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ROHM ANNOUNCES NEW SEASON
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► NEWS BRIEFS

OMANI-SAUDI TECHNOLOGICAL FORUM HELD

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - The Omani-Saudi technological forum was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

It aimed to boost communication between Omani and Saudi tech companies, increase commercial expansion of tech companies, and enhance fields of investment in innovation and technology in both countries.

The Omani delegation was headed by H E Eng Said Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

The agenda of the forum included presentations on strategies and programmes related to digital economy in the two countries and supporting tech companies.



Salalah to get new integrated facility for customs clearance



Israeli minister misses event due to wheelchair fiasco

'Saudi-Oman oil pipeline project revival important'

Pipeline to Arabian Sea to be vital alternative to Strait of Hormuz

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A Saudi-Omani oil pipeline to the Arabian Sea is of paramount strategic significance as it will provide an alternative route for Saudi oil shipments to reduce dependence on the Strait of Hormuz, according to H E Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy.

In an interview with *Asharq al Awsat* newspaper in Saudi Arabia, H E Saqri said, "It is time to start transporting Saudi oil through the Arabian Sea via Oman. The idea of a project to construct an oil pipeline across the sultanate to the Arabian Sea has existed since the 1970s."

He also stated that Oman and Saudi Arabia recently signed several agreements to increase investments between the two countries. "Therefore, the project's implementation has become of strategic importance."

Endorsing the importance of



the project, Faisal Faeq, an energy sector adviser who has worked with Saudi Aramco and OPEC Secretariat, recently wrote in *Arab News*: "An oil pipeline from Saudi Arabia to the Arabian Sea via Oman would reduce the region's dependence on the Strait of Hormuz, which is currently the main artery for the majority of oil and gas exports from the Arabian Gulf."

In Faeq's estimation, the eco-

The opening of a road between Oman and Saudi Arabia will facilitate work on connecting the city of Duqm and the city of NEOM in Saudi Arabia

H E DR SAID AL SAQRI

nomics would include savings for oil tankers, in terms of both journey time and the cost of freight and insurance. "Such a project would require billions of dollars to fund, but the cost will be justified by the strategic and economic benefits."

In his interview with *Asharq al Awsat*, H E Saqri added that the opening of a road between Oman and Saudi Arabia will facilitate work on connecting the

city of Duqm and the city of NEOM in Saudi Arabia. "The road will open the way for Saudi goods to reach Omani ports faster. Both countries will benefit from the existing facilities of each other, such as industrial and free zones, and the possibility of establishing new economic areas on the border," he said.

He noted that the volume of trade and investment exchange between the two countries will increase through joint strategic projects and mutual investments in various sectors, especially after the opening of the new Saudi-Oman road.

"There is cooperation and on-going joint meetings between Oman and Saudi Arabia to discuss investment opportunities and prospects for integration in the special economic zones, such as the establishment of an industrial zone in the sultanate. Saudi Arabia will develop, operate and manage the zone," H E Saqri informed.



New attractions planned for Muscat Festival

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Festival is set to return in 2022 after a gap of two years. The annual event was scrapped in 2020 and 2021 following the outbreak of COVID-19. This forthcoming edition is being planned with new ideas and attractions that will be boosted by wide private sector participation.

"Muscat Festival 2022 will be based on new ideas that will showcase the event in a modern way. It is scheduled early next year. Many ideas have been developed with partners from gov-

ernment institutions to enrich and enliven the festival, and introduce new activities and programmes," H E Issam al Zadjali, chairman of Muscat Municipality, said during his interaction with youth in Muttrah this week.

"Muscat Municipality has put forward many ideas to enhance the festival, such as continuing its activities and accompanying events held at different locations throughout the year instead of a 30-day period," he said.

"The festival will be hosted in a comprehensive and innovative way and the private sector will have wider participation."

World leaders promise to end deforestation by 2030 at COP26

Glasgow, Scotland - More than 100 world leaders have promised to end and reverse deforestation by 2030, in the COP26 climate summit's first major deal.

Brazil, where stretches of the Amazon rainforest have been cut down, was among the signatories on Tuesday. The pledge includes almost US\$19.2bn of public and private funds.

Experts welcomed the move, but warned a previous deal in 2014 had "failed to slow deforestation at all" and commitments needed to be delivered on.

Felling of trees contributes to climate change as it depletes forests that absorb vast amounts of the warming gas CO₂.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is hosting the

global meeting in Glasgow, said "more leaders than ever before" - a total of 110 - had made the "landmark" commitment.

"We have to stop the devastating loss of our forests," he said - and "end the role of humanity as nature's conqueror, and instead become nature's custodian".

The two-week summit in Glasgow is seen as crucial if cli-



Boris Johnson

mate change is to be brought under control.

The countries who have signed the pledge - including Canada, Brazil, Russia, China, Indonesia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the US and the UK - cover around 85 per cent of the world's forests.

Some of the funding will go to developing countries to restore

damaged land, tackle wildfires and support indigenous communities.

Governments of 28 countries also committed to ending deforestation linked to the global trade of food and cultivation of agricultural products such as palm oil, soya and cocoa.

Agencies

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OFA discusses challenges faced by women, staying motivated

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Success stories, challenges and hurdles for women in Oman were discussed at the third edition of the 'Inspirational Women of Oman' conference held at Hormuz Grand Hotel on Monday.

Organised by Omani French Friendship Association (OFA), more than a hundred women attended the event that presented interesting insights into the journeys of three inspiring women - Nutaila al Kharusi, managing director and psychotherapist at Al Harub Medical Center; Dr Zayana Aisri, team lead for Regional Geology Team at PDO; and Nadia Sultan, educational psychologist at Inspire Educational Consultancy.

In her presentation, Nutaila said, "Both women and men need to support women. It has been proven that when professional women support and celebrate the success of other women, it is indeed a victory and motivation to every woman. We need more mentors for young



(From left) Sara al Lamki, Nadia Sultan, Nutaila al Kharusi and Dr Zayana Aisri (Muscat Daily)

Pursue your dream with full integrity and faith. Never give up

NADIA SULTAN

women."

Zayana revealed that most of her team mates are men, "but I do not try to be like them. Being with them doesn't mean that I change my originality or characteristics. I continue to be who I am and I feel that I do not need to be a man or aggressive to be professional".

To deal with emotional stress, her remedy is engagement with loved ones and disconnecting from work for sometime.

A significant issue raised in the conference was that of mental health and the urgent and immediate need to address it. "It is very important to deal with this at the school level. We need

more awareness and education in society on this," Nadia said.

Urging women to be passionate about their life goals, Nadia said, "Pursue your dream with full integrity and faith. Never give up."

The event was moderated by communications consultant Sara al Lamki.



The announcement of the National Day celebration programme was made at an event held in Grand Millennium Muscat on Tuesday

Oman to celebrate National Day at Expo 2020 Dubai

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate will celebrate its National Day in a gala event at Oman Pavilion in the ongoing Expo 2020 Dubai on November 21. The event will begin with welcoming Royal Navy of Oman's *Shabab Oman II*, which will set sail from Sultan Qaboos Port for the United Arab Emirates on November 7.

The ship will carry students from across the Gulf Cooperation Council and the world as part of a cultural exchange.

Speaking about the celebration, Alya al Hosni, director of Oman Vision 2040 in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the National Day Celebration Programme at Expo 2020 Dubai, said, "It will consist of three main events, starting with the official delegation of the government receiving *Shabab Oman II*, followed by an event hosted by Expo 2020's organising committee to celebrate our National Day. Finally, there will be a formal evening reception to showcase

Omani culture to the world."

The announcement of the National Day celebration programme was made at an event held in Grand Millennium Muscat on Tuesday, which was attended by Mohsin Khamis al Balushi, adviser in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the sultanate's General Commissioner at Expo 2020.

The Omani Pavilion has been one of the most popular ones at Expo 2020 with more than 250,000 visitors of various nationalities, a Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion statement said. More than 300 SMEs are taking part in it and the next five months will witness several business events, workshops and conference for small and medium enterprises and investors.

Hussein al Harrasi, deputy director of SME Department in Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "We have send several SME delegations to Expo 2020 and have more lined up. It is an opportunity to showcase the best of our country."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Mumtaz Area needs attention of municipality

I would like to draw the kind attention of Muscat Municipality to the total absence of cleanness in Mumtaz Area, Ruwi, Way No 3326, near Al Burj International hotel.

For the last two months, water leakages from the main road have been entering the inner thoroughfares giving the area an ugly look. It is further

compounded by the accumulation of trash in and around the trash bins placed by the municipality.

A huge number of used furniture, utensils, felled trees and household items discarded by residents of the area have gathered near the dumping area.

After the disruption caused by cyclone Sha-

heen on October 3, 2021, the entire area has turned dusty. As a result of the garbage not being cleared and constant flow of water, the entire area has become infested with mosquitoes and flies.

Hiten Dutia
Ruwi

ROHM announces new season

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In celebration of its tenth anniversary, Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) has announced the launch a new season for 2022 with a return to live performances featuring 20 productions and a total of 35 performances.

The new season includes two operas, two ballets, two Arab stars, two gala concerts and two symphonic concerts featuring, among others, jazz and world music, ROHM said in a statement.

The season opens with a landmark red-carpet, world premiere of ROHM's production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, produced by the globally renowned director Franco Zeffirelli.

"This is the great man's final legacy with Leo Nucci, the Rigo-

letto with no comparison, starring in the lead role."

Zeffirelli's direction is packed with his trademark vibrancy and grand vision in presenting the Orchestra and Choir of Fondazione Arena di Verona, along with the Omani Opera Choir Group, to perform under the baton of Jan Latham-Koenig on January 20, 21 and 22.

The season also includes an unparalleled exhibition on the life and works of the legendary director to be hosted at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts from January 16 to March 20.

Through artefacts, images and videos designed especially for ROHM, many on display for the first time, the exhibition is an artistic tour de force of Zeffirelli's vision of grand opera.

All performances will take place adhering to COVID-19 protocols, the statement said.



First camel milk project to start soon in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The first commercial camel milk production company in Oman, Al Morooj Dairy is going to start operations soon.

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has announced that the project is the first-of-its kind in the Gulf region, too. It will involve collection of milk from breeders in Dhofar, processing and marketing across the sultanate.

According to OIA, the project will include three collection centres where fresh milk will be received in the morning and evening. "Each centre will be equipped with the latest technologies, and also have an integrated outlet for marketing products," an OIA official said.



"Following collection in the morning and evening, the milk received will be transferred to an integrated factory for processing and packaging."

The centres are expected to receive 18,000ltr of milk - both cow and camel milk - per day, and the project will produce 6mn

ltr annually.

According to the OIA official, the project aims to increase income of camel breeders, by purchasing milk directly from them, and create job opportunities. "It will support small- and medium-sized companies engaged in this sector, besides enhancing food

security and achieving self-sufficiency in the dairy sector."

The Agricultural Census of 2018 recorded more than 3.5mn heads of livestock, including 397,000 cows, 2,302,000 goats, 605,000 sheep and 268,000 camels.

Al Morooj Dairy is promoted by the state-owned Oman Food and Investment Company (OFIC), which is owned by OIA, and mandated to promote Oman's food security through partnerships with government agencies, private sector companies and investors.

OFIC aims to boost Oman's food security and economic well-being by investing in domestic and international food projects in partnership with food companies, investors and other stakeholders.

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Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Yahoo pulls out of China as regulatory crackdown bites

US Internet services giant Yahoo pulled out of mainland China starting Monday, the company said in a statement on its website, as a crackdown by Beijing on the tech industry gathers pace.

Yahoo said its site would 'no longer be accessible from mainland China' starting November 1, after it gradually winnowed down its services offered in the country in recent years.

The firm is the latest foreign company to pull a major product from the Chinese market in recent weeks, after Microsoft announced in October that it would close its career-oriented social network LinkedIn.

Visitors to Yahoo's website in China are now redirected to a brief statement announcing the closure.

'In recognition of the increasingly challenging business and legal environment in China, Yahoo's suite of services will no longer be accessible from mainland China as of November 1,' the firm said.

'Yahoo remains committed to the rights of our users and a free and open internet. We thank our users for their support.'

Salalah to get new integrated facility for customs clearance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A new integrated facility for customs clearance will be established in Salalah.

The new customs clearance facility will be built over an area of about 42,000 sqm and will be located close to Salalah Free Zone, Port of Salalah and Raysut Industrial City, according to the information provided in the latest issue of *Duqm Economist*, a quarterly magazine issued by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

The integrated facility will serve the companies operating in Salalah Free Zone, Port of Salalah and Raysut Industrial City, including importers and exporters and will accordingly contribute to facilitating the passing of goods and vehicles.

The establishment of the new customs clearance facility in Salalah reflects the cooperation between Salalah Free Zone, Port of Salalah and Raysut Industrial City, the magazine noted.



The new integrated facility for customs clearance will serve the companies operating in Salalah Free Zone, Port of Salalah and Raysut Industrial City

'Reflecting the commendable cooperation between the concerned parties, it has been decided to establish this integrated facility for customs clearance in Salalah Free Zone to include an inspection yard, a customs clearance gate, and many other services and amenities,' it added.

The establishment of the project comes within the plan of OPAZ to develop the services for the companies which are investing in Salalah Free Zone. The project is being developed in collaboration between OPAZ, Royal

Oman Police (ROP), Office of State Minister and Governor of Dhofar, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Port of Salalah, Raysut Industrial City and Asyad Group.

