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INSIGNE STUNNER SENDS ITALY INTO SEMIFINAL CLASH WITH SPAIN



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NEW AGRO MARKETING FIRM TO SET UP 80 OUTLETS IN OMAN



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TRANSFORMING OLD HOUSES INTO MUSEUMS



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO JOE BIDEN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Joe Biden of the United States of America, on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Biden and the friendly American people further progress and prosperity wishing Oman-US friendship relations more progress and development. — ONA

TEHRAN

IAEA DEPUTY HEAD ON 'ROUTINE' IRAN VISIT

The deputy head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog IAEA is to visit Iran for "routine" matters and no talks are planned, Iran's envoy said on Saturday according to state media, as the agency awaits a reply from Tehran on an expired monitoring deal. In late June, the International Atomic Energy Agency demanded an immediate response from Iran on whether it would extend a monitoring agreement that had expired. Iran said last week it was yet to decide whether to extend the deal.

READ IN

OPINION

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INSIDE



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MILITARY TO EVACUATE CANADA'S TOWNS | P8

Oman-Saudi road link project in final phase

RIYADH: His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Sultanate's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, affirmed that the Omani-Saudi relations are firm fraternal relations distinguished by several joint links and mutual respect.

In comments to Oman New Agency (ONA), HH Sayyid Faisal said the distinctive relationship between the two brotherly countries are evidently

reflected on various public and commercial levels thus fostering the cultural, social and economic relations.

The ambassador noted that Oman's Vision 2040 and the Saudi Vision 2030 have many shared programmes in addition to the exchange of expertise between the two countries taking into considerations the peculiarity of each country. He added that the economic system of the GCC countries are

generally similar and the GCC governments are striving to realise economic integration.

Commenting on the Saudi investments in the Sultanate, the ambassador said that the reliance lies on the business sector in both the countries to raise the level of trade exchange, indicating "the desire of the brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to further enhance

investments in the Sultanate" in light of the amendments and improvements issued by the Sultanate, both at the level of structuring the state's administrative apparatus or at the level of legislation and improvement of the business environment in addition to great facilities to support and stimulate the national economy.

Speaking about the road linking the Sultanate to Saudi Arabia, the

ambassador said that the project is in its final phases, expressing the hope that the road will be opened during the upcoming period, explaining that the authorities concerned in both countries are making great efforts in this regard.

HH Sayyid Faisal spoke of the continuous attempts for convergence of views between the parties with regard to the Yemeni issue. — ONA



AN ICONIC VILLAGE HIDDEN IN NIZWA

Who believes that a civilised city like Nizwa would have a hidden ancient village in its depths, featuring a comprehensive town which mixes the past with the present. No doubt, it is the Omani's concern to preserve their legacy and that is hugely noticed in their persistence at reconstructing old villages in the Sultanate. The village of Al Suwara is an ancient village where houses were built with mud and stone, and ancient heritage was mixed with modernity to make it a wonderful tourist village. This village is in Jabal Al Akhdhar, 176 km away from Muscat can be reached by a four-wheel vehicle. **DETAILS ON P20**

VACCINATION FOR 18 AND ABOVE BEGINS

OVER MILLION VACCINATED IN SULTANATE

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The national mass immunisation drive in the Sultanate will enter the new phase from Sunday as it includes youngsters (above 18) in the target group.

The new target group gains significance as the new variants have been affecting even the younger people, including children.

The Ministry of Health has urged people in the target group aged 18 and above to pre-book before going to the approved government centre for immunisation in the various governorates.

The national immunisation campaign has covered more than 900,000 people, according to ministry as of Thursday.

While according to an international tracker, 1,064,000 people have been vaccinated in the country till date, at the rate of 21 per 100.

Around 17 per cent of the population have received the first dose, while 4.3 per cent have received the second dose of vaccine.

The country aims to cover 30 per cent of the total population by the end of this month.

The timings at Oman Convention



and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) are from 8 am to 6 pm during weekdays and 9 am to 4 pm on weekends.

"Book your appointment through Tarassud+ app or <http://covid19.moh.gov.om>. You will receive an SMS with your appointment confirmation and a barcode to show when you arrive at the centre", the ministry has said.

The target groups have been urged to visit vaccine centres only after registration to avoid crowding at the venues.

TURN TO P2

Avoid events and gatherings

Authorities have categorically said there's a strict 'no' for inter-family gatherings at public places including farms and other places and strict action will be taken against the offenders. **REPORT ON P2**

Elderly people live lonely life as young look to careers

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyp

As youngsters look to build their careers and independent lives, there are less of them who find time to look after their ageing family members.

Despite a law that stipulates stringent punishments in Oman, several elderly persons are being forced to live a lonely life, in some cases being abandoned by their children, as an unfortunate impact of rapid urbanisation.

"Many youngsters have wildly varying relationships with their parents, and different feelings about

taking care of them. Whatever the personal histories, they have an ethical responsibility to make sure that their loved ones are safe, secure and getting the attention they need", asserts Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Senior Consultant, Old Age Psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

The children's preoccupation with work makes them feel neglected by the family members.

The demographic transition combined with a steady improvement in life expectancy is resulting in an increasingly ageing population.

The number of Omanis aged 65 and above is estimated to reach 75,000 by 2025, many of them will be unable to look after themselves

The number of Omanis aged 65 and above is estimated to reach 75,000 by 2025, many of them will be unable to look after themselves due to ailing

physical and mental health.

Data from the annual statistical book issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) shows that the average life expectancy rate of the total population stood at 78.2 by December 2019 up from 78.1 the previous year. And the Omani population aged 65 years and above was at level of 2.5 per cent in 2020, up from 2.4 per cent in the previous year.

This is expected to reach 10 per cent by 2025 and 20 per cent by the 2050. Compared to high-income countries, developing countries, including

Oman, have less time to adjust to the consequences of an ageing population. Many of whom will be unable to look after themselves due to ailing physical and mental health.

According to Dr Sinawi, leaving elderly parents uncared or abandoned is a common phenomenon reported in many societies where grown-up children, especially when reaching puberty becomes more rebellious towards their parents and insist on doing things their way, regardless, of advice and concerns expressed by their parents. **TURN TO P2**

Avoid events, gatherings to slow the spread

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The authorities have categorically warned against any inter-familial gatherings at public places, including farms and others. It will amount to strict action against the offenders.

The statement came following an ROP search operation of places where people gathered illegally, and many expatriates were arrested for not following the Covid-19 norms.

“There shouldn’t be gathering of any sort at any public place as a precaution against the pandemic. Those who violate will have to face legal actions,” a senior official from the ROP told the *Observer*.

The Supreme Committee on Covid-19 has barred all sorts of events, gatherings, and holding of any get-together at public places.

Some people used some private farms instead of hotels, beaches and parks, and other places, to do the gatherings. On June 20, the appellate body of Covid-19 issued a total ban on

such gatherings, events and get-togethers.

The set of punishments for illegal gatherings shall be arrest, fine on individuals, corporate (s), name and shame, imprisonment and deportation, as the case may be.

Legal actions would be initiated against the person(s) involved in such gatherings and will be considered as an action against the national initiatives against the pandemic.

Additionally, one should continue to take other precautions against the community spread of the virus.

“These measures include, as most of us know by now, to wear the mask properly and clean his or her hands from time to time either with soap and water or with an approved sanitiser.”

Keeping social distance from one another is crucial, and one should not step out unless it’s necessary because gatherings can trigger the spread.

“No one is safe until everyone is safe, and the safety is in one’s own hands,” he added.



Dangerous time of the pandemic

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate will be hoping for some reprieve in the coming week as the last week and the month of June, especially, was the deadliest.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday the world is in an extremely dangerous period of the Covid-19 after the contagious Delta variant was found in nearly 100 countries.

At a press briefing, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the Delta variant is still evolving and mutating to emerge as the most dominant variant of Covid-19 in many countries.

The number of Covid-19 related deaths reported increased

by 70 to 292 last week from 222 reported a week before.

According to Ministry of Health (MoH), the number of cases reported during the same period increased by 143 to 13,962 cases from 13,819 cases a week before.

At the same time, 938 people were admitted to public and private hospitals for treatment.

Currently, there are over 30,376 active cases in the country, which means 11.23 per cent of the total infected patients are sick. However, there were only 16,046 sick people in the country as of June 2 this year.

As of Thursday, the number of inpatients in public and private hospitals was 1,591, an increase

The Sultanate is currently seeing a worrying rise in the number of Covid-19 infections, which has led to an increase in the number of inpatients in health institutions

of 50 from 1,541 reported the previous week. The number of patients in ICUs went up by 66 to 530 from 464 the previous week.

MoH has warned that the Sultanate is currently seeing a worrying rise in the number of Covid-19 infections, which has led to an increase in the number

of inpatients in health institutions, including those in ICUs.

The MoH analyst Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Maymani said that June 2021 saw the highest number of new infections of over 50,274 since the beginning of the pandemic in the Sultanate.

He said that Oman has reported 25 deaths on average daily in June, which is the highest rate since the beginning of the pandemic, while 344 deaths were recorded in April this year, on an average of 11.5 deaths per day.

Al Maymani said the number of inpatients in hospitals doubled by 98 per cent, compared to 808 at the end of May, bringing the cases until the end of this month to 1,597, an increase of 789 cases.



Elderly people live lonely life as young look to careers

FROM PAGE 1

Some of this phenomenon is attributed to what is known as the generation gap.

“We need to understand the needs of this population and adapt our services accordingly. The best way to come off this generation gap is to encourage open communication and discussion between the generations where each feels respected and accepted by the other group,” he advises.

Omani Penal Code promulgated by Royal Decree

No 7/2018 that includes crimes and punishments affecting religion, family and society, calls for imprisonment for a period of not less than 10 days and not exceeding three months, and a fine of no less than RO 100 and no more than RO 500, or one of these two penalties if anybody leaves his/her parents abandoned or do not take care of them.

At the same time, the law provides exemption to those who have physical inability or the presence of their parents cause

serious harm to them.

In this case, says the law, “those parents can be sent to elderly homes subject to they earn a verdict from a court or a competent authority who will decide on this matter”.

By the end of 2018, reports indicate, nearly 70,000 elderly people in Oman are under the Ministry of Health’s elderly care programme, which was formed to ensure that they are given prompt, affordable and continuous healthcare. This constitutes 44.8 per cent of the total elderly

population in Oman.

Even though Oman doesn’t have nursing homes like many countries in the world mainly because elder care is viewed as a religious and traditional obligation for families and the community, the programme is a collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development, which studies the situation of the elderly from the economic and social perspective and the availability of caregivers at home.

Vaccination for 18 and above begins

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, many expatriates and their family members, including children, have been getting vaccines through private hospitals, which also include prior registration.

Only Pfizer vaccine has been approved for children in the age group of 12 and above, which will be covered in the coming phases.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health has clarified about audio messages to Covid-19 patients and anti-viral vaccines.

It confirmed that there is no need to conduct any tests before receiving the vaccines if the recipient does not have any symptoms of Covid-19 disease, and what was mentioned in the letter about the composition of the vaccine and that it increases

the severity of the disease for those who received it is not true.

The ministry has reiterated that neither the Pfizer/BioTech or Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines contain any Covid-19 virus, but rather viral components that activate the immune system to resist the virus when it enters the body.

It said that spreading rumours and false information about Covid-19 vaccines harming the body may cause the death of innocent people.

The Ministry of Health called on everyone not to obtain information from non-specialists, but through the ministry’s website and its accounts documented on social media platforms or through other official sources.

■ REGION’S FIRST FIVE-BLADED HELICOPTER



Al Sharqiyah Aviation, the first and only commercial helicopter operator in the Sultanate, announced that it will soon receive the five-bladed H145D3 helicopter from Airbus, the first of its kind helicopter to be delivered in the Middle East region. – ONA



Oman participates in Arab Civil Aviation meetings

RABAT: The Sultanate participated in the 26th session of the General Assembly of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization (ACAO) which was held in the Moroccan capital, Rabat.

At the end of the session, the “Rabat Statement” was issued, underscoring the main role for which the Arab Civil Aviation Organization was established as a specialised Arab organisation under the League of Arab States. The Organization targets to foster cooperation and coordination between Arab countries in the field of civil aviation and its development.

The statement said that the ACAO is based on the charter of the League of Arab States and the pivotal role it plays to encourage Arab-Arab cooperation through a group of specialised organisations formed at different

levels inside and outside the Arab League.

The statement emphasised the commitment of the member states to the principles and objectives enshrined in the agreement whereby the ACAO was established, particularly those roles related to strengthening the bonds of unity and solidarity between the member states while defending their general interests and enhancing coordination among them and with international organisations and regional blocs.

The statement called for direct talks with countries and unions with a view to achieving mutual recognition for vaccination certificates, urging the lifting of travel restrictions while taking into account the health measures related to international traffic.

— ONA

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, JULY 3

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has cautioned clothiers and outfitters in the Sultanate against tinkering with the traditional design and style of Omani dresses and costumes, such as the kummah, musar, dishdasha or women's abaya.

Examples of design tampering can include the sewing, printing or embroidering slogans and trademarks of foreign clubs or incorporating drawings contrary to the public interest or merging the design of the kummah or musar or other traditional dresses in any form that may amount to a distortion of these costumes, it said.

The Directorate of Commercial Affairs and Electronic Commerce at the ministry emphasised that the Omani dress is an important symbol of the traditional Omani heritage. It warned that some commercial establishments were found to be in violation of Ministerial Decision 270/2015, which bans the import or sale of merchandise found to be offensive to the Omani dress identity and costumes. Some establishments



were also found selling products that had images and slogans considered offensive or against common moral practices or the public order. It noted that it has stepped up its inspection of tailoring shops in various governorates of the Sultanate.

The Omani standard specification for the Omani Dishdasha defines the Dishdasha as a loose-fitting garment, embroidered on the neck, chest and ends of the sleeves, in accordance with its type. Cotton cloth is often used in the tailoring

Some commercial establishments were found to be in violation of Ministerial Decision 270/2015, which bans the import or sale of merchandise found to be offensive to the Omani dress identity and costumes

and sewing of Dishdasha, and it is made of plain fabric. It is permissible to use cotton fabric mixed with polyester as well as wool, while it is embroidered with cotton threads.

The Dishdasha is the men's dress in the Sultanate and is classified into several types.

One of the most important types mentioned in the specification is the commonly used one, which is worn by citizens in most governorates of the Sultanate, and is considered the official Omani dress.

Falaj al Misfah: More than a thousand years and still running

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

The village of “Al Misfah” in the Wilayat of Qurayat is famous for its green oases, beautiful orchards and ‘aflaj’ from which water flows throughout the year. ‘Falaj al Misfah’ is one of the oldest water channels that is more than 1,000 years old, and the locals call it “Fraifer”. Its falaj extends for more than five kilometres, running through the green farms.

