

**MAQSOOD, KHUSHI STAR
IN OMAN'S THRILLING
VICTORY OVER MUMBAI**

Oman rode on Muhammed Naseem Khushi's hurricane 39 off just 12 balls to beat a fighting Mumbai by 2 wickets in the first of three-match T20 series here at Oman Cricket Ground One in Amerat on Tuesday. **>A8**



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**HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREET'S
URUGUAYAN PRESIDENT**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Luis Lacalle Pou of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Lacalle Pou and the friendly people of Uruguay. - **ONA**



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BILATERAL TIES



Oman, Switzerland review cooperation

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister held a session of political talks with Ignazio Cassis, Vice President of the Federal Council, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

The session, held in Lugano, Switzerland reviewed the joint relations of cooperation and exchanged views on regional

and international matters of common interest.

The session was attended by Khalid Hashil Al Masalhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, Salim Ahmed Al Kindi, Charge d'Affaires of the Sultanate's embassy in Bern, Balz Abplanalp, Ambassador of Switzerland to the Sultanate and several officials from the FDFA. — **ONA**

Most blackmailing operations are conducted by specialised criminal gangs who operate from outside the country, the Royal Oman Police said

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Scammers are taking to social media to extort money from people through a number of methods, including blackmail, emotional manipulation, or taking them into their confidence, the Royal Oman Police has said.

Asking people to stay alert of those who might try to scam them out of their hard-earned money, Brigadier Jamal bin Habib Al Quraishi, the Director General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations, said that people need to understand the dangers of social media, and educate themselves on how to use such platforms.



"The development of technology has made it very easy for many of us to communicate with others, or complete transactions easily, but this has also led to the emergence of various fraudulent practices where scammers try to seek out victims and deceive them, seize their money, blackmail them, or use them to achieve other objectives," he said.

"Those who seek out victims on social media are also doing so to increase their own fame to grow their follower numbers," he added.

"To protect people from such actions, we have laws that play an important role in ensuring social media is safe for all of us, prevent us from getting involved in cyber-crimes, and prevent the promotion of wrong behaviour and negative thoughts rejected by society."

"Fraudsters take advantage of a person's emotional, physical, or other vulnerabilities to gain their trust, by which time the victims allow them access to their personal information," explained Al Quraishi. "Once that happens, the victim is blackmailed and threats



Brigadier Jamal bin Habib Al Quraishi, Director General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations, Royal Oman Police.

are made to expose or defame them. In response, the victim pays the scammer some money, in the hope that these perpetrators will stop blackmailing them."

Although victims might think paying off their blackmailers will put an end to the threats they face from online criminals, the ROP says otherwise: despite promising to never threaten their victims, a blackmailer's first demand will not be their last.

Most blackmailing operations are conducted by specialised criminal gangs who extort a continuous source of money from their victims.

The Royal Oman Police advises against responding to all those who seek to defraud others online. **>A5**

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN SQU achieves hybrid power milestone

1 Current work at the Hybrid Power Plant of Sultan Qaboos University's Sustainable Energy Research Centre encompasses a project that includes 5 kilowatts hydrogen fuel cell equipped with methanol reformer, a 6 kW diesel generator, a 5 kW rooftop PV system, and 15 kWh lithium-ion storage batteries. **>A3**

WORLD Evacuation extension ruled out by Taliban

2 A Taliban spokesperson on Monday said the group would not agree to an extension of the presence of international forces in Afghanistan. The militant group seized power in Afghanistan just two weeks before an August 31 deadline for foreign troops to withdraw from the country. **>A7**



MARKET Treasury bills worth OMR40mn issued

3 Oman's central bank raised OMR40 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Tuesday. The treasury bills are for a maturity period of 182 days, from August 25 until February 23, 2022. The average accepted price reached 99.617 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at 99.615 per OMR100. **>B1**

EDUCATION

More than 11% jump in number of National Research Award applicants

Times News Service

MUSCAT: 243 people have applied for the 2021 National Research Award, 11.4 per cent more than last time. Registrations for the eighth cycle of the NRA ended on Thursday, August 19, said the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI).

"The NRA is divided into two categories. Best published research, led by a PhD Holder or Equivalent (senior specialist or higher in the medical field) and best published research led by a Young Researcher (a non-PhD holder)," said a ministry statement.

"Out of the 243 applications submitted for the NRA, 143 applications were in the PhD Holder or Equivalent category, while 100 were in Young Researcher category."

"The research applications were submitted in accordance with the six research fields of the award in both the PhD and Young Researcher categories, with 48 applications in the field of Education and Hu-



man Resources, 21 in Information and Communication Technologies, 60 in Health and Social Services, 42 in Cultural, Social, and Basic Sciences, 22 in Energy and Industry, and 50 in the field of Environmental and Biological Resources.

The winners will be announced at the upcoming Annual Research Forum. Applicants must be the first author whose name appears in the research article being entered for the competition, and must ensure the research submitted is of relevance to Oman. The published research must not have won any

other award nationally or internationally, and must have been published after March 15, 2018, in a refereed journal.

The award is limited only to original research studies and articles. Publications such as review papers, conference proceedings, historical articles, book chapters or medical case reports are not accepted.

Only one application per cycle is allowed. If an applicant submits more than one application, then all of them will be excluded. Applicants must also provide written consent from each team member to prove his or her approval to participate in the competition.

Only complete applications for the award, submitted electronically on the award website, and supplemented with all the required documents as attachments, will be considered for evaluation. The award winners must provide any additional information requested, and shall be willing to attend and present their research at the Annual Research Forum.

TOURISM

Experience this year's Khareef season before it comes to a close

Times News Service

SALALAH: With this year's Khareef season only around for a few more weeks, if you don't go to Salalah now to experience the wonder and magic of nature, you're going to have to postpone your travel plans to the southern Dhofar region for another year.

The Khareef takes place every year between June and September, and it is when many tourists go to Salalah. With hotels and other tourist accommodation sites running at reduced occupancy, trips to Salalah need to be planned in advance, but here are five reasons that make travel down south worthwhile:

1. The rain

Unlike other parts of Oman (and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries), which are currently experiencing their peak summer months, the period from June to



September in the Dhofar brings with it cool rains, pleasant mists, and refreshing breezes that make for an amazingly pleasant change from the rest of the region. Pre-pandemic, it was not uncommon to see vehicles registered in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and even the more distant countries of Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain, on Dhofari roads, with

people from these parts driving all the way to Salalah just to experience this amazing weather.

2. The greenery

Fly over much of the Middle East and you will fill a primarily brown coloured landscape, interspersed with the concrete, glass, and steel of cities. Not so in the Dhofar,

where the rain leads to lush greenery carpeting the region.

That's not the only wonder of nature you'll see there: the landscape of Salalah leads to the formation of many waterfalls that cascade down into the wadis. Together with the lush greenery, they make for a very pleasant, stunning sight for sore eyes. **>A5**

'Cable cars in Dharbat soon'

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The cable car project is coming to the Governorate of Dhofar, the Minister of Heritage and Tourism stated.

The Minister of Heritage and Tourism said in a tweet through his official account: "The cable car in Dharbat is coming through the main developer, and qualitative and diverse investment opportunities are available to everyone, and in all of this our vision is clear and the plans are comprehensive." Last week he met with the Board of Directors of

Omran to assess the progress of work in the implementation of tourism development projects. The development and establishment of tourist destinations in the Governorate of Dhofar was among the list of priorities.

Speaking at a meeting with Dhofar Chamber of Commerce and Industry members he said that it is not within the Ministry's competence to licence or establish public utilities, but that those responsibilities have been specified for relevant governorates and ministries.

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Maghrib.....6:37pm
Isha.....7:50pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....4:29am

Times of Oman

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PRICE BAIZAS 200

New labour laws by end of year

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is considering a new set of labour laws which are expected to be introduced by the end of this year.

This was disclosed by Mr. Amer Shuwain al Hosni, Under-Secretary of Social Affairs and Labour in an exclusive interview to the 'Times' this week.

The new labour laws will exercise stricter control on the import of foreign manpower in view of the process of Omanisation

by Muzaffar Mohammad

which has been stepped up recently.

