,648
Total comprehensive income for the year	**4,834,755**	**2,775,723**
Basic earnings per share	**0.017**	**0.009**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (unaudited) at 30th Sept 2021

	30th Sept 2021 RO	30th Sept 2020 RO	31st Dec 2020 RO
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	13,108,357	13,206,864	13,392,335
Right of use of Asset	528,882	600,694	528,882
Fair value through other comprehensive income investment	2,280,461	2,339,356	2,167,089
Non Current portion held to Maturity Investment	5,777,251	7,321,004	7,321,004
Total non-current assets	**21,694,951**	**23,467,918**	**23,409,310**
Current assets			
Debt instruments at amortised cost	–	7,288,723	10,299,989
Inventories	4,218,365	3,820,038	3,555,424
Trade & Other receivables	11,508,786	8,911,127	8,022,770
Bank balances and cash	2,827,371	1,086,800	789,280
Total current assets	**18,554,522**	**21,106,688**	**22,667,463**
Total assets	**40,249,473**	**44,574,606**	**46,076,773**
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Share capital	22,000,000	29,621,368	29,621,368
Legal reserve	7,100,236	6,665,959	7,100,236
Retained earnings	4,934,621	2,940,665	4,184,083
Equity Investment reserve	(629,064)	(512,124)	(714,396)
Total equity	**33,405,793**	**38,715,868**	**40,191,291**
Liabilities			
Non-current liabilities			
Non current portion of lease liabilities	461,931	490,476	461,931
Employees' end of service benefits	923,285	809,441	869,818
Deferred tax liability	326,198	399,110	326,198
Total non-current liabilities	1,711,414	1,699,027	1,657,947
Current liabilities			
Current portion of lease liabilities	92,597	124,624	92,597
Accounts and other payables	4,192,152	3,531,986	3,310,847
Taxation	847,517	503,101	824,091
Total current liabilities	5,132,266	4,159,711	4,227,535
Total liabilities	6,843,680	5,858,738	5,885,482
Total equity and liabilities	**40,249,473**	**44,574,606**	**46,076,773**
Net assets per share	**0.152**	**0.131**	**0.136**

(Supplied photo)

Omani astrophotographer plans to capture winter skies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A noted Omani astrophotographer and a social media 'star' is all set to travel the length and breadth of the country to capture our galaxy – the Milky Way.

Ali Rabiaa Ahmed al Kindi, a 25-year-old engineer from Nizwa whose pictures have been recognised by the Oman Astronomical Society (OAS) and featured in several magazines, is all geared up to captures glimpses of the solar system in one of the most toughest seasons of the year.

He has almost 2,500 followers in Instagram, making him one of the most popular social media influencers in the field.

Kindi said, "The universe is different in seasons and in winters it is quite a challenge to capture the stars because of the direction of the sun. The best of the Milky Way is visible in the summers and is easy to capture, but I take this challenge and will capture the winter sky."

He added that some of the places that he plans to venture are Salalah, the Empty Quarter and Masirah Islands.

"I am looking for dark places; so that means that I need to travel to the interiors. There must not be any city lights as one single speck of light can disrupt the image."

Kindi is one of the few photographers in Oman who specialises in this kind of photography.

He used to have a Nikon DSLR with which he started the journey and now he has Sony, Nikon and Canon cameras. Since astrophotography needs special lenses and cameras making it an expensive activity, Kindi found ways to make his DIY camera.

"YouTube and some astronomy clubs - through e-subscription - have been my teachers. I have learnt several tactics to capture the best of the images with limited resources. I use a star-tracker and through it use my camera to capture images. Normally I use a wide lens (16mm), aperture 4 or less, ISO not more than 1600 and shutter speed as much as two minutes. I also use a Sigma sports telephoto zoom lens of 150 to 600 mm."

He started astrophotography in 2019 end when the sky was dark and there were lots of stars.

"Sometimes the pictures didn't come well because I didn't know enough dark locations. As I moved places I found better images."

Kindi has shot comets, asteroids, meteor showers, the Milky Way, and planets like Mars and Mercury. According to him, the most challenging part has been to shoot nebula as it requires technical skill and artistry.

He added that his dream in astrophotography is to shoot the aurora in Iceland or Sweden in near future.

Abdul Wahab al Busaidi, head of the observatory unit of OAS, described Kindi as one of the most promising astrophotographers of Oman.

4,500-year-old incense burner found in Saham

Continued from Page 01

The site comprised a large number of enclaves that housed ancient human settlements along the banks of a valley. The enclaves include building structures, the most notable of which is a monument marked by researchers as DH1:S.10, where the team found seven multipurpose chambers, including rooms for storage of imported goods, a copper smelter and a residence.

According to a press statement, Carbon-14 dating showed that the incense burner is the most ancient antique of its kind discovered so far.

The analysis was done at the laboratory of Georgia University, United States. The specimen was cross-checked at Max Blank Institute, Germany, where traces of plant oils were found in the burner.

In 1996, a similar incense burner was unearthed in Ras al Jinz, dating back to 2200 BC. This burner, made of white limestone, too had traces of incense. It was the most ancient evidence that Omanis used frankincense for centuries in everyday activities.

Visitors rue fewer affordable eateries in iconic Qurm Park

Muscat – Having lived in isolation fearing COVID-19 infection for more than one-a-half years, people are finally gaining the confidence to venture out and spend time outdoors.

Parks and gardens appear to be the best option both in terms of the safety that they can afford in maintaining social distancing and not being confined in closed places. With the change in weather, more people are seen in the evenings, particularly during weekends, in parks and gardens.

Most public parks in Oman have affordable coffee shops. But visitors to Qurm Natural Park, the largest public place in Muscat, saw the closure of smaller eateries and opening of a restaurant. "There were four small coffee shops in the park, but now this is the last one operating inside the park," said an attendant at the lone coffee shop.

"Affordable eating options should be provided inside public parks. Not everyone can afford family restaurants. At the coffee shop today, we spent less than RO1 for tea and ice-cream for our child. It would cost a lot more at the restaurant," said Shareen Sumayya, who was visiting the park with family and friends.

Salam al Jabri, who came to park with his wife and four children, echoed Shareen's concerns. "The municipality should think about people from all walks of life and provide options to suit all pockets at public places."

According to Sachin Chavan, most visitors plan their visit to the park, preferring to prepare and carry their own food to enjoy with friends and family. "But for casual visitors, there will be a problem with three coffee shops closing down at Qurm garden. Authorities should provide casual dining as well as affordable café options."

An expatriate nurse who was visiting with her sister and friends said, "We used to buy and enjoy food from a small coffee shop earlier. But now the affordable coffee shops are gone. There's a new expensive restaurant inside the garden which we cannot afford." She and her friends now carry their own food to the garden these days.

Photo and text by Syed Fasiuddin

Initiative for those who lost books during Shaheen

Our Correspondent
Muscat

An initiative called Kitab Fi Haya, or Book in Life, has been launched by Book Friends Team to help those who lost books in the areas hit by cyclone Shaheen.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Safiya al Hosani, a member of Book Friends Team, said, "We operate under the umbrella of the Sinaw Cultural Centre. Kitab Fi Haya was launched on October 15 for the cyclone-stricken people in areas like Suwaiq, Saham, Khabourah and Mussanah in North and South Batinah governorates. The team is cooperating with a few libraries to provide books to these people for free."

Groups of ten team members in each governorate collected books over a period from October 17 to 23, following which these were sorted. The books will be distributed from Sunday until Saturday next week.

"The team consists of more that 2,600 members from different Arab countries. It organises reading events in cooperation with Arab countries. The team also organises events with the objective of encouraging the habit of reading in the community," Safiya said.

"With this initiative, we aim to show our solidarity and support the victims of Shaheen and help owners restore and restock libraries. For individuals, we aim to provide five to ten books. They can choose from a wide variety of books, including religious and scientific."

Cultivated area decreased by 2.2% in 2020: NCSI

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The estimated cultivated area in the sultanate has decreased by 2.2 per cent by the end of 2020 to 256,959 acres, compared to 262,855 acres at the end of 2019, according to the data in the Statistics Yearbook issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Perennial fodder crops had the highest percentage of the total cultivated area during 2020 with 32.8 per cent followed by fruit crops with about 30.8 per cent. The perennial fodder crops contributed with 41.1 per cent of the total sultanate's production of agricultural crops in 2020, while vegetables production came second with 38.2 per cent.

According to the data, fodder crops occupied the largest area of cultivated lands, with a total area of 84,279 acres, with its total production reaching 1,247,105 tonnes, followed by fruit crops on a total area of 79,210 acres with a total production of 464,929 tonnes.

This was followed by vegetable cultivation on a total area of 69,276 acres, with a total production of 1,159,540 tonnes while the total cultivated area of field crops reached 24,194 acres, with production of 162,545 tonnes.

Among the forage crops, the total planted area of alfalfa grass in Oman at the end of 2020 reached 13,709 acres, with a total production of 239,867 tonnes while the total area planted with Rhodes grass reached 54,729 acres, with 614,592 tonnes of production.

Fodder crops occupied the largest area (84,279 acres) followed by fruit crops (79,210 acres) and vegetables (69,276 acres)

The total area planted with sorghum reached 8,747 acres, with a total production of 148,884 tonnes while the areas planted with other fodder crops amounted to 7,094 acres, with a total production of 50,817 tonnes of these crops.

As for fruit crops, the NCSI data revealed that date palm occupied an area of 61,024 acres, with total production of 364,577 tonnes while mangoes acquired an area of 3,623 acres, with a total production of 16,006 tonnes. The total areas planted with bananas reached 3,751 acres, with a total production of 18,447 tonnes.

The total areas planted with lemon reached 4,166 acres, with a production of 8,389 tonnes while the total area planted with coconut palm reached 1,517 acres, with a total production of 6,709 tonnes. The area planted with other fruit trees reached 4,430 acres, with a total production of 40,971 tonnes.

Regarding vegetable crops, the data showed that tomatoes acquired the largest space of cultivated area, reaching 8,843 acres, with a production of 340,228 tonnes, followed by cantaloupe with a total area of 4,555 acres, and production of 50,910 tonnes.

Okra were planted in a total area of 3,404 acres, with production of 13,112 tonnes, while watermelon with a total area of 2,388 acres, producing 37,090 tonnes.

GCC discusses adoption of early health warning system

Manama - Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health, took part in the seventh meeting of GCC Health Ministers Committee and the 84th GCC Health Ministers Conference held in Bahrain's Manama on Thursday.

The sultanate was represented by H E Dr Ahmed Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health. The meeting addressed a spectrum of key health topics and issues of common concern.

It reviewed the implementation of the 41st session of Supreme Council's decisions and the declaration issued in the field of health.

It considered the adoption of the general framework of the Gulf public health plan for emergency preparedness and response, the adoption of the early health warning system and the adoption of the establishment of the Gulf Center for Disease Prevention and Control.

In addition, the meeting reviewed strengthening strategic partnerships and the development of joint action mechanisms.

Hotel guests increase, revenue declines

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The total number of guests in three- to five-star hotels in the sultanate increased by 37.9 per cent till September as compared to the same period in 2020.

As many as 834,255 guests stayed in hotels of this category in Oman this year compared to 604,940 guests in 2020, according to statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Despite the increase in numbers and occupancy rate, which improved to 35 per cent this year compared to 27.3 per cent in 2020, hotel revenues until the end of September was RO59.273mn, a decrease of 11.7 per cent compared to RO67.136mn in 2020.

According to NCSI statistics, Omani guests constituted the largest chunk of hotel patrons, which increased by 115.8 per cent to 619,194 from 286,867 in the same period last year.

Omanis were followed by Asian guests (98,752), Arabs from non-Gulf countries (32,151), Europeans (29,732), from Americas (13,259), GCC nationals (13,452), Oceanians (3,916), Africas (2,868), beside others.

المها
al Maha
معكم أينما كنتم
With you everywhere

Re-Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tender:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable)	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
PDEN/2021/03/006	Semi-Revamping of Hitam Filling Station in Al Wusta Governorate	50.000	28.10.2021	03.11.2021	08.11.2021
Bank Name & Account Number		**Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)**			

The Conditions:

1- **Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.

2- **Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.

3- **Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee,** Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.

4- **Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.

5- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.

6- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.

7- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.

8- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.

9- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.

10- For any enquiry email us at **(procurement@almaha.com.om)** or by calling **24610289/24610287/24160355**

Oil prices won't decline until 2023, says World Bank

Washington, US – The stunning recent runup in global oil prices could threaten economic growth, and is unlikely to retreat until 2023, according to the World Bank.

Average crude prices are expected to end the year at US$70 a barrel, 70 per cent higher than in 2020, according to the latest Commodity Markets Outlook report of the World Bank.

That in turn is pushing up other energy prices like natural gas, the report said.

"The surge in energy prices poses significant near-term risks to global inflation and, if sustained, could also weigh on growth in energy-importing countries," said World Bank chief economist Ayhan Kose.

The increases have been 'more pronounced than previously projected' and 'may complicate policy choices as countries recover from last year's global recession'.

Oil prices in recent weeks have surged above US$80 a barrel, the highest point in years.

The World Bank uses an average of Brent, WTI and Dubai crude which it said will 'remain at high levels in 2022 but will start to decline in the second half of the year as supply constraints ease'. The 2022 average is projected to rise to US$74 before falling to US$65 in 2023, the World Bank said.

AFP

Moody's affirms ratings of eight Omani companies

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Moody's Investors Service has affirmed the ratings of eight government-related issuers (GRIs) domiciled in Oman. At the same time, Moody's has also revised its rating outlooks on these eight government-related companies to 'stable' from 'negative'.

The rating action, Moody's said, is a direct consequence of that on the government of Oman where the Ba3 government bond rating was affirmed and the outlook was changed to stable from negative.

Moody's has affirmed the ratings of the following eight GRIs to Ba3 and revised their outlooks to stable from negative because of their close linkage to the government and high exposure to the domestic operating environment: Dhofar Power Co (DPC), Majan Electricity Co (MJEC), Mazoon Electricity Co (MZEC), Muscat Electricity Distribution Co (MEDC), Oman Electricity Transmission Co (OETC), Oman Power and Water Procurement Co (OPWP), Rural Areas Electricity Co (Tanweer), and Oman Telecommunications (Omantel).

Moody's has revised its rating outlooks on eight government-related issuers to 'stable' from 'negative' because of their close linkage to the government

In a statement, Moody's said the decision to change the outlooks to stable from negative reflects the strong credit links between these companies and the sultanate's government.

The ratings of DPC, MJEC, MZEC, MEDC, OETC, OPWP and Tanweer are constrained by the sovereign rating because of their significant exposure to the Omani government in the form of subsidies (OETC and OPWP being indirectly exposed), the ratings agency said.

It further said the liquidity of DPC, MJEC, MZEC, MEDC, OPWP and Tanweer remains weak because of their continued reliance on short-term funding.

'While delays in the payment of subsidies have reduced, the liquidity of DPC, MJEC, MZEC, MEDC, OPWP and Tanweer continues to be negatively affected by the use of short-term working capital facilities to cover shortfalls. MJEC, MZEC and OETC will also continue to face high capital spending until at least 2023 with associated funding requirements and increases in leverage,' Moody's said.

As per Moody's statement, the ratings of DPC, MJEC, MZEC, MEDC, OETC, OPWP and Tanweer remain supported by (1) the stable and transparent regulatory frameworks for the electricity and water sectors and the independence of the regulator; (2) the cost-recovery mechanisms of the regulatory frameworks; (3) the low business risk profile of their activities; and (4) their respective monopoly positions in Oman.

