



Woman of the Year Awards 2021 winners declared



Winners of the Woman of the Year Awards, organised by Apex Media, pose with their trophies at Grand Millennium Muscat on Tuesday evening (Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)

Our Correspondent Muscat

Woman power in Oman received yet another round of acknowledgement and accolades as the fourth edition of the Woman of the Year Awards, organised by Apex Media in partnership with Perfumes and Cosmetics, was held at a glittering function at the Crystal Ballroom of Grand Millennium Muscat on Tuesday evening.

The coveted trophy - The Shining Lady (Al Mara Al Laama) - was presented by H H Dr Mona al Said, the chief guest, to winners in 30 different categories covering a range of activities wherein women have not just excelled but also showed the way forward.

From charity work to culi-

nary distinction, fashion to finance, and start-up business to social media influence, the winners cherished their trophies and pledged to continue steadfastly on their respective journeys.

The most important award for the evening - the Lifetime Achievement Award - was presented to Dr Kaltham al Zadjali,

fondly known as 'Mama Kaltham', for touching the lives of numerous individuals and families with her unique initiatives

as a popular media personality in Oman on radio and television. 'Mama Kaltham' believes 'Challenges generate determination to achieve success while obstacles in life serve as motivators'.

The evening was embellished with a trail of achievements of the other winners.



MoE releases strategic programme for 10th five-year plan

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Economy (MoE) on Tuesday released the 'Strategic Programmes Folder' for the 10th Five-Year Development Plan 2021-25, which focuses on 14 national priorities and 430 strategic programmes chosen as per the priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

The Strategic Programmes Folder is an integral part and

main document of the 10th Five-Year Development Plan. These programmes aim to identify mechanisms for achieving objectives of Oman Vision 2040 over the next five years, the ministry stated in its document.

Strategic programmes in the 10th five-year plan include legislative, institutional and regulatory framework development, financial resources and funding sources arrangement in addition

to programmes aiming to enhance the use of available resources.

The Strategic Programmes cover four main themes: People and Society, Economy and Development, Sustainable Environment, and Governance and Institutional Performance.

Under People and Society, five priorities and 156 strategic programmes have been outlined. The priority areas include educa-

Programmes in the plan include legislative, institutional and regulatory framework development, financial resources and funding sources arrangement

tion, learning, scientific research and national capabilities (76 strategic programmes); health (six programmes); youth development (three programmes); social protection and welfare (26 programmes); and citizenship, identity, heritage and national culture (45 programmes).

Six priorities and 165 strategic programmes were outlined under the Economy and Development theme. The priorities are eco-

nomic leadership and management (six programmes); labour and employment market (19 programmes); economic diversification and financial sustainability (66 programmes); development of sustainable governorate and cities (28 programmes); information technology (29 programmes); and private sector, investment and international co-operation (17 programmes).

Under the Sustainable Envi-

ronment theme 56 strategic programmes and one priority area of environment and natural resources has been identified.

Two priorities and 53 programmes have been set for the Governance and Institutional Performance. The priorities are governance of the state's administrative apparatus, resources and projects (40 programmes); and legislation, judiciary and oversight (13 programmes).



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Injaz Oman announces winners of Student Company competition

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Injaz Oman announced the names of the winning companies in the 10th Student Company programme and competition on Monday. The ceremony was held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the patronage of Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said, Special Envoy to His Majesty the Sultan, alongside a number of highnesses and excellencies, as well as senior officials from the public and private institutions participating in the programme.

At the college level, sponsored by the Zubair Corporation, T2C company won the Best Student Company award for 2021. It will represent Oman in the regional competition. Korea Motiv won the Best Sustainable Product award, also sponsored by the Zubair Corporation, and Tharaa won the Best Innovative Product award, sponsored by Boeing.

At the school level, sponsored by Ominvest, Hirfa won the award for the Best Student Company; Ajwan won the award for the Best Sustainable Product and Purex won the award for the Best Innovative Product.

In the sub-category awards sponsored by Boeing, Boon was the winner of the 'Elevator Pitch' award, which saw an innovative demonstration of the idea in just 90 seconds.

Rashad al Zubair, chairman of the Zubair Corporation's Board of Directors said, "Supporting



Despite the difficult conditions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to overcome the current situation by utilising modern technologies.

KHAWLA AL HARTHIYA

and nurturing entrepreneurs has always been a key strategic objective of the Zubair Corporation, reflecting our role and contribution to society. Therefore, our initiative to sponsor this competition, organised by Injaz Oman, seeks to promote and spread the culture of entrepreneurship among youth."

"Through our partnership with Injaz Oman, we are keen to support participating student companies and enable them to transform their ideas into projects that can be implemented on-ground. We extend our warmest congratulations to all the winners and wish them a bright future towards further progress and

achievements," he added.

Khawla al Harthiya, CEO of Injaz Oman, said, "This year, we witnessed fierce competition from the participating student companies. Despite the difficult conditions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to overcome the current situation by utilising modern technologies. This way we were able to help students present their projects and encourage them to develop their creative ideas.

"We are conducting the ceremony to honour the winners, whose victories were well-deserved, alongside all the participating students and organisers.

We congratulate all the winning companies and wish them continued success. Last but not least, we would like to extend our warmest gratitude to the sponsors of the competition, which was aimed at fostering a culture of entrepreneurship among young people," she added.

The jury panel for the competition included several experts, namely Adel al Hubaishi, executive manager of the Zubair Small Enterprise Centre (Zubair SEC); Majid al Amri, CEO of Thawani Technologies; Abdullah al Saidi, CEO of Nafath Renewable Energy, and Abdullah al Abri, CEO of Makers of Progress.



(For illustrative purpose)

Ministry to open outlets in malls to sell date products

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a move to support Omani agricultural products and farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources will set up marketing outlets to sell dates in commercial centres in Muscat from October 22 to 31.

An official at the ministry said, "Marketing outlets target dates factories, dates packaging units, and owners of small and medium enterprises."

Talking about the conditions for participating in the programme, he said, "Participants must be Omani working in the dates farming and production sector. The date products that will be displayed in the marketing outlets should be Omani.

A Participant must also have a commercial register and wrap date products in var-

ious suitable packages. All the production details from the date of production and expiry must be displayed on the packages."

The deadline for submitting applications is October 14 and those wishing to participate can do so via www.maf.gov.om/form

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), production of dates increased by 2.2 per cent by the end of 2019, reaching 376,982 tonnes compared to 368,940 tonnes in 2018.

As for the production of dates in 2019, the NCSI statistical yearbook showed that the highest quantity was produced in the Governorate of North Batinah, reaching 78,572 tonnes. It was followed by South Batinah with 73,271 tonnes, and Dakhliyah with 67,607 tonnes.

Pets love live food: Omani youth ventures into insect farming

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With demand for pet food rising, the niche market for live food for pets is growing in Oman. To exploit the market, an Omani startup has ventured into insect farming.

"There is a huge need for live food in the form of insects for exotic pets like bears, rodents and reptiles. Insects are a rich source of nutrition for pets," said Asaad K al Hassni, the man behind the concept.

Hassni started working on the idea in 2019 and since then has attracted great interest from people all over Oman.

"I breed insects like worms, superworms, crickets, etc as live food for animals (specifically pets) that need to hunt something alive. In my insectaria, we breed insects for reptiles, birds, hedgehogs, scorpions and many other exotic animals. This project was developed to fulfil the demands of all those animal lovers that keep exotic pets at home, specially chameleons and birds."

He added that main objective behind the project is to provide high quality live food in order to maintain healthy and happy pets.

"We also provide materials and adequate habitats specially designed to fulfil the necessities of these exotic animals."

The job has its challenges, he said. "One of them is the red ant and the other is heat. Red ants love to feast on crickets. They attack in teams and are very well co-ordinated and though the crickets are big and powerful, they are killed instantly. I also lost almost 10,000 crickets in this summer because of the heat.



(Supplied photos)



There is a huge need for live food for exotic pets like bears, rodents and reptiles. Insects are a rich source of nutrition for pets

ASAAD AL HASSNI

Anything within the temperature of 25°C to 32°C is fine; but beyond that, they die."

Hassni believes that the insects also have the potential as

the food of the future for humans, "because they don't transfer diseases to humans as chicken or meat do. They have much more and better quality protein than other sources. It's production is environment friendly and is very affordable".

There are about one million of species described and many more to discover, but not all are edible due to toxicity and their hard exoskeleton, said Hassni.

"We breed five species of crickets and two species of worms that are completely safe and free of parasites," he said.

The insects are bred in a warm temperature and are fed with high quality cereals, proteins and fresh vegetables to give the best nutrition to the pets.

Apart from his business venture, Hassni is passionate about diving, and is the founder of Mobula Dive Centre. He is also an emergency first aid instructor.

ASMED inks pact to set up manufacturing industries' incubator at Sohar university

Muscat - The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) signed an agreement with the University of Sohar on Tuesday to establish, manage and operate an incubator specialising in manufacturing industries for entrepreneurs at the university.

Signed by Halima Rashid al Zar'eeya, ASMED chairperson, and Prof Barry Winn, president of Sohar University, the agreement also provides for the development of ten new small and medium enterprises.

It is a way of cultivating firms capable of delivering top technical and administrative performance in the field of converting industries. The aim is to ensure an entrepreneur's sustained practice of business. It covers a wide range of training, consul-



tancy, marketing, designing and planning services, ASMED said.

"Through the incubator a group of start-up companies will be created with high technical and administrative capabilities in the field of manufacturing indus-

tries. It will also provide a stimulating environment and technical support to entrepreneur in the fields of training, consulting, marketing, design and development of manufacturing plans and equipment selection."

The agreement will also help entrepreneurs communicate with potential suppliers, and support them in establishing networks and transfer of knowledge and intellectual property, ASMED's release added.

Sultanate participates in Arab Water Forum being held in UAE

Dubai, UAE - The sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, is taking part in the 5th Arab Water Forum being held in the UAE.

The forum, which is hosted every three years by the Arab Water Council in collaboration with the Arab League, will continue till Thursday.

The sultanate's delegation is being headed by H E Eng Ali Mohammed al Abri, Undersecretary for Water Resources in the ministry.

The forum addresses the challenges in the field of water resources. It also explores suitable solutions. The forum also discusses preparations to participate in 9th World Water Forum



in Dakar, Senegal in March 2022, in addition to exchanging expertise and techniques through the

exhibitions being held on the sidelines of the forum.
ONA

COVID-19: Recovery rate rises to 97%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With more recoveries being reported than new COVID-19 cases everyday, the recovery rate is touching an all-time high of 97 per cent in Oman.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported no deaths on the fourth consecutive day on Tuesday.

'Thirty-one new cases of COVID-19 were registered on Tuesday and zero deaths. This brings the total number of cases to 303,490 and related deaths to 4,093,' the ministry said.

Five people were hospitalised over the past 24 hours, as number of those in hospitals reached 49, of them 21 are in intensive care units, the MoH said.

National Museum unveils model of 18th century trading and cargo ship

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The National Museum has unveiled a model of a 18th century deep-sea trading and cargo vessel of the Arabian Gulf that took four years to build.

The model of the armed *baghla* (1838 CE) is made of pear wood, ebony, linen, canvas, metal and brass, it said.

According to the National Museum, the *baghla* was the largest deep-sea trading and cargo vessel of the Arabian Gulf, and the most ornate of the big Arabian ships. She was fitted with two or occasionally three

masts and was distinguished by ornamental projections that resembled the quarter galleries found on the European line-of-battle ships of the 18th-19th century. The stem-post curved gently upward to a stem-head which was topped with a bollard-shaped decoration - a further form of ornamentation peculiar to the *baghla*.

'Although the *baghla* was predominantly a merchant vessel, it could also be effectively armed for use in warfare. This model represents an armed *baghla*, measuring approximately 40m in length and 45m in height, fitted with ten 12-pounder Blome-



(Supplied photo)

field pattern cannons. In the early 19th century, the Blomefield was regarded as the most efficient breaching weapon in existence,' the National Museum stated.

Oman has had a long relationship with the sea. With an extensive coastline, the story of Oman's past is in many senses a maritime history.

Although the baghla was predominantly a merchant vessel, it could also be effectively armed for use in warfare. This model represents an armed baghla

the Islamic period, they were part of a vast trading network that extended from China to east Africa, the single longest maritime trade route at the time. In the last four centuries, Omanis had established two maritime empires that connected Oman with the Arabian Gulf, Makran Coast and East Africa.'

All of this activity has shaped the maritime culture of Oman. As Omanis braved the seas, they became excellent navigators and produced a rich navigational literature. They developed an active tradition of boatbuilding, using the materials and tools available to them.



RO3,000 fine, prison term for spreading rumours

Muscat - The Public Prosecution has warned that publishing any news to stir up public opinion or for the purpose of spreading rumours is a crime punishable by imprisonment of up to three years and a fine of RO3,000.

The Public Prosecution issued a statement saying that it has monitored an 'increasing frequency of abusive writings and sensational rumours and the publication of news that includes attributing criminal acts to individuals or institutions on social media platforms'.

The Public Prosecution said that 'publishing such news is a crime punishable by imprisonment of up to three years and a fine of RO3,000'. It affirmed that posting on social media is not a method of reporting, and it may warrant investigation procedures.

'We will take all appropriate legal measures against anyone who pens such writings and generates rumours, or promotes, incites or assists in them in any way, in accordance with the laws and regulations in force,' the Public Prosecution said.

SAYYID FATIK BIDS ADIEU TO ETHIOPIAN ENVOY



Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said, special envoy to His Majesty the Sultan, received in his office on Tuesday morning Dr Ayyorit Mohamed Yassin, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the sultanate, to bid her farewell at the end of her tenure. The ambassador expressed her thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Government of Oman for the support extended to her (ONA)

MTCIT releases second batch of IT Services Standards

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) has announced the second batch of IT Services Standards under the Accreditation Program for IT Service Providers.

The standards will include managed security services and professional security services. The accreditation for these services will start in the first quarter of 2022. The service providers can find the published accreditation standards and the application process for the programme on the ministry's website: www.mtcit.gov.om/ITAccreditation.

MTCIT is mandated to enable the digital economy and drive digital transformation across all government entities.

'This release comes within the framework of ministry's endeavour to improve the technical readiness and push the digital transformation of the units of the state administrative apparatus.'

Accordingly, MTCIT had launched the IT Accreditation Program at the end of 2019 to accredit IT service providers eligible to serve government administrative units.

'IT service providers are accredited based on national standards placed by MTCIT in line with the best international practices'.

Events lined up in Dhofar to mark World Tourism Day

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To celebrate the World Tourism Day, marked on September 27 every year, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism will hold several events in the Governorate of Dhofar, said an official.