Duqm Economist noted that the concerned parties have already started developing the plan to kick-off the project. Accordingly, the construction tender will be floated early next year and the project will be developed within eight months post awarding the contract.



CBO issues RO93mn worth treasury bills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A tender of the government treasury bills (issue number 127) was announced by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) this week.

Total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO93mn, for a maturity period of 28 days, from November 3, 2021 until December 1, 2021. The average accepted price reached RO99.952 for every RO100 treasury bill, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO99.950.

The average discount rate and average yield reached 0.6307 per cent and 0.6310 per cent, respectively. The interest rate on the repo operations with the

CBO is 0.5 per cent while the discount rate on the treasury bills discounting facility with the central bank is 0.75 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance. These instruments provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The Central Bank of Oman acts as the issue manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (repo).

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates.

Oil prices may hit \$120 by June 2022: Bank of America

Muscat - The Brent crude benchmark price is likely to hit US\$120 per barrel by the end of June 2022, Bank of America (BoFA) said in a research note this week, according to Bloomberg.

The catalyst for BoFA's increased price forecast is the current global energy crisis that has seen prices for crude oil, coal,

natural gas, and LNG skyrocket as the market tightens.

Just a month ago, BoFA had forecast that oil could reach US\$100 over the next six months - and that was if we had a winter that was colder than usual. At the time, this was expected to be the most important driver of the global energy markets.

BoFA now expects that the oil



demand recovery will continue to outpace supply over the next year and a half, resulting in dwindling inventories that set the stage for higher oil prices. BoFA sees rebounding diesel, jet fuel, and petrol - along with refining capacity restraints - accelerating this price rally into next year.

'Oil prices have recently risen above US\$80, led by gas-to-oil

substitution and an increase in air travel. Pent-up demand for oil was the main reason we laid out a US\$100 target for Brent in 2022 back in June. Yet we now believe that the run-up in global gas and coal prices has turbocharged the Brent and WTI price recovery,' BoFA wrote in its note.

Agencies

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Pfizer sees \$36bn in COVID-19 vaccine sales for 2021

New York, US - Pfizer again lifted its 2021 profit and revenue outlook on Tuesday, bolstered by the latest surge in COVID-19 vaccinations, including regulatory approvals for boosters and shots for younger populations.

The drugmaker now expects 2.3bn dosage deliveries of the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021 for the shots jointly produced with Germany's BioNTech, up 200mn from its previous forecast in July. That will bring total 2021 revenues for the vaccine to US\$36bn, from US\$33.5bn.

Pfizer said higher forecast 2021 results reflect the boost from the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as the performance of Pfizer's broader business.

On Friday, US health authorities approved Pfizer's vaccine for children aged five to 11, paving the way for 28mn young Americans to soon get immunised.

Pfizer's shares rallied on the announcement, which comes on the heels of similar upbeat earnings in May and July also showing how the vaccine has transformed the drugmaker's fi-



nancial performance over the last year.

'Despite all we have been able to accomplish to date, we remain focused on our future, not our past,' said chief executive Albert Bourla. 'Our ultimate goal is to help bring this pandemic to an end as quickly as possible, but also to apply the lessons we have learned through our work on the vaccine to all of our therapeutic areas.'

Bourla said the company had

about three-fourths of the US market share in late October and about 80 per cent in the European Union, the result 'of our booster being the first to receive emergency use authorisation and our two-dose series being preferred by some countries around the world for use in certain younger populations'.

In the most recent quarter, the company's revenues were US\$24.1bn, more than double the level in the year-ago period,

with US\$13bn coming from revenues tied to the COVID-19 vaccine. Profits shot up to US\$8.1bn, compared with US\$1.5bn in the year-ago period.

While Pfizer's financial performance has thrived thanks to the COVID-19 vaccine, the company has been criticised by non-governmental organisations for placing profits above public health in its dealings with governments over the shot.

A recent report by advocacy

Pfizer now expects 2.3bn dosage deliveries of the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021 for the shots jointly produced with Germany's BioNTech, up 200mn from its previous forecast

group Public Citizen accused the company of 'bullying' authorities and called for the US government to assume greater leverage with the company.

Pfizer has defended its comportment, saying in Tuesday's press release that it plans to sell the US government 1bn doses 'at a not-for-profit price to be donated to the world's poorest nations at no charge to those countries'.

AFP

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MSX falls 0.1% on weak volumes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) fell 0.1 per cent to close at 4,055.36 points on Tuesday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 34.53 per cent to RO2.69mn and volumes fell 6.13 per cent to 17.04mn shares.

While Financial index rose 0.11 per cent, Industrial and Services indices fell 0.23 per cent and 0.54 per cent, respectively. The MSX Shariah Index closed down by 0.3 per cent at 554.42 points.

Market breadth remained negative as nine companies closed up, while 15 companies closed down. The rest 19 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were National Aluminium Products Company (7.63 per cent),

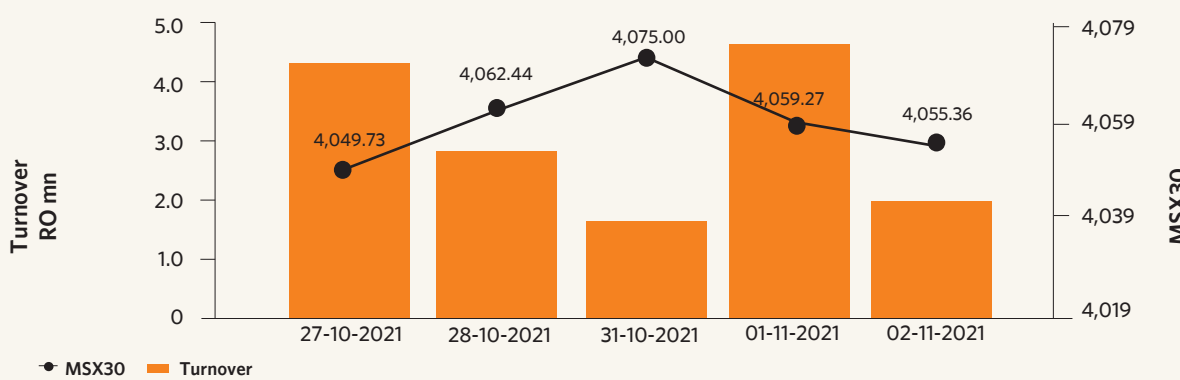


Oman and Emirates Investment Holding (4.29 per cent), Oman United Insurance (2.42 per cent), Muscat Finance (1.7 per cent) and Ominvest (1.3 per cent).

Top losers were Dhofar Generating

Company (-5.2 per cent), Al Maha Ceramics (-2.64 per cent), Al Batinah Power (-1.92 per cent), United Finance (-1.72 per cent) and Al Omaniya Financial Services (-1.7 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Dubai to list 10 govt firms on stock market

Dubai, UAE - Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed, Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the UAE, on Monday announced the listing of ten government and state-owned companies on the Dubai Financial Market (DFM) as part of accelerating new listings in various sectors including energy, logistics and retail.

Sheikh Maktoum also announced the formation of a Dubai Markets Supervisory Committee and specialised courts for capital markets in Dubai. He said that as part of the vision of Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Dubai aims to increase the total volume of its

stock markets to AED3tn.

The announcements came during the first meeting of the Securities and Exchange Higher Committee chaired by Sheikh Maktoum. The Securities and Exchange Higher Committee approved the establishment of a market making fund worth up to AED2bn to increase liquidity in the markets.

The committee will also launch an AED1bn fund to support tech company IPOs and encourage innovative financial products and solutions.

Furthermore, the committee will mandate the study of a regulatory framework to attract new digital assets to operate from Dubai, in addition to supporting environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors and report-

ing in operations, which will contribute to shaping Dubai's future economy.

The committee, which is charged with developing the vision for the financial sector and evaluating plans and policies to meet strategic objectives, also approved the formation of the Dubai Markets Supervisory Committee, chaired by Dr Abdullah Al Ghafari.

The Committee will be responsible for supervising, monitoring and protecting the rights of shareholders and investors, and enhancing transparency and enforcement in Dubai's securities and commodities markets through effective coordination between relevant stakeholders.

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Google and Mukesh Ambani launch budget smartphone

Mumbai, India - Online giant Google and Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani opened advance orders in India on Monday for an entry-level smartphone billed as the world's most affordable, joining the race to tap into the booming budget market.

Ambani's conglomerate Reliance Industries announced in July last year that it would partner with Google to launch the 4G smartphone, competing with Chinese and South Korean manufacturers that already have a strong foothold in the South Asian nation.

The JioPhone Next will offer content in ten Indian languages and has a price tag of ₹6,400 (US\$87), with customers able to put down an initial ₹1,999



The JioPhone Next has a price tag of US\$87 (AFP)

(US\$27) and the rest payable in instalments.

Ambani said in a statement that the handset was a 'break-

through device' that would 'empower common Indians... and take their digital journeys to the next level'.

But Emkay Global Financial Services analysts Naval Seth and Sonali Shah said in a note that the price tag was currently not yet 'lucrative enough for [the] masses'.

They said Reliance's telecoms arm Jio had cut prices of previous phones multiple times 'which accelerated acceptance'.

'We believe that there is a possibility of it doing the same through various promotional schemes, if the sales are not up to expectations,' they added.

Jio is India's biggest mobile network operator with 398.3mn subscribers, having upended the market with free calls and ultra-cheap data when it launched in 2016.

AFP

BP underlying earnings surge to \$3.3bn

London, UK - British energy giant BP said on Tuesday that its bottom line was hit by an accounting charge in third quarter, but underlying earnings rose strongly on the back of soaring oil prices.

BP said in a statement that its net loss widened to US\$2.5bn in the period from July through September from US\$450mn in the same period a year earlier.

The group attributed the deeper loss to 'significant adverse accounting effects' of US\$6.1bn, 'primarily due to the exceptional increase in forward



gas prices towards the end of the quarter'.

By contrast, underlying profit

surged to US\$3.3bn in the third quarter from US\$86mn a year earlier, BP said.

Gas prices, along with oil futures, have risen sharply in recent months, boosting income for energy majors, but weighing on business costs and households' spending power.

"Rising commodity prices certainly helped," said chief executive Bernard Looney.

"But I am most pleased that quarter by quarter, we're doing what we said we would - delivering significant cash to strengthen

our finances, grow distributions to shareholders and invest in our strategic transformation."

BP also announced plans to buy back shares totalling US\$1.25bn.

Looney, who was appointed chief executive at the start of the global coronavirus pandemic early last year, wants BP to achieve 'net zero' carbon emissions by 2050 as energy majors worldwide increasingly move to cleaner, sustainable energy sources.

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Ahlibank marks exceptional performance in Q3

As a follow-up to the recent announcement of its third quarter financial results, Ahlibank hosted a retail meeting to share details of its exceptional performance in the market, apprise its stakeholders and beneficiaries of proposed plans, and reward top achievers in the retail banking team.

With an impressive performance during the first nine months of 2021, Ahlibank has well demonstrated its strategic role in Oman's economic recovery process, initiated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its well-honed policies and directives have helped it to substantially boost its total assets, customer deposits and operating income with significant contribution from the retail banking, a press release said.

Throwing the spotlight on the impressive figures and the factors that helped augment this growth, Muneer al Balushi, AGM – head of Retail Distribution, Ahlibank, said, "This achievement is thanks to the efforts put in by every team member. The expertise and experience of our professional bankers, and the team under them, helped shore up our financial status during the pandemic and brace up for any unseen crisis.

"As a company, we believe, innovation is the key to progress and have, over the years, proven that right planning and flawless execution is the premise for better prospects. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate our top performers, who have stood by the Bank as strong pillars, working steadfastly to ensure all round success and prosperity. Your resilience and agility to adapt to the changing global business environment and the new normalcy brought about by the pandemic has worked as a leverage in our growth trajectory," he added.

The meeting also brought to the fore some of the salient features of Ahlibank's retail operations, which has grown in strength and size to deliver multifaceted financial solutions, which are tailored for individual needs. With a customer-centric approach to business, it has established its ability to meet customer needs.



Revamped Shell Intilaaqah training session concludes

Oman Shell has celebrated the conclusion of the revamped Shell Intilaaqah training programme, for the year 2021, which included the participation of 22 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The programme, which was launched in August, also celebrated the winner of the Shell LiveWIRE global Top Ten Innovators competition, a press release said.

The month-long, intensive training program included certified courses in the fields of sustainability, solar panel installation, health, safety, and environment, as well as topics on entrepreneurship, marketing, branding management, change management, quality management, work ethics and various other topics related to financial management and procurement. The programme also focused on advocating best business practices in the energy sector.

Commenting on the programme, Walid Hadi, Oman Shell country chairman, said, "Acknowledging the role of SMEs in acting as a catalyst to economic growth, the Shell Intilaaqah programme is in line with Oman Shell's vision to support entrepreneurs and SMEs, and empower them to achieve sustainable growth.

As part of Oman Shell's social investment programme, we remain committed to adapting our initiatives to suit the needs of the dynamically changing energy sector locally, and internationally. By providing the local youth with necessary avenues to enhance their skills and capabilities, we will continue to motivate individuals to optimise the use of energy and focus on sustainable development, which is aligned to the objectives of Oman Vision 2040".

Incorporating practical examples into theoretical concepts, the programme hosted seasoned speaker sessions where participants were provided with material they could implement in their day-to-day business operations.

Participants who have completed the programme received a Solar Electric Design and Installation certificate (PV101) a prerequisite by the Oman Authority for Public Services Regulation.

