

Indian government cancels
CBSE Class 12 examinations

In view of the uncertain conditions due to Covid and the feedback obtained from various stakeholders, India has decided that Class 12 Board Exams will not be held this year. It was also decided that CBSE will take steps to compile the results of Class 12 students as per a well-defined objective criteria in a time-bound manner. Following the cancellation of the CBSE Board examination on Tuesday, the Council For the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) has scrapped its ISC examination for this year. **DETAILS ON P2**



P12

THE RISE OF 'KING KAHN' HERALDS NEW ERA AT BAYERN MUNICH



P14

FROM ROCKS TO PRODUCTIVE FARM LANDS



P17

NEW RO 10M FOOD INDUSTRIES PROJECT TO COME UP IN KHAZAEN



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO ITALIAN PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Sergio Mattarella of the Italian Republic on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Mattarella. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Italia further progress and prosperity. — ONA

A 4-PAGE SUPPLEMENT ON ITALY'S NATIONAL DAY



MUSCAT

SWEDISH FOREIGN MINISTER ARRIVES

Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden and her accompanying delegation arrived here on Tuesday on a 2-day official visit to the Sultanate during which she will meet a number of officials and hold a political talks session between the Sultanate and Sweden. She was received by Dr Khalid bin Said al Jaradi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry and a number of officials at the foreign ministry.

INSIDE



WHO TO START COVID-19 VACCINATION IN YEMEN

P6



UGANDAN MINISTER HURT IN ASSASSINATION BID

P8

PLANS FOR NATIONAL VACCINATION DRIVE UNVEILED

32,172 GED STUDENTS VACCINATED IN FIVE DAYS



VINOD NAIR @vinot_nair

The Sultanate on Tuesday unveiled the details of the National Campaign for Immunisation that will cover 70 per cent of the population over several phases, including those 12 years and above.

The new vaccination programme is a welcome decision, as the country continues to report over 1,000 cases daily and deaths in double digits.

The Ministry of Health on Tuesday reported 1,047 new cases and 11 deaths. Ninety-seven people were admitted to hospitals across the country, bringing the total number of inpatients to 802, including 257 in intensive care units.

The Ministry of Health has said that, as per vaccine procurement

agreements signed with different firms, the Sultanate will receive 1.25 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines at a rate of 20,000 doses per week.

The 205,000 doses of vaccines which arrived on Saturday will be now followed by more than 100,000 doses of Pfizer and around 148,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines.

TARGET GROUPS

The ministry strives to cover all target groups in Oman, equivalent to 70 per cent of the population of the Sultanate. The vaccine will be administered in stages, in accordance with the schedule of arrival of doses and in line with the national immunisation strategy.

TURN TO P2



PALESTINIAN PM ARRIVES ON VISIT

Mohammad Shtayyeh, Prime Minister of the State of Palestine and his delegation arrived in Muscat on Tuesday on a three-day visit to the Sultanate. The Palestinian Prime Minister and his delegation were received upon their arrival by Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the State and Governor of Muscat, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, Dr Khalid bin Said al Jaradi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry and Dr Tayseer Ali Farhat, Palestinian Ambassador to Oman. **SEE ALSO P2**

PROBE UNDER WAY

Doctor suspended over patient's death

ZAINAB AL NASSRI @zainabalnasseri

The Ministry of Health issued a statement following the death of an Omani citizen due to medical error in a private hospital.

As legal measures are under way, the ministry has affirmed that the doctor has been suspended from practicing as a precaution until the completion of the investigation.

It also stressed that it is keen on the safety of medical practice in both public and private sectors and that it will not go easy with any breach of professional standards.

The death of Munira al Muqbali, an entrepreneur,

happened due to a medical error during surgery at a private hospital in the Sultanate. According to their claims, the victim's family members mentioned in media channels that the operation was for liposuction, but the doctor, according to their claims, cut a part of the liver and pancreas due to lack of professionalism.

According to the law regulating the medical and medical auxiliary professions, the Supreme Medical Committee has the authority to recommend suspension of a practitioner with an explanation, without any prejudice.

TURN TO P2

Call for action against human trafficking

KABEER YOUSUF @kabeeryousef

The Sultanate of Oman has zero tolerance towards human trafficking. It is committed to playing its part in the global battle to combat human trafficking.

Oman considers human trafficking as a form of modern slavery which involves recruiting men, women and children by deception or coercion for exploitation. It is against the law of the land. The Sultanate is part of the global fight against trafficking, which is called Trafficking in Persons (TIP).

Worldwide, TIP is considered a global problem, with an estimated 25 million victims in developed and less developed countries. Labour exploitation, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation come under the purview of the most common forms of TIP.

The issue discussed in the backdrop of a comprehensive training programme for Omani female candidates at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences. It is a continuous training programme for the nominated officers.

Conducted by the General Directorate of Criminal Inquiries and Investigations in cooperation with the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, the comprehensive event focused on early detection and booking of the criminals before the actual crime.

TURN TO P2

Muscat swelters on hottest day of this season

STAFF REPORTER MUSCAT, JUNE 1

With maximum temperatures in Muscat touching 46 °C on Tuesday, people were warned to take all precautions in the coming days, especially by taking more liquids.

Temperatures in Suhar were around 47 °C, while Salalah recorded 32°C.

“Clear to partly cloudy skies are expected along the coastal strip of Dhofar Governorate and



the surrounding mountains, with intermittent rain and generally clear skies over the rest of the governorates, with the possibility of low clouds

forming in the night and early morning over parts of the Al Wusta Governorate,” the Met forecast said.

Workers should be not employed at construction sites and open areas between 12.30 pm and 3.30 pm in the peak summer months of June, July and August, an online statement issued by the Ministry of Labour, said.

As per Article 16 dealing with the regulations for occupational safety and health, “The workers shall be not employed at the construction sites or

high-temperature locations during afternoon hours from 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm throughout June, July and August every year.”

According to the company law, in the event of the existence of any danger which threatens the safety and health of the workers, the ministry shall take necessary measures to stop the work fully or partially or stop the operation of one or more machinery until the elimination of the causes of such danger.

■ PALESTINIAN PREMIER ARRIVES



Mohammad Shtayyeh, Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, and his accompanying delegation arrived in Muscat on Tuesday on a three-day visit to the Sultanate. – ONA

National vaccination drive unveiled

FROM PAGE 1

Badr bin Saif al Rawahi, Director of Contagious Disease Department at the Directorate General of Disease Surveillance, said that the ministry has devised an immunisation plan for June that targeted General Education Diploma (GED) students and the GED exam supervision staff. The programme began on May 25. The plan also covers private sector health workers who did not receive the vaccine, in addition to basic service providers and personnel of military and civil departments, said Al Rawahi, adding that all will begin to be vaccinated this week.

As for other segments of society, the vaccination drive will cover those aged 45 and above during the third week of June, said Al Rawahi, who said that those who received the first dose and completed 10 weeks will receive the second dose this month.

Other target segments to be

covered during June include higher education students in institutions of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Al Rawahi added.

He pointed out that the immunisation plan will be conducted in a variety of methods with the prime aim of covering the target segments in immunisation centres and by mobile teams.

The campaign to vaccinate students and GED exam staff has so far covered about 32,172 or 43 per cent of the target segment, just within five days, said Al Rawahi, adding that, despite society's cooperation, challenges still remain, and these include reservations among the elderly and student parents.

Al Rawahi stressed that the vaccine is totally safe and that it has been endorsed only after tests by specialised departments in the countries of origin and by international organisations that licensed the vaccine.

Doctor suspended over patient's death

FROM PAGE 1

Compensation for proven medical errors in cases of death, partial, or total and permanent disability, wounds, and injuries shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Royal Decree regarding the assessment of 'blood money'. In all cases, this does not prejudice the right of the victim to seek compensation for moral damage if this is required.

Based on the Penal Code in the Sultanate, anyone who mistakenly causes the death of a person shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than three months and not exceeding three years and a fine of not less than RO 300 and not more than RO 1,000.

The penalty stipulated in Articles 311 and 312 in this law is intensified, provided that it does not exceed the double, if the crime occurred as a result of the offender's breach of the principles of his profession or job, or if he was under the influence of drunkenness or a drug, or if the act resulted in death or permanent disability, or if he refused to help the victim or refused to seeking help for him.

More than 32,000 GED students vaccinated

MUSCAT: As many as 32,172 have been vaccinated as part of the current drive undertaken by the ministries of Health and Education for immunisation against coronavirus (Covid-19).

The proportion of GED students vaccinated so far stands at 43 per cent of the total number estimated at 75,730.

Muscat Governorate had the largest number of vaccinated (7,915 or 47 per cent of the target segment), followed by North Al Batinah Governorate (5,418 or 39 per cent of the target segment) and Al Dakhiliyah Governorate (4,613 or 44 per cent of the target segment).

The Ministry of Education said that the vaccination of students



is optional for all segments and that parents have been notified accordingly.

All students will be allowed to sit for the exams, irrespective of whether or not they took the vaccine, affirmed the ministry. Yet, it advised all to get the vaccine to safeguard their health.

All countries plan to make Covid-19 vaccination a prerequisite to travellers' entry to their lands, observed the ministry, noting that students who obtain scholarship may require the vaccination to pursue their studies abroad.

— ONA

Sultanate, European body seek to enhance ties

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's Foreign Ministry and the European External Action Service (EEAS) on Tuesday held a political consultation session via video-conferencing.

The Omani side was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, while the European side was chaired by Enrique Mora, Deputy Secretary-General of the EEAS.

The session reviewed bilateral relations between the Sultanate and the European Union (EU) and means of promoting them in various fields to serve joint interests.



The session also exchanged views on the regional and international issues of common concern and the latest regional developments. Najim bin Sulaiman al Abri, the Sul-

tanate's Ambassador to Belgium and the EU, Patrick Simonnet, EU Ambassador to the Sultanate, and some officials from both sides took part in the session. — ONA

Parents weary as CBSE cancels +2 exams

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Expatriate parents in the Sultanate have expressed their concern over the future of their children as the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Plus 2 examinations were cancelled on Tuesday in the wake of the looming uncertainty over the pandemic.

However, some Plus 2 students when contacted said they heaved a sigh of relief at the news as they have already been exhausted after several months of preparations for the exams.

On April 14 this year, the Plus 2 exams were postponed while class 10 exams were cancelled. The Central body on Tuesday announced after a meeting with the Prime Minister that the aforesaid exams stand cancelled.

"It was a period of uncertainty as the exams stood postponed earlier. We were on the lookout for the announcements from the CBSE about the exams, and finally here it is. I need to plan my son's future education as the

exam is cancelled," Sana Saleem, parent of an ISM student, told the *Observer*.

A statement issued after a high level meeting which decided the cancellation, said, "Looking at the present situation of the pandemic and school closures, and also taking into account the safety and well-being of the students, it has been decided to cancel the Board Exams for Class 12.

"As a commerce student, it's good to cancel as it's very difficult to conduct exam in India, even though Oman's Covid numbers are not so high," adds Lijihas Hussain, parent of a student.

"In other way it's high time to stop such examination procedure which gives a lot of pressure to students. These days we have lots of other ways of assessments to check students' capabilities, strength and weaknesses. So it's high time to change our examination system as well," adds Lijihas.

"My son already got admission to a leading college in Bangaluru and entrance test and interview were over in February. Fees were

paid and he is attending hybrid classes while those who want physical attendance can do so," adds Lijihas.

Teachers said several students had planned to pursue their higher studies in India after the exams and they would find it difficult to do so at least for some time.

"This decision can have adverse effects on different children. There are many children who were planning to continue their studies in India after getting their Board results. So those students will obviously face difficulties," principal of an Indian school said.

However, the news has also brought an element of joy to many a parent as well as the students.

"The news of boards exams getting cancelled has indeed brought a relief from stress that had been building up for more than a year," said a parent.

"I'm very happy about the news as the past few months have been so exhausting, not having a clear information about anything," said Aasim Laisee Lijihas, a Plus 2 student.

Call for action against human trafficking

FROM PAGE 1

"Oman has stringent laws in place to combat human trafficking and has zero tolerance towards such crimes that harm the individual freedom," a source at the Royal Oman Police (ROP) said. He said that if someone finds to be a victim of TIP or gets to know about it, they should alert the Royal Oman Police hotline on

80077444.

More often than not, TIP victims are transported across international frontiers.

The ROP works in close partnership with the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT), Public Prosecution, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Jus-

tice and Legal Affairs besides the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to tackle this international menace.

The event dealt with the concept of human trafficking, role of the ROP in addressing such crimes, and early identification mechanisms for victims. It aimed to prepare more officials to tackle human trafficking and make Oman free from TIP.

Tender

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
4/2021/PEIE/HQ-4	CONSTRUCTION OF THE MADAYN VEHICLE COMPLEX (MOTKAR), SUHAR, SULTANATE OF OMAN	17-06-2021	14-07-2021	Construction	Excellent	3000

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

- Tender Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.
- E-Tendering System Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@ita.gov.om and +968 24166670, 24166409.

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening.

Madaayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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madaayn.om

Oman, Saudi Arabia review investment opportunities

MUSCAT: Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, held a meeting through video conference with Eng Khalid bin Abdulaziz al Falih, Minister of Investment of Saudi Arabia, with the participation of several officials from both sides.

The two sides reviewed aspects of cooperation between the two brotherly countries in the field of investment and the available opportunities as well as the Saudi Vision 2030 and Oman Vision 2040 and the economic diversification projects and targets therein contained.

The minister discussed the importance of activating the Omani-Saudi Business Council alongside the trade chamber in both countries.

It was agreed to form a working team tasked with



laying down an action plan for the joint economic aspects in preparation for mutual visits between the two countries. It was also agreed that the ministry's under-secretary for investment promotion will

visit Saudi Arabia to review the Saudi investment experience.

The meeting was attended by His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, the Sultanate's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Asila bint Salim al

Samsamiyah, Under-Secretary for Investment Promotion at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and a number of officials from the ministry and Oman Investment Authority.

Expat held for keeping illicit goods

MUSCAT: The police command of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate arrested an expat for possessing illicit goods, and seized more than 6,130 boxes of cigarettes and 9,714 cans of banned tobacco derivatives.



Deal to fund projects in Al Wusta



HAIMA: The Office of the Governor of Al Wusta signed on Tuesday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to fund several projects as a part of its social responsibility.

As per the deal, PDO will fund building a public park, installing solar system lights in main street intersections, repairing damaged

lights, and funding two portable units for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities.

The MoU was signed by Shaikh Me'athad bin Mohammed al Ya'qoubi, Governor of Al Wusta, and Eng Abdul-Amir bin Abdul-Hussain al Ajmi, PDO External Affairs and Value Creation Director.

— ONA

Education Ministry's forum on blended learning begins

MUSCAT: The first virtual educational forum 'Towards a sustainable blended education: Reality, empowerment and ambition' kicked off on Tuesday under the patronage of Majid bin Said al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

Prof Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary for Education, attended the opening session of the forum with a number of Directors-General at the ministry and with wide participation from different groups in the educational field.

The two-day forum includes six discussion sessions covering four different topics, which are: 'Effective implementation of simultaneous lessons', 'Effective implementation of the integration between simultaneous and



asynchronous classes,' 'Effective application of electronic evaluation methods,' and 'Production and application



of interactive lessons in educational platforms'.

This virtual educational forum comes with the aim of

highlighting the efforts and the distinguished teachers' initiatives from various government schools in the educational directorates in the governorates, which have had a positive impact on the continuation of distance learning.

The forum aims at defining the requirements for the implementation of these initiatives and their results to enable teachers to benefit from these initiatives in various educational levels.

The forum also seeks to motivate teachers to develop their teaching methods in line with the distance learning and blended learning, as well as to spread the culture of digital transformation in learning by employing information and communication technology in the educational process.

— ONA

MoH signs deal with PDO and Gulf Energy

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) signed on Tuesday a funding agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Gulf Energy SAOC for the construction of a new oxygen tank with the capacity of 10,000 L to the Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah.