"The Directorate General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar will hold a number of events to celebrate the World Tourism Day," the official at the ministry said. The directorate will hold a workshop on adventure tourism at the Museum of the Frankincense Land on September 27.

The directorate will also hold an exhibition at Salalah Grand Mall from September 29 to October 1. The exhibition will display camping equipment.

The ministry recently announced that it has a plan to develop tourism destinations in Dhofar and it is preparing to launch an investment management programme worth RO6bn.

Last month, the ministry had said that plans were afoot to develop winter tourism in Dhofar.

'Plans have been approved



and agreements will be signed shortly with travel and tourism operators to ensure opening of direct and regular airline routes between Dhofar and other parts of the world,' the official said.

Tourism sector took a beating due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But with the number of infections sharply declining, Oman recently lifted entry restrictions for travellers with proof of vaccination.

This means that tourists can now return to Oman after several months of border closures.

There was a 75.1 per cent

drop in tourists to Oman in 2020 compared to 2019, according to the statistics issued by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The sultanate welcomed 3,506,441 tourists in 2019, and 874,444 tourists in 2020.

The ministry said the reason for the decline in the number of tourists was the COVID-19 pandemic which affected this vital sector. The ministry is working to establish numerous projects to attract tourists to achieve the strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Over 1.5mn vehicles registered in Oman till August this year

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The total number of vehicles registered in the sultanate until August this year rose by 0.12 per cent to reach 1,544,707 compared to 1,542,860 registered in July, according to a recent update from the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Private vehicles topped the list

with 1,224,408, followed by 232,373 commercial vehicles, 28,883 taxis, 22,770 rentals, and 12,333 government vehicles.

There were 9,892 vehicles with temporary registration, including export and import vehicles, 6,135 motorbikes, 5,807 driving instruction vehicles, 1,305 agricultural tractors, while the number of diplomatic corps was 801.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	37	27
Doha	39	25
Kuwait City	40	28
Manama	36	28
Riyadh	38	23

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.38am
Sunrise	5.55am
Duhr	11.59am
Asr	3.25pm
Maghrib	6.03pm
Isha	7.33pm

Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tender:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable)	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
PDEN/2021/09/08	Construction of New Filling Station at Al Mabellah South in Muscat Governorate	200.000	29.09.2021	04.10.2021	07.10.2021

Bank Name & Account Number Bank Muscat (0423005687760617)

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om. The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM – 03:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value, with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling **24610289/24610287**

MSX falls 0.62% as volumes surge

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) fell 0.62 per cent to close at 3,920.94 points on Tuesday.

Trading activity improved from the previous session as turnover jumped by 126.49 per cent to RO2.27mn and volumes surged 115.38 per cent to 10.97mn shares.

All the sectoral indices closed in red territory. Financial index fell 0.5 per cent, Industrial index declined 0.48 per cent and Services index fell 0.8 per cent.

The MSX Shariah index closed down by 0.68 per cent at 583.91 points.

Market breadth remained highly negative as no companies closed up, while 28 companies closed down. The rest 16

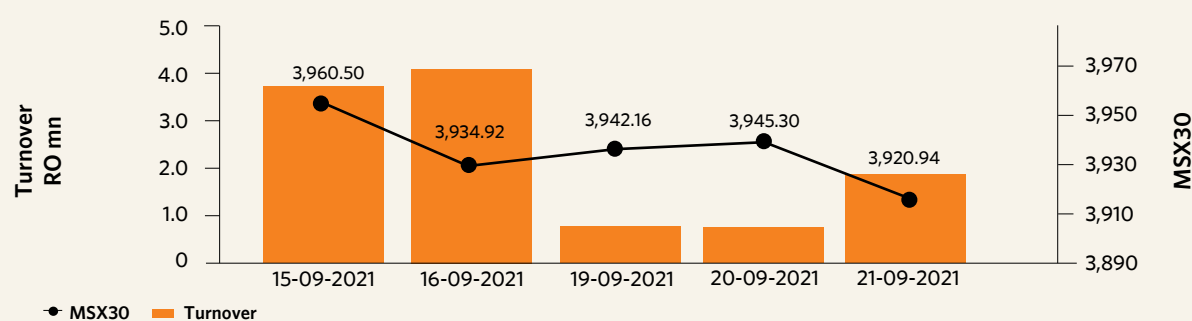


traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top losers were National Aluminium Products Company (-4.76 per cent), Oman Qatar Insurance (-3.33 per cent),

Global Financial Investments Holding (-3.08 per cent), Takaful Oman (-3.06 per cent) and Sharqiyah Desalination (-2.54 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



OECD lowers global, US growth forecasts

Paris, France - The OECD warned on Tuesday of an 'uneven' global economic recovery as it lowered its 2021 growth forecasts for the world and the United States while raising the outlook for Europe.

The world economy has bounced back this year on the back of stimulus measures, the rollout of effective COVID vaccines and the resumption of many economic activities, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said.

'The recovery remains very uneven, with strikingly different outcomes across countries,' the OECD said in its interim economic outlook.

Global GDP has surpassed its pre-pandemic level following last year's COVID-induced recession. Global output is now expected to expand by 5.7 per cent this year, down 0.1 percentage points from the organisation's previous forecast in May.

But the outlook for 2022 has slightly improved, with 4.5 per cent growth now expected, up by 0.1 points.

'Output and employment gaps remain in many countries, particularly in emerging-market and developing economies where vaccination rates are low,' the report said.

The OECD lowered its growth outlook for the United States,



Shoppers walk through the Village in California on September 16 (AFP)

from 6.9 to 6 per cent this year. The US Congressional Budget Office has forecast 6.7 per cent growth for the world's top economy.

The OECD's eurozone forecast, however, was raised by one point to 5.3 per cent, though the outlook varied within the single-currency bloc, with higher growth now expected in France, Italy and Spain while Germany was not performing as well.

The growth prospects of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey have also improved, while those of Australia, Britain, Japan and Russia were lowered.

The forecast for China, the world's second biggest economy and a driver of global growth, remained unchanged at 8.5 per cent.

The impact of the Delta variant of the coronavirus has 'so far been relatively mild' in countries with high vaccination rates, but it has lowered the momentum elsewhere and added pressures to global supply chains and costs, the OECD said.

'Sizeable uncertainty remains,' the report said.

'Faster progress in vaccine deployment, or a sharper slowdown of household savings would enhance demand and lower unemployment but also potentially push up near-term inflationary pressures,' it said.

However, it added, 'slow progress in vaccine rollout and the continued spread of new virus mutations would result in a weaker recovery and larger job losses'.

AFP

Crunch time for property developer Evergrande, but no 'Lehman moment'

Hong Kong, China - With the future of Evergrande hanging in the balance, global markets have plunged on fears that one of China's biggest developers could collapse and cause a contagion throughout the world's number two economy and beyond.

Talk of a 'Lehman moment' has rung loud this week as worried investors try to ascertain whether the crisis could be a replay of the bankruptcy of Wall Street titan Lehman Brothers during the 2008 global financial crisis.

While predominantly a developer, Evergrande - which employs 200,000 people, has a presence in more than 280 cities and claims to indirectly generate 3.8mn Chinese jobs - has been on a buying spree for more than a decade.

In that time it has bought Guangzhou FC and turned it into a highly successful club, set up the popular Evergrande Spring mineral water and opened amusement parks it boasted were 'bigger' than Disney's.

It also has an electric car unit as well as investments in tourism, digital operations, insurance, and health.

Well, that spending spree was paid for by founder Xu Jiayin's gargantuan borrowing. The firm is now in the hole for more than US\$300bn - equivalent to 2 per



An aerial view of the halted under-construction Evergrande Cultural Tourism City, in Taicang, China (AFP)

cent of China's GDP - and it is having trouble paying that back.

What happens then?

All eyes are on the government. The property sector is a crucial engine of the Chinese economy - estimated to account for around a quarter of GDP - and has played a key role in the post-pandemic recovery. Any bankruptcy of such a major company would have major repercussions.

But, as a private company, Beijing might feel less compulsion to stop Evergrande hitting the buffers and could force it to file for bankruptcy, to use it as a warning that no firm is too big to fail and they cannot rely on the state to bail them out.

However, most experts agree the state will not want to

see Chinese homebuyers left out of pocket.

Larry Ong from SinolInsider said the 'best-case scenario' is that authorities 'find a way to keep Evergrande from declaring bankruptcy, give the company's creditors a glimmer of hope that they will walk away from the debacle with at least something, and avert the triggering of greater social unrest'.

Then there is the prospect of a restructuring with local authorities taking control of parts of the firm, while corporate investment divisions are allowed to go out of business. But that would be a huge undertaking.

Is this a 'Lehman moment'?

Apparently not. Lehman Brothers was a Wall Street behemoth,

one of the so-called Big Five investment banks. However, drowning under huge losses linked to sub-prime mortgages, US authorities allowed the firm to go under.

A banking crisis ensued and markets were pummelled, while millions of jobs were lost and lives ruined.

But analysts say conditions are different here.

"I do not think it will be at that kind of level, because I do not see any kind of a securities product that's been kind of securitised off from Evergrande's books itself" said CMC's Wong.

"So what we could see right now is more of a negative feedback loop impact, a sentiment impact that actually spills over to the rest of the world."

AFP

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Bank Muscat's Al Jawhar banking well received

Bank Muscat's Al Jawhar Privilege Banking continues to be well received by the bank's customers across the sultanate. Designed to elevate Privilege Banking to unparalleled heights, Al Jawhar opens a world of opportunities with a number of services and benefits that makes the banking experience truly rewarding for its exclusive clientele in Oman.

Abdulnaseer al Raisi, deputy general manager - Premier Banking, said, "As a prolific innovator of banking products and services in the sultanate, Bank Muscat has been continuously launching new products and services in response to customer feedback and global banking trends. Our Al Jawhar Privilege Banking customers enjoy an excellent banking experience based on Recognition, Rewards and Solutions.

"We request all our valued customers to take full advantage of these innovative services and features, and look forward to warmly welcoming new customers to the joys of Privilege



Banking in the future."

Al Jawhar Privilege Banking customers are eligible for exclusive 2-for-1 deals on food, entertainment and shopping that are available through the 'VISA Xperience App' on their smartphones.

They also have access to a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO800, the chance to win a fixed salary prize of RO500 every month for a year as well as other exclusive and high value Al Mazyona prizes that are especially reserved for them in the new 2021 Al Mazyona scheme. Al Jawhar Privilege Banking customers who maintain a minimum balance of RO10,000 in



their accounts are eligible to win one of the 20 monthly prizes of RO5,000 each.

Al Jawhar customers are also eligible to participate in the special draws for 10 prizes of RO20,000 each during the Mid-year and End of Year draws. In all, 340 high-value prizes worth more than RO2.1mn have been

reserved for Al Jawhar customers in 2021.

Al Jawhar VISA Platinum Credit cardholders will be delighted to know that they will receive 1 per cent cashback as a reward on their local and international purchases.

They can also make high-value purchases from a number

of local merchants and pay for these purchases in 12 monthly instalments at zero per cent interest through the bank's Easy Payment Plan. Al Jawhar VISA Platinum Credit Cardholders can access 25 premium lounges around the world in addition to the lounges at Muscat and Salalah airport.

Al Jawhar VISA Platinum Credit Cardholders are also eligible for a complimentary Dragon Pass and a 'Meet and Greet' service with 15 per cent discount at over 450 global destinations. Al Jawhar VISA credit cards allow customers to enjoy the best in class complimentary travel insurance which include

includes travel accident insurance as well as insurance for lost baggage and money, cancellation, travel delay, delayed baggage, personal liability, legal expenses and loss of passport and access to free medical and legal referral services worldwide.

To extend more innovative benefits to its customers, Bank Muscat has been conducting several special promotions earlier this year.

These included waiver of first year fees on primary and supplementary Al Jawhar Platinum credit cards as well as a referral scheme, which gave customers a chance to earn up to RO5,000 by simply referring friends and family members for Al Jawhar Privilege Banking.

The bank is also offering discounts on annual rental fees on safe deposit lockers to all existing and new Al Jawhar customers. Going forward, the bank has announced that it will continue to innovate and launch new features and services to benefit its Privilege Banking customers even more.

Oman Air confirms weekly Muscat-London flights

Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, will resume flights between Muscat and London (Heathrow) starting September 22. The flights will operate three times weekly on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, departing Muscat at 2.25pm local time and arriving in London at 7.10pm local time. Flights from London will depart at 8.50pm local time and arrive in Muscat at 7.15am local time on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. All flights are scheduled to operate with Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

Oman Air will maintain its comprehensive safety program throughout all elements of the travel journey to ensure that guests fly confidently. Masks are required when guests are on board the aircraft and in Oman's airports. Distancing is maintained while guests board and exit the aircraft, which are carefully cleaned after each flight and at the end of every day. Cabin crew all wear a full set of personal protective equipment, meal service has been modified to further ensure safety, and a number of other measures have been implemented to ensure



that the airline's guests and crew are safe at all times.

Guests who are planning to travel to Muscat should visit the Civil Aviation Authority website, caa.gov.om, to ensure they are prepared to comply with requirements to enter the sultanate.

Guests travelling to the UK

should ensure they are aware of official requirements to enter or transit through the country.

Guests departing from Oman should also ensure that they are aware of all pre-departure requirements and requirements during their flights, which are provided at omanair.com.

Dhofar Automotive enters into sponsorship agreement with Juventus Football Academy

Dhofar Automotive, the official distributor of Jeep vehicles in the sultanate, announced a sponsorship agreement of the Juventus Football Academy in Oman, which began in September, for a period of one year. The Juventus Football Academy is the largest international academy that trains children on the skills of football, a popular sport in the sultanate. The agreement stems from the extension of the international Juventus shirt sponsorship with Jeep until 2023/24.

Biju Luckose, head of Sales & Marketing at Dhofar Automotive, said, "The Jeep brand, with its legendary four-wheel drive capabilities and vast history, has proven itself as an icon that expresses freedom. The ability to push boundaries and determination to succeed in everyday tasks are values that have brought Jeep and Juventus together for eight seasons. As the world gradually takes steps to return to normal, we are pleased to be a part of an effort to encourage a way to move forward and start again, while ensuring that our customers stay true to their passion. The renewal of our contract



sponsorship with Juventus is a testament of our role towards enriching the spirit of passion and freedom by supporting and motivating young children to practise their beloved sport through physical and mental development on the field."

"Over the course of our sponsorship, football fans within the sultanate will see the Jeep logo tagged on the academy players' clothes as well as visibility at Juventus Academy Oman's stadium in Al Khuwayr and Al Mouj Seeb, stands and dressing rooms. This is in addition to our Jeep models being displayed during matches, events, and

other activities. Moreover, our sponsorship aims to showcase the incredible driving features of the Jeep brand, across our wide range of models, all of which are renowned for their strength and tenacity off-road. We look forward to enabling the public to enjoy their favourite sport in an atmosphere that is fun, passionate, and exciting, which are values upheld by Jeep, while also showcasing the brand's extraordinary features," he added.

