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ABBA TOPS UK CHARTS AFTER 40 YEARS
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MoL surpasses target, provides 35,000 jobs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has crossed its target of providing 32,000 jobs to citizens this year that it announced in January. The ministry has stated that 35,344 positions were created in public and private sectors in the sultanate from the period starting in January and ending in September.

In a performance report released on Saturday, MoL said this was a result of the government adopting new work systems and policies to absorb Omani jobseekers.

According to the report, 19,535 jobs were provided in units of the state's administrative apparatus, of which 6,446 were a result of training offered in the government sector.

The private sector employed 8,562 jobseekers who had no work experience. Of these, 2,025 didn't have General Education Diploma, 2,664 had General Education Diploma or an equivalent qualification, 1,088 had university diplomas, 2,695 had university degrees and 90



Jobseekers take a test at University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Salalah on Saturday for 37 vacancies in Dhofar Municipality (ONA)

The percentage of non-Omani employees decreased 7.6 per cent from September 2020 to September 2021

had Master's or PhDs.

MoL's direct initiatives created 1,067 jobs in the private sector and 6,180 jobs resulted from training and rehabilitation in the sector. The report stated that 9,556 citizens - 6,953 males and 2,603 females - benefitted from

the Job Security Programme.

Additionally, according to the report, the ministry received requests from 83 private institutions that wanted to terminate contracts with nationals in their workforce and 128 private institutions that wanted to re-

duce wages.

'The ministry dealt with these situations and was able to maintain job stability without terminating services or reducing wages of 45,708 Omani workers in the private sector.'

The report further indicated that the percentage of the non-Omani employees decreased 7.6 per cent from September 2020 to September 2021, which 'confirms that the replacement plans are proceeding according to plan and that the results are good'.

CIVIL ORDER OF OMAN FOR JAPANESE DIPLOMATS



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has bestowed the Civil Order of Oman, 2nd Class, on three Japanese diplomats - Eto Seishiro (top), Kono Taro and Nishimura Yasutoshi (bottom) - in recognition of their efforts and contributions to strengthening bilateral relations between Oman and Japan in various fields. The medals were handed over by Mohammed bin Saeed al Busaidi, Oman's ambassador to Japan, when he received them at the embassy in Tokyo on Friday (ONA)

Social progress: Oman ranked 85th globally

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman is ranked 85th in the world and third in the GCC in the 2021 Social Progress Index.

The index, which ranks 168 countries, is based exclusively on indicators of social and environmental outcomes, offering a revealing picture of the levels of development in different countries that is independent of traditional economic measures.

Published by the Social Progress Imperative, a global nonprofit based in Washington, DC, the index combines 53 social and environmental outcome indicators to calculate an overall score.

Norway ranks first, followed by Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Canada, Sweden, Netherlands, Japan and Greece in top ten.

In the GCC, Kuwait tops with overall rank of 50, followed by UAE (67th), Oman (85th), Qatar (86th), Bahrain (96th) and Saudi Arabia (105th).

Guinea at 159, followed by Burundi, Congo, Niger, Yemen, Somalia, Eritrea, Chad, Central African Republic and South Sudan at 168 make up the bottom ten.

'Countries achieve very different overall levels of social progress and widely differing patterns of social progress by dimensions and components. The index re-

veals that high-income countries tend to achieve higher social progress than low-income countries. Yet this relationship is neither simple nor linear,' stated the index.

The 2021 index found that overall social progress is advancing across the world, but remains slow and uneven. 'The population-weighted world average score has improved by 4.63 points since 2011, to 65.05/100. Despite this overall progress, the world is declining significantly on personal rights with 116 of the 168 countries (69 per cent) measured by the index seeing individual rights rolled back since 2011.'

The index is structured around three broad dimensions

of social progress: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity. Each of the dimensions is divided into four components which are further divided into a total of 53 distinct indicators.

Basic Human Needs covers Nutritional and Basic Medical Care, Water and Sanitation, Shelter, and Personal Safety.

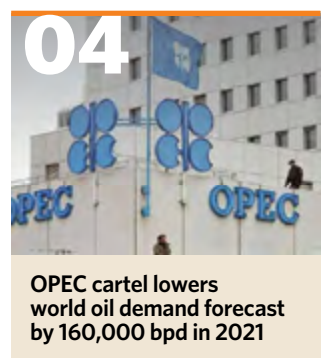
Foundations of Wellbeing covers Access to Basic Knowledge, Access to Information and Communication, Health and Wellness, and Environment Quality, while Opportunity covers Personal Rights, Personal Freedom and Choice, and Access to Advanced Education.



Runners from 30 nations to take part in Himam Trail Run Race



SOHAR to focus on renewable energy, plastic and food projects



OPEC cartel lowers world oil demand forecast by 160,000 bpd in 2021

Unesco lists navigator Ahmed bin Majid among influential world personalities

Paris - Oman's legendary navigator and cartographer Ahmed bin Majid, known as the Lion of the Sea for his seafaring exploits, has been added to a list of influential world personalities by Unesco.

The sultanate, represented by the Oman National Committee for Education, Culture and Sciences and the Office of Oman's Permanent Representative to the Unesco, succeeded in adding Ahmed bin Majid's name to the list of influential world personalities.

The listing, which coincides with the 600th birth anniversary of the navigator, will be recognised during a Unesco international programme to celebrate historic events and influential persons. Ahmed bin Majid will be the sixth Omani personality in the international programme.

The announcement was made on the sidelines of Oman's participation in the 41st session of Unesco's general conference being convened November 9 to November 24.



Ahmed bin Majid's innovations include a wind compass and a three-sided wooden instrument to locate stars

Ahmed bin Majid is counted among the most famous navigators in the Indian Ocean. His seafaring literature has enriched Arab and European libraries and constituted a basic reference in

principles of navigation. His innovations include the Al Warda instrument (wind compass) and a three-sided wooden instrument to locate stars. He is also credited with developing the contempo-

rary maritime compass.

The five Omani personalities who are on the Unesco list already, include linguist Al Khalil bin Ahmed al Farahidi, physician-cum-pharmacist Rashid bin Omaira al Rustaqi, social reformer Sheikh Nooreddin al Salmi, physician Abu Mohammed Abdullah al Azdi and poet Nassir bin Salim al Rowahi. ONA

Egypt to host 2022 climate summit and UAE in 2023

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has officially announced that Egypt and UAE will host the COP27 and COP28 UN Climate Change Conferences in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

At the UN Climate Change Conference COP26 in Glasgow on Thursday, Egypt's Minister of Environment Yasmine Fouad expressed her appreciation to all delegations, especially from African countries, for their support to Egypt.

The minister added that Egypt is committed to building on the success achieved at COP26 and will exert efforts to achieve success in the upcoming COP27 summit in Sharm el Sheikh.

She also welcomed all parties to meet next year in Egypt to work on reaching fair and balanced outcomes to face the impacts of climate change and to help developing and African countries to quickly face and

adapt to climate change.

In September, President Abdel Fattah el Sisi declared his country's interest in hosting COP27 on behalf of the African continent.

The UAE's bid was confirmed following unanimous endorsement by the Asia Pacific Group of nations during COP26.

In response, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, said, "We commit ourselves as a nation to supporting the entire international community in accelerating our combined efforts to overcome the very real threat of climate change."

Sheikh Abdullah further added that "COP28 will and must be a solutions COP" and that he is confident "the rich experience of this young, inclusive nation in advancing practical, viable and shareable solutions to the world's most pressing challenges will again come to the fore as we host the world for the UN Climate Change Conference in two years' time".

Runners from 30 nations to take part in Himam Trail Run Race

Three races – 70km, 35km and 20km – will be held in Nizwa on December 3

Our Correspondent Muscat

A countdown to the second edition of the Himam Trail Run Race is on with over 420 runners from 30 countries preparing for a challenge that will put their trail running and endurance skills to the test. Taking centre stage in Nizwa on December 3, the race is set to start in front of Bait al Rudaydah Castle in Birkat al Mouz, where trail running enthusiasts and professionals will run one of three distances - 70km, 35km or 20km - in a route across Jebel Akhdar.

Of the three, the 70km-challenge is the most technical, presenting athletes with a daunting elevation of 2,210m. The race then covers relatively flat ground to Wadi al Maurydaen towards the middle point and Wadi Bani Habib, before starting the descent back to Birkat al Mouz through Sayq and Sallut. The distance is certified by the International Trail Running Association, and is worth three ITRA points to each participant who completes



the race. The first runner to finish the course will receive a prize of RO500, RO300 for the second and RO150 for the third. The first female participant who completes the race will receive RO150 and all runners completing the course within 18 hours will receive a medal.

The second distance is an intermediate course that offers a carefully considered route of 35km over a variety of terrains and a comfortable descent to the finish line. The race follows the same route as the beginners' race to the village of Al Maurydaen and then climbs to reach Masirat al Rawajih, a total elevation of 1,050m before turning back and finishing in Birkat al Mouz. All runners finishing within the eight-hour time limit

will receive a medal.

The third distance is a beginners' race which has been designed for newcomers to trail running and runners aged 16 and older. The course covers 20km and an elevation of 350m through the old town of Birkat al Mouz and lush date plantations nearby before following a wide wadi towards the mountains and passing through Tawi Saddah and the village of Al Maurydaen before turning back towards Birkat al Mouz.

All races begin at 6.15am on December 3. Seeking accommodation for the runners within the area is recommended. A number of options are available and organisers have negotiated preferential rates for registered Himam Trail Run Race runners.

The Himam Trail Run Race is organised by Al Sahwa Team, under the umbrella of Nizwa Club. The event is also supported by Petroleum Development Oman as main partner, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Authority for SME Development. The event will be held in accordance to the latest safety procedures as per guidance from the Ministry of Health and the Supreme Committee. Masks are mandatory for spectators while in the start/finish areas and during the closing ceremony.

For more information, Runner's Guide and registration, WhatsApp 9540 9757 or 9244 8742, or email hikinghimam@gmail.com



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specialized Companies in the field of tender shown below and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	No E- Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/21/061	2021/MM/QS-30	Supply & Fixing Kiosk in Wilayat A' Seeb (E- Tender)	Rial 25	09/12/2021	23/12/2021	Specialized
PRE/21/072	2021/MM/QS-31	Replacing Of Damaged Gantry Signs In Various Locations In Muscat Area (Re Call) (E- Tender)	Rial 25	09/12/2021	23/12/2021	Specialized
PRE/21/091	2021/MM/QS-32	Supply of Safety Barriers (E- Tender)	Rial 25	25/11/2021	05/12/2021	Specialized
PRE/21/092	2021/MM/QS-33	Supply of Spare Parts for Road Marking Machines (E- Tender)	Rial 25	09/12/2021	23/12/2021	Specialized

Tender Conditions :-

- 1- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- 2- Tender Bonds shall be placed in the Tender Bond Box for E-Tendering in the Ground floor at Muscat Municipality Building, Ruwi, before **10:00 am** as per the date Mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.
- 3- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
- 4- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).







Dhofar Cattle Feed Company (S.A.O.G)

P.O. Box 1220 PC 211 Salalah – Phone 23225381 - Fax 23225258

Consolidated Un - Audited Financial for 3rd Quater Year 2021

Chairman's Communique

Dhofar Cattle Feed Financial Statements Consolidated and Parent Company 30th September 2021

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to place before you the unaudited group results of your company for the 3rd quarter ended 30th September 2021.

Financial Performance

Group

The group revenue for the period ended 30th September '21 was RO 30,129 Million, as compared to RO 30,128 Million achieved during the third quarter of previous year. Group's gross profit for the period under review was RO. 4,375 Million as against RO. 4,289 Million achieved during same quarter of previous year. The group loss for the period under review was RO. (1,053k) as against a loss of RO. (1,664K) during the same period last year.

Company

The company achieved a Revenue of RO. 25,572 Million during the period under review, compared to RO 25,490 Million with increase by 0.03% compared to the previous year. The COVID-19 started in mid of last year impacted the operation in term of raw material availability and cost of production increase and sale and marketing expenses increase. The gross profit for the period was RO. 3,240 Million as against RO. 2,625 Million achieved during the same period of previous year. The current period loss and reduced level of liquidity are mainly due to raw material cost increase, slow pace of investment and projects and increasing interest costs. The company achieved loss for the period under review of RO. (550k) as against a loss of RO (1,628k), compared to the third quarter of the previous year. The total assets of the company stood at RO 49,196 Million as compared to RO 42,958 Million as of previous year. The NAV stood at RO 0.350 as against NAV of RO 0.311 as of same period last year due to capital market value improvement.

Corporate Governance

The Company believes that to succeed on a sustainable basis, it must maintain high standards of corporate governance towards its shareholders, employees, consumers and community. To this end, the Company has always and will remain focused on good corporate governance. Your company has adhered to all the regulations covering corporate governance in Oman and your Board is fully committed to ensure compliance of all the applicable rules and regulations.

Omanisation / Training

Your company attaches enormous importance to Human resources as a strategic asset with specific attention to employ and nurture the local Omani talent. We

continue to develop our staff to lay the foundation for our future growth with great amount of emphasis being done to develop local talent.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Board, I express my sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tareq for his wise leadership and constant and generous support extended to the private sector. I would also like to thank our Management, staff, bankers, suppliers and our customers for their continuous trust placed upon your company.