This falaj is characterised by its permanent flowing water that originates from a mountain spring in the middle of the valley. The channel of this falaj is the only main source for irrigating agricultural fields. Its water is warm in winter and moderately cold in summer. There is also a water spring in this village, and the sources estimate that its daily water flow is approximately 190 thousand gallons. The village springs into a sulfur spring called

AL MISFAH IS ALSO FAMOUS FOR ITS ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORTRESS “AL BUSTAN FORT”, ITS ANCIENT MOSQUES, ANCIENT HOUSES AND TOMBS, WHOSE RUINS STILL TELL THE HISTORY OF PREVIOUS ERAS

“Al-Faj”, which local residents and tourists visit to recover from some skin diseases.

This village is characterised by its valley, which grows among its flanks many local trees, the most important of which are palm, mango and lemon trees. Water



ponds are especially common during the rainy season, as the abundance of water contributes to providing good environments for wild animals and birds.

This village is also famous for its archaeological fortress “Al Bustan Fort”, its ancient

mosques, ancient houses and tombs, whose ruins still tell the history of previous eras.

The first thing that catches the visitor's attention is the architectural style of the falaj, which serves as a bridge between the two banks of the valley.



In addition, the sulfur water is one of the most important tourist attractions, and the locals express their great happiness receiving visitors who go to this distinguished site.

The village still retains its ancient architectural style, and

is famous for its agricultural products, which it markets in various local markets.

Locals of this village hope that all visitors will respect the archaeological and natural sites that are the first points of tourist attractions.



AVOID HEAT AND STAY SAFE!

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

[@zainabalnasseri](#)

Often workers or those who engage in any kind of activities during daylight hours and for a long time are exposed to high temperatures, which leads to a feeling of stress and health symptoms that may pose a threat to their lives if no immediate medical care is provided.

Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said that cases associated with high temperatures are considered medical emergencies that happen due to an increase in body temperature due to direct exposure to sunlight or hot weather for a long time, especially in the summer.

“Among the most important reasons for being affected by hot weather are: Not drinking enough water, exposure to direct sunlight for a long time, wearing tight clothes and exerting any physical effort in a hot and humid atmosphere”, CDAA said.

The patient shows several symptoms, including excessive sweating, headache, diarrhoea, weakness in the body, dizziness, pain and cramps in fingers, arms and legs, as well as abdominal pain, in addition to the loss of consciousness.

To prevent heat-related health problems, the Authority called upon all to drink sufficient quantities of water constantly, avoiding exposure to direct sunlight for long periods, not make efforts or exercise in hot and humid weather, and not to wear tight clothes when exposed to heat.

For helping people in emergencies related to high temperatures, the Authority advised to move the person away from direct sunlight or to a cool place if possible, make the person lie on his back, give him fluids to compensate for acidity or juices if he is conscious, and use a sponge or towel moistened with cold water and place it on the head and limbs of the victim.

In the absence of signs of life, cardiopulmonary resuscitation procedures must be started, and then the person must be transferred to the nearest health institution.

The difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke is that the first is a condition that precedes heatstroke and can develop. Generally, heat stress is not considered dangerous if the person is cooled within 30 minutes. Still, if it develops into heatstroke, an ambulance should be called.





SQU Council discusses academic jobs for Omanis

MUSCAT: The Council of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), during its fourth meeting of the academic year 2020-2021, discussed a draft proposal on academic employment for Omanis, mid-year graduates lists, and a proposal on the budget estimates for the university and the hospital for the fiscal year 2022.

The meeting was held at the SQU Cultural Centre under the chair of Dr Rahma bint Ibrhaim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and



Innovation, Chairperson of SQU Council.

The Council also looked into a report on decisions and recommendations made by the SQU and reviewed some performance indicators of relevance to quality improvement and the SQU global rating.

The Council commended the SQU's good rating at world level, following the recent international classification of world universities, in which the SQU occupied the 368th position.

The SQU Council valued the efforts taken to achieve the international rating. It called for the continuation of such efforts to improve the SQU's rating and achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040 to maintain the objective of having three Omani universities figure among the best 300 universities worldwide.

The meeting was attended by HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin al Julanda al Said, SQU Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Chairman of the SQU Council, among other members. — ONA

ELECTRONIC TENDER

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation announced the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for purchasing Tender	The deadline for submission of Tenders
07/2021 Recall (1)	Providing Maintenance Services For The Al Buraimi Vocational College Buildings	Specialized in Providing Same Service and Registered With The Tender Board With Grade – Second	(25/- R.O)	10/07/2021	20/07/2021

please visit the following link in E-Tendering system for purchasing the tender documents:

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Preference will be given to companies' or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that includes the largest proportion of its tender Omanization.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Chairman of tender committee
Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation



NDC concludes annual strategic exercise



MUSCAT: Activities of the annual strategic exercise "Decision Making-8" were concluded at the National Defence College (NDC).

The concluding event was held under the auspices of Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning.

The exercise was carried out by the NDC eighth batch from the various military, security and civil units.

The 5-day exercise aimed at enhancing the joint cooperation and integration among the participating units. It also targeted the actual practice of strategic planning tools at the national level, as well as managing events, and exceptional and emergency cases from a strategic perspective.

The exercise was conducted with full adherence to the precautionary and preventive measures set by the Covid-19 Supreme Committee. — ONA

Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Our Beloved



Bhupinder Singh

Born into Time:
21st May 1954

Born into Eternity:
18th June 2021

"What we once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes part of us"

Until we all unite again as a family
Your Beloved Wife and Kids

Procedures for jewellery inspection

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has clarified the followed procedures in receiving the bijouterie for inspection.

The Directorate-General of Standards and Metrology at MoCIIP said the procedures followed in receiving jewellery at the land, sea and air customs ports in the Sultanate include, submission of the application through the "Bayan" system of the Royal Oman Police by the importer to enter the goods into the Sultanate, obtaining the conditional approval of the precious metals laboratory to allow the entry of the goods, provided that the goods shall be sealed by the customs port and referred to the laboratory to complete the rest of the procedures within 72 hours, then the sealed goods to be opened by the precious metals laboratory staff in order to complete the rest of the procedures.

MoCIIP pointed out that there are also a number of procedures carried out by the specialists at the border crossings and the precious metals laboratory of the MoCIIP upon receiving jewellery from importers, shops.

OMAN EDUCATION & TRAINING INVESTMENT COMPANY SAOG

Directors Report

On behalf of the Directors of Oman Education Training and Investment S.A.O.G. it is my pleasure to present the Third Quarterly Report of the company for the period from 1/3/2021 to 31/5/2021

On 23 May 2021, Sohar University began teaching summer programs for the academic year 2020/2021 for 2,386 students who had failed in some courses, the teaching is online, which constituted revenues of RO 800 thousand OMR.

Consolidated Financial Statements:

The consolidated financial statements for the period ended 31/05/2021, note the following:

- Net profit estimated at 1,480,984/- OMR for the period ended 31/05/2021 compared to 465,385/- OMR for the period ended 31/05/2020 due to higher student fees and lower expenses.
- The government grant was registered to calculate deferred government grants, reflecting the value of its extinguishment on the company's profits equivalent to the consumption of property and equipment financed by that grant, which during the current fiscal year was valued at 354,249/- OMR.
- Purchase of fixed assets and assets of the group (computers, laboratory devices, furniture, equipment and projects under completion) during the period for 153,350/- OMR.

Finally, I would extend my sincere congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, may Allah protect him, as well as Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation. I would like also to extend my profound thanks to the Board of Directors, as well as the University Board of Governors and the company Executives, Academic and Administrative staff for their great effort, looking forward for a successful future in the next years.

Hassan bin Ihsan bin Nasseb Al-Nasseb
Chairman

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them.
The request to be made at
P.O. Box 44, P.C. 311, Tel: 26850120,
Fax: 26721258

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (Un Audited) At 31 May 2021

	Group 31-May-21 OMR	Group 31-May-20 OMR	Group 31-Aug-20 OMR
ASSETS			
Non-current asset			
Property and equipment	32,962,878	34,132,181	33,689,226
Right-of-use assets	156,123	-	166,074
	33,119,001	34,132,181	33,855,300
Current assets			
Inventories	18,540	84,765	74,773
Trade and other receivables	5,868,922	5,374,550	4,936,199
Bank balances and cash	4,182,286	2,741,394	3,074,152
TOTAL ASSETS	43,188,749	42,332,890	41,940,424
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity attributable to equity holders of the parent			
Share capital	7,000,000	7,000,000	7,000,000
Statutory reserve	3,429,713	3,070,171	3,281,615
Property revaluation reserve	5,301,623	5,301,623	5,301,623
Retained earnings / (Loss)	1,856,896	1,053,778	1,364,010
	17,588,232	16,425,572	16,947,248
Non-current liabilities			
Deferred grant related to assets	15,074,740	15,734,465	15,428,989
Term loan	-	115,841	-
Deferred tax liability	1,141,083	1,163,514	1,141,083
Employees' end of service benefits	1,366,019	1,448,599	1,372,104
Lease liabilities	152,268	-	154,556
Student Deposit-Non Current portion	219,515	180,000	211,754
	17,953,625	18,642,419	18,308,486
Current liabilities			
Bank Overdraft/short Term loan	-	-	3,000,000
Current portion of term loan	115,841	625,000	428,341
Lease liabilities	668,473	223,107	9,238
Trade and other payable	6,862,578	6,416,792	2,586,622
Provision for Income Tax	7,646,892	7,264,899	6,684,690
	25,600,517	25,907,318	24,993,176
TOTAL LIABILITIES	43,188,749	42,332,890	41,940,424
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Net assets per share	0.251	0.235	0.242

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (Un Audited) Period ended 31st May 2021

	Group 31-May-21 OMR	Group 31-May-20 OMR	1,3259 om 31-Aug-20 OMR
Tuition fee	9,960,708	9,410,415	12,546,989
Other income	100,368	389,669	590,144
Total income	10,061,076	9,800,084	13,137,133
Expenses			
Salaries and related costs	(6,705,035)	(7,161,665)	(8,853,935)
Administrative and other operating expenses	(954,435)	(1,195,759)	(1,593,375)
Depreciation of property and equipment	(878,929)	(1,091,037)	(1,429,395)
Release of deferred government grant	354,249	351,610	469,704
Reversal of bad and doubtful debts Provision	-	-	113,054
Amortisation of right-of-use assets	(9,952)	-	(13,269)
Total Expenses	(8,194,102)	(9,096,850)	(11,307,216)
Profit / (loss) for the period from operations	1,866,975	703,234	1,829,917
Finance cost	(83,375)	(102,048)	(148,334)
Finance income	15,313	8,375	9,858
Profit for the period before tax	1,798,913	609,561	1,691,241
Income Tax	(317,929)	(144,178)	(559,128)
Net Income After Tax	1,480,984	465,385	1,132,113
Profit attributable to:			
Equity holder of the parent	1,480,984	465,385	1,132,113
Minority interest	-	-	-
Earnings per share	0.021	0.007	0.016

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. 28/2021

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/21/032	(2021/MM/HQ-28)	Construction of Pedestrian Walkway from AL Gubrah to AL Ansab (E- Tender)	Rial 40	29/07/2021	12/08/2021	First
PRE/21/035	(2021/MM/HQ-29)	Slope Protection Works at Qurm Alsarooj Beach (E- Tender)	Rial 60	29/07/2021	12/08/2021	Excellent

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat Municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Original Tender Bond envelope should be sealed with red wax and entitled to His Excellency/ Head of Internal Tender Committee and to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Third Floor, before 10:00 am as per the date Mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+968 24166670).

UN-backed Libya talks fail to reach consensus on elections

GENEVA: UN-sponsored talks aimed at paving the way for elections in Libya in late December failed to find common ground, the deputy of the United Nations mission in Libya said on Friday night after weeklong talks near Geneva.

Raisedon Zenenga, assistant secretary-general and mission coordinator of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), called on participants to pursue the effort, describing the talks as “heated debate” marked by threats of walkouts.

“The people of Libya will certainly feel let down as they still aspire to the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights in presidential and parliamentary elections on December 24,” Zenenga told the closing session.

“This does not bode well for the credibility and future relevance of the LPDF (Libyan Political Dialogue Forum),” he said. “I encourage you to continue to consult among yourselves to pursue a workable compromise and cement what unites you.”

The talks, held at a hotel about 15 kilometres from Geneva, had been extended into a fifth day on Friday with delegates struggling to agree. They had been expected to establish the constitutional basis for presidential and parliamentary elections by July 1.

But delegates and UN officials said they could not agree among themselves on several proposals circulating, prompting organisers to extend the talks originally planned to last four days.

The elections would be a critical step in international efforts to bring stability to Libya, which has been in turmoil since a 2011 Nato-backed uprising against Muammar Gaddafi.

A UN-led peace process



Tunisia's President Kais Saied speaks as Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Political Affairs in Libya Stephanie Williams listens during the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in Tunis. — Reuters File Photo

brought a ceasefire last summer after fighting between rival factions paused and then a unity government was formed.

The talks in Switzerland follow an international conference in Berlin last week.

The United Nations envoy for Libya, Jan Kubis, said on Monday that leaving Switzerland without a decision this week was “not an option” given the timeframe.

On Thursday, Kubis described that day’s session as “difficult” and urged delegates to refrain from “disrespectful behaviour and personal attacks”, without elaborating.

LPDF member Elham Saudi told Reuters on Friday: “This is not the outcome that many of us had hoped for but it is the better outcome given the options that were on the table and UNSMIL’s leadership’s inability to keep the talks on track.”



The people of Libya will certainly feel let down as they still aspire to the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights in presidential and parliamentary elections

RAISEDON ZENENGA
UN Support Mission in Libya

“This only delays the battle, but does not resolve the issue,” she said. “Let us remember the interests of Libya and Libyans who deserve elections.”

Moves towards a political solution in Libya accelerated after eastern commander Khalifa Haftar’s 14-month assault on Tripoli collapsed last summer. A formal ceasefire was agreed in October and the next month the participants in the UN peace dialogue set a date for elections and agreed to create a new interim government.

However, major risks persist with many armed groups holding power on the ground. Haftar was backed by the United Arab Emirates, Russia and Egypt in his Tripoli offensive. The internationally-recognised Tripoli government was supported by Turkey, which ultimately helped it repel the assault. — AFP

Lebanon port blast judge targets top officials

BEIRUT: A judge investigating last year’s devastating port explosion in Lebanon’s capital said on Friday he had summoned the outgoing premier and taken steps towards indicting several former ministers and security officials.

Hundreds of tonnes of ammonium nitrate fertiliser exploded on the dockside of Beirut port on August 4 last year, killing more than 200 people, injuring thousands and ravaging swathes of the capital.

It emerged afterwards that officials had known about the explosive substance being stored unsafely at the port for years.

The slow pace of the investigation has sparked outrage at home and fuelled distrust among international donors.

Tareq Bitar in February became the second judge to probe the explosion following a court order removing his predecessor, who had issued charges against prime minister Hassan Diab and three former ministers over the blast. Bitar on Friday told a small group of journalists, including AFP, that he had summoned Diab, who is still indicted in the case.

He said he had also taken steps towards charging four former ministers — ex-finance minister Ali Hasan Khalil, former public works ministers Ghazi Zaiter and Yusef Fenianos, and ex-interior minister Nohad Machnouk.

