



HM SENDS CONGRATULATIONS CABLE TO PRESIDENT OF USA

Muscat: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Joe Biden of the United States of America on his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the president and his country's people further progress and prosperity, wishing existing relations and cooperation between the two countries further development and progress. — **ONA**



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



WORLD Merkel makes last official visit to UK

2 Finally, German Chancellor Angela Merkel met Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle. The Queen even invited photographers to “take a picture and make history” as the European political giant bowed out of her UK visit in style. **>A6**

OMAN Ministry of Labour unveils 2021 plan

1 Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, gave a presentation in the Majlis Al Shura about the ministry's plan for the Sultanate's labour market in 2021. **>A3**

MARKET MSX gains for fourth consecutive month

3 The Omani stock market witnessed gains for the fourth consecutive month during June-2021 and was the best performing market in the GCC, according to a new report. **>B1**

CRICKET

Over 3.5bn people to watch T20 World Cup

Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than 3.5 billion people around the world are expected to watch matches from the upcoming Twenty20 Cricket World Cup, which is jointly hosted by Oman.

Pankaj Khimji, the Chairman of the Oman Cricket Association, speaking to TFM, the radio station of the *Times of Oman*, said that the World Cup is a chance for Oman to showcase its sporting facilities, as well as the qualities that make it a destination people will look forward to visiting in the future. The tournament is being jointly held by Oman and the neighbouring United Arab Emirates.

“I am still finding it difficult to fathom that we are a World Cup hosting nation,” he said. “The more I think about it, the more I say that this will really put Oman on the



Pankaj Khimji, the Chairman of the Oman Cricket Association.

global map, at least among the cricketing countries of the world.

“This will showcase Oman as not just a sporting country, but one that has developed so much,” added

Khimji. “This is a country whose sporting development has been very much under the radar.

For this particular 23 or 24-day event, that is under four weeks, we are talking about a television audience of 3.5 billion people. That is massive.” Matches for one of the two groups of the preliminary stages of the tournament will be held in Oman, with the other taking place in the UAE.

Groups

Each group will consist of four teams, of which two will advance to the tournament proper, called the Super 12. Oman is one of the eight teams involved in this initial round, and the team is set to play its matches at the Amerat Cricket Ground, its home stadium.

This means that Oman is among the first associate level countries to host and play in a Twenty20 World

Cup at the same time, Khimji said.

“We are the only associate level nation in the whole of Asia to have qualified. Therefore, this is a huge deal for Oman,” he explained. “We are going to hold something like six to 12 games of the 40-odd games of the tournament. What's going to happen next is that you are going to have a lot of other cricketing nations taking notice of Oman, both as a stopover for their pre-season and post-season activities, and a lot of Test playing nations who will want to come here and do their pre-season with us. “It puts Oman on the map for a lot of people who are not aware of the country's culture, its geographic beauty, its stature, and its proximity to large groups of people who can travel here, so from that perspective, I think it is one of the best opportunities Oman will get to showcase its natural beauty,” he added. **>A3**



3,140 NUMBER OF DEATHS REPORTED
IN OMAN TILL JULY 1, 2021

530 PATIENTS ADMITTED TO ICUS AS OF
JULY 1, 2021

1,591 PATIENTS ADMITTED IN HEALTH
INSTITUTIONS

MAIN REASONS BEHIND COVID DEATHS IN OMAN

Immunity – a person's natural ability to fight off diseases – is by far the most important factor in combating the coronavirus

Times News Service

MUSCAT: There are four main factors that determine the severity of COVID-19 in patients, and their chances of recovery from the disease, say doctors in Oman. A person's natural immunity, the strain of the virus that has infected them, the extent to which the virus has spread in their body, and any other existing health problems they have, influence whether they will make a full recovery, or succumb to the disease.

Immunity – a person's natural ability to fight off diseases – is by far the most important factor in combating the coronavirus, and the factors that determine this are often hereditary, i.e., passed down from one's parents.

“If your parents have strong immunity, then it is likely that you will also have a better ability to fight off diseases,” said Dr A Basheer, a senior internist at Badr Al Sama'a Hospital. “If you have strong immunity, then it is very likely that you will only get mild symptoms and recover from COVID-19 easily.”

Immunity is not wholly dependent on hereditary factors, though. Following a proper diet and taking regular exercises are two of the best ways to naturally boost the body's disease-fighting capabilities. “These days, we see a lot of patients eating junk food, sugary drinks, and fatty snacks,” admitted Basheer. “These foods will not help the body fight off illnesses. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, keep yourself hydrated, and maintain healthy habits. Your body's immunity will automatically improve.”

Adding to this, Dr Rasheed Ali, a specialist in internal medicine at Al Salama Polyclinic, said unhealthy habits lead to problems such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension that doctors refer to as comorbidities, which worsen the impact of some diseases on people.

“If a patient's viral load is

high, then it is more likely they will reach the critical stages of COVID-19,” he said. “If there are 100 instances of the virus in my body, and 10,000 in yours, then the intensity of the disease and its spread in your body will be more. My ability to fight the disease also depends on my immunity.”

“But if I have comorbidities, if I have hypertension, diabetes, cardiac disease, renal disease, or if I am taking an immunosuppressive drug, I will have more complications that will affect my recovery,” he added.

The initial period of the virus' presence in the human body, explained Ali, is its most crucial. Patients intentionally coming late to hospitals to get a COVID-19 diagnosis, after they have already developed symptoms such as fever and cough, also played a role in making it more difficult for some of them to recover. Ali also touched upon a phase in the body called viremia, which is when the virus is present in the person's bloodstream. During this phase, treatment with anti-inflammatories and other related medicines will help the patient make a full recovery. **>A3**

- » SERIOUSNESS OF INFECTION
- » NEW STRAIN OF THE VIRUS
- » EXISTING HEALTH ISSUES
- » LACK OF IMMUNITY

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

COVID-19 vaccination for 18+ begins today

Times News Service

MUSCAT: People above 18 years of age can start taking their COVID-19 vaccines from today, once they have made their appointments to take the jab.

Those wishing to book vaccine appointments need to do so through the Tarassud+ COVID-19 surveillance app, or from the website, covid19.moh.gov.om. The effort comes as part of the country's national immunisation campaign against COVID-19.

Once they have received their appointment details, people can go to the vaccination centre closest to them, and proceed to get inoculated. Those who turn up for



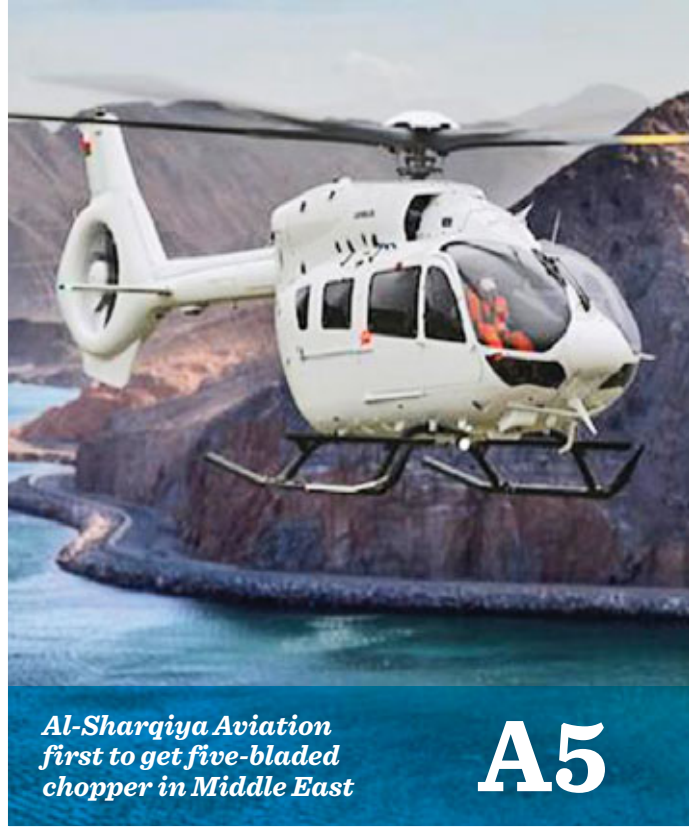
their appointments are requested to follow the prevention measures related to COVID-19.