Operational in the sultanate for eight years, the Juventus Academy's objective of producing 'people before players' are based on developing a genera-

tion of professional players by focusing on young children. The academy has trained over 15,000 players, preparing to develop their skills to build a football foundation that contributes towards increasing the number of football players and professionals.

Davis Rizzolo, director from Juventus Football Academy in Oman said, "At Juventus Academy, we have seen the immense success of our activities through our partnership with Jeep. This has led to widespread interest among Jeep owners to follow and be a part of our various training programmes."

Nissan Oman's 'book a home test drive' service receives fantastic response

Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles' (SBA) 'book a home test drive' service has earned excellent response from potential customers. The service empowers prospective customers to schedule their test drive online as per their convenience.

Applicable only in the Muscat governorate right now the 'book a home test drive' service is another unique step from Nissan Oman to make car buying more convenient.

While customers will be charged RO5 for home test drive service, upon sales conversion a sum of RO10 will be passed on to them as cash gift. Interested customer can schedule a test drive of Nissan models from the comfort of their homes simply by logging on to the official SBA Nissan Oman website.

A senior official of Nissan Oman said, "There's no better way to see if a vehicle is right for customers than to test drive it. To avail our home test drive



service, customers must just let us know what model they are interested in, and we will take it to their homes."

He added, "All test drive vehicles are completely sanitised before delivery at customers' homes for test drives. We are following strict safety procedures with regards COVID-19 and we are adjusting our daily operations to fit within the new normal." Nissan is committed to

extending outstanding pre-sales services to its customers. This is yet another distinctive step from Nissan Oman to make the feel of buying Nissan cars easier.

Awards for Nissan

In 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, Nissan was conferred with 'Oman's Most Trusted Brand' award across categories including SUV, crossover, 4WD and mid-size Nissan, considered a

premium and trusted name in the market, was the only brand to have won the recognition for four times in a row in the automobile category.

The award is instituted by Apex Press and Publishing.

SBA is largely committed to supporting Nissan's growth in the sultanate through major emphasis on customer satisfaction and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman.

Indian School Salalah launches STAI 2021

In a pursuit to inculcate scientific temperament and innovative spirit amongst students, Indian School Salalah under the aegis of Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman launched 'STAI 2021- Science Technology and Innovation' on September 18.

The launch ceremony was graced by the chief guest Dr Amer al Rawas, chairman, Theamar Group. Other dignitaries were Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, Sirajudeen Nhelat, DIC - Indian School Salalah, keynote speaker Dr Varsha Kelkar, fellow, Royal Society of Chemistry, HoD Dept. of BioTechnology, University of Mumbai, Dr Syed Ahsan Jamil, president, School Management Committee, Indian School Salalah and principal of the host school Deepak Patankar. The event was attended by the members of the board, School Management Committees, principals of various Indian schools in Oman, teachers and participating students.

Dr Syed Ahsan Jamil, president of School Management

Committee, focused on the need to inculcate scientific attitude in today's generation and develop a sense of curiosity and creativity which will help humanity and make the world a better place to live in these challenging times.

The introductory message by Dr Manickam highlighted the technology integration in various walks of human life today. Events like STAI are organised with an objective of providing a stage to young talents to showcase their talents in the field of Science, Technology and Innovation.

"STAI 2021 recognises the inquisitive minds of children and fosters their individual growth through research and exploration," he said.

This mega event on Science, Technology and Innovation 2021, featuring the tagline "Curious by Heart, Creative by Minds" was launched virtually by chief guest Dr Rawas. In his address, he appreciated the initiative taken by Indian schools to organise tech events. Science and technology go hand in hand and it is the effective implementation of theoretical knowledge which makes technol-

ogy as a way of life, he added.

Indian School Salalah has marched majestically to accomplish 40 years of academic excellence since its inception in 1981 and in the gracious presence of the Indian School Board chairman and other dignitaries ISS@40 logo was unveiled in a video presentation.

Nhelat, in his felicitation highlighted the three fold aim of STAI. It helps students to develop the curiosity in various areas of science and technology and to provide an arena for practical implementation of acquired knowledge.

Keynote speaker for the launch ceremony, Dr Varsha, an expert in the field of science and technology, shared her views on environment and biotechnology, with emphasis on diagnostics and therapeutics, paleontology and archival preservation, bio prospecting and bio-valorisation. She urged students to take up research as a career as it is extremely rewarding. The two-day mega inter-school event STAI 2021 commences on Saturday, September 25.



OAB launches graduate training programme

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recently launched an advanced programme to provide Omani college and university graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills to enhance their prospects of securing jobs within the banking sector. This two-year programme is in line with the bank's strategy to support national competencies by providing them with the practical experience necessary to achieve success in the future. The programme reflects positively on the bank's economic development plans for by investing in Omani youth and promotes sustainability.

OAB aims to improve economic progression through in-

vestment in the local youth workforce, increasing sustainability, driving knowledge transfer, and enabling banking technology localisation within the Sultanate of Oman. The programme also reinforces the bank's commitment to empowering national talent, with the graduates gaining valuable practical experience that will help them start their career in the banking sector.

The bank will work closely with each graduate employee to identify their abilities and match them with their career aspirations. They will be assigned to different divisions of OAB's operations, rotating between Corporate Banking, Credit Admin,

Credit Review, and Trade Finance, to nurture wider expertise of banking products and services. The two-year programme is open to proactive and determined Omani nationals who are recent graduates in finance, or accounting with a GPA of 2.4 or higher.

The programme will also present a chance to the graduates to learn from seasoned OAB professionals across a wide range of business departments. It will touch upon all areas of business banking, with each segment of the programme being supported by a mentor, in order to evaluate graduate performance, assist and provide a model of commitment, productivity,

and professional responsibility. The programme encourages personal growth with professional qualifications and training that is critical to a career in banking. It has been specifically designed to maximise the potential of each candidate with a designed development plan.

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the sultanate. Today, the bank operates a nationwide network of 53 branches and representative offices with 150 ATMs spread across Oman.

OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App.

Aston Martin announces launch of 'No Time To Die' special edition

The Little Car Company, Aston Martin and EON Productions announced the launch of a 'No Time To Die' special edition Aston Martin DB5 Junior. Inspired by the 25th James Bond film, *No Time To Die*, released in cinemas from September 30, the film sees the return of the iconic Aston Martin DB5.

This unique collaboration with The Little Car Company has created a gadget-laden collector's item. The two-thirds scale version of the original comes with a fully electric powertrain.

Specifications

The No Time To Die edition will pay homage to the rich shared history of the brands, with Silver Birch paintwork, Smiths instruments, individually numbered chassis plates and completed with Aston Martin badging. In true Bond style, this special edition boasts even greater power and range over the standard DB5 Vantage Junior, giving it a higher level of performance.

After extensive development and months of collaboration between the three companies, the car is a truly authentic homage to both the Aston Martin and 007 brands.

The original Aston Martin DB5 was 3D-scanned for reference, allowing a completely accurate reproduction.

Whilst some elements of the car have been replicated, such as the Smiths instruments on the dashboard, some elements have been reimagined for the modern era. The fuel gauge has been converted into a battery meter, while the oil temperature now monitors the motor temperature.

The No Time To Die Special Edition has been designed as a convertible, and not the fixed head coupe driven by 007.

This is to offer seating for an adult and child side by side, allowing all generations of Bond fans to share the love of driving.

With multiple driving modes and a range of up to 80 miles, aspiring secret agents should be able to escape any situation.

There are also some secret 'Easter Eggs' hidden within the car for the lucky owners to find.

A quick-release steering wheel allows for a speedy entry and exit for the driver, and when they need to stop in a hurry, they can rely on both regenerative braking and high-performance Brembo disc brakes. Bilstein dampers and coilover springs make sure the suspension can handle the performance squeezed into this two-thirds scale marvel.

No Time To Die Specification

James Bond's Aston Martin DB5 has become a much-loved character in its own right. No Bond car would be complete without Q style gadgets, and the Aston Martin DB5 Junior No Time To Die edition is no exception.

Chris Corbould OBE, the Oscar-winning special effects supervisor, has worked on 15 James Bond films since the early 1980s, and he consulted with The Little Car Company on the development of the car's complex gadgets in miniature;

"When I saw the DB5 Junior in the flesh, I was amazed at how identical it is to the full-sized car - its stunning. It's an amazing feat of engineering."

All the gadgets, are operated by individual controls in a hidden switch panel in the passenger door. At the push of a button, the headlights drop to reveal a twin set of simulated Gatling guns, complete with imitation barrel blasts and flashes.

As witnessed in the *No Time To Die* trailer, the skid mode comes in handy when caught in a tight spot.

The No Time To Die special edition has a unique digital number plate activated through the hidden control panel.

Just like the original car, this special edition can produce a smoke screen to aid a successful getaway.

Ejected through the rear 'exhaust', the smoke has a supply tank which supplies an hour of safe smoke before it needs topping up.

Although the DB5 Junior is not road legal, as an authentic Aston Martin model, every owner will receive automatic membership of the respected Aston Martin Owners Club.

In addition, all clients will receive complimentary membership of The Little Car Club, allowing them to take part in exclusive events where they, their children and their grandchildren can drive their DB5 Juniors on the most prestigious racetracks.

Ben Hedley, CEO of The Little Car Company, said, "Regarded as the most famous car in cinematic history, the gadget-laden Aston Martin DB5 awed audiences around the world over fifty years ago.

"Now, that story continues. As part of an exclusive partnership with EON Productions and Aston Martin, we have had the opportunity to create something truly unique for James Bond fans and collectors.

"We can't wait to see the adventures these cars take with their owners."

Bond fans worldwide are able to secure one of the limited-edition No Time To Die editions of the DB5 Junior by visiting 007junior.com.

With only 125 cars being built, build slots are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, by placing a fully refundable deposit.

Pricing for the car has been set at £90,000, plus local taxes. Existing Aston Martin DB5 Junior clients will be given first refusal on upgrading to a No Time To Die edition, and remaining build slots will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.



Mazoon Dairy celebrates new school year in Buraimi governorate

Mazoon Dairy Company celebrated the beginning of the school year 2021-2022 in public and private schools in Buraimi governorate, and the students' pleasure of returning to classrooms, by offering dairy products to all schools in the governorate. A number of employees of the company and the General Directorate of Education in the governorate participated in the event.

Yousuf bin Khamis al Fazari,

corporate affairs manager at Mazoon Dairy, expressed his pleasure at the beginning of the new school year, explaining that the company, within its responsibility towards the local community, was keen to implement several initiatives that support educational activities in the governorate, most notably sponsoring the pre-school class at Al Sunina Basic Education School, as well as honouring a group of recently excelling general

diploma students from public and private schools and adult education centres.

The company also received a delegation of 50 teachers from various schools in the governorate, as part of community partnership initiatives and plans to involve the local community to introduce production stages and its various sections.

Fazari added, "We are glad that life has returned to the corridors of our schools, which is

important evidence of the recovery that our country is witnessing as a result of the efforts made in this regard. Therefore, we would like to share this wonderful moment with our teachers and students, as well as raising awareness of the importance of eating healthy food, mainly milk, especially for students of all ages because it has positive impact on their health, physical fitness and academic achievement."



Samsung announces exclusive line-up of app subscriptions

Samsung Gulf Electronics announced an exclusive line-up of app subscriptions which can be unlocked when purchasing selected Samsung TVs in Oman. This perfect content pack, including OSN Streaming, Shahid VIP and Spotify Premium subscriptions, is the best way to enjoy a smart start with a new TV.

Running until October 31, consumers purchasing select Samsung TVs will receive up to 12 months of Shahid VIP and OSN Streaming, as well as three months' access to Spotify Premium.



The three services offer Samsung customers more choice than ever before to elevate home entertainment experiences,

whether it be video content with OSN Streaming and Shahid VIP or music content through Spotify Premium.

This latest news promises to drive satisfaction even higher as people uncover more entertainment and enjoy the best content,

from the best platforms, on industry-leading TV screens.

Customers purchasing a Neo QLED 8K, Neo QLED 4K, any

Lifestyle TV - The Frame, The Serif, The Sero and The Premiere - and QLED 4K with 65" screen and above can redeem their access to Shahid VIP and OSN Streaming for 12 months. Customers purchasing 50" and 55" QLED 4K and Crystal UHD TVs 55" and above will receive 6-month access to Shahid VIP and OSN Streaming.

Three-month subscriptions apply to Crystal UHD 43" and 50" model purchases.

For all models listed above, customers can always get a three-month additional subscription to Spotify Premium.

To redeem these offers, customers must connect their recently purchased TVs to the Internet, for the first time, during the promotion period.

The offer will be available on the Samsung Promotion application and will only appear if customers connect their TVs during this timeframe. Consumers are simply required to turn on their new Samsung TV, go to Apps, download the Samsung Promotion app, open the Samsung Promotion app and then proceed to claim the relevant Shahid VIP, OSN Streaming and Spotify Premium offers.

EU rallies around angry France in US row

United Nations - Tensions rocked the Western alliance on Monday as European Union (EU) leaders backed France in its anger over a scuppered mega-contract, but US President Joe Biden addressed a key European grievance by easing COVID-19 travel restrictions.

The tensions in the transatlantic alliance overshadowed the beginning of the UN General Assembly week, with Biden hoping to turn the page on the turbulent presidency of Donald Trump and rally allies in the face of a rising China.

Tensions with France suddenly took centre stage after Australia last week cancelled a multi-billion-dollar contract for French submarines, instead opting for US nuclear-powered ones as part of a new three-way alliance with Washington and London. European Council chief Charles Michel said the bloc would seek answers, saying that allies needed to be sure of ‘transparency and trust’.

“We are observing a clear lack of transparency and loyalty,” he told reporters. With Trump, ‘at least it was really clear - the tone, the substance, the language - it was very clear that the EU was not in his opinion a useful partner, a useful ally’, Michel said.

European Union foreign ministers, meeting in New York, ‘expressed clear solidarity with France’, top EU diplomat Josep Borrell said.

“This announcement ran counter to calls for greater cooperation with the European Union in the Indo-Pacific,” he said.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian has accused the



High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell speaks during a press conference following the informal EU Foreign Ministers meeting in New York City on Monday (AFP)

United States of betrayal and Australia of back-stabbing, and has no separate meeting scheduled with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Le Drian called on Europeans to ‘think hard’ about alliances, saying the contract showed ‘the persistence of reflexes from a time we had hoped had passed’.

