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**LOVE AFFAIR WITH HOCKEY TO CONTINUE: WAHAIBI**  
**GO TO PAGE 16 SPORTS**

## NEWS BRIEFS

### HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Nicolas Maduro of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and wellbeing to President Maduro. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Venezuela further progress and prosperity.

### HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF ALGERIA

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria on his country's Independence Anniversary. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health, wellbeing and a long life to President Tebboune.



**Medical waste on the rise, 4,688 tonnes treated in 2020**



**Oil row flares as UAE rejects 'unjust' OPEC+ output deal**

## Tax Authority begins receiving VAT returns from July 1

Muscat - With effect from July 1, the Tax Authority began receiving the first set of VAT returns via the authority's electronic website for a period of 30 days. The quarterly tax return for VAT registrants covers the added value of imports, accruals, deductibles, due tax and refund-

able tax credits.

The authority pointed out that, over the past period, it published an advisory guide through which it explained the mechanism of presenting tax returns for VAT registrants, as well as terms for tax refund, rectification of submitted tax returns and

ways of maintaining tax registers and bills.

The Tax Authority underscored the significance of taxpayers presenting their disclosures in time to avoid penalties stated in the VAT Law - Article (101) - which penalises any person who fails to submit

tax returns, presents false data or commits any other violation stated in the law. The penalty includes imprisonment for three months to one year and/or a fine of RO5,000 to RO20,000.

With effect from July 1, the Tax Authority started receiving registrations from merchants

and service providers committed to paying VAT from among those whose baseline annual imports or expected imports range between RO250,000 and RO499,999.

The Tax Authority affirmed that it will begin imposing compulsory registration for those

whose annual imports or expected imports reach a minimum of RO38,500 next December. Those whose annual or expected imports range between RO19,250 and RO38,499 can choose optional VAT registration. ONA

## Almost 1mn vaccinated

MoH calls on all target groups – including 18+ category – to register through electronic platforms

**Our Correspondent**  
Muscat

With the National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 adding the 18+ category on Sunday, Oman is nearing the 1mn vaccination mark. More than 900,000 individuals had been vaccinated as of Thursday.

'The ministry began vaccinating a new target group - 18 years and older - in all governorates of the sultanate under the nationwide immunisation programme on Sunday,' a Ministry of Health statement said on Sunday.

Dr Thamra bint Said al Ghafriyah, acting director general of health services in Muscat governorate, described the turnout for vaccination at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) as 'great'.

"The procedure followed at OCEC is very smooth and the flow of recipients is great," she said on Sunday.

According to MoH, more than 1.5mn doses of vaccines have been received and 3.2mn more will arrive this month.



Citizens await their turn to be vaccinated at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Sunday (Supplied photo)

*The procedure followed at OCEC is very smooth and the flow of recipients is great*

**DR THAMRA AL GHAFRIYAH**



MoH has called on those eligible for vaccination to register through the Tarassud + app or covid19.moh.gov.om in advance. On weekdays, vaccination timing at OCEC is 8am to 6pm; on weekends (Friday and Saturday), the centre is open from 9am to 4pm.

The Al Sahel Health Centre in Quriyat is open Sunday to Thursday from 8am to 2pm, and the drive-through service at Oman Automobile Association, Seeb, runs from 3pm to 7pm, Sunday to Thursday.

'The ministry calls on all target groups to book advance appoint-

ments in order to ensure a safe and accessible process for everyone,' MoH stated.

The ministry has also launched a drive to immunise the elderly at home, for which it urged the eligible in this category to book through the nearest health centre.

Currently, individuals aged 18 years and older are receiving the first dose of vaccine; the second dose will be announced shortly.

MoH has also expanded the number of vaccination centres in all the wilayats of the sultanate.

The Directorate General of Health Services in Dhahirah Governorate has announced that the immunisation drive is continuing

at a good pace in its 11 vaccination centres in the wilayats of Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank. The directorate has vaccinated close to 37,000 individuals and targets about 1,500 people every day to achieve 50 per cent vaccine coverage of the target group in July and 100 per cent in August.

Dhahirah has recorded more than 8,000 COVID-19 cases and 88 related deaths since the outbreak of the pandemic.

In Salalah, MoH started vaccinating the 18+ category at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment on Sunday with the first dose of vaccine. The centre continues to vaccinate other target groups.

## 143 COVID-19 deaths in 72 hours

Muscat - COVID-19 deaths are rising further in the sultanate with the daily toll now hovering around 50 as hospitals face acute pressure. The number of new infections is also seen surging.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 4,662 COVID-19 cases and 143 related deaths on Sunday for the three-day period from Thursday to Saturday, accounting for a total number of 275,166 cases and 3,283 deaths registered in the sultanate.

According to the MoH, 50 individuals succumbed to the virus on Thursday, 48 on Friday and 45 on Saturday. 'One hundred and seventy-one patients were admitted to hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients to 1,589, including 532 in intensive care,' a statement said.

The number of recoveries, however, is encouraging with 5,886 patients reported as recovered in the last three days, accounting for a total of 242,874. With these figures, the recovery rate improved from 87.6 per cent on Thursday to 88.3 per cent on Sunday.

To cater to the rising number of patients, MoH is expanding Sohar Hospital to add 30 more COVID-19 beds to relieve pressure on the hospital's facilities.

## 45 DEAD IN PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE TRANSPORT PLANE CRASH



In this handout photo taken on Sunday and received from the Philippine military Joint Task Force-Sulu, rescue workers arrive as smoke billows from the wreckage of a Philippine Air Force C-130 transport plane after it crashed near the airport in the town of Jolo in Mindanao island (AFP) See also Page 10

## Oman, Saudi chambers discuss promotion of joint investments

**Our Correspondent**  
Muscat

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Council of Saudi Chambers held a virtual meeting on Sunday during which the two sides discussed means of expediting investment opportunities available in the two countries.

The Omani side was led by Eng Ridha Juma al Saleh, chairman of OCCI, and Ajlan Abdulaziz al Ajlan, head of Saudi Chambers, from the Saudi side, in the presence of ambassadors of both countries.

Eng Saleh underscored the significance of efforts being undertaken to foster economic and commercial cooperation between the private sectors in both countries. His speech also dealt with ways of exchanging expertise and consolidating efforts of business and economic firms specialising in the two countries' target sectors and visions - Oman Vision 2040 and the Saudi Vision 2030.

Eng Saleh also spoke about



(Supplied photo)

statistics and indicators shared by the sultanate and Saudi Arabia, notably data pertaining to commercial exchange, tourism, commerce and joint investment.

He informed that the value of Saudi investments in the sultanate stands at RO105mn.

Ajlan's speech focused on the depth of Omani-Saudi strategic economic relations, noting that the kingdom, in its 2030 vision, seeks to enhance ties with other countries, including Oman, and affirmed Saudi support for the economic drive.

"We strive to expand aspects of cooperation in all economic spheres and study investment and business opportunities available in the two countries'

private sectors," said Ajlan. This, he observed, involves a greater sense of responsibility to be shouldered by both parties with a view to augmenting the volume of commercial exchange to the levels desired by the private sectors.

The meeting touched on a number of joint economic fields. To this effect, H H Sayyid Faisal Turki al Said, Oman's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, stressed the importance of stimulating economic action.

"In the near future, we may sign a number of commercial agreements between the two sides and many of these agreements will deal with the private sectors," said H H Sayyid Faisal.

# Ministry documents traditional settlements



More than 25 students from SQU among others participated in the field research (Supplied photos)

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has started a project to document the important and endangered traditional settlements in the country.

According to the ministry, the sultanate has a diverse urban and architectural heritage that extends over successive historical eras since man inhabited this land. The traditional Omani settlements - locally called harat - are among the most important components of this heritage and cover wide areas in the sultanate. The Omani harat is quintessential to societal history and identity, even if some of these have been abandoned and others have disappeared.

After the first group of harats that was documented in cooperation with Nottingham Trent University and the University of Liverpool, UK, the ministry has completed a new book that includes architectural and photographic documentation, along with ethnographic studies, of

*The Omani harat is quintessential to societal history and identity, even if some of these have been abandoned and others have disappeared*



three more harats in Al Batinah region and one harat in Dakhliyah.

These studies were done by the ministry in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in the first project of this kind with an Omani university. Dr Naima Benkari, assistant professor in the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering at SQU and member of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, supervised the documentation, conducted the studies and prepared the restoration and

management plans for four harats - Qasra (wilaya of Rustaq), Saija (wilaya of Samail), Hujrat Musalmat (wilaya of Wadi al Ma'awil) and Harat Khabat with its 'Abs Fort (wilaya of Khabourah).

More than 25 male and female students from SQU's Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering and a number of its researchers, engineers and technicians participated in the field research.

The 550-page book includes plans, orthographic sections and

three-dimensional drawings of various structures and landmarks in these settlements.

The studies included in the book were conducted taking into account international regulations and standards approved by the Unesco World Heritage Committee.

The book is an important reference for architectural, historical and societal details of these harats, and can be used to implement any restoration project of such settlements and their structures in the future.

## SEZD takes tanker driver to court

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Special Economic Zones at Duqm (SEZD) has taken legal action against a driver of a sewage tanker for disposing sewage in an undesignated place.

SEZD said, 'SEZD calls upon all drivers to adhere to guidelines in disposing sewage water properly.' It said all tankers are being tracked by a special system.



## Medical waste on the rise, 4,688 tonnes treated in 2020

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The amount of medical waste generated in Oman has gone up considerably due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As much as 4,688 tonnes of healthcare waste was treated in 2020 compared to 4,286 tonnes in 2019, according to Jassim Mohammed al Wahaibi, head of the healthcare waste department at be'ah.

Medical waste management is one of the important pillars of health management. The sultanate, like other countries, deals with the healthcare waste of COVID-19 patients in home and institutional isolation, as well as in healthcare institutions, safely.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Wahaibi said, "The amount of medical waste has increased due to the rise in the number of institutional quarantine centres, number of patients in health institutions and medical laboratories."

Wahaibi added that medical waste is divided into non-hazardous and hazardous wastes under which a number of categories are included depending on the degree of risk such as infectious, chemical, radioactive, domestic waste and more.

"The company deals with non-hazardous healthcare waste (HCW) like general municipal waste is treated, but the hazardous health waste, which is about 25 per cent of the total waste generated from various healthcare facilities, is dealt with and treated in the company's healthcare waste treatment facilities with the latest global technologies," Wahaibi informed.



*Medical waste has increased due to the rise in the number of institutional quarantine centres and number of patients in health institutions*

JASSIM AL WAHAIBI

"be'ah has exerted remarkable efforts to enhance the existing healthcare waste management infrastructure by enhancing operational efficiency of the HCW treatment facility in the wilayat of Amerat and establishing two other facilities, one in the wilayat of Liwa, North Batinah, and the other in the wilayat

of Thumrait, Dhofar. The Amerat facility is the largest in the sultanate, with an operating capacity of 14.5 tonnes per day. As for the two facilities in North Batinah and Dhofar, the operating capacity is six tonnes per day each," he added.

"The Governorate of Muscat produces the most hazardous healthcare waste, as the maximum number of health institutions are concentrated here, followed by the governorates of Dhofar, North Batinah and Dakhliyah. The stations are equipped with the highest specifications and are also operated according to local and international standards. Healthcare waste typically includes sharps, non-sharps, blood, body parts, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, medical devices and radioactive materials - a waste stream re-

garded as potentially toxic."

According to Wahaibi, be'ah lays emphasis in taking all the precautionary procedures to ensure health and safety of personnel working in healthcare waste in addition to ensuring full compliance of employees with safety procedures at the companies that operate treatment facilities.

The Ministry of Health stresses on dealing with domestic waste with caution and using the required personal protective equipment such as face mask and gloves.

Domestic waste must be placed in double bags and taken to the nearest municipal waste site. It emphasises the need to remove used personal protective equipment cautiously and washing hands thoroughly with water and soap or sterilising them.

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# Fak Kurbah secures release of 749

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

With generous donations of individuals and institutions, the Fak Kurbah Initiative or Ending Loan Agony, in coordination with 34 courts in Oman, released 749 insolvent persons from prison this year.

With this, the number of people released over the past eight years went up to 3,934.

The initiative, run by Omani Lawyers Association (OLA), helps raise funds to pay off debts of people serving sentences in insolvency cases. The eighth edition of the initiative was launched on April 1 and concluded on May 31.

"The 749 released persons were jailed for civil, commercial, legal or labour related financial claims," said an official at OLA.

The released cases covered 11 governorates, namely Muscat (226), South Batinah (85), North Batinah (151), South Sharqiyah (56), North Sharqiyah (48), Dakhliyah (39), Dhahirah (34), Buraimi (70), Musandam (8), Al



The initiative, run by Omani Lawyers Association, has so far secured the release of 3,934 individuals (Supplied photo)

Wusta (9) and Dhofar (23).

"Over the past seven years, the initiative succeeded in releasing 3,934 prisoners, including 44 in 2012, 304 in 2014, 432 in 2015, 425 in 2017, 510 in 2018, 673 in 2019, 797 in 2020 and 749 in 2021," said the official.

"This initiative primarily tar-

gets prisoners, whose circumstances made them unable to pay financial claims. These cases are thoroughly studied by the lawyers in coordination with the competent courts, to ensure that the initiative reaches those in need."

He added, "I would also like here to extend my thanks and

appreciation to the teams and charitable societies in all the governorates of the sultanate, which have taken similar initiatives aimed at relieving the distress of prisoners.

"In order to further develop our initiative, we are planning to have a special website, through which you can donate, and see

the number of cases that you will help. This step came in response to the proposals we have received in order to move forward towards the sustainability of this humanitarian project.

"In conclusion, I assure everyone that the initiative team is committed to moving forward

*This initiative targets prisoners whose circumstances made them unable to pay financial claims. OLA studies these cases thoroughly*

OLA OFFICIAL

with their national duty. We are inspired by your generous souls, and we will continue with your support and the government's support."

"Thank you for the smiles you have brought to the families of the prisoners. Heartfelt thanks to the soldiers of this initiative who have been behind the success of this year. I would also like to thank our media supporters, various social media platforms, as well as Lente Luna company, which has enabled us to convey our message," added the official.

## Applications for amphibious aircraft open till August 4

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has extended the date of application for receiving requests from investors wishing to establish and operate amphibious aircraft in Oman to August 4 from the previous deadline of July 4.

Interested investors should provide a detailed proposal that includes an economic feasibility study, the company's business plan, and proof of financial ability. Investors must complete application forms for a Class B operating licence for aircraft of 19 seats or less or with a maximum take-off weight of less than ten tonnes.

The forms can be obtained through the authority's website - caa.gov.om - after paying an application fee of RO300.

'After the initial acceptance of the application, the applicant is obligated to complete all requirements for getting an Air Operator Certificate (AOC) according to a specific timetable,' it added.

# 44,779 register at Higher Education Admission Centre

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation has completed the two-month registration phase (May-July 2021).

As many as 44,779 students of General Education Diploma (GED) and equivalent registered in the electronic admission system for the academic year 2020/2021.

Dr Hamad bin Khalfan al Nu'mani, director general of HEAC, said of the registered students 23,040 were male and 21,739 female. As many as 39,865 students made their initial study programme choices.

Nu'mani added that the centre is preparing for the upcoming registration and admission stages, which are as important as the initial registration. He explained that their dates coincide with the announcement of GED students' final results for the academic year 2020/2021.

He added, "It is expected that the study programme updates will be announced in the first week of August, coinciding with the start of the stage of finalising study programme choices.

"Students are advised to carefully read the announcement of the developments of this stage



*It is expected that the study programme updates will be announced in the first week of August, coinciding with the start of the stage of finalising study programme choices*

DR HAMAD AL NU'MANI

and focus on the accompanying information. During this stage, students can add new programmes, either from the student's guide or from the new study programmes that will be announced on the centre's website and social media channels when the stage begins."

He explained that students who did not register during the

initial registration stage can register, obtain the user number and the password, and arrange their choices of study programmes.

Nu'mani said the students studying outside the sultanate must register and arrange their choices of study programmes on the same registration dates announced by the centre.

After the announcement of

their final academic results, they must enter the study materials, final grades, a copy of their passport or ID card, and a copy of the certificate in the system.

