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Oman braces for Shaheen

In Muscat governorate, 55 emergency shelters have been set up, including 21 in Seeb and ten in Quriyat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With heavy rains and disruption to normal life expected in the wake of tropical storm Shaheen over most of Oman, authorities declared Sunday and Monday to be an official holiday for government and private sector establishments.

The closure does not include the governorates of Dhofar and Al Wusta where the impact of the storm is expected to be minimum.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Saturday issued directives to provide all that is necessary for the safety of citizens and residents during the sultanate's exposure to the effects of the tropical storm.

This came during an emergency meeting of the National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM), headed by the Inspector General of Police



Waves lash Muttrah Corniche on Saturday evening. The Muttrah Sea Road was closed by ROP in anticipation of rising sea level (Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)

and Customs.

NCEM urged residents of areas within the direct impact of the tropical storm from Barka to Saham, as well as the coastal strip of Muscat and some areas of South Sharqiyah to evacuate their homes and go to the near-

est government shelters.

The National Multi Hazards Early Warning Centre stated that Shaheen will move towards the coast of North Batinah governorate, and make landfall between Saham and Suwaiq later in the day.

'The governorates of Muscat, North and South Batinah, Dakhrah, Buraimi, Dakhliyah and the coastal areas of South Sharqiyah will bear the direct impact of Shaheen from Sunday morning. It will include strong winds of 40-60 knots and heavy rains

ranging between 200 to 500mm causing severe flash floods in these governorates,' the centre stated.

The storm surge might cause seawater inundation in low-lying coastal areas.

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S&P revises Oman outlook to 'positive'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

S&P Global Ratings on Saturday revised its outlook on Oman to 'positive' from 'stable' as the world's biggest ratings agency now believes that the sultanate's reforms programme and higher oil prices will narrow fiscal deficits and slow the increase in government debt.

S&P has also affirmed the sultanate's 'B+/B' long- and short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings.

'Economic and fiscal pressures on Oman are easing, as the effects of sharp drop in oil prices in 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic abate. We project that Oman's reform programme will reduce the pace of net government debt accumulation over the next three years,' S&P said in a research update report.

The ratings agency said it could raise its ratings on Oman over the next 12 months if planned fiscal reforms and stronger economic growth sustainably reduce fiscal imbalances and the stock of net government debt beyond the

Economic and fiscal pressures on Oman are easing, as the effects of sharp drop in oil prices in 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic abate

current expectations.

'In our view, the (Omani) authorities have outlined a solid path to reduce the historically high fiscal deficits, backed by strong political will to implement the related reform measures,' it said.

Reform momentum, S&P noted, has picked up under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, with several changes to governance, economic and fiscal policies.

As a result of these reforms, S&P expects a material reduction in Oman's fiscal deficit to 4.2 per cent of GDP in 2021, from 15.3 per cent of GDP in 2020.

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RO1.3bn food security projects announced

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to support the food security sector and create job opportunities, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has announced 128 projects and initiatives worth RO1.3bn. The projects will be implemented during the next five years.

The projects were announced at the conclusion of the Food Security Laboratory, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources on Thursday.

Government and private representatives, academics and experts in the food security sector took part in the four-week lab.

"The laboratory came within the framework of the 'Invest in Oman' programme. It aimed to attract private investments and support Omani exports in foreign markets. The lab is among the national programmes within Oman Vision 2040," said an official at the ministry.

He explained that the Food Security Laboratory identified 128 initiatives and projects, including 39 in the agriculture sector, 29 in livestock, 28 in fisheries, eight in the water resources sector and 26 other

initiatives, with an investment value of RO1.3bn. "The projects will contribute to achieving self-sufficiency and food security in the sultanate."

H E Dr Saud Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said that the lab resulted in a number of initiatives and agreements that will bolster investment and provide a suitable environment in the field of food security.

The official added that the Food Security Laboratory also aimed to design a strategic investment programme for food security in the sultanate, in partnership with relevant governmental and private institutions, businessmen and investors. "The lab focused on the main activities related to agricultural, fisheries and livestock wealth, water resources, food safety and quality through three themes covering projects and investment opportunities, project enablers and incentives package," the official said.

The laboratory also approved the initiative of the National Water Strategy, which will transform the sector and attract investment in the next phase, achieve water security and sustain water resources.

The laboratory also approved



The laboratory came within the framework of the 'Invest in Oman' programme. It aimed to attract private investments and support Omani exports in foreign markets

MINISTRY OFFICIAL

an initiative to promote exports and imports through Omani ports and a special initiative to enable national cadres to work in the sector. Additionally, the Food Innovation Complex project was approved, which will work to address the current gap

in the innovation system in the food sector and transform it into products targeting local and foreign markets, enhance local added value and open up wide scope for businesses and job opportunities, the official said.

During the event, a number of agreements were signed, including an agreement to plant coconut trees in Dhofar, a contract for a commercial banana cultivation project in the wilayat of Mussanah in South Batinah, and lease pomegranate and olive farms in Jebel Akhdar.

Some other agreements signed included developing the Wadi Dayqah Dam, a usufruct contract for land allocation for the establishment of a commercial fish farming project, an agreement to establish and manage a unit for inspection of trucks exporting and importing agricultural, animal and food products in Dhofar, and an investment contract for the establishment of a fish collection centre in Khuwema area in the wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali in South Sharqiyah governorate.

"The Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-Up Unit has provided support and assistance in organising the lab, developing performance indicators for its outputs and following up their implementation according to the approved follow-up criteria. It will continue to provide support and assistance to the ministry to ensure that the laboratory's objectives are achieved," the official added.



Campaign launched to attract international students at Expo 2020

Muscat - The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) launched a campaign to attract international students and researchers during the Expo 2020 Dubai on Thursday.

The launch ceremony was held under the auspices of H E Dr Rahma Ibrahim al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The campaign aims to introduce Oman's higher education institutions to visitors of the global event, as well as showcase the sultanate's capabilities in scientific research and innovation.

Laila Khamis al Shaqsi, direc-

tor of the Educational Services Department at the General Directorate of Universities and Private Colleges in MoHERI, and chairperson of the Supervising Committee of the ministry in Expo 2020 Dubai, said that the ministry's corner in the Omani pavilion will hold various symposiums.

The symposiums will cover a Science and Knowledge Week, in addition to displaying the talent of innovative Omani youth, Omani products in an exhibition and in the Frankincense Store, she informed.

Laila said that the ministry has launched a special website and a slogan for a 'Study in

Oman' campaign.

The ministry also coordinated with the organisers of the Shabab Oman Ship Voyage for a number of higher education students to take part in its journey. The ship left Oman and arrived in Dubai simultaneously with the expo's launch.

She pointed out that four researchers will speak in the Science and Knowledge Week symposium, to be held from December 12 to 18.

Also, the ministry is coordinating with the Tayseer platform to take part in the 'Omani youth innovating' symposium, to be held from January 5 to 8, 2022. ONA

Indian schools in Oman waive non-refundable infrastructure fee

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As Indian schools in Oman gear up to welcome students on campus from the first week of October in a phased manner, the Board of Directors has decided to waive the non-refundable infrastructure fee for the current academic year due to the financial constraints of parents resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The decision of the board to waive the non-refundable infrastructure fee for the current academic year is taken after discussing the ongoing financial constraints of parents due to the pandemic," said Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman.

According to Indian Schools Board, parents have been going through a lot of difficulties during



the COVID-19 pandemic period.

"They have expressed their concerns through their representatives in the board and requested for a reduction in the school fees. Having considered their concerns positively, the

board has unanimously decided to waive the non-refundable infrastructure fees for the current academic year 2021-2022," the statement from the board said.

"Those who have already paid the non-refundable infrastruc-

ture fee for the current academic year will have the amount adjusted in their school fees.'

The Indian schools have adopted many relief measures to assuage the financial crunch experienced by parents during the pandemic. Besides the usual fee concession granted by the schools, parents who lost their job during the pandemic and are facing financial constraints have also been included among the beneficiaries of fee concession. Moreover, schools also allow parents to pay the fees monthly instead of quarterly.

Students are excited about returning to school after a break of 18 months; parents, too, are happy about sending their wards to school despite the expenses they have to meet on uniforms, transport and other allied purchases before sending them to school after a long time.

Fines for lease contracts, municipal licences to be exempted: Muscat Municipality

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Fines for lease contracts, all municipal licences and annexes for commercial activities will be exempted, provided these are renewed before December 31, 2021, the Muscat Municipality stated on Thursday.

In a statement, the civic body said, 'Based on the decisions of

the Supreme Committee to deal with COVID-19 issued on September 22, and in the interest of the public, Muscat Municipality has decided to exempt fines for all municipal licences and commercial activity annexes.'

The municipality added that it will also exempt fines for lease contracts, provided these are ratified before December 31.

Muscat Municipality called on

all beneficiaries of its services to take advantage of the period of exemption from fines and to correct and update their documentation urgently.

The municipality reminded its service users that all licences that expired on December 31, 2019 or after will be cancelled in the event that data and conditions are not corrected beyond December 31, 2021.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	39	28
Doha	34	28
Kuwait City	41	27
Manama	35	27
Riyadh	39	23

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.44am
Sunrise	5.59am
Duhr	12.01pm
Asr	3.25pm
Maghrib	5.58pm
Isha	7.08pm



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120m deep cave found in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Salalah

A group of 25 adventure enthusiasts has discovered a new cave in Dhofar governorate, adding to the list of Oman's subterranean treasures. The cave was found by the Dhofar Adventure and Exploration Team.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Abdul Hakim Amer al Ma'ashani, head of the team, informed that the Mughaleel Cave in the wilayat of Rakhyut is about 120m deep and has three chambers connected via narrow corridors. The cave's entry is small and its chambers can only be accessed by crawling on all fours.

"The team had to dig into the outer chamber to reach inside



The team had to dig into the outer chamber to reach inside the cave. This is the first time Mughaleel Cave has been explored - the first time people went inside it

ABDUL AL
MA'ASHANI

the cave. This is the first time Mughaleel Cave has been explored - the first time people went inside it," Ma'ashani said. Entering the cave needs the utmost caution. "It is risky and exhausting because of multiple vertical slopes and very slippery surface," Ma'ashani added.

mations of stalactites, stalagmites and rock canopies."

Some of the stalagmite deposits on the floor of the cave are up to 2m tall. "Some stalagmites have white and grey lime crystals that resemble granite rock. The floor of the cave has rocky basins, most of which have no water," Ma'ashani said.

The last chamber of the cave has a number of beautiful rock formations. "The stalactites in this room have characteristic thorn-like growths, some of which resemble hooked poles and fishing rods," Ma'ashani noted.

The cave is inhabited by various living organisms, including 5-7cm black spiders, many kinds of worms and bats. "The team also found fragments of cow bones, bat droppings and remains of white butterflies, which may have been fed on by the bats," Ma'ashani said.

"This cave is among many found in Dhofar governorate and can be a tourist attraction in the future."

Ma'ashani informed that the team's goal is to explore caves in the sultanate and document these, besides spreading the culture of adventure among members of the community and promoting tourism.

Set up in August 2020, Dhofar Adventure and Exploration Team has found nine caves to date and emphasises on the safety of its members during exploration and adventure activities.

S&P revises Oman outlook

Continued from Page 01

'In its Medium-Term Fiscal Plan for 2021-2025, Oman has set out an ambitious target to achieve fiscal balance by 2025.

'If the government fully implements its reform programme and oil prices turn more favourable than we had assumed, the pace of increase in net debt could slow significantly below our current forecast of slightly above five per cent of GDP on average over 2021-2024,' S&P said.

'We would expect countries in the GCC region to provide timely support to Oman if needed - for example, in the unexpected event of a significant deterioration in the external reserves that support the peg of the Omani rial to the US dollar,' S&P added.

32 livestock pens established to support breeders in four wilayats: MAFWR

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In its efforts to support farm animal breeders and the livestock sector, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has established 32 pens in various wilayats of the sultanate.

These livestock pens have been financed by the Agricultural Development Fund, according to the ministry.

Saqr Saeed al Omari, project evaluation specialist in MAFWR, said, "The project aims to support farm animal breeders and the livestock sector in the sultanate and raise the quality of farm ani-



mals like goats and sheep."

Omari informed that of the 32 pens, 14 are in the wilayat of Shinas, eight in Mussanah, seven in Rustaq, and three in the wilayat of Al Awabi.

The latest statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicate that 4.8mn farm animals were treated in the sultanate in 2020, which is an increase of 9.5 per cent compared to the previous year.

NCSI has stated that 4.2mn farm animals were vaccinated against various diseases in 2020, an increase of 31 per cent compared to the previous year when 3.2mn animals were vaccinated.

Oman braces for tropical storm Shaheen

Continued from Page 01

The state of the sea will be rough along Omani coasts with maximum wave height between 8-12m.

Muscat Municipality and several other municipalities, especially in South and North Batinah governorates, confirmed their readiness to deal with the tropical situation.

Muscat Municipality has activated a 24-hour centre (1111) to receive updates and notifications, and has set up an operations room in its office in the wilayat of Seeb to take necessary action and delegate field teams to respond to emergencies.

In Muscat governorate, 28 emergency shelters have been set up, including 18 in Seeb and ten in Quriyat.

NCEM has established 33 shelters in South Batinah as part of its preparations to deal with the effects of the tropical situation. Eleven shelters have been planned in the wilayat of Rustaq, five each in the wilayats of Barka and Nakhal, and four each in wilayats of Al Awabi, Mussanah and Wadi al Ma'awel.

In North Batinah, 37 shelters will be provided, including eight in the wilayats of Sohar and Suwaiq, six each in the wilayats of Saham and Shinas, five in Khabourah, and four in Liwa, while six have been provided in South Sharqiyah - four in Sur and one each in Tiwi and Ras al Hadd.

The Ministry of Health confirmed the readiness of its health institutions to deal with the tropical situation and announced suspension of the ongoing vaccination drive across Oman, except in Al Wusta and Dhofar, until further notice.

Taking precautions, Mwasa-lat has suspended all city buses in Muscat governorate and inter-city buses routes in all governorates until further notice. City bus services will continue in Salalah.

Ferry services have also been suspended on all routes to and from Musandam governorate until further notice, while ferries will continue to operate on the Shanna-Masirah route.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology stated that it has activated an emergency plan for road infrastructure in the governorates facing the threat of the storm. It called on companies working in the sector of road building and transport 'to provide necessary and sufficient equipment and labour to open and maintain roads and delegate them in all sites expected to be damaged'. It has formed field teams in various governorates to monitor the condition of roads in each area.

