

MUSCAT DAILY



33°C/25°C



TUESDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2021
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AN APEX MEDIA PUBLICATION

Wear a mask... always!



HM directs speeding up relief work

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik delivered a Royal speech on Monday reading as follows:

Dear Citizens,

Our dear homeland, particularly in the governorates of North Batinah and South Batinah, has undergone major climatic conditions that claimed the lives of some citizens and residents. The adverse climatic conditions also caused immense material losses to citizens' properties and infrastructure.

Right from start of the tropical condition, we were keen to follow up on all that happened, moment by moment, while our hearts turned to the Almighty Allah with pleadings and supplications to safeguard Oman and protect its citizens and residents against any harm.

A national patriotic epic unfolded as Omani people exhibited splendid forms of solidarity, collaboration and patience. This will forever remain testimony to the strength of this nation and its ability to stand the test of time in facing adverse conditions and unfavourable circumstances. This is an everlasting reflection of the sacrifices made

TOP PRIORITY TO WORK FOR RESTORATION OF NORMALCY IN PUBLIC LIFE

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS TO ENSURE SPEEDING UP ACTION TO SERVE CITIZENS

by this nation over the ages.

While we condole with the families of citizens and residents who lost near and dear one during this tropical condition, we pray to the Almighty Allah to have mercy on the deceased's souls and rest them in peace. We also offer praise to the Almighty for granting safety to the citizens of Oman, who embodied values of selflessness and solidarity, and collaboration and cooperation while supporting the national efforts exerted by the departments concerned in facilitating the life of citizens.

In the meantime, we reaffirm that, in this

stage, it is our top priority to work for the restoration of normalcy to public life and provide basic needs to the stricken ones.

We will also accord our attention to the restoration of damaged infrastructure. The departments concerned have already began accomplishing this objective. All government departments have to work together as one unit whose segments cooperate and complement each other to perform their duties and responsibilities in the best possible manner. They have to speed up actions to serve citizens in every part of the country. The Council of Ministers has to

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMERGENCY FUND TO TACKLE NATURAL DISASTERS

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE TO WORK UNDER DIRECT ROYAL SUPERVISION

ensure the achievement of this goal.

The Ministerial Committee tasked with assessing the damage caused to citizens' homes and properties has to deliver assistance as soon as possible. The government departments concerned have to facilitate the mission of the committee and cooperate with it. The Ministerial Committee will come under our direct supervision, and we will follow up on the progress of its tasks and operations.

To expedite recovery following the tropical condition and to alleviate the losses of affected citizens, we have decreed the establishment of

a National Fund for Emergencies to tackle the aftermath of this tropical condition and similar natural disasters that may occur, God forbid.

From this podium, we would like to thank our brethren and friends - leaders of sisterly and friendly states - who showed solidarity by contacting us and conveying their sympathy. We pray to the Almighty Allah to spare them any harm or calamity.

We would also like to express our appreciation for all government and private establishments and individuals who played commendable roles in managing this crisis. We thank them for their prompt response in handling the situation. In particular, we note the performance of the National Committee for Emergency Management, our valiant armed forces, Royal Oman Police, the security services, citizens and residents, the Shelter and Relief Sector, support services, private sector firms, non-governmental organisations and volunteer teams who all set excellent examples of citizenship.

May the Almighty Allah protect Oman and its people!"
ONA

► NEWS BRIEFS

HM GREETES KING FELIPE OF SPAIN

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Felipe VI of Spain on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to King Felipe VI. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Spain further progress and prosperity.

04



Widespread vaccination boosts economic activity in Oman

Engineering Committee formed to redesign roads to withstand storms

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministerial Committee appointed to assess damages resulting from cyclone Shaheen has announced that a joint engineering committee will be formed to re-engineer roads and develop technical specifications to suit tropical conditions.

The joint engineering committee will include the Engineering Services of Sultan's Armed Forces and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

H E Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance and chairman of the Ministerial Committee, held a meeting on Monday to assess the damages resulting from the cyclone with officials from the governorates of North and South Batinah at the Royal Oman Police Station in the wilayat of Suwaiq.

The engineering committee



Image shows the aftermath of tropical cyclone Shaheen in the town of Suwaiq in North Batinah on October 4 (AFP)

will take into account the flow of wadis as well as review housing plans of the future in coordination with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. 'The focus will be on developing solutions and the need to establish protection dams and water drainage channels,' the committee stated.

Telecom services

A statement issued by National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM) said that telecommunications services affected by Shaheen in South Batinah governorate have been restored 100 per cent.

NCEM, in coordination with

other public agencies, continues to work to restore basic services in all areas affected by the cyclone in South and North Batinah.

'Work to restore power supply is continuing in North Batinah,' it added. NCEM informed that a large number of licensed electricians are helping restore electrical lines in North Batinah with the support of the Engineering Services unit of the Ministry of Defence and volunteer teams.

Clean-up campaigns

Dhofar Municipality announced that it continues its efforts to support the clean-up drive in the wilayats of North Batinah. In a statement, Dhofar Municipality, said, 'The municipality team, in coordination with the municipal departments of the wilayats of Khabourah and Suwaiq, is removing debris from residential neighbourhoods and public roads.

Continued on Page 02

AstraZeneca upbeat over test results of COVID-19 drug

London, UK - British pharmaceuticals giant AstraZeneca on Monday revealed more positive results from a trial of a treatment for COVID-19 symptoms.

The drug, made from a combination of two antibodies, achieved a "statistically significant reduction in severe COVID-19 or death" in non-hospitalised patients with mild-to-moderate symptoms, AstraZeneca said in a statement.

The group's treatment, known as AZD7442, has been undergoing Phase 3 or final clinical trials to assess its safety and efficacy. "With continued cases of serious COVID-19 infections across the globe, there is a significant need for new therapies like AZD7442 that can be used to protect vulnerable populations... and can also help prevent progression to severe disease," said principal trial investigator Hugh Montgomery. "These positive results show



that a convenient intramuscular dose of AZD7442 could play an important role in helping combat this devastating pandemic."

The trial involved 903 participants, 90 per cent of who were people at high risk of progression to severe COVID-19.

AstraZeneca's separate COVID-19 vaccine, developed with the University of Oxford, helped enable Britain's speedy COVID-19 vaccination drive.

AFP

Quick response to road reconstruction

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Restoration and rehabilitation work in cyclone-affected areas in Batinah by the authorities has been quick. This is despite the fact that work was not expected to start soon and the damages were significantly greater than expected.

The action by authorities to assign construction companies quickly has been commended by many. Just days after the cyclone, Galfar Engineering and Contracting company was assigned to repair damages caused by the cyclone to the Batinah Expressway.

'In implementation of the Royal Directives of His Majesty the Sultan to speed up the repair of infrastructure that was damaged as a result of the tropical cyclone Shaheen, the Ministerial Committee assigned Galfar Engi-



(Supplied photo)

neering and Contracting company to repair the damages caused to Batinah Highway,' the Ministerial Committee said last

week.

Also, two other companies were assigned the task of rebuilding and repairing other roads

damaged by the cyclone.

Strabag Oman and Al Sarooj Construction will undertake repair works in North and South

Batinah governorates, restoring roads that were damaged during the adverse weather condition. They were assigned the task by

the Ministerial Committee set up to assess damages caused by the cyclone.

Immediately after the cyclone,

Just days after the cyclone, Galfar Engineering and Contracting company was assigned to repair the damages caused by the cyclone to the Batinah Expressway

the committee was formed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to analyse the impact of the cyclone and take measures to assist people and restore normalcy. The scope of a second package includes repairing damages to the Wadi Bani Omar Road, Wadi al Jahour Road, Wadi al Sarmi Road, Wadi al Qunoot Road, Wadi al Hawasneh Road and the Sohar-Yanqul Road.

Ministerial Committee visits cyclone-affected villages

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Members of the Ministerial Committee tasked with the assessment of damage from cyclone Shaheen, headed by H E Sultan bin Salem al Habsi, Minister of Finance and chairman of the committee, visited affected areas as well as the operations centre of the National Search and Rescue Team on Monday.

The committee members also visited a number of villages in the wilayat of Khabourah, during which they met citizens whose homes and properties were damaged.

The field tour included visits to Sana'a, Bani Ghafer, Wadi al Hawasneh, Wadi Shafan and Wadi al Sarmi.

H E Eng Said bin Hamood bin Said al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, who toured the sites, said, "Work will begin next week on the roads affected by the cyclone in Wadi al Hawasneh and Wadi Bani Omar,

The committee's visit to the affected villages revealed many aspects for which the committee needs to develop joint plans

H E DR LAILA AL NAJJAR

while seven crossings will be re-engineered in Wadi al Hawasneh."

He added that roads and diversions have been opened from the wilayat of Khabourah to Ibri, and field teams are still working on establishing diversions on some roads till the main roads are completely repaired.

For her part, H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, said that the committee's visit to the affected villages revealed many aspects for which the committee needs to develop joint plans with all relevant government agencies.

Students produce eco-friendly cement



(Supplied photo)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Students of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Higher College of Technology) in Muscat have innovated a mechanism to make cement from sewage waste.

The nine-member student team - T2C - won the Injaz Oman competition with the product. T2C claimed the award

for the Best Student Company in Oman for 2021 and will represent the sultanate in the Injaz regional competition.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ibtihal al Omairi, marketing manger in the company, said, "We thank Injaz Oman for the support. We are preparing for the upcoming regional competition and hope for success there."

T2C started the project in September 2020. "The idea

emerged from our interest and background in civil engineering since most of us in the company are pursuing civil engineering. We thought about the issues that the construction sector faces and came up with Shabk."

The cement offers an environmental friendly alternative to regular construction products.

The biggest challenge T2C faced was working during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Many

places closed down and most of the places we were dealing with didn't allow more than two people to visit. Also, due to lockdowns, we couldn't complete our project in time," Ibtihal informed.

T2C has inked several agreements that provide the team technical and research support.

"The population is growing and the number of construction projects is increasing proportionately. Cement is the main re-

quirement in all construction work. The growing number of construction projects is a healthy sign for the country but we must also take into account the health of the environment and cost and quality of construction for sustainable growth. And that is where our eco-friendly cement comes in," Ibtihal said.

T2C is currently actively seeking out collaborators for commercial production of Shabk.

Announcement

The National Leadership Program to Upskill and Empower the Potential Omanis for Middle and Senior Management Positions in the Private Sector "Etimad" in collaboration with "Competence HR" is pleased to announce the registration for the upcoming program to all the candidates working in private sector, entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises (SME) starting from Monday 11/10/2021 until Sunday 24/10/2021. Kindly note that (10%) of the seats has been allocated for entrepreneurs and owners of SMEs to join the program. The current program is designed for senior leadership training only.

"Etimad" Program aims at training Omanis and improving the level of their leadership skills through a specialized program designed in partnership with international and local institutions and centers with expertise in refining the management skills as well as training leaders. .

You can register and join the program if you meet the following eligibility criteria:

- 1- The applicant should be an Omani national and working in the private sector or an entrepreneur/ owner of SME.
- 2- The employee must have a minimum bachelor's degree from a recognized university, and the entrepreneur must have minimum a high diploma.
- 3- Experience of not less than (7) years, including at least (3) years in middle leadership positions.
- 4- Fluent in English with a high level of proficiency (spoken and written).
- 5- Have middle leadership experience such as managing a department or a team.
- 6- The employee should be registered with the Ministry of Labor.
- 7- The entrepreneur/ owner of SME must be registered with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyadh).
- 8- Those who were previously nominated and did not join the first batch, are entitled to registration.
- 9- nomination of employees in the private sector should be through employers only and Not through self-nomination.

If you are interested, kindly check "etimad" website for further details www.etimad.om and use the following link for registration <https://etimad-leadership.podium365.com/>

www.etimad.om

MCSY awards Omani cultural icons

Muscat - The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY) awarded two Omanis for their work in the field of visual and literary arts on Monday.

Anwar Khamis al Zedjali was honoured for his work in visual arts, while poet Hassan Obaid al Matroushi was awarded for his work in literary arts. The awards come as part of the ministry's endeavour to honour Omani talent in the sultanate and abroad in various intellectual, literary and artistic fields.

It also aims to present them as cultural role models for the future generations, encouraging the intellectual, literary and artistic movement, and supporting innovative outputs to build the nation further.

The awards are also part of the Gulf cultural strategy for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which includes organising joint Gulf cultural events that contribute to the advancement of joint Gulf contributions.



(Supplied photo)

Redesigning roads to withstand storms

Continued from Page 01

It is carrying out drainage work in waterlogged areas and also spraying insecticides.'

Muscat Municipality has also deployed field teams and a fleet of heavy vehicles and equipment

to support relief work.

Aflaj and dams

H E Eng Ali Mohammed al Abri, Undersecretary for Water Resources in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water

Resources, visited dams and aflaj in Suwaiq, Khabourah and Saham to gauge the extent of damage caused by the cyclone to water resources and to follow-up with the team in charge of assessing damage in the wilayats.

MoSD postpones Omani Women's Day activities

Muscat - The Ministry of Social Development has announced the postponement of Omani Women's Day celebrations due to the damages caused by cyclone Shaheen.

The ministry in a statement said that it decided to postpone the celebrations of Omani Women's Day (on October 17) 'due to the current exceptional circumstances resulting from the tropical situation Shaheen and the mobilisation of all efforts of state institutions to restore life to normal'. The ministry said it will announce the date of the celebrations later.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	38	25
Doha	35	26
Kuwait City	36	24
Manama	34	25
Riyadh	36	21

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.45am
Sunrise	6.02am
Duhr	11.53am
Asr	3.14pm
Maghrib	5.43pm
Isha	7.13pm

INDIAN, NEPALI ENVOYS BID FAREWELL



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received separately in his office Munu Mahawar, Ambassador of the Republic of India to the sultanate, and Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal to the sultanate, on Monday to bid them farewell at the end of their tenure (ONA)

Turtle Commandos to protect sea turtles

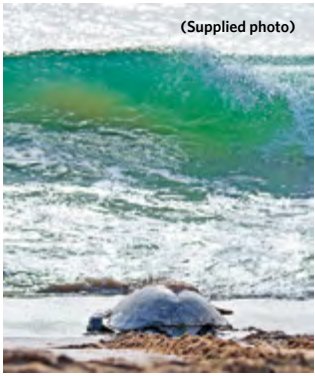
Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to protect sea turtles, the Environment Authority (EA), with the participation of local youth, will launch an initiative called 'Turtle Commandos' on Tuesday.

An official at EA said, "The three-month initiative aims to protect and monitor sea turtles in Oman, specially at Ras al Hadd Nature Reserve."

He added that the initiative will encourage youth to volunteer for environment conservation projects, educate the local community inside turtle reserves on best practices, and teach them to protect and monitor sea turtles. "It will also motivate them to keep beaches clean and help clean up post cyclone Shaheen," the EA official said.

"Participants will undergo awareness training on the importance of turtles. They will in turn transfer this knowledge to the community."



The programme will engage 40 participants every week from all governorates in various activities and workshops to help achieve its goals in the Ras al Hadd reserve in the wilayat of Sur, South Sharqiyah governorate.

"The idea of the Turtle Commandos programme is based on several factors. Owing to the global situation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges faced by foreign tourists in visiting Oman, domestic tourism flourished. This led to crowding at turtle sanctuaries as

a large number of visitors came to watch turtles nest and baby turtles hatch without knowledge of the guidelines and laws of the reserve," the official said.

