



50
GLORIOUS YEARS

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A GREAT HIKE... AT YOUR DOORSTEP
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Sayyid Fahd receives former ministers



(Mohamed al Rashdi)

Muscat - Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received in his office former members of the Council of Ministers and top ex-officials on Monday. Sayyid Fahd underscored His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's commendation of the former cabinet members for completing the work entrusted to them.

Sayyid Fahd expressed his

gratefulness and appreciation for the efforts exerted by the former cabinet members, saying, "Your efforts contributed to the steps and procedures undertaken during the past period," adding that their expertise will reflect positively on the nation's progress.

The ex-cabinet members valued the significant support they received which, they reaffirmed, enabled them to fulfil their responsibilities. They expressed

Your efforts contributed to the steps and procedures undertaken during the past period

SAYYID FAHD BIN MAHMOUD AL SAID

willingness to offer their expertise in the service of their dear homeland and its wise leadership.

The former ministers included Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, ex-

Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs; Darwish bin Ismaeel al Balushi, ex-Minister Responsible for Financial Affairs; Ahmed bin Nasser al Mahrazi, ex-Minister of

Tourism; Khalid bin Omar al Marhoon, ex-Minister of Civil Service; Mohammed al Tob, ex-Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs; Badr bin Saud al Busaidi, ex-Minister Responsible for Defence; Azza al Ismaili, ex-Minister of Technology and Communications; Dr Abdulmunim bin Mansour al Hassani, ex-Minister of Information; Sheikh Mohammed bin Said bin Saif al Kalbani, ex-Minister of Social De-

velopment; Shaikh Saif bin Mohammed al Shabibi, ex-Minister of Housing; Sheikh Sa'ad bin Mohammed al Sa'adi, ex-Minister of Sports Affairs; Ahmed bin Abdullah al Shuhi, ex-Minister of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources; and Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Abdullah al Bakri, ex-Minister of Manpower.

The top ex-officials Sayyid Fahd met, include Dr Rasheed bin Safi al Huraibi, former chairman

of Tender Board; Sheikha Aisha bint Jameel al Siyabia, former chairperson of Public Authority for Craft Industries; Yahya Said al Jabri, former chairman of Special Economic Zone at Duqm; and Dr Yahya bin Mahfoudh al Mantheri, former chairman of State Council.

The meeting was also attended by the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers.

ONA

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Departments' merger will expedite investment: MoCIIP

Muscat - The merger of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Public Authority for Investment Promotion (Ithraa) and the Centre for Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention by Royal Decree No 97/2020 will expedite investment-related transactions and cut down the duplication of licence providers, according to Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

This, he affirmed, will establish an investment-friendly climate in the sultanate at a time when all countries are competing to attract investments.

Yousef added that the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik stressed streamlining procedures of government services for investors and customers through the prompt finalisation of their transactions in the shortest possible time, particularly electronic services.

He made the statement during a weekly meeting with the ministry's undersecretaries and director generals aimed at rapprochement of officials' views so that all could work as one team. The aim is also to have a close



Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef

look at the progress of work in different sections and sectors of the ministry while at the same time streamlining procedures, and improving and developing services rendered to enterprises and the investment sector.

Yousef pointed out that the ministry accords attention to all directorates and administrations across the sultanate and helps them shoulder their responsibilities in activating the economy, business and investment.

The minister called for concerted efforts to achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040 as envisioned by His Majesty the Sultan.

ONA

US-Israeli delegation lands in Abu Dhabi on historic flight

Abu Dhabi, UAE - A US-Israeli delegation led by White House adviser Jared Kushner arrived on Monday in Abu Dhabi, on the historic first commercial flight from Tel Aviv to mark the normalisation of ties between the Jewish state and the UAE.

In another breakthrough, regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia allowed the flight to cross its airspace, halving what would otherwise have been a long trip around the Arabian peninsula.

"This is the first time this has ever happened. I would like to thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for making that possible," Kushner, US President Donald Trump's son-in-law, said on arrival in Abu Dhabi.

The word 'peace' was written in Arabic, English and Hebrew on the cockpit of the El Al flight that landed in the Emirates capital, where US flags flew alongside the Star of David banner.

The landmark direct flight by Israel's national carrier, numbered LY971 in a nod to the UAE's international dialling code, is due to return on Tuesday with the number 972, matching Israel's dialling code.

"While this is a historic flight, we hope that it will start an even more historic journey in the Middle East and beyond," Kushner, a key architect of Trump's Middle East policy, said before boarding.

"The future does not have to be predetermined by the past. This is a very hopeful time."



A US-Israeli delegation led by US Presidential Adviser Jared Kushner (C) disembark from an El Al aircraft, in the first-ever commercial flight from Israel to the UAE at the Abu Dhabi airport (AFP)

Kushner urged the Palestinians, who have condemned the UAE deal as a betrayal of their cause, to come to the negotiating table.

"When they are ready, the whole region is very excited to help lift them up and move them forward. But they can't be stuck in the past, they have to come to the table," he said.

The accord was announced by Trump on August 13, making the UAE the first Gulf country and only the third Arab nation to establish relations with Israel.

Unlike Egypt, which made peace with its former battlefield enemy in 1979, and Jordan, which followed in 1994, the UAE has

While this is a historic flight, we hope that it will start an even more historic journey in the Middle East and beyond. The future does not have to be predetermined by the past. This is a very hopeful time

JARED KUSHNER

never fought a war with Israel.

Saudi next?

Gulf Arab nations have had increasingly public ties with Israel in recent years, boosted by their shared rivalry with Iran and the advantages of linking their powerful economies.

Saudi Arabia, in keeping with decades of policy by most Arab nations, says it will not normalise ties until Israel has signed a peace deal establishing an independent Palestinian state.

But the overflight was a concrete sign of Saudi cooperation with Israel after years of behind-the-scenes overtures.

The plane however skirted the

Gulf states of Qatar and Bahrain, who have declined so far to follow the UAE's move, also met with criticism elsewhere in the Arab world.

"Peace is not an empty word used to normalise crimes and oppression," Saeb Erekat, secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, said Monday.

"Peace is the outcome of justice. Peace is not made by denying Palestine's right to exist."

Transforming a vision

The talks in Abu Dhabi aim to boost cooperation between the two regional economic powerhouses in areas including aviation, tourism, trade, health, energy and security. The visit is also expected to include a meeting between Kushner and Israeli and Emirati national security advisors Meir Ben-Shabbat and Sheikh Tahoun bin Zayed.

Ben-Shabbat, who was also on the flight to the UAE, said the delegation's goal was to make a plan to push ahead relations in a broad range of areas.

"We came here to transform a vision into a reality. There are no limits to cooperation... in education, innovation, health, aviation, agriculture, energy and many other fields," he said in Abu Dhabi.

Since the agreement between the UAE and Israel was unveiled, there have been phone calls between their ministers.

AFP

Sayyid Fahd receives top ex-officials



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Guidelines

- ▶ The weekly quiz (**Every Tuesday**) is open to all the residents of Oman irrespective of their nationality.
- ▶ The link for accepting the answers will be active every Tuesday from 2 pm till Wednesday midnight and will stop accepting responses after that.
- ▶ The quiz will have 2 winners per week namely the **FIRST** and the **SECOND**.
- ▶ In case of a tie or a greater number of participants with correct answers, the initial correct respondents will be declared as the winners. (Timestamp of 2 pm will be taken into account).
- ▶ The prizes for the winners will be announced during the Grand finale (10th October).

283 beggars arrested in Muscat: MoSD

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As many as 283 beggars were arrested in Muscat in the first half of the year as per an official of the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD).

"The ministry's anti-begging teams arrested them. They included 217 males and 66 females. Forty of them were Omanis and there were 243 expatriates. Six per cent of them were less than 12 years old," the official said.

He added, "Unfortunately, some people have taken advantage of the coronavirus pandemic situation to appeal to the people and beg for money. Some even use children."

The beggars were taken in at traffic lights, ATM machines, fuel stations and commercial centres.

Begging is a big problem with social, ethical, security and economic dimensions, he said, while stressing that the government institutions are working to combat the menace that cannot be eliminated without community



solidarity and cooperation.

"Begging has increased during the recent period due to the co-operation of families and individuals with people sympathising with beggars."

The Ministry of Social Development cooperates with some government agencies such as the Ministry of Labour, ROP and the Public Prosecution to reduce begging.

It has also established an operations room and prepared a programme with them to combat begging.

The MoSD's anti-begging

teams arrested 1,152 beggars in 2017; 1,678 in 2018 and 1,814 in 2019 in some parts of the sultanate.

The arrested beggars have been referred to the relevant authorities for legal action, the official said.

"For begging, the Article 297 of the Omani Penal Code imposes a prison term of not less than a month, not exceeding a year, and a fine of not less than RO50 and not more than RO100."

Any begging activity can be reported on 1100.

Date production in Oman goes up

Muscat - The production of dates increased by 2.2 per cent by the end of 2019, reaching 376,982 tonnes compared to 368,940 tonnes in 2018.

As for the production of dates at the end of 2019, the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) statistical year-book showed that the highest quantity of dates was produced in the Governorate of North Batinah, reaching 78,572 tonnes. It was followed by South Batinah with 73,271 tonnes, and Dakhliyah with 67,607 tonnes.

The production of dates in the Governorate of North Sharqiyah reached 41,781 tonnes while the production of dates in the Governorate of South Sharqiyah reached 39,995 tonnes. The Governorate of Dhahirah and



Muscat produced 37,930 tonnes and 13,425 tonnes, respectively.

The NCSI data book stated that the production of dates at the end of 2019 in the Governorate of Buraimi reached 12,793 tonnes, and in the Governorate

of Musandam it was 7,443 tonnes. The Governorate of Dhofar recorded dates production of 4,033 tonnes, and the production in the Governorate of Al Wusta reached 132 tonnes. ONA

Blended learning - the way forward

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To prevent the spread of the COVID-19 among students, the Ministry of Education will introduce a mix of remote and traditional classroom learning called 'blended learning' in the new academic year - 2020/21 - commencing on November 1.

In an interview with Oman TV, H E Dr Abdullah bin Khamis bin Ali Ambusaidi, Undersecretary in the Ministry of Education, said all teaching staff will be trained ahead of the school year.

"There will be a training programme for teachers and support groups on how to use e-learning platforms and deal with distance learning," he said.

"Education will be blended - a mix of traditional education and distance learning - which will help reduce direct contact between students and teachers," H E Dr Ambusaidi added.

Muscat Daily spoke to citizens about the new decision and found that most welcomed the move.

Dr Tantawi Gabr, a parent, said, "Blended education has become a necessity due to the coronavirus. Schools have a major role in preparing students to accept the blended education system. Traditional education is



essential and necessary because it allows a positive and direct interaction between the teacher and student and between the students themselves. I think online education is not enough."

For Sultan al Rawahi, another parent, blended education is good and keeps pace with educational developments. "We are preparing by providing laptops to all our children. I believe blended education will help future gener-

ations keep pace with technological developments, and I hope Internet services will be available in all of Oman by the end of the year."

Placed at the other end of the equation, teachers like Ali al Shiyadi too are welcoming the move. He believes blended learning in all study programmes will improve and accelerate the learning process of students.

"The future of e-learning will

be blended learning, a mix of traditional instructor-led courses and self-directed e-learning courses," he said. "Blended learning aims to improve the learning process through an adequate mix of teaching techniques."

According to Badis Saleh Gharbi, deputy HoD for foundation courses at Bayan College, teaching methods and the best ones to match a particular edu-

cational system have been debated over the last century.

"The whole world has grown in that time and developed thanks to innovative technology, and yet somehow, school systems have stayed the same. The world has been flooded with new devices — personal computers and smartphones - but their potential still hasn't been fully realised for education. Finally, the term 'blended learning' had been



I believe blended education will help future generations keep pace with technological developments

SULTAN AL RAWAHI



Traditional education is essential and necessary because it allows a positive and direct interaction between the teacher and students

DR TANTAWI GABR

MoAFWR gives clarification on livestock deaths in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) has taken note of the livestock deaths reported in Dhofar due to bovine ephemeral fever. It has also ensured the required veterinary teams are in the field to treat and vaccinate other livestock to prevent the spread of the disease in Dhofar.

Referring to what was circulated on social media about the death of livestock in Dhofar, MoAFWR has issued a statement saying the ministry con-



firmed the incidence of bovine ephemeral fever in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The ministry also stated that the infection spreads as a result of rains during the ongoing kharref in Dhofar. Mosquitoes are vectors responsible for the trans-

mission of the disease. The ministry said its veterinary teams are in the field to ensure treatment and immunisation to prevent further spread of the diseases.

The ministry urged livestock owners to keep animal pens clean and do pest control.



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COVID-19 UPDATE

WHERE WE STAND (AUGUST 31, 2020)

Oman Total: 85,722
(Omanis: 52,943 Expats: 32,779)
Recovered: 80,810 Deaths: 685

OMAN GOVERNORATES

Governorates	Total	New
Muscat	42,532	42
South Batinah	9,795	11
Dakhliyah	5,524	9
South Sharqiyah	2,794	6
North Batinah	14,895	49
Dhahirah	1,869	4
North Sharqiyah	2,322	9
Dhofar	3,294	45
Musandam	76	1
Buraimi	957	2
Al Wusta	1,664	0

MUSCAT

Wilayats	Total	New
Muttrah	8,968	5
Seeb	15,984	10
Bausher	10,839	11
Amerat	3,422	5
Muscat	2,215	11
Quriyat	1,104	0

178 new COVID-19 cases, 8 deaths reported

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Monday confirmed 178 new cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), taking the total to 85,722. The number of deaths reported on Monday was eight.

"The number of recoveries has increased to 80,810 while the number of deaths has reached 685," an MoH statement said.

As of Monday, a total of 404 patients were admitted in health institutions, while 155 patients were in ICU.

MoH calls upon all to adhere to the isolation procedures by staying in an isolated room with an attached toilet and serving the isolated person from outside the room as instructed.

It said that social distancing also helps prevent the spread of the virus.

MoH advises all citizens and residents to continue washing hands with water and soap, avoiding touching the face, nose, mouth, and eyes and following healthy habits when coughing and sneezing.

Environment Authority visits Damaniyat Islands

Camping activities in the reserve to resume on November 1

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Omari, chairman of Environment Authority, and specialists from the Governorate of South Batinah recently visited the Damaniyat Islands Nature Reserve for an inspection and to monitor the progress of work carried out at sites frequented by campers.

Following the inspection, the Environment Authority announced that camping activity in the reserve will resume on November 1.

The chairman of the authority urged the specialists in the reserve to continue work and further efforts to protect the reserve from pollution. He also urged the management of the authority in South Batinah governorate - in coordination with competent authorities - to get rid of construction waste and other solid waste that resulted after the completion of a new reserve building.

At the conclusion of the visit, Dr Omari thanked all the employees of the reserve for their hard work and eagerness to preserve the site. He also praised



(Supplied photos)



From the beginning of May till the end of October, which is the nesting season, camping in the Damaniyat Islands Nature Reserve is prohibited

their efforts to enforce the environmental laws.

Announcing the resumption of camping activities in the reserve on November 1, the authority said, 'We would like to

remind everyone that from the beginning of May till the end of October, which is the nesting season, camping in the Damaniyat Islands Nature Reserve is prohibited.'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tenancy law in Oman needs amendment

This is in reference to the article 'Oman's real estate sector faces serious challenges' (*Muscat Daily*, Page 13, August 31).

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and weak oil prices globally have affected all sectors of the economy, especially the real estate sector.

In Oman, our tenancy agreements specify that either party - tenant and landlord - must serve a three-month notice to vacate the premises before the expiry of tenancy agreement. However, despite falling rents in recent times, a few landlords are not willing to reduce the rent during the contract period. In these circumstances, tenants don't have any choice but to move out from their rented houses when landlords are unwilling to negotiate the rent agreed upon in the contract.

They are obliged to pay the full rent amount till the contract period is over even if they wish to move out in between.

I would request concerned government authority to look into reducing the three month-notice period as this will give relief to tenants.

It would also help to add a clause in the tenancy law to factor in cases of disaster or poor maintenance. In such circumstances, alternate arrangement or another accommodation must be provided by the landlord. Most landlords do not willingly enter into a maintenance contract and pass this burden on to tenants.

These are tough times, and with white-collar expatriate workers moving out from the country, there will be a further impact on the real estate sector and the economy without the suggested interventions.