Bitar said he would be looking at possible charges of “probable intent to murder” and “negligence”, as the officials “did not take measures to avert the risk of an explosion”.

Bitar’s predecessor, Fadi Sawan, had in December last year charged Diab, Khalil, Fenianos and Zaiter with “negligence and causing death to hundreds”. But Khalil and Zaiter managed to get a court to remove Sawan in February, arguing that the indictment of a lawmaker needed parliament clearance.

Bitar said he has requested that parliament lift the immunity of lawmakers Khalil, Zaiter and Machnouk.

The judge has approached the Beirut Bar Association for permission to indict Khalil and Zaiter, and the Tripoli Bar Association to be able to charge Fenianos, as all three are lawyers.

— AFP



A view shows damages at the site of an explosion in Beirut. — Reuters File Photo

Iraqis suffer as temperature sizzles and hit by blackouts

BAGHDAD: When the mercury soared to 52 degrees Celsius this week in Iraq, Ali Karrar placed his baby for a couple of minutes in the fridge. But when the power went off on Thursday night across oil-rich Iraq, people were left at a loss as to how to escape the torrid heat.

Those with the means hooked up fridges, air conditioning units and fans to private generators — but not Karrar, who lives in the town of Al Hillah, as well as others across the impoverished and rural

south. Four southern provinces have been without electricity since Tuesday, including Basra — home to Iraq’s main port.

Sizzling temperatures have been compounded by high levels of humidity.

“The children sleep right on the floor to try and stay cool, but us, the adults, haven’t slept a wink these past nights,” Meshaal Hashem, a Basra docker and father of three, said.

In the city of Diwaniyah, Rahi



Iraqis buy ice blocks at a factory in Sadr City, east of the capital Baghdad amid power outages and soaring temperatures. — AFP

Abdelhussein buys bags of ice to cool down his children, saying it helps hydrate them. Shops have placed hoses and makeshift showers outdoors to attract customers to stop.

Anger has mounted among Iraq’s 40-million population, with corrupt politicians at the centre of a blame game for its poor services and dilapidated infrastructure.

“The electricity ministry is blaming the oil ministry which is blaming the finance ministry, and the finance ministry says the culprit is Iran, but Iran says it’s the Iraqi government’s fault, and the government lays the blame on the people who accuse politicians of shortcomings,” Iraqi political analyst Sajad Jiyad tweeted.

“The politicians just shrug and say, ‘We’ve got to live with it.’” Boiling temperatures and power outages often go hand in hand during the summer months in Iraq, but there are other factors behind the latest crisis. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

TEHRAN

Iran fears ‘fifth wave’ of Covid linked to Delta variant

President Hassan Rouhani expressed fears that Iran will be hit by a new wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, due to an outbreak of the Delta variant. “It is feared that we are on the way to a fifth wave throughout the country,” Rouhani told a meeting of Iran’s anti-virus taskforce, warning the public to be careful as “the Delta variant has spread” in southern provinces.

Covid-19 has killed more than 84,000 people out of over 3.2 million detected infections in the Islamic republic, according



to official figures that authorities admit do not account for all infections. The health ministry has classified as “red” — the highest category on Iran’s coronavirus risk scale in Tehran and 9 other cities in Tehran province. — AFP

IBLIN

Shelling kills 8 civilians in NW Syria’s Idlib

Six children were among eight civilians killed by regime artillery fire on Saturday in Syria’s last major rebel stronghold of Idlib in the country’s northwest, a war monitor said. The shelling on Saturday morning also wounded 16 others in several locations of the Jabal al Zawiya area in the south of the stronghold, the Syria Observatory for Human Rights said.

It killed five members of the same family — a man, his wife and their three children — in the



village of Iblin, two children in Balyun village, and another child in Balshun village, it said.

In Iblin, a photographer saw the bodies of the family arrive at a health dispensary, wrapped in woollen and cotton blankets.

ALGIERS

Algerian opposition party head arrested

Algerian authorities arrested the head of an opposition party for allegedly insulting President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and other charges, his wife and rights groups said. Fethi Ghares, 47, (pictured), coordinator for the small leftist Democratic and Social Movement party, was taken from his home last week in a suburb of Algiers, said his wife Messaouda Cheballah.

Lawyers for Ghares said he was detained on several charges, including “insulting



the president” and “publishing information that could undermine national unity”. No further details were given, Said Salhi, vice-president of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights. — AFP

Indonesia rolls out tougher curbs as virus cases skyrocket

JAKARTA: Thousands of troops and police hit the streets of Indonesia's Java island and Bali on Saturday to enforce new virus curbs as the Southeast Asian nation battles an unprecedented wave of Covid-19 infections.

The country's overwhelmed healthcare system teetered on the brink of collapse as jammed hospitals turned away patients, forcing desperate families to hunt for oxygen tanks to treat the sick and dying at home.

Hundreds of checkpoints were set up as mosques, parks, shopping malls and restaurants were shuttered across the capital Jakarta and hard-hit Java. — AFP



SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Local and International Companies in the following Tender

NO	Tender Ref	Tender Title	Tender Fee OMR
1	SIDC 2021/009	Pre-Qualification Construction of the Quay Wall in SOHAR Port East Development.	RO 1,050

The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%. Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Sunday, 04 July 2021 until 4:00 pm on Thursday 15 July 2021. Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

Account Name	Sohar Industrial Port Co
Account Number	3101-007970-500
Bank Name	Oman Arab bank SAOC – Main Br
SWIT	OMABOMRUXXX
Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted	

Step 2: Tenderers to send the following documents:
A request for the electronic tender documents
Scanned bank transfer
The firm's commercial registration documents
All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address:
sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

Step 3: Tenderers will receive the electronic Pre-Qualification Document by email.

Step 4: Tenderers should raise any clarifications regarding this tender no later than 4:00 pm on Tuesday 27 July 2021.

Step 5: Tenderers should submit the Pre-Qualification Proposals no later than 4:00 pm on Thursday 5 August 2021 and to follow the process of submission as specified in the Pre-Qualification Document.

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SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Local and Omani based Companies in the following Tender

NO	Tender Ref	Tender Title	Tender Fee OMR
1	SIPC 2021/155	Pre-Qualification Design and Build of Service Pontoons and Control Building in SOHAR Port East Development	RO 1,050

The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%. Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Sunday, 04 July 2021 until 4:00 pm on Thursday 15 July 2021. Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

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2 dead as torrential rains unleash landslides in Japan

TOKYO: Two bodies were found after a huge landslide at a resort town in central Japan swept away homes on Saturday following days of heavy rain, with around 20 people still missing, officials said.

Television footage showed a torrent of mud obliterating buildings as it crashed down a hillside in Atami, southwest of Tokyo, sending people fleeing as it buried part of a road.

"I heard a horrible sound and saw a mudslide flowing downwards as rescue workers were urging people to evacuate. So I ran to higher ground", the head of a temple near the disaster told public broadcaster NHK.

"When I returned, houses and cars that were in front of the temple were gone."

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said emergency services and the military had launched rescue and evacuation missions, warning that more downpours were forecast. "There is a possibility of heavy rain due to the rain front, so we still need to be alert at the maximum level", he said at an emergency disaster meeting. Atami saw rainfall of 313 millimetres in just 48 hours to Saturday — higher than the average monthly total for July of 242.5 millimetres, according to NHK.

Two people were "found in a state of cardio and respiratory arrest", the regional governor said, an expression often used in Japan before confirming death.

"Because of the heavy rain, the ground loosened and the mudslide occurred... it



Houses damaged by a mudslide following heavy rain are seen at Izusan district in Atami. — Reuters

picked up speed and swept away houses together with people", Shizuoka Governor Heita Kawakatsu told reporters. He said "around 20" people were still missing after being swept away by the landslide.

The disaster began at around 10:30 am at a river near the city, which is around 90 kilometres from Tokyo and is famous as a hot spring resort.

A video posted on TikTok from the scene showed a huge slurry of mud and debris sliding slowly down a steep road and nearly engulfing a white car, which drove away before a faster and more violent torrent arrived.

In other clips on social media, the landslide was seen toppling electricity poles,

with large areas left inundated by several waves of earth.

Much of Japan is currently in its annual rainy season, which lasts several weeks and often causes floods and landslides, prompting local authorities to issue evacuation orders.

Scientists say climate change is intensifying the phenomenon because a warmer atmosphere holds more water, resulting in more intense rainfall.

More than 200 people died as devastating floods inundated western Japan in 2018. The highest evacuation alert, which urges people "to secure safety urgently", has been issued to Atami city which has more than 20,000 households, according to NHK. — AFP

Philippine volcano spews toxic gas

MANILA: More than 2,000 people have fled from a volcano eruption that has filled the air near the Philippine capital with toxic gas, officials said on Saturday.

Taal volcano, which sits in a picturesque lake, has been belching sulphur dioxide for several days, creating a thick haze over Manila and several surrounding provinces, and prompting health warnings.

At least 2,400 people have left their homes since the government called for evacuations of hamlets on the lake's shores, provincial disaster official Joselito Castro said.

"We expect more residents to evacuate over the coming days", he said, adding that they were seeking refuge either in schools closed by the coronavirus pandemic or in the homes of relatives.

Taal lies just 50 kilometres south of Manila and for much of the past week has discharged volcanic smog that has blotted out the sun in the capital.

Civil defence officials have warned that upwards of 317,000 people could be vulnerable to toxic gas emissions from the volcano under the current eruption's worst-case scenario.

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDERS



The Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C) invites following tenders:

Tender No	Description	Tender Price (R.O)	Grade	Last Date of Buying	Last Date of Submission
Tanweer-26/2021	Operation and Maintenance of Masirah Power Station Al Sharqiyah South Governorate	1,313/=	"A"	14/07/2021	28/07/2021
Tanweer-27/2021	Supply and Delivery of Fuel Gas Oil to Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer) Power Stations	3000/=	Specialist Companies	14/07/2021	28/07/2021

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tender:** Interested and Specialized Companies and Establishments registered with Tender Board (valid certificate), Tanweer and (Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) for tender no. Tanweer- 26/2021) (valid certificate) may obtain the Tender documents from Procurement & Contracts Department, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. The fees for the tenders shall be deposited on Tanweer account 0423010783090041 – Bank Muscat and for more information please contact via email address i.e. tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om , or call us on phone number: 24250824.
- Bank Guarantee:** The Tenderer should enclose original bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC (Tanweer).
- Offers Submission:**
 - Original bids along Cover letter shall be placed by bidders inside the red waxed Tender's envelopes as communicated to bidders by Tanweer. Such documents must be serialized according to the numbers of the tender items.
 - Tender bids shall be provided separately on a CD Rooms, along with original cover letters in each envelop. Bids and cover letters shall bear the bidder's official seal and must be signed in either blue or red ink, but not black. A true soft copy of the bids shall be provided on a CD in an inner envelope marked "Copy". Bids who do not comply with these requirements will be overlooked.
 - Bidders shall write the following details on the cover of CD:
 - Tender name and number.
 - Tenders to be Addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee, Tanweer.
 - Prequalification / Technical Proposal / Commercial Proposal / Bid Bond.
- Submission Location:** The Completed bids in CD should be deposited in the Tender Box at Tanweer Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 12:00 PM on the last date of submission.
- Tender Price (R.O):** 5% VAT is inclusive.
- Tanweer without mentioning the reason is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender and not bond to refund tender purchase fees if you are not qualified to participate the tender.

For more information please call: 80077787
Or visit our Website: www.tanweer.nama.om



Tanweer
P.O Box 1166, P.C. 133, Al Seeb, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24250800, Fax: +968 24250892
info@tanweer.nama.om | www.tanweer.om



Military prepares to evacuate Canada towns

OTTAWA: Canada’s government warned on Friday of a “long and challenging summer” ahead as it prepared military aircraft to help evacuate towns and fight more than 100 wildfires fuelled by a record-smashing heat wave.

At least 152 fires were active in the western province of British Columbia, 89 of them sparked in the last two days, according to officials. Most were caused by lightning strikes.

The fires were north of the city of Kamloops, 350 kilometres northeast of Vancouver.

While the immediate blame for the scorching heat in Canada has been placed on a high-pressure “heat dome” trapping warm air in the region, climate change is causing record-setting temperatures to become more frequent.

Globally, the decade to 2019 was the hottest recorded, and the five hottest years on record have all occurred within the last five years.

“The dry conditions and the extreme heat in British Columbia are unprecedented,” Public



An air tanker drops retardant along a ridge during the Salt fire in Lakehead, California. — AFP

Safety Minister Bill Blair said on Friday. “These wildfires show that we are in the earliest stages of what promises to be a long and challenging summer.” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

met on Friday afternoon with an incident response group that included several ministers. He said he had already spoken with British Columbia’s premier, as well as local mayors and indigenous chiefs in

communities under threat. “We will be there to help,” he told a news conference.

The response group announced it would set up an operations centre in Edmonton, where armed forces

At least 152 fires were active in the western province of British Columbia, 89 of them sparked in the last two days

will be able to provide logistical support. Military aircraft were also deployed to help.

Roughly 1,000 people have already fled the wildfires in British Columbia, and authorities are searching for many who have gone missing. Late on Friday, the British Columbia medical examiner’s office said there had been 719 deaths in the past week, “three times more” than the average number of deaths recorded over this period under normal circumstances.

CALIFORNIA FIRES Meanwhile, hundreds of firefighters on Friday scrambled to contain three wildfires in drought-hit northern California that have scorched nearly 40,000

acres, including a popular tourist lake preparing to welcome hordes of visitors for the July 4 holiday weekend.

Evacuation orders were in place along stretches of Shasta Lake — a camping and boating hotspot 160 kilometres south of the Oregon border — as soaring temperatures and high winds spur blazes at a relatively early stage in the region’s fire season.

Around 40 structures were destroyed, including at least half a dozen homes near the town of Lakehead, a photographer said.

“We were fully booked, but right now you can’t get in even if you want to,” said Cecil Hengst, owner of the Lakehead Campground and RV Park, forced to temporarily close by evacuation orders.

“This (fire) got really close... it’s a bad one,” said Hengst, 63, who has been in the area for 12 years.

“Everything’s so dry with the drought. We have had very little rain, our lake levels are so low right now for this time of year. It’s perfect conditions for fires right now.” — AFP

Russia sets another Covid record as world battles Delta variant



Russian Red Cross volunteers talk to people in central Moscow on Saturday as Russia reported 697 Covid-19 deaths in the previous 24 hours. — AFP

MOSCOW: Russia reported its fifth record for daily Covid-19 deaths in a row on Saturday, as countries around the world rush to contain the rapid spread of the highly contagious Delta variant.

The variant has propelled a resurgence of the virus which has already killed nearly four million people, forcing numerous nations to reimpose restrictions well over a year after the pandemic first swept the world.

Russia has so far ruled out a new lockdown to fight surging Delta infections, even as it reported 697 deaths on Saturday — setting a new record for the fifth straight day.