"Without observers to monitor these large crowds, there was no control and protection for turtles in the reserve in the past two years. The programme will find effective solutions to meet this challenge."

Located 250km south of Muscat, Ras al Jinz is one of the largest nesting sites for endangered Green Sea Turtles in the world.

Each year, thousands of sea turtles migrate to the Arabian Peninsula to lay eggs in a natural habitat which has been preserved by authorities at the Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve. Visitors are offered a chance to witness the turtles laying eggs during the wee hours, while some may even be lucky to spot other species of turtles, including Loggerhead, Leatherback, Olive Ridley and Hawksbill turtle.

International Day of the Girl Child celebrated in the Arab region

Cairo, Egypt - The United Nations Population Fund Arab States Regional Office (UNFPA ASRO) marked International Day of the Girl Child (Oct 11) with the launch of 'In Her Words' - a collection of stories, insights and art created by adolescent girls living in humanitarian settings throughout the Arab region.

Developed by the UNFPA Regional Humanitarian Hub for Syria and the Arab States (RHH-SAS), the initiative invited adolescent girls living in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine and Syria to experiment with different forms of self-expression, resulting in a remarkable array of impactful moving narratives.

"The objective of 'In Her Words' is to build on efforts made in recent years to highlight the unique challenges and needs of adolescent girls as well as their often astounding resilience," explained UNFPA Arab States regional director, Dr Luay Shabaneh.

"Adolescent girls are not usually targeted in humanitarian programmes which limits their opportunities and potential. 'In Her Words' gives us the opportunity to hear directly from them



The objective of 'In Her Words' is to build on efforts to highlight the challenges of girls

DR LUAY SHABANEH

and to amplify their voices as they tell us about their dreams, realities and triumphs."

"In 2021, several countries in the Arab region are coping with the lasting impacts of longstanding and emerging humanitarian situations. Both the Syria and Yemen crises have passed the ten-year mark, while more recent developments in Sudan and Lebanon will result in additional disruptions in community networks, placing the lives and dignity of millions of people at risk.

Meanwhile, the worsening impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the challenges facing communities in those countries, impeding access to lifesaving services and exacerbating the risks of gender-based violence," stated a press release.

The first part of 'In Her Words' - 'Her Dreams' - immediately communicates the remarkable spirit, awareness and imagination of adolescent girls even as they face the most challenging of crises. From there, the narrative shifts to 'Her Realities', covering a wide range of difficult themes that pervade the lives of adolescent girls in the region. The third and final part - 'Her Triumphs' - shines the spotlight on some of the remarkable achievements made by girls as they strive to find their place amidst these challenges.

First 'Green Mosque' completed in Bidiyah

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In efforts to reduce dependence on conventional energy sources, the Amanah Endowment Funds Management Company has installed solar panels in the Obaid bin Saeed al Hajari Mosque in the wilayat of Bidiyah in North Sharqiyah governorate.

The project is part of the first phase of a programme titled 'Green Mosque' to convert a number of mosques to run on renewable energy.

Yousef bin Ali al Harthy, CEO, said, "Amanah has completed the project in Obaid bin Saeed al Hajari Mosque. This is the second mosque after the Hassan bin Thabit Mosque, in the wilayat of Seeb, Muscat governorate, to be fitted with solar panels."

A total of 39 solar panels have been installed in the mosque in Bidiyah with a mechanism in place to monitor the performance and efficiency of the panels. The mosque is spread over an area of 1,827sqm.



The solar panels in the mosque will generate approximately 20kW of power, which is the total requirement of the mosque. "This will result in reducing the mosque's electricity bill by 100 per cent," Harthy said.

The Green Mosque programme aims to create a sustainable environment by turning

to alternative energy sources and transitioning to a green economy. The programme will provide investment solutions to encourage mosques to use of solar energy, Harthy informed, adding that this is in line Oman Vision 2040 and the global trend towards green buildings.

Amanah Endowment Funds

Management Company with the Authority for Public Services Regulation, energy companies and Islamic financial institutions, launched the Green Mosque programme in August. The programme will be applied to 100 mosques through three phases over a period of three years, with an investment of RO5mn.

Almost 3mn vaccinated, 84% of target

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced on Monday that over 80 per cent of the total target population has been vaccinated with one dose of COVID-19 vaccine in Oman, while 66 per cent received two doses.

"The total number of people vaccinated against COVID-19 in Oman in the nationwide immunisation campaign till October 10 with at least one dose was 2,959,586, which is 84 per cent of the total target population," MoH said in a statement.

"The number of individuals vaccinated with two doses is

2,294,880, accounting for 65 per cent of the total target population. The total number of doses administered is 5,254,466."

Further drop in cases

The daily case count of COVID-19 has been declining further. On Monday, MoH announced 13 new cases and no related deaths.

This takes the total number of cases in the sultanate to 303,978, including 4,102 deaths.

MoH added that 31 COVID-19 patients recovered on Monday, taking the total number of recoveries to 299,309, while the number of cases in health institutions was 21, including seven in intensive care units.

Tender 51 /2021

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

Tender No	Title of the Tenders	Company rate	Tender document price R.O (Un refundable)	Deadline for Tender Document collection	Deadline For Offers Submission
51 / 2021	Maintenance for the Administrations of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion Rustaq	Specialized	25/. R.O	Tuesday 19/10/2021	Tuesday 26/10/2021 Before 10:00 am

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

- Offers should be submitted online to the above mentioned website. enclosed with a copy of Bank Guarantee or certified cheque issued by a local bank in the Sultanate of Oman values (1%) of the offer, valid for (90) days from the date of offer submission and addressed to H.E the Undersecretary of Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.
- Offers shall be submitted in a wax-sealed envelopes accompanied by the original Bank Guarantee or the cheque to the Secretariat of the Internal Tender Committee located in second floor of the Ministry's main building in Muttrah AlKubraa.
- The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other submitted offer.

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

Correspondences:

- Tender inquiries; All correspondence pertaining to TENDER Inquiries shall be online through E-Tendering System . (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System inquiries : All correspondences pertaining to the technical support of E-Tendering System shall be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number .
Tel. :+968 24402200 E-mail :etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

www.tejarah.gov.om

 80 00 00 70

MARKET WATCH

MSM30	3,957.86
BSE Sensex	60,135.78

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)

Indian Rs	196.19
Pakistani Rs	444.96
Bangladeshi Taka	222.58
Philippine Peso	132.25
Sri Lankan Rs	520.19

*Rates as on October 11
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Iran warns of power cuts due to illegal crypto mining

Illegal cryptocurrency mining in Iran risks causing new power cuts this winter, the state electricity company warned.

Illegal cryptocurrency mining will account for at least '10 per cent of electricity outages this winter', the power company said in a statement carried by state news agency IRNA.

Such illegal mining was responsible for 20 per cent of blackouts over the summer, it added.

Profitably creating, or mining, bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies requires masses of computers dedicated to solving deliberately complicated equations - an endeavour that globally consumes more electricity than some entire nations.

Widespread vaccination boosts economic activity in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The acceleration of the vaccination efforts against COVID-19 has helped Oman in restoring economic activity. As the widespread vaccination has contained the pandemic and allowed the government to fully reopen the economy, the sultanate's economic growth is projected to rebound this year and accelerate further in 2022.

'The economy is expected to recover gradually after a difficult 2020. Oil and non-oil growth are projected to rebound as oil production increases and widespread vaccine distribution boosts domestic activity,' the World Bank said in its GCC Economic Update report.

Oman's economy, the World Bank said, is gradually emerging from last year's contraction as the pandemic battered key sectors such as energy, tourism, and manufacturing.

Oman's nominal GDP - gross domestic product at current market prices - has greatly surpassed its pre-pandemic level after growing rapidly in the first half of this year, latest official data showed.

Supported by stimulus meas-



(Muscat Daily)

ures and reopening of economic activities, the sultanate's nominal GDP grew at a solid 10.1 per cent rate in the first half of 2021 in another sign that the country is on a sustained recovery path from the pandemic recession.

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

the first half of the year.

The Ministry of Health on Monday announced that 84 per cent of the total target population has been vaccinated with one dose of COVID-19 vaccines, while 65 per cent of the target population received two doses.

The International Monetary Fund recently said that Oman's economy is set to recover in 2021 as vaccine rollout gradually restores domestic activity along

with the recovery of external demand.

According to the World Bank, the sultanate's oil sector will remain the driving force of the economy, which is projected to grow by 3.5 per cent in 2021 and accelerate to 6 per cent by 2023, driven by higher oil output.

'Non-oil economy is forecast to post a modest recovery of 1.8 per cent in 2021 as the fast-spreading delta variant continues

to cause intermittent lockdown, before picking up to an average of 2.5 by 2022-23 supported by lifting the restrictions and the resurgence in tourism,' the World Bank said.

Oman's inflation rate, the World Bank said, is projected to pick up to 3 per cent this year, owing to the recovery of domestic demand and introduction of value added tax.

The sultanate faced significant economic disruption from the twin-shock of COVID-19 and oil price collapse in 2020, amplifying fiscal and external vulnerabilities. The World Bank said Oman's fiscal and external deficits are projected to swing into surplus driven by the oil market recovery and the fiscal adjustment, putting the sultanate's debt on a downward path.

'Oil price recovery and export diversification are projected to narrow the current account deficit to 5 per cent of GDP in 2021, reversing the nearly 14 per cent of GDP deficit observed in 2020. The current account balance will significantly improve in 2021-23 driven by the diversification efforts, but to remain in negative territory given large import inputs,' the World Bank said.

Galfar wins RO21mn contract

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Galfar Engineering & Contracting Company has been awarded a new contract worth RO21mn by the Tender Board.

'We are pleased to inform our esteemed shareholders that the Tender Board has awarded Galfar the tender for Rehabilitation of the Southern Runway and Air Corridors of Muscat International Airport Project,' Galfar said in a filing to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Monday.

The firm said that the estimated value of this project, which will be executed for the Civil Aviation Authority, is approximately RO21mn. The execution period of the project is 16 months from the issuance of the work commencement order.

Galfar said this new project is expected to contribute to the company revenues and strengthen its presence in such vital infrastructure projects.

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FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories: Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/ Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35). Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99104346



Omantel network sites damaged by Cyclone Shaheen

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) has said that Cyclone Shaheen, which badly affected parts of Oman on October 3 and 4, caused damages to some of its network sites in Muscat, North Batinah, South Batinah and Al Dhahirah governorates.

In a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Monday, Omantel said that it is currently in the process of assessing the extent of the caused damages. 'At the same time, our teams are engaged in the restoration of Omantel services.'

The company informed its

shareholders and investors that all its equipment and sites are fully covered by insurance.

'It is expected that any losses arising out of this (cyclone damages) will be reimbursed by the insurance company subject to policy conditions. Hence, we do not expect to incur any material loss,' Omantel said.

The company added that in due course it will provide an update on the loss estimates and related insurance claims.

The Capital Market Authority and Muscat Stock Exchange last week asked the exchange-listed companies and investment funds to urgently disclose the damages and loss caused by Cyclone Shaheen.

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Crude spikes to fresh peaks

London, UK - World oil prices vaulted on Monday to fresh multi-year pinnacles on strong demand and tight supplies, fuelling inflation worries and weighing on most European stock markets.

London Brent oil jumped to a three-year high at US\$84.38 per barrel, while New York's WTI crude leapt to a seven-year peak US\$81.72, though both eased lower later in the day.

The recent decision by OPEC and other major producers not to ramp up output has further strained global supplies.

"Nerves are still clearly apparent in the markets," OANDA analyst Craig Erlam told AFP.

"The energy crisis is a major concern in the coming months, while inflation concerns and the prospect of tighter monetary policy are among the numerous economic headwinds."

Stock markets in Paris and Frankfurt were down, but London's FTSE 100 - home to energy giants - was up in afternoon trading. Wall Street was higher in morning trading



after a mixed opening.

Energy crisis

Oil was also boosted last week by record-breaking natural gas prices, but these have eased after recent comments from Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Gas had spiked last week on rebounding demand from re-opening economies ahead of the

peak-demand northern hemisphere winter.

That has persuaded some consumers to switch from gas to crude oil.

"Extremely high natural gas prices ... [are] likely to add demand for oil products in substitution for expensive natural gas," noted SEB analyst Bjarne Schioldrop.

"But we have never experienced a situation like this before on such a scale ... [whereby] natural gas prices equal twice the price of oil."

"European markets are on an uncertain footing," noted IG analyst Joshua Mahony.

"With inflation fears continuing to loom, we are unlikely to see a return to the rampant bull-

ish optimism soon," he noted.

Qatar, the world's biggest liquefied natural gas exporter, said on Monday it was not pleased with current global prices which have surged to record peaks.

"I am unhappy about gas prices being high," Energy Minister Saad al Kaabi told a press conference.

High prices, he said, 'are negative for the customer, and the customers being satisfied is the most important thing to me'.

Low energy prices during the COVID-19 pandemic were expected to wipe out Qatar's budget surplus and lead to a deficit for 2021, the government had forecast in December.

Kaabi added, "If the customer is unhappy, he's not going to buy."

Kaabi said Qatar's production was 'maxed out' at 77mn tonnes per year.

"We have never 'less than' maxed out... we've not gone down, we've not gone up," he said. "We're just consistent. We're producing what we can."

AFP

MSX falls 0.28% on weak activity



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) fell by 0.28 per cent to close at 3,957.86 points on Monday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 71.78 per cent to RO2.62mn and volumes fell 13.62 per cent to 17.2mn shares.

While Financial index rose 0.02 per cent, Industrial and Services indices fell 0.89 per cent and 0.08 per

cent, respectively. The MSX Shariah Index closed down by 0.56 per cent at 577.67 points.

Market breadth remained negative as ten companies closed up, while 14 companies closed down. The rest 21 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Galfar Engineering & Contracting (7.5 per cent), Sohar Power (6.82 per cent), Vision Insurance (5.2 per cent), Oman United insurance (2.94 per cent) and Renaissance Services (2.63 per cent).

Top losers were Dhofar Generating Company (-9.32 per cent), Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles (-6.7 per cent), National Aluminium Products Company (-5.0 per cent), Aman Real Estate (-5.0 per cent) and Al Jazeera Steel Products (-4.26 per cent).



The photos of the winners of Nobel Economics Prize (L-R) David Card, Joshua D Angrist and Guido W Imbens are seen on a screen at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, Sweden on Monday (AFP)

Trio win Nobel Economics Prize for 'natural experiments'

Stockholm, Sweden - Canadian David Card, Israeli-American Joshua D Angrist and Dutch-American Guido W Imbens on Monday won the Nobel Economics Prize for insights into the labour market and 'natural experiments', the jury said.

The researchers were honoured for providing 'new insights about the labour market' and showing 'what conclusions about cause and effect can be drawn from natural experiments', the Nobel committee said in a statement.

Half of the US\$1.1mn prize went to Card, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, who was born in Canada in 1956, 'for his empirical contributions to labour economics'.

Card's work has focused on labour market effects of mini-

mum wages, immigration and education.

The other half went jointly to Angrist (61), a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Imbens (58), a professor at Stanford, 'for their methodological contributions to the analysis of causal relationships'.

They demonstrated how precise cause and effect conclusions can be.