Nu'mani added, "The Higher Education Admission Centre encourages General Education Diploma students to take the vaccine against COVID-19 because of its importance in facilitating and regulating the enrolment of students in higher education institutions. And also in conducting interviews for programmes in a safe manner, knowing that immunisation has become mandatory for travel to most countries."

## EA releases rescued honey buzzard in Musandam

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

An injured honey buzzard found by a citizen was treated by the Environment Authority (EA) in Musandam governorate and released into the wild.

The EA said, 'The Environment Department in Musandam governorate released a honey buzzard in its natural environment after it received treatment and full care from the specialists in the authority. A citizen had found the injured bird and handed it over to the authority.'

The authority said the migratory bird uses the islands of the governorate as nesting ground.



## OCCI calls on private health institutes to vaccinate staff

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has urged all private health institutions to vaccinate their employees as they are on the frontline in the fight against COVID-19.

"In view of the present circumstances, the chamber urges all private health institutions to contribute to their community by giving priority to their employees to obtain vaccine doses against COVID-19," OCCI stated.

It said this is necessary as healthcare providers represent the first line of defence against the pandemic and their role in protecting others is pivotal.

### REGIONAL WEATHER

|             | Max | Min |
|-------------|-----|-----|
| Abu Dhabi   | 43  | 33  |
| Doha        | 39  | 29  |
| Kuwait City | 43  | 31  |
| Manama      | 40  | 29  |
| Riyadh      | 45  | 27  |

### PRAYER TIMINGS

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| Fajr    | 3.55am  |
| Sunrise | 5.25am  |
| Duhr    | 12.11pm |
| Asr     | 3.30pm  |
| Maghrib | 6.57pm  |
| Isha    | 8.27pm  |

## 4-5 star hotels can open restaurants, cafes during lockdown

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Four and five star hotels have been allowed to open restaurants and cafes during the night lockdown for their guests.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism said, 'With reference to the existing coordination between the ministry and

the Supreme Committee, the ministry allows 4-5 star hotels to operate dining halls and cafes for their guests during the night lockdown (8pm to 4am), starting from July 4, until further notice.'

The ministry has urged hotels and tourist facilities to abide by the decisions of the Supreme Committee to avoid legal action.



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

| Tender No. | No E- Tender      | Description of Tender                                                     | Tender Fee | Last date to collect the tender | Tender return date | Grade     |
|------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| PRE/21/032 | ( 2021/MM/ HQ-28) | Construction of Pedestrian Walkway From AL Gubrah To AL Ansab (E- Tender) | Rial 40    | 29/07/2021                      | 12/08/2021         | First     |
| PRE/21/035 | ( 2021/MM/ HQ-29) | Slope Protection Works at Qurm alsurooj beach (E- Tender)                 | Rial 60    | 29/07/2021                      | 12/08/2021         | Excellent |

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- Original Tender Bond envelope should be sealed with red wax and entitled to His Excellency/ Head of Intrnal Tender Committee and to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Third Floor, before 10:00 am as per the date Mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
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YOUR SAY

## CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE

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

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**Sajid al Hooti**  
Businessman

Sometimes we underestimate nature and the reaction is horrible. One of the best ways to keep trees on mountains safe from fire is making sure that they remain cool. It is a hot country and they are prone to fire.

**Badru Zaman**  
Marketing executive

Making fire rings of rocks in the mountains or fire pit in the desert and beaches can prevent fires. Extinguishing fire properly plays an important role. Use rocky/gravel ground instead of vegetation areas for campfire.

**Fuad al Farsi**  
Engineer

As a person who goes camping often, I would suggest authorities put up fire stations at the main camping areas. Also, local police stations must be well equipped with fire extinguishing tools in case of emergencies. Of course, people and campers must take extra care so that no accident happens.

**Harish Danani**  
Senior manager

We should obey the local laws regarding open fires, including campfires. We need to keep inflammable objects away from fire and have firefighting equipment handy. We should ensure careful disposal of hot charcoal and carefully extinguish all smouldering items.

**Naishadh Suresh Panchal**  
Assistant manager

Spreading awareness about damage to trees due to human acts while camping, introducing regulations for trekkers/campers and imposing penalties for damage caused to environment will help in curbing fire at camp sites.

**Mohan Anandan**  
Banking sector employee

Very often it is an irresponsible act for the sake of fun that ends up in a mammoth destruction of precious flora and fauna built by nature over decades. Campfires should be prohibited at areas thickly populated with trees. To enhance awareness, notice board should be placed cautioning against throwing cigarette butts and other burning objects.

**MD Moniruzzaman**  
Teacher

Trees at camping sites in mountainous areas can be saved by regulating safety measures. Smoking, barbecues and leaving glass or bottles (as sunlight shining through glass can start fires) should be strictly prohibited. Open fires must be restricted in mountainous areas. In case of any fire, it must be reported immediately to the authorities.

**Aiman al Musallami**  
Bank employee

People should be aware and follow the laws regarding open fires, including campfires. There are no clear restrictions and punitive measures so people don't take it seriously. More awareness is needed.

**Jay Prakash**  
Private sector employee

Citizens/visitors should refrain from barbecuing, smoking or lighting open fires in mountainous areas. These activities should be banned and people should be penalised for violations.

? NEXT ON  
YOUR SAY

## With summer holidays on and outdoor activities restricted, what options do children need to stay engaged?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to [muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om](mailto:muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om) Log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue

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MUSCAT DAILY

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Be responsible to defeat pandemic

This refers to the report 'ROP warns against gatherings' (*Muscat Daily* Page 1, July 4).

The non-compliance on the part of certain people is quite unfortunate despite clear guidelines being in place.

While healthcare workers continue to struggle coping with the alarming situation, people conveniently ignoring the guidelines should be severely dealt with. The media keeps on highlighting the non-compliance and its adverse effects; it is the responsibility of each individual to adhere to the guidelines and strictly follow the protocols whether they are vaccinated or not.

Wearing masks, following social distancing and avoiding crowded places need to be adhered to while in public places.

I firmly believe that the people of Oman, both citizens and residents, are respecting

the Supreme Committee decisions on the pandemic. However, the isolated cases of non-compliance may trigger the spread of the virus. People must understand that authorities and healthcare workers are struggling to combat the spread of the virus for which support from each individual is crucial.

At the same time, some of the photos appearing in print and visual media of various functions often show people without masks and in close proximity. This practice does not send a serious message.

If we want our lives to return to normalcy, our constant support to the preventive measures is critical. It is our responsibility to strictly follow the COVID-19 guidelines without any compromise. We must think twice before venturing out.

Ramachandran Nair  
Ruwi

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# Oil row flares as UAE rejects 'unjust' OPEC+ output deal

Dubai, UAE - The United Arab Emirates on Sunday criticised the current oil output deal among OPEC+ alliance members as 'unjust', escalating a row that could derail the energy market's post-pandemic recovery.

The UAE's push to increase its production baseline is reported to have derailed last week's meeting of the alliance of oil-producing countries, and also sets it against its ally Saudi Arabia.

"The UAE demands to have justice in the new agreement after April, and it is our sovereign right to demand reciprocity with the rest of the countries," UAE Energy Minister Suhail Mohamed al Mazrouei said in a television interview.

"It is unreasonable to accept further injustice and sacrifice - we have been patient," he said in an interview with Sky News Arabia, in unusually frank comments from an official in the UAE, which typically handles disputes discreetly.

While OPEC+ leaders Saudi Arabia and Russia support extending the deal as it is until December 2022, the UAE wants to lock in an increase in production before agreeing to an extension beyond April when the current agreement expires.

Videoconference talks were held Friday between the 13 members of OPEC proper led by Saudi Arabia, followed by a technical meeting and discussions between the 23 members of OPEC+.

The wider grouping includes Russia, the world's second-largest oil producer. The hitch in discussions came 'due to the UAE raising a last-minute objection to the Russian-Saudi Arabia deal reached earlier', according to analysts from Deutsche Bank.

"The UAE, which has raised its production capacity since 2018 when the individual baselines were set, insisted on having its baseline lifted by 0.6mn barrels per day (bpd) to 3.8mn bpd,



UAE Energy Minister Suhail Mohamed al Mazrouei (WAM)

thereby allowing them a unilateral production increase within the current quota framework," according to Ole Hansen from Saxobank.

"Negotiations will be difficult as OPEC+ knows that if the UAE is allowed to produce from a different base, other members may

tel's Vienna headquarters.

Mazrouei said the UAE was ready to have a committee of independent bodies formed to look into its request.

Bloomberg news agency reported Thursday an agreement had been floated that would raise production by 400,000 bpd

- they are now at levels not seen since October 2018.

The alliance has to navigate a complex market, characterised by an uptick in demand which may yet turn out to be fragile, as well as the possible complication of a return of more Iranian exports in the medium term.

But current high prices - which saw Brent crude climb above US\$76 a barrel last week - are prompting grumbles from large crude consumers, such as India. Abu Dhabi's muscular position is also pitting it against its long-time ally and neighbour Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter. The UAE reportedly floated the idea of leaving OPEC+ in late 2020, in order to pump more oil and capitalise on the huge investment it has made to expand capacity.

"The UAE will push hard at this juncture to use this meeting to get their excess capacity recognised and brought back online", Roger Diwan, oil analyst at consultant IHS Markit Ltd, told Bloomberg News.

"Compromise exists, but it is just how they bring their capacity, not if."

AFP

*The UAE demands to have justice in the new agreement after April, and it is our sovereign right to demand reciprocity with the rest of the countries*

SUHAIL MOHAMED AL MAZROUEI

protest," said Louise Dickson from Rystad.

OPEC+ essentially faces a choice between acceding to Abu Dhabi's demands, or failing to reach a deal which could drive crude prices sharply higher. Also at risk is the unity of the alliance, which if broken could trigger a price war that would create global economic havoc.

## Angst over high prices

OPEC said its meeting would reconvene on Monday at the car-

each month from August onwards, reaching an extra two million bpd by the end of 2021.

This would fit the broad strategy followed by OPEC+ since May: gradually increasing output which it had drastically cut in reaction to the collapse in demand at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

Since the beginning of the economic crisis, the group has held almost monthly meetings to coordinate their response.

Their strategy has succeeded in steering prices back upwards -

# Mala'a offers credit score to assist risk management

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Oman Credit and Financial Information Centre (Mala'a) is now offering credit bureau services to enhance the creditworthiness of individuals and corporates in the sultanate in line with Oman's Vision 2040.

Mala'a's services will support financial inclusion by ensuring responsible financing in addition to improved credit risk management, a press statement said.

Managing director Aadil al Saadi said that Mala'a aims to fulfil its objectives by being Oman's national data bank and reference to all credit and financial information.

The centre offers credit reports and credit score for individuals and corporates, instant credit decisioning engines and a range of data analytics solutions.

The availability of credit scores for individuals and corporates will enable lenders to make informed credit decisions.

Saadi added that Mala'a credit score is a dynamic indicator that is generated according to a world-class scoring engine to reflect the analysis of historical credit information of individuals and corporates.



Aadil al Saadi

Mala'a credit score is the quantitative measure which ranges from 300 to 900, where the higher number reflects lower risk.

Credit score is a proven world-class system in advanced and emerging markets and supports credit providers in assessing credit risk. Credit score information is based on Oman's actual credit data for the last 10 years.

Saadi said that Mala'a credit score is a valuable credit risk management tool. "Credit score is dynamic and changes according to credit and financial history.

It is calculated based on the information derived from credit providers taking into consideration over-indebtedness, positive history, and payment behaviour."

He noted that positive financial and credit behaviours lead to higher credit score.

In addition, work is currently underway to establish online channels for self-service, such as a portal and a smartphone application, which will help individuals and corporates to utilise Mala'a's services in the future. It also aims to raise awareness about the financial and credit principles in the sultanate.

# Sri Lanka-Oman virtual business forum to be held on Wednesday

Muscat - Sri Lankan embassy in Muscat, jointly with National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), will organise a virtual business forum on Wednesday. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between NCCSL and OCCI will be virtually signed to promote business co-operation between the private sectors of both countries followed by a B2B matchmaking session.

In a press release, H E Ameer Ajwad, ambassador of Sri Lanka to Oman, said that this is the first ever business forum to be held between the two national chambers of Sri Lanka and Oman. "The business communities in both countries including exporters, importers as well as investors, could seize this opportunity to ascertain market information and to establish potential business links with their counterparts."

The business forum will be

addressed by representatives of NCCSL, Sri Lanka Board of Investment, Export Development Board, and Sri Lanka Association for Software and Services Companies (SLASSCOM).

From Omani side, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion as well as the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones will address the business forum.

# ANNOUNCEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) announcement the following Auction:

| Auction No. | Description                          | Location/ Inspection | Last Date for Obtaining Auction Documents | Deadline for submission of Offers | Document Price (Including VAT) (RO) | Deposit Amount (RO)* |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 03/2021     | Sale of Scrap at Misfah Grid Station | Misfah Grid Station  | 15/07/2021                                | 10/08/2021                        | 26.250                              | 1,000/-              |

- The interested company should provide Copy of CR Showing activity in the same field
- Interested companies may obtain Documents from Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC) at Al Mawaleh against the non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Time 8:00 am-12:00 pm.
- Interested Company should deposit 1,000/- Rial Omani in OETC Bank account and enclose the receipt along with the auction documents. Failing to do so the offer will be rejected.
- The Offers should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to Chairman of the Tender Committee mentioning Auction Number 6 - Sale of Used IT Equipment on the top of the envelope. No other writing or any reference should be mentioned on the envelope. The offer shall be valid for 90 days from the date of submission.
- The deposit amount will be returned to the unsuccessful bidders after awards announcement and to the successful bidders after receiving full payment and removal of Equipment with in time limit as mentioned below.
- The Winning Bidder shall pay for the value of the Used IT Equipment by transfer to OETC bank account within One Week of the date of notification to him.
- The Winning Bidder is bound to transfer the materials no later than **One Week** from the date of sale notification and payment. In case of its failure to transfer the Equipment in the period specified the bidder company is not entitled to claim compensation and the bank deposited amount will be forfeited.
- OETC is not responsible for the sold Equipment after the payment and expiration of the deadline for delivery.
- OETC is not bound to sell the entire materials to a single buyer.
- The Winning Bidder shall be responsible for all risks during transfer or reuse of the materials.
- The Auction area shall be cleaned after transfer the materials.
- The Offer should be deposited in the Tender Box (1) of the Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department at the Company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission.

Company Address: Muscat - Al Mawaleh  
Way No : 2153 - Building No. 4230 Block No: 321 GSM: 93268155  
Web site: [www.omangrid.com](http://www.omangrid.com)



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# إعلان مزاييدة

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المزاييدة التالية :

| رقم المزاييدة | الوصف                         | الموقع       | آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المزاييدة | آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات | ثمن النسخة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (ر.ع) | تأمين دخول (المزاد ر.ع) |
|---------------|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ٢٠٢١/٠٣       | بيع مواد خردة في محطة المسفاه | محطة المسفاه | ٢٠٢١/٠٧/١٥                            | ٢٠٢١/٠٨/١٠               | ٢٦/٢٥٠                                       | ١,٠٠٠/-                 |

- على الشركات والمؤسسات الراغبة في الإشتراك في المزاييدة إحضار السجل التجاري
- يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات الإشتراك والحصول على مستندات المزاييدة من دائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود بمبنى الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء المكتب الرئيسي بالمواقع ، مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد - أثناء الدوام الرسمي من الساعة (٠٨:٠٠) صباحاً وحتى الساعة (١٢:٠٠) ظهراً .
- تقدم العروض في مظاريف مخطومة بالشمع الأحمر معنونة باسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات ومكتوباً عليها من الخارج رقم وعنوان المزاييدة ، على ألا يكتب على المظروف إسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه ، وأن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء .
- يجب على الشركات والمؤسسات التي ترغب في الإشتراك في هذه المزاييدة ، إيداع مبلغ نقدي قدره (١,٠٠٠ ر.ع). مع ضرورة إرفاق نسخة من الإيصا داخل العطاء وكل عطاء لا يستوفي المطلوب لن ينظر فيه .
- سيتم إرجاع مبلغ التأمين إلى المتنافسين غير الفائزين بعد الإعلان عن النتيجة وأما الفائزين سيتم إرجاع مبلغ التأمين بعد دفع قيمة المواد وتنظيف ساحة المزاد .
- يلتزم من يرسو عليه البيع بسداد القيمة عبر التحويل البنكي لحساب الشركة خلال اسبوع من تاريخ إخطاره برسو المزاد عليه.
- يلتزم المشتري بنقل المواد التي تم دفع قيمتها في موعد أقصاه اسبوع من تاريخ البيع وسداد قيمة المواد وفي حالة عدم قيامه بنقل المواد حسب الفترة المحددة تتم مصادرتها لصالح الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء ولا يحق له المطالبة بالتعويض عنها ويتم مصادرة الضمان.
- الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مسؤولة عن المواد بعد البيع و إقبضاء المهلة المحددة للتسليم.
- الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير ملزمة ببيع كامل المواد لمشتري واحد.
- على المشتري تحمل جميع المخاطر المترتبة عن نقل المواد أو إعادة إستخدامها.
- لا يسمح بتفكيك المواد ونقطيعها في المخزن وعلى المشتري تنظيف ساحة المزاييدة بعد نقل المواد المباعة.
- يجب وضع العروض في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) لدائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود بمبنى الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء الفرع الرئيسي بالمواقع قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات .

