

THE SULTANATE CONDEMNS KABUL AIRPORT BOMBINGS

The Sultanate expressed its denunciation and condemnation over the bombings that targeted Kabul Airport on Thursday, said a statement by the Foreign Ministry. The Sultanate expressed its sincere condolences and sympathies to families of the victims, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.



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HM THE SULTAN GREETES PRESIDENT OF MOLDOVA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Maia Sandu of the Republic of Moldova on her country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Sandu. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Moldova further progress and prosperity.



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Are Omanis too picky in accepting jobs?

1 Part of the problem of high unemployment is that some Omani graduates are too choosy in accepting jobs. A senior academic urges such graduates to apply for any vacancy and not wait for the jobs of their specialisation only. >**A3**

WORLD

21 dead, 50 missing in boat accident

2 A boat carrying more than 70 people sank in Bangladesh's Brahmanbaria district, killing at least 21 and leaving 50 missing after a collision that involved a sand-laden cargo ship, late on Friday night. >**A6**

SPORTS

England beat India, series poised at 1-1

3 England bowlers came out all guns blazing and wrapped the game up in the opening session itself to register an innings and 76-run win and thereby level the five-match series 1-1 with two games to go. >**A8**

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ALL EYES ON SEPTEMBER

Stranded expats can fly back to Oman

Public sector offices at 100% capacity

Plan for students' return to classrooms

New visas to be issued for expats

Country's land borders to reopen



Residency permits of only those expatriates will be renewed who have taken at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine

Times News Service

MUSCAT: People in Oman have much to look forward to this September, when a number of COVID-19 related restrictions are eased. From 1 September, expats stranded in their home countries can fly back to Oman, public sector

offices will operate at 100 percent physical presence, students will return to classrooms in schools and universities, new visas will be issued, and the country's land borders will reopen. A decision on resuming cultural and social activities is also being studied.

Supreme Committee

Members of the Supreme Committee to deal with COVID-19 said on Thursday that decisions regarding the relaxation of infection prevention protocols will be taken gradually, with people's safety of utmost importance during the pandemic.

"Extensive studies are carried out by technicians from various sectors, with no tendency to favour one side over any other," said Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Saidi, the Minister of Health. "The Supreme Committee always places the interests of both its citizens and residents in sight."

"The success to fight this pandemic depends on adhering to the precautions and getting vacci-

nated," added the minister, urging parents to also get their children inoculated against COVID-19.

Although government offices will operate at 100 percent physical capacity from September onwards, entry will only be allowed to vaccinated employees.

Residency permits

Similarly, residency permits for expatriates will only be renewed for those who have been provided at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

"By the end of September, we hope that all citizens receive two doses of the vaccine," said Al Saidi.

"Unfortunately, there are employees in the public sector who have not registered for the second dose."

I therefore urge them all to register themselves and get vaccinated."

Return of expats

Measures have also been drawn up by the Civil Aviation Authority ahead of the expected arrival of thousands of expatriates who travelled home during the pandemic, but have so far been unable to return to Oman because of measures adopted to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

"We aim to ensure a gradual and safe return of regular flights to Oman," said Naif bin Ali Al Abri, the CAA chairman, explaining the two-phase approach to aircraft operations that the organisation has taken during the pandemic. >**A4**

BOOSTING TIES

Saudi Arabian trade team to visit Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A trade delegation from Saudi Arabia will arrive in Oman on Sunday to look at available economic and investment opportunities.

The visit, which will last for several days, is headed by Eng. Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Falih, the Minister of Investment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On the sidelines of the visit will be held a meeting of the Omani-Saudi Council, as well as the opening of the Omani-Saudi Investment Forum, and a meeting with Qais bin Muhammad Al Youssef, Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry, and



Investment Promotion.

The team will also visit the offices of Madayn, the Public Authority for Industrial Estates, and the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZD), reported Oman News Agency.

The Saudi delegation to Oman also includes a number of government sector representatives, and many Saudi businessmen.

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WE ARE THE REVOLUTIONARIES

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—QAIS ZAWAWI

Muscat : (By our Staff Reporter)

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H.E. Qais Abdul Munim Al Zawawi left Kuwait for London on Wednesday at the conclusion of his official visit during which he handed over to H.H. Sheikh Sabah Al-Salim Al-Sabah, the Emir of Kuwait a letter from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs held a series of meetings with H.H. Sheikh Jabir Al-Ahmad, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Sheikh Jabir Al Ali, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information and Sheikh Sad Al-Abdulla, the Minister of Interior and Defence. Official talks between the two sides opened in Kuwait on Tuesday. The Omani side was led by Mr. Qais Zawawi and the Kuwaiti side was headed by the Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad.

Addressing a press conference in Kuwait on Tuesday, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs said that there is complete stability in the Southern Region following the decisive victory achieved by the Sultan's Armed Forces against the rebels who wanted to block the development activities with South Yemeni support. He said that ambitious projects are currently under implementation in the region. A general study has been conducted, he said, which includes a number of basic projects including the establishment of social and administrative centres. Some of these projects, he said, are related to fisheries, agricultural research and cattle-breeding. Asked if there were still some hirelings of Aden supporting the rebels, he said that Aden's support was still there but that the Omani forces are stationed on the borders with South Yemen. He said that it is no more possible for the South Yemeni forces or their hirelings to infiltrate into the Omani territories. He said that the rebellion has been totally eliminated and there is nothing known as revolutionary because "we are the revolutionaries who, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, launched a revolution against backwardness, illiteracy and disease with a view to ensur-

ing the overall progress of Oman."

In reply to a question, Mr. Qais Zawawi said that Oman is keenly interested in the security and stability of the region and does not want the big powers to exercise their influence in the area, especially because we are already suffering from the influence of the forces pushing South Yemen against the Sultanate. He said that there is no plan to give facilities in Masira to any foreign force, be it the United States or the Soviet Union.

Asked about the presence of the Iranian forces, he said that the Iranian forces stationed on some important positions in Southern Oman would withdraw. At the same time, there was an agreement between the two countries to send other forces to be stationed in a new region in South Oman. He said that this is something known to everybody and it comes in the framework of co-operation to maintain peace and security in our region in which some of the countries want to create problems.

In reply to a question regarding the speech delivered by H.E. Sayyid Thuwaini bin Shihab at the non-aligned conference, H.E. Qais Zawawi said that Sayyid Thuwaini who represented His Majesty at the conference, was replying to the speech of the South Yemeni President in which he made a slanderous attack on Oman. He said that we have already declared in unequivocal terms that we are interested in peaceful co-existence and co-operation with all our neighbours. Asked about the Saudi mediation between Oman and South Yemen, he said that we welcome the efforts made by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait or for that matter any other Arab country as we are interested in cooperation with our neighbours. However, he said, the situation in South Yemen leaves no scope either for Saudi Arabia or for North Yemen or Oman.

Asked about Kuwait's call to hold an Arab Summit Conference to discuss the current Arab

Continued on page 2

Sanctity of the month of Ramadhan be maintained

Muscat :

(By our Staff Reporter)

On the occasion of the Holy month of Ramadhan, H. E. Sheikh Waleed bin Zahir Al Hinai, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has issued the following announcement :

"No restaurants and cafes should be opened during the day throughout the Holy month of Ramadhan. It is also requested that all people not of the Islamic Faith should, during the Holy month of Ramadhan, respect the feelings of those observing fast, and refrain from eating, drinking and smoking in front of them or in public places. We expect everybody's cooperation during the month of Ramadhan."

US trade deficit

Washington : (UPI-RR)

The United States has announced its largest trade deficit for almost two years. In its monthly trade report the Commerce Department says the nation last month imported \$827 m. worth of goods more than it exported. The big rise was attributed to a major increase in oil imports which were up by more than \$500 m.



The French Ambassador to Oman H.E. Robert Otts presenting credentials to H.M. The Sultan at Rabat Palace, Salalah.

