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HM returns, reviews ways of developing bilateral relations

His Majesty the Sultan invites Sheikh Tamim to visit Oman | Leaders state desire to cooperate in the area of clean energy | Oman expresses its pride in Qatar hosting FIFA World Cup | Two sides emphasise on dialogue to resolve all regional issues



Oman and Qatar affirm their leaderships' strong political will and firm resolve to upgrade all areas of cooperation

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik returned home on Tuesday after concluding a two-day state visit to Qatar, which was in response to an invitation by Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar.

During the visit, His Majesty the Sultan held a round of official talks with Sheikh Tamim. The two leaders discussed aspects of cooperation and means of enhancing fraternal relations to achieve the aspirations of their peoples.

Oman and Qatar issued a joint communique which stated that His Majesty the Sultan and the Emir of Qatar held expanded talks that reviewed bilateral relations and ways of developing these in various spheres. The two leaders also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues. The talks showed that relations between Oman and Qatar are deep-rooted and their stands identical on regional and international issues. They re-



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, accompanied by Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, visited Qatar Foundation on Tuesday

flected the two countries' emphasis on the significance of dialogue in resolving all issues of the region.

The two sides affirmed the leaderships' strong political will and firm resolve to upgrade all areas of cooperation. This historic visit of His Majesty the Sultan will open new vistas of consultation, coordination and cooperation between the two

countries, the communique stated.

His Majesty the Sultan and Sheikh Tamim commended the excellent bonds binding the two countries, notably the great scope of cooperation and partnership. The two leaders reiterated their desire to promote cooperation in the area of clean energy and their keenness to exchange expertise on ways to

curb climate change.

The two sides stressed that tangible, diverse opportunities in the two countries constitute strong grounds for consolidating relations, expanding investment opportunities, and establishing partnerships. Additionally, they stressed on augmenting and diversifying the volume of commercial exchange and enhancing the role of the private sector to achieve their common interests.

Several pacts were signed as part of the state visit, including an agreement on military cooperation between the two governments, an agreement on avoidance of double taxation, an agreement in the field of investment, an agreement on cooperation in investment in Oman Shipping Company, a cooperation agreement for investment in the hospitality sector, and a memorandum of understanding in the field of labour and human resources development.

Continued on Page 02

HM THE SULTAN GIVES AUDIENCE TO FIFA PRESIDENT



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik granted an audience to FIFA President Gianni Infantino in Doha on Tuesday. They reviewed areas of cooperation and means of promoting these between football authorities in the sultanate and FIFA. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his appreciation for FIFA's efforts to develop football globally. On his turn, Infantino expressed his gratitude for His Majesty's continuous support to the Omani youth and different sports that improve their skills, particularly football (ONA)

HM visits Qatar Foundation, National Library



Doha, Qatar - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, accompanied by Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, visited Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, as part of his visit to Qatar.

His Majesty heard a briefing on the objectives of Qatar Foundation and its role in promoting education, research, community development, innovation and entrepreneurship. The foundation hosts branches of international universities and programmes of cooperation with educational establishments in Oman. His Majesty and Sheikh

HM hails efforts of Qatar, led by Sheikh Tamim, in upgrading education

Tamim toured the venues of world universities, research centres and academic facilities affiliated to the foundation.

Later, His Majesty the Sultan and Sheikh Tamim visited Qatar National Library where they were briefed about its main functions. It comprises a wide range of reference books, man-

uscripts and archives serving researchers and students pursuing different disciplines.

His Majesty accepted a souvenir commemorating his visit to the National Library.

At the conclusion of the tour, His Majesty signed the Visitors' Register hailing the efforts of Qatar, led by Sheikh Tamim, in upgrading education, innovation and community development.

During the two visits, His Majesty was accompanied by the head and members of the Mission of Honour and members of the official delegation accompanying him.

ONA



Oman's healthcare award goes to facilities in India, Afghanistan and Zambia



Sohar International seeks to initiate merger talks with Bank Nizwa

Oman's healthcare award goes to facilities in India, Afghanistan and Zambia



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman Excellence Award for Health Services During Crisis instituted under the International Hospital Federation (IHF) Awards has gone to three health institutes in Afghanistan, India and Zambia.

The federation announced the winners of the IHF Awards 2021 at the 44th World Hospital Congress (WHC) in Barcelona, Spain, held recently.

The Sultanate of Oman Excellence Award for Health Services During Crisis was first announced during the 2019 WHC held in Muscat. IHF Awards 2020 were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The award instituted by Oman recognises achievements of hospitals and healthcare organisations in developing countries during a time of crisis. Apart

The award instituted by Oman recognises achievements of hospitals and healthcare organisations in developing countries during a time of crisis. Winning organisations receive a grant of 10,000 Swiss francs

from global recognition similar to other IHF Awards, winning organisations receive a grant of 10,000 Swiss francs.

The French Medical Institute for Mothers and Children in Afghanistan won the gold award, Medland Health Services in Zambia won silver and Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd in India claimed bronze.

Amiri Medical Complex (Afghanistan), Democrito O Plaza Memorial Hospital (Philippines), Dr Jose N Rodriguez Memorial Hospital and Sanitarium (Philippines), MAX Superspeciality Hospital (India), and

Shahid Beheshti Medical University of Sciences (Iran) won honourable mentions.

During the awards ceremony, attended by hospital and healthcare leaders from around the world, gold, silver and bronze awards were revealed in each of six IHF Awards categories, as well as honourable mentions for other exceptional entries in each category. Gold winners were invited to present their winning programmes and projects in a special parallel session at WHC.

The awards committee, comprising health leaders from around the world and chaired by

Dr Lawrence Lai of the Hong Kong Hospital Authority, evaluated 250 entries submitted from 38 countries/territories - a record since the awards were established in 2015.

Evaluation is based on five criteria - originality and innovativeness; intended impact; adaptability and scalability; scientific rigor; and clarity.

The five other IHF Awards are Dr Kwang Tae Kim Grand Hospital Award, American College of Healthcare Executives Excellence Award for Leadership and Management, Austco Excellence Award for Quality and Patient Safety, Ashikaga-Nikken Excellence Award for Green Hospitals, and Seddiqi Holding Excellence Award for Corporate Social Responsibility.

The Royal Hospital in Muscat won silver in the Austco Excellence Award for Quality and Patient Safety that recognises excellence or outstanding achievements in promoting quality and patient safety. The gold went to Kaiser Permanente Northern California (USA) and bronze jointly to Saudi German Hospital Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) and Hospital Universitari Mútua Terrassa (Spain).

The Sultanate of Oman Excellence Award for Health Services During Crisis is given to the hospitals in a developing country (low income country according to latest World Bank list) and/or in a country facing a major nationwide crisis (war and/or disaster). The hospital must have experienced or is currently experiencing a situation of particular strain from an acute or unexpected nature.



HM returns from Qatar

Continued from Page 01

'The Sultanate of Oman expressed its pride in the State of Qatar hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022, affirming Oman's confidence that Qatar will show unprecedented success in organising the global event in a manner that reflects the region's heritage and great potential.'

On regional and international matters, the two sides agreed on the importance of the role of the

Gulf Cooperation Council in enhancing security and stability in the region.

They also underscored the significance of consolidating consultation and coordination of stands at a bilateral level, as well as regional and international arenas, with the prime aim of serving Arab, Islamic and legitimate humanitarian issues - on top of which comes the Palestinian cause - and the need to bolster security and stability in the Mid-

East and the world at large.

At the conclusion of the visit, Sheikh Tamim expressed his heartfelt appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan and his pride in this historic visit.

His Majesty the Sultan stated his deep thanks to Sheikh Tamim and his appreciation for the hospitality extended to him and his delegation during the visit.

His Majesty also invited Sheikh Tamim to visit Oman. ONA

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November 2021	December 2021	January 2022	February 2022
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Thu 11 ● ● ●	Sat 04 ● ● ●	Sat 15 ● ● ●	Sat 12 ● ● ●
Sat 20 ● ● ●	Sat 11 ● ● ●	Thu 20 ● ● ●	Thu 17 ● ● ●
Sat 27 ● ● ●	Sat 18 ● ● ●	Sat 29 ● ● ●	Sat 26 ● ● ●

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UAE updates land border crossing procedures

Abu Dhabi, UAE - United Arab Emirates (UAE) has updated entry procedures through land borders for citizens of neighbouring countries and individuals living in border areas who enter and exit the UAE frequently.

UAE's Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security, and the National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority announced the update, effective from Tuesday.

According to the updated procedures, all GCC citizens or foreigners who are vaccinated with approved vaccines and booster doses, must present a negative PCR test not older than 14 days to enter through land borders.

They have to also undergo a PCR test on the sixth day after entry if they stay six consecutive days or more.

Non-vaccinated individuals must present a negative PCR test conducted no more than 72 hours before the date of arrival. Those staying in the UAE for four days or more must take a



PCR test on the fourth day of entry, and take another on the eighth day.

The validity of PCR test results has been extended to 14 days for vaccinated and non-vaccinated educational staff, and students and parents of students who pick them up from educational institutions.

'Other procedures related to supply chains will remain in place,' the two entities said.

'These measures are in line

with the current health situation and to facilitate the travel of citizens and visitors of neighbouring countries to the UAE.'

The two authorities stressed on the importance of commitment to applying all preventive and precautionary measures, such as wearing masks, maintaining social distance and sterilising luggage, and advised avoiding travel for those with chronic diseases or those experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

Slime toys banned; fines up to RO1,000

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Jellies and slime-based toys have been banned in Oman, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) announced on Tuesday.

In a statement CPA said, 'Salim bin Ali al Hakmani, chair-

man of Consumer Protection Authority, issued the decision (No 301/ 2021) to suspend the circulation of jellies and slime games products of all kinds and shapes in the sultanate.'

The authority said that it will impose a fine on violators of the decision. The fine will be not

more than RO1,000 and not less than RO50.

The fine will be doubled if the violation is repeated, CPA added.

CPA has called on all to cooperate and report any violation through its communication channels.

One COVID-19 death in November

Our Correspondent
Muscat

One COVID-19 related death has been reported in Oman this month. According to the Ministry of Health (MoH), ten new cases were recorded on Tuesday, with no new related deaths.

This takes the total number of COVID-19 cases in the sultanate to 304,509. The total number of related deaths is 4,113, MoH stated. The last death due to COVID-19 was reported on November 8.

Seven patients recovered in a 24-hour period on Tuesday, taking the total number of recoveries to 299,928.

In a 24-hour period on Tuesday, one patient was admitted to a hospital, accounting for a total to 13 in health institutions, including two in intensive care.

Muscat Municipality holds clean-up drive at Al Bustan beach

Muscat - Muscat Municipality and Muscat Charity Team conducted a campaign to clean Al Bustan beach on Tuesday.

The campaign aimed to deliver the message of community partnership that emphasises the value of municipal work by activating the roles of civil society institutions and members in the field of environmental volunteering.

Maternal mortality up, infant mortality down in 2020: NCSI

Our Correspondent
Muscat

New data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicates that maternal mortality rate in Oman has increased while infant mortality rate has gone down in 2020 as compared to 2016.

Maternal mortality rate in Oman increased from 13.4 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2016 to 29.4 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2020, according to NCSI statistics.

Maternal mortality rate is the number of women who die during pregnancy and childbirth per 100,000 live births. Data also revealed that infant mortality rate in the sultanate fell from 9.3 deaths per thousand live births in 2016 to 7.6 deaths in 2020.

Additionally, the average visit of individuals to health institutions decreased from 3.5 in 2016 to 2.3 in 2021. While the number of hospital beds increased from 4,539 in 2016 to 5,293 in 2021, the number of healthcare institutions in 2020 was 1,587, of which 64 per cent were private clinics. The number of dialysis centres also grew with 24 centres providing services to 2,264 patients.

Statistics indicate an increase in the number of dialysis sessions in the sultanate from 204,289 in 2016 to 309,845 sessions in 2020, NCSI stated.

Government spending on the health sector in 2020 was 7.4 per cent of the total expenditure, while the sector's contribution to GDP was RO954.1mn (3.9 per cent).

The percentage of nationals employed in government and private health institutions in 2020 increased seven per cent

6.7% increase in blood donors in five years

Blood bank to remain open during National Day holidays



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has seen the number blood donors increase over the past five years even as the country continues to face a growing demand from patients reflecting the critical role of social responsibility.

To cater to the demand, Central Blood Bank in Bausher will remain open during the National Day holidays from 8am to 8pm.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Infor-

mation (NCSI), the number of blood donors increased by 6.7 per cent between 2016 and 2020. NCSI figures show that there were 61,679 blood donors in Ministry of Health's centres in the five-year period.

The Governorate of Muscat recorded the highest number of blood donors (28,617), followed by North Batinah (10,480), Dakhliyah (4,266) and 3,003 in South Batinah.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ahmed bin Hamad al Kharusi, who has donated blood 174 times, said, "Donating blood

doesn't just save lives, but there are health benefits for donors too. People in Oman need to be aware of the importance of blood and platelet donation."

He informed that blood banks in the wilayats of the sultanate need about 1,500 units of blood every week.

"There is an urgent need to create awareness on the issue and efforts to increase the number of blood and platelet donors in the country," said Kharusi.

According to Kharusi, it's always a challenge to reach a wider audience to create awareness when blood donation drives are organised. "Our aim is to make people aware that they should visit the nearest blood bank for donations rather than wait for a campaign." He informed that donating blood every three months is good for health.

The time for blood donation at the Central Blood Bank in Bausher from Saturday to Thursday is between 8am to 8pm and 3pm to 8pm on Friday.

over 2016.

Marginal rise in HIV/AIDS cases

Oman has witnessed a marginal increase in HIV/AIDS cases over

a five-year period.

According to figures released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, cases increased from 135 in 2016 to 147 in 2020.

Of these, 110 cases were in the 25-49 years age group, 20 cases in 50 years and older category, 16 in the 15-24 years age group, and one case in the 5-14 years age group.



10 teams in final round of Upgrade programme

Muscat - The fifth edition of the Upgrade programme hosted the last stage of evaluation before announcement of the winners on December 15 at Innovation Park Muscat of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation recently.

The programme transforms the best graduation projects utilising Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies into successful ICT startups for the socio-economic benefit of Oman.

For the final evaluation stage, ten teams qualified to present their ideas to a panel consisting of experts and specialist in the field. The jury will select three teams as winners of this year's programme who will be announced in the Eighth Annual Research Forum and Upgrade ceremony on December 15. The winning teams will be provided

Winners will be announced at the 8th Annual Research Forum and Upgrade ceremony on Dec 15

incubation services, business and marketing consultation, and networking and mentoring opportunities. Workshops and lectures will be held for the winning teams at the ministry's incubation centre.

Upgrade is a competition-based programme in which the winners are assisted in transforming their graduation projects into startups in the ICT sector.

Topics included in the Upgrade programme include Smart Cities, Internet of Things, Information Security, Artificial Intelli-

gence, Big Data and Blockchain.

It is a collaboration between the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, which is involved in the programme's management and regulation, Omantel that looks into seed funding and financing, and Oman Technology Fund that is responsible for training and investment preparations.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth looks into professional and leadership development, Sas Centre for Entrepreneurship of the Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is involved in mentoring, coaching and consulting services, and the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development provides commercial, financial and marketing guidance to the winning teams.

Omani students can return to Russia: MoHERI

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omani students are now able to return to Russia for their studies, according to the Ministry of Higher Education,

Research and Innovation (MoHERI).

In a statement, the ministry said, 'The Russian government announced that all foreign students studying in Russia can return for study.'

The ministry urged Omani students to return to their colleges immediately and called on them to communicate with their educational institutions for further coordination on their return.



Grape cultivation project begins in Dhahirah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has given 450 grape seedlings to a farmer in Dhahirah kick-starting a programme to develop grape cultivation and production. Over 25 acres of land will be cultivated with grapes in five governorates under the programme.

