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GLORIOUS YEARS

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Tax on sweetened beverages effective from Oct 1



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Tax Authority has announced that all business establishments will have to start paying 50 per cent excise tax levied on sweetened drinks with effect from October 1, 2020. The tax application comes in the

wake of the Unified GCC Agreement on Selective Tax, already implemented by other GCC states.

According to the provisions of Article 15 of the Excise Tax Law, anyone who practises an activity related to the taxable sweetened drinks (including import, production, trading and distribution),

should notify the authority about possession of such goods on the day before the taxation date.

'The available stock on September 30, 2020, needs to be recorded and provided to the authority through the electronic portal of the Tax Authority,' a statement said. The notice has to be filed within 15 days (from the

date of application of the tax) via the portal of the Tax Authority.

The authority emphasised the need for importers of goods subject to excise tax (including sweetened beverages) to compare the list of their imported goods with the list published in the portal of the Tax Authority.

For information related to the

excise tax, log on to www.tax.oman.gov.om/portal/web/tax-portal/excise or call 24747614.

To avoid delays in clearance of imported consignments at customs outlets, importers have to apply in advance for the addition of their products in the selective tax list before beginning import operations.

Sugary or sweetened beverages/drinks covered by the excise tax, also referred to as selective tax, includes all types of juices, sports drinks, fruit/malt syrups, pre-mixed ready to serve coffee and tea drinks, which contain sugar or any of its derivatives (regardless of the percentage of sugar contained).

Incentives package for private sector extended till year end

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The set of incentives announced by the Ministry of Labour for private sector institutions and companies, based on a decision of the Supreme Committee for dealing with COVID-19, has been extended until the end of the current year.

The ministry confirmed that the package of incentives includes reducing the fees for renewal of non-Omani resident cards from RO301 to RO201. The package also includes waiving of fees and fines for non-Omani workforce in the event of final departure from the sultanate.

Institutions and companies with Omani workforce and owners of small and medium enterprises registered under the Public Authority for Social Insurance are allowed to renew expired cards without fines. Employers are allowed to

renew expired work permits for workers currently outside the sultanate during the precautionary period and exempt from the resulting fines after coordination with the competent authorities.

Multiple establishments owned by the same partners may delegate their employees to work in any of those establishments if needed.

Private sector establishments may seek the assistance of manpower belonging to other establishments to work in their facilities according to a written agreement between the establishments.

Additionally, private sector institutions and companies affected by COVID-19 are allowed to terminate work contracts of non-Omani workforce with the commitment of these institutions to pay all workers' dues and ensuring they leave the sultanate permanently.

380 WHALES DIE IN MASS STRANDING IN AUSTRALIA

At least 380 of the entire pod of 460 long-finned pilot whales stuck in Macquarie Harbour, on the west coast of Tasmania, have perished in a mass stranding in southern Australia. This is likely to be the biggest beaching of the cetaceans in the country's history (AFP)



Mass strandings of whales around the world

OMAN: Twelve false killer whales beached at Al Sawadi Beach in January 2013. Members of the public tried to return the animals back to the sea prior to the arrival of experts, with all but one subsequently restranding and dying.

NEW ZEALAND: Considered one of the 'hotspots' for whale strandings, New Zealand's largest reported mass stranding took place in 1918, when 1,000 whales beached at Chatham Islands. More recently, hundreds of pilot whales died after nearly 700 were found on the beaches

of Farewell Spit in February 2017.

ARGENTINA: One of the largest known mass beachings in the last century was of false killer whales in October 1946, when an estimated 835 were stranded near Mar del Plata in Argentina.

CHILE: In December 2015, more than 300 whales were discovered washed up on a remote Patagonian inlet in southern Chile.

JAPAN: In April 2015, around 150 melon-headed whales were discovered washed up on a stretch of beach in Japan.

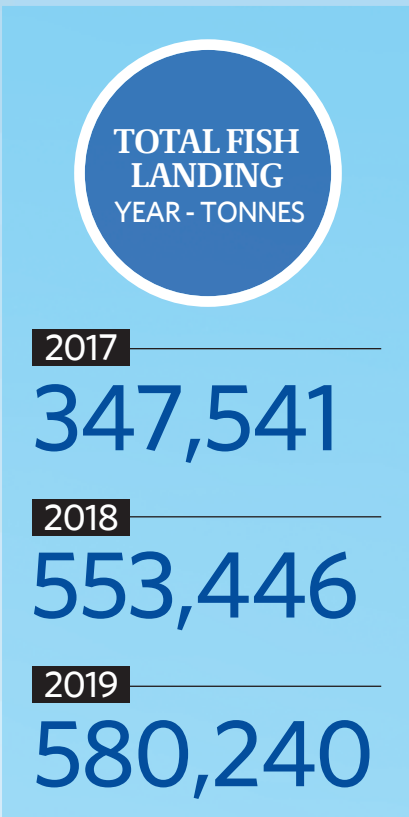


HUAWEI WATCH FIT

10 DAYS BATTERY LIFE*



*The data comes from Huawei labs. The actual usage may vary depending on the product differences, user habits, and environment variables. Product color, shape, interface and functions are for reference only. The actual product may vary.



BIGGER FISH TO FRY

4.8% increase in fish production in 2019; artisanal fishing nets 96% of catch

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The fishing industry is one of the largest employers in the sultanate and a major contributor to the national economy. With many new fishing ports launched recently or under planning, besides the growing infrastructure support for the industry, fish landings have steadily increased over the years.

The number of fishermen has also risen from 49,715 in 2018 to 50,405 in 2019. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has launched several projects to support the fishery sector by modernising boats, launching fish farms, setting up fish markets and creating artificial breeding grounds among coral reefs in Suwaiq to boost volumes. Fish production increased by 4.8 per cent to 580,000 tonnes in the sultanate in

2019, compared to 553,000 tonnes in 2018, according to official statistics released recently. The figures released by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) show that artisanal fishing accounted for 96 per cent of the sultanate's total fish production in 2019. There was a 1.2 per cent increase in total production from artisanal fishing in 2019 over 2018. NCSI figures show that 37 per cent of

the sultanate's artisanal fish production in 2019 was contributed by Al Wusta governorate, followed by South Sharqiyah - 26 per cent. Commercial fish production increased from 19,600 tonnes in 2018 to 20,100 tonnes in 2019, while total production from aquaculture increased by 603 tonnes from 2018 to 2019, according to NCSI figures. In 2019, 75 per cent of Oman's total fish production was exported to the GCC, 68

per cent of which was exported to the UAE. In 2019, the total landing from artisanal fishing was 555,210 tonnes, while it was 20,055 tonnes from commercial fishing, 3,921 tonnes from coastal fishing and 1,054 tonnes for aquaculture.

Artisanal fishing
According to the NCSI, a total of 50,405 fishermen and 25,030 boats were engaged in artisanal fishery in Oman in 2019, compared to 49,715 fishermen and 23,726 boats in 2018, and 49,299 fishermen and 23,913 boats in 2017. In 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Al Raffd Fund signed a cooperation agreement to finance a project to introduce 275 modern fishing vessels by 2023. The ministry has trained 250 Omanis in the first phase of this project. The programme aims to empower Omani youth to work in the fisheries sector. The programme also aims to maintain quality of fish products, raise the revenues of Omani fishermen, and improve their working conditions by meeting safety and security requirements on boats. The programme includes training of fishermen on the applications of navigation devices, boat operations, maintenance of engines, requirements of safety and security and maintenance of fish quality.



ARTISANAL FISHING

YEAR	FISHERMEN	BOATS
2019	50,405	25,030
2018	49,715	23,726
2017	49,299	23,913

FISH LANDING BY TYPE 2019 (TONNES)

Artisanal	Commercial	Coastal	Aquaculture
555,210	20,055	3,921	1,054

Recovered patients call for plasma donation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In response to a call of the Department of Blood Banks Services of the Ministry of Health, a group of volunteers who have recovered from COVID-19 are donating blood plasma to help save lives of those critically ill with the disease.

Muscat Daily spoke to a few volunteers about their tryst with the disease and their reasons for donating blood plasma.

Dawood, one of the volunteers recovered from COVID-19, said, "I started to have symptoms of COVID-19 on June 11 evening. Few days earlier, two of my colleagues tested positive and they were hospitalised. I think I got infected from them. I had fever, so I decided to undergo home quarantine."

Dawood isolated himself from his family, stayed in a separate room and used separate utensils during the quarantine.

"I took a swab test on June 13 in a private hospital and received the result on June 21. I had fever during the first three days for which I took paracetamol - 1,000mg three times a day. From the fourth day onwards, the fever subsided a little and was completely gone on the seventh day."

To keep himself hydrated, Dawood drank plenty of warm water and ate a lot of fruits and vegetables, as advised by the doctor.

"Besides paracetamol, I took some home remedies like black cumin seeds with honey, ginger, pepper, garlic and turmeric



George said he decided to donate plasma as it would help hospitals treat at least three patients (Supplied photo)

221 donors in August

Minister of Health H E Dr Ahmed al Sa'eedi said at a recent press conference that the number of plasma donors during the month of August

reached 221.

A total of 911 people have donated more than 2,000 plasma units since the beginning of the pandemic.

boiled in water, etc. I didn't have any other health issues except sleeping disorders. I rejoined duty after 17 days of quarantine. My family didn't show any symptoms."

He said he decided to donate plasma after full recovery from the disease.

Another donor Mohsen said he got infected last Ramadan. "I

had some mild symptoms - fever and cold. Unfortunately, my brother was also infected and he is currently in hospital. I donated plasma and urge everyone to donate to help the Ministry of Health to treat COVID-19 patients. Donating blood is a humanitarian gesture and a national duty."

Sumesh, another donor, said

he knows what a COVID-19 patient goes through.

"Helping someone with just a little of your blood in such a critical situation is the best thing one can do for another human being," he said.

Another donor Ramdas said that he believes in humanity and being a regular blood donor, it is his duty to help the needy.

George, another donor, said he decided to donate plasma after full recovery from COVID-19 infection as he believes it would help hospitals treat and help at least three patients to recover from the illness.

George thanked 'Pratheeksha Oman' for organising the donation campaign and helping needy patients who are admitted in the ICU for treatment of COVID-19.

Mohsen al Sharyani, head of Donor Affairs Section at the Department of Blood Bank Services, said donating plasma does not have any effects on a donor's immunity against the disease.

Sharyani said, "Plasma extraction is done by a device that draws and separates blood, which takes about 40-60 minutes. A person can donate plasma twice a month."

He added, "We receive four to ten people a day to donate plasma. We call on those who have recovered from COVID-19 infection to volunteer to donate plasma to help patients."

For inquiries on plasma donation, or to book an appointment, send a WhatsApp message to 94555648, or call 24594255/24591255. Donation times are from 8am to 6pm.

Experts urge caution as two citizens die hiking

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In separate incidents, two citizens lost their lives while hiking in Dakhliyah on Wednesday, Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulances (PACDA) said.

As per the authority, the first case was reported in Sa'al in the wilayat of Bidbid. PACDA said that its team in Muscat responded to a report that a citizen had fallen while a group of citizens were hiking in Sa'al.

'Upon arrival it became clear that he had fallen to his death,' the authority said.

The second incident occurred in Bahla.

Following the unfortunate incidents, hiking and mountaineering experts have urged people to adhere to proper measures to avoid hazards while hiking.

A hiker should have physical fitness and endurance, said Hamoud al Wahaibi, a hockey coach and a mountaineer.

"They should have had enough sleep before hiking and must be free of chronic diseases."

He added that the main goal of hiking is to discover beautiful tourist areas and not to compete with other participants.

"Everyone should start small and choose the right trail according to their fitness level. Once you have selected a trail, obtain a map of the area and read reviews of the place and get proper data."

Keeping a tab on the weather is also important, Wahaibi said.



The first fatal accident occurred in Sa'al in Bidbid (Supplied photo)

A hiker should have physical fitness and endurance. He should have had enough sleep before hiking and must be free of chronic diseases

HAMOUD AL WAHAIBI

"Leading up to your hike, and again a few hours before, check the weather. This will give you valuable information on how to dress and what to pack. If the forecast for weather is bad, it will give you the chance to change plans."

Mohammed Alawi, head of Muscat Hiking Team, said a hiker

must be prepared physically and psychologically before setting out.

"If the participant feels tired, they should stop and ask for help from friends," he said.

PACDA has called on hikers to ensure physical fitness and good health before taking up such activities to avoid risks.

Ministry signs pact with Oman Flour Mills



Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) on Wednesday signed a memorandum of cooperation with Oman Flour Mills Company (OFMC). According to the memorandum, the company will buy locally produced wheat from farmers during the harvest season.

The memorandum was signed by H E Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Undersecretary for Agriculture in MAFWR, and Haitham bin Mohammed al Fannah, CEO of OFMC.

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Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Labour

ANNOUNCEMENT

BIDDING NOTICE

Internal Tender Committee, Ministry of Labour, invites the following Bidding:

Bidding No.	Bidding Description	Establishments entitled to subscription	Last date of tender submission	Documents Fee (RO)
2/2020 (Re-bidding)	Managing and operating the internal coffee shop in a general office for the Ministry at Airport Height	SMEs Owners		R.O. 25/=
8/2020 (Re-bidding)	Management and operation of the student lounge coffee shop at Muscat Higher College of Technology	---	Thursday 8/10/2020 at 10:00 am	R.O. 25/=
9/2020 (Re-bidding)	Managing and operating a restaurant in the English language building of Nizwa College of Technology	---		R.O. 25/=

- Specialized establishments can obtain documents of bidding from the Department of Treasury, third floor, the Ministry's Building at Airport Heights, against a non refundable amount specified above, starting from Thursday 24/09/2020.
- Each bid is to be attached with a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of (1%) of the value of the tender for the Ministry of Manpower, valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission of the tender.
- Bids are to be submitted in closed envelopes sealed with red wax and addressed to His Excellency Sheikh Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee, and the name and number of the tender must be written on the envelope with no reference to the bidder.
- Tenders are to be put in the box of tenders of the Internal Tender Committee, ground floor of the Ministry's Building at Airport Heights, no later than the date of submission. They will be opened at 11:00am the same day.

(The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest price of or any tender)

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Fajr	4.41am	Duhr	12.04pm	Maghrib	6.07pm
Sunrise	5.56am	Asr	3.29pm	Isha	7.17pm

Oman Air flights to Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam from Oct 1

Muscat - Oman Air will return to scheduled operations on October 1 with services to 18 cities in 12 countries including two flights per week connecting Muscat and Zanzibar in Tanzania. The flights will depart from Oman on Thursdays and Saturdays, and return on Thursdays and Sundays.

Flights to Dar es Salaam, also in Tanzania, will also depart on Thursdays and Saturdays with return flights on Thursdays and Sundays, the airline stated.

Passengers to Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam do not need to take a coronavirus test before they travel or when they arrive at their destination and no quarantine is required. Citizens of Oman are not required to obtain a visa; citizens of other nations should



review official sources of information to determine if they need a visa to enter Tanzania.

Oman Air will maintain its comprehensive safety programme throughout all stages of

the journey to ensure that guests fly confidently. Masks are required when guests are on board the aircraft and in Oman's airports. Distancing is maintained while guests board and exit the

aircraft, which are carefully cleaned after each flight and at the end of every day,' the airline stated. 'Cabin crew will wear a full set of personal protective equipment, meal service has been modified to further ensure safety and a number of other steps have been taken to ensure that the airline's guests and crew are safe at all times.'

People who are planning to travel to Muscat should visit the Civil Aviation Authority website, paca.gov.om, to ensure they are prepared to comply with the requirements to enter the sultanate. People departing from Oman should also ensure that they are aware of all pre-departure requirements and requirements during their flights.

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Transport minister visits Rusayl-Bidbid road project

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Eng Said bin Hamoud bin Said al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, visited the expansion project of the Rusayl-Bidbid road in Dakhliyah governorate.

