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OWYA 2020 WINNERS - H E HUNAINA SULTAN AL MUGHAIRY & SAHAR ASKALAN
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Property without visa not viable: Realtors

Shaddad al Musalmy
Muscat

Expectations that the recent decision of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MHUP) allowing expatriates to buy property in Oman will boost the real estate market in the country are fat-fetched, according to realtors. They cite the current conditions, specially the unavailability of residence visa on purchase of such property, as being inconducive to potential buyers.

According to MHUP, expatriates in Oman can now purchase apartments in multi-storey buildings in the Governorate of Muscat. The decision was taken to create a competitive business environment in the real estate sector and inject cash into it.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Saleem Hassan al Bulushi, deputy director general of Real Estate Development in MHUP, said only expat residents who have been in Oman for more than two years can buy property in Muscat.

"The offer is valid for expatri-



ates from all countries and for people who already have residency visas in Oman. Residency visas will not be transferred to real estate visas," he said.

Under the new real estate scheme, the minimum price of

apartments that expatriates can purchase has been set at RO45,000. Additionally, property bought must be for residential purposes of the purchaser or his/her first-degree relatives.

"The property lease can be for

a period of 50 years renewable for a maximum of 49 years upon agreement of all stakeholders," Bulushi said.

"The property can be inherited during the same (lease) period and after that it returns to the

Expats' land ownership deadline extended

Muscat - The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has announced a one-year extension for non-Omanis for disposal of land and real estate located in prohibited areas. Setting the cut-off date as October 31, 2021, the ministry stated that the decision was taken on account of the exceptional circumstances as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

owner," he informed.

According to the ministry, the decision is aimed at encouraging expatriates to buy property while keeping in mind the demographics of the country.

Continued on Page 02

Over 263,000 expat workers left Oman from Jan to Sept

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Expat numbers in Muscat governorate fell by 121,519 to 609,569 at the end of Sept 2020

Oman's expatriate worker population has dropped by 15.3 per cent - accounting for over 263,000 people - in the first nine months of this year. Over 118,000 of those who left were from India.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), there were 1,712,798 expatriate employees working in various sectors in the sultanate at the end of 2019. The number dropped to 1,449,406 in September 2020 with 263,392 expatriates leaving Oman in the first nine months of 2020.

The figure was 1,490,421 in August 2020, accounting for 41,015 expatriate workers leaving in a month and 92,663 exiting since July 2020. In September 2020, the number of expatriates working in the government sector reduced by 11,698 to 42,989 when compared to figures at the end of 2019.

The expatriate workforce in the private sector shrank by 215,778 over the same period to 1,148,177, while those engaged in the domestic/family sector came

down by 35,916 to 258,240.

Though Bangladeshi workers continue to make up the bulk of the expatriate population, their numbers declined by 80,210 in the nine months till September 2020, and now account for 550,471 workers. The Indian expat worker population declined by 118,299 to 499,431, while the Pakistani worker population fell by 30,738 to 176,550.

Filipinos - 4,418 left reducing their number to 45,038 workers - and Egyptians - 3,537 left to drop their total to 31,511 - make up the top five expatriate employee population.

The NCSI stated that the Governorate of Muscat, which is home to the largest number of expatriate workers, saw their number fall by 121,519 to 609,569 at the end of September 2020.

SQU student wins bronze in Korea Youth Olympiad

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A student of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has done Oman proud at the Korea International Youth Olympiad 2020. Nibras Hamdan Salem al Shukaili from the College of Science, SQU, won a bronze medal for her project called Green Gold, which uses Omani plants and recycled cooking oil to produce biodiesel.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Nibras said, "The idea for the project emerged a few years ago when fuel prices in Oman rose. After we learnt in school about biofuels and hydrocarbons, I thought about how we could create a viable alternative."

Extensive research led her to the concept for the Green Gold project to produce biodiesel from seeds of indigenous Omani plants that are not usually used for anything and recycled cooking oil.

"The Korea International Youth Olympiad 2020 saw participation from 60 countries across the world. I won bronze after several qualification rounds," Nibras said.

"The project was not endorsed by any institution or com-



Nibras Hamdan Salem al Shukaili

pany despite its potential. But following the win, now I hope to find support from the government and some private companies," she added.

Talking about the challenges she encountered in her project, Nibras said, "I am a student, not a specialist in this field. It was difficult communicating with the specialists and getting appoint-

ments. Also, I had a tough time juggling time between studies and the project. It was very frustrating at times."

Nibras hopes that her project will help reduce dependence on hydrocarbons. "It could open new avenues in the field of biodiesel production and export. Hopefully, it will also open up employment opportunities," she said.



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Night curfew to end on Saturday,
school year to begin on Nov 1



09

Sultanate's budget deficit
widens as oil revenues fall

Omanisation in state firms discussed

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with the Oman Investment Authority, held a meeting with CEOs of government firms to discuss prioritising recruiting Omanis in leadership and supervisory roles in government companies. Plans for the replacement of expatriates with Omani manpower were also discussed.

The meeting was chaired by H E Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, who stressed the need to accelerate the replacement of the expatriate workforce by the na-



(Photo for illustrative purpose)

H E Dr Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, stressed the need to accelerate the replacement of the expatriate workforce by the national workforce, and the importance of training them on the job

the difficulties and challenges faced by companies and the private sector in light of the economic conditions to find possible solutions and facilitate procedures that require regulations and renewal in private sector establishments.

The meeting also reviewed ways to enhance cooperation between the ministry and the firms towards augmenting productivity.

Besides replacing expats, it was proposed to focus on the employment of Omanis with specialist or technical qualifications in a manner that ensures the accomplishment of Oman Vision 2040 goals.

tional workforce, and called on the importance of training them on the job.

The minister affirmed that the initiative aims to overcome difficulties, provide the necessary facilities and simplify procedures to enhance the contribution of government companies in providing new

jobs for Omanis.

Officials in government companies expressed their willingness to present replacement and follow-up plans to provide job opportunities for the national workforce and contribute to the stability, support and regulation of the labour market.

The meeting also discussed

Oman's digital strategy to spur growth hailed

Muscat - The Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) has commended the sultanate's espousal of a digital strategy that lays the foundation of novel programmes to spur economic growth, enhance self-reliance and provide more jobs through economic diversification.

In a new study titled 'Digital economy in Arab countries: Its Realities and Challenges,' the AMF noted that Oman's economic strategy began to come into its own from 2003. Since then, economic approaches have been classified into six categories towards the execution of a comprehensive Oman Economic Vision encompassing initiatives and projects necessary for supporting the realisation of the country's knowledge-based economy, the AMF report said.

It explained that the digital transformation strategy in the sultanate focused on developing society's capabilities, including individuals' skills, and circulating government applications and

In a new study titled 'Digital economy in Arab countries: Its Realities and Challenges,' the AMF noted that Oman's economic strategy began to come into its own from 2003

smart services to help establish a comprehensive system of ICT industries.

The strategy also lays emphasis on governance, developing standards, policies and a whole new generation of digital applications, in addition to spreading cognitive awareness.

The report showed that the sultanate enacted laws for digital economy like the Electronic Transactions Law (2008), Law on Combating Information Technology Crimes (2009) and Law on Regulating

Communications (2002).

As many as 21 national firms operate in the field of digital economy, in addition to ten foreign firms and six multinationals, said the report, adding that the sultanate has 17 platforms and applications that offer services to different segments and finalise civil transactions.

The report pointed out that the sultanate's digital transformation programme began in October 2012 with the approval of the Council of Ministers. It added that various seminars and workshops were held to outline the digital transformation programme.

This is in addition to the formation of teams for e-government transformation and institutional change within each establishment, under the supervision of the minister or undersecretary to follow up the process of digital transformation in their respective institutions, the report said.

ONA

MINISTER OF HOUSING MEETS AMBASSADOR OF QATAR



H E Dr Khalfan bin Said bin Mubarak al Shu'aibi, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, discussed joint cooperation in the field of housing and urban planning between the two countries in his meeting with H E Jassim Abdulrahman al Thani, Ambassador of Qatar to the sultanate



Dr Rajyashree N Kutty (second from left) honours Yuthar al Rawahy (Supplied photo)

OCA's Yuthar feted by Barakath al Noor

Our Correspondent
Muscat

On the occasion of the 12th anniversary of Barakath al Noor Clinic and 11th Omani Women's Day, the health clinic felicitated Yuthar al Rawahy, founder and honorary president of the Oman Cancer Association (OCA).

Yuthar fought and won against four cancers and after the success she dedicated herself to advocating for cancer patients and their empowerment. She draws inspiration from humanitarian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa.

In remarks to *Muscat Daily*,

Yuthar said, "Honouring me means honouring the whole team that is working for this good cause. Barakath al Noor Clinic under Dr Rajyashree has been very supportive of our endeavours. We all need to be safe and take care of ourselves, and creating more awareness towards cancer is very important."

Yuthar's conviction and belief is that if one strongly believes in anything with focus, honesty, love and passion, everything is possible. "Yuthar has been an inspiration to many ladies and is a role model for those who want to dedicate their life to a cause, with complete dedication and com-

passion," said Dr Rajyashree N Kutty, director and specialist surgeon, Barakath al Noor Clinic.

"We chose Yuthar because she is a role model. She is a real fighter who came to the world to impart knowledge about cancer. She has helped a lot of women in this regard. She supports ladies affected with cancer and encourages them for regular check-ups including regular repeated self breast examination that helps early detection, diagnosis and cure," she added.

Dr Rajyashree said Yuthar started the MMU (Mobile Mammography Unit) that screens women over 40 years of age.

Apart from this, there are other projects under OCA including the Dar al Hanan, a home away from home for children with cancer, and a walkathon in October which is dedicated to breast cancer awareness.

Yuthar was a member of the State Council and was conferred several prestigious awards by the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. She was also awarded with Oman Woman of the Year 2019 Award for Lifetime Achievement.

In her endeavours, Yuthar is supported by her husband, Dr Wahid al Kharousi, chairman of OCA, and her children.

Property without visa not viable: Realtors

Continued from Page 01

Under the rules, residential units can't be sold before construction works are complete. The property must be in a multi-storey residential cum commercial building, must be within the area specified for sale and licensed by the ministry.

"The seller of the real estate residential unit pays a fee of three per cent and the buyer pays five per cent fee on the value of the residential real estate unit upon registration," Bulushi said.

Additionally, the building must not be more than four years from the date of issue of the building completion certificate.

The number of rooms in the residential unit having utilities must not be less than two in a building having no more than four residential floors.

Following the full set of rules and regulations being made public, real estate experts have voiced their concern that the attached conditions will prove counterproductive to the ministry decision and fail to achieve the desired impact on the sector.

Dr Khalid al Matani, chairman of BBH Group, a nationally recognised real estate company specialising in acquisitions, development and management of commercial properties throughout Oman, said, "Since the decision, all the callers to our office to

inquire about the apartments mainly ask if residence visas would be granted on buying the property. When told otherwise, they just say 'sorry' and hang up. Without visas, there will be no buyers."

However, Dr Matani said following discussions with officials at the ministry, he was hopeful that the rules of the decision - especially regarding visa - will be relaxed. "Other conditions like ownership period are understandable because these are international rules," he said.

Said al Rashdi, CEO of the real estate company Al Nasr Investment and Development Company, too believed the decision in its current format will not have the desired impact. "For example, if a buyer suddenly loses his job and can't find another one, he or she might not be able to possess the apartment anymore," he said.

"Besides the visa, many other conditions are not conducive at all. Authorities need to look into the decision again. Also, setting the minimum value at RO45,000 is not feasible because some apartments in the specified sale area cannot fetch that amount. The rules also stipulate ownership for at least four years before the property can be sold. Many expatriates would be unable to fulfil these requirements," he added.

@shadam

Municipality continues checks on businesses

Muscat - Muscat Municipality is continuously following up on business activities related to public health, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

This is to ensure that businesses comply with the required health requirements and controls, to monitor any observations or abuses, and to take the necessary measures in cooperation with other directorates.

The inspection visits are intended to ensure that all businesses activities adhere to the decisions stipulated in the rules and precautionary measures.

Women inspection teams are following up on women's clubs, hairdressers and beauty shops, together with a focus on raising awareness on the issue.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	33	22
Doha	34	22
Kuwait City	34	23
Manama	32	23
Riyadh	33	16

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.52am
Sunrise	6.07am
Duhr	11.56am
Asr	3.14pm
Maghrib	5.40pm
Isha	6.51pm

Night lockdown helps reduce patients in ICU

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As a result of stricter control on movement, specially during the night, the number of new COVID-19 cases has slowly begun to come down. It has also resulted in a significant decrease in the number of patients with the disease in the intensive care unit (ICU) at The Royal Hospital.

"The night-time lockdown has reduced the COVID-19 patients in the ICU at The Royal Hospital. Before the Supreme Committee's decision to prevent movement at night, there were around 50 COVID-19 patients in the ICU. It has now decreased to 40 cases," Dr Hisham Abdullah al Dahab, consultant doctor of internal medicine at the hospital, told Oman TV in an interview.

He added, "The prohibition of movement at night achieved positive indicators."

As of Wednesday, a total of 480 patients were admitted in health institutions, including 198 in ICUs. This is the first time,



(Supplied photo)

since September 29, that the number of cases in ICUs has come down below 200.

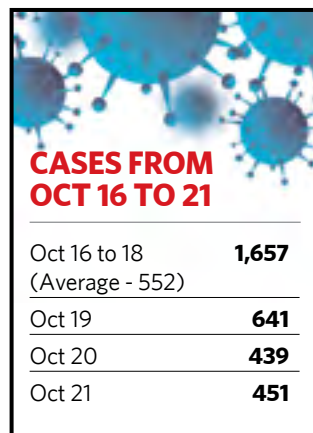
On Wednesday, the Ministry of Health (MoH) confirmed 451 new cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), taking the total to 111,484. The number of

deaths was 15.

The number of those who have recovered has also increased by 418.

'The number of recoveries has increased to 97,367 while the number of deaths has reached 1,137,' an MoH statement said.

Dr Saad Saeed al Jumaa, an emergency consultant at The Royal Hospital, said, "Those who have recovered from COVID-19 are still suffering from some symptoms such as lethargy, loss of appetite and weakness. The pandemic is also affecting the



medical staff psychologically."

The Supreme Committee calls on everyone, especially young people, to fully adhere to all preventive measures at the individual and collective levels, and stop all family and social gatherings.

To check the spread of the disease, MoH advises all citizens and residents to continue washing hands with water and soap, avoid touching the face, nose, mouth and eyes, and follow healthy habits when coughing and sneezing.

