



SUNDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2021
www.muscatdaily.com
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om
To subscribe, call toll free no: 80076000

26°C/17°C

AFGHAN FILMMAKER AT CANNES
GO TO **PAGE 13** FEATURES

HM hosts dinner on Armed Forces Day

The day recognises the armed forces' dedication to defend the homeland

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, hosted a dinner at Al Barakah Palace on Saturday on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day observed on December 11.

The ceremony comes as a felicitation by His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Commander, to all military formations and units of the armed forces on the glorious day. It symbolises his Royal recognition for their great dedication in performing the sacred duty to defend the homeland, protect its secu-

urity and ensure its stability and safety. It is a manifestation of the armed forces' role in safeguarding the national achievements to retain Oman's status as an oasis of security, harmony and peace under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.

The ceremony was attended by Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, ministers, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces, Royal Oman Police and senior military and civil officers. **ONA**



Sayyid Shihab greets HM

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received greetings on the occasion of Armed Forces Day - December 11 - from Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, reading as follows:

Your Majesty, Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander,
On the occasion of Armed Forces Day, we - as Omanis - commemorate this important anniversary in Oman's history. It was the day when Your Majesty's heroic Armed Forces gave the best examples of sacrifice so that the nation could press ahead with its ever renewed renaissance.

On this glorious occasion, I am honoured to convey the most heartfelt greetings of the Armed Forces and all personnel of the Ministry of Defence to Your Majesty, praying to the Almighty Allah to protect Your Majesty and endow you with continuous good health and happiness.

The loyal people, though proud of the civilisation of their nation, have never constrained themselves to the past, but kept creating milestones on the road to progress and prosperity. The values associated with this national anniversary are a source of inspiration for the present and future generations.

Continued on **Page 03**

All plastic shopping bags to be banned

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Environment Authority (EA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, is considering a ban on the use of all kinds of plastic shopping bags. A decision in this regard is expected soon, according to Dr Mohammad Majid al Kasbi, director, Department of Chemical Materials at EA.

EA had banned the use of single-use plastic bags in the sultanate starting January 1, 2021. These were soon replaced with thicker 50micron bags, which are now provided free at most shops.

However, with this practice, the very purpose behind banning single-use plastic bags seems defeated.

"I started carrying multi-use bags for grocery shopping as the ban set in. But now I see all supermarkets giving the thicker shopping bags for free. So, what have we achieved?" asked Mohammed Ali, a resident of Dar-sait.

On condition of anonymity, a mall manager said, "When we saw some players in the market giving free plastic shopping bags, we started doing the same in fear of losing customers."

He added that the culture of carrying one's own shopping bag



to the supermarket doesn't exist in Oman. "When one gets shopping bags for free for years, it becomes a habit. It is an inconvenience for both shoppers and supermarkets to charge for the bag."

According to Kasbi, in cooperation with relevant authorities, "except for environmentally friendly polypropylene bags, EA will prevent the use of plastic bags of all thicknesses for shopping completely in the sultanate. The authority is also studying a ban on importing all plastic bags

that are used for shopping".

He informed that the authority has randomly recorded violations of shops distributing plastic bags. "They were warned and urged to adhere to the rules."

The authority has cooperated with several relevant authorities, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Consumer Protection Authority, and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to spread awareness on the importance of using environmentally friendly bags, Kasbi informed.

"We distributed 1.1mn environmentally friendly bags this year. EA's initiative targeted school and university students and citizen's homes in several governorates. The campaign was held in cooperation with the governor's offices in the wilayats. Many commercial centres have agreed to offer their customers eco-friendly bags for free," Kasbi said.

"The authority has launched more than 25 awareness campaigns in several governorates to reduce the use of plastic, which are ongoing. Many Omani factories have started producing environmentally friendly bags to support EA's decision and promote the circular economy."

Continued on **Page 02**

WHICH BRANDS DO YOU TRUST THE MOST?

Acknowledge quality and service excellence



Automotive Cars (Sedan)

☐ BAIC	☐ Ford	☐ Mitsubishi
☐ Changan	☐ Geely	☐ Nissan
☐ Cherry	☐ Honda	☐ Renault
☐ Chevrolet	☐ Hyundai	☐ Subaru
☐ Chrysler	☐ KIA	☐ Suzuki
☐ Dodge	☐ Mazda	☐ Toyota
☐ FIAT	☐ MG	☐ VW

Vote for your favourite brands

Log on to www.muscatdaily.com/omtb-2021

SCAN ME



MUSCAT DAILY PRESENTS

2021 OMAN'S MOST TRUSTED BRAND AWARDS



For more details, contact Sajir Mobile: +968 99474314 | Email: sajir@apexmedia.co.om | www.muscatdaily.com



RO20mn shrimp farm starts commercial operation



Palestinians in West Bank villages hold municipal polls

No COVID-19 deaths in over a month

Muscat - After a critical period in the COVID-19 pandemic when the sultanate saw high daily case counts and deaths, there is a collective sigh of relief as 2021 draws to an end. For the first time, Oman reported zero deaths in a one month period.

While Ministry of Health (MoH) figures indicate a recovery rate of 98.5 per cent among COVID-19 patients, latest infection numbers too reflect a downward trend with less than 25 daily cases in the past month.

Thirty-two COVID-19 related deaths were reported in September, 15 in October and two in No-

vember. The last death was reported on November 8.

According to MoH data, the total number of COVID-19 infections and related deaths were 304,679 and 4,113, respectively, as of Thursday. Twenty-five new cases were registered on the day. The number of recoveries was 300,066.

While the drop in cases and deaths is attributed to high vaccine coverage, precautionary measures such as wearing masks, hand hygiene and maintaining social distancing have also played a major role in improving the situation, MoH has stated.

Ironman returns to Muscat in Feb

Our Correspondent
Muscat

After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, triathlon championship Ironman 70.3 Muscat will be held in February 2022, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism said.

The fourth edition of the championship to be held in Oman will take place at Qurm beach under the auspices of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in cooperation with TriMe Middle East.

The ministry added that a good number of participants representing various countries will take part in the race, considered one of the world's toughest athletic challenges. It consists of three stages - swimming, cycling and running.

'The Ironman 70.3 Muscat race aims at raising awareness regarding the triathlon sport

We seek to support tourism through sports in the country, and to enhance the local tourism movement, especially in Muscat

ALI AL TAMIMI

across Oman and to serve the organising company's (TriMe Middle East) vision of adding Oman on the global map of international sporting events,' the ministry's statement said.

'Iron Man is one of the most important sporting events in Oman, because it attracts many athletes and their families from across the world. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has been supporting this tournament for several years and con-



(Supplied photo)

tributed to its popularity by facilitating procedures and overcoming obstacles to ensure the establishment of the sports event and simultaneously supporting tourism in an area which has a diverse terrain and authentic and modern Omani attractions,' it added.

Ali al Tamimi, founder and CEO of TriMe Middle East, said, "We seek to support tourism through sports in the country, and to enhance the local tourism movement, especially in Muscat, which is unique for its many attractions. We're prepared on all levels to host this international event, and we know that we're capable of not only delivering a well-organised race, but also helping Oman become a global destination for such high-quality sporting events."

Iron Man is a world championship launched in 1978 in Hawaii, USA.

Over 120 bikers to take part in 3-day event



Our Correspondent
Muscat

More than 120 bikers will take part in a three-day event starting on December 16. This is one of the biggest road trip events organised by Oman Riders since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and will see bikers from other GCC and Arab states.

According to Khalil al Oufi, a member of Oman Riders, bikers from Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, besides Oman, have signed up for the event with more likely to follow.

The bikers will set off from Oman Automobile Association in Seeb and ride to Nizwa in Dakhliyah and further on to Sur in South Sharqiyah. Covering a distance of 400km, the final stopover will be Wadi Shab.

"We ride for the sheer joy of biking. Though our bikes can go fast, we always stay within the speed limit. The objective of this event is to support the tourism sector and showcase several little unknown sites in Oman."

The last road trip organised by Oman Riders was in 2019 - a two-day event of 350km.

300 volunteers come together to destroy mesquite trees in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To preserve the environment, 300 volunteers recently came together to remove mesquite trees in Dhofar governorate. They belonged to the Friends of the Environment team that started working earlier this year in several areas to remove mesquite trees and increase green cover in Dhofar.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ahmed Issa Jaboob, a team member, said, "The team was established after Cyclone Shaheen, which struck the sultanate. Most of the team members participated in the Habbat Dhofar campaign, which helped the people of North and South Batinah who were affected by the cyclone in October.."

He added, "Our aim is to spread environmental awareness among members of society and motivate young people to participate in volunteer work. The team burnt and removed



(Supplied photo)

mesquite trees."

He informed that mesquite trees are a menace as they threaten local species, competing for water and soil nutrients.

"Its leaves contain toxic substances and its thorns are known to cause serious injuries to hu-

mans. The tree's pollen has been identified as a major source of respiratory allergens, and its pods when eaten by animals lead to teeth decay and subsequently loss of life. It also affects soil salinity and groundwater.

"The tree prevents other plants from growing in its vicinity, and farmers are unable to plant whatever they want. The soil won't even be suitable to grow anything for seven years after the trees' removal."

He also advised citizens and residents to buy plants that can adapt to Oman's climate.

Jaboob said that in October, the team began uprooting and burning mesquite trees in several parts of Dhofar. "It is necessary to spread awareness to remove mesquite trees, and increase green spaces in the country."

The team worked during weekends from 9am to 5pm, which needed a lot of effort and money, said Jaboob. "We uprooted the toxic plant from a

large area."

The team cooperates with the Dhofar Municipality to clean beaches, afalaj and water springs, he added.

"We urge residents and citizens to cooperate with us to save the environment. We thank all the citizens who support us. We will continue to remove mesquite trees. I hope that all volunteer teams in Oman come together under one umbrella," said Jaboob.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has launched a number of campaigns to remove marine ghaf (mesquite) trees in different parts of Oman. The ministry has used geographic information system and remote sensing to monitor its spread.

"Removing mesquite trees is a national requirement, and everyone should join hands to eradicate these because of the damage these do to agriculture and the environment," said an official at MAFWR.



All plastic shopping bags to be banned

Continued from Page 01

About the alternatives available, Kasbi said, "Multi-use bags are an option. Made of cloth, paper or other organic materials, these eco-friendly bags can be used over hundreds of times, while plastic shopping bags are used only once and take more than a thousand years to degrade.

"We urge all members of society to cooperate and abide by the authority's decision to reduce the use of plastic and preserve the Omani environment."

Violators of EA's ban on single-use plastic bags are liable to pay a fine of not less than RO100 and no more than RO2,000. The fine doubles in case of repeat violations.

Stemazone Centre launched at Children's Museum in Qurm

Muscat - Eshraqa, the corporate social responsibility arm of Khimji Ramdas, announced the opening of the Stemazone Centre for learning at the Children's Museum in Qurm on December 9.

Aligning itself with the sultanate's objectives of building a knowledge economy, the STEAM education programme aims to introduce Omani children to the world of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. Stemazone is presented in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY).

"The jobs of the future will need specialised skills, hence relevant education will become the building blocks of the nation. We have chosen the innovative STEAM educational programme to teach and inspire students to imbibe future skills required in the local and global labour market, in line with Oman Vision 2040," said Nailesh Khimji, director, Khimji Ramdas.

"Eshraqa's Stemazone has recently won a number of awards including MoCSY's Youth Proficiency Award which recognises and honours significant initia-



(Supplied photo)

tives that are innovative and exemplary. The initiative was also honoured with three coveted titles at the Future Skills and HRD Awards, which were held under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Labour," he said.

"We are proud to partner with Eshraqa in launching the Stemazone initiative, a successful exemplary integration between the public and private sectors, building the innovative and creative capabilities of young people," said Dr Maya al Azri, director of the Department of Innovation

and Science Olympiad, MoE.

"This comes in the framework of achieving the outlined objectives of the national agenda that aim to build an effective national ecosystem for scientific research, creativity and innovation, based on national competencies with viable competitive capabilities that contribute towards fostering the development of Oman's knowledge-based, diversified and sustainable economy," she said.

As part of its continued efforts to make a difference in the educational sector, the Stemazone team has started school visits and conducts workshops during

school days. Under its new upcoming programme called 'Stemazone ambassadors', the initiative seeks to identify a number of talented students from different wilayats who will become key representatives of Stemazone in their respective locations.

Salwa al Rashdi, acting director of Children's Museum, said, "Through this unique programme, we seek to inspire the youth of Oman to explore and learn future skills in an innovative and educational way, enabling them to be productive in the world of the modern knowledge economy."

(Contributed by Akshaya Pavanje)

Uptake of Internet leads to rise in e-government services, online banking

Muscat - A new survey has found that 94 per cent of household members in Oman own a mobile phone, and 93 per cent of the surveyed individuals used the Internet. The increased penetration of mobile services has led to rise in use of e-government services as well as online banking.

The survey 'Measuring Access and Usage of Information and Communication Technology Among Households and Individuals', was conducted by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology from February 14 to March 4.

The data showed an increase in the usage of laptops in Oman from 34 per cent in 2020 to 38 per cent in 2021, while the use of tablets grew from 17 per cent to 20 per cent.

The percentage of using the Internet for purposes of accessing e-government services increased from 34 per cent in 2020 to 55 per cent in 2021.

The use of online banking services also increased from 38 per cent in 2020 to 53 per cent in 2021, while the percentage of Internet usage for educational purposes increased from 28 per cent in 2020 to 39 per cent in 2021.

The results also show that

clothes, shoes, sportswear and accessories are the most popular types of goods or services - accounting for 66 per cent - that were purchased online, while the percentage of foodstuffs purchased online was 56.8 per cent.

Of the people surveyed, 71.8 per cent preferred shopping in stores, while 50.4 per cent said they were not interested in shopping online. The data also indicates that 94 per cent of families have access to the Internet, and the percentage of tablets in households increased from 37 per cent in 2020 to 51 per cent in 2021, and smart TVs increased from 47 per cent to 59 per cent during the same period.

Corrigendum

In the special coverage of the Hospitality Champions 2021, published on December 9, **Mahmood Salim Said al Alawi, W Muscat, winner in the HR Assistant category**, was wrongly published as Front Office Junior winner.

The error is regretted.

HR ASSISTANT



Mahmood Salim Said al Alawi
W Muscat

Highly Commended
Warda al Wardi
Crown Plaza Muscat

Mahmood wakes up every morning and says, "I will work whatever hours I need to get my work done."

RO20mn shrimp farming project starts commercial operation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A RO20mn shrimp farming project with an initial production capacity of 2,100 tonnes annually has started commercial operation in Qurun in the wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, South Sharqiyah.

Spread over an area of 500 hectares, production is expected to be scaled up to 4,600 tonnes by 2023.

According to an official in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR), the farm is one of the investments of Fisheries Development Oman, which is affiliated to Oman Investment Authority (OIA). "The project is in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to increase gross domestic product and raise the contribution of non-oil sectors to the national economy."

The project has an intake canal from the sea stretching over 300m to supply seawater and another canal for discharge of used water after being treated as per the local and international environmental standards, the ministry official informed.

The project includes a Maturation Unit for egg production



(Supplied photo)

with capacity of 1.2bn baby shrimps per year, a Post Larval Production Unit with capacity of 400mn baby shrimps, and a Nursery Unit with capacity of 250mn juvenile shrimps. The project also includes 220 grow-out ponds – each 5,041sqm, a facility for pre-processing and packing, administrative offices, warehouses, a laboratory, maintenance workshops and a labour camp with full facilities.

"The project will create several business opportunities for

SMEs operating in allied industries. The project will open the door for setting up added value projects for shrimp production. "It is expected to promote SMEs, impart technology and enhance capacity for the project's national staff - 40 per cent Omanis. The project has set up a plan for Omanising all positions in the coming years," the official said.