The minister was briefed on the progress of the work.

The project is of 27km and will have pedestrian bridges, tunnels and rainwater drainage canals.

The expansion phase starts from Rusayl-Nizwa interchange on Muscat Expressway and ends on Sharqiyah Expressway

interchange located in Bidbid.

The expansion-based construction work aims to upgrade the road to four lanes on each side.

The road will be provided with lighting, with all the necessary traffic safety requirements, including metal barriers, indicative regulations, warning signs, paints, as well as a surface drainage system for the main road, the middle island, bridges, roundabouts, entrances and exits.

H E Eng Ma'awali urged the executing company of the project to ensure that the current traffic flow is not affected when implementing the project.

CURB COVID-19

STOP THE SPREAD

IT'S IN YOUR HANDS

Oman celebrates World Maritime Day

ASYAD Group adopts international standards and practices to conserve marine environment

Muscat – Oman will celebrate World Maritime Day, observed annually on September 24, at a time when the ASYAD Group is aiming to achieve growth and business continuity while keeping the sustainability of marine life high on its agenda. The group is adopting international standards and practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit the sulphur content in fuel oil in its operations.

As per a statement, the group's efforts fall in line with the Sultanate of Oman's Logistics Strategy (SOLS) 2040 to cement Oman's global logistics hub position.

This year the International Maritime Organization (IMO) marks the World Maritime Day on the theme 'Sustainable Shipping for a Sustainable Planet'.

The ASYAD Group stated that it is committed to supporting the efforts of concerned authorities preserve Oman's marine ecosystem and will continue to echo the global voice for preserving the natural capital locally and internationally, through its implementation of sound maritime transport practices.

The logistics group adheres to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Annex VI),



throughout its maritime operations as part of its efforts to protect the maritime environment. Green initiatives such as using Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (VLSFO); prohibiting fuel or plas-

tics discharge into the marine environment; and controlling ships ballast water and sediments are key business policies and practices within ASYAD Group operations.

Additionally, all Omani ports pay attention to the sustainability of the environment by adhering to international regulations and standards.

The Port of Salalah, fitted with

reception facilities, which works in compliance with the international and local requirements for 'zero tolerance of illegal discharges from ships', provides a host of compliant logistics serv-

ices centred on the safety of marine life. As for the Port of Duqm, it was established according to the best international environmental and safety standards to maintain maritime life.

In an unprecedented initiative, Sohar port demonstrated its commitment to sustainable shipping by introducing a system that rewards international ships and shippers keen on reducing air emissions, in accordance with the IMO standards.

Sohar port gives a five per cent rebate on port dues to shipping companies that have made additional investments in their ships and crew to improve their environmental performance, safety and quality standards.

This year witnessed a 40 per cent increase in rebates granted, and 239 ships against 148 ships in 2019 were rewarded. Sohar port is the only port in the Middle East and among 20 international ports providing such incentives within the framework of the World Ports Climate Initiative.

Adhering to the quality requirements of MARPOL, Oman Dry Dock Company boasts integrated plants for recycling and disposing of chemical waste, as well as filtering and purifying bilge water and oily effluents before being discharged into the sea.

Up to the end of August 2020, the quantities of treated and discharged water increased by 29 per cent compared to that of 2019.

Forum on Road to Oman Vision 2040

Muscat - The ninth round of Al Roya Economic Forum took place on Wednesday under the title 'Road to Oman Vision 2040'.

The annual economic forum saw a large turnout of experts and specialists who deliberated on various topics revolving around the sultanate's ambitious strategic plan.

The forum was opened by Sayyid Fatik bin Fahr al Said, Special Envoy of His Majesty the Sultan. In an opening speech, Sayyid Fatik said, "The event comes at a delicate moment as the sultanate braces to move confidently towards wider horizons, abuzz with ambitions, and aspires to join the orbit of advanced nations under the astute leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - its vehicle being Oman Vision 2040."

"His Majesty the Sultan's attention to the future vision started seven years ago, when the strategic plan took shoots, sprouted and began to take shape, setting the stage for coming generations to aspire for



Sayyid Fatik bin Fahr al Said, Special Envoy of His Majesty the Sultan, at the forum

His Majesty the Sultan's attention to the future vision started seven years ago, when the strategic plan took shoots, sprouted and began to take shape, setting the stage for coming generations to aspire for higher ranks in global indicators

SAYYID FATIK BIN FAHR AL SAID

higher ranks in global indicators," said Sayyid Fatik.

Hatim bin Hamad al Ta'ee, editor-in-chief of Al Roya daily, said in a speech that the 2020 economic forum, held in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, explores many issues of relevance to Oman Vision 2040.

The forum's statement was delivered by Dr Said bin Mubarak

al Mahrami, State Council member and Finance Professor at Sultan Qaboos University.

Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, board chairman of Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest), gave a speech titled 'Towards Sustainable Economic Vision: Strategic Tracks and Initiatives'.

Eng Mohammed bin Ahmed al Ghareebi, external affairs and communications manager, Petroleum Development Oman, also gave a speech titled 'Train for 2040 March', in which he said that Oman Vision 2040 embodies the great expectations of a blossoming future for Oman.

Eng Ghareebi highlighted the role of the two sectors of oil and gas in fueling the national economy. He laid emphasis on the responsibilities shouldered by oil firms and the need to empower other sectors.

This was followed by a discussion session under the theme 'Setting off towards the goal'. It included two working papers. ONA



Ministry signs pact to support honey industry

Our Correspondent
Oman

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) on Tuesday signed an agreement with Oman-Indian Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) with the aim of supporting the honey industry in the sultanate.

The pact was signed in cooperation with the Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA).

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Undersecretary for Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Said bin Talib al Ma'awali, chairman of OMIFCO Board of Directors.

Through the agreement, bee-

keepers (men and women) will receive support to build a common vision and action plan through a series of participatory multi-stakeholder workshops to encourage sustainable and economic beekeeping.

The agreement aims to address some of the challenges facing the honey industry in line with the agricultural and rural development strategy 2040, its investment plan, FAO strategic objectives and the provision of capacity building programmes with a focus on the organisational and technical aspects. The project also aims to enhance the technical skills of beekeepers and beekeeping-related institutions, low-income families and family projects, in addition to honey bee technicians in agriculture departments, which results in the adoption of good agricultural practices.

OMAN SENDS AID TO SUDAN BY SEA



A military transport ship from the Royal Navy of Oman loaded with essential humanitarian needs and relief materials set sail on Wednesday from the Said bin Sultan Naval Base for the Republic of Sudan, following massive flooding caused by heavy rains that inundated large swathes of the country. The relief aid is operated and managed in coordination with Oman Charitable Organization. The move comes in implementation of the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in pursuance of similar assistance and humanitarian efforts extended by the sultanate to sisterly and friendly countries during emergencies or exceptional conditions (ONA)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please use indicators

Further to your excellent editorial about driving habits of many in Oman (*Muscat Daily*, page 2, Sep 21), I witnessed a total lack of signalling when driving from Qurum to Muscat City Centre, that is apart from two drivers who did manage to use their indicators.

It is so selfish not to let people know when you are turning off, changing lanes, etc. No wonder there are so many accidents in Oman.

I am glad to read that the ROP is really going to take these careless and dangerous drivers to task. How are people to know if you are turning off, changing lanes, etc if the indicator is not used? They are installed in cars for this reason and are a real safety net.

Muscat Daily, keep up your good work highlighting these bad practices.

Jane Martin
Via email

Huawei Y9a comes with super camera, charger

Huawei recently announced the launch of Huawei Y9a. To many, this is a brand-new product that has some features from some of Huawei's flagship devices. The latest addition to the Huawei Y Series comes with a super camera, super charger, ample storage and a sleek design that catches your breath.

Upgraded 64MP Quad camera

As a Huawei Y Series smartphone, the Huawei Y9a brings more upgraded camera capabilities. Huawei Y9a features a 64MP high resolution main camera which, together with an 8MP Ultra Wide Angle camera, 2MP Macro camera and a 2MP Depth camera, makes it ideal for shooting photos in a wide range of scenarios.

The 64MP Main Camera shines in indoor/outdoor settings in addition to lowlight and bright light surroundings. With The Ultra Wide Angle Lens offering a wider field of view.

With an angle up to 1200, the Huawei Y9a captures not just photos; you can also record Ultra Wide Angle videos.

The 2MP Depth Lens works in conjunction with the Main Camera to blur the background, creating layering and a shallow depth-of-field effect to highlight subjects.

Lastly, the 2MP Macro Lens allows you to take photos from up to 4cm up close.



40W Huawei SuperCharge

In addition to the flagship-inspired design and powerful camera system, Huawei Y9a offers other irresistible advantages in terms of user experience. One of the biggest gripes people have with smartphone experience is running out of battery. Featuring a 40W Huawei SuperCharge,

the smartphone can charge to nearly 70 per cent in 30 minutes only.

The smartphone also comes equipped with a flagship-grade 4200mAh large capacity battery (typical value). It also supports Huawei's AI power-saving technology to achieve intelligent battery optimisation, which allows the phone to deliver a more en-

during battery life.

Smooth processing and large storage

Pushing the limits of what consumers can expect at its price point, the Huawei Y9a packs in 8GB RAM + 128GB ROM for massive internal storage and background multi-tasking. This means you can play, browse and

watch for hours at a time, experiencing an easy and smooth multitasking performance.

Premium design

The Huawei Y9a has inherited the style and design of Huawei's flagship Huawei Mate 30 series, featuring the iconic, round rear camera module. This is accentuated further using a pop-up front camera solution, which presents the phone with the ultimate 6.63-inch Ultra FullView Display. It also features a side-mounted fingerprint power button, which makes the device easy and convenient to unlock.

To indulge users with a wide range of mobile apps, the Huawei Y9a is pre-installed with AppGallery - Huawei's official app store with a constantly growing list of apps, where users can simply browse and download the apps they need. You can also choose to download your favourite apps from Petal Search, which is already available for download via AppGallery. This new search tool offers Huawei users an open gateway to a million apps, a place where you can get all the apps you are looking for!

Thanks to its 64MP Quad camera, 40W Huawei SuperCharge, long-lasting battery 8GB + 128GB large storage, there are no drawbacks to the Huawei Y9 smartphone.

Huawei Y9a is available for purchase for RO104.900.

Bank Muscat upgrades mobile, Internet banking

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, in line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to a customer-centric service culture has upgraded its new Omni-channel Mobile and Internet banking with three new features to add further convenience and ease of banking.

These features will allow the instant generation of e-PINs for Debit, Credit and Prepaid cards; instant opening of additional Savings Accounts for existing customers; and the ability to block one's prepaid cards in case they are lost or stolen. The new features are available to customers through both Mobile and Internet banking.

On this occasion, Amjad Iqbal al Lawati, assistant general manager - Cards and Electronic Banking, Bank Muscat, said, "As the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, Bank Muscat is proud to have a number of innovative services and products that meet the requirements of our tech-savvy customers. We are happy to introduce these features which will further ease the delivery of banking services and products to our customers. The bank's Internet and mobile banking platforms are being upgraded on a regular basis to be future ready and this has resulted in a significant increase of active users on these platforms."

Bank Muscat customers can enjoy a fast and secure banking



experience 24/7 from the comfort of their homes and offices. Today both Retail Internet and Mobile Banking customers extensively use the various features available such as bill payments, mobile top ups, payments within Bank Muscat and Oman and International transfers. They can make Speed Transfers to India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Philippines and Bangladesh with instant credit to the beneficiary account in many cases, in addition to remittances to multiple countries through the SWIFT network.

Bank Muscat had also earlier introduced a new Personal Finance Module, which assists Retail Banking customers analyse their spending habits. Other new features include applying for IPOs and getting an enhanced account statement with more details. The Credit Card section has also been recently upgraded and has additional features including getting Credit Card statements, viewing pending transactions, etc.

MOH BEGINS WORKSHOP ON PHARMACOECONOMICS



The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Occupational Development & Guidance Section in the Directorate General of Medical Supplies, in collaboration with Merck Company, began on Tuesday a training virtual workshop on applying pharmacoeconomics. A number of specialists in health economic management from the sultanate and abroad along with the MoH pharmacists are participating in the workshop

be'ah's Eco--Innovate Oman in last stage

Due to its belief in the importance of sustainability, the Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) has launched the Eco--Innovate Oman (EiO) accelerator programme to support Small and Medium Enterprises specialising in the environmental sustainability, and waste management sectors, and to support the Omani SME ecosystem by promoting the circular economy.

The programme is considered the first of its kind in the sultanate and was launched last year in collaboration with Inspired Solutions.

The accelerator's main objectives are to create jobs through



entrepreneurialism and diversify Oman's economy in support of Oman's Vision 2040 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Dr Farah al Barwani, research and development manager at be'ah, said, "We were glad to have chosen a number of ambi-



tious SMEs in all levels of development and that have high potential in the fields of environmental sustainability, waste management, agriculture, education, aquaculture, biotechnology, environmental tourism.

"The participating SMEs have

completed the first stages of the accelerator which involved a three-month boot camp and coaching sessions. The final stage of the accelerator involves preparing the SME's to pitch to investors."

William R Crew, CEO of Inspired Solutions said, "It has been so exciting to personally witness the commercial development of the entrepreneurs who have been participating in Eco-Innovate Oman. Over the past many months they have all grown and embraced the principles of impact entrepreneurialism-of creating not only financial returns, but also environmental and social returns as well."

Orbit Car Rental gets a fleet of JAC S3 Crossover SUVs

For many companies and organisations, leasing out a fleet of cars - as opposed to having to face the initial capital outlay to buy the fleet outright - is a "best practice" business strategy that continues to make excellent financial sense.

This, together with a host of other benefits associated with renting a fleet of cars - can pave the way for business success in the short and long term.

One such rental fleet success story comes from Orbit Car Rental & Lease, who recently purchased eight of Towel Auto Centre's brand new JAC S3 Crossover SUV models for lease to a leading Fast-moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) business based in Oman.

Orbit Car Rental & Lease says their client had requested a fleet of cars that would specifically cater to their sales team's need to constantly be out and about on Oman's roads to meet new customers. Requirements in-



cluded a reasonable size SUV with lots of room to move in; that was easy to enter/exit many times throughout the day; that was absolutely reliable; and that had a handsome exterior and interior that they would always be proud to show off.

Orbit Car Rental & Lease advised that the brand new JAC S3 Crossover SUV, which Towell Auto Centre recently launched in

Oman as part of a new JAC passenger and lifestyle range, perfectly matched these requirements. As the JAC S3 also came at a very attractive price-point (the S3 is essentially a Crossover SUV at the price of a Sedan), Orbit Car Rental & Lease was able to provide the lease agreement at a budget friendly price-point.

Satisfied that the new JAC S3s

perfectly met their needs, Orbit Car Rental & Lease's client was happy to go ahead with the rental agreement.

Abey Abraham Isaac - business head, Orbit Car Rental & Lease, explained, "The reason for buying the JAC S3 Crossover SUVs was a joint decision with our team and the end customer who is a corporate giant in FMCG sales. We always make

tailor made deals for customers after understanding their budget and requirements. In this case, the JAC S3 provided a perfect blend of both."

"We made the lease package inclusive of all expenses such as maintenance, insurance, replacement vehicles on every service etc - ensuring that our client's sales team would be mobile 24/7 without any burden. An-

other significant advantage was that there was no need of initial capital investment for the fleet. Currently, many companies want to avoid blocking their capital by owning an asset which depreciates year-on-year - and leasing provides the perfect solution to this. Plus, Orbit Car Rental & Lease takes care of all the appropriate documentation processes, which means much less hassle

for the end-user," Abey added.