An official of MAFWR said, "The ministry's specialists have started delivering grape seedlings in Dhahirah governorate. Salem al Farsi is the first farmer to receive 450 grape seedlings in the programme."

He added that the programme

aims to support Omani farmers and diversify Omani fruit crops. The ministry has started establishing two gene banks for the development of grape varieties in Oman.

The gene banks are part of a project to develop and grow grapes in the sultanate that was launched in June 2020, and will run till June 2023. The project is funded by the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund.

The official said, "The project aims to develop, produce and market grapes, and train farmers on modern grape cultivation, including fertilisation and pruning, and the use of new technologies that reduce effort and cost."

"The project also aims to es-

tablish genes banks for the development of grape varieties and for research studies. The ministry will establish two gene banks, one in Bahla and the other in Sohar."

He added that under the project, 12,500 grape seedlings will be planted on 25 acres of land in five governorates in cooperation with small and medium enterprises. Seven acres will be in North Sharqiyah, five each in Dakhliyah, Dhahirah, North Batinah and South Batinah, and three acres in Dhofar.

"Around 25 farmers will benefit from this project. The ministry will provide grape seedlings to farmers and support them with modern irrigation tools."

National organ transplantation programme gathers momentum

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH), in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), on Tuesday organised a workshop on the 'Development of National Transplantation Programme' at Grand Millennium Muscat.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Mohamed al Hosni, MoH's Undersecretary for Health Affairs and Chairman of the Technical Committee for Organ Transplantation, with participation of physicians from MoH's health institutions, Sultan Qaboos University and Armed Forces hospitals.

The workshop discussed the best ways to develop the national programme for organ transplantation and to benefit from the experiences of medical authorities and institutions in the field of human organ and tissue transplantation.

Dr Hosni said that organ transplantation is the new hope for millions of patients around the world.

He added that the blessings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to establish a National Centre for Organ Transplantation will contribute in developing the National Transplantation Programme.

MUSCAT DAILY

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*Rates as on November 23
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Eurozone business recovery gains pace

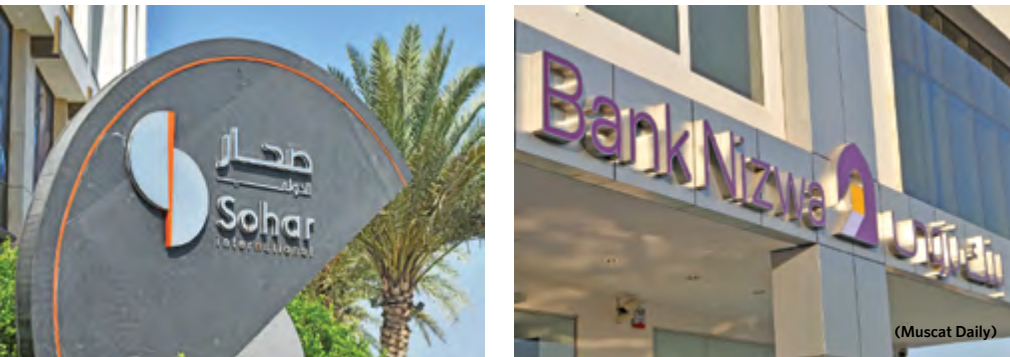
The recovery of the eurozone economy is again gaining pace after dipping last month, a closely watched survey said on Tuesday.

The IHS Markit purchasing managers' index (PMI), which measures corporate confidence, rose to 55.8 in November after dropping to 54.2 in October.

This is good news for job creation as the single currency area recovers from the damage of the pandemic and global supply chain disruption. But it comes along with increasing inflationary pressures, with prices and wages rising more steeply.

Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit said, "A stronger expansion of business activity in November defied economists' expectations of a slowdown."

Sohar International seeks to initiate merger talks with Bank Nizwa



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Sohar International Bank has expressed its intention to initiate merger discussions with Bank Nizwa. The bank on Tuesday sent a letter of intent to the board of directors of Bank Nizwa for a merger between the two entities.

"The board of directors of Sohar International Bank would like to announce that on Tuesday it has sent a letter of intent to the board of Bank Nizwa proposing a merger of the two banks," Ahmed al Musalmi, chief executive officer of Sohar International Bank said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Musalmi said the Sohar International Bank's board will keep

the market updated with any progress on this matter, which will be subject to necessary boards, shareholders and regulatory approvals and the applicable laws of the sultanate.

Mergers between the banks are quite rare in Oman. Last year Alizz Islamic Bank was merged with Oman Arab Bank's Islamic banking window, and before this erstwhile Oman International Bank was merged with HSBC Oman in 2012.

Bank Nizwa is the leading and fastest-growing Islamic bank in Oman. The bank's total assets grew by 22 per cent to RO1.385bn as of September 30, 2021 from RO1.139bn a year ago.

Bank Nizwa's gross financing portfolio grew by 19 per cent

year-on-year to reach at RO1.130bn in September 2021, while its total customer deposits reached RO1.074bn recording a growth of 18 per cent compared to the same period of last year.

On the other hand, Sohar International Bank's total assets increased by 9.3 per cent to RO4.023bn as of September 2021 compared to RO3.681bn a year ago.

The bank's net loans and advances increased by 3.4 per cent to RO2.550bn in September 2021 against RO2.467bn a year ago. Sohar International Bank's customer deposits, however, decreased by 5.1 per cent to RO2.229bn in September this year compared to the same period a year ago.



Asyad invites investors for Suwaiq Port expansion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's integrated logistics service provider Asyad Group has invited local and international private sector parties to invest in the expansion of Suwaiq Port within the framework of a joint cooperation programme.

Asyad's expression of interest tender includes developing, operating and management of Suwaiq Port, so that the 600sqm port would continue to perform its role as a multi-purpose commercial port in accordance with global standards.

The expansion seeks to enable the port to receive mega ships, thereby opening international maritime routes and handle general, liquid and loose cargo, as well as livestock and vehicles, at an operational capacity of 10mn tonnes per annum.

Dr Ahmed Mohammed al Abri, CEO of Asyad Ports, said that the step aims to encourage all firms to express their desire to participate in this major project. He added that the move will enable Suwaiq Port to prepare designs to make deeper quays, raise the reception capacity of the facility and enhance its competitiveness at regional and international levels. It will also meet the local economy's needs, notably in the field of food security, he said.

Abri told Oman News Agency (ONA) that Suwaiq expansion figures among Asyad's strategic goals of developing into a leading regional hub, besides making the sultanate an international logistics centre.

The target expansion comes as a natural outcome of the

growth the port undergoes year after year, which is a testimony to the ongoing expansion of the business and economy sectors, Abri said. He added that the project will attract investments, activate the labour market and achieve twinship with the Port of Sohar.

Speaking about the terms of the expression of interest document, Abri said that they state the augmentation of the reception capacity of the port by 5mn tonnes a year for general cargo and 5mn a year for liquid cargo, in addition to the setting up of 14m multi-purpose quays for the reception of mega ships.

The applications deadline has been extended to December 6, 2021. The tender document is available at Asyad headquarters and via its website.

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CMA digitises all services for investors, insurance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Tuesday announced the provision of six electronic services to enhance communication with the insurance policyholders, investors and stakeholders.

The digitalisation of services for investors and insurance policyholders by the CMA is in line with Oman's Vision 2040 towards digital transformation. The e-services are available via CMA's website and the smartphone application. The electronic services include a system for complaints against insurance companies, a system for complaints against the companies operating in the capital market sector (such as listed companies and brokerages) beside other services such as enquiries and whistle-blowing. The e-services also include a system for applications for assistance from the Fund for Assistance of the injured and heirs of the deceased and compensation for damage incurred in traffic accidents.

The CMA also provides electronic enquiry service which allows users to enquire about the

procedures and services rendered by CMA. Furthermore, a service for calculation of the value of cancelled vehicles was added in the website and CMA's smartphone application.

The CMA also introduced a platform for communication with the insurance companies to discuss the developments and issues related to the insurance industry.

Omantel announces successful test of 5G mmWave extended range with Ericsson

Muscat - Omantel on Tuesday announced the completion of a 5G mmWave proof of concept (POC) trial for extended range under the supervision by Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA). This trial which concluded recently with Ericsson will enable the company to extend the coverage of 5G mmWave to longer distances.

In a press release, Sheikh Talal al Mamari, Omantel's CEO said, "We have always worked in Omantel to bringing the best and latest technologies to Oman which help in facilitating the way local and resident international companies and organisations to excel in the way they do business. In every step we take, we are trying to help in making the life of the people in Oman easier, simpler and more entertaining. We have enjoyed a long and successful partnership with Ericsson, and we add these latest trials to our many milestones of achievement. This trial is the first of its kind in the Middle East, yet it is the next step for us to provide an even richer 5G experience to our customers. This is a major milestone that Omantel will add to its achievement and its journey towards excellence."

Abdullah al Balushi, country manager of Ericsson Oman, said,

"This trial demonstrates how 5G mmWave technology can be leveraged to offer fiber like experience at larger distance, even in rural areas of Oman. 5G Macro deployment complemented with mmWave extended range will help Omantel meet the opportunity to develop and deploy 5G networks that can handle the increase in traffic and deliver the user experience they expect for consumers and business across the sultanate."

Through this trial, Omantel and Ericsson have showcased how increased bandwidth can help to deliver faster, higher-quality video, and multimedia content and services at larger distances using mmWave 5G, and the successful test paves the way for enhanced 5G capabilities for consumers and businesses across the sultanate.

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US decides to release 50mn barrels of oil from strategic reserves

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden announced on Tuesday he has ordered the release of 50mn barrels of oil from the US strategic reserves in a coordinated attempt with other countries to tamp down soaring fuel prices.

'This release will be taken in parallel with other major energy consuming nations including China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom,' the White House said.

A senior administration official told reporters this was 'the first time we've done something like this in parallel with other countries.'

As the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, oil production has not kept pace with rocketing demand, pushing prices up.

In the United States, an associated rise in petrol prices is one of the main culprits in a surge of inflation.

Biden's announcement comes as Americans prepare for the holiday season, when travel ramps up.

Average fuel prices at filling stations are US\$3.41 a gallon, the highest level since 2014, according to latest figures from the AAA motorists' association. This represents an increase of US\$1.29 over petrol prices a year ago.

The US reserves, held in underground depots in Texas and Louisiana, are the largest emer-



US President Joe Biden speaks during an announcement at the South Court Auditorium of Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, DC on Monday (AFP)

gency supply of oil in the world.

'pain at the pump'

A senior administration official said the releases would start in mid- to late December, and that further intervention was possible to steady the market, 'responding to a once-in-a-century pandemic'.

"As the President has said, consumers are facing pain at the pump right now," the official said.

"The President stands ready to take additional action if needed and is prepared to use his full authorities, working in coordination with the rest of the

world, to maintain adequate supply as we exit the pandemic."

As output rises, oil prices are already down nearly 10 per cent in the last few weeks. But officials echoed Biden's repeatedly stated concerns that despite easing of crude values, prices of petrol for drivers have only gone up.

This has hurt ordinary Americans, while driving a sharp dive in Biden's approval ratings.

"There is mounting evidence that declines in oil prices and the cost of other inputs into petrol are not translating into lower prices at the pump," said the senior official, who spoke on con-

dition of anonymity.

The official said the government was looking into 'anti-competitive practices' and will 'examine whether illegal conduct is costing families at the pump'.

The approach is 'two-pronged. First, making sure that, you know, the price of oil is coming down, reflecting the fact that we have to have supply matching demand, but also making sure that those savings are passed through to consumers', he said.

"We expect the industry to be passing through the savings to consumers as quickly as possible."

AFP

Biden nominates Jerome Powell to stay as Fed chair

Washington, US - Jerome Powell is the 'right person' to lead the US Federal Reserve and fight the record spike in US inflation, President Joe Biden said on Monday as he made his long-awaited pick for chair of the world's most influential central bank.

The nomination, expected to win confirmation by the Senate, ends weeks of speculation over whether Biden would appoint the Republican chair to a second term or heed calls from left-wing members of his Democratic Party to replace him with another candidate, such as Fed governor Lael Brainard.

Instead, Brainard will serve as vice chair, Biden said, while Powell (68) will remain in the Fed's driver's seat, presiding over the rollback of its pandemic stimulus and the likely beginning of interest rate hikes next year.

Speaking alongside Powell and Brainard at a White House event, Biden credited the Fed chair with helping to spur the economy's faster-than-expected recovery from last year's col-



Jerome Powell

lapse, pointing to the progress made towards restoring the more than 20mn jobs COVID-19 destroyed.

"I believe Jay is the right person to see us through and finish that effort while also addressing the threat of inflation and what it poses to our economies and families," Biden said, referring to Powell by his nickname.

Powell has led Fed's response to the massive pandemic downturn, which saw it slash its lending rate to zero and roll out trillions of dollars in liquidity.

The bank has pulled back those measures as the economy

has recovered, but inflation has also spiked, fueling a drop in Biden's approval ratings.

The Fed chair and other central bank leaders argue the inflation wave will prove temporary and have said they do not foresee rate hikes at least until the middle of 2022, while saying their policies can address employment disparities, with racial minorities and less-educated people getting hired less.

Powell pledged to use 'our tools to support the economy and a strong labour market and to prevent higher inflation from becoming entrenched'.

Powell was appointed by Biden's predecessor Donald Trump and took office in 2018 after the then-president decided not to give Democrat Janet Yellen a second term in the seat. Now Treasury secretary, Yellen said that she believes Powell and Brainard will 'have broad support among Congress and the public and can be counted on to do an excellent job'.

AFP

Investcorp launches new fund in Saudi

Manama, Bahrain - Investcorp, a leading global provider and manager of alternative investment products, announced on Tuesday the launch of a Saudi focused Pre-IPO Growth Vehicle.

The vehicle is dedicated to investing in a diversified portfolio of companies at a 'pre-IPO' stage of development in Saudi Arabia, providing investors with an opportunity to gain exposure to growing and market-leading businesses in the kingdom. It aims to raise US\$500mn, targeting high growth and underserved sub-sectors such as healthcare, consumer, transport and logistics, and business services.

Commenting on the launch, Yasser Bajsaïr, CEO of Investcorp Saudi Arabia, said, "We are delighted to announce the launch of our Saudi Pre-IPO Growth Vehicle. Saudi Arabia's economy continues to evolve and remains a key market for Investcorp. The kingdom's Vision 2030 and its strong macroeconomic fundamentals, combined with its favourable regulatory en-



Yasser Bajsaïr

vironment and strategic privatization mandate makes it an attractive investment hub for creating new business opportunities that contribute to its economic growth."

Investcorp opened its office in Riyadh in 2008, managing deep-rooted and long-standing relationships with its investors in Saudi, and has since then been investing in leading businesses in the kingdom. To date, Investcorp has made seven investments in Saudi Arabia, operating across diversified sectors such as healthcare, consumer, manufacturing, transport and logistics, and industrial services.

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Sultan Qaboos University announces their desire to sell used furniture and their in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used furniture in auction stores and receive the bidding on Wednesday and Thursday 24-25/11/2021 from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used furniture, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used furniture, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 30/11, 01/12 and 02/12/2021.
- The used furniture are sold in their current condition, and SQU is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the moving is not completed after the end of the sale, and (10) Omani riyals will be imposed for each day after 05/12/2021.

Notes:

- Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- Commitment to Precautionary measures and wearing a mask and only one person is allowed to enter auction's location with the buyer.
- Entering the auction stores through Gate No. (2).
- For more information, please contact 92907117 .



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Muriya launches Beachfront project phase 2 in Jebel Sifah

Following the successful sell-out of Phase 1 of The Beachfront project in Jebel Sifah, Muriya, Oman's largest and most diversified real estate developer, has announced the highly anticipated launch of Phase 2.