Night curfew to end on Saturday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Supreme Committee in charge of developments resulting from the spread of the COVID-19 held a meeting on Wednesday under the auspices of H E Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior and chairman of the committee, in which it decided to lift the night curfew from Saturday, October 24, at 5am. The committee also confirmed that the school year will start for all students on November 1.

In a statement, the Supreme Committee said, "With regard to the decision to prevent movement at night, the committee clarifies that its implementation will end on Saturday at 5am, while con-

firms the decision to start the school year for all students from November 1.'

The statement added that the decision to adopt the blended education curriculum for all schools will be implemented from November 1.

'The Supreme Committee examined reports related to the number of cases infected with the disease, the number of deaths resulting from it, and other epidemiological data in the various governorates of the sultanate and expressed its grave concern over non-compliance of preventive measures by some people,' the statement said.

The Supreme Committee has decided to open the door for volunteering in various sectors related to the pandemic.

Five raptors released in South Batinah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In celebration of the Arab Environment Day which falls on October 14, the Environment Authority (EA) released five raptors in South Batinah.

Raptors, also known as birds of prey, include species that hunt and feed primarily on vertebrates and are great hunters. In addition, they have keen eyesight for spotting food from afar or in flight, strong feet with claws to

Citizens had found the birds injured or infected with disease and handed them over to the specialists

grasp or kill prey, and strong, curved beaks for tearing flesh.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Khamis Hammoud al Saadi, director of the Environment Department in South Batinah, said specialists released the raptors in the Al Ghail area in the wilayat of Rustaq on Monday.

Citizens had found the birds

injured or infected with disease and handed them over to the specialists, he said.

"The Wildlife Rehabilitation and Breeding Centre in Barka receives animals and birds, as well as animals that are confiscated from people indulging in hunting. They are treated, rehabilitated and released into the natural en-

vironment by doctors specialised in the field."

Saadi added, "The Barka-based centre provides wild animals and birds with medical care in order to release them into the wild later. It houses more than 300 wild animals such as Arabian gazelles, Arabian oryx and Arabian sand gazelle and wild birds."

The species released on Monday included two Egyptian vultures, two bald eagles and a snake eagle.

1,000 MANGROVE SEEDLINGS PLANTED



(Supplied photo)

The Environment Authority organised a campaign to plant 1,000 mangrove seedlings in Khor Hafri in the wilayat of Barka, South Batinah governorate, last week. The campaign was a part of the authority's efforts to increase mangrove forest areas, restore degraded sites and help marine organisms

Public E-Auction Sale announcement

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information technology announces the Establishment of a Public E-Auction sale on www.safqa.om for selling unusable government movables as follows:

Sale Items field inspection location	Movables on sale	Field inspection time	Public E-Auction
Darsit, Wellayat Matrah Muscat Governorate	Water tanks	October 25 2020	October 26 2020
Al-Wusta Governorate (Shanah Harbour office)	Old fence+diesel electric machines+diesel tank+ACs		
Al-Ghlee workshop Governorate of North and south Al-Batinah	Furniture iron scraps +signboards+iron poles+iron fences		
Al-Buraimi Governorate			
Al-Wusta Governorate (Roads department in Wellayat Haima)			
Musandam Governorate (Roads department in wellayat Khasab)			

Potential auction bidders must take the following steps to participate:

- 1- Register in (www.safqa.om)
- 2- Potential purchasers of the Government movables shall pay interim insurance electronically in safqa website, which is (1000 OMR), one thousand Omani Rials.
- 3- Successful bidders must pay Auction commission fee which is (3%) of the value of his purchases.
- 4- The Ministry of Transport, Communications and information technology and Safqa Auctions shall not be responsible for the movables if they are not matching the pictures and descriptions. They will not also be responsible for the validity of the auctioned items or its technical condition thus bidders must carefully inspect all the auctioned items in the stated field inspection times.
- 5- Successful bidders must pay for their obtained purchases within **48 hours** after winning the auctioned items.
- 6- Successful bidders must dismantle and move their purchases **within a week** after winning/obtaining their auctioned items, in case of failing to do so in the specified time period, The Ministry of Transport, Communications and information technology shall not be responsible if the items suffered damage or lost.
- 7- The sold auctioned items not returnable or able to be discounted in price and any similar claims will not be received.
- 8- The insurance payment will be confiscated of one of the 2 following conditions are met :
A- If Successful bidders didn't pay for their obtained purchases within stated payment period.
B- If Successful bidders fail to move their purchases within the specified period for moving the items.

For more information visit www.safqa.om or call **71096969**

<http://www.transport.gov.om>

إعلان مزاد علني إلكتروني

تعلن وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات عن إقامة مزاد إلكتروني عام على موقع صفقة للمزادات الإلكترونية لبيع مجموعة من المنقولات الحكومية الغير صالحة للاستعمال وذلك على رابط الموقع (www.safqa.om)

موقع المعاينة الميدانية	المنقولات المراد بيعها	ترقيت المعاينة الميدانية	مزاد عام إلكتروني
دارسيت بولاية مطرح بمحافظة مسقط	خزانات مياه	25 أكتوبر 2020 م	26 أكتوبر 2020 م
محافظة الوسطى (مكتب مرفأ شنة)	سياج قديم + مكان كهربائية ديزل + خزاد ديزل + مكيفات		
ورشة القليل محافظتي شمال وجنوب الباطنة	أثاث متنوع + خردة (سكراب) حديد ولوايح وأعمدة وحواجز حديدية		
محافظة البريمي			
محافظة الوسطى (دائرة الطرق بولاية هيما)			
محافظة مسندم (دائرة الطرق بولاية خصب)			

على الراغبين في الاشتراك إتباع الخطوات التالية :

- 1- التسجيل في الموقع الإلكتروني (www.safqa.om)
- 2- على المشترك دفع مبلغ التأمين إلكترونيا وقدره (100/=) ألف ريال عماني بالموقع الإلكتروني .
- 3- يلتزم الرأسي عليه المراد يدفع رسوم الدلالة وقربا (X3) من القيمة المنقولات .
- 4- وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات وصفقة للمزادات لا يتحملان أي التزام بالنسبة للمنقولات في عدم تطابق صورة أو وصف أي سلعة , كما لا تضمن صلاحيتها للعروضة للبيع أو سلامة حالتها الفنية. ويتعين على المشتريين التأكد بأنفسهم بالمعاينة البصرية وذلك في الأيام المخصصة للمعاينة .
- 5- على المشتري سداد قيمة المنقولات بواسطة التحويل الإلكتروني خلال **48 ساعة عمل** بعد رسو المراد .
- 6- على المشتري القيام بفك ونقل المنقولات خلال **أسبوع** بعد رسو المراد وفي حالة عدم نقلها في الفترة المحددة فإن وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات لن تكون مسؤولة عن فقدانها أو تلفها أو هلاكها .
- 7- المنقولات المباعة لا ترد ولا تخفض قيمتها. كما لن يتم قبول أي التماس يقدم في هذا الشأن .
- 8- سيتم مصادرة مبلغ التأمين في حالتي :
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ب . إذا لم يتم البيع المشتري بنقل المنقولات المشتراة خلال المدة المحددة للنقل .

لزيد من التفاصيل يرجى زيارة الموقع www.safqa.om أو التواصل على الرقم **71096969**

<http://www.transport.gov.om>

Bank Muscat opens modern branch at Madinat Sandan

In line with Bank Muscat’s vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’, the bank has announced the opening of its new branch in the Sandan Industrial City in Halban. The new branch, which features state-of-the-art facilities and the ‘best in class’ security practices, will further strengthen the largest bank network in the sultanate.

The expanding branch network, especially in areas where developmental activities are gaining momentum, highlights Bank Muscat’s focus to remain the nation’s bank of first choice.

Madinat Sandan is the first integrated city for light industries in the sultanate and its strategic location will help the industrial city cater to businesses in Muscat and Batinah. With world-class facilities, Sandan has many businesses from automotive, and construction sectors along with warehouses and offices operating on its premises. The new Bank Muscat branch will offer a range of retail banking services



including Current and Savings Accounts, Sayyarati Auto Finance and Baituna Home Finance in addition to cash deposit and withdrawal services as well as other retail banking facilities.

Saleh Mohammed al Maaini, assistant general manager – Muscat, Bank Muscat, said, “We are pleased to open our new branch in Sandan Industrial City to reach out to a large segment of the bank’s customers given that Madinat Sandan is one of the promising and upcoming commercial cities with a great future. It is expected to attract a large number of projects and commercial businesses, which will mean rising numbers of visitors, thereby increasing the need for banking and financial services in the area.”

Maaini added that the bank is committed to providing banking services and facilities across all governorates of the sultanate in

order to reach out to the maximum number of customers.

Today, Bank Muscat has a network of 146 retail banking branches spread across all governorates of the sultanate and is the largest bank in Oman. Bank Muscat has distinguished itself by providing the largest ATM-CDM network with over 480 ATMs and 193 CDMs in Oman. In addition, Bank Muscat customers can use Meethaq ATMs and CDMs, and thus has ready access to about 784 devices across the country.

Bank Muscat’s online and mobile banking services provides customers a fast, comfortable and secure banking experience, 24/7, from the comfort of their homes and offices. Retail banking customers extensively use the various features available in the upgraded omni-channel Internet and Mobile banking such as bill payments, mobile top ups, payments within Oman and international transfers.

Hublot marks sultanate’s 50th anniversary

Hublot and Oman partners Mistal came together once again to collaborate on a special edition. Building on the success of their first collaboration, the watchmaker and its Oman partners celebrate the sultanate’s 50th anniversary with the release of the Classic Fusion Special Edition Oman Golden Jubilee.

“Hublot is happy to celebrate the sultanate’s 50th anniversary with this new edition, and we are looking forward to seeing the watch on the wrists of our Omani Hublotistas. This launch sets a mark in history, and embodies a fusion of time, history and culture,” said David Tedeschi, regional director for Hublot Latin America & Caribbean and Middle East & Africa.

“We are proud to present with Hublot this special watch dedicated to our country’s jubilee. This jubilee is an important milestone for the country and we are proud to be able to celebrate it. It is a very special edition that we will cherish for the 50 years to come,” said Dharmesh Ajit Khimji, managing director – Mistal



A special tribute Housed in 42mm microblasted Titanium case with a brushed bronze bezel this Classic Fusion stands out not only thanks to its material but also its colour. A testament to the country’s colours, the dial features a black to green gradient as well as polished gold-plated applique. The Microblasted caseback engraved ‘Special Edition – Golden Jubilee – 1 of 100’ will allow Omani Hublotistas to mark the occasion with a timeless piece.

Bronze Hublot cut its Classic

Fusion bezel out of bronze, a material created over 10,000 years ago through a fusion of copper and other metals such as aluminium, manganese, nickel or zinc.

The alloy has the advantages of non-magnetism, resistance to corrosion and a distinctive appearance through its unmistakable hue. As bronze is covered with a natural patina that protects it and lends it an unparalleled finish, it gives this special edition a beautiful colour that contrasts with the smoked green dial which positions its 3N gold-plated appliques in an unusual direction. An homage to the history of the sultanate and the avant-garde spirit of Hublot, the highly anticipated watch with its black rubber and green vintage alligator with green stitching is limited to 100 pieces.

Alizz Islamic Bank holds Bushra quarterly draw

Alizz Islamic Bank organised the latest quarterly draw event for Oman’s first Sharia’a-compliant Prize Savings Account, ‘Bushra’ recently.

As a precautionary measure during the ongoing pandemic the draw event was held at the Alizz Islamic Bank head office, with a livestream for the public shared via Instagram Live.

Ten female winners received RO1,000 each. Ten winners re-



ceived RO2,500 each and the quarterly draw winner won RO100,000. Alizz Islamic Bank launched the Bushra Prize Sav-

ings Account in 2016 as Oman’s first fully Sharia’a compliant prize savings account offering daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and annual cash prizes as hiba (gift) from the shareholders. The account, which comes with the approval of the Sharia’a Supervisory Board, reflects the bank’s efforts to deliver innovative and high-quality products and ensure a premium customer experience.

The bank conducts draws regularly and has many upcoming including a special draw for Omani Youth Day whereby 12 customers between the ages of 18-25 will win RO500 each, the special National Day draw where 50 customers will win RO1,000 each and the Bushra monthly draw, where there will be one winner of RO50,000 and one winner of RO25,000 amongst other draws.

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Dawoodi Bohras distribute food to support families in Oman



Members of the Dawoodi Bohra community in Muscat teamed up with Dar al Atta’a to celebrate the occasion of World Food Day on October 16. Undertaking this activity under the banner of ‘Project Rise’, Bohra volunteers distributed over 1.5 tonnes of non-perishable food items.

A Project Rise volunteer said, “We’re happy to have played a part in providing food to the less fortunate among us. We look

forward to collaborating with government bodies and social welfare organisations to collectively work towards supporting our fellow residents and Omanis.”

Project Rise is the global philanthropic arm of the Dawoodi Bohra community.

As the name suggests, its core objective is to raise and elevate society’s less fortunate in every aspect of life where no individual

is neglected, overlooked or marginalised.

The Dawoodi Bohras have called Oman home since more than 50 years and have witnessed rapid developments in each of Oman’s socio-economic sectors. Community members have always sought out opportunities to further support welfare programmes, and are grateful to Dar al Atta’a for the uplifting work they continue to do.