According to Riyadh Ali Sultan - general manager, Towell Auto Centre, "The Towell Auto Centre-JAC partnership has existed for well over ten years with our provision of JAC commercial vehicles that deliver long-term performance and reliability for a broad range of business and industry sectors in Oman. Now, with the addition of this exciting new range of JAC passenger and light commercial models to our line-up, I am very confident that these vehicles will meet the needs of many individuals, families, and business owners in Oman."

Towell Auto Centre's new JAC additions include the JAC S3 and JAC S4 Crossover SUVs; two versions of the JAC T8 Pickup 2.0lt Turbo; and the JAC M4 in 9-Seater Passenger Van and Panel Van configurations.

To find out more or to book a test drive, visit www.jacoman.com.

Montero Sport one of best family SUVs

An attractive design, spacious interior, impressive technology throughout, and strong performance, together with everyday reliability and practicality, make the 2019 Montero Sport one of the best family SUVs available in its class. While stocks last, General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor of Mitsubishi vehicles in Oman, is selling the 2019 Montero Sport GLS Premium at reduced prices starting from as low as RO10,995 or instalments of only RO138 per month. The price also includes six years unlimited mileage warranty and roadside assistance.

Commenting on the Montero Sport, Manoj Ranade, general manager of GAC, said, "Right from the moment it was launched, the Montero Sport began to draw in fans thanks to its elegant design, spaciousness, price, reliability, and sheer capability. It has proven to be amongst our most popular models to date. As part of the ongoing promotion we are offering the 2019 Montero Sport in its GLS Premium trim at an unmatched price point. Since stocks are limited, we highly recommend potential buyers to act

fast and secure your vehicle before they all run out."

From the Dynamic Shield front design concept, right through to the vibrant rear lamps, the Montero Sport has been boldly sculpted and stylishly accented; its assertive aerodynamic body delivering solid refinement down to the last detail. The sophisticated LED headlamps and daytime running lights further contribute to this appealing, high-quality personality. The interior features a large dashboard, as befits a larger SUV, and sculpted seats add to its luxurious feel.

The well-appointed cabin surrounds occupants with solid craftsmanship, comfort, and intelligent features.

In the GLS Premium trim, the Montero Sport comes pack to the brim with features such as a Forward Collision Mitigation System, Blind Spot Warning (BSW), Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC), Power Leather seats, Power sliding sunroof, and

much more.

Under the hood, powering the Montero Sport is a 3.0lt MIVEC V6 gasoline engine that produces 219 hp@6,000rpm and 285Nm@4,000rpm; all the power that one may require from a rugged SUV to accomplish every mission with smooth, efficient ease.

This is



mated to an 8-speed automatic transmission that delivers smoother shifts and improved fuel efficiency.

All these features combine to provide a one-of-a-kind vehicle with both on- and off-road capabilities worthy of the tri-diamond badge.

The all-new Montero Sport also comes with a very comprehensive list of active and passive safety features and equipment that ensures the driver and passengers are kept safe at all times.

The 2019 Montero Sport GLS Premium is available from your nearest Mitsubishi showroom with prices starting from as low as RO10,995 and can be financed with EMIs as low as RO138.

For more information on the Eclipse Cross, visit GAC's Mitsubishi showrooms in Azaiba, Barka, Sohar, Nizwa and Salalah.

Oppo launches Reno4 series and Enco W51 wireless headphones

Global technology brand, Oppo, announced the launch of Oppo Reno4 Series and Oppo Enco W51 wireless headphones in the Middle East. The Oppo Reno4 Series which includes Reno4 Pro 5G, Reno4 Pro and Reno4, make it easier than ever to capture creative portraits and imaginative videos at night.

The Oppo Enco W51 create a personal space to enjoy undisturbed sound with a double breakthrough in noise cancellation on both call and music, supported by a high-end dual-core digital noise reduction chip with hybrid ANC technology.

From September 23 exclusively for a week, customers will be rewarded when they pre-order their new Reno4 smartphone - available while stocks last across major retailers and e-commerce platforms in Oman.

At an interactive and engaging virtual event titled, 'Own the Night' on September 22, Oppo unveiled its Ultra Night Wide-angle Video and other engaging videography functions that gives every user a chance to make their night come alive in their own unique way.

The event also revealed



touch-free interactions and made this flagship feature more easily accessible to a greater market place, powered by an AI-enhanced Smart Sensor that allows the phone to be controlled with a wave, and an AI algorithm secures the phone from peeping eyes.

Ethan Xue, president of Oppo Middle East and Africa said, "The Reno Series has always been a pathbreaker in smartphone camera technology and Reno4 Series carries on Reno3's legacy of pioneering the mobile photography, with new videography features and portrait shooting that enable

users shoot a comprehensive range of scenes. Designed for personality and style, the Reno4 Pro 5G not only delivers powerful performance but also enables a connected lifestyle through the power of 5G. Living up to Oppo's mission of elevating life through technological artistry, Oppo's Reno4 Series introduces fun and new ways to 'own the night' by using the trendy phone's innovative technology to express their creativity."

The Reno4 Series pushes the boundaries of industrial design by packing a powerhouse of components into a slim and sleek

design. A brand-new patent-applied technique introduces a gradient colour in a perfect combination of matte and glitter.

Reno4 Pro 5G weighs 172g at 7.6mm, while Reno4 Pro weighs 161g and is 7.7mm thin.

A 90Hz 3D Curved Screen elevates the premium look and feel of the phones and a unique gradient colour on the back cover would certainly elevate your style in all angles.

Inspired by the tranquility of nature, Reno4 Pro 5G comes in Galactic Blue and Space Black, with the Galactic Blue crafted with the patent-applied 'Reno Glow' process, which achieves both a matte finish with a subtle glittery detail, almost like tiny diamonds are embedded on the back cover, and is more resistant to fingerprints and scratches.

Reno4 Pro comes in two premium colors, Galactic Blue and Starry Night, which convey an innate peacefulness, but like a blank canvas brings out the user's artistic side.

The Reno4 Series is available for pre-order in Oman from September 23. For more information, visit www.oppo.com/ae.

Omantel adds new stations in 5G network expansion

Omantel - the leading company in providing integrated telecommunication services in the sultanate - continues its pioneering role in providing the 5G technology since it launched the first 5G network in the sultanate at the end of last year by expanding its network and adding new sites in a number of governorates.

As part of its plans for expanding the 5G network, new stations have been added in the wilayats where the service was previously launched. Furthermore, new stations were installed in a number of regions in five wilayats where the 5G network was introduced for the first time. These wilayats are Salalah, Taqa, Sur, Samail and Bahla. As a result, thousands of subscribers in these regions will be able to enjoy Home Internet with high speeds up to 1 Gbps.

Commenting on this, Eng Al-addin Abdullah Bait Fadhil, acting vice president, Consumer Business Unit at Omantel, said, "5G technology is the latest addition to our network. Since we launched it last year, the network enabled us to offer high-speed Home Internet in several new re-



gions. This, in turn, would support our contribution to enabling the digital transformation in the sultanate."

He added, "We are proud of our subscribers' response to the 5G technology. Over the past few months, new customers subscribed to different packages of our 5G Home Internet service enjoying incomparable Internet speeds up to 1 Gbps which is perfect for online entertainment and games in addition to downloading and watching videos and movies easily. Our customers can choose from four different 5G Home Internet plans starting from RO 25. The 5G Home plan offers download speeds up to 20 Mbps, whereas the 5G Gaming

offers speeds up to 40 Mbps, the 5G Entertainment which is the most popular plan offers download speeds up to 80 Mbps and the 5G Premium offers download speeds up to 1Gbps."

It is worth mentioning that 5G technology is considered one of the enabling technologies of the 4th Industrial Revolution such as the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain technology and mega data technology. It is envisaged that the services to be provided through the 5G network will lead to a breakthrough in many sectors including education, health, transportation and entertainment. Besides, it is a key component in future smart cities projects.

Seatrade Maritime Middle East set to make a virtual return

Seatrade Maritime Middle East, the region's leading event in the shipping industry, will kick-off virtually from December 14-16, 2020. Using the latest in digital technology, the three-day interactive online event will bring together maritime buyers, industry suppliers, solution-providers and equipment manufacturers from around the world. With a special focus on technology, the platform will be a great opportunity for maritime professionals to generate business leads, elevate their profile and gain access to insights from business leaders in the field.

Over the years, Seatrade Maritime Middle East has proven to be the epicentre of a number of maritime activities, uniting the maritime industry. It acts as a hub that connects proactive maritime suppliers from every



industry with influential stakeholders and shipowners. Stakeholders can identify exciting

business opportunities, find solutions to overcome business challenges, shaping the landscape of

the Middle East region that is constantly evolving as a world-class maritime hub.

The Federal Transportation Authority for Land and Maritime has been one of the strategic

government supporters to Seatrade Maritime Middle East.

Eng Ahmed Sharif al Khouri, director general of the Federal Transportation Authority for Land and Maritime said, "The UAE has always been committed to strengthening the position of the maritime industry. Even today, despite the global disruption that has impacted every sphere in life and businesses around the world, the leaders of the country are striving hard to maintain normalcy through several directives, in order to stabilise the market and make it resilient."

"We are pleased to see that events like Seatrade Maritime are providing considerable support to businesses in the country and are addressing pressing problems that the industry is facing during this difficult time. Their initiative

to enlighten and train the next generation of maritime professionals is also noteworthy. We are looking forward to witnessing how the virtual edition of the tradeshow empowers the country and the maritime sector."

This year, the format of the event has been refined to adapt to the changing times. Chris Morley, event director, Seatrade Maritime said, "Despite the pandemic, industry professionals were keen on networking and collaborating, so going digital was the ideal solution since it seems to be a preferred choice now. Seatrade Maritime Middle East Virtual will echo the core values of the physical edition of the event. The tradeshow is a highly anticipated event in the region and we do not want to deprive our patrons of this enlightening experience."

DAILY CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1 Have words

5 Wore

10 Enough, Luigi!

15 Vipers

19 Composer Porter

20 Type of tower

21 Church section

22 Octagonal sign's word

23 Pinnacle

24 Rajah's wife

25 Take it easy

26 "Dawson Creek's" Smith

27 Judy Garland's request

30 Hit, biblically

31 Capri

32 Conductor Previn

33 Intuit

34 Parasol's purpose

38 Raised railways

40 Home hangout

41 VIP's car

42 Opportunist's request

49 Celestial bodies

53 Seth's birthplace?

54 Core work group

55 Moore's "Still ____"

56 Give up

57 Car no no?

58 Largest continent

59 Travels

60 "Do ____ others..."

61 Wax and ____

63 Tuckered out

65 Arrive at

66 Dramatize

69 Rower

71 Showed disapproval

72 Leonine homes

73 Went 50-50

74 "Waste not, ____ not"

75 "House" star Epps

76 Unwelcome assignment

77 Upsilon followers

79 "Why, the very ____"

83 Ominous

84 Cries

85 West ____

86 Spoken

87 Thick slice

88 Parker Brothers' request

90 Bright star

91 Curvy letter

93 Have debts

94 Colorado resort town

95 Important person in Turkey

98 "____ up or ship out!"

102 Goals

105 Moderate

106 Doris Day's request

113 Daytime drama

114 First double Grand

Slam winner

115 Apportion

116 Shell's staff

117 Cut

118 Open

119 "Superman" star

120 Ascend

121 Start of a counting rhyme

122 Railroad bed

123 Proboscis

124 Capone trademark

DOWN

1 Sting

2 British satirist

Alexander

3 Sheltered

4 Cell phone message

5 Employs

6 Advantage

7 "Death Be Not Proud" poet

8 Metal carriers

9 Putin's negative

10 Meat brought home

11 Audible

12 Step

13 French cup

14 Gallery fare

15 Reluctant witness's request

16 Toklas's companion

17 Harbors

18 Shopping ____

28 French crumb

29 Final

30 WSW less 90

34 Winter vehicle

35 Put out of sight

36 Critical Masters' corner

37 Bobby McFerrin's request

38 Poet Pound

39 Spike or Peggy

40 Coloring agents

42 Sparse

43 Slacken

44 ____ Amin

45 "____ and Kumar"

46 Eschew the big wedding

47 Scua or pearl

48 Served without return

50 Small ones

51 Please, to Johann

52 Tolerated

62 Ger. neighbor

63 Most chaste

64 Yay, matador!

65 Cotton processor

66 Medicinal plants

67 Desert mount

68 Headpiece for Duchess of Cambridge

69 Displayed

70 "Godfather's" character Rizzi

71 Must

73 Beat it!

74 Stage assembly area

76 Namesakes of Charisse

77 Strike a ____

78 Word on a towel

80 Western advantage

81 Roof overhang

82 "The Good Wife's" Cumming

85 Manhandle

89 Rhymed message

92 "Just ____ no"

94 Simile words

95 Dated

96 Solitary

97 Killed

98 Spartacus, for one

99 Hold still aloft

100 Dodge

101 Australian city

102 "The Bridge at ____"

103 "____ a parade..."

104 Measures out

107 Work for

108 Spread choice

109 TV adjuncts of the 80's and 90's

110 Comic Idle

111 Desert flatland

112 Pitcher

114 High trajectory stroke

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES

MARCH 21-APRIL 19



Be mindful of the conversations you find yourself involved in. Your ruling planet, Mars, spends the day trapped in a tense rendezvous with communicator Mercury, intensifying your self-expression. It's easy to burn to bridges with your choice of words.

LEO

JULY 23-AUGUST 22



Your mind can feel something like a pressure cooker today, Leo. You've got things you need to share that you've been withholding, and with expressive Mercury's opposition to direct Mars this afternoon, it's likely you won't hold back any longer.

SAGITTARIUS

NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21



Today's skies are something of a forest fire. Tread lightly and retreat if you see smoke on the horizon. The tension permeating the day is due to mental Mercury's overheated opposition with self-assertive Mars, fanning flames around creative frustration.

TAURUS

APRIL 20-MAY 20



Today's skies are fraught with tension on the job front. Take it one step at a time. Your anger can light up like a match this afternoon, as Mercury locks into a stare down with fierce Mars. Try to openly address any irritation you encounter.

VIRGO

AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22



Virgos are faithfully guided by the wing-footed messenger planet, Mercury. Today's skies see Mercury moving through a tough spot, as he faces off with aggressive Mars. You're likely to be dealing with your anger and directness this afternoon.

CAPRICORN

DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19



It's easy to get worked up over the slightest annoyance on the home front today. This is all thanks to a tense opposition of mentally active Mercury and irritable Mars. This connection may stir up frustrations around your public and private life.

GEMINI

MAY 21-JUNE 21



Wherever quick-footed Mercury goes, you faithfully follow, Gemini. Today's skies witness a tense showdown between aggressive Mars and communicative Mercury, adding a considerable amount of heat to your self-expression.

LIBRA

SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22



Libras typically tend to avoid conflict at all costs. Yet, it seems today you can't help but get pulled into the dramas and bad moods of others. Something important in your close relationships may need to be cleared out.

AQUARIUS

JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18



Take a deep breath. Know that your mental world might feel more trying than usual, as you work to manage any overflow of stress. Mercury spends the day disagreeing with aggressive Mars, creating a ripe environment for conflict in conversations.

CANCER

JUNE 22-JULY 22



Cancerians have a bad habit of being indirect when they try to share their needs. Today's cosmos present an opportunity to get frustrations off your chest around the home front—before they bubble over to the point where you feel explosive.

SCORPIO

OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21



Scorpios are led by the courageous god of war, Mars. Today's cosmic landscape sees Mars getting into a difficult scenario, as Mercury stokes the red planet's fires. Subconscious material around anger, forthrightness, and boundaries are likely to surface today.