The three laureates 'have revolutionised empirical work in economics. They have shown that it's indeed possible to answer important questions, even when it's not possible to conduct randomised experiment', Nobel Committee member Eva Mork told reporters in announcing the prize.

The trio was honoured for

their work using so-called 'natural experiments', in which 'chance events or policy changes result in groups of people being treated differently, in a way that resembles clinical trials in medicine'.

Last year, the honour went to US economists Paul Milgrom and Robert Wilson for their work on theories of auctions as well as inventing new auction formats.

The economics prize was the only prize not among the original five set out by the will of Swedish philanthropist and inventor Alfred Nobel, who died in 1896.

It was instead created through a donation from the Swedish central bank in 1968, and detractors have thus dubbed it 'a false Nobel'.

AFP

US will implement global minimum tax, says Yellen

Washington, US - US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Sunday she was 'confident' Congress would pass legislation to implement a global tax agreement in the United States enacting a minimum international tax on big corporations.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-brokered deal, which sets a global tax of 15 per cent, is aimed at stopping international corporations from slashing tax bills by registering in nations with low rates.

"I am confident that what we need to do to come into compliance with the minimum tax will be included in a reconciliation package," Yellen told ABC's 'This Week', referring to the federal budget bill currently being debated in Congress.

The multi-trillion dollar spending package is the cornerstone of President Joe Biden's economic agenda.

Budget reconciliation is a political move that would allow Democrats, who control the House of Representatives and Senate by a slim majority, to act without Republican votes.

"I hope that... it will be passed and we will be able to reassure the world that the United States will do its part," Yellen said, praising the 'historic' agreement.

The 136 nations now on board with the global tax agreement represent 90 per cent of global gross domestic product.

Under the deal, they will be able to generate around US\$175bn in additional revenue.

The OECD said countries are aiming to sign a multilateral convention in 2022, with an eye on



Janet Yellen

implementing the reform in 2023.

Each country in the deal must now incorporate the agreement into its own legislation. However, some questions remain, such as the Biden administration's ability to get the reform through Congress.

Democrats want to include the measure in the US\$3.5tn infrastructure spending package, but their majority in the Senate is so small that the party cannot afford any defections among their ranks.

Two Democratic senators say the amount, which is intended to fundamentally reform US infrastructure and combat climate change, is too high.

The additional revenue from the international minimum tax would help finance Biden's plans.

In addition to the minimum rate, the 136 countries also agreed to re-allocate more than US\$125bn of profits from around 100 of the world's most profitable multinationals to countries worldwide. This means companies will have to pay taxes in countries where they have business activities and earn profits.

AFP

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Oman Air launches revamped Sindbad Loyalty Program

Oman Air, the national airline of the Sultanate of Oman, has revamped its Sindbad Loyalty Program, replacing distance-based miles accrual with spend-based miles accrual. Delivering on its customer promise to offer a superior loyalty programme, the overhaul simplifies the way members earn Sindbad miles and attain Sindbad tiers, and offers a more transparent and generous accrual experience. The new reward system applies to all eligible flights operated by Oman Air, provided flight tickets are issued by Oman Air.

Rolled out on September 8, the shift from distance-based accrual to spend-based accrual lets Sindbad members earn four, five and six Sindbad miles per US\$ spent, for their current tier level—Blue, Silver, and Gold. Members can earn additional



miles on prepaid baggage, seat assignment, lounge access, and a suite of Primeclass add-ons such as arrival/departure meet and greet services, customs and security fast track services, and more.

Oman Air CEO Eng Abdulaziz al Raisi said, “Our re-

vamped Sindbad loyalty programme answers current traveller requirements with a more generous accrual model and can scale to meet future needs and evolving loyalty technologies. Oman Air has always prioritised innovative products and services for our members

and we are proud to be the first national airline in the region to offer a spend-based loyalty programme.”

A shift in tier qualifications has also simplified the way members attain their Sindbad tiers, making it easier to reach Sindbad Silver and Sindbad

Gold which offer greater benefits and privileges. Instead of Tier miles or Tier sectors, members will now earn Tier points based on class of travel and four flight zones, with destinations in each zone having fixed Tier points.

Members can qualify for Sindbad Silver tier with 500 Tier points and Sindbad Gold tier with 1100 Tier points and are entitled to a spend bonus of 100 Tier points per US\$1,000 accumulated flight spend.

“Adding a revenue component to the Sindbad programme ensures that our most valued customers enjoy a more realistic mileage earning experience and the best programme benefits. Now your travel with Oman Air counts more than ever,” said Abdulaziz al Rashdi, vice president Marketing.



Ooredoo marks International Day for Older Persons

Ooredoo marked the United Nations International Day for Older Persons on October 1 with a special visit to the Social Care House in Rustaq.

Members of Ooredoo’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) team visited the home, which is under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Development, meeting with elderly residents, as well as presenting them with medical beds, wheelchairs and other personalised gifts. The initiative is the latest in Ooredoo’s CSR efforts, which seek to enhance partnerships between government and private institutions, promote initiatives in the care fields, while inspiring a spirit of volunteerism.

Raed Mohammed Dawood, director of Branding, Communications and Corporate Affairs at Ooredoo, said, “As well as being a reminder of our capacity to do good, our visit to the Social Care House serves as a testament to Ooredoo’s place in the heart of the community and the wonderful culture of giving that runs throughout the company. We all have a responsibility to take care of the most vulnerable members

of our community and we were glad to once again work with the Ministry of Social Development to be able to channel our help where it is needed most.”

Mustafa al Rajaibi, head of the Social Care House in Rustaq, added, “As the only such institution in the sultanate that accommodates elderly and disabled people from various governorates who have no breadwinner among their relatives able take care of them, we do our utmost to provide them with everything they need, while ensuring they have a happy and fulfilling life. We are grateful for Ooredoo’s visit, not only for their kind donations but also for raising awareness and reminding us that we can all play a part in their care.”

Through its CSR programme, Goodwill, Ooredoo continues to work in collaboration with a variety of charitable associations and government organisations to support the economic and social development of all society members. From building sensory rooms for children with disabilities to donating digital devices to schools, providing various medical supplies to hospitals.

Mercedes-Benz opens Actros Health Check

Ensuring exemplary safety and outstanding reliability and economy, Mercedes-Benz Oman has announced its latest Actros trucks Health Check campaign.

Running throughout Muscat, Haima, Sohar and Salalah and carried out by certified technicians, the customised service includes a range of maintenance checks focused on the components that are most prone to wear and tear.

Available during Service Week, between October 24 and

28, the comprehensive package costs RO103 incl. VAT for 6-cylinder engines and RO111 incl. VAT for 8-cylinder engines.

“Our Actros trucks continue to prove themselves as vehicles to trust, providing maximum comfort even in the most extreme conditions. Designed to keep them in the best possible shape and ensure they continue to stand the test of time, our Health Checks are part of our ongoing commitment to after-sales care, giving our customers the attention and service that

they rightly expect from Mercedes-Benz,” said Gary Brown, general manager of Mercedes-Benz Oman.

The Health Check package ensures that each truck remains in peak mechanical health, and includes engine oil (mineral oil) and filter change, replacement of diesel filter, checking for oil leaks on major components, checking and adjusting fluid levels, diagnostic check-up of vehicle electrical system, engine compression test with diagnostic tool that gives indication on engine



condition, multi-point inspection, retightening of lug nuts on

two/three axles, and vehicle washing and greasing.

Mazoon Electricity in cooperation with be’ah safely disposes used oil

Mazoon Electricity Company, the leading electricity provider in Oman, in cooperation with Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) has succeeded in safe disposal of 1,500lt of transformer oil used for maintenance operations.

The company classified the hazardous waste produced during various operations and used appropriate environmental protection standards to safely dispose the materials.

Additionally, the company created a tracking mechanism for the waste materials, which included collection, loading and transportation from warehouse by using recommended and approved tools and equipment for the purpose as per the laws in force in the sultanate. The objective of this project was to increase the recyclable value of these materials in comparison with previous disposal practices, enhance environmental culture with internal and external stakeholders and follow permitted environmental practices.

Eng Majid Nasser al Busaidi, chief operations officer - Distri-



tribution in Mazoon Electricity said, “Our activities are in line with the core values of Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) commitments. The company is devoted to work processes and products, which has enabled us to help protect and reduce environmental impact and secure the well-being, health and operational safety of our employees and community.

“Mazoon Electricity pursues business activities that promote environmental protection and conservation. The company recognises that acts such as safe disposal of transformer oil, contributes to preserving the environment and creating a healthy global environment.”

Kumail Ahmed al Lawati, head of Business Development, be’ah, said, “We are pleased to

partner with Mazoon Electricity which has a strong commitment towards the environment. We are keen to work with them towards safe disposal of oil.

“We will use the latest international standards to achieve the standards of sustainability. In line with the national strategy for managing the waste in Oman, we seek to protect the environment from the risks of random disposal of waste.”

Last year in line with environmental sustainability practices Mazoon Electricity and be’ah signed an agreement for the safe collection and disposal of lead acid batteries (LAB).

As per the agreement, be’ah is responsible for collecting and transporting LAB from the Mazoon Electricity plant to a certified processing and recycling facility. The move supports Mazoon Electricity in ensuring its work processes are in accordance with the stipulated environmental laws of the sultanate.

be’ah’s action helps Mazoon Electricity ensure that its work processes are in accordance with the stipulated environmental laws of the sultanate.

Lulu Exchange achieves 100% vaccination

Lulu Exchange Company – one of the leading payment providers in the Sultanate of Oman with 37 branches across the country, has successfully vaccinated all of its employees, in adherence to the Supreme Committee’s vaccination drive.

All members of the company, including those working in the company’s branches have taken

two doses, thus ensuring the safety of consumers and staff alike. “The benevolent leaders of Oman have provided full support in getting the people of this nation vaccinated against COVID-19, and we are privileged to play our part in ensuring our services are provided in a safe and healthy environment,” said Adeeb Ahamed, managing di-

rector, Lulu Financial group.

“The safety of our team and consumers is paramount to us, and by getting everyone vaccinated, we stand true to our core values of displaying a customer first approach and utmost integrity in our actions.”

Lulu Exchange, which started operations in Oman in 2011, is part of the globally recognised

Lulu Financial Group. The group operates a network of nearly 240 branches in 11 countries of the Middle East, Indian sub-continent and APAC regions.

The company’s payments app, Lulu Money, continues to grow in strength on the back of positive user experience and a progressive payments ecosystem taking shape in Oman.

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

China Petroleum Pipeline Engineering Company Limited Oman Branch (CPP), as an EPC Contractor, invites companies to participate in the following tender:

Estimated Scope Description	Tender Documents Fee
Landscape Works: Supply and installation of necessary irrigation system for plantation, execution, pipe laying, gravel laying with geotextile wrapped, sweet soil filling, root barrier, anchoring system for plants, grass, plants & trees, gravel laying above whatsoever mentioned in the drawing.	Free

Legal entities, domestic Omani and foreign companies who meet the following minimum qualification criteria are eligible to quote in Tender:

- Priority to Oman local companies, or local agent appointed by foreign companies.
- Capability to submit a performance bond of ten percent of total value.
- Complying with the CPP’s project execution schedule.
- ISO 14001 and OHSAS18001 in valid period are mandatory.
- Having direct experience of similar jobs in the last five years.
- Agree to complete the further prequalification undertaken by CPP.

All interested bidders shall submit a written application letter printed on Bidder’s letter head signed by the Bidder’s authorized Person to cppomanand@cppmde.com, contractcppoman@cppe.ae over a period before **19th October, 2021** stating the following details: Full name of Bidder, phone number, e-mail address, contact person, tender name and tender title. Any application received after **19th October, 2021** shall not be entertained.

The ITB documents will be issued via email by CPP later. The bidders shall bear all cost arising from or incidental to the preparation, clarification, finalization and delivery of their bid proposal.

CPP is not obliged to accept the bid with least prices or any other bids. CPP reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids, at any time prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders or; any obligations to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground for the CPP’s action.

Lulu launches 'Discover America'

Lulu Hypermarket on October 11 launched its latest edition of the 'Discover America' campaign, an annual festival that enables shoppers to explore the widest range of American products in Oman. The Lulu event, held from Oct 11 to 17, showcases a wide range of products specially flown in from the United States for Lulu shoppers. The event is held across selected Lulu branches in Oman and features food, delicacies, and grocery products from the United States.

Sixth time in Oman
Commenting on the promotion, Shabeer K A, Lulu's regional director - Oman, remarked, "We are organising the 'Discover America' promotion for the sixth time in Oman. The promotion is an exceptional opportunity for our customers to explore and experience the culinary delights and lifestyles of the United States. The growing demand for US products from our customers encourages us to organise such events and we hope to bring in more such innovative promotions for our shoppers in the future."

H E Leslie M Tsou, the U S

Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, inaugurated the event at Lulu Hypermarket, Bausher, on October 11, in the presence of Lulu management, staff members, and customers.

"Discover America' celebrates the strong partnership between Oman and the United States," H E Tsou said. "The incredible variety of products available here shows Omani appreciation for the high quality and value of American brands," she added.

The Oman American Business Center (AmCham Oman), a Discover America partner, is working closely with the U S Embassy to promote the U S-Oman Free Trade Agreement and highlight U S and Omani partnerships in business and culture.

Lulu has brought in fruits and vegetables, fresh and frozen foods, chilled and dairy products, pies, cakes, and chocolates from the best U S brands for the promotion. The promotion will feature more than 180 brands with a product range of more than 4,000 items. Popular brands like Kraft, Duncan Hines, Planter's, Bragg, McCain, Jell-O, Bertolli, Ragú, Folgers, Smucker's,



Quaker, Hunt's, Hershey's, and many more are available for customers to purchase.

With over 200 stores across the region, the Lulu Group has succeeded in carving out a niche for itself in the retail industry. The group's unrelenting commitment to constantly deliver the best to its customers has been the reason behind its success all along the way.



Gozoop Group wins Oman Cricket's marketing mandate for ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021

Gozoop Group, independent marketing agency which manages brands like Dell, Taj Hotels, Mashreq Bank, Guardian GNC, Bisleri, Saint Gobain, OPPO, Olympic Council of Asia, continues its aggressive growth in the region.

Recently, Gozoop Group won the 360° Integrated Marketing Mandate for Oman Cricket - official governing body of the sport of cricket in Oman.

The country is co-hosting the Seventh Edition of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021 with UAE for the Board of Control for Cricket

in India (BCCI).

As part of the mandate Gozoop Group will be responsible for marquee campaigns, deploying an interdisciplinary approach that integrates Creative, Strategy, Social Media, Digital PR, Influencer Management, Media Planning and Buying to leverage one of the biggest International Events hosted in the Country.

Commenting on the partnership with Gozoop, Pankaj Khimji, chairman, Oman Cricket, said, "For Oman this is a watershed opportunity and we want to make the most of it by showcasing



Pankaj Khimji

ing our true potential to the world that has been unknown to many. We believe in building a



Ahmed Aftab Naqvi

global presence and promoting community engagement through the sport and the T20 World

Cup has helped us come miles ahead from where we were just two months back.

"We are thrilled to share this journey of introducing Oman in the world of cricket with Gozoop. The team at Gozoop has a proven pedigree in building global brands and doing iconic campaigns that delight audiences which I am sure will benefit Oman Cricket and enhance Oman's image in the minds of the global audience."

