



MONDAY, 28 JUNE 2021
www.muscatdaily.com
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om
To subscribe, call toll free no: 80076000

37°C/32°C

VERSTAPPEN WINS STYRIAN GP
GO TO **PAGE 16 SPORTS**

Call to expedite vaccination for 18+

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following rising COVID-19 deaths and rapid spread of the pandemic, medical experts are calling for immunisation of all over 18 years at the earliest as this age group comprises the largest percentage of Oman's population.

Dr Ahmed Sulaiman al Har-rasi, founder of the Natural and Medical Sciences Research Centre at University of Nizwa, tweeted, "In light of the spread of the Delta variant that targets all groups, we must expedite the vaccination programme in those over 18 years. Oman is a young society and this group constitutes a large proportion of it."

Speaking from his experience, Dr Hamad bin Khalifa al Kalbani said those over 18 must be vaccinated at a record pace - at least 100,000 per day. A resident physician in the Cardiac Surgery Department at University of Sor-

Vaccines are effective in preventing infection and complications in case of infection despite immunisation. The odds of death from the virus for a non-vaccinated person is three in 100. For a vaccinated person, it is one in a million

DR AHMED AL AMMAR



(Syed Fasiuddin/Muscat Daily)

bonne, Paris, he said, "The Supreme Committee should seek the assistance of medical and nursing students, retirees, researchers and the army, if necessary, in the immunisation process."

Reiterating the effectiveness

of vaccines in preventing infection and complications in case of infection despite immunisation, Dr Ahmed al Ammar, director of Public Health in the Gulf Health Council, informed that the odds of death from coronavirus for a

non-vaccinated person is three in 100. For a vaccinated person, it is one in a million.

"Our hospitals are full and the number of deaths is rising. COVID-19 is destroying our healthcare system; we cannot

bear the loss of life due to this disease. We urge everyone to follow all precautions for everyone's safety," said citizen Ahmed al Arami.

According to citizen Mohammed al Abri, more than 95

257 deaths, 14,564 new cases in seven days

Muscat - The surge in COVID-19 infections continues with Oman reporting 5,517 new cases and 119 deaths on Sunday - the highest for a three-day period. The past week has also been the deadliest and most infectious with 257 deaths and 14,564 new cases recorded from June 20 to June 26.

With the rise in new cases, hospitals are under tremendous pressure. The number of inpatients and those in intensive care - 1,635 and 489 respectively - is also unprecedented.

"The total number of cases registered in the sultanate has now reached 262,059, including 2,967 deaths," a Ministry of Health (MoH) statement said on Sunday.

The total number of recoveries is 229,998, with the recovery rate now going down to 87.8 per cent.

"Two hundred and fourteen people were admitted to hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours," the MoH stated.

per cent of deaths are among unvaccinated people, and more than 90 per cent of those in intensive care are unvaccinated. "We must hurry to vaccinate as many people as possible."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of

Health stated that it will start providing the second dose of vaccine - Sputnik V - to workers in the private health sector in Muscat. All doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacist and paramedical staff are eligible for the second dose.

MHT DOCUMENTS 81 ANCIENT HEALTH QUARANTINE SITES

Muscat - It is common knowledge that ancient civilisations isolated the sick before the actual cause of disease was known. In times when treatment for illnesses were rare and public health measures few, people turned to quarantine to contain a scourge.

A proof of that practice has been recorded by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT), which has identified 81 ancient health quarantine sites (mostly caves) in all governorates of Oman.

A statement issued by MHT, said, "The ministry, represented by the Directorate General of Antiquities, implemented a project to inventory and document ancient health quarantines sites in all parts of Oman in 2020 and 2021. The ministry's specialists documented 81 such sites."

The ministry confirmed that these isolation sites were used to quarantine patients with infectious diseases such as plague and smallpox.

"The objective of such sites was to reduce the spread of disease among the population.

The presence of these quarantine sites indicates the awareness of Omanis about the gravity of epidemics and the need to isolate patients to avoid its spread."



(Supplied photos)



Switzerland opens its borders for GCC visitors

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Switzerland has started welcoming fully vaccinated visitors from the Gulf Cooperation Council states from June 26. The Swiss Federal Council approved a proposal to relax its entry requirements for arrivals from the Schengen Area and third countries on June 23.

The new ruling now allows GCC residents who have been vaccinated with a European Medical Agency (EMA) and WHO approved vaccination (up to 12 months after vaccination), entry into Switzerland without any pre-travel PCR test or quarantine on arrival.

Following the decision, tourism officials in the canton of Graubunden, also known as Grisons, are gearing up for a busy summer.

"Switzerland and the Graubunden region in particular have always been favourite holiday destinations for tourists from the GCC and with the re-opening of borders, we look forward to welcoming them again this summer.

"This year in particular, the fresh air, outstanding natural



beauty, mild climate and healthy outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling and sailing make it the perfect destination for family pursuits," said Tamara Loeffel, head of business development at Visit Graubunden.

According to official sources, in the years prior to the pandemic, GCC tourists were responsible for approximately 1mn overnight stays per annum in Switzerland, with daily expenditure of around US\$466 per day each.

Many of the GCC visitors are leisure tourists, travelling mostly during the summer months. Residents from the UAE and Saudi

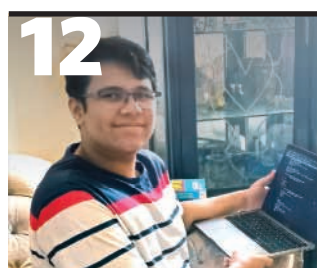
Arabia make up the bulk (70 per cent) of the tourist arrivals to Switzerland from the GCC, with Kuwait and Qatar accounting for over ten per cent with the balance coming from Bahrain and Oman.

"With this latest announcement by the Swiss government, added to the existing pent-up demand, we are expecting exceptionally heavy demand from the GCC countries. Graubunden has to be nature's remedy for a post-COVID holiday," Tamara added.

The Graubunden region is also very familiar with Middle Eastern culture and most restaurants offer halal menu options.



Secret UK defence documents found in bus stop



Former ISG student in US satellite design competition

Oman mediating discussions to end Yemen conflict

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Intense political discussions and backdoor meetings are continuing to find a viable solution to the ongoing strife in neighbouring Yemen with Oman playing a major mediatory role in bringing warring parties to the negotiating table.

According to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs in the US State Dept, US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking spoke to H E Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry, and H E Moosa Hamdan al Tai, ambassador of Oman to the United States, on Friday separately.

The US envoy discussed with Omani diplomats the next steps for resolving the Yemen conflict. "The US welcomes Omani efforts, including their recent trip to Sana'a to engage the Houthi leadership," a statement said. An Omani delegation had travelled to Yemen earlier this month to speak to parties concerned.

Lenderking also spoke with Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, Foreign Minister of Yemen, on Saturday to discuss the Riyadh Agreement and efforts to improve public services. "The US has a strong partnership with the Yemeni government and we look forward to its return to Aden," stated the US State Dept.

Lenderking had returned from



ICRC staff distribute aid in the Marib region of Yemen (icrc)

Saudi Arabia on June 18. During the trip he met with officials from Yemen and Saudi Arabia, as well as UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and the five permanent members of the UN Security

Council. In these meetings, Lenderking noted the need for the Yemeni government to return to Aden as soon as possible and highlighted the importance of swift progress in the implemen-

tation of the Riyadh Agreement.

Additionally, the special envoy discussed the latest efforts to achieve a comprehensive, nationwide ceasefire, including the urgency of de-escalating the fighting in Marib, and reiterated the importance of the free flow of goods, especially fuel, through Hudaydah port and throughout Yemen.

"The Special Envoy also discussed with the Omanis their recent visit to Sana'a and reiterated US appreciation for the efforts of Oman in encouraging peace efforts in Yemen."

Owing to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen, Lenderking also had a discussion on Saturday with Peter Maurer,

president of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "They agreed upon the importance of improved humanitarian access, an immediate comprehensive and nationwide ceasefire, and an end to the Houthi offensive against Marib, where 1mn already-vulnerable internally displaced persons reside," said the US State Dept.

According to ICRC, more than 2,500 schools have been damaged or destroyed and 2mn children are out of school. About 70 per cent of the population does not have access to drinking water and more than 80 per cent of the population depends on humanitarian aid.

See also **Page 09**



(Supplied photo)

2,500 chronic kidney disease patients in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Currently, as many as 2,500 patients suffer from chronic kidney diseases in Oman with 24 dialysis centres spread across the sultanate providing services to them.

Dr Yaqoub bin Ahmed al Maimani, head of the Kidney Dialysis Centre in Bausher, informed that an increase in the number of patients prompted the setting up of 24 dialysis centres with 373 beds.

Of these, the centre in

Of the 2,500 patients, more than 600 are in Muscat. There are three dialysis centres in the governorate - in Bausher, Seeb and a small unit in Quriyat Hospital

DR YAQOUB BIN AHMED AL MAIMANI

Bausher, established in 1998, is the oldest and biggest. Its operations began with 28 beds for 120 patients, which expanded to 52 beds in 2020, serving more than 350 patients in 24 hours.

"Statistics indicate that the number of patients suffering

from chronic renal failure in Oman has reached 2,500, of which more than 600 patients are in Muscat. There are three dialysis centres in the governorate - in Bausher, Seeb and a small unit in Quriyat Hospital. The three combined have

95 beds."

According to Dr Maimani, diabetes, high blood pressure and certain genetic diseases, besides blockage of urinary tract, are among the most important causes of kidney and urinary tract conditions.

He described changing one's lifestyle to follow a healthy diet, exercising regularly, maintaining blood sugar, treating high blood pressure, avoiding excessive use of pain relievers and drinking a lot of water as among the most important ways to prevent chronic kidney diseases.

MoSD launches summer programme to support people with disabilities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) is running a summer programme at branches of Al Wafa Centre for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in various governorates of the sultanate in efforts to support the capabilities and skills of people with disabilities.

In a statement, the ministry said, 'The summer programme will continue until July 13. It aims to develop talent of people with disabilities in various fields, and mitigate the psychological and social effects resulting from the spread of COVID-19.'

The programme also aims to help parents encourage the skills and meet the needs of their children with disabilities at home, besides educating workers at these centres about the medical and health aspects to be followed during the pandemic. Additionally, it has instructions on how to entertainment and bring joy to people with disabilities.

The 2020 e-census indicates



(Supplied photo)

that there were 42,304 Omanis with disabilities - 1.55 per cent of citizens or 15.5 per thousand of the Omani population.

The highest rate of prevalence of disabilities was registered Dhahirah governorate - 18.5 per thousand - while the lowest was in Al Wusta - 10.1 per thousand -

according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The 2020 data indicates that 36.6 per cent of the people with disabilities live in seven wilayats across the sultanate - Seeb, Sohar, Suwaiq, Ibri, Saham, Rus-taq and Salalah.

DBBS appeals for donation of A- blood

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Department of Blood Banks Services (DBBS) has appealed to holders of A- blood type to donate urgently at the Central Blood Bank in Bausher.



DBBS said, 'The department appeals for urgent donation of A- blood due to a sharp drop in stock of this type of blood.'

DBBS urges people to donate blood at the Central Blood Bank by contacting it via WhatsApp on 94555648.

Over 24,000 use e-licensing service since April launch

Muscat - The number of automatic licences submitted via the Invest Easy portal and Sanad reached 24,664, since the launching of the automatic licence approval service on April 4 until June 22, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

MoCIIP said that the top ten countries that utilised the new automatic licence approval service included the sultanate, India, Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, Syria, Bangladesh, UAE, Egypt and Iraq.

A number of investors and businessmen, who obtained automatic licences (Sanad), praised this new service, stressing that the automatic licence approval service contributes to creating an enhanced business environment in favour of the growth and diversification of the national economy, as well as empowering the private sector as a key partner in the development march and enabling it to lead the local economy towards competitiveness.

They emphasised that this service also enhances the sul-

tanate's international indicators in terms of ease of doing business, in accordance with the directions of Oman Vision 2040.

Businessman Said bin Nasser al Maeini said, "The automatic licence approval service through the electronic portal Invest Easy has contributed to save the investors' time and efforts. It is considered one of the easiest government services launched by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in cooperation with the concerned government entities. It allows the investor to obtain a unified licence in less than 24 hours."

Suleiman bin Nasser al Siyabi said, "The automatic approval service facilitated obtaining a unified licence for local and foreign investors who are planning to set up new projects in the sultanate, while the unified licence includes all the required permits and approvals from all the concerned authorities, where this action contributes to strengthening the national economy and attracting foreign investments as well."

MORNING MARKET IN MUTTRAH



An aspect of Omani heritage and culture can be witnessed every morning at Muttrah Market for Fish, Fruits & Vegetables. Small-scale farmers from farms around Muscat bring their produce - a variety of fruits and vegetables - which are auctioned as per a traditional practice. Yousuf Salem al Jarndani, a farmer from the Al Hajer area in the wilayat of Amerat, brought dates on Saturday to sell in the morning market. "I bring dates from my farm twice in the season. The first lot I bring is *rata* (ripe and soft) and the second is *tamar* (ripe and sun-dried)," he said (Syed Fasiuddin/ Muscat Daily)

You love natural Swiss Muesli for your little ones. So do we.

Distributed by:

Please contact +968 22060236/237

We live for Muesli.

Drug awareness contest winners announced



Dr Huda bint Khalfan al Siyabi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To mark International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking which falls on June 26 each year, the National Committee for Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances announced the results of a community competition, aimed to reduce the spread of narcotics and psychotropic substances.

Dr Huda bint Khalfan al Siyabi, director of Health Community Initiatives in the Ministry of Health, said, "The competition aimed at strengthening the role of the wilayats' health committees and consequently community role, in supporting community-based projects and resolving the drug-related issues, as well as developing in individuals the concept of voluntary work for serving the public interest.

"Furthermore, it aimed at underlining and recognising the leading efforts and the effective initiatives in the field of narcotics and psychotropic substances steered by individuals and voluntary groups."

The first competition was held for the year 2017/18 where ten projects from various wilayats of the sultanate took part. The winners were honoured at a national ceremony in June 2019.

Thirteen projects from the wilayats including Mudhaibi, Bidiyah, Dima Wa al Taien, Wadi Bani Khalid, Shinas, Mirbat, Bidbid, Barka, Rustaq, Sur, Al Kamil W'Al Wafi participated in the second edition (2019/2020) of the competition.

The wilayat of Al Kamil W'Al Wafi came first. Khasab got the second place, while the third place went to the wilayats of Dima Wa al Taien and Shinas.

1mn wild seeds plantation drive begins today in Dhofar



(Supplied photos)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to plant 10mn trees, the Environment Authority (EA) will launch a drive to plant 1mn seeds that it collected recently in Dhofar over a week starting today.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Eng Mohammed Salim Hardan, head of the wild seed collection and planting team at EA, said, "We recently started collecting 1mn wild seeds from all regions in Dhofar. These seeds include sidr, samr, al ghaf, etc."

He added, "The authority, in cooperation with volunteer teams, will launch the first phase of the project in some wilayats of Dhofar, including Dalkout, Rakhyut, Salalah and Taqa. More than 200 volunteers will join us for this campaign. The first phase of the project will be from June 28 to July 4 and will last for five hours a day."

He said the project is part of planting 10mn wild trees.

"We aim to cultivate the lands that have been subjected to desertification. We chose this



We aim to cultivate the lands that have been subjected to desertification. We chose this time because it is the rainy season in Dhofar that will help us plant wild seeds in a better way,"

ENG MOHAMMED HARDAN

time because it is the rainy season in Dhofar that will help us plant wild seeds in a better way," he said.

"We urge all members of society to cooperate with us and participate in the first stage of cultivation of wild plants to increase green spaces."

Badr al Samaa inaugurates latest branch in Ma'abala

Muscat - Badr al Samaa Group of Hospitals last week launched a state-of-the-art branch in Ma'abala, Muscat - its 13th in the sultanate.

Badr al Samaa Medical Centre, Ma'abala was virtually inaugurated by chief guest H E Sheikh Nasar Amer Shuwain al Hosni, Undersecretary, Ministry of Labour.

The ribbon cutting ceremony was performed by Dr Mazin bin Jawad al Khabouri, director general, Directorate of Private Health Establishments, Ministry of Health, who was the guest of honour.

In his welcome address, Abdul Latheef, managing director, said since the pandemic started everything has become challenging be it construction, manpower, operations, etc, but Badr al Samaa with its motivation, hard work and dedication made it possible to inaugurate

two state-of-the-art medical centres and one flagship hospital within one year.

He said, "For us it is not the business but a social responsibility towards our nation, especially in the times when demand for quality healthcare is ever increasing."

He added till now Badr al Samaa has vaccinated more than 50,000 people and "this is just the beginning".

H E Sheikh Hosni congratulated Badr al Samaa for serving more and more people and reaching out to every part of Oman with quality healthcare.

He appreciated Badr al Samaa for providing more and more technical and administrative job opportunities for Omani nationals.

He said the medical centre in Ma'abala can become a flagship centre for the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour to



work together in up-skilling clinical and non-clinical Omanis and prepare them for bigger opportunities. He was "glad to see the vision and passion of Badr al

Samaa to contribute in a bigger way to meet the growing healthcare needs" of Oman.