Hiten Dutia
Via email

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tenders:

Sr. No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (RO)
1	52/2020	Procurement, Supplying & Configuration of Core Firewall with Three Years AMC and Providing Support for Active Components.	15/09/2020	29/09/2020	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	150/=
2	53/2020	Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning and Support for Datacenter Expansion.	15/09/2020	29/09/2020	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	150/=

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity of sending a valid Tender Board certificate in the same required field.
Buying the Tender:	The documents required for the purchase of the tender are sent by e-mail to the Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department, to ensure the authenticity of the documents before purchasing the tender through the official working days of the hour from 8.00 am - 01.00 pm.
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document. (Payment Through Bank Transfer)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	Each bid should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to The Chairman of tender committee mentioning Tender Number and Name on the top of the envelope.
Terms and conditions:	- No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
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تعلن الشركة العمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية:

رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	نوع الوثيقة
٢٠٢٠/٥٢	شراء وتوريد وضبط جدار الحماية الرئيسي مع توفير دعم وصيانة خدمات مركز البيانات لمدة ثلاث سنوات	٢٠٢٠/٩/١٥	٢٠٢٠/٩/٢٩	الشركات المحلية العامة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول	١٥٠/ـ
٢٠٢٠/٥٣	شراء وتركيب وتشغيل وفحص تجهيزات توسعة مركز البيانات الرئيسي مع توفير الدعم الفني	٢٠٢٠/٩/١٥	٢٠٢٠/٩/٢٩	الشركات المحلية العامة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول	١٥٠/ـ

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة مع ضرورة إرسال شهادة مجلس المناقصات سارية المفعول وفي نفس الحال للطلوب.
طريقة الشراء	يتم إرسال المستندات المطلوبة لشراء المناقصة عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني إلى إدارة المناقصات والشريات والعقود. وذلك لتأكيد من صحة المستندات قبل شراء المناقصة وذلك من خلال أيام العمل الرسمية من الساعة ٨:٠٠ م إلى ١:٠٠ م.
الرسم	مقابل دفع اللبغ المحدد أثناء للتسوية الواحدة - لا ترد (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد لاستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العرض	تقدم العرض في مغلف مغلف ومعبئة باسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات مع تحديد رقم وعنوان المناقصة فقط.
الشروط والضمائم	- عدم تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على الطرّف. - أن تكون العرض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء. - إقرار تأييداً في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (١٪) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء. - ويعتبر باسم الشركة المُعانة لنقل الكهرباء. - كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه. - الشركة المُعانة لنقل الكهرباء غير مقبولة بقبول أقل العرض أو أي عطاء آخر.
العرض لتقديم	يجب وضع العرض في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات.
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - الواجه رقم المسكة ١١٥٣ - مبنى رقم ٤٢٣ - هاتف: ٩١٧٧٣٧٨, ٩٣١١١٩٨
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MoH's patient services department continues work

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Patients and Clients Services Department of the Ministry of Health (MoH) has implemented a number of measures to reduce the spread of the coronavirus and protect both employees and clients from the infection, stated Dr Abeer al Mammari, director of Patient Services.

The department closed the reception hall and started to receive applications and inquiries via email and phone.

The department further implemented the downsizing of personnel by asking them to work remotely. Meanwhile, their job performance is monitored periodically to ensure that none of the services are delayed.

Dr Abeer added that the department has continued to provide all its assigned services amidst the pandemic. Under the current circumstances, the department receives many inquiries related to the pandemic in general, offering consultation to the inquiries of both citizens and residents. The department continues to communicate with hospitals and wards to solve issues related to patients in addition to supervising and monitoring administrative procedures for transferring referred patients to the referral hospitals.

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Sri Lankan social club provides pandemic relief

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Like other expatriate community clubs in the sultanate, the Sri Lankan Community Social Club (SLCSC) is doing what it can to help its countrymen during the coronavirus pandemic. It's helping people by distributing dry rations, providing medical assistance and assisting in COVID-19 contact tracing.

The club has delivered over 1,400 dry ration parcels to those who could not arrange their daily needs following the lockdown and social distancing procedures during the crisis. In a second round of delivery assistance to the needy, the club is now reaching out to people in Nizwa, Buraimi, Sohar, Salalah and also

some parts of Muscat.

As per Roy Lasantha, president of SLCSC, the club also organised several awareness seminars and programmes to educate the Sri Lankan community members in the sultanate about the COVID-19.

"Safeguarding fellow Sri Lankans is at the forefront of our efforts. We are operating a hotline to register Sri Lankans who are either affected by the virus or had any known contact with a patient or exposure to such cases. We provide them with all the necessary advice, guidance and assistance," he said.

SLCSC has also established a COVID 19 Medical Assistance Programme with the voluntary services of a group of Sri Lankan doctors to help, advise and



H E Ameer Ajwad (centre) and Roy Lasantha (second from right) distribute dry rations (Supplied photo)

monitor the Sri Lankans in Oman who are either affected with the virus or are in isolation

due to close contacts. "We are using pulse oximeters to monitor the recorded cases remotely.

There is also a COVID-19 contact tracing group with Sri Lankan volunteers to track,

trace and monitor those Sri Lankans with first layer and second layer of close contacts to avoid the spread of the virus within our community."

The club is also maintaining a welfare facility in Wadi Kabir for Sri Lankan men who have lost jobs and means of income. Food is provided to them at no cost.

In a bid to help stranded Sri Lankans who were eager to return home, the club also organised a repatriation charter flight on August 14, Lasantha said.

It will be arranging another flight on September 15 to repatriate those who can afford tickets of the charter flight with related costs.

"This was initiated to reduce the burden on the embassy owing to the large number of

repatriation requests. SLCSC is facilitating flights for community members who can afford charter flights and paid quarantine facilities back home."

He added that the club is a success because of team work.

"I would like to mention the whole BoD of SLCSC. It is important to mention the support and cooperation received from the Sri Lankan Embassy in Muscat, H E Ameer Ajwad, the Ambassador, and the staff," Lasantha said.

SLCSC is a charitable and non-profit organisation approved by the Ministry of Social Development, Sultanate of Oman.

Established in 1997, the main objectives of SLCSC is to organise social, cultural and sports activities for the benefit of all Sri Lankans residing in Oman.

372,000 tonnes of fish produced in 1st half of 2020

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) said that the sultanate's fish production increased by 34 per cent during the first half of 2020 compared to the same period of last year.

From January to July 2020, Oman's total fish production was up by 34 per cent to 372,000 tonnes with a value of RO161mn compared to the same period of last year, according to statistics of the ministry.

The ministry said the quantity of fish exports reached 138,000 tonnes and was valued at RO58mn. Production of the artisanal fishing sector was about 358,300 tonnes while coastal fishing reached 2,300 tonnes and commercial fishing accounted for 11,200 tonnes.

The ministry has launched several programmes to develop the fishing fleets as part of its endeavour to develop the artisan and coastal fishing sectors and



The ministry said it is aiming to increase the fisheries sector's contribution to the GDP by five fold, taking it to RO1.3bn in 2023 from RO225mn in 2016

support commercial fishing in the high seas.

The ministry launched the advanced fishing boats programme that aims at introducing 270 state-of-the-art boats by the end of 2023. 'We have also prepared a plan to develop the coastal fishing sector,' it said.

The ministry is aiming to increase the fisheries sector's contribution to the GDP by five fold, taking it to RO1.3bn in 2023 from RO225mn in 2016. To achieve this target, the ministry is expecting to raise fish production to 1.4mn tonnes in 2023 from 280,000 tonnes in 2016.

Mazoon Electricity cautions against illegal connections

Muscat - To ensure safety standards, Mazoon Electricity Company has reminded the public of the dangers of illegal electricity connections.

Mazoon Electricity urged the public to follow the simple yet right process to apply for electricity connection by submitting a request through the company's website or through Sanad centres and reminded people to abstain from using any illegal connections. Cautioning against unauthorised connections, Mazoon Electricity has alerted the public that illegal power connections pose a danger of electrocution not just to the users, but the public at large.

'Unsafe and illegal connections are an easy solution to temporary electricity needs but they pose a danger to user's safety and those in their surroundings,' Mazoon Electricity alerted.

The company explained that customers who wish to obtain temporary electricity connection should visit the nearest Sanad centre with required documents and submit their request.



'Customers have to fill the temporary connection request form by including documents such as ID copy, Mulkiya and Krooki copy, construction permit from municipality, description of the devices/appliances required to be connected and required load.'

Once the document is processed, an inspector from the company will visit the site and approve the connection if all the required criteria are fulfilled. An account for temporary connection will be created in the customer's name provided a prepaid meter is installed to avoid accumulation of billing dues.



Street vendors arrested in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Dhofar Municipality, in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police (ROP), conducted a raid and arrested street vendors who were selling food on roadsides.

The ministry called on sponsors to follow up on their expat workers and adhere to the norms in order to safeguard the health of everyone.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	43	29
Doha	41	30
Kuwait City	40	29
Manama	39	29
Riyadh	40	27

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.32am
Sunrise	5.49am
Duhr	12.12pm
Asr	3.39pm
Maghrib	6.30pm
Isha	7.42pm

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Attention

Majan Electricity Company announces amendment in the Period Buying & Submission date in the following tender below:

TENDER NO	DESCRIPTION	GRADE	LAST DATE FOR BUYING	SUBMISSION DATE	TENDER PRICE R.O.
74/2020	Contract for provide labors for inspections and auditing electrical meters for a period of 12 months	C	3/9/2020	8/9/2020	25/=

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

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

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

For more information please contact Tel no.:24051501- 26944266
For any technical assistance please contact Helpdesk: +968-24166670
E-mail: etenderhd@ita.gov.om

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

The Company is not bound to consent the lowest Bid or any other Tenders.

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Tel: +968 2694 4444 | Fax: +968 2694 4222
Information@majanco.nama.om | www.majanco.co.om

30 customers rewarded in Bank Muscat salary prizes

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, in step with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to partnership in encouraging a savings culture in Oman, recently held its salary transfer draws for the month of July.

The event was held at the bank's head office along with the monthly draws in other categories in line with the bank's commitment to encouraging a savings culture in Oman and 30 winners were chosen in the salary transfer segment. Overall, more than RO800,000 was given away to winners across multiple customer segments during the monthly draw.

All customers who transfer their salaries to Al Mazyona accounts are eligible to be entered into the salary transfer draws. Al Mazyona rewards 15 winners every month from among those with salaries between RO500 and RO999 every month, and winners were chosen during the draw for the month of July. These winners will be paid a monthly salary prize of RO500 for a whole year as a reward for choosing Al Mazyona salary accounts. Similarly, 15 winners were chosen from among those whose salaries are above RO1,000 and will similarly receive RO500 every month for a whole year.

In 2020, Bank Muscat lined up the largest number of high-



value prizes in the country with 6,677 winners all set to be rewarded for their savings habit.

Both the number of prizes and the total prize money have been increased across different customer segments this year. Bank Muscat recently celebrated the special mid-year draw at its head office. Over

RO1mn was given in high-value prizes to the lucky winners including two special prizes of RO250,000 each.

The livestreaming of the prize draws on the official social media channels like Twitter, Instagram and YouTube are generating keen interest from the bank's customers and the gen-

eral public.

The bank is proud of the success so far achieved by Al Mazyona in promoting the concept of savings in the Omani society. Apart from allowing customers to realise their dreams, the scheme is also contributing majorly to the development of Oman and en-

couraging financial prudence amongst the general public.

Al Mazyona is designed to transform the lives of prudent savers and special prizes are reserved for different customer segments including Premier Banking, regional, youth, women and children's account categories.

More glory for Omantel at CCGA Awards 2020

Omantel, Oman's pioneering and only integrated telecommunications services provider, has been going from strength to strength and has now won even more international recognition for its innovative strategy.

Omantel Wholesale emerged winner at the 4th Carrier Community Global Awards (CCGA) 2020- Berlin, Germany, walking away with top honours in the Best Data/Capacity Provider of the Year and the Middle East Regional Operator of the Year categories, which is a prestigious achievement and a global recognition of its achievements in the wholesale business as a regional leader.

Omantel Wholesale, the company's international arm providing services and solutions to carriers and content providers outside of Oman, was selected among global telecom companies being recognised for innovations and achievements in the telecom wholesale industry by a panel of 13 international and independent telecoms analysts and industry experts.

Sohail Qadir, vice president, Omantel Wholesale, addressed the community and the audience by saying, "We are really honoured to receive these Carrier Community Global Awards 2020, and we would like to thank the Carrier Community for selecting Omantel as a winner in the prestigious awards that truly reflects our commitment to boost the global whole-

sale industry. It is with great pride that our milestone achievements in various areas like submarine cables, data centers, network operations centre, telecom alliance and more are recognised to have given us a unique competitive advantage to reach further and accelerate digital transformation across the Middle East."

Omantel Wholesale capitalises on ultra-low latency networks to enable innovation and digital transformation globally, utilising Oman's geographic advantage at the absolute nexus of Asia, Africa and Europe, and the entrance to the Middle East.

Laying the foundation for Omantel's strong contention at this year's awards were several measures from 2018 where Omantel, under its Global Wholesale Transformation Project, took great strides in expanding its presence internationally in the subsea cable market and in restructuring its offerings to facilitate the growth of cloud, content, and next-generation communication globally.

Some of these achievements are being the European, and Omani, landing party of one of the world's largest subsea cable system, the AAE-1, connecting Singapore and Marseille, with Oman in the middle, and Landing of the Gulf 2 Africa subsea system in Somalia as Omantel's first step towards expansion into Africa.

GAC awarded for after-sales excellence by Mitsubishi Motors MEA

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributors for Mitsubishi vehicles in Oman, was recently awarded the '3 Star Silver Award' in the After-Sales Business Excellence Program for the year 2019 by Mitsubishi Motors Middle East and Africa.

It received this award for its outstanding after-sales service and customer care; GAC was the only dealership to have received this accolade from the region.

Manoj Ranade, general manager of GAC, said, "For GAC to be selected for this award is indeed a great honour. For us to have received this prestigious award is a testament to our commitment to our customers and towards achieving after-sales excellence in Oman. It is also very encouraging for our team here at GAC, for it is their consistent hard work and dedication towards their job and their cus-

tomers that has truly earned us this recognition."

The Mitsubishi brand enjoys one of the largest and most loyal customer bases in the sultanate, and for good reason. As its official distributor, GAC is committed to excellence and continues to invest heavily in its employees. As a result, GAC boast a highly motivated and qualified workforce, dedicated to maximising customer satisfaction, right from

the moment they walk into the showroom for the first time all the way through every stage of the ownership experience.

"When purchasing a car, after sales service is almost always a key deciding factor. This is because, excellent after sales service ensures a customer a trouble-free ownership experience for years to come. To be sole dealership to have won this award in the region is a source of

great pride for us at GAC. It shows the dedication of every member of our team to provide our customers with the highest quality service," added Ashraf Osman, national service manager of GAC.

For more information, visit GAC's Mitsubishi showrooms in Azaiba, Barka, Sohar, Nizwa and Salalah or follow 'MitsubishiMotorsOman' on Facebook or @mitsubishioman on Twitter.



Be'ah to support PDO's Renewable Energy Award



Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) has remotely signed an agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to provide promotional and educational support to PDO's Renewable Energy Award that targets students from private and public schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

The award aims at spreading awareness on the importance of renewable energy (biofuels) for the economy and the environment, as well as encouraging creative and innovative skills among school students.

The agreement was signed by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Harthy, executive vice president of the Strategic Development Sector from be'ah, and PDO ex-

ternal affairs and value creation director Eng Abdul Amir al Ajmi.

The signing ceremony was also attended by other representatives from both companies.

This collaboration goes in line with be'ah's vision to conserve beautiful Oman for future generations and comes as a step forward towards achieving the company's strategic goal to divert waste from landfills and transform the current linear economy approach to a circular greener economy.

In addition, PDO has always been keen to connect with the local community through various initiatives that focus on the best utilization of renewable resources in Oman.

As per the agreement, be'ah in collaboration with the Ministry

of Education will provide full technical support for PDO's Renewable Energy Award. The award's main objectives are to embrace students innovative projects in the field of power and renewable energy, elevate and enrich the innovation culture in the sultanate, increase awareness about renewable energy's contribution in developing the country, and to guide students who are looking to forge a career path in the renewable energy sector.

