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DUQM REFINERY PROJECT MOVES FULL STEAM AHEAD
 GO TO **PAGE 13 BUSINESS**



HM the Sultan receives credentials of envoys

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq received the credentials of eight ambassadors of countries accredited to the sultanate at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday.

On the sidelines of the credentials presentation ceremony, the ambassadors conveyed greetings of the leaders of their countries along with their best wishes of good health, happiness and long life to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people, and continuous progress and prosperity under his wise leadership. They also expressed their

honour and delight in presenting their credentials before His Majesty the Sultan. They pledged their sincere efforts to promote relations of their countries with the sultanate in a manner that serves the joint interests of the Omani people and their own.

His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors and expressed his gratitude for their leaders' greetings and best wishes. His Majesty the Sultan affirmed to them that they would receive all his support, besides the government and the Omani people's in carrying out their duties.

ple's in carrying out their duties.

The credentials presentation ceremony was attended by the Minister of Interior, Foreign Minister, Head of the Royal Protocols, Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman and the military aides to His Majesty the Sultan.

His Majesty the Sultan received the credentials of:

► Leslie M Tsou, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Donald Trump of the United States of America

Continued on Page 02



Leslie M Tsou, Ambassador of the USA



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HM the Sultan receives credentials of envoys

Continued from Page 01

- Haji Sulaini bin Haji Said, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam
- Jose Marcos, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Dr Jair Bolsonaro of the Federative Republic of Brazil
- Mohammed Ahmed Fahmi Ghoneim, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt
- Ayse Sozen Usluer, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Turkey
- Dr Tibor Szatmari, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Janos Ader of the Republic of Hungary
- Najmedin Muhametali, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Kassym Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan
- Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman bin Mohammed al Thani, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar



Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman bin Mohammed al Thani, Ambassador of Qatar



Najmedin Muhametali, Ambassador of Kazakhstan



Dr Tibor Szatmari, Ambassador of Hungary



Haji Sulaini bin Haji Said, Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam



Jose Marcos, Ambassador of Brazil



Ayse Sozen Usluer, Ambassador of Turkey



Mohammed Ahmed Fahmi Ghoneim, Ambassador of Egypt

US election results awaited with bated breath in US, Oman

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

Following closing of the ballots on November 3 for the US presidential elections, Americans in Oman and Omanis, too, who have been following the US elections keenly, anxiously await the final results. Irrespective of who wins, they hope to see more engagement in Oman as there is always room for more growth in the relations between the two countries.

The final results will decide whether Republican Donald Trump remains in the White House for another four years or his challenger Democrat Joe Biden, best known as Barack Obama's vice-president, will be its next occupant. Biden has been in US politics since the 1970s.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Richard Lewis Baltimore III, former United States Ambassador to Oman, who has been residing



Alex Suarez (L) and Ralph Reichard (R) supporters of the Democratic party cheer as they attend a watch party in Miami, Florida, US (AFP)

in Muscat for the last 18 years, said, "Whoever wins, I hope he heals the divided nation. As for relations, Oman has been a good friend to US and whoever

wins this presidential election, we hope to see our relations at its best."

US presidents are not decided by the national vote, but by win-

ning enough states. The winner in each state takes a certain number of 'electoral votes' based roughly on the size of its population. To win the White House, 270 electoral votes are needed.

Rebecca Olson, executive director at Oman American Business Center (American Chamber of Commerce in Oman), said, "It seems we may have to wait a while for the final results. No matter who wins, we trust that Oman and the US will grow and maintain their strong bilateral relationship."

She added, "The FTA between the US and Oman, which spurs investment and trade in goods and services has benefited both nations for over ten years, and there is always room for more growth. We are looking forward to working with the elected administration to continue the work of promoting commercial development between the US and the sultanate. Now, to find

out who it is!" Many Omanis too are following the US elections keenly. "A win by Trump is a chance for him to engage more in the Gulf region. Biden is likely to win. However for me, there would be not much difference between the two. Trump is good with the economy and Biden is stable in his policies. But whoever wins, we hope he doesn't push Oman to go deep into the Oman-Israeli relations. Oman does not need to be pressurised into anything," said media personality Khalfan al Tauqi, who is following US elections closely.

Tauqi, who also invests in US stock market, said, "For a small time investor in the US stock market, I think Trump is good. He is a real businessman and the economy was moving well under him."

The US and Oman share a strong and dynamic relationship which has grown over the years.

@shadadm

Massive change planned for Muscat governorate

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad al Busaidi, Minister of State and the Governor of Muscat, has issued Ministerial Decision No 72/2020 to form a committee to manage change in the Governorate of Muscat.

The decision confirmed that the committee will follow the progress of the change management process in the governorate and its administrative divisions with regard to several areas. They include strategic planning, restructuring, legislation, rescheduling of powers, re-engineering procedures, merging the main committees, changing the organisational culture, and other related fields.

The decision also stipulates that the committee will set the general foundations, prepare the change management plan, the timetable for the stages, and steps and procedures for implementing the outputs of the change plan. It will also ensure achievement of integration and

harmonisation in the implementation of the change management procedures in all sectors according to a common vision.

The committee held its first meeting on Tuesday to discuss methods and mechanisms for implementing the tasks assigned to it.

The committee approved the establishment of executive work teams to manage change, such as the information technology team, the planning team, the human resources team, the finance team, the administration and services team, the legal affairs team, and the media team.

H E Sayyid Busaidi recently issued Ministerial Decision No 66/2020 to form a working group to prepare a draft organisational structure for the governorate and its administrative divisions. These decisions are aimed at organising the work sectors in Muscat by achieving structural integration, improving performance, and developing work environment in line with the future aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.

Health Minister receives Swiss ambassador

Muscat - H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Obaid al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, on Wednesday received in his office H E Balz Abplanalp, Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation.

The meeting addressed means of promoting bilateral co-operation in the field of health, as well as the joint initiatives on the international level. The Swiss envoy expressed the gratitude of the Swiss community in the sultanate to the ministry and the medical staff for their efforts in dealing the COVID-19 pandemic.



(Supplied photo)

MoH airlifts citizen from UAE

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health's (MoH) Directorate of Treatment Abroad recently airlifted a citizen from the UAE in a coordinated exercise involving several authorities in the sultanate and abroad.

The citizen was on a family trip in the UAE when he fell ill. Following sudden deterioration of his condition, he was admitted in the intensive care unit of Al Qassmi Hospital, Sharjah, and

put on ventilator.

'The ministry exerts all efforts within its human and financial capacities in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Being an integral part of the healthcare system in enhancing the quality of its services, the MoH's Directorate of Treatment Abroad has played a pioneering role during these exceptional circumstances. It has worked at full capacity to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the healthcare recipients and those benefiting from the department's services.'

ROP NEWS



Over 1,500 boxes of cigarettes seized

More than 1,500 boxes of cigarettes and 220kg of tobacco products hidden in a truck were seized by the Oman Customs in Buraimi

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Tender Announcement



The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaayn) announces the following Tenders:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Type of work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
7/2020/PEIE/HQ-7	Medical Fitness Center At Samail Industrial City	18-11-2020	14-12-2020	Consulting	First and Second	150
8/2020/PEIE/HQ-8	Consultancy Services for Detailed Design and Construction Supervision of Development of Infrastructure Facilities for new upcoming Thumrait Industrial City at Dhofar Governorate	18-11-2020	14-12-2020	Consulting	First	150
9/2020/PEIE/HQ-9	E-Madaayn Platform (Integrated ERP Product Implementation)	18-11-2020	03-12-2020	Information Technology Services	Fourth and above	500

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.
2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@ita.gov.om and +968 24166670, 24166409 Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening. Madaayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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Startup safeguards cultural identity through craft items

Our Correspondent
Muscat

An Omani startup is producing items with the idea of safeguarding the cultural identity of the country.

Abdullah Suleiman al Afi, a 23 year old law student at Sultan Qaboos University, and Thwiba Saleh al Barwani, 22, an environmental science student at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, set up their project 'Bordoghal' in November 2019.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Afi said Bordoghal (orange colour) is focused on designing, making and selling craft items and tote bags with iconic Omani elements. "The idea came from a passion for visual content and art. We started by drawing inspiration from Omani culture and artistic heritage." The startup offers modern lifestyle products with a unique design.

"Oman has traditions that



Oman has traditions that must be saved and we found that through these products, we have a good chance of doing that

ABDULLAH SULEIMAN AL AFI

must be saved and we found that through these products, we have a good chance of doing that."

Afi said they started learning online marketing following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Talking about the challenges they faced, he said, "Making a financial plan for the products took

a lot of time. COVID-19 affected suppliers which directly affected our business."

He said they have the support of their families and friends in the venture. Besides continuing to design products that promote Omani culture and heritage, they hope to take the products to other countries in the future.

ROP ARRESTS 16 INFILTRATORS



The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has arrested 16 infiltrators who were attempting to enter the sultanate illegally. In a statement, ROP said, 'Coast Guard Police boats stopped a boat with infiltrators on board. The boat was stopped close to a beach in the Governorate of Muscat as they were trying to enter the country. They were arrested and legal measures have been taken against them.' (Supplied photo)

319 new cases of COVID-19, 11 deaths reported on Wednesday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Wednesday confirmed 319 new cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), taking the total to 116,847. The number of deaths reported was 11, while the number of people who recovered was 363 in this period.

'The number of recoveries has increased to 106,903, while the number of deaths is 1,279 now,' an MoH statement said. As of Wednesday, a total of 371 patients were admitted in health institutions, including 158 in ICUs.

MoH calls upon all to adhere to the isolation procedures by



staying in an isolated room with an attached toilet and serving the isolated person from outside the room as instructed. It said that

social distancing also helps curb the spread of the virus. MoH advises all citizens and residents to continue washing hands with

water and soap, avoid touching the face, nose, mouth and eyes, and following healthy habits when coughing and sneezing.

CASES FROM OCT 26 TO NOV 04

Oct 26	422
Oct 27	466
Oct 28	614
Oct 29 to Nov 1 (Average - 325)	1,300
Nov 2	418
Nov 3	376
Nov 4	319



Air Arabia to fly to Muscat from Nov 16

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has given permission to Air Arabia Abu Dhabi to operate biweekly flights between Abu Dhabi and Muscat, starting from November 16.

In a statement CAA said, 'Air Arabia Abu Dhabi will operate two flights a week between Mus-

cat International Airport and Abu Dhabi International Airport, starting from November 16.'

The newly formed venture between Etihad and Air Arabia is gradually adding new routes.

Last month, the budget carrier announced the introduction of flights to Kathmandu, Nepal, from Abu Dhabi. It has also started services to Dhaka and Chattogram in Bangladesh.

MoE denies closure of school

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has refuted rumours that a school was closed due to coronavirus infection.

'The news circulating about the closure of a school in the sultanate due to infection with COVID-19 is not true,' MoE said in a statement.

The ministry urged people to obtain information only from its official sources and avoid circulating rumours and false news.

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.58am
Sunrise	6.15am
Duhr	11.55am
Asr	3.07pm
Maghrib	5.31pm
Isha	6.43pm

MoL launches e-service to register work contracts

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has launched a new electronic service to register the work contracts of expatriate manpower through the ministry's website.

The ministry said that in case of any change in the work contract of non-Omani workforce, employers must modify details of the contract of employees.

'To ensure the validity and accuracy of the contract data, the worker (second party) will be required to review and approve the contract registered by the employer (first party) through the employment contract acceptance service, using the civil card or the mobile phone card that has the Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) electronic certification feature,' the ministry said.

WEATHER WATCH

MUSCAT TODAY

Max 30°C
Min 21°C

Humidity: 64.2%

REGIONAL WEATHER

ABU DHABI
Max 32°C Min 20°C

DOHA

Max 31°C Min 22°C

KUWAIT CITY

Max 31°C Min 21°C

MANAMA

Max 30°C Min 22°C

RIYADH

Max 32°C Min 14°C



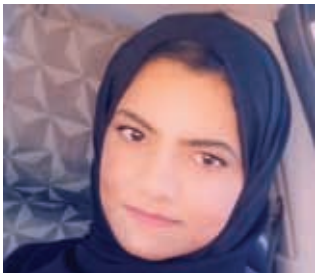
Omani among 15 at Innovation Week in Germany

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Young innovator Razan Hamed al Kalbani has done Oman proud by being one of 15 participants chosen to take part in the Innovation Week in Germany.

She is taking part in the event virtually with her project 'Breaking the Wall of Paint Absorbs X-rays', for which she won first place in the Falling Walls Lab Competition 2020, organised by the Research and Innovation Department of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The Innovation Week is being held from November 2 to 6 with the participation of some of the leading German universities, including the University of Stuttgart, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology and the RWTH Aachen University. During the five-day period, participants take



Razan al Kalbani won first place in the Falling Walls Lab Competition 2020 organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation

part in various scientific activities and develop their innovative projects in collaboration with groups of scientists specialised in their fields from the participating

universities.

The event also includes training workshops on how to obtain research support, how to convert research ideas into new products and how to develop ideas and deal with challenges.

Moreover, there are lectures on creating and establishing startups in the right way, individual mentoring and networking opportunities to enrich the innovative capabilities of the participants as well as hosting the participants separately in one of the specialised technological institutes.

At the end of the week, the participants will give a presentation on their experience and how they developed their innovations.

Razan will also represent the sultanate in the Falling Walls Lab Competition in Berlin, Germany on November 8 and attend the Falling Walls Conference on November 9.

MANGROVE SEEDLINGS PLANTED IN NORTH BATINAH



The Environment Authority recently planted 1,000 mangrove seedlings in Khor Shinas in North Batinah to increase the area of mangrove forests as part of the national drive to plant 10mn trees by 2030 (Supplied photos)

Madayn academy conducts studies on performance, cost

Muscat - Madayn Industrial Academy has implemented a series of training programmes for the employees of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates - Madayn and the companies and factories investing in its industrial cities during 2020.

Announcing this, Dr Khamis bin Said al Muniri, director general, informed that the academy has carried out several studies and consultations during 2020, which included a study of human

resources performance that targeted all the employees of Madayn's head office, industrial cities, Knowledge Oasis Muscat and Al Mazunah Free Zone. Another study was carried out on the operational cost for the units and the industrial cities of Madayn.

"The human resources performance analysis adopted descriptive method where interviews were taken as the fundamental tool to ask direct questions, followed by analysis,



Dr Khamis bin Said al Muniri

discussion, and drawing out results. In fact, these interviews play a pivotal role in facilitating

discussions, analysis and interpretation of the employees' answers," Dr Muniri said.

He added, "Moreover, a dedicated form to the human resources analysis was prepared by the supervising committee and was used in this study. Document analysis was also employed for the tasks of the directorates and departments, job descriptions, and employees' data."

He pointed out that these analysis efforts will contribute

in getting acquainted with the employees' productivity in terms of quantity, quality and methodology used for carrying out the tasks, work overload, and ensure fair distribution of human resources to keep in line with the Madayn's objectives.

A study was also done to analyse the operational cost of the directorate and industrial cities of Madayn.

"The analysis aimed at determining the accurate operational cost and revenues for each di-

rectorate and industrial city so that the top management can take any related decisions in this regard," he said.