PISCES

FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

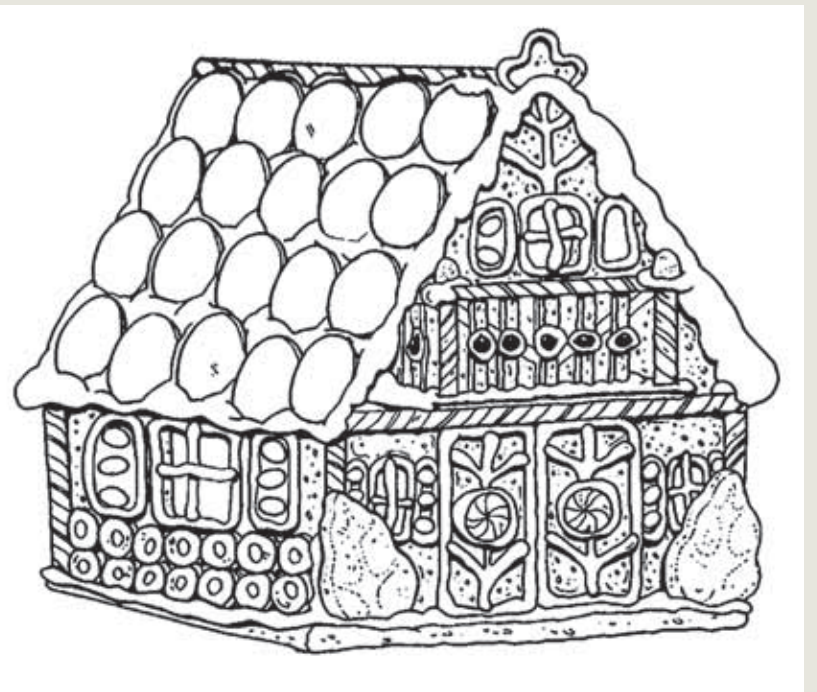


Don't let financial stress overwhelm your thinking. It's all too easy to get caught up in an examination of your debts that can leave you feeling fried. It's a good day to be direct about everyone's situation and acknowledge dormant frustrations.

Answers: 1. c 2. a 3. a

KIDS COLOURING





DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

BOGGLER

C	R	E	G
A	I	L	O
C	U	E	A
H	A	T	R

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

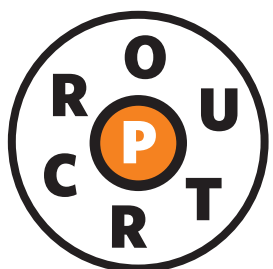
DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (SEPTEMBER 23)



WORD BUILDER

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

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



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Smart Indian, excellent English, Masters-Journalism & Communication, Finance, strong writing, 15+years diversified Oman experience seeks Admin/HR, Corporate/Marketing, Operations, Management, Customer Relations, Credit. NOC. Contact 99283938.

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NOTHING TO HIDE, SAYS QUINTANA

TOUR DE FRANCE

Marseille, France - The lead rider of a Tour de France team caught up in a doping investigation said he had 'nothing to hide' after two unnamed members of the French outfit were briefly detained before being released.

Colombian rider Nairo Quintana, 30, leader of the Arkea-Samsic team and winner of the 2014 Giro d'Italia, said no drugs were discovered during the investigation.

"No doping substance has ever been found," Quintana said in a statement late on Tuesday.

"I have nothing to hide and

No doping substance has ever been found. I have nothing to hide and have never had anything to hide

NAIRO QUINTANA

have never had anything to hide."

Police detained two people from the Arkea-Samsic team on Monday, with press reports saying they were a doctor and physiotherapist.

Marseille prosecutor Dominique Laurens confirmed on Wednesday that the pair,

whom he had said had 'many health products including drugs in their personal belongings, but also and above all a method that can be qualified as doping', had both been released on Tuesday.

"The investigation is ongoing," Laurens said, adding that new developments were possible.

"Investigations and hearings (must) be carried out before the public prosecutor reaches a decision on the basis of the elements collected."

A source familiar with the matter said that searches had targeted several riders including Quintana's brother Dayer, as well as members of the medical team. Nairo Quintana finished the Tour in 17th place, more than an hour behind Pogacar. Quintana's teammate Warren Barguil finished in 14th place.

It is the most significant investigation in years for the repeatedly scandal-hit Tour,

which wrapped up Sunday in Paris with a surprise victory for 21 year old debutant Tadej Pogacar, the youngest winner in more than a century.

The Tour was rocked by a major probe in 1998, when customs officials stopped a vehicle laden with doping products and the Festina team was thrown off the race as the peloton headed into Paris.

Most notoriously, Lance Armstrong, who won from 1999-2005, admitted doping in 2013 and the American was stripped of his record seven titles.

AFP

French rugby chief Laporte still in custody

Paris, France - French rugby federation (FFR) president Bernard Laporte was questioned for a second day in police custody on Wednesday as part of an investigation into suspicions he favoured Top 14 club Montpellier, a source close to the case said.

Montpellier's billionaire owner Mohamed Altrad and the chief organiser of the 2023 Rugby World Cup to be held in France, Claude Atcher, are also in custody, along with two senior FFR officials.

Laporte, 56, a former coach of the France national team who is also vice-chairman of the game's global body World Rugby, is suspected of pressuring the appeals committee of the French league to reduce a disciplinary punishment against Montpellier in 2017.

Laporte is standing for re-election as FFR president with the result expected on October 3. On Tuesday he called the timing of the legal proceed-



Bernard Laporte

ings 'revolting' and claimed he was the victim of a putsch attempt.

"It's a true attempt at a coup of which there is no doubt about the motivation of the creators. It all adds up to a truly foul electoral strategy," Laporte said in an open letter to clubs.

He has always denied intervening in favour of Montpellier but admits he had a telephone conversation with the head of the appeals committee, Jean-Daniel Simonet, before the decision was changed.

AFP



A file photo of Arkea-Samsic team leader Colombia's Nairo Quintana during the 107th edition of the Tour de France race that concluded recently

Former Ferrari chief to be F1 CEO: Report

London, UK - Former Ferrari team principal Stefano Domenicali is set to become the new CEO of Formula One after leaving the Italian team earlier than expected, media reports said on Wednesday.

The 55 year old Italian is to replace Chase Carey, who has been in charge since US group Liberty Media took over the sport in 2017, according to the BBC and Autosport.

While Formula One officials would not confirm the appointment of Domenicali, senior sources in F1 told the BBC it was a done deal.

The news - which will also see American Carey remain as chairman in some form - has been communicated to the team bosses.

Domenicali took over at Ferrari from Jean Todt, now

the FIA president, at the end of 2007 and tasted immediate success when Ferrari won the 2008 constructors championship - the last time they did so.

However, his term at Ferrari ended early when he stood up to then team president Luca di Montezemolo who wanted the head of the engine section to be sacked for incompetence.

He has subsequently filled a senior management role at Audi, before being appointed chief executive of Lamborghini, which is also part of the VW Audi Group.

Carey can step aside having overseen a shortened season played out with virtually no spectators due to the coronavirus pandemic.

AFP

Medvedev knocked out in first round by Humbert

TENNIS ROUND-UP

Paris, France - US Open semifinalist Daniil Medvedev was knocked out in the first round of the Hamburg ATP event on Tuesday by world No 41 Ugo Humbert.

Humbert of France sent the top seed packing with a 6-4, 6-3 upset in the last tournament before the rescheduled French Open starts on Sunday.

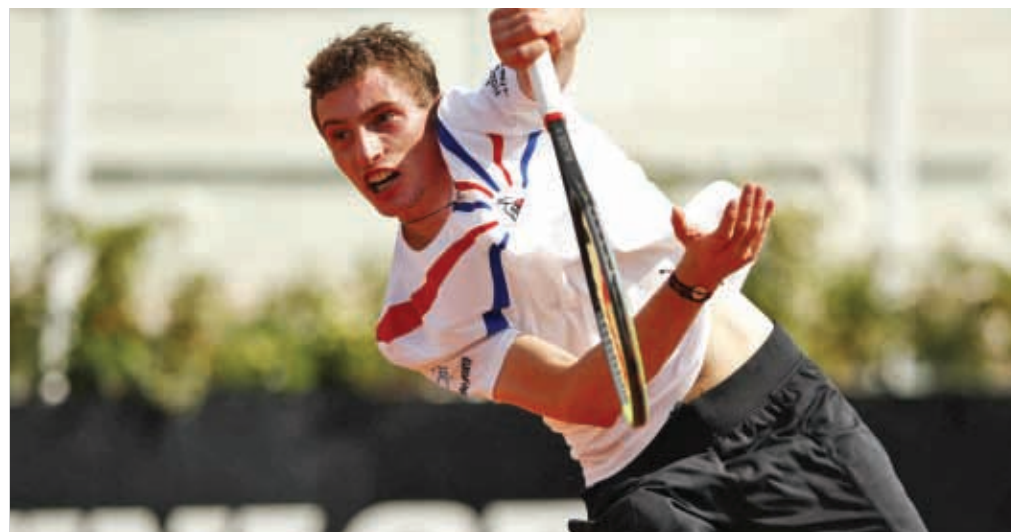
This was the 22-year-old's first top-ten scalp. Russian Medvedev, who was beaten by eventual US Open winner Dominic Thiem in New York this month, is ranked fifth.

Humbert has emerged as the main home hope for Roland Garros. Compatriot Gael Monfils lost earlier on the Hamburg clay 6-4, 6-3 by Yannick Hanfmann.

Humbert next faces Czech Jan Vesely, who beat another French player, Gilles Simon, on Monday.

Bianca Andreescu to miss rest of 2020

Last year's US Open champion Bianca Andreescu said on Tuesday she will sit out the remainder



Ugo Humbert serves to Daniil Medvedev during their match in Hamburg, Germany, on Tuesday

of the season to focus on her 'health and training' after a year beset by injury.

Andreescu, who beat Serena Williams at Flushing Meadows 12 months ago to become Canada's first Grand Slam singles champion, has not played a match since hurting her knee last October at the WTA Finals in Shenzhen. Last week the world No 7 withdrew from the French Open, rescheduled to start on Sunday from May due to

the coronavirus pandemic.

She had already been forced to skip the defence of her US Open crown after being unable to properly prepare, in part because of the global health crisis.

"I have come to the difficult decision to skip the clay court swing this year and will be taking the remainder of the season off to focus on my health and training," Andreescu wrote on Twitter.

"As hard as it was to come to

this conclusion, I have so much to look forward to in 2021, including the Olympics; I want to use this time to focus on my game so I can come back stronger and better than ever."

Andreescu, 20, joins defending Roland Garros champion Ashleigh Barty and newly-crowned US Open winner Naomi Osaka on the absentee list for the September 27-October 11 Grand Slam.

AFP

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IPL 2020



QUOTE OF THE DAY

Oh, I haven't batted for a very long time, you know and the 14-day quarantine doesn't really help. [I'm] slowly trying to get into the tournament.

MS Dhoni

Chennai skipper, on batting at No 7 against Rajasthan Royals, on Tuesday



TODAY'S MATCH

DUBAI, 6PM



KINGS XI PUNJAB



ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE

POINTS TABLE

TEAMS	P	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
MI	2	1	1	0	2	+0.993
RR	1	1	0	0	2	+0.800
RCB	1	1	0	0	2	+0.500
DC	1	1	0	0	2	+0.000
CSK	2	1	1	0	2	-0.145
KXIP	1	0	1	0	0	+0.000
SRH	1	0	1	0	0	-0.500
KKR	1	0	1	0	0	-2.450

P: Played, **W:** Won, **L:** Lost, **NR:** No Result, **PTS:** Points, **NRR:** Net Run-Rate

CSK: Chennai Super Kings
RCB: Royal Challengers Bangalore
DC: Delhi Capitals
KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders
KXIP: Kings XI Punjab
MI: Mumbai Indians
RR: Rajasthan Royals
SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad

SCOREBOARD

MUMBAI INDIANS INNINGS		
Q de Kock	c Naik b Mavi	1 (3)
Rohit Sharma	c Cummins b Mavi	80 (54)
S Yadav	run out	47 (28)
S Tiwary	c Cummins b Narine	21 (13)
H Pandya	hit wicket b Russell	18 (13)
K Pollard	not out	13 (7)
K Pandya	not out	1 (3)
Extras	(lb 2, nb 1, w 1)	14

TOTAL: 195 for five

Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-98, 3-147, 4-177, 5-180

Bowling: S Warrior 3-0-34-0,

S Mavi 4-1-32-2, P Cummins 3-0-49-0,

S Narine 4-0-22-1, A Russell 2-0-17-1,

Kuldeep Yadav 4-0-39-0

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

S Gill	c Pollard b Boult	7 (11)
S Narine	c de Kock b Pattinson	9 (10)
D Karthik	lbw b Chahar	30 (23)
N Rana	c H Pandya b Pollard	24 (18)
E Morgan	c de Kock b Bumrah	16 (10)
A Russell	b Bumrah	11 (11)
N Naik	c H Pandya b Boult	1 (3)
P Cummins	c H Pandya b Pattinson	33 (12)
S Mavi	st de Kock b Chahar	9 (10)
Kuldeep Yadav	not out	1 (2)
Extras	(lb 2, w 3)	5

TOTAL: 146 for nine

Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-25, 3-71, 4-77, 5-100,

6-101, 7-103, 8-141, 9-146

Bowling: T Boult 4-1-30-2, J Pattinson

4-0-25-2, J Bumrah 4-0-32-2, R Chahar

4-0-26-2, K Pollard 3-0-21-1, K Pandya

1-0-10-0

ROHIT AND BUMRAH SHINE IN MUMBAI'S FACILE WIN

Abu Dhabi, UAE - A clinical Mumbai Indians played true to form to shrug off their opening game loss in IPL 2020 with a 49-run win over the Kolkata Knight Riders on Wednesday.

Put in to bat, Mumbai put on an above par 195 for five at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi, built around Rohit Sharma's 54-ball 80 at the top of the order.

Rohit batted deep into the innings, falling only in the 18th over, with the sapping heat playing its part in a tired shot, but his effort was enough to give Mumbai's bowlers a total that was proof against the Knight Riders' power-packed middle order.

Mumbai's pace trio of Jasprit Bumrah, James Pattinson and Trent Boult then bowled to plans, with Bumrah particularly sensational as the Knight Riders' chase spluttered and faltered, without ever kicking into top gear.

Bumrah bowled one over in the powerplay, but Rohit saved him for the Knight Riders' big guns thereafter, and he made a second appearance only in the 13th over, when Andre Russell had joined Eoin Morgan in the middle with the asking rate touching 14.75.

By the time he had completed his third over, the chase was buried, with Bumrah snaring both Russell and Morgan



Jasprit Bumrah of Mumbai

within four balls and Bumrah's figures reading 3-0-5-2.

Rather anti-climatically, Bumrah conceded a whopping 27 runs in his final over to spoil his figures somewhat, as Pat Cummins hit him for three sixes, but by then, the task was beyond the Knight Riders, who eventually ended up on 146 for nine.

The victory also broke a sequence of six consecutive defeats for Mumbai in the UAE, dating back to when they lost five out of five games in 2014.

After Knight Riders won the toss and elected to field in their first game of the season, Shivam Mavi struck early, to dismiss Mumbai opener Quinton de Kock in the second over.

But Rohit was joined by Suryakumar Yadav and they counter-attacked and cashed in

on every scoring opportunity.

While Yadav hit four fours in the third over of the innings, Rohit went after Cummins in the fifth over, hitting him for two sixes.

Rohit and Yadav completed the fifty-run partnership and team's fifty in the final over of the powerplay. Rohit then hit a four and a six, taking on Russell in his first over.

Yadav then welcomed Kuldeep Yadav into the attack, with a six in his first over as Mumbai moved past 80-run mark at the close of eight overs.

Rohit then brought up his 37th IPL fifty before Mumbai moved past hundred in the 12th over.

In the 14th over - Kuldeep's last of the night - Rohit hit two mighty sixes to complete his 200 sixes in the IPL.

Rohit and Saurabh Tiwary, meanwhile, put up a 49-run stand, with the left-hander scoring 21 in 13 balls before getting out off Sunil Narine's bowling.