On the other hand, the rating of Omantel, Moody's said, is constrained by the rating of the Omani government because the company generates most of its cash flows in the sultanate.

It said the rating of Omantel remains supported by the company's (1) dominant market position in the Omani market; (2) resilient operating performance, supported by the necessity-like consumer spending on telecommunications services; (3) high Ebitda margin of above 50 per cent; and (4) good liquidity.

Moody's expects Omantel's leverage and cash flow metrics to improve in 2021 to 2.5x and 22 per cent from 3.0x and 17.7 per cent in 2020, respectively.

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories:
Situations Wanted/Accommodation Wanted or Available/Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/Matrimonial Alliances
(Word limit is 35)
Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apex-media.co.om or call 99104346

Saudi Arabia targets zero carbon emissions by 2060

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Top crude exporter Saudi Arabia will aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2060, its de facto ruler said on Saturday, days before the COP26 global climate summit.

The kingdom said it would also join a global effort to cut methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030.

The UN says more than 130 countries have set or are considering a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, an objective it says is 'imperative' to safeguard a livable climate.

"I announce today Saudi Arabia's target to reach net zero emissions by 2060," Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told the Saudi Green Initiative forum.

"I am pleased to launch initiatives in the energy sector that will reduce carbon emissions by 278mn tonnes annually by 2030, thus voluntarily more than doubling the target announced," said Prince Mohammed.

"We also announce the kingdom's accession to the Global Methane Pledge."

A statement said Saudi Arabia would 'contribute to cutting global methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030, as part of its commitment to deliver a cleaner, greener future'.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (centre) delivers a speech during the opening ceremony of the Saudi Green Initiative forum on Saturday in the Saudi capital Riyadh (AFP)

The 2060 target would 'enable us to have a smooth and viable transition, without risking economic or social impacts', Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said.

COP26 president Alok Sharma welcomed the news. 'I hope this landmark announcement... will galvanise ambition from others ahead of #COP26,' Sharma tweeted.

Saudi Arabia is estimated to emit about 600mn tonnes of CO_2 per year - more than France and slightly less than Germany.

The year 2050 has become a focus for carbon neutrality, defined as achieving a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

Held between October 31 and November 12, the COP26 gathering is seen as a crucial step in setting worldwide emission targets to slow global warming.

In March, Saudi Arabia unveiled a campaign to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions, including a plan to plant billions of trees in the coming decades.

The OPEC kingpin aims to reduce emissions by generating half of its energy from renewables by 2030, Prince Mohammed said at the time.

The Crown Prince on Saturday announced the first phase would include planting more than 450mn trees and the rehabilitation of 8mn hectares of degraded land.

Saudi Arabia also declared it would designate new 'protected areas'. The move brings 'the total protected areas in the kingdom to more than 30 per cent of its total area', Prince Mohammed said.

AFP

US Fed chief says 'premature' to up rates despite inflation risk

Washington, US - Despite a risk that high inflation in the United States could persist, it would be 'premature' to raise borrowing rates and risk slowing the economic recovery, Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell said.

The US central bank chief acknowledged that supply constraints and shortages that have caused prices to rise sharply are 'likely to last longer than previously expected, likely well into next year'.

But at the Fed 'we need to be patient', Powell said during a panel discussion organised by South Africa's central bank.

The Fed is 'on track' to begin to pull back on its massive monthly bond purchases, which would be completed by mid-2022, he said.

But 'it would be premature to actually tighten policy by raising rates now with the effect and intent of slowing job growth'.

Policymakers are expected to announce the slowdown of bond buying at the central bank's policy meeting early next month, but the benchmark lending rate is forecast to remain at zero at least until late next year.

AFP

Crisis-hit Lebanon hikes fuel prices

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanon raised fuel prices on Wednesday in a de facto end to state subsidies, pushing the cost of filling a vehicle's tank to more than the monthly minimum wage in the poverty-stricken nation.

Subsidies were gradually phased out over the past few months to shore up diminishing foreign currency reserves at the central bank, which could no longer fund fuel imports.

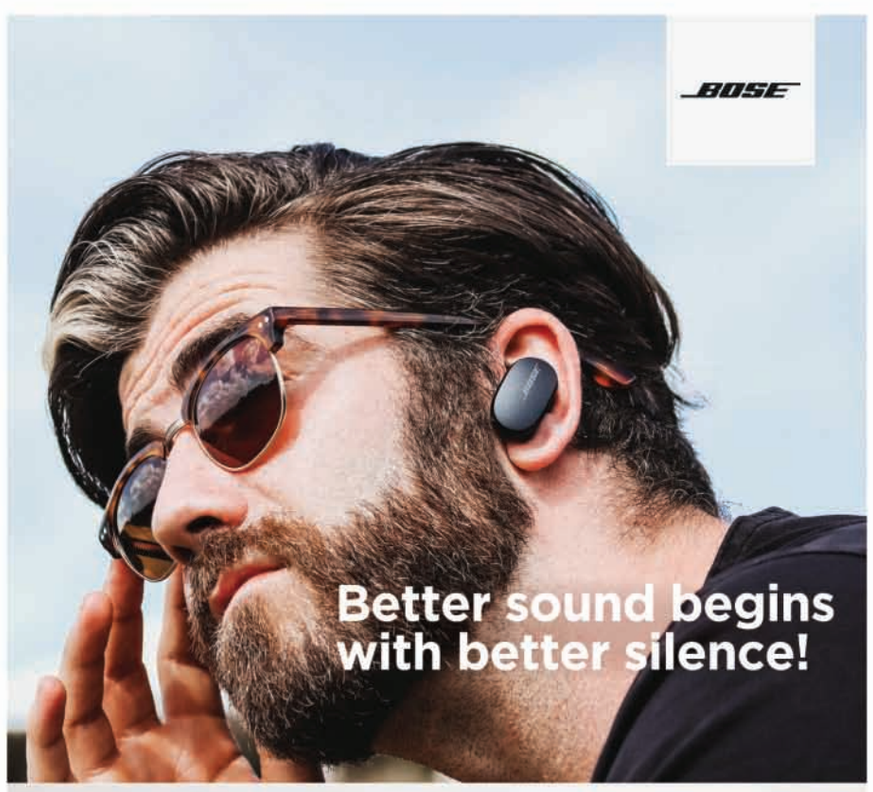
A revised price list published by the Energy Ministry set the cost of 20 litres of 95-octane petrol at 302,700 Lebanese pounds, or around US$15 at the black market rate.

This is around five times the price of 61,100 pounds set at the end of June, adding to the economic pain in a country where power cuts are common and basic goods including medicine have become scarce.

The Energy Ministry on Wednesday also raised the price of diesel and cooking gas.

To fill a medium-sized vehicle's tank, Lebanese would now have to pay more than the monthly minimum wage of 675,000 pounds, at a time when nearly 80 per cent of the population is estimated to live below the poverty line.

AFP



Engineered with the world's most effective noise cancelling and high-fidelity audio, you'll love what you hear with Bose QuietComfort® Earbuds, no matter how loud or soft you play it. Check it out now!

QuietComfort® Earbuds

OHI ELECTRONICS

Bose Showroom at Qurum City Centre
Tel: 24470497
Also available at Lulu (Bowsher, Markaz Al Bahja, Mall of Muscat & Salalah), Emax, Sharaf DG, Virgin & MI Stores.

ELECTRONIC TENDER (S)

Majan Electricity Co. (SAOC) Announces the Following E-Tender

Tender NO	Description	Grade	Last date for buying	Submission date	Tender price (including 5% VAT) R.O.
15/2021 Re-Tender	Extension Of Power Supply To The Various Rop Plots In Hadaf, Madam (Rowdha) Buraimi Governorate	C	4/11/2021	16/11/2021	26 /=
116/2021	Testing, Reporting The Health Index And Technical Study With Recommendation For Re Using The Existing 11kv Switchgear In Old Tareef Pss And Al Hojrah Pss (North Batinah Governorate)	B	28/10/2021	9/11/2021	26 /=
117/2021	Upgrade Of Existing Ghuraifah Rimary Substation From 2x20mva To 3x20mva (Shinas-North Al-Batinh Governorate)	A	28/10/2021	16/11/2021	693 /=
118/2021	Construction Of 33kv Feeder To Al-Khabourah Rop Primary Substtion (North Al-Batinah Governorate)	B	28/10/2021	9/11/2021	272 /=
119/2021	Construction Of 2x6mva Al-Khabourah Rop Primary Substation (North Al-Batinah Governorate)	B	28/10/2021	9/11/2021	220 /=
120/2021	Consultancy Services for Providing Supervision of 33 kV Projects	Specialized	31/10/2021	23/11/2021	95 /=
121/2021	Certification Services for Integrated Management System on ISO9001:2015 and ISO14001:2015 and ISO45001:2018	Specialized	11/11/2021	30/11/2021	26 /=
122/2021	Conversion Work Of Ht & Lt Oh Line To Ug Cable At Various Location In Sohar Area Of North Batina Governorate	C	11/11/2021	30/11/2021	37 /=
123/2021	11 Kv Interlink Work In Various Location In Sohar Area Of North Batina Governorate	C	11/11/2021	30/11/2021	26 /=
124/2021	Provision Of Electricity And Water Meters Reading And Operations Of Data Collection ,Meters Replacements Disconnection Reconnection Services Related To Electricity Accounts In Mjec Concession Area	Specialized	11/11/2021	30/11/2021	158 /=

Interested Firm having relevant experience in the similar nature of services and registered with Tender Board and Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) for electrical work, may register and obtain the tender documents from E-Tendering Site **https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om** against online payment of non-refundable fees mentioned above for each tender.

The Tenderers should enclose a copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any registerd bank in the Sultanate of Oman for a value of (1%) of the submitted bid value valid for a period of (90) days from the date of Sujbmission, and addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee .The original Bid Bond to be delivered in sealed envelope, and the tender number and title of project only are to be mentioned on the envelopes. The place of submission the original bond would be at **MJEC Contracts & tenders office at MJEC building in AL Sawari Center in Sohar or at MJEC Contracts & tenders office at Muscat in Al Mubailah- opposite to the industrial Area beside to Bank Suhar ,before 10 A.M.** according to the assigned date of submission of the tender. Any Submission of original tender bond after the time and date mentioned in the advertisement will not be accepted and tenderer offer will be rejected.

The Completed signed and sealed commercial and technical offer with all tender documents should be submitted and uploaded online into the above mentioned E-Tendering website .The Hard copies of the tender document are not accepted.

For more information please contact Tel no.:24051501- 26944266
For any technical assistance please contact
Helpdesk: +968-24402200.
E-mail: etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products & and have a High level percentage of Omanization.

The Company is not bound to consent the lowest Bid or any other Tenders.
"WITH ELECTRICITY WE PROGRESS PLEASE AVOID EXTRAVAGANCE IN CONSUMPTION"

شركة كهرباء مجان (ش.م.ع.م)
Majan Electricity Company (SAOC)
إحدى شركات مجموعة نماء
Member of Nama Group

Majan Electricity Company S.A.O.C
P.O Box 286, Sohar
PC 311, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 2694 4444 | Fax: +968 2694 4222
Information@majanco.nama.om | **www.majanco.co.om**

Bank Muscat rewards 25 Zeinah customers

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, rewarded 25 Zeinah customers with RO1,000 each at a special Omani Women's Day draw at the Grand Ballroom of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat.

Held in line with the bank's commitment to appreciating the role of Omani women in the progress and development of the sultanate and to encourage a savings culture, the draw gave away a total of RO25,000 to Zeinah customers. It was part of a special Women's Day event attended by Ilham Murtadha al Hamaid, deputy general manager - Large Corporates, Bank Muscat, and well known social entrepreneur and life coach, Hala Kazim, a press release said.

Speaking on the occasion, Hamaid said, "Bank Muscat is particularly proud of the role that Omani women play in various sectors. By achieving their full potential, Omani women are contributing greatly to economic progress and development of the Sultanate. Women now form more than 48% of the over 3,800 employees at the bank, and work across all departments. They have demonstrated their capabilities within the bank's senior management and are role models at the workplace."

Hamaid added, "Omani women are ambitious and focused on their careers even as they balance their work and family life very well. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation and thanks to each and every Omani woman who is working for the advancement of our beloved country."

Addressing the gathering, Hala Kazim congratulated Omani women on the occasion of the Omani Women's Day. She elaborated on the concepts of investing in oneself, setting future goals and being financially secure. This can help individuals attain their true potential in life. Hala, who works to inspire women to become more effective and positive role models for themselves, their families, their community and the world at large, shared a number of motivational examples and success stories with the audience. She congratulated the Zeinah customers for their savings habit, which is the starting point for all investments.

Omani Women's Day celebrates the important role that Omani women play in nation-building. All Zeinah customers who maintained an average monthly balance of RO1,000 were entered into the special draw to reward their good savings habit. Zeinah also holds a monthly draw that rewards 10 women customers with RO1,000 each every month as part of the Al Mazyona 2021 prize draw scheme. Customers who maintain a minimum balance of RO100 will be automatically entered into the monthly Zeinah draw.

The Zeinah suite of products and services is based on the premise that women prefer to use special banking services that enhance their privacy. Zeinah ensures privacy and a relaxed atmosphere for women customers at Bank Muscat branches. The unique products for women include Zeinah Debit card, tailored merchant discounts and a health and beauty finance scheme.

Oman Post ties with Asyad Express for US shipments

Oman Post and ASYAD Express' 'Matjar+' e-Commerce service, that allows customers in Oman to make purchases in the United States, now delivers shipments to the customers' doorstep across the sultanate.

Starting October 22, customers using the Matjar+ service can pre-pay all their shipping fees and taxes in one simple online payment at the time of order. To enhance the overall customer experience a number of new enhancements have been introduced, including on-line tracking, dedicated Matjar+ customer support. All packages will be delivered to the customer's door from the US within seven to nine business days, a press release said.

Customers can register with Matjar+ for free on-line, where they will receive a unique 'virtual' postal address in the US enabling them to shop online at all their favourite stores, enjoying discounts and promotions. All Matjar+ items will be directly delivered to their selected addresses in Oman.

Matjar+ customers can save on shipping costs by consolidating their packages at their 'virtual' postal address for up to 30 days at no extra charge. This feature avoids customers incurring unnecessary delivery costs when making multiple orders at separate times.

Ooredoo 'Most Socially Responsible Telecom Company' in Oman

Ooredoo was recently named Most Socially Responsible Telecom Company – Oman, at the 2021 International Finance Awards.

It's a welcome acknowledgement of Ooredoo's ongoing commitment to support sustainable development across the country by promoting women's economic empowerment, education, entrepreneurship, and helping those in need. In the last year and a half, it has doubled its efforts, helping the community mitigate the impact of COVID-19 with a series of donations, an SMS donation service, as well as moving some of its development programmes online, a press release said.

As a mainstay of Ooredoo's promise to enrich people's lives, its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme – Goodwill - has directly benefited thousands of individuals and families over more than 16 years. Among its award-winning initiatives are the sultanate's first ever women's incubator programme, Springboard and Spring Forward, which aims to train men and women in digital entrepreneurship and leadership, and its education programme - Fursa.

Earlier this year, Ooredoo also earned a Gold Stevie Award for its project building sensory rooms for social welfare centres across Oman. By placing itself at the heart of the community, the company aims to support the advancement of the Omani people, while inspiring others to do the same.

