



WEDNESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2021

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29°C/21°C

ENVOYS' GREETINGS ON NATIONAL DAY
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NEWS BRIEFS



OMAN, USA HOLD TALKS ON SECURITY COOPERATION

Muscat - Oman and the United States of America held an official session of talks to discuss ways of enhancing security cooperation.

The two sides also reviewed training programmes and joint exercises to be implemented in 2022, with a view to upgrading national capabilities in various joint security fields, sustain security cooperation to help maintain regional stability and security, and consolidate the two countries' advanced strategic relations.

His Majesty to preside over National Day military parade

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, will preside over a military parade on Thursday, to be staged at the military parade ground of Al Murtafaa Camp on the occasion of the 51st National Day.

Units representing Royal Army of Oman, Royal Air Force of Oman, Royal Navy of Oman, Royal Guard of Oman, Sultan's Special Force, Royal Oman Police, Royal Court Affairs, Royal Cavalry, Royal Guard of Oman Cavalry and the joint military musical band will take part in the military parade.



No special events, celebrations on National Day

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To limit the spread of COVID-19 among school students, the Ministry of Education has cancelled the 51st National Day celebrations in all schools. The Ministry of Social Development too has asked people to avoid holding special events on the occasion.

An official in the Ministry of Education, said, "The Ministry has issued a statement to all the director generals in the governorates to cancel the National Day celebrations in schools."

He added that the ministry has received a circular from the concerned authorities to ban holding celebrations for the National Day. "The celebrations cannot be conducted with restriction on gatherings and socialising. The ministry confirmed that these celebrations could lead to the spread of COVID-19 and an increase infections."

The ministry stated that all schools should adhere to precautionary measures, to stabilise the epidemiological situation in the sultanate. "It also requested all schools to abide by this decision and take the necessary measures in this regard," the official added.

The Ministry of Social Development has called on people to avoid holding special events and celebrations on the occasion of the 51st National Day.

A statement issued by the ministry, said, "The ministry urges citizens and residents not to hold any activities to celebrate the 51st National Day to prevent the spread of COVID-19."

04



177 cases of influenza, 2 deaths in 2020/21

18



Japan defeat Oman 1-0 in World Cup qualifier



Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said

Sayyid Fahd, Sayyid Shihab greet HM

Almighty Allah to endow His Majesty with divine assistance to achieve further progress and prosperity for Oman.

"The Sultanate of Oman takes pride in the comprehensive renaissance it accomplished over the past five decades. It has become a modern state established on solid foundations. The country's leadership strives to provide a decent life for citizens in a society governed by principles of equality in rights and duties.

"The Council of Ministers will continue to exert efforts to carry forward the flag of development and modernisation in all walks of life. Oman will remain an oasis of bounty, progress and prosperity.

"We, at the Council of Ministers, pray to the Almighty Allah that this glorious occasion returns over and over again and finds Your Majesty in full health and happiness," Sayyid Fahd said.

In his message, Sayyid Shihab said he and the valiant Armed Forces and personnel of the Ministry of Defence express sincerest greetings and pray that the Almighty Allah guards His Majesty under His divine care, blesses him with good health, happiness and a long life and bestows the bounties of prosperity, peace and stability on our dear homeland, Oman.

"Inspired by Your Majesty's farsighted thought, the march of progress presses ahead with firm resolve to attain its noble goals in all spheres in contemplation of a brilliant future based on the pillars of Oman Vision 2040.

"The personnel of your Armed Forces are also honoured to take the lead in providing all types of support to other sectors of the state. This was evident as the Armed Forces spearheaded national ac-



Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said

tion in the aftermath of the tropical cyclone Shaheen.

"The personnel of the victorious Armed Forces hereby renew the pledge of loyalty and allegiance to Your Majesty and to dear Oman under Your Majesty's wise leadership. They are steadfast in their oath of 'Faith in Allah, Allegiance to the Sultan, Defence of the Nation'," Sayyid Shihab said in his greetings.

ONA



Best Wishes to our Great Leader and the People of Oman

On the occasion of the 51st National Day it is our great honour to extend our sincere wishes and heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman.

We pray to the Almighty Allah to bless him with good health, long life and happiness. We remain dedicated to serving under the wise leadership of His Majesty for the growth, progress and prosperity of Oman, and its loyal people.



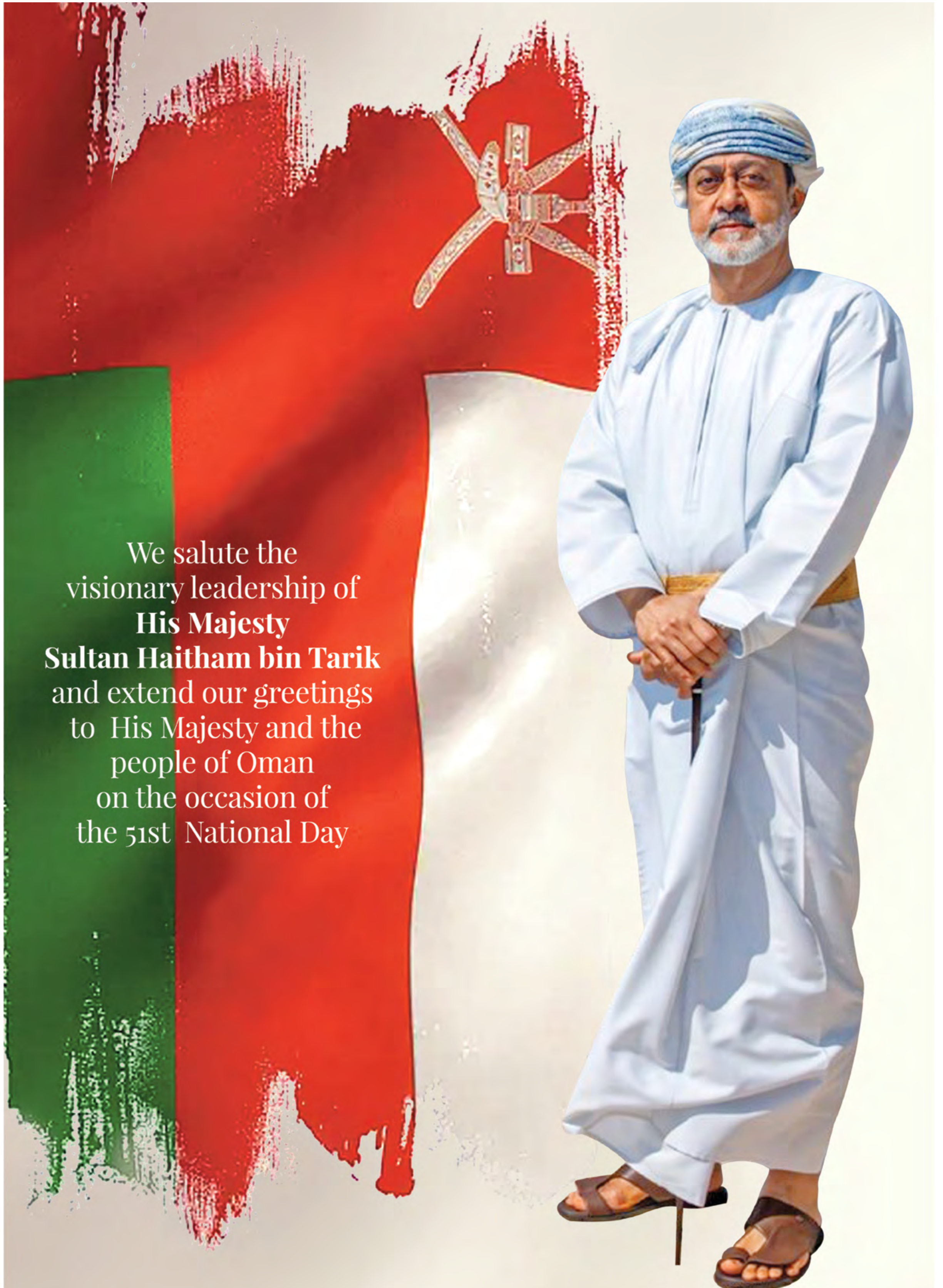


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and all the people of Oman
on the occasion of **51st National Day.**

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We salute the
visionary leadership of
His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and extend our greetings
to His Majesty and the
people of Oman
on the occasion of
the 51st National Day



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Royal Oman Police

Directorate of Public Relations

ANNOUNCEMENT

As part of the country's celebrations of the 51st glorious National Day, the Royal Oman Police - Directorate of Public Relations will prevent vehicles from parking on both sides of the lane from Al Baraka Palace roundabout to the Military Parade Field at Al Murtafa Camp, from 8am to 8pm on November 18, 2021.

The Royal Oman Police calls on motorists to abide by the above and to cooperate with policemen in the service of the public interest.

Send your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

China Petroleum Pipeline Engineering Company Limited Oman Branch (CPP), is an EPC Contractor, invites companies to participate in the following tender:

Estimated Scope Description	Tender Documents Fee
1. Supply and Apply of Cementitious/ intumescent coating on steel structure and equipment support for Ras Markaz Crude oil park (Phase 1). The main scope includes Structural supporting members, Steel columns and steel beams including pipe racks and pipe supports, Instrument and electrical cable trays, tubing and valve actuators, piping supports inside bund, equipment which require PFP.	Free

Legal entities, domestic Omani and foreign companies who meet the following minimum qualification criteria are eligible to quote in Tender:

- Priority to Oman local companies, or local agent appointed by foreign companies,
- Capability to submit a performance bond of ten percent of total value.
- Complying with the CPP's project execution schedule.
- ISO 14001 and OHSAS18001 in valid period are mandatory.
- Having direct experience of similar jobs in the last five years.
- Agree to complete the further prequalification undertaken by CPP.

All interested bidders shall submit a written application letter printed on Bidder's letter head signed by the Bidder's authorized Person to cppomanecd@cppmde.com over a period before **23th NOV, 2021** stating the following details: Full name of Bidder, phone number, e-mail address, contact person, tender name and tender title. Any application received after **23th NOV, 2021**, shall not be entertained.

The ITB documents will be issued via email by CPP later. The bidders shall bear all cost arising from or incidental to the preparation, clarification, finalization and delivery of their bid proposal.

CPP is not obliged to accept the bid with least prices or any other bids. CPP reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids, at any time prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders or; any obligations to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground for the CPP's action.

177 cases of influenza, 2 deaths in 2020/21

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As many as 177 cases of seasonal influenza and two deaths resulting from it have been recorded in the sultanate in 2020/2021, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH).

Outbreaks of seasonal influenza, commonly known as flu, caused by influenza viruses resulting in acute respiratory infection are witnessed in all parts of the world.

Seasonal influenza claimed 29 lives in Oman between July 2018 and June 2019. According to MoH, there were 1,248 laboratory confirmed cases during this period.

The number of cases registered in the 2019-2020 season, however, decreased. This was due to precautionary measures adopted worldwide to counter the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, including partial lockdowns and border shutdowns, school lessons and office work moving online, suspension of travel, and face masks being made mandatory in public places.

According to Dr Amal bin Saif al Maani, senior consultant in pe-



(File photo)

diatric infectious diseases, and infection prevention and control, viruses exist in nature and will never stop existing. "Seasonal influenza causes winter diseases annually. With the emergence of COVID-19, we no longer registered seasonal influenza cases due to adherence to preventive measures. But this year, there is a sense of reassurance - which is unfounded - as a result of the decrease in number of COVID-19 cases. A greater number of sea-

sonal influenza cases have been registered this year."

Dr Amal said that the health measures enforced as a result of the pandemic - including hand hygiene, avoiding shaking hands and direct contact with eyes, nose and mouth - must continue to be observed, especially during flu season. "Everyone is requested to take vaccines against viruses," she added.

MoH recommends seasonal vaccines for the most vulnerable

groups, such as healthcare workers, pregnant women, the elderly (65 years and older), and patients with chronic conditions, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, kidney and liver disorders, and diabetes.

MoH informed that it continues to conduct necessary surveillance and implement preventive measures throughout the year, besides updating the concerned authorities and specialists on the situation.

Royal Hospital starts surgeries in evenings, weekends

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To reduce waiting time for patients, The Royal Hospital announced that it has started surgeries in the evening as well as at weekends.

In a statement, the hospital

said, 'We have started operations in the evenings and at weekends, in addition to performing operations during the official working hours.'

'This decision has been taken with the aim to reduce the waiting list of patients, especially after the exceptional period of

the COVID-19 pandemic.'

Dr Amed bin Khamis al Aarimi, director of the Department of Surgery at The Royal Hospital, informed that this important step has been taken keeping in mind critically ill patients and to reduce waiting period, provide optimal service

and ensure the comfort and safety of patients.

"The Royal Hospital is keen to provide the highest standards of quality in line with its vision and objectives to serve the various segments of society," he said.

Omani families spent RO9 a month on health in 2018-2019: NCSI

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Omanisation rate in government and private health institutions increased by seven per cent from 2016 to 2020, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The centre's statistics show that the number of healthcare institutions in Oman grew to 1,587 in 2020, of which 64 per cent were private clinics.

The average monthly expenditure of Omani families on healthcare amounted to RO9 in 2018-2019.

'Spending on the health sector was 7.4 per cent of the total government expenditure in 2020, while the sector's contribution to the GDP amounted to about RO954.1mn, accounting for 3.9 per cent of the total,' NCSI stated.