US officials noted that Blinken will see Le Drian in a group setting on Wednesday during talks on Iran amid last-ditch efforts to salvage a 2015 nuclear accord.

Asked about a bilateral meet-

ing, senior State Department official Erica Barks-Ruggles said that ‘the schedule will remain dynamic’. Biden also plans to speak by telephone with French President Emmanuel Macron, one of a number of leaders skipping the General Assembly due to COVID-19 precautions, on ‘the way forward’, another official said.

Addressing European concerns

US officials said Blinken, a fluent French speaker who grew up in

Paris, sought to contain damage on Friday in a conversation with France’s ambassador in Washington before the latter was recalled to Paris for consultations as a protest.

Officials said Blinken also passed along continued concerns by France and other allies over a ban on European travelers imposed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a significant reversal, the Biden administration announced it would ease a COVID-19 travel ban on all air passengers so long

Macron and Modi vow to ‘act jointly’

Paris, France - President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday vowed to ‘act jointly’ in the Indo-Pacific region, the French presidency said, as a row with Australia and the US intensifies.

In telephone talks, both leaders said they would ‘act jointly in an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific area’, days after Australia pulled out of a submarine contract with France in favour of US submarines as part of an alliance with Washington and the UK.

Macron assured Modi of France’s continued ‘commitment to the strengthening of India’s strategic autonomy, including its industry and technology base, as part of a close relationship based on trust and mutual respect’.

The statement from Macron’s office said France and India’s shared approach



This file photo shows Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with French President Emmanuel Macron during the former’s visit to France, in Paris on June 3, 2017 (Twitter)

would be aimed at promoting ‘regional stability and the rule of law, while ruling out any form of hegemony’.

Macron’s discussion with the Indian leader came before a planned conversation with US President Joe Biden.

France is furious with the US for secretly leading talks about a new strategic alliance, AUKUS, and a deal for the de-

livery of American nuclear-powered submarines to Australia, calling the move ‘a stab in the back’.

Australia informed France only hours before pulling out of the submarines deal, according to the French government.

Biden has requested a conversation with Macron, but no date has been set.

AFP

Sudan govt foils coup attempt, order restored

Khartoum, Sudan - Sudan’s fragile transitional government said it foiled an attempted coup early on Tuesday involving military officers and civilians linked to the ousted regime of longtime President Omar Bashir.

Information Minister Hamza Baloul said the coup attempt was thwarted and those behind it ‘brought under control’.

“We assure the Sudanese people that order has been restored and the leaders of attempted coup both military and civilian have been arrested and are being investigated,” he said in a televised address.

“Authorities are pursuing supporters of the defunct regime who participated in the coup attempt.”

Earlier, top military and government sources told AFP that the plotters had attempted to take over the state media building but ‘failed’ and the officers involved were ‘immediately suspended’.

State television broadcast patriotic songs as it announced the coup attempt and urged ‘the people to confront it’.

Senior members of Sudan’s ruling council told AFP the coup attempt had been ‘thwarted’ and ‘the revolution is victorious’.

The Cabinet announced that ‘all those involved in the attempt have been detained’.

Traffic appeared to be flowing smoothly in central Khartoum, AFP correspondents reported, including around army headquarters, where protesters staged a months-long sit-in that eventually led to Bashir’s overthrow in a palace coup by the army.

Security forces did however close the main bridge across the White Nile connecting Khartoum



Sudan’s PM Abdalla Hamdok

to its twin city Omdurman.

‘We will not allow a coup’

There have been previous coup attempts since Bashir’s ouster which officials have blamed on Islamist supporters of the former president and members of his now-defunct ruling party.

Sudan has had a long history of coups. Bashir, a one-time general himself, came to power on the back of an Islamist-backed military coup in 1989.

Since his ouster, the ex-president has been kept in Khartoum’s high security Kober prison and is facing trial over the coup which brought him to power.

He is also wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide for his prosecution of a deadly war against ethnic minority rebels in Darfur.

In an address to his troops on Tuesday, powerful paramilitary commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo said, “We will not allow a coup to take place.

“We want real democratic transition through free and fair elections, not like in the past,” said the commander, widely known as Hemeti.

AFP

Egypt’s first post-Mubarak ruler, Tantawi, dies at 85

Cairo, Egypt - Egypt’s Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, who headed the military junta that ruled after president Hosni Mubarak’s ouster in the Arab Spring protests, has died at age 85, the presidency said on Tuesday.

After his stint as Egypt’s de facto leader, he was soon sacked by the country’s first freely elected president, the Islamist Mohamed Morsi, and spent his remaining years largely out of public view.

President Abdel Fattah al Sisi paid tribute to him in a statement that confirmed his death, calling him one of ‘Egypt’s most loyal sons’.

“He dedicated his life to serving the nation for more than half a century... [He was] a states-



Mohammed Hussein Tantawi (AFP)

man who took responsibility for running the country during a very critical time,” the statement added, referring to the tumult after the 2011 revolution.

The government newspaper *Akhbar al-Youm* said the field marshal died on Tuesday ‘after

giving a lot’ to his country.

The European Union’s delegation in Cairo paid tribute to Tantawi in a tweet, saying he had served Egypt ‘decades in crucial roles throughout his career’.

President Sisi declared a period of national mourning, with-

Firefighters race to protect giant sequoias in California fires

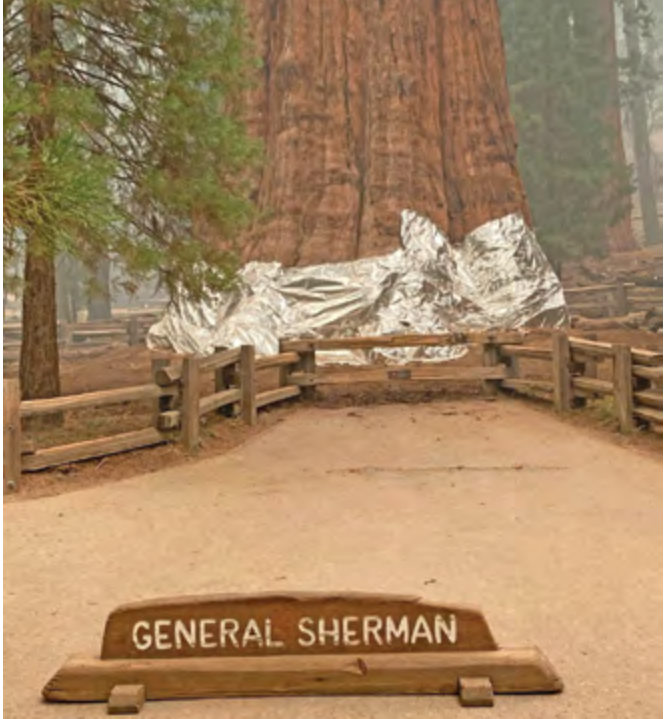
Los Angeles, US - Hundreds of firefighters were battling to protect several groves of giant sequoias in the United States on Monday, warning the enormous ancient trees were at risk from out-of-control blazes.

A number of separate fires were converging on the California woodland that is home to the huge trees, highlighting the terrifying power of wildfires to consume everything in their path.

Incident commanders said the Windy Fire, which has already charred 10,000 hectares has burned into the remote Peyrone Sequoia Grove and the Red Hill Grove.

“We don’t know that those are destroyed,” Windy fire incident spokeswoman Amanda Munsey said, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. “But the fire has completely surrounded those two groves.”

In nearby Long Meadow Grove, the blaze had spread to the vulnerable top of at least one



The historic General Sherman Tree is seen wrapped with fire-proof blankets in the Sequoia National Park, California (AFP)

of the trees.

“It was running toward multiple trees and [firefighters] were

able to get it out, but it did get into the crown of one of the sequoias.”

out specifying how many days.

A veteran of Egypt’s wars and politics, Tantawi had long served as Mubarak’s defence minister and as chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

From infantryman to army chief

Tantawi became the acting head of state of the Arab world’s most populous country after an 18-day popular uprising during the region’s ‘Arab Spring’ protests ended Mubarak’s rule in early 2011.

Like all Egyptian leaders from the overthrow of the monarchy in 1952 to the 2012 election of Morsi, Tantawi came from the ranks of the military.

Born in 1935, and of Nubian origin, Tantawi began his career

as an infantryman in 1956. He served during the 1956 Suez Crisis, and in the 1967 and 1973 Middle East wars against Israel.

After taking charge of the country, his ruling council quickly said Egypt would stay ‘committed’ to its regional and international treaties, implicitly confirming that its landmark 1979 peace treaty with Israel would remain intact.

In 1991, Tantawi was on the side of the US-led coalition in the first Gulf War after Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

He served as Egypt’s minister of defence and military production for 21 years and became the army chief in 1995.

AFP

Wildfires that spread to the tops of trees - especially very tall trees - can move quickly through the forest, as the tops of the trees explode, showering embers over a large area below them.

Further north, the KNP Complex fire continued to threaten the renowned Giant Forest, home to General Sherman, the world’s biggest tree by volume, and standing at 83m.

General Sherman, which is estimated by the National Parks Service to be 2,200 years old, was wrapped in fireproof foil blankets last week.

Incident commanders said they believed they could protect the tree from the 24,000-acre blaze, which was sparked by lightning just over a week ago.

They point to meticulous forest management over the last few decades, including prescribed burns that deplete available fuels, and slow the progress of fires.

California and other parts of

the western United States are labouring under a years-long drought that has left swathes of the region’s magnificent forests tinder dry. Scientists say human activity, including the unchecked burning of fossil fuels, is warming the planet and changing weather patterns, making wildfires hotter, more intense and more destructive.

The giant sequoias are the world’s largest trees by volume. Their relatives, the California redwoods, can grow taller - well over 100m - but are not as wide.

Both kinds of tree are adapted to fires, with thick bark that protects them from heat.

In their lifetimes, which are measured in thousands of years, they typically endure lots of fires, the heat from which helps their cones to open, allowing the seeds to disperse.

But longer, hotter and more aggressive fires can damage them, sometimes irreparably.

AFP

Biden bids to renew US leadership in UN speech

United Nations - President Joe Biden is to impress the world that the United States wants to avoid a Cold War with China, while pivoting from continuous post-9/11 conflicts to an era of US-led diplomacy.

Biden's first speech as US president to the annual United Nations General Assembly in New York faces a tough reception.

He has spent his presidency branding countries like China and Russia as the opposing side in a generational, global struggle between autocrats and democracies.

Close ally France is also furious at what it calls backstabbing by Washington in a defence pact that will see Australia acquire US nuclear submarine technology, while ditching previous plans for French conventional submarines.

Throw in the hangover from the traumatic Afghanistan exit - where victorious Taliban fighters forced the US-led alliance into a hasty, at times chaotic, withdrawal - and Biden can expect some scepticism.

However, Biden will argue from the UN rostrum that the United States is stepping in to save the world from the COVID-19 pandemic, leading on climate crisis measures and rebuilding democratic ties frayed under Donald Trump.

And he will insist that his drive to deepen the US footprint in Asia - the new nuclear sub-



US President Joe Biden (right) and United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres hold a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly at the United Nations Headquarters, in New York on Monday (AFP)

marines pact with Australia is only the latest building block - doesn't have to mean confrontation with China.

Biden will say 'he does not believe in the notion of a new Cold War with the world divided into blocks. He believes in vigorous, intensive, principled competition', a senior US official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Reinforcing that theme of a United States wanting to turn the page on two decades of conflicts, Biden will vow a shift to diplomatic leadership, the official said.

"The President will essentially drive home the message that ending the war in Afghanistan closed the chapter focused on war and opens a chapter focused on personal, purposeful, effective

American diplomacy," said the official.

New Iranian leader Raisi debuts

Biden will not be the only leader making his first appearance before the United Nations.

Iran's new ultraconservative President, Ebrahim Raisi, will make his international debut with a pre-recorded speech, possibly offering clues on whether a 2015 nuclear accord can be salvaged.

The summit will kick off with Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, a far-right leader who insisted on flying to New York despite refusing guidance that he be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Biden's speech will stress US pledges in tackling both the pandemic and climate change.

Many African countries, for example, have got only a trickle of their populations fully vaccinated, and international donations are nowhere near enough to change the dynamic.

The President will essentially drive home the message that ending the war in Afghanistan closed the chapter focused on war and opens a chapter focused on personal, purposeful and effective diplomacy

US OFFICIAL

A UN official signaled on Monday that Biden would deliver 'good news' on resolving a US\$20bn shortfall in the US\$100bn fund that developed countries promised to mobilise annually from 2020-2025 for helping poorer nations adapt to climate change.

On COVID-19, Biden will likely recall that the United States is easily the biggest donor of vaccines around the world, while acknowledging that considerably more needs to be done before vaccine imbalances can be ironed out.

Many African countries, for example, have got only a trickle of their populations fully vaccinated, and international donations are nowhere near enough to change the dynamic.

On Wednesday, Biden will be hosting virtually from the White House a global summit on the pandemic response. He will 'call for an all-hands-on-deck effort that can end this pandemic much more rapidly', the US official said.

French fury

Ending a busy diplomatic week, Biden will also meet on Friday in the White House with the leaders of Australia, India and Japan, which join the United States in the Quad alliance at the heart of the Indo-Pacific.

While manoeuvring through this week's multilateral mazes, Biden will have to keep one eye on trying to mend bridges with France.

Paris recalled its ambassador to Washington in fury at the US-Australian submarines deal, and the French Foreign Minister has described Biden's diplomatic style as 'brutality'.

The White House appears confident it can calm the spat, while keeping focused on what it says is the main issue: Shoring up regional networks to resist China's growing military and commercial footprint.

On Monday, the US government satisfied a key European demand by easing a travel ban imposed at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. From November, anyone fully vaccinated will be allowed to fly into the United States.

AFP

Pakistan calls for unfreezing of Afghan assets

New York, US - Pakistan on Monday called on world powers to unblock billions of dollars in Afghan assets frozen after the Taliban takeover but said it did not expect recognition soon of the new government.

Ahead of talks on Afghanistan at the UN General Assembly, Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said the most urgent priority was averting an even deeper economic collapse of the neighbouring nation that could trigger a humanitarian catastrophe.

"On one hand, you're raising fresh funds to avert a crisis and on the other hand money that is theirs - belongs to them - they cannot use," Qureshi told reporters.

"I think freezing the assets is not helping the situation. I would strongly urge the powers that be that they should revisit that policy and think of an unfreeze," he said.

"It will be a confidence-building measure as well and that could also incentivise positive behaviour."

The US froze US\$9.5bn in Afghan central bank assets and international lenders have stayed clear of Afghanistan, wary of providing money that could be used by the Taliban.

Pakistan was the chief backer of the Taliban's draconian 1996-2001 regime and has long faced US allegations that its intelligence service fuelled the Islamist fighters in their two-decade battle against NATO forces and the now collapsed Western-backed government.