The Ministry of Social Development decided to suspend work on Sunday and Monday in all children's development and rehabilitation centres and nurseries in all of Oman.

'Upholding human rights cornerstone of society's growth'

Geneva, Switzerland - The sultanate has affirmed that the principle of spreading the culture of human rights is accorded great attention by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who considers the human being as the very essence of the political process.

This was stated at the United Nations (UN) high-level virtual session marking the tenth anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training.

Oman will adapt national legislation with the essential principles of international agreements and translate this into ground reality

IDRIS AL KHANJARI

Oman's speech was delivered by Idris Abdulrahman al Khanjari, the sultanate's Permanent Representative at the UN. He said that His Majesty the Sultan has pledged to spread and protect the culture of toler-

ance and dialogue.

"His Majesty the Sultan encouraged initiatives that conform with the national plans aimed at realising a decent life that guarantees the rights of citizens, as well as residents in the

sultanate," said Khanjari.

He added that Oman accords importance to society's awareness about the significance of human rights. He further said that "education in the field of human rights plays a vital role in bringing about positive change in the life of individuals and empowers them in all respects".

Khanjari explained that the sultanate has portrayed — in records of international organisations — a positive image of

respect for human rights, thereby earning accolades from those organisations.

"From this podium, I would like to reiterate the sultanate's sincere desire to enhance human rights, which are secured by the Basic Law of the State. Oman will adapt national legislation with the essential principles of international agreements and translate this into ground reality," Khanjari stressed.

ONA

Dubai Expo 'new city' will exist for decades: Chief

Dubai, UAE - Dubai has created a 'new city' for Expo 2020 that will exist for decades, the head of the event said, promising most of the vast site will remain in use after the six-month world fair.

The US\$7bn, purpose-built showground occupies a vast site on Dubai's outskirts, with hundreds of pavilions and exhibitions sprawling across an area twice the size of Monaco.

Expo 2020, which has sustainability as one of its main themes, wraps up in March. But director general Reem al Hashimy said the lavish, largely air-conditioned development would not go to waste.

"It was never an investment to host an Expo, it was an investment to create a new city that is equal distance between Dubai and Abu Dhabi and really the city of the future," she said in an interview.

"That investment goes into a

city to 2040, 2050 and beyond. In addition to that, we have also made a commitment not to dismantle all Expo-related facilities."

"Everything that we're building, a very large majority, over 90 per cent or so, will actually remain for that future city."

And whether the 5G-enabled site thrives or languishes after Expo depends on what businesses can be persuaded to base themselves there.

"Given the focus on technology and sustainability we're looking to attract industries, residents that are inclined to operate in those spaces," said Hashimy, who is also the UAE's Minister of State for International Cooperation.

"So in part we're looking at industries related to climate or green technology if you will, a lot around ag-tech."

AFP

S&P expects Oman's growth to accelerate from 2022

Our Correspondent
Muscat

S&P Global Ratings has forecasted Oman's economic growth to accelerate from next year supported by higher oil and gas production and non-oil sector growth.

"We expect Oman's real GDP to grow by 1.7 per cent this year and then accelerate to 3.1 per cent on average in 2022-2023 as oil and gas production ramps up after OPEC+ production limits are eased," S&P said in a research update report released on Saturday.

A stronger economic rebound from 2022, the ratings agency said, will be supported by higher oil and gas output and non-oil sector growth.

A stronger rebound in non-oil sector growth will come from the logistics, manufacturing, agriculture and fisheries, and tourism sectors.

"That said, we could see downside risks to our forecasts from a slower-than-expected global economic recovery and the spread of COVID-19 variants," S&P added.

It said the economic activity will start to pick up this year.



A stronger economic rebound from 2022 will be supported by higher oil and gas output and non-oil sector growth

However, given the ongoing oil production limits under the OPEC+ agreement, COVID-19-induced lockdown measures, and the slow pace of vaccinations to mid-2021, it expects only a mild economic recovery of about 1.7 per cent this year.

"Notwithstanding OPEC+ quotas on crude oil production, Oman has increased its volumes of condensates that are not covered under the agreement. The vaccination roll out has picked up in recent months, so that 52 per cent of the population were fully

vaccinated at the end of September, and authorities have gradually eased restrictions on movement and travel," S&P noted.

"The government also announced an economic stimulus plan (of about 0.1 per cent of GDP) that includes incentives on taxes and fees for private sector companies, particularly small and mid-size enterprises," the ratings agency added.

S&P expects Oman's oil and condensates production will rise

to 1mn barrels per day (bpd) in 2022 as OPEC+ production limits are eased, and 1.1mn bpd in 2023, from 0.96mn bpd in 2021. According to government estimates, gas production will ramp up from 157mn cubic metres per day in 2021 to 174mn cubic metres per day in 2023.

Given the concentrated nature of Oman's economy - hydrocarbon products comprise about 40 per cent of real GDP, 60 per cent of goods exports, and above 70 per cent of fiscal receipts - the country remains sensitive to movements in oil prices in either direction, S&P said.

S&P assumes an average oil price of US\$60 per barrel in 2021 (based on realised sales of Omani crude until October) and 2022 and US\$55 from 2023, up from US\$42 in 2020.

After a substantial increase in the budget deficit in 2020, S&P expects a sharp narrowing in Oman's budget deficit in 2021. "We expect fiscal deficits will average about 4.6 per cent of GDP over 2021-2022 and increase to 6 per cent over 2023-2024, based on our assumption that oil prices will decrease by US\$5 per barrel over this period."

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With great sadness and sorrow in our hearts and with belief in God's justice and destiny, the Board of Directors, management and staff, express their heartfelt condolences to

Sheikh Abdul Azeez Bin Soud Bin Ali Al Khalili

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Soud Bin Ali Al Khalili

Sheikh Taher Bin Soud Al Khalili

And Sheikh Khalid Bin Abdullah Bin Ali Al Khalili

Chairman of Bank Nizwa

and their families

for the sad demise of

Sheikh Soud Bin Ali Al Khalili

Founder of Bank Nizwa

May Allah bless his soul and
may he rest in eternal peace.

بنك نزوى
Bank Nizwa



MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

MSX index gains on support from industrial stocks

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX30) ended last week higher by 0.39 per cent. Trading activity picked up last week ahead of the upcoming earnings season.

All the sub-indices closed higher except financial index which was down by 0.08 per cent. Services and Industrial indices closed higher by 1.33 per cent and 3.95 per cent, respectively. MSX Shariah index closed lower by 0.04 per cent.

Local news

►ACWA Power is now of the view that it is very unlikely that it will receive an extension to its Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) before the expiry of its current PPA on December 31, 2021. In addition, the company, up until the date of this disclosure, has not received any further notification regarding the power 2022 tendering process. The company is in discussion with the management and other stakeholders to determine how best to proceed, following receipt of this information.

►Vodafone Oman, the sultanate's third telecom operator, is set to commence operations in the very near future - a development that promises to further intensify competition in the retail and business segments of the telecom market, as well as accelerate the country's digital transformation.

A top official affirmed that Oman's newest telecom player is gearing up to go live shortly, after nearly a year's delay, attributable primarily to the global economic slowdown and compounded by the pandemic. We at U Capital believe it will be a challenging time for existing operators once the third telecom operator starts operations in Oman as the competition will heat-up.

►The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotions (MOCIIP) last week launched a programme for granting long-term residency to expatriate investors in the sultanate. Aimed at enhancing the investment quality in Oman and create more job opportunities, the 'Investor Residence' programme offers foreign investors and retirees the right to long-term stay in the sultanate. Applications will begin from October 3 through an online system of MOCIIP.

►Oman's budget deficit was recorded at RO1.2bn in the first seven months of 2021. The deficit recorded in the month of July 2021 was lower at RO97.3mn compared to deficit of RO217.9mn in the month of June 2021. With higher oil prices and government control on the expenditure side, the deficit of Oman is gradually reducing which should be taken positively by the investors.



Overall, revenue stood at RO5.21bn while the expenditure stood at RO6.42bn in the first seven months of 2021.

►Value of traded property in Oman went up by 11.7 per cent in the first eight months of 2021 to RO1.52bn compared to RO1.36bn in the same period a year ago. Traded value of mortgage contracts during the same period fell by 1.6 per cent to RO848mn compared to RO 861mn a year ago. Traded value of sale contracts rose by 47.1 per cent to RO662mn compared to RO 450mn in the first eight months of 2020. Number of properties issued during the first eight months of 2021 also rose by 53.5 per cent to 137,717 compared to 89,698 properties a year ago.

►Oman's bond price fell last week after witnessing a good rally following an upbeat IMF report. The price of ten-year dollar bond dropped and hence the yields picked up again. At the time of writing this report, the yield on the ten-year bond is at 5.29 per cent after hitting a low of 4.88 per cent in mid September. However, the yields are still lower compared to the high of 5.72 per cent recorded in early months of 2021.

Bahrain should balance annual revenues with spending.

Bahrain's government sent a draft bill to parliament for approval to amend the value-added tax rate, currently at 5 per cent, from next January, the state-run Bahrain News Agency said. It did not say whether the amendment referred to a hike or a cut in the rate.

The Central Bank of United Arab Emirates (CBUAE) said it was starting to gradually withdraw stimulus measures introduced last year to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bank launched a Targeted Economic Support Scheme (TESS) to help banks provide temporary relief to companies and individuals affected by the crisis and boost lending capacity through the relief of existing capital and liquidity buffers.

The Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) extended the deferred payment programme for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that are still impacted by the COVID-19 precautionary measures for three additional months from October 1 to December 31, 2021. SAMA clarified that during this extension, MSMEs will be subject to the assessment by the financing entities on the extent to which these MSMEs are still affected by the COVID-19 precautionary measures, in order to be qualified for the extension.

Since its launch on March 14, 2020, to date, the deferred payment programme has benefited more than 107,000 contracts with a total value of deferred payments worth SAR174bn. Meanwhile, the number of contracts benefiting from the Guaranteed Financing Program has exceeded 6,000 contracts, with a total financing value of more than SAR11bn.

Recommendation

The global markets remained confused as the US Fed announcement and interviews continued during the week. Yields remained in the focus as ten year yield picked up again and spooked the investors.

Oil after hitting a high of US\$80 per barrel came down a little. Energy crisis has been hitting across the world with prices of gas picking up in Europe and US while coal prices kept on going higher in China.

Regional markets performance remained mixed.

The initial public offerings (IPOs) stole the limelight last week as well. Saudi market crossed its 2008 financial crisis high last week.

Locally, the turnover and volumes picked up last week in anticipation of upcoming result season. We estimate the same continuing in the coming week.

By special arrangement with U Capital

What happens if the United States defaults on its debt?

Washington, US - After narrowly avoiding a shutdown of the US government, President Joe Biden's Democratic lawmakers and the Republican opposition face an even more high-stakes task: Forging an agreement to raise the country's borrowing limit or risk a catastrophic default.

Here's what you need to know about the debate over the US debt limit:

What is the debt limit?

The debt limit is the legally established maximum on how much the United States can borrow to pay the government's bills for everything from social welfare programmes to salaries for the military.

According to the Treasury, it has been raised, suspended or otherwise delayed 78 times since 1960: 29 times under Democratic administrations and 49 times under Republicans.

A 2019 budget measure passed under Republican former president Donald Trump suspended the limit for two years, and when it was reinstated on August 1, 2021, the US had reached its ceiling, and the national debt now stands at US\$28tn.

How is the government preparing for a default?

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen announced the government would take 'extraordinary measures' from August, but that those would no longer be sufficient to pay Washington's bills beyond October 18.

Were a default to occur, "I think it would be catastrophic for the economy and for individual families," Yellen warned on Thursday.

Social Security benefit payments would either stop or be



A visual aid of a blank check is seen during a news conference on the debt ceiling at the US Capitol (AFP)

delayed for almost 50mn elderly Americans and paychecks to soldiers would be disrupted, as would an anti-poverty programme targeting families.

What would a default mean for the economy?

The US has never defaulted on its debt, which forms a backbone of the global economic system. The consensus among analysts is that a failure by Washington to make an interest payment on its debt would be a self-inflicted wound that would undercut the economy's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and perhaps inflict permanent injury on the United States' international standing.

What is the status of negotiations?

Democrats control both houses of Congress - but just barely. They need ten Republican votes to overcome a filibuster in the Senate, and the opposition has made clear it will not help them raise the debt limit.

The fight comes in the context of negotiations over two spending bills totaling trillions of

dollars that Biden wants Congress to enact.

Republicans argue that they won't raise the limit to pay for those bills, but the limit needs to be increased anyway to pay for spending authorised under previous Republican and Democratic administrations. Republicans want Democrats to approve an increase unilaterally using the reconciliation process, but that is expected to take weeks and Democratic leaders continue to insist Republicans should join them in taking action to prevent a default.

Could there be negative consequences even without a default?

Few Washington observers believe either party is willing to let the country default, and expect they'll somehow reach an agreement, potentially at the last minute.

This has happened before, but it wasn't without costs.

In 2011, the country came days away from a default after Republicans blocked an increase unless Democratic president Barack Obama agreed to concessions in his spending plans

that they said would cut the country's debt and deficit over the long run, though it has soared ever higher since.

Wall Street fell 6 per cent as the deadline to raise the limit neared, according to financial services firm Morningstar.

Then, after markets had finished their last session of the week, S&P Global Ratings downgraded US credit to just below its top rating, where it had previously sat for decades.

When markets reopened on Monday, the S&P 500 declined 6.6 per cent, Morningstar said.

The other ratings agencies didn't join in ding the US over its politicians' inability to come to grips with its massive deficit and debt.

But as the latest standoff drags on, Shai Akabas, director of economic policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center, warned of consequences.

"As we keep having these episodes where we get so narrowly close, it will increase the calls for a change to the world's reserve currency, which could favour China," he said.

AFP

Cash-strapped Lebanon names team for IMF talks

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanon said that it has formed a new government delegation to resume talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) aimed at rescuing the country from an economic meltdown.

The government of Prime Minister Najib Mikati said in a statement that a four-member committee had been appointed to resume talks with the IMF.

The team - Deputy Prime Minister Saade Chami, Finance Minister Youssef Khalil, Economy Minister Amin Salam and central bank governor Riad

Salameh - would be backed by experts.

