

HM RECEIVES CREDENTIALS OF EIGHT AMBASSADORS



Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received credentials of a number of ambassadors of Arab and friendly countries accredited to the sultanate at Al Alam Palace on Monday.

His Majesty the Sultan received credentials of the following ambassadors:

Stella Kluth, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of King Willem Alexander of the Netherlands, accredited to the sultanate.

Shaiful Anuar Mohammad, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, King of Malaysia, accredited to the sultanate.

Veronique Aulagnon, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic, accredited to the sultanate.

William Murray, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth, accredited to the sultanate.

Khalid Mohammed Abdulhaleem, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, accredited to the sultanate.

Qais Saad al Amiri, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Dr Barham Salih of the Republic of Iraq, accredited to the sultanate.

Ligia Maria Scherer, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Jair Bolsonaro of the Federative Republic of Brazil, accredited to the sultanate.

Amit Narang, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of President Ram Nath Kovind of the Republic of India, accredited to the sultanate.

During the meeting with His Majesty the Sultan, the ambassadors conveyed greetings of leaders of their countries along with their best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to His Majesty the Sultan. They also wished the Omani people continuous progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

The ambassadors also expressed their great honour and delight in presenting their credentials before His Majesty the Sultan. They affirmed to exert their sincere efforts to promote relations of their countries with the sultanate in various domains in a manner that serves the joint interests of the Omani people and their countries' peoples.

His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors, expressing his thanks for their leaders' greetings and best wishes. His Majesty affirmed that they will receive all support from him, the government and the Omani people to facilitate carrying out their duties.

The credential presentation ceremony was attended by the Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, the Foreign Minister, the Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman, the Head of the Royal Protocols and the Military Aides to His Majesty the Sultan.

ONA



Amit Narang, Ambassador of India



William Murray, Ambassador of UK



Veronique Aulagnon, Ambassador of France

03

Expat retirement visas to boost tourism in Oman

04

Oil market doesn't need more supplies: H E Rumhi

National Day mood set; car decorations allowed till Nov 30

Shaddad al Musalmy
Muscat

November has special significance for the sultanate owing to the National Day celebrations during the month when cars decorated in green, red and white are a common sight in every street.

As the country prepares for the 51st National Day celebrations, citizens - and resident too - are gearing up to decorate their cars in a show of patriotism and loyalty.

Decorations mostly include national symbols and portraits of His Majesty the Sultan, which are monitored by Royal Oman Police. 'Motorists can decorate their



vehicles with stickers in commemoration of 51st National Day from November 8 to 30,' ROP stated on Monday, issuing guidelines for motorists on vehicle decorations.

According to ROP, stickers can be placed on the body of vehicles but not extend to the front windscreen, windows, number plates and lights. 'Images are allowed on rear windscreen as long

as it doesn't block the driver's view,' ROP stated.

According to the statement, fabric decorations are forbidden on the engine hood. 'Derogatory and offensive language should

not be used and the colour of the vehicle should not be affected by decorations. Posters should be limited to pictures and phrases related to the occasion.'

Saada al Nuumani, who decks out her car every year for the occasion, said, "This year is no exception. I was just waiting for ROP to announce when we can start decorating our cars."

Following the announcement, Saada will take her car to a body shop in Al Khuwayr to adorn it with stickers and flags. "Doing this makes me happy. It gives me a sense of belonging to the nation that has done so much for its people."

Dressing in clothes in the na-

tional colours with badges and brooches marking the day also add to the sense of patriotism among citizens and residents alike. Since the beginning of the month, many outlets across the country have been stocking and displaying items that are in demand for National Day.

For Amerat resident Abdullah al Khaldi, the National Day celebrations are incomplete without raising a flag at home and a green, red and white scarf around his neck. "These items distinguish the National Day from other days of the year, so I make sure to buy them. These show that I am grateful for everything Oman has done to us."

HM receives credentials of envoys



Qais Saad al Amiri, Ambassador of Iraq



Khalid Mohammed Abdulhaleem, Ambassador of Egypt

His Majesty the Sultan welcomes ambassadors and affirms that they will receive all support from him, the government and the Omani people to carry out their duties



Ligia Maria Scherer, Ambassador of Brazil



Shaiful Anuar Mohammad, Ambassador of Malaysia



Stella Kluth, Ambassador of the Netherlands

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INCHING HIGHER

Do you think the cost of living in Oman has increased? If so, what in particular are you spending more on now?

Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

Almost everything one needs to buy is expensive. People are generally better prepared to deal with disruptions when they have a steady income. People are struggling to pay bills.



Renjith Gopi
Sales and marketing professional

Obviously, the cost of living has risen. Fuel, school fees and groceries are the main expenses. Most residents spend their monthly salary in the same month after taking care of commitment and liabilities.



Rashid Hilal al Balushi
Banking sector employee

Prices of foodstuff, especially vegetables and fruits, have increased. This is clearly hurting the pockets of people. As for other items, VAT has affected the prices of non-essential items. All this is affecting the economy in general and spending power in particular.



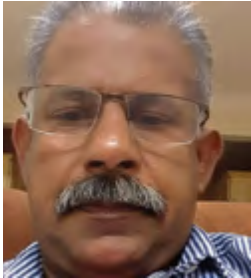
Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

The cost of living has increased. Oman is ranked 55th among 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index and this exhibits the standard of living of citizens and expats. My priorities for spending are learning and education to build a sustainable future for myself.



Ruskeen S
Sales manager

The cost of foodstuff haven't increased but of other essentials like telephone, mobile data, wifi charges, etc. Unfortunately, there's no way of reducing these expenses.



Mohan Anandan
Banking sector employee

An increase in prices of foodstuff, especially vegetables and fruits, is quiet evident, which is hurting the pocket of the common man as he is required to spend more on these. Besides, VAT has also pushed the prices of non-essential items a bit high, which has a spiraling effect on the economy.



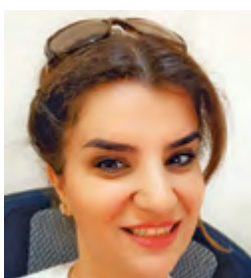
Nasser al Naamani
Shipping industry employee

The cost of living in Oman has increased. Monthly expenses typically comprise food (35 per cent of salary), rent (25 per cent), electricity, water and Internet (15 per cent), eating out (15 per cent) and fuel (ten per cent). I think prices of most items increased due to VAT.



Amany Ahmed
Architect

Yes, the cost of living has increased manifold in Oman. The costs of the most basic items are affected, besides expenses on petrol, electricity and airfare. When travelling, there are additional expenses on PCR test and travel insurance.



Aiman Khalaf al Musallmi
Banking sector employee

Everything has become expensive and people these days are careful. But there are things people cannot avoid spending on such as paying bills, some of which have gone up, too. Spending power has also been affected as salaries for many have remained stagnant.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

What are your concerns about sending your children back to school?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by Muscat Daily. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om Log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue



Expatriate retirement visas to boost tourism in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Offering eligible expatriates residence visas to stay in the sultanate beyond their working lives and the introduction of new visa options are key to tourism. These new policies are expected to facilitate new activities and entertainment avenues and make the country a more attractive destination. This will be one of the topics discussed at the Arabian Travel Market 2022, scheduled on May 8 to 11.

It is estimated that there are currently over 35mn expatriate workers in the GCC countries, a sizeable proportion of white-collar professionals among who may want to retire in the GCC, even if only for a short period of time.

A step in that direction was recently taken in Oman. Expatriate retirees can now get a five-year renewable visa if they are 60 years old. The applicant must provide proof of work in Oman with employment of not less than two years and must submit a bank statement in Oman of not less than six months showing monthly income of at least RO4,000.

According to Dr J Retnakumar, a long time Muscat-based expatriate who works in the insurance sector, providing expat workers the option to stay be-

MHT asks hotels to follow 50% capacity rule

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has cautioned hotels not to lower the guard and to continue adhering to precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

'It has been observed that some hotel and tourist establishments have been negligent in adhering to precautionary measures,' MHT said in a statement.

yond their working lives and the introduction of other new visa categories is good for any country to boost tourism and the economy in turn. "However, a monthly income of RO4,000 is a bit too high. It would have been better if it was around RO2000." Danielle Curtis, Arabian Travel Market's exhibition director for Middle East, said, "With the means and time on their hands, it would be natural, not only for these retirees to travel, but also to receive family and friends. Airlines, hotels, destinations and other entertainment venues, all benefit from this ad-

Hotel and tourist establishments must abide by all the decisions issued by the ministry and other competent authorities regarding the prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

'Hotel and tourist establishments are reminded to continue to reduce the number of visitors at hotel facilities to 50 per cent capacity in order to avoid legal action. This applies to restaurants, banquet halls and other facilities,' the statement said.

ditional revenue stream which ordinarily might have been lost, had the retirees returned to their home countries."

She noted that it is no coincidence that two of Dubai's top feeder markets in 2019, India with 2mn visitors and the UK with 1.2mn visitors, have communities in the UAE of 2.6mn and 120,000 respectively.

Likewise in Oman, Asians and Europeans make up the bulk of visitors to the sultanate and have a sizeable resident population.

Spotting this potential, Dubai Tourism in collaboration with the General Directorate of Residency

and Foreigners Affairs, launched an initiative called 'Retire in Dubai', the first of its kind in the region. The programme has a practical framework with certain minimum financial requirements. Residents of Dubai who are approaching retirement age can apply for a renewable, five-year retirement visa.

"If this initiative is a success, it is more than likely that other GCC nations will follow at some point. Retired expatriates would undoubtedly contribute significantly to the tourism sector, receiving family and friends and continuing to enjoy a quality lifestyle that they have become accustomed to," Danielle added.

Worth US\$254bn globally in 2019, the tours, activities and attractions segment of travel and tourism is not just the third-largest part of travel, it is why many people travel in the first place. Providing just such a catalyst would be events and attractions, such as Expo 2020, the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, Ain Dubai and the upcoming tourism attractions in Saudi Arabia and the natural beauty of Oman, a press release said.

Arabian Travel Market 2022 will also host dedicated conference summits on the global stage, covering aviation, hotels, sports tourism, retail tourism and a special hospitality investment seminar.

Committee holds meeting on raising Oman's competitiveness

Guide of the National Competitiveness Office and mechanism of its work discussed

Muscat - Muscat - The National Competitiveness Committee held its third and last regular meeting for 2021 at the Ministry of Economy under the chairmanship of H E Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, with officials and representatives of the private sector.

The meeting discussed a number of topics on the agenda, most notably the Global Competitiveness Yearbook, the World Federation of Competitiveness Councils and the Global Competitiveness Report.

The meeting also discussed the Guide of the National Competitiveness Office on the mechanism of its work, in



collaboration with other relevant stakeholders in and outside the sultanate.

The guide aims to enhance the sultanate's competitiveness ranking in the international indicators and reports. It makes proposals for improvement mechanisms, follow up on their implementation, and defines the mechanisms for dealing with international reports and indicators issued by international organisations.

The National Competitiveness Committee proposes policies to raise the competitiveness of the sultanate, in cooperation with all concerned parties, and to achieve advanced ranking in international indicators, especially those included in Oman Vision 2040.

'Global indicators are very important as they play a role in improving the services rendered by the government,' a press release stated.



Oman, Saudi firms ink agreement to recycle waste, save nature

Muscat - Muscat - An Omani and a Saudi firm have signed an agreement for joint action in the field of waste management and recycling.

Al Khedmah Recycling from Oman and Tadweer from Saudi Arabia will exchange expertise and carry out joint operations to achieve the highest possible levels of environmental sanitation

and natural resources protection.

Waste will be recycled to produce reusable raw materials to be launched in local and external markets as recycled products, which will facilitate optimum use of natural resources.

According to the agreement, Al Khedmah will use its premises to process hazardous and

non-hazardous waste material, and recycle byproducts from food industries and green waste.

The agreement will be a step forward in the two countries' march of cooperation and commercial exchange. It will help reduce waste of natural resources and prevent the effects of direct disposal of debris.

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Oman, Morocco ink MoU on management of historical documents and archives

Muscat - Oman and the Kingdom of Morocco signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of historical documentation and management of documents and archives on Monday in Muscat.

The MoU was signed by Dr Hamad Mohammed al Dhawyani, chairman of National Records and Archives Authority, and Dr Bahija Simou, director of Moroccan Royal Archives.

As per the MoU, the two sides will cooperate in copying documents, printing and exchanging



manuscripts and books, as well as preserving and restoring documents. The two sides will also promote cooperation in publish-

ing cultural, literary and historical documents, and organising various activities.

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OMAN-BRITAIN MILITARY EXERCISE HELD IN MUSANDAM



An Oman-Britain military exercise, codenamed Musandam Fort 2021, began in Musandam on Monday. The Musandam Security Force is representing the Royal Army of Oman, while units of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards are representing the UK in the joint exercise which will run till November 11.

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MARKET WATCH

MSX30	4,050.07
BSE Sensex	60,545.61

FOREX RATES
(RO1 equals)

Indian Rs	192.16
Pakistani Rs	441.98
Bangladeshi Taka	222.59
Philippine Peso	129.88
Sri Lankan Rs	523.07

*Rates as on November 08
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

SoftBank posts first quarterly loss in 18 months

Japan's SoftBank Group on Monday logged its first quarterly net loss in 18 months on the falling value of investments in its Vision Fund, including Chinese ride-hailing giant Didi Chuxing.

The telecoms-firm-turned-investment giant posted a net loss of 397.9bn yen (US\$3.5bn) in July-September, its first net loss since January-March 2020.

That dragged first-half net profit down 80.7 per cent on-year to 363.5bn yen.

Oil market doesn't need more supplies: H E Rumhi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's Minister of Energy and Minerals, H E Mohammed al Rumhi, has said that the sultanate does not see a need to increase oil supplies beyond what is agreed upon [under the OPEC+ agreement].

Speaking to CNN Arabic, H E Rumhi said, "We do not see the need to pump more oil than what was agreed upon. The market does not need [more supplies] either from reserves or from oil fields."

The sultanate is a member of OPEC+ alliance, which includes all members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC producers such as Russia, Oman, Mexico, Azerbaijan and others.

On Thursday, OPEC+ agreed

to continue modestly raising output despite pressure from the United States and other big consumer nations to open up the taps much more decisively amid soaring oil prices.

The 13 members of the OPEC and their ten allies reconfirmed a July decision to gradually step up production each month in a brief meeting via videoconference.

The OPEC+ group, led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, will add 400,000 barrels per day in December, they said.

The decision aimed 'to ensure a stable and a balanced oil market, the efficient and secure supply to consumers,' the group said in a statement.