While calling for engagement with the Taliban, Qureshi appeared to share the US stance that it was premature to establish formal ties.

"I don't think anybody is in a rush to recognise at this stage and the Taliban should keep an eye on that," Qureshi said.

If the Taliban want recognition, 'they have to be more sensitive and more receptive to international opinion', he said.

Qureshi voiced hope that the



Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi speaks on the sidelines of the high-level 76th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, US on Monday (AFP)

I think freezing the assets is not helping the situation. I would strongly urge the powers that be that they should revisit that policy and think of an unfreeze. It will be a confidence-building measure as well and that could also incentivise positive behaviour

SHAH MAHMOOD QURESHI

Taliban would be more inclusive after forming a caretaker government that includes figures blacklisted by the United Nations on terrorism allegations.

But he said he saw 'positives' from the Taliban including a declaration of amnesty and a willingness to include ethnic groups other than the group's

Girls to return to school 'as soon as possible': Taliban

Kabul, Afghanistan - The Taliban said on Tuesday Afghan girls will be allowed to return to school 'as soon as possible', after their movement faced international fury over their effective exclusion of women and girls from education and work.

The hardliners' spokesman meanwhile announced the remaining members of Afghanistan's all-male government, weeks after the fighters seized Kabul in an offensive that shocked the world.

The Taliban were notorious for their brutal, oppressive rule from 1996 to 2001, when women were largely barred from work and school, including being banned from leaving their homes unless accompanied by a male relative.

One month after seizing power and pledging a softer version of their previous regime, the Islamists have in-

crementally stripped away at Afghans' freedoms.

"The work is continuing over the issues of education and work of women and girls," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said at a press conference, saying schools will reopen 'as soon as possible', without providing a timeframe.

"More time is needed... instructions on how to deal with their work, their services and their education are needed because the system has changed and an Islamic system is in place."

At the weekend, girls and female teachers were excluded from returning to secondary school, while boys and male teachers were ordered back to the classroom.

The Taliban have also slashed women's access to work, with officials previously telling them to stay at home for

their own security until segregation under the group's restrictive interpretation of sharia'a law can be implemented.

The group imposed a harsh interpretation of sharia'a law during their last rule and this time round have said progress in women's rights will be respected 'within the framework of Islamic law'.

Many women however are deeply suspicious about the Taliban's pledges.

"This happened last time. They kept saying they would allow us to return to work, but it never happened," a woman teacher told AFP on Monday.

No female ministers

New additions to the Taliban's government were also announced on Tuesday, with businessmen and engineers added to the line-up, as well as a doc-

tor appointed as Health Minister.

The Taliban had promised an inclusive administration, but no women were added on Tuesday, and it remains largely drawn from loyalist ranks.

A member of the Hazara community, which is majority Shiite and has long been persecuted by the Sunni Taliban - joined the Health Ministry as a deputy minister.

There was no mention in the press conference of the recently shut down women's affairs ministry, with its offices replaced with a department notorious for enforcing strict religious doctrine during the Taliban's last rule.

Women have been at the forefront of several small, scattered protests across the country demanding to be included in public life.

AFP

dominant Pashtuns.

"These are trends that must be encouraged," he said.

Activists and witnesses say on-the-ground reality is different than the Taliban's promises,

with women and girls already being excluded from employment and education even

without formal announcements by the fighters.

AFP

UK reveals contacts of 250 Afghan interpreters

London, UK - Britain's Defence Ministry has apologised after it accidentally revealed the email addresses of more than 250 Afghan interpreters seeking to move to the UK.

The error came as the UK acknowledged it had left behind hundreds of Afghans eligible for relocation in the rushed evacuation following the Taliban takeover.

The BBC reported that an email sent by a Defence Ministry team promising help with relocation mistakenly copied in the addresses of more than 250 people, so they were visible to all recipients. Many addresses also contained photographs.

The ministry reportedly sent another message 30 minutes later, advising the recipients to change their email addresses.

An interpreter told the broadcaster the mistake 'could cost the life of interpreters, especially for those who are still in Afghanistan'.

A Defence Ministry spokesperson said that an investigation had been launched into a 'data breach of information from the Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy team'. "We apologise to everyone impacted by this breach and are working hard to ensure it does not happen again," said the spokesperson.

The data breach prompted anger from Conservative MP and former veterans minister Johnny Mercer, who called it a 'criminally negligent performance'.

In August, *The Times* reported that it had found contact details of staff and job applicants left behind at the British Embassy compound in Kabul, potentially endangering them.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson earlier this month said 311 people were left behind who were eligible under the UK's Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, such as interpreters.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

US to end travel bans for vaccinated

Unprecedented restrictions had kept families separated for many months

Washington, US - The United States will lift travel bans on all air passengers in November if they are fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 and undergo testing and contact tracing before travel.

The unprecedented restrictions had kept relatives, friends and business travellers around the world separated for many months as the pandemic grinds on.

Jeffrey Zients, coronavirus response coordinator for President Joe Biden, told reporters the new 'consistent approach' would take effect 'early November'.

The easing of travel restrictions, imposed by Donald Trump 18 months ago as the COVID-19 pandemic first erupted, marks a significant shift by Biden and answers a major demand from European allies at a time of strained diplomatic relations.

Numerous safeguards will remain in place to suppress spread of the virus, which has already killed more than 675,000 Americans and is resurgent after what many had hoped was a lasting dip earlier this year.

"Most importantly, foreign nationals flying to the US will be required to be fully vaccinated," Zients said.

It was not immediately clear if the new rule only applied to US-approved vaccines or if other brands, such as those produced in China or Russia, would also qualify. Zients said that would be determined by the US Centers for Disease Control.

Restrictions on vehicle movement from Canada and Mexico will remain in place.

Zients said passengers will need to show they were fully vaccinated before boarding planes bound for the United States, as well as providing proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within three days.

Americans not fully vaccinated will still be able to enter, but only on testing negative within a day of travel.

Masks will be obligatory on



Travellers exit from the Miami International Airport, through the 'international arrivals' door, in Miami, Florida, on Monday (AFP)

We haven't seen our daughter for 18 or 19 months. That has been very, very, very difficult for us... As a family we're going to be together for Thanksgiving, which is amazing

PHIL WHITE

US-bound flights, and airlines will provide the US health authorities with contact tracing information.

"This new international travel system follows the science to keep Americans' international air travel safe," Zients said.

'Great news'

The change means many families and friends can be reunited, sometimes after nearly two years apart.

Phil White, a British entrepreneur living near San Francisco, told AFP his daughter plans to finally visit from London in November.

"As a family we're going to be together for Thanksgiving, which

is amazing," he said, adding that he had not seen his daughter for 18 or 19 months.

"That has been very, very, very difficult for us, as everyone can imagine," White said.

And British and German officials quickly welcomed the lifting of the near total ban.

The German Ambassador to the United States called it 'great news'. 'Hugely important to promote people-to-people contacts and transatlantic business,' Ambassador Emily Haber tweeted.

The announcement was also hailed by airlines, which have taken a huge hit during the pandemic shutdown.

The trade group Airlines For Europe predicted 'a much-

needed boost to trans-Atlantic traffic & tourism and will reunite families and friends'.

While it had been widely expected that Biden would reopen borders to the European Union and Britain, the announcement covers the globe.

"This applies to all international travel," Zients said.

Currently only US citizens, residents and foreigners with special visas are allowed to enter the United States from most European countries.

In an interview in Washington with AFP, Thierry Breton, European commissioner for internal market, said he was hopeful the policy will be extended to include the AstraZeneca shot used by many European nations, which has not been approved by US health authorities.

Breton said he spoke with Zients, who 'sounded positive and optimistic'.

The restriction has deeply irked EU and British authorities.

On Monday, the European Union recommended that member states reimpose restrictions on American travellers who had earlier been free to enter if vaccinated.

Breton said the restrictions 'no longer made any sense', given Europe's high vaccination rates.

Biden's move comes on the eve of his speech to the annual UN General Assembly in New York, where the pandemic is due to be the headline issue.

It also comes as Washington and Paris spar bitterly over Australia's sudden announcement that it will acquire US-built nuclear submarines as part of a new defence alliance, ditching a previous French contract for conventionally powered submarines.

"This is really driven by the science," a State Department official said, denying the travel decision was an attempt to smooth ruffled French feathers.

AFP



Women walk through a field of over 600,000 white flags to symbolise the lives lost to COVID-19 in the US, in Washington, DC (AFP)

More Americans lost to COVID-19 than 1918 flu

Washington, US - Despite a century of medical advances, more Americans have now died from COVID-19 than the number who succumbed to the 1918 flu pandemic, according to new data.

The latest grim milestone comes as the country is experiencing a fourth-wave driven by the highly contagious Delta variant, with low vaccination uptake in many regions the main cause of death.

Johns Hopkins University tracker showed 675,722 US coronavirus deaths as of Friday, which surpasses the 675,000 US deaths during the influenza outbreak that began in the last year of World War I.

All told, some 50mn died worldwide in the flu pandemic - sometimes inaccurately referred to as the 'Spanish flu' - making it the deadliest event in human history, according to epidemiologists.

That far exceeds global COVID-19 deaths so far - around 4.7mn.

But the United States has borne a disproportionate 14 per cent of those fatalities, despite making up only five per cent of the world's population.

The American population in 1918 was less than a third of what it is now, meaning the flu deaths would be equivalent to some 2.2mn in today's terms.

Unlike today's influenzas, which impact children and the

elderly the most, the 1918 flu caused unusually high mortality among young adults.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with no vaccines and no antibiotics for secondary bacterial complications, control efforts were limited in the 1918-19 to non-pharmaceutical measures.

These included 'isolation, quarantine, good personal hygiene, use of disinfectants, and limitations of public gatherings', it said.

Many of the same measures, including face masks, were recommended when the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Now, however, there are also multiple safe and highly effective vaccines that were developed and tested in record-time - but 24 per cent of US adults, or almost 60mn, haven't yet gotten their first dose.

Uptake has been hit by a polarized political climate and what experts call an epistemological crisis, with misinformation supercharging vaccine hesitancy to historically new heights.

Beyond vaccines, effective treatments have been developed such as monoclonal antibodies, corticosteroids to dial down hyperactive immune responses in patients with severe COVID-19 infections, and advanced ventilators.

AFP

India warns of compulsory quarantine for Brits in travel spat

New Delhi, India - New Delhi on Tuesday warned the UK that its citizens would face reciprocal measures over London's new 'discriminatory' COVID-19 rules requiring travellers from India to quarantine even if they are fully vaccinated.

England and Scotland will ease pandemic restrictions from early October, but the list of countries with approved vaccines does not include India, despite the country using a locally made version of the AstraZeneca vaccine created in Britain.

"The basic issue is that, here's a vaccine - Covishield - which is a licensed product of a UK company manufactured in India of which we have supplied five million doses to the UK at the request of the government," Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla told reporters in New Delhi.

Calling the non-recognition of Covishield 'a discrimi-

The non-recognition of Covishield - a licensed product of a UK company - is a discriminatory policy

HARSH VARDHAN SHRINGLA

natory policy', he said that negotiations were underway with Britain over the new requirements. "But if we don't get satisfaction we would be within our rights to impose reciprocal measures."

India is a major supplier of Covishield globally via the Serum Institute, the world's biggest vaccine maker.

The government plans to resume exporting COVID-19 vaccines to fulfil its commitment to the Covax programme for poorer countries from October.

AFP

Melbourne police disperse violent anti-jab protest

Melbourne, Australia - Melbourne riot police used pepper spray, foam baton rounds and rubber ball grenades to disperse a violent protest against mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for construction workers on Tuesday.

More than 1,000 demonstrators wearing work boots and hi-vis jackets rampaged through the centre of Australia's second-largest city, lighting flares, throwing bottles, attacking police cars and chanting their opposition to vaccines and lockdown restrictions.

Melbourne has been in strict lockdown for seven weeks, as the city struggles to curb an outbreak of the fast-spreading Delta variant.

Several clusters have been linked to construction sites, where COVID-19 containment measures are said to be lax.

In response, authorities have introduced ever-tougher restrictions, closing work site tea rooms, announcing mandatory vaccination for labourers and, most recently, closing almost all construction sites for two weeks.

For hours protesters opposing the measures confronted police, ignoring loudspeaker calls to leave and a final caution that 'no further warnings will be given'.

Victoria state chief police



A stinger grenade hurled at demonstrators during a protest against regulations in Melbourne on Tuesday (AFP)

commissioner Shane Patton said about 500 officers were responding to the 'challenging' situation and had deployed pepper spray, foam baton rounds and rubber ball grenades.

"These crowd control equipment munitions were necessary, and they are necessary, because we can't allow this type of conduct to go on," he said.

"We will stop this protest. And we will then step back and investigate and hold those to account who need to be held to account."

At least three police officers

had sustained injuries while more than 40 people had been arrested, Patton added.

Brandishing 'Trump' banners and chanting 'you serve us', protesters briefly occupied a bridge on one of the city's main thoroughfares and sang a popular 1990s power rock ballad.

A number of journalists were assaulted, including one television reporter who was hit on the head with a can live on air, shortly after another incident in which he was doused with urine.

Union leaders denounced the protests, saying the issue had

been hijacked by anti-vaccine activists and what former Australian Labor Party leader Bill Shorten called 'man-baby Nazis'.

On social media forums that regularly feature anti-vaccine conspiracies, followers were urged to attend, 'bring friends' and 'wear work gear'.

Building tension

This was the second such protest in as many days.

On Monday, more than 100 construction workers in high-visibility vests brawled and smashed union office windows

in the centre of Melbourne.

That prompted the authorities to announce the temporary closure of construction sites, leaving tens of thousands of people out of work.

"We've been clear: If you don't follow the rules, we won't hesitate to take action," said state minister for industrial relations Tim Pallas, announcing the shutdown.

"We put the industry on notice just a week ago, we have seen appalling behaviour on site and on our streets, and now we're acting decisively and without hesitation," he said.

Local construction union boss John Setka denounced the protesters, whom he said were hurting the entire workforce.