The number of dialysis centres increased to 24, providing services to 2,264 patients in 2020. There were 204,289 dialysis sessions in 2016 and

309,845 in 2020.

The number of inpatients with tumours in the sultanate was 4,341, and the number of new cases registered for eye diseases in health institutions affiliated to the Ministry of Health was 137,10.

The number of surgical opera-

Omanisation rate in government and private health institutions increased by 7% from 2016 to 2020

tions in institutions affiliated to the Ministry of Health decreased more than 50 per cent between 2016 and 2020. However, there was an increase in the number of blood donors by 6.7 per cent between 2016 and 2020.

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On the glorious occasion of the 51st National Day of the Renaissance, we would like to offer our warm wishes and congratulate **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and the people of Oman for the nation's continued success, progress, and prosperity.



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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2021

NATIONAL DAY BECKONS

Expatriates cherish National Day experience

Muscat - Oman’s rich culture and history, along with the kindness shown by its citizens, has made this country a welcoming and loving home to expatriates from all over the world. With close to 1.67mn people in the sultanate being expats, many non-Omanis celebrate the National Day every year.

This significant day that recognises the country’s growth and achievements is celebrated with fireworks, decorations, coloured lights, parades, Omani food and music.

With 51st National Day just around the corner, the glowing lights and decorated cars give expats a chance to appreciate the country that has provided for and hosted them over the past years. Expatriates expressed their joy over the occasion.

Talking about the special and distinctive event, Kevin Schafer from the United States and director of The American International School of Muscat (TAISM), said, “Oman’s National Day celebrations are unique. Every year, I look forward to the festive spirit, with flags flying along the highways, cars decorated and buildings lit up with the tricolours.”

He described how the school celebrates the day.

“Seeing TAISM’s hallways decorated with the flags of Oman and pictures of His Majesty the Sultan, while hearing the Omani musicians perform for our students, brings great joy to our school community. I feel very fortunate to be a resident in this great country.”

Aloysius Saldanha, from India, has lived in this country for almost 30 years and works with

Renaissance Services Group.

“Oman is a very friendly and scenic place. It’s a very well administered country. It has been a home away from home.”

When asked about the National Day, he said, “I take pride in being a part of it and the feeling of oneness with the Omani people. I will spend this holiday reaching out to as many of my Omani friends as possible to wish them well.”

He added that he feels very blessed to have the Omani experience.

Chandra Lahiri, retired CEO of Muriya and an expatriate from India, admires the country’s ability to embrace expats with open arms.

“At an airport in an alien land somewhere, watching an Oman Air flight land, the words come unbidden to your mind, ‘Ah, home!’ That, to me, is the most wondrous thing about Oman – its amazing ability to embrace us, expatriates, and make itself more truly home than even the diverse lands of our birth. The National Day marks yet another milestone in Oman’s renaissance, as we celebrate the country’s extraordinary transformation, over the decades, with happiness and hope. ‘Ah, Oman ... home!’”

National Day is cherished by Omanis and expatriates alike throughout the country, as it allows them to recognise and honour their home together. The beautiful celebration is one several members of the community are fond of and look forward to every year. The red, white and green flag will be waved by many tomorrow.

Contributed by Zara Saldanha



Wafa al Balushi came from Mussanah with her family to take pictures of the National Day lighting at Royal Opera House Muscat on Tuesday (Syed Fasiuddin/ Muscat Daily)

‘We are proud to be Omani’

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

The National Day celebrations, which reflect the achievements of the sultanate in the last five decades, acquire a special significance this year. The general public in 2021 is even more jubilant thanks to the reassuring recovery from COVID-19 pandemic.

National Day is celebrated with great fervour every year; people decorate their vehicles with national symbols and portraits of His Majesty Sultan

Haitham bin Tarik, and cities are lit up in green, red and white lights.

Amour Sultan al Nuamani, 68, described the National Day as time to remember Oman’s development journey, particularly where it started. “The country’s development has been rapid. I remember the time when Oman didn’t have proper roads, basic amenities or health facilities. But five decades later, we have everything. Oman has not only grown into a safe haven for its citizens but for expatriates, too,” he said.

The country’s state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities include the Grand Mosque, the Supreme Court building, Royal Opera House Muscat, Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, the ports in Duqm, Salalah and Sohar, and Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport.

The country’s rapid development is a dream come true. “National Day, in particular, is when all Omanis should be proud of their nation. The sultanate started developing only after 1970s. And now in 2021, there is no place better than Oman. We

have good education, healthcare services, road networks and obviously good leadership. With all this, Oman is set to climb higher to the next level,” said Amerat resident Shamsa Hamad, 78.

On November 18, citizens dress up in the bright national colours, and wear badges and brooches symbolising the occasion. Since the beginning of the month, outlets across the country sell special National Day items.

Streets and building are illuminated, and flags and slogans raised to show devotion and

gratitude for the country. “Every November, I celebrate the country’s progress by raising a flag at home. And on the day, I make it a point to wear a scarf in green, red and white. By doing so, I feel proud of my country,” said Obaid al Khaldi, a resident of Barka.

Over the past decades, Oman has made a clear mark in different arenas and made big differences in the lives of its citizens and residents alike. The least among these is the peace and harmony in the country which is recognised and appreciated all over the world.



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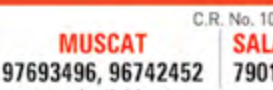
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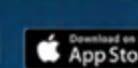
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51st National Day horse race on Friday

Muscat - The 51st National Day Cup horse race, organised by the Royal Horse Racing Club, will be held on Friday, November 19, under the auspices of H H Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik al Said.

The race, to be held at Al Rahba Racecourse in Barka, is a distinguished event held in the midst of the National Day celebrations. Elite Arabian thoroughbreds, pedigrees and domestic breeds will take part in the races spanning eight rounds.

Pact signed by OMSB and ministry

Muscat - Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation signed a programme of cooperation on Tuesday to provide Oman Research Repository with content ranging from published research papers in the Oman Medical Journal, diverse books and reports, and audio-video materials.

The pact was signed by Dr Hilal Ali al Sabti, CEO of OMSB, and H E Dr Saif Abdullah al Haddabi, the ministry’s Undersecretary for Research and Innovation.

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FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

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

Alizz Islamic Bank wins award for women empowerment

Alizz Islamic Bank added another recognition to its list of accomplishments by winning the award for the 'Best Initiative Recognising and Empowering Women' at the Al Mar'a Magazine Summit and Annual Awards event which was held at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel under the patronage H E Rahma al Mahrooqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation.

Alizz Islamic Bank won the honour for its new female banking segment 'Hiyya' which features products and services that are designed exclusively for women.

The award highlighted the achievements of Omani women and shed light on their contributions and effective roles in the comprehensive development of the sultanate.

The award was received by Muna al Khusaibi, deputy senior manager of Marketing and Corporate Communications on behalf of the bank.

Mohammed al Ghassani, chief consumer banking officer, Alizz Islamic Bank, stressed that "Achieving a pioneering role in the banking sector is not an easy matter. We have a clear understanding of women's banking needs and services and we do not make a product without putting in it the maximum benefits for the customer, whether it is a woman or a man."

Ghassani added, "Alizz Islamic Bank won the award for its continuous provision of exclusive and exceptional services and products that it provides to its customers, all of which are in compliance with the provisions and principles of Sharia'a."



Hiyya, offers women a Sharia'a compliant savings account that is based on the Shari'a principle of mudaraba whereby the customer is the 'rab-al-mal' (investor) and the bank is the 'mudarib' (investment manager), wherein the bank invests the funds within a common investment pool, including other Mudaraba accounts.

As per the arrangement, profits will be shared between customers and the bank according to the previously agreed distribution ratios.

In addition to that, the instant debit card will offer exclusive benefits, as the main intent is to ensure an open platform for women to enjoy a host of discounts and special offers at spas,

beauty salons and beauty products, while availing deals from health clubs, fitness centres and perfume stores.

Exclusive stores and branded outlets for clothing and accessories, home décor, restaurants and flower shops are all pegged onto the account, which also includes priority express service at all Alizz Islamic Bank branches.

'Hiyya' customers will get free Takaful insurance services that is designed specifically for women, as it covers some of the most common cancers that affect women, and will also include insurance cover to obtain a second medical opinion.

Additionally, it will also cover the takaful insurance on hand luggage and travel, the Takaful insurance provision also assures

compensation for the loss of hand luggage while traveling anywhere in the world.

It will also provide compensation for the loss of personal documents or keys on account of the loss of handbag; the onus will be on the insurance company to reimburse the customer for the expense incurred in obtaining new personal documents/keys.

The only condition for availing the Takaful insurance scheme, which has some of the best offers to meet all health needs of women and add value to their lifestyles, is that the woman must not be less than 18 years old and not more than 65 years old, and that she be of Omani nationality or have a valid Omani residency visa.

Ooredoo marks National Day with double data offer

Celebrating Oman's 51st National Day with customers, Ooredoo is giving double data, valid for up to one month, from November 14 to 20.

Digital prepaid and postpaid users can now share the festivities with family and friends without the fear of running out of data. Hala users can get up to 60GB with their existing plan, while Shahry Endless can get up to 60GB, and Shahry Omanuna customers can enjoy up to an incredible 3TB to stream, download, surf, share and chat.



This fun freebie is one of many ways Ooredoo is to giving back to customers, giving them the best digital experience. Customers can subscribe to the offer by dialling (*555*900#), through the Ooredoo app, or by visiting any Ooredoo store.

tomers can subscribe to the offer by dialling (*555*900#), through the Ooredoo app, or by visiting any Ooredoo store.

Al Razi Pharmacy opens its latest outlet in Al Khoudh



Al Razi Pharmacy LLC expanded its network of community outlets by offering quality medicines with the inauguration of a new retail outlet at The Sultan Center Al Khoudh branch in Muscat.

The Al Razi Pharmacy new retail outlet was inaugurated by Nagla Yousef al Ibrahim, executive creative director of the Dolphin International LLC, and Dr Mahmoud Shabrawy, general manager of Al Razi Pharmacy LLC.

The vision of Al Razi Pharmacy LLC is to be a leader in delivering value to our community. Al Razi Pharmacy has five retail outlets in different regions of the sultanate of Oman in Ruwi, Amerat, Sohar, Sur, and Al Khoudh (Sultan Center).

In the meantime, Al Razi Pharmacy is planning to open a couple of more retail outlets by the next year in various regions of the sultanate

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In the meantime, Al Razi Pharmacy is planning to open a couple of more retail outlets by the next year in various regions of the sultanate

NBO celebrates National Day giving 18,000 Nuqati points to customers

To mark the sultanate's 51st National Day, National Bank of Oman (NBO) is celebrating with a special one-day offer, giving away 18,000 Nuqati points to 18 lucky customers.

All cardholders who make a POS or online purchase of at least RO20 using their credit, debit, or prepaid card on November 18 will be automatically entered into a draw with the chance to win the points, which can be redeemed on a whole host of products and services including airline tickets, hotels bookings, restaurants, gift shops, fuel stations, entertainment venues and supermarkets.

Maha Saud al Raisi, head of Retail Products at NBO, said, "Celebrating National Day with our community and country is something we look forward to every year. Everyone enjoys getting rewards so this year we wanted to show our appreciations to our loyal customers and reward them for using NBO cards. We continue to live up to our commitment to offer our customers the best banking experience possible."



Maha Saud al Raisi

Nuqati Rewards is the country's first and only free loyalty program that rewards members with points for their day to day banking. Nuqati points can be earned across a wide range of products and services such as spends on cards, increase in deposits, and online transactions. In addition, Al Kanz Savings account-holders will receive nine points for every RO100 deposited.

NBO's suite of credit, debit and prepaid cards offer cashless convenience, tailor-made to meet the needs of its customers. Providing excellent spending power and a smarter, safer alternative to cash, cardholders can enjoy Nuqati rewards for every purchase, as well as exciting promotions. To activate, view and redeem points, members can login through online banking or the mobile app.

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Changan Hunter pick-up 2022 available in automatic transmission

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC (AGAE), which is part of Bahwan International Group, has launched the Changan Hunter pick-up with two engine variants - 2.4 turbo gasoline (available in manual and automatic transmission) and 1.9 turbo diesel engine (manual transmission).

One of the best aspects of the Changan Hunter is its pick-up capabilities and usage. Being a heavy-duty pick-up for loading, it is sturdy, spacious and of high quality, and is suitable for various load and road conditions. Boasting of class leading power and excellent ground clearance, it delivers an unmatched level of supremacy and capability especially for the farm and construction sector. Offering excellent seating comfort, SUV like interiors and manifold features, Changan Hunter ensures a pleasurable and comfortable drive for the passengers.

Changan Hunter's double cabin pick-up comes with a 2.4 turbo gasoline engine producing 210 hp with a 6 speed manual (2wd & 4wd) and automatic transmission available in 4WD. The 'power to perform' Changan

Hunter also comes with a 1.9lt turbo diesel engine producing 150 hp with a 6-speed manual transmission and is available in 4 WD.

This incredible pick-up is built on a large wheelbase of up to 3180mm, and measures 5330mm in length, 1930mm in width and 1835mm in height. With capacity to carry a substantial weight, it has a ground clearance of 230mm and fuel tank capacity of 80 litres.

Changan Hunter is equipped with all safety and security measures and innovative driving systems that provide a smooth ride and enhanced performance. Changan Hunter pick-ups are targeted to meet the needs of local commercial transporters as well small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Logistic solutions.