He expects the project to pave the way for the establishment of other shrimp farming projects

along the Arabian Sea in South Sharqiyah and Al Wusta in cooperation with MAFWR and the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. In January 2020, OIA announced that it merged Blue Water, Al Wusta Fishery Industries and Oceanic Shrimp Aquaculture to establish a new company under the name of Fisheries Development Oman. 'The consolidation of these companies is the result of the close cooperation between OIA

and MAFWR. It is an example of government institutions' cooperation with investment authorities in the sultanate to create incentives for private sector investors,' an OIA statement said. 'The consolidation will push forward Barr al Hikman Shrimp Aquaculture Farm, expected to be the second largest of its kind in the MENA region, with an area of 40,000 hectares and an estimated production capacity of 200,000 tonnes of shrimp annually, to a speedy completion.'

Strict penalties for fishing law violations: Ministry



(Supplied photo)

As many as 272 Marine Fishing Law violations were reported in September

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Strict penalties will be imposed on people who fail to comply with the Artisanal Fishing Law, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resource (MAFWR) said, adding that instances of violations of the fishing law have increased recently. The ministry said fisheries control teams in the governorates of Muscat and Dhofar registered a number of violations.

On December 5, the fisheries control team in Dhofar, in cooperation with the ROP Coast Guard Unit, seized a fishing boat with two expatriate workers and a citizen fishing without a licence in the sea in Shuwaymiyah. 'The team also seized 16 pieces of nylon scorpion nets on Gnoot beach in Shuwaymiyah, and 31 cages used for fishing lobster outside the season in Salalah. The equipment was confiscated and legal measures were taken against the violators,'

MAFWR said. On November 25, the fisheries control team in Muscat governorate detected violations related to the use of hedge nets equipped with rings without a licence in the wilayat of Seeb. The ministry said, 'The law stipulates that the violator will be fined RO1,000 or imprisoned for a month. The punishment will be increased in the event of repetition of violations.' As many as 272 Marine Fishing Law violations were reported in September.

Sayyid Shihab greets HM

Continued from Page 01

It will be a strong impetus for every genuine action aimed at building a better future for Oman.

Your Majesty,

While celebrating this glorious event, the Armed Forces express pride and deep gratitude for Your Majesty's visit to one of its facilities and making it the venue of the 51st National Day. The Armed Forces cherish their achievements and the modernisation introduced to all its land, air and navy units so that they can remain strong and protect the nation's gains and its blessed renaissance. The Armed Forces are steadfast in their allegiance to Your Majesty and they pledge to follow your footsteps in all that realises Oman's progress and prosperity.

Your Majesty,

the Supreme Commander, Your gallant Armed Forces, Firq Forces and all personnel of the Ministry of Defence promise to remain loyal to Your Majesty and sacrifice everything dear in protecting Oman. They pledge to hoist high the banner of dignity as they march forward under the wise leadership of Your Majesty, praying to the Almighty Allah to protect Your Majesty and grant you a long life and good health.

ONA



جامعة التكنولوجيا والعلوم التطبيقية
University of Technology and Applied Sciences

Local Auction Announcement

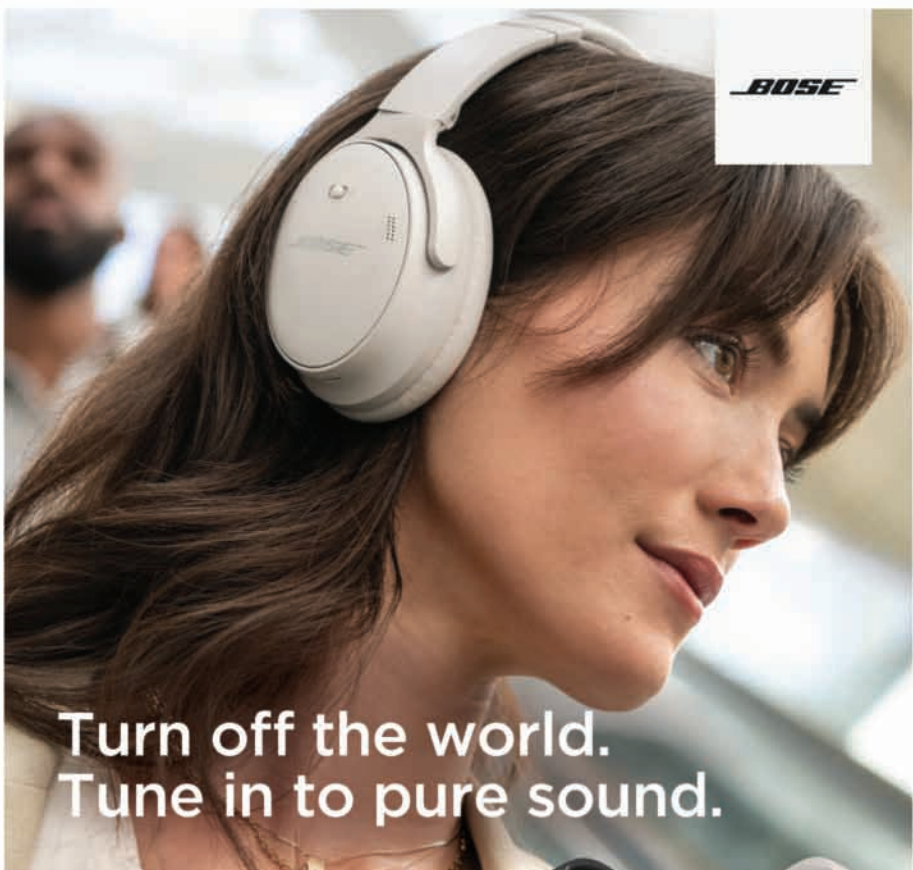
The University Of Technologies Applied Sciences announces the auctions shown in the following table :

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Establishments eligible to bid and registered with the Tender Board	Document's Price	Purchase , submit Tender Documents	Last date bid submission
03/2021	Providing maintenance services for air conditioning and refrigeration devices for the buildings of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Higher College of Technology in Muscat)	Excellent	RO 25/-	The Office of the Presidency of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences First Floor	Wednesday 19/01/2022 at 10:00 am
03/2021	Providing gardening and watering services for the University of Technology and Applied Sciences building (Nizwa College of Technology)	-	RO 25/-		Sunday 26/12/2021 at 10:00 am
02/2021	Providing operation and maintenance services for the University of Technology and Applied Sciences building (Al Musanah College of Technology)	Second	RO 25/-		Wednesday 19/01/2022 at 10:00 am
02/2021	Providing operation and maintenance services for the buildings of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Salalah College of Technology)	First	RO 25/-		
03/2021	Providing cleaning services for the University of Technology and Applied Sciences building (Salalah College of Technology)	-	RO 25/-		

- Establishments specialized in the above-mentioned works can obtain auction documents from Sunday 12/12/2021
- All bidding companies must attach with their bids a temporary tender bond in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, not less than (1%) of the bid value, addressed to the name of the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee, and valid for a period of (90) days from the date of bid submission. Any bid that does not meet the required temporary tender bond shall not be considered.
- Bids shall be submitted, signed and stamped on the form prepared for this purpose and on the accompanying category table, in closed envelopes sealed with red wax, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, bearing the auction number and subject with no indication to the name of the bidder.
- Bids must be placed in the sub-tender box in the office referred to above before 10 a.m. of the day specified in the table above. Bids submitted after this date will not be considered, regardless of the reasons for the delay. Preference will be given to companies or institutions whose bids include the biggest Omanisation and biggest purchase percentage of national products.
- Preference in awarding will be given to small and medium enterprises registered with the Authority for SME development and whose bid includes the biggest percentage of Omanisation and a biggest purchase percentage of national products.

The University shall not be bound to accept the highest or any other bid





Turn off the world.
Tune in to pure sound.




Launching Bose QuietComfort 45 Headphones

The original noise cancelling headphones are back! Clear away the noisy distractions of the world. Get deeper into your music, your work, or whatever you want to focus on. That's the power of QuietComfort 45 headphones. Proprietary technology, ultimate comfort and pure sound. Get yours today!



Bose Showroom at Qurum City Centre
Tel: 24470497 / 92311039

Also Available at Lulu Hypermarkets, Emax, Sharaf DG, Extra, MI Stores, Virgin Megastores, Bulidex & Muscat Duty Free.

Karwa Motors: A cornerstone in OIA's growth strategy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Duqm-based Karwa Motors – the sultanate's first ever bus brand and manufacturing facility which recently rolled out its first made-in-Oman bus – is a cornerstone of Oman Investment Authority's (OIA) diversification strategy towards a sustained economic growth, according to a senior official.

Karwa recently commenced its new state-of-the-art production facility in Duqm. Founded in 2017, the company is a joint venture between Mowasalat Qatar (owning 70 per cent share) and Oman Investment Authority (owning 30 per cent share).

"This factory is a cornerstone of our commitment towards sustained economic growth for the coming decades – to set the stage for what will become the beacon of automotive and industrial progress in Oman," Dr Ibrahim al Balushi, CEO of Karwa Motors said in a press statement.

Karwa Motors is a success story in many ways for the diversification of Oman's economic development. It emphasises four key objectives in its business model, namely: Creating in-country value, localising global standards and technologies, contributing to the economic development of Duqm and Oman, and youth empowerment through direct and indirect employment in the transportation industry.

Balushi said, "Located right at one of Oman's most prominent gateways to the world, our facility



Dr Ibrahim al Balushi

ity will now serve as the country's first foray into bus production. With our technology transfer partners, we aim to introduce several innovations and industry-leading production practices and technologies to Oman, setting the benchmark for all future production facilities to come."

The bus manufacturing facility is built on a site covering approximately 600,000 square metres and in its first phase comprises 40 working stations. These are staffed by a team of highly skilled workers who form and manufacture the buses, install their vari-

ous parts, paint, and check their quality.

Karwa Motors facility is responsible for the production of three Karwa branded bus models. Initially it will focus on the school buses, with the intercity coach and city bus to follow in the coming year. The company hopes to achieve an annual production of 500 buses in its first year.

Balushi said, "In the first phase of our ramp-up, we plan to focus on producing the first of three Karwa branded buses and which we are proud to say constitutes our first prestigious order; as

they will be used at the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Doha next year. Later next year, we will introduce the intercity coach and the city bus."

By opening a vehicle manufacturing plant at Duqm Port, Karwa is creating valuable opportunities for the birth of new SMEs and empowering the abundant young Omani talent in the country. These could include anything from vehicle logistics and automotive engineering and design, all the way to parts manufacturing; each of whom Karwa aims to avail the services of and support in the future.

Omantel's subsidiary Zain gets \$1.3bn offer for Sudan business

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omantel's Kuwait-based subsidiary company Zain Group has received a US\$1.3bn acquisition offer for Zain Sudan and Kuwait Sudanese Holdings from Sudan's leading business group.

"We would like to disclose that Zain has received a non-binding offer to acquire 100 per cent stake in Zain Sudan and Kuwait Sudanese Holdings by Invictus Holding Limited, a subsidiary of DAL Group for the amount of US\$1.3bn," Omantel said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Omantel said Zain's board of directors has agreed to proceed with the due diligence process to provide the initial approval.

"However, this offer does not include Zain South Sudan. All



material updates will be disclosed in due course," the company said in the disclosure.

DAL Group is Sudan's leading and most diversified conglomerate. It operates across many business sectors including food and beverages, agriculture, earthmoving, real estate, energy, mining, automotive, healthcare and education – with each business playing a leading role in its field.

As per Omantel's latest financial report, Zain Group reported total revenue of RO1.413bn for the first nine months of 2021, a decrease of 3.2 per cent compared with RO1.458bn in the corresponding period of 2020.

Zain's net profit stood at RO180.9mn for January – September period of 2021 against RO182.9mn in the same period of last year.

OPEC+ alliance completes five years

Vienna, Austria – The Declaration of Cooperation (DoC) between OPEC members and non-OPEC oil producers, an alliance known as OPEC+, turned five on Friday.

On December 10, 2016, OPEC members and Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Equatorial Guinea (which later joined OPEC), Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan gathered in Vienna at the OPEC headquarters to embark on a new era of cooperation to support sustainable stability in the global oil market. Other producers attended the

meeting in support of these extraordinary efforts.

In a statement, OPEC Secretary General, Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo, said, "The Declaration of Cooperation is an unprecedented collaborative framework of leading oil producers that saw the need to come together during a critical juncture in the global oil industry. If it was not for this group of countries and the courageous act that they have undertaken, the oil sector would, without a doubt, be in a different situation."

"Looking back to 2016, very few believed that the collaborative efforts would grow and

evolve into a major, robust cooperative force to help restore much needed stability in the global oil market. However, the 23 oil-producing countries have continued to rise to the challenges they have encountered, including instrumenting effective and visionary policies to combat the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic."

In response to the severe oil market contraction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the OPEC+ group adopted the largest-in-size and longest-in-time voluntary oil production adjustment in the history of OPEC and the oil industry. WAM

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE شركة برشوتم كانجي للصرافة OMAN'S 1st EXCHANGE

Transfer US Dollar to China for your Trade & Personal Transaction

Commission OMR 3.5/-

99101314, 99849289 91787829
customersupport@pkexchange.net
www.pkexchange.com

GET IT ON Google Play Download on the App Store

f t y i n

mai alkaline

Oman Oasis brings you the new alkaline ionized drinking water.

HYDRATE SMARTLY

pH 9.1 to 9.5

Nadhira Alharthy FIRST OMANI WOMAN TO CLIMB MOUNT EVEREST

oman OASIS

CALL TOLL-FREE 800 71 222 www.oman oasis.com

C.R. No.: 1365452

Qatar sees budget outlay up 5% for World Cup 2022

Doha, Qatar – Qatar foresees a nearly 5 per cent rise in government expenditures next year due to its hosting of the 2022 World Cup, budget estimates released last week show.

The emirate's planned expenses for 2022 rose by 4.9 per cent from last year to QAR204.3bn (US\$55.7bn), Finance Minister Ali bin Ahmed al Kuwari said, according to the official Qatar News Agency.

This was "mainly due to the temporary increase in operational expenses related to the World Cup hosting activities, which include security and operating costs for all related events to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022," the minister said.

Qatar, the world's biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas, conservatively projects total revenue of QAR196bn, based on an average oil price of US\$55 a barrel, Kuwari said.

That leaves an expected deficit of QAR8.3bn, which the finance ministry would work to



Ali bin Ahmed al Kuwari

cover "through available cash balances and issue of local and foreign debt instruments if the need arises," he said.

A year ago the government projected its 2020 budget surplus of QAR500mn would be wiped out in 2021 after energy prices fell due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Kuwari said there had been a "remarkable recovery in global energy prices". AFP

oman OASIS

sifr

SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER

The healthy choice

Call Toll-Free 800 71 222 or GSM 9275 5522

f OmanOasis i OmanOasisOfficial t OmanOasisWater www.oman oasis.com

C.R. No.: 1365452



Omani and US firms urged to take advantage of FTA

Muscat – The United States and Oman are celebrating 12 years of trade under the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a bilateral accord that lowers trade barriers between the two countries.

Since taking effect in 2009, the FTA has benefitted both countries by boosting trade and investment and creating jobs. Despite its success, the FTA remains an untapped resource for companies in both Oman and the United States. With this view, the Oman American Business Center (OABC), in partnership with the US Embassy in Muscat and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (Tejarah), launched a video campaign last week to raise awareness of the FTA and encourage more firms to take advantage of it.

Titled 'Success Stories of the US-Oman FTA,' the video seeks to raise awareness of the FTA by introducing viewers to companies that operate in Oman and have successfully exported products for sale to the United States duty free, imported products from the United States

Oman is one of only 20 countries with a US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) worldwide, and one of only two countries with a US FTA in the Middle East

duty free, or otherwise benefited from the FTA. Funded by a grant from the US Embassy, and in partnership with Tejarah, the video features remarks from Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion H E Qais al Yousef, United States Ambassador to Oman H E Leslie Tsou, and OABC chairman emeritus and president Ali Daud.

"The FTA has greatly benefited Omani companies, as well as the US and international firms," Daud said. "But it is important to remember that the FTA has also increased the overall amount of foreign direct investment into Oman and created opportunities and jobs for Omanis over the past 12 years."