The eastern Mediterranean country is facing what the World Bank has described as one of the world's worst economic crises since the 1850s. Its currency, the pound, has lost almost 90 per cent of its value against the dollar on the black market since 2019, and people's savings are trapped in banks.

Inflation has soared, and 78 per cent of all Lebanese now live under the threshold of poverty, according to the UN. Power cuts are common in the country and

basic goods including petrol and medicine have become scarce.

After defaulting on its debt in March 2020 for the first time in history, Lebanon started talks with the IMF but they hit a brick wall amid bickering over who should bear the brunt of the losses. Lebanon hopes the talks with the IMF will help unlock billions of dollars in financial aid.

But the international community has demanded sweeping reforms and a forensic audit of the country's central bank before any financial assistance is disbursed.

AFP

Energy prices push eurozone inflation to 13-year high

Brussels, Belgium - Eurozone consumer prices last month rose at their fastest pace since 2008 as energy costs skyrocketed, with analysts warning that high inflation could continue for still more months.

Eurostat, the EU's official statistics agency, said eurozone inflation in September reached 3.4 per cent on an annualised basis, with energy prices increasing by 17.4 per cent.

The inflation rate was far above the European Central Bank's (ECB) target of 2 per cent and will raise pressure on EU governments to take measures to ease the burden of energy costs.

ECB president Christine Lagarde insists that high inflation remains a temporary phenomenon linked to the coronavirus pandemic that has upset supply chains and disrupted the energy market.

The ECB must not 'overreact', Lagarde said last week, giving no sign that she would tighten easy money policies.



Christine Lagarde

Worries over the price hikes are partly vindicated by core inflation, which strips out energy and other items and stood at 1.9 per cent, up from 1.6 per cent a month earlier.

The ECB has for years used ultra-low interest rates, cheap loans to banks and mass bond-buying in a bid to drive up inflation and boost growth.

It also unleashed a €1.85tn emergency bond-purchasing programme (PEPP) last year to keep credit flowing during the

coronavirus pandemic.

Analysts said inflation was still months away from slowing, though it could fall suddenly once the supply problems and heavy demand for energy had worked themselves out.

"Eurozone inflation looks set to continue on its upward trend and we think it will soon hit 4 per cent," said Jack Allen-Reynolds, senior Europe economist at Capital Economics.

And even though 'it is likely to fall sharply next year' to below two percent, the current high rates will probably push the ECB to end its bond-buying programme, he said.

Energy prices are becoming a political flashpoint in Europe, with countries considering a wide range of emergency plans to lower prices for consumers.

Brussels is preparing a series of short-term measures such as cutting value-added tax and excises on energy, in the hope of preserving commitments for more renewable energy sources.

AFP

Bank Muscat strengthen its partnership with Dar al Atta'a

In line with its commitment to partnership in sustainable development and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider, has continued its endeavour to strengthen its partnership with NGOs to launch initiatives and programmes to support individuals and families across Oman.

The bank has extended its support to Dar al Atta'a in carrying out their back to school campaign which aims to provide support to students from low-income families. It includes providing school outfits, school bags, stationery and school meal vouchers. The campaign came in line with the start of the school year after over a year and a half of online teaching since the start of the pandemic.

Talib Saif al Makhmari, manager, Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat is delighted to continue its partnership with Dar al Atta'a to successfully carry out this campaign. We are proud to be



part of this collaboration that aims to spread joy to our students from social welfare families at the beginning of the school year and help them in minimising their financial burden.

"Such initiatives are part of our duty in enabling these organisations and strengthen our partnership with different NGOs to achieve our common goals that

place society as their number one priority." He thanked Dar al Atta'a for their tremendous efforts in organising such societal initiatives.

Bank Muscat is proud of the success and achievements of its CSR programmes, which draws from the values of leadership and partnership so as to create a positive impact on Omani society.

The Tadhamun programme has benefitted 1,691 families comprising more than 8,000 people since it was first launched in 2013. In 2021, the programme distributed 790 household appliances to 150 social welfare families across Oman. Earlier this year, the bank also provided laptops and tablets to 1,240 students from low-income families

with the aim of supporting the government's efforts to make online education available for all students in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the past four years, the bank has extended its support to the Fak Kurba initiative launched by the Oman Lawyers Association to help secure the release of those who have been jailed for failing to clear financial obligations. None of these cases relates to payments involving banks or financing firms. The total number of cases the bank has secured their release for four consecutive years reached 826 cases, including 250 cases this year only.

Bank Muscat has also cooperated with Oman Down Syndrome Association aiming to developing and enhancing the role of this organisation by providing electronic educational equipment and devices to rehabilitate people with Down Syndrome in improving their communication skills to enable them to engage with society.



Ashok Leyland introduces 9m bus variant for oil, gas segment

Ashok Leyland, the flagship company of the Hinduja Group and a transnational transportation and mobility solutions leader, introduced exclusive variant to meet growing demand in PDO [Petroleum Development of Oman] segment.

The company which has over seven decades of experience in manufacturing commercial vehicles rolled out its first Oyster bus PDO variant from its Ras al Khaimah plant in UAE. On the occasion of roll out Amandeep Singh, head - International Operations said, "As a regional player, we ensure that each variant of bus is made keeping the end user and operating conditions in mind.

"Every product of ours is

tested for endurance in the GCC climate over a long period thereby ensuring that the power train and air conditioning are the best suited for the region."

The new Oyster with PDO specifications, is the first GCC-made rollover- and frontal-crash compliant bus with factory-built features to join the 1,000 plus of Ashok Leyland buses in Oman.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani added, "MHD and Ashok Leyland relations are three decades old and we built our brand with our strong customer centric after-sales support. MHD has invested in 10 bay state-of-the-art facility in Ghala and 26 skilled technicians. We believe that customer success is our success."

JOYALUKKAS REOPENS ITS RENOVATED SHOWROOM IN THRISSUR



The renovated Joyalukkas Showroom in Thrissur (Round East) in Kerala, India was inaugurated by Mary Jacob, sister of Joy Alukkas, and her husband, Jacob Kattukaran, in the presence of Joy Alukkas (CMD, Joyalukkas Group) and his sisters

ASAAS gets new CEO

To empower Omani competencies and believe in their leadership capabilities in achieving the company's visions and aspirations, the Board of Directors of ASAAS Company announced Ahmed Mohammed al Humaidi as chief executive officer (CEO) of the company.

Humaidi has had an affluent

professional and leadership career and more than 20 years of experience in several sectors.

The most important of which are investment and real estate development. He also led several companies in the real estate development and investment sector and the membership of the boards of directors.

Sohar Port joins OC for ICC T20 World Cup

Sohar Port and Freezone has joined hands with Oman Cricket (OC) to sponsor the forthcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup, taking place in Oman and the UAE between October 17 and November 14.

H E Abdulsalam al Murshidi, Minister of Oman Investment Authority, H E Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Undersecretary of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, attended the signing ceremony in preparation to kick-off the first global event to be held in Oman.

Omar Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone and deputy CEO of Sohar Port, said, "This is a lifetime opportunity for Oman to host such a prestigious event and a milestone in our nation's sporting history. Sohar Port and Freezone always prioritises sports, health and cultural activities and we are proud to contribute to a thriving local



community through sport. Sohar's name will be seen around the world as we reach new audiences."

Pankaj Khimji, chairman, Oman Cricket, said, "To have leading corporates such as Sohar Port and Freezone as one of our partners for the World Cup event is a huge endorsement."

Roca One Day Design Challenge returns

The fourth edition of the Roca One Day Design Challenge in association with the Khimji Ramdas Group in Oman will take place on October 9, this year in an online format.

After attracting over 100 participants at national level in 2019, the competition promises to once again test the imagination and skill of hundreds of students and professional designers and architects under the age of 30 from all over the country.

They will be challenged to create innovative solutions for the bathroom space that can



contribute towards a more sustainable and conscious future. Registration for Roca One Day

Design Challenge 2021 is open until 11.59pm (UTC+4) on October 6.

Interested participants can log on to www.onedaydesignchallenge.net to register.

Roca One Day Design Challenge reflects the brand's commitment to talent, innovation and sustainability, aiming to promote the role of design in the efforts to tackle our world's current challenges, such as the climate emergency and the new social realities around the globe.

In light of the restrictions imposed by the current pandemic, the 4th Oman edition of this international competition will be held online.



Rediscover Opportunities
Invest in Oman's first and only reinsurance investment opportunity.
Oman Reinsurance Company SAOG
(Under Transformation)



CORRIGENDUM - PROSPECTUS

Reference to the Statutory Advertisement for Oman Reinsurance Company SAOG (Under Transformation) for the IPO released on 26th and 27th of September 2021.

There was an inadvertent error in Earnings per Share and Book Value per Share under the table in section 17.2 - Quantitative Factors, in the Prospectus. The same should be read as below:

Key Financials (RO Million unless stated otherwise)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Historical					Projected				
EPS*	(0.002)	0.000	0.002	0.003	0.005	0.004	0.007	0.009	0.013	0.017
Book Value*	0.075	0.073	0.074	0.077	0.085	0.089	0.096	0.105	0.118	0.135

*EPS and Book Value in Rial Omani per share.

All other contents remains the same.

Qataris vote in subdued 1st legislative poll

There are 183 candidates for 30 seats of the 45-member Shura Council, with 15 to be appointed by the Emir

Doha, Qatar - Qataris were voting in the emirate's first legislative election on Saturday, a symbolic nod to democracy that analysts say will not lead to power shifting away from the ruling family.

The vote is for 30 members of the 45-strong Shura Council, a body with limited powers that was previously appointed by the emir as an advisory chamber.

Polls close at 1500 GMT and results are expected the same day. Voting began at 0500 GMT.

More than one-third of the entire field, 101 candidates, had dropped out of the race by Saturday afternoon according to state-run Qatar TV, apparently to support other candidates in their constituencies.

After the withdrawals, there were 183 candidates in contention for the 30 seats.

The remaining 15 will be appointed by the Emir.

Across the Arabian desert peninsula nation, orderly queues of Qataris in national dress formed inside polling stations, mostly schools and sports halls.

In the 17th district, a chauffeur-driven Mercedes-Benz and a pearl white Rolls Royce SUV dropped off female voters at a primary school. Women were a majority among the steady stream of those casting ballots there at lunchtime.

Observers say the repeatedly-delayed decision to hold the



A Qatari man casts his ballot during the country's first ever legislative vote, at a polling station in the capital Doha on Saturday (AFP)

election comes with Qatar under heightened scrutiny as it prepares to host the 2022 World Cup.

All-powerful emir

Former US ambassador to Qatar Susan Zideh said Qatar was 'looking to see how it enhances its position on the world stage' which had led it to organise the

polls ahead of 2022. "They have the World Cup. That will place them on the international stage once again," she said.

The Shura will be allowed to propose legislation, approve the budget and recall ministers. But the emir, all-powerful in the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas, will wield a veto. "I'm not going to vote because

I don't think the elections are well organised," said one young Qatari who declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the election.

"I think sadly it's done for the optics rather than a genuine desire for a more transparent and fairer process."

In the working class Najma suburb, candidates and voters

paused for afternoon prayers on mats that had been set up inside the 10th district polling station which, like all others, was segregated by gender.

Beyond single-candidate town hall meetings, posters and ads, the country's electoral exercise has been limited, with no change of government possible and political parties outlawed.

This is a national duty to vote for the first elected Shura Council. Voting must be for the right person... and not by the degree of kinship or family name

ABDULLAH AL MAHRI

Candidates have uniformly avoided debate about Qatar's foreign policy or status as a monarchy, instead focussing on social issues.

'Deliver our voice'

All candidates had to be approved by the powerful interior ministry and just one in ten of the originally confirmed candidates were women.

Most of Qatar's 2.5mn residents are foreigners, ineligible to vote.

Candidates have to stand in electoral divisions linked to where their family or tribe was based in the 1930s, using data compiled by the then-British authorities.

In Al-Khor, a fishing town north of Doha, voters flocked to the polls in one district which has 13 candidates - making it one of

the most competitive races in the country.

"There are a large number of candidates... but for me the most important thing in the selection is competence," said voter Rashid Abdul Latif al Mohannadi (37).

A member of the election organising committee told AFP they expected turnout in the polling stations under their supervision 'will be large'.

Diplomatic sources suggest families and tribes have already conducted internal ballots to determine who will be elected for their constituencies, which analysts say is a consequence of not having political parties.

"This is a national duty to vote for the first elected Shura," said Abdullah Ahmed Saleh al Mahri al Mohannadi, a 52 year old legal consultant.

"Voting must be for the right person... and not by the degree of kinship or family name."

Qataris number about 333,000, but only descendants of those who were citizens in 1930 are eligible to vote and stand, disqualifying members of families naturalised since then.

Some members of the sizeable Al-Murrah tribe are among those excluded from the electoral process, sparking a fierce debate online and isolated protests.

AFP



Turkish writer Hatice Cengiz (right), fiancée of Jamal Khashoggi, poses next to his portrait on the National Mall in Washington, DC, on Friday (AFP)

Jamal Khashoggi widow urges US to hold Saudis accountable

Washington, US - Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi's widow on Friday questioned US President Joe Biden's commitment to hold the kingdom accountable three years after the writer's brutal murder.

Marking the anniversary, Hatice Cengiz travelled to Washington for a demonstration outside the Saudi Embassy and an evening vigil near the US Capitol where she unveiled a portrait of Khashoggi made out of newspaper columns.

She voiced dismay that days ahead of the anniversary, Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who US intelligence says ordered the killing.

"Is this what the accountability that Biden promised looks like?" she asked at the candlelight vigil organised by rights groups.

"MBS took Jamal from me and the entire world. Will you hold him accountable or will you reward these murderers?" she said, referring to the 36 year old heir apparent by his initials.

Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi who lived in self-exile in the United States, wrote critically about MBS in columns in *The Washington Post*.

On October 2, 2018, he entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul to file paperwork to marry Cengiz, who is Turkish.

According to US and Turkish officials, a waiting Saudi hit squad strangled him and dismembered his body, which has never been retrieved.

US president at the time Donald Trump played down the episode, saying it was more important that Saudi Arabia buys US weapons and shares hostility toward Iran.

Biden vowed a tougher approach, declassifying intelligence and imposing sanctions on Saudis although not on the crown prince himself.