Hardik Pandya then joined the party, hitting Cummins for two fours and a six.

Rohit's innings was ended by Mavi. His brilliant knock comprised three fours and six sixes. Hardik was hit-wicket off Russell's bowling in the penultimate but Mumbai had set a good total of 195, a scored they easily defended.

Agencies



Rohit Sharma of Mumbai Indians plays a shot during his knock of 80 against Kolkata Knight Riders on Wednesday

Rohit Sharma
80
54 BALLS

I worked on my range-hitting skills during break: Samson

Sharjah, UAE - Convinced that possessing an array of shots is a must to go with power-hitting, the Rajasthan Royals wicketkeeper-batsman Sanju Samson says he worked on these aspects during the coronavirus-enforced break.

The work done by Samson was there to be seen when he pulverised the Chennai Super Kings on Tuesday night, setting up a win with his blistering 32-ball 74, studded with nine sixes and a four.

That he is an impact player is a known fact but his clean and elegant hitting earned praise from one and all.

"I think range-hitting is what the game demands in this generation," Samson said at the post-match presentation. "I had time to work out in these five months, and I think I've increased that ability."

"I've been working hard on my fitness, diet and training, and on

my strength, because my game relies a lot on power-hitting."

Samson, who was adjudged Man-of-the-Match, said his plan is to go and hit all the deliveries in his arc.

"My game plan is stand-and-deliver. If it's in the arc, I go for it, and it's very important to keep the intent to hit the ball if it's there to be hit."

With Robin Uthappa and Jos Buttler also in the squad, the Royals are spoilt for choice in the wicketkeeping department.

However, Samson, who executed two stumpings and as many catches against the Super Kings, said he is happy to play any role the captain and coach deem fit for him.

"Everyone likes to keep wickets and no one likes running around, but it's up to the coach. We are happy to bring smiles on the fans' faces and we hope to continue doing so."

Cricinfo



Sanju Samson in action during his knock of 32-ball 74 against Chennai

Marsh out of IPL, Holder named as replacement

Dubai, UAE - Mitchell Marsh has become the first player to be ruled out of IPL 2020 because of injury. Marsh hurt his right ankle during Sunrisers Hyderabad's first match of the tournament, against Royal Challengers Bangalore. West Indies all-rounder Jason Holder has been named Marsh's replacement.

This is the second time in the last five years that Marsh has had to abort the IPL because of injury - in 2017, a shoulder problem cost him the entire season for Rising Pune Supergiants.

Marsh was picked by the Sunrisers for his base price of US\$281,000 approx last December. Marsh was expected to be a first-choice player for the Sunrisers with his allround skills.

This will be Holder's second stint with Sunrisers (after 2014-15) and fourth overall in the IPL. Holder has previously featured for Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders.

Cricinfo



QUICK RUN

Sweden's World Cup runner-up Simonsson dies aged 84

Former Sweden international Agne Simonsson, who scored in his country's 1958 World Cup final loss to Brazil, has died at the age of 84, his family announced on Wednesday. Simonsson passed away Tuesday following pulmonary complications, his brother told local newspaper Goteborgs Posten. The forward scored 27 goals in 51 appearances for Sweden in a career that included a brief spell at Real Madrid in the early 1960s. He struggled to break into a team with Alfredo Di Stefano and was loaned to Real Sociedad. Simonsson scored four times during the 1958 World Cup hosted by Sweden, including in the 5-2 loss to Brazil and a 17 year old Pele in the final.

Roma handed 3-0 loss for fielding ineligible player

An Italian disciplinary hearing on Tuesday punished Roma for fielding an unregistered player in the opening round of Italian League (Serie A) by changing their goalless draw at Verona to a 3-0 defeat. Serie A clubs can register up to 25 players aged over 22 and must submit the list to Italian football's governing bodies at the start of the season. Roma did not include Amadou Diawara, who turned 23 on July 17, in their list and the Guinean midfielder started and played 89 minutes on Saturday in Verona.

Neymar made racist remarks towards Sakai: Marseille

Marseille claim to have footage of Neymar racially abusing Japanese rightback Hiroki Sakai during their French League (Ligue 1) win over Paris Saint-Germain earlier this month, a source close to the club said on Tuesday. The individual said Andre Villas-Boas's side have evidence of the Brazil forward making the comments on two occasions. A Marseille spokesperson refused to confirm the allegations. "We have no comment. We entrust all our expertise and analysis to the examiners" of the league, they said. The world's most expensive player alleged he was the victim of racist abuse by Marseille defender Alvaro Gonzalez in the fixture where five players including Neymar himself were shown red cards.

Pakistan confirm Zimbabwe for 'bio-secure' series

Pakistan cricket authorities confirmed on Wednesday they would host Zimbabwe for a series of three one-day internationals (ODIs) and three Twenty20s starting next month. The tour will take place under 'bio-secure' conditions to prevent the risk of spreading the coronavirus, officials said. Zimbabwe is expected to arrive on October 20. Following ten days in quarantine, Zimbabwe are scheduled to play the first ODI in Multan on October 30. Games will be played in closed stadiums. The other two ODIs will also be in Multan on November 1 and 3. The three T20Is will be played in Rawalpindi on November 7, 8 and 10.

AFP

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Man United reach last-16

West Ham manager Moyes and two players test positive for COVID-19; Tottenham tie postponed

ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP

London, UK - Manchester United moved into the English League Cup fourth round with a 3-0 win at Luton, while West Ham boss David Moyes and two of his players contracted the coronavirus ahead of their 5-1 victory against Hull as the pandemic caused chaos on Tuesday.

Moyes, Josh Cullen and Issa Diop all left the London Stadium after learning of the tests before kick-off and will self-isolate, with the trio said to be asymptomatic.

West Ham were not the only English Premier League (EPL) club affected by the virus as Tottenham's tie at Leyton Orient was postponed after their fourth tier opponents suffered a COVID-19 outbreak.

West Ham's match went ahead as planned despite the virus tests, with assistant manager Alan Irvine taking charge of the Hammers. "At 20 past six we suddenly got some information from our doctor and head physio to say there were three positive tests, the manager and the two players," Irvine said.

"We'd had contact insofar as we were in the same area of the stadium as David.

"We were shocked by the news. We've had so many tests and not had any positive. But we've been very particular about protocol right from the start."

Sebastien Haller and Andriy Yarmolenko both struck twice for West Ham after Robert Snodgrass opened the scoring. West Ham will play Fleetwood or Everton in the last-16.

The news of the virus striking at football's heart came after British Prime Minister Boris Johnson dealt a major blow to the sport's financial future on



Manchester United's goalkeeper Dean Henderson makes a save against Luton Town during the English League Cup third round match in Bedfordshire, UK, on Tuesday (AFP)

Tuesday. Johnson said fans would not be allowed back into stadiums in October as originally planned due to a spike in virus cases, measures that will remain in place for 'perhaps six months'.

At Kenilworth Road, United bounced back from a dismal 1-3 home defeat against Crystal Palace in their EPL opener on Saturday.

In United's first meeting with Championship side Luton since

1992, boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer made ten changes, giving full debuts to goalkeeper Dean Henderson and close-season signing Donny Van De Beek.

United went ahead in the 44th minute when George Moncur fouled Brandon Williams and Juan Mata dispatched the penalty. Henderson is hoping to replace the error-prone David De Gea after an impressive loan at Sheffield United last season.

He preserved United's advantage with his only save of the match in the final minutes, keeping out Tom Lockyer's header at the far post.

Marcus Rashford came off the bench to net in the 88th minute before fellow substitute Mason Greenwood's stoppage-time goal put a flattering gloss on the scoreline.

"Going through is the big thing. There are some positives,

the keeper does his job and we scored some nice goals towards the end," said Solskjaer, whose side will travel to Brighton or Preston in the fourth round.

Henderson tweeted: "I dreamt about this my whole life. Unbelievable feeling to make my debut for the club I love."

Tottenham's clash with Orient has yet to be rearranged amid reports Jose Mourinho's men could be given a bye into the

last-16, where they would face Chelsea or Barnsley.

West Bromwich Albion crashed out against second tier Brentford, losing 4-5 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at the Hawthorns.

Newport reached the competition's last-16 for the first time in their history as the fourth tier side beat Championship club Watford 3-1.

AFP



Robert Lewandowski of Bayern Munich



Kevin De Bruyne of Manchester City

Lewandowski, Neuer, De Bruyne nominated for UEFA player prize

Paris, France - Bayern Munich duo Robert Lewandowski and Manuel Neuer have been nominated alongside Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne for the UEFA Men's Player of the Year prize for last

season, European football's governing body announced on Wednesday.

The winner will be announced - along with the UEFA Women's Player of the Year - on October 1, when UEFA hold the draw for

this season's Champions League group stage at their headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland.

Lewandowski and Neuer starred as Bayern won the Champions League, beating Paris Saint-Germain 1-0 in the final in Lisbon in August.

Polish striker Lewandowski scored an astonishing 55 goals in 47 games as Bayern won the treble of Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup. He top-scored in the Champions League with 15 goals.

Goalkeeper Neuer also played a key role in Bayern's triumphant campaign, while Belgian playmaker De Bruyne scored or set up 33 goals in the English Premier League and was nominated despite City finishing second to Liverpool domestically and going out of the Champions League in the quarterfinals to Lyon.

Barcelona's Lionel Messi just missed out on being shortlisted, coming fourth in the vote by a jury comprising the 80 coaches of the clubs that participated in the group stages of last season's Champions League and Europa League, along with 55 selected journalists, one from each of UEFA's member associations.

England star Lucy Bronze is a contender to win the women's prize for the second year running after helping Lyon win the Champions League for the fifth season in a row before recently signing for Manchester City.

Her Lyon colleague, the France defender Wendie Renard, is also shortlisted alongside the Danish striker Pernille Harder, who recently joined Chelsea after helping Wolfsburg get to the Champions League final.

AFP

Barcelona agree to sell Suarez to Atletico Madrid

Barcelona, Spain - Barcelona have agreed to let striker Luis Suarez join Spanish League (La Liga) rivals Atletico Madrid, BBC reported on Wednesday.

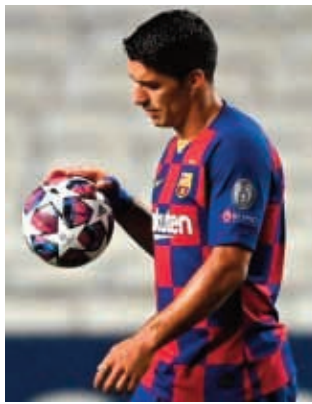
Suarez is not wanted at Barca and the Catalans were happy to release him for free, providing he did not join certain other top clubs. The Uruguayan agreed terms on a reduced salary with Atletico after a move to Juventus fell through because of passport issues.

Barcelona chairman Josep Maria Bartomeu then blocked the deal because he did not wish to sell to a Spanish rival. But, after meeting with Suarez's representatives, the Catalan club have backed down, with the striker threatening to air his grievances to the media.

Atletico will have to pay a nominal fee of no more than US\$4.7mn for the 33 year old, which will be based on variables such as Champions League qualification. Suarez will earn half of the US\$35mn a year he was on at Barca at Atletico.

The move ends Suarez's six-year career with Barca, during which he scored 198 goals in 283 appearances and formed one third of a feared front three with Lionel Messi and Neymar.

He joined the club for US\$94mn from Liverpool in 2014 and helped them win four La Liga titles, four Copa del Reys



and the Champions League and Club World Cup in 2015.

It also ends one of this summer's long-running transfer sagas, which looked likely to result in the player ending up in Turin - a move that was dashed, according to Juventus directors, because of the amount of time it would have taken to secure Suarez an Italian passport.

Also, Wolves announced the signing of Portugal right-back Nelson Semedo from Barcelona on Wednesday for a fee that could rise to US\$47mn.

The English Premier League club said the 26 year old had signed a three-year deal at Molineux, with an option to extend until 2025.

The Portugal international, who made 124 appearances for Barcelona, joins Nuno Espirito Santo's side after three seasons at the Nou Camp.

Agencies



GEELY LAUNCHES EV PLATFORM
Chinese carmaker Zhejiang Geely Holding Group launched its first electric vehicle (EV)-focused platform - Sustainable Experience Architecture (SEA) on Wednesday

BUSINESS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2020 | MUSCAT DAILY | 13

MARKET WATCH	
MSM30	3,621.66
BSE Sensex	37,668.42
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	191.30
Pakistani Rs	432.13
Bangladeshi Taka	220.69
Philippine Peso	126.37
Sri Lankan Rs	481.14
*Rates as on September 23 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

Germany to breach balanced budget rule again in 2021

Germany will again breach its balanced-budget policy in 2021 to help pay for massive stimulus measures aimed at steering the economy through the coronavirus pandemic, German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said on Wednesday.

Europe's biggest economy would borrow €96.2bn, abandoning the country's constitutionally enshrined 'debt brake' rule, Scholz said.

"For 2020 and 2021, we are obliged to ask the parliament to authorise us to borrow an unusually large amount," Scholz said.

Germany expects to reinstate the no new debt rule in 2022, Scholz said.

Oman's oil exports resilient on China demand despite pandemic

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In the face of the global recession triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, Oman's oil exports have shown resilience during the first eight months of this year. The robust demand for Oman crude in China, the biggest destination for the sultanate's oil shipments, kept Oman's exports nearly steady during the January-August period of 2020, despite the coronavirus pandemic decimating oil demand worldwide.

Despite a sharp decline in global energy demand this year, Oman's total oil exports only marginally decreased 1.5 per cent to 193.64mn barrels during the January-August period of 2020 from 196.6mn barrels in the same period of 2019, according to the figures released by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Crude exports to China, which bought more than 88 per cent of Oman's total oil shipments this



year, grew by 18.2 per cent to 171.07mn barrels in the first eight months of 2020 compared to 144.7mn barrels in the same period a year ago.

On the production side, the coronavirus pandemic had a limited overall impact on Oman's oil

output during the January-August period. Total production decreased by just 1 per cent to 233.57mn barrels in the first eight months of 2020 compared to 235.84mn barrels a year ago. Of the total oil production, crude output decreased 7.5 per cent to

190.91mn barrels, while condensate production sharply rose by 45.2 per cent to 42.66mn barrels.

The sultanate's daily average oil production decreased 1.4 per cent to 957,300 barrels per day during the January-August pe-

riod of this year compared to 970,500 barrels per day recorded for the same period of last year, the NCSI data showed.

Oman sold its crude at an average price of US\$47.7 per barrel during the first eight months of 2020, which is 26 per cent lower

compared with the average price achieved last year at US\$64.7 per barrel. On Wednesday, Oman crude contract price at the Dubai Mercantile Exchange slightly increased to US\$41.36 per barrel (for November delivery).

While Oman's oil exports to China rose this year despite the pandemic and the global recession, exports to other countries sharply fell during the first eight months of the year. Exports to Japan plummeted more than 90 per cent to 1.6mn barrels from 17.52mn barrels last year, while exports to South Korea decreased 2.6 per cent to 4.99mn barrels.

Oman's oil exports to India also dropped by 49.7 per cent to 6.67mn barrels this year compared to 13.27mn barrels in the same period of the previous year. Exports to rest other countries fell 42 per cent to 9.29mn barrels during the January-August period of 2020 compared to 15.97mn barrels in 2019.

CMA awards contract for Dhamani electronic platform to Infoline

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Wednesday announced that it had concluded the contract to establish the Dhamani electronic platform with Omani IT solutions provider Infoline LLC in collaboration with its strategic partner IQVIA.

Dhamani is the electronic platform for the exchange of health information, claims settlement, funds transfer, requests for approvals and verification and checking insurance coverage between the parties in the insurance relationship and the regulators and supervisors.

The tender documents for the Dhamani platform contract were prepared after studying the needs of the local market through meetings with stakeholders such as insurance companies, health service providers, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Public Authority for Social Security, the CMA said in a press statement.