"The United States is the world's largest economy, and Oman is one of just 20 nations – and two in the GCC – that enjoys free trade in this unique

way. We are very excited to shine a spotlight on just a few of the many success stories of the US-Oman FTA and look forward to inspiring similar stories in the years to come," Daud said.

Ambassador Tsou encouraged more Omani and American companies to take advantage of the FTA, whose many benefits include duty-free treatment of goods and a no-minimum investment requirement for new businesses.

"The FTA is a pillar of the strong economic partnership between our two countries and provides opportunities to expand prosperity for companies large and small in both Oman and the United States," she said. "The US embassy is working closely with the Omani government, the OABC, and other business organizations to strengthen the FTA to benefit

both our economies." As part of Tejarah's goals to attract investors and spotlight opportunities for companies in Oman, the video will be shown at the Oman Pavilion at EXPO 2020, attracting the attention of millions from around the globe.

Commenting on the FTA anniversary, H E Qais al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said, "On this the 12th anniversary of the Oman-US free trade agreement, we celebrate not just this landmark agreement but also the longstanding relationship between our two countries."

H E Yousef said, "The friendship between us is not the only reason American businesses choose to invest in Oman – also playing an important role is the strength of the sultanate's competitive offer, its pro-business government, strategic location, seamless access to regional markets, world-class infrastructure, skilled talent and the strength and ambition of Oman Vision 2040, the sultanate's blueprint for social and economic development."

US inflation surges to 40 year high

Washington, US – US consumer prices rose last month at a rate not seen in nearly 40 years, the government reported Friday, underscoring how inflation threatens the world's largest economy and President Joe Biden's public support.

The Labor Department's consumer price index (CPI) jumped 6.8 per cent compared to November of last year, its biggest gain since June 1982 as prices for gasoline, used cars, rent, food and other goods continued to climb.

While the report contained signs that the inflation wave may be reaching a crest, it nonetheless poses a political liability for the president, with the Republican opposition using it to argue against his economic policies.

Biden countered that the report did not encompass recent declines in prices of energy and used cars – two main drivers of the high inflation readings seen this year – and that supply chain issues which have driven prices higher are being resolved.

"Today's numbers reflect the pressures that economies around the world are facing as we emerge from a global pandemic – prices are rising," Biden said in a statement.

He added that "price and cost increase are slowing, although not as quickly as we'd like," but later acknowledged inflation was "a real bump in the road."



US President Joe Biden

Top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell blamed the White House for the price spikes, saying that the data "confirm what every American family already knows: Inflation is out of control on the Democrats' watch."

Gasoline prices rose 6.1 per cent last month, while prices of used cars climbed 2.5 per cent, according to the CPI report. However, those were both the same increases as in October.

Biden made fighting inflation a top priority last month after the CPI in October saw its sharpest annual increase since 1990.

That surprised analysts and gave Republicans ammunition to use against Biden's landmark Build Back Better plan, which would spend US\$1.8tn on improving social services and fighting climate change but faces a tough road in Congress, which his Democrats control by a narrow margin.

A variety of factors have caused the price increases, including shortages of components and workers, high demand for goods and rebounds in industries that were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic but are now recovering with the help of vaccines.

The degree to which Biden deserves blame for the inflation spike is the subject of debate.

The White House has argued that its actions helped get the country back on its feet after last year's economic collapse, citing steady declines in the unemployment rate and the number of people filing for jobless assistance.

Some of the high inflation readings have stemmed from price increases for commodities like oil, which went negative last year at the nadir of the downturn but have risen as worldwide demand recovered in 2021.

That has pushed gas prices higher in the United States, but they have started to dial back in recent weeks.

Economist Joel Naroff said the data confirmed that Washington policymakers have misread the persistence of the price burst that accompanied the economy's vaccine-driven reopening, and while inflation may decrease in the months to come, Americans are feeling real pain now.

AFF



ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDERS

The Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C (invites following tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Price (R.O)	Grade	Last Date of Buying	Last Date of Submission
Tanweer - 37/21	Installation of Sub Station- 500KVA ,33/0.433 KV with Extension of OHL & U/G CABLE 33 KV to Feed Power Supply to Al Ghaba Industrial Area at Adam Wilayat - Al Dhkeilya Governorate	40/=	"B" and above	20/12/2021	05/01/2022
Tanweer - 38/21	Interlink of Rural Area Electricity (33 KV) Network in Wilayat Mahout in Al Wusta Governorate with (400 KV) main Transmission Network.	1159/=	"A"	20/12/2021	12/01/2022
Tanweer - 39/21	Construction of (33 KV) cabling with Duqm Grid station at Wilayat Al Duqm - Al Wusta Governorate	1696/=	"A"	20/12/2021	12/01/2022
Tanweer - 40/21	Construction of New (11 KV) Feeder Line to support Abu Mudhabi & Al-Mabar Feeder at Wilayat Haima - Al Wusta Governorate	33/=	"C" and above	20/12/2021	05/01/2022

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tender:** Interested and Specialized Companies and Establishments registered with Tender Board (valid certificate), Tanweer and Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) may obtain the Tender documents from Procurement & Contracts Department, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. The fees for the tenders shall be deposited on Tanweer account 0423010783090041 – Bank Muscat and for more information please contact via email address i.e. tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om , or call us on phone number: 24250824.
- Bank Guarantee:** The Tenderer should enclose original bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC (Tanweer).
- Offers Submission:**
 - Original bids along Cover letter shall be placed by bidders inside the red waxed Tender's envelopes as communicated to bidders by Tanweer. Such documents must be serialized according to the numbers of the tender items.
 - Tender bids shall be provided separately on a CD Rooms, along with original cover letters in each envelop. Bids and cover letters shall bear the bidder's official seal and must be signed in either blue or red ink, but not black. A true soft copy of the bids shall be provided on a CD in an inner envelope marked "Copy". Bids who do not comply with these requirements will be overlooked.
 - Bidders shall write the following details on the cover of CD:
 - Tender name and number.
 - Addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Tanweer.
 - Prequalification / Technical Proposal / Commercial Proposal / Bid Bond.
- Submission Location:** The Completed bids in CD should be deposited in the Tender Box at Tanweer Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 12:00 PM on the last date of submission.
- Tender Price (R.O):** 5% VAT is inclusive.
- Tanweer without mentioning the reason is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender and not bond to refund tender purchase fees if you are not qualified to participate the tender.

For more information please call: 80077787



Tanweer
P.O Box 1166,P.C. 133, Al Seeb, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24250800, Fax: +968 24250892
info@tanweer.nama.om | www.tanweer.om



وزارة الطاقة والنفط
Ministry of Energy and Petroleum



The Management and staff of
KIMSHEALTH express their heartfelt

CONDOLENCES

to

Sheikh Mustahail bin Ahmed Al Mashani

&

**Sheikh Salim bin Mustahail Al Mashani
& Family**

on the sad demise of

Sheikha Salma bint Mohammed Al Mashani

May Allah bless her soul and
may she rest in eternal peace.



KIMSHEALTH

Al Mouj Muscat, SQU programme nurtures Omani talent in architecture, engineering

Al Mouj Muscat has begun a new programme of collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) by hosting architect and engineering students at its Community Hub. This initiative is set to inspire leaders of the future as they learn from a real-life success story of Oman’s leading lifestyle destination.

Final year architecture students spent two days at the integrated tourism complex, taking part in tours of key buildings as well as workshops on urban planning, design and sustainability.

Working with the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering, the initiative was kick-started by a visit which, as part of Al Mouj Muscat’s corporate social responsibility strategy, seeks to support the talents of the sultanate’s youth. Al Mouj Muscat provides its facilities and expert staff to support students with post graduate theses and data collection, as well as assessing design and graduation projects.

Other opportunities that sit within the ethos of giving something back to the community, will be to allow individuals to complete their training whilst gaining practical experience working within Oman’s leading lifestyle and leisure destination.

Commenting on Al Mouj



Muscat’s sustainable new initiative, Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj said, “It was a great pleasure to welcome these students and to continue providing

opportunities for the youth of our country who have an opportunity to learn and see first-hand, what it takes to create a world-class urban destination.

“At Al Mouj, we excel at place making and understand what it takes to put in place everything that’s needed for how people want to live, work and play.

“Our community is built to grow not just in terms of scale and the number of amenities but in how people interact with one another and feel a real sense of

belonging. We are looking forward to furthering our relationships with the university and by helping to educate and support the careers of talented individuals, we know we will be playing our part in inspiring the future architects, urban planners and leaders of our nation who will work to realise Oman Vision 2040 and in turn help our wonderful country to grow.”

Al Mouj is a joint venture between the UAE-based Majid Al Futtaim Properties, Omran and Tanmia, and since 2006 it has succeeded in creating a thriving oceanfront community for over 7,000 residents from 85 nationalities. Living in luxury accommodation within distinct neighbourhoods each with their own identity and offering, residents have the benefit of a vibrant dining and retail district with 85 outlets, two luxury hotels, a championship golf course and a 400-berth luxury marina all on their doorstep.

As well, there are landscaped community parks, 1.5km of cycle trails, 6km of beach, and new for 2021, Masjid Al Mouj and the Community Hub.

National Museum holds workshop on Grand Mosque

The National Museum organised a workshop titled ‘Highlights from Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque’ dedicated to hearing impaired group, in cooperation with the Scientific College of Design on December 7.

The workshop was presented by Abdullah al Rugaibi, education specialist at the National Museum, and Dr Mohammad Tarik, head of Fashion Design Department at the Scientific College of Design, along with Huda al Ameriyah, sign language translator.

The workshop included a



number of topics, most notably a historical view of the status of mosques in Islam, the importance of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, the parts of the mosque, and its universal mes-

sage, followed by a practical application of drawing and painting the mosque.

The workshop aimed to train and rehabilitate this category and integrate it within the society, discover their creativity, provide them with skills related to art and colouring, and spread this experience for a better and happier future.

The students excelled in executing artworks, emphasising their ability to deal with various materials to implement artistic paintings that require skill and accuracy.

Meethaq Hibati draws offer RO300,000

Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, has announced the countdown for its upcoming End-of-Year grand draw, where five high-value prizes amounting to RO300,000 will be given away. Meethaq is at present conducting a special campaign to increase customers’ awareness to participate in the upcoming Hibati End-of-Year grand draw. Customers can increase their savings in the Hibati account to get more chances to win any of the attractive cash prizes.

Amor Said al Amri, senior regional manager, Meethaq Branches, said, “We are delighted to see strong participa-



tion from Meethaq’s esteemed customers in all the Hibati draws throughout the year. On behalf of Meethaq, I would like to express our sincerest appreciation to all our customers for placing their trust and strong confidence in the bank’s services and products.

“As part of the grand draw, Meethaq is offering four prizes of RO50,000 each and one grand prize of RO100,000, which is the biggest year end prize amount by any Islamic bank/window this year. Five lucky winners will be chosen from amongst all Hibati customers. We wish all the very best to our customers in this special draw.”

Based on the Sharia’a concept of unrestricted Mudarabah, the cash prizes offered under Hibati’s 2021 prize draw scheme are ‘Hiba’ (gift) from Meethaq to its customers and are paid out of Mudarib’s (shareholders’) own sources. The cash prizes are in

addition to the profit share of Investment Account Holders (IAHs) in the General Mudarabah Pool as per the declared profit rates.

Based on the concept of Mudarabah, customers with Hibati Savings Accounts enjoy a variety of benefits with Meethaq Islamic Banking, which include competitive profit rates, attractive cash prizes draws, Visa Debit Card, world-class digital banking facilities with no minimum balance charges. Meethaq ensures that each and every product goes through the process of Sharia’a compliance certification by the Shari’a Supervisory Board.



A'Sharqiya Investments Holding Co. (SAOG)

FINANCE MANAGER

A'Sharqiya investment Company SAOG is seeking to appoint a high-caliber financial professional for the position of a Finance Manager. The Finance Manager will be responsible to help manage the overall financial operation and accounting process of the company.

Qualification:	Minimum Bachelor Degree in Commerce or Accounting; Financial Certification, ACCA/ CA will be preferred
Experience:	Minimum 8 years of experience in financial operations and preparation of accounts
Scope:	Responsible for overall management and delivery of the business plan and managing managerial and financial accounting.
Location:	Muscat
Salary:	commensurate with qualifications and experience
Nationality:	Only Omanis

Please send the credentials within 14 days to:
sihc@asharqiya.com

Badr Al Samaa extends helping hand to victims of cyclone Shaheen



Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals has always been on forefront in supporting the communities at the time of crises.

Cyclone Shaheen left beyond a trail of destruction involving houses, roads, commercial establishments, livestock and above all the distress in families of the affected areas. Government of the sultanate, many social organisations, companies and individuals came forward yet again together as one team after COVID-19 to fight one more challenge.

Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals under its corporate social responsibility is committed in providing the best possible support and care to the deserving. Under its CSR program Badr Al Samaa distributed household

electronic items like refrigerators, TVs, washing machines, ACs, microwave ovens in large quantities.

The office of the Wali of Suwaiq led by deputy wali of Suwaiq, Mohammed bin Abdulsattar al Kamali helped Badr Al Samaa to reach to the deserving with the aid. Kamali expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciations to Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals for its support in this noble cause.

He said Badr Al Samaa has always been at the forefront, when the communities are in distress and need not just with the healthcare services but much beyond that.

Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals also organised free multi-

speciality preventive health screening camp for hundreds of victims of cyclone Shaheen and screened them for many health conditions. Badr Al Samaa contributed in their capacity to ensure that the cyclone Shaheen should leave no health complications in the community.

The managing directors of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals Abdul Latheef and Dr P A Mohammed in a joint statement said that being the largest healthcare provider and one of the oldest organisations in the sultanate, Badr Al Samaa’s share of responsibilities towards the communities are much bigger and the healthcare group has always been in the front-line to tackle all the challenges.

Salalah port gets 16 eco-efficient RTG cranes, 3 mobile cranes

Port of Salalah has taken delivery of 12 out of the 16 new eco-efficient rubber-tired gantry (RTG) cranes from ZPMC to expand operations and enhance cargo movement within the terminal. The new equipment actively reduces the terminal's environmental impact as well as significantly improves the container handling capabilities. This in addition to investing in state-of-the-art equipment with three new mobile harbour cranes from Liebherr, expected to arrive Q1 of 2022, which will vastly improve general cargo handling capabilities.

The Port of Salalah is a multi-service port and the largest in Oman, handling over 4.3mn TEU last year and 15.7mn tons of general cargo. The port, instrumental in facilitating strong trade links to the Indian Subcontinent, East Africa, Red Sea/Levant, and the Arabian Gulf and access to key regional markets including Asia and Europe, attracts over 2000 vessel calls, sailing to over 52 port destinations around the world. The contract with ZPMC and Liebherr, market leaders in port equipment, is a part of Port of Salalah's future capacity expansion investments to ensure the terminal is equipped with the



latest technologies and equipment to support local and international business customers. The agreement also aligns with Oman's Vision 2040 elevating infrastructure as a key economic instrument to further grow the transportation and logistics sector.

"Innovation and improvement are at the heart of our port-centric solutions. Our investment in the latest RTG and mobile harbor

cranes demonstrates our long-term commitment to optimise operational efficiencies and cargo handling services while accommodating existing and new trade. We're excited to have the 12 new RTGs already in the commissioning-progress phase to be delivered, with the remaining four expected to arrive later this year. Once completed, it will enable us to expand our capabilities, capacity, and efficiencies,

and support increased demand," said Mark Hardiman, CEO, Port of Salalah.

The new RTG cranes are an important step in the terminal's long-term plan to have zero-carbon emissions-reducing fuel burn by 20 per cent. They are fitted with the latest Siemens technology Simotion D with S & 1500 PLC, and can lift 41 tonnes, and have six wide stacking plus truck lanes. They can be fully moni-

tored remotely and integrated with the asset digitisation system currently being installed in the terminal to monitor production and efficiency. In addition to laser anti-collision systems to provide protection to machinery and pedestrians. The 16 RTG cranes will be operational by January 2022. Two of the mobile harbor cranes will arrive in February 2022 while third will be received in April 2022.