Jasim al Ajmi, Social Investment and Performance Manager at Oman Shell, said, "Since its launch, the training programme has continued to have a positive impact on the local community by encouraging entrepreneurs."

Bank Muscat's Najahi helps OTaxi expand services for varied segments

Recognising the need for access to financing by Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Bank Muscat has been steadily launching a number of new products and services through its Retail Enterprises (Najahi) department over the past many years. The bank's financial and non-financial support has been crucial in the emergence and success of several MSMEs in the sultanate.

Omani ride-hailing app OTaxi has been one of the success stories in the sultanate's MSME sector. Banking support facilitates business growth, which in turn create more jobs for the local community. Thanks to the PoS Receivables Financing support from Najahi, OTaxi continues to steadily expand its services in Oman catering to different customer segments. The app has more than 1,800 drivers registered



with it, a press release said.

Notably, the ride-hailing app has been witnessing a steady growth of over 5 per cent every month, even during the challenges thrown up by the pandemic, with growth expected to climb to over 12 per cent in 2022. Through its expansion into newer categories like luxury transport and women-only cabs, the startup hopes to create many more new jobs in the future. The foray into luxury transport is expected to create 10 new jobs immediately with more jobs expected in the future. OTaxi is a great example of how business can flourish with the encouragement of a supportive banking partner like

Bank Muscat Najahi.

Bank Muscat's Najahi is the only financial product from any bank in the sultanate to offer loans without any collateral. The Najahi suite of products include the value-added Najahi Current Account, Najahi Flexi Loan to support working capital, business expansion and other business needs; the Najahi Business Credit Card; and Najahi PoS Receivables financing for customers who use PoS machines for sales. All financing options are available to the bank's customers 'collateral free'. Bank Muscat has launched a series of initiatives covering all segments of the SME sector in Oman. Serving as building blocks for entrepreneurs, these initiatives assume importance in the backdrop of the priority accorded by the government to develop the MSME sector in Oman.

Omantel and Ericsson launch new entrepreneurship programme

Omantel has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ericsson (NASDAQ: ERIC) to foster thought leadership and technology innovation initiatives through the Omantel Innovation Labs.

The Omantel Innovation Labs leverages Omantel's expertise, partnerships, reach, and access to technology to contribute to Oman's Vision 2040 and promote innovation and entrepreneurship in new and emerging technologies.

Located in a 1100m2 facility at Omantel headquarters in Muscat, the key focus of the Omantel Labs is to cultivate entrepreneurial skills among the youth and accelerate the growth of relevant Oman-based technology startups across five technological verticals: 5G, Internet of Things, Cybersecurity, Customer Experience Technology, and Big Data, a press release said.

Based on a shared vision to



Abdullah al Balushi



Talal al Mamari

engage the entrepreneurial community to contribute to Vision 2040, the MoU will see Omantel and Ericsson work together to support digital transformation and innovation in the country by expanding the enterprise market's capabilities through 5G and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Using the Omantel Innovation Labs as a platform, Ericsson's regional innovation hub, local, regional, and international

experts will provide thought leadership to start-ups and innovators in Oman. Ericsson and Omantel will also host multiple activities to bring together innovators to develop technology solutions in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Talal Said al Mamari, CEO of Omantel said, "We are committed to equipping Omani entrepreneurs with the right tools to develop meaningful solutions and are delighted to be partnering with Ericsson to add more

value to the local startup ecosystem.

"We believe, that the collaboration with Ericsson will open new doors to technology innovators and entrepreneurs across the sultanate and will be focusing on several technology areas to drive the value of 5G and innovation in the country and contribute to Oman Vision 2040."

Abdullah al Balushi, country manager of Ericsson Oman, added, "Our collaboration with Omantel will support in accelerating their digital transformation journey.

Supporting Omantel in nurturing innovators and entrepreneurs through our expertise in 5G presents the vast talent in Oman with an opportunity to build on skills to bring to life Oman Vision 2040. We have many activities lined up and are looking forward to working together and bringing innovation to fruition."

Mandarin opens at Mall of Muscat

Mandarin, the authentic Chinese cuisine restaurant operating in Sohar by Jawad Sultan Restaurants, has now opened its second location in Muscat at Mall of Muscat, in the food court, on October 31.

The Mandarin chinese restaurant, brings the authentic taste of China with a special Menu prepared by the MasterChef. Guests can choose from a delectable range of Chinese soups, rice and Hakka noodles and dimsums - from and Veg and Non veg selections of the main food course that will give the gourmets a chance to experience the different regional foods from across China.

Junaid Kader, general manager, Jawad Sultan Restaurants, said, "Mandarin is a place where originality meets perfection. Where friends and loved ones come together for a great meal experience to enjoy authentic Chinese cuisine at an even better price."



Unimoni Exchange celebrates customer service week

Unimoni Exchange Oman, a leading remittance and foreign exchange firm in the sultanate, celebrated customer service week from October 24-28.

The five-day celebrations emphasised on customer centricity for which the brand is known for. It's the trust of the customers that made it a successful brand and a trendsetter in technological innovations for last 26 years, ta press release said. Unimoni employees who are the brand ambassadors of

the exchange, conducted many customer engagement and entertainment activities across its 58 outlets while the management team of Unimoni visited many of loyal customers who are associated with the exchange for years to endorse the brand.

On the technological front, Unimoni exchange keeps on bringing new innovations to provide a seamless service experience to its customers. Apart from 58 outlets spread across

Oman, Unimoni is the first exchange to launch its online money transfer app adding to customer convenience. Customers can download the app from Google play store or App store by typing 'Unimoni Oman'.

Unimoni Oman has its own wholesale foreign currency exchange division which caters to the needs of large-scale corporates and walk-in customers. Additionally, the brand has strong banking relations and

tie-ups across the globe which enables it to move money for various needs of the customers, be it trade transactions, personal remittances or transactions towards educational needs of the students studying abroad.

Speaking on the occasion, Boban MP, CEO, Unimoni Exchange, said, "Ensuring a smile on each customer's face is a priority with us and we leave no stone unturned to achieve that aim. The customer service

Qatar Airways offers winter escape to over 140 destinations

Qatar Airways is offering passengers in the Middle East and Caucasus region great savings of up to 20 per cent to select destinations, for a sale period of eight days, ending November 8. Travellers dreaming of snow-capped mountains or wanting to spend a cosy evening with family can fulfil their wishes with the winter getaway offers. Passengers joining Qatar Airways' Privilege Club will also earn 1500 Bonus Qmiles, a press release said.

The national carrier of the State of Qatar continues to rebuild its network, which currently stands at over 140 destinations. With more frequencies being added to key hubs, Qatar Airways offers unrivalled connectivity to passengers. Passengers can experience Qatar Airways' award-winning services and book tickets with guaranteed flexibility on Business and Economy Class to an expanding network of destinations across Europe, Africa, Middle East and the Americas.

Dersenish Aresandiran, VP Sales - Middle East, Levant, Caucasus and Pakistan, said, "We want our passengers to benefit from this winter promotion and experience the joy of travel once again. Countries are opening up,

and we observe strong growth and recovery of international travel. The long awaited announcement by the Government of Australia on easing travel restrictions before the winter break has further boosted travel sentiments across the globe."

The promotion is valid on Qatar Airways flights booked to select destinations by November 8, for travel from now until March 31. To take advantage of this offer, passengers must book their tickets on qatarairways.com, visit any local Qatar Airways sales office or visit their preferred travel agents.

Privilege Club opens up a world of unique opportunities and exclusive travel benefits, such as unlimited lounge access, complimentary extra baggage allowance, priority check-in, tier bonus and more. Last year, Privilege Club continued to invest in redefining the programme, including cutting the number of Qmiles required to book award flights by up to 49 per cent. It also revised its Qmiles policy so that when a member earns or spends them, their balance is valid for 36 months.

Qatar Airways was announced as the 'Airline of the Year' at the 2021 World Airline Awards.



OSCO team cleans up desert site near Ibri

On the Occasion of the Prophet's Birthday (October 19), Oman Shapoorji Company staff took up a clean-up drive in the desert area around 70km from Dhank, Ibri.

The OSCO team collected garbage and disposables scattered around the dunes and mountains and along the edge of a natural

water source. The team marked the occasion by caring for the environmental and working towards keeping the surroundings clean. They spent four hours collecting all types of waste.

Oman Shapoorji Company has been working for A'Namaa Poultry Projects from 2020

Johnny Rockets opens new branch in MSQ

Johnny Rockets launched its newest branch on October 20 in Souq Al Madina, at Madinat Sultan Qaboos. The new outlet was inaugurated by Zakariya Mubarak Ismail al Zadjali, Rtd colonel and member of the Board at Bank Dhofar, marking the second branch of the popular diner in Oman - the first being in Al Khoud.

"When we opened our first branch in Al Khoud, we were overwhelmed by the response of the locals and expats towards our restaurant and the food we serve," said T Thiru, Business Manager for Johnny Rockets Oman. "We realised that the location in Al Khoud is not easily accessible to a group of residents who were eager to try our world-famous burgers and milkshakes, which is why opening another branch in MQ was ideal."

The new branch in Souq Al Madina at Madinat Sultan Qa-



boos maintains the brand's fun, casual, and upbeat environment with interiors that represent a traditional 'American Diner,' while the exterior is more rustic and urban, with an exclusive seating area for their customers. In addition to the design, the staff's friendly service and classic old-school music which is lightly

played in the background, enhances the brand's vibe as a relaxing place to hang-out.

Johnny Rockets is a 35-year-old American restaurant franchise famous for its signature milkshakes and fresh burgers. Burgers are cooked using 100% halal beef, while chicken/veggie burgers are also popular.

Danube Properties announces launch of high-rise Skyz Tower

Danube Properties, the UAE-based affordable housing pioneer and one of the most dynamic and popular private real estate developers in the UAE, has announced the launch of Skyz Tower, a Mediterranean-themed high-rise residential tower with elegantly-designed apartments, retail outlets and recreational facilities with a development value exceeding Dh475mn.

The project will be developed at the Arjan master-planned community in Dubai, close to the Miracle Gardens, opposite to Motor City, Dubai Hills Estates and Dubai Hills Estate Mall with the easiest access to Mohammed Bin Zayed highway. The affordable homes come with Danube Properties' trend-setting one per cent payment plan that

helps middle income tenants and end-users to easily acquire their dream homes, a press release said.

The announcement was made at a packed press conference attended by the largest contingent of media and cheering crowd by Rizwan Sajjan, founder and chairman of Danube Group. The launch of the new residential tower comes a few days after land transaction value exceeded Dh100bn mark in less than 9 months this year - as announced by Dubai Land Department - fuelled by strong investor interest in Dubai's real estate.

This marks the first real estate project launch after the COVID-19 pandemic and also the first project launch since the start of Dubai Expo 2020 and reflects Danube Properties' confidence in

the market that is witnessing a gradual upturn.

"The launch of Skyz Tower comes 18 months after we launched our last project, Olivz - which was sold out by our team at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic last year. Due to the sell-out of all of our previous projects, we were running out of stocks - since the beginning of the year. This necessitated the launch of the new project," Sajjan said.

"Despite the challenging global economic environment and uneven global recovery from COVID-19 pandemic, we never lost our focus and continued the development and construction works of the ongoing projects. I am happy to announce that three of our projects are being handed over in three months," he added.



International mediation on to end Sudan crisis: UN diplomat

United Nations - Mediation efforts in Sudan and abroad are underway to find a possible solution for the country a week after the civilian government was ousted in a military coup, the UN envoy to Khartoum said on Monday.

"Many of the interlocutors we are speaking with in Khartoum, but also internationally and regionally, are expressing a strong desire that we move forward quickly to get out of the crisis and return to the steps of normalcy," Volker Perthes told reporters at the United Nations headquarters in New York, during a video conference from the Sudanese capital.

The UN envoy to Sudan met on Sunday with ousted Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who is under house arrest. Perthes said on Twitter they 'discussed options for mediation and the way forward for Sudan'.

Perthes on Monday urged Sudan to return 'to the steps of political transition, as we viewed it before 25 October', the date of the coup.

On Monday, Hamdok said the reinstatement of his government could pave the way to a solution in the country, according to a statement from the Information Ministry.

Hamdok, according to the statement, demanded that the situation in Sudan return to what it was before the coup, refusing to negotiate with the military rulers.

On October 25, Sudan's top general Abdel Fattah al Burhan dissolved the Cabinet as well as the ruling joint military-civilian



This file photo shows Sudanese youths during a protest, amid ongoing demonstrations against a military takeover that has sparked international condemnation, in the capital city of Khartoum on October 28 (AFP)



Abdalla Hamdok (AFP)

Sovereign Council which had been heading Sudan's transition towards full civilian rule following the 2019 overthrow of autocrat Omar al Bashir.

In a move widely condemned

internationally, Burhan declared a state of emergency and detained Sudan's civilian leadership, including Hamdok and members of his government.

Hamdok, an international economist, was later released and placed effectively under house arrest.

Hamdok spoke during a meeting at his home, where he is under effective house arrest, with the ambassadors of the United States, Britain and Norway, the ministry which remains loyal to the Prime Minister said.

The ousted Prime Minister 'insisted on the legitimacy of his government and transitional institutions', the Information Ministry said on its Facebook page.

He added that 'the release of the Cabinet ministers and the full

reinstatement of the government could pave the way to a solution', the ministry said.

Hamdok, according to the statement, demanded that the situation in Sudan return to what it was before the coup, refusing to negotiate with the military rulers.

The statement added that the three ambassadors also informed Hamdok that the US special envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman, would arrive at dawn on Tuesday in Khartoum 'to pursue efforts to ease the crisis'.