Harthy said, "Be'ah will be implementing a number of awareness workshops for the award participants on different topics including biofuel and other subjects related to the environmental aspect of the award. In addition, be'ah will construct a complete programme that focuses on two main subjects; self-development and the technical part of waste management."

He added, "The pact and its associated programmes promote pivotal concepts among students and would contribute to their academic development, giving their innovations more exposure."

QuizLive a resounding success in conceptualising innovative quizzing



It was an evening to remember. Natural Born Quizzers took it to Natural Stupidity right till the end but fell short by a mere 5 points, with Natural Stupidity emerging deserved champions in the inaugural online international quiz - #Quiz Live - Play @Home with QuizMaster Murli Pillai.

Organised by Oman's leading creative, digital, branding and event management company, Nexus Novel Advertising, and conducted by Oman's own Quiz-Master Murli Pillai, this was the first time that an online quiz on a video-conferencing platform was being introduced in Oman and at the same time open to teams from all over the world. A truly international event.

Split into three stages - The Prelims, The Semis and The Finals - the teams went through a written Prelims round from

which the top 16 teams qualified for the semi finals - two sessions with eight teams each. The semis were live and interactive and as the degree of difficulty kept mounting, the top four from each semi finals qualified for the Grand Finale on the August 28.

QuizMaster Murli Pillai of LetsGetQuizzical, did not just test the participants' knowledge but also their cognitive and imaginative skills and most importantly the ability of the teams to react quickly under pressure. Speed was the key factor in the ultimate analysis.

And that's is where Team Natural Stupidity (Jaykathan, playing solo) scored with natural ease. Natural Born Quizzers (father-son duo of Murali Ramaswamy and Abhishek Murali - ex-Muscateers) were not far behind making a majestic come-

back towards the end to fall short by just 5 points.

Bearly Koalified (young sibling duo of Skaria and Sebastian Parakal from Muscat) were consistent from the word go and were deserving second runner-up. Special mention goes out to the schoolboy team QuizWiz (Chetan Sethu & Lael Alva from Muscat) who held their own and surely queered the pitch for Natural Born Quizzers in the final round.

The event was viewed by enthusiastic audiences across the world as it was live-streamed on Facebook with lots of audience questions too. The audience was spellbound with the calibre of the quizzers and the interesting rounds set by QM Murli, covering a whole range of topics from Fiction to Events, from Faces to Brands; it was an all-encompass-

ing quiz by all standards.

Mobin Beg, business head of Nexus Novel, in a concluding observation, congratulated the teams that had won the prizes and thanked all those who had participated in the event, and expressed his gratitude to the sponsors who had patronised the event that had turned out to be a great entertainer. He also promised to conduct more such quiz shows based on different themes like Technology, Sports, Entertainment, etc.

Said Jaykathan of Natural Stupidity, after his victory, said, "It was really an exciting quiz in a completely innovative format. A great event and very well organised." The victorious teams won handsome cash prizes plus generous shopping vouchers from Sea Pearl, Danube and Mazon Dairy.

OAB enhances local market presence with its advanced digital services

Oman Arab Bank continues to enhance its presence in the local banking industry as one of the best-certified e-payment solutions providers. The bank has heavily invested in building an advanced digital infrastructure, capable of keeping pace with the rapid technological changes that influence the growth of businesses while enriching the digital business environment. Based on this concept, OAB's advanced e-payment gateway has emerged as one of the best e-channels for digital payments in the Omani market.

Commenting on the features of this innovative technology, Rashad al Shaikh, acting head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB said, "Our e-payment gateway is the only one in the market that provides direct connectivity



for all types of local and international bank cards, in addition to competitive service fees and 24/7 advanced technical support. This single-integration point allows our customers to easily make transactions and accept payments from anywhere in the world. Moreover, our team supervising the gateway is always ready to facilitate the acti-



vation process for new customers, and support them in all their banking requirements."

He added, "Currently, the global market is witnessing rapid developments in the sphere of doing business, with e-commerce emerging as one of the most promising sectors. Due to changes in government services, cash transactions have declined in favour of online payments. This reinforces the need to establish more reliable digital banking solutions that enable real-time payment and seamless cash flow services.

"This is an extremely useful service for business owners, and especially SMEs, since it prevents payment delays. As one of the most advanced local financial institutions, we see it as our responsibility to provide advanced

solutions and accelerate digital transformation in both the public and private sector."

For several years now Oman Arab Bank has been on the path to promote growth through innovation. Its transformation strategy is based on strategic pillars, the most important being enabling innovation across various business activities. This is possible through the development and implementation of advanced, state-of-the-art technologies.

The bank has proven the effectiveness of its vision by successfully activating new digital channels and solutions during the COVID-19 crisis, generating widespread acclaim. OAB continues to maintain its position as one of the most prominent providers of digital services in the local banking sector.

Mazda design brings a new vision of driving elegance and pleasure

In 2020, with Mazda celebrating its '100 Year Anniversary', the Japanese vehicle manufacturer continues their mission to brighten people's lives by designing and bringing into existence cars that deliver exceptional driving pleasure - and which provide owners with a new vision of design elegance, rooted in Japanese aesthetics.

For Mazda, a car is far more than a mass of metal. 'Every car we create has a life of its own, and every form created by the hands of our esteemed Takumi (the master craftsmen) breathes life into our cars,' the manufacturer proudly states.

Mazda's design philosophy - which is firmly rooted in their 'Soul of Motion' Kodo Design philosophy - serves to imbue vitality into the form of each of their models; with the end result being that an emotional connection between car and driver is achieved.

The manufacturer's relentless pursuit of perfection and their full attention to the smallest of inte-



rior and exterior design details on each of their models ensure that a work of art is created - that can only serve to inspire and challenge the imagination.

The colour finish on each model is also something that, in line with Mazda's design philosophy, becomes something more than a mere sum of its parts. For example, Mazda's strikingly beautiful Soul Red Crystal Metal-

lic is an expression of vitality and alluring transparency, while it's Machine Gray Premium Metallic is the outcome of faithful reproduction of a realistic "metal feel" painstakingly hand-crafted by their master craftsmen.

Excellence

If Mazda's Kodo Design philosophy appeals to the driver's aesthetic heart, then the

manufacturer's groundbreaking engineering design and technology appeals to the driver's mind - and his or her thoughts of on-road performance and safety.

Mazda's ground-breaking Skyactiv-Vehicle dynamics with G-Vectoring Plus Control work to adjust power delivery and optimally shift vehicle weight to achieve a much smoother and less fatiguing drive. At the same time, Mazda's i-Activesense safety innovations use sophisticated technologies to give the driver a sixth sense for safety in all weather and road conditions; while alerting them to any potential road hazards.

'World Car Design of the Year' for 2020

Indeed, Mazda continues to achieve real-world acclaim for its design. In early 2020, Mazda was honoured to have their Mazda 3 model win the highly coveted 2020 'World Car Design of the Year' title at the World Car Awards (WCA).

This was the second of the

manufacturer's models to be handed the 'World Car Design of the Year' title, following their Mazda MX-5 winning the award in 2016.

These annual World Car Awards are recognised as the number one awards program in the world and serve to recognize and reward excellence, leadership and innovation in the global automotive industry.

In the Sultanate of Oman, Mazda's range of award-winning vehicles can be viewed and test-driven at the nine Towell Auto Centre showrooms located across the country. (Customers can also visit www.mazdaoman.com to find out more about each Mazda model). Towell Auto Centre's showroom opening times are from 8.30am to 1pm, and 3.30pm to 7.30pm (Sunday to Thursday). At the moment, during the current Covid-19 situation, Towell Auto Centre is taking all the essential steps to ensure their customers remain happy and healthy during their showroom visits.

Ooredoo's 5G business plans offer a range of benefits

Opening up new and previously unimagined opportunities for growth, Ooredoo's Internet Professional 5G business plans offer a wide range of benefits to an increasing number of companies across the sultanate. Starting at RO139 per month, B2B customers can enjoy speeds of up to 50Mbps, unlimited bandwidth, flexible contract terms, and more. Faster, more responsive, and highly efficient, Ooredoo's 5G plans are a gateway to better business, helping companies to stay ahead.

Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi, chief business & wholesale officer at Ooredoo, said, "Connectivity is now more important than ever, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic has forced companies to rethink their strategies to be more resilient and ensure they are able to stay connected no matter what. 5G is steering this monumental shift as its global rollout takes place, and we want to make sure that our



customers are among the first.

"Designed to benefit businesses of all sizes and sectors, with fast speeds, flexibility and security, our plans come with dedicated customer service to make sure every business reaches its full potential." With a 1-year contract, businesses can choose from 20 Mbps for RO199 or 50 Mbps for RO399. Meanwhile, two-year contracts come with a choice of 20 Mbps for RO139 and 50 Mbps for RO279. Further higher speed plans will also be added soon.

Omani referees take part in virtual meeting of IKF



Oman's international karate referees participated in a distance virtual meeting through video meeting platform which was conducted by the International Karate Federation (IKF) on August 29.

The following international referees participated: Ahmed al Zakawani, Salim al Qutaiti, Hilal al Alabdali, Suleiman al Henai, Yusuf al Siyabi and Nesma Wnas.

The meeting was opened by Antonio Espinos, president of the International Karate Federation, in the presence of Khafiere Escalanti, head of referees committee, under the International Federation and the participation of 300 international referees from 95 countries.

The president welcomed the attendees and wished them good luck in their referring endeavour.

After that, they explained the procedures to be followed by everybody while dealing with COVID-19. Escalanti explained a number of points concerning registration procedures and renewing the international refereeing licence. Finally, they answered all inquiries and the attendees' questions related to the international refereeing rules implemented from the beginning of January 2020.

UAE-based supplier first firm in region to get new Renault trucks

UAE-based concrete supplier, Ocean Readymix & Precast has become the first company in the Gulf to take delivery of Renault Trucks' new 8x4 chassis model with a transit mixer capacity of 14m³. The new vehicles are being provided by Renault Trucks' UAE-based importer Al Masaood, one of the largest integrated industrial, commercial and service organisations in the Middle East.

In total, Ocean Readymix & Precast has received five units of Renault Trucks' K440 P8x4 model, which will be used by the company to service its projects and customers in its home city of Al Ain. With a Gross Vehicle Weight of 50 tons, the 8x4 Chassis version is the ideal model to meet the company's specific operational requirements. At the same time, the availability of a preventive maintenance service contract and reliable after-sales support provided added appeal.

The new K range models are equipped with an Optidriver manual gearbox with automated



gearing, as well as Renault Trucks' unique Optibrake exhaust braking system which, with a power rating of 300kW, promotes driver safety.

Additional selling points include hill-start aid, wheel anti-slip regulation (ASR), anti-lock braking system (ABS), emergency braking assist (AFU) and an electronic parking brake (EPB).

Renault Trucks' K range of heavy construction trucks is designed to tackle the Middle

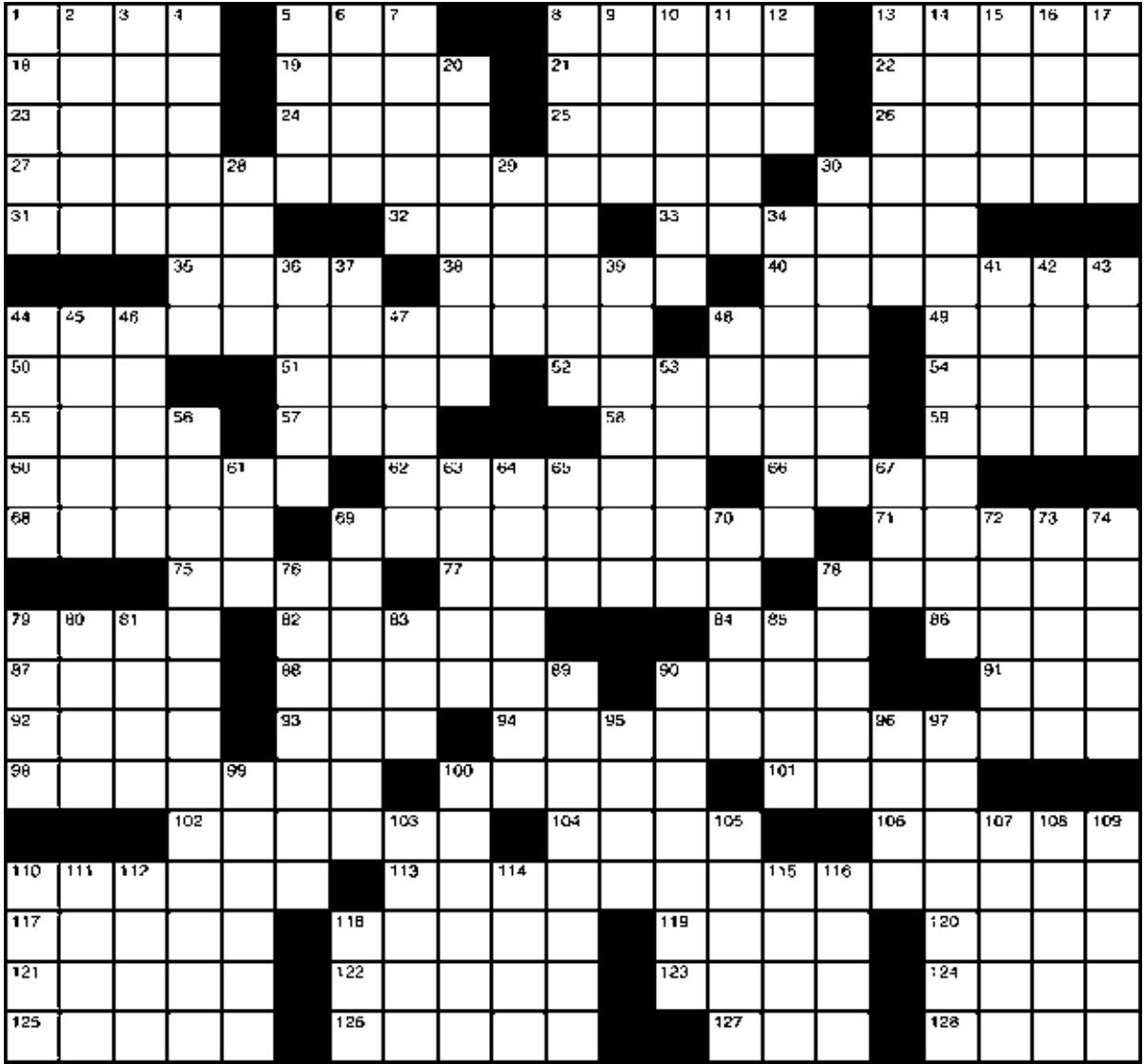
East's toughest terrain, while at the same time minimising fuel consumption and maximising profitability. The K range of heavy construction trucks also features the latest cutting-edge equipment and technology; these robust, heavy-duty trucks are equipped with 11lt and 13lt engines and All Wheel Drive (AWD) capabilities.

Eng Eyad Ibrahim Dukhan, managing director of Ocean Readymix & Precast, commented, "Working with Renault

Trucks for the very first time to bring this unique deal to light has been an extremely positive experience. Not only have we been able to collaborate closely to introduce the largest concrete mixer yet to the region, but the finance scheme offered by the brand ensures maximum flexibility for us as a business. With its tried and tested engine, differential and gearbox, we have total confidence in our new trucks' capabilities."

Mohamed el Zeftawi, general manager of Al Masaood Commercial Vehicles & Equipment, said, "We're very pleased to collaborate with Ocean Readymix & Precast and to provide them with our best-in-class holistic sales and aftersales services. Our sales and services are in line with Al Masaood's commitment to bringing enhanced customer experience and satisfaction. For Ocean Readymix & Precast, the K range model was a perfect fit for their needs due to its high capability and durability features that fully support the company's operations."

