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MEET THE WINNERS... WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2021
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Nominal GDP surpasses pre-pandemic level

Wholesale and retail trade recorded 19% growth to reach RO1.364bn in the first half of 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman’s nominal GDP – gross domestic product at current market prices – greatly surpassed its pre-pandemic level after growing rapidly in the first half of this year, official data released on Monday indicated.

Supported by stimulus measures, reopening of economic activities and higher oil prices, the sultanate’s nominal GDP grew at a solid 10.1 per cent rate during the January-June period of 2021 in another sign that the country is on a sustained recovery path from the pandemic recession.

Nominal GDP surged to



(File photo)

RO15.301bn in the first half of 2021 compared to RO13.898bn in the same period of 2020 and RO14.049bn in the first half of 2019, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data shows that Oman’s economic recovery is broad-based with all major sectors – oil and gas, industry, services, and agriculture and fisheries – recording robust growth during

the first half of the year.

Hydrocarbon GDP increased by 8.7 per cent to RO4.428bn in the first half of 2021 from RO4.074bn in the same period of last year.

On the back of higher oil prices in 2021, the value of oil production rose 11 per cent to RO3.723bn from RO3.354mn in the same period a year ago, while the value of natural gas output decreased two per cent

to RO705mn.

Earlier this month, the International Monetary Fund stated that Oman’s economy is set to recover in 2021, with real GDP expected to grow by 2.5 per cent this year and 2.8 per cent in 2022.

The sultanate’s non-oil GDP jumped 11.1 per cent to RO11.456bn in the first half of this year from RO10.309bn recorded in the same period a

year ago. Among non-oil sectors, the industrial sector output grew by 12.1 per cent to RO3.122bn, while the services sector grew by 11 per cent to RO7.912bn.

Within the industrial sector, manufacturing bounced back with more than 34 per cent growth to RO1.338bn in the first half of 2021, while mining and quarrying grew 7.7 per cent to RO114.5mn.

Construction activities, however, remained 3.3 per cent lower at RO1.235bn during the January-June period of 2021 against RO1.278bn in the corresponding period of 2020.

Within the services sector, wholesale and retail trade recorded 19 per cent growth to reach RO1.364bn in the first half of 2021 from RO1.147bn in same period of 2020. Financial and insurance sector activities also grew by 11.5 per cent to RO1.05bn.

Agriculture and fisheries sector activities recorded a seven per cent year-on-year growth to reach RO421.2mn in the first half of 2021.

Oman considering boosters for those with low immunity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate is considering a booster dose against COVID-19 for immunocompromised individuals, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH).

“The ministry will announce the target group that will be vaccinated soon,” an MoH official said.

A third dose can help protect people with weakened immune systems who did not have a strong enough response to the first two doses of vaccine.

The World Health Organization had called for a moratorium on booster doses till vaccines reach more people across the globe.

“The limited supply of these vaccines will save the most lives if made available to people who are at appreciable risk of serious disease and have not yet received any vaccine. Even if some gain can ultimately be obtained from boosting, it will not outweigh the benefits of providing initial protection to the unvaccinated,” said a report, co-authored by WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan, published in Lancet recently.

2.89mn people vaccinated

Muscat - On Monday, the Ministry of Health (MoH) announced that the total number of individuals vaccinated till September 26, with at least one dose, was 2,896,271, accounting for over 82 per cent of the target population.

‘The total number of people who received two doses of vaccine is 2,500,716 – 58 per cent of the target group – while the total doses administered so far is 4,946,987,’ the ministry said.

Joint meeting

MoH announced on Monday that a joint meeting was held between the Directorate General of Health Services in South Sharqiyah Governorate and Royal Oman Police to follow up on vaccination camps for expats, who will be given the second dose of vaccine. Vaccination centres and the participation of relevant sectors for the camps in the governorate have been identified.

► NEWS BRIEFS

VISIT OMAN MARKS WTD

Muscat - The Visit Oman digital platform for travel and tourism in the sultanate organised an introductory meeting on tourism in Oman to mark World Tourism Day.

WTD, marked on September 27 annually, comes this year under the theme ‘Tourism for Inclusive Growth’.

The meeting, held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, reviewed the latest updates within the phased development of the platform, after launching its commercial identity, and plans to launch the portal commercially in Q4 2021.

The platform will be an all encompassing resource which will connect the entire accredited Omani tourism supply chain to travel and trade in key international markets.



Hyport Duqm signs land deal for green hydrogen project



Japan awaits wedding news as royal sweetheart returns

Oman pavilion set to welcome the world

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has completed preparations to open to the world its pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai and receive visitors starting Friday, October 1.

The sultanate will be joining 191 countries in hosting visitors from around the world for 182 days in their respective pavilions, each one presenting a new experience under the slogan ‘Connecting Minds and Creating the Future’.

Mohsen bin Khamis al Balushi, advisor at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and commissioner general of Oman’s participation at Expo 2020, informed that the sultanate seeks the involvement of the world at the event in finding innovative solutions to meet the challenges facing humanity and maximise the benefits for the country at all levels.

As part of the preparations for Oman’s participation in the expo, Qais al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and chairman of the main committee supervising the sultanate’s participation, visited the pavilion on Monday morning.

During the visit, Yousef met



H E Qais al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, visited the pavilion on Monday (Supplied photo)

Through our participation, we aim to highlight Oman as a distinct destination for tourism and doing business, highlighting the Omani identity and our ancient heritage

MOHSEN AL BALUSHI

Glittering line-up of global stars to open expo

Dubai, UAE - The opening ceremony of Expo 2020 Dubai on September 30 is poised to be a mega event.

Celebrated Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli will lead the line-up at the iconic Al Wasl Plaza along with Golden Globe-winning actress, singer and songwriter Andra Day, platinum-selling British pop star Ellie Goulding, Chinese pianist Lang Lang and

four-time Grammy winning singer-songwriter Angelique Kidjo.

Regional artists like the ‘Artist of Arabs’ Mohamed Abdu, Emirati singing sensation Ahlam al Shamsi and Expo 2020 ambassador Hussain al Jassmi will perform for live as well as global TV and online audience.

The opening ceremony is co-

curated and co-produced by Franco Dragone, the creative director behind groundbreaking productions such as Cirque du Soleil and La Perle, and Scott Givens, president and CEO of FiveCurrents, the award-winning creators behind major live events including Olympic ceremonies and stunning New Year’s Eve celebrations worldwide.

Reem al Hashemi, UAE’s Minister of State for International Cooperation and director general of Expo 2020.

Through its participation, the sultanate will present the achievements of Omani civilisation throughout history, as well as highlight its current achievements, its renewed renaissance and future aspirations under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

“Through our participation, we aim to highlight Oman as a distinct destination for tourism and doing business, highlighting the Omani identity and our ancient heritage while promoting investment opportunities in various sectors,” Balushi informed.

Oman’s pavilion will host a series of events and exhibitions, including scientific, artistic, cultural and economic seminars, Omani products exhibitions, an exhibition for small and medium enterprises, and Omani Investment Week.

The exhibitions will display more than 2,000 types of goods and products made by nearly 400 SMEs, including craftsmen, productive families and rural women, with the aim of promoting and selling these in the global event.

Pact signed to develop network of air quality monitoring stations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority (EA) is planning to launch an integrated national system to monitor and control environmental pollutants. The authority signed an agreement with Middle East Scientific Equipment Corporation on Monday to develop the programme.

The programme aims to have a network of ambient air quality

monitoring stations in the sultanate. The agreement was signed by H E Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Omari, Chairman of EA, and Ahmed al Habsi, director general of Middle East Scientific Equipment Corporation.

EA stated that it is keen on ensuring the safety of the environment, combating pollution and preserving various ecosystems within the framework of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and Oman Vision 2040.



(Supplied photo)

The programme also aims to protect the environment and human health in support of SDGs, and to enhance Oman’s position in international environmental indicators within the indicators of the sustainable development goals of 2030, the environmental performance index and global economic competitiveness reports.

‘Through the programme, important data will be provided to the government in making devel-

opment decisions based on sound scientific foundations, and fulfilling the obligations and requirements of regional and international environmental agreements regulating the sultanate and the requirements of United Nations organisations related to health, environment and society.’

EA has set environmental regulations and requirements to reduce air pollutants by issuing the ‘Regulation on Controlling Air Pollutants from Fixed Sources’.

NOT TIME TO LOWER GUARD YET

Those who lost a near and dear one will never forget the suffering caused by the pandemic

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

In the last two years, Oman - like the rest of the world - has witnessed irreparable loss of human life. There were more than 4.7mn deaths in the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each one of us is likely to have lost either a family member, a friend or an acquaintance to the virus.

Even though the number of COVID-19 deaths has significantly decreased now, those who lost a near and dear one will never forget the suffering caused by the pandemic. COVID-19 will forever be remembered as a killer that took away loved ones unexpectedly.

Seeb resident Samya al Nummani, a private sector employee, lost her mother to COVID-19.

"She was on a short visit to Uganda. She battled for her life in an ICU and I could not be with her as she breathed her last. We were in a helpless situation; I will never forget it. We could not travel, due to the lockdown, and neither could she as she was too ill. A week later, she



(For illustrative purpose)

passed away."

An Indian expatriate, who wished to remain anonymous, was in a similar situation. He lost his mother to COVID-19 and

could not attend her last rites in India.

"My mother was healthy but she tested positive and before we could help her, she breathed her

last. This happened during the travel ban and so I couldn't go to India for her treatment or after her death," he said, adding that nothing will be the same for him

when he visits India again.

"Whenever I visited India in the past, I always went to see her," he said.

Muscat resident Mohammed

al Tawqi, who lost his son Abdullah to COVID-19, hasn't got over the shock.

"My wife and I have no more joy in our lives. Our son Abdullah was a lovable, caring and friendly person. He left us too early. He would have turned 32 today," Tawqi said on Monday.

Remembering Abdullah, Tawqi said that his son touched the hearts of all those he met. Not just his parents, Abdullah left a hole in the hearts of his extended family, too. "We can only pray and hope to find strength to overcome this pain."

Tawqi, too, was hospitalised during Abdullah's death and could not attend the burial making the loss more painful.

However, following strict restrictions brought on by the government to control the spread on the virus through most of this summer, there is reason for relief. Oman is catching its breath after a punishing time when the infection rate and daily death count was beyond comprehension.

On Monday, the Ministry of Health (MoH) reported no new COVID-19 deaths. 'Thirty-four fresh infections were registered in the last 24 hours, taking the

total to 303,673 cases. The death toll due to the virus in the country now stands at 4,095 and 43 people are currently hospitalised, including 22 in intensive care units,' MoH said.

While ministry figures indicate a recovery rate of 97.8 per cent among COVID-19 patients in Oman, far higher than the world average, public health authorities have warned against slacking preventive measures. "Until the time that health authorities announce there is no need for preventive health measures, we should all continue to follow them strictly," said Dr Sulaiman al Shereiqi, senior specialist of public health in the Ministry of Health.

"We all hope that soon we will have sufficient vaccine coverage of high risk individuals, followed by those in the lower risk group, to the point that we reach herd immunity in the public, which will stop the transmission of infection and control the disease. But we must also bear in mind that such viruses are known to mutate and reappear in new forms. It is a challenge that may require development of new vaccines," he added.

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

Tender No.	No E- Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/20/080	2021/MM/QS-9	Rectification Works of Waterproofing in Muscat Municipality Building at Quriyat (E- Tender)	Rial 25	24/10/2021	07/11/2021	Second
PRE/21/072	2021/MM/QS-10	Replacing Of Damaged Gantry Signs In Various Locations In Muscat Area (E- Tender)	Rial 25	24/10/2021	07/11/2021	Specialized

Tender Conditions :-

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

Research uses ELISA test to detect asymptomatic COVID-19 cases

Muscat - A new research by an infectious diseases expert has helped to recognise COVID-19 patients whose condition might deteriorate earlier, by performing special blood tests and inflammatory markers that reflect the immune response to fight the virus.

"Knowing these markers and which ones to use to predict patients' deterioration and disease progression can be used to prevent further deterioration by implementing early interventions while managing these cases. This reduces the load on intensive care units and might even prevent death," said Dr Asma al Balushi, specialist in infectious diseases, who undertook the study as part of her fellowship training programme at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital, UK in collaboration with a research team in Oman.

The findings of the study can also help specialists in formalising the guidelines for doctors taking care of COVID-19 patients and thus unnecessary tests can be removed from the guidelines and rationalise spending, Dr Asma stated in the research.

The research - 'Detection of asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic contacts of confirmed



Knowing these markers and which ones to use to predict patients' deterioration and disease progression can be used to prevent further deterioration

DR ASMA AL BALUSHI

COVID-19 cases in Oman using ELISA test. Why do some patients develop severe illness while others do not?" - is part of the COVID-19 Research Programme of the Ministry of Health, Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI).

The research aimed to detect early asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic contacts of COVID-19 cases by using the antibody test called 'ELISA' in addition to the accredited PCR test through nasal and throat swabs.

The research team also collected blood samples from confirmed mild cases who did not require admission to hospitals and compared them to those with more severe illness of cases admitted to the hospitals. Different inflammatory markers were studied to know which markers are correlated with disease severity in COVID-19 patients. Genetic testing of human genome, especially ACE-2 genome, was also performed.

According to Dr Asma, the most important findings of this research project is that ELISA test and PCR testing can be used to detect those who are affected by the coronavirus without the appearance of any symptoms in them. Some of these patients had the symptoms appear after two or three days of testing and some remained asymptomatic.

The research was conducted in collaboration with MoHERI, Ministry of Health, The Royal Hospital, Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, the Royal Liverpool University Hospital in the UK, the Central Public Health Laboratories and the National Genetic Centre in Oman.

ROHM announces digital tour

Muscat - Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) has announced the launch of a new digital 360-degree tour of the Opera House and House of Musical Arts on the occasion of World Tourism Day featuring members of the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra and the First Royal Band for Music & Folklore.

'With stunning footage from the main areas, ROHM has created an exciting new way to explore the world-class performance space housed within the incredible buildings and beautiful architecture. Heralded in the region as a beacon of cultural exchange and admired worldwide for its national identity and artistic integrity, ROHM is a very special place to visit,' stated a communiqué.

'The virtual tour will open the Opera House to a host of new eyes across the world. Everyone is invited to take a glimpse through the doors, up the stairs, along the red carpet and into the magic of the auditorium of both the Royal Opera House Muscat and the House of Musical Arts, taking in the splendour, design details and inspiring artistry on the way.'