Ahmed Aftab Naqvi, CEO & co-founder of Gozoop Group, said, "Oman has always had a

special place in our hearts with its warm people, rich culture and mesmerising natural beauty. In recent times, it has also been winning our hearts on the cricketing field. The progress Oman has made on the world cricketing stage is nothing short of phenomenal. Mr Pankaj Khimji's vision for growing the sport in Oman has inspired us to put together a best in class team in Muscat, from our Middle East and India Operations that will make everyone in Oman fall in love with this beautiful game."

PSM students achieve 100% results

Pakistan School Muscat (PSM) has achieved another hallmark by producing 100 per cent results in the FBISE SSC-II & HSSC-II Annual exams, 2021 despite the severe circumstances brought about by the pandemic.

Eman Younis has achieved the first position by scoring 1092/1100 marks (99.27 per cent), Ayat Zafar & Saman Fatima 1084 marks (98.55 per cent) and Fatima 1077 marks (97.91 per cent) in the FBISE SSC-II Annual Examination 2021. Sibgha Sohail has achieved the first position by securing 1078/1100 marks, Ayesha Arooj second position 1065 marks, Burzam Furzaan and Emin Atif third position 1052 marks in the FBISE HSSC-II Annual Examination.

PSM, one of the prominent institutions in the region, has been implementing cutting-edge strategies to increase students' achievement level since its inception. It aims to spark a pursuit of knowledge in students so that they may keep on learning and become a valuable part of society. In this connection, the school induces the latest tools and technology-based plans to cater to the contemporary needs of learners. Owing to its timely planning and up-to-date strategies, the students of PSM Federal Stream have produced marvelous academic results in their FBISE Annual Examinations, 2021 by scoring significant grades in spite of the severe constraints caused by Covid-19 pandemic.

They have made a history by scoring the highest-ever results in SSC and HSSC levels. These outstanding grades make up 31 per cent A+, 9 per cent A and 18 per cent B of the total result in HSSC level and 29 per cent A+, 15 per cent A and 12 per cent B of the total result in SSC level.

Infiniti Q50 Red Sport 400: Build to inspire, thrill

Sports sedan Infiniti Q50 Red Sport 400 is defined by performance and features amazing exterior, incredible design, and innovative technologies. Designed to empower and support the driver, it offers breathtaking horsepower at command.

Build to inspire, thrill, and stir the daring side Infiniti Q50 offers two engines to choose from: the 300 HP 3.0t V6 Twin turbo or the exhilarating 400 horsepower 3.0t Twin Turbo V6. The RED SPORT 400 has Kacchu Aluminum trim and red contrast stitching that takes the cabin to a new level.

Putting high performance at the heart of the Infiniti Q50, the 400 horsepower twin-turbocharged 3.0t V6 engine, offers class-leading performance that's bound to get the driver's heart racing. With 475 Nm of torque, acceleration is effortless.

Those who don't need such high output and high efficiency, one can choose the class-leading twin-turbocharged V6 that returns 300 HP and 400 Nm of torque.

The Infiniti Q50's suspension shapes the drive around you. As road conditions change, it automatically adjusts the vehicle's body roll, pitch and bounce rate for smooth, comfortable ride.

Dynamic Digital Suspension comes equipped with two distinct settings, Standard and Sport. Standard mode is meant for comfortable, dynamic han-



dling. Sport mode offers firmer dampening and greater agility.

Owners can set their preference for a soft or firm ride through the Drive Mode Selector. Electronically adjusted dampers do the rest, applying the right amount of force to keep the drive feeling balanced.

The Infiniti Q50 sports sedan which offers an optimal blend of ride comfort and class-leading agility has been impressing the new generation of buyers. Its new engines and chassis technologies that deliver empowering performance and rewarding drive have been a big

winner with Oman's auto enthusiasts.

A senior official at Infiniti Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles said, "Q50 Red Sport 400 is the performance-orientated. It offers a premium driving experience with great powertrains as well as several technological advancements in driver safety.

"While its new powerful and efficient turbocharged V6 gasoline engines headlined by Q50 Red Sport 400 delivering 400 hp, key technology additions including dynamic digital suspension and rack electronic power

steering are impressive too. The premium sports sedan has been developed to offer buyers a higher level of customisation and driving engagement, bringing the brand's signature design, energising driver technology, and inspiring performance to the model."

Red sport package

Red sport package is adorned with sports brakes with red callipers, exterior mirrors in black colour, door waist moulding in black, trunk finisher in black, radiator grill and surround in black paddle shifters, direct adaptive

steering (DAS) with active lane control (ALC), 19 inch alloy wheel rims with dark grey metallic finish, black headliner and semi-aniline quilted leather seats with red contrast stitching.

Visibility

For visibility, Infiniti Q50 offers rear defogger with timer exterior mirrors electric folding, heated, black colour, reverse link with memory interior rear view mirror with auto dimming front led headlamp with high and low high beam led daytime running lights adaptive lighting system and smart beam.

Interior

Infiniti Q50 offers electrical tilt and telescopic steering wheel with memory, standard leather shift lever knob, paddle shifters, Infiniti intelligent key (I-key) - keyless entry system with push button ignition, window opening both sides front and rear one-touch up and down I-key linked open and close system, driver and passenger sunvisor with card holder, illumination, vanity mirror, extension, front headrest 1-way adjustable (up and down), rear headrest 3-separate and 1-way adjustable, front armrest console, rear armrest with cupholder and load through, semi-aniline quilted leather seats with red contrast stitching, driver seat 8-way power adjustable with thigh support and power lumbar and memory and back side support and thigh extension, driver and passenger seat back pocket, passenger seat 8-way power adjustable with thigh support and extension, rear seat 6:4 split and armrest with cupholder and load through, heated front seat, 2 pieces coat hanger on rear seat assist grip (right & left), ambient lighting, dual zone auto climate control with plasma cluster deodorization treatment & auto recirculation, grape polyphenol filter.

Its audio and navigation includes 1CD/DVD AM/FM, SSV, AUX, USB, digital audio broadcasting (DAB), Bose performance series audio system with 16

speakers, Infiniti intouch p-IVI navigation system with three maps and voice recognition, smartphone integration, wireless Apple carplay and wired android auto), wireless charger, voice command function (audio), Aux (Mini-jack) and USB (2), Bluetooth and smart phone connection.

Exterior

The exterior attributes include electric sunroof - I-key linked open/close system, sport front bumper, sport rear bumper, dual exhaust tail pipe sport type. Its performance is supported by sports suspension, electronically controlled shock absorbers, sports brakes with red callipers at synchronized rev. control, Infiniti drive mode selector.

It has a run flat summer tire 245/40R19 and 19" alloy wheel rims with dark grey metallic finish. Its high end safety and security features includes advanced driver and passenger airbag, front side airbag and curtain airbag, 3-point ELR front seat belts with pretensioners and load limiters, 3-point ELR front pre-crash seat belts with pretensioners and load limiters, 3-point ELR rear seat belt 3 (right and center and left), driver and passenger seat belt shoulder height adjuster, isofix + tether, immobilizer + anti-theft alarm, emergency stop signal, ABS and EBD (anti-lock braking system) assist brake, intelligent brake assist, etc.

Record low turnout mars Iraqi parliamentary polls

Preliminary turnout was just 41%, below the 44.5% recorded in 2018

Baghdad, Iraq - Turnout hit a record low for parliamentary elections in war-scarred Iraq, early figures showed on Monday, amid widespread disillusionment about a political elite seen as inept and corrupt.

Sunday's vote was moved forward from 2022 as a concession to an anti-government protest movement that has demanded deep reforms in the oil-rich yet poverty-stricken country.

But in the end voter participation hit a new low in Iraq's fifth election since the 2003 US-led invasion that ousted dictator Saddam Hussein with the promise of bringing freedom and democracy.

Preliminary turnout was just 41 per cent, based on results from 94 per cent of voting stations, the election commission said - below the 44.5 per cent recorded in 2018.

"There's general apathy. People just don't believe that elections matter," said Iraqi researcher Sajad Jiyad of the Century Foundation think-tank.

"The weak turnout is a warning. It is not only the legitimacy of the next prime minister that is in question, but also the legitimacy of the government, of the state - of the entire system."

Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi brought forward the vote to appease a youth-led protest movement that erupted two years ago against graft, unemployment and crumbling public services. Iraq is a major oil producer but nearly a third of its almost 40mn people live in poverty, according to UN figures, and the pandemic only deepened a long-running crisis.

The premier and national spy chief tweeted that he had 'kept



Judge Jalil Adnan Khalaf, chairman of Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission, addresses the press after elections, in Baghdad on Monday (AFP)

The weak turnout is a warning. It is not only the legitimacy of the next prime minister that is in question, but also the legitimacy of the government, of the state

SAJAD JIYAD

his promise and done his duty by organising fair elections'.

Kadhemi's own political future is now uncertain, with few observers willing to predict who will emerge as leader after the usual political haggling between factions that follow Iraqi elections.

Early fireworks

The election was held under tight security in a country where key

parliamentary blocs have armed factions and Islamic State group extremists have launched mass-casualty suicide attacks this year.

Airports were closed and travel between provinces banned, while voters were searched twice at polling stations.

An attack blamed on IS on a voting centre in a remote part of northern Iraq left a police officer

dead, a security source said.

And a soldier was killed and another wounded by "accidental fire" from a fellow soldier at a polling station in Diyala province bordering Baghdad, officials said.

Authorities also reported the arrests of 77 suspects for electoral "violations".

The vote was marred by technical problems at some stations, including malfunctioning equipment and fingerprint readers, officials and AFP journalists said.

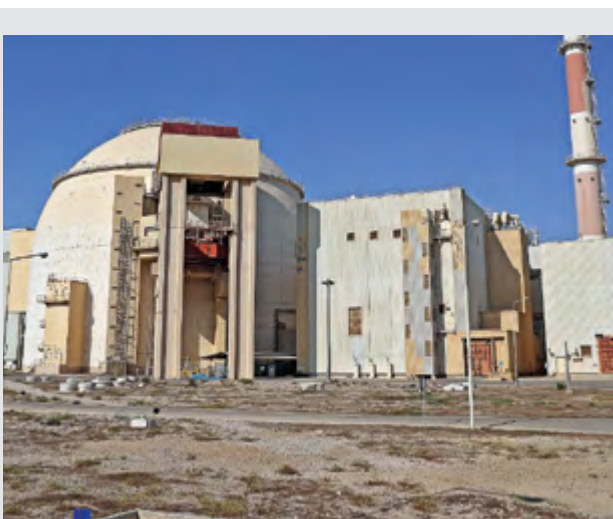
Official provisional results were now expected until later Monday, but some candidates already claimed victory and celebrated with fireworks overnight in Baghdad and the southern city of Nassiriyah.

In Sunday's election, some 25mn eligible voters were called to choose from more than 3,200 candidates.

A new single-member constituency system for electing 329 lawmakers aimed to boost independents versus the traditional blocs largely centred on religious, ethnic and clan affiliations.

Iraqi politics, and the legislature, have been dominated by factions representing the country's Shiite Muslim majority since the fall of Saddam's Sunni-led regime. But they are increasingly split, including in their attitudes toward powerful Shiite neighbour Iran, which competes with the US for strategic influence in Iraq.

AFP



The Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant in the southeast of Bushehr (AFP)

‘Europe must guarantee deal will be upheld’

Tehran, Iran - Iran on Monday called on European countries to guarantee an existing nuclear deal that the parties are set to revisit during a planned resumption of talks in Vienna.

"The European capitals, including Berlin, have been passive spectators," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters.

"We therefore expect all parties, when they arrive in Vienna, to know that they have no choice but to adhere to their obligations under the nuclear deal," he said during his weekly news conference.

"They must give their clear assurance to the Islamic republic that this time, no party will violate the nuclear deal," he continued.

The deal was concluded in 2015 with the US, UK, China, Russia, France and Germany and it offered Iran relief from international sanctions in exchange for drastically limiting its nuclear programme, while also placing it under UN supervision.

But the US unilaterally pulled out of the deal under Donald Trump and reimposed sanctions, prompting Tehran to gradually renege on its

commitments.

Talks got underway in Vienna in April to revive the deal, but have been suspended since June, when Iran elected ultra-conservative Ebrahim Raisi as president, but Tehran said last week it expects talks to resume within days.

Khatibzadeh said German Chancellor "Angela Merkel and the European countries know that without Europe's inaction, Trump would not have dared to withdraw from all the agreements or to violate the nuclear deal".

During a visit to Israel, Merkel on Sunday called on Iran to immediately return to the talks. "The message to Iran is unequivocal: Return to the negotiating table immediately," she said.

"There is no new text or deal being negotiated. It is simply a matter of technical talks to ensure the full implementation of the nuclear deal by all parties," Khatibzadeh told reporters. "The Vienna talks, I repeat, will take place and in the next days you will see more activity and diplomatic exchange around the nuclear deal," he said.

AFP

Lebanon firefighters quell huge fuel tank fire at Zahrani oil facility

Zahrani, Lebanon - Firefighters in Lebanon put out a huge blaze that raged at a key fuel storage depot on Monday to the relief of many in the country gripped by desperate energy shortages.

There was no immediate report of casualties from the fire that sent large plumes of dark smoke billow into the sky.

The fire broke out around 8:00am in a large petrol tank belonging to the army at the Zahrani facilities some 50km south of Beirut, the National News Agency and local media said.

An AFP photographer said firefighters put out the flames at around noon (0900 GMT), and civil defence chief Raymond Khattar told the press the blaze was 'under control'.

Ziyad al Zein, head of facilities at Zahrani, said the fire broke out as the tank was being emptied.

"We noticed an inclination in the reservoir's roof yesterday and took immediate measures... this morning to transfer its contents," he said, adding that 'it would have been a disaster if the fire had spread to nearby tanks'.

Energy Minister Walid Fayad said the flames had consumed around 250,000 litres of gasoline and that an investigation had been launched into the cause of the fire.

The army cordoned off the area, cutting off roads leading to the depot as well as the main



Firefighters try to extinguish a fire in one of the tanks at an oil facility in Zahrani on Monday (AFP)

The flames have consumed around 250,000 litres of gasoline... an investigation has been launched into the cause of the fire

WALID FAYAD

highway linking Beirut to the country's south, the photographer said.

The Zahrani site also houses a power plant of the same name, and provides 15 per cent of the country's fuel oil.

A worker in a plantation nearby told AFP he had heard a loud bang before the fire broke out.

The small Mediterranean nation is battling one of the world's worst economic crises since the 1850s, and has in recent months struggled to import enough fuel oil for its power plants.

In recent months, Lebanese have only received one or two hours of state electricity a day.

The fire comes after the electricity grid went completely offline on Saturday.

That outage came after two key power plants, including the one in Zahrani, ran out of fuel.

By Sunday limited supply was back after the army provided gas oil.

Most Lebanese saw no major change to their daily lives during the blackout, as those who can afford it have already subscribed to private generators to keep the lights on during the almost round-the-clock power cuts.

AFP

€60mn migrant money is coming: UK tells France

London, UK - The UK said on Monday that over €60mn promised to France to stop cross-Channel migrant boats was coming, after Paris complained that none had been paid yet amid a surge in the perilous crossings.

British Home Secretary Priti Patel has reportedly threatened to withhold the package worth £54mn (€64mn approx) in light of record numbers of migrants arriving from France.

But Damian Hinds, a minister in Patel's department, said the money would be paid 'in the coming weeks'.