US officials said Sullivan traveled to Saudi Arabia, where MBS is also Defence Minister, largely to discuss the crisis in Yemen where the kingdom has led a devastating air campaign aimed at defeating Iranian-backed Huthi rebels.

Also addressing the evening vigil was the sister of Abdulrahman al-Sadhan, a Red Crescent aid worker who was arrested in 2018 and earlier this year was handed a 20-year sentence after criticising the Saudi leadership through an anonymous Twitter account.

AFP

Philippines' Duterte says will retire from politics

Manila, Philippines - Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said on Saturday he will not run for vice president in 2022 and will retire from politics, potentially paving the way for his daughter to contest the country's highest office.

Duterte, who polls show remains almost as popular as when he was swept to victory in 2016 on a promise to rid the country of drugs, is constitutionally barred from seeking a second term as leader.

"The overwhelming... sentiment of the Filipinos is that I am not qualified and it would be a violation of the constitution to circumvent the law, the spirit of the constitution [to run for the vice presidency]," Duterte (76) said.

"Today I announce my retirement from politics."



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte speaks to the media after a political event in Pasay City, metro Manila on Saturday (AFP)

The authoritarian firebrand declared in August he would contest the country's second-highest office in the May election - a move critics said was a smokescreen and motivated by fear that he could face criminal charges after leaving office.

But a recent poll by PulseAsia

Research showed Duterte well back in second place among preferred vice presidents.

A survey by Social Weather Stations showed 60 per cent of Filipinos did not think Duterte's run for the vice presidency was in the spirit of the constitution.

Duterte made the surprise an-

nouncement at the venue where he was expected to register his candidacy. He did not specify when he would leave politics. His close aide, Senator Christopher Lawrence 'Bong' Go, registered for the vice presidency instead.

The tough-talking leader has not yet announced his preferred successor, but many expect it will be his daughter, Sara, who has been the front runner in recent polls.

"He must have realised that if both Dutertes are talked about as running in 2022 then they might stand to lose, given the last survey results," University of the Philippines political science professor Jean Franco told AFP.

Analysts say Sara would likely protect Duterte from criminal charges in the Philippines, and International Criminal Court

prosecutors probing his deadly drug war, which rights groups estimate has killed tens of thousands of people.

But the mayor of the southern city of Davao - a position held by her father before he became president - has said she would not run if Duterte sought the vice presidency.

On Saturday, Sara registered to run for her third term as mayor, state media reported.

But Franco said she has until November 15 to make a late entry into the presidential race - as her father did in 2015. Sara did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment.

The election season kicked off Friday with candidates vying for thousands of posts from president to town councillor.

AFP

Britain's top ballet stars leap back into spotlight

London, UK - After a year of playing to empty houses, Britain's Royal Ballet dancers William Bracewell and Fumi Kaneko are eager to 'celebrate what we do best' when they return to the public stage as *Romeo and Juliet*.

"I haven't done this, a three-act ballet for ages," Japanese prima ballerina Kaneko told AFP after a rehearsal of the famous balcony scene.

"To be able to dance with a whole company of ballet dancers is so special," ballerina said.

"*Romeo and Juliet* is my dream role, I'm enjoying every minute of the rehearsal right now," she said of the Kenneth MacMillan choreographed work, ahead of World Ballet Day on October 19.

In one aerial scene, Kaneko is entranced by her Romeo, Bracewell, who twirls her around and draws her closer into an embrace, crowned by a kiss.

Bracewell said the return of in-person audiences after more than a year of rolling lockdowns was 'what we needed to do, to come back together and cele-



Royal Ballet dancers Fumi Kaneko and William Bracewell rehearse a scene from Kenneth MacMillan's adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, at the Royal Opera House in central London on Thursday (AFP)

brate what we do best, which is tell those amazing stories'.

Kaneko revealed other problems thrown up by the pandemic, saying 'even when we came back to studio we had to wear masks'.

"I think we did struggle a lot, this breathing with a mask," even if it meant they 'could do what we want to do'.

Britain began lifting its coronavirus lockdown restrictions in

July, as a mass vaccination campaign reduced hospital admissions for severe COVID-19 and deaths.

Bracewell said now was the time for everyone who has made

Romeo and Juliet is my dream role, I'm enjoying every minute of the rehearsal right now

FUMI KANEKO

some sacrifices 'to start hopefully getting back to some sort of normality and getting the joyful parts of life as well'.

He praised the famous troupe, which performs at London's Royal Opera House, as being 'amazing' during the pandemic.

"They did as much as they could in a safe environment and to help us feel like we had a purpose and could dance, and still perform," he told AFP.

The dancers were able to perform online, which 'was a bit of an outlet of emotion', he added.

The ballet opens on October 5 at the Royal Opera House.

AFP

Democrats feud over spending plans as Biden vows getting done

Washington, US - President Joe Biden vowed on Friday to get his sweeping domestic agenda over the line as he visited the US Congress to energise Democrats negotiating for a second day on twin make-or-break spending bills that could define his legacy - or spell crippling political failure.

"I'm telling you, we're going to get this done," he told reporters after meeting with House Democrats who are deeply divided on a spending spree that Biden says would restore America's battered middle class.

"It doesn't matter when. It doesn't matter whether it's in six minutes, six days or six weeks, we're gonna get it done."

The unusual presidential visit follows weeks of trips by party leaders in the other direction to the White House as Biden tries to get the two ambitious spending plans passed into law.

One would funnel US\$1.2tn into repairing infrastructure and the other would allocate even more for education, child care, and promoting clean energy.

"These are his proposals. These are his bold ideas," Biden's press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters.

"This is his plan that he's outlined: To not just rebuild our roads, our railways and bridges, and put millions of people back to work, but also to make child care, elder care, (pre-school programs) more cost effective, to address the climate crisis. And he wants to make the case directly to members."

Biden's political legacy is at stake and so probably are the Democrats' chances of keeping control of Congress in midterm elections next year.

However, on Thursday, a game of chicken between moderate Democrats and more left-wing members over the bills ended in stalemate.

Their razor-thin majority in



US President Joe Biden walks with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi as he departs the US Capitol after a caucus meeting in Washington, DC, on Friday (AFP)

Congress means that even a few defections could prevent votes from succeeding.

Nancy Pelosi, the leader of the fractious House Democrats, pulled a vote on infrastructure on Friday for the second night running as congressional leaders arbitrated disputes among the party's centrist and left groupings.

Trust issue

The impasse on the Democratic side is rooted in political differences over how much the government should spend, but also on the sheer lack of trust between competing factions.

On one side, moderate senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema - popularly dubbed the 'Manchinema' duo - refuse to back the proposed US\$3.5tn price tag for the social spending package.

They do, however, support something more modest, with Manchin proposing US\$1.5tn. They also have already voted in favour of the separate US\$1.2tn infrastructure bill.

Over in the House, a younger, fiery generation of more leftwing representatives insists on keeping the US\$3.5tn number for so-

cial spending, or at least something close.

And to maintain negotiating leverage, they are refusing to back the popular infrastructure bill, saying this can only come once they know they have a 'yes' from the Democratic-controlled Senate for the social spending deal.

"If there's something else that's short of a vote, that somebody can offer me that gives me those same assurances, I want to listen to that," Pramila Jayapal, chairwoman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, told reporters, in a hint that the left

might be willing to compromise.

"But right now I'm still saying we need a vote."

Psaki said the administration's outreach to congressional Democrats and their staff had included at least 300 phone calls or meetings since September 1.

During the 2020 campaign Biden repeatedly touted his deal-making chops - established during his four decades as a senator - but he has made the journey up to Capitol Hill only rarely as president.

His in-person visit was a welcome development to rank-and-file Democrats who have been voicing hope he would get more deeply involved.

On Friday Pelosi decided against trying again straight away for a vote on the infrastructure bill, amid assurances from the progressives that they would kill it.

She now has the option of putting everything on ice to buy time for crafting an overall agreement on the two bills.

There is no hard timeline for action on either bill, and Biden will not see the lack of progress as a defeat unless it starts dragging into the election year.

With a threatened government shutdown averted until December, the next urgent deadline is to raise the national debt limit ahead of the default date of October 18 - and there is still no plan on how to accomplish it.

Usually this is not a complicated issue. This year, though, Republicans are refusing to join Democrats in granting authorization, while Democrats argue they should not have to bear responsibility alone.

The standoff leaves the United States close to the cliff edge of a default on its US\$28tn debt, with the lack of progress expected to soon start raising pulses in the financial markets.

AFP



This photo released by North Korea's official news agency shows a 'newly developed' anti-aircraft missile being test-fired (AFP)

N Korea test-fires anti-aircraft missile this week

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea has successfully fired a new anti-aircraft missile, state media said on Friday as the UN Security Council failed to issue a statement after an emergency meeting on the recent flurry of weapon-tests by the nuclear-armed nation.

The anti-aircraft missile had a 'remarkable combat performance' and included twin rudder controls and other new technologies, the official Korean Central News Agency said.

A picture in the official *Rodong Sinmun* newspaper showed the missile ascending at an angle into the sky from a launch vehicle on Thursday. It is the latest in a series of tension-raising steps by Pyongyang, which had until recently been biding its time since the change in US administrations in January.

In September, it launched what it said was a long-range cruise missile, and earlier this week tested what it described as a hypersonic gliding vehicle, which South Korea's military said appeared to be in the early stages of development.

And on Wednesday, the North's leader Kim Jong Un denounced Washington's repeated offers of talks without preconditions as a 'petty trick', accusing the Biden administration of continuing the 'hostile policy' of its predecessors.

South Korea's Defence Ministry said it was unable to immediately confirm the latest launch.

Anti-aircraft missiles are much smaller than the ballistic missiles the North is banned from developing under United Nations Security Council resolutions, and harder to detect from afar.

Pyongyang is under multiple international sanctions over its weapons programmes, which have made rapid progress under Kim, including missiles capable of reaching the whole of the US mainland and by far its most powerful nuclear test to date.

The latest tests have sparked international condemnation, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken saying they created 'greater prospects for instability and insecurity'.

Friday's UN Security Council meeting on North Korea, called by the United States, Britain and France, was originally due to take place on Thursday.

But it was delayed by Russia and China, who asked for more time to study the situation, a diplomatic source said.

The meeting lasted for just over an hour. France wanted the council to issue a public statement afterward expressing 'concern' over North Korea's behaviour but again China and Russia said they needed more time, a diplomat said.

AFP



A damaged house after a gunfight in Charikar, in Afghanistan's Parwan province, on Friday (AFP)

Afghan interpreters who worked for the Dutch summoned: TV

The Hague, Netherlands - Afghan interpreters who worked for the Netherlands have been summoned to appear in court by the Taliban who have threatened their families, Dutch public television NOS reported on Friday.

The interpreters are in hiding but their family members will be held responsible if they fail to show up in court 'and severely punished to teach other traitors a lesson', said a letter from the Taliban, which was aired by the broadcaster.

NOS said the recipient, who worked for the EU's policing agency Europol in Afghanistan, was accused of taking 'dishon-

ourable and forbidden money' from foreigners.

"We will take revenge. If we are not able to get hold of you, we will settle scores with your near ones," said another letter to an interpreter whom the Taliban accused of being responsible for the deaths of some of their fighters.

All indications show that the letters, which bear official seals, were despatched by the Taliban, NOS said.

It said it had contacted about ten interpreters or people who had worked for the Dutch and who all said their situation was becoming increasingly difficult.

The Taliban in June urged interpreters who had worked for foreign forces to repent but urged them to stay on in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of foreign forces and assured them they would not be harmed.

Just after taking power, the Taliban declared a general amnesty for Afghan government and military officials.

But despite their pledges not to avenge themselves, a confidential United Nations report said the Taliban were tracking down people who worked with foreign forces.

AFP

Kashmiri beekeepers travel southward through Indian planes for honey and cash

Pathankot, India - As the winter months near, Kashmiri beekeepers like Abid Hussain are preparing for an annual migration southward in search of warmer climes, more honey and bigger payouts.

Hussain wears protective gear on his arms and face as he reads to send his convoy of bees hundreds of kilometres from the Himalayan region into the desert state of Rajasthan.

"Everything comes to a halt in Kashmir in winter, including nature," says Hussain, who takes his colonies 750km to vast mustard fields around Sri Ganganagar on the edge of Rajasthan's Thar desert.

Dozens of his fellow beekeepers make the same autumn journey, travelling across twisting mountain highways and the northern Indian plains to reach warmer provinces.

Honey-makers started taking the journey in the 1980s, when an insect disease nearly wiped out the local population and a replacement European species - much more sensitive to the Himalayan cold - was introduced.

Now hundreds of millions of bees feast on rich farm crops to the south of Kashmir every year and help feed a honey-making boom for the beekeepers.

Each hive can net Hussain, who transports tens of millions of bees, as much as ₹9,000 (US\$120) worth of honey during his time in Sri Ganganagar.

While the bees get fed, the

mustard farmers are happy to have their crops pollinated for future harvests.

For the beekeepers, the annual pilgrimage is crucial to their survival, says Parvez Ahmad Sofi, a professor at Kashmir's agricultural university.

"Migration saves the bees from the harsh weather, helps them reproduce colonies and produce honey," he said.

Without it, the beekeepers have only two harvests a year, instead of four if they travel south.

As temperatures rise in Feb-

ruary, Hussain will begin his return north, stopping for two months in the ancient city of Pathankot near the Pakistan border.

He will lease land and wait for the flowers on lychee trees to blossom in early April, allowing him one more harvest before the final journey home.

But back in the Kashmir Valley, authorities say the region's temperatures are rising, while freak winter storms remain a threat to its wildlife.