Agreements

Madayn, represented by the academy, has signed a number of agreements this year that support its role and objectives.

Of these agreements, a cooperation programme was signed with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation to develop joint plans that link

the outputs of higher education institutions with the investing companies in the industrial cities of Madayn.

Another agreement was signed with Amazon for Environment and Sustainability to provide a healthy environment in Madayn's industrial cities.

Through the academy, Madayn aims to enhance the skills of national cadres and complement the efforts made by the sultanate to support Omanisation.



OMSB launches National E-learning Platform for Health

Muscat - Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) launched the National E-learning Platform for Health - Tebyan - under the patronage of H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health and Chairman of OMSB Board of Trustees, on Wednesday.

The launch of the e-learning platform is to support continuation of the educational process in the field of medical education and its role in qualifying and preparing medical personnel. The platform also seeks to aid the health sector in education and development by using the latest electronic technologies anywhere and anytime from credible sources.

The launch ceremony began with a welcome speech by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, OMSB executive president, followed by a presentation on the platform and

its features. The platform aims to contribute to the process of remote medical education and training for resident doctors of the board and other medical groups working in the health sector.

This will be done through lectures and integrated training courses available on the platform in the remote learning management system.

It also aims to improve the educational process for Ministry of Health staff in the sultanate, enhancing the educational experience through attractive and innovative means, contributing to health awareness for the community, and partnering with the relevant authorities to develop and update innovative medical education methods.

Through the platform, doctors and health practitioners can access various educational

resources and complete training activities and practical exercises in an interactive and interesting way. At the end of the training course, the participant receives an electronic certificate approved by the OMSB.

Through the educational platform, doctors can enrol in new training courses based on the requirements of the resident physician category, such as scientific research methodology, communication skills, and infection prevention and control.

These training courses have been converted to either fully electronic or blended where the learner must finish the theoretical part of the course electronically before enrolling in practical training that takes place usually at the Medical Simulation and Skills Development Centre of the OMSB.

ONA

 شركة الباطنة للتنمية والاستثمار القابضة ش.م.ع.ع Al Batinah Development & Investment Holding Co. SAOG				
Chairman Report				
Dear shareholders, On behalf of the board of directors, I present the report of Board of Directors and the unaudited financial statements for the parent Company and the group for the Nine months ended September 30, 2020. The markets witnessed an improvement in the late third quarter, supported by the gradual reopening and easing of restrictions imposed on activities, but the challenges and impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the drop in oil prices still cast a shadow on the financial markets and economic activities in general. The Muscat Securities Market witnessed a decline of 9.2% since the beginning of this year.				
The Company performance during the Nine Months:				
The group's income decreased from investing activity in stocks, real estate and other activities, as well as the suspension of Tadawul Financial Services Company during the third quarter. the parent company incurred a net loss of 179,550 Omani Rials compared to a net loss of 80,438 Omani riyals for the same period last year, and the group incurred a net loss after tax of 519,955 Omani Rials compared to a net loss of 497,709 Omani Rials for the same period last year, and the net shareholders' equity of the parent company amounted to 2,315,137 Omani Rials compared to 2,721,167 Omani Rials for the same period last year. We hope that the economy will recover from this pandemic soon, and the financial markets will perform better, and we will strive to achieve the best in the future. Finally, I have the honors on behalf of the members of the Board of Directors and the shareholders to extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haithem bin Tariq for his wise leadership and guidance and pray to God to keep Oman and its people in peace and prosperity. I would also like to thank the esteemed shareholders for their support and continued encouragement of the company and the Capital Market Authority, the banks and all the entities that the company deals with.				
Best regards, Salah Bin Hilal Al-Mawally Chairman				
Unaudited Consolidated and parent company statement of financial position as at 30 September 2020				
	Group	Parent Company		
	As on 30 September 2020	As on 30 September 2019	As on 30 September 2020	As on 30 September 2019
	OMR	OMR	OMR	OMR
Non-Current Assets	1,569,390	1,661,378	2,415,263	2,463,444
Current Assets	732,795	1,501,271	588,480	731,859
Total Assets	2,302,185	3,162,649	3,003,743	3,195,303
Share Capital	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Legal Reserve	310,079	306,133	200,478	200,478
Special Reserve	24,541	24,541	24,541	24,541
Retained earnings	(994,648)	(353,356)	(609,904)	(271,327)
Investment fair value reserve	(296,204)	(231,948)	(299,978)	(232,525)
Non-Controlling Interest	31,000	38,984	-	-
Total Shareholders' equity	2,074,768	2,784,354	2,315,137	2,721,167
Total non-current liabilities	28,607	18,120	21,271	16,417
Total current liabilities	198,810	360,175	667,335	457,719
Total equity and liabilities	2,302,185	3,162,649	3,003,743	3,195,303
Unaudited Consolidated and Parent Company statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the Nine months ended 30 September 2020				
	Group	Parent company		
	Nine months ended 30 September 2020	Nine months ended 30 September 2019	Nine months ended 30 September 2020	Nine months ended 30 September 2019
	OMR	OMR	OMR	OMR
Net revenue	58,702	89,536	0	0
Net investment income	(142,421)	(321,417)	(90,580)	25,425
Total income	(83,719)	(231,881)	(90,580)	25,425
Salaries and other staff costs	(120,371)	(135,176)	(44,401)	(42,233)
General and administrative exp.	(98,834)	(94,202)	(35,209)	(47,471)
Amortizations	(197,264)	(6,361)	(211)	(211)
Finance cost	(9,697)	(13,496)	(9,044)	(13,238)
Depreciations	(9,313)	(11,732)	(105)	(2,710)
Total expenses	(435,479)	(260,967)	(88,970)	(105,863)
Net profit/(loss) before tax	(519,198)	(492,848)	(179,550)	(80,438)
Income tax expenses	(757)	(4,861)	-	-
Net profit/(loss) after tax	(519,955)	(497,709)	(179,550)	(80,438)
Unrealized fair value gains / (Loss) on financial assets through other comprehensive income	(44,588)	81,153	(44,588)	81,153
Total comprehensive /(loss) income for the period	(564,543)	(416,556)	(224,138)	715
Net earnings/(loss) per share	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.006)	(0.003)
On request by any shareholder, the complete accounts either in English or Arabic will be sent by mail within 7 days of receipt of such request to P.O.Box 68 pc 117 al wadi al kabir, Muscat, sultanate of Oman tel. 24856658 , fax 24856698.				

Lulu opens E-commerce, logistics centre

Lulu opened its new dedicated E-commerce and Logistics Centre at Seeb on Wednesday. H E Asila bint Salim al Samsami, Under-secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, inaugurated the new facility. This will serve as the logistics hub for the group's growing e-commerce activity in Oman.

Speaking from the sidelines of the inauguration, H E Asila said, "The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting our everyday life, impacting it in ways we couldn't have imagined 12 months ago. But in the midst of this disruption we are inspired by the efforts of industries across Oman as they innovate to help us meet the challenges we all now face, to help us deal with this 'new normal'. One fine example of this innovation is Lulu's new E-commerce and logistics centre in Seeb. An expansion of the popular superstore's online presence, it is an important showcase for our great local products and offers us all an easier, faster and more comfortable way to shop. We are delighted to see such developments."

The online portal for multi-category shopping in Oman, is



expected to deliver world-class shopping experience to customers, right in the comfort of their homes. This Omni channel approach to shopping will offer multiple retail options to the customers to choose from and optimise Lulu's distribution network in Oman.

From everyday grocery, fresh food and dairy products to trending electronics like smart phones, laptops, tablets, mobile accessories, in-vogue fashion clothing and accessories, furniture, large & small appliances, home furnishings, as well as toys and household products, customers

can get everything they need delivered right at their doorstep.

The expansive fleet of specially designed vehicles will be instrumental in reaching these products to your doorstep in a safe and hygienic environment. The vehicles are fitted with three temperature controlled compart-

ments for frozen, chilled and ambient requirements.

The new logistics centre is spread over an area of 125,000 sq ft and has a modern infrastructure for more convenient handling of goods. It has an expansive and modern fleet with capability to meet the widest possible range of customer demands. The facility will act as an exclusive fulfillment centre for the entire spectrum of online transactions and will cater to the growing needs of the tech savvy population of Oman.

Speaking on the opening of the new logistics centre, Ananth

A V, director of Lulu Hypermarkets Oman & India, said, "The opening of the new logistics centre demonstrates Lulu's continuous innovation and development to serve its customers. It not only marks an important milestone in our growth but sets a benchmark for our future projects. We hope the new facility would boost online sales and significantly expand our economic footprint in the region."

Shabeer K A, regional director of Lulu Oman, remarked, "We are working round the clock to keep up with the growing demand of our online customers and make sure all of them get what they need at this crucial time - especially the elderly and those who are more vulnerable."

Customers can also shop on the go by visiting www.luluhypermart.com or by downloading the Lulu Shopping App to enjoy a more convenient experience. A point to note is that the new E-commerce and Logistics Centre does not entertain walk-in customers. Credit and debit cards can be used for transactions made through the online channels. Lulu also provides safe and secure payment gateways to enhance security in payments.

Hibati to celebrate 50th National Day with draw

Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has begun the countdown to conduct a special Hibati draw to celebrate the sultanate's 50th National Day on November 18. Fifty lucky winners will win prizes of RO1,000 each during the special draw. All that a customer needs to do is maintain a minimum weekly balance of RO100 in their Hibati account from November 8-14 to be eligible.

Meethaq is committed to promoting a healthy savings habit in Oman and has been growing from strength to strength by helping customers realise their aspirations since its launch in 2013. The Hibati Savings account is based on the unrestricted Mudarabah contract.

The cash prizes offered under Hibati's 2020 prize draw scheme are 'Hiba' (gift) from Meethaq to its customers and are paid out of Mudarib's (shareholders') own sources. The cash prizes are in addition to the profit share of Investment Account Holders

(IAHs) in the General Mudarabah Pool as per the declared profit-sharing weightages. With prizes including 100 weekly prizes of RO100 each and 10 monthly prizes of RO1,000 each, Meethaq's Hibati offers one of the biggest Sharia'a-compliant cash prize schemes in Oman. Recently 10 special prizes of RO1,000 each were given away on the occasion of the Omani Women's Day in October. Also mega prizes for the Hafawa segment are given away every quarter which include 6 prizes of RO5,000 each and 5 prizes of RO10,000 each for customers every quarter. A massive total of over RO1mn will be given away to 5,424 winners in 2020.

Meethaq actively participates in all national events in order to bring joy and happiness to its customers and will continue to conduct additional special prize draws on a number of other special occasions during the year.

For every RO100 in weekly average balance during the

week, the customer shall be entitled for one entry to the special draw.

An interesting highlight of the Hibati scheme is that customers are also eligible for monthly Mudarabah Profit as per the declared profit-sharing weightage.

The Hibati savings scheme helps customers realise their aspirations, while also boosting the savings culture in Oman.

The Hibati account benefits include attractive Mudarabah profit rates, cash prizes through draws, Visa debit card, no minimum balance charges and eBanking facilities. Launched in 2018, Hibati has boosted awareness for Islamic Banking in Oman and has seen excellent response from customers.

Every Meethaq product goes through the process of Sharia'a compliance certification by the Sharia'a Supervisory Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

OPPO inaugurates Reno Glow technology on new Reno4 Series

Global technology brand, OPPO, has unveiled yet another groundbreaking technology, Reno Glow, inaugurated on the new Reno4 Series, exclusively on the Reno4 Pro 5G smartphone, that was recently launched in Oman. Conceptualised and developed entirely by the company's very own R&D team, Reno Glow is among OPPO's more than 21,000 granted patents and 52,000 filed patent applications globally. In addition to enhancing the aesthetics of the phone, Reno Glow also makes the surface more resistant to fingerprints and scratches.

The patented Reno Glow technology is a unique diamond cutting technique applied on glass that gives the phones a transparent, yet dazzling tone on the back cover. Working with traditional anti-glare (AG) glass, OPPO's R&D team pioneered new techniques of crystal drilling, suspended coating and light path texture to give the phones a matte finish with glittery details.



Based on the design-led nature of the Reno series, OPPO worked with Pantone Color InstituteTM to jointly innovate an exclusive Galactic Blue color for the Reno4 series. Reno Glow was then applied to the Galactic Blue on Reno4 Pro 5G, making the smartphone a symbol of youth culture and fashion.

It took the OPPO design team 200 rounds of process and parameter adjustments to arrive at the Reno Glow technique. As a leading technology company,

like diamonds when hit by light.

Ethan Xue, president of OPPO MEA, said, "Taking the Reno4 Series' design focus to the next level, we have invested in developing our own patented technique to enhance the look and feel of the phone, and ensure an exclusive texture for OPPO users. The Reno Glow diamond cut technique evolved over three generations of R&D to produce a unique hue that stands out.

"Keeping in mind our young customers who are in with the trends, we not only wanted to give them a phone that they want to be seen with, but also one that understands their needs. Despite constant usage, the Reno Glow keeps the phone looking clean and shiny without picking up any fingerprints or dirt. OPPO is dedicated to developing new ways to innovate and lead by providing users with unique features and top-class performance."

The phone is priced at RO259.9.

Hyundai offers exceptional prices on all the models

The recently launched promotion by OTE- Hyundai, offers exceptional prices on the entire model line-up of Hyundai models, prices starting as low as RO3,888 on Grand i10, along with an attractive cash-as-gift ranging from RO1,712 to RO5,606 and a manufacturer warranty of up to 5 years/ 100,000km - one of the best in the industry. The promotion will be valid only for a limited period and the elements may vary for different models; exact details can be checked out at any of the Hyundai showrooms closer to you.

As part of the on-going promotion, the popular model Elantra is now available at RO5,999 onwards and price of the bold styled SUV Tucson starts from RO6,999, after adjusting the cash-as-gift amount. With such attractive prices, this is indeed the best time to buy your favourite Hyundai!

Hyundai's model line-up features a bold design and each



loaded with a wide range of cutting-edge safety technologies, host of advanced driver assistance systems and convenience features, have been continuously winning renowned awards across the globe for design, performance, safety etc, delivering great customer value.

Hyundai constantly provides new values and experiences that are unique to the brand and also go beyond what customers of today expect by combining exceptional performance with reasonable price and emotional elegance.

With many high value propo-

sitions as standard offering, most of the Hyundai models remain as one of the top-shopped vehicles in their respective segment thus not only offer great value for the initial buyer but also has a high demand in the used car market.

Hyundai's ability to understand people's desires and respond quickly to the changing needs of its customers by offering products with futuristic global design and cutting-edge technology has touched the hearts of millions of customers worldwide and is moving fast towards becoming the most beloved brand across the globe.

The first eco-focused vehicle platform in the world, IONIQ - Hybrid, with its trendy design and an impressive mileage of 30.3km per litre, the game-changing Veloster with its unique expression of Hyundai's bolder side, tech and styling, continues to attract style conscious youth as well as those interested in eco-friendly driving.

Also, because of its distinct offerings, Hyundai has been regularly winning top awards globally for its sophisticated product design, uncompromising quality, safety technology and exceptional value.