He told BBC television that an 'administrative process' rather than any 'political question' had led to the payment delay.

"I would like to see increased activity, increased turnback (of migrants)," Hinds added.

"France is a safe country. If you are seeking asylum, you should claim it in the first safe country you come to."

French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin on Saturday called for the start of talks for a migration treaty between the European Union and the UK, which has now left the EU, and complained that none of the money had been forthcoming yet.

Under an agreement reached in July, the UK agreed to finance border security in northern France.

"We call on the British to keep their promise of financing since we are maintaining the border



Britain's Home Secretary Priti Patel speaks at an event at the Manchester Central convention centre, in Manchester last week (AFP)

for them," Darmanin said on a visit to the Channel coast.

A total of 15,400 people attempted to cross the Channel in the first eight months of this year, up 50 per cent over the figure for the whole of 2020, according to French coastguard statistics.

At least 491 people including children arrived by boat in Britain from France on Saturday alone, according to the Press Association news agency.

To the anger of refugee groups, the UK government is pushing through new legislation that would significantly toughen

penalties against such migration, and Patel says she is reviewing maritime tactics to deter people-smugglers.

"We make no apology for securing our borders and exploring all possible options to save lives by ending these horrific journeys," she told the annual conference of Britain's ruling Conservative party last week.

There was also 'no reason' why migrants should want to leave France, which was not a country 'riven by war or conflict', Patel said.

AFP

US, UK warn citizens of Kabul threat

Scores of foreigners have left Afghanistan as the Taliban took over

Kabul, Afghanistan - The United States and Britain warned their citizens on Monday to avoid hotels in Afghanistan, days after dozens were killed at a mosque in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group.

The Taliban, which seized power in August and declared an Islamic emirate, are seeking international recognition and assistance to avoid a humanitarian disaster and ease Afghanistan's economic crisis.

But, as the hardline group transitions from a rebel army to a governing power, they are struggling to contain the threat from the Afghanistan chapter of the IS.

"US citizens who are at or near the Serena Hotel should leave immediately," the US State



People, who were injured in October 8 suicide bombing at the Gozar-e-Sayed mosque, rest inside a regional hospital in Kunduz on Sunday (AFP)

Department said, citing 'security threats' in the area.

"In light of the increased risks you are advised not to stay in hotels, particularly in Kabul (such as the Serena Hotel)," Britain's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office added.

Since the Taliban takeover, many foreigners have left Afghanistan, but some journalists and aid workers remain in the capital.

The well-known Serena, a luxury hotel popular with business travellers and foreign guests, has twice been the target of attacks by the Taliban.

In 2014, just weeks before the presidential election, four teenage gunmen with pistols

US aid pledge discussed

In August, during a chaotic evacuation of foreign nationals and at-risk Afghans, NATO countries issued a chorus of warnings about an imminent threat, telling people to stay away from Kabul airport.

Hours later, a suicide bomber detonated in a crowd gathered around one of the airport gates, killing scores of civilians and 13 American troops.

The attack was claimed by the IS, which has since targeted several Taliban guards, and claimed a devastating bomb attack in Kunduz city on Friday that ripped through a mosque during Friday prayers - the bloodiest assault since US forces left the country in August.

In recent years, the Islamic State's Afghanistan-Pakistan chapter has been responsible for some of the deadliest attacks in those countries - massacring civilians at mosques, shrines, public squares and even hospitals. The terror threat has partly overshadowed Taliban efforts to improve their international standing.

Over the weekend, senior Taliban and US delegations held their first face-to-face talks in the Qatar capital Doha since the US withdrawal.

The talks 'focused on security and terrorism concerns and safe passage for US citizens, other foreign nationals and our Afghan partners', according to State Department spokesman Ned Price.

"Human rights, including the meaningful participation of women and girls in all aspects of Afghan society," were also raised, Price said in a statement.

According to the State Department, the discussions were 'candid and professional' and US officials reiterated that 'the Taliban will be judged on its actions, not only its words'.

The Taliban said the United States had agreed to send aid to Afghanistan, though the US said the issue had only been discussed, and that any assistance would go to the Afghan people and not the Taliban government.

"US representatives stated that they will give humanitarian assistance to Afghans," the Taliban's foreign ministry said.

AFP



The strategically important Galwan valley between Tibet and India's Ladakh region last year witnessed one of the deadliest troop clashes in decades

China, India lash out at each other after no progress in talks

Beijing, China - China and India on Monday blamed each other for the failure of high-level talks to ease tensions along a disputed Himalayan border between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

The strategically important Galwan valley between Tibet and India's Ladakh region became a high-altitude flashpoint last year after one of the deadliest troop clashes in decades.

Senior military officials from the two countries held their first round of talks in two months, but it ended without any progress.

India made 'unreasonable and unrealistic demands', Chinese military spokesman Long Shao-hua said in a statement issued by the People's Liberation Army's

Senior military officials from the two countries held their first round of talks in two months, but it ended without any progress

western theatre command.

The statement did not say what the demands were.

In response, India's Defence Ministry said China was 'not agreeable' to discussing 'constructive suggestions... (and) could not provide any forward-looking proposals'.

India said both sides have agreed to maintain communications and stability.

China and India - whose border runs for 3,500km - fought a full-scale war in 1962 and have long accused each other of trying to seize territory along their unofficial border, known as the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The latest talks focused on resolving 'remaining issues' along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, the Indian defence ministry said.

Long said China had tried to ease tensions along the boundary area, but warned India 'not to misjudge the situation' and to act 'in good faith'.

India has blamed the tensions on what it calls unilateral moves

by China to 'alter the status quo', in violation of existing bilateral agreements.

Earlier this month, India's army chief said China was sending 'considerable numbers' of troops to the border, prompting a matching deployment by New Delhi. His comments came days after Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said Indian soldiers had made illegal incursions into Chinese territory, an accusation that New Delhi denied.

Media in both countries have reported a border confrontation between Indian and Chinese last month, but neither side has confirmed it.

AFP

Suspected militants kill five Indian soldiers in Kashmir

Srinagar, India - Suspected militants shot dead five soldiers in Indian-administered Kashmir on Monday in the deadliest incident since February, an army spokesman said, stoking tensions following a string of civilian murders.

The shootings occurred in a mountain pass near the Line of Control (Loc) dividing the area from Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Col Devendar Anand said that one officer and four soldiers 'were killed during a search operation probably by infiltrators'.

"The operation is ongoing," he added.

The shootings were the deadliest attack on military forces in the area since a ceasefire between India and Pakistan along the effective border was announced in February.

500 arrested

Tensions have flared in recent weeks with a spate of shootings of civilians in the area in attacks claimed by an anti-India militant group.

Seven civilians were shot dead in six days last week, including two teachers on Thursday, sparking public outrage in Kashmir and across the country. Politicians from all sides have condemned the killings.

Nearly 500 residents suspected to have links with banned religious and militant groups were detained across the dis-



A security personnel stands guard at a market, as suspected militants killed five soldiers, in Srinagar on Monday (AFP)

puted territory following the shootings, a senior police officer said on Sunday.

"No stone will be left unturned to find the killers," the officer added.

A top anti-terrorism intelligence officer was sent by New Delhi to the region to head up the investigation.

India's counter-terrorism task force, the National Investigation Agency, summoned 40 schoolteachers in the main city of Srinagar for questioning on Sunday, officials said.

Authorities say at least 29 civilians - including workers from pro-India political parties - have been shot dead in Kashmir so far this year.

Twenty-two of them were Muslims, officials added.

The two teachers, shot by gunmen at a government-run school, were from the Sikh and Hindu communities who are minorities in the Muslim-majority region.

A relatively new militant group The Resistance Front has claimed responsibility and accused those killed of working for 'occupier mercenary forces and occupier stooges'.

The statements, issued only in English, were circulated in numerous WhatsApp groups and could not be independently verified by AFP.

The killings have instilled fear among Kashmir's minorities, with local media reporting that many were fleeing the region.

On Saturday, Human Rights Watch called for the alleged perpetrators as well as Indian security forces to be held accountable for their actions.

AFP

Thousands evacuated and coal mines shuttered as floods hit north China



Rescuers evacuate residents from a flooded area, in Jinzhong city, China's Shanxi province on Sunday (AFP)

Beijing, China - Over 120,000 people have been evacuated, coal mines shut and crops destroyed after unseasonably heavy rainfall flooded north China's Shanxi province over the weekend, state media reported on Monday, with more rain forecast.

The deluge comes just months after record floods hit the country's central Henan province in July - killing more than 300 people - and raises fears about ensuring the supply of energy ahead of the winter.

Many parts of Shanxi, a landlocked province that generally has dry weather, saw record-breaking rainfall over the past week, according to the provincial

government, which ordered coal mines to take flood-proofing measures and make emergency plans to be 'activated immediately in case of grave danger'.

At least 60 coal mines in the province - one of China's top coal-producing regions - have suspended operations due to the floods, according to a local government statement, even as the country faces a power supply crunch.

Beijing recently ordered coal mines to spare no costs to increase production and ensure supply, as well as said it will allow higher electricity prices in a bid to boost generation. Analysts have warned the move could add

to inflation concerns.

China has been hit by widespread power cuts amid record coal prices, state electricity price controls and tough emissions targets that have squeezed the power supply.

More than 1.75mn residents have so far been affected by the floods in Shanxi, which state news agency Xinhua reported had received more than three times the average monthly rainfall for October in just five days last week.

An estimated 190,000 hectares of crops were destroyed and 17,000 buildings were reduced to rubble, the local Communist Party newspaper

Shanxi Evening News reported.

Shanxi's meteorological bureau said on Sunday there would be more rain in the coming days, urging farmers to 'rush to harvest when the weather is clear'.

Authorities have not yet published a death toll.

Video footage published by the *Shanxi Evening News* showed rescuers wading through murky waters and floating on rafts down flooded urban streets.

Meanwhile, state broadcaster CCTV showed workers repairing a broken dam, and railway tracks left suspended over water after part of the bridge they were on collapsed.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC



A phone displays the Kuwaiti health ministry's registration page for a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose, in Kuwait City on Sunday (AFP)

Vaccines prevent severe infection, even from Delta, says French study

Paris, France - Vaccination is highly effective at preventing severe cases of COVID-19, even against the Delta variant, a vast study in France has shown.

The research published on Monday - focusing on prevention of severe COVID-19 and death, not infection - looked at 22mn people over 50 and found those who had received jabs were 90 per cent less likely to be hospitalised or die.

The results confirm observations from the US, the UK and Israel, but researchers say it is the largest study of its kind so far.

Looking at data collected starting in December 2020, when France launched its jab campaign, the researchers compared the outcomes of 11mn vaccinated people with 11mn unvaccinated subjects.

They formed pairs matching an unvaccinated individual with a vaccinated counterpart from the same region and of the same age and sex, tracking them from the date of the vaccinated person's second jab to July 20.

Starting 14 days after a second dose, a vaccinated subjects' risk of severe COVID-19 was reduced by 90 per cent, according to the research conducted by Epi-Phare, an independent medicines safety research group that works

Vaccination appears to be nearly as effective against for the Delta variant, with 84 per cent protection for people 75 and older and 92 per cent for people 50-75

clashes with the French government.

Vaccination appears to be nearly as effective against for the Delta variant, with 84 per cent protection for people 75 and older and 92 per cent for people 50-75.

That estimate, however, is only based on a month of data, since the variant became dominant in France only in June.

"The study should be followed up to include results from August and September," epidemiologist Mahmoud Zureik, the head of Epi-Phare, told AFP.

The study covers vaccination with the Pfizer/BioNtech, Moderna and AstraZeneca jabs, but not Janssen which was authorised much later and is far less widely used in France.

AFP



A woman jogs around the Sydney Opera House, as the city ends its 106-day long lockdown as a measure against the spread of COVID-19, in Sydney on Monday (AFP)

Sydney ends coronavirus lockdown after 106 days

Sydney, Australia - Elated Sydneysiders celebrated the end of almost four months of coronavirus lockdown on Monday, putting behind them a period of 'blood, sweat' and nothing else in Australia's largest city.

Sydney's more than five million residents were subjected to a 106-day lockdown, designed to limit the march of the highly transmissible Delta variant.

With new infections now falling - New South Wales state recorded 496 cases on Monday - and more than 70 per cent of over-16s fully vaccinated, the city is dusting off the cobwebs.

From midnight restaurants and cafés began throwing open their doors to anyone who could prove they were vaccinated.

Café-goer Peter Morgan (35) was also relishing his newly regained freedoms.

"Even though it's like freezing outside, it's so good," he said.

"The first thing I'm going to do is see my parents. Actually no, not see my parents. I'm going to go to Lakemba to get a Lebanese mixed plate and then



The first thing I'm going to do is see my parents... I'm going to go to Lakemba to get a Lebanese mixed plate and then go see my parents

PETER MORGAN

go see my parents."

Across the city, shaggy-haired customers lined up outside hairdressers to get eyebrow-raising home cuts and dye jobs repaired.

"I couldn't wait to be in here to get the hair done," said Brett Toelle, a salon customer in Surry Hills whose last trim was 15

weeks ago. "That's the longest time I've ever been without a haircut."

For many, the end of lockdown was a chance to get into the shops.

At midnight, hundreds of people poured into a discount Kmart store in the western Sydney suburb of Mount Druitt,

with social media images showing long queues inside.

For others, it was a chance to put their business back on track.

"It's a great vibe this morning," said Hannah Simmons, owner of Gordon's Café in the beachside suburb of Clovelly whose business survived the lockdown by offering takeaway.

"The outside seating will be a little bit dreary but that's OK. We are really excited to be back there and open."

Since June, shops, schools, salons and offices have been closed for non-essential workers and there have been unprecedented restrictions on personal freedom.

There were bans on everything from travelling more than five kilometres from home, visiting family, playing squash, browsing in supermarkets to attending funerals.

'You've earned it'

For most of the pandemic, Australia successfully suppressed infections through border closures, lockdowns and aggres-

sive testing and tracing.

But the Delta variant put paid to any dream of 'COVID-zero', at least in the largest cities of Melbourne and Sydney which are now pivoting to 'living with COVID'.

"It's a big day for our state," said New South Wales' recently appointed conservative premier Dominic Perrottet.

After "100 days of blood, sweat and no beers," he said, "you've earned it".

Prime Minister Scott Morrison hailed the day as one to celebrate things once taken for granted. "Being with family and friends, getting a haircut, grabbing a meal together, going to the pub and having a beer with your mates," he said.

There will still be limits on mass gatherings and international borders and schools will not fully reopen for a few weeks yet. But otherwise daily life is beginning to look more like normal, with crowds again gathering at bus stops and the hum of traffic growing a little louder.

AFP

New Zealand health workers, teachers told 'no jab, no job'

Wellington, New Zealand - New Zealand announced on Monday a sweeping 'no jab, no job' policy for most healthcare workers and teachers to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"We can't leave anything to chance so that's why we are making it mandatory," said

COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins, who is also the education minister.

Doctors, nurses and other frontline health workers must be double-jabbed by December 1 while everyone working in the education sector who has contact with students must have

their two doses by January 1.

The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners backed mandatory vaccinations with president Samantha Murtton describing it as a 'bold, but necessary call' to make.

Secondary schools will also be required to keep a register to

show the vaccination status of students.

"Vaccination remains our strongest and most effective tool to protect against infection and disease," Hipkins said.