The agreement was signed by Dr Fatma bint Mohammed al Ajmi, MoH Under-Secretary for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs, on behalf of the Ministry, Eng Abul-Amir bin Abdul-Hussain al Ajmi, PDO External Affairs and Value Creation Director, on behalf of PDO Company, and Yasser al Baraami, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Mubbadarah, on behalf of Gulf Energy Company. — ONA



Over 52,000 SMEs registered till April 2021 with 19 pc rise

MUSCAT: The total number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) registered in the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada) till the end of April 2021 stood at 52,524, compared to 44,139 in April 2020, an increase by 19 per cent, according to the data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of SMEs registered in the Governorate of Muscat stood at 17,692 at the end of April 2021, followed by the Governorate of North Al Batinah with 8,310, the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah with 6,554, comprising an increase by

17.6 per cent, the Governorate of Dhofar with 4,388, the Governorate of South Al Batinah with 3,981, the Governorate of North Al Sharqiyah with 3,488, comprising an increase by 16.3 per cent, and the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah with 3,123.

The number of SMEs registered in the Governorate of Al Dhahirah stood at 2,988, marking a rise by 13.9 per cent while 1,123 SMEs were registered in the Governorate of Al Buraimi.

In the Governorate of Al Wusta, 684 SMEs were registered, a rise by 38.2 per cent. The number of SMEs in the Governorate of Musandam also rose by 14.9 per cent to stand at 193. — ONA

AL-EZ

AL EZ TRADE TRANSPORT & CONTRACTING LLC

Job Vacancy (Only for Omanis)

JOB TITLE: PROJECT MANAGER

- Location - Muscat/site
- Qualification - Degree in Civil Engineering
- Experience - Shall have minimum 20 years' relevant work experience of which 15 years in a managerial position integrated service contract in oil & gas environment.
- Role & Responsibilities: Single point responsible and accountable for the management and execution of all aspects of the services, ensure all projects are executed in line with international standards and specifications and leadership in HSSE performance.

JOB TITLE: (HSSE) ADVISOR

- Location - Site
- Qualification - Certification courses such as NEBOSH IGC or technical level memberships with IOSH.
- Experience - Minimum of 5 years of relevant HSE experience preferably in oil and gas industry, 3 years in HSSE position overseeing similar scope of work.
- Role & Responsibilities: day-to-day HSSE oversight, documentation, risk assessment, monitoring, auditing, inspections, induction and training.

JOB TITLE: (HSSE) MANAGER

- Location - Muscat/Site
- Qualification - NEBOSH diploma/ certified safety professional/ chartered member of IOSH
- Experience - Shall have minimum 10 years' relevant work experience in oil and gas industry of which 6 years of experience in HSSE managerial position.
- Role & Responsibilities: Inspecting, auditing the activities, liaise with contractor management to provide all necessary HSE resources at site.

JOB TITLE: (CIVIL) ENGINEER

- Location - Muscat/Site
- Qualification - Civil Engineering Degree/ Diploma.
- Experience - Fresh graduate.
- Role & Responsibilities: To manage/ supervise discipline construction and commissioning activities according to applicable procedures and specifications ensuring technical integrity, schedule, quality and HSE targets are met in a

professional and cost effective manner.

JOB TITLE: CONSTRUCTION SITE MANGAGER

- Location - site
- Qualification - Degree in Civil Engineering
- Experience - Shall have minimum 15 years' relevant work experience in oil and gas construction/ maintenance of which 10 years in a similar position in oil & gas environment.
- Role & Responsibilities: Responsible and accountable to manage the execution of all discipline construction/ maintenance activities in a safe manner, on time and in accordance with the international standards and specifications ensuring technical integrity and HSSE targets are met in professional and cost effective manner.

JOB TITLE: QUALITY ASSURANCE& QULITY CONTROL LEAD

- Location - Site/Muscat
- Qualification - Civil Engineering degree
- Familiar with building/structural standards such as BS, ACI, ASTM, NFPA, etc.)
- Experience - Minimum of 15 years of relevant work experience of which 10 years in similar position in oil and gas environmental.
- Role & Responsibilities: Implementing the Quality systems on site in accordance with Quality plans, Inspection & Test plans and procedures, preparing all Quality Control documentation, Procedure Qualification etc., liaising with contractor construction manager and QC/QA site inspector to resolve all QA/QC related problems and reviewing site generated daily documentation with site inspector/construction manager.

JOB TITLE: HEAD OF PROJECT SERVICES

- Location - Muscat/Site
- Qualification - Degree in Civil Engineering
- Experience - Shall have minimum 15 years' relevant work experience in pre and post contract management of which 10 years in oil and gas environment.
- Role & Responsibilities: Cost estimation and cost control, planning and scheduling, information management and document control and administration services.

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HEALTH INSURANCE NEED OF THE HOUR

VINOD NAIR
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Whether to have a detailed medical insurance or a cashless treatment policy needs serious thinking, irrespective of whether one is frequently sick or not.

With the world, including Oman, in the grip of a pandemic that can affect anyone, anytime, the need for insurance cover is important as hospital bills can be beyond reach for both individuals and their employers.

Speaking to the *Observer*, a senior executive of leading insurance firm, said, “Insurance policies take some time to get activated after the applicant’s documents are vetted.

We have clients or potential clients coming to us when their near ones are admitted to hospital. Things do not work that way. Insurance is a safety net, and not that someone must fall sick to make use of it. It is always good to have a cover that can be used anytime, anywhere.”

Here in Oman, medical expenses can burden both the employers and employees if they are not insured enough. “Covid has taught that one can get hospitalised anytime and need not have a history of illness for that. So, it is good to have a health security net.”

Oman’s mandatory universal health insurance for private sector employees, domestic workers and visitors to the Sultanate is expected


Insurance is a safety net, and not that someone must fall sick to make use of it. It is always good to have a cover that can be used anytime, anywhere
EXECUTIVE
Insurance firm

to be launched this year.

The system aims to provide affordable health insurance to private sector employees and domestic workers, as well as visitors to Oman and will start with the electronic Dhamani system for mandatory health insurance. It hopes to guarantee that costs do not leave too much of a dent in the wallet of those who find healthcare expensive.

According to industry experts, it is important to opt for the right health insurance policy that will meet the requirements of emergencies.

According to sources in the industry, the client should understand the requirement while selecting the health insurance policy as it will help them to take maximum

advantage.

The clients should also compare with multiple insurance companies or agents to find which policies suit them the most.

In terms of life insurance, age is one of the significant factors that determine the premium. The policies are less expensive at the age of 30 than bought at the age of 50, as people are more prone to get impacted by diseases at their later age.

Health insurance policies have specific terms and conditions that will inform you about the covered and excluded things under the policy. It is always better to check all the terms and conditions of the policy before buying it.

Open cooperation is key to Oman's 5G ecosystem

TARIQ AL BARWANI

Organisations throughout Oman now recognise the enormous value of technology to support productivity, efficiency, innovation. Government efforts to support the local tech sector have also led to many new jobs being created, and industries becoming more competitive in a globalised economy.

At the heart of this global economy is connectivity. As noted by Arthur D. Little in one of their latest reports on the digital economy, Oman has already developed a robust ICT infrastructure supporting regional and international connectivity with 14 international submarine cables passing through its territory. Earlier this year, 5G mobile network services also became a reality for consumers in the Sultanate, having previously only been offered as fixed wireless access (an alternative to home fibre).

Today, 5G connectivity is accelerating innovation across Oman and the Middle East. It is more important than ever that governments explore the possibilities of improving this infrastructure, and specifically, initiating network evolution to move their countries into the era of 5G.

The pandemic has only underscored this point as demand for network usage and data has increased rapidly for remote working, education, entertainment, healthcare, and more. In one recent study, it was forecasted that 5G will enable \$13.2 trillion of global economic output in 2035.

Oman's cooperation with international counterparts will help us to capture a bigger share of this global opportunity while realising the ambitions of the Oman 2040 National Vision. We must be vocal in our support for international cooperation and public-private partnerships.

Unfortunately, the rapid pace of digitisation has led to some growing pains. Escalated tensions in the technology realm by the US against China — where 5G technology was originated — have created serious issues in the industry, including a global shortage of semiconductor chips, which are the lifeline of modern technology and a critical component to 5G networks.

This has caused major disruptions to nearly every industry from car

manufacturing to TV production. The Covid-19 pandemic only exacerbated this situation over the last year, with manufacturing temporarily suspended in some instances, while people are relying on computers and work-from-home technology more than ever before.

Such instances have stressed yet again the importance of building strong international relationships and supply chains in the technology field. These must be based on a spirit of open trade, mutual understanding, and unified standards for shared prosperity.

Last year, for example, the Ministry of Technology and Communications (MTC) signed a deal with China's tech giant Huawei on a new collaborative effort to develop the Sultanate's digital society as well as its technology ecosystem. This is a private global company that has experience in 170 markets worldwide, and has

played a pivotal role in supporting Oman's move from 3G to 4G and now 5G connectivity. It is also a company that has led 5G technology globally and is now working with local partners to deploy 5G capabilities in areas like the Sultanate's oil and gas, logistics, and transport sectors. Such projects should continue to be encouraged. These public-private partnerships are a great example of collaboration that will lead to the transformation of entire industries, and the future socio-economic growth of the Sultanate.

But it is not just industries that are transforming. It is essential that we continue to nurture local talent in the 5G arena, enabling bright minds in Oman to develop and lead our connected future. Joint collaboration projects are pivotal in this regard.

As the country elevates its infrastructure in line with the Oman 2040 National Vision, government authorities, telecom service providers, and private global companies must ultimately join forces to catch this wave of 5G potential. With a shared spirit of ambition and determination, there remains huge potential to use 5G to support further prosperity in Oman.

The author is a popular ICT expert and founder of largest community knowledge-sharing platform, Knowledge Oman. Tariq can be reached on www.tariq.net



Fruits, nuts boost immunity

JISHA SEBY

Eating the right food in the right amount is essential to maintain a healthy body. We know that any particular food cannot protect us from Covid-19 but we can have a healthy diet and maintain a healthy lifestyle to keep our immune system strong and to fight infections. Proper nutrition, hydration, sleep and exercise are essential during this tough time.

Our daily diet should include fruits and vegetables which have lots of vitamins and antioxidants. Vitamin C helps to build up the immune system. It increases the production of white blood cells which helps to fight infections. Lemons, oranges, grapefruit, gooseberry, bell peppers, guava, papaya are rich sources of vitamin C. Carotenoids, which are good infection fighters, are present in Carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and green leafy vegetables.

Vitamin D or sunshine vitamin is mostly lacking in all individuals as most of us spend the majority of time indoors in summer. Include vitamin D rich foods like salmon, mackerel, tuna, mushroom, egg etc and vitamin D fortified milk and cereals. Sun exposure is always the best way to increase vitamin D.

Fifteen minutes of daily exposure to sun helps to maintain sufficient amounts of vitamin D. If vitamin D is low, it can be increased with supplements. Vitamin E acts as a powerful antioxidant to fight infections. Almonds, sunflower seeds, peanuts, hazelnuts etc are good sources of vitamin E. Removing the seed of sunflower seeds and



enjoying it can be a good lockdown family activity.

Beans and lentils should be a part of daily diet as they contain folates which help to maintain the immunity. Iron helps to carry oxygen in the body so keep the iron levels high by taking in lean meat, poultry, beans, broccoli, green leaves, dates etc. Selenium makes the immune system powerful.

Brazil nuts, lean meat, poultry, sea foods etc are good sources of selenium. Zinc helps in producing new immune system cells. They are present in sea foods, lean meat, beans, nuts, yoghurt, avocado etc. Magnesium helps to reduce anxiety which is needed during the pandemic and it helps in body metabolism. Include walnuts and small amounts of dark chocolate in the daily diet that helps to maintain magnesium levels.

Adequate energy is needed for our body on a daily basis. Include complex carbohydrates like whole grains, legumes etc to get sufficient energy instead of white flour products.

Proper nutrition, hydration, sleep and exercise are essential to fight Covid-19

Some of the herbs and spices are considered immunity boosters. Garlic and ginger helps to inhibit the attachment of viruses to cells to some extent. Turmeric helps to ward off infection by the action of curcumin present in it. Curcumin acts as being anti-inflammatory and antiviral. These can be included in our daily diet by adding to different preparations.

Concoction of water made with coriander seeds, cumin, fennel seeds and ajwain is good to maintain gut health and keep away acidity issues.

Green tea is a good source of antioxidants because of the high levels of epigallocatechingallate (EGCG). Probiotic foods like yoghurt, Yakult, fermented cabbage, cucumber etc help to maintain healthy gut bacteria

which play a great role in immunity building.

Follow meal timings and plan meals ahead. Try to include a variety of foods in the daily diet rather than depending on one or two particular foods so that we will be getting all essential nutrients in required amounts. Practice mindful eating as we might be spending more time home and end up eating more due to boredom.

Hydration is another key factor to maintain a healthy body. Drink at least 8-10 glasses of water daily. Good sleep of around 7 hours is essential to keep our immunity high and for good brain activity. Exercise of about 30-45 minutes should also be a part of daily routine.

Practice some breathing exercises daily. It also helps to bring down the stress level.

Follow the safety guidelines of wearing a mask, social distancing and hand sanitising. Stay home as much as possible and be safe.

(The author is a clinical dietician, KIMS Oman Hospital)

■ NEW STUDY TO PRESERVE LOCAL BANANA VARIETIES



The Directorate-General of Agriculture and Livestock Research at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is implementing a number of research projects through the main programmes dependent on the research strategy laid down in accordance to the government directives. In one of these studies the Agricultural Research Centre studied all types of local banana with the aim of preserving them. — ONA



PUBLIC PROSECUTION TENDER NOTICE

The Public Prosecution invites interested companies to the following tender(s):

Tender Number	Description	Deadline for obtaining tender	Deadline for tender submission	GRADE (Group)	Tender document Cost (Non-refundable)
34/2020 Re-Tender	IMPLEMENTATION & SUPPORT FOR ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT & RECORD MANAGEMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE SYSTEM (EDRMS)	09/06/2021	27/06/2021	Specialized	RO 25/=

- Companies that are specialized in such works and who have a valid registration certificate from the Tender Board can participate and obtain technical specifications and tender documents from the website: <https://etenderhd.gov.om>.
- The bidder shall submit their offers electronically via the mentioned website.
- Each tender shall be accompanied by an electronic copy of the temporary insurance in the form of bank guarantee or check certified by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate at a rate of (1%) of the value of the bid valid for 90 days from the date of submission.
- The bidder shall submit the original bank guarantee to the FINANCE DEPARTMENT on the Second floor, in the Oman Public Prosecution Authority, head office in Al Khuwair before 10:00 AM in the date of tender submission.
- To help the contestants contact the technical support center at 24166670 and email: etenderhd@ita.gov.om.
- Public Prosecution is not bound to consent the lowest bid or any other tenders.



University of Technology and Applied Sciences COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES IBRI

Declaration of Tender

University of Technology and Applied Sciences (College of Applied Sciences Ibri) invites Tenders Contractor firms for the below tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company than are Entitled to Participate	Tender Price	Last Date for Buying Tender	The Deadline for Submission of Tenders
1/2021	Providing Cleaning services to the buildings of Ibri College of Applied Sciences	Specialized in providing regained service and registered with the Tender Board (Second degree and higher)	25/= R.O Twenty Five Rials Omani	21/06/2021	11/07/2021

Tender Documents can be obtained from Administration & finance Affairs at COLLAGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES IBRI, during normal working days starting from **Wednesday 02/06/2021 where copies will be distributed from 9 am to 2 pm.**

All companies must attach with their bid a temporary insurance in the form of bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate of at least (1%) of the tender value addressed to the Chairman of the tender sub-committee and valid for a period of 90 days from the date of bid submission, and every bid that does not meet the required temporary insurance will not be considered. Bids shall be submitted signed and sealed on the form prepared for this and on the table of categories accompanying it in envelopes sealed with red wax and titled in the name of the Chairman of the Tender Sub-committee of College of Applied Sciences Ibri and written on it from the outside the number and name of the tender, provided that the name of the bidder is not written on the envelope or what he refers to it.