DAILY CROSSWORD



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125 Good cheese or chocolate
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127 Blustery
128 Geraint's beloved
DOWN
1 Knife edge
2 Kidney-related
3 Land of curry cuisine
4 By the sea
5 Designer Cassini
6 Spanish surrealist
7 Pickle herbs
8 Conductors
9 Above
10 Wealthy
11 Francois' friends
12 Pres. advisory gp.
13 Rasps
14 Floral mystery writer?
15 Poker stake

- 16 Rocker Billy
17 Learning
20 Wine storage areas
28 "... Can"
29 Where the sun rises
30 Planting tools
34 40 Across transaction
36 British farewells
37 Ready for business
39 Main dishes
41 Chop choice
42 Sommer of films
43 After lob or hip
44 Hollows
45 Shakespearean sprite
46 Dye plant
47 Up and about
48 Colloquial dissimilarity
53 "Superman" Chris
56 Floral aquatics star?
61 Moray
63 Records
64 21 Across item
65 Road sign
67 Sounds of surprise
69 Release sources
70 Author Shaw
72 Dana of films
73 Carnegie Hall performer

- 74 Tiny spot
76 Milk sugar
78 Map collection
79 "... Face"
80 "What ___ can I say?"
81 "I could ___ horse!"
83 Mexican Mrs.
85 Kazan of Hollywood
89 Preconcert musicians
90 Africa's most northern country
95 Actor Shalhoub
96 The sky over Paris
97 Shirley's pal
99 Gets uptight
100 John Travolta musical
103 Florida attraction
105 Calvin's Hobbes
107 Suffix for fix or flirt
108 Cartoon kid
109 Finished
110 Falls behind
111 "Pretty Maids All in ___"
112 Reiterative ailment half
114 Ken, of "Thirtysomething"
115 Ephron or Roberts
116 Mature
118 Aves.

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Virgo season has you putting your nose to the grindstone with work, Aries. You've invested long hours into your personal projects to get things shaped up the way you'd like. Sensitivity runs high (your subconscious is highly active today).

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

What sets you apart from the rest of the pack? This time of year is all about getting in touch with the talents that you tend to shrug off. Tonight's full moon directs your emotional energy toward the current happenings in your relationship story.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Be gentle with yourself today, Sagittarius. Tonight's full moon in emotionally-charged Pisces pulls you into the basement of your psyche for a good look around. This time of year sees you focusing all your energy on career matters and getting ahead.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You come equipped with a taste for the arts. Virgo season activates your desire for creative action, enjoyment of life's pleasures, and indulging in romantic rendezvous. Your creative self-expression can contribute on a larger social scale.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

It's your time of year, Virgo. You've been pouring energy into re-establishing your own wellbeing and honouring your individuality—and rightfully so! Revelations and emotionally charged conversations around love are likely today!

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Life implores us to make broad statements about how things operate. Over time, those statements become our philosophy about the world and ourselves. This time of year has you exploring what you believe about life on a big scale.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Geminis have a notoriously hard time sitting still and staying home. Yet, the universe has been asking you to do just that, as you explore your current connection to your roots. You might find that some career changes are waiting for you as well.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

As a Libra, you instinctively involve other people into your plans. It's part of your life's journey to explore the balancing art of these interactions! Yet, Virgo season asks you to move inward and away from the crowd, as you reconnect to your own source.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Aquarians don't typically enjoy having to sift through their psychological complexes and over analyse their relationships. Yet, that's precisely what the universe has you doing this Virgo season. Tonight's full moon shines its light onto your talents.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Exploring your mental terrain is no easy feat, Cancer. You have to wrestle with fears and memories of the past resurfacing on the daily. Virgo season is all about learning to wrangle your mind and express yourself more fully.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Scorpios tend to keep a very specific close knit group of friends. Virgo season is all about finding your place in community and re-establishing connection with the friends you truly value. Tonight's full moon in Pisces briefly pulls your attention away from the group.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

This time of year usually centres your focus around the give-and-take happening in your relationships. A lot of your energy is spent exploring the grounds for love and making sure everything is running smoothly. Take a beat to truly reconnect with your needs.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. When did Alessandro Volta invent electrophorus?
a) 1772
b) 1769
c) 1664
d) 1775

2. Which gas did Alessandro Volta discover in 1776 and isolate in 1778?
a) Methane
b) Neon
c) Chlorine
d) Ozone

3. When did Alessandro Volta invent voltaic pile also known as Volta cell?
a) 1802
b) 1800
c) 1804
d) 1814

Answers: 1. d 2. c 3. b

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

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

BOGGLER

N	T	E	U
R	E	R	O
P	A	E	R
S	E	K	S

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

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

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (AUGUST 31)

GIFFIN HST COMA HIDE ORLE DOOR EVEN OWER AWAY ENO EARTRING SPAS LATTICE ARID LATENT TELL ATES DEFER STERLING NEAR ELUTE STARS HORROR POOR OTIL APE CEDED STOW TURK SEDER BEINE PLEASES ROO DONEE BAY SHARPER GEDES SECTS HERS DOES EROSE HOP OAR BEAM TOTOT FARE TROPE SUOS ENKOLLED GITANY ATAR BELLOU GRANDE SPIET BAONESB AUNT SLAPSTICK KNEE ONCE TALL ADAY EGAN LEER SPAR ROY DENY

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

MEDICAL SUPPLY SERVICES

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1860/1860S

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9010



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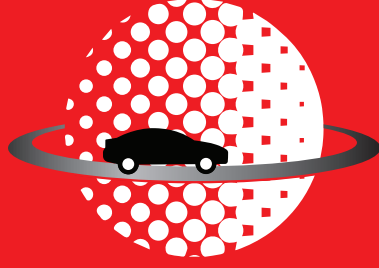


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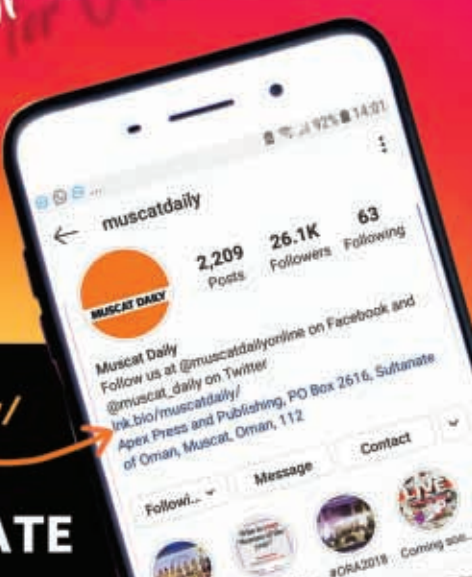
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FORMULA ONE

Red Bull defend Albon after Hamilton criticism



Red Bull driver Alex Albon (right) chats with Red Bull team chief Christian Horner during the Belgian Grand Prix at Spa-Francorchamps

Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium - Red Bull team adviser Helmut Marko hit back at Lewis Hamilton's criticism of Alex Albon and defended Red Bull's driver line-up as a 'good pairing' after the London-born Thai driver's sixth-placed finish in Sunday's Belgian Grand Prix.

Albon, in his first full season as Max Verstappen's teammate, has struggled to match the Dutchman's pace and has remained around four-tenths of a second per lap behind him – a gap that Sunday's race winner Hamilton believes has undermined Verstappen and Red Bull's challenge for the titles.

Marko, who is head of the Red Bull driver programme that has supplied a stream of racers to both Alpha Tauri, formerly Toro Rosso, and the senior team, defended Albon in the aftermath of Verstappen finishing third behind both Mercedes' cars to claim his sixth consecutive podium finish.

"I don't understand the criticism of Albon," said Marko. "Other teammates also had a lot of trouble with Max... I don't see it that Max is pushing him to the limit, but that he is pushing himself. I think we have a good pairing there."

Albon was separated from Verstappen by both Renaults on

I experienced it many years ago with McLaren and I was the driver that was always at the front and didn't have a teammate backing up. So you equally don't get the constructors' points

LEWIS HAMILTON



Sunday while Hamilton was followed home by teammate Valtteri Bottas in Mercedes' 50th one-two finish since 2010 in the modern turbo hybrid era.

Asked about the potency of Red Bull's challenge to the 'black arrows' defence of their championship crowns, Hamilton had suggested that Verstappen

lacked a teammate who could match his pace and results.

The championship leader, whose win on Sunday took him 47 points clear of second-placed Verstappen in the drivers' title race, did not mention Albon by name as he made a general strategic point.

"People downplay it, but Red

Ferrari must stay calm after flop: Vettel

Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium - Sebastian Vettel said Ferrari have to remain calm and avoid any sense of frustration as they seek to shake off a dismal Belgian Grand Prix weekend ahead of their home Italian race next Sunday.

The four-time champion, who is in his final season with the Italian team, finished 13th on Sunday, one place ahead of teammate Charles Leclerc, who won last year's race.

Neither driver was able to make any impression, as Ferrari struggled and finished pointless outside the top ten.

At one stage, the drivers almost collided as they banged wheels in a scrap over 12th position.

"It was very difficult to have any decent pace in this race or this weekend," said Vettel. "There are a lot of things we have learned and we have to stay calm and not frustrated."

"Being frustrated normally does not lead you anywhere. We

have to be calm, be realistic and not expect any miracles.

"The package we have is what it is and we have to focus on the good things even if there are not many of them."

Vettel added that he and the team were very conscious of 'the two important weeks coming up' with their home Italian Grand Prix at Monza next weekend being followed immediately by the Tuscany Grand Prix at Mugello to celebrate Ferrari's 1,000th F1 race.

"The next is Monza – it means a lot to us and we have to keep fighting," he said, as the team prepares to return to the 'temple of speed' for a race behind closed doors.

The German, linked with a move next year to Aston Martin, the re-branded Racing Point team, has won three times before at Monza, but his wins in 2008, 2011 and 2013 were with Toro Rosso and then, twice, with Red Bull.

AFF



Sebastian Vettel (left) speaks to a Ferrari team member at the Spa



Russell admits being 'very lucky' to avoid serious injury at Spa

Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium - George Russell said he had been 'very lucky' to escape serious injury on Sunday thanks to his Williams car's cockpit 'halo' when he was hit by a bouncing wheel from Antonio Giovinazzi's Alfa Romeo during the Belgian Grand Prix.

The Briton was behind the Italian as they came out of Les Fagnes corner where Giovinazzi lost control of his car

and spun into the barriers.

His car suffered extensive damage and a rear wheel flew across the track ahead of Russell.

"I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and there was nothing we could do," said Russell.

"If I went to the right, that's where Antonio's car was – but at the left side of the track, I had a massive impact with the tyre.

"I have to say you feel much safer in the car now with the halo. When I saw this massive tyre coming towards me, it was quite scary, to be honest."

"So I'm very thankful that we have this halo on the car right now. I'm all fine... just a little bit frustrated, obviously, but that's racing sometimes."

Giovinazzi said a snap of over-steer on the exit of the left-hand corner pitched him

out of control. "I had a snap of over-steer on the exit and there was nothing I could do," he said.

"I'm just sorry for my team after what happened, but I have to reset my mind right now for Italy."

"I feel really sorry for George as I destroyed his race as well. It's really unfortunate what happened to him. I'm just sorry."

AFF

Birdie bomb lifts Rahm to triumph over Johnson

Chicago, US - Jon Rahm drained a swinging 60-foot birdie putt at the first playoff hole on Sunday to win the US PGA Tour BMW Championship over world No 1 Dustin Johnson.

Spain's Rahm, ranked second in the world behind Johnson, was in the right rough off the tee at the first playoff hole, the 18th at Olympia Fields near Chicago.

His second shot rolled to the back of the green, leaving him what could have been a tough two-putt for par. "Never did I think I'd be making another 50-, 60-footer - couple of breaks in there, too - to end up winning it," said Rahm, who gave a roaring fist pump as the putt dropped.

Johnson's tee shot was also off course, but ricocheted off a tree to settle in the fairway. The American found the middle of the green, but after Rahm's miraculous birdie effort, Johnson's birdie attempt settled inches from the cup.

Johnson had snaked in a 43-foot birdie at the same hole to force the playoff, joining Rahm on four-under par 276 in the second event of the US tour's FedEx Cup playoffs.

Rahm had powered to the top of the leaderboard with six birdies in an impressive six-under par 64 - the lowest round of the week. "I still can't believe what just happened, what hap-

pened the last hour of play," Rahm said. "That stretch of waiting for DJ, him making the putt, going in the playoff, me making the putt, then trying to stay mentally in it just in case he made the last putt - it's been a roller coaster but so much fun."

Johnson, seeking a second straight win and 23rd tour title, started the day tied for the lead with Hideki Matsuyama with Rahm three adrift. He birdied three of his first four holes, but bogeys at eight and ten saw him fall out of the lead before he picked up strokes at 15 and 18 to sign for a three-under 67.

Johnson's solo second place means he'll stay atop the rank-

ings. Rahm was tied for sixth starting the day after a third round marred by a bad mistake at the fifth hole, where he absentmindedly picked up his ball on the green without marking it and was assessed a penalty.

The reserved Johnson pointed to the sky then swung a fist as his playoff-forcing putt crested a hill, accelerated down and curled in. "Obviously I knew I needed to make birdie to get into the playoff," he said. "I played an unbelievable putt, got in the playoff and then Jon made an even more ridiculous putt on top of me."

Rising Chilean star Joaquin Niemann finished with a 67 that

left him tied for third on 278 alongside Matsuyama, who signed for a 69. American Tony Finau was alone in fifth after a 65 for 279.

Meanwhile, Rory McIlroy closed with a disappointing one-over par 71 for a three-over par tally. Tiger Woods wrapped up the final round shooting a one-over 70 to finish the tournament at 11-over par and in a tie for 51st.

The final round was the best round for Woods', whose play over the weekend meant that he won't qualify for next weekend's Tour Championship in Atlanta, signalling that his PGA Tour season is over.

AFF



RAINA'S EXIT WON'T IMPACT CHENNAI, SAYS SRINIVASAN

Mumbai, India - Chennai Super Kings owner N Srinivasan has said he believes Suresh Raina's return to India from the UAE on Friday would not impact the team's preparations ahead of the IPL season.

However Srinivasan, a former BCCI president and ICC chairman, said Raina would 'certainly realise' what he would be missing, including the 'money he is going to lose' by skipping the IPL.

Srinivasan also said the Super Kings were confident about their prospects for the season because MS Dhoni, the captain, was 'unfazed' not just by the Raina issue but also by COVID-19's impact on the contingent: at least 13 members of the Chennai unit including two Indian players - one international and one uncapped - have tested positive since landing in the UAE.

This is the first time Srinivasan has commented on the Raina issue, which caught the Super Kings management by surprise. Raina returned to India on Friday from Dubai, less than ten days after the Super Kings had landed in the UAE for the IPL.



A file photo of N Srinivasan (left) and MS Dhoni

"Cricketers are like prima donnas ... like the temperamental actors of the olden days. Chennai Super Kings have always been like a family and all seniors players have learnt to co-exist," said Srinivasan, speaking to the *Outlook* magazine.

"My thinking is that if you are reluctant or not happy, go back. I don't force anyone to do anything ... sometimes success gets into your head," Srinivasan said.

On Friday, the Super Kings CEO Kasi Viswanathan said on the team's Twitter feed that Raina had left for 'personal rea-

sons' but did not elaborate on what they were. It is understood that a personal tragedy, as well as concerns over the team's biosecure bubble in the UAE, led Raina to his decision.

"The season has not begun yet and Raina will certainly realise what he is missing and certainly all the money he is going to lose," Srinivasan said.