'Dangerous legal situation'

Earlier on Monday a Sudanese lawyer representing the detained civilian leaders said their where-

abouts is unknown and that they are in a 'dangerous legal situation'.

Kamal al Gizouli is the lead defence lawyer on a team of attorneys which has come forward to represent them with the backing of their families.

Gizouli said his team went to an agency 'where they were believed to have been held but we found that they were not there'.

Gizouli expressed concern about the well-being of the detainees and called on those holding them to reveal their location.

'These detainees are in the most dangerous legal situation' since nothing was known about their case nor who was heading the investigation, he added.

Little is known about the whereabouts of his Cabinet and the members of the council that had been tasked with paving the way to full civilian rule.

Burhan had since August 2019 chaired the council, working alongside Hamdok's government under a power-sharing deal that outlined the post-Bashir transition.

The arrangement came under strain, however, as splits deepened between the civilians and the military.

In a news conference last week, Burhan defended the military's takeover, saying it was 'not a coup' but a move to 'rectify the course of the transition'.

The general also said the detainees were being kept in 'a decent place' and that those facing charges 'will be moved to where the accused are usually taken while the rest will be released'.

AFP



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian

Iran FM tests positive for COVID-19 at key stage of nuke talks

Tehran, Iran - Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has tested positive for COVID-19, local media reported, at a key moment in diplomatic efforts to revive a nuclear agreement with major powers.

Amir-Abdollahian 'tested positive today for coronavirus', the Tasnim news agency reported late on Monday.

The 57 year old career diplomat, who was named Foreign Minister in August by ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi, was a close confidant of military strategist General Qassem Soleimani who was assassinated in a US drone strike early last year.

"His general health is satisfactory and he is continuing his daily duties from quarantine," ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told the IRNA news agency.

Khatibzadeh had said just on Monday that talks with the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal would resume 'in the next two or three weeks', although he added that ministers

would not take part.

The administration of President Joe Biden has warned repeatedly that time is running out to reverse the US withdrawal from the deal ordered by his predecessor Donald Trump.

Washington is not directly participating in the talks but is taking part through EU intermediaries.

Trump's abandonment of the agreement and reimposition of sweeping economic sanctions prompted Iran to suspend many of the commitments it made in return for the lifting of the sanctions.

Western governments issued a joint statement on Saturday expressing 'grave' concern over Iran's production of highly enriched uranium and enriched uranium metal, which they said met 'no credible civilian need'.

Iran retorted that the output was 'for medical supply and for use as fuel in the Tehran research reactor', and reiterated its readiness to resume talks.

AFP

Lebanon's oldest English-language daily goes under

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanon's oldest English-language daily newspaper laid off its entire staff and became the latest casualty in the collapse of the country's once-flourishing press, employees said on Tuesday.

The *Daily Star's* employees were notified a few days earlier that they were all being made redundant from October 31, according to an email which was sent to the staff and seen by AFP.

The newspaper, which is co-owned by the family of former prime minister Saad Hariri, had halted its print edition early last year and stopped updating its website two weeks ago.

There was no statement from the newspaper but the layoffs put an end to years of financial

difficulties during which staff were routinely paid late.

Hariri's once prosperous media empire has unravelled in recent years, with his Future TV channel and Arabic-language *Al Mustaqbal* daily downsizing to bare bones.

Lebanon's prominent *As-Safir* daily shut down five years ago and *An-Nahar*, another of the country's historical newspapers, is clinging on for dear life.

The *Daily Star* was founded in 1952 by Kamel Mroue, then owner and editor-in-chief of the pan-Arab *Al-Hayat* newspaper.

It closed for more than a decade during the 1975-1990 civil war, returning to news stands in 1996.

AFP

Ten Egyptian peacekeepers wounded by gunfire

Bangui, Central African Republic - Members of the Central African Republic's presidential guard fired on Egyptian peacekeepers in capital Bangui, injuring ten of them, the UN mission in the poor nation said on Tuesday, just two weeks before the end of their mandate.

The 'deliberate and unspeakable attack' took place on Monday, the MINUSCA mission said in a statement, adding that the Egyptian police contingent was unarmed at the time and travelling in a bus marked UN.

The second poorest country in the world, according to UN figures, the CAR has been ravaged by a civil war since 2013, although the level of fighting has fallen off since 2018.

MINUSCA, whose mandate runs out on November 15, has nearly 12,000 troops in the former French colony, and is one of the UN's costliest operations



This file photo shows MINUSCA - the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) - personnel on patrol in the Sudanese capital Bangui (UN Photo)

with an annual budget in excess of US\$1bn.

In its attempt to leave the area, the bus 'hit a woman who lost her life', MINUSCA said, adding that it had 'offered its condolences to the victim's family' they visited later in the day.

Members of the Egyptian

Constituent Police Unit 'came under heavy fire from the presidential guard without prior warning or any response, while they were unarmed', the UN said.

The incident happened around 120m from the presidential residence, the UN added.

The members of the police

unit had arrived earlier on Monday at Bangui airport as part of a periodic rotation and troop deployment in CAR. They were heading towards their base in a bus clearly marked 'with UN initials', said MINUSCA spokesman Vladimir Monteiro.

Three weeks ago, UN chief

Antonio Guterres denounced 'hostile incidents' targeting peacekeepers that he said had reached an 'unacceptable level'.

'Such actions prevent the fulfilment of the mandate, endanger the lives of the peacekeepers and are in contradiction with the commitments of President [Faustin Archange] Touadera and the government' to stop them, Guterres said in a report, calling for 'concrete measures' to put an end to them.

It recorded seven attacks on MINUSCA forces and 18 cases of motorway harassment by national security forces between June 1 and October 1.

Since December last year, government forces have managed to reconquer vast swathes of territory from rebel control with the help of hundreds of Rwandan soldiers and the support of Russian paramilitaries.

AFP

UK police officers admit sharing murder victim photos on social media

London, UK - A judge warned two British police officers on Tuesday they faced potentially lengthy jail terms after they admitted sharing crime scene photographs on WhatsApp of two murdered sisters.

The guilty pleas came after another serving officer with the Metropolitan Police was recently jailed for life for the kidnap, rape and murder of a woman earlier this year.

Both cases have threatened to undermine public confidence in the London force, and have piled pressure on its commissioner, Cressida Dick, to resign.

Bibaa Henry (46) and Nicole



Bibaa Henry (left) and Nicole Smallman had been celebrating the older sister's birthday before they were killed in June last year (Met Police)

Smallman (27) were found dead in bushes in Fryent Country Park in Wembley Park, northwest London, last year.

Danyal Hussein (19) was last week sentenced to life in prison for murder after telling the court he had made a pact with 'a demon' to kill women.

Officers Deniz Jaffer and Jamie Lewis were tasked with protecting the scene, but instead took 'inappropriate' and 'unauthorised' photographs and shared them on social media.

Jaffer (47) took four pictures and Lewis (33) took two, the Central Criminal Court in London was told.

"Lewis edited one of the pictures by superimposing his own face onto the photograph with the victims in the background," said prosecutors.

"He sent the resulting image to Jaffer, who then forwarded it unsolicited to a female officer also present at the scene."

They both admitted misconduct in a public office by entering a crime scene without authorisation, sending information about their attendance to members of the public and taking photographs of the crime scene. Judge Mark Lucraft granted the defendants conditional bail and adjourned sen-

tencing until December.

"These matters are extremely serious and you should be under no illusions when you return for sentence it is extremely likely you will receive custodial sentences, custodial sentences of some length for your conduct," he warned them.

The Met has already apologised to the victims' family, who accused their investigation of being tarnished by racial bias.

Smallman, a freelance photographer, and Henry, a social worker, were killed in June last year as they celebrated Henry's birthday at a late night picnic.

AFP



Afghan medical staff members stand at the entrance of a hospital as they wait to receive the victims after the capital Kabul was hit by two blasts near a military hospital, in Kabul on Tuesday (AFP)

19 killed in Kabul as bomber, gunmen target military hospital

Kabul, Afghanistan - At least 19 people were killed and 50 others wounded in an attack on a military hospital in Kabul on Tuesday, the latest assault to rock Afghanistan since the Taliban seized power.

The attack got under way when a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the entrance of the sprawling site.

Gunmen then broke into the hospital grounds, firing their weapons there, the Taliban said.

"Nineteen dead bodies and about 50 wounded people have been taken to hospitals in Kabul," a health ministry official said.

The Taliban spent 20 years waging an insurgency against the ousted US-backed government.

Now they face the struggle of bringing stability to Afghanistan, which has been hit in recent weeks by a series of bloody assaults claimed by the Islamic State group's local chapter.

Tuesday's attack has not yet been claimed by any group.

"All the attackers are dead. The attack was initiated by a suicide bomber on a motorcycle who blew himself up at the entrance of the hospital," a Taliban official from the media team said.

"Some attackers entered the

hospital compound."

Two explosions targeted the hospital area, he had earlier said.

Residents in the city heard a second explosion some 30 minutes after the first was reported.

"I heard a big explosion coming from the first checkpoint. We were told to go to safe rooms. I also hear guns firing," a doctor at the Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan hospital in Kabul said while the attack was being carried out.

"I can still hear gun firing inside the hospital building. I think the attackers are going from room to room... like the first time it was attacked," the doctor added.

Ambulances speeding through

The hospital, which treats wounded soldiers from both the Taliban and former Afghan security forces, was previously attacked in 2017, when gunmen disguised as medical personnel killed at least 30 people in an hours-long siege.

Although both IS and the Taliban are hardline Sunni militants, they differ on details of religion and strategy.

IS have claimed four mass casualty attacks since the Taliban takeover on August 15, including suicide bomb blasts targeting

Shiite mosques. The group regards Shiites as heretics.

In the 2017 attack on the military hospital, militants went from room to room killing people, switching to knives when they ran out of ammunition.

That attack was claimed by the Islamic State group, and the Taliban denied responsibility.

However, survivors told AFP that the attackers chanted 'Long live Taliban' in Pashto and attacked all but two wards on the hospital's first floor where Taliban patients were admitted.

An Italian NGO which runs a separate hospital in the capital

tweeted on Tuesday that it has received nine patients with injuries from the blast site.

Photos shared on social media showed black smoke billowing after the explosions, the first of which went off around 1.00pm.

Taliban fighters raced to the scene in at two armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and pick-up trucks. Roads close to the heavily fortified 'Green Zone' where the buildings of several former Western embassies were located were closed off to traffic and Taliban guards scaled up searches.

AFP

Mexican forces fire on vehicle killing one

Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Mexico - Mexican security forces opened fire on a pick-up truck carrying migrants that tried to ram a patrol vehicle, leaving a Cuban dead and several injured, authorities said on Monday.

Leaders of a migrant caravan marching towards Mexico City to demand refugee status said the foreigners were part of their group, accusing the National Guard of an 'attack'.

The National Guard said its personnel had located a pick-up truck on a dirt track in the southern state of Chiapas on Sunday after reports that three vehicles had evaded a security checkpoint.

It said in a statement that the driver ignored an order to stop and accelerated towards the patrol, prompting its forces to open fire due to fears for their safety.

Several people tried to flee the vehicle but were detained, while one person was killed and four injured, the National Guard said.

In a statement released late Sunday that did not mention the National Guard's involvement, the Chiapas attorney general's office identified the man killed as Cristobal 'N', a Cuban national.

The wounded - all Cubans according to a government source - were taken to hospital.

Nine other foreigners were handed over to the immigration authorities, while the driver was detained by prosecutors, the National Guard said.

Irineo Mujica, one of the leaders of the migrant caravan, said the foreigners had been traveling with the group but decided to break off due to rumors of raids by the authorities.

"They were given a ride by a truck and shot," Mujica said.

Around 1,000 migrants seeking refugee status set off on foot from the city of Tapachula on October 23 demanding 'justice, dignity and freedom'.

AFP

Pakistan frees detained protesters after deal

Lahore, Pakistan - Authorities in Pakistan released hundreds of detained supporters of a banned Islamist party on Tuesday after a deal was struck with the group to end clashes that left seven policemen dead.

The Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP) was protesting over the detention of its leader, arrested in April when the group was outlawed by authorities, and was demanding the expulsion of the French ambassador from Pakistan.

The group has been behind major anti-France protests that earlier this year led to the French



This file photo shows supporters of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) during a protest march towards Pakistan's capital Islamabad demanding the release of their leader Hafiz Saad Hussain Rizvi, in Muridke on October 24 (AFP)

Embassy issuing a warning for all its citizens to leave the country.

"I can confirm 860 people have been released," Mazhar Hussain, a police spokesman in Punjab province, told AFP.

Other detainees from the protest who had charges filed against them would have to go through the 'legal process' to secure their release, he added.

"These are clearly the fruits of the agreement that we had with the government," TLP leader, Mufti Muhammad Umair al Azhari said.

AFP

7 killed, many trapped in Lagos building collapse

Lagos, Nigeria - Nigerian rescue crews pulled two more survivors out of a collapsed Lagos high-rise building on Tuesday and were communicating with others buried inside the rubble, a day after the disaster killed at least seven and left many more trapped.

The 21-storey building was still under construction when it fell abruptly into a pile of concrete slabs on Monday in the wealthy Ikoyi district of Nigeria's commercial capital.

Rescuers say they have so far managed to pull seven survivors out of the wreckage, but construction workers fear dozens of their colleagues are trapped inside. Ibrahim Farinloye of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) told AFP at the scene that two of the seven were rescued earlier on Tuesday.