Bank Muscat offers RO1.5mn in year-end draw

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, will soon hold a special End-of-Year Al Mazyona draw with over RO1.5mn in high value prizes to be given away to 92 lucky winners, in line with the bank's commitment to promoting a strong savings culture.

Keeping in mind the keen interest of the bank's customers and the general public in following the largest prize draws in the country, the draw will be livestreamed across the bank's social media channels, and will reward Asalah and Al Jawhar customers as well as lucky customers from across different governorates.

All customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO30,000 in their Al Mazyona accounts will be automatically entered into the draws to select the winners of the two RO250,000 mega prizes. High savings Asalah Priority Banking customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO30,000 will be entered into the special draws for 10 prizes of RO50,000 each with a total of RO500,000 reserved in prizes for them. Al Jawhar customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO10,000 will be eligible to win one of the



10 prizes of RO20,000 each, adding to a total of RO200,000. Also, 70 winners will be chosen from across all governorates in the sultanate, from among customers having a minimum balance of RO1,000. Each winner will get RO5,000 in the prize draw, which will give away a total of RO350,000 in prizes to customers from different governorates.

Abdullah Tamman al Mashani, deputy general manager - Institutional Sales and Product Development, said, "The Al Mazyona prize draw scheme has been going from strength to strength, and the financial prizes are a reward to our customers for their confidence and trust in the bank. Bank Muscat continues to meet the aspirations of our valued customers, while also promoting a good savings habit."



NBO introduces remittance services to Sri Lankan embassy

Under the auspices of H E O L Ameer Ajwad, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman, National Bank of Oman (NBO) introduced remittance services to the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Muscat. Continuing to make banking more accessible and convenient, the service will help the Sri Lankan community to make affordable transfers to friends and family in their native language using the bank's secure and approved international transfer network.

With competitive exchange rates in several currencies, NBO customers can also instantly send funds of up to RO7,500

from their account using the bank's digital remittance service available anywhere at any time through the award-winning NBO Mobile App. Plus, the first instant transfer is free, and thereafter just RO1,500.

Tariq Atiq, chief retail and digital banking officer at NBO, said, "NBO has been at the forefront of delivering seamless, convenient and flexible banking experiences. Adding to the growing number of affiliations with embassies, we are proud to partner with the Embassy of Sri Lanka to provide our customers working and visiting there with greater access to our services, and more

value to their banking needs. They can also pay the way they like, whether its directly from their bank account, or using a credit or debit card."

NBO's remittance service continues to offer convenient, fast and easy way to send money abroad. The bank encourages its customers to take advantage of its digital banking app, which allows them to remit safely and securely, any time of the day or night, to Sri Lanka as well as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Philippines, and Indonesia. The beneficiary will then receive the money on the same day, and if possible, instantly.

OFA event to discuss adventure tourism

In an endeavour to support the development of the adventure tourism sector of the sultanate, Omani French Friendship Association (OFA) will be hosting an event titled 'Tourism in Oman -

Global Adventure'. The event will be held on December 15 at Al Bustan Palace hotel. The panel discussion will focus on how to match the potential of the sultanate with ex-

pertise in developing tourism sites. The panelists will cast light on existing capabilities and good strategies to undertake the boost of the adventure industry in a good manner.

Before this event, a team of French professional riders will travel in Oman and explore the incredible places while shooting videos and photos to promote the country in France.

British-themed restaurant opens at Al Falaj Hotel

A British-themed restaurant, is ready to welcome the community to celebrate and dine with them at Al Falaj Hotel.

Offering an opportunity for gourmets to experience British heritage right here in Oman, the eatery delivers an authentic experience.

H E Bill Murray, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Oman, and England women's cricket team inaugurated the authentic eatery that embodies true British spirit with its decor and food. The restaurant serves several specialties with welcoming hospitality that is sure to warm guests' heart.

Srinith De Silva, CEO of Aitken Spence Hotels and Resorts (Middle East) said, "The restaurant offers top-notch flavours, a hearty meal and great beverages.



It is a perfect destination for every occasion. There is plenty to choose from a wide selection of delicious dishes.

"We invite connoisseurs to hop in for the British experience, culture and the ambience. We guarantee they won't be disappointed."

Praveen George, general manager, Al Falaj Hotel said,

"Boasting a British-themed decor, this eatery is the perfect place to catch up with friends and colleagues over beverages and good food. It is also the perfect cosy cafe to celebrate birthdays, reunions or any other occasions with customisable food items and combinations available according to personal choices."

A'Sharqiya Investments Holding Co. (SAOG)

GENERAL MANAGER

A' Sharqiya investment Holding Company SAOG is seeking a high-caliber Investment professional to take on the position of a General Manager. The key role of the General Manager is to manage and drive the investment business of the organization.

Responsibilities Include:

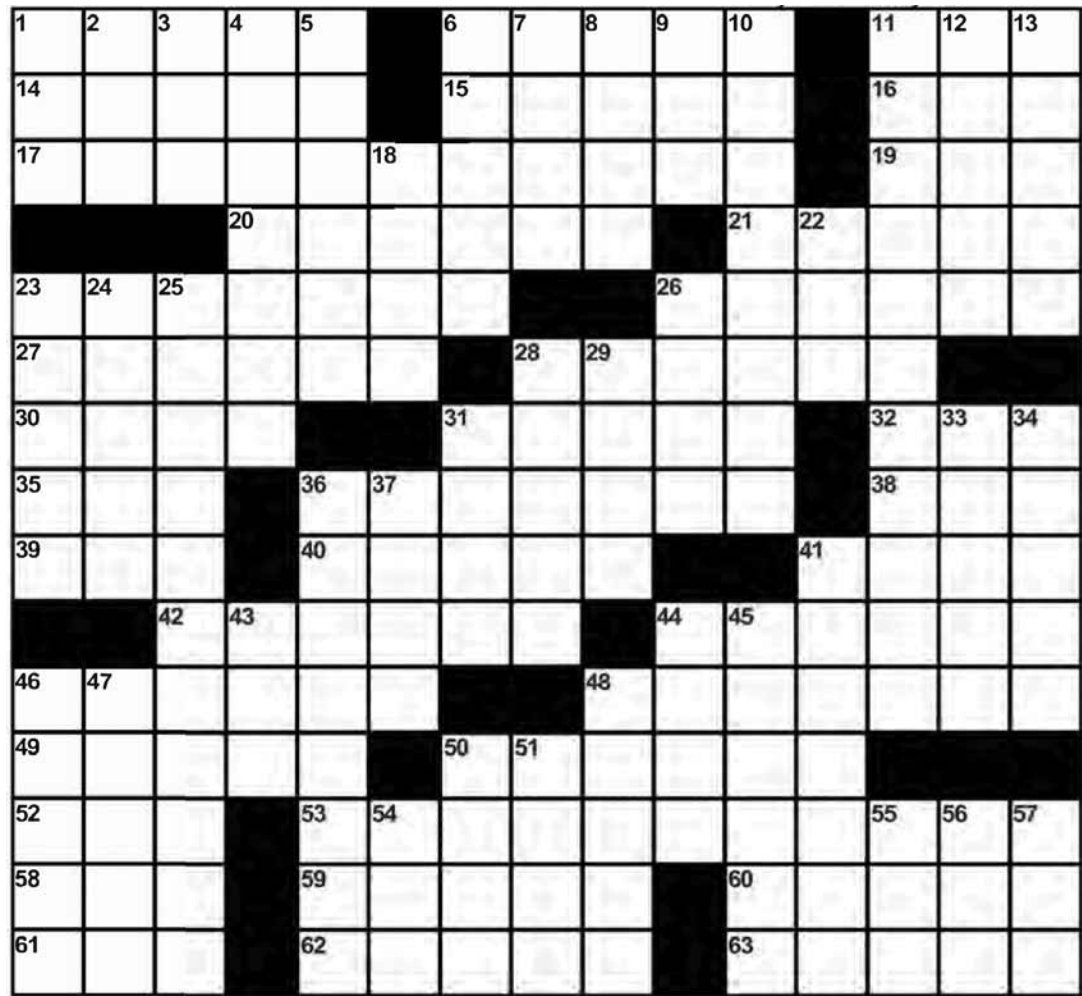
1. Develop and implement strategic asset allocation for the investment portfolio.
2. Setting effective & realistic strategies for investments that can help maximize sustainable portfolio returns for the company.
3. Develop annual budget and five-year business plan using objective methodologies with challenging but attainable goals.
4. Follow efficient, effective and well-structured investment processes in line with international best practices.
5. To lead a team of investment professionals & Company to higher goals and stakeholder value creation.
6. To generate deal flows of opportunities for the Company
7. Supervise all operational, administrative, financial and accounting, and human resource management workflows. Ensure all workflows are in compliance with the approved policies and procedures in place and applicable laws.
8. Oversee the management of the Companies relationship with internal such as the board of directors and external stakeholders (regulators, authorities, partners, etc.)

Key Requirements:

1. Degree in Economics, Finance, Business Administration or other relevant discipline. Professional qualifications would be an added advantage.
2. At least 5 years working as GM/ Head of Investment Team/ CIO /
3. At least 15 years' experience in the investment industry
4. Strong leadership skills with a proven track record in the industry
5. Good rapport and contacts in the industry
6. Oman experience preferred

Please send the credentials within 14 days to:
sihc@asharqiya.com

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Helicopter blade
6) Native of an Arabian Peninsula monarchy
11) "Ahas" relatives
14) Pop superstar
15) City in Georgia
16) Grand Canyon viewing area
17) Some restaurant VIPs
19) First lady McKinley
20) Fountain drink
21) Book collection
23) Makes less offensive?
26) Somewhat broad
27) They're not perfectly round
28) Stone of "Basic Instinct"
30) "... better watch out ..."
31) Rock containing crystal
32) Pendulum's path, e.g.
35) Be wrong
36) First book of the Bible
START-UPS
38) Grassy meadow

39) Big Apple inits.
40) Here and there
41) Nile denizens with fangs
42) Wetland birds
44) Mad Magazine's genre
46) City in southeastern Wisconsin
48) Game with dotted tiles
49) With no one else
50) Kidman film "... Rouge"
52) Job estimate
53) Weeder's chore
58) Nectar inspector
59) Like Halloween sound effects
60) Partner of wiser
61) Outs' counterparts
62) Big-ticket wedding purchase
63) Be responsible for

DOWN

1) Generic cheer
2) Flowery lyrical poem
3) Coffee's alternative
4) Classic card game
5) Incentive in a "lost" ad
6) Leaves off a list
7) Do more than check
8) Got a hole in one
9) Neither counterpart
10) Motivates to greatness
11) Infamous Eden event
12) Animal skins
13) Vicious tennis stroke
18) Charitable goods
22) "Without any further ..."
23) Senior fellow
24) Elephant tusk composition
25) App "blueprints"
26) African ravine
28) Fortune-tellers
29) Parasite's quest
31) Buzzing annoyance
33) Glossy paper proof
34) Lawyers' jobs
36) Collected, as praise
37) Fencing sword
41) Bursting with excitement
43) Martini ingredient
44) One-man performances
45) Mexican friends
46) Bar mitzvah presider
47) Ewok or Klingon, e.g.

48) Ranch guys chlor- or fluor-
50) "But wait, there's ...!" 56) It bisects a tennis court
51) Name in many elevators 57) Miracle- (garden product)
54) "... the ramparts ..." product)
55) Suffix used with



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
As an Aries, it's hard to keep still and stay inactive for long. Sunday's skies thrust you out of yesterday's sleepy cocoon and push you into productive action, as the moon's presence in your sign calls attention to your physical body and health. Luna's smooth connection with steady Saturn makes it an ideal day for plugging away at any projects that require ample concentration and stamina, so give yourself something to sink your teeth into!

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Get out of your comfort zone and stretch your perspective today, Leo. Sunday's skies find you needing a fresh change of scenery as the moon meanders through adventure-hungry Aries. Get lost in a good book or movie or simply skip town if you can! Luna's sweet connection with grounded Saturn makes it an ideal day for future-oriented conversations and plan-making in close relationships.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Things are beginning to brighten up with the arrival of Sunday's skies, Sagittarius. The moon cruises through energetic Aries, pushing you to seek out pleasure, good times, and a romantic rendezvous. It's an ideal day to reconnect with creative activities that you love or for slipping off on a playful date, as Luna's smooth connection with stable Saturn helps you ground back down and apply yourself with steady follow through.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Take some time away from the crowd today, Taurus. You've been dealing with more than your fair share of mini crises this past week, and Sunday's skies encourage you to prioritize rest over productivity. The independent Aries moon forms a supportive connection with structure-seeking Saturn, providing with you a welcome reality-check and feeling of groundedness. Take it easy and let yourself regain stability.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You need some private time away from the world, Virgo. The moon's presence in self-focused Aries encourages you to take a close look at nagging relationship issues and concerns over your current debts. Prioritise healing modalities and intimate conversations to clear the air. Luna's steady connection with realistic Saturn makes it an ideal day for plugging away at work projects that require ample stamina.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Focus on your own thing today. Let Sunday's skies gently guide you back to your home base as the moon cruises through self-focused Aries. Luna's smooth connection with Saturn makes it easy to tackle projects on the home front, as you're provided extra stamina and follow-through. It's an ideal day to deal with any matters concerning your home and family environment, as this energy offers stable, peaceable energy to utilize.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
As a Gemini, you regularly need social interaction and a sense of community to thrive. Let your extroverted twin take center stage today, as the playful Aries moon encourages you to seek out connection among your people. Luna's steady union with grounded Saturn makes it an ideal day for serious conversations or for making future travel or educational plans that need a steady foundation.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
The universe isn't done helping you explore your current relationship story, Libra. The moon prances through your opposite sign of energetic Aries today, sending your focus towards the intimate one-on-one's in your world, whether single or taken. Luna's steady connection with Saturn makes it easy to approach any emotionally-riled up topics with ease and grace, so don't miss the opportunity to calmly put things back in place.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Speak your truth. The moon's presence in Aries encourages you to engage in any kind of communicative effort that helps you get your story out there. It's an ideal day for serious, important conversations that need to run smoothly, as Luna's stable connection with Saturn provides a grounded energy to keep things from getting riled up. Seek out local movement and breathe some fresh life into what's gotten stagnant.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Cancerians seek guidance from the enchanting movements of the moon. Sunday's skies find Luna prancing through go-getter Aries, ramping up your energy and turning your attention towards your current list of career concerns. It's an ideal day to plug away at projects that require stamina and follow through, as the moon's steady connection with capable Saturn makes it easy to stay focused.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You're looking to get productive under Sunday's skies. Let yourself pour your energy into something that matters to you as the moon jogs through self-motivated Aries. Luna's placement here makes it an ideal day to hone your craft, reconnect with a healthy exercise regimen, and get back into your body. Luna's smooth connection with capable Saturn makes it easy to push ahead with anything you set your sights on.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Sunday's skies find you moving through a productive mindset. The moon steadily marches through Aries, directing your focus towards the current ins and outs of your finances and pushing you to take action on personal projects. Use this energy to sort out your money story in a more supportive way, as Luna's supportive connection with grounded Saturn makes it easy to be realistic and measure in your approach.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The main purpose of the Group of 77 was
- a. sustained economic growth
b. to promote African unity and solidarity
c. to defend the economic and trade interests of the developing nations of the world
d. None of the above
2. The last ruler of the Mughal dynasty was
- a. Babur
b. Bahadurshah Zafar
c. Akbar
d. None of the above
3. The headquarter of the Warsaw Treaty Organization were at
- a. Berlin
b. Prague
c. Moscow
d. Warsaw

Answers: 1. c 2. b 3. c

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	S	E	O
M	E	C	N
S	B	Y	G
K	M	A	E

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

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

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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



Palestinians queue up at a polling station during municipal elections in the village of Baitain, East of the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, on Saturday (AFP)

Palestinians in West Bank villages hold municipal polls

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories - Palestinians in villages of the Israeli-occupied West Bank voted in municipal polls Saturday, amid a boycott by the main opposition Hamas, the Islamist rulers of Gaza, in protest at the indefinite postponement of a general election.