The bids must be placed in the bidding box in the department referred to above. Before ten o'clock in the morning of the day specified in the above schedule; The bids submitted after this date will not be taken into consideration, regardless of the reasons for delay. Preference will be given to attribution to companies or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanisation and a possible purchase of national products.

The university is not restricted to accepting lower or any other bid.

**Chairman of the Tenders Sub-Committee
College of Applied Sciences Ibri**

WHO to start Covid-19 vaccination in north Yemen



Yemenis receive humanitarian aid provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Sanaa on Tuesday. — AFP

DUBAI: The World Health Organization will start Covid-19 vaccinations next week in north Yemen where the Ansar Allah authorities in control have played down the impact of the pandemic, largely denying any outbreak there.

Inoculations in parts of the Arabian Peninsula country run by Yemen's Saudi-backed government began seven weeks ago, giving a boost to a healthcare system shattered by war, economic collapse and, recently, a shortfall in humanitarian aid funding.

Ansar Allah authorities, who control the capital Sanaa and most major urban areas in Yemen's six-year conflict, have provided no

coronavirus infection or fatality figures since a couple of cases in May 2020. But numbers of confirmed cases in the rest of Yemen started to rise rapidly in mid-February.

The WHO's representative in Yemen, Adham Abdel-Moneim, said 10,000 vaccine doses arrived at Sanaa airport on Monday and were put into cold storage.

Only healthcare workers would be given the shots at this stage, beginning next week, at the health ministry in Sanaa "under the control and management of the WHO", he said on Tuesday.

Yemen's vaccination campaign began in government-held areas on April 20, using a first shipment

of 360,000 doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine from the global COVAX vaccine-sharing scheme.

A batch of 10,000 of those doses intended for Ansar Allah-run areas had been caught up in wrangling between parties over how it would be administered, according to humanitarian aid sources and Yemeni officials.

The emergency coronavirus committee of the internationally recognised government, based in south Yemen, has recorded 6,742 coronavirus infections and 1,321 deaths so far, although the true figure is widely thought to be much higher as the war has restricted Covid-19 testing and reporting.

Human Rights Watch said

on Tuesday Ansar Allah have suppressed information about Covid-19 and undermined international efforts to provide vaccines in areas under their control.

"Since the start of the pandemic in Yemen in April 2020, Ansar Allah officials have actively spread disinformation about the virus and vaccines," the rights group said in a report.

HRW quoted Ansar Allah officials as dismissing Covid-19 as a "conspiracy".

"America bears the primary responsibility for the Covid-19 epidemic," it quoted Ansar Allah leader Abdul Malik al Huthi, as saying in a televised speech last year. — **Agencies**

Netanyahu opponents grapple to form govt before deadline

JERUSALEM: Israeli politicians worked against the clock on Tuesday to overcome final hurdles to building a coalition that would end the record rule of right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid, a secular centrist, and religious nationalist Naftali Bennett were locked in talks late into the night on Monday on the terms of a "change alliance" to unseat the premier ahead of a Wednesday midnight deadline.

"The coalition negotiation team sat all night and made progress toward creating a unity government," a Bennett spokesman said in a statement.

He said Bennett, who heads the Yamina party, would meet Lapid — leader of the Yesh Atid party — again in the afternoon. The discussions come as Israel's longest serving premier is on trial on criminal charges of fraud, bribery and breach of trust while in office, accusations he denies.

Former TV anchor Lapid inched closer to success on Sunday when he and tech millionaire Bennett overcame their sharp political differences and publicly agreed to join a "national unity government" in which both would serve as premier, with Bennett going first. Lapid was tasked with forming a government after Netanyahu failed to do so following Israel's fourth

inconclusive election in less than two years.

Efforts to form a new government without Netanyahu have picked up speed after an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire on May 21 halted 11 days of hostilities with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

They have left the 71-year-old prime minister, who heads the right-wing Likud party, scrambling to scupper the new alliance against him.

Lawyers for the Likud on Tuesday tried to hobble the emerging coalition by challenging Bennett's right to serve first as prime minister when Lapid was charged with forming the government.

But the legal adviser to Israel's president knocked down the challenge.

Netanyahu, in power for 12 straight years after an earlier three-year term, had warned on Sunday of "a left-wing government dangerous to the state of Israel".

Lapid said on Monday that obstacles remained to build the diverse coalition necessary to unseat the premier, but encouraged his party to be upbeat. "That's our first test — to see if we can find smart compromises in the coming days to achieve the greater goal."

Lapid, 57, is seeking to cobble together an unlikely alliance including Bennett, a supporter of Jewish settlements in the Israel-occupied West Bank, as well as Arab-Israeli lawmakers.

— **AFP**

Hamas ready for prisoner swap talks with Israel

GAZA CITY: Hamas is open to "indirect and rapid" negotiations on a prisoner exchange following its bloody military escalation with Israel in May, the military group said on Monday.

"There is now a real opportunity to move this file forward," Yahya Sinwar (pictured) said in response to an AFP query on a potential prisoner exchange.

"We are ready for indirect, urgent and rapid negotiations to conclude the case."

The head of Hamas' political

wing in the Gaza Strip delivered the statement on the sidelines of a visit by Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel.

Kamel is working to solidify the ceasefire Cairo brokered between Israel and Hamas that went into effect on May 21, after 11 days of Palestinian militant rocket fire and Israeli air strikes. The aerial bombardments on Gaza killed 254 Palestinians, including 66 children, health officials said.

Rockets and other fire from Gaza claimed 12 lives in Israel,



including one child and an Arab-Israeli teenager, medics said.

A Hamas official, who requested anonymity, said the Gaza talks focused on three points: turning

the ceasefire into a longer-term truce, a prisoner exchange and the reconstruction of Gaza.

Sinwar said Hamas had "no objection" to talks on reconstruction and an end to Israel's decade-long siege of Gaza "moving forward in parallel" with negotiations on a prisoner exchange.

"However, we categorically reject any link between these two aspects," he added, without specifying how many prisoners could be released. — **AFP**

Turkey launches probe into 1996 killing after mob leader's claims

ISTANBUL: An Istanbul prosecutor's office said on Tuesday it launched an investigation into the murder of a Turkish Cypriot journalist 25 years ago, after a mob leader said last month the killing was ordered by a former Turkish minister. Convicted gang leader Sedat Peker's uncorroborated allegations on YouTube of extrajudicial killings in the 1990s have placed the unsolved murders of hundreds of people during that decade back on the agenda in Turkey.

In a video viewed by 17 million Turks, Peker said he tasked his brother to kill journalist Kutlu Adali in 1996 upon the orders of a former minister.

Peker said his brother Atilla was not able to carry out the killing, although Adali was shot dead shortly afterwards in July 1996.

Atilla Peker was briefly detained nine days ago, a few hours after his brother's video was released. Istanbul Anadolu prosecutor's office said on Tuesday that it had launched a new investigation into Adali's murder based on an application for the probe by Atilla Peker that "included various claims". It said efforts were being made to obtain information and documents from Turkish Cypriot judicial authorities regarding the killing, in addition to collecting potential evidence in Turkey. — **Reuters**

SHORT TAKES

BERLIN

Germany to host new round of Libya talks

Germany will host a new set of Libyan peace talks on June 23 in Berlin, with Libya's transitional government due to attend, the foreign ministry said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The next steps needed for a sustainable stabilisation of the country will be discussed" at the conference, said the ministry.

Talks will mainly focus on preparations for national elections planned for December 24 as well as the withdrawal of foreign troops and mercenaries



from Libya. They will also look at the creation of unified security forces for the North African country. "The conference is an expression of the continued international support for the stabilisation of Libya," said a German ministry spokeswoman.

RABAT

Morocco says US drill to be held in W Sahara

Morocco's prime minister has said that US-led multi-nation African military exercises this month would take place in the disputed desert region of Western Sahara.

Last year, under former US president Donald Trump, Washington recognised Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara — after Rabat normalised relations with Israel — sparking anger from the separatist Polisario Front.

The military training,



which the US Africa Command (Africom) says is its largest annual exercise, "marks the consecration of American recognition of the Moroccan Sahara", Prime Minister Saad-Eddine El Othmani said on Twitter last week.

DUBAI

Nuclear talks not at impasse, says Iran

Iran believes that barriers to the revival of its 2015 nuclear accord with world powers are complicated but not insurmountable, a spokesman said on Tuesday, denying that negotiations had stalled.

Iran and six powers have been negotiating in Vienna since April to work out steps for Tehran and Washington to take, respectively, on nuclear activities and sanctions, for the pact to resume.

"There is no impasse in the Vienna talks," Iranian govern-



ment spokesman Ali Rabiei told a news conference streamed live by a state-run website.

"Negotiations have reached a stage where a few key issues need to be decided, and these issues require the proper attention, perfectionism and time."

In brief

NEW DELHI



DOCTORS PROTEST 'YOGA-BEATS-COVID' GURU

Thousands of doctors across India wore black armbands on Tuesday calling for the arrest of a hugely popular guru who has claimed yoga can prevent Covid-19 and that conventional medicine has killed thousands of coronavirus patients.

Baba Ramdev, the creator of a successful traditional medicine empire, said last month the pandemic showed modern pharmaceuticals to be "stupid and failed science" and claimed hundreds of thousands "have died because they had allopathy (conventional) medicines".

On Tuesday's "Black Day" of protests, photos on social media showed doctors with banners demanding the arrest of "Quack Ramdev" while others wore PPE suits with #ArrestRamdev written on the back.

ISLAMABAD



PAKISTANI TALK-SHOW HOST TAKEN OFF SCREEN

Prominent Pakistani political TV talk-show host Hamid Mir was suspended from his regular programme on Monday, his media group Geo News network said, following comments he made last week against the powerful military for its role in media censorship. A spokesman for Geo did not specify if Mir's absence was permanent, but his show was hosted by a stand-in anchor on Monday.

Mir, who survived an assassination attempt in 2014, is the latest target of an alleged military backed media crackdown that started in the run-up to 2018 election that brought Prime Minister Imran Khan to power.

MANILA



PHILIPPINES EXTENDS BAN ON INBOUND TRAVEL

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday prolonged partial coronavirus curbs in the capital and nearby provinces until mid-June to contain infections that have been decreasing since hitting a peak in April.

Religious gathering remain capped at 30 per cent of venue capacity while dining in restaurants can operate at 20 per cent in the capital region, an urban sprawl of 16 cities that is home to at least 13 million people, and nearby provinces.

Non-essential travels will remain prohibited.

China reports first human case of bird flu

BEIJING: A 41-year-old man in China's eastern province of Jiangsu has been confirmed as the first human case of infection with the H10N3 strain of bird flu, China's National Health Commission (NHC) said on Tuesday.

The man, a resident of the city of Zhenjiang, was hospitalised on April 28 after developing a fever and other symptoms, the NHC said in a statement.

He was diagnosed as having the H10N3 avian influenza virus on May 28, it said, but did not give details on how the man had been infected with the virus.

The man was stable and ready to be discharged from hospital. Medical observation of his close contacts had not found any other cases. H10N3 is a low pathogenic, or relatively less severe, strain of the virus in poultry and the risk of it spreading on a large scale was very low, the NHC added.

The strain is "not a very common virus," said Filip Claes, regional laboratory coordinator of the Food and Agriculture



Workers vaccinate chicks with the H9 bird flu vaccine at a farm in Changfeng county, Anhui province. — Reuters file photo

Organization's Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases at the Regional Office for

Asia and the Pacific.

Only around 160 isolates of the virus were reported in the 40

years to 2018, mostly in wild birds or waterfowl in Asia and some limited parts of North America,

and none had been detected in chickens so far, he added.

Analysing the genetic data of the virus will be necessary to determine whether it resembles older viruses or if it is a novel mix of different viruses, Claes said.

Many different strains of avian influenza are present in China and some sporadically infect people, usually those working with poultry. There have been no significant numbers of human infections with bird flu since the H7N9 strain killed around 300 people during 2016-2017.

No other cases of human infection with H10N3 have previously been reported globally, the NHC said. Following recent avian flu outbreaks in Africa and Eurasia, the head of China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention last week urged stricter surveillance in poultry farms, markets and wild birds.

Covid-19 was first detected at a food and animal market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019. — Agencies

India plans to more than triple Covid-19 shots per day

BENGALURU: India could have as many as 10 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines available per day in July and August, compared with just under three million now, the government said, trying to allay concerns about shortages and mishandling of the programme.

The world's second most populous country has suffered a disastrous outbreak of infections since April that is only now abating and health experts say the only way it can avert another surge is mass vaccination of its 1.3 billion people.

"We don't doubt that we will be able to increase the pace of vaccinations, once supply is ramped up," government advisor V K Paul told reporters on Tuesday.

Vaccine manufacturers such as Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech are scrambling to boost supplies, with the country



A doctor checks on a Covid-19 coronavirus patient at Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a hospital in Siliguri on Tuesday. — AFP

is also in talks with major foreign vaccine producers such as Pfizer Inc, officials have said.

The health ministry said nearly 45 million people had been fully vaccinated — 4.7 per cent of the country's 950 million adult population. India administered nearly 2.8 million doses on

Monday, according to data from its official vaccine portal.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has drawn criticism for a slow vaccine rollout even though India is one of the world's biggest manufacturers of doses, including AstraZeneca's shot. — Reuters

Sri Lanka ship fire put out after 13 days

COLOMBO: A fire aboard a cargo ship off Sri Lanka carrying hundreds of tonnes of chemicals, plastics and cosmetics was finally extinguished on Tuesday after a 13-day international operation, the navy said.

In Sri Lanka's worst marine ecological disaster, huge volumes of microplastic granules from the ship's containers have inundated beaches, forcing a fishing ban and a major clean-up involving thousands of troops.

Experts from Dutch salvage company SMIT boarded the MV X-Press Pearl and reported massive flooding of the engine rooms.

The Singapore-registered vessel caught fire on May 20 when it was about to enter the Colombo port.

Navy spokesman Captain Indika de Silva said the stern of the 186-metre (610-feet) long container carrier had gone down

by about a metre because of the flooding.

"It is not unusual for the vessel to trim by aft (tilt to the rear) when water sprayed on deck settles in the engine room," Silva said.

He said the spraying of water was stopped to prevent further flooding, but some areas of the ship were still too hot to carry out a complete examination of the vessel.

However, navy divers were carrying out examinations under the water line to ensure that there were no cracks in the hull to undermine the integrity of the ship, which is also carrying 278 tonnes of bunker oil and 50 tonnes of gasoil.

Sri Lanka's navy was joined by India's coastguard and tugs brought in by SMIT to battle the flames which destroyed most of the nearly 1,500 containers the vessel was carrying. — AFP

Global warming blamed for 1 in 3 heat deaths

PARIS: More than a third of summer heat-related fatalities are due to climate change, researchers said on Monday, warning of even higher death tolls as global temperatures climb.

Previous research on how climate change affects human health has mostly projected future risks from heatwaves, droughts, wild fires and other extreme events made worse by global warming.

How much worse depends on how quickly humanity curbs carbon emissions, which hit record levels in 2019 but dipped sharply during the pandemic.

But a new study by an international team of 70 experts is one of the first — and the largest — to look at health consequences that have already happened, the authors said.

The findings, published in Nature Climate Change, were stark: data from 732 locations in 43 countries spread across every inhabited continent revealed that,

on average, 37 per cent of all heat-related deaths can be attributed directly to global warming.

"Climate change is not something in the distant future," senior author Antonio Gasparrini, a professor of biostatistics and epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said. "We can already measure negative impacts on health, in addition to the known environmental and ecological effects."

The authors said their methods — if extended worldwide — would add up to more than 100,000 heat-related deaths per year laid squarely at the feet of man-made climate change. That number could be an underestimate because two of the regions for which data was largely missing — south Asia and central Africa — are known to be especially vulnerable to extreme heat deaths.