Photo : Mohammed Mustafa

Raymond Barre appointed new French Premier

Paris : (AFP)

President Giscard d'Estaing has appointed an economic expert Mr. Raymond Barre as his new Prime Minister, to succeed Mr. Chirac who resigned earlier on Wednesday. Mr. Barre who is 52 was Foreign Trade Minister in the outgoing government, and is a former Vice President of the European Community Commission in charge of economic and financial affairs. After his appointment the new Prime Minister told correspondents, his principal objective would be to fight inflation and maintain the stability of the Franc. Mr. Barre does not belong to any political party.

In his letter of resignation Mr. Jacques Chirac said he believes the Prime Minister's authority should be strengthened to deal with France's economic and political problems, but he had understood that the President did not agree with him.

Los Angeles, California:(Reuter)

Democratic Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter condemned the North Korean Government for what he said was the 'deliberate murder' of two American officers.



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Should Omanis be less picky in getting jobs?

A senior academic urges graduates to apply for any vacancy and not wait for the jobs of their specialisation only

SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

MUSCAT: Part of the problem of high unemployment in the country is that some Omani graduates are too picky when it comes to getting a job.

Not all of them are willing to work in the areas outside their specialisations. They would rather wait for years instead of getting any other job to keep them busy. With over 66,000 young Omanis who are still waiting to be employed, they still think it is a waste of their time to work anywhere else.

But senior academics who had long experience in the industry, urge graduates never to sit home idle waiting for their dream job.

"It is wrong to assume that you can only work in the area of your specialisation. It is not a shame to work as an administrator when you have an engineering degree or in marketing when your specialisation is Human Resources. What is important is getting your first work experience and the more you wait the worse it can be for your prospect of getting a



“What is important is getting your first work experience and the more you wait the worse it can be for your prospect of getting a decent job

Dr Khalfan Al-Asmi
Deputy Dean of Modern College of Business and Science

decent job," Dr Khalfan Al-Asmi, Deputy Dean of Modern College of Business and Science, told *Times of Oman*.

Young graduates like Moham-

med Al-Shikeli, is still looking for a job since 2018 after graduating with a chemical engineering degree.

"A month after my graduation, I was offered a sales job but I declined. Three months later I got an opportunity in an insurance company, which I rejected. For me it is not wrong to reject jobs outside my specialisation. I worked hard for four years in the university to earn my degree and I cannot just get any job," Al-Shikeli, told *Times of Oman*.

Dr Al-Asmi said competency is not always connected with your specialisation.

Time to change

"It is attitude and the level of readiness to complete your work is what employers need. Many times your job task is not connected with your final project you did at the university. Your specialisation prepares you to competency when you get a job and that is how you are rated by your office managers. It is time to change this attitude that you should only accept a job connected with your degree," Al-Asmi added.

But not all Omani graduates follow this belief. Some are working outside the field of their specialisation and it is quite fulfilling for them.

"I am an airport management degree graduate but I work for an insurance company. I know insurance is completely different from my specialisation but I find it very satisfying. What is important is to get a job to help you push your career. You are not good to anyone if you stay at home waiting," Yahya Al-Shuaili, a 2015 airport management graduate, said.

TRIBUTES POUR IN

Former ISM principal hailed for motivation, leadership

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Tributes have poured from alumni and education officials for former Indian School Muscat Principal Yash Pall Bharadwaj, who passed away late last week.

Bharadwaj, who was ISM principal from July 1992 to March 1998, was the third man in the post, succeeding the long-serving Leo Lobo. His passing was announced on Wednesday, 25 August.

Aishwariya Hegde, a former ISM student, said, "I remember him as a remarkable person and a wonderful educator."

Another alumnus, Ramanuj Venkatesh said the lessons taught by the ex-principal about 20 years ago are of importance even today, particularly during the uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I took him to be a very good person. He encouraged all of us to share with others, and that spirit is still there in my mind," he recalled. "I speak about sharing because I remember him giving a long speech about doing the right thing. He reminded us that due to tough circumstances, there might be students who were unable to bring lunch to school on a particular day, or were unable to complete their homework."

"That one aspect of sharing was very much inculcated by Mr Bharadwaj," he added. "To him,



Late Yash Pall Bharadwaj

school was also not about getting only good grades and marks, but also the eagerness to enjoy what you are doing, which is why he put a lot of emphasis on sports. He knew the importance of improving one's physical abilities, not just their mental strength, and of socialising and interacting with others."

Tributes also came from Mukund Manohar, who completed his education at ISM and went on to work in Oman for many years. He said Bharadwaj's leadership and positive attitude played a huge role in moulding the school into what it is today.

"His incredible passion for the students made him a principal who was loved and appreciated by everyone," he said. "He would stand at the main gate on most mornings and welcome all the students to school. YP Bharadwaj was an impactful principal and leader to ISM and his remarkable contributions to this institution will always be remembered."

Tribute has also come from Kapil Venkatachalam, the current president of the Indian School Muscat Alumni Association (ISMA). "It is shocking to hear the news of the passing away of our beloved principal, Mr. Bharadwaj," he recalled. "He was an amazing human being, an amazing teacher, amazing mentor and one of the most friendly principals we have had. It is hard to find words to describe the sorrow."

In a statement, the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman also mourned his passing.

"The fraternity of Indian schools in Oman is grieved by the sad demise of YP Bharadwaj, a brilliant educator and a noble administrator," said the board. "His holistic and child-first approach to education and his charismatic leadership as the principal of Indian School Muscat has left indelible imprints in the educational milieu of our schools. Our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. May his blessed soul rest in peace."



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JOINT COMMITTEE MEET

Oman and Bahrain to discuss bilateral ties



MANAMA: The 7th meeting of the Omani-Bahraini Joint Committee will be held on Sunday in the Bahraini capital of Manama.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and his accompanying delegation arrived on Saturday in Manama on a two-day official visit.

On arrival at Bahrain International Airport, Sayyid Badr was received by Dr Abdullah bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain; Dr Jumah bin Ahmed Al Ka'abi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain accredited to the Sultanate and a number of officials at Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Abdullah bin Rashid Al Medailwi, the Sultanate's ambassador accredited to Kingdom of Bahrain and members of the Sultanate's embassy in Manama, were present at the reception. — OMA

OMAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

OFA re-elects chairman, vice chairman

MUSCAT: Winning the majority of votes, Salim bin Said Al Wahaibi, secured the post of Chairman of Oman Football Association for the 2021-2025 term, during the elections held on Saturday. The post of vice chairman went to Mohsin bin Hamad Al Masroori. The mandatory seat for woman went for Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish. The membership posts saw competition among 18 candidates of whom the membership went for Ibrahim bin Mubarak Al Hosni, Qutaiba bin Said Al Ghailani, Ali bin Mohammed Al Ajmi, Ibrahim bin Said Al Alawi, Ahmed bin Abdulqadir Al Hadad and Nasser bin Salim Al Hadabi. — OMA



HEALTH SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Borders to open from September 1

< FROM A1 Phase one looked to develop and implement operational plans meeting aviation safety requirements, support local and global efforts to transport medical supplies, goods, and passengers, while maintaining an orderly flow of passengers within the country, and adapt service providers' recovery plans, as well as the rules and recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

The second phase aims to mini-

mise the financial and operational impact COVID-19 has had on airlines. It involves adapting aviation health safety protocols in keeping with ICAO protocols, and creating an environment that helps in the return of air traffic and passengers to Oman.

Phase two also includes stronger control over compliance with health and safety protocols at Oman's airports, under an existing safety framework between the CAA, Royal Oman Police, and Ministry of Health.

"Oman will open its land bor-

ders from September 1, while adhering to the controls imposed by the Supreme Committee, including testing before arrival into the country" said Dr Saif bin Salim Al Abri, the Director General of Disease Surveillance and Control at the Ministry of Health.

Dr Mohammed bin Said Al Mamari, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious affairs, said regarding the use of mosques: "The ministry followed a gradual approach to return to normal lives in mosques."