Second city Saint Petersburg hosted a Euro 2020 quarterfinal between Spain and Switzerland on Friday night, with concern raised after hundreds of cases were detected among spectators attending games across the continent.

Russia had hoped its vaccination campaign would tamp down a new wave, but it has met with widespread scepticism and a sluggish rollout, with only 16 per cent of Russia’s 146 million people having been jabbed.

AFP journalists saw hundreds of people waiting at vaccination points across Moscow on Friday. — AFP

Second Florida building evacuated as death toll rises to 22 in tower collapse

SURFSIDE, FLORIDA: The death toll rose to 22 on Friday from the collapse of a Florida condominium tower after the remains of four more victims were found in the rubble, and local officials ordered a second residential complex evacuated after deeming it unsafe.

All residents of the second building, Crestview Towers, were told to leave immediately after engineers found serious concrete and electrical problems, said Arthur Sorey, city manager for North Miami Beach.

The move was considered urgent due to the approach of Hurricane Isla, which is forecast to hit Florida as early as Monday. The building’s owners had not yet begun a mandatory safety recertification process required 40 years after it was built, he said.

“It’s definitely not an easy decision,” Sorey said. “It’s just the right thing to do during these times. It’s uncertain what’s going to happen with the storm.”

The latest remains recovered from the rubble left behind by the 12-story Champlain Towers South in nearby Surfside left 126 people listed as still missing and feared dead. No survivors have been



A woman prays as rescue workers search the rubble at the site of the partially collapsed 12-storey Champlain Towers South condo building in Surfside, Florida. — AFP

pulled alive from the ruins since the first few hours after the tower partially caved in on itself early on June 24.

The number of people on the missing list dropped by 17 from Thursday, Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava told reporters, saying that the totals were “fluid” and sometimes revised through work by investigators.

Levine Cava said she had signed a demolition order for a remaining section of the tower over worries that it was dangerously unstable halted search and rescue efforts at the scene for much of Thursday.

“It’s important to note that we’re

still evaluating all possible impacts and determining the best timeline to actually begin the demolition,” she said.

The operation was scaled back on Friday to three of the nine grids mapped out across the debris field.

HURRICANE ISLA THREATENS

Crews also sought to make progress before the expected arrival of Elsa, which strengthened into the first hurricane of the 2021 season on Friday as it churned in the Caribbean Sea. The storm could approach South Florida as early as Monday, National

Weather Service meteorologist Robert Molleda told reporters, with tropical storm-force winds possible on Sunday. Elsa’s forecast path remains uncertain.

Among the dead found in Surfside on Friday was the daughter of a firefighter, the third child fatality to be recovered so far. Miami Mayor Francis Suarez told the *Miami Herald* that the firefighter was at the recovery site at the time, though not digging through the rubble.

The man and his brother, also a firefighter, have kept a vigil at the site since last week, the *Herald* said. About 200 officers saluted as her body was carried away, according to the paper.

“Every victim we remove is very difficult,” said Miami-Dade County Fire Chief Alan Cominsky. “Last night was even more, when we were removing a fellow firefighter’s daughter. As firefighters, we do what we do — it’s kind of a calling. But it still takes a toll.”

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis wrote on Twitter that more than 400 members of the US Army Reserve from Indiana, New Jersey, Ohio and Virginia had arrived in Surfside to assist in the effort.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

HONOLULU

Cargo plane makes emergency water landing

A decades-old Boeing Co 737-200 cargo airplane with two people on board made an emergency nighttime landing in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Honolulu, Hawaii, early on Friday, the US Federal Aviation Administration said. The FAA said both crew members were rescued, citing preliminary information.

“The pilots had reported engine trouble and were attempting to return to Honolulu when they were forced to land



the aircraft in the water,” the FAA said in a statement.

The FAA and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) will investigate.

NKANDLA

South Africans gather in support of Zuma

Hundreds of supporters gathered in a show of solidarity for former South African president Jacob Zuma outside his Nkandla homestead on Saturday, as the deadline looms for him to hand himself over. In an unprecedented ruling, Zuma was on Tuesday told by the constitutional court to hand himself over by Sunday to start a 15-month jail term for contempt of court.

Supporters, mainly members of the African National



Congress’s Umkhonto Wesizwe military wing, have for weeks camped outside Zuma’s home in KwaZulu-Natal province in solidarity with the former leader.

VATICAN CITY

Cardinal, 9 others to be tried over fraud

An influential Cardinal and nine others will be tried within the Vatican’s legal system over alleged financial wrongdoing, the Holy See announced on Saturday. Italian Cardinal Angelo Becciu, who was one of the most influential figures in the Vatican and a close ally of Pope Francis, will appear before the tribunal of the Holy See from July 27, according to a Vatican statement.

The 73-year-old was dismissed from a powerful Vatican job last September, after Francis told him



he was accused of syphoning off Vatican charity funds to help his siblings. Becciu will be prosecuted over embezzlement, abuse of power and witness tampering.

Bolsonaro paying dearly to fend off impeachment

ANTHONY BOADLE

Brazil’s far-right President Jair Bolsonaro is in a tight spot, caught between the rock of impeachment threats and the hard place of dwindling public support, as corruption scandals over Covid-19 vaccine deals encircle his administration.

On the one hand, if he denounces allies in Congress linked to alleged attempts to profit on vaccine orders, Bolsonaro risks losing the backing of the fickle cluster of centre parties with which he has allied in order to ensure bids to impeach him go nowhere. But, if he chooses to protect the scandal-hit politicians and their parties, Bolsonaro could be stained by graft charges ahead of next year’s election. He is already down in the polls.

The Covaxin scandal, in which allies are accused of putting undue pressure on health ministry officials to hasten a purchase for the Indian vaccine Covaxin, has become a nightmare for Bolsonaro in part because it allegedly involves the government’s chief whip in the lower house of Congress: Ricardo Barros. Bolsonaro and Barros have denied all wrongdoing.

The accusations have given Bolsonaro’s opponents ample ammunition to attack him, with the president’s dependence on centrist parties, many of whose leaders face graft investigations, belying his campaign vow to clean up Brazilian politics that got him elected in 2018.

“Bolsonaro faces a continuous process of weakening. It’s hard to say it will lead to an impeachment, but it does hurt his chances of re-election,” said Claudio Couto, political scientist at the Getulio Vargas Foundation think-tank in Sao Paulo.

More than half a million Brazilians have died from Covid-19, yet Brazil lags many other countries in vaccinations. Only 11.8 per cent of its population are fully vaccinated. This has made allegations of graft surrounding vaccine orders particularly damaging for the president. — Reuters

Bolsonaro faces a continuous process of weakening. It’s hard to say it will lead to an impeachment, but it does hurt his chances of re-election

CLAUDIO COUTO
A political scientist



BRINGING AWARENESS

A municipal worker drives an auto-rickshaw decorated with mock syringes through the streets to boost awareness amid people on the importance of Covid-19 coronavirus vaccination in Chennai, India, on Saturday. — AFP

Vintage, veteran, venerable... and maturing?



Ray Petersen
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AGE IS AN ISSUE OF MIND OVER MATTER, AND IF YOU DON’T MIND, IT DOESN’T MATTER!

It has been said that the great thing about getting old, is that you do not lose all the other ages you have been, the trials and tribulations of those ages, the experiences and experience shared, and the understanding of your fellow man.

So how come as we, the classic generation, appear to merge seamlessly from our forties to our fifties, our sixties, and beyond, the younger generation, and many of those in privileged positions who have the cheek to ignore their own age, define us? How dare they belittle our contributions to society simply because we are getting older? How dare they deny us the respect of our effectiveness as the measure of our value, instead of our age?

It is said that “Men are like a fine wine and get better with age,” but no matter how vigorous, industrious, reliable, passionate and enthusiastic we are, someone always decides that upon attaining an arbitrary age, we must be consigned to the scrap heap, rejecting the wise counsel of the eminent Mark Twain, that doyen of humorist literature, who said, “Age is an issue of mind over matter, and if you don’t mind, it doesn’t matter!”

We, the venerable generation, want more and newer experiences. We of an

age, have an unquenchable thirst for new ways to look at those things of maturity and permanence, and have an unending desire to give those that come after us, more. We also understand the priority of quality over quantity, and that happiness lies not in wealth, but in the calmness and serenity of... well, just knowing stuff!

A case can be made for the mature among us in a hundred ways, not least that they are old enough to know better than to do foolish things. Young enough not to care too much about inconsequential things, or those they can never change. While at the same time we are knowledgeable and experienced enough to do most things right!

Youth may well in fact, be the gift of nature, but age is a work of art, and those who would throw us on the scrapheap are making arbitrary decisions based on their own prejudices, not facts, and not research. Cut the head from a beast, and it will surely die, but removing the wise heads and wisdom from an institution, will also cause it to wither and die. We in our golden years do not look at maturity in the way that some of the more insecure among you do. We are no threat to you.

I remember wondering if I would ever

reach my parents’ age. Then, at school I recall a debate on the topic of “What should we do with people when they turn fifty?” What a self-obsessed generation we were, and seemingly, you are now. Yet, here we are, many of us the ‘wrong’ side of sixty, yet far from feeling redundant. It’s true, I know I am not as energetic, or as athletic as I was in my youth, but like many of my ilk, neither decrepit or enfeebled, but intellectually active, and certainly, not ready for the scrapheap!

It is not us who are worried about us getting old, but you, and it consumes you. But why not put aside those prejudices... You need us so much more than you think, and you can learn from us an understanding that, as attributed to David Bowie, “Aging is an extraordinary process where you become the person you were always destined to be.” So don’t lock us up, shut us down, or pack us in cotton wool.

Instead... let us be who, what, and whatever it is our destiny to be... seasoned... cultivated... prime... cultured... sophisticated... mellow... discerning... insightful... perceptive... erudite... omniscient... sagacious... choice... and... Oh yes... just a wee bit feisty when we need to be.

The Last Brother... a movie tainted by cruelty



Rasha Al Raisi
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THE MOVIE IS TAINTED BY CRUELTY WHETHER IT’S NATURE ON HUMANS, HUMANS ON EACH OTHER OR OCCASIONALLY ON OTHER LIVING BEINGS

If you’re a fan of Argentinian movies, then *The Lost Brother* (2017) by Uruguayan director Adrián Israel Caetano is something I’d recommend you with a warning: get ready to be shocked.

The movie is tainted by cruelty whether it’s nature on humans, humans on each other or occasionally on other living beings.

Set in a poor town called Lapachito in the Chaco province, the opening scene is set in a scorching hot day with dry surroundings while the main character Cetarti (played by Uruguayan actor Daniel Hendler) sweats profusely.

He’s meeting up with Durate (Argentinian actor Leonardo Sbaraglia) apparently a local lawyer who’s taking him to the morgue to identify the remains

of his estranged mother and half brother — both killed by the mother’s boyfriend who happens to be Durate’s former colleague in the air force.

Later we learn that Durate is actually a thug and that his main interest is the insurance money left by the deceased, which he proposes to split into half between him and Cetarti. Cetarti doesn’t mind as being jobless for a year, gaining money is all he’s after before returning to Buenos Aires.

He stays in his deceased half-brother house and starts selling the home’s items while waiting for the insurance money.

Meanwhile, other characters emerge with indirect links to Durate such as Marta, the boyfriend’s widow (played by Spanish actress Ángela Molina) and her son Daniel. The plot unfolds and the relationship between the

characters tense and leads to a surprise ending. What distinguish this movie is the limitation of space surrounding the characters. Whether it’s the low ceiling bunker used by Daniel or the morgue to the suffocating murder site and the overly-cluttered temporary residence of Cetarti — that clears off completely by the end of the movie.

Also, the characters are not as straightforward as they appear. Starting from Durate the psychopath who keeps controlling and manipulating everyone to slow and impassive Cetarti who’s not as simple minded as first thought. The relationship between different characters is either marked by indifference, greed or by being taken advantage of. Marta is the only character displaying limited empathy towards her son but its always

hindered by his complicated relationship with Durate.

Sbargalia’s impersonation of Durate who keeps switching from charisma to monstrosity is astounding. He’s also funny at scenes where he deals with awkward situations in a matter-of-factly fashion. The same goes to Hendler in the role of slow Certarti — he gained a few kilos to get into character.

The movie’s plot is really simple yet the smart dialogue is what gives it depth and character. There is a funny scene where Durate asks Cetarti if he’s mentally challenged — the very same question that goes in the viewers mind from the first scene — and when he’s answered by a why?

He simply states that he could get paid more insurance money if he was. The movie is an Argentinian-Uruguayan co-

production that’s based on the critically acclaimed novel *Under this Terrible Sun* by Argentinian writer Carlos Busqued.

It was hailed by critics that some had given it a 10/10 describing it as ‘powerful and devastating at once’. It is also considered as Caetano’s best work in years. Although the movie had a moderate success in other countries, it was the most watched movie in its patria Uruguay in 2017.

Sbargalia was nominated and won best actor premiums in Málaga and Argentina’s film festivals. *The Lost Brother* depicts humanity at its worst; when no moral or compassion reigns its existence or actions. It’s an intelligent and a tough movie not cut for the faint-hearted. Available on Netflix.

(Rasha al Raisi is a certified skills trainer and author)

sport

INSIGNE STUNNER SENDS ITALY INTO SEMIFINAL CLASH WITH SPAIN

MUNICH, Germany: A stunning strike by Lorenzo Insigne fired Italy into the semifinals of Euro 2020 on Friday as a 2-1 win over Belgium sent them through to a last-four meeting with Spain.

Nicolo Barella struck the opening goal of the quarterfinal in Munich before Insigne curled in Italy's second in an action-packed first half.

Belgium grabbed a lifeline just before the break when Romelu Lukaku converted a penalty, but Roberto Martinez's side ultimately fell short against a disciplined Italian defence.

"We scored two and we could have scored more," said Italy coach Roberto Mancini.

"I think the victory is fully deserved. Spain are next but the more you go forward the most difficult it becomes."

While Italy face Spain at Wembley on Tuesday, defeat means more European Championship quarterfinal heartbreak for Belgium, who exited at the same stage in 2016 after defeat by Wales.

Belgium sorely missed their captain Eden Hazard, ruled out by a hamstring injury, even as Kevin De Bruyne won his race to shake off an ankle injury.

The Manchester City playmaker showed why the medical staff worked around the clock to get him fit by regularly causing Italy problems, but Romelu Lukaku twice was denied by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

"It was a miracle that I played, because there was definitely damage to my ankle," said De Bruyne.

"We tried everything to win that match.

"Getting eliminated is always a disappointment. Too bad I couldn't do more."

SPINAZZOLA INJURY

Italy's win came at a cost, with left-back Leonardo Spinazzola out



Italy's Lorenzo Insigne celebrates scoring their second goal. – Reuters

of the tournament with a leg injury.

"Leonardo had a great European championship. Now whoever replaces him will do the same," said Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci.

Italy had the ball in the net on 13 minutes when Bonucci

ched it past Thibaut Courtois from a free-kick, but the goal was disallowed by VAR for an offside against captain Giorgio Chiellini.

Marco Verratti and Youri Tielemans both earned yellow cards for midfield tussles involving

the pair.