The order includes home-based educators and parents volunteering at schools, but no

decision has been made on whether vaccination will be mandatory in the tertiary education sector.

Before the arrival of the Delta variant in August, New Zealand had won widespread praise for its COVID-19 elimination policy, which had largely protected

the country from the pandemic. Residents enjoyed a near-normal domestic life alongside tight restrictions on international borders.

However, the 'COVID Zero' strategy fell apart when Delta was detected in Auckland, New Zealand's most populated re-

gion, and has since spread to the surrounding Northland and Waikato provinces.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the highly transmissible Delta variant had proved a 'game-changer' that could not be eliminated.

AFP

Princes Charles urges action, not words at UN climate summit

London, UK - Prince Charles, a lifelong environmentalist who has championed organic gardening and runs one of his cars on white wine and cheese, has urged world leaders to turn talk into action at the upcoming UN climate summit.

Queen Elizabeth II's eldest son and heir (72) is due to attend events at the two-week COP26 summit in Glasgow starting on October 31, along with his 95 year old mother.

But in an interview with the BBC broadcast on Monday, he said he worried that world leaders would 'just talk', adding: "The problem is to get action on the ground."

The UN summit will try to per-

suade major developing economies to do more to cut their carbon emissions, and get the rich world to cough up billions more dollars to help poorer countries adapt to climate change.

When asked if Prime Minister Boris Johnson's UK government was doing enough itself against climate change, Charles replied: "I couldn't possibly comment."

Johnson on Monday held talks with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, and directly urged him to do more to cut emissions.

India is the world's third-highest emitter of greenhouse gases and relies on coal for nearly 70 per cent of its electricity genera-



Protesters take part in a demonstration against climate change in Brussels on Sunday. Prince Charles of Britain (in the inset) - a lifelong environmentalist - is due to attend the COP26 summit in Glasgow (AFP)

tion. But it is resisting international pressure to set a target date for emissions to reach net zero, arguing the onus is on

richer countries with higher emission rates per capita.

Johnson 'underlined the importance of making concrete

progress on climate change' before and at the Glasgow summit, Downing Street said in a statement.

"He noted that India already lead the world in renewable technology and expressed his hope that they will commit to a more ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution and to achieving Net Zero emissions," it added.

Protests

The Prince of Wales warned that the failure to act would have dire consequences, saying the world had taken 'far too long' to take climate change seriously.

The summit aims to secure new commitments to reduce carbon emissions to prevent runaway global warming.

"The risks now are so great if you don't make the right move.

It'll be catastrophic," Prince Charles said.

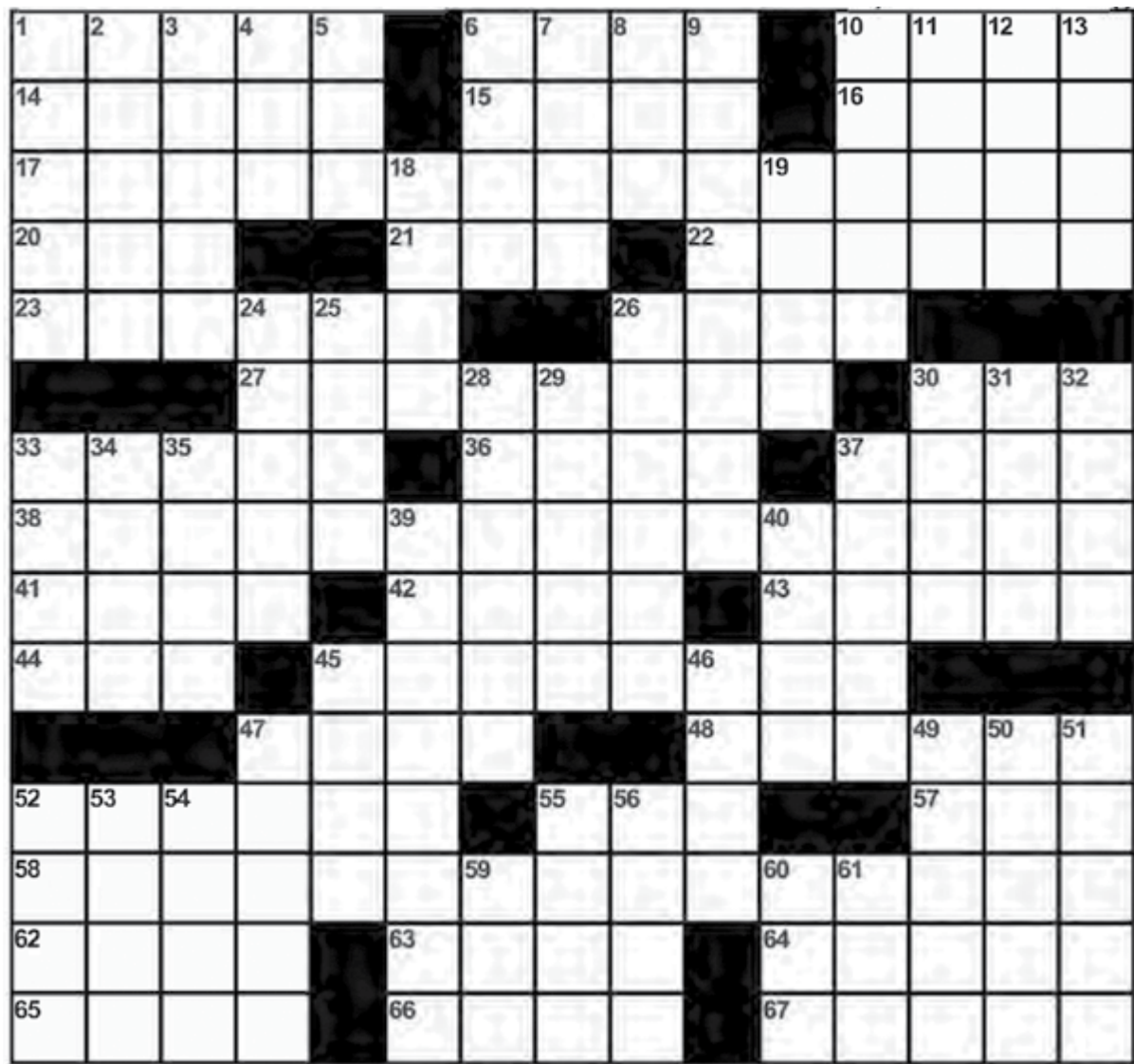
"It is already beginning to be catastrophic, because nothing in nature can survive the stress that is created by these extremes of weather."

He expressed sympathy with climate protesters, who have been blocking roads in Britain for several weeks as part of a campaign to make homes more environmentally efficient.

"I totally understand the frustration," he said, as the government tries to get tough with the demonstrators, who have caused gridlock to rush-hour traffic with sit-down protests and by glueing themselves to tarmac.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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- ACROSS**

1) Go into
6) Tubular pasta
10) Brit's elevator
14) Code name?
15) 2015 nuke deal country
16) Woody's son
17) Bummed-out vampire?
20) Aliens, for short
21) Rustic stopover
22) Already programmed
23) Step down
26) Skedaddles
27) Game-winning shots, e.g.
30) Kiltie's cap
33) De-grease, say
36) Brooding spot
37) Make do, somehow
38) Communist in charge of a private school?
41) Frozen waffle brand
42) Bird on a Canadian dollar
43) Helping hands
44) Hand-wringer's word
- 45) Grows, as a romance
47) Active sort
48) _ up (enlivened)
52) "Aja" band _ Dan
55) Intimate apparel
57) Gardner of "On the Beach"
58) Cowardly partier in a stadium parking lot?
62) Canaveral org.
63) Belt-makers' tools
64) Sharpener's creation
65) Modeler's medium
66) Farm team's harness
67) Symbol of laziness

DOWN

1) Feature of a fading flame
2) Nick of "A Walk in the Woods"
3) Supporting frame
4) Legal conclusion?
5) Ole Miss athlete, familiarly
6) Jerusalem's Mount _
7) Press a suit, say?
8) Smidgen
9) Sporadically
- 10) Alternative to Velcro, on shoes
11) Is vexing to
12) Skedaddle
13) Basis for pressing a suit, maybe
18) Town Car, for short
19) Pottery class projects
24) Kind of potato
25) Simmons of KISS
26) Frankincense and amber, for two
28) Not alfresco
29) Deliveries to record execs
30) Open_ shoes
31) Recess at St. Paul's
32) Sloppy state
33) Shell team
34) K'NEX alternative
35) Slight lead
37) Like new dollar bills
39) Passage between buildings
40) Not at all ferocious
45) Tie for a Texan
46) Gemstone of silica
47) Airport annoyance
49) Spot for a grill
50) Decathlon part
- 51) _ Vader of "Star Wars"
52) Match up
53) Eurasian duck
54) "Frozen" character
55) Pitcher's flub

56) Climb the corporate ladder
59) Tango necessity
60) Navigation aid, for short
61) Net giant, briefly
- NOTE PAD**
-

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

 Your world's an orderly, balanced and bright one, and you're doing your part to keep it that way -- putting selfishness aside and enjoying giving just as much as you're delighting in receiving. This generous mood of yours also gives you an extra-sparkly charm factor, which won't go unnoticed by those around you (and may be noticed by one person in particular).

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

 It feels as if other people were put here to grant your wishes, but it's also a reflection of your own generous spirit and accumulated good karma. A very special gift could come your way now, and you know how you love to get gifts. It could be something big in the material realm -- computer equipment, a digital doohickey you've been hankering for, a gorgeous piece of artwork.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

 Friends treasure you, family loves you, and you feel totally tapped into it all. Life's a gift, and you're gleefully tearing off the paper and tying the ribbon around the top of your head (yes, you're a gift, too!). Some deeper moments during the day will especially please you -- talking about what it all means, maybe even being asked for advice by someone you respect.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

 There's so much good stuff all around you, you'll just want to grab hold of as much as possible and revel in it. It's certainly an appropriate time for indulgence, but you'll be even happier in the end if you mix in a balance of activities -- and others will enjoy it with you as well. How about heading up a nice walk before (and maybe after) that big, celebratory meal?

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

 Your analytical side goes out the window now, and you're indulging in sweet sentimentality. It doesn't hurt that you're having the day all planned out (which will also come in handy since if you had to make a decision today, it'd be difficult). Enjoy the company of family and friends, and don't be surprised if you're moved to tell people how meaningful they are to you.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

 Letting your industrious side take the day off could prove challenging, but it'll mean a great deal to the family and friends who'd like your complete presence. Whatever's going on at work will definitely be there tomorrow, while this day happens only once. Get yourself busy and engaged in the moment -- appoint yourself official photographer, or sous chef for a meal.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

 The energy the stars are sending you befits this special day perfectly. You're ready for fun and celebration surrounding family and friends, and everything has a little extra sparkle to it. If there's a romantic connection happening, that'll be extra shiny, too. Get out the camera to document the memories, and don't forget to spend a few minutes on the phone with those who can't be there.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

 With your usual impeccable timing, you have the good energy going full-blast and it's just going to continue to flow. The universe is definitely on your side, and any and all celebrations that you're a part of will be a smashing success. Meanwhile, there's also the possibility of some amped-up romance, so don't hesitate to steal some special moments with a special someone.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

 Your mind may be wandering to far-off places -- perhaps someone's given you the gift of a plane ticket, even -- but friends and family would still like to feel that you're in the present moment. Make a special effort to keep your five senses up and running; if you take the time to appreciate all that's around you, you won't be able to help being involved.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

 Home and all things domestic -- maybe lavish meals, entertaining family and friends, enjoying coziness and comfort -- are in the stars. You'll actually enjoy troubleshooting any little bumps that occur in your carefully laid plans, getting creative if relatives have a tiff or dessert gets burned. What starts out as an accident could turn into a great tradition.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

 If life were a reality TV show, you'd be the one who was most excited about the final revealing scene, the one with the surprise twist and the unveiling of the cause of all the buildup. Today is just like that, except without the creepy cosmetic surgery and weird hosts. The sweet little secrets you've cooked up recently are finally revealed, and everyone loves them.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

 Things are just getting better right about now, and today is no exception to the general trend. In fact, gatherings and groups are wonderful today, and you have many an opportunity to strengthen bonds and deepen connections. The fact that you're sincerely ready to help also makes you a precious part of the scene and an integral part of the fun.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Potassium nitrate is used in
- a. medicine
 - b. fertiliser
 - c. salt
 - d. glass
2. Permanent hardness of water may be removed by the addition of
- a. sodium carbonate
 - b. alum
 - c. potassium permanganate
 - d. lime
3. Soda water contains
- a. carbonic acid
 - b. sulphuric acid
 - c. carbon dioxide
 - d. nitrous acid

Answers: 1.b 2.a 3.c

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

N	C	L	S
P	S	U	S
K	E	P	A
O	G	H	A

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

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

FASHION IN F1



Hamilton models kilt in the paddock to take a fashionable approach to a title run-in



Lewis Hamilton demonstrated his love of fashion last Thursday by wearing a bold blue kilt for his news conference ahead of the Turkish Grand Prix on October 10. It was a notable departure from Mercedes' usual corporate uniforms and an endorsement of the role fashion plays in enabling the British seven-time champion – dressed this time by Burberry – to escape the pressures. "I love being able to separate from the sport," he said. "The intensity of this whole season is difficult for everyone that's at the track and so to be able to have something else — another outlet, something else that you can focus on — helps take the weight off of it. "And so when I come back, it always feels fresh when I come to a Grand Prix because it's not something I've been thinking about every day..." Since scoring his 100th victory by winning the Russian Grand Prix two weeks ago, Hamilton said he had 'blown off steam' by attending fashion shows in Paris. In September, he hosted a table for young black design-

ers at the Met Gala in New York. "I love the fashion scene," Hamilton explained at the Istanbul Park circuit. "When you're in a fashion week, for example, you're surrounded by people from all different walks of life, expressing themselves in different ways. "I love that environment where I'm able to be able to express myself." He conceded that wearing a kilt in the paddock was 'quite daring', adding "Formula One's not focused on fashion... It's obviously very corporate and there is actually no fashion in F1." Turning his attention to his enthralling title duel with Red Bull's Max Verstappen, in which he held a two-point lead, he echoed the Dutchman's comments about shrugging off the pressures. "What an amazing season it has been so far," he said. "It's been super exciting for the fans. We finally see two teams neck and neck, which is amazing and, of course, we want to win, but you've got to learn to let that not overtake everything in your life." AFP

DIFFERENT

EYE FOR DETAIL

Memories before Oblivion



Tunisian photographer Jacques Perez (wheelchair) attends the launch of his exhibition

'People speak to me, their faces intrigue me, I would like to know what's behind them,' says veteran Tunisian photographer Jacques Perez

"It's the eye that makes a photograph, not the camera," says 90-year-old Jacques Perez, who has forever retained his curiosity for his homeland Tunisia. An exhibition of his work named 'Souvenirs d'Avant l'Oubli' (Memories before Oblivion) is being held until the end of October in a palace in the medina of Tunis, the old city where he was born and still lives. "I didn't study to take photos - no need. It's, above all, about seeing. I like to look at 360 degrees and show what I saw," he

said. Perez began photography at the age of 11 or 12. "I was lucky to have a German mother and an Italian grandmother who gave me illustrated magazines" which 'educated his eyes'. After 15 years of amateur photography alongside a teaching job, he was commissioned by a major Tunisian publisher to create a photo book of Sidi Bouzid, a poor but picturesque blue-and-white city, that launched his career. In the exhibition, all his works are 'inhabited' by people, Perez



said. "People speak to me, their faces intrigue me, I would like to know what's behind them." This idea is at the core of the work of Perez, a photographer of international repute. He is a humanist photographer, like those who inspired him, including Robert Doisneau, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Elliot Erwitt, said curator Hamideddine Bouali. **It's all intuitive** Perez has only ever wanted to photograph his own country, in all its diversity. The 70 photos in

the exhibition cover the breadth of his work: the sea and fishermen, the daily life of Tunisians, the old arts and crafts. Some of the most striking images are portraits of women, including 'Lady of Chebika' and 'Lady with a Lion'. In the Lady of Chebika, wrinkled with age, "her face interested me but I did not know if I could approach her," Perez said. "I got closer, she did not react. I got closer again and she gave me a sign of assent. I took the picture. It's all intuitive," he said. AFP

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Messi's Argentina drub Uruguay, Brazil drop first qualifying points



Argentina's Lionel Messi celebrates after scoring against Uruguay during the FIFA World Cup South American qualifier in Buenos Aires, on Sunday

2022 FIFA WORLD CUP

SOUTH AMERICAN QUALIFIERS

Montevideo, Uruguay - Lionel Messi opened the scoring as Argentina thumped neighbours Uruguay 3-0 in an entertaining World Cup qualifier on Sunday.