IDEAS COME TO LIFE DURING INDIAN ART FEST



Times News Service

MUSCAT: 55 portraits depicting the love and patriotism Indians have for their country were showcased by 46 artists during a special art show put together to commemorate India's 75th Independence Day.

Organised by the Indian Social Club's artists' wing, Rangrez, the virtual exhibition opened on August 14, the eve of India's Independence Day, and was provided support by Munu Mahawar, the ambassador of India to Oman.

Soni Budhia, an experienced Indian artist with plenty of competitions to her name, was the curator of the event. Art aside, her skills extend to oil, mixed media and sculpture. Soni curated the show with the help of dedicated Rangrez volunteers, who are all artists themselves.

The organisers paid special



thanks to Uma, a committee member and volunteers Harini Kumar, Shalini Kartik, Shalini Varma and Soubam Priyananda.

"Our homeland has a special place in our heart irrespective of which country we reside in," said Budhia. "When I got the oppor-

tunity to curate for the month of August, I felt that since we are a group of Indian artists and August is the month when we celebrate our Independence Day, this would be an apt theme.

"It is an ode on canvas with paint for Mother India," she added. "Every artist endeavoured to portray their love for the country through their sensitivity. Curating this exhibition was exciting and an eye-opening experience for me."

"I learned a lot," she said. "Apart from painting, there are many aspects to learn to grow in the field of art. It helped me develop and hone my skills further. My sincere gratitude to the vibrant team that worked hard behind the scenes to support me, and made this exhibition a grand success. A big thank you to Rangrez for giving me the opportunity to curate this exhibition."





WORLD



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SITUATION DETERIORATING

Afghans protest against closure of banks in Kabul

KABUL: Hundreds of Afghans in Kabul protested against the closure of banks on Saturday as people have been facing serious financial difficulties due to the shut-down, a media report said.

Men and women took to the streets of Kabul on Saturday to protest against the closure of the central bank, private banks, and money-changing markets across the country, Khaama Press report-



ed on Saturday. People gathered at the gate of government and private banks in Kabul but they did not get their money, Khaama Press added.

The Taliban had directed all government and private banks to resume operations from Saturday. However, bank officials have not resumed operation as they said the central bank of Afghanistan, Da Afghanistan Bank, is still closed, Khaama Press added.

Since the Taliban's takeover of the country, banks have been closed leaving millions of people out of cash.

Employers have not paid their staff and even those who have money in their accounts cannot withdraw it.

Afghanistan's situation is deteriorating as the Taliban took control of the country on August 15 after the fall of the government. **ANI**

UK enters final stages of evacuation from Afghanistan

The UK's ability to process further cases is now extremely reduced and additional numbers will be limited, the UK Ministry of Defence said

LONDON The UK Armed Forces have now entered the final stages of the evacuation from Hamid Karzai Airport (HKIA) in Kabul, General Nick Carter, the chief of UK Defense Staff, said.

"Following our pre-planned timetable, processing facilities inside the Baron Hotel in Kabul have been closed. This will enable us to focus our efforts on evacuating the British nationals and others we have processed and who are at the airport awaiting departure," the UK Ministry of Defence said in a statement. The UK's ability to process further cases is now extremely reduced and additional numbers will be limited, it added. "No further people will be called forward to the airport for evacuation."

The ministry said that "evacuating all those civilians we have already processed will free up the capacity needed on UK military aircraft to bring out our remaining diplomats and military personnel".

The decision to close the evacuating handling centre was made by the Chief of Joint Operations



EVACUATION: The decision to close the evacuating handling centre was made by the Chief of Joint Operations and authorised by the Defence Secretary.

and authorised by the Defence Secretary. It reflects the latest understanding of the situation on the ground. "Our top priority as we move through this process will be the protection of all those involved who are operating in a heightened threat environment," said UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace.

"It is with deep regret that not everyone has been able to be evacuated during this process. But I am proud of this remarkable achievement from our Border Force, Armed Forces, MOD, FCDO, Home Office who have evacuated over 13,000 people in 14 days during Operation Pitting. We will continue to honour our debt to all those who have not yet been able to leave Afghanistan. We will do all that we can to ensure they reach safety."

After the Kabul airport blast, the US Embassy in Kabul on Thursday (local time) warned its citizens to stay away from the Kabul airport and told anyone outside the perimeter to "leave immediately," citing unnamed security threats.

The US Embassy cited three areas of particular concern in its advisory. "US citizens who are at the Abbey Gate, East Gate, or North Gate now should leave immediately," the statement said, without further detail, reported The New York Times.

A senior US official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity about confidential assessments, confirmed that the United States was tracking a "specific" and "credible" threat at the airport from the IS affiliate in Afghanistan, which

has carried out dozens of attacks in recent years, many targeting ethnic minorities and other civilians.

The warnings came as the last of the estimated 1,500 Americans and countless other foreigners still in Afghanistan try to make it to the airport to leave before the Taliban deadline of August 31, reported The New York Times.

The US government has been warning about potential security threats at the airport, and access to the airport has been adjusted accordingly, with some gates temporarily closed.

Earlier, the British and Australian governments issued similar warnings, with Australian officials describing "an ongoing and very high threat of terrorist attack." — **ANI**



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Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zedjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

MEDICAL SUPPLIES SHORTAGE



Afghanistan to run out of medical supplies soon, says WHO

KABUL: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that war-ravaged Afghanistan has only a few days of medical supplies left to meet the health needs of millions of people in the country, according to a media report.

The WHO said that health kits containing essential supplies, medicine for hospitals, nutritional food for acutely malnourished children and items for controlling the COVID-19 pandemic are short in supply, Voice of America (VOA) reported. Following the Kabul blasts on Thursday, trauma kits are also in high demand.

WHO's emergency director for the Eastern Mediterranean region Rick Brennan said the closure of Kabul airport for commercial aircraft has led it to explore other means to transport medical supplies.

"There are multiple security and logistics constraints to doing so but we hope and expect that we will be able to bring in more supplies in the coming days, with the support of the Pakistan government. Kabul airport is not an option for bringing in supplies at this stage and so we are likely to use Mazar-i-Sharif airport, with our first flight hopefully going in the next few days," VOA quoted Brennan as saying.

Afghanistan is facing its worst-ever crisis in decades after the Taliban took control of the country. As the situation is deteriorating rapidly, humanitarian needs have surged in the country.

The UN has said that nearly 18 million people require global support and they include an estimated 3.5 million internally displaced people, among them more than half a million newly displaced this year, according to VOA.

However, Brennan has vowed that the WHO is committed to assisting the displaced and vulnerable people in Afghanistan.

"Already we are hearing that some female health workers are not attending work and that there has been a decline in the attendance of women and children at some facilities. This again highlights the need to ensure the availability of medical supplies, to support female health workers in their work, and to encourage families to bring their mothers and children to seek health care when they need it," he said.

He further said that the WHO has staff in Afghanistan's all 34 provinces and they are monitoring the health situation closely. He also stressed that most of the 2,200 health centres that WHO monitors are open. **ANI**

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Dr Soumya Swaminathan lauds India for achieving 10 million jabs in a single day



NEW DELHI : As India administered over 10 million vaccine doses against COVID-19 on Friday until 10 pm, which is the highest vaccination that happened in a single day, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, chief scientist, World Health Organization (WHO), congratulated the country for vaccinating 50 per cent of the adult population with the first dose.

Dr Soumya Swaminathan tweeted, "India achieves 50% coverage (at least one dose) of adult populn - > 620 million doses administered, 10 million in the past day! Congratulations to the thou-

sands of personnel involved. Vaccination, along with public health & individual preventive measures will protect everyone!"

As 10 million people were vaccinated in a single day on Friday, Chief of National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation in India (NTAGI) Dr NK Arora said it is a matter of pride for the Indian health system.

Dr Arora also said that the country hopes to vaccinate 12.5 million in a single day soon. In order to achieve complete vaccination by the end of this year, the country has to give jabs to 10 million daily

until December 31.