The OPEC+ nations also pledged 'to continue to adopt a proactive and transparent approach which has provided stability to oil markets.'



H E Mohammed al Rumhi (Muscat Daily)

The next OPEC+ meeting is set for December 2.

OPEC+ slashed production steeply last year as the pandemic hit oil markets, but has eased output cuts this year as the

global economy slowly recovers.

With prices for the benchmark WTI crude reaching to their highest level since 2014, US President Joe Biden recently appealed to OPEC on the sidelines

of the G20 summit in Rome to pump more oil.

The White House was disappointed with the OPEC+ decision, warning that the global economic recovery is being imperiled by a mismatch between supply and demand of oil.

But Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, who chairs the OPEC group, told reporters after the meeting on Thursday, "We still believe what we are doing is the right thing."

Analysts had widely expected the group to stick by its July decision.

"Prices of over US\$80 per barrel are, of course, another reason why OPEC+ will not be in any hurry to add supply to the market," Caroline Bain of Capital Economics said.

(With inputs from AFP)

Oman and Iran seek to boost trade

Tehran, Iran - Oman and Iran held talks on Monday to discuss means of boosting trade and economic relations between the two countries.

The session was attended by Eng Ridha Juma al Saleh, chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), Gholam Hossein Shafei, president of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, and Mohsen Zarrabi, chairman of Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce.

The two sides exchanged views on ways to promote trade relations between the private sector in Oman and Iran as well as cooperation in the field of medical tourism. They also reviewed the preparations to organise the first virtual exhibition between the sultanate and Iran.

The session came on the sidelines of the 5th International Conference on Health in Islamic Countries, hosted by Tehran. ONA

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Sohar International gets Saudi licence

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Saudi Arabia's central bank has granted Sohar International Bank the licence to open a full-fledged branch in the kingdom.

'The board of directors of Sohar International Bank is pleased to announce that on November 7, Sohar International received a licence from the Saudi Central Bank for opening of a full-fledged branch of Sohar International in Saudi Arabia,' Sohar International said in a disclosure



to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The disclosure said Sohar International Bank will conduct banking business in Saudi Arabia in line with the regulatory requirements in the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia's Cabinet recently approved the licence for Sohar International Bank to open a branch in the kingdom.

The Cabinet also authorised the Saudi Minister of Finance to decide on any subsequent request to open other branches of Sohar International Bank across Saudi Arabia, according to a

Saudi Press Agency's report.

The board of directors of Sohar International Bank earlier affirmed to the shareholders that the expansion into Saudi market comes in line with the bank's strategy to support Oman Vision 2040.

Recently, Sohar International Bank also signed a memorandum of understanding with Saudi Export-Import Bank to establish a framework of cooperation between the banks for the furtherance of their respective mandates.

World crypto market value tops \$3tn for first time

London, UK - The world cryptocurrency market is worth more than US\$3tn for the first time, according to calculations on Monday, as mainstream investors increasingly jump on board.

The value has reached US\$3.007tn, said CoinGecko, which tracks prices of more than 10,000 cryptocurrencies.

"The crypto market is growing at a mind-blowing speed," noted SwissQuote analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya.

"A part of it is speculation of course, but a part of it is real," she said.

"Crypto is now making its way to traditional finance and everyone is on board."

Bitcoin, the world's biggest cryptocurrency, hit a record-high US\$66,000 last month after taking another step towards mainstream status.

It surged back above US\$66,000 on Monday close to its all-time peak after a 5 per cent jump.

Ethereum, the second biggest



cryptocurrency by market value, hit a record high US\$4,768 on Monday.

A bitcoin futures exchange-traded fund (ETF), a type of financial instrument, launched on the New York Stock Exchange in October.

The ETF is a more accessible vehicle that puts bitcoin within the grasp of even more investors.

Some investors sees cryptocurrencies as a hedge against inflation, which is surging worldwide as economies reopen after pandemic lockdowns.

"Bitcoin is bouncing higher

again, close to all-time highs," Hargreaves Lansdown market analyst Susannah Streeter said on Monday. "The recent surge in the crypto... partly seems to have been caused by investors piling in, seeing it as a hedge against inflation," Streeter added.

No more than 21mn bitcoin can be created, helping its price to trade way above its rivals, but trading of cryptocurrencies in general has shown to be extremely volatile with massive price swings a common occurrence.

AFP

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Mobile payments firm Paytm kicks off India's biggest IPO

Mumbai, India - India's biggest-ever initial public offering (IPO) opened on Monday with digital payments platform Paytm looking to raise nearly US\$2.5bn, in what has already been a record year for share listings.

Paytm is backed by Chinese tycoon Jack Ma's Ant Group, Japan's SoftBank and Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, which together own around a third of the company.

The firm was founded barely a decade ago by Vijay Shekhar Sharma, the son of a school-teacher who says he learnt English by listening to rock music. He was ranked India's youngest dollar billionaire four years ago at the age of 38 and now has a net worth of US\$2.4bn, according to *Forbes*. He owns a nearly 14 per cent stake.

Paytm was issuing fresh shares worth ₹83bn (US\$1.1bn), with existing shareholders selling stocks worth US\$1.34bn, according to the prospectus.

The IPO is expected to make Paytm India's most valuable tech company with a valuation of



A family sits next to a billboard advertisement for Paytm in Mumbai, India on Sunday (AFP)

US\$20bn, up 25 per cent from two years ago.

The platform was launched in 2010 and quickly became synonymous with digital payments in a country traditionally dominated by cash transactions. It has benefited from the government's efforts to curb the use of cash -

including the demonetisation of nearly all banknotes in circulation five years ago - and most recently, from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I didn't know corona would happen but Paytm was very useful to me during the pandemic," Mumbai grocery shop owner

Naina Thakur said.

Thakur said about a third of her customers pay her for milk, bread and other daily groceries via Paytm. "It's much easier than a bank transfer because they only need my mobile number to pay and I get the settlement within seven hours," she said.

Thakur is one of nearly 22mn Indian shop owners, taxi and rickshaw drivers and other vendors who accept payments as low as ₹10 (US\$0.13) using Paytm's ubiquitous blue-and-white QR code stickers.

The platform had 337mn customers at the end of June, according to the company's regulatory filing. In 2020-21 it undertook transactions worth more than US\$54bn.

But Paytm has made continual losses and is not sure when it will make a profit. It reported a net loss of ₹17bn last year on revenues of nearly ₹32bn.

"We expect to continue to incur net losses for the foreseeable future and we may not achieve profitability in the future," the prospectus warned. Paytm has reported negative cash flows for the last three years, primarily due to operational losses.

Paytm will issue shares in a price band of ₹2,080-₹2,150 in the offering, which is slated to close on Wednesday.

AFP



MSX inches down amid thin trading

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Monday marginally decreased 0.08 per cent to close at 4,050.07 points. Trading activity remained weak at the bourse.

All the sectoral indices closed in green territory with Services index rising most by 0.26 per cent. Financial index increased 0.12 per cent while Industrial index closed 0.03 per cent up. MSX Sharia index, however, decreased 0.07 per cent to close at 552.21 points.

Trading activity decreased on Monday as volumes fell 29.1 per cent at 9.97mn shares compared with 14.06mn

shares traded in the previous trading session. Market turnover declined more than 63 per cent to RO1.65mn compared with RO4.56mn in the previous session.

Market breadth remained negative with nine advancing stock to 12 decliners. As many as 18 traded stocks remained flat for the day.

Top gainers were Dhofar Generating Company (8.57 per cent), Oman Cables Industry (4.26 per cent), Oman Investment and Finance Co (2.92 per cent) and Al Jazeera Services (2.27 per cent).

Top losers were Takaful Oman (-6.25 per cent), National Aluminium Products (-2.01 per cent), Voltamp Energy (-1.61 per cent) and Omantel (-1.6 per cent).

Twitter votes Elon Musk should sell 10% of his Tesla stock

New York, US - Twitter has spoken - after Elon Musk polled his more than 62mn followers on whether he should sell 10 per cent of his Tesla shares, by Sunday a majority had voted 'yes'.

"I was prepared to accept either outcome," said Musk, who regularly takes to Twitter to make unexpected announcements or surprising comments. He did not specify when or how he plans to sell the shares.

The electric car maker's query on Saturday night follows a proposal by US Congressional Democrats to tax the super wealthy more heavily by targeting stocks, which are usually only taxed when sold.

Musk had already criticised the proposal at the end of October, tweeting, "Eventually, they run out of other people's money and then they come for you."

He broached the topic again on Saturday, writing on Twitter, "Much is made lately of unre-



Elon Musk

alised gains being a means of tax avoidance, so I propose selling 10 per cent of my Tesla stock." He also shared a poll asking followers whether they agree 'yes' or 'no'.

By Sunday, 57.9 per cent of those who voted had picked 'yes'.

Musk owned about 17 per cent of Tesla's outstanding shares as of June 30, currently worth US\$208.37bn, according

to Bloomberg.

The entrepreneur was also awarded a large package of stock options and convertible shares as compensation.

By selling 10 per cent of his shares, he could theoretically earn just under US\$21bn. His wealth swelled with the recent surge in Tesla's stock price, from about US\$130 at the start of 2020 to US\$1,222.09 as of Friday.

Taking into account his stakes in his other companies, such as neurotechnology firm Neuralink and SpaceX, Musk is, in theory, the richest man in the world, with an estimated fortune of some US\$338bn, according to Bloomberg.

"Note, I do not take a cash salary or bonus from anywhere," Musk tweeted on Saturday. "I only have stock, thus the only way for me to pay taxes personally is to sell stock."

AFP

Australia vows to sell coal 'for decades'

Sydney, Australia - Australia said on Monday it will sell coal for 'decades into the future' after spurning a pact to phase out the polluting fossil fuel to halt catastrophic climate change.

More than 40 countries pledged to eliminate coal use within decades during the COP26 UN climate summit in Glasgow, which aims to cap the warming of Earth since the Industrial Revolution to between 1.5°C and 2°C.

Australia, along with some major coal users such as China and the US, did not sign up.

"We have said very clearly we are not closing coal mines and we are not closing coal-fired power stations," Australian Minister for Resources Keith Pitt told national broadcaster ABC.

Defending Australia's decision, Pitt said Australia had some of the world's highest quality coal. "And that is why we will continue to have markets for

decades into the future. And if they're buying... well, we are selling." Demand for coal is expected to rise until 2030, the minister claimed.

"If we aren't to win that market, somebody else will," Pitt added. "I would much rather it be Australia's high-quality product, delivering Australian jobs and building Australia's economy than coming from Indonesia or Russia or elsewhere."

AFP

 شركة الباطنة للتنمية والاستثمار القابضة ش.م.ع.ع. Al Batinah Development & Investment Holding Co. SAOG				
Board of Directors Report				
Dear shareholders,				
On behalf of the board of directors, I present the report of Board of Directors and the unaudited financial statements for the Nine months ended September 30, 2021.				
Financial performance of the parent company and the group:				
The parent company income from the investments for the Nine months ended September 30, 2021 amounted to OMR 156,843 compared to loss of OMR (90,580) for the same period of last year. The parent company achieved a net profit of OMR 80,035 compared to a net loss of OMR (179,550) for the same period of last year.				
The group's achieved income for the Nine months was OMR 301,864 compared to loss of OMR (83,719) for the same period of last year, and the group incurred a net profit after tax of OMR 139,686 compared to a net loss of OMR (519,955) for Last year. The Net shareholders' equity amounted to OMR 2,525,289 and net assets per share 84 Baisa, compared to OMR2,074,768 and 69 Baisa, respectively, for the same period last year 2020.				
Finally, I have the honors on behalf of the members of the Board of Directors and the shareholders to extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haithem bin Tariq for his wise leadership and guidance and pray to God to keep Oman and its people in peace and prosperity. I would also like to thank the esteemed shareholders for their support and continued encouragement of the company and the Capital Market Authority, the banks and all the entities that the company deals with.				
Best regards,				
Salah Bin Hilal Al-Mawally Chairman				
Unaudited Consolidated and parent company statement of financial position as at 30 September 2021				
	Group	Parent Company		
	As on 30 September 2021	As on 30 September 2020	As on 30 September 2021	As on 30 September 2020
	OMR	OMR	OMR	OMR
Non-Current Assets	1,986,412	1,569,390	1,611,823	2,415,263
Current Assets	810,624	732,795	680,704	588,480
Total Assets	2,797,036	2,302,185	2,292,527	3,003,743
Share Capital	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Legal Reserve	346,755	310,079	208,482	200,478
Special Reserve	24,541	24,541	24,541	24,541
Retained earnings	(688,935)	(994,648)	(977,099)	(609,904)
Investment fair value reserve	(138,277)	(296,204)	(138,277)	(299,978)
Non-Controlling Interest	(18,795)	31,000	-	-
Total Shareholders' equity	2,525,289	2,074,768	2,117,647	2,315,137
Total non-current liabilities	109,909	28,607	23,743	21,271
Total current liabilities	161,838	198,810	151,137	667,335
Total equity and liabilities	2,797,036	2,302,185	2,292,527	3,003,743
Unaudited Consolidated and Parent Company statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the Nine months ended 30 September 2021				
	Group	Parent company		
	Nine months ended 30 September 2021	Nine months ended 30 September 2020	Nine months ended 30 September 2021	Nine months ended 30 September 2020
	OMR	OMR	OMR	OMR
Net revenue	62,396	58,702	0	0
Net investment income	239,468	(142,421)	156,843	(90,580)
Total income	301,864	(83,719)	156,843	(90,580)
Salaries and other staff costs	(69,013)	(120,371)	(31,027)	(44,401)
General and administrative exp.	(75,312)	(98,834)	(37,713)	(35,209)
Amortizations	(465)	(197,264)	(212)	(211)
Finance cost	(8,029)	(9,697)	(7,707)	(9,044)
Depreciations	(6,510)	(9,313)	(149)	(105)
Total expenses	(159,329)	(435,479)	(76,808)	(88,970)
Net profit/(loss) before tax	142,535	(519,198)	80,035	(179,550)
Income tax expenses	(2,849)	(757)	-	-
Net profit/(loss) after tax	139,686	(519,955)	80,035	(179,550)
Unrealized fair value gains / (Loss) on financial assets through other comprehensive income	155,501	(44,588)	155,501	(44,588)
Total comprehensive / (loss) income for the period	295,187	(564,543)	235,536	(224,138)
Net earnings/(loss) per share	0.005	(0.017)	0.003	(0.006)
On request by any shareholder, the complete accounts either in English or Arabic will be sent by mail within 7 days of receipt of such request to P.O.Box 68 pc 117 al wadi al kabir, Muscat, sultanate of Oman tel. 24856658 , fax 24856698.				