On the global level, Changan 'Hunter' is described as a distinctive new generation of trucks that are characterised by strong capabilities and a very impressive exterior design with a practical and comfortable interior. All this is a result of the strong support of the research and development centres of

Changan.

2WD manual P (standard)

The exterior of Changan Hunter 2WD manual pick-up features 17" steel wheels, halogen headlamps, front fog lights, ORVMS - electrically adjustable and side-step. The aesthetically designed interiors offer fabric seats.

In terms of safety, the Changan Hunter gets front airbags, rear sensors, ESP and TPMS. The infotainment attributes include multifunction steering wheel, 3.5" instrument cluster screen, two speakers. The rear AC outlets offer comfort.

Changan Hunter 2WD & 4WD manual transmission (Classic) and Automatic 4WD gasoline available.

Changan Hunter 4WD manual P (Classic) includes the features of 2WD manual P (Standard) features and other features. The exterior features includes 17" alloy wheels, door handles in chrome, welcome light, LED Headlamps, follow me home light, LED DRLs, ORVMs with heating and rear LED tail lamps.

The attractive interior includes leatherette fabric seats, electrically adjustable front seats, lumbar support, and rear armrest. The safety features offer rear differential lock, front side airbags, rear view camera, and rear disc brakes. It has a special feature which is the camera for right blind area which helps the driver sitting on the left side of the car to see the right side area behind the car with help of a camera fixed to give the driver a view of that specific area.

The infotainment features include 4.2" coloured instrument cluster screen, 10" infotainment screen, mirror link, radio, USB, Bluetooth, six speakers. It also offers cruise control.

The safety attributes include rear differential lock, front airbags, rear sensors, rear view camera, camera for right blind area, ESP, TPMS and rear disc brakes.

It has a DPF Filter which is an indicator which gets activated when the engine is being over-used or damaged due to the driver's negligence.

For instance, the indicator

screen, 10" infotainment screen, mirror link, radio, USB, Bluetooth, six speakers. It also offers cruise control.

4WD manual diesel (platinum)

The exterior of the Changan Hunter 4WD manual diesel (Platinum) includes 17" alloy wheels, door handles in chrome, halogen headlamps, front fog lights, LED DRLs.

The interior has leatherette fabric seats and rear armrest. With the help of another attribute ORVMs (Outside Rear View Mirror) can be electrically adjusted and has the function of heating to prevent the mirror from fogging up. There are turn indicators on the edges of the mirrors as well.

The safety attributes include rear differential lock, front airbags, rear sensors, rear view camera, camera for right blind area, ESP, TPMS and rear disc brakes.

It has a DPF Filter which is an indicator which gets activated when the engine is being over-used or damaged due to the driver's negligence.

For instance, the indicator

comes on when the AC is running for a long time and the car is stationary or when the driver is driving short distances and doing constant stop-starts or if engine has dust particles.

The indicator can be switched off through a switch placed near the indicator.

It has a host of infotainment features such as 3.5" instrument cluster screen, 10" infotainment screen, mirror link, radio, USB, Bluetooth, 4 speakers and multifunction steering wheel.

It is also fitted with cruise control, rear AC outlet, auto AC.

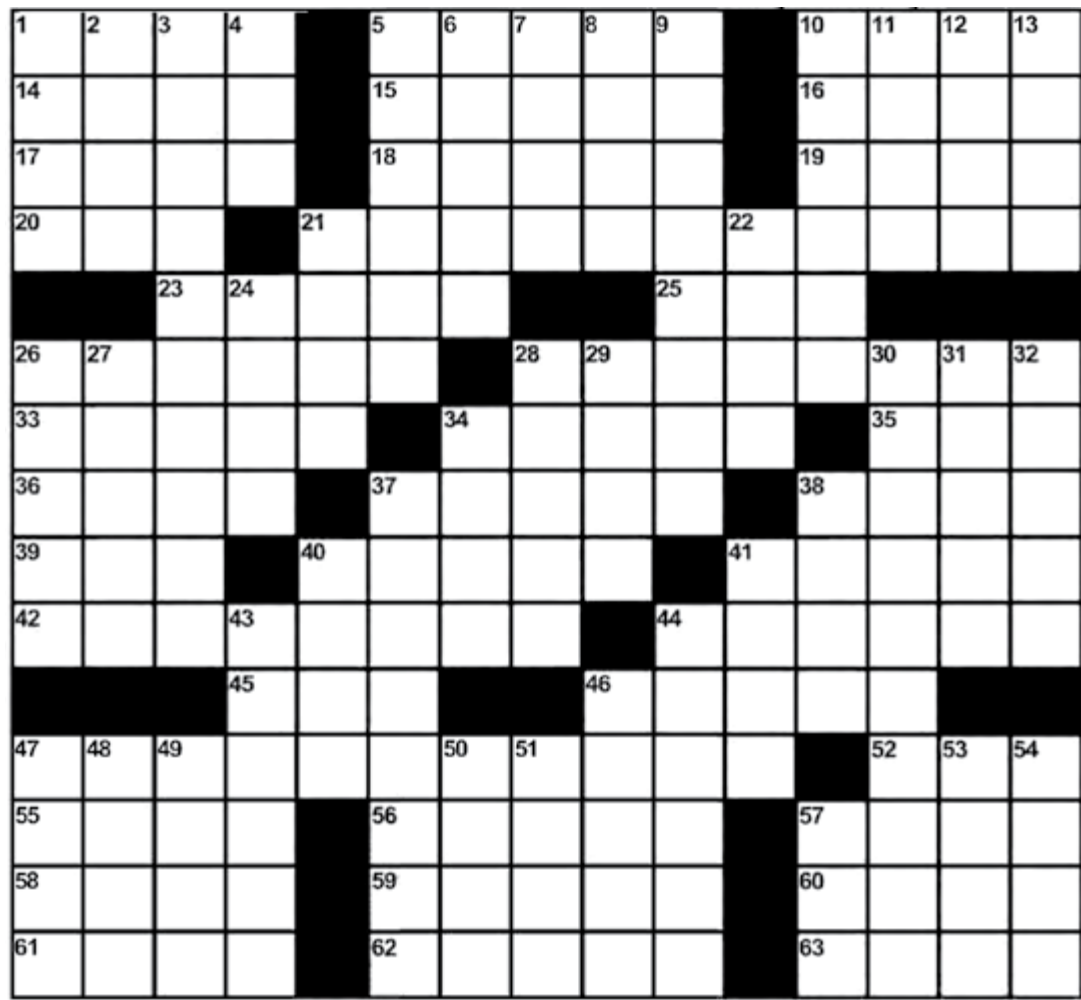
The premium automotive brand Changan has received overwhelming response among Oman customers.

Changan Automobile boasts of a comprehensive portfolio of range of products including Sedan, Crossovers and SUVs like EADO - Family Sedan, CS35 PLUS Crossover, CS75 4WD Crossover, CS85 Coupe, CS95 7 Seater 4WD and Changan Alsvin.

All the models of Changan Hunter the pickup has a 'European Standard' body and has plastic bed liners which is unique to the model.



DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - 1) Study all weekend
 - 5) Newton with a bump on the noggm
 - 10) Pompous "bye"
 - 14) Murder mystery suspect
 - 15) Saki's real last name
 - 16) 37-Across booking
 - 17) Brings to a conclusion
 - 18) Pumpkin eater of rhyme
 - 19) "Render therefore _ Caesar II
 - 20) Org. approving new medicines
 - 21) Well-connected kids' game
 - 23) Western film "neck-tie"
 - 25) Band-Aid necessita-tor
 - 26) In style
 - 28) High-pressure pitch
 - 33) Glorify
 - 34) One of the Barbary States
 - 35) Constrictor snake
 - 36) Ad- (improvises)
 - 37) Well-connected travel guide listing
 - 38) Set edge-to-edge
 - 39) "To Crosswords" could be one
- 40) Sapid
 - 41) Garbage
 - 42) Socializes in search of new business
 - 44) Submerged nets
 - 45) It may appear after a long time?
 - 46) Far from trailing
 - 47) Like well-connected natives
 - 52) Cap from Morocco
 - 55) "This won't hurt _"
 - 56) Gradually surrender to wind and water
 - 57) Model builder's need
 - 58) Chanel's famous fragrance
 - 59) Where you look bet-ter upon exiting
 - 60) "Encore!"
 - 61) Acute, as vision
 - 62) Astral objects
 - 63) They provide easy times
 - 8 9
 - E. Parker
 - 12 13

DOWN

 - 1) Master of whipping, beating and stuffing
 - 2) Violently split
 - 3) What well-connected lookouts do?
- 4) Woman who made it official
 - 5) Like a playfully naughty grin
 - 6) Blue shoe material of song
 - 7) Starting poker chip
 - 8) Neighborhood
 - 9) Farm storage site
 - 10) Has faith in
 - 11) Sensational rating
 - 12) Carry-on bag
 - 13) Run_ (go nuts)
 - 21) One expecting an RSVP
 - 22) They don't go "boom!"
 - 24) Lubricates
 - 26) Breakfast side, sometimes
 - 27) Iron_ (rust)
 - 28) Seeks prey
 - 29) First name in May-berri
 - 30) What well-con-nected tides do
 - 31) Nit
 - 32) Plasterwork backers
 - 34) To-do list item
 - 37) Certain British noble
 - 38) Solo at an opera
 - 40) Garment of old Rome
 - 41) Like a football at kickoff
 - 43) Like some destruc-tion
 - 44) Surface lusters
 - 46) Intense feeling of
- love

47) It makes a stool a chair

48) Slender woodwind

49) Jambalaya ingredi-ent

50) Old-style "Shucks!"

51) Weapon with weights on each end

53) 100 cents

54) This puzzle has two?

57) Clock standard, briefly
- NOTE PAD
- EDITS
LETUP
FLORESCENCE
BATHETHE
BEFORE
WALTER
AGODELIS
NEWSOILED
ARENLEWIS
REALTY
AMPERES
MAORIS
LIE
EER

ETHER
THEME
RETINAS
RESEND
REEFS
DRAT
FIRE
SPENCE
MANGER
COATI
FLOODLIGHTS
AMINO
LASTS

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

A new focus on health and diet could come into your life, shifting your priorities away from taking the easy way out and toward putting in the hard effort that you know will pay off in the long term. It's time to face the music and banish the junk food and get more active. Investigate new ideas on how to eat more healthfully and exercise more. There are many ways to get healthier. Dig deep into matters of the heart with a psychic love reading.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You could be wearing your emotions like a T-shirt today, and they'll be the first thing others notice when they see you. Fortunately, the heavens have arranged for you to be in a wonderful mood. Unpredictable, perhaps, and unusual, for sure, but pleasant. So don't worry about offending anyone (not that you would) and don't hold anything back. The fans will love you exactly as you are.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER21

On one hand, you're totally absorbed by your work, even though getting things done could be tough thanks to a supervisor who's only objective seems to be getting in your way. On the other, you're reevaluating what's important to you. And once you uncover it, you won't be willing to back down on your beliefs, not even for a paycheck. Tread carefully. You're walking that fine line you've heard so much about.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

If you've recently stopped seeing someone, prepare for some unexpected company in the near future, and even over the next month or so, in fact. Whoever you just left behind could be back for yet another dramatic scene too, so it's up to you to make them realize that this really is it and you both need to move on. And don't forget to lavish some attention on that new flame.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

For the next several weeks, you're going to shock and amaze the masses, not to mention the folks you see on a regular basis. You might also end up looking in the mirror wondering who that is. Don't fight it. Everybody gets to be remarkably and appropriately aggressive every now and then. Now it's your turn, and there's no better time to be struck by a heady dose of fire. Put it to good use.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You've never been shy about speaking your mind, but now it's going to come even more easily, and others will seem to be in the same frame of mind. Since you love surprises and everyone knows it, you won't mind. But you should be ready for anything from phone calls to surprise visits to invitations to travel. Yes, you're always up for this sort of thing, so you'll definitely enjoy it, but your loved ones maybe not so much.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

If you're alone today, you might be in the mood to pull out your old scrapbooks and photo albums and flip through them, and that's fine. Just don't get too stuck in the past. It's over and done with, and there's nothing but important new experiences on the way. Besides, you're due to meet someone who will drag you right into the future, and you can bet you won't be kicking, crying, or screaming.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Plenty of fire and excitement are on today's agenda. Chances are excellent that a co-worker will be responsible for turning up the thermostat, which could turn out to be a wonderful thing. Of course, fire shows its face in many ways, so along with the possibility of a casual, supposedly harmless flirtation turning passionate in a hurry, you might also encounter an argument. Either way, it definitely won't be a boring day.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Surprising encounters could be everywhere today, especially at work. And when a co-worker tosses you a glance or smile that isn't quite professional, no one else may notice, but you certainly will. For now, pretend not to notice. Whether you smile back or not is up to you. But if your professional position has recently changed, you'd better think carefully about what to do after that.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You're in the mood for a little excitement. Actually, that's not entirely true. You're in the mood for a whole lot of excitement, and you'd like it to be of the romantic variety. Fortunately, you just so happen to know someone who'll be happy to help you make the very most of your mood. Better give them a call now. This might not last forever and you definitely don't want to waste it.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You've had a wonderful time lately with all kinds of new and fascinating romantic interests coming your way, and you're not ready to quit just yet. You are, however, ready to narrow the playing field substantially as of today. But don't be surprised if the object of your affection makes the first move. The unexpected is about to make an entrance into your life in a very dramatic and very welcome way. Enjoy!