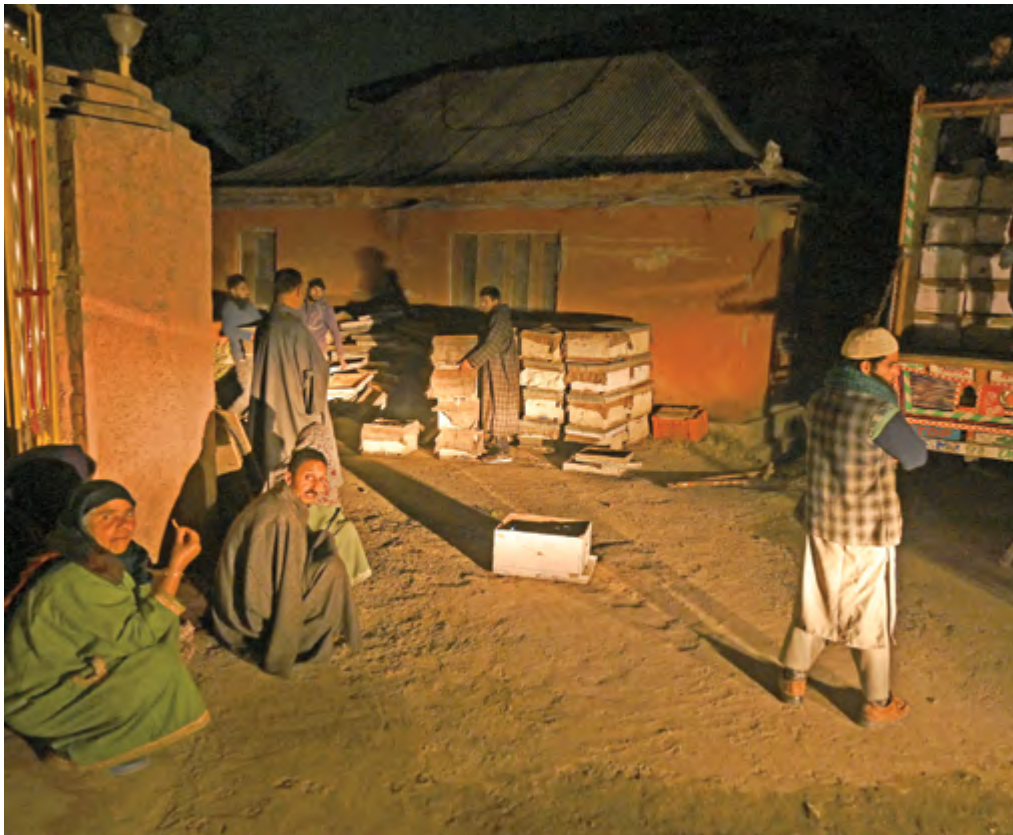
Nearly 750 tonnes of honey

were produced there last year and, while experts say the region could make more, storms, warmer winters and unpredictable rains have hit production in recent years.

Hussain says the changing climate in Kashmir makes the annual migration increasingly vital to his livelihood.

"Hot weather can destroy the flowers and the bees cannot collect nectar," he said. "In recent times, there has been more heat and too much rain."

AFP



This file photo shows Kashmiri beekeepers loading their bee colonies on to a truck, in Srinagar last year (AFP)

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

US surpasses 700,000 deaths: Johns Hopkins

The grim threshold comes with an average of well over 1,000 dying each day with only 55.7% fully vaccinated

Washington, US - US fatalities from COVID-19 surpassed 700,000 on Friday, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University, a toll roughly equivalent to the population of the nation's capital Washington.

The grim threshold comes with an average of well over 1,000 dying each day, in a country where 55.7 per cent of the population is now fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

After a heavily criticised early response to the pandemic, the United States organised an effective vaccine roll-out - only to see a significant portion of Americans still refusing to get the shots.

The United States finds itself having notched the most fatalities in the world, far exceeding other frontrunners such as Brazil and India, and facing a resurgence in cases due to the prominence of the highly contagious Delta variant.

While the latest global coro-



US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (left) and US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell testify before the House Oversight And Government Reform Committee hearings on oversight of the Treasury Department's and Federal Reserve's Pandemic Response, on Capitol Hill on Thursday (AFP)



navirus wave peaked in late August, the virus continues to spread rapidly, particularly in the United States.

The vaccination campaign launched by US authorities in December - which had reached a peak in April, with sometimes more than four million injections per day - has meanwhile slowed considerably.

Coronavirus misinformation has been rampant in the country, and masking remains a political issue, dividing many Americans.

Some Republican governors, such as those in Texas and Florida, have sought to ban mandatory masking in their states, citing individual freedoms.

The Democratic state of California on the other hand announced on Friday that COVID-19 vaccinations will be compulsory for all students.

In Washington, hundreds of thousands of white flags fluttered on the grass on the National Mall, not far from the White House, as somber reminders of those who have died

of COVID-19 in the US.

Nearly 4.8mn people worldwide have died since the outbreak began in China in December 2019, according to an AFP tally from official sources.

US to send 8mn jabs to Bangladesh, Philippines

The United States on Friday said

it is sending more than eight million COVID-19 vaccine doses to Bangladesh and the Philippines in the latest wave of aid to a world still struggling to tame the pandemic.

Five shipments totalling 5,575,050 doses will go to the Philippines by next week, a White House official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Another 2,508,480 doses will arrive early next week in Bangladesh, the official said.

The vaccines - all Pfizer-BioNTech - are being donated through the World Health Organization's Covax programme.

The 'administration understands that putting an end to this pandemic requires eliminating it around the world', the official said, noting that US donations represent 'the largest-ever purchase and donation of vaccines by a single country'.

Hard-hit Bangladesh has already received millions of US vaccine doses, including another 2.5mn sent just last week.

According to AFP's database, only about ten per cent of Bangladesh's population has been fully vaccinated.

The impoverished country of about 170mn people, which neighbours India, has imposed some of the world's longest lockdowns in an attempt to stop the spread of COVID-19 virus.

The Philippines has recorded more than 2.5mn infections, including over 38,000 deaths. Just over a quarter of the adult population has been fully vaccinated amid a delayed and slow vaccination rollout.

Officials warn the economy could take more than a decade to recover from the pandemic impact, which has thrown millions out of work.

Nearly 70 per cent of the economy, including 23.3mn workers, remained under 'heightened quarantine' restrictions, Economic Planning Secretary Karl Kendrick Chua said on Thursday. AFP

Students must get vaccinated: California

Los Angeles, US - COVID-19 vaccinations will be compulsory for all students in California, the state's governor announced on Friday - a first in the United States, where vaccine hesitancy has slowed efforts to end the pandemic.

The plan will be phased in as Food and Drug Administration regulators grant full approval for use in younger age groups.

California 'will require our kids to get the COVID-19 vaccine to come to school', said Governor Gavin Newsom.

"Our schools already require vaccines for measles, mumps and more. Why? Because vaccines work. This is about keeping our kids safe and healthy."

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been granted full FDA approval for those age 16 and up.

"Once the FDA approves the vaccination in different cohorts, starting with 12 and above - grade seven to 12 - we will begin to apply that requirement in the next term," Newsom said as he made his announcement at a local school.

"We are all exhausted by this pandemic," added Newsom, saying the rules would apply to all students attending class in both the state or private education systems.



This file photo shows a man pushing his belongings past a sign announcing a free COVID-19 vaccination clinic for homeless people in Los Angeles, California on September 22 (AFP)

The rules are set to affect six million students in America's most populous state, where 84 per cent of all eligible residents have had at least one dose of the vaccine.

More than 700,000 people have died in the United States from coronavirus, with vaccines, mask-wearing and shutdowns all becoming fiercely political issues.

"Schools are actually closed more frequently in those states

that have not been more disciplined in terms in advancing more scientific and data-driven approaches to taming this disease," Newsom said.

Pfizer and BioNTech last week said they had begun submitting data to the FDA for the highly-anticipated authorisation of their vaccine for children aged five to 11.

Children have been infected in greater numbers in the latest wave driven by the Delta vari-

ant, and inoculating younger people is seen as key to keeping schools open and helping thwart the pandemic.

The Pfizer vaccine received full, formal approval in the United States in August and is technically available to younger children if prescribed by a doctor.

Pfizer and BioNTech are also testing their vaccine on children as young as two.

AFP

Brazil top court upholds vaccine pass for tourist hotspot Rio

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - Brazil's Supreme Court has upheld a requirement that all who access Rio de Janeiro's tourist spots starting on Friday must have a COVID-19 vaccine certificate.

The mandate also applies for access to other public spaces such as cinemas, theaters, gyms, museums, sports stadiums and conference venues - but not restaurants, bars or shopping malls.

Foreign visitors are allowed to present an international health pass.

A judge in a lower court had scrapped the measure, calling it tantamount to 'health dictatorship'.

But federal supreme court justice Luiz Fux reversed that decision on Thursday night, arguing that the efforts to combat the pandemic, such as the health pass, are the responsibility of the mayor's office.

"This is a tourist city that wants to celebrate New Year's, carnival and summer with its hotels full," said Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes, welcoming the court ruling.

"By the second half of November, almost 100 per cent of (Rio residents) will have taken



This file photo shows a Brazilian volunteer receiving a coronavirus vaccine at the Sao Lucas Hospital in Porto Alegre, on August 8 (AFP)

the second dose.... With the passport we want to tell the responsible tourist who was vaccinated: 'Come without worry'."

And to those who are unvaccinated, Paes offered a blunt message: "Please don't come, you will not be welcome in Rio de Janeiro."

The city of 6.8mn people famous for its beautiful beaches and breathtaking views has seen a surge of coronavirus infections recently because of the Delta variant.

Rio is betting on widespread vaccination to bring back beloved events such as its annual carnival, the world's largest, which had to be canceled this year because of the

pandemic.

Brazil, a country of 213mn people, has registered nearly 600,000 COVID-19 deaths, a toll second only to the United States.

Rio has a reported coronavirus death rate of 439 per 100,000 inhabitants - far higher than the national average of 280. Brazil had a late start with coronavirus vaccination but is now the country with the fourth-most doses administered.

Nearly two-thirds of the population have received at least one vaccine dose, and 35 per cent are fully immunized. In Rio, that figure is nearly 50 per cent. AFP

Thailand's tourism haven Phuket opens to all vaccinated travellers

Bangkok, Thailand - Fully vaccinated travellers from any country can now book holidays to tourism haven Phuket, the Thai government has announced, under tweaks to a struggling quarantine-free travel scheme.

Thailand's tourism industry has been on its knees, with the coronavirus pandemic and related restrictions slashing visitor numbers from 40mn in 2019 to a mere trickle over the last two years.

Pre-virus, the sector made up a fifth of Thailand's national income, and the travel curbs have fed into the country's worst economic performance in more than two decades.

The kingdom launched a 'sandbox' scheme in July, which allowed fully vaccinated travellers from countries considered low-to-medium risk to roam free



This file photo shows a medical centre conducting swab tests in Phuket on September 20 (AFP)

on the popular beach island for a fortnight, and then afterwards travel to the mainland without quarantine.

Last week, authorities cut the required stay to a week, in line with national changes to quarantine rules.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand announced late on Friday that the scheme had been broadened from the around 80

countries already eligible.

'This means Thailand is now welcoming travellers from any country in the world to the sand-

box programme,' it said.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Tanee Sangrat said unvaccinated children would be able to travel with their vaccinated parents.

The sandbox programme has already lured more than 38,000 visitors to the white sands of Phuket, and generated US\$66.67mn. But tourism operators are lukewarm on the revival of the island's economy, where 90 per cent of hotels have been shuttered.

They have been pleading for the government to simplify entry requirements to increase visitor numbers.

The changes will allow previously excluded Indonesians and Malaysians to travel to Phuket.

Before the pandemic, Malaysia was Thailand's second biggest source of tourists, with

more than four million travellers visiting in 2019.

Thai authorities hope to reopen five other destinations, including capital Bangkok, using the sandbox model from the start of November, followed by 20 more locations in December once vaccination rates increase.

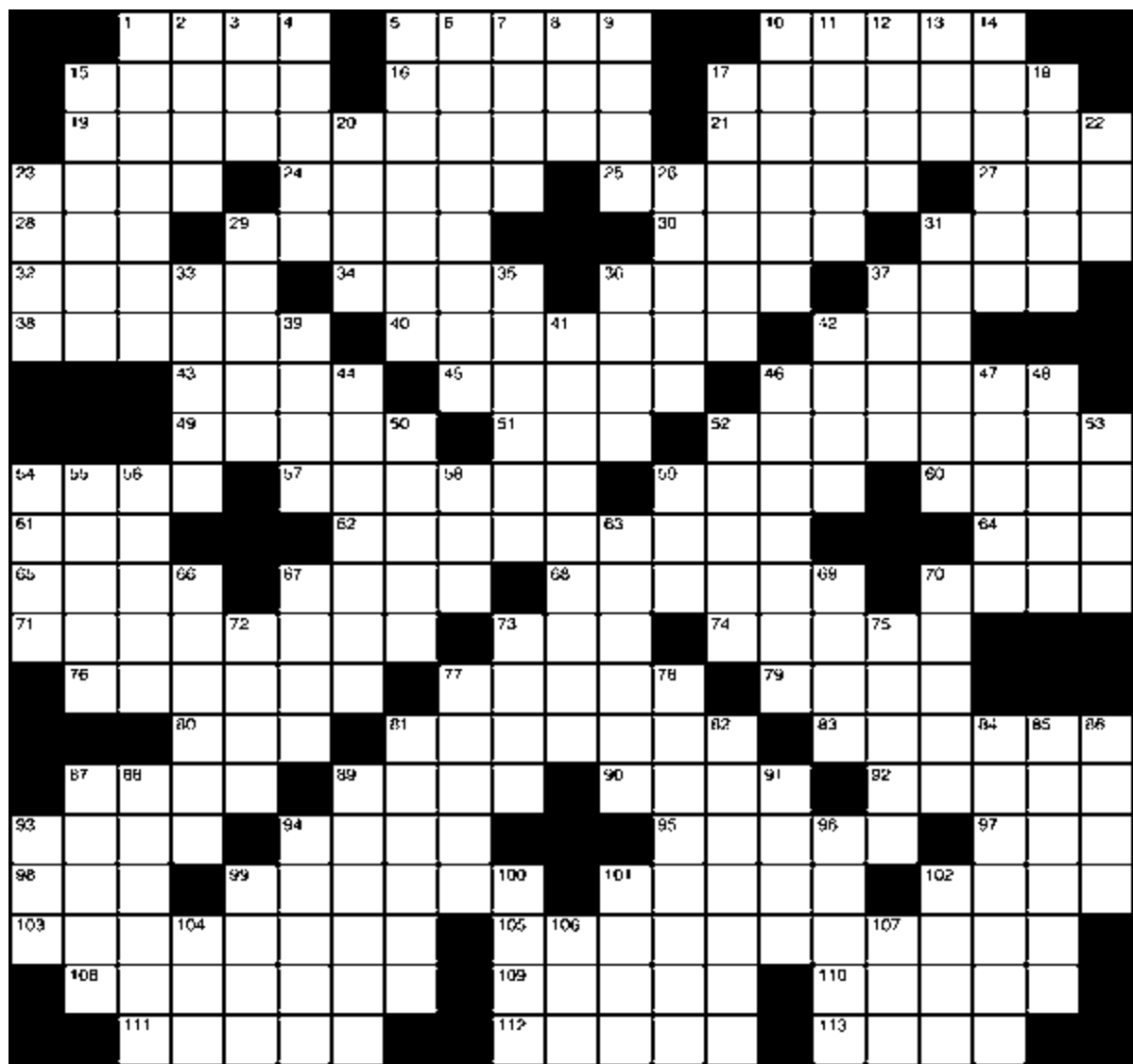
However, travel advice from other countries discouraging would-be tourists could hamper Thailand's plans to reboot the industry.