The Under-Secretary said the existing labour laws came into effect in 1973 and since then a lot of changes had taken place in the local labour situation.

The growth of the private sector, the spurt in industrialisation and above all the planned policy of

Omanisation.... all these factors called for a change in labour laws, he said.



Mr. Amer Shuwain al-Hosni

Mr. Amer said: We feel that there is a need to make labour laws more comprehensive, incorporating all the experience gained during the past 10 years.

The Under-Secretary said the new labour laws will provide a solution to all difficulties and problems faced by both the employers and the employees. The authorities had considered the matter in depth and intend to offer in the new laws a clear interpretation of everything that concerns labour.

Asked if the new laws would be stricter than the existing ones, Mr. Amer said: "When we talk of Omanisation, we will have to

exercise stricter control on the import of foreign workers.

"We will not allow any employer to import workers unless he needs them in the real sense and his demand for manpower cannot be met locally", he explained.

The Ministry, he continued, will ban the import of foreign workers coming under categories in which qualified workers are available in Oman. This would be a continuous process he said.

Pension plan in private sector?

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour is considering the idea of introducing a pension scheme for employees in the private sector.

This was revealed by Mr. Amer Shuwain al Hosni, Under-Secretary of Social Affairs and Labour.

He said the scheme, which is in the preliminary discussion stages will, if approved, ensure a pension for expatriate workers as well. There would then be separate sets of pension schemes for Omani and non-Omani employees

Mr. Amer said that there was no

pension scheme for Government employees at present because they were fully covered by social security benefits.

He declined to give details on what benefits would be available to private sector employees under the scheme since the matter is still under discussion. The Under-Secretary discounted reports that there was a move to increase minimum wages in the private sector.

He said wages and salaries in the private sector were decided by agreements entered into between the employers and the employees and the Ministry has no intention to interfere in the matter.

Restaurant owners warned

The Ruwi Municipality will launch a campaign to check the standard of hygiene in restaurants — both in respect of food and premises.

This was stated by Mr. Abdalla Seif al Khalili, Director of the Ruwi Municipality, this week.

He said restaurants found serving unhygienic food will be penalised — which may also involve a shut-down.

Action will also be taken against establishments which do not maintain a high standard of cleanliness in the kitchen and the eating premises. Utensils and crockery must also be clean.

According to Municipal health regulations, all employees of restaurants are

required to possess a health card which is issued after a thorough medical check up.

Waiters in restaurants are required to wear clean uniforms.

Bad food destroyed

Municipal health squads destroyed 350 kg of vegetables and fruits, 47 kg of cooked food and 184 kg of fish and mutton in the Muttrah area.

The Seeb Municipality destroyed 2,341 kg of vegetables and fruits after they were found unfit for consumption. Stocks of fish and mutton weighing 1,283 kg were also destroyed.

The Municipal Court has summoned 54 people for violations

Several projects on anvil in South

The Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, Mr. Abdul Khaliq Amer Mansour, paid a visit to Muscat this week to observe the activities of the Capital Municipality and discuss way of co-operation between the two municipalities.

During his stay, Mr. Abdul Khaliq was received by Sayyid Abdalla bin Hamad al Busaidi, Chairman of the Capital Municipality and Mr. Essa Nasser Essa, Director-General.

The Dhofar Municipal chief visited various departments of the Municipality to apprise himself of the systems designed to deal with the problems faced by the city.

In an exclusive interview to the 'Times', Mr. Abdul Khaliq said the Dhofar Municipality is working on a number of projects. These include the construction of a central market in Salalah, which is expected to be ready next year.

The Municipality, he said, has complete work on markets in Taqa and Mirbat while children's parks are being built at several places.

Network

He disclosed that a study was under way for laying a master sewerage network in Salalah. The Dhofar Municipality has four branches in the South — Salalah, Taqa, Mirbat and Thumrait — and there are plans to open more.

The Dhofar Municipality has a lead over the Capital Municipality in respect of traffic signals — Salalah has seven against the two in Muscat. Roads and public parks have been 'lit up'.

The Dhofar Municipality set up in 1981 under a Royal Decree works under the supervision of the Wali of Dhofar but there are moves to grant an autonomous status to the body.

Mr. Abdul Khalq said the purpose of his visit to Muscat was to learn from the experience gained by the Capital Municipality. He, however, admitted that his municipality was not confronted with the complex problems faced in Muscat because Dhofar had a lower density of population.

Plots allotted at Rusail

Eleven plots of land have been allocated for industrial development close to Seeb airport.

Part of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's industrial estate at Rusail, the plots will be used by new businesses.

Road mishap

A Pakistani labourer Abdul Ghani died of a severe head injury after a fall from a moving pick-up in Sohar.

PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF A REGIONAL EDUCATION OFFICE BUILDING



The Ministry of Education has approved the design (see drawing) for three regional education buildings to be constructed in Rustaq, Wusta and Nizwa this year.

There are in all nine education regions in the Sultanate. Of these the Capital, Buraimi and Bukha education offices have their own buildings.

1,250 teachers from Egypt

New teachers, 1,250 of them, will arrive in Muscat next week to join schools of the Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs.

The new teachers — all from Egypt will be assigned schools in the Capital Area and in the interior.

The teachers will arrive in four special flights landing in Muscat from August 27 onwards.

Youth camp in Salalah

Brigadier Salim Abdallah al Ghazali, Secretary of the Ministerial Council, on Tuesday opened the Eighth Youth Camp at Salalah.

The two-week camp, organised by the Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, is also attended by youth delegations from the Arab Gulf Co-operation Council's member-states.

Your TV and radio programmes are on page 22.



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New milestone for SQU hybrid power plant

The research team is working to integrate various energy sources to effectively produce electricity through the utilisation of renewable resources



tinuing efforts are being made to ensure the plant has the necessary equipment to achieve its primary objectives. Through these efforts, the Sustainable Energy Research Centre remains at the forefront of research into the generation of electricity through renewable energy sources in place of diesel fuel, especially in rural areas.

Several stages

The construction of the hybrid plant has already progressed through several stages. The first began in 2017 with a research project entitled “Studying the Performance and Monitoring of Solar Photovoltaic Energy” conducted by a research team led by SQU’s Dr. Rashid Al Abri and Dr. Amer Saif Al Hinai. The project was funded by Nafath Renewable Energy LLC. During this stage, the plant included a 4 kW ground-mounted PV system combined with a 3 kW wind turbine, and storage batteries with power capacity of 900 Wh. The hybrid system was designed to operate in stand-alone mode or grid-connected to the SQU distribution network.

In 2019, the second phase of the plant’s development was associated with a research project funded by Salalah Methanol Company LLC (currently OQ) and led again by Dr. Amer Al Hinai. The project focused on evaluating the potential for methanol to generate electricity in rural and remote areas in the Sultanate. The plant, at this stage, included a laboratory, researcher offices, methanol storage, and a water treatment and purification plant to produce distilled water that is used in the production of fuel-mix for the hydrogen fuel-cell.

Current work at the plant encompasses a project that includes 5 kilowatt hydrogen fuel cell equipped with methanol reformer, a 6 kW diesel generator, a 5 kW rooftop PV system, and 15 kWh lithium-ion storage batteries. In addition, the smart energy management system connects the integrated resources to the university’s distribution grid or can be operated as an isolated microgrid system that feeds the local loads in the plant. The project generally focuses on using methanol to generate electricity in an economical and eco-friendly way due to the low levels of harmful emissions.

Evaluation

Following the conclusion of the first two phases of the plant’s construction, efforts have been geared first towards the evaluation of utilising methanol to generate electricity for rural and remote areas. The research team is working to integrate various energy sources to effectively produce electricity through the utilisation of renewable energy resources. In addition, a battery energy storage system will be used to mitigate energy fluctuations and stabilise the system. The hybrid system depends on a solar PV system, hydrogen fuel cell, and a fossil fuel diesel generator. Batteries are used to store energy during excess production and can be reused during production shortfalls. It is intended that the Hybrid Power Plant will soon be operational and synchronized to the SQU distribution network. Efforts will continue to be extended towards the production of green methanol utilising renewable energy. -ONA



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The Supreme Committee will hold a press conference in order to clarify the procedures followed for arrivals to the Sultanate.