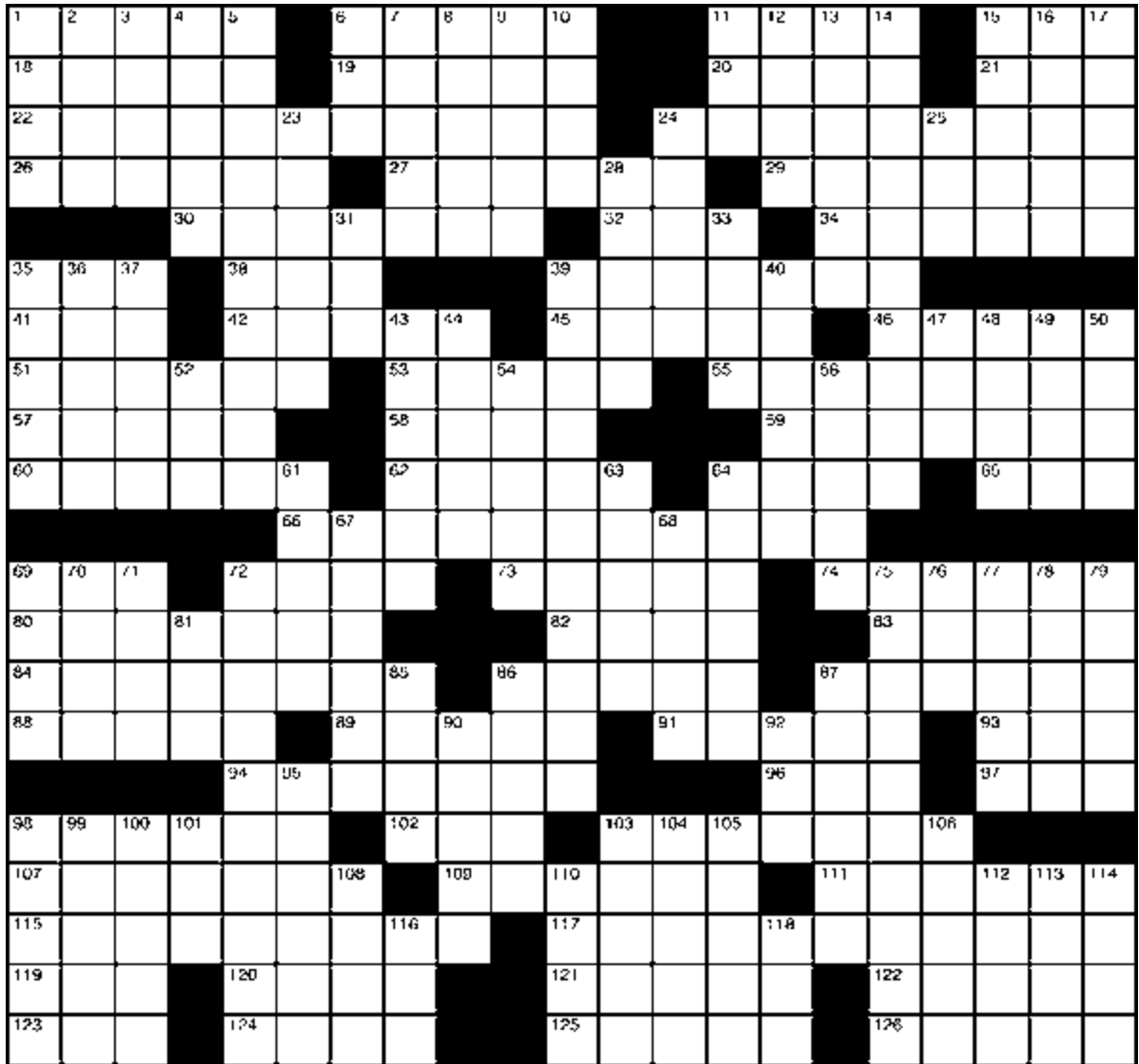
"Those drunken fascist un-Australian morons are the reason construction workers will be sitting at home and not getting paid for the next two weeks," he said.

The state of Victoria recorded 603 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours.

Australia's two largest cities, Melbourne and Sydney, are currently in lockdown, as they race to vaccinate 80 per cent of the population. That target would trigger gradual reopening, but remains at least a month away for most areas.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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- ACROSS**

1 "Never ___ money spent": Frost

6 Turkish bigwig

11 Its capital is Lima

15 RR stop

18 Large, grassy plain

19 English horse race

20 Harness part

21 Cheerleader's word

22 High point in a theater

24 Cliffhanger

26 Willowy

27 Madden

29 Ocean liner

30 Opted

32 Height: abbr.

34 Given name of

45 Across

35 Pvt.'s boss

38 Pledge words

39 Frowns angrily

41 Card game

42 Depressed state

45 French philosopher

Ernest

46 Swarms

51 "Cocoon" actor Don

53 Gets out of bed

55 Chess game variation

57 Computer fix

58 California county

59 Sign a check

60 Evaluate

62 Pennsylvania sect

64 Unrestrained revelry

65 Hot time, in Paris

66 Popular stage star

69 Dear ____:

72 ___ la France!

73 Room

74 Arctic and Antarctic ____

80 Teach

82 Flatboats

83 Custom

84 Saviors

86 Tiny insects

87 Turn around

88 Overripe

89 Smooth, glossy fabric

91 More rational

93 Stitch

94 Graceful and refined

96 Wildebeest

97 Time periods: abbr.

98 Yuca

102 Chimpanzee

103 Leanest

107 "Sweet ____"

109 Pressed

111 Conceited person

115 Actor with a walk-on part

117 Backdrop creator

119 Gehrig or Reed

120 Fibs

121 Ducks

122 Street show

123 Intuition: abbr.

124 Existence

125 Writer Gardner's namesakes

126 Suspicious

DOWN

1 Priest's robes

2 Eastern European

3 Variety of cabbage

4 French relative

5 Stage illumination

6 Reimburse

7 Valuable possession

8 Subdivision of a play

9 Accumulate

10 "___ boy!"

11 Prefix for earlier

12 Lampreys

13 Disturber of the peace

14 Leading lady's standby

15 Disgrace

16 Big Apple Square

17 Not together

23 Seamstress' utensil

24 Cantaloupe, e.g.

25 Cantered

28 Strong winds

31 Murmur amorously

33 Christmas tale opener

35 "It" girl ___ Bow

36 Apples, pears, et al.

37 Fine-grained clay

39 Dressing room requisite

40 Comb. form for intestine

43 Showily decorated

44 Winter resort center

47 Wine

48 To be, to Blanche

49 Majority

50 Snick-or-___

52 Dee preceder

54 Gyrate

56 ___-Saxon

61 Hit, Biblical style

63 Core

64 Russian or Texan city

67 Unwilling

68 FDR Cabinet member

69 Medieval slave

70 ___ fixe

71 Corrode

72 Stage variety show

75 Musical comedy essential

76 Snack

77 Disconcert

78 Saltpeter

79 Seethes

81 Roman 201

85 Long narrative

86 Underground worker

87 Certain French girls

90 Tropical hoglike animal

92 Athenians' language: abbr.

95 Hawaiian verandas

98 Telegraph

99 Goodbye, to Fernando

100 Erect

101 High peak

103 Malevolent look

104 Flower part

105 Confuse

106 Roman robes

108 Scans

110 Prefix indicating bone

112 Concerning

113 Prophet

114 Low card

116 Compass dir.

118 Road curve

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You have another day to do exactly what you know you were born to do: Mingle. By late this evening, you'll be ready for at least a day off from socialising -- and you'll have it. The stars make sure you get a nice break from the spotlight. Even when it comes to a sign as fiery, outgoing and personable as yourself, it's easy to see how home might be the only place you'll really want to be now.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You've spent a good part of the past couple days staring intently into the mirror, wondering if there might not be something tattooed on your forehead that's visible only to shiftless types. For some reason, individuals of that kind seem to be gravitating toward you with sad stories, pleas for redemption and promises to do better next time.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Those who know and love you are never surprised at what tumbles from between your lips. So when you begin spouting off even a bit more bluntly than usual over the next couple of days -- which is really saying something, for you -- if you're with the usual suspects, no one will blink an eyelash. But if you're with folks who aren't used to your rather frank and direct style?

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

There's absolutely nothing like the company of kindred spirits, as you well know. Thanks to the heavens playing up your earthy, permanence-loving side and your house of friendships, you'll be reminded of that now, via an insatiable urge to connect with like-minded others. You're after something that you instinctively know you can only get from them: Camaraderie.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

After one last day of teasing you with lingering glances that last just a tad too long to be socially acceptable, late this evening a certain person will finally be ready to say what's on their mind. If you're unattached and interested, stare back. (Heck, even if you're attached, go ahead and enjoy their admiration.) In fact, stare back for even longer than they do. Think of it as a contest.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Your financial situation seems to be a bit shaky at the moment -- or is it only that you're worried about it because you've been pleasantly distracted by more tender matters? Regardless of how or why it's happened, return your attention to numbers, just for a bit. If the emotional situation is for real, it won't go anywhere -- and definitely not in the time it takes to balance the chequebook.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

The urge to take yourself somewhere you've never been before will be strong, especially if you've got an equally spontaneous travel companion handy. It may not be a holiday, but you can always play hooky for a day and explore a little town a few miles away from you. Spend the evening immersed in a pile of brochures and maps -- with your cohort, of course.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Right now you're amply endowed with sensuality, charisma and an absolutely illegal amount of allure. This is not a surprise to anyone who knows you. Thanks to the stars, you're doubly lethal at the moment -- and you really should be careful where you aim this stuff. You know how potent your charm is. Now double that by a hundred -- or a thousand.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

That old expression about 'wearing your heart on your sleeve'? You'll be living proof of it for at least one more day. You're not ordinarily the type to spout off and you don't enjoy it when it happens. It's tough for you to navigate this type of thing, but for now, why not indulge yourself? Invest in a box of Kleenex. If you really want to go deep, play some Billie Holiday.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

The stars are urging one and all to rebel, revolt, mutiny and at the very least, question authority. You, however, are especially susceptible to this influence right about now. So, about that well-deserved reputation you've acquired for being considerate and cooperative? Let's just say it might temporarily be in danger. That doesn't mean you should shut down.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It's all about strong feelings coupled with an erratic, unpredictable energy right now. You're usually the very soul of devotion and commitment, and you love your routines more than just about anyone. But now, for some darned reason, you can't even force yourself to do anything the way you did it yesterday -- or for the past ten months. Or even years.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Somewhere between late this afternoon and early this evening, you'll need to make a decision: Whether to let a secret finally see the light of day, or keep it under wraps. Use that famous intuition of yours to make your decision. Remember to consider the future of all parties concerned. Don't feel guilty if your ultimate decision is to open up and let the truth be told.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Who is the English physicist responsible for the 'Big Bang Theory'?

a. Albert Einstein

b. Michael Skube

c. George Gamow

d. Roger Penrose

2. What 'game' was first produced by the Southern Novelty Company in Baltimore, Maryland in 1892?

a. Frisbee

b. Monopoly

c. Ouija board

d. Ping Pong

3. Who had an explosive idea and first patented dynamite?

a. J R Gluber

b. A Nobel

c. G Fawks

d. W Bickford

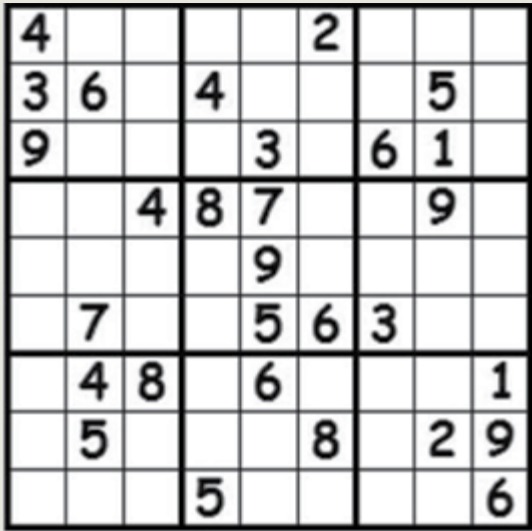
Answers: 1. c 2. b 3. d

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



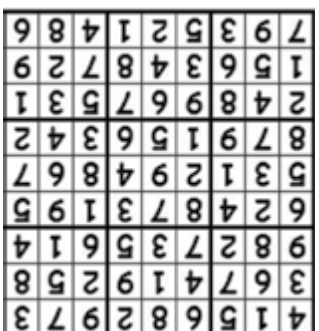
BOGGLER



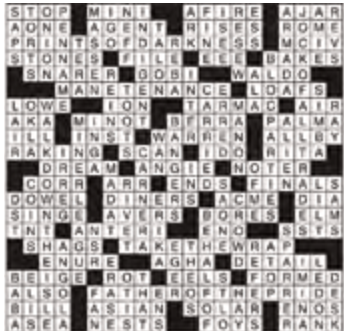
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (SEPTEMBER 21)



WORD BUILDER

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

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



APPETISERS

Tikka Textures

Tikka invariably refers to chunks of seasoned boneless chicken, coated with a spicy yoghurt based marinade, strung on bamboo or iron skewers and cooked in a tandoor (clay oven) or grilled over a charcoal furnace. However, with the introduction of other ingredients like fish, paneer (cottage cheese) and vegetables to this form of dry cooking, this appetiser is now specifically known as 'Chicken Tikka'. The other forms like Fish Tikka and Paneer Tikka have brought in new textures to this popular north Indian dish which is consumed as a snack or a side-dish and served with green chutney,

onion rings and lemon wedges. While Chicken Tikka has its own inimitable aroma and magic to every bite, Fish Tikka (commonly made with kingfish, hamour or white fish) has a softer texture and a fishy odour. On the other hand, Paneer Tikka (the popular preference of vegetarians) has a more firm texture, and in this case, the marinade plays a key role in making it appealing to the tastebuds as paneer doesn't have a striking flavour or aroma. The ingredients used for each of these tikkas are somewhat the same, but surprisingly, the main ingredient in each gives each of them their own identity and fan following. Try these three recipes on different days (together there will be a fight for supremacy):

PANEER TIKKA

Ingredients

- 1 cup cubed onion, capsicum, and firm tomato
- 10-12 firm cubes of slices of paneer
- 3tbsp hung curd
- 1tsp red chilli powder
- ¼tsp turmeric powder
- ½tsp garam masala
- ½tsp chat masala
- 1tsp lemon juice
- 1tsp ginger-garlic paste
- Salt, to taste

2-3tsp oil

Method

Soak paneer cubes/sliced in hot water for 30 minutes, drain the water, squeeze the paneer and set aside. Chop capsicum, onion, and tomato into large chunks, large enough to be mounted onto skewers without tearing. Now, mix the ingredients for the marinade and add the paneer, onion, capsicum, and tomato. Refriger-

ate for at least an hour. Then, mount them alternatively onto bamboo skewers and grill in an oven or over a charcoal furnace, turning sides in between, so that all sides cook evenly - 2-3 minutes each side. Remove when the corners get charred and the marinade coating on the paneer pieces dries up. Serve with skewers or onto a plate with green chutney and onion rings/lemon wedges.