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INFINITI QX80 available with special EMI

INFINITI Oman has announced a special EMI on the INFINITI QX80, a premium vehicle that is designed and engineered to allow customers to travel everywhere in luxury. The INFINITI QX80, which has a refined and spacious cabin, is now available on a low EMI of RO324.

The starting EMI mentioned is inclusive of VAT and is calculated on the price of the base model with 20% down payment, for 96 months loan tenure. Subject to credit approvals from Bank Muscat, a press release said. The special offer is valid till November 30, 2021.

The model features a high-quality, hand-crafted interior, driver-centric, passenger-minded space for inclusive and modern luxury travel. With a firm yet comfort-oriented suspension, and ample performance from its 5.6ltr V8 engine, the INFINITI QX80 aims to give drivers an assured feeling of control and confidence at the wheel.

A spokesperson for INFINITI Oman said, "A design and engineering masterpiece, QX80 exudes luxury from every angle, for every passenger. It's generously equipped with thoughtful



touches, with plenty of room to grow in. QX80 is designed to handle all of life's roads, so you can make memories with style and grace. We are pleased to offer an exclusive low EMI on IN-

FINITI QX80."

Full-size SUV INFINITI QX80's innovative new technologies and stylish features benefits its luxury status. A design and engineering masterpiece,

QX80 exudes luxury from every angle, for every passenger. It is liberally equipped with attentive touches, with plenty of room to grow in. QX80 is designed to handle all of life's roads, so own-

ers can make memories with style and grace.

The INFINITI QX80 the flagship of the INFINITI range combines bold proportions and a commanding exterior design

with a spacious, high quality cabin with room for seven or eight passengers. Effortless performance, advanced drive-assist technologies and taut yet refined dynamics allow for a relaxing and

confidence-inspiring drive.

INFINITI QX80 features a range of drive-assist technologies. Blind Spot Intervention (BSI), Lane Departure Prevention (LDP), Distance Control Assist (DCA), and an updated Intelligent Cruise Control system are all included, while Android Auto and Apple CarPlay continue to bring enhanced connectivity across the QX80 range.

Key additions to the flagship model include the new generation INFINITI InTouch infotainment, Premium In-Vehicle-Infotainment (P-IVI) System featuring two HD display screens, 3D maps, Apple Car Play and Android Auto capabilities. A further notable addition to the model is the BOSE Performance Series with 17 speakers for high fidelity audio experience with surround sound technology.

The new 'Black Edition' grade features dark chrome and black exterior accents highlight the front grill and fascia, side fender vents, door mirror caps and rear tailgate strip. The commanding stance is heightened with the addition of dark chrome 22-inch forged alloy wheels.

Oman Air introduces suite of travel add-ons

Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, has launched a suite of new services for passengers arriving and departing Muscat International Airport. Available for purchase, the add-ons are part of the airline's commitment to offer more choice of services and convenience to Oman Air passengers while at the airport, regardless of ticket class, a press release said.

"As a premium airline with a long list of award-winning products and services, easing the airport journey was the natural next step in providing more flexibility and convenience for our guests," said Oman Air CEO Eng Abdulaziz al Raisi. "Enhanced add-ons are a great way for our guests to sample different services and discover those that best suit their travel needs - whether an expedited check-in, premium lounge experience, or dedicated fast track lane through passport control and security."

The new services are operated by TAV OS and are currently available for purchase online at omanair.com

Meet & Greet arrival

When arriving to Muscat International Airport, Meet & Greet Arrivals provides a quick, easy and expedient airport check-out. Passengers are greeted at their arrival gate and escorted through fast track passport control and customs to the main arrivals area. Service also includes

buggy transfer to the Prime-class Lounge for light refreshments, dedicated porter at baggage carousels, and personal escort to ground transportation or pick-up point.

Meet & Greet departures

When departing Muscat International Airport, Meet & Greet Departures offers expedited check-in at Departures Gate A (First and Business Class Gate) followed by fast track escort through immigration and security and through the airport to flight boarding gate. Service also includes dedicated curbside assistance, complimentary 3-hour access to the Primeclass Lounge, buggy transfer, and personal porter to assist with bags.

Fast track

When arriving or departing Muscat International Airport, economy class passengers can now purchase Primeclass Fast Track service to avoid long lines and speed up their journey with dedicated passport lanes and security counters.

Primeclass Lounge

When departing Muscat International Airport, Primeclass Lounge elevates the travel journey with comfort and convenience for both business and leisure travellers. The service includes 3-hour access with full-board services, relaxation zone, etc.



SPAR to open branch in Al Muna Gardens

Zain Real Estate Development, the leading real estate development company, announced the signing of an agreement with SPAR Company in the heart of Al Muna Gardens complex project located in the Wilayat of Bawshar, in Al Muna area.

The opening of the SPAR supermarket represents a new step added to a series of recent achievements witnessed by the Al Muna Gardens project, which is keen to provide an environment of luxury and luxury worthy

of the residents of the distinguished real estate project, a press release said.

Commenting on the agreement, Musa Mohammed al Raisi, CEO, said, "In high-end places, residents are distinguished by their own tastes and also expect to find an environment that meets their needs. Therefore, we are very pleased to welcome the opening of the SPAR supermarket in Al Muna Gardens and we are confident that our luxurious and growing project will con-

tribute to the popularity of the SPAR store, in which we trust the quality of their services.

Shirayu Khimji, director of SPAR Oman, said, "We are pleased to enter into a partnership with Zain Real Estate Development Company through its project Al Muna Gardens and to be part of this unique residential destination. SPAR stores have witnessed a wide spread and today we announce the opening of our 25th branch in one of the distinguished projects of Zain,"

Ooredoo launches charity donation through its app

Ooredoo Oman has launched a brand-new donation service through its mobile app, a press release said.

Android users are now able to make contributions to a range of charitable organisations including the Ministry of Health, Oman Charitable Organisation, Dar Al Atta'a, the Omani Bahja Orphan Society, Oman Cancer Association, Oman Diabetes Association, the Association of Early Intervention for Children with Disability, the Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Child Welfare, and the Omani Association for the Hearing Impaired, securely and within seconds.

Raed Dawood, director of Branding, Communications and Corporate Affairs at Ooredoo, said, "At Ooredoo we believe our place is in the heart of the community. As such, we continue to build on not only our own social initiatives, but on empowering the community to find more ways to help too. Our new service is an important addition to our growing digital services, facilitating the donation process in an innovative way, while making



Raed Dawood

people's lives better."

Donations are easy and can be made an unlimited number of times. Part of Ooredoo's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, Goodwill, it continues to work alongside voluntary organisations, the government, and non-government organisations (NGOs) to support the economic and social development of all society members. In addition to the new app donation feature, the telecoms company also offers special donation services via SMS.

Easy to use, the Ooredoo Oman app can be found on Apple store or Google Play.

AMJ scoops major international accolade

AMJ has won the prestigious 'Oman National Law Firm of the Year' award at the International Financial Law Review (IFLR) Middle East Awards held in Dubai on October 27.

This accolade brings AMJ's tally of IFLR's 'National Law Firm of the Year' awards to an impressive and unrivalled 13th time in Oman. The award recognises the best law firms in each jurisdiction based on the innovation and the complexity of deals completed. AMJ was also shortlisted for M&A Deal of Year, a press release said.

The annual IFLR Awards brings together leading global and regional corporate law firms to celebrate the most outstanding legal deals that have taken place in the region in the past 12 months. AMJ's nomination and achievements highlight the resilience of the Omani market in



terms of the quality of transactions and projects being undertaken in the country, particularly given the tough market conditions of the past few years and the challenging pandemic situa-

tion.

This latest achievement reaffirms AMJ's position as a leading Omani law firm, and highlights the benefits of the firm's nearly 40 years of practice in the sul-

tanate and involvement in many, 'first of its kind' deals and landmark projects that have taken place in Oman and the region.

Its resident team of lawyers includes many of Oman's most

senior and experienced practitioners, recognised as leaders in their fields. The firm's success is based largely on its ability to draw on expertise gained in multiple innovative deals.

MHD ACERE donates appliances to cyclone affected

Supporting the nation's efforts in the wake of cyclone Shaheen, MHD ACERE, the exclusive distributor of Michelin Tyres in Oman, donated washing machines and refrigerators to the affected families of Cyclone Shaheen.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, along with his team handed over these essential household appliances to the Omani Charitable Association, a press release said.

Bahrani said, "The damage caused by the cyclone has been unprecedented and it is our responsibility to help those who need it the most. As a proud partner of Michelin, we are very glad to be able to offer our support through meaningful contributions for community welfare. In these difficult times, we stand with the people of Oman".

Globally, Michelin group's societal responsibility is embodied by its sustainable development and mobility strategy. It aims to make Michelin one of the most innovative, responsible, and high-performing companies worldwide across all of its re-



sponsibilities: economic, environmental, social and societal. In all places where it operates, Michelin is actively involved in local community life, forging ties with local organisations such as

regional authorities, educational establishments, and associations and more.

MHD ACERE is one of the main operating clusters of MHD, representing some of the finest

global brands, coupled with the reputed service delivery of MHD. Over the last 5 decades, MHD has been an anchor for niche commercial and mass market brands. MHD ACERE is the ex-

clusive distributor of niche and reputable brands such as Jaguar, Land Rover, McLaren, Volvo, MG Motor, Ashok Leyland, Ford Trucks, Michelin, ABB, BF Good Rich, Riken, Weir Trio, etc.

Asyad Global Start-up Challenge concludes

Asyad Group announced the three final winning companies of Asyad Global Start-Up Challenge organised in partnership with Hypermotion Dubai and Omantel, the sultanate's technology arm, winning a total prize of US\$50,000.

Showcasing how to harness emerging technologies to advance the transport and logistics sectors, Cubex Global from the UAE took home first place with a prize of US\$25,000, while US-based UVL Robotics home-grown from Oman and PalletPal from the USA were awarded second and third places respectively.

The intense competition saw 12 semi-finalists pitch to a panel of international judges and investors. A launch-pad for budding entrepreneurs, Asyad Global Start-up Challenge pro-



vided participants with an opportunity to engage with peers from around the world and share sustainable forward-thinking solutions to increase the competitiveness of the sector both locally and internation-

ally. In line with its drive to support local start-ups as a key driver of economic growth, Asyad Group sponsored the participation of three Omani companies in the challenge.

The last day of the challenge

included several enlightening discussions presented by Asyad Group represented by SOHAR Port and Freezone and Oman Post Asyad Express as well as its strategic partners, Omantel.

The sessions focused on the im-

portance of technology in port management, supply chain efficiencies and last mile delivery in e-commerce as well as 5G as a catalyst for sector growth.

The startup challenge was highly competitive and selective. Having whittled down almost 50 applications to just 12, the final competition included seven regional companies and five internationals.

As part of its efforts to bring Oman's competitiveness in the logistics sector to the forefront, Asyad Global Logistics Start-up Challenge aimed to capitalise on the power of data and attract global talent all the while creating a nurturing environment for creative solutions.

The innovation-driven event marked a successful participation of Asyad Group in Expo 2020 Dubai.

Bank Muscat announces the launch of new ATMs, CDMs

Bank Muscat has announced the installation of new ATMs and CDMs in different governorates in line with its vision to 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to promote financial inclusion in Oman.

The new devices have been installed in the following locations: Lulu Hypermarket - Ibra, Oasis Mall - Sohar, China Mall - Sohar, Mustafa Sultan Exchange - Ghala, Shell Select Filling Station near City Center Qurum, Lulu Hypermarket - Ruwi Souq, Sahnoot - Salalah, Rameez Shopping Mall - Sur, Mudhaibi Al Rudha, Bawadi Mall - Ibra, Mawaleh Fruits and Vegetables Market, Royal Guard of Oman (Halban), Hafeet border post and Al Bahja Super Market - Salalah. The bank currently has more than 800 devices, including Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), Cash Deposit Machines (CDMs), Full Function Machines (FFMs), Statement Printers and Business Cash Deposit Machines (BCDMs), spread across the sultanate, a press release said.

Speaking on the occasion, Amjad Iqbal al Lawati, assistant general manager - Cards and Electronic Banking, Bank Muscat, thanked customers for their strong confidence in the bank's digital banking facilities. He said, "Bank Muscat is pleased to launch a number of new ATMs and CDMs at various important locations across the Sultanate. The bank is committed to continuously developing and launching new solutions and features in line with modern developments and its e-channels like ATMs, CDMs and FFMs represent an important means for customers to complete their banking transactions at all times with enhanced convenience and security.

"As part of its customer centric vision, the bank contin-



Amjad Iqbal al Lawati

uously takes feedback from its customers, conducts surveys and identifies fresh installation sites. The bank promises to keep on innovating and install new devices based on customer feedback and in line with its pioneering role in digital transformation."

New ATMs and CDMs continue to be installed at other locations as Bank Muscat makes further efforts to improve financial inclusivity amongst all demographic segments.

The final decision to install new devices are made on the basis of various inputs including the feedback from bank officials, customer feedback and the footfalls in that particular location, especially if it is within a business hub.

This drive for enhancing financial inclusion is closely aligned with national growth and development goals as envisaged by the landmark Oman Vision 2040.

Bank Muscat's ATMs and CDMs offer a variety of services including cash withdrawals; balance enquiry; fund transfers to other accounts in Bank Muscat / other banks in Oman; loading funds onto BM Wallet; setting / resetting debit and credit card PIN; mini statements; submission of requests for cheque books; cash deposits; payment of utility bills, credit card bills and school fees; and updating of the mobile number linked to the customer's account.

IWC celebrates horological heritage of Oman in November

IWC Schaffhausen celebrates the horological heritage of the Sultanate of Oman with a special exhibition at luxury watch and jewellery boutique Mistal in November.

The announcement of the exhibition comes after the recent unveiling of the Pilot's Watch Chronograph Edition 'Sultanate of Oman' (IW387910) to mark the country's 51st National Day on November 18.

In a showcase that will take over the first floor of the vast Mistal showroom, historical IWC timepieces belonging to private Omani watch collectors and dating back to the 1970's will be on display. The exhibition pays homage to the rich heritage of IWC's long-standing relationship with Oman, one that dates back nearly a century.

In February 1974, current member of IWC's Board of Directors Hannes Pantli visited the country for the first time and had the honour of meeting the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said. This was the beginning of a remarkable relationship between IWC Schaffhausen and the nation of Oman.



Since then, Hannes Pantli has regularly visited the sultanate and IWC has created special watch sets for the country. Now, over 40 years after his first visit, Hannes Pantli headed to Oman to open a special exhibition on November 7, ahead of the National Day celebrations.