Story on Supreme Committee to provide updates in a press conference

A story on Supreme Committee to provide updates in a press conference reached 35,062 people and had 10,167 engagements on Facebook.



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7,353 VIEWS

Over 2.33 Million Vaccinated Against COVID-19 in Oman





MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK

9,200 VIEWS



Video story on travel ban lifted in Oman

A video story on travel ban lifted in Oman had 9,200 views and reached 26,900 people on Facebook.



Video update on vaccinations in Oman

A video update on vaccinations in Oman had 1,193 views and 99 likes on Instagram.



UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY OF KHOR KHARFOUT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESERVE

KHOR KHARFOUT Archaeological Reserve, was established by Royal Decree No. 58/2021, issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, on Monday 23rd August 2021. The Reserve is located between the Wilayat of Rakhyout and the Wilayat of Dhalkout at the coast of the Arabian Sea, Dhofar Governorate.

The total area of Khor Kharfout Archaeological Reserve is 143.4 square kilometres and falls within the mountainous area of Dhofar Governorate, which has Khareef, the monsoon rains and subtropical climate. The area enjoys moderate climate with maximum temperature 14-34 °C, relatively cold winters and frequent rainfall that may turn heavy due to climate and weather changes.

The topography of the area comprises mountain areas at the northern part adjacent to Wadi Seiq in the form of rocky steep cliffs. This diverse topography has led to formation of different environments at the reserve; as there are mountain areas, forests, wadis, coastal areas and desert areas.

At the northern and northwestern areas of the reserve, there are desert lands and rocky areas with gravel. The sedimentary rock at the area comprises limestone with frequent igneous rock at some are-

as. The soil at the northern area of the reserve (classified as Entisols soil) lacks (Lithic Torriorthents) along with dominance of Orthents and high percentage of calcium carbonate.

The field survey findings revealed the presence of 20 types of mammals, 193 types of birds, 20 types of reptiles and 183 types of plants among others.

The beach of the reserve facing the Arabian Sea is an exceptional habitat for migrating birds and an amazing destination for relaxation and watching turtles, dolphins and for fishing. The unique biodiversity of the reserve is quite an attraction.

Khor Kharfout Archaeological Reserve is believed to have been used as an ancient port for export of frankincense. There is evidence which depicts the historic and cultural role the area has played in the past.

The high mountains and steep valleys appeal to many adventure lovers. The creek also serves as the main livestock grazing area for inhabitants of wilayats of Dhalkout and Rakhyout. As such Kharfout Archaeological Reserve has become a busy point of attraction for various types of visitors, shepherds, bird waters, nature lovers and people interested in cultural and environmental tourism.





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SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

Dar Al Atta’a fully equips 10 classrooms

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dar Al Atta’a Association has fully equipped 10 classrooms of some schools in the wilayats of Saham, Liwa, Al Buri-ami, Yanqul and Ibri at a cost of OMR22,157.

This is within the preparations for the new school year 2021-2022 and the annual efforts of the association to provide supplies to classrooms at some schools which require such support.

The furniture and equipment supplied included 138 chairs, 36 tables, 44 cabinets, 17 partitions, 12 computers, 11 pieces of carpet, 10 printers, and 21 curtains.

Siham bint Yousef Al Kharousi, Director of Empowerment Division of Dar Al Atta’a Association expressed her thanks to Mitsui Company for their contribution to the campaign to support school students and to all who have co-



operated for the efforts of School Students Welfare Programme of the Association.

She said that Dar Al Atta’a provides the classrooms at the beginning of every school year with necessary supplies. This included the pre-school classrooms at the government schools in addi-

tion to medical and audio-visual supplies.

She said, “The programme for the welfare of school students is one of the first programmes adopted by Dar Al Atta’a in 2006.”

Dar Al Atta’a has provided supplies to over 80 classrooms for pre-school children for a better

educational environment. The association coordinates with the directorates of education in various governorates for listing the schools entitled to support and is keen to qualify teachers of nursery schools by organising specialised training courses and sessions in the field.

DISCUSSIONS

Majlis Al Shura Office holds key meeting

MUSCAT: Majlis Al Shura Office in its meeting held on Tuesday discussed the reply of the Council of Ministers on the requests for discussions presented by Majlis Al Shura on the graduates (academic outputs) yet to join the labour market and the issue of creation of a legal system to regulate the cooperative societies and the strategic road projects.

The Council of Ministers in its reply confirmed approval of the requests for discussion and for the Majlis Al Shura’s hosting the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and the Minister of Economy for a discussion on unemployed graduates as well as hosting the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for a discussion on enacting a legal system regulat-



ing the cooperative societies and hosting the Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for a discussion on the strategic projects in the field of roads.

The Majlis Al Shura Office also approved a request for briefing on utilisation of Wadi Dayqah Dam addressed to the Chairman of Oman Investment Authority among other issues.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

<FROM A1> Apps being used to extort money

“Whoever thinks they might be victims of this criminality must discuss their problems with someone they trust,” said Al Quraishi. “Do not allow yourself to get trapped within your own mind. Instead, inform the authorities without hesitation. That way, the matter will be dealt with quickly and confidentially.”

“Also please stop using the service through which you were contacted by the perpetrator,” he added. “That way, you stop communicating with them, and cut their ability to influence you.”

The brigadier’s advice came in the light of criminals recently using social media apps to extort money from victims. He explained that many of the perpetrators of such crimes operate from outside Oman.

He revealed that despite pre-

vious warnings provided by the ROP requesting people to stay safe, those in the country continue to fall victim to fraudulent activities.

“We see that in criminal investigations we’ve recently dealt with concerning fraudulent activities through social media channels, there is often a desire for quick financial gain and excessive confidence in victims. Perpetrators also try to tempt their victims by sharing with them suggestions that are used to trick people into parting with their money,” he detailed.

“We would like to assure you that the tempting offers put forth by scammers are only a way to draw people into being robbed,” said Al Quraishi. “Please pay attention to such deals and be careful of them.”

SALALAH

<FROM A1> Watch the serenely-flowing rain-fed rivers

Visit Ittin and Jabal Samhan and be amazed at the greenery around you, or head to Wadi Darbat and Ayn Sahanlout to watch the wondrous effect serenely-flowing rain-fed rivers have on the surrounding landscape.

3. The culture

Salalah was the nexus of the Land of Frankincense, from where the precious resin was shipped as early as 400 BC to empires around the world, including China, Ancient Rome, and Egypt. Remnants of the sites where the Frankincense was stored, harvested, and packaged still stand today, and are a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visitors to the Land of Frankincense can also visit the nearby museum, which tells of Oman’s storied past in the global frankincense trade. There are also a number of well-maintained forts in the area that are centuries old. Do stop by the ones at Taqah and Mirbat to



delve into the region’s history.

4. The people

Omanis have a reputation for being some of the friendliest people in the world. Travel to the Dhofar, and you will experience the welcoming, hospitable nature of the locals. It is not uncommon to see locals voluntarily help those who need directions to a location, often driving with them all the way

and then giving directions on how to return to their hotel. Should you ever find yourself in the unfortunate situation of a vehicle breakdown or a flat tyre, do not be surprised if an Omani stops his vehicle, drives you to the nearest station or garage, and stays with you until your ride is fixed. To help others in need is part of the Omani way of life, and makes visiting the country an absolute pleasure.

5. The respite

Many in Muscat and other parts of the country have been chafing under the heat, with daytime temperatures regularly crossing 45 degrees.

The regular lockdowns and movement bans have also curtailed the opportunities people have to go outside and meet each other, while travel restrictions introduced means it can be challenging to return to Oman if you want to go overseas right now. This is where Salalah – which can feel like it is in a different world – really comes in handy, and provides an excellent break from our normal lives. Please note that local visitors to Salalah need to have been administered with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccines, while overseas tourists must be fully vaccinated. Proof of vaccination and valid ID will need to be produced at airport check-in desks prior to departure.