Nasser Bin Muhammad Salem Al Harithi
Chairman

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 SEP 2021

	Group 2021 RO'000	Parent Company 2021 RO'000	Group 2020 RO'000	Parent Company 2020 RO'000
INCOME				
Revenue from sales of goods and services	30,129	25,572	30,128	25,490
Rental income	61	70	39	48
Cost of sales	(25,285)	(21,872)	(25,878)	(22,913)
Gross profit	4,905	3,770	4,289	2,625
EXPENSES				
Selling and distribution	3,696	3,060	3,844	3,197
General and administration	1,622	987	1,855	1,140
Directors' remuneration and meeting	76	59	79	49
	5,394	4,106	5,778	4,386
Profit / (loss) from operations	(490)	(336)	(1,490)	(1,781)
Investment income (net)	142	331	187	187
Other income	82	32	560	526
Share of result of associates	150	-	-	-
Finance costs (net)	(935)	(577)	(921)	(579)
Profit / (loss) before taxation	(1,051)	(550)	(1,684)	(1,628)
Taxation	(2)	-	-	-
Net profit / (loss) for the year	(1,053)	(550)	(1,684)	(1,628)
Other comprehensive income for the year:				
Potentially reclassifiable to the income statement:				
Movement in Fair value reserve	2,892	2,892	49	49
Deferred tax effect on movement in fair value reserve	-	-	-	-
Other comprehensive income for the year	2,892	2,892	49	49
Total comprehensive income for the year	1,839	2,342	(1,615)	(1,579)
Net profit / (loss) attributable to:				
Shareholders of the Parent Company	(991)	(550)	(1,651)	(1,628)
Non-controlling interest	(62)	-	(13)	-
	(1,053)	(550)	(1,664)	(1,628)
Total comprehensive income attributable to:				
Shareholders of the Parent Company	1,901	2,342	(1,602)	(1,579)
Non-controlling interest	(62)	-	(13)	-
Basic earnings per share (RO)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.020)	(0.020)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEP 2021

	Group 2021 RO'000	Parent Company 2021 RO'000	Group 2020 RO'000	Parent Company 2020 RO'000
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	14,225	7,619	14,931	7,878
Right-of-use assets	1,065	965	711	588
Intangible assets	89	36	62	2
Investments in subsidiaries	0	2,927	0	3,070
Investments in associates	2,941	2,812	2,916	2,812
Fair Value through other comprehensive income	15,068	15,068	12,700	12,700
Investment properties	2,000	2,000	1,010	1,010
Biological assets	4,256	4,256	3,440	3,440
Deferred tax asset	385	232	249	232
Total non-current assets	40,028	35,915	36,020	31,732
Current assets				
Inventories and biological assets	10,775	7,412	10,601	6,887
Accounts and other receivables	4,875	5,359	3,641	4,053
Bank balances and cash	552	510	487	286
Total current assets	16,203	13,281	14,729	11,226
Total assets	56,231	49,196	50,749	42,958
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	8,085	8,085	8,085	8,085
Legal reserve	2,599	2,599	2,599	2,599
Voluntary reserve	3,712	3,712	3,712	3,712
Revaluation reserve	525	0	525	0
Fair value reserve	6,930	6,930	4,562	4,562
Retained earnings	5,664	6,940	5,689	6,206
Equity attributable to Shareholders of the Parent Company	27,515	28,266	25,172	25,164
Non-controlling interest	217	-	316	-
Total equity and non-controlling interest	27,732	28,266	25,488	25,164
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities				
Non-current portion of term loans	195	195	1,318	1,224
Employees' end of service benefits	924	639	898	648
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	714	621	459	362
Deferred tax liability	15	-	2	-
Total non-current liabilities	1,848	1,454	2,677	2,234
Current liabilities				
Bank borrowings	16,359	9,852	10,291	4,090
Current portion of term loans	1,613	1,519	1,789	1,509
Accounts and other payables	8,270	7,718	10,163	9,854
Current portion of lease liabilities	403	386	309	276
Income Tax Payables	5	0	31	31
Total current liabilities	26,651	19,475	22,584	15,560
Total liabilities	28,499	20,929	25,261	17,794
Total equity and liabilities	56,231	49,196	50,749	42,958
Net assets per share (RO)	0.340	0.350	0.311	0.311

Note : The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any share- holder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request .



OPEC cuts world oil demand forecast for 2021

Paris, France - OPEC has lowered its world oil demand forecast for 2021, citing weaker demand in major consumers China and India, and an expected hit from high energy prices.

In a monthly report, the cartel of major oil producers cut its forecast by around 160,000 barrels per day (bpd).

Global demand for 2021 is now forecast to reach 96.4mn bpd.

'Revisions were mainly to account for slower than anticipated demand from China and India' in the third quarter, the report said.

'In addition, a slowdown in the

pace of recovery in the fourth quarter is now assumed due to elevated energy prices,' it said.

China's economy slowed more than expected in the third quarter as a crackdown on the property sector and a looming energy crisis began to bite.

OPEC's report said India's recovery was 'still challenged by the lingering effects of the recent COVID-19 wave'.

OPEC expects world oil demand to rise to 100.6mn bpd in 2022, 500,000 more barrels per days than before the pandemic in 2019.

AFP

SOHAR to focus on plastic, food and renewable energy projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

SOHAR Freezone in the coming years will be focusing on attracting plastic and food industries and renewable energy projects in the zone, which is a 4,500 hectares development.

In an interview published in the latest issue of the *Duqm Economist* magazine, Omar al Mahrizi, CEO of SOHAR Freezone, said, "SOHAR Freezone will focus in the coming years on plastic and food industries, vehicle spare parts, renewable energy projects, mining, iron and steel, and circular economy projects. The zone attracts downstream integrated projects that offer opportunities to establish other projects that benefit from the products of existing factories."

SOHAR Freezone, Mahrizi said, is currently working on attracting industries that depend on polyethylene products, which will be produced in the Liwa Plastic Industries Complex.

"It targets industries that seek exporting their products and benefiting from the integrated logistics system of SOHAR Port and Freezone as one entity. The zone attracts factories that export their products to the GCC or India, so they establish their businesses in Sohar to get closer to the target consumer markets. SOHAR Freezone offers competitive advantages," he added.

Mahrizi noted that the investment volume in the existing projects in SOHAR Freezone stands at RO353mn (excluding the investments spared for establish-



SOHAR Freezone is currently working on attracting industries that depend on polyethylene products, which will be produced in the Liwa Plastic Industries Complex

OMAR AL MAHRIZI

ing and improving the zone's infrastructure).

He pointed out that 44 industrial projects have been established in SOHAR Freezone in various sectors such as minerals, petrochemicals, food industries, and others. The zone also includes a number of companies leasing warehouses and offices, which are provided by the zone as a competitive advantage.

Speaking about under construction projects, Mahrizi said under construction projects include Al Hosun Cold Storages, Sohar Qabas solar power plant, truck restrooms, quartz and mineral products factory and Sanvira carbon factory. "The volume of investment in these projects is RO76.5mn," he added.

Mahrizi emphasised that SOHAR enjoys a diversity of ex-

isting projects, where many sectors flourish, such as logistics, clean energy, iron and steel, minerals, chemicals, and textiles. He noted that the zone is rich with the diversity of investors' nationalities form the sultanate, GCC, Europe, India, and South and East Asia.

Regarding SOHAR Freezone's development phases, Mahrizi explained, "The zone, established in 2010, stretches over 4,500 hectares and has been divided into five phases. During the past years, most of the area was leased out in the first phase, which prompted us to launch the second phase, which includes 516 hectares."

Pointing out the contribution

of Sohar Freezone in strengthening Oman's national economy and economic diversification, Mahrizi said, "SOHAR Port and Free Zone contribute about 2.7 per cent to the sultanate's GDP and award 13 per cent of contracts to the local companies, with most have been awarded to SMEs. SOHAR Freezone was able to provide thousands of direct and indirect jobs and support youth training plans."

He also shed light on the future vision 'SOHAR 2040', stressing that its goal is to form an integrated logistics and industrial centre that to employ latest global technologies and follow highest standards of sustainability in various activities.

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Thailand's PTT to purchase 5mn barrels of Oman crude

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Thailand's state-owned energy company PTT has signed an agreement to purchase 5mn barrels of Oman crude oil during the first half of next year.

In a statement, PTT said its international trading business unit has signed the sale and purchase agreement with PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation and PTTEP MENA Limited for a total 5mn barrels of Oman crude oil delivery from January to June 2022.

Auttapol Rerkpiboon, president and chief executive officer of PTT, presided over the signing ceremony between PTT and PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation (POC) and PTTEP MENA Limited.

The contract has been signed by Disathat Panyarachun, senior executive vice president, International Trading Business Unit, PTT, and Montri Rawanchaikul, chief executive officer of PTTEP. Kris Imsang, chief operating officer - Downstream Petroleum



Business Group, PTT, also witnessed the signing ceremony.

Panyarachun said Oman crude is widely recognised as one of the most important crude benchmarks in the world.

He said, "PTT's International Trading Business Unit wins the sale and purchase agreement with PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation and PTTEP MENA Limited for the total of 5mn barrels of Oman crude oil delivery from January till June 2022. This Oman crude will provide further trading opportunities, including out-out trading, and profits to the company and Thailand."

Rawanchaikul said PTTEP returned to Oman in 2019 through

the acquisition of Partex Corporation which later transformed into PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation (POC) and currently acquires two onshore producing petroleum blocks. "The PDO (Block 6) project has a total oil production volume approximately of 610,000 barrels per day and Mukhaizna (Block 53) project holds approximately 120,000 barrels per day."

Earlier this year in February 2021, PTTEP further acquired 20 per cent in Block 61 of Oman through PTTEP MENA Limited (a subsidiary of PTTEP) which adds on condensate production volume around 65,000 barrels per day.

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MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

MSX retreats on weakness in all sub-indices

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) posted weekly losses driven by weakness in all the sectors. The MSX30 index ended the week lower by 0.94 per cent.

All sub-indices ended lower for the week. The Services index fell 0.85 per cent, followed by Financial index that fell by 0.45 per cent and Industrial index that dropped by 0.09 per cent. MSX Shariah index also closed lower by 0.88 per cent during the week.

The MSX is likely to remain range-bounded this week due to lack of significant triggers in the local market.

Local news

►A Royal Directive was issued to stabilise vehicle fuel prices in Oman in accordance with the rates of October 2021 as a maximum ceiling. The government will bear the loss from the differences in oil prices till the end of 2022, the directive said. The fuel prices for the month of October were 229bz per litre for M91; 239bz for M95; and 258bz for diesel.

►During the week, Oman National Engineering & Investment

Company (ONEIC) announced that Al Hadeetha Resources LLC has awarded ONEIC a contract for a sum of RO1.138mn for a period of ten months.

►Oman Chlorine announced that it has commenced commercial production of Caustic Soda Plant Expansion which will contribute additional 30mn tonnes per day (TPD) to its daily production. With this expansion the capacity of the plant will be 75mn TPD.

►Oman Chlorine also announced signing a non-binding letter with Basic Chemical Industries KSA for a regional alliance and a commercial strategic partnership including investment into one of the subsidiaries - Union Chlorine LLC based in the UAE. Oman Chlorine also didn't reach a deal on divestiture of a 9 per cent stake in Union Chlorine (as disclosed on July 14, 2021 about a non-binding letter of intent signed with Basic Chemical Industries Company)

►Oman Cement Company (OCC) launched an oil-well cement strength testing equipment, which is considered the most advanced instrument in



Oman used for measuring the quality of cement. The testing equipment simulates the high pressure and heat conditions prevalent in oil wells to test quality. Through this move, OCC aims to develop the quality measurement of oilfield cement produced by the company to fulfil the demand in Oman and abroad. Dr Hilal Saif al Dhamri, general manager of manufacturing at OCC said, "This equipment is one of the most advanced devices used for measuring the efficiency of oil-well cement in the sultanate. It measures the suitability of using cement in the oil-well environ-

ment by measuring the samples in conditions similar to those prevalent in oil wells."

►Sohar International Bank recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Vodafone. "Vodafone has been recognised as an international leader in telecom and we are indeed proud to partner with the brand. With a strong track record attesting to its business excellence, we are certain that this partnership will be mutually beneficial. Meanwhile, our expert team of professionals will offer their unconditional support and assistance to Vodafone as they establish their

presence in the country," said Sayyed al Busaidi.

GCC markets

Ratings agency Moody's said last week it expects Bahrain to receive additional financing from its Gulf allies. The heavily indebted Gulf state was bailed out with a US\$10bn package in 2018 from wealthier Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE, but in September postponed by two years plans to balance its budget after the coronavirus crisis strained its finances.

Moody's raised Saudi Arabia's outlook to 'stable' from 'negative' and affirmed its rating at 'A1'. The agency stated that its rating reflects the possibility that the Saudi government would reverse most of its 2020 debt growth while maintaining fiscal buffers. Moody's praised the kingdom's fiscal policies effectiveness evidenced by policy responses in periods of both low and high oil prices, which consistently shows a commitment to controlling and sustaining the public financial position over the long term. Higher oil prices are expected to improve the public financial position

over the next years. However, stable outlook takes into account that oil prices will remain volatile. The kingdom recorded a surplus of SAR6.7bn in the third quarter of 2021.

S&P Global Ratings said last week it has affirmed its 'AA-/A-1+' long- and short-term foreign and local currency ratings on Qatar, citing that the outlook is stable for the country. The ratings agency said it considered that the rapid growth of foreign debt in the Qatari banking system could present balance-of-payment risks if the capital inflows were to reverse sharply, but that it was not the agency's base-case scenario. S&P said it could consider raising the ratings if Qatar's external and fiscal net asset positions proved stronger than forecast, while the banking system's elevated stock of short-term external debt moderated in an orderly way.

The president of Qatar's General Tax Authority (GTA), Ahmed bin Issa al Mohannadi, confirmed that the authority does not intend to impose a tax on income and that the value-added tax is still under legisla-

tion. He explained that in general, tax is a sum of money imposed by the government on companies, and it is one of the sources of public revenue as it is redistributed between sectors and government services provided to individuals to achieve equality and economic stability in the country.

Recommendation

Oil has been under pressure amid a stronger dollar and after a US government report showed a surprise increase in domestic crude stockpiles. Nevertheless, it continues to remain above US\$80 per barrel at the time of writing this report.

Regionally, the markets performed very well, especially the UAE, Saudi and Kuwait markets remained in the limelight. We believe that this momentum will continue in the coming weeks.

Locally, we believe that the market will likely remain range bound due to lack of triggers. We advise investors to watch developments on oil as the direction of oil price movement is likely to have a direct impact on the local and regional markets.

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Group of countries vow to exit oil and gas at COP26

Glasgow, UK - A handful of nations committed to phasing out oil and gas production at the COP26 summit in Glasgow, in what organisers Denmark and Costa Rica hope will inspire a global movement towards ending fossil fuels.

The coalition, which includes a dozen countries, was announced as nations tussle over a range of issues in the final stages of the UN climate talks in Glasgow.

The UN summit aims to implement the Paris Agreement, which has a target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. To do that, scientists say the use of oil and gas must be radically slashed.

The Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance counts France and Greenland among its core members, committing to end new oil and gas exploration and extraction and set a Paris-aligned date for ending production. The US state of California is also among a wider group signed up to measures to restrict fossil fuel supply.

"Now we extend the challenge to others," said Danish Climate, Energy and Utilities Minister Dan Jorgensen. Denmark, which is among the largest oil and gas producers in Europe, said it will phase out production by 2050 and cancel all future licensing rounds.

"The fossil era must come to



Protesters march past the venue of COP26 climate conference behind a large banner displaying a message against the use of fossil fuels in Glasgow on Friday (AFP)

Pledges 'hollow' unless fossil fuels end: UN

Glasgow, UK - Promises by governments to cut carbon emissions 'ring hollow' as long as they continue to funnel trillions of investment to oil, gas and coal projects, UN chief Antonio Guterres said on Thursday.

"The announcements here in Glasgow are encouraging - but they are far from enough," he told the COP26 climate summit. "Promises ring hollow

when the fossil fuels industry still receives trillions in subsidies."

Guterres called on the governments 'to pick up the pace and show the necessary ambition' to confront the climate crisis. "We cannot settle for the lowest common denominator. We know what must be done," he said. "Every country, every city, every company, every financial institution must radi-

cally, credibly and verifiably reduce their emissions and decarbonise their portfolios starting now," Guterres said.