Verratti was booked for holding Tielemans in a tackle, while the Belgian picked up a yellow card moments later for clattering into the Italian.

Italy broke the deadlock with 31

minutes played.

When Belgium failed to clear, Verratti played the ball into Barella, who stayed on his feet, squeezed past two defenders and drilled across Courtois.

A piece of brilliance on 44

“We scored two and we could have scored more. I think the victory is fully deserved. Spain are next but the more you go forward the most difficult it becomes

ROBERTO MANCINI
Italy coach

minutes saw Napoli's Insigne double the Italy lead when he was allowed to dribble to the edge of the area and then curl his shot inside the post.

However, Belgium got back into the game when a rush of blood saw Giovanni Di Lorenzo concede a penalty for using his elbow to brush off Jeremy Doku, filling in for Hazard.

Lukaku stepped up and rifled in the resulting spot-kick to halve the deficit.

With an hour gone, Belgium had the best chance of the second half, coming agonisingly close to an equaliser, when De Bruyne's cross led to Lukaku having his shot blocked by the thigh of Spinazzola.

Martinez brought on fresh legs up front with Dries Mertens and Nacer Chadli for the final 20 minutes.

There was an almost instant impact when Mertens fed Chadli, whose cross-cum-shot was deflected by Di Lorenzo just out of the reach of Lukaku and Thorgan Hazard.

With time running out, Doku fired over after beating three defenders, while a last-gasp De Bruyne free-kick also failed to beat the Italy defence as the Azzurri clung on. — AFP

Toothless Spain edge Swiss but identity crisis continues

ST PETERSBURG, Russia: Spain squeezed past ten-man Switzerland to book a spot in the Euro 2020 semifinals but time is running out for Luis Enrique to find a way of playing that is any way convincing — and the opposition gets tougher from here on in.

On Tuesday, they will take on Italy at London's Wembley Stadium and it is highly unlikely they will get away with the kind of sloppy, ineffective football they played against the Swiss if they are to make the final.

Once again they dominated possession on Friday and attempted a staggering 1,008 passes, completing 902 of them — however, their problem was that very few of them posed any sort of threat to the Swiss defence.

Much has been made of the form of striker Alvaro Morata but the closest Spain had to a playmaker trying to set him up was full back Jordi Alba, whose



Spain's Gerard Moreno celebrates after the match with team-mates. – Reuters

deflected shot, later chalked down as an own goal, had given them the lead.

The pointless passing in the final third was more akin to

Olympic handball as they worked the ball from side-to-side across the box, never really threatening to play the defence-splitting pass that would have opened the game up

for them.

For all their possession they were surprisingly sloppy at times, needlessly surrendering the ball in dangerous positions that the Swiss

were happy to exploit, not least when Sergio Busquets lost the ball in the lead-up to their equaliser.

Marcos Llorente came off the bench to replace Koke for extra

time but the sending off of Remo Freuler saw the Swiss drop even deeper, snuffing out any space that he might have been able to run into behind the backline.

The only thing more ineffective than Spain's passing was their finishing: of a whopping 27 chances in the game, nine were blocked and 10 were on target and though Swiss keeper Yann Sommer was superb, many did not trouble him too much.

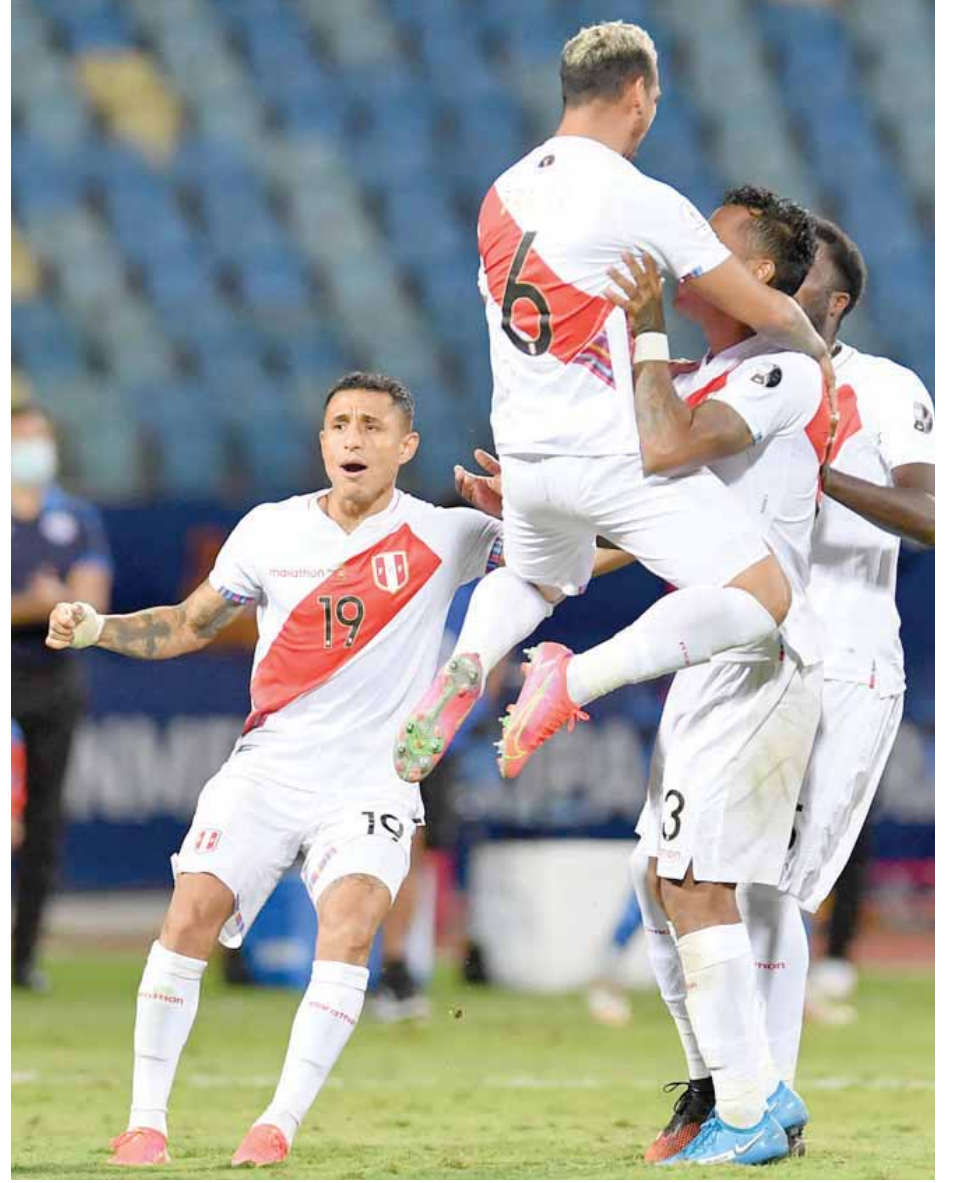
Busquets, who was part of the dominant Spanish team that won the 2010 World Cup and the 2012 Euros, no longer looked capable of angling balls through the defence that cause the kind of havoc where strikers thrive, and he missed his penalty in the shootout.

Luis Enrique now has four days to work out what he wants his team to be, because this toothless "tiki-taka" passing throwback may not cut it at the semifinal stage.

— Reuters



Chile's Sebastian Vegas (L) and Brazil's Neymar vie for the ball during their Conmebol 2021 Copa America quarterfinal. — AFP



Peru's Miguel Trauco celebrates with team-mates after scoring the defining goal during the penalty shootout. — AFP

BRAZIL EDGE CHILE TO SET COPA AMERICA SEMIFINAL WITH PERU

RIO DE JANEIRO: Lucas Paqueta's second-half strike was enough for defending champions Brazil to hold off determined Chile 1-0 on Friday and book a Copa America semifinal showdown with Peru.

Second-half substitute Paqueta made an instant impact, finding a gap in Chile's defence and firing into the back of the net in the 47th minute to put Brazil up 1-0.

Less than two minutes later, however, Brazil were reduced to 10 men when Gabriel Jesus's reckless high kick caught Eugenio Mena in the face and drew a straight red card.

Chile couldn't capitalise on the man advantage, no matter how hard they tried.

Eduardo Vargas thought he'd grabbed the equaliser in the 62nd with a close-range shot, but VAR confirmed the offside call was correct.

In the 69th, Mena's cross from the left found Ben Brereton, whose looping header had Brazilian goalkeeper Ederson wrong-footed but caromed off the crossbar.

Ederson came up with another big save in the 78th as Chile battled desperately for an equaliser.



Brazil's Lucas Paqueta (L) celebrates with Neymar (C) and Richarlison after scoring against Chile. — AFP

Second-half substitute Paqueta made an instant impact, finding a gap in Chile's defence and firing into the back of the net in the 47th minute to put Brazil up 1-0

Carlos Palacios went for broke five minutes into injury time with an attempt from the top of the box that sailed over the crossbar.

Brazil's best first-half chance

came after 20 minutes, when Neymar found Roberto Firmino at Claudio Bravo's far post, but the Liverpool striker couldn't convert.

Ederson was soon called on and dived right to save a shot from Vargas after the Chilean striker shook off Thiago Silva.

Jesus, played in by Neymar, nearly fired Brazil ahead shortly before half-time but Chilean keeper Claudio Bravo tipped his shot over the bar.

With the victory, Brazil set up a rematch of the 2019 final in which they beat Peru 3-1.

Peru punched their semi-final ticket earlier on Friday, beating

Paraguay 4-3 on penalties after playing to a 3-3 draw in regular time in Goiania.

The remaining quarterfinals will be played on Saturday, when Argentina take on Ecuador and Uruguay face Colombia.

In Goiania, Miguel Trauco scored the decisive penalty for Peru in a shoot-out that echoed the drama of the match with two shots over the crossbar and three saves.

Peruvian keeper Pedro Gallese set the stage for Trauco with his diving save of Alberto Espinola's attempt.

Paraguay captain Gustavo Gomez had opened the scoring in the 11th minute, but Gianluca Lapadula scored in the 21st and 40th to give Peru the lead.

Paraguay's prospects looked bleak when Gomez was sent off moments before half-time, but Junior Alonso pulled them level in the 54th minute.

Yoshimar Yotun's 80th-minute strike put Peru up 3-2, but after Andre Carrillo was sent off in the 84th to reduce the Peruvians to 10 men Gabriel Avalos grabbed a last-minute equaliser to force the shoot-out. — AFP

Oman beach soccer team to begin domestic camp tomorrow

THE NATIONAL TEAM'S OVERSEAS CAMP IN UKRAINE FROM JULY 20

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 3

The international governing body of football, Fifa, announced that the draw of Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup Russia 2021 will take place on Thursday in Zurich city in Switzerland.

The Sultanate beach soccer team, United Arab Emirates and favourites Japan are the representatives of Asia and awaiting the results of the draw ahead of the showpiece tournament which will be held from August 19 to 29 in Russia.

With less than 47 days to go, the national beach soccer team is undergoing an intensive preparatory plan to shape players readiness for the forthcoming top assignment.

After completion of the

International beach soccer tournament in Dubai recently, the beach soccer team will begin the domestic preparatory camp which will take place from Monday until July 18 in Muscat.

The experienced national and long serving beach soccer coach Talib Hilal named 13 members for the upcoming camp in Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex including: Kahlid al Orami, Yahya al Orami, Mundher al Orami, Mashal al Orami, Jalal al Sinani, Abdullah al Souti, Noh al Zadjali, Amjad al Hamdani, Younis al Oauisi, Eid al Farsi, Hamood al Touqi, Said al Farsi and Salim al Orami.

Many faces have the right technical expertise as they had attended in some editions of Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup Russia



including Yahya al Orami and Jalal al Sinani.

The local training camp of 14 days will be followed with an overseas camp in Ukraine which

will take place on July 20 to 26 ahead of the Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup Russia 2021.

The camp will feature participation in an international

beach soccer tournament.

Coach Talib Hilal's men concluded recently their participation at the International beach soccer tournament in Dubai

on June 26 and the Sultanate team ended the event as runner up.

The national team suffered two defeats in the first two matches in the tournament against Senegal 3-2 and UAE 2-1. Then, the Sultanate beach soccer team bounced back and registered a 5-6 win over Senegal and a 6-7 triumph in penalties against UAE.

Oman men's beach soccer team will be looking for a different show with an aim of advancing to the next round in the fourth attendance at Beach Soccer World Cup.

The Sultanate's beach soccer team had participated in Beach Soccer World Cup in Ravenna city in Italy in 2011 and in Portugal in 2015. The third participation of the team was at the Beach Soccer World Cup in Paraguay in December 2019.

Raducanu produces stunning display to reach last 16



Britain's Emma Raducanu celebrates winning her third round match against Romania's Sorana Cirstea. – Reuters



Germany's Angelique Kerber in action during her third round match against Belarus' Aliaksandra Sasnovich. – Reuters

LONDON: Emma Raducanu's Wimbledon fairytale continued on Saturday with a history-making victory over world number 45 Sorana Cirstea on Court One that sent her into the last 16.

The 18-year-old has quickly become the story of the Championships, having only played one WTA Tour level match before this tournament, but she showed she belongs on the big stage with a 6-3, 7-5 victory.

Raducanu, who is waiting for her school exam results, passed this particular test in fine style, with a run of eight successive games laying the foundations of a memorable afternoon.

As well as a sparkling attacking display, where she hit 30 winners, she also showed fighting spirit and tenacity in the second set, claiming the win on her third match point.

She becomes the youngest British woman into the fourth round of SW19 in the Open era and surely a Centre Court date with Ajla Tomljanovic on Monday awaits.

KERBER SHINES AFTER RAIN DELAY

Former Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber was put through the wringer early in her third-round clash with unseeded Aliaksandra Sasnovich on Saturday but the

WIMBLEDON RESULTS

MEN (THIRD ROUND):
7-Matteo Berrettini (Ita) bt Aljaz Bedene (Slo) 6-4, 6-4, 6-4;
14-Hubert Hurkacz (Pol) bt Alexander Bublik (Kaz) 6-3, 6-4, 6-2;
23-Lorenzo Sonego (Ita) bt James Duckworth (Aus) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4; Ilya Ivashka (Blr) bt Jordan Thompson (Aus) 6-4, 6-4, 6-4

WOMEN (THIRD ROUND):
Emma Raducanu (Gbr) bt Sorana Cirstea (Rom) 6-3, 7-5; Ajla Tomljanovic (Aus) bt Jelena Ostapenko (Lat) 4-6, 6-4, 6-2; 20-Coco Gauff (US) bt Kaja Juvan (Slo) 6-3, 6-3; 25-Angelique Kerber (Ger) bt Aliaksandra Sasnovich (Blr) 2-6, 6-0, 6-1; 19-Karolina Muchova (Cze) bt 16-Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (Rus) 7-5, 6-3

German rallied from a set down to win 2-6 6-0 6-1 after a rain delay.

Kerber faced a tough test against Sara Sorribes Tormo

in the previous round before overcoming the Spaniard in the longest women's match at Wimbledon since 2011 and made a

sluggish start on Saturday by twice dropping serve in the opening set to give Sasnovich a 4-0 lead.