Hyundai, today, ranks among the top automotive brands in the world, and has already overtaken several global majors in quality.

With Hyundai many models getting IIHS Top Safety Pick rating, the brand has the most number of IIHS Top Safety Pick+ and Top Safety Pick awards in the industry.

Many Hyundai models also have triumphed with multiple Red Dot Awards for innovative and creative design. In the region too, Hyundai has been winning many awards regularly and adding to its awards tally is being

awarded as Oman's most trusted car brand for two years in a row. These awards are testimony to Hyundai's high quality products with futuristic global design and cutting-edge technology.

Hyundai has a strong presence in the passenger vehicles category in Oman with its wide range of Sedans and SUVs offered with various engine options and trim options.

Hyundai offers an array of sedans in Oman including: Grand i10, Accent, Elantra, Sonata and Azera, while trend setter for the modern youth continues to be the Veloster. Hyundai Motor's innovative Hybrid model Ioniq, delivers an uncompromising design and driving experience coupled with the latest in safety and convenience technologies, makes it an appealing choice for a wide range of buyers.

OTE Group is the distributor for Hyundai in Oman. For more details please contact 800-50003.

MEDC invests RO7mn in projects

In the current year Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (MEDC) invested in a group of electricity projects in Muscat governorate, which cost approximately RO7mn to operate, upgrade stations and to expand new power lines.

The total capacity of these stations was 182 MVA. The plan included four main projects, as follows: Operating (Al Araimi Boulevard station) with a capacity of 3x20 MVA; Operating (the Police Hospital Station) with a capacity of 3x20 MVA; The project of upgrading (Renaissance station) in Amerat, 2x20 MVA to 3x20 MVA; The project of upgrading (Al Awabi station) in Bausher from 3x6 MVA to 3x20 MVA.

These projects and investments came to cover the growing demand for electric power in the governorate, and to increase its efficiency and quality.

Sohar International unveils Sohar|Youth proposition

Driven by its vision to become a world-class Omani services company, Sohar International has unveiled its newest proposition, Sohar|Youth. The new account type is in line with Sohar International's commitment towards creating a generation of financially responsible future business leaders in the country, and caters to the ever-changing lifestyles of today's young consumer. The proposition will offer the youth segment a wide range of financial solutions across multiple stages of their personal and professional lives.

On launching the proposition, Khalil al Hedaifi, chief retail banking officer at Sohar International, said, "The fast-paced evolving world that today's young generation lives in, makes it challenging for them to step back and plan the future for themselves. Sohar International's newly developed Youth proposition is part of the bank's strategy to ensure that being a service-oriented organisation, we cater to the smallest of financial needs of the consumer, thereby encouraging them to plan ahead and adopt prudent financial practices."

Amongst the many value added features and services provided through the newly launched proposition, the Youth Account offers customers no withdrawal fees at any ATM inside Oman, rewards on all purchases,

no minimum balance required to open the account, monthly cash prizes with dedicated draws,

and possibility of opening the account in different currencies.

"In line with our principles to provide more value, more velocity and more vision to our clients and the nation at large, we foresaw a need to establish Sohar|Youth to emphasise on the importance of financial independence whilst encouraging the youth to save by offering them exciting incentives and unique offers that helps them make fair gains on their finances. This is an actual reflection of the bank's brand and identity stemming from its vision and strategy that define how we envisage ourselves today and in the future in order to better serve every demographic of our customer base," added Hedaifi.

Similar to any account type, there are some primary requirements for the individual to be eligible for the Sohar|Youth proposition.

In order to be eligible to become a Sohar|Youth customer,

the individual's age should range from 18 to 25 years old and would require all the necessary documentations that can be done via the bank's branches. Sohar International is uniquely positioned to effectively cater to all customer segments within the Sultanate, with differentiating factors that accommodate individual needs and enable them to win.

Earlier this year, Sohar International unveiled its Sohar|First proposition to provide an ecosystem of banking and non-banking services to the mass affluent segment offering them a wide range of solutions that allows them to save time and effort for their everyday needs, and therefore enabling them to save



time to enjoy life's more important moments.

Sohar International continues to deliver with the sole purpose of enabling people to win, each in their own respective way by investing in itself and its capabilities. This will not only contribute towards the enrichment of our stakeholders, but also towards developing the socioeconomic scene within the country thus making banking more meaningful for the people of Oman.

Be a guaranteed winner with Malabar Gold during this festive season

In a run up to the festive season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 250 outlets spread across ten countries, has announced attractive in-store offers to lure customers.

The latest campaign from the brand gives customers the opportunity to win assured gold coins on purchase of gold and diamond jewellery.

As part of the festive season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also unveiled the Festive Jewellery collection, featuring the most eye-catching and unique trends in gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery, bound to captivate jewellery lovers at the best price.

An 'Exclusive Jewellery Collection' has also been launched, which features unique and one-of-a-kind pieces, that was once adorned by the royals and is sure to make you look splendid at special occasions. The latest offer announced by Malabar Gold & Diamonds gives customers unmatched opportunities to win gold coins for their gold or diamond jewellery purchases.

Customers can win a guaranteed gold coin or up to 100 gold coins instantly on purchase of gold jewellery worth RO300 via 'Scratch & Win' coupons from November 6 until 13.

Adding to the above, customers

also get one gram gold coin on diamond jewellery purchase of RO400 and a half gram gold coin on purchase of diamond jewellery worth RO250.

"Jewellery shopping is on the rise, due to the new collections launched by us, as well as the price appreciation in the past months. However, every customer now looks for an added incentive to make a purchase, which is why we have created this campaign, wherein customers can get the best designs at the best prices, while becoming a guaranteed gold winner," said Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Ahamed was quite positive about the upcoming season, remarking that there have been positive changes in the last 10-15 days especially during weekends and holidays.

He also added that on Dhanteras day, all their stores will have extended working hours, to ensure that customers get to safeguard their beliefs and purchase their favourite jewellery, while strictly adhering to coronavirus protocol recommended by the authorities which includes frequent store and surface sanitisation, practicing social distancing, employee safety checks, safe billing and jewellery sanitisation after each trial.

The brand has also introduced

shopping options like contactless shopping and video shopping, to make it more convenient for customers to continue shopping for their favourite jewellery.

As the upward trend witnessed by gold price is expected to continue and outcome of critical events like US elections will further push the price forward, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also gives customers the opportunity to avail the gold rate protection offer, designed in such a way that they are protected from any increase in gold rate and if the rate reduces during purchase, they get the lower rate. They can just pay 10 per cent of the value as advance and get gold rate protection until November 15. So customers do not have to worry about the volatility of the gold price.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has incorporated the festive designs as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewellery, Precia - Gem Jewellery, Divine- Indian Heritage Jewellery and Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewellery.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds is the flagship company of Malabar Group, a leading diversified Indian business conglomerate. The company currently has 12 jewellery brands to cater to the discerning needs of customers.

Enjoy international money transfer through BankDhofar



Within its efforts to provide convenient services to a wide range of mobile banking users in the community, BankDhofar introduced International Instant Money Transfer feature from Western Union to non BankDhofar customers. The service allows mobile banking users to send money instantly across the world costing them only RO1.500 per transaction to all countries, without the need to open a bank account with BankDhofar.

Elaborating on that Abu Baker Karim al Balushi, head of Digital Banking at BankDhofar, noted, "At BankDhofar, we are always keen to provide convenient banking experience to our customers. Following the impressive results and the success of the instant international money trans-

fer through Western Union service, we opted to enable this service to non-BankDhofar customers as well. Given the current conditions of COVID-19, safe, secure, and easily accessible services are highly demanded, especially when it comes to money transfer. Non-customers may easily transfer money internationally by opening a mobile wallet account through our Mobile Banking App."

The addition of this feature for non-customers comes after the outstanding success of this service since it was launched. Non-BankDhofar customers may now benefit from the feature and send money, up to RO500, instantly internationally at their convenience, by opening a wallet account through BankDhofar's

Mobile Banking App.

BankDhofar is one of the leading banks in the sultanate in deploying the latest technologies and in providing cutting-edge financial solutions. Western Union is a global leader in cross-border, cross-currency money movement.

BankDhofar's Mobile Banking App offers a wide range of exclusive services that are available only through its award winning App. The services include; instant transfer to any bank in the Sultanate, cardless cash, mobile top-up for all telecom providers in the Sultanate, increasing withdrawal limit to RO5,000, among other services. BankDhofar customers can access the financial services through a wide network of branches, ATMs and CDMs.

Investment Manager Report

On behalf of the Fund Management Board, I am pleased to present the un-audited financial results of Al Hilal MENA Fund for the nine months period ended 30 Sep 2020.

	30-Sep-20	30-Sep-19	*31-Dec-19
Number of units	3,215,700	3,613,700	3,409,000
Net asset value (RO)	2,206,954	2,761,830	2,648,787
Net asset value per unit (RO)	0.686	0.764	0.777
Net profit/(loss)	(132,409)	184,209	224,254

* 12 months FY 2019

Al Hilal MENA Fund has ended the third quarter with a gain of 6.19% compared to 12.41% gain of S&P Shariah Index and -0.51% of MSM Shariah Index. A summary of the result is given hereunder:

	** Last Price	**MoM	QoQ (3 Months)	**YTD
Al Hilal MENA Fund	0.686	2.39%	6.19%	-5.28%
S&P Shariah Index	832.46	3.39%	12.42%	-0.78%
MSM Shariah Index	514.70	-1.92%	-0.51%	-3.99%

**as of 30 Sep 2020

The COVID-19 impact that triggered the markets during February 2020 has been brutal. Over the third quarter (Q3) of FY 2020, equity markets gave the impression of normal service being resumed. On a quarter on quarter basis, all regional markets ended on a double-digit return except Abu Dhabi and Oman's MSM. In general, market moments have been wild with year to date returns still in negative territory for all the regional markets. On a year to date basis only Saudi Arabia's Tadawul is closer to where it started off.

During the third quarter, Moody's Investors Service downgraded Kuwait's long-term foreign and local currency issuer rating to A1 from Aa2, and changed the outlook to stable. Qatar was affirmed at Aa3 by Moody's (outlook stable) and Saudi Arabia was affirmed at A- by S&P with stable outlook.

On a global front, the value of intangible-heavy companies like Google and Facebook soaring while real assets stocks languish. All of which is a source of deep concern for those who consider macro scenario with increasing debt to GDP levels.

Commodities had a negative month. The S&P GSCI index, which consists of a basket of commodities including oil, metals and agricultural items, slumped -3.64%. The recovery in oil prices halted, with the price of a crude oil futures contract plunging -10.16%. The precious metals also faltered as the S&P GSCI Gold and Silver indices fell -4.19% and -17.83% respectively.

A look Ahead

We emphasize the theme of a gradual recovery as the path forward for post Covid-19 era. Our 2020 base case forecast calls for a 3-5% contraction in regional gross domestic product (GDP), though as the fourth quarter began, the growth appeared to be tracking toward the upper end of our forecast.

Policy response to the pandemic was key, and the region has been very pragmatic in dealing with the fallout on the overall economy. Looking ahead, the fundamental underpinnings of the markets are showing improvement with the stabilizing oil prices and regional governments' initiatives to spur growth

صندوق الهلال للشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا
Al Hilal MENA Fund

INTERIM CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEP 2020

	Unaudited Sep 2020 RO	Unaudited Sep 2019 RO	Audited Dec 2019 RO
Assets			
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	1,918,716	2,627,086	2,519,506
Amount due from brokers	-	-	88,010
Cash and cash equivalents	301,643	142,404	48,375
Other Receivables			
Total assets	2,220,359	2,769,490	2,655,891
Liabilities			
Accruals and other payables	13,397	7,650	7,104
Amount due to unitholders	8	10	-
Net assets attributable to the unitholders	2,206,954	2,761,830	2,648,787
Total liabilities and net assets attributable to the unitholders	2,220,359	2,769,490	2,655,891

	0.686	0.764	0.777
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INTERIM CONDENSED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 SEP 2020

	Unaudited Sep 2020	Unaudited Sep 2019	Audited Dec 2019
Income			
Dividend income	46,860	93,280	97,083
Other income	783		
Wakala profit	452	582	582
Total income	48,095	93,862	97,665
Net realised (loss) /gain on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	(50,262)	153,947	199,462
Net unrealised (loss) /gain on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	(89,894)	(17,008)	(1,209)
	(92,062)	230,801	295,918

Expenses			
Management fees	(20,838)	(25,596)	(33,969)
Custody fees	(3,743)	(4,173)	(4,462)
General and administrative expenses	(15,766)	(16,822)	(33,233)
Total expenses	(40,347)	(46,591)	(71,664)

(Loss)/Profit and total comprehensive (loss)/income and (decrease)/increase in net assets attributable to the unitholders for the period/year	(132,409)	184,209	224,254
(Loss)/profit per unit	(0.042)	0.050	0.062



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1 Hungarian
composer Franz
6 A type of bag?
10 Hinged metal strap
14 "___ one per
customer"
19 Papal veil
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22 Odorous/erous
principal of
orrisroot
23 Decently polite
24 Frosted
25 Market
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27 Ancient tribe of
Britons
28 Man cave
29 Author of the
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30 To set in
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36 Aves. counterparts
39 Sharpen
40 A wing
42 Carol
43 Period of time
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50 Scuffles
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118 In ____
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123 NV city
124 Issues forth
125 Spars
126 ____ Christian
Andersen
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waste
128 Greek island

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- 2 Aussie actor Bana
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ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Thursday's skies are something of a mixed bag. The Cancer moon roots you down on the home front and her smooth link to the sun and dreamy Neptune make it easy to embrace down time or reconnect with family members. Luna's only irritation comes from a disagreement with "me-first" Mars and other-oriented Venus. This can create minor tensions on the relationship front.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Part of your life's mission is to embrace unabashed celebration of the good things. Thursday's skies make that easy to do, as the Cancer moon forms a pact with Neptune and the sun. Laying low, spiritually recharging, and prioritising your alone time is the key to your happiness today. Luna's squabble with Mars and Venus can create minor friction around educational matters or travel plans.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

It's not always easy for you to embrace your full range of emotions. Thursday's skies make any stirred up feelings a little easier to digest, as the cozy Cancer moon unites with Neptune and the sun. It's an ideal day for intimate exchanges and laying low. Luna's squabble with Venus can create some friction between your creative pursuits and those involving the community.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Today's cosmic landscape is mostly smooth sailing. The Cancer moon reaches out warmly to both the sun and blissed out Neptune—creating a peaceful sense of ease in all social scenarios or relationship exchanges. Luna does butt heads with Venus and irritable Mars though. This can stoke any latent frustrations around the equilibrium of your work/life balance.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

It's easy to move your goals along and feel good doing it. The Cancer moon reaches out to the sun and Neptune, helping create smooth and supportive social interactions that push your ambitions forward. Luna faces a little bit of turbulence from her squares to pleasure-seeking Venus and aggressive Mars, creating potential frustration around finance resources.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Thursday's skies are socially sweet. The moon drifts happily through Cancer, linking up the sun and Neptune. This gives you sweet-talking abilities with a soft focus on intimate one-on-ones. Any endeavour involving communication should run smoothly. Luna's tense encounter with Venus and Mars cause slight friction between your home life and career life.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's easy to get down to business. The Cancer moon creates a supportive alliance with the sun and visionary Neptune, making it easy to excel with your workload or connect helpfully with co-workers or those in authority in your field. The moon isn't fully without conflict though, as she argues with artistic Venus and Mars. This flares tensions around your creative aspirations.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're at your career peak. The Cancer moon helps elevate your reputation and visibility in your field, and her smooth connection to the sun and Neptune make it easy for you to push ahead with your work agenda. Minor frictions erupt this evening when the moon squares off to irritable Mars and love-hungry Venus. This creates minor turbulence around relationship matters.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

What craft is uniquely yours? That skill or hobby is looking to get honed and perfected, and you have an ideal opportunity to make that happen. The Cancer moon links up with the sun and Neptune, helping you apply yourself towards your personal projects with ease. Luna's disagreement with Venus and irascible Mars can create mental frustrations to wrestle with.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Embrace the centredness you're feeling. The moon cruises through your sign, working to nurture your needs and reconnect you with your health. Luna's pleasant link to the sun and Neptune makes for a creatively dreamy day, ideal for charismatic acts of self-expression. Yet, the moon's hard encounters with Mars and Venus can stoke tensions between your public and personal life.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It's easy to shine. Any activity that has you in the spotlight bodes well today, as the Cancer moon aligns with the confidence-instilling sun and Neptune, boosting your charisma and appeal in creative ventures. The only snag is the moon's square to Venus and Mars, creating a sharp divide between your desire to slack off and the work waiting to be done.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Don't be afraid to share what you've been working on.