CHICKEN TIKKA

Ingredients

- 500g skinless, boneless chicken breasts - cut to chunks
- 60g yogurt
- 1tbsp mustard oil
- 1tsp salt
- 1tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- ½ lemon juice
- 2tsp Kashmiri red chilli powder
- ½tsp turmeric powder
- 1tsp coriander powder
- ½tsp cumin powder
- ½ tsp garam masala
- ½tsp dried mango powder
- 1tsp kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves)

A pinch of red food colour (optional)

Method

Cut the chicken breast into 3-4cm chunks and marinate with salt, ginger garlic paste, 1tsp kashmiri red chilli powder and the juice of half a lime. Marinate for 30 minutes. Now, make a second marinade. Hang curds in a cloth to get rid of some of the water. In a bowl, heat the mustard oil for 30 seconds in the micro and mix with the remaining kashmiri chilli powder to bring out the red colour. Then add the

hung curds and remaining spices, including the kasuri methi. Add the chicken into this marinade and let it sit for an hour. Thread the chunks on skewers, spray with oil and cook in batches either on a grill or on a hot plate with a drizzle of oil. Don't crowd the pan, even if there is much space as the chicken chunks will release more liquid and the toasting effect will be lost. (Ideally, chicken tikka should be done in a tandoor or over a charcoal furnace). Serve hot with onion rings and green chutney

FISH TIKKA

Ingredients

- 400g fish fillet (kingfish/hamour) - cut to chunks
- 1 cup thick yogurt
- 4tbsp oil
- 1tbsp onion paste
- 1tbsp ginger paste
- 1tbsp garlic paste
- 4tbsp lemon juice
- ½tsp turmeric
- 1tsp coriander powder
- 1tsp cumin powder
- ¼tsp nutmeg powder
- 1tbsp red chilli powder

Salt, to taste

Fresh coriander for garnish

Method

In a large bowl, whisk all the marinade ingredients (except oil), add the fish chunks and coat them well. Cover and refrigerate for at least an hour. Mount on skewers, drizzle with oil and cook over a charcoal furnace or on an oven grill at 180° C until tender and slightly charred at the corners. Serve hot with green chutney.



Usyk jumping in at the deep end, says Joshua

BOXING
London, UK - British world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua praised Oleksandr Usyk for being bold in challenging him for his belts after just two bouts at the weight.

Joshua is set to face World Boxing Organisation (WBO) mandatory challenger Usyk in London on Saturday, with a crowd of some 60,000 expected at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, the home of the English Premier League club.

Joshua, whose World Boxing Association (WBA) and International Boxing Federation (IBF) titles are also on the line, compared Usyk's lack of experience to boxing legend Evander Holyfield's before tackling a heavyweight championship fight.

You have to have the mental capacity to do what you do... I'm here to win

ANTHONY JOSHUA



Britain's Anthony Joshua (AFP)



Oleksandr Usyk

Usyk - who moved up to heavyweight in 2018 after being undisputed cruiserweight world champion - beat Chazz Witherspoon in 2019 before easing to a points win last November over veteran Derek Chisora.

"When (Evander) Holyfield came up to heavyweight I think he had six fights at heavyweight before he fought for the championship belt," said Joshua.

"Usyk's fought two heavyweights. He's jumping in at the deep end early on.

"But good luck to him - he must believe in himself. He wants to be at the top end early. It's better to swim deep - get in there and get on with it - rather than tread water.

"You could still end up drowning anyway. You could still get caught in a current and drown. You might as well jump in the deep end and try to survive."

Joshua, at 31 three years

younger than his fellow 2012 Olympic champion, is likely to weigh in on Friday a stone heavier than Usyk. "I've been doing a lot of sparring to be honest, which is also physical: pushing,

shoving, defending," said Joshua.

"I've been doing heavy bag work so maybe I'm just shedding a lot of the weight."

Joshua needs to beat Usyk to keep alive the bout that most boxing fans want to see above all else - the all-British clash with fellow world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury.

That is also dependent on World Boxing Council (WBC) champion Fury successfully coming through a third bout with American Deontay Wilder in October. However, although Joshua will be favoured to see off Usyk he says the bout will not be won on who is physically more impressive but who wins the battle of the minds.

"Advantages physically is one thing but it doesn't make the world's tallest man the

heavyweight champion of the world," said Joshua.

"You have to have the mental capacity to do what you do. He's coming to the ring confident, and so am I. This is heavyweight boxing and I'm the heavyweight champion of the world. I don't play games. I'm here to win."

'Dream bout will happen'

Joshua said the mouthwatering heavyweight bout with Fury will happen preferably in Britain before he hangs up his gloves.

Between them, the two boxers currently hold all the major versions of the heavyweight world title.

Talks of a unification 'superfight', which went on for months, appeared to be on the brink of ending in an agreement earlier this year only for a United States arbitrator to rule Fury had to fight Deontay Wilder for a third time.

As a result Fury, having previously drawn with and then stopped Wilder, is set to make the maiden defence of his World Boxing Council (WBC) belt against the American in Las Vegas next month. "It will happen," the 31-year-old Joshua told the *Daily Mail*.

"I know what people are saying about boxing politics, but I'll promise before the end of my career I will have done everything in my power to fight Tyson Fury. "We saw it with Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao (not fighting until they were beyond their primes) but that was a superstar fight.

"Me and Fury is streets, two warriors, two fighters who have come from the amateur system in the UK, and have taken the world by storm. We'll get it on in Britain."

"This is a British UK fight which can happen at Wembley, Tottenham, the O2, York Hall."

AFP



A file photo of a Test between All Blacks and Springboks

All Blacks brace for 'bully' Boks in historic clash

RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP

Brisbane, Australia - The All Blacks must prepare to face South Africa's 'bully mentality' in Saturday's historic 100th Test between the fierce rivals, assistant coach John Plumtree said.

Plumtree said the Springboks' game had evolved since they won the 2019 World Cup and he was unsure what approach Jacques Nienaber's men would take in the Rugby Championship fifth-round fixture in Townsville.

Plumtree's New Zealand are undefeated in the Rugby Championship, leading the standings by ten points, and can wrap up the tournament with a win.

Plumtree, who has coached extensively in South Africa, said the Springboks had used a skills-based approach to become world champions before reverting to the physicality they are renowned for. "It's probably more of a bully mentality around contestable kicks, really aggressive defence and forward play, scrummaging, mauling, which suits their DNA," he said.

"We've seen them play some pretty good footy at the World Cup and against the (British and Irish) Lions as well. They can play, they've got some outstanding backs. So you can't trust them, you don't know what's going to happen on the day, so we've got



John Plumtree

to be prepared for everything."

Whatever the South African game plan, Plumtree said the All Blacks could expect a fierce contest from a side smarting over back-to-back losses to Australia.

"For the forwards, particularly, this is going to be the toughest-fought battle since I've been involved (in 2019)," he said. "All the boys know that. Everything we do has to have more power, more speed. We've got to play the game at a high tempo, we can't fall into the trap of allowing the game to slow down."

Plumtree played down the significance of the 100th Test meeting, saying the coaching group had not discussed it with the players. "A milestone like that doesn't help, we'll just knuckle down and get the preparation done," he said.

AFP

Vunipolas, Ford among five senior players dropped from England side

RUGBY UNION

London, UK - England coach Eddie Jones axed five senior players, including the Vunipola brothers and occasional captain George Ford, from his first England squad of the autumn on Tuesday.

Jamie George and Elliot Daly are also missing from the 45-man training group that will gather in London for a three-day camp on Sunday.

Billy Vunipola and Ford were given the summer off rather than playing in the July Tests against the United States and

Canada. Mako Vunipola, Daly and George were involved in the recent British and Irish Lions tour to South Africa yet failed to win places in the squad that will begin preparations for matches against Tonga, Australia and South Africa in November.

Two years out from the World Cup, Jones' selection could represent a changing of the guard after a disappointing year.

England finished second bottom of the Six Nations, losing to Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

"We have left out some experienced players but we're really clear that the door isn't closed to them and we're looking forward to seeing them work hard to get back into contention," said Jones.

"We have five campaigns now until the 2023 World Cup so each one counts, and this is a chance for this 45 to impress the new coaching staff."

Nine of the 16 new caps awarded against the USA and Canada retain their place, including Marcus Smith, whose starring role in Harlequins' Premiership triumph in June earned him a late call-up to the Lions tour.

There are also eight uncapped players with Mark Atkinson, Jack Kenningham, Louis Lynagh, Gabriel Oghre, Raffi Quirke, Sam Riley, Bevan Rodd and Ollie Sleightholme hoping to make their England debut.

"This is an exciting squad made up of experienced players and young guys who did well in the summer and have earned their place again," Jones added.

AFP



A file photo of England's rugby player Billy Vunipola during a training session (AFP)

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP



Inter Miami coach Phil Neville (AFP)

Neville impressed with Beckham’s son debut in MLS

Miami, US - Inter Miami coach Phil Neville believes David Beckham’s son Romeo has the potential to forge a career in professional football following his debut in Florida.

Romeo Beckham played in his first professional game on Sunday after starting for Inter Miami’s sister team Fort Lauderdale CF. The 19-year-old played 79 minutes in a 2-2 draw with South Georgia Tormenta FC and impressed Inter Miami boss Neville despite having only 19 touches in the match.

"I thought he did really well," said Neville on Monday. "I think the measure of his performance was that he was only planned to play 45 minutes, and he played nearly 80 minutes because he is a boy that is hungry."

"He has got a lot of pressure and expectations on his shoulders, but what he has got is he has got his feet firmly on the ground. He knows he has got a lot of development to do, and he has got all the right attributes, character, determination, good person, to have a really good opportunity of making it in professional football."

Romeo joined Fort Lauderdale CF’s roster earlier this month in a low-key move that was made



Romeo (L) and David Beckham

without an official announcement. He had been training with the team and occasionally Inter Miami prior to that.

Neville said that former Manchester United and England team-mate David Beckham had instructed him to take a tough line on his son. "The first thing that David said to me was, 'You have got to be harder on him than anyone else,'" said Neville.

"He has got to work harder than anyone else to get into that team because there will be questions, there will be expectations on his shoulders."

Neville’s own son Harvey has also played for Fort Lauderdale this season, making 15 appearances. "He knows when he is in this football club he is no different than any other player, and it is the same with Romeo," Neville said.

AFF

BARCA SURVIVE GRANADA SCARE



Barcelona’s Ronald Araujo (R) celebrates after scoring against Granada at the Camp Nou stadium on Monday

SPANISH LEAGUE

Madrid, Spain - Ronald Koeman defended his direct tactics after being accused of betraying Barcelona’s attacking traditions in a 1-1 draw at home to Granada on Monday.

Koeman brought Gerard Pique off the bench at Camp Nou to play up front alongside Luuk de Jong, with Ronald Araujo, another central defender, also thrown into the attack as Barca sent in 54 crosses in search of an equaliser.

Araujo finally headed home in injury-time after Domingos Duarte had given Granada an early lead but the whistles at the end from the Barcelona fans indicated a point was not nearly enough.

"We changed our style a little bit," Koeman said. "The spaces were out wide, not in the middle. We went with Pique, De Jong and Araujo and from one of those crosses we got the draw."

Koeman’s position was already fragile after last week’s 3-0 drubbing at home to Bayern Munich in the Champions League, a game in which his team failed to muster a single shot on target. After the latest disappointment against Granada, it was put to him that supporters were even angrier about Barcelona’s style than the result.

"If you see the list of players, what do you do? Play tiki-tiki? Tiki-taki when there are no spaces?" said Koeman.

"We did what we had to do. We tried to win another way. We don’t have players one-on-one or with speed. We’re talking... I’m

not going to say more because it seems I have to argue about everything."

Koeman ‘calm’

Koeman insisted on Sunday he was ‘calm’ and not fearing for his future as Barcelona coach but an already-strained relationship with club president Joan Laporta will be pushed to breaking point if results, and performances, do not improve.

There were 85 seconds on the clock when Domingos Duarte headed Granada in front.

Sergio Escudero was quickest to his cleared corner and he beat Sergio Busquets twice, once to the ball and then again to the line where he fed Duarte, who nipped in front of Frenkie de Jong at the back post.

Barca tried to exert some control but they never really stretched Granada, who could have doubled their lead when Jorge Molina volleyed over a cross from the lively Darwin Machis.

As Barcelona grew more desperate, they became more predictable too, as more and more crosses were slung into the box in the hope someone might capitalise. De Jong should have scored with 11 minutes left but headed over from five yards.

Araujo was booked after a skirmish with Granada’s defenders and then, with the adrenaline still pumping, he grabbed an equaliser for Barca, keeping the ball alive in the box and then dashing forward to meet Gavi’s chipped ball in.

AFF

Napoli continue perfect start at Udinese to go top



Napoli players celebrate after a goal against Udinese on Monday

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Milan, Italy - Napoli moved top of Serie A on Monday thanks to a 4-0 stroll at Udinese which made sure they maintained their 100 per cent start to the season.

Goals from Victor Osimhen, Amir Rahmani, Kalidou Koulibaly and Hirving Lozano earned Luciano Spalletti’s side an impressive win at the Dacia Arena which gives them a perfect 12 points from four games, two points ahead of Inter Milan and AC Milan, who sit

second and third respectively.

Roma are a further point back alongside Fiorentina as Napoli remain the only team to win all of their matches so far this term in Italy’s top flight.

Udinese lost for the first time this season sit seventh, level on seven points with Lazio, Atalanta and Bologna as Napoli gave off early signs of being title contenders.

Osimhen followed up on his dramatic brace in Thursday’s 2-2 Europa League draw at

Kuntz feels at home as he signs Turkey deal

Istanbul, Turkey - Stefan Kuntz feels like he is ‘coming home’ after signing a three-year contract as Turkey’s national coach with the aim to guide them to their first World Cup finals in 20 years.

The 58-year-old former German international striker scored nine goals playing for Istanbul-based side Besiktas in 1995/96.

Kuntz, who has established his coaching reputation on the back of coaching Germany to two European U21 titles (2017/21), looked back on those days with longing while formally signing his contract to replace Senol Gunes as Turkey’s new head coach.

"It’s like coming home. It was an unbelievable one year in Besiktas," Kuntz told reporters at the signing ceremony in Istanbul.

"My wife even still tells me we made a mistake, that we left Turkey too early."

No financial terms of the deal were disclosed. The football federation decided to part ways with Gunes after Turkey got thumped



Turkey’s new coach Stefan Kuntz

by the Netherlands 6-1 in a 2022 World Cup qualifier earlier this month - one of the worst losses in their history.