The experience of exploring the interior is now accessible to people who may not have been inside the opera house before, those who never had the chance to visit and those who are planning to travel to Oman.

Tours can be enjoyed on ROHM YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/ROHMuscat>

ROP inducts new recruits

Muscat - The Royal Oman Police, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, continues to receive Omanis who meet conditions of employment according to a specific timetable.

A new batch of recruits was enlisted after passing the evaluation stages, ROP said.



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Dakhliyah Municipality invites bids for 35 new development projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dakhliyah Municipality has invited bids for 35 different development projects in the governorate. The bids are invited for a variety of projects, including public parks, recreational areas, commercial and tourist centres and livestock barns.

"The tenders include the establishment of some commercial and industrial complexes, such as an integrated commercial and tourist complex and a market for the sale of local and handicraft products in Jebel Akhdar on an area of 27,873sqm," said an official.

He added, "The municipality also invites bids to establish a commercial complex in the wilayat of Bidbid on an area of 2,250sqm and another in Bahla on an area of 1,200sqm. The tenders also include the construction and operation of an



integrated recreational area in Jebel Shams in the wilayat of Al Hamra on an area of 9,000sqm and the establishment of a number of barns for the sale of livestock in the wilayats of Nizwa, Izki and Manah."

Talking about the parks, he

said that the municipality has opened tenders for the development and operation of Tanuf Park in the wilayat of Nizwa spread over an estimated area of 10,789sqm, the development of the Al Seha al Hamr Park in Bidbid on an area of 21,097sqm, and the development of the popular heritage neighbourhood park in the wilayat of Nizwa on an area of 9,197sqm.

The municipality will also develop Bidbid Park on an area of 3,601sqm, and another park in Misfat al Abrieen in the wilayat of Al Hamra on an area of 3,643sqm, besides establishing an electric games area in Samail Park and another in the wilayat of Adam on an area of 4,641sqm.

The tenders also include the renting of a number of cafes in the wilayats of Nizwa and Samail, and renting a number of slaughterhouses in the wilayats of Nizwa, Bahla, Samail, Al Hamra and Adam.

OMAN, INDIA SIGN MOU ON MARITIME SECURITY



The Maritime Security Centre signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Navy on Monday. It aims to enhance the existing joint cooperation between the Maritime Security Centre and the Indian Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre in areas of maritime security and information exchange. The MoU was signed by Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of Naval Staff of India, and Rear Admiral Saif Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of Royal Navy of Oman (ONA)

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Unit Rate announcement

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company S.A.O.C Invites Interested Companies To Participate In The Following

Description	Last Date to Participate	Date of Submission Request of Participation Letter	Grade	Tender Price (R.O)
Unite Rate Contract for MEDC Provision of Manpower Outsourcing Services	14/10/2021	One week obtaining UR document	Specialized	157.5

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents - The amount specified above is including 5 % VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - For payment procedure and to obtain the document, please contact us via e-mail Contract@medcoman.com 24588600 – Ext: 8577 - 8726
Purchase timing	document can be purchased at the official working time between 08:00 – 13:00 hours please contact us via e-mail Contract@medcoman.com
Enquiries	Any inquiry can be sent using clarification available in the tender documents , within 3 days from obtaining UR document
UR Submission	- The Vendor should stamp all the unit rate contract pages - The contractors, after reading and accepting the prices, terms and conditions of the contract, shall submit a "Request of Participation Letter" addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION CO. - Vendor experience in managing and running slmier contract - Recorded of past performance in running of similar contract - All the required documents should be submitted only throgh email Contract@medcoman.com
Terms and Conditions	MEDC have the right to close the participation date on or before 14/10/2021.



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Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion



Tender 38 /2021

The Internal Tenders Committee at Ministry of Commerce , Industry and Investment Promotion announces the following tenders:

Tender No	Title of the Tenders	Company rate	Tender document price R.O (Un refundable)	Deadline for Tender Document collection	Deadline For Offers Submission
38 / 2021	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Time attendance for Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion	Specialized	25/- R.O	Tuesday 5/10/2021	Wednesday 20/10/2021 Before 10:00 am

Companies Specialized in such fields and the Omani Local Companies that have valid registration certificate from the Tender Board , a valid tax card issued by tax Authority , can participate and obtain requirement for proposals and tender terms from the following website.
<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

First: Offers should be submitted online to the above mentioned website. enclosed with a copy of Bank Guarantee or certified cheque issued by a local bank in the Sultanate of Oman values (1%)of the offer, valid for (90) days from the date of offer submission and addressed to H.E the Undersecretary of Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Second: Offers shall be submitted in a wax-sealed envelopes accompanied by the original Bank Guarantee or the cheque to the Secretariat of the Internal Tender Committee located in second floor of the Ministry's main building in Muttrah AlKubraa.

Third :The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other submitted offer.

Note: Priority shall be given to companies and institutions whose bid has the highest Omanisation rate .

Correspondences:

- Tender inquiries; All correspondence pertaining to TENDER Inquiries shall be online through E-Tendering System . (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System inquiries : All correspondences pertaining to the technical support of E-Tendering System shall be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number .

Tel: +968 24402200
E-mail: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

Profitability of GCC banks has stabilised: S&P

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The profitability of GCC banks stabilised in the first half of this year and will continue to do so in the second half of 2021, according to S&P Global Ratings.

'Overall, GCC banks' profitability stabilised in the first half 2021 due to still-high cost of risk and stable interest margins,' S&P said in a report released on Monday. 'In the absence of further shocks - pandemic or non-pandemic related - we expect this to continue in second-half 2021, aided by careful cost control,' the ratings agency said.

S&P expects that the GCC banks' capitalisation will remain supportive of their creditworthiness.

According to S&P, the COVID-19 pandemic and last year's oil price crash did not affect all GCC banking systems in

the same way, highlighting the resilience of some and the inherent weaknesses of others.

'Among the four country banking sectors we profiled, we believe the most vulnerable is the UAE, where the pandemic disrupted important economic sectors such as the hospitality, trade, and real estate sector,' the agency said.

'However, this was largely mitigated by the government's Targeted Economic Support Scheme, which offered breathing room to corporates hit by the pandemic and reduced costs for banks by providing free funding.'

Similarly, in Qatar the state's footprint in the economy and support measures helped reduce COVID-19's effects on the banking system, S&P said.

S&P considers the Saudi Arabian banking system the least vulnerable in the GCC in the current environment.

Hyport Duqm signs land deal for green hydrogen project

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Hyport Duqm Company, which is planning to set up a major green hydrogen production facility in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, on Monday signed a land reservation agreement with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) for the green hydrogen project.

Hyport Duqm is a joint venture project between Oman's OQ and Belgian company DEME Concessions.

As per the agreement, Hyport Duqm will now continue to move forward with the early engineering works and site data collection to establish a green hydrogen and ammonia project in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Ali Masoud al Sunaidy, chairman of OPAZ, and on behalf of Hyport Duqm by Dr Salim al Huthaili, CEO of OQ Alternative Energy, and Alain Bernard, chairman and managing director of DEME Concessions.

The project will be established in part of the land already allocated for the renewable energy



projects, in an area of 150 sqkm and is located in the southern part of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. This strategic land will accommodate both an onshore wind and solar farm with a combined capacity of 1.3 GW, which will be developed in subsequent expandable project phases.

Hyport Duqm is currently completing the installation and commissioning of four meteorological wind masts and two meteorological solar stations within

the site in order to confirm Duqm's excellent solar and wind conditions which are available throughout the year and which form the basis of a successful green hydrogen to green ammonia project.

In a press statement, H E Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, deputy chairman of OPAZ, said, "OPAZ welcomes this project in the Special Economic Zones at Duqm. It aspires to be a pioneering project that will introduce green hydrogen and green Am-

monia to the country, which will lead the diversification beyond hydrocarbons efforts and contribute to Vision 2040."

Huthaili said, "The land reservation agreement is yet another milestone in the development of this important project. The Special Economic Zone at Duqm will be a global green hydrogen hub combining power, manufacturing and logistics activities while focusing on effort of decarbonisation and electrification."

"The excellent renewable re-

sources and the existing infrastructures along with the upcoming national grid connection makes Duqm an attractive and competitive destination for renewable energy projects. Oman continues to be a global leader in delivering clean energy projects to accelerate the energy transition effort. OQ and our shareholders, the Oman Investment Authority continue to support this project and our strategy to grow this important sector," he added.

Alain Bernard, executive chairman of DEME Concessions, said, "Our flagship green hydrogen project Hyport Duqm strikes another important milestone which underwrites DEME Concessions' strong commitment in making the necessary project progress."

"Hyport Duqm responds not only to the call for projects supporting the global energy transition; the project will form an integral part of SEZAD's ambitious growth under the strong leadership of OPAZ. Finally, this milestone strengthens DEME Concession's sustainable, long-term presence in SEZAD, complementing its shareholder's role in Port of Duqm."



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MSX inches up on improved activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) marginally rose by 0.07 per cent to close at 3,931.35 points on Monday. Trading activity improved from the previous session as turnover jumped by 313.11 per cent to RO3.91mn and volumes surged 201.26 per cent to 12.99mn shares.

The gains in the main index were supported by all the subindices. Financial index rose 0.11 per cent, Industrial index climbed 1.26 per cent and Services index rose 0.06 per cent. The MSX Shariah Index closed up by 0.21 per cent at 580.57 points.

Market breadth remained negative as ten companies closed up, while 11 companies closed down. The rest 20 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

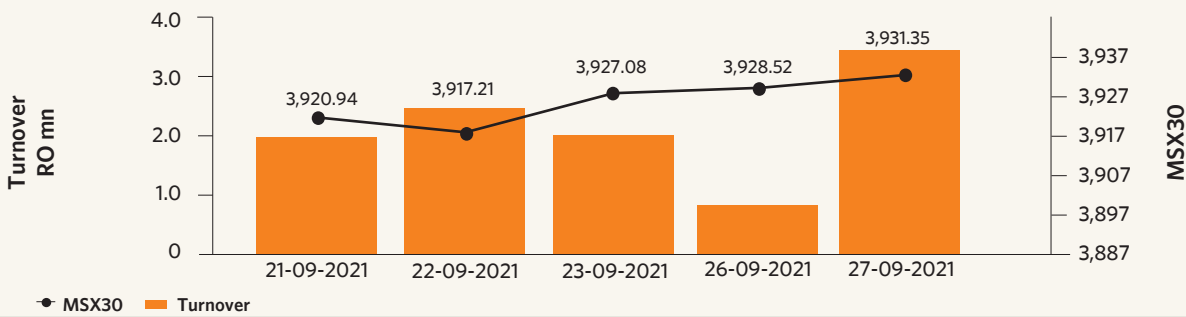
Top gainers were Oman Refreshment



(9.72 per cent), Oman Investment & Finance Co (2.94 per cent), Muscat City Desalination (2.5 per cent), HSBC Bank Oman (2.22 per cent) and Al Maha Ceramics (2 per cent).

Top losers were Oman United Insurance (-5.47 per cent), National Gas (-2.11 per cent), Oman Cables Industry (-2.01 per cent), Oman Cement (-1.79 per cent) and Muscat Finance (-1.72 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



EU-US to seek shared tech rules despite French ire

Brussels, Belgium - The EU and US will this week embark on a tricky effort to deepen ties on tech regulation, but with France resisting the project in the wake of a row with Washington over a submarine deal.

High-level talks will begin in the US city of Pittsburgh on Wednesday despite efforts by Paris to delay the meeting in retaliation for a pact between the US, Australia and Britain - dubbed AUKUS - that saw Canberra scrap a multi-billion-dollar submarine order from France.

The EU-US Trade and Tech Council (TTC) was set up after a summit in June to look at issues including trying to attune their strategies on regulating Internet giants and defend democratic values.

The council came at the request of the Europeans, who are seeking concrete signs of increased transatlantic cooperation after years of tension under former president Donald Trump, especially over trade.

President Joe Biden's administration will be represented by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo.

On the European side, EU executive vice presidents Margrethe Vestager and Valdis Dombrovskis will lead talks.

Vestager, the EU's tech policy supremo, said the talks would attempt to enhance cooperation 'in the areas where there is a shared sense of values being



two big, old democracies'.

Unspoken in her comments was the rise of China, with Washington understood to be pressing its EU partners to join forces in isolating Beijing on the global stage.

This is being resisted in Europe, where powerful member states France and Germany are reluctant to blindly follow Washington's increasing assertiveness.

"European officials want to avoid the TTC simply becoming an unproductive exercise at China-bashing," said former EU trade boss Cecilia Malmstrom and analyst Chad Bown in a paper for the Peterson Institute in Washington.

The talks in Pittsburgh, a rust-belt city that has grown into a tech hub, are only the first instalment of the Trade and Tech Council, with another round expected in the spring, Vestager said.

EU diplomats said France sharply criticised the talks at a

meeting on Friday, reminding member states that previous attempts to deepen trade ties with Washington led nowhere.

Dombrovskis, who is also the EU's trade commissioner, cautioned that the new effort was not an attempt to clinch a trade deal, with memories still fresh of the failed attempt to strike an ambitious accord during the Obama administration.

The European Commission, which handles trade policy for the EU's 27 member states, also failed to finalise a smaller scale deal with Donald Trump, beyond a zero-tariff pact on lobsters.

"It's not like a free trade agreement," the former Latvian prime minister told reporters. "It's more about long-term benefits."

Dombrovskis pointed to potential cooperation on banning unwanted foreign investments or tackling supply chain problems, such as with microchips.

AFP

Fuel 'panic-buying' in Britain could see military coming to the rescue

London, UK - Britain experienced further 'panic-buying' of motor fuel on Monday as a shortage of lorry drivers on COVID-19 and Brexit fallout could reportedly prompt the government to use the army to make deliveries.

The Petrol Retailers Association claimed that almost half of the UK's 8,000 fuel pumps had run out of petrol on Sunday, as desperate drivers formed long queues to fill up tanks.

PRA chairman Brian Madderson told the BBC that shortages were down to 'panic buying, pure and simple'.

In an emergency move, Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said he had suspended oil industry competition laws to ensure suppliers 'can share vital information and work together more effectively to ensure disruption is minimised'.

It comes as UK media widely reported that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is considering whether to call upon soldiers to deliver fuel to petrol stations across the nation.

Questioned over the week-



A security guard assists drivers queuing to fill up at a Tesco petrol station in Camberley, London on Sunday (AFP)

end, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps refused to rule out requesting military assistance.