Expo 2020 committee reviews event progress, participation

The Steering Committee of the College of Commissioner Generals of Expo 2020 Dubai has held its first event-time meeting, where it applauded the UAE leadership and Expo organisers for the strong delivery and exceptional start to Expo 2020 Dubai.

The meeting of the committee, which represents Expo's 192 participating nations, was attended by Reem al Hashimy, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation and Director General, Expo 2020 Dubai and Dimitri Kerkentzes, Secretary General of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), the governing body of World Expos, a press release said.

Hashimy said, "We are already witnessing the potential for positive change that comes with gathering 192 nations in one place, in pursuit of partnership, impact and legacy. This is global cooperation to inspire life: an opportunity to learn more about one another, and ourselves, so that we might build a brighter tomorrow."

Kerkentzes added, "The UAE, Expo 2020 Dubai and all International participants are together delivering an exceptional experience for visitors from all over the world. I am delighted by the management of the event."

CBSE chairman inaugurates AVENIR 2021

Avenir 2021, a global career guidance event hosted virtually by Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir, under the aegis of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools Oman, was held on October 20.

The event was graced by the presence of Manoj Ahuja IAS, Chairman, CBSE, special guest Saurav Ganguly President-BCCI, members of the Ministry of Education, Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman, Alkesh Joshi, Hon. president of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir School Management Committee, members of the BoD, members of all School Management Committees, besides others.

Ahuja addressed the gathering, motivating the students to make the best use of the Avenir platform for relevant career-oriented information and hone their competencies for a bright and successful future.

Dr Manickam expressed his heartfelt appreciation to the host school for organising the much-sought after global career guidance event and lauded the efforts of the ISWK team for having conceptualised and planned the comprehensive educational programme.

"Avenir will take our students through the different domains of professions and businesses around the technology-driven world marked by rapid advances in automation and artificial intelligence. True to its name Avenir, which means 'the future pathway', this mega initiative of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, will equip our students with the much needed 21st century skills that will prepare them to face the future challenges with confidence" Dr Manickam said.

Joshi mentioned that the virtual platform facilitated the merging of several renowned motivational speakers and university representatives from across the globe who would disseminate vital career-oriented information that would greatly benefit the student community. He highlighted the importance of technological advancements and its role in preparing the future workforce foreknew and relevant professions.

Hoo Global debuts at Future Blockchain Summit

This year's Future Blockchain Summit officially kicked off on October 17 at the Dubai World Trade Center headlined by world-renowned tech heavyweights Amazon, Microsoft, IBM, Google, with blockchain innovation company Hoo Global making its maiden appearance to showcase a technology feast for global audiences.

The annual summit, which is composed of exhibitions, conferences, seminars, investor programs, hackathons, and other components, brings together the world's top developers, transformative innovators, the most disruptive innovation companies, and powerful investors, a press release said.

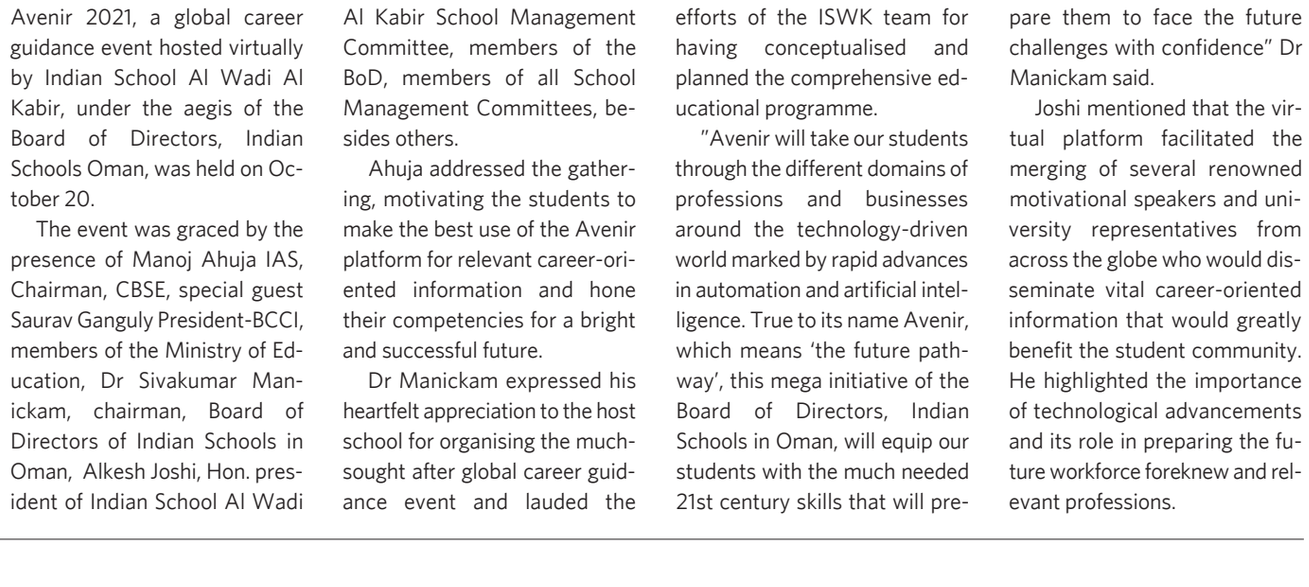
During his 'Blockchain Industry Innovation and Contemporary Finance' presentation, Dr Farzam, executive chairman of Hoo Global, illustrated crucial opportunities and challenges that continue to face blockchain technology for contemporary finance.

"The first change of blockchain technology to contemporary finance is the change of financial instruments. Blockchain is closely integrated with traditional finance, NFT, virtual space, and other scenarios, and there will be more innovations in the future." Dr Farzam said.

Since 2018, blockchain technology and crypto currency have become innovative technologies and industries that Dubai focuses on. The government's macro-level support for the blockchain industry as well as the advantageous conditions such as a safe and stable social environment, a developed financial industry, and the gathering of high-tech talents have made Dubai a landing point for many blockchain companies to conduct business globally.

The summit is also an innovative move by Dubai to further promote industry development and focus on the industry's breaking point. Due to the regulatory environment that provides blockchain companies the much-needed space to explore applications, as well as Dubai's strategic location and talent pool, Hoo Global has now established a global operation center in Dubai, using it as an important node to radiate the global market.

Hoo Global is actively working with local governments and enterprises to develop blockchain applications at the level of empowering traditional business and social governance, and relying on Hoo Global's ecological facilities, industry resources, technology accumulation, etc.



OCCI, BCCI discuss economic cooperation

Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, has affirmed the depth and strength of the Bahraini-Omani economic, trade, investment and social relations.

Saleh was speaking during his visit to the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), leading an Omani economic delegation, along with the Bahraini Ambassador to Oman, Dr Jumaa al Kaabi, to be informed about the kingdom's experience in the fields of business incubators, and the facilities provided for start-ups, entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises.

The OCCI chairman stressed the importance of holding bilateral meetings in consolidating joint economic and investment action across various fields, especially regarding the provision of the GCC market with the necessary food commodities and agricultural products.

He indicated that the two countries are seeking to create a strategic partnership through increasing the volume of trade exchange, by investing in the distinctive opportunities in the Omani market related to food security in cooperation with Bahrain's BCCI. He noted, that in Oman, the investment atmosphere and laws grant foreign investors 100% ownership of the companies, in addition to Oman's strategic location as a commercial centre.

He highlighted the importance of exchanging delegations and visits at the commercial and industrial levels between the two brotherly countries, strengthening cooperation between OCCI and BCCI and enhancing the role of SMEs and entrepreneurship to exchange experiences in this field, stressing the importance of facilitating the export and import of goods and services between the two parties and the establishment of joint projects to serve the two countries' economies.

Dr Kaabi stressed the importance of boosting the Bahraini-Omani economic relations, through taking steps aimed at developing joint cooperation between business owners, institutions and companies at the level of SMEs and entrepreneurship, as well as opening up new horizons for the trade, business and investment sectors, and encouraging the establishment of joint companies and projects between the business sectors in the two countries.

He added that the Bahraini-Omani Joint Committee had identified a number of areas of economic cooperation that can be discussed through the exchange of experiences and joint visits, in order to serve bilateral trade cooperation, including promising sectors for investment, such as food security and mining, as well as the financial and banking sector.

Acting BCCI CEO, Dr Abdulla al Sada, presented an overview of the role played by the official authorities in the Kingdom in supporting entrepreneurship and start-ups through services provided via business incubators and accelerators for a specific incubation period, such as joint work spaces, guidance and counseling, marketing, commercial and financial planning and public relations.

He also indicated that business incubators and accelerators offer comprehensive training programmes in the administrative, marketing, financial and economic aspects, in addition to providing advice and guidance related to operations and financial planning and the best ways to obtain financing.

Genome sequencing to monitor COVID-19 variants

In order to control a disease like COVID-19, scientist need to better understand the evolution of the virus, as well as how it mutates into different strains.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, genome sequencing is vital in detecting, identifying, and understanding the evolution and genomic diversity of COVID-19.

Genomic surveillance plays a key role in tracking transmission, developing vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics, as well as monitoring the mutation of the virus.

To date, 14 out of 22 countries in WHO's region for the Eastern Mediterranean use genome sequencing to detect and monitor variants of concern circulating locally. The other eight countries are receiving support from WHO to sequence abroad.

"As COVID-19 continues to evolve, the regional response in the area of genome sequencing plays a key role on our efforts to better understand the virus. The progress made by countries since the start of the pandemic with the use of genome sequencing is significant but can still be strengthened and further expanded." said Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. "Not only will this help us learn more about the current virus and known strains, but also help us be better prepared to prevent and control future strains."

WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is working closely with governments to boost genomic surveillance capacity to track and monitor the virus's behaviour, as well as the evolving strains.

In addition, WHO provides constant support to eight countries to continue sequencing abroad while working with concerned authorities to enhance local capacities to conduct local sequencing.

However, genome sequencing still faces several challenges in the region. These include lack of trained health workforce, limited resources to sustain sequencing, availability of reagents and other essential supplies, in addition to logistical difficulties in shipping specimens to international or regional reference laboratories.

"As more countries implement sequencing programs, there will be further opportunities to better understand the virus, how it develops and most importantly how it came into our lives," Dr Mandhari added.

WHO emphasises that the rapid sharing of virus genome sequence data, together with the relevant epidemiological and clinical metadata, maximises the impact of genomic sequencing in the public health response. WHO encourages all countries to share data generated by genome sequencing with the global community as rapidly as possible, to ensure access to critical information for improving public health.

Petroplan appoints new global CEO

Specialist energy talent acquisition group, Petroplan, has appointed Christopher Honeyman Brown as Chief Executive Officer to lead the group's global operations.

A widely respected professional within the accounting, law and education space, Christopher's appointment signals a new era for Petroplan as the Group begins to move at pace, accelerating, adapting, and sharpening their service offering, a press release said.

Prior to becoming CEO, Christopher was appointed as non-executive Director of Petroplan Holdings Limited in 2018. His proven leadership capability in large and complex organisations – having undertaken four major change programmes during his career – ideally positions him to deliver Petroplan's vision for growth.

"I am delighted to take on the role of CEO during what is expected to be an exciting time for the business. We're on the cusp of a major transformation to provide a best-in-class service to our candidates, clients, and stakeholders.

"Too often the recruitment industry can be impersonal, but the best solutions are where we meet our clients needs and are able to inspire and encourage candidates. At Petroplan, we are building a community, a family, a place where candidates can go for advice and opportunities. We nurture our candidates and relationships for life, not just to fill a vacancy," he said.

Kaspersky experts caution on cyber attacks in Mideast

Kaspersky researchers issued 49 threat intelligence reports as a result of investigations associated with cyber-attacks on the United Arab Emirates, which is the most number of reports coming out of all the Middle Eastern countries.

The second highest is Saudi Arabia with 39 reports followed by Egypt with 30 reports. Kuwait and Oman followed suit with 21 reports each, while Jordan had 20 reports. Other investigative reports issued were from Iraq, Qatar and Bahrain, which had below 20 reports from each country, a press release said.

The Middle East region has always been a hotbed of such targeted attacks due to geopolitical factors. The highest number of APT attacks investigated by Kaspersky primarily targeted governmental agencies: Government institutions where the most targeted followed by Diplomatic institutions, Education and Telecommunication institutions. Other targeted sectors on the list include Financial institutions, IT Companies, Healthcare, Law firms, Military and Defence. Some of the notorious APT groups investigated are the Oilrig, WIRTE, Lazarus and Sofacy.

Amin Hasbini, Head of Global Research and Analysis team for Middle East, Turkey and Africa at Kaspersky said, "Our cyber security experts have always been at the forefront of detecting and reporting the latest APT threats. Our reports are the product of their visibility into the cyber security landscape and promptly identify what poses a threat. We use these insights to of course alert the concerned organisations on time and provide them with the protection as well as intelligence needed against both known and unknown threats. As companies move towards digitisation especially due to the pandemic, it is more important now than ever before to know about the threats that are constantly evolving."

Advanced Persistent Threats (APT) attacks as the names suggest are ongoing threats that are active for years on end. Evaluating these attacks allows cyber security teams to make connections and try to measure the motivation behind why these attacks took place. It also helps teams to calculate what the attacker's next moves could be and accordingly take the necessary steps to protect themselves against future incidents. Kaspersky works with the legal authorities and provides them with the intelligence needed to track and prosecute the groups behind such attacks.

Kaspersky's Global Research and Analysis Team creates detailed reports for each APT investigation and makes them available on Kaspersky's Threat Intelligence Portal. These reports provide in-depth insight into the activities of APTs targeting the region.

Far East flavours return to Al Baleed Resort

'Cruise the cuisines of the Mekong River and rediscover the flavours of Asia at Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara this October.'

Anantara invites patrons to join the grand reopening of Mekong restaurant on October 29. and enjoy the exquisitely blended tastes of Thailand, China, Vietnam, and beyond, at the Far East themed celebration launch.

"Our expert chefs will guide you through the subtle spices and aromas of this vast and unrivalled culinary region. Allow us to bring the famous hospitality of South East Asia to your table in our luxury Omani resort. Step into a place where tradition and innovation combine seamlessly to provide an unforgettable dining experience," the resort stated.

A wide selection of authentic dishes from handmade dim sum to Thai hotpot will be on offer throughout the evening. Live grill stations and fresh sushi will whet the appetite for a range of a la carte dishes showcasing the eclectic and dynamic fare of the Far East.

"We are delighted to be welcoming guests back to our signature Asian restaurant this month. We recognise it has been a long wait but the opportunity to revitalise our menu and reintroduce our loyal visitors to the amazing dishes from the countries of the Mekong has us filled with anticipation. We can't wait to see our friends again, old and new," commented Andrea Orrú, General Manager, Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara.

US, Europeans renew call for Iran diplomacy

Paris, France - The United States and three European powers agreed on Friday in consultations in Paris on the need for Iran to return quickly to talks amid growing alarm over a delay.

Rob Malley, the US envoy on Iran, spoke with his counterparts from Britain, France and Germany on how diplomacy 'continues to provide the most effective pathway' on Iran, State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

"We are united in the belief that negotiations should resume in Vienna as soon as possible and that they should resume precisely where they left off after the sixth round," Price told reporters in Washington.

The 2015 agreement between Iran and world powers to find a long-term solution to the now two-decade-old crisis over its controversial nuclear programme has been moribund since former US president Donald Trump walked out of the deal in May 2018.