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If you're currently involved, this would be the perfect day to stay home, cuddle up under a nice comforter, and watch a couple of movies. If either of you can't play hooky, though, and you need to force yourself to focus, remember that it's only going to be for a few hours. Once quitting time rolls around, you can both pretend it's date night all over again. Bet you can manage until then, especially if you keep that warm, snuggly image in mind.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

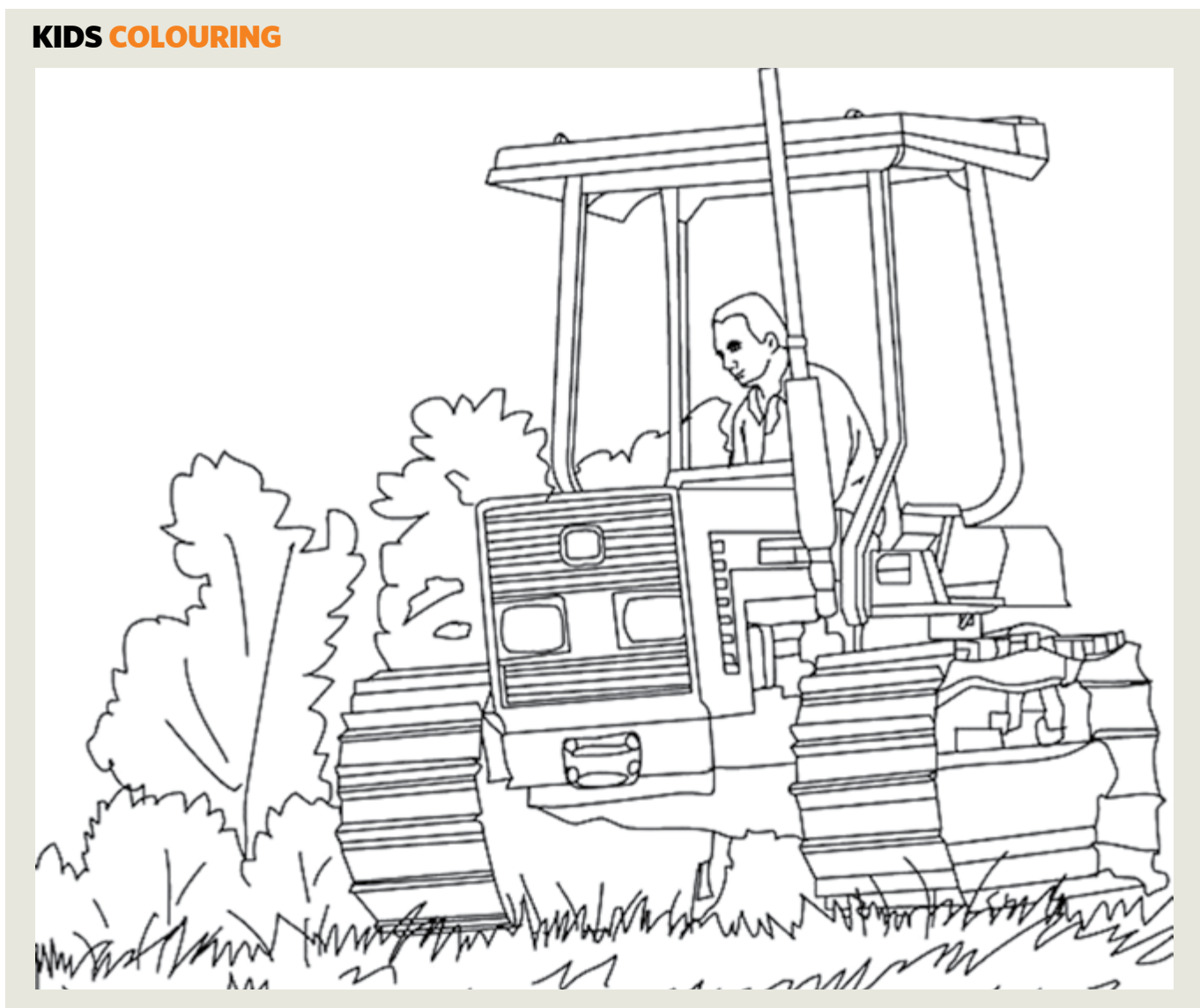
1. The first lady Prime Minister of a country was

 - a. Srimavo Bhadaranaik (Sri Lanka)
 - b. Maria Estate Pew (Argentina)
 - c. Junko Taibei (Japan)
 - d. None of the above
2. The common pesticides which are in use consist of

 - a. PCBs
 - b. organochlorines
 - c. olefins
 - d. heterocyclic compounds
3. The first Asian Games were held in 1951 in

 - a. New Delhi, India
 - b. Manila, Philippines
 - c. Tokyo, Japan
 - d. Jakarata, Indonesia

Answers: 1. a 2. c 3. a



BOGGLER

I	M	N	L
G	R	I	D
F	U	A	P
U	N	N	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

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

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

WORD BUILDER

S A E R

U O E S

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

Pfizer strikes global licensing deal for ‘Paxlovid’ COVID pill

Geneva, Switzerland - US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer on Tuesday announced a deal to make its oral antiviral COVID-19 medication available more cheaply in poorer countries, if the promising pill passes trials and regulatory approval.

Pfizer, which also produces a COVID-19 vaccine with German lab BioNTech, said it had signed an agreement to sub-licence production of its Paxlovid pill to generic drug manufacturers, without receiving royalties.

The deal with the global Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) would therefore make the candidate drug available at a lower cost in 95 low and middle-income countries covering around 53 per cent of the world's population.

It follows a similar deal for US rival Merck & Co last month.

The drug is to be taken with the HIV medicine ritonavir.

Interim data from ongoing trials demonstrated an 89 per cent reduction in the risk of COVID-19-related hospitalisation or death compared to a placebo, in non-hospitalised high-risk adults with COVID-19 within three days of symptom onset, said Pfizer.

Similar results were seen within five days of symptom



A person holds an American flag over the word 'science' during an anti-vaccine protest in front of Pfizer world headquarters in New York City on Saturday (AFP)

onset, it added.

The Geneva-based MPP is a United Nations-backed international organisation that works to facilitate the development of medicines for low- and middle-income nations.

MPP executive director Charles Gore said, "This licence is so important because if authorised or approved, this oral drug is particularly well-suited for low and middle-income countries and could play a critical role in

saving lives."

The drug 'is to be taken together with ritonavir, an HIV medicine we know well, as we have had a licence on it for many years, and we will be working with generic companies to ensure there is enough supply for both COVID-19 and HIV'.

HIV drug mix

Pfizer will forego royalties on sales in all countries covered by the agreement while COVID-19

remains classified as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization.

Last month, the WHO maintained the highest level of alert over the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19.

Paxlovid, or PF-07321332, is an investigational antiviral therapy designed to block the activity of the SARS-CoV-2-3CL protease - an enzyme that

the coronavirus needs to replicate.

Taking it together with a low dose of ritonavir helps slow the breakdown of PF-07321332. It therefore remains active in the body for a longer period at a high concentration, to help combat the virus.

If taken at the first sign of infection or exposure to COVID-19, the pill could potentially help patients avoid severe illness, which can lead to hospitalisation and death, Pfizer said.

"We believe oral antiviral treatments can play a vital role in reducing the severity of COVID-19 infections, decreasing the strain on our healthcare systems and saving lives," said Pfizer chairman and chief executive Albert Bourla.

"We must work to ensure that all people - regardless of where they live or their circumstances - have access to these breakthroughs."

While the search for vaccines has resulted in multiple products being approved for emergency use in the pandemic, the hunt for treatments for those who have already caught the disease has not been as fruitful.

AFP



East Libya strongman Khalifa Haftar announces his candidacy for the presidential election during a televised speech on Tuesday (AFP)

East Libya leader Khalifa Haftar to run for president

Benghazi - The strongman in the east of war-scarred Libya, Khalifa Haftar, said on Tuesday he would run for president in a December 24 election that is also set to be contested by a son of former dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

"I declare my candidacy for the presidential election, not because I am chasing power but because I want to lead our people towards glory, progress and prosperity," he said in a speech, broadcast live on Libyan television.

His announcement comes two days after the candidacy of Seif al Islam Gadhafi - the son of slain dictator Moammar Gadhafi - who has been accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Court.

Both are controversial figures. Haftar, backed by Russia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, is despised by many in western Libya and has been accused of seeking to establish a military dictatorship.

In April 2019, his self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) launched an offensive on the capital Tripoli under the pretext of rooting out militant groups.

The year-long war left the outskirts of the capital in ruins and Libya more divided than ever, but a United Nations-brokered ceasefire last October paved the way for a peace process leading to elections set for December 24.

In his speech on Tuesday, Haftar affirmed that the poll is 'the only way to pull Libya out of chaos'.

On September 22, he provisionally retired from his role as

head of the LNA in line with electoral law to allow him to run for president.

'Intimidation or worse'

Last week, his forces said 300 mercenaries fighting on his side would leave Libya at the request of France in a 'unilateral gesture', expecting nothing in return from the government in Tripoli.

But pro-Haftar forces remain in control of much of eastern and southern Libya, and some analysts have voiced scepticism over the chances of a free and fair vote.

"Haftar's forces have by far been Libya's leading perpetrators of war crimes since 2014, and are bound to use intimidation or worse to influence the elections," tweeted Wolfram Lacher, a Libya specialist at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Following his announcement, Haftar is expected to head to the electoral authority to formalise his candidacy.

Next month's election is seen by the international community as a key step in restoring stability to Libya after a decade of conflict since the overthrow of Gadhafi in a NATO-backed uprising.

But the path to the ballot box has been lined with disputes over the constitutional basis for the polls and the powers to be given to whoever wins.

Some observers have warned that there are no guarantees either side will respect the result of the election.

AFP

Putin tells Macron US leading 'provocative' exercises

Moscow, Russia - Russian President Vladimir Putin told French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Monday that 'provocative' US-led exercises in the Black Sea were 'increasing tensions' between Moscow and NATO, the Kremlin said.

Both leaders expressed 'dis-satisfaction' with what Moscow called a 'worsening' situation in eastern Ukraine, the Kremlin statement said.

Putin 'drew attention to the provocative nature of the large scale exercises led by the United States and its allies in the Black Sea which are increasing tensions between Russia and NATO', the Kremlin said.

Putin's comments came after Western countries raised alarm over Russian military activities near Ukraine.

According to the Elysee, Macron told Putin that France



Russian President Vladimir Putin (AFP)

was ready to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Last week, Putin said the Kremlin considered recent Black Sea exercises by the US and other NATO ships as a serious challenge.

He told state television that

Russia's Defence Ministry 'had a proposal to hold its own unplanned exercises in the same waters'.

"But I believe that this is inappropriate and there is no need to further escalate the situation," he said.

Putin seemingly referred to several US warships taking part in exercises in the Black Sea which Moscow has said it was 'monitoring'.

According to the Kremlin statement, Putin also criticised Ukraine for the 'recent use' of drones in its conflict with pro-Russia rebels.

Last month, Kiev released footage of what it said was its first use of the Turkish-made TB2 Bayraktar drone against separatists.

Putin said this violates peace agreements signed in Minsk in 2015.

In Washington, Pentagon Spokesman John Kirby rejected the criticism of US manoeuvres, and said Russian military activity near Ukraine 'remains concerning to us'.

Kirby said the United States is open about its military exercises,

issuing press statements with details and photographs of them.

"All our exercises are defensive in nature, and they are in keeping with our alliances and partner commitments in the region," he said. "There's been no transparency from the Russian side about this concentration of forces in the western part of their country."

US top diplomat Antony Blinken warned Moscow last week against making another 'serious mistake' on Ukraine as Washington sought clarity about troop movements near the border.

The EU has said it was also concerned by Russian military activities close to the border.

The 27-nation bloc said it was monitoring the situation with partners, including the US and Britain.

AFP

Britain's Prince Charles visits Jordan

Amman, Jordan - Prince Charles and his wife Camilla met with Jordan's King Abdullah II and Queen Rania on Tuesday at the start of a tour of Jordan and Egypt, their first since the coronavirus pandemic struck.

The visit by the Prince of Wales who is heir to the throne comes at a time of concerns about the health of Queen Elizabeth II, who missed the Remembrance service for fallen soldiers on Sunday 'having sprained her back'.

'Back on tour!' Prince Charles' personal office at Clarence House said on Twitter, posting a video of the red carpet welcome and the guard of honour who greeted them as they landed in Amman.

'A very warm welcome to Jordan,' Clarence House added, with a photograph of Britain's heir apparent and his wife the Duchess of Cornwall meeting with King Abdullah and Queen Rania in the palace.

"We are celebrating a 100 years centenary for our country this year, and the special relationship with the United Kingdom is something that is in our



Britain's Prince Charles and his wife Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, visit the baptism site of Al-Maghtas on the Jordan river on Tuesday (AFP)

heart, so it is of tremendous delight for me to welcome you back," Abdullah said as he welcomed the British couple.

Charles apologised that a planned trip to Jordan last year was postponed amid efforts to stem the spread of COVID-19, but said the 'fact we can come now is hugely encouraging'.

Later on Tuesday, the prince and Camilla visited Al-Maghtas, or Bethany Beyond the Jordan, the site where the faithful believe Jesus Christ was baptised, standing on the edge of the water in a moment of quiet re-

flection.