Meanwhile, companies that do not adhere to prevention measures are being penalised, as per the rules issued by the Supreme Committee. On Friday, 2 June, companies in Barka, Saham, and

Nizwa were found to not comply with the precautionary requirements needed to prevent the spread of the disease.

Similarly, a day earlier, South Sharqiyah Municipality “issues violations against commercial facilities in the states of Jalan Bani Bu Ali, and Al Kamel Al Wafi”, according to the Government Communications Centre, for the same reasons.

Violations were also issued by North Batinah Municipality for shops in Suwaiq that failed to follow COVID prevention guidelines. The Ministry of Health has also issued advice for parents of children who are suspected to be suffering from COVID-19. **>A5**



Al-Sharqiya Aviation first to get five-bladed chopper in Middle East

A5



PRAYER
TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....12.16pm

Asr.....3:35pm

Maghrib.....7:03pm

Isha.....8:25pm

Fajr (Tomorrow).....3.58am

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Labour Ministry unveils 2021 plans



Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, gave a visual presentation before the Majlis Al Shura about the ministry's plan for the Sultanate's labour market in 2021

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour is reviewing and updating laws and legislations of work in the Sultanate and studying the replacement

and employment plan in cooperation with the supervising government agencies and various economic sectors. Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, gave a visual presentation on Thursday

before the Majlis Al Shura about the ministry's plan for the Sultanate's labour market in 2021.

Pillars

During the presentation, His Excellency the Minister of Labour also referred to the pillars from which the ministry's action plan emerges, represented in the "Oman 2040" vision, the tenth five-year plan (2021-2025), the results of diagnosing the current situation of the labour market, the national strategy for Oman's digital society and e-government, and reviewing and updating laws, legislation, replacement and employment management in cooperation

with supervisory government agencies and various economic sectors, developing labour market policies, enhancing the attractiveness of the private sector, and national programmes for rehabilitation and training of jobseekers.

The presentation covered five main topics: (1) Public-private sector partnership; (2) The Labour Ministry's Plan 2021; (3) Procedures to generate jobs for Omanis; (4) Efforts to implement employment initiatives (including direct employment in fresh jobs, replacement of expatriate manpower and adjustments for lay-off in Omani labour); and (5) Employment initiatives. At the conclusion of the

session, the minister answered queries raised by the Majlis members about the labour market, employment opportunities, expat replacement plans and ways to resolve the issue of Omanis whose services have been terminated.

Continuity of partnership

Their Excellencies members of the Council stressed during their discussions the importance of continuity of partnership between the government and the Council in issues related to the employment of the Omani workforce, since most of the initiatives that are found in the presentation and the Ministry is working on within its current plans

include proposals and recommendations that came out of the Council in previous periods.

The discussions also agreed on the importance of emphasising the message of higher education and its role in meeting the current and labour market requirements, and linking generations to scientific, cognitive and scientific developments that provide them with sufficient expertise to achieve those requirements, and this is what must be confirmed by the Ministry's procedures in dealing with available job opportunities in order to achieve a balance between the type of jobs, the level of graduates and their specialisations.

COVID-19

<FROM A1 'Come to hospital early'

Once it has begun to affect other organs, however, causing the patient a lot of suffering, it is harder to treat the disease.

In this context, Dr Sathish Veluswamy, a surgeon at Burjeel Hospital, also advised people to come to hospitals early to get diagnosed, should they feel their symptoms taking a turn for the worse. He too asked people to look after their immunity, as it is one of the most important defences at their disposal against the virus.

"All individuals don't have the same immune response: when you have the common cold, for example, some recover quickly and go about their business, whereas others have severe headaches and other problems," he said. "Most often, immunity is familial: it is inherited from the family. Some individuals are atopic: they are more affected by diseases, while others are not."

"There is unfortunately no system present to properly map a person's immunity," said Veluswamy, who added that some poor lifestyle habits – such as cigarettes and alcohol – did indirectly affect the body's ability to

fight off disease.

"Alcohol for sure definitely affects your immunity," he explained. "Similarly, if you are a smoker, then you are weakening your lungs. This deters you from physical activities, and comorbidities like this can cause other problems such as hypertension."

"Exercise is also a great way to boost your immunity, particularly if you undertake practices such as yoga," he added. "There are many online instructors these days, who can help you learn it the right way."

Don't take chances

The doctor went on to add that people are sometimes reluctant to come to hospital to get checked up, they asked people to seek medical attention, should they feel ill or experience difficulty breathing. "During COVID-19, do not take any chances, please," explained Veluswamy.

Another doctor in the country, Dr Rajeev Chathanath, the head of the COVID-19 unit at NMC Hospital, said that until people were eligible for vaccines, it was important that they kept their immunity levels high, and main-

tained the required precautionary measures.

"Immunity is governed by various factors, such as whether a person has been previously exposed to the virus, their general health status, how active they are, and their level of physical fitness," he said. "Some people might also take medicines such as steroids for other comorbidities such as arthritis, but a side-effect of these is their immunosuppressive nature."

Exercise goes a long way in improving immunity, added Chathanath, as does proper sleep habits and a regular diet.

"Usually, patients who present only COVID-19 with mild symptoms do not even need to come to the hospital," he said. "They can recover at home, by drinking plenty of water, taking nutritional supplements high in vitamins, as well as getting enough rest. Unfortunately, there is not yet any anti-COVID medicine available to give to patients with mild symptoms of the disease. Depending on their comorbidities, if they have other serious illnesses, it is better for them to come to the hospital."

CRICKET

<FROM A1 Received lot of encouragement

Cricket in Oman has received plenty of encouragement from the government, added Khimji, with a big part of the OCA's efforts to develop interest in the sport involving introducing the game to more and more schools across the nation, and setting up more grass-root training opportunities. "We have a fantastic infrastructure, which was facilitated by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour, and patronised by His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, both of whom have been great supporters of setting up not just sport for youth in Oman, but also of cricket," he explained.

"We've put up some facilities that are among the best for an associate nation in this region, if not the world, and that is going to put us on a higher pedestal than we currently are," he went on to say.



"Secondly, the fact that the Oman cricket team have qualified for the World Cup, and we are among the top 16 cricketing nations in the world, mean that when I raise my hand to make a point, Oman gets more noticed: this is the second time in a row that we have qualified for this tournament."

He added that Oman now has

the right infrastructure now to host large countries to come here and do pre-season training. About a month and half ago, OCA was on the verge of hosting an Afghanistan-Zimbabwe-Ireland series, but that did not happen. However, talks are underway to host two well-known countries immediately after the World Cup.

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MANAH'S RARE TREE WITH MEDICINAL PROPERTIES



A NUMBER of rare plants and trees are found at different parts of the Sultanate, depending on the environment and climatic conditions. Wilayat of Manah in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah is known for the rare antherus trees which are used for treatment of many diseases.

Suwaid bin Awadh Al Tobi from the village of Al Ma'ara in Manah said, "it is one of the rare trees in the Sultanate and grows only at Al Ain Village in the Wilayat of Manah. It is of medium height with short branches and the leaves have a bitter taste. It is one and a half metre from the ground and has roots that go at the depth of 80cm under the ground."

He said that traditionally, people living in this area used the leaves of the tree for treatment of asthma, acidity and stomach



pain. The sweet roots of the tree have low calories. The tree is also used for treatment caused from scorpion and snake bites.