Britain and the US have issued travel warnings as the country grapples with a deadly third wave of the virus and low vaccination rates.

Daily new case numbers are hovering at around 11,000, following a peak of 23,000 in August - but testing levels have also declined.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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- ACROSS**

1 Former Mets' stadium, now Citi

5 Kind of breath

10 Puppeteer Lewis

15 Case

16 Mites

17 Part of USA

19 "Z"

21 Cognomen

23 Location

24 Stable babies

25 Hunts

27 ___ McClanahan

28 Legal rep.

29 ___ Cats, band

30 Ginger ___

31 Disney's Daisy

32 Sea animal

34 ___ and Sciences

36 Pairs

37 Domino

38 From Damascus

40 Usher's job

42 Cut off

43 On

45 Perfume

46 Short-sighted

49 Library word

51 Execs

52 In a gentle manner

54 Lassie's offspring

57 Deleted

59 Algerian port

60 Ocho ___

61 Neat ___ pin

62 Pry

64 Navigational heading

65 Sandwich staple fish

67 Whopper

68 "Streetcar" star

70 Sonny's ex

71 Belongs to Chelsea

73 Wahini's offering

74 What "mark twain" measured

76 Frivolity

77 Bambi and others when adult

79 Stagger

80 Proof of age

81 Indian dishes

83 Lie low

87 Basics

89 Miss West and others

90 Defense group

92 Edison's Park

93 ___-dieu

94 Nuthatch, for one

95 Fills

97 ___-tse

98 Total: abbr.

99 Recipients

101 Substitute money

102 Kiln

103 Tire

105 Banking options

108 Sahara and Gobi

109 Minor diety

110 Hundred Years' War battle

111 Clamor

112 Creator of R.P. McMurphy

113 Quiet!

DOWN

1 Break

2 Now's companion

3 BPOE member

4 Up

5 Flea markets

6 Attendants

7 Sailors

8 Goof

9 Vaya con ___

10 Grins

11 Mild expletives

12 Boats

13 Movie dog's first name?

14 Early aviator

15 "... the village ___..."

17 Computer term

18 Frenzied

20 Tribunals

22 "___, a mouse!"

23 Adages

26 Mock

29 Use the rink

31 Nattily dressed

33 Deceitful ones

42 A Redgrave

44 Crime of lying

46 Wander

47 From Cork

48 Actress

49 Glenn ___

50 Keens

52 Inclination

53 Belgian river

54 Aisle

55 Customary

56 Lightweight velvet

58 Texas univ.

59 Grandpa in Ulm

63 Genesis

66 Jeanne Phillips output

67 ___ go

69 Oil cartel

70 Daphnis' love

72 Caps

73 PO sight

75 "___ of Endearment"

77 Shoe material

78 Marine scene

81 Editorial marks

82 Like potatoes

84 Open

85 Ritzy

86 A ___ and a holler

87 ___ to the teeth

88 "Once ___..."

89 Man or steak

91 Of the ear

93 Baby food

94 Uncouth ones

96 Era

99 Three in Bonn

100 Submerge

101 Spade and Goldwyn

102 Dollar bills

104 That: Sp.

106 Deli choice

107 East of Arg

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

- ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You may feel somewhat dissociated today, as if you're watching yourself from a distance. This discontinuity between mind and body can be disconcerting, but it can also be a fascinating exercise if you attempt to see yourself from an objective view. You are feeling fragile, though, and the least show of opposition could elicit an emotional response that is wildly out of proportion.
- LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Now is not the time for superficial judgments and snap decisions. Whatever situation you're facing deserves very careful consideration and a thorough check with your intuition. Taking what appears to be the path of least resistance could find you trudging up a steep, rocky hill in the very near future. Look to your interests and be aware of what others could stand to gain.
- SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

The pictures in your head may seem more real than what your eyes actually see today. You're so wrapped up in your own thoughts there's a danger you could bump into a post or step off the curb without looking. When others speak to you, you may not hear them at all, or it could seem as if they're calling to you from across a wide canyon.
- TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

The green-eyed monster strikes. Are you going to let it take over? Your feelings of envy may be directed at a lover who seems to be having too much fun, at a friend who receives some very good news or at a coworker who is showered with recognition you feel is undeserved. Showing anger may temporarily mask your feelings, but you'll have to face your own vulnerability.
- VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your desire to get ahead could find you in an audience of equally ambitious folks, listening to an exciting business presentation. But hold your horses before you go galloping off in pursuit of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Does this opportunity truly have the potential the presenter depicts? The only way to find out is to thoroughly investigate the company.
- CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You effortlessly see both sides of a question. Consequently, you have no trouble making decisions as circumstances demand and no problem explaining the reasons behind your conclusions. The best part is you don't feel the least bit of hesitation or ambivalence; the right choice seems so obvious. Others respect your integrity, so they accept your conclusions.
- GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you've been putting off a visit to the doctor because you've just been too busy, pick up the phone and make the appointment today. Whether you need to investigate a symptom or are taking a proactive, preventive approach by arranging for a physical or some other kind of routine testing, you are taking the right step. Your health is your most valuable asset and it deserves much care.
- LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Demands on your time, your chequebook or your emotional support could leave you drained and feeling somewhat selfish by the end of the day. Perhaps too many people are laying claim to various parts of you, causing you to feel as if you have no energy or time for yourself. This kind of dependence rarely goes away on its own, so you may need to take a series of small steps.
- AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Work may not be as satisfying these days as it once was. Maybe you've grown so used to your job that it no longer stimulates your creativity, or perhaps your principal interests have simply moved in another direction. Reconciling this situation could be as simple as adding some extracurricular activities to your after-work existence or as complicated as changing careers.
- CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

Peer pressure and pushy salespeople can be hard to resist, but you want to give all forms of intimidation a wide berth today. Look at these urgings for what they are -- others' attempts to influence your will and your actions. Even if no harm were to come from your acquiescence, you would still have a lingering feeling of having been manipulated. Stand your ground.
- SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You forge ahead like a locomotive full of steam today. Nothing can stop you -- you're so compelling no one even bothers to stand in your way. Quite the contrary. Everyone is trying to jump on your train and go for the ride of their lives. Enjoy the attention and the accolades, but remember that even the mightiest engine needs to stop and refuel from time to time.
- PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Has your heart been bruised recently? You're feeling so sensitive that the slightest emotional prod could cause a big lump to form in your throat or send you running out of the room in tears. The unwitting agent of your distress may need as much consolation as you do. They will be shocked that their innocuous remark elicited such a reaction.

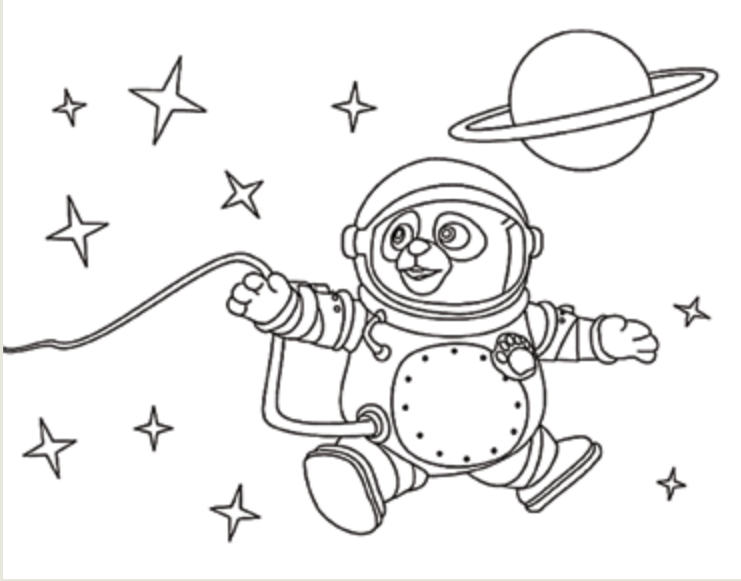


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The Naked Face a very popular book is written by
- a. Dominique Lapierre
- b. Larry Collins
- c. Sidney Sheldon
- d. Juan Benet
2. The author of controversial book Taj Mahal is a citizen of
- a. Pakistan
- b. Indonesia
- c. Bangladesh
- d. India
3. The first history book was written by
- a. Euclid
- b. Herodotus
- c. Aristotle
- d. Julius Caesar

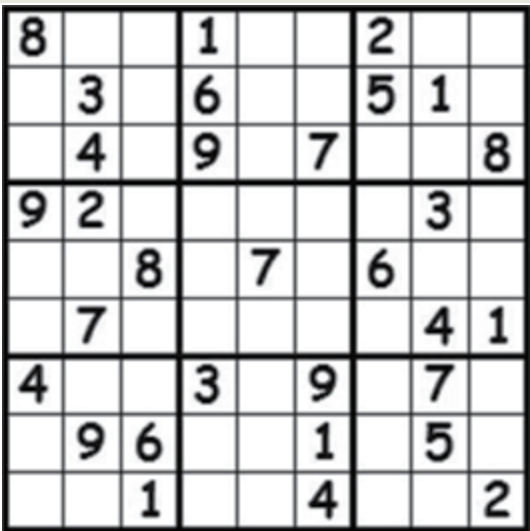
Answers: 1. c 2. b 3. d

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



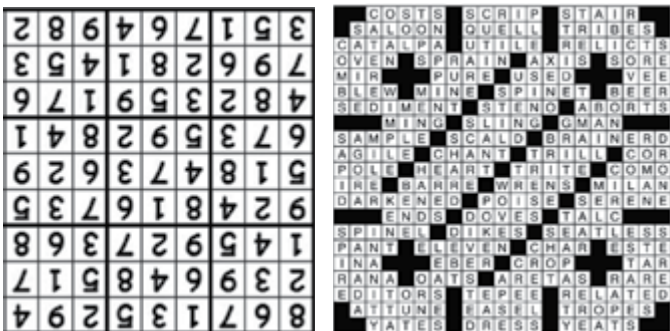
BOGGLER



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 30)

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



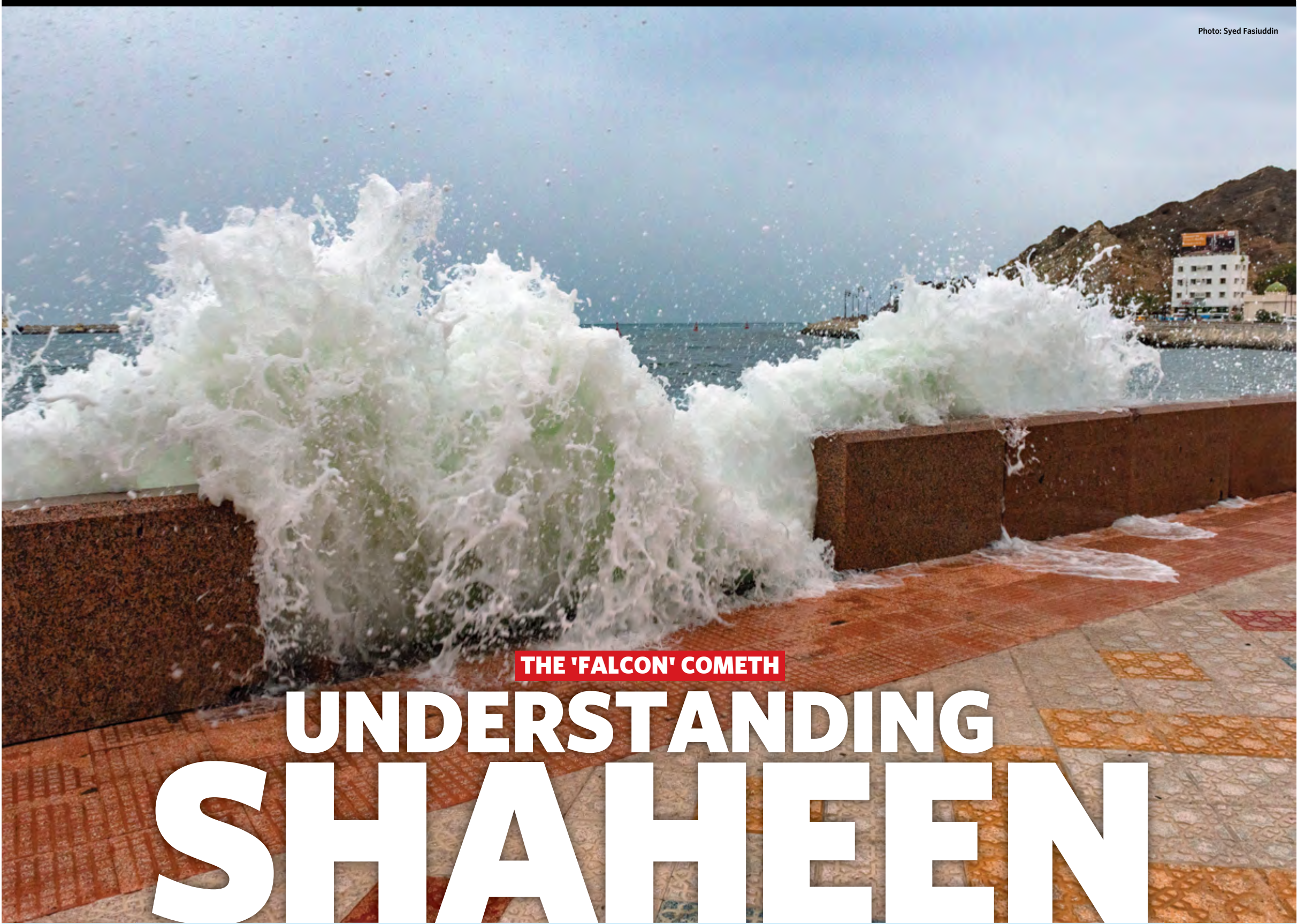


Photo: Syed Fasiuddin

THE 'FALCON' COMETH

UNDERSTANDING SHAHEEN

Tropical cyclone ‘Shaheen’, that is fast moving towards the coast of Oman, is expected to offer Muscat a vigorous greeting, with strong winds and torrential rains today

Oman braces itself today for Shaheen, the arriving tropical cyclone, though the exact strength and implication of this expected weather phenomenon with an unpredictable outcome is yet to be ascertained.