Dr Khabouri in his speech said that he is glad to be the part of in-

auguration ceremony of this state-of-the-art medical centre. He appreciated the role of Badr al Samaa in providing the best quality healthcare in every part of

the country and be shoulder-to-shoulder with government institutions to serve the people of this country. He acknowledged the guiding principles of Badr al Samaa Group of Hospitals: accessible, available and affordable private healthcare provider.

Dr P A Mohammed in his vote of thanks expressed his gratitude to the chief guest, guest of honour, dignitaries, management and staff of Badr al Samaa. Husain Mehdi al Lawaty, branch head of Badr al Samaa Medical Centre compered the event.

The state-of-the-art facility will deliver healthcare services in the specialties like general medicine, internal medicine, cardiology, obstetrics & gynaecology, urology, paediatrics, dentistry, dermatology, ENT, orthopaedics, general surgery, etc. The centre will have facilities for COVID-19 vaccination and RT-PCR sample collection.

شركة النماء للدواجن ش.م.ع.م
A' Namaa Poultry Co. S.A.O.C

Tender Announcement

A' Namaa Poultry Company SAOC announces the following tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Tender Fee	Last Date of Document Purchase	Last Date of Clarification	Last Date of Bid Submission
ANP/CTOHE/001/2021	QHSE consultancy and Software	100 /-OMR Non-Refundable	06 July 2021 03:00 PM	11 July 2021 03:00 PM	13 July 2021 03:00 PM

Specialized Companies in such business and with a valid commercial record can apply to purchase the tender as follows:

- Obtaining the documents of the tender from the Procurement Committee at the company's headquarters at the following address: Al Nahda Towers 2, Floor 7, Office No. 9, during working hours from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., before 07 July 2021 for a fee of OMR 100 non-refundable.
- Submission of bids in a sealed envelope addressed to the name of the head of the Tender Committee and written on it from the outside only the name and number of the tender.
- Tenderer should submit a Tender Bond not less than (1%) of the tender value, valid for Ninety (90) days from the latest date of submission.
- Attach the official and supporting documents of the applicant institution.

A' Namaa Poultry reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers without giving any reasons. Suppliers will be notified after the screening process according to the company's standards.

In case of any queries or further clarification on the process, please contact Procurement Department (Phone: +968 22504468, +968 22504 480; Email: info@anamaa.com) during office hours.

Send your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE شركة برشوتم كانجي للمرافاة

OMAN'S 1st EXCHANGE

SEND MONEY TO UAE TO BANK ACCOUNTS

Corporate and Individual

99101314, 99849289 customersupport@pkexchange.net
www.pkexchange.com pkexch @pkexchange1

YOUR SAY

EFFECTIVE, ESSENTIAL...

How effective are night lockdowns in controlling the spread of virus? Does the decision affect your daily affairs?

SEND US ON OUR
NEW
WHATSAPP NO
91953774NOW ON
WHATSAPP

Share your comment in not more than 50 words along with your full name, profession and front facing photo before next Sunday, 10am, via WhatsApp

Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

The decision on night lockdown has been taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Past experience has shown that the spread of the virus can be significantly reduced by imposing lockdown, but it affects everyone's life. I miss seeing my family and friends. We are all confined to our homes to save ourselves and for a better tomorrow.

**Amaal Ghalib Amri**
Sales professional

Studies and simulations indicate that lockdowns can be quite effective under certain conditions, for example in combination with law enforcement of preventive measures. It hasn't affected my daily routine, as by evening we are already home and getting ready for bed.

**Vipin Garg**
Bank employee

Night lockdowns have proved to be effective but every citizen and resident has to understand their responsibility towards the nation and wear masks and avoid gatherings. Night lockdowns affect our daily affairs a little but it's manageable.

**Ali al Sheyadi**
Teacher

Of course, the night lockdown has reduced the number of COVID-19 infections, because it restricts gatherings and family visits that are responsible for the spread of the virus. The closure affects some of our activities, but we must cooperate with government agencies and adhere to health measures to limit the spread of the virus.

**Subia Musheer**
Teacher

At night, people relax by venturing out resulting in high interaction. Imposing night lockdown checks the spread of the virus. We all know in our heart of hearts that such measures are a must for our own good. We must persevere now to enjoy later.

**Mohan Anandan**
Banking sector employee

Night lockdown is of course quiet effective. However, unless everyone assumes individual responsibility to honour the pandemic norms at all times, controlling the pandemic will be a herculean task for the authorities. The lockdown decision must not be viewed as an inconvenience since it is taken for the wellbeing of society at large.

**Mohammad Ali**
Businessman

I support the lockdown. It is the only way now to control the virus. We have witnessed increased infection rate and deaths in the last few weeks. Yes, the night lockdown affects my business like in the case of most others, but life is more precious than money. In the current situation, lockdown is the only remedy for safety.

**Govind Arjan**
Communications and media consultant

The world over, lockdowns have proved to be effective in bringing down cases as it restricts movement, gatherings and mingling. My daily activities have been adjusted without any difficulty to the lockdown timings. The severity of the current wave definitely warrants additional strict measures to protect society.

**Meer Waheed**
Banking sector employee

The night lockdown serves the purpose of keeping people home. After office-hour get-togethers are restricted and late nightouts and shopping are also discouraged. The authorities have also said that the night lockdowns are most efficient in curtailing infections. I am affected but this is the time to be cautious and safe rather than being adventurous.

? NEXT ON
YOUR SAY

How can trees at camping sites in mountainous areas be saved from fire resulting from human negligence?

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

oman OASIS
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

WIN GOLD

Total 1061 PRIZES!

- Buy Oman Oasis 1.5L or 500ML Carton
- Scratch the coupon to find your unique code
- Register the code at www.omanoasis.com/wingold

22 Carat 100 GM Gold Bar 1 No.	22 Carat 50 GM Gold Bar 2 Nos.
22 Carat 25 GM Gold Bar 8 Nos.	22 Carat 4 GM Gold Coin 250 Nos.

Shopping Voucher worth RO 10 300 Nos.

24 pieces of 500ML Oman Oasis Water 500 Nos.

Offer valid from 16th May 2021 to 15th August 2021. Total of 3 raffle draws will be held at Oasis Water Company, Azabba. Draw Dates: 16th June 2021, 18th July 2021 and 16th August 2021. Winners will be intimated directly. Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Gifts shown are for illustrative purpose only. Actual may vary.

OASIS WATER COMPANY SAOC
PO Box 87, Rusayi 124, Sultanate of Oman.
www.omanoasis.com

CALL TOLL-FREE
800 71 222
or GSM: **9275 5522**

Scan QR Code to Register
C.R.No: 1365452 R.N.No: 06/43/2021

Our WhatsApp number has changed

Get your latest news update on WhatsApp

91953774

Save this number to your contact list.
Send 'start' to receive news update

MUSCAT DAILY



Event held on accreditation standards of diagnostic labs

Muscat - The Directorate General of Quality Assurance Centre (DGQAC), represented by the Accreditation and Standards Development Department, in co-operation with the Gulf Accreditation Council, recently organised a workshop on accreditation of health institutions and diagnostic medical laboratories via video conferencing.

H E Eng Ahmed al Mutairi, director general of GCC Accreditation Centre (GAC), inaugurated the workshop and touched upon the importance of accreditation of health institutions locally and internationally, as well as obtaining ISO 15189 for diagnostic medical laboratories in line with the basic and effective role of providing high quality and safe health services.

Dr Qamra al Sariri, director general of the Quality Assurance Centre, made a visual presentation on the various phases of setting up an Omani accreditation system project that will be implemented.

Qamra explained the importance of the workshop for health workers in general and those in national diagnostic medical laboratories, in particular, in providing them with the required knowledge to apply the approved standards in health institutions and medical laboratories and ensuring delivery of quality and safe healthcare. The workshop was attended by approximately 100 health workers from various government and private health institutions of the sultanate and other GCC countries.

sifr
SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER

Eid Offer

BUY & WIN 310 Prizes

Get 1 Raffle Coupon for every RO 20 spent. Buy from any of the offers (RO 50 or RO 20) or buy a coupon book worth minimum of RO 20.

10 NOS. 22 CARAT 8 GMS GOLD COIN	20 NOS. 22 CARAT 4 GMS GOLD COIN
200 NOS. 10 SIFR 5 GALLON WATER COUPONS	80 NOS. LULU GIFT VOUCHERS WORTH RO 10

Offer valid from 1st May 2021 to 31st July 2021. Total of 3 raffle draws will be held at Oasis Water Company, Azabba. Draw Dates: 1st June 2021, 1st July 2021 and 2nd August 2021. Winners will be intimated directly. Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Gifts shown are for illustrative purpose only. Actual may vary.

oman OASIS
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

Offer valid from 1st May 2021 to 31st July 2021. Total of 3 raffle draws will be held at Oasis Water Company, Azabba. Draw Dates: 1st June 2021, 1st July 2021 and 2nd August 2021. Winners will be intimated directly. Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Gifts shown are for illustrative purpose only. Actual may vary.

Oasis Water Co. SAOC
PO Box 87, Rusayi 124, Sultanate of Oman.
www.omanoasis.com

CALL TOLL-FREE
800 71 222
or GSM: **9275 5522**

Omantel offers customers option to buy car insurance through self-service machines

Muscat - Omantel - the pioneer in providing integrated telecommunications services in the sultanate - has joined hands with the National Life and General Insurance company (NLG Oman) to help a customer purchase car insurance and pay insurance premiums through its Self-Service Machines (SSMs) across the country.

The telecom service provider thus became the first company in Oman to provide this facility, which comes in addition to the company's tie-up with the ROP that saw people making use of their SSMs to make various payments for almost a year, a press release said.

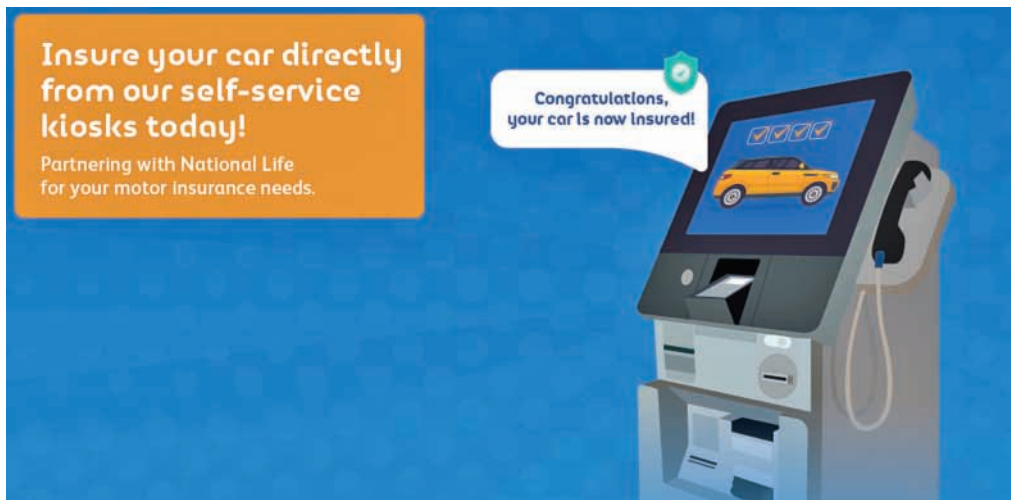
The latest facility 'will bring more convenience for NLG clients, be it individual car owners, new buyers, government clients or corporate organisations by saving their time and ef-

fort', the statement added.

To buy a car insurance or pay the premium, it said that a user can proceed in easy steps at any of the 15 Omantel SSMs that are available at primary locations across the country.

The easy interface and navigation guides the user to the NLG page wherein he/she is prompted to fill in the required details like the type of insurance cover (third party or comprehensive), Civil ID number, license plate number and code, mobile number, vehicle seating capacity and vehicle value (if comprehensive policy).

Once these details are punched in, the user is directed to the next steps of entering their name, choosing the financial institution if mortgaged, confirmation of the premium amount and lastly clicking on the 'pay' tab to finalise the transaction.



The facility completes the transaction in a matter of minutes and easily, the statement said, adding that 'details of the policy purchased will be sent to the user's registered e-mail address, and a link to download the policy will be sent via SMS'.

Commenting on this innova-

tive smart solution, Aladdin Abdullah Bait Fadhil, vice president, consumer business unit at Omantel, said, "Our company's zeal for making new digital products and service available to people within the shortest possible time and innovative thinking form the base of this

partnership with NLG Oman.

"The new product available on Omantel's Self-Service Machines are the first in Oman, and we at Omantel are proud to have facilitated such a unique service. It is a fast, easy, secure and convenient way to buy a car insurance or pay premiums without

the need to visit offices physically," the Omantel vice president added.

S Venkatachalam, chief executive officer of NLG Oman - an Ominvest Group company, said, "This is a first-of-its-kind service to be rolled out for the people of Oman and we could have no better partner than Omantel to enable it. At NLG Oman, we care for our policy subscribers; be it individuals or business owners, citizens or expatriates.

"We wished to add an element of convenience to the entire process of car insurance purchase and premium payment for them. This partnership with Omantel is also a nod to the Sultanate's digital future. We are looking forward to see the initiative's positive impact," he added.

Omantel's SSMs are conveniently placed at 15 locations

across Oman, such as the Qurum City Centre, Muscat Mall, Omantel headquarters, Muscat City Center, The Royal Office, Al Khoud and Al Amerat in the Muscat capital area and in other locations outside Muscat like Nizwa Grand Mall, Salalah Al Saadh Bill Payment Machine, Salalah City, Ibri, Sur, Ibra, Omantel's Sohar office and Al Buraimi.

Omantel is the Sultanate's first and leading integrated telecommunications services provider, enabling the digital society to flourish, allowing new ways of doing business and delivering a world of information, news and entertainment.

While striving to ensure optimum customer satisfaction, Omantel plays a key social role to provide the required support and subsidy to all sectors of the Omani society.



UAE firm Masdar to develop solar projects in Iraq

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Masdar, a subsidiary of Mubadala Investment Company and one of the world's leading renewable energy companies, signed a strategic agreement with the Republic of Iraq to develop Solar Photovoltaic (PV) projects in the country with a minimum total capacity of two gigawatts (GW). Heads of Agreement were signed at a virtual ceremony by Majid A Hantosh, Iraqi Minister of Electricity; Suha al Najjar, president of the National Investment Commission of Iraq; and Mohamed Jameel al Ramahi, chief executive officer of Masdar.

The signing took place in the presence of Ihsan Abdul Jabbar Ismail, Iraqi Minister of Oil; Suhail bin Mohammed al Mazrouei, the UAE Minister of Energy and Infrastructure; and Dr Thani bin Ahmed al Zeyoudi, the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade.

Commenting on the agreement, Iraq's Oil Minister said that the government "intends to increase and enhance the national production of clean energy".

Through this agreement with Masdar, he said, the country would generate 2GW of solar power through projects in central and southern Iraq.

"Iraq is targeting 20 to 25 per cent of energy coming from renewable sources, rather than fossil fuels, equivalent to 10 to 12GW," Ismail said. "This agreement with Masdar, a global leader in renewable energy, is an important step in the development of the clean energy investment sector and the exploitation of solar energy in Iraq."

The UAE's Energy Minister Mazrouei said that they were grateful to Iraq for providing Masdar with the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of renewable energy strategy in that country.

"The UAE is committed to working with Iraq to develop sustainable energy resources. This initiative also highlights the importance of public and private sector partnerships in finding affordable solutions.

"Masdar has been a pioneer in developing clean energy projects, and is now active in more than 30 countries around the world, with a total value of more than US\$20bn and a production capacity exceeding 11GW. Masdar will leverage the expertise it has built up through these projects to support Iraq on its clean energy journey," he added.

The UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Trade underlined the strong brotherly relations that unite the two countries, supported by many deep political, social and economic ties, and driven by the keenness of both leaderships to enhance cooperation in all fields, especially vital areas of common interest.

Zeyoudi pointed out that this cooperation would add significant value to the Emirati and Iraqi partnerships in addressing the challenges posed by climate change and keeping pace with the growing energy demand. It will also contribute to supporting Iraqi efforts aimed at implementing quality projects to produce 10GW of solar energy by 2025.

Zeyoudi re-affirmed his country's eagerness to facilitate channels of technology transfer, enrich knowledge and encourage exchange of the best and most successful experiences for the economic development of Iraq.

"The project is one of the largest renewable photovoltaic solar projects in the Middle East," the president of the National Investment Commission of Iraq said. "It falls within the vision of Iraq's sustainable transition plan 2021- 2030," she added.

WAM

CMA to update e-link between insurance companies and ROP

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) recently announced a tender for the operation and maintenance of the e-insurance systems which was launched in 2008 in continuation of the development and improvement of the services related to digital transformation.

The system links the insurance companies, the Royal Oman Police and insurance policyholders.

The CMA aims to enhance the role of technology and maximise

its uses especially its role in serving policyholders and other stakeholders to ease registration, renewal, transfer and export of motor vehicles, and issuance of registration certificates, according to a press statement posted on the CMA website.

It also offers the insurance companies a database containing specific information on drivers and vehicles such as traffic accidents and violations for use in underwriting.

The system allows the CMA to monitor and follow up the business of insurance companies

to evaluate their performance.

The system comprises software, operation licenses, linking devices, servers and provides an environment linking 15 insurance companies carrying out motor insurance business with policyholders and the ROP for quality and improved service to policyholders and enhance the supervision process.