No legislative or presidential election has been held in the Palestinian territories for 15 years, while the last municipal vote - also boycotted by Hamas - took place in 2017.

Of the 367 villages in the West Bank, 60 had no candidates standing and another 162 had a single list, leaving only 154 villages actually voting on Saturday.

The spokesman for the Palestinian Central Elections Commission, Fareed Taam Allah, told AFP that polling stations had opened in all villages scheduled to hold votes on Saturday.

Polling stations are open until 7.00pm, with some 405,000



A Palestinian woman casts her vote at a polling station on Saturday (AFP)

people eligible to vote, according to the elections committee.

The municipal vote - the first of two stages, with cities and towns due to vote in March 2022 - is widely considered as inconsequential, with most candidates running as independents and Hamas not taking part.

They are "politically unimpor-

tant because they are taking place in villages and not the big cities" yet, and are 'futile' in the absence of Hamas, according to political analyst Jihad Harb.

The armed group, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, is boycotting the vote in protest at president Mahmud Abbas' indefinite postponement of parlia-



A woman shows her ink-stained finger after voting (AFP)

mentary and presidential elections that had been scheduled for earlier this year.

The Islamists had been poised to sweep the parliamentary election scheduled for May, which was widely seen as the real reason for Abbas' 11th-hour postponement of the poll, citing Israel's refusal to allow voting in

They[elections] are politically unimportant because they are taking place in villages and not the big cities yet, and are futile in the absence of Hamas

JIHAD HARB



annexed east Jerusalem.

Abbas' presidential term was supposed to end in 2009.

Hamas and Fatah, a secular party led by 86-year-old Abbas, have been at loggerheads since 2007 when the Islamists seized Gaza after a week of deadly clashes.

AFP

Farmers head home after year-long protest in India



Farmers cheer as they prepare to leave the protest site at the Delhi-Haryana state border, in Singhu on Saturday (AFP)

New Delhi, India - Thousands of Indian farmers were packing their belongings and dismantling tent cities on Saturday as they headed home from the Delhi outskirts following a year-long protest against the government's agriculture policies.

In a rare retreat last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced and pushed through parliament the repeal of three contentious laws that farmers claimed would let private companies control the country's agriculture sector.

Hundreds of farmers danced and celebrated the victory early on Saturday as they began removing road-blocks and dismantling thousands of makeshift homes along major highways.

Farmers in India have political heft due to their sheer numbers - tens of thousands had camped out to protest against the laws in the biggest challenge to the Modi government since it came to power in 2014.

Protesters had initially refused to leave the sites despite the repeal of the legislation, pressing other demands including a legal guarantee for minimum benchmark rates for their produce.

The government said it will form a commission on fixing

minimum prices for crops and promised to stop prosecuting farmers for burning crop stubble that is blamed for polluting Delhi's air every winter.

It also agreed to pay compensation to the families of more than 700 farmers who died during the demonstrations and withdraw criminal cases lodged against protesters during the year-long campaign against the farm laws.

The three agricultural laws passed in September 2020 aimed to deregulate farm produce markets from state control and allow private companies to enter the sector - on which two-thirds of India's more than 1.3bn population rely for a living.

The government said the laws were a necessary reform but farmers opposed the move, saying it would leave them at the mercy of big corporations.

Farmers started local protests in northern Punjab and Haryana - India's breadbasket states - before tens of thousands headed to New Delhi to press their demands.

But they were violently stopped by police at the borders of New Delhi, triggering a year-long impasse that saw authorities erect concrete and steel barricades and metal spikes to stop their advance.

AFP

Pakistani Taliban kill policeman after calling off truce with govt

Peshawar, Pakistan - A Pakistani policeman was shot dead and another officer was hurt while guarding a polio vaccination team on Saturday, police said, in an attack claimed by the local Taliban a day after they called off a ceasefire with the government.

The militants on Friday ended a truce mediated with the help of the Afghan Taliban, accusing the government of violating the terms of the agreement.

Two men riding a motorcycle opened fire on police officers guarding a two-woman polio inoculation team who were administering vaccines to children in Tank district in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"The gunmen opened fire indiscriminately, killing one policeman on the spot and wounding another," district police officer Sajjad Khan told AFP.

Another local police official, Kamal Shah, confirmed the incident and said the assailants had escaped. Police guards protecting vaccination teams in Pakistan have come under attack before, mostly from homegrown militants.

The Taliban claimed the latest



Pakistani Taliban leader Noor Wali Mehsud

attack and put the death toll at two, according to a statement from spokesman Muhammad Khurasani.

They accused security forces of killing some of their fighters and violating the one-month truce. The Pakistani Taliban - a separate movement from Afghanistan's new leaders but which shares a common history - plunged Pakistan into a period of horrific violence after forming in 2007.

Seven years after a military crackdown on the movement, Islamabad is now trying to quell a comeback by the group after the victory of the hardline Islamists across the border.

In an audio message released late Friday, the group's leader Noor Wali Mehsud said no progress had been made in negotiations with Pakistan's government.

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan announced in October that the government was in talks with the group for the first time since 2014, facilitated by the Afghan Taliban, who seized power across the border in August. Pakistan is one of two countries where polio remains endemic but only one case has been reported this year after 84 in 2020, according to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

AFP

Benin opposition leader gets 20 years of jail

Porto-Novo, Benin - Benin opposition leader Reckya Madougou was sentenced on Saturday to 20 years in prison for terrorism by a special court in the capital Porto-Novo after a brief trial that her lawyers condemned as a 'political attack'.

After more than 20 hours of hearings, Madougou was found guilty of 'complicity in terrorist acts' by the Economic Crime and Terrorism Court, or Criet, which on Tuesday sentenced another key opposition figure to 10 years.

Critics say the court, set up in 2016, has been used by President Patrice Talon's regime to crack down on the opposition and pushed Benin into authoritarianism.

"This court has deliberately decided to penalise an innocent person," Madougou said shortly before her prison sentence was announced.

"I have never been and I will never be a terrorist," the 47-year-old former justice minister added. "It's a sad day for our justice system, I maintain that there is no proof," one of her lawyers, Robert Dossou, told AFP.

Madougou was one of several Benin opposition leaders banned from running in an election in April in which Talon won a second term with 86 per cent of the



Supporters of Reckya Madougou's gather at the Court of Repression of Economic Offences and Terrorism (CRIET), in Porto-novo on Friday (AFP)

vote. She was arrested in the economic capital Cotonou in March - just weeks before the election - accused of financing an operation to assassinate political figures to prevent the vote, in an alleged bid to 'destabilise' the country.

'Tried at 6am, without witnesses, without documents, without evidence, Recky Madougou was sentenced to 20 years in prison by three accomplices of those in power,' her France-based lawyer Antoine Vey tweeted after the sentencing. 'Her crime: to have embodied a democratic alternative to the regime of Patrice Talon.'

Vey had told the trial on Friday that 'this procedure is noth-

ing but a political attack'. "Even before her arrest, everything was orchestrated," Vey said a day after arriving from Paris.

He asked for the trial to be cancelled, before leaving the court and never returning - Madougou's Benin-based lawyers stayed for the remainder. Vey then told AFP that it was 'a trial in which nothing was judicial'. Madougou said on the stand at the trial that she had 'no illusions' about its outcome.

"I offer myself to the democracy of my country, if my sacrifice can give your court back its independence," she said.

Less than a week before the April election, a judge from the

special court fled Benin denouncing political pressure to make rulings, in particular in the case of Madougou's arrest.

Government officials dismiss claims of political interference and say Benin's judiciary is independent. Benin was long praised for its thriving multi-party democracy in a troubled region.

But critics say the West African state's democracy has steadily eroded under Talon, a 63-year-old cotton magnate first elected in 2016. Some opposition leaders have fled the country while others were disqualified from running in elections, or targeted for investigation.

AFP

US hits Chinese, North Korean firms with sanctions

The sanctions take aim at Myanmar’s crackdown on protestors and oppression of Uyghurs in China

Washington, US - The United States unveiled a raft of new rights-abuse sanctions on Friday on senior officials and entities in eight countries, including a Chinese firm specialising in facial recognition technology and a giant cartoon studio in North Korea.

Timed for International Human Rights Day and supported in part by Britain and Canada, the sanctions took aim at officials accused of abetting the crackdown on anti-coup protestors in Myanmar, the oppression of Muslim Uyghurs in China’s Xinjiang region and political violence in Bangladesh under the guise of a war on drugs.

“Our actions today, particularly those in partnership with the United Kingdom and Canada, send a message that democracies around the world will act against those who abuse the power of the state to inflict suffering and repression,” the US Treasury Department said.

It said China’s artificial intelligence company SenseTime, and two ethnic Uyghur political leaders in Xinjiang, Shohrat Zakir and Erken Tuniyaz, took part in the sweeping oppression of Uyghurs.

The sanctions and blacklisting can prevent individuals from obtaining visas to the United States, block assets under US jurisdiction, and prevent the targets from doing business with US individuals or entities - effectively locking them out of the US banking system.

Xinjiang surveillance

Zakir was the chairman of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China from at least 2018 to 2021, and Tuniyaz is current acting chairman.

Zakir has defended the prison



Activists from the China Democracy Party attach signs to figures hanging from Olympic rings as they hold a 'No Rights No Games' rally on International Human Rights Day in Hollywood, California on Friday (AFP)

Bangladesh protests US sanctions of its security chiefs

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladesh on Saturday called in the US Ambassador to protest sanctions by Washington against its top security officers after seven people including the country’s national police chief were accused by the Biden administration of human rights abuses.

Washington imposed sanctions against the Rapid Action Battalion, which is accused of involvement in hundreds of disappearances and nearly 600 extrajudicial killings since 2018.

Seven current or former officials of the Rapid Action Battalion were also sanctioned. They



RAB deputy chief K M Azad

include Benazir Ahmed, previously the RAB chief and currently the national head of the South Asian country’s more than 200,000-strong police force.

Bangladesh officials were quick to denounce the move, with foreign secretary Masud bin Momen summoning the US ambassador ‘to convey Dhaka’s discontent’ over the decision, his ministry said.

He ‘regretted that the US decided to undermine an agency of the government that had been on the forefront of combating terrorism, drug trafficking and other heinous transnational crimes that were considered to be shared priorities with successive US administrations’, it added.

One of the sanctioned individuals, RAB deputy chief K M

Azad, defended the force’s operations, saying it never violates human rights. “If bringing down a criminal under the law is a violation of human rights, then we have no objection to violating this human rights in the interest of the country,” he said.

But local rights activists welcomed the measures.

“It is a perfect move by the US. But more officers who were involved in the abductions and enforced disappearances should have been included,” said Sanjida Islam, an organiser of Mayer Daak, which represents victims’ families.

AFP

camps as ‘education centres’ that teach people Mandarin and ‘the true meaning of religion’. But international rights organisations have called them a central tool in the Chinese government’s ‘genocidal’ policies towards Uyghurs.

‘The mass detention of Uyghurs is part of an effort by (Chinese) authorities to use detentions and data-driven surveillance to create a police state in the Xinjiang region,’ the Treasury said. The Treasury said SenseTime’s facial recognition programs were designed in part to be used in Xinjiang against Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities, more than one million of whom have been incarcerated in prison camps.

The move put new pressure on SenseTime, which was preparing to list its shares in the coming week on Hong Kong’s stock market in an initial public offering.

The company, which Washington says is part of China’s ‘military-industrial complex’, had already been placed on the US Department of Commerce’s blacklist in 2019 because its technology had been used for mass surveillance in Xinjiang.

SenseTime strongly criticised the decision, saying in a statement it was ‘caught in the middle of geopolitical tension’. ‘We strongly oppose the designation and accusations that have been made in connection with it. The accusations are unfounded and reflect a fundamental misperception of our Company,’ it said.

First Biden sanctions on North Korea

The Treasury also announced the first new US sanctions to target North Korea since President Joe Biden took office, a move

that comes after months of attempting to engage Pyongyang in talks on its nuclear program.

The Treasury accused Pyongyang’s government-run animation firm, SEK Studio, and companies and individuals related to it, of exploiting North Korean workers to earn much-needed foreign currency and avoid sanctions on the country.

SEK Studio has an international reputation and has contributed work to big-budget animated features including Disney’s ‘Pocahontas’ and ‘The Lion King’. Also hit with sanctions was North Korean Minister of People’s Armed Forces, Ri Yong Gil.

Myanmar, Bangladesh

In additional actions to mark Human Rights Day 2021, the Treasury added four Myanmar state and regional chief ministers to its sanctions blacklist, accusing them of participating in “brutal crackdowns” against the Myanmar people.

A Bangladesh internal security unit, the Rapid Action Battalion, which is accused of involvement in hundreds of disappearances and nearly 600 extrajudicial killings since 2018, was also included.

Six current or former officials of the Rapid Action Battalion were also sanctioned.

In a parallel move, the US State Department announced Friday the blacklisting of 12 officials from China, Uganda, Belarus, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Mexico ‘for their involvement in gross violations of human rights’.

“We are determined to put human rights at the centre of our foreign policy,” said Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

AFP

Deadly unrest closing schools in Cameroon

Buea, Cameroon - There are no students in the playground of the high school in the Bomaka district of Buea - just the odd goat grazing on overgrown grass.

Buea is the capital of Cameroon’s Southwest Region - one of two regions gripped by violence after anglophones launched a campaign to break away from the country’s French-speaking majority.

In Bomaka, almost all the schools have been closed since 2016. It has just one junior school that remains open, but whose rollcall has slumped from around 600 to just 69 today.

“The crisis has killed the schools,” said Isaac Bissong, its headmaster. “Many pupils have left this neighbourhood to study elsewhere because they are afraid.”

In one classroom, only eight students were present when AFP visited. The silence in the once-bustling corridors was heavy.

Unlike other schools in the country, the green, red and yellow flag of Cameroon was nowhere to be seen - ‘that could get us into trouble’, said Bissong.

The school is located less than three kilometres from Muea, one of the separatists’ strongholds and the scene of many clashes.

Bissong provides whatever security he can for the school, although he is not armed.

He sits on a chair at the school entrance, on the lookout for potential trouble.

Deaths and threats

Anglophone separatists in the Southwest and neighbouring Northwest Region regularly attack schools that they accuse of teaching in French.

Teachers and other civil servants have been killed after being accused of ‘collaborating’ with



Children senitise themselves on reaching the school in Buea - the capital of Cameroon’s Southwest Region

the central government in Yaounde. The predominantly French-speaking country is ruled with an iron fist by President Paul Biya (88), who has been in power for 39 years.

Years-long grievances among the anglophone minority brewed for years, overflowing into a declaration of independence on October 1, 2017.

Armed separatists launched attacks on the security forces, triggering a violent crackdown.

The spiral of bloodshed has claimed more than 3,500 lives and forced around 700,000 people to flee their homes, according to monitors.

NGOs say that killings of civilians and abuses have been committed by both sides.

According to Unicef, in 2019, some 850,000 children were not in school in the English-speaking regions.

In October 2020, a dozen men stormed the Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy in Kumba, in the Southwest Region, opening fire on pupils. They killed seven children aged be-

tween nine and 12. A dozen others were shot or macheted.

On November 24 this year, four students and a teacher were killed by gunmen in the Southwest.

‘Children are dying’

“Children are dying, and teachers too, for providing an education that these armed people do not want, believing it is not good for their region,” Jan Egeland, secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, told AFP during a visit to Buea.

“There’s a generation of children who are on the verge of becoming illiterate because they have not been to school.”

In the streets of downtown Buea, armed soldiers were on patrol.

Blaise Chamango, a parent, said she was constantly worried for the children’s safety.

“Before leaving them at school in the morning, I pray.”

“When we send our children to school, we can receive threats,” said another parent, Manu Dao. “I am sad because

their future is at stake.”

In the Southwest’s coastal area of Souza, one school is hosting 596 displaced English-speaking children this year, out of a total of 1,087 pupils.