Meanwhile, on achieving a 10 million mark of vaccination in a single day, PM Narendra Modi said that it is a momentous feat.

"Record vaccination numbers today! Crossing 10 million is a momentous feat. Kudos to those getting vaccinated and those making the vaccination drive a success," PM Modi tweeted.

India adds 46,759 new COVID-19 infections

India reported 46,759 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the country's tally to 32,649,947, informed the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Saturday.

Active cases rose to 359,775, according to the health ministry. Kerala continues to report a record number of cases and logged 32,801 fresh infections and 179 deaths on Friday.

The active cases comprise 1.10 per cent of the total infections.

With 31,374 recoveries in the last 24 hours the cumulative tally of recovered patients has reached 31,852,802.

The national recovery rate was recorded at 97.56 per cent. According to the health ministry, the death toll has climbed to 437,370 with 509 fresh fatalities. **ANI**

COLLISION



21 dead, 50 missing in boat accident in Bangladesh

DHAKA: A boat carrying more than 70 people sank in Bangladesh's Brahmanbaria district on Friday after a collision that involved a sand-laden cargo ship.

At least 21 people died and close to 50 were missing, as rescue operations took place late into the night. The incident took place in the Bijoynagar area, about 51 miles east of the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka.

"We have recovered 21 bodies including nine women and six children so far," said local govern-

ment administrator Hayat-Ud-Dola, adding that the toll would likely rise.

He said the boat and the cargo ship's steel tip collided, causing the passenger vessel to capsize.

"I was grazing cattle on the bank of the pond. I heard a loud noise and saw the cargo vessels hitting the passenger trawler. I saw the trawler sinking quickly," witness Nurul Amin told local media. He said two cargo vessels hit the boat.

Akhi Akter was traveling on the

boat with her son, mother-in-law and brother-in-law when it capsized.

"When the accident occurred, I managed to swim back to the bank. But the rest of my relatives are still missing," she said.

While waterways are a common way to move people and goods in Bangladesh, poor enforcement of safety measures has led to deadly accidents in the past.

In April and May, at least 54 were killed in two separate boat capsizing accidents in the country. **DW**



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WORLD



Forecasters say Hurricane Ida could become ‘extremely dangerous’

The hurricane is expected to intensify as it reaches the northern Gulf Coast

WASHINGTON: Hurricane Ida entered the Gulf of Mexico late on Friday, as people in the United States' southern state of Louisiana evacuated high-risk areas and stocked up on essentials. The hurricane is expected to intensify as it reaches the northern Gulf Coast. "The time to act is NOW. Hurricane Ida is now forecast to make



landfall as a category 4 hurricane," the US National Weather Service tweeted, after the country's National Hurricane Center (NHC) branded the storm "extremely dangerous." The hurricane made landfall in western Cuba late Friday as a Category 1 storm, with maximum sustained winds hitting 80 miles per hour.

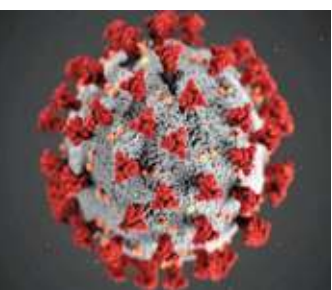
More than 10,000 people were evacuated and electricity cut off as a precaution as Ida struck the province of Pinar del Rio. Thousands were evacuated in the

capital city of Havana. **Eyes on Gulf Coast** As the storm strengthens to an extremely dangerous Category 4 hurricane, winds are expected to pick up speed — close to 140 miles (225 kilometers) per hour — before making landfall along the Gulf Coast late Sunday. "This will be a life-altering storm for those who aren't prepared," National Weather Service meteorologist Benjamin Schott said during a Friday news conference with Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards. The governor urged residents to be prepared: "By nightfall tomorrow night, you need to be where you intend to be to ride out the storm." US President Joe Biden approved a federal emergency declaration for the state. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the Federal Emergency Management Agency was going to send nearly 150 medical personnel and about 50 ambulances to the Gulf Coast to assist hospitals. **Climate change and its repercussions** A recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that the world is on track to surpass the warming limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) within 15 years. The report explicitly laid out that human emissions were the cause of the rise in temperature, which has already sparked environmental catastrophes around the world.

COVID-19 VIRUS

China rejects COVID-19 origins report by US, terms it ‘political, fake’

BEIJING: Refuting results of a US report tracing the origins of the COVID-19 virus, Beijing has lodged solemn representations with Washington terming the report as "completely political, and having no scientificity and credibility." "China has lodged solemn representations with the US over a so-called virus origins tracing report by the US intelligence community that is completely political, fake, having no scientificity and credibility," said Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, as quoted by Global Times. In a strongly-worded statement, Ma said the US should "stop poisoning" the international cooperation on virus tracing and return



to the correct path of scientific origins tracing and cooperation in the fight against the pandemic. Beijing's reaction follows the declassified summary of a report commissioned by US President Joe Biden revealed on Friday which said that the US Intelligence

Community (IC) assesses that the origins of the novel coronavirus disease may never be definitively identified without additional information. According to the report, the US intelligence community is still divided about which of the two theories -- that the virus came from a lab leak or that it jumped from animal to human, naturally. There is consensus among the intelligence agencies that the two prevailing theories are plausible, the report said. A WHO-led team of scientists that travelled to China in early 2021 to investigate the origins of the virus struggled to get a clear picture of what research China was conducting beforehand, faced

constraints during its visit, and had little power to conduct thorough and impartial research. Back in May, Biden issued a directive to the 17 main US intelligence agencies, which make up the IC, to deliver a report on the origins of coronavirus within 90 days. "The IC judges said they will be unable to provide a more definitive explanation for the origin of COVID-19 unless new information allows them to determine the specific pathway for initial natural contact with an animal or to determine that a laboratory in Wuhan was handling SARS-CoV-2 or a close progenitor virus before COVID-19 emerged," the IC concluded.

NEWS CONFERENCE

Protesters stop Mexico President Obrador from addressing press conference

MEXICO CITY: A group of protesters on Friday prevented Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador from leading his usual daily news conference. Lopez Obrador is rarely absent from the daily morning news conferences, which he has held almost every weekday since he took office in 2018. But on Friday, demonstrators gathered at the entrance of a mili-

tary barracks in the southern Chiapas state, where Lopez Obrador was set to hold a Cabinet meeting and a press conference. The standoff lasted for around two hours. **What did Lopez Obrador say?** In a video message from inside his vehicle, the president said protesters refused to let him pass

to pressure him into answering their demands. "I cannot allow this because the president cannot be held hostage by anyone," he said. Lopez Obrador also stressed that he was a non-violent leader who avoided any use of force. He said that although he was stopped in front of a military barracks, he would not call out the army to disperse protesters.



Ministry of Defence

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Defence invites MOD registered suppliers to participate in the following tender:

Subject	Tender Number	Last Date for Inquiries	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Document Price per copy (RO)
SUPPLY OF RUGS	17/2021	21/09/2021	28/9/2021	101 RO

1. Tenders documents and terms may be obtained on payment from the office of the Secretary of the Tender Committee, gate No. 14 of MAM Camp between 0900 to 1300 hrs. on the working days.

2. Payment of Tender documents to be made by using of any Visa Electron Cards or "Visa credit" Cards or through Smart Card issued from all the banks are operated in Oman.



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SPORTS

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Robinson steals show with fifer as India lose by innings, 76 runs

England bowlers came out all guns blazing and wrapped the game up in the opening session

HEADINGLEY: With the score reading 215/2 at the start of the fourth morning, India would have hoped to continue the remarkable comeback they had started scripting on the third day of the third Test at Leeds on Friday. But it wasn't to be as the England bowlers came out all guns blazing and wrapped the game up in the opening session itself to register an innings and 76-run win and thereby level the five-match series 1-1 with two games to go.