"There is still hope many more are inside. I spoke to some of them just minutes ago and their voices are strong," he said.

AFP

Wound of the soul: Victims recount horrors at Paris attacks trial

Paris, France - Over the past month, hundreds of survivors and relatives of victims of the November 2015 Paris attacks have recounted their ordeal in harrowing detail at a historic trial held over the atrocities.

The biggest trial in modern French history went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that those caught up in the Islamic State attacks, which left 130 people dead and over 350 injured, could tell their stories.

Over 300 people were called to the stand to testify about the mass shootings and suicide bombings that targeted young people enjoying a Friday night out in the French capital.

"I hope that this trial paves the way for our personal and collective recovery," said Ali, the father



These court sketches show Philippe Duperron (left), the president of the association '13Onze15 Fraternite-Verite', and Arthur Denouveaux, the president of the French association 'Life for Paris', during the November 2015 attacks trial at the Palais de Justice de Paris historic courthouse (AFP)



of a Universal Music executive killed in the first burst of gunfire at the Bataclan theatre, where 90 concertgoers died.

As the focus shifts to the defendants, including the sole surviving member of the IS cell that targeted Paris, AFP looks back on

some of the most compelling witness accounts.

A 'broken' face

Medics who treated the wounded at the Bataclan and nearby bars and cafés described injuries similar to those seen in

war zones.

One of the survivors of the siege at the Bataclan, which lasted more than two hours, said doctors had described her face as 'broken' - using a French expression for soldiers who were disfigured during World War 1.

Gaelle (40) said she had been operated on 40 times for horrific injuries after a bullet tore through her face, leaving her with a cheek 'dangling by my neck' and a mouthful of broken teeth which she swallowed 'because they made me cough and I was afraid

of drawing the terrorists' attention'. Her dreams for the future, she said, included 'being able to drink a coffee without it dribbling down my chin and to kiss someone without them being turned off' by her appearance.

An 'Everest of bodies'

Several survivors of the Bataclan shootings described playing dead while three gunmen roamed the theatre, firing on people who moved or moaned in pain after several bursts of automatic gunfire.

"They were shooting at us like rabbits," said Cedric, a 41 year old former delivery driver, describing how he tried to 'melt into the floor'.

Virginie described joining the 'undulating wave' of people try-

ing to crawl towards an emergency exit in the concert hall, where 90 people were killed, and scaling 'an Everest of bodies' piled up in front of the door before making it to safety.

The officer in charge of counting the dead after police stormed the theatre and ended the attack described horrific scenes of 'bodies, bodies, bodies' and an eerie silence permeated only by the ringing of mobile phones as relatives and friends frantically attempted to join their loved ones.

Some of the victims' families gave wrenching accounts of trying to locate their loved ones in the chaotic aftermath of the attacks and then coming to terms with their loss.

AFP

CLIMATE SUMMIT

COP26 leaders vow to save forests

Glasgow, UK - World leaders on Tuesday issued a multibillion-dollar pledge to end deforestation by 2030, a promise met with scepticism by environmental groups who say more urgent action is needed to save the planet's lungs.

According to summit hosts the British government, the pledge is backed by almost US\$20bn in public and private funding and is endorsed by more than 100 leaders representing over 85 per cent of the world's forests, including the Amazon rainforest, Canada's northern boreal forest and the Congo Basin rainforest.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the agreement on deforestation was pivotal to the overarching goal of limiting temperature rises to 1.5°C - the most ambitious Paris Agreement target. "Climate change and biodiversity are two sides of the same coin," Johnson said on Tuesday.

"We can't deal with the devastating loss of habitat and species without tackling climate change and we can't tackle climate change without protecting our natural environment and respecting the rights of indigenous people."

"So protecting our forests is not only the right course of action to tackle climate change, but the right course for a more



Delegates attend the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, the capital of Scotland on Tuesday (AFP)

prosperous future for us all," he said.

Signatories include Brazil and Russia, which have been singled out for accelerating deforestation

in their territories, as well as the United States, China, Australia and France.

The forests pact was the first of two anticipated announce-

ments in Glasgow on Tuesday, with governments set to unveil a global agreement to reduce emissions of methane - a powerful greenhouse gas - by 30 per

cent this decade.

A senior US administration official told AFP that 90 countries including 'half of the top 30 major methane emitters' had

signed up to the pledge.

The summit pact to 'halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030' encompasses promises to secure the

rights of indigenous peoples, and recognise 'their role as forest guardians'.

While Johnson described the pledge as 'unprecedented', a UN climate gathering in New York in 2014 issued a similar declaration.

That deal saw more than 200 countries, companies and indigenous groups promise to halve the rate of deforestation by 2020, and end it by 2030.

However an assessment earlier this year found that seven years on from the pact, virtually no government was on course to fulfil their responsibilities.

Trees continue to be cut down on an industrial scale, not least in the Amazon under the far-right government of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro. Deforestation in Brazil surged in 2020, leading to a 9.5 per cent increase in its emissions.

Humans have already cut down half of Earth's forests, a practice doubly harmful for the climate when CO₂-sucking trees are replaced with livestock or monoculture crops.

US President Joe Biden on Tuesday said that forests were an 'indispensable piece of keeping our climate goals within reach' and urged leaders to seek to eliminate deforestation with the 'same seriousness' as they pursued emissions cuts.

AFP

Israeli minister misses event due to wheelchair fiasco

Glasgow, UK - Israel's Energy Minister was to meet British Premier Boris Johnson at the COP26 climate summit on Tuesday, a day after she was prevented from entering the site in her wheelchair.

In an incident that embarrassed the Glasgow conference hosts, Karine Elharrar missed Monday's events when security staff would not let her car through, a spokeswoman for the minister told AFP.

British media reported Elharrar could not reach the site because shuttle buses taking people to the venue were unsuitable for wheelchairs.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's office said the delegation spent two hours trying to facilitate Elharrar's entry but ultimately failed 'due to it not being fully wheelchair accessible', and issued a formal complaint.

Elharrar said that 'it is sad that the UN, which promotes



This file photo shows Karine Elharrar in Jerusalem on April 5

accessibility for people with disabilities, in the year 2021, doesn't arrange for accessibility in its events'.

'I hope the necessary lessons are learnt so that tomorrow I will be able to address promoting green energy, removing obstacles and energy efficiency,' she wrote on Twitter on Monday.

A source in Bennett's delegation said he had raised the issue with Johnson ahead of their scheduled meeting on Tuesday.

The two agreed that Elharrar 'will reach the venue with Bennett and participate in the meeting with Johnson', according to the source.

AFP

India to hit net-zero climate target by 2070, says PM Modi

Glasgow, UK - India's economy will become carbon neutral by the year 2070, the country's Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Monday at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow.

"By 2070, India will achieve the target of net-zero emissions," Modi told more than 120 leaders at the critical talks.

India is the last of the world's major carbon polluters to announce a net-zero target, with China saying it would reach that goal in 2060, and the US and the EU aiming for 2050.

Modi also said India would increase its 2030 target for installed capacity of 'non-fossil energy' - mostly solar - from 450GW to 500GW.

In addition, 50 per cent of the country's energy requirements will come from renewable sources by the same date.

Modi also announced that the carbon intensity of India's



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (left) and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the COP26 summit in Glasgow on Tuesday (AFP)

economy - the amount of emissions produced per unit of GDP - would be reduced by 45 per cent by 2030. The previous goal was 35 per cent.

Modi made it clear, however, that emissions-cutting pledges from India and other developing nations would require finance from rich, historic emitters.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries that submitted carbon

cutting plans under the 2015 treaty were to provide updates five years later, by the end of 2020.

India is the only major economy not to have not done so, but Modi's announcement is likely to be formalised in a revised plan, experts suggested.

One key sector where India would aim to lighten its carbon footprint is rail transport.

"Friends, more passengers than the entire population of the world travel by Indian Railways every year," Modi said.

"This huge railway system has set itself a target of making itself 'net-zero' by 2030. This initiative alone will reduce emissions by 60mn tonnes per annum."

On finance, Modi lambasted the failure of rich nations to cough up a promised US\$100bn a year by 2020 to help vulnerable nations decarbonise their economies and cope with climate impacts.

"We all know this truth that the promises made to date regarding climate finance have proved to be hollow," he said.

"It is India's request that developed countries make available US\$1tn of climate finance as soon as possible," he added, without specifying how such funds should be distributed.

AFP

Japan opposition leader resigns after election loss

Tokyo, Japan - The leader of Japan's main opposition party announced his resignation on Tuesday after an election drubbing that saw him fail to capitalise on public dissatisfaction with the ruling party's pandemic response.

Yukio Edano - who has headed Japan's leading opposition faction, the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) of Japan, since its founding in 2017 - apologised for the poor electoral showing, in which the party lost 14 seats, down to 96.

He said on Tuesday he would step down in response.

"We were able to create a structure offering political options, but the results mean that many of our deserving members are not returning and the number of seats we hold will decline," he said.



Yukio Edano (left), leader of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP), announces his intention to resign at a meeting of the CDP executive board, in Tokyo on Tuesday (AFP)

"It's a very disappointing result," he added, saying "This is primarily because of my lack of ability".

A lawmaker since 1993,

Edano served in government when the now-defunct Democratic Party of Japan had a brief stint in power from 2009 to 2012, and was the Cabinet's pub-

lic face in the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami and Fukushima nuclear meltdown.

He launched the CDP in 2017 and the party merged with an-

other major opposition group in 2020 in an unsuccessful bid to strengthen their standing.

In Sunday's election, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party won a strong majority under new leader Fumio Kishida. Final results are expected later in the week, but the LDP and its coalition party Komeito are projected to hold 293 of the lower house's 435 seats, a slight drop from the previous figure of 305.

The vote's surprise star appears to have been the Nippon Ishin (Japan Innovation) Party, an Osaka-based faction that won 41 seats, up from just 11.

The party, which advocates small government, deregulation and tax cuts, becomes the third-largest in parliament and has ruled out joining the ruling coalition.

AFP

US hostage negotiator meets Myanmar junta

Yangon, Myanmar - Former United States diplomat and hostage negotiator Bill Richardson met Myanmar's junta chief on Tuesday, the military said, as the country passed nine months under a regime that has detained a US journalist.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the February coup ousted Aung San Suu Kyi. Security forces have launched a crackdown on dissent that has killed more than 1,200 people, according to a local monitoring group.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing received former UN ambassador Richardson in the capital Naypyidaw, where they 'exchanged views and discussed... COVID-19 vaccine assistance from the US to Myanmar', a military-run news website said.

Richardson is in Myanmar on



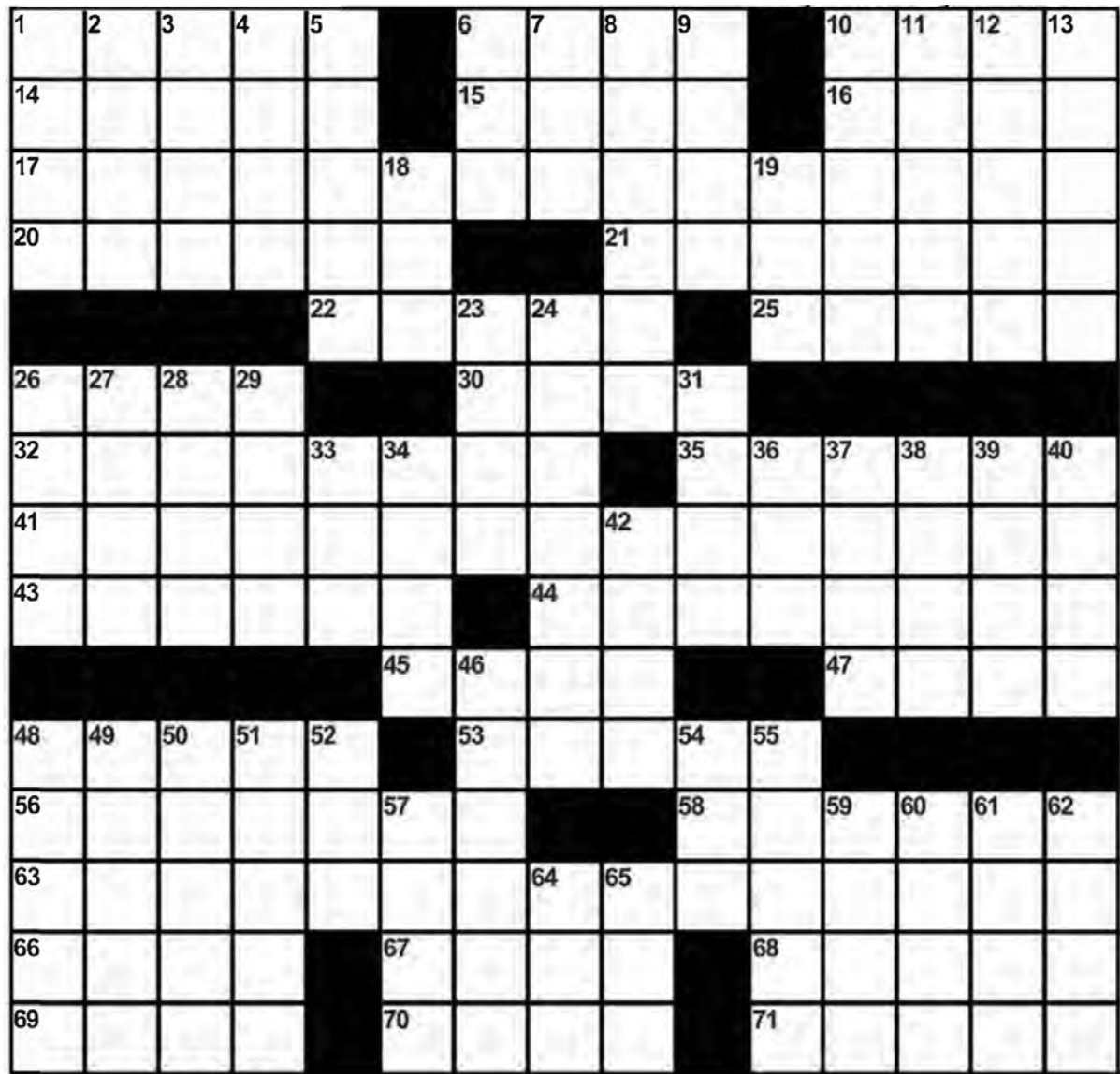
Bill Richardson

a 'private humanitarian mission', his organisation the Richardson Center said in a statement.