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Tender NO	Description	Grade	Last date for buying	Submission date	Tender price R.O.
94/2021	REINFORCEMENT OF (11/0.433 KV)2021, NEW LT FEEDERS FROM TX - 06 and 25 AT SAARA in Al Buraimi Governorate	D	31/8/2021	7/9/2021	25 /=
95/2021	SUPPLY OF CAPACITOR BANK CELL 167 KVAR, 11KV, FOR MAJAN STORE.	Specialized	7/9/2021	28/9/2021	25 /=
96/2021	GIS DATA CAPTURING & SURVEY PROJECT	Specialized	7/9/2021	28/9/2021	25 /=
97/2021	MJEC NETWORK PROTECTION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT 2021 (NORTH BATINAH, BURAIMI and DHAHIRAH GOVERNORATES)	A	13/9/2021	28/9/2021	62 /=
98/2021	REPLACE OF EXISTING 3MVA POWER TRANSFORMER (TX-2) AT HAILSHI PRIMARY SUBSTATION And REPLACE OF EXISTING 2X3MVAR TO NEW 2X3MVAR CAPACITOR BANKS AT WADI AHIN PRIMARY SUBSTATION (NORTH BATINAH GOVERNO	B	2/9/2021	7/9/2021	25 /=

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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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VISA-ON-ARRIVAL SUSPENDED

UAE temporarily suspends visa-on-arrival for Indian passengers

ABU DHABI: The UAE authorities have decided to temporarily suspend the visa-on-arrival facility for passengers who are arriving from or been in India in the past 14 days Etihad Airways said on Monday.

Taking to Twitter, Etihad Airways said, "The UAE authorities have decided to temporarily suspend the visa-on-arrival facility

for passengers who are arriving from or been in India in the past 14 days."

On August 3, the UAE lifted the ban for transit travellers for six countries including India.

Besides India, the ban was lifted for Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Nigeria and Uganda.

In a tweet, UAE's National Emergency and Crisis Manage-

ment Authority (NCEMA) had said, "These categories include those with valid residency permits who have received full vaccination doses in the UAE and 14 days have passed since receiving the second dose and who have vaccination certificates approved by the official authorities in the country."

The NCEMA is the nodal agen-

cy in the UAE, which looks after the COVID-19 related relaxations in case of travel from other countries and informs the passengers about the travel criteria.

The UAE is a major transit hub for travellers as it connects the USA, Europe and African countries but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was suspended for several months. **ANI**



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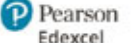
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DELTA VARIANT

Biden urges unvaccinated Americans to receive shots amid spread of Delta variant

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden on Monday urged unvaccinated individuals to receive their shots amid the rapid spread of highly contagious COVID-19 Delta variant.

Biden made the remarks after the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave its full approval to the Pfizer vaccine earlier in the day.

"So let me say this loudly and clearly: If you're one of the millions of Americans who said that they will not get the shot until it has full and final approval of the FDA, it has now happened," said Biden.

"The moment you've been waiting for is here," he said. "It's time for you to go get your vaccination and get it today. Today."

The president also encouraged businesses to require vaccinations among employees.

"Today I'm calling on more companies in the private sector to step up with vaccine requirements that will reach millions more people," Biden said Monday.

Asked if the FDA's approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine will lead to any additional vaccine mandates from the Biden administration, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said during the press briefing on Monday, "I expect there will be more, sure, as we've said all along."

Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said during a Pentagon briefing on Monday the Department of Defense would move forward with requiring all U.S. military service members to be vaccinated now that the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has full



FDA approval.

In recent weeks, the Biden administration has rolled out vaccine requirements among federal workers, members of the armed forces, federal medical facilities and nursing home workers. As of Sunday, 51.5 percent of the total U.S. population were fully vaccinated, showed CDC data. **ANI**

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Taliban refuse to extend evacuation deadline

Western countries have been scrambling to get their citizens and local personnel out of Afghanistan

KABUL: A Taliban spokesperson on Monday said the group would not agree to an extension of the presence of international forces in Afghanistan.

The militant group seized power in Afghanistan just two weeks before an August 31 deadline for foreign troops to withdraw from the country.

Western countries have since scrambled to get their citizens and local personnel out of Afghanistan, and discussions about keeping US forces on the ground past this date are underway. Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen warned there would be “consequences” if foreign troops stay after August 31, saying it would be an “extended occupation.”

“If the US or UK were to seek additional time to continue evacuations — the answer is no. Or there would be consequences,” Shaheen told British broadcaster Sky News on Monday.

What is the European stance?
The British government said Prime Minister Boris Johnson would



EVACUATION: France voiced concern about the looming deadline, saying more time was needed to finalise the evacuation.

request an extension to the US troops’ mandate at an emergency G7 summit on Tuesday.

Britain’s Minister for the Armed Forces James Heapey, however, told Sky News that “this is not just a discussion that happens between G7 leaders tomorrow, it is a discussion which happens with the Taliban.”

France also voiced concern about the looming deadline, saying more time was needed to finalise the evacuation.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said he was discussing with NATO allies and the Taliban

keeping the Kabul airport open beyond the deadline.

On Saturday, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said it was “mathematically impossible” to evacuate tens of thousands of Afghan staff and their families before the deadline.

What about the US?
Biden has not ruled out extending the airlift beyond August 31, but said he hopes it would not be necessary. Speaking at the White House on Sunday, Biden said talks were underway. The US has air-

lifted 37,000 people from Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover, officials said.

Biden acknowledged the tragic scenes at the Kabul airport, but said they were the cost of departure. “There is no way to evacuate this many people without pain and loss and heartbreaking images you see,” Biden said.

With the troop withdrawal, the US is ending its 20-year presence in Afghanistan. Former US President Donald Trump’s administration had struck a deal with the Taliban last year to end the war. **AW**

SUPPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN

UK PM to call on G7 leaders to step up support for Afghan people



NEW DELHI: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson will be calling on G7 leaders to step up support for Afghan people after the war-torn country fell into the hands of the Taliban last week, said British High Commission in India on Tuesday through an official statement.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson will chair a G7 Leaders’ meeting this afternoon to continue to stand by the Afghan people and step up support for refugees and increase humanitarian aid. Chairing the meeting, he is expected to urge international partners to match the UK’s commitments on aid and the resettlement of those who need it the most, in order to protect human rights and contribute to the stability of the region.

Leaders are also expected to reiterate their commitment to safeguarding the gains made in Afghanistan over the last 20 years - in particular on girls’ education and the rights of women and minori-

ties, said British High Commission release.

Discussions are set to cover ongoing collaboration on evacuation efforts at Kabul airport and longer-term work to secure a more stable future for Afghanistan and ensure any new government is inclusive and abides by its international obligations. Ahead of the meeting, Johnson said, “Our first priority is to complete the evacuation of our citizens and those Afghans who have assisted our efforts over the last 20 years - but as we look ahead to the next phase, it’s vital we come together as an international community and agree a joint approach for the longer term.”

“That’s why I have called an emergency meeting of the G7 - to coordinate our response to the immediate crisis, to reaffirm our commitment to the Afghan people, and to ask our international partners to match the UK’s commitments to support those in need,” added Johnson. **ANI**

AFGHAN ELITE

Taliban warn US not to encourage Afghan elite to leave country

KABUL: The Taliban on Tuesday warned the US against encouraging the Afghan elite to leave the country.

While speaking from Kabul on Tuesday, the Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that Washington should not encourage the Afghan elite to leave the country as the US has been evacuating some Afghans in recent days, Tolo News reported. This comes as several countries including the US are evacuating their citizens and Afghans, who are at risk in Taliban-led Afghanistan. Since August 14, the US has evacuated and facilitated the evacuation of approximately 58,700 people while the country has re-located approximately 63,900 people since the end of July, the White House informed in a tweet. Several Afghan politicians, former government workers, and journalists have left the country as they fear they will be targeted by the Taliban.

Mujahid also said that the Taliban are committed to resolving the problem in Panjshir peacefully, the



only province left from the terror group’s control.

The valley lies in the Hindu Kush mountains, approximately 90 miles north of Kabul. The Taliban have been unable to take this major holdout of resistance after steamrolling across pro-government troops in a matter of months.

He also mentioned that there have been no house-to-house searches as the Taliban already announced a general amnesty.