عنوان الشركة: مسقط - الموالج  
رقم السكة ٢١٥٣. مبنى رقم ٤٢٣٠ المربع رقم ٣٢١ هاتف: ٩٣٢٦٨١٥٥  
Web site: [www.omangrid.com](http://www.omangrid.com)



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الهاتف : +٩٦٨ ٢٤٢٨ ٣٠٠٠ / الفاكس : +٩٦٨ ٢٤٢٨ ٣٠٠٠  
الموقع الإلكتروني: [www.omangrid.com](http://www.omangrid.com)



# Rising food prices deepen woes of world's poorest

Paris, France – Global food prices are rising at their fastest rate in a decade, exacerbating the troubles of the world's most vulnerable nations as they struggle with the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is worried that soaring prices could foment further social unrest in countries already mired in political turmoil.

Here is a look at the situation worldwide:

**Where are food prices headed?**

According to the FAO, food prices were nearly 40 per cent higher in May than a year ago, the sharpest increase since September 2011.

On a 12-month basis, the price of corn has skyrocketed by 88 per cent, soybean by 73 per cent, grain and dairy products by 38 per cent, sugar by 34 per cent and meat by 10 per cent.

"Obviously, it's very concerning," said Arif Husain, chief economist of the World Food Programme.

In 2007-2008, brutal increases in the price of basic foodstuffs sparked riots in a number of cities around the world. Peaking in 2010-2011, the price rises acted as a harbinger for the Arab Spring uprisings.

**What is driving the phenomenon?**

The global economy is rebounding but inflation is also rising as governments have spent huge sums on stimulus programmes after the pandemic brought economic activity to a standstill last year.

China, which the World Bank projects will notch up growth of 8.5 per cent in 2021, is gobbling up basic foodstuffs such as oilseed, cereals and meat.

"It really is China which is currently fuelling the surge in food prices," said economist Philippe Chalmin.

The US economy is also expected to bounce back strongly, with the World Bank projecting growth there of 6.8 per cent this year. But the economic recovery is 'very uneven' across the world, with developing nations facing



People buy and sell food at the Illaje market in Lagos, Nigeria on June 29 (AFP)

higher import bills while their income is not growing, said Josef Schmidhuber, deputy director of the FAO's trade and markets division.

Other factors behind the

surge in prices include a drought in Brazil, which is driving up corn prices, rebounding oil prices and an explosion in sea freight costs.

The US Department of Agriculture is forecasting record crop

production for 2021-2022 and also record harvests of Brazilian soybean and American corn. If these materialise, that will help ease the price situation.

But climate conditions could

be a wild card in such projections. The FAO's Schmidhuber believes that prices will remain relatively high this year, notably if oil prices go up as the agriculture sector consumes a lot of energy.

"If they rise, food prices will remain high for a long period of time". For FAO economist Abdolreza Abbassian, "the only thing we know is that the food market is going to be even more volatile in the future than it was in the past".

**Impact for poor countries**

In a range of countries currently facing other 'shocks', such as COVID-19, food price inflation currently stands at more than 20 per cent, said WFP's Arif Husain.

Lebanon is facing a grave financial and economic crisis that has sent its currency into tailspin and brought the country close to default. There, the rate of food price inflation stood at 226 per cent on a 12-month basis in May, according to the website Trading Economics.

In Argentina, the government

suspended beef imports for a month in mid-May as food price inflation skyrocketed. According to the World Bank, high inflation in Nigeria, fuelled by sharp increases in foodstuff prices, has plunged another seven million people into poverty.

"Prices are going up, but at the same time people's incomes are decimated because of Covid," said WFP's Husain.

"A poor person gets squeezed because prices go up and at the same time they have no money," he said, pointing out that conflicts were the main cause of food insecurity.

FAO economist Abbassian said there was "no evidence that countries are any better prepared than they were 10 years ago" for such price volatility.

"More or less the same countries which were in the forefront of the riots and political instability 10 years ago, today can easily find themselves in exactly the same situation: waking up in the morning and find prices have gone up very rapidly," the economist said.

AFP

## US GDP growth to hit 7% this year : IMF

Washington, US – The IMF is bullish on the US economic recovery, predicting growth will hit 7 per cent this year – much stronger than previously forecast and 'the fastest pace in a generation,' the Fund said in a report.

The cheery analysis is a boon to President Joe Biden's administration and comes amid data showing an improving job market.

The International Monetary Fund's annual review of the US economy put growth at its fastest rate since 1984, and also boosted the 2022 GDP forecast to 4.9 per cent, 1.4 percentage points higher than the April estimate. But while the IMF mostly cheered Biden's policies to support the economy, the report flagged 'significant concern' over the fact he has not pulled back on tariffs on goods like steel and aluminum imposed by his predecessor.

The United States has seen a 'remarkable recovery,' the Fund said, helped by 'unprecedented' support from government spending and the Federal Reserve's 'highly effective' stimulus measures.



IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva (left) and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen meet at the Treasury Department in Washington, DC (AFP)

The report notes the potential for growth to be even higher than forecast, but the outlook assumes US\$4.3tn in spending over the next decade from Biden's proposed American Jobs Plan (AJP) and American Families Plan (AFP). Together those programs would fuel a more than 5 per cent GDP increase for 2022-2024, the IMF estimated.

"Rather than just offering a short-term boost to demand that then fades away, the Jobs and Families Plans are expected to produce a lasting improvement in income and living standards for many years to come," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva told reporters.

However, if Congress fails to approve the legislation or sharply curtails the size, that would reduce the growth boost.

Asked about that, Georgieva noted the bipartisan agreement on the physical infrastructure parts of the proposal.

"Size is not everything. What matters more than sizes, what is the composition of the packages," she said.

The IMF report said there is 'solid empirical evidence... of the societal payoffs' of programs like those Biden has proposed, which include access to childcare to allow women to enter and remain in the workforce, and access to higher education and

training to ensure younger workers have necessary skills for the jobs available.

A permanent increase in taxes on corporate profits and on high income households is warranted to pay for the proposals, the IMF said.

**'Significant concern'**

The Washington-based crisis lender reserved its harshest comments for Biden's trade policies, and said removing trade barriers would help support his worker-centric agenda.

"It is of significant concern ... that many of the trade distortions introduced over the past four years remain in place," the report said.

Biden has continued tariffs imposed by former president Donald Trump on imported steel and aluminum, washing machines, solar panels, as well as a range of goods imported from China.

The IMF also questioned the tougher requirements set by the Trump administration for US products in government procurement which remain in place.

AFP

## Woes deepen at Vodafone's India unit

Mumbai, India – Woes are deepening for Vodafone's India unit as it seeks more time to pay mobile network fees levied by the government, with creditor banks reportedly pleading with New Delhi to cut the firm some slack.

The debt-ridden joint venture has long been facing stiff competition in the market of 1.3bn people from Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio, which is owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani.

In a call to analysts Friday, Vodafone Idea said it has requested the Department of Telecommunications for a year's extension to pay 2.9bn rupees (US\$1.1bn) in mobile network fees due in April 2022.

The firm cited low tariff rates and other business environment challenges for its inability to generate sufficient cash from its operations.

"I think it is only reasonable to say to the government that they have to provide an extension to the moratorium until these pricing-related issues and the stress in the industry and the sector is removed," CEO Ravinder Takkar said.



Indian banks with large outstanding loans to the firm have also reportedly written to the finance ministry expressing fears about a bankruptcy being triggered if the telecom operator is not granted relief on upcoming payments.

Vodafone Idea's total debt stood at 1.86tn rupees at the end of March 2021.

The company has been unable to meet its fundraising target of 250bn rupees announced last September, with investors reluctant to lend to the cash-strapped firm.

Telecom firms have been struggling to survive ever since the 2016 launch of rival company Reliance Jio sparked a brutal

price war, with Ambani promising Indians dirt-cheap internet and free calls.

"I think the biggest hurdle is that the overall industry is under stress because of the pricing situation," Takkar said, echoing comments by Sunil Mittal, the billionaire chairman of Bharti Airtel.

"To say the telecom industry is in a bit of trouble is an understatement," Mittal told reporters Thursday.

"It is in a tremendous amount of stress," he said, calling on the government to set a minimum guaranteed price for services to prevent firms from constantly undercutting each other.

Vodafone Idea is a partnership between British telecom major Vodafone and Indian conglomerate Aditya Birla.

On Wednesday, the firm reported a net loss of 69.85bn rupees for the quarter ending March 2021.

Vodafone Idea's shares fell over 2.5 per cent in Friday's trade. Over a quarter of the company's share value has been eroded in the last six months.

AFP

## Bezos leaves enduring legacy as he steps away as Amazon CEO

Washington, US – As he prepares to blast off into a new career stage, Jeff Bezos leaves an enduring legacy after transforming Amazon from a modest online bookseller into one of the world's most powerful corporations.

Bezos, 57, was set to hand over the job of Amazon chief executive on Monday to Andy Jassy and turn his attention to his private space exploration firm, philanthropy and other endeavors. He will retain a key role, however, as executive chair at the technology and e-commerce colossus he founded 27 years ago.

The transition comes after a spectacular streak for Amazon, which has drawn attention for its innovations.

But the firm has also been vilified over business practices that have crushed competitors and raised concerns over treatment of a workforce of more than one million.

"Bezos has been a transformational leader... in book selling, the retail market, cloud computing and home delivery," said Dar-

rell West, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center for Technology Innovation.

"He was a pioneer who introduced many of the conveniences that people take for granted, such as going to an online store, ordering something, and having it delivered to your home the next day. The whole e-commerce sector owes many of its innovations to this individual."

In public appearances, Bezos often recounts the early days at Amazon, started in his garage, when he packed up orders himself and drove boxes to the post office.

Today, Amazon has a market value of more than US\$1.7tn. It posted 2020 annual revenues of US\$386bn from operations in e-commerce, cloud computing, groceries, artificial intelligence, streaming media and more.

**'An instinct'**

Bezos "had an instinct for the right thing" in finding the next market, said Roger Kay, analyst at Endpoint Technologies Associates.

Kay said Bezos deftly transi-



Jeff Bezos

tioned from books to other merchandise to an online marketplace, and successfully built the cloud infrastructure for the company which became the highly profitable Amazon Web Services.

Amazon outlasted its rivals by forgoing profits in its early years "and reinvesting everything into

expanding," Kay said.

"If you look at the trajectory now, it was all logical," Kay added. "You can say Bezos has been one of the best business architects of his time."

Bob O'Donnell of Technalysis Research said Bezos "wasn't the first or the only one, but he took the concept (of e-commerce)

and worked to perfect it."

Amazon was able to outdo rivals because Bezos "recognized the need to build infrastructure," including the vast network of warehouses, trucks, planes and other logistics for the business, O'Donnell said.

"A lot of other companies didn't want to spend money on the

messy behind-the-scenes work."

The stunning rise of Amazon has made Bezos into one of the world's richest people, with a net worth close to US\$200bn, even after a divorce settlement which gave part of his stake to his ex-wife MacKenzie Scott.

Bezos will step away from day-to-day Amazon management to spend more time on projects including his space firm Blue Origin – which is set to take him into space later this month.

He owns the Washington Post newspaper and has devoted time and funds to efforts to fight climate change, while also facing criticism after recent reports that he paid no income tax at all some years.

His departure leaves questions about the future of Amazon as it faces a torrent of regulatory scrutiny and criticism from activists.

US lawmakers are considering a measure that would make it easier to break up Amazon, amid concerns that a handful of Big Tech firms have become too dominant, hurting competition in a way that eventually harms con-

sumers.

Amazon was well-positioned during the coronavirus pandemic with its fast delivery of goods and groceries, and boosted its US workforce to more than 800,000.

While the company has boasted of its US\$15 minimum wage and other benefits, critics say its relentless focus on efficiency and worker surveillance has treated employees like machines.

The Teamsters union recently launched a campaign to organize Amazon employees, claiming its workers 'face dehumanizing, unsafe and low-pay jobs, with high turnover and no voice at work.'

Bezos appeared to respond to worker concerns earlier this year when he called for a "better vision" for employees after a bruising battle over a unionization vote in Alabama, which ultimately failed.

He laid out a new goal for the company to be "Earth's best employer and Earth's safest place to work," in his final letter as chief executive.

AFP

# Bank Nizwa introduces Treasury Weekly Newsletter for corporate customers

Oman's most trusted Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa has launched its Treasury Weekly Newsletter series for its valued corporate customers.

The weekly newsletter, an initiative by the Wholesale Banking Group's Global Markets Department (Treasury), is to showcase the multitude of Sharia'a-compliant products and services that the bank offers to private and public entities in the sultanate and provide a condensed informative summary of markets and treasury related updates during the week in a reader-friendly design and fashion.

The newsletter will be sent out every Sunday to a wide range of the bank's Wholesale Banking Group clients. Distribution of the newsletter has been adopted via an electronic platform to ensure physical distancing protocols are adhered to in compliance with the health and



medical advisories to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Designed to be compact, the one pager document will also be easily accessible regardless of location or time zones.

The highlight feature of the newsletter is that it is a one snapshot capturing the most relevant market moving headlines in the global, regional (GCC) and domestic (Oman)

markets. Clients will have ready essential information on hand with the newsletter without having to go through the hassle of collating through the myriad of news and data from multiple channels.

Speaking on the introduction of the newsletter, R Narasimhan, general manager of the Wholesale Banking Group said, "We received encouraging feedback from clients which lauded the bank's initiative. With the fast changing global scenario, such concise and quality newsletter are most welcoming."

"We appreciate the effort put in by the Bank Nizwa's Treasury team in bringing value addition with the periodical to the entire Wholesale Banking Group's clientele segments."

Incorporating various aspects of local and international markets facts and figures from trusted sources including the latest foreign exchange of major currencies, key commodity pricing, key market indices movements, relevant interbank rates, Oman Sovereign Sukuk and key news highlights, the newsletter will undoubtedly be a useful and indispensable tool for clients to kick start the business week.

Bank Nizwa's Wholesale Banking Group covers clients in various industries and sizes including large corporations, mid-sized corporations, SMEs, project and government institutions to service each Sharia'a-compliant banking needs.

Bank Nizwa remains committed to be engaged even during these challenging times as the nation's premier Sharia'a compliant partner of choice through its focus of service quality, product offering, pricing, people, processes and continuous improvements.

## Oman Air becomes airline partner of ICCA

Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, announced its collaboration with the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), becoming official airline partner for the Middle East as part of ICCA's Regional Travel Partnership Program.

As newest member to the programme, Oman Air brings 5-Star COVID-19 safety and network connectivity across the Middle East to association meetings professionals so they can reconnect with colleagues and work towards reviving face-to-face, in-person meetings in the post-pandemic landscape.

"In securing this partnership, we are pleased to connect our ICCA members in the Middle East with an airline that will serve them under exceptional stan-

dards of health and safety. Meeting face-to-face is vital to our industry and we at ICCA World believe we can begin to do so once again as we continue to adhere to best practices in pandemic safety," said Senthil Gopinath, ICCA CEO.