Britain's shortage of lorry drivers is affecting many sectors including the food industry, although German supermarket Aldi on Monday insisted it was coping well with regards deliveries to its many UK stores.

Oil giant Shell meanwhile

said it is 'working hard to ensure supplies for customers'.

It added in a statement, 'Since Friday we have been seeing a higher than normal demand across our network which is resulting in some sites running low on some [petrol] grades. We are replenishing these quickly, usually within 24 hours.'

The situation has evoked the dark days of the 1970s, when energy supply problems led to a three-day working week and fuel rationing in Britain. It is reminiscent also of late 2000, when people protesting over high fuel prices blockaded oil refineries, bringing the country to a virtual standstill for weeks.

AFP

Sudan government in talks with protesters over oil shutdown

Khartoum, Sudan - Sudan's transitional government on Sunday held talks in the Red Sea trade hub of Port Sudan with leaders of a protest movement that threatened the impoverished country's fuel supplies and revenue.

Information Minister Hamza Baloul confirmed to AFP the arrival of a senior delegation while another senior official, who preferred to remain anonymous, said, "The delegation won't come back [to the capital Khartoum] before solving the crisis."

A protest leader announced on September 20 that dozens of demonstrators, objecting to parts of a peace deal with rebel groups, had blocked the main container and oil export terminals in Port Sudan.

By Saturday, Sudan's Oil Minister Gadein Ali Obeid warned of

'an extremely grave situation' with two pipelines blocked by the protesters.

One transports oil exports from South Sudan while the other handles Sudanese crude imports.

Sudan had reserves to last only for ten days, Obeid's ministry said.

Neighbouring South Sudan produces around 162,000 barrels of oil per day, which are transported by pipeline to Port Sudan and then shipped to global markets.

The Khartoum government receives around US\$25 for every barrel of oil sold from the South, according to official figures.

The delegation to Port Sudan, the country's main seaport, is headed by Sovereign Council member Shams al Din Kabashi

and other ministers. They include Obeid and Foreign Minister Mariam al Mahdi, the official SUNA news agency reported.

Kabashi met with protest leaders after his arrival.

Sudan formed the joint civilian-military sovereign ruling council months after the ouster of long-time autocrat Omar al Bashir in April 2019.

It serves alongside a transitional government, headed by civilian Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, which last October signed a peace agreement with several rebel groups.

But the eastern protesters, from Sudan's Beja minority, say that the deal with rebels from the Darfur region, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states ignored their interests.

AFP

How the US debt limit became 'a hostage that's worth ransoming'

Washington, US - A decade ago, a standoff between Democrats and Republicans over increasing the United States' authority to borrow brought the country days away from a default and caused a major ratings agency to downgrade its credit for the first time.

In the aftermath, top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell described the debt limit to *The Washington Post* as 'a hostage that's worth ransoming', and a decade later, it's in captivity once again.

The ceiling on how much debt the US can take on is the subject of fierce negotiations in Washington between Democrats who control Congress but can't rally enough votes to increase it unilaterally, and Republicans who refuse to vote for any increase at all.

The dispute has unusually high stakes because absent an increase, the US could default on

its bills in October, likely devastating its economy and undercutting a pillar of the international financial system.

Lawmakers have bargained over increasing the debt limit for decades.

But the willingness to push the world's largest economy to the brink dates back to 2011, when ascendant Republicans were committed to reining in spending by Democrats, and used the limit to achieve that.

"Most of the [Republican] leadership sees the 2011 debt limit standoff as ultimately a success in that they were able to force [then-president Barack Obama] to sign what was the biggest spending cut bill in decades without actually having any default," said Brian Riedl, who was then chief economist to Republican Senator Rob Portman.

The deal they cut was meant



A family buys ice cream at a food truck on the National Mall with the US Capitol building in the distance (AFP)

to lower the government's spending over the course of years. It did not stick: The US na-

tional debt and budget deficit have soared in the years since due to spending by both Repub-

lican and Democratic presidents.

Others involved in the 2011 standoff warn that even without

a default, the brinksmanship has its own consequences.

"The ways that it could be affecting our country and its economic strength are difficult to measure, but it's likely they're occurring under the surface, that our credibility is being eroded," said Shai Akabas, director of economic policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center, who a decade ago worked with now-Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell in analysing a default's effects.

Different year, same people

Few countries must borrow as much as the US while simultaneously having to negotiate periodic increases in how much debt it can take on.

Not only does Congress now have to approve a borrowing limit increase to avoid a default, they also need agree to fund the government to forestall a shut-

down by the end of September - all while negotiating over two massive spending bills Democratic President Joe Biden wants enacted.

As in the standoff a decade ago, Senate Republicans are being led by McConnell. Today, he insists that raising the debt limit is the responsibility of the Democrats in power, and his party won't help them do it.

In 2011, the two parties negotiated a deal that was meant to make deep cuts into the budget deficit over the following years, but was ultimately unsuccessful.

Obama's Republican successor Donald Trump signed tax-cutting legislation that piled on to the deficit, then two massive pandemic spending measures that sent it soaring to a record in 2020 even as they likely kept the economy from a worse downturn.

AFP

Bank Muscat's Asalah banking offers unparalleled benefits

In line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to customer service excellence, Bank Muscat continues to innovate and launch new services and benefits for its Asalah Priority Banking customers. Asalah Priority Banking reflects the bank's continued commitment to remain the bank of first choice in the sultanate by providing its elite clientele with innovative and exclusive benefits and features. From lifestyle benefits, savings and financing options to elite wealth management, Asalah Priority Banking offers an unsurpassed range of benefits.

Abdulnasir al Raisi, deputy general manager - Premier Banking, said, "In line with our customer-centric vision, Bank Muscat's Asalah Priority Banking offers a large number of exclusive and innovative products and services. In line with global banking trends and customer centricity, Asalah continues to launch new services and benefits. The recently launched exclusive WhatsApp service for Asalah customers provides one more channel of communication with the bank, and helps customers quickly get answers to their various queries. Backed by an excellent customer service team, Asalah Priority Banking is working to further enhance benefits and ease of banking for its valued clientele."



Asalah Visa Signature credit cardholders can enjoy airport lounge access at more than 1,000 lounges worldwide, and a 24/7 global concierge service. The Credit Card also offers 1 per cent cashback on purchases as well as free multi-trip travel insurance for customers and their direct family members. Cardholders can also enjoy complimentary chauffeur service to and from the Muscat International Airport.

Asalah debit card offers access to 50 lounges worldwide and has a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO1,000.

Asalah Visa Signature credit cardholders can enjoy airport lounge access at more than 1,000 lounges worldwide, and a 24/7 global concierge service. The Credit Card also offers 1 per cent cashback on purchases as well as free multi-trip travel insurance for customers and their direct family members. Cardholders can also enjoy complimentary chauffeur service to and from the Muscat International Airport.

It must also be noted that a large number of high-value prizes have been reserved for Asalah customers in the Al Mazyona 2021 prize draw scheme including 10 monthly prizes of RO25,000 each and 10 End-of-Year prizes of RO50,000 each. Asalah customers maintaining RO30,000 or more in their savings accounts will also be automatically entered into the draw for two mega prizes of RO250,000 each during the upcoming End-of-Year draw.

Asalah customers also enjoy access to an integrated wealth

management platform that allows them to invest in global asset classes through a single touchpoint. They get the latest updates and reports on local and international investment opportunities and can also make use of tablet banking for banking requirements such as account opening, credit card applications, consumer and auto finance and bancassurance products.

Notably, Bank Muscat has been offering several promotions this year to extend more benefits to its exclusive clientele. These offers include discounts on annual rental fees for safe deposit lockers and a chance to earn up to RO2,000 by referring friends and family members to Asalah.

Asalah Priority Banking reflects the bank's commitment for continued leadership of Oman's banking sector. As a prolific innovator in the financial sector, the bank has won a number of international and local awards and accolades. It was listed by Forbes Middle East as one of the Top 50 Banks in the region as well as one of the Top 100 Listed Companies in the Middle East in 2021. Asalah Priority Banking has won multiple awards.

Farei appointed COO of Zubair Automotive Group

The Zubair Corporation has announced the appointment of Mohammad Yahya al Farei to the position of chief operating officer (COO) for the Zubair Automotive Group, as of October 1, 2021.

In his new role, he will supervise the group of companies under the umbrella of the Zubair Automotive Group, including General Automotive Company, represented by the Mitsubishi and Fuso brands, Dhofar Automotive Company, the official distributor for Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler, RAM, Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Mopar and International Heavy Equipment, which represents a large number of renowned brands in the world of heavy equipment and machinery such as Volvo, Bobcat and Renault Trucks.

The group of companies also comprise of Sayarti, provider of professional car care services, the Mega Body Shop, an integrated service facility for car bodies that provides a package of services including repair, painting and modification and extends its services for all models of various brands. Also included in the group is Zubair Leasing & Rental Company, which provides the best services



and innovative car rental solutions for fleets and individual customers.

Rashad al Zubair, chairman of The Zubair Corporation said, "Mohammad al Farei was chosen for this position because he is one of the notable national competencies, who has worked within The Zubair Corporation for many years. During this time, he held a number of positions across the group companies and proved his management skills and ability to encourage change.

"This was proven with the companies under his management achieving outstanding milestones at all levels. We are completely confident that Farei will leave a significant impact on the automotive sector of the

group's business, alongside implementing strategic plans to develop the business of the Zubair Automotive Group during the upcoming period."

Farei said, "The automotive sector is one of the largest commercial sectors in the sultanate, both in terms of employment and sales. The recent years have undeniably posed a great challenge to this sector as well as others, due to the decline in the economy's performance caused by general recession and decline in oil prices, both of which are key contributors to the national economy.

"The situation has also worsened with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have brought several sectors to a standstill. We hope that we have passed this stage with the new developments that are being communicated from concerned authorities. Accordingly, we hope that this sector will begin to significantly grow in the days to come. I will fully dedicate myself to preparing the Zubair Automotive Group to capitalise on this potential. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Board of Directors of The Zubair Corporation as well as the executive management."



Book chronicling Oman-India ties across sea, space launched

A special book that chronicles the deep and timeless friendship between India and Oman, *Oman-India Ties Across Sea and Space* was released on September 26. The book has been published by the Ministry of Information in collaboration with the Embassy of India, Muscat, to commemorate the 50th National Day of Oman and 75th year of India's Independence, which is being celebrated as *Amrit Mahotsav*.

The book has been written by Samuel Kutty and Dr Sandhya Rao Mehta, associate professor of Sultan Qaboos University. It highlights the shared heritage of India and Oman and explores opportunities for enhancing India-Oman bilateral relations in

various spheres.

A special event was organised at the embassy which was graced by H E Ali bin Khalfan bin Salem al Jabri, Undersecretary for Information, as chief guest. The book was released by H E Jabri, H E Munu Mahawar, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, and both the authors during the event. The event was also attended by senior officials from Government of Oman, ambassadors, diplomats, senior media professionals, other Omani and Indian dignitaries and members of Indian community.

H E Mahawar in his speech stated that, "there is so much to write on India-Oman relations, right from 5000 years old historical

linkages, to vibrant people-to-people ties, growing economic relations, close security cooperation and immense opportunities for further expansion in all these areas, that even more than 300 pages were less to do justice to each facet of our relationship."

H E Jabri stated that, "the valuable book marks the deep-rooted ties between the two friendly countries over decades of civilizational contact".

Dr Sandhya and Kutty shared their experiences and spoke about the importance of the book, as it not only highlights the historical relations, but also explores the future cooperation opportunities between India and Oman.

OIH welcomes medical students from Portugal

Oman International Hospital (OIH) has welcomed two senior medical students (MD6) and a faculty member from the University of Porto (UoP), Portugal as part of its affiliation agreement with the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Porto (FMUP) and Idealmed Global Healthcare Services (IGHS), the international operator of Oman International Hospital.

The University of Porto, founded in 1901 and the second largest university in Portugal with excellent research facilities, enables its students to visit, stay and study at OIH in an elective clinical rotation within their integrated studies cycle.

Beatriz Bernardes, one of the visiting sixth year medical students (MD6) stated that, "The OIH, I can say, is world class not only because of the modern and well-equipped installations but also due to its staff, who are always available to help and take care of people. On the other hand, Oman is simply stunning, and its people are so full of warmth."

"I thank everyone for this valuable opportunity to be visiting Oman International Hospital as part of my medical studies.

"Visiting and spending my days at Oman International Hospital, its dedicated healthcare providers and staff, as well as its facilities is a remarkable experience."



"The welcoming environment, professional medical, nursing and allied-health staff and the homely feeling will surely provide every patient with most comfortable and assuring experience. Besides, I am overwhelmed by the simplicity and hospitality of Omani people here," stated by José Paiva, another visiting student from the UoP.

"As Professor of Surgery Department at Faculty of Medicine of University of Porto and Member of the University Council of University of Porto, I can say with great satisfaction that I welcome this collaboration, which will strengthen the bonds of

friendship between the two countries. It is an honour and a huge privilege to have students from the Faculty of Medicine of University of Porto doing elective clinical rotation at OIH," Professor Dr João Araújo Teixeira, associate professor of surgery from the University of Porto and one of the most noted general surgeons in Portugal, stated.

"I have no doubt that this affiliation in the very near future will be extended to other areas of medical and academic," Dr José Alexandre Cunha, chairman of IGHS said.

"These students are the future of medicine and IGHS is glad to support them with out-

of-the-box training, knowledge and experience to shape them into better medical professionals.

"Through these affiliations, we aim to make OIH not just a hospital but an international medical destination for learning, knowledge-sharing and innovation. We look forward to signing agreements with local Universities and welcoming students."

With the OIH's affiliation aligning with University of Porto, IGHS has expanded its network of partners, which includes several companies with international presence and educational institutions such as the University of Coimbra.

Disclaimer

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) would like to announce the following amendment for the tender which was announced on 20/09/2021:

Sr. No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	49/2021	Replacement of Air-Conditioning Package Units at Raysut Grid Station - Dhofar Region.	04/10/2021	02/11/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	65.625

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م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	ثمن الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (ر.ع)
1	٢٠٢١/٤٩	إستبدال وحدات التكييف في محطة رسوت - محافظة ظفار.	٢٠٢١/١٠/٠٤	٢٠٢١/١١/٠٢	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول	٦٥.٦٢٥

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Armenia, Azerbaijan mourn war dead

Baku, Azerbaijan - Armenia and Azerbaijan on Monday mourned thousands of people killed in their brief but brutal war for control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region on the first anniversary of the conflict.