He also pointed to the role the people play in preservation of these rare trees. "People now replant these trees at different areas of the village due to the decrease in irrigation water and the fire incidents that damaged some of the trees. -ONA



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AIRBUS H145D3

Al Sharqiya Aviation first to get five-bladed chopper in Middle East



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Al-Sharqiya Aviation (ASA), the first and only commercial helicopter operator in Oman, announced on Saturday that it will shortly take delivery of its first Airbus H145D3 helicopter, leased from the Milestone Aviation Group (Milestone).
Not only is this the first five-bladed Airbus H145 for ASA, it is the first to be delivered to a customer in the Middle East.
“Al-Sharqiya Aviation is thrilled to be the first operator of the five-bladed H145D3 variant in the Middle East. The H145D3 complements our fleet perfectly and fulfills a variety of mission profiles which match our overall business

development objectives,” Tariq Al Barwani, CEO of Al Sharqiya Aviation said.
“We have been working closely with Milestone on this project and we are grateful to have them as our leasing partner in this transaction where certainty of execution is critical to deliver for our customers,” he added.
“The helicopter enhances our capabilities to support various sectors such as oil and gas, emergency medical services, and offshore operations. On top of that, the H145D3 builds on our passenger capabilities, as it can carry up to 8 passengers in addition to 2 captains,” Adam Al Rashdi, commercial manager for Al-Sharqiya Aviation, said.

BILATERAL TIES

Oman, KSA reaffirm strong relations and mutual respect

RIYADH: His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Turki Al Said, the Sultanate’s ambassador accredited to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) reaffirmed that the relations between the two brotherly countries were deep-rooted and established on strong ties and mutual respect.
In a statement to Oman News Agency, he said that the distinct relations between the two countries have covered the popular and commercial levels, which would further enhance the cultural, social and economic relations.
Regarding the existing investments of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Sultanate, he said



He also pointed to the interest of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in boosting their investments in the Sultanate, mainly in light of the amendments and improvements the Sultanate has issued in terms of restructuring the administrative apparatus of the State and the legislations and improvement of the business environment besides the facilities aimed to boost national economy.
On the road to link the Sultanate and Saudi Arabia, he said, “Work is in progress and at the final stages.” Regarding the border post, he said that “the authorities concerned in both the countries are according due efforts to this effect.” —ONA

that business sector in both the countries would no doubt upgrade the level of exchange of trade between the two countries.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

<FROM A1> Prevention is better than cure

“Many children with the coronavirus can recover with the availability of home care,” said the MoH.
“But you should go to the nearest health facility when you notice any of these symptoms in the child.”
These symptoms include difficulty breathing, chest and/or abdominal pain, the face and lips turning blue, an inability to sleep, diarrhoea, vomiting, an inability concentrating, or too much sleep.
“Because prevention is better than cure, take precautions to protect your child from infection with the coronavirus,” added the ministry.

ARAB CIVIL AVIATION ORGANISATION MEETING

The Sultanate has participated in the 26th General Assembly of the Arab Civil Aviation Organisation, held in the Moroccan capital of Rabat. The final declaration (Rabat Declaration) of the 26th session stressed the main role for which the Arab Civil Aviation Organisation was established. — ONA





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Electronic Tender (s)

Majan Electricity Co. (SAOC) Announces the Following E-Tenders

Tender NO	Description	Grade	Last date for buying	Submission date	Tender price R.O.
66/2021 Re-Tender	LIVE AND DEAD LINES WASHING OF OVERHEAD LINE INSULATORS FOR (33 & 11) KV NETWORK AT (NORTH BATINAH , AL DHAIRAH AND AI BURAIMI) GOVERNORATE	B	13/7/2021	27/7/2021	212 /=
43/2021 Re-Tender	POWER TRANSFORMERS OIL REGENERATION AT MJEC NETWORK IN NORTH ALBATINA, AL DAHIRA & AI BURAIMI GOVERNORATES	Specialized	22/7/2021	10/8/2021	25 /=
78/2021	TECHNICAL SUPPORT TEAM PROVISION CONTRACT (CONDITION MONITORING AND NETWORK SECURITY)	B	20/7/2021	10/8/2021	608 /=
79/2021	MAINTENANCE OF DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMERS (315 KVA, 500KVA, 1000KVA, and 2000KVA) AT NORTH ALBATINAH, ALDAHAIHRA & BURAIMI GOVERNORATE	C	20/7/2021	10/8/2021	25 /=

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The Tenderers should enclose a copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any registered bank in the Sultanate of Oman for a value of (1%) of the submitted bid value valid for a period of (90) days from the date of Submission, and addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee. The original Bid Bond to be delivered in sealed envelope, and the tender number and title of project only are to be mentioned on the envelopes. The place of submission the original bond would be at MJEC Contracts & tenders office at **MJEC building in Al Sawari Center in Sohar** or at **MJEC Contracts & tenders office at Muscat in Al Mubailah- opposite to the industrial Area beside to Bank Suhar, before 10 A.M.** according to the assigned date of submission of the tender. Any Submission of original tender bond after the time and date mentioned in the advertisement will not be accepted and tenderer offer will be rejected.

The Completed signed and sealed commercial and technical offer with all tender documents should be submitted and uploaded online into the above mentioned E-Tendering website. The Hard copies of the tender document are not accepted.

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Ministry of Higher Education, Research & Innovation

Electronic Tenders

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

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 /= RO	10/07/2021	20/7/2012

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



www.moh.gov.om

Germany's Angela Merkel makes last official visit to UK

Queen Elizabeth II invited photographers to "take a picture and make history"

LONDON: Finally, German Chancellor Angela Merkel met Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle in the west of London.

"I'm delighted to be here," said Merkel when she was introduced to the British monarch, reviving memories of their moments at the G7 conference in Cornwall which she called the highlight of that trip.

The Queen said that it was "very nice" to see the outgoing leader once again.

The monarch even invited photographers to "take a picture and make history" as the European political giant bowed out of her UK visit in style.

Disagreements over sausages and football

While the talks seemed to go smoothly, Boris Johnson raised the problem of getting chilled meats like sausages into Northern Ireland.

According to European Union common market rules, importing chilled meats from third countries is not allowed. Britain is considered a third country by the EU since Brexit.

Although the grace period for sending British meat to Northern



POLITICAL GIANT: In a press conference after talks, Merkel thanked her British hosts for the "gracious hospitality" extended on her first bilateral visit abroad since the pandemic

Ireland was this week extended until September, Johnson wants a more long-term solution.

"Imagine if Bratwurst could not be moved from Dortmund to Dueseldorf because of the jurisdiction of an international court," the UK Primer Minister said. "You'd think it was absolutely extraordinary. So we have to sort it out."

"I'm sure as Angela says, with goodwill and with patience we can sort it out," he added.

On a more humorous note, Merkel remarked she was "a little bit sad" after England's 2-0 beating of Germany in the Euro 2020 competition last Tuesday.

"I'm obviously grateful to you for breaking with that tradition, just for once," Johnson said of the habitual losses to Germany in past soccer matches.

The UK Prime Minister said he was creating a new academic

medal in honor of his German counterpart.

The £10,000 (\$13,800) award will be named after German-born British scientist Caroline Herschel, who broke new ground in astrophysics.

It would be given to any German or British woman who achieves excellence in science from 2022.

In a press conference after talks, Merkel thanked her British hosts for the "gracious hospitality" extended on her first bilateral visit abroad since the pandemic.

"Now that Britain has left the European Union it's a good opportunity to open a new chapter in our relationship, to find very practical formats where we can have very close contact," she said.

"We would be very happy on the German side to work together on a friendship treaty or a cooperation treaty, which would reflect

the whole breadth of relations," she added.

However, Angela Merkel has said she will taking a "step by step" approach to the new relationship with the United Kingdom after Brexit.