The 100,000 figure is consistent with a recent analysis from the



Greenpeace activists project a slogan onto the cooling tower of the brown coal fired Belchatow power plant, in Belchatow, Poland. — Reuters file photo

Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluations (IHME), published in *The Lancet*.

The IHME calculated just over 300,000 heat-related deaths worldwide from all causes in 2019. If just over a third of those deaths are due to climate change,

as Gasparrini's team reported, the

global total would indeed be more than 100,000.

India accounted for more than a third of the total in the IHME tally, and four of the five worst-hit countries were in south Asia and central Africa.

The share of heat-related deaths attributable to global warming in

the new study varied widely from country to country.

In the United States, Australia, France, Britain and Spain, for example, that percentage was roughly in line with the average across all countries, between 35 and 39 per cent.

For Mexico, South Africa, Thailand, Vietnam and Chile, the figure rose above 40 per cent.

And for half-a-dozen countries — Brazil, Peru, Colombia, the Philippines, Kuwait and Guatemala — the percentage of heat-related mortality caused by climate change was 60 per cent or more.

A complex methodology combining health data and temperature records from 1991 to 2018, coupled with climate modelling, allowed researchers to contrast the actual number of heat-related deaths with how many fewer deaths there would have been without man-made warming. — AFP

Covid-19 variants get new names

GENEVA: Coronavirus variants with clunky, alphanumeric names have now been assigned the letters of the Greek alphabet to simplify discussion and pronunciation while avoiding stigma.

The World Health Organization revealed the new names on Monday amid criticism that those given by scientists to strains such as the South African variant — which goes by multiple names including B.1.351, 501Y.V2 and 20H/501Y.V2 — were too complicated.

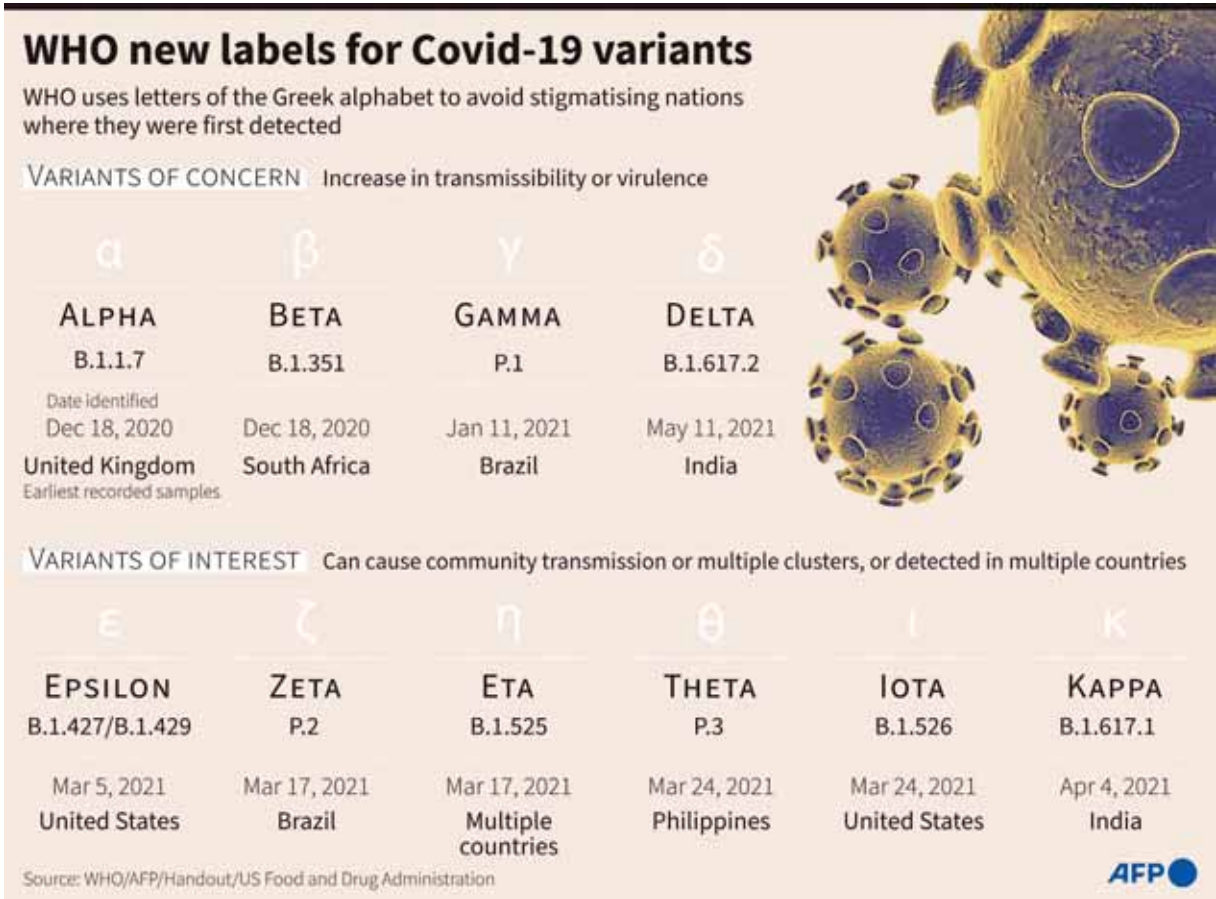
Since the pandemic began, the names people have used to describe the virus have provoked controversy. Former US President Donald Trump called the new coronavirus “the China virus” and other monikers, raising concern he was using the names as a political weapon to shift blame to a rival nation.

The WHO, which has urged people not to use language to advance Covid-19 profiling of people or nationalities, has also said people should avoid using country names in association with emerging variants.

The four coronavirus variants considered of concern by the UN agency and known generally by the public as the UK, South Africa, Brazil and India variants have now been assigned the Greek letters Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta, respectively, according to the order of their detection.

Other variants of interest continue down the alphabet.

“While they have their advantages, these scientific names can be difficult to say and recall, and are prone to misreporting,” said the WHO, explaining the



decision.

The choice of the Greek alphabet came after months of deliberations in which other possibilities such as Greek gods and invented, pseudo-classical names were considered, according to bacteriologist Mark Pallen, who was involved in the talks.

Many, though, were already brands, companies or alien names.

Another idea, to refer to variants of concern as VOC1, VOC2 and so on, was scrapped after Pallen pointed out pronunciation of the acronym could sound like an English swear word.

Lost religions and the names of plants and fruits were also considered, the WHO said.

The UK, South Africa, Brazil and India variants have now been assigned the Greek letters Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta, respectively, according to the order of their detection

Historically, viruses have often been associated with the locations from which they are thought to have emerged, such as the Ebola virus, which is named after a Congolese river.

But this can be damaging

and inaccurate such as with the “Spanish flu” pandemic of 1918 whose origins are unknown, although the earliest cases are now believed to have emerged in the US state of Kansas.

“No country should be stigmatised for detecting and reporting variants,” said WHO epidemiologist Maria Van Kerkhove.

In the United States, Asians have been harassed and attacked during the pandemic, with activists and police saying anti-Asian sentiment was fuelled by Trump’s comments blaming the pandemic on China.

President Joe Biden this month signed a law against Covid-19 hate crimes. — **Reuters**

Heads of international organisations issue joint call for vaccine equality

WASHINGTON: World leaders must make a “new commitment” to a more equal distribution of coronavirus vaccines to bring the pandemic under control, the heads of four major global organisations said on Tuesday.

Their joint rallying cry comes as concerns rise that vaccine inequality between wealthy and poor nations is further complicating and prolonging a pandemic that has killed more than 3.5 million people globally.

Writing in *The Washington Post* on Tuesday, the heads of the World Health Organization, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization blamed the gap in vaccination programmes for the emergence of virus variants that have fuelled fresh outbreaks in the developing world.

“It has become abundantly clear that there will be no broad-based recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic without an

It has become abundantly clear that there will be no broad-based recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic without an end to the health crisis. Access to vaccination is key to both

end to the health crisis. Access to vaccination is key to both,” they said.

“Ending the pandemic is possible — and requires global action now.”

The joint op-ed was penned by IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva, WHO director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Bank president David Malpas, and WTO director general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. — **AFP**



A woman takes photographs of flags planted by protesters in tribute to those who have died of the coronavirus disease, a year after the Slovenian government called an official end to its coronavirus epidemic, in Ljubljana, Slovenia on Tuesday. The sign indicates that 4,265 people have died in the year since the announcement. — **Reuters**

Gun attack on Ugandan minister kills daughter, driver

KAMPALA: Uganda’s transport minister was shot on Tuesday in an attack which left the former top general’s daughter and bodyguard dead, a government spokesman said.

General Edward Katumba Wamala, who was chief of the defence forces between 2013 and 2017, came under fire while driving in capital Kampala, government spokesman Chris Baryomunsi said.

“There was an attempt on his (Wamala’s) life this morning... His daughter and bodyguard were shot and they died at the scene,” Baryomunsi said. “General Katumba has been rushed to hospital with bullet wounds and he is receiving treatment, the crime scene has been taken over by the investigators,” he added.

“This could be a case of assassination by criminal elements but the investigations will establish the motive and those behind” the attack.

Witnesses to the attack told local television stations that four masked men riding two motorbikes fired scores of bullets at Wamala’s vehicle.

Ugandan military spokesman Brigadier General Flavia Byekwaso confirmed this account.

“Armed assailants on two motorbikes trailed and shot at the vehicle of General Edward Katumba Wamala,” he said in a statement.

In a video addressed to his children seen by AFP, Wamala spoke out about the attempt on his life, saying he had only been wounded in his arms.



The wife of Uganda’s transport minister General Katumba Wamala (C) arrives at the crime scene where the minister was shot in his car in Kampala on Tuesday. — **AFP**

“I’ve survived. We have lost Brenda. That’s God’s plan. I love you guys. Please pray for Mummy. Mummy’s in a terrible, terrible state, please pray for her,” he said.

President Yoweri Museveni slammed the attackers as “pigs who do not value life” in a statement posted to Twitter.

“I talked to Gen. Katumba twice

on the phone. He is being well-managed,” he said, adding “we already have clues to those killers”.

Museveni said the bodyguard had fired a warning shot which had saved the general’s life, but should have “shot to kill”.

“We could be having a dead terrorist instead of scaring away the terrorists.”

Images from the scene showed about a dozen bullet holes riddling the rear and driver side of Wamala’s car — an official army vehicle easily identified by its distinctive military green number plates.

Tuesday’s shooting is the latest in a series of attempted killings of high-profile targets by motorcycle-riding assassins in Uganda’s capital.

In June 2018 Ibrahim Abiriga, a leading politician from Museveni’s National Resistance Movement party, was gunned down alongside his bodyguard in similar circumstances.

In March 2017 witnesses described how Uganda police spokesman Andrew Kaweesi was killed in a hail of bullets, also by four masked assailants riding two motorcycles and near the site of the latest attack on Wamala.

And in March 2015, Joan Kagezi, a prosecutor in charge of investigating militants’ attack in Kampala in 2010, was shot dead by men on motorbikes as she returned home.

No one has been convicted of any of those killings.

Museveni said a new system of “digital beacons” on all vehicles and motorcycles would stop them from being used in crimes.

— **Agencies**

SHORT TAKES

TURIN

Spacey back to acting after 5 years

Kevin Spacey has made a return to acting, starting work on an independent movie directed by Franco Nero in the northern Italian city of Turin, local media reported on Tuesday. The US actor, who largely disappeared from public view since being accused of sexual misconduct in 2017, was photographed on the streets of Turin, where the film ‘*Luomo Che Disegnò Dio*’ (The Man Who Drew God) is being shot.

The movie’s producer Louis



Nero confirmed news of Spacey’s involvement in the project to *Variety*, saying he had a small role playing the part of a police detective.

ROME

Italians aghast as notorious mafia killer released

Italians were outraged on Tuesday at the release from prison of a ruthless mafia boss who assassinated Italy’s most famous prosecutor and dissolved a boy’s body in acid, among other crimes.

Giovanni Brusca, 64, was released on Monday from Rome’s Rebibbia prison after serving a 25-year sentence, during which he became a state’s witness.

He will now serve four years of probation.



“Brusca freed — the cruelest boss,” wrote *La Repubblica* daily.

Brusca was a key figure within the Cosa Nostra, the Sicilian mafia group.

MOSCOW

Plane halted, Russian politician arrested

Prominent Russian opposition politician Andrei Pivovarov says he was arrested on board a plane as it was leaving for Poland.

Police officers stopped the plane, which was already taxiing, in St Petersburg on Monday evening, Pivovarov wrote on his Telegram channel.

According to the 39-year-old, the authorities’ action is connected to his former activity as chairman of the organisation Open Russia, which was critical of the Kremlin.



The relevant investigative agency said on Tuesday that he is accused of being involved with an “undesirable organisation,” a designation that was given to Open Russia a few days ago, effectively banning it.

Change does not happen overnight...

Life is full of different challenges, with most come unexpectedly in our days! Nobody dares to deny this fact for everyone could experience hiccups, difficulties, disappointments and obstacles of different forms in one way or the other. Regardless how hard or soft these challenges are hitting and breaking people, they make matters which require part of one's attention, time and effort. Usually life comes with every dawn bringing a different surprise; either a pleasing or a frustrating one.

One just wakes up every morning with a distinct experience for the day! Possibly, more than a challenge on a day comes on one's plate! Days are not all alike, so are life experiences and happenings. However, all what matters is the way one handles every challenge or experience that comes across. They are either making or breaking people for their reaction and attitude are what always count. Some are easily and immediately provoked while others are self-controlled and patient.

As people own the control button of how they run the show of their days, one should be positively looking at the brighter side of each experience. Although it is not easy to manage self-reaction, attitude and feelings, but one must try the best possible to have a good day and enjoy every moment of



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
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LIFE IS VERY SHORT,
SO IT SHOULD
NOT BE WASTED
IN MOMENTS
OF SADNESS,
MISERY AND
DISAPPOINTMENTS

life. Helen Keller, an American lecturer and author, said: "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."

Most likely, all what one needs is just to have a dose of patience, which could cure tension, frustration and disappointment. Being hopeful could be another relief that makes people less tense. Staying positive and optimistic rise the level of patience in people. Usually, patience can help people achieve their goals, maintain a more positive outlook on life, and make them less reactive, which in turn will make them less directed to bad decisions.

Stress, regret and anger do not help in getting anything. Hence, when facing an uncertain future, a negative incident or something scary, one has to take a minute and think before acting on spot. Life is very short, so it should not be wasted in moments of sadness, misery and disappointments. Challenges are to be regarded as learning lessons and experiences, while disabilities should be turned into abilities that bring new opportunities. Just be positive and believe in yourself as greater than any obstacle.

As the saying goes, a minute of patience equals 10 years of peace. If one finds the brain deviates in a negative direction, perhaps recalling

a positive incident would help getting back on track of mind to make a better decision. Patience is not the ability to wait, but the ability to keep a good attitude while waiting. Nobody pretends that exercising patience is easy, but one tries the best possible to overcome the bitterness of patience. As Aristotle said, patience is bitter, but its fruits are sweet.

Practically, everyone should always take the needed dose of patience whenever one comes across of a challenge in life. Likewise, as emotionally sensitive human beings we should all be fair with ourselves by having enough time to fully understand what happens and what are the possible reasons behind incidents and situations? Then, things will undoubtedly get clear for us, so we can wisely think of potential solutions.

Possibly, seeking support from others could work as another way of getting things out of our chest. Thus, we might need to get a proper consultation and an advice from trusted friends, colleagues or loved ones even. Receiving a word of commendation or lending a hand of support to others gives another mind to think with and introduces a better vision of decision-making. As it has been said, a friend in need is a friend indeed.

FALLING BIRTHS

As births slow in China and US, Germany bucks the trend

EMMA THOMASSON

China and the United States are grappling with falling birth rates but Germany has bucked the trend with a rise in births nine months after its first pandemic lockdown, testimony to recent family-friendly policies and higher migration.