The Dhamani platform is considered one of the five key-steps



holders such as insurance companies, health service providers, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Public Authority for Social Security, the CMA said in a press statement.

The Dhamani platform is considered one of the five key-steps

designed by the CMA in collaboration with the concerned entities in the preparatory stage for the implementation of the compulsory health insurance scheme for the employees of the private sector, residents and visitors.

As per the CMA statement, the implementation of Dhamani platform will be in phases due to the size of the technical and operational requirements.

The first phase will commence after signing the contract and will continue for nine

months. This phase includes building the platform and linking it to the government entities concerned with the health insurance schemes, insurance companies and health services providers for online exchange of health insurance transactions.

The second phase, which will take eight months to be implemented, will include electronic payment features, verification of insurance coverage and data storage.

Finally, the third phase will also continue for eight months and is related to training of the parties of the insurance relationship and government entities on the system components and work methods.

The Dhamani platform would take nearly 25 months to be completed and fully implemented.

Oman successfully completes RO200mn sukuk issuance



Muscat - The Ministry of Finance affirmed that the sultanate has successfully concluded the issuance of RO200mn local sovereign sukuk. The sukuk issuance is within the context of the government's plan to fund the budget deficit for 2020.

The ministry said in a statement that the sukuk were listed on the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) and are available for trading. The sukuk issue will carry an annual profit rate of 5.25

per cent for a period of six years.

The Ministry of Finance explained that the sukuk issue paved the way for local banks, Islamic banking windows, business firms and individual investors to utilise their funds in a smooth manner.

The sukuk issuance is considered a step to develop the local financial instruments for the Islamic banking industry, the ministry added.

ONA

World's workers lost \$3.5tn in wages amid pandemic: UN

Geneva, Switzerland - The coronavirus pandemic is taking a heavier toll on jobs than previously feared, the UN said on Wednesday, with hundreds of millions of jobs lost and workers suffering a 'massive' drop in earnings.

In a fresh study, the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that by the mid-year point, global working hours had declined by 17.3 per cent compared to last December - equivalent to nearly 500mn full-time jobs.

That is nearly 100mn more job-equivalents than the number forecast by the ILO back in June, when it expected 14 per cent of working hours to be lost by the end of the second three-month period of the year.

"The impact has been catastrophic," ILO chief Guy Ryder told reporters in a virtual briefing, pointing out that global labour income had shrunk by 10.7 per

cent during the first nine months of the year compared to the same period in 2019.

That amounts to a drop of some US\$3.5tn, or 5.5 per cent of the overall global gross domestic product (GDP), the ILO said.

Since surfacing in China late last year, the novel coronavirus has killed nearly 1mn people worldwide out of the more than 31mn infected.

In addition to the health challenges, lockdowns, travel restrictions and other measures taken to rein in the virus have had a devastating impact on jobs and income across the globe.

'Worsened significantly'

The ILO also warned that the outlook for the final three months of 2020 had 'worsened significantly' since its last report in June.

The organisation had previ-



A shopper makes his way into a store offering a closing down sale in Auckland, New Zealand on June 19 (AFP)

ously forecast that global working hours would be 4.9 per cent lower in the fourth quarter than a year earlier, but said it now ex-

pected an 8.6 per cent drop, which corresponds to 245mn full-time jobs.

It explained that workers in

developing and emerging economies, especially those in informal jobs, had been much more affected than in past crises.

The ILO also pointed out that while many of the most stringent workplace closures have been relaxed, 94 per cent of the world's workers were in countries where some sort of workplace restrictions remain in place.

And Sangheon Lee, head of ILO's employment policy division, warned that the situation for workers could worsen further.

If second waves of infections bring tighter restrictions and new lockdowns, he said, 'the impact on the labour market could be comparable to the magnitude we saw in the second quarter of this year'.

Ryder cautioned against those pushing for policy makers to focus on economy over health in their response to the pandemic.

"It is very clear... that the capacity and the speed with which the global economy can get out of its labour market slump is in-

timately linked to our capacity to control the pandemic," he said.

"These two things are very, very intimately intertwined, and we have to act on that understanding."

The ILO's report meanwhile showed that the labour market devastation could have been worse without the numerous fiscal stimulus packages provided by governments.

Without such stimulus efforts - amounting to around US\$9.6tn globally - global working hours would have shrunk by a full 28 per cent in the second quarter, it said.

But it warned that fiscal stimulus was delivered very unevenly, with low and middle-income countries receiving around US\$982bn less in overall support than their wealthy counterparts.

Ryder urged international efforts to close the gap.

AFF

'No-deal Brexit will hit UK economy more than virus'

London, UK - A 'no-deal' Brexit could be three times more costly to Britain's economy in the long term than the coronavirus outbreak, a new study published on Tuesday warned.

The thinktank UK in a Changing Europe said the political and economic effects of the pandemic were likely to mitigate or hide that of failing to secure a trade agreement with the European Union (EU).

But in the short term, the lack of a new formal trading relationship with Brussels would be bad news for economic recovery and larger than the health crisis in the long term.

The thinktank, which collaborated with the London School of Economics, said Brexit would hit growth in the coming years more than if the UK had opted to remain in the bloc.

'The claim that the economic impacts of COVID-19 dwarf those of Brexit is almost certainly correct in the short term,' its authors wrote.

'Not even the most pessimistic scenarios suggest that a no-deal Brexit would lead to a fall in output comparable to that seen in the second quarter of 2020.'

'However - assuming a rea-



sonably strong recovery, and that government policies succeed in avoiding persistent mass unemployment - in the long run, Brexit is likely to be more significant,' according to the study.

'Our modelling with LSE of the impact of a no-deal Brexit suggests that the total cost to the UK economy over the longer

term will be two to three times as large as that implied by the Bank of England's forecast for the impact of COVID-19.'

The study estimated that the negative impact on gross domestic product would be 5.7 per cent over the next 15 years compared with the current level, while GDP was forecast to take a 2.1 per cent hit from COVID-19.

The reintroduction of customs duties and paperwork for importers and exporters will increase costs for both businesses and consumers.

Britain and the EU have set an October 15 deadline to strike a deal, but weeks of talks remain deadlocked over key areas such as competition and fisheries.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said he will walk away from negotiations if there is no agreement, despite having promised that it would be quick and easy to get one.

Britain would then deal with the EU - its biggest trading partner - under World Trade Organization rules from January 1, 2020.

"While the Prime Minister said no deal is a 'good outcome', our report shows that it may lead to significant disruption and will have a significant economic impact," said Anand Menon, director of the UK in a Changing Europe.

The report said the most immediate and visible consequences of a 'no-deal' will be seen at borders, with risks of queues and shortages of certain foods and medicines.

AFP



People wearing face masks walk past a shop in Leipzig, Germany (AFP)

Eurozone business growth stagnates as virus resurges

Brussels, Belgium - Eurozone economic activity stagnated in September as a summer recovery faltered because of a resurgence in the spread of the coronavirus, IHS Markit said.

The firm's closely watched PMI index fell to 50.1 points from 51.9 points in August, just barely above the key 50-point level which indicates growth.

'A two-speed economy is evident, with factories reporting that production growth was buoyed by rising demand' while the service sectors were hard hit, said Chris Williamson, chief economist at IHS Markit.

The data provider said that Germany, the eurozone's biggest economy, continued to lead the recovery, though at a slower rate

than previously.

The rest of the eurozone - which includes Spain and Italy - suffered a more rapid slowdown, IHS Markit said, noting that staff were being cut across the continent, though at a slower pace.

Williamson saw encouragement 'from a further improvement in companies' expectations for the year ahead, but this optimism often rests on [COVID-19] infection rates falling, which remains far from guaranteed for the coming months'.

Jessica Hinds of Capital Economics warned that the data 'suggest that the recovery is grinding to a halt, at least outside the German manufacturing sector'.

AFP

France's economic recovery stumbles in September

Paris, France - French business activity fell in September - its first drop in four months - according to a key survey released on Wednesday which found firms blamed renewed coronavirus disruptions for the slowdown.

The preliminary reading of IHS Markit's PMI survey for September came in at 48.5 points, with a reading under 50 indicating a contraction.

The index, which is based on surveys of businesses about their current activity and expectations, had come in at 51.6 in August.

"The sharp rise in COVID-19 cases recorded across France during September helped to explain the first fall in business activity since May," said IHS Markit economist Eliot Kerr.

Infections have been surging across France in recent weeks

and authorities in may areas have been tightening restrictions on gatherings but have so far avoided lockdowns.

Those restrictions have 'caused hesitancy among businesses due to fears of a second round of temporary business closures', said Kerr in a statement.

IHS Markit said employment fell in September, but despite that firms were still clearing their backlogs of work and new orders had fallen.

It found that the drop in activity was centred among service firms with manufacturing companies still expanding.

While the survey also found that French firms remain optimistic about the future, Kerr said that 'should the current trajectory of infection rates persist, that confidence is likely be tested

in the coming months'.

The French government has unveiled a massive spending plan to jump start the economy and avoid mass unemployment after lockdowns earlier this year caused unprecedented disruption.

The virus impact has plunged the French economy into its worst downward spiral since 1945, with gross domestic product plunging 13.8 per cent in the second quarter, after a drop of more than 5 per cent in the first.

In the larger Paris Ile-de-France area, the incidence rate of infection has risen to 204 per 100,000 inhabitants, higher than in other hard-hit cities such as Lyon and Marseille, which have already tightened measures to curb virus transmission.

AFP

US set for strong economic rebound in third quarter: Treasury Secretary

Washington, US - The United States is ready for a strong economic rebound in the third quarter but additional government spending is still needed, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Tuesday.

The comments came as Mnuchin testified along with Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell before the House Financial Services Committee amid a continuing impasse in Washington over how much to spend to revitalize the US economy as it struggles with the COVID-19 downturn.

"I believe we will see tremendous growth in the third quarter fueled by strong retail sales, housing starts, home sales, manufacturing growth and increased business activity," Mnuchin said.



Steven Mnuchin (AFP)

"America is in the midst of the fastest economic recovery from any crisis in the US," he added.

However Mnuchin acknowl-

edged that 'some industries particularly hard hit by the pandemic require additional relief', citing tourism and restaurants, among others.

The United States saw GDP plunge by a historic 31.7 per cent annualised in the second quarter, but growth is expected to rebound sharply thanks to states' moves to resume business even as COVID-19 remains rife.

Facing business shutdowns that caused mass layoffs, Congress passed the US\$2.2tn CARES Act in March, which included a programme of loans and grants for small firms as well as extra weekly payments to the unemployed.

"The President and I remain committed to providing support for American workers and business," he said. "I believe a targeted package is still needed and the administration is ready to reach a bipartisan agreement."

AFP

Tesla slashes battery cost on road to \$25,000 model

San Francisco, US - Tesla on Tuesday said it is cutting battery costs to speed a global shift to renewable energy, and could have a US\$25,000 self-driving model available in three years or so.

Chief executive Elon Musk and the head of Tesla's power team laid out battery design, material and production innovations that combine to cut the cost per kilowatt hours by 56 per cent.

New approaches to making lithium-ion batteries for vehicles are desperately needed given the limited supply and cost, Musk said during a 'Battery Day' presentation.

Tesla shares dropped about 6 per cent in after-market trades as investors learned the road ahead was not short.

Musk had put out word on Twitter that Battery Day announcements would be 'insane', driving high expectations.

During the presentation, Musk and energy engineering

senior vice president Drew Baglino laid out technical details of Tesla's overhaul of making batteries, from raw materials and design to building finished cells into the very structures of cars.

Innovations, some still in development, were expected to pack more energy into battery cells, cut production costs and dramatically extend battery life.

They expected it to be several years before transformative battery making methods were being used at scale in Tesla factories.

"It was not one big thing, but a lot of little enhancements," iSeeCars executive analyst Karl Brauer said of Battery Day revelations, explaining that they all add up to batteries that can be made faster and cheaper and provide longer vehicle range

Innovations include using plentiful silicon in batteries in place of more expensive material and designing battery cells themselves into the very structures of vehicles,



according to Brauer.

Sustainable future

Musk and Baglino were adamant that a shift away from fossil fuels toward sustainable energy is a vital part of tackling climate change.

"It's really important that we take action," Baglino said.

"We're going to run out of these fossil fuels, so let's just move to the future."

Making lithium-ion batteries cheaper and more abundant is essential to a global shift to re-

newable power, which is Tesla's over-arching goal, according to Musk.

"We are going to work our darndest to transition the world to sustainable energy as soon as possible," Musk said.

Along with making electric

cars, Tesla has a battery division devoted to power cells for its vehicles, as well as storage packs for electricity at homes, businesses or disaster scenes.

Tesla makes batteries at its plants in the US and China, and is building a factory in Germany.

Lithium-ion batteries for Tesla models are made by Panasonic at the electric vehicle company's 'gigafactory' in Nevada.

Musk said in a tweet on Monday that Tesla intends to increase battery purchases from Panasonic, LG and China-based CATL.

"However, even with our cell suppliers going at maximum speed, we still foresee significant shortages in 2022 and beyond unless we also take action ourselves," Musk said.

Tesla is already ahead of other automakers when it comes to batteries, the key to the future of electric vehicles.

The battery event followed an annual shareholders meeting,

with attendees sitting in Tesla cars parked in a lot facing an outdoor stage to reduce COVID-19 risk. "We've got the Tesla drive-in movie theater, basically," Musk quipped.

Colourful founder and chief executive Musk has a pattern of envisioning wondrous innovations, from colonies on Mars to meshing minds with computers and 'hyperloop' tunnel systems, with people zipping along underground.

Tesla's new method of battery making will potentially enable the company to field a US\$25,000 model in 'three years-ish', according to Musk.

Despite a long-stated goal of making electric cars for the masses, Tesla models currently start at a bit more than US\$35,000 and quickly leap in price.

"It is absolutely critical that we make cars that people can actually afford," Musk said.

AFP

No deal with Israel, but Saudi pushes outreach

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - From scrubbing hate-filled school textbooks to a taboo-defying religious sermon, Saudi Arabia is pushing for another kind of normalisation after declining to establish formal relations with Israel - co-existence with Jews.

Saudi Arabia has said it will not follow its allies Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates in establishing diplomatic relations without a resolution to the Palestinian issue, even as it cultivates clandestine ties with the Jewish state.

Having Saudi Arabia, an Arab powerhouse, forge a similar deal would be the ultimate diplomatic prize for Israel, but the kingdom is wary that its citizens - sympathetic to the Palestinian cause - may not be ready for a full embrace.

Saudi Arabia, however, is pushing to change public perceptions about Jews with a risky outreach to a community that has long been vilified by the kingdom's clerical establishment and media, laying the groundwork for an eventual recognition.

School textbooks, once well-known for denigrating Jews and other non-Muslims, are undergoing revision as part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's campaign to combat extremism in education, officials say.

"The Saudi government has also decided to prohibit the disparagement of Jews and Christians in mosques," said Saudi analyst Najah al Otaibi.

"Anti-Jewish rhetoric was common at Friday prayers of the imams in mosques used to address Muslims around the world."

In a stunning U-turn, a preacher in the holy city of Mecca triggered a social media storm this month when he spoke of Prophet Mohammed's friendly relations with Jews to advocate religious tolerance.

The sermon was by Abdulrahman al Sudais, the imam of Mecca's Grand Mosque who courted controversy in the past for strongly anti-Semitic views.

'When, not if'

Mohammed al Issa, a Saudi cleric who heads the Muslim World League, won praise from Israel in January after he travelled to Poland for events marking 75 years since the Nazi death camp Auschwitz was liberated.

Earlier this year, the kingdom announced the screening of a



A file photo of US President Donald Trump with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (AFP)

Israel airliner flies to Bahrain after ties

Jerusalem - An Israeli airliner flew to Bahrain on Wednesday, tracking data showed, just days after the two countries inked a normalisation accord backed by the US.