British minister Alok Sharma, the host president of COP26, warned that time was running short to clinch a deal. "We still have a monumental challenge ahead of us," he said, appealing to delegates to show more ambition.

AFP

an end," said Jorgensen. "But just as the Stone Age did not end due to lack of stone, the fossil era will not end because there's no more oil left in the ground. It will end because governments decided to do the right thing."

The initiative was welcomed as a first step that would need

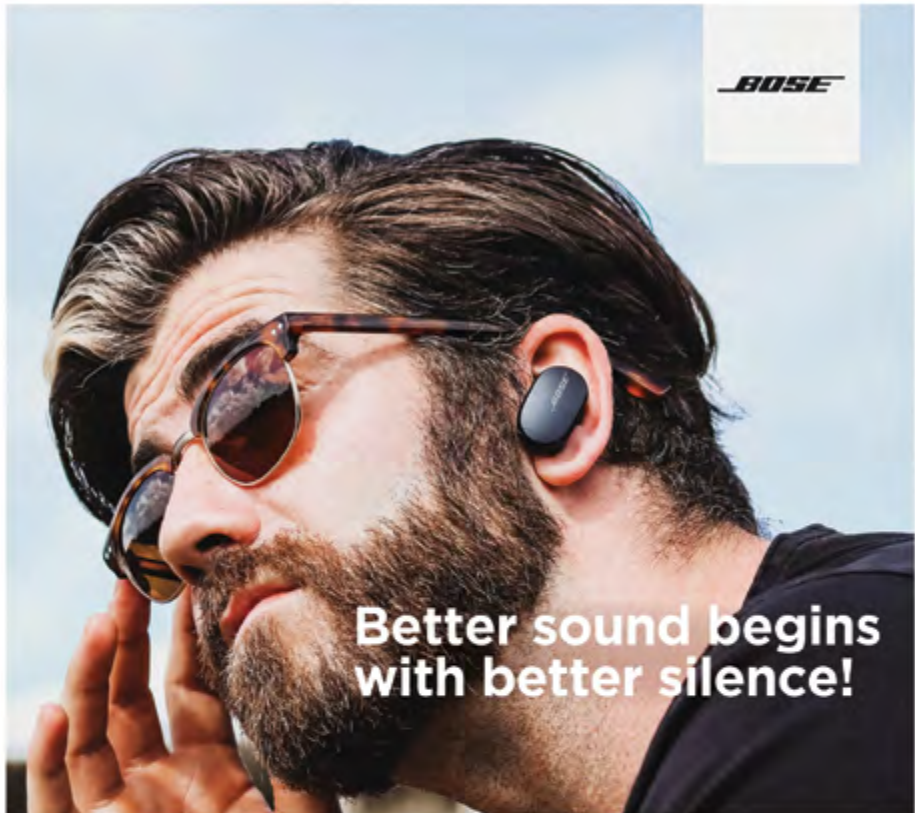
the buy-in of more oil producing nations to have an impact.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its special report on 1.5°C, offered estimates of how much fossil fuel use needed to decline in order to hit the temperature cap.

Absent large-scale deploy-

ment of untested technology, it said that oil use needed to fall 37 per cent by 2030 and 87 per cent by 2050. Gas would need to fall by 25 per cent by 2030 and 74 per cent by 2050, and coal use would need to fall 97 per cent by mid-century.

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Indian businesses in Oman discuss road aheadThe Embassy of India organised 'Ambassador's CEO Roundtable: Indian Businesses in Oman - A promising future' on November 9. The meet was attended by CEOs and heads of prominent Indian business houses and Indian public sector undertakings in Oman.

H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of India, spoke about the significance of India-Oman trade and investment relations and the contribution of the Indian diaspora and Indian companies based in Oman to further enhance these relations. He mentioned that there is a huge potential for Indian companies in Oman in the post-COVID-19 period and that the time was right to tap the Omani market.

He underlined the importance of aligning with the Oman Vision 2040 and working together with Sultanate of Oman to achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. This would be beneficial for the growth of Indian companies in Oman, he said.

The ambassador highlighted that Indian companies in Oman can play a crucial role of connecting and guiding Indian companies and their counterparts in Oman on the basis of their experience and knowledge about Oman. He also encouraged participants and all Indian companies in Oman to explore possibilities of bringing Omani investment to India to realise the Government of India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.



Participants shared their experiences, challenges and business opportunities available in Oman and were unanimously positive about the Omani economic growth and investment opportunity in the post pandemic period. To this end, they shared their constructive ideas and views for stronger cooperation between India and Oman.

There was unanimity among the participants that Oman Vision 2040 presents new opportunities for further growth of

Indian business in Oman and committed to better aligning their respective strategies to Vision 2040 of Oman. It was agreed that potential major sectors for Indian companies in Oman are IT, including digital services and education, agriculture and food products, pharmaceuticals, mining, new energy, transportation and tourism. Need for more visits of business delegations from India to Oman and vice-versa, organising sector-specific buyer-seller meets, investment related seminars and a GAP analysis to assess the potential of Indian companies in Oman in different sectors were discussed.

The Round-table is expected to contribute to the drawing up of a road-map for stronger trade and investment collaboration between India and Oman and will help the embassy in better assisting and partnering with Indian businesses in Oman.

Volkswagen Oman ties up with Budget RAC

Volkswagen has partnered with car-rental company, Budget RAC to extend leasing services to customers in Oman. This new partnership allows customers to avail special leasing prices on the wider range of Volkswagen vehicles, a press release said.

Customers choosing to lease a Volkswagen through Budget RAC will receive leasing solutions including no depreciation value on the vehicle, no service and maintenance costs during the leasing period, a generous annual mileage allowance and no down payment. Additionally, customers also get free insurance and registration.



The partnership will extend preferential rates for customers for long term, short term lease and daily rental options.

Christian Nehme, general manager of Premium Motors

Oman, said, "We are delighted to partner with Budget RAC to offer leasing services in Oman. Volkswagen offers the right vehicle to meet all kinds of requirements. Volkswagen cars are innovative, affordable, fun

to drive, safe, fuel-efficient, and distinctly German-engineered. Our mission is to provide customers with a unique and innovative automotive experience by offering a wide range of products and services that deliver superior value and satisfaction."

He added, "Our collaboration guarantees our commitment to unparalleled service, customized solutions, and world-class vehicles that raise the standard in their respective classes."

Benty Jose, general manager of Budget RAC said, "We are extremely pleased to tie up with Volkswagen Oman. We believe that the Volkswagen models are a great addition to our existing portfolio and will help us provide great choice to our customers and meet the demand of the Omani market."

Indian businesses in Oman discuss the road ahead

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Indian companies in Oman should try to import more products made in India, he said, assuring full support and assistance of the embassy to any Indian company or investor in Oman. Participants shared their experiences, challenges and business opportunities available in Oman and were unanimously positive about the Omani economic growth and investment opportunity in the post pandemic period. To this end, they shared their constructive ideas and views for stronger cooperation between India and Oman.

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Bank Muscat extends support to visually-impaired students

Bank Muscat has extended strong support to students with special needs studying in different educational institutions in Oman. The bank provided BrailleSense devices and laptops to a number of visually impaired students at Sohar University to support and motivate them.

The devices were given away in the presence of Dr Hamdan Sulaiman al Fazari, acting president, Sohar University, and Yousuf Khalfan al Nadabi, regional manager North al Batinah, Bank Muscat.

These devices will help the students both in their studies and also in their day-to-day lives by enhancing their skills and capabilities and their potential to contribute to society, a press release said.

On this occasion, Talib al Makhmari, manager, Community and Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said, "We are happy with our constant partnership with Sohar University in extending support to students. Continuing our strong partnership with higher education institutions is



one of the top most priorities at Bank Muscat. Such initiatives are of great importance because they are designed to contribute in enhancing the day-to-day life of visually-impaired students and extend a helping hand to improving their success rate in higher education and help them get suitable job opportunities in the future. This is a key part of Bank Muscat's efforts in social responsibility in different fields."

He further said, "We are proud to partner with higher education institutions and we will continue supporting our students and offer them the best



Ahli Islamic holds 2021 Qitaf draw

Ahli Islamic held its 2021 Qitaf third quarter draw, which saw the top winner walk away with a whopping RO100,000.

The streamed live virtual event also announced the lucky winner of its RO20,000 October draw, and presented winners of its weekly prize scheme: children's draw of RO50 - for three winners, and RO250 - for two winners, from each branch, respectively, a press release said.

Reiterating Ahli Islamic's pledge to fulfill its customers' dreams by creating opportunities that help financially stabilise their future, Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, deputy general manager and head of the Ahli Islamic, said, "On behalf of Ahli Islamic, it gives me great pleasure to felicitate (Ahmed Mohammed), the winner of Qitaf third quarter draw from Ghubra branch. We hope that the prize money will help him achieve his dreams.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to call on our customers to continue saving and improve their prospect of winning through our Qitaf prize scheme. At Ahli Islamic, we believe in growth that is attained by delivering a portfolio of innovative products and services, which not only meets the customers' needs, but also enables them to benefit in far-reaching ways. This is in addition to our unstinted support in helping our customers maintain their financial stability, secure their future, and fulfill their aspirations."

Drawing attention to the virtues of Qitaf, he added, "Qitaf reflects our efforts to provide unique savings opportunities that are in line with the needs of customers. Our larger objective is to instill a culture of prudent savings among them and reward them for their commitment through quarterly, monthly and weekly and children weekly prize draws, in addition to special event draws. In our new 2021 Qitaf prize scheme, we have added new categories to increase our customers' chances of winning."

The basic premise behind Qitaf is to not only promote a culture of savings among Omani people, but also to provide opportunities to invest in profitable assets that are in accordance with the bank's standards and are based on the principle of sharia'ah-compliant speculation. As for this year's Qitaf draws scheme, the bank seeks to reward more than 4,200 customers from all its branches, with prizes totaling more than RO1,250,000 all through the year.

An evening with Olympic sailor Caterina Banti

The Ras Al Hamra Boat Club (RAHBC) welcomed Caterina Banti, Gold medalist at Tokyo 2020 in the Nacra 17 class, to Oman for an exclusive evening with the Italian and sailing communities in Oman last weekend.

The event was held under the patronage of H E Federica Favi, Ambassador of Italy to the Sultanate of Oman, and Dana Sarhani, RAHBC Commodore, in partnership with the Italian Sailing Federation, Oman Sail, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and the Italian Embassy in Muscat, at Sohar Gardens. Guest speakers included Dr Francesco Ettore, president of the Italian Sailing Federation, and Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail.

The guests were welcomed by Adel Foory, president of RAHRC and his team who manage the club and its 45 sections that are run primarily by volunteers since 1961.

Adel commented, "We are proud of our sailing community who have navigated their way through the last few months and have kept their passion for sailing alive despite restrictions with courses and activities. They were the last community to host an event in 2020 and the first community to host their RAHBC annual regatta when things reopened".

Dana Sarhani said, "It is a



(Left to right; Dr Francesco Ettore, Gabriele Bruni, Caterina Banti, Dr Chiara Cei (moderator), Ibtisam al Sami, Musab al Hadi, Khamis al Anbouri, Dr Khamis al Jabri

great honour to welcome Caterina Banti to Oman and provide an opportunity for her to share her sailing experiences and achievements with Club members. We are equally honoured that Dr Ettore and Dr Al Jabri can share stories from their extensive maritime careers.

"Oman and Italy both have a deep affinity with the sea and

sailing, and we were able to hear first-hand their visions on the future of this sport and gather the views of those best placed in Oman to make these plans a reality."

Banti is one of the most successful sailors in Italian history, winning gold at the 2018 Nacra 17 World Championships, and three gold medals at the Nacra

17 European Championships between 2017 and 2020. Her gold in Japan with teammate Ruggero Tita was Italy's fourth Olympic gold medal in sailing and the first since 2000.

Guests were enthralled by the story of her rise through the sport, the determination to qualify and how she coped with the postponement of the Games.

Dr Ettore also shared an insight into the strategy for a more inclusive and youth-orientated sport while Dr Al Jabri gave his perspective on sailing in Oman and the potential for Oman Sail to win a medal at future Olympic Games.

Other speakers for the evening included champion sailor Musab al Hadi, Ibtisam al

Salmi, one of the first female sailors in the country, Oman Sail's head of performance, Hashim al Rashdi and manager of SailFree (the first para sailing programme in the region), Khamis Al Anbouri.

Each panellist answered questions on the future of the sport, with a particular focus on how sailors can use their position to

encourage more women and young people to take to the water whilst also highlighting the values of hard work, dedication and teamwork.

The evening concluded with a reception and commitment by stakeholders to further explore joint ways of working together to benefit the sport of sailing, both in Oman and Italy.

Muscat Bay offers turnkey investment opportunity

Muscat Bay, Oman's premier lifestyle destination offers a high investor yield opportunity on its two-bedroom Smart Park View apartments for those looking at diversifying their investment portfolio into real-estate assets with proven returns.

These fully-furnished apartments are ready for immediate handover with just 5% booking and come with 3-year payment plan, 1-year service charge waived for only RO120,000. Comparative two-bedroom units are being rented already at between RO400-500 at Muscat Bay.

This means that the net yield over a 3 year payment plan period, assuming 100% occupancy, can be as high as 11%, a press release said.

As part of a growing luxury resort village with 90% occupancy of sold units, this incredible opportunity is also tipped as a preferred choice for investors as it comes with the Muscat Bay advantage of an exclusive address, a well-managed community lifestyle, and stunning location. With the 5-star Jumeirah beach hotel also slated to open by the end of this year, this investment is uniquely poised to appreciate and offer higher investor yield as increasingly numbers.



Integrated right in the heart of Muscat Bay, these park view apartments are part of the Zaha zone, with views overlooking 5 hectares of open parkland that support a thriving community lifestyle with swimming pool, sports amenities and access to the Village Square with restaurants, cafes, supermarket, gym and other facilities.

Ready for immediate occu-

pancy, they offer high-quality fit-out and furnishings while integrating timeless Omani design, saving the cost and hassle of setting up an unfurnished space.

For those looking at assured rental returns, there is plenty to be reassured by as they are expected to offer up to 11% rental yield per annum, during the first 3 years of rental at Muscat Bay using current rental rates.

OTC floats Oman Chef competition

Oman Tourism College (OTC) announced the opening of registration for the 'Oman Chef' competition. This event is powered by Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group), in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and organised by Celebrate Oman.

The registration is open until November 21, with the competition taking place from December 4 to 18, held on every Saturday, at the OTC campus. The event intends to promote and celebrate locally sourced ingredients and local food consumption, a press release said.

The competition is open to chefs of all ages and nationalities, male and female, who are working in Oman in any hotels, restaurants and catering companies and have occupied various positions up to the position of Sous Chef. Those wishing to participate need to fill in an online registration form and include a short profile of themselves.