The pupils are sometimes crammed 90 to a class.

“Many of them are in a state of shock,” said school official Joseph Mencheng.

“Many have seen people killed, their parents in some cases. Sometimes, in the middle of a lesson, they bring up some horror they have experienced.”

Stephanie, aged 12, is in a class with children years younger than her.

“I left my village because there was a war and I couldn’t go to school for three years,” she explained.

Nine-year-old Dipanda is talking with three classmates in another crowded classroom.

She comes from a small village in the Northwest Region. She says she is delighted to be back in school after classes were stopped ‘because of the war’.

AFP

Joe Biden makes late-night TV debut as President

New York, US - Joe Biden on Friday used his first late-night television talk show appearance as US President to highlight his infrastructure bill - and laugh off his flagging approval ratings.

Biden’s appearance on NBC’s *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* is the first by a sitting president since Barack Obama, and comes as the White House seeks to highlight the recently passed bill for upgrading the nation’s tattered transport networks.

Despite its passage, Biden’s approval ratings have sunk to the low 40 per cent area, in part due to the spike in inflation.

Asked by host Jimmy Fallon if he pays attention to approval ratings, Biden dead-panned, “Well, not anymore.”

“I’m joking. I was paying attention when it was in the mid-60s, but when it’s in the mid-40s I don’t pay attention,” said the President, to laughter from the studio audience.

Biden’s appearance by remote video comes after his predecessor President Donald Trump declined invitations for any late-night talk shows as president.

Obama frequently used programs hosted by Fallon and rivals such as Jimmy Kimmel and Stephen Colbert to speak to the wider US public.

Fallon opened the show by joking the pair would ‘discuss the economy, the infrastruc-



US President Joe Biden (left) and Jimmy Fallon (AFP)

[On approval ratings]... I’m joking. I was paying attention when it was in the mid-60s, but when it’s in the mid-40s I don’t pay attention

JOE BIDEN

ture bill, and break down the first two episodes of the *Sex and the City* reboot’.

Fallon managed one barb about inflation figures, claiming he had earlier asked the president how excited he was to appear on the show on a scale of one to ten.

“He said ten. But six without inflation.”

But during the interview,

Fallon allowed Biden to set out policies including his landmark US\$1.8tn Build Back Better plan to improve social services and fight climate change, which faces a tough road in Congress.

Wearing a suit and tie, and seated in front of a festively decorated mantelpiece, Biden also urged Americans to get booster shots and highlighted steady declines in the unemployment rate.

“We do have inflation on things that in fact matter in people’s lives [such as gas prices],” said Biden.

“It’s going to come down,” he promised.

The interview - in which Fallon praised Biden for ‘bringing class back to the office’ of the president and asked ‘does anyone really understand how hard your job is?’ - ended with the talk host being invited over to the White House for dinner.

AFP

Daughter of first American astronaut to launch on Blue Origin flight

US - Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin is set to blast its third private crew to space on Saturday, this time including the daughter of the first American astronaut.

The spaceflight will last roughly 11 minutes, launching from the company's base in Texas and soaring to just beyond the internationally-recognised boundary of space, 100km high.

The six-member crew will unbuckle and enjoy a few minutes' weightlessness before the space-ship returns to Earth for a gentle parachute landing in the desert.

Laura Shepard Churchley,

whose father Alan Shepard became the first American to travel to space in 1961, will be flying as a guest of Blue Origin.

The company's suborbital rocket is in fact named *New Shepard* in honour of the pioneering astronaut.

Michael Strahan, an American football Hall of Famer turned TV personality, is also a guest, while there are four paying customers: Space industry executive and philanthropist Dylan Taylor, investor Evan Dick, Bess Ventures founder Lane Bess, and Cameron Bess.



Good Morning America co-anchor Michael Strahan and Laura Shepard Churchley, set to travel to space in Blue Origin's *New Shepard* rocket (AFP)

Lane and Cameron Bess will become the first parent-child pair to fly in space. Ticket prices have not been disclosed.

"It's kind of fun for me to say an original Shepard will fly on the *New Shepard*," Shepard Churchley, who runs a foundation that promotes science and raises funds for college students, said in a video. "I'm very proud of my father's legacy."

Alan Shepard performed a 15-minute suborbital space flight on May 5, 1961, just under a month after the Soviet Union's Yuri Gagarin became the first human

in space, orbiting the planet. Shepard, who died in 1998, went on to be the fifth of twelve men to have set foot on the Moon.

Previous Blue Origin flights have flown the company's billionaire founder Bezos as well as Star Trek actor William Shatner to space.

Bezos, who made his fortune with Amazon envisages a future in which humanity disperses throughout the solar system, living and working in giant space colonies with artificial gravity.

This, he says, would leave Earth as a pristine tourism desti-

nation much like national parks today. The year 2021 has been significant for the space tourism sector, with Virgin Galactic also flying its founder Richard Branson to the final frontier, and Elon Musk's SpaceX sending four private citizens on a three-day orbital mission for charity.

The industry's predicted growth means that, starting from next year, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said on Friday it will stop awarding astronaut wings badges to commercial space travellers.

AFP

New Caledonia to hold tense final vote on independence from France

Noumea, France - The Pacific territory of New Caledonia goes to the polls on Sunday for a third and final referendum on independence from France with campaigning marked by angry demands to call off the vote because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The territory, 2,000km east of Australia, was granted three independence referendums under a 1988 deal aimed at easing tensions on the islands.

Having rejected a breakaway from their French former colonial masters in 2018 and then again last year, the territory's 185,000 voters will be asked one last time: "Do you want New Caledonia to accede to full sovereignty and become independent?"

The vote comes against the backdrop of increasingly strained ties between Paris and its regional allies.



A municipality employee sets a polling station ahead of the referendum on independence in Noumea, on New Caledonia, on Friday (AFP)

France regards itself as a major Indo-Pacific player thanks to overseas territories such as New Caledonia.

President Emmanuel Macron has insisted the French state takes no side in the referendum, other than to ensure fair and smooth proceedings. "The day after (the vote), whatever the result is, there will be a shared life [between New Caledonia and France]," he said on Thursday.

Polls open at 8:00 am local time (2100GMT on Saturday) and close at 6:00 pm local time (0500GMT on Sunday) with the results expected a few hours later.

Pacific power Australia infuriated France in September by ditching a massive submarine contract in favour of a security pact with Britain and the United States.

Behind the spat looms China's growing role, with experts suspecting that an independent New Caledonia could

be more amenable to Beijing's advances, which are partly motivated by an interest in the territory's vast nickel reserves.

China is already the biggest single client for New Caledonia's metal exports.

China's 'pearl necklace'

"If the French safeguard disappears, all elements would be in place for China to establish itself permanently in New Caledonia," said international relations analyst Bastien Vandendyck.

Other nations in the region, including Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, had already become 'Chinese satellites', Vandendyck told AFP.

"All China needs now to complete its pearl necklace on Australia's doorstep is New Caledonia," he said.

Pro-independence campaign-

ers are boycotting Sunday's vote, saying they want it postponed to September because 'a fair campaign' is not possible with high coronavirus infection numbers.

New Caledonia's 270,000 inhabitants were largely spared during the pandemic's first phase, but have suffered close to 300 COVID-19 deaths since the recent appearance of the Delta variant.

The French government has rejected the demand, saying the virus spread had slowed, with the infection rate falling to a modest 80 to 100 cases per 100,000 people. The pro-independence movement has still threatened non-recognition of the referendum outcome and vowed to appeal to the United Nations to get it cancelled.

The French minister in charge of overseas territories, Sebastien Lecornu, said that while it was 'a

democratic right' to refuse to vote, the boycott would make no difference to the referendum's 'legal validity'.

A cyclone warning was issued on Saturday to complicate voting as a tropical depression loomed.

'Declaration of war'

The pro-French camp, meanwhile, has called on supporters to turn out, fearing the boycott by pro-independence parties may prompt them to stay at home with victory looking like a foregone conclusion.

"It is important that the mobilisation of the no-independence supporters remains absolute, to show that they are in a majority and united in their wish for New Caledonia to remain part of the French Republic," said Thierry Santa, president of the conservative Rassemblement-LR party.

In June, the various political parties agreed with the French government the referendum, whatever its outcome, should lead to 'a period of stability and convergence' and be followed by a new referendum by June 2023 which would decide on the 'project' New Caledonia's people want to pursue.

But hopes for a smooth transition were jolted when the main indigenous pro-independence movement, the FLNKS, deemed the government's insistence on going ahead with the referendum 'a declaration of war'.

Observers fear renewed tensions could even spark a return of the kind of violence last seen 30 years ago.

The pro-Paris side won the 2018 referendum with 56.7 per cent of the vote, but that fell to 53.3 per cent in the 2020 election.

AFP

At least 50 dead in Kentucky as storms batter US state

Washington, US - At least 50 people are dead after a tornado ripped through the southeastern US state of Kentucky, its governor told reporters, as storms ravaged large swathes of the country.

Several counties in Kentucky were devastated, with the strongest tornado tearing 322km through the state, Governor Andy Beshear said.

"I fear that there are more than 50 dead ... probably closer to somewhere between 70 and 100, it's devastating," he said, adding this was the "most severe tornado event in Kentucky's history".



Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear

The governor said a roof collapse at a candle factory 'resulted in mass casualties' in the city of Mayfield.

"Before midnight I declared a state of emergency," Beshear said.

The tornado came as storms wreaked havoc in multiple US states.

A storm earlier tore through a massive Amazon warehouse in the US state of Illinois on Friday, officials said, with local media reporting around 100 workers trapped inside.

Officials were working through the early hours of Saturday to rescue employees at the facility - a third of which was reduced to rubble - who were on the night shift processing orders ahead of the Christmas holidays.

The Collinsville Emergency Management Agency described it as a 'mass casualty incident' with 'multiple subjects trapped at Amazon Warehouse'.

A tornado warning had been in effect in the area at the time of the incident.

Footage shared across US news channels and social media of the Edwardsville Amazon warehouse showed a large part of the facility's roof ripped off

while one of the walls had collapsed into the building, with rubble strewn across the site.

It was not immediately clear if anyone was hurt or killed.

Illinois Governor JB Pritzler said, "My prayers are with the people of Edwardsville tonight."

"Our Illinois State Police and Illinois Emergency Management Agency are both coordinating closely with local officials and I will continue to monitor the situation," he added.

In a statement sent to local media, Amazon spokesperson Richard Rocha said, "The safety and well-being of our employees and partners is our top priority right now. We're assessing the situation and will share additional information when it's available."

In Arkansas, one person was killed and 20 others were trapped after a tornado struck the Monette Manor nursing home, US media reported.

Craighead county official Marvin Day told local news channels that rescuers had successfully pulled out those trapped in the building while the structure was 'pretty much destroyed'.

In Tennessee, at least two people were killed in storm-related incidents, an emergency management official told local media.

AFP

Mauritius records first two Omicron cases, fears more

Port Louis, Mauritius - The Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius has recorded its first two infections of the COVID-19 Omicron variant, both linked to people returned from South Africa, with a dozen more contact cases feared.

Health Minister Kailesh Jagutpal told a press conference on Friday the pair were asymptomatic and had tested negative the day before.

"They have already gone home," he said.

He added that contract tracing for the two people had been carried out, revealing 12 positive cases with a missing S gene - a tell-tale sign of Omicron.

Health authorities were currently analysing the samples to determine if they are in fact Omi-



Health Minister Kailesh Jagutpal

cron.

One of the two Omicron cases was detected in a man who flew home to the island from South Africa on November 27.

South Africa first identified the variant just two days before on November 25.

The second case was recorded in a woman in the is-

land's south whose husband had returned from South Africa on November 18.

Mauritius fully opened its doors to international visitors at the start of October, hoping to rebuild its vital tourism industry after long months of isolation because of the pandemic.

But it was forced to reimpose restrictions last month as Delta variant cases surged.

According to latest figures reported to the World Health Organization, Mauritius has had 62,652 COVID-19 cases and 680 deaths.

More than 900,000 people have been fully vaccinated, representing 73.5 per cent of the population, government figures show.

AFP

India nabs man for stealing Maradona's watch

Guwahati, India - Indian police have recovered a stolen watch customised for star footballer Diego Maradona and arrested a suspect behind the alleged theft in Dubai, officials claimed on Saturday.

Police said they detained Wazid Hussain in the northeastern state of Assam and recovered a Swiss-made Hublot watch after he fled to India following an alleged theft in Dubai.

The 37-year-old had been working as a security guard since 2016 at a Dubai-based firm where memorabilia relating to the Argentinian footballer were stored, police said.

They said the single edition watch, worth around \$26,500, has a photo of the star engraved on its back and carries his signature with his jersey number 10.

"Though there are many lim-



Indian police officer Rakesh Roushan displays the stolen customised watch of Diego Maradona, in Sivasagar on Saturday (AFP)

ited edition watches available this watch was customised for Maradona," Sivasagar Superintendent of Police Rakesh Roushan said, quoting information received from Dubai authorities.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the local police held the accused after receiving a tip-off from their counterparts in Dubai.

"In an act of international co-operation @assampolice has co-ordinated with @dubai policeHQ through Indian federal LEA to recover a heritage @Hublot watch belonging to legendary footballer Late Diego Maradona and arrested one Wazid Hussein. Follow up lawful action is being taken", Sharma tweeted.

Police said the detained man denied the allegations.

AFP

Mexico urges US to rethink on migration policy after horror crash kills 55 migrants

Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Mexico - Mexico on Friday urged Washington to rethink its migration policy after a horror road accident killed 55 undocumented migrants in a truck on a major transit route to the United States.

Bodies draped in white sheets lined the roadside near Tuxtla Gutierrez in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, where a truck transporting some 160 migrants - most from Central America - overturned on Thursday.

Passengers, bleeding and with broken bones, lay in the road crying out in pain after the latest disaster to befall desperate people travelling through Mexico in search of a better life in the United States.

More than 100 people were injured.

Thousands attempt the long, often dangerous, and expensive journey every year to escape violence and poverty in their home nations in South and Central America.

Such tragedies, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Friday, should move the world to address 'the underlying problem' - despair.

"The migration problem cannot be solved by coercive measures, but by opportunities for work and well-being. People don't leave their villages for pleasure, they do it out of necessity," he said.

If the United States wanted to prevent migration to its shores, added Lopez Obrador, it should invest in social programmes in Central America - a matter he has discussed with Joe Biden.

But 'there is slowness', said the Mexican leader.

The victims of Thursday's accident, authorities said, were from Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

Most of the dead were from Guatemala, said Lopez Obrador.

"It was horrible to hear the wailing. I just thought about helping," 18 year old Sabina Lopez, who lives nearby, said.

The driver, who fled the scene, was allegedly speeding when he lost control of the truck.

The National Institute of Migration said it was working to identify the dead, pay for funerals and repatriate bodies. It said survivors will be allowed to stay in Mexico.

'Don't close your eyes'

The death toll is likely to rise, with many of the injured taken to hospital in a serious condition, according to Luis Manuel Garcia, a local civil protection official.

Lopez told AFP she saw a man pleading with his wounded companion.

"Don't go to sleep, don't close



Workers remove the container from the trailer of a truck that crashed with migrants aboard following a road accident in Tuxtla-Chiapa de Corzo highway in the State of Chiapas, Mexico on Thursday (AFP)



Candles (left) placed at the accident site in Mexico on Friday; a photo of a Guatemalan (right) who survived the accident, is seen at his house in Paraje Pamezabal village, 152km west of Guatemala City on Friday (AFP)



I remember the screaming of the people when the trailer overturned - and nothing else, just screaming

SERVIN LANUZA

your eyes," she recalled him saying. "Remember what you promised your mother! Hold on."

Servin Lanuza, who left Guatemala hoping for a better life, boarded the truck minutes before the accident.

"I remember the screaming of the people when the trailer overturned - and nothing else, just screaming. The people from the nearby houses helped us," the 18-year-old told AFP from a Red Cross facility where he was being treated for minor injuries.