Raina has been part of the Super Kings set-up since the inception of the IPL in 2008, and is the franchise's highest run-getter and a key figure in the team reaching multiple finals and win-

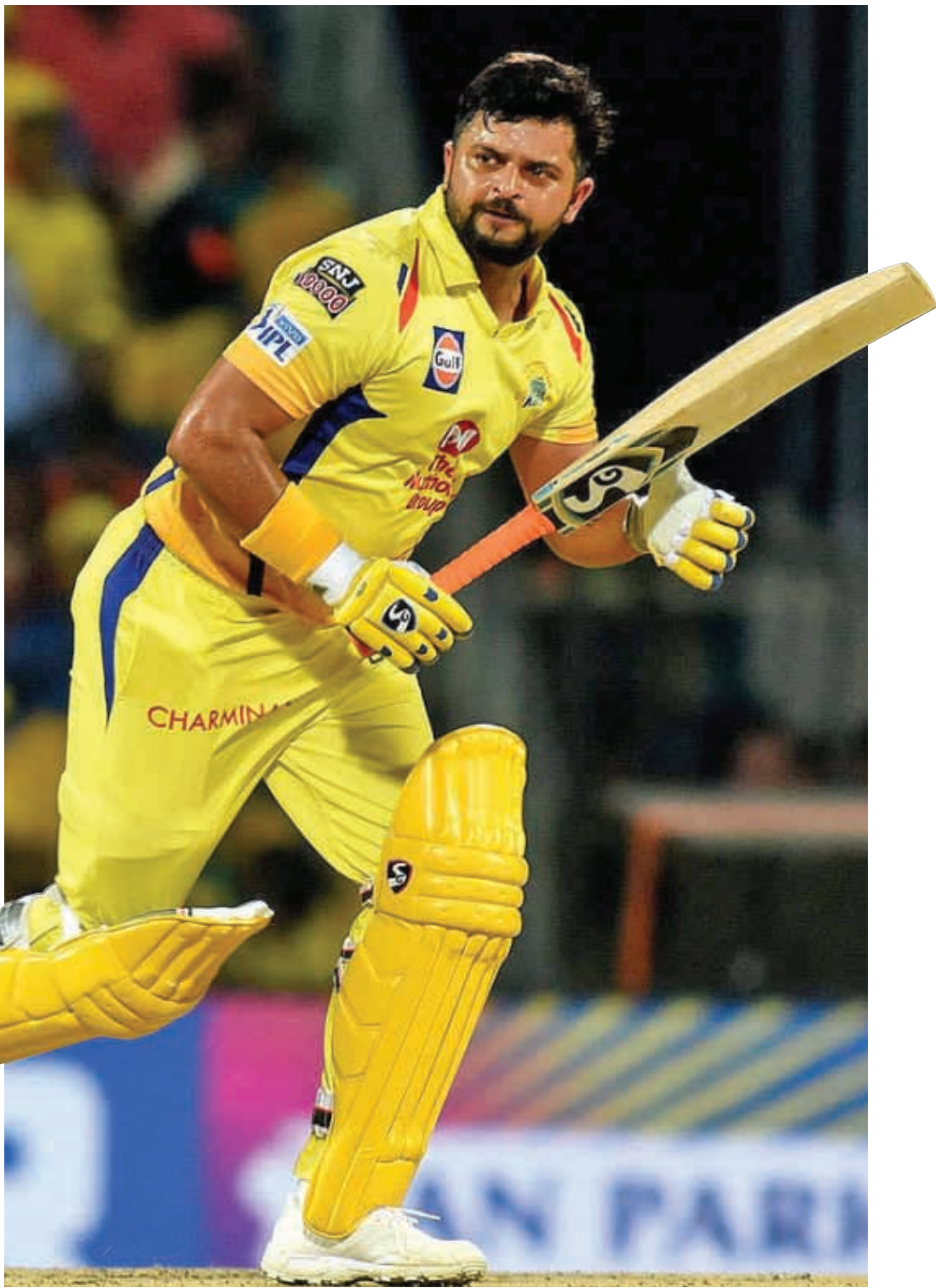
ning the title twice.

In 2018, Super Kings retained three players before assembling the rest of the squad at the layer auction. Dhoni was the first player retained at US\$2mn, Raina was the second at US\$1.5mn and Ravindra Jadeja the third at US\$955,830.

Srinivasan also said he had spoken to Dhoni, who reportedly assured him that things would be under control. "I spoke to MS and he has assured me that even if the numbers go up, there was nothing to worry," Srinivasan said. "He spoke to the players through a Zoom call and asked them to remain safe. You really don't know who is a passive carrier

"I have got a solid captain. Dhoni is simply unfazed by anything. That is giving everyone in the team a lot of confidence."

Agencies



A file photo of Suresh Raina during an IPL match last season

Morgan happy with 'career-best' form

ENGLAND VS PAKISTAN T20I SERIES

London, UK - Eoin Morgan has suggested he is hitting the ball as well as at any time in his career after a match-defining performance against Pakistan on Sunday.

Morgan made 66 from 33 balls as England pulled off a record T20I chase at Emirates Old Trafford and against this opposition.

It was his fourth half-century in his seven most recent T20I innings and sustains a remarkable record that has seen him average 59.37 in T20I cricket since March 2019 with a strike rate of 183.39.

Morgan's impressive numbers extend to ODI cricket. Since July 14, 2018 he averages 61.38 in the format with a strike rate of 106.79.

And Morgan, who was subsequently named Player of the Match, revealed the secret of his improved form was his increased comfort with the role he has been required to fulfil in



the England side.

"Am I hitting the ball as sweetly as I ever have? Definitely," Morgan said. "The numbers definitely back this up, even before this series started, and certainly within T20 cricket.

"The last two years in international cricket are my best numbers to date. That's great because if I can combine a little of that [form] with my experience, I think that will go a long way to winning games. It's nice that I am feeling good but it's actually replicated in the numbers as well.

"Why? It's about being comfortable in the role. It's about having experience and confidence in the roles that I play.

"Before I became captain, I didn't feel that comfortable jumping up and down the order. But now that it's my decision I feel more at ease, particularly when I am moving up and down the order between No 4 and No 6.

I'd feel more comfortable if I was slipping down to No. 6 with Jos Buttler coming in ahead of me, than I would beforehand."

AFF

Buttler, Archer, Wood recalled

ENGLAND SQUAD FOR T20I, ODI SERIES VS AUSTRALIA

London, UK - Jos Buttler, Mark Wood and Jofra Archer have been recalled to England's T20I and ODI squads for the forthcoming series against Australia, but there is no return for the Test captain Joe Root, nor for Jason Roy, who is yet to recover from a side strain.

England's two white-ball squads also include a recall for Sam Curran, who was not considered for selection against Pakistan after being a part of the Test bubble, while Tom Banton has been retained in both formats. Dawid Malan has been retained in the T20I squad, and Sam Billings is also involved in both squads after his starring

role in the ODI series win against Ireland last month.

Saqib Mahmood, England's quickest bowler in the Pakistan T20Is, makes way for the return of Wood and Archer, for whom the recall offers a first taste of international white-ball cricket since the World Cup final against New Zealand at Lord's last summer.

Mahmood will remain with the squad as a reserve, alongside Liam Livingstone in the T20I squad, and Joe Denly in the ODI squad. The Australia series is the first time that England have been able to select their strongest available white-ball squads since the South Africa tour in February, with the selectors operating separate Test and one-day

squads throughout the summer due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

England had hoped to be able to turn to Roy once again, after he was rested for the Pakistan series as a precaution.

T20I squad: Eoin Morgan (capt), Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Tom Banton, Sam Billings, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Joe Denly, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Mark Wood. **Reserves:** Liam Livingstone, Saqib Mahmood

ODI Squad: Morgan (capt), Moeen, Archer, Bairstow, Banton, Billings, Buttler, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Rashid, Joe Root, Chris Woakes, Wood. **Reserves:** Joe Denly, Saqib Mahmood

Cricinfo



AB de Villiers (left) with Royal Challengers Bangalore coach Simon Katich at the nets in Dubai, UAE, on Saturday

De Villiers back to keeping at Royal Challengers' nets

Dubai, UAE - The postponement of the 2020 T20 World Cup may have thrown AB de Villiers' potential South Africa comeback off the rails for the moment, but he's happy to be back playing cricket in some form after a strict five-month lockdown in South Africa because of COVID-19.

In this period, the only cricket he played was at the experimental 3TC competition in Centurion, where he slammed a 21-ball half-century to lead his side, the Eagles, to victory. Last week, de Villiers linked up with the Royal Challengers Bangalore squad for IPL 2020 in the UAE, and had his first hit on Saturday.

"It was good, very enjoyable to be out there," de Villiers told RCB TV. "It was night time, the lights were a bit blurry, the wicket was a bit sticky so it was a great challenge and actually if I could have it my way, this would've been the way I would've had it after a long time. So, I really kept my basics in place. I had to watch the ball carefully and I hit some nice shots towards the end, which was enjoyable."

De Villiers took part in a full session that included warm-up

drills, a game of football, a batting session and wicketkeeping drills. Fellow South African Chris Morris, their latest recruit at the auction, was among those who bowled at de Villiers, amid a battery of net bowlers and throw-down specialists. A day earlier, Dale Steyn was part of the first batch of players to train.

That de Villiers trained with the gloves was noteworthy, considering he hasn't kept in the IPL since 2013.

However, he returned to keep wickets during his stint with Brisbane Heat at the Big Bash League earlier this year. While Royal Challengers haven't officially confirmed if they are thinking on those lines - they have Parthiv Patel and Australia's Josh Philippe as specialist wicketkeepers - it's something the franchise feels could be a 'topic for discussion'.

"We have had a lot of discussions about the make-up of our team. I think it is hard to say anything now, we have three weeks of the camp to get through and see how things turn out physically. Obviously, AB has kept wickets before and that will be a topic for discussion," head coach Simon Katich said during a media

interaction last week.

"He has a huge role to play for RCB, given his level and performances over the years for us and South Africa. We know he's world-class. He will be revitalised with the break. We'll play it by the ear, let's see what happens."

Lockdown was a big hurdle: Rhodes

Elsewhere, Jonty Rhodes took charge of the Kings XI Punjab group during his first session as their fielding coach. Rhodes is making a return to the IPL after having spent two seasons away post his stint with the Mumbai Indians.

Like the rest of the players and support staff, Rhodes too was in

lockdown in South Africa. Although initially concerned, he is at ease having complied with the mandatory six-day quarantine.

"I must confess being away from home was a big concern, having spent the last five months in lockdown in South Africa, but the biggest hurdle I had to overcome was those first six days [in quarantine]," he told the Kings XI website. "That's done. Out here as part of the coaching staff, we have to manage the players, they've also had a long lockdown period. Even though a few of the guys have been practising in the nets, when they've had the opportunity, there's no match practice in their systems."

Cricinfo



Kings XI Punjab coach Jonty Rhodes

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

STAND-OFF CONTINUES BETWEEN MESSI, BARCA

Argentinian superstar misses first pre-season training session

Madrid, Spain - Lionel Messi boycotted Barcelona's first pre-season training session on Monday, club sources have confirmed to AFP, as the striker upped the stakes in his battle to leave this summer.

After skipping coronavirus tests on Sunday, Messi was absent again from the club's Ciutat Esportiva training ground, where Ronald Koeman held a session at 5:30pm (local time), his first since being appointed Barca coach.

It appears increasingly likely Messi will try to force a transfer by refusing to play in Spanish League (La Liga) next season, which begins on September 12.

The 33 year old Argentinian and his lawyers believe that participating in Barca's pre-season programme would contradict their argument that Messi no longer belongs to the club.

They insist a clause in his contract that allows Messi to depart for free this summer was activated last Tuesday, when the burofax stating his intention to leave arrived at the Camp Nou. But Barcelona maintain that clause had to be activated by June 10 and the deadline has not been extended, despite the

season being prolonged due to the pandemic, with the men's Champions League final played on August 23.

La Liga backed up Barca's position on Sunday by announcing that the release clause in Messi's contract, set at US\$833mn, still applies. "The contract is currently in force and has a 'termination clause' applicable if Lionel Andres Messi decides to activate the early unilateral termination of the contract," La Liga said. "In compliance with the regulations and procedure in these cases, La Liga will not de-register the player from the (Spanish football) federation unless they have previously paid the amount of said clause," the league added.

The club's captain and greatest ever player, who has scored 634 goals for them and won 34 titles, now risks being punished either by a fine or, if his absence continues, a reduction in salary. Manchester City remain favourites to sign the six-time Ballon d'Or winner. Messi has reportedly spoken to City coach Pep Guardiola but other clubs remain in the running, including PSG, Inter Milan and Juventus.

AFP



Jack Grealish

Grealish earns first England call-up, Rashford withdraws

NATIONS LEAGUE
London, UK - Aston Villa midfielder Jack Grealish was called up to the England squad for the first time on Monday after Marcus Rashford and Harry Winks withdrew from the Nations League matches against Iceland and Denmark.

Villa captain Grealish was a surprise absence from Gareth Southgate's initial squad for the Nations League matches after his impressive form helped his club avoid relegation from the English Premier League last season.

But the withdrawals of Manchester United forward Rashford and Tottenham midfielder Winks created a vacancy the 24 year old will fill.

Grealish, recently linked with a move to Manchester United, has previously represented England at U21 level and was a member of Southgate's Toulon youth tournament-winning squad in 2016.

Southgate had already added Wolves defender Conor Coady and Arsenal

midfielder Ainsley Maitland-Niles to his squad on Saturday after dropping Manchester United captain Harry Maguire following the guilty verdict over in his Greek court case.

Maguire, who had pleaded not guilty, is appealing after being handed a suspended prison sentence after the street brawl.

Rashford has been nursing an ankle problem suffered towards the end of last season and he tweeted: "Gutted. Never want to let this team down but these fixtures just came a little too soon for me.

"I tried my best but I have to focus on starting the season at my strongest for club and country. Good luck boys, I'll be cheering you on from home."

England's players met up at their St George's Park training camp on Monday ahead of the clash with Iceland in Reykjavik on September 5 and the trip to face Denmark in Copenhagen three days later.

AFP

Thauvin lifts Marseille to win at Brest



Marseille's French forward Florian Thauvin celebrates after scoring a goal against Brest during their French League match at the Francis Le Ble Stadium in Brest, western France, on Sunday. Photo right: Monaco coach Niko Kovac celebrates after his side beat Metz on Sunday

FRENCH LEAGUE
Paris, France - Florian Thauvin marked his first start in 15 months with a goal and two assists as Marseille beat Brest 3-2 on Sunday in their opening game of the French League (Ligue 1) season.

World Cup winner Thauvin

missed all but 20 minutes of the coronavirus-shortened 2019-20 season with an ankle injury as Marseille came a distant second to Paris Saint-Germain, the club's best finish in seven years.

Coach Andre Villas-Boas hopes the return to full fitness of Thauvin can help the team close

the gap on bitter rivals PSG, who start their campaign on September 10 and host Marseille three days later.

Marseille's scheduled opener last weekend was postponed after they suffered five cases of COVID-19. Dimitri Payet, Bouna Sarr and Alvaro Gonzalez were



after signing on loan from Borussia Dortmund.

Kovac gets first Monaco victory
Earlier on Sunday, Niko Kovac earned his first French League victory as Monaco coach as his side won 1-0 at Metz.

Teenage centreback Benoit Badiashile scored for the second game in a row and Monaco held on despite playing almost half the match a man down following the dismissal of Youssouf Fofana.

Bordeaux are in second place, two points behind leaders Nice, after a 2-0 triumph at Angers courtesy of goals from Nigeria international Josh Maja and Toma Basic.

Nantes are one of five sides on four points, along with Rennes, Lille and Monaco, as they defeated Nimes 2-1 despite finishing the game with just nine men.

Romain Hamouma netted twice for Saint-Etienne in a 2-0 win over promoted Lorient as last season's French Cup runners-up also made a belated start to the new campaign.

AFP



Celtic players celebrate after their win against Motherwell on Sunday

Celtic defeat Motherwell

SCOTTISH LEAGUE
Glasgow, UK - Celtic bounced back from their midweek Champions League exit to beat Motherwell 3-0 on Sunday and stay in touch with early Scottish Premiership pacesetters Rangers.

Neil Lennon's side were knocked out of the Champions League qualifiers by Hungarian side Ferencvaros on Wednesday and were again unconvincing before winger James Forrest scored five minutes before the break.

Bottom-placed Motherwell, who are winless after six matches, proved stubborn opponents but late goals from substitute Alban Ajeti and Christopher Jullien sealed their fate.

Celtic, aiming for their tenth successive title, moved to within six points of Rangers with two games in hand after their win at Parkhead.

In another game, Aberdeen edged past hosts Hibernian 1-0.

AFP

Ewan rockets to sprint victory

TOUR DE FRANCE
Sisteron, France - Australian rider Caleb Ewan produced an irresistible late burst of speed to pip a stunned Sam Bennett of Ireland on the finish line of stage three of the Tour de France on Monday.

France's Julian Alaphilippe retained the leader's yellow jersey after the 198km stage from the Nice football stadium to the hilltop town of Sisteron in the Haute Provence region.

Ewan, 26, won three stages on the 2019 Tour but started this

edition on his backside after a bruising fall on crash-strewn opening stage.

Known as the pocket rocket and standing 1.65m, Ewan bided his time and overtook Bennett right on the line.

The timely win gives Lotto a double boost after the team was reduced from eight to six riders on stage one when Philippe Gilbert broke a knee while John Degenkolb was thrown off the race for being too slow.

"It worked perfectly to plan, I had to move just at the right

moment. It was disappointing to lose two risers on day one, but everyone has pulled together and we've done quite well," Ewan said.

"The world is watching and everyone would like to be here at this, it's the biggest race in the world and I'm delighted."

Ewan won three stages on the 2019 Tour.

After a rampaging climax to Sunday's race provided by Alaphilippe, this stage was a more leisurely run through a national park located between

the Mediterranean and the foot of the Alps, winding through oak and pine-forested hills.