Commenting on the importance of organising such events, Qais Zahir al Hosni, chairman and acting dean of OTC, said, "The Oman Chef competition seeks to promote local resources and aims at enhancing In-Country Value (ICV) for local business and SMEs in the food sector. Participants are expected to cele-



brate natural local ingredients by utilising Omani made food products, at all stages of the competition. This also seeks to highlight the available talents and the promising career opportunities offered by the hospitality sector within the Sultanate."

Nora Ourabah Haddad, FAO representative in Oman, said, "By extending support of this competition, we look to raise awareness of local natural products by encouraging and supporting the Omani industry, introducing and promoting Omani products and shed light on the importance of choosing local food products in support of workers in the respective industry. This, in turn, will

positively impact the national economy.

Our support for this competition also coincides with the World Food Day celebrations that will continue until the end of the year, intended to enhance, and encourage the production and consumption of healthy food products. In addition, the purchase and consumption of local products contribute to supplementing farmers and manufacturers of food products, which leads to raising production, enhancing efficiency and the competitiveness of the Omani product across various markets, while simultaneously being beneficial to the national economy."

Highlighting the importance of the competition, Sarah al Balushi, founder of Celebrate Oman, noted, "We are pleased to participate in the organising of the Oman Chef competition, which will shed light on the variety of Omani products. I am confident that the chefs in Oman will take advantage of this opportunity to augment their presence and share their experience and knowledge with others."

The competition is an incredible opportunity for chefs and food enthusiasts in Oman to put their creative culinary skills to the test and make use of readily available local products to create an authentic Omani ambience.

Soo Chai - new Ceylon masala tea launched in Oman

H E Ameer Ajwad, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman, launched a new brand of Ceylon Masala Tea, 'Soo Chai' at the auditorium of the National Bank of Oman (NBO) in Muscat on November 10.

Ceylon masala tea named 'Soo Chai', is a product of Soo Group in Sri Lanka which includes premium quality blend of Ceylon tea combined with high quality Ceylon spices with over 10 natural health boosting ingredients. Soo Chai is the first of its kind in the market of masala tea products and offers a unique twist to the masala tea industry with spices such as cardamom,



cinnamon, clove, star anise, nutmeg, peppercorns, ginger, turmeric and cumin, a press release said.

Shan Abeywardena, managing director of Soo Group, introduced the new brand by highlighting its health benefits during the launch.

Triq Atiq, NBO general manager and high ranking officials of the bank, including G V Ramakrishna, head of Sales and Business Development, participated at the launch.

Soo Chai masala tea was served by the co-partner of Soo Group, Shezna Sumanadeera, among the participants.

UK urges to adopt ‘balanced’ climate deal

Large emitters such as China, Saudi, Russia tried to remove the mention of polluting fuels from the draft

Glasgow, UK - Britain on Saturday urged compromise among feuding COP26 delegates as it touted a ‘balanced’ package to help avert the worst effects of climate change in what is meant to be the Glasgow summit’s final hours.

COP26 president Alok Sharma told delegates from nearly 200 countries that a draft summit text attempted to reconcile yawning gaps between rich emitters and developing nations that have hobbled the fortnight’s discussions.

“Everyone has had a chance to have their say. I hope that colleagues will appreciate what is on the table,” he said, presenting a third draft text.

“While not every aspect will be welcomed by everyone, collectively, this is a package that really moves things forward for everyone,” Sharma added.

He added ‘it is my intention that we will close this COP this afternoon’ - while allowing more time for haggling over technical issues.

After three nights of all-night negotiations that have blown COP26 past its scheduled finish of Friday, delegates are still trying to agree a deal to deliver greater emissions cuts and vital finance for vulnerable states.

The new draft text released by Sharma’s team urged nations to accelerate efforts to phase out unfiltered coal and ‘inefficient’ fossil fuel subsidies.

Large emitters such as China,



Climate activists participate in a protest action during the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow on Friday (AFP)

Saudi Arabia and Russia had tried to remove the mention of polluting fuels, according to delegates.

But after resistance from rich nations led by the United States and European Union, the draft text omitted any reference to a specific finance facility for ‘loss and damage’ - the mounting cost of global warming so far - which has been a key demand of poorer nations.

Do the right thing

The text noted ‘with deep regret’ that wealthy nations had also failed to stump up a separate annual sum of US\$100bn they promised over a decade ago. It urged countries to pay up ‘urgently and through 2025’.

Greenpeace International chief Jennifer Morgan told AFP that the language on fossil fuels ‘is far from what is needed but sends a signal - I dare countries

to take that out of the text right now’.

“The US has to support the most vulnerable on the issue of loss and damage. They cannot avoid this issue any longer. Nor can the European Union,” she added.

“I would call on President [Joe] Biden to do what’s right, and support the most vulnerable in helping them deal with their losses.”

There was no immediate comment from the US, but EU Commission vice president Frans Timmermans denied that the rich world had turned its back on the countries most at risk.

“We have increased substantially our financial contribution, both in terms of the US\$100bn but also in terms of the adaptation fund,” he told reporters.

“But if there is more we can do, we will certainly try and

The US has to support the most vulnerable on the issue of loss and damage. I would call on President [Joe] Biden to do what’s right, and support the most vulnerable in helping them deal with their losses

JENNIFER MORGAN

help,” Timmermans said.

‘Bullied’

Saleemul Huq, director of the ICCAD climate NGO, said the British COP26 presidency had been ‘bullied’ overnight into rejecting specific loss and damage funding.

“The UK’s words to the vulnerable countries have been proven to be totally unreliable,” he said.

The delegates in Glasgow are trying to hammer out how to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement goals to limit temperature rises to 1.5°C-2°C.

Countries already battered by climate disasters such as record-breaking drought, flooding and storms are demanding they be compensated separately for loss and damage, and have made it a

red line issue.

However, a proposal to include the creation of a dedicated facility to administer financial support was quashed by the United States and EU, delegates said.

Amadou Sebory Toure, head of the G77+China negotiating bloc, told AFP the proposal was ‘put forward by the entire developing world, representing six of every seven people on Earth’.

Alden Meyer, senior associate at climate policy thinktank E3G, said loss and damage talks were a ‘cliffhanger moment’ that could jeopardise the UK’s goal of wrapping the summit up later Saturday.

Developing nations say it is unfair for the summit to produce an unbalanced agreement heavily weighted toward ‘mitigation’ - how economies can ditch fossil fuels by 2050.

They want specific instruction on how they can meet the bill of decarbonising while also adapting to the natural disasters supercharged by global warming.

Another key sticking point are rules governing carbon markets. Countries that benefited from a global framework predating Paris want to be able to carry over credits into the new deal.

There is still disagreement over rules preventing double counting of carbon savings and to what extent the private sector is governed by guidelines agreed between nations.

AFP



Opponents of the military coup gather behind a roadblock as they take part in a protest in the Sudanese capital Khartoum’s twin city of Umdurman, on Saturday (AFP)

Sudan anti-coup protesters rally as army tightens grip

Khartoum, Sudan - Sudanese security forces shot dead at least one protester on Saturday in a crackdown on anti-coup demonstrations, medics said, after the military tightened its grip by forming a new ruling council.

The pro-democracy protests come nearly three weeks after top general Abdel Fattah al Burhan ousted the government, detained the civilian leadership and declared a state of emergency.

“One protester was killed in Omdurman by the bullets of the putschist military council,” the Central Committee for Sudanese Doctors said in a statement referring to security forces.

Other demonstrators in Khartoum’s twin city were wounded by ‘live rounds’, it added.

An AFP correspondent reported hearing the sound of gunfire as well at a protest in east Khartoum.

Tear gas was also fired at many protests in Khartoum and neighbouring cities as security forces sought to disperse the demonstrations, witnesses and an AFP correspondent there said.

‘No, no to military rule’, ‘Civilian [rule] is the people’s choice’,

and ‘Down with the entire council’, the protesters in southern Khartoum shouted.

Thousands rallied nationwide, with protests taking place in the cities of Atbara, Wad Madani as well as in the central state of North Kordofan and in Port Sudan city and Kassala state, witnesses said.

The military’s October 25 takeover drew widespread international condemnation, as did a deadly crackdown on street demonstrations by people demanding it restore the country’s democratic transition.

Any hopes the demonstrators had that the military would back down were dashed on Thursday, when Burhan named himself as the head of a new ruling Sovereign Council that excludes the country’s main civilian bloc, triggering more condemnation from the West.

The protests occurred despite the heavy presence of military, police and paramilitary forces in Khartoum, where bridges connecting the capital to neighbouring cities were sealed off, AFP correspondents reported.

The security forces also blocked roads in Khartoum lead-

ing to the army headquarters, the site of a 2019 mass sit-in that led to the ouster of autocratic president Omar al Bashir.

The United Nations has called on the security forces to refrain from violence, which since the coup has already left dead at least 16 people, according to an independent union of medics.

“I once again call upon the security forces to exercise utmost restraint and respect the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression,” said UN Special Representative for Sudan Volker Perthes.

Saturday’s demonstrations have largely been organised by informal groups known as ‘resistance committees’, which emerged during the 2019 anti-Bashir demonstrations.

On Friday, military figures and new civilian members of a new ruling council were sworn in before Burhan.

Three former rebel leaders who were members of the ousted Sovereign Council and were appointed to the new one did not attend the ceremony. They had previously rejected the military coup.

AFP

Yemen rebels seize area by key port

Dubai, UAE - Yemen’s Houthi rebels have taken control of a large area south of Hodeida, a lifeline port where the warring sides agreed a ceasefire in 2018, government military sources said on Friday.

The rebels advanced after forces loyal to the internationally recognised government retreated from positions south of the Red Sea port city, the sources said, without giving reasons.

The Hodeida ceasefire was agreed at Yemen’s last peace talks in Sweden in 2018, but clashes have since broken out between the rebels and pro-government troops around the city.



Yemenis inspect the site of reported Saudi-led airstrikes targeting the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa on Thursday (AFP)

Elsewhere, the Iran-backed insurgents, who are fighting a Saudi-led coalition, have been engaged in a sustained attempt

to capture Marib, the government’s last stronghold in the north.

The United Nations said it

was aware of the reported withdrawal near Hodeida and the Houthis’ move into the vacated areas, and was watching the situation closely.

“We call on all parties to the conflict to ensure the safety and security of civilians in and around those areas where shifts in front-lines have taken place,” the UN secretary general’s deputy spokesman, Farhan Haq, told a regular briefing.

The coalition intervened militarily to prop up the Yemeni government in 2015, after the Houthis seized the capital Sanaa the year before.

AFP

Tigray rebels killed scores of civilians for sheltering wounded soldiers: Watchdog

Nairobi, Kenya - Tigrayan rebels killed scores of civilians in the Amhara region on suspicion of being informants or offering aid to federal forces, the government-affiliated Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said in a report published on Saturday.

The investigation, which draws on 128 interviews, focuses on parts of Amhara which saw heavy fighting in July and August between fighters from the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and Ethiopian soldiers as the country’s brutal conflict enters its second year.

At least 184 civilians died as a result of the bloodshed, the EHRC said, accusing TPLF fighters of ‘willfully [killing] scores of civilians in towns and rural areas they captured’.

Civilians were shot and killed for supporting the federal government or for sheltering wounded soldiers, the commission said.

“TPLF forces shot and killed mentally ill residents of towns they controlled on suspicion of being informants for the govern-



This file photo shows a member of the Amhara Special Forces deployed at the border crossing as people cross from Eritrea, Ethiopia (AFP)

ment,” it added.

Local youth meanwhile killed people who had fled war-torn Tigray, accusing them of spying for the TPLF, the commission said.

“Additionally, both warring sides engaged in indiscriminate shelling that was not directed at a specific military objective causing civilian deaths, injuries and

damage to civilian property.”

EHRC chief commissioner Daniel Bekele said that “Violations and abuses committed by all parties in South Gondar and North Wollo Zones of the Amhara region underscores the need to put an urgent stop to the continued suffering caused to civilians.”

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed

sent troops into Tigray last November to topple the TPLF, a move he said came in response to rebel attacks on army camps.

Though the 2019 Nobel Peace laureate vowed a swift victory, by late June the TPLF had retaken most of Tigray before expanding into Amhara and Afar.

As the humanitarian toll has spiked, bringing reports of massacres, sexual assaults and a starvation crisis, rights groups have sounded the alarm.

Human Rights Watch said on Wednesday that the Abiy government’s ‘effective siege’ of Tigray - where Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers are accused of mass rapes - was preventing survivors from getting health care and other critical services.

The same day, Amnesty International said Tigrayan rebels had raped, robbed and beat up women during an attack on a town in Amhara.

The TPLF criticised Amnesty’s ‘disturbingly flawed methodology’ but said it would conduct its own probe.

AFP

Biden and Xi set to hold virtual summit on Monday

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden will hold a hotly anticipated virtual summit with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping tomorrow, with both sides indicating they will not give ground on flashpoint issues such as Taiwan.

Relations between the world's two largest economies have recently deteriorated, in particular over Taiwan, a self-ruling democracy claimed by China, which last month made a record number of air incursions near the island.

Washington has repeatedly signaled its support for Taiwan in the face of Chinese aggression, but the United States and China reached a surprise agreement on climate at a summit in Glasgow.

The two leaders will discuss

ways to responsibly manage the competition' between the two countries 'as well as ways to work together where our interests align', White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement on Friday.

"Throughout, President Biden will make clear US intentions and priorities and be clear and candid about our concerns with the PRC," Psaki said, referring to Beijing by the acronym for the People's Republic of China.

The virtual talks will take place 'in the evening' on Monday in Washington - meaning early Tuesday in Beijing, she announced.

'Not going to hold back'

Biden and Xi have talked by



US President Joe Biden (left) and Chinese President Xi Jinping (AFP)

phone twice since the veteran Democrat moved into the White House. The pair also met extensively when Biden was Barack Obama's vice president, and Xi was vice president to Hu Jintao.

Biden had hoped to meet Xi at a recent G20 summit in Rome, but the Chinese leader has not

traveled since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and instead agreed to virtual talks by the end of the year.

"I've noted repeatedly, over the past ten months, that the relationship with China is among the most consequential and also most complex that we have," US

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday.

"It has different elements in it - some cooperative, some competitive and others adversarial and we will manage all three at the same time."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Blinken on Saturday had a preparatory phone call for the summit.

Wang told his counterpart that 'the two sides should meet each other halfway' at the Xi-Biden meeting, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said.

Wang also told Blinken that Washington should stop sending 'incorrect signals' on Taiwan's status.

'Specific deliverables' were unlikely from the summit, White House spokeswoman Psaki said.

Washington instead sees the meeting as a way of 'setting the terms, in our view, of an effective competition'.

Psaki said, "The president is certainly not going to hold back on areas where he has concern."