During an exclusive launch event, guests were given a glimpse into the new neighbourhood, which presents the epitome of luxurious waterfront living. Potential buyers are able to view the unit of their preference at the first phase, seeing first-hand the unspoiled sea views from every home and graceful, modern architecture that comes with every townhouse and villa. With delivery in two years, family residency for all nationalities and other amazing homeowner benefits, it's the ideal way to experience the dream beach lifestyle amongst Jebel Sifah's thriving multicultural community.

Seif el Khouly, chief development officer of Muriya, said, "The rapid sell-out and the ongoing delivery of Phase 1 of The Beachfront project underscores the confidence our clients place in our destination and the success of the development. The Beachfront properties have been designed and constructed with luxury and passion in mind, keeping true to Jebel Sifah's low



density approach, and maintaining the highest standards of development".

The latest addition to

Muriya's growing portfolio of resort-style developments, The Beachfront offers a range of beautiful homes layered up-

wards from the beach with unobstructed sea views, protected by the Al Hajar Mountains, and surrounded by nature. From one-

bedroom twin villas, two- and three-bedroom stand-alone villas, to spacious townhouses and one-bedroom simplexes, each

property boasts unique architecture, panoramic sea views, and plenty of room to breathe. Villas also feature a generous garden, private pool, spacious rooftop terraces, making them both a private home and lavish entertainment space.

Alongside all the benefits of owning a property at The Beachfront in Jebel Sifah, homeowners will gain access to a range of community amenities including a kids' area, beach promenade and infinity pool. Whether relaxing by the poolside in the sun, making the most of family-time on the colourful playground, or enjoying a sunset stroll, there's time to appreciate and re-connect with the natural world. Meanwhile, at their doorstep, they are connected to modern day living at Jebel Sifah marina, with an abundance of indoor and outdoor activities to enjoy.

Located a 40-minute drive from Muscat, Jebel Sifah is nestled between the towering peaks of the Al Hajar Mountains and the tranquil crystal waters of the Arabian Sea. With a Harradine designed golf course, a modern marina with superyacht berthing, boutique hotel, restaurants and an incredible choice of freehold residential properties, Jebel Sifah offers all the elements of leading healthy and rewarding lives.



Maha Saud al Raisi

Unique offer with 'NBO Friday'

Continuing to make day-to-day banking more rewarding and enjoyable, National Bank of Oman (NBO) is celebrating White Friday on November 26, bringing back its popular 'NBO Friday' with a unique offer for its customers. For one day only, the bank is going to be giving 10 per cent cash-back, up to a maximum of RO100, for customers who use their credit card on all transactions at any of their favourite online retailers.

Maha Saud al Raisi, head of Retail Products at NBO, said, "At NBO we continue to find more ways to enhance the overall banking experience for our customers. As well as offering security and convenience, our credit cards come with a range of unmatched benefits and constant rewards. We're delighted with our latest offer and the best part of it is, cardholders can get cash back on each online purchase during the day, as well as earning Nuqati points."

Offering cashless convenience, tailor-made to meet the needs of its customers, NBO's suite of credit cards are fee-free as long as they maintain their yearly usage. Providing a smarter, safer alternative to cash, cardholders can enjoy perks like movie tickets, dining and hotel discounts, free travel insurance, airport lounge access, as well as Nuqati points. It's a great way for customers to increase their savings while enjoying the freedom of the lifestyle they choose.

Madayn inks pact to assess safety, security in industrial cities

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates - Madayn signed on Tuesday an agreement with Salamati Group, represented by the International College of Engineering and Management, to enhance joint cooperation and expertise exchange, and boost public-private partnership efforts in related areas.

The pact, which was signed by Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn, and Affan bin Khalfan al Akhazmi, CEO of Salamati Group, aims at developing an integrated study on safety and security assessment in Madayn, its industrial cities, and the industrial units based at these cities.



More and more customers impressed with JAC J7

Since its inception, JAC Motors has inspired everyone with its innovativeness, setting new marks in quality deliverance and value proposition. With its unmatched dedication JAC has delivered products that have become an integral part of people's lives.

Al Harith al Amrani feels the same elation and excitement when he describes his experience of owning the JAC J7 that puts the spotlight on the owner due to it's aesthetically pleasing design. Amrani, associated with the Sohar Aluminum Company, bought the JAC J7 5 months ago from the Sohar JAC showroom. He is fulfilling his long cherished dream of criss crossing Oman and visiting its innumerable beautiful locations with his J7.

The JAC J7 has been a great companion through his adventures. Specifically, he admires the fuel efficiency, smart sensors, 10.4" touch screen, the spacious, luxurious and comfortable interior coupled with exterior design that turns heads.

Amrani has been very vocal about his admiration towards the unique design of JAC J7. The



wide waterfall intake grille gives it a sleek dominating look backed up by the exquisite double sharp arrow waist lines running down, calling it to stand out from the crowd with the lift up tailgate that makes it so sporty yet so practical as far as the utility goes.

He also expressed the professionalism he encountered while buying the JAC J7. He praised the Towell Auto Centre team for being a great support and mak-

ing the whole process smooth and seamless. He has researched enough for him to know that JAC genuine parts are easily available throughout Oman which gives him a major sense of relief.

JAC was founded in 1964 and has been a partner with Towell Auto Centre in Oman for over 12 years.

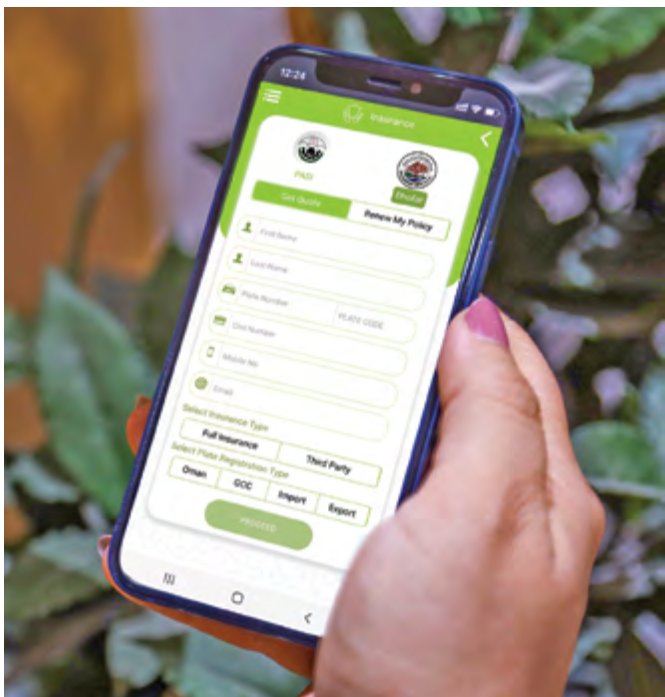
The strides JAC has taken over in this short period of time is envious, to say the least.

Dhofar Insurance customers can now pay premium through Khedmah app

Oman Investment and Finance Company's popular payments gateway - Khedmah, relentlessly aspires to expand its portfolio of products and services, and provide high-end solutions to meet customer's needs and surpass their expectations. Following a collaborative approach, Khedmah recently added a new service in the field of collecting vehicle insurance premiums.

Through the direct integration between Khedmah and systems of Dhofar Insurance Company, customers of Dhofar insurance can now pay the insurance premiums for renewal of their vehicle insurance. New customers can also view competitive quotes from the Insurance company and apply for car insurance through the app as well as the website.

Such digital services are known to provide ease and convenience, allowing customers to make transactions or browse for options from the comfort of their homes. For Dhofar Insurance customers, downloading the Khedmah App on their smart phones or logging onto



the website, can now reduce their need to visit the branches.

This will save them time, effort and money. At the same time, they can avail the integrated services that Khedmah provides such as paying their electricity, water and telecommunications bills, recharging meter

bills, entertainment recharge as well as making payments to the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) and other solutions.

Khedmah constantly seeks to keep abreast with current market trends in order to provide its customers with services that suit their dynamic lifestyle and make their life easier. The latest

tie-up with Dhofar Insurance Company is a testament to this approach and it reflects OIFC's constant efforts in analysing market trends as well as customer requirements who are looking for fast and safe ways to finalise their daily needs from the comfort of their home or office. Khedmah provides for them an integrated platform they can utilise to benefit from a plethora of smart and seamless solutions.

Along with Khedmah's wide array of solutions, Customers interested in subscribing to Awasr and Omantel home internet products as well as Omantel postpaid packages can also easily do so at any of the Khedmah branch offices. Furthermore, customers can now benefit from a gamut of Oman Post and Asyad Express services outside their working hours through a selected number of Khedmah branches.

The services include post box subscriptions, subscription fee payments, subscription renewals and sending parcels locally and internationally.

McLaren Muscat showcases its flagship models - Artura, GT and 720S at Al Mouj

At a two-day event attended by the crème de la crème of Oman, McLaren Muscat showcased its flagship models - Artura, GT and 720S at the Zunairah mansions in Al Mouj Muscat. McLaren not only displayed its models but also gave McLaren GT and McLaren 720S for test drive to sport cars enthusiasts. The response was overwhelming and the attendees enjoyed the high-class engineering and performance of these spectacular models.

Zunairah provided the perfect backdrop for these unique supercars. The Zunairah mansions, in the heart of Al Mouj Muscat's renowned Shatti District, are designed to offer the perfect balance of exquisite form and outstanding function. The mansions have been created to re-draw and redefine the standards by which modern living is judged. They offer an unequalled luxury experience delivered in the most sustainable and environmentally responsible way - their ethos similar to that of McLaren brand.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE - the sole distributors of McLaren cars in Muscat, said, "We are very pleased with the response we received for this event. We showcased and organised test drives of some of our supercars and from the feedback we received from our guests, each model offered a uniquely intense driving experience. We want to thank our guests who wholeheartedly participated in our event."

"We are grateful to Al Mouj Muscat for their amazing arrangements at this spectacular



Zunairah venue. The ambience was perfect for a brand like McLaren that stands for creating breathtaking experiences."

McLaren embraces a hybridised future of high performance with the sculptural 2022 Artura supercar. The newly introduced mid-engine two-seater rides on a Carbon Fibre Lightweight Architecture platform. It also pairs a twin-turbo V6 - the company's first - with a battery-electric powertrain to create a plug-in-hybrid model - another first.

The duo generates a combined 671 horsepower and 531 pound-feet of torque. Performance estimates are highlighted by a zero-to-60-mph time of 3.0 seconds and a top speed of 205 mph.

Its bodywork is pure McLaren, complete with prominent air vents and scissor-style doors.

Along with a more premium and spacious interior, the 2022 Artura offers several convenience and driver-assistance features.

McLaren GT is a supercar that is thrilling, yet refined, dynamic and engaging. Like all McLarens, the new GT has a carbon fibre structure that possesses exceptional strength and rigidity while enabling unparalleled driving dynamics and lightest-in-class kerbweight.

At 1,530kg, the McLaren GT is more than 130kg lighter than its closest core competitor. And with new 4.0lt twin-turbocharged V8 engine, the all-new GT delivers 620PS and

630Nm of torque and undoubtedly the fastest acceleration.

The car also offers ample room under the full length, glazed, powered tailgate and in the front storage area. It has a perfectly designed ergonomic interior that is luxurious.

The contours of the 720S are distinctly McLaren, yet the details are boldly different. The beating heart of the 720S is a new and fearsomely powerful M840T engine with 720PS.

Press the start button and the twin-turbo V8 comes alive with a potent growl that ignites your senses and focuses your mind. Bathed in vibrant red light, every part of this 4.0lt unit is refined to maximize power, sharpen responses, and increase fuel efficiency.



Bank Muscat and Visa renew partnership

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, and Visa, the world's leader in digital payments, has announced the renewal of their partnership.

An agreement was signed recently in the presence of Sheikh Waleed K al Hashar, chief executive officer, Bank Muscat, by Dr Saeeda Jaffar, senior vice president and Group Country Manager, GCC region, Visa and Amjad Iqbal al Lawati, assistant general manager - Cards and eBanking, Bank Muscat.

The visiting Visa delegation also presented an award to the bank for its leadership in developing Contactless PoS infrastructure in Oman. Amjad Iqbal al Lawati, assistant general manager - Cards and eBanking, Bank Muscat, said, "As a pioneer in launching innovative products and services to enhance customer experience, we are very pleased to continue partnering with Visa to rapidly roll out con-

tactless payment infrastructure across the sultanate.

"This is greatly benefiting our customers and merchant partners alike. Contactless payments are highly secure and convenient, and will promote further innovation in other sectors, apart from enhancing the convenience of making PoS payments quickly and securely."

Dr Jaffar said, "As the global leader in digital payments, our mission is to connect the world through the most innovative, reliable and secure payment network - enabling individuals, businesses and economies to thrive. Our focus on innovation has been a catalyst for the growth of digital payments, and we are delighted to strengthen our longstanding partnership with Bank Muscat to provide access to the digital economy to more consumers and businesses in Oman."

Bank Muscat is particularly keen to encourage all its cus-

tomers to use digital banking channels to meet their financial requirements and needs.

As the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, Bank Muscat has the largest network in Oman. Today, the bank's merchant partners across the sultanate use over 24,000 Point of Sale (PoS) devices on a daily basis.

The tremendous growth in PoS transactions is reflected by the fact that more than 61mn PoS transactions have already been carried out in 2021 compared to about 45mn in 2020.

The technology-driven products and services are in tune with Oman's move towards a cashless, e-payments-based society.

Over the years, Bank Muscat has been closely partnering with Visa in building a state-of-the-art digital payment infrastructure in the sultanate that are in line with the sultanate's ambitious eGovernment project and conform to international standards.



Tolerance, inclusivity, technology in focus at hybrid ABLF Talks

Tolerance, constructive dialogue and peace will be the engines that drive economic and social growth, said Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak al Nahayan, Minister of Tolerance and Co-existence, UAE, at the second hybrid edition of the ABLF Talks at the Dubai Cares Pavilion, Expo 2020 Dubai.

The monthly leadership series, held under the patronage of Sheikh Nahayan and in partnership with the UAE Ministry of Economy and Dubai Cares, a UAE-based global philanthropic organisation, saw a lively discussion by world leaders on the virtues of tolerance and inclusivity, and their role in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the Keynote Address, Sheikh Nahayan highlighted how the UAE was driven by its belief in constructive dialogues and concern for each other's welfare. "Tolerant societies are more open, innovative and economically prosperous while tolerant businesses are more

successful. We in the UAE, consider ourselves to be the example of the truth of these statements," he added.

The role of the Expo 2020 Dubai was also spotlighted as an event that not just motivated people to redesign and reshape their future but also served as a platform to learn, discover and appreciate the relationship between individuals and the world around them. "Our country is a land of opportunities. We will continue to be a dynamic hub of a vast, vibrant and ever-accelerating global market that serves over 2bn people in the Middle East, Africa and beyond."

The panel discussion that followed focused on the impact of the pandemic on the UN SDGs, especially in the education sector. Featuring Dr Tariq al Gurg, commissioner general for the Dubai Cares Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai and chief executive officer of Dubai Cares, Dr Dena Assaf, UN resident coordinator, UAE, and the deputy

commissioner general, United Nations and Majid al Usaimi, Unicef national ambassador and president, Asian Paralympic Committee (APC), the conversation veered on the need to democratise technology to bridge the huge gaps in society.

"COVID-19 has accelerated united efforts towards SDGs, but at the same time, it has also created a huge digital divide. If you have a shared vision and a global agenda but not enough technological connectivity or adequate force or funding, these goals cannot be achieved. Therefore, universal access to connectivity is critical," said Dr Gurg.

The ABLF Talks Hybrid, which will return to the Dubai Cares Pavilion next month on December 14, is powered by four innovative superbrands, the Aditya Birla Group, Zand, DP World and Etisalat. The Conclaves are also supported by a powerful lineup of partners including Muscat Daily.

Bank Nizwa continues to support local SMEs

Recognising SMEs as the integral part of the economy, Bank Nizwa has always played a pioneering role in contributing to the development of SMEs in Oman. Aligning itself to the country's economic diversification plan as outlined in its Vision 2040 and in an endeavour to bridge the funding gap for SMEs operating in key sectors, the bank recently signed a financing agreement with Emmar Industries.