People in both countries observed a minute of silence and congregated for memorial services in churches and mosques in memory of those left dead in six weeks of fighting that erupted on September 27 last year.

The war for control of the mountainous region left some 6,500 people dead and sparked mutual allegations of war crimes. It ended in November with a Russian-brokered ceasefire that saw Armenia hand over to Baku swathes of contested territories it had controlled for decades.

"We will forever keep our martyrs in our hearts," Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said in a televised address to the nation.

"If we see that there is a new threat facing our people or state, we will crush Armenian fascism

We will forever keep our martyrs in our hearts... If we see that there is a new threat facing our people or state, we will crush Armenian fascism again

ILHAM ALIYEV

again," he said.

At noon local time, traffic halted across Azerbaijan and passersby stood for a minute of silence nationwide.

Thousands of troops marched in downtown Baku holding photos of the soldiers killed in action.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan laid a wreath at the Eralbur military cemetery in Yerevan on Monday morning, before visiting a medical centre for war veterans.

"I bow before the memory of the dead and before their fami-



This handout photo shows people taking part in a march through the streets of Baku to commemorate those left dead in six weeks of fighting for control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region on the first anniversary of the conflict on Monday (AFP)

lies,' Armenia's President Armen Sarkisian wrote on Facebook.

On Sunday evening, around 3,000 Armenians staged a torch-lit march from the centre of capital Yerevan towards a memorial cemetery to commemorate the war victims.

Ethnic Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan as the Soviet Union collapsed, and an ensuing conflict claimed around 30,000 lives.

At the time, Armenians took control of the enclave as well as seven nearby districts of Azerbaijan - some 20 per cent of the country's national territory.

The fresh war last year saw Baku recapture parts of Karabakh and all of the surrounding districts.

Moscow has deployed some 2,000 peacekeepers in the area to oversee the ceasefire.

Both countries filed applications in the International Court of Justice, accusing each other of war crimes.

AFP



Iran's atomic energy organisation chief Mohammad Eslami (left) and its Ambassador to the IAEA Kazem Gharib Abadi depart from the IAEA General Conference, in the Austria capital Vienna on September 20 (AFP)

IAEA's claim on being blocked from site not accurate: Iran

Tehran, Iran - Iran on Monday rejected a complaint by the UN nuclear watchdog that it was blocked from a nuclear site, arguing that the facility was exempt from a recent agreement.

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on Sunday it had been denied 'indispensable' access to the TESA Karaj centrifuge component manufacturing workshop near Tehran contrary to a September 12 agreement with Iran.

Iran's Ambassador to the IAEA Kazem Gharib Abadi on Monday rejected the charge on Twitter.

"During the discussions in Tehran and Vienna, Iran indicated that... equipment related to this Complex are not included for servicing," he wrote, referring to IAEA work on its surveillance equipment.

Sunday's IAEA statement 'isn't accurate and goes beyond the agreed terms', he added.

This month's agreement between the IAEA and Iran came days after the nuclear watchdog had decried a lack of cooperation from Tehran.

Agency inspectors had been allowed to service monitoring

and surveillance equipment and to replace storage media at 'all necessary locations' except the TESA Karaj workshop, the IAEA said on Sunday.

The IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi in his latest report on Iran informed member states that the Islamic republic had granted all other access from September 20-22.

The IAEA's latest report comes amid stalled negotiations to revive a 2015 landmark agreement scaling back Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

That deal started to fall apart in 2018 when the US withdrew from it and reinstated sanctions. Iran in turn again started to ramp up its nuclear activities.

Talks began in April in Vienna between Tehran and the remaining five parties to the 2015 deal aimed at bringing Washington back into the agreement.

But that dialogue has been stalled since June, when ultra-conservative Ebrahim Raisi won Iran's presidential election.

Iran's Foreign Minister said on Friday that talks would restart 'very soon', but the US has called for a clear timetable.

AFP

More than 60 killed in fierce fighting for Yemen's Marib

Dubai, UAE - Sixty-seven Yemeni rebels and pro-government troops have been killed as fighting intensifies for the key city of Marib, military and medical sources said on Monday.

A volley of air strikes from the Saudi-led coalition targeted the Iran-backed Huthi rebels, who have stepped up their assault on the government's last northern stronghold.

Hundreds of fighters have died this month after the Huthis renewed their campaign for the capital city of oil-rich Marib province.

"Fifty-eight Huthi insurgents and nine loyalists were killed in fighting and air strikes in the provinces of Marib and Shabwa in the past 24 hours," military sources told AFP, in figures that were confirmed by medical

sources.

The rebels rarely announce their casualties.

According to the military sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the Saudi-led coalition launched more than 20 airstrikes in the past 24 hours.

"It targeted Huthi vehicles, meeting points and reinforcements in Shabwa and Marib,"

they added.

The Huthis initially escalated their efforts to seize Marib in February, hoping to seize control of the region's oil resources and strengthen their position in peace talks.

Marib, about 120km east of the rebel-held capital Sanaa, sits at a crossroads between the southern and northern regions and is key to controlling

Yemen's north.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed and millions have been displaced in the war that erupted in 2014, after the Huthis seized the capital Sanaa.

About 80 per cent of Yemen's 30mn people are dependent on aid, in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

AFP

One dead in strong quake on Greek island of Crete

Athens, Greece - A strong earthquake struck the Greek island of Crete early on Monday, killing a man who was working in a church that collapsed and injuring 11 others, officials said.

The quake, measuring magnitude 5.8 according to Greece's seismological observatory, sent panicked residents rushing into the streets and damaged buildings on Greece's largest island.

It struck at 9.17am, 23km from the Crete capital of Heraklion.

"So far, one man is dead and 11 people are in hospital suffering mostly from fractures," according to a spokesman from the National Centre for Emergency Care.

Spiros Georgiou, spokesman for the civil protection agency, had earlier said nine people were



A demolished house following an earthquake, in Arkalochori village on the Crete Island, on Monday (AFP)

slightly injured in the farming town of Arkalochori which was particularly badly hit.

He said the man died in a small church that collapsed in the town.

Images on ERT public television showed old buildings that

had collapsed in Arkalochori and surrounding villages near Heraklion.

"It's an earthquake that we did not expect, for the moment there are aftershocks of 4.5 on the richter scale," said Efthymis Lekkas, the head of Greece's

quake protection agency, quoted by the ANA news agency.

The minister for civil protection Christos Stylianides was to visit the area later Monday accompanied by Lekkas and other experts, ERT said.

The Athens observatory said

the epicentre of the quake was 346km south of Athens and at a depth of 10km.

Greece is located on a number of fault lines, and is sporadically hit by earthquakes.

The last deadly quake in the country occurred on March 3 in the central town of Elassona, killing one person, injuring ten and causing major damage.

On October 30, 2020 a magnitude 7.0 quake hit in the Aegean Sea between the Greek island of Samos and the city of Izmir in western Turkey.

Most of the damage was in Turkey where 114 people were killed and more than 1,000 injured.

In Greece, two teenagers were reported dead on Samos.

AFP

Japan awaits wedding news as royal sweetheart returns

Tokyo, Japan - Japanese romantics and royal-watchers held their breath for a wedding announcement as Princess Mako's boyfriend returned to Tokyo on Monday, following years of public controversy over their marriage.

The lovebirds' reunion has sparked a media frenzy, with reporters chasing 29 year old Kei Komuro in recent days through the streets of New York, where he moved for law school.

Major TV networks carried live footage of his plane landing, with reports saying the long-delayed wedding could go ahead as soon as next month - more than three years after it was dramatically postponed.

Mako, also 29, is the eldest granddaughter of Emperor Akihito, although Japan's imperial succession rules mean she will lose her title after marriage to a commoner. The pair's union



This file photo shows Japan's Princess Mako (left) entering the Imperial Palace to attend the Korea-sai autumn ceremonies to pay respects to past emperors and members of the imperial family, in Tokyo on September 23. Her boyfriend Kei Komuro (right) on arrival at the Narita airport in Chiba Prefecture on Monday (AFP)

was delayed after a scandal erupted around reports that Komuro's family had run into financial difficulties, with his mother failing to repay a four-million-yen (US\$36,000 approx) loan from a former fiancé.

Local media said it was his

first return to Japan since he left for America in 2018 in a move seen as a bid to defuse negative attention following the tabloid reports.

As he stepped off the plane at an airport near Tokyo on Monday, Komuro was met by



camera flashes, video crews and a gaggle of eager reporters.

Dressed in a dark suit with his long hair tied back, he bowed deeply to the journalists and did not speak. He will quarantine for two weeks, as required by Japan's border restrictions.

Public broadcaster NHK said the Imperial Household Agency was planning a wedding next month and would announce it soon.

Mako is also said to be planning to move to the United States after her wedding, drawing inevitable comparisons with another controversial royal couple: Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

Earlier this month, Japanese media said the pair had decided to wed without some traditional ceremonies, rejecting a payout that usually goes to female royals marrying out of the family.

The size of the payment is unknown, though reports put it at 137mn yen or more.

Mako is sister to Prince Hisahito (15) currently the only eligible male heir to the Chrysanthemum Throne other than his father.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Sydney gets 'blueprint for freedom' as virus cases fall

Sydney, Australia - Vaccinated Sydney residents will finally emerge from a lengthy COVID-19 lockdown by mid-October, Australian officials said ON Monday, outlining a three-stage 'blueprint for freedom' as case numbers fell in the city.

Stay-at-home orders are set to be lifted in Sydney and surrounding New South Wales when the double-dose vaccination rate hits 70 per cent, with state premier Gladys Berejiklian saying 'quite confidently' that was now expected to occur on October 11.

Shuttered pubs, restaurants and shops will be allowed to reopen to the vaccinated while friends and families living across Australia's biggest city will be able to reunite for the first time in more than three months.

"It is just this week and next week that we have to hang in there for," Berejiklian said. "We are nearly, nearly there, and let's not give up at the last minute."

Deputy premier John Barilaro said the 'blueprint for freedom' would allow travel across New South Wales under its second stage - once 80 per cent of over-16s are fully vaccinated - which is likely by the end of October.

Restrictions on guest numbers at funerals and weddings



This file photo shows mounted police patrolling near the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union headquarters during a demonstration call by them against virus restrictions, in Sydney on September 21 (AFP)

would be lifted at the same time, while sporting fixtures would also be permitted to resume.

However, unvaccinated adults will need to wait until at least December 1 to enjoy the same eased restrictions under the road map's third stage, when it is predicted that around 90 per cent of the eligible population will be vaccinated, officials said.

"I think today is a very disappointing day for those who aren't vaccinated. They will have to

wait five or six weeks after others (for freedoms)," Berejiklian said.

'Through the roof'

The announcement came as new daily cases dipped below 800 in New South Wales on Monday - down from peaks of around 1,500 earlier in September - and the number of adults with at least one vaccine dose reached 85 per cent.

Berejiklian warned that hospitals still faced being over-

whelmed by a surge in COVID-19 patients in the coming weeks.

"We know that once we start reopening at 70 per cent (fully vaccinated) that the case numbers will go through the roof," she said.

"But what will protect us is the fact that so many people have received at least the first dose of the vaccine and those people will have that extra layer of protection against ending up in hospital or worse."

Australia has been grappling with a winter spike in the highly contagious Delta coronavirus variant that forced its two biggest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, into months-long lockdowns.

But a once-sluggish vaccine rollout has picked up pace across the country, prompting leaders to outline cautious reopening plans including the mooted resumption of international travel by the end of this year.

Authorities also announced Monday that stay-at-home orders will be lifted in Canberra on October 15 with bars, beauty salons and gyms among the businesses set to reopen.

About 400,000 people in the nation's capital have been under lockdown since mid-August as officials struggled to quash a small but sustained virus outbreak.

Australian Capital Territory chief minister Andrew Barr said the easing of restrictions was possible due to 'nation-leading vaccination levels', coming as 'welcome relief' to Canberra residents.

Overall, Australia has recorded more than 98,000 cases of COVID-19 and over 1,200 related deaths so far.

AFP

Global death toll crosses 4.74mn

Paris, France - The novel coronavirus has killed at least 4,744,890 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1000 GMT on Monday.

At least 231,740,830 cases of coronavirus have been registered.

The vast majority have recovered, though some have continued to experience symptoms weeks or even months later.

The figures are based on daily reports provided by health authorities in each country.

They exclude revisions made by other statistical organisations, which show that the number of deaths is much higher.

The World Health Organization estimates that the pandemic's overall toll could be two to three times higher than official records, due to the excess mortality that is directly and indirectly linked to COVID-19.

A large number of the less severe or asymptomatic cases also remain undetected, despite intensified testing in many countries.

On Sunday, 4,602 new deaths and 325,362 new cases were recorded worldwide.

Based on latest reports, the countries with the most new deaths were Russia with 779

new deaths, followed by United States with 289 and Iran with 288.

The United States is the worst-affected country with 688,033 deaths from 42,931,410 cases. After the US, the hardest-hit countries are Brazil with 594,443 deaths from 21,351,972 cases, India with 447,194 deaths from 33,678,786 cases, Mexico with 275,450 deaths from 3,632,800 cases, and Russia with 204,679 deaths from 7,443,149 cases.

The country with the highest number of deaths compared to its population is Peru with 604 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Bosnia-Herzegovina with 318, the Republic of North Macedonia with 317, Hungary with 312, Montenegro with 302, and Bulgaria with 294.

Latin America and the Caribbean overall has 1,483,741 deaths from 44,756,793 cases, Europe 1,302,904 deaths from 67,169,675 infections, and Asia 834,398 deaths from 53,594,389 cases. The US and Canada has reported 715,678 deaths from 44,532,817 cases, Africa 208,797 deaths from 8,243,424 cases, the Middle East 197,310 deaths from 13,274,036 cases, and Oceania 2,062 deaths from 169,704 cases.

AFP

Thailand to cut quarantine for vaccinated tourists

Bangkok, Thailand - Thailand is to cut the quarantine for vaccinated travellers to seven days starting in October, officials said on Monday, as it seeks to revive its battered tourism industry.

Pre-pandemic Thailand attracted nearly 40mn visitors a year, but COVID-19 travel restrictions have hammered the sector, contributing to the economy's worst performance in more than 20 years.

The kingdom is pushing to reopen despite still being in the

grips of a deadly third wave of infections, driven by the Delta variant.

Authorities said that starting on Friday, the quarantine period for fully jabbed visitors will be seven days, halved from the current 14-day period - provided they have a vaccination certificate.