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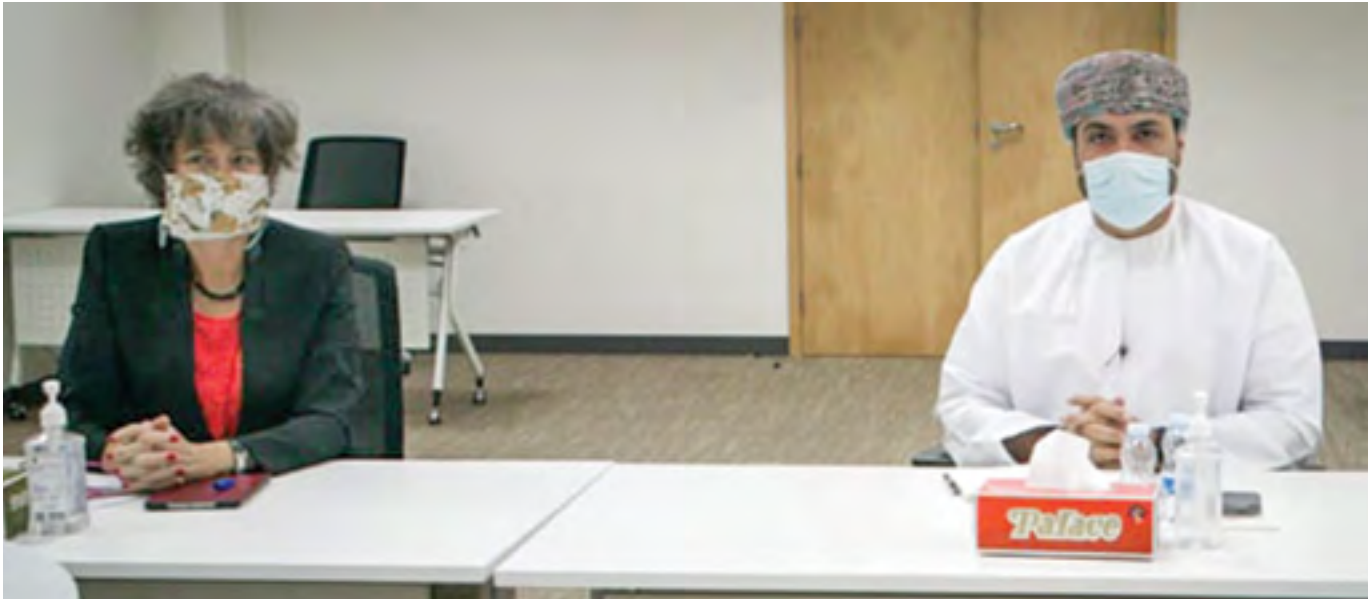
OASIS WATER COMPANY LLC P.O.Box: 87, PC: 124, Rusayl, Sultanate of Oman.

Oman Aviation outlines FDI opportunities

In an exploratory webinar held at Oman Aviation Group and attended by the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Oman H E Laetitia Van Asch-Pieters, Oman Aviation Group strategic chief financial officer Hussain al Balushi; Oman Aviation Group Chief Sector Development and Promotion Shabib al Maamari, and senior representatives from both countries' aviation sectors, the case was made for more collaboration between Oman and the Netherlands. This is in view of increasing Dutch foreign direct investment to Oman and prioritising in-country value creation across the aviation sector and broader economy.

"Developing Oman's air logistics ecosystem remains a top priority for us," explained Maamari.

"Previous high-level discussions and meetings with potential investors around the world, including Dutch logistics experts, have been part of our push to attract new business and FDI from



key global markets. Our objective now is to solidify investment and develop lasting partnerships for a perishables centre, bonded warehouses, and specialised

maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facilities, which will strengthen our position as an air cargo hub in the region.

"Global investors who can help us create a competitive advantage in these areas with the latest innovation and cutting-edge technology is what we are looking for. We have a goal of

730,000 tonnes of air cargo by 2030 and recognise the expertise that Dutch aviation brings to the table— webinars like this are vital for identifying the right partners to help us get there."

Strategic infrastructure FDI in Oman's aviation sector continues to gain momentum, as affirmed in July this year with a strategic partnership between Oman Aviation Group and DHL for a new storage facility in Logistics Gate at Muscat International Airport. The partnership is part of DHL's plans to expand its network in the region to take advantage of a shift in global trade; Oman's location continues to boost its attractiveness as a strategic air logistics and e-commerce hub on East-West trade corridors.

Oman Aviation Group's National Aviation Strategy 2030

provides a roadmap for the aviation sector's role in the development of infrastructure projects which hold the promise of significant economic potential.

H E Laetitia remarked, "The aviation sector's resilience during this difficult time has been truly remarkable. As a pillar of economic growth and connectivity for countries around the world, it is vital that aviation keeps innovating and working towards collaboration and partnerships. Aviation in the Netherlands has played an important role in developing regional economies and is a key enabler of national economic activity."

"By sharing know-how and expertise, and by exploring potential partnership opportunities with Oman, the hope is that our two countries can benefit mutually over the long term."

Sohar International's Viewpoints witnesses wide live audience

Continuing its efforts to make significant local impact on topics of national interest, Sohar International hosted the eighth edition of its Chairman's Forum - 'Viewpoints', in a successful virtual session recently. The session was an engaging dialogue and stayed true to its objective of bringing in global insights, and useful perspective by distinguished speakers from across the world.

Hosted by Mohammed Mahfoudh al Ardhi, chairman of Sohar International, the virtual session featured Dr Reinhard Christian Zinkann, as a fourth-generation executive director and co-proprietor at the 121-years old Miele Group, who delivered firsthand experiences and learnings on building a resilient family business, with several industry leaders, senior working professionals including business chiefs and entrepreneurs, in attendance via Zoom and Sohar International's YouTube channel.



Presenting the welcome address, Ardhi said, "Sohar International is proud to have pioneered change and bring in a truly world class experience to its stakeholders and audiences alike, with the Viewpoints forum. Continuing this legacy, we appreciate Dr Zinkann's valued contribution at the recently concluded Viewpoints, wherein he generated important messages that are relevant from the Omani perspective, as well as the nation's

economic development, and hence, critical to the sultanate's continued progress. Such thought leadership platforms are meant to drive purpose and Viewpoints has been rightfully doing so by inspiring transformational change that intends to create strong socio-economic value."

Dr Zinkann threw light on the sensitivities attached to growing a flourishing family business over the years. He emphasised on the importance of futuristic and process-led planning with respect to succession and defining roles of different family members within the business.

Dr Zinkann highlighted that the human resources function also plays a momentous role in catalysing situations arising out of disputes, allocation of work responsibilities, and other job matters which are instrumental in seamlessly carrying out business operations. The session touched upon some interesting insights, such as, the role of the women in the family who are not a part of the direct line of succession.

Mercedes-Benz Oman launches new ExpressService Plus

Making sure every driver keeps their vehicle in the best possible shape, Mercedes-Benz Oman has launched its new ExpressService Plus, available until December 17.

Offered at its Service Centres in Muscat, Sohar and Salalah and starting at just RO76, customers can avail a quick and comprehensive maintenance check and be back out on the road faster than ever. Provided by Mercedes-Benz certified technicians with deep knowledge of the vehicle's systems, it is designed to help make life less complicated with service that's both professional and efficient.



Scott Shears, general manager of Passenger Cars, said, "At Mercedes-Benz Oman we know how valuable our customers' time is. To better help them fit the maintenance they depend on

into their busy schedule, our ExpressService Plus provides dedicated vehicle care designed to get them in, out, and on their way fast."

To book an ExpressService Plus, call 80079777.

Perfect time to study in Canada/USA/UK

Worried about the future regarding your child's education? What course to go for? Which country to select? Suddenly a zillion questions come to your mind when you think as a parent on where to send your child for higher education and choosing the right consultant is always a pain.

During the COVID-19 pandemic everyone has learnt a lot on many countries, observing how they have been handling the situation and how they have facilitated the students. Oman's leading immigration consultant M J Global, who pioneers in sending students abroad for higher studies apart from helping people migrate to different countries under skilled category/ business or investment categories to over 25 countries is pretty synonymous with the people of Oman.



Within a short span of time they have managed to be the most trusted consultant for students and people seeking resettlement solutions alike. If you are

wondering whether it is safe to send your child abroad for higher studies, now is the perfect time. Colleges and universities present in Canada/USA/UK are giving huge discounts on their fee structure, application fees, etc due to the pandemic. Notably, Canada has handled the COVID-19 situation beautifully and showcased on how safe the students are in Canada. This gives a perfect opportunity for students even on a budget to seek their most favourite course in their favourite university. "M J Global deals with more than 400 universities and colleges related to Engineering, Medicine, Arts and Commerce whether it is a

Diploma course, Bachelors or a Post Graduate degree you have a wide array to choose from based on your affordability," says Ajay Kuriakose Jacobs, managing director, M J Global.

No more thinking, no more pondering, no more doubting, fulfil your dreams of the best education opportunity and fly ahead. 2021 intakes have now started and there is a huge rush of students applying for universities and colleges in Canada/USA/UK. Canada is the best choice amongst the students due to their immigration policy which helps them to become a Permanent Resident of Canada after their course is completed.

OTTA delivers presentation on development of women's game

The Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) delivered a visual presentation to International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) on the 'Development of Women Table Tennis in the Sultanate'.

The presentation was part of a webinar organised by the ITTF High Performance and Development Unit for the programme titled 'My Gender. My Strength'. The webinar came in coincidence with the sultanate's celebration on Omani Women's Day that occur yearly on October 17.

Sajad Mohammed Baqir, vice chairman of OTTA, briefed the participants on the development stages of domestic women and girls in table tennis. He commenced the presentation on a summarised description of the government attention on the women's sports including table tennis. He wished a happy Omani Women's Day for all the women players, coaches and umpires.

The OTTA official moved on to the association's earlier efforts

on the women's TT development during the Oman Tables Tennis Committee period.

"There was a direct coordination between OTTA, Ministry of Education and Oman School Sports Association (OSSA) to develop TT in the sultanate at different categories with more focus at junior level and taking the potential stars from schools, universities, clubs and even the elderly of both genders. The project of 'Women's Development in Oman's Table Tennis' came

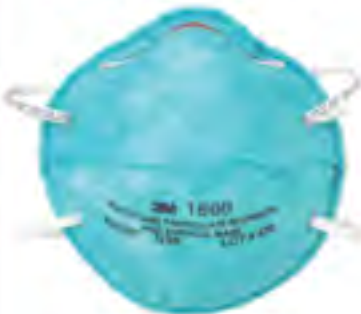
through an initiative organised between OTTA and OSSA.

Baqir said the plan in 2023 is to increase number of women umpires to 30 as the sultanate will organise the prestigious 2023 ITTF World Veteran Championship.

"Also, our plan is to have more female and girls players. The target is to reach to 40 and 50 players in the few following years. Also, three top female players will be selected for the forthcoming international events."

شركة التغليف المحدودة (ش.م.ع.) Packaging Co Ltd. (SAOG)			
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT		Unaudited Balance sheet as at 30th September 2020	
On behalf of the Board of Directors, we present the Chairman's Report of Packaging Co Ltd (SAOG) for the 3rd quarter ended on 30.09.2020.		30/09/2020 RO	30/09/2019 RO
The nine months ended with revenue of RO. 6,692,053/- and net profit of RO.499,150/- (before tax) as against revenue of RO. 7,395,657/- and net profit of RO.203,168/- in the same period of previous year. The profit before depreciation was RO.865,559 compared to profit of RO.621,220/- before depreciation in the same period of previous year.		Assets	
The paper prices have now stabilized but the competition from both local and UAE based box manufacturer have increased due to reduction in demand of corrugated boxes. This resulted in lower realization.		Property, plant and equipment	5,078,188
We would like to place on record our thanks to all our employees for their dedication and hard work		Capital Work in Progress	9,500
We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all of you for the patience and confidence reposed in the company. We also thank the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Muscat Securities Market for their support.		Available-for-sale investments	-
On behalf of the Board or Directors, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimur for his vision, growth oriented policies and general support to private sector.		Total non-current assets	5,087,688
Chairman of the Board of Directors		Inventories	2,558,650
Note: The Complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request them either in Arabic or English within 7 days of the receipt of the request at the company's address at PO Box No 2818, Rawi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman.		Trade and other receivables	3,060,345
		Cash and bank balances	23,833
		Total current assets	5,642,828
		Total assets	10,730,516
		Equity	
		Share capital	3,000,000
		Share premium	90,811
		Legal reserve	481,916
		General reserve	53,378
		Revaluation Reserve - Land	649,245
		Cash flow hedging	-
		Accumulated (losses)/Profit	572,918
		Total equity	4,848,268
		Liabilities	
		Long Term loan from Banks	-
		Loan from a related party	100,000
		Deferred tax liability	231,763
		End of service benefits	118,466
		Total non-current liabilities	470,229
		Bank Borrowings	2,361,282
		Term loan current portion	139,402
		Loan from related party	-
		Trade and other payables	2,911,335
		Total Current Liabilities	5,412,019
		Total liabilities	5,882,248
		Total equity and liabilities	10,730,516
		Net Asset Per share	1.616
		Unaudited Income Statement for the III quarter ended on 30th September 2020	
		30/09/2020 RO	30/09/2019 RO
		Revenue	6,692,053
		Cost of goods sold	(5,430,969)
		Gross profit	1,261,084
		Selling and distribution expenses	(328,440)
		Administrative and general expenses	(420,603)
		Other income	105,716
		Profit from operations	617,757
		Finance costs	(118,607)
		Profit before taxation	499,150
		Basic earning per share *	0.166
		* Income tax will be provided at the year end	

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Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346



IPL 2020





QUOTE OF THE DAY
I am a naturally aggressive player. I play on merit. If it's in my zone, I hit it. Simple as that.
Nicholas Pooran
Punjab batsman, after his 28-ball 53 against Delhi, on Tuesday night

SENSATIONAL SIRAJ

Bangalore pacer is first to bowl two maiden overs in an IPL match on a record-breaking night



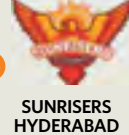
Mohammed Siraj

3 WKTS

8 RUNS

SCOREBOARD	
KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS	
S Gill	c Morris b Saini 1 (6)
R Tripathi	c de Villiers b Siraj 1 (5)
N Rana	b Siraj 0 (1)
T Banton	c de Villiers b Siraj 10 (8)
D Karthik	lbw b Chahal 4 (14)
E Morgan	c Singh b Sundar 30 (34)
P Cummins	c Padikkal b Chahal 4 (17)
Kuldeep Yadav	run out 12 (19)
L Ferguson	not out 19 (16)
Extras	(lb 2, w 1) 3
TOTAL: 84 for eight	
Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-3, 3-3, 4-14, 5-32, 6-40, 7-57, 8-84	
Bowling: C Morris 4-1-16-0, M Siraj 4-2-8-3, N Saini 3-0-23-1, I Udana 1-0-6-0, Y Chahal 4-0-15-2, W Sundar 4-1-14-1	
ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE	
D Padikkal	run out 25 (17)
A Finch	c Karthik b Ferguson 16 (21)
G Singh	not out 21 (26)
V Kohli	not out 18 (17)
Extras	(lb 2, w 3) 5
TOTAL: 85 for two in 13.3 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-46, 2-46	
Bowling: P Cummins 3-0-18-0, M Prasidh Krishna 2.3-0-20-0, C Varun 4-0-28-0, L Ferguson 4-0-17-1	

TODAY'S MATCH
DUBAI, 6PM



POINTS TABLE

TEAMS	P	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
DC	10	7	3	0	14	+0.774
RCB	10	7	3	0	14	+0.182
MI	9	6	3	0	12	+1.201
KKR	10	5	5	0	10	-0.828
KKP	10	4	6	0	8	-0.177
RR	10	4	6	0	8	-0.591
SRH	9	3	6	0	6	+0.008
CSK	10	3	7	0	6	-0.463

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

CSK: Chennai Super Kings
RCB: Royal Challengers Bangalore
DC: Delhi Capitals
KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders
KKP: Kings XI Punjab
MI: Mumbai Indians
RR: Rajasthan Royals
SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad

Abu Dhabi, UAE - A devastating spell of new-ball bowling from Mohammed Siraj (4-2-3-8) on Wednesday left Kolkata Knight Riders so far down on the mat it was all they could do to last the 20 overs.