The German leader was also non-committal when asked if UK prime ministers could be invited to European Union summits as an attempt to repair ties in the post-Brexit era.

"We will see," said Merkel, who is in her last few months as chancellor of Germany.

Prime Minister Johnson has said he doesn't plan to order a reduction in crowds numbers at the remaining Euro 2020 tournament soccer matches at London's Wembley Stadium. Crowd capacity at Wembley Stadium is to be increased to more than 60,000 fans for the semifinals. **bw**

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TOKYO OLYMPICS

Olympics chiefs relax protest rules for Tokyo Games

TOKYO: Olympics chiefs on Friday eased some of its rules to allow athletes at the Tokyo Games to "express their views" both before and after events. The decision came amid calls to relax rule 50.2 of the Olympic Charter, which states: "No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas."

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) had promised to review the rule after the Black Lives Matter movement gained global support. The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee had already vowed not to sanction American athletes for "respectful" protests supporting racial and social justice at the Tokyo Games. IOC said it consulted with some 3,500 athletes ahead of the Tokyo Games, which open in three weeks.

What are the new guidelines?

For the first time, athletes can express themselves before starting a competition or after, but not during a game. In that limited period, athletes can take a knee or raise a fist.

Political statements during



events, victory ceremonies, and at the Olympic Village are still not allowed, the IOC said.

IOC also stressed that protests must not be "targeted, directly or indirectly, against people, countries, organizations and/or their dignity," and they cannot be "disruptive" to other competitors.

Athletes who violate the revised guidelines face sanctions, including disqualification and being stripped of medals.

Do the new rules apply to other Olympic events?

The IOC's Friday decision is limited to the Tokyo Olympics and does not refer to the controversial 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics in February.

China has come under scrutiny and boycott calls over the treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang and the clampdown on freedoms in Hong Kong. **bw**

DEMOLITION

BMC prepares to demolish part of Amitabh Bachchan's house for road widening

MUMBAI: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has started compliance on its 2017 notice to demolish a part of Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan's Prateeksha Bungalow for road widening.

The BMC has given a notice to Bachchan's family for road widening that a portion of their Prateeksha bungalow plot will be acquired for the widening of the Sant Dnyaneshwar Marg road. The BMC has also instructed Mumbai Suburban Collector City survey officials to demarcate the exact portion of the bungalow required for the road-widening project.

Sant Dnyaneshwar Marg connects Chandan Cinema area to Link Road towards Iskon temple.

Advocate Tulip Brian Miranda, Municipal Councillor, while speaking to ANI, asked why the BMC's work had been completed for all other houses except around the Bollywood actor's, and said that the key project had been stalled.

"The BMC had given notice to actor Amitabh Bachchan in 2017 about this situation under the road winding policy. The wall of the plot adjoining Bachchan's bungalow was taken and drainage has been created. But Bachchan's house has been left untouched," Miranda said.

She added, "When the notice was issued, why was the land not



taken? It belonged to a common person they would have taken it immediately under Section 299 of the Municipal Act notice that says you don't have to wait for a second notice of appeal."

The advocate further said that despite repeated attempts, she was unable to get through to authorities till threatened to go to Lokayukta.

"I wrote to the BMC in Feb 2021. I did not receive a reply so I had a telephonic conversation with the ward officer and wrote to the commissioner but still did

not receive a reply. This is a very necessary project because there are two schools, a hospital, an ISKCON temple, and monuments in Mumbai are around. The road winding project has been suddenly stopped just because of Amitabh Bachchan's Bungalow," she added.

"I started agitation and followups in February. I am very happy that this work resumed when I said that I will go to Lokayukta if this particular order is not followed and if it notice is not consummate," she added. **ANI**

MUDSLIDES

20 people missing in Japan after landslides

TOKYO: Japanese authorities said on Saturday that at least 20 people were missing after rows of houses were swept away by mudslides in Atami, west of Tokyo, according to NHK, Japan's public broadcaster.

The country's military sent emergency rescuers to Atami in the Shizuoka prefecture following

the incident.

Officials in the Shizuoka prefecture said that the mudslide happened on Saturday morning. Rescue workers are still searching for the missing people.

Takamichi Sugiyama, a prefectural disaster management official, said that some officials in the area were believed to have been

evacuated, but more details were unavailable. Television footage, along with videos on social media showed a black mudslide from the mountains crushing houses on the way.

Yoshihide Suga, Japan's prime minister, has called an emergency task force to respond to the crisis, according to the NHK. **bw**



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Italy march past Belgium into Euro 2020 semifinals

The Red Devils started brightly into the game and reaped their first chance with less than a minute played

MUNICH: Relentless Italians scored twice in the first half and advanced past Belgium 2-1 in an intense see-saw Euro 2020 quarterfinal encounter in the Football Arena Munich on Friday.

The Red Devils started brightly into the game and reaped their first chance with less than a minute played as Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma had to defuse a dangerous attack from Romelu Lukaku.

Belgium were the more active team in the opening stages, yet Italy thought they had opened the scoring with their first chance, but Leonardo Bonucci's goal was ruled



BELGIUM VS ITALY: Both teams posed threat when they attacked and it was eventually Italy, who broke the deadlock.

offside by the video assistant referee with 13 minutes gone.

At the other end of the pitch, Donnarumma had to be on guard to deny Kevin De Bruyne's promising strike on goal nine minutes later.

Both teams posed threat when they attacked and it was eventually Italy, who broke the deadlock as Belgium failed to clear the ball from their area allowing Nicolo Barella to slot home after shrugging off three defenders at the

half hour mark.

The Squadra Azzurra picked up the pace and made it two on the scoreboards after Lorenzo Insigne gave the ball a couple of touches before smashing it past hapless goalie Thibaut Courtois with two

minutes remaining in the first half.

Belgium sparked to life just before the half time whistle as Italy defender Giovanni di Lorenzo felled Jeremy Doku inside the box to cause a foul play penalty. Lukaku stepped up and made no mis-

take to halve the deficit.

After the restart, Italy continued on the front foot while Belgium lacked in penetration and ideas.

Belgium had to wait until the hour mark to create their next clear-cut opportunity, but Lukaku and Thorgan Hazard missed Nacer Chadli's sweeping cross to the far post. Robert Martinez' side increased the pressure but couldn't do much damage to Italy's bulwark. Belgium's golden and last chance came in the closing stages when Doku pulled a long-range effort just over the crossbar.

With the result, Italy progress into the semifinals where they will clash with Spain in Wembley on Tuesday.

"I don't think we suffered too much in any moment of the game. To beat a team like Belgium you need a great performance by everybody, and this is exactly what happened today," Italy head coach Roberto Mancini said.

"It hits hard. We had two opportunities, but their keeper made a good save and I think we gave the first goal away a bit to easily. It really could have gone either way, but Italy deserved to win here," Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois said. *xinhua*

EURO CUP

COPA AMERICA

Spain beat 10-man Switzerland on penalties to reach Euro 2020 semis

SAINT PETERSBURG: Mikel Oyarzabal held his nerves to score the crucial penalty as Spain entered the semi-finals of the ongoing Euro Cup after beating Switzerland 3-1 on penalties on Friday.

The match had gone to penalties after their last-eight tie had ended in a 1-1 draw. Even the extra time wasn't able to separate the two sides before it all came down to the penalty shootouts for deciding the winner. In the match, it was a dream start for Spain as the side took the lead within eight minutes of the play. Jordi Alba's shot from range took a big deflection off Denis Zakaria. It was the tenth own goal of the ongoing Euro Cup.

Switzerland kept fighting hard for the equaliser however the side wasn't able to find one as the game stood 1-0 at half-time.

Switzerland even replaced Breel Embolo with Ruben Vargas in the 23rd minute but that didn't change the fortune of the side.

