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2 Omanis named global cybersecurity influencers

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Two Omani cybersecurity professionals have been recognised among hundreds of experts from around the world to be included in the IFSEC Global Top Influencers in Security & Fire 2021 list.

On July 21, this year's list of IFSEC Global Top Influencers was announced. These were selected from hundreds of nominations in a judging process by a highly respected international panel.

The influencer awards span seven categories including commercial security, fire safety and cybersecurity.

Eng Badar Ali Said al Salehi, director general of Oman National CERT, was named in the Commercial Security - Security Executives category, while Maiysa Said al Dhanki, assistant manager for Cyber Security at EY, in the



Eng Badar Ali Said al Salehi



Maiysa Said al Dhanki

Security: End Users category.

According to IFSEC (International Fire and Security Exhibition and Conference), Salehi is a dynamic leader with more than 20 years of work and professional experience in cybersecurity, and is focused on making the world a safer cyber and digital space.

Maiysa is a professional experienced in cybersecurity, which she has demonstrated across MENA and at an international level in multiple engagements, including participation in various cyber security events and projects.

cluding participation in various cyber security events and projects.

She has a Master's degree from Royal Holloway University of London and is certified as Chief Information Security Officer, lead implementer and lead auditor and certified IT DR Planner.

Maiysa was recently feted at the Women in Cybersecurity Middle East 2020 awards in the 'Woman Cybersecurity Consultant' category.

His Majesty the Sultan receives call from Raisi

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a phone call from President-elect of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ebrahim Raisi, on Saturday evening.

During the call, congratulations and blessings were exchanged on the occasion of the blessed Eid al Adha, asking God to bring the two friendly countries and peoples goodness and blessings.

The existing bilateral relations between the two countries and ways of supporting and developing these in many fields were reviewed for the benefit of the two friendly peoples.

ONA



Omar Abdullah al Ghailani



Omani freediver wins World Cup in Egypt

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Diver Omar Abdullah al Ghailani has done Oman proud by winning the AIDA Freediving World Cup 2021 held in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, from July 11 to 15. Ghailani claimed four gold medals, including overall winner, and a bronze.

The competition saw participation of divers from several countries, including Switzerland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Ireland, South Africa, Israel, Germany, Netherlands, France and China.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ghailani said, "I won gold in the Constant Weight (CWT) Bi-fins 91m, CWT, Constant Weight Without Fins and overall performance. I also got a bronze in the

Free Immersion category."

Ghailani informed that he created four new national records and broke the Asian record in the CWT Bi-fins category in the event.

He described the competition as 'tough' owing to the participation of experienced divers from around the world, and the temperatures encountered in the waters to which he dives as a 'challenge'.

"Reaching the finals required immense concentration and determination. I prepared for the championship by undergoing one-month training in Sharm el Sheikh."

Ghailani won the overall third place in the event last year. "I was determined to continue training to I win the championship this year."



Immunisation campaign resumes today

Muscat - The National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 will resume on Sunday after being suspended temporarily due to the Eid al Adha holidays. Citizens in the target group - 18 years and older - are required to book online through Tarassud + or through www.covid19.moh.gov.om

"The ministry will resume the vaccination programme against COVID-19 at the same predetermined approved immunisation centres on Sunday, July 25. The appointment service is available online. All citizens from target groups should book their appointments before going to the vaccination centres," the Ministry of Health stated.

According to ministry officials, half a million doses of COVID-19 vaccines will arrive in Oman after the Eid holidays. In August and September, Oman will receive 3mn doses of vaccines. Around 40,000 people were vaccinated daily before the Eid holidays.

Travel agencies barely survive pandemic

Muscat - The tourism industry has borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic with travel agencies among the worst affected businesses.

Over the past year in Oman, many small travel agencies have shut shop, while bigger ones have closed down branches.

According to H E Salim al Mahrrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, the tourism sector has lost about RO1.3bn due to the pandemic resulting in 25,513 direct and indirect job losses.

The World Travel and Tourism Council, the trade group representing major travel companies, projects a loss of 75mn jobs and US\$2.1tn in revenue globally.

Cutting costs and salaries

With business coming to a grinding halt, Anfai MP, who operates World Air Travels and Tours, sent two staff of his three-member setup on unpaid leave. He had started the agency after quitting his job in Muscat in March 2020 just before the pandemic outbreak. "I am struggling to meet my daily expenses even after drastically downsizing," he told *Muscat Daily*.

Mohammed Shajhan, who runs Royal Travels and Tours, too laid off the only other staff he had and now runs the show himself. "I am struggling due to uncer-



Anfal MP awaits customers and better days in the empty office of World Air Travels and Tours in Ruwi (Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)

tainty of travel restrictions. I earn hardly enough to meet running expenses and owe almost 12 months rent in dues."

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, an official of a major travel agency in Muscat said that on an average, 20 to 30 per cent of International Air Transport Association's licensed agents have already downsized operations. "Most of the agencies cut staff salaries. Some sent expat employees on unpaid leave, while others terminated their services," he said, adding that his company is closing down one division of the business.

Faiyaz Khan, general manager of Travel Point Oman, described his company as one of the fastest-growing travel agencies in the market. But it too down-

sized by closing five outlets in interior areas. "We stalled plans to expand to other GCC countries and the Indian market due to the pandemic. As soon as things go back to the pre-pandemic stage and there is a demand, we will not only re-open our closed outlets, but open new ones."

Tickets for survival

Anfal rued the fact that the current market has limited offerings. "Before the pandemic, there were multiple options - umrah, holiday packages, visas and tickets. Ticket sales comprise only 30 to 40 per cent of the overall business of travel agencies. With the pandemic, the only option remaining is ticket sales, and that too is down 50 per cent."

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Total lockdown: Tough on bachelors, bonding time for families



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Search for missing person continues for ninth day in Sur



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Issa al Adawi to launch Oman's Olympic campaign on Tuesday

Lockdown lessons

The COVID-19 pandemic has been wreaking havoc globally and countries the world over have been left with no option but to halt all economic activities and ban movement of people, social gatherings and all recreational activities to arrest the spread of infection. For residents of Oman, the four-day total lockdown during the Eid al Adha holidays has been an altogether different experience.

Days before the lockdown, one could see shoppers on a panic buying spree. Everyone grabbed anything and everything that they could lay their hands and eyes on. It was difficult to understand whether they

were storing for four days or four weeks! Such was the panic that milk, curd, bread and eggs, to name a few, vanished from shelves in a matter of seconds.

The quiet city of Muscat went into a meditative trance. Roads were empty and streets were deserted. The lockdown brought the city to a standstill; life and movement took a break. There was silence everywhere; every object under the sun seemed to enjoy the moment and appeared to be in deep meditation.

Birds too did not feel like flying as their wings and movements lacked the usual energy and flamboyance in the air. For that matter, the city did not seem to have the usual number of winged creatures on the horizon as one sees on normal days. It seemed as if the birds too followed the

lockdown orders.

Some of us have lost our near and dear ones to COVID-19. We were heartbroken that we could not even have a glance or perform/attend their last rites as the burial had to be done as per pandemic norms. Suddenly, we felt that life has become so uncertain and unpredictable. Though we knew it already, we have been made to understand it even better now by the sheer magnitude and mercilessness of the pandemic.

Humanity has suffered a lot, and this pandemic has compelled us into deeper introspection. It made us appreciate Mother Nature and the need to reconnect with her. It exposed the

fragility of life and prompted us to examine our way of life, emphasising the need to re-bond with the people around us.

It also paved the way for a reflection on the many blessings we enjoy and being grateful to the Creator.

Perhaps the greatest learning is to mellow down, slow down and give more time to oneself, and be there for the people around.

However, the stark reality is that COVID-19 is still around us, and will be around for some more time, as forewarned by experts. The lockdown has not wiped out the menace of the pandemic yet; we must not lower our guards and strictly adhere to social distancing and COVID-19 appropriate behaviour.

Mohan Anandan
Banking sector employee, Ruwi

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Total lockdown: Tough on bachelors, bonding time for families

Shaddad al Musalmi
Muscat

The four-day Eid al Adha lockdown, which ended at 4am on Saturday, was tough on bachelors while families had ample time to indulge in board games, binge-watch Netflix shows, attend online family gatherings and cook elaborate meals.

To contain the spread of COVID-19 cases in the country, the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the impact of the pandemic implemented a nationwide complete lockdown during which movement of individuals and vehicles was prohibited and commercial activities were completely closed during the four days of Eid al Adha.

The people who Muscat Daily spoke with said they found new ways to spend time. "I used my time to enjoy with my family. I indulged my passion for cooking, giving my wife a break from the kitchen. We also resorted to board games and watched shows on Netflix. All that we did was a family affair. We can't complain," said Khalfan Saif, a resident of Seeb.

Fuad al Farsi from Amerat used the four days of lockdown to bond with his family. "I work in the oil field, so this Eid I was lucky to be home. I made good use of the time being with my family; it was a great time for us. The first day was the usual Eid activities and preparing special



I work in the oil field, so this Eid I was lucky to be home. I made good use of the time being with my family; it was a great time for us.

FUAD AL FARSI

dishes. The second day was dedicated to mishkak and the third day to shuwa. We kept ourselves busy and we did not feel bored," he said.

However, for bachelors, the four days seemed a long time. "It was quite difficult as for the first time in my life I experienced a situation where restaurants and shops were closed for four days in a stretch and nobody could step out. To make matters more difficult, I did not have a food warmer and my small fridge was packed to capacity with food I had ordered from different

restaurants," said Govind Arjan, a bachelor who stays in Ghubra.

"Some food got spoiled in the fridge and had to be thrown away. I had bought a small rice cooker a day before the lockdown in case of an emergency but somehow managed without cooking any food for the four days," he added.

Mohammad Jamalluddin, who shares a room with four others, said the four days were both good and bad for him. "Normally in Eid, I visit my relatives in Gala spending quality time with them. We also get some good

food from well-wishers. This is also usually the time to earn some extra money but everything stopped this Eid. I was exhausted economically and mentally," he said.

He added that no one likes to stay locked up and that the pandemic has taken away hope for many. "Thankfully, I live with sharing friends. We shared our time and food with one another. I also got ample time to call home and talk to my sons."

Jamalluddin and his roommates cleaned their kitchen and faced a small challenge when they ran out of vegetables. "But we somehow managed," he said.

Some restrictions will continue in the evenings till July 31. "We thank people for their commitment to follow the rules and remind everyone that evening closure of commercial activities and a ban on movement of persons and vehicles will be in place from 5pm to 4am till July 31 in Oman," a tweet by the official Twitter handle OmanVSCovid-19 stated.

Authorities urged citizens and residents to continue observing the COVID-19 protocols and preventive measures as they did in the past. "Everyone should continue to take precautions and wear face masks, while social distancing and other precautions need to be followed," the Ministry of Health stated in a reminder.

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Travel agencies barely survive pandemic

Continued from Page 01

Currently travellers from 21 countries are barred from entering Oman, with the exception of Omani citizens, diplomats, health workers and their families.

"All small sub-agents are dependent on ticket sales, but with the restrictions in place for travellers from the Indian subcontinent, many customers cancelled their tickets while others put travel plans on hold indefinitely," Anfal said.

Travel Point's Khan noted that travellers from Europe and other western countries are very few in number; the bulk of the business in Oman comes from the Indian subcontinent. "Since the entry ban from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, there is not much for travel agencies to do other than sell hotel quarantine packages."

When the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic made hotel quarantine mandatory, the travel agents started selling quarantine packages with hotel bookings. But that too was short lived due to the introduction of 'Sahala' as authorities made it mandatory for all arriving

passengers to book hotels through this online platform.

Khan described the introduction of 'Sahala' as 'surprising'. "When there is an industry licensed to book hotels and sell travel packages, introduction of another online platform by authorities takes away our right to do business."

Going forward

Royal Travels and Tours' Shajhan predicts nothing will happen in the next two-three years and leisure travel will take five years to reach the pre-pandemic level. "Overall, the tourism industry should be redefined by the authorities and they should make new operating guidelines. Agency licence should be granted to qualified people with travel and tourism industry background."

The travel agency official who spoke anonymously said, "Compared to licensed IATA agents, there are a larger number of sub-agents in the Omani market. As they have a bigger share of the ticket sales, regularising the sub-agents could help the sector."

(Text by Syed Fasiuddin)

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Self-isolation weighs on people's minds: Experts

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Frequent lockdowns and quarantine have become standard measures to curb the pandemic. While those infected with COVID-19 or even suspected of having the disease are forced into quarantine for others' safety, isolation is known to cause severe boredom often leading to depression among some. The separation from family members in addition to having no set routine result in anxiety.

Praveen K P Nair, a collection officer in a private company, was not required to be present in office as his job demanded that he be on the move. But he is now forced to work from home and quarantine himself after his wife tested positive for COVID-19.

"I have been in isolation for six days now," he said, adding that he is staying away from his wife and children. In loneliness he has become anxious. "I have no routine and most importantly I cannot meet my family. I am not



used to watching television or surfing the net as I am more of a social person. Every evening I used to take a walk on the beach, but now everything has come to a standstill."

According to Dr Nandhini Nandakumar, a psychotherapist and counsellor, lack of purpose makes a person depressed.

"Initially, the rest seems good for a few days, but as human beings we are programmed and purpose driven, and when this

character is not fulfilled, sadness and gloominess sneak in."

She added, "Our life has become miserable due to the pandemic. As a psychotherapist, I personally believe through my experiences that everyone is committed towards an aim. It might be small or big, professional or personal; when somehow this target is missing, people feel like a ship without sails. Man is a social being and to be cut away physically is indeed a problem."

The rest seems good for a few days, but as human beings we are programmed and purpose driven, and when this character is not fulfilled, sadness and gloominess sneak in

DR NANDHINI
NANDAKUMAR



first few days but soon I was getting depressed and felt not productive enough. The days passed slowly making me lazier and bored."

According to research, those who work from home tend to report high levels of stress.

As confirmed by Dr Nishat Shams, a psychotherapist in the Ministry of Health, 41 per cent of employees who often worked from home considered themselves highly stressed, as opposed to 25 per cent of those who worked only on-site.

Dr Nishat said, "Employees who work from home might experience more of a blur and depression in personal life. Work from home employees might grapple more with the concept of unplugging and ending their workday as opposed to those who work in an office setting. When working from home, you might feel a lack of structure; you might struggle with getting your day going, formally ending your day, and taking time for breaks and lunch."

She said people can use the time for self analysis and also take up exercising or a hobby to pass the time fruitfully.

There are many who have started work from home. But work without colleagues, as claimed by many, is distracting.

Salim al Harthy, who was in home quarantine recently, said, "I was working from home but I did not find a purpose. There were no colleagues and no office engagement. It was good for the



Over 2,400 violations of Marine Fishing Law in H1 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As many as 2,439 violations of the Marine Fishing Law and Protection of Living Aquatic Resources were registered in the sultanate in the first half of 2021, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR).

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, an MAFWR official said that specialists in the ministry arrested 258 expatriates for violating provisions of the Marine Fishing Law and Protection of Living Aquatic Resources.

"The violations included non-compliance with the regulations of Marine Fishing Law; 1,586 violations of fishing licensing regulations, 408 cases of the use of prohibited fishing methods and possession of unauthorised equipment, 31 violations of fishing in prohibited areas and times, 160 cases of employment of unlicensed expatriate workers, 230 instances of non-compliance with the placement of plates on boats and vessels, and 143 various other violations," the MAFWR official added.