They did so playing out four maidens - an IPL record - two of them to Siraj alone - another IPL record. They suffered 72 dots in a 120-ball innings - only three shy of another IPL record and put up only 84 on the board - the lowest IPL total for a team batting first and not losing all their wickets. Royal Challengers Bangalore had little trouble with the chase, completing it with eight wickets and 39 balls to spare and moving to second place on the table.

Super Siraj
All they needed was a hint. Royal Challengers have been very good with the way they've handled their bowlers this season.

And in this game as well, as soon as they saw there was some swing on offer, they immediately went to Siraj with the new ball. Even though he was the new man in the XI.

Siraj is a natural inswinger. But it was moving the ball the other way that brought him most of his success. He snagged the outside edge of Rahul Tripathi in the second over. One ball later, he burst through Nitish Rana's defences. That over ended up as a double-wicket maiden.

He also had Tom Banton caught behind before he gave up

a single run off his bowling as the Royal Challengers earned the upper hand from start to finish.

Recovering from a powerplay score of 17 for four was never going to be easy and though skipper Eoin Morgan tried, the opposition just had too many resources to mount a counter attack. Yuzvendra Chahal, for so long the only consistent wicket-

taking threat for the Royal Challengers, might even have felt weird playing back up as he picked up two for 15 and limited Knight Riders to 84 for eight.

The easiest chase?
Well not for Aaron Finch and Devdutt Padikkal. They fell for 16 and 25 respectively but with such a tiny target before them, Bangalore could always regroup.

They did the sensible thing with the batting too and gave one of their less experienced players time in the middle -

Gurkeerat Singh making 21 as they sealed victory with skipper Virat Kohli (18) in company.

Speaking after his man-of-the-match display, Siraj said: "First I want to thank Allah for my performance. Then thanks to Virat for giving me the new ball. I have been practising a lot with the new ball. We hadn't planned that I will open but when we went out, Virat bhai said *Miyan* ready ho jao. [Sir, get ready.]. The ball to Rana was very good. Executed exactly what I had planned."

Cricinfo

Chennai's Bravo out of IPL with groin injury

Dubai, UAE - Chennai Super Kings' IPL 2020 woes have deepened with Dwayne Bravo ruled out for the rest of the season on Wednesday.

The Super Kings' CEO Kasi Viswanathan confirmed to *ESPNCricinfo* that Bravo had suffered a Grade 1 tear to his right groin and would be leaving the UAE on Thursday.

"It's sad news, it's sad to be leaving my team CSK," Bravo said in a video message on the Super Kings' Twitter handle later in the day. "To all our CSK fans, I want you all to keep encouraging the team, keep supporting, all the true die-hard CSK fans."

Bravo suffered the injury during the Super Kings' match against the Delhi Capitals on October 17, and was able to bowl only three of his four overs.

With Bravo unable to bowl the 20th over with the Capitals needing 17 to win, the Super Kings turned to Ravindra Jadeja, who conceded 6, 6, 2, 6 to Axar Patel off what turned out to be the last four balls of the match.

Bravo did not feature in the Super Kings' next match, against



Chennai Super Kings' Dwayne Bravo of West Indies has been ruled out of the IPL due to a groin injury

the Rajasthan Royals on Monday, which they lost by seven wickets - the result left them with six points from ten games, a spot at the bottom of the points table, and almost no hope of progressing to the play-offs.

"This wasn't a season we expected or our fans wanted, but we gave it our best. Sometimes, despite giving our best, the results don't show," Bravo said. "Keep supporting us and I can guarantee you we're going to

come back stronger and better like champions.

"One of the most successful franchises, I feel we should be proud to be members and fans of CSK."

According to Viswanathan, Bravo had been provided a rehabilitation programme with an estimated recovery time of two to three weeks.

Bravo missed the start of the season with a knee injury that he sustained during the Caribbean Premier League.

He has since featured in six of the Super Kings' ten matches, taking six wickets while returning an economy rate of 8.57, and batting just twice down the order, scoring seven runs.

MS Dhoni, the Super Kings captain, has predominantly utilised Bravo in the middle and end overs through the seasons. This season, Bravo had bowled 13 of his overs in the middle phase (overs 7-15), conceding 8.23 runs per over and picking up one wicket, and six overs at the

death (overs 16-20), bagging five wickets and returning an economy rate of 9.12.

Bravo's injury also raises issues for the West Indies team management because the bowling allrounder was picked last week as part of their squad for the three-match T20I series in New Zealand in November.

As per the proposed schedule the three T20Is will be played on November 27 in Auckland and on November 29 and 30 in Mount Maunganui.

Seifert replaces Khan in KKR side
New Zealand wicketkeeper-batsman Tim Seifert has joined the Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL to replace injured bowler Ali Khan. Seifert has played three ODIs and 24 T20Is for the national side.

Khan became the first US national to join the lucrative T20 league after being signed by Kolkata last month after an impressive show in the Caribbean Premier League. He did not play a game, however.

Cricinfo



2021 worlds to give boost to sports tourism, says Oman Sail CEO Jabri

Al Mussanah to host the 49er, 49erFX, and Nacra 17 World Championships from November 16-21 next year



A file photo of Oman's 49er sailors Musab al Hadi and Waleed al Kindi (left) during a competition

Our Correspondent Muscat

Oman Sail has been in the forefront of promoting sports and adventure tourism in the sultanate. Over the past decade, Oman Sail has hosted many world championships and top-class regattas to give impetus to sports tourism.

As part of its continued efforts to put Oman on the global sailing map, Oman Sail will host 400-strong fleet when the world championships in three Olympic classes will be held at the Al Mussanah Sports City from November 16-21, 2021

Earlier in February this year, Oman was awarded the rights to host the 49er, 49erFX and Nacra

World Championships in 2021.

On Wednesday, Oman Sail announced the dates of the championships.

The worlds are taking place in Asia for the first time and sailors in the three classes will kickstart their path to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games during the six-day event.

Khamis al Jabri, Oman Sail

CEO, said, "Hosting the 2021 49er, 49erFX, and Nacra 17 World Championships is another opportunity for the sultanate to share its warm hospitality with the international sailing community.

"The regatta forms an important component of the national priorities of Oman's Vision 2040 in terms of



The regatta forms an important component of the national priorities of Oman's Vision 2040 in terms of boosting sports tourism and unlocking opportunities for local businesses and the community to deliver positive economic return for the country

KHAMIS AL JABRI, Oman Sail CEO

boosting sports tourism and unlocking opportunities for local businesses and the community to deliver positive economic return for the country. This is an incredibly exciting event for Oman Sail and we look forward to welcoming sailors from across the world to our shores."

Marcus Spillane, Nacra 17 Class President, said, "We are very pleased to be heading to Oman next year in November for the 2021 49er, 49erFX and Nacra 17 World Championships as our sailors continue their global adventure. Oman has a great reputation for organising world class regattas and we are confident that the event will be a great test for the teams as they embark on the road to Paris 2024."

Oman Sail's Olympic hopeful

in the 49er class, Musab al Hadi, said, "As the first global sailing event after the Tokyo Olympic Games, this will be a strong test of every bit of international experience the Oman Olympic Sailing team will gain against the very best in class. We hope that our fellow sailors enjoy visiting Oman as much as we enjoy hosting them."

Hadi along with Waleed al Kindi, along with the pair of Abdulrahman al Mashari and Ahmed al Hasani have returned to training intensively in preparation for the 2021 ASAF Asian Sailing Championships, an Olympic qualifier for 49er planned to be held in Abu Dhabi.

Combining excellent sailing conditions with powerful sea breezes and pleasant waves and a fully-equipped marina in the

heart of a sports city purpose-built for the 2010 Asian Beach Games, Al Mussanah Sports City offers ideal surroundings for another event in 2021 following the success of events such as the 2013 Laser World Championships, the 2015 RS:X World Championships and the 2019 Asian and Oceanian Optimist Championships.

As with past championships, Oman Sail and the 49er and Nacra 17 Class will focus on the maintaining a positive environmental impact by minimising waste, emphasising recycling and aiming to leave the sea in a better condition than before the regatta. The championship will also prioritise the fan experience with a live broadcast of the event and in-depth social media programming.

Oman's Rawas elected to AVC Executive Council

Muscat - Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) president Sheikh Badar al Rawas did the sultanate proud when the experienced sports administrator was elected to the Executive Council of the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) on Wednesday.

Rawas was unanimously favoured as 11 of the 12 zonal members [Oman is the other member], voted for him.



Rawas has been serving OVA as its chairman since 2008.

Rawas becomes the first Omani to be elected to the

AVC Executive Council. The election was held during the AVC zonal meeting via video conference. All the five AVC zonal associations held their separate meetings online as they prepare for the governing body's 23rd AVC General Assembly, which will also be held online on October 26.

Rawas' term at the Asian volleyball will be for the next four years.

Rashford sinks PSG again; Barca drub Ferencvaros

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP STAGE

Paris, France - Marcus Rashford once again sank Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) after netting the decisive goal in a 2-1 Champions League win in the French capital on Tuesday, while Barcelona sent a message with a thumping 5-1 victory over Ferencvaros.

Rashford, who scored the winning spot-kick when United knocked PSG out in 2019, drilled home a low shot three minutes from the end which won a thrilling Group H contest at a near-empty Parc des Princes.

United had taken the lead in the 23rd minute when Bruno Fernandes slotted home from the spot at the second attempt, but Anthony Martial inexplicably headed Neymar's corner into his own net ten minutes after the break. The rest of the match was an end-to-end affair with both sides opting to go for the win rather than hold on for the draw, and Rashford took the points after twice being denied by Keylor Navas earlier in the match.

"Of course it's a nice feeling. More importantly we win the game and we're in a strong position now in the group," Rashford told BT Sport.

The win sets United up nicely for next week's home clash with RB Leipzig, who are top of the group after beating Istanbul Basaksehir 2-0 in Germany.

Koeman's winning start

Ronald Koeman got his first Champions League campaign as Barcelona coach off to a winning start with a confident win over Ferencvaros that gives them control of Group G, top but level on three points with Juventus.

Ferencvaros, the first Hungarian team to make the group stage in 11 years, started brightly and even had the ball in the net via Tokmac Nguen only for the powerful 12th-minute strike to be ruled out for offside.



Man United's Marcus Rashford celebrates after scoring against PSG in Paris, France, on Tuesday (AFP)

Messi won and converted the penalty to give the Catalans a 27th-minute lead and the match was as good as done when Ansu Fati clipped home Frenkie de Jong's sumptuous pass just before the break. It was yet another milestone for Messi as he scored in a joint record 16th Champions League season.

Philippe Coutinho lashed home the third before Ihor Kharatin pulled one back from the penalty spot after Gerard Pique was sent off for pulling back Nguen as he charged towards goal.

Pique's red card means he will miss next week's game away at Juventus, a greater test of Barca's capabilities. Pedri and Ousmane Dembele finished the scoring for the ten-man hosts as they prepare for the weekend's Clasico with Real Madrid.

Juventus looked comfortable in their 2-0 win at Dynamo Kiev in what was the Andrea Pirlo's first ever Champions League match in the dugout, with Alvaro

Morata scoring twice to take the points for the Italians.

Immobile downs Dortmund

It was a good night for Italy as Ciro Immobile got revenge on his old club Borussia Dortmund by scoring in Lazio's 3-1 win over the Bundesliga club in Rome, their first Champions League match in 13 years.

Immobile outshone Dortmund's star forward Erling Braut Haaland by netting the opening goal for the hosts after just six minutes. Lazio went two ahead midway through the first half thanks to Marvin Hitz deflected Luis Alberto's corner into his own goal.

Haaland pulled one back with a thumping finish but Immobile laid on an easy finish for Jean-Daniel Akpa-Akpro to hand Lazio a big win. Simone Inzaghi's men are level on three points with Club Brugge in Group F following their dramatic 2-1 win at Zenit Saint Petersburg earned

thanks to Charles De Ketelaere 93rd-minute winner.

Chelsea are still waiting for a US\$284mn spending spree to pay off they began their campaign with a 0-0 draw with Sevilla at Stamford Bridge. All four sides in the group are on a single point after Rennes drew 1-1 with Krasnodar in their first ever Champions League match in front of 5,000 fans in Brittany.

AFP

COLLATED RESULTS

GRUPE

Chelsea 0 Sevilla 0
Rennes 1 Krasnodar 1

GRUPE F

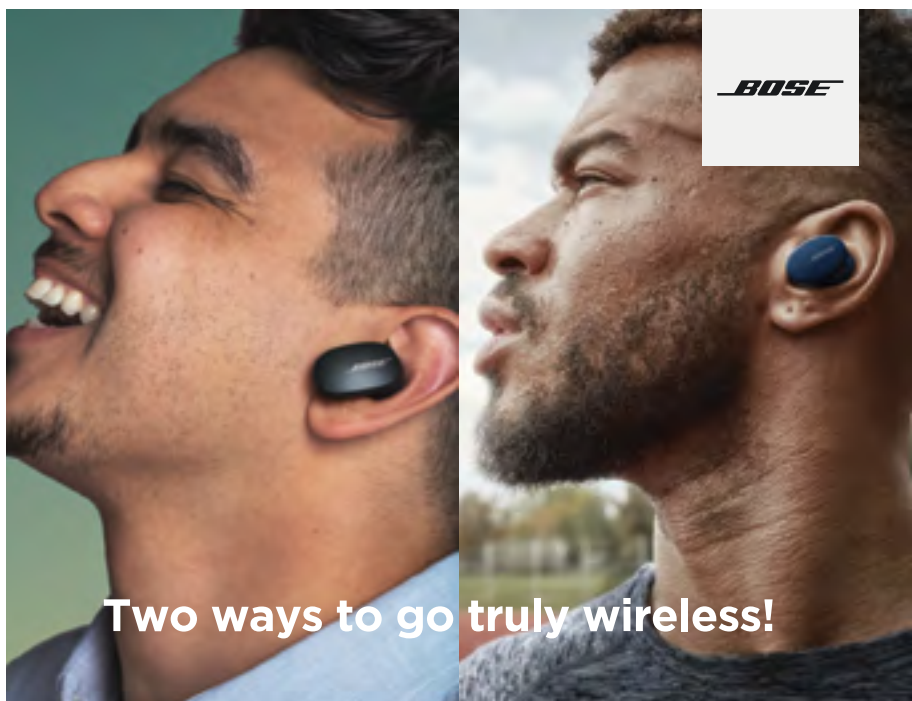
Lazio 3 Borussia Dortmund 1
Zenit Saint-Petersburg 1
Club Brugge 2

GRUPE G

Barcelona 5 Ferencvaros 1
Dynamo Kiev 0 Juventus 2

GRUPE H

PSG 1 Manchester United 2
RB Leipzig 2
Istanbul Basaksehir 0



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CATHAY AXES 8,500 JOBS
Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific airline announced that it is closing its subsidiary Cathay Dragon and cutting 8,500 jobs

BUSINESS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2020 **MUSCAT DAILY** 09

MARKET WATCH

MSM30	3,586.55
BSE Sensex	40,707.31

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian Rs	191.69
Pakistani Rs	421.11
Bangladeshi Taka	220.26
Philippine Peso	126.24
Sri Lankan Rs	479.25

*Rates as on October 21
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

China warns Swedish firms on Huawei ban

China on Wednesday told Sweden to reverse a ban on Chinese tech firms from its 5G network, warning of 'negative impacts' if it did not. The Swedish telecoms regulator issued a ban on Tuesday that would require carriers to remove existing Huawei and ZTE equipment by 2025, citing national security concerns. Chinese telecoms companies have faced bans and heightened scrutiny in recent months over fears Beijing could use their overseas deals to spy on foreign citizens. That has provoked a furious response from Beijing, which denies the allegations and says trumped-up security concerns are being used against its successful tech firms to hem them in for commercial reasons. China's foreign ministry said it was 'strongly dissatisfied' with Sweden.