Thursday's skies offer a wonderful opportunity for you to step into the spotlight and receive praise and encouragement for your creative ventures. This is all as the Cancer moon aligns with Neptune and the sun. The only snag is the moon's tussle with Venus, which can create minor stresses over finances.

1. Of the following foods, which one is the best source of protein?

- a. Butter
- b. Fish
- c. Lettuce
- d. Milk

2. Karoline Mikkelsen was the first woman to

- a. reach North Pole
- b. reach South Pole
- c. climb Mt. Everest
- d. set foot on the moon

3. Liquids transmit pressure equally in all directions.
This is known as

- a. Boyle-Pascal's Law
- b. Pascal's Law
- c. Archimedes' Principle
- d. None of the above

Answers: 1: b 2: b 3: b



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

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

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

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other.

The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on.

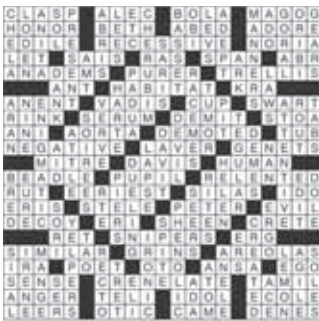
Valid words must be at least three letters long.

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

SUDOKU EASY
ANSWER

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

**DAILY CROSSWORD
ANSWERS (NOVEMBER 04)**



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



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Liverpool's Portuguese striker Diogo Jota (right) scores past Atalanta's Italian goalkeeper Marco Sportiello during their UEFA Champions League match at the Atalanta stadium in Bergamo, Italy, on Tuesday

Liverpool, Bayern run riot as Real Madrid edge Inter Milan

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP STAGE

Paris, France - Diogo Jota scored a stunning hat-trick in Liverpool's 5-0 demolition of Atalanta in the Champions League on Tuesday, as holders Bayern Munich scored six and Real Madrid struck late to beat Inter Milan in a thriller.

On a prolific night across Europe which also saw a rampant Borussia Moenchengladbach hit six in Ukraine, the star individual performances came from Jota and Alassane Plea.

Portugal forward Jota joined Liverpool from Wolverhampton Wanderers in September and has wasted little time making an impact with seven goals from just five starts.

In Bergamo, against an Atalanta side who reached the quarter-finals last season, Jota was brought into the starting line-up in place of Roberto Firmino and required just 16 minutes to open the scoring.

Another emphatic finish allowed the 2019 Champions League winners to double their lead before the break, and Mohamed Salah then broke away to get the third just after the restart.

Salah set up Sadio Mane for Liverpool's fourth before Jota got his hat-trick goal as the English Premier League champions recorded their biggest win in Europe since beating Porto 5-0 away in February 2018.

"I'm playing in the best team



Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski (right) celebrates with his teammate Javier Martinez after defeating Salzburg in Salzburg on Tuesday (AFP)

of my career so far. I don't know if it's the best moment of my career but obviously scoring goals is my way of playing football," Jota told BT Sport.

With three wins from three, Liverpool are well on course to top Group D, with Ajax and Atalanta both five points back.

Ajax won 2-1 away to Midtjylland in Denmark, as Brazilian youngster Antony opened the scoring in the first minute and Dusan Tadic netted from an indirect free-kick inside the box soon after. Anders Dreyer got one back for the hosts, who remain pointless.

French forward Plea had earlier scored a hat-trick as Gladbach claimed a stunning 6-0 victory over Shakhtar Donetsk in Kiev, the German

side's biggest European triumph since their 1970s heyday.

The unfortunate Valeriy Bondar scored an own goal, with Rami Bensebaini and Lars Stindl also scoring as Gladbach went top of Group B, a point clear of Shakhtar and Real Madrid.

Rodrygo wins it for Real Madrid

Real, the 13-time European champions, ran out 3-2 winners in a dramatic encounter with Inter behind closed doors at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium, as Vinicius Junior set up his fellow Brazilian substitute Rodrygo to lash in the decisive goal ten minutes from time.

Karim Benzema had put the hosts ahead and Sergio Ramos headed in his 100th Madrid goal

in the 33rd minute, but Lautaro Martinez pulled one back shortly after.

Inter were missing the injured Romelu Lukaku but looked set to escape with a draw when Ivan Perisic equalised midway through the second half, only for Rodrygo to pounce and leave the Italians bottom of the group.

Bayern make it 14 in a row

Reigning champions Bayern have now won a record-extending 14 consecutive Champions League games after a 6-2 victory against Salzburg in Austria.

German forward Mergim Berisha gave Salzburg an early lead only for Robert

Lewandowski to level from the penalty spot, and a Rasmus Kristensen own goal put Bayern ahead before the break.

Japanese substitute Masaya Okugawa restored parity midway through the second half only for Bayern to run away with the game late on.

Jerome Boateng headed them back in front, Leroy Sane got their fourth and Lewandowski strained to head in his 12th of the season, before Lucas Hernandez wrapped up their win.

Hansi Flick's side are firmly in control of Group A, five points ahead of Atletico Madrid, who drew 1-1 at Lokomotiv Moscow.

Jose Maria Gimenez's header for Atletico was cancelled out by

Anton Miranchuk's penalty.

Meanwhile Marseille's 3-0 loss away to Porto saw them equal Anderlecht's record of 12 consecutive Champions League defeats.

Moussa Marega gave Porto an early lead before Dimitri Payet blazed a penalty over for Marseille.

Sergio Oliveira then scored from the spot to make it 2-0 for Porto and Luis Diaz sealed the win for the home side in Group C.

Manchester City are firmly in control of that section after Pep Guardiola's side eased past Olympiakos 3-0, with Ferran Torres, Gabriel Jesus and Joao Cancelo netting.

AFP



Real Madrid's Rodrygo (left) scores a goal against Inter Milan in Valdebebas, Madrid, on Tuesday

QUICK RUN

Australia's golden era swim coach Talbot passes away

Long-time former Australia coach Don Talbot has died at 87, with the swimming world on Wednesday remembering him as a legend of the sport who oversaw his country's golden era in the pool. Talbot passed away peacefully on November 3, Sport Australia Hall of Fame said in a tribute. He began his coaching career in the 1950s and was Australia's head swimming coach during its peak in the 1990s and 2000s - including at the 2000 Sydney Olympics when Australia produced their best result in almost 30 years by winning 18 medals. Talbot guided the 4x100m relay team of Michael Klim, Chris Fydler, Ashley Callus and a 17 year old Ian Thorpe to break the world record and stun the US team who were heavy favourites and had never been beaten in the event since its Olympic introduction in 1964.

South Africa to remain in Rugby Championship

South Africa have committed to the Rugby Championship until 2030, organising body SANZAAR said on Wednesday, ending speculation the World Cup holders were set to shift to Europe. The announcement is a boon for the game in the southern hemisphere, after coronavirus disruption tore Super Rugby apart and left question marks over the 'flagship' Rugby Championship. "The southern hemisphere rugby powers have recognised the need for change in these difficult times and have committed to an international rugby future through to 2030," SANZAAR (South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Argentina Rugby) said in a statement.

Debutant Gerloff on standby with Rossi still in doubt

Seven-time MotoGP champion Valentino Rossi remains a doubt for this weekend's European Grand Prix in Valencia after contracting coronavirus, his Yamaha team said on Wednesday. Rossi, 41, who has featured in just five of the season's 11 Grand Prix to date, will be replaced by American Garrett Gerloff if he fails to return two negative tests, 48 hours apart, ahead of the race. "Today the Italian will undergo a new test," Yamaha said Wednesday. "Should he test negative, he will still have enough time to complete the required second PCR test and fly to Valencia. "Should Rossi be deemed 'unfit' to ride in Valencia, Gerloff will be backed by the No 46 rider's usual crew," the team added.

AFP

Maradona undergoes successful brain surgery

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Argentine football great Diego Maradona underwent successful brain surgery for a blood clot in a specialist private clinic in Buenos Aires on Tuesday, his doctor said.

"We managed to successfully remove the clot. Diego coped well with the surgery," Leopoldo Luque said at the icon's private clinic in the capital Buenos Aires.

"It's under control, there's a little drainage (of blood). He'll remain under observation."

World Cup winner Maradona had been taken to hospital in La Plata - where he is the coach of top-flight side Gimnasia y Esgrima - on Monday for a series of tests after feeling unwell.

A scan revealed the blood clot, and on Tuesday he was transferred to the specialist clinic in a northern

neighbourhood of the capital.

Maradona, who turned 60 on Friday, has suffered ill health before. He has survived two heart attacks, and also contracted hepatitis and undergone gastric bypass surgery.

Groups of fans congregated outside the clinic with banners showing Maradona's face and the words 'Come on, Diego!'

Earlier on Tuesday, Luque insisted it was 'a routine

operation' and that Maradona was 'lucid' and 'calm'.

Argentine media speculated the clot was the result of a blow to the head.

Luque said the clot was 'imperceptible' and that those suffering from one rarely remembered receiving a knock to the head.

Maradona's daughter Dalma said she had visited her father after his surgery but did not give

further details of his condition.

"I just want to thank everyone for the constant displays of love for my dad, for my sister and for me, thanks to everyone who prayed for him," she tweeted on Wednesday morning.

Alongside Brazil's Pele, who turned 80 last month, Maradona is widely regarded as one of the greatest football players of all time.

AFP





IPL 2020



QUOTE OF THE DAY

Feeling good now. There is great resilience in the side. We always out our best foot forward.

David Warner
Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper, after his team made it to the playoffs with a win over Mumbai Indians, on Tuesday

Rohit: Hamstring is absolutely fine

He is mature enough to do what is best for him: BCCI chief Ganguly



Sharjah, UAE - Rohit Sharma made his return to IPL 2020 on Tuesday, for the Mumbai Indians against the Sunrisers Hyderabad, after missing the past four matches through injury.

His return was curiously timed: it came a few hours after BCCI president Sourav Ganguly said that there was no timeline for Rohit's return to the cricket field and that the board would 'have to assess' his fitness status.

At the toss on Tuesday, when Murali Kartik asked Sharma whether 'everything was fit and fine', the Mumbai captain let out a short laugh and said, "Yeah, looks like that." He was later dismissed for four, off seven balls.

Later in the night, after Mumbai lost to the Sunrisers by ten wickets, commentator Mark Nicholas asked Rohit at the presentation if his hamstring was 'completely fine', Rohit said, "Ya, absolutely," with a smile.

"I was happy to be back, it's been a while. I was going through some tough times but, again,

I was happy to be back, it's been a while. I was going through some tough times but, again, good to be back. I'm looking forward to play a few more games here and then see what happens.

ROHIT SHARMA

good to be back. I'm looking forward to play a few more games here and then see what happens. Always nice to be on the ground doing what I love to do so very happy about it."

Rohit, who had not been named in any of the three India squads that were announced last week for the Australia tour, last played on October 18 against the Kings XI Punjab, where he suffered a left hamstring injury while finishing a run at the end of the first of the two Super Overs.

On October 23, the day Mumbai played against the Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai issued a brief statement saying Rohit was

making 'good progress'.

The confusion around Rohit soared when soon after the announcement of the India squads, the Mumbai franchise put out a picture and then a video on their social media of Rohit batting in the nets on October 26. On Monday, Mumbai once again posted a video on their social media of Rohit batting, further adding to the intrigue over his absence from the Australia tour.

It is too early to say if Rohit's return to the field would affect his chances of being selected for the Australia tour which is scheduled to start with the ODIs from November 27 in Sydney.

TODAY'S MATCH QUALIFIER 1

DUBAI, 6PM



The Indian contingent will travel straight from the UAE to Australia after the IPL finishes on November 10. Defending champions Mumbai were the first to make the playoffs and will take on the Delhi Capitals on Thursday in the Qualifier 1.

Nitin Patel, the Indian physio, who is in the UAE, is understood to have cautioned Rohit to not rush back to the field, which could completely rule him out of the Australia tour. The seriousness of the injury and the team management's concerns were first expressed by India head coach Ravi Shastri, followed by Ganguly in the past few days.

On Tuesday, Ganguly said he wanted Rohit to be cautious before deciding whether to play any more in the IPL.

"Rohit is injured at the moment. Otherwise, why would we leave out a player like him? He is the vice-captain of the national (limited-overs) team," Ganguly said. "We will have to assess him. I don't know [when he can come back]. He hasn't played so far since the time he has got injured. We want him to recover."

"Yeah, you don't want him to get injured again. He has a hamstring tear and it will get ruptured again. It will then get longer for him to come back. But yes, there are people working with him."

"The Mumbai Indians physio is working with him. The Indian physio [Nitin Patel] is there. Rohit himself knows that he has got a long career ahead and it's not just this IPL or next series for him. I am sure he is mature enough to do what is best for him."

Cricinfo



Sunrisers' Sandeep Sharma celebrates after picking a wicket against Mumbai Indians on Tuesday

Hyderabad's Sandeep is the powerplay Bumrah

Sharjah, UAE - Did you know that Sunrisers Hyderabad's Sandeep Sharma and Mumbai Indians' Jasprit Bumrah have virtually the same record in IPL cricket? No seriously. They do.

One of them is a simple medium pacer who, it might seem, requires helpful conditions to be at his best. The other is an all-format bowling force. A once in a generation cricketer. And they have the same record.

So how come one gets superstar billing and the other - while being a staple of the IPL - is largely looked over. Well the simple reason is Bumrah saves his team when the whole damn game is on the line. He comes on when Andre Russell is starting to get hot. He comes on when AB de Villiers is looking to go 360. He comes on when they go into a Super Over. These are all viciously pressure-riddled scenarios and Bumrah succeeds in them time and time again.