A 100 per cent Omani-owned SME, Emmar Industries will receive financing from Bank Nizwa which will fulfill the working capital requirements of the company. A highly revered manufacturing company located in the heart of the Samail Industrial Estate with an investment above



RO5mn, Emmar Industries has shown steady growth since its incorporation in 2018.

Establishing itself as a market leader in producing fire rated isolation products such as sandwich panels, the company has bagged several small and large-scale construction projects in a short span of time. The financing from

Bank Nizwa will provide the needed financial support to acquire machinery for the project while covering a portion of the company's capital expenditures.

"The development of the SME sector is a driving force for industrialisation and plays a vital role in building the nation's economy.

By empowering entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skill and financial capabilities to undertake key projects, Bank Nizwa has remained steadfast in its commitment to supporting SMEs through innovative Sharia'a compliant financial solutions," said Khaled al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa.

MG Motor opens showroom in Sinaw

MHD ACERE opened a state of the art MG Motor showroom in the city of Sinaw. Inaugurated by Madam Areej Mohsin Haider Darwish, chairperson of MHD ACERE, along with the senior management, Sinaw showroom is the 11th MG Motor outlet in the country.

In a very short span of time, MG Motor has expanded its presence across Oman as a result of its commitment to "Do More" for its customers. Very recently, MG Motor also launched the all-new 2022 MG GT car - a rebellious sport sedan, reflecting the British-born brand's commitment to diversify its line-up by unveiling a sporty new model.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO - MHD ACERE, said, "The inauguration of MG Motor show-



room in Sinaw city is aligned with our plans to expand our retail presence closer to our prospective customers. The Sinaw facility will help us to cater to the mobility requirements of people across North Sharqiyah governorate. MG as a brand is committed to delivering engaging

and differentiated experiences to its customers and we are proud to be their distributor."

The line-up that will be displayed at the Sinaw showroom will include all MG Motor's best-selling cars including the MG HS, RX8 Black Edition and the all-new 2022 MG GT. There will be MG 5

and MG 6 sedans and the MG T60 pick up. The Sinaw showroom is fully equipped to provide the very best retail support to MG customers. MG Motor also has an e-commerce platform to help enhance its customers' shopping experience from the comfort and safety of their homes.

IAEA chief seeks ‘common ground’ with Iran

‘Establishing a framework for cooperation between IAEA and AEOL is one of the main topics of discussion’

Tehran, Iran - The UN nuclear watchdog said on Tuesday it was seeking ‘common ground’ with Iran days after reporting that the Islamic republic had sharply increased its stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi made the remarks following talks with officials in Tehran ahead of negotiations next week aimed at salvaging the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

His visit comes after the IAEA said Iran had boosted its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to many times in excess of the limit laid down in the landmark accord.

“Our work has been intense since the morning,” Grossi said at a joint news conference in Tehran with Mohammad Eslami, the chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOL).

“We are continuing at this point the negotiations with a view to find a common ground,” he said.

“There are other issues that we are working on and... it is very important to put this into the perspective of the peaceful nuclear programme of Iran.”

“We are multiplying our efforts with a view to conclude our exchanges today.”



Behrouz Kamalvandi (left) - spokesman of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran - meets with Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), upon his arrival in the Iranian capital Tehran on Tuesday (AFP)

In a brief statement, the AEOL said, ‘Establishing a clear framework for cooperation between the IAEA and the agency is one of the main topics of discussion.’

The talks come ahead of the scheduled resumption on Mon-

day of negotiations between Tehran and world powers aimed at saving the 2015 deal that gave Iran sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.

On November 12, Grossi had described as ‘astonishing’ his

lack of contact with the new Iranian government of ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi.

Days later, Tehran responded by announcing it had invited the watchdog chief to visit.

There was no mention of

Grossi’s visit in Iran’s ultraconservative newspapers on Tuesday.

Demand to lift sanctions
Iran’s Foreign Ministry

We have always advised the IAEA to stay on the path of technical cooperation, and to not let certain countries pursue their political orientations on behalf of the IAEA

SAEED KHATIBZADEH

spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh expressed hopes on Monday that his visit would be ‘constructive’.

“We have always advised the IAEA to stay on the path of technical cooperation, and to not let certain countries pursue their political orientations on behalf of the IAEA,” he said.

Iran began easing its commitments under the deal in 2019, a year after then president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the accord and began imposing crippling sanctions.

Trump’s successor Joe Biden wants to bring Washington back into the agreement, which is

known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

Tehran is demanding all sanctions imposed or reimposed on it by the US since 2017 be lifted.

The IAEA said last Wednesday in a report seen by AFP that Iran had boosted its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to 2,489.7kg.

The total amount now includes 113.8kg enriched to 20 per cent, up from 84.3kg in September, and 17.7kg enriched up to 60 per cent, up from 10kg, it said.

The United States warned later that Iran was reaching the point of no return for reviving the nuclear deal.

“The time will come if Iran continues at this pace with the advancements they’ve made, (it) will make it impossible even if we were going to go back to the JCPOA to recapture the benefits,” the US envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, said on Friday.

The November 29 talks will be held in Vienna, where the IAEA is based.

The remaining parties to the deal - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia - will join the talks while the United States will participate indirectly.

AFP

Israel ‘formalising’ defence ties with Morocco on minister’s visit

Tel Aviv, Israel - Israel’s Defence Minister Benny Gantz was set on Tuesday to head to Morocco on a visit that will ‘formalise’ cooperation between the two countries, officials say, at a time when Rabat is embroiled in a standoff over Western Sahara.

The two-day trip comes less than a year after Morocco normalised ties with Israel in a deal brokered by former US president Donald Trump’s administration.

In return, Washington recognised the North African kingdom’s sovereignty over the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

Gantz, the first Israeli Defence Minister to make an official visit to Morocco, will sign ‘a memorandum of understanding that will outline defence cooperation between the two countries’, his office said.

The trip aims to ‘set the foundation for all future security cooperation between Israel and Morocco’, a source familiar with the visit told AFP.

“Until now there has been some level of cooperation; this



Israel’s Defence Minister Benny Gantz (AFP)

truly formalises it,” the source said.

Morocco controls most of Western Sahara and considers the former Spanish colony as its sovereign territory.

Tensions have flared between Morocco and Algeria, which backs Western Sahara’s Polisario Front independence movement.

Algeria cut diplomatic ties with Morocco in August citing ‘hostile actions’ - a charge denied by Rabat.

Earlier this month, Algiers ac-

cused Morocco of killing three Algerian civilians on a desert highway, raising fears of an escalation.

And Polisario head Brahim Ghali said last week the movement had decided to step up military operations.

Timing ‘not coincidental’

Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, an Israeli expert on Morocco, said the timing of Gantz’s visit and the signing of an MOU were not a coincidence.

“It’s possible that in the context of the Moroccan-Algerian tensions, the Moroccans were the ones who were keen on this,” he said.

“It would seem to me that the Moroccans are the ones who are keen on showing everybody - their own public, their Algerian rivals, the West - that they are deepening their relationship with Israel,” said the Tel Aviv University professor.

Morocco and Israel previously set up ties in 1993 but Rabat broke them off at the start of the

second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, in 2000.

Rabat normalised ties with the Jewish state last December, shortly after similar announcements by the UAE and Bahrain.

Last month, Israel’s Ratio Petroleum announced an agreement with Rabat on ‘exploration operations’ off Dakhla in Western Sahara.

Israel’s Defence Ministry oversees all security exports, with the Jewish state offering state-of-art products ranging from attack drones to the Iron Dome missile defence system.

One Israeli product, the NSO’s Pegasus spyware, has already made its way to Morocco, according to Amnesty International and Paris-based organisation Forbidden Stories.

Rabat allegedly used it against French President Emmanuel Macron - a claim denied by Morocco which said it never bought the software and has filed lawsuits against French media and Amnesty International.

AFP

Generation of children ‘at stake’ in Lebanon crisis: UN

Beirut, Lebanon - The UN children’s agency on Tuesday called on Lebanon to take urgent action to protect children after it documented a spike in child labour rates and food insecurity since April.

“Urgent action is needed to ensure no child goes hungry, becomes sick, or has to work rather than receive an education,” said Yukie Mokuo, Unicef representative in Lebanon.

“The staggering magnitude of the crisis must be a wake-up call,” she said, quoted in a statement.

Lebanon is grappling with its worst-ever financial crisis, with nearly 80 per cent of the population estimated to be living below the poverty line.

UNICEF in October followed up with the more than 800 families it had surveyed in April and found that since then living conditions had deteriorated dramatically.

“The future of an entire generation of children is at stake,” it said in its latest report titled ‘Surviving without the basics’.

The survey found 53 per cent



Children at their home in Hay el Gharbeh, an informal settlement in southern Beirut, the capital of Lebanon (Unicef)

of families had at least one child who skipped a meal in October 2021, compared with 37 per cent in April.

“The proportion of families... who sent children to work rose to 12 per cent, from 9 per cent,” UNICEF added.

It said almost 34 per cent of children who required primary health care in October did not receive it, up from 28 per cent in April.

“Life is very hard; it is becoming harder every day,” Hanan, a 29 year old mother, was quoted as saying by UNICEF.

“Today I sent my four children to school without food.”

“I have suicidal thoughts and the only thing stopping me from doing this is my children. I feel so bad for them.”

Amal, a 15 year old who works as a fruit-picker in southern Lebanon, said she had to take up the job to support her family.

“Our parents need the money we earn. What would they do if we stopped working now?” Unicef quoted her as saying.

“When I look to the future, I see life getting harder.”
AFP

The broken dreams of desperate migrants fleeing Africa for Saudi

Hargeisa, Somalia - The people smugglers promised Fentahun Derebe passage to Saudi Arabia, where the young Ethiopian could make more money than he had ever dreamed of, then return home to start a business.

Instead, after he reached the coast of Somalia, the smugglers demanded more money and dumped the 19 year old when he couldn’t pay up. Broke and alone, Fentahun had no option but to walk back the way he came - a journey many hundreds of kilometres through the desert.

“People told me I would get a good job, and change my life. They told me it would be easy. But it didn’t turn out like that at all,” the soft-spoken teenager told AFP in Hargeisa, a transit hub along the smuggling route where many migrants wind up stranded.

As attempts to cross the Mediterranean have intensified, and a migrant crisis has erupted on the EU border, another of the world’s busiest smuggling routes is quietly swinging back into gear.

Fentahun is among thousands of migrants trying to leave Africa - but his destination isn’t Europe, but the Arabian Peninsula.

This so-called ‘Eastern Route’ is perilous and sometimes fatal, with migrants crossing scorching desert, rough seas and active war zones in search of economic opportunity.

The journey takes migrants - mainly Ethiopians, but also some Somalis - from the Horn of Africa across the Gulf of Aden to war-torn Yemen.

From there they traverse vast stretches of hostile territory in the hope of reaching Saudi Ara-



This file photo shows an Ethiopian migrant moving out with relief materials distributed to migrants at an International Organization for Migration centre in Hargeisa, Somaliland, on September 19 (AFP)

bia and other Gulf states, and finding work.

Eastern promise

Most don’t make it. Tens of thousands of migrants

are stuck in Yemen, unable to pay for a return trip, held hostage by smugglers or detained by local authorities.

Some meet tragic and grisly ends along the way.

In March, a fire in an overcrowded detention facility in Yemen’s capital killed dozens of migrants. That same month, 20 drowned when smugglers tossed people overboard en route to

Yemen, fearing their vessel was overloaded.

But many never leave Africa at all, swindled long before even setting sail. “They told me it would cost US\$500 to get on the boat. I didn’t even have US\$100. I was shocked,” said Fentahun, who left Gondar in northern Ethiopia when he had barely finished high school.

The Eastern Route offers two gateways to Yemen: One via Obock in Djibouti, but more often from Bosaso in northern Somalia.

Djibouti patrols its coastline and tracks migrants but governance is weaker in Somalia, in part making the Bosaso option more popular. But it is the longer and more dangerous of the two, passing through isolated, lawless and arid parts of Somalia, and daytime temperatures reach ex-

cruciating highs.

On the month-long walk between Bosaso and Hargeisa, Fentahun said he passed many migrants in dire straits. Some had been robbed or physically abused, and all were desperately short on food and water.

“I was afraid... It wasn’t safe along the way,” he said.

Hundreds of exploited migrants are stuck in limbo in Hargeisa, without cash to return home to Ethiopia or press onward to Bosaso.

“I left for my children,” said Woynshat Esheto, a 35 year old single mother of four, who wanted to go to Saudi Arabia and become a housekeeper, but ran out of money in Hargeisa.

“I didn’t have a way of feeding them, or sending them to school. I had no choice.”
AFP

46 killed in tourist bus crash on Bulgaria highway

Bosnek, Bulgaria - North Macedonia called for three days of national mourning after a tourist bus carrying its citizens caught fire and crashed in Bulgaria on Tuesday, killing 46 people in Europe's deadliest road accident in the past decade.

Although the cause has yet to be determined, officials believe the bus crashed into the guardrails and caught fire while returning from Istanbul in Turkey to Skopje in North Macedonia.

Those who died trapped in the burning bus - including four year old twins, according to media reports - were mostly from North Macedonia, prompting the government to declare three days of mourning.

The flag of the Republic of North Macedonia will be flown at half-mast. Bulgaria has also declared a day of mourning on Wednesday.

Only four men and three women, including a 16 year old girl, survived the crash by breaking one of the windows and jumping to safety, according to officials.

'Lost my whole family'

"I lost my whole family in the blaze," one man told the *Sloboden Pecat* newspaper, saying ten relatives had died.

Media in North Macedonia reported that several of the dead were from a Skopje primary school, where all classes were stopped.

The accident happened after



Officials at the site of a bus accident, in which at least 46 people were killed, on a highway near the village of Bosnek, Bulgaria on Tuesday (AFP)

midnight on a highway about 40km from Sofia, near the village of Bosnek. Many of the dead were between 20 to 30 years old, officials said.

Local media said the bus was registered with the Besa Trans tourist agency, which organises sightseeing and shopping tours to Istanbul.

It was one of four buses travelling back to Skopje along the same highway at short intervals.

'Explosion'

Images showed the carcass of

the charred bus after it broke through the highway's central guardrail.

Bulgaria's interim Prime Minister Stefan Yanev said a probe into the accident had been launched, dismissing suggestions that road conditions were to blame.

Deputy chief prosecutor Borislav Sarafov said they were still investigating "if it was a technical fault of the vehicle or a human error that caused the crash".

North Macedonian Prime

Minister Zoran Zaev told state news agency MIA that he had spoken to one survivor.

"He explained that they were sleeping in the bus when an explosion was heard. They succeeded in breaking one of the windows and saved a few people. Unfortunately, the rest did not succeed," he said.

Bulgarian national police chief Stanimir Stanev said the bus driver died 'immediately so there was no one able to open the doors'.

Bulgaria's Interior Minister

Boyko Rashkov, who was among those who rushed to the site of the crash, described the scene as 'terrifying'.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen sent her 'deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who perished in the tragic bus accident' and wished 'a fast recovery to those injured'.

Russian President Vladimir Putin also expressed his 'sincere condolences' and said he hoped for 'the speedy recovery of all those wounded'.

AFP



Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (AFP)

Ethiopia's Abiy vows to head to war front amid rebel advance

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said on Monday he would head to the war front to lead soldiers battling rebels, as the year-long conflict moves closer to the capital Addis Ababa.

"Starting tomorrow, I will mobilise to the front to lead the defence forces," Abiy, winner of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, said in a statement posted on Twitter.

"Those who want to be among the Ethiopian children who will be hailed by history, rise up for your country today. Let's meet at the front."

Abiy's statement came as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebel group continued to press towards Addis Ababa, claiming control of the town of Shewa Robit, just 220km northeast of the capital by road.