Sultanate's budget deficit widens as oil revenues fall

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's budget deficit increased by more than 25 per cent in the first six months of this year amid a sharp plunge in oil revenues and corporate tax income.

The coronavirus pandemic and lower oil prices have hit the sultanate's economy hard this year affecting government's revenues from oil exports as well as corporate tax.

The budget shortfall during January - June period of 2020 increased to RO826.5mn compared to RO660.6mn in the corresponding period of 2019, the figures released on Wednesday by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed.

The government's total revenues in the first half of 2020 decreased by 12.4 per cent to RO4.830bn against RO5.514bn in the same period of last year.

As the oil prices sharply fell earlier this year due to weak global demand caused by the recession, Oman's net oil revenue decreased more than 16 per cent to RO2.572bn in the first half of 2020 compared to RO3.074bn recorded in the first half of 2019. Gas revenue remained 21.2 per cent lower in the first half of this



Oman's net oil revenue decreased more than 16 per cent to RO2.572bn in the first half of 2020 compared to RO3.074bn recorded in the same period of 2019

year at RO740.8mn compared with RO940mn in the same period of 2019.

As the private sector firms were badly hit by the COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, Oman's revenue from corporate income tax dropped 33 per cent in the first half of 2020 to RO350.9mn from RO523.8mn in the same period a year ago. In-

come from customs duties also fell 15 per cent at RO83.8mn in the first six months of 2020 compared to RO98.3mn in the same period of 2019.

On the expenditure side, Oman's total public expenditure was reduced by 8.4 per cent to RO5.656bn during January - June period of 2020 from RO6.174bn in the corresponding

period of the previous year.

Under the current expenditures, the expenditure of civil ministries increased 1.6 per cent to RO2.127bn, while the spending on defense and security decreased by 12.9 per cent to RO1.328bn in the first half of 2020. Interest paid on loans rose more than 47 per cent to RO410.3mn in the first half of this year against RO279mn in the same period of last year.

The total investment expenditure dropped 25.6 per cent to RO816.9mn in the six months ended June 30, 2020 compared with RO1.098bn in the first six months of the previous year.

CMA endorses CGC for state-owned companies in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has endorsed a new Corporate Governance Charter (CGC) for the companies in which the government holds stakes. The aim of the Corporate Governance Charter is to improve the performance of the companies and raise their efficiency.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, H E Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, executive president of the CMA, said that the charter represents a qualitative shift in regulating the tasks undertaken by this category (state-owned) of firms. "Its significance lies in regulating the management of the companies and ensuring harmony between the goals of sustainable development and the purpose for which the firms were founded."

The charter is a step forward in realizing the comprehensive development and sustainable economy by striking a balance between economic and social goals and optimum use of human and financial resources and available assets. It will also provide a general framework that regulates accountancy and accountability and extends the



H E Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi

services to stakeholders, H E Salmi explained.

H E Salmi said that, as per the Corporate Governance Charter, the government-owned companies will be committed to divulging to the public their quarterly and annual unaudited or audited accounts, either via their websites or their respective electronic platforms approved by the CMA.

He further said that the transparency and disclosure of accounts are among the main features of the application of corporate governance.

The formulation of the Corporate Governance Charter took into account an array of basic principles and components short-listed from the most established institutions, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).



Category: International Achiever

And the winner is...

H E Hunaina Sultan al Mughairy

H E Hunaina Sultan al Mughairy, who was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Sultanate of Oman to the United States of America, in 2005, is currently also a non-resident ambassador to Canada, Cuba and Mexico.

Ambassador Hunaina is an economist with an extensive business background. Since taking charge of her diplomatic position, she has been a strong advocate for the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement and has focused much of her energy on improving relations between the US and Oman. She is also the Chair at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center in Washington which focuses on promoting knowledge and awareness of both, the US and Oman's shared history and civilisation as well as building bridges between the two nations.

From 1999 to 2005, Ambassador Hunaina served as representative of the Omani Center for Investment Promotion & Export Development in New York, from 1996 to 1998 as director general for Investment Promotion at the Omani Center for Investment Promotion & Export Development, and from 1991 to 1996 as advisor to the Undersecretary for Industry at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

She was also director of Industrial Planning and Research at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (1985-1991), and worked in the Permanent Mission of Oman to the United Nations in Geneva (1984-85).

HEADLINE PARTNER



ASSOCIATE PARTNER



MSM closes flat for second day

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) closed flat again on Wednesday at 3,586.55 points.

While Industrial index fell 0.34 per cent, Financial and Services indices inched up by 0.03 per cent and 0.08 per cent, respectively. MSM Sharia index gained 0.1 per cent to close at 521.22 points.

The market breadth remained negative on Wednesday as only seven stocks advanced in comparison to 15 decliners. As many as 18 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

The market activity remain weak compared to the previous trading session. Total turnover dropped by 22.3 per cent to RO759,781 compared to above RO977,000 on Tuesday. Trading vol-

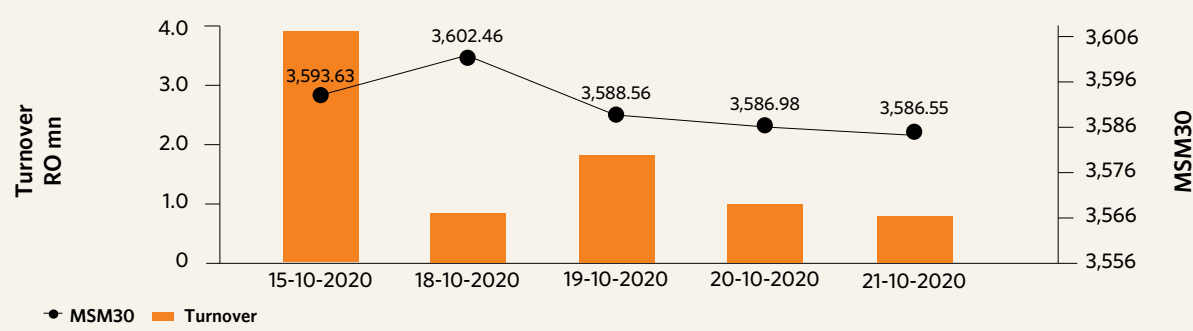


umes decreased more than 26 per cent to 7.8mn shares against 10.8mn in the previous session.

Top gainers of the day were Al Jazeera Services (4.4 per cent), HSBC Bank Oman (2.3 per cent), Sembcorp Salalah

(1.8 per cent) and Oman United Insurance (1.5 per cent). Top losers were United Finance (-8.5 per cent), Vision Insurance (-5.4 per cent), National Gas (-3.8 per cent) and Al Anwar Holding (-3.1 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



IATA revises down air traffic forecast for Middle East



In 2021, the passenger demand in Middle East is expected to strengthen to 45 per cent of 2019 levels to reach 90mn travelers to/from/within the region

Amman, Jordan - The International Air Transport Association (IATA) downgraded its traffic forecast for the Middle East for 2020 to reflect a weaker-than-expected recovery.

Full-year 2020 passenger numbers in the Middle East (to/from/within) are forecast to reach only 30 per cent of 2019 levels, down significantly from the 45 per cent that was projected in July, according to a press released issued by IATA.

In absolute numbers, the Middle East is expected to see 60mn travelers in 2020 compared to the 203mn in 2019.

In 2021, the demand in Middle East is expected to strengthen to 45 per cent of 2019 levels to reach 90mn travelers

to/from/within the region. A full return to 2019 levels is not expected until late 2024, IATA said.

Regional travel picked up across the Middle East from the low point in April as countries in the region re-opened their borders.

However, international travel has remained heavily constrained owing to the return of government restrictions in the face of new COVID-19 outbreaks in a number of key markets. Forward bookings for air travel in the fourth quarter show a much slower recovery than had been expected previously, according to IATA.

"The slower than anticipated return to the skies for travelers in

the Middle East is more bad news for the region's aviation industry. A few months ago, we thought that a fall in passenger numbers to 45 per cent of 2019 levels was as bad as it could get. But the second wave, combined with continuing travel restrictions and quarantines, will result in passenger numbers in the region being less than a third of what we had in 2019," said Muhammad Albakri, IATA's regional vice president for Africa and the Middle East.

"This heightens the urgency for governments to adopt systematic COVID-19 testing to restart travel and curb the economic devastation that is being caused because people cannot travel," he added.

US officials optimistic on economic stimulus

Washington, US - Chances for approving a new spending package to support the US economy improved dramatically on Wednesday after the senior Democratic lawmaker said a bill is in the works and the top Senate Republican said he would bring it to a vote.

Both sides said they made progress in talks, but whether ne-

gotiations can be completed in time for Congress to approve the package before the November 3 presidential election remains a question mark.

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Bloomberg TV that legislators are starting to commit the measure to paper.

While the bill must go through legislative steps, including ap-

proval by the House Appropriations Committee, "I am optimistic" it can get bipartisan support, Pelosi said, but cautioned "Legislation is tough."

The bill's prospects got a boost after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who repeatedly signaled that he would not support a massive package, said he would bring the

measure to the Senate floor for a vote.

"If a Presidentially-supported bill clears the House, at some point we'll bring it to the floor, yes," McConnell told reporters.

Economists say the coronavirus-ravaged US economy has held up well because of the massive injection of about US\$3tn.

AFP

Google's war on all fronts over media, competition and tax

Paris, France - The internet giant Google faces a growing list of battles around the world, from tussles in Europe and Australia over fair compensation for media outlets to competition probes on both sides of the Atlantic.

Department of Justice strikes

Washington's powerful justice department is the latest to announce a probe into Google on suspicion of an 'illegal monopoly'.

US authorities have had the digital giant in their sights for years, and now accuse it of breaching competition law to maintain its iron grip on search and online advertising.

The government has called for 'structural' change at Google, which could mean breaking it up.

Three antitrust fines in Europe

Across the Atlantic, Google has come under Brussels' scrutiny three times in recent years for anticompetitive practices.

In 2018, the company was ordered to pay a 4.3bn euro fine over abuse of the dominant posi-



tion of its Android mobile operating system to entrench the Google search service.

The previous year, Google was slapped with a 2.4bn euro fine for abuse relating to its Google Shopping service.

And in 2019 there was a 1.5bn euro bill over its AdSense targeted advertising service.

All three cases are now before European courts.

The EU opened up a new front against Google in August, with an 'in-depth' probe into its acquisition of fitness wearables maker Fitbit that regulators fear would further buttress its dominance of

the online advertising market.

Payouts for publishers

News publishers in many countries have accused Google and other digital platforms of profiting off their content without giving them a fair share.

In March last year, the European Parliament adopted a directive on so-called 'neighbouring rights' that calls for the giants to pay publishers.

France implemented the law immediately and was challenged in court by Google.

But judges recently upheld a

decision that required the company to enter into talks with publishers over neighbouring rights.

Since then, Google has said it is close to a deal with one of its opposite numbers in the French press, and has also announced a programme to pay publishers around the world through a licensing system.

In Australia, the government in July unveiled a binding 'code of conduct' that would require digital giants to pay media for their content and to increase transparency around the algorithms used to rank content in news feeds and search results - on pain of significant fines.

Global tax fight

Under the umbrella of the OECD, 137 countries are negotiating to find a way to make digital companies pay their 'fair share of taxes', as many treasures around the world currently see no cut of their massive profits. But the US has often been a brake on the multilateral talks targeting a mostly American sector.

AFP

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QUICK RUN

India returns soldier: China

India on Wednesday returned a Chinese soldier detained after straying across a disputed border where the two countries have clashed in recent months, China's army announced. Corporal Wang Ya Long was handed over early on Wednesday, the Chinese military said. New Delhi on Monday said it had detained Wang after he crossed into Indian-controlled territory in the harsh mountainous area of Ladakh. China said Wang had got 'lost after being asked by herders to search for yaks'. The two countries have moved tens of thousands of troops and weapons into the high-altitude region after a violent clash in June.

Israeli strike hits southern Syria

An Israeli strike hit the province of Quneitra in southern Syria, state media reported on Wednesday. A missile hit a school in a village in Quneitra's northern countryside, the official SANA news agency said, without providing additional detail. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also reported a missile attack on the area, saying Israel was 'likely' responsible. The war monitor said that the attack hit a base for pro-Iran militias. Along with Russia, Israel's nemesis Iran has been a key backer of the Damascus regime in its nine-year-long civil war.

Turkey trial begins into 2015 killing

A long-awaited trial opened on Wednesday of three police officers for the 2015 killing of a prominent rights lawyer in Diyarbakir, Turkey's biggest Kurdish-majority city. Tahir Elci, who campaigned for Kurdish rights, was shot in the head in broad daylight on November 28, 2015, during armed clashes between Kurdish militants and police. He was head of Diyarbakir's bar association at the time. The three police officers are accused of 'causing death by foreseeable negligence' and face between two to six years in prison if convicted. A fourth individual is being tried in absentia on the same charge.

Tanzania readies for polls after years of opposition 'repression'

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - Tundu Lissu, shot 16 times in an assassination attempt, returned to Tanzania to run for president - but he did not know what to expect after the 'hell' experienced by the opposition under President John Magufuli.