The website made no mention of American journalist Danny Fenster, who was detained in May and has since been charged with encouraging dissent against the military and unlawful association.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1) Model S maker
6) With a cast of thousands
10) Two-word anagram for "teas"
14) "The_" (series starring Mr. T)
15) Mexican snack food
16) Many a Syrian
17) Two orange things
20) Slip by, as time
21) Parts of clowns' wardrobes
22) Bygone Toyota sports car
25) Suggestive stares
26) Word in synagogue names
30) Cartoon bear
32) Alarm clocks, in the mommg
35) Linger around a store without purpose
41) Four orange tests
43) Metallic tests
44) Shipment amount?
45) In this way
47) Some shady trees
48) Street urchins

53) Highly skilled
56) Wicked
58) Like rain on your wedding day, as per a certain song
63) Three orange things
66) Holiday precursors
67) Polish, as one's skills
68) Nimble of foot
69) "Out," to an editor
70) Fancy pitcher with a lip
71) Fabricated stories

DOWN

1) Break, as a horse
2) "Too many more to mention" abbr.
3) " _ whatever will be, will be"
4) "Aladdin" discovery
5) Stock up on
6) Pilot's announcement, briefly
7) What a mouse slides on
8) It can lead to cooler heads
9) Nickname for Conan O'Brien
10) Fry just a bit over high heat
11) Keebler's head elf
12) Spud

13) Immeasurable chasm
18) Romanian currency
19) It gives a hoot
23) Ignited funeral heap
24) "Citizen Kane" sled
26) Ali_ of "The Arabian Nights"
27) Winged god of love
28) Auto-club services
29) Hip-swiveling Hawaiian dance
31) Pelvic bones
33) Boar's place
34) Old-style prefix for "while"
36) Make a selection
37) Spot on a map
38) Saw or screw-driver
39) Cheese that comes in red wax
40) Radioactive energy units
42) Prepare for a photo
46) Make sacred
48) Performed a dish-washing chore
49) Get_ on (hurry)
50) Drive forward
51) "All That Jazz" director Bob

52)_Lanka
54) Apple or cherry treat
55) Take the tab for all
57) Continuous dull pain
59) Gold-medal gymnast Korbut

60) Ammunition for a carpenter's gun
61) Wait at the light
62) Average school grades
64) About two o'clock on a compass
65)_ capita

NOTE PAD

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

If you're not feeling so hot about your ability to get things done on schedule, it's time to reach out and ask for help. Get your ego out of the way. Don't worry about how this request will look to others. People know you've been asked to do the impossible, so they're half expecting your call anyway. Deadlines are deadlines, and there is no getting away from your responsibilities.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Have you let your flirting skills get rusty? Whatever your excuse (you're in a committed relationship, you haven't been feeling confident, or you've just been a lazy) today could offer you aN opportunity to add some sizzle to your day. Remember that flirting doesn't have to be a commitment. Flirting is just having fun! Let yourself loosen up a bit. Try to make someone laugh.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Now that you've reached a point in your life when you can sit back and relax for a little bit, be sure to do it with gusto! Just coast and experience things for a while. There's no need to get involved in anyone's drama or big new idea. Reserve your strength and plan a little getaway if you can. Solo travel is favored highly. It will enable you to do whatever you want.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

So what if folks aren't giving you your props. They may have been bitten by the green-eyed monster! If others are giving you a hard time for feeling cocky, it might also be karma's way of sending you a message. Next time the people around you score a big win, try to be the first one to congratulate them, and mean it! The generous energy you put out will come right back to you.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

When the accolades come your way, don't be shy about accepting them. On the other hand, don't brag about what you've done. Let other people do that for you! True, it's a very tricky thing to balance your humility and your pride, but you can find a great way to make it happen. Creative impulses should be obeyed today. If you want to create something, you must do it!

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Whatever insight you've been taking from your dreams lately will serve you well today. Follow your gut and do what you think you need to. Your subconscious is keying you in to what you need to deal with first. It's now time to confront things once and for all. Getting to the heart of the matter as quickly as you can today will save you a lot of headaches later.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's much more helpful to get your ideas and concerns out in the open. There's nothing wrong with debating with yourself to come to a firm conclusion about how you feel on a certain issue, but there's a problem with internal talk: no one can hear you! When you unlock your feelings and thoughts from the vacuum of your mind, you can quickly see what makes the most sense.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Organization is key for understanding the details that will show down on you today. Dates, names, budgets, and itineraries all need your full attention right now, so get ready to get it together! Like a harried conductor trying to get all the musicians to play the same notes in the same way, you need to use all your patience and creativity to create that beautiful music.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

One of your friends is seeking a bit more independence in your relationship, and it could feel as if they're pushing you away. Don't let your fears get the better of you. Just because they're being vague about future plans or declining your social invitations doesn't mean you've fallen out of their good graces. Being alone is a skill everyone should learn.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You will be struck by visions of what can be today. When you look at a child, you'll see a glimpse of the talented adult they might become. When you look at an empty lot, you'll see the structure that could stand there some day. It's a day of fanciful imagining and creativity, so apply your most positive way of thinking to everything you see.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're deep in the thick of a work situation, and while you're enjoying this particular challenge, it might be causing you some stress. Today, you should make sure this stress doesn't bleed into the other areas of your life. Give some attention to a friend who needs your insight. A few words of wisdom on your part will make them feel cared for.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

The normal routine of your day could be disrupted by someone who needs your help with something entertaining. Turns out they'll end up giving you some help too, although you might not understand just how to ask them for it yet. In a business negotiation, your creativity enables you to get what you want without sacrificing any of your hard-earned resources.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The dance performed by women to invoke rain in Bihar is

a. Jata Jatin
b. Faguna or Fog
c. Purbi
d. Bihu
2. The exhaled air contains

a. carbon dioxide only
b. a mixture which has more carbon dioxide than oxygen
c. a mixture of carbon dioxide, nitrogen and oxygen in which nitrogen has the highest percentage
d. a mixture of carbon dioxide and nitrogen
3. The full-fledged Commonwealth Games were first organized in ____ at ____

a. 1930; Hamilton in Canada
b. 1934; London in England
c. 1932; Sydney in Australia
d. 1936; Cardiff in UK

Answers: 1.a,2.c,3.a

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

S	L	D	A
L	I	E	S
V	V	E	E
U	A	Qu	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

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

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

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

DIWALI SWEETS



Sweet truth for the sweet tooth



It's that time of the year to lower your guard a little and indulge in sweets. After all, what's Diwali without a round of your favourite sweets among family and friends. You can make up for your indulgence by faithfully pounding your treadmill or taking a walk around your block - one round for every bite! You can also choose to go easy with the sugar, if you do make your sweets at home.



BOONDI LADDOO



- Ingredients**
- For the marinade**
- 1 cup gram flour
 - 3 drops yellow food colour
 - ¼cup + 3tbsp water
 - ¼tsp baking soda
 - Oil for deep frying
- For sugar syrup**
- 1¼cup sugar (¾ cup for the sugar conscious)
 - ½ cup water
- Other ingredients**
- 1tbsp ghee
 - 2tbsp raisins
 - 2tbsp cashew
 - 5 cloves
 - ¼tsp cardamom powder

Method

First, prepare boondi from the gram flour batter. Mix the gram flour with water, baking powder and food colour to get a flowing consistency. Heat oil for deep frying and then place a spatula with holes over the hot oil. Pour spoonfuls of the batter over the spatula to let it rain into the hot oil, forming small drops. When the drops get crisp and golden, remove to a paper line tray. Set aside in a large bowl.

In a large thick bottomed pan, take 1½ cup of sugar and add ½ cup of water and mix well till the sugar dissolves. Mix well and allow to boil till you attain 1 string consistency. Once the sugar syrup cools slightly, pour over the prepared boondi. Lightly fry the raisins, cashew and cloves in 1tsp ghee and add to the boondi along with cardamom powder. Mix well with a spoon till sugar syrup is evenly absorbed.

When the mixture is still warm, start making the laddoos by taking small portions into your hands and pressing together to form small balls.



GHEE MYSORE PAK

- Ingredients**
- 1 cup gram flour
 - 1 cup sugar (half cup for the sugar conscious)
 - ½ cup ghee
 - 6 – 8tbsp ghee – to add later
 - 6tbsp water

Method

Sieve gram flour directly to a wide heavy bottom pan. Turn on the flame and dry roast, stirring continuously for 5 minutes on a low flame. Be attentive as the colour of the flour should not change while losing its raw taste. When you smell a roasted aroma, turn off the heat. Pour 4-6tbsp ghee and mix well to a smooth paste. Then add another 2-4tbsp and mix well. There should be no lumps in the flour mixture. Set aside.

Grease a tray with a parchment paper. Add sugar and water to a heavy bottom pan and cook until you see an almost one string consistency, but not a full one string consistency. It is sticky and you see the string breaks when you check a drop of syrup in between your thumb and index

finger. Now, pour the flour and ghee mixture all at once to the sugar syrup and mix continuously non-stop until it becomes a uniformly smooth.

Cook this, stirring continuously on a low flame for two minutes. Then pour ½ cup ghee and incorporate it into the mixture again. When you see all of the ghee is absorbed, add another 2tbsp ghee and incorporate it again. You should see no ghee separating at this stage. Then add the last 2tbsp of ghee in batches ensuring it is absorbed by the mixture. Keep stirring all this constantly to avoid burning. At the last stage you will see the mixture turns thick and will leave a trail in the pan. Turn off the heat.

You can test by taking a small portion of the mixture into a spoon. Cool quickly and roll to a ball. It should be non-sticky and soft. At this stage, quickly pour all of the mixture at once to the greased and lined tray and flatten it to half inch thickness. Let it cool for 5-6 minutes on a wired rack. When it firms up a bit, draw lines. Cool further for another hour. Slice the pieces and store in an air-tight container.



COCONUT BARFI



- Ingredients**
- 3 cups grated coconut
 - 1½ cups sugar (¾ cup for the sugar conscious)
 - ¾ cup heavy whipping cream
 - 3tbsp confectioners sugar
 - ½tsp freshly ground cardamom
 - 1tsp ghee for greasing
 - 1tbsp finely chopped pistachios for garnishing

Method

Heat a non-stick pan over medium-low heat and add grated coconut, sugar, and cream. Mix them well till they are well combined. Continue to cook while stirring continuously till the mixture turns yellowish golden in colour and starts leaving the sides of the pan. Remove from heat and add cardamom powder and confectioners sugar and mix well.

Grease a flat plate with ghee. Pour the mixture into the greased pan and spread it evenly. Sprinkle finely chopped pistachios and let the coconut barfi set for an hour or so in the refrigerator. Slice the barfi into neat squares and store in the refrigerator.

KAJU KATLI

- Ingredients**
- 1½ cups cashew nuts
 - 6tbsp water
 - ¾ cup sugar (½ cup for the sugar conscious)
 - 1tsp rose water
 - Few dry rose petals
 - 2tsp ghee for cooking
 - 1tsp ghee for greasing

Method

Powder the cashew in a dry grinder - the cashews should be in powdered form and not pasty or oily.

On a low flame, heat sugar and water in a thick bottomed or non stick pan. Meanwhile grease a plate or a tray and keep aside.

When all the sugar has dissolved in the water, add the rose water and cashew powder. No specific consistency in the sugar syrup is required, just let the sugar dissolve in the water and then proceed with the next step. Mix and keep on stirring the cashew mixture non-stop on a low flame. The cashew mixture would start thickening. Cook for about 10 minutes until the whole dough starts to come together. Remove the whole lump of the kaju dough from

the pan and place it on your work surface or in a bowl or plate. Add rose petals and ghee or oil to the cashew mixture. When the heat in the dough is hot enough to handle flatten the dough and place it on a butter paper or on a greased plate or tray. Place a butter paper on top and then using a rolling pin, roll gently till you reach a thickness of 3 to 5 mm. Remove the butter paper and let the rolled dough cool.

When completely cooled, using a sharp knife, cut the cashew dough giving square or diamond shapes. Optional: you may add a sheet of silver on the flattened dough before cutting.



TENNIS ROUND-UP

Canada stun holders France in opener

BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

Prague, Czech Republic - Champions France stumbled at the first hurdle as they lost to Canada in their opening tie of the maiden Billie Jean King Cup final tournament in Prague on Monday.

The 2019 Fed Cup champions and the top seeds of its re-branded version have to beat a strong Russian team on Wednesday to keep their hopes of making the playoffs alive.

Belgium, Spain and the Czech Republic started the tournament with wins, securing an advantage ahead of the second and final ties in the three-member groups.