Goals from Rodrigo De Paul and Lautaro Martinez rounded off a successful night for Lionel Scaloni's team in Buenos Aires as they maintained their unbeaten start to the qualification campaign and closed the gap at the top of the single South American table to six points behind Brazil, who drew 0-0 with Colombia.

We played a great match, I think we're improving a lot. It was a tough match and we had to win it. Uruguay sit back and are dangerous

LIONEL MESSI, ARGENTINE SUPERSTAR

"We played a great match, I think we're improving a lot," said Messi. "It was a tough match and we had to win it."

"Uruguay sit back and are dangerous. Once we scored the first goal we started to find spaces and many appeared."

The first half was a classic end-to-end thriller with both sides hitting the woodwork before Argentina opened the scoring.

Uruguay's Luis Suarez looked lively early on and had three gilt-edged chances, all from the corner of the six yard box.

Two, including an acrobatic

volley, were parried by goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, while his third effort came back off the near post. For Argentina, Messi had a low shot from the 'D' deflected inches past the post and then broke the deadlock in bizarre fashion.

His chip into the box with the outside of his left boot was missed by Nicolas Gonzalez, whose presence seemed to deceive Muslera, the goalkeeper also missing the ball as it nestled in the bottom corner.

Muslera flirted with disaster moments later when he dribbled

start to the qualification campaign in Barraquilla.

The Selecao had won their first nine qualifiers, scoring 22 goals to lead the table by eight points before kick-off.

Coach Tite's side are still almost certain to qualify for next year's finals in Qatar as they maintain a 13-point lead over fifth-placed Colombia, with the top four progressing automatically.

"Neymar did well as the team's leader," said Tite, but 'he was well marshalled' by a Colombian side that has 'more technical qualities than other teams'.

It was a good day for the bottom two teams in the group as Bolivia beat Peru 1-0 and Venezuela defeated Ecuador 2-1.

In the late match, goals from English-born Ben Brereton and Mauricio Isla gave Chile, who had Charles Aranguiz sent off, a 2-0 win over Paraguay, who had Omar Aldieret dismissed.

AFP

COLLATED RESULTS

Bolivia 1 (R. Vaca 82) Peru 0
Venezuela 2 (Machis 45+1, Bello 64) Ecuador 1
(Valencia 37-pen)
Colombia 0 Brazil 0
Argentina 3 (Messi 38, De Paul 44, Martinez 62)
Uruguay 0
Chile 2 (Brereton 68, Isla 72) Paraguay 0



Brazil's Neymar (R) and Colombia's Stefan Medina (C) vie for the ball during their match in Barranquilla, Colombia, on Sunday

World Cup in 2022 will be my last, says Neymar

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - Brazil star Neymar said on Sunday that the 2022 World Cup will be his last as he doesn't have the strength to put up with more football.

"I think it will be my last World Cup," the 29-year-old told DAZN. "I will play it like it is the last because I don't know if I will still have the mental strength to put up with even more football."

Neymar, who has played in two World Cups and is his country's second top scorer of all time behind Pele, will be 34 when the 2026 tournament rolls around.

"I will do everything to get to the 2022 World Cup in great shape and will do everything to win for my country, to fulfill my biggest dream since I was little," added the Paris Saint-Germain star.

So far, his international honours have been limited to the 2013 Confederations Cup and an Olympic gold medal in Rio in 2016.

Injury ruled him out of the 2019 Copa America which Brazil won as well as the 2021 edition where Argentina triumphed in the final.

AFP

Nigeria avenge shock loss

2022 FIFA WORLD CUP

AFRICAN QUALIFIERS

Johannesburg, South Africa - Nigeria centre-backs Leon Balogun and William Troost-Ekong redeemed themselves by playing key roles in a 2-0 World Cup qualifying away victory over the Central African Republic on Sunday.

They had been criticised for allowing Karl Namnganda to score in the final minute three days ago as the Central African Republic snatched a stunning 1-0 Group C triumph in Lagos.

Balogun from Scottish Premiership giants Rangers was first to make amends, scoring in the 29th minute of the second meeting to put the Super Eagles ahead.

Troost-Ekong, who plays for Premier League outfit Watford, atoned in first-half added time by setting up Napoli sharpshooter Victor Osimhen for the second Nigerian goal.

Nigeria top the table after four rounds with nine points, two more than Cape Verde, who snatched a 1-0 home win over Liberia thanks to a 90th-minute goal from captain Ryan Mendes.



Action from the match between Nigeria and Central African Republic during the FIFA World Cup African qualifiers

Musa milestone

Forward Ahmed Musa is only the third Nigerian to reach the 100-cap milestone after former Everton defender Joseph Yobo and goalkeeper Vincent Enyeama.

Nigeria visit Liberia and host Cape Verde next month, and the table toppers will join nine other group winners in playoffs during March to decide the five African qualifiers for the World Cup.

Tanzania, the fifth lowest

ranked team among the 40 who qualified for the group stage, won 1-0 in Benin through an early Simon Msuva goal to regain the Group J lead.

They are ahead of Benin on goals scored with top seeds the Democratic Republic of Congo two points adrift after losing 0-1 in Madagascar, whose second-minute winner came from Njiva Rakotoharimalala.

Mali retained a two-point

advantage over Uganda in Group E after both countries achieved 1-0 victories to eliminate Kenya and Rwanda from the race to finish first.

Group B leaders Tunisia failed to defeat Mauritania for the first time in a World Cup qualifier, drawing 0-0 in Nouakchott after winning five previous meetings spanning 21 years.

Former African champions Zambia continue to disappoint in

COLLATED RESULTS

GROUP B

Mauritania 0 Tunisia 0
Zambia 1 (Sakala 65) Equatorial Guinea 1 (Bikoro 82)

GROUP C

Cape Verde 1 (Mendes 90) Liberia 0
Central African Republic 0
Nigeria 2 (Balogun 29, Osimhen 45+1)

GROUP E

Uganda 1 (Bayo 22) Rwanda 0
Kenya 0 Mali 1 (Kone 55)

GROUP J

Madagascar 1 (Rakotoharimalala 2) Democratic Republic of Congo 0
Benin 0 Tanzania 1 (Msuva 6)

Note: Central African Republic moved home fixture to Cameroon because they do not have an international-standard stadium

the same section, surrendering a second-half lead given to them by Rangers' Fashion Sakala in a 1-1 home draw against second-place Equatorial Guinea.

AFP



Panama players celebrate after scoring against the US on Sunday

Panama upset US

2022 FIFA WORLD CUP

CONCACAF QUALIFIERS

Panama City, Panama - The United States crashed to their first ever World Cup qualifying defeat against Panama on Sunday as coach Gregg Berhalter's decision to ring the changes backfired. Anibal Godoy's glancing header on 54 minutes secured all three points for Panama at Panama City's Rommel Fernandez Gutierrez Stadium to jolt the US's bid to reach next year's finals in Qatar.

The US had moved to the top of the CONCACAF qualifying standings after a 4-1 win over Honduras last month was followed by a 2-0 win over Jamaica in Austin last Thursday.

Panama moved up into third

place in the CONCACAF standings with the victory, level on eight points with the US.

In other games on Sunday, Mexico regained first place in the standings after goals from Francisco Cordova, Rogelio Funes Mori and Chucky Lozano were enough for a 3-0 win over ten-man Honduras in Mexico City.

Honduras's veteran defender Maynor Figueroa was sent off early in the second half for a challenge on Raul Jimenez. Mexico now lead the eight-team qualifiers with 11 points.

In other games on Sunday, Canada drew 0-0 against Jamaica in Kingston while in San Jose, Costa Rica came from behind to beat El Salvador 2-1.

AFP

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MBAPPE'S LATE WINNER FIRES FRANCE TO GLORY

NATIONS LEAGUE FINAL

Milan, Italy - Kylian Mbappe fired France to Nations League glory on Sunday after netting the winner which completed a comeback from a goal down to beat Spain 2-1 in Milan.

Mbappe struck with ten minutes remaining to win the title for world champions France after Karim Benzema had levelled just two minutes after Mikel Oyarzabal put Spain into a 64th-minute lead. The win will ease some of the pain created by an early exit from Euro 2020 at the hands of Switzerland and highlighted just how powerful France are going forward.

"I really wanted to win a trophy with France, and now it's done," said Benzema, who returned the France fold ahead of the Euro, to M6. "We showed strength of character, because this team is very strong, never gives up and we have proven it today. It is the sign of a great team not to panic, to be patient and to wait for the right opportunity."

Les Bleus came out on top of a match, which came to life after Oyarzabal slid home the opener. As well as the two goals from their superstar attackers, France had other opportunities to score through Mbappe before a frantic finish in which Spain launched an



France's Kylian Mbappe (L) celebrates with his teammates after scoring the winner against Spain on Sunday

assault on the French goal. Didier Deschamps can thank Hugo Lloris the match didn't go into extra-time after the France captain pulled off a fine stoppage time save to deny Yeremi Pino a late leveller.

France ease the pain

France started the strongest and should have been ahead with five

minutes on the clock when Benzema was put through perfectly by Paul Pogba. The Real Madrid striker tried to dribble around Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon but went too far wide and ended up aimlessly hitting a low pass across goal which was easily cut out by Cesar Azpilicueta.

Two minutes later a lightning passing move led to Aymeric La-

porte, playing against the country of his birth for the first time since obtaining Spanish nationality, cutting out a low cross.

A previously niggly contest suddenly got going in the 63rd minute when a sweeping French passing move started by Benjamin Pavard ended with Theo Hernandez smashing a first-time finish against the crossbar.

Enrique proud of Spain despite loss

Milan, Italy - Luis Enrique said on Sunday that he was happy with his Spain side despite them coming up short in the Nations League final.

"I know that we were able to win against European champions and play almost even with the world champions so for players and the team that is all good," Enrique told reporters. "The important thing is that the team maintains its personality and will to win."

Mbappe's decisive strike made the Spain players livid as they were convinced it should have been ruled out for offside but a VAR check ensured that

the goal stood. However Enrique did not want to aim any anger at referee Anthony Taylor, insisting that he wanted to concentrate on his team's positive display.

"We don't have the best point of view on pitch as coaches but I think this decision was difficult," he added.

"I don't want to say anything about it. I've been a coach for ten years and I've never spoken about referees. I've got nothing to say, I'm concentrating on trying to get my team to play the best way and accepting wins and losses."

AFP

Just seconds later Spain took the lead through Oyarzabal, who swept home a precision left-foot finish to the delight of the Spanish fans gathered behind that goal. However no sooner had those supporters stopped celebrating than France were level through Benzema, who curled home an outstanding strike after being fed by Mbappe.

Mbappe then had two chances in quick succession, first chipping way over with Simon off his line in the 68th minute and then hitting a tame shot at the Athletic Bilbao goalkeeper. The PSG forward had his goal with ten minutes remaining though, outfoxing Simon with some deft footwork before slotting home.

AFP



Kylian Mbappe (L) and Karim Benzema with the trophy

Deschamps hails 'improved' Benzema

Milan, Italy - France coach Didier Deschamps heaped praise on Karim Benzema after the once-exiled forward played a key role in France's Nations League triumph.

"Karim is a crucial player and he has proved over two matches that he has very obvious talent, it's there for all to see," he told reporters.

"He has improved in different areas, he's clinical, he plays his part in the build-up."

Real Madrid forward Benzema had been banished from the national team for over five years but was recalled by Deschamps ahead of Euro 2020.

"From a personal perspective he's no longer the same person, he's matured."

"He's been at the highest level for a long while now and I'm delighted he's able to celebrate tonight with France."

AFP

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Crafty Murray defeats Alcaraz

INDIAN WELLS TENNIS

Los Angeles, US - Andy Murray rallied to win an inter-generational battle against teenager Carlos Alcaraz on Sunday, reaching the third round at the Indian Wells Masters along with Stefanos Tsitsipas and Alexander Zverev.

Murray, who has touted Alcaraz as a future world No 1, defeated the talented 18-year-old 5-7, 6-3, 6-2 to set up a meeting with third-seeded German Zverev, a 6-4, 3-6, 6-1 winner over American Jenson Brooksby.

Greece's Tsitsipas, the second seed, advanced in the combined WTA and ATP hard court event with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Spain's Pedro Martinez.

"I thought if he's going to stand that far back and I'm getting no love from the court and the conditions, why not try it and see if I can bring him forward a little bit again?" Murray said of the underarm serve - his first in an ATP match.

"Wasn't expecting, obviously, to get an ace out of it," he added.

"I felt like in the second set he played maybe better," 34-year-old Briton said after sealing



Andy Murray in action against Carlos Alcaraz during their match on Sunday

victory in three hours and four minutes. "First set I felt like I had more of the opportunities but didn't get it so, yeah, happy with the way I fought."

Murray can expect a stern test in the third round from Zverev, winner of titles in Madrid and Cincinnati this season.

Zverev fired 28 winners against Brooksby but his 35 unforced errors were 14 more than his opponent delivered. "Especially in the second set I didn't see the ball well on (one) side of the court because of the sun," Zverev

said. "It wasn't an easy match, but I'm happy to be through, I'm happy to be in the third round and playing Andy now."

Zverev noted that Murray was the only one of the 'big four' of men's tennis - Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Murray - that he was yet to beat.

Fifth-seeded Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini of Italy also advanced, beating Chile's Alejandro Tabilo 6-4, 7-5.

Italy's Jannik Sinner, seeded tenth, downed Australian John

Millman 6-2, 6-2. Spain's Albert Ramos Vinolas sprung an upset, ousting seventh-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-2.

Swiatek books spot in round of 16

In women's action, second-seeded Iga Swiatek roared to a 6-1, 6-0 third-round victory over Veronika Kudermetova.

The win came on the anniversary of Swiatek's victory in the pandemic-delayed 2020 French Open and put her into the round of 16 in her Indian Wells debut.

Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus continued her upset run with a 7-5, 6-4 victory over 2015 Indian Wells champion Simona Halep of Romania.

Sasnovich, ranked 100th in the world, posted her second straight win over a Grand Slam champion, having stunned recently crowned US Open champion Emma Raducanu in the second round.