The second half started with Switzerland searching for the equaliser and captain Xherdan



Shaqiri came to the rescue. The Switzerland skipper scored on his weaker right foot to give his side the equaliser in the 68th minute.

With 13 minutes remaining, Switzerland midfielder Remo Freuler received a red card, however, it didn't stop the side from pressing hard and the game went

into the extra time with a 1-1 score.

In the extra time, Yann Sommer's vital saves ensured that Spain didn't get the lead as the match went into the penalty shootout.

Spain will play Belgium or Italy for a place in the Euro Cup final. *ANI*

Paqueta's goal helps 10-man Brazil defeat Chile to enter Copa America semifinals

RIO DE JANEIRO: Lucas Paqueta's lone strike helped Brazil defeat Chile 1-0 in the quarter-finals of the ongoing Copa America here at the Olympic Stadium on Saturday.

With this win, Brazil has now entered the semifinals of the ongoing tournament. The only goal of the match came in the 46th minute as Paqueta netted the ball into the goalpost, giving Brazil 1-0 lead. No more goals were scored in the first half and as a result, Brazil went into halftime with a 1-0 cushion.

In the opening minutes of the second half, Brazil was given a big blow as Gabriel Jesus was sent off as he was given a red card by the match referee.

However, Brazil's defence managed to hold off Chile and in the end, the hosts walked away with a 1-0 victory.

In the other quarterfinal, Peru defeated Paraguay 4-3 on penalties to enter the semifinals of the ongoing tournament.

The normal match action had



finished in a 3-3 tie and as a result, the match eventually had to progress to penalties. Later in the day, Uruguay will clash against Colombia in the quarterfinal while in the second quarterfinal of the day, Argentina will lock horns against Ecuador. *ANI*

WIMBLEDON

BOXING

Former champions Murray, Muguruza out at Wimbledon

LONDON: Former champions Andy Murray and Garbine Muguruza were both ousted from the third round at Wimbledon on Friday.

Local hero Murray won the men's singles title twice in 2013 and 2016, but had been absent from the grass-court Grand Slam since 2017 due to injuries.

The 34-year-old Scot was granted a wild card for this year's tournament and reached the third round after two long matches, while his third-round opponent Denis Shapovalov had advanced much more easily thanks to a walkover with his second-round opponent Pablo Andujar.

The 22-year-old Canadian eased past Murray 6-4, 6-2, 6-2, setting up a clash with eighth seed Roberto Agut of Spain in the last 16.

"This is a dream come true for me," Shapovalov said in the on-court interview. "To play against a legend like Andy on Centre Court. He's an inspiration to many people, including me."

Murray has suffered a few setbacks since trying to return to the tour after hip surgeries. He was forced to withdraw from this year's Australian Open after testing positive for COVID-19,



and quit the French Open due to feeling discomfort.

"This week has been really good in some ways, but it's been frustrating too," said Murray. "I played two long matches and it's really significantly more than anything I have done in the last six months."

"I feel like I put a lot of work into getting to this point and then obviously to lose like that is tough," he added.

"It was positive that I got through the event without getting hurt, but I feel like I can do better tennis-wise. I feel like I

can play better and close matches out better."

Earlier on Centre Court, 2017 women's singles winner Muguruza was defeated by Ons Jabeur from Tunisia 5-7, 6-3, 6-2.

21st seed Jabeur will fight for a quarterfinal berth against last year's French Open champion Iga Swiatek, as the 20-year-old Pole needed only 55 minutes to beat her Romanian opponent Irina-Camelia Begu 6-1, 6-0.

Women's second seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus and eighth seed Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic both cruised into the fourth round in straight sets.

Men's singles defending champion Novak Djokovic also beat American qualifier Denis Kudla in straight sets, but the Serbian was backed into a corner many times. "I had to slow down the pace in the game because he was really handling well the ball, the flat ball, from the back of the court," said Djokovic after his 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (9) victory.

"I myself from the other side, I can't say that I'm too pleased with the way I performed. I felt like today I was a bit off, especially with serving," he said.

Djokovic will face Cristian Garin of Chile in the last 16. *xinhua*

AIBA increases weight categories for elite, youth men and women boxers

LAUSANNE: The International Boxing Association (AIBA) has decided to increase the number of weight categories for men and women boxers, saying that it will allow a greater pool of boxers to fight in divisions they feel "most strong and comfortable" in.

The Men's weight categories will increase from ten (10) to thirteen (13), whilst the women's categories will move from ten (10) to twelve (12). The new weight categories will come into effect from August 1.

"We are hereby pleased to inform you that after the widespread consultation of stakeholders in men's and women's boxing, including the Competition Committee, the Women's Committee and our national federations, the AIBA Board of Directors has voted in favour of amending the weight classes for youth and elite boxers at all AIBA competitions," AIBA stated in a letter to all National Federations.

"We believe this step will allow a greater pool of boxers to participate in the respective weight categories where they feel most strong

and comfortable. This innovation will help boxing to develop from grassroots to elite," the letter further added.

The changes have been made for the safety of boxers by ensuring easier weight management and a more level playing field. The minimum weight for men was reduced from 49kg to 48kg. The spread between the first five categories is 3kg, between the 5th and 7th it is 3.5kg, between the 7th and 9th it is 4kg, and between the 9th and 10th it is 5 kg, 10th and 12th is 6kg. The super heavyweight category starts from 92kg and has no limits.

The minimum weight for women remains 48kg. However, the spread between the first four weight categories is now 2kg. Between the 4th and 8th it is 3kg, between 8th and 9th it is 4 kg, from the 9th to the 10th it is 5kg, and from the 10th to the 11th it is 6kg. The heavyweight weight class remains the same at +81kg. AIBA president Umar Kremlev has shown full support of this decision as the reform of AIBA's whole competition structure is in process. *ANI*

RANSOMWARE ATTACK
US technology company Kaseya urged customers to shut down their servers on Friday after cyberattackers smuggled ransomware onto its network platform. The REvil gang, a major Russian-speaking ransomware syndicate, appears to be behind the attack, said John Hammond of the security firm Huntress Labs.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



NEW EU VAT RULES
New value-added tax (VAT) rules come into effect in the European Union on Thursday, making low-value e-commerce imports from China, the United States and Britain more expensive.

Oman's MSX emerges as best performing market in the GCC

Gains for the MSX Total Return index were similar at 5.5 per cent, whereas the MSX Sharia index reported slightly higher gains of 7.03 per cent in June



REPORT: In terms of sectorwise performance, all the three sectoral indices closed the month in the green. - File picture

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman stock market witnessed gains for the fourth consecutive month during June 2021 and was the best performing market in the GCC, according to a new report.

"The Muscat Securities Exchange (MSX) during the month of June ended with a gain of 5.5 per cent with the index touching a 14-month high level by mid-month at 4,077.87 points but receded marginally during the second half of the month to close slightly lower at 4,063.4 points," the Kuwait-based investment, strategy and research firm, Kamco Invest said.

Gains for the MSX Total Return index were similar at 5.5 per cent, whereas the MSX Sharia index reported slightly higher gains of 7.03 per cent during June 2021, Kamco Invest said in its monthly report on GCC stock markets.

In terms of sector performance, all three sectoral indices closed the month in the green with the Industry index reporting the biggest gains of 8.7 per cent followed by Financial and Services indices with monthly gains of 8.1 per cent and 6.1 per cent, respectively.

Gains during June 2021 pushed the first half of 2021 gains into

double digits for the MSX 30 index at 11.1 per cent.

The Industrial index was up 40.4 per cent in the first half of 2021 followed by Financial and Services indices with gains of 14.4 per cent and 8.2 per cent, respectively, the research firm said.

Galfar Engineering topped the monthly gainers' chart with its shares up 72.9 per cent followed by Oman Qatar Insurance and Oman & Emirates Investment Holding with gains of 70.4 per cent and 47.1 per cent, respectively.