As per the official, 1,829 sets of equipment were seized which included boats, engines, nets and devices. The specialists also seized more than 1,490kg of fish and marine resources that were caught and traded during the prohibited seasons.

Talking about MAFWR's efforts to reduce violations, he said,

"The ministry organises monitoring campaigns in cooperation with the relevant authorities, such as the Coast Guard of the Royal Oman Police, the Royal Oman Navy, the Maritime Security Centre and the Ministry of Labour."

The campaigns aim to ensure compliance with laws and regulations. The ministry's Fisheries Control Operations Room also uses modern technology in its work by using satellites and applying a remote sensing system to monitor the movement of commercial and coastal fishing vessels.

On June 7, the fisheries control team in Dhofar arrested a number of artisanal fishing vessels for violating the Live Aquatic Wealth Law and its executive regulations related to not installing number plates and employing expatriate workers without licences.

On June 13, the fisheries control team in Dhofar arrested two artisanal and coastal fishing vessels that were using Al Hial nets in an unauthorised area. On June 20, the fisheries control team at MAFWR foiled an attempt to smuggle 593kg of fresh lobster through Al Wajajah port, as the ministry prohibits fishing and possession of lobster from June to February.

On July 14, the fisheries control team in Al Wusta seized several unlicensed boats in the wilayat of Duqm and 50 pieces of prohibited nylon nets. Legal was taken against the violators.

Virtual expo looks to develop students' art skills

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education, represented by the General Directorate of Education in Dakhliyah governorate, recently held a virtual art exhibition for students of the governorate's schools for the academic year 2020/2021.

Ali bin Hamoud al Hinal, a supervisor in the General Directorate of Education in Dakhliyah, said, "The exhibition displayed artworks of 70 students. It targeted students of the 12th grade of the General Education Diploma.



"The exhibition aimed to help students identify the styles of modern and contemporary art

and to spread an awareness message to the community stemming from the ideas of stu-

dents at this stage."

He added that each school participated with three works of

art, and a committee was formed to select the best works produced according to the artistic foundations, to be displayed in the virtual exhibition.

"The exhibition also aimed to highlight students' artistic talents and exchange artistic experiences among students by presenting their experiences, in addition to promoting creativity and urging them to display their artistic creations in a virtual manner."

The exhibition also looked to involve the parents of the students, the school and local community, he added.

New virtual programme to support SMEs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has launched a virtual programme to support SMEs. The programme called 'Tazeez' - or Boost - aims to train 37 people from the institutions incubated in ASMED and the National Business Centre, an official said.

He said the programme will be for a month and will include training in project management, leadership skills, marketing skills, technology skills and digital transformation.



Talking about the authority's efforts, he said, "We are still receiving applications from small and medium enterprises to register in the on-the-job training initiative to employ jobseekers in

the institutions in order to enhance their competitive capabilities in accordance with the specific requirements."

The initiative targets all owners of SMEs and jobseekers reg-

istered with the Ministry of Labour or according to the institution's nomination of those it deems appropriate for training, he added.

"The Ministry of Labour will bear the cost of the monthly training grant for trainees. In the first year 100 per cent of the grant will be paid; a Bachelor's graduate will receive RO500 per month, a diploma graduate RO400 per month, and a General Education Diploma graduate RO300 per month. In the second year 50 per cent will be paid."

ASMED has urged business owners to take advantage of the on-the-job training initiative.

SEARCH CONTINUES FOR MISSING PERSON IN SUR



The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) on Saturday said it was continuing to search for a missing person in Sur for the ninth day. CDAA had earlier announced that following heavy rains and overflowing wadis in the wilayats of Sur and Jalaan Bani Bu Ali, four people went missing and three bodies were found in different locations

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Bank Muscat posts RO95mn profit for first half of 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bank Muscat, the sultanate's largest financial institution, posted a net profit of RO94.65mn for the first half of 2021 compared to RO69.56mn net profit reported in the same period of 2020, an increase of 36.1 per cent.

The increase in net profit was mainly due to lower impairment charges in the first half of this year compared to the same period of 2020, according to the bank's preliminary financial results.

Bank Muscat's net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing increased 4.9 per cent to RO168.44mn for the six months period ended June 30, 2021 compared to RO160.53mn for the same period in 2020.

Non-interest income came at RO74.70mn for the first six months of 2021 compared with RO64.69mn recorded in the same period of 2020, an in-



crease of 15.5 per cent.

Bank Muscat said net impairment for credit and other losses for the six months period in 2021 decreased at RO35.33mn from RO48.19mn in the same period of 2020.

'The decrease is mainly attributed to the precautionary and collective provisions created by the bank during the first half of 2020, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the historic decline seen in global crude oil prices. The bank

remains vigilant of the continuing stress in the macroeconomic and business conditions and its potential impacts,' Bank Muscat said in a press statement.

The bank's operating expenses in the first half of this year marginally increased to RO95.12mn from RO94.03mn for the same period in 2020.

Bank Muscat's net loans and advances (including Islamic financing receivables) increased by 2.7 per cent to RO9.238bn as against RO8.996bn as at June

30, 2020.

Customer deposits (including Islamic customer deposits) inched up 0.3 per cent to RO8.670bn as against RO8.645bn as at June 30, 2020.

Bank Muscat said its full results for the first half of 2021 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the board of directors at their meeting scheduled later during this month.

Hypport Duqm and Uniper sign deal to explore green ammonia offtake

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's strategic green hydrogen project Hypport Duqm has signed a cooperation agreement with the global energy giant Uniper. As per the agreement, Uniper will be joining the project team to provide engineering services and negotiate an exclusive offtake agreement of green ammonia.

With Uniper, Hypport Duqm's shareholders DEME Concessions and OQ Alternative Energy have onboarded a globally recognised and reputable partner, which will support Hypport Duqm in demonstrating a strong business case for the offtake, and in turn, enable them to secure optimal financing for the project.

The agreement marks another important milestone for Hypport Duqm, after having secured its 150sqkm renewable generation site in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) earlier this year. The site is being prepared for the deployment of a series of meteorological masts to confirm Duqm's excellent solar and wind conditions which are available throughout the year and that form the basis of successful green hydrogen and green ammonia projects.

In the first phase the Hypport Duqm project will develop a 250MW to 500MW green hydrogen facility at SEZAD. The facility is planned to come into operation in 2026 and will respond to the global demand for green hydrogen and its derivatives.



Image for illustrative purpose

The first phase will establish a complete power-to-product value chain at utility scale, combining first-of-a-kind technology integration with economies of scale, producing competitive green hydrogen and green ammonia. Future expansions are foreseen in subsequent phases, whereby a further scaling up of the value chain will transform SEZAD into a green hydrogen hub in Oman and the wider region.

In a press statement, Dr Salim al Huthaili, CEO of OQ Alternative Energy, said that the cooperation agreement with Uniper marks a major milestone in the development of the Hypport Duqm project.

"This brings us a step closer to delivering a world-scale green hydrogen facility in SEZAD and showcases the true potential of Oman's renewable capabilities as well as the critical role that the country can play as a net energy exporter."

"This agreement will pave the way to further cooperation between OQ Alternative Energy, DEME Concessions and Uniper

moving us to the engineering phase of the project. Uniper's expertise coupled with that of DEME Concessions and OQ Alternative Energy will ensure that Hypport Duqm is provided with the necessary talent and tools to take us through the engineering phase," Huthaili said.

Luc Vandenbulcke, CEO of DEME Group, said, "With Hypport Duqm, DEME is proud of taking the initiative in the global energy transition whereby green hydrogen has been identified as one of the major energy vectors. This project will not only contribute to the challenging European ambitions to reduce CO2 and greenhouse gas emissions, but will also strengthen Oman and the sultanate's visionary future."

John Roper, Uniper's CEO Middle East, said, "The partnership with OQ and DEME in the Hypport Duqm project supports Uniper's global hydrogen strategy. With Uniper as the offtake partner for green ammonia, the partnership will benefit from the additional value added through Uniper's global commodity trading network."

Saudi Aramco confirms data leak

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Aramco said Thursday that company data had been leaked from one of its contractors, but said it had 'no impact' on the oil giant's operations. Aramco, the kingdom's cash cow and the world's biggest energy company, did not respond to questions about a possible cyber attack or any ransom demand.

'Aramco recently became

aware of the indirect release of a limited amount of company data which was held by third party contractors,' the oil giant said in a statement. 'We confirm that the release of data was not due to a breach of our systems, has no impact on our operations, and the company continues to maintain a robust cyber security posture.'

So called 'ransomware' at-

tacks are an increasingly lucrative form of digital hostage-taking, in which hackers encrypt victims' data and then demand money for restored access. Saudi Arabia, the world's largest exporter of crude oil, has been criticised for the vulnerability of its infrastructure, and has been the target of cyber attacks in the past.

In 2012, Aramco was among

the firms hit by Shamoon, an aggressive disc-wiping malware, in what is believed to be the country's worst cyber attack yet. At that time, US intelligence officials suspected the involvement of Iran, Saudi Arabia's regional rival. In 2016, Saudi media reported that cyber attacks had targeted several state institutions, as well as other vital structures.

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MUSCAT DAILY

Eurozone economy booms at fastest rate in 21 years

Brussels, Belgium - Business activity in the eurozone shot ahead at its fastest rate in 21 years in July, a closely watched survey said on Friday, as the economy went into full throttle with loosened COVID-19 restrictions.

But the survey showed that the spread of the Delta variant was beginning to chip away at business confidence, with concern that new measures could again sow chaos in the economy. The PMI composite index from economic data group IHS Markit said activity rose from 59.5 in June to a strong 60.6 in July, well above the 50-point level that indicates growth.

With the summer in full swing, Chris Williamson, chief economist at IHS Markit, said that tourism and hospitality sectors were especially responsible for pushing the economy to historic growth levels.

However, for manufacturers, supply chain delays remained a



"major concern", hurting production and pushing costs higher.

This, he warned, would likely "feed through to higher consumer prices in coming months" and make itself felt in the inflation data.

Pointing to a darker days ahead, Williamson said the delta variant posed "a major risk to the outlook".

"Not only have rising case numbers led to a slide in business optimism to the lowest since February, further COVID-19 waves around the world could lead to further global supply chain delays and hence ever higher prices."

AFP

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Iran opens oil export terminal outside strategic strait

Tehran, Iran – Iran has opened its first oil export terminal that does not require tankers to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint patrolled by warships of its arch foe the US, President Hassan Rouhani announced Thursday.

Rouhani hailed as a 'historic day' the inauguration of the new terminal located at Jask on the Gulf of Oman, which will allow tanker ships headed into the Arabian Sea and beyond to avoid the narrow waterway.



Iran's other major oil terminal is located at the Gulf port of Kharg, accessed through the Strait of Hormuz, which is less than 40km wide at its narrowest point, and where US and Iranian naval vessels have faced off in the past.

"We had a terminal and if there was a problem, our oil exports would be cut off," Rouhani acknowledged, adding that "today is a great, historic day for the Iranian nation".

Iran has been under punishing US sanctions since then president Donald Trump more than three years ago unilaterally withdrew from the landmark 2015

Sea, is the main shipping lane linking Middle East oil producers to markets in Asia, Europe and North America.

The location of the new terminal will also save tankers headed into the open seas several days' sailing time.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh proclaimed at the launch of the project that it would aid exports, and was therefore "a manifestation of the breakdown of sanctions".

The official IRNA news agency said that the new pipeline and terminal would help Tehran 'win back the Iranian oil market from rival countries'.

The project also helped ensure the country's 'energy security', because it is located 'outside the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz', IRNA added.

Given the US sanctions, Tehran is discreet about its shipments of crude to the few customers who still dare to buy it.

The United States has accused Iran of trying to circumvent the sanctions by exporting oil to countries including China, Venezuela and Syria.

AFP

US to hit debt limit on August 1, Yellen warns

Washington, US – The US government will hit the federal borrowing limit on August 1, forcing officials to take "extraordinary measures" until lawmakers increase the level, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said.

Congress suspended the debt limit in 2019 but that exemption expires in about two weeks, and Yellen warned of dire consequences if Congress fails to act.

"If Congress has not acted to suspend or increase the debt limit by Monday, August 2, 2021, Treasury will need to start taking certain additional extraordinary measures in order to prevent the United States from defaulting on its obligations," Yellen said in a letter to Democratic and Republican lawmakers in Congress.

The US national debt has soared during the COVID-19 pandemic after Washington approved three massive spending bills aimed at lessening the damage from its economic impacts.



Janet Yellen (AFP)

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) said the national debt as of the end of June was US\$28.5tn, and this year's budget deficit will be US\$3tn, second only to the record deficit in 2020.

Yellen stressed that raising the debt limit does not increase spending but simply allows Treasury to finance actions already approved by the legislature.

"The current level of debt reflects the cumulative effect of all

prior spending and tax decisions, which have been made by administrations and Congresses of both parties over time," she said.

"Failure to meet those obligations would cause irreparable harm to the US economy and the livelihoods of all Americans."

She said Treasury would stop selling State and Local Government Series securities July 30 and will not resume those sales until the limit is raised.

However, CBO says that Treasury should be able to keep paying the government's bills until October or November, after which point it would have to either delay making payments or default, which could cause economic chaos.

Raising the debt ceiling has been a contentious issue in Congress for the past several years, and a 2011 standoff caused US sovereign to lose the coveted AAA rating.

AFP

Frenzied appetite for India food delivery giant Zomato's IPO

Mumbai, India – Shares of Indian food delivery giant Zomato soared on its market debut Friday, following a ₹93.75bn (US\$1.3bn) initial public offering (IPO), the country's biggest this year. Around 30 Indian companies have announced plans to list shares this year, with start-ups attracting billions of dollars in investment even though many are yet to make a profit.

Zomato, which counts subsidiaries of Chinese tycoon Jack Ma's Ant Group and Uber among its shareholders, dominates India's booming app-based food-delivery space alongside rival Swiggy.

Its shares debuted at ₹115 on the Bombay Stock Exchange's Sensex Index, 51 per cent higher than its issue price after its IPO was subscribed 40.38 times at the end of last week.

The stock then rocketed up



Image tweeted by Zomato

80 per cent in the opening 10 minutes, taking Zomato's market capitalisation across the one trillion rupee mark.

India's economy has taken a battering during the pandemic, recording its worst annual recession since independence in 1947. But its start-up sector has been a rare bright spot.

This year alone, around 20 'unicorns' – firms valued at more than a billion dollars – have been created, including half a dozen in

four days in April.

Many are struggling to recruit qualified employees, with some reportedly offering incentives such as free motorbikes and tickets to cricket matches to lure talent. This year is set to be India's best for IPOs. Others set to list include digital payments firm Paytm, backed by Japan's Soft-Bank and Ma. Many of the start-ups, though, are loss-making.

Zomato for instance, which operates in 525 Indian cities, is yet to turn profitable and reported a loss of ₹8.16bn in the financial year ending March 2021.

"We are going to relentlessly focus on 10 years out and beyond, and are not going to alter our course for short-term profits at the cost of long-term success of the company," Zomato's chief executive Deepinder Goyal said Friday.

AFP

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The Coca-Cola Company is a global stalwart, known throughout the world and continuously among the world's top brands. We are the world's leading beverage company and we want to be a big part of Oman's story, refreshing Omanis with our vast portfolio, which includes Coca-Cola, Arwa, Sprite, Fanta and Monster, among other brands.