Motor insurance is among the top insurance activities with more than 1.402mn insurance policies at 85.4 per cent of the insurance policies and direct premiums at RO113.3mn.



Digital shift during pandemic helps UAE's retail e-commerce market touch \$3.9bn

Dubai, UAE - The UAE retail e-commerce market reached a record US\$3.9bn in 2020, a 53 per cent year-over-year increase driven by the COVID-19-led digital shift, while e-commerce accounted for eight per cent share of the retail market during the same year, new analysis from Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry has revealed.

The study projected the value of the market to grow by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) to reach US\$8bn by 2025, a growth trend supported by several key factors, such as high-income potential, high Internet penetration rate (99 per cent), developed transport logistics network, modern digital payment systems, growing tech-savvy youth population, and strong government support.

The UAE has the highest Smartphone penetration rate in the MENA region, which influenced the growth of mobile-commerce (or m-commerce) from 29 per cent in 2015 to 42 per cent in 2020.



Moreover, in 2020, the UAE's retail m-commerce retail market value reached US\$1.6bn, 56 per cent higher than the previous year. The retail m-commerce market of the UAE is projected to reach US\$3.9bn by 2025, and

grow with a CAGR of 18.9 per cent between 2020 and 2025.

The UAE, and Dubai in particular, remains the hub for e-commerce growth in the MENA region. Changing consumer habits during COVID-19 has accelerated the growth of digital shopping.

According to data from the UAE National Economic Register, the UAE e-commerce sector

issued the highest number of licenses of 196 in May last year.

Despite growth opportunities, there are some challenges in the e-commerce market, such as cash on delivery. However, during the pandemic the share of this payment method was significantly reduced, due to hygienic measures and development of contactless payments.

Moreover, some online retailers faced financial pressure to due high costs. Apart from picking, packing and delivery costs, one of the biggest costs is high returns of products.

Experts have found that people return 15 per cent to 40 per cent of what they buy online, compared to five per cent to ten per cent for in-store shopping.

However, the improvements of online product details, customer support and visualisation, the product returns are expected

to go down.

According to Euromonitor data, in 2020 apparel and footwear e-commerce category had the highest share of 33 per cent (US\$1.3bn) in the UAE's retail e-commerce market. Despite some lockdown measures, the online share of this category slightly increased in 2020, due to the growing demand for comfortable style clothing, such as T-shirts, sweatshirts and hoodies.

The next biggest category in the UAE's retail e-commerce was consumer electronics with a share of 31 per cent (US\$1.2bn). In this category, the demand was high especially for laptops, personal computers and tablets, due to the remote working and online education. Food and drink were the third largest category (11 per cent or US\$400mn) in the country's retail e-commerce market.

WAM



Over 53,000 SMEs registered in Oman till May this year

Muscat - The total number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) registered in the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development till the end of May this year stood at 53,166, compared to 44,197 in May last year, posting an increase of 20.3 per cent, according to the data released by the National Centre for Statistics and information (NCSI).

Among the governorates, the Governorate of Muscat topped the list with 20.3 per cent of the total registered SMEs, followed by North Batinah with 20.4 per cent, Dakhiliyah with 18.5 per cent, Dhofar with 19.3 per cent, South Batinah with 23.6 per cent, North Sharqiah with 17.5 per cent, South Sharqiah with 25.5 per cent, Dhahira with 14.7 per

cent, Buraimi with 22.3 per cent, Al-Wusta with 39 per cent and the Governorate of Musandam with 17.3 per cent.

The number of SMEs registered in the Governorate of Muscat stood at 17,927 at the end of May, followed by North Batinah with 8,411, Dakhiliyah with 6,616, Dhofar with 4,439, South Batinah with 4,049, North Sharqiah with 3,527, South Sharqiah with 3,158, Dhahira with 3,016 and the Governorate of Buraimi with 1,135 registered SMEs.

The number of SMEs registered in the Governorate of Al-Wusta stood at 691 and 197 in Musandam, the lowest number of SMEs registered in any governorate during the period.

ONA

China's industrial profits grow as business performances improve



This file photo shows workers at an unit of the Northeast Light Alloy Co Ltd, in Harbin in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, on March 9 (Xinhua)

Beijing, China - China's major industrial companies saw their profits maintain steady expansion in the first five months of the year amid recovering market demand and improving business performances, official data showed on Sunday.

Industrial firms with an annual business turnover of at least 20mn yuan (about US\$3.09mn)

raked in around 3.42tn yuan in total profits during the period, soaring 83.4 per cent year on year, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed.

Compared with the 2019 level, profits of major industrial firms rose 48 per cent in the first five months.

The expansion put average January-May growth in 2020

and 2021 at 21.7 per cent, NBS data shows.

In May alone, the profits of major industrial firms climbed 36.4 per cent from a year earlier to 829.92bn yuan.

Of all 41 industrial sectors, nearly 70 per cent registered yearly profit increases in May, and 80 per cent saw profits surpass 2019 levels, according to

NBS senior statistician Zhu Hong.

Specifically, the raw materials manufacturing sector maintained a robust profit increase last month, and the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector logged accelerated profit growth, Zhu noted.

Boosted by rising market demand and price rises for bulk

commodities, sectors related to metal smelting and processing, raw chemical materials and product manufacturing, as well as oil and coal, posted fast profit expansions in May, according to Zhu.

The pharmaceutical manufacturing industry also saw strong growth, driven by demand for pandemic-related medical supplies such as COVID-19 vaccines and testing kits.

The sector's profits soared 85.7 per cent over a year earlier, jumping by 23.6 percentage points from April.

Moreover, the business operations of major industrial companies continued to improve last month, with increasing profitability, declining costs and decreasing debt-to-asset ratios, NBS data shows.

"In general, China's industrial firms continued their recovery momentum in May, but the recovery is still not on solid footing, given the companies' unbalanced profitability," said Zhu.

In the next stage, China will step up efforts to return commodity prices to supply and demand fundamentals, stimulate the vitality of market entities, and sustain the stable growth of industrial firms, Zhu added.

Xinhua



Large US banks can handle economic downturn: Fed

Washington, US - The largest US financial institutions have sufficient capital to continue lending during a severe economic downturn, the Federal Reserve said on Thursday as it released the results of its latest stress tests.

The 23 banks that took part in the annual trials gauging whether they could maintain capital requirements in hypothetical economic crises all passed, remaining 'well above their risk-based minimum capital requirements', the Fed said.

"Over the past year, the Federal Reserve has run three stress tests with several different hypothetical recessions and all have confirmed that the banking system is strongly positioned to support the ongoing recovery," the central bank's vice chair for Supervision Randal Quarles said.

The results clear the way for restrictions on dividends and 23 share buybacks to be lifted starting in July.

The Fed had ordered buy-

backs suspended and dividend payments limited in June 2020 as COVID-19 caused a sharp economic downturn, and then relaxed those restrictions last December, allowing capital distributions limited to an amount based on a bank's previous income.

'Today's stress test results clearly show that the nation's largest banks have strong balance sheets and remained highly capitalised throughout the pandemic,' the American Bankers Association said after the release of the results.

In this year's test, banks faced a hypothetical scenario in which unemployment rises to a peak of nearly 11 per cent, GDP falls four per cent over two years and asset prices fall 55 per cent, with much of the stress occurring in the corporate debt and commercial real estate markets. The 23 banks lost more than US\$470bn altogether under that scenario.

AFP

Bank of England keeps record-low rate, sees 'temporary' inflation spike

London, UK - The Bank of England on Thursday froze interest rates at a record-low but forecast a 'temporary' inflation spike as the economy reopens, echoing warnings from the European Central Bank and the US Federal Reserve.

The world's major central banks are grappling with fears of an inflationary spike, fuelled by commodity price gains, and worries over the health of post-COVID economic recovery.

The BoE's monetary policy committee (MPC) said in a statement that it held borrowing costs at 0.1 per cent and also maintained the level of its stimulus measures - but warned inflation would likely top 3.0 per cent.

The pound dipped slightly against the dollar and euro after the news, which was in line with market expectations.

'The committee's expectation is that the direct impact of rises in commodity prices on CPI inflation will be transitory,' read minutes from the gathering.

'More generally, the ... central



expectation is that the economy will experience a temporary period of strong GDP growth and above-target CPI inflation, after which growth and inflation will fall back.'

Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation was set to shoot further above the central bank's 2.0 per cent official target.

'Inflation is expected to pick up further above the target, owing primarily to developments in energy and other commodity prices, and is likely to exceed 3.0 per cent for a temporary period,' the BoE warned.

Both the Federal Reserve and

ECB kept their own ultra-low rates and economic support measures intact in recent weeks, insisting also that high inflation would be temporary.

UK inflation in May hit 2.1 per cent - the highest level since before the pandemic - with clothing, fuel and oil prices rebounding as the economy gradually reopens.

The BoE remains keen not to snub out any nascent economic recovery by raising rates too soon, following a raft of encouraging data for the period.

'The Committee does not intend to tighten monetary policy

at least until there is clear evidence that significant progress is being made in eliminating spare capacity and achieving the 2.0 per cent inflation target sustainably,' it added on Thursday.

Inflation in Britain has nevertheless accelerated sharply since March, when the government began a phased lifting of coronavirus restrictions.

Outlook upgrade

The BoE also forecast on Thursday that the UK economy would surge by 5.5 per cent in the second quarter or three months to June, up from prior guidance of 4.25 per cent growth. That would follow a 1.5 per cent contraction in the first quarter.

'Bank staff have revised up their expectations ... as restrictions on economic activity have eased,' the minutes added.

'This recovery in activity has been most pronounced in the consumer-facing services for which restrictions were loosened in April.'

AFP

Tesla to 'recall' over 285,000 cars in China due to faulty software

Beijing, China - Electric car giant Tesla will 'recall' over 285,000 cars from the Chinese market after an investigation found issues with its assisted driving software that could cause road collisions, a government regulator announced late on Friday.

Tesla would contact affected users to upgrade their vehicle's software remotely for free, a State Administration of Market Regulation (SAMR) notice said, adding that it affects some imported and domestically manufactured Model 3 and Model Y vehicles.

'The recall plan was filed with the State Administration of Market Regulation, and it was decided to recall the following vehicles from today,' the SAMR said.

The order is the latest blow to the American self-driving car pioneer, which has come under growing regulatory scrutiny in China due to several deadly collisions involving Tesla vehicles in recent months.

'Due to issues with the cruise control system... the driver can



easily activate the cruise control function by mistake,' the Chinese government agency said in the notice. 'A sudden increase in vehicle speed will occur, which could... in extreme cases, cause a collision, posing safety hazards.'

The carmaker has also been targeted by numerous social media complaints from Chinese users regarding quality and service issues, culminating in a high-profile customer protest at the Shanghai Auto Show in April.

The cruise control function, which 'matches the speed of your car to that of the surrounding traffic' is a key part of Tesla's Autopilot assisted driving function, according to the manufacturer's website.

Tesla's road in China appeared to be paved with gold after founder Elon Musk was granted rare permission to build a wholly owned factory in Shanghai that has allowed it to accelerate to the head of the pack in China's huge electric car market.

The company is hugely popular in China, where it sells one out of every four of its cars.

The firm announced last month it would be setting up a data centre in China, following user backlash over fears that their data could be passed over to the US.

Tesla shares fell almost 8 per cent upon the news during US trading hours on Friday.

AFP

Bargaining among countries over global tax enters key stage

Paris, France - Nearly 140 countries will haggle over key details of a global corporate tax plan this week, with some concerned about giving up too much and others eager to ensure tech giants pay their fair share.

The Group of Seven (G7) wealthy democracies approved a proposal to impose a minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 per cent earlier this month, hoping to stop a 'race to the bottom' as nations compete to offer the lowest rates.

It is one of two pillars of reforms that would also allow countries to tax a share of profits of the 100 most profitable companies in the world - such as Google, Facebook and Apple - regardless of where

they are based.

The deal now goes to the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is overseeing two days of talks starting on Wednesday to find a consensus among 139 countries.

The proposal will then be taken up by the G20 club of wealthy and emerging countries at a meeting of finance ministers in Italy on July 9 and 10.

"I don't think we have ever been so close to an agreement," said Pascal Saint-Amans, director of the OECD tax policy centre. "I think that everybody has realised that a deal is better than no deal," Saint-Amans told France's BFM Business radio earlier this month, adding that



failing to agree would lead to unilateral taxes and US reprisals.

US President Joe Biden has galvanised the issue by backing the global minimum corporate tax, and Europeans want a deal,

he said.

Negotiations have gained new urgency as governments seek new sources of revenue after spending huge sums on stimulus measures to prevent their economies from collapsing

during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Irish concerns

While the G7 - the United States, Canada, Japan, France, Britain, Italy and Germany - approved the plan, it still faces hurdles as the negotiations expand to other nations.

European Union members Ireland and Hungary are not thrilled about it, as their corporate taxes are less than 15 per cent.

Ireland has become the EU home to tech giants Facebook, Google and Apple thanks to its 12.5-per cent rate.

But another EU country that has benefited from a low rate, Poland, voiced support for the proposal last week.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said China also has concerns about the proposal.

Two sources involved in the negotiations told AFP that China, which has a reduced rate for companies in key sectors, would not want a rate that exceeds 15 per cent.

Biden also has some convincing to do at home, as key Republicans in Congress have already criticised the deal as a 'speculative agreement' and an 'economic blunder'.

Amazon escape?

The next round of talks will also have to settle on a tax base and the number of companies whose profits could be taxed.

While Britain backed the G7

plan, it wants to ensure that its financial sector is exempt from the reform's 'Pillar One' on taxing a share of profits of overseas headquartered companies.

Others like France are concerned that US e-commerce behemoth Amazon could escape the levies because its profit margin does not exceed a 10 per cent threshold.

The world's 100 biggest multinationals would be targeted by Pillar One, but countries in the G24 - an intergovernmental group that includes countries such as Argentina, Brazil and India - say more firms should be added to the list.

AFP

KR-Eshraqa Entrepreneurship Academy is now ‘Tasees’

Eshraqa, Khimji Ramdas Social Development Arm, announced ‘Tasees’ as the new identity for its Entrepreneurship Academy. Tasees aims to play an important role to incubate, mentor and guide budding entrepreneurs on their journey to achieve their innovative business ideas into reality.

Established in 2018 with a vision to help nurture the dreams and give flight to the ambitions of aspiring Omani entrepreneurs, to achieve their entrepreneurial freedom and growth through viable business solutions to compete in the marketplace.

Tasees aims to be a one-stop-solutions-provider for startups and MSMEs, giving them the scope and opportunity to change the socio - economic fabric of Oman.

To know more about Tasees and its programmes, log on to www.eshraqa.om/tasees/

Designed by Bluerance, an Omani start-up design agency, the logo of Tasees is a modern interpretation of the true purpose of the programme. It represents a progress bar which stands for growth and prosperity. It manifests the core offering of the Tasees programme in a simple and engaging manner.

“Found on the principles of



giving back to the community, Tasees aligns itself to the Oman Vision 2040 mirroring the country’s interests in creating an entrepreneurial mindset for its youth, encouraging the ongoing development of knowledge and skills amongst professionals by creating a favorable environment and new entrepreneurship opportunities for its aspiring youth,” said Nailesh Khimji, director, Khimji Ramdas.

“For decades, our business has enjoyed the support from the local community. It, therefore, is one of our paramount duties to aid in the economic growth of

not just the country, but to invest in and help in the development of its most invaluable asset, which is the people.”

Tasees will continue its multiple interventions with a vision to influence the attitude, mindset and outlook of the youth, build a sustainable entrepreneurship culture and address the futuristic economic goals of Oman.

Its team of highly qualified professionals will impart deeper knowledge and the right skills necessary to help budding entrepreneurs achieve success as a business owners and contribute to the GDP of the nation.

The Pre-incubator programme nurtures talented entrepreneurs to gain the right skills and competencies to be ready for doing business.

The Business Incubator programme seeks to help entrepreneurs who have just launched their business but are running into roadblocks.

The Business Accelerator programme helps SMEs with high growth potential in strategy formation and implementation, collaboration and partnership advisory, marketing and networking support along with entrepreneurial coaching.

It also gives them valuable access to logistical and technical resources, as well as a strong support network of investors.

Badar al Farsi, founder of Power Packs Solutions, a successful business enterprise serves as a testimony of Tasees’s efforts towards incubation and entrepreneur mentoring.

Commenting on the same, Farsi said, “Even the brightest ideas need the right direction. The incubation programme conducted by Eshraqa Tasees has turned my dreams into reality. The experts at Eshraqa have the industry knowledge, experience and technical know-how to help entrepreneurs like me become successful and overcome challenges and make the best of the volatile market scenario while benefiting from the professional resources the program offers. I welcome you to see a short video on my growth story <http://bit.ly/Tasees>

Under the repurposed identity, Tasees will not only continue to support the establishment of sustainable businesses that will aid in the economic growth of the country, but also invest in promising individuals who reserve the potential to make a difference and lead the way for change.



Ooredoo joins with Sadara for B2B ICT solutions

Reinforcing its role as the digital partner of choice for the sultanate’s leading companies, Ooredoo has joined hands with Omani ICT solutions provider, Sadara (Prime Business Solutions).