That expressionless walk back to the top of his mark. The breath he takes before starting to run in. The awkward action. The awesome pace. The breathtaking clarity of mind. The machine-like execution. It's like Hollywood built a fast bowler and dropped him in Ahmedabad for India to enjoy.

Sandeep can't live up to that billing. For one, he can't bowl fast. And that limits your options so badly. Bouncers can become hit-me-for-six balls. Batsmen have extra time to move around the crease and mess up your lines and lengths. You'll have to arm yourself with variations. It's a lot of work.

Luckily, Sandeep loves that. He slogs through thousands of overs in first-class cricket. Even though no one watches that. It might seem a silly gripe. But wouldn't you want everyone to know when you do something well? Didn't you run over to every single one of our family

members to show that exam in which you got 100/100? Recognition is important. In a world dominated by social media, it can even be life-changing. Sandeep deserves it simply because he does this one thing as good as anybody else. Even Bumrah.

He owns top-order batsmen in the IPL.

Here is a sample of his work. He has dismissed Virat Kohli seven times in 13 matches. He has knocked over Rohit Sharma four times in 14 matches. The latest on Tuesday was the result of a ball that moved in just a smidge and just late enough to mess with the timing of a chip that was meant to carry over mid-off. He has even taken down T20's greatest batsman four times in 11 innings. Chris Gayle averages an anaemic 10.25 runs against this mean old merchant of the dibbles and doddies.

Through the course of Tuesday's game - one that the Sunrisers had to win to make the playoffs - Sandeep overtook a World Cup winner in Zaheer Khan to become the most successful bowler in IPL powerplays. Of his 108 wickets in the tournament so far, 62 belong to openers and No 3s. This is his game. This is his value. This is his genius. Sandeep is the powerplay Bumrah.

His round-arm action pushes the ball in the opposite direction to which he wants it to swing it so that the movement is both subtle enough and late enough to beat the middle and take the edge. But he knows if things don't go for him, he will likely get patted. Sandeep isn't Hollywood. But he's still very very good.

Cricinfo



A file photo of Jasprit Bumrah of Mumbai Indians during the 2020 IPL

OUTSIDE IPL



Samuels, 'the confident fellow', retires

Kingston, Jamaica - Marlon Samuels, the West Indies batsman who top-scored in both of their World T20 final wins, has retired from professional cricket.

Johnny Grave, the Cricket West Indies (CWI) chief executive, confirmed to ESPNcricinfo that Samuels had told CWI of his retirement in June, having last played in December 2018.

While Samuels' career ends with underwhelming batting averages, he was always a man for the big occasion, as he proved in both of West Indies' World T20 wins. Perhaps his finest innings came in the 2012 final in Colombo, when he saw

off and then took down two of the format's top bowlers at the time in Ajantha Mendis and Lasith Malinga respectively.

Samuels was on 20 off 32 balls after ten overs of West Indies' innings, with the team score just 32 for two, before launching a stunning assault on Malinga to finish on 78 off 56 balls. He then took one for 15 to seal a comfortable win.

Four years later, he became the only man to be player of the match in two ICC global finals, hitting 85 not out off 66 balls to steer WI to a four-wicket win against England in Kolkata.

His best batting perform-

ances were not limited to the shortest format. He scored a maiden Test hundred at Eden Gardens as a 21 year old and had a dominant period against the red ball which saw him top score in a series defeat in England in 2012, as well as making 260 - his highest Test score - in Bangladesh later that year.

In ODI cricket, he still holds the record for the highest partnership for any wicket - 372 with Chris Gayle, against Zimbabwe in the 2015 World Cup.

Across formats, he made 11,134 international runs including 17 centuries, and took 152 wickets with his quick off-

breaks. He also represented several T20 franchises around the world later in his career.

No stranger to controversy, Samuels defied a team curfew in India in 2002 and was almost sent home, and was banned for two years from 2008 by the ICC after he was found guilty of 'receiving money, or benefit or other reward that could bring him or the game of cricket into disrepute'.

During West Indies' aborted 2014 tour of India, he was the only player to take a public stance against ODI captain Dwayne Bravo, and claimed he had wanted to complete the

series. Samuels was never afraid to stand his ground and have his say. One defining image of his career would come at the media briefing after leading West Indies to the 2016 World T20 title against England. Samuels arrived on his own, sat sideways, pads still on, spikes on the table, and spoke his mind.

Andre Russell, Samuels' compatriot, disapproved of Samuels' gesture. Recounting the incident during the 2016 IPL, Russell called Samuels a 'different Jamaican' but summed up his former teammate appropriately: "He is a confident fellow."

Cricinfo

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LLOYDS STEPS UP JOB CUTS
Britain's biggest domestic bank Lloyds said it is cutting 1070 jobs, accelerating redundancies despite a return to profit in the third quarter of this year

BUSINESS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 05, 2020 **MUSCAT DAILY** 13

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Philippine Peso	125.75
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*Rates as on November 04
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

German car sales dip in October

New car sales in Germany fell slightly in October, official data showed on Wednesday, ahead of renewed nationwide restrictions to curb a second coronavirus wave.

A total of 274,303 cars were registered last month in Europe's largest car market, a drop of 3.6 per cent compared with the year before, the KBA transport authority said.

"The uncertain economic outlook and the overall difficult sales situation of many companies has again led to a sharp decline in registrations," said EY analyst Peter Fuss.

The dip came ahead of a four-week 'lockdown light' announced by Chancellor Angela Merkel, which curtails gastronomy, leisure and cultural activities for much of November and promises to subdue consumer spending.

Fuss said he was expecting a 'renewed decline in willingness to buy among both private individuals and companies'.

Canada trade deficit widens in September

Canada's trade deficit widened in September to C\$3.3bn (US\$2.5bn) as both exports and imports rose 1.5 per cent but remained down from pre-pandemic levels, the national statistical agency said on Wednesday.

The figure was up from a C\$3.2bn deficit in August, which Statistics Canada revised significantly upward in this month's report. Economics had forecast a C\$2.2bn trade deficit in September.

The deficit, commented CIBC analyst Royce Mendes, was 'materially worse' than expected.

According to the data, Canadian exports rose to C\$45.5bn in the month, led by higher sales abroad of timber - which rose for a fifth consecutive month to its highest level in 14 years - and aircrafts.

OECD area annual inflation stable at 1.3% in September

Consumer prices in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) area remained stable at 1.3 per cent in September, the organisation said on Wednesday.

Energy prices continued to fall in the month by 6.5 per cent, but at a slower pace than August (7 per cent), while food price inflation slowed to 3.6 per cent from 3.8 per cent in August.

OECD annual inflation, excluding food and energy, picked up slightly to 1.7 per cent in September, compared to 1.6 per cent in August.

By contrast, Euro area inflation fell marginally to 0.3 per cent in September from 0.2 per cent in August.

Duqm Refinery project moves full steam ahead

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Duqm Refinery project is progressing full steam ahead despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the result of the dedication displayed by a highly skilled and motivated team of more than 21,000 manpower at the site serving the three EPC contractors, Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Co (DRPIC) said in a statement issued on Wednesday.

DRPIC said the project is expected to be completed and commissioned by the first quarter of 2022. Since the start of construction in 2019, the refinery project has been a key driver for economic growth in the Duqm region. The commencement of operations at Duqm Refinery will further fuel economic growth in Duqm and drive other industries to flourish in the region.

The statement said that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted businesses around the world with organisations adapting to it with various mitigation plans. 'By taking necessary precautions at the right time to ensure the safety of our staff and without compromising on our operations we have managed to



The project, which has already achieved 72% completion rate, is expected to be commissioned by the first quarter of 2022

achieve an overall 72 per cent progress to date,' DRPIC said.

'Guided by our shareholders' aspirations for the project to create in-country value (ICV), the project from the onset had a very strong ICV component attached to it. This resulted in over US\$1.7bn worth of contracts value awarded for local goods and services. Over US\$200mn worth of contract and services were awarded to local SMEs,' it said.

The ICV contribution also extended to empowering communities and directly contributed to support more than 600 training opportunities for young people that would provide them with needed employability skills.

Duqm Refinery is a joint venture between two industry pioneers - OQ and Kuwait Petroleum International. Once the refinery starts operations, it will have the capacity to process around 230,000 barrels of crude

oil per day. Diesel, jet fuel, naphtha, and LPG are slated to be its primary products.

Holding a strategic maritime location in the path of international shipping lines is a major advantage for the refinery. Located in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, the refinery project will serve as a key driver for growth in the region, encouraging investment opportunities for projects that would interface with the refinery's operations.

CBO issues warning on illegal money transfer business

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Wednesday warned the public about the unlicensed money collection and transfer business.

It has come to the notice of the CBO that there are non-licensed shops and individuals in the sultanate who are engaged in the conduct of international money transfer through an application called 'Bkash', the CBO said in a statement.

'The CBO, hereby, calls for the public to be cautious and to withhold from utilising the money transfer services offered by shops and persons who are not licensed by the central bank,' the CBO said.

The central bank further said

that the conduct of money transfer business by non-licensed entities/individuals is illegal and incriminated pursuant to Omani laws, and customers depending on such illegal channels are vulnerable to the fraud risk and they may lose their hard-earned money.

The CBO warns all shops and individuals that the collection and transfer of money without a licence are considered as violations under the provisions of the Banking Law, the National Payment System Law and the Anti Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) Law, and whoever commits any of such violations shall be subject to a number of punishments, including imprisonment and fines.



Raysut Cement returns to profit after two loss-making quarters

Our Correspondent
Muscat

After two consecutive loss-making quarters this year, Raysut Cement Company has returned to the profit trail with a net group profit of RO512,121 in the third quarter ended September 30, 2020.

According to the company's financial disclosure submitted to the Muscat Securities Market, Raysut Cement is seen to be poised to weather the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had taken a toll on the company's financials since the beginning of the year.

According to a press statement issued by Raysut Cement, the third quarter turnaround is a significant come back even though the company's losses in the second quarter stood at RO6.86mn. The losses have been attributed to the impact from the pandemic's widespread



negative impact the world over and specifically on verticals like construction, infrastructure etc.

Returning to profitability was a sign of its agility and resilience, according to the company. The comeback growth also should be seen in the context of restraints on supply to the company's export markets because of the pandemic-related transportation issues.

In the third quarter of 2020,

Raysut Cement generated a group revenue of RO20.41mn against RO20.4mn in the same period of last year. Raysut Cement said a significant share of its revenue growth was contributed by Sohar Cement Factory LLC which it acquired in May 2019.

Raysut Cement recently acquired a majority 75 per cent stake in Lafarge Holcim Maldives Ltd, a cement terminal located at Thilafushi Islands, Maldives.

Bosses of state-owned firms participate in OIA workshop

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) is continuing to hold a series of workshops for its holding companies' chairpersons and CEOs as part of the 'Rawabet' programme, which aims at establishing a comprehensive and unified governance framework for the state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

The second workshop of OIA started with a welcome note by H E Abdulsalam bin Mohammed bin Abdullah al Murshidi, president of the Oman Investment Authority, complementing the dedication and cooperation demonstrated by the SOEs towards achieving the ultimate objectives of 'Rawabet' programme.

H E Murshidi highlighted the matters covered in the first workshop including the grounds for which the programme was es-



H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef

tablished, focusing on the strategic directions of the companies and their alignment with the Oman Vision 2040, particularly highlighting partnership with and empowerment of the private sector.

The workshop also hosted H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion. H E Yousef stated that he looks for-

ward to the anticipated governance policies and frameworks for the state-owned enterprises to ensure the empowerment and integration of the private sector as well as to promote synergy between the companies within the business community at large.

H E Yousef also highlighted the importance of cooperation with the ministry in line with its plans for private sector development, the adoption of local content approach through supporting local products, and prioritisation of local industries in tenders. He further noted the importance of empowering SMEs, especially at this stage of the changing economic landscape.

The workshop highlighted the key pillars of the Rawabet programme, namely corporate governance of the state-owned enterprises, strategic management direction, and the synergies between them.

Saudi Arabia to ease restrictions on foreign workers

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia said on Wednesday it will ease key restrictions on millions of foreign workers, as part of plans to reform its long-criticised labour policy.

Human rights groups have repeatedly called on the kingdom to abolish its 'kafala' sponsorship system, described by critics as a modern form of slavery that binds workers to their Saudi employers.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development said that from March 14, expatriates will no longer need their em-

ployers' permission to change jobs, travel or leave Saudi Arabia - home to some 10mn foreigners. 'This initiative will improve and increase the efficiency of the work environment,' the ministry said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

'The exit and re-entry visa reforms allow expatriate workers to travel... without the employer's approval after submitting a request, [and] the employer will be notified electronically of their departure,' it said.

Sattam Alharbi, a Deputy Minister at the ministry, said the



A file photo shows foreign workers gathering outside Saudi immigration department as they try to get visas and legalise their work situation in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (AFP)

reforms will abolish 'runaway' reports against foreign workers who do not report for duty, which effectively renders them criminals at risk of being jailed and deported. "We aim to achieve more inclusion for Saudis, attract talent, improve the working conditions, make Saudi Arabia's labour market more dynamic and productive," Alharbi said.

However, he said the new regulations will not apply to the country's 3.7mn domestic workers.

AFP



This photograph taken on Wednesday, shows the closed toy department of a supermarket in Paris, on the sixth day of a lockdown (AFP)

Fresh recession fears rise as Europe enters new lockdowns

Brussels, Belgium - New lockdowns across Europe will seriously affect a nascent economic recovery, but not hurt as badly as during the first coronavirus wave last spring, top officials said on Tuesday.

"The tightening of containment measures will evidently have an impact on economic activity," the EU's economic affairs commissioner Paolo Gentiloni told reporters.

"But there are some reasons to believe that the impact could be smaller than in spring," he added.

However, Gentiloni cautioned that forecasts were very difficult to make given the unpredictable

progression of the coronavirus that has infected over 10mn people in Europe.

Klaus Regling, the head of the eurozone's bailout fund, the Eu-

ropean Stability Mechanism, said the deterioration of the health situation 'has substantially increased the risks of a double dip recession' in the 19 countries that use the euro single currency.

The tightening of containment measures will evidently have an impact on economic activity

PAOLO GENTILONI

"What we considered to be downside scenarios until re-

cently, are now becoming our new baseline it seems," he added, though he also was optimistic the situation would be an improvement from the economic

crash seen in March. The officials spoke after a meeting of eurozone finance ministers who urged quick approval of a massive EU stimulus package that is blocked in negotiations between European Parliament and member states.

Eurogroup chief Paschal Donohoe pushed member states and MEPs to maintain a 'unity of purpose' to swiftly agree the package.

It is 'an urgent priority for all of us because of its crucial importance in supporting economic recovery in the coming years', said Donohoe who is also the Irish Finance Minister.

Official data last week showed that the eurozone economy soared by 12.7 per cent in the third quarter. The figure was historic, but it follows an equally unprecedented collapse of 11.8 per cent from April to June as a result of pandemic.

AFP

US export jump narrows Sept trade gap to \$63.9bn

Washington, US - A jump in soybean exports and sharp drop in cell phone imports led to a 4.7 per cent narrowing of the US trade deficit in September, according to government data released on Wednesday.