Europe's largest economy used to have one of the lowest fertility rates in the region as conservative social norms and policies made it hard for women to reconcile families and work, crimping economic growth and compounding Germany's labour shortage as baby boomers retire.

That started to change as Chancellor Angela Merkel expanded parental benefits and state investment in childcare from 2005. Her 2015 decision to let in over a million mostly young refugees from Syria and elsewhere gave a further boost. While data this month showed Chinese births fell 18 per cent last year to their lowest since 1961 and the US birth rate declined 4 per cent to its weakest since 1979, births in Germany were down just 0.6 per cent.

Germany used to be one of the laggards in Europe and now it is in the midfield of Europe

MARTIN BUJARD
Federal Institute for Population Research

And a 0.8-per cent yearly rise in births between December 2020 and February — nine months and counting from Germany's first Covid-19 lockdown — showed many would-be parents were not put off even by the pandemic that paralysed the

economy.

"Germany used to be one of the laggards in Europe and now it is in the midfield of Europe," said Martin Bujard, deputy director at Germany's Federal Institute for Population Research.

"It was mainly driven by family policies like childcare to help to reconcile work and family, particularly for highly-educated women," he said, adding that the influx of migrants and strong economic growth before the pandemic had also helped.

Germany's fertility rate of 1.54 children per woman is still below the US figure of 1.64 and short of the so-called replacement rate of around 2.1 seen as necessary to sustain rich-country population levels.

However, it is well above the 1.3 rate recorded in China last year — the level Germany was at in 2006 — and is now broadly in line with the European Union average, according to Eurostat. Its data shows less wealthy countries including Italy and Spain have the EU's lowest fertility rates.

Policies that have helped include the expansion of maternity and paternity benefits, investment in state-funded childcare and the extension of school opening hours into the afternoon. US President Joe Biden has promised similar expansions of childcare and early years education.

Whereas the United States is almost alone among wealthy nations in not providing paid maternity leave at national level, the German state covers 14 months of paid parental leave, with two months reserved for fathers. The exact amount received depends on top-ups payable by employers. In China, women are entitled to 98 days of maternity leave, including 15 days of pre-natal leave. But many couples say high living costs and the difficulty of combining parenthood and careers have deterred them from starting families. — Reuters

SPREADING AWARENESS

Schools go solar as West Bengal state reaches for green goals

MOUSHUMI BASU

Until two years ago, all 12-year-old Sapan Majhi knew about solar power was what he read in his science book. Now he gets to see it in action nearly every day, after his school was fitted with rooftop panels that generate clean electricity.

The solar energy system powers the whole school for 1,600 students in the remote town of Kakdwip in West Bengal state, including its computers, kitchens, science labs and even energy-hungry welding machines in vocational classes.

Before the school was equipped with solar through a government project in 2018, Majhi said it struggled with low and fluctuating power voltage, particularly in the summers when the main grid got overburdened.

"But today the quality of power has much improved," he said. "Solar energy can be so powerful, it runs my whole school."

West Bengal's Sunshine Schools project aims to lower carbon emissions and bring cheap, reliable energy to the state's classrooms by swapping traditional grid electricity supplies for solar power produced onsite by grid-connected systems.

Saktiram Das, the teacher in charge of monitoring the solar system at Akshaynagar Jnanadamoyee Vidyaniketan High School, said its pupils had gained a new appreciation of green energy.

"Our students now get to see and understand the real-time efficacy of solar power," he said.

"They learn from a young age the importance of clean energy and how it



School students and staffs clean solar rooftop panels at the Akshaynagar Jnanadamoyee Vidyaniketan school in Kakdwip, West Bengal. — Reuters

SUNSHINE SCHOOLS PROJECT AIMS TO LOWER CARBON EMISSIONS AND BRING CHEAP, RELIABLE ENERGY TO THE STATE'S CLASSROOMS

keeps our environment clean."

The project run by the West Bengal Renewable Energy Development Agency (WBREDA) aims to add at least 250 megawatts of solar power to the grid by 2030, said governing board member Ratan Mondal.

"One of our basic aims... is to connect remote schools with robust and easily available power, so that even rural children can benefit from the latest educational facilities," Mondal told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The project has so far covered 1,800 schools across the state, and plans to install mini solar energy plants — each costing Rs 450,000 (\$6,210) — in 1,000 schools every year, eventually reaching a total of 25,000, he added.

Besides cutting planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions and providing a steady power supply, the switch to solar from the conventional electricity supply has also substantially reduced the schools' energy bills.

Any surplus solar power generated is fed into the national grid and is offset against the cost of what schools take from the grid when their solar systems cannot meet their needs, such as on a cloudy day, Mondal explained.

Mithila Shyamal, a senior teacher at the Bankisole Akshoy Kumar Institution, a high school in Bankura district, said before getting its solar panels, the school's energy bills were Rs 15,000-17,000 every three months.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

SPORT

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JAPAN, SPONSORS JOIN ATHLETES TO SUPPORT OSAKA AFTER FRENCH OPEN WITHDRAWAL

TOKYO: Naomi Osaka received support from her country Japan, her sponsors and leading sporting figures on Tuesday after the world number two withdrew from the French Open in a row about media duties, saying she had been suffering from depression and anxiety.

One of the biggest names in sport, Osaka stunned the tennis world when she pulled out of the Grand Slam on Monday after being fined and threatened with expulsion for declining to face the media after her first-round match on Sunday.

The four-time Grand Slam champion had last week signalled her intentions to skip her media duties to protect her mental well-being and she returned to Twitter on Monday to announce her withdrawal.

While her original stance had earned the Japanese 23-year-old little backing from her fellow professionals, most saying that dealing with the media was part of the job, her withdrawal triggered a wave of support from around the world.

“The first thing to be considered is Ms Osaka’s health. I wish her the earliest possible recovery,” Japan Tennis Association (JTA) Executive Director Toshihisa Tsuchihashi said in a statement on Tuesday.

Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told a news conference that he would “watch over her quietly” and there was concern on the streets of Tokyo for the woman who will be one of the faces of this year’s Olympic Games in the city.

“I think she’s under a lot of pressure, more than we can imagine,” kimono dresser Tomomi Noguchi, 67, told Reuters.

“She got to the top when she was young so I think we can’t really imagine what she’s going through.”

According to sports business website Sportico, Osaka earned \$55.2 million over the past 12 months - a record haul for a female athlete - much of it from sponsorship deals with major companies in Japan and the United States.

Japanese sponsor Nissin Foods wished Osaka a quick

recovery while the world’s biggest athletic shoemaker, Nike, lauded her for her courage in sharing her mental health experience.

“Naomi Osaka’s decision reminds us all how important it is to prioritise personal health and well-being,” Mastercard, one of Osaka’s long list of sponsors, said in a statement.

“We support her and admire her courage to address important issues, both on and off the court”

Vickie Skorji, who manages a helpline at TELL, a non-profit counselling service in Japan, said society needed to be “more respectful and supportive” of mental health.

“Who has asked her how she is doing? She put out a statement and said ‘I need to take care of myself,’ and she’s been punished,” Skorji told Reuters.

“I think she is courageous and needs support.”

‘INCREDIBLY BRAVE’

Skorji’s thoughts echoed earlier comments from women’s tennis trailblazers Martina Navratilova and Billie Jean King.

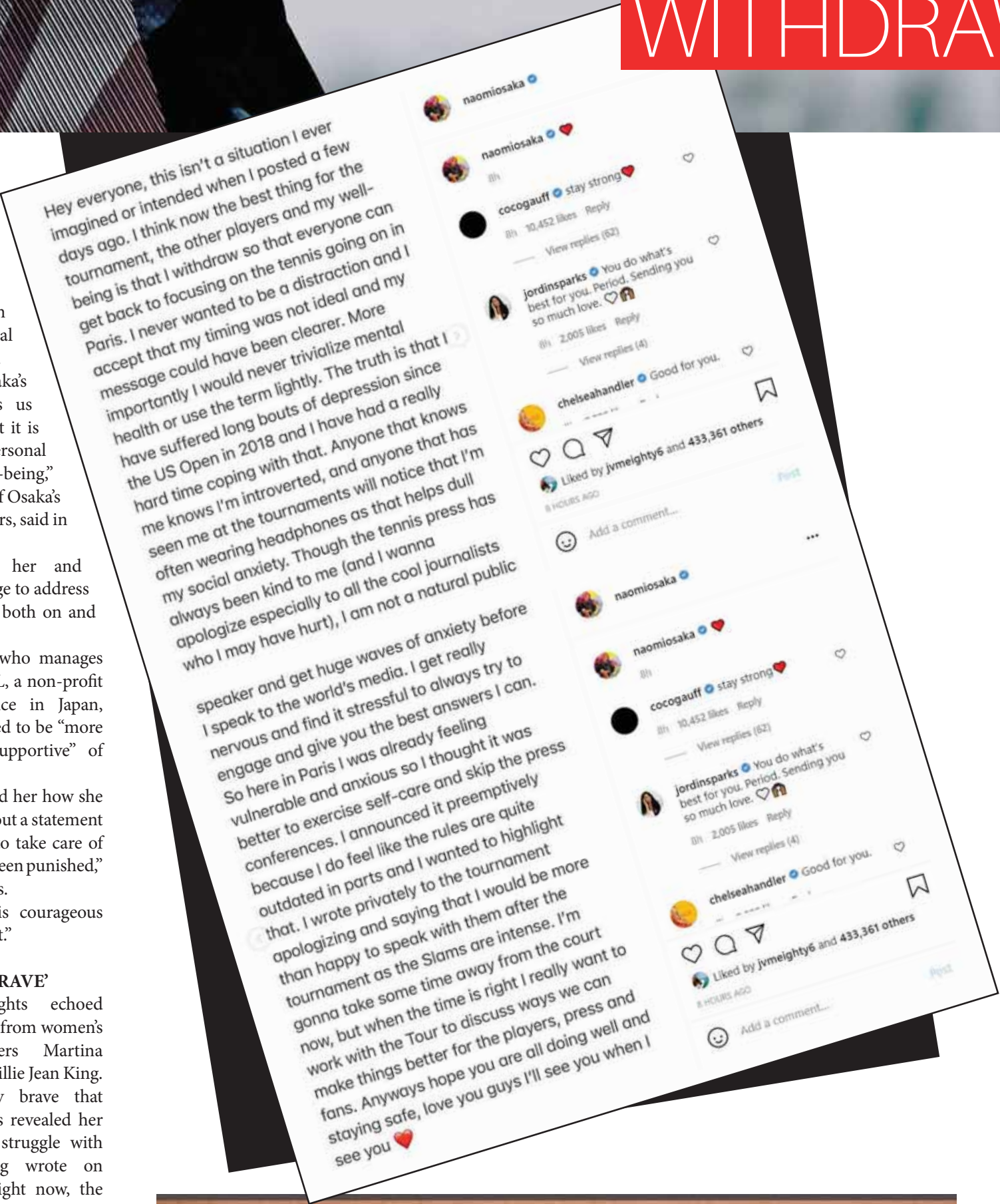
“It’s incredibly brave that Naomi Osaka has revealed her truth about her struggle with depression,” King wrote on social media. “Right now, the important thing is that we give her space and time she needs. We wish her well.”

Williams sisters Serena and Venus, as well as younger American players Coco Gauff and Sloane Stephens, chimed in with messages of support as the focus shifted from Osaka’s responsibilities to her wellbeing.

There were also messages of support from athletes in other sports.

“You shouldn’t ever have to make a decision like this -- but so damn impressive taking the high road when the powers that be don’t protect their own. Major respect,” wrote NBA All-Star Steph Curry on Twitter.

Four-time Olympic champion Mo Farah told Sky



Naomi Osaka

AGED 23
1.80 m
Right-handed

RANKING	2
GRAND SLAM TITLES	4
WINS	247
DEFEATS	136
SINGLES TITLES	7
PRIZE MONEY \$US millions	19.77

NAOMI OSAKA

JAPAN

PROFESSIONAL SINCE 2013

Source: WTA/AFP Photo/Martin Bureau (May 30)

“The first thing to be considered is Ms. Osaka’s health. I wish her the earliest possible recovery

TOSHIHISA TSUCHIHASHI
Japan Tennis Association (JTA)
Executive Director

News: “I’ve been in that scenario where you have 40 journalists, you’ve got the camera right in front of you, and it’s nerve-wracking, and you can only support her.”

Osaka said “the rules are quite outdated in parts” and expressed desire to work with tennis administrators to improve things for players, press and fans.

Former British No. 1 Laura Robson told BBC that the four Grand Slams, who threatened Osaka with expulsion from Roland Garros and future majors, should not have let the matter escalate.

There was also some criticism of Roland Garros organisers for their handling of the matter.

French Tennis Federation President Gilles Moretton read a prepared statement on Monday offering Osaka their support but the irony of him not taking questions afterwards was not lost on some.

“So the FFT handled the Ms Osaka mental health concerns without empathy or sensitivity. Then the FFT President refuses to take questions at a presser. An own goal,” wrote former Australian tennis official Richard Ings.

Six-times major champion Boris Becker was worried Osaka’s career could be in danger because of mental health issues.

“If she can’t cope with the media in Paris, she can’t cope with the media in Wimbledon or the U.S. Open. So I almost feel like her career is in danger due to mental health issues,” he told Eurosport. — Reuters



IPL organisers brace for UAE leg minus star foreigners

NEW DELHI: As the Indian cricket board seeks to complete this year's Indian Premier League (IPL) in the United Arab Emirates, it appears to have accepted that the UAE leg may not feature several of the league's star foreign players.

The Board of Control for Cricket (BCCI) in India was staring at a \$270 million loss in revenue when the IPL was suspended last month after several players and backroom staff tested positive for Covid-19.

Having shifted rest of the tournament in the UAE in September-October, the BCCI top brass are currently in Dubai to finalise schedule of the remaining 31 matches in consultation with their Emirati counterparts.

England have effectively ruled out further participation of their players when the tournament resumes but the BCCI appear unfazed.

"Our main focus is on completing this edition of the IPL," BCCI vice-president Rajeev

Our main focus is on completing this edition of the IPL. So whichever foreign players are available is fine. Whoever is not available, it is not going to stop us from hosting the tournament

RAJEEV SHUKLA
BCCI Vice-President

Shukla told Khaleej Times on Monday.

"So whichever foreign players are available is fine. Whoever is not available, it is not going to stop us from hosting the tournament."

IPL chairman Brijesh Patel, currently in Dubai, did not respond to Reuters calls to elaborate.

Boards would be wary of



releasing players and exposing them to possible injuries on the eve of the Twenty20 World Cup in October-November.

Cricket Australia has not considered their players' return for IPL yet.

"Once we get back together as a group that is something we'll obviously need to discuss," CA

chief executive Nick Hockley said on Monday.

The Bangladesh duo of Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman will not be available for IPL, their cricket board has said citing the team's international schedule.

According to local media reports, the BCCI has requested Cricket West Indies (CWI) to advance the start of the Caribbean Premier League, scheduled from Aug. 28 to Sept. 19, so their players remain available for IPL.

The CWI did not reply to Reuters asking if it would oblige.

An IPL franchise official said players would be paid on a pro-rata basis if they do not return for rest of the tournament which was suspended just before the halfway stage.

It means South African Chris Morris, sold to Rajasthan Royals for a record \$2.23 million, would take home around \$1 million should he skip the league's UAE leg. — Reuters

OOA to organise virtual course on "Management and hosting high profile sporting events"

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

The Oman Olympic Academy (OOA) will resume the virtual courses which were planned for 2021.

"Management and hosting sporting events" will be the upcoming course title and will be held remotely through MS Teams platform from June 8 to 10. The three days online course will be delivered by Dr Abdulrahim al Droushi, an assistant professor in Sports Management and Policy at Physical Education Department in Sultan Qaboos University.

The virtual course will aim to enable all the participants of movement to know about the designing and hosting the high profile events into practical experiences that will ease the execution of the high-class sporting tournaments through available resources. The certified lecturer will provide during online course the different classifications of sporting events, main principles on organising top sporting championships, using volunteer's management programmes for sporting events, utilising the right methods for proper marketing to the sporting events, implementing a professional plan to organise top sporting championship and having proper evaluation methods to develop weakness areas.