Political rallies had been banned for years, freedom of speech suffocated, opposition leaders killed, abducted and arrested. Lissu was worried for his own safety.

But the 52 year old has been amazed by the reaction as he crisscrosses the country to heaving crowds clamouring to see him. "After five years of repression, I was not expecting this kind of enthusiasm and mass support from the people," he said.

He said the opposition has 'gone through hell', but believes his Chadema party will be the rightful winner of the October 28 presidential and parliamentary elections. However, like many observers, he believes it will not be a fair fight.

"There has not been one large event that has really thrown the free and fair moniker off of this



This file photo shows supporters of Tanzania's ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) celebrating during the official launch of the party's campaign for the general election at the Jamhuri stadium in Dodoma, Tanzania on August 29 (AFP)

election, it has been more a series of small things, death by a thousand cuts if you will," a Western diplomat said. "Whether it is a campaign event being disrupted by police, campaign officials being arrested for unknown reasons... the burning of Chadema offices... little things that add up."

Tanzania has long been seen as a haven of stability in an otherwise volatile neighbourhood, but since Magufuli's election in 2015 as a corruption-busting man of the people, alarm has grown over a perceived slide into autocracy. Magufuli at first made wildly popular moves such as curbing

foreign travel for government officials or showing up in person to make sure civil servants were doing their work. However Ringisai Chikohomero, a researcher with the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies said it was clear from the start that his approach 'does not leave room for anyone to

question his methods'. Then, Magufuli banned political rallies - saying it was time for work, not politics - and cut live coverage of parliament sessions. A series of tough media laws were passed, arrests of journalists, activists and opposition members soared and several opposition members were killed.

When a local advocacy group published an opinion poll showing his popularity had plunged from 96 per cent at the beginning of his term to 55 per cent in 2018, its director had his passport confiscated and further polls were banned. Nevertheless, Magufuli's rallies - reflecting the slick capabilities of incumbency, with professionally printed banners, coordinated green outfits and performances by some of Tanzania's best-loved musicians - have also drawn massive crowds. He touts his expansion of free education, rural electrification and infrastructure projects such as railways, a hydropower dam set to double electricity output and the revival of the national airline. "I will surprise you with more development projects if I win. What I did in the last five years is just peanuts," he said at one rally. "He has been tough enough to address corruption and create discipline in the public service," said supporter Andrew Masanja. AFP

11 Afghan women killed in stampede for Pakistan visa

Jalalabad, Afghanistan - At least 11 women were killed on Wednesday in a stampede at an Afghan football stadium where thousands of people had gathered to apply for Pakistani visas, authorities said.

The incident unfolded at the stadium in Jalalabad city, the capital of eastern Nangarhar province, after large crowds assembled in a bid to secure travel permission after the nearby Pakistani consulate resumed services following a seven-month hiatus due to the pandemic.

To avoid overwhelming the visa centre, applicants had been directed to Jalalabad's nearby football stadium to hand over passports and paperwork, provincial governor's spokesman Attaullah Khogyani said. "Unfortunately this morning tens of thousands of people had come to the football stadium which led to the tragic incident," Khogyani said. Khogyani and provincial hospital spokesman Zaher Adel put



Women gather outside the main gate of a football stadium following a stampede, in Afghanistan's Jalalabad on Wednesday (AFP)

the death toll at 11 women, while Nangarhar provincial council member Naser Kamawal said 15 people had died and 15 more were injured. Eyewitness Abdul Ahad said women had been given priority to stand at the front of the crowd. "When the officials announced that the gates were opening in the morning, everybody rushed to enter the stadium to be the first to deliver their

passports," Ahad said. "The women, most of them elderly, who were in the front fell and could not get up. It was chaotic." Pakistan's Embassy in Kabul expressed 'deep grief and sadness' over the incident. 'The Embassy remains committed to ensure smooth and effective management of visa applicants at our end,' a state-ment read. AFP

Taliban ambush kills at least 25 Afghan personnel

Kunduz, Afghanistan - At least 25 Afghan security force personnel were killed in an ambush blamed on the Taliban, officials said on Wednesday, as spiralling violence imperils ongoing peace talks.

The ambush came despite assurances by the Taliban to Washington last week that they would reduce bloodshed. Security forces were attacked overnight Tuesday in Takhar province and fighting was still going on, said Jawad Hejri, a spokesman for the governor, who put the death toll so far at 25. "The Taliban had taken positions in the houses around the area. They ambushed our forces who were there for an operation against the enemy," he said. Takhar provincial health director Abdul Qayoum said 34 security personnel had been killed - including the deputy police chief of the province. The Taliban have so far not commented on the attack.



Relatives gather around the coffin of a soldier outside a hospital after a Taliban ambush killed 25 security personnel, on Wednesday (AFP)

Despite opening peace talks with the Afghan government in Qatar, the hardline group have only increased violence in Afghanistan in a bid to wield leverage in the negotiations. A major assault by the Taliban in Helmand province forced thousands of families to flee their homes last week, while a car bomb Sunday near the police headquarters in Ghor blamed on

the insurgents left 16 people dead and 154 wounded. Meetings have been held between Afghan forces and the Taliban in Doha over the past few days, but little progress has been made since the talks launched in September. "This level of violence, of course, makes the task of negotiating very difficult," said Nader Naderi. AFP

UN envoy in Libya 'optimistic' about ceasefire prospects

Geneva, Switzerland - The UN's Libya envoy said on Wednesday she was 'quite optimistic' about the prospects of a ceasefire emerging from talks under way in Geneva between the two warring factions in the troubled north African country. After two days of face-to-face discussions at the United Nations, which are scheduled to last until Saturday, the two sides have agreed to open internal land and air routes. They also agreed to maintain the current calm on the frontlines and to avoid military escalation, and on moves which should ensure the increase of oil production. "The two sides have reached agreement on several important issues which directly impact the lives and welfare of the Libyan

people," Stephanie Williams, the head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), told a press conference. "I'm quite optimistic... there is an air of seriousness and commitment," she said on the prospect of a ceasefire. Libya has been wracked by conflict since the overthrow and killing of dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. Rival power centres as well as a myriad of militias are vying for control, while human rights violations are often overlooked. The two main factions are based around the internationally-recognised Government of National Accord in Tripoli and a parliament in the eastern city of Tobruk, which backs Khalifa Haftar. AFP

Armenia, Azerbaijan ministers arrive in Moscow

Moscow, Russia - The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan have arrived in Moscow on Wednesday for meetings with Russia's top diplomat Sergey Lavrov as world powers seek to halt fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh. The ministers were visiting the Russian capital, their respective ministries said as the pair are due to meet with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Friday. They have ruled out a trilateral meeting and will meet Pompeo separately. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov arrived in Moscow for 'consultations with the Russian side', the ministry said in a statement. His Armenian counterpart Zohrab Mnatsakanyan was set to meet with Lavrov in Moscow 'to discuss the situation in Karabakh and the implementation of a ceasefire agreement', ministry spokeswoman Anna Nagdalyan said.



A man stands among the debris of a house hit by a rocket during the ongoing military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in the Azerbaijan city of Ganja on Wednesday (AFP)

It was not immediately clear if the two diplomats would meet Lavrov jointly or separately. World powers including Russia and the United States have expressed dismay that there has been no let-up in more than

three weeks of fighting over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. A truce was agreed in Moscow earlier this month after 11 hours of talks, but the accord had next to no impact on the ground.

A second ceasefire agreed Saturday fell apart almost immediately. Yerevan says 772 Armenian soldiers and 36 civilians have been killed in the flare-up of fighting.

Baku has reported 63 civilian casualties but has yet to disclose military losses. Azerbaijan and the Armenian separatists who control its Karabakh region have been locked in a bitter impasse over the fate of the mountainous province since a war in the 1990s that left 30,000 people dead. Their long-simmering conflict erupted again on September 27 in fierce clashes that raised the alarm over the failure of decades-long international mediation. Along with France and Russia, the United States co-chairs the so-called Minsk Group of international mediators to the Karabakh peace talks since the 1994 ceasefire. Baku says its forces have captured ground within Karabakh and that it also now controls Azerbaijani territory that had been held by Armenian forces. AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Translation tools, air purifiers: Face masks go high-tech

Singapore - From monitoring vital signs to filtering filthy air and even translating speech into other languages, the coronavirus-fuelled boom in mask-wearing has spawned an unusual range of high-tech face coverings.

As masks become the norm worldwide, tech companies and researchers are rolling out weird and wonderful models to both guard against infection and cash in on a growing trend.

One of the wackiest comes from Japan, where start-up Donut Robotics has created a face covering that helps users adhere to social distancing and also acts as a translator.

The 'C-Face' mask works by transmitting a wearer's speech to a smartphone via an app, and allows people to have a conver-



A face mask - installed with sensors which transmit via Bluetooth readings of a person's skin temperature, blood pressure, heart rate and blood oxygen levels to a mobile app - is on display in Singapore (AFP)

sation while keeping up to 10m apart.

"Despite the coronavirus, we

sometimes need to meet directly with each other," Donut Robotics chief executive

Taisuke Ono told AFP.

The lightweight silicone device could have immediate ben-

efits for people such as doctors who want to communicate with patients from a distance, the company says.

It can translate speech from Japanese into English, Korean and other languages - a function that will become more useful once travel restrictions are eventually eased.

But it does not offer protection from COVID-19 on its own, and is designed to be worn over a regular face covering when it goes on sale in February for about 4,000 yen (US\$40).

Donut Robotics raised nearly 100mn yen (US\$950,000 approx) via crowdfunding to develop it, a success Ono believes was driven by a desire for innovations to make life easier during the pandemic.

"We may be able to fight the

virus with technology, with human wisdom," he said.

Another face mask developed in Singapore is aimed at protecting medics treating COVID-19 patients.

It has sensors that monitor body temperature, heart rate, blood pressure and blood oxygen levels, and relay data to a smartphone via a Bluetooth transmitter.

"Many of these frontline workers will be exposed to patients when they are taking their vital signs," Loh Xian Jun, one of the scientists behind the invention, told AFP.

"This poses a health risk to the nurses, and we wanted to think about a way to reduce such risk."

Its inventors say the device could also monitor vital signs of

migrant workers in crowded dormitories, which incubated massive virus outbreaks in the city-state this year.

They hope to trial it in the near future and market it commercially.

For those seeking to combat the effects of pollution in smog-choked cities, South Korea's LG Electronics has developed an air purifier mask.

The futuristic white device, which fits snugly around the wearer's mouth, nose and chin, is equipped with two filters on either side and fans to aid airflow.

The filters are similar to those in the company's home air purifiers, and can block 99.95 per cent of harmful particles.

AFP

India to roll out quick, low-priced paper test



This file photo shows a researcher working at a laboratory of the CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), which developed a paper-based test for COVID-19 that could give results similar to the speed of pregnancy tests, in India's capital New Delhi on October 7 (AFP)

New Delhi, India - A fast and low-priced paper-based coronavirus test will soon be available across India, with scientists hopeful it will help turn the tide on the pandemic in one of the world's worst-hit nations.

India has recorded more than 7.5mn infections, second only to the United States, and the outbreak has spread from densely packed megacities like Mumbai to rural communities with limited medical services.

The locally developed Feluda, named for a detective in a famous Indian novel series, resembles a home pregnancy paper-strip test and delivers re-

Researchers are optimistic that the kit's low cost and ease of use can help stem the virus spread in remote areas

sults within an hour.

Researchers are optimistic that its low cost and ease of use can help stem the pathogen's spread in poor and remote areas.

"This test doesn't require any

sophisticated equipment or highly trained manpower," said co-creator Souvik Maiti, a scientist at New Delhi's CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB).

"There are lots of remote parts of India where you do not have any sophisticated laboratories... (The test) will be much easier to deploy; it will have much more penetration."

India currently diagnoses COVID-19 with either RT-PCR tests, which are highly accurate but require advanced lab machinery, or antigen tests, which can give results in just a few minutes at a limited cost but

with significantly lower accuracy. Feluda, like other inexpensive paper-based tests being developed in other countries, claims to combine the accuracy of the PCR test with the accessibility of the antigen kits.

It uses the gene-editing technique CRISPR-Cas9, which recently earned its inventors Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier the Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

Feluda has been granted government regulatory approval and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said last week it could be rolled out in the next few weeks by Indian conglomerate Tata Group.

erate Tata Group.

If made available within that timeframe, India will be one of the first countries in the world to begin mass use of such a test. The price has not been released, but local media said it could cost around ₹500 (US\$6.80 approx) - around a fifth of what a PCR test costs in New Delhi.

The current prototype requires a PCR machine for processing, but scientists are working on a saliva or self-swabbing version that can be used at home, co-founder and IGIB scientist Debojyoti Chakraborty said.

AFP



Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro (left) and Health Minister Eduardo Pazuello at an event at Planalto Palace, in Brasilia on October 14 (AFP)

Brazil embraces Chinese vaccine after messy row

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - Brazil's Health Minister said on Tuesday the country would add the Chinese-made CoronaVac vaccine against COVID-19 to its national immunisation programme, despite a political and diplomatic row over whether to use it.

Health Minister Eduardo Pazuello said the federal government had reached a deal with Sao Paulo state, which is helping test and produce the vaccine, to buy 46mn doses to be administered starting in January.

"This vaccine will be Brazil's vaccine," in addition to another developed by Oxford University and pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca, Pazuello told a video meeting of the South American country's 27 governors.

"That's our big news. This is going to recalibrate the process [of eventually vaccinating Brazil's population against COVID-19, which has claimed more lives here than any country except the United States]."

CoronaVac, developed by Chinese pharmaceutical firm Sinovac Biotech, has been caught up in a battle in Brazil.

Far-right President Jair Bolsonaro had labelled it the vaccine from 'that other country', and resisted using it, pushing for

the Oxford vaccine instead.

Sao Paulo Governor Joao Doria, a top Bolsonaro opponent, meanwhile pushed a deal between Sinovac and Brazil's Butantan Institute to test and produce the vaccine in his state.

Doria has touted the vaccine as safe and effective, personally holding press conferences to announce preliminary results from the clinical trials.

He and Bolsonaro have also clashed over whether vaccination should be compulsory, as Doria would like. "That vaccine will not be obligatory, period," Bolsonaro said on Monday.

Both the Sinovac and Oxford vaccines are currently undergoing final-stage clinical trials in Brazil, a top testing ground for vaccine candidates because of its high infection rate.

Both still need regulatory approval.

Brazil had previously signed a contract for 100mn doses of the Oxford vaccine.