The drop in the trade gap to US\$63.9bn could be hailed as a win for President Donald Trump who made an aggressive trade strategy with China a hallmark of his first term in office.

The 'phase one' trade agreement reached early this year included commitments from Beijing to buy huge amounts of

US crops.

On the day after the US presidential election there is no clear winner in the contest between Trump and former vice president Joe Biden to see who will preside over the White House and trade policy starting in January.

Total US exports in September rose to US\$176.4bn, and though imports also rose, to US\$240.2bn, the increase was minimal, according to the Commerce Department data.

Overseas sales of soybeans - of which China is a key buyer - surged by US\$1.4bn.

And the data also showed that the US trade gap with China dropped by US\$2.1bn in the month to US\$24.3bn.

Trump had made cutting that figure a goal of his policy that imposed steep tariffs on billions of dollars in imported goods, a strategy many economists say have hurt US firms and farmers.

Car imports surged by US\$2.4bn in the month, but cell phone purchases fell by nearly the same amount, according to the report.

AFP



Overseas sales of American soybeans - of which China is a key buyer - surged by US\$1.4bn

Dutch govt backs KLM bailout after pilots agree to pay cut

The Hague, Netherlands - The Dutch government on Tuesday approved a multi-billion-euro coronavirus bailout for struggling airline KLM after pilots agreed a five-year pay cut deal.

Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra on Saturday dramatically suspended plans to rescue the beleaguered Dutch arm of Air France-KLM after unions refused to budge.

But after KLM announced that the pilots' union had backed down, the government said it was now ready to sign off on the €3.4bn state aid injection.

'Intensive consultations' between KLM and the unions led to a 'positive outcome', Hoekstra and Infrastructure Minister Cora van Nieuwenhuizen said in a letter to parliament.

'The Cabinet can therefore agree to its restructuring plan and has since confirmed this to the KLM management board,' they wrote.

KLM chief executive Pieter Elbers had earlier announced the deal with the pilots' union, hailing



Dutch airline KLM planes are parked on the tarmac of the Schiphol Airport, in the outskirts of Amsterdam, Netherlands on March 18 (AFP)

it as an 'important step' for the airline's survival.

"The past few days have been incredibly intensive for everyone, with great pressure on the company, negative impact on reputation and internal divisions," he said.

"But in the end we, as KLM and unions, came to an agreement."

The suspension of the rescue plan had put the future of the world's oldest airline at risk as it struggles to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the spring, Paris gave Air France €7bn in loans, and The Hague also granted KLM state aid.

But arguments over the restructuring plan for KLM meant that the government kept back most of the money.

KLM chief Elbers admitted that the coronavirus pandemic meant the airline was 'asking a lot from all colleagues'.

"This unprecedented time requires unprecedented and unusual steps," he said.

AFP

BMW reports higher third quarter profit

Frankfurt, Germany - German luxury carmaker BMW on Wednesday warned that new pandemic restrictions would 'severely' hit business in the months ahead, even as it reported better than expected third quarter profits.

The coronavirus 'will remain the biggest of many risks', chief executive Oliver Zipse told a virtual press conference, as 'new lockdowns could severely impact our business development in the fourth quarter and early 2021'.

The Munich-based company posted a net profit of €1.8bn in the three months to September, up from €1.5bn in the same period last year as it recovered from the impact of lockdowns early in



2020, BMW said in a statement. Group sales were down 1.4 per cent year-on-year to €26.3bn.

The results beat analysts' predictions of third quarter net profit of €1.5bn on sales of €26.1bn, ac-

cording to the FactSet financial information service.

BMW suffered its first loss in ten years in the second quarter after the pandemic shuttered showrooms, closed factories and ravaged demand in the spring

but the auto market bounced back strongly as restrictions were eased.

Following a better third quarter, 'the pandemic is now clearly regaining momentum', BMW said. The company confirmed its full year outlook, forecasting a significant fall in earnings and car sales for 2020.

Brexit will also 'contribute to uncertainty', with BMW maintaining a large presence in Britain at its Mini factory in Oxford.

Operating profit at BMW's automobiles segment, which includes its Mini and Rolls-Royce marques, fell 2.5 per cent to €1.5bn with more than 675,000 cars delivered worldwide in the third quarter.

AFP

No breakthrough as EU, UK locked in crunch talks

London, UK - EU and British negotiators are holding face-to-face talks in locked-down Brussels to try to find a last-minute accord on post-Brexit ties, officials said on Tuesday, with no sign yet of a breakthrough.

A European Commission spokesman dismissed British newspaper reports that the two sides had resolved the thorny issue of an EU demand to continue fishing in UK waters.

"We have not yet found a solution on fisheries," spokesman Daniel Ferrie told journalists.

He said that the EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, and his British counterpart, David Frost, were meeting in Brussels with their teams.

Their physical presence highlighted the critical juncture of the talks.

Belgium is now under tight restrictions to curb a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, with all workers - including those at the commission - told to stay away from their offices unless there was no other option.

Britain and the EU have only days left to strike an agreement on their future trading, security and energy relations if they want it to be ratified and in force before January 1, 2021, when a post-Brexit transitional arrangement comes to an end.

The search for an accord has become even more high-stakes because of the devastating impact of the new coronavirus on the British and EU economies.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson seriously undermined EU trust in September by introducing a bill to breach parts of the Brexit divorce treaty, the

Withdrawal Agreement, that was reached late last year.

The bill, still passing through the UK parliament, intends to override a section of the Withdrawal Agreement dealing with trade between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Under the treaty, Northern Ireland has a special status keeping it within the orbit of the EU's single market when it comes to goods. That aims to maintain peace on the island of Ireland by avoiding any north-south border.

The EU last month launched legal action against Britain over the bill.

Ferrie said 'to date, the EU has received no reply from the UK' despite an end-of-October deadline to respond to a formal letter demanding explanations.

"We are therefore considering the next steps, including issuing

a reasoned opinion," he said.

That is the next stage in the EU infringement process that could end up with the matter being sent to the European Court of Justice, which could impose penalties on the UK.

In London, Johnson's spokesman said, "We are not disputing what the commission spokesman has said."

He added that Britain was 'committed' to addressing the dispute through a joint panel set up to decide details of the Withdrawal Agreement. "That is our overriding priority," he said.

In the event of an EU-UK deal on post-Brexit ties, there is an expectation the controversial British bill will become unnecessary and possibly dumped by Johnson's government.

But to get there, both sides need to overcome persistent

gaps in three areas: The EU's demand for similar rules to ensure fair competition; a dispute mechanism seen as robust and effective; and, finally, fishing.

On the fishing issue, Ferrie said the EU was intent on 'protecting the fishing opportunities of European fishermen and women'.

He dismissed a British proposal on making ownership of fish stocks determined by 'zonal attachment', based on how long fish spent in the territorial waters of a country, saying that 'cannot be the basis for the solution'.

He added: "Intensive negotiations are ongoing now here in Brussels. We're working hard for that deal. We're working hard on getting a deal soon. We're not there yet. So a lot more work remains to be done."

AFP



Anti-Brexit activist Steve Bray holds an EU flag and a placard as he stands alongside a sign about Brexit posted on a bus stop shelter in Westminster, central London on October 28 (AFP)



Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed

Ethiopian PM orders riposte after ‘attack’

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Ethiopia on Wednesday declared a state of emergency in Tigray after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said he ordered a military response to a deadly attack by the ruling party of the restive region on a camp housing federal troops.

A statement from Abiy's office said the government made the declaration 'recognising that illegal and violent activities' in Tigray, a region locked in a long-running dispute with Addis Ababa, were threatening national sovereignty, constitutional order and peace and security.

It followed an announcement by Abiy on social media that the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) 'has attacked a military camp' in the northern region, and 'tried to loot' military assets.

The attack resulted in 'many martyrs, injuries and property damage', Abiy said later in a five-minute address on state television.

'Our defence forces... have been ordered to carry out their mission to save the country. The final point of the red line has been crossed. Force is being used as the last measure to save the people and the country,' he said in an earlier post on Facebook and Twitter. It was not immediately clear what form the federal military response might take, or what the state of emergency declaration will entail.

But analysts and diplomats have been warning for weeks that the standoff between the federal government and the TPLF could spill over into violence.

"This war is the worst possible outcome of the tensions that have been brewing," said William Davison, an analyst with International Crisis Group.

"Given Tigray's relatively strong security position, the conflict may well be protracted and disastrous," he said, adding it could send 'shockwaves' into the wider Horn of Africa region.

Internet monitoring group Netblocks reported that internet appeared to have been cut in Tigray as of 1.00am.

Abiy said on state TV that 'traitorous forces' had turned on the military in the regional capital, Mekele, and the town of Dansha in western Tigray.

The assault on Dansha was 'repelled' by security forces from Amhara region, which borders Tigray to the south, he added.

A separate statement from Abiy's office accused the TPLF of dressing its soldiers in uniforms resembling those of the army of neighbouring Eritrea to 'implicate the Eritrean government in false claims of aggression against the people of Tigray'.

Our defence forces... have been ordered to carry out their mission to save the country. The final point of the red line has been crossed. Force is being used as the last measure

ABIY AHMED

Tigray's government said on regional state media that leadership and rank-and-file soldiers from the military's Northern Command, based in Mekele, 'have decided to stand with the Tigray people and the regional government'.

The statement also said Tigray had closed its airspace.

It was not possible to immediately corroborate the two sides' statements.

The TPLF dominated politics in Africa's second most populous country for nearly three decades before Abiy came to power in 2018 on the strength of anti-government protests.

Under Abiy, winner of last year's Nobel Peace Prize, Tigrayan leaders have complained of being unfairly targeted in corruption prosecutions.

AFP

Militants shot 'one by one' in Kabul varsity attack: Survivor

Kabul, Afghanistan - Students were gunned down 'one by one' as they leapt from the windows of Kabul University classrooms when militants stormed the campus earlier this week, a survivor told AFP on Wednesday.

At least 22 people, mostly students, were killed and another 27 wounded when three gunmen stormed the university on Monday, spraying classrooms with bullets in an assault claimed by the Islamic State group.

Mohammad Qasim Kohistani (22), a student of public policy at Kabul University, one of Afghanistan's main educational institutions, described how the seven-hour attack unfolded.

"We were waiting for our teacher to come... suddenly, we heard loud sounds coming from the first floor," Kohistani, who was in a classroom on the second floor, told AFP.

"We knew something was wrong, we started jumping from the windows."

Kohistani took refuge under a window ledge with his friends, a bloody scene unravelling above him as the attackers went room to room searching out victims.

"After a gunman took over our class he started shooting fleeing students from the window," he said.

"The (other two) gunmen were shooting students one by one from a close range," he added.

Hundreds of students fled, some by scrambling over perimeter walls and onto the streets, others by barricading themselves inside rooms until they were rescued by Afghan special forces.

Among those killed was Kohistani's best friend, Ahmad Ali, who stopped to help another



Journalists take photos and videos of a damaged classroom, a day after gunmen stormed the university, in Kabul on Tuesday (AFP)



Mohammad Qasim Kohistani, a student of public policy who survived the carnage in his university, at his home in Kabul on Wednesday (AFP)

friend, Roqia. "He didn't jump from the window because Roqia had fainted," he explained.

"He wanted to save her but the gunman shot both of them in the head and killed them."

Turkey fines Facebook, others over social media law

Ankara, Turkey - Turkey on Wednesday fined Facebook, Twitter and three other social media companies for failing to appoint a country representative under a controversial law which came into force last month.

The legislation, passed in July, requires platforms with more than 1mn users to appoint representatives in Turkey that could implement court orders to remove contentious content or face heavy fines.

Turkey has ordered Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Periscope, YouTube and TikTok to pay 10mn lira (US\$1.2mn approx) fines for failing to comply,

Deputy Transport and Infrastructure Minister Omer Fatih Sayan tweeted.

If the networks fail to open local offices by the start of December, they will be fined an additional 30mn lira. Failure to comply by early January would result in an advertising ban.

Should the social media companies still ignore Turkish law three months after the advertising ban, they will see bandwidth reductions of 50 per cent and then by as much as 90 per cent in the fifth and final stage.

Digital rights expert Yaman Akdeniz said any bandwidth reduction would start in April and



A woman uses mobile sitting in front of a banner with photos of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (left) and Minister Omer Fatih Sayan

reach 90 per cent by May, making the platforms effectively inaccessible.

Akdeniz tweeted on Tuesday

Kohistani, who sprained a leg when he jumped, stayed hidden for hours on campus.

"It was the most horrible moment of my life," he said.

"All through the day we were hearing their wails and cries for help but we were helpless."

After the attack ended, Kohistani came to learn that the attackers had killed everyone inside one of the classrooms below his.

"I am still in trauma. Yesterday, I was not even able to talk," he said.

Officials said two attackers were shot dead by security forces, while the third blew himself up during the assault.

The attack was claimed by IS, the second such assault the

group had carried out on an educational centre in less than two weeks in the capital.

However, Vice President Amrullah Saleh has blamed the Taliban and their allies in Pakistan for the attack.

The Taliban have denied it was involved.

Afghan security forces have been grappling with surging violence that has only worsened in recent months despite the government holding peace talks with the Taliban in Qatar.

Afghanistan held a national day of mourning on Tuesday, while students demonstrated outside Kabul University, with banners reading 'Stop killing us'. AFP

Yemen's ancient 'Manhattan of the Desert' risks collapse

Shibam, Yemen - Dubbed the 'Manhattan of the desert' for its centuries-old skyscrapers, Yemen's ancient city of Shibam escaped damage in the civil war - but faces collapse from disrepair amid rains and floods.

Against a backdrop of cliffs looking like America's Grand Canyon, the UNESCO-listed World Heritage site is strategically built on a rocky spur high above the river valley of Wadi Hadramawt, in the arid centre of Yemen.

Some of the hundreds of fantastical sun-dried mud-brick towers soar seven stories high, many dating back to the 16th century, all crammed inside a traditional fortified wall built for protection.

The UN describes the city, once an oasis stop for the camel



An aerial view of Shibam City in Yemen's central Hadramawt governorate (AFP)

caravans on the spice and incense routes across southern Arabia, as 'one of the oldest and best examples of urban planning based on the principle of vertical construction'.

But Shibam is struggling.

The mud-brick constructions need constant repair, but Yemen's economy has collapsed in the brutal civil war raging since 2014, creating what the UN describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"The city looks like it was hit by a disaster - without precedent," said Abdulwahab Jaber, a local official in the town, 480km east of the capital Sanaa.

Jaber said at least four towers have been completely destroyed and 15 others damaged in recent floods, which have killed scores of people across Yemen.

Victim of conflict

The sun-baked earth walls are crumbling.

Hassan Aidid, head of the General Organisation for the Preservation of Historic Cities in Yemen, said that the roofs and the exterior of the mud towers had sustained the most damage.

"Residents of the city have been unable to restore them because of the war and the difficult situation in which they live," Aidid told AFP.

Yemen is gripped by a war between Iran-backed Huthi rebels - who control the capital - and a beleaguered government supported by a Saudi-led military coalition. Shibam is controlled by the internationally-recognised government, but while it has largely been spared direct conflict, it has not escaped the effects of the war.

fects of the war.