The Indian innings folded up for 278 as Ollie Robinson (5/65) was on fire from the word go on Saturday. Craig Overton also pitched in with figures of 3/47 and James Anderson picked one to make it 400 wickets on home soil. But the star of the show was Robinson as he put the hosts off to just the start they would have dreamt of as he trapped Pujara in front of wickets. It was a complete



ENGLAND VS INDIA: The Indian innings folded up for 278 as Ollie Robinson (5/65) was on fire from the word go on Saturday.

misjudgement from the Indian batsman as Robinson went very full and Pujara assumed it's going to go away from him. England took a smart review after a huge appeal and Pujara (91) was sent back packing to the pavilion.

Notably, this was for the sixth time in his career, Pujara was dismissed without adding to his overnight score -- the most for India surpassing Rahul Dravid, who had five such dismissals.

All hopes were now pinned on skipper Virat Kohli as he worked his way towards a fifty. But just when one thought he would build it up into a match-winning knock, he edged one to the slip cordon. Robinson was the bowler again for England and Joe Root made no mistakes as Kohli walked back after making 55.

This started the beginning of the end for the visitors as Anderson joined the party to dismiss

Ajinkya Rahane (10). And with Rishabh Pant (1) once again failing to rise to the challenge against the new Dukes ball, it was all about waiting for the inevitable.

Ravindra Jadeja tried his best to delay the inevitable, but he too had to walk back after scoring a quick 25-ball 30 as the Indian tail failed to wag.

Brief Scores: India 78 and 278 (Pujara 91; Robinson 5/65); England 432. **ANI**

JOINING MANCHESTER UNITED



You'll always be in my heart, says Ronaldo as he departs Juventus

TURIN: After bringing his three-year stint with Serie A club Juventus to an end, Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo said that the club will always hold a dear place in his heart.

"Today I depart from an amazing club, the biggest in Italy and surely one of the biggest in all of Europe. I gave my heart and soul for Juventus and I'll always love the city of Turin until my final days. The 'tiffosi bianconeri' always respected me and I tried to thank that respect by fighting for them in every game, every season, every competition," Ronaldo wrote in his Instagram post.

"In the end, we can all look back and realize that we achieved great things, not all that we wanted, but still, we wrote a pretty beautiful story together. I will always be one of you. You are now part of my his-

tory, as I feel that I'm part of yours. Italy, Juve, Turin, tiffosi bianconeri, you'll always be in my heart," he added.

Manchester United on Friday confirmed that the club has reached an agreement with Juventus for the transfer of Cristiano Ronaldo, subject to agreement of personal terms, visa, and medical. "Cristiano, a five-time Ballon d'Or winner, has so far won over 30 major trophies during his career, including five UEFA Champions League titles, four FIFA Club World Cups, seven league titles in England, Spain, and Italy, and the European Championship for his native Portugal," United said in an official statement.

In his first spell for Manchester United, he scored 118 goals in 292 games. **ANI**

REVISED CALENDAR

Formula 1 announces revised 22-race calendar for 2021 season

SPA: Formula 1 on Saturday announced a revised calendar for the rest of the 2021 season, following the news earlier this month that the Japanese Grand Prix would not be staged this year.

The new schedule will see 22 races held -- a record-breaking number of races in one season -- with a number of existing events shifting to new dates.

The Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort, the Italian GP at Monza, and the Russian race at Sochi will all take place on their original dates. Following those races, the Turkish Grand Prix, originally slated for October 3, has now moved back a week to October 10.

That will be followed by the United States Grand Prix -- which

stays on its original date of October 24 -- before the Mexico City and Brazilian GPs, which are both shifting back by a week, from October 31 and November 7, to November 7 and November 14, respectively.

There will then be another event on November 21, at a circuit yet to be announced, before the season finishes with the first-ever Saudi Arabian Grand Prix at Jeddah on December 5, and the finale at Abu Dhabi on December 12. Notably, F1 earlier planned its longest-ever season at 23 races this year but now has revised it to 22 races.

Stefano Domenicali, President and CEO of Formula 1, in a statement said: "We are very pleased to

announce the updates to the 2021 calendar following extensive discussions with the promoters and national authorities. The pandemic continues to present the season with challenges but we have proven we can adapt and we are confident we can deliver a record-breaking 22 races this year despite a global pandemic."

"I want to thank the promoters in Brazil, Mexico and Turkey for their patience and flexibility and we will provide the details of the final addition soon. This season is proving to be an incredible battle on the track and this is hugely exciting for our fans around the world and we look forward to the intensity continuing in the races ahead." **ANI**



FIELD INVASION

'Jarvo 69' invades pitch again after Rohit Sharma's dismissal



HEADINGLEY: Daniel Jarvis -- also known as Jarvo 69 -- invaded the pitch again on the third day of the third Test between India and England here on Friday.

The incident happened after India opener Rohit Sharma was dismissed.

Jarvis walked in padded up as a batsman and looked to take strike before the security personnel rushed in and took him off. He had earlier walked in as a fielder of the Indian team in the second Test at the Lord's Cricket Ground. Coming back to the game, Rohit Sharma, Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli ensured that India displays a spirited fightback on Friday.

At stumps, India's score read

215/2 -- still trailing by 139 runs with eight wickets in hand. For the visitors, Pujara (91*) and Kohli (45*) are at the crease.

Resuming the final session, India did not get off to an ideal start as Rohit (59) was sent back to the pavilion by Ollie Robinson. The right-handed batsman was given out on the field, however, he opted for a review, but the verdict came out to be umpire's call, and hence, Rohit had to walk back to the pavilion.

Skipper Kohli then joined Pujara in the middle and the duo moved the scoreboard slowly and steadily. Both batsmen kept England's attack at bay and in the end, ensured that India enters Day 4 with eight wickets in hand. **ANI**

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INDIA GETS \$22.53BN FDI

India attracted a total foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow of \$22.53 billion from April to June which was 90 per cent higher from \$11.84 billion in the year-ago period, the government said on Saturday. FDI equity inflow grew by 168 per cent in the first three months of FY 2021-22 compared to the year-ago period. >B2

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



AIR PASSENGER VOLUMES

Another month of extremely weak international air passenger volumes continued amid an unrelenting rise in COVID-19 infections across Asia and elsewhere, preliminary July traffic figures released by the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) show. >B2



Sohar Aluminium Continues
it's Successful Journey

Overcoming the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020, Sohar Aluminium Company has recorded an excellent annual production of primary aluminium totalling 396,929 tonnes. Timely business continuity measures initiated by the company management have greatly contributed to this achievement. The year 2021 so far seems to be witnessing a similar trend in production and other overall Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).



Sohar Aluminium Company was formed in September 2004 to undertake a landmark Greenfield aluminium smelter project in the Sultanate. Its establishment stands on a strong foundation of decades-long industry insight in design, specification, and construction. This has ensured efficiency, environmental protection, and utmost safety of its workforce.

The Company is jointly owned by OQ S.A.O.C representing the Omani government (40%), Abu Dhabi National Energy Company - TAQA (40%) and Rio Tinto Alcan Inc. (20%) that also provides smelting technology and sales support.



3 Stages of Aluminium



The smelter has an annual production capacity of 395,000 tonnes of high-quality aluminium. The company's first pot started in June 2008, operating at 350 kA and reached full operational capacity in February 2009. By August 2011, a cumulative 1 million tonnes of aluminium had been produced and currently, 360 pots operate at 398kA.

Sohar Aluminium uses the latest and most efficient AP39 technology provided by its shareholder Rio Tinto Alcan. The company's primary products include hot metal, primary Aluminium Ingots, and primary Aluminium Sows.

Nearly 60 per cent of finished products are committed for local downstream companies, in the form of hot metal, the rest as Ingots and Sows - is exported to markets in Southeast Asian countries such as Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam. Indirect export via downstream is to USA, Europe, Brazil.

Sohar Aluminium sources its raw materials from Australia, USA, China, India, Tunisia, and UAE, and has signed technology-sharing agreements with global leaders among which Rio Tinto Alcan is the provider of AP39 technology.