The collaboration will enable Ooredoo to expand its range of competitive services including Enterprise Resource Planning for Internet of Things, software development, robotic process automation, data management and connectivity and telecommunication services, and more, as it continues to provide its business customers with the tools to help them grow in the modern world.

Sultan Ahmed al Wahaibi, chief business and wholesale officer at Ooredoo, said, “Our agreement with Sadara is reflective of our continuous commitment to enhance our B2B offerings, as well as our efforts to support the sultanate’s digital transformation and Oman’s Vision 2040 to be a knowledge-based and technologically-advanced society. Taking advantage of the latest technologies, and backed by Ooredoo’s customer service excellence, we are equipping our customers with transformative data services to enhance their businesses and meet their digital needs now and in the future.”

Hilal al Busaidi, group chairman of Sadara, said, “At Sadara, we believe in a customised and flexible approach to finding solutions for our growing number of clients all over the world, across multiple industries. We are delighted to be joining hands with Ooredoo, and offering our range of digital management solutions to benefit more businesses across Oman.”

Sadara is a rising group in the digital transformation space in the region, specialising in a synergy of services and solutions. Ooredoo’s wide range of innovative business products and services has gained a large following amongst entrepreneurs, local businesses, and corporations.

Rado True Square x Yuan Youmin: A ‘balanced’ design collaboration

A millennia-old culture meets minimalist design, Chinese craftsmanship meets Swiss precision. Yuan Youmin – graphic designer, lecturer and curator – has drawn inspiration from traditional elements of his homeland China, and together with Rado, created an exceptional timepiece. The new True Square x Yuan Youmin unites West and East, yesterday and today with elaborate details and the latest methods worthy of a Master of Materials.

For the latest Rado True Square design collaboration, the renowned graphic designer Yuan Youmin drew inspiration from the fascinating cultural history of China, combined with modern minimalism. The traditional steelyard served as a motif. This important measuring instrument has been anchored into Chinese everyday life for almost two thousand years. It consists of a rod with markings, a weighing tray and a movable counterweight.

The new watch picks up on some of these elements stylised in its design. The recessed, round dial in the centre, for example, represents the weighing tray, the lever arms of the steelyard be-



come the slender hands, and the traditional hexadecimal dot graduation serves as the basis for the design of the hour markings.

Their yellow gold colour has also been chosen carefully. It traditionally stands for the pure heart and honesty of the tradesman working with the steelyard. The four segments that connect the round dial with the angular case feature polished black lacquer, a further classic Chinese technique. Yuan ultimately chose the image of a phoenix, the famous symbol of eternal rebirth, for the case back of the watch.

The craftsmanship of the

watch is just as refined and sophisticated as its design. The basis was the new groundbreaking True Square – the first watch made from solid high-tech ceramic with rounded edges, whose flowing shapes are created using injection moulding. It unmistakably bears the signature of the watchmaker from Lengnau and impresses with pioneering materials, innovative design, scratch-proof longevity and a pleasant, sensual feel. The new Rado True Square x Yuan Youmin is driven by a Swiss-made automatic calibre with an 80-hour power reserve.

Vivo X60 series: Where modern technology meets cutting-edge design

When it comes to buying a new smartphone, consumers are spoilt for choice. In addition to professional-grade cameras, long-lasting batteries and powerful hardware, companies are now placing increasing importance on the design element.

Aspiring to redefine mobile photography, the vivo X60 series offers distinct features packed in an ultra-thin body. Here is a look at some of them.

Ultra-sleek design

Through extensive R&D, vivo integrated the X60 series’ cutting-edge capabilities into ultra-sleek devices. The smartphones were carefully designed to be ultra-slim, enabling users to take them wherever they go. The X60 is 7.36mm thin, breaking the industry’s limits on 5G technology, and comes with an AMOLED screen containing a 3.96mm front camera punch hole centred at the top with ultra-narrow bezels. The X60 Pro is a 7.59mm-thin 5G phone with 3D curvature and a large screen for noticeably better viewing and selfie experiences. With the



Black colourway weighing 176g and 177g respectively, the smartphones are ergonomic and comfortable to hold.

Ultra O Screen

The X60 series has a 6.56-inch Ultra O Screen with a 120Hz refresh rate. Not only does this screen give consumers more choices and functions, it also offers magnificent colour harmonisation for photos and videos,

and more space for widgets, icons and almost any type of content, whether it is a movie, a game or a video call.

AG Glass with Satin Finish

In terms of craftsmanship, the X60 series features the innovative AG Glass with Satin Finish, which gives the body a soft, satin-like touch that feels better than the usual frosted finish. Its

upgraded anti-fingerprint coating means that users will barely leave any smudge marks on the phone.

Dual-Tone Step

Amongst the highlights of the X60 series is the Dual-Tone Step – a bold attempt to connect imaging with design by blending the cameras on the rear with the aesthetics of the back cover. The cameras on the back of the smartphones are encased within the Dual-Tone Step, offsetting an otherwise bulky look. Fashioned in thin cascading panels that rise in subtle steps, this layout is more structured and aesthetically pleasing.

Trendy Colours

The colour palette of the X60 and X60 Pro is inspired by summer blooms, and the smartphones are available in Blue or Black. Blue is a mix of brilliant hues that allows users to experience the visual radiance of a sun rising. Black is elegant and timeless, reminiscent of the night sky. The classic colour exudes strength and tranquility.

Now you can own fuel-efficient Nissan Altima on EMI as low as RO168

Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), is offering a low EMI on Nissan Altima. The model is known for its outstanding drive, enhanced handling, fuel efficiency and thoughtful technology solutions. Customers can now avail an exceptionally low EMI rate of RO168 on Nissan Altima. EMIs are calculated based on 2.99 per cent rate of Interest, 20 per cent down payment, six-year loan tenure. Subject to credit approvals.

A senior official of Nissan Oman said, “We are pleased to offer Nissan Altima on a low EMI. Its state-of-the-art engineering offers those who drive it an effortless power while furthering remarkable fuel economy. Nissan

Altima is also cherished by owners in Oman for its classy design, fuel economy, driving performance, technology, and comfortability. Its good looks, striking exterior, colour range, spaciousness, and fashionable interior has brought the car a lifetime of fans. Its powerful high-performance engine and a range of other options add to its appeal.”

Excellent driving experience

Nissan Altima has advanced safety features for those seeking a more focused driving experience. Owners vouch that with its advanced technology and in-built design, Nissan Altima is a pleasure to drive.



The Nissan Altima 2.0t Turbo, which has a new standard of design, driving enjoyment and technology has been creating waves within the mid-size sedan segment since its launch. The sedan’s advanced VC-Turbo engine – the company’s first pro-

duction-ready variable compression ratio engine – is one of the most advanced internal combustion engines ever created. Similarly, Nissan Altima 2.5t features expressive styling, an uplifting interior, two powertrains, and advanced Nissan Intelligent

Mobility features.

The Nissan Altima 2.0t has the world’s first variable compression turbo engine. The engine is so smart that it anticipates what the driver wants. The Altima’s shape-shifting VC-turbo engine lets the

driver enjoy a lot. Nissan Altima 2.5t unlocks the pure joy of driving through its innovative latest technology and Nissan Intelligent Mobility feature that responds to the world around in real time.

Powered by an innovative 248 horsepower, 2.0t, turbocharged variable compression, four-cylinder engine, Nissan Altima continuously adjusts its compression ratio to optimise power and efficiency. Whether its turbocharged power that pushes you back in your seat or efficiency that sips fuel, even in city streets, Altima’s shape-shifting VC-Turbo engine gives you the best of both worlds. The sedan is a complete technological package – it over delivers on the ba-

sics, boasts features and innovative technologies never seen in its class.

The VC-Turbo engine has been developed after years of research and consumer feedback. It seamlessly changes its compression ratio between 8:1 (for high performance) and 14:1 (for high efficiency) – with an advanced multi-link system continuously raising or lowering the pistons’ reach to transform the compression ratio.

While a high compression ratio gives greater efficiency, a low compression ratio allows for greater power and torque and avoids knocking.

Nissan Altima also comes standard with a traditional 2.5t, four-cylinder engine.

296 GTB: Defining fun to drive

The 296 GTB, the latest evolution of Maranello's mid-rear-engined two-seater berlinetta, was premiered during an online event broadcast on Ferrari's social media and web channels. The 296 GTB redefines the whole concept of fun behind the wheel, guaranteeing pure emotions not just when pushing the car to its limits, but also in day-to-day driving situations.

The 296 GTB ushers in an authentic revolution for Ferrari as it introduces a new engine type to flank the marque's multi-award-winning 8- and 12-cylinder power units: a new 663 cv 120° V6 coupled with an electric motor capable of delivering a further 122 kW (167 cv). This is the first 6-cylinder engine installed on a road car sporting the Prancing Horse badge: it unleashes its massive 830 cv total power output to deliver previously unthinkable performance levels and an innovative, exhilarating and unique soundtrack.

The car's name, which combines its total displacement (2.992 l) and number of cylinders with the GTB (Gran Turismo Berlinetta) acronym, in finest Ferrari tradition, was chosen to underscore this new engine's epoch-changing importance to Maranello: it is not simply the living, beating heart of the 296 GTB but also ushers in a new V6 era that has its roots deep in Ferrari's unparalleled 70-year-plus experience in motor sports. The very first Ferrari V6, in fact, featured a 65° architecture and debuted on the 1957 1500 cc Dino 156 F2 single-seater. This was followed in 1958



by bigger displacement versions on the front-engined sport prototypes - the 196 S and 296 S - and F1 cars, such as the 246 F1 which powered Mike Hawthorn to the F1 Drivers' Championship title the same year.

The very first Ferrari to sport a mid-rear-mounted V6 was the 246 SP in 1961, which won amongst others the Targa Florio both that same year and in 1962. Also in 1961, Ferrari secured its

first Constructors' title in the Formula 1 World Championship with the 156 F1, which was powered by a 120° V6. Ferrari first installed turbos between an engine's cylinder banks on the 126 CK in 1981 and subsequently on the 126 C2 in 1982, which became the first turbo-charged car to win the Formula 1 Constructors' World Championship title. This was followed up with a second title in 1983 with the 126 C3.

Lastly, V6 turbo hybrid architecture has been used on all Formula 1 single-seaters since 2014.

The 296 GTB's plug-in hybrid (PHEV) system guarantees it is an incredibly usable car as well as cutting pedal response times to zero and delivering a 25km range in all-electric eDrive mode. The car's compact dimensions and the introduction of innovative dynamic control systems as well as meticulously honed aero

ensure that the driver will instantly experience its astonishing agility and responsiveness to commands. Its sporty, sinuous design and extremely compact dimensions also visually underscore its exceptional modernity, brilliantly referencing the likes of the 1963 250 LM, the perfect marriage of simplicity and functionality.

Powertrain

The 296 GTB is the first Ferrari road car to sport a V6 turbo with a vee with an angle of 120° between the cylinder banks, coupled with a plug-in electric motor. This new V6 has been designed and engineered from a clean sheet by Ferrari's engineers specifically for this installation and is the first Ferrari to feature the turbos installed inside the vee. Aside from bringing significant advantages in terms of packaging, lowering the centre of gravity and reducing engine mass, this particular architecture

helps deliver extremely high levels of power. The result is that the new Ferrari V6 has set a new specific power output record for a production car of 221 cv/l.

As the V6 turbo is integrated with an electric motor at the rear, the 296 GTB's combined maximum power output is 830 cv, putting it at the top of the rear-wheel-drive sports car segment as well as making it extremely flexible.

This is true both in terms of day-to-day contexts (the 296 GTB has a full-electric mode range of 25 km), and in driving enjoyment (accelerator pedal response is instant and smooth at all engine speeds).

Internal combustion engine

Thanks to its 663 cv and 221 cv/l, the 296 GTB's ICE sets the new specific power output record for a production road car. Central to achieving this result was the introduction of the 120° vee configuration with equally-spaced firings as well as the positioning of the turbos inside the vee which produces a much more compact engine and optimally distributed masses.

Electric motor

This is the first ever Ferrari with a rear-wheel drive-only PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle) architecture in which the ICE is integrated with a rear-mounted electric motor producing up to 122 kW (167 cv) derived from the Formula 1 application from which it also inherits the MGU-K (Motor Generator Unit, Kinetic) moniker.



NBO, Loylogic partnership

National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Loylogic, the global leader in e-commerce and e-payment solutions for loyalty programmes, have announced a strategic partnership on Loylogic's PointsHub and PointsPay solutions for the Nuqati Rewards programme.

Nuqati Rewards is the country's first and only free loyalty programme that rewards members with points for their day-to-day banking on a wide range of banking products and services. Customers can redeem their points through a host of options including travel, bill payments and shopping. Through this collaboration, NBO aims to extensively broaden its Nuqati rewards offering with an innovative platform in order to increase program member engagement and retention.

Maha al Raisi, head - Retail Products, at NBO, said, "We are constantly finding ways to upgrade and maximise our popular Nuqati programme and are delighted to team up with Loylogic to give more rewards than ever before, simply through banking with us. Now, customers can access and manage their Nuqati account through the app, making it even easier."



Nizwa Zubair Chess Centre hosts virtual tourney

The Zubair Chess Centre in the wilayat of Nizwa hosted the conclusion of the first virtual tournament for participants under 16 years old on June 24. It was organised in cooperation with the Oman Chess Committee, with the aim to enable competition among the affiliates of the participating Zubair Chess Centres.

The tournament saw 47 participants with the competition being conducted through Lichess, an online platform with a digital board dedicated to the game.

The tournament was held as per the Swiss system of chess, with 9 rounds, a thinking time of 5 minutes and an addition of 5 seconds for each move. The tournament was run by a group of renowned judges, Muslim al Wadhahi, Bashir al Qadimi and Hamdan al Hinai.

The results saw Hammoud al Busaidi from the Zubair Chess Centre from the Dakhliyah governorate winning first place, Abdul Rahman al Zadjali from the Muscat governorate placing second and Asail al Mamari in the third place in the North Batinah governorate.

This tournament stems from the framework of The Zubair Corporation's adoption of the activities of the Oman Chess Com-

mittee, to enhance competition among the members of the various Zubair Chess Centres. It also aims to identify the level of players and assess the extent to which they benefit from the training courses that were held via e-learning over the course of the last period.

Hilal al Siyabi, chief corporate services officer at the Zubair Corporation stated, "The organisation of this first virtual tournament is part of our continuous endeavour to support the continuity of sports activities, especially in light of the current health conditions that have imposed great challenges in this field. Therefore, the idea arose of organising a virtual tournament among the members of the ten Zubair Chess Centres through an online platform. This helps maintain the momentum that was achieved during the last four years, following the start of the joint cooperation between The Zubair Corporation and the Oman Chess Committee in 2017."

Ahmed Darwish al Balushi, chairman of the Oman Chess Committee said, "We would like to thank The Zubair Corporation for their continuous support to the committee, which contributed to achieving our goal."

ISD organises virtual Graduation Ceremony 2021

Indian School Darsait (ISD) organised its Graduation Ceremony on a virtual platform for outgoing batch of Class XII 2020-21 at a solemn function held on June 21. Dr Sivakumar Manickam, chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman was the Chief Guest. Sebastian Chungath, president and members of SMC were among the dignitaries who attended the function.

Starting with an Invocation song by the students, the function entered the ambience of welcome wherein Alexander Gee Varghese, vice principal, Senior School, extended a propitious note to everyone. He gave a bird's eye view of the achievements of the students and the



laurels that they had brought to the institution. He also urged the students to equip themselves with adequate skills and knowledge to face the challenges and to excel in their career by upholding the values of life as stated by great scientist Albert Einstein.

The Class Teachers Roilet Sherlin Noronha (12 A), Shobha Krishnan (12 B), Dr Kavitha

Prabhu (12 C) and Joseph Martin (12 D) introduced their classes to the audience and read out proudly a brief citation of students to acknowledge their performance in curricular and extracurricular activities apart from other accomplishments. They further urged not to kill their uniqueness by comparing them with others and congratulated all for their hard work. Akarsh Vin-

Gulf Air begins operating point to point flights beyond hub

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, announced the launch of point to point flights beyond its Bahrain International Airport hub allowing the airline to expand its operations to new destinations as well as extending passenger services to new markets.

Gulf Air launched flights between Athens and Larnaca allowing passengers from either location to buy tickets and commute between both Mediterranean cities.

Similarly, it later launched flights between Bangkok and Sin-

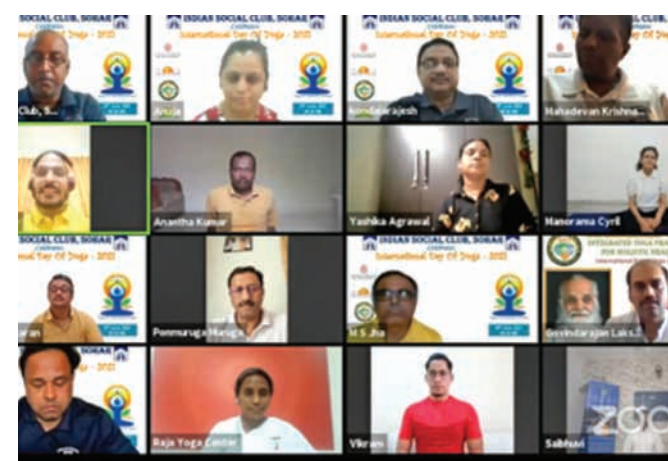
gapore where passengers can buy tickets to fly between both Far Eastern capitals.