She also said that the 'intense competition' in the bilateral relationship required 'intense diplomacy'.

com giant Huawei from getting new equipment licences from US regulators, in Washington's latest effort to crack down on Chinese tech firms.

Also on Thursday, Xi warned against a return to Cold War-era divisions, in remarks to a virtual business conference on the sidelines of the APEC summit.

"Attempts to draw ideological lines or form small circles on geopolitical grounds are bound to fail," he said. "The Asia-Pacific region cannot and should not relapse into the confrontation and division of the Cold War era."

But the two countries, also the top two carbon emitters in the world, agreed this week to work together to accelerate climate action this decade.

AFP

Russia sees US, NATO Black Sea drills as 'serious challenge'

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin said in an interview aired on Saturday that Moscow considered recent Black Sea exercises by the US and other NATO ships as a serious challenge.

"The United States and its allies in NATO are carrying out unplanned exercises in the Black Sea. Not only is a rather powerful naval group involved in these exercises, but also aviation, including strategic aviation. This is a serious challenge for us," he said in an interview with state broadcaster Vesti.

His comments came after Washington this week raised alarms over Russian military activities close to Ukraine's border.

Putin said that his Defence Ministry 'had a proposal to hold its own unplanned exercises in the same waters'. "But I believe that this is inappropriate and there is no need to further escalate the situation there," he said.

Putin seemed to refer to several US warships taking part in



Russia's President Vladimir Putin (AFP)

exercises in the Black Sea which Moscow this week said it was 'monitoring'.

On Wednesday, US top diplomat Antony Blinken warned Moscow against making another 'serious mistake' on Ukraine as Washington sought clarity about

troop movements near the border. The EU on Friday said it was also concerned by Russian military activities close to Ukraine's border. The 27-nation bloc said it was monitoring the situation with partners including the US and Britain.

Putin brushed off the accusations, saying 'he had not seen these alarmist statements yet'.

But he criticised Ukraine for using Turkish-made drones against pro-Russia rebels, saying the move was 'strictly' against a peace protocol signed in Minsk

in 2015.

Last month, Kiev released footage of what it said was its first use of the Turkish-made TB2 Bayraktar drone against separatists in the east of the country.

"But no one even reacts to this, and the US practically supported it," Putin said.

France and Germany had criticised the move. Ukraine said it was 'defending its territory'.

"In parallel to this, they organised drills on the Black Sea. It seems that we are simply not allowed to let our guard down," the longtime Russian leader said.

"Well, they should know that we are not letting our guard down," he added.

Putin said on Saturday that Russia is often accused of not fulfilling the Minsk agreements.

"When we ask our partners," he said, "what exactly Russia should be doing according to the Minsk agreement, there is no answer."

AFP



A file photo of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and his daughter Sara Duterte arriving for a conference in Boao, south China (AFP)

Sara Duterte to run for Philippines vice president

Manila, Philippines - Sara Duterte, the daughter of outgoing Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, will run for vice president in the 2022 elections, the government's election monitor said on Saturday, after months of speculation she would seek the top job.

The Davao City mayor had been widely expected to contest the presidency in a bid to succeed her father, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a second six-year term and is facing an investigation by the International Criminal Court into his deadly drug war.

Her tilt for the country's second-highest office was immediately endorsed by the party of presidential front-runner Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the son and namesake of the former dictator, to be his running mate in the poll.

Sara's decision came just before the November 15 deadline for candidates to make a late entry into the May elections.

"This is to confirm that Mayor Inday Sara Duterte through her representative, has filed her certificate of candidacy for Vice President under Lakas-CMD [party]," her spokeswoman Christina Garcia Frasco said on Facebook, confirming the Commission on Elections' announcement.

For months, Sara (43) had insisted she wanted to serve another term as mayor in the family's southern bailiwick - the position her father held before he was elected president in 2016 - despite leading in surveys of voter preferences for the next president.

Speculation about her plans intensified last week after she suddenly withdrew from the mayoral contest. She quit her regional party and joined Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, the national political party of her close ally and former president Gloria Arroyo.

"I thank my supporters. I hope whatever happens in the next few days, I will be able to give them what they want," she told reporters on Thursday on the sidelines of a wedding.

Sara's decision to run for vice president leaves Marcos Jr in a strong position in the presidential race. Popularly known as Bongbong, Marcos Jr has been in the second spot in voter polls, ahead of celebrity mayor Francisco Domagoso, boxing great Manny Pacquiao and incumbent Vice President Leni Robredo.

In the Philippines, the president and vice president are elected separately.

AFP

Chinese dissident artist defies Beijing in Italian show

Brescia, Italy - Exhibiting a torture instrument as an innocent rocking chair, Chinese dissident artist Badiucao mocks the propaganda of Beijing in a new show - while appropriating its codes.

Defying calls from the Chinese government to cancel it, the northern Italian city of Brescia is hosting the first international solo exhibition by the 35 year old artist and exile from China who lives in Australia.

Badiucao's works are 'full of anti-Chinese lies' that 'jeopardise the friendly relations between China and Italy', charged Beijing's embassy in Rome in a letter sent last month to Brescia's town hall. But the city stood its ground.



Chinese dissident artist Badiucao poses next to his artwork entitled *Carrie Lam, 2018* at his exhibition in Brescia, Lombardy on Friday (AFP)

The show, 'China is (not) near - works of a dissident artist', which opened on Friday, denounces political repression in China and the country's censor-

ship of the origins of the coronavirus, two explosive subjects for Beijing.

The exhibit, whose title is an allusion to a famous Italian film

from 1967, *China Is Near*, runs until February 13 at the Santa Giulia museum.

In an interview with AFP, Badiucao - who has been called 'the Chinese Banksy' - said he was 'very happy and proud' that the city 'had the courage to say 'no' to China to defend fundamental rights'.

"I want to use my art to expose the lies, to expose the problems of the Chinese government, to criticise the Chinese government, however on the other hand it's also celebrating the Chinese people, for how brave Chinese people are... even when they have been subjected to this very harsh envi-

ronment with an authoritarian government," Badiucao said, speaking in English.

Among the works exhibited in Brescia that have provoked the ire of Beijing is a famous image of Chinese President Xi Jinping merged with the face of Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's chief executive, to illustrate the erosion of self-rule in the former British colony.

The Chinese Communist Party 'thinks that all free artists are its enemies, that's why it hates me so much', said Badiucao, who added that he receives 'daily death threats' on social media.

AFP

Unbreathable: Delhi shuts schools as pollution 'emergency' looms

New Delhi, India - Authorities in New Delhi announced on Saturday a one-week closure of schools as the Indian capital's pollution control body warned of a looming health emergency due to smog.

"Starting Monday, schools are being shut so that children don't have to breathe polluted air," Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal told reporters in the megacity of 20mn people.

Delhi is ranked one of the world's most polluted cities, with a hazardous melange of factory and vehicle emissions and

smoke from agricultural fires turning its air a toxic grey every winter.

On Saturday, levels of PM 2.5 particles - the smallest and most harmful, which can enter the bloodstream - topped 300 on the air quality index. That is 20 times the maximum daily limit recommended by the World Health Organization.

Kejriwal said on Saturday that no construction activity would be allowed for four days, starting Sunday, to cut down dust from vast, open sites.

Government offices were

asked to operate from home and private businesses advised to stick to work-from-home options as much as possible.

The Central Pollution Control Board on Friday told residents to 'limit outdoor activities and minimise their exposure' and advised government authorities to prepare 'for implementation of measures under emergency category'. It added the poor air quality would likely run until at least November 18 due to 'low winds with calm conditions during the night'.

Hospitals were reporting a

sharp rise in patients complaining of breathing difficulties, the *Times of India* reported.

"We are getting 12-14 patients daily in the emergency, mostly at night, when the symptoms cause disturbed sleep and panic," Dr Suranjit Chatterjee from Apollo Hospitals told the paper.

Earlier on Saturday, the Supreme Court suggested imposing a pollution lockdown on Delhi to help with the air quality crisis.

"How will we live otherwise?" Chief Justice N V Ramana said.

AFP



Commuters drive along a street under heavy smoggy conditions in New Delhi on Thursday (AFP)

Qatar to handle US interests in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan

Washington, US - The United States said on Friday it would set up an interests section in Afghanistan under Qatar, creating a more direct way to assist US citizens and engage with the Taliban after the embassy in Kabul was shuttered.

The step marks the latest diplomatic win for Qatar, the wealthy Gulf state that has increasingly positioned itself as the pivotal US ally on Afghanistan.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken signed an agreement with his Qatari counterpart to establish Qatar as the US protecting power in Afghanistan, an arrangement in which a third nation handles a country's interests in the absence of diplomatic relations with the host country.

The United States has voiced cautious optimism about dialogue with the Taliban but has made clear that reopening the embassy - which would imply recognition - is not on the cards.

Qatar, home to a major US military base, has played a significant role both in diplomacy and evacuations as the United States ended its 20-year war in Afghanistan.

Around half of the 124,000 Westerners and Western-allied Afghans flown out of the country in the waning days of the US military involvement transited through Qatar.

"Let me again say how grateful we are for your leadership, your support on Afghanistan, but also to note that our partnership is much broader than that," Blinken told Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani.

"Qatar is a crucial partner in promoting regional stability," he said, pointing as well to Qatari assistance to the Palestinians.

Working with the Taliban

Blinken said that the State Department has reached out to all



Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi (right) talking with US special representative to Afghanistan, Thomas West, as they arrive to attend the 'Troika Plus' meeting on Afghanistan, in Islamabad on Thursday (AFP)

Let me again say how grateful we are for your leadership, your support on Afghanistan, but also to note that our partnership is much broader than that

ANTONY BLINKEN

verified US citizens or permanent residents still in Afghanistan with offers to leave, arranging the departure of more than 580 people since the Taliban victory.

But the issue remains politically sensitive and has become the top US priority with the Taliban, although Washington says that any future relationship also would depend on the Islamists addressing concerns on the treatment of women and the role of Al Qaeda.

The US pointman on Afghanistan, Thomas West, met on Thursday in Islamabad with Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi alongside repre-

sentatives of Pakistan, Russia and China - three nations that have encouraged greater cooperation with the militants.

A joint statement called for continued engagement to encourage 'moderate and prudent policies'.

Qatar has sent 15 charter flights into Afghanistan since the Taliban victory and, along with Turkey, has offered to repair the Kabul airport, which officials warn may soon be in complete disrepair.

"They have a dire need for help, especially when the winter is coming," Thani said of Afghanistan.

"Abandoning Afghanistan would be a big mistake," he said. "We believe engaging with the Taliban, since they are in power right now, is very important for us to ensure that our facilitation for humanitarian assistance is moving smoothly."

Alignment on Syria

Qatar took on the expanded role on Afghanistan just as Saudi Arabia, backed by other Gulf Arab monarchies including the United Arab Emirates, was trying to isolate it over concerns that included Doha's relationship with Iran.

Despite Qatar's historic support of engagement, Thani voiced objections to another initiative also opposed by the United States - normalising relations with Syrian President Bashar Assad.

UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan on Tuesday met in Damascus with

Assad, part of the momentum to restore relations amid a growing conclusion that Assad has won after a brutal, decade-long civil war that has left nearly half a million people dead.

"We hope that countries will be discouraged from taking further steps with the Syrian regime," Thani said, while saying that others had the 'sovereign right' to their own decisions.

"Qatar's position will remain as it is - we don't see any serious steps by [the] Assad regime showing his commitment to repair the damage that he made for his own country and for his own people."

Blinken said that the United States was 'concerned' by engagement with Assad.

"And I would simply urge all of our partners to remember the crimes that the Assad regime has committed and indeed continues to commit," Blinken said. AFP



A man in a wheelchair is vaccinated outside a mobile vaccination centre set up in the city of Duisburg, western Germany on Friday (AFP)

Merkel urges 'national effort' to beat virus surge

Berlin, Germany - Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday called for a 'national effort' to break a fourth wave of coronavirus that is sweeping Germany and again urged people to get vaccinated.

The EU's most populous country officially recorded 50,196 new cases over 24 hours to Thursday - the first time the figure has exceeded 50,000.

On Saturday, the Robert Koch Institut (RKI) health agency reported 45,081 more cases with 228 deaths over the previous 24 hours.

"I am very concerned by the situation," Merkel said in a weekly podcast.

"We face difficult weeks. We need a national effort... to break the difficult autumn and winter wave of the pandemic."

"If we show solidarity, if we think about protecting ourselves and taking care of others, we can spare our country a great deal this winter," she said.

Infections and deaths have been climbing steeply since mid-October, in an outbreak blamed on Germany's relatively low vaccination rate of just over 67 per cent.

Merkel told those refusing jabs 'to reflect' on their position and agree to be inoculated against COVID-19.

She also backed a third dose saying it was a 'real chance to

break this major wave'.

The country's likely next leader Olaf Scholz last week demanded new restrictions to combat the record surge in infections.

The measures proposed by the incoming coalition parties include restricting access to certain facilities to those who are vaccinated or have recovered from the disease.

They also want to tighten testing requirements at workplaces and reintroduce free rapid antigen tests, a measure that had been in place over the summer but was abandoned in mid-October.

The proposals will be scrutinised by the Bundestag lower house of parliament this week and are expected to come into force at the end of the month.

Merkel said it was 'urgent' that the federal government and regions take a 'unified approach' and agree a threshold for when new measures need to be imposed.

Hospitals in some regions are already overwhelmed, especially in the east, and have started transferring patients to less affected regions.

Several of the worst-hit states, including Saxony, Bavaria and Berlin, have introduced new restrictions on unvaccinated people at most indoor public venues. AFP

Tunisian town revolts over toxic garbage issue

Agareb, Tunisia - As tear gas and protest cries filled the air in the Tunisian town of Agareb, Mabrouka Ben Ibrahim vowed to demonstrate for her daughter, whose death she blames on a nearby rubbish dump.

Yousra (21), died in 2019 after being bitten by a mosquito that came from the toxic trash site, Ben Ibrahim said.

"I lost my daughter and I don't want other families to lose their children because of the filth in this landfill," the 59 year old said.

Residents say rubbish dumped at the site, including dangerous industrial and medical refuse, has caused a string of diseases from cancer to vision problems and infertility.

Authorities decided to close the site in September after declaring it full but reversed course last Monday, prompting angry street demonstrations that degenerated into clashes with security forces.

In the early hours of Tuesday, a protester died of what relatives said was tear gas inhalation, although authorities have blamed his death on an unrelated health condition.

The protests come amid a garbage crisis across Sfax province that has seen refuse piling up on pavements after the closure of the Agareb site, the province's main dump.

Residents say the site, around



Smoke billows from tear gas fired by Tunisian forces as people protest over the reopening of a rubbish dump, in Agareb on Thursday (AFP)

3km from the town centre and stretching over 35 hectares, has become a public health disaster since it opened in 2008.