With around a third of the peloton nursing grazes and bumps from that bruising first stage, and with a speedy stage two in their legs, the teams took it slowly before the Tour was treated to its first real sprint.

"Today was one of the few real sprint opportunities, so we weren't going to give that up," Ewan said after stepping from the podium.

AFP



Australian rider Caleb Ewan exults in joy after winning stage three of the Tour de France on Monday



GAZPROM PROFIT SLUMPS

Russian energy giant Gazprom's net profit fell 25-fold to US\$447mn in the first half of 2020 due to the economic crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic and low oil and gas prices

BUSINESS

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MSM rises 0.54% on improved activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) rose 0.54 per cent to close at 3,771.89 points on Monday.

Trading activity improved from the previous session as turnover jumped by 488.89 per cent to RO3.09mn and volumes surged 211.46 per cent to 14.41mn shares.

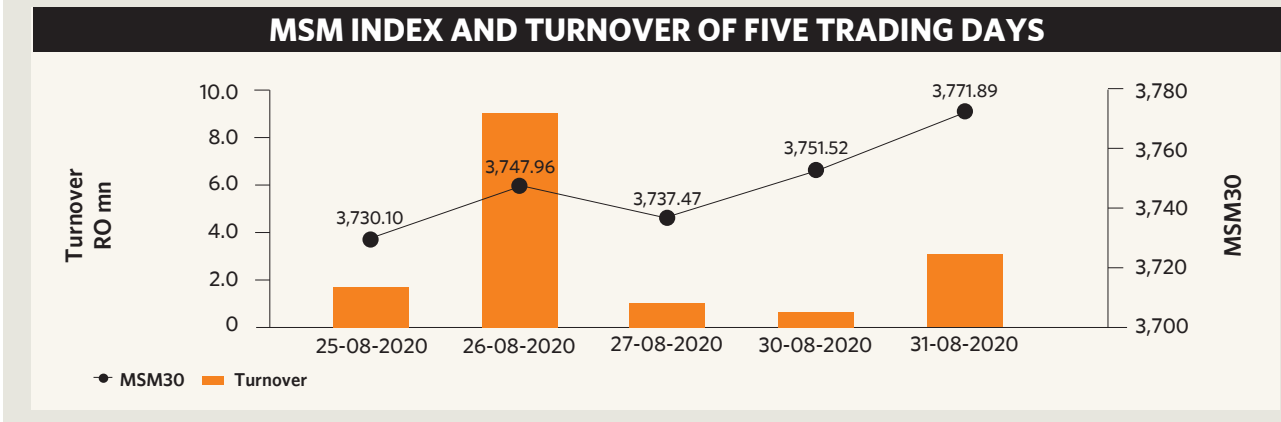
The gains in the main index were supported by all the subindices. Financial index rose 0.73 per cent, Industrial index climbed 0.15 per cent and Services index rose 0.3 per cent. The MSM Shariah Index closed up by 0.09 per cent at 524.78 points.

Market breadth remained positive as 17 companies closed up, while eight companies closed down. The rest 21 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Oman Oil Marketing (5.88 per cent), Al Maha Petroleum (3.47 per cent), United Finance (3.18 per



cent) and HSBC Bank Oman (3.16 per cent). Top losers were ACWA Power Barka (-19.8 per cent), Dhofar Cattle Feed (-10.0 per cent) Al Madina Investment (-4.0 per cent) and Phoenix Power (-1.79 per cent).



Saudi Arabia discovers 2 new oil, gas fields

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia's national oil company Saudi Aramco discovered two new oil and gas fields, the country's state-run Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported on Monday citing the country's Energy Minister.

Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman announced that Saudi Aramco had discovered a gas field called Habbat Al-Hajarah in the Al-Jouf region and an oil and gas field called Abraq Al-Tuloul in the Northern Borders region.

The Habbat Al-Hajarah field, located east of Sakaka, is estimated to have a flow rate of 16mn standard cubic feet of gas per day as well as approximately 1,944 barrels of condensate per day.

The Energy Minister said the discovery of Abraq Al-Tuloul is expected to contain 'unconventional super light Arabian crude', with flow rates of 1.1mn cubic feet of gas per day and 3,189 barrels per day of condensate.



Saudi Aramco is continuing its work on 'assessing the quantities of oil, gas and condensate in the two fields, in addition to digging more wells to determine the area and size of the two fields,' Prince Abdulaziz said.

Saudi Arabia holds 269bn

barrels, or 17.2 per cent, of total global reserves after Venezuela.

The oil and gas sector accounts for about 50 per cent of gross domestic product, and about 70 per cent of export earnings.

Anadolu Agency

Turkish economy shrinks 10% on COVID-19 impact

Istanbul, Turkey - Turkey's economy shrank by 9.9 per cent between April and June compared to the same period last year, the first reading since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic showed on Monday.

The drop was smaller than the 10.7 per cent contraction forecast in a survey by Bloomberg and less severe than those experienced in other big emerging markets.

It was also largely in line with the economic slowdowns experienced across Europe once weeks-long national lockdowns were imposed in March.

The Turkish economy grew by 4.5 per cent in the first three months of the year as the country fought its way back from a deep economic crisis in 2018.

The pandemic forced the Turkish central bank to sharply cut interest rates and inject cash into the economy to help businesses and households survive.

But those measures are now taking a toll.



People wearing face masks do their grocery shopping at a market in Istanbul, Turkey on April 17 (AFP)

The Turkish lira has lost roughly fifth of its value against the dollar this year and annual inflation is hovering around 12 per cent.

The central bank has responded by tightening access to credit without raising the main interest rate - a political sore point for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The measures are aimed at slowing down inflation and improving the appeal of

Turkish bonds and other financial instruments.

But foreign investors are still pulling out of the Turkish market and the central bank is burning through its hard currency reserves to support the lira.

Investors are worried that Turkey may be forced to impose currency controls and raise tariffs on imports to raise dollars and euros.

AFP

Qatar enacts key worker reforms amid criticism

Doha, Qatar - Qatar on Sunday introduced a US\$275 monthly minimum wage and simplified the process for changing employers, the Labour Ministry said, following criticism of its treatment of foreign labourers.

It comes a week after a stinging Human Rights Watch (HRW) report highlighted the shortcomings of past efforts to improve conditions for the migrant labourers who make up almost 90 per cent of the population.

The new rules, which were announced last October 16 but have only now been signed into law, abolish the requirement that workers obtain a 'no objection' certificate from their employer to change jobs.

They require all workers, including domestic staff, be paid at least QR1,000 (US\$275) for a month of full-time work - equivalent to around US\$1.30 an hour.

Employers are also required to either provide bed and board, or an additional QR800 a month allowance for food and accommodation and will have six months to implement the new minimum wage.

Previously, the temporary minimum wage was set at QR750 (US\$206) a month.

'The Labour Ministry has today taken a major step forward in its labour reform programme by introducing a non-discriminatory minimum wage and removing the no-objection certificate requirement,' it said in a statement.

The ministry said the changes would 'boost investment in the



local economy and drive economic growth'.

Qatar has made a series of reforms to its employment regulations since being selected to host the 2022 World Cup, which has required a vast programme of construction dependent on foreign workers.

"Qatar is the first country in the Middle East to have a minimum wage for all workers without discrimination, whether domestic workers or private sector workers," Qatar's assistant under-secretary for labour affairs, Mohammed Hassan al Obaidly, told AFP.

Rights groups have long said Qatar's system - the same one used across the Gulf - of private companies rather than the state sponsoring individual workers fuels abuses.

The new rule requires all workers, including domestic staff, be paid at least QR1,000 for a month of full-time work

Amnesty International said the requirement to have an employer's agreement before changing jobs had 'left migrant workers in Qatar at the mercy of abusive employers'.

"We welcome the enactment of these laws, and now call on the Qatari authorities to ensure they are swiftly and properly implemented," said Steve

Cockburn, Amnesty's head of economic and social justice.

Vani Sarasawthi, director of projects at the Migrant Rights non-governmental group, said she had already received a flurry of messages about the changes from workers.

HRW said last week that some workers in Qatar were struggling to eat because employers were illegally withholding salaries as economic conditions worsen amid the coronavirus crisis.

The government insisted HRW's survey of 93 migrant workers at 60 companies or employers was not representative and that 'nearly all individuals who come to Qatar for employment never experience any form of wage abuse'.

AFP

Italy plunges into recession

Rome, Italy - Italy posted a record economic contraction on Monday as household spending and investment crashed during the country's coronavirus lockdown, driving the eurozone's third-largest economy deep into recession.

The country's GDP fell by 12.8 per cent in the second quarter compared to the previous quarter and by 17.7 per cent versus

the same period last year, national statistics agency Istat said.

'The full estimate of the quarterly economic figures confirm the exceptional extent of the drop in GDP in the second quarter, due to the economic effects of the health emergency and the containment measures adopted,' Istat said.

The contraction was even worse than predicted in July,

when Istat estimated a second-quarter drop of 12.4 per cent.

A recession is commonly defined as two consecutive periods of a quarter-on-quarter drop in GDP. Italy's economy shrunk 5.4 per cent in the first quarter.

In the second quarter, household spending fell by 11.3 per cent compared to the first quarter, while exports fell 26.4 per cent.

AFP

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Pandemic hits earnings at Chinese banks, oil firms

Shanghai, China - China's 'big four' banks suffered rare profit declines in the first half of the year and its two oil giants posted losses, joining a growing global tide of pandemic-induced red ink.

Bad-loan provisions rose as the pandemic hammered Chinese business activity, causing a historic first-quarter contraction and weighing on an economy that was already in a long-term growth slowdown.

Bloomberg News said the profit declines - reported over the weekend - were the largest in more than a decade for the banks, which are closely supervised by the Chinese government and for years have typically posted slight but steady increases.

"The pandemic sent the world economy into a serious recession, posing heavier pressure on banks' business operations and asset quality in 2020," Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) said in an earnings report.

ICBC, the world's largest lender in terms of assets, and Bank of China both said first half profit fell around 11 per cent, while China Construction Bank and Agricultural Bank of China each reported a decline of around ten per cent.

Shares in the four banks, all listed on the Hong Kong and Shanghai stock exchanges, were barely changed on Monday.

ICBC also indicated in its report that profit was likely im-



Industrial and Commercial Bank of China's (ICBC) first half profit fell around 11 per cent

pacted by government-directed initiatives to enlist financial institutions in the national pandemic recovery effort by extending credit to keep the economy steady.

The banks warned of further disruptions ahead.

"The global economy will face a variety of adversities in the second half of 2020, including sharp contraction in international trade and investment, turbulent international financial markets, restricted international exchange,

economic de-globalisation and rising geopolitical risks," ICBC warned.

Sinopec, Asia's biggest refiner, swung from a profit in the first half of last year to a loss of 21.17bn yuan (US\$3.2bn) as the pandemic depressed demand.

It was the company's worst-ever loss over a half-year period, according to Bloomberg.

PetroChina, the country's biggest oil producer, posted an even bigger loss of 29.98bn yuan.

Oil firms have been hit in part by a crash in oil prices this year, also triggered by the pandemic.

The two companies' shares rose more than two per cent on Monday.

The coronavirus outbreak, which first emerged in China late last year, caused a 6.8 per cent contraction in the Chinese economy - the world's second-largest - in the first quarter.

Growth returned in April-June, with the economy expand-

ing 3.2 per cent.

The Chinese banks are just the latest institutions to report pandemic damage.

British-based, Asia-focused lender HSBC reported a 69 per cent slump in earnings earlier this month, and top French bank Societe Generale announced a second-quarter loss of more than €1bn.

UBS, Barclays and others also have reported major financial hits linked to the pandemic.

AFP

India economic growth hit by record slump

Mumbai, India - India's economic growth suffered a historic 23.9 per cent decline between April and June, official figures showed on Monday, as manufacturing and productivity were battered by a strict coronavirus lockdown.

The contraction was the biggest since New Delhi started publishing quarterly statistics in 1996, and the latest figures came as the country's coronavirus cases surged past the 3.6mn mark.

The steep dip in Asia's third-largest economy reflected the impact of a months-long nationwide shutdown that saw most industrial and manufacturing activity grind to a halt.

The decline was worse than expected, with a survey of economists by Bloomberg earlier predicting a contraction of 18 per cent.

On Monday the government warned that the figures could be revised further since the pandemic had also affected the ability to collect accurate data on

economic activity.

"The entire quarter was spent in lockdown and it was a complete washout for the Indian economy," Mumbai-based economist Ashutosh Datar told AFP.

He added that the clouds of gloom were unlikely to lift 'for the next few quarters'.

"We started publishing quarterly growth figures only from 1996 and this is the worst quarterly performance on record ever since," he said.

Even before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a lockdown in late March, the economy was struggling to gain traction with sluggish growth, record unemployment, and a flurry of bad loans making banks reluctant to lend. The sudden shutdown prompted a huge exodus by millions of migrant workers who fled cities for their villages due to a lack of food and money. Many have yet to return even as restrictions have eased, leaving factories struggling with labour shortages.

AFP



A man waits for customers at his clothing store in New Delhi, India on Monday (AFP)

Captainless WTO is in troubled waters



Geneva, Switzerland - As Roberto Azevedo left the World Trade Organization (WTO) on Monday, the institution faces multiple crises without a captain - a situation experts warn could drag on for months.

Any future WTO leader will head an organisation mired in stalled trade talks and struggling to curb trade tensions between the United States and China.

It must also help member countries navigate a devastating global economic slump sparked by the coronavirus pandemic.

The global trade body faces relentless attacks from Washington, which has crippled the WTO dispute settlement appeal system and threatened to leave altogether.

Many observers fear that intransigent US positions could paralyse the WTO process of designating a new director general, leaving the organisation leaderless for the foreseeable future.

"The US demands that the new DG shares US concerns, many of which are about addressing concerns related to China," Manfred Elsig, a professor of international relations at

the World Trade Institute in Bern told AFP.

"Given that the DG is chosen by consensus, this tough stance complicates the selection."

The WTO has already presented a timeline for selecting one of eight candidates in the running to replace Azevedo within a few months.

But Elsig warned that 'the process is already torpedoed'.

"It could well be that many WTO members want to wait until after the [US] election, hoping that the administration changes," he said.

Azevedo's surprise announcement in May that he would end his second WTO term 12 months early forced the organisation to speed up its usually lengthy process of selecting a new leader.

Three Africans, two Europeans, two Asians and one Latin American quickly threw their hats in the ring.

The organisation is due this month to begin three rounds of consultations - dubbed 'confessionals' - in which all member states confidentially voice their preferences, gradually whittling down the list.

The process, based on con-

sensus, is expected to last until mid-November.

But soaring international tensions and growing politicisation of picks to head UN agencies and other international organisations could trip up the tentative timeline.

Members failed last month to pick an acting chief from among four deputy directors - something that is normally a straightforward process.

Brussels and Washington butted heads over whether German Karl Brauner, or American Alan Wolff, should get the job, in what observers say was unprecedented politicisation of an administrative decision.

Elvire Fabry, a researcher at the Jacques Delors institute, said that 'the US veto' of widely-backed Brauner was first and foremost linked to President Donald Trump's wish to 'increase the power play towards the European Union... ahead of the elections'.

Many say the process has never been so politicised, and some suggest the organisation might be forced to ditch its long-held policy of consensus and ask members to vote.

AFP

TikTok owner to abide by export rules

Beijing, China - The owner of popular video app TikTok said on Sunday it will 'strictly abide' by China's new export rules, which could potentially complicate a sale of the business as demanded by US President Donald Trump.

TikTok has been at the centre of a diplomatic storm between Washington and Beijing, and Trump signed an executive order on August 6 giving Americans 45 days to stop doing business with TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance - effectively setting a deadline for a sale of the



app to a US company.

But China's Commerce Ministry published new rules on Friday that added 'civilian use' to a list of technologies that are restricted for export.

The new regulations could make it more difficult for

ByteDance to sell the wildly popular video app, which features clips of everything from dance routines to jokes about daily life.

Walmart, which confirmed on Thursday that it has joined forces with Microsoft in negotiations to buy TikTok, has not yet commented on the new rules, while Microsoft declined to comment when asked by AFP.

ByteDance said in a statement it would 'strictly abide' by China's technology law and its list of restrictions 'to handle business relating to the import and export of technology'.

The move marked the first time China has adjusted its list of technologies subject to export bans or restrictions since 2008, adding 23 new items.

An interview with a professor in official news agency Xinhua on Saturday suggested the change could mean ByteDance has to get approval from the Chinese government to sell its technology to an American company.