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شركة صناعة مواد البناء (ش.م.ع.ع)

Construction Materials Industries (S.A.O.G)

P.O. Box: 1791, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: 26752247/26752287, Fax: 26750867

MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Management of Construction Materials Industries SAOG has the honour of submitting the report on the performance of the Company for the six months ended on 30th June 2021.

Key Performance Indicators

Particulars	2021 30 – Jun RO	2020 31-Jun RO	Increase / (Decrease)	% of Increase / (Decrease)
Sales	2,090,357	1,762,046	328,311	18.63 %
Gross Profit	567,627	256,233	311,394	121.53 %
Profit/(Loss) before Tax	326,043	32,768	293,275	895.00 %
Net Profit / (Net Loss) after Tax	326,043	32,768	293,275	895.00 %
Earnings Per Share	0.0038	0.0004	0.0034	850.00 %

Particulars	2021 30 – Jun RO	2020 31-Dec RO	Increase / (Decrease)	% of Increase / (Decrease)
Total Assets	7,817,954	7,289,639	528,315	7.25 %
Total Liabilities	1,390,720	1,188,448	202,272	17.01 %
Net Assets	6,427,234	6,101,191	326,043	5.34 %
Total Number of Shares	85,000,000	85,000,000	----	----
Net Assets Per Share	0.076	0.072	0.004	5.55 %

“UN AUDITED” STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT JUNE 30, 2021

ASSETS	2021 JUNE RO	2020 DEC RO
Current Assets:		
Cash and bank balances	871,198	299,162
Trade and other receivables	696,348	786,439
Inventories	1,283,341	1,279,482
Total Current Assets	2,850,887	2,365,083
Non-current Assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	4,486,854	4,591,904
Right of use of Assets	480,213	332,652
Total Non-current Assets	4,967,067	4,924,556
TOTAL ASSETS	7,817,954	7,289,639
Current Liabilities:		
Term loan – current portion	75,795	111,197
Short term facilities	163	386
Trade and other payables	532,831	441,343
Current Portion of Lease Liability	44,413	28,718
Total Current Liabilities	653,202	581,644
Non-current Liabilities:		
Term Loan	---	19,387
Employees service benefits	119,694	107,874
Non-Current portion of Lease Liability	459,927	321,646
Provision for decommissioning	13,268	13,268
Deferred Tax Liability	144,629	144,629
Total Non-current Liabilities	737,518	606,804
Total Liabilities	1,390,720	1,188,448
Shareholders' Equity:		
Share capital	8,500,000	8,500,000
Legal reserve	302,394	302,394
Accumulated losses	(2,375,160)	(2,701,203)
Total Shareholders' Equity	6,427,234	6,101,191
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY	7,817,954	7,289,639
Net Assets Per Share [face value RO.0.100 each]	0.076	0.072

“UN AUDITED” STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE SECOND QUARTER ENDED ON JUNE 30, 2021

	June 2021 RO.	June 2020 RO.
Sales	2,090,357	1,762,046
Cost of sales	(1,522,730)	(1,505,813)
Gross Profit	567,627	256,233
Other income	2,250	5,870
General and administrative expenses	(185,043)	(165,645)
Selling and distribution expenses	(41,448)	(48,331)
Interest – bank facilities (net)	(2,722)	(9,998)
Interest – on lease liability (IFRS16)	(14,621)	(5,361)
Profit/(Loss) for the period before taxation	326,043	32,768
Taxation provision	(---)	(---)
Profit/(Loss) for the Period	326,043	32,768
Earnings/(Loss) per share [basic and diluted]	0.0038	0.0004

Note: The complete accounts either in English or Arabic will be sent to any shareholder by mail within 7 days of receipt of request

Oman Air operates two separate flights with fully vaccinated crews on same day

Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, operated two regularly scheduled passenger flights with fully vaccinated crews to two separate domestic destinations in the sultanate on July 12.

Oman Air Flight 931, a Boeing 737-800, departed Muscat at 7.30am on July 12 for Khasab, a popular port city on northern Oman's breathtaking Musandam peninsula. The flight was piloted by Captain Suhib Mohamed al Barwani and First Officer Waleed al Jadeedi, comprising a cabin crew of four.

Oman Air Flight 907, a Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, departed Muscat at 2.55pm the same day for Salalah in Oman's southern Dhofar province, a destination popular with tourists for its spectacular beaches and lush, green landscape during monsoon season (Khareef).

The flight was piloted by Captain Sayyid Haitham Thabit al busaidi and First Officer H H Sayyid Tariq Numer al Said, comprising a cabin crew of eight.

Captain Nasser al Salmi, chief operating officer at Oman Air, explained, "Oman Air has an exceptional track record when it comes to operational health and



safety measures. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have consistently prioritised our frontline workers and valued guests to ensure that every journey with Oman Air is undertaken with the full reassurance that exceptional pre-flight and on-board safety measures are in place. Vaccinated crews are an integral part of this safety-first mindset and especially significant at a time when our flight frequencies continue to increase and as we resume key routes to destinations around the world."

Oman Air adheres to all traveller restrictions established by the country's Civil Aviation Authority with regard to COVID-19 and guests are invited to visit caa.gov.om to ensure they are prepared to comply with requirements to enter and travel within the sultanate.

Both Oman Air and its Holidays division proudly display the Safe Travels Stamp from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), and in March this year, the airline received both the Skytrax 5-Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating and Skytrax 5-Star COVID-19 Lounge Safety Rating at Muscat International Airport.

MEC workshop discusses patent application

Middle East College (MEC) recently hosted a two-day virtual workshop entitled 'WIPO virtual study on International Patent Application' organised by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

International speakers representing WIPO from Geneva, Switzerland, discussed various topics related to intellectual property rights. Research scholars, postgraduate students, faculty, and Technology Transfer officers participated in the event.

The main aim of this event was to involve the research community in discussions of commercialisation and the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). The workshop participants were familiarised with the e-filing process of international patent applications with real-time procedures and gave an overview of the Omani receiving office and PCT.

The event was a great success with more than 110 attendees joining this event from various higher educational institutions in Oman.

The event concluded with identifying the upcoming WIPO activities which will be carried out in collaboration with other organisations through their Technology Transfer Offices. These activities will also focus on spreading awareness about international patent applications and commercialisation of innovative ideas, among the general public and entrepreneurs.

Sony's Bravia XR TV with cognitive processor redefines immersive experience for viewers

Sony Middle East & Africa has announced that viewers in the region can now enjoy a much more immersive and realistic experience thanks to the groundbreaking cognitive intelligence of its award-winning Bravia XR televisions. The new Bravia XR TV, powered by the Cognitive Processor XR, caters to the growing demand from at-home audiences for 4K and HD content, and images that faithfully convey the creators' intent.



Shintaro Hayatani, head of Marketing, Sony Middle East & Africa, said, "We are proud to bring the Cognitive Processor XR, the brain of the Bravia TV and a world first, to the region. In recent times, as we spend more time at home, we relying on the television to keep us entertained with high-quality, well produced content. Responding to the demand from our customers, Sony has innovated yet again with the game-changing Cognitive Processor XR. It can intelligently detect and analyse each object in the picture resulting in exceptional detail and contrast for a more realistic picture that represents the directors' intent. It makes for a revolutionary TV viewing experience."

Powered by the Cognitive Processor XR, the brain of the new Bravia XR, the TVs use a completely new processing method that goes beyond conventional AI, designed to replicate the ways humans see and hear. When we see objects, we unconsciously focus on certain points. Cognitive Processor XR, powered by cognitive intelligence, knows

where that focal point is by dividing the screen into numerous zones and detecting where the "focal point" is in the picture. While conventional Artificial Intelligence (AI) can only detect and analyse picture elements like colour, contrast and detail individually, the new processor can cross-analyse an array of elements at once, just as our brains do. By doing so, each element is adjusted to its best final outcome, in conjunction with each other, so everything is synchronised and lifelike - something that conventional AI cannot achieve.

Cognitive Processor XR can also analyse the sound position in the signal so the sound matches precisely with what's on the screen. In addition, it upconverts any sound to 3D surround sound, to deliver supreme realism with an immersive soundscape. It

learns, analyses and understands unprecedented amounts of data and intelligently optimises every pixel, frame and scene for the most lifelike picture and sound Sony has ever delivered.

The Bravia XR models come with Google TV, offering a brand-new entertainment experience that brings together movies, shows, live TV and more from apps and subscriptions designed to create the most immersive visual media experience possible. It offers the Netflix Calibrated Mode specially developed to enjoy Netflix originals and reproduce the same picture quality on a TV as on a studio evaluation master. All Bravia XR TVs feature HDMI 2.1 and e-ARC compatibility, including 4K 120fps. The Bravia XR TV also learns, analyses, and understands unprecedented amounts of data.



Team Abu Dhabi crowned World Endurance champions

Team Abu Dhabi secured their first major powerboat racing crown of the season as Rashed al Qemzi, Thani al Qemzi and Mansoor al Mansoori combined to win the UIM World Endurance Championships in Augustów, Poland.

Third place on Lake Necko to add to their opening race victory 24 hours earlier was enough to clinch the title for the all-Emirati crew in Abu Dhabi 1 as team manager Guido Cappellini's two-boat strategy worked to perfection.

Italian Tullio Abbate, Norway's Marit Strømøy, Monaco's Giacomo Sacchi and Spain's Hector Sanz recovered from mechanical disaster to comfortably win race two, but had to settle for third spot in the championships.

Ensuring a repeat of Team Abu Dhabi's one-two success in 2019, the all-Emirati crew of Rashed al Tayer, Majed al Mansoori, Rashed al Remeithi and Mohamed al Mehairbi finished runners up on the day, and in the championships, in Abu Dhabi 2.

After Abbate's first day problems which resulted in a fourth place finish, the Al Qemzi cousins and Team Abu Dhabi new recruit Al Mansoori knew that only a major mechanical failure or driver error could cost them the world crown.

They were happy to settle for third podium place as Abbate - a member of the winning Abu Dhabi crew when the event was last staged two years ago - Strømøy, Sacchi and Sanz pulled away to complete 246 laps by the six-hour mark.

A five-lap penalty for a driver infringement during refuelling still left them clear of Al Tayer - also part of the 2019 championship-winning team - Al Mansoori, Al Remeithi and Al Mehairbi, who clocked up

236 laps.

First race winners Abu Dhabi 1 were just two laps further away. They had started the day in complete control of the championship, but were well aware that a technical issue or a single lapse in concentration could prove costly.

No-one understood this better than Rashed al Qemzi, the two-times F2 world champion, who was at the wheel and leading in this event in 2018 when the Abu Dhabi boat was halted by a sudden electrical failure a few minutes before the finish.

The triumph means that Cappellini has now delivered 12 world championship titles to Abu Dhabi International Marine Sports Club since taking charge in February 2015.

This was also the first time in the championships that Team Abu Dhabi had been represented by a full Emirati driver line-up.

Infiniti QX60 available on special price

Infiniti Oman has announced a special price on the Infiniti QX60, the seven-passenger crossover that offers world class technology, comfort, space and an array of features which underline its position as a luxury vehicle. Customers purchasing Infiniti QX60 during the offer period are eligible for a special price of RO16,900.

Infiniti QX60's innovative design gives it both luxurious versatility and visual appeal, besides its improved interior design with a suite of assistive and intuitive technologies provide versatility precisely tailored to the needs of every guest.



A senior spokesperson at Infiniti Oman said, "The latest offering gives customers the opportunity a chance to buy their dream Infiniti QX60 at an affordable price. Featuring superior interior and exterior design with a collection of assistive and in-built technologies, the Infiniti QX60 which is a fantastic three-row luxury crossover stays ahead of the curve by bringing a unique offering to the segment. Only something stunning and intelligent could bring life and luxury together."

Amazing three-row luxury crossover

Infiniti QX60 is one such car where family-first versatility and generous comforts form a vibrant collaboration. There is no other seven-passenger crossover like this incredible model.

While it impresses auto enthusiasts with its array of features, Infiniti QX60's intelligent technology, advanced performance, and leading-edge crafts-

manship has brought it new fans too. Inside Infiniti QX60 rich leather appointments are naturally soft yet durable enough for beach days.

A dual-screen rear entertainment system keeps kids happy, while drivers can enjoy music or conversation up front. When a premium crossover is as practical as it is elegant the owners get the best.

Dynamic lines

The dynamic lines and muscular shapes are the best part of Infiniti QX60. Owners can sense the possibilities from the rugged roof rails up top and the LED signature headlights and taillights, through to the 20-inch wheels at ground level. One can feel the power from a 3.5lt V6 engine with 295 hp transform to confidence with added traction of intelligent All-Wheel Drive that adapts instantly to changing conditions.

Easy access

Choose the QX60 and one can

load and unload passengers of all sizes in three rows. A tilting and sliding second row creates a wide opening for easy third-row access. If second-row passengers need more leg room, the seat slides back for an extra 5.5 inches of space. To fit tall passengers in the third row you have to just slide the seat forward and you will gain valuable inches.

Motion-Activated Liftgate

With QX60 one has to simply swing your foot under the rear bumper and the Motion-Activated Liftgate automatically opens. Enjoy hands-free entry as well as the convenience of power return for folding third-row seats. With the push of a button, seat-backs easily return to their upright position.

Advanced automotive technology

As automotive technology becomes more advanced, Infiniti QX60 has found new ways to

anticipate the dangers around you.

When you select the ProACTIVE Package, you get Infiniti world-first technologies that automatically respond to vehicles you might have missed. Technologies like Backup Collision Intervention, which alerts you to and helps brake for crossing traffic detected when reversing. Blind Spot Intervention which uses sensors to help detect cars in your blind spot area and can intervene to help avoid a collision.

Room for seven personalities

Optimism is everywhere in the QX60. Created for family and friends, it welcomes all possibilities. It brings three rows of space and the versatility to configure seats to individual needs.

Seven seats are a good fit for bold and imaginative personalities.

Colours

It is available in majestic white (QAB), deep bordeaux (NBM), mocha almond (CAS), black obsidian (KH3), graphite shadow (KAD), liquid platinum (K23), hermosa blue (BWS), imperial black (GAL).

A 360 view

See all around your QX60 with the ProACTIVE Package. An Infiniti world first, the Around View Monitor with Moving Object Detection uses four cameras to give you one virtual composite 360 view from above as you park. Combined with the Front and Rear Sonar System, the system makes it easy to manoeuvre in tight spaces.

Jeep celebrates 80 years; builds an electric present and future

On July 15, 1941, the former Willys-Overland Co signed a contract with the US War Department to begin production of the first military Jeep vehicle. Eighty years later, the Jeep brand thrives around the world with a product line-up that continues to expand into new segments, a devoted community of global customers and the utilisation of 4xe electric vehicle technology as the natural evolution of 80 years of capability leadership

"We're celebrating our 80th anniversary by continuing to move upward and forward," said Christian Meunier, Jeep Brand chief executive officer.

"We're expanding our portfolio into new segments, with the 3-row Jeep Grand Cherokee L, while setting a strong foothold in the premium SUV market, with our all-new Wagoneer and Grand Wagoneer. Next in our exciting global product pipeline is the introduction of the all-new Jeep Grand Cherokee, which will be equipped, for the first time, with plug-in-hybrid 4xe technology. We are fully committed towards a vision of zero emission future, and by 2025 we will be offering a zero-emission fully electric Jeep 4xe in every SUV segment."