On August 15, the Taliban entered the presidential palace in Kabul soon after President Ashraf Ghani left Afghanistan. The Taliban are also in talks with intra-Afghan leaders to form the government. **ANI**

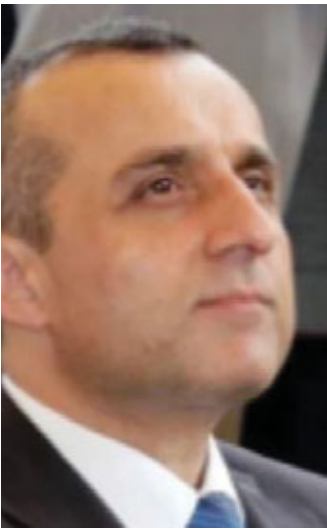
DIRE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Taliban not allowing food, fuel to get into Andarab valley: Amrullah Saleh

KABUL: Afghanistan’s “acting” President Amrullah Saleh has highlighted the dire “humanitarian situation” in Andarab valley of the northern Baghlan province and accused the Taliban of committing human rights violations in the region.

This comes as clashes were reported between the Taliban and resistance forces in the Andarab region. Taliban forces are reportedly facing a challenge from local resistance forces in the Panjshir valley led by Ahmad Massoud, son of renowned anti-Taliban figure Ahmad Shah Massoud. “Talibs aren’t allowing food and fuel to get into Andarab valley. The humanitarian situation is dire. Thousands of women and children have fled to the mountains. Since the last two days Talibs abduct children and elderly and use them as shields to move around or do house search,” Saleh tweeted.

A day earlier, Saleh had warned the Taliban to avoid entering Panjshir. “Talibs have massed forces near the entrance of Pan-



jshir a day after they got trapped in ambush zones of neighbouring Andarab valley and hardly went out in one piece. Meanwhile, the Salang highway is closed by the forces of the Resistance. ‘There are terrains to be avoided’. See you,” Saleh tweeted on Sunday.

UN humanitarian agencies, meanwhile, are warning that

they are unable to bring urgently needed emergency supplies into Afghanistan, and are calling for a “humanitarian airbridge” to be set up immediately, to allow the unimpeded delivery of medicines and other aid supplies to the country.

Richard Brennan, the WHO Regional Director, explained that the agency is unable to bring some 500 tonnes of medical supplies, scheduled to be delivered this week, into the country.

In the past week, the WHO has distributed trauma and medical kits from existing supplies to hospitals in Kabul, Kunduz and Helmand provinces to support health services for tens of thousands of people in need. However, supplies are dwindling and they need to be replenished, UN News reported. The key focus has been the evacuation of foreigners and vulnerable Afghans but the agencies pointed out that “The massive humanitarian needs facing the majority of the population should not - and cannot - be neglected”. **ANI**

WAR-TORN COUNTRY

Taliban to include Karzai, Abdullah, Baradar in 12-member council

KABUL: Taliban on Tuesday included ex-Afghan President Hamid Karzai, the High Council for National Reconciliation chief Abdullah Abdullah and Taliban co-founder Abdul Ghani Baradar in its 12-member council which will govern the war-torn country, according to a source.

Out of 12 members, seven candidates have been already agreed upon, a source close to senior Taliban circles told Sputnik.

“Afghanistan would be governed by a 12-member council, with the exception of the president and the emirate. So far, the council has agreed on Abdul Ghani Baradar, [son of Taliban founder] Mullah Yaqub, [high-ranking member of the Haqqani network terrorist group] Khalil-ur-Rehman Haqqani, Dr Abdullah Abdullah, Hamid Karzai, [ex-Afghan Interior Minister] Hanif Atmar and [the leader of the Party of Islam] Gulbuddin Hekmatyar,” the source said. **ANI**



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Maqsood, Khushi star in Oman's thrilling victory over Mumbai

Khushi slammed 5 huge sixes and a four in no time to take the game away from Mumbai

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman rode on Mohammed Naseem Khushi's hurricane 39 off just 12 balls to beat a fighting Mumbai by 2 wickets in the first of three-match T20 series here at Oman Cricket Ground One in Amerat on Tuesday.

Khushi slammed 5 huge sixes and a four in no time to take the game away from Mumbai who looked to be in pole position to win the game when Oman was in trouble at 7 for 101 in the 17th over. Oman sealed the win in the 19th over when Khushi whacked Mohit Avasthi for a six over mid wicket. Captain Zeeshan Maqsood laid the foundation for Khushi's late on-



THREE-MATCH T20 SERIES: Oman sealed the win in the 19th over when Khushi whacked Mohit Avasthi for a six over mid-wicket.



slaught with a typically solid 50 off 39 that included 4 sixes.

Oman captain said his team had worked hard and was enjoying playing in home conditions after a long time. "We have had a long summer and boys are in great shape after months of training. Mumbai bowled exceptionally well to put us under pressure but I knew we had the players to take

the fight deep and Khushi finished the game in great style," said Maqsood.

"I must thank the team management for the wonderful support given to us all the way and we hope to do well in pursuit of our main goals this season," he added.

Oman's new ball bowlers Mohammed Naseem and Kaleemullah put Mumbai under pressure

by taking early wickets. Maqsood's accurate left-arm spin fetched him two wickets as Mumbai was restricted to 131 for 9 in 20 overs. Oman's start was equally precarious as it was reduced to 88 for 5 in 13 overs. However, Maqsood and Khushi kept their calm amid the ruins, cutting loose occasional to keep the run rate under check. Khushi's late onslaught then pow-

ered Oman to a nail-biting win over Mumbai, which is packed with first class cricketers including those who have represented India in various formats.

The two teams will lock horns again in the second T20 on Thursday and the third and last on Friday before playing a four-match one-day series on August 29, 31, September 2 and 3.

Brief scores: Mumbai 131 for 9 in 20 overs (Aakarshit Gmel 33 - 4x4, Hardik Tamore 23- 2x6, Shams Mulani 19 - 1x6. Mohammed Naseem 3-23, Zeeshan Maqsood 2-17, Kaleemullah 2-21) lost to Oman (Zeeshan Maqsood 50 - 2x4, 4x6, Naseem Khushi 39 not out - 1x4, 5x6. Shashank Attarde 2-23, Mohit Acasthi 2-32, Shams Mulani 2-34) by 2 wickets.

OMAN CRICKET



Kail Khalid, Shakeel Ahmed win top Premier Division awards

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Kail Khalid of Al Turki NMC and Shakeel Ahmad of IT Works walked away with the best batsman and best bowler awards for the Premier Division season 2020-21 while Zeeshan Siddiqui (best batsman) and Aqil Khan (best bowler) won the top awards for A Division at a prize ceremony held by Oman Cricket at OC Ground One in Amerat on Monday. Sarco's Sandip Patel received the consolation prize for his bril-

liant bowling during the season.

The prizes were presented by Oman Cricket Board Directors including Madhu Jesrani, OC Secretary, Kiran Asher, Treasurer, Dilip Mehta and Anil Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas, in the presence of Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer, Oman Cricket.

Premier Division League champion Muscat CT was awarded the winner's trophy while the runner-up prize went to Al Turki NMC. A Division topper Arabian Region Travel and Tourism (ARTT)

was awarded the winner's trophy while Sarco received the runner-up prize. In a mood to acknowledge the top performers of the season 2020-21, Oman Cricket also presented awards to Omani players who had an excellent season.

OCT Al Hail dominated the evening, claiming most of the top awards. Of Omani players representing one team, Khalid Rahim of OCT Al Hail B was adjudged best batsman while his team mates Samir Faizu and Shuaib Abdul Ghani received the

best bowler and best all-rounder awards respectively. Sharing the honour, Warith Al Balushi of OCT Maabala was also presented best all-rounder award for his excellent performance with the bat and ball. Representing two teams, Rafiq Mohammed won the best batsman award playing for OCT Al Nahdha and Orient Travels. Zubair Ali Akbar (OCT Ruwi/Y Horizon) and Shuaib Ismail (OCT Ruwi/Maniz Azad) claimed best bowler and best all-rounder awards.

COMMENTARY

When is Virat Kohli's next hundred coming?