During his visit, Prince Charles is also expected to meet representatives of humanitarian organisations that he supports, including the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR.

Jordan hosts some 650,000 Syrian refugees who are registered with the UNHCR.

Charles told Abdullah 'how hugely we all admire Jordan... on looking after so many refugees coming from all around this area, and the fact that Jordan is so unbelievably hospitable'.

AFP

Israel unveils remains of Hellenistic fortress

Jerusalem - Israeli archaeologists on Tuesday unveiled the ruins of a Hellenistic fortress they said was devastated in the Maccabean Jewish revolt 2,100 years ago which is celebrated during the Hannukah holiday.

The excavation in Lachish Forest, 60km southwest of Jerusalem, has revealed a fortified structure measuring 15m by 15m, with stone walls 3m thick, the Israel Antiquities Authority said.

During the dig of the seven-room structure, archaeologists said, they discovered a layer of artifacts, including weapons, charred wooden beams and dozens of ancient coins.

The excavation directors said the finds were 'tangible evidence of the Hannukah story' behind the upcoming festival of lights, which Jewish people celebrate this year beginning November 28.

The holiday marks the victory of Hasmonean Jewish warriors against the Seleucids, a Greek dynasty then reigning over a large portion of the Middle East.

'It appears that we have dis-



Israel Antiquities Authority archaeologist Saar Ganor presents pottery finds at an excavation site in Lachish Forest near the southern city of Kiryat Gat on Tuesday (AFP)

covered a building that was part of a fortified line erected by the Hellenistic army commanders to protect the large Hellenistic city of Maresha from a Hasmonean offensive,' the directors said in a statement.

'However, the finds from the site show that the Seleucid defences were unsuccessful; the

excavated building was badly burnt and devastated by the Hasmoneans,' added the directors, Saar Ganor, Vladik Lifshits and Ahinoam Montagu.

The Maccabean revolt led to the capture of Jerusalem, the reestablishment of Jewish worship in the Temple, and the Hasmonean dynasty that ruled Judea

until about 67 BCE.

Zeev Elkin, Israel's Minister of Construction and Housing, Jerusalem and Heritage, said the finds were 'impressive discoveries' that 'demonstrate the history of our great and wonderful land and the story of Hannukah'.

AFP

Biden and Xi at loggerheads on Taiwan in lengthy virtual summit

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping traded strong warnings on the future of Taiwan at a virtual summit meant to establish 'guardrails' against conflict between their rival superpowers.

The video-link summit, which took place late on Monday in Washington and early on Tuesday in Beijing, lasted a 'longer than expected' three and a half hours, a senior US official told reporters. "The conversation was respectful and straightforward."

While the goal was to settle an increasingly volatile relationship between the giant economic and geopolitical competitors, tension over Taiwan - a self-governing democracy claimed by China - loomed large.

Chinese state media reported after the summit that Xi cautioned Biden that encouraging Taiwanese independence would be 'playing with fire'.

"Some people in the US intend to 'use Taiwan to control China.' This trend is very dangerous and is like playing with fire, and those who play with fire will get



US President Joe Biden with China's President Xi Jinping (on a monitor) during a virtual summit from the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, DC on Monday (AFP)

burned," he was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency.

The White House readout after the summit was considerably more measured, but between the lines, Biden's pushback against Beijing's increasingly aggressive posture toward Taiwan was clear.

'On Taiwan, President Biden underscored that the United

States... strongly opposes unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait,' the White House statement said.

The statement reiterated longstanding US policy that does not recognise Taiwan's independence but supports defence of the island.

According to the US official,

who asked not to be identified, there was 'extended discussion of Taiwan' during the summit.

Biden also raised 'concerns' over wider issues of human rights abuses and mass repression against the Uyghurs in the northwest region of Xinjiang.

The two leaders have spoken by phone twice since Biden's inauguration in January but with Xi

refusing to travel abroad because of the pandemic, an online video meeting was the only option short of an in-person summit.

Avoid veering into conflict

The White House emphasised it did not expect - or get - any concrete changes out of the summit. Rather the goal was to build on earlier contacts with Xi to manage a relationship that is too big to fail.

Speaking from the White House to Xi on a television screen, Biden said it was their 'responsibility as leaders of China and the United States to ensure that the competition between our countries does not veer into conflict, whether intended or unintended'.

"We need to establish some common sense guardrails," he said.

Instead, the aim should be for 'simple, straightforward competition', Biden said, promising a 'candid' discussion.

Xi, speaking from Beijing, called Biden 'my old friend', but

said their countries had to work more closely.

"We face multiple challenges together. As the world's two largest economies and permanent members of the UN Security Council, China and the United States need to increase communication and cooperation," he said, speaking through an interpreter in brief public remarks, before they went behind closed doors.

Both Biden and Xi emphasised the need for working together on major global issues, especially COVID-19 and climate change.

'A sound and steady China-US relationship' is needed 'for safeguarding a peaceful and stable international environment', Xi said.

Relations between the superpowers plummeted during the presidency of Donald Trump, who launched a trade war with China while assailing Beijing's response to an international probe into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

AFP

QUICK RUN

Palestinian killed by Israel army

A Palestinian was killed on Tuesday during dawn clashes with Israeli troops in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry and the Israeli army said.

Saddam Bani Odeh (26), died in hospital from a bullet wound to the lungs following the clashes on the road into the northern town of Tubas, the ministry said.

Israel's army said that during an operation to arrest two 'suspects' in Tubas overnight, 'live ammunition was fired towards [Israeli] troops and an explosive device was hurled from a passing vehicle'.

"The troops responded with fire towards the suspicious vehicle," the army statement said, adding that the military was 'aware of reports that a Palestinian was killed'.

Sudan releases Al Jazeera bureau chief

Sudanese authorities released Al Jazeera television's Khartoum bureau chief on Tuesday, the Qatar-based network said, two days after security forces arrested him from his home.

The arrest of Al-Musalami al Kabbashi was the latest since a military coup three weeks ago and came after tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets on Saturday to demand a transition to civilian rule.

Kabbashi, a Sudanese citizen, 'was released on Tuesday... the military has yet to give a reason for his detention', the network said.

Assad scraps top Muslim cleric post

Syrian President Bashar Assad has issued a decree eliminating the post of top Muslim cleric for the country and expanding the powers of a government ministry overseeing religious affairs.

The new decree, which state media said came into effect on Monday, effectively forces Ahmed Badreddin Hassoun, appointed as grand mufti by Assad in 2004, into retirement.

His prerogatives will be folded into a council that falls under the ministry of religious endowments, or waqf, which already oversees Islamic affairs in Syria, the official SANA news agency said.

The Council on Islamic Jurisprudence will from now on determine the lunar calendar and make rulings on matters relating to religious rituals and rites, SANA said.

Two civilians killed in Kashmir

Two men killed alongside a pair of suspected militants in Indian-administered Kashmir were 'murdered in cold blood by security forces', a relative of one of the dead said on Tuesday.

According to police, two suspected rebels were killed the night before during a shootout inside a commercial centre in Srinagar, the territory's main administrative hub. The building's owner Mohammad Altaf Bhat and tenant Mudasir Ahmed also died in 'cross-fire', the police added.

Bhat's niece said her uncle and Ahmed were civilians who had been murdered in 'cold blood'.

AFP



A man runs away from a water cannon used by Polish law enforcement officers against migrants attempting to break into Poland on Tuesday (AFP)

Poles fire tear gas at migrants on Belarus border

Sokolka, Poland - Polish forces fired tear gas and water cannon on Tuesday at stone-throwing migrants trying to cross the Belarusian border, sparking accusations from Belarus that EU and NATO member Poland was trying to escalate the crisis.

Polish border guards, who are deployed along with the army and police, estimate up to 4,000 migrants are currently camped out on the frontier between Poland and Belarus in increasingly dire conditions and freezing temperatures.

Western powers accuse Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko of orchestrating the crisis, possibly with Russia's backing, by luring migrants to the border to sow division in the European Union - claims denied by Minsk and Moscow.

A standoff near the Bruzgi-Kuznica border crossing on the EU's eastern frontier began last week when hundreds of migrants gathered there.

'Migrants attacked our soldiers and officers with rocks and are trying to destroy the fence and cross into Poland,' Poland's Defence Ministry said on Tuesday, tweeting a video showing apparent clashes at the border.

"Our forces used tear gas to quell the migrants' aggression."

A police officer, a border guard and a soldier were injured in the clashes, Polish officials said, with police saying stun grenades and tear gas canisters

had also been thrown at officers.

The Defence Ministry said 15,000 troops have been deployed. There were an estimated several hundred border guards and police officers.

'Stop the suffering'

Belarusian Foreign Ministry spokesman Anatoly Glaz accused Poland of exacerbating the problem.

"We see today from the Polish side direct provocations and inhumane treatment of the disadvantaged," he said.

Russia also condemned Poland's use of tear gas and water cannon against the migrants, with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov calling it absolutely unacceptable.

Visiting areas near the border on the Polish side, the Council of Europe human rights commissioner Dunja Mijatovic on Tuesday said the situation was extremely dangerous.

"We need to find a way to de-escalate, to make sure the focus is really to stop the suffering," she told reporters, also calling for aid groups and the media to be given 'full access'.

Lukashenko said on Tuesday that he wanted to avoid a 'heated confrontation' at the border.

"The main thing now is to protect our country and our people, and not to allow clashes," he told a government meeting, according to state news agency Belta.

AFP

Myanmar junta charges Suu Kyi with fraud

Yangon, Myanmar - Myanmar's junta Min Aung Hlaing has charged Aung San Suu Kyi with committing electoral fraud during the 2020 polls, state media reported on Tuesday, the latest in a barrage of allegations against her since her party won in a landslide.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military coup in February sparked nationwide protests and a deadly crackdown on dissent.

Detained since the putsch, Suu Kyi (760, has been charged with illegally importing walkie talkies, sedition and corruption, and faces decades in jail if convicted.

Suu Kyi is now also accused of 'election fraud and lawless actions' during the polls, state-run newspaper *Global New Light of Myanmar* reported, without giving details on when court proceedings would begin.



Aung San Suu Kyi (AFP)

Fifteen other officials - including former president Win Myint and the former chairman of the election commission - face the same charge, the report added.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) saw its support increase in the 2020 vote compared to the 2015 election, trouncing a military-aligned party.

But the junta has cited fraud during the poll as its reason for seizing power and ending Myanmar's democratic interlude.

In July, it cancelled the results of the polls, announcing it had uncovered more than 11mn instances of voter irregularities.

In a report on the 2020 polls, the Asian Network for Free Elections monitoring group had said

Russia admits destroying one of its satellites with space missile strike

Moscow, Russia - Russia on Tuesday admitted to destroying one of its satellites during a missile test but rejected US accusations that it had endangered the International Space Station (ISS).

US officials on Monday accused Russia of a 'dangerous and irresponsible' strike on a satellite that had created a cloud of debris and forced the ISS crew to take evasive action.

'The Russian Defence Ministry successfully conducted a test, as a result of which the Russian spacecraft Tselina-D, which had been in orbit since 1982, was destroyed,' the military said in a statement.

Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu later said the launch used a 'promising' system that 'accurately' struck its target.

"The fragments that formed do not pose any threat to space activity," he added, as quoted by Russian news agencies.

US officials said they were not informed in advance of the anti-satellite missile test - only the fourth ever to hit a spacecraft from the ground - which generated more than 1,500 pieces of trackable orbital debris.



A close-up view of the International Space Station (AFP)

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday that the danger was far from over and the debris would continue to threaten satellites and activities on the ISS.

NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg on Tuesday described the test as a 'reckless' and 'concerning' act.

"It demonstrates that Russia is now developing new weapon systems that can shoot down satellites," he said at a meeting with EU defence ministers.

On Tuesday, French Defence Minister Florence Parly on Twitter

lashed out at 'space vandals' who were producing dangerous amounts of debris.

The satellite was a Soviet signals intelligence satellite that has been defunct for several decades.

The Russian military said it was carrying out planned activities to strengthen its defence capabilities but denied that the test was dangerous.

'The United States knows for certain that the resulting fragments, in terms of test time and orbital parameters, did not and will not pose a threat to orbital

stations, spacecraft and space activities,' it said.

The confirmation of the US claims came moments after Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had denied that Moscow had endangered the ISS.

"To declare that the Russian Federation creates risks for the peaceful use of space is, at the very least, hypocrisy," Lavrov told a press conference in Moscow, adding that 'there are no facts' behind the claims.

NASA said the crew aboard the orbital outpost - currently four Americans, a German and two Russians - were woken up and forced to take shelter in their return ships.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russia's Roscosmos space agency said its 'automated warning system for dangerous situations' was continuing 'to monitor the situation in order to prevent and counter all possible threats to the safety of the International Space Station and its crew'.

NASA chief Bill Nelson said on Monday he was 'outraged' by the 'irresponsible and destabilising action'.

AFP



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Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
-may Allah bless and protect him-



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Omantel Group reports profit of RO168mn for nine months

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Omantel Group has reported a net profit of RO168.1mn for the nine months period ended September 30, 2021 compared with the net profit of RO167.7mn for the corresponding period of last year, a marginal increase of 0.2 per cent.