It also came after the ruling Prosperity Party's executive committee met on Monday to discuss the war, which has dragged on for a year.

After that meeting, Defence Minister Abraham Belay told state-affiliated media that security forces would embark on a 'different action', without providing details.

"We can't continue like this, that means there will be change," Belay said. "What happened and is happening to our people, the abuses being meted out by this destructive, terrorist, robber group, can't continue."

Abiy sent troops into Ethiopia's northernmost Tigray region to topple the TPLF in November 2020, saying the move came in response to TPLF attacks on army camps.

Though he promised a swift victory, by late June the TPLF had regrouped and retaken most of Tigray including its capital Mekele, prompting the federal army to largely withdraw from the region.

Since then the TPLF has pushed into the neighbouring Afar and Amhara regions.

It has also formed an alliance with other insurgent groups including the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), which is active in the Oromia region surrounding Addis Ababa.

Diplomatic push

The war has already killed thousands and pushed hundreds of thousands into famine-like condition, according to the UN.

In early November Abiy's government declared a six-month state of emergency.

Fears of a rebel advance on the capital have prompted several countries including the US and the UK to pull out non-essential diplomatic staff.

These countries are also urging their citizens to leave Ethiopia while commercial flights are still available.

The government says rebel gains, and the threat to Addis Ababa, are overstated.

The African Union's special envoy for the Horn of Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo, is leading a frantic push to broker a ceasefire, but so far there has been little concrete progress. Over the weekend he wrapped up his second visit to the country this month, which included a third round of meetings in Mekele with TPLF leaders.

AFP

Philippines accuses China coastguard of 'harassment'

Manila, Philippines - Manila's Defence Minister on Tuesday accused the Chinese coastguard of 'intimidation and harassment' after Philippine navy personnel were filmed and photographed unloading goods in the disputed South China Sea.

Tensions over the resource-rich waters have spiked in the past week after Chinese coastguard ships fired water cannon at Philippine boats delivering supplies to marines at Second Thomas Shoal in the contested Spratly Islands.

Manila expressed outrage over the attack which forced the Philippine boats to abort their mission. But Beijing said the vessels had entered its waters without permission.

Two civilian boats manned by



This file photo shows a China Coast Guard ship (top) and a Philippine supply boat engaging in a stand off as the Philippine boat attempts to reach the Second Thomas Shoal on March 19, 2014 (AFP)

Philippine Navy personnel made another attempt to reach the shoal and arrived 'without any untoward incident' on Tuesday, Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said.

But three people in a rubber boat deployed by a nearby Chinese coastguard vessel took photos and videos as 'personnel and cargo' were unloaded from the vessels, Lorenzana said. "I have communicated to the Chinese ambassador that we consider these acts as a form of intimidation and harassment," he added.

Tuesday's incident comes a day after Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte condemned the latest flare-up in the sea during an Asian regional summit hosted by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

AFP

Film star's death sets India's sights on eye donations

Bengaluru, India - Mourning fans of beloved Indian film star Puneeth Rajkumar are pledging to give up their eyes after the actor's untimely death brought his post-mortem organ donation into focus.

The 'Powerstar' - so named for his boisterous action roles - died of a heart attack in Bengaluru last month at 46, with thousands of grief-stricken admirers thronging the city's streets to hug, cry and commiserate.

News reports in the days following revealed that Rajkumar had willed the donation of his eyes, with enough ocular tissue salvaged to restore sight for four people.

The tradition runs in the actor's family - both his parents made the same pledge before their deaths - and doctors say the example has now been taken



A staff of Narayana Nethralaya eye hospital helps a volunteer fill an eye donation pledge form during an event organised in memory of late Kannada actor Puneeth Rajkumar, in Bengaluru on November 18 (AFP)

up in earnest around Bengaluru.

"He sort of reminded people that you should donate eyes... instead of burning or burying them," Rekha Gyanchand, medical director at the Lions International Eye Bank, told AFP.

"We see a lot of people coming forward to donate," she added. "The awareness has really increased."

At the nearby Narayana Nethralaya hospital, vinyl posters and pamphlets showed Rajkumar's smiling visage, along with a message urging prospective donors to give the gift of sight.

A queue of young men waited in front of a trestle to speak to staff and fill in pledge forms.

More than 7,000 members of the public have committed themselves to post-mortem eye donations since Rajkumar's death, said the clinic's managing director K Bhujang Shetty.

'In the days after Puneeth passed away, we have had 112 eyes collected' from the recently deceased after relatives agreed to transplants, he added.

'Somebody will benefit'

Among those donating was Subramani, a driver who lost work after his vision deteriorated but received a transplant just two weeks ago. He was offering the eyes of his recently deceased brother. "We didn't want to waste his eyes, and would like to donate them to someone like the person who donated eyes to me," he told AFP.

Rajkumar first made a name for himself as a child actor and went on to star in around 30 films, with his debut action-comedy flick *Appu* being one of the biggest hits. He had established himself as one of the most recog-

nisable stars of the Kannada-language film industry centred on Bengaluru, better known to the world as India's main tech hub.

News of his death sent the city into shock, with a crowd chasing the ambulance carrying his body from the hospital, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing the loss as a 'cruel twist of fate'.

Rajkumar is survived by his wife Ashwini Revanth and two children, along with the fanatical devotion of his fans.

Among them was Bengaluru housewife Uma Aravind Kumar, who resolved to donate her own eyes. "After the [example] of Puneeth, our son pledged his eyes without our knowledge," she told AFP.

"I liked it and I wanted to donate too. Somebody will benefit from this."

AFP

Homicide charges for driver after US parade tragedy

Waukesha, US - The driver of the car that plowed into a Christmas parade in the Midwestern US city of Waukesha, killing five and injuring 48, was apparently fleeing a domestic dispute at the time - and will face charges of intentional homicide, police said on Monday.

Waukesha, Wisconsin police chief Dan Thompson said that suspect Darrell Brooks (39), appeared to be fleeing a domestic disturbance and was not being pursued by police when he drove his red SUV through the city's annual holiday parade on Sunday.

Four women and one man between the ages of 52 and 81 were killed, and 48 people were hospitalised, Thompson said.

Of those sent to hospitals, 18 were children, according to Dr Amy Drendel, the head of emergency medicine at Children's Wisconsin hospital.

Two have been discharged, but six remain in 'critical condition', Dr Michael Meyer, head of the hospital's critical care division, said.

Thompson also said there appeared to be no motive for the disaster, other than that Brooks had driven away from some kind of confrontation as police were called to the scene.

He did not confirm reports the confrontation had involved a knife fight.

"We are confident he acted alone. There is no evidence that this was a terrorist incident," Thompson said of Brooks.

"There was no pursuit that led to this incident," he added.

In Washington, President Joe Biden offered words of support to a community stunned by a 'horrific act of violence', and paid his respects to families 'facing the fresh grief of a life without a loved one'.

Waukesha Mayor Shawn Reilly called it a 'senseless



A makeshift memorial is pictured along the route of the parade on W Main Street in Waukesha, Wisconsin on Monday, a day after a vehicle drove through an annual Christmas parade killing five people and wounding scores including children (AFP)

Darrell Brooks appeared to be fleeing a domestic disturbance when he drove his red SUV through the holiday parade. There is no evidence that this was a terrorist incident

DAN THOMPSON

tragedy' that affected the entire city west of Milwaukee, as it held its nearly six-decade-old parade to kick off the Thanksgiving-to-Christmas holiday season.

"Last night, lives were lost at what should have been a celebration," Reilly said.

Lost shoes and spilled hot chocolate

The tragedy had raised immediate fears of a deliberate act - in a state where tensions have spiked following a high-profile acquittal in the racially charged trial of Kyle Rittenhouse, a teen who fatally shot two people during Black Lives Matter protests in

nearby Kenosha last year.

Brooks is from nearby Milwaukee, where he already faces multiple charges from July 2020 of recklessly endangering the safety of others and firearms violations, as well as from earlier this month for a domestic abuse incident.

Corey Montiho, a school district board member in the Milwaukee suburb, was near a restaurant when he heard that his daughter's youth dance team had been struck.

"There were pom-poms and shoes and spilled hot chocolate everywhere," he was quoted as saying by the *Milwaukee Journal*

Sentinel.

"I had to go from one crumpled body to the other to find my daughter. My wife and two daughters were almost hit."

Reilly said the city would hold a prayer vigil this evening, and Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers ordered flags across the state lowered to half-staff.

"We continue to pray for the Waukesha community and the kids, loved ones, and neighbours whose lives were forever changed by an unthinkable tragedy last night," Evers tweeted on Monday.

'Deafening cries'

While police confirmed at least five deaths and 48 injured, there were fears the toll may yet rise, and the city was left in shock.

Witnesses described a terrifying scene on Main Street, where school bands and other groups were marching before bundled-up spectators lining the road.

Sandra Peterson, a spokeswoman for the Milwaukee Catholic church, said one of its priests was injured, 'as well as multiple parishioners and Waukesha Catholic school children'.

Witness Angela O'Boyle, whose apartment overlooked the parade, told CNN, "All I heard was screaming and then people yelling out their children's names."

Schools and city hall remained closed on Monday, and the schools would be closed again on Tuesday, officials said.

Angelito Tenorio, running for Wisconsin state treasurer, told the *Journal Sentinel* that he 'saw an SUV cross over, just put the pedal to the metal and just zooming full speed along the parade route'.

"And then we heard a loud bang, and just deafening cries and screams."

AFP



Migrants gather next to French gendarmes during the evacuation by police forces of a camp in Grande-Synthe, France on November 16 (AFP)

France holds 15 after breaking people-smuggling network: Police

Paris, France - French police have detained 15 suspected members of an international migrant smuggling syndicate that helped people illegally cross the Channel to Britain.

The announcement comes as tensions grow between London and Paris over the record numbers of migrants crossing the Channel, with Britain urging tougher action from France to stop them making the voyage.

Those arrested included Iraqi Kurds, Romanians, Pakistanis and Vietnamese who approached migrants in camps in Grande-Synthe outside Dunkirk in the north of France and encouraged them to cross to England in small boats, police said in a statement late Monday.

In an investigation that started in October 2020, French police said the network helped at a minimum 250 people per month cross to England, using small boats that transport up to 60 migrants at a time.

Passage to England would cost a migrant €6,000 and the smugglers racked up some €3mn in total profits, the illegal migration branch of the French police, OCRIEST, said in a statement.

"It was a network of hardened criminals who were well organised due to the complicity of drivers, secret financial backers and people who acted as look-outs for the police," Xavier Delrieu, who led the investigation, told AFP.

The 15 were detained last week and around €40,000 in cash seized.

According to the French authorities, 31,500 people attempted to leave for Britain since the start of the year and 7,800 people have been rescued at sea, figures which doubled since August.

In Britain, the ruling right-wing Conservative party of Prime Minister Boris Johnson is coming under intense pressure, including from its own supporters, to reduce the numbers crossing.

According to British authorities, over 25,000 people have now arrived illegally across the Channel so far this year, already triple the figure recorded in 2020.

The issue has added to growing post-Brexit tensions between Britain and France, with a row on fishing rights also still unresolved.

AFP

Hong Kong independence activist jailed for secession

Hong Kong, China - A young Hong Kong democracy activist was sentenced to three and a half years behind bars on Tuesday after pleading guilty to secession under the city's sweeping national security law.

Tony Chung (20), is the youngest person to be convicted under the new law which has crushed dissent in Hong Kong and transformed the once outspoken international business hub.

Earlier this month he pleaded guilty to one count of secession and one count of money laundering but defiantly declared he had 'nothing to be ashamed of'.

Chung was previously the convenor of Student Localism, a small group he set up five years ago as a secondary school pupil to advocate Hong Kong's independence from China.

Separation from China was then a fringe minority view in Hong Kong although calls for self-rule became more vocal during huge and often violent democracy protests two years ago.

Beijing imposed the security law on Hong Kong in response to those protests and Student Localism disbanded hours before it came into effect.

Authorities accused Chung



Tony Chung

of continuing to operate the group with the help of overseas activists and soliciting donations via PayPal - the foundation of the money laundering charge.

Prosecutors said Chung's group published more than 1,000 social media posts that included calls to 'get rid of Chinese Communist colonial rule' and 'build a Hong Kong republic'.

Some of the posts prosecutors cited dated back to before the security law's enactment, despite Hong Kong authorities promising that the law would not be retroactive.

On Tuesday Stanley Chan, one of a group of select judges picked by the government to try national security cases,

said Chung's criminal intent was 'clear for all to see' on social media, in interviews, at street booths and in schools.

Chung has already spent more than a year in custody after he was arrested in October 2020.

He was nabbed by plain-clothes police from a coffee shop opposite the US consulate, where he was allegedly planning to seek asylum.

The security law targets anything authorities deem subversion, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces.

Chung initially faced an additional charge of sedition and another count of money laundering but they were shelved following a plea bargain.

In a separate case last December, Chung was jailed for four months for unlawful assembly and insulting China's national flag. Four other men have so far been convicted in separate cases under the security law - mostly for their political views.

More than 150 people have been arrested under the legislation, with around half charged.

Bail is often denied and guilty pleas are a way to reduce both the end sentence and the legal costs of a long court battle.

AFP

UN appeal for Afghan aid meets \$600mn target with US support

Geneva, Switzerland - The United Nations (UN) said on Tuesday that its flash appeal for more than US\$600mn to support the humanitarian response in Afghanistan until the end of the year was now fully funded.

According to the UN, Afghanistan is on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe, with more than half of its population at risk of not having enough to eat during the coming winter.

Following the Taliban takeover of the country in August, the UN held a ministerial meeting in Geneva in September, asking international donors for urgent support.

"We can now report that the flash appeal is 100 per cent funded," Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, told reporters in Geneva. The main donors were the United States, European countries and Japan, who helped reached the total funding goal of US\$606mn.

The funds are directed towards helping the 11mn most deprived people in Afghanistan.

Laerke said that between September 1 and November 15, the UN and its non-governmental organisation partners provided food assistance to 7.2mn people. They also provided healthcare to nearly 900,000 people.

Nearly 200,000 drought-affected people have been assisted



Children walk as they collect garbage in Kandahar, Afghanistan on Sunday (AFP)

Not all funding has been translated into action because of the crisis in Afghanistan's banking and financial system. And half of the population still need emergency aid

JENS LAERKE

with water trucking and 178,000 children under the age of five have been treated for acute malnutrition, he added.

"However, not all funding has been translated into action because of the crisis in Afghanistan's banking and finan-

cial system. And half of the population still need emergency aid," he said.

Laerke added that access had recently improved and the humanitarian effort now had access to all areas in Afghanistan.