Watch enthusiasts and aficionados in Oman will be able to view the timeless IWC pieces at their leisure throughout the month of November and explore the historical mechanics of each piece. Some of the pieces on display will be historical watches with complications along with jewellery and accessory sets.

"We wanted to create a unique celebration that truly

showcases the history between IWC and the nation of Oman. There is no better way to tell our story than through these exquisite and timeless pieces that speak for themselves. Together, we look forward to reaching new heights in the next 50 years," said Mehdi Rajan, regional brand director of IWC Schaffhausen for the Middle East, India and Africa.

IWC's local partner in the country, Dharmesh A Khimji, managing director of Mistal, said, "We share a very special relationship with IWC, and we are more than delighted to have the watch community in Oman experience the brand's unique craftsmanship dedicated to the beauty of our nation."

Cityscape Summit discusses current and future of real estate landscape

The latest edition of the Cityscape Summit opened its doors as government, industry and thought leaders from across the region and beyond descended on the Dubai Exhibition Centre (DEC) at Expo 2020 Dubai to take part in numerous topics defining the current and future real estate landscape. The summit was officially inaugurated by Sultan Butti bin Mejren, director general of Dubai Land Department.

Assessing the global economic outlook, Ian Goldin, Professor of Globalisation and Development at University of Oxford, shared his thoughts on the future of the world economy and the implications for Dubai and its property sector. Identifying the emirate's Urban 2040 Plan and recent amendments to property and visa laws, Goldin believes there are very few places on earth that have achieved what the UAE has in the last 60 years.

"The world economy will look very different than it does today by the year 2040. China will be the largest economy by far, probably accounting for about 18% of



Ian Albert

global economic activity; the US will have slipped from number one to number three; India will be bigger than the US at number two accounting for around 15%; and Indonesia will be close behind the US, with about 10% of global economic activity.

The centre of global economic gravity is shifting fast, and the pandemic has accelerated shift towards the Middle East region and further east, with the UAE ideally placed to be a strategic bridge between old economic centres and new.

Not only is it where things are happening and changing, but the composition of economic activity and markets are aligning per-



Chris Speller

fectly, as well," said Goldin, who also identified some of the UAE's key industries as 'composition growth sectors': "Manufacturing, services, digital, financial, hospitality, retirement, care, health and education are all accounting for a greater share of our economies.

Again, this places the UAE and Dubai in an ideal situation because these are where the country is excelling. More people will come here to enjoy life and work in these industries, with dramatic implications for property and the real estate sector. We are already seeing a rebound to the sorts of levels seen before the pandemic, and this will be

sustained."

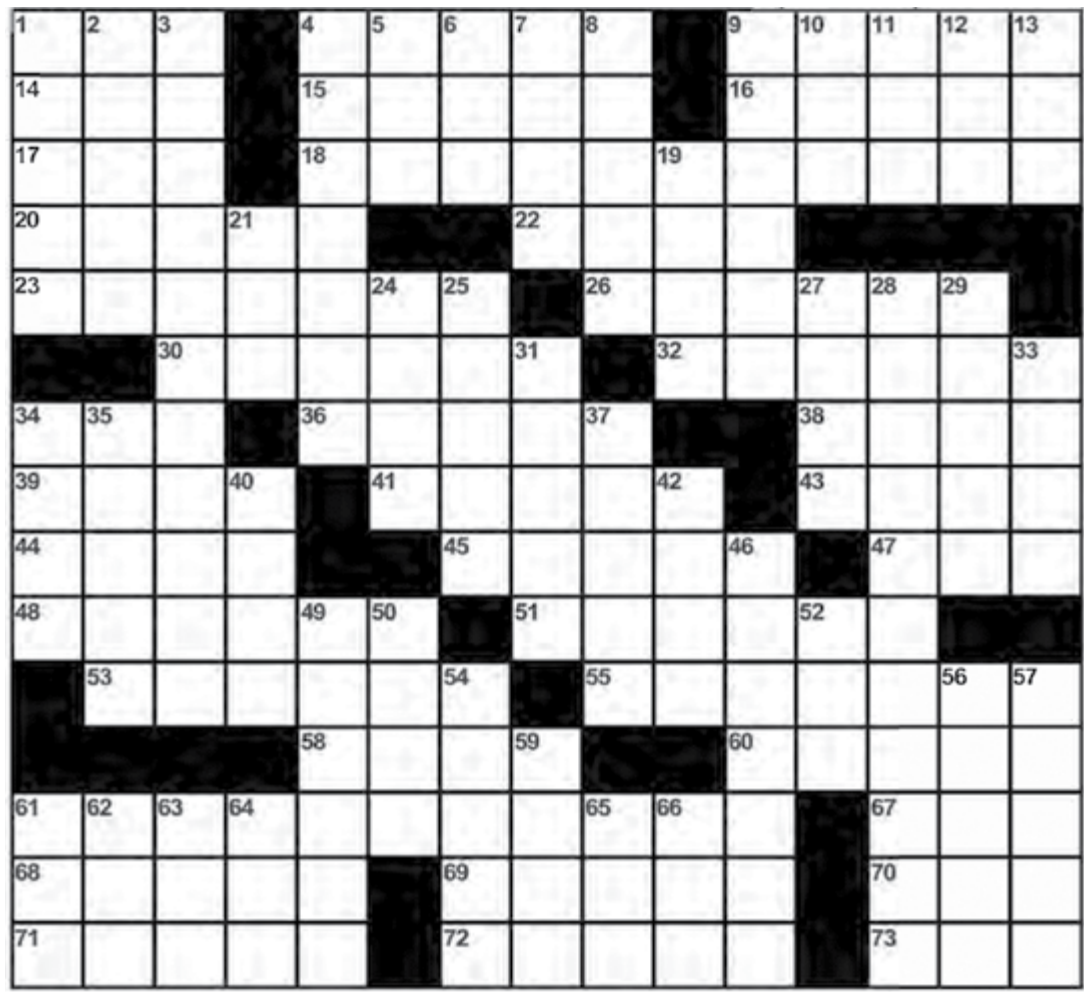
The latest Dubai Commercial Property Price Indices, jointly created by JLL and Dubai Land Department, was launched today at the Cityscape Global Summit.

According to the report, around 2,845 commercial property transactions worth AED 33.9 billion were recorded by Dubai Land Department (DLD) in Q3 2021. Transaction volumes were up 1% when compared with the preceding quarter and stood 34% higher year-on-year.

"These figures demonstrate that 2021 saw a significant pick-up in sales activity in this sector compared with last year. Sale transactions, which represent cash bought commercial properties, accounted for the largest proportion of the overall volume of transactions registered in the third quarter of 2021.

Indeed, this element accounted for 74% of the total figure, followed by mortgages at 18% and gifts at 2%. Meanwhile, the value of mortgage transactions equated to AED 20.3 billion in Q3 2021 - double that of cash transactions.

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Navigational aid
 - 4) "FoxTrot" cartoonist Bill
 - 9) Bondservant
 - 14) 90-degree letter
 - 15) Achiever
 - 16) Place for the high-born?
 - 17) Vast grassy area
 - 18) Celebrator to the extreme
 - 20) Banana cluster
 - 22) Mall lure
 - 23) Opposites do it
 - 26) Renounce, as a family member
 - 30) More replete
 - 32) Channel of the sea
 - 34) Daisy of "Li'l Abner"
 - 36) LaGuardia lineup
 - 38) Beginning of a famous conclusion
 - 39) Yemeni city
 - 41) Dry riverbeds
 - 43) Sign of things to come
 - 44) Took a horse
 - 45) Roomy four-door auto
 - 47) Fury
 - 48) Bring into existence
 - 51) Come back

- 53) Book corrections
 - 55) Thrill to pieces
 - 58) Rural hotels
 - 60) One running easily
 - 61) Handy exterminators
 - 67) Word before "carte" or "mode"
 - 68) 1970 World's Fair site in Japan
 - 69) Frightfully strange
 - 70) Matchstick-removing game
 - 71) Astronomer Hubble
 - 72) Won every game of a series
 - 73) Mariner's "May-day!"
- DOWN**
- 1) Type of toast
 - 2) Alaska Peninsula native
 - 3) Time-saver for a gardener
 - 4) Driveway material
 - 5) Bygone bird of New Zealand
 - 6) Make a goof
 - 7) Butterfly snarers
 - 8) Tree nymph in Greek myth
 - 9) Most mentally fit
 - 10) Souvenir from

- Hawaii
- 11) What you have up your sleeve
- 12) By way of
- 13) "Electric" fish
- 19) Boxers Muhammad and Laila, for two
- 21) Grand_ (wine bottle words)
- 24) Hammerhead part
- 25) Things are bigger there
- 27) Nabisco item
- 28) Some utensils for chefs
- 29) African river or country
- 31) Revere at midnight, historically
- 33) Voicemail sound
- 34) Antony of antiquity
- 35) Like a whole lot
- 37) Ending with "blind" or "broad"
- 40) Able to get to quickly
- 42) Fill beyond full
- 46) Group with no members, in math
- 49) South China Sea island
- 50) Volcano in Italy
- 52) Christ the Redeemer city, briefly

- 54) Opening poker stakes
- 56) Prefix meaning "sun"
- 57) Mine vehicles
- 59) Hearty soup

- 61) Enemy
- 62) 1960s hits?
- 63) Go off course
- 64) Type of boot or lift
- 65) Long start, of old
- 66) Tear inelegantly



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your feelings may fly around like an unpredictable yo-yo today, so it's not the best time to make a first impression on anybody. Stick with the folks who know you well. You can't control what kind of mood you'll be in when you're with others, but if they already know you, they'll be fine with whatever energy you put out. Your emotions are in control of your life for today.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Don't be surprised if one of the authority figures in your life starts acting oddly today. Everyone is more concerned with their own issues right now, and this person is no exception. You might be tempted to take advantage of their distracted mood and start slacking off, but that wouldn't be wise. Now is the time to be a model citizen in every sense of the word. Show those in power that you don't need someone watching over you.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

When it comes to flirting, you can't afford to be shy today. Life is too short for you to hem and haw! If you don't step up and let someone know you're interested, another person could beat you to the punch. Preserving a false front is a waste of your energy, so fess up when you feel special feelings toward someone. It's the only way you're ever going to find out if they have special feelings for you too.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You are at your happiest when the people you love are happy, but that generous joy could be tested today when someone who recently had a windfall is getting too insensitive about their situation. Their constant bragging is shutting you out. Get some space from this person so you can stay happy for them and stop the feelings of resentment. Remember, this person isn't in a compassionate space right now.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your high-flying ideas are great at motivating people and keeping you feeling hopeful, but they might be a bit too unrealistic to come to fruition, and that could ultimately be quite disappointing. To save yourself from a harsh reality check, be more grounded about your chances for success in a new venture. It's not that you will fail, but you can't assume you'll be victorious. Do yourself a favor and think up a backup plan.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Today, whether you like it or not, you might have to let go of a few things that you thought were must-haves to keep the peace between you and your peers. Making a compromise isn't what your ego wants to do, but your brain understands that it's the best thing to do. Letting go of something you really want can be an empowering experience. You're keeping your desires from overpowering your common sense.

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Try to spend some time in nature today. You don't have to go on an all-day hike, but the more time you can spend breathing fresh air the better. Take a walk outside, visit a botanical garden, or just pick up a bouquet of flowers at the grocery store. Getting in touch with nature will keep you balanced and feeling more confident about an upcoming event. Simple beauty has a way of putting everything in a healthy perspective.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Avoid making any big commitments or major decisions right now, especially if they have anything to do with financial matters. Throwing money at a problem is never a wise idea, but today it could have long-term ramifications. You're full of confusion right now, which could cause you to put money in an ineffective place. Let time sort out any issues that pop up today, because your money sure won't be able to no matter how much of it you have.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Stop the engines and cool your jets today, because if you don't slow down the pace of your life, you could zip right past something wonderful and miss out on a life-changing opportunity. Someone has been desperately trying to get your attention, but you've been so busy with other things that you haven't noticed. They deserve a good bit of your time even if you don't think so. They have an important message to give you.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You're feeling more indecisive today, and you'll be forced to rely on your intuition more than you're comfortable with. Even though all the information you want to know isn't going to be available, you will still have to make a choice. Luckily, your fortune is hot and chances are you will make the right decision whatever it is. Trust your instincts. Even if they lead you down the wrong path, they won't put you in a difficult position.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

There's a magnetic pull tugging at you today. Your friends are dying to get some of your free time, and they're pulling out all the stops to try to get some! Their tantalizing offers for good times are flattering, but today you have to keep your priorities straight. And unfortunately, painting the town red doesn't rate above getting your work finished! Don't put off the boring stuff just because it's boring. Get it done as soon as you can.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You're going to get some major motivation from someone powerful today, which will help you get out of a situation that's been making you feel like a bit of a doormat with a friend or co-worker. Your backbone will grow back instantly, and you'll be able to tell that certain bossy someone that you aren't going to take it anymore. Be careful about how you say it, though. You don't want to tick off someone who has power over you.

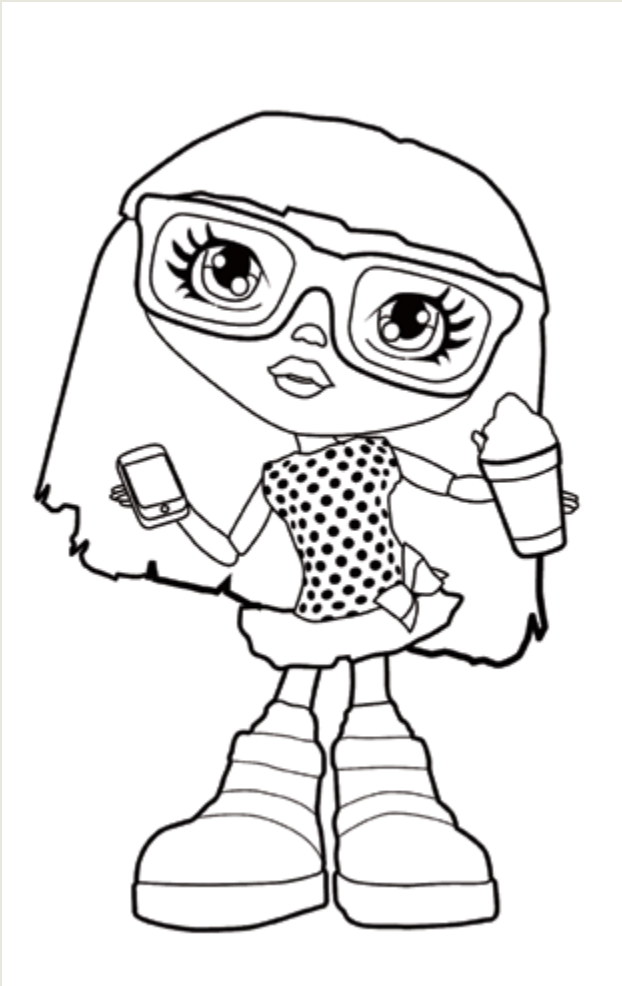


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- The conservation hawks and owls is important to mankind chiefly because these birds eat
 - numerous weed seeds
 - harmful birds
 - many harmful rodents
 - harmful reptiles
- The first attempt in printing was made in England by
 - James Arkwright
 - James Watt
 - William Caxton
 - Isaac Newton
- The first foreigner to receive Bharat Ratna was
 - Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan
 - Nelson Mandela
 - C. V. Raman
 - None of the above

Answers: 1. c 2. c 3. a

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

G	S	E	Y
L	E	O	K
N	H	E	O
N	O	L	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.