Net profit attributable to the shareholders of Omantel rose by 5.6 per cent to RO48.9mn during the January - September period of 2021 against RO46.4mn posted in the same period of 2020, Omantel said in its report submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Omantel said its group revenues for the nine months period ended September 2021 decreased 3.1 per cent to RO1.802bn compared to RO1.859bn for the corresponding period in 2020.



Omantel's domestic revenues also decreased 3.2 per cent to RO396.9mn in the first nine months period this year compared to RO410.1mn in the same period of 2020.

'Revenues growth achieved in mobile postpaid and fixed broadband have contributed in managing the margins for the third

quarter of 2021, despite a fall in mobile prepaid revenue due to challenging market conditions,' Omantel said in its report.

The company said its net profit from domestic operations for the nine months ended September 30, 2021 came at RO54.7mn, which is a decline of 2.3 per cent in comparison to

2020 performance.

'Continued focus on cost optimisation measures has resulted in managing the net profit decline despite the revenue decrease,' the company said.

Omantel's total domestic subscriber base as of September 2021 (including mobile and fixed businesses) stood at 3.303mn

(excluding mobile resellers) compared to 3.286mn a year ago, recording a growth of 0.5 per cent over the year. Total subscriber base with mobile resellers reached 3.8mn.

Omantel's mobile market share (including mobile resellers) stood at 53.6 per cent in September 2021 with a revenue share of 60.1 per cent. The company's fixed telephone market share is 70.3 per cent with a revenue market share of 80.1 per cent.

Omantel's Kuwait-based subsidiary Zain Group recorded a 3.2 per cent drop in revenues at RO1.413bn in the first nine months of 2021 compared to RO1.458bn in the corresponding period of last year. Total customer base of Zain Group decreased by 2.3 per cent to 48.4mn as of September 2021 compared to 49.6mn customers a year ago.



Oil price rally may start to ease, says IEA

Paris, France - The International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Tuesday a reprieve from soaring oil prices may be on the horizon as output increases.

Shortages of natural gas and coal have triggered a switch to oil, boosting demand for crude and fuelling a rise in prices.

Last month, the IEA, which advises governments on energy policy, said oil prices were 'scaling multi-year highs'.

But on Tuesday, it sounded a note of optimism, saying that tide may be turning.

'The world oil market remains tight by all measures, but a reprieve from the price rally could be on the horizon,' the Paris-based agency said.

It cautioned however that was not because demand for high-polluting oil was decreasing, 'but rather due to rising oil supplies'.

Prices had until now risen on the back of a global economic recovery, while supply from producer countries remained tight.

The price of a barrel of oil rose by around US\$20 between the

end of August and mid October, before reaching a plateau in recent weeks at around US\$80.

But the IEA said global oil production was on the rise.

In October, oil supplies leapt by 1.4mn barrels per day (bpd), with the US post-hurricane recovery accounting for half the increase. A further boost of 1.5mn bpd is expected over November and December.

The IEA's forecast for demand, meanwhile, remains unchanged this year and the next.

'Global oil demand is strengthening due to robust gasoline consumption and increasing international travel as more countries re-open their borders,' it said.

'However, new COVID waves in Europe, weaker industrial activity and higher oil prices will temper gains, leaving our forecast for oil demand growth largely unchanged.'

For 2021 and 2022, it predicts an increase of 5.5mn bpd and 3.4mn bpd respectively.

AFP

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Bank Muscat receives two awards from JP Morgan



Muscat - Bank Muscat has been recognised by global banking giant JP Morgan for its best-in-class Straight-Through Processing (STP) rates for US dollar clearing operations.

The bank won the 2021 Quality Recognition Award for MT103 with its best-in-class STP rate of 98.63 per cent and the 2021 Quality Recognition Award for MT202 with STP rate of 99.9 per cent from JP Morgan, which is a global leader in offering financial services and solutions to the world's leading governments, corporates and institutions, a press release said.

Recipients of this award have traditionally demonstrated superior transaction-processing quality, resulting in higher efficiencies, faster payments and cost reductions and honouring commitments to operational excellence. JP Morgan has been giving these awards since 1997

to acknowledge consistent high-quality performance by its partner banks.

The international payments landscape is an essential part of banking relationships in today's global economy.

Given the dynamic environment and continuous developments in technology, the responsibility for quicker and efficient processing is a shared effort by all financial institutions that are involved in the payment cycle.

Bank Muscat has established more than 500 correspondent banking relationships across the world and JP Morgan is among Bank Muscat's prominent correspondent banks for dollar payments. Bank Muscat won the accolades after exceeding the elite benchmarks in both categories.

Bank Muscat's exceptional quality of SWIFT messages on

dollar payments and an outstanding error-free rate for remittances were highlighted by the two awards, which also appreciated the Bank Muscat's valued partnership with JP Morgan.

The bank's performance has been consistently lauded by the international financial and banking community for decades, with the bank winning similar awards from Wells Fargo, Standard Chartered and Citibank in the past.

Also in June 2021, Bank Muscat was recognised as one of the 'Top 100 Companies in the Middle East' and as one of the 'Top 50 banks in the Region' by *Forbes Middle East*.

The bank has also won a number of awards from prestigious international publications like *Global Finance*, *Euromoney*, *The Banker* and *EMEA Finance* for its different lines of business in 2021.

Adnoc to invest \$6bn for more oil drilling

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Abu Dhabi's national oil company announced on Tuesday a US\$6bn investment in crude oil drilling as it ramps up production capacity.

The announcement comes a day after the United Arab Emirates said a recent UN climate summit in Glasgow was a 'success' but that the world needs to keep investing billions in oil and gas. The UAE is one of the world's top crude exporters, with an average of 4.2mn barrels per day (bpd). The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc) said the US\$6bn investment would 'enable drilling growth as it boosts its crude oil production capacity to 5mn bpd by 2030'.

The Adnoc investments include contracts with multiple companies, some lasting for a decade, according to a statement released on the second day of the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference.

Both the UAE and neighbouring Saudi Arabia, the world's

number one oil exporter, have announced net zero carbon goals, despite efforts to ramp up oil production. The UAE has said it hopes to be carbon neutral by 2050.

Sultan al Jaber, the UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, forecast that the oil and gas industry would have to invest 'over US\$600bn every year until 2030' just to keep up with the expected demand. "Yes, renewable energy is the fastest growing segment of the energy mix, but oil and gas is still the biggest and will be for decades to come," he said.

"While the world has agreed to accelerate the energy transition, it is still heavily reliant on oil and gas."

UAE Energy Minister Suhail Mohamed al Mazrouei said indications point to an oil supply surplus in the first quarter of 2022. "2022 will be a year of balance between supply and demand." AFP

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MSX closes flat; volumes down

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Tuesday closed almost flat at 4,032.67 points against 4,030.57 points on Monday. Trading activity at the bourse remained weak compared to the previous session.

While Financial and Industrial indices slightly increased 0.06 per cent and 0.08 per cent, respectively, Service index closed 0.40 per cent down. MSX Sharia index inched down 0.01 per cent to close at 546.64 points.

Trading activity decreased on Tuesday as volumes fell 27.5 per cent to 7.86mn shares compared with 10.83mn shares traded in the previous trading session. Market turnover also dropped 24.8 per cent to RO1.41mn compared with RO1.88mn in the previous session.

Market breadth at the MSX remained negative with eight advancing stock to 12

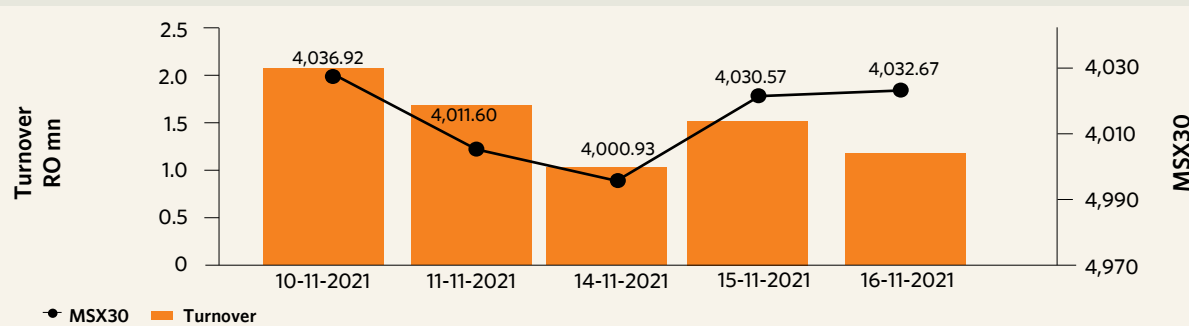


decliners. As many as 26 traded stocks remained flat for the day.

Top gainers for the day were Al Maha Ceramics (2.0 per cent), Bank Dhofar (1.54 per cent), Oman Investment and Finance Company (1.45 per cent) and Vision Insurance (1.24 per cent).

Top losers were Oman Fisheries (-7.35 per cent), Oman and Emirates Investment Holding (-2.86 per cent), Muscat Desalination (-2.53 per cent), Ooredoo Oman (-2.17 per cent) and Oman National Engineering and Investment (-2.13 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



India's Akasa Air orders 72 planes from Boeing

Dubai, UAE – Boeing announced its first big order at a major air show in Dubai on Tuesday, saying India's new carrier Akasa Air ordered 72 737 Max aircraft.

"The new Indian carrier has ordered [72] 737 Max airplanes to build its fleet," the US aerospace giant said in a statement, adding that it was valued at nearly US\$9bn at list prices.

Akasa Air has ordered two variants of the 737 Max family, including the 737-8 and the high-capacity 737-8-200.

"We are delighted to partner with Boeing for our first airplane order and thank them for their trust and confidence in Akasa Air's business plan and leadership team," the airline's CEO, Vinay Dube, said, according to the statement.

"India is one of the fastest-growing aviation markets in the world with an unparalleled potential. We are already witnessing a strong recovery in air travel, and we see decades of growth ahead of us."

Boeing had said on Sunday



that it would fulfil an order to convert 11 single-aisle 737s into cargo aircraft, as the aviation industry slowly recovers from a COVID-induced downturn.

Boeing's 737 Max returned to the skies last year after the entire fleet was grounded for 20 months following two crashes - in Ethiopia and Indonesia - that left 346 people dead.

"We are honoured that Akasa Air... has placed its trust in the 737 family to drive affordable passenger service in one of the world's fastest-growing aviation

regions," said Stan Deal, president and CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes, according to the statement.

Almost 370 of the planes remain in inventory and Boeing chief executive David Calhoun has said that it will take two years to sell them all.

The 737 Max has also yet to be re-certified in China, a major market for aircraft makers. Boeing's production plans will depend on access to the Chinese market, Calhoun says.

AFP

China's factory output, retail sales see surprise jump in October

Beijing, China – China's economy showed signs of stabilising in October, according to data on Monday, with retail sales and factory output beating expectations as a power supply crisis appeared to ease.

The recovery in the world's second biggest economy has been losing steam for much of the year after a swift bounceback from harsh lockdowns to contain COVID-19, with officials earlier citing an 'unstable and uneven' economic rebound.

Power outages in recent months caused by emission reduction targets, the surging price of coal, and supply shortages also had impacted some factory production. But industrial production grew 3.5 per cent on-year last month, up from September, said the National Bu-

reau of Statistics, as China worked to boost coal production and ease the energy shortage. A survey of economists by Bloomberg News tipped a 3.0 per cent expansion.

However, NBS spokesman Fu Linghui cautioned that the 'international environment remains complex and severe' with many uncertainties, adding that China needs to 'work harder to maintain economic stability and recovery'.

"While electricity shortages and production cuts hampered output in early October, we don't think they are a significant problem anymore," said Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics on Monday.

He added that this follows 'a range of policy measures to boost coal production and lower coal prices'. But economic mo-

mentum remained weak in October, he said, 'with the real estate downturn weighing on industry and a new wave of COVID outbreaks dampening household consumption'.

Retail sales rose 4.9 per cent on-year, according to latest data, up from September and far exceeding forecasts for 3.7 per cent. But observers warn that this could be bogged down by recent containment measures, reimposed following a fresh virus outbreak in mid-October that has spread to several regions.

While October is traditionally part of China's spending season, Fu said "domestic tourist numbers and income growth were below pre-pandemic levels" during the golden week holiday at the start of the month.

AFP

Emirates on path to profitability: Clark

Dubai, UAE - Aviation giant Emirates expects to return to profitability 'in the next 18 months' as the sector bounces back from the COVID-19 pandemic, its president Tim Clark said on Tuesday.

The Dubai-based carrier said last week it was on the path to recovery as six-month losses dropped by more than half from a year earlier.

"The profitability of Emirates is a well-known fact... We'll restore that in the next 18 months, we're already on path to do that," Clark told reporters at the Dubai Air Show.

"We were burning through US\$250mn a month. We stopped that. We're now a growing business again. "In the last



Tim Clark

four weeks, we've been profitable, even with 80 A380s on the ground."

Emirates posted an April-September loss of US\$1.6bn, compared with US\$3.4bn during the

same period in 2020.

Emirates specialises in long-haul flights, with its fleet solely composed of large A380 and B777 aircraft, dozens of which it grounded amid a lack of passen-

ger traffic.

However, Clark said he was 'fairly bullish' about the recovery. "As soon as it comes back, you will have 18 months of resurgence of demand, the likes of which you've never seen," he said.

Clark said that he expected global traffic to return to pre-crisis levels by 2023-2024, growing at about 4 per cent every year after that.