The Israir Airlines jet from Tel Aviv flew over Saudi Arabia to reach the Gulf state, according to data from the FlightRadar24 website.

Israel's *Yediot Aharonot* newspaper reported senior government officials were on the plane. Neither Prime Min-

ister Benjamin Netanyahu's office nor the airline would confirm the flight when contacted by AFP.

It comes a day after Netanyahu spoke by phone with Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman to map out the two countries' new relationship.

They 'reviewed potential areas of bilateral cooperation and relevant regional and international developments', the state's BNA news agency said. AFP

Holocaust-themed film for the first time at a movie festival, before it was cancelled due to the

coronavirus pandemic. The kingdom has also pursued a bold outreach to Jewish

figures, including in February when King Salman hosted a Jerusalem-based rabbi, David Rosen, for the first time in modern history.

"When it comes to Saudi Arabia and Israel establishing relations, it is a question of 'when', not 'if'," said Marc Schneier, an American rabbi with close relations to Gulf rulers.

"Part of the process that all Gulf countries have and are going through on the road to normalisation is first pushing warmer ties between Muslims and Jews and then moving more boldly into discussing Israel and the Gulf."

Arab News, the kingdom's main English-language daily, whipped up a social media storm at the weekend when it briefly changed its social media banner on Twitter and Facebook with a greeting in Hebrew for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.

The newspaper recently published a lengthy series on the Jews of Lebanon, and plans a similar instalment on an ancient Jewish community that lived in what is today Saudi Arabia.

The newspaper's editor Faisal Abbas told AFP the coverage 'was not tied to Israel' but aimed at connecting with 'Arab Jews worldwide'.

The coverage marks a departure for tightly controlled media in the absolute monarchy.

Saudi media outlets have previously branded the Jewish state as the 'Zionist' enemy, but largely hailed the recent deals struck with the UAE and Bahrain.

Data from a rare Saudi public opinion poll published last month by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy suggests many Saudi citizens are not in favour of a deal. AFP



This handout photo shows Iranian President Hassan Rouhani chairing a Cabinet meeting, in Tehran on Wednesday (AFP)

Iran's President claims 'victory' over Trump at UN

Tehran, Iran - Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday declared 'victory' over the United States after the UN Security Council rejected the Trump administration's bid to reimpose UN sanctions on the Islamic republic.

"The Iranian nation has achieved great political, legal and diplomatic success at the United Nations," Rouhani told a televised weekly meeting of his Cabinet.

"The reason for this victory lies solely in the support and resistance of the people," he said. "America's greatness has collapsed (just like) the global hegemony they thought they had."

In May 2018, US President Donald Trump withdrew from a landmark deal that gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for UN-verified guarantees that it is not seeking nuclear weapons.

Since breaking from the accord, the United States has slapped wave after wave of sanc-

tions on Iran that have crippled its economy.

In retaliation since May 2019, Iran has gradually reduced its commitments to the 2015 nuclear treaty known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Tehran says its response has been in line with the JCPOA, but Washington says it has violated the agreement and sought a 'snapback' of UN sanctions on Iran at the Security Council.

The US insisted it was still a 'participant' in the JCPOA despite its pullout, but that was rejected by virtually every other member of the Security Council.

While denouncing Iranian 'violations' of the nuclear deal, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Tuesday that Europe would 'not compromise' with the US over its move to reactivate the sanctions.

Rouhani did not comment on Macron's remarks. AFP

Kazakhstan bars 3 airlines for breaking UN Libya embargo

Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan - Kazakhstan has barred three air carriers from operating for violating a UN Security Council embargo covering the supply of arms to Libya, the Central Asian country's government said Wednesday.

The announcement comes as Kazakhstan's close ally Russia continues to strenuously deny supplying mercenaries to support attacks on the UN-recognised Government of National Accord.

A statement on the website of the Kazakh Industry Ministry said that it had stripped the locally held licenses of Azee Air, Sigma Airlines and Jenis Air.

The statement said that the

UN Security Council had informed Kazakhstan via a letter that the trio were violating the embargo in February of this year.

Flights by the three air carriers to Libya 'were carried out from third countries', the ministry said, noting that it was not Kazakhstan's responsibility to monitor the airlines' activities outside of Kazakhstan. UN officials have long warned that deliveries of foreign-made weapons to Libya are undermining peace efforts.

Libya has endured almost a decade of violent chaos since the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed leader Moammar Gadhafi. AFP

At least 380 whales are dead in Australia mass stranding

Hobart, Australia - At least 380 whales have died in a mass stranding in southern Australia, officials said on Wednesday, with rescuers managing to free just a few dozen survivors.

Nearly the entire pod of 460 long-finned pilot whales stuck in Macquarie Harbour, on the rugged and sparsely populated west coast of Tasmania, has now perished.

"We have got a more accurate count and we can confirm that 380 whales are dead," Tasmania's Parks and Wildlife Service manager Nic Deka said.

"There's around 30 left still alive but the good news is that we have saved 50," he said, describing the rescue effort as emotionally taxing.

The first of the giant mammals were found on Monday, sparking a major effort to free them from a sandbar only accessible by boat.

It is the largest mass stranding



Members of the Parks and Wildlife Service monitor whales stranded on a sandbar in Macquarie Harbour on the rugged west coast of Tasmania, on Wednesday (AFP)

ever recorded in Tasmania, an island state off mainland Australia's south coast, and likely the biggest in the country's history.

A rescue crew of 60 conservationists, skilled volunteers and

local fish farm workers has concentrated efforts on a group of whales partially submerged in the water.

The rescuers have spent two days wading in the cold shallows

to free the still living creatures, using boats fitted with special slings to guide them back to the open ocean.

They are now racing to free as many of the 30 remaining live

whales as possible.

"They're focused on the job - it's demanding work, some of them are up to their chest in cold water so we're trying to rotate the crews," Deka said.

"It's very draining physically. It's also draining emotionally."

The whales have been found stranded up to 10km apart, and officials have now expanded their search area to see if more of the mammals are stuck nearby.

Some of the whales rescued on Tuesday re-stranded overnight, in line with predictions by whale behaviour experts, but Deka remained upbeat about the immediate prospects for those that remained in the ocean.

"The good news is the majority of whales that were rescued are still out in deep water and swimming," he told reporters in the nearby town of Strahan.

"They haven't stranded. So we've been more successful than not."

The causes of mass strandings remain unknown - even to scientists who have been studying the phenomenon for decades.

However, some researchers have suggested the highly sociable pilot whales may have gone off track after feeding close to the shoreline or by following one or two whales that strayed.

Tasmanian environment department marine biologist Kris Carlyon said it was a 'natural event' with strandings of the species occurring regularly throughout history in both southern Australia and neighbouring New Zealand.

"We do step in and respond in these situations, but as far as being able to prevent these occurring in the future, there's really little that we can do," he said.

Carlyon said animal welfare issues were a major reason authorities and conservationists intervened in mass strandings, along with public expectations

and the ability to learn more about a species.

It would have been a 'hugely stressful' experience for the whales that were freed, he said, but past events showed they were likely to thrive in the wild.

"We have shown fairly conclusively that animals will regroup, they will reform those social bonds, and they will - at least in the short to medium term for the duration that they've been tracked - demonstrate normal and natural behaviour," Carlyon said.

Officials will now turn their attention to the disposal of the whale carcasses, with assessors arriving onsite Wednesday to create a clean-up plan.

"As time goes on (the whales) do become more fatigued so their chances of survival reduces," Deka said. "But we'll keep working as long as there's live animals at the site."

AFP

Brussels pact on migrants fails to satisfy activists

Brussels, Belgium - The European Commission launched an effort on Wednesday to rally sceptical member states around a plan to better share responsibility for settling refugees and sending rejected asylum seekers home.

The long-awaited proposal for a 'New Pact on Migration and Asylum' comes two weeks after a devastating fire in an overcrowded camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, and five years after Europe's last major migrant crisis.

It proposes that EU member states who do not want to volunteer to house more migrants - and reduce pressure on Italy and Greece, where most arrivals land - can instead take charge of sending those whose asylum requests are rejected back to their homelands.

"We want to live up to our values. And at the same time face the challenges of a globalised world," the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said, warning that old system 'no longer works'.

The proposal disappointed migrants' rights activists and refugee agencies, who had hoped for compulsory quotas for refugee settlement and an end to a 'Fortress Europe' ringed by squalid refugee camps.

'It's a compromise between xenophobia and cowardice,' tweeted professor of environmental geopolitics Francois Gemenne.

But the plan is likely, nevertheless, to face a rough reception in



European Commissioner for Promoting our European Way of Life Margaritis Schinas speaks at a press conference on a New Pact for Migration and Asylum at the European Commission, in Brussels on Wednesday (AFP)

national capitals, many of which are keen to see the EU take ownership of the problem, without wanting to take charge of large numbers of refugees on their own soil.

"It won't work like this," Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz told AFP this week, rejecting the

idea of mandatory quotas for refugees for all EU countries.

Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia also oppose compulsory relocation, and torpedoed such plans after the 2015 migration crisis.

But von der Leyen had promised another ambitious plan, with

an accelerated process to remove migrants who are unlikely to obtain protection.

Those coming from countries with a lower than 20 per cent positive response rate to asylum applications, such as Tunisia or Morocco, will be processed at the border and within 12 weeks.

And if a country is subject to migratory 'pressure', and believes that it cannot take care of migrants, it can request the activation of a 'compulsory solidarity mechanism' by the Commission.

All states will then be called upon to contribute, according to their economic weight and population, but they will have the choice between receiving asylum seekers, 'sponsoring' the return of a migrant who does not have the right to stay or helping to build reception centres.

In the event of a crisis similar to that in 2015 - when more than a million refugees arrived, compared to only 140,000 per year now - the choice for a state is reduced to taking charge of the relocation of refugees or the return of rejected migrants.

But if an EU country fails to return migrants to their country of origin within eight months, it must take them in - an idea that a European source admitted would be hard for smaller countries to accept.

Von der Leyen said last week the proposal would replace the 'Dublin Regulation' with 'a new European migration governance system'.

The Dublin Regulation states that asylum claims must be processed by the migrant's country of arrival, a rule that has led to bitter squabbles between the southern coastal member states where seaborne migrants arrive, and wealthier northern countries where most prefer to head.

AFP



This Instagram photo shows Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny posing for a selfie with his family at Berlin's Charite hospital (AFP)

Russia's Navalny discharged from hospital, eyes full recovery

Berlin, Germany - Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who the West believes was poisoned with a Soviet-era nerve agent, has been discharged from hospital after a month and can make a full recovery, his doctors in Berlin said on Wednesday.

European leaders have demanded explanations from the Kremlin since Germany said toxicology tests showed the 44 year old anti-corruption campaigner was poisoned with Novichok.

But the Kremlin has rubbished allegations it was behind the poisoning, and it said on Wednesday that with his recovery, Navalny 'is free' to return to Russia anytime, 'like any other Russian citizen'. The outspoken Kremlin critic fell ill after boarding a plane in Siberia in August. Russian doctors who first treated him said their tests did not find

any toxic substances.

But German lab tests pointed to 'unequivocal proof' of Novichok, which was also used to poison ex-double agent Sergei Skripal in Salisbury, England, in 2018. He survived.

France and Sweden have since said tests they ran independently corroborate Germany's conclusions.

Navalny spent 32 days in Charite hospital in the German capital, including 24 days in intensive care, before his release on Tuesday, the hospital said.

'Based on the patient's progress and current condition, the treating physicians believe that complete recovery is possible,' Charite said in a statement, adding however that it remained too early to assess any long-term effects of his severe poisoning.

AFP



Activists protest in front of the Swiss House of Parliament during a week of 'Rise up for change' demonstrations, in Bern on Tuesday (AFP)

Climate protesters evicted by police

Geneva, Switzerland - Police broke up a two-day protest outside the Swiss parliament overnight, carrying away demonstrators who had camped out to demand more action against climate change, the ATS news agency reported on Wednesday.

They swarmed the square in the middle of the night, forcibly removing protesters chanting 'Protecting the climate is not a crime', ATS reported.

"Tonight the police were made a tool of political ignorance," the activists lamented on the Collective Climate Justice Facebook page.

"Institutional politics did what it has been doing for decades: once again it treats the climate movement rather than the climate crisis as the problem!"

Several hundred protesters had set up camp on the square outside the parliament building in central Bern in the wee hours of Monday under the banner 'Rise Up for Change', aiming to pressure MPs as they are holding their autumn session.

Protests on the square while parliament is in session have been prohibited by law since 1925, and parliamentarians had

asked to have the activists removed.

The municipality of Bern repeatedly asked the protesters to move to a nearby location, but to no avail, and they also ignored a final ultimatum issued by the police late on Tuesday to clear the square.

In the end, police cordoned off the square at around 2.00am (0000 GMT), and around 30 of the protesters who agreed to filter out on their own were permitted to leave after providing their personal details.

By 3.30am, police moved in to evacuate the sit-in, carrying away protesters who refused to walk out on their own, and cutting the chains some had used to tie themselves down.

Police spokesman Christoph Gnagi told reporters that the evacuation had been peaceful, with no injuries.

The protesters criticised the decision to clear the square.

"An urgent and legitimate protest has been blocked," Frida Kohlmann, of the Climate Justice collective, told ATS.

"The powerful of this world do not want to hear our message." AFP

Malaysia's Anwar says has backing to form govt

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Malaysian opposition chief Anwar Ibrahim said on Wednesday he had 'formidable' support from MPs to form a new government, but the Prime Minister insisted he remained the country's legitimate leader.

The Southeast Asian nation has been in turmoil since an alliance that swept to power in 2018, which was headed by Mahathir Mohamad and included Anwar, collapsed in February amid bitter infighting.

Muhyiddin Yassin became Prime Minister at the head of a coalition backed by a scandal-plagued party which had been ousted at the polls two years earlier, but with only a wafer-thin



Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday (AFP)

majority in parliament. Speaking at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur, veteran

politician Anwar - who has long sought to become prime minister - said he now had the backing of enough MPs to form the government and oust Muhyiddin.

"Conclusively we have a strong, formidable majority," the 73 year old said. "The government under the leadership of Muhyiddin Yassin has fallen."

However, there were immediately doubts over his claim as he did not reveal how many MPs were backing him or which parties they were from. A government must command the support of a majority of the 222 MPs in parliament.

To form a new government Anwar must prove to the king, who formally appoints

Malaysia's Prime Ministers, that he has enough support in parliament, and he has yet to meet the monarch. He said an audience with the king originally planned for Tuesday had been postponed as the monarch was having medical treatment. The national palace confirmed a meeting had been scheduled.

Muhyiddin appeared unshaken by the opposition leader's challenge, and challenged Anwar to go through the proper process to prove his claim to the premiership.

'Until proven otherwise, the... government still stands firm and I am the legitimate prime minister,' he said in a statement.

The parties backing Muhyid-

din's coalition slammed Anwar's move as 'cheap publicity'. 'His latest action highlights his greedy and power-crazy attitude which pays no heed to the country's political and economic stability, or the fate of the people who are badly affected by COVID-19,' they said in a joint statement.

Other members of the government brushed off the move, with International Trade and Industry Minister Azmin Ali brandishing Anwar an 'incorrigible liar and political psychopath'.

Anwar's move came ahead of weekend elections for the legislature in the eastern state of Sabah - a major test of the current government's popularity.

AFP

Philippine military to review accounts of service members after Facebook purge

Manila, Philippines - The Philippine military said on Wednesday it will review the social media accounts of service members after Facebook took down a network linked to state security forces it accused of 'coordinated inauthentic behaviour'.

Facebook said it had removed two networks - one traced to the Philippines and another to China's Fujian province - for violating its policies.