Visitors without certification will have to quarantine for ten days if they enter by plane and 14 days if they come over land.

All will require at least two

negative COVID-19 tests.

Government deputy spokeswoman Rachada Dhanadirek waved off concerns about unvaccinated travellers entering the kingdom. "I think these measures are effective enough to screen whether if they are infected," she said.

The relaxation also applies to Thailand's so-called 'sandbox' scheme in Phuket, its most popular beach island, which was launched in July as a first step towards restarting tourism.

The scheme allowed vaccinated tourists to enter without having to undergo a strict hotel quarantine, and after 14 days spent on the island - as well as three negative COVID-19 tests - to travel elsewhere in Thailand.

From Friday, this 14-day restriction will also be cut to seven days. Authorities plan to reopen five other tourist destinations, including Bangkok, using the sandbox model on November 1, followed by 20 more in December.

One cloud hanging over Thailand's plans is the travel advice of other countries discouraging would-be tourists from visiting.

Britain and the US have issued travel advisories against Thailand due to its rising case numbers and low vaccination rates. The kingdom is still recording more than 10,000 new infections a day, bringing its cumulative total on Monday to more than 1.57mn and its death toll to 16,300.

AFP



A medical staff member waits to conduct swab tests, as tourists throng the mountainous island of Phuket on Sunday (AFP)

Russia wants continuity in ties with Germany: Kremlin

Moscow, Russia - The Kremlin said on Monday it hoped for 'continuity' in Moscow's ties with Berlin, as Germany was bracing for a period of political uncertainty following a general election.

"Of course, we are counting on continuity in our bilateral relations," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, adding that Moscow was following the vote with 'great attention'.

"As far as we understand, the process of creating a coalition will be lengthy and complicated," Peskov added, noting that Moscow would monitor the progress.

He added that while there are disagreements between Moscow and Berlin, "we are united by an understanding that problems can and should be solved only through dialogue".

Germany was facing uncertainty after the Social Democrats narrowly won the vote but faced a rival claim to power from outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative camp.

The coming weeks and months promise to be a rocky ride as both Finance Minister Olaf Scholz's SPD and the conservatives led by Armin Laschet scramble for coalition partners.



Germany's conservative CDU party leader Armin Laschet is scrambling for coalition partners after the recent loss in elections (AFP)

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who speaks German, has maintained a working relationship with Merkel, a Russian speaker, throughout her 16 years in office. But they have sparred over issues like the Syrian war, the annexation of Crimea and the poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny who was treated in Germany.

Russia and Germany remain important trading partners despite Western sanctions and tensions since the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine and Moscow's takeover of Crimea in 2014.

Moscow and Berlin have worked together to complete the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in the face of objections from Ger-

many's eastern EU and NATO allies like Poland, the Baltic states and the US, which say it gives Moscow too much control over Europe's energy supply.

The pipeline will also divert supplies from an existing route through Ukraine and Kiev fears it will lose much-needed transit fees.

Scholz told reporters on Monday that Moscow had promised that the pipeline will not serve as an energy weapon.

Moscow guaranteed, he said, that 'Ukraine will remain a transit country and that we will ensure that gas supplies to certain countries in Eastern Europe are not threatened by Russia'.

AFP

India exam cheats with Bluetooth flip-flops

New Delhi, India - Ten people have been arrested in India for planning to cheat in fiercely competitive teaching exams using Bluetooth devices concealed in their flip-flops, police said.

Cribbing has long been a problem in India and, for Sunday's government exams involving 1.6mn students in Rajasthan state, police had permission to snap mobile Internet access while the tests lasted.

But one group planned to get around this with devices hidden in the soles of their flip-flops that could receive ordinary calls which would be transmitted wirelessly to tiny receivers hidden in their ears.

The plan was for accomplices outside to call the hidden contraptions and dictate the correct answers to the exams, said Priti Chandra, a police official in the western city of Bikaner.

But the group of would-be teachers were arrested acting suspiciously outside the examination hall on the evening before the exams and the devices in their footwear were discovered.

"We were aware of the possibility of cheating but we thought it would be a question paper leak or someone would use the internet, which is why it was restricted in many cities," Chandra told AFP.



This combination of photos shows a flip-flop with concealed bluetooth device, confiscated on the eve of an examination for teachers' recruitment, in Ajmer - in the western Indian state of Rajasthan - on Sunday (AFP)

"But this was a totally new modus operandi. (They) are getting so tech savvy."

Investigations revealed that at least 25 students had bought these flip-flops from a gang for ₹600,000 (US\$8,100 approx) per pair.

The information was shared with several other districts in time for the exams and many

centres asked the students to remove their footwear outside the examination hall.

"In one case we caught a student after the exam and had to take him to a doctor to identify and remove the Bluetooth device from his ear," Chandra said.

Cheating is rife in India's highly competitive government, university and even school ex-

aminations and authorities have struggled with ever-more sophisticated methods to help people pass.

These include professionals who earn a living impersonating others and taking exams in their place, to gangs stealing or illegally procuring exam papers and then selling them.

AFP

UN meet ends without Taliban, Myanmar

United Nations - The UN General Assembly in New York ends on Monday but without speeches by those in power in Afghanistan and Myanmar, one of many quirks at this year's diplomatic marathon that saw 100 leaders defy coronavirus fears to meet in person.

The UN representative of Afghanistan's former regime was expected to defy the Taliban with an address on Monday after the group requested its new foreign minister be allowed to speak instead.

The Taliban wrote a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last Monday requesting that Amir Khan Muttaqi be allowed to 'participate'.

The letter noted that Ghulam Isaczai, Afghanistan's UN envoy under Ashraf Ghani, who was ousted last month, 'no longer represents' Afghanistan at the United Nations.

The plea was due to be considered by a committee that included the United States, Russia and China, but a UN official said the meeting didn't take place.

A diplomat said the Taliban sent their request 'too late', paving the way for Isaczai, whom the UN still recognises as Afghanistan's representative, to speak.

If he does take the opportunity, he could demand a strengthening of sanctions against the Taliban, as he did during a Security Council meeting on September 9.

The week of speeches was originally due to end with Afghanistan, Myanmar and Guinea, but the situation of the latter two countries also stirred



Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov addresses the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters on Saturday (AFP)

up further intrigue going into the last day.

A high-level UN diplomat said that 'an agreement' had been reached between the United States, Russia and China preventing Myanmar's UN ambassador - an outspoken supporter of the democracy movement who has refused junta orders to quit - from speaking.

'Low profile'

Kyaw Moe Tun, chosen by former leader Aung San Suu Kyi, is

supported by the international community and has retained his seat at the United Nations following the February 1 military coup.

In May, the junta appointed a former general to replace him, but the United Nations has not yet approved the appointment.

Kyaw Moe Tun was the victim of a recent alleged conspiracy foiled by US investigators that plotted to either force him to resign or kill him if he refused. He told AFP his plans for the General

Assembly were 'low profile'.

Diplomats are, however, expecting to hear from Guinea's representative to the UN, Aly Diane, even though he is an appointee of the former president who was deposed in a military coup earlier this month.

It is another curiosity at this year's high-level meet, which saw some 100 leaders descend on the UN headquarters after last year's event was mostly virtual.

"How encouraging to see the General Assembly meet again in person," Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said Friday.

"Don't we all aspire to 'get back to normal'?" he asked.

General Assembly President Abdulla Shahid agreed in an interview with AFP.

"It is clear that diplomacy greatly benefits from the creativity, exchange of ideas, discussions and flexibility that comes with in person meetings," he said.

Many leaders chose to send video messages instead, however.

Submarine spat

French President Emmanuel Macron initially said he would attend, before opting to send a video message that was to be played the day after US President Joe Biden spoke.

But now, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian will speak Monday for France, whose presence all week was overshadowed by a spat with the United States over a mega submarine deal with Australia.

The address will be delivered

via a pre-recorded video message, despite Le Drian being at the UN for five days this week.

"It is rare for one of the five permanent members of the Security Council to intervene on the last day. I've never seen it," said a European diplomat.

But despite the tensions and concern over growing lack of mutual trust among the international community, Shahid said this year's General Assembly led him 'to the conclusion that we all share the same concerns and wish the same outcome'.

Washington, fearing the event would be a hotbed for the coronavirus, had tried to dissuade leaders from travelling to New York, where a vaccine mandate is in place.

Strict rules over masks and social distancing were imposed, with only seven people per delegation allowed. However, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was flanked by 20 people when he walked the corridors of the UN.

Ultimately, only four positive cases were reported, all in the delegation of Brazil, whose president Jair Bolsonaro is a vaccine sceptic, although his wife did receive a shot while in the Big Apple.

The restrictions meant that on the first day of the debate, only 1,929 people passed through the security gates at the UN, compared to 26,000 in 2019, according to the world body.

In all, by the end, more than 200 speeches will have been delivered, many focusing on international collaboration on climate change and COVID-19.

AFP

ICC chief prosecutor to focus on Taliban, IS-K in Afghan probe

The Hague, Netherlands - The International Criminal Court's new chief prosecutor said on Monday he wants to focus his investigation in Afghanistan on the Taliban and Islamic State-Khorasan, and to 'deprioritise' alleged war crimes by US forces.

Karim Khan said he had asked judges to allow him to relaunch the probe - put on hold last year at the request of Kabul's then-government while it said it would investigate war crimes itself - following the Taliban takeover in August.

'Recent developments in Afghanistan and the change in the national authorities, represent a significant change of circumstances,' Khan, who took over as prosecutor in June at the Hague-based court, said in a statement.

'After reviewing matters carefully, I have reached the conclusion that, at this time, there is no longer the prospect of genuine and effective domestic investigations,' he stated.

Khan asked judges for 'expedited' permission to resume the probe.

The Afghanistan probe's inclusion of alleged US crimes had infuriated Washington.

The administration of former US president Donald Trump imposed sanctions on Khan's predecessor Fatou Bensouda over the issue.

Khan said that he would now narrow his focus in Afghanistan due to the 'limited resources' of the ICC as it investigates various situations around the world.

'I have therefore decided to focus my office's investigations in Afghanistan on crimes allegedly committed by the Taliban and the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-K)



This file photo shows ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad (AFP)

and to deprioritise other aspects of this investigation,' he said.

This was because of the 'gravity, scale and continuing nature of alleged crimes by the Taliban and the Islamic State' and the need to 'construct credible cases capable of being proved beyond reasonable doubt in the courtroom', Khan said.

The ICC prosecutor specifically mentioned the deadly August 26 attack on Kabul airport claimed by IS-K in which 13 US service members and more than 100 Afghan civilians were killed.

'In relation to those aspects of the investigation that have not been prioritised, my office will remain alive to its evidence preservation responsibilities, to the extent they arise,' the ICC chief prosecutor said.

The ICC was set up in 2002 to investigate the world's worst crimes in cases where member states were either unable or unwilling to investigate them themselves.

Former prosecutor Bensouda asked ICC judges to approve a formal investigation into Afghanistan in 2017. Appeals judges ruled in March 2020 that it could go ahead.

AFP

Australian PM says may not join global climate summit

Sydney, Australia - Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, under pressure to adopt a 2050 net-zero carbon emissions target, said in an interview published on Monday that he may not join this year's landmark UN climate summit in Glasgow.

The world's biggest coal exporter by value, and still reliant on fossil fuels for most of its electricity, Australia has not made a firm commitment on its own greenhouse gas reductions.

Morrison has vowed to mine and export fossil fuels as long as there are buyers. Asked about attending the global climate crisis conference in November, Morrison told the *West Australian* newspaper: 'We have not made any final decisions'.



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison during his meeting with US Vice President Kamala Harris and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, in Washington, DC, on Friday (AFP)

'I mean it is another trip overseas and I have been on several this year and spent a lot of time in quarantine,' he was quoted as saying.

'I have to focus on things here and with COVID-19. Australia will be opening up around that time. There will be a lot of issues to manage and I have to manage

those competing demands.'

The 12-day meeting in Scotland, the biggest climate conference since landmark talks in Paris in 2015, is seen as a crucial step in setting worldwide emissions targets to slow global warming.

Foreign Minister Marise Payne said Australia would be 'strongly represented' at a senior level, even if Morrison did not attend the summit.

Morrison's government has suggested it will achieve net-zero carbon emissions 'as soon as possible', and preferably by 2050, but has not made any commitments to do so.

The Australian Prime Minister told the newspaper he was trying to bring the government and the

country together on commitments, to provide certainty for the next 20-30 years.

He has been in tough negotiations over setting a net-zero target within the conservative coalition government, an alliance of his own Liberal Party and the Nationals, who have much of their support base in rural and mining communities.

Climate scientists warn extreme weather and fierce fires will become increasingly common due to manmade global warming. Environmentalists argue inaction on climate change could cost Australia's economy billions of dollars as the country suffers more intense bushfires, storms and floods.

AFP

'Wall of shame' built to block crack users slammed

Paris, France - A wall erected to keep crack users from entering a Paris suburb has drawn outrage, forcing the government to promise new responses to a long-running drugs scourge.

The conflict could loom large in France's coming presidential race, where Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo is playing up her record of managing the capital in a bid to unseat Emmanuel Macron.

Authorities bricked up a tunnel under the Paris ring road leading to the northeastern suburb of Pantin over the weekend after clearing dozens of crack smokers from a park in the area.

Several residents of Pantin and the neighbouring suburb of Aubervilliers slammed the so-called 'wall of shame'. They demanded that the government find a permanent solution to Paris' decades-old drugs problem to prevent it spilling over into low-income suburbs.

Pantin mayor Bertrand Kern



A wall made by French authorities to block the access to a tunnel leading to the popular suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis due to crack addicts, in the northeast of Paris on Monday (AFP)

called the government's decision 'shameful and irresponsible' and asked for an emergency meeting with Prime Minister Jean Castex.

"It's by nature a temporary solution for an emergency situation, and does not satisfy anyone," Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti admitted to RTL radio on Monday.

He said the government was working 'very seriously' on how to deal with the insecurity caused by crack addicts in Paris, a problem that reached a tipping

point earlier this year when disgruntled residents began shooting powerful fireworks at users or pelting them with eggs.

