

HM sends condolences to Saudi King

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the death of Princess Jawaher bint Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Jalawi al Saud. His Majesty expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise. – ONA



Established 1981. Editor-in-chief: Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili

OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.om editor@omanobserver.om

P10

OSAKA
OFF TO
CONFIDENT
START



P15

S KOREA BANS
APP PAYMENT
MONOPOLIES IN
WORLD'S FIRST



P18

UNIQUE ATLAS
ON OMAN'S
WHALES AND
DOLPHINS



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO
UZBEKISTAN, SLOVAKIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan on his country's Independence Anniversary. His Majesty expressed his best wishes of good health and wellbeing to President Mirziyoyev and wished the people of Uzbekistan further progress and prosperity. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik also sent a cable of greetings to President Zuzana Caputova of the Slovak Republic on her country's National Day. His Majesty expressed his best wishes to President Caputova and the friendly people of her country. — ONA

SAUDI BUSINESSMEN
VISIT SUHAR, DUQM

A high profile Saudi business delegation visited Sohar Industrial City on Tuesday. The city falls under the umbrella of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn). The delegation explored the investment climate in the industrial city. Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry and Chairman of Madayn's Board of Directors welcomed the Saudi business delegates and briefed them on Madayn's mission. SEE P13

READ IN

OPINION P9

From Online to offline
with Covid protocol
Samuel Kutty

Stay positive for the
sound health of
body and mind
Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

INSIDE



DROUGHT DIPLOMACY HELPS
BOOST ISRAEL-JORDAN TIES

P6



MERKEL TAKES AIM AT SPD'S
SCHOLZ OVER FAR-LEFT

P8

OMAN
RECEIVES
86,400
DOSES OF
ASTRAZENECA

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Supreme Committee on Tuesday vaccination against Covid-19 is must for all travellers coming to the Sultanate. The announcement comes as the nation prepared to lift air travel curbs on Wednesday and the fight against the pandemic touched a milestone of 61 new cases and just one death in the last 24 hours. Only nine people were admitted to hospitals.

Oman also got a shot in the arm when it received 86,400 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine through COVAX. COVAX is a global initiative co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi (the Vaccines Alliance) and the World Health Organization

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, said: "In line with the national strategy for the purchase and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines, we are pleased to receive the new batch of AstraZeneca Covid-19 via the COVAX initiative. The delivery of this important shipment is part of a series of arrivals to continue the vaccination campaign. We are delighted to see positive outcomes as we continue to make Covid-19 vaccines available to the public."

The Supreme Committee said all arrivals must abide by the measures set to curb the spread of the virus. "We will follow-up on the epidemiological situation in all countries, and we will take appropriate decisions in accordance with these developments."

The SC added that the institutional quarantine will continue to be applicable to all

VACCINATION
MUST FOR
TRAVELLERS

FROM TODAY

ONLY VACCINATED
PEOPLE CAN ENTER
PUBLIC, PRIVATE
ESTABLISHMENTS

100% ATTENDANCE
OF EMPLOYEES IN
ALL GOVERNMENT
SECTORS AND
INSTITUTIONS

people coming to the Sultanate from Iraq and Iran, including Omani citizens, until further notice.

For the first time since April, there will be 100 per cent attendance in all government sectors and institutions from Wednesday.

Vaccination is mandatory for entry into government and private establishments with measures already being put in place by the human resources and security departments.

All employees and visitors to the public sector offices will have to present vaccination certificates through the Tarassud application.

Commercial establishments, including restaurants have put in place the necessary controls as per the Supreme Committee directives, apart from the existing measures such as offering sanitisers, mandatory wearing masks and temperature checks.

While Oman has lifted the ban on arrivals from all countries, it has not been moved from the United Kingdom's Red List to the amber list in the latest review. The next review of the list is expected to be announced on September 15 or 16.

Al Mashaykhi
clinches historic
medal in Tokyo



Al Mashaykhi celebrates his bronze medal in Tokyo.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 31

Oman's parathlete champion Mohammed bin Jameel al Mashaykhi bagged a historic bronze medal in the men's shot put - F34 class finals on Tuesday at Olympic Stadium in Tokyo. Al Mashaykhi's triumph at Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games is a historic accomplishment for the Sultanate as he won the first ever medal for Oman in the showpiece event.

Besides his achievement, he managed to register a new national record after clearing 10.84 metres. The gold medal went to Chinese parathlete star Li Liu as he registered a world record of 12.97, while

the Russian Paralympic Committee's parathlete Aleksei Churkin snatched the silver medal with a Russian record of 11.31 m.

The Omani 30-year-old managed to register his best record (10.84 metres) in the first attempt while in the second attempt he ended with 8.73 metres. In the following attempt, he cleared 9.60

metres and then 9.41. He registered 10.19 and 10.00 metres in the fifth and sixth attempts respectively.

Earlier on Saturday, Mohammed al Mashaykhi registered his season best record at men's club throw - F32 as he cleared 30.59 metres to end in ninth place. Oman's parathlete Taha al Harrasi registered personal record on Monday as he jumped 4.24 metres in T36 category of long jump competition. The Sultanate's parathlete Iman al Shamsy made her debut in the shot put – F34 class. She finished in 10th place with 5.17 metres.

Taliban celebrates return to total power in Afghanistan

KABUL: The Taliban celebrated their total return to power on Tuesday with gunfire and diplomacy, after the last US troops flew out of Afghanistan to end two decades of war.

The United States' longest military conflict drew to a close on Monday night when its forces abandoned Kabul airport, where it had overseen a frenzied airlift that saw more than 123,000 people flee.

Taliban fighters then quickly swept into the airport and fired weapons into the sky across the

city in jubilation — an astonishing comeback after US forces invaded in 2001, weeks after the September 11 attacks, and toppled them for supporting Al Qaeda.

"Congratulations to Afghanistan... this victory belongs to us all," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told reporters hours later on the airport runway. Mujahid said the Taliban's victory was a "lesson for other invaders".

In Kandahar, the spiritual birthplace of the movement and



Taliban fighters atop a Humvee vehicle take part in a rally in Kabul as they celebrate after the US pulled all its troops out of the country. — AFP

the country's second-largest city, thousands of