TikTok CEO Kevin Mayer quit the firm, days after TikTok filed a lawsuit challenging the crackdown by the US government.

AFP

Berkshire acquires stakes in 5 Japanese trading companies

Tokyo, Japan - Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway has acquired five per cent stakes in five leading Japanese trading companies, it said in a statement on Monday.

The stakes are valued at more than US\$6bn according to Bloomberg News, and were acquired over approximately a year through regular purchases on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, Berkshire said.

The stakes are in Itochu Corp, Marubeni Corp, Mitsubishi Corp, Mitsui & Co and Sumitomo Corp, and Berkshire said it plans to 'hold its Japanese investments for the long term'.

Berkshire said it could increase its holdings up to 9.9 per cent in any of the five firms, but added it would not exceed that cap 'unless given specific approval by the investee's board of directors'.

Berkshire Hathaway is the holding company of Buffett, who

is considered one of the world's savviest investors and has amassed a US\$72bn fortune - the world's fourth-largest, according to *Forbes* magazine.

But even he has suffered setbacks during the pandemic, particularly on investments in the airline industry.

In the statement, Buffett said he was 'delighted' to participate in the Japanese firms and he hoped there would be 'opportunities of mutual benefit'.

News of the purchases sent stock in all five firms soaring, with Marubeni Corp up 10.18 per cent to 643.7 yen, Sumitomo Corp up nine per cent to 1,373.5 yen, Mitsubishi Corp up 8.72 per cent to 2,536 yen, Mitsui & Co up 6.47 per cent to 1,898.5 yen and Itochu Corp up 4.49 per cent to 2,731.5 yen.

The Nikkei as a whole was higher, up 1.20 per cent at the open on Monday.

AFP

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Lebanon's PM-designate vows to swiftly form reform-oriented govt

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib vowed on Monday to swiftly launch a reformist government and seek international financial assistance after the Beirut blast deepened a political and economic crisis.

In a televised speech after his nomination, Adib said there is 'a need to form a government in record time and to begin implementing reforms immediately, starting with an agreement with the International Monetary Fund'.

An AFP correspondent then spotted him in an immaculate white shirt, tie and face mask touring the Gemmayzeh neighbourhood, which was hard hit by an August 4 Beirut explosion.

"I want your trust," the AFP correspondent heard him tell a resident.

The PM-designate also met with volunteers spearheading relief efforts in the blast-hit district, telling them he wanted the state to work with them in rebuilding Beirut.

No other senior government official has visited neighbourhoods near the port since the explosion.



Lebanon's Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib (left) tours Beirut's badly-hit Gemmayzeh neighbourhood, on Monday (AFP)

Mustapha Adib, a little-known diplomat who was nominated to become Lebanon's new Prime Minister on Monday, faces the nearly impossible challenge of embodying change after being

picked by the political establishment.

Adib has been Lebanon's ambassador to Germany since 2013 and his name only emerged on Sunday to replace Hassan Diab,

whose government resigned in the aftermath of the deadly August 4 blast at Beirut port.

The 48 year old was born in the northern city of Tripoli and is a Sunni Muslim, making him eli-

gible to become prime minister under Lebanon's sectarian-based power-sharing system.

His biography on the Berlin embassy website presents him as an academic who holds a PhD

in political science.

It says he has conducted 'research and expert work in the areas of both human and state security, parliamentary oversight of the security sector, decentralisation and local democracy, and electoral laws'.

From 2000 to 2004, he served as an advisor to Najib Mikati, a billionaire and former prime minister who backed his nomination on Monday.

In 2011, then-prime minister Mikati appointed Adib as his chief of Cabinet.

Former prime ministers Saad Hariri and Fouad Siniora also threw their weight behind Adib after two other candidates were reportedly rejected by the dominant Shiite Muslim group Hezbollah and its political allies.

His appointment came on the day French President Emmanuel Macron is arriving for another landmark visit.

An acquaintance of Adib from Tripoli described him as 'calm, courteous and diplomatic'.

"He is not a man of confrontation and does not take strong stances, but avoids problems and strives to solve them diplomatically with a view to consolidating his relationship with different sides," the acquaintance said.

Opposition groups representing the protest movement that erupted last year to demand the wholesale removal of a political class seen as corrupt and incompetent rejected Adib's nomination before it was even confirmed.

Activists on social media were quick to compare Adib to Diab, who had promised to lead Lebanon's first government of technocrats when he took office in January but showed no ability to break from his political sponsors.

Lebanon Rises Up - Germany, a Facebook page representing Lebanese activists in Germany, told AFP that Adib was a product of the past and could not embody change.

AFP

Mustapha Adib faces the nearly impossible challenge of embodying change

Former Indian president Pranab Mukherjee dies



A file of the then India's President Pranab Mukherjee (AFP)

New Delhi, India - Former India president Pranab Mukherjee, a veteran powerbroker once described in leaked US diplomatic cables as 'the ultimate Congress Party fixer', died on Monday at the age of 84, his family said.

He died of multiple organ failure after being admitted to hospital weeks ago, having also contracted coronavirus.

The Bengal-origin politician was a protégé of former prime minister Indira Gandhi and was a member of her Cabinet when she suspended democratic rights in the infamous 'Emergency' of 1975-77.

Mukherjee's star waned after Gandhi's assassination in 1984

when he was a rival to her son and heir Rajiv Gandhi for leadership of the Congress party.

He briefly broke away from Congress, but after Rajiv Gandhi was killed in 1991 his political fortunes revived.

He became Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's righthandman during his decade in power from 2004-14, serving as defence, foreign and finance minister, winning a cross-party reputation as a skilled negotiator.

However, Mukherjee's performance as finance minister was criticised for his failure to push through economic liberalisation measures.

In 2012 he moved away from active politics and assumed the largely ceremonial role of president, serving a five-year term until 2017.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, from the arch-rival nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, said Mukherjee 'left an indelible mark on the development trajectory of our nation'.

'A scholar par excellence, a towering statesman, he was admired across the political spectrum,' Modi said on Twitter.

Current President Ram Nath Kovind called Mukherjee 'a colossus in public life' who served India 'with the spirit of a sage'.

AFP

India's top court fines rights lawyer token one rupee

New Delhi, India - India's top court imposed a symbolic one rupee fine (one US cent) on Monday on a celebrated public service lawyer for contempt in a case that raised concern about free speech in the world's largest democracy.

Prashant Bhushan (63) was convicted in August for two tweets deemed critical of the judiciary - including one showing a picture of the chief justice astride a Harley-Davidson motorbike.

Following Monday's sentencing, Bhushan tweeted a photo of him holding a one rupee coin -



Senior advocate Prashant Bhushan (right) during a press conference in New Delhi on Monday (AFP)

saying his lawyer and senior colleague Rajiv Dhavan had given him the money.

Bhushan had been ordered to pay the fine by mid-September or face three months in jail and a suspension from the bar.

The case raised concerns about freedom of speech, but also was seen as a battle of wills in India's legal ether. Bhushan is a political activist and a vocal critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

Hailing from legal blue blood, he studied at top Indian universities - and Princeton in the US -

before embarking on a celebrated career at home.

Following the imposition of a coronavirus lockdown in March, Bhushan filed petitions concerning the plight of millions of migrant workers who were left without jobs.

In June he tweeted a picture of chief justice Sharad Arvind Bobde on a motorbike - without a face mask and surrounded by people despite the coronavirus pandemic. He accused him of hypocrisy at a time when the court was in lockdown.

AFP

Germany urges more from Moscow to probe Navalny poisoning

Paris, France - Germany on Monday urged Moscow to step up its efforts to investigate the apparent poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny who is currently being treated at a Berlin hospital in a coma.

Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in a special address to French ambassadors in Paris that Europe needed 'constructive' relations with Russia for the sake of the continent's own security but it was clear now that 'dark clouds' were hanging over bilateral ties.

"Of course we have the expectation that Russia should contribute more to clearing up of the Navalny case than it is doing at the moment," he said alongside French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian.



German army emergency personnel load into their ambulance the stretcher that was used to transport Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny at Berlin's Charite hospital on August 22 (AFP)

Berlin's renowned Charite hospital said on Friday there was 'some improvement' in Navalny's condition but the 44 year old nevertheless remains in a medically induced coma and on a ventilator.

Navalny fell ill after boarding a plane in Siberia earlier this month. He was initially treated in a local hospital before being flown to Berlin for treatment.

Charite doctors said they believed the anti-corruption campaigner was poisoned with a substance that inhibits the cholinesterase enzyme, a feature of nerve agents.

Navalny's allies say he may have been poisoned by a cup of tea he drank at Tomsk airport in Siberia.

But the Russian doctors who

first treated Navalny said their tests did not find any toxic substances, and the Kremlin has rejected international calls for an investigation.

Russian blogger alleges assault

A well-known Russian opposition blogger and radio host was beaten outside his home in Moscow, his spokesman said, as Kremlin critics say they are subject to a growing number of attacks.

Yegor Zhukov (22) was handed a suspended sentence last summer on extremism charges for making videos criticising President Vladimir Putin amid huge protests calling for fair elections.

AFP

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GLOBAL PRESSURE ON CHINA

Czech minister to summon China envoy over threat to senator

Prague, Czech Republic - The Czech Foreign Minister said on Monday he would summon the Chinese envoy to Prague after threats were made against an opposition politician who is currently visiting Taiwan.

A delegation led by Czech Senate speaker Milos Vystrcil arrived in Taipei on Sunday, angering China which is trying to keep the island isolated from the rest of the world.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Monday that China would make Vystrcil 'pay a high price for his short-sighted behaviour and political speculation' on his ministry's website, calling the journey a 'provocation'.

"I expect the Chinese side to explain those words," Czech Foreign Minister Tomas Petricek told journalists in Prague.

"Of course the journey has an impact on our relationships with China, but I think this has gone too far."

The Czech government accepts the One-China policy under which Beijing considers Taiwan a part of its territory, with reunification by force an option, and does not send official delegations to the island.

But Vystrcil is a member of the right-wing opposition Civic Democrats and is not bound by the protocol.

His 90 member group, including politicians, entrepreneurs, scientists and journalists, will stay in Taiwan until Friday.

He gave a speech in Taiwan's parliament on Monday and is due to meet President Tsai Ingwen, whose re-election earlier this year upset China as she views the island as a sovereign nation and not part of 'one China'.

Vystrcil said his trip would fulfil the legacy of the late Czech president Vaclav Havel, a



Czech Senate President Milos Vystrcil (centre) next to Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu (right) waves upon his arrival at the airport in Taoyuan on Sunday. Vystrcil is leading a Czech delegation - the second high-profile foreign visit to Taiwan this month (AFP)

China would make (Milos) Vystrcil pay a high price for his short-sighted behaviour (for visiting Taiwan)

Wang Yi

human rights fighter and dissident leader of the 1989 Velvet Revolution which toppled communism in the former Czechoslovakia.

Vystrcil is following in the footsteps of his predecessor Jaroslav Kubera, who died of a heart attack in January while planning the trip to Taiwan.

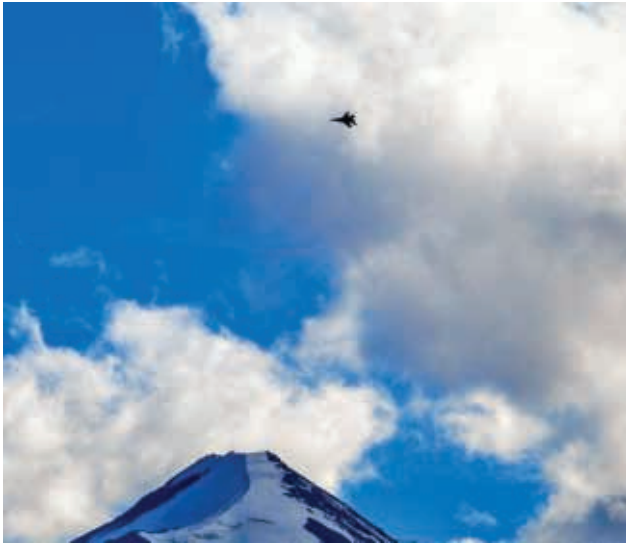
After Kubera's death, Czech media published a letter stamped by the Chinese embassy in Prague, in which China threatened both Kubera and Czech companies intending to accompany him on the trip.

Ties between Prague and China suffered a blow last October when Prague city hall, run by a mayor from the anti-establish-

ment Pirate Party, pulled out of a twinning deal with Beijing over its insistence on the One-China policy.

Prague mayor Zdenek Hrib, who is on Vystrcil's delegation, then signed a partnership agreement with Taipei in January, triggering outrage in Beijing.

AFP



An Indian fighter jet flies over a mountain range in Leh, the capital of the union territory of Ladakh, on Monday (AFP)

India accuses China of new 'provocative' border action

New Delhi, India - The Indian military on Monday accused China of carrying out 'provocative' movements on their contested Himalayan border near where 20 Indian troops were killed in a battle in June.

A Defence Ministry statement said the incidents happened in eastern Ladakh on Saturday night but did not indicate whether there was a new clash.

Chinese People's Liberation Army troops 'carried out provocative military movements to change the status quo' at the border, it said.

It added the two sides were holding military talks on Monday.

On June 15, troops from the two sides fought hand-to-hand combat in which 20 Indian troops were killed. China also acknowledged casualties but did not give numbers.

New Delhi and Beijing have blamed each other for the latest frontier tensions between the two sides who fought a border war in 1962 and have been involved in regular showdowns since.

The Chinese and Indian militaries have poured tens of

thousands of troops into the region since the June fighting. But their military and diplomatic talks on easing tensions are in an apparent stalemate.

The Indian statement said Chinese troops 'violated the consensus' to ease border tensions.

'Indian troops pre-empted this PLA activity on the southern bank of Pangong Tso Lake, undertook measures to strengthen our positions and thwart Chinese intentions to unilaterally change facts on ground,' said the Indian ministry.

'A brigade commander level flag meeting is in progress at Chushul to resolve the issues,' Beijing did not confirm the incident. However at a regular press briefing on Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said, "Border troops from both sides have maintained communication over issues on the ground."

China's military said Indian troops had crossed the border Monday near Pangong Tso, a lake at 4,200m, and engaged in 'open provocation and caused the border situation to become tense'.

AFP

A brigade commander level flag meeting is in progress India's Defence Ministry

Thailand delays \$724mn submarine deal with China

Bangkok, Thailand - Thailand delayed on Monday its US\$724mn purchase of two submarines from China, following public outrage over the controversial deal as the kingdom's economy flatlines due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Under a 2015 deal, Thailand was one of the first countries to buy Chinese naval hardware and finalised its purchase of three submarines in 2017, with the first one expected to be delivered in 2023.

An order for two more for 22.5bn baht (US\$723.9mn) was approved earlier this month by a parliamentary subcommittee - a move which drew public outcry as Thailand struggles with a freefalling economy.

Angry Thais took to social media to criticise the deal, and the hashtag 'People don't want submarines' trended on Twitter.

Government spokesman Anucha Burapachaisri an-

nounced Monday Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-cha - also defence minister - had 'requested the navy to consider a delay' in the purchase of the two additional submarines.

"The navy will negotiate with China to delay for another year," Anucha told reporters.

Prayut's military-aligned administration is under fire from near-daily protests demanding his resignation and a complete overhaul of the government - which the demonstrators consider illegitimate.

Thailand's economy is also undergoing one of its worst periods in more than 20 years, contracting 12.2 per cent in the second quarter as its tourism- and exports-led sectors have been hard-hit by the pandemic.

"The Prime Minister has given priority to the concern of the public who are worried about the economy," Anucha said.

Besides questioning military purchases and the govern-

ment's handling of the economy, the burgeoning pro-democracy movement is also calling for reforms to the unsalable monarchy - a once-taboo topic in the kingdom.

The increasingly bold requests from the youth-led protesters have drawn ire from arch-royalist camps, who have held counter-demonstrations to demand that protesters 'do not touch the monarchy'.

More than a thousand mostly older demonstrators dressed in yellow shirts - considered a royal colour - massed at a stadium on Sunday, holding portraits of King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

On Monday, they submitted a letter to the Japanese embassy in Bangkok to demand the extradition of prominent government critic Pavin Chachavalponpun, who started a private Facebook group to hold frank discussions of the monarch.

AFP

Australia to probe increasing foreign influence at universities

Sydney, Australia - Australia's parliament is set to probe alleged foreign interference at public universities, a government minister said on Monday, as concerns grow about Chinese influence.