But with many airlines having sold off their older aircraft or downsized their fleet to cut costs, 'capacity will not be there in international airlines to meet that demand', he said. This is the 'biggest problem going forward over the next five to ten years'.

AFP

Pfizer and Moderna making \$1,000 profit every second: Analysis

Washington, US – Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna are making combined profits of US\$65,000 every minute from their highly successful COVID-19 vaccines while the world's poorest countries remain largely unvaccinated, according to a new analysis.

The companies have sold the vast majority of their doses to rich countries, leaving low-income nations in the lurch, said the People's Vaccine Alliance (PVA), a coalition campaigning for wider access to COVID vaccines, which based its calculations on the firms' own

earning reports.

The Alliance estimates that the trio will make pre-tax profits of US\$34bn this year between them, which works out to over US\$1,000 a second, US\$65,000 a minute or US\$93.5mn a day.

"It is obscene that just a few companies are making millions of dollars in profit every single hour, while just 2 per cent of people in low-income countries have been fully vaccinated against coronavirus," Maaza Seyoum of the African Alliance and People's Vaccine Alliance Africa said.

"Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna have used their monopolies



to prioritise the most profitable contracts with the richest governments, leaving low-income countries out in the cold."

Pfizer and BioNTech have delivered less than 1 per cent of their total supplies to low-income countries while Moderna

has delivered just 0.2 per cent, the PVA said.

Currently, 98 per cent of people in low-income countries have not been fully vaccinated.

The three companies' actions are in contrast to AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson, which provided their vaccines on a not-for-profit basis, though both have announced they foresee ending this arrangement in future as the pandemic winds down.

PVA said that despite receiving public funding of more than US\$8bn, Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna have refused calls to transfer vaccine technology to

producers in low- and middle-income countries via the World Health Organization, 'a move that could increase global supply, drive down prices and save millions of lives'.

'In Moderna's case, this is despite explicit pressure from the White House and requests from the WHO that the company collaborate in and help accelerate its plan to replicate the Moderna vaccine for wider production at its mRNA hub in South Africa,' the group said.

While Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla has dismissed technology transfer as 'dangerous non-

sense', the WHO's decision to grant emergency use approval to the Indian-developed Covaxin earlier this month proves that developing countries have the capacity and expertise, PVA added.

PVA, whose 80 members include the African Alliance, Global Justice Now, Oxfam, and UNAIDS, is calling for pharmaceutical corporations to immediately suspend intellectual property rights for COVID vaccines by agreeing to a proposed waiver of World Trade Organisation's TRIPS agreement.

AFP

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Envoys greet His Majesty Sultan



To mark the 51st National Day of Oman, a number of foreign ambassadors in Oman have expressed their greetings and sincere wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the citizens of Oman on behalf of their respective governments and the people of their homelands. The members of the diplomatic corps were interviewed by the management of Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboo's personal website – the first Omani website that highlights the life and achievements of the Late His Majesty, translated into 35 languages.



H E Leslie M Tsou
Ambassador of United States

The US government and the American people congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Omani people on the occasion of Oman's 51st National Day. Oman and the United States share the common desire to create a better future for the next generation. Our thriving economic, security, and cultural partnership is anchored by deep historical bonds of friendship. We look ahead to many more years of prosperous cooperation. Happy National Day, Oman.



H E María Luisa Huidobro
Ambassador of Spain

On the occasion of the 51st year celebrating the renaissance of Oman, in my position as Ambassador of Spain, I would like to take this opportunity to convey, in the name of HM King Felipe VI and the Government of Spain and its people, our warmest congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and to the friendly people of this beloved country.

I am confident that our bilateral relations that date from decades between both the monarchies will continue to contribute for further progress in the various fields of mutual interests.



H E Stella Kluth
Ambassador of The Netherlands

On the occasion of the 51st National Day of Oman, I am honoured to convey and extend my sincere and cordial congratulations and warmest greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, as well as to the friendly people of Oman. More than 400 years ago the strong bonds between Oman and The Netherlands were formed on the basis of trade. They have not only persisted, but have grown broader and deeper over the centuries. We look forward to many more years of friendship and cooperation. May Oman always enjoy security, stability, welfare and prosperity. Happy National Day!



H E Ligia Maria Scherer
Ambassador of Brazil

On the joyous occasion of the 51th National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, it is my privilege to extend my heartfelt greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, on behalf of the Embassy of Brazil in Muscat and on my own behalf. It will be my great honour to further enhance the already warm friendship and strong cooperation bonds that unite Brazil and Oman. May I take this opportunity to convey my sincere wishes for His Majesty and the people of Oman long-lasting peace, prosperity and happiness.



H E Federica Favi
Ambassador of Italy

On the occasion of the 51st Anniversary of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, I would like to send, first of all, my thoughts to the people and the families who suffered from the COVID19 pandemic that has hit so hard the country this year. I would like to commend the Omani authorities for their effective and successful response both to the pandemic and the preparedness and recovery from the cyclone. My sincere wish is to see the country meet its vital targets of economic diversification and recovery of state apparatus modernisation, digitalisation and sustainable growth. Italy is ready to contribute to this important process with all its capabilities and shared ideals and values.



H E Ayse Sözen Usluer
Ambassador of Turkey

It is a great honour and pleasure to extend warm congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman on the occasion of the sultanate's 51st National Day. On this auspicious day, I am reminded of the proud history of Oman, which made this country an oasis of stability and progress in the region. With deep-rooted ties from the 16th century, Turkey and Oman enjoy excellent bilateral relations in many fields with a higher momentum every year. May Allah continue to bestow his blessing to the people of Oman and His Majesty Sultan Haitham, with good health, peace and welfare.



H E Imelda M Panolong
Ambassador of Philippines

On behalf of the Philippine Embassy and the Filipino community in Oman, I wish to convey to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Oman Government, and the friendly people of Oman, my sincere felicitations on their National Day. I congratulate His Majesty for his wisdom and astuteness in his rule, as exemplified in Oman's success in overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic. With over 40,000 Filipinos in Oman, Oman is one of our important partners in the region. I look forward to further strengthening relations between our two sisterly countries.



H E Véronique Aulagnon
Ambassador of France

On the occasion of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman and on behalf of the President of the French Republic, its government and its people, I convey our congratulations to his Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Omani people. Our partnership has deep historical roots. Based on trust and mutual respect, it is reflected in a concrete way in all areas - political dialogue, military and security cooperation, investment, education and culture. As a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations and a strong supporter of multilateralism, France deeply values the role of Oman in promoting peaceful resolution of conflicts, respect for international law, sustainable development and social justice. Happy National Day!

Haitham on 51st National Day



H E Dr Tibor Szatmari
Ambassador of Hungary

On the glorious occasion of the 51st National Day of Oman, on behalf of the President, the government and the citizens of Hungary, it is my greatest honour to express to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of the sultanate, my most heartfelt appreciation, greetings, congratulations, and best wishes. We look forward to continuing the strong bilateral relations and to further strengthening them for the sustainable progress and prosperity of our two nations, in the years to come.

H E Toshinori Kobayashi
Ambassador of Japan

On behalf of the people of Japan, I congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of the Sultanate of Oman on the joyous 51st National Day. We take the opportunity to express our sincere admiration to the Government of Oman for its efforts against COVID-19 and the citizens for their unity during this challenging time. Before long, the world will welcome the year 2022, a year to mark the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Japan and Oman. It would be our greatest honour to deepen the bilateral relationship and to add another milestone to our growing partnership and cooperation on all levels and fields.



H E Abdullah al Enezi
Ambassador of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

On the occasion of the 51st anniversary of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, I would like to extend my congratulations to the friendly Sultanate of Oman, its leadership, people and government, wishing them health, progress and prosperity. I am confident that, just as the relations between the two countries witnessed stability and steadfastness during the reign of the Late Sultan Qaboos, so would it continue on the same path under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. May God protect him and nurture him towards further development and prosperity. In this context, we will seek to enhance economic cooperation between the two countries.



H E Mohamed Dori Yakub
Ambassador of Kenya

I heartily congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the wonderful people of Oman on their glorious 51st National Day. Kenya and Oman enjoy warm and deep-rooted friendly relations that is strongly anchored on a shared, long-standing historical and cultural connection that dates as far back to the 17th Century. I remain confident that our warm and fruitful bilateral relations will continue to be strengthened under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. In the name of H E Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya, the government, and people I wish His Majesty, the government and friendly people of the Oman good health, peace and prosperity.



H E Andreas Nikolaides
Ambassador of Cyprus

On the auspicious occasion of the 51st Anniversary of the National Day of Oman, it gives me great pleasure to convey to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and the friendly people of Oman, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Cyprus, our warmest wishes and sincere congratulations for continued peace, prosperity and progress. On this 'Second Renaissance', Oman's steady and unwavering commitment to peace, dialogue, and mutual understanding between the nations and peoples of the world, make it an indispensable partner to our common endeavours to promote peace and prosperity.



H E Thomas F Schneider
Ambassador of Germany

It gives me great pleasure to convey most sincere feelings of friendship and warm congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman on the noble occasion of the 51st National Day. Omanis may be very proud of what they have achieved. Germany and Oman share a spirit of common values, mutual respect, fair partnership, and trustful cooperation. On this solid basis, our two countries shall work hand in hand to face the challenges which lie ahead and together march towards a bright and prosperous future.



H E Mohammed Arzan Jawhan
Ambassador of Indonesia

On behalf of the President and the people of Indonesia, I have the honour to extend to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the friendly people of Oman, Our warmest congratulations on the 51st anniversary of the National Day of Oman. Praise and thanks be to Allah as we have the pleasure to witness and appreciate the ongoing development of Oman's modern renaissance in the country's comprehensive march of growth. We commend Oman's international role as an important key country in the region as well as globally. We look forward for continuous strong relationship between Indonesia and Oman.



H E KIM Chang-Kyu
Ambassador of Korea

On behalf of the Republic of Korea, I would like to express my sincere congratulation on the 51st anniversary of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham, Oman has returned to normal life gradually after COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, active high-level exchanges took place this year. The Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos established the long-lasting friendship between Oman and Korea, His Majesty Sultan Haitham will further develop the friendly relations of our two countries. We will remain devoted to deepening our friendship.



H E Omar Lebbe Ameer
Ambassador of Sri Lanka

I have the honour to extend my warm congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Government, and the friendly People of the Sultanate of Oman on the occasion of the 51st National Day which also coincides with the commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman. This year is an important milestone in the history of bilateral relations between the two countries. I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes for the good health and personal wellbeing of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik as well as for the continued progress and prosperity of the people of the Sultanate of Oman.



H E K K Ahsan Wagan
Ambassador of Pakistan

On the auspicious occasion of the 51st National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, I wish to extend warm felicitations and sincere greetings on behalf of the President, Government, and brotherly people of Pakistan to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman Government, and the people of Oman.

Pakistan and Oman have always enjoyed close cordial ties, deeply rooted in common faith, shared history, and cultural affinities. Our fraternal relations have strengthened under the wise leadership of Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and further grow in diverse fields in the times to come.



Hamoud bin Muhammad al Azri, general supervisor of Oman Qaboos, expressed sincere appreciation to Their Excellencies the ambassadors for the continuous support over the years towards a great leader, dear to everyone's hearts, stressing that the next phase will witness broader cooperation. "I am honoured to offer my heartfelt greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, may God prolong his life and extend the period of his auspicious life," he said.

Italy in play-offs after Northern Ireland stalemate

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS

Belfast, UK - Italy will have to get through the play-offs if they are to return to the World Cup after a goalless draw at Northern Ireland on Monday allowed Switzerland to pip them on the final day of qualifying.

Roberto Mancini's European champions, who started the night top of Group C on goal difference, knew that they needed to match the Swiss' result against Bulgaria if they wanted to qualify directly for next year's tournament in Qatar.

However their uninspiring stalemate at Windsor Park and Switzerland's 4-0 win in Lucerne saw Italy give up first place and the group's sole guaranteed World Cup spot at the last.

That leaves the Azzurri in the November 26 draw for March's play-offs, from which they famously failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup after a miserable aggregate defeat to Sweden.

"Right now it is what it is, we struggle to score goals, we always have control of the play... It's a shame because the group should have been finished before

this match," Mancini told RAI.

However Mancini insisted he was confident his team would be in Qatar despite a series of underwhelming displays in qualifying since winning Euro 2020.

Italy had won their first three games in March but followed that up with four draws and a thumping of minnows Lithuania - missing a penalty in both of their draws with the Swiss.

"We missed two penalties in the two key matches, that means that we had things under our control, but if you don't create chances you're going to find yourself in difficulty," added Mancini.

"I have faith, let's see in March, but we might even win it."

Mancini, who had to face the final two qualifying fixtures without important players like captain Giorgio Chiellini, first-choice striker Ciro Immobile and key midfielder Marco Verratti, made two changes to the side which drew with the Swiss on Friday, bringing in Domenico Berardi to create a more fluid front three and Sandro Tonali in midfield for Manuel Locatelli.

AFP



Italy's midfielder Jorginho (left) vies with N Ireland's midfielder Gavin Whyte during the World Cup qualifier, in Belfast on Monday (AFP)



Japan's midfielder Wataru Endo (left) is marked by Oman's midfielder Salaah al Yahyai (right) during the World Cup qualifier, at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Tuesday (AFP)

Japan strike late for three points against Oman

ASIAN QUALIFIERS

Muscat - Junya Ito struck nine minutes from time to earn Japan a 1-0 win over Oman in Group B of the AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to Qatar in Muscat on Tuesday to take the Samurai Blue into second place in the standings with only four games remaining.