In-Country Value

Besides its commitment to provide metal to the downstream industry with 60% of its metal production, Sohar Aluminium is also committed to total spend retained in country that can benefit business development, contribute to human capability development, and stimulate productivity in the Omani economy. For example, in terms of procurement of goods and services, the company dedicates more than 50% of its spending locally. SMEs and major suppliers take priority in sourcing and tendering processes. In 2020, 59% of the company's procurement were sourced locally totalling more than 14 million Omani Rials.

In terms of job creation, Sohar Aluminium is considered to be one of the leading companies in hiring Omanis, with its Omanisation rate currently standing above 77 per cent. The workforce is the driving force within the organisation. The development of its employees is paramount, for which the company has set up its own recognised training centre that gives every employee the opportunity for further

learning and growth.

In many ways, Sohar Aluminium's development mirrors the Sultanate of Oman's own emergence onto the world stage - driving forward at a formidable pace, while being respectful of its cultural heritage and values. The company intends to become a benchmark smelter and an important contributor to Oman's sustainable development goals.

Support for local communities

Sohar Aluminium firmly believes in supporting the local communities it operates in. Its well-established Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework ensures execution of projects that directly and indirectly have a positive impact on various sections of society. This commitment is one of the key drivers behind its high investment in CSR programmes.



Awards and recognitions

Sohar Aluminium recently claimed the first position in His Majesty the Sultan's Award for Industrial Excellence 2021. This is the third time that the company has won this prestigious award, other than titles and trophies at local, regional, and international levels for nationalisation, CSR, Human Resources Administration and Development, Occupational Health, community service, and environment protection.



EHS Policy

Sohar Aluminium's Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) Policy is embedded in its Strategic Business Objectives and forms an integral part of its journey towards excellence. Its main EHS goal is to operate its smelting operations and power generation in a



manner that minimises environmental footprint, creates a mindset of Zero Harm, and ensures good health of its workforce. This is achieved through engaging all employees and contractors in EHS, providing safe and healthy working conditions, commitment to leadership in environment protection, responsible use of natural resources, mitigating risks, and eliminating hazards.

Committed to ESGs

Sohar Aluminium has always been mindful and acts in favour of protecting the environment, adopting, and implementing high standards in terms of working conditions for its workforce, maintaining excellent relation with all stakeholders, and committing to transparent policies and moral responsibilities. These aspects form the company's commitment towards Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), a key indicator of its successes and aspiration to be a benchmark Smelter.



Combating COVID-19 Impacts

The company has taken a proactive approach to managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, the health and safety of its workforce has remained top priority in addition to business and operations continuity. Several actions were taken including the formation of a special committee mandated with planning and overseeing implementation of actions and precautionary procedures. The number of workforce on site was reduced before being gradually increased using clustering patterns. Also, work-from-home plans were initiated. On the logistics front, Sohar Aluminium managed to keep the pandemic's impact on its import and export lines at the minimum thus avoiding disruptions in production and operations of smelting aluminium.



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MARKET

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Majid Al Futtaim secures \$1.5 billion sustainability-linked loan

DUBAI: Majid Al Futtaim, the leading shopping malls, communities, retail and leisure pioneer across the Middle East, Africa and Asia has signed its inaugural \$1.5 billion sustainability-linked loan (SLL), a financial instrument secured primarily on environmental, social and govern-

ance related performance. In line with Majid Al Futtaim's ambitious sustainability strategy, the SLL aims to facilitate and support environmentally and socially sustainable economic activity and growth by incentivising ambitious, predetermined sustainability performance objectives.



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‘Air passenger volumes in July remained weak’

The number of international passengers carried by the region's airlines totalled 1.5 million in July

KUALA LUMPUR: Another month of extremely weak international air passenger volumes continued amid an unrelenting rise in COVID-19 infections across Asia and elsewhere, according to the preliminary July traffic figures released by the Association of Asia



DECLINE: The international passenger load factor averaged 31.8 per cent, a sharp decline from the 82.6 per cent achieved in July 2019. - Photo used for illustrative purpose only

Pacific Airlines (AAPA). The number of international passengers carried by the region's airlines totalled 1.5 million in July, representing only 4.6 per cent of the 33 million that flew in the corresponding month of 2019. The international passenger

load factor averaged 31.8 per cent, a sharp decline from the 82.6 per cent achieved in July 2019 while available seat capacity for the month was 13.5 per cent of pre-pandemic. With strong external demand and congestion at major shipping ports boosting demand for ship-

ments by air, Asia Pacific airlines recorded a 26.8 per cent year-on-year increase in international air cargo demand as measured in freight tonne kilometres in July, slightly above the volumes recorded in July 2019. The average international freight load factor climbed by 6.2 percentage points to 76.2 per cent for the month after accounting for a 16.4 per cent year-on-year increase in offered freight capacity. More than a year into the pandemic, strict border restrictions and quarantine measures continue to have a devastating impact on international air travel, said Subhas Menon, AAPA Director General. "By contrast, air cargo remains the single bright spot for the region's airlines, with strong external demand boosting cargo revenue." -ANI

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APRIL TO JUNE

India attracts FDI inflow of over \$22bn

NEW DELHI: India attracted a total foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow of \$22.53 billion from April to June which was 90 per cent higher from \$11.84 billion in the year-ago period, the government said on Saturday. FDI equity inflow grew by 168 per cent in the first three months of FY 2021-22 (\$17.57 billion) compared to the year-ago period (\$6.56 billion). **Automobile industry** The automobile industry emerged as the top sector during the first three months of FY 2021-22 with a 27 per cent share of total FDI equity inflow followed by computer software and hardware

(17 per cent) and services sector (11 per cent) respectively. Under the sector automobile industry, the majority of FDI equity inflow (88 per cent) was reported in the state of Karnataka. Karnataka was the top recipient state during FY 2021-22 (up to June) with a 48 per cent share of the total FDI equity inflows followed by Maharashtra (23 per cent) and Delhi (11 per cent). "Measures taken by the government on the fronts of FDI policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country," said a statement issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. -ANI

Tender Notice

The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), announces following E-Tenders for 2021

Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tender bids	Tender Price
15/2021	WAN Optimization Solution	29 July 2021	12 August 2021	75 OMR

Interested companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender document from the E.Tendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scanned copy of bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (2%) of the Tender value validity for (120) days from the deadline for the tender bids and addressed to the Public Authority for Social Insurance. And original document of the same should be submitted later directly to the Administration Department - Purchase and General Services Section / Third Floor, PASI Head Office in Bawshar.

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender inquiry : All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at E-Tendering system (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering system inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number; Tel : **+968 24166670** , E-mail : etenderhd@ita.gov.om

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WHEN MUSIC SAYS WHAT WORDS CAN'T

This innovative technology helps bring people with severe epilepsy closer to the ones they love

Fifteen-year-old Riley's inner world is hard to penetrate. Two rare and severe conditions often characterised by seizures that are difficult to treat—Lennox-Gastaut syndrome (LGS) and tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC) — have affected her cognitive ability, so she has never been able to speak. "It's not easy to get to know someone who can't talk," her dad Tim says. "It teaches you to pay a lot more attention to little things."

While Riley can't verbally communicate her wishes, hopes or desires, she was able to express herself through painting. Inspired by Riley's story, the company that makes one of her medicines, Greenwich Biosciences, wanted to find another way to give back—not only to Riley, but to the larger epilepsy community. So they launched a creative program— unspoken symphony — that has provided a new way for thousands of people like Riley to translate their art into music and share it with the ones they love.

Technology with a heart
Unspoken symphony is a web-based, image-recognition technology designed to translate art into an original melody. The interface is simple. Users upload artwork to the website unspokensymphony.com through their phone or computer and within seconds the software translates the visual into a unique melody, adding a layer of expression that gives voice to the art and, by extension, the individual who created it.