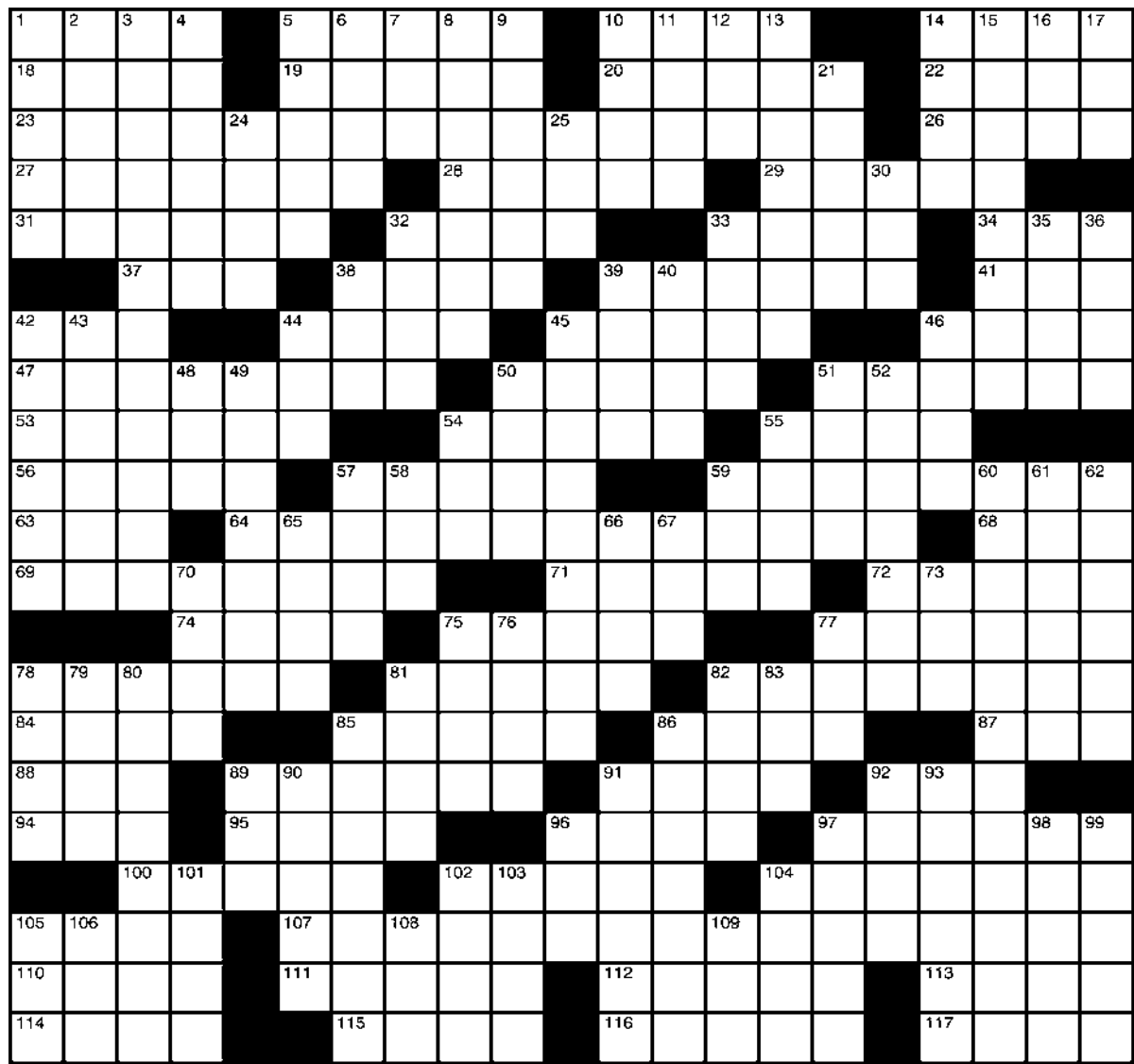
In a letter to Hidalgo seen by AFP, Paris police chief Didier Lallement said that addicts had been expelled from a park on Friday because their presence 'near several schools' had become 'untenable'. He added that the wall was a 'necessary protection for the residents of Pantin', which is part of the Seine-Saint-Denis department, one of the poorest in France.

Lallement and Hidalgo have crossed swords repeatedly over the Socialist mayor's request for more supervised drug use sites, a proposition rejected by many on the right.

So far just one is open in the capital, and Hidalgo was forced to abandon plans for a new one in eastern Paris this month after an uproar from residents.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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- ACROSS**

1 Minn. neighbor
5 Lock like
Mélisande's
10 Buddy
14 Border upon
18 No part
19 Do a double take, e.g.
20 Famous fabulist
22 Astronauts' org.
23 ___ none
26 Nicholas or Alexander
27 Basketball term
28 Stove parts
29 Garb
31 Bent
32 Did a farm job
33 Certain kinfolk: abbr.
34 Floe material
37 Turkish title
38 "Laughing Cavalier" painter
39 Cathedral city on the Somme
41 Neither partner
42 Bond or Smiley
44 Piano parts?
45 Trademark
46 "Place your ___"
47 Short-tailed rodents
50 Narrow cuts
51 African fly
- 53 Winged
54 Inclined up
55 Plant's home
56 Yard tools
57 Wading bird
59 Flowed
63 Nice summer
64 ___ seven ___
68 Number in Nantes
69 Vows anew
71 Composer
Johanna ___
72 Old Thai coin
74 Heraldic border
75 Brit chip
77 Iranian language
78 Journalism's W, R. ___
81 Upright
82 "I crave ___ of tears. . .": Robert Frost
84 Peak
85 Minotaur's isle
86 Bog contents
87 Deputy Chief of Staff
88 "___ Sea Around Us"
89 Axis foe
91 Dracula's Stoker
92 Mil. officer
94 Heir, frequently
95 Unauthorized disclosure
96 Mine vehicle
97 Detour
- 100 Map source
102 Fancy's opposite
104 Competent
105 River to the North Sea
107 "84 ___": 1987 film
110 List of names
111 Macho type
112 Muscular organ
113 Chanted
114 First victim?
115 Ditto
116 Pecan or walnut drupe
117 Major ending

DOWN

1 Gridlock, e.g.
2 Gift recipient
3 "___ three"
4 Organic compound
5 General course
6 Tear
7 Sup
8 Harrow and Winchester
9 Allen and McQueen
10 City in Normandy
11 Cleaves
12 Take advantage of
13 Arthurian villain
14 Hill builders
15 Crib's cousin
16 "Born in the ___"
17 Road surface
- mixture
21 Juan, Eva, or Isabel
24 Long of Louisiana
25 Leftist hue
30 Road curve
32 Beldams
33 Storage receptacles
35 Camp beds
36 Gaelic
38 His relative
39 Seed covering
40 Mr. Dillon
42 Divider
43 Gourmet's pride
44 Directed
45 Three ___
46 Composer Bartók
48 Jeanne d'Arc, e.g.
49 Perfume-counter items
50 Greek colonnade
51 Ripped
52 Snoozes in Seville
54 Exist: pl.
55 Recipe direction
57 Now's partner
58 Asner and McMahon
59 Opp. of NNW
60 ___ Nothing
61 Related on the mother's side
62 Actor Alain
65 Sentry's order
66 For fear that
- 67 Canine cry
70 Fatigued
73 Suffix for motor or lobby
75 Manitoba native American
76 Prepares flax
77 Fala or Checkers
78 Chapeaux
79 Nymph who loved Narcissus
80 Tractable
81 Composer Satie
82 Oilers, e.g.
83 Overactor
85 Conflicts
86 One of Santa's eight
89 "This above ___"
90 Percolate
91 Shining
92 Old World vulture
93 Not dense
96 Sunbather's object
97 "Enough!" in Rome
98 Bias
99 Solid-stemmed grasslike plant
101 Renowned archer
102 Nanny's charge
103 Trade or occupation
104 Bulb's cousin
105 NOW concern
106 McEnroe weapon
108 "I ___ Camera"
109 Bit of sun

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

-  **ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Reliability is a virtue, especially when it comes to finances. In fact, it's quite virtuous of you to take a look at any consistently unhealthy ways you deal with money. It's even more educational for you (and your checkbook) if you start to plan how to deal with your money on a consistently functional basis, rather than the same patterns that have recently come into question.
-  **LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Someone could be taken aback by your brutal honesty when you change your mind about plans they thought were set in stone. You're done with following other people's agendas just because it's polite, and you're ready to try new goals. Trust your instincts and use your emotional momentum to break out of old habits, whether emotional, professional or personal.
-  **SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your mental energy gets a giant helping of earthy influences, which help bring you a deep sense of calm. It's fortunate, too, because you're just about to tackle some big tasks that require the best of your intellect. The only way to stay focused on these tasks is to retain a sense of connection. Remember that as you set about reaching your goal.
-  **TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

You and someone close may get so giddy in each other's company that your heads seem to have settled in the clouds for now, but your feet should be firmly planted on the ground. This helps take care of all the irritating details, so you can both revel in each other's company without even a bit of guilt. Altogether, you're a fantastic combination.
-  **VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Look for a new way to reduce the number of duties in your life and make space for the things that you really want to do. Once you give yourself the space to examine recent events in your life, you might find yourself dictating the outcome of the next few events, instead of feeling that you're at the mercy of fate. Learn to be focused and perform actions mindfully.
-  **CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Supremely capable and hard-working people like you aren't always the best at expressing feelings, but that all changes for you today. You've got a lot of emotions that you need to get off your chest, and you're determined to express them to those who are closest to you. Not only are they pleased to hear you let it all out, but they reciprocate in ways that will please you.
-  **GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

Truth is certainly stranger than fiction, though it's usually not as stylish! It's your job now to sift out the facts from the tall tales. It's important to consider your sources. Since you're able to see both sides of most issues, you're better able than most to spot a cherished truth that's actually just an embellished opinion. This should definitely come in handy as you go about your day!
-  **LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're usually able to keep up with your crazy pace, but sometimes it feels as if everything is moving faster, louder and more frantically for no good reason. You're smart enough to know when you need to replenish body and soul. Now is the time to take a break and do something indulgent that pampers you. It could be as simple as a good book or a trip to the beach.
-  **AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You are the best at coming up with far-reaching ideas or being a visionary in your chosen field, but you might not be quite as flexible when it's time to implement those ideas -- or listen to other people's opinions. Try doing some simple yoga or even deep breathing -- whatever it takes to help you find a way to stay limber so the rest of you can keep up with your clever brain.
-  **CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

It's a good moment to keep your social life low-key -- instead of fighting your way through crowds, just gather a few close friends who really understand you (and spend your time near water, if possible). Your emotional nature might take you a step further and opt for solitude. This would be a good time to commune with your spirit and ask the big questions.
-  **SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Even if their demands are unreasonable or they're being weirdly fussy, face up to your people bravely. Use your natural speed and clever brain to engage them instead of simply dismissing their concerns. You're more than capable of giving generously (of time and energy), so make sure you take care of that, no matter how trying this person is to your patience.
-  **PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Break out the palette, pen, knitting needles or whatever you use to please your muse. Your energy emphasises art and creation. That could mean exploring a museum you've never been to, or maybe looking through your old sketchbooks from that long-ago life-drawing class. It should provide plenty of inspiration to pick up your tools and make something that pleases you.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. In which year was the 'All India Radio' set up?

- a. 1936
b. 1927
c. 1947
d. 1950

2. Who directed the film Sardar?

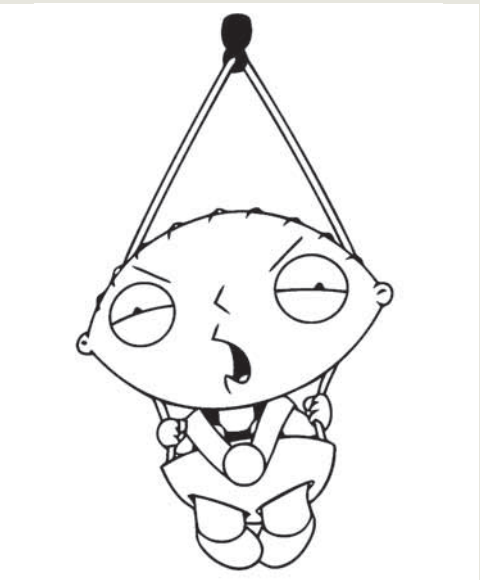
- a. Das Gupta
b. Shyam Benegal
c. Tapan Sinha
d. Ketan Mehtai

3. Who said "God helps those who help themselves"?

- a. Andre Maurois
b. Andre Gide
c. Algernon Sidney
d. Swami Vivekananda

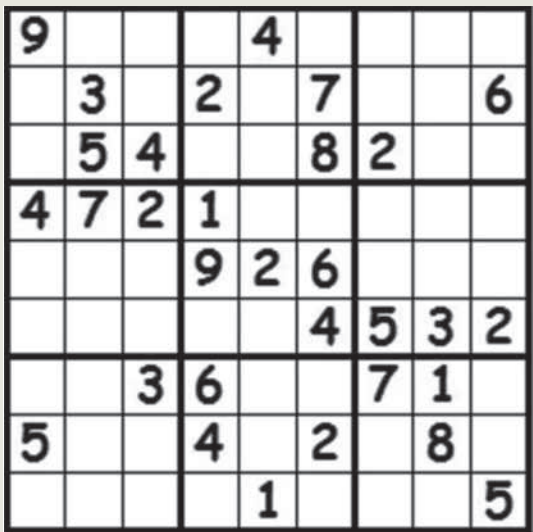
Answers: 1. a, 2. d, 3. c

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



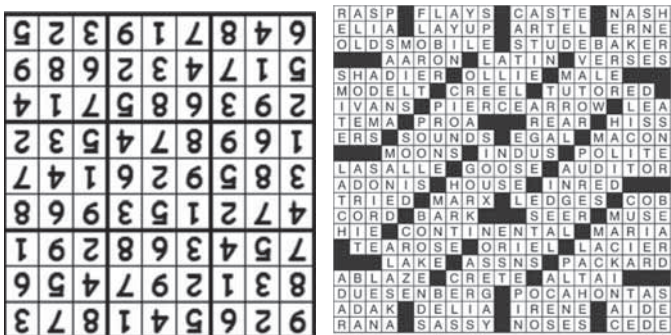
BOGGLER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (SEPTEMBER 27)