World number 100 Sasnovich, taking on a second former All England champion this week after watching Serena Williams limp off injured in their opener, wrapped up the first set in style after rain temporarily halted the action on Court Two.

Kerber had warmed up for Wimbledon with her first title in three years at the inaugural Bad Homburg tournament last week and the 33-year-old showed why she cannot be written off on grass with a blistering response in the second set.

The 2018 champion shot out of the blocks, playing inspired tennis to hand her 27-year-old opponent a bagel and level the contest at one set apiece.

A wayward forehand by Sasnovich gifted Kerber the advantage at 3-1 in the decider and the only remaining Wimbledon champion in the women's singles draw further tightened her grip on the match before finishing with an ace to reach the last 16.

In the fourth round, 25th seed Kerber will face the winner of the match between American teenager Coco Gauff and unseeded Slovenian Kaja Juvan.

— dpa/Reuters

Verstappen on pole in Austria with Hamilton fourth

VIENNA: Formula One leader Max Verstappen put his Red Bull on pole position for the Austrian Grand Prix on Saturday with title rival Lewis Hamilton managing only fourth on the grid for Mercedes.

McLaren's Lando Norris joined Verstappen on the front row, a sensational career best for the young Briton, with Verstappen's Mexican teammate Sergio Perez qualifying in third place at the scenic Red Bull Ring.

The pole was Verstappen's third in a row and set him up perfectly for a hat-trick of wins after winning the Styrian Grand Prix last Sunday and the French race the previous weekend.

The 23-year-old is 18 points clear of seven-times world champion Hamilton after eight races, with Red Bull chasing a fifth successive victory to pull further ahead in both championships.

Verstappen's pole lap of one minute 03.720 seconds was only 0.048 faster than Norris's effort, Mercedes-powered McLaren's first front row since 2012.

"I think Q3 was pretty bad. I'm of course happy to be first but not the way we got it," said Verstappen of the tight margin. "Something to look into, but nevertheless to be twice on pole here is very good.

"Hopefully we can finish it off tomorrow." Hamilton's team-mate Valtteri Bottas will line up fifth, with Pierre Gasly and Yuki Tsunoda sixth and seventh for AlphaTauri.

Sebastian Vettel qualified eighth for Aston Martin but was summoned to stewards for blocking Alpine's Fernando Alonso, with George Russell an impressive ninth on merit for struggling Williams. — Reuters



Red Bull's Max Verstappen reacts after qualifying in pole position. – Reuters



Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen drives during the qualifying session at the Red Bull Ring race track in Spielberg, Austria. – AFP

New agro marketing firm to set up 80 outlets in Oman

STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY: Nationwide network of outlets to support marketing of locally cultivated fruits and vegetables

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Agricultural Production and Marketing Company (APMC), a new outfit set by Oman Investment Authority (OIA) – the Sultanate’s integrated sovereign wealth fund – in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, plans to develop a network of around 80 outlets across the country to support the marketing of locally grown fruits and vegetables.

APMC was formally established in July 2020 as a subsidiary of Oman Food Investment Holding Company SAOC (OFIC) – part of Oman Investment Authority – to help boost the Sultanate’s food security through strategic

investments in key segments of the food sector.

According to a high-level executive, APMC is now preparing to roll out a chain of outlets to support the marketing of all kinds of fruits and vegetables cultivated by Omani farmers’ associations, cooperatives and other local producers.

“APMC is about to start construction of the 80 outlets that we have promised the public,” said Ali al Shihhi, Vice-President – Finance, Oman Food Investment Holding (OFIC). “These outlets will be developed all over Oman with the aim to market and sell Omani fruits and vegetables.”

The official made the announcement during a recent webinar on the theme, ‘Connecting Denmark to Oman’s Business Opportunities’, organised by Business Gateways International with the support of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

APMC is envisaged as an integrated entity that will specialise initially in the collection



(Picture for illustration only)

and marketing of fresh fruits and vegetables grown locally, and subsequently begin investing in the cultivation of high-quality produce targeted at local and overseas markets. Total investment in the outfit is estimated at RO 11.5 million. OFIC currently holds a 70-per cent stake in APMC’s equity with the balance made available for private investment.

According to OIA, the new marketing agency plans to eventually establish model farms in various governorates to cultivate fruits and vegetables suited to the local environment. These model farms, based on contract farming, will cater to premium markets by focusing on organic produce based on modern farming practices. The Ministry, for its part, will provide

key guidance on the type of fruit and vegetable crops that will add further value to the economy by substituting for imports, for example.

“The project activities also focus on purchasing fruits and vegetables directly from farmers’ associations, agricultural companies, small and medium-sized companies and small farmers, and then sorting

The firm is now preparing to roll out a chain of outlets to support the marketing of all kinds of fruits and vegetables cultivated by Omani farmers’ associations, cooperatives and other local producers

and packing them. The company’s trading unit will work to import fruits and vegetables throughout the year from different countries based on the demand of the local market, and to export surplus products overseas,” according to OIA.

Investments in OFIC-backed ventures, currently totalling in excess of \$1 billion, encompass dairy farming and processing, poultry and egg production, red meat processing, oilseeds crushing and animal feed production, dates and agro food processing, food innovation and veterinary pharmaceuticals, among other areas.

Regulatory cooperation crucial in post Covid-19 era: Report

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 3

A new report from the World Alliance of International Financial Centers (WAIFC) has urged governments and regulators to do more to coordinate their activities to support the global economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report, ‘How international financial centres can help drive international regulatory cooperation post-Covid-19’, makes the case for why regulatory cooperation is crucial to facilitate the growth of capital.

The report explains how the necessary actions that national governments and regulators took to support domestic businesses and address the health crisis could now lead to new unintended international barriers to the free flow of capital and the operation of global financial markets.

To address these challenges, the WAIFC report outlines several principles which could guide regulatory cooperation in the years ahead to smooth the global economic recovery, improve the functioning of financial markets and unlock more capital for investment. These methods, where appropriate, include:

- **Recognition:** Host country regulators could recognise the home country regulator’s standards as valid where both have high standards and seek the same outcomes, even if they try to achieve



them in different ways. Mutual recognition between countries should be an important objective.

- **Substituted compliance:** Host regulators could permit foreign regulated institutions and services whose activities might bring them within the scope of the regulator’s jurisdiction to show compliance with their home jurisdiction regulations as a substitute for compliance with the host country’s regulations.
- **Exemptive relief:** Host country regulators could grant financial institutions from another country exemption from compliance with some of their regulations if the home country regulatory regime is deemed adequately similar to that of the host country on the issue in question.
- **Equivalence:** governments could accept one another’s regulatory rules as valid on the grounds that they are equivalent to their own, i.e., substantially the same in terms of outcomes in practice, if not necessarily identical in form.

Commenting on the release of this report, Jennifer Reynolds, Chair of the WAIFC, said:

“Our members are united in calling for increased international regulatory cooperation, whether at a global, regional or bilateral level, to create more integrated global financial markets and support greater economic growth.”

Omani oilfield firm receives new high-tech hoists in Muscat

RARE UNDERTAKING: Giant Antonov cargo plane delivers oilfield systems from Canada to the Sultanate

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 3

AlShawamikh Oil Services SAOC, a leading Super Local Community Contractor (SLCC), has received two high-tech automated hoists, the first of their kind in the Sultanate. These hoists are committed for service within Petroleum Development Oman’s (PDO) assigned concession areas of Bahla and Adam in North Oman.

The arrival of these hoists is made possible through a strategic alliance with Highwood Global, a leading Canadian manufacturer of trusted oil services equipment.

The equipment were air-freighted aboard an

Antonov-124, one of the largest cargo planes in the world, which recently landed at Muscat International Airport — a rare occurrence in the Sultanate. These hoists will contribute to enhancing the quality of oil extraction services and elevating the skills of Omani technicians and engineers in the oil and gas sector.

Weighing more than 120 tonnes in total, the hoists were designed and manufactured to the highest international standards and assembled in record-time, despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

For AlShawamikh, the successful delivery of the hoists from Canada to the Sultanate, within half the time it usually takes to manufacture and ship such equipment, represents a major milestone in its history. Complex technical machines of this kind typically take about a year to design,

fabricate and deliver. Adding to the remarkable feat was the company’s deployment of a giant Antonov-124 cargo plane to ship these hoists instead of via the normal ocean route.

Its partner in this commendable initiative, Highwood Global, will also be laying the groundwork for a national project centralised on the establishment of a factory specialising in assembling, servicing and maintaining hoists in the Sultanate.

The project will enable the transfer of specialist technology and know-how to the Sultanate — a goal enshrined in Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to enhance economic diversification notably through the advancement of the industrial sector, and supporting In-Country Value (ICV) development linked to oil and gas projects.

Dr Aflah al Hadhrami, CEO of AlShawamikh, said: “The strategic partnership between

AlShawamikh and Highwood has won praise from the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and among other institutions and companies in the oil and gas sector, for promoting the transfer of the latest hoists technology in this vital sector. This partnership achieves one of the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 by enabling the transfer of technologies while also attracting foreign investment into the Sultanate, notably through the establishment of a national factory by Highwood, the first of its kind locally, to manufacture this type of hoists with the ‘Made in Oman’ label. This project will contribute to ICV development and local added value, besides creating job opportunities for nationals, raising the level of local competencies in the oil and gas sector and open up future prospects for the expansion of AlShawamikh in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.”





New procedure for hallmarking precious metal

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 3

Jewellery and precious stones submitted for authenticating and hallmarking must necessarily be sealed by customs authorities at the port of entry before they can be processed by precious metals lab staff at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

According to the Directorate General of Standards and Metrology at the ministry, the procedure is prescribed for all jewellery and precious items received at the land, sea and air customs ports in the Sultanate, including the Bayan system of the Royal Oman Police (ROP). The

importer, after receiving conditional approval from the Precious Metals Laboratory, must ensure that the goods are sealed by the customs port and referred to the laboratory to complete the rest of the procedures within 72 hours.

As a part of the inspection procedures, the received jewellery will be referred to the sampling division after confirming its weight and completing the rest of the procedures and confirming its true caliber.

It is then referred to the Stamping Division where it either manually or laser stamped. The jewellery is then returned to its owners after showing the deposit deed and paying the requisite fees.

New head of Oman's water utility tours key wilayats

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 3

Qais bin Saud al Zakwani (pictured), CEO of the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC) — Member of Nama Group — visited the Customer Services Offices in the governorates of Al Batinah South and Al Dakhiliyah. The tour covered the wilayats of Al Rustaq, Barka, Al Musannah, Nizwa, Bahla, Samayil and Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

During the tour, Al Zakwani engaged with company employees



Qais bin Saud al Zakwani

and listened to their suggestions and views on improving the Company's business, as well as challenges they encounter in

providing their services to the general public. The discussion also included an outline of the company's future strategy and vision.

The CEO expressed his sincere thanks to all employees for their keenness in improving services to consumers. "We are confident that the sector's cadres will translate challenges into achievements, and also contribute to a work environment characterised by hard and systematic work that will result in many opportunities to develop the company's business and achieve its goals."

The CEO also stressed the importance of adopting modern technologies and practices, and urged all employees to continue to adhere to safety protocols in light of the continuing pandemic threat.

He added: "In any business, the human cadre is the main element of any business success and in the OWWSC, we are proud of our distinguished employees who work continuously to make achievements through achieving their tasks and their continuous role in developing and improving the company's business and services."

MEC student talent blossoms at first virtual ArtFest

MUSCAT: The artistic talent of Majan University College shone brightly at the first ever virtual ArtFest with performances, poetry, paintings and presentations from across the student body on show. Each student was tasked with preparing a one-minute video to display their work created with an environmental message.

Students presented art in all

its forms and glory to the panel of judges, selected from different academic fields and backgrounds. Work submitted by students throughout May was eligible for consideration and the winners were announced on May 20, 2021.

Nabila al Macki, Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs) at Majan University College, said, "Majan University College always aims

to nurture the creativity of our students and encourage them to become universal citizens by considering the environment. Inspiring and supporting students a key component of all curriculums at the college and we are delighted by the enthusiasm with which students embraced ArtFest."

ArtFest was organised on a

virtual platform due to Covid-19 restrictions giving students an opportunity to present and compete on a variety of activities virtually. Participants were given two weeks to prepare their video showcasing their abilities in a range of artistic pursuits, such as drama, singing, collage, painting, art and craft, presentation, tableau, mimicry and poetry recitation.



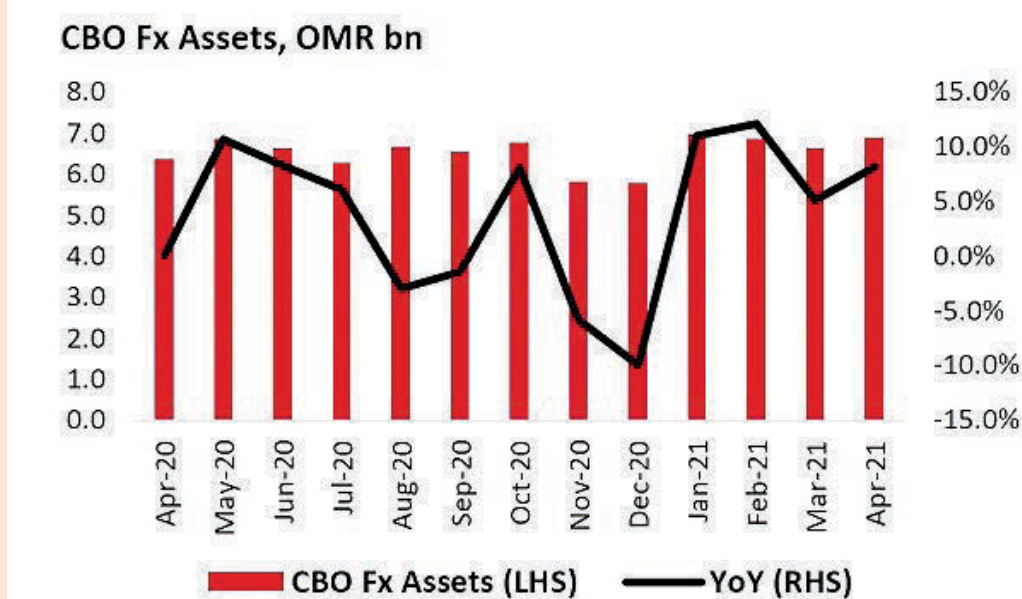
MSX WEEKLY REVIEW

MSX ends the week higher supported by all sub-indices

MSX 30 Index ended the week higher by 0.80 per cent. All sub-indices ended in green. Industrial sector led the gaining 1.51 per cent. Services sector and Financial sector closed up by 1.13 per cent and 0.94 per cent respectively. MSX Shariah Index increased by 1.51 per cent.

A new collaboration between Sharakah and BankDhofar was established recently to support the SMEs in Oman. The collaboration is to facilitate a wider array of funding and supporting opportunities to small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate. With a keen interest to help entrepreneurs, the joint support will also ensure better facilities for the startups and established businesses alike.