At the heart of the technology lies an elaborate algorithm that interprets the shapes, lines, brightness, dominant colors, density and contrast of the user's uploaded artwork, and translates those elements into tempo, chords, style, timing and pitch. It can work with any medium—paintings, drawings or computer-generated images. Once the melody has been created, users can save their art as an

animated file that illustrates the music notes as they play across the patterns or images. Their one-of-a-kind melody can then be shared with others through social media via an animated MP4 file. They also receive a PDF with customized sheet music that showcases the art turned melody.

The magic is in the music
The true magic behind the software is the experience it creates when families gather to hear the unique musical expression of their loved one's work. Since the program first launched in the fall of 2020, its developers have been working with a team of web developers and other creative professionals, including music therapists, and award-winning



producers and composers to create an even richer visual and musical experience for the community. As part of the project's expansion, users now have the option of personalising their melody even more by selecting multiple instruments—just like a real symphony—to really make the creation their own.

For Riley's family, the gift unspoken symphony provides is the profound connection they can share with their daughter through art and music. Music has long been explored for its ability to engage and change the brain and some studies have demonstrated its positive effects on individuals with epilepsy. Music therapy is a field that uses the unique aspects of music to help individuals reach their full potential.

Building awareness one melody at a time

Since its launch, unspoken symphony has received more than 40,000 visitors and roughly 8,000 users have submitted artwork to the online gallery. Many of those submissions have come from individuals living with rare seizure disorders that have affected their ability to communicate, like LGS, TSC, or Dravet syndrome.

Today the site is open to anyone who wants to submit their own artwork and create a melody to share with others.

By expanding the community's reach, the company hopes to raise greater awareness of those living with rare seizure disorders. To learn more and create your own melody go to www.unspokensymphony.com. -BPT



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FEATURE



CAN HYDROPOWER WITHSTAND A FUTURE OF EXTREME WEATHER?

FOR MANY YEARS, the thinking around the use of hydropower as a clean energy source has been that once built, a plant can reliably generate electricity at any time. As recently as 2019, more than half the world’s renewable electricity was generated from hydropower.

But as the climate changes, so does the potential of this water-powered source of energy. This year, droughts made more frequent and severe by rising temperatures have caused the biggest drops in hydropower generation recorded for decades.

Losses in power generation worldwide

At Lake Mead, not far from the US metropolis of Las Vegas, the Colorado River feeds the Hoover Dam, which supplies water to more than 140 million people in America. But right now, the vast reservoir is just one-third full.

Declining levels mean the dam’s power plant produced 25 per cent less electricity this July than would usually be the case. They have also prompted the US federal government to announce water cuts to towns downstream of the dam starting in January 2022.

In South America, it’s a similar situation. The Parana River, which flows through Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, is experiencing extremely low levels of water. Southern Brazil, where the Parana rises, has been in the grip of severe drought for three years.

According to local reports, levels in reservoirs in central and southern Brazil have dropped by more than half the average of the past 20 years, and are currently at just under a third of their capacity. As Brazil generates about 60 per cent of its electricity from hydropower, continued low dam levels could lead to blackouts.

A return to fossil fuels

To prevent that from happening, Brazilian authorities have begun reactivating natural gas power plants, which is causing electricity prices, as well as

greenhouse gas emissions, to rise.

A similar scenario is playing out back in the United States. In drought-ridden California, the state government has permitted industries and ships to use diesel generators for the electricity they cannot access from renewable sources. Natural gas power plants are also being permitted to burn more gas to generate electricity.

But it’s not only drought that can cripple hydroelectric power generation. Heavy rain and flooding can also pose major problems. In March 2019, severe flooding following Cyclone Idai, which struck western Africa, damaged two major plants in Malawi, cutting off power to parts of the country for several days.

Hydropower on the way out in Africa?

In several African countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi and Mozambique, hydropower accounts for more than 80 per cent of electricity generation, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). Overall, hydropower accounted for about 17 per cent of electricity in Africa at the end of 2019. That figure is forecast to rise to more than 23 per cent by 2040.

But according to the IEA, most new plans for hydropower plants in Africa do not adequately take into account the potential hazards of climate change, if they consider them at all.

Warnings against hydropower expansion

Meanwhile, many hydropower plants already in operation around the world are facing another problem — aging. According to a United Nations University study, dams reach the end of their useful life 50 to 100 years after construction. The more these structures weather, the study notes, the more likely dam failure becomes.

From as early as 25-35 years into a dam’s lifetime, the measures needed to maintain it significantly increase

the operating costs, the authors said.

With that in mind, it would be disastrous to invest in more hydropower plants while phasing out fossil fuels, says Thilo Papacek from CounterCurrent, a German NGO that campaigns for socially and environmentally responsible foreign involvement from German organisations abroad.

Hydropower plants don’t only interfere with the surrounding ecosystem, but because they prevent sediment from being carried downstream, they can also become hazards for people, Papacek told DW.

“Without sediment accumulation on the riverbanks, the river burrows deeper and narrower into the landscape behind the dam. It can then develop tremendous force during heavy rains, especially if water also has to be released from the reservoir,” he said, adding that it increases the risk of flooding in nearby settlements.

Mega-dam alternatives

“It’s true that we won’t be able to do without hydropower in the future,” said Klement Tockner, director general of the Senckenberg Society for Nature Research and a professor of ecosystem science at Goethe University in Frankfurt.

“But the question is: Where do we build them, how do we build them and how do we operate hydropower plants in the future?”

He believes they should not be built in existing protected areas where there are still sufficient free-flowing rivers and says that where appropriate, measures should be put in place to offset the negative impacts of hydropower plants on ecosystems — such as the restoration of impaired waterways and the removal of dams. New plants need to be built in such a way that rivers are still as permeable as possible — both to let fish and sediment to travel up and downstream, and to allow the flow of large volumes of water during floods.

“That means the flow velocity must not be impacted too much, and the

river must retain enough residual water as well as floodplains,” explained Stefan Uhlenbrook, a hydrologist at the International Water Management Institute (IWMD). “If necessary, sediment must be mechanically returned to the river channel,” he told DW.

He says large plants are likely to become increasingly ineffective due to climate change, and that the focus should be on smaller plants and a decentralized supply.

Technology alone is not enough

There are alternatives to mega-dams. Instream turbines, for example, are suspended in the middle of the river and generate electricity from the velocity of the flowing water. These don’t require extensive construction work and can still operate when water levels dip. But while they are suitable for remote regions, they cannot supply metropolitan areas.

Another example is the shaft hydropower plant, located at the Technical University of Munich (TUM), which was designed to accommodate for flood safety and longevity. A pilot plant in the southern German state of Bavaria supplies electricity to around 800 households.

But innovative technology alone won’t protect against severe and long-lasting droughts.

“We can mitigate the effects of droughts by using the land differently,” said ecosystem scientist Tockner. “Semi-natural forests and wetlands store a lot of water, which they then release during periods of drought — we have to look at how we can reduce both droughts and floods using nature-friendly measures.”

But, he added, given the increase in extreme weather events, it’s clear that “hydropower will no longer be a reliable source of energy to the same extent.”

For hydrologist Uhlenbrook, there’s another aspect in the energy debate that is often overlooked: “Above all, we must focus on saving as much energy as possible in the future.” —**dw**

ROUND-UP

TAC announces new recruitment drive for young talent across Oman

Interviews were conducted to fill several positions in the sales of new cars in the Barka showroom, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, South Al Batinah Directorate

MUSCAT: Oman's leading automobile pioneer Towell Auto Centre (TAC) has announced a new recruitment drive for young talent across Oman.

Following the campaign, interviews were conducted to fill several positions in the sales of new cars

in the Barka showroom, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, South Al Batinah Directorate.

For this part, Aflah Nasser Al-Shibli, HR Manager at Towell Auto Centre, stated that the company is committed to working alongside the directives of the Ministry of Labour to provide more job opportunities for Omani citizens in line with the government's specific goals for employment in the private sector.

More from this recruitment drive, the campaign is primarily focused on the immediate hiring of individuals.

The hired individuals will get the opportunity to work with international brands and will get a learning experience towards their growth through on the job training.