But CoronaVac is expected to be available first, after Oxford had to suspend testing in September when a volunteer developed an unexplained illness.

Brazil, a country of 212mn people, has registered 5.3mn cases and 155,000 deaths from the novel coronavirus.

AFP

Quarantined fishermen drive New Zealand virus spike

Wellington, New Zealand - A coronavirus outbreak among hundreds of Russian and Ukrainian fishermen flown to New Zealand to bolster its struggling deep-sea fishing industry has prompted that country's largest daily increase in infections in months, authorities said Wednesday.

Over 230 fishermen were flown in from Moscow last week, with 18 of the crew members then testing positive for COVID-19 while in quarantine,



This file photo shows New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern when she announced zero case of COVID-19 in her country on June 8

New Zealand's Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said.

The Pacific nation has almost eliminated local transmission of the virus, but regularly records small numbers of new cases in returned travellers.

The fishing cluster pushed the daily tally of new infections to 25, the highest level since April sparking concern among officials in Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's recently re-elected government.

New Zealand has recorded over 1,500 cases and 25 deaths in a population of almost five million and has been widely praised for its handling of the pandemic.

Health officials said two new cases had also been linked to a port worker, who may have come into contact with a vessel now docked off Australia's east coast.

Broad travel bans remain in place in New Zealand and those granted exemptions - in-

cluding the fishermen, who were classified as essential workers - are forced to quarantine for 14 days.

Bloomfield said the new cases highlighted the threat of overseas arrivals.

"We cannot afford to be complacent, we are not being complacent at the border," Bloomfield told media.

The maritime sector has also come under scrutiny in Australia, where dozens of crew members from a cattle ship

docked off Australia's west coast tested positive for the virus.

"It is becoming clear that ships arriving with COVID-19 on board is one of the weakest links and the biggest risk to our way of life in Western Australia," Western Australia premier Mark McGowan said on Tuesday.

Australia has recorded over 27,400 cases and 905 deaths in a population of 25mn.

AFP

US ELECTION

Donald Trump traverses US as Obama steps up support for Biden

Washington, US - Former president Barack Obama holds his first rally on Wednesday in support of US election front runner Joe Biden, while Donald Trump campaigned frantically and accused his opponent, who stayed home in Delaware, of going 'into hiding'.

Two weeks before the polls, the contrast in campaign strategies between Trump (74) and Biden (77) has never been more pronounced: The Republican president led another rally in the battleground state of Pennsylvania on Tuesday, while Democrat Biden stayed mostly out of sight ahead of a pivotal televised debate later in the week.

Polls show Biden ahead and, with the clock running down, he appears confident.

In any case, few could ever out-campaign Trump, who has rediscovered his old energy with daily, sometimes twice-daily, rallies around the country since recovering from COVID-19 just over a week ago.

His latest rally was in Erie, a former Democratic stronghold that he won in 2016, symbolising his successful capture of the white working-class vote that had long been loyal to the left and which Biden has been trying to claw back.

Trump's message with a fortnight left to go has boiled down to a mix of optimism, telling Americans that the coronavirus pandemic is practically over, and ever more extreme attempts to tar Biden as corrupt - even saying on Tuesday that he wants the attorney general to open an investigation ahead of the election.

But, underlining how hard it is for him to escape the subject of the COVID-19 crisis, Trump's wife Melania canceled plans to accompany him to Pennsylvania at the last minute, complaining of a 'lingering cough'.



US President Donald Trump (front) watches as a video of Democratic presidential candidate former vice president Joe Biden plays behind him when the President holds a 'Make America Great Again' rally at Erie International Airport in Erie, Pennsylvania, on Tuesday (AFP)

following her own bout with the virus. This was to have been her first appearance alongside Trump at a rally in more than a year, possibly boosting his dire standing among women voters.

Slinging dirt

After a difficult few weeks for his reelection hopes, compounded by three nights in hospital with the coronavirus, Trump believes he is storming into the final stretch with new momentum - even if published polls show little sign to support this theory.

"Things are changing fast," Trump told the Fox & Friends programme, claiming that his own polling showed Biden is 'imploding'.

Both candidates will get something of a reality check on Thursday when they meet for their second and final televised debate.

To try and impose some sense of order after a chaotic first clash in September, the moderator will this time switch off each candidate's microphone when their opponent is speaking, thereby trying to

thwart interruptions.

In what could be seen as foreshadowing, Trump's microphone cut out briefly at his Erie rally on Tuesday. When it came back on, he blamed 'Crooked Hillary' for the interruption - a reference to his 2016 opponent, Hillary Clinton.

At the debate Biden is sure to go after Trump for his record on the pandemic, which has killed around 220,000 Americans and, despite the president's frequent claims, is surging back rather than going away.

A New York Times report on

Tuesday was likely to give Biden additional ammunition, revealing how Trump spent years cultivating business projects in China and even maintains a previously unknown bank account in the country.

As for Trump, he has made clear his priority is to pursue his claim that Biden's son Hunter sold access to his father in Ukraine and China when he was vice president under Obama.

Trump upped his offensive on Tuesday by calling on US Attorney General Bill Barr to investigate his 'criminal' opponent

'before the election'. And he told Fox News that the accusation has sent Biden 'into hiding'.

Trump is the subject of multiple allegations of sexual assault, corruption, and also is the first president to run for reelection after being impeached.

However, he won in 2016 in part thanks to the success of a last-minute push to sow doubt about Clinton's honesty.

He is dusting off that playbook again. Crowds at Trump's rallies have even repurposed the old anti-Clinton chant for Biden, shouting 'lock him up'.

Trump upped his offensive on Tuesday by calling on US Attorney General Bill Barr to investigate his 'criminal' opponent 'before the election'. He told Fox News that the accusation has sent Biden 'into hiding'

Pennsylvania push

According to a new poll from The New York Times/Siena College, Biden has a nine-point lead nationally.

Although this reflects the consensus of polls, there are outliers, including IBD/TIPP, which accurately predicted the 2016 shock result and sees a much tighter race now, with Biden only 2.3 points ahead.

Pennsylvania is one of the half-dozen states that Trump more or less has to win to amass enough electoral college votes to hold on to the presidency. Polls show Biden ahead there, though a Reuters/Ipsos poll this week showed the gap narrowing slightly.

Reflecting the state's importance, the Biden team said Obama would campaign in Pennsylvania on Wednesday at a 'drive-in car rally' in Philadelphia, during which he will encourage early voting.

Firebrand Senator Bernie Sanders, who is hugely popular with the Democrats' leftwing, will go on Saturday.

A key element in this year's campaign is early voting, which is at record-high levels.

AFP

Why Beijing may want Trump to remain President

Beijing, China - Donald Trump has frustrated and enraged China during a tumultuous first term, but Beijing may welcome his re-election as it scans the horizon for the decline of its superpower rival.

Relations are as icy as at any time since formal ties were established four decades ago, with China warning it does not want to be drawn into a new 'Cold War' with the United States.

Under his 'America First' banner, Trump has portrayed China as the greatest threat to the United States and global democracy.

He has launched a massive trade war that has cost China billions of dollars, harangued Chinese tech firms and lay all the blame for the pandemic with Beijing.

But another Trump triumph in November may have its advantages for China as President Xi Jinping seeks to cement his nation's rise as a global superpower.

China's leadership could be handed 'the opportunity to boost its global standing as a champion for globalisation, multilateralism, and international cooperation', said Zhu Zhiqun, professor of political and international relations, Bucknell University.

Trump has pulled America



A pencil sketch of US President Donald Trump (centre) lies on a bench at a portrait artist's stall near the Hu Hai Lake in Beijing on October 16 (AFP)

from a sprawling Asia-Pacific commercial deal and climate agreements, imposed billions of dollars of tariffs on Chinese goods, and withdrawn the US from the World Health Organization at the height of a global pandemic.

Where the US has retreated, Xi has stepped forward.

He has presented his country

as the champion of free trade and a leader in the fight against climate change, as well as vowed to share any potential COVID-19 vaccine with poorer nations.

"A second Trump term could give China more time to rise as a great power on the world stage," Zhu said.

Philippe Le Corre, a China ex-

pert at the Harvard Kennedy School in the United States, agreed an extension of Trump's 'America First' policies would be of long-term benefit for Beijing.

"(It) partially cuts Washington off from its traditional allies," he added, and that gave China room to manoeuvre. China's nationalists have openly cheered, or jeered, for Trump.

"You can make America eccentric and thus hateful for the world," Hu Xijin, editor-in-chief of the *Global Times*, a chest-beating nationalist paper, warned in a Tweet directed at the US President.

"You help promote unity in China."

Trump is also lampooned on China's heavily censored social

media as 'Jianguo', meaning 'help to build China'.

Biden trouble

Trump has undoubtedly inflicted economic and political pain on China.

"China has lost out enormously in its plan for trade and technology," said Beijing-based political analyst Hua Po.

In January the US and China signed a deal bringing a partial truce in their trade war that obliged Beijing to import an additional US\$200bn in American products over two years, ranging from cars to machinery and oil to farm products.

Washington has also turned its guns on Chinese tech firms it says poses security threats, throwing the future US operations of video-sharing app TikTok - owned by Chinese parent company ByteDance - into uncertainty.

Mobile giant Huawei is also on Trump's hitlist.

The enmity also extends into defence and human rights, with Taiwan, Hong Kong and the treatment of China's Muslim Uighur minority all making waves in US.

But China may not win much relief in any of these areas if Trump loses to Democratic challenger Joe Biden.

Beijing worries that Biden is

likely to renew American leadership on human rights, pressing China on issues of the Uighurs, Tibet and freedom in Hong Kong.

"Biden is likely to be tougher than Trump on human rights issues in Xinjiang and Tibet," said Zhu, of Bucknell University.

And on tech and trade - crucial flash points in the US-China rivalry - it is unclear just how much room a Biden White House would have to manoeuvre.

"Biden will inherit the tariffs, and I'm doubtful he would lift them unilaterally," said Bonnie Glaser, Director of the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"Beijing will probably have to concede to other US demands if it wants the tariffs lifted."

China will also have to come up with convincing arguments on data security if it is to avoid more damaging bans on its tech firms.

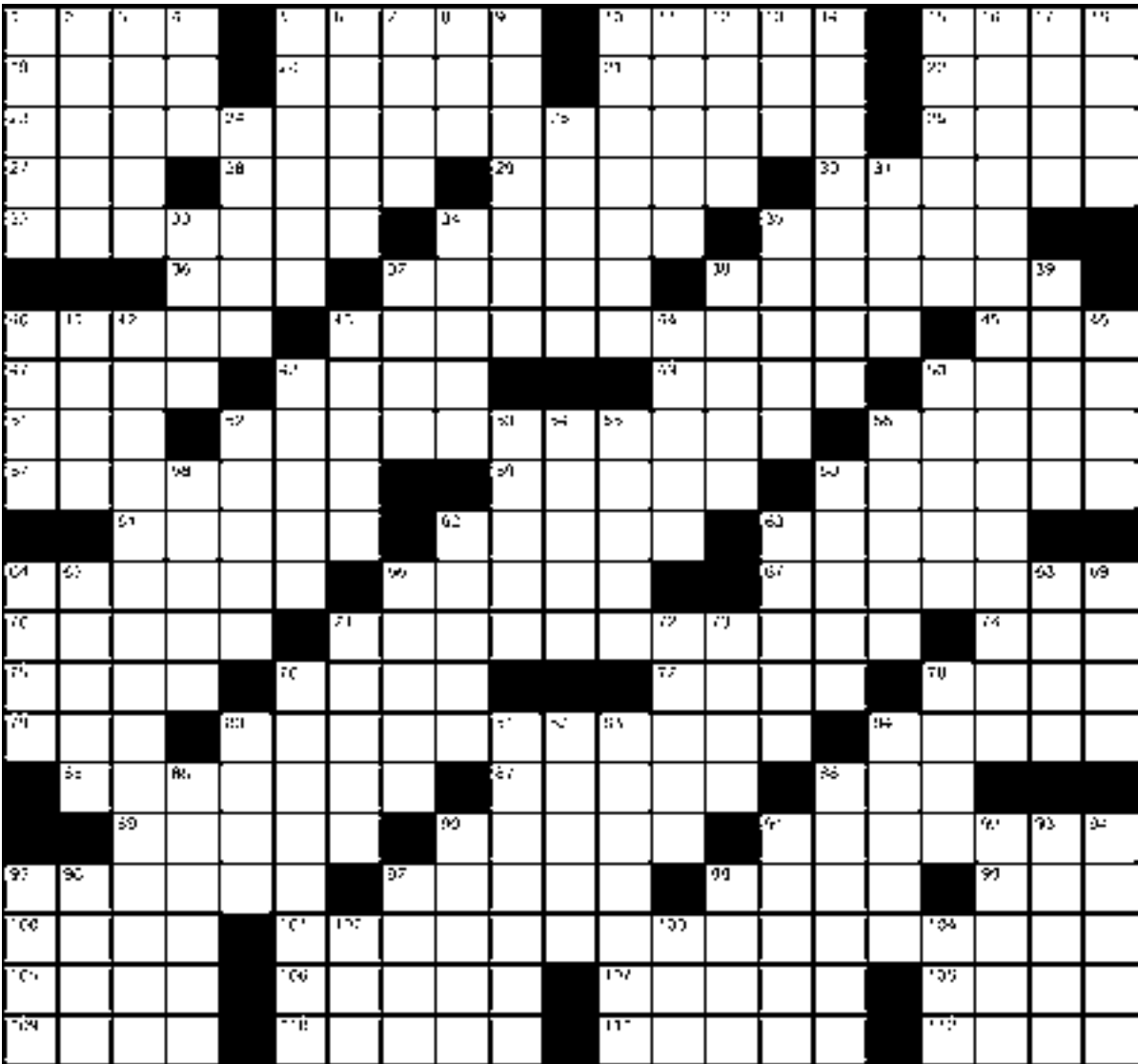
Washington sees Huawei - the global leader on 5G internet - as a serious security threat.

"Politically, it will be almost impossible for Biden to reverse these policies," Fallon said.

"Huawei has been on the US radar as a security threat even before the Trump presidency."