To celebrate its anniversary and to honour this zero emission vision, the Jeep brand posted on the Jeep brand YouTube channel the 80th Anniversary version of the Jeep Life Electrified video, which debuted during the 2021 Stellantis' EV day. The video showcases the unique nature of the electrification of the Jeep brand through a couple's love story. The piece intertwines Jeep brand vehicles, future technology and the Jeep global community, to establish a promise for a brighter future ahead. The piece features Bastille's new song, 'Give Me The Future'.

"We are committed to make Jeep the greenest and most exciting SUV brand. The electrification of the Jeep lineup will allow commuters to travel solely on electric power, delivering an efficient and fun on-road experience and offering an ability to enjoy even more off-road capability in nearly complete silence," said Meunier.

12 key moments in 80 years

Below is a list of some of the most important moments for the Jeep brand from those eight memorable decades.

1. 4xe is the new 4x4
The evolution of the Jeep brand accelerated in this 80th anniversary year with the arrival of 4xe,



the Jeep brand's exclusive and proprietary utilisation of electrification applications to develop and produce the most capable, fun and advanced 4x4 vehicles in the world, including the all-new Jeep Grand Cherokee, which will be introduced at the 2021 New York International Auto Show.

As the icon of the brand, the Jeep Wrangler 4xe is leading the brand's electrification offensive. Jeep Wrangler's Trail Rated 4x4 capability is made possible by a sealed waterproof battery pack and electronics that can perform in the toughest conditions. Powered by a 2.0lt I4 DOHC direct-injection turbo PHEV, the 4xe sports impressive 375 horsepower and 470 pound-feet (637 Nm) of instant torque. With 49 MPGe, a driving range of 370 miles, acceleration from 0-60 mph in just six seconds and E-Select driving modes, this is the most capable, powerful, efficient, eco-friendly and technically advanced Wrangler ever, which, because of its quiet electric power, can now more fully immerse its owners in nature drives.

2. The new American premium

The all-new 2022 Wagoneer and Grand Wagoneer take the premium SUV into uncharted territories of style, comfort and adventure. The eight-passenger Wagoneer and Grand Wagoneer represent a premium extension of the Jeep brand, wrapped in a sophisticated and authentic new design. They build on a rich heritage of premium American craftsmanship, heritage and refinement, while delivering a best-in-class customer experience with a suite of premium ownership perks that go beyond simple VIP service.

3. Global expansion
During the last decade, the Jeep brand has expanded its global product offering with new name-

plates such as the compact Jeep Renegade and the all-new Jeep Gladiator, the most capable Jeep truck ever. The brand also expanded its production footprint, allowing customers in markets such as Europe, Brazil, India and China to enjoy locally-assembled Jeep brand vehicles.

4. The ultimate in traction and handling

In 1999, two new four-wheel-drive systems were introduced. The Quadra-Trac II system offered an innovative system that transfers torque rear to front and side to side, meaning drive torque is immediately available to all four wheels - assuring ultimate traction and handling at all times and under all circumstances without driver input. When Quadra-Trac was combined with the new Vari-Lok front and rear progressive axles, which deliver far more torque to the wheel with better grip, the result was the new Quadra-Drive system.

5. Jeep Grand Cherokee literally breaks through in Detroit

On January 7, 1992, at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Chrysler president Bob Lutz drove the first new Jeep Grand Cherokee ZJ off the Jefferson production line, along the streets of the city and through the glass front door of the Cobo Hall, signifying the breakthrough premium SUV.

6. The birth of a legend

The arrival of the Jeep Wrangler in 1986 answered the public's desire for a compact SUV with more creature comforts. It featured a lower center of gravity, improved handling and a more comfortable interior. It set the precedent for one of the most beloved - and ca-

pable - Jeep vehicles of all time. Although the Wrangler shared the familiar open-body profile of the CJ-7, it contained few common parts with its famous predecessor. Mechanically, the Wrangler had more in common with the Cherokee. On Aug. 5, 1987, just over a year after the introduction of the Wrangler, American Motors Corporation was sold to the Chrysler Corporation and the popular Jeep Brand became a part of Chrysler's Jeep/Eagle Division.

7. The world's first compact SUV - Cherokee

The energy crisis of 1979 spurred the development of a smaller 4x4. The 1984 Jeep Cherokee XJ was designed from the ground up and was the world's first compact SUV. Using a unibody structure, the vehicle was much smaller than its predecessor yet retained 90 percent of its interior space.

8. Wagoneer creates the original premium SUV

In 1963, Jeep Wagoneer was the original premium SUV that combined four-wheel drive with an automatic transmission. Featuring options that were, up until then, only available in high-end passenger cars, the Wagoneer changed what people expected of a four-wheel-drive vehicle. This broadened the market and appeal of 4x4 vehicles and created the modern SUV, one that was advertised as "All-New, All-Jeep."

9. Jeep Jamboree - the 'Granddaddy'

In 1953, the first Jeep Jamboree took place at the Georgetown Divide in California, attracting 55 vehicles and 155 participants. This event, organised by Mark Smith, demonstrated just how much owners of Jeep brand ve-

hicles love getting together for fun, camaraderie and 4x4 adventure. While Jeep Jamboree proudly holds events on trails all over the United States, one of the most popular is the Rubicon Trail, which traverses the Sierra Nevada mountain range in California -- arguably the most gruelling 17 miles of off-roading adventure anywhere.

10. The first SUV

In 1946, Willys-Overland introduced the industry's first all-steel-body station wagon - the Willys Wagon - but the real groundbreaking news was in 1949 when four-wheel drive was added to the wagon to create the first SUV. Capable of carrying seven passengers in comfort, hauling cargo and tackling even the toughest trail, the Willys Wagon was a game changer. The Brooks Stevens-designed Wagon was in production for nearly 20 years--longer than any other contemporary American automobile of its day.

11. A Jeep 4x4 for the masses

The 1945 CJ-2A became the world's first light-duty four-wheel-drive vehicle available in mass quantity to the general public. While the CJ-2A shared the basic architecture of the MB, there were several notable improvements. These included a fold-down tailgate, side-mounted spare tire, larger headlights and a power take-off unit.

12. An icon is born in wartime

In 1941, Willys-Overland was awarded the contract to be the primary supplier of the new 1/4-tonne military vehicle by the US government. Over 350,000 of these Jeep MBs would be produced by 1945 and would be the basis for the civilian Jeep CJ that would start production even before the war was over.

National Finance awarded 'Best SME Finance Solution'

National Finance, Oman's leading finance company, was recently recognised with the 'Best SME Finance Solution 2021' award by Capital Finance International (CFI.co). The accolade came to recognise National Finance's sterling efforts in supporting the development of the local SME ecosystem and its tailor-made financial solutions for this category.

National Finance's easy, fast and flexible solutions dedicated for SMEs, reflects the company's belief in the significance of the SME sector and their role in the socio-economic development of the sultanate. Over the past three decades, National Finance has directed its resources to meet clients' requirements and fulfil their aspirations. The company's efforts come in line with the national priorities that aim to stimulate the economy, ultimately achieving the objectives of the Oman Vision 2040, seeking to create a diverse and sustainable roadmap for overall progress.



"We are proud of this accomplishment. This award serves as testimony to the company's endeavors toward uplifting this vital sector by supporting SMEs and encouraging Omanis to enter the field of entrepreneurship. National Finance will constantly strive to add value to local talents and support them in achieving their business goals," Robert Pan-cras, CEO, National Finance said.

National Finance, established in 1987, has built a reputation as the market leader trusted by thousands of customers across the sultanate. National Finance offers a wide range of products targeting both individual customers and SMEs.

beIN Sports delivers Olympic coverage

beIN Media Group, the global sports and entertainment broadcaster and its flagship sports channel beIN Sports is exclusively broadcasting the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020 from July 23 to August 8 across the 24 countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with 3,000 hours of planned coverage - the biggest worldwide.

The 32nd Summer Olympic Games 2020 - held in the Japanese capital of Tokyo across 43 venues - will feature an astonishing 33 sports, 50 disciplines, 339 events, and 5 new sports (baseball/softball, karate, skateboarding, climbing, and surfing).

beIN will provide its viewers and subscribers with extensive and exclusive coverage, providing approximately 3,000 hours of premium live events and supporting programmes.

beIN Sports will broadcast more than 97 per cent of the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020 across 15 channels in both Arabic and English - rebranding its beIN XTRA 1 and 2 to dedicated beIN Olympics 1 and beIN Olympics 2 channels - in addition to over 14 hours of daily news bulletins and programmes on the beIN Sports News Channel and a Free to Air obligation of 400 hours.

The specially curated studio will give fans an inside scoop into



the world of professional sports, with 41 commentators and 10+ world-class international and Arab sports analysts and guests, such as Areej Sleem, Mohammad Kidan Barhome, Jamal Mahfoudh al Hasani, Assia Abdulla, Bassel Tabbal, and Mouhib Ben Chouikha.

Commenting on beIN Sports' coverage of the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020, Duncan Walkinshaw, acting director of Programs for beIN MENA, said, "beIN is thrilled to help bring the world together through broadcasting the highly anticipated Tokyo Olympic Games 2020. Significant planning has gone into showcasing the most diverse, inspiring, and celebratory stories that sport has to offer through our comprehensive coverage, and we're set to deliver a truly exceptional Olympics viewing experience to our millions of viewers and subscribers in MENA".

To enjoy a world of sports and entertainment on beIN, please visit www.bein.com/en/subscribe/.

Gulf Air continues to operate 80% of its pre-pandemic destinations

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, begins the summer season with 80 per cent of its pre-pandemic destinations as it continues to resume operations and restore services to cities of its original 2019 destination network.

The airline has also announced that it has successfully launched all of its seasonal destinations for the summer of 2021 with direct flights to Mykonos and Santorini in Greece, Malaga in Spain and Alexandria and Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt as well as recently resuming Tbilisi in Georgia. The airline currently flies to and from Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Kuwait, Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Medina, Muscat, Cairo, Amman, Casablanca, London, Paris, Frankfurt, Athens, Istanbul, Tbilisi, Larnaca, Bangkok,

Manila, Singapore, Dhaka, Colombo, the Maldives and several destinations in India and Pakistan.

Gulf Air's acting chief executive officer Captain Waleed al Alawi commented, "We at Gulf Air are very excited and proud to restore 80 per cent of our 2019 destinations network amidst the restrictions and continuous updates from each and every destination we fly to. The national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain never stopped flying during the peak of the pandemic making it one of the most experienced and safest airlines to fly during these times and today we are growing closer to our full network."

He added, "We are working on frequencies and connectivity to offer more choices and more convenience to our passengers



and we are confident that the months ahead will feature more milestones and success stories to tell."

Recently, Gulf Air announced the launch of point to point

flights beyond its Bahrain International Airport hub allowing the airline to expand its operations to new destinations as well as extending passenger services to new markets. Gulf Air launched

flights between Athens and Larnaca allowing passengers from either location to buy tickets and commute between both Mediterranean cities. Similarly, it later launched flights between

Bangkok and Singapore where passengers can buy tickets to fly between both Far Eastern capitals.

Back in May, the airline announced that all its flights would be operated by 100 per cent vaccinated crew including pilots and flight attendants. The airline has started its internal vaccination campaign for its operating crew and front line staff since December 2020 and is proud to be one of the first airlines in the world to be able to provide peace of mind to all passengers flying to any destination of its growing network.

Moreover, recently Gulf Air announced offering complimentary COVID-19 travel insurance coverage to all ticket holders including health and quarantine expenses in the unexpected circumstances of being diagnosed

with or contracting COVID-19 during passengers' journeys.

All tickets booked, including redemption tickets, on Gulf Air flights for travel starting from May 10 until November 10 are automatically covered with COVID-19 insurance at no extra cost. All passengers, according to the newly announced insurance policy and in the unfortunate event of being diagnosed with COVID-19 while traveling abroad, will be covered for repatriation assistance, medical and hospitals costs abroad as well as quarantine accommodation costs. Coverage is applicable on Gulf Air operated flights with Gulf Air ticket numbers that are purchased through the airline's website, the Gulf Air Contact Centre, Gulf Air's sales offices or travel agents.

Iraqi PM to meet Joe Biden at White House

Mustafa al Kadhemi will discuss a total US troop withdrawal from his country

Baghdad, Iraq - Weakened by pro-Iran factions at home, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi will meet with US President Joe Biden on Monday to discuss a possible full US troop withdrawal from his country.

The White House talks between the two allies come just a week after a deadly attack claimed by the Islamic State group, despite Baghdad declaring the Sunni extremists defeated over three years ago.

Kadhemi finds himself backed into a corner by the influence of Iraq's other main ally - neighbouring Iran, which has long seen the United States as its arch-enemy.

Despite shared enmity on the part of the US and Shiite Iran toward a resilient IS, Kadhemi is under intense pressure from pro-Tehran armed factions who demand the withdrawal of 2,500 US troops still deployed in Iraq.

Operating under the Hashed al Shaabi, a paramilitary network whose tentacles extend deep into the state, these Shiite factions stand accused of carrying out around 50 rocket and drone attacks this year against US interests in Iraq.

"If there is no significant announcement on the withdrawal



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (right) and Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein leave after a press meet at the State Department on Friday (AFP)

of troops, I fear that the pro-Iran groups may... increase attacks on the US forces," Iraqi researcher Sajad Jiyad told AFP.

Such concerns are given weight by the leader of one such paramilitary group Asaib Ahl al Haq, who recently warned that 'resistance operations will continue until all American forces have left Iraqi territory'.

Most of the US soldiers, deployed in 2014 to lead an international military coalition against the IS, left under Biden's predecessor Donald Trump, who

hosted Kadhemi at the White House last August.

The troops that remain are officially classed as advisors and trainers for Iraq's army and counter-terrorism units.

'Enduring US presence'

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, already in Washington for several days, has assured Iraqi media that 'the talks will successfully establish a timetable for the withdrawal of American forces'.

But US media outlets have only pointed to a 'redefinition' of the troops' mission.

Ramzy Mardini, an Iraq specialist at the University of Chicago's Pearson Institute, believes there will be no 'radical change' in the US position.

The Biden-Kadhemi meeting may cosmetically be 'shaped' to help the Iraqi premier alleviate domestic pressures, 'but the reality on the ground will reflect the status quo and an enduring US presence', he said.

Mardini points to 'political

costs' for Biden were he to authorise a full withdrawal of US troops, stemming from the catastrophic 'legacy' of the 2011 withdrawal, which created a vacuum exploited by IS during their lightning 2014 offensive.

It took a three-year military onslaught, heavily supported by a US-led coalition at the invitation of Iraq, to wrest back all the urban centres the Sunni extremists seized.

"The last thing that the US would want would be to quit Iraq and find themselves a few years

DRONE ATTACK ON IRAQ BASE HOSTING US TROOPS

Baghdad, Iraq - A drone attack has been carried out on a military base in Iraqi Kurdistan that hosts American troops, without causing any casualties, the US-led coalition said on Saturday.

'An unmanned aerial system impacted a coalition base in Kurdistan [in the early hours of Friday],' coalition spokesman US Colonel Wayne Marotto said in a statement.

"There were no casualties and no damage as a result of the attack," he said, adding "the United States and coalition forces will stay vigilant and maintain the inherent right to self-defence."

Iraqi Kurdish media outlets said the attack targeted a base at Al-Harir, 70km northeast of Erbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdistan region.