"Throughout COVID-19, Oman Air has implemented and maintained exceptional health and safety standards on board our aircraft and across the entire passenger journey," said Eng Abdulaziz AlRaisi, CEO of Oman Air. "In-person, face-to-face meetings—whether association and industry meetings or the full offering of corporate travel and events—are crucial for the recovery of local economies and Oman Air is proud to partner with ICCA to offer safe travels for its members throughout the



Middle East, and beyond, as we work together towards a robust restart of the interconnected aviation, MICE and tourism sectors."

"As ICCA Middle East Regional Director, I am proud to announce their new collaboration with Oman Air as the official air-

line partner for the Middle East region. Oman Air's initiative during the current crisis and their adaptability demands applause and should be taken as a positive step in this new era. Let's congratulate them and hope for a better and healthy future," stated Anju Gomes, ICCA regional director - Middle East.

ICCA plans to further expand the Regional Travel Partnership program in 2021 with additional trusted transportation partners. ICCA also has partnership programs in other sectors, including: Association Relations, Corporate, Destination, Industry, Hospitality and Sustainability. Each partnership is targeted to a diverse audience and provides unique benefits.

Oman Air and its division Oman Air Holidays proudly display the Safe Travels Stamp from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). In March this year, Oman Air received the Skytrax 5-Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating and the Skytrax 5-Star COVID-19 Lounge Safety Rating at Muscat International Airport.

## Get latest smartphone with Ooredoo's Shahry

Get the latest smartphone without worrying about the price tag! Ooredoo customers can enjoy amazing installment rates when subscribed to any Shahry plan. With zero down-payment, the offer combines affordable access to state-of-the-art technology with all the benefits of Ooredoo's flexible postpaid plans. Open to new and existing subscribers and extended to the all-new digital plans including subscribed to Shahry Omanuna and Shahry Endless plans, users can enjoy the internet on the coolest devices around.

With a wide range of options that fit all payment methods, Ooredoo's Shahry plans offer the perfect mix of flexibility, great value, simplicity and most of all,



convenience. The first all-digital postpaid plans in Oman, customers can choose from a variety of contract and contract-free options to match all kinds of communications needs, including free calls to any network in Oman at any time, and free SMS.



## Mercedes-Benz Oman offers complimentary health check

Providing impressive ride comfort and maximum safety mile after mile, Mercedes-Benz Oman is offering its customers a complimentary 15-point vehicle health check along with 55 per cent off when changing their shock absorbers and engine suspension mounts. Valid between July 11 and September 11, the offer is available at the Service Centres in Sohar and Salalah, ensuring unbeatable value and convenience.

"At Mercedes-Benz Oman, our aftersales care is as important as the sale itself. Fitted by our certified technicians, Mercedes-Benz GenuineParts em-

body our entire know-how as a vehicle manufacturer, offering excellent quality, proven safety and a high level of reliability," said Shaun Michael, chief executive officer at Mercedes-Benz Oman. "With our special offer, we are making it easier than ever for our customers to keep their vehicles in optimum condition for the longest amount of time."

Offering top-level comfort and safety even on the toughest roads, Mercedes-Benz shock absorbers and engine suspension mounts are perfectly designed to work seamlessly with the safety systems in Mercedes-Benz vehicles. Adding even more value,

the complimentary 15-point vehicle health check includes checks on engine oil level, engine oil leaks, engine air filter, all engine and chassis suspensions, brake fluid level, and front and rear brake pads. It also includes checks on windscreen wiper condition, vehicle undercarriage, A/C temperature, A/C filters, suspension components, steering components, bodywork inspection, electronic diagnostic test and a vacuum and wash.

The offer is valid on all models registered before January 30, 2018, excluding Mercedes-AMG vehicles. To book an appointment, call 80079777.

## Celebrate summer at Alila Hinu Bay

Alila Hinu Bay is launching spectacular summer offers to celebrate its recent opening. The boutique beachfront resort, situated on an endless bay and private beach just off the southwest coast of Salalah, is Alila Hotels & Resorts newest addition.

Be amongst the first to witness the stunning views of the Arabian Sea and embark on a haven of nature this summer, with up to 30 per cent off on room rates which includes a sumptuous breakfast at SeaSalt, as well as a selection of complimentary and discounted resort and leisure activities during your

stay, such as yoga, meditation and memorable fun at Play Alila kids club. The "Celebrate With Us" offer also includes 10 per cent off on customised packages and treatments at Spa Alila, as well as blissful indulgence, with 15 per cent off when dining at the 5-Star resort's restaurant SeaSalt, and Lobby Lounge.

Guest can escape the heat and hide away in their very own private slice of paradise, just steps away from the Arabian Sea. The one-bedroom pool villa provides a spacious living room, luxurious outdoor bathtub and private pool, along with a compli-

mentary a la carte breakfast at SeaSalt, all starting from just RO199.

"Following such a successful and exciting opening we had last month, we are even more excited to unveil our special offers for the season and invite guests to indulge in the 'Alila Experience'. As especially with it being such a difficult time to travel, we want to offer Oman's residents a safe and pleasurable escape this summer without having to go too far," said Martin Persson, general manager of Alila Hinu Bay.

Alila Hinu Bay offers the best of both worlds, with its un-

touched marine life and nature reserves. Located in the quaint town of Mirbat and tucked away between Jebel Samhan and the Arabian Sea, the resort is one of Salalah's hidden gems. With a whirlwind of discovery, where the 'sea and mountain hug', there is much to explore this summer.

Embark on a harmonious journey of land, sea and sky in the heart of Dhofar, and reconnect with nature surrounded by mindful luxury.

For more information visit [www.alilahinubay.com](http://www.alilahinubay.com), email [Reservations.hinubay@alilahotels.com](mailto:Reservations.hinubay@alilahotels.com) or call +968 23373350.



# Khedmah, Direct Software pact facilitates entertainment top-up

Oman Investment & Finance Co (Khedmah), a leading investments and services company in Oman, has signed an agreement with Direct Software to provide one-touch access to many top-up and recharge services associated with world's top retailers, especially in the entertainment space.

The agreement was signed by Saud Ahmed al Siyabi, chief operating officer of OIFC, and Dr Ibrahim Abdullah al Rahbi, chief operating officer of Direct Software.

Under the agreement, Khedmah will have the rights to sell and recharge game, gift cards and digital subscriptions for many retailers such as Netflix, Amazon, Microsoft Office, iTunes, Google Play, PlayStation, Xbox, and many more services offered as part of the platform.

These features can be availed through Khedmah smart phone application and the website.

Speaking on this effective service, Siyabi said, "We are delighted to have collaborated with Direct Software to enhance our popular digital payments platform - Khedmah. These efforts come as part of OIFC's constant strive to cement its leadership in the market through the



Khedmah app, which has become a household name in a short period of time.

"The company seeks to keep abreast with technological advancements and new trends by offering new innovative products and unparalleled services, to meet clients' evolving requirements and fulfill their aspirations, ultimately achieving our desired

objectives." "Over the previous period, the number of Khedmah app downloads surpassed half a million. This benchmark encourages us to further innovate and improve our digital transformation methodology, which comes in line with the sultanate's efforts towards instilling a digital-first culture with the commu-

nity," he added. Commenting on this partnership, Dr Rahbi said, "We are proud of this partnership with OIFC and we aspire to increase the synergies between us. "Through our services in the field of top-up and recharge, we aim to create a secure and an efficient platform that allows the consumers to benefit from all of

our offerings at the push of a button.

"This resonates with Khedmah app and its services. We also endeavor, through our combined efforts, to bring about positive change and revolutionise how digital services are perceived in the community."

Khedmah's comprehensive set of services will now also offer sale of gift cards and subscriptions across entertainment, technology and retail segments.

Its constant innovation in the digital technology domain and established relationships with local and regional entities have enabled it to become a household name in the sultanate.

OIFC is one of the leading Investment and Services Company in the sultanate for more than four decades.

It specialises in billing, collection, debt factoring for electricity, water and telecom services as well as making payment to Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI).

Furthermore, it provides recharge services pre-paid telecommunication and electricity operators across Oman. These services can be easily availed through Khedmah branches around the sultanate and electronic channels.

# Tanweer uplifts Duqm system with RO22.6mn

The Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer), member of Nama group, continues its expansion projects to develop and enhance the electricity infrastructure in the Duqm Special Economic Zone, with RO22.6mn worth of projects, as part of efforts to accelerate economic growth in the Special Zone.

Tanweer is developing five major projects during 2021, including expanding the existing Duqm North Switching Station and Duqm south primary substation, which is due to be completed by the end of the second quarter. The project will enhance the electricity system in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and meet the increasing demand for electricity in various industrial, commercial, tourism, and residential sectors in the Zone.

In addition, Tanweer is working on completing a lay of 33 kV cables to connect the two substations in the north and south of Duqm. The project connects one of the key investments in Oman, the "Karwa" bus assembly plant. The interconnection project is expected to be fully operational by the end of the year.

The projects that Tanweer is working on completing before the end of the year also include three vital primary substations. The first is in the Fisheries Indus-

tries Area; the second is in the Light Industries Zone and the Showroom Area, and the third is in the Heavy Industries Zone.

Apart from the ongoing projects, the company is striving to complete procedures for a critical phase of one of the country's most significant national project to the national grid in the north of Oman with Dhofar electricity transmission network "Rabt". The project has specified connecting Duqm to the national grid as a priority phase. Accordingly, Tanweer has floated the tender to interconnect Tanweer's 33kV distribution system with the 400kV line from the Main Interconnection System (MIS) that connects the north of the sultanate.

Tanweer's diverse portfolio of projects includes developing 11kV distribution transformers to serve the Duqm Industrial Land area and Duqm cement located at Port of Duqm. Tanweer aims to develop and enhance the electrical infrastructure in the Special Economic Zone of Duqm. To serve the aspirations and needs of current and future investors, especially in light of the extensive investment facilities provided by the sultanate for investments located in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and other Free & Special Economic Zones.

# Good turnout for second Zubair U-16 chess championship

The second edition of the Zubair International U-16 Classic Chess Championship witnessed a great turnout from participants across all nationalities. This was after the opening of registration that took place recently for this tournament, which will run from July 11 to 14. The number of participants has reached more than 50 participants so far; the registration is still open until July 10.

This tournament stems from the framework of The Zubair Corporation's adoption of the activities of the Oman Chess Committee. This is in order to encourage talented youths, develop them and enhance their chess abilities, through their interaction and participation in various local and external competitions. In addition, it motivates and supports them to do more through participation in such competitions. The tournament has been approved and implemented virtually via the lichess.org website, taking into account the prevailing health conditions.



Players wishing to participate in the tournament must have an account on the lichess.org website, provided that all final stage players are monitored via 'Zoom'. Those wishing to participate must register via the link: <https://forms.gle/McGTAc5zcS7AqEL8>. The tournament's system follows the regulations and laws of the International Chess Federation for remote Internet tournaments. Each players' pairing will be merged through the Swiss Manager Programme.

Nine rounds will be played according to the Swiss system, giving each player five minutes with the addition of two seconds after each move in the qualifying stage. The top 40 players will qualify for the finals.

Hilal al Siyabi, chief corporate services officer at the Zubair Corporation said, "We are extremely pleased with the high turnout of participants in the second edition of the tournament, which is a positive indication of the wide popularity of chess."

# Alshaya Group first in MENA region to offer global hospitality certification

As part of its ongoing investment in people, Alshaya Group, one of the world's leading brand franchise operators has launched the Alshaya Global Hospitality Certification (AGHC), a unique international culinary certification to help develop the careers of its professional culinary employees.

With a wide portfolio of award-winning restaurants including The Cheesecake Factory, P F Chang's, Texas RoadHouse, Asha's, Dean & Deluca, Bouchon Bakery and Princi, Alshaya Group has a strong hospitality footprint in the region bringing customers a wide choice of well-loved international restaurant brands.

The Alshaya Global Hospitality Certification (AGHC) is recognised by the City & Guilds of London Institute (City & Guilds) and endorsed by the World Association of Chef's Societies (Worldchefs). The first of its kind in the region the certification programme provides employees in Alshaya Group's hospitality division with professional recognition for their skills



and expertise, benchmarked to international standards.

AGHC is fully funded by Alshaya for its employees as part of Alshaya's ongoing investment in its people and provides a fully portable, practical, and professional qualification. Certification is broken down into five levels, depending on the employee's expertise and level of responsibility. No exams or study time is needed, and certification is based solely on experience and level of responsibility and is assessed by

an independent panel. Certification is made in the form of a digital badge, which provides a portable secure method to showcase achievements and allows for a physical certificate to be printed, if required.

AGHC will make it possible for Alshaya employees to get recognised for the skills and experience they have developed whilst working and will help them stand out from the crowd as their career develops.

Matthew Holgate, president -

Hospitality Division at Alshaya Group said, "We are delighted to have partnered with Worldchefs and City & Guilds to introduce this international culinary certification for our employees. We continually invest in our people and recognise that career development and training is critically important to maintaining world-leading levels of excellence. Professional development is key to this and we have seen what incredible things can happen when our employees are empowered."

# Renault Master L4H3 amazes customers with class leading safety, comfort

Class-leading safety technology and a feature-packed cabin has made Renault Master L4H3 a favourite among customers.

The Renault Master L4H3 MY2021 is a mix of practical space, adaptable interior, handy features and low running costs. L4H3 MY2021 sets the benchmark with its efficient engine to help business users and trades to do their work more effortlessly and efficiently. In addition to the L4H3, Renault Master is also available in two other variants including L1H1, L2H2.

Serving the Oman market perfectly, it combines great value for money with high levels of driver and passenger comfort.

Adil al Abri is impressed with its safety features such as driver and passenger airbags, emergency brake assistance, tyre

pressure monitoring system. He also says, "The Master Van is fitted with a rear-view camera so you can reverse with confidence whether you're loading, parking or manoeuvring tight spaces."

Zaid al Zedjali likes Renault Master's comfort qualities such as electric front window (driver & passenger), electric mirrors, C-shaped DRL, rear glazed doors with 270° opening and heated rear window, floor anchorage points and side anchorage points in the load area.

He says, "Master Van delivers on space and ability and suits your delivery needs perfectly."

Khalil Abdul says it is a great looking van that can get a great deal done.

"The Master Van sets a new standard for practicality with style. Its exterior features include



new front grille, new bumpers, and front wings which is very impressive."

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, said, "Thanks to its undeniable practicality, robustness and versatility,

the LCV line-up has generated a high demand. Renault Master L4H3 is equipped with the 2.3lt Diesel dCi 125hp engine. The dynamic performance of the Renault MASTER makes it one of the best in the market. It has a capacity of 2,299 cc, power 92

Kw (125Hp), four cylinders, 16 valves, Euro 3 and transmission of rear wheel drive and gearbox of 6 MT."

## Myriad innovations

Renault Master continues to offer businesses and trades re-

markable flexibility. It sets the bar very high and is powerful, economical and safe. Its engines and myriad innovations are designed to make life easier for the owners every day.

Renault Master L4H3 has a bench with storage on the centre back seat and rotating tablet, full steel bulkhead (without window), ESP, C shape daytime running lights, rear steel doors with 270° opening, right sliding door, electric mirrors and electric front window (driver & passenger).

With greater loading and towing capabilities, the Renault Master RWD is a great best partner to transport significant loads over regular and soft ground. Its loading benefits includes greater permissible rear axle load, available in L4 Panel van with the biggest load length (4.38m). Its

traction and grip benefits include better traction with heavy loads, on a steep slope and on soft ground to limit the risk of getting stuck. It also has better obstacle-clearing capacity, differential locking as an option, twin wheels for greater grip and a higher rear-axle load.

## Dynamic front end

With its strong and dynamic front end, the Renault Master embodies efficiency. Expressive lights, grille, dynamic logo, updated lines and a wide bumper maximizing the bodywork protection, it is modernity personified. It is available in nine colours including mineral white, carmen red, orange, Caribbean blue, Persian blue, lemon yellow, star grey, tempest and pearlescent black.

# IAEA's Massimo Aparo to visit Iran

It is principally going to be a visit to Natanz enrichment facility: European diplomatic source

Vienna, Austria - The deputy director general of the UN's nuclear watchdog will travel to Iran next week, sources said on Saturday, against a backdrop of tension over curbs on the agency's inspections there.