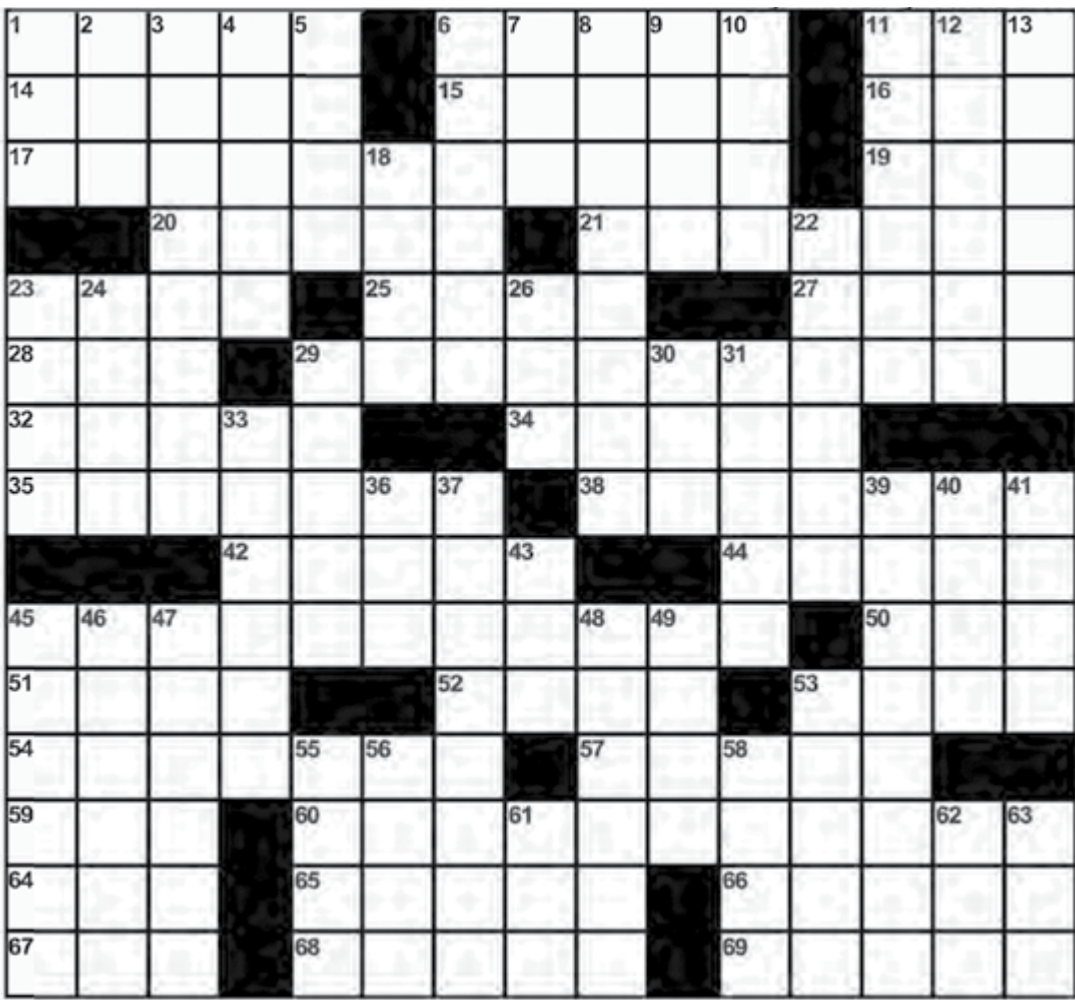
"The big problem now is impeding the economic collapse of the country," he said.

Afghanistan's food shortage is caused by a drought coupled with an economic crisis that has deepened since the Taliban took power.

The financial crunch was aggravated after Washington froze about US\$10bn of assets held in its reserve for Kabul and deteriorated further after the World Bank and International Monetary Fund halted Afghanistan's access to funding.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Far-from-short films
- 6) Broke the silence, in a way
- 11) Teary-eyed
- 14) Update land boundaries
- 15) Suitable for tabloid headlines
- 16) English 101 verb
- 17) Called on the carpet
- 19) Word with "ad" or "women's"
- 20) Kidney-related
- 21) Guacamole essential
- 23) In the middle of
- 25) Late quotable Yankee legend
- 27) Congregation's positive reply
- 28) Fourth musical scale sounds
- 29) It was established by Augustus
- 32) Not use a wedding planner
- 34) Procreate, old-style
- 35) Apple variety
- ONE'S INNER MAN
- 38) Fanciful ornamental styles

- 42) Hot wine beverage
- 44) Old hag
- 45) Stealing obsession
- 50) Hosiery mishap
- 51)-tat (drumming output)
- 52) Frame of mind
- 53) More than half
- 54) Flatter in a servile manner
- 57) Exudation from certain plants
- 59) Young billy
- 60) Newts and others
- 64) Praiseful poem
- 65) Large-scale concert venue
- 66) Say "uh-huh"
- 67) Is in another form?
- 68) Brake part
- 69) P.C. Wren's "Beau_"
- DOWN
- 1) Commit a faux pas
- 2) Dodgers legend_
- Wee Reese
- 3) Put in the slammer
- 4) Felt concern for
- 5) "Wheel of Fortune" tum
- 6) Ski past flags
- 7) Humorous play on words

- 8) Cleric, as times
- 9) Ukrainian capital
- 10) Taro root
- 11) Italian deli item
- 12) More desiccated
- 13) Make a fillet of
- 18) BLT condiment
- 22) Hostage taker
- 23) "_ Good Men" (1992 film)
- 24) Country once known as French Sudan
- 26) Chat and then some
- 29) Electronic clock feature
- 30) Kind of trip that's all in your head
- 31) Place of pilgrimage
- 33) Foreign correspondent?
- 36) Years_ (in the past)
- 37) Walloped in the ring
- 39) They examine bodies of evidence?
- 40) Burden
- 41) Posted
- 43)_ Tome and Principe
- 45) Former Polish capital
- 46) "Well,!" ("Aren't you something!")
- 47) Piano school lessons

- 48) Like a 98.6-degree body temperature
- 49) Potential solution
- 53) Mosquitolike insect
- 55) Rush-order letters
- 56) Unladen weight
- 58) Angler's problem
- 61) Santa_, California
- 62) Emeritus (Abbr.)
- 63) "What'd I tell you?"

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You're quite fiery, especially when it's time to speak your mind or ask for answers you know you deserve. You've never been shy about asking those questions either, even if they're not polite. Now that you've got a hot topic on your mind and you know there's no other way to solve it than to ask around, you're more than willing to risk tarnishing your reputation a little to get the answers you're after.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
In an innocuous chat today, your opinion could be the odd one out, so try not to go on the defensive. It could force things to take an uncomfortable turn. Remember, you're all just having a friendly conversation and exchanging your ideas! Your deeply emotional response to this subject might surprise you, but your passions are strong, and you should appreciate that about yourself. Don't try to just say what the group wants to hear.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You can't put two people together who don't want to be together. So, if your matchmaking experiment isn't working out, it might be time to give up. The magnetic pull between two people isn't something you can manufacture or even encourage. It will just happen when it's meant to happen. Don't feel guilty. Just switch your energy to a different endeavour. Instead of setting people up, just hang out with them and enjoy their company.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- The member of SEATO (South-East Asia Treaty Organisation) were
a. Australia, France, New Zealand
b. Philippines, Thailand
c. UK and USA
d. All of the above
- The highest national award in India given for exceptional work for advancement of art, literature and science
a. Bharat Ratna
b. Padma Awards
c. Gallantry Awards
d. None of the above
- The main reserves of phosphorus in the biosphere is in the
a. hydrosphere
b. atmosphere
c. lithosphere
d. troposphere

Answers: 1. d 2. a 3. c



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Two of your most famous qualities are needed right now, and while many don't have what it takes to answer, you most certainly do. You need to listen quietly while others are chatting about absolutely nothing. Then, when you speak, tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. That all comes easily to you, but try not to be too smug as you watch others struggle to keep quiet with what they know or don't know.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You don't usually make decisions without thinking them through all the way, especially when it comes to career matters. Still, something has been offered recently that sounds far too good to pass up. If you're interested and ready to jump (and you most likely are, at least on the inside), you need to investigate the possibilities. You might not have to do anything uncomfortable right now, but soon, maybe.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Your regal bearing and the mantle of authority you wear so easily and so well can sometimes intimidate those around you, but in a good way! You have the power to decide who to let into your world and who to banish from it. If someone has been trying to edge their way in, don't hesitate to give them a good shove back out. If they're this pushy now, imagine how they might act a bit further down the road.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You're in a restless mood, and no matter where you are, there's someplace else you'd rather be. While you might ordinarily be able to distract yourself until you can find a practical way to get out, you're unwilling to waste a moment now. Cut to the chase. Announce to one and all that you've got someplace to be and get yourself there. It's time for the next step on your journey.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You are involved with someone you met as if through magic. Just about everything that's happened since seems to have carried that same lovely, magical tone. Today, when jealousy is almost sure to strike, don't let anything endanger what you have. A little bit of jealousy can be a compliment, which means you love someone enough to value them. Too much implies insecurity, so know where to draw the line.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Whether you believe in reincarnation or not doesn't matter right now. Everyone has had the experience of feeling like we've known someone forever even though it's only been a few months (or minutes). You have learned to pay careful attention to this weird sort of thing, so when you now cross paths with someone who seems familiar, you don't hesitate to say so and even to ask where they've been all your life!



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
If you just can't bear the thought of heading out and being with other people in the big, loud world, why force yourself? You don't have to go out, and everyone who knows and loves you should understand. If they want to see you badly enough, they should also be smart enough to call and ask for an audience. If you do somehow get lonely, let them visit, but if not, schedule something for later. Absence really does make the heart grow fonder!

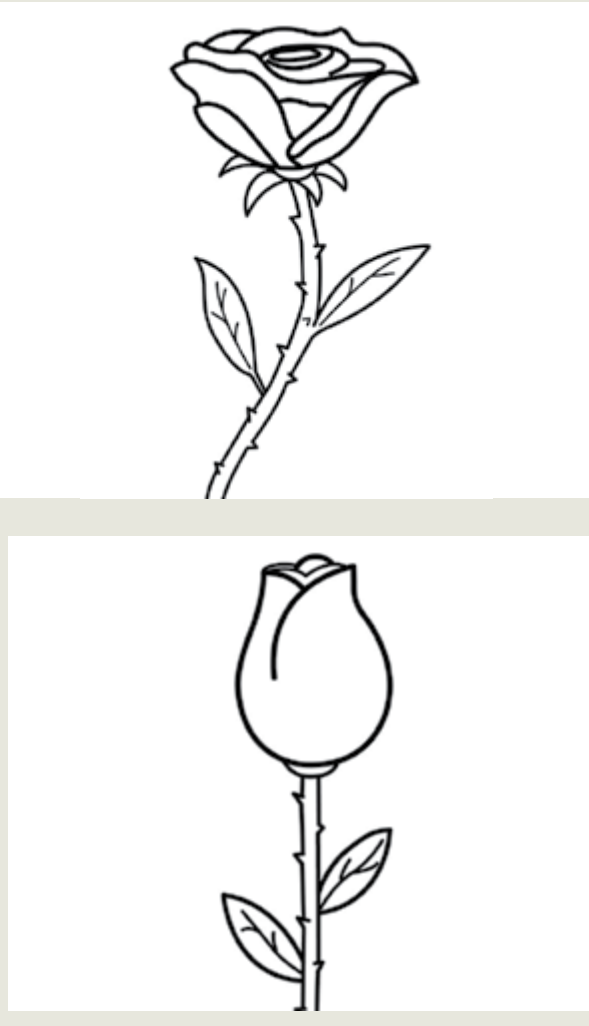


SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You're not exactly famous for your love of lighthearted, frivolous conversation. In fact, you often use just one word for every three that other folks blurt out without even thinking. At the moment, though, you've got quite a bit to say, and while your sweetie is amazed, there's no doubt that they'll sit still and listen. That is what you're after, right?



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
More often than not, emotional situations don't seem to work out the way they should (or at least the way they do in movies), but now, thanks to some highly unusual circumstances, a magical ending is actually on the agenda. Your job is to refuse to turn a Hollywood ending into something out of Shakespeare. You'd rather live a comedy than a tragedy, right? Do your part and make a dream come true.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

D	E	S	U
B	A	T	E
H	Qu	E	K
A	E	A	C

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

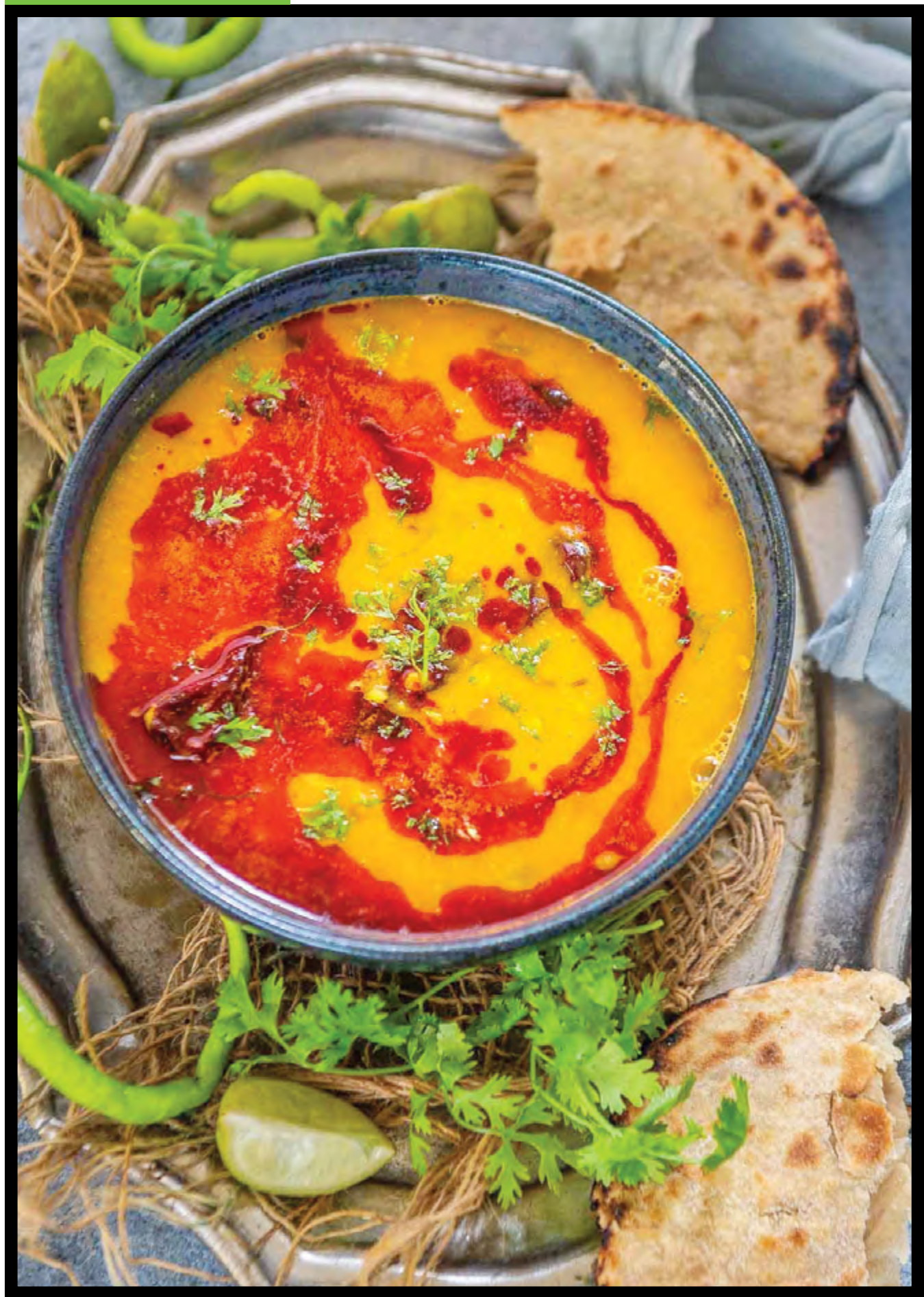
LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

LENTILS



Darling

OF THE DINNER

Dal is one of the most popular Indian comfort foods which finds its way in diverse settings, from the humble weekday lunch at home to festive dinners in five-star buffets. Check out these all-time favourite recipes:

DAL TADKA

Ingredients

- ¾ cup toor dal
- ¼ cup moong dal/masoor dal
- 2tbsp channa dal
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup hot water
- 1½tbsp oil
- ½tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1tsp minced ginger
- 1 onion – sliced finely
- 1 green chilli - slit
- 2 tomatoes – minced
- ½tsp turmeric powder
- ½tsp red chilli powder
- 1tbsp kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves)
- 1tbsp chopped coriander – for garnish
- lemon wedges for serving

For 'tadka' (seasoning)

- 2tbsp oil or ghee
- ½tsp cumin seeds
- 2 dried red chillies
- ½tbsp minced garlic
- A pinch of asafoetida

- ¼tsp red chilli powder

Method

Pressure cook all the dals together with water on a medium heat for 3 to 4 whistles. Lightly mash keeping the channa dal intact. Add more water as required to bring to consistency. While the lentils cook, in a medium pan, heat oil and add cumin seeds to the hot oil. They will begin to splutter, then add ginger garlic and saute on a low heat until fragrant. Add onions and green chillies and fry them until slightly golden. Reduce the heat, add red chilli powder and turmeric, and give a quick stir. Add the tomatoes along with salt and saute until the tomatoes become soft.