It was the latest in a spate of attacks on US military and

diplomatic facilities in Iraq, blamed on pro-Iranian armed groups within a state-sponsored paramilitary force.

The US still has around 2,500 troops deployed in Iraq, out of 3,500 men in the international coalition set up in 2014 to fight the Islamic State group. Their departure is demanded by the pro-Iranian factions, which have been blamed for some 50 attacks against US interests in Iraq since the beginning of the year.

The Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee on Friday threatened to continue the attacks unless the US withdraws all its forces and ends the 'occupation'. Most of the American troops deployed in the coalition, which helped defeat IS in Iraq in 2017, were withdrawn under former US president Donald Trump.

AFP

Palestinian shot in clashes with Israeli troops dies

Jerusalem - A Palestinian teenager has died after being shot during clashes with Israeli soldiers at a protest over illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian authorities said on Saturday.

Seventeen-year-old Mohammed Munir al Tamimi, who suffered gunshot wounds, died later in hospital, the Palestinian Health Ministry said, a day after the violence in the flashpoint Palestinian village of Beita.

The Red Crescent said 320 Palestinians were injured in the clashes, including 21 by live fire, 68 by rubber-tipped bullets and many others by tear gas.

Hundreds of Palestinians had gathered in the afternoon in the village of Beita, a hot spot in recent months, to protest against the wildcat settlement of Eviatar, located nearby.

The Israeli army said its soldiers had responded 'with riot dispersal means' after Palestini-



Relatives comfort Ruba al Tamimi as she mourns her son Muhammad during his funeral in Deir Nizam on Saturday (AFP)

ans hurled rocks at them. Israel said two of its soldiers were 'lightly injured' in the violence.

Beita has been the scene of frequent unrest since May, when dozens of Israeli families arrived and began building the settlement on a hilltop near Nablus in defiance of Israeli and international law.

AFP

US airstrike on Al Shabaab in Somalia

Washington, US - The US military conducted an airstrike in Somalia on Friday against Al Qaeda affiliated Al Shabaab extremists, the second in four days after a six-month hiatus, the Pentagon said.

The US military command for Africa (AFRICOM), 'conducted an airstrike against Al Shabaab in the vicinity of Qeycad' in Galmudug province 500km north of the capital Mogadishu, Pentagon spokeswoman Cindi King said.

The strike was carried out by a drone and there were no US forces on the ground, King said, adding no further details could be provided.

The strike was the second carried out by the US military in Somalia in a week, and only the second under US President Joe Biden, who took office in January this year. On Tuesday, AFRICOM targeted Al Shabaab extremists near Galkayo, northwest of Qeycad.

As soon as Biden arrived at



The US military command for Africa conducted the airstrike against Al Shabaab near Qeycad (AFP)

the White House, he limited the use of drones against extremist groups outside US theatres of war. That reversed the policy of his predecessor Donald Trump, who had given the military carte blanche in countries such as Somalia and Libya.

King noted 'US forces are au-

thorized to conduct strikes in support of combatant commander-designated partner forces under the 2001 AUMF', referring to the Authorisation for the Use of Military Force, whose authority US presidents have relied on to launch operations against armed groups.

Last month, the US House of Representatives voted to repeal a 2002 use-of-force measure that gave the US military the legal authority to invade Iraq and has since been used to justify military action against groups linked to Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Supporters of repealing the 2002 AUMF argue it has long outlived its purpose and that Congress should reclaim its war-making powers. No elected officials have indicated there is any immediate plan to reverse the 2001 measure.

Defence Department spokesman John Kirby said last week that AFRICOM commander General Stephen Townsend has 'the authority to act in defence of our forces and our Somali partners'.

The recent strikes 'underscore the threat that Al Shabaab poses in Somalia, and in certainly the Horn of Africa', Kirby said.

"That threat remains significant, and we're going to continue to be vigilant about it."

Drone strikes had multiplied during Trump's term, going from 11 in Somalia in 2015, to 64 in 2019 and 54 in 2020, according to the non-governmental group Airwars.

AFP

Iran's Supreme Leader urges water protesters not to fall prey to 'enemy'

Tehran, Iran - Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Friday warned residents of the drought-hit southwest not to give ammunition to the 'enemy', after days of protests that have seen at least four killed.

Khuzestan, Iran's main oil-producing region and the wealthiest of the country's 31 provinces, has been gripped by drought since March, with protests erupting in several towns and cities since July 15.

Khamenei acknowledged the seriousness of the water problem and said residents of Khuzestan were not to blame for expressing their discontent, but he urged them to be cautious.

"The enemy will try to use any

tool against the revolution, the nation and the people's interests, so we must be careful not to give him any pretext," Khamenei said, in remarks published on his official website.

Addressing residents of Khuzestan, he added, "The people have expressed their discontent, but we can't criticise them for that."

"The water problem is not a minor one, particularly in Khuzestan's hot climate."

Iranian media and officials have said at least three people have been killed, including a police officer and a protester, accusing 'opportunists' and 'rioters' of shooting at demonstrators and security forces.



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the capital Tehran on Friday (AFP)

State television said Friday a fourth person was killed the previous night and two wounded during 'rioting' in Aligudarz, in the western province of Lorestan.

'Pretext'

It said people had taken to the streets 'on the pretext of the water problems in Khuzestan'.

"Shots were fired by unknown

elements," the broadcaster said, adding that the security forces were deployed to tackle the situation.

It was the first time local

media had reported protests or casualties outside Khuzestan since the water protests broke out last week.

Farsi-language media based abroad have broadcast videos they said were of protests in several towns and cities in Khuzestan, showing hundreds of people marching and chanting slogans against the authorities while surrounded by anti-riot police.

AFP could not verify the authenticity of the videos.

Global rights watchdogs Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch meanwhile alleged that Iranian security forces have used unlawful and excessive force to quell the protests in Khuzestan.

Amnesty said on Friday at least eight protesters and bystanders, including a teenage boy, have been killed in the unrest. Khuzestan is home to a large Arab minority, and its people regularly complain of marginalisation.

In 2019, the province was a hotspot of anti-government protests that also shook other areas of Iran.

Over the years, blistering summer heatwaves and seasonal sandstorms blowing in from Saudi Arabia and neighbouring Iraq have dried up Khuzestan's once fertile plains. Scientists say climate change amplifies droughts.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Australians clash with police at march against lockdown

Sydney, Australia - Thousands marched through Australia's two biggest cities in anti-lockdown protests on Saturday, sparking violent clashes with police in Sydney.

Dozens of protesters were arrested after an unauthorised march flouted public health orders in Sydney, while several confrontations with police broke out during the hours-long rally.

Officers were pelted with pot plants and bottles of water as opponents of Sydney's month-long stay-at-home order took to the streets in numbers.

Thousands also crowded several streets in Melbourne after gathering outside the state parliament in the early afternoon. The largely maskless protesters were flouting rules on non-essential travel and public gatherings, a day after authorities suggested the restrictions could remain in place until October.

'I am utterly disgusted by the illegal protesters in the city today whose selfish actions have compromised the safety of all of us,' the premier of Sydney's state of New South Wales, Gladys Berejiklian, said in a statement. 'The protesters have shown utter contempt for their fellow citizens who are currently doing it tough.'

Hundreds of police responded to the Sydney protest,



A pedestrian walks through a street of Melbourne, during the ninth day of the lockdown on Saturday (AFP)

with several demonstrators pulled from the crowd in handcuffs by officers. Police said they issued nearly 100 fines and arrested 57 people.

Police in Melbourne said six people were arrested.

New South Wales Police Minister David Elliott said a team of detectives would be scouring footage to identify and charge as many people as possible in the coming days.

"What we saw today in Sydney is unfortunately something that we've seen in cities that we all shake our head at," Elliott told media after the protest.

"It's quite clear that you know, Sydney isn't immune from morons as well."

He also said he expected the gathering to drive a spike in COVID-19 cases and urged all those who attended to get tested and isolate.

Organisers had dubbed the protest a 'freedom' rally and publicised it on social media pages frequently used to spread vaccine disinformation and conspiracy theories.

Attendees carried signs and banners reading 'Wake up Australia' and 'Drain the Swamp' - echoing messages seen in similar demonstrations overseas.

Helicopters buzzed above the streets of Sydney, a city of over

40mn cases in LatAm, Caribbean

Montevideo, Uruguay - The number of COVID-19 cases surpassed 40mn on Saturday in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since the first coronavirus infections were recorded last year, the number of cases in the region has reached 40,073,507, according to an AFP count based on official data as of 0200 GMT on Saturday.

The number of deaths has reached 1,353,335.

AFP

five million people that is struggling to contain an outbreak of the Delta variant.

The state of New South Wales reported 163 new infections Saturday to bring its total in the current outbreak to nearly 2,000. After escaping much of the early pandemic unscathed, around half of Australia's 25mn people are now in lockdown across several cities.

AFP



Patients wait on benches in a hallway of the Rafik Hariri University Hospital, in Lebanon's capital Beirut on Friday (AFP)

'Lebanon can't handle next wave'

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanon's deepening economic crisis has piled pressure on hospitals, leaving them ill-equipped to face any new wave of the coronavirus, a top hospital director has warned.

Already struggling with shortages of medicine and an exodus of staff abroad, the country's health facilities are now also having to contend with almost round-the-clock power cuts.

"All hospitals... are now less prepared than they were during the wave at the start of the year," said Firass Abiad, the manager of the largest public hospital in the country battling COVID.

"Medical and nursing staff have left, medicine that was once available has run out," and ever lengthening cuts to the mains power supply have left hospitals under constant threat.

Even the Rafik Hariri University Hospital he runs has been struggling to cope.

"We only get two to three

hours of mains electricity, and for the rest of the time it's up to the generators," Abiad said.

On top of worrying they could burn out, 'we have the huge burden of having to constantly be on the hunt for fuel oil'. Huge demand for the increasingly scarce commodity has driven up prices by more than 80 per cent since June 17.

Even at the prestigious RHUH, some medicines are routinely running out.

"Some days it's antibiotics, others it's anaesthetics," the hospital chief said. Sometimes 'we're forced to ask the patients' relatives to go and try to find the medicine from another hospital or a pharmacy'.

After dropping over the spring, COVID cases are on the rise again as Lebanese expats flood home for the summer, and many gather with family and friends. On Thursday alone, 98 people tested positive for COVID on arrival at Beirut airport, the health ministry said.

AFP

8mn people in Vietnam's capital go under lockdown as cases soar

Hanoi, Vietnam - Vietnam locked down eight million people in Hanoi on Saturday, the latest attempt to curb a serious coronavirus outbreak that has already forced a third of the country to stay home.

Authorities reported more than 7,000 new infections across the nation on Friday - the third record number of daily infections in a week.

The centre of the normally bustling capital was empty and

shops were shuttered as the lockdown came into force, although people could still be seen on the streets in the outskirts of the city.

"I think people in Hanoi as myself agree with the city's sudden decision of locking down the city," said local resident Nguyen Van Chien.

"We have to take economic risks to fight the pandemic," he added.

After successfully containing



A woman wearing a face mask rides her bicycle along a near-empty street in Vietnam's capital Hanoi on Saturday (AFP)

limited coronavirus outbreaks last year, Vietnam has seen cases skyrocket since late April.

About a third of Vietnam's 100mn people are already subject to lockdown orders.

But the outbreak has showed few signs of slowing and southern commercial hub Ho Chi Minh City - which has recorded the majority of recent cases - extended its stay at home order on Friday.

"I have been indoors for a

month. The situation in our city is scary," resident Le Bich Thanh told AFP.

Authorities began a campaign to disinfect the entire city, which they say will take a week.

Vietnam was one of the few economies that expanded last year due to its success in containing the virus during the first wave of the pandemic.

But the Southeast Asian country has been slow to pro-

cure and administer vaccines, with just almost 4.5mn doses given so far.

It is also developing its own inoculations and authorities say they hope to reach herd immunity by early 2022.

Vietnam has a policy of hospitalising all virus carriers, putting medical workers and hospitals under huge strain, although the rule has been lifted in some areas.

AFP

Pegasus scandal: Amnesty urges moratorium on sale of technology

Paris, France - Allegations that governments used phone malware supplied by an Israeli firm to spy on journalists, activists and heads of state have 'exposed a global human rights crisis', Amnesty International said, asking for a moratorium on the sale and use of surveillance technology.

In a Friday statement, the NGO warned of 'the devastating impact of the poorly regulated spyware industry on human rights worldwide'.

The NSO Group's Pegasus software - able to switch on a phone's camera or microphone and harvest its data - is at the centre of a storm after a list of about 50,000 potential surveillance targets was leaked to rights groups.

Amnesty International and French media nonprofit Forbidden Stories collaborated with a clutch of media companies, including the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian* and *Le Monde*, to analyse and publish the list.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who was on the list of alleged targets, had to change his phone and number.

"Not only does it expose the risk and harm to those individuals unlawfully targeted, but also



This illustration shows a smartphone with the website of NSO Group which features 'Pegasus' spyware, on display in Paris on Wednesday (AFP)

the extremely destabilising consequences on global human rights and the security of the digital environment at large," Agnes Callamard, Amnesty's Secretary General, said in the statement.

Israel group NSO 'is just one company'. "This is a dangerous industry that has operated on the edges of legality for too long, and this cannot be allowed to continue," she said.

"Now, we urgently need greater regulation over the cyber surveillance industry, accountability for human rights violations and abuses, and greater oversight over this shadowy industry."

Amnesty called for an immediate moratorium on any export, sale, transfer and use of surveillance technology 'until there is a

human rights-compliant regulatory framework in place'.

"The fact that world and other political leaders themselves may have come into the spyware technology's crosshairs will hopefully serve as a long overdue wake-up call for them and states worldwide to step up and regulate this industry," Callamard said.

The list of alleged targets includes at least 180 journalists, 600 politicians, 85 human rights activists and 65 business leaders.

NSO insists its software is only intended for use in fighting terrorism and other crimes, and that it exports to 45 countries, with approval from the Israeli government.

AFP

China braces for Typhoon In-Fa after historic floods devastate Henan province

Beijing, China - China shut down ports and railways on Saturday as it braced for Typhoon In-Fa as parts of the country struggled to recover from devastating floods earlier this week.

In-Fa is forecast to make landfall late on Sunday in the eastern coastal province of Zhejiang near Shanghai, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Chinese authorities have issued a level III alert - the third-highest - for the storm, while more than 100 trains travelling through the region have been cancelled, according to China Railway.

Shanghai authorities closed some public parks and museums and warned residents on Saturday to 'stop large-scale outdoor gatherings' and to stay indoors.

Meanwhile, all container ship docks were shut down from Yangshan Port south of Shanghai and 150 vessels including passenger ships and cargo vessels were evacuated from the area.

In central China's Henan province, where historic floods this week have now killed at least 58 people, authorities are gradually clearing and reopening roads blocked with vehicles and debris.

Millions have been affected by the floods, with some trapped



Cars are stuck in floodwaters after heavy rains hit the city of Zhengzhou in Henan province on Wednesday (AFP)

without fresh food or water for days and others lifted to safety in excavator buckets.

More than 495,000 people have been evacuated, according to the Henan government, with the flooding causing billions of dollars in losses.

Henan emergency response official Li Changxun warned on Saturday that the province would need to undertake large-scale cleaning and disinfecting to 'ensure the disaster is not followed by an epidemic'.

Photos published by state media and government social

media accounts on Saturday showed rescue workers continuing to shovel mud and remove uprooted trees across the province.