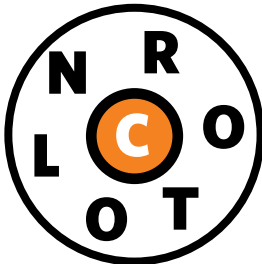
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

An appeal for Lebanon, Gulf ‘detente’

The resignation of Lebanon’s Information Minister could have defused the crisis: Arab League envoy

Beirut, Lebanon - The Arab League on Monday backed the resignation of Lebanon’s Information Minister whose comments on the Yemen war sparked a damaging diplomatic row with Gulf States.

“From the very beginning, the resignation could have defused the crisis,” the League’s assistant secretary general, Hossam Zaki told a news conference in Beirut.

“We need stronger confirmation that this step could still happen,” he said following talks with parliament speaker Nabih Berri. Zaki, who also met Prime Minister Najib Mikati and President Michal Aoun said Information Minister George Kordahi’s departure could be a starting point for ‘detente’ between Lebanon and Gulf states.

The diplomatic rift, which threatens to plunge Lebanon deeper into meltdown, prompted Saudi Arabia and some of its allies to recall ambassadors and block imports from Lebanon.

Import restrictions are a further blow to a country where a weak government is struggling to secure international aid, namely from wealthy Arab neighbours.

The dispute was triggered by comments made by Kordahi in



Arab League envoy Hossam Zaki (left) holds a meeting with Lebanon’s Prime Minister Najib Mikati in the capital Beirut on Monday (AFP)

an interview taped in August before he became Information Minister and broadcast in late October.

Kordahi characterised the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen since 2015 as an ‘external aggression’, sparking rebukes from

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

Each of those states support the Saudi-led military coalition

against Iran-backed Houthi rebels fighting Yemen’s internationally recognised government.

The diplomatic rift has

prompted calls for the resignation of Kordahi, an ally of the powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah.

Information Minister George Kordahi characterised the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen since 2015 as an ‘external aggression’, sparking rebukes from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE

HEIKO MAAS

Hezbollah, which is backed by Riyadh’s arch rival Iran, has opposed calls for Kordahi’s resignation, saying he did nothing wrong.

And Hezbollah deputy chief Naim Qassem went further on Sunday saying it was up to Saudi Arabia to ‘apologise’.

Kordahi has said stepping down was out of the question.

Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said this month that Hezbollah’s dominance made ‘dealing with Lebanon pointless for the kingdom’.

AFP

Sierra Leone must learn from tanker blast, says President

Freetown, Sierra Leone - Sierra Leone President Julius Maada Bio said on Sunday the West African country ‘must learn’ from the deaths of over 100 people killed in a fuel tanker explosion in the capital Freetown.

Three days of national mourning began on Monday with flags ordered to fly at half mast and prayers held nationwide on Friday and Sunday, he said in a televised address to the nation.

“We are going to concentrate on helping those who are critically injured right now,” Bio said earlier in the day after returning from Britain, where he had been attending the COP26 climate conference.

Reiterating the government’s promise of free treatment for the injured, the President added that the country ‘must learn from this unfortunate incident’.

“Let us come together and learn from this, let us say never again it will happen,” he said.

The blast occurred when a fuel tanker collided with another truck at a petrol station on Friday night, according to witnesses.

The flames then spread, burning people in cars and on roads nearby.

Most of the victims were street vendors and motorcy-

clists, many of whom were caught in the blaze while trying to retrieve fuel leaking from the tanker before it ignited, an eyewitness said.

Medical supplies needed

Hundreds of people were picking through the wreckage on Sunday for any valuable materials they could find.

“I lost two family members and my entire business in the explosion,” hawker Mohamed Kamara said.

“We need help to restart our lives all over again,” he added.

The National Disaster Management Agency on Sunday said the death toll had risen to 101 with 91 more in hospital after the explosion in an industrial area of Freetown.

Bio said on Sunday the authorities were working on plans to give a ‘dignified burial’ to the dead.

Health Minister Austin Demby warned that ‘at the moment we don’t have enough medical supplies’ to treat all the victims.

But he added that after contacting the World Health Organization, the government was ‘very hopeful for a huge medical consignment to reach Sierra Leone in the next 24 hours’.

AFP



Sierra Leone’s President Julius Maada Bio (AFP)

Belarus’s use of migrants ‘unacceptable’: NATO

Brussels, Belgium - NATO on Monday slammed as ‘unacceptable’ Belarus’s allegedly tactical use of migrants to put pressure on the EU, saying it was worried about ‘escalation’ on the border with Poland.

An alliance official termed the Belarusian regime’s ploy ‘a hybrid tactic’, meaning a combined military-political operation, and said, “NATO stands ready to further assist our allies, and maintain safety and security in the region”.

Belarus, allied with Russia, is under EU sanctions after diverting a Ryanair flight between EU capitals in May to arrest a dissident Belarusian journalist and his girlfriend on board, and brutally cracking down on the opposition.

Authorities in EU member Poland said on Monday that Belarus was sending hundreds of migrants to the border, where it has built high rows of barbed wire and deployed troops to hinder illegal crossings.

The EU has accused Belaru-



Afghan refugees put up a tent on the Polish-Belarusian border

sian strongman Alexander Lukashenko of facilitating the wave of migrants and refugees,

mainly from the Middle East, in retaliation for the sanctions.

A Polish emergency law has

barred media from reporting along the border, where at least ten migrants have died, apparently blocked from entering further into Poland and stopped from going back into Belarus.

“We are concerned by the recent escalation at the border between Poland and Belarus,” the NATO official said in a statement, remaining anonymous in line with the alliance’s practice.

“We call on Belarus to abide by international law. We have seen a surge of migrants trying to enter Allied territory via Belarus.

“NATO continues to closely monitor the situation, which is putting pressure on our Allies Lithuania, Latvia and Poland,” the official said.

‘Inhumanly misusing people’

The European Commission cited Frontex, the EU’s border security agency based in Poland but not involved in policing its border with Belarus, saying ‘several hundred’ people were at the frontier.

“This is a continuation of the desperate attempt by Lukashenko regime to use people as pawns to destabilise the European Union,” a spokesman, Adalbert Jahnz, told journalists.

Another spokesman, Peter Stano, suggested EU countries were discussing further sanctions against Belarus.

“We are facing a hybrid threat and we will not stand without any action,” he said, adding that the issue would be taken up by EU foreign ministers meeting in a week’s time.

Sanctions deliberations were confidential, but the EU was treating as ‘a matter of urgency’ the ‘unacceptable’ situation Belarus was foisting upon the EU’s borders, he said.

Stano added that the EU was speaking to countries where the migrants were departing from to warn them ‘how the Lukashenko regime is brutally, inhumanly misusing people - their own citizens - and bringing them into very difficult situations’.

AFP

Sharp jump in number of people facing famine

Rome, Italy - The UN’s food agency said on Monday the number of people on the edge of famine in 43 countries had risen to 45mn, as acute hunger spikes around the world.

The jump from 42mn people earlier in the year was largely down to a food security assessment that found another three million people facing famine in Afghanistan, the World Food Programme (WFP) said.

“Tens of millions of people are staring into an abyss. We’ve got conflict, climate change and COVID-19 driving up the numbers of the acutely hungry,” WFP executive director David Beasley was quoted as saying.

“And the latest data show there are now more than 45mn people marching towards the brink of starvation,” he said after a trip to Afghanistan, where WFP is upping support for almost 23mn people.



Children take a lunch of sorghum with a local fruit in Akobo East, Jonglei in South Sudan (WFP)

“Fuel costs are up, food prices are soaring, fertiliser is more expensive, and all of this feeds into new crises like the one unfolding

now in Afghanistan, as well as long-standing emergencies like Yemen and Syria,” he added.

WFP said the cost of averting

famine globally now stands at US\$7bn, up from US\$6.6bn earlier in the year, but warned that traditional funding streams were

overstretched.

Families facing acute food insecurity are being ‘forced to make devastating choices’, marrying off children early, pulling them out of school or feeding them locusts, wild leaves, or cactus.

‘Meanwhile media reports from Afghanistan point to families reportedly being forced to sell their children in a desperate attempt to survive,’ it said.

Multiple droughts in Afghanistan were combining with an economic meltdown to push families to the edge, while some 12.4mn people in Syria do not know where their next meal will come from - more than any time during the decade-long conflict, it said.

Increases in acute hunger are also being seen in Ethiopia, Haiti, Somalia, Angola, Kenya, and Burundi, the Rome-based agency said.

AFP

Good COP, bad COP: UN climate conference praised and panned

Glasgow, UK - The COP26 climate talks resuming on Monday have so far unfolded on parallel planes, with high-level announcements stage-managed by host country Britain during week one riding roughshod over a laborious UN process built on consensus among nearly 200 countries.

A dizzying blitz of pledges to curb methane emissions, phase out coal-fired power, stop overseas fossil fuel financing, and halt deforestation would appear to have moved the dial towards the Paris Agreement's most ambitious goal of capping global warming at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

With a rise of 1.1°C to date, storms, heatwaves and floods have become more frequent, intense and deadly.

An International Energy Agency (IEA) tally of the commitments, along with one by India to boost renewables and reach net zero by 2070, found they would hold warming to 1.8°C - not good enough, but way better than the 'catastrophic' 2.7°C projected by the UN just last month.

US special envoy John Kerry, a 30-year veteran of climate geopolitics, said he 'had never counted as many initiatives and as much money - real money - being put on the table'.

But not everyone was equally impressed.

On the streets, climate activist Greta Thunberg, leading a global protest march on Saturday, branded COP26 a 'failure' and an exercise in greenwashing.



Protesters gather in Trafalgar Square having marched into central London during a global day of action on climate change on Saturday, during the COP26 climate conference underway in Glasgow (AFP)

Several of the marquee pledges last week, while still significant, were considerably less than meets the eye, analysts pointed out.

'We've run the numbers - the

IEA scenario still leaves an enormous emissions gap in 2030,' researchers at Climate Analytics reported, highlighting the need to slash global emissions nearly in half within a decade to keep

1.5°C within view.

'Two truths'

Many frontline negotiators were not happy either.

"This first week is a disap-

pointment," said Ahmadou Seybory Toure, chair of the G77-plus-China group, a negotiating bloc of more than 130 poor and developing countries, the largest in the UN climate forum.

"Most of our concerns are not truly or effectively being taken into account," the Guinean diplomat told AFP in an interview.

Toure lambasted the failure of rich nations to cough up US\$100bn a year by 2020 - a pledge first made in 2009, and now postponed to 2023 - to help

For Laurence Tubiana, head of the European Climate Foundation and, as France's top negotiator, a main architect of the 2015 Paris Agreement, 'Glasgow could become the city of two tales'.

"One is of fantastic mobilisation and progress," she said. "The other - which we see with the protests in the street - is that it's not really happening and companies are just cheating."

"There is no mechanism for ensuring delivery, no capacity to check these claims," she added,

This first week of COP26 is a disappointment. Most of our concerns are not truly or effectively being taken into account

AHMADOU SEBORY TOURE

vulnerable nations decarbonise their economies and cope with climate impacts.

"After the sub-prime crisis in 2008, the US mobilised US\$8tn - and that was just for one country," he said.

Many experts and negotiators commented on the stark contrast between the competing narratives, and wondered if they could be reconciled during the home stretch of the talks, which run through Friday.

"We have two different truths here," said Helen Mountford of the World Resources Institute.

"We've made much more progress in some ways that we could have ever imagined even in a couple of years ago, but at the same time we're nowhere near enough."

noting that the flurry of pledges last week were made outside the framework of the UN talks.

"That is why I say greenwashing is the new climate denial."

UN Secretary Antonio Guterres raised a similar concern in launching the 13-days talks.

"There is a deficit of credibility and a surplus of confusion over emissions reductions and net zero targets," he said, announcing the creation of an expert group to measure the claims of non-state actors, whether local governments or multinationals.

The 'two COPs' may well collide during a formal 'stocktake' on Monday of the first week, in which countries and negotiating blocs will air their views and grievances.

AFP

9 dead after floods in Sri Lanka and India

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Nine people are dead and two others missing after floods in Sri Lanka and parts of southern India caused by more than a week of pounding rains.

Nearly half of Sri Lanka's 25 districts have been hit by the deluge, with the worst affected areas in and around the island's tea-growing Central Highlands.

'Five deaths and two disappearances were reported' across Sri Lanka since the rains began at the end of October, Pradeep Kodippili of the island's disaster management agency said on Monday.

More floods are likely in the coming days with downpours set to move to the country's northern coast around the city of Jaffna, the country's weather bureau warned.

Four people have also died in 'rain-related incidents' across India's Tamil Nadu state, local Disaster Management Minister K K S R Ramachandran said on Sunday.

Authorities had established more than 150 relief camps to distribute food and aid to those forced out of their homes, the minister added.

Most main roads in state capital Chennai were underwater and trees were uprooted, disrupting traffic.

Residents were seen wading around the city ankle-deep in waters that also lapped up against the century-old offices of the municipal government.

Flooding in Chennai killed more than 250 people during record rainfall in 2015.

AFP



A rescue helicopter flies over the avalanche site in Ama Dablam mountain in the Everest region, where Frenchmen went missing (AFP)

Nepal finds bodies of French climbers lost in Himalayas

Kathmandu, Nepal - The bodies of three French climbers who disappeared in a remote corner of the Himalayas were recovered on Monday close to where they went missing last month, police in Nepal said.

The group were attempting to scale Mingbo Eiger, a 6,000m peak near Mount Everest, and were last heard from via satellite phone at their camp on October 26.