The win moves the Japanese a point clear of Australia, who were held to a 1-1 draw by China PR in Sharjah earlier in the evening, with Saudi Arabia now four points clear at the top of the standings. Oman remain in

fourth on seven points.

The top two finishers in the group will qualify automatically for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 while the third placed side will advance into a series of play-offs for a possible fifth Asian berth.

Ito's goal earned Japan a third win in a row and avenged their loss to the Omanis in Osaka in September as Moriyasu's team finally pick up momentum along the road to Qatar 2022.

With Hidemasa Morita suspended, Gaku Shibasaki returned to the midfield for a Japan side that was otherwise unchanged

from the team that defeated Vietnam on Thursday, but who struggled to break down Oman's disciplined defence.

Yuya Osako mistimed his header a quarter of an hour into the game while Yuto Nagatomo's deep cross from the left was sent well off target by an unmarked Ito.

Nine minutes before the break, Ito forced Ahmed Al Khamisi to head over his own crossbar in a tepid opening 45 minutes.

Kaoru Mitoma's introduction at the start of the second half for Shibasaki invigorated the Japan-

ese, however, and within minutes of the restart Ao Tanaka was firing over the bar from the edge of the area.

Mitoma's pace and trickery were at the heart of Japan's best move four minutes into the half when he dribbled into the area before feeding Tanaka.

While his shot was partially blocked, the ball fell to Osako before popping up at the feet of Takumi Minamino, who agonisingly rolled his attempt across the face of an open goal.

For all Japan's growing dominance, the Oman players still carried a threat on the break.

Arshad al Alawi's drive from distance was only narrowly wide of Shuichi Gonda's right post.

At the other end, Yuta Nakayama's attempt was deflected over the bar and Maya Yoshida's header from the resulting corner was comfortably dealt with by Faiyz al Rashidi, but the Japanese were edging closer and, with nine minutes to go, they finally took the lead.

Japan will play China PR when the AFC Asian Qualifiers resume in January with Oman to face Saudi Arabia. AFC

England qualify with 10-goal rout of San Marino

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS

Serravalle, San Marino - Gareth Southgate said England's mentality was the key to qualifying for the World Cup in record-breaking style as Harry Kane scored four times in a 10-0 demolition of San Marino on Monday.

Needing a draw from their last Group I qualifier to reach next year's tournament in Qatar, England went goal crazy as they scored 10 in a single game for the first time since a 1964 friendly against the United States.

The result ranked as the Three Lions' biggest ever victory in a competitive match.

Harry Maguire put Southgate's side in front early on before Filippo Fabbri's own goal doubled England's lead.

England captain Kane took centre-stage after that, scoring four before the break to rewrite the record books.



England's forward Harry Kane controls the ball during the World Cup qualifier against San Marino, in Serravalle on Monday (AFP)

Arsenal midfielder Emile Smith Rowe notched his first senior international goal in his maiden start.

Tyrone Mings headed his first England goal after San Marino's Dante Rossi was sent off, before

Tammy Abraham and Bukayo Saka completed their country's record-breaking win.

Kane has scored 16 goals in 2021 for England, setting a calendar year record for the Three Lions as he surpassed the 12-goal

tallies of George Hilsdon in 1908 and Dixie Dean in 1927.

The 28-year-old moved level with Gary Lineker on 48 England goals, with only Bobby Charlton (49) and Wayne Rooney (53) above him.

"Harry is a phenomenal goalscorer. If we left him on another half an hour he might have got it (the record)," Southgate said.

"We would have had Wayne Rooney's family on the phone telling us to get him off!"

Group winners England finished the qualifying campaign unbeaten in their 10 matches.

They have won more games (15), scored more goals (52) and kept more clean sheets (14) in 2021 than in any calendar year in their history.

"The qualification was earned away in Budapest, in Warsaw, in Albania and I've got to credit all of our players and staff on

a really good year," Southgate said.

"The mentality, even in a game like tonight, we can't do anything about the level of the opposition but the way we played was terrific."

Southgate's men ended a memorable 2021 on a fitting high note after they reached the Euro 2020 final in July - missing out on a first trophy since 1966 in a painful penalty shoot-out against Italy.

They will head to Qatar in 12 months established as one of the main contenders to win the World Cup.

"Now is a good period to reflect," Southgate said. "This is a good opportunity for us to look at the past few months, the younger players and the experiences they might need over the next six or seven months before a World Cup."

AFP

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CELEBRATING OMAN 51st NATIONAL DAY

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CELEBRATING OMAN 51st NATIONAL DAY

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Seven venues confirmed for 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia

Oman to host qualifying matches in February

Muscat - Next year's Twenty20 World Cup will be held across seven venues in Australia, officials confirmed on Tuesday, with Sri Lanka and the West Indies forced to play for a place in the Super 12. Two qualifying tournaments will be held in Oman in February, and in Zimbabwe in June-July next year.

The tournament, which was supposed to be held Down Under in 2020 but was pushed back two years due to coronavirus, will take place between October 16 and November 13.

A total of 45 matches will be played across Adelaide, Brisbane, Geelong, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, with the final under lights at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Sydney and Adelaide will host the semis.

Sri Lanka and the West Indies will play the preliminary round with Namibia, Scotland and four other countries to be determined through two qualifying tournaments - in Oman in February and in Zimbabwe in June-July, 2022.

"Following the success of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2020 (in Australia) and a two-year postponement, our sights are now firmly set on planning for the 2022 event," said International Cricket Council head of events Chris Tetley.

Hosts Australia will be defending champions after ham-

mering New Zealand by eight wickets in Dubai on Sunday, with both of this year's finalists automatically qualifying for the Super 12 stage along with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, England, India, Pakistan and South Africa who are the eight highest-ranked teams.

14 countries to host events post 2023

The ICC on Tuesday also finalised 14 countries, which will host the men's white ball events from 2024-31. Eleven Full Members and three Associate Members have been selected to host two ICC Men's Cricket World Cups, four ICC Men's T20 World Cups and two ICC Men's Champions Trophy events.

The USA and Namibia will host an ICC World Cup event for



Oman Cricket hosted six matches in the first round of the 2021 T20 World Cup in October, putting the sultanate on the world cricket map

Following the success of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2020 (in Australia) and a two-year postponement, our sights are now firmly set on planning for the 2022 event

CHRIS TETLEY

the first time. Whilst Australia, Bangladesh, England, Ireland, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, Scotland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, West Indies and Zimbabwe have previously staged major events and will do so again over the next

decade. The hosts were selected via a competitive bidding process overseen by a Board sub-committee chaired by Martin Snedden along with Sourav Ganguly and Ricky Skerritt.

The ICC Board accepted the

recommendations of the committee who conducted a thorough review of each bid along with ICC management. A similar process to identify the hosts for ICC Women's and U19s events for the next cycle will be undertaken early next year.

ICC chair Greg Barclay said, "We are delighted to have concluded this competitive bidding process for the first time for ICC events."

"To have 14 Members hosting 8 events", he said, "is a reflection of the truly global nature of our sport and I'd like to thank every

Member that submitted a bid and offer our congratulations to the successful bidders".

"It is fantastic to be returning to so many previous hosts, but what is really exciting about this process is the countries who will stage ICC events for the first time including the USA which is a strategic growth market for us. This gives us the opportunity to deepen our connection with fans in traditional cricket nations and also reach new fans around the world," Barclay added.

Martin Snedden, chair of the ICC Hosting Sub-Committee

said, "We received a range of excellent bids to host the ICC Men's events in the next cycle. We were committed to ensuring a broad spread of hosts to align with the ICC strategic objective of global growth and have ended up with 14 countries who will support that long term aim."

Ricky Skerritt, Cricket West Indies President and ICC Board member said, "The success of this joint bid by CWI and USA Cricket will be a huge boost for our cricket. It offers a vital strategic opportunity to promote and develop cricket, and related

commercial activity, in North America and the Caribbean. I take this opportunity to thank all those at ICC, USA Cricket and CWI who helped to make this 2024 venue selection decision possible."

The awarding of the events to preferred hosts is subject to the completion of the host agreements and the ICC will now work closely with Members to finalise arrangements. 17 Members submitted a total of 28 proposals to host the eight ICC Men's white ball events.

(With AFP inputs)



New Zealand's captain Kane Williamson (AFP)

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson skips India T20 series

New Delhi, India - New Zealand captain Kane Williamson will sit out this week's Twenty20 internationals against India to focus on the upcoming Test series, the Black Caps said as they confirmed their squads on Tuesday.

The talismanic batsman has been in blazing form, hitting 85 off 48 balls in Sunday's T20 World Cup final defeat to Australia in Dubai.

Williamson arrived with the squad in Jaipur on Monday, with the first of three T20 internationals against India taking place on Wednesday. But he has joined the Test specialist group to focus on red-ball preparation, New Zealand Cricket said.

Paceman Tim Southee will captain the Twenty20 side for the matches in Jaipur, Ranchi on Saturday and Kolkata on Sunday.

Southee said he was upbeat about leading the side, but ad-

It's three games in five days with travel days in between and then we're into a Test series

TIM SOUTHEE

mitted the tight scheduling and the team's long spells in COVID-19 bubbles were concerns.

"It's three games in five days with travel days in between and then after a couple of days we're into a Test series," Southee told a virtual press conference.

"(But) it's something we can't control. This is something we just have to adapt to and get used to, but it does take its toll," added the 32-year-old.

"I know a few players that

have been in a number of bubbles for long periods of time (and) it does weigh (you) down after a while, so hopefully we don't have to deal with bubbles for too much longer."

The two-Test series begins in Kanpur on November 25. The second Test is in Mumbai from December 3.

Indian Test skipper Virat Kohli will also be rested for the Twenty20 games. The players are likely to have to contend with high levels of air pollution across northern India for the tour, particularly in Jaipur and Kanpur. **New Zealand T20 squad:** Tim Southee (capt), Todd Astle, Trent Boult, Mark Chapman, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Guptill, Kyle Jamieson, Adam Milne, Daryl Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Glenn Phillips, Mitchell Santner, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi.

AFP



Azeem Rafiq

I lost career to racism: Ex-cricketer Rafiq tells UK lawmakers

London, UK - Former Yorkshire cricketer Azeem Rafiq fought back tears as he told British lawmakers on Tuesday he had 'lost my career to racism', detailing widespread discrimination within the English game in an emotional testimony.

An independent report found the Pakistan-born player was a victim of 'racial harassment and bullying' while playing for the county club, with Rafiq himself revealing he had been driven to thoughts of suicide.

Although Yorkshire apologised, they said they would take no disciplinary action against any staff - a decision the former player told MPs on the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport committee left him 'staggered'.

"I felt, isolated, humiliated at times," Rafiq told the hearing in London. "Pretty early on, me and other people from an Asian background... there were comments such as 'you'll sit over there near the toilets', 'elephant-washers'.

"The word 'Paki' was used constantly. And there just seemed to be an acceptance in the institution from the leaders and no one ever stamped it out."

AFP



India's T20 skipper Rohit Sharma (AFP)

Players are not machines, says Indian T20 captain Sharma

New Delhi, India - Indian T20 skipper Rohit Sharma said on Tuesday his players were 'not machines' and needed rest, ahead of an imminent encounter with New Zealand on home turf just days after the World Cup.

New Zealand's tour begins with the first of three Twenty20 internationals on Wednesday, only three days after the Kiwis lost in the Dubai tournament's final.

The matches are spread across three Indian cities and wrap up just four days before Tests in Kanpur (from November 25 to 29) and Mumbai (from December 3 to 7).

"Workload management is very important to us. Players are not machines. Taking time off is necessary," Sharma said at a virtual press conference, with India's new coach Rahul Dravid at his side.

Some players need to be rested to remain fresh. We want all our boys to be mentally fresh

ROHIT SHARMA

"Some players who have been playing for long need to be rested to remain fresh. We want all our boys to be mentally fresh for the challenges ahead," he added.

Indian Test captain Virat Kohli has opted out of the T20 series and will also miss the first Test.

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson is also unavailable for the short-format matches but will return for the Kanpur encounter.

Former batting hero Dravid

said cricketers needed to follow the example of footballers when it came to managing their workload.

"Even in football, the big players don't play all the matches. A player's mental and physical well-being (is) very important," he said.

Earlier in the day, Kiwi paceman Tim Southee admitted the tight scheduling and the team's long spells in COVID-19 bubbles were weighing on his side.

"It's obviously a pretty busy schedule... even before leading into the T20 World Cup, we had a series in Bangladesh and Pakistan," said Southee, who will lead his squad in Williamson's absence.

He added that the Kiwis "haven't really had a chance to stop and think" since Sunday's finals loss in Dubai.

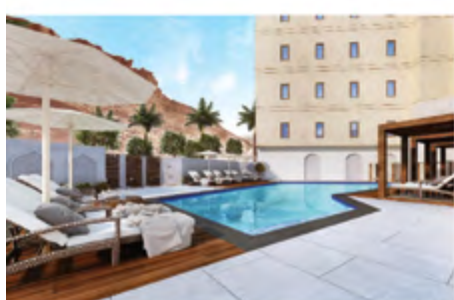
AFP



We salute the visionary leadership of
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and extend our greetings to His Majesty and the people of
Oman on the occasion of the
51st National Day.



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