"Two years after it was opened, we started seeing an increase in allergies, respiratory diseases and miscarriages as a direct result of burning of trash and the release of toxic gases" from the site, said Bassem Ben Ammar, a doctor who has worked in the town for two decades. "The number of cancer cases has shot up."

Even as the smell of tear gas dissipates, the stench of refuse still hangs over the town of 40,000.

"During the summer and throughout the year, the mosquitoes and the disgusting smell never leave us. We can't even

open our windows," demonstrator Adel Ben Faraj said.

The dump, situated in the middle of a nature reserve, receives more than 620 tonnes of waste every day, according to Ines Labiadh of the FTDES rights group.

Ben Ammar said the site was a destination for 'waste of all kinds, including medical waste, amputated body parts and even fetuses'.

The Environment Ministry said medical waste was treated before going into the dump.

Residents say the site was only meant to be active for five years, but its use was extended and it continued operating despite a judge ordering its immediate closure in 2019. AFP

Putin says Russia has 'nothing to do' with Belarus-Poland border crisis

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday denied claims Moscow is helping to orchestrate a crisis that has left hundreds of migrants from the Middle East trapped on the Belarus-Poland border.

Blaming Western policies in the Middle East for the crisis, Putin hit back at claims from Poland and others that Russia is working with Belarus to send migrants to the border of the European Union.

"I want everyone to know. We have nothing to do with it," he said in an interview with state television broadcast on Saturday.

Putin said European leaders needed to talk to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to resolve the crisis and that 'as I understand it' German Chancellor Angela Merkel was ready to do so.

"We should not forget where these crises associated with migrants came from... Western countries themselves, including European countries," he said.

The migrants, mainly Kurds, have been stuck for days in a no-man's land on the border in near-freezing temperatures, setting up a tent camp and burning wood to keep warm.

Belarus says there are about 2,000 people in the camp, including pregnant women and children. Poland says there are between 3,000 to 4,000 mi-



A group of migrants moves along the Belarusian-Polish border towards a camp to join those gathered at the spot and aiming to enter EU member Poland, in the Grodno region on Friday (AFP)

grants on the border, with more arriving every day.

Tents, heaters brought to camp

There is growing concern for their plight as temperatures continue to fall, with Poland refusing to allow them to cross and accusing Belarus of preventing them from leaving the area.

Belarusian authorities said on Saturday they were delivering aid including tents and heaters to the migrant camp - a move that could make it a semi-permanent presence on the borders of the EU.

State news agency Belta reported that government bodies were erecting tents at the camp

and that a generator had been delivered.

"The Belarusian side is doing everything to provide them with what they need. Water, firewood and humanitarian aid have been delivered," Igor Butkevich, the deputy head of the state border committee, told Belta.

Migrants have been trying to cross the border for months, but the crisis came to a head when hundreds made a concerted effort on Monday and were pushed back by Polish border guards.

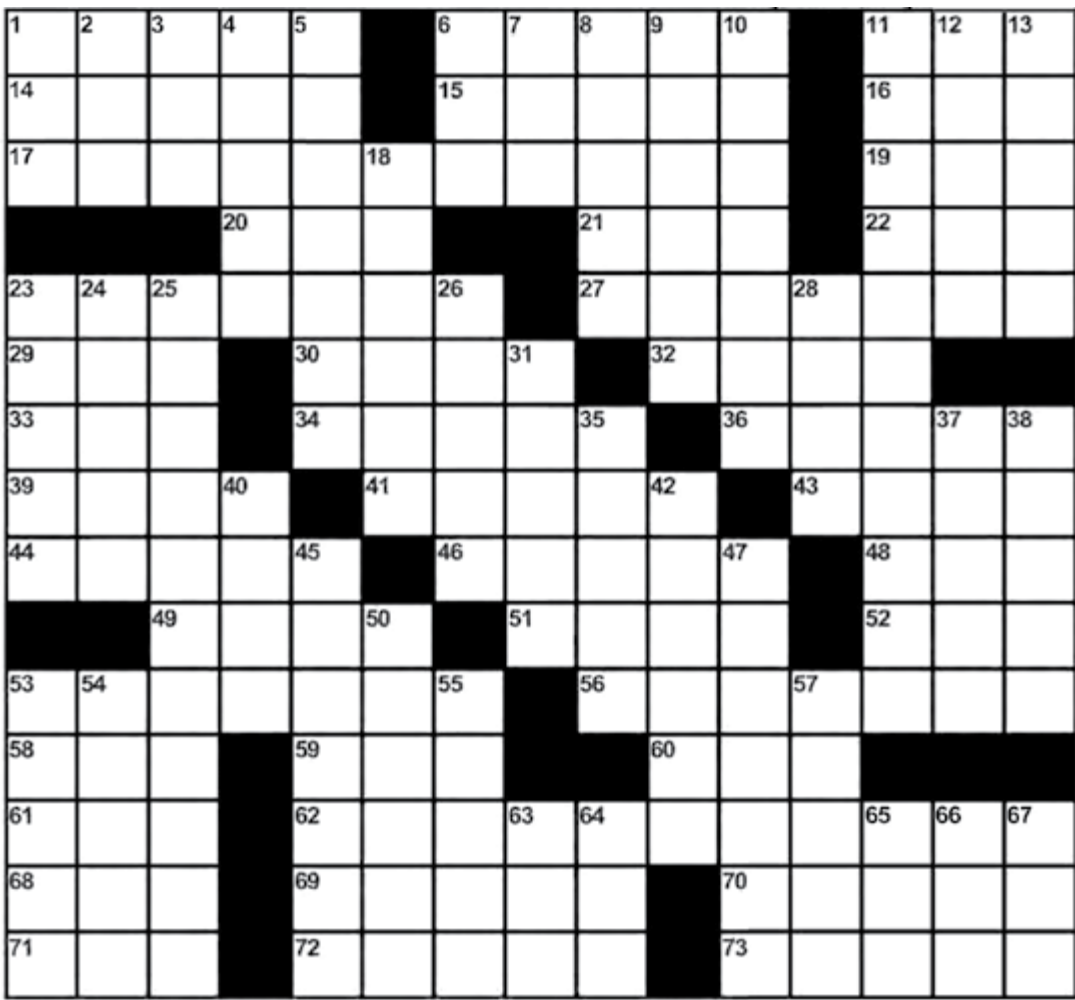
Sporadic attempts to cross have continued, and Polish police said on Saturday that the body of a young Syrian man had been found in a forest close to the bor-

der. Police said the cause of death could not be immediately determined and that a group of around 100 migrants had attempted to cross the border during the night in the area.

The death brings to 11 the number of migrants found dead on both sides since the crisis began in the summer, according to aid groups.

European leaders have accused Lukashenko, who has ruled ex-Soviet Belarus for nearly 30 years, of luring the migrants to his country to send across the border in revenge for sanctions imposed over a bloody crackdown on his opponents. AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Tub activities
6) Flat-necked snake
11) It may be skipped in alphabetization
14) "I, Robot" author Asimov
15) Head piece?
16) Bottom seam
17) "Pronto!"
19) Monte Rosa, e.g.
20) United Kingdom brew
21) Psychology 101 topic
22) Trike rider
23) International agreement
27) Mass-to-volume ratio
29) Outburst from Homer
30) Cows' chew
32) Some bread loaves
33)_ few rounds (box)
34) Susan Lucci character
36) Lauer and LeBlanc
39) Carpenters and har-vesters
41) Cause of some food poisoning
43) Ill-mannered one

44) Send for consulta-tion
46) Fabric with patterns
48) Not to be trusted
49) Curtain that no longer exists
51) Hand part
52) Feel feverish
53) Surgically ties
56) Class within a class
58) Flightless bird
59) Android offering
60) Chairman in The Beatles'
"Revolution"
61) Damage superficially
62) Now-or-never time
68) Store in casks, as wine
69) Kind of silence
70) Crystal-bearing rock
71) They are not positive
72) Searched for bugs
73) Old-fashioned music hall
E. Parker
65 66 67

age)
4) Hurriers make it
5) High school subject
6) "Elementary" network
7) Dinner table crumb
8) Emulated a sheep
9) Horseshoe score
10) Contrary word?
11) "What I meant was ..."
12) Old serf
13) Ready for a refill
18) Kind of study or trail
23)_ Allan Poe
24) "There's_ here but us ..."
25) "Makes sense"
26) Formal proclamation
28) "Clapping" animal
31) Ice-cream utensil
35) Name on a wanted poster
37) Early spring bloom
38) What the rich live in?
40) Evening, in Milan
42) Light
45) Spins, as the earth
47) Commerce stop-page
50) Certain male rela-tive
53) Lake_ (Lake

Geneva)
54) Adult insect
55) Church steeple
57) Teased (with "with")
63) Tentative taste
64) Animal doc

65) Bambi's mother, for one
66) Shakespeare's "Much_ About Nothing"
67) Tokyo cabbage?

NOTE PAD

BATHS COBRA THE
ISAAC BRAIN HEM
THIS INSTANT ALP
TEA EGO TOT
ENTENTE DENSITY
DOH CUDS RYES
GOA ERICA MATTS
ANTS ECOLI LOUT
REFER TOILE SLY
IRON PALM AIL
LIGATES SUBTYPE
EMU APP MAO
MAR THIS VERY DAY
AGE EERIE GEODE
NOS SWEPT ODEON

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Take care of whatever happens to be on your to-do list during the day. Expect a dear one to demand your time this evening, and don't dare to refuse them.

You've undoubtedly had all the fun you can stand by being good and all the stress you can handle at work. Try to keep your opinions to yourself tonight. Why start it up all over again if you don't have to?

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It's finally starting to dawn on you that it's over and that you've actually gotten yourself out of a really tough situation. You're feeling free, like it really is the first day of the rest of your life. Well, don't stop now. If you have a couple of other changes in mind, this would be a good time to give them some energy and consideration too.

Why not make it a clean sweep?

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Someone who counts on you to keep things together for them will be on the phone or at your door in serious need of your talents. Fortunately, you can calm them down especially well today because you have what it takes to get the job done.

You have humor, wisdom, and the gift of gab, which the heavens have tossed your way as of early this morning. Better get busy.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Just the facts, ma'am. That's your style, your credo, and what you're famous for. It applies most to your style of communication, especially to conversations with strangers or platonic acquaintances. Right now, though, you feel the need to go on at length about the silliest things.

Don't worry. It's just temporary. In the meantime, chat up a storm and enjoy it.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You've been on an emotional roller coaster lately, haven't you? And you've taken some of your friends and family members along for the ride too. It's time to get rid of all those emotions, the highs and the lows, and prepare yourself for some old-fashioned fun. Fun of the lighthearted variety.

Your friends will be so relieved they might need to dab their eyes.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Everything you're thinking, feeling, and even remotely wondering will emerge immediately from your lips. No, that's not your usual style, and yes, you'll definitely be shocking and amazing the masses, not to mention your inner circle. That doesn't mean you should stop yourself, though. Not for a second. Say every word just the way you want to. It's your turn to be unceremoniously blunt. Enjoy it.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's time to have that conversation you've put off for far too long. The good news is that you're in the perfect mood to do it. Just be sure not to get too carried away.

You might want to make up for lost time, but going overboard won't help anything. Let the other party get a word in edgewise. Remember, they've probably been holding on to a few things for a while too.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're entitled to give yourself the luxury of speaking your mind whenever you want to, and lately you've done just that. But today you woke up without the urge to shout, spout, or go on at length about anything at all. It's a bit of a relief, isn't it?

If you're feeling that way, you can just imagine how your dear ones are feeling. Treat them to dinner at your place. It's only fair.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

While the rest of the world seems to be eager to let go and just say it, whatever "it" happens to be, you're in the opposite mood for once. You want to keep quiet, draw back, and watch.

And it's going to be quite amusing. You're so used to acting this way that it will be like watching a kid try to ride a bike for the first time. Be kind, though, and offer some pointers if you're feeling especially generous.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Have you been looking for a new and interesting companion? Someone who's just bright and witty enough to capture and hold your attention? Well, get ready, because they're right around the corner. What do you have to do to ensure that the feelings will be mutual? Just show up and smile that dazzling smile. No one could ever resist you, especially when you've been waiting for them for so long.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Here we go. Someone who obviously doesn't know you, or doesn't know how close they can come to trouble with a few badly placed words, has decided to push your buttons just to see what will happen. After they manage to close their mouth, they'll probably want to apologize.

Whether or not you allow them to is up to you, but it would be generous at this point.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Spend the day keeping a nice, healthy distance between you and whoever you've been trying to duck out on even if you know they'll notice and take offense.

What's more important, after all? Having a good day, or placating someone who really does need to realize, once and for all, that nobody in their right mind wants to be around a Debbie Downer? You win.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The first Olympics in the city of Olympia in Greece took place in

a. 1000 BC
b. 850 BC
c. 776 BC
d. 753 BC
2. The clear sky looks blue because

a. reflection of light
b. refraction of light
c. diffraction of light
d. dispersion of light
3. The common terms used in shooting are

a. hunting, show-jump, dressage
b. bed, ballsege, marksman-ship, plug
c. bou, bucket, low, feather, paddle, regatta
d. None of the above

Answers: 1. c 2. b 3. d

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

M	E	M	Y
W	O	A	R
O	A	P	E
N	A	B	R

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

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

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

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



REVELLERS
THROUGH
GERMAN
CARNIVAL
WHICH
BEGAN AT
THE 11TH
MINUTE OF
THE 11TH
HOUR ON
THE 11TH
DAY OF THE
11TH
MONTH



Germany may be registering record coronavirus infections again but in Cologne, revellers shrugged off any virus fears to return in force on Thursday for their first carnival fair since the pandemic. "We are completely protected" by the rules keeping unvaccinated people away from the event, said Marie-Louise, who had travelled in from the Netherlands for the street party. The Cologne Carnival, which begins at the 11th minute of the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, kicks off a months-long series of merrymaking events running

through to Ash Wednesday the following year. The street festivities in the western city involving people dressed up in elaborate costumes, partying to big band music and enjoying comedy shows, were cancelled in 2020 over the pandemic, like elsewhere across Germany. Early in the health crisis last year, a carnival party had become a super spreader event, leading to Germany's first major cluster of infections. More than a year on, the COVID-19 crisis still casts a shadow over festivities. Germany registered a record number of new infections in 24

hours, official data showed, and regions are laying on new restrictions, especially targeting the unvaccinated. Bavarian state premier Markus Soeder, himself an aficionado of dressing up at carnivals, said he found it "a little difficult to imagine" the carnival going ahead. Instead, he warned that restrictions on such events may be needed to halt surging infections. The Cologne event too had to improvise as the designated 'prince' who is meant to lead the festivities tested positive on the eve of the carnival and had to be replaced at the 11th hour. But the crowd was unde-

tered. **We are back** Gathered without masks in a square in the city's old town, they turned up in their thousands to the tune of the song 'Mir sin widder do' (We are back). Uwe Schoernig, who is the treasurer of an association of carnival participants, said: "It feels great to party again. I'm not going to feel bad about having fun." Schoernig, dressed in a sailor's uniform, told AF, "If the politicians think restrictions are necessary, we'll keep to the rules. But as long as that's not the case, we will carry on."