His successor Joe Biden has said he is ready to re-enter the agreement, so long as Iran meets key preconditions including full compliance with the deal whose terms it has repeatedly violated by ramping up nuclear activities since Trump walked out.

This photo shared by the Iranian Army press office on Thursday shows military personnel checking air defence missiles during a military exercise at an undisclosed location in Iran (AFP)

But the Vienna-based talks through intermediaries made little headway, before being interrupted by the election of hardliner Ebrahim Raisi as Iran's president and suspended for the last four months.

Malley's trip to Paris comes after he visited the Gulf for talks with allies Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates which are all deeply concerned by Iran's nuclear programme.

The French Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the talks were coming at a 'critical time' when France and other world powers were still prepared to return to the Vienna talks on bringing the US back into the deal.

'In the meantime, it is urgent and essential that Iran ends violations of unprecedented gravity" of the nuclear accord,' the ministry said, urging Iran to also resume full cooperation with the UN atomic agency 'without delay'.

Western powers, Israel and pro-Washington Arabian peninsula states fear that Iran intends to develop an atomic bomb. Tehran denies this, insisting it only seeks to produce energy for its population.

UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi expressed concern on Tuesday that he was still waiting for a 'high-level' discussion with Iranian officials, after negotiating last month a new compromise on monitoring Iran's nuclear programme to help restart the talks in Vienna.

> *We are united in the belief that negotiations should resume in Vienna as soon as possible and that they should resume precisely where they left off after the sixth round*
>
> **NED PRICE**

Malley also met in Paris with Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jongkun of South Korea, which is locked in a dispute with Iran over billions of dollars frozen to comply with US sanctions.

Price said that Malley and Choi discussed the 'enforcement of the sanctions regime that continues to be in place and will continue to be in place on Iran unless and until there is a negotiated return to compliance'.

AFP

Israeli security forces deploy as Arab Israelis rally to denounce crime and violence targeting their community, in the mostly Arab city of Umm al-Fahm in northern Israel on Friday (AFP)

Israel outlaws leading Palestinian civil groups

Jerusalem - Israel designated six leading Palestinian civil society groups as outlawed organisations on Friday in a move swiftly condemned by the Palestinian Authority and international human rights groups.

The Jewish state said its move was due to the groups' alleged financing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), after it earlier this year informed European donors of their alleged financial misconduct.

The Israeli Defence Ministry accused the six groups of working covertly with the PFLP, a leftist group which pioneered plane hijackings in the 1970s to highlight the Palestinian cause and is blacklisted by several Western governments.

According to the ministry, the six groups 'constitute a network of organisations active undercover on the international front on behalf of the PFLP to support its activity and further its goals'.

The ministry named the groups as the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC), Addameer, Bisan Center for Research and Development, Al-Haq, Defence for Children International - Palestine (DCI-P) and the Union Of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC).

A ministry statement said that while the groups functioned as civil society organisations, they were in fact 'controlled by the senior leaders of the PFLP' and employed many of its members, 'including activists who participated in terror activity'.

The groups used the humanitarian funding they obtained from European governments and other sources, some of it fraudulently, 'as a central source for the financing of the PFLP's activity', the ministry alleged.

Defence Minister Benny Gantz called on governments and organisations around the world 'to refrain from contact with organisations and groups that feed the flames of terror'.

> *[The ministry] unequivocally condemns and rejects Israel's unhinged assault on Palestinian civil society and human rights defenders*
>
> **PALESTINIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY**

'Political decision'

The Israeli move was met with outrage from the Palestinian government and human rights groups.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry 'unequivocally condemns and rejects Israel's unhinged assault on Palestinian civil society and human rights defenders', it said in a statement.

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Palestinian territories said it was 'alarmed' by the move, accusing Israel of 'a long stigmatising campaign against these and other organisations' that damaged 'their ability to deliver on their crucial work'.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said the US would 'be engaging our Israeli partners for more information regarding the basis for these designations'.

"The Israeli government did not give us advance warning" that the groups would be designated, he said. "We believe respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and a strong civil society are critically important to responsible and responsive governance," Price said.

Shawaan Jabareen, who heads one of the outlawed groups, Al-Haq, said the designation was a 'political decision' that had nothing to do with security matters but was aimed at 'stopping the work of these organisations'.

In a joint statement, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch noted that the Israeli designation 'effectively outlaws' the activities of the six groups, subjecting their members to raids and arrests by security forces.

'This appalling and unjust decision is an attack by the Israeli government on the international human rights movement,' Amnesty and HRW said.

AFP

UN cancels Tigray flights after Ethiopia government airstrike kills 11 civilians

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Ethiopia's latest aerial bombardment of Tigray's capital city on Friday injured 11 civilians and forced a UN flight bound for the famine-threatened region to turn around, humanitarian sources and doctors told AFP on Friday.

The incident prompted the UN to suspend its twice-weekly passenger flights to Tigray for humanitarian personnel, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said at a press conference.

The strike, the fifth on the city since Monday according to the government, coincided with ramped-up fighting farther south in Amhara region as Ethiopia's nearly year-long war rumbles on.

A spokeswoman for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Billene Seyoum, told AFP the air force was targeting a training centre used by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebel group that was 'also serving as a battle network hub by the terrorist organisation'.

This file photo shows a damaged tank on a road north of Mekele, the capital of Tigray, on February 26 this year (AFP)

Residents told AFP the strike hit a field, with one reporting it set alight dry grass collected for livestock.

One civilian injured in an earlier strike who was being treated at Tigray's flagship Ayder Referral Hospital succumbed to their injuries on Friday, said research director Dr Hayelom Kebede.

Abiy's government has been locked in a war against the TPLF since last November, though Tigray itself has seen little combat since late June, when the rebels seized control of much of Ethiopia's northernmost region and the military largely withdrew.

On Monday Ethiopia's air force launched two strikes in Tigray's capital Mekele that the UN said killed three children and wounded several other people.

And on Wednesday it bombed TPLF weapons caches in Mekele and the town of Agbe, about 80km to the west.

A hospital official told AFP that Wednesday's strike in Mekele injured at least eight people, including a pregnant woman.

A fourth strike in Mekele on Thursday did not result in any casualties, according to medics and the TPLF.

The UN flight that was forced back because of Friday's strike was carrying 11 humanitarian staff, said Gemma Connell, head of the UN's humanitarian coordination office for East Africa. "The flight was forced to turn back in midair, because of the events on the ground," Connell said.

AFP

Egyptian cinema on poverty ruffles feathers

El-Gouna, Egypt - Egyptian movie *Feathers* has drawn critical acclaim abroad but its unsettling depiction of poverty in the Arab world's most populous country has sparked heated debate at home.

Veteran actor Sherif Moneer, who walked out of a screening at Egypt's El Gouna Film Festival this month, has led a patriotic backlash against the film for 'presenting Egypt negatively'.

Egyptian film director Omar El-Zohairy (third from right) poses with his team and their award for the best Arab Narrative Film at the end of the El-Gouna Festival, in El-Gouna on Friday (AFP)

But others have praised director Omar el Zohairy for shedding light on a genuine social problem in a way that is both artistic and constructive.

On late Friday at the closing ceremony of the fifth edition of the El Gouna Film Festival, *Feathers* won the award for best Arab narrative film.

"For me any artistic work will always generate differing views," a beaming Zohairy told AFP on the red carpet, addressing the issue after claiming the prize. "The film is more important than any award," the director said.

"The film is strong because of its feeling, artistic authenticity... and human values."

Feathers tells the story of Om Mario (Mario's mother), a poor woman from the rural south who struggles to make ends meet after her husband is transformed into a chicken.

The absurdist narrative is performed by an amateur cast, mostly from the country's Coptic Christian minority.

It was the first Egyptian feature film to win a major award at the star-studded Cannes Film Festival this year.

The film's opponents, who also include pro-government lawmakers, accuse Zohairy of creating an exaggerated image of squalor that bears no relation to contemporary Egypt.

"The slums that we had and those that are disappearing now are better than the scenes represented in the film," Moneer, the actor, said in a television interview this week.

"The state has made great strides in eliminating slums and moving people to excellent alternative furnished housing... We are in a new republic now."

Loyalist MP Mahmud Badr took to Twitter to condemn the 'making of a movie depicting your country as if there was no development'.

Samir Sabry, a lawyer with a penchant for suing critics of President Abdel Fattah al Sisi, filed a lawsuit against the film's producers for 'insulting Egypt and Egyptians'.

But the rush of well-to-do Egyptians falling over each other to defend government policy and national pride over a movie about poverty was widely lampooned on social media.

Economic rights researcher Osama Diab said the film's depiction of poverty was by no means exaggerated, based on the government's own figures.

AFP

US seeks to contain Beijing anger after President Biden vows Taiwan defence

Washington, US - The United States on Friday sought to prevent an escalation with China, saying there was no change in Taiwan policy after President Joe Biden promised to defend the island from attack by Beijing.

Tensions have soared in recent months as Beijing steps up air incursions near Taiwan, a self-ruling democracy that the growing Asian power has vowed one day to take over, by force if necessary.

At a CNN televised forum in Baltimore on Thursday evening, Biden was asked whether the United States would come to Taiwan's defence if China invaded. "Yes," he responded. "We have a commitment to that."

Biden's statement appeared at odds with the long-held US policy of 'strategic ambiguity', where Washington helps build Taiwan's defences but does not explicitly promise to come to the island's help in the event of war.

The United States clarified on Friday that it was still guided by the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, in which Congress required the US to provide weaponry to 'enable Taiwan to maintain sufficient self-defence capabilities'.

"The President was not announcing any change in our policy and there is no change in our policy," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters, reiterating earlier White House comment.

"We will uphold our commitments under the act, we will continue to support Taiwan's self-defence and will continue to oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo," Price said.

Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, on a visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels, declined to discuss 'hypotheticals' but said the US 'will continue to help Taiwan with the sorts of capabilities that it needs to defend itself'.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki speaks on the US stand on Taiwan, at a press conference at the White House in Washington, DC on Friday (AFP)

New firmness?

Beijing said that Biden's comments risked 'damaging Sino-US relations', warning Washington on Friday to 'act and speak cautiously on the Taiwan issue'.

"China has no room for compromise on issues involving its core interests," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a press briefing.

The US should not underestimate China's 'staunch determination, firm will and strong ability' to defend against what it sees as threats to its sovereignty, Wang added.

Price declined to reply to Wang's remarks, saying, "We have been nothing but clear when it comes to where we stand."

Strategic ambiguity is designed to deter a Chinese invasion but also discourage Taiwan from formally declaring independence - something Beijing regards as a red line.

Biden's comments were welcomed by Taiwan, which has pushed to bolster international alliances to protect itself from Beijing.

"The US government has demonstrated, through actual actions, their rock solid support for Taiwan," Presidential Office spokesman Xavier Chang said in a statement.

> *We will continue to support Taiwan's self-defence and will continue to oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo*
>
> **NED PRICE**

Biden made similar remarks in August during an interview with ABC, insisting that the US would always defend key allies, naming Taiwan among them, despite the withdrawal from Afghanistan in the face of the victorious Taliban.

Biden's remarks were unlikely to come out of ignorance. The veteran politician himself was serving on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1979 and voted to approve the Taiwan Relations Act.

Richard McGregor, a senior fellow for East Asia at the Lowy Institute, said Biden may have wanted to show greater firmness. "I suspect Biden was not trying to announce any change. So it was either loose language, or perhaps a slightly harder tone, deliberately adopted because of the way Beijing has increased the tempo of its military harassment of Taiwan recently," he told AFP.

Warplane incursions

China has ramped up economic, diplomatic and military pressure on Taiwan since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, who views Taiwan as already sovereign and not part of 'one China'.

Military pressure has escalated in the last year with China sending waves of fighter jets and nuclear-capable bombers into Taiwan's air defence zone.

According to an AFP tally, more than 800 flights have been made into the zone since September last year - 170 just this month.

Defending Taiwan, one of Asia's most progressive democracies, has become a rare bipartisan issue in Washington's otherwise deeply polarised landscape. At Thursday's live town hall, Biden was also asked by an audience member whether the United States would be able to keep up with China's rapid military development.

Biden responded with "Yes."

"Don't worry about whether... they're going to be more powerful," he said. "China, Russia and the rest of the world knows we have the most powerful military in the history of the world."

Biden's comments come in the wake of a *Financial Times* report that China has tested a state-of-the-art hypersonic missile with nuclear capacity that flew around the planet before landing, albeit not on target.

AFP

Supporters of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan party take part in a protest march towards capital Islamabad from Lahore on Friday (AFP)

Deadly clashes at banned Pakistan party protests

Lahore, Pakistan - A radical Islamist party on Saturday said five of its supporters have died in clashes with authorities in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore, after two police officers were killed in the unrest.

On Friday more than 1,000 people from Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) gathered after prayers to demand the release of their detained leader, blocking roads and firing projectiles.

The protests continued on Saturday.

The TLP has previously been behind major anti-France protests that earlier this year led to the embassy issuing a warning for all French citizens to leave the country.

'Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan lost two people on Friday night and three more today to police firing,' the party tweeted on Saturday. Police in Lahore would not comment on the claim, but on Friday night said two of its officers had died.

"The clashes are still ongoing," Rana Arif, a spokesman for Lahore police, told AFP.

"This is a defensive operation by police against the mob... We are only doing shelling to control the crowd."

TLP leader Saad Rizvi was arrested in April when Pakistan's government outlawed the party in response to violent anti-France protests. Supporters have threatened to move in convoys towards the capital Islamabad, where police have closed off roads using shipping containers.

The party has vowed not to end the protests or enter talks with the government until their leader is released.

Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad, who had been in Dubai to watch Pakistan compete in the T20 cricket World Cup, returned home on Prime Minister Imran Khan's directive to monitor the situation.

The TLP has waged an anti-France campaign since President Emmanuel Macron defended the right of a satirical magazine to republish cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed - an act deemed blasphemous by many Muslims.

Six police officers were killed in April when the TLP staged days of rallies which paralysed roads.

Few issues are as galvanising in Pakistan as blasphemy, and even the slightest suggestion of an insult to Islam can supercharge protests, incite lynchings, and unite most of the country's warring political parties.

AFP

UN fears 'mass atrocity' in Myanmar as troops gather

United Nations - The UN said on Friday it feared an even greater human rights catastrophe in Myanmar amid reports of thousands of troops massing in the north of the Southeast Asian country, which has been in chaos since a February coup.

"We should all be prepared, as the people in this part of Myanmar are prepared, for even more mass atrocity crimes. I desperately hope that I am wrong," said UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tom Andrews.

More than 1,100 civilians have been killed in the country's bloody crackdown on dissent and more than 8,000 arrested since the coup, according to a local monitoring group.

Andrews, who was presenting the findings of an annual human rights report on Myanmar to the General Assembly, said that he had received information that tens of thousands of troops and heavy weapons were being moved into restive regions in the north and northwest.

Police patrol in a truck in downtown Yangon on Friday (AFP)

> *We should all be prepared, as the people in this part of Myanmar are prepared, for even more mass atrocity crimes. I desperately hope that I am wrong*
>
> **TOM ANDREWS**

The findings, he said, also indicated that the junta had engaged in probable crimes against humanity and war crimes. "These tactics are ominously reminiscent of those employed by the military before its genocidal attacks against the Rohingya in Rakhine State in 2016 and 2017," Andrews said.