Iran's ambassador to the UN in Vienna Kazem Gharibabadi announced the visit on Twitter, adding that 'the purpose of the visit [of Massimo Aparo] is in line with routine safeguards activities in the context of the CSA', referring to one of the agreements under which the IAEA conducts its inspections.

'We are in continuous contact,' he added, but there were no pre-planned talks in Tehran.

A European diplomatic source confirmed the visit and said it was principally going to be a visit to the Natanz enrichment facility 'to check that inspectors have access to the cascades' of centrifuges used for uranium enrichment.

Iran had limited IAEA access to the site after an explosion on April 11, but access should be 'fully' re-established in the next few days, said the same source.



Massimo Aparo, the deputy director general of IAEA and head of the Department of Safeguards attending a special meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors on Iran, in the Austrian capital Vienna, on July 10, 2019 (IAEA)

Iran said the explosion had been a sabotage attempt by Israel.

Asked by AFP to confirm the trip, an IAEA spokesman said, "As part of the Agency's imple-

mentation of its safeguards activities in Iran, Deputy Director General Aparo regularly travels to Iran."

Aparo's visit will come at a delicate time after a temporary

agreement covering inspections at Iranian nuclear facilities expired last week.

In late February, Iran limited the IAEA's access to nuclear sites it has been monitoring as

*The purpose of the visit [of Massimo Aparo] is in line with routine safeguards activities in the context of the CSA. We are in continuous contact... but there were no pre-planned talks in Tehran*

KAZEM GHARIBABADI

part of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

## A delicate time

A three-month agreement reached on February 21 allowed some inspections to continue and that was extended by another month in May.

Under that deal, Iran pledged to keep recordings 'of some activities and monitoring equipment' and hand them over to

the IAEA as and when US sanctions are lifted.

On Tuesday, Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabii said Iran was 'examining' whether to extend the temporary agreement.

The issue is weighing on the talks, which have been taking place in Vienna with the goal of reviving the 2015 deal.

Diplomats ended the last round of negotiations with Enrique Mora, the EU diplomat chairing the talks, saying 'we are closer to a deal'.

But a date for reconvening has not been set.

The 2015 accord ensured some relief from UN and Western sanctions on Iran in exchange for strict curbs on its nuclear programme.

But the deal has been unravelling ever since former US President Donald Trump withdrew from it in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions on Iran.

Tehran retaliated by disregarding most of the limits set down in the deal on its nuclear programme.

AFP

## Sudan urges ceasefire in Tigray

Khartoum, Sudan - Sudan called on Saturday for a ceasefire and dialogue in neighbouring Ethiopia, warning of regional instability, as fighting intensified in war-hit Tigray region across the border.

'The Sudanese government is deeply concerned about the developments in Ethiopia, which may have a negative impact on regional stability,' it said in a statement.

It urged 'all the parties in neighbouring Ethiopia to stop the fighting and come to the negotiating table'.

Ethiopia's northern Tigray region has been rocked by fighting since last November 4, when the federal government unleashed a military operation against dissidents in the region.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced his forces had seized control of Tigray's capital Mekele weeks later.

But last week, rebel fighters announced retaking Mekele and dismissed a unilateral ceasefire declared by the government as a 'joke'.

Sudan said it would 'spare no effort' to work with all the Ethiopian factions to resolve the conflict.

The months-long fighting has left thousands dead and plunged the region into a humanitarian crisis.

It has also sent some 60,000 refugees fleeing into Sudan, a nation struggling with its own economic woes and a rocky transition since the April 2019 ouster of strongman Omar al Bashir.

The Tigray conflict comes at a time of souring Khartoum-Addis Ababa ties over use of the fertile Fashaga border region where Ethiopian farmers have long cultivated land claimed by Sudan.

Sudan, along with Egypt, has also been locked in a long-running dispute over Ethiopia's construction of a massive hydro-electric dam on the Blue Nile. Cairo sees the barrage as an existential threat to its water supply, while Khartoum fears its own dams would be harmed without a binding agreement with Addis Ababa.

AFP

## Fire kills Palestinian at protest against West Bank settlement

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories

- A Palestinian man was killed by Israeli gunfire in the West Bank on Saturday, Palestinian authorities said, in an incident Israel's army described as a 'violent confrontation' between Palestinians and Jewish settlers.

An Israeli army statement did not confirm the fatality, but said troops had fired at a suspect who threw 'a suspicious object that exploded on the soldiers', amid the unrest.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said Mohammad Fareed Hasan, who was in his 20s, was killed in his village of Qusra near the city Nablus by Israeli gunfire, while two others were wounded. 'Hasan was standing on the rooftop of his home when he was shot dead,' said a report on the official Wafa news agency.

According to Wafa, Palestinians in Qusra, were 'fending off an attack by hardcore Israeli settlers on the village'.

Israel's army said, 'A violent confrontation between tens of Palestinians and Israeli settlers developed adjacent to the village of Qusra, south of Nablus, during which both sides hurled rocks at each other.'



Palestinians gather with torches during a demonstration against the Israeli settlers' outpost of Eviatar, in the village of Beita on Saturday (AFP)

'Troops who were present at the scene operated to distance both sides from the area using riot dispersal means.'

'During the activity, a suspect was identified throwing a suspicious object that exploded on the soldiers, who responded by firing at the threat,' the statement added.

Jewish settlements in the West Bank, a Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, have proliferated in recent years.

Clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers and troops are common.

The Nablus area has seen heightened tension in recent

days as Palestinians have held furious protests against the construction of an illegal Jewish outpost near the village of Beita.

The settlers evacuated the outpost, known as Eviatar, on Friday in accordance with an agreement they reached with Israel's new coalition government.

There was no immediate indication of a link between the Eviatar fracas and Saturday's unrest.

There are roughly 475,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank, living alongside some 2.8mn Palestinians, in communities regarded as illegal by most of the international community.

AFP

## 'Combative' Le Pen re-elected as head of France's far-right

Perpignan, France - Marine Le Pen won re-election as head of France's far-right National Rally Sunday at a party congress, where she is seeking new impetus for her 2022 presidential bid after performing badly in regional polls.

The National Rally (RN), which had been tipped for strong gains in last month's regional elections, was left floundering after failing to win any of the 13 regions in mainland France.

The results raised questions about Le Pen's strategy of trying to detoxify her party's brand and position it as a more mainstream right-wing force.

But she faced no challenge for the party leadership, with her quest for a fourth term winning the backing of 98.35 per cent of members in an online and postal ballot, RN announced on the second day of its congress in the southern city of Perpignan.

Addressing reporters, the 52 year old trained lawyer said she felt 'extremely combative' about her chances of winning the presidency on her third attempt.

"I have no doubts about what needs to be done for France," said Le Pen.



Far-right leader Marine Le Pen in Perpignan on Sunday (AFP)

Polls show the election coming down to another duel between Le Pen and centrist President Emmanuel Macron, who defeated the anti-immigration candidate handily in the second round of the 2017 vote.

But that scenario is no longer seen as a foregone conclusion.

Macron is also seen as being weakened by the poor performance of his Republic on the Move (LREM) party in the regional election.

LREM, which was founded in 2016, finished last of the big parties, winning just seven per cent of second-round votes in a contest characterised by record low turnout.

## Syria shifts power - towards solar in rebel-held northwest

Killi, Syria - Huge solar panels poke out of pumpkin and tomato fields in Syria's rebel-held northwest, where after infrastructure was destroyed during a decade of war, many have switched to renewable energy.

"We used to rely on diesel-powered generators, but it was a struggle with fuel shortages and price hikes," said Khaled Mustafa, one of dozens of farmers who set up panels in the Idlib region.

"So we opted for solar power instead," he said.

More than three million people live in the Idlib region in Syria's northwest, much of which is controlled by extremist forces and other rebels.

Across Syria, at least 90 per cent lack a stable power supply, according to the United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP).

In rebel areas, there is little hope of state-provided electricity. Instead, the dark blue silicon

panels have become common - installed on roofs, in hospitals or between tents in massive displacement camps.

Once small and smoky diesel generators used to power many homes.

But with regular fuel shortages sending prices soaring, solar panels are now viewed as a cheaper, more efficient and reliable alternative.

In Mustafa's plot, solar panels hooked to rotating metal plates turn to follow the movement of the sun.

They are among 200 solar panels purchased two years ago by an agricultural cooperative of nearly 20 farmers, costing some US\$4,000. The panels power water pumps from a well, irrigating three hectares of cooperative farmland, as well as neighbouring fields.

"Even if (state) electricity is restored, solar energy will remain cheaper," said Mustafa.



This file photo shows solar panels installed in agricultural fields in the village of Killi, near Bab al-Hawa in Syria's northwestern Idlib province, on June 9 (AFP)

## 'Valid alternative'

Syria's electricity production had slashed by at least half during the conflict, but renewable energy sources have increased as fight-

ing has calmed, the UN says.

"Since armed clashes have decreased, and most of the country is in a more stable situation, solar energy production has spiked as

a valid alternative," UNDP said.

In regime-controlled areas, solar panels provide power for both homes and public institutions like universities.

As for those under rebel control, one survey found eight per cent used solar as the main source of power in their homes, according to a report in the Education and Conflict Review, published by Britain's University College London.

It also found a tenth of people used solar for heating water, and a third of people used solar as a secondary source of power, for lighting and charging batteries.

In the rebel-held town of Dana, shimmering solar power installations cover rooftops.

"Sales increased by 300 per cent between 2018 and 2021," said solar panel salesman Abdulhakim Abdul Rahman. Farmers account for most of his clients.

A single agricultural project can require '100 panels, sometimes even 500', the trader said.

Abdul Rahman said the panels he imports - mostly from Turkey, but also from Germany and China - can last up to 20 years.

## Powering hospitals

In his small apartment, Zakariya Sinno turns on a ceiling fan and blasts Syrian revolutionary anthems from a loudspeaker to show off the power of his solar set-up. Like many of his neighbours, he has installed three panels on his roof.

"It's enough to power the fridge, the washing machine, and lighting," said Sinno.

Hospitals have also installed solar panels.

In 2017, the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organisations (UOSSM) launched its 'Syria Solar' initiative to introduce renewable power for Idlib's hospitals. It has since installed 480 panels in one general hospital, and 300 others in a separate orthopaedic facility. It has also helped more than 40 other clinics in Idlib and northern Aleppo with technical assistance, so they can install solar systems.

AFP

# 45 killed in Philippine military plane crash

Cotabato, Philippines - At least 45 people were killed and dozens injured on Sunday when a Philippine military aircraft carrying troops crashed and burst into flames after missing the runway in the country's south, officials said.

Nearly 100 people, most of them recent army graduates, were on the C-130 Hercules transport plane which was trying to land on Jolo island in Sulu province around midday.

Some of the soldiers were seen jumping out of the plane before it hit the ground and exploded into flames, said Major General William Gonzales, commander of the Joint Task Force-Sulu.

It was one of the country's deadliest military aviation accidents.

'This is a sad day but we have to remain hopeful,' Gonzales said in a statement. 'We enjoin the nation to pray for those who are injured and those who have perished in this tragedy.'

A search was still under way for 17 missing people.

Photos of the crash site released by the Joint Task Force-Sulu showed the damaged tail and the smoking wreckage of the fuselage's back section laying near coconut trees.

Images published by local media outlet Pondohan TV on its Facebook page showed the



Rescue workers arrive at the site after a Philippine Airforce C-130 transport plane crashed near the airport in Jolo town, on the southern island of Mindanao on Sunday (AFP)

wreckage engulfed in flames and a plume of thick black smoke rising above houses located near the site.

Armed Forces Chief General Cirilito Sobejana said the aircraft was carrying troops from Cagayan de Oro on the southern island of Mindanao when it 'missed the runway' as it tried to land on Jolo.

The plane tried to 'regain

*This is a sad day but we have to remain hopeful. We enjoin the nation to pray for those who are injured and those who have perished in this tragedy*

WILLIAM GONZALES

power but didn't make it', he told local media.

The four-engine plane crashed near a quarry in a lightly populated area, First Lieutenant Jerrica Angela Manongdo said.

Western Mindanao Command chief Lieutenant General Corletan Vinluan told AFP the aircraft overshot the landing strip and broke into two according to initial reports.

Air force spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Maynard Mariano said the cause of the crash would be investigated, while armed forces spokesman Major General Edgard Arevalo told

DZBB radio that it was being treated as an accident rather than an attack.

Most of the passengers had recently graduated from basic military training and were being deployed to the restive island as part of a joint task force fighting terrorism in the Muslim-majority region.

They were supposed to report for duty on Sunday, Gonzales

said. The military has a heavy presence in the southern Philippines where militant groups, including the kidnap-for-ransom outfit Abu Sayyaf, operate.

**Deadly accidents**

C-130s have been the workhorses of air forces around the world for decades, used to transport troops, supplies and vehicles. They are also often deployed to deliver humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The Hercules that crashed on Sunday has the same tail number as one acquired from the United States and delivered to the Philippines earlier this year.

Senator Richard Gordon said it was the fourth military aircraft accident this year with 'mass casualties'. 'Are we buying defective crafts... (with) the people's money?' he tweeted.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque described the accident as 'very unfortunate', and the US Embassy Charge d'Affaires John Law offered 'sincerest condolences' to the families of the victims.

Sunday's accident comes after a Black Hawk helicopter crashed last month during a night-time training flight, killing all six on board.

The accident prompted the grounding of the Philippines' entire Black Hawk fleet.

AFP

## Families flee as Taliban seize key Kandahar district in Afghanistan

Kandahar, Afghanistan - The Taliban have captured a key district in their former bastion of Kandahar after fierce night-time fighting with Afghan government forces, officials said on Sunday, sending scores of families fleeing from the area.

The insurgents have pressed on with their campaign to capture territory across Afghanistan's rural areas since early May when the US military began its final pullout of troops from the violence-wracked country.

The fall of Panjwai district in the southern province of Kandahar comes just two days after US and NATO forces vacated their main Bagram Air Base near Kabul, from where they led operations for two decades against the Taliban and their Al Qaeda allies.

Over the years, the Taliban and Afghan forces have regularly clashed in and around Panjwai, with the insurgents aiming to seize it given its proximity to



An Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier greeted by two men on a bike outside Bagram Air Base, some 70km north of Kabul on Friday (AFP)

Kandahar city, the provincial capital.

The leader of the Taliban, Hibatullah Akhundzada, hails from Panjwai.

The province of Kandahar is the birthplace of the Taliban, who went on to rule Afghanistan with a harsh version of Islamic sharia law until being overthrown by a US-led invasion in 2001.

Panjwai district governor Hasti Mohammad said Afghan

forces and the Taliban clashed during the night, resulting in government forces retreating from the area.

"The Taliban have captured the district police headquarters and governor's office building," he told AFP.

Kandahar provincial council head Sayed Jan Khakriwal confirmed the fall of Panjwai, but accused government forces of 'intentionally withdrawing'.

**'Taliban don't want peace'**

Scores of families of Panjwai fled their homes after the Taliban captured the district, an AFP correspondent reported.

"The Taliban fired on our car as I was fleeing with my family. At least five bullets hit my car," Giran, a resident of Panjwai told AFP as he took refuge in Kandahar city.

"The Taliban are on top of the mountains and firing at any moving vehicles. The Taliban don't want peace."

Assadullah, a commander of border police in the area, said it was only the police force that was fighting against the insurgents.

"The army and the commandos who have better military equipment are not fighting at all," he said.

Panjwai is the fifth district in Kandahar province to fall to the insurgents in recent weeks.

AFP

## Ten killed in Myanmar clashes between army and protesters

Yangon, Myanmar - At least ten anti-junta fighters and civilians were killed during clashes with the military in central Myanmar, villagers said Sunday, as locals increasingly take up arms against the regime in the coup-wracked country.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since a February coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government, with 890 people killed in a junta crackdown on dissent, according to a local monitoring group.

In some areas civilians have formed 'defence forces' to combat the State Administration Council, as the junta dubs itself, often using hunting rifles or makeshift weapons cobbled together from household items.

The central Sagaing region has been the site of multiple skirmishes between defence forces and the military, and on Friday fighting broke out in Depayin township.