These flights will be available for booking and tickets will be sold on Gulf Air's website or through travel agencies in the mentioned cities.

Upon the announcement, Gulf Air's acting chief executive officer Captain Waleed AlAlawi commented, "This is an exciting development for the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Now, not only we operate from and to our hub, but we will also operate from and to foreign points

and give the opportunity to more passengers to experience our Arabian hospitality at a local level in their own markets. We studied the demand between Athens and Larnaca as well as between Bangkok and Singapore to carry passengers between each city pair. This is the beginning of a wider plan to expand globally and be available and more visible to the local markets in countries that we fly to."

Last month, the airline announced that all its flights would be operated by 100 per cent vaccinated crew.



Indian Social Club, Sohar holds yoga celebration

Indian Social Club, Sohar organised an event to mark International Day of Yoga on June 18.

The welcome speech was given by the president, Kondala Rajesh. Various yoga instructors from Art of Living, Rajyoga Centre of Self Development, SKY the World Community Service Centre and Yoga Alliance partici-

pated and demonstrated best practices of yoga for wellbeing. The event was streamed live on Youtube.

H E Muni Mahawar, Ambassador of India, gave a speech and explained the need of yoga in this pandemic. Entertainment secretary Anuja Aphale proposed the vote of thanks.

Blinken meets with Israel's new Minister Lapid amid Iran moves

Rome, Italy - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets Israel's new top diplomat Yair Lapid in Rome on Sunday, in the United States' first face-to-face meeting with the freshly installed government that seeks a less combative approach with its main ally Washington.

Lapid, a centrist who delayed his own plans to be prime minister as he masterminded a coalition to unseat veteran leader Benjamin Netanyahu, is flying to Rome on Sunday to see Blinken, whose plane touched down mid-day in the Italian capital as part of his three-nation tour of Europe.

The meeting comes as President Joe Biden's administration moves ahead with fresh talks on reviving a 2015 accord with Iran - strongly opposed by Israel - in which Tehran drastically scaled back nuclear work in return for promises of sanctions relief.

Biden and Blinken are also eager to preserve a fragile ceasefire that took effect on May 21 between Israel and the Palestinian movement Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, after the worst fighting since 2014.

The bloodshed triggered some of the strongest criticism of Israel in memory in the US Congress, with some members of Biden's Democratic Party accusing Netanyahu of excessive force and of triggering the crisis by backing far-right Jewish groups that want to change the delicate status quo in the holy city of Jerusalem.

Lapid, who took office on June 13 under Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, a nationalist, has accused Netanyahu of jeopardising Israel's once rock-solid support in the United States by openly rallying behind former president Donald Trump's Republican Party.

The new coalition government still sees Iran as the major



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken waves as he arrives at Ciampino Airport in Rome, on Sunday (AFP)

threat to Israel, and has launched its own strikes on the Gaza Strip - but has pledged to put the alliance with Washington first and to try to keep differences private.

After one of Lapid's telephone conversations with Blinken, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said that the two agreed on no surprises in the relationship.

Netanyahu quickly pounced, posting a video in English on social media calling the new government 'so dangerous' and speaking of how he as premier would sometimes not inform the

United States of pending Israeli actions.

Modest goals on Middle East

With tensions still high after last month's violence, a motley coalition getting its bearings in Israel and political uncertainties lingering within the Palestinian Authority, the Biden administration has made clear it is not rushing to make any grand Middle East peace initiatives.

Blinken, speaking in Paris at a forum on the youth-oriented Brut

network, said the immediate priority was finding ways to bring humanitarian and reconstruction aid into the densely populated and impoverished Gaza Strip.

Also critical is to 'avoid provocations and incidents over the coming days, weeks and months that could reignite the violence and then to work to create a bit more confidence between the Israelis and Palestinians', Blinken said.

The hope is that 'there can be conditions, which do not currently exist, to allow perhaps a relaunch of the peace process

There can be conditions, which do not currently exist, to allow perhaps a relaunch of the peace process and the establishment of two states, Israel and Palestine. We have to work on them and we will

ANTONY BLINKEN

and the establishment of two states, Israel and Palestine', Blinken said.

"I don't think the conditions are there yet. We have to work on them and we will."

He reiterated that the Biden administration plans to let the Palestine Liberation Organization reopen its office in Washington, which was closed under former president Donald Trump in one of the first of many decisions welcomed by Netanyahu.

The Biden administration has hoped to be less involved in Middle East hotspots and to repair rifts created under Trump with European allies as part of a strategy to focus long-term attention on managing the rise of China.

In his three days in Italy, Blinken on Monday will see Pope Francis, the pontiff's first meeting with a high-ranking Biden administration official.

Blinken will also take part in meetings hosted by Italy of the Group of 20 major economies and of the coalition to defeat the Islamic State extremist group.

Blinken kicked off his trip to Europe in Berlin, where he met with Chancellor Angela Merkel. AFP



Yemenis attend the funeral of Huthi fighters killed in battles with Saudi-backed government troops in the Marib region, in Sanaa (AFP)

111 Yemen govt and rebel fighters killed in Marib in three days

Dubai, UAE - Clashes between rebels and Yemeni government fighters killed at least 111 in Marib in three days, pro-government sources said, following a renewed offensive by Huthi insurgents.

The Iran-allied insurgents escalated their efforts to seize Marib, the government's last stronghold in northern Yemen, in February, and the fighting has killed hundreds on both sides.

The fighting between Thursday and Sunday killed 29 pro-government personnel and at least 82 rebels, three pro-government sources said. Rebel forces have not confirmed the toll.

Yemeni government officials said that since Thursday, the Huthis had mounted intensive attacks from the north, south and west, but were unable to breach government defences which were supported by air cover from a Saudi-led military coalition.

"These areas witnessed fierce fighting amid artillery shelling from both sides and intense coalition air raids," one government military official said.

Control of the oil-rich region of Marib would strengthen the Huthis' bargaining position in peace talks, but the battle has

also raised fears of a humanitarian catastrophe, as many Yemenis had fled to the area to escape fighting in other parts of the country.

Yemen's conflict flared in 2014 when the Huthis seized the capital Sanaa, prompting the Saudi-led intervention to prop up the government the following year. While the UN and Washington are pushing for an end to the war, the Huthis have demanded the re-opening of Sanaa airport, closed under a Saudi blockade since 2016, before any ceasefire or negotiations.

As well as the bloody offensive in Marib, the Huthis have also stepped up drone and missile strikes on Saudi targets, including its oil facilities.

This month the outgoing UN envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths told the Security Council his own efforts over the past three years to end the war had been 'in vain'.

The fighting has killed tens of thousands and left some 80 per cent of Yemenis dependent on aid, in what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The war has also displaced millions of people and left many on the brink of famine.

AFP



The British Royal Navy destroyer HMS Defender arrives in the Black Sea port of Batumi on Saturday (AFP)

Secret UK defence documents found at bus stop in Kent

London, UK - Britain's government said on Sunday it was investigating how secret defence documents, outlining the movements of a warship that led to Russia firing warning shots off the Crimean coast, were found at a bus stop in England.

The Ministry of Defence said that an employee told it last week that the documents had been lost, and that an investigation had been launched.

"It shouldn't be able to happen," Brandon Lewis, minister for Northern Ireland, told Sky News on Sunday.

"It was properly reported at the time... there's an internal investigation into that situation."

An anonymous member of the public told the BBC they found 50 pages of classified information behind a bus stop in Kent, southern England, on Tuesday.

The papers discussed the

possible Russian reaction to Britain's HMS Defender travelling through Ukrainian waters off the coast of Crimea on Wednesday, the BBC reported.

Russia on Wednesday said it fired warning shots at the navy destroyer in the Black Sea after what it said was a violation of its territorial waters.

Britain however said it was making 'an innocent passage through Ukrainian territorial waters in accordance with international law'.

According to Moscow, the incident took place off the coast of Cape Fiolent on Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014 in a move that the vast majority of the international community has not recognised.

The documents appear to show that the British officials knew the route could lead to a possible reaction from the Russians, but that taking an alterna-

tive passage could be considered by Moscow as 'the UK being scared/running away'.

The route it did take would instead 'provide an opportunity to engage with the Ukrainian government... in what the UK recognises as Ukrainian territorial waters', said another document.

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Thursday summoned the British ambassador to 'strongly protest' the incident.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described it as a 'deliberate and prepared provocation'.

Russia's Defence Ministry said warning shots were fired and bombs dropped along the path of the HMS Defender.

Among the other documents found at the bus stop were those that laid out plans for possible British military presence in Afghanistan after the end of NATO operations there.

AFP

Makeshift memorial honours score of missing in Florida building tragedy

Surfside, US - The scores of people missing in the collapse of the beachfront condo building in Florida are no longer just a dry number but have names and faces thanks to a makeshift memorial erected nearby.

On a chain link fence at a site serving as a staging ground for rescue teams and equipment, photos of some of the missing illustrate the desperation of their loved ones, waiting for news after the sudden and still unexplained tragedy in the wee hours of Thursday.

Behind the fence, a block away, smoke drifts up from the rubble of the Champlain Tower South building, half of which fell like a house of cards, while cranes and other heavy machinery groan with the work of moving concrete and steel rubble.

As of Saturday night, five people are confirmed dead and 156 who may have been in the building when it came tumbling down in the middle of the night in this beach town near Miami are unaccounted for.

One photo on the fence shows a father and his adolescent son - Alfredo, in glasses and bearded, and young Lorenzo - with the word 'MISSING' and this note: 'A family friend tells me they were in unit 512.'

Other photos show an older couple seated at a restaurant, a young man in suit and bow tie, and a couple standing on a beach - identified as Ilan Naibryf and Deborah Berezhdivin.

Passages from the Bible are



Flowers and notes decorate a makeshift memorial near the site of a collapsed building in Florida's Surfside, on Saturday (AFP)

written on Post-its attached to some of the photos. Beside the photos, well-wishers have stuck flowers in the fence and set candles on the ground.

"You can see the smoke off in the distance, and here the faces of the missing. Now they are unforgettable," said Olivia Ostrow, a French woman who has lived in Surfside for 20 years. "These parents, these children. They are people just like us," she told AFP.

Gina Berlin, who has lived in

the neighbourhood for nearly 30 years, said she came to the memorial to pray for the missing.

"I am still in shock," said the 54 year old, who has two friends who live in the part of the building that remained standing and were able to get out safely.

Peace and meditation

The memorial went up in a noisy and bustling spot as electrical generators from the rescue effort

hum and trucks come and go. At one point police even barred people from stopping at the memorial fence. A few blocks away, a quiet park has also become a memorial for the missing.

On the corner of a street with small houses, people have posted more photos and flowers on the fence of a dog park, again with names of missing people, their apartment numbers and messages of support.

Dana Culvin (53) said she had the idea to do this on Friday.

"I just want to send thoughts and prayers and love to the whole community and specifically those waiting for answers," she said.

Daniela Calzadilla (48) sits on a bench as her dog Paco plays nearby. "It's a place where you can find peace," she said. "I know a lot of families from the area that are missing, meditation is always good to feel calm in your mind and body."

As he walks past the park, Raphael Amar, a 63 year old Jew who was born in Morocco and has lived in Surfside for 20 years, pauses at the memorial.

He is returning from synagogue, where he says the atmosphere is quiet and sad because of all the people still unaccounted for. Many of them are from the local Jewish community.

"The memorial at the park," he said, "shows that we are one community in a small town. We are all neighbours. That creates an extraordinary sense of unity." AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Moscow deaths rise; curbs in Asian nations

Moscow, Russia - Moscow on Sunday recorded the worst daily coronavirus death toll so far for a Russian city, as countries across the Asia-Pacific region extended or reimposed restrictions to tackle fresh waves of infections.

The pandemic has now killed close to four million people across the world but vaccination drives have brought down infection numbers in many wealthy countries, though the Delta strain of the virus remains a concern.

The variant is now in 85 countries and is the most contagious of any COVID-19 strain identified, according to the World Health Organization.

Still, in much of Europe and the United States curbs on daily life are easing as vaccination programmes bear fruit, although Russia is grappling with a deadly third wave.

The Russian capital on Sunday recorded 144 COVID-19 deaths in the last 24 hours, a day after Saint Petersburg set the previous highest figure.

Saint Petersburg has hosted six Euro 2020 matches and is due to host a quarter-final on Friday, with spectator numbers capped at half but still upwards of 26,000 people.

Russia as a whole has seen an explosion of new infections



This file photo shows people walking down a street in Moscow on June 21. The Russian capital on Sunday recorded 144 COVID-19 deaths in 24 hours (AFP)

since mid-June driven by the Delta variant.

The dramatic rise in cases comes as officials in Moscow are pushing vaccine-sceptical Russians to get inoculated after lifting most anti-virus restrictions late last year.

"To stop the pandemic, one thing is needed: Rapid, large-scale vaccinations. Nobody has invented any other solution," Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanyin

told state-run television on Saturday.

The Delta variant is also feeding fresh outbreaks in Southeast Asia and Australia where authorities have brought back or prolonged restrictions.

More than five million Sydney residents endured their first full day of a two-week lockdown Sunday to contain an outbreak of the strain.

Australia's northern city of

Darwin also entered a separate snap 48-hour lockdown on Sunday after a handful of cases were linked to a coronavirus outbreak on a remote gold mine.

Similar spikes in infections have recently been seen across Southeast Asia.

Thailand restrictions begin from today

Thailand from Monday will reimpose COVID-19 restrictions

on restaurants, construction sites and gatherings in the capital Bangkok and its suburbs as it tries to contain a wave of coronavirus cases.

After a year of relative success in keeping infection rates low, Thailand's latest wave kicked off in April when a cluster was found in upscale Bangkok clubs typically frequented by the elite.

Since then, more have been

discovered in its overcrowded prison system, as well as among migrant workers who toil in its construction and service industries.

The government said in an order published on Saturday that new restrictions will begin on Monday and last for a month.

They include closing construction sites in Bangkok and surrounding areas, banning workers from leaving, prohibit-

ing eat-in customers at restaurants, and restricting gatherings to a maximum of 20 people.

Checkpoints will be set up in Thailand's southernmost provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala and Songkhla. Travellers must carry a 'letter of intent' to leave or enter.

The new restrictions come ahead of the July 1 launch of a quarantine-free model for vaccinated tourists in the popular holiday destination Phuket.

The so-called 'Phuket sandbox' has been touted as a way to resuscitate Thailand crucial tourism industry and related sectors such as service, restaurants and transport.

Thailand's government has also been widely criticised for its faltering vaccine rollout, with authorities scrambling to import more doses.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha has said he plans to fully reopen the country by October, which would require his administration to hit the target of vaccinating 50 million Thais in four months.

So far, a little over ten per cent of the population has received shots.

Thailand has reported more than 244,000 cases and over 1,900 deaths since the beginning of the pandemic.

AFP



Tables and chairs lay empty in Circular Quay, which usually remains full of visitors during the weekend, in central Sydney on Sunday (AFP)

Australia imposes fresh restrictions

Sydney, Australia - Millions of Sydney residents began the first full day of a two-week coronavirus lockdown on Sunday, as Australia imposed new restrictions to contain an outbreak of the highly contagious Delta variant.

Restaurants, bars and cafés were shuttered after stay-at-home orders for central neighbourhoods were extended Saturday evening across the sprawling city and to the coastal and mountainous regions surrounding it.

While the city centre was virtually deserted, large numbers of surfers and swimmers hit the water at Sydney's Bondi Beach, with outdoor exercise still allowed.

Australia's northern city of Darwin also entered a separate snap 48-hour lockdown on Sunday after a handful of cases were linked to a coronavirus outbreak on a remote gold mine.

Northern Territory Chief Minister Michael Gunner said officials were concerned about being unable to reach close contacts of infected people in the region, home to a large Indigenous population feared to be more vulnerable to COVID-19.

"We are taking extreme action right now to stop or slow any spread before the coronavirus is let loose in the Territory, and that means we need a lockdown," he said.

Health experts had advised that a shorter snap lockdown of Sydney - which has proved ef-

fective in other Australian cities in recent months - would not be enough to contain the growing cluster, New South Wales state Premier Gladys Berejiklian said.

More than 110 cases have been reported since a driver for an international flight crew tested positive in mid-June to the highly contagious Delta variant, which first emerged in India.

"Given how contagious this strain of the virus is, we do anticipate that in the next few days case numbers are likely to increase even beyond what we have seen today," Berejiklian told reporters on Sunday.

The flare-up has been a shock for a city that had returned to relative normality after months with few local cases.

Matt Daly (37), who lives south of Sydney, said he supported the measures but anticipated a 'testing' period of working from home and entertaining his two young children who are on school holidays.

"A lot of juggling over the next two weeks. Really hope it doesn't extend further," he said.

Sydney's restrictions require people to stay home until at least July 9, only venturing out to purchase essential goods, obtain medical care, exercise, go to school or if they are unable to work from home.

Professional musician Blain Cunneen (27) said his work - performing gigs, studio sessions and teaching students - had gone 'up in smoke' overnight.