Isaías Diaz, a nearby resident who arrived 15 minutes after the incident, described a ghastly scene, with 'a lot of people lying around, some of them were already dead'.

Diaz said he saw "five, six children, injured ... People (who had) broken legs, ribs, heads, cuts on their necks, everything." "The crying, the pain, the des-

peration. It was a very ugly atmosphere," he said.

Another local, Emmanuel Hernandez (43) said the aftermath was horrendous.

"The bodies were like demons, with the skulls protruding, most of them deformed," he said.

Broken hearts

People came spontaneously from nearby settlements on Friday to place candles at the accident site and pray.

"Our hearts are broken," said Rocio Hernandez, a 52-year-old housewife.

The Attorney General's Of-

fice has opened a homicide investigation, while government officials denied the truck had been allowed through a road-block before the crash.

Guatemalan authorities declared three days of national mourning, and the Vatican expressed condolences to the victims and their loved ones.

"Migratory alternatives and legal avenues are needed to avoid tragedies like this," the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) tweeted.

Human traffickers commonly hide undocumented migrants in trucks bringing them from

Guatemala into Mexico, from where they head north to the US border. Accidents are common.

Last month, 12 migrants died when two trucks crashed and burned in Chiapas.

Migrants have told AFP that the truck journey entails hours locked up without ventilation, avoiding drinking water so as not to have to urinate. Drivers, they say, ignore pleas for fresh air.

Faced with these dangers, many migrants opt instead to join so-called caravans undertaking the long journey on foot, enduring extreme weather and other hardships, including extortion from drug gangs.

The flow of undocumented migrants has increase since Biden came to office with a promise to scrap the hardline border policies of his predecessor Donald Trump.

Mexican authorities have detected more than 190,000 migrants between January and September, three times as many as in 2020.

Some 74,300 have been deported.

The United States recorded a high of 1.7mn people entering illegally from Mexico between October 2020 and September. Many were expelled.

AFP

CLASSIFIEDS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SALE

Ali Dohh & Co. LLC - public accountants offers a well established printing press (under liquidation) with all machinery in Ruwi for sale including its commercial registration. Interested parties may call (968) 97770477 or email to info@aliadohh.com for any information.

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

**أوربت ORBIT**
Car Rental & Lease

Send your request for Birthday/Anniversary wishes to wish@apexmedia.co.om with your resident card copy (It's free of cost)

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

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



Afghan film director Salim Shaheen (AFP)

Kabul, Afghanistan - Four years ago, Afghan film director Salim Shaheen was in the spotlight at Cannes, but now he spends his days confined to his home, afraid of the new Taliban regime and their clampdown on arts and music.

Prolific and exuberant, Shaheen often speaks in the third person or as the on-screen personas developed in his 125 ultra-low-budget films.

A mention of his moment in the Cannes limelight elicits particular rapture.

"It was the most beautiful day of my life!" Shaheen cries out from his home in Kabul.

"All the French knew me. They were shouting: 'Shaheen! Shaheen!'"

The film presented at Cannes was a documentary called *The Prince of Nothingwood*, produced by journalist Sonia Kronlund, which followed Shaheen as he made his 111th film.

The 56-year-old still savours the memory of the minutes-long standing ovation he received after the documentary's press screening at Cannes.

But all that now seems very far away, and though he has not received any direct threats from the Taliban, he now lives in fear of the headline Islamists who returned to power in mid-August after a two-decade insurgency.

"I'm afraid," he admits, momentarily ditch-

ing his theatrical persona.

"I'm no ordinary guy going out onto the streets. I am Salim Shaheen."

Shaheen fled to Pakistan during the Taliban's first brutal regime of 1996 to 2001, when cinema and television were banned and the arts severely restricted.

Afghanistan's new government has pledged a softer rule this



It was the most beautiful day of my life!
All the French knew me. They were shouting:
'Shaheen! Shaheen!'

SALIM SHAHEEN

time round - television has so far been permitted but with heavy restrictions on content, while the country's few cinemas have mostly closed because of the worsening financial crisis.

But restrictions on dancing, playing music and singing have been imposed variably across provinces.

'Cinema has died in Afghanistan'

When the Taliban rolled unopposed into Kabul on August 15

during the collapse of the Western-backed regime, Shaheen burned dozens of posters of his films, keeping only two in an otherwise bare room.

He tried to leave the country later that month and he says he was on a list of people accepted by France.

"I was meant to leave the day of the explosion at the airport," says Shaheen, referring to an August 26 suicide bombing by an Islamic State group affiliate that killed more than one hundred people.

He was in a vehicle at the airport when the explosion took place, and "we received a message telling us to get out of the area", he explains.

He has since closeted himself away at home, along with 12 other family members who were also meant to be evacuated.

"All the actors and actresses from my films

are currently in France... I want to go to somewhere I can resume my art and cinema," he says.

His films focus on social issues including violence against women, crime, and drugs - topics not to the Taliban's taste.

Taking inspiration from Bollywood, he flirts with all the main genres - drama, comedy, police action - while song and dance are also integral features.

His exaggerated style isn't always appreciated by educated Afghans, but he is very popular among ordinary folk - many in Kabul break into a smile at the mere mention of his name.

The Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has made it clear that films that it says go against Islamic and Afghan culture are not permitted.

In mid-November, it also issued a religious directive urging Afghan television channels to stop broadcasting dramas featuring women.

A ministry spokesman told AFP he was not familiar with Shaheen or his work.

The filmmaker has just finished editing his last three projects, but doesn't know if they will ever reach the public.

"Cinema has died in Afghanistan - and Salim Shaheen has died too with that!" AFP

Christmas tree turns symbol of hope at Brazil dump

Pinheiro, Brazil - An illegal garbage dump seems an unlikely setting for a holiday story, but when a photojournalist captured 12-year-old Gabriel Silva pulling a Christmas tree from a fetid mountain of trash, the image quickly went viral.

Silva lives with his mother and two older brothers in a small mud hut next to the dump in the town of Pinheiro, in northeastern Brazil.

It is a disturbing landscape of rotting waste and discarded plastic, where dozens of trash-pickers compete for scraps of food with vultures, cats, dogs and cattle.

Silva was with his mother on November 8, digging through the garbage as he does most days after school, when he unearthed a blue plastic bag with a small artificial Christmas tree inside.

"I had never had a Christmas tree before," he says.

His face has an inscrutable expression in the picture that photographer Joao Paulo Guimaraes captured of that moment, as if the shirtless young trash-picker were unsure what to make of this find: It intrigued the child in him, but would do nothing to feed his family.



A Gabriel Silva holds a Christmas decoration he found while scavenging through garbage at the Picarreira landfill of the Cidade das Aguas neighbourhood, in Pinheiro, Maranhao state, Brazil (AFP)

But then the image went viral on social networks, and the little plastic tree turned into an unexpected Christmas present.

Silva and his family's dirt-floor hut now has a giant, sparkling Christmas tree inside - not the one from the

dump, but a gift from a benefactor who was moved by the photograph.

It is just one of a flood of donations the family has received.

"We've gotten clothes, mattresses, baskets of food. Thank God, we'll be able to get by fine for Christmas this

year," says Silva's mother, 45-year-old Maria Francisca Silva.

There has also been money, thanks to online collections - a windfall for Maria Francisca, who earns around

600 reais (US\$105) a month selling recyclable materials from the dump.

The family hopes to soon fulfill their dream of building an actual house.

They have already realized one longtime wish, thanks to an initial donation of 500 reais: Install a hydraulic pump to bring up water from their well, replacing the rope and bucket they used to use.

But Silva's favourite gift is a bicycle he received from a teacher at his school.

'Like the apocalypse'

Silva spends much of his free time at the dump with his mother.

"I prefer to bring him with me. If I let him run around in the street, he could get into drugs, do things he's not supposed to," she says.

"He's a good boy. He always helps me."

The episode has turned Silva into a

local celebrity.

"Every day, people want to take my picture, ask me things," he says.

Guimaraes, a freelance photographer who collaborates with AFP, lives in the neighbouring state of Para.

He got the idea to shoot pictures at the dump after seeing a video of residents there running after a garbage truck carrying waste from a supermarket.

"It was just crazy. There were probably 50 people chasing it," says Pinheiro's public defender, Eurico Arruda, who shot the video.

"That dump is like something out of the apocalypse. There are fires and smoke everywhere, vultures, dogs. It's the bottom rung of destitute poverty." Arruda, who has set up a cooperative to help the trash-pickers defend their rights, says he hopes the Christmas tree picture will raise awareness about the plight of people like the Silvas.

The local government has already promised monthly welfare payments of 100 reais (US\$18) for the trash-pickers, and vowed to build a legal dump next year that complies with sanitation regulations.

AFP

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Sterling bags 100th Premier League goal as Man City win

Manchester, UK - Raheem Sterling scored his 100th Premier League goal as the Manchester City forward's penalty fired the leaders to a 1-0 win against 10-man Wolves on Saturday.

Sterling netted from the spot in the second half at the Etihad Stadium to clinch City's sixth successive league victory.

City's cause was aided by a needless first half red card for Wolves striker Raul Jimenez, who was dismissed for failing to retreat the required 10 yards before a free-kick he had been booked for conceding seconds earlier.

Sterling's landmark goal ensured City capitalised on Jimenez's blunder as they survived an average display to get back on track after the midweek Champions League defeat at Leipzig.

After struggling to get into Guardiola's starting line-up at times this season amid talk of a potential transfer, Sterling is finally showing signs of recapturing the scintillating form that made him such a dangerous force.

Pep Guardiola's side are four points clear of second placed Liverpool, who can close the gap if they beat Aston Villa at Anfield later on Saturday.

Kyle Walker was dropped to the bench after City's right-back was criticised by Guardiola following his red card at Leipzig.

Guardiola made eight changes from the Leipzig game, with Phil Foden, troubled by an ankle problem, and Kevin De Bruyne, recovered from the coronavirus, named as substitutes.



Manchester City's English midfielder Raheem Sterling (left) vies with Wolverhampton Wanderers' French defender Rayan Ait-Nouri during their English Premier League football match on Saturday (AFP)

Bernardo Silva had scored six goals in his previous eight league appearances and the City playmaker was inches away from adding to that total when he bent a curler just over the bar in the opening minutes. Joao Cancelo's lung-bursting breaks from right-back were a constant threat in the first half and he advanced again for a low strike that tested Wolves keeper Jose Sa.

Sterling strikes

Wolves duo Max Kilman and Ruben Neves needed lengthy treatment after a nasty clash of heads that left Kilman with blood pouring from a cut.

Jimenez, the victim of a fractured skull in a collision with David Luiz at Arsenal last season, was quick to check on his team-mates, who were both able to continue playing.

It was Jimenez who didn't make it to half-time as the Mexican saw red in needless fashion.

Booked for a tug on Rodri, Jimenez stupidly stuck out a foot to block the resulting free-kick without retreating 10 yards, earning his second yellow card 48 seconds after the first.

Jimenez ripped off his protective headband and swung it around in frustration, but he could have no complaints about his self-inflicted exit.

City's pressure finally produced a goal in the 66th minute.

Joao Moutinho blocked Silva's cross with a raised arm and, although the ball appeared to hit the midfielder's armpit, VAR confirmed Jon Moss's decision after a check.

AFP



This file photo shows Fiorentina's Dusan Vlahovic during the Italian Serie A football match against Juventus on November 6 (AFP)

Vlahovic strikes twice as Fiorentina sink Salernitana

Milan, Italy - Dusan Vlahovic added two more goals to his rapidly growing tally for Fiorentina in Saturday's 4-0 Serie A win over Salernitana which continues an encouraging season for the Tuscans.

Serbia forward Vlahovic lashed home the Viola's second five minutes after half-time and tapped home Riccardo Sottil's low cross six minutes from the end to make it 15 league goals for the season and move top of the goalscoring charts in Italy.

Giacomo Bonaventura opened with a well-struck volley in the 31st minute while Youssef Maleh netted following a saved Vlahovic shot in the final minute as Fiorentina move up to fifth on 30 points, three ahead of sixth-placed Juventus who are at Venezia in Saturday's early evening match.

Vincenzo Italiano's side are also four points from Atalanta in the final Champions League spot ahead of their trip to Verona on Sunday.

Vlahovic, 21, has now scored 32 Serie A goals in 2021 and is leading Fiorentina to what looks to be their best season in years.

With 10 wins so far this campaign Fiorentina have already beaten last year's tally and are aiming to qualify for Europe for the first time since 2016.

He had been targeted with insults by supporters earlier in the season after refusing to sign an extension to his current contract which expires in the summer of 2023. However his form - seven goals in his last five matches - has brought the crowd in Florence back on his side.

Salernitana's sixth defeat in their last seven matches leaves them rooted to the bottom of the league on eight points from their 17 matches.

AFP



Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema (AFP)

Benzema fit for Madrid derby, says Ancelotti

Madrid, Spain - Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti said Saturday that forward Karim Benzema, who injured a leg last weekend against Real Sociedad, "will play" the derby against Atletico Madrid on Sunday.

"Benzema trained today, he has good feelings, he is available and he will play tomorrow," Ancelotti told a press conference.

The derby is already crucial for the race for the title. Victory would put Real Madrid 13 points ahead of reigning champions Atletico at the top of the standings. "If we win, we will simply have three points more than a direct opponent, who will be fighting with us until the end, I am sure," Ancelotti said.

"The statistics say that there are only three points at stake, but there is also the emotional aspect. It's a game that the fans of both teams live in a special way. I don't want to add to it, because there is already a lot of pressure on both teams. We are confident and we play well lately, but it's good to have pressure," he said.

"If La Liga ended today, it would be over. But, we still have six months to play. Until today, we have been the best, of course. But what concerns us is the future, not the past", said Ancelotti.

AFP

UEFA cancels Tottenham's postponed tie against Rennes

Lausanne, Switzerland - UEFA on Saturday announced the cancellation of Tottenham's COVID-postponed Europa Conference League game against Rennes.

The two clubs were unable to find a suitable date to reschedule Thursday's game and "as a consequence, the match can no longer be played", European football's governing body explained.

UEFA's disciplinary wing will determine a result for the scrapped fixture.

The ruling will please Group G winners Rennes. The French side had flown to London and accused Spurs of making a "unilateral decision" in calling off the match on Wednesday.

Tottenham were level on points with third-placed Vitesse Arnheim and required a win to seal second and go through to the play-off round.

But according to UEFA rules Antonio Conte's side face being declared 3-0 losers, ending their participation in the third-tier competition.



Rennes' French midfielder Lesley Ugochkwu (left) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal (AFP)

Conte revealed on the eve of the game in north London that eight of his players and five members of staff had tested positive for Covid-19.

Rennes go on a winter break on December 22 and did not take the postponement well.

They accused Spurs of causing "London fog" by refusing to tell them how many cases they had and informing them on Wednesday afternoon that the game would be played -- only to call it off an hour after they had arrived in the British capital.

Tottenham's Premier League match at Brighton on Sunday has also been postponed.

Spurs were forced to close their first-team training centre on Wednesday as a result of the severe outbreak. Their Premier League match at Leicester on December 16 will also be in doubt, not only due to the situation in Conte's squad but because the Foxes have been hit by a less widespread Covid outbreak.

AFP



Verstappen on pole for title-deciding Abu Dhabi Grand Prix



Abu Dhabi, UAE - Max Verstappen gained a potentially decisive advantage in his epic battle for the Formula One world title on Saturday by claiming pole for the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

Verstappen goes into the season-closing race level on points with Lewis Hamilton, who took second in qualifying to join the Red Bull driver on the front row.

Lando Norris was a surprise third to start on the second row alongside Verstappen's teammate Sergio Perez.

The last six winners in Abu Dhabi have all started from the front of the grid, with Verstappen victorious from pole last year.

Hamilton, seeking a historic eighth world title, was favourite to secure the final pole of 2021 after his Mercedes left Verstappen's Red Bull trailing in his wake in practice.

But after Red Bull's mechanics worked on Verstappen's car

overnight, the Dutchman produced a blistering flying lap in Q3. His time of 1min 22.109sec left Hamilton over half a second behind.