Residents told AFP that mili-



Protesters take part in a demonstration, in Yangon on Saturday (AFP)

tary trucks entered their area and opened fire on a village near the jungle hoping to flush out members of the local defence force.

"We heard the shooting of artillery 26 times," said a villager, who added that anti-junta fighters tried to retaliate but could not fend off the attack.

"They shot everyone who they saw on the road and in the village. They did not just have one target," he said.

Civilians were among the

dead, he added.

Villagers waited until Saturday to venture out of their homes to assess the casualties, said another witness, who helped to collect the bodies around Depayin township.

"We found in one place eight people were killed, and in another area two were dead," he said.

Local media reported a higher death toll, though it could not be independently verified by AFP.

AFP

## Last picture show looms for Shahi Theatre in the Himalayan hill station

Shimla, India - With its ancient humming projector and elegant balcony, the Shahi Theatre is the last surviving single-screen cinema in Shimla, the Himalayan hill station.

But like many other once-teeming movie houses across the country that were already struggling to stay afloat, the pandemic may be the final death knell for the century-old picture house.

It was originally built as a theatre in British times, when the entire colonial administration would decamp from the blistering summer heat of the plains for the cool mountain climate further north.

Current owner Sahil Sharma said his grandfather bought the building and turned it into a cinema after the British left in 1947, at a time when the town's other

three theatres were too expensive for ordinary people.

"In those days we still had the British legacy that people couldn't go around in the evenings without good formal clothes," Sharma told AFP.

"So ordinary and poor people didn't have a cinema they could call their own."

Shimla was a popular destination in the golden decades after independence and its cinemas would host prime ministers and celebrities as people flocked to see the latest Bollywood flicks.

"I was here in 1972 when the Pakistani president's daughter watched a movie," recalls Ashok Kapoor (69), who started working at the now-closed Ritz Cinema as a teenager and rose to be manager.

She was there, Kapoor says,



This file photo shows a projectionist in the projector room of the Shahi Theatre, in Shimla (AFP)

because elsewhere in Shimla the leaders of India and Pakistan were meeting to defuse tensions

after a brief conflict between both countries the year before, during the Bangladesh war of in-

dependence.

Satish Kumar, another old hand who has worked at the

Shahi for 50 years, says a brisk black market for tickets used to cater for queues that stretched around the block.

But, he adds, business has been 'really bad over the last few years'.

**Old-world charm**

Shimla has lost some of its old-world charm as the local population has grown and the town has sprawled over the hills, although the main street - The Mall - retains its colonial-era shopfronts.

In recent decades cinemagoers have drifted to out-of-town multiplexes with their air conditioning, surround-sound and greater choice of films.

The trend has been replicated across the country, with hundreds of antiquated single-screen cinemas once catering to

budget crowds closing their doors in recent years.

Only two Shimla cinemas were left by last year but when India went into a national coronavirus lockdown, the Ritz folded too.

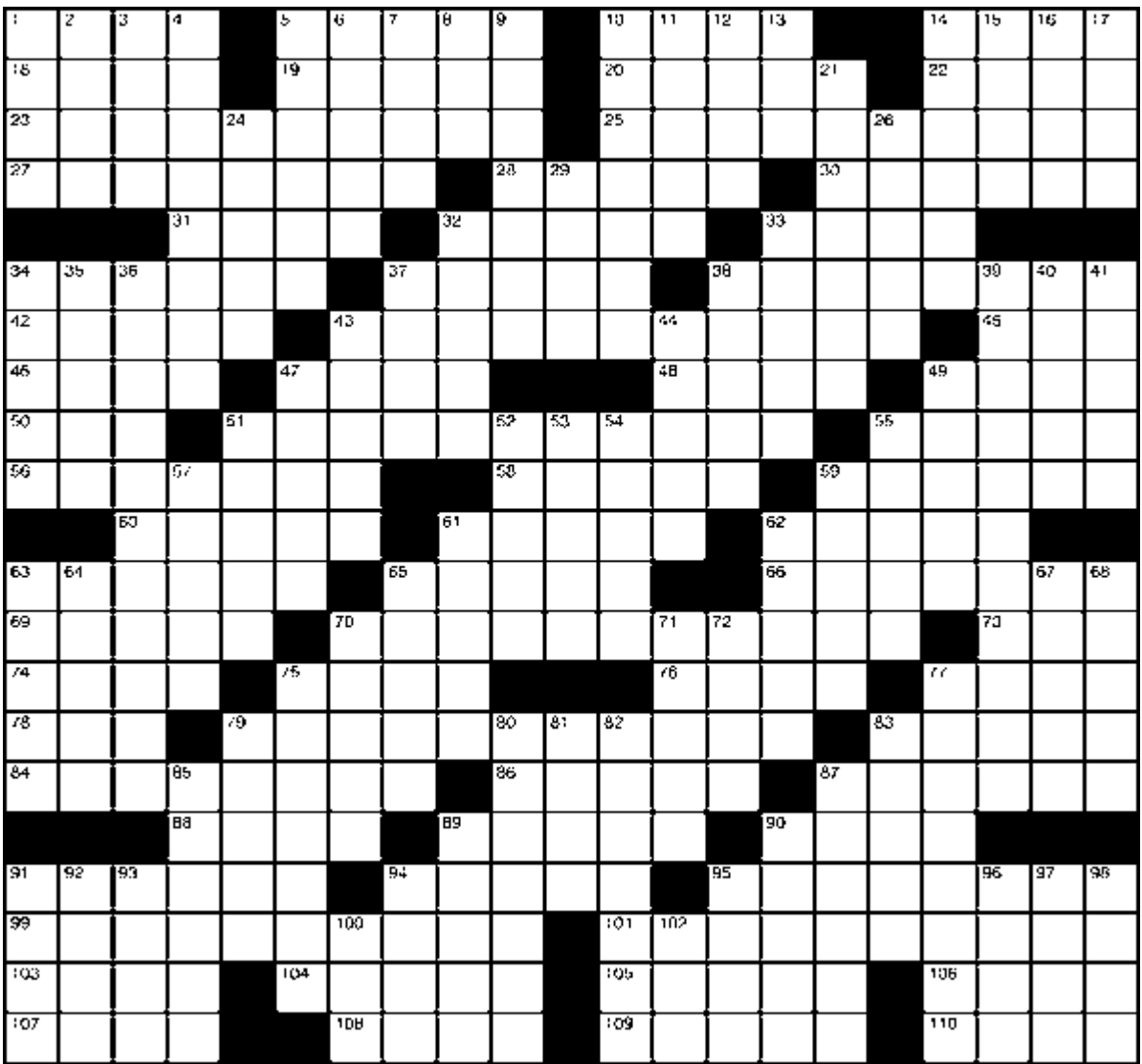
Movie houses were only allowed to open again last October but were forced to shut again in April after a vicious new wave of COVID cases that dwarfed the previous year's outbreak.

"We aren't sure about our post-corona future," Sharma says, fearing that audiences housebound by the pandemic have permanently switched their movie habits to online streaming.

"We don't even know if people would still want to come to cinemas."

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 They're "in"  
5 Fragrant resin  
10 Kind of cut  
14 Small or grand accomplishment  
18 Miscellaneous mixture  
19 Put aside  
20 Fabulous storyteller  
22 Corn bread  
23 Country fair features?  
25 Window display people?  
27 Uninvited visitor  
28 Plot's point  
30 Nightingale's devotees  
31 Route to Roma  
32 Makes sure, with "down"  
33 F.D. or R.  
34 Grows grave  
37 Coin in the Trevi Fountain  
38 Sisko's command  
42 Came up  
43 Lucy at "Swan Lake"?  
45 Foe of Frazier  
46 "Clyde" of the NBA  
47 Light, swingy rhythm  
48 Cornishman or Welshman

- 49 Stable sound  
50 Blueprint wing  
51 How Eartha sang  
"Santa Baby"?  
55 Sore soother  
56 Script overhaul  
58 Medieval helmet  
59 Beat  
60 Chowhound  
61 Beef on the hoof  
62 Hi-fi factor  
63 Waver  
65 Rigg or Ross  
66 Like most offices  
69 French daydreams  
70 Slugger slays chimera?  
73 Part of TGIF  
74 Saharan  
75 Tangible  
76 Nothing in Bordeaux  
77 Loopy  
78 Wheaton, of "Toy Soldiers"  
79 Quaker Stater into pungent mints?  
83 Knight wear  
84 Holmes's inspector friend  
86 Make a scene  
87 Like winter weather  
88 Angling gear  
89 Sam the sleuth  
90 Learning method  
91 White rhino, e.g.  
94 By oneself

- 95 Actress Richardson, et al.  
99 P.I. Peter joins B-29 group?  
101 Wooden chair for "Shane" star?  
103 Face contour  
104 Dogma  
105 Cherokees' kin  
106 In disagreement  
107 Part of an Einstein equation  
108 Nighty-night signal  
109 Believer  
110 Candidate's supporting votes
- DOWN**  
1 Points of interest  
2 Economist Greenspan  
3 Gossip: sl.  
4 Most wretched  
5 Ducks  
6 Goldfinger's weapon  
7 A flirt  
8 An Italian cap.  
9 Locate  
10 Lerner-Loewe musical  
11 Lots and lots  
12 Ancient field hand  
13 Took the cake  
14 Sudden bursts  
15 Clark's wife, ultimately

- 16 Mrs. Shakespeare  
17 Camp chow  
21 Victory flag  
24 Bizarre  
26 Paper quantity  
29 Cache  
32 Nick from Nebraska  
33 Its flag is red, white and green  
34 Carpenter, on the job  
35 Pope's vestment  
36 Author Heinrich's cotton attackers?  
37 Food preservative  
38 Fuse ores  
39 Much-honored Annie and Monty?  
40 "\_\_\_ Louisa": "The Band Wagon" tune  
41 Whistled sharply  
43 Mosquito for one  
44 Yellow pigment  
47 Metric system measure  
49 Baghdad bigwig  
51 Long-tailed fliers  
52 Indigenious  
53 Goddess of peace  
54 Engage in calumny  
55 Africa's largest country  
57 Gave an X or R  
59 Tease  
61 Foolish

- 62 Fire remains  
63 Dragnet fish  
64 Creepy  
65 Silas of diplomacy  
67 Rye fungus  
68 Personal record  
70 Diver's woe  
71 Speechify  
72 Stack  
75 Computer issue  
77 Home of the Cheese Heads  
79 Meat sticker  
80 Covers the news  
81 Middle Eastern gulf  
82 Vocalized in Bavaria  
83 Promising location?  
85 Aviary talk  
87 Most piqued  
89 REM time  
90 Midway attractions  
91 It's indivisible  
92 Vesuvius product  
93 Angle  
94 Vronsky's lover  
95 Galba's 1502  
96 Man from Odense  
97 Deeds  
98 Winter runners  
100 Take home  
102 Part of 'to be'

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

It won't be tough at all to talk yourself into spending a few extra dollars on a dear one right now. In fact, if you're out shopping for them, better bring someone along who doesn't love them quite so much. Just this once, you might get completely out of control when it comes to the plastic.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Don't worry about losing your sanity. This phase you're going through is only temporary. You simply want to do everything you possibly can to make your sweetheart's day special, and you won't stop at anything to make that happen. By tomorrow, you'll be back to normal -- for you, at least -- which means you'll be pooh-poohing all public displays of affection.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Ready to raise some eyebrows? Well, when aren't you? Your freedom-seeking nature makes it all too easy to try something new, no matter who might have refused before you. The good news now is you're operating with a nice, solid safety net, while being allowed to dream at the same time. So what's the holdup? Get busy turning those dreams into a reality.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

If there was ever a time -- no, absolutely destined -- for the beginning of a romance, this, for you, is definitely it. All the cosmic lights are green. Very green. So when you're invited out, do yourself a favour. Forget all about washing your hair, doing your grocery shopping or any other shallow excuse you had lined up to avoid this. Get dressed -- nicely -- and go!



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

After days of dashing about, doing at least three things at once, you're suddenly in the mood to snuggle -- and you know exactly who to invite to help satisfy that wish. If you're single, however, don't settle for a teddy bear. Get out there and start looking around. You're definitely due to meet someone new. They'll probably be intelligent enough to keep you interested.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You were probably downright ecstatic when you woke up this morning. It's finally, officially time to make your grand entrance at the home of your beloved -- or, better still, from a dramatic, romantic viewpoint, at their place of leisure, with an audience. Brandish the flowers and the gifts proudly with your usual flair. Make them feel as special as you know they are.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You're definitely going to feel torn -- in at least two directions. You'll want to keep the plans you've made -- which may be tough to do. You'll want to be totally spontaneous, which is what your sweetie will want. There's only one thing to do: Lie. Tell them you just had the most scathingly brilliant idea, take them to the place you'd planned on taking them and bribe the waiter to keep their mouth shut.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

It may have been a long time coming -- at least in the eyes and in the heart of the person who's been waiting for the verdict -- but you're ready to make a decision. You've mulled over your choice long enough, so don't hesitate to announce it immediately. You'll know if it's right as soon as soon as you see the reactions of your loved ones. Holding off any longer would only serve to raise doubts.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Money matters will be tricky to manage now. It's not that you'll be having problems with your checkbook, exactly, or that you won't be able to come up with what you need to make the day special. The issue is, you may suddenly decide to do something spontaneous, but you'll be uncomfortable with the lack of planning -- like the rest of the celebrations you've arranged.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Romance is in the air, without a doubt. Whether or not it's the kind of romance you can talk about is an entirely different story. If either of you isn't fully available at the moment, you'd better keep quiet. Totally quiet. Once jealousy becomes involved, things could spiral entirely out of control. And while you're an expert at restoring balance, you can only do so much.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

This will be a day you won't soon forget -- for all the right reasons. You'll be especially emotional -- but then, so will the person you've directed your loving, affectionate attention toward. So how could this be less than memorable? If there's any way at all you can manage to take some time off from the world -- and spend it with your special someone -- please do.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You never, ever miss a chance to spoil someone you love on a daily basis. So when a certain someone remembers to return the favour, don't you dare argue about it. It's now officially your turn to receive the benefits. Sit down, be quiet and smile. Oh, and when they're done, go ahead and return the favour!



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Who is the author of the book 'Forbidden Verses'?

- a. Salman Rushdie  
b. Abu Nuwas  
c. Taslima Nasrin  
d. D.H. Lawrence

2. The lead character in the film 'The Bandit Queen' has been played by

- a. Rupa Ganguly  
b. Seema Biswas  
c. Pratiba Sinha  
d. Shabana Azmi

3. Which of the following books has been written by Vikram Seth?

- a. My God Died Young  
b. Islamic Bomb  
c. Look Back in Anger  
d. A Suitable Boy

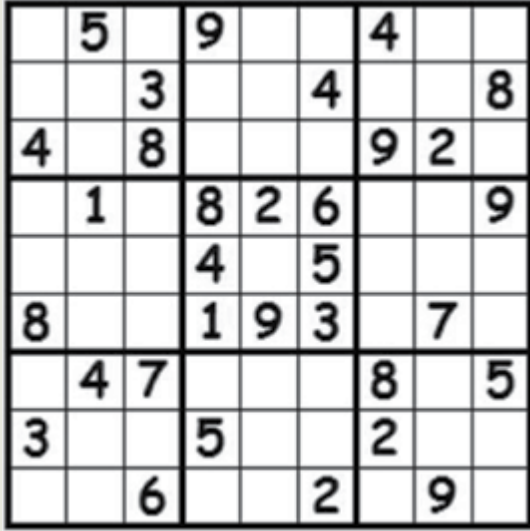
Answers: 1.b 2.c 3.d

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



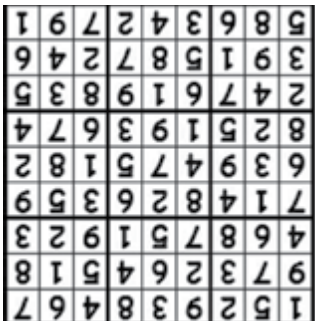
BOGGLER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



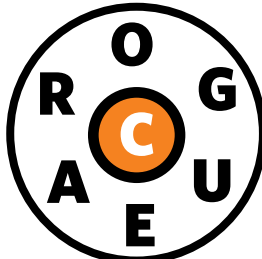
DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JULY 04)



WORD BUILDER

You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count





WRITTEN

OFF

By Anirban Ray

No one passes by here, even pigeons seldom flutter above...there is an eerie silence all around as a vast array of beauties, some of which had once been stunning head-turners, lie lifeless in a desolate yard, awaiting redemption!