About 740,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar's Rakhine state in 2017 after security forces launched a clampdown that the UN has said may amount to genocide.

Andrews urged countries to deny Myanmar's military junta the money, weapons and legitimacy it desired, citing a prisoner release earlier in the week as evidence that pressure was working.

On Monday, Myanmar's junta chief Min Aung Hlaing announced the release of more than 5,000 people jailed for protesting against the coup.

The move came just days after the Association of Southeast Asian Nations delivered a major snub to the military regime, exclude the junta head from an upcoming summit of the ten-country bloc.

Andrews said that junta-controlled forces had displaced a quarter million people. Many of those who had been detained were tortured, he said, including dozens who had died as a result.

Andrews added that he had received credible reports that children had also been tortured.

AFP

COP26 climate deal harder than Paris: Summit chief

London, UK - Success at the upcoming COP26 climate summit is 'definitely harder' than the 2015 Paris talks which resulted in a landmark accord, the British minister presiding over the gathering warned on Saturday.

The October 31-November 12 gathering in Glasgow is the biggest climate conference since the Paris summit and is seen as crucial in setting worldwide emission targets to slow global warming.

Alok Sharma, the British minister in charge of the talks, told *The Guardian* newspaper that getting nearly 200 countries to commit to the emission targets to limit global temperature rises to less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels was a daunting task.

Alok Sharma, president for the COP26 climate summit (AFP)

"What we're trying to do here in Glasgow is actually really tough," he said.

"It was brilliant what they did in Paris" but "a lot of the detailed rules were left for the future," he added.

"It's like, we've got to the end of the exam paper and the most difficult questions are left and you're running out of time."

"This is definitely harder than Paris on lots of levels."

The task will be made all the more difficult as Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin are not attending but sending delegations.

More than 120 world leaders and around 25,000 delegates are expected in Glasgow.

The Paris accord saw 197 nations agree to limit global heating to below 2°C but their 'nationally determined contributions' (NDCs) - national plans drawn up to implement the deal - have been deemed inadequate.

Strengthening those plans will be a key part of negotiations.

"What we're potentially saying to countries is that if your NDC isn't good enough, you're going to have to come back to the table," said Sharma.

He called on the world's biggest emitter China, whose fractious relationship with the West is another obstacle to agreement, to present its NDC.

"They signed up to the communique in July that we negotiated in Naples, that all the G20 would come up with enhanced NDCs before COP - I reminded them they needed to deliver on that," he said.

UN chief Antonio Guterres said on Thursday that the current climate situation was 'a one-way ticket for disaster' as he stressed the need to 'avoid a failure' at COP26.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Ukraine posts record deaths and cases for second day

Kiev, Ukraine - Ukraine's capital on Friday reimposed restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus as the ex-Soviet nation reported record COVID-19 deaths and cases for the second day in a row.

A government tally registered a record 23,785 new infections and 614 daily deaths in the ex-Soviet nation, which has an under-resourced public health service.

Authorities warned that the worst was yet to come.

"Dear friends, we are now just approaching this peak," said Oleksiy Danylov, the head of the national security and defence council.

"This is a very scary situation," he told reporters on Friday.

He blamed widespread anti-vaccine sentiment in the country for the spike in cases and deaths, adding that Ukraine could soon see more than 1,000 people die from the virus each day.

Kiev pupils will stay away from school for the next two weeks, with the first seven days coinciding with national school holidays.

Kindergartens are allowed to remain open if all their employees have been vaccinated. Kiev authorities may also announce the temporary closure of retail, sporting and entertainment venues.

A healthcare worker prepares to administer a dose of Russia's Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine to a patient at a vaccination centre in the GUM State Department store in Moscow on Thursday (AFP)

Authorities in the country of around 41mn people initially struggled to source vaccines and convince Ukrainians to get a jab. The vaccination campaign has also been hampered by the proliferation of fake vaccination certificates.

"Fake tests and COVID certificates take the lives of Ukrainians," Health Minister Viktor Lyashko told lawmakers earlier Friday.

"If you choose to die, to lose your loved ones by buying fake documents, this is your right, but wearing an oxygen mask in intensive care, patients admit that they have not been vaccinated."

Badly hit regions have imposed vaccine certificates for entry to public places including restaurants and cinemas, sparking a wave of people getting inoculated.

Officials on Friday said that 269,666 people had been vaccinated over the past 24 hours - the highest figure since the beginning of Ukraine's vaccination drive in February.

Four vaccines including AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Moderna are available in Ukraine, but only 16.5 per cent have been fully vaccinated. Ukraine has recorded more than 2.7mn cases and 63,000 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

Russia reports record deaths

Russia also on Saturday posted a record 1,075 COVID deaths in 24 hours as Europe's hardest hit country with dramatically low vaccination rates braces for nationwide curbs from next week, reports from Moscow said.

Despite multiple pleas from President Vladimir Putin and the availability of the home-grown Sputnik V vaccine, only 36 per cent of Russians are fully vaccinated.

According to fresh government figures, the country saw a record 37,678 new virus cases on Saturday.

This brings the official death toll to 229,528 - the highest on the continent - even as authorities are accused of vastly downplaying the effects of the pandemic.

Figures by statistics agency Rosstat paint a far darker picture, suggesting that more than 400,000 people had died from coronavirus by the end of August.

Moscow - the epicentre of Russia's outbreak - will shut non-essential services between October 28 and November 7.

Putin also ordered a nationwide paid week off starting October 30 to curb fast spreading infections.

AFP

A face mask is seen on the ground in front of the Reichstag building housing the lower house of parliament Bundestag in Berlin (AFP)

German infection rate hits highest level since May

Frankfurt, Germany - Germany's seven-day coronavirus incidence rate reached 100 infections per 100,000 people on Saturday for the first time since May, following a surge in cases in recent weeks.

The number hit 100 after rising from 68.7 just eight days ago, the Robert Koch health institute (RKI) said.

The milestone comes a day after the German Health Ministry warned that 'we are seeing an escalation of the situation'.

The upwards trend 'became visible in almost all age groups over the past week and it is to be expected that the increase in case numbers will pick up speed in the further course of autumn and winter', Health Ministry spokesman Oliver Ewald said.

Germany recorded 86 new COVID-19 deaths on Saturday, with the country's total toll rising to 95,077, official figures said.

There were also 15,145 new infections recorded over 24 hours, the figure having risen 31 per cent over the last eight days.

The Health Ministry said on Friday that the spike in cases had not yet led to an 'increased dynamic' in COVID-19 patients needing intensive care.

Germany's DIVI intensive care association however voiced alarm.

Senior DIVI expert Christian Karagiannidis wrote on Twitter that there was a 'very close correlation' between incidence rates and new COVID hospital admissions.

'The real fourth wave is beginning now and is gathering speed,' he tweeted.

AFP

Peru surpasses 200,000 coronavirus deaths: Health officials

Lima, Peru - Peru, which has the world's highest COVID-19 death rate per capita, has surpassed 200,000 deaths from the coronavirus, the health ministry said on Friday.

The ministry announced 25 new deaths over the previous 24 hours, taking the South American country over the symbolic threshold with 200.003 deaths since the pandemic started in March 2020.

The Andean country of 33mn has also recorded 2.2mn infections.

With 6,065 deaths per million population, Peru's COVID-19 mortality rate is the highest in the world, according to an AFP count based on official data.

The news comes at a time of falling daily cases and deaths attributed to the increase in vaccinations, although authorities remain worried about a potential new wave of infections due to the Delta variant that is now predominant in the country.

"We're maintaining a high level of control," Health Minister Hernando Cevallos said recently.

"It is probable that the first and second waves have generated immunity in part of the population, as has vaccination."

The fall in infections has allowed the government to relax some healthcare measures and reactivate parts of the economy.

The night curfew has been reduced to just two hours while restaurants are now allowed to operate at full capacity.

Peru's number of deaths is only surpassed in Latin America by Brazil and Mexico, although those countries' populations are almost seven and four times greater respectively.

Before the pandemic, Peru enjoyed one of the most dynamic economies in the region but in 2020 GDP fell by 11 per cent and more than 2.1mn people lost their jobs as Peru entered recession.

"We need to get vaccinated so there is no more sadness in homes and no more orphans," Mirtha Garcia Espinoza, a 39 year old mother of two widowed by the pandemic, said.

Peru's virus death rate has been falling since April when it reached 2,500 a week. Last week that was down to 169.

The government hopes to vaccinate 70 per cent of its population over 12 by the end of the year. More than 14.2mn people have so far received both vaccination doses, accounting for 51 per cent of those aged over 12.

AFP

A health professional assists a COVID-19 patient, at the Intensive Care Unit of the Virgen de Fatima contingency hospital, in Sullana, northern Peru last Tuesday (AFP)

Biden and Macron discuss 'stronger' European defence

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron discussed strengthening European defences in a telephone call on Friday, the White House said, as Washington seeks to mend ties after a bitter row over submarine contracts.

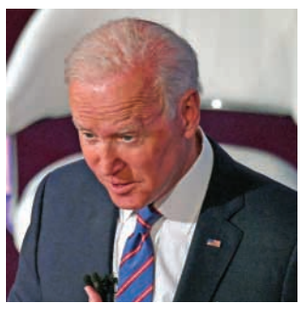
The two leaders 'discussed efforts to enable a stronger and more capable European defence while ensuring complementarity with NATO', the statement said.

Biden will meet Macron in Rome later this month, and the statement said he looked forward to the chance to 'take stock of the many areas of US-France cooperation, and reinforce our shared interests'.

A similar statement was issued by the French presidency.

Biden and Macron last spoke on September 22 for their first conversation since the furious spat over selling submarines to Australia severely strained relations.

Specifically, Australia agreed to acquire US nuclear sub technology and in doing so scrap a huge, already existing deal with France to buy conventional submarines. The new accord infuriated the French.



French President Emmanuel Macron (left) and US President Joe Biden

Macron recalled France's ambassador to Washington and Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian compared Biden's unilateral methods to ex-president Donald Trump's but 'without the tweets'.

VP Harris to visit Paris

Although Biden did not apologise for secretly negotiating to sell nuclear submarines to Australia, he did acknowledge that the issue 'would have benefited from open consultations among allies', according to a statement after the dispute erupted.

Following four years of tumultuous relations with Trump, the diplomatic fireworks dashed hopes of a complete reset under Biden, who took office in January aiming to rebuild frazzled ties with Europe. US officials have since sought to patch up ties, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken visiting Paris earlier this month and holding a one-to-one meeting with Macron.

In their September call, Macron secured what he saw as a significant commitment from Biden to respect French-led efforts to boost European defence and autonomy.

US Vice President Kamala Harris will also hold talks with Macron in Paris next month, the White House announced.

'They will discuss the importance of the transatlantic relationship to global peace and security,' it said, underlining partnership on challenges 'from COVID-19 and the climate crisis to issues affecting the Sahel and the Indo-Pacific'.

AFP

Rising tide of leaks inundates Facebook

San Francisco, US - Facebook held back from doing all it could to stop users from being radicalised and US election misinformation from flooding the social network, according to media reports on Friday.

An array of US news outlets cited documents from former Facebook worker Frances Haugen, adding to a series of critical revelations already published based on information she provided.

Articles in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and elsewhere on Friday focused on how Facebook apparently intensified political division.

Examples included an internal finding that 10 per cent of political content viewed by US users in the days after the election perpetuated the falsehood that the vote had been rigged.

What has come to be known as the 'Big Lie' has been repeated relentlessly by former President Donald Trump and enraged his supporters, who stormed the US Capital in a deadly attack on January 6.

Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms banned Trump from their platforms for encouraging the violent effort to thwart the democratic process.

Revelations published on Friday indicated that Facebook could have anticipated such trouble.

The information was reportedly found in the thousands of internal documents Haugen provided to regulators at the US Securities and Exchange Commission. Haugen told US lawmakers early this month that the social media giant fuels division, harms children and urgently needs to be regulated, drawing pledges Congress would take up long-delayed action.

The testimony by Haugen has fuelled one of Facebook's most serious crises yet, and prompted a denial from CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who said in a post on his account that her claim the company prioritises profit over safety was 'just not true'.

A common theme in revelations is that Facebook knew about problems hurting users and society but chose, in large part, to ignore them.

Articles on Friday referred to a report compiled by Facebook's own internal researchers titled 'Carol's Journey to QAnon'.

Facebook's security team in 2019 reportedly created a fake account for a 'conservative mother from North Carolina' given the profile name Carol Smith. The social network software quickly offered Smith a 'barrage of extreme, conspiratorial and graphic content' including from the QAnon movement known for unfounded conspiracy theories, according to the researchers.

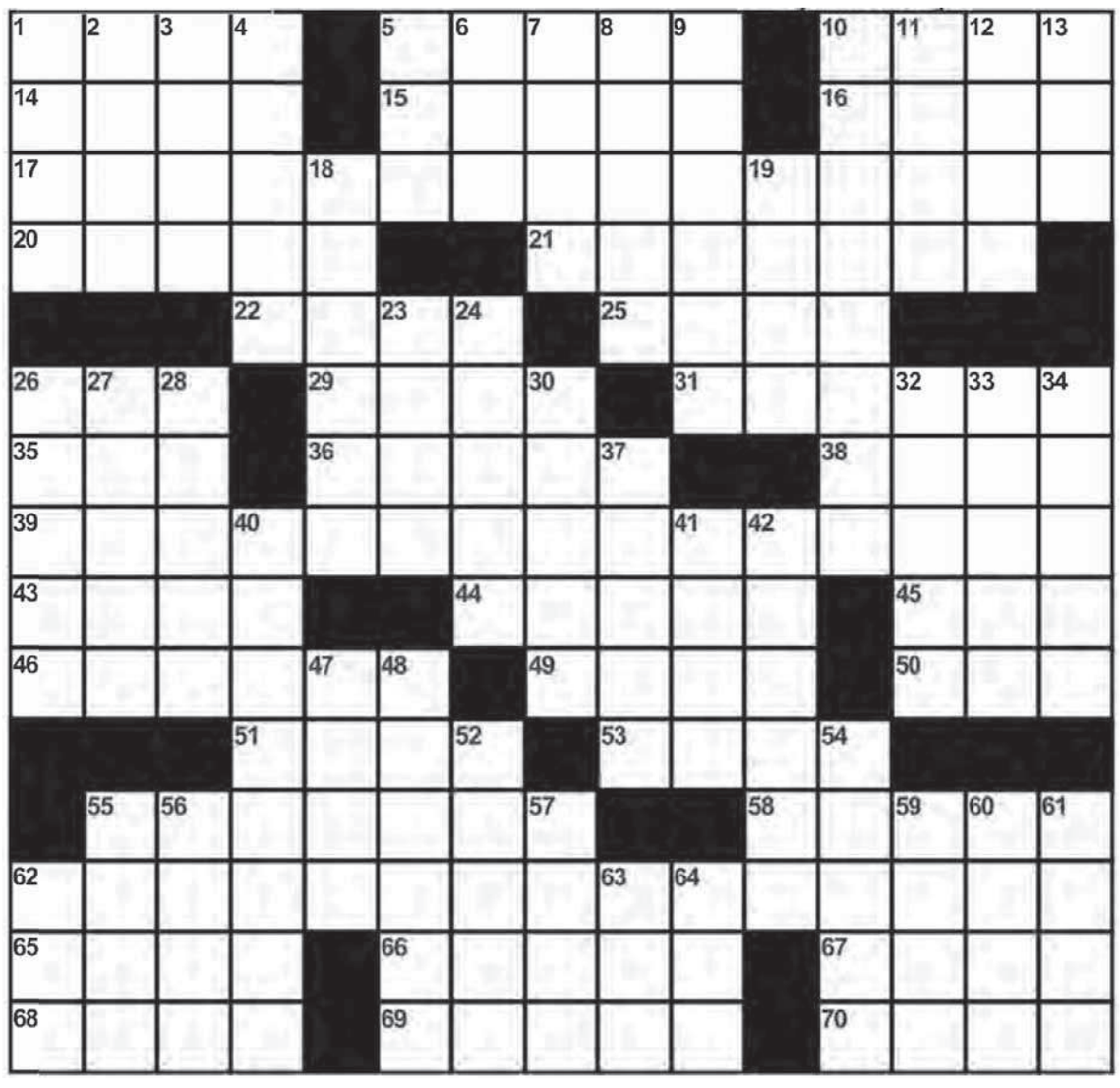
"Our comprehensive strategy to protect the US 2020 elections began years before the election cycle even began and was designed to last through the inauguration," Facebook vice president of integrity Guy Rosen said in a blog post.