Hanno Puetz, who was the 'prince' leading festivities at Bergisch Gladbach city in 2019, agreed. "We've been waiting for so long," he said, pointing to cancelled carnivals through 2020. "We can't wait any longer to parade through the streets in our costumes. We have so little normalcy in our lives these days. Here at least we can bring back a bit of joy," said Puetz. Martina, 22, who had travelled from Bielefeld with her friend Alina for the party, said, "We feel free again. You just need to get vaccinated and then there's no problem." AFP



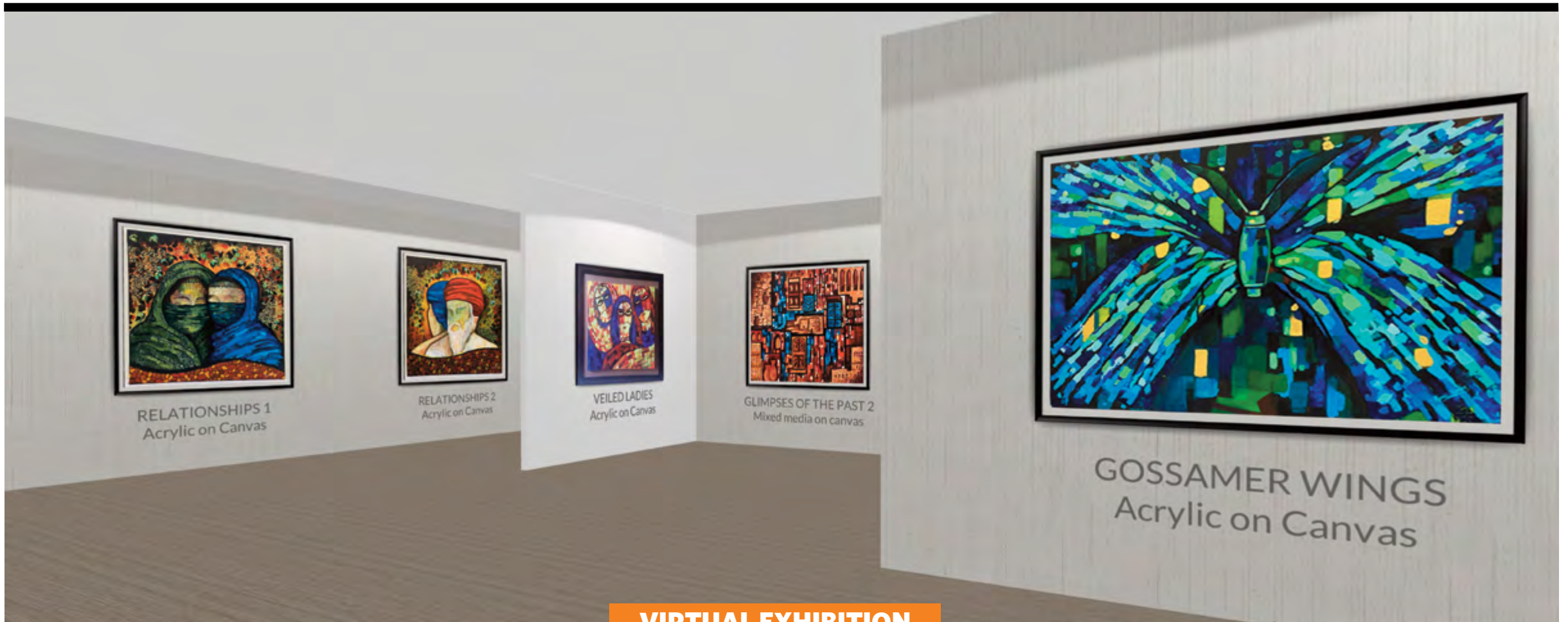
ABBA tops UK charts after 40 years

ABBA's first studio album in nearly 40 years has made it to the top of the UK charts, becoming the fastest seller of the year so far, the Official Charts Company said on Friday. 'Voyage' by the Swedish quartet of Agnetha, Bjorn, Benny and Anni-Frid racked up 204,000 chart sales in the seven days since it was launched last Friday. Sales gave the supergroup the biggest opening week on the UK album chart in four years since Ed Sheeran's 'Divide', and fastest-selling album by a group in eight years. The last fastest-seller was One Direction's 'Midnight Memories' in November



2013. ABBA, propelled to global fame by their 1974 Eurovision Song Contest win with 'Waterloo', and split in 1982, a year after their last album, 'The Visi-

Springsteen and David Bowie - have had more. The group said in a statement, "We are so happy that our fans seem to have enjoyed our new album as much as we enjoyed making it. "We are absolutely over the moon to have an album at the top of the charts again." The 204,000 sales comprise 90 percent physical copies, including 29,900 on vinyl, making it the fastest-selling vinyl release of the 21st century. The previous record holder was the Arctic Monkeys' 'Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino', which sold 24,500 vinyl copies. AFP



AHLAN WA SAHLAN

Hubert Vaz

Oman and the people of Oman, nationals and residents alike, played a major role in her growth as an artist. She grew from being just a novice to an artist who can curate major exhibitions, says Harini Kumar, an Indian artist residing in Oman, who held a virtual solo exhibition titled 'Ahlam wa Sahlan' with a set of her paintings done in Oman, on Friday. "It was my dream to pay my tributes to this beautiful country by staging a solo exhibition in Muscat. The sudden onset of the unfortunate pandemic stalled my wish and we had to relocate to India in June 2021. But I left the paintings in Oman with a family friend of mine hoping to come back sometime and fulfill my dream of holding a physical exhibition," Harini



said, adding that she looked upon this as a blessing in disguise which opened up a new chapter in the lives of people in the form of online events, including art exhibitions which could be viewed by people from the world

"I could not have got a better title than 'Ahlam wa Sahlan' for this solo exhibition, since it was a tribute to my time in Oman, and we welcomed the idea with enthusiasm"

HARINI KUMAR

without any restrictions.

After learning the ropes by viewing as well as participating in a couple of online exhibitions in the UAE, Harini was able to develop her own skills at creating and curating virtual

exhibitions. With help from the owner and founder of Orbit Event Management, she was able to hold her own solo virtual exhibition.

"I could not have got a better title than 'Ahlam wa Sahlan' for this solo exhibition, since it was a tribute to my time in Oman, and we welcomed the idea with enthusiasm. Having already relocated to India, this seemed a great idea now," Harini said.

The virtual exhibition was inaugurated on November 12 at 7.30pm, and Reena Jain, first secretary (Culture), of the Indian Embassy in Oman, was the guest of honour while Harini's friends and associates from different countries, including several artists, visited the online gallery to get a glimpse of her artistic journey in Oman.

"Most of my paintings had Omani themes and many had been painted in the last couple of years. They identify closely with my emotional connection to Oman which was my

home for the last 27 years," she said, adding, "My evolution as an artist with a distinctive style can be observed in my paintings."

While acknowledging the support and patronage for her virtual solo exhibition by people of diverse backgrounds, Harini also expressed her gratitude towards Ramesh, of Orbit Events, and Saiju Victor, of Spectrum Solutions, who played a major role in the success of this online exhibition, with their valuable inputs.

The online virtual gallery can be viewed at:

SCAN ME



Art Cafe for Omani women artists

On the occasion of Omani Women's Day, the first Art Cafe in Oman was held at, Crepe Cafe lounge, in Al Araiimi Boulevard Mall, in Seeb.

The event, curated by Dr Zahra Akbari, an Iranian artist and sociologist, featured artworks of ten international artists hailing from seven countries

including Oman, Iran, India, South Africa, United States, United Kingdom and Ger-

many were presented.

The Art Café intends to present art to the public through different media, like paintings, sculptures, music, singing, performances, food and drink art, while contributing to charities. Around 20 per cent of the proceeds from sales is marked for charity.

The Art Café is a concept developed by Dr Zahra to bring 'art to public and public to art'. She believes that in the post-COVID era,

people need more to socialise and get immersed in art.

"We would like to make art understandable for everyone as we all need a touch of art in our lives," says Dr Zahra. "We hope more people in Oman try to learn about art and that is why we conduct art workshops to educate people from different backgrounds and age groups. This a social responsibility for artists."



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WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Kane fires England to brink of Qatar, Italy held by Switzerland



England's striker Harry Kane (left) shoots past Albania's Lorenc Trashi during the qualifier match at Wembley Stadium in London on Friday (AFP)

London, UK - Harry Kane scored a first half hat-trick as England romped towards the 2022 World Cup with a 5-0 thrashing of Albania, but Italy still have work to do to reach Qatar after a 1-1 draw with Switzerland.

England still need a point to mathematically qualify when they visit San Marino on Monday, but boast a three-point lead and six-goal advantage on goal difference over Poland, who sealed at least a playoff place with a 4-1 win over 10-man Andorra.

The Three Lions can look ahead to Qatar with confidence

as they bounced back to form at Wembley in style with all the goals coming before half-time.

"The first half was fantastic, as well as we've played for a long time," said England boss Gareth Southgate.

"We're best when we have an edge and this was a game that could put us on the verge of qualification for the World Cup."

Harry Maguire put a difficult start to the season at club level behind him as the Manchester United captain opened the floodgates with a thumping header from Reece James' free-kick.

Kane admitted on Thursday to also struggling physically and mentally from the exertions of England's run to the Euro 2020 final added to the speculation over his future.

The England captain has scored just one Premier League goal this season, but now has six in five games for his country.

Kane headed home Jordan Henderson's cross from close range before turning provider for Henderson to calmly slot home his first international goal on home soil.

England were rampant in the

first 45 minutes as Kane thrashed home his second from a narrow angle before completing his fourth international hat-trick in spectacular fashion with a scissor kick from Phil Foden's corner.

Kane is now level with Jimmy Greaves as England's fourth highest goalscorer of all time on 44 and moved ahead of Wayne Rooney with the most competitive goals for the Three Lions.

Italy pay late penalty

European champions Italy maintained a narrow advantage over

Switzerland at the top of Group C, but missed a glorious late chance to virtually secure qualification when Jorginho blazed a penalty over the bar.

The Chelsea midfielder has now missed six spot-kicks for club and country since the start of last season.

"If he felt like shooting, it is right that he took the penalty," said Italy manager Roberto Mancini.

The visitors got off to a flying start in Rome when Silvan Widmer's thunderous strike flew into the top corner.

The Azzurri levelled nine minutes before half-time thanks to a well-worked set-piece that was headed in by Giovanni Di Lorenzo.

Italy were given a controversial late spot-kick after a VAR review for a push on Domenico Berardi by Ulisses Garcia.

Jorginho also missed from the spot when the sides drew 0-0 in September and fired well off target.



Egypt captain Mohamed Salah (AFP)

Salah gets two goals as African World Cup qualifying intensifies

Johannesburg, South Africa - A brilliant assist by Egypt captain Mohamed Salah triggered a comeback that earned a 2-2 World Cup draw in Angola on Friday, and a place in the final African qualifying stage.

The Liverpool star pushed the ball between two defenders and onrushing Arsenal midfielder Mohamed Elneny slammed the ball into the net to halve an Angolan lead to 2-1 by the interval.

Akram Tawfik equalised with a deflected shot just before the hour and the draw gave Egypt an unassailable four-point lead over Gabon in Group F with one round remaining.

Meanwhile, Group A leaders Algeria extended an unbeaten run in competitive and friendly matches to 32 by hammering Djibouti 4-0 in Group A in Cairo with recent West Ham recruit Said Benrahma among the goals.

Algeria surpassed the African

record of the Ivory Coast in June and now have their sights on the 37-match world record set by Italy this year.

In Luanda, Helder Costa, the Leeds United winger on loan to Valencia, gave Angola a lead that doubled when M'Bala Nzola converted a penalty.

Salah, who won the Premier League Player of the Month and Goal of the Month awards on Friday, was the centre of attention with several spectators racing on to the pitch during the match seeking selfies.

South Africa-born Egypt assistant coach Roger de Sa hailed the two-time African Footballer of the Year, calling Salah 'a respectful professional who is a pleasure to work with'.

"He is one of the best footballers in the world, but so humble. His behaviour in the build-up to the Angola match was exemplary."

AFP

ONLY
PURE
WATER

AND
PERFECT
TASTE

ONLY
WHAT'S
ESSENTIAL

Di Maria's winner takes Argentina close to qualification

Montevideo, Uruguay - Angel Di Maria's goal on Friday put Argentina on the verge of qualifying for next year's World Cup in Qatar as Lionel Messi was on the bench for the 1-0 win away to Uruguay.

Messi was only called upon by coach Lionel Scaloni to play the final quarter of an hour as he made his comeback from knee and hamstring issues that saw him miss Paris Saint-Germain's last two matches.

Di Maria's sublime early finish at the Campeon del Siglo stadium in Montevideo was the difference between the sides in a match dominated by Uruguay.

The result means Argentina - who are unbeaten in 26 matches - will qualify for the World Cup finals if they beat Brazil on Tuesday and any one of Colombia, Chile or Uruguay fail to win.

"This team has great courage and when you don't play well, you still have to win," said Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez.

"Winning today was a huge step. We deserve it because we work very hard."



Argentina's Angel Di Maria against Uruguay on Friday (AFP)

The defeat left Uruguay in a World Cup play-off spot, behind Colombia and Chile in the final two automatic qualification position on goal difference.

Nahitan Nandez should have given Uruguay a fifth minute lead after Argentina failed to deal with a long throw into the box.

A ricochet saw the ball land at

Nandez's feet seven yards from goal and while Martinez did well to come out quickly and spread himself, Nandez's finish was poor and straight at the Aston Villa stopper.

Uruguay were made to pay two minutes later as Paulo Dybala robbed a dawdling Joaquin Piquerez just outside the box and



Lionel Messi (AFP)

passed inside for Di Maria to stroke a glorious shot into the top corner.

It was Argentina's only shot at goal in the first half.

Luis Suarez provided Uruguay's main threat, as he has done so many times before, and fired a free-kick narrowly over.

On the half hour he hit an in-

stinctive volley against the post before snatching at the rebound with his left foot and putting it wide. Uruguay were piling on the pressure and Matias Vecino had a chance to restore parity at the end of the first half but shot too close to Martinez.

Messi's late cameo

After the break, Argentina continued to control possession without creating chances, while Uruguay were more dangerous, but without testing Martinez.

Substitute Papu Gomez finally got off Argentina's second shot, just before the hour mark, but it flashed wide, while Martinez had to backpedal to tip over a wayward Facundo Torres cross that looked like it was dipping in behind the goalkeeper's head.

With Uruguay pushing to salvage something from the game, Joaquin Correa had a pair of chances on the break for Argentina but could not take advantage. Finally with a quarter of an hour to play, Scaloni summoned Messi from the bench but he had little impact on the game.