On the decliner's side, Oman Chlorine topped with a fall of 15.5

per cent followed by Dhofar Generating Co. and Dhofar International with declines of 12.7 per cent and 10.5 per cent, respectively.

The monthly market breadth strongly favoured gainers that included 53 stocks as compared to 18 decliners. Trading activity remained upbeat during the month reaching multi-year highs. The total volume of shares traded during the month reached the highest in 37 months at 667.3 million shares as compared to 315.3 million shares traded during May-2021.

The monthly value traded was also at a 21-month high after

reaching OMR90.7 million in June 2021 as compared to OMR50.3 million in May 2021.

Bank Nizwa topped in terms of monthly volumes with 92.5 million traded shares followed by United Finance and Al Anwar Investment with 86.1 million shares and 60.2 million traded shares, respectively.

In terms of value traded, Bank Muscat topped with OMR11.2 million worth of shares changing hands during the month followed by Bank Nizwa and Al Anwar Investment at OMR 8.9 million and OMR6.3 million, respectively.

The share of Omanis in the monthly trading activity witnessed a steep decline from last month. Omanis accounted for 64.5 per cent of the total value of buy trades during June 2021 as compared to 85.4 per cent in May 2021.

In terms of the value of sell trades, Omani's share increased to 83.4 per cent in June 2021 from 82.1 per cent in May-2021, indicating net sellers during the month.

On the economic front, the government recently hired banks for its second international bond sale this year. According to the document, the Sultanate issued \$1.75 billion in a 9-year USD denominated Sukuk to support its budgeted expenditure. Total issuance this year stood at around \$7.2 billion amid a non-investment grade rating for the country.

The prospectus for the Sukuk

showed that Oman forecasts a deficit of OMR2.23 billion this year or 8.6 per cent of GDP.

Deficits are expected to decline to OMR1.66 billion in 2022 or 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and further lower to OMR605 million and OMR165 million in 2023 and 2024, respectively, resulting in a deficit of 2.0 per cent and 0.5 per cent of GDP.

GCC markets

Equity markets in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) were up for the eighth consecutive month during June-2021, in a rally that started in November-2020.

Gains were broad-based with only the Qatari index reporting a marginal decline of 0.2 per cent during the month, whereas the rest of the GCC markets reported low to mid-single-digit gains.

As a result, the MSCI GCC total return index recorded the best first-half performance since the index started tracking regional markets in 2005 with a return of 25.0 per cent during the first half of 2021.

Abu Dhabi continued to lead with the highest returns in the region as well as globally at 35.5 per cent followed by Saudi Arabia with a gain of 26.4 per cent.

All the markets in the GCC were in the green this year with a majority of the indices reporting double-digit gains.

PRIDE MOMENT

Renaissance celebrates 25th anniversary of IPO

Times News Service

MUSCAT: 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 the MSX 30 Index.

Commemorating the 25th anniversary of going public, Samir J Fares, 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 invaluable support from all stakeholders. We have been privileged to earn the trust and confidence of shareholders, thanks to a robust pro-

cess, disciplined approach, good corporate governance, transparent reporting and 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 these 25 years, 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.

EXPORT TARGET

India sets target of \$400 billion merchandise export in 2021-22

NEW DELHI: India has set a target of \$400 billion merchandise exports for 2021-22, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday.

"In collaboration with private industry, MSME sector, engineering, agriculture, automobile, steel sector, we have set an export target of \$400 billion. We all will work together to achieve this target," Goyal said at a press conference here. He said India's economy is growing and exports are also growing. -ANI

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE

153% surge in industrial applications submitted through Invest Easy

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) said that 4,981 industrial applications were submitted through the Invest Easy portal in the first quarter of 2021.

This is an increase of 152.5 per cent compared to the 1,973 industrial applications submitted in the same period of 2020, MoCIIP said in a statement.

In this context, the ministry pointed out that, the Sultanate's Industrial Strategy 2040 in collaboration with the other partners in the public and private sectors, aims at seeking investment opportunities in various sectors. This is with a view to strengthen economic diversification, raise the Sultanate's rating in the international indicators, promote foreign direct investment, and boost Oman's exports.

The Secretary of the Industrial Register at the MoCIIP, Ibtisam bint Mohammad Al Alawiya clarified that the number of new industrial applications of investment cost less than OMR5,000, submitted to MoCIIP during the first quarter of 2021, reached 4,737 applications, compared to 1,936 applications in the same period in 2020.



Ibtisam bint Mohammad Al Alawiya

As for the renewed industrial applications, Ibtisam said that the number of the renewed industrial applications of investment cost less than OMR5,000 reached 82 applications, compared to 42 applications submitted during the first quarter of the last year of 2020

She also pointed out that, the increase in the number of industrial applications registered during the first quarter of 2021 is due to investors' orientation to the electronic services provided by the ministry.

The provision of industrial licencing electronically aims at providing the best services to the Sultanate's industrial sector.

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Accountant with 3 years Oman experience (6 years total Experience), MBA Finance, well versed in VAT, NOC Available. Contact 97874226

Srilankan with 5 yrs experience & have completed BBA in Accounting looking for an Accountant job. Contact: 98981998, 9388825.

Part time accountant doing upto finalization seeking job. # 79102100

Indian male, B.Com, MBA, Finance 23 years of experience in Accounts, Audit & Finance (last 14 years in Oman) is looking for a suitable opportunity. D/L & NOC available. Contact 93231040
Email: trp270172@gmail.com

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MEP - Civil Designer/Draftsman 14 years GCC experience. (Full time - Freelance). Contact 90518123

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Indian male with 21 years' experience in Oman seeks job for Admin / Hr / - Contact 95425764

BM, with 26 yrs exp of large FMCG distribution looking for better prospect. Contact 90925520

Indian Female, Msc. (Mathematics) looking suitable job position. No experience, currently in Oman. Contact 91169195
Email: cb3415@gmail.com

Indian female, 8 years experience coordination, ex-secretary, admin asst. Contact 92243552

Omani male 15 yrs experience in the field of Public relation & good communication skill looking for a suitable placement. Contact 97407500.
Email khalidoman017@gmail.com

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Looking for driving job, 8 yrs experience in Oman. Languages known - Arabic, English & Hindi. Contact 97002240

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Contact 94887879
Email: amani.alhaj94@gmail.com