A former member of Facebook's integrity team emerged on Friday as another whistleblower. The ex-employee reportedly told US regulators that Facebook dismissed controversy over Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election as a 'flash in the pan' and that managers undermined efforts to fight disinformation for fear of angering Trump or his fans.

AFP

The Facebook 'like' sign is seen at the platform's corporate headquarters campus in Menlo Park, California (AFP)

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1) Indisputable thing
5) Absolute requirements
10) Dressy junction
14) Continental currency
15) " ... _live nephew of my
Uncle Sam"
16) It's involved in armtwisting
17) Three things started by fire
20) Spread seeds
21) She saves the day
22) Fit together, as gears
25) Light-footed for one's age
26) _-flung
29) Exclamation of regret
31) Involuntary muscle movements
35) It may be put out to pasture
36) Lefts and rights
38) Roundhouse result, sometimes
39) Three things started by fire
43) "_ go bragh!"
44) Heat in Florida?
45) Long-armed primate
46) Second-grader's time out?
49) Tree projection
50) "_just one of the guys"
51) Baseball Hall of Farner Slaughter
53) Half a tetrad
55) Vamp's victim
58) Tibetan holy men
62) Three things started by fire
65) Seagirt land
66) Texas A and M athlete
67) Charlie the pitch fish
68) Crack and roughen, as lips
69) City of northern England
70) Coal furnace waste

DOWN
1) Admit guilt (with "up")
2) Garage dweller
3) Pouch in some birds
4) Tribal pole
5) Chairman of China, once
6) Caterer's coffee dispenser
7) One of Abel's brothers
8) Shipping container weights
9) Drinks rudely
10) Japanese entree
11) Great style
12) Ill-fated Boleyn
13) It's often the first to welcome you
18) Engage in brainstorming
19) Business abbr.
23) Utter indistinctly
24) Sultan's assemblage
26) Decreasing numbers of
27) Cognizant
28) Museum item
30) Slow gastropod
32) Abraham's wife
33) Shortsighted one
34) Loudness measures
3 7) Prim and proper
40) Very much involved
41) Award for TV programming
42) Crude and vulgar
47) Refuse to acknowledge
48) Kind of security or studies
52) Material that's worsted for wear?
54) Pub game
55) Accessory for Miss America
56) Legendary Fitzgerald
57) Sharp side of a knife
59) Hefty hammer
60) "The King and I" lady
61) Males-only party
62) Attack command to a dog
63) Ducked the seeker, in a game
64) Word of acceptance

NOTE PAD

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You've got to free your mind for the rest to follow. You've been putting up too many rules to govern your life, but now you might find them more burdensome than helpful. If so, you need to examine what's so important that caused you to build these real and imaginary fences. You need to spread your wings, but first you need to unlock your cage.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
You've got to drop the nice guy act, there's a difference between being nice and being kind. Nice people usually try to get everyone to like them. Kindness isactually doing or saying what is genuinely in the best interests of all parties, even though it may not be the easiest route. You're nice when you want to appease people, but when you're kind, you're true to yourself.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Some close friends are tussling and making your emotions their arena! Walk away and refuse to let them target you with their schemes, or just remind them that this doesn't concern you. They need to settle this among themselves, and they also need to learn not to involve you in their dramas. Don't let yourself be a captive audience. Keep your eyes open and your chin up.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
A seemingly innocuous encounter or unimportant feeling could end up tying you in knots triggering an emotional issue one with deep roots! Turn to someone close for assistance, whether it's a friend, family member or a professional. You have to speak your mind to the person at fault, also, but it's a good idea to check first with someone who can help you organize your thoughts.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Try making it up as you go along! Getting everyone to follow a strict plan just closes off options, rather than helping you get to the point. Shouldn't you enjoy the journey on your way to the destination? Loosen your grip and go with a more laid-back approach, especially when it comes to big plans. Serendipity can devise far more creative solutions than even you can!

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You might need a big crew to pull off this next scheme of yours. Think big, but make sure you've got all the resources it takes to get this enterprise off the ground. It'd be awful to make these big plans only to have them fall flat due to lack of planning! You may actually be better off taking inventory and then making your plans from there.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You're quite sensitive and attuned to the needs of others. Those are awesome traits, of course, but make sure that others aren't taking advantage of your good-natured ways. Are you feeling like someone relies a little too heavily on you? Listen carefully to that feeling -- those alarm bells are going off for a reason, you know. It may be time to speak up and set this person straight.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Someone needs your help, but they're far too proud and delicate to come out and ask for it directly. You need to be a Good Samaritan and do some behind-the-scenes work. Don't let them know what you did any time soon. There may be a few people out there who would try to take advantage of the situation. Act discreetly and swiftly and things should go well for both of you.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Your earning potential and your love life are both powered up - and it's almost too much activity for you to handle! You're actually loving the frenetic pace and the endless opportunities for exploration right now. Just make sure not to bite off more than you can chew, and don't do anything just because it seems like the thing to do. Pay attention to your instincts.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Your financial worries should subside for a time when you get wind of a surprising new development. It's a relief, but there might be a few complications, so err on the side of caution and make contingency plans. Don't act on that Plan B unless you must, or you undermine the fortune that just landed in your lap. Just make sure it's safely tucked away in case you need it.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Your assertive instincts are telling you to make your move, but your equally powerful insecurity has you doubting what you hear. Heed what your heart and gut are telling you, especially if a sluggish relationship or work project looks like it's heading south. Once it gets an infusion of your special know-how, all should be well. Commit fully, and will show new signs of life.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
If you start to feel irritable, just take a deep breath (or two, or ten) and tell yourself it's all temporary. When you acknowledge that you're in a crabby mood, you shouldn't find yourself lashing out at others who count on you. Things should soon take a turn for the better and you ought to find yourself on the sunny side of the street -- and not a moment too soon!

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

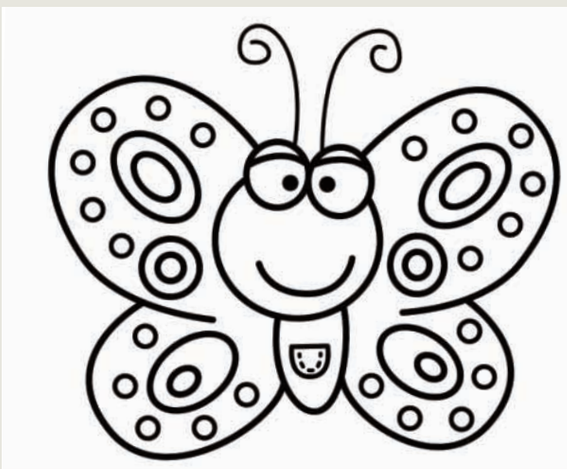
1. Study of life in outer space is known as
a. endbiology
b. exobiology
c. enterbiology
d. neobiology

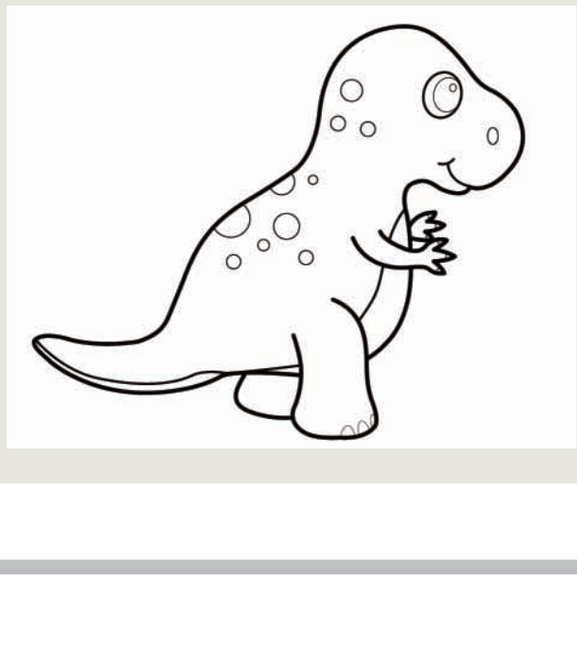
2. Recession is
a. slowing down of economic activity over a limited period
b. period during which unemployment may rise and demand and output may fall, leading to slump in trade
c. period that results from accumulation of unsold goods, owing to fall in demand
d. All of the above

3. Pythagoras was first to ____ the universal validity of geometrical theorem.
a. give
b. prove
c. both
d. None of the above

Answers: 1. b 2. d 3. b

KIDS COLOURING





BOGGLER

A	C	D	B
R	S	I	O
D	R	A	N
A	N	I	E

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER

You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

GUNS ON CELLULOID

How safely are guns used while shooting for films? The truth is, real weapons are used for real effect in an action shot, though with multiple safeguards, just as airline safety checks. 'For an accident to happen, there is always a chain of errors that precede it,' says Hollywood armourer Guillaume Delouche

SHOTS IN A SHOT

The fatal shooting of a crew member by actor Alec Baldwin during the making of a movie in the western United States has raised questions over the use of guns on film sets.

Hollywood armourer Guillaume Delouche - who has been supplying weapons to filmmakers for three decades, with 75 titles to his name - says there are usually multiple safeguards against tragedy. Here are some of his insights into the use of guns in the movie business:

Why are guns used on a movie set?

Even though adding digital effects in post-production is relatively easy and cheap nowadays, a lot of directors and actors prefer to use real guns, says Delouche, citing added authenticity.

"The problem with dummy weapons is that you take away the recoil and the smoke, which adds something to the acting," he said.

"When you give the actor a latex or plastic gun and add the effect of the bullet later with digital effects, there is still a clear difference."

How are guns handled on a film set?

Protocols are necessarily strict, says Delouche, comparing the double and triple checks with the way airplane safety systems operate.

"We treat blank weapons as if they were real weapons. In many cases, they are real weapons that have been modified," he explained.

"The weapons are kept in a safe. Once they are on the set, we organise the blank ammunition, which is marked and colour-coded to differentiate it.

"First, we show the crew and actors that the gun is empty before loading it.

"When we put blanks in a gun we announce it, several times."

What happens when a gun needs to be fired?

"We have very strict safety distances: you can't have someone less than 20 feet - or about six meters - in front of a weapon when it is fired.

"Even with blanks, there can be small debris that is projected. It's better to never aim at someone directly, so we work with the cinematographer to frame the shot and give the illusion that the person is in the line of fire.

"If we need to be closer we put up Plexiglas walls. We cover the operators and stagehands with fire blankets. They also have anti-noise helmets and safety glasses to protect against splinters."

How can accidents happen?

It remains unclear what happened on the set of 'Rust'. According to Delouche accidents are extremely rare, considering how many Hollywood productions feature characters wielding guns. They can occur, however, if live ammunition is being used on set for some reason.

"Real ammunition has absolutely no place on a set because dummy bullets are also used and they could be confused," he said. "A possibility is that a dummy bullet becomes separated from its casing and then enters the chamber of the gun. If a blank is put in behind that dummy, it effectively becomes a live round. This is what cost Brandon Lee his life (in 1993 on the set of 'The Crow'). There was never a check by the prop maker, which would have prevented the accident, " he said, adding, "For an accident to happen, there is always a chain of errors that precede it."

Constant, absolute caution

A French weapons expert, Christophe Maratier, who has worked on several international productions involving hundreds of weapons - from Kalashnikovs to First World War machine guns to the latest automatic guns, said it is a business that demands 'constant, absolute caution.'

"It's an anxiety-provoking job, we put all our energy into safety to avoid accidents," he said.

Maratier is currently working with Keanu Reeves on the latest instalment of his John Wick series, which is filming in Paris. In France, he said, only modified weapons which cannot fire projectiles are permitted on sets.

But directors still need real guns that make nice flames, he said, adding, it is common to use guns that fire blanks - a reserve of explosive powder without any projectile. Just to be sure, actors are also instructed never to fire towards anyone or fire any close-range shots, he said, adding that film-makers see blanks as a necessity to give the illusion of a real shot.

AFP

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

Alec Baldwin

On a ranch in northern New Mexico, where the cottonwoods and the dusty foothills have formed the backdrop of Westerns since the 1950s, Alec Baldwin was filming a new movie on Thursday afternoon when his character, an outlaw, needed a gun.

An assistant director grabbed one of three prop guns that the film's armourer had set up outside on a gray cart, handed it to Mr. Baldwin, and, according to an affidavit signed by Detective Joel Cano of the Santa Fe County sheriff's office, yelled "Cold Gun!" — which was supposed to indicate that the gun did not have any live rounds in it.

When Mr. Baldwin fired the gun, law enforcement officials said, it struck and killed the film's cinematographer and wounded its director — and raised new questions about firearms safety on film sets.

The assistant director "did not know live rounds were in the prop-gun" when he gave it to Mr. Baldwin, according to the affidavit, which was made as part of a search warrant application. The affidavit did not specify what kind of ammunition the gun had been loaded with.

The results were deadly: Halyna Hutchins, 42, the film's director of photography, was struck in the chest and flown to the University of New Mexico Hospital in Albuquerque, where she died, officials said. Joel Souza, 48, the film's director, was shot in the shoulder area and wounded; he was taken to Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center in Santa Fe and later released.

MUSCAT DAILY
www.muscatdaily.com

Chairman & Editor-in-chief
Saleh Zakwani
Apex Press and Publishing.
Printed at Apex Printing Press, Jiffnain

PO Box 2616, Ruwi 112, Muscat,
Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24799388.
Toll Free No. 80076000

EDITORIAL
Shaddad al Musalmy
Tel: +968 24799388
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

ADVERTISING
Sajir CP
Mobile: +968 99474314
Email: sajir@apexmedia.co.om

SUBSCRIPTION
Toll Free No. 80076000
Email: customercare@apexmedia.co.om
Annual subscription offer: RO24

DISTRIBUTION
Shamshad Khan
Toll Free No. 80076000
Email: shamshad@apexmedia.co.om

Verstappen left fuming after Hamilton move

Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (L) and Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton race to the first turn during the second practice session in Austin, US, on Friday (AFP)

FORMULA ONE

US GRAND PRIX

Austin, United States - Road rage bubbled as the track temperature rose in the second practice session for US Grand Prix on Friday as Max Verstappen called title rival Lewis Hamilton a 'stupid idiot'.

World champion Hamilton angered Verstappen by pushing past on the inside of the Red Bull when the Dutchman was lining up a flying lap. Verstappen leads Hamilton by six points in the title race. After the Mercedes almost pushed Verstappen off the track, the Dutchman gave way, lifting his right hand off the wheel to make a gesture with his middle finger at the rear end of Hamilton's car.