Transfer this to the cooked dal and simmer for about 6 to 7 minutes. Taste test and add more salt, if needed. Then add kasuri methi and give the boiling dal a good stir. Add coriander leaves and turn off the heat.

To get a smoky effect, place a tall steel cup in the center of the pot with the dal. With a tong hold a wood coal over direct fire like a candle or lighter until a portion of it becomes red hot. This will take about 2 minutes. Place this gently into the cup and pour 1tsp ghee directly over the hot coal. It will begin to release smoke. Quickly cover the pot and let the dal smoke for 3 to 4 minutes.

Transfer the hot cooked lentils to a serving bowl. Pour 2tbsp ghee in a small pan and heat it on medium flame. Add cumin seeds and let them fry on a low heat until aromatic. Next add red chillies, followed by garlic and fry until light and aromatic. (Do not brown). Stir in asafoetida and red chilli powder. Quickly remove from heat and pour the tadka over the dal.

Garnish dal tadka with coriander leaves. Squeeze some lemon juice over the dal while serving with rice or rotis.

DAL GHOSH

Ingredients

- 500g mutton with bones
- 1 cup channa dal, ½ cup toor dal
- 1 onion - finely chopped
- 1tbsp garlic paste
- 1tbsp ginger paste
- 2tbsp red chilli powder
- 1tbsp turmeric powder
- ½tsp cumin powder
- 1tbsp coriander powder
- ½tsp black pepper powder
- Salt, to taste, ½tsp garam masala powder, 2tbsp ghee, 2dry red chillies, ½tsp cumin seeds
- Lemon wedges – to serve

Method

Soak the dal for 30 minutes. Boil the

dal with the mutton pieces, salt, turmeric powder, and 3 cups of water in a pressure cooker, till the dal is soft.

In a heavy bottomed pan, heat 2tbsp of ghee, add the whole cumin and then the dry red chilli. Add the onions and fry till golden brown. Add the ginger, garlic paste and fry for a minute. Add the coriander, cumin seeds, black pepper powder, red chilli and garam masala powder and fry till the ghee separates from the masala. Add the cooked dal-meat mixture to this masala and mix well. Bring to a boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Take off from the fire and serve garnish with lemon wedges.



DAL MAKNI

Ingredients

- ¾ cup urad dal sabut (whole black lentil), ¼ cup rajma
- 1tsp salt, 3.5 cups water

Masala for the Dal

- 1tbsp ghee
- 3tbsp salted butter - divided
- 1 medium white onion - finely grated
- 2tsp ginger garlic paste
- ½ cup tomato puree
- ½tsp Kashmiri red chilli powder
- ¼tsp garam masala
- ½tsp salt
- 1½ cups
- ½tsp sugar
- ¼ cup cream
- More salted butter - for serving
- Piece of charcoal – for smoking

Method

Soak the dal and rajma overnight and pressure cook with around 3½ cups water and salt on high-medium heat for 10 whistles. Then, lower heat to low-medium and cook for another 10 minutes. Let the pressure release naturally. The dal and rajma should be completely cooked and you should be able to mash them with your fingers. Reduce heat to simmer while you prepare the masala.

In a large pot, heat 2tbsp butter and 1tbsp ghee on medium heat. Once the butter melts and is hot, add the finely grated onion. Cook the onion for around 5-6 minutes till it turns light golden brown. Keep stirring, add the ginger garlic paste, and cook for 1 to 2 minutes until the raw smell goes away. Add the tomato puree

and mix. Cook for 2 minutes as the puree mixes well and oil starts oozing out from the sides. Add in the boiled dal (which had been simmering) and mix. Add garam masala, Kashmiri red chilli powder and salt. Mix to combine. Add ½ cup water, stir and set heat to low. Let it simmer on low heat uncovered for around 30. Stir every 10 minutes to prevent getting stuck to the bottom of the pot. (Add little water, if needed)

Now, add sugar and mix, followed by 1tbsp butter and 1/4 cup cream. Mix well and simmer for 10 more minutes on low heat after adding the cream. Dal will become really creamy by now. (You may serve the dal at this point or do the additional step of giving it a smoky flavour, as in Dal Tadka recipe).



DANISH GASTRONOMY

CULINARY

successes

It's home to the top two eateries in the world and a cornucopia of Michelin stars: Denmark's haute cuisine, non-existent 20 years ago, is making Copenhagen a top destination for gourmands. Noma and its star chef Rene Redzepi, and Geranium, headed by Rasmus Kofoed, clinched the top two spots in the 50 Best Restaurants awards recently published by British magazine Restaurant.

"They were nobody 20 years ago when Rene Redzepi started to reinvent the Nordic cuisine, focusing on local, ethical food," says Szilvia Gyimothy, a marketing professor at Copenhagen Business School. "It was quite unique, and now he is an agenda-setter."

With cold winters and sandy fields battered by winds from the North Sea and Baltic, Denmark is worlds away from the sun-drenched orchards of France, Italy and Spain, whose bountiful crops have served up gastronomic feasts for centuries.

Paradoxically, Denmark's culinary successes have been partly attributed to the country having no gastronomic traditions to speak of, leaving the field wide open to innovation and creativity.

"There are many restaurants in the world where the chefs rest on their laurels and are not so creative. Rene Redzepi and Rasmus Kofoed are never satisfied with what they've achieved," says Bent Christensen, founder of Danish food guide Den Danske Spiseguide. "It's very special to have two people like that in such a small country," he adds.

Christensen attributed the success to a

vibrant culinary scene spearheaded by the two young chefs, as well as the unexpected advantages of Denmark's geographical location.

"You're always less than 40km from the sea, that's fantastic for fish," he gushes. "And it's nice with our climate - you really have four seasons and the vegetables can slowly mature."

Creating refined, delicately flavoured meals, chefs favour local specialities - such

Pushing a social agenda

Redzepi is a fermentation guru - a technique he uses to make pine cones edible - and fiercely loyal to local products, always inventing new dishes, Gyimothy says.

"He is engaged in the debate around food, climate, labour conditions, parity. He has really been using his role to push a strong societal agenda," she says.

Shortly after earning its third Michelin star in September - finally, according to food critics - Noma clinched the top spot in the 50 Best Restaurants awards on October 5, elbowing out Mirazur, in Menton, France. Redzepi previously held the title four times in the 2010s.

The fantastical dishes, however, do not come cheaply: Noma's set menu costs 2,800 kroner (US\$435), excluding drinks.

"It is still a very elitist product but it also affects the way average Danes think of their food," says Gyimothy.

Danes have become more conscious of buying locally-grown and in-season products, and reducing their climate footprint, she explains.

The effect can also be seen on other restaurants.

"Danes used to travel around, just to practice (different cooking styles) but now it's upside down, people are coming to Denmark to study," notes Christensen.

According to VisitDenmark, which promotes tourism to the country, 38 per cent of foreigners who visited Copenhagen in 2019 did so to sample the gastronomy.

AFP



Rene Redzepi (centre), co-owner of the Danish restaurant Noma

Rasmus Kofoed, head chef and co-owner of Geranium restaurant in Copenhagen

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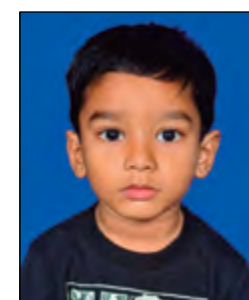
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BIRTHDAY WISHES



BURRA SATHWIK

Many many happy returns of the day. God bless you

Best wishes from Daddy, Mymmy & Sister



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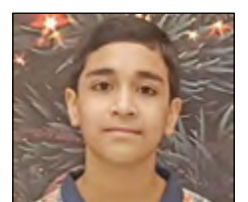
ACCA / CA / CMA / CPA / Graduate / Diploma any of this qualification with at least 5 years of experience. Candidate should have the capability to manage payable Accounting keeping in mind minimum working capital and constraints in Liquidity. Independently managing Payable Function and Cash Flow, Petty Cash Management, Timely managing Supplier Payments and other Inter Company Payments and all other payments, Timely Booking of Invoices, GRN Costing and booking of Bank Payments, etc., Timely Reconciliation of Suppliers as well as Banks. Month End Closing Activities of Payable Accounting to ensure timely submission of MIS. Ready to take more responsibilities during Budget, Month End Activities and Audits to meet time line. Candidate should be able to oversee and bring about the functioning of Accounts, Finance and Store activities of a large size trading organisation to ensure company needs are met and interests safeguarded.

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MARRIAGE NOTICE

SHIROONA SHARIN (holder of Indian Passport No T9503151) D/o/S o SHUKOOR ARATHIL KARAKKUNIYIL having permanent residing in BAITHULAHAD, PO MUZHAPILANGAD, KANNUR PIN, 670662, KERALA, INDIA (complete postal address in India) presently residing Muscat, Al KHOUDH P.O Box No: 166 Postal Code: 111 Sultanate of Oman (complete postal address in Sultanate of Oman), intend to marry Mr MOHAMMED JASEEM (holder of Indian Passport No 23793251) S/O MUTHUVANA MAJEED having permanent residence in MENAPROM PO CHOKLI KANNUR OT KERALA (complete permanent address) at Embassy of India, Muscat. I swear that I am marrying him at my own free will and not under any duress and intimidation. Any objection towards this marriage may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P.O Box No.1727, Postal code No.112 Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman within 30 (thirty) days of publication of this newspaper advertisement.

BIRTHDAY WISHES



JESWIN
24th November

Have a wonderful and joyful birthday now and forever. Happy Birthday!! By: Appa, Amma & Chettai



AVANISH PS
25th November

Happy birthday Rockstar Avanish. Wishing you happy and healthy long years. With love: Amma, Appa, Athi and Paatti

INDIA-NEW ZEALAND TEST SERIES

Host India pursue revenge against top-ranked New Zealand

New Delhi, India - Buoyed by their T20 clean sweep, India will look to avenge their defeat in the World Test Championship final when they host a weary New Zealand in the first Test in Kanpur from Thursday.

The Indians have been hurting since the eight-wicket hammering by Kane Williamson's Black Caps at the inaugural World Test Championship final in Southampton in June.

But they routed the tourists, runners-up in the T20 World Cup earlier this month, in the recent three-game series, giving them confidence that they can start the new World Championship cycle in winning style.

However India - under new coach Rahul Dravid and second in the Test rankings behind New Zealand - will be without their in-form opener Rohit Sharma, who has opted out of the two-Test series, and skipper Virat Kohli.

Kohli will return for the second Test in Mumbai in early December while Ajinkya Rahane will lead the side in his absence in Kanpur.

New Zealand will be boosted by the return of captain Williamson, who was rested from the T20 games following a gruelling schedule that saw his side travel to India just the day after losing the World Cup final in Dubai.

The World Cup itself followed hot on the heels of the Indian Premier League.

India failed to make it to the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup after going down to Pakistan and New Zealand, an exit which at least allowed them a breather. It clearly helped, with India



India - under new coach Rahul Dravid and second in the Test rankings behind New Zealand - will be without their in-form opener Rohit Sharma (left), who has opted out of the two-Test series, and skipper Virat Kohli (AFP)

cruising to a clean sweep over a jaded-looking New Zealand in the three games, all played in less than a week and in three dif-

ferent cities. But Dravid was quick to offer a reality check. "To be honest, we have to

keep our feet on the ground and be a bit realistic about this win," said Dravid, after India won Sunday's final game by 73 runs to

Injured Indian opener Rahul out of series

Kanpur, India - India's opening batsman K L Rahul has been ruled out of the two-Test series against New Zealand due to injury, the cricket board said on Tuesday.

Rahul, who has scored 2,321 runs from 40 Test matches, will be replaced by rookie Suryakumar Yadav, the Board of Control for Cricket in India said in a news release ahead of the first Test in Kanpur starting on Thursday.

Rahul, who has a muscle strain in his left thigh, 'will now undergo rehabilitation at NCA (National Cricket Academy) in preparation for the series against South Africa scheduled next month', the board said.

India, looking to avenge their defeat to New Zealand in the World Test Championship final in June, are also without Rahul's opening partner



Rohit Sharma and skipper Virat Kohli, both of whom have been rested.

Kohli will however return for the second and final Test to be played in Mumbai from December 3. AFP

Squads
INDIA: Ajinkya Rahane (Capt), Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Wriddhiman Saha, K S Bharat (wicket-keeper), Ravindra Jadeja, R Ashwin, Axar Patel, Jayant Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav, Md Siraj, Prasidh Krishna
NEW ZEALAND: Kane Williamson (Capt), Tom Blundell, Kyle Jamieson, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Will Somerville, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Neil Wagner, Will Young, AFP

wrap up the series 3-0. "(It's) not easy for New Zealand to play a World Cup final and then to turn up three days later and play three games in six days."

'Formidable India'

Veteran Black Caps batsman Ross Taylor, returning to international action for the first time since the Test final five months ago, admitted retaining the crown would be a tall order.

"We've gone so many years as underdogs. But now coming in as champions, I guess the element of surprise is gone," Taylor said during a virtual press meet.

"But any time you play India at home you're going to be the underdogs, whether you're No. 1 in the world or where they sit in international cricket at the time," said Taylor (37). "They are resting a couple of players but they're still a formidable side and know these conditions really well."

New Zealand will next tour Pakistan and England in the new WTC cycle and will be hosting Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and South Africa. AFP



New Zealand coach Gary Stead

You may see three spinners playing: NZ coach

Kanpur, India - New Zealand are exploring a spin-heavy approach against India as they gear up for this week's first Test in Kanpur, coach Gary Stead said on Tuesday.

Indian pitches are traditionally favourable to spin bowling, and Stead said they were considering three specialists against their formidable hosts.

"The traditional way of playing four seamers and one part-time spinner can't be the way to go over here," Stead said at a virtual press meet.

"You may see three spinners playing in this game and that will be decided once we have a look at the surface."

The visitors have packed their squad with five spinners, including India-born Ajaz Patel and Rachin Ravindra, of Indian origin but born and brought up in Wellington.

"For us it's about being able to adapt quickly to what the surface is telling us and what is right in front of us," Stead said.

"Sometimes when you start the match, it may not be spinning too much but it does come later on. So having mul-

tiple ideas (and) ways to challenge the bowlers back will be something that will be important to our group."

New Zealand, who beat India in the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) final in Southampton in July, are the number one Test side, with the hosts in second place.

Indian batsman Cheteshwar Pujara said his side were still hurting from that eight-wicket defeat, but were keen to make a winning start in the new WTC cycle.

Pujara also said he would try to play the same courageous brand of cricket he had on display during their triumphant series against England.

"My mindset was a lot more different in the England Test series, I was a lot more fearless," said the 33-year-old Indian batsman.

"So far preparations for the New Zealand series has been good and I'll look to carry that same fearless mindset."

The first Test in Kanpur, in northern India's Uttar Pradesh, starts on Thursday. AFP



Oman set to host Legends League Cricket in January

Former cricket greats will be in action at Al Amerat Cricket Stadium in January 2022

Muscat - Legends Cricket League (LLC), a professional T20 cricket league for former star players, announced that the inaugural season of the League, scheduled to take place in January next year, will be played at Al Amerat Cricket Stadium in Muscat.

Al Amerat Cricket Stadium, Oman was the co-host of recently concluded ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 along with Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi as the other three venues.

The global league where former cricketers, legends of the game, will be playing competitive cricket is looking at emerging as a global professional league, where the Legends can relive old rivalries on the field.

With Oman as the host na-



tion, the League shall well and truly start its journey on a global platform.