Torrential downpours dumped a year's rain in just three days this week on the hardest-hit city of Zhengzhou, where at least a dozen people died inside a subway train during Tuesday's rush hour after floodwaters trapped passengers in their carriages.

State media warned that In-Fa could bring more torrential downpours to parts of the province in the coming days.

China has suffered an annual flood season for millennia, but the record rainfall in Henan has prompted questions about how China's cities could be better prepared for freak weather events, which experts say are happening with increased frequency and intensity due to climate change.

Henan province is straited by rivers, dams and reservoirs, many constructed decades ago to manage the flow of floodwater and irrigate the agricultural region, but rapid urban sprawl has strained existing drainage systems.

AFP

Afghan govt imposes night curfew across 31 provinces to stem Taliban advance

Kabul, Afghanistan - Afghan authorities on Saturday imposed a night-time curfew across 31 of the country's 34 provinces to curb surging violence unleashed by a sweeping Taliban offensive in recent months, the Interior Ministry said.

The widespread Taliban offensive has seen the insurgents capture key border crossings, dozens of districts and encircle several provincial capitals since early May.

"To curb violence and limit the Taliban movements a night curfew has been imposed in 31 provinces across the country," except in Kabul, Panjshir and Nangarhar, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

The curfew will be effective between 10.00pm and 4.00am local time, Ahmad Zia Zia, Interior Ministry's deputy spokesman said in a separate audio statement to reporters.

With the withdrawal of American-led foreign forces all but complete, the resurgent Taliban now controls about half of Afghanistan's 400 districts.

After a brief lull in violence during the Eid al Adha holidays, fighting continued again with the authorities claiming to have



A woman with her children (left) walks through a market in Afghanistan's capital Kabul on Thursday; the Taliban delegation (right) at the final declaration of the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Qatar's capital Doha on July 18 (AFP)

killed more than 260 Taliban fighters in the past 24 hours across several provinces.

Both the authorities and the Taliban exaggerate their claims which cannot be independently verified.

As the fighting raged in re-

cent weeks, the US military was forced to carry out airstrikes 'to support' Afghan troops to repel Taliban offensives even as its overall withdrawal continues, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said on Thursday.

Experts say a lack of regular



US air support since May to Afghan forces on the ground is a key factor in government troops losing lot of territory to the Taliban.

Late on Friday, the Taliban warned the US military against carrying out airstrikes. 'It is a

clear violation of the signed agreement that will have consequences,' the Taliban said, referring to a landmark deal between Washington and the insurgents last year that paved the way for the withdrawal of foreign forces.

The Taliban also warned the

Afghan government against launching any offensive, saying the group will 'strongly defend their territories and not remain in a defensive posture if the enemy insists upon war'.

The Taliban had said earlier this week that its fighters were

As the fighting raged in recent weeks, the US military was forced to carry out airstrikes 'to support' Afghan troops to repel Taliban offensives even as its overall withdrawal continues

JOHN KIRBY

in a 'defensive' posture to mark the Eid al Adha holidays that ended on Thursday.

Earlier this week, the chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff General Mark Milley said the Taliban appear to have 'strategic momentum' on the battlefield.

With the militants putting pressure on around half of the country's provincial capitals, Afghan troops are in the process of 'consolidating their forces' to protect those major urban centres, Milley added.

AFP



L-R: Jovenel Jr Moïse, Joverlain Moïse, Jomarlie Moïse and Martine Moïse attend the funeral of slain Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, on Friday (AFP)

Tensions high as Haiti bids farewell to slain president

Cap-Haïtien, Haiti - Haiti bade farewell on Friday to its slain president Jovenel Moïse under tight security at a state funeral marred by an eruption of gunfire outside the venue, highlighting the instability of the impoverished Caribbean country.

Just over two weeks after the 53 year old Moïse was shot dead in his home in Port-au-Prince in the early hours of July 7, he was interred in Cap-Haïtien, the main city in his native northern region.

In an open-air funeral lasting several hours, Moïse's coffin was draped in the red, white and blue Haitian flag and the presidential sash, and surrounded by flowers. Military guards kept watch, and soldiers performed the national and presidential anthems.

One by one, representatives of the government and foreign diplomats stopped to pay their respects to Moïse's widow Martine - who was seriously wounded in the attack that killed her husband, and required treatment in the United States.

She had her arm in a sling and wore a black hat and a mask bearing a photo of her late husband on one side.

"What crime did you commit to deserve such punishment?" she asked in an emotional eulogy, calling Haitian politics 'rotten and unfair' and insisting her husband had tried to clean it up before being 'savagely murdered'. "Overnight, he found the whole system lined up against him," the widow said, nevertheless noting she was not seeking 'revenge'.

Despite her praise, the late president was not a popular man - many people accused him of failing to make progress on the country's many woes.

And in a sign of Haiti's chronic security problems, despite a robust police presence in the streets of Cap-Haïtien, gunfire rang out during the funeral, prompting some in attendance to leave early.

US President Joe Biden had sent a high-level delegation to the funeral, including his ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, and his new special envoy to Haiti, Daniel Foote.

"Members of the presidential delegation to the funeral of president Moïse have arrived safely back in the United States," Thomas-Greenfield said, underscoring her country's commitment 'to support an inclusive and peaceful dialogue in Haiti'.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Washington remained 'deeply concerned about the situation on the ground in Haiti'. "We strongly urge all parties to express themselves peacefully, and call on Haiti's leaders to be clear that their supporters must refrain from violence," Sullivan said.

So far, more than 20 people have been arrested in connection with Moïse's assassination, most of them Colombians, and police say the plot was organised by Haitians with political ambitions and links outside the country.

AFP

Blinken to visit India amid Afghan withdrawal

Washington, US - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will speak next week in India about supporting Afghanistan as worries grow in New Delhi about Taliban gains amid the end of the two-decade US military mission, officials said on Friday.

On his first visit to the emerging US ally since taking office, Blinken will also look to resume work together on supplying COVID-19 vaccines and explore greater security and cyber cooperation, officials said.

Blinken will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaisankar on the trip on Wednesday and afterward hold separate talks in Kuwait.

Dean Thompson, the top US diplomat for South Asia, said that Blinken would welcome India's 'shared commitment to peace and supporting economic development in Afghanistan', where New Delhi has pumped in some US\$3bn since the US invasion overthrew the Taliban regime following the September 11, 2001 attacks.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken listen to President Joe Biden at a press conference in the White House in Washington, DC, on July 15 (AFP)

"We expect that all the countries in the region have a shared interest in a stable and secure Afghanistan going forward and so we will certainly be looking at talking with our Indian partners about how we can work together to realize that goal," Thompson told reporters.

President Joe Biden has ordered an end to the longest-ever US war by the end of August, saying that nothing more can be achieved militarily - despite rapid

gains on the ground by Taliban insurgents.

The Taliban welcomed virulently anti-Indian extremists when the militant group ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, with an Indian civilian airliner hijacked to the Taliban bastion of Kandahar in 1999.

India's enthusiastic support for the Afghan government, including helping build a new parliament building, has fuelled suspicions in its historic rival

Pakistan which was the main international backer of the Taliban regime.

India recently evacuated 50 diplomats and others from its consulate in Kandahar although it insisted personnel would return as soon as security improves.

Rights to be addressed

US and Indian governments across party lines have been building closer relations since the late 1990s as the world's two largest democracies see shared interests on a rising China, extremism and other challenges.

But Biden, in a shift in tone if not substance from his predecessor Donald Trump, as a candidate voiced subtle criticism of Modi's nationalist government over controversial steps including a citizenship law that critics say discriminates against the minority. Thompson said the United States will raise human rights issues but added: "We firmly believe that we have more values in common on those fronts than we don't."

Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin visited New Delhi as part of his first overseas trip but Blinken's travel was put on hold amid a severe outbreak of COVID-19 in the billion-plus country. The Biden administration had seen India as a key partner on fighting COVID with a deal announced in March for India to produce one billion vaccine doses with US, Japanese and Australian support.

"This is such a critical country in the fight against COVID-19," Blinken said of his India trip during an interview on MSNBC.

"We have millions of vaccines ready to go to them when they finish their own legal process to bring them in. And India is the leading country when it comes to the production of vaccines," Blinken said.

"Of course, they're focused understandably on their own internal challenges now, but when that production engine gets fully going and can distribute again to the rest of the world, that's going to make a big difference, too."

AFP

India rescuers hunt for survivors as monsoon toll hits 76

Mumbai, India - Rescuers in India combed through mud and debris on Saturday in a desperate search for survivors as the death toll from heavy monsoon rains climbed to 76, with nearly 90,000 others evacuated.

Torrential downpours have lashed India's western coast in recent days, leaving dozens missing near the financial capital Mumbai and causing the worst floods in decades in the resort state of Goa.

"People have lost virtually everything," said Goa's Health Minister Vishwajit Rane, pointing out that the state had not seen such heavy rains in half a century. He said more than 1,000 houses had suffered serious damage in the area as rising waters flooded homes.

Goa's floods were its worst in decades, according to its Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who said the monsoons had caused 'widespread damage' but no casualties, unlike in neighbouring Maharashtra state, where 76



The site of a landslide at Taliye, about 22km from the city of Mahad in the state of Maharashtra on Saturday (AFP)

people died.

More than half of the deaths occurred in hard-hit Raigad, south of Mumbai, where landslides buried dozens of houses, killing 47 and with another 53 feared trapped under layers of mud.

The downpour caused the

Savitri river to burst its banks, leaving the town of Mahad completely inaccessible by road, and prompting terrified residents to climb onto rooftops and upper floors to escape swelling waters.

National Disaster Response Force teams could not land their

choppers in the area due to bad weather on Friday but were eventually able to rescue locals as waters began to recede.

The hillside resort of Mahabaleshwar recorded nearly 60cm of rain in a 24-hour period ending Friday morning, the India Meteorological Department said.

Rescue teams and military units worked frantically to evacuate stranded people but their operations were hampered by landslides blocking roads, including the main highway between Mumbai and Goa.

Water levels rose to nearly 6m on Thursday in areas of Chiplun, south of Mumbai, after 24 hours of uninterrupted rain submerged roads and homes.

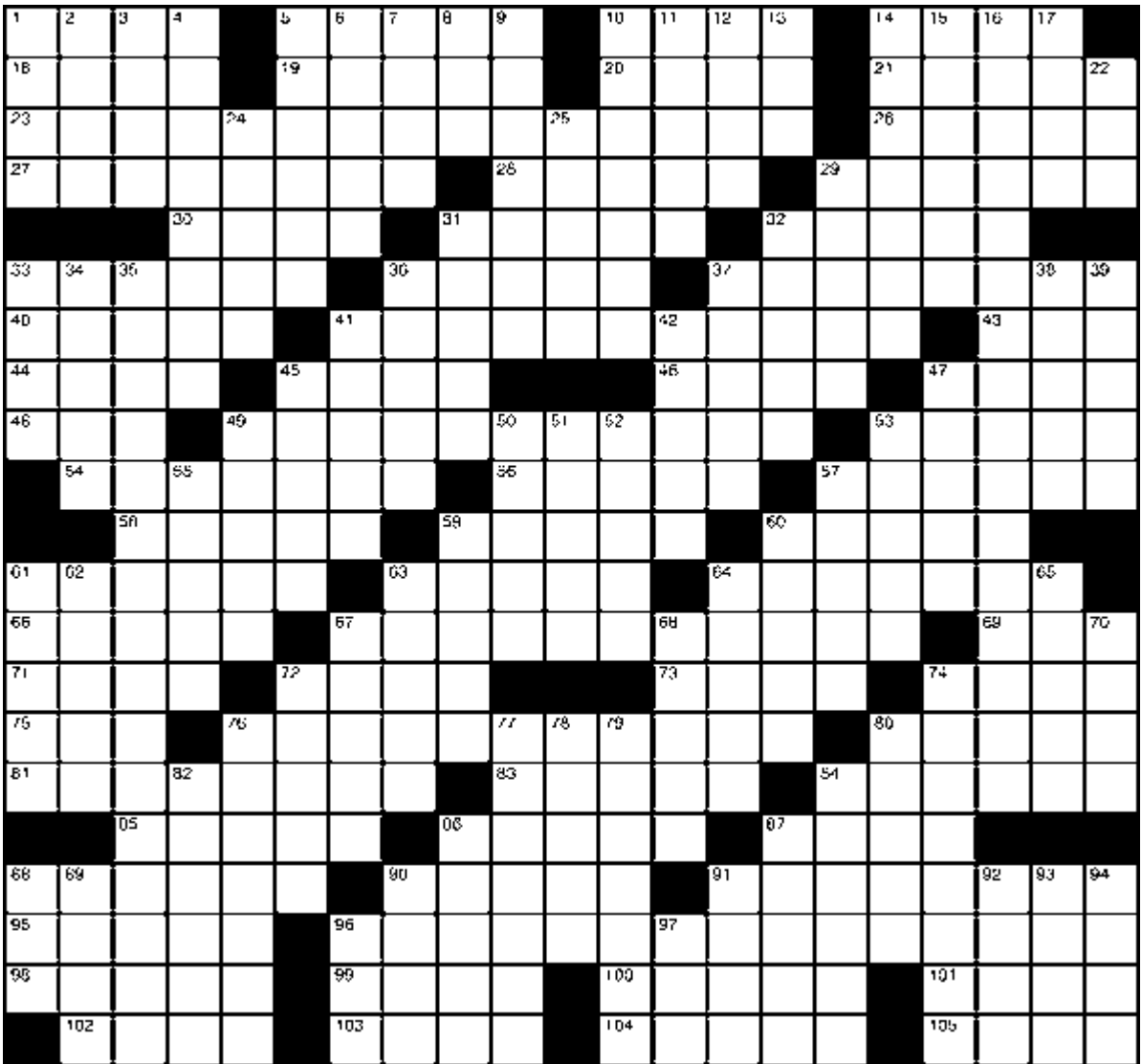
"Contact from the town was completely cut off due to land routes being inundated," the Maharashtra state government said.

Seven naval rescue teams equipped with rubber boats, life jackets and lifebuoys were sent to the affected areas, along with specialist divers and a helicopter to airlift marooned residents.

Nearly 90,000 people have been evacuated in Maharashtra so far. India's weather bureau has issued red alerts for several regions in the state and forecasts heavy rainfall to continue for the next few days.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

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22 Neighbor of Isr.