Verstappen complained on team radio that Hamilton was a 'stupid idiot' and never seemed to recover his poise, ending the session eighth fastest.

His team principal Christian Horner was calmer. "They were obviously queuing up to start the lap and Lewis decided just to jump Max there," Horner told UK Sky TV from the pit lane. "They have an unwritten rule in sessions like this that they take their turns and Max was pointing out that he was first in the queue."

Verstappen never found a gap in traffic to make another attempt. "Why do we always go in traffic. Jesus," was part of a later radio message that also contained several swear words.

He was not the only angry driver. Nikita Mazepin was almost sideswiped by a driver exiting the pits. "What was that man? Just avoided a crash," said the Russian. "Man it's impossible to get a lap on this track."

After the session, with his helmet off but his mask on, Verstappen was more guarded.

"Just a mess with the traffic," he said before addressing the Hamilton incident in a bewildered tone.

"We're all lining up to go for our laps so I don't really understand what happened there."

Yet the afternoon was not a total loss for his team, which had been badly outpaced by Mercedes in the morning.

Red Bull's Mexican driver Sergio Perez was fastest with a time of 1min 34.946sec.

Lando Norris of McLaren was second 0.257sec behind.

Hamilton who had what would have been the fastest time of the session scrubbed out because he crossed the white track limits line on turn 19, was third 0.364, 0.50sec ahead of teammate Valtteri Bottas.

Daniel Ricciardo of McLaren, Lance Stroll in an Aston Martin and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc were the next three fastest, ahead of Verstappen.

"It was a good day," said Perez. "Obviously it's going to be very tight trying to put it all together and find those couple of tenths that would put us in the mix for pole tomorrow."

'Hands sticking to wheel'

Perez said the real problem was not the heat.

"Very humid as well," said the Mexican. "My hands are sticking to the wheel a lot."

Mercedes dominated in the morning and Hamilton said changes the team made between sessions had not worked.

"We lost some ground or they gained some ground," he said. "It's been a good day but work to do."

Bottas faces a grid penalty on Sunday after Mercedes changed his engine for the fifth time this season.

After Hamilton took an ultimately costly ten-place grid penalty for an engine change before the Turkish Grand Prix, Bottas and two other drivers with Mercedes power units, George Russell of Williams and Sebastian Vettel of Aston Martin, are taking penalties in Austin.

Drivers are allowed three engines a season, after that they are hit with decreasing penalties. Bottas drops five grid places for his sixth engine. Russell and Vettel will drop to the back of the grid after each switched to their fourth power unit of the season.

AFP

World No 1 Ashleigh Barty of Australia

Barty pulls out of WTA Finals to end season early

Sydney, Australia - World No 1 and Wimbledon champion Ashleigh Barty pulled out of the season-ending WTA Finals on Saturday, opting to remain at home and focus on preparing for the Australian summer.

The Australian has not played since a shock third-round loss at the US Open in September and has now formally ended a year that earned her five titles, including a second major at Wimbledon after her French Open triumph in 2019.

"I wanted to let everyone know that I won't be competing in any further tournaments in 2021, including the WTA Finals in Mexico," the 25-year-old said in a statement.

"It was a difficult decision but I need to prioritise my body and my recovery from our 2021 season and focus on having the strongest pre-season for the Australian summer."

Barty won the WTA Finals in 2019 before last year's version was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. She spent most of this year abroad because of strict quarantine rules on entering Australia, finally returning in September and undergoing a mandatory two-week stint in hotel isolation.

She said she was not ready to go through that again, ending any hope of playing the WTA Finals at Guadalajara next month. "With ongoing challenges of travelling back to Queensland and quarantine requirements, I am not willing to compromise my preparation for January," she said.

"I wish the WTA team and the players all the best for a successful WTA Finals and the rest of the year."

AFP

A file photo of fencers training at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex

Inaugural Oman Fencing Championship on Oct 30

Muscat - The inaugural Oman Fencing Championship, which will feature men's epee and women's foil events, will be held at the main indoor hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on October 30, according to a press release from the Oman Fencing Committee (OFA).

A total of 40 fencers from seven clubs - Muscat, Oman, Al Nahdha, Quriyat, Al Shabab, Ahli-Sidab and Salalah – will take part in the championships.

This is the first national-level championship to be organised by the OFC.

Five local umpires will officiate at the meet while the head coach of the national fencing team, Hisham Karshood of Tunisia, will be the technical head of the event.

Hats off to Qatar: Fifth 2022 FIFA World Cup stadium inaugurated

Doha, Qatar - Qatar inaugurated the fifth stadium that will host FIFA World Cup matches in 2022 with a domestic cup tie on Friday watched by thousands who either recently recovered from coronavirus or received vaccinations.

Al Thumama stadium, designed by Qatari architect Ibrahim Jaidah, is 12km south of central Doha, and inspired by the lace-like Islamic gahfiya cap, will seat 40,000 fans.

Since being selected in 2010, Qatar has faced bad headlines and searing criticism of its record on everything from women's rights and labour issues to treatment of LGBT people and its political system. The nation of 2.5mn people, only 333,000 of whom are Qataris, has insisted that it has done more than any country in the region to openly address the issues and tackle criticism constructively.

"Since we won the World Cup (rights) we have received a lot of criticism. There is constructive criticism that we tried to take on board," said Fatma al Nuaimi, head of communications at the Supreme Committee that is organising the 2022 tournament.

"We also try not to let this criticism stop us."

Fireworks illuminate the venue during the opening ceremony of the Al Thumama stadium on Friday (AFP)

World Cup ready

The inaugural fixture, the Amir Cup, is in honour of the nation's all-powerful ruler Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani who attended Friday's fixture along with FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

It saw Al Sadd, under former Spain legend Xavi Hernandez, take on Al Rayyan, coached by former France boss Laurent Blanc, with Al-Sadd winning 5-4 after a penalty shootout.

In addition to Al Thumama, Qatar has so far inaugurated new-build Ahmad Bin Ali, Al Janoub and Education City stadiums alongside the refurbished Khalifa ground.

Ras Abu Aboud, Al Bayt, and Lusail, which will host the final in 14 months, are yet be opened.

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

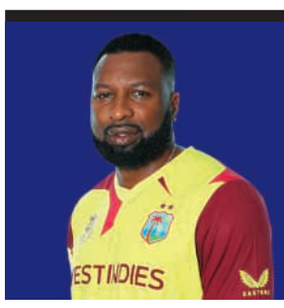
أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Send your request for Birthday/ Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories:
Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/ Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)

Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346



QUOTE OF THE DAY

It was unacceptable, we accept that. These sorts of games sometimes, we just need to bin it. For us, it's just a matter of finding our straps

Kieron Pollard

West Indies' skipper, after they were outplayed by England, on Saturday

ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

MOTHER OF ALL BATTLES

A Sunday evening blockbuster awaits for Indian and Pakistani fans from around the world as the two teams face off in the T20 World Cup Group Two clash in Dubai

You have to play your best cricket against them: Kohli

Dubai, UAE - India skipper Virat Kohli on Saturday said they will take on a 'very strong' Pakistan team in their ICC Men's T20 World Cup opener and downplayed their unbeaten record against their opponents.

India have beaten Pakistan in all of their 12 matches at the T20 and 50-over World Cups.

"We never discussed these things, about our record and past performance," Kohli told reporters on the eve of the much-anticipated clash in Dubai on Sunday.

"These things create distractions. What matters is how we prepare and execute on that particular day, regardless of the opposition."

Kohli said regardless of their past dominance Pakistan is and always has been packed with talented players.

"Pakistan, according to me is a very strong team and always has been a strong side," he said.

"You have to play your best cricket against them, because they have lots of talent and players who can change the game."

Babar Azam's Pakistan will look to break their World Cup jinx against India, who have won all five clashes in T20's showpiece event.

Babar, Mohammad Rizwan and Fakhar Zaman hold the team's batting key while quicks Shaheen Shah Afridi and Hasan Ali lead a potent bowling attack.

Kohli backed his team's match winners including Hardik Pandya to come good in the tournament despite the allrounder struggling with his bowling.

"He is getting better in terms of getting prepared to bowl two overs for us," said Kohli.

"What he brings at that No 6 spot is something that you cannot create overnight and hence I was always in favour of backing him in Australia as a batter purely. He can take the game away from the opposition when he is in full flow."

Pandya emerged as India's top allrounder after his white-ball debut in 2016 but a spate of back injuries affected his career and he underwent back surgery two years ago.

The pace bowler did not bowl in the second leg of the IPL in the UAE for his side Mumbai Indians.

But Kohli says the attacking batsman is an asset to the team in the shortest format.

"We understand the value he brings to the team as a number six batter,"said Kohli.

"In world cricket if you look around there are specialists who do that job and it is very important to have that guy specially in T20 cricket.

"He is motivated and keen to start giving us a couple of overs and when that happens obviously the balance becomes even better. But we are pretty confident how we are heading into the start of this tournament."

The tournament is Kohli's last as captain of the national T20 side, but he refused to speak more on the issue. "Our focus is to play well in this World Cup and do what we need to do as a team," he said. "I have explained myself very honestly (on Twitter). If people feel there is more to it, then I feel sorry for them."

AFP

India skipper Virat Kohli

Forget the past, Babar tells his teammates

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam

Dubai, UAE - Skipper Babar Azam vowed his team will not think about Pakistan's poor record against arch-rivals India when they meet in a high-octane T20 World Cup match on Sunday.

Pakistan have lost all seven World Cup (50 over) clashes against India as well as five games in the T20 World Cup and start as 'underdogs'.

Exuding confidence, Babar stressed that the past is irrelevant to his players.

"To be honest, what has passed is beyond us," Babar told a virtual media conference on Saturday, as both nations buzzed in anticipation of a thrilling match.

"We want to use our ability and confidence on the day of the match so that we can get a better result. Records are meant to be broken."

The tickets for the match were sold out within hours of going on sale after the UAE government allowed a 70 per cent crowd for the T20 World Cup matches in a relaxation of the COVID-19 restrictions.

The South Asian nuclear rivals have only played in multi-national events like the World Cups and the Champions Trophy as strained relations have stalled bilateral cricket since 2007.

Pakistan did tour India in 2012 for five limited over matches but ties were not fully resumed as the two nations continued to be at loggerheads over multiple issues.

Babar admitted it will be a match full of intensity. "The matches between Pakistan and India are always full of intensity so we need to perform well in all three departments of the game," said Babar.

Former champions India and Pakistan are placed in Group Two along with New Zealand, Afghanistan and Scotland and Namibia, who both came through the qualifying stage.

Babar announced 12 for the match with hard-hitters Haider Ali and Asif Ali competing to make the final eleven.

"The boys are excited to play the World Cup and we have a crucial match on Sunday," said Babar, who will be leading Pakistan for the first time in a senior World Cup match. "A winning impact is necessary and then we will go match by match."

Babar said Pakistan's prime minister Imran Khan - who led the country to victory in the 1992 World Cup - had shared his experiences with the team. "The Prime Minister met us before our departure and shared his experiences of the 1992 win and told us to play aggressive and fearless cricket against India."

AFP

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Chelsea hit Norwich for seven

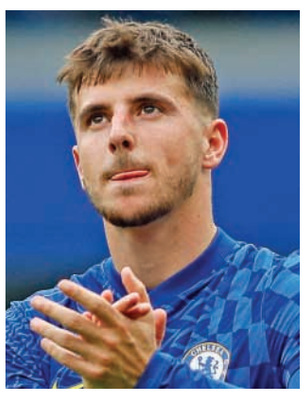
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Chelsea opened up a four-point lead at the top of the English Premier League (EPL) with a 7-0 rout of Norwich on Saturday as Newcastle's wait for a EPL win went on after a 1-1 draw at Crystal Palace. Mason Mount scored a hat-trick for the Blues at Stamford Bridge as the European champions coped without first-choice strikers Romelu Lukaku and Timo Werner.

Mount started the rout after just eight minutes and finished it with two more in the closing stages after Ben Gibson had been sent-off for the visitors.

Callum Hudson-Odoi, Reece James and Ben Chilwell were also on target for Thomas Tuchel's men, while Max Aarons' own goal summed up a sorry day for the Canaries.

And in a late game, Phil Foden scored twice as Manchester City stormed into second place in the EPl with a 4-1 dismantling of Brighton at the Amex. Pep Guardiola's men had the points sealed by half-time as Ilkay Gundogan tapped into an empty net on 13 minutes before Foden finished off two fine team moves. Alexis Mc Allister's penalty pulled a goal back for Brighton, before Riyad Mahrez put the seal on a slick City display.



Mason Mount of Chelsea

Newcastle's interim manager Graeme Jones took charge for the first time since Steve Bruce was sacked and needed a moment of brilliance from Callum Wilson just to salvage a point. Christian Benteke headed the Patrick Vieira's men in front.

Claudio Ranieri got his first win as Watford manager as the Hornets twice came from behind to stun Everton 5-2 at Goodison Park. Leeds needed a stoppage-time penalty to earn a 1-1 draw at home to Wolves. Burnley remain in the bottom three after a 2-2 draw at Southampton.

SPANISH LEAGUE

Valencia held

Madrid, Spain - Valencia scored twice in injury time on Saturday to rescue a 2-2 draw against newly-promoted Mallorca, whose late collapse came after former Valencia midfielder Lee Kang-in was sent off. In another match, Alaves beat Cadiz 2-0.

GERMAN LEAGUE

Lewandowski scores

Berlin, Germany - Robert Lewandowski scored his tenth Bundesliga goal in nine games this season for leaders Bayern Munich in a 4-0 rout at home to Hoffenheim on Saturday.

OTHER RESULTS

RB Leipzig 4 Greuther Fuerth 1, Wolfsburg 0 Freiburg 2.

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Salernitana 2 Empoli 4. **Friday:** Torino 3 Genoa 2, Sampdoria 2 Spezia 1.

AFP

Bagnaia storms to fourth straight pole

EMILIA-ROMAGNA MOTOGP

Misano Adriatico, Italy - Francesco Bagnaia gave himself a huge chance of prolonging the MotoGP title race on Saturday after claiming his fourth consecutive pole position in a stunning comeback at Misano. Ducati's Bagnaia had topped the times in the first qualifying session for the Emilia-Romagna race to get into Q2 following a poor run in the morning's third practice.

He then charged to a best time of one minute, 33.045 seconds to take first place on the grid, just 0.25sec ahead of his teammate Jack Miller.

The Italian, 24, is 52 points behind championship leader Fabio Quartararo with three races remaining this season and with the Yamaha rider starting Sunday's race in 15th Bagnaia can extend their battle for at least a week. He needs to keep the gap in the overall standings between him and Quartararo to less than 50 and will fancy his chances of doing so as he beat the Frenchman on the same circuit in the San Marino MotoGP last month.

AFP

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Sharjah pitches could be similar to those in Dhaka. Hopefully that can assist us in tomorrow's game. We are happy with the 2pm starts - it suits us big time

Russell Domingo

Bangladesh coach, ahead of Sunday's game against Sri Lanka

ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

Bowlers' show in Aussies win

GROUP ONE

AUSTRALIA VS S AFRICA

Abu Dhabi, UAE - A wicket off the third ball of spin. Their best player playing on in inexplicable fashion. A batter losing his footing and getting run-out. This really wasn't South Africa's day but they didn't care. They had a job to do. Defending 118. Temba Bavuma's men made the first match of the Super 12s in the 2021 T20 World Cup one for the ages. It is a shame they had to settle for second best.