"It is an honour for Oman Cricket to host the Legends of the game," Pankaj Khimji, chairman - Oman Cricket, said in his immediate reaction, adding that "this is going to be very big for Oman Cricket".

Such a gathering of star cricketers, Khimji said, "is unprecedented in Oman and I am sure

this will just be the beginning, opening up a completely new opportunity for Oman Cricket".

"We at Oman Cricket would extend the best hospitality to the Legends while they entertain the fans with cricket," the Oman Cricket chief assured.

Ravi Shastri, commissioner, Legends League Cricket, said, "We see our League as an opportunity to promote Cricket in new destinations. Amongst all op-

tions, Oman came out as the best package. It would be a great start to a new journey ahead."

Raman Raheja, co-founder and CEO, Legends League Cricket, said, "Oman has proved its credential as a world-class international venue and host in the T20 World Cup and we felt it will be the best place for the League to start with.

"I am sure we will have fantastic tournament and all the play-

ers will have an experience of a lifetime."

This will be the first time that such big names will play in Oman and perhaps once in a lifetime opportunity for the cricket fans of Oman.

Vivek Khushalani, chairman of the Legends League Cricket said, "We are looking forward to the League being hosted in Oman. It is an upcoming destination for international cricket and this event would further enhance their position. You don't get such opportunities every day to bring such legends together in one venue."

The first season of LLC will have former cricketers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia, England, among other cricket nations divided into three Teams representing India, Asia and Rest of the World.

Ravi Shastri joined the League last week as the commissioner after completing his term with the Indian Cricket Team as its Head Coach.

Oman Cricket said that the exact dates of the League would be announced soon.





West Indies' Shannon Gabriel walks back to the pavilion as rain stops the third day's play against Sri Lanka at the Galle International Cricket Stadium, in Galle on Tuesday (AFP)

Rain forces early end as WI avoid follow-on

Galle, Sri Lanka - Rain forced an early end with the West Indies tail still hanging on after avoiding the follow-on for day three of the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle on Tuesday.

The West Indies added nine runs in 30 balls and lost Rah-keem Cornwall in a brief passage of play after lunch before the heavens opened. The forecast for the next two days was more wet weather.

With the new ball due, Suranga Lakmal was called up to bowl the 79th over of the West Indies innings from the City End and he dismissed Cornwall.

Lakmal bowled a short ball and Cornwall could not resist the pull shot, but got the execution wrong and was caught by Ramesh Mendis running back-wards from mid-wicket. Cornwall made 39 off 58 balls with five fours and a six.

But the 49-run stand between



Ground staff cover the pitch during the rain in Galle on Tuesday (AFP)

Cornwall and Joshua da Silva ensured the West Indies avoided the follow-on.

After a brief pause in the rain, umpires inspected the field and decided to resume play. Another downpour soon washed out the final session before it began, threatening to spoil Sri Lanka's

early advantage.

"We are hoping and praying the weather gods are kind to us," said Sri Lanka spin bowling coach Piya Wijetunga, who was disappointed his spinners had failed to dispatch the tourists before the rain, despite accounting for eight wickets between them.

"Not a hundred percent happy with the way we went about things," he said.

"The boys are excited and they try too many things without sticking to basics. Patience is the key and they need to learn."

Play will resume early for the final two days to make up lost time, with 98 overs scheduled for each.

Earlier, Sri Lanka had posted 386 all out after electing to bat first. Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne scored his 13th Test hundred, going on to make 147 while Dhananjaya de Silva (61) and Pathum Nissanka (56) scored half-centuries.

The West Indies collapsed to 113 for six at stumps on day two but recovered thanks to a rear-guard action by the lower order. Kyle Mayers (45), Jason Holder (36) and Cornwall (39) all chipped in.

The side's only warm-up

game ahead of the series, a four-day match against Board President's XI in Colombo, was called off without a ball being bowled, due to rain.

AFP

SCOREBOARD		
Sri Lanka 1st Innings 386		
WEST INDIES 1st INNINGS		
K Brathwaite	c Nissanka b Mendis	41
J Blackwood	lbw b Embuldeniya	20
N Bonner	c de Silva b Jayawickrama	1
S Hope	c Fernando b Mendis	10
R Chase	c Fernando b Mendis	2
J Warrican	c Chandimal b Jayawickrama	1
Kyle Mayers	c Karunaratne b de Silva	45
J Holder	c Chameera b Jayawickrama	36
J Da Silva	c Mendis b Lakmal	11
R Cornwall	c Mendis b Lakmal	39
Extras:	(b 8, lb 5, nb 2, w 3)	18
TOTAL:	224/9 in 80 overs	
Fall of wickets:	1-46, 2-51, 3-80, 4-83, 5-86, 6-100, 7-163, 8-175, 9-224	
Bowling:	S Lakmal 6-1-10-1, D Chameera 8-0-14-0, L Embuldeniya 29-10-63-1, P Jayawickrama 17-6-38-3, R Mendis 17-1-75-3, D de Silva 3-0-11-1	

Bangladesh inducts new faces for Test squad

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Batter Mahmudul Hasan Joy and fast bowler Rejaur Rahman Raja have earned their maiden call-ups to the Bangladesh Test squad for the first match against Pakistan, to be held in Chattogram from November 26.

The team management is waiting for Shakib al Hasan's fitness assessment as he works his way back from a hamstring injury he suffered during the T20 World Cup last month.

Bangladesh will be without Tamim Iqbal who was ruled out of the Test series with a second fracture on his left thumb, sustained during an Everest Premier League match in October.

Mahmudullah isn't part of the squad either, having announced his Test retirement during Bangladesh's last Test in Harare in July.

Chief selector Minhajul Abedin said that both Joy and Raja were rewarded for their form in the National Cricket League. Joy made back-to-back centuries for Chattogram Division, scoring 345 runs overall at an average of 57.69. Raja, who plays for Sylhet



Shakib is working his way back from a hamstring injury (AFP)

Division, took 12 wickets at an average of 16.91, with best match figures of 8 for 82.

"It is still early days for him but Mahmudul has showed good temperament for the longer version," Abedin said. "He is also an in-form batsman. With injury concerns to Taskin (Ahmed) and Shoriful (Islam), we needed to keep our pace-bowling options open and Raja got the nod. We have been monitoring his performances in first-class competitions. He is strong and energetic and has a knack for taking wickets."

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Haseeb Hameed

Hameed unbeaten at 53 as England begin Ashes warm-ups

Brisbane, Australia - Haseeb Hameed hit an unbeaten 53 and Rory Burns 39 as England began their Ashes tour in a low-key and rain-hit intra-squad warm-up game on Tuesday, played against the backdrop of a racism scandal back home.

Test superstars Joe Root, Stuart Broad, Jimmy Anderson and Ben Stokes were among the first wave of players to land in Brisbane on November 6 with their Twenty20 World Cup contingent jetting in later.

They have completed 14 days quarantine at a Gold Coast resort and experienced their first real taste of Australian conditions in the informal three-day game against England Lions at Peter Burge Oval.

But rain restricted the opening day to just 29 overs.

Hameed struck eight boundaries and Burns found the ropes four times as an England XI made 98 without loss after winning the toss and opting to bat

Zak Crawley is scheduled to come in at three followed by skipper Root, Stokes then Ollie Pope.

While Broad was on the team sheet, his veteran fast-bowling partner Anderson was not.

Other absent Ashes squad members included Johnny Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Dawid Malan and Mark Wood, who all played at the T20 World Cup.

The five-Test tour got under way amid a growing racism scandal surrounding the treatment of Root's former Yorkshire teammate Azeem Rafiq.

Pakistan-born Rafiq told a parliamentary inquiry this month how racist language was 'constantly' used during his two spells at the county club. He made several allegations against high-profile individuals, including former England players Gary Ballance, Tim Bresnan, Matthew Hoggard and Alex Hales.

In comments from England's Gold Coast base on November 12, Root demanded change but claimed he had not witnessed racist incidents during his time at Yorkshire. He has not spoken publicly since and there have been no media opportunities with the England squad.

Australia have their own problems heading into the first Test at Brisbane on December 8 - Tim Paine quit as captain last week over a sexting scandal.

AFP

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP



Hassan al Thawadi (third from the left), Secretary General of Qatar World Cup's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro (centre) with FIFA president Gianni Infantino (third from the right) at the Lusail Stadium, the 80,000-capacity venue that will host the FIFA World Cup final in December 2022 (AFP)

Qatar's preparations best-ever: FIFA chief

One-year countdown discussion explores social, cultural, and economic legacy of the tournament - as QF announces new inclusive sport partnership with FIFA Foundation

Doha, Qatar - Qatar is more ready to host a FIFA World Cup than any nation in history and will deliver the 'best World Cup ever', FIFA president Gianni Infantino has told Qatar Foundation's Education City Speaker Series as the build-up to the global sporting showpiece enters its final year.

A virtual event held to mark the one-year countdown to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 - which kicks off on November 21, 2022 (Monday) - heard how the tournament will create a cultural, social, and economic legacy for Qatar and the region, including through cruise ships that will act as 'floating hotels' for fans going on to play a post-World Cup role in boosting Qatar's tourism and industry.

During the discussion, titled FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022: The Countdown to History, Qatar Foundation (QF) and the FIFA Foundation announced a new partnership focused on inclusivity and engaging young people of different abilities through sport, including a Football for Schools app that will go global in 2022.

"I have never seen a country so ready to host a World Cup as Qatar," Infantino told the Education City Speaker Series.

"In terms of infrastructure, everything is ready, which means that for the next year we can focus on making sure every fan coming to Qatar will have an in-



A view of the Khalifa International Stadium in the Qatari capital Doha (AFP)

credible experience in a welcoming part of the world, in a great country and in a great region.

"It will not only be the best World Cup ever, but also a truly unique one."

Speaking about how the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and the Arab world will support FIFA's efforts to grow the global game, Infantino said: "Our vision at FIFA is really to make football truly global. We often say it is a global sport, but (when) you scratch beneath the surface, you realise that top professional football is still very concentrated between a few teams in Europe. We need to give more opportunities and more access

to the world through football, and the Arab world, in this respect, is crucial in this.

"There is a population of 450 million people, and there is a great passion for football among the Arab world. I think it is absolutely fitting to have the World Cup here for the first time in history. I believe that World Cup, being such an amazing event, really has the power to inspire young generations and develop football at all different levels.

"We, at FIFA, in Qatar, and everyone that is part of the team organising the FIFA World Cup, want to really embrace sustainability, because we want to make football, and the impact that

football has in the world, better from one World Cup to the next. The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 will really be a highlight, because we have the commitment from Qatar and that is something unique, that will be seen from now until the World Cup (finals), but much more importantly, after the World Cup as well."

His Excellency Hassan al Thawadi, Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, described the tournament as 'a great opportunity to showcase the culture, heritage, and hospitality of this part of the world', saying: "The World Cup is a gateway for piquing the interest of people from all walks

of life to come to Qatar, the Middle East, and the Arab world, and for us to showcase ourselves to the world.

"It will shine the spotlight on so many of our initiatives - such as our museums and cultural events, which are some of the best in the world - and people will not only have a profound and long-lasting experience, but they will keep talking about it and promoting our country and our region."

Machaille Hassan al Naimi, president of Community Development, Qatar Foundation - whose Education City is home to one of the eight FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 stadiums - said, "At QF, we are a living, breathing city within a city, and we are playing a very unique role in supporting the World Cup from the perspective of sustainability, research, and community development, all of which are core mission areas for us.

"Our researchers are developing solutions that support the World Cup and many of these have come into policy and been launched as businesses.

"Working closely with the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy to make this an Arab World Cup, we want to ensure tournament volunteers learn about our Arabic language, history, and culture, so the legacy of the volunteer programme extends beyond the World Cup," Naimi added.



Sporting Lisbon's coach Ruben Amorim (centre) speaks with his players during a training session, in Alcochete near Lisbon on Tuesday (AFP)

Dortmund without Haaland and Hummels in Lisbon showdown

Berlin, Germany - Borussia Dortmund will be without both Mats Hummels and Erling Haaland when they head to Portugal for Wednesday's potential Champions League Group C decider against Sporting Lisbon.

Level on points with two games to play in the group stage, Sporting and Dortmund meet on Wednesday in a clash which could decide which of them joins group leaders Ajax in the knockout stages.

Yet Dortmund will be deprived of two of their best players in Hummels and Haaland as they look to steer their Champions League campaign back on course after back-to-back defeats.

Veteran defender Hummels is suspended after he was controversially sent off in Dortmund's

3-1 defeat to Ajax three weeks ago. The club had said they would appeal the red card, but coach Marco Rose admitted last week that he did not expect the 2014 World Cup winner to be available.

"We all know that Mats is suspended in Lisbon," he said, and hinted that Dan-Axel Zagadou could take his place in central defence.

Haaland, meanwhile, has been out for the last four weeks with a hip injury. Dortmund are hoping the Norwegian striker, who has nine goals in just six league appearances this season, will return to action in time for their top-of-the-table clash with Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich on December 4.

AFP



Dimitri Payet (centre) reacts after getting hit by a bottle from the stand during a French L1 match in Decines-Charpieu, near Lyon (AFP)

Lyon ordered to play behind closed doors

Paris, France - Lyon were on Monday ordered to play home games until at least December 8 behind closed doors after their Ligue 1 fixture against Marseille on the weekend was abandoned due to a bottle attack on Dimitri Payet.

The Marseille captain required treatment after being struck on the side of the head as he prepared to take a corner for the visitors in the fifth minute of Sunday's match at Lyon's Parc OL stadium, prompting both teams to return to the changing rooms. Payet, who did not train on Monday, has lodged a complaint with the Lyon public pros-

ecutor investigating the incident, a Marseille club official told AFP.

"He was very scared and he's fed up," the official said.

The French professional football league (LFP) said that 'in light of the serious incident that occurred during the match', its disciplinary committee had opened an investigation and, as a precaution, ruled that all games at the Parc OL stadium be played behind closed doors until a ruling is made, which will not come before December 8. It means there will be no fans for Lyon's home Ligue 1 match against Reims, scheduled on December 1.

AFP

Southgate's courage and communication transformed England

London, UK - Five years after being thrown in at the deep end to tackle the chaos engulfing England, Gareth Southgate on Monday extended his time in charge of a team that is going places.

Southgate has been rewarded with a contract extension until the end of 2024 after leading the Three Lions to a first major tournament final in 55 years at Euro 2020, three years after a first World Cup semi-final since 1990.

Initially appointed on an interim basis, Southgate was seen

as the squeaky-clean role model the Football Association needed after his predecessor, Sam Allardyce, was brought down by a newspaper sting that alleged he offered advice on how to 'get around' rules on player transfers.

A three-year spell at Middlesbrough, which ended in relegation from the Premier League, and mixed results with England's under-21s was all Southgate had to offer on his coaching CV when he was appointed.

However, his calm presence has proved to be the perfect fit for a richly talented generation

of players who have made England a force to be reckoned with again at international level.

Courage

For decades, England managers have bowed to the will of media and fans to cram the most talented individuals into the starting line-up, even at the expense of the overall structure of the team.

Paul Scholes retired from international football after years of being stuck out of position on the left wing to make room for Frank Lampard and Steven Ger-

rard as a 'golden generation' failed to progress beyond the quarter-finals of major tournaments under Sven-Goran Eriksson, who was in charge from 2001 to 2006. By contrast, Southgate has been happy to leave an abundance of attacking talent on the bench.

Communicator

Southgate has been the perfect leader for a squad with a social conscience who are not content to let their football do the talking. Under his reign, England players have had to cope with

racial abuse in Montenegro and Bulgaria.

They began the tournament being booed by sections of their own fans for taking the knee as a protest against racial injustice.

"The most important thing for our players is to know we are totally united on it, we are totally committed to supporting each other," Southgate said at the time, standing up to complaints from leading politicians about 'gesture politics'. That moral stance will be under the spotlight in the coming year.

AFP



His calm presence has proved to be the perfect fit for a richly talented generation of England players

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