As per the CBO, Oman's narrow money supply (M1) increased during the month of April 2021 by 3.6 per cent MoM and 4.1 per cent YoY. The MoM expansion was due to a growth in Demand Deposits by 4.3 per cent as well as a 1.5 per cent MoM increase in currency outside banks. Broad money (M2) supply also increased by 1.0 per cent MoM and was higher by 5.8 per cent YoY. YoY increase was led by a 6.6 per cent rise in Quasi Money. While on monthly basis, domestic liquidity increased



The collaboration is to facilitate a wider array of funding and supporting opportunities to small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate

by about RO 198 million i.e. 1 per cent.

CBO's foreign assets dropped to RO 6.62 billion as at the end of April 2021, having decreased by 3.3 per cent MoM but were higher 5.1 per cent YoY. CBO's Fx assets include bullion, IMF reserve assets, placements abroad and foreign securities. CBO Fx assets were higher on MoM basis by 4.0 per cent. The MoM expansion was brought on by a 6.9 per cent

MoM increase in placements abroad, 1.4 per cent MoM growth in IMF reserve assets and 1.1 per cent growth in securities. Share of securities of the total was 46.3 per cent while that of placements abroad was 51.9 per cent while the rest amounting to 1.8 per cent was held by IMF reserve assets.

Oman Fixed line subscribers were down 0.2 per cent YTD till May at 0.593 million compared to 0.594 million in December 2020. Total mobile subscribers were down 3.6 per cent YTD while within mobile segment, post paid subscribers were higher by 11.2 per cent whereas the prepaid subscribers were down 6.5 per cent. Active Mobile Broadband subscribers were down 6.2 per cent to 5.05 million in May 2021

compared to 5.385 million in December 2020. Penetration levels were down marginally to 13.2 per cent, 134.4 per cent and 112.3 per cent for fixed line, mobile and mobile broadband, respectively.

The total number of vehicles registered in the Sultanate totalled 1.539 million in May 2021, representing a small increase over the December 2020 registered vehicles at 1.557 million, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Private vehicles topped the list of vehicles registered at 1.218m, followed by 0.232 million commercial vehicles and 29,169 taxis. The number of vehicles with temporary registration reached 10,545 compared to 15,351 vehicles in December 2020.

(Courtesy: U-Capital)

Renaissance completes 25 years on MSX



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 3

Renaissance Services (MSX: RNNS), Oman's first family-owned company to be listed on Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), marked the 25th anniversary of its IPO in June 2021. Renaissance completed its IPO in 1996 and is part of MSX 30 Index.

Commemorating the 25th anniversary of going public, Samir J Fancy, Chairman, Renaissance Services presented a memento as a token of appreciation to MSX for their support on this journey.

He said, "This is a moment of pride for the board, management team and all the employees of Renaissance. Our success has been possible only with the invaluable support from all stakeholders. We have been privileged to earn the trust and confidence of shareholders, thanks to a robust process, disciplined approach, good corporate governance, transparent reporting and a collaborative culture. We celebrate this milestone together and look ahead to meeting the opportunities and challenges to come." Receiving the memento, Haitham bin Salem

al Salmi, CEO, MSX, said, "Congratulations to Renaissance on its strong performance over the last 25 years. We believe that such leading corporations reinforce the role of the securities market in contributing to economic and social development. We are certain that Renaissance's approach to adopting best practices in financial management and building trusted relationships with shareholders will inspire other listed companies as we march into the next phase of national growth." Over this 25-year period, Renaissance has grown exponentially expanding its service offerings and establishing leadership in integrated facilities management, large scale accommodation solutions, and environmental services. Today, Renaissance has over 8,800 employees serving a wide range of clients across diverse industries from over 100 locations in Oman, and a growing presence in the UAE.

"We take pride in being an investor-friendly organisation creating value for all shareholders. Renaissance is well-placed to drive growth as we continue to invest in the future," Samir added.



200 businesses hit in cyberattack on computer tool



A man types into a keyboard during a hacker convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, in this file photo. — Reuters

SAN FRANCISCO: A computing network management tool by Kaseya was under cyberattack attack on Friday, prompting the US IT company to urge businesses to shut down servers to avoid ransomware.

Cybersecurity firm Huntress Labs said in a Reddit forum that it was working with partners targeted in the attack, and that some 200 businesses "have been encrypted." Ransomware attacks typically involve locking away data in systems using encryption, making companies pay to regain access.

Kaseya describes itself as a leading provider of IT and security management services to small- and medium-sized businesses, meaning an attack would make them targets going into the Independence Day holiday weekend in the United States.

"We are in the process of investigating the root cause of the incident with an abundance of caution but we recommend that you immediately shutdown your VSA server until you receive further notice from us", Kaseya said in a message shared in a Reddit forum.

"It's critical that you do this immediately, because one of the first things the attacker does is shutoff administrative access to the VSA." VSA is the company's flagship offering, designed to let companies manage networks of computers and printers from a single point. The company lists a US headquarters in Florida and an international headquarters in Ireland.

Kaseya said in a post that the apparent cyberattack may have been limited to a "small number" of its customers.

The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) put out word that it is "taking action to understand and address the recent supply-chain ransomware attack" against Kaseya VSA and the service providers using its software. — AFP

US employment accelerated in June as companies boost perks

WASHINGTON: US job growth likely picked up in June as companies, desperate to boost production and services amid booming demand, raised wages and offered incentives to lure millions of reluctant unemployed Americans back into the labour force.

The Labour Department's closely watched employment report on Friday will likely show that the economy closed the second quarter with strong growth momentum, following a reopening made possible by vaccinations against Covid-19. More than 150 million people are fully immunised, leading to pandemic-related restrictions on businesses and mask mandates being lifted.

Despite the anticipated acceleration in hiring, employment gains would probably still be less than the million or more per month that economists and others had been forecasting at the beginning of the year.

"There are jobs, but workers are not there", said Sung Won Sohn, professor of finance and



People line up outside a newly reopened career centre for in-person appointments in Louisville, Kentucky. — Reuters

economics at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

The minimum pay workers will accept has risen significantly since the pandemic began, he said, "and many workers have an inflated view of what their skills are worth and as a result they are not willing to go back to work at the prevailing wage." Nonfarm payrolls likely increased by 700,000 jobs last month after rising 559,000 in May. That

would be more than the 540,000 monthly average over the past three months. Still, employment would be about 6.9 million jobs below its peak in February 2020.

Estimates ranged from as low as 376,000 to as high as 1.05 million. The unemployment rate is forecast dipping to 5.7 per cent from 5.8 per cent in May. The jobless rate has been understated by people misclassifying themselves as being "employed

but absent from work." There are a record 9.3 million job openings.

Politicians, businesses and some economists have blamed enhanced unemployment benefits, including a \$300 weekly check from the government, for the labor crunch. Lack of affordable child care and fears of contracting the coronavirus have also been blamed for keeping workers, mostly women, at home.

— Reuters

Former French PM Fillon joins Russian oil company board



Former French prime minister Francois Fillon

MOSCOW: Former French prime minister Francois Fillon has been named to the board of Russian oil company Zaroubejneft, a list published on Saturday by a website specialising in business leaks showed.

Zaroubejneft did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the list posted to the e-disclosure.ru website run by

the Interfax news agency, which said Fillon had been on the board since June 28.

Fillon, who ran the French government under president Nicolas Sarkozy between 2007 and 2012, works for the state-owned fossil fuels company in his role as head of Apteras, a consultancy he set up after an ignominious 2017 presidential bid.

His campaign was capsized by a fake-jobs scandal, for which a court sentenced him in June 2020 to five years in prison, three suspended.

He has already worked with Russian firms through Apteras and was nominated for his role on the Zaroubejneft board by the government in Moscow in early June. — AFP

UK supermarket Morrisons agrees to £6.3 billion takeover

LONDON: British supermarket giant Morrisons has accepted a takeover offer from a consortium of investment groups following its rejection of a private equity bid last month, the chain announced on Saturday.

Under the £6.3 billion (\$8.7 billion) deal, the group of investors comprising Softbank-owned Fortress, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and Koch Real Estate Investments (KREI) will pay 252 pence per share plus a 2p special dividend.

According to the announcement, the deal also includes £3.2 billion in debt, which makes the total

operation worth £9.5 billion with debt recovery.

The takeover of the supermarket based in northern England follows the rejection of a £5.5 billion offer in June from Clayton Dubilier & Rice that sent the chain's share prices soaring — but which Morrisons ultimately said was too low.

Andrew Higginson, the chairman of the chain which employs 110,000 people at 500 outlets, said directors believed the offer represented "a fair and recommendable price for shareholders which recognises Morrisons' future prospects".



Shoppers are seen inside Morrisons supermarket in central London. — AFP

"Fortress, CPP Investments and KREI all have strong track records and a long-term approach to investing. They are backing our strategy, our management and our people", he added.

Fortress, which led the offer, would offer Morrisons "long term support", Higginson said.

In Europe, the investment management firm has holdings in food retail and the UK-based wine retailer Majestic Wine.

In the United States, as well as groceries, Fortress has invested in petrol station forecourts, retail and restaurants.

Richard Lim, CEO of

consultancy Retail Economics, said the announcement "signals the biggest shakeup in the UK grocery sector for over a decade".

"Success will hinge on the new owners gaining the support of experienced key members of the leadership team to execute on the future strategy", he added, emphasising the impact of the shift towards online grocery shopping and the growth of rapid delivery on the market.

These shifts in food shopping began before the pandemic with the online retail giant Amazon entering sector.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

STOCKHOLM

Swedish supermarket chain hit by cyberattack

One of Sweden's biggest supermarket chains said on Saturday it had to temporarily close around 800 stores nationwide after a cyberattack blocked access to its checkouts.

"One of our subcontractors was hit by a digital attack, and that's why our checkouts aren't working any more", Coop Sweden, which accounts for around 20 per cent of the sector, said in a statement.

"We regret the situation and will do all we can to reopen



swiftly", the cooperative added.

Coop Sweden did not name the subcontractor or reveal the hacking method used against it beginning on Friday evening.

— AFP

BERLIN

Germany bans single-use plastic products

Single-use plastic products are to start disappearing from the market in EU member states in line with an EU directive which came into force on Saturday.

The ban, approved in 2019, affects disposable products such as single-use cutlery and plates, drinking straws, stirrers, cotton buds and balloon wands made of plastic.

Takeaway containers and beverage cups made of polystyrene are also no longer allowed to be put on the market.



Traders are now obliged to use reusable alternatives made of glass or metal.

However, disposable products that are still in stock may continue to be sold. — dpa

NEW YORK

Tesla reports record deliveries

Tesla scored record car deliveries in the second quarter, while Ford reported higher US auto sales despite a drag from the worldwide semiconductor shortage in June, the companies said on Friday.

Tesla delivered 201,250 autos during the period, overtaking the previous record set in January and prompting a cheer from Tesla chief Elon Musk, who has lamented the chip shortage and other supply chain problems in recent months as the



company has moved to ramp up production.

"Congrats Tesla Team on over 200,000 car built & delivered in Q2, despite many challenges!!" Musk said on Twitter. — AFP

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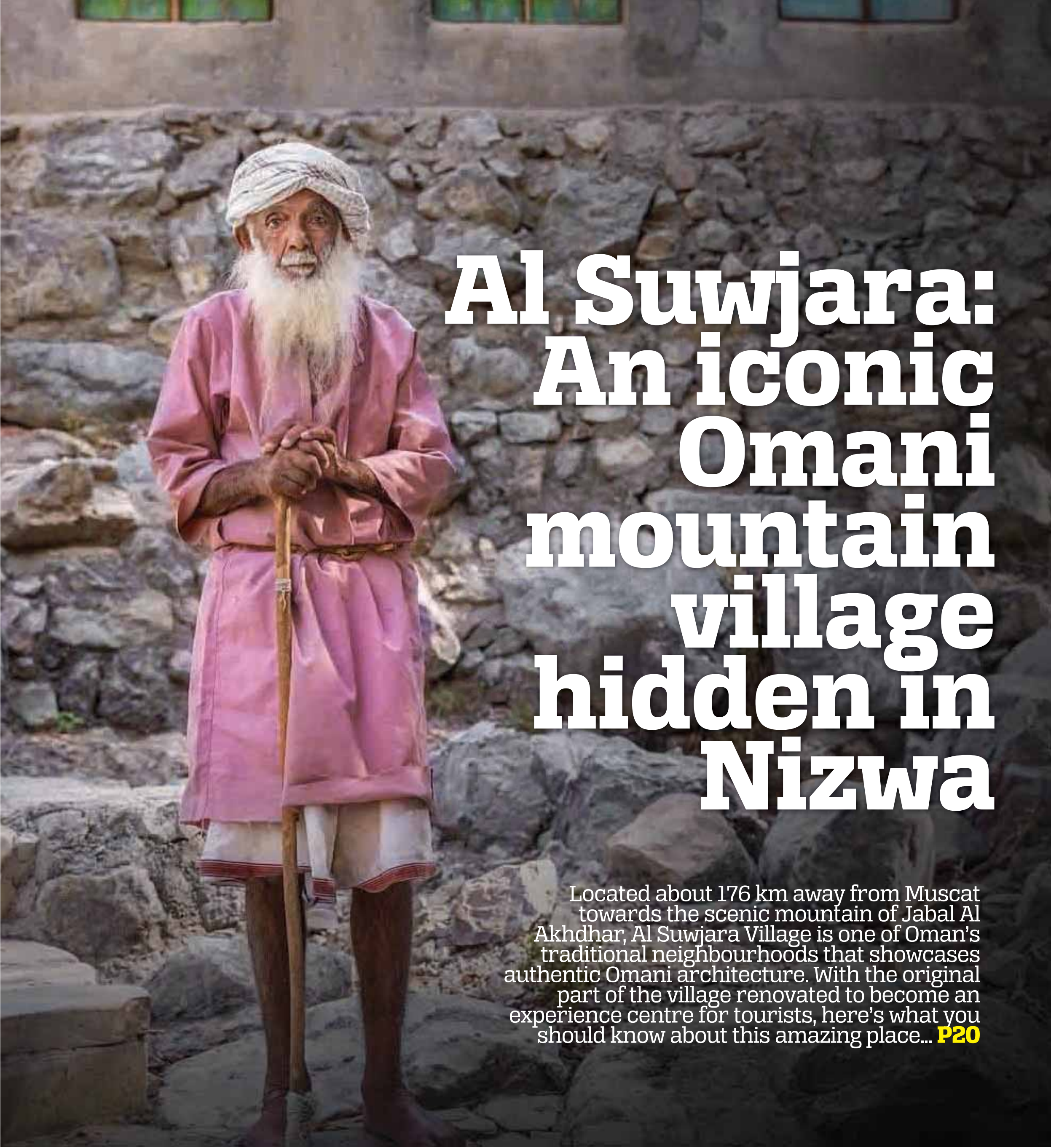
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Al Suwjara: An iconic Omani mountain village hidden in Nizwa

Located about 176 km away from Muscat towards the scenic mountain of Jabal Al Akhdhar, Al Suwjara Village is one of Oman's traditional neighbourhoods that showcases authentic Omani architecture. With the original part of the village renovated to become an experience centre for tourists, here's what you should know about this amazing place... **P20**

UNDER THE SUN

READ



THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES
BY GARY CHAPMAN

It outlines five general ways that romantic partners express and experience love, which Chapman calls "love languages".