A variety of related topics will be discussed during the three days



of the online course including: meaning of hosting high profile sporting championships, expected outcomes and revenues from hosting sporting events, privacy of top high profile sports tournaments, stages of planning, designing and executing the sporting event, management and selection of right volunteers, marketing of the world-class sporting events and practical experience on evaluation for the sporting events.

The course will target different categories and that featured employees of Olympic committees, staff of sporting associations and committees, employees of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Military sports representatives and school sporting members.

The OOA was launched in December 2018 at the premises of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) and it is classified as the best hub for sportspersons, coaches, administrators to capture different basic platform in terms of knowledge, training and administration.



Oman U-15 basketball team may withdraw from GCC meet

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

The Oman U-15 basketball team may withdraw from the Under-15 GCC Basketball Championship which is scheduled to be held in Manama city, Bahrain from August 10 to 18.

The decision may be announced as soon as the team is out of training sessions for more than three months due to suspension of sporting activities.

According to a source, the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) communicated with the Ministry of Culture, sports and Youth for providing an approval to the team to resume the training sessions two months back.

The source added that the ministry is stuck with the previous announcement of suspension of all the sporting activities until further notice and basketball activity is part of it. "We are looking for an exceptional approval and hope the team can return to the field soon to gear up for the event", the source ended.

The Under-15 GCC Basketball Championship is a significant



championship for the team as this event will act as Asian qualification for the GCC zone to the U-15 Asian basketball championship. The first and second-placed teams in the championship will seal spots in the top Asian basketball event.

The head coach of Oman U-15 team, Mohammed al Qusaimi, was supervising all the training sessions since last January.

The team was depending on the short domestic camps during weekends at Sultan Qaboos Sports

Complex. The former coach of Nizwa club had selected the right and talented faces to represent the Sultanate team squad. After a series of the short camps, the head coach was in proper stage to identify the top faces for the starting list. The



experienced national basketball coach stated in a previous statement to Oman Daily Observer that: "It is always better to have the training on the field especially with players in under age of 15 years. Also, having an external camp is

quite difficult and costly during this tough period.

Therefore, we hope to obtain the permission from the Ministry and Supreme Committee to resume the training and our warm-up session for the GCC assignment".



The rise of 'King Kahn' heralds new era at Bayern Munich

THE 51-YEAR-OLD WILL REPLACE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN KARL-HEINZ RUMMENIGGE, WHO WILL STEP DOWN AT THE END OF JUNE AFTER 30 YEARS IN THE CLUB'S ADMINISTRATION

BERLIN: On the pitch, legendary Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn had a reputation for a fiery temper, but he has since mellowed enough to become the next chairman of Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich.

The 51-year-old will replace outgoing chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, who will step down at the end of June after 30 years in the club's administration.

As a player, Kahn earned nicknames 'King Kahn' and 'Vol-Kahn-o' for his fierce competitive nature.

He won eight Bundesliga titles and lifted the German Cup on six occasions with Bayern before retiring in 2008 after 14 years with the club.

Since hanging up his gloves, Kahn has been steadily integrated into Bayern's management, joining the club's board in January 2020 and groomed to replace Rummenigge, 65.

Kahn has toned down his temper since once famously demanding "balls, we need balls!" during a post-match interview as Bayern captain.

He is remembered in Germany not only for his stunning saves which helped Bayern win the 2001 Champions League final on penalties, but also for a biting incident in 1999.

During a Bundesliga match, he nuzzled his teeth into the neck of bemused Dortmund forward Heiko Herrlich.

In a 2010 interview, Kahn admitted the incident forced him to curb his temper.



"That was the zenith of my aggression and it erupted inside of me," he told Munich-based *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*.

"That was some kind of internal force inside me signalling: I can't go on like this."

Three-times voted the world's best goalkeeper during his career, Kahn has kept busy since retiring.

He earned his coaching licence in 2010, worked as a TV pundit and completed an MBA in 2012, writing his thesis

on "Strategic management in Germany's professional football".

After an 18-month apprenticeship, he will take the reins of Bayern next month.

The 2021-22 season will herald a new era for the Bundesliga giants with Julian Nagelsmann, 33, also replacing Hansi Flick as head coach.

'DETERMINED'

Kahn certainly has the pedigree, having kept 247 clean sheets in 632 appearances for

Bayern.

Bayern are expecting a seamless transition of power from Rummenigge to Kahn.

"After his extremely successful professional career and his time as an entrepreneur, he has now been intensively involved in the board of directors of FC Bayern Munich," said club president Herbert Hainer in a statement on Tuesday.

"We are all convinced that Oliver Kahn is the right man to successfully shape the future of

FC Bayern Munchen AG."

However, he will have to develop his diplomatic skills in the spotlight at Bayern Munich.

His no-nonsense approach has polarised opinions of Kahn in Germany and as chairman, he will demand success at Bayern just as much as he did as a player.

The sight of Kahn charging out of his goal terrified opposing strikers, but he was just as difficult with teammates.

He famously fell out with



Bayern Munich's CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge holds the DFB German Cup trophy on the balcony of Munich's town hall during celebrations of the DFB German Cup title in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP

Bayern colleagues Luca Toni and Franck Ribery just before retiring at the end of 2007-08.

It took the arrival of future Bayern and German captain Manuel Neuer in 2011 to finally fill Kahn's impressive shoes after a string of hopefuls failed to hold down the number one shirt in Munich.

In his autobiography, soberly titled "Number One", Kahn describes himself as "determined and possessed like no other".

With 'King Kahn' as their driving force at the helm, Bayern are now showing no sign of loosening their iron grip on the Bundesliga.

No sooner had Bayern secured a ninth straight title last month, than Kahn challenged the team to make it a decade of German league titles. — AFP

features



From rocks to productive farm lands

Ahmed al Zakwani is one of the farmers of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in Nizwa who has dedicated his life to transforming a mountain into a working farm. Guided by the primitive ways of his ancestors, he built upon their old methods in order to carve farms out of mountainsides... **P14**

INSIDE STORIES

LOCAL TRAVEL

KHADRAAFI: AN AMAZING DHOFAR NEIGHBOURHOOD RIGHT AT THE BORDER OF YEMEN

Located at the site of Darbat Ali, there is something mystifying about Khadraafi. The last Omani village right at the border of Yemen, this beautiful location overlooks the Arabian Sea bordered on the northern side by Jabal Sarfait... **Story on Page 16**

CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED IBERIAN LYNX POPULATION JUMPS 10-FOLD

Once on the verge of extinction, the Iberian lynx population in Spain and Portugal has risen more than 10-fold over the past 18 years, the Spanish government said on Friday... **Story on Page 15**

READ

THE POWER OF HABIT

BY CHARLES DUHIGG

It explores the science behind habit creation and reformation. The book reached the best seller list for *The New York Times*, Amazon.com and *USA Today*

ART

ARTIST DAVID HOCKNEY USED LOCKDOWN AS INSPIRATION FOR NEW PAINTINGS

Artist David Hockney has described living in near isolation in Normandy during the first coronavirus lockdown as "marvellous" – and the inspiration for his new exhibition... **Story on Page 15**

CELEBRATE

MASIRAH BEACH CAMP OFFERS ENJOYABLE TIMES FOR VISITORS

The camp is witnessing the influx of many tourists because of the services it provides to tourists and water activities as well as the rooms of the camp with a sea view available with modern amenities... **Story on Page 15**



From rocks to productive farm lands

By Staff Reporter

Oman's agriculture triumph over the years had been forged in hardship by the country's relentless farmers. There are many success stories, with the number of creative farmers scattered throughout the Sultanate who transformed the rocks of the dead mountains and the scorching sand desert into green lands rich with fruit trees and productive crops.

Ahmed al Zakwani is one of the farmers of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in Nizwa who has dedicated his life to transforming a mountain into a working farm. Guided by the primitive ways of his ancestors, he built upon their old methods in order to carve farms out of mountainsides.

To make this possible, Ahmed used wood and garlic to heat the stones to the point that it becomes red. Once he gets the desired rock temperature, he then pours cold water to break the rocks apart and once they are pulverised into small pieces, they remove them from the site.

Al Zakwani repeated the process over and over until the land is cleared and he was able to create terraces used for cultivating plants. He then fills these terraces with arable soil imported from Nizwa, Birkat Al Mouz and some dams in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. Once he gets the desired soil consistency, he grows pomegranate trees, olives, walnuts, figs, rose bushes, corn crops and some vegetable crops such as pumpkins, zucchini, eggplant, and other crops.

"To provide water for these plants, I broke the rocks of the wadi to build up reservoirs and dams. I worked on the construction of three successive dams, including two reservoirs with a basin, with a total surface area of about 3900 square meters and an average depth of 4.5 metre, so that the total storage capacity of water is about 17,500 cubic metre", Ahmed said.



GASTRONOMY

Escaping the crowds: Croatia yacht holidays in demand once again



KASTEL GOMILICA, CROATIA: Sailing holidays may well be one of the best ways to avoid any crowds this summer and Croatian yacht charter companies say they have seen a strong increase in bookings from July to September after the pandemic brought some of them close to ruin.

Jelena Matkovic, head of bookings at Croatia Yachting, said two months ago some firms like hers were facing ruin due to the slump in tourism amid the pandemic.

"If we witness another year like the last one, many owners of the boats and charter companies would have difficulties to survive," Matkovic said as she stood in a marina in the Bay of Kastela surrounded by dozens of sailing yachts.

"However, although May was practically lost and June is still full of uncertainty, the bookings for July, August and September are strongly rising," she said.

Yachting holidays make up a big chunk of Croatian tourism. "Croatia runs around 30 per cent of the global charter fleet of the sailing boats that are up to 16 meters (52 ft) long," said Pasko Klisovic who heads an association of boat chartering firms.



But the industry suffered a huge blow last year when the coronavirus pandemic halted global leisure travel. Revenues have plummeted, and with overheads high - the costs of keeping up a sailing boat reaches annually some 30,000 euros (\$36,700) - companies barely survived.

However, some tourists have already begun to arrive on the Croatian coast. Marc, a German tourist from Munich, said he was chartering a boat in the Bay of Kastela with a group of his friends.

"A lot of people couldn't commit to holidays and didn't want to go to Croatia. We did several security steps, we did the PCR tests, some people are vaccinated and we feel safe on the boat, much safer than in the hotel or with the air travel," he said.

The epidemic situation in Croatia has been steadily improving in the last few weeks. The rate of infection fell to some 300 new cases daily from more than 2,500 in mid-April.

Germany and Austria are the main markets, the Croatian Tourist Board data show, but guests come from all over the world including Scandinavian countries, Britain, the United States and Australia.

"The conditions of return to their countries of origin weighs a lot when the tourists decide whether to come or not. In that sense, if we keep a good epidemic situation the guests will come as they won't face any restrictions when going home," Matkovic said. — **Reuters**

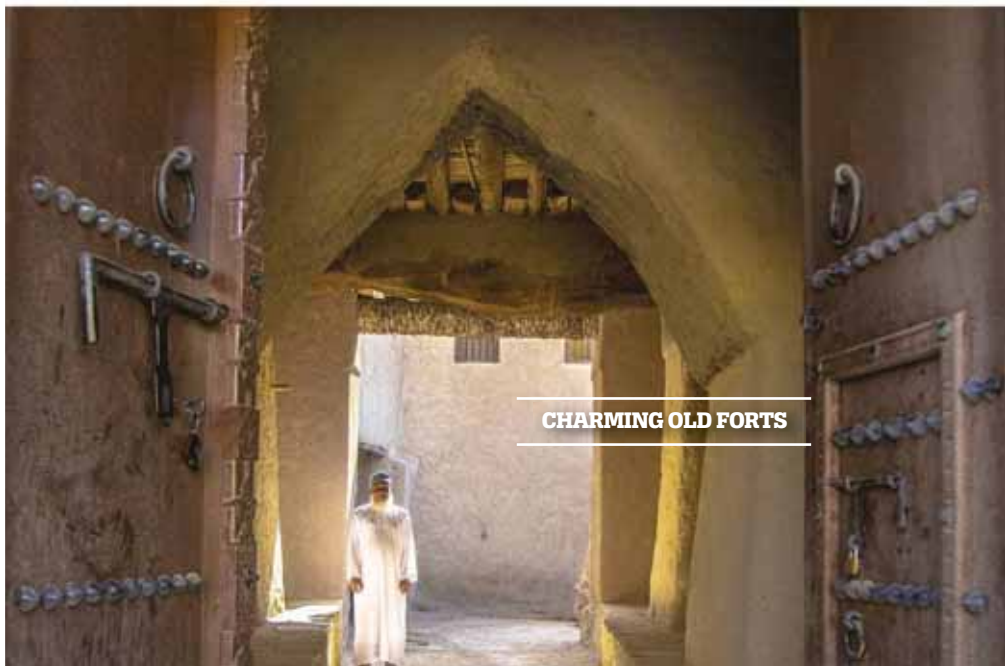


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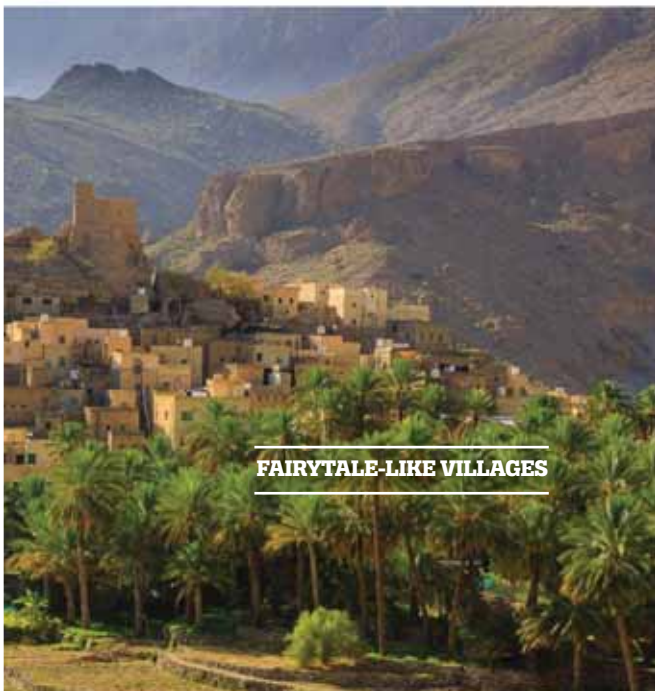
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ART



Artist David Hockney used lockdown as inspiration for new paintings

ARTIST DAVID Hockney has described living in near isolation in Normandy during the first coronavirus lockdown as "marvellous" - and the inspiration for his new exhibition. The 83-year-old said living for the last two years in a "higgledy-piggledy" house in the middle of the northern French countryside meant he had no interruptions and allowed him to paint without distraction.

Hockney had already started what would become his new exhibition at the Royal Academy of Art when the pandemic began.

"It was fantastic. When the lockdown came, I think it was marvellous because I wanted to be isolated anyway," Hockney said.

"That's why I'd come here. It meant there were no visitors, we didn't go out to restaurants and I could just explore the whole place.

"I was doing one or two a day and I could think about them when I went to bed, and I wasn't thinking about somebody coming tomorrow for lunch.

"That is all I could think about, and I thought it made a vast difference actually. I don't think I would have done any if visitors had been coming, I know I wouldn't.

"It's only a small house and three of us live here and if anybody comes, they have to stay at a little place down the road or a little place in Beuvron.

"There's no big hotels here. It is very isolated and I always knew I would need some isolation to do anything good for me at my age now."

The Bradford-born artist was speaking at the Hay Festival a few days after his latest exhibition, *The Arrival of Spring, Normandy, 2020* opened in London.

The exhibition showcases 116 paintings Hockney created on an iPad during the spring of last year.

Later this year, his work will also be exhibited in Paris's Musée de l'Orangerie in which he has created a Bayeux Tapestry-style 80-metre long frieze depicting the succession of the Normandy seasons.