Bad weather hampered efforts to find the men and the rescue team said last week that they could have been buried under a depth of snow the size of a five-floor building. Rishi Raj Dhakal, an inspector at the Solukhumbu district police office, told AFP the bodies were transported by helicopter to the small town of Lukla, which sits close to the route up to Everest.

"The bodies will now be sent to Kathmandu for post-mortem," he added.

Ang Norbu Sherpa, a moun-

tain guide who led the rescue efforts for the trio, said they had been found near the north face of Mingbo Eiger.

Sherpa was not able to provide separate confirmation that the bodies belonged to the missing climbers.

The three young mountaineers - Thomas Arfi, Louis Pachoud and Gabriel Miloche - were part of an eight-strong expedition. They had split into two groups to tackle different summits.

The men appeared to have abandoned their summit attempt and turned back when an avalanche hit.

Search operations were suspended last week, after the French Federation of Alpine and Mountain Clubs (FFCAM) conceded that the chances of finding the men were 'practically zero'.

The FFCAM had also rejected claims in local media that the expedition did not have proper climbing permits.

AFP

Pakistan lifts ban on radical party behind anti-France protests

Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistan has lifted a ban on a radical party that staged massive anti-France protests, after reaching a deal with the group that ended the latest round of deadly unrest.

In a notification published late Sunday, the government said the move was in the 'national interest', coming after seven police officers were killed in clashes during a rally that began last month.

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

'The federal government is



This file photo shows supporters of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan during a protest in Lahore (AFP)

pleased to remove the name of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan as proscribed organisation,' the government said in a statement.

It said the decision was made after assurances from the group - which has three members in parliament - that it would abide

by the law.

Hundreds of detained TLP supporters were also released from detention earlier this month

French Navy enforces North Korea sanctions

Onboard Falcon 200 - Flying above the Yellow Sea between Korea and China, a French naval crew scans the ocean surface for signs of contraband headed for North Korea.

The team is part of an international mission enforcing United Nations (UN) sanctions on Pyongyang, flying surveillance trips from the US Futenma base in Japan's Okinawa.

"The UN sends us information on vessels suspected of illicit behaviour," and then a flight plan is drawn up, explained Guillaume, the lieutenant commander who leads the team and can only be identified by his first name.

On board their Falcon 200 aircraft, the team of six uses radar as well as ships' AIS - the automatic identification system that



French Navy personnel look through binoculars onboard a Falcon 200 Guardian aircraft flying above the Yellow Sea on November 2 (AFP)

transmits information including a vessel's identity and its route.

But their best tool remains visual observation: Two crew members sit next to the plane's windows, scanning the ocean

surface with binoculars and taking photographs. "We're the eyes of the United Nations in the area," said Guillaume.

Suddenly, the team is on alert: A ship has been spotted with its

AIS deactivated, a move considered suspect behaviour.

The pilots reroute the plane, making two passes at an altitude of less than 150m, looking for the boat's name on its stern and trying to establish radio contact with its crew.

Briefing the team before the flight, Guillaume stressed the importance of a 'cordial and professional response' in instances of suspicious behaviour.

"In the context of the international tensions in the area, the goal is to avoid poisoning the situation. We have to be firm but courteous."

A little farther away, the team spots two stationary ships, hull to hull. A first pass reinforces suspicions: Pumping pipes connect the larger of the ships,

as part of the deal.

"This label has been a source of major concern for us as all our activists were being booked under the anti-terrorism act. We were told last night about the decision," TLP spokesman Sajjad Saifi said on Monday.

But TLP leader Saad Rizvi remains in detention.

Saifi added that they expect Rizvi to be released this week.

The party launched its anti-France campaign over the Paris-based satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* issue last year.

Protests in April led to the French Embassy issuing a warning for all its citizens to leave the country.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

US reopens borders after 20 months of restrictions

Washington, US - The United States reopened its land and air borders on Monday to foreign visitors fully vaccinated against COVID-19, ending 20 months of travel restrictions that separated families, hobbled tourism and strained diplomatic ties.

The ban, imposed by former president Donald Trump in early 2020 and upheld by his successor Joe Biden, has been widely criticised and become emblematic of the upheavals caused by the pandemic.

At airports in Europe, passengers queued excitedly to board planes bound for the US east coast, while long lines of masked people, cars and motor homes were seen before dawn at the borders with Mexico and Canada.

The United States closed its borders after March 2020 to travelers from large parts of the world, including the European Union, Britain and China, India and Brazil, in an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

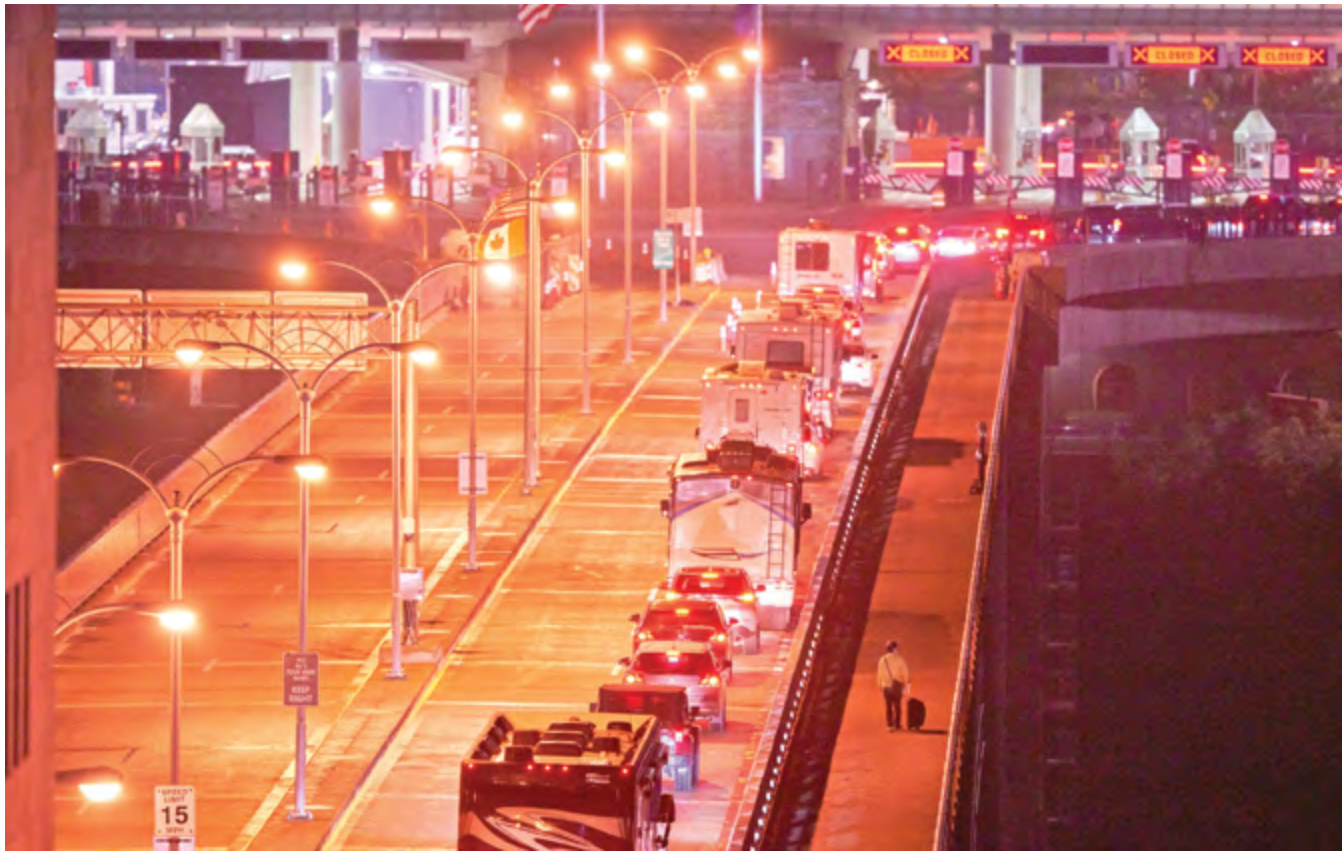
Overland visitors from Mexico and Canada were also banned.

Larger planes

At Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, Charlotte Boulais (27) stood in the queue to drop off her luggage, excited at the prospect of seeing her friends again.

"I'm going to New York, we're going to sightsee with my husband and see friends who have been over there for a year and a half and who we haven't seen because of COVID-19," she said.

Over at London Heathrow Airport, two planes from rival airlines British Airways and Virgin Atlantic heading to New York took off at the same time



A pedestrian (right) walks past a line of Canadian travellers in their passenger cars or motor homes on the Rainbow Bridge between Niagara Falls, Ontario and Niagara Falls, New York in the early hours of Monday as the United States reopened its borders to fully vaccinated foreign visitors (AFP)

I'm going to New York, we're going to sightsee with my husband and see friends who have been over there for a year and a half and who we haven't seen because of COVID

CHARLOTTE BOULAIS

from parallel runways, to mark the occasion.

To cope with surging demand, airlines have increased the number of transatlantic flights and plan to use larger planes.

Dollar shortages

Along the US-Mexico border, many cities have faced economic struggles due to anti-COVID-19 trade restrictions.

Underscoring anticipation of

the reopening, currency exchange centers in Mexico's Ciudad Juarez were hit by a shortage of dollars.

The Ciudad Juarez government has implemented a special system to direct traffic, including installing portable toilets on the three bridges crossing into the United States 'as waiting times of up to four hours are estimated', said the local director of road safety, Cesar Alberto Tapia.

In the United States' northern neighbour, seniors will be able to resume their annual trips to Florida to escape the bitter Canadian winters.

Before sunrise, passenger cars and motor homes were seen lined up on Rainbow Bridge between Niagara Falls in Ontario and New York.

But the cost of PCR tests Canada requires for cross-border travel - up to US\$250 - can be prohibitive. Ann Patchett, an Ontario resident, told the *Ottawa Citizen* it will cost US\$500 for her and her husband to go south to visit family.

Some restrictions remain

Lifting the travel ban will affect more than 30 countries, but

entry into the United States will not be totally unregulated.

US authorities plan to closely monitor travellers' vaccination status and will still require them to present negative COVID-19 tests.

The reopening will happen in two phases.

From Monday, vaccines have been made mandatory for 'non-essential' trips - such as family visits or tourism - although unvaccinated travellers will still be allowed into the country for 'essential' trips.

A second phase, beginning in early January, will require all visitors to be fully vaccinated to enter the United States by land, no matter the reason for their trip.

AFP



A woman walks past a COVID-19 test centre in Berlin on Thursday (AFP)

Incidence rate of Germany soars to new high

Berlin, Germany - Germany's incidence rate measuring the number of new coronavirus infections per 100,000 people over the last seven days soared to 201.1 on Monday, a record since the pandemic erupted more than a year ago.

The figure, published by Germany's Robert Koch Institute (RKI), surpasses the last high, which had been 197.6 reached on December 22, 2020.

While many more people in the country have had the jab than at that point last year, vaccination rates have stagnated at under 70 per cent, with officials pleading in the last days for the population to get the jab.

"For the unvaccinated, the risk is high that they will become infected in the coming months," warned RKI chief Lothar Wieler on Wednesday.

In the eastern state of Sax-

ony, where the incidence rate is more than twice the national average at 491.3, unvaccinated people face new restrictions from Monday.

Access to indoor dining and other indoor events will be limited to those who are fully vaccinated or can show proof of recovery.

The new rules are the toughest state-wide restrictions in Germany against non-inoculated people.

Only children as well as those who cannot receive jabs for medical reasons will be exempt.

The surge in German cases comes with the country in political limbo following September's general election.

The incoming coalition parties, aiming to form a government by early December, have so far ruled out mandatory jabs and said there will be no new lockdowns - at least not for the vaccinated.

AFP

Aussies skirt vaccine rules with fake certificates

Melbourne, Australia - A ban on unvaccinated Australians entering bars and restaurants nudged thousands to get jabbed - but it has also seen the rise of a thriving black market in fake COVID-19 vaccine certificates online.

Twenty four year old Molly - who asked to conceal her real name - is hitting the town.

When Melbourne last month clambered out of 260-plus days of sporadic lockdowns, the allure of the city's vibrant social scene was too much to resist, even though she is unvaccinated.

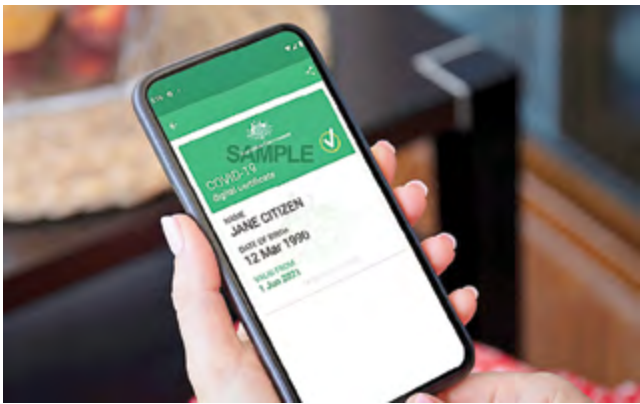
"I'm not anti' vaccine, she told AFP, "But I don't agree with it being so mandatory."

In the last few weeks, she has used a fake vaccine passport acquired through social media to dine at multiple restaurants across the city.

"There was a link going around a few months ago: You put in your details, and it gives you a vaccine passport," she explained.

The link has since been removed, but Australian authorities are playing whack-a-mole with a host of similar sites and apps that are keen to cash in.

Across the country, Google searches for fake certificates soared when rules for the non-vaccinated were announced in early October, surging again



A photo received from Services Australia shows a sample coronavirus vaccine certificate of a fully vaccinated person on a mobile phone (AFP)

when they entered into force.

One still-active website purports to sell certificates from Australia, the United States, Britain, Ireland and Pakistan for around US\$500 apiece.

Health experts worry that fake certificates put owners at risk, could fuel outbreaks and complicate contact tracing.

The number of fakes in circulation is difficult to estimate, but one Telegram channel touting fraudulent Australian certificates has more than 64,000 members alone.

"You can get them pretty easily on the dark web," said Vince Hurley, a veteran detective who now teaches criminology at Macquarie University.

"The price ranges from AUS\$100 (US\$74 approx) to AUS\$1,000 depending on the quality, on the reputation of the

person selling and comments from other individuals."

Despite the risk of up to ten years in jail and fines topping US\$7,400, some Australians have bought the fake certificates, or created their own homemade workarounds.

Salim (27) - who also asked for his real name not to be used - created his own vaccine passport by using a friend's real one as a template.

He has successfully used it in restaurants, gyms and salons, and is not deterred by any legal risks.