With 48+ years of glorious history, Towell Auto Centre has been proving to be a trusted name in all automotive-related products & services and aims to be the one-stop centre in the segment. To continue its growth and business, TAC is constantly reinventing its existing relationships with brands and finding new global brand partners to enhance and enrich the lives of its customers in Oman



NEW FEATURE

Maisarah Islamic introduces instant self-service ID update via mobile app

MUSCAT: Adding to the vast array of convenient services offered to its mobile banking users, Maisarah Islamic Banking Services – the Islamic banking window of Bank-Dhofar - recently introduced a new feature that allows existing customers to update their ID/resident card expiry date instantly through the mobile application without the need to visit the branch.

Maisarah is the first financial institution in Oman to provide an instant update of ID expiry dates without manual input by customers or service agents. With seamless scanning of the ID card, the system captures the new expiry date and updates the customer's profile automatically without any human intervention.

Highlighting the Islamic window's efforts to bring in state-of-



the-art digital banking solutions, Marwan Mohammed Al Zadjali, Head of Digital Banking at Maisarah, stated, "Our innovative mobile app is a full-fledged smart banking platform that has been designed thoroughly with the utmost attention to details to offer 24/7 convenience to our customers at their

fingertips. We are constantly looking for opportunities to improve the platform and to introduce new services and features that add value to our customers and give users the ultimate banking experience they deserve."

The new feature adds to the expansive bundle of services offered via Maisarah's mobile banking application where customers can get their transactions completed in simple steps anytime and anywhere. "Like the rest of our digital banking channels, the mobile application is highly secure and we constantly add more safety and security measures so our customers can utilize these services with complete peace of mind. By investing in technology, we make it easier for customers to get their financial transactions completed in

real-time," elaborated Al Zadjali.

Maisarah's mobile banking application is available on Android and IOS devices, with enabled face recognition, fingerprint login and Touch ID. Moreover, the pioneering application encompasses a host of self-services; including mobile top-up (Omantel, Ooredoo, Friendi and Renna), mobile phone and landline bill payment (Omantel, Ooredoo), internet bill payment (Omantel, Ooredoo, Awasr), water and electricity utility bill payment, debit card services (card details, limit change, card block, country unblock), credit card services (payment, card details, statements, card block), fund transfer (self-transfer, third party transfer, within-Oman transfer, instant transfer), standing orders and cardless cash.

NATIONAL LIFE AND GENERAL INSURANCE

NLG recognised at Oman Best Employer Brand Awards

MUSCAT: The largest insurance company in Oman, National Life and General Insurance (NLG) has recently been recognised at the Oman Best Employer Awards 2021 in two categories. The insurer won Dream Employer of the Year and Promoting Health in Work Place.

The company has an employee strength of well-trained insurance professionals and has received various awards and recognitions for its products and services. The company has been the Best Performing Company in the Large cap segment in Oman for the last 3 years in a row.

"I thank and congratulate each and every employee at NLG for winning this prestigious award. Our employees have proven time and again that they are one of the best in the industry and our awards are a testimony to that. I feel proud of our team and our



leaders for cultivating a culture of collaboration, teamwork and instilling the passion to excel. Our internal organisational operations and departmental processes are such as to actively involve our employees by giving them opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills, implement

their expertise and grow up in the organisation," said S. Venkatachalam, CEO, NLG.

Apart from being a good employer, NLG has ensured well that their employees have a good and safe workplace and was awarded – Promoting Health in Work Place. Some of the initiatives include awareness of safety norms and protocol, safety infrastructure and creating a safe and hygienic work environment. During the pandemic, with the company's Business Continuity Plan, many operations were smoothly run online including policy servicing, claims management and policy sales. Precautionary measures were implemented at their office to keep employees safe.

"Employee safety is our priority. We deployed a task force comprising members from HR, Administration, Learning & Development and Medical professionals within

NLG to monitor and manage COVID-19 cases within the organisation, facilitating the testing of suspected cases and assisted medical treatment for infected staff and their family members," said Sanaallah Al Balushi, Manager, HR and Admin.

Some of the COVID 19 preventive measures of NLG included regular sanitisation, distribution of PPE, precautionary thermal screening, ensuring social distancing at the workplace and common areas, awareness programs and most importantly vaccination drive for employees and their dependent family members.

National Life and General Insurance Co is the market leader and largest insurance company in Oman with a workforce of more than 500 employees operating in Oman, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait.

IMMUNISATION DRIVE



ahlibank vaccinates over 3,000 staff and their family members

MUSCAT: In line with its core values of supporting national initiatives, ahlibank has successfully vaccinated over 3,000 individuals, including the bank's employees and their respective family members.

The initiative, held in collaboration with the respected Ministry of Health, is a testament to the bank's keen interest to protect its team members and their dear ones, thereby creating a motivating environment, ensuring seamless operations and business continuity.

Speaking on this national initiative, Mohammed Al Mufargi, AGM Head of Human Resources at ahlibank said, "ahlibank gives the highest priority to the safety of its employees and the community at large. This has been reflected in a series of initiatives undertaken within the Bank that aimed mainly at preparing and responding quickly to combat the spread of this global pandemic. The launch of this vaccination campaign is an integral part of our efforts to address the spread of this virus, which has greatly affected our lifestyle, generated other dimensions and exceptional circumstances that we have never experienced before. Our participation in providing vaccines as soon as possible to our employees and their families is part of our responsibility to cre-

ate a safe working place and environment for all.

"We believe this is also essential to encourage our people to continue performing undeterred and contribute effectively to Oman's social and economic development in the long run."

ahlibank, represented by its exceptional leadership and a strong team, has been a front-runner in taking preventive measures in accordance with the directives announced by the government and the Supreme Committee dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The bank continues to provide guidance and directives to its staff, not only to immunise themselves but also to stay committed to social distancing across ahlibank's branch network, protecting themselves and hence, protecting those around them.

"We have also implemented the strategy of security, health and safety by preparing the premises in the Head Office and our branches distributed in all governorates, using a full proof mechanism that safeguards our customers and stakeholders as well. We also have a Business Continuity Management framework that's aligned to the operating model and is in compliance with regulatory requirements," added Ghada Al Balushi, GM – Head of Risk Management at ahlibank.

COMPACT

Lexus NX: Combination of luxury and contemporary design



MUSCAT: The sharp-looking, compact and luxurious NX300 is a brilliant combination of luxury, contemporary design and enjoyable driving dynamics.

The NX's advanced turbo-charged 238hp, 2.0-litre engine combines fuel efficiency with outstanding power output, generating exhilarating acceleration for sporty driving, together with exceptional fuel economy. It is also available with features offer-

ing both driver and passengers comfort and convenience such as a Head-Up Display (HUD), a dual-zone air conditioner, a power-folding 60:40 split rear seat, in addition to a hands-free power backdoor to name a few.

The interior of the NX exudes a sportier nature and a more luxurious feel. There is also a focus on the ease of use, convenience, and comfort of the equipment features, faithful to Lexus' commitment

to the principles of Omotenashi (hospitality). The first thing you are bound to notice is the 10.3-inch multimedia display on the dashboard. The central analogue clock, with a clearer face and a more pronounced outer ring, adds to the luxurious ambience.

14" speaker Mark Levinson Sound system adds a unique dimension to entertainment on the move with its crystal-clear audio quality. Nearly all the controls

and switches inside the NX, including the drive mode selector, shift knob, and door handles, have a metallic satin finish, enhancing the premium look and feel of the cabin. Even the audio knob and window switches feature a metallic coating.

Reflecting Lexus' utmost commitment to passenger safety, the NX300, comes equipped with a comprehensive suite of active and passive safety features.



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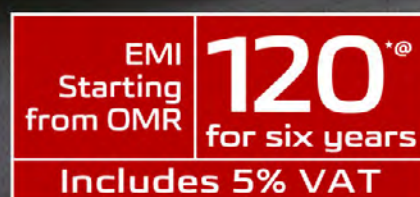
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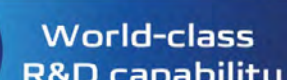




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