"I've just started another painting in the studio and I'll go back to painting but I am also doing the spring of 2021 as well," Hockney said.

Hockney said he thought he had found the equivalent of Monet's Giverny, where he created some of his most famous paintings.

"I feel like staying and staying. The spring this year was two weeks later than last year. Every year it is different, and every moment is different," he said.

"I think that is rather marvellous for me at my age. I can look at things and realise that nothing is static, and I think it is very exciting.

"I've always thought that painters live in the now. I'm almost 84. How much longer do I have? I'm still a smoker.

"I think I am really living in the now."—**dpa**

CONSERVATION

Endangered Iberian lynx population jumps 10-fold



ONCE ON THE verge of extinction, the Iberian lynx population in Spain and Portugal has risen more than 10-fold over the past 18 years, the Spanish government said Friday.

A total of 414 lynx were born in 2020 bringing their total number in the two countries to 1,111, a record high since monitoring of the species began, the ministry for ecological transition said in a statement.

That is up from fewer than 100 in 2002, when the first census of the spotted nocturnal cat was carried out, thanks to a programme of captive breeding and release of the animals into the wild.

"This demographic curve allows for optimism and raises scenarios that move the great Iberian feline

conservation in Spain and the world. Few species are able to escape from such a critical situation as the Iberian lynx has been in," the head of the Spanish branch of the WWF, Juan Carlos del Olmo, said in a statement.

But the WWF warned that the Iberian lynx, which is found only in Spain and Portugal, will only "be out of danger" when its population reaches 3,000 to 3,500, including 750 breeding females.

Del Olmo said this could be achieved by 2040, but that much still needed to be done to eradicate threats to the animal, such as illegal hunting "which still cause an irreparable loss of lynxes every year".

The WWF has warned in the past



away from the critical risk of disappearance," the statement said.

"Nevertheless experts ask for caution and insist on the need to keep up the effort and existing conservation programmes since the species is not out of danger."

Slightly larger than a red fox and distinguished by a white and black beard and black ear tufts, around 100,000 Iberian lynx roamed the two nations at the start of the 20th century.

But urban development, hunting, roadkill and most of all a dramatic decline due to disease in wild rabbits numbers — the lynx's main prey — sharply reduced their populations.

"This is a great success for con-

servation in Spain and the world. Few species are able to escape from such a critical situation since the sabre-tooth tiger died out 10,000 years ago.

In 2015 the International Union for Conservation of Nature downgraded the status of the animal from "critically endangered" — its highest category before extinction in the wild — to "endangered".

Most Iberian lynx can be found in the Donana national park and Sierra Morena mountains in the southwestern region of Andalusia, but the conservation programme has reintroduced captive-bred animals to the Spanish regions of Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura and Murcia, as well as Portugal.—**AFP**

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Masirah Beach camp offers enjoyable times for visitors



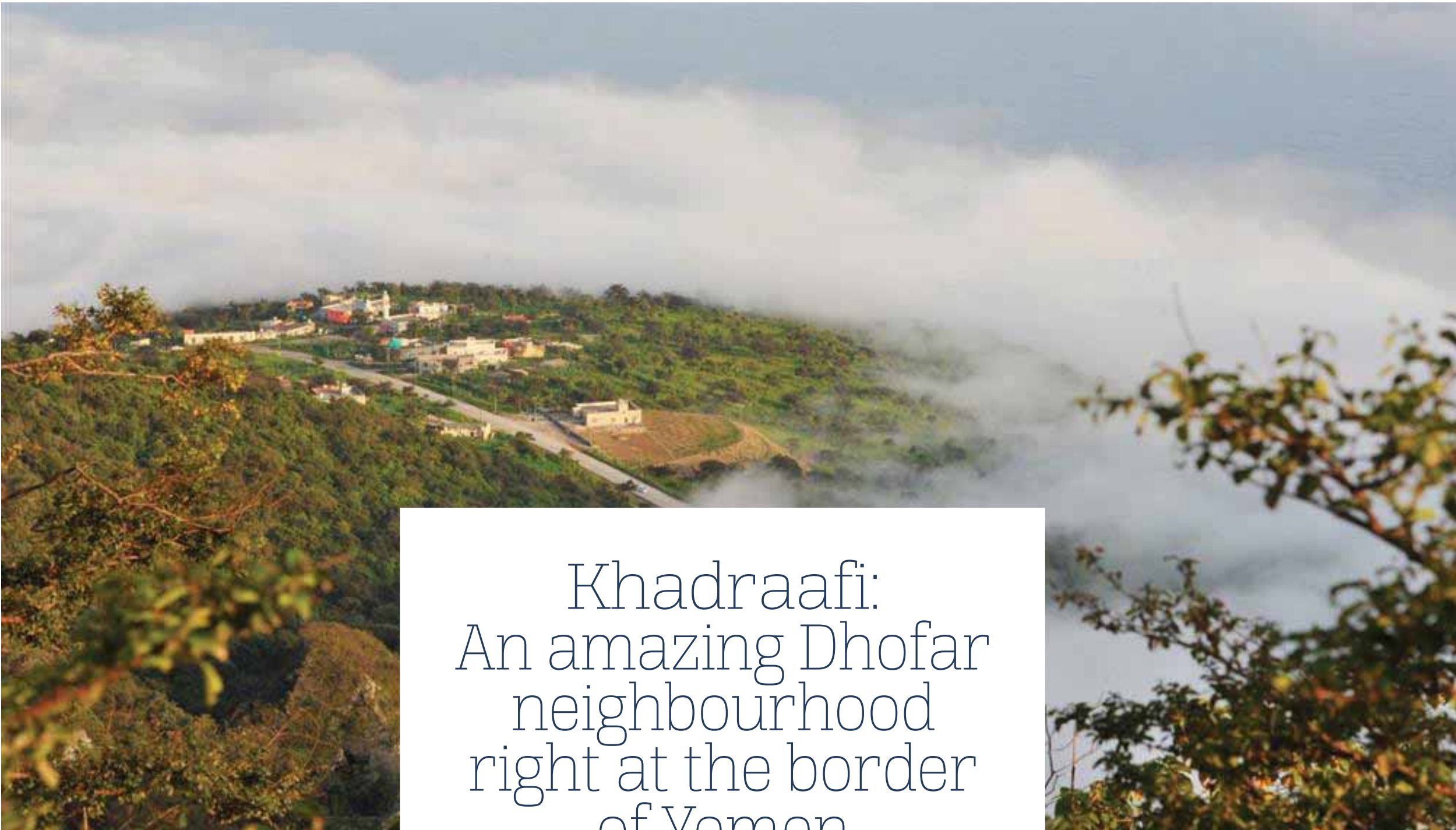
MASIRAH BEACH campsite overlooks the Arabian Sea in Masirah and is about 9 km away from the city centre.



The camp is witnessing the influx of many tourists because of the services it provides to tourists and water activities as well as the rooms of the camp with a sea view available with modern amenities.



The camp also offers its adventure-loving visitors a training centre for those who wish to take courses to learn to kitesurf, noting that the camp hosted many important tournaments and many famous champions from around the world who participated in kitesurfing activities held in the camp.



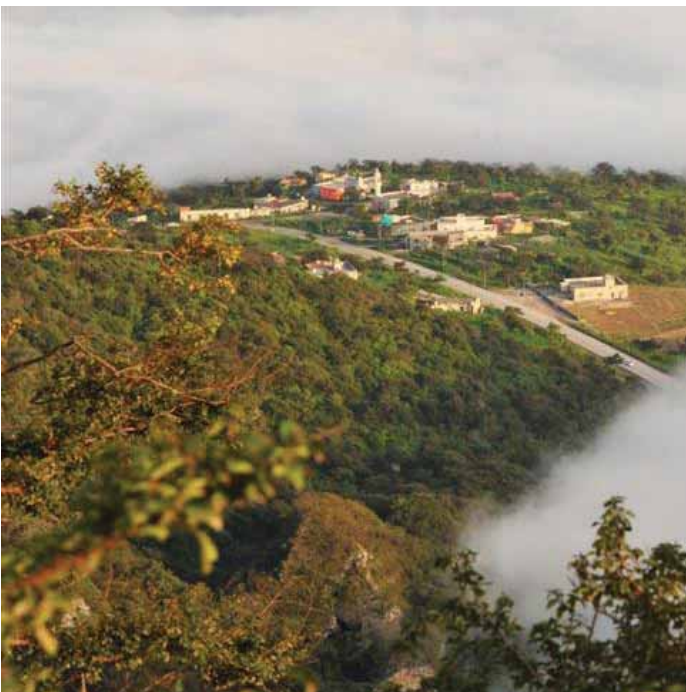
Khadraafi: An amazing Dhofar neighbourhood right at the border of Yemen

By Staff Reporter



Located at the site of Dharbat Ali, there is something mystifying about Khadraafi. The last Omani village right at the border of Yemen, this beautiful location overlooks the Arabian Sea bordered on the northern side by Jabal Sarfait. It is the only village in the Wilayat of Dhalkout with the largest population density. The village is consists of a number of neighbourhoods like Hamoot, Joot Adhar, Firaq and Deem. Sheikh Salem Raafit, Deputy Wali of Dhalkout in Khadraafi, said that the village is distinguished by its unique strategic location that overlooks beautiful views of the Arabian Sea, making it a tourist destination for many visitors from inside and outside the Sultanate. He added that in the Khareef season, beautiful clouds form on the

a beautiful Dhofari heritage reminiscent of the ancient houses their houses lived on before the blessed renaissance. These houses receive visitors, researchers and discovery enthusiasts. The area is fenced with Al Kadi trees to protect them from grazing animals. Regarding the most important commercial activities for the residents of Khadarafi, the wali explained that the residents are like other residents of the Dhofar who practice agricultural and animal grazing, as they also pay great attention to seasonal agriculture in the Khareef season like corn and cowpea, which is locally called "al dajar". The crops have a big market at the end of December every year, as the crops of Khadrafi are known for their big size and good quality. He added that Khadraafi is distin-



Sarfait mountains, which gives it a brilliant splendour and a wonderful view, and attracts many visitors and enthusiasts of art and photography. He explained that Khadraafi includes many freshwater springs such as Ain Deem, Ain Dhablil, Ain Sarfait, Ain Khadrafi, Ain Quhoud, Akoub, Farqnout and Ain Baal Oud and Hailuf. It has many ancient caves that in the past were used by inhabitants as shelters for their animals to avoid rain, wind and the cold. These caves include Dhirbet, Husam, Dharoot, Menaaramat, Shirchiti, Heithil, and Baramthat cave — all large caves that can accommodate dozens of families. He pointed out that many families still have their old houses made of tree trunks and grass and mixed with

guished by its beautiful pastures and the diversity of its plants, which is why natural mountain honey becomes a source of income for many people in the area. They harvest honey from natural mountain apiaries, whether from the bellies of caves and valleys or from apiaries hanging on trees, and the natural honey season always begins after the end of October. The Wali said that the wilayat has dramatically changed and developed compared to what it was before. Today, all neighbouring villages are connected by paved roads. The area also now enjoys water lines and internal lighting for residential neighbourhoods and public streets as well as schools to serve the other neighbourhoods, and it is equipped with all the necessary educational supplies.





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Madayn participates in virtual COMEX 2021



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), represented by the Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM), is taking part in the 30th edition of the Technology, Communications, Innovation and Digital Transformation – COMEX 2021, which kicked-off on Sunday and will continue till June 8.

Held virtually for the first time this year under the theme of ‘Digital Transformation and Accelerated Utilisation of Artificial Intelligence Future’, COMEX 2021 presents a specialised platform for online industry leading discussions, knowledge-sharing, and B2B meetings.

Through a dedicated app and portal where visitors can login and virtually communicate with representatives of various local and international bodies, Madayn — a diamond sponsor of COMEX 2021 — is featuring and highlighting the services, incentives and objectives of its technology arm — the Knowledge Oasis Muscat.

Held virtually for the first time this year under the theme of ‘Digital Transformation and Accelerated Utilisation of Artificial Intelligence Future’, COMEX 2021 presents a specialised platform for online industry leading discussions, knowledge-sharing, and B2B meetings.

Established by Madayn in 2003 as Oman’s first tech park, KOM plays a pivotal role in transforming business in the country by creating an outstanding collaborative environment in which knowledge driven enterprises can pursue their local and international ambitions.

It is worthwhile mentioning that COMEX this year aims at highlighting the major trends and developments witnessed by the field of information and communication technology worldwide, and underscoring the Sultanate’s e-government initiatives and services.

New RO 10m food industries project to come up in Khazaen

ROBUST GROWTH:
Salalah Mills unveils strategy for expansion and diversification of investment portfolio

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

Salalah Mills Co, a publicly traded company listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSE), plans to set up a new food industries centre at Khazaen Economic City with an investment of between RO 10–12 million. An initial agreement to this effect will be signed by the Dhofar-based flour mill company for the lease of a 20,000 sq meter plot in Khazaen.

The proposed Food Industries Centre will include an industrial bakery and production lines for frozen and semi-cooked pastries in the first phase, followed by frozen cakes, snacks, noodles and biscuits in the second phase.

In a filing to the Capital Market Authority, Salalah Mills CEO Ahmed bin Alawi al Dhahab said the new venture is in line with the company’s strategy to expand its flour-based food activities.

The project, financed with the support of commercial loans, will come into production before the end of 2022. Internal Rate of Return (IRR) is projected at 18 per cent, with the complex



expected to turn a profit from the second onwards, the CEO noted, citing feasibility studies.

One of the largest millers in the Sultanate, Salalah Mills operates a 1,500 tonnes per day capacity four mill in Raysut Industrial City. A wholly owned subsidiary also produces 432 tonnes per day of macaroni.

A plastics manufacturing unit, currently producing 250,000 bags per day, is being expanded to reach a capacity of 350,000 bags per day by the end of 2022, according to the company.

Additionally, Salalah Mills plans to commence trial production of its concentrated animal feed manufacturing unit by the end of this month, with a production capacity of 240 tonnes per day. Likewise, Salalah Laboratories Company, a new subsidiary focusing on providing physical and chemical analysis of grains and foodstuffs, will be launched this year.

Going forward, Salalah Mills has plans to diversify its product portfolio and revenue sources, said Al Dhahab.

Over the 2022 – 2025 timeframe, the company aims to expand into a number of food related fields, notably food grain trading and storage, manufacture of flour blends, improvers, vitamins and minerals for bakeries, flour mills, fodder factories, starch production, fish and pet feed, production of grass capsules, and manufacture of flexible packaging films and FFS bags. Besides, the company is weighing partnerships for the production of plastic medical supplies, he added.

New Integrated structure for water, wastewater sector adopted

NEW MILESTONE:
Transfer of powers, prerogatives from predecessor entities to new entities comes into effect

CONRAD PRABHU
[@conradprabhu](#)

Oman’s newly restructured and integrated water and wastewater services sector has been formally operationalised with effect from June 1, 2021. It follows a decision by the Ministry of Finance to endorse the transfer of powers and prerogatives from the predecessor entities to the newly created entities under the integrated structure, Nama Group – the holding company of state-owned power and water utilities and service providers – affirmed here on Tuesday.

Nama Group – an affiliated

of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman – now oversees two new entities created out of the restructuring exercise.

Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC) has been formed out of the merger of the erstwhile Public Authority for Water (Diam), hitherto the sole distributor of potable water services across Oman (with the exception of Dhofar Governorate), and Oman Wastewater Services Company (Haya Water), the sole entity responsible for wastewater management in Oman (with the exception of Dhofar Governorate).

Responsibility for potable water distribution and wastewater management in Dhofar Governorate has been placed in the hands of Dhofar Integrated Services Company (DISC), a newly established entity created out of the merger of three existing entities: the



Following an ambitious strategy and clear goals, we will endeavour to achieve 98 per cent water network coverage by 2040 in order to provide safe drinking water to all governorates

QAIS AL ZAKWANI
CEO, Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company

Directorate General of Water – Dhofar (which focused on potable water distribution), and Salalah Sanitary & Drainage Services (overseeing wastewater management), and Dhofar Power Company (responsible for power distribution and supply).