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JOB WANTED

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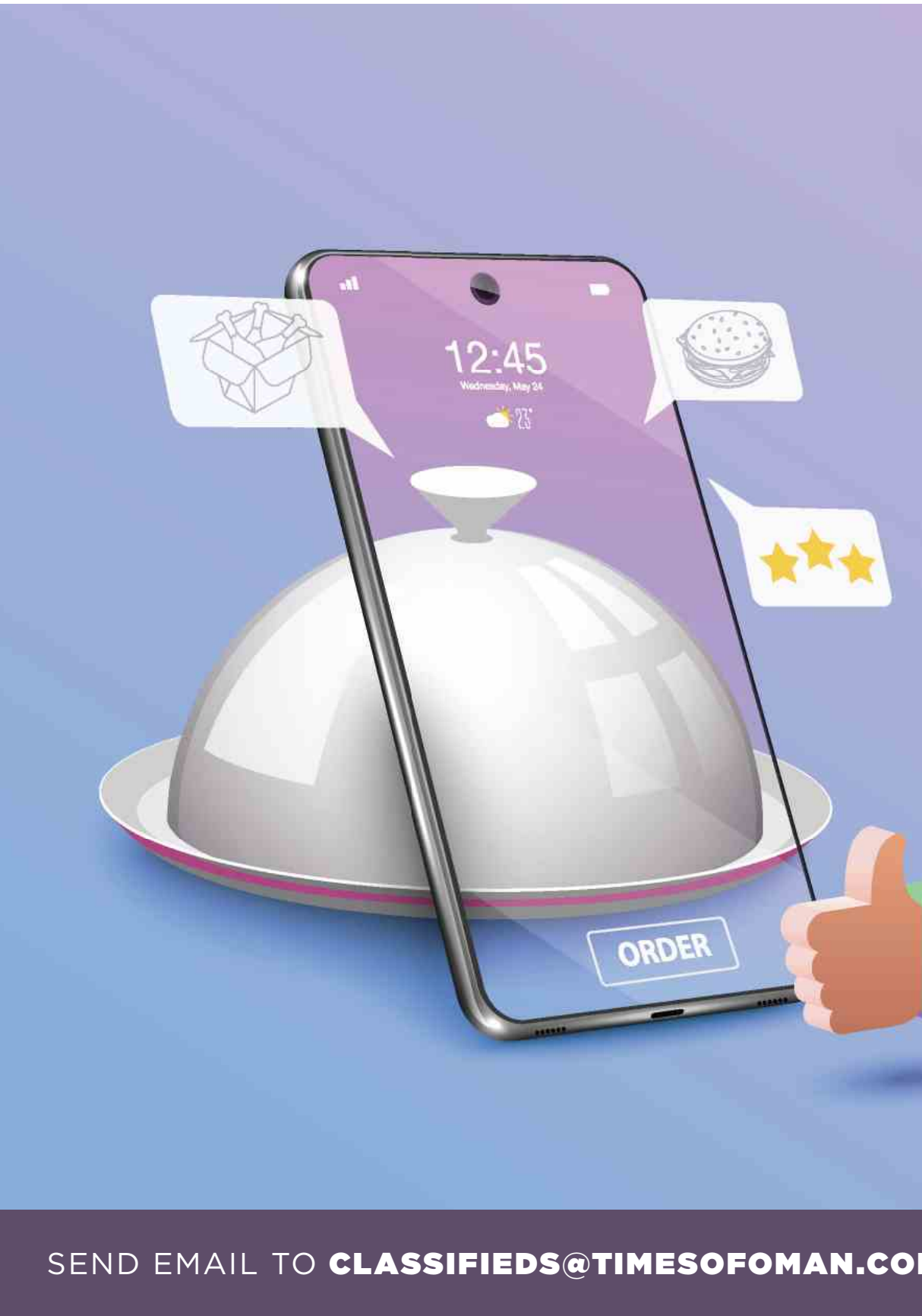
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BELGIUM'S 'GOLDEN GENERATION' RUNNING OUT OF TIME

Belgium have dominated the world rankings in recent years, but continue to fall short in major tournaments. Time is running out for the Red Devils' 'golden generation' to turn their talents into a title win.

NOT EVERYTHING that glitters is gold. Or better said, not everything that's gold, glitters.

That's certainly the case for Belgium's golden generation after Italy crushed their dreams of lifting a first-ever major trophy with victory in their Euro 2020 quarterfinal clash in Munich.

For many Belgium supporters inside the Allianz Arena the result was soul-destroying. It was a "we've been here before" moment – and they have been. In 2018 it was France that put an end to their World Cup hopes in Russia, this time around it was the Azzuri.

"I'm still playing certain phases in my head," defender Jan Vertonghen said after the game. "This was another missed opportunity, just like the previous tournaments."

Belgium's number one status in FIFA's world rankings will never carry the same weight as a trophy

and fans are aware that the window of opportunity is getting smaller.

Same old story

Knowing that Euro 2020 may represent their last shot at glory, the sense of urgency was palpable before kick-off outside the Allianz Arena. Many Red Devils' fans expressed that "it's time to deliver" and that their side "need to prove the golden generation label."

Midfielder Axel Witsel promised pre-match that "there will be a real battle in midfield," but in the end, Belgium failed to battle through the critical moments.

Trailing by a single goal at the break thanks to Romelu Lukaku's late first-half penalty, many fans still thought Belgium could turn this around. After the restart, not even the individual brilliance of Lukaku or a moment of inspiration from an injury-hit Kevin De Bruyne could make the difference

they were desperate for.

That fact was painfully evident in the 70th minute when Lukaku and Thorgan Hazard both failed to apply the finishing touch to level the scores. It was a moment that rattled the hopes of Belgian fans' in attendance.

Time was running out, not only on the pitch, but also for this golden generation to crown themselves with glory. "This hits hard but we knew it was going to be a tough game," conceded goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

A race against time

Belgian fans take pride in this team. Pride in their talent. Pride that a country with a population of only 12 million, has managed to produce so many stars. From Lukaku and De Bruyne to the Hazard brothers, the emergence of such talent in one generation is rare.

Several stars within the squad were

in or entering their prime. There was a team spirit fostered by a core group of players that have developed together and been shaped by their highs and lows on the international stage.

"We were in Russia together. We've been through the emotions together having beat teams like Brazil. Having to adapt to different styles," said head coach Roberto Martinez before the game.

For all that experience though, they still fell short. They had the stars, the system, the pragmatism and the experience. De Bruyne admitted that "getting eliminated is always a disappointment," but on the way from the stadium to the U-Bahn talk had already turned to the future for fans of the Red Devils.

After all, while the aging squad is a concern, the 2022 World Cup in Qatar may offer Belgium one last opportunity to turn this talent into a title win.

ROUND-UP

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MUSCAT: The GAC Motor GA8 flagship sedan is more than just a regular vehicle.

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The GA8 flagship sedan is sure to make a lasting impression on every arrival with its LED headlights with alarm for headlight on and follow-me-home function, 17" aluminium alloy wheels, LED daytime running lights, LED high mounted brake light, front and rear fog lights, power adjustable side mirrors, dedicated led cornering lights and more.

Giving you the opportunity to take the lead and enjoy the experience is the Turbo-charged 2.0L, 194 HP engine that produces 300 Nm Torque at 1600-4500 RPM. This engine is paired with a 6-speed automatic transmission.

Making journeys comfortable and smooth is the double-wish-bone independent suspension and rear five-link beam independent suspension.

Making every entry warm and welcoming are the well-appointed interiors. An experience inside the GA8 will encourage you to spend more time in it. Passengers can easily get away in a world of their own and enjoy uplifting moments even on a busy day with the available three-zone automatic air conditioning, second row AC vents, negative ion air purifier, leather and leatherette-trimmed seats, 10-way power-adjustable driver's seat, 6-way power-adjustable front passenger's seat, power sunroof with jam protection and more.

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start, eco-drive and more. Keeping passengers safe on every journey is a range of features that include dual front, front side and side curtain airbags, electronic sta-

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ing the flagship GA8 can visit their nearest GAC Motor showroom. New World Autos is the distributor for GAC Motor vehicles in Oman.

'MIDHYAF' PROGRAMME

New initiative to train and develop competent local workforce in hospitality, tourism sectors

MUSCAT: To provide a platform and prepare highly trained and skilled Omanis in the tourism and hospitality sector, Oman Tourism Development Company (programme Group), the executive arm of the Sultanate for tourism development, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour launched its new training for employment programme 'Midhyaf', that will act as the stepping stone for future Omani tourism and hospitality talent development. The programme is the result of the capability building agreement signed between both parties to establish this national training for an employment project.

The new programme will provide training to 148 Omani job seekers from high schools as well as Diploma and Bachelor's degree holders, to prepare them to join the labour market upon completion of the programme's requirements. The Midhyaf programme consists of seven capacity-building vocational and professional courses, namely culinary, food & beverage, front of house operations, hotel operations management, accounting and procurement, sales and marketing, and housekeeping. The training will take place at Oman Tourism College (OTC), the training provider of the Midhyaf programme followed by on-the-job training in several hospitality assets under Omran Group.