That forced the seven-time world champion back onto the heavily modified Yas Marina circuit for one last throw of the dice.

But although he reduced the gap to 0.371 at a venue where he is a five-time winner he could not knock his arch rival off the top of the grid.

"It's an amazing feeling, we definitely improved the car in quali," said Verstappen.

The 24-year-old added, "I'm incredibly happy with this. It's what we wanted but it was not easy with Mercedes' form. I'm looking forward to tomorrow, that's the most important."

With the two drivers locked together on 369.5 points after 21 of the 22 races the stakes could not be higher for the duelling duo. Should the pair end up all square - (one finishes ninth, the other 10th with the fastest lap) - or fail to score any points then the title is Verstappen's on the strength of his nine race wins to Hamilton's eight.

AFP

I'm incredibly happy with this. It's what we wanted but it was not easy with Mercedes' form

MAX VERSTAPPEN

Shorthanded Suns sink Celtics; Bucks stop Rockets



JaVale McGee of the Phoenix Suns reacts after a three-point shot (AFP)

Los Angeles, US - JaVale McGee scored a season-high 21 points as the short-handed Phoenix Suns earned their 20th win in the past 21 games by cruising to a 111-90 victory over the Boston Celtics on Friday.

McGee also had 15 rebounds while Cameron Payne came off the bench to score 17 points in front of a crowd of 17,000 at Footprint Center in Arizona.

Jae Crowder and Cameron Johnson added 16 points apiece for the Suns, who played without star guard Devin Booker and centre Deandre Ayton. Booker missed his fourth straight game with a hamstring injury while Ayton was sidelined with an undisclosed illness that the team said was not COVID-19.

Mikal Bridges added 14 points while Chris Paul and Landry Shamet scored 10 each. Paul also handed out a game-high 12 assists for the Suns, who made all 11 of their free throws.

"It was next man up," said Paul. "We got a lot of guys on our team who understand their jobs. Whatever it takes to win I got to do it."

Jayson Tatum had a game-high 24 points and seven

rebounds for Boston, who dropped their third straight and ended a five-game road trip with just one win.

Dennis Schroder added 15 points, Robert Williams scored 10 and Al Horford had nine in the loss. Boston's Marcus Smart missed his first 11 shots and finished with a dismal four points - shooting just one of 13. Overall the Celtics sank just four of 26 from beyond the arc.

In Houston, Giannis Antetokounmpo's full arsenal was on display as he scored 41 points and grabbed 17 rebounds and the Milwaukee Bucks cooled off the red-hot Houston Rockets 123-114.

Antetokounmpo also had five assists, three steals and two blocked shots as the Bucks snapped the Rockets' winning streak at seven games.

"I was just looking to be aggressive," Antetokounmpo said. "Last game I wasn't as aggressive as I wanted."

He got plenty of support from his teammates, especially Khris Middleton and Bobby Portis, who each scored 21 points and added eight rebounds.

AFP

AMAZFIT
SMART WATCHES

Sleek, Smart,
Sporty, Superb
Take things to the limit

World Class **Now in Oman**

AMAZFIT
AUTHORISED PARTNER

Genetco
GENERAL ELECTRIC & TRADING CO. LLC

50
YEARS OF SUCCESS

C.R. No. 1009680
For Enquiries
95713529

**FREE
CLASSIFIED
LISTING**

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories:
Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/ Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35) Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call 99251604

SETTLE DOWN IN THE COUNTRY OF YOUR CHOICE

CHOOSE THE BEST
M-J GLOBAL
OMAN / UAE / QATAR / SRI LANKA

M-J GLOBAL
Ultimate Resettlement Solutions

CANADA
Get Permanent Residency of Canada through Express Entry/ Provincial Nominee Program in 6-12 months OR Get Permanent Residency through Owner operated LMA within 12 months with minimum Investment of CAD 150,000 OR Start your business in British Columbia with minimum CAD 250,000 and get residency in 11 to 13 months.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
USA EB-3 Visa: Direct employment and US Green Card for you and your family. Processing Time 15 months. Occupation in Demand: Caregiver, Janitor, Production Helper, General Laborer

GERMANY
Germany Business Immigration with minimum Euro 25,000 capital investment in business. Processing time is only 5 months. Resident Visa for entire family. Get Passport on the 5th year.

PORTUGAL
Invest in real estate of minimum Euro 280,000 and get the Portugal Golden Visa in 6 months. Get Portugal Passport in 5 yrs with access to 177 countries visa free travel. Stay requirement only 7 days per year in Portugal. Excellent returns on investment

HUNGARY
Hungary Business Immigration • Euro 50,000* Minimum Investment • Temporary Resident Visa for entire family • Processing time only 4-5 months • 2yrs Business experience/Senior Management role preferred

CYPRUS
Cyprus: Get your Citizenship in 6 months by investment of Euro 2 million in Real Estate or Get a Permanent Residency in 3 months by investing in Real Estate with investment worth Euro 300,000

DOMINICA
Dominica Citizenship by Investment • Starting from USD 100,000* • Direct Citizenship • Visa free travel to over 120 Countries • Processing time 4-5 months • No need to stay in Dominica

GRENADA
Grenada Citizenship by Investment • Starting from USD 150,000* • Direct Citizenship • Visa free travel to over 130 Countries • Processing time 6 months • Tax advantages

TURKEY
Turkey: Get your citizenship in 5 months by investment of USD 250,000 in Real Estate. Smooth and Fast processing with excellent returns.

OFFICE NO. 204, 2ND FLOOR, JASMINE COMPLEX, AL HADQA STREET, AL KHUWAIR, MUSCAT.
PH: +968 24478381, +968 9357 1122, +968 7171 90 28. EMAIL: CS@MJGLOBAL.COM

WWW.MJGLOBAL.COM

Season Greetings!

www.inapaarman.co.za

Distributed by

Please Contact
+968 22060236/237

THE ASHES

Australia romp to nine-wicket win

Nathan Lyon finally claimed his 400th Test wicket as another calamitous collapse from the visitors handed the hosts a comfortable win

Brisbane, Australia - The power went down at the Gabba and England went down with it as Nathan Lyon finally claimed his 400th Test wicket and Australia claimed a one-nil series lead after another calamitous collapse from the visitors handed the hosts a comfortable nine-wicket win.

Lyon took four wickets on the fourth morning, including that of Dawid Malan's for his 400th to start the rot prior to the new ball being taken, while Cameron Green claimed the prized scalp of Joe Root for 89 as England lost 8 for 74 to be bowled out for 297 and set Australia just 20 runs to win.

Australia's only concern came when David Warner did not come out to bat in the fourth innings. He did not field during England's second innings after he was hit in the ribs by Ben Stokes during his first-innings 94. Cricket Australia released a statement on day three saying he had bruised ribs and Warner told Channel Seven on the morning of day four that he was sore but would bat with the aid of some pain killers. However, with only 20 runs required to win Warner did not take to the crease raising concerns about his fitness for the second Test in Adelaide, with just four days to recover.

Alex Carey opened alongside Marcus Harris. It was just the third time Carey has opened in first-class cricket having opened in just his third first-class match back in 2013. He tried to play positively. He was nearly run out twice before Ollie Robinson found his outside edge with a superb delivery that nipped off the seam. Harris was far from convincing early as the new ball zipped around but played a glorious cut shot and equally



Australia's Marnus Labuschagne (right) and teammate Marcus Harris walk off the field in celebration after completing the chase to win the first Ashes cricket Test match against England on day four at the Gabba, in Brisbane on Saturday (AFP)

good square drive to bring up the winning runs without Marnus Labuschagne having to face a ball.

Earlier, England regressed to their mean on the fourth morning after the sublime day three partnership between Root and Malan had sprung hopes of a 2010-style Gabba revival, having erased 220 of the 278-run first-innings deficit just two down.

But hope springs eternal as Lyon snuffed out any chance of a miracle removing Malan in the

fourth over of the morning. Lyon had been stuck on 399 wickets for 326 days and Malan revealed to ABC radio after play on day three that Lyon should have had him out caught and bowled in the afternoon when a ball ballooned off his pad and brushed the glove on the way back to Lyon but the Australians did not appeal.

Lyon finally got him a similar manner for wicket 400 with Malan deceived in flight as he skipped down to the wrong length. He groped in defence

only to get a thick inside edge onto pad with Labuschagne claiming the chance at a well-placed silly mid-off. The relief for Lyon and the Australians was palpable as he celebrated becoming the 17th Test bowler to claim 400 wickets, and just the third Australian behind Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath.

But the biggest wicket of the morning came from the unlikely source. Green bowled a superb spell with a 70-over old ball to fill a hole for his captain Pat

Cummins while Australia's thoroughbred quicks were held back for the new ball. Green banged away at a good length at 140kph/87mph for several overs and finally found a hint of outswing, luring Root into a false prod outside off stump and catching his outside edge. Root fell 11 short of his 7th century of 2021 and is still yet to register three figures in Australia.

Lyon then picked up Ollie Pope, whose struggles against spin continue. He tried to cut a

ball that bounced and spun back from outside off and succeeded in only gloving it to slip.

The game went dark for a period of five overs after Australia took the new ball as a power outage at the Gabba saw the entire television feed go down. Josh Hazlewood returned to the bowling crease after questions were raised about his fitness having only been used for eight overs out of 70 on the third day, but only those at the ground could see it.

Television pictures were restored just in time for Cummins to pick up Stokes for the second time in the match. Stokes was squared up again by Cummins, this time from over the wicket, as he closed the bat face to a ball that leapt from a length. Green held the leading edge at gully with ease.

Jos Buttler was unable to produce the same counter-attack he offered in the first innings, poking meekly wide of his off stump at Hazlewood to give Carey his seventh catch of the match. Lyon and Green cleaned up the tail handing Lyon a well-deserved four-wicket haul after toiling without reward on day three, while Carey claimed a record-breaking eighth catch to end the innings in a flawless display behind the stumps. It is the most catches on Test debut by a wicketkeeper and the equal-most dismissals alongside fellow Australian Brian Taber and England's Chris Read.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD

England 1st Innings 147

Australia 1st Innings 425

ENGLAND 2nd INNINGS

H Hameed	c Carey b Starc	27
R Burns	c Carey b Cummins	13
Dawid Malan	c Labuschagne b Lyon	82
Joe Root	c Carey b Green	89
B Stokes	c Green b Cummins	14
O Pope	c Smith b Lyon	4
Jos Buttler	c Carey b Hazlewood	23
Chris Woakes	c Carey b Green	16
O Robinson	c Head b Lyon	8
M Wood	b Lyon	6
Jack Leach	not out	0
Extras:	(b 4, lb 5, w 6)	15
TOTAL:	297 in 103 Overs	
Fall of wickets:	1-23, 2-61, 3-223, 4-229, 5-234, 6-266, 7-268, 8-286, 9-296, 10-297	
Bowling:	M Starc 20-3-77-1, J Hazlewood 14-6-32-1, P Cummins 20-6-51-2, N Lyon 34-5-91-4, C Green 12-3-23-2, M Labuschagne 3-0-14-0	
AUSTRALIA 2 nd INNINGS		
A Carey	c Buttler b Robinson	9
M Harris	not out	9
M Labuschagne	not out	0
Extras:	(nb 2)	2
TOTAL:	20 for one in 5.1 Overs	
Fall of wickets:	1-16	
Bowling:	O Robinson 3-0-13-1, C Woakes 2-0-3-0, M Wood 0.1-0-4-0	



400-wicket feat yet to sink in: Lyon

Brisbane, Australia - Australia's Nathan Lyon said reaching the milestone of 400 Test wickets in Saturday's big Ashes win and joining cricket's greats had not yet sunk in.

A classical off-spinner, the 34-year-old removed Dawid Malan for 82 on the fourth day of the first Test against England to write his name in Australian sporting history.

Speaking immediately after playing a central role in Australia's nine-wicket victory at the Gabba, Lyon said, "It hasn't really hit me yet to be honest.

"No doubt I'll get my phone and call my family and friends, and that will probably hit a little bit closer to home, I guess," he said. "But it's something that I'm very proud of, there's no doubt about that. It's been some hard toil to get it, but it's very rewarding, that's for sure."

Lyon, in his 101st Test, became just the 16th player worldwide to achieve the feat and only the third Australian after Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath.

Sri Lankan legend Muttiah Muralitharan tops the all-time Test wicket-takers with 800, followed by Warne on 708.

AFP



Oman Cricket announces D20 and D10 domestic league

Muscat - Oman Cricket has announced the launch of its new version of Domestic Tournament - Oman D20 & Oman D10 League in partnership with ITW Consulting DMCC.

The inaugural edition of Oman D20 will be played at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat from December 21 this year to January 5 next year.

The league will be played in a round-robin format between eight teams with two matches on weekdays (4pm and 8pm) and three matches on weekends (12pm, 4pm and 8pm), said a press statement.

Oman Cricket have signed ITW Consulting as their partners for three years to promote its cricket and showcase them to the highest level with Oman D20

and Oman D10 League to be played at least once a year.

The Oman D20 League will be exclusively broadcasted Live on FanCode App and www.fancode.com.

FanCode, India's premier digital sports destination for all fans, will continue to provide an unparalleled sports experience to sports fans through a plethora of features including interactive

data overlays, fastest interactive live scores, in-depth sports stats and analytics, and real-time match highlights.

The Oman D20 league would be also carried on Sports Eye (a regional cricket broadcasting portal) and other premium platforms globally.

The official logo of the league and the team's jersey's were also unveiled during the ceremony.

Gut-Behrami denies Goggia in Saint-Moritz Super-G

St Moritz, Switzerland - Switzerland's Lara Gut-Behrami edged Italian rival Sofia Goggia to win the World Cup Super-G at Saint-Moritz on Saturday.

Gut-Behrami's 33rd World Cup success brought her level on points at the top of the discipline standings with Goggia, who turned up after annexing all three races at Lake Louise.

In the first of a pair of super-Gs this weekend, the reigning world champion, returned to her best after being slowed by a virus last week in Canada.

Despite reduced visibility under a cloudy sky, she gave a demonstration of anticipation and technical fluidity as she swept down the course in 1min 19.82 seconds.

Goggia, who won the super-G as well as both downhill last week, was 0.18sec slower as the top two in the standings outpaced the competition.

Mikaela Shiffrin was third, exactly a second behind than Goggia.

The American, who has been a specialist in the shorter techni-



Lara Gut-Behrami competes in the Women's Super G race during the Audi FIS Alpine Ski World Cup at St Moritz, Switzerland, on Saturday (AFP)

cal disciplines, won the bronze in the super-G in the World Championships in February and has said she wants to try to win speed events this season.

The decision is paying off as Shiffrin has built a substantial lead in the overall standings.

She has 465 points, Goggia climbed to second on 395 while Slovakian defending champion Petra Vlhova, a slalom specialist who is skipping this weekend's faster races, dropped to third on 340.

AFP

Jeep®



A LEGEND REDESIGNED

THE FIRST-EVER SEVEN-SEATER GRAND CHEROKEE L

Exceptional capability, stunning looks, the latest technology and complete comfort for all seven passengers. The all-new three-row Jeep Grand Cherokee L will turn every journey into a wildly civilized adventure.

**Visit our showrooms across Oman
to book a test-drive today.**

BOOK A TEST DRIVE

Q50

UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL



EMI STARTING FROM
OMR 166*



BOSE® PERFORMANCE SERIES
AUDIO SYSTEM WITH 16 SPEAKERS



INFINITI INTOUCH™P-IVI
NAVIGATION SYSTEM



PREDICTIVE FORWARD
COLLISION WARNING

3.0L TWIN-TURBO V6 ENGINE, 300 HP

[LEARN MORE](#)



INFINITI



9496 5500



TOLL FREE
800 50011

سهيل بهوان للسيارات ش.م.م.
Suhail Bahwan Automobiles LLC

Bahwan
International
Group



مجموعة
بهوان
العالمية

* Starting EMI mentioned is inclusive of VAT and is calculated on the price of the base model with 20% down payment, for 96 months loan tenure. Subject to credit approvals from Bank Muscat.