Australia persevered and persevered. This was their game. With the benefit of a few players coming off a good IPL, they knew just what to do on a slow Abu Dhabi pitch. Josh Hazlewood (4-1-19-2) and Glenn Maxwell (4-0-24-1) were particularly devilish to deal with, their tight lines tying the opposition down.

It still came down to their batting, which has not been their strength lately. But Marcus Stoinis and Matthew Wade came good when it mattered most, their 40-run stand in only 26 balls sealing a profoundly valuable victory. Especially given they are in the group of death.

Australia's Josh Hazlewood (C) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of South Africa's Quinton de Kock

Power on. Power off

Bavuma smacked 11 runs off the first five balls of the game from Mitchell Starc. His two shots - through point and cover - were a symbol of South Africa's form heading into this T20 World Cup.

They are here having beaten the current world champions and former world champions in back-to-back T20I series. They wouldn't have wanted to crumble like this. But crumble they did, starting with Bavuma, who played back to the innings' third ball of spin and lost his stumps.

The ball was basic. Length. No swing. No seam. No nothing. Quinton de Kock wanted to boss it. He went for a scoop. He mis-hit it. And then everything stopped. The ball hung in the air. Right over the stumps. Eventually it began moving. In slow motion. de Kock's eyes were horror-movie wide. He stood absolutely still. Watching the chaos. As that little white cherry plonked right on top of his stumps. South Africa 29 for three in six overs.

The slide

Aiden Markram and David Miller tried to pick up the pieces through the middle overs, but a double-wicket over from Adam Zampa put paid to that. The leg-spinner was able to break the partnership with a googly that Miller failed to read. That bit of magic, combined with discipline from the pacers, forced South Africa from 80 for four to 83 for seven in the space of six balls.

The finish

No chase in the UAE is done until the last ball is bowled. All day, the batters found it hard to hit out on this slow pitch. South Africa used that to their benefit, toppling Aaron Finch, David Warner and Mitchell Marsh cheaply. Steven Smith was guiding the chase beautifully, but he too fell before the job was done. Maxwell followed him three balls later and suddenly Australia were 81 for five, still needing 38 off the last five overs.

This was what South Africa were waiting for. Two new batters facing the heat in the death.

Wade and Stoinis weathered it at first, the partnership inching along on nine off nine, and then it blossomed when Wade pulled off a scoop off Kagiso Rabada to end the 17th over. Stoinis joined in later, hitting three fours in the final six balls to seal the game.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA			
T Bavuma	b Maxwell	12	(7)
Q de Kock	b Hazlewood	7	(12)
R van der Dussen	c Wade b Hazlewood	2	(3)
A Markram	c Maxwell b Starc	40	(36)
H Klaasen	c Smith b Cummins	13	(13)
D Miller	lbw b Zampa	16	(18)
D Pretorius	c Wade b Zampa	1	(2)
K Maharaj	run out	0	(2)
K Rabada	not out	19	(23)
A Nortje	c Finch b Starc	2	(3)
T Shamsi	not out	0	(1)
Extras:	(b 2, lb 3, w 1)	6	
TOTAL	**118 for nine in 20 overs**		

Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-16, 3-23, 4-46, 5-80, 6-82, 7-83, 8-98, 9-115

Bowling: M Starc 4-0-32-2, G Maxwell 4-0-24-1, J Hazlewood 4-1-19-2, P Cummins 4-0-17-1, A Zampa 4-0-21-2

AUSTRALIA			
D Warner	c Klaasen b Rabada	14	(15)
A Finch	c Rabada b Nortje	0	(5)
M Marsh	c van der Dussen b Maharaj	11	(17)
S Smith	c Markram b Nortje	35	(34)
G Maxwell	b Shamsi	18	(21)
M Stoinis	not out	24	(16)
M Wade	not out	15	(10)
Extras:	(lb 1, w 3)	4	
TOTAL	**121 for five in 19.4 overs**		

Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-20, 3-38, 4-80, 5-81

Bowling: K Rabada 4-0-28-1, A Nortje 4-0-21-2, K Maharaj 4-0-23-1, T Shamsi 4-0-22-1, D Pretorius 3.4-0-26-0

GROUP ONE

TEAM	P	W	L	PTS	NRR
ENG	1	1	0	2	+3.970
AUS	1	1	0	2	+0.253
SA	1	0	1	0	-0.253
WI	1	0	1	0	-3.970
BAN	0	0	0	0	+0.000
SL	0	0	0	0	+0.000

GROUP TWO

TEAM	P	W	L	PTS	NRR
AFG	0	0	0	0	+0.000
IND	0	0	0	0	+0.000
NAM	0	0	0	0	+0.000
NZ	0	0	0	0	+0.000
PAK	0	0	0	0	+0.000
SCO	0	0	0	0	+0.000

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

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

TODAY'S MATCHES

GROUP ONE

BANGLADESH VS SRI LANKA

Sharjah (UAE), 2pm

GROUP TWO

INDIA VS PAKISTAN

Dubai (UAE), 6pm

England trounce West Indies

GROUP ONE

ENGLAND VS WEST INDIES

Dubai, UAE - Adil Rashid returned figures of four for two to set up a six-wicket victory for England after they dismissed defending champions West Indies for a paltry 55 at the T20 World Cup on Saturday.

West Indies rattled England's top order before Jos Buttler (24) and skipper Eoin Morgan (7) took the team home in 8.2 overs.

Left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein took two wickets and Moeen Ali was run out, but the target proved too meagre to challenge England.

Moeen opened the bowling for England with his off-spin and made an instant impact, first with a sharp running catch to remove Evin Lewis. He then got the wicket of Lendl Simmons.

Pace bowler Tymal Mills claimed two wickets including Chris Gayle, the only batsman to make double figures with his 13, as West Indies crumbled.

Rashid entered the attack with West Indies on 44 for six and bowled the big-hitting Andre Russell for nought. He took two more wickets in successive balls in his next over and then wrapped up the innings. He returned outstanding figures from his 2.2 overs of leg-spin.

England's Adil Rashid (L) celebrates with his captain Eoin Morgan after dismissing West Indies' Ravi Rampaul

West Indies avoided their worst T20 total of 45 against the same opposition in 2019. The two sides met five years after their clash in the 2016 final in Kolkata when Carlos Brathwaite hit Ben Stokes for four straight sixes in the last over.

But with Saturday's crushing performance, England have fired a warning to their rivals in the seventh edition of the event.

England skipper Eoin Morgan said, "It's as good as it gets. To start our campaign like that, all credit to our bowling unit. The guys were very disciplined, and we took our chances.

"I think Moeen Ali read the conditions beautifully, he took chances when his match-up was in his favour, and to take his opportunity like he has, after the success he's had in the IPL was brilliant."

AFP

SCOREBOARD

WEST INDIES			
L Simmons	c Livingstone b Moeen	3	(7)
E Lewis	c Moeen b Woakes	6	(5)
C Gayle	c Malan b Mills	13	(13)
S Hetmyer	c Morgan b Moeen	9	(9)
D Bravo	c Bairstow b Jordan	5	(5)
N Pooran	c Buttler b Mills	1	(9)
K Pollard	c Bairstow b Rashid	6	(14)
A Russell	b Rashid	0	(2)
A Hosein	not out	6	(13)
O McCoy	c Roy b Rashid	0	(1)
R Rampaul	b Rashid	3	(8)
Extras:	(w 3)	3	
TOTAL:	**55 in 14.2 overs**		

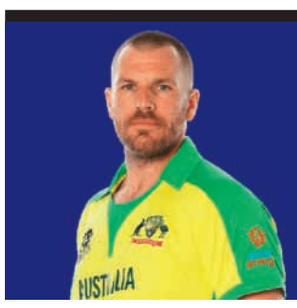
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-9, 3-27, 4-31, 5-37, 6-42, 7-44, 8-49, 9-49, 10-55

Bowling: Moeen Ali 4-1-17-2, C Woakes 2-0-12-1, T Mills 4-0-17-2, C Jordan 2-0-7-1, A Rashid 2.2-0-2-4

ENGLAND			
J Roy	c Gayle b Rampaul	11	(10)
J Buttler	not out	24	(22)
J Bairstow	c & b Hosein	9	(6)
Moeen Ali	run out	3	(4)
L Livingstone	c & b Hosein	1	(2)
Eoin Morgan	not out	7	(7)
Extras:	(nb 1)	1	
TOTAL	**56 for four in 8.2 overs**		

Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-30, 3-36, 4-39

Bowling: A Hosein 4-0-24-2, R Rampaul 2-0-14-1, O McCoy 2-0-12-0, Kieron Pollard 0.2-0-6-0



QUOTE OF THE DAY

The dugout was probably a bit more relaxed than I was. In the end we needed a bit of luck to go our way and we got it

Aaron Finch

Australia skipper, after his team's win over South Africa in Group 1, on Saturday

ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

A great sense of accomplishment, says OC chief

Oman Cricket successfully hosted ICC Men's T20 World Cup First Round Group B matches

Pankaj Khimji (C) with BCCI chief Sourav Ganguly (L) and BCCI secretary Jay Shah during their recent visit to Muscat

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Hours after the disappointment of hosts Oman bowing out of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 on Thursday night, there were still a handful of volunteers eager to get a snap or a selfie with the man who made it possible for Oman to host the First Round Group A matches - Oman Cricket chairman Pankaj Khimji.

Oman lost to Scotland by eight wickets in their final league match to end third in the four-team group. Scotland with three out of three wins topped the group to advance along with Test-playing side Bangladesh, who finished second.

There was a tinge of sadness on the team's failure to make history by qualifying for the Super 12s but that was overshadowed by the tremendous success of Pankaj Khimji and his organising team in hosting the World Cup.

Oman Cricket (OC) won all-round praise from the ICC, BCCI, players and officials along with the fans and journalists from other countries who came to cover the six group matches involving hosts, Bangladesh, Scotland and Papua New Guinea.

History was made on October 17 when Oman hosted the inaugural ceremony of the T20 World Cup at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground as they became the first Associate Nation to host and play in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Over the next five days since the launch ceremony, OC demonstrated its organisational capabilities in large measure to win the hearts of all.

In an exclusive chat with *Muscat Daily* after leading from the front to host the T20 World Cup for the first time in Oman, Khimji said, "Great relief!. A great sense of accomplishment in many ways for Oman Cricket. We as Team Oman have delivered the World Cup as near as flawless as possible."

Khimji added, "We also wowed many people around the world. The Wow factor grew among the cricket fans across the world. Our venue and video clips of Oman that were telecast globally have left a lasting impression on their minds about the sultanate. It was not only cricket but the way we showcased Oman as a country that made me immensely proud."

The OC boss said 'the success of the First Round Group B T20 World Cup games has made Oman a destination for cricket, permanently.'

"We are now firm destination for cricket nations across the world. There wouldn't be any more quiet moments here. Cricket will play a big role in the sultanate's sports tourism as we continue develop the facilities further," said Khimji.

Oman Cricket's Herculean efforts saw world-class floodlights installed, new media and corporate boxes constructed, besides upgrading other facilities, in a short span of 91 days.

Khimji said, "We could achieve all this due to sheer drive and conviction. The team we put together was amazing and such projects are delivered only due to a committed teamwork."

Asked to measure the overall success of hosting the T20 World Cup, Khimji replied, "9.5 on a scale of ten."

However, the OC chief admitted that there was still a lot to do at the venue- Oman Cricket Academy Ground – with more focus on public facilities.

"We just had 91 days to deliver. It was possible only due to the support and blessings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

"H H Sayyid Theyazin's strong backing was our biggest asset and strength. He told me 'let's do it' and that gave me the confidence to make it happen. I am proud that we could put Oman on the world cricket map prominently," said Khimji.

On Oman's failure to advance to from the First Round after their loss to Scotland, Khimji said, "Our team suffered from nerves. They lack maturity. Our players certainly do not have big-match temperament and it reflected."

@ashokmuscat

We will bounce back: Maqsood

Muscat - Oman skipper Zeeshan Maqsood is known for his never-say-die spirits. Despite making an early exit from the T20 World Cup on Thursday, the captain was confident that his team would bounce back strongly during the future tournaments.

Maqsood expressed his disappointment on missing out on a historic berth in the T20 World Cup Super 12 stage after their eight-wicket loss to Scotland, their second successive defeat in the First Round Group B match, at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground.

Oman went into the game against the Scots needing a win but lost their nerves against a much-better opposition.

Maqsood said, "We had an opportunity to make history. We couldn't do it but then this is sports. Some day you win, some day you lose. We will come back strongly. We learn from defeats and we have the strength to bounce back."

Oman were restricted to below-par 122 by Scotland. The winners then raced to victory in 17 overs scoring 123 for two.

The skipper said, We couldn't bat very well, and it was a below-par total. It was always going to be difficult to defend such a score."

He added, "Jatinder Singh [opener] is in good nick and unfortunately he got run out off the second ball. So pressure was there on the team. In the middle, the batsmen didn't score enough runs which is where we fell short. I am sorry that we couldn't deliver."

Maqsood said 'the World Cup experience will help them improve and there is a lot of positivity among the players'.

"Overall, I am happy with the way we played. We lack experience and we will learn from the mistakes," he said.

On Oman hosting the World Cup, he said 'it was a great achievement'. "We are proud to have hosted the T20 World Cup. Unfortunately, we couldn't make the optimum use of our home conditions."

Celebrate the Hijri New Year with BMW's generous offer. Start fresh with 0% Interest and enjoy the following benefits:

- 0% Interest on 3 Years Financing*
- BMW Service Inclusive for 5 years/100,000 kms**
- BMW Warranty for 5 years/200,000 kms**
- Free Window Tinting from AutoSpa
- 1st Year Free Registration

* Terms and Conditions apply.
** Whichever comes first.
Offer valid on stock cars: Vehicles must be purchased & delivered during the offer period.
Offer valid from August 23rd till September 30th 2021

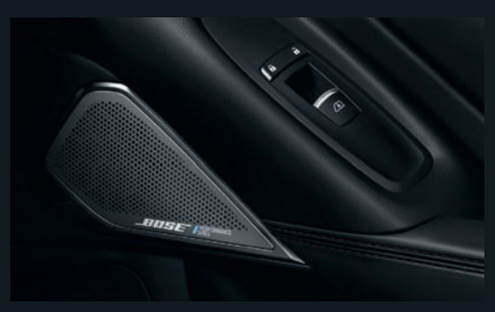
Al Jenaibi International Automobiles
Phone 9617 8383, 9617 9393 or toll-free 800 50008
www.bmw-oman.com

Q50

UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL

EMI STARTING FROM

OMR 166*



BOSE® PERFORMANCE SERIES AUDIO SYSTEM WITH 16 SPEAKERS

INFINITI INTOUCH™P-IVI NAVIGATION SYSTEM

PREDICTIVE FORWARD COLLISION WARNING

3.0L TWIN-TURBO V6 ENGINE, 300 HP

LEARN MORE

INFINITI

9496 5500 | TOLL FREE 800 50011 | سهيل بهوان للسيارات ش.م.م. Suhail Bahwan Automobiles LLC | Bahwan International Group مجموعة بهوان العالمية

* Starting EMI mentioned is inclusive of VAT and is calculated on the price of the base model with 20% down payment, for 96 months loan tenure. Subject to credit approvals from Bank Muscat.