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Theda of the silents
- 5 Not live
- 10 Irregular mass
- 15 Med. course
- 19 Iowa State locale
- 20 Nicholas Gage book
- 21 “Foreign Affairs” author Alison
- 22 Hawaiian port
- 23 Actor’s building grounder
- 26 Collection of verses
- 27 Queen before Sophia
- 28 Leftovers dish
- 29 Call a halt
- 30 Ankle
- 32 Out of debt
- 34 Chisel out
- 35 Islamic sect
- 36 Quant.
- 37 She made pigs of men
- 38 Augur
- 40 Slip
- 43 Director’s police weapons?
- 45 Golfer’s gadget
- 47 Part of Q.E.D.
- 48 Quote
- 49 Times around
- 50 Letters from Greece

- 51 Trait carrier
- 52 Suffragist’s revolving tray?
- 56 City in the Finestère
- 57 Jet Blue is one
- 59 Praying figure
- 60 Respiration
- 61 Grain related
- 62 Union unit
- 63 Ascend
- 64 Corroborate
- 66 Actor Murphy
- 67 Incipient American Beauty
- 70 Patriot Silas
- 71 Singer’s free-forall?
- 74 Sash for Cio-Cio-San
- 75 River at Rennes
- 76 Byzantine town
- 77 “Revolutionary ____”
- 78 Anna who played Nana
- 79 Sesame
- 80 Flimsily constructed actor?
- 84 Rocket stage
- 85 Speech problem
- 87 Man-made fabric
- 88 Fair grade?
- 89 Having mystical inscription
- 90 Percussion instruments
- 91 “Dark ____”: cult

- series
- 95 Mite
- 97 Cherubini opera
- 98 Leave out
- 99 One way to stand
- 100 Extinct bird
- 101 Recently arrived singer?
- 105 Fulda feeder
- 106 Concur
- 107 South African village
- 108 Turgenev’s birthplace
- 109 Space acronym
- 110 Stiff wind, old style
- 111 Unimpressive
- 112 Facility
- DOWN
- 1 Cotton units
- 2 Acid type
- 3 Courtly
- 4 ____ Wednesday
- 5 Lease holder
- 6 Healing
- 7 Phnom ____
- Cambodia
- 8 MIT grad
- 9 Reject
- 10 Butcher’s tool
- 11 Oscar winner
- Rainer
- 12 Impel
- 13 Kabuki pose
- 14 Disquiets
- 15 Actor Brian
- 16 Checks-at-the-start

- comedian?
- 17 Mattie or Felipe
- 18 Turn’s partner
- 24 Kind of song or park
- 25 Canonical hour
- 31 Aardvark’s diet
- 33 Immense
- 34 “Adriana Lecouvreur” composer
- 35 Comic Sales
- 37 Part of NYC
- 38 Botanical garden item
- 39 Believer in a personal God
- 40 Swan lady
- 41 Water buffalo
- 42 Handy talk-show host?
- 43 Shriveled
- 44 Genetic replica
- 46 Baltic native
- 48 “Cave ____”
- 50 ____ de menthe
- 52 Petrol measure
- 53 Will ____: won’t work
- 54 School’s goal
- 55 Despised
- 56 Lively
- 58 Singer Frankie
- 60 “____ and Sand”:
- Valentino flick
- 62 Singer Yma
- 63 Zagreb native

- 64 Miner’s way in
- 65 Cat genus
- 66 “____ Is Born”
- 68 Over, in Bonn
- 69 DeLaurentis
- 71 Spherical
- 72 Soft cheeses
- 73 Rock’s partner
- 76 “... and thy want as an ____”: Proverbs
- 78 Seminal source
- 80 Boston’s ____ Parker House
- 81 More robust
- 82 Scottish hillsides
- 83 Empties the suitcase
- 84 Ranch in “Giant”
- 86 Roman Eos
- 88 Fall forecast
- 90 Giggle
- 91 Slander
- 92 Met offering
- 93 Burton’s birthplace
- 94 Manner
- 95 Mideast gulf
- 96 Musical finale
- 97 Engs.
- 98 Sharif
- 102 In the past
- 103 Spanish pelf
- 104 ____ the line

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

This past month has had you fully focused on partnership, Aries. Whether that meant breaking up, beginning anew, or exploring your own relationship to relationships, you couldn’t pull yourself away from involvement with another. Today, the sun moves forward into intimacy-hungry Scorpio, summoning you on an inward mission to discover a more raw and vulnerable approach



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

What does home mean to you? You’ve been in constant motion and so enmeshed in communication that your soul is aching for some time to lay down roots and find simple stillness. The sun moves forward into emotionally rich Scorpio this morning, putting you at your most private time of year. It’s helping redirect your focus towards your home and family life in the month ahead.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Sagittarians are the natural philosophers of the zodiac. After weeks of heightened social activity and trying to make your dreams come true, it’s time to pull away and quietly retreat from the scene so you can ponder in peace. The sun moves forward into private Scorpio this morning, directing your energy towards rest, relaxation, and regeneration in the month ahead.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You’ve been working yourself to the bone. It’s been imperative that you straighten out your job situation to your liking and establish a healthier balance between your down time and productive time. Today’s skies begin to sway your focus away from the management of your workload and redirect it towards exploring the world of partnership, as the sun enters Scorpio.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

All Virgos are born with something to say. After a few weeks of exploring your natural talents and skills behind the scenes, you’re likely feeling ready to begin to self-express and open yourself back up to sharing. Today, the sun moves forward into Scorpio, refocusing the bulk of your energy towards educational pursuits, communication, and your mental inner world.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You’ve devoted so much energy towards getting ahead in recent weeks. Hopefully you’ve made some strides or have felt a deeper understanding around your own drive for accomplishment. Today’s skies feature the sun’s forward movement into emotionally rich Scorpio, redirecting your focus towards your long-term goals and the alliances you keep.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It’s been crucial that you rediscover your joy this past month, Gemini. You’ve needed to explore your creative energy and get lost in the playful world of romance. Now that you’ve rediscovered what it is you love to do, it’s time to get to work on honing that craft. The sun moves forward into highly focused Scorpio this morning, redirecting your energy towards your work/life balance.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You’re reinventing yourself from scratch. The last few weeks have helped you reaffirm what direction you’d like to take your identity in, as you’ve wrestled with issues of individuality. Today’s skies see you taking the next step in this ongoing journey, as the sun moves forward into Scorpio, helping illuminate the underutilised talents and skills that await your activation.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Don’t stop now! You’re entering your peak time of year career-wise. After several weeks of considering education, travel plans, or exploring your own philosophy on life, you’re now ready to pursue the career you set your sights on. The sun moves forward into highly Scorpio, making you more visible among your peers and bringing opportunities for advancement in the coming weeks.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

It’s easy for you to get trapped in melancholic moods. The past few weeks have tested your emotional stability, as you’ve been asked to go deep and explore ancient hang-ups that still haunt you. Fortunately, the sun moves forward into sensual Scorpio this morning, pulling you out of the dark and refocusing your energy on playful creative projects and romantic pursuits.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Your season has finally arrived! The sun moves forward into your sign, pulling you out of the reflective cave in which you’ve been hiding. You’ve had to explore a lot of the self-built blockages that have stood in your path, but now with more clarity and room for growth, you can begin to pour your energy into your self-expression and individuality.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You’re finally coming out of the dark. It’s been a rough couple of weeks, as you’ve had to really sit with some of the more emotionally challenging material you harbour around sex, intimacy, and commitment. Now you’re ready to build new philosophies on life. The sun moves forward into sharp Scorpio this morning, helping you prioritise your core beliefs on life.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. In cricket, a run taken when the ball passes the batsman without touching his bat or body is called

- a. leg bye
- b. bye
- c. bosie
- d. drive

2. How many non-permanent Security Council (UNO) members are from Afro-Asian countries?

- a. 5
- b. 15
- c. 2
- d. 1

3. Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, established in 1971, is located at

- a. Indore
- b. Trombay, Maharashtra
- c. Kalpakkam, Chennai
- d. Kolkata

Answers: 1: b 2: a 3: c

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

BOGGLER

B	U	H	F
F	A	A	G
E	R	A	E
T	S	E	R

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (OCTOBER 21)

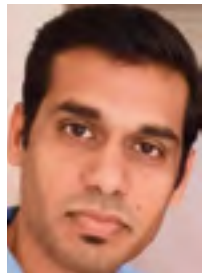
WORD BUILDER

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



4 BASIC EXERCISES



SEBASTIAN GEORGE
Fitness coach

If you haven't been exercising all your life but do have the intent to start at some point, it is good to start with 4 basic exercises that mobilise and strengthen your spine and limbs, besides giving you an all-round feeling of wellbeing.

Fitness coach **Sebastian George** presents the following four exercises which anyone can do, irrespective of age of gender. "They don't require any equipment and can be done anywhere, indoors or outdoors, depending on one's preference," he says.



SQUAT - THE 'KING OF EXERCISES'

Muscles Worked - Lower body (Quadriceps, Hamstrings, Calves, Glutes) and core.

Benefits - Strengthens the lower body and core, increases mobility at hips, knees and ankles. Creates stronger joints and helps reduce risk of injury while doing any other activity. It also helps burn a lot of calories.

How to squat

Begin by standing with feet hip-width apart, hold your arms in front of you or fold them across your chest. Inhale and brace your core and lower your hips until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Imagine sitting on an invisible chair and drive through your heels to stand up to complete one rep. You may do 12-15 reps for 2-3 sets.

- Dos**

 - Stand hip-width apart
 - Align your knees with your toes
 - Maintain natural arch at spine
- Don'ts**

 - Don't roll your knee inward
 - Don't raise heels
 - Don't arch the spine
 - Don't let knee overshoot toes



REVERSE CRUNCH

Muscles worked - abdominals, especially the lower abs, and external oblique.

Benefits - Strengthens abs and core by putting less stress on lower back.

How to do reverse crunches

Start lying down with your arms by your sides. Raise your legs so that your thighs are perpendicular to the floor and your knees are at a 90-degree angle. Breathe out and contract your abs to bring your knees up towards your chest and raise your hips off the floor, hold for a moment and slowly lower your legs back to the starting position.

Aim for 1-2 sets of 10-15 reps.



REVERSE LUNGES

Muscles worked - Glutes, Hamstrings, quadriceps and calves.

Benefits - Lunges is an all-rounder for your lower body. There are many kinds of lunges but Reverse Lunges are the best for beginners since it doesn't put much stress on your knees and are great in strengthening and shaping glutes, hamstrings and quads.

How to do reverse lunges

Stand tall, with your feet hip-width apart. Take a large step backward with your left foot and lower your hips so that your right thigh (front leg) becomes parallel to floor, with your right knee positioned directly over your ankle. Your left knee should be bent at 90-degrees and pointing toward the floor, with your left heel raised.

Return to the standing position by pressing your right heel in to the floor and bringing your left leg forward to the starting position to complete one rep. Alternate legs and do 12-15 reps for 2-3 sets.

- Dos**

 - Tuck your core
 - Maintain natural arch at spine
 - Take a long enough stride
 - Move slowly and get full range of motion
- Don'ts**

 - Don't take a small step back
 - Don't step directly behind the front foot
 - Don't use hands to push off front leg to stand up
 - Don't do partial range of motion



LOW PLANK

Muscle worked - Entire core

Benefits- Strengthens core, helps protect lower back.

How to do low planks

Begin in the plank position - Face down with your fore arms and toes on the floor. Your elbows are directly under your shoulders and your fore arms are facing forward, keep the head relaxed and looking at the floor.

Engage the abdominal muscles, by drawing your navel toward the spine. Keep the torso (upper body) tight and rigid and the body in a straight line, as much as possible. Try holding for 10-20 seconds and work up to 40-60 seconds.

- Common mistakes**
- Arching your back** - Shifts load away from the core
 - Sagging hips** - When your hips are sagging, it's an indication that your abs have reached their failure or fatigue.
 - Tilting head** - Your neck should be in line with your body, not tilted up, which could strain the neck.

LOSE WEIGHT WITHOUT EXERCISE

Exercise and diet are the two key pillars of good health, especially for keeping one's weight under control. However, if you are interested in losing weight without having to exercise, you surely are seeking an easy way out. And, the good news is: that's possible!

Research has shown numerous ways for losing weight, not just through a controlled diet combined with long-term exercise plan, but also by simply keeping a tab on what goes into your belly. So, if you have no time or inclination to exercise, it is still possible for you to lose weight, if you watch what you eat and how you eat. Consider these tested methods:

Chew your food slowly

It is said, the brain needs time to process if you've eaten enough. Chewing food thoroughly, slows down your food intake and induces increased fullness. Studies have shown that fast eaters are more likely to gain weight than slow eaters.

Use small, red plates

Bigger plates make portions look small, often calling for a second helping, while smaller plates can trick your brain into thinking that you are eating more than you actually are. Also, serve unhealthy fried foods in red plates - red triggers a 'stop' reaction in the brain and induces some restraint.

Eat more protein

Protein has a powerful effect on appetite, it increases feelings of fullness and decreases one's craving for food. Adding protein to your diet has been linked to weight loss, even without exercise or conscious calorie restriction.

Out of sight, is out of mind

Place unhealthy foods out of sight in kitchen cabinets. If you leave them on the counter, you would be more likely to snack in between meals. So keep candy and chips on the highest shelf, behind that jar that you never touch often.

Eat fibre-rich foods

Viscous fibre (plant foods like beans, oats, asparagus, oranges) is particularly helpful in reducing appetite and food intake. This fibre forms gel that slows down digestion.

Drink plenty of water

Drinking water can help you eat less and lose weight, especially if you drink it before a meal. Replacing a sugary drink with water is particularly beneficial.

Eat without distractions

Paying attention to what you eat may help you consume fewer calories. People who eat while they're watching TV or playing computer games may tend to overeat.



Category: Legal Services



And the winner is...

Sahar Askalan
(Awarded posthumously)

Sahar Askalan, the late founder and managing partner of S A Legal, was a UK qualified solicitor-advocate who had been trained and advocated in courts and before arbitration tribunals in the UK. She had graduated from Boston University of Massachusetts and obtained her dual post-graduate professional qualification from BPP Law School, London.

Sahar had comprehensive local and international legal experience. She worked at top-tier international law firms - Allen & Overy (London), Theodore Goddard (at present Addleshaw Goddard, London), Clifford Chance (Paris) and Richard's Butler (Abu-Dhabi) where she gained experience working in project finance, joint ventures, real estate, tourism and litigation. Her main area of expertise is in project finance where she advised on a variety of structures for major projects including infrastructure, pipelines, hotels, and the financing of each.

Upon her return to Oman, Sahar has worked as a corporate lawyer in private practice and in-house for a tourism development entity gaining a thorough knowledge of Omani laws and regulations. She ventured into opening her office - S A Legal - in order to provide the leading legal services she had been trained to provide. Sahar was the first Omani woman to open her own legal practice in Oman. Being an Omani with international legal experience, she always strived to raise the standards of legal practice in Oman.

Under her managerial expertise, S A Legal flourished to become one of the premier legal outfits in Oman, working with a top-tier national and international clientele. Now, her family has made sure that Sahar's legacy continues in her esteemed legal establishment.

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