Anis Sajjan, Vice Chairman, Danube Group

INDIA WERE robbed of a win in the first test match because of rain after dominating the first test match.

They were tested in the second Test at Lord's but bounced back strongly to win the second test match and take a 1-0 lead. Each of the 11 players who played in the Lords test match contributed in their own way which paved for India's big victory in the last hour at Lord's.

But the big question which still remains on every cricket followers mind, when is Virat Kohli's next hundred coming?

The reason is that his last Test hundred came in 2019 late November against Bangladesh at Eden Gardens. After that Virat has played 10 test matches in which he has batted for 17 innings and his highest score is 74 which was scored at Adelaide in the first innings of that ill-fated match where India were bowled out for their lowest score of 36 in the second innings. Virat has played 94 test matches and has 27 test hundreds, his first test hundred incidentally came at Adelaide too way back in 2012 in his eight test match and till his 84th test match, Virat had added another 26 test centuries which meant he has been scoring a test hundred in every third test match after he got his debut hundred.

So it's now 10 test matches where he has failed to score a test hundred. His last ten matches have been three against New Zealand, one against Australia and the rest 6 against England which has been in testing conditions but his earlier hundreds scored have also come in tougher conditions. His last ODI hundred came against the West Indies in August 2019 and after that he has

failed to get an ODI hundred in his next 15 innings. He has 43 ODI hundreds in 254 matches which is just 8 short of Sachin Tendulkar's 49 ODI hundreds.

His first ODI hundred came in his 14th ODI and he has been scoring a ODI hundred in every five matches. So it's been 15 ODI innings and 20 test innings where Virat blade has not been able to get a hundred.

It's not that he looks out of form, boasts an average of 59 in ODI and 51 in Test matches and 52 in T20's which is phenomenal but the hundreds have dried up for far too long for his high standards.

Not only the fans are anxious but I am sure Virat Kohli has been trying to reach out for the balls which is way out of the off stump and it has become a pattern of his dismissals where he nicking either in the slips or to the keeper.

Virat Kohli had a torrid time in 2014 against James Anderson where he managed just 131 runs without getting a fifty but he corrected himself in his next series in 2018 against the same opposition where he scored a whopping 600 runs and scored two hundred in the last series. Some Pundits had said after that series in 2018 that he left a lot of balls outside the off stump and kept his ego under control by not going after the balls which were to be left alone specially in English conditions.

There is no doubt he is a champion player but if King Kohli has to get back to his hundred mode he will have to curb his anxiousness and his ego and hundreds will automatically fall in place as it did before 2019 November. Every fan feels the next hundred is round the corner but only Virat knows which corner he needs to tackle to get that elusive hundred.

CRICKET

Pakistan's ranking reflects they cannot make it to finals: Ramiz Raja

LAHORE: Former Pakistan batsman Ramiz Raja has said that the Babar Azam-led side remains highly inconsistent and their ranking in all three formats reflects that they cannot make it to the finals of major tournaments.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan is set to take the decision on who will be the next Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief. Ramiz Raja can either take up the role or either current chairman Ehsan Mani can be given an extension.

"I did meet with the PM and presented him with a roadmap for how Pakistan cricket can go forward. It was a cricket-centric discussion on the problems Pakistan cricket is facing and what possible steps can be taken to improve the overall performance. I am glad he called me up and heard me out. -ANI

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by October 2021 reaching \$68.80, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by \$2.70 from the price of Monday, which was at \$66.10. - **ONA**

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 3,956.23 points, down 0.10 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.11 per cent at 594.79 points. Construction Materials Industry, up 3.33 per cent, was the top gainer while Muscat Thread Mill, down 8.33 per cent, was the top loser.

Treasury bills worth OMR40mn issued

The treasury bills are for a maturity period of 182 days, from August 25 until February 23, 2022



BENCHMARK YIELD CURVE: the treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. - **ONA**

MUSCAT: Oman's central bank raised OMR40 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Tuesday.

The treasury bills are for a maturity period of 182 days, from August 25 until February 23, 2022.

The average accepted price reached 99.617 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at 99.615 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.76836 per cent and 0.77131 per cent, respectively.

The treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial in-

struments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through dis-

counting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

The interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 0.5 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 0.75 per cent.

Furthermore, the treasury bills

promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. - **ONA**

ECONOMY



RAPID SPREAD: The rapid spread of the highly infectious Delta variant of the coronavirus and low vaccination rates have caught much of the region off-guard, especially in emerging markets, even as economies in Europe and North America reopen. - **BNA**

Delta blow knocks wind out of Asia's economic recovery

TOKYO: Asia's robust economic recovery from last year's coronavirus low is losing momentum as a surge in COVID-19 cases sees shops empty again and factories close, dimming prospects for corporate profit growth after a blockbuster half year.

The rapid spread of the highly infectious Delta variant of the novel coronavirus and low vaccination rates have caught much of the region off-guard, especially in emerging markets, even as economies in Europe and North America reopen.

"It's clear that economies across the region are suffering more from COVID-19 than they previously did. The biggest factor is that Asia is poorly vaccinated," said Rob Carnell, Asia-Pacific head of research at ING in Singapore, according to a media report.

While year-on-year corporate and economic indicators continue to show strong recovery, flattered by comparisons with 2020's sharp declines, quarter-on-quarter indicators reveal flagging momentum.

Asia's biggest firms are likely to post their first quarter-on-quarter profit decline in six quarters in July-September, falling 6.19 per cent, showed a Reuters calculation based on Refinitiv Eikon analyst data of 1,069 companies with a market capitalisation of at least \$1 billion.

"There's no mistake there will be a slowdown in the third quarter," said Norihiro Fujito, chief investment strategist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities in Tokyo.

In the near term, much depends on vaccination progress in

Southeast Asia - a major production base - and whether China takes extra steps to support its economy, Fujito said.

Vehicle sales in China, the world's second-largest economy, slipped 11.9 per cent in July versus the same month last year, falling for a third consecutive month amid virus outbreaks and a global semiconductor shortage which is curbing output.

Toyota Motor Corp, the world's largest automaker by sales volume, said last week it would cut September production by 40 per cent from its previous plan due to the chip crunch, though it retained production and sales targets for its fiscal year.

Regarding broader parts supply, Toyota executive Kazunari Kumakura said, "The spread of coronavirus and lockdowns in Southeast Asia had a major impact."

In Southeast Asia, soaring COVID-19 cases and subsequent lockdown measures have hit economic activity in both the services and manufacturing sectors.

Factory activity in the region contracted in July at the fastest pace since June last year, IHS Markit data showed.

"That's quite a strong signal that economic momentum in Southeast Asia will slow in the third quarter," said Rajiv Biswas, Asia-Pacific chief economist at IHS Markit in Singapore.

Delta outbreaks in Southeast Asia have caused supply chain headaches for many of the world's largest manufacturers, many of which rely on auto parts and semiconductors made in low-cost bases such as Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia. - **BNA**

AUTOMOBILE

India's passenger vehicle segment to lead sales recovery to pre-pandemic levels

MUMBAI: Passenger vehicles (PV) dealers are expected to lead a recovery among all automobile dealers sub-segments with 20 to 22 per cent revenue growth this fiscal to almost reach pre-pandemic revenue levels of fiscal 2020, rating agency Crisil said.

Comparatively, due to slower recovery, two-wheeler (2W) dealers will take a year or so longer to reach pre-pandemic sale levels.

Revenues for commercial vehicles (CV) dealers will remain below pre-pandemic levels this fiscal despite higher revenue growth due to a low base created by a sharp fall in the last two fiscals, said Crisil.

The pace of recovery could have been swifter but for the second wave of COVID-19 infections which led to a partial shutdown of dealers' showrooms in the first quarter of fiscal 2021.

Even so, automobile dealers' overall revenues are likely to grow at 20 per cent on a low base, also sup-



OVERALL REVENUE: Automobile dealers' overall revenues are likely to grow at 20 per cent on a low base, also supported by 4 to 6 per cent price hikes across vehicle segments. - **Photo used for illustrative purpose only**

ported by 4 to 6 per cent price hikes across vehicle segments.