- 24 Eccentric, new
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25 Expresses
29 Box in Bordeaux
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33 "___ Remember?"
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57 Delicate
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60 Played a high-
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84 Rennes resident
86 Naval supply ship
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88 Wrestling area
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90 Put by
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92 Spoken
93 Elephant feature
94 Addition for
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96 Hat for the Casbah
97 Astronaut Grissom

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

New experiences are waiting for you out there in the world, but you won't have the time to start exploring them fully unless you clear off your plate! Make room for adventure today by completing all those half-finished tasks on your list. And if you have to, ask for help. At least one person owes you a big favour, so why not call it in? Your health is good, but it could be better.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Something high up on your wish list is getting tantalisingly close to becoming yours today, thanks in part to the genuine and magnanimous charm you have been showing to a powerful person. You've been incredibly generous to them and they want to return the favour. Accept their gift with graciousness, and do not try to play it down. Just say thank you and mean it.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Let go of negative things today -- it will be easier than ever before, because your mind is eager to move on to more positive endeavours. One way is to release yourself from being responsible for other people's happiness -- you have to let them take care of their own issues. Instead, start focusing more on the new opportunities coming your way soon.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

The prettiest packages sometimes hide the ugliest things, so keep that in mind when you encounter someone or something that seems too good to be true today. Just because it glitters does not mean it's a golden opportunity. People turn on the charm when they lack other qualities -- and sometimes the brighter they shine, the more you should avoid them.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

A family obligation will cause a bit of conflict with you and a friend or sweetie ... but you should definitely take a risk. Do what you really want to do and just be prepared for whatever the consequences may be. If you're currently unattached, someone you meet through work will provide lots of opportunity for sizzling romance. Be more generous.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

It isn't hard to hold on to your idealistic attitude when you have great people behind you, supporting every step you take. It's when you're stuck with negative people who love to complain that you start to get pessimistic about where things are going. So make sure you're hanging out with positive forces, people who know how to keep you focused and on track.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you are involved in any type of legal negotiations, get prepared for things to move to the next stage today. It's time to deal with paperwork and make that final commitment. You need to stay on top of all details right now and take no shortcuts, but you can do it -- in fact, you've been waiting for this for a long time. Just remember not to accept any grey areas or vague terms.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Today is the perfect day to get back in touch with your culinary skills, no matter how much of a novice you may be. Making meals for people you love is a great way to express your personality, exercise your creativity and explore new cultures. Plus, it's a great way to save money! Being in the kitchen will be relaxing, because you can let your mind wander.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Anything is possible today. It's a very expansive day, and you're more positive than you've felt in a long time. But today's strong vibe of opportunity will encourage bad events just as much as positive outcomes, so be sure to stay skeptical as much as possible. Consequences are a fact of life in whatever path you choose, so make sure you do something good for you.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

If a blur of social obligations has left you exhausted, then get some well-deserved alone time. Treat yourself to a quiet dinner, or rent your favourite movie and just chill out on the couch. It's not selfish to want to be by yourself -- it's actually quite healthy. You need downtime to recharge. So when you do get back in a social frame of mind, you'll be charming and fun to be around.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

If you're having a tough time making a decision about something right now, that's an easy problem to overcome -- all you have to do is trust your instincts. And if you can't get in touch with your gut easily, just wait. Be patient, and you will soon start to sense what the right choice is and what feels best. You have to ignore how people might react to your choice.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Grab something to hang onto, because your creativity is about to take off like a rocket! It'll be simple as can be for you to find ways to add more fun, colour, music and beauty to your life. All you have to do is pay attention to things that confuse you -- when your brain can't wrap itself around something, it starts coming up with real innovation, helping you create something new.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The first death anniversary day of Rajiv Gandhi was observed as the

a. National Integration Day

b. Peace and Love Day

c. Secularism Day

d. Anti-Terrorism Day

2. 20th August is celebrated as

a. Earth Day

b. Sadbhavana Divas

c. No Tobacco Day

d. None of these

3. When is the World Population Day observed?

a. May 31

b. October 4

c. December 10

d. July 11

Answers: 1. d 2. b 3. d

KIDS COLOURING

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

BOGGLER

E	S	S	A
A	L	S	Qu
U	R	S	I
E	B	L	A

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

GRATE	ETNA	DAIR	CASIS
CHARIE	SUITE	ANAL	OCHEIT
THAMES	SUBARU	BRITNE	
MEN	EGAN	NEE	MENO
BIANCO	BAKIS	OGNIOAL	
TEPE	SINIA	WOP	PEIS
PASSE	CHAPAS	FEI	RABRI
ASHA	OPPIA	ALIA	ODAT
ITTA	BRUTAS	OP	COCHER
TIME	IMBERG	CELINE	MONAIE
HELENE	PAVILIS	ROUVER	
CHOMER	BOTFIELD	CRANKIN	BOY
BOG	EGHOMAS	ATIZIO	OLA
ANKS	OUZEL	PAINTIG	ERIN
DAISIE	GEN	PARCER	ORININ
SHANNON	ARLIS	PAVIGOCK	
LET	CARON	AMAR	PARAG
CHIEF	CHIEF	CHIEF	CHIEF
SHAKI	ERTIA	ERTIA	OVNEL
HARPER	REEK	DALIN	SEIFAL

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

BY THE SEA

Splash
of colour

UK beach huts brighten pandemic gloom - most are rented out by the day, offering cocktails or table football

In her yellow-and-white striped beach hut, Melanie Whitehead boils the kettle for a cup of tea and sits gazing out over the North Sea. Brightly painted wooden huts like hers line England's coastline and have enjoyed a boom during the pandemic, as people rediscover seaside breaks close to home.

In the resort of Walton-on-the-Naze in Essex, eastern England, beach huts run along the shore for miles, in some places rising up in five tiers. Huts in the area have sold for over £80,000, said Barry Hayes of Boydens estate agent, based in the adjoining resort of Frinton-on-Sea. That amounts to nearly a third of the £255,000 average house price in the UK, but it's far from a record: a hut in Dorset on the Channel coast sold for £330,000 this month.

Despite such astronomical prices, the huts are

basic: most lack water mains or electricity, and staying the night is prohibited. As huge waves crash onto the esplanade at Walton-on-the-Naze, inhabitants read books and newspapers, snooze or chat, often in multi-generational groups.

Endless cups of tea

Huts have names such as Paradise Found and Serenity. Outside one, a group of women are drinking pro-secco, celebrating 60 years of friendship since primary school.

Whitehead, a 49-year-old former town planner, does not use her hut for its historic purpose of changing into a swimming costume. "I really hate swimming and going into the water," she said.

She is clear about the hut's real purpose: to make endless cups of tea. The hut, which she bought in



2008 for £6,000, has proved a welcome get-away during the pandemic when her husband and daughter were both at home constantly.

It has white-painted walls and a narrow couch topped with a patchwork quilt, and colourful blankets she crocheted herself. A gas cylinder powers a hob and oven, which she uses to bake scones.

"It's perfect. It comes into its own on a horrible day," Whitehead said.

As a seasoned beach hut owner, she is well aware of the pitfalls - the need for regular repairs and the risk of vandalism by bored teenagers.

She is chairman of the local beach hut association and carries out regular patrols. Many owners live far away and can't keep an eye on their huts, Whitehead said. Many huts are also rented out by the day, some offering Instagram-worthy features such as cocktail bars or table football.

Sarah Stimson, who runs a rental business called Walton-on-the-Naze Beach Huts, says this has been her best year yet. All her huts are fully booked until September.

"I think COVID-19 has made people look for certain things to do in the UK," she said. "It's made us a bit more visible."

Most renters are women in their 20s and 30s with

family in tow, and 70 percent of bookings come via Instagram. For an upcoming client, she is arranging a photographer and a cream tea delivery. He plans to surprise his wife with a proposal to renew their wedding vows.

Grown-up Wendy house

Stimson, 46, used to commute to London to head a charity that promotes diversity in the PR industry. Wanting to spend more time with her family, she and her husband started their business three years ago with three huts.

This year they are renting out seven of their own and managing three more.

Her own family uses a hut named Queenie after her great-grandmother.

Painted bright green, it has space-saving elements such as a fold-down table, storage bench and overhead storage for paddleboards.

"It is a bit like a grown-up Wendy house," Stimson said, describing a children's playhouse. The pandemic-related surge in prices means Stimson's family has no current plans to buy more, though. Prices have roughly doubled locally in a year.

"The last one we sold was over £80,000," said Hayes, the estate agent, calling the pandemic a "game-changer". An average hut in Frinton-on-Sea, seen as more up-market than Walton-on-the-Naze, goes from £50,000 to £60,000. "Last year we were selling those for 30-ish," he said.

As changes to rules on foreign travel make planning holidays difficult, "that uncertainty will keep the interest inflated for the time being", Hayes predicted.

Whatever the market does, Whitehead is not going anywhere. "I can get snug in here, look at the view, and forget about the world really."

AFF

I think COVID-19 has made people look for certain things to do in the UK. It's made us a bit more visible

SARAH STIMSON



FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Man Utd manager Solskjaer 'delighted' to sign new deal

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has signed a new three-year deal, the English Premier League (EPL) club announced on Saturday. The Norwegian, who took over from Jose Mourinho in 2018, will stay at Old Trafford until at least 2024, with the option of an extra year.

"Everyone knows the feeling I have for this club, and I am delighted to have signed this new contract," Solskjaer told the club website.

"It is an exciting time for Manchester United, we have built a squad with a good balance of youth and experienced players that are hungry for success."

Solskjaer led United to a second-placed finish in last season's Premier League while losing in the Europa League final to Villarreal.

However, the 48-year-old, who this week added England winger Jadon Sancho to his squad, has his eyes firmly on the biggest prizes in English and European football.

"I have a fantastic coaching team around me, and we are all ready to take that next step on our journey," he said.

"Manchester United wants to be winning the biggest and best trophies and that's what we are all striving for. We have improved, both on and off the pitch, and that will continue over the coming seasons."

"I can't wait to get out in front of a packed Old Trafford and get



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer

this campaign started."

Sancho's contract for five years

On Friday, United signed Sancho from Borussia Dortmund on a five-year contract.

No fee was disclosed but British media reports said Sancho had moved from Germany in a deal worth US\$100mn - which would make him the second-most expensive



Jadon Sancho

English player of all time behind new United teammate Harry Maguire. Sancho is set to stay at United until June 2026, with the option of a further year.

"I'll always be grateful to Dortmund for giving me the opportunity to play first team football, although I always knew that I would return to England one day," Sancho told *manutd.com*.

"The chance to join Manchester United is a dream

Pochettino extends PSG contract

FRENCH LEAGUE

Paris, France - Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) coach Mauricio Pochettino on Friday penned a one-year extension to his contract to stay with the French giants until 2023 despite a below-par start to his reign.

The Argentine took over from the sacked Thomas Tuchel in January but PSG were dethroned as champions by Lille and were knocked out in the semi-finals of the Champions League.

Their European campaign was ended by Manchester City but PSG saw off Barcelona and Bayern Munich on their way to the last-four.

PSG did win the French Cup with a 2-0 victory over Monaco. "I'm really very happy, for myself and also for my staff," said former PSG captain Pochettino, who had been rumoured to be



Mauricio Pochettino

on the verge of quitting.

PSG have been active in the transfer market this summer with midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum arriving from Liverpool, defender Sergio Ramos from Real Madrid while goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma arrived from AC Milan on the back of helping Italy to the Euro 2020 title.

Pochettino's next challenge is to persuade star striker Kylian Mbappe with the world champion's contract due to expire in a year.

AFP

'Repairs to Verstappen car in crash cost \$1.8mn'

BRITISH GRAND PRIX

London, UK - Red Bull boss Christian Horner said on Friday his team has been left with a bill for a whopping US\$1.8mn to repair the damage to Max Verstappen's car after the controversial collision with Lewis Hamilton at the British Grand Prix. Verstappen and seven-time world champ Hamilton clashed on the opening lap of last weekend's race at Silverstone.

The Dutchman was forced to retire and undergo a six-hour hospital checkup while Hamilton took victory to revive his title hopes.

"That crash has cost us approximately US\$1.8mn and an accident like that has massive ramifications in a budget cap era," Horner wrote in a column on the team's official website.

Horner also criticised Hamilton for his celebrations on the podium, a display already blasted as 'disrespectful and unsportsmanlike' by Verstappen.

Even though Hamilton was handed a ten-second penalty, his victory allowed him to slash Verstappen's lead in the championship from 33 points to just eight. "I am also still disappointed about the level of celebrations enjoyed in the wake of the accident," added Horner.

Hamilton and Verstappen will renew their rivalry at the Hungarian Grand Prix next weekend.

AFP

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TOKYO 2020



MEDALS TABLE

(Only selected nations)

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
China	3	0	1	4
Italy	1	1	0	2
Japan	1	1	0	2
South Korea	1	0	2	3
Ecuador	1	0	0	1
Hungary	1	0	0	1
Iran	1	0	0	1
Kosovo	1	0	0	1
Thailand	1	0	0	1
ROC*	0	1	1	2
Serbia	0	1	1	2
Belgium	0	1	0	1
Spain	0	1	0	1
India	0	1	0	1
Netherlands	0	1	0	1
Romania	0	1	0	1
Chinese Taipei	0	1	0	1
Tunisia	0	1	0	1

(ROC* - Russian Olympic Committee)



India's Chanu Saikhom Mirabai competes in the women's 49kg weightlifting competition during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo on Saturday (AFP)

I hope this is just the beginning: Mirabai

China's Hou wins weightlifting gold, India's Mirabai claims historic silver

Tokyo, Japan - China's Hou Zhihui took the first weightlifting gold of Tokyo 2020 on Saturday as the Indian Prime Minister led tributes to his country's silver medal winner Chanu Saikhom Mirabai.

The 24-year-old world championship silver medallist Hou dominated the 49kg competition, opening up an early 7kg advantage over Mirabai that she never relinquished at the Tokyo

International Forum. "I felt very happy when I finally made it," said Hou.

Mirabai, the 2017 world champion at 48kg, was unable to make inroads on Hou's 210kg aggregate but was ecstatic at becoming India's first weightlifting silver medallist, after Karnam Malleswari's bronze in the women's 69kg at Sydney 2000. Mirabai hoped her success could inspire more Indian young women to take up weightlifting.

'It's a really big thing'

"It's a really big thing, the first silver for India. Whatever happens in the future I hope this is just the beginning," said Mirabai.

Back in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the celebrations as the country celebrated only its fifth individual Olympic silver medal in the history of the Games. "Could not have asked for a happier start to @Tokyo2020!", Modi tweeted.

Had she won gold, Mirabai would have been just the second athlete - and first woman - from the country of 1.3bn people to win an individual Olympic title, after Abhinav Bindra in the 10m air rifle at Beijing 2008.

"I had worked hard for Rio but it was just not to be, but from that day onwards I thought of winning in Tokyo and fulfil my

dream of an Olympic medal," Mirabai told reporters. "I am here because of what I had learned in Rio." Mirabai had failed to finish in the 2016 Olympics after recording no clean lifts in three clean and jerk attempts.

Mirabai's family recognised her talent early when she carried huge logs of firewood which her elder brother found tough to pick, will be rewarded with US\$70,000 from the Indian Olympic body.

"I would like to dedicate this medal to my country and would like to thank the billion prayers of all Indians which were with me during this journey," Mirabai wrote on Twitter.

Teenager Windy Cantika Aisah took the bronze for Indonesia.

PNG history-maker

Earlier in Group B of the 49kg competition, Papua New Guinea's Loa Dika Toua made history as the first woman to compete in five Olympic weightlifting competitions, just a few hours after carrying her nation's flag at the Tokyo 2020 opening ceremony. It was a remarkable achievement by the 37-year-old, coming 21 years after she became the first woman ever to lift at Olympics, when women's weightlifting was first introduced at Sydney 2000.

AFP



US players celebrate their win against New Zealand in Saitama on Saturday

US bounce back on goal-laden day

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Tokyo, Japan - The United States bounced back from their embarrassing opening defeat by Sweden in the Tokyo Olympics women's football event, thrashing New Zealand 6-1 on Saturday, while Britain and the Swedes reached the quarterfinals.

The previously all-conquering Americans had seen a 44-match unbeaten run ended by a 0-3 loss to Sweden on Wednesday, but they romped to victory against the Kiwis.

In Group G, Sweden booked a last-eight spot with a dramatic 4-2 success against Australia.