Canadian Leylah Fernandez, who fell to Raducanu in the US Open final, rallied to beat French Open finalist Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 5-7, 6-3, 6-4.

AFP

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

I think when he's done and when he's retired I think he'll definitely be remembered as one of the great finishers the game has ever seen

Ricky Ponting
Delhi Capitals coach speaks about MS Dhoni's knock against his side on Sunday



Sunil Narine
4 WKTS
21 BALLS

26
15 BALLS

NARINE DAZZLES WITH BAT AND BALL IN KKR WIN

KOLKATA VS BANGALORE

Sharjah, UAE- Three balls of Sunil Narine, with the bat, changed the game. And now Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) are one step closer to the final.

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) had put up only 138 on the board but they were defending it with fearsome spirit.

The score was 80 for three in the 12th over. The Sharjah slowdown was well and truly on. On this pitch an equation that reads 59 from 51 can be dicey. You can't leave it too late. Too many variables. So Knight Riders sent in their pinch hitter and he went 6, 6, (wide) and 6.

Three balls of Narine changed the game. Twenty-four balls earlier had set it up. Royal Challengers actually had a solid powerplay - 53 for one at 8.8. Then he came on and the runs dried up. Only 60 came off the next 11 overs. 60 for four at 5.45.

Sublime Narine

Virat Kohli. Clean bowled. AB de Villiers. Clean Bowled. Glenn Maxwell. Utterly deceived. Most people need a cheat code and a computer screen to pull that off. Narine doesn't. He imposed video game logic on this game and turned it in Knight Riders' favour.



Kolkata's Sunil Narine (C) celebrates with his teammates after taking the wicket of Bangalore's Glenn Maxwell on Monday

Pressure was mounting on Kohli. He had slowed down once again after the powerplay - 24 off 16 and 15 off 17 - and his desperation was apparent. Narine knew that in these situations, batters often forget about the basics and just swing across the line. Even one as good as Kohli was susceptible to this weakness as a straightforward off-break sneaked through his defences.

Triple strikes

Doing de Villiers required a bit more subtlety. Bangalore's talisman had come out with a plan. It involved thrusting his front foot outside off stump to eliminate lbw, and heaving across it. Narine, though, spotted the smallest gap between bat and pad and he targeted it with missile-like pre-

cision. Pace, drift, length and spin - everything came together as de Villiers played all around an off-break and lost his middle stump.

That only left Maxwell. And having to do all the heavy lifting with time running out and the spinners closing in, even those invincible sweep shots of his suddenly looked not quite invincible. Narine got him to top edge one straight into the hands of short third.

Knight Riders had saved their mystery spinner for Royal Challengers' big three. And it worked a treat. Twelve runs. Seventeen balls. And three massive wickets.

The fightback

Kohli wanted this one badly. He got in the face of the umpire when he made a poor lbw deci-

sion. When the resulting DRS proved how plumb the lbw was he roared like only he can. He had said this would be his last season as captain in the IPL. He would have imagined signing off with that big shiny trophy. So he kept going to his match-winners.

Harshal Patel has the honour in 2021 and he responded by knocking out Shubman Gill and Venkatesh Iyer. Those two wickets took his season tally to 32, an IPL record, tied with Dwayne Bravo's tally from 2013.

Yuzvendra Chahal has had the honour for pretty much the entire time Royal Challengers have been around. He created the DRS drama.

Dan Christian had had the honour in various T20 leagues around the world.

Even at 38, he broke into the Australian World Cup squad on the basis of that. But here he missed his spots.

Narine pulled a short ball that didn't rise high enough for six over square leg to start his innings. Then he launched a length ball on leg stump over midwicket. And to top it off, he cleared the long-off boundary with one hand. Just one hand. That brought the required rate down from 6.9 to 4.8.

And though Royal Challengers

WEDNESDAY'S MATCH

QUALIFIER 2



DELHI CAPITALS VS KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

SHARJAH, 6PM

SCOREBOARD

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE

D Padikkal	b Ferguson	21	(8)
V Kohli	b Narine	39	(33)
S Bharat	c Iyer b Narine	9	(16)
G Maxwell	c Ferguson b Narine	15	(18)
AB de Villiers	b Narine	11	(9)
S Ahmed	c Mavi b Ferguson	13	(14)
D Christian	run out	9	(8)
Harshal Patel	not out	8	(6)
G Garton	not out	0	(0)

Extras: (b 1, lb 6, nb 2, w 4) 13

TOTAL 138 for seven in 20 overs

Fall of wickets: 1-49, 2-69, 3-88, 4-102, 5-112, 6-126, 7-134

Bowling: Shakib al Hasan 4-0-24-0, S Mavi 4-0-36-0, Varun Chakravarty 4-0-20-0, L Ferguson 4-0-30-2, S Narine 4-0-21-4

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

S Gill	c de Villiers b Harshal	29	(18)
V Iyer	c Bharat b Harshal	26	(30)
R Tripathi	lbw b Chahal	6	(5)
N Rana	c de Villiers b Chahal	23	(25)
S Narine	b Siraj	26	(15)
D Karthik	c Bharat b Siraj	10	(12)
E Morgan	not out	5	(7)
Shakib al Hasan	not out	9	(6)

Extras: (lb 2, w 3) 5

TOTAL 139 for six in 19.4 overs

Fall of wickets: 1-41, 2-53, 3-79, 4-110, 5-125, 6-126

Bowling: M Siraj 4-0-19-2, G Garton 3-0-29-0, Harshal Patel 4-0-19-2, Y Chahal 4-0-16-2, G Maxwell 3-0-25-0, D Christian 1-4-0-29-0

ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP COUNTDOWN: 5 DAYS TO GO



Oman cricket team at the Muscat International Airport on Sunday

Oman to play against Namibia in warm-up game in Dubai today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Duleep Mendis' Oman will take on Namibia in an ICC official warm-up match at the ICCA Dubai ground ahead of the T20 World Cup. The match will begin at 1pm, Oman time.

Zeeshan Maqsood-led Oman played two T20 warm-up matches against Sri Lanka at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground on September 7 and 9 before departing for the UAE on Sunday night. Oman lost both the games but gave a decent account of themselves against the much experienced Sri Lankan side.

Oman take on Papua New

Guinea (PNG) in the opening match of the T20 World Cup at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground on October 17.

The second warm-up game for Oman will be against the Netherlands at the same venue on October 14 before they return home for the opener.

Oman are pooled along with Scotland, Papua New Guinea and Bangladesh in Group B, from which the top-two teams will qualify for the Super 12 round.

All the teams will arrive in Oman on October 15 after playing their official warm-up matches. They will be in a bio-secure bubble at the Shangri-La's Barr al Jissah Resort.



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OMAN FIRM FAVOURITES



Oman players train on Sunday ahead of their FIFA World Cup third round match against Vietnam at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Tuesday

Ivankovic's Red Warriors look to close gap with a win at home against Vietnam

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

AFC ASIAN QUALIFIERS ROAD TO QATAR

Having suffered two successive defeats after their dream start [defeating Japan] to their campaign in the third round of AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to Qatar, hosts Oman will go into Tuesday's game against a winless Vietnam as firm favourites. The match, which will be

played at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex (SQSC), kicks off at 8pm.

Branko Ivankovic's Red Warriors have put up an enterprising display so far despite earning only three points from three matches in Group B. Tuesday's match will only be the second home game for Oman, who were unlucky not to share the spoils against Saudi Arabia (lost 0-1) in their previous match at home last month.

Oman will hope to stay within touching distance of the qualifying places to the 2022 FIFA World Cup and a win on Tuesday that will keep them in the mix along with table toppers Australia along with Saudi Arabia and Japan.

Oman was convincingly defeated last week by Australia 1-3 in Doha and will hope to bounce back to winning ways, given the strong home record the Red Warriors have at the venue.

The visiting Vietnam will be targeting their first win at this stage. Vietnam suffered late heartbreak in a 2-3 defeat to China in the UAE last week.

Oman's spirited performances so far have earned praise

but wins have eluded them so far after the Japan stunner.

Coach Ivankovic will hope his men can collect the three points in front of the home fans.

The capacity at the SQSC has been raised to 50% and with an expected 15,000 fans cheering them, the Red Warriors will hope to bring joy to the nation that has recently suffered lot of devastation due to Cyclone Shaheen.

Oman Football Association (OFA) also announced on Monday that the gate money earned for the match will be donated to help relief work in the cyclone-affected areas.

Oman currently sit in fourth place in the group with three points, level with third-placed

Japan, but six points behind runaway leaders Australia and Saudi Arabia. A win against Vietnam could prove vital to closing that gap or overtaking Japan or both as Japan and Australia also meet on Tuesday.

Speaking at the pre-match conference on Monday, Ivankovic said, "We respect Vietnam as a team. Their results in the campaign so far do not reflect their true potential. We know they can provide a tough challenge but we are ready. We would like to get back to our winning ways."

"We will miss three key players for tomorrow's match. Zahr al Aghbari and Al Mundhir al Alawi along with Mohsin al



Oman coach Branko Ivankovic (second from right) at the press meet



Vietnam coach Park Hang Seo (R) at the press conference on Monday

Ghassani are ruled out due to injuries. But I am confident that we can pick three points."

The two sides have never met in FIFA World Cup Qualifiers, but they played each other in Group E of the 2004 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers, with Oman cruising to victory in both legs; 6-0 in Vietnam and 2-0 in Oman.

Also attending the press conference was Mohsin Jawhar, who said that the 'team is ready and will look for nothing less than victory'.

Vietnam coach Park Hang Seo said that the situation of his team is very 'difficult'. "We are the only team in Group B that have yet to score points. We are under a lot of pressure but I take the respon-

sibility," he said.

Vietnam captain Que Ngoc Hai said, "What we aim to do is improve what we have not done in previous matches. When you wear the national team jersey, everyone always tries and gives everything to the fans. The whole team will always remember this. To overcome the pressure and fatigue."

"After three games, we didn't win any points but everything from the game, to the confidence, to the fighting spirit, I think the whole team did well. This is the first time that Vietnam has appeared in the third qualifying round of the World Cup, so we definitely lack some experience."

@ashokmuscat



A file photo of an Omani windsurfer competing at Mussanah

Competition at Asian windsurfing begins in Mussanah from today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Competition at the Asian Windsurfing Championships 2021 will begin in Mussanah on Tuesday, kick-starting a hectic sailing season for Oman Sail.

The Asian windsurfing meet brings together a select group of talented men and women windsurfers from the continent in the Techno293, Techno293Plus as well as the foiling Formula Windsurfing class, which is making its debut at the championships.

Held at the Barcelo Mussanah Resort, the predominantly-Omani fleet will showcase the depth of local talent across all classes and demonstrate the potential of Oman as a world-class sporting venue.

After the conclusion of the Asian Windsurfing Champi-

onships on October 16, sailors from around the world are set to touch down in the sultanate to compete in the Mussanah Race Week from October 30-November 5. This will be followed by the 2021 49er, 49er FX & Nacra 17 Asian Championships from November 5-9 and the 2021 49er, 49er FX & Nacra 17 World Championships from November 16-21.

Sailing Arabia-The Tour 2021, set entirely within Oman, will be held from November 24-December 5 while the 2021 ICLA Radial World Championships also heads to Mussanah, from November 29-December 6.

The 2021 World Youth Sailing Championships closes the season as 350 of sailing's future stars head to Oman for the 50th anniversary of the competition and the first to be held in Asia.

Ahmad's Oman Racing team on podium

Our Correspondent
Muscat

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

Oman Racing trio of Ahmad al Harthy, Charlie Eastwood and Giacomo Petrobelli claimed a creditable Pro-Am podium during the final race of the Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Powered by AWS Endurance Cup season in Spain on Sunday.

The Aston Martin trio produced an outstanding drive to claim third place during a challenging three-hour encounter.

The class was won by SPS Automotive Performance (Mercedes-AMG). Barwell Motorsport Lamborghini captured runner-up spot.

An emotional Ahmad dedicated the hard-earned success to the people of Oman, who suffered devastation last week when tropical cyclone Shaheen made landfall in the northern Batinah governorate.

Starting the race at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya from eighth in the Pro-Am class, Ahmad took the opening one-hour stint and delivered an excellent fault-free drive before handing over the No 97 Aston

Martin Vantage GT3 to Italian teammate Petrobelli.

Aston Martin factory driver Charlie Eastwood took the final stint and stormed through to a fantastic podium.

"It is an unbelievable result and I'm so happy," said Ahmad.

He added, "This podium result really feels like a win as it was a very tough race weekend for me. I'm really proud to see the Omani flag flying on the podium in Barcelona. These are tough times in Oman after the devastation suffered caused by the cyclone last week. Our sincerest thoughts are with everyone affected."

"This is a beautiful way to end this part of the season for Oman Racing and a huge thank you to everyone who made this happen, the team and everyone back home who showed us such incredible support. I hope this podium finish can go some way in helping to lift everyone's spirits in Oman."

Earlier, Oman Racing concluded the official free practice second in Pro-Am and an 11th overall before finishing fifth in Pro-Am in pre-qualifying. The final qualifying wasn't

quite what the team wanted with the eighth fastest time in Pro-Am. "It was a tough and competitive grid. Teamwork helped us achieve this amazing result," said Ahmad.

"As a car we struggled, but as a team we didn't and that was something amazing. Everyone kept out of trouble and did a fantastic stint. I was so happy with the first hour, it was very difficult and so I was glad to stay out of trouble and put us in contention."

Of the two GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup contests Oman Racing contested this year, the team achieved fifth in Pro-Am at the Nurburgring in Germany last month before returning to the podium in Barcelona, Spain, this weekend.

The Iron Lynx Ferrari crew of Alessandro Pier Guidi, Côme Ledogar and Nicklas Nielsen captured the Endurance Cup drivers' title, while Team WRT snatched the teams' championship.

Lamborghini squad Barwell Motorsport earned the combined Pro-Am teams' and drivers' crowns with Miguel Ramos and Henrique Chaves.



Oman Racing's Ahmad al Harthy celebrates on the podium in Barcelona

Oman's Luqman and Mashal advance to last-32 round



Luqman al Farsi



Mashal al Shehi

WTT YOUTH CONTENDER

Muscat - Oman's Luqman al Farsi continued to impress for the second successive day as he sealed a spot in the last-32 (knockout) stage of the U15 boys' singles of the ongoing 2021 WTT Youth Contender Muscat at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Monday. Also reaching the last-32 round was another Omani paddler - Mashal al Shehi - in U19 boys' singles.

Luqman, who lost in the last-32 stage of the U17 event on Sunday, finished second in his group on Monday to advance. The Omani blanked Sri Lanka's Lithum Singappulige 3-0 but lost to Qatar's Khalid al Yafei 1-3.

The other Omani players in the U15 event - Moayad al Mutawa, Said al Awadi, Ayman al Shehi, Ali al Ghafri, Mohammed al Mutawa, Mohammed al Jassasi - failed to advance.

Luqman will meet Saudi Hadi Abualrahi for a place in the pre-quarterfinals.

Mashal beat Qatar's Ahmed Saadawi 3-1 but lost to India's Yashansh Malik 0-3 to finish second and advance. Oman's Bader al Jassasi lost both his matches to exit in the U19 event.

The boys' competition will conclude on Tuesday and after a rest day, girls' competition will commence on Thursday.

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