Regulation of the integrated sector is now the responsibility of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), while the policymaker is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

In a statement, Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC) affirmed its commitment to building on the achievements of the predecessor entities – Diam and Haya Water – in delivering high quality services to the general population.

Qais al Zakwani, OWWSC’s newly appointed CEO, said: “Thanks to the fresh start of OWWSC to complete the success march that has been achieved since the blessed renaissance

era, and the contributions of Omani cadres and competencies capable of making even more efforts to complete the journey of success under the umbrella of Nama Group, we will strive over the next phase to allow our employees to apply the best international standards and practices to improve the company’s operating performance and complete their work with great professionalism.”

He further stated: “Following an ambitious strategy and clear goals, we will endeavour to achieve 98 per cent water network coverage by 2040 in order to provide safe drinking water to all governorates (except Dhofar), and expand our sanitation services to include the rest of the governorates, as well as seek out the most adaptable and creative digital technologies for reliable and sustainable services that meet the needs of our valued subscribers,” he added in a message featured on the website of the new company.

UK trade deal with Norway worth £20bn implodes

A free trade deal, involving various products, between Britain and Norway, will have to be put on hold as Norway's coalition government failed to reach an agreement last week.

In this post-Brexit era when it's a priority for the UK to strike trade deals, it's frustrating that obstacles arise to delay matters.

After a rollover deal was agreed on last December, UK's International trade minister, Liz Truss, said: "We've secured continuity for businesses trading goods with Norway and Iceland, worth over £20bn in 2019."

She added: "We're looking forward to a more comprehensive FTA (Free Trade Agreement) with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein that will come into force this year (2021)."

The three governing parties of Norway were to reach a consensus over fears that a free trade deal would hit farmers too hard. The Christian Democrats party (KrF), part of the current coalition government, refuses to open up the Norwegian market to British beef and cheese, fearing non-tariff access would put many farmers in the country out of businesses.

A KrF party insider said: "They have failed to agree, no one is moving, and now there is not enough time left to pass (any agreement) in the Norwegian parliament" before national elections are held on 13 September."

He added that it is now unlikely that a deal will take effect before 2022, as any new government, which will most likely consist of at least three or four parties, will have to approve what has



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

THE THREE GOVERNING PARTIES OF NORWAY WERE TO A REACH CONSENSUS OVER FEARS THAT A FREE TRADE DEAL WOULD HIT FARMERS TOO HARD

been agreed so far and reach a consensus on outstanding issues, such as opening up Norway to the two British products on a non-tariff basis.

After that process is complete, the required domestic legislation will need to be drafted and passed. This process can easily take several elections, after the September elections.

Following intense internal discussions last week, the Christian Democrats were not prepared to change their minds and join the other two governing parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, who fully back a comprehensive trade deal.

The party insider explained the party "can simply not agree" to a non-tariff deal because it traditionally leans heavily on Norway's rural vote. According to the most recent polls, the party is well behind, polling at only 3.4

per cent of the vote.

After the EU, the UK is Norway's most important trading partner, with an estimated annual value of around £20bn. The Norwegian market is small, but highly attractive for UK exporters, as prices are high and consumers have strong purchasing power.

Last December, the UK signed a temporary post-Brexit rollover trade deal with Norway. The agreement covered trade in goods, and ensured 95 per cent of goods trade with Norway and over 90 per cent with Iceland will remain tariff-free, providing businesses with certainty that they can continue operating on the same terms as they did pre-Brexit.

However, it's merely a temporary deal and includes a range of sectors, including agriculture, fishing and services.

The news comes only three weeks after a fishing deal between the UK and Norway collapsed, as parties could not agree on annual catches.

The failure to reach an agreement left the British fishing industry extremely annoyed as this was an important part of negotiations, and it put Hull-based freezer trawler giant Kirkella, one of the UK's biggest players, out of business for the rest of the year.

A spokesperson for the UK's Department for International Trade said that trade deal negotiation itself has not ended. "The UK's negotiations with Norway have not collapsed. Talks are ongoing and remain positive. All sides are committed to agreeing on a new deal as soon as possible," he said.

(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)

Omantel wins Best Digital Transformation Leadership Award



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

Recognising the Company's service to the nation during the Covid-19 pandemic by way of accelerating digital technology's reach to businesses in the region, the Capital Finance International magazine (cfi.co) has conferred Omantel with the Best Digital Transformation Leadership (GCC) Award, 2021.

The award further emphasises Omantel's position as the market leader that puts the country first. Omantel, the Sultanate's leading integrated telecommunications services provider and its trusted digital enabler, has driven Oman to be among a host of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states at the vanguard of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and is fast turning its digital transformation goals into reality.

Omantel is embedding futuristic communications and network technology into every aspect of the nation's functioning through smart solutions, the Internet of Things "IoT", Artificial Intelligence and other frontier technologies.

The award categorically recognises the efforts of Omantel as it rose from just being a telecom company to be an ally in the Omani government's fight against Covid-19, with multi-pronged measures.

NBO to provide banking services for Ministry of Defence Pension Fund

MUSCAT: Marking another milestone in its digital leadership, National Bank of Oman (NBO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Defence Pension Fund for the provision of digital banking services, including its Corporate Online Banking (CIB) and B2B Banking Portal.

Signed by Ahmed bin Salem al Busaidy, Director General of the Ministry of Defence Pension Fund, and Hassan Abdul Amir Shaban, General Manager - Chief Government Banking Officer at NBO, the agreement is the latest in a number of long-term strategic partnerships the bank has formed as it seeks to build bridges between the private and public sectors. With its state-of-the-art, simple and secure online corporate banking services, it continues to support Oman's 2040 Vision and its digital transformation.

Hassan Abdul Amir Shaban said, "We are pleased to sign this strategic agreement with the Ministry of Defence Pension Fund. As the first local bank



to conclude such fruitful cooperation with the Ministry, it is a welcome confirmation of our leadership in digital and electronic banking services in the Sultanate.

We will work hard to ensure that the Ministry is provided with the latest services and solutions, while meeting its banking requirements in an easy and convenient manner, now and into the future." NBO has been providing full digital financial services to the Ministry of Defence since 2019.

Using cutting-edge technology and leading security features, its online banking services empower companies and government entities to make instant transactions, payments and transfers, access account balances, make on-the-spot enquiries, access non-financial services and complete transaction histories on all of their accounts.

Available free and accessible 24/7, the frequently updated digital service is enhanced by the bank's best-in-class expertise and superior customer experience.

CMA joins Arab Securities Commissions' Board meeting

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

The Sultanate of Oman represented by the Capital Market Authority participated in the 15th meeting of the Board members of The Arab Securities Commissions Association with the participation of the presidents and officers of the supervisors of Arab capital markets. The CMA was represented by Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President.

The virtual meeting discussed a number of topics related to regulation and development of the capital markets in the Arab countries and the latest developments in Arab stock exchanges.

The meeting reviewed the progress in the execution of the general principles and guidelines approved for Arab capital markets, the establishment of e-education portal to provide specialised training programmes related to capital markets



proportionate for the needs of the member states.

The secretariat general of the association continued in 2020 providing training programmes through electronic communication methods for about 870 trainees most of them working in the field of capital markets and regulated entities.

The Arab Securities Commissions Association was established in 2007 as an independent non for profit organisation based in the United Arab Emirates with the aim of upgrading the legislations and regulations of Arab capital markets to achieve fairness, efficiency and transparency and to unify the efforts to reach to efficient standards of regulation over the transactions in the Arab securities markets.

OTF inks pact to boost entrepreneurial development in frontier technology

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

Oman Technology Fund (OTF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with AWJ Innovation (Sustainable Technologies and Innovation Development (STID)), with the aim of investing in the outcomes of the entrepreneurial development in frontier technology programme (.nxt), by providing potential training and employment opportunities.

Moreover, OTF is aiming to create potential Investment opportunities to support feasible projects and entrepreneurial ideas within the Fund's investments in the fields of technology and innovation, which is scheduled to last for two years, which can be extended accordingly.

The MoU was signed by Ismail bin Ibrahim al Harthy, acting CEO of the Oman Technology



Fund and Eng Hamoud bin Sloum al Shukeiry, Vice President of Projects and Operations of AWJ innovation.

Al Shukeiry explained that the third phase of the (.nxt) programme comes as an intensive virtual practical training bootcamp for a period of five weeks, which is dedicated to developing 100 young Omani entrepreneurs and startups as part of the programme.

Al Shukeiry elaborated that, at the end of this stage, participants are expected to develop the skills necessary for entrepreneurship through learning experience based on training workshops, interaction with mentors and successful pioneers in the startups and entrepreneurship, forming teams, as well as innovating in their companies' ideas, and working to turn ideas into reality.

Besides building relationships with successful entrepreneurs and experts in various fields. The entrepreneurial development in frontier technology programme (.nxt) extends for a period of nine months for each batch. It began in October of 2020 and shall end in July of 2021 and is divided into three progressive phases.

The first phase included 1,200 participants, the second 700 participants (January - May 2021), and the third phase (June - July 2021) 100 participants.

JOYALUKKAS EXCHANGE INAUGURATES HEAD OFFICE



Joyalukkas Exchange, one of the leading money exchange houses in Sultanate have relocated their head office to Fahad Plaza, MBD, next to Muscat Security Market. The ceremony was inaugurated by the Joyalukkas Group Local Partner Shaikh Salim al Rawahi. The event took place in the presence of dignitaries like Joyalukkas Exchange General Manager Nixon Baby, Joyalukkas Jewellery General Manager Anto Ignatious, Manager Operations Ansar Shenthair, other department heads of Joyalukkas Exchange and invited officials.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement of Capital Reduction
In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company RIAM SHINE TRADING, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1050346**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from Omani Rials **100,000.000** to **20,000.000**. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

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INSTITUTION Licence contact 95595512.

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FLAT in Muscat Grand Mall, 3 bedrooms, majlis, A/C and car park, RO 130,000. 99328880.

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INDIAN, male, Master Degree in Accounting, 15+ years of experience in Oman, UAE & India as Finance / Accounts Manager/ Chief Accountant. Looking for a job and have noc on visit. Contact: 79007124/ 78039524. email: kadercok@outlook.com

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Opec and Russia seen gaining more power with Royal Dutch Shell ruling

LONDON: Climate activists who scored big against Western majors last week had some unlikely cheerleaders in the oil capitals of Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Russia.

Defeats in the courtroom and boardroom mean Royal Dutch Shell, ExxonMobil and Chevron are all under pressure to cut carbon emissions faster. That's good news for the likes of Saudi Arabia's national oil company Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company and Russia's Gazprom and Rosneft.

It means more business for them and the Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec). "Oil and gas demand is far from peaking and supplies will be needed, but international oil companies will not be allowed to invest in this environment, meaning national oil companies have to step in," said Amrita Sen from Energy Aspects consultancy.

Climate activists scored a major victory with a Dutch court ruling requiring Royal Dutch Shell to drastically cut emissions, which in effect means cutting oil and gas output.

The same day, the top two US oil companies, Exxon Mobil Corp and Chevron Corp, both lost battles with shareholders who accused them of dragging their feet on climate change. "It looks like the West will have to rely more on what it calls 'hostile regimes' for its supply," joked a high-level executive from Russia's Gazprom oil and gas group, referring to energy companies around the world owned completely or mostly by the state.



Engineers work at a Saudi Aramco's Ras Tanura oil refinery and oil terminal in Saudi Arabia. — AFP

Since 1990, global oil consumption has grown to 100 million barrels per day from 65 million bpd, with Asia providing the lion's share of growth

A senior Saudi Aramco staffer said the court ruling would make it easier for Opec to ramp up production. "It is great for Aramco," the staffer said.

Western oil majors like Shell have dramatically expanded in the last 50 years, as the West sought to cut its reliance on energy from the volatile Middle East, and from Russia.

Those same Western energy majors, including BP and Total, have set out plans to sharply reduce emissions by 2050. But they face growing pressure from investors to do more to meet

UN-backed targets to limit global warming.

Saudi Aramco, listed on the Saudi bourse but majority state-owned, is not under the same sort of pressure to cut its carbon emissions, although the kingdom's rulers aim to sharply increase the country's use of renewables.

Gazprom expects demand for natural gas to grow in the coming decades and for it to play a bigger role in energy consumption than renewable sources and hydrogen.

Western oil majors control around 15% of global output, while Opec and Russia have a

share of around 40 per cent. That share has been relatively stable in the last decades as rising demand was met with new producers like smaller private US shale firms, which today face similar climate-related pressures.

Since 1990, global oil consumption has grown to 100 million barrels per day from 65 million bpd, with Asia providing the lion's share of growth.

Countries such as China and India have made no pledges to reduce oil consumption, which on a per capita basis is still a fraction of the levels in the West. China will rely heavily on gas to cut its huge coal consumption.

The International Energy Agency, which looks after energy policies of the West, issued a stark appeal last month to the

world to essentially scrap all new oil and gas developments. But it gave no clear formula on how to reduce demand.

Despite pressure from activists, investors and banks to cut emissions, Western oil majors are also tasked with maintaining high dividends amid heavy debt. Dividends from oil companies represent significant contributions to pension funds.

"It is vital that the global oil industry aligns its production to the Paris goals. But that must be done in step with policy, changes to the demand side, and the rebuilding of the world's energy system," said Nick Stansbury from Legal & General, which manage £1.3 trillion (\$1.8 trillion) in assets on behalf of savers, retirees and institutions.

"Forcing one company to do so in the courts may (if it is effective at all) only result in higher prices and foregone profits," he said.

Legal & General, one of the world's largest fund managers, holds assets in most oil majors. Climate lawsuits have been filed in 52 countries in the past two decades, with 90 per cent of those in the US and European Union, risk consultancy Verisk Maplecroft said.

"In the West, energy investments will peak on fears and concerns over regulations and court rulings. Then, we will see peak dividends," said the Aramco executive.

Aramco pays the highest annual dividend of \$75 billion. Over the past five years, the IEA has been predicting a large oil shortage and an oil price spike due to a lack of investments following a 2014-2017 oil price crash.

— Reuters

Brent hits \$70 on demand prospects

WASHINGTON: Oil prices rose on Tuesday, with Brent topping \$70 and trading at its highest since March, as optimism grew over the fuel demand outlook during the summer driving season of the United States, the world's top oil consumer. Prices were also boosted after data from China showed that factory activity expanded at its fastest this year in May.

Brent crude futures for August gained 94 cents, or 1.4%, to \$70.26 a barrel by 0610 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude for July was at \$67.66 a barrel, up \$1.34, or 2% from Friday's close, with no settlement price for Monday due to a US public holiday.

Brent earlier hit a session peak of \$70.34, the highest intraday price since March 8. "While there are concerns over tighter Covid-19 related restrictions across parts of Asia, the market appears to be more focused on the positive demand story from the US and parts of Europe," analysts from ING Economics said in a note.

"In the US, the summer driving season officially got underway following the Memorial Day weekend, and we have entered this period with gasoline inventories already trending lower, and not too far from a 5-year low for this time of the year," he added.

— Reuters



A man fills a car tank at a gas station in Beijing. — Reuters

Asia's factories sustain expansion but supply squeeze dims outlook



An employee is seen working at a textile factory in Hanoi, Vietnam. — Reuters

TOKYO: Asia's factory activity continued to expand in May thanks to an ongoing recovery in global demand, surveys showed on Tuesday, though rising raw material costs and supply chain constraints clouded the outlook.

A spike in Covid-19 infections in some countries could disrupt supply chains, posing a headache for manufacturers and weighing on Asia's export-driven recovery, analysts say. Japan and South Korea saw expansions in factory activity moderate in May, purchasing managers' indexes (PMI) showed on Tuesday, underscoring the fragile nature of their recoveries.

"A spread of new variants is already having a negative impact on supply chains. If this situation persists, it would hit Asian manufacturers that had been scrambling to diversify supply chains out of China," said Toru Nishihama, economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute.

— Reuters



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