Perched on a low hill at the far end of one of the dusty lanes in the Wadi Kabir Industrial Area (popularly known as Sanaya), this 'car graveyard' has been home to thousands of cars that have been either written off or abandoned by their owners after unfortunate road accidents. Each of the vehicles sitting 'pretty' in this yard have a sordid tale behind them that altered the demeanours and destinies of many a motorist in the capital.

They say, cars are personal 'companions' of many young drivers who use them for all their fun-filled endeavours, daily commuting, revelry with friends, obligations and errands, all of which, sort of, personify them. While some people even talk to their cars, others care for them like their own family members and ensure that they are clean and tidy as well as all revved up each day. And, when a fatal accident happens, the cordial ties between man and machine get severed all of a sudden, and many vehicles land up in such yards in their heyday itself.

Called the Al Jazeera Car Yard, this vehicle dump yard is not easy to find as it is cut away from all the industrial activity and garages that dot all the lanes in the Sanaya area of Wadi Kabir. But, if you ask around, the workers in any garage will guide you to it.

But, why would one want to visit a car graveyard? The answer is simple, as many come looking for this place mainly in search



of spare parts to replace those in their own cars. Since this is one of the biggest car dumpyards in Oman, it as has over 2000 cars lying there and one can look for suitable door handles, mirrors, bumpers, fenders, bonnets and boot covers, and internal parts of cars of different brands and models of different years, here. Al Jazeera also has branches in Sohar, Nizwa and Ibra that provide a similar service.

Since derailed destinies and hapless twists of fate are associated with most of the accident vehicles, some people would rather not come here for spare parts. But, when you cannot get the exact matching spare part to suit your need, and the respective dealer cannot provide a similar new part, then this yard is one's only hope.

Cars lying around this yard have smashed window panes, dismantled engines, shattered bonnets and fractured bodies, and the condition of some speak volumes of the severity of the accident it had been involved in. While many people have been injured or lives lost in some of the accidents, the cars, too, have borne the brunt of many a crash, though their own agony remains muted.

Lying over a period of time, most cars are covered with layers of dust. But under the layer of dust one can visualise their own

time of glory as many of them look really strong and attractive, except for the mangled portions. One can find cars of some high end brands like BMW, Mercedes, Jaguar, Porsche, Audi, Lamborghini, Jeep, as well as many muscle cars like Mustangs which have been victims of the whims of errant motorists or their sheer bad luck.

As you pass by the rows and rows of vehicles lying there, you could imagine some of them whispering to you or beckoning you to listen to their sad stories and you even experience goosebumps at the sight of some. The headlights of some seem to stare at you with a deadly gaze and you can even imagine voices in your head as you hurry past them.

The yard is frequented by many garage mechanics from different parts of Muscat who come seeking spare parts for some of their customers as well as buyers of used cars who attempt to repair and renovate some which can be resold to customers of used cars within Oman as well as those from African and Arab countries, especially like Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

Saddam Hussain, the caretaker of the

About 15-20 cars used to be brought here daily, but now that figure has come down. Most of the causes for the accidents are said to be the craze of using mobile phones while driving

SADDAM HUSSAIN

drastically as the number of road users as well as the number of accidents has reduced, he asserted. "About 15 to 20 cars used to be brought here daily, but now that figure has come down. Most of the causes for the accidents are said to be the craze of using mobile phones while driving," he said, pointing out that cars driven at top speed often not just lose control but also get other innocent motorists involved in freak accidents," he said.

After a hurried gaze at the abandoned cars that await anxious customers who might give them new life, or at least procure some of their parts that are in good condition, you want to quickly retreat from the area and shake your head to return to reality. But then, as you leave, did you actually see a headlight come on... or hear a horn? Did someone really whisper to you 'come again' or was it your imagination playing games?

"Drive safely," you tell yourself and leave quietly.



# Messi stars as Argentina set up Colombia semifinal

Goiania, Brazil - Lionel Messi scored one goal and created two others as Argentina beat Ecuador 3-0 in Goiania on Saturday to reach the Copa America semifinals.

In Tuesday's last-four match, the 14-time winners will play Colombia, who beat Uruguay on penalties earlier in the day.

Messi teed up goals for Rodrigo De Paul and Lautaro Martinez before firing home an injury time free-kick to cap a stunning individual performance.

The scoreline was harsh on Ecuador, who ended the game with ten men after Pedro Hicapie's dismissal but had been competitive throughout.

"The truth is it was a very tough match. We knew the difficulty of playing Ecuador, who work hard with players who are fast, physically strong, young," said Messi.

"It was a battle until we managed the (second) goal."

Just before half-time, Argentina were in front, with Messi the architect. First he played in Nicolas Gonzalez on goal but when he was tackled by Galindez, Messi reacted quickest and teed up De Paul to score.

There was still time before the break for Galindez to make an incredible double save from Gonzalez, before Valencia somehow headed wide from six yards out.

After the break, Valencia remained Ecuador's most likely route back into the match and



Argentina's Lionel Messi (L) celebrates with his teammate Angel Di Maria after scoring against Ecuador during their Copa America match on Saturday

the livewire forward's near post shot hit Martinez's leg before going behind.

A wicked Estupinan cross was then almost turned into his own net by Gonzalez.

Messi came close to killing off the tie but his curled effort sailed just past the post, while Aston Villa goalkeeper Martinez denied substitute Gonzalo Plata an equaliser with a near-post block.

Inter Milan forward Martinez finally ended Ecuador's resistance six minutes from time from Messi's pass after Hincapie was caught in possession by Angel Di Maria.

And Hincapie completed a miserable few minutes as he was dismissed in injury time after dragging back substitute Di Maria when clean through, with Messi despatching the free-kick.

## Record-breaker Ospina

Goalkeeper David Ospina was the hero as Colombia beat Uruguay on penalties in Brasilia.

Ospina, 32, saved two spot-kicks in the shoot-out on the day he earned his 112<sup>th</sup> Colombian cap, moving clear of the previous national record he shared with the iconic Carlos Valderrama.

There was little to report in a drab 0-0 draw over the regulation 90 minutes before the quarterfinal tie went straight to penalties. Ospina saved from Jose Gimenez and Matias Vina while Colombia scored all four of their penalties.

It was a huge disappointment for Uruguay's star forward pair Edinson Cavani and Luis Suarez, who both converted their spot-kicks but almost certainly have played in their last Copa.

AFP

# SA clinch T20I series with 25-run victory



Aiden Markram (R) and Quinton de Kock of South Africa cross for a run against West Indies at Saint George's, Grenada, on Saturday (AFP)

## WEST INDIES VS S AFRICA

### FIFTH T20I

St George's, Grenada - South Africa capitalised on the misfiring power-hitters of the West Indies to claim a series-clinching 25-run victory in the final T20I of their five-match contest at the National Cricket Stadium in Grenada on Saturday.

Defending a total of 168 for four, thanks to half-centuries from Aiden Markram and Quinton de Kock, all the Proteas' main bowlers made significant strikes to limit the defending World T20 champions to 143 for nine despite a flamboyant 52 from opener Evin Lewis.

Fast bowler Lungi Ngidi, who endured a hammering through the first four matches, bounced back with three wickets. Fellow pacer Kagiso Rabada, and seam bowling allrounder Wiaan Mul-

der took two wickets each. However, the outstanding bowling effort was again produced by Tabraiz Shamsi, the left-arm wrist-spinner, who conceded just 11 runs in his spell and took the wicket of Chris Gayle.

West Indian hopes of coping with an increasingly challenging run-rate eventually rested on the shoulders of their captain Kieron Pollard.

However he was hampered by a leg injury sustained when scampering a quick single and when Mulder removed Pollard and Andre Russell off successive deliveries in the 15<sup>th</sup> over, the match tilted heavily in favour of the visitors.

For South Africa, it was a first T20I series triumph for almost two years. It was also the first under the captaincy of Temba Bavuma and coaching

## SCOREBOARD

| SOUTH AFRICA                                                                                                                                        |                                 |         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| T Bavuma                                                                                                                                            | c Gayle b Edwards               | 0 (3)   |
| Q de Kock                                                                                                                                           | c Russell b Edwards             | 60 (42) |
| A Markram                                                                                                                                           | c Simmons b McCoy               | 70 (48) |
| D Miller                                                                                                                                            | not out                         | 18 (16) |
| R van der Dussen                                                                                                                                    | c & b Bravo                     | 1 (2)   |
| W Mulder                                                                                                                                            | not out                         | 9 (9)   |
| Extras:                                                                                                                                             | (b 1, lb 1, w 8)                | 10      |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>                                                                                                                                       | <b>168 for four in 20 overs</b> |         |
| <b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-0, 2-128, 3-144, 4-149                                                                                                    |                                 |         |
| <b>Bowling:</b> F Edwards 3-0-19-2, C Gayle 2-0-15-0, D Bravo 4-0-28-1, O McCoy 4-0-31-1, A Russell 3-0-32-0, A Hosein 2-0-24-0, K Pollard 2-0-17-0 |                                 |         |
| WEST INDIES                                                                                                                                         |                                 |         |
| L Simmons                                                                                                                                           | lbw b Linde                     | 3 (4)   |
| E Lewis                                                                                                                                             | c Markram b Ngidi               | 52 (34) |
| C Gayle                                                                                                                                             | c de Kock b Shamsi              | 11 (9)  |
| S Hetmyer                                                                                                                                           | c Miller b Ngidi                | 33 (33) |
| K Pollard                                                                                                                                           | c Markram b Mulder              | 13 (15) |
| A Russell                                                                                                                                           | c Ngidi b Mulder                | 0 (1)   |
| N Pooran                                                                                                                                            | c de Kock b Rabada              | 20 (14) |
| D Bravo                                                                                                                                             | c Bavuma b Rabada               | 1 (2)   |
| A Hosein                                                                                                                                            | not out                         | 2 (3)   |
| O McCoy                                                                                                                                             | c Mulder b Ngidi                | 1 (3)   |
| F Edwards                                                                                                                                           | not out                         | 0 (3)   |
| Extras:                                                                                                                                             | (lb 1, nb 1, w 5)               | 7       |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>                                                                                                                                       | <b>143 for nine in 20 overs</b> |         |
| <b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-20, 2-65, 3-75, 4-110, 5-110, 6-125, 7-140, 8-140, 9-142                                                                  |                                 |         |
| <b>Bowling:</b> B Fortuin 1-0-11-0, K Rabada 4-0-24-2, G Linde 3-0-33-1, L Ngidi 4-0-32-3, T Shamsi 4-0-11-1, W Mulder 4-0-31-2                     |                                 |         |

stewardship of Mark Boucher.

"This is really a tremendous effort for our side, and especially for me in just my first T20I, it is something to build on going forward," said Mulder.

Pollard was bitterly disappointed with his team's failure yet again to chase down a moderate total.

"It looks as is we haven't learnt much from these matches because we keep making the same mistakes, and that is the definition of insanity," said the captain.

AFP

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# EURO2020

TUESDAY'S SEMIFINAL



SPAIN VS ITALY  
WEMBLEY, LONDON  
(11pm, Oman time)



## Kane scores double as England power past Ukraine to reach semifinal

**Rome, Italy** - A buoyant England are looking forward to a Euro 2020 semifinal before 60,000 of their own fans at Wembley after Harry Kane scored twice in a one-sided 4-0 win over Ukraine in Rome on Saturday.

Kane ended his international scoring drought by netting in the 2-0 last-16 defeat of Germany in midweek and he put England ahead inside four minutes of this quarterfinal on a sweaty evening in the Italian capital. Gareth Southgate's side then put the tie out of sight with two more goals early in the second half, one from Harry Maguire before Kane netted again.

"Teams have to go on a bit of a journey and they have to go through some pain sometimes to progress," said Southgate.

"We've had some great nights over the last four years but we've also had some painful ones and that's definitely helped us prepare for another tournament."

Substitute Jordan Henderson got the fourth, and as Denmark lie in wait at Wembley on Wednesday, England will be confident of going on to reach a first ever European Championship final and even now claiming a first major international title since 1966.

"We are on the right track for sure, but we haven't done anything yet. We have got a massive semifinal to look forward to now at Wembley. What an occasion, what a moment to be involved in," Kane said.

The draw here was kind for them, with Ukraine surely as weak an opponent as they could hope to face in a quarterfinal, a stage at which they have lost to the likes of Italy and Portugal in recent European Championships.

However the statistics are impressive, with England having



England's forward Harry Kane celebrates after scoring the third goal against Ukraine during their quarterfinal at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Saturday (AFP)

come through five games at this tournament all without conceding a goal.

Some of their play in wide areas was outstanding, with Raheem Sterling and Jadon Sancho too hot for Ukraine to handle.

Kane, their captain, had gone close to eight hours without finding the net for his country but his opener here was his second in just eight minutes following the late strike that secured victory over Germany.

"It was a fantastic performance

from everyone really, the perfect night for us," Kane added.

Their display at the Stadio Olimpico was a step-up in class in the final third to previous games at the Euro and they will be favourites at home against a Danish side who played their own quarterfinal against the Czech Republic on Saturday in distant Baku.

| QUARTERFINAL                                                                        |                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ENGLAND VS UKRAINE                                                                  |                                                                                      |
|  |  |
| 4                                                                                   | 0                                                                                    |

### Hat-trick of headers

This will be the only match England play away from home in the competition and, with Italy currently imposing a five-day quarantine on arrivals from the

United Kingdom, the number of England fans in Rome was limited.

However, they still made themselves heard in the crowd of under 12,000.

the ball past Georgiy Bushchan.

Ukraine's giant striker Roman Yaremchuk forced a save from Jordan Pickford and a Declan Rice piledriver was kept out by Bushchan, with England looking comfortable.

However Ukraine were a different proposition after injured defender Serhiy Kryvtsov was replaced by Dynamo Kiev winger Viktor Tsygankov in the 36<sup>th</sup> minute.

They finished the first half strongly. England scored again less than a minute after the restart when Luke Shaw delivered a free-kick from the left for Maguire to head in.

Four minutes after that Sterling supplied the overlapping Shaw and he crossed for a rejuvenated Kane to head home. The Tottenham star nearly had his hat-trick, a stinging volley producing a fine save from Bushchan.

From Mason Mount's resulting corner came the fourth goal, another header, this time from Henderson, the first of five substitutes sent on by Southgate who would have been thinking about the semifinal long before this quarterfinal was officially over.

"To come here, prepare differently, play in a historic stadium on a night that was beautiful for football with the weather inspired the players," said Southgate.

"They gave a fantastic performance, not only the players who started but the players who came into the game."

"The recognition in moments like tonight was that we didn't want to take a backwards step. We really wanted to grasp an opportunity. I thought the players were decisive and ruthless all night," he added.

AFP

## England 'not settling' for semifinal: Maguire

**Rome, Italy** - England defender Harry Maguire insisted they will not be satisfied with a run to the semifinals of Euro 2020 after thrashing Ukraine 4-0 on Saturday to set up a last-four clash with Denmark.

Maguire scored his side's second goal in Rome, three years after also netting in England's World Cup quarterfinal win over Sweden.

Gareth Southgate's men lost their semifinal in Russia 1-2 after extra-time to Croatia and Maguire believes they will learn from their mistakes in that game. "It's a great feeling, back-to-back semi-finals at a major tournament is a great achievement but we don't stop

here," the Manchester United captain told the BBC.

"We've got another big game coming up and we want to go further than we did at the World Cup.

"The way we did it shows the progress we are making as a country. Long may the improvement continue because we've got another big one coming up."

Maguire's effort and Jordan Henderson's first England goal on his 62<sup>nd</sup> cap both game from set-pieces with Harry Kane also scoring twice. "We spoke before the game we needed to be better on attacking set plays," added Maguire.

"I got a great connection on it.



Harry Maguire (R) celebrates with Luke Shaw after scoring on Saturday (AFP)

It's nice to chip in with the goal but most importantly the victory.