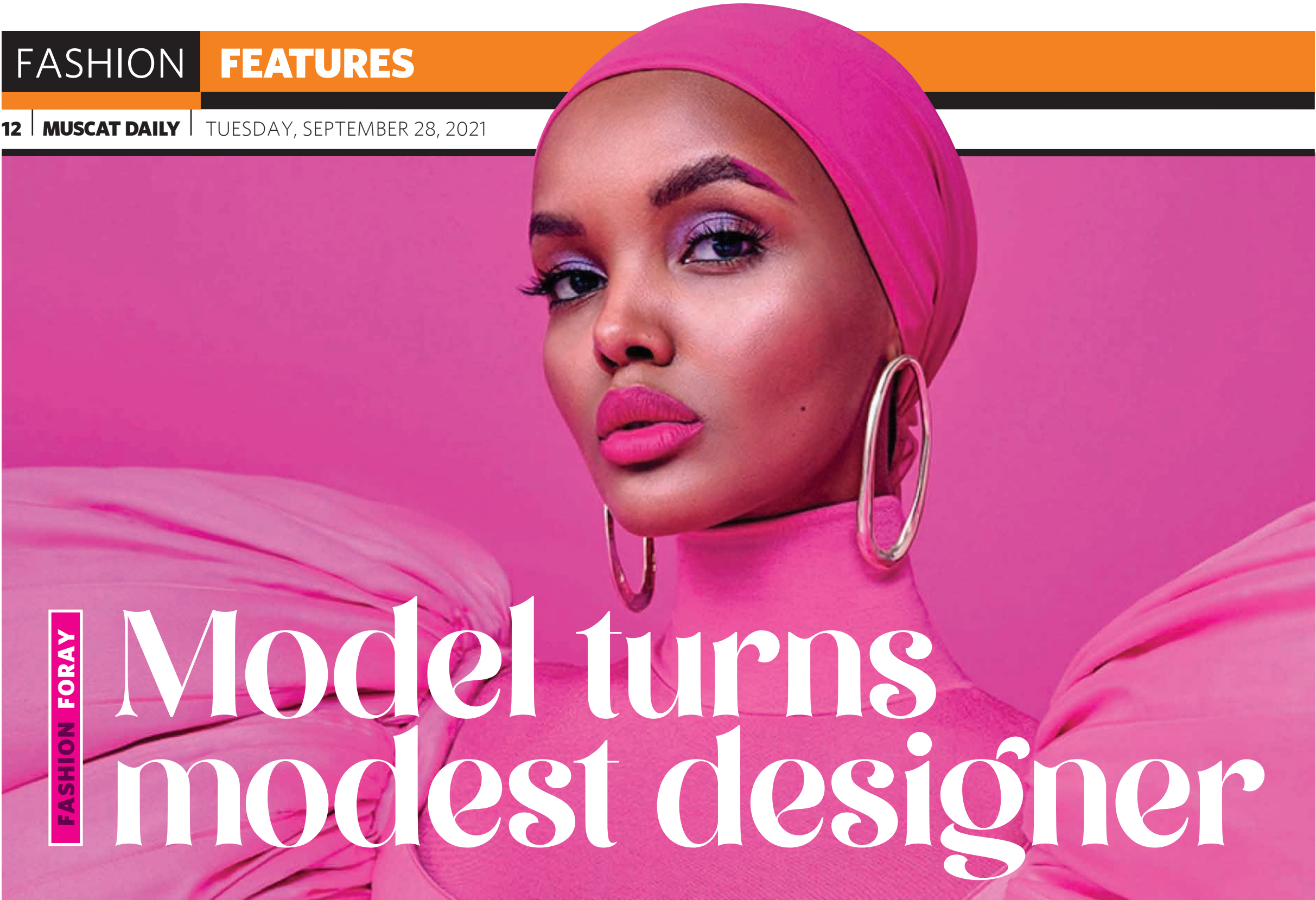


WORD BUILDER

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

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





FASHION FORAY

Model turns modest designer

Supermodel Halima Aden turns to a new career as a modest fashion designer to send out a strong message to an industry where ‘there is no basic human respect’



Halima Aden, the first supermodel to wear a hijab and pose in a burkini, has ripped up her lucrative contracts in an industry she feels lacks ‘basic human respect’ and entered the world of modest fashion design instead.

For the Somali-American who was born in a refugee camp in Kenya, it was a matter of preserving her self-worth and well-being in a fast and loose sector that increasingly clashed with her Muslim values.

“Since I was a little girl, this quote - ‘don’t change yourself, change the game’ - has gotten me through so much in life,” she told AFP in an interview in Istanbul. “When I took the decision to quit, that is exactly what I did,” she said. “So I am very, very proud.”

Aden’s departure last November delivered a shock to fashionistas and Muslim influencers who have admired her trailblazing career. She broke ground in Minnesota, where she became the first contestant to wear a hijab and a burkini (a full-body swimsuit whose appearance has stirred controversy on some European beaches) in a US state beauty pageant in 2016.

She posed in them again for Sports Illustrated’s annual swimsuit issue when her fame began spreading in 2019. But personally, Aden felt increasingly boxed in, sometimes, literally.

“I was always given a box, a private place to change in, but many times I was the only one given the privacy,” she said. “I got to see my fellow young women having to undress and change in public, in front of media personalities, cooks and staff, designers and assistants,” she recalled.

“To me, it was very jar-

ring,” she said. “I couldn’t be in an industry where there is no basic human respect.”

Change of focus

Aden sounded liberated when she announced her decision to abandon photo shoots and catwalks last year. She is becoming a designer instead.

“Wow this is actually the most relief I felt since I started in 2016. Keeping that in was literal poison!” she said on Instagram.

She felt her traditions, starkly different from those of most other supermodels, were caricatured and turned into a gimmick by some brands.

One, American Eagle, replaced a headscarf with a pair of jeans on her head in a 2017 campaign.

“But... this isn’t even my style?” she protested on Instagram at the time.

“I got to a place where I couldn’t recognise my hijab the way I would traditionally wear it,” Aden told AFP.

Aden looked far more at ease in Istanbul, sur-

rounded by Middle Eastern fashionistas while attending an event organised by Modanisa, her new home.

She will be designing collections exclusively for the Turkish online brand, which is one of the biggest names in the modest fashion industry, valued at US\$277bn in 2019.

It already makes up more than a tenth of the \$2.2tn global fashion industry, with plenty of room to grow, according to Dinar-Standard, an advisory firm specialising in emerging Muslim markets.

Taste of the world in Istanbul

World capitals as diverse as Moscow, Riyadh and London have staged modest fashion shows in the past few years. The trend is particularly strong in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, where Aden rejoices at the melee of cultures on the streets.

“What I love the most about Turkey, especially Istanbul, is that it is very diverse, you see women who don’t wear the hijab right alongside women who wear the hijab,” she said. “You get a taste of the world in Istanbul.”

The industry has taken off in the past decade, thanks in part to the modelling careers of women such as Aden.

Soft-spoken but smiley, Aden sounds confident in modest fashion’s ability to withstand crises like the coronavirus pandemic and changing fads.

“It is the oldest fashion staple, it’s been around for hundreds of years, it will continue to be around for hundreds of years,” she said.

Islam and fashion are 100 per cent compatible because there’s nothing that says you can’t be fashionable, she asserts.

Luxury brands such as DKNY and Dolce & Gabbana have already picked up on the trend, creating collections catered to modest women.

But Aden hit out at “a lot of tokenism, especially in the fashion industry, where they want our money but they don’t want to support us in the issues that we are faced with.”

“I think fashion needs to do a greater job,” she said. “You are representing your clients who are Muslims, it is important to speak up when they are faced with injustices.”

AFP

Al Faisal, Soucek shine in rain to take second spot



Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair drives his Porsche 911 GT3 R car during the second race of the 2021 International GT Open Series in Monza, Italy, on Sunday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

2021 INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN SERIES: ROUND SIX

A spectacular fightback in wet and difficult conditions saw Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair and Spain's Andy Soucek claim runner-up spot in the second race of the penultimate round of the 2021 International GT Open Series at Monza in Italy on Sunday.

The Lechner Racing Porsche 911 GT3 R crew started out on slicks and opted to pit straight away for wet tyres and the strategy paid off with another important haul of championship points and a podium finish.

Chilean driver Benjamin Hites and Italian teammate Fabrizio Crestani secured victory by 8.372 seconds in the Rinaldi Racing Ferrari 488. Michele Beretta and Frederick Schandorff rounded off the podium places in their Vincenzo Sospiri Racing Lamborghini behind Al Faisal and Soucek. Beretta and Schandorff remain firm favourites to clinch the championship title with just one round in Barcelona next month remaining.

Al Faisal had qualified P9 for the second race and to rally to post a second-place was a 'thrilling feeling'.

Speaking after the podium celebrations on Sunday, Al Faisal said, "This weekend was good, especially the second race, where we started P9 after the rain in qualifying."

"P9 really put us on the back foot but we knew we had a strong car and if the rain came down it would favour us. Coming out on the formation lap on slicks seemed like the right call. But,



Al Faisal al Zubair (L) and Andy Soucek celebrate on the podium

just before the race started, we pitted for wet tyres. This was the best call and, ultimately, we did very good to climb from P9 to P2.

"We are very happy with this. We did not expect a P2 after starting so far back. The team did an amazing job when we came into the pits. We jumped three cars in the pit itself due to the team's pit stop, which was great. I am now looking forward to the final race in Barcelona."

The Lechner Racing Porsche lined up in ninth spot for the second race with pole position going to the Inception Racing McLaren of Joe Osborne and Nick Moss. Jacopo Guidetti qualified the Reno Racing Honda NSX in second place.

Damp conditions and light drizzle was present at the start

and Al Faisal and Guidetti pitted from the rolling start to put wet weather tyres on their cars.

After the pit stop, Al Faisal rejoined in 18th spot and climbed back to 13th heading into lap three. The Oman driver's early pit stop decision proved to be a good one as he moved to P8.

With rain intensifying, Al Faisal moved up to fifth on lap six. Both Schandorff and Al Faisal overtook the leading Cup cars and moved into second and third positions with 44 minutes of the race remaining.

Pro class cars held the top-six positions heading towards the halfway point, with Crestani leading Schandorff by 6.922s and Al Faisal locked in a tussle with Giacomo Altoe for third.

Both Al Faisal and Schandorff

pitted for driver changes and Soucek and Beretta took over for the remaining 34 minutes of the race from 14th and 15th places respectively.

Soucek and Beretta settled into third and fourth behind Hites and Federico Leo with 24 minutes of the race to run in difficult track conditions. Soucek managed to overtake Leo on lap 17 to snatch second and began to hunt down Hites.

The gap was 23.404s when a safety car came out under the yellow flag to allow for debris and a stricken Lamborghini to be removed from the circuit. Racing resumed under a green flag with 12 minutes left of the race and Soucek, Leo and Beretta tightly closed in behind leader Hites.

The rain had stopped but there was still a lot of standing water, as the leading quartet held station. Hites led Soucek by 5.806s after 22 laps with nine minutes of the race to run.

But the chasing trio was not able to hunt down the Ferrari over the closing laps and Hites reached the chequered flag 8.372s ahead of Soucek, with Beretta in third.

Earlier on Saturday, Al Faisal and Soucek had finished among points with a fifth spot.

The last two races of the 2021 International GT Open will take place in Barcelona on October 23-24.

OVERALL STANDINGS [after 12 races]:

1 Frederick Schandorff/Michele Beretta (136 points),
2 Andy Soucek (108),
3 Al Faisal al Zubair (90),
4 Baptiste Moulin/Yuki Nemoto (85), 5 Ollie Millroy/Brendan Iribe (67).



Oman sailors finish runner-up in Italy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

2021 MARINA MILITARE NASTRO ROSA TOUR

It was a successful return to competitive sailing for Oman Sail sailors as they led Team Oman to a second-place finish in the 2021 Marina Militare Nastro Rosa Tour, which concluded in Venice in Italy on Sunday.

This was the first major participation for Oman Sail sailors after nearly a year and a half following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Competing in the Diam 24 class, Team Oman was led by Nasser al Mashari and included Hussain al Jabri, Ali al Balushi, Haitham al Wahaibi and Akram al Wahaibi.

Oman had, in fact, led at the half-way stage of the eight-leg series but slipped in the second half of the series, with Team France taking the top honours. Italy's Team Luna Rosa was third.

The series took the sailors to eight destinations along the Italian coast with the opening leg in Genova from August 26-28. The tour then visited Rome, Gaeta, Napoli, Brindisi, Bari, Ravenna and concluded in Venice.

After podium finishes in all



Oman Sail CEO Khamis al Jabri (C) with Team Oman sailors in Venice

but one in 21 races in the first half of the series, Team Oman finished in second overall in fifth stage in Brindisi. The remaining races included two inshore races and a 50nm coastal race, which the team finishing third overall.

They improved the following day with a second-place finish in Bari before heading to Ravenna for a short race, where they finished sixth, and a long 76nm coastal race where they finished fourth.

Venice hosted the finale and the team started well before succumbing to their second disqualification of the series in the last race on the penultimate day. They battled back on the final day but could not overtake the leaders.

Mashari said, "To finish

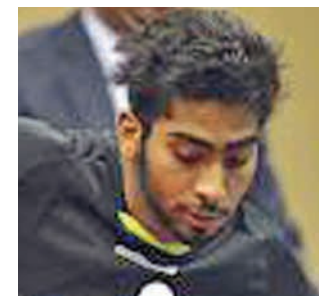
second in our first event back after a long break is an impressive achievement. We did well to take a runner-up spot though we didn't plan to compete in the full series. The results exceeded all our expectations. We bonded well and it will help us in our next challenge - Star Sailors League in Switzerland."

Training for the Star Sailors League Finals began last week as team manager Hashim al Rashdi along with other sailors - Yassir al Rahbi, Waleed al Kindi, Musab al Hadi, Ahmed al Hasani, Abdulrahman al Mashari and Raad al Hadi - have already reached Switzerland. They will be joined by Mashari and his teammates as they prepare to compete in the Sir Roland Symonette Trophy.

Three-member Oman team for Asian TT championships



Muhannad al Balushi



Haitham al Mandhari



Asad al Raisi

Muscat - A three-member national team will take part in the 2021 ITTF-ATTU Asian Table Tennis Championships in Doha, Qatar, from September 28-October 5.

Asad al Raisi, Muhannad al Balushi and Haitham al Mandhari were picked by the Oman Table Tennis Association

(OTTA) for the tournament.

Four Oman's referees - Mohammed al Alawi, Al Julanda al Mawali, Hisham al Sibani and Ahmed al Abrawi - will also officiate at the event.

Also the OTTA chairman Abdullah Bamkhalif will attend the Asian Congress, which will be held on the sidelines of the

event on October 3. The other members of the Oman delegation are Sajad Baqir (vice-chairman) and Adil al Balushi (general secretary). The Asian Congress will elect a new board. Bamkhalif has filed his nomination for a seat in the Asian board while Baqir has submitted his nomination for the post of a treasurer.