France's Fiona Ferro lost the opening rubber to world No 353 Francoise Abanda 6-4, 4-6, 4-6.

Alize Cornet levelled the score by edging Rebecca Marino 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) but then lost the decisive doubles rubber alongside Clara Burel 3-6, 6-7 (6/8) at the hands of Gabriela Dabrowski and Marino.

Canada were a late addition to the tournament, replacing Hungary after Budapest passed on the hosting rights to Prague.

"To beat the number one is obviously incredible and I think we should be really proud of ourselves," Marino beamed after the doubles rubber. "As a team we came together and fought with a lot of heart," she added.

In the other afternoon tie, Belgium won both singles to beat Belarus 2-1 in Group B.

Belgium's Greet Minnen first eased past Irina Shymanovich 6-2, 6-2 in the opening rubber.

Elise Mertens added a second point when she overpowered Aliaksandra Sasnovich 6-2, 4-6, 6-2. Sasnovich and Vera Lapko then won a consolation point for



Francoise Abanda of Canada returns a ball to Fiona Ferro of France during their match in Prague, Czech Republic, on Monday (AFP)

Belarus as they beat Mertens and Kirsten Flipkens 6-4, 6-3.

Hosts the Czech Republic, who won six of the last nine Fed Cup editions, edged Germany after Marketa Vondrousova first swept Andrea Petkovic 6-1, 6-3.

In a roller-coaster rubber pitting the highest ranking players of the tournament, world No 9 Angelique Kerber edged third-ranked Barbora Krejickova 6-7 (5/7), 6-0, 6-4. "We both played a great match on a really high level. It was just one, two points which decided the match," Kerber said after the 136-minute epic.

Thirty-six-year-old Lucie Hradecka then replaced Krejickova next to her usual doubles partner Katerina Siniakova, and the Czech duo won the decisive doubles rubber against Anna-Lena Friedsam and Jule Niemeier 6-4, 6-7 (2/7), 10/8.

Lacking Garbine Muguruza and Paula Badosa, Spain had a hard time facing Slovakia, but they finally prevailed 2-1 owing to Sara Sorribes Tormo.

In the first rubber, Slovakia's Viktoria Kuzmova beat Carla Suarez Navarro, who is winding up her career in Prague, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3. Sorribes Tormo levelled after edging Anna Karolina Schmiedlova 6-3, 3-6, 6-2, and together with Suarez Navarro they outdid Kuzmova with Tereza Mihalikova 4-6, 6-2, 10/7 in the doubles.

"I think what we've done today is an amazing day, an amazing feeling. I'm super proud of what we did," said Sorribes Tormo.

AFP



Andy Murray in action against Dominik Koepfer on Monday

I did not deserve to win: Murray

PARIS MASTERS

Paris, France - Former world No 1 Andy Murray failed to convert seven match points but said he did not 'deserve to win the match as I did not play well enough' after losing a three hour thriller to lucky loser Dominik Koepfer of Germany in the Paris Masters first round on Monday.

Murray, ranked 144, had been given a wild card but while the 34-year-old lacked killer instinct, he did show steely determination to battle back from a set and a break down to take the match to a third set before Koepfer won 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (11/9).

Koepfer - a late replacement when American qualifier Jensen Brooksby withdrew with abdominal pains hours before the match - had served for the match in the second set.

Earlier Cameron Norrie, who occupies a role Murray once did in his pomp as British No 1, celebrated his 100th ATP tour match win, outclassing Argentinian Federico Delbonis 6-2, 6-1. Norrie is in world No 1 Novak Djokovic's half of the draw but the Serbian will be wary if they meet in the quarterfinals.

Djokovic is playing for the

first time since Daniil Medvedev dashed his dreams of a Grand Slam sweep in the US Open final in September and he warned on Sunday lack that match play is his major worry.

The 34-year-old perhaps also with one eye on the Davis Cup finals is playing the doubles as well in Paris.

He and Krajcinovic beat Australian pair Alex de Minaur and Luke Saville in a super tie-break 4-6, 6-4, 10/7 to progress to the second round.

"I've never played in front of so many people for a doubles match, it's incredible," said the world No 1, whose last doubles match was in Mallorca in June when he and Carlos Gomez-Herrera won their semifinal.

He took to the court knowing who his second round singles opponent would be - Hungary's Marton Fucsovics. It will be a rematch of their Wimbledon quarterfinal this year which Djokovic breezed through in straight sets.

Fucsovics secured his place in the second round prevailing in a marathon three setter with Italy's Fabio Fognini 6-1, 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (7/5).

AFP

Nadal targets Australian Open warm-up return in Abu Dhabi

Paris, France - Rafael Nadal, who has hardly played since losing in the semifinals of the French Open, said on Monday that he wants to return in December in Abu Dhabi, as he targets the Australian Open in January.

"My plan is to play Abu Dhabi in December and then in a tournament before Australia and then the Australian Open. That's my goal," the Spaniard said at a sponsor event in Paris.

"We're working hard to make it happen."

Nadal won the Australian Open in 2009 and has lost in the final four times since then.

The 35-year-old Spaniard could face a weakened field as uncertainty swirls around the COVID-19 rules for players coming into Melbourne for the first Grand Slam of next year

which runs from January 17-30 in Melbourne.

World No 1 Novak Djokovic, who beat Nadal at Roland Garros, said on Sunday he would make his mind up about whether he defends his title when an official decision is made regarding players and vaccinations.

Nadal attempted a comeback on the hardcourts at the Citi Open in Washington in August but aggravated his foot injury in a three-set victory over Jack Sock and lost to South Africa's Lloyd Harris in the next round.

On Monday he said he was looking forward to his return.

"I don't know exactly when I'll be back," he said.

"But I can say that my goal is to try to come back to Abu Dhabi in December, and then, of

course, for the start of the new season in January."

"The injury in my foot still needs to get a little better, but I'm already training almost an hour and a half a day so that's positive. Some days are better than others, but I'm starting to have a lot more positive days than negative ones. So I'm on the right track," he said.

"I'm training, I'm feeling better. I'm back on the court," he said.

In early September, Nadal announced that he had undergone treatment on his left foot that would keep him "away from the courts for several weeks".

He suffers from Muller-Weiss syndrome, a degenerative disease that causes a deformity of one of the bones in the central part of the foot.

There have been mixed messages from Australia over who will be allowed to play in Melbourne.

A leaked email last week from the WTA, which runs the women's tour, suggested unvaccinated players would be allowed to compete provided they quarantined for 14 days and submitted to regular coronavirus testing.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison then said unvaccinated players would be permitted to enter the country if they received an exemption, which the host state Victoria would need to apply for on behalf of players.

But Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews quickly ruled that out.

AFP



Spain's Rafael Nadal to play in Abu Dhabi ahead of Australian Open

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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Wolves pile on misery for Benitez's Everton

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Wolverhampton, UK - Wolves condemned Everton to a third successive English Premier League defeat as Max Kilman and Raul Jimenez scored in a 2-1 win at Molineux on Monday.

Bruno Lage's side took control in the first half thanks to Kilman's first ever Wolves goal and a clinical finish from Jimenez.

Alex Iwobi reduced the deficit in the second half, but Wolves held on to extend their unbeaten run to five league games.

With four wins in that impressive streak, Wolves have climbed to seventh, while Everton dropped down in tenth.

"For now I don't care about the table. I want the points. I think the winter will be hard for us, we will have to work. To win the most points we need to win this kind of game," Lage said.

After Everton's dismal 5-2 home loss to Watford in their previous match, this was another setback for Rafael Benitez's spluttering team.

Everton have won just one of their last six league games to shatter the optimism created by their four-match unbeaten start to Benitez's first season in charge.

"When you lose games you have to be disappointed. We were too worried about making mistakes but in the second half we saw the character we have," Benitez said. "We have to learn from it. When we have all the players available we will be much better."



Wolverhampton Wanderers' Max Kilman celebrates after scoring against Everton on Monday (AFP)

Wolves made a flying start and Ruben Neves saw his shot from the edge of the area superbly saved by Jordan Pickford.

Pickford made another excellent stop to tip over Francisco

Trincão's rocket moments later.

Wolves forward Hwang Hee-chan had the ball in the net when the South Korean finished off Jimenez's pass, but the goal was disallowed for offside after a VAR check.

The hosts' incessant pressure was rewarded in the 28th minute.

Kilman jumped between flat-footed Everton centre-backs Ben Godfrey and Michael Keane and netted with a powerful header

from Rayan Ait-Nouri's corner.

Four minutes later, Everton shot themselves in the foot again when Godfrey's woeful backpass was intercepted by Jimenez, who streaked clear before clipping a composed finish over the on-rushing Pickford.

It was the Mexican striker's second goal this season as he continues his return from the fractured skull he suffered at Arsenal last season.

Everton's struggles were encapsulated by the anonymous Richarlison, who had returned to their Premier League starting line-up for the first time since September 13.

A mistake from Wolves keeper Jose Sa gifted Richarlison a golden opportunity to give Everton a lifeline, but the Brazilian stumbled just yards from goal, allowing Conor Coady to make a last-ditch block.

Jimenez headed against the post from Nelson Semedo's cross, before Iwobi pulled one back for Everton in the 66th minute with a fierce finish after Godfrey's shot was blocked into his path.

In a tense finale, Everton finally found their stride, but Sa preserved Wolves' victory with a fine save from Anthony Gordon's header.

OTHER RESULTS
SPANISH LEAGUE:
Rayo Vallecano 0 Celta Vigo 0, Levante 0 Granada 3.
AFP

Tottenham appoint Conte as manager

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Tottenham on Tuesday announced the appointment of former Chelsea and Inter Milan boss Antonio Conte as their new manager following the sacking of Nuno Espirito Santo.

Spurs moved quickly to hire the Italian, who has signed an initial 18-month contract, after firing Nuno on Monday after just four months in charge.

Conte, who won the Premier League with Chelsea in 2016/17, had been out of work since leaving Inter Milan at the end of last season, having just won the Serie A title.

"We are delighted to announce the appointment of Antonio Conte as our head coach on a contract until the summer of 2023, with an option to extend," the Premier League club said in a statement.

"Antonio has won titles in Serie A, in-

cluding a hat-trick of Scudettos with Juventus, the Premier League and also managed Italy, leading the Azzurri to the quarterfinals of Euro 2016."

Conte had been in advanced talks with Spurs in June about becoming Jose Mourinho's successor but they broke down after the two parties were at odds over key issues.

However, director of football Fabio Paratici is now in position at Tottenham and has a strong relationship with the 52-year-old, having worked with him at Juventus.

"I am extremely happy to return to coaching, and to do so at a Premier League club that has the ambition to be a protagonist again," said Conte.

"Tottenham Hotspur has state-of-the-art facilities and one of the best stadiums in the world.

"I can't wait to start working to convey to the team and the fans the passion, mentality and determination that have always distinguished me, as a player and as a coach."

They are currently ninth in the table after losing five of their past seven league matches.

AFP



Antonio Conte

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WHAT'S
ESSENTIAL


Omani

Messi out of PSG's clash with Leipzig



Lionel Messi

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Leipzig, Germany - Argentinian superstar Lionel Messi will miss Wednesday's Champions League clash with RB Leipzig due to injury, Paris Saint Germain (PSG) announced on Tuesday.

The 34-year-old six-time Ballon d'Or winner has a left hamstring problem and a painful knee. Messi had gone off at half-time of PSG's 2-1 Ligue 1 victory over Lille last Friday but coach Mauricio Pochettino had said he expected him to be fit for the Leipzig match.

However, he missed training on Monday and on Tuesday the

club confirmed he would not after all be fit.

PSG's statement said the four-time Champions League winner was suffering from "a pain in his hamstring in his left thigh and a painful knee due to bruising."

Messi may also be a doubt for Saturday's Ligue 1 clash between table-toppers PSG and strugglers Bordeaux.

He is due to then join up with his national squad for two World Cup qualifiers against Uruguay and Brazil.

Wednesday's game will be the third match that Messi has missed this season due to injury, having sat out two Ligue 1 matches at the end of September.

PSG top their Champions League group after three matches with seven points.

Last season's beaten finalists Manchester City are a point behind whilst Leipzig are yet to get off the mark after three defeats.

AFP

Renaissance rout Majees; Oman Stallions drub IAS



Fawad Ali Khan

LOCAL CRICKET

Renaissance CT's Fawad Ali Khan claimed six for 36 as they trounced Majees while Oman Stallions prevailed over IAS (Ibn Abdul Samad Eng & Cons) in the Oman Cricket Premier Division (50-over-a-side) matches at the Al Amerat ground recently.

Batting first, Renaissance put up a decent total of 197 in 49.5 overs with Pruthvikumar Machhi (59) and Shubo Pal (55) slamming half-centuries. Adnan Ilyas made a valuable 32. Ahmed Fayyaz Butt bagged four for 35.



Pratik Athavale

In reply, Renaissance bowlers ripped through the Majees batting line-up to bowl them out for paltry 68 in 16.2 overs. Besides Khan, Sufiyan Mahmood claimed three wickets.

In the second match of the same division, chasing a modest target of 119 to win, Oman Stallions raced home, scoring 119 for five in 22.2 overs

IAS was bowled out in for 118 in 32.5 overs with Karan Sonavale picking up three for 13. Bilal Khan and Hemalkumar Tandel picked up two wickets



Karan Sonavale

each. Arasalan Bashir was the top-scorer with 35. Stallions' chase was led by Pratik Athavale who hammered 51 off 60.