In Group E Ellen White's third

goal of the Games saw Britain edge hosts Japan 1-0 in Sapporo to sit top of group. Canada moved into second place in the group as they saw off Chile 2-1.

Most of the drama came in Group F, as Dutch star Vivianne Miedema and Zambia striker Barbra Banda both equalled the record for most goals (6) scored in an Olympic women's tournament by Canada's Christine Sinclair at the 2012 London Games. Arsenal's Miedema, grabbed a double in a 3-3 draw with Brazil while Banda netted three for Zambia in their 4-4 draw against China.

AFP

SMASHIN' IT!



Brazil's Yoandy Leal Hidalgo (R) spikes the ball during the men's volleyball preliminary round match against Tunisia at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo on Saturday (AFP)

At 12, an 'achievement' for young Syrian Zaza



Syria's Hend Zaza in action against Austria's Liu Jia on Saturday

Tokyo, Japan - Syria's Hend Zaza - the youngest athlete at the Tokyo Olympics at just 12 - said just reaching the Games was 'an achievement' despite bowing out in the preliminary round on Saturday. Zaza, who shot to fame overnight in her war-torn country last year by qualifying for Tokyo, lost to Austria's Liu Jia 11-4, 11-9, 11-3, 11-5.

But Zaza, the youngest Olympian since 11-year-old Romanian Beatrice Hustiu competed in figure skating at the 1968 Winter Olympics, said she was happy with her performance.

"Reaching the Tokyo Olympics was already an achievement. I wasn't asked to win, I was asked to play well," she told *Olympics.com*. "I think I had a good performance and I learned from the loss. Hopefully in the next Olympics, there will be something in it for me."

Liu, 39, was the European champion in 2005, four years before Zaza was born. "In my eyes I accomplished something. A 12-year-old girl playing against a 39-year-old and taking nine or ten points, this is an achievement," said Zaza.

AFP



TOKYO 2020



A recent photo of Serbia's Novak Djokovic at the Ariake Tennis Park in Tokyo, Japan

TENNIS STARS TOIL IN TOKYO HEAT

Djokovic and Medvedev urge schedule rethink

Tokyo, Japan - Novak Djokovic and Daniil Medvedev called on organisers to delay the start times of Olympic tennis matches as players laboured in the sweltering Tokyo summer heat on the opening day of the tournament.

World No 1 Djokovic encountered little resistance from Bolivia's Hugo Dellien in a 6-2, 6-2 first round win, but like many others found the playing conditions particularly demanding.

Medvedev, a 6-4, 7-6 (10/8) winner over Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik, suggested putting back matches until the evening, having started his opening round shortly after midday in blazing sunshine.

"I agree with him 100 per cent," said Djokovic, who revealed he had asked the International Tennis Federation (ITF) about potentially changing the daily 11am start. "To be honest I don't understand why they don't start matches at say 3pm. I've heard that for tennis there's some kind of curfew and they have to finish by midnight.

"If that's the case, I just finished the last match (on centre court) and it's not even 5pm. We still have like seven hours to

play, they have the lights on all the courts.

"They (could) make life much easier for all of us thanks to this. I just don't understand why they don't move it. I doubt they will change the decision but we're hoping that they will."

Medvedev admitted the conditions were 'some of the worst' he had ever experienced.

"I think... the matches should maybe start at like 6pm because the heat actually gets much lighter," said Medvedev, whose match began with temperatures hovering around 32°C.

"I don't think they're going to change it in the middle of the tournament, but that's what can

be done and the fact we have only one minute between changeovers is a joke.

"I think if you ask 200 tennis players here, I think 195 will say one minute is a joke and it should be 1:30 like it is in Asian tournaments."

Poland's Iga Swiatek, the 2020 French Open champion, suffered with the heat and the glare of the sun as she opened the day's programme on the main court. "Not only the temperature was hard, but also the sun because on one side it was pretty hard to serve," Swiatek said after a 6-2, 6-2 win over Mona Barthel.

"But we had to adjust quickly and change our toss, so that was

hard, but you know I would say the players who can adjust quicker are going to be the best ones here."

Murray, Salisbury win in doubles

Andy Murray and Joe Salisbury dumped out French second seeds Pierre-Hugues Herbert and Nicolas Mahut 6-3, 6-2 in the first round of the Olympic men's doubles on Saturday.

Murray, the defending two-time gold medallist in singles, and British partner Salisbury broke once in the opening set and twice in the second to eliminate gold medal contenders who have won the career Grand Slam.

AFP



Action during the judo competition at the Olympic Games on Saturday

Algerian judoka given chop for Israeli snub

Tokyo, Japan - Algerian judoka Fethi Nourine and his coach Amar Benikhef on Saturday had their Olympic accreditation withdrawn and will be sent home after refusing to fight an Israeli athlete.

Nourine was set to face Sudan's Mohamed Abdalr-sool on Monday in his first bout, with a possible second round showdown against Israeli Tohar Butbul in the men's 73kg division.

But speaking to an Algerian television station late Thursday, he said his political support for the Palestinian cause made it impossible for him to compete against an Israeli.

"We worked a lot to reach the Olympics... but the Palestinian cause is bigger than all of this," he said, adding that his decision was 'final'.

On Saturday, the International Judo Federation's (IJF) executive committee announced they had temporarily suspended Nourine and Benikhef. In response, the Algerian Olympic Committee withdrew their accreditation said they would be put on a plane home, with further sanctions expected.

The IJF said Nourine's stance was 'in total opposition to the philosophy of the

International Judo Federation'. "The IJF has a strict non-discrimination policy, promoting solidarity as a key principle, reinforced by the values of judo," it added.

It is not the first time Nourine has pulled out to avoid facing an Israeli rival, after a similar move at the 2019 world championships, also in Tokyo. Iranian judokas have also come under fire for refusing to compete against their Israeli counterparts.



Takato wins Japan's first gold

Judoka Naohisa Takato won Japan's first gold medal of the Tokyo Olympics on Saturday with victory in the men's 60kg final at the iconic Nippon Budokan.

The 28-year-old made up for his disappointing bronze medal in Rio five years ago by getting the host nation up and running in the Games with a win over Taiwan's Yang Yung-wei.

Earlier, Japanese world number three Funa Tonaki had suffered an agonising defeat by Kosovo's Distria Krasniqi in the women's 48kg final. Her silver, though, was her country's first medal of the Games.

AFP

Tennis star Osaka in Olympic spotlight, but biracial Japanese face struggles

Tokyo, Japan - Emili Omuro was thrilled by Naomi Osaka's star turn at the Tokyo Olympics opening ceremony, but the biracial teenager says Japan must do more to accept people of mixed heritage.

Four-time Grand Slam winner Osaka, whose mother is Japanese and father Haitian, climbed a replica Mount Fuji on Friday to light the cauldron in the ceremony's crowning moment. And she wasn't the only athlete of dual heritage representing the host.

Japanese-Beninese NBA basketball star Rui Hachimura was one of the flag bearers leading Japan's team into the Olympic Stadium. Osaka and Hachimura are adored in Japan, and boast lucrative sponsorship and advertising deals.

But many young people of black and Japanese heritage still struggle in an often conservative and largely homogenous society.

"There were many times when it was hard," 14-year-old Omuro, born to a Japanese mother and a black American father, said of her childhood in a town north of Tokyo.



Japan's tennis star Naomi Osaka stands after lighting the Olympic cauldron at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games on Friday

"People would whisper behind my back and make fun of me at extra-curricular clubs, or when I was walking down the street."

Looking to draw attention to the bullying and discrimination

faced by some biracial Japanese, Omuro applied and was chosen to be a torchbearer in the nationwide Olympic flame relay before the Games.

She also hoped to highlight

the country's increasing but often overlooked racial diversity.

"Some people say, 'for mixed people, bullying is inevitable.' And other people don't know there is discrimination, or pretend not to see it," she said.

Japan remains a largely homogenous society.

An analysis of government data by *Kyodo News* agency found just 20,000 of 1.02mn babies born in 2014 had Japanese and non-Japanese parents.

And only recently has the image of mixed Japanese started to include those with black heritage, said Sayaka Osanami Torngren, associate professor of international migration and ethnic relations at Malmö University in Sweden.

"Historically, mixed persons have always existed (in Japan), but the image of mixed persons has always been white or Caucasian and Japanese," said Torngren.

Now, more people of black and Japanese or mixed Asian heritage are raising their voices and addressing their experiences of discrimination or racism'.

AFP

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TOKYO 2020



Indian players celebrate after a goal against New Zealand during their men's Pool A match of the field hockey event in Tokyo on Saturday

Belgium, Australia and India men win openers

HOCKEY

Tokyo, Japan - World champions Belgium, heavy-weights Australia and India made winning starts in the men's hockey competition on Saturday.

In the men's Pool A match, Australia, in their quest for a second men's hockey Olympic gold, began with a 5-3 victory over hosts Japan, in a pulsating opening match at the Oi Hockey Stadium.

Also in the same group, eight times Olympic gold medalists India edged past a gritty New Zealand team 3-2. Kane Russell put the Black Sticks ahead with a penalty corner before Rupinder Pal Singh tied the scores from the penalty spot. Penalty corner goals either side of half time from Harmanpreet Singh established a 3-1 lead for India, although Stephen Jenness's field goal set up a tense final quarter.

Reigning Olympic champions Argentina could only claim a solitary point were held to a 1-1

draw by Spain in another Pool A match.

In Pool B, Alexander Hendrickx scored a four-minute hat-trick to help reigning world champions Belgium fight back from a goal down to beat Low Countries rivals the Netherlands 3-1 in their opening match. Following a quiet opening two periods, Jeroen Hertzberger scored a wonderful individual effort to put the Oranje ahead early in the third quarter, but it was Hendrickx who would have the final say in the outcome. Hendrickx netted two penalty corners either side of a penalty stroke as Belgium made a clear statement of intent with a hard-earned victory.

OTHER RESULTS:

Men's: Pool B: Great Britain 3 South Africa 1, Germany 7 Canada 1.

Women's: Pool A: Netherlands 5 India 1, Ireland 2 South Africa 0. AFP

CHINA'S GOLDEN START

Ecuador's Carapaz makes history with cycling road race title

Tokyo, Japan - China claimed three gold medals on the first day of the Tokyo Olympics on Saturday and cyclist Richard Carapaz became just the second competitor in Ecuador's history to top the podium, with victory in the road race. As the troubled build-up to the pandemic-postponed Games gave way to the first full day of competition, China secured victories in shooting and weightlifting.

Yang Qian sparked the mini gold rush in the 10m air rifle competition, pipping Russia's Anastasiia Galashina with a dramatic last-shot victory to take the very first title of the Games.

Galashina had looked poised to win heading into the last shot, but stumbled with 8.9 on her final effort to allow Yang to grab gold. "It's the 100th birthday of the Chinese Communist Party," she said. "I'm so happy that this golden medal is a gift to my country. I'm so proud."

There was more joy for China, with Hou Zhihui taking gold in the women's 49kg weightlifting with an Olympic record total of 210kg. Fencer Sun Yiwen added a third Chinese gold of the day



China's Yang Qian (C) celebrates on the podium flanked by Anastasiia Galashina (L) and Nina Christen on Saturday

with title in the women's epee.

In cycling's gruelling road race, 2019 *Giro d'Italia* winner Carapaz outfoxed a heavyweight field led by Slovenia's Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar. It was only Ecuador's second gold at the Olympics after Jefferson Perez's victory in the 50km race walk at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Japan celebrated the first goal medal of its Games when judoka Naohisa Takato won the men's 60kg final but the host nation suffered disappointment when gymnastics great Kohei Uchimura's campaign came to an early end. The two-time all-around Olympic champion slipped up in



Ecuador's Richard Carapaz celebrates at the finish line on Saturday (AFP)

qualifying for the horizontal bar competition, having battled a shoulder injury to be fit for the Games. In another Japanese setback, world champion Daiya Seto failed to reach the final of

the men's 400m medley in the pool, although he has two more events.

'You have to believe' With spectators barred from al-

most all Olympic venues due to COVID-19 restrictions, the road race was a rare chance for domestic fans to glimpse the action. Tens of thousands lined the route of the brutal 234km course to watch as Carapaz prevailed in a thrilling tactical battle.

"It's an incredible moment for me," Carapaz said. "You always have to believe. I have worked so hard to be here and it's a huge moment for me."

The spectre of COVID-19 continued to stalk the Games when German cyclist Simon Geschke was forced out of the road race while Dutch rower Finn Florijn has also tested positive.

Storm fears

Organisers were also nervously tracking the progress of a tropical storm heading towards Tokyo, with forecasters saying it could arrive on Tuesday. As a 'protective measure', organisers have brought forward to this weekend rowing events scheduled for Monday.

As the swimming started, Britain's Adam Peaty blasted through his heat to kickstart the defence of his 100m breaststroke title. Peaty, 26, hit the wall in 57.56 sec. American Michael Andrew, who caused a stir by refusing to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before heading to Tokyo, was third fastest.

Meanwhile, Hungary's evergreen fencer Aron Szilagyi made Olympic fencing history as he took the sabre title for a third time in a row.

AFP

OMAN AT OLYMPICS

Adawi to make Games debut on Tuesday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Talented swimmer Issa al Adawi, 22, who was Oman's flag bearer during the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics on Friday, will make his Games debut on Tuesday when he competes in the preliminary heat of the men's 100m freestyle swimming event.

Oman are taking part in four disciplines - swimming, athletics, weightlifting and shooting.

Oman's other Olympic Games debutant, Amur al Khanjari, 20, will be competing in the 81kg class of the weightlifting event, on July 31.

Experienced marksman Hamed al Khatri will be in action on August 2 in the 50m rifle three position men's qualification round. This is his second successive Games participation.

Oman's only women participant, Mazoon al Alawi, will make her second Olympic appearance when she runs in the



Oman's swimmer Issa al Adawi carries the sultanate's flag during the opening ceremony in Tokyo on Friday

100m round one heat on July 30 while Oman's fastest sprinter, Barakat al Harthi will feature in the 100m heat on July 31. For Harthi, this will be his third consecutive Olympic Games, equalling the record of legendary Omani athlete,

Mohammed al Malki, who too, took part in three successive Games (1984, 1988 and 1992).

On Saturday, Adawi was assigned heat three and with his best timing of 51.69s, he is seventh best among the eight competitors in Tuesday's race.

Out of the nine heat races comprising a total of 72 swimmers, the best 16 will advance to the semifinals. Brazil's Cesar Cielo holds the world record of 46.91s, set in 2009.

Speaking ahead of his historic participation, Adawi

said, "It was a great honour to be Oman's flag bearer during the opening ceremony on Friday. The memory of carrying the sultanate's flag will remain etched in my memory forever."

"I hope to give my best in my race on Tuesday. I am confident of bettering my own personal best. It is a world-class competition with only 16 of the 72 advancing to the next stage. My aim is to improve my timing and soak in the experience of competing at the world's biggest sporting event."

Meanwhile, Adawi's Omani coach, Ayman al Kulaibi, arrived in Tokyo on Friday. Kulaibi will join Adawi's Japanese coach Kusanagi Kenta during the event. Kenta has been training Adawi for the past three years at Chukyo University in Japan.

Also, Oman's ambassador to Japan, H E Dr Mohammed al Busaidi, in a statement wished the Omani athletes the very best for their respective events at the Olympic Games.

Every day, all day!