The Philippine network involved 57 Facebook accounts, 31 pages and 20 Instagram profiles, according to Nathaniel Gleicher, head of security policy at the social media giant.

'Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our investigation found links to Philippine military and Philippine police,' he said in a blog post. Activities fo-



This file photo shows members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)

cused on local politics, military operations, a controversial anti-terrorism bill and criticism of communist insurgents.

Philippine military chief Lt-

Gen Gilbert Gapay on Wednesday urged troops to comply with Facebook guidelines.

"The (armed forces of the Philippines) does not tolerate the

uploading of fake news and fictitious social media accounts," he said ahead of a meeting with Facebook officials in Manila.

"This development also

prompted us to review personnel accounts and remind them of our policies."

Philippine police chief Camilo Cascolan said official force Facebook pages 'remain compliant'.

The force adheres to 'cyber etiquette and proper decorum in all public engagements including social media', he said.

Tuesday's action by Facebook was the third takedown of suspicious Philippine accounts since 2018 when it stepped up an offensive against misinformation.

In January 2019 it removed hundreds of pages with 43 million followers linked to a local digital marketing group.

Facebook said the campaign out of China it took down focused on the Philippines and South East Asia, but also took aim at the US presidential race.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Cases pass five million in Europe

► Paris, Madrid get stricter measures ► British PM warns new restrictions could last up to 6 months

Paris, France - Europe surged past five million cases of the new coronavirus on Wednesday as France and Spain prepared tighter restrictions in an attempt to curb rising levels of infections in their capital cities.

Worldwide nearly 32mn people have been infected and more than 971,000 have died since the virus emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019 and spread across the globe.

After appearing to bring cases mostly under control with economically devastating lockdowns, Europe now faces a resurgence, forcing governments to consider reintroducing tough measures.

More than half of Europe's infections have been recorded in Russia, followed by Spain, France and the United Kingdom.

The 380,000 cases reported in the past week represent the highest number in the region since the start of the pandemic.

'Be vigilant'

The French government is all set to announce stricter anti-virus measures for Paris, sources told AFP, as national infections have rocketed since lockdown was lifted - sometimes surging past 10,000 a day.

President Emmanuel Macron had said new curbs would be announced on Wednesday and sources said they could include a ban on alcohol sales after 8:00 pm and restrictions on social gatherings, as well as speeded up testing.

"We are calling on people to be vigilant, we will have to live with this virus for a while," Anne Souyris, deputy Paris mayor said. "The object is to protect yourself while shaping a social life."

The Madrid region, the heart of an explosion of infections in Spain, has already locked down roughly 850,000 people and plans to extend the measures on Friday.

Britain has already an-



Head of French far-right party Rassemblement National (RN), Marine Le Pen leaves after a meeting with the French government, opposition leaders and members of parliament about the current pandemic situation in France, in Paris on Tuesday (AFP)

China creaks open door to foreigners

Beijing, China - China on Wednesday eased entry restrictions for foreigners holding certain residence permits, an incremental step towards reopening borders closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The country has gradually allowed more foreigners to enter after an abrupt ban on all foreign nationals, including those with Chinese work or residence permits, announced



A woman gets tested in Tongji Hospital in Wuhan (AFP)

in March to fight the pandemic.

Foreigners who have residence permits tied to employment, as well as permits

for two types of family reunions may now re-enter the country without applying for new documents, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

But all entrants 'must strictly abide by China's anti-epidemic management regulations', it said.

That means being subject to COVID-19 tests and a 14-day quarantine.

AFP

nounced fresh steps to try to allay the rising toll.

"To help contain the virus, of-

fice workers who can work effectively from home should do so," the government said on

Tuesday, despite fears of a devastating economic impact.

New rules come into force for

pubs and other hospitality venues on Thursday, forcing them to close early, and plans to allow fans back into sporting events have been ditched.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned the new restrictions could last up to six months and called for a collective effort to 'get through this winter together'.

His scientific advisors had said the United Kingdom could see a devastating 50,000 coronavirus cases a day by mid-October if no action is taken.

The World Health Organization reported late on Monday that almost 2mn infections were recorded around the globe in the week to September 20.

AFP



A man walks with a mascot promoting awareness about the COVID-19 along a street, in Tokyo on September 14 (AFP)

Japan may ease entry restrictions next month

Tokyo, Japan - Japan is considering easing strict coronavirus border restrictions from October to allow more foreign nationals to enter, local media reported on Wednesday.

Tourists would still be banned and only longer-term visas approved, the reports said, as the nation looks to rebuild its economy and prepare for the postponed Olympics next year.

Japan currently bans entry for foreigners from most countries, but has been negotiating the gradual resumption of cross-border business travel.

Business visitors are already allowed from seven places - including Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan.

This limited travel resumption has not resulted in additional virus cases, so the government is now considering letting in eligible visa-holders from all countries, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper reported, citing un-

named government sources.

Several other local media outlets reported similar stories, also citing unnamed sources. Arrivals would be capped at 1,000 per day and the minimum stay would be three months, they said.

An immigration agency official could not confirm the reports, saying only that negotiations on business travel resumption were ongoing with several countries.

Government spokesman Katsunobu Kato told reporters that ministers 'will study how to resume accepting new visitors while preventing a resurgence of infections'.

"We will deal carefully with the issue while keeping an eye on the virus situation," he added.

With the postponed Olympics due to open in July, discussions are also ongoing about how to handle the arrival and movements of athletes and spectators.

AFP

Freed Taliban members returned to battlefield, says top Afghan official

Washington, US - A number of Taliban prisoners who were released by the Afghan government as a condition for peace talks have taken up arms again, top official Abdullah Abdullah said Tuesday.

Abdullah, who chairs Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation and is overseeing the government's peace efforts, said discussions with the Taliban in Qatar so far have been positive.

However, he said some - though not the majority - of the 5,000 Taliban prisoners released by the government as a condition for talks had resumed the fight against Kabul.

"I do know that some have returned to the battlefield, which is a violation of the agreement that they had made," Abdullah said during an online conference with the US Council on Foreign Relations. Abdullah said talks between the two sides had begun in Doha on a positive note, as the delegations build some familiarity with each other.

Yet the level of violence inside Afghanistan has not fallen, and he called on the US, which launched the peace process with its own deal with the Taliban, and



Women hold banners and chant slogans during a march in support of peace talks between the Taliban and the government as they demand announcement of permanent ceasefire, in Jalalabad on September 16 (AFP)

Pakistan, which maintains ties to the insurgents, to pressure them to agree to a ceasefire.

"Unfortunately, so far, the level of violence is very high and to a level that is not acceptable for the

people," Abdullah said. "I repeat my call to the Taliban themselves and also to all partners who have any leverage over the Taliban to press on that point."

Abdullah said he planned to

visit Pakistan in the coming days for the first time since 2008.

The persistent violence, and the Taliban's failure to completely cut relations with the Islamic State and Al Qaeda

extremist groups, was singled out as a barrier to success by US officials testifying in Congress on Tuesday.

US chief negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad said a drawdown of US troops, under the US-Taliban agreement, would halt at around 4,500 remaining in Afghanistan in November while Washington assesses whether the insurgents were living up to their pledges.

"Further withdrawals will be determined based on conditions on the ground and delivery by the Taliban on their commitments," Khalilzad told a hearing of the House oversight committee.

The US has slashed troop numbers in Afghanistan by more than half from above 12,000.

Under President Donald Trump's promise to end US involvement in wars abroad, Washington has pledged to withdraw all forces by May 2021, if the Taliban and the government can achieve a solid peace agreement.

"By any measure, the current levels of violence are too high. We know that the reductions are possible," Khalilzad said, noting short ceasefires were respected by the Taliban in the past.

AFP



People waded through a flooded street following massive monsoon rains in India's financial capital Mumbai on Wednesday (AFP)

Toll 39 in India building collapse

Mumbai, India - The death toll from an apartment block collapse in western India jumped to 39 on Wednesday, officials said, as hopes of finding anyone else alive dimmed.

Emergency workers from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) have so far pulled 20 survivors from the rubble of the three-storey building in Bhiwandi, near Mumbai.

A senior NDRF official said that recovery teams, aided by sniffer dogs, retrieved 39 bodies buried under brick and concrete after the block came crashing down before dawn on Monday.

"Five people are still missing

so... operations are ongoing," NDRF Commandant Anupam Srivastava said.

An official with the Thane city authority, which oversees Bhiwandi, said the dead included at least eight children.

The cause of the incident was not immediately clear, but building collapses are common during India's June-September monsoon season.

Heavy overnight downpours in the Mumbai region forced railway authorities to reschedule or cancel trains in the city on Wednesday due to waterlogging on tracks.

AFP

KARATE FOR BEGINNERS

Hubert Vaz

If you really are interested in pursuing Karate, closure of institutes is no excuse to put it off. You need to either diligently continue what you have learnt or take new lessons from an instructor and start training at home everyday.

Karate training at home is excellent because it may not always be possible to go to the training arena every day. Besides, home training allows you to train differently - you can work for as long as you want on a specific punch or kick. At home, you can improve your body conditioning by working on anything that you feel you need to improve.

Beginners always get influenced by what they see in movies and look forward to acrobatic moves, but Karate is more than that - it is a disciplined sport that begins with self discipline and a mastery of the basics.

Technically, Karate training requires very little equipment. Once you have a uniform and a belt, you're fine to begin. But by gradually improving your body conditioning, you directly improve your techniques. Tools like punching bags, kicking shields, etc, only help in improving your performance once you've learnt the basics.

When you are a beginner, you do self-defence techniques and sparring at long range. Why? Because you are not yet comfortable with receiving attack and your reaction time is relatively slow. With experience, you will naturally move to close range and have sparring sessions.

Remember, when you punch, kick, or block, don't use just your arm or leg, use your hips as well. This way, you will drastically improve your striking power. Every movement comes from your hips, its the centre of your Karate. Power should come from the ground up, through the legs, through the hips and then explode into a punch or a kick.

For attaining belts, however, you have to go through an institute or instructor. But, as most people think, the black belt is not the end of the journey, rather it is the beginning of serious Karate.



Karate helps refine your personality



Hilal al Abdali
Instructor, Shotokan Martial Arts

Given the current circumstances of the spread of the Corona pandemic globally, and the subsequent suspension of many daily activities, especially team sports that require direct contact between players such as martial arts, most karate instructors have resorted to training via virtual forms such as Zoom and other visual communication programmes. With these, they can communicate with players in their homes to ensure the players' continuity in training, flexibility and review of the basics, katas and fight training.

Advantages

There are some advantages of these programmes, such as creating more impact and interaction by the player because of the techniques he uses, and the ease and speed of communication between the instructor and the player, regardless of the distance.

Disadvantages

There are also some drawbacks to using such programmes, such as the player's lack of immediate feedback from the instructor, the need for internet and devices to communicate and the difficulty in evaluating the player and developing his movements.

Discipline

Karate is one sport that helps to refine the personality of the person, as he becomes more confident and self-reliant and gains the ability to think well. The player's performance gets better, whether in study or work, and other activities that he participates in also gets positively impact. Karate teaches self-discipline, taking responsibility, controlling anger and fear, and improving character. It also helps to avoid insecure situations and teach the person how to use his mind instead of his fist to solve problems.

I improved my fitness level and discipline



Basil al Balushi
Karate student

I started Karate nine years ago, in April 2012, at Shotokan Karate Centre. I have been practising everyday at home, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when most people had to stay indoors. I benefited from online video training programmes with trainers in Oman as well as outside Oman. It has helped in improving my level of fitness, too.

I trained the basic movements as well as did katas and fighting movements that are used in tournaments (kumite). These exercises increased by energy and self confidence, calmed my mind, and improved my personal skills. I am thankful to all my trainers who have helped me train and grow as a Karate student as well as a disciplined individual.

Karate is one of the most important arts that require a number of physical and psychological components that are compatible with each other in a continuous manner in relation to its practice. And these components are acquired by the trainee directly from the trainer in a training hall in the form of classes divided into several days a week.

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LET'S TALK FITNESS BY PURVA NARANG

WEIGH YOUR WORKOUTS



PURVA NARANG is an ACE certified, fitness, rehab, pre/post natal trainer
@purvanarang

Whenever we decide to lose weight, we often find ourselves stuck with a tricky question — should we do cardio or lift weights? They are the two most popular types of workouts, but it can be hard to understand which one of them is better to achieve your fitness goals while making the most of your time.

While both help us become healthier and fit (as discussed in my previous columns), it all comes down to whether your aim is to increase strength or change your body composition.

The National Health Service, UK, recommends adults do at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity a week, as well as strengthening activities that work all the major muscles at least twice a week. But what those minutes are made up of, is really up to you.

CARDIO VS STRENGTH TRAINING Activities involved

Cardio - This involves activities like running,

walking, swimming, cycling, or anything that raises your heart rate.

Weight training - This ranges from compound and isolation exercises to circuits and other workouts that include high impact movements, targeting specific muscles, performed in a shorter period of time.

Calories burnt

Cardio - Cardio workout burns more calories than a weight training workout in the same duration. Eg. If you weigh 70 kg, you will burn about 200-250 calories per 30 minutes of jogging at a moderate pace. While you might only burn around 130-200 calories in the same amount of time if you weight-train.

Weight training - Strength training is more effective than cardio at increasing the number of calories we burn throughout the day. The muscles we train using weights continue to burn calories during recovery, even when the body is at a state of rest. This, in turn, improves our overall metabolism.

Achieving fitness goals

Cardio - If your goal is to bring down the number on the weighing scale, cardio is your best tool. Cardio workouts aid in fat loss by burning minute to minute calories, improving cardiovascular health and uncovering the muscles you've sculpted.

Weight training - If your goal is to fit into smaller pants, strength workouts are the answer. These help build lean muscles and sculpt them better; while also improving our resting metabolism by burning calories for days or hours after a workout.

It's difficult to say if one is better than the other. A combination of cardio and weights is best for improving your body's composition. You need to incorporate cardio to lose the excess fat and uncover the lean muscle you've built by weight training.

The ultimate aim should be to train consistently in a way that helps you smash your goals while enjoying the whole process. This, without necessarily sacrificing your social life in the pursuit of these goals.

Start small, stay consistent!



HOME REMEDIES FOR ALLERGIES

Allergic reactions don't always come with a warning but one can avoid allergens and triggers to keep them away. Whether you experience a fit of sneezing or a sudden itching of the skin, you can try some of these safe home remedies for relief:



Citrus drinks

A majority of allergies arise during spring when the scorching heat of the sun gets harsher every passing day. This also makes you want to binge on refreshing cool drinks. Citrus fruits can not only energise and refresh your body, they also contain good amounts of Vitamin C which aid in fighting seasonal allergies by boosting your immune system.

Red onion water

Onions contain a water soluble chemical compound called quercetin, which is known to reduce the amount of histamine produced by the body, therefore reducing symptoms of allergies. When you inhale pollen, your body immediately releases a chemical compound called histamine, which triggers the immune responses in the body. As such, antibodies are released that fight against the allergens. But the release of histamine also causes certain reactions in the body, which are what we experience as symptoms of allergy, such as sneezing, etc. Onion is nature's version of an anti-histamine. Quercetin also acts as a bronchodilator, opening up airways and helping you breathe easier.



Apples and walnuts

Walnuts are a daily snack that you can enjoy to help ease allergy symptoms. Being high in magnesium content, they help curb down wheezing or coughing. Their vitamin E content can boost immunity and protect the body from reacting to allergens. Apples also contain quercetin, and naturally reduce the production of histamine. Several studies have confirmed that an apple a day really does keep allergies at bay.



Hot and spicy food

Hot and spicy food tends to make the mucus secretion in your nose thin down, thus making the nose cleaner and clearer. This enables you to breathe more efficiently. While consuming spicy foods, your body will naturally loosen the mucus and phlegm that is clogging your body. Spicy foods include chilli peppers, horseradish and wasabi.