Be prepared, avoid venturing outdoors in the afternoon, and take precautions for your own safety. This includes not parking cars along any low-lying or unsafe areas, having enough food and water supply at home, and keeping candles and emergency lights charged, in case of a power outage.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has issued an alert which configures the arriving tropical storm Shaheen as a 'category 1' tropical cyclone. The CAA said that the storm will directly impact coastal areas, including the capital Muscat from Sunday.

According to the India Meteorological Department, the severe cyclonic storm 'Shaheen' was yesterday 240 km east-southeast of Chabahar Port (Iran) and seen to be moving west-northwestwards, skirting Makran coast. Thereafter, it was likely to re-curve west-southwestwards, move towards Oman coast across Gulf of Oman and expected to weaken gradually.

Shaheen means ‘falcon’

Shaheen is an Arabic word that means ‘falcon’ and was provided by Qatar as part of the naming system for tropical storms that form over the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. The responsibility of naming tropical storms and cyclones that originate in these regions falls to the countries that border these bodies of water, a system adopted by the World Meteorological Organisation of the United Nations.

Understanding a tropical cyclone

Tropical cyclones, also known as typhoons or hurricanes, are among the most destructive weather phenomena. They are intense circular storms that originate over warm tropical oceans, and have maximum sustained wind speeds exceeding 120kmph and are accompanied by torrential rains. However, the

IMPACTS OF TROPICAL CYCLONES

Tropical cyclones are dangerous because they can produce extreme winds, heavy rainfall with flooding and damaging storm surge that can cause inundation of low-lying coastal areas – in Muscat, typically Shatti Qurm, besides Muttrah, Hamriyah, Ghubra and Azaiba along the seacoast.

Wind

Cyclones have gale force winds with wind gusts in excess of 90kmph around their centre. In the most severe cyclones, gusts can exceed 280kmph. These winds can cause extensive property damage and turn airborne debris into potentially lethal missiles. It is important to remember when the eye of a cyclone passes over a location, there will be a temporary lull in the wind, but that this will soon be replaced by destructive winds from another direction.

Rain

Heavy rainfall associated with the passage of a tropical cyclone can produce extensive flooding. This can cause further damage.



The heavy rain can persist as the cyclone moves inland and weakens into a low pressure system, hence flooding due to an extratropical cyclone can occur a long way from where the cyclone made landfall.

Storm surge

Besides extreme winds, a tropical cyclone

can cause the sea to rise well above the highest tide levels of the year when it comes ashore. These storm surges are caused mainly by strong, onshore winds and also reduced atmospheric pressure. Potentially, the storm surge is the most dangerous hazard associated with a tropical cyclone.

Research, however, indicates that over the past 30 years, the proportion of the world's population living on cyclone-exposed coastlines has increased 192 per cent, thus raising the risk of mortality and morbidity in the event of a tropical cyclone.

How do tropical cyclones form?

A cluster of thunderstorms can develop over warm tropical oceans. If that cluster persists in an area of low pressure, it can start rotating. If the conditions are just right, the cluster of thunderstorms can grow in size and sustain itself and then develop into a tropical cyclone.

Once developed, a tropical cyclone is like a giant, atmospheric heat engine. The moisture from the warm ocean acts as it's fuel, generating huge amounts of energy as clouds form.

The rotating thunderstorms form spiral 'rainbands' around the centre (eye) of the cyclone where the strongest winds and heaviest rain are found (eye wall), transporting heat 15km or higher into the atmosphere. The drier cooler air at the top of the atmosphere becomes the exhaust gas of the heat engine.

The wind field of a tropical cyclone may be divided into three regions. First is a ring-shaped outer region, typically having an outer radius of about 160 km and an inner radius of about 30 to 50 km. In this region the winds increase uniformly in speed toward the centre.

Wind speeds attain their maximum value at the second region, the eye wall, which is typically 15 to 30 km from the centre of the storm. The eye wall, in turn, surrounds the interior region, called the eye, where wind speeds decrease rapidly and the air is often calm.

TROPICAL CYCLONE CATEGORIES

CATEGORY 1

Negligible house damage. Damage to some crops, trees and caravans. A category one cyclone's strongest winds are gales with typical gusts over open flat land of 90-125kmph.

CATEGORY 2

Minor house damage. Significant damage to signs, trees and caravans. Heavy damage to some crops. Risk of power failure. A category two cyclone's strongest winds are destructive winds with typical gusts over open flat land of 125-164kph.

CATEGORY 3

This is a severe cyclone causing structural damage. Power failures likely. A category three cyclone's strongest winds are very destructive winds with typical gusts over open flat land of 165-224kph.

CATEGORY 4

This is also a severe cyclone causing significant roofing loss and structural damage. It carries dangerous airborne debris and causes widespread power failures. A category four cyclone's strongest winds are very destructive winds with typical gusts over open flat land of 225-279kph.

CATEGORY 5

This is an extremely dangerous cyclone with widespread destruction. A category five cyclone's strongest winds are very destructive winds with typical gusts over open flat land of more than 280kph.

RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND-UP

Boks stun All Blacks

SOUTH AFRICA VS NEW ZEALAND

Gold Coast, Australia - Elton Jantjies nailed a penalty after the final hooter as world champions South Africa snapped a three-game losing streak to stun New Zealand 31-29 on Saturday in a Rugby Championship thriller.

Damian de Allende and Makazole Mapimpi scored tries in the gutsy win as they bounced back from 20-14 behind at half-time, with the lead changing hands four times in a breathless final five minutes.

It was sweet revenge for the Springboks after a bitter last-gasp 17-19 defeat to New Zealand a week ago, which came on the back of two successive losses to Australia.

After trailing at the break, the Springboks were revitalised when coach Jacques Nienaber changed the entire front row.

Mapimpi's try early in the second stanza boosted their confidence and they piled intense pressure on New Zealand, forcing errors from a team that had won their previous ten games.

Ultimately, it came down to the final few minutes, and Jantjies was the hero, converting a simple penalty in front of the posts after an offside decision.

"It's been a tough couple of weeks, thank you so much to South African fans for sticking with us," said Springboks skipper Siya Kolisi. "We going to celebrate tonight."

Despite losing the All Blacks had already sealed the southern hemisphere title, standing them in good stead heading to the US, then a European tour later this month.

"Congratulations South Africa, they were awesome," said skipper Ardie Savea. "We fought till the end but unfortunately we didn't come out on top, but that's ok."



World champions South Africa celebrate their win over New Zealand that snapped their three-Test losing streak to All Blacks on Saturday



Australia's Andrew Kellaway in action against Argentina during their Rugby Championship match on Saturday

AUSTRALIA VS ARGENTINA

Kellaway's hat-trick in Wallabies win

Gold Coast, Australia - Andrew Kellaway scored a hat-trick as

Australia made it four wins in a row with a comprehensive 32-17 victory over Argentina on Saturday in the Rugby Championship.

The winger has now crossed for seven tries since his international debut against New Zealand earlier this year and the Wallabies can head on their

European tour full of confidence. The hosts led 32-3 midway through the second half on the Gold Coast and despite a late surge by the Pumas, they

were always in control.

Argentina, who went into the match on the back of five consecutive losses in the Rugby Championship, endured rocky preparations after six players and two officials broke coronavirus regulations and were barred from playing.

Australian captain Michael Hooper said that while he was pleased with the win, he was disappointed to let Argentina in for two late tries. "It was a good game, we created a lot of opportunities, but it was just sloppy at the end," he said.

"We were sloppy with our discipline and that's something we wanted to be good at tonight."

"I think for parts we were really, really good and hurt them quite easily at times and built some good pressure. But we just kept letting them in the game."

The Pumas were missing key forwards Pablo Matera and prop Santiago Medrano after they were among those who broke

Australian coronavirus travel rules, and they proved major losses at scrum time. The Wallabies had the Argentine scrum under enormous pressure from the outset, winning a string of penalties as the Pumas' scrum collapsed.

"It's been really consistent, the mistakes we've been making," Pumas coach Mario Ledesma said.

"Discipline, our set pieces, especially our scrum, not scoring when we have opportunities."

Ledesma said his side had shown character to fight back after conceding three second-half tries, especially as the Pumas have been on the road since July.

"They've been playing for 12 months now," he said, pointing out the players had come straight from their club seasons into the Pumas camp. "It's not the best way to prepare," he said. "They need rest."

AFP

QUICK RUN

Evans powers into Rally Finland lead as Rovanner exits

Elfyn Evans charged into the lead at Rally Finland in Jyväskylä, Finland, on Saturday and won all four morning stages as Toyota teammate Kalle Rovanner crashed out after ploughing into a gravel pile. Overnight leader Craig Breen trails Welshman Evans by 5.6 seconds through 10 of 19 specials, with 2019 world champion Ott Tänak third at 9.7sec. Local favourite Rovanner was in fourth place when his hopes of home success came to an abrupt halt after his Toyota was damaged beyond repair on stage ten. The Finn's retirement allowed championship leader Sebastien Ogier to climb to sixth. The French driver could clinch an eighth world title this weekend if results go his way, but is almost a minute off the pace. Japan's Takamoto Katsuta was forced out on stage eight when his Toyota landed awkwardly after a jump and went into the undergrowth.

FIFA announces 'Football Tribunal' is up and running

FIFA said on Friday a new 'Football Tribunal' to unite its various disciplinary and dispute-resolution processes under a 'single umbrella body' had started operating. The world governing body said the tribunal will, ultimately, be made up of three chambers. The 'Dispute Resolution Chamber' will decide 'employment-related disputes between players and clubs' and financial issues over training. The 'Players' Status Chamber' will resolve disputes between coaches and clubs or associations and transfer disputes between clubs as well as making 'regulatory' decisions on international transfers and national-team eligibility. The members of those panels have already been chosen. The plan also calls for an 'Agents Chamber', to be created after FIFA has revised its rules on agents. FIFA estimated that the first chamber will decide 'approximately 3,500 disputes per year', while the second would 'rule on approximately 700 disputes and 6,000 regulatory applications' annually. AFP

OCT Ruwi, Bank Muscat begin campaign with wins

LOCAL CRICKET

Zubair Al Balushi's spell of four for ten and Wasim Ismail's 58 led OCT Ruwi to a seven-wicket win over OCT Muscat in an Oman Cricket B Division (30-over-a-side) game as the 2021-22 domestic season began at Al Amerat on Friday.

In another match of the same division, Amir Mehmood's

four-for guided Bank Muscat to a 33-run victory over OCT Al Hail-A in their opening clash.

Elsewhere, the C Division T20 matches witnessed wins for Ideal International and Vanderlande.

BRIEF SCORES

B Division (30-over-a-side):

OCT Muscat 105 in 24.3 overs (Ahmed al Balushi 30; Zubair al



Rahul Chadha of Vanderlande

Balushi 4-10) lost to OCT Ruwi 107-3 in 12 overs (Wasim al Balushi 58).

Bank Muscat 159 in 26 overs (Mubashar Iqbal 31, Mohsin Nazir 29; Hisham Shafi 3-32, Nadhir Ghulam 2-27) beat OCT Al Hail-A 126 in 24.5 overs (Waleed al Balushi 40; Mehmood 4-28, Ajay Hirlekar 3-29).

C Division (T20)

Al Jadidi Engineering and Contracting 110 in 19.1 overs (Feroz Vazhayil 57; Asim Mohammed 3-22, Rahul Chadha 3-24, Joseph Navin 2-12) lost to Vanderlande 113 for no loss in 11.3 overs (Chadha 74, Prasanth Reddy Thonduru 35).

Design Group Engineering Consultants 142 in 20 overs (Chaitanya 31; Wasim Jamadar 3-14, Nikhil Varsani 3-23, Sachin Mamnani 2-20, Ruban Durai 2-29) lost to Ideal International 146-6 in 13.5 overs (Ruban Durai 74, Jamadar 29; Mohammed Haris 2-25, Jibin Kunumpurath 2-30).

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

No regrets, says Solskjaer after resting Ronaldo

Townsend strike earns Everton draw at Man United

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Manchester, UK - Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said he did not regret resting Cristiano Ronaldo after Manchester United let two more English Premier League (EPL) points slip away at Old Trafford as Everton emerged with a 1-1 draw on Saturday.

United missed the chance to move top of the Premier League and needed a late VAR call in their favour to avoid a second consecutive home league defeat.

Yerry Mina's late winner for the Toffees was ruled out by a review for offside after Andros Townsend's excellent equaliser had cancelled out Anthony Martial's opener for United.

Solskjaer's decision to start Ronaldo on the bench will be questioned as the Red Devils have now won just two of their last six games in all competitions.

But the manager defended



Manchester United's manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (C) directs his players during the match against Everton

that call and his side's start to the season as they moved level on points with Liverpool and one ahead of champions Manchester City before those two teams clash at Anfield on Sunday.

"You make decisions throughout the season, you've got to manage the players' workload," said Solskjaer. "The decision was, for me, the correct one today."

"We have started better than

last season, but it is still not what we wanted."

Ronaldo's heroics deep into stoppage time against Villarreal on Wednesday saved United from having a mountain to climb to reach the knockout stages of the Champions League.

But Solskjaer did not risk the 36-year-old with a third start in a week as he took his place on a star-studded bench alongside

Jadon Sancho and Paul Pogba among five changes.

OTHER RESULTS

Burnley 0 Norwich 0, Chelsea 3 (Chalobah 9, Werner 84, Chilwell 89) Southampton 1 (Ward-Prowse 61-pen), Leeds 1 (Llorente 18) Watford 0, Wolves 2 (Hwang 20, 58) Newcastle 1 (Hendrick 41). AFP

Lens cut PSG lead to six points in empty stadium

FRENCH LEAGUE

Paris, France - Lens cut Paris Saint-Germain's lead at the top of Ligue 1 to six points on Friday with a 2-0 win over Reims although their fans were forced to stay away.

Teenage striker Arnaud Kalimuendo, on loan from PSG, scored both Lens goals as the team moved to 18 points.