BRIEF SCORES

Renaissance CT 197 all out in 49.5 overs (Machhi 59, Pal 55; Butt 4-35) beat Majees 68 all out in 16.2 overs (Khan 6-36).

IAS 118 all out in 32.5 overs (Bashir 35; Sonavale 3-13) lost to Oman Stallions 119-5 in 22.2 overs (Athavale 51, Rafi Ullah 32; Khalid Rashid 3-32).

Every day, all day!





QUOTE OF THE DAY

It was a good day for us. Quite a lot in the wicket early on, and KG and Nortje were able to exploit it. It excites us

Temba Bavuma

South Africa's skipper, after his team's big win against Bangladesh, on Tuesday



ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

Rabada and Nortje set up SA's convincing victory

Both seamers collected career-best figures to help bowl out Bangladesh for 84

GROUP ONE

S AFRICA VS BANGLADESH

Abu Dhabi, UAE - It was a fast bowling day at Abu Dhabi and that eventually made it a big win for South Africa, who chased 85 with six wickets in hand despite their own top order struggling against Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam in the powerplay.

South Africa's bowlers got first use of the pitch after Temba Bavuma had won the toss, and both Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje finished with career-best figures as they took six wickets between them to help bowl Bangladesh out for 84. The total was small enough that South Africa's falling to 33 for three at the end of their powerplay didn't become a big enough hurdle for Bangladesh to cause an upset; in the end, Bavuma's team took the two points and created a two-point gap between themselves and Australia, who are placed third with a game in hand.

Rabada finds his mojo

Before this match had begun, Rabada had taken 39 wickets in T20s in the UAE, but only four of them had come in the powerplay. On Tuesday, he managed to get away from that trend with the new ball, grabbing three wickets inside the powerplay - he was on a hat-trick at one stage - to rattle Bangladesh early on.

The banana-bend inswinger to catch Soumya Sarkar lbw first ball was a salute to a mode of dismissal that is natural for Rabada in Test cricket, but one which has been hard to find in this format, in this part of the world.

That wicket followed Mohammad Naim's first attempt at a big shot to hole out at mid-wicket, and was then followed by



South Africa's Kagiso Rabada in action during his three-wicket spell against Bangladesh in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday (AFP)

Mushfiquir Rahim playing out the hat-trick ball and the ball after. Then, he copped a rising short of a length ball on the shoulder of his bat to be taken at gully and Bangladesh bagged their second duck of a powerplay they finished three wickets down.

More ducks were to follow, but South Africa had to make sure they didn't allow Bangladesh's best remaining batters - Liton Das and Mahmudullah - to stage a recovery. Nortje put his hand up for that task, slipping in a fast, steep bouncer that was headed for Mahmudullah's face and forced him to fend as far as Aiden Markram at point.

Bangladesh were 34 for four in eight overs at that stage.

That a recovery wasn't coming became clear off the very next ball, when No 6 Afif Hossain stepped out and had an ungainly swing across the line against Dwaine Pretorius. It was his first and last ball at the crease, the wickets split and Bangladesh half their side down.

Das, in an unfamiliar role of trying to bat through the innings, got as far as 36 balls with careful cricket, before falling to Tabraiz Shamsi. From there on it was an endeavour to get to 20 overs of batting, Mahedi Hasan the only one showing any resolve during that phase. Ultimately,

Bangladesh got as far as Nortje's last over - the 19th over the innings - where Nasum Ahmed became the fourth batter to fall for a duck by knocking his own leg stump with his bat.

One last shot

It was Bangladesh's third time being bowled out under 100 in T20s this year, and there seemed no real chance of them getting anything out of this game at the mid-way stage.

South Africa looked good to solidify their No 2 standing, but fast bowlers Taskin and Shoriful managed to do a tiny favour for Australia by not allowing South Africa the chance to significantly

increase their net run-rate.

Reeza Hendricks' dismissal in the first over was a precursor, Taskin getting the ball to nip back in to trap him in front of the stumps.

Shoriful would finish with no wickets, but his 15 runs in four overs held the other end up, even as Taskin continued cutting through the mid-riffs of South Africa's batters with skid and movement inwards.

Off the few deliveries that didn't come back in with the angle, he managed to get Markram to edge to first slip, bat hanging away from the body shortly after Mahedi had straightened one past Quinton de Kock's back foot

SCOREBOARD	
BANGLADESH	
M Naim	c Hendricks b Rabada 9 (11)
L Das	lbw b Shamsi 24 (26)
S Sarkar	lbw b Rabada 0 (1)
Mushfiquir Rahim	c Hendricks b Rabada 0 (13)
Mahmudullah	c Markram b Nortje 3 (9)
Afif Hossain	b Pretorius 0 (1)
Shamim Hossain	
	c Maharaj b Shamsi 11 (20)
Mahedi Hasan	c & b Nortje 27 (25)
Taskin Ahmed	run out 3 (5)
Nasum Ahmed	hit wkt b Nortje 0 (1)
S Islam	not out 0 (0)
Extras:	(lb 1, nb 2, w 4) 7
TOTAL:	84 all out in 18.2 overs
Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-22, 3-24, 4-34, 5-34, 6-45, 7-64, 8-77, 9-84, 10-84	
Bowling: K Maharaj 4-0-23-0, K Rabada 4-0-20-3, A Nortje 3.2-0-8-3, D Pretorius 3-0-11-1, T Shamsi 4-0-21-2	
SOUTH AFRICA	
Q de Kock	b Mahedi Hasan 16 (15)
R Hendricks	lbw b Taskin Ahmed 4 (5)
R van der Dussen	c Islam b Nasum Ahmed 22 (27)
A Markram	c Naim b Taskin 0 (4)
T Bavuma	not out 31 (28)
D Miller	not out 5 (2)
Extras:	(b 4, lb 1, w 3) 8
TOTAL:	86 for four in 13.3 overs
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-28, 3-33, 4-80	
Bowling: Taskin Ahmed 4-0-18-2, S Islam 4-0-15-0, Mahedi Hasan 2.3-0-19-1, Nasum Ahmed 2-0-22-1, S Sarkar 1-0-7-0	



Umpire Gough serves six-day suspension for bubble breach

Dubai, UAE - Michael Gough, the English umpire, had to be suspended from his duties at the ongoing T20 World Cup for a six-day period starting October 28 following 'a breach of the event bio-security protocols'.

The sanction from the ICC came after Gough is understood to have left his hotel without permission and went outside the tournament's bio-bubble. He has already missed one game as a result, the October 31 fixture between India and New Zealand in Dubai, when South African Marais Erasmus stood in for Gough.

"The bio-security advisory committee has instructed umpire Michael Gough to isolate for six days due to a breach of the event bio-security protocols," an ICC spokesperson told ESPNcricinfo.

He was subsequently tested for signs of COVID-19 on the second, fourth and sixth days - after October 28 - and is understood to have returned negative results on the first two days.

The third test is scheduled for November 2, and if he tests negative again, he will be allowed to return to work. Gough's next game is scheduled for November 4, between Sri Lanka and West Indies in Abu Dhabi. Cricinfo

India clinging to slimmest hopes



A file photo of India players during a training session in Dubai, UAE

GROUP TWO

INDIA VS AFGHANISTAN

Abu Dhabi, UAE - India are teetering on the brink of this T20 World Cup, depending on other teams to hand them a lifeline, and as dire as that may be, they'll need to keep telling themselves that it is not over.

A couple of bad tosses resulted in them getting the worst of the conditions. Their batters panicked because they knew they needed an extra 20-30 runs to even make a match of it, and their bowlers were handicapped by the dew that always comes in during the evenings in the UAE and flips the script.

Still there is hope. India must beat Afghanistan - preferably by a big margin - and then hope Afghanistan can in turn beat New Zealand, which is very much possible given the way their bowlers have performed at this edition. Rashid Khan continues to dominate this format and Mujeeb Ur Rahman - assuming he's recovered from injury - functions at almost the same level. So it is game on.

In the spotlight

Virat Kohli: He has already announced that he will relinquish the India captaincy in the shortest format. He will not go quietly

into the night though. He set in motion India's last loss, going for a big hit when he probably should have tried to bat out. It's unlikely that a batter of his quality, and more so his hunger, will make a mistake like that again.

Hamid Hassan: He ended a five-year hiatus from T20 cricket when he took the field in Afghanistan's last match. In that time he's dabbled in coaching and in commentary but somehow nothing suits him quite as much as being out there in the thick of all the action. He's still got the headband. He's still got the yorkers. He's still a threat.

The buzz

India: The experiment with Rohit Sharma down the order may come to an end, which may mean that KL Rahul slips down to No 4. Suryakumar Yadav missed the last game with back issues and it is unclear if he has recovered from them.

Afghanistan: With Asghar Afghan's retirement, they will be looking to either Hashmatullah Shahidi or Usman Ghani to step up and fill his role.

Teams (likely)

India: Rohit Sharma, Ishan Kishan, Virat Kohli (c), KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Mohammed Shami, Varun Chakravathy, Jasprit Bumrah.

Afghanistan: Hazratullah Zazai, Mohammad Shahzad (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Hashmatullah Shahidi/Usman Ghani, Mohammad Nabi (c), Najibullah Zadran, Gulbadin Naib, Rashid Khan, Karim Janat/Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Naveen-ul-Haq, Hamid Hassan. Cricinfo

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QUOTE OF THE DAY
We had great expectations, but we couldn't play up to those. All the criticism is quite natural. We have to accept it

Taskin Ahmed
Bangladesh's bowler, after his team's loss to South Africa, on Tuesday



ICC MEN'S T20
WORLD CUP 2021

PAKISTAN ENTER SEMIS

Another century stand between Azam and Rizwan steer them to 45-run win against Namibia



Pakistan openers Mohammad Rizwan (photo left) and Babar Azam in action during their half-century knocks against Namibia in a Group Two match of the ICC T20 World Cup in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on Tuesday (AFP)

GROUP TWO

PAKISTAN VS NAMIBIA

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Pakistan became the first team to reach

the ICC T20 World Cup semifinals after beating Namibia by 45 runs, with brilliant half-centuries from Mohammad Rizwan

and skipper Babar Azam in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

Rizwan finished with a slow-to-fast 50-ball 79 not out while Babar notched his 23rd T20I fifty with a 49-ball 70 to lift Pakistan - who won the toss and batted - to 189 for two in their 20 overs.

Babar said Pakistan went with a different plan, batting first. He said, "It was a different plan today [against Namibia]. We wanted that opening partnership to go deep and it worked for us. We have two good players in [Mohammad] Hafeez and Hasan Ali. They'll be important in the next stage and it was important we ticked those boxes."

Pakistan skipper was confident his team will keep the winning momentum. "Everything has gone according to plan, we're looking forward to the semifinals and playing our cricket

with the same intensity."

Namibia tried their best to match their opponents with David Wiese notching 43 not out and Craig Williams scoring 40 but Pakistani bowlers never allowed them a free hand as they managed 144 for five in 20 overs.

With four wins in as many games, Pakistan became the first side to reach the last four from Group Two. This will be their fifth semi-final in T20 World Cup history - the most by any team.

Williams knocked five boundaries and a six before he holed out to spinner Shadab Khan while Wiese smashed two sixes and three boundaries in his 31-ball knock. Opener Stephan Baard scored 29.

But Rizwan and Azam were the stars once again, like they were in Pakistan's win over arch-rivals India, which gave

them a kick-start to the event.

The pair added 113 for the first wicket after Pakistan were slow out of the blocks, scoring just 59 in the first ten overs but ended with a flurry in the next ten, taking 130. Mohammad Hafeez scored a 16-ball 32 not out.

Pakistan's total is the second-highest in this tournament, behind Afghanistan's 190 for four against Scotland in Sharjah.

Azam hit seven boundaries before he holed out to David Wiese in the 15th over while Fakhar Zaman was smartly caught by keeper Zane Green for five. Rizwan reached his tenth half century with a pulled six off Wiese in the 19th over before hitting four boundaries and a six to take 22 off JJ Smit's final over.

Rizwan's knock included eight fours and four sixes.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN			
M Rizwan	not out	79	(50)
B Azam	c Frylinck b Wiese	70	(49)
F Zaman	c Green b Frylinck	5	(5)
M Hafeez	not out	32	(16)
Extras:	(lb 3)	3	
TOTAL: 189 for two in 20 overs			
Fall of wickets: 1-113, 2-122			
Bowling: R Trumpelmann 4-1-36-0, D Wiese 4-0-30-1, JJ Smit 4-0-50-0, J Frylinck 4-0-31-1, B Shikongo 2-0-19-0, J Loftie-Eaton 2-0-20-0			
NAMIBIA			
S Baard	run out	29	(29)
M van Lingen	b Hasan Ali	4	(2)
C Williams	c Hasan		
	b Shadab Khan	40	(37)
G Erasmus	c Shadab b Wasim	15	(10)
D Wiese	not out	43	(31)
JJ Smit	c Zaman b Rauf	2	(5)
J Loftie-Eaton	not out	7	(7)
Extras:	(lb 2, nb 2, w 1)	4	
TOTAL: 144 for five in 20 overs			
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-55, 3-83, 4-93, 5-110			
Bowling: S S Afridi 4-0-36-0, Hasan Ali 4-0-22-1, I Wasim 3-0-13-1, H Rauf 4-0-25-1, Shadab Khan 4-0-35-1, M Hafeez 1-0-11-0			

TODAY'S
MATCHES

GROUP TWO



NEW ZEALAND
VS
SCOTLAND

Dubai (UAE), 2pm

GROUP TWO



INDIA
VS
AFGHANISTAN

Dubai, 6pm



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