"This group of players is not settling for a semifinal. We've got

to rest, recover and have another big one."

England will return to Wembley on Wednesday, where they played their opening four games of the tournament, with 60,000 fans allowed to attend the match against the Danes.

Denmark are riding a wave of emotion spurred by the near-tragedy of Christian Eriksen's cardiac arrest in their opening match.

They are dreaming of a repeat of their 1992 triumph and could yet spoil England's party, having beaten them 1-0 at Wembley last year in the Nations League.

"It's an amazing game to be a part of. To be able to lead out a

team at any game at Wembley is special, to have a semifinal is extra special," said England manager Gareth Southgate. "We won't win the game because we're at home. We've got to play well and we've got a fabulous opportunity.

"It's a chance to make history. We've never been to a European Championship final, it's not so much pressure but it's another challenge for these players to take on."

Get past Denmark and Italy or Spain would await on July 11, fittingly one of Europe's traditional powers the final hurdle standing in the way of England glory.

AFP

QUICK RUN

Rain frustrates England in third Sri Lanka ODI

Rain meant the third one-day international (ODI) between England and Sri Lanka at Bristol on Sunday ended in a no-result. The hosts were on course for a 3-0 series clean sweep after dismissing Sri Lanka for just 166, with Tom Curran taking four for 35 in an innings where only Dasun Shanaka, with 48 not out, offering much resistance with the bat. But before the home side could start their reply, a heavy downpour forced the game to be abandoned at 4:15 pm local time (1515 GMT). England next play Pakistan in a three-match ODI series starting at Cardiff on July 8.

Crystal Palace announce Vieira as new manager

Crystal Palace announced former Arsenal captain Patrick Vieira as the club's new manager on Sunday, following a prolonged search for a successor to Roy Hodgson. Vieira, who won three English Premier League titles as a player with the Gunners, has had mixed results in charge of New York City and Nice in his two previous managerial jobs.



The Frenchman, who also won the World Cup and European Championship with his country, is highly regarded in England for his stellar playing career under Arsene Wenger at Arsenal. "Crystal Palace Football Club are delighted to confirm the appointment of Patrick Vieira as its new manager for the next three seasons," Palace said in a statement. The Eagles have been searching for a new boss since Hodgson announced in May he would step down at the end of last season when his contract expired.

Former Parma boss D'Aversa appointed Sampdoria coach

Former Parma boss Roberto D'Aversa has been appointed coach of Sampdoria, where he briefly played 20 years ago, the Serie A side announced on Sunday. The 45 year old Italian left Parma after they were relegated at the end of last season and takes over from Claudio Ranieri at the Genoa club. "Roberto D'Aversa has joined the club as the manager of the first team until June 30, 2023," Sampdoria said in a statement. D'Aversa was reappointed Parma coach in January barely four months after being sacked, but could not stop the club finishing bottom of the league. He had led Parma from 2016 to 2020. A former midfielder, D'Aversa wore the Sampdoria jersey during the 2000-2001 season, scoring two goals in 17 Serie B league appearances. Sampdoria winners of Serie A once in 1991, finished ninth last season under Ranieri who announced his departure at the end of the campaign.

AFF

# Dominant Verstappen triumphs in Austria



Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen gets out of his car and celebrates after winning the Austrian GP on Sunday

FORMULA ONE  
AUSTRIAN GRAND PRIX

**Spielberg, Austria** - Max Verstappen reeled off his third win in a row from pole in the Austrian Grand Prix on Sunday to consolidate his world championship lead over Lewis Hamilton who after finishing fourth said his toiling Mercedes team were 'miles away from Red Bull'.

Hamilton's Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas took second with McLaren's Lando Norris a fine third after picking up a five second time penalty.

Verstappen's latest step towards ending Hamilton's hold on the drivers' title triggered a carnival atmosphere in Formula One's first capacity crowd since the coronavirus pandemic struck with most of the 100,000 in attendance decked out in his Dutch orange colours.

"To see so much orange in the stands is incredible, it's an extra motivation, thank you" he told his cheering congregation at the Red Bull-owned Spielberg circuit.

"The car was unreal," added the 21 year old threat to Hamilton's bid for an unprecedented eighth world crown who was following up his win at the track last week.

"It's insane - I'm a bit amazed myself how today went. I didn't expect it to be like this. Incredible job by everyone to deliver something like this."

After his fifth win of the season Verstappen moved on to 182 points in the standings, 32 clear of Hamilton ahead of the seven-time world champion's home British Grand Prix at Silverstone on July 18.

Hamilton, without a win since Barcelona in early May, had forecast after qualifying Saturday that beating Verstappen looked unlikely.

Aside from his Red Bull rival's superior pace, damage to Hamilton's car late on in the race cost him a likely second place.

Flawless

"We're miles away from them Red Bull. We need all hands on deck. They have brought a lot of upgrades over the last few races - and we haven't brought any," he said.

Verstappen enjoyed a flawless Sunday afternoon drive in the Austrian mountains alive with the sound of his supporters come to watch his latest step towards a possible world title.

He was clean away at lights out from Norris but by turn three the safety car had to be deployed after Esteban Ocon's race came to a premature end when his Alpine was nudged by Antonio Giovinazzi's Alfa Romeo.

Racing got back under way on lap four with Verstappen gliding

clear with Norris fending off an attack on his second spot from Sergio Perez in the other Red Bull. The Mexican, in his 200<sup>th</sup> Grand Prix, paid dearly for his audacity, going off on to the gravel to drop to tenth. On lap 20 Norris was dealt a double blow.

He was told race stewards had handed him a five second penalty over the Perez incident, and was then overtaken by Hamilton despite valiantly trying to fend off his compatriot.

"Such a great driver, Lando," Hamilton told his pits.

After all the leaders had pitted for the first time Verstappen was over 15sec clear of the chasing Hamilton, with Bottas now up to third. Down in midfield it was Perez's turn to pick up a five



Max Verstappen celebrates with his trophy on the podium on Sunday (AFP)

RESULTS [TOP TEN]:

- 1 Max Verstappen (1:23:54.543),
- 2 Valtteri Bottas (+17.973)
- 3 Lando Norris (+20.019)
- 4 Lewis Hamilton (+46.452)
- 5 Carlos Sainz Jr (+57.144)
- 6 Sergio Perez (+57.915)
- 7 Daniel Ricciardo (+1:00.395)
- 8 Charles Leclerc (+1:00.820)
- 9 Pierre Gasly (+1:01.844),
- 10 Fernando Alonso (+one lap).

DRIVERS' STANDINGS [TOP FIVE]

- 1 Verstappen (182 points)
- 2 Hamilton (150)
- 3 Perez (104)
- 4 Norris (101)
- 5 Bottas (92)

second penalty for aggressively shutting out the Ferrari of Charles Leclerc. Bottas was told by the pits not to overtake Hamilton whose car had picked up damage to his rear left tyre.

But by lap 52 the Finn heard over the radio he was clear to race his teammate and, fighting for his job next season, duly nipped past him. Norris meanwhile, having served his time penalty, had Hamilton's Mercedes in his cross hairs and he swept past to seal his fourth spot.

This latest win for Verstappen, who also picked up the point for the fastest lap, has Mercedes with their backs to the wall ahead of Hamilton's home British Grand Prix on July 18.

AFF



Ben O'Connor of Australia

## O'Connor in the frame after Alpine victory

TOUR DE FRANCE

**Tignes, France** - Australian climber Ben O'Connor soared to a high-altitude stage win on the Tour de France on Sunday on a cold, rainy day that culminated in a 21km climb to Tignes.

UAE Emirates controlled the main contenders and their leader the 22 year old defending champion Tadej Pogacar again hurt his rivals and strengthened his hold on the Tour lead, while Citroen AG2R man O'Connor hauled himself into second in the overall standings.

O'Connor skipped up the 21km final climb to Tignes leaving other members of his break-away group, including Colombian pair Nairo Quintana and Sergio Higuita, trailing in his wake. "It's mind-blowing, it can make your heart stop and it definitely did that to mine," said a visibly thrilled O'Connor who dedicated the win to his happy Citroen-AG2R team, his family, girlfriend and mates back in Australia.

The temperature was in single figures Celsius and rain fell most of the day. "Conditions were atrocious," O'Connor said.

Pogacar once again showed he is currently the strongest of the overall contenders as he dropped Ineos pair Geraint Thomas and Richie Carapaz with 4km to go, gaining another 30 seconds in his title defence.

The Tour lost two big guns, however, as 2020 runner-up Primoz Roglic succumbed to exhaustion following on from a fall on Monday. And Mathieu van der Poel decided to pack his bags for Tokyo, to focus on Olympic mountain bike gold after spending six days in yellow and sending the roadside fans wild with his gung-ho approach.

Monday is a rest day before Tuesday's relatively flat 190.7km run from Albertville to Valence.

AFF

## Barty reaches last-16

**London, UK** - Australia's world No 1 Ashleigh Barty looked a bit more fluent after two inconsistent performances in moving into the last-16 of women's singles at Wimbledon on Saturday.

The 25 year old's 6-3, 7-5 win over Katerina Siniakova reassured her fans she can win the title on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of fellow indigenous Australian Evonne Goolagong Cawley's first Wimbledon crown. Victory pitches her into a fourth round clash with French Open champion Barbora Krejickova.

"It was a hell of a match right from the first point," said Barty.

"Another great challenge (Krejickova) but looking forward to it. "She has been playing some great stuff and it will be a new challenge for me as I have never played her before."

Krejickova has been under the radar but battled through to the last-16 beating Anastasiya Sevastova of Latvia 7-6 (7-5), 3-6, 7-5.

Should Barty reach the quarterfinals for the first time she



Ashleigh Barty celebrates her win over Katerina Siniakova on Saturday

will face a tough rival in either Coco Gauff or 2018 champion Angelique Kerber.

On the men's side, Daniil Medvedev, the second seed, showed his mettle as for the first time in his career he came from two sets down to beat 2017 Wimbledon finalist Marin Cilic on Saturday.

Medvedev triumphed 6-7 (3/7), 3-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 and will face Polish 14<sup>th</sup> seed Hubert Hurkacz for a place in the quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, Novak Djokovic

and Roger Federer headline 'Manic Monday' at Wimbledon with the two Grand Slam heavyweights looking to edge closer to a dream title showdown. World No 1 Djokovic, chasing a sixth Wimbledon title and record-equalling 20<sup>th</sup> major, is already halfway to becoming just the third man to complete a calendar Grand Slam.

The Serb faces Cristian Garin of Chile while eight-time champion Federer takes on Italy's Lorenzo Sonego.

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# My love affair with hockey to continue, says Wahaibi

Outgoing OHA chairman hopes to play a key role in the hosting of inaugural FIH Hockey5s World Cup

Five-year of his tenure saw Oman gain spotlight at Asian and global level

Ashok Purohit  
Muscat

It has been an emotional journey for him over the past few months. But having achieved a near 'impossible' mission, he bids farewell to Oman Hockey Association (OHA) with his head held high as he successfully led the sultanate's bid to bag the hosting rights for the inaugural edition of the FIH Hockey5s World Cup (men and women) in Muscat in January 2024.

In an exclusive chat with *Muscat Daily*, days after it was confirmed that Marwan Juma al Juma will be the new OHA chairman [he was the only candidate left in fray for the post], the outgoing chief, Talib al Wahaibi, told *Muscat Daily*, "It has been a very satisfying and successful journey for me over the past five years. Undoubtedly, the greatest joy for

me was reserved for the end. I feel honoured to have put Oman on the world hockey map by getting the first ever FIH Hockey5s World Cup to Muscat in January, 2024."

Like the captain of a ship, which incidentally, Wahaibi was, having spent nearly a decade and a half as captain with the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), he tackled the domestic hockey governing body through the ups and downs, quite similar to sailing through choppy waters at times.

But it was his direction and vision, as the OHA chief, that put spotlight, on Oman, first at the Asian level, and now at the global level.

There were tears of joy flowing down his cheeks as he spoke about the challenges that he overcame to get the hosting rights for the FIH Hockey5s World Cups (men and women).



A file photo of outgoing Oman Hockey Association chairman Talib al Wahaibi at a hockey game at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex

total of 32 teams including Oman men and women teams in fray, a large contingent of teams, officials, media and fans are due to visit in January 2024.

## Women's hockey to be developed

It was during Wahaibi's tenure that Oman hosted the key AHF Congress in 2017 and a year later, Oman managed to get the prestigious Asian Champions Trophy to Oman with a dream final set up between bitter rivals, India and Pakistan. Unfortunately the final was washed off due to heavy rains in Muscat.

Wahaibi was also instrumental in roping in one of the best coaches in Asia, Tahir Zaman of Pakistan, a World Cup winner, to Oman. During Zaman's tenure, Oman improved their rankings. According to the latest FIH rankings, Oman are at 27<sup>th</sup> spot in the world.

The outgoing OHA chief said that the launch of a women's hockey5s team in Oman will go a long way in changing the outlook for hockey among Omani girls. "We are in talks with a top coach from India and plans are afoot to introduce the game in schools. We are confident of fielding an Oman women's team at the Hockey5s World Cup. It is an important step in the direction of women empowerment in Oman sports."

## Retractable roof stadium planned

Among the other major developments expected with the hosting of the Hockey5s World Cup are more astro-turf grounds, exclusive hockey5s ground, a new outdoor stadium with a retractable roof next to the existing hockey stadium at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, more international participations and the raising the profile of the game, which is the oldest recognised Olympic sport played in the sultanate.

Wahaibi said, "I will cease to be OHA chief at the next OHA general assembly in August, when the elections will be held. But, my love affair with hockey will continue. It has been there since my childhood. I now want to dedicate my full time and energy for the hosting of the Hockey5s World Cup. It will be the biggest hockey event staged in Oman and it means a world to me."

Known for his passion, organisational skills and commitment towards the game, Wahaibi said, "The event will be a great boost for the promotion of hockey both in the country and in the whole region."

"Winning the rights to host this attractive format of the tournament will open up new horizons and showcase Oman around the world," he said as he signed off.

@ashokmuscat

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ONLY  
WHAT'S  
ESSENTIAL

## 'Not an easy task to win the bid'

"It was not an easy task. Unfortunately, people think like that. I literally didn't sleep for days and worked tirelessly with a very small team to achieve the near impossible task as we were up against some of the heavyweights in world and Asian hockey," he said.

In fact, Wahaibi recollects vividly the day they had submitted the bid papers to the FIH, as they faced a race against time after getting the necessary approval from the concerned authorities a bit behind the schedule.

"We had to burn the midnight oil to ensure that our bid was admitted as we were late in our submission," said Wahaibi.

He added, "The next challenge was to get the much-needed support from across globe, and make attempts to talk with rival bidding nations. We knew Pakistan was in contention along with India and Singapore. I decided to take the risk to travel to Pakistan despite the coronavirus pandemic and meet the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) officials to convince them to support us. De-



*I now want to dedicate my full time and energy for the hosting of the Hockey5s World Cup. It will be the biggest hockey event staged in Oman and it means a world to me*

TALIB AL WAHAIBI

spite the travel hurdles with COVID-19 restrictions in place, I decided to risk the trip against the advice of even my family.

"I am grateful to Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) chief executive Dato Tayyab Ikram, who was at that time in Pakistan, and agreed to meet us. We finally managed to gather support of other nations and got the nod of the FIH task force to award us the inaugural edition of the Hockey5s World Cup."

"It [winning the hosting rights of the Hockey 5s World Cup] has turned out to be an icing on

the cake as I give way to the young Marwan [al Juma], who incidentally belongs to the same club that I have grown with since my childhood - Al Ahli and now Ahli-Sidab," said Wahaibi.

## 'Mission to make it grand success'

The brainchild behind the successful bid for Hockey5s World Cup and an experienced administrator, Wahaibi said, "Though I will be leaving the OHA in August [elections are due then], my association with the game will continue, in

particular, as a member of the organising committee of the FIH Hockey5s World Cup."

He added, "It is my dream project and I would like to continue my association with it with a mission to make it a grand success. I am hopeful that I would be handed a key role in the organising committee, given my large years in organising successful international hockey tournaments and events."

Oman are certain to benefit with his expertise in the coming days as they prepare to host the Hockey5s World Cup. With a

Every day, all day!