The fighting has almost completely halted public spending.

The city, with its densely-packed tower houses and alleyways often too narrow for cars, was put on the UNESCO heritage list in 1982 - but in 2015 it was also added to the 'List of World Heritage in Danger'.

It came shortly after the Saudi-led military coalition joined the war to support the government against the Huthi rebels.

Aidid said an emergency response plan in cooperation with UNESCO is underway, with approximately 40 buildings being restored at a cost of US\$194,000. Private donors have also offered to help, including a Saudi businessman who donated about US\$54,000, he said. AFP

US POST-POLL CRISIS

Trump declares win, vows court action

As the counting was on, the Republican tycoon alleged ‘major fraud’ and wanted ‘all voting to stop’



A demonstrator (right) at Black Lives Matter plaza charges a supporter of US President Donald Trump, on the US Election Day in Washington, DC on Tuesday (AFP)

Washington, US - The US election was plunged into chaos early on Wednesday as President Donald Trump prematurely declared victory and sought Supreme Court intervention to stop vote-counting - even as his Democratic rival Joe Biden voiced confidence in his own chances.

In a divisive election cast under the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic that has claimed more than 230,000 lives in the United States, Trump appeared to have avoided a Democratic wave predicted by some polls but he still needs key states to secure another four-year term.

Shattering norms in the world's most powerful democracy, Trump alleged 'major fraud' as he held an upbeat rally inside the White House's ceremonial East Room.

"We did win this election,"

Trump told cheering supporters, few of them wearing masks to protect from COVID-19.

"This is a fraud on the American public."

The Republican tycoon said he would go to the Supreme Court because 'we want all voting to stop'.

Voting had already ended by the time Trump took the podium after 2.00am but Trump appeared to be calling for the court to stop counting.

Trump also alleged that there had been 'surprise ballot dumps' in states where he had been leading.

'Last night I was leading, often solidly, in many key States, in almost all instances Democrat run & controlled,' Trump tweeted. 'Then, one by one, they started to magically disappear as surprise ballot dumps were counted.'

Trump has railed for months



Last night I was leading, often solidly, in many key States... Then, one by one, they started to magically disappear as surprise ballot dumps were counted

DONALD TRUMP

against mail-in ballots, charging without evidence that they could be fraudulent, as some 100mn Americans voted ahead of Election Day amid the health crisis.

Biden had earlier warned that vote counting would take a while as he greeted his own backers, who honked from cars at a socially distanced rally in his home state of Delaware.

'Constitutional crisis'

Soon after Biden's remarks, Trump tweeted his claims of victory and fraud, leading Twitter to flag his comments as part of its effort against election dis-

information.

Governor Tom Wolf of Pennsylvania, which is proving to be the vital prize, said that one million mailed-in ballots remained to be counted and promised that all counties would work 'tirelessly' to complete them.

"Let's be clear," the Democrat said of Trump's comments. "This is a partisan attack on Pennsylvania's election, our votes and democracy."

Trump for the past four years has often been quick to say he is treated unfairly but even a few of his allies voiced unease at his dramatic intervention.

"Stop. Full stop. The votes will be counted and you will either win or lose. And America will accept that. Patience is a virtue," tweeted Adam Kinzinger, a Republican congressman who won reelection.

Foreign countries also sounded the alarm, with German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer warning that Trump could create a 'constitutional crisis'.

One state flips

Television networks predicted that Biden would be the first Democrat in 24 years to win Ari-

Bid to stop vote counting outrageous: Biden camp

Wilmington, US - Joe Biden's White House campaign slammed President Donald Trump's threat to try to stop the election vote count as 'outrageous' early on Wednesday, saying its legal team was ready to prevent such an 'unprecedented' act.

'The President's statement tonight about trying to shut down the counting of duly cast ballots was outrageous, unprecedented, and incorrect,' Biden campaign manager Jen O'Malley Dillon said in a statement.

'Never before in our history has a president of the United States sought to strip Americans of their voice in a national election.'

Biden has long warned that Trump was seeking to diminish the integrity of mail-in voting, which has surged this year given the health concerns about going in person to polling places during



Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden (AFP)

the coronavirus pandemic.

'Having encouraged Republican efforts in multiple states to prevent the legal counting of these ballots before Election Day, now Donald Trump is saying these ballots can't be counted after Election Day either,' Dillon said.

He insisted 'the counting will not stop' adding: "We have legal teams standing by ready to deploy to resist... and they will prevail."

AFP

zona, seizing on the southwestern state's changing demographics and the popularity of astronaut Mark Kelly who was projected to win a Senate seat.

But no other states immediately flipped and Trump won an early prize in Florida, where his hard line against Latin American leftists helped him make inroads among Cuban Americans.

Democratic hopes fizzled of turning around Texas, a Republican bastion indispensable for Trump, even though Biden came tantalisingly close in early results.

Biden, as expected, comfortably won the biggest prize of all, California, as well as New York and easily kept Minnesota and New Hampshire, two states where Hillary Clinton in 2016 had only eked out victories over Trump.

Attention was again turning to three states that elected

Trump four years ago - Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin - with early ballots still waiting to be counted from the Democratic stronghold cities of Detroit, Philadelphia and Milwaukee.

Biden said he was feeling 'real good' about Michigan and Wisconsin and voiced confidence about Pennsylvania, where he was born.

The former vice president said he was also competitive in Georgia - a state that until recently had not appeared to be in play - as election workers in its largest city Atlanta halted counting for the night after a pipe burst.

But Trump pointed to the total votes already counted as he insisted that he was winning the states, saying he was leading in Pennsylvania 'by a tremendous amount of votes'.

AFP

Survivors of October 20 shooting in Nigeria's Lagos tell their story

Lagos, Nigeria - Solomon, Patrick and Samuel were wounded on October 20 during a crackdown by Nigerian security forces on protesters in Lagos who had gathered despite a curfew order.

The three say they spent several days at the Lekki toll gate, the epicentre of demonstrations that erupted on October 8 over police violence and bad governance, as they themselves had been victims of police abuse in the past.

Now discharged from hospital, the three men - whose full names are being left anonymous for safety reasons - are desperate for their stories to be heard.

It was the Nigerian army who fired, all three said.

The government denies any responsibility and labelled reports that soldiers killed 12 people as 'fake news'. The police on Friday said 22 officers had been killed in protest-linked unrest last month.

"How can they say it's not true?" asked Patrick.

"We saw them. Two guys died instantly in my presence, and one is still in the coma - my friend Nicholas," said the 25 year old demonstrator, unemployed since



This file photo shows a Nigerian youth with a placard during a protest against the brutality of the Nigerian Police Force unit named Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), in Lagos on October 13 (AFP)

a lockdown in March imposed to contain the coronavirus.

Shot in the arm - he was brandishing a flag when he came under fire - Patrick was evacuated, put on a canoe that crisscrossed the Lagos lagoon and took him to a hospital.

"The soldiers were blocking the roads, the ambulances could not access the scene. Some were using bikes, others wheelbarrows to take the injured," he said.

Samuel (30) was helping to

ensure safety at the protest ground with a group of volunteers when he heard the first gunshots. "We saw armed, military men, so we came back to the stage and started waving our flags and singing the national anthem."

"I was not expecting them to shoot at us," said the young man, who works in agriculture on the outskirts of the sprawling city.

"I was expecting them to address us in a normal manner. But

they didn't talk to anybody, they just started shooting."

"All of a sudden I started feeling something hit my left thigh," he remembered. The screen of his phone might have saved him - the bullet might have otherwise penetrated even deeper.

In pain, he managed to walk 500m to find someone who could take him to hospital.

The 38 year old construction worker is still in shock.

AFP

Scientists in Australia find chink in coral-eating starfish armour

Paris, France - The discovery that coral-eating starfish are late risers and feed mostly at night could help slow the decline of the Great Barrier Reef and other shallow-water corals already ravaged by global warming, scientists reported on Wednesday.

Crown-of-thorns starfish suck the colour and life out of corals, a favourite food, but in a healthy ecosystem their numbers are held in check. When marine heatwaves bleach large swathes of coral, however, bigger fish leave the area and the spiky multi-armed predators proliferate and zero in on what's left.

"Mass-bleaching, outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish, and a myriad of other disturbances and pressures are leading to widespread coral loss and degradation of reef ecosystems," James Cook University professor Morgan Pratchett told AFP.

Efforts to manually remove the ravenous starfish have largely failed, in part because they are not always easy to find.

But a study published in the Royal Society's Proceedings B has found a chink in their spiky armour which could help scientists buy time for the world's embattled reefs.



This photo received from the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies on Monday shows a crown-of-thorns starfish at Swains Reef (AFP)

"The starfish appear to sleep in, and will be harder to find on the reef before about midday," lead author Scott Ling, also from James Cook University, explained. That means they would be most active and exposed after the Sun goes down, Ling said.

But the logistics of scooping them up during night dives are daunting.

"We recommend culling dive efforts be focused from midday until early evening," he added.

Crown-of-thorns starfish have a special liking for Acropora, a coral species that has been the

foundation for reefs across the world for the past 2mn years.

But the main threat to coral reefs - on which half-a-billion people and a quarter of marine species depend - remains climate change.

Increasingly severe marine heatwaves cause healthy corals to expel algae living in their tissues, draining them of their vibrant colours in a process known as bleaching.

Half of the Great Barrier Reef's corals have died over the past 25 years.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Crammed into camps on Turkish border, displaced Syrians fear spread of virus

Qah, Syria - Hassan Sweidan is terrified he will catch COVID-19 in the overcrowded displacement camp in northwest Syria he calls home, even so as medical staff in the region have become sick.

Humanitarian workers fear any further rise in novel coronavirus cases would be disastrous in northwest Syria, where almost 1.5mn people live in overcrowded camps or shelters, often with poor access to running water.

In an informal settlement in Idlib, the country's last major rebel stronghold, Sweidan said he and other displaced Syrians did not stand much chance against the disease.

"We live in a camp all crammed in together. If someone talks to his family, all the neighbours can hear it," said Sweidan, who is in his forties and has an existing health condition.

If someone gets sick, 'it's hardly the disease's fault', the father of six added.

In the encampment in Qah, a few makeshift solar panels shimmer on the canvas roofs of endless tiny breeze-block rooms where families have settled after being uprooted by war.

Resting after helping a friend build a small room to serve as a shop, Sweidan said he hopes he does not have to take anyone in his family to the local hospital.

"Hospitals are overcrowded. People have started to be



This file photo shows elderly displaced Syrian men in front of a tent in an overcrowded camp near the village of Qah on the Turkish border, in Syria's northwestern Idlib province on October 28 (AFP)

We live in a camp all crammed in together. If someone gets sick, it's hardly the disease's fault. One of my relatives got it a while back, and I'm really scared because I have no immunity

HASSAN SWEIDAN

scared of doctors and nurses, who they think might be infected, with all the sick people going to them."

'End our misery'

Sweidan, who fled his home seven years ago, especially fears catching the COVID-19 disease

as he suffers from a chronic liver condition. "One of my relatives got it a while back, and I'm really scared because I have no immunity," he said.

The Idlib bastion - now dominated by a group led by Syria's former Al Qaeda affiliate - has been battered by years of war.

Local and international humanitarian workers are working to contain the virus, but cases are still on the rise.

"In the northwest, confirmed cases have increased six-fold over the last month, with cases also rising in displacement camps and settlements," Mark Lowcock, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, told the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

The health authorities in northwest Syria have officially announced 5,075 cases of COVID-19, including 42 deaths.

Seated cross-legged on the floor, as she crushed small green olives one by one with a brick, 80 year old Ghatwa al-Mohammad said she and her family felt like sitting ducks.

"We're scared of the disease but we don't dare leave," she added. "We're so confused about what we should do. If only God would have us die and end our misery."

Of the three million people living in Idlib, around half live in makeshift homes and tents after escaping the fighting during Syria's nine-year civil war.

The latest Russia-backed regime offensive on the region last winter killed around 500 civilians and forced nearly one million people to flee their towns and villages.

Since a ceasefire brokered by Moscow and rebel-backer Ankara came into force in

March, only around 200,000 people have returned home.

Distancing 'near impossible'

At the Idlib health directorate, doctor Yahya Nehmeh said they had asked residents to observe social distancing.

But he admitted that was 'near impossible' in the hundreds of informal settlements dotting the region.

Few in the camps wear masks. Many cannot afford to buy face coverings, or to change them regularly, let alone disinfectant hand gels.

For most, food, water, medicine and school supplies are far more important.

"The regime and Russian forces are responsible for displacing these people and for the disastrous conditions in which they now live," Nehmeh said.

Back in the camp, Mohamad al Omar (40) agreed that asking people to self-isolate in a tent city was not realistic.

"They tell us, 'Don't go out. Don't cause overcrowding'. But we live in tents barely half a metre apart," said the father of four, who was displaced by the conflict eight years ago.

"They give all of us who are older than five one mask as if that were enough. But it's not."

Omar, who works as the driver of a water truck, said he cannot stay inside the camp as he needs to earn money.

AFP

Russia virus infections hit new record

Moscow, Russia - Russia announced a record daily number of coronavirus infections on Wednesday, with 19,768 new cases adding to pressure on the government only days after President Vladimir Putin said there were no plans for a lockdown.

The number of deaths also ticked up by a record 389, meaning that 29,217 people have been killed by COVID-19 since it reached Russia earlier this year.

Russia has listed a total of 1,693,454 cases of infection.

Like in many European countries, hospitals in Russia's regions have been hit by a sharp increase in virus patients with pictures circulating on social media showing people lying on staircases at medical facilities and long ambulance queues unable to deliver patients for treatment.

Russia imposed one of the most restrictive lockdowns during the peak of first wave of the pandemic from March to May, but last Thursday Putin said 'we



Amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, a municipal worker wearing protective gear sprays disinfectant on a bus stop near the Novodevichy convent, in Moscow on Tuesday (AFP)

are not planning to introduce sweeping restrictive measures' or a nation-wide lockdown.

Putin spoke in favour of a regionalised approach with targeted measures in the most

Russia has listed a total of 1,693,454 cases of infection. The number of deaths also ticked up by a record 389, meaning that 29,217 people have been killed by COVID-19 since it reached Russia

affected cities and region.

Other countries, including France and England, tried to implement this strategy before abandoning it in favour of national lockdowns due to the exponential growth of virus cases.

AFP

Italy orders to impose night curfew from today

Rome, Italy - Italy's Prime Minister has signed a decree to enforce a nationwide night curfew from 10.00pm on Thursday as he tries to halt the resurgence of coronavirus, media reported.

Giuseppe Conte was expected to detail other measures, such as shutting shopping centres at the weekend and also museums, in a new programme of restrictions that will last until December 3.

Tougher curbs could also be imposed in the hardest-hit areas under a new three-tier system that divides Italy's 20 regions into either red, orange or green, with red being the highest risk.

Italy was the first European country to be hit by coronavirus and has so far recorded more than 39,400 deaths, and almost 760,000 cases.

Infections have surged in recent weeks, particularly in the northern region of Lombardy that includes Milan, and health experts have called for the kind of national shutdown adopted by France, Ireland and England.