AFP

Migrant workers flee Dhaka as lockdown tightens

Sreenagar, Bangladesh - Tens of thousands of migrant workers fled Bangladesh's capital on Sunday on the eve of a tightened lockdown that will curtail most economic activity and confine people to their homes as coronavirus infections soar.

Restrictions on activities and movement have been in place since mid-April as cases and deaths jumped.

Infections declined in May but started to rise again this month, with just over 6,000 daily cases on Thursday and 108 deaths on Friday, according to the health ministry - the highest in more than two months.

The resurgence has prompted the government to toughen restrictions in stages from Monday, with economic activity - including shops, markets, transportation and offices - to shut down by Thursday.

People will be ordered to stay at homes while only emergency



People crowd to board a ferry to escape a new lockdown, in Munshiganj in Dhaka division on Sunday (AFP)

services and export-oriented factories continue operations.

The coming closure has sparked an exodus from Dhaka, the capital.

With public inter-city transportation already suspended since June 22, people have squeezed into rickshaws,

hopped onto motorbikes and even hired ambulances to make their way to their villages.

Ferries have been operating on overdrive, with some running services 24 hours a day and cramming more than 1,000 passengers onto each trip.

"We don't want them to

overcrowd the ferry. But they don't listen," said police sub-inspector Mohammad Reza.

"There is a mad rush of people."

A senior official at the state-run Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation told AFP that at least 50,000 people had crossed the river by ferries on

Sunday alone. At a river station in the rural town of Sreenagar about 70km south of Dhaka, thousands queued from early on Sunday to cross the Padma, a tributary of the Himalayan river the Ganges.

"We did not have any choice but to leave the city," Fatema Begum (60) told AFP while waiting for a ferry.

"During lockdown, there is no work. And if we don't work, how do we pay rent? So we packed up everything and are going back to our village."

Mohammad Masum (30), a street vendor in Dhaka, said it was better to return home and 'spend the time with family' than be confined in the capital.

Bangladesh has reported more than 880,000 infections and just over 14,000 virus deaths, but experts say the actual toll could be much higher due to possible underreporting.

AFP

Turkish resort frets over second lost summer

Bodrum, Turkey - The Russians are finally coming but the mayor of this empty Turkish resort doubts their converted rubles will save what looks to be another lost summer.

"We closed the last tourism season down 75 per cent," Bodrum mayor Ahmet Aras told AFP in a lavish library overlooking the Aegean Sea. "We expect a recovery from July with the start of flights from Russia and Europe," but for the sector overall, "that will not happen for a few more years," he said.

Pandemic curbs on travel wrecked Turkey's economy by depriving it of foreign revenue to finance debt and support the lira. The lack of tourists played a large part in the lira's slide from six to the dollar in March 2020 to around 8.7 now.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government needed an urgent fix therefore to quell public discontent.



This file photo shows foreign tourists (right) next to Turkish people in Bodrum, on the Aegean Sea in southwestern Turkey, on June 16 (AFP)

He tried to coax tourists to Turkish beaches with exemptions from weekend curfews and other coronavirus rules.

But quarantines placed on travellers returning from Turkey laid the government's plans to waste. In 2019, Bodrum airport welcomed a record 4.34mn

tourists to a city dubbed the 'Turkish Saint-Tropez'.

Traffic slumped by two-thirds last year however, and the airport recorded just 350,000 arrivals between January and May.

Things are finally looking up, and Turkish leaders have their

fingers crossed.

"God willing, we will jump-start tourism and have a tourist push," Erdogan said this month.

'Walking dead'

Russia this week lifted a Turkish travel ban that was officially imposed because of the coronavirus but which coincided with a spike in geopolitical tensions.

And more people are expected once EU travel rules ease on July 1. But the scenic city that stretches from the sea to rolling hills bears little resemblance to the playground of jetsetters and moneyed Istanbulites of the past.

"You see all the boats resting on the shore, maybe one of them goes on tour a day," guide organiser Baris Kasal lamented.

"We said the last season was 'dead'. We are calling this one 'the walking dead'," he quipped.

"There's been a little bit of movement but it's very, very

weak. Russians make up the largest share of tourists because Turkey is one of the main holiday destinations they can reach without a visa."

Bodrum airport operations manager Iclal Kayaoglu said it was handling just a tenth of the passengers it did in 2019. "It's primarily the Russians and British who visit," she told AFP.

Russians found a way to sneak in even when travel was banned by the Kremlin.

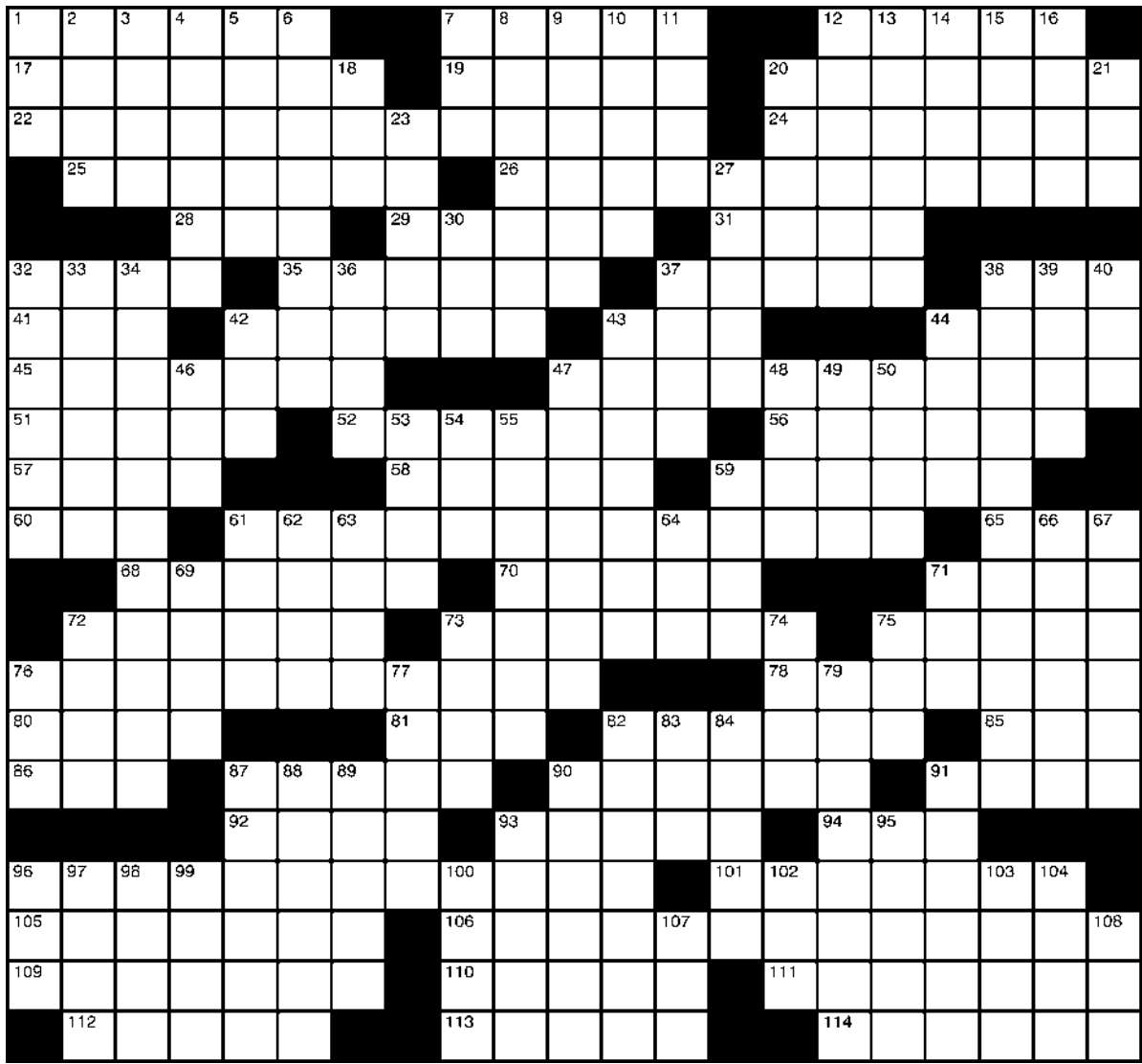
The number of arrivals from Poland spiked after they opted for a circuitous route.

Yet shop owners say the business these holidaymakers drum up barely covers the debts and state loans they took on to survive last summer.

"Last year was like a joke, but we thought it was just that one time, and that we would get over it," said leather shop owner Engin Erkan.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



©2020 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All rights reserved

ACROSS

- 1 Deadly
7 Send without stamps
12 Cowboy cry
17 Cause of Weakness
19 Small error
20 Ancient region of Asia Minor
22 It allows you the freedom to be scared
24 Operating independent of the main computer
25 Use up
26 Garment district load
28 Sushi serving
29 Reprimand
31 Middleweight champ, Tony ____
32 Kiddies' song starter
35 Habituates
37 Revealed everything
38 Fido's foot
41 To and ____
42 Some drums
43 Spoil
44 Icicle holder
45 Rock group staff
47 Fisherman's

purchase

- 51 No votes
52 Referential words
56 Human resources personnel
57 Alligator logo-brand
58 Biblical verb after pride
59 Ranier's realm
60 OED entry
61 Competition that's for the birds
65 Not agin
68 "The ____ Queen": Spenser
70 Singer Tucker
71 '70s do
72 "The ____ the Wild"
73 Farrell and Ford
75 Sea of Japan port
76 Autumnal equinox
78 She-devil
80 Spherical beginning
81 Ending for acid
82 Kind of solution
85 Log entry
86 Roman tens
87 Reunion attendees
90 Early Mitsubishi model
91 D-Day landers
92 Actress Kadrova
93 With modesty
94 ____ Jima

- 96 Snowy country
101 Stargazers' instruments
105 Flatterer
106 Metropolis with many airports
109 Without pretensions
110 ____ maid
111 Young hare
112 Busy bees
113 Notched, as a leaf
114 Blood components
DOWN
1 Test site
2 Author Bagnold
3 Story
4 Gave a hand
5 Soap substitute
6 Safety device
7 Connecticut collegian
8 Chatterers
9 Plant pests
10 Cordage fiber
11 ____ majesté
12 Hem and haw
13 Nobel or Noyes
14 Sign of a saint
15 Ear-related
16 Porker plaint
18 Fore opposite
20 Succeed
21 JFK's UN ambassador
23 Happen

- periodically
27 ____ Mountains of Missouri
30 Charlemagne's realm: abbr.
32 Chicken?
33 Third place
34 Agricultural ap-parel
36 Political cartoonist
37 Famed family of music
38 Janus feature
39 Ways to go: abbr.
40 Director Craven
42 Family nickname
43 Political organization
44 Part of GE
46 Accomplished
47 Unexpected danger
48 Worrier's words
49 Dandy's complement
50 Italian brothers
53 S shaped molding
54 Court
55 With some weight behind it
59 Thom, the shoe man
61 Moolah
62 Buck addition?
63 Annoy
64 Bill, the science

- guy
66 Wandering
67 Ways to go
69 ____-ran: loser
71 Peach State cap.
72 Give a ticket
73 Grub
74 Leg part
75 "____ Miss"
76 Copier cousin
77 Big exam
79 Authorizes
82 Agrees to
83 Totality
84 ____ the land
87 Deal maker
88 Full-term inmates
89 Actress Woodard
90 Blighted area
91 Maxi compared with mini
93 Vail visitor in winter
95 Exempt from
96 CD predecessors
97 Waterless
98 One billionth: comb. form
99 Rolled cubes
100 Summit
102 Grey Cup org.
103 Traffic sign word
104 Pipe part
107 Pay dirt
108 Religious abbrs.

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You've got everything you need to start the week off strong. The moon parades through Capricorn, fixing your focus on career concerns. Luna spends the day in a well-supported connection with energetic Mars and inspired Neptune, adding a steady flow of drive and creative vision. New developments in your friend groups are likely too, as retrograde Mercury merges with the sun.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Love has been a loaded topic in your world. Relationships have been your central focus and will continue to be in the weeks ahead. Today's skies feature the conjunction of Mercury and the sun, prompting dialogues and revelations concerning partnership matters. The Capricorn moon aligns with Mars and Neptune, offering a highly productive energy to take advantage of.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Monday's skies set you up for success. The moon marches through Capricorn, pointing your attention towards your skills and resources and helping you find new ways to utilise them. Luna's connection with Mars and Neptune helps you plough ahead with your workload. Mercury merges with the sun, bringing important conversations or revelations to your doorstep.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Keep a close eye on the stories stirring on the career front. Mercury spends the day with the illuminating sun, bringing important insights or developments concerning your ambitions. The day itself is highly productive, as the moon ploughs through Capricorn and aligns with Mars and Neptune. Any activities that centre around your self-expression should do well!



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You're ruled by the messenger planet, Mercury. The past few weeks have seen Mercury dancing backwards through its retrograde phase, taking you for a spin in the process! Today's union of the illuminating sun and Mercury marks the halfway point of the retrograde journey, and delivers critical insights and developments concerning identity issues and career matters.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Today's cosmic landscape is brewing with important insights. Mercury forms a conjunction with the sun, bringing fresh revelations to your talent, potential, and resources. That aside, a productive day awaits, as the moon treks through your ambitious sign. Luna's supportive link to Mars and Neptune helps you prioritise your own needs and express yourself with ease.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Be on the lookout for breakthrough revelations. Your ruling planet, Mercury, has been trekking backwards through the zodiac in its retrograde phase. Today marks the halfway point of that journey, as Mercury merges with the sun. This union prompts important insights around your individuality and family past—and it particularly speaks to any misbeliefs you hold around those topics.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Lovers past and present have been clouding your atmosphere. Today's skies bring important developments to that arena, as Mercury merges with the sun. Important revelations around matters of the heart and creative projects are likely to emerge. The day itself is an active one, especially on the home front, as the Capricorn moon aligns with Mars and inspired Neptune.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Enjoy a day away from the noise. The moon floats through Capricorn, suggesting it's best to direct your focus toward restorative action. Luna's connection with Mars and Neptune gives you ample energy to expend. But try to prioritise activities that have little social involvement. Mercury spends the day alongside the sun too, bringing fresh insights to your individuality.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You're a nurturer. Despite the hard outer shell you display, you're just a big softy looking for closeness and comfort. This mission in your heart has been especially pressing as of late, and today's skies nudge that story forward. Retrograde Mercury merges with the enlightening sun this afternoon, prompting new developments or insights around your affections.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Sometimes we need to move back in time before we can move ahead. That concept of past and present feels especially important, as Mercury merges with the sun under today's skies. This union kicks up any unsettled dust around any family matters. Fortunately, the Capricorn moon aligns with Mars and Neptune all day, allowing for ease of direct conversation.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You're likely to feel torn between productive activity and reflective introspection. The moon floats through Capricorn, forming strong links to Mars and Neptune. This blend of energy allows you to go after your goals with ease, yet elsewhere, Mercury merges with the illuminating sun. This union prompts important revelations around relationships and family matters.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which scientist discovered the radioactive element radium?

- a. Isaac Newton
b. Albert Einstein
c. Benjamin Franklin
d. Marie Curie

2. When was barb wire patented?

- a. 1874
b. 1840
c. 1895
d. 1900

3. What did Galileo invent?

- a. Barometer
b. Pendulum clock
c. Microscope
d. Thermometer

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

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

BOGGLER

M	E	M	Y
W	O	A	R
O	A	P	E
N	A	B	R

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

DAUB	SWARM	OHARA	STAT
ABEL	BACAO	REBUS	PTIXIV
COLLEPORER	BRAMSTONER		
EYESORES	EMITTS	AIKI	TIDIO
BURNS	KLUTZ	TIME	
ABBOT	BILLA	VALENCIA	
LARK	CIAROLI	BAKER	AND
AYES	ELLEN	USED	APISO
MOT	JAMES	FIARMED	NITIER
OUTLIVED	LEAPS	STATE	
BONED	CORNY	MASAT	
SHUCK	PIWITT	ORTHURNA	
ROYAL	DIANES	AWYER	GRI
ROLL	TAOS	SABA	FOAL
TSE	DAMIEL	BARBER	ROTE
MERCULES	TOWAS	JONED	
LEITS	SCRAM	SITTY	
AWAITIS	AREAR	DOOBITUDE	
JAMESMAISON	EARLWEAVER		
ADEN	ADIOS	NATIVE	GEAR
RENT	NOTIRE	SINOIR	ELATS

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JUNE 27)

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

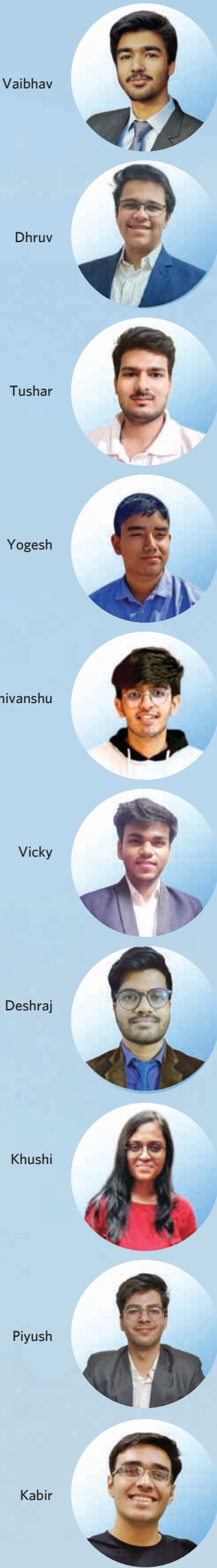


CanSat 2021

SPACE RACE

Former ISG student leads team to World Rank 2 in US satellite design competition

TEAM GAGAN



Hubert Vaz

Driven by an unflinching zeal to achieve heights of success from an early age, and powered by a youthful craving for deciphering software solutions, Dhruv Tewari, a former Indian School Ghubra student, has achieved success in CanSat 2021, a prestigious, annual student design-build-launch competition for space-related topics organised by the American Astronautical Society (AAS).