Cash flows are expected to gradually recover, and along with controlled channel inventory and limited increase in debt, lend stability to credit profiles this fiscal. A study

of 191 automobile dealers rated by Crisil Ratings indicated as much.

Automotive retail registrations plunged in April and May due to localised lockdowns and temporary dealers' showroom closures amid the intense second wave. June saw

a sharp recovery on a low base and with the easing of curbs, the recovery is seen continuing in July.

More so, because the restrictions were mainly imposed in key states such as Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Rajasthan which account for 43 to 45 per cent of total retail automotive retail sales in India.

Anuj Sethi, Senior Director at Crisil Ratings, said PV dealers seem to be recovering faster compared with other categories, riding on higher pent-up demand and preference for personal mobility - especially in urban and semi-urban areas.

Slower demand from the pandemic-hit hinterland, increased spending on health and prices hikes are likely to impact the pace of recovery in 2W dealers.

"As a result, PV dealers' revenues will grow at 20 to 22 per cent, well over 15 to 16 per cent revenue growth for 2W dealers," said Sethi. - **ANI**

ANDROID ACCESSIBILITY SUITE APP



Google's new Android 12 accessibility feature lets users control phone with face expressions

WASHINGTON: American tech-giant Google is working on a new Android 12 accessibility feature to let users control their phone using facial expressions.

Mashable India quoted a report by XDA Developers that says the 'Camera Switches feature', which is one of the accessibility services in the Android Accessibility Suite app, will support setting gestures to specific controls. Smiling, opening the mouth, and looking out right, left, or down are reportedly the possible gestures, the app will include.

The corresponding camera

actions include getting to the homepage, scrolling backward and forward, and selecting. The app will also allow the users to adjust the gesture size and duration.

As per The Verge, the new feature would require the device's camera to be switched on, and Android 12-enabled devices will show a standing bar indicating the camera is getting used.

The feature will reportedly use an additional battery. It is currently in beta mode and is claimed to be convenient for users with disabilities. - **ANI**

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Indian male B.Com with 12+ yrs of experience in Accounts upto finalisation, is looking for a suitable placement. Oman D/L & NOC available. Contact 95089869. Email annchanda@gmail.com

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HOBBIES YOU CAN PURSUE ON YOUR OWN

WHETHER you simply prefer doing things solo or you have a tight schedule that makes it difficult to commit to classes at set times of the week, you don't need to forgo the pursuit of new hobbies. Here are five activities that you can take on completely on your own:



LIFESTYLE



1

Running

Running is great for cardiovascular health, a proven stress reliever and a fun way to explore your local area. The good news? All you need is a pair of sneakers to get started. While many people prefer to join a running group or pair up with a buddy, this is one sport that's ideal for individualists.

2

Music

Teach yourself to play piano at your own pace using a keyboard that features built-in learning tools. The Casiotone LK-S450 is not only an affordable model, it has lighted keys to help guide you through its built-in songs, along with intuitive Step-Up Lessons providing finger placement guidance to help you along your musical journey. The keyboard is also compatible with Chordana, a free learning app available for iOS and Android that teaches you to play any MIDI file using standard notation.



3

Arts and crafts

From cake decorating and sewing to drawing and painting, you can learn more than 20 hobbies. The site hosts over 1,500 classes and members get access to live events, a newsletter and additional resources designed to educate and inspire DIY-ers.

4

Coding

If you are looking to pick up a new job skill or you simply want to exercise your mind, you can learn the fundamentals of coding by programming a graphing calculator. Some of the models available from Casio, which have a natural textbook display for ultimate readability and user-friendliness, feature built-in Python programming functionality. Get started by visiting casioeducation.com where you can find free resources and tutorials.



5

Indoor gardening

Indoor gardening is a satisfying and calming hobby that you can take on in order to beautify your space and grow your own herbs and vegetables. What's more, you can get started any time of year, making it a great activity for those who march to the beat of their own drum.



Using new tools and resources, you can make your hobbies completely your own, fitting them into your schedule when, where and how you see fit. — StatePoint



This year’s festival in Bonn opened with a marathon of the famous composer’s symphonies and a benefit concert for flood victims.

In 2020, Beethovenfest was forced to cancel the spring and fall festival seasons due to the coronavirus restrictions. It was supposed to have been a special year, marking the composer’s 250th birthday. Thanks to the Beethoven Jubilee Society (BTHVN2020), some events are taking place this year.

The original festival motto, “Auferstehn, ja auferstehn!” (Resurrect, yes, resurrect), turned out to be a prophetic one: From August 20 to September 10, 2021, the Beethovenfest Bonn is literally “resurrecting” with 54 concerts in Bonn — the pandemic allowing, of course.

Iconic symphonies

On the opening weekend of the Beethovenfest, five world-class ensembles presented the entire cycle of the composer’s symphonies. The nine works, each of which is an icon of European music, form the symbolic core of Beethoven’s artistic legacy.

The Ninth was interpreted by the orchestra Le Concert des Nations, under legendary conductor and orchestra founder Jordi Savall.

The French Baroque ensemble Les Talens Lyriques under Christophe Rousset played Symphonies No. 8 and No. 7, and the Hungarian National Philharmonic, conducted by Stefan Soltesz, presented



Symphonies No. 6 and No. 4.

The Flemish B’Rock Orchestra, led by Alessandro de Marchi, performed Symphonies No. 2 and No. 5, and the Austrian ORF Radio Symphony Orchestra, under Michael Boder’s direction, concluded with Symphonies No. 1 and No. 3.

DW presented the festival’s opening concert as a charity event. Donations will go to people affected by the recent devastating floods in the Bonn area.

Beethoven and variations

The festival programme offers quite a few rare gems, including Beethoven’s nine symphonies in Franz Liszt’s transcription for piano. The Orchestre des Champs-Elysées under Philippe Herreweghe and the Vienna Philharmonic, conducted by Herbert Blomstedt, will also pay homage to Beethoven.

This year’s grand finale is Mahler’s mighty Resurrection Sym-



phony, which also inspired the festival’s theme, presented by the Mahler Chamber Orchestra conducted by Maxime Pascal.

As pianist in residence, Marino Formenti will perform three evenings at the Beethoven House, the Lyon Opera Ballet will devote itself to Beethoven’s string quartets, and director Romeo Castellucci will create a “Pavane for Prometheus” in a disused indoor pool, “the most interesting place in Bonn,” according to festival director Nike Wagner.

Campus — around the world in 20 years

In cooperation with Deutsche Welle, Beethovenfest Bonn continues its successful Campus Project of previous years. In 2021, the youth encounter project celebrates its 20th anniversary and



invites young musicians from all over Europe to Bonn to develop a challenging programme along with the members of Germany’s Federal Youth Orchestra.

The focus is on 20th and 21st century spatial compositions. The musicians led by conductor Johannes Kalitzke sit in groups around the audience — a unique sound experience.

Another highlight: the world premiere of the DW-commissioned work “Entlang der Lieder” (Along the Songs) by the young Turkish composer Zeynep Gedizlioglu, who has been making a name for herself internationally.

The World Conference Centre Bonn concert hall is currently allowed to seat 500 guests.

DW and its partner stations will be broadcasting numerous concerts on the radio and online on the

DW Classical YouTube channel.

Beethoven, humanist superstar

Ludwig van Beethoven is the most frequently performed of all classical composers. Why is the composer so popular around the world even today, 194 years after his death?

The question is easy to answer for Nike Wagner, who opens her last season as artistic director of the Beethovenfest on August 20.

“It’s because of his commitment to humanity,” she told DW. “Beethoven is not a narcissistic composer or a purely lyrical composer working from an ivory tower. He says ‘I,’ — but that encompasses ‘we,’” Wagner says, adding she knows of no other composer like that.

The musician, born in modest circumstances in Bonn, has a message that hasn’t lost in urgency in the face of the crises of today’s world, for instance the dramatic situation in Afghanistan.

We’re once again dealing with “dictatorships, oppression and a reactionary ‘rewinding’ of the achievements of civilization,” says Beethovenfest festival director Nike Wagner.