A proposed inquiry by the security and intelligence committee follows a series of controversies over China's clout on Australian campuses, ranging from hacks of university data to questionable financial donations and intimidation of Beijing's critics. Concerns have also been raised about the nature of research links between academics and scientists in the two countries.

Alan Tudge, the Minister for Population and Cities, told Sky News the mooted inquiry was the latest government attempt to tackle spiralling foreign interference now at 'levels not seen since World War II'.

The move comes after Canberra announced that it was seeking new powers to scrap



The Confucius Institute aim to teach Chinese language and culture, but critics say they often offer only Beijing government's view (AFP)

deals between local authorities and foreign countries that threaten the national interest - sweeping powers that would extend to universities.

A year ago Australia had announced new guidelines for universities for research collaboration, cybersecurity, and international partnerships.

China detains Australian journalist

China has detained an Australian news anchor working for its state-run English-language television network CGTN, Australia's Foreign Minister said on Monday.

The detention of journalist Cheng Lei is a new blow to de-

teriorating relations between the two countries that have seen China warn its citizens of travelling to Australia and vice-versa. Foreign Minister Marise Payne said Australia was informed on August 14 that Cheng was being held by Beijing authorities.

AFP

Trump presses law and order message as protest turns deadly

Trump’s challenger Joe Biden traded pre-election barbs on Sunday as violent clashes continued to roil US



The Portland east police personnel (left) stand guard, a day after political violence left one person dead, in Portland, Oregon on Sunday; a protester (right) exhales vape smoke during a march against police brutality and racial injustice, in Portland, Oregon on Sunday (AFP)

Portland, US - President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger Joe Biden traded pre-election barbs on Sunday as violent clashes continued to roil the US city of Portland following the fatal shooting of a protester.

While the US leader tried to characterise Biden as weak on crime, his opponent accused Trump of fanning the flames of violence in a polarised and tense nation.

Saturday’s shooting during a pro-Trump rally in the Oregon city followed a week of country-wide protests - including the cancellation of numerous sporting events - over the police shooting in Kenosha, Wisconsin of African American Jacob Blake.

The violence in Portland erupted during a rally involving hundreds of vehicles ‘caravanning throughout downtown Portland’, police said. OregonLive reported ‘clashes’ and ‘tense moments’ between demonstrators and counter-protesters.

Photographs from the scene showed the victim wearing a hat with a logo for ‘Patriot Prayer’, described by local media as a far-right group at the centre of multiple Portland demonstrations that have ended in violence.

By 10.00pm on Sunday, about 100 to 150 anti-racism protesters had gathered outside a police building to the east of the city centre, waving signs and occasionally throwing projectiles.

Police declared the gathering an illegal assembly and in a tweet ordered people to leave the scene, warning of arrests and the use of tear gas.

Videos posted online showed about 20 officers rushing from the building to clear the area, and arresting a handful of protesters.

The Portland clashes followed unrest in Kenosha, where prosecutors accused 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse of shooting dead two men and wounding another who were protesting against Blake’s shooting.

Trump is due to travel on Tuesday to the Midwestern city

His (Trump’s) failure to call on his supporters to stop seeking conflict shows just how weak he is

Joe Biden

‘Law and order’

Violence connected to anti-racism protests has become a major issue in the campaign for November’s presidential election, with Trump presenting himself as the ‘law and order’ choice and arguing that a Biden presidency would allow left-wing mob rule.

Biden condemned the violence and argued that Trump had played a role in spurring the clashes.

‘He is recklessly encouraging violence,’ the Democratic nominee said in a statement.

‘He may believe tweeting about law and order makes him

strong - but his failure to call on his supporters to stop seeking conflict shows just how weak he is.’

Biden’s campaign said he will give a speech on Monday to address what it called a key question facing voters in November ‘Are you safe in Donald Trump’s America?’

Trump spent Sunday morning tweeting and retweeting dozens of posts purporting to show violence in Democratic-run cities, and especially Portland.

The president has repeatedly threatened to send federal government forces into the west coast city if Mayor Ted Wheeler does not crack down.

Trump attacked Wheeler, a Democrat, for refusing help from the National Guard, which he said ‘could solve these problems in less than 1 hour’.

‘Wheeler is incompetent, much like Sleepy Joe Biden,’ Trump tweeted. ‘This is not what our great Country wants. They want Safety & Security, and do NOT want to Defund our Police!’

Wheeler blasted Trump in a press conference on Sunday, saying that for nearly four years Americans have had to tolerate what the mayor called Trump’s racist attacks on blacks, sexist talk about women, insults toward immigrants and journalists, and now, toward mayors of major US cities.

“Do you seriously wonder, Mr President, why this is the first time in decades that America has seen this level of violence?” Wheeler said. ‘It’s you who have created the hate and the division.’

Wheeler said the convoy that rode through Portland on Saturday night was inspired by Trump. “They were supported and energised by the president himself,” Wheeler said.

Wheeler had shared an open letter to Trump on Friday in which he said ‘we know you’ve reached the conclusion that images of violence or vandalism are your only ticket to re-election’.

Senate Homeland Security Committee chairman Ron Johnson, a Republican from Wisconsin, said the violence and loss of life would not stop until law enforcement reasserted control.

“But... when you encourage the disdain for the police you encourage criminals,” he told CNN.

“When you do little or nothing to stop rioting, you encourage anarchy. People’s lives are lost,” he said.

AFP

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AFP

Australia virus cases drop after Melbourne lockdown

Sydney, Australia - Australia reported fewer than 100 new coronavirus cases on Monday, the lowest number in two months as authorities appeared to bring an outbreak in the country’s second-largest city under control.

Victoria state, which has been battling a second wave of infections in Melbourne, recorded just 73 cases after peaking above 700 in late July, providing hope for a way out of a strict city-wide lockdown.

Melbourne residents are currently enduring a raft of restrictions including an overnight curfew, while all non-essential businesses remain closed until at least September 13.

Under growing pressure to ease restrictions, Prime Minister Daniel Andrews said he would release a ‘roadmap’ next Sunday for reopening but warned any changes would be gradual.

“We know and understand that if we were to open up with numbers anything like what we have had, even with a really positive trend, then those numbers



People walk around the Albert Park Lake in Melbourne, as the city battles an outbreak of COVID-19, on August 26 (AFP)

will explode,” he told reporters in Melbourne.

“You will lose control of this again.”

A further 41 fatalities were added to the state’s death toll, mostly in aged care facilities that have been devastated by the outbreak.

Protective equipment in high-risk workplaces, mandatory masks in public and physical distancing will be key to any reopening strategy, according to a government statement.

Even when restrictions are eased, Victoria is likely to remain sealed off from the rest of the country, where most regions are recording few or no new daily cases. The state, which has been battling a second wave of infections in the city, recorded just 73 cases after peaking above 700 in late July,

An outbreak at a youth detention centre in Brisbane has led the Queensland state government to put prisons into lockdown

providing hope for a way out of a strict city-wide lockdown.

Flare-ups are persisting in neighbouring New South Wales state, which recorded ten new cases on Monday as community transmission in Sydney continues to trouble health officials.

Meanwhile, an outbreak at a youth detention centre in Brisbane has led the Queensland state government to put prisons into lockdown and cancel a huge annual school-leavers celebration on the nearby Gold Coast.

Australia has recorded almost 26,000 cases in total and 652 deaths from the virus to date.

The vast majority were detected in Victoria in recent months, after the country’s initial success in containing the virus.

AFP

POST TRAVEL BLUES

Back from an exciting trip, don't sit and sulk over getting back to routine. Keep yourself engaged and let the excitement stay on.

Hubert Vaz

Have you ever come back from a trip abroad and felt that everything around seems meaningless or found it difficult to adjust back to your normal routine, or feel engaged in your job/household matters? Did you feel there is something out there that's really good for you and that you are missing out on it by burying the urge to travel and getting stuck in the daily grind? You might be experiencing 'post-travel blues', a common phenomenon among many people when they return from a wonderful trip.

What are post-travel blues?

Quite simply, 'post-travel blues' is a form of sadness that some travellers experience once they return from a trip. This can range from being disappointed that you're not sitting atop Table Mountain anymore to becoming seriously confused, frustrated and miserable that your home life pales in comparison to the freedom you experienced on your adventures.

"I call it a vacation hangover," says Karen Schaler, host of American series Travel Therapy TV. "You come back from a great trip and then you are depressed because it's now back to reality.

Why do we experience it?

Often, after a good trip, we get the blues because we start comparing our life at home to the trip we've just come back from. The spontaneity we revel in while travelling and the liberty of having no fixed plan is part of what makes the experience so enjoyable.

Back home, the usual rituals of regular life can appear almost mind-numbing at first. You find yourself comparing details – the culture, the society, the people – even if it's subconsciously; more often than not these contrasts can enhance your anxieties.

"Travelling naturally causes you to re-evaluate your own life and environment, which can bring dissatisfactions to the surface," explains Dr Alice Boyes, author of The Anxiety Toolkit.

For those people who do experience this, there are

ways to maximise the positives of a trip to stop that feeling from setting in.

How to handle it?

Being back home doesn't have to mean settling into the same old routine. Have a look around, there might be a secret wilderness you've never unearthed, a prime landmark you've never properly visited, a wealth of fascinating local history you can delve into. You just might have a great travel experience waiting at your doorstep.

Even if it's just a quick day trip somewhere to try a new restaurant, knowing you have another adventure looming, no matter how small, will keep you inspired.

It's not just what you can see on your return that matters, but also who you can see. "I make sure I see one of my friends the day I get home, even if it's just for a cup of coffee," a travel blogger said, pointing out that a good way to keep post-travel blues away is to remind yourself of the treasures of being home and to be thankful for every situation, however boring.

MAINTAIN THE HIGH



Arun D'Souza
Avid adventurer

Upon return from a trip, I keep up the excitement by reviewing, processing, and sharing photos taken on various photography portals, besides publishing photo albums or travelogues on FB. I also create YouTube videos and share them with various channels, besides discussing with various travel buddies about the adventure undertaken. Essentially, I try to maintain the high as long as possible, till I plan my next trip.



Hamdoon Sultan
Bicycle expeditionist

It's true that I often feel low after a good trip, especially after my trip to Morocco which was 19 days long. I just sit and think about the trip for days after it is over. Returning home after a great trip always makes it difficult to get back to one's routine lifestyle as the joys of travel make you feel that it should continue forever. However, I divert my mind by joining group hikes and sharing experiences.



Habiba al Balushi
Weekend adventurer

Usually after a trip, I do feel a bit depressed but I do overcome this feeling very fast by setting new goals. I take my time and think about the good things of the present. This helps me bounce back.



PACK RIGHT

Packing for travel need not be a nightmare if you do it right. Keep in mind where you are going, for how long, and what you intend doing when placing items in your travel bag. Here are some helpful packing techniques to pack right:

Roll and fold

Roll softer garments and fold stiffer ones. Underwear, T-shirts, jeans, cotton pants, and knitwear won't wrinkle when rolled tightly. They can be rolled and placed at the bottom of your suitcase.

Folded garments

For your middle layer, start with skirts/trousers. Place the garments along the length of the suitcase, alternating waists with hems. Next, lay shorter items, like shirts, along the breadth. Finally, snake belts around the perimeter of the bag.

Cover with dry-cleaning bags

The slippery surface of dry-cleaning bags don't allow creases to set, so place a bag between each layer of clothing. To approach each layer, simply pull the ends of the bag up on either side.

First things first

Place what you will need first on the top of the pile. This could be anything from a bathing suit or pyjamas to attire for your first trip outdoors after arrival.



A great view of Mina Sultan Qaboos, the port at Muttrah Corniche

Mark Rix

How often do we drive around Muscat and fail to see the beauty that surrounds us. Maybe we take it for granted to some degree, after all, it's always there, or most likely, we are just too pre-occupied with our daily routine. If you love to hike and get off the beaten track, it is incredible what is available to explore right under your nose. My wife and I recently took some friends on the 'Riyam to Muttrah' hike. This is essentially a short excursion, but with some very interesting twists and turns, not to mention a number of outstanding vantage points to survey the beautiful port of Muttrah and surrounding mountains.

The 'staircase' opposite Riyam Park

Once you have checked your gear and supplies, particularly ensuring that you have sufficient water to stay hydrated, it is advisable to start from the car park in Riyam Park and ascend the rocky 'staircase' behind the residential properties. This represents the steepest part of the 1.8km hike and just requires a nice, leisurely pace to ease into the experience. Once at the top of the steps, you will follow the path (and a

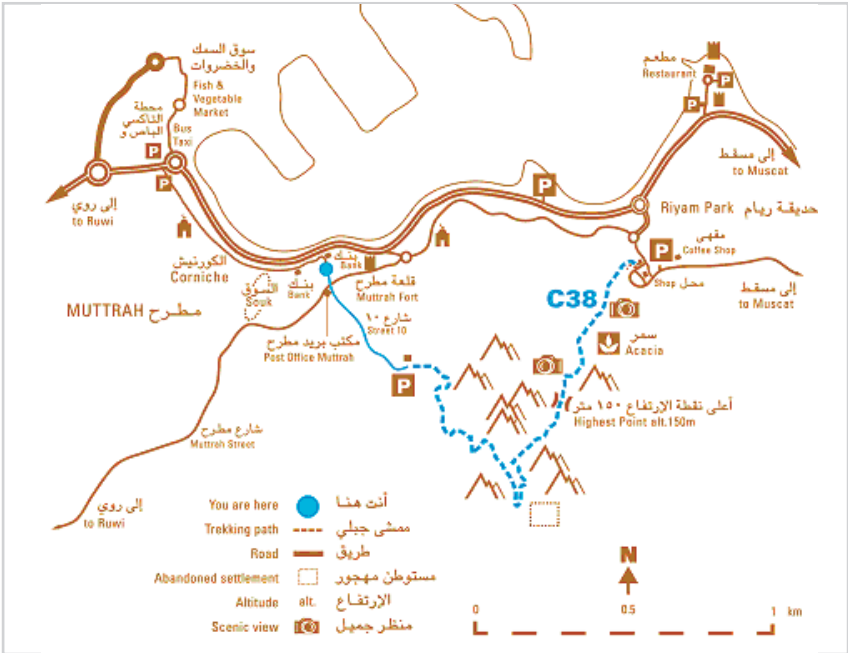
long brown metal pipe) for around 200m and at the top of a small slope, the path reaches an open area that offers an amazing vista of the port below. You can scramble a short way up the ridge from the path for an even wider view.

Great views of Muttrah port

Follow the path that is marked on the rocks with flags in yellow, orange and red. Your route should be running parallel with the corniche and port below. The path narrows and begins to descend steeply into a valley surrounded by the mountains and featuring the ruined remnants of an old village. This is a perfect spot to rest a while under the broad trees' canopies before effectively turning right and entering the narrow wadi which continues the descent to Muttrah.

The old village foundations

Once in the wadi, simply follow the river bed's winding course and remember to look up and appreciate the mountainsides that form the steep gorges. As with any wadi excursion, you should check the local weather forecast before departing and not attempt the hike if rain is present or anticipated. Naturally, the degree of difficulty of the descent is greatly reduced in dry conditions when there is little or no water present. Walking along the dry river bed



C38 - Riyam to Muttrah trek

compared to leaping and scrambling diagonally across the flowing river is more acceptable to the less athletic among us!

Navigate your way through the wadi

After forty five minutes or so, obviously depending on your pace and natural conditions, you will see a signpost and painted

flag marker on the left side of a wide sharp bend in the river bed, this path is a steep, short climb and reveals the cemetery at the rear of Muttrah and the path descends here and passes through to the streets below that lead to the corniche, close to the Muttrah Souq entrance. Once at the corniche, you turn right and follow the main road back to the exit to Riyam Park.

The hike

Hike distance - Circa 1.8km
Suitable for children over 5 years
Difficulty - Easy to moderate
Time to complete - 1 hour 45 minutes approx
Take at least 2 litres of water per person

The path narrows and begins to descend steeply into a valley surrounded by the mountains and featuring the ruined remnants of an old village. This is a perfect spot to rest a while under the broad trees' canopies

The final stage - into Muttrah through the cemetery

This hike should take around two hours at a leisurely pace and is worth the effort. An early morning start ensures you have the rest of your day to enjoy other activities and most importantly avoids the hottest time of day.



Descending to the wadi and old village settlement



The old village foundations



The narrow path through the wadi



Into Muttrah through the cemetery