Co-Team leader of Team GAGAN, a 10-member group of bright minds from Netaji Subhas University of Technology, Delhi (India), which took part in the competition that is open to teams from universities and colleges from around the globe, Dhruv led them onto the path of success right from the initial rounds when they exhibited great promise in their project which ultimately secured World Rank 2 with a final score of 99.17%. (The first place of the competition went to another team from the same university in India).

Disclosing details of their participation, Dhruv explained that his team comprised the brightest young minds of his college with three freshmen, six sophomores, and one junior. The team was led by Vaibhav Sharma and himself, who together managed the team and ensured that everything was done meticulously.

Expressing gratitude to M P S Bhatia, the faculty advisor of the team for his support, guidance and faith in their capability right from the beginning, as well as to Pradeep Tripathi (Global Phone Technologies, Oman) for his generous support by sponsoring them, Dhruv said it was a great experience participating in a prestigious competition which is intended to teach space technology and let students take their first steps in space.

"These are worthwhile as they do give students the satisfaction of the end-to-end life cycle of a complex engineering project. It also calls for the utilisation of unique skills from different disciplines, which help to augment the multidisciplinary skills of the contestants," he said, adding that their task was to build a CanSat following the approved competition guide, and then compete with top teams short-listed from different countries around the world. The team had to virtually demonstrate the capability and credibility of their CanSat creation this year because of travel restrictions due to the pandemic.

'Team GAGAN' members (and their respective roles) included Vaibhav Sharma - Team Leader (Software Dept - Integration and multi-threading), Dhruv Tewari - Co-Team Leader (Software Dept - Real Time plotting, API management and data transmission cloud services), Tushar Yadav - Electronics Department (Electronics codes and component transmission Xbee setup), Vicky Jaiswal - Electronics Department (Electronics design for PCB and soldering and integration of components in the satellite), Shivanshu Mittal - Mechanical Department (CanSat designing and component selection), Yogesh Sharma - Mechanical Department (CanSat designing and component selection), Piyush Sehgal - Mechanical Department (CanSat designing and component selection), Deshraj - Software Department (GUI Development), Kabir Batra - Electronics Department (Electronics integration and soldering of PCB), and Khushi Singal - Software Department (Document design and CanSat flight flow).

Embrace the chaos

Dhruv Tewari, Co-Team Leader of Team GAGAN, who supervised work in all divisions of the competition, was entrusted the core task of software development - a crucial element for building a CanSat and maintaining all the communication and functionalities of the satellite using software. "The software created was called the Ground Control Station where all the operations and real time plotting of data from the CanSat would be visible on the Graphical User Interface we had created from scratch," he disclosed in an exclusive chat. Excerpts:

What was your contribution in this project?

I specifically made the real time plotting software that gathered data from the satellite and performed data interpolation and visualisation. My responsibility was to manage API related work that was used for getting the real time location of the satellite during its launch. The transmission of the data packets was managed through a cloud service and ensured that there was an establishment of a subscription based model.

As the Co-Team Leader, I had the responsibility of managing the team and ensuring that flow and continuity in work is maintained. I looked over the entire process and managed each activity by guiding the team and taking regular updates on the progress from all the departments. I also ensured that the team was on track as we had deadlines to meet. Managing that was crucial. During the pandemic when we were all in different locations and it was not easy to procure components required for the CanSat, it was quite a task to keep the spirit of the team high.

What was the conviction which all of you had while taking part?

We, as a team, had a strong belief and dedication to win the competition from the start. We were super excited about competing with the best minds in the world. We were not a perfect team, and led by two sophomores, but we were hard working and determined. As a team, we were certain of winning a rank in the competition. From the initial stages we were ranked 2 in the world which was quite motivating. We had put a lot of effort, and due to our clear understanding of the requirements of each round, we made sure that we fulfilled what was asked for and could show more to the judges. Our difference of marks with the first rank holders turned out just 0.01%.

Did you research what previous teams have done to come forth with something new?

The documents for the top 5 in the previous year are shown on the CanSat website and could be looked at for understanding how the previous years achievers had represented their work.

All the content and documents were made from scratch, so we did our own research on specific fields of engineering, such as which software development lifecycle would lead to a faster and better development process, or what payload release mechanism was best suited.

We did a lot of research on the topics and various systems that we could implement, and made sure that the best software could be implemented. We also made sure that we had understood our

system and why we had chosen it.

How would this outcome affect your future career prospects?

Achieving World Rank 2 in an International competition is an amazing feeling, the outcome of this would showcase my leadership and software development capabilities. My journey in the contest has opened my eyes to a much broader world of Research and Development. I have definitely developed an inclination towards research.

My latest achievement - International Organization of Software Developers (IOSD). Under the previous terms leadership, a group of developers from IOSD-NSUT (the largest tech society) team had created two major projects in NSUT, NESCL - a blogging platform - and NSUTx - a cross platform app - made by and for the students of NSUT, which facilitates access to information and latest college updates. I was personally involved as a developer in NSUTx - a daily app that provides the functionalities of the college portal on every iOS and android phone. The app has been a great success with more than 2000 downloads, a 4.4 rating on Google Play Store, and 4.7 on App Store.

The leadership of the last term showed faith in me and I have been elected as the President of International Organization of Software Developers - NSUT. This is the same society that I was a part of during the development phase of one of the projects. Now, I not only manage the two existing projects, but also we, as a team, have planned to solve more problems and are in the process of ideating the projects that are required in space, so as to ease the life of a user. In my professional career, I feel that my mindset of problem solving would be a great asset.

What is your ambition in life? What message do you have for grade 12 students in Oman?

My ambition is to learn and solve problems. I would like to explore more of software development and also learn about management and self growth. I feel that I tend to develop a passion for anything I put my mind into and work on. Research in space exploration and the power of machine learning to solve problems is something I would be keen on exploring.

My advice for 12th grade students is to enjoy each moment of your life with an ever increasing sense of wanting to grow and learn. Stay focused and everything shall fall in place at the right time. Opportunities are plenty if you are keen to learn and not just win. Take a plunge into the field of your choice and be prepared to work hard and not give up because of difficulties in your path.

I am lucky that my family stood by my dreams and gave me the choice to do what I wanted. That is extremely important - you should do what you want to and not just what everyone is doing. In the time we are in, everyone wants to become the best. With the population of the world increasing continuously and the chaos around us developing, the best way to move forward is to embrace the chaos.

'Thoughts become things. If you see it in your mind, you will hold it in your hand.' - Bob Proctor

This image shows a CanSat launch from the 2019 edition - For illustrative purpose only

Lewis blasts Windies to easy win over S Africa



Evin Lewis
71
35 BALLS

WEST INDIES VS S AFRICA FIRST T20I

St George's, Grenada - Evin Lewis led a rampaging assault by the West Indies as they made a mockery of a potentially tricky target of 161 in an eight-wicket victory with five overs to spare in the opening fixture of their five-match T20 series against South Africa on Saturday.

In a performance which emphasised the vast difference between international cricket's shortest format and the traditional game, Lewis tore into the same bowlers who dominated the Caribbean side in the just-concluded two-Test

series in St Lucia. He blazed 71 off just 35 deliveries with seven sixes and four fours decorating a pyrotechnic innings. He and opening partner Andre Fletcher set about the South African bowlers with such gusto that they raced to 85 before the end of the seventh over when Fletcher was run out at the non-striker's end for 30 off 19 balls.

Lewis looked on course for a hundred before he miscued another attempted big hit and was caught at long-off by David Miller off wrist-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi. It left two other celebrated power-hitters, Chris Gayle and Andre Russell to finish

the job, Russell appropriately finishing the match with a six over midwicket.

In all the West Indies tallied 15 sixes and nine fours (126 runs) in their innings.

"I always like batting on this pitch because the ball comes on nicely and you can play your shots," said Lewis in reflecting on his spectacular knock.

"I was thinking a bit about the hundred but I decided to keep playing my shots because the most important thing for us was to get on that winning track."

Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi and Anrich Norje, the three pacers who tormented the West

Indies in the Tests, bowled a combined eight wicketless overs in conceding 88 runs.

Rassie van der Dussen picked up from where he left off in the Test series with an unbeaten half-century to lift South Africa to what looked at the time to be a competitive total of 160 for six batting first.

Fresh from a vital innings of 75 which set up the Proteas to complete a clean sweep of the Test series, the tall right-hander steadied his team's innings.

He then provided the late impetus in getting to an unbeaten 56 off 38 balls with four fours and two sixes after

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA		
R Hendricks	b Allen	17 (11)
Q de Kock	c Holder b Russell	37 (24)
T Bavuma	c Lewis b Allen	22 (20)
R van der Dussen	not out	56 (38)
H Klaassen	c Allen b Holder	7 (12)
D Miller	c Pollard b Bravo	9 (11)
G Linde	c Sinclair b Bravo	0 (1)
K Rabada	not out	6 (3)
Extras:	(b 1, lb 2, w 3)	6
TOTAL: 160 for six in 20 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-61, 3-95, 4-112, 5-140, 6-140		
Bowling: K Sinclair 2-0-21-0, J Holder 3-0-29-1, F Allen 4-0-18-2, A Russell 3-0-29-1, O McCoy 4-0-30-0, D Bravo 4-0-30-2		
WEST INDIES		
A Fletcher	run out	30 (19)
E Lewis	c Miller b Shamsi	71 (35)
C Gayle	not out	32 (24)
A Russell	not out	23 (12)
Extras:	(lb 1, w 4)	5
TOTAL: 161 for two in 15 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-85, 2-124		
Bowling: G Linde 2-0-24-0, K Rabada 3-0-32-0, A Nortje 2-0-10-0, L Ngidi 3-0-46-0, T Shamsi 4-0-27-1, R Hendricks 1-0-21-0		

they were put in to bat. Quinton de Kock, man of the series in the Test matches, got his team off to a flying start before his demise for 37 to the bowling of Russell left the innings sputtering in the middle overs.

However van der Dussen's experience proved invaluable with wickets falling around him as he was able to manufacture important boundary hits against an experienced and varied West Indies bowling attack.

Left-arm spinner Fabian Allen finished with the best figures of two for 18 while senior player Dwayne Bravo also picked up two wickets, including Miller who was appearing in his 82nd T20I, the most by a South African.

AFF



Ogier secures Safari success in Kenya

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Nairobi, Kenya - Sebastien Ogier extended his lead at the head of the World Rally Championship (WRC) title race with victory in the Safari Rally in Kenya on Sunday.

Ogier benefitted from the early retirement of overnight leader Thierry Neuville who broke his right rear shock absorber when he hit a rock during the day's first special stage. Frenchman Ogier came home 21.8 seconds ahead of his Toyota teammate Takamoto Katsuta with the Estonian Ott Tanak third in his Hyundai.

It is Ogier's 53rd career victory and his fourth this season, putting the Frenchman in control of his quest to collect an eighth title. He now has a 34-point lead over Welshman Elfyn Evans with Neuville third, 56 points behind Ogier, who had to claw his way back from seventh after suffering suspension troubles on Friday.

"This rally was an incredible experience," said a delighted Ogier on the podium at the end of the first WRC rally in Kenya for 19 years.

"After our troubles on Friday, we had a really good

weekend, really good pace. We received extraordinary support from the people.

"This rally may be shorter than in the past, it's still a very big challenge and we liked it."

Neuville, who held a 57-second lead overnight over Takamoto Katsuta, also in a Toyota, arrived at the end of the first stage with a severely damaged right rear suspension, having lost one minute over 11 kilometres.

"It's heartbreaking to end the WE (weekend) like this," said Neuville on Twitter.

"We had to retire after our suspension broke in SS14 this morning. This is how it is but I feel sad for us & the team.

"I think we all did the job and everybody is working very hard. There's no one to blame and we will continue to push."

Tanak is 67 points behind Ogier in fourth place in the title race but kept his hopes alive with victory in the final Power Stage finale which gave him five bonus points and ensured he left Nairobi with 20 points in the bag. He will be the home favourite in the next seventh round of the WRC which takes place in Estonia from July 15-18.

AFF

CLASSIFIEDS

AL AZOON UNITED PROJECTS
FOR ALL TYPE OF MAINTENANCE
PAINTING WALL PAPER, WALL DESIGN,
ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING TAIL FIXING,
SAILING, A/C REPAIRING, DECOR.
CONTACT: AMIR ALI 96609857
www.alazonunited.com



WJ Towell Group Company

**Quality car rentals
at competitive prices.**

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



ASHIRADHYAN THAKKATU MOOSE
VAIDYARATNAM
USHADHASALA
"The cradle of ayurveda"

عيادة فصول السنة للطب الهندي التقليدي
ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC
Authorized Dealer - وكيل معتمد

**For Genuine Ayurvedic
Treatment & Medicine, Yoga,
Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc...
Rehabilitation, Beauty therapy
& Post Delivery care**

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A,
Al Khuwair service road, near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

**SPECIAL
SUBSCRIPTION
OFFER**



Toll free no: 80076000
E-mail: customercare@apexmedia.co.om

an **apex** media **منشور** PUBLICATION **الإعلام**

www.apexmedia.co.om

FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories:
Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)

Please email your listing to
dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om
or call 99104346

EDUCATION FURNITURE

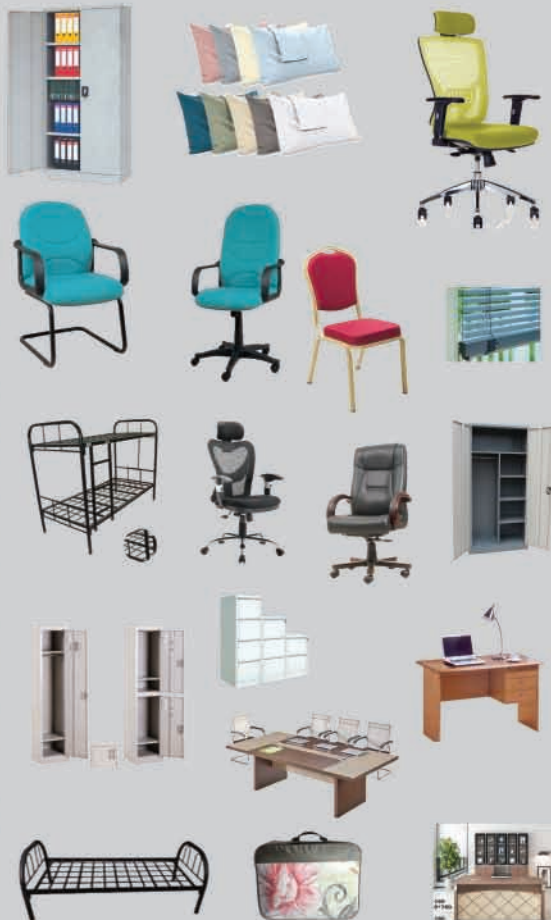


uniQue
CITY TRADING

OUTDOOR SHADES



LABOUR CAMP FURNITURE



Contact: 9611 5353 / 9611 5252 Email: mybusinessoman@gmail.com



EURO2020



Czechmate for Dutch

Czech Republic upset ten-man Netherlands to set up quarterfinal tie against Denmark

Budapest, Hungary - The Czech Republic reached the Euro 2020 quarterfinals on Sunday after shocking ten-man Netherlands 2-0 in their last-16 tie in Budapest thanks to second-half strikes by Tomas Holes and Patrik Schick.

A header by Holes and clinical finish by Schick came after Matthijs de Ligt was sent off in the 55th minute, securing the efficient Czechs a deserved berth in the last-eight against Denmark in Baku, Azerbaijan, on July 3.



Patrik Schick of Czech Republic

Having emerged as Group C winners with a 100 per cent record after playing all three of their games in Amsterdam, Frank de Boer's fancied Netherlands were on the road for the first time in the tournament. Roared on by boisterous ranks of orange-clad fans in a packed Puskas Arena, it was the livelier Dutch who dominated the opening exchanges.

On eight minutes a floated cross by Danny Blind evaded Tomas Vaclik in the Czech goal but De Ligt's header across the goalmouth was sliced well wide by Memphis Depay.

Then Denzel Dumfries, raiding on both wings, was released on the left soon after but, with Vaclik again flailing, couldn't direct his header into the open goal.

But after soaking up the early pressure Jaroslav Silhavy's well-organised side, began posing threats of their own with a series of dangerous counter-attacks.

Tomas Soucek, who took over the captain's armband from the injured Vladimir Darida, glanced a dangerous header just wide



Czech Republic's players celebrate after winning their round-of-16 match against the Netherlands at Puskas Arena in Budapest on Sunday (AFP)

ROUND-OF-16	
NETHERLANDS	0
CZECH REPUBLIC	2

at full stretch midway through the period.