Beethoven, she points out, “stands for the idea of freedom, equality, brotherhood. His work can only be understood as an appeal to humanity and humanity.” **-dw**





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ROUND-UP

Tadhamun programme to support social welfare families across Oman

This year, Bank Muscat's Tadhamun programme will distribute 790 household appliances to 150 social welfare families across Oman

MUSCAT: In line with its pioneering role in corporate social responsibility Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has launched its annual Tadhamun programme in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development.

In 2021, the programme will distribute 790 household appliances to 150 social welfare families across Oman. Earlier this year,



the bank also provided laptops and tablets to 1,240 students from low-income families intending to support the government's efforts to make online education available

for all students in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. A joint team from the Ministry of Social Development and the bank is at present distributing household

appliances to families in the Governorate of Muscat and will continue in other governorates in the coming weeks. The distribution is being conducted after taking all

precautions and in full compliance with COVID-19 social distancing norms to maintain the safety and health of everyone.

Speaking on the occasion, Talib Saif Al Makhmari, Manager, Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat is delighted to continue the ninth edition of this pioneering CSR programme, in close partnership with the Ministry of Social Development and sees this as an important means of further achievements in social responsibility and sustainability, especially given its great success in the past."

This year's programme is being implemented by the bank in cooperation with specialists from the Ministry of Social Development, who received applications and finalised the list of families entitled to the benefits.

Talib Al Makhmari thanked the Ministry of Social Development, the volunteers and other participants for their role in ensuring the success of the programme.

Bank Muscat is proud of the success and achievements of its

CSR programmes, which draws from the values of leadership and partnership to create a positive impact on Omani society. The Tadhamun programme has benefitted 1,691 families comprising more than 8,000 people since it was first launched in 2013. The bank has over 10 long-term CSR programmes including Green Sports, Little Investor, Jesr Al Mustaqbal, and the Al Wathbah SME Academy. It has also launched many development projects in the past including the Misfat Al Abriyeen heritage tourism project in the Wilayat of Al Hamra in partnership with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and a 15,000 sq. m. public park in Al Khoud in partnership with Muscat Municipality.

Bank Muscat is well recognised both locally and internationally for its outstanding efforts in CSR and sustainability. In 2020, it was honoured by the Ministry of Social Development for its outstanding role in supporting people with disabilities, and also at the Fourth Oman Forum for Partnership and Social Responsibility.

7TH EDITION

ahlibank's graduate development programme to provide jobs for aspiring banking professionals

MUSCAT: Reflecting its commitment to empowering young people and developing their abilities to enhance their career opportunities in the banking industry, ahlibank has announced the launch of the 7th edition of its renowned Graduate Development Programme (GDP).

The programme aims to providing jobs for aspiring banking professionals in several different disciplines of the industry, after undergoing intensive training and leadership led coaching that allows them to obtain basic knowledge suitable for a lucrative and rewarding career in Oman's banking industry.

Ever since its inception, ahlibank has put concerted focus on training and developing human resources as one of the key elements of its operational strategies, and as an important pillar of its growth. The bank believes in effectively contributing to the national agenda as outlined in Oman Vision 2040, of meeting the needs of the labour market, through job creation and skill development of the local population, especially the young national workforce. In line with the same, the graduate development programme, an annual initiative, is designed to accelerate the participant's career growth and prepares them to take up leadership roles at the bank.

Speaking on the success of the programme, Mohammed Al Mufargi, AGM-Head of Human Resources ahlibank said, "Creating



jobs for Omani youth is a top priority for the bank, and its efforts have been reflected in supporting the government's direction to develop youth skills and benefit from their capabilities by providing a platform to help them grow and prosper faster. In line with Oman 2040 vision, which adopts a strategic plan to promote training and operational programmes for youth, the bank affirms its commitment to contributing to the development of young people's skills, encouraging and guiding them towards improving their professional performance for a brighter future. ahlibank's advanced levels of skill development, and training to meet the modern-day require-

ments of the banking industry set a benchmark by not only preparing the young graduates for a banking career but also by giving them a first-hand experiential with full-time job offers."

Launched under the name 'Graduate Development Programme', the two-year programme was first conducted in the year 2015, employing a number of graduates within several of the bank's divisions. The programme is designed to develop the skills of new graduates by combining hands-on training with theoretical training, mentoring programmes and allowing participants to join the team when the programme is completed. The programme focuses on

strengthening leadership and career skills in banking with the support of a group of managers, trainers and experienced people.

After successful completion of the first year, the bank will distribute graduates across the bank's various departments as part of the on-the-job training initiative, based on their abilities, taking into account their educational qualifications and prevailing job requirements. Upon successful completion in the second year, they will be formally appointed to a full-time role at the bank, based on their work requirements and leadership skills.

In keeping with national development objectives, which focus on providing vocational training to citizens, ahlibank is keen through its youth-oriented initiatives to attract entrepreneurs and creativity, and to qualify them to enrich the labour market with competencies that not only meet the basic requirements of employment but are able to exceed expectations and contribute effectively in a highly competitive environment

ahlibank is considered a forerunner in enhancing the capabilities and competencies of Omani youth and the annual graduate development programme plays a key role in cementing this position. Its strategic approach confirms its commitment to supporting Oman's efforts to create jobs and its keenness to create a coherent framework that serves the process of national growth and development.

APPOINTMENT



Pearson Online Academy UK Global appoints Jo Vigneron as its founding principal

MUSCAT: Pearson Online Academy UK Global, is delighted to announce the appointment of Jo Vigneron to the role of Founding Principal, for its inaugural September term.

Jo Vigneron brings with her over 20 years of educational expertise. In recent years she has played a key role in the opening of two highly successful schools in the UAE and is now aiming to make Pearson Online Academy UK Global the "best online school in the world". Jo's educational career has encompassed key leadership positions, teacher and lecturer roles across the globe.

Sharing her views for the new school, Jo said, "We have access to some of the most innovative technology available, and our teachers are experts in their fields, with superb pedagogical skills. As educators who've worked through the last 18 months of change and developments in the sector, gone is a perception that education is limited by location. Now the lid has lifted, it is for us to meet the challenges posed to us. Our young people today are more connected than ever. It is for us as educators to facilitate meaningful links and access to learning opportunities globally. Supported by Pearson

and all their expertise, a team of wonderful teachers and a school full of amazing students. I have absolutely no doubt that we have the winning formula and I look forward to all the adventures that lie ahead."

Offering Pearson Edexcel International GCSEs in a variety of subjects, International AS and A-Levels, Pearson Online Academy UK Global welcomes 14 - 18-year-old students with good English skills who are looking for a personalised learning pathway accessible anywhere. The academy's expert teachers and wider support team will provide a rigorous and inspiring academic experience that integrates the best of online and offline activities. With core coursework and 'super-curriculum' experiences, students will develop transferable skills such as self-management and cross-cultural collaboration; build their wellness and become valuable members of society, who participate in local, national and global communities.

Pearson Online Academy UK Global is currently accepting applications for the Academic Year 2021-22. To find out more, download a brochure, and apply, visit www.ukglobal.pearsononlineacademy.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Radisson Hotel Group opens restaurants' doors to Ministry of Health's nurses

MUSCAT: Radisson Hotels in Muscat have opened their restaurants' doors to the nurses of the Ministry of Health (MOH) in gratitude for their round-the-clock efforts to fight COVID-19.

Nurses on the frontline attending to COVID-19 patients have been working through the most trying circumstances to save lives

and offer care to those affected by the virus.

The initiative, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, is to celebrate the hard work and dedication of nurses. Maha Al Maskari, Senior Specialised Critical Care Nurse from Risk Management Office in DGPHE-MOH said this dining experience will be a welcome

relief for the nurses enduring long hours under challenging circumstances. "Knowing that there is a nice meal waiting for you at the end of a long shift can make all the difference in the world right now."

"During this crisis, we have seen so many nurses working in the most challenging circumstances, sacrificing their own needs for the

greater cause. They truly are front-line heroes," said Panos Panagis, District Director of RHG Oman. "We are honoured to extend our hospitality across our Muscat properties - Hormuz Grand Muscat, A Radisson Collection Hotel, Radisson Blu Hotel, Muscat; Park Inn by Radisson Muscat to them during this difficult time."



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