Upon graduation, the participants will be directly employed at the respective Omran Hospitality Assets, including JW Marriott Muscat, W Muscat, Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah, Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC, Crowne Plaza Duqm, Alila Jabal Akhdar, Inter-



Continental Muscat and Barceló Mussanah Resort.

The methodology of the training program that will be implemented by OTC is based on an integrated training approach that aims to further hone the skills of the participants in three main areas: fundamentals, core factors, and mindset. The programme will cover professional training courses that will be facilitated by the OTC in cooperation with multiple globally renowned hospitality institutes and academies, to develop the local competencies according to the highest standards and support them to obtain up to 11 professional certificates, depending on the type of the training programme.

On this occasion, Hashil bin Obaid Al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, said, "Midhyaf will play a significant role in supporting the objectives of the National Tourism Strategy 2040 by creating a sustainable platform to support employment in the tourism industry and encourage Omani youth to enrol in this dynamic sector, which is prominent as one of the rapidly growing sectors in the world. This

programme also reflects Omran's in-country value efforts through the empowerment of national competencies to enable them to excel in this career path."

"We deeply recognise the collaborative efforts of our partners in this programme, and we aim through this fruitful cooperation to create more meaningful jobs for Omanis. Moreover, we aim to increase job opportunities at our hotel portfolio," Al Mahrouqi added.

Commenting on the launch of 'Midhyaf', Sharifa bint Tahir Aidid, from the Ministry of Labour, commented, "We are delighted to be launching 'Midhyaf' programme. This step reflects the ministry's active participation towards to implementation of the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, in addition to carrying out its plan for this year, targeting 9,000 jobs across the key focus areas which include training for employment, on-the-job training and entrepreneurship, through continued cooperation with the various sectors."

"Midhyaf programme fosters a new setup for training and developing a competent local workforce

in the hospitality and tourism sectors and entice them to explore and prosper in a challenging yet rewarding working environment. We are confident that the participants will benefit from the high-quality professional courses and the practical training at Oman Tourism College and Omran hotels," she added.

Qais bin Zahir Al Hosni, Chairman of Oman Tourism College said, "As the training provider, our objective at Oman Tourism College is to train and develop the candidates as per the highest global standards, benefiting from our long experience in providing accredited vocational training programmes in partnership with international training providers and awarding bodies as well with our affiliation with the Technological University Dublin, one of the famous academic institutions. The collaboration with renowned hotel facilities in the industry will also contribute to develop the participants' capabilities and hone their skills to make them ready to be future hoteliers of Oman."

Omran Group signed a Capability Building Agreement with the Ministry of Labour to establish a strategic two-year collaboration project that aims to attract young Omani hospitality enthusiasts. The collaboration has resulted in the creation of Midhyaf, forging a new and sustainable path of employment for national talents who will participate in shaping the future of Oman's growing tourism sector.

The programme is open to all Omani job seekers from high school graduates, Diploma and Bachelor's degree holders.

SAVINGS ACCOUNT SCHEME

Be one of the winners of BankDhofar's mid-year grand prize draws

MUSCAT: BankDhofar continues to encourage customers to save and rewards them with valuable cash prizes for their savings. The coming mid-year grand prize draws of the savings account scheme 2021 will distribute more than OMR 250,000 for lucky winners. The savings account scheme, which reiterates BankDhofar's keenness to spread the culture of saving among the community, provides chances for all family members to win valuable cash prizes.

On the coming draws, Dr Tariq Taha, Chief Retail Banking Officer at BankDhofar said, "We have seen good responses from our customers on this year's scheme, as we are providing more chances of winning for all family members. As we are near our mid-year prize draws, we encourage our customers to continue saving as they might be one of the winners who will take home the grand prizes."

The draws will see cash prizes worth a total of OMR 50,000 (2 winners / OMR 25,000 for each winner), along with the Al Riadah prize worth OMR 200,000 for one winner. The bank will also conduct the monthly draws.

With a total of OMR 2.304 million, the scheme is valid till December 2021. As per the prize draw scheme, BankDhofar customers who save a minimum of OMR 100 in their accounts are eligible to enter the draws and get the chance to win in the Monthly Guaranteed Prizes for branches, worth a total of OMR 708,000 (59 winners per month/ OMR 1,000



for each winner), Monthly Prizes for Children, worth total of OMR 177,000 (59 winners per month/ OMR 250 for each winner) and Monthly Prizes for Youth, worth total of OMR 30,000 (5 winners per month/ OMR 500 for each winner). To show our respect for the retirees in the society, we have also introduced, monthly Prizes for Amaan Retirees Banking Services' customers, worth a total of OMR 300,000 (5 winners per month/ OMR 5,000 for each winner). BankDhofar will continue celebrating occasions with customers, the 2021 scheme includes Omani Woman's Day Prizes, worth a total of OMR 10,000 (10 winners / OMR 1,000 for each winner), and National Day Prizes, worth a total of OMR 59,000 (59 winners / OMR 1,000 for each winner). In addition to the Grand Prizes; Mid-Year Grand Prizes, worth a total of OMR 50,000 (2 winners / OMR 25,000 for each winner), and Year-End Grand Prizes worth a total of OMR 100,000 (2 winners / OMR 50,000 for each winner).

IATA TRAVEL PASS

Qatar Airways becomes first airline to integrate vaccination certificates in 'Digital Passport'

DOHA: Qatar Airways continues to set the benchmark for innovation, safety and customer service, becoming the first airline to trial COVID-19 vaccine authentication through the IATA Travel Pass 'Digital Passport' mobile app.

As more travellers return to the skies, the airline remains committed to reducing paperwork and providing a more contactless, secure and seamless travel experience for its passengers.

The trial will be rolled out in phases from July, beginning initially with cabin crew returning to Doha travelling from Kuwait, London, Los Angeles, New York, Paris and Sydney. Cabin crew will be able to upload their Qatar issued COVID-19 vaccination credentials along with their COVID-19 test results to the IATA

Travel Pass Mobile App and verify they are eligible to travel. On arrival in Doha, crew will then be able to safely and securely share their vaccination certificate and proceed through immigration at the airport.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, Akbar Al Baker said: "Despite the significant challenges the pandemic has caused international aviation, our industry has continued to be a leader in adopting new technologies and innovations to ensure a safe, secure and seamless travel experience for our passengers. Qatar Airways is proud to lead the way by becoming the first airline to trial COVID-19 vaccine authentication through the IATA Travel Pass 'Digital Passport' Mobile App. I want to especially thank Qatar's Ministry of Public



Health, Ministry of Interior, Primary Health Care Corporation and Hamad Medical Corporation, whom without their ongoing support, this trial would not be possible. We know as more people begin making plans to return to

their favourite holiday destinations, they will inevitably face the challenge of ensuring they have the right paperwork. Through trialling and supporting the development of new technologies, we aim to provide travellers with a tool

that will support them to seamlessly travel across borders with greater confidence."

Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General said: "Qatar Airways and the Qatari Government are showing leadership by becoming the first to trial the verification of passengers' vaccine credentials through IATA Travel Pass. Certificates of COVID-19 vaccination or testing status will be key to restoring people's freedom to travel. Trials by Qatar Airways and some 70 other airlines have demonstrated that IATA Travel Pass can efficiently manage test results. This important new trial focusing on vaccination status will build even more confidence in IATA Travel Pass as a complete solution for travellers, governments and airlines."

As travellers return to the skies with Qatar Airways, they can take comfort knowing that they are travelling with the only airline in the world that has, together with its state-of-the-art global hub Hamad International Airport, achieved four 5-Star Skytrax ratings - including the prestigious 5-Star Airline Rating, 5-Star Airport Rating, 5-Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating and 5-Star COVID-19 Airport Safety Rating. These achievements highlight Qatar Airways' commitment to providing our passengers with an industry-leading experience at every point of their journey, including the highest possible level of health and safety standards that safeguard the wellbeing of our passengers both on the ground and in the air.



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