"I'm forced to do this because I wasn't given a choice. I'm not robbing a bank, I'm not hurting anyone," he said.

"I know at least ten people who have fake vaccination papers," he added.

AFP

Russia shutdown ends despite increasing number of cases

Moscow, Russia - Most of Russia on Monday ended a week-long paid holiday aimed at curbing the spread of the coronavirus, despite the country seeing thousands of new cases and more than 1,000 deaths per day.

President Vladimir Putin ordered the paid holiday period from October 30 to November 7 in a bid to stem soaring infections and deaths exacerbated by a slow vaccination drive.

Individual regions had the authority to extend the period but as of Monday only five had done so, including the western region of Bryansk and the northwestern region of Novgorod.

A number of regions did however introduce or extend a requirement for proof of vaccination to visit restaurants, cafes and shopping centres.

In the city of Veliky Novgorod where authorities extended the shutdown, some approved of the measure.

"That's the right thing to do," Antonina Leontyeva (75), said. "Maybe there will be fewer patients and fewer infections in a week."

But others said they were growing exasperated.

"I do not like this, this makes me mad," said 19 year old Alexander Vorotilov. "I can't go anywhere without a QR-code."



Passengers go about their business at Komsomolskaya metro station in Moscow on Monday (AFP)

Moscow, the epicentre of the pandemic in Russia, still does not require proof of vaccination for most public activities.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it was too early to say whether the week-long shutdown would help reduce infections.

"This will only become clear in a week," he told reporters.

With more than 8.8mn cases registered since the start of the pandemic, Russia is one of the worst-hit countries in the world and a devastating wave this au-

turn has seen infections and deaths reach new records.

On Monday, authorities reported 39,400 new cases and 1,190 fatalities over the previous 24 hours.

The highest number for new infections - 41,335 - was recorded on Saturday, while the highest number of new deaths - 1,195 - was reported last Thursday.

Russia has rolled out several homegrown vaccines, including Sputnik V, but only about a third of the population is

fully inoculated.

Authorities have been accused of playing down the pandemic and figures from statistics agency Rosstat in October showed nearly twice as many COVID deaths compared with the government tally.

Rosstat said 44,265 people died of coronavirus in September - nearly double the official government figure - bringing the agency's total virus toll to nearly 450,000, the highest in Europe.

AFP

Rural Afghanistan pins hope on Taliban

Dashtan, Afghanistan - In the vil-lages that once bore the brunt of Afghanistan's frontline fighting, the Taliban victory has broken a cycle of airstrikes, gunbattles and funerals.

The hardliners' takeover of Kabul and the sudden collapse in August of the US-backed regime shocked the world and upended the freedoms of Afghans, which were particularly enjoyed by the urban middle class.

But away from major cities, where little of the international aid worth billions of dollars ever reached, many believe the Is-lamist movement's rule could bring a stop to the fighting and the hope for an end to corruption.

"I would give everything for the Taliban," said 72 year old Maky as she prepared cotton fibre in her hardened hands with a group of other women in Dash-tan, a remote farming settlement in northern Balkh province. "Now there is no sound of shooting," she said. "The war is over and we are happy with the Taliban."

'No infidels'

Desperately poor, the villagers are preparing for winter by drying animal dung to use as fuel.

A bitter breeze whips up dust in the central cemetery, where the graves of Taliban fighters are now decorated with colourful trinkets and flags.

In one of the long-tended plots lies the son of 82 year old village elder Hajifat Khan, who cele-brated the Islamists' victory.



This file photo shows women and children harvesting cotton at Dawlatabad District, Balkh province of Afghanistan on October 28 (AFP)

"The men and women of this village are Taliban supporters, young and old," he said, cross-legged in a neighbour's home.

"Now I'm satisfied. Now there are no infidels," he told AFP, adding that he had been beaten by a local pro-government militia just before the takeover.

He said Dashtan - about 30km north of Balkh town - used to be a thriving community with more than 60 families. After many fled the fighting and poverty, now only a handful of families remain

among the eroded foundations, collapsed domed roofs and empty dwellings.

Caught in crossfire

A US-led invasion ousted the brutal, repressive Taliban regime in 2001, after which two decades of military intervention by NATO forces followed.

A democratic government was restored, women were once again allowed to work and study, and a vocal civil society was re-built. But corruption and vote-rig-

ging allegations plagued govern-ment institutions, justice was slow and ineffective, and foreign troops were tainted by accusa-tions of colluding with warlords, abusing Afghans and disrespect-ing local customs.

Thousands of civilians were killed or injured each year in at-tacks by Taliban insurgents and airstrikes by US-led forces, with progress largely limited to cities as the worst of the war raged in rural areas.

Mohammad Nasir earns 200

to 300 Afghanis (two to three US dollars) a day at a cotton field on the outskirts of historic town of Balkh, yards from the 9th-centu-ry Noh Gonbad Mosque, be-lieved to be Afghanistan's earliest mosque.

He weighs the white crop from a scale hanging on a tree, before stuffing it into huge or-ange bags, ready for collection.

Nasir said he did not support either side in the conflict that raged through most of his life.

"I was against both of them

because I wanted peace," the 24 year old from nearby Zawlakai village told AFP.

"I didn't want to fight."

At another plantation nearby, 26-year-old Farima is among dozens of women and children harvesting cotton in the sun-shine, wrapped up warmly against the wind.

During the war, she avoided leaving her home, afraid of being injured.

With the cotton-picking sea-son ending, she is now working on the land each day with her daughters Asma (10) and Husna (9) and son Barktula, aged just three.

The pickers in the fields in Dawlatabad district are paid about 10 Afghanis (11 cents of a US dollar) per kilogram, each making 200 to 300 Afghanis.

Wearing pink rubber gloves to protect her hands from the sharp bolls of the cotton plants, Farima told AFP it was hard work. "But what else can I do?" she said.

For her, life since the Taliban takeover remains unstable and exhausting.

While the end of the conflict is a relief, hardship and insecurity endure. "What change has come? We are still hungry and there are no jobs," she says.

Food prices soaring

A looming economic disaster means the Taliban's window for holding on to loyalty may be short. Essentials like cooking oil, rice and tomato paste now cost

a lot more after the national cur-rency, the Afghani, depreciated and the country's reserves were frozen abroad.

Afghanistan is now home to one of the world's worst human-itarian crises, with more than half of Afghans expected to suffer 'acute food insecurity' this win-ter, as a severe drought devas-tates the country.

In Samangan province, where 93 per cent of the 440,000-strong population live in the countryside, Noor Mohammad Sedaqat grows onions, carrots, okra, tomatoes and pumpkins. In the months before the takeover, he was caught in the crossfire of heavy fighting be-tween government forces to the west and the Taliban to the east.

On one occasion a group of farmers was mistaken for Taliban by a local militia, and narrowly avoided being killed, he said.

Sedaqat's situation on the frontline meant he dared not show allegiance to either the Tal-iban or the government.

"If we went to one side, the other side would beat us, and vice versa," he said.

The 28-year-old father of nine, who works a plot of land in Yakatut village, about 20km from the provincial capital Aybak, says the new government has cut crime and corruption.

He hopes the Taliban will gain international recognition and trade with Afghanistan's neigh-bours will grow.

AFP

Nicaraguan President Ortega wins new term after opponents jailed

Managua, Nicaragua - Daniel Ortega won a fourth consecutive presidential term on Monday in elections denounced by the United States as a 'sham', with the long-term Nicaraguan leader deriding his opponents - most of them jailed or in exile - as 'terror-ists'.

With ballots in 49 per cent of polling stations counted, Ortega had 75 per cent of votes, accord-ing to official partial results from the country's Supreme Electoral Council.

With seven would-be presi-dential challengers detained since June, the 75-year-old was assured a fourth consecutive five-year term - his fifth overall.

The five contenders he did face have been dismissed by crit-ics as regime loyalists.

Late on Sunday night, some of Ortega's followers began to cele-brate on the streets of the capital Managua even before the final result.

"Yes we did it, Daniel, Daniel!" they shouted in several neigh-bourhoods as fireworks went off.

US President Joe Biden said in a statement on Sunday that the outcome was 'rigged' long before the 'sham' election.

"What Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice-President Rosario Murillo, or-



Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega and his wife and Vice President Rosario Murillo give their thumbs up after casting their votes during the general election, in the country's Managua on Sunday (AFP)

chestrated today was a pan-tomime election that was neither free nor fair, and most certainly not democratic," the President said, adding the pair now run Nicaragua 'as autocrats'.

Former guerilla hero Ortega launched a new attack on his op-ponents on Sunday, saying: "This day we are standing up to those who promote terrorism, finance war, to those who sow terror, death." He was referring to Nicaraguans who took part in massive protests against his gov-ernment in 2018, which were

met with a violent crackdown that claimed more than 300 lives in Central America's poorest country.

Some 150 people have been jailed since then, including 39 op-position figures rounded up since June in the run-up to the vote.

'Police state'

Polling stations closed Sunday after 11 hours of voting under the watchful eye of 30,000 police and soldiers.

The Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (Cenidh) said

Nicaragua was a 'police state' using tactics of 'fear (and) social control' to 'crush the opposition'.

The opposition said the vote was marked by mass abstention even as the government claimed a turnout of 65 per cent.

Fear vied with apathy among the 4.4mn Nicaraguans eligible to cast votes in the country of 6.5mn. Short lines of voters wearing face masks could be seen at some of the 13,459 polling stations, but many were empty when AFP visited.

AFP

Astronaut Wang becomes first Chinese woman to spacewalk

Beijing, China - Astronaut Wang Yaping became the first Chinese woman to walk in space, author-ities said on Monday, as her team completed a six-hour stint outside the Tiangong space sta-tion as part of its ongoing con-struction.

Tiangong - meaning 'heavenly palace' - is the latest achieve-ment in China's drive to become a major space power, after land-ing a rover on Mars and sending probes to the Moon.

Its core module entered orbit earlier this year, with the station expected to be operational by 2022.

Wang and her colleague Zhai Zhigang stepped out of the mod-ule on Sunday night - waving to the camera while tethered to the outside of the station - and in-stalled a suspension device and transfer connectors.

'This marks the first extrave-hicular activity of the Shenzhou-13 crew, and it is also the first in China's space history involving the participation of a woman as-tronaut,' said the China Manned Space Agency in a statement early on Monday.

'The whole process was smooth and successful,' the agency added, declaring it fin-ished.



Chinese astronaut Wang Yaping a day before the launch at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre, in China's Gobi desert on October 14 (AFP)

Tiangong is expected to oper-ate for at least ten years, and the three astronauts are the second group to stay there. Wang is the first woman to visit.

Mission commander Zhai is a former fighter pilot who per-formed China's first spacewalk in 2008.

Sunday's operation came just weeks after Wang, Zhai and third team member Ye Guangfu blasted off from the Jiuquan launch centre in northwestern China's Gobi desert.

Ye, who stayed inside during

the walk to support his crew-mates, is a People's Liberation Army pilot.

Their work involves setting up equipment and testing technol-ogy for future construction, with at least one more spacewalk planned.

The team is expected to spend six months at the station.

The previous record-breaking crew, who made the first mission to Tiangong, returned to Earth in September after spending three months there.

AFP

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Women search for used clothes amid tonnes discarded in the Atacama desert, in Alto Hospicio, Iquique, Chile

Chile's desert turns dumping ground for fast fashion leftovers from around the world

A mountain of discarded clothing, including Christmas sweaters and ski boots, cuts a strange sight in Chile's Atacama, the driest desert in the world, which is increasingly suffering from pollution created by fast fashion.

The social impact of rampant consumerism in the clothing industry - such as child labour in factories or derisory wages - is well-known, but the disastrous effect on the environment is less publicised.

Chile has long been a hub of second-hand and unsold clothing, made in China or Bangladesh and passing through Europe, Asia or the United States before arriving in Chile, where it is resold around Latin America. Some 59,000 tonnes of clothing arrive each year at the Iquique port in the Alto Hospicio free zone in northern Chile.

Clothing merchants from the capital Santiago, 1,800km to the south, buy some, while much is smuggled out to other Latin American countries. But at least 39,000 tonnes that cannot be sold end up in rubbish dumps in the desert.

"This clothing arrives from all over the world," Alex Carreno, a former employee in the port's import area, told AFP. "What

is not sold to Santiago nor sent to other countries stays in the free zone" as no one pays the necessary tariffs to take it away.

"The problem is that the clothing is not biodegradable and has chemical products, so it is not accepted in the municipal landfills," said Franklin Zepeda, the founder of EcoFibra, a company that makes insulation panels using discarded clothing. "I wanted to stop being the problem and start being the solution," he told AFP about the firm he created in 2018.

Water waste

According to a 2019 UN report, global clothing production doubled between 2000 and 2014, and the industry was held responsible for 20 per cent of total water waste on a global level.

To make a single pair of jeans requires 7,500ltr of water. The same report said that clothing and footwear manufacturing contributes eight percent of global greenhouse gases, and that "every second, an amount of textiles equivalent to a garbage truck is buried or burnt."

Whether the clothing piles are left out in the open or buried underground, they pollute the environment, releasing pollutants into the air or underground water channels.

Clothing, either synthetic or treated with chemicals, can take 200 years to

biodegrade and is as toxic as discarded tyres or plastics.

Not all the clothing goes to waste: some of the poorest people from this region of 300,000 inhabitants pick through the dumps to find things they need or can sell in their local neighbourhood.

Venezuelan migrants Sofia and Jenny, who crossed into Chile only a few days earlier on a 350km journey, search through a clothing pile as their babies crawl over it.

The women are looking for "things for the cold," given the desert's nighttime temperatures drop to levels unheard of in their tropical homeland.

Changing attitudes

Chile, the richest country in South America, is known for the voracious consumerism of its inhabitants.

Fast fashion advertising "has helped to convince us that clothing makes us more attractive, that it makes us stylish and even cures our anxiety," said Monica Zarini, who makes lamp shades, notebooks, containers and bags from recycled clothing.

Things are changing, though, according to Rosario Hevia, who opened a store to recycle children's clothes before founding in 2019 Ecocitex, a company that creates yarn from pieces of discarded textiles.

DESERT DUMPING



Men work at a factory that recycles discarded clothes in the Atacama desert for wooden isolation panels



Branded garments from all over the world which get left over in various stages of production are discarded



Amy Winehouse's last concert dress sells for \$243,200

The dress singer Amy Winehouse wore for her final performance sold on Sunday for US\$243,200, 16 times its estimated value, as part of a trove of memorabilia from the late diva's life auctioned in California.

Winehouse wore the green and black bamboo print dress at a concert in Belgrade in 2011. A month later, on July 23, she died from acute alcohol poisoning. She was 27 and her death was the culmination of a lengthy - and often very public - struggle with alcohol and drugs.