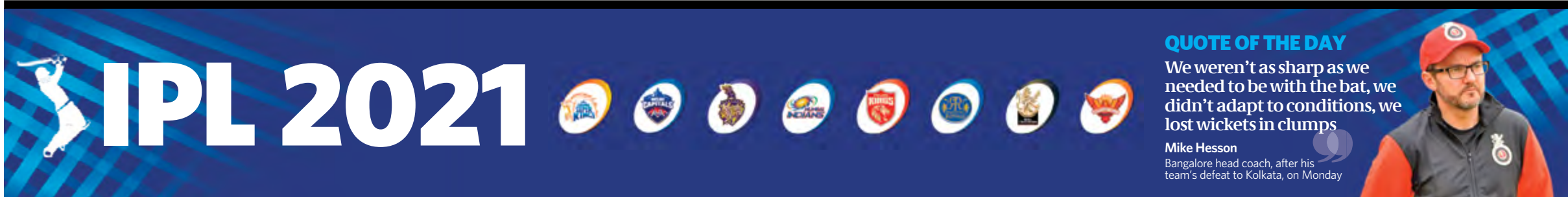
Turkey are sitting third behind the Netherlands and Norway in World Cup qualifying Group F.

This leaves them in danger of failing to qualify for a fifth successive World Cup finals. Their last appearance in 2002 saw them stun pundits by storming into the semifinals and ultimately finish in third place.

"Hopefully, we can play once again in a World Cup finals after 20 years," said Turkish Football Federation chief Nihat Ozdemir.

AFF

Every day, all day!



LAST-OVER THRILLER



Rajasthan Royals' Kartik Tyagi (L) celebrates the victory of his team after he defended four runs in the final over

Rajasthan's Tyagi concedes just one run in final over to stun Punjab

RAJASTHAN VS PUNJAB

Dubai, UAE - A banner statistical day for Punjab Kings that included KL Rahul passing 3,000 runs in the IPL, 2,000 runs in the league for Mayank Agarwal, and a maiden IPL five-for from left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh became completely spoiled in the final moments of play as they tripped spectacularly at the final hurdle, losing by two runs despite having six wickets in hand chasing a target of 186 against Rajasthan Royals in Dubai on Tuesday.

Rahul was dropped three times during a sloppy fielding display by Royals that allowed him to reach 49 in the end as part of a century stand with Agarwal.

But Royals were able to overcome that due to the brilliance of Mustafizur Rahman and Kartik Tyagi.

With eight runs needed off 12 balls and eight wickets in hand, Rahman conceded just four singles off the penultimate over.

The odds were still overwhelmingly in favour of Kings entering the final over with the well-set pair of Aiden Markram and Nicholas Pooran at the crease on 25 and 32

respectively in the midst of a half-century partnership.

But after a single by Markram, Pooran's attempted steer with an open face to third man instead found the gloves of Sanju Samson behind the stumps.

Markram was then starved of the strike for the rest of the over as Deepak Hooda and then Fabian Allen could not get away Tyagi's wide yorkers, capping a scoreless final four deliveries and a stunning heist by Tyagi and the Royals.

Speaking at the post-match presentation, Royals' captain Sanju Samson said, "Somewhere we had that fight left. We knew we had some special bowlers.

"We kept Mustafizur's overs for the end. Tyagi was confident with his yorkers, especially wide yorkers. He executed them well against the new batters."

The wicketkeeper-batsman added, "We had top fielding plans for every batter, we have planned till the last batter. We were happy with our score, on this wicket that was a good score. We are a better bowling/fielding team too.

"We could've won the game early if there weren't drops early on."

A disappointed Kings' captain

SCOREBOARD

RAJASTHAN ROYALS

E Lewis	c Agarwal b Arshdeep Singh	36 (21)
Y Jaiswal	c Agarwal b Brar	49 (36)
S Samson	c Rahul b Porel	4 (5)
L Livingstone	c Allen b Arshdeep	25 (17)
M Lomror	c Markram b Arshdeep	43 (17)
R Parag	c Markram b Shami	4 (5)
R Tewatia	b Shami	2 (5)
C Morris	c Markram b Shami	5 (5)
C Sakariya	c & b Arshdeep	7 (4)
K Tyagi	b Arshdeep	1 (3)
M Rahman	not out	0 (0)
Extras	(lb 4, w 5)	9

TOTAL: 185 in 20 overs

Fall of wickets: 1-54, 2-68, 3-116, 4-136, 5-166, 6-169, 7-175, 8-178, 9-185, 10-185
Bowling: M Shami 4-0-21-3, I Porel 4-0-39-1, Arshdeep Singh 4-0-32-5, H Brar 3-0-17-1, A Rashid 3-0-35-0, D Hooda 2-0-37-0

PUNJAB KINGS

KL Rahul	c Tyagi b Sakariya	49 (33)
M Agarwal	c Livingstone b Tewatia	67 (43)
A Markram	not out	26 (20)
N Pooran	c Samson b Tyagi	32 (22)
D Hooda	c Samson b Tyagi	0 (2)
F Allen	not out	0 (1)
Extras	(nb 1, w 8)	9

TOTAL: 183 for four in 20 overs

Fall of wickets: 1-120, 2-126, 3-183, 4-183
Bowling: M Rahman 4-0-30-0, C Sakariya 3-0-31-1, K Tyagi 4-0-29-2, C Morris 4-0-47-0, R Tewatia 3-0-23-1, M Lomror 1-0-7-0, R Parag 1-0-16-0

TODAY'S MATCH



DUBAI, 6PM

POINTS TABLE

TEAMS	P	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
CSK	8	6	2	0	12	+1.223
DC	8	6	2	0	12	+0.547
RCB	8	5	2	0	10	-0.706
MI	8	4	4	0	8	-0.071
RR	8	4	4	0	8	-0.154
KKR	8	3	5	0	6	+0.110
PBKS	9	3	6	0	6	-0.345
SRH	7	1	6	0	2	-0.623

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

CSK: Chennai Super Kings

RCB: Royal Challengers Bangalore

DC: Delhi Capitals

KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders

PBKS: Kings XI Punjab

MI: Mumbai Indians

RR: Rajasthan Royals

SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad

Player of the match Tyagi was 'feeling happy' after his display.

The pacer said, "I was injured during the India leg of IPL 2021, and when I recovered the tournament got cancelled. I'm very happy to get the chance today. I have spoken to seniors for the last few years. Everyone has said that game can change anytime. I knew I have the death-overs skills."

Cricinfo

Ramiz rages at 'Western Bloc'

PCB chairman promises to 'avenge' cancellations when Pakistan meet England, NZ at the T20 World Cup

Lahore, Pakistan - Ramiz Raja, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman, has hit out at cricket's 'western bloc', as he copes with the second cancellation of a home series in a matter of days.

England's decision on Monday to withdraw their men and women's team tours to Pakistan leaves Pakistan's busiest home season in many a year in tatters.

In a video message released by the PCB, Ramiz said that though the decision was disappointing, it was also expected, and he drew on a bullish message of self-reliance and regeneration in response.



Ramiz Raja, Pakistan Cricket Board chairman

The PCB has been bristling at the ECB's decision, officials saying it has left them feeling betrayed. Since the pandemic began, Pakistan have twice toured England, as well as New Zealand and West Indies, only to now see England cite general COVID-19 bubble fatigue as a reason for withdrawing from the tour.

"I am severely disappointed in England's withdrawal but it was expected because this western bloc gets united unfortunately and tries to back

each other," Ramiz said.

"So you can take any decision on the basis of security threat and perception. There was a sense of anger because first New Zealand got away without sharing information about the threat they were facing.

"Now, this [England] was expected but this is a lesson for us because we go out of our way to accommodate and pamper these sides when they visit. And when we go there, we undergo strict quarantines and we tolerate their admonishments,

but there is a lesson in this. That is, that from now on we will only go as far as is in our interest.

"Our interest is that cricket will not stop in our country and if the cricket fraternity will not take care of each other then there's no point to it. New Zealand, then England, now we have a West Indies series that can also be hit, and Australia who is already reconsidering.

"This - England, Australia, New Zealand - is all one block. Who can we complain to? We thought they were our own but

they haven't accepted us as theirs."

Though it is too early to start calculating the financial impact of these two tours not happening, or potentially, other hits being taken in the season, some within the board reckon the losses could range from between US\$15-25mn.

Though he did not provide details, Ramiz said that Pakistan had begun a formal communication with New Zealand seeking compensation for losses relating to the abandonment of the tour. And as he did a couple of days ago, he again called on his team to take out the frustrations of their players and fans on the field when they finally play at the T20 World Cup.

"We go in the World Cup now and where we had one team in our target - our neighbours [India], they now add two more teams - New Zealand and England. So pick up the strength and develop a mindset that we are not going to lose because you didn't do right by us with us and we will avenge that in the ground."

Cricinfo

Cancellation of tour very disappointing, says NZ's Latham

NZ'S TOUR OF PAKISTAN

Dubai, UAE - Tom Latham, New Zealand stand-in captain for the cancelled Pakistan series, admitted the team's decision to pull out of the tour citing security concerns was 'very disappointing' for Pakistan fans.

Latham, who is currently in Dubai, was speaking to New Zealand's in-house media channel, about the fateful decision to call off the tour minutes before the start of the first ODI in Rawalpindi on Friday

He spoke of the 'historic nature of the tour, 18 years after New Zealand's last, and paid tribute to the Pakistani authorities and New Zealand Cricket for keeping the players' safety foremost in their minds. "It's naturally very dis-

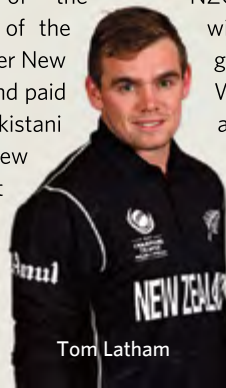
appointing for them [Pakistan and their fans]," Latham said.

"It was something they were very proud of. I remember doing the captain's round with Babar [Azam] the day before and just seeing how happy he was to have international cricket and have us there. He was very excited and it was a historic moment for New Zealand Cricket to be back there 18 years since they were last there.

"To be part of that was going to be something special, but obviously things changed.

NZC acted swiftly along with the people on the ground in Pakistan. While we were there after the decision, the Pakistan authorities were brilliant. They kept us safe at the hotel and we certainly need to thank them."

Cricinfo



Tom Latham

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Oman's 'biggest race' returns

Al Mouj Muscat Marathon to be held on February 11-12, 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Dubbed as 'Oman's biggest race' Al Mouj Muscat Marathon returns after a gap of nearly two years with the organisers revealing the details of the 2022 edition at a press conference on Tuesday.

Coronavirus pandemic forced the organisers to initially reschedule the 2021 edition to November this year but on Tuesday they announced that the popular race will now take place on February 11-12, 2022 at Al Mouj Muscat. The last edition of the marathon took place on February 21-22, 2020.

At the press conference, the organisers, represented by Al Mouj Muscat, Sabco Sports and Oman Sail, said that 'such events highlight the importance of leading an active and healthy lifestyle'.

This would be the sixth time

that Al Mouj Muscat has partnered with the marathon, based on a commitment to further contribution to sport tourism in the sultanate.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat said, "The Al Mouj Muscat Marathon is a great match for our values to promote an active and healthy lifestyle for both residents and visitors of Al Mouj Muscat. In 2022, we expect runners from across Oman and around the world to enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of the destination and be a part of a festival which will cater to a variety of ages, fitness levels and experience."

Oman Sail, which has been in the forefront in helping the marathon grow over the years, confirmed that they have handed over the hosting rights to Sabco Sports for a three-year deal.

Sabco Sports is an Oman-based premier sports agency and will organise the

2022 marathon in close cooperation with Al Mouj.

Khamis al Jabri, CEO, Oman Sail said, "Oman Sail took over management of the annual Al Mouj Muscat Marathon in 2017 from Muscat Road Runners, and successfully registered in excess of 10,000 runners from over 100 nationalities last year. It has planted the seeds of growth, nurturing its appeal with recognised international standards. Based on a commitment to benefit the local private sector we have handed over the management to leading sports entity, Sabco Sports."

"Al Mouj Muscat Marathon has built a reputation and a loyal fan base within Oman, and we are confident that the upcoming edition will bring even more members of the community to start running and will also attract an international audience to visit Oman and experience an authentic experience," he added.

The 2022 Al Mouj Muscat Marathon will feature seven race distances: Marathon (42.2km), Half Marathon (21.1km), 10km, 5km, 3km, 2km and 1km.



Representatives of Al Mouj Muscat, Oman Sail and Sabco Sports at a press conference on Tuesday to reveal the details of the 2022 Al Mouj Muscat Marathon

The Marathon, Half Marathon and 10km races will be held on February 11 (Friday), while the 5km and Kids' races are scheduled to held the next day (February 12).

The organisers are working towards creating an environment

where all safety protocols are in place during the event and in close coordination with the government authorities who are taking all measures to ensure COVID-19 is under control in the country by the end of the year.

The marathon will be open

only to fully vaccinated participants.

Sayyid Aymen al Busaidi, vice-chairman of Sabco Group, said, "Sabco Sports and Sabco Group are proud to be working with Oman Sail and Al Mouj Muscat on continuing to build

the Muscat Marathon into a world-class event that inspires the country to a healthier and more athletic lifestyle."

All information about Al Mouj Muscat Marathon as well as registration details are available on www.muscatmarathon.om.

US rivals Koepka and DeChambeau 'unlikely to be paired together'



Bryson DeChambeau

RYDER CUP

Kohler, US - Brooks Koepka's feud with teammate Bryson DeChambeau won't be an issue at the 43rd Ryder Cup, US captain Steve Stricker said on Monday.

But don't expect the major champions to be paired when the Americans face holders Europe in the biennial team golf showdown that starts Friday at Whistling Straits, postponed from last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's a non-issue, really, for me and the team," Stricker said of the spat. "I've had conversations with them both. They have assured me it's not going to be an issue. I have no worries whatsoever."

"We had great conversation, great talks. So I'm not seeing it as an issue at all and they are

completely on board. "Will we pair them together? I don't think so at this point. Could always happen. But probably not."

The feud began at the PGA Championship in May and expanded over social media, with taunts of 'Brooks' being shouted to DeChambeau at tournaments.

Koepka's injured left wrist and comments to *Golf Digest* about how the Cup is 'hectic' and 'a bit odd' also caused some concerns, but Stricker says the four-time major winner's health and attitude are both fine.

"He tells me everything is 100% and everything is ready and raring to go," Stricker said of the wrist injury. "From what I understand, he's fully healed and ready for everything."

Stricker has also spoken to Koepka about his Ryder Cup

comments, which had former US captain Paul Azinger saying Koepka should step aside for someone who cared more for the event. "I've had experiences with Brooks over many of these teams," Stricker said.

"The conversations I've had with him and what I have personally seen in the team room does not jive up to what I was reading in those articles. I'm not worried about Brooks. He assures me he's healthy."

Stricker disputes a long-held notion that Europe has found success through superior team spirit, with European squads winning nine of the past 12 Ryder Cups, including the most recent in France in 2018. "That's a misconception amongst our team," he said.

AFP



Brooks Koepka