But the first lockdown was devastating for the Italian economy and the new decree was only agreed after long discussions between Conte's government and regional leaders.

The curfew will run until



Italy's olympic champion Massimiliano Rosolino (left) holds a banner during a protest against the government's restrictions, in front of the Italian parliament, in central Rome on Wednesday (AFP)

5.00am, with 60mn Italians only allowed out for work or health reasons, according to the

last month, a move that sparked a series of small but sometimes violent protests.

Secondary schools, which were already running most classes online, will reportedly switch to total distance learning, although younger children will still be allowed to go to school.

The number of passengers on public transport will also be halved.

The Health Ministry will decide which regions will be classed as red, orange and green based on a number of factors, including rates of infection and occupancy of hospital beds.

AFP



Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen (right) with Hungary's Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto, in Phnom Penh on Tuesday (AFP)

Hungarian Minister tests positive on Southeast Asia tour

Bangkok, Thailand - Hungary's Foreign Minister tested positive for coronavirus in Thailand, the kingdom's health minister said on Wednesday, a day after he jetted in from a meeting with Cambodian premier Hun Sen.

The confirmed case left the Cambodian strongman facing the prospect of a period in quarantine, as well as a test for the contagion.

Peter Szijarto flew into Phnom Penh Tuesday for a one-day official visit to sign agreements on civil aviation, agriculture and water management, as well as reopening an embassy after a 25 year hiatus.

On Tuesday night, he arrived in Bangkok and was swiftly taken to hospital after testing positive for the virus on arrival.

The test 'showed he has COVID-19, but he didn't have any symptoms', Thailand's Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul told reporters,

after he visited Szijarto at Bamrasnaradura Infectious Disease Institute on Wednesday. "His entourage all tested negative."

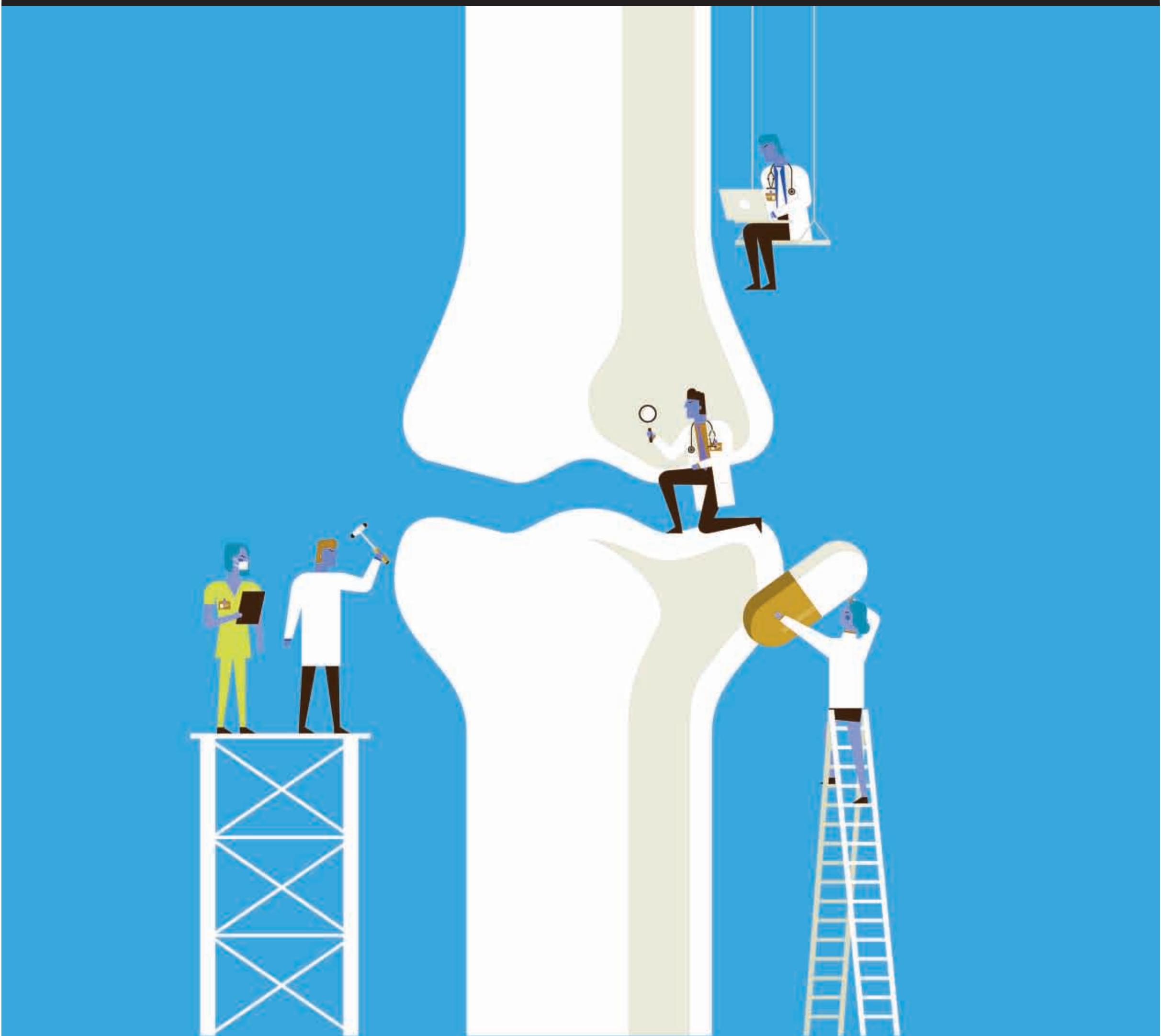
During his Cambodia visit, Szijarto was pictured with Hun Sen at a meeting where neither appeared to be socially distancing or wearing a mask. He also met his Cambodian counterpart and shook hands with a coterie of other ministers.

All of those people would now be tested and quarantined, according to Phnom Penh's Foreign Ministry.

"The leaders and all officials who met and had direct contact with the delegation during the visit will be tested for COVID-19 and quarantined in accordance with the ministry of health's advice," Cambodia's Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

Szijarto's scheduled meetings in the Thai capital were cancelled.

AFP



JOINT VENTURE

5 cautions on joint replacement surgery during COVID-19

If you're suffering from joint pain and considering a joint replacement surgery for long, you're not alone. Chronic, debilitating pain that requires joint replacement affects nearly one in four adults in countries like the United States, though its prevalence among senior populations all over the world, including the Middle East and Oman, is growing. Unfortunately, many people wait years to move forward with surgery,

enduring significant pain and negatively impacting their lives. This delay has worsened in the current climate of stress and fear of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a recent US survey of 1,200 people comprising joint replacement patients and caregivers, conducted by Wakefield Research and commissioned by a leading medical device company

Zimmer Biomet, 48% of people reported they postponed elective joint replacement surgery due to fears and concerns stemming from COVID-19. Informed by the results of this survey, Zimmer Biomet recently launched Don't Let Pain Gain on You, an educational resource aimed at informing and empowering those living with joint pain to make informed decisions about joint replacement surgery in partnership with

their healthcare professional. Although joint replacement is typically considered an elective surgery, it is an important tool in restoring mobility, especially for senior citizens, and helping to enhance their quality of life. So, if you are considering joint replacement surgery and feeling hesitant during the COVID-19 pandemic, here are five things to consider:

1

Enhancing your quality of life without pain

Relief from debilitating pain is the number one benefit of joint replacement surgery. "Unfortunately, I have many patients who are suffering greatly from joint pain but have canceled or delayed their planned joint replacement procedures due to concerns stemming from COVID-19," says Dr Mark Klaassen, orthopaedic surgeon. "While this concern is understandable, it becomes a quality-of-life issue. I do my best to encourage people to proceed as soon as they feel comfortable, so that they can achieve relief from chronic, debilitating joint pain and move forward with their life." Discussing all potential benefits and risks with your own doctor to determine the right time for you is important. Expectations and achievable level of pain-relief and mobility can vary depending on your specific pre-operative condition and activity level.

2

Talking to professionals about options

Ask your surgeon about your potential to have an outpatient surgical procedure so that you may be able to be discharged on the same day of surgery and recover at home instead of spending additional time in the hospital - which may be particularly appealing during the pandemic. Additionally, you can ask your healthcare professional about technological innovations in joint replacement surgery such as robotics and digital health platforms that are available in some locations, for appropriate patients. One such option is mymobility with Apple Watch from Zimmer Biomet, a first-of-its-kind remote care management system that uses an iPhone and Apple Watch to facilitate a new level of connection between patients and their surgical care teams. This is also intended to help minimise the need for unnecessary physical touch points.

3

Understanding the safety protocols

If you are concerned about your safety at this time, it is important to realise that there are mandated protocols and guidance in place in every country to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure. According to Dr Klaassen, "Hospitals and surgery centres across the country are typically utilising extremely stringent policies and procedures to help keep people safe. If safety concerns are holding you back, I urge you to discuss further with your healthcare professional as I personally don't see this as a reason to further delay a necessary joint replacement procedure." Becky D, a grandmother from Warsaw, Ind, and a patient of Dr Klaassen's who underwent two separate joint replacement procedures, this year, says, "Two months after surgery, I am so relieved not to have that debilitating pain I had before surgery, and I am able to be more active again," she said.

4

Considering the plight of your caregivers

For many people suffering from severe joint pain, family members and caregivers are often a critical part of the process, so don't forget to consider the impact that continuing to delay your joint replacement surgery could have on them. Data shows that caregivers of people with joint pain can face a decrease in their quality of life and an increase in stress as they bear added responsibilities or household duties. In fact, according to Zimmer Biomet's survey, 56% of caregivers wished their loved one would move forward with surgery more quickly even during the pandemic in order to relieve their physical pain and the negative impact on quality of life.

5

Delaying surgery causes more pain

Zimmer Biomet's survey also found that those who have postponed their elective joint replacement surgery due to COVID-19 related concerns report that their daily lives have been impacted, citing increases in pain (71%), mobility changes (58%), and worsening sleep (36%). Talk to your surgeon about what's right for you and when is the right time to go in for surgery. Whether you've put off your joint replacement surgery or haven't yet scheduled it, now may be the time to take action, so you can get back to enjoying your daily life. (BPT)



SEBASTIAN
GEORGE
Fitness coach

EXERCISES FOR BUSY BEES

Are you a professional who is always busy and short of time? Do you keep your fitness routine on the back-burner of your day's to-do list and often give it a miss? If so, combination moves are ideal for you as it requires less time to enable you to get fit.

BURPEE

Benefits

The burpee is a full body exercise, working most major muscle groups. It also improves cardiovascular fitness along with burning tonnes of calories.

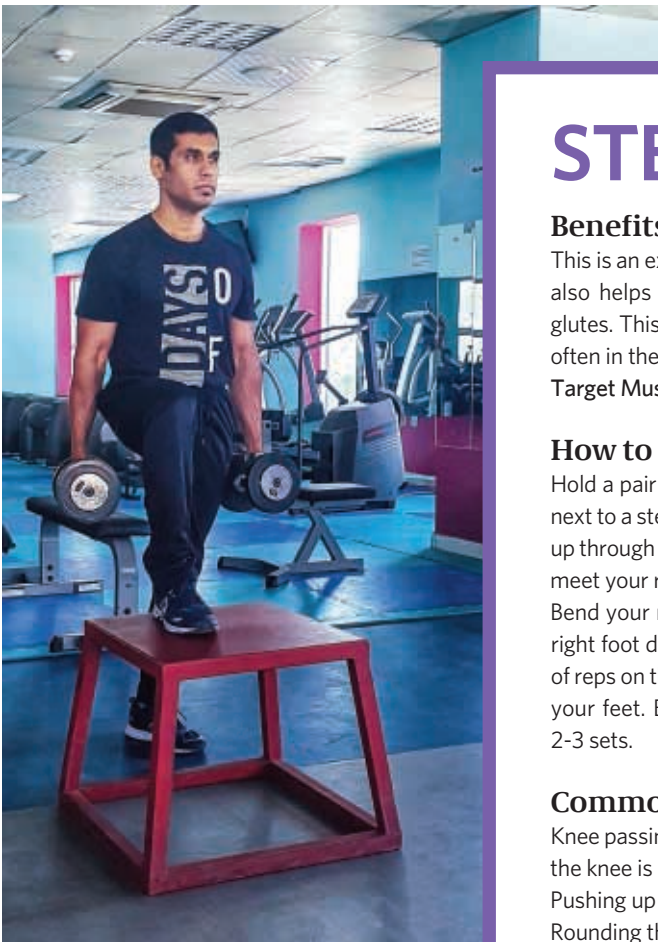
Target Muscles – Whole body

How to do it

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, with arms at your side. Bend your knees and lower your body into a squat. Place your hands on the floor directly in front of you and shift your weight on to your hands. Jump your feet back to land on the balls of your feet into a high plank position with a straight body and tight core. If possible try to do a push up. Then, jump your feet back so that they just land outside your hands, reach your Arms over head and explosively jump up in the air, land back and repeat.

Common mistakes

Collapsing knees as you squat
Arching back and sinking hips at top plank position



STEP UP

Benefits

This is an excellent exercise to strengthen the quadriceps. Step up also helps build the posterior chain, including hamstrings and glutes. This exercise is very functional as people climb stairs very often in their daily life.

Target Muscles - Lower body and core

How to do it

Hold a pair of dumbbells (for beginners no dumbbells) and stand next to a step (chair/bench). Step up with your right foot, pressing up through heels to straighten up the right leg, bring the left foot to meet your right foot on top of the step. Bend your right knee and step down with the left foot. Bring the right foot down to meet the left foot on the ground. Do a number of reps on the right and then repeat with your left foot, or alternate your feet. Build up your repetitions to do sets of 12-15 reps for 2-3 sets.

Common mistakes

Knee passing toes (protect the knee of your active leg by ensuring the knee is not pushed past the toes)
Pushing up with your lower leg
Rounding the back
Knee out of alignment (make sure the knee stays aligned with the ankles of the active leg)



V UPS

Benefits

Stronger abs and core. Improves balance and stability. Helps prevent back pain and injury

Target Muscles - Abs and core

How to do it

Lie on your back and extend your arms behind your head, keep the feet together and toes pointed. Keep your legs straight or slightly bend and lift them up as you simultaneously lift your upper body off the floor to reach your toes with your hands. Slowly lower your self to return to starting position to complete one rep. Aim for as many reps as possible, since it is a body weight exercise. Generally few sets of 15 or more repetitions.

Common mistakes

Swinging of arms
Rounding back and shoulders
Not raising the legs and upper body enough

THRUSTERS

Benefits

Being a compound movement, it involves more than one joint and combines the front squat and over head press. It strengthens the whole body, especially the lower body and core.

Target Muscles - Lower body and core, along with shoulders and triceps

How to do it

Stand with feet hip-width apart, with a pair of dumbbells at shoulder height, with palms facing each other. Hold the dumbbells at shoulder height and lower into a squat position with a neutral spine and tight core. Press your heels into the floor and bring your elbows up as quickly and powerfully explode into a pressing movement to return to starting position.

Common mistakes

Not doing the whole movements smoothly in one go
Losing balance and shifting the base during the move