The dress was the highlight of an 800-item

collection of personal effects, ranging from undergarments and DVDs to books and make-up that were sold by Winehouse's parents, Mitch and Janis.

The entire collection brought in US\$4mn, twice the original forecast, according to auction house Julien's which managed the sale that ran from Saturday to Sunday.

"Of course, there are fans and museums and collectors all over the world that will want to own some of these items, care for them, show them at museums, keep her legacy and

her memory alive, and at the same time raise some money for the foundation," Martin Nolan of Julien's said ahead of the auction.

The proceeds will go to the Amy Winehouse Foundation, which supports vulnerable young adults struggling with addiction. "All of these dresses represent Amy - fantastic musician, but also a fashion icon," Nolan said.

Multi-Grammy-winning Winehouse, whose seminal and soulful 2006 album 'Back to Black', is counted as a modern classic, often spoke of her personal experiences battling al-

cohol and drug addiction.

Another highlight of the sale was the heart-shaped handbag custom-made by Moschino that Winehouse used at the 2007 Brit Awards, which sold for \$204,800. Many of the other dresses she wore in performances sold for between \$12,500 and \$150,000.

The 400-plus-page catalogue put together by Julien's was a walk-through of the singer's influences and career, besides her distinctive retro style that made her a fashion icon.

AFP

‘Far superior’ Verstappen outpaces Hamilton to win Mexico Grand Prix



Red Bull’s Dutch driver Max Verstappen races during the Formula One Mexico Grand Prix at the Hermanos Rodriguez racetrack in Mexico City on Sunday (AFP)

Mexico City, Mexico - Max Verstappen cruised to victory at the Mexico Grand Prix on Sunday leaving defending champion Lewis Hamilton to admit the Red Bull car ‘is far superior’.

Hamilton clung on to finish second in his Mercedes holding off a late charge from Red Bull’s Mexican driver Sergio Perez.

“Their car is far superior this weekend and there was nothing we could really do about it,” said Hamilton.

Verstappen, who grabbed the lead on the first corner, finished 16.555sec ahead of Hamilton with Perez just over a second further back.

The Dutchman increased his lead in the world championship to 19 points from Hamilton with four races left.

“There’s still a long way to go,” Verstappen said. “It’s of course looking good but also it can turn around very quickly.”

Frenchman Pierre Gasly was

fourth in an AlphaTauri followed by the Ferraris of Monegasque Charles LeClerc and Spaniard Carlos Sainz.

Hamilton had expressed his surprise on Saturday after Mercedes secured a front-row lock-out, with teammate Valtteri Bottas on pole.

The advantage did not survive the first corner, where almost all of the drama of the race happened in a few chaotic seconds.

Bottas and Hamilton started

fast but as they headed into the turn side by side, Verstappen charged round the outside of the Finn. The three cars went into the corner abreast but the Red Bull came out first.

“It was nice three wide and it was all about just trying to brake as late as you can,” said Verstappen.

“I kept it on the track, came from third to first and that was basically what made my race because I could just focus on my-

self, and we had incredible pace in the car,” said the Dutchman who won for the third time in Mexico.

‘Someone hit me’

As Hamilton gave chase, the Finn went for a spin.

“Someone hit me and caused me to spin,” Bottas complained on team radio after rejoining in last place.

The guilty party was

Daniel Ricciardo, charging from row four. His McLaren lost a front wing.

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff was unhappy at the way Verstappen got through.

“That should not happen,” Wolff said. “We had two cars in front and seemed to opened up the sea for Max to come around the outside. The spin afterwards when there could have been a third or fourth place is annoying to say the least.”

The collision at the front sent ripples down the pack as Yuki Tsunoda and Mick Schumacher both went off.

The safety car came out, allowing Ricciardo and Bottas, who eventually finished in 15th place, to pit for repairs.

When the racing resumed, Verstap-

pen quickly built a lead over Hamilton with Perez third.

Red Bull’s pit-stop strategy allowed Perez to take the lead on the 33rd lap.

As it dawned on the huge crowd that a Mexican was leading, they rose in their seats, roaring and waving flags. “I could hear the crowd coming through the stadium section, it was pretty incredible,” said Perez.

‘Pace on another level’

After Perez finally pitted, he came back in third and resumed his pursuit of Hamilton.

The crowd roared again when Perez caught his hare on the 61st lap, but he could not find a way past.

“It shows how fast their car is when Sergio is that close behind me and able to follow that closely,” said Hamilton.

Perez still earned the first podium finish by a Mexican driver in the race.

Wolff said the Red Bulls were just faster. “Their pace was on another level,” he said. “I don’t think we could have won even if we’d stayed ahead at the first corner. They could have driven circles round us.”

The battle resumes in Sao Paulo, Brazil, next week before the championship heads to the Middle East for the last three races.

AFP

Max Verstappen celebrates after winning (AFP)

ONLY
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WATER

AND
PERFECT
TASTE

ONLY
WHAT'S
ESSENTIAL

‘Djokovic’s greatness will be recognised’

Paris, France - The tide is turning in tennis legend Novak Djokovic’s favour in gaining the respect he deserves from followers of the sport but he may have to wait for years post-retirement to be fully appreciated, says Daniil Medvedev.

World number two Medvedev was speaking after Djokovic had come back from a set down to beat him 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 in the final in Paris for a record-breaking 37th Masters 1000 title on Sunday.

This came a day after the 34-year-old Serbian won his semi-final to assure himself of another milestone - season-ending world number one for a seventh time.

In doing so he ended Medvedev’s slim hopes of toppling him, two months after the Russian dashed Djokovic’s dreams of a Grand Slam sweep in the US Open final.

Djokovic has spoken of the love he felt from the US Open crowd that day which has not always been the case elsewhere - in the Wimbledon final this year he was riled on several occasions by spectators siding with oppo-



Serbia’s Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Russia’s Daniil Medvedev during the ATP Paris Masters final, in Paris on Sunday (AFP)

nent Matteo Berrettini.

For many years too he has been seen as the odd one out of the three great rivals who have won 20 Grand Slams apiece.

Roger Federer and Rafael

Nadal are generally loved but the intense, deep-thinking Serbian provokes lukewarm sentiments.

Medvedev, though, believes the man he calls ‘his friend’ will eventually get the recognition he

deserves for his achievements.

“I have the feeling that people start more and more to respect what he has done in tennis,” said Medvedev. “Because, well, he continues to beat the records.

“I feel like unless they are real haters, which are not real fans, people start to see what he’s done and to see that he’s able to do more.”

‘Break all the records’

Medvedev says this comprehension of just how great a player Djokovic is will not reach full bloom quickly.

“I think that maybe ten years after he retires, because there is going to be people who will start watching tennis who will not have seen him play,” said Medvedev.

“Just like me, I didn’t see (Pete) Sampras play, I was too young but I heard he was amazing - it’s going to be the same.

“There are going to be new people coming to tennis who are just going to read in Wikipedia what were the results.

“Who was the World No. 1 for most weeks, for most times in

the end, and they are going to see Novak everywhere.

“That’s when people are going to start to understand. Okay, that’s amazing what he has done.”

Djokovic has a stock reply to questions as to how he rates his achievements.

“Of course, when I surpass one of the past champions, particularly someone that I looked up to when I was a kid like Pete Sampras (prior to Saturday he was tied with the American on six for finishing season-ending world number one), it means the world to me,” said Djokovic.

“It’s kind of a surreal feeling. But, yes, I mean, in general terms, it’s just difficult for me to reflect fully on what was achieved.

“Not just this week but just in general in my career, I can’t really devote myself to thinking about the historic achievements.”

Djokovic, though, makes no secret of his desire to keep setting new standards. “It is an objective, yes, to prove that I can break all the records,” he said. “I’m very motivated to carry on.”

AFP

Every day, all day!



QUOTE OF THE DAY

When the players prefer to play IPL over playing for the country, what can we say? Your national team should come first

Indian legend Kapil Dev after the pre-tournament favourites India were dumped out of the T20 World Cup



ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

India thrash Namibia in Kohli's last game as T20 skipper



Indian opener Rohit Sharma plays a shot during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match against Namibia at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, in Dubai on Monday (AFP)

Dubai, UAE - India hammered Namibia by nine wickets to give Virat Kohli a winning farewell in his last match as Twenty20 captain and finish their disappointing World Cup campaign on a high on Monday.

India, who bowed out of the tournament on Sunday, rode on a 87-run opening stand between Rohit Sharma, who hit 56, and K L Rahul, who made an unbeaten 54, to reach their target of 133 in 15.2 overs in Dubai.

India, the 2007 champions, finished the tournament with three wins from five Super 12 matches but missed out on the semi-finals.

Namibia signed off with a single win in their first appearance in the Super 12 stage of the T20 World Cup.

Indian spinners Ravindra

Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin took three wickets each to set up the victory after they kept Namibia to 132 for eight.

David Wiese scored 26 off 25 balls and lifted Namibia from a precarious 94-7 to a respectable total, but it was not enough to challenge a powerful Indian batting line-up which came good towards the business end of the tournament.

Rohit, who remains the front-runner to take over the T20 duties from Kohli, hit his second half-century of the competition.

Rohit finally fell to Jan Frylinck's left-arm medium pace but only after he smashed seven fours and two sixes in his 37-ball knock.

Rahul kept up the pace to make his third consecutive fifty and struck the winning boundary.

Kohli hands over T20 reins

Dubai, UAE - Virat Kohli said it had been an 'honour' to captain India's Twenty20 side as he began his last match in charge in their final World Cup outing on Monday.

Kohli stepped out in Dubai as T20 skipper for one last time against Namibia in an inconsequential group match after they exited the tournament following New Zealand's win on Sunday.

The superstar batsman, who had already announced the tournament would be his last as skipper in the shortest format, said his deputy Rohit Sharma had been overseeing matters going into the game.

Kohli (33), who will continue to captain India in Test and ODI

cricket, took over the T20 captaincy from M S Dhoni in 2017.

He has led the team to great heights in Test and white-ball cricket but critics have always pointed at his failure to land a World Cup triumph in either T20 or ODI cricket.

"It's been an honour for me, I was given the opportunity and I tried to do my best," Kohli said at the toss in his 50th match as T20 captain.

"But it's also time to create some space and move forward. I've been immensely proud of how the team has played.

"Now I think it's time for the next lot to take this team forward. Rohit has been looking on anyway, and Indian cricket is in good hands."

Suryakumar Yadav hit an unbeaten 25 off 19 balls.

India had only managed to post 151 and 110 in their opening two losses against Pakistan and New Zealand that dented their chances of making the semi-finals.

New Zealand beat Afghanistan on Sunday to eliminate India from the competition and join Pakistan as the teams into the final four from Group 2.

In the final Super 12 match, the Indian bowlers took control after pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah sent back Michael van Lingen for 14 to end a 33-run opening stand. Jadeja struck three times with his left-arm spin and off-spinner Ashwin also rattled the Namibian middle and lower order with figures of 3-20.

AFP



PCB chairman Ramiz Raja

Australia to tour Pakistan after 24 yrs

Lahore, Pakistan - Australia will tour Pakistan for the first time in 24 years in March-April, the Pakistan Cricket Board said on Monday, despite England and New Zealand recently pulling out of matches there.

Australia will play three Tests, as many one-day internationals and a single Twenty20 international.

'Australia are one of the high-performing sides and them playing in our backyard for the first time after a gap of 24 years will be a special treat for the fans,' Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ramiz Raja said in a statement.

The tour will be a huge boost for Pakistan, which was hit hard when New Zealand abandoned its tour over a security alert just as the two teams were due to kick off their first match in September.

England pulled out a week later and there had been fears Australia would do the same.

"Cricket Australia is excited about the prospect of touring Pakistan next year for what will be a highly anticipated series in a country so incredibly passionate about the game and their national team," said Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley, according to the PCB statement.

AFP

Xavi unveiled as Barcelona coach to fans at Camp Nou

Madrid, Spain - Xavi Hernandez was unveiled as Barcelona's new coach on Monday as thousands of fans welcomed the debt-ridden club's legendary former midfielder back to Camp Nou.

Xavi walked out to chants of 'Xavi, Xavi' before signing his contract on the pitch, alongside his family and Barca president Joan Laporta.

"I don't want to get too emotional so I will just tell you one thing - we are the best club in

the world," Xavi told the crowd of around 10,000 fans.

"And we will work to the highest standards to have success. We cannot accept defeats or draws, we have to win every game."

Laporta said, "Today will be an historic day for Barca."

Xavi is the first Barca coach to be presented on the pitch in front of fans at the 99,000-capacity stadium, with the routine usually only reserved for the club's biggest signings.

The return of the 41-year-old as coach, six years after he left Barcelona to play in Qatar, has generated huge excitement and raised hopes the club can begin a return to Europe's elite.

Barca sit ninth in La Liga, with the club grappling with debts of more than a billion euros. They have not been European champions since 2015.

Xavi's appointment was confirmed in the early hours of Saturday and he flew out of Doha a few hours later, before watching

Barcelona at a distance as they threw away a three-goal lead away at Celta Vigo to draw 3-3.

He then attended in person to watch the club's youngsters as Barca B beat Sevilla B at the Johan Cruyff Stadium on Saturday evening.

Xavi's first training session in charge will be on Tuesday, although the squad is depleted by injuries and absentees away on international duty.

Barcelona's first game with Xavi in the dug-out will be at

home to local rivals Espanyol on November 20.

After playing 767 games for Barcelona, Xavi left to play for Al Sadd in Qatar in 2015 before taking over as the team's coach four years later.

He is widely considered one of the Barca's greatest ever players, having won eight La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues, as well as the World Cup and two European Championships with Spain.

AFP



Newly-appointed FC Barcelona's Spanish coach Xavi Hernandez (right) with club president Joan Laporta, in Barcelona on Monday (AFP)



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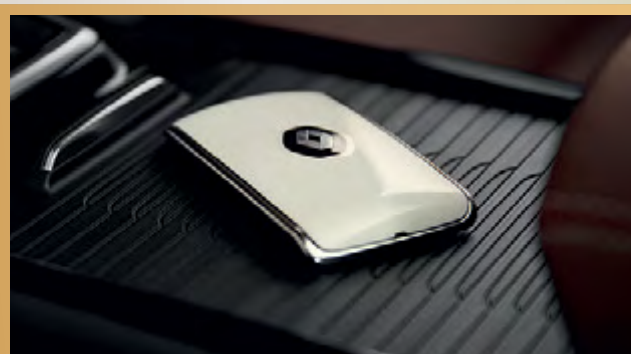
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