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Corporates unite to back Oman Cricket

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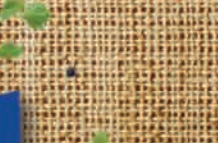


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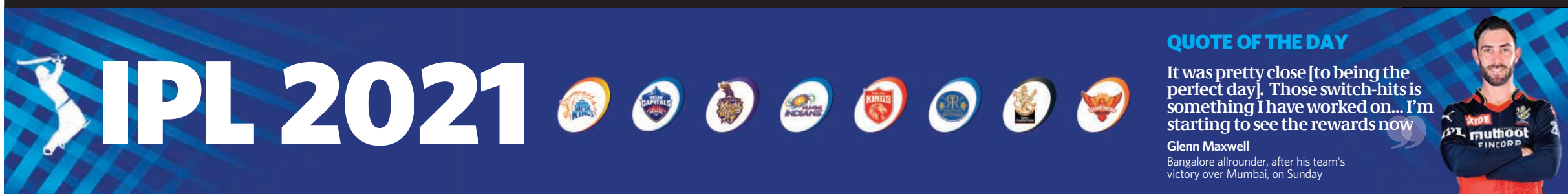


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SUNRISERS KEEP HOPES ALIVE

RAJASTHAN VS HYDERABAD

Dubai, UAE - Sunrisers Hyderabad kept their season alive with a revamped side easing to a seven-wicket win against the Rajasthan Royals on Monday.

A bowling performance that was competent in parts was complemented by a batting charge led by Jason Roy (60 off 42) and finished by Kane Williamson (51 n.o. off 41).

Royals put up a competitive 164 for five after choosing to bat, in an innings that captain Sanju Samson largely carried on his back while hitting 82 off 57.

But while totals in the same region have been defended in the second leg of this season in the UAE, the Royals bowlers ran into two men who marshalled the chase expertly in contrasting styles, and didn't have the bowling firepower to break through them.

Roy, with his trademark boundary-blasting style, enjoyed a debut to remember for the Sunrisers. He had been brought in for David Warner - a big call in itself - but with every boundary he struck, it felt like one of the most iconic player-franchise partnerships in the IPL might have come to its end.

Williamson, who has replaced Warner as captain, played a typically controlled innings to see the team through. Roy's start meant there were no fireworks needed in the back-end, and Williamson's calm steering of the chase was exactly what his team wanted.



Kane Williamson (L) and Abhishek Sharma celebrate after Sunrisers Hyderabad beat Rajasthan Royals on Monday

Jaiswal's aggression

Yashasvi Jaiswal didn't have a happy outing with the Royals in IPL 2020, but returning to the UAE has seen him unlock his potential.

Of the first ten balls he faced, four went to the boundary as Jaiswal made his intent clear. Royals gameplan clearly involved going hard from the start, and that didn't change even when

Evin Lewis fell in the second over off Bhuvneshwar Kumar. Jaiswal, however, continued unfazed. He wasn't always in perfect control, but his approach benefitted the Royals because it didn't let the run-rate flag.

Superb Samson

The Royals captain knew his team lacked batting depth and that their chances of a good total

depended heavily on him. That dependence became more pronounced when Liam Livingstone was out for four, and Samson constructed his innings accordingly. Samson was going at just about a run a ball, on 38 off 36 after 14 overs. He then cut loose spectacularly, as his next 21 balls brought forth 44 runs. He began the assault with perhaps the most audacious shot

SCOREBOARD			
RAJASTHAN ROYALS			
E Lewis	c Samad b Kumar	6	(4)
Y Jaiswal	b Sandeep Sharma	36	(23)
S Samson	c Holder b Kaul	82	(57)
L Livingstone	c Samad b Rashid	4	(6)
M Lomror	not out	29	(28)
Riyant Parag	c Roy b Kaul	0	(1)
R Tewatia	not out	0	(1)
Extras	(b 1, lb 3, w 3)	7	
TOTAL	164 for five in 20 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-67, 3-77, 4-161, 5-162			
Bowling: S Sharma 3-0-30-1, B Kumar 4-1-28-1, J Holder 4-0-27-0, S Kaul 4-0-36-2, Rashid Khan 4-0-31-1, A Sharma 1-0-8-0			
SUNRISERS HYDERABAD			
J Roy	c Samson b Sakariya	60	(42)
W Saha	st Samson b Lomror	18	(11)
K Williamson	not out	51	(41)
P Garg	c & b M Rahman	0	(1)
A Sharma	not out	21	(16)
Extras	(b 4, lb 4, w 9)	17	
TOTAL	167 for three in 18.3 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-57, 2-114, 3-119			
Bowling: J Unadkat 2-0-20-0, C Morris 3-0-27-0, M Rahman 3-3-0-26-1, M Lomror 3-0-22-1, R Tewatia 3-0-32-0, C Sakariya 4-0-32-1			

of his innings, stepping out and lifting no less than Rashid Khan over long-off.

Death bowling

Bhuvneshwar bowled the 17th and 19th overs, bringing a measure of control to the Sunrisers when Samson was cutting loose. In the 19th, he nailed his yorkers consistently, giving up a mere seven runs. His first over had been a wicket- maiden too, and his bowling at the death meant Sunrisers were chasing less than they might have.

Saha's power play

Wriddhiman Saha was quick off the blocks once again, which also

gave Roy a bit of extra time to settle in. Roy soon got into the groove too, courtesy some wayward bowling by Chris Morris. Four boundaries came in the fifth over, one of them via leg-byes, and the Sunrisers were up and running.

Saha was out stumped when he charged Mahipal Lomror's left-arm spin, but with Roy going along nicely, the chase was on track. Roy blitzed Rahul Tewatia out of the attack with a six and three fours in the 11th over, bringing the equation down to a run a ball with nine overs left.

There was a bit of a wobble when Roy fell, with Sunrisers also losing Priyam Garg soon after, but the opener's big hitting meant the chase was in a place where it could absorb a quiet period.

Williamson finishes

The finish was a straight contest between what Kane Williamson would do and how Royals' death bowling would go.

In Mustafizur Rahman, there was a terrific death bowler in operation. However, in Abhishek Sharma, Williamson found the perfect foil.

Abhishek kept his cool in a chase that could have become tense, hitting Chetan Sakariya for a six over the bowler's head in an over that would swing the game decisively Sunrisers' way, as an equation of 22 from 18 became six off 12.

Williamson finished things off with two boundaries to mid-

TODAY'S MATCHES

	VS	
KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS		DELHI CAPITALS
SHARJAH, 2PM		
	VS	
MUMBAI INDIANS		PUNJAB KINGS
ABU DHABI, 6PM		

POINTS TABLE

TEAMS	P	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
CSK	10	8	2	0	16	+1.069
DC	10	8	2	0	16	+0.711
RCB	10	6	4	0	12	-0.359
KKR	10	4	6	0	8	+0.322
PBKS	10	4	6	0	8	-0.271
RR	10	4	6	0	8	-0.369
MI	10	4	6	0	8	-0.551
SRH	10	2	8	0	4	-0.501

P: Played, **W:** Won, **L:** Lost, **NR:** No Result, **PTS:** Points, **NRR:** Net Run-Rate

CSK: Chennai Super Kings
DC: Delhi Capitals
KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders
PBKS: Punjab Kings
MI: Mumbai Indians
RR: Rajasthan Royals
SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad

wicket, the second of which also raised his own half-century while bringing up victory.
Cricinfo

OUTSIDE IPL

Moeen Ali retires from Test cricket

London, UK - England allrounder Moeen Ali on Monday announced he was retiring from Test cricket to focus on his white-ball career, saying the format's 'intensity can be too much sometimes'.

The 34-year-old scored five centuries and took 195 wickets in 64 Tests, including a top score of 155 not out and five five-wicket hauls.

But Moeen felt he needed to abandon cricket's longest format to prolong his career and rekindle his love for the game. "I want to play for as long as I can and just want to enjoy my cricket," he said.

Moeen finished with 2,914 Test runs at an average of 28.29 but regretted not being more productive with the bat. "I do feel like my batting was a little bit wasted," he told ESPNcricinfo.

AFP

US regain Ryder Cup in style

Kohler, US - The United States crushed Europe 19-9 to recapture the Ryder Cup on Sunday in a performance captain Steve Stricker called the 'greatest of all time'.

Collin Morikawa, the 24-year-old world No 3, delivered the winning half point when he tied his match with Viktor Hovland at Whistling Straits. He was one of eight 20-somethings on a US team that featured nine players in the world's top-11 - all gunning to regain the trophy won by Europe in France three years ago.

"Speechless," US captain Steve Stricker said, tearing up as he talked of the commitment that resulted in dominant victory.

The Americans became the first team to notch 19 points, beating the previous record of 18.5 achieved twice by each team before.

"This is the greatest team of all time right here," Stricker said. "These guys are unbelievable."

World No 2 Dustin Johnson, at 37 the oldest member of the team, provided a template for his younger colleagues, his one-up



US captain Steve Stricker celebrates with his teammates after defeating Europe in the Ryder Cup on Sunday (AFP)

victory singles win over Paul Casey giving him a perfect 5-0 record in a maximum five matches. He became the first American since Larry Nelson in 1979 - and just the fifth player ever - to go five-for-five when he prevailed in a tightly contested battle with Casey.

US took an 11-5 lead into Sunday's 12 singles matches, the six-point gap more than either team has ever overcome on the final day to lift the trophy. It meant the Americans needed

just 3.5 points to win the Cup. The US team needed 3.5 more points from Sunday's 12 concluding singles matches to take the Cup.

Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy won Sunday's opening match for Europe 3&2 over Tokyo Olympic champion Xander Schauffele, taking his only point of the week.

But Scheffler started the US scoring by defeating world No 1 Jon Rahm of Spain 4&3.

Moments later, Cantlay, the

US PGA playoff champion, completed a 4&2 victory over Ireland's Shane Lowry.

DeChambeau, last year's US Open winner, pushed the US team to the brink of victory with a 3&2 triumph over Spain's Sergio Garcia.

The Americans lead the all-time rivalry 27-14 with two drawn although they still trail Europe 11-9-1 since the expansion beyond a British-Irish squad in 1979.

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CATEGORY: CUSTOMER SERVICE

Her wide range of experience has had her serve on the design teams for many real estate projects in Oman, such as the W hotel, Hilton Garden Inn Hotel and Al Sharq Master Development.

Badriya Darwish al Hamdani, customer service supervisor at Al Meera Hypermarket, is known for her friendly and helpful disposition and her dedication to excellent customer service.

The staff and management of Al Meera also uphold her incredible oral communication skills when answering questions and dealing with customer concerns in the discharge of her day-to-day duties. She also has an excellent problem-solving ability that helps resolve customer issues satisfactorily and strong leadership skills that help customer service representatives on the team work toward specific goals.

"The most important qualities that a person must possess, whether at work or at home, is sincerity in everything that you do. This is in addition to perfection and honesty," says Badriya, who has overcome many obstacles, including that of personal transport, while arriving on duty sharp on time everyday.

Fond of spending her spare time reading, browsing social networking sites and participating in positive activities therein, besides a fitness regime, Badriya says her biggest motivation in life is her limitless ambition. This, she says, makes her progress in every task she undertakes.

With a zeal to continue working hard and progressing steadily in her career in customer service, Badriya admits that one of the most important events that changed her life was the illness of her mother when she had to travel with her mother for treatment in India and take charge of every aspect involved.

With her ambition for growth constantly before her, Badriya firmly believes that there is no substitute for hard work and hopes to continue her stride towards success confidently.



Hanan Mansoor al Busaidi

CATEGORY: CULINARY DISTINCTION

Hanan al Busaidi, endowed with creativity as an inherited trait from her talented mother, started baking on a regular basis from the age of 17 years - a time when girls her age are full of constantly changing ambitions.

Convinced that she was following a desire deep within, she later started her own home business - Aches For Cakes - and continued it in all earnestness while attending Oman Tourism College.

With a determination to forge a sound career for herself in this field, Hanan, who is passionate about everything she does, then took up specialised training at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris for a diploma in patisserie. After graduating, she came back to Muscat and began her culinary dream of opening her own little shop in Azaiba. It was first just a kitchen and she would take up orders in advance or make special mixed boxes of desserts. A few years later, she added a storefront as her business picked up.

"Our menu at the storefront tends to change on a daily basis (with a few popular favourites available daily). I love trying out new recipes and flavour combinations," says Hanan disclosing that she creates a variety of cakes, desserts, cookies as well as gelato, all made from scratch.

Hanan believes she yet has a long way to go with regard to her culinary ambition and she would like to take one step at a time.

"I would love to expand a little later on in the future, when the time is right. As for now, we are a hidden neighbourhood gem," she asserts, adding that her current task is to maintain consistency in the quality of her cakes and pastries in order to build up a strong customer base.

With a keen desire to spread more sweetness in the sultanate with her creations, Hanan is optimistic about her future goals which are, indeed, rooted in a sincere belief that there's no substitute to hard work. "what pushes me to work hard even when facing challenges is knowing that it'll help my business improve in the long run," she says.

Sahra al Sabti

CATEGORY: EDUCATION

Sahra al Sabti, a single mother of three young children, had dreamt of becoming an architect. Despite the many challenges that came her way, she was determined to turn her dream into reality, but as soon as she took up university education, she realised that this was not her calling.

She then got qualified from Montessori International Centre (MIC London) as a Montessori teacher as she had always been passionate about learning about the different phases of a child's development, physically and psychologically. In doing so, she knew that she had found her purpose in life and thoroughly enjoyed her work.

"My passion had driven me to fulfill my mission in today's education and I found that when I had the opportunity to work in the Montessori Centre and Dar Al A'tta. There, I succeeded not only in teaching and helping underprivileged mothers on the developmental needs of children in the 21st Century, but also on the creation and importance of sensory games," she said.

Having been selected as one of the representatives to develop EYFS standards in the Sultanate of Oman by the UNICEF Early Childhood Standard Board, in association with the ministries of Education, Health, Social Development and the Royal Oman Police, besides other private sector organisations, she looks upon this as a unique honour.

"Today I am an experienced school leader having assisted in the development of two schools from the very beginning. I have played a pivotal role overseeing the development of each school department, with experience as a teacher and as a member of senior management, before being appointed as Deputy Principal & Operations Manager," Finland Oman School, says Sahra who firmly believes in the motto - Serve to lead.

She has also developed a strong working relationship with the Ministry of Education and assisted with several school event, with able support from her family and her team who believed in her vision.



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