AFP

Every day, all day!

Kontaveit advances at WTA Finals, Muguruza stays alive



Anett Kontaveit returns the ball to Karolina Pliskova in the WTA Tournament Finals, in Zapopan on Friday (AFP)

Guadalajara, Mexico - Anett Kontaveit powered past third-seeded Karolina Pliskova 6-4, 6-0 to lead the way into the semi-finals of the season-ending WTA Finals at Guadalajara on Friday.

The eighth-seeded Estonian continued her late-season surge, notching her 12th straight WTA match win as she assured herself of finishing in the top two of her group in the round-robin phase.

Spain's Garbine Muguruza kept her hopes of advancing from the same group alive with a 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory over reigning French Open champion Barbora Krejickova.

Kontaveit, whose win streak

I wasn't thinking about the fact that I was three-love down in previous matches

ANETT KONTAVEIT

included titles at Moscow and Cluj-Napoca, had beaten Krejickova in her tournament opener.

"Of course, very thrilled to be in the semi-finals," said Kontaveit, who needed just 57 minutes to roar past Pliskova, winning 24 of her 29 first-service points and claiming the last eight games for her first career victory over the Czech in four meetings.

"I wasn't thinking about the fact that I was three-love down in previous matches," Kontaveit said. "Every time you step on the court you have a new opportunity. The previous matches don't really matter. It's a new day and

you have to beat the player you're playing against."

But Kontaveit is riding a wave of confidence, having won 28 of her past 30 matches.

"I've really been enjoying being on court, just having a good time," she said.

"I think that's been the main thing why I've been doing so well. I do feel like I can take on everyone. I never expect an easy match, I always expect it to be tough. I just try my best when I go out there."

Muguruza's gutsy victory over Krejickova means that she along with Krejickova and Pliskova remain in the hunt for a semi-final spot heading into their final round-robin matches on Sunday.

After holding serve just once in the opening set the Spaniard raised her level, breaking Krejickova for 3-1 in the second and stretching her lead to 4-1 with a superb service effort that featured two aces in the fifth game.

Krejickova managed to regain the break in a hard-fought seventh game, finally converting her sixth break of the game.

But Muguruza broke back and served out the set with an ace up the middle. Muguruza battled to a break for a 2-1 lead in the third set - taking the 12-minute game on her sixth break point - and made the advantage stand up.

It was the fourth meeting of the season between the two. Muguruza had beaten the Czech in the Dubai final but lost to her at Cincinnati and the US Open.

The elite tournament was moved to Guadalajara this year from its usual home in Shenzhen, China, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

AFP



Lewis Hamilton celebrates after winning the qualifying session for Brazil's Formula One Sao Paulo Grand Prix, in Sao Paulo on Friday (AFP)

Hamilton under investigation after Brazil GP sprint edge

Sao Paulo, Brazil - World champion Lewis Hamilton on Friday dominated qualifying at the Brazil Grand Prix but then found himself facing demotion to the back of the grid for Saturday's sprint race after Mercedes were placed under investigation for a potential breach of technical rules.

Hamilton edged out title rival Max Verstappen for first place on the grid for the 24-lap sprint which in turn decides the starting order for Sunday's race at Interlagos.

However, race stewards were investigating whether or not the DRS system (the flap mounted on the rear wing of the car which opens to gain top speed) had exceeded allowed limits.

Mercedes were summoned to a hearing but late on Friday the stewards said it was adjourned as they await further evidence.

Seven-time world champion Hamilton, who trails Verstappen by 19 points in the title race, had

already been hit with a five-place grid penalty for Sunday's main event after the engine was changed on his Mercedes.

"I'm so happy to be back in Brazil. Just a big thank you to all the team, they've been working flat-out. Today was a really good qualifying," said Hamilton before the investigation was launched.

"It's been so long - it's like the first time," added the 36-year-old who had not set the fastest time in qualifying since Hungary in August.

However, aware that Verstappen has won the last two races in the United States and Mexico, he added to Sky Sports: "I don't know how we can go from one track where they are half a second quicker to this."

The Briton posted a fastest time of 1min 07.934sec, four tenths quicker than his Dutch rival.

AFP



Mercedes' British driver Hamilton powers his car during the qualifying session at the Autodromo Jose Carlos Pace, in Sao Paulo on Friday (AFP)

Jiu-Jitsu Championship begins today in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi, UAE - The 13th edition of the Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship (ADWPJJC) starts six-day run on Sunday, welcoming more than 4,000 athletes from over 90 countries.

It gets better for jiu-jitsu fans in the UAE just days after the successful completion of the 26th Ju-Jitsu World Championship.

The largest and most prestigious event on the global jiu-jitsu calendar, held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, will draw as many as 4,000 players from over 90 countries, taking to the mats in juvenile, youth, masters, and adult categories in pursuit of gold and a winning end to the season, said a press statement.

The ADWPJJC comes just two days after the Ju-Jitsu World Championship (JJWC), where the UAE national team reigned supreme, retaining the team title with 53 podium finishes: 18 gold, 16 silver, and 19 bronze medals.

The 13th ADWPJJC action begins on Sunday with the Abu Dhabi World Youth Jiu-Jitsu Championship for boys and girls in kids, juniors, teens and juveniles divisions.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

We've tried to learn and grow throughout the tournament and we have another opportunity to do that.

Kane Williamson
New Zealand skipper ahead of the final match against Australia



ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

Australia, New Zealand seek to win maiden title

Dubai, UAE - Kane Williamson's New Zealand eye a second global crown in a single year when they take on Australia at the Twenty20 World Cup final that will witness a new winner on Sunday.

New Zealand and Australia renew their trans-Tasman rivalry in Dubai as both teams look to clinch their maiden world title in the shortest format.

It's a hat-trick of ICC finals for the once perennial underdogs of world cricket after they outplayed India to win the inaugural Test championship in June.

They beat favourites England in the semi-final to avenge their 2019 defeat in a dramatic 50-over World Cup final at Lord's when they went down on boundary count after a super over.

Head coach Gary Stead said the Black Caps are excited to take on the Australian challenge in what will be their first ever T20 World Cup final appearance.

"That's probably a final that I'm not sure too many people would have predicted a month or so ago, Australia and New Zealand," said Stead.

The Kiwis though have suffered an injury blow after wicket-keeper Devon Conway was ruled out following a broken hand when he punched his bat on his dismissal in the semi-final.

Jimmy Neesham played a key part in the team's semi-final win over England as he hit 27 off 11 balls to turn the game on its head and win with an over to spare.

"I am sure there will be a bigger outpour of emotion if we



Australia's Mitchell Starc (right) talks to a team member during a practice session at the ICC academy, in Dubai on Saturday (AFP)

That's probably a final that I'm not sure too many people would have predicted a month or so ago, Australia and New Zealand

GARY STEAD

manage to get across the line," he said.

Sunday's clash will bring back memories of the 2015 50-over final when Australia beat New Zealand by seven wickets to clinch their fifth ODI World Cup.

Aaron Finch's Australians beat title favourites Pakistan by

five wickets in the second semi-final. "They've got a bunch of guys who are real match winners," said Stead.

"And we're going to have to make sure that our planning, out scouting is right on point and we've got really clear plans for their players because they can

like rip a game open pretty quickly."

Australia were in trouble at 96-5 while chasing 177 on Thursday when Marcus Stoinis (40) and Matthew Wade (41) put on an unbeaten partnership of 82 and win by an over to spare.

Wade smashed Pakistan pace ace Shaheen Shah Afridi for three straight sixes including two audacious scoop shots - the final one sailing over fine leg to silence the Pakistan crowd.

'Piece to the puzzle'
Stoinis said a T20 World Cup

title will 'mean a bloody lot to us'.

"Obviously Test cricket and the Ashes, that's what we grew up when we played. Then the transformation of T20 cricket. It's not a hit and a giggle anymore in terms of the pressure," said Stoinis.

"I don't think many people gave us a chance leading into this tournament apart from the players and coaching staff. So it's definitely going to mean a bloody lot to us and we will be super proud when we bring that home to Australia."

AFP



Australia's wicketkeeper Matthew Wade plays a shot to win during the semi-final against Pakistan, in Dubai on Thursday (AFP)

Australia to be careful on reviews after Warner miss: Matthew Wade

Dubai, UAE - Australia's Matthew Wade said the team will work better on referrals in the Twenty20 World Cup final after David Warner walked off caught behind without an apparent edge in Thursday's semi-final win over Pakistan.

The Aussies won by five wickets after Wade and Marcus Stoinis put on an unbeaten stand of 81 to chase down their target of 177 to set up a title clash with New Zealand on Sunday.

The left-handed Warner gave the team a blazing start before he fell to Shadab Khan's leg spin and walked after being given caught behind for 49 off 30 balls.

But replays suggested the ball made no contact with the bat before heading into the gloves of Mohammad Rizwan as Pakistan celebrated the key wicket amid raucous shouts

from the crowd.

"I think there was a noise, he wasn't sure. Maybe his bat handle clicked or his hand on his bat," Wade said of the dismissal.

"He didn't think that he hit it. But I think Glenn (Maxwell) at the other end heard the noise. To be fair, the bat was out there. That was the only thing maybe it could have been. He was potentially thinking that he might have hit it," the Australian batsman added.

"Hopefully something that doesn't happen in the next match. But we've just got to work it out. The thing is you get two (reviews) in these formats. We should have used it."

Shadab got four wickets including Mitchell Marsh (28), Steve Smith (five), Maxwell (seven) with Australia in trouble at 96-5.

AFP

Pollock, Brittin and Jayawardena go into cricket Hall of Fame

Dubai, UAE - South Africa's Shaun Pollock, Sri Lankan batsman Mahela Jayawardena and former England women's batter Janette Brittin have been inducted into cricket's Hall of Fame, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Saturday.

They were accorded the honour ahead of the Twenty20 World Cup final between New Zealand and Australia on Sunday in Dubai.

The ICC has recognised 106 players in the Cricket Hall Of Fame since its launch in 2009.

The inductees played in 284 Tests, 814 ODIs and 67 T20 Internationals between them, the ICC said in a statement.

Mahela retired in 2015 as one of Sri Lanka's greatest ever batsmen with 11,814 runs in 149 Tests at an average of 49.84.

Pollock has been one of the finest allrounders to have graced the game, while Brittin was a mainstay of the England Test team for 19 years, helping to pave the way for women's cricket from 1979 to 1998.

AFP

Warner's six on double-bounce ball unbelievable: Langer



David Warner plays a shot during the match against Pakistan (AFP)

Dubai, UAE - David Warner's six on a delivery that bounced twice in the Twenty20 World Cup semi-final has been termed unsportsmanlike, but Australia coach Justin Langer on Friday called the shot 'unbelievable'.

Warner hit 49 to set up Australia's five-wicket victory over Pakistan in Dubai on Thursday to book a title clash with New Zealand.

But his 30-ball knock had two interesting moments including when he jumped out of his crease sideways to smash Mohammad Hafeez for a six over deep mid-wicket after the ball had slipped from the bowlers

hand and connected with the bat on a double bounce.

Former India opener Gautam Gambhir said, "What an absolutely pathetic display of spirit of the game by Warner! #Shameful".

But Langer said he was impressed by Warner's instinct to make a shot out of the ball that would have surprised any batsman.

"Oh my gosh! it's one of the best things I have ever seen in the game of cricket. I don't think anyone would have the instincts to do that," Langer told reporters.

"Most people would not have been sure what to do. It's a no

ball and then to have the talent and ability to hit it for six, unbelievable. And then he walked off course when he nicked it, so anyone thinks it to be unsportsmanlike, probably evens it up a bit," the Australian coach said.

Warner hit three fours and three sixes to give the team a flying start before Shadab Khan pulled it back with his four wickets.

Australia fell to 96-5 after Maxwell's wicket before Marcus Stoinis (40) and Matthew Wade (41) pulled off the team's chase of 177 with one over to spare and guide the team to the final.

AFP



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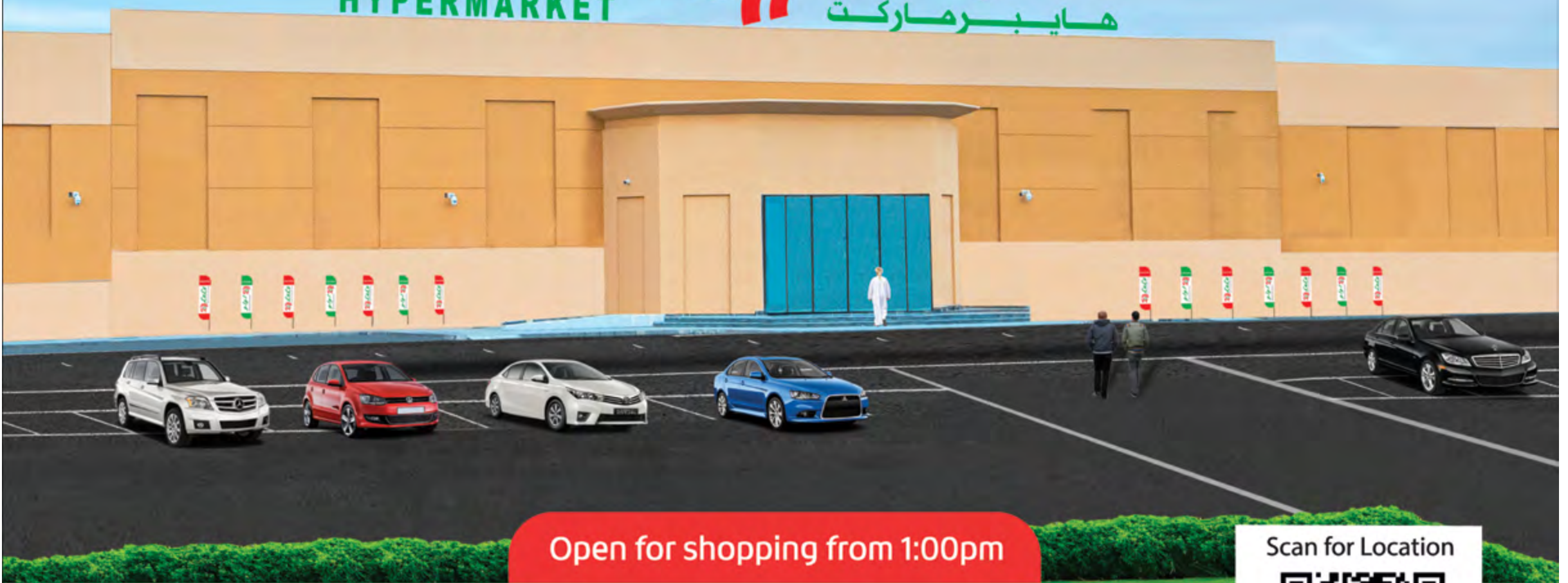


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