PSG lead with 24 points from eight games and have a game in hand. Lens were playing their second home match at Stade Bollaert behind closed doors following crowd trouble last month in the local derby with Lille.

Kalimuendo, just 19, opened the scoring on the stroke of half-time from the penalty spot after a red card handed to Reims teenage winger Hugo Ekitike for dangerous play.

Kalimuendo added his second in the 52nd minute as Lens bounced back from a 1-0 loss to Strasbourg in their last, crowd-less, home game.



Lens' forward Arnaud Kalimuendo (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Reims at Stade Bollaert-Delelis in Lens, on Friday (AFP)

"We were in control. Obviously, with the penalty and the red card, it helped us to intensify our control," said Lens coach Franck Haise.

"To be second in the table heading into the international break, with an average of two points per game, it's beautiful."

PSG will look to restore their nine-point lead when they travel

to Rennes on Sunday.

OTHER RESULTS

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Friday: Cagliari 1 Venezia 1.

Saturday: Salernitana 1 Genoa 0.

GERMAN LEAGUE

Friday: Cologne 3 Greuther Fuerth 1.

AFP

Williams sets Spanish League consecutive games record

SPANISH LEAGUE

Madrid, Spain - Athletic Bilbao striker Inaki Williams set a new La Liga record on Friday when he played his 203rd consecutive game, having not missed a match since 2016.

After equalling the mark of 202 in a row set by Ion Andoni Larranaga with Real Sociedad between 1986 and 1992, Williams broke the record in the home game against Alaves.

His tireless run began on April 20, 2016, in a match against Atletico Madrid at Bilbao's San Mames home. He then played in the four remaining games that season before featuring in five entire seasons, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

In the current campaign, he has played in all eight top-flight games. Before Friday, the 27-year-old had started 168 games and appeared as a substitute on 34 occasions.

AFP

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

I am able to read the batter more easily and can plan better. If I can think about what the batter is doing and deny them the ideal ball, I can be more successful

Axar Patel
Delhi spinner, after his three-wicket haul against Mumbai, on Saturday



DELHI DEFEAT MUMBAI



Delhi Capitals' Shreyas Iyer and R Ashwin during their unbroken partnership against Mumbai in Sharjah on Saturday

DELHI VS MUMBAI

Sharjah, UAE - Mumbai Indians threatened to defend 129 on a sluggish Sharjah track on Saturday, but Shreyas Iyer denied their playoff chances and strengthened Delhi Capitals' own chances of a top-two finish with a smart innings in the company of R Ashwin.

Iyer absorbed the pressure created by the fall of three wickets within the first five overs of the chase and ushered Capitals home with five balls to spare.

Despite the defeat on Saturday, Mumbai Indians could still sneak into the final four, but in addition to needing to win their remaining two games against Rajasthan Royals and Sunrisers Hyderabad, they must also rely on favours from other sides.

It was Capitals' depleted attack that set up the victory. While Avesh Khan and Anrich Nortje defied the slowness of the pitch with a hair-raising display of pace and guile, left-arm finger-spinner Axar Patel thrived with his more subtle variations.

The Capitals left out off-spin-bowling allrounder Lalit Yadav to welcome back Prithvi Shaw, which meant they had only five bowling options at their disposal. It proved enough, with the seamers dovetailing beautifully with Axar. It was Avesh who produced the first breakthrough when Rohit Sharma - believe it or not - miscued a pull to deep third man.

Axar then ran into two

left-handers and trumped both of them. He first dangled one away from Quinton de Kock's reach and had him carving a catch to backward point. Then, he zipped one away from Saurabh Tiwary from around the wicket, drawing a top edge. Axar also had Suryakumar Yadav holing out later with a dipping full-toss, ending with three for 21 in his four overs.

Nortje and Avesh wreck middle order

Mumbai's middle order largely strolled through the middle overs, not managing to score even a single boundary for 35 balls between the 11th and 17th overs. After pounding the deck with heavy lengths in the early exchanges, Nortje cut his pace down to 123kph and had Kieron Pollard chopping on in the 15th over.

Avesh yorked both Hardik Pandya and Nathan Coulter-Nile and although the last over, bowled by Ashwin, went for 13 runs, Mumbai were kept to a sub-130 total.

Iyer and Ashwin get the job done

That total, however, looked a whole lot bigger once the Capitals lost their top three early. It was Pollard who had launched a familiar Mumbai comeback when he swooped in from mid-on and nailed a direct hit to run out Shikhar Dhawan for eight. Rishabh Pant then chanced his arm and swung his

SCOREBOARD	
MUMBAI INDIANS	
Rohit Sharma c Rabada b Avesh Khan 7 (10)	
Q de Kock c Nortje b Axar Patel 19 (18)	
S Yadav c Rabada b Axar 33 (26)	
S Tiwary c Pant b Axar 15 (18)	
K Pollard b Nortje 6 (9)	
H Pandya b Avesh Khan 17 (18)	
K Pandya not out 13 (15)	
N Coulter-Nile b Avesh Khan 1 (2)	
J Yadav c Smith b Ashwin 11 (4)	
J Bumrah not out 1 (1)	
Extras: (nb 1, w 5) 6	
TOTAL 129 for eight in 20 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-37, 3-68, 4-80, 5-87, 6-109, 7-111, 8-122	
Bowling: A Nortje 4-1-19-1, Avesh Khan 4-0-15-3, R Ashwin 4-0-41-1, K Rabada 4-0-33-0, Axar Patel 4-0-21-3	
DELHI CAPITALS	
P Shaw lbw b K Pandya 6 (7)	
S Dhawan run out (Pollard) 8 (7)	
S Smith b Coulter-Nile 9 (8)	
R Pant c H Pandya b J Yadav 26 (22)	
S Iyer not out 33 (33)	
A Patel lbw b Boult 9 (9)	
S Hetmyer c Rohit b Bumrah 15 (8)	
R Ashwin not out 20 (21)	
Extras: (lb 2, w 4) 6	
TOTAL: 132 for six in 19.1 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-15, 3-30, 4-57, 5-77, 6-93	
Bowling: T Boult 4-0-24-1, J Yadav 4-0-31-1, K Pandya 2.1-0-18-1, J Bumrah 4-0-29-1, N Coulter-Nile 4-0-19-1, K Pollard 1-0-9-0	

TODAY'S MATCHES



ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE

VS



PUNJAB KINGS

SHARJAH, 2PM



KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

VS



SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

DUBAI, 6PM

POINTS TABLE

TEAMS	P	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
CSK	11	9	2	0	18	+1.002
DC	12	9	3	0	18	+0.551
RCB	11	7	4	0	14	-0.200
KKR	12	5	7	0	10	+0.302
PBKS	12	5	7	0	10	-0.236
MI	12	5	7	0	10	-0.453
RR	11	4	7	0	8	-0.468
SRH	11	2	9	0	4	-0.490

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

powerplay, didn't hit a boundary until the 17th over, when he swiped Coulter-Nile over midwicket. He meted out similar treatment to Bumrah in the 18th to effectively get the dirty job done.

Cricinfo

OUTSIDE IPL

Five players added to Sri Lanka squad

T20 WORLD CUP

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Pathum Nissanka, Minod Bhanuka, Ashen Bandara, Lakshan Sandakan and Ramesh Mendis have been added to Sri Lanka's squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup, while Lahiru Madushanka is left out from the original squad after failing to recover in time from the fractured collarbone he suffered against South Africa.

The additions take Sri Lanka's travelling contingent to 23 players, including four reserves, though they scarcely add any weight in terms of international experience.

While Sandakan has 20 T20I caps to his name, the other four have just 15 combined. It is also unlikely that any of them will make their way into Sri Lanka's preferred starting XI, though they do add much-needed injury cover.

As such, the inclusion of Sandakan, who had been omitted from Sri Lanka's recent home series against South



Pathum Nissanka (L) Ashen Bandara were among the five late inclusions

Africa, means there will be four specialist spinners in the squad, with him joining Wanindu Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana and Praveen Jayawickrama.

In the highly-rated Nissanka, Sri Lanka have a potential future star with an impressive domestic record - his century on Test

debut in the West Indies only reaffirmed his standing - though he is yet to impress in the shorter formats of the game.

That said, he did get a few promising starts in the recently concluded SLC T20 Invitational, including an unbeaten 76 off 54 balls.

Bandara, meanwhile, was a

surprise inclusion in Sri Lanka's tour of the West Indies earlier this year and is renowned for being a livewire in the field.

However, aside from an unbeaten half-century in a losing cause against West Indies, he hasn't done much for the national side, having been dropped for the South Africa series following a modest showing against a weakened India.

In much the same way, both Bhanuka and Mendis have made little impression in the limited outings they've had for the national side.

While Sri Lanka begin their World Cup campaign with qualifiers against Namibia, Ireland and Netherlands in Group A, they will also play two T20Is against Oman, who feature in Group B qualifiers, at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Muscat in the lead-up to that, on October 7 and 9.

The team will fly out for Oman on October 3.

Cricinfo

WCL 2 match abandoned

Muscat - Rain and bad weather led to the abandonment of the concluding match of the ongoing tri-series in the ICC World Cricket League (WCL) 2 between hosts Oman and Scotland at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground on Saturday.

Rain stopped play with Scotland at 100 for three in 23.2 overs after electing to bat first in cloudy conditions. With the weather failing to improve, the match was called off by umpires, Ahmed Shah Pakteen of Afghanistan and Harikrishna Pillai of Oman at 8.45pm.

The tri-series involved Oman, Scotland and Papua New Guinea. Scotland won all their three games they played while Oman lost against Scotland and won both the games against PNG.

Following the abandonment, Oman remain on top of the seven-nation table with 27 points from 18 matches while Scotland are second with 16 points from 12 games. USA are third with 14 from 16 matches. PNG have yet to open their account after 12 matches.

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CATEGORY: HEALTH SERVICES

Nadiya Asghar al Balushi

Nadiya al Balushi, an ambitious professional in the field of health services, says she thrives on challenges and constantly sets new goals for herself, so that she always has something to strive toward.

"I am results-oriented, constantly examining my goals, to determine how close or how far away I am from it, to devise what it takes to make it happen," says Nadiya, asserting, "I find this pressure inspiring and a great motivator for myself and the rest of my team."

One who had to opt out of school and join a perfume shop as a salesperson to support her family, Nadiya later tried to upgrade her skills by joining Badr Al Sama Hospital where she embarked on a career in customer care. Within a short time, she got promoted to staff in-charge and then as assistant HR manager. She subsequently moved on in her career and joined Aster Al Raffah Hospital as HR director.

"Achievement is associated with the targeted goals or aims in life. When we define our action in relation to something like a goal, a task is created. A task, when fulfilled, becomes an achievement. And, our struggle in life is the sum total of our achievements, success, failures, and mistakes," she says, explaining that achievements are only another name for fulfilled goals.

Satisfied with the way she successfully performs varied roles everyday - as a daughter, a wife, a mother, an employee and as socially vibrant member of the community she lives in, Nadiya believes that every role is important and occupies a place of pride in her life.

Over the past year, when the world has been in the grip of a pandemic, Nadiya admits that she and her team were successful in reaching out to several people suffering from COVID-19 by starting a 'Home care service' which helped hundreds of patients overcome their struggles with the deadly virus.

CATEGORY: HEALTHCARE

Dr Noor Kamal

Dr Noor Kamal, is the only female general practitioner from Burjeel Hospital who actively put her efforts in the COVID-19 ward to take compassionate care of COVID-19 patients, both mentally and physically. She is considered a brave 'Lady COVID warrior' because of her selfless service during the time of the pandemic.

Dr Noor had started her studies to obtain membership of the Royal College of Physicians, UK, in internal medicine, along with managing her work life and family life, and passed the exams at her very first attempt.

When the pandemic started in Oman, she was among the first doctors who dealt with COVID-19 patients at Burjeel Hospital. Dr Noor dedicated her free time at home for research by attending many relevant lectures and reading articles to develop her skills in treating and handling COVID-19 patients.

Dr Noor has a genuine interest to take care of patients knowing fully well that her own life and family is at risk due to the nature of the infection which has taken a toll among many medical practitioners all over the world. She works 8-12 hours in a day with high performance and concentration, besides pursuing membership of the Royal College of Physicians, UK, in endocrine and diabetes.

Apart, from her work life, she loves to cook and prepares delicious sweets and traditional food for her family. She is also a step ahead in educating her patients and the public, and has conducted many awareness sessions for different corporates.

Dr Noor was also awarded the 'Best GP' and 'Most popular female doctor' of Burjeel Hospital. Keen on educating and supporting many women organisations, she has also been presenting and spreading awareness on breast cancer among different associations and organisations.

In April 2021, Dr Noor consulted and examined around 1000 patients which is the highest number of patients seen by a doctor in a month at Burjeel Hospital - a unique record of sorts.



CATEGORY: INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

Leen al Atassi

Leen Attasi, as head of Innovation at Oman Arab Bank, was entrusted the task of connecting technology, emerging trends, and talent across various ecosystems, to accelerate innovation and growth in the financial services industry, by developing Fintech partnerships and facilitating the development of an innovation eco-system for entrepreneurship.

"Traits that speak to me personally are authenticity, being self-motivated and passionate - there is a sweet spot for everyone between what you are good at and what you love, it is so much better when you are passionate about what you are doing. I have been driving forward with a purpose, shouldering responsibilities and being accountable, staying focused on goals and being consistent in the effort, and most importantly doing everything with integrity," says Leen, asserting that success is primarily driven by a mindset rather than a set of skillsets.

When she joined the bank in September 2018, the goal was to support Oman's 2040 vision by creating platforms for Oman's youth, budding entrepreneurs, and employees to develop innovative solutions that contribute to Oman's socioeconomic agenda.

"Our transformation journey started four years ago, with a commitment to creating long-term value in innovative ways. We recognised that a successful transformation can only be achieved by ensuring the entire organisation's mind-set and culture are geared towards innovation and, therefore, launched a bank-wide roadshow to accelerate innovative thinking across the organisation," she disclosed.

Pointing out that in her field radical innovation happens when you experiment profusely and learn by adapting to the environment, she said, "The iterative adaptation builds momentum. In today's complex business environment, where things are constantly changing, speed of execution is important," she said.

Constantly setting new goals for herself, Leen believes that goals provide the fuel to keep going ahead with a positive attitude. She also feels that it is important to nurture the personal growth that comes from the journey, the friends, and connections one makes along the way.