Ice baths for the mind and body break heat of UAE desert

AS THE MORNING sun bakes through the orange dunes of the UAE desert, a man submerges himself in a wrinkly tub of ice.

Facing such extreme distress is an attempt to increase the body's immunity and connect with the inner strength.

"The temperature difference boosts your immune system," said Benoit Demeulemeester of Switzerland, who runs ice baths and breathing sessions in the United Arab Emirates.

"You stress your system for a short period of time, which makes you stronger."

Emirati participant Marwan Abdelaziz, sitting in an orange basin of ice in swimming shorts and sunglasses, said: "The beginning is a little scary. You want to pass out, you can't control your breath. But now I am fine, absolutely fine."

Abdelaziz entered the bathhouse with a grin, but held his breath calmly as directed by the Demeulemeester, who trains the participants on

breathing techniques.

"I'm a passionate hot and cold person... I like to take people out of their comfort zones and give them a body and mind experience, reconnecting (with nature)," Demeulemeester said.

The cold water immersion and breathing technique was popularised by Dutch cold water enthusiast Wim Hof, who holds several world records for cold exposure.

Hoff has developed his own methodology, which has a similarity to ancient Tibetan Buddhist breathing techniques, involving breathing, cold exposure and commitment.

Old, young, athlete or non-athlete, techniques are good for everyone, said Demeulemeester, a former banker and now executive



coach who uses Hoff's methods in his practice. Given the desert's rocky terrain, California participant Reza Targari agreed that the start was the hardest part, but then came the benefits.

"You realise that your mind is more powerful, your body and your mind controls your body. You have to make your body obey your mind - that is the secret," Targari said. — **Reuters**



Transforming old houses into museums

To Omanis, the old traditional houses that their ancestors exerted efforts to design and build, brick by brick, are extremely valued. Recently, since they moved to new residential blocks, it has become common that each owner of the house restore the old house and turn it into a touristic landmark, open to visitors.

An example of such houses is the "Oud House" in Al Khatwa in Wadi Al Haimli in the Wilayat of Rustaq. It is one of the old ancient houses that have been restored recently. The owners of this property that dates back to more than 260 years, transformed the house into an archaeological and historical landmark that tells and embodies different historical periods in Wadi Al Haimli.

Humaid al Rajhi, one of the owners of the house, said that the Oud House is one of the fortified Omani houses that was built by its owner Rashid bin Khamis al Rajhi, who died in 1188 AH. The house is a square-shaped building with a total area of 300 square metres and a height of 12 metres. it consists of: Two floors attached to a tower, and the house contains many defensive elements such as projectors and shooting holes, and the most distinctive feature of the house is its door



that is made from the locally called "Al elalan tree".

He added that the house has been restored several times, the last was in 1390 AH, but over the past years, some parts of the house have collapsed. In 2018, the house was restored following the old traditional method, in which mud bricks, known locally as "tafal", plaster, palm trunks are used. It was also prepared and transformed into a heritage exhibition covering different

historical periods of Wadi Al Haimli and reflecting the scientific and cultural movement witnessed by the place in the past.

He pointed out that the house was divided into five corners: The first corner for antiques such as currency, weapons and silverware. the second corner for old doors and windows and their decorations, artistic elements and iron materials. the third corner for palm fronds and their

uses in daily life, and the fourth corner was devoted to manuscripts and historical documents, the oldest of which dates back to 1196 AH along with models of rock inscriptions and the oldest known rock inscription date back to the year 944 AH. the fifth corner is allocated for the household items of the old Omani house, which are used permanently, such as pottery and copper utensils such as trays, flasks and cooking tools.

NATURE

The rare Matak trees in Manah



THERE ARE MANY plants and trees in the various governorates of the Sultanate that adapt to the environment in which they grow. Manah in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah is distinguished by the presence of the rare locally called "Al Matak" tree, which represents a social value for the people. It is the emblem of the wilayat and is used to treat some diseases.

Suwaid al Toobi from the village of Al Ma'ara in the Wilayat of Manah is one of those interested in studying this tree, and said that the tree is one of the rare trees in the Sultanate that only grows in the Al Ain neighbourhood in Al Ma'ara. It is known for its medium size, short branches, small sticky leaves and bitter taste. It grows by one to one and a half meters above the level of the ground, and its roots spread in a depth of 80 cm with a length of more than three metre-s.



He added that the tree has many benefits for people in the traditional medical treatment, and its sweet-tasting roots are used to treat some diseases. After taking the roots of the tree, they are thoroughly cleaned of impurities and cut into small pieces after adding a little water to be used then to treat asthma, acidity and colic.

He explained that the tree is used to treat and resist poisons and is also used against snakes and scorpions' stings, and its lower roots extracted from the ground can be chewed, which con-



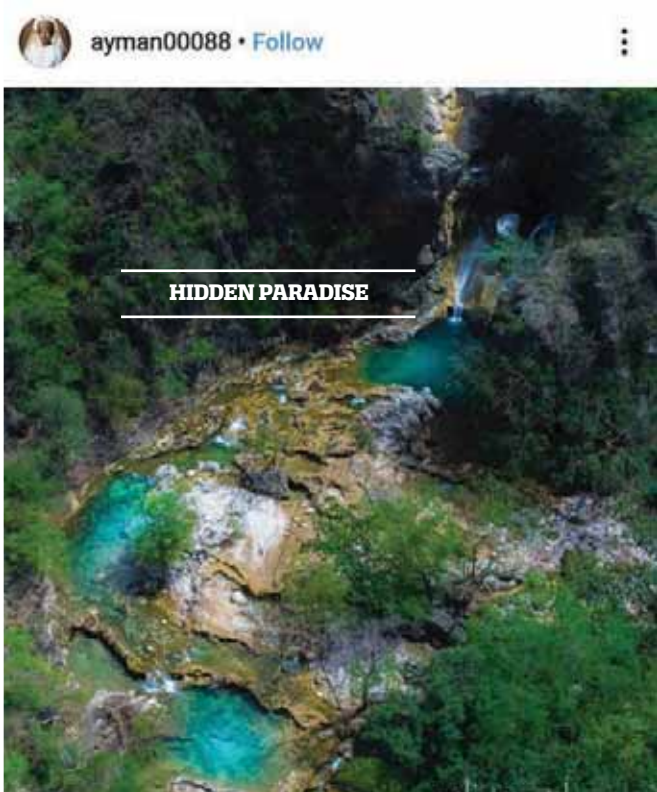
tain very sweet substances with low calories. poisonous reptiles avoid approaching the places where the tree grows.

He pointed to the role of the people of the region in preserving the tree due to its rarity and importance, and for fear of extinction, by replanting it in several places in the village. The number of the tree decreased due to water shortages and the outbreak of fires that destroyed some of them.



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TRAVEL TALES

With 3D printed 'steaks', Spanish start-up eyes the mass market



AS DEMAND for plant-based alternatives to meat rises, Barcelona-based startup Novameat is using its 3D printing technology to manufacture vegetarian "steaks" that it hopes will reach the mass market next year.

Novameat plans to sell its "steaks" directly to consumers and to businesses such as restaurants interested in producing plant-based meat, business development manager Alexandre Campos said on Tuesday.

The Spanish company, which developed its technology in 2018, was showing how its latest 3D printer produced food at Barcelona's Mobile World Congress (MWC).

"It didn't have the feeling of a traditional steak but I was positively surprised because I did not expect that the texture would be so well achieved," said Ferran Gregori, after trying one of the "steaks" printed at Novameat's stand at the world's

largest telecoms gathering.

The company uses 3D technology to test recipes, introducing ingredients through capsules because it is a cheaper process than mass-producing, Campos said.

Once a model is considered successful, it could then be produced on a larger scale in bigger machines not using 3D technology, manufacturing up to 500 kg of fake meat per hour, he added.

Campos said the startup's aim had been to recreate the muscle fibres of animal meat but using 100 per cent plant-based ingredients.

He forecast the plant-based industry would keep growing at double-digit rates in the foreseeable future.

The company also said it was producing the fake meat for environmental reasons.

"(We seek to) replace animal meat for something that is better for the planet, ourselves and animals," Campos said. — **Reuters**



Norway salmon farming moves to cleaner waters: Indoors

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS of salmon swim against the current in southeast Norway — in massive indoor tanks away from the nearest river as the controversial industry increasingly embraces greener land-based facilities.

The fish live in two gigantic pools inside an inconspicuous industrial building in Fredrikstad owned by a company that plans to raise salmon in similar settings even further afield, in the United States.

By raising the salmon on land, the industry is attempting to move away from the river or sea cages that have invited criticism over a slew of issues.

The problems run from costly mass escapes to fish infected with sea lice treated with chemicals to mounds of faeces and feed piling up on the seabed below the farms.

"At sea, you depend on the almighty for many things. In a land-based farm, we are suddenly the all-powerful one," Fredrikstad Seafoods general manager Roger Fredriksen said.

"Here we control every-

thing: temperature, oxygen, pH, CO2," he said as he gave a tour of Norway's first land-based salmon farm, opened in 2019.

Pumped from the nearby mouth of Norway's largest river, the salt water that feeds the facility is treated with UV light to eliminate viruses and bacteria and afterwards it is cycled and filtered through a loop for repeated use.

Under a faint blue light, designed to trigger their appetite, the salmon swim day and night as they are fed food pellets from an overhead dispenser.

When they reach between four and five kilograms (nine and 11 pounds), they are harvested.

"The fish have a very firm consistency," said veterinarian Sandra Ledang, head of production at the adjacent abattoir.

"That's because it swims against the current all its life, from the moment it arrives in our facilities until it is slaughtered. It exercises absolutely every day," she added.

As populations are expected to increase, with almost 10

billion mouths to feed by 2050, food production needs to be optimised.

While salmon, which is rich in protein, is still a luxury in many places, it is finding new customers among the growing middle class, particularly in Asia.

MADE IN CHINA SALMON

Matthias Halwart, a senior officer in the fisheries department of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), sees clear benefits to recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS), like those tested in Norway.

"You have fully controlled environment for the fish, a very low water use, a very good disease control, a very efficient land use, you can optimise your feeding strategies and you can have a very good proximity with the market," Halwart said.

Proponents say that although land farms require a lot of energy, their proximity to consumers reduces the use of transportation, making them better for the environment.

Land-based farming

projects are already spreading around the world and soon salmon now primarily raised in Norwegian, Chilean, Scottish and Canadian waters will also be produced in Japan, Florida or China.

Nordic Aquafarms, the parent company of Fredrikstad Seafoods, is working on two farms in the United States, one in Maine on the east coast, the other in California on the west coast.

The plan is to use Icelandic salmon roe to raise the fish there.

"The idea is to produce locally. No need to fly salmon over the ocean from one continent to another," Fredriksen said.

HAPPY FISH?

However, production costs are still higher, and land-based salmon farming is currently considered more as a complement than a substitute for sea- or river-based farming.

NGO Compassion in World Farming, which campaigns against intensive factory farming, fears that the quest for profits will come at the expense of animal welfare.

"We estimate that the minimum density necessary for profitability is 50 kilograms per cubic metre of water," said Lucille Bellegarde, in charge of agri-food affairs for the French branch of the organisation.

But she lamented that the "average density found in existing systems is more like 80 kilograms per cubic metre" — eight times denser than what the NGO recommends.

Fredriksen said these fears are misguided as his farm cares about the welfare of the salmon.

"If the fish are not happy, they don't grow." — **AFP**



Al Suwjara: An iconic Omani mountain village hidden in Nizwa

By Thekra al Manji



The Sultanate of Oman is unique in its ancient cultural and historical heritage that is rich in culture and authentic legacies that reflect the extent to which the Omani man is connected to his environment and society.

Many of Oman's old villages exemplify these rich legacies becoming symbols of the Omani's efforts to preserve their culture even on their special architectural designs.

In the past, the buildings in Oman were simple with people creating homes from the resources available around them. The Omanis relied on the gifts of Allah to not only build homes but create thriving communities.

The village of Al Suwjara is an example of an ancient Omani village whose houses were built with mud and stone. Here, one will easily find ancient heritage mixed with the beauty of modern ideas to generate a wonderful tourist village.

Al Suwjara is located in Jabal Al Akhdhar, about 176 km away from Muscat and can only be reached by four-wheel-drive vehicles. Reaching it requires driving 4 km on the unpaved road and then walking for 15 minutes. Upon reaching the village, tourists would forget the trouble and hardship of the road when feeling they begin to breathe the calm, fresh air.

The idea of converting the old village into a tourist hostel began when the original residents of the village moved to another residential block. The question in the villagers' minds was how can they preserve the heritage village? The idea came from a visitor who used to visit the village a lot. So, in 2016, residents started implementing the idea with two goals: Firstly, to preserve the heritage that is a testament to Omani's dynamic range of talent in home building and; secondly, to introduce future generations to the life of the ancient Omani people. The project started with two rooms created by a volunteer tourism team.

"We focused on involving the village's youth and creating opportunities for families who want additional income. We faced several economic difficulties due to the lack of sufficient financial support to open the rest of the rooms and receive tourists. As the expansion of the village is required to accommodate the

largest number of tourists, we needed financial support from private or governmental companies to develop the village and provide it with good services", shared one of the original development team members.

The village offers many different natural and outdoor experiences. Surrounded by diverse plant life, visitors can get up close and personal with the different flora located in this part of the mountain. Al Suwjara is also near Amer Cave where you can see the beautiful rock formations, stalagmites, and stalactites. Entry to the cave requires the use of ropes and tourists should be medically fit for this type of experience. The atmosphere in the first half of the cave is cold the other half is dry and wet and muddy with a total length of about 800 meters. Amer Cave is one of the five longest caves in Jabal Al Akhdhar.

The village also offers plenty of mountain hiking trails. For those who love adventure, they can go down from the top of the mountain to the bottom. There are also heritage rooms where a tourist can stay overnight.

"Currently, we are completely renovating the village to suit families and also individual visitors. Visits to the village of Al Suwjara are appropriate in all seasons, as it is influenced by the Jabal Al Akhdhar's climate, where it is moderately cold in summer and very cold in winter. There are some instructions that the tourist must follow to enter the village, which is posted at the entrance" shared the developing team member.

The team also advises that "we must all preserve the Omani heritage for future generations. These mud houses are considered one of the ancient architectures that reflect the civilisational development of people in the ancient time and expresses the development of human needs in every time and place. It is a symbol of the strong Omani man who paved the way from the harsh environmental conditions surrounding him to make his own home with the use of simple primitive tools", the team member said.

"Al Suwjara Village is a successful project that we must focus on to develop and make it an integrated tourist village; together to preserve the efforts of the Omani ancestors", he added.