Early in the second period the advantage swung decisively the Czechs way when De Ligt was sent off by the Russian referee Sergei Karasev after a VAR review.

Bayer Leverkusen striker Schick, scorer of all three Czech goals in the group stage, put De Ligt under pressure, prompting the Juventus defender to blatantly knock the ball away with his hand to deny a goalscoring opportunity.

Midway through the half, with the Czechs scenting blood, Pavel Kaderabek should have got the opener while in space in the area but

saw his shot blocked. Then 68 minutes in a curled free-kick from the right by Barak was headed across goal by Tomas Kalas to the unmarked Holes who had time to place his header.

Ten minutes from the end Schick sealed the win with his fourth goal of Euro 2020, slotting home with his left foot at the near post after Holes pounced on a loose ball and laid on a clever cut-back. In truth, a man down, the hapless Dutch never looked like catching the Czechs who were comfortable at the end, chalking up their fourth straight win over the Oranje in front of jubilant fans.

AFP

More fans allowed to attend at Bucharest arena

Bucharest, Romania - France and Switzerland will play their Euro 2020 last-16 clash in front of up to 25,000 people at the National Arena in Bucharest, Romania, UEFA said on Saturday, doubling the previously announced attendance.

"We can confirm that the National Arena Bucharest capacity was increased to around 50 percent. The available capacity will be approximately 25,000," UEFA confirmed in a statement ahead of Monday's match. European football's governing body added that the additional seats made available were sold 'only to fully vaccinated people'. The permitted crowd at the stadium for the tournament had previously been set at 25 percent of the venue's capacity.

AFP

Rejuvenated Spain face Croatia test



Spain's players attend a training session ahead of their round-of-16 match against Croatia on Monday (AFP)

Copenhagen, Denmark -The good news for Spain came all at once, their five-goal rout of Slovakia on Wednesday steering them clear of an early exit and restoring hope they could even win Euro 2020.

Luis Enrique said he would have taken any position in Group E as long as Spain got through and yet from desperation came elation, a goal-fest in Seville transforming expectations after a whirlwind 60 minutes. 'Just like that', came *Marca's* headline on Thursday, while AS's front cover read: 'Permission to believe'.

Whether optimism proves brief or longer-lasting will depend on the outcome on Monday against Croatia, the World Cup finalists who appear to be growing into this event themselves.

Croatia also qualified in second place and will certainly offer a sterner examination than Slovakia, who put up surely the worst performance of any team in all 36 matches of the group stage.

They might have profited from Spain's goal-scoring angst had the floodgates not been so generously opened by their own goal-

keeper Martin Dubravka.

After Alvaro Morata's missed penalty, Dubravka flapping the ball into his own net was the perfect way to calm Spanish nerves and why doubts still linger around Spain being able to navigate tougher tests to come.

Their route to the final could be perilous. France are a potential foe in the quarterfinals and perhaps Italy, Belgium or Portugal in the semis.

Croatia may be a class below any of those but still a class above what Spain have faced so far, with their mid-

field of Luka Modric, Marcelo Brozovic and Mateo Kovacic possessing the guile to dominate the very best.

But Spain do have a spring in their step again, no matter how fortuitously they found it, and a victory in Copenhagen on Monday would give them genuine momentum too.

It would represent the country's first quarterfinal at a major tournament since they were last Euro champions in 2012. 'It's obviously a relief, not only for me, but what it means when you keep insisting on the same

football ideas and you see you can get results with them," said Luis Enrique.

"The result comes at the best moment and it prepares us for what is to come."

Croatia lose Perisic

Croatia will be without Ivan Perisic against Spain after the Inter Milan winger tested positive for coronavirus on Saturday. Perisic has scored twice in three matches at the tournament to help drag the 2018 World Cup finalists into the knockout stages after a slow start.

However, his tournament looks to be over as he must isolate for ten days and would therefore miss the quarterfinals and semifinals should Croatia make it that far.

The rest of the Croatian squad and backroom staff have tested negative.

Along with captain Luka Modric, Perisic is one of Croatia's key men and heroes of their run to the World Cup final three years ago. His two goals at Euro 2020 took the 32 year old's tally at major international tournaments to nine.

AFP

TODAY'S MATCHES

(ROUND-OF-16)



CROATIA VS SPAIN
(8pm, Oman time)



FRANCE VS SWITZERLAND
(11pm, Oman time)





EURO2020



Super subs strike as Italy get past battling Austria



Italy's Matteo Pessina (2L) scores during extra-time against Austria at Wembley Stadium in London on Saturday (AFP)

London, UK - Substitutes Federico Chiesa and Matteo Pessina struck in extra-time as Italy beat battling Austria 2-1 to reach the quarterfinals of Euro 2020 at Wembley on Saturday.

The two teams were locked at 0-0 after 90 minutes in London, with Italy enjoying the better of the first half and Austria coming back strongly in the second period.

But Chiesa made the crucial breakthrough early in extra-time and another goal from Pessina set up a quarterfinal match against the winners of Sunday's tie between Belgium and holders



Portugal, despite late drama.

"We knew we had to suffer because Austria are the typical side who do not allow (you) to play well," said Italy boss Roberto Mancini. "The substitutes made the difference for us, but everybody

gave their best tonight. I'm happy because the lads gave everything to win even when we were tired."

Having emerged as Group A winners with a 100 per cent record after playing all three of their games in Rome, Italy were on the road for the first time in the tournament.

Mancini made seven changes from the side that beat Wales as Marco Verratti started instead of Manuel Locatelli in midfield, while Giorgio Chiellini again missed out with a hamstring injury.

After belting out a rousing rendition of their national anthem

with ample backing from the largely Italian crowd, the Azzurri made a lively start.

Leonardo Spinazzola's buccaneering bursts from left-back were a constant threat and he had Italy's first sight of goal with a blast wide from an acute angle.

Nicolo Barella's low volley from Spinazzola's cross forced Daniel Bachmann to save with his legs.

Ciro Immobile was inches away from putting Italy ahead when the Lazio forward whipped an audacious 20-yard strike against the woodwork with Bachmann rooted to the spot.

We deserved to be in quarters, says Mancini

London, UK - Roberto Mancini said that his Italy team deserved to be in the quarterfinals of Euro 2020 despite struggling to beat battling Austria at Wembley.

"We got the result because we deserved it. In the first half we could have scored a couple of goals and then after the break we dropped off physically," Mancini told Italy's public broadcaster RAI. "We won thanks to the players who came on with the right mindset and resolved the situation. "I knew it would be hard, maybe even more so than in the quarterfinals."

The win means that Mancini has guided Italy to 31 matches unbeaten, breaking a record that had been established by Vittorio Pozzo in the 1930s.

AFP



VAR denies Austria

Marko Arnautovic thought he had given Austria a shock lead in the 65th minute when he nodded home from David Alaba's header, but the former West Ham striker was ruled to be marginally offside after a lengthy VAR review.

Substitute Locatelli fluffed his chipped effort and Domenico Berardi sent a bicycle kick well over as Italy's frustration mounted.

The sides were locked at 0-0 at the end of normal time but it did not take long for Italy to make their mark in extra-time. The impressive Spinazzola crossed from the left and Chiesa controlled the ball and rifled home with his left foot five minutes into the extra half-hour.

"It's never too late to come on from the bench," said Chiesa after

the match. "The credit goes to the coach because everyone is always ready, we're a squad of 26 starters."

Italy effectively ended the tie ten minutes later when Francesco Acerbi shepherded the ball to Pessina, who finished superbly before racing towards the corner flag and throwing himself on the turf.

But there was still time for late drama when Austria's Sasa Kaladzic stooped to head the ball in at the near post from a corner with a little over five minutes to go.

That was the first goal Italy had conceded since October 2020, ending a run of 1,168 minutes without conceding. Italy that failed even to qualify for the 2018 World Cup will now fancy their chances of going all the way.

AFP

Bale proud of Wales 'kicking and screaming'

Amsterdam, Netherlands - Wales captain Gareth Bale said he was still proud of his side after a 4-0 thrashing by Denmark in the last-16 of Euro 2020, but refused to answer questions over his future.

Bale, whose one-year loan spell at Tottenham Hotspur from Real Madrid has come to an end, said after the English Premier League season finished he would reveal his plans for the future at the end of the European Championship - otherwise it would cause 'chaos'.

That sparked rumours the 31 year old could retire. When asked if he had played his last game for his country, Bale stormed off from an interview with the BBC without replying.

"The boys are frustrated and angry, but I'd rather we go out like that kicking and screaming than laying off and doing nothing," said Bale, who himself was booked for sarcastically applauding the referee.

"We've missed an opportunity but one thing we can't fault is the effort the boys showed. I'm still so proud of them."

Asked what he thought of Bale's reaction to being asked about his future, Wales coach Page defended his skipper. "To me it was an insensitive question and he has done the right thing walking away," Page said.



We've missed an opportunity but one thing we can't fault is the effort the boys showed

GARETH BALE, WALES CAPTAIN

"Like any other player in the changing room he is disappointed but it is about the group and moving forward now," added Page, who became coach in the run-up to the

tournament after Ryan Giggs was arrested on assault charges.

"Right now the players are disappointed of course but tomorrow, before we travel home, they will realise what they have achieved.

"Nobody wants to go out like that but we are not going to lick our wounds for too long - we will be better for going through this experience."

Wales will revert their attention to the 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign in September but they are in a tough group alongside Belgium and the Czech Republic.

AFP

AIR CONDITIONERS

BEST COOLING
BEST ENERGY EFFICIENCY!

ROTARY SERIES - BSTS18CNE2 | BSTS24CNE2

RECIPROCATING SERIES
BSTS18GPE2 | BSTS24GPE2 | BSTS30GPE2

R-410A REFRIGERANT

4 way swing
Better Air Flow

6 in 1 Filter
Healthy Air

Low Noise
Peaceful Sleep

Gold Fin
Anti Rust

HEAVY DUTY
COMPRESSOR

Genetco
50 YEARS OF SUCCESS

MUSCAT
97693496, 96742452
Available at
Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

SALALAH
79011363



Fabio Quartararo celebrates after winning the race on Sunday (AFP)

Quartararo extends overall lead with 'tough' triumph

DUTCH MOTOGP

Assen, Netherlands - Fabio Quartararo battled through fresh problems with his right arm to win Sunday's Dutch MotoGP and stretch his lead at the top of the world championship with a dominant display in Assen.

The Frenchman led a Yamaha one-two as Maverick Vinales, who started on pole, finished second. Reigning champion Joan Mir completed the podium on his Suzuki.

"Really tough race. I struggled a little bit over the weekend with my right arm. I was feeling really bad," said Quartararo, who underwent surgery in May after an issue with his right arm cost him possible victory at the Spanish Grand Prix. "To be honest, I was a little scared."

In the last race before the mid-season break, Quartararo, 22, won for the fourth time in this campaign and extended his advantage over compatriot Johann Zarco to

34 points with Italian Francesco Bagnaia 13 points further back. Zarco was fourth on Sunday on his Ducati Pramac with Bagnaia sixth on his factory Ducati.

Yamaha's Vinales started in pole after setting a track record during Saturday's qualifying but his teammate Quartararo dominated the race. "I really want to leave this part of the season behind me," Vinales said.

Earlier, *Motorsport.com* reported Vinales and Yamaha were looking to terminate their contract because their relationship has soured. Vinales is reportedly considering joining Aprilia next season. Seven-time champion Valentino Rossi failed to finish after falling off his bike with seven laps to go. Marc Marquez finished seventh after starting 20th on the grid.

The next event of the season is the Styrian MotoGP on August 8. AFP

VERSTAPPEN WINS

Dutchman extends title lead with victory at Styrian Grand Prix

FORMULA ONE

STYRIAN GRAND PRIX

Spielberg, Austria - Max Verstappen tightened his grip on the Formula One driver standings as he cruised to victory in the Styrian Grand Prix on Sunday with his closest challenger Lewis Hamilton a distant second.

The Dutchman started from pole in his Red Bull and led throughout to finish more than 35 seconds head of British reigning champion Hamilton in his Mercedes. Finn Valtteri Bottas was third for Mercedes, chased home by the second Red Bull of Mexican Sergio Perez.

Verstappen led from start to finish for the third time this season as he increased his lead over Hamilton to 18 points while Red Bull, sponsored by an Austrian company, increased their lead in the constructor's championship.

"Unbelievable. The car was on fire," Verstappen on team radio at the finish. "Another win at home feels really good."

"It's looking really good," he said after climbing out of his car. "We just have to keep pushing really hard and I'm confident we can do a really good job again."

Hamilton spent much of the race expressing frustration on his inability to cut into Verstappen's lead as once again Mercedes was not quite as quick as Red Bull, although he did pick up a bonus point for the fastest lap time.

"It was a bit of a lonely race really," Hamilton said. "I was trying to keep up with those guys but, the speed they have - they've obviously made some big improvements. Impossible to keep up."

"They continue to keep pulling



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates with the trophy on the podium in Spielberg, Austria, on Sunday (AFP)

We just have to keep pushing really hard and I'm confident we can do a really good job again

MAX VERSTAPPEN



just got to keep pushing."

Briton Lando Norris was fifth for McLaren.

Carlos Sainz was sixth for Ferrari. Monegasque Charles Leclerc clawed his way through the field after having to pit after wrecking his Ferrari car in a lap-one crash to finish seventh.

This season has been marked by a series of gripping races and ultra-tight battles between Verstappen and Hamilton, but this was race was notable for his lack of excitement.

There was entertainment provided by Leclerc, though, as the Ferrari driver fought back up to seventh place after damaging his front wing and dropping to last on the first lap with a superb attacking drive in which he several times flirted with the limits while passing rivals.

Lance Stroll's Aston Martin finished eighth while Alpine's Fernando Alonso and Alpha Tauri's Yuki Tsunoda completed the top-ten.

Results [Top-ten]: 1 Max Verstappen (1:22:18.925), 2 Lewis Hamilton (+35.743), 3 Valtteri Bottas (+46.907), 4 Sergio Perez (+47.434), 5 Lando Norris (+1 lap), 6 Carlos Sainz Jr (+1 lap), 7 Charles Leclerc (+1 lap), 8 Lance Stroll (+1 lap), 9 Fernando Alonso (+1 lap), 10 Yuki Tsunoda (+1 lap).

Drivers standings [Top-five]: 1 Verstappen (156 points), 2 Hamilton (138), 3 Perez (96), 4 Norris (86), 5 Bottas (74). AFP

ONLY
PURE
WATER
AND
PERFECT
TASTE



ONLY
WHAT'S
ESSENTIAL



Van der Poel claims stage two

TOUR DE FRANCE

Mûr-de-Bretagne, France - Mathieu Van der Poel won stage two of the 108th edition of the Tour de France on Sunday to claim the overall leader's yellow jersey and strike a blow for his famous cycling family.

The Dutch 25 year old is the grandson of French cycling icon, the late Raymond Poulidor who was a regular on the Tour de France podium and beloved of French fans despite never wearing the fabled yellow jersey.

On his first Tour de France, Van der Poel dropped to the tarmac gasping for breath before weeping with his hands covering his face as the weight of Poulidor's historic legacy was settled on two dramatic ascents of the same Brittany hill, the Mur-de-Bretagne.

"Imagine how he'd feel, he's not here," said van der Poel of Poulidor who died in 2019 at the age of 83. "This was my last chance on the Tour to do it, it's so good."

French fans saw their own hero Julian Alaphilippe lose the yellow jersey, but cheered the Dutchman. Van der Poel won a



Stage two winner Team Alpecin Fenix' Mathieu van der Poel of Netherlands celebrates as he crosses the finish line on Sunday (AFP)

maximum of 18 bonus seconds for crossing the summit in the lead twice, and then winning by a clear margin after accelerating away from a chasing clutch of elite road racers.

Defending champion Tadej Pogacar was second followed by Primož Roglic, while Alaphilippe

was fifth at eight seconds.

Stage two passed off in relative calm after two spectacular falls on stage one sparked a police investigation into the roadside spectator that caused a heart-stopping domino-effect pile up.

AFP

Serena joins Nadal in skipping Olympics

London, UK - Serena Williams said on Sunday that she will not compete at the Tokyo Olympics next month, joining fellow Grand Slam legend Rafael Nadal in withdrawing from the Games.

The 39 year old American revealed her decision at her pre-Wimbledon press conference. "I'm actually not on the Olympic list, so... Not that I'm aware of. If so, then I shouldn't be on it," she said.

She refused to divulge the reasons for her decision. However, a ban on foreign fans as well as family members at the Olympics would have meant Serena being separated from her daughter Alexis Olympia. The Olympics have already been delayed by a year and organisers have been forced to introduce strict measures to fight COVID-19.

"There's a lot of reasons that I made my Olympic decision," she said. "I don't feel like going into them today. Maybe another day. Sorry."

Serena is the joint most successful Olympian in tennis history in terms of gold medals



Serena Williams

alongside sister Venus having won one gold medal each in singles and three in doubles.

"I have not thought about it (missing the Games)," said Serena, who plays world No 100 Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus in the first round at Wimbledon.

Nadal announced earlier this month he would be missing Wimbledon and the Olympics so as to look after his body and prolong his career. His great rivals Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic have yet to decide whether they will go to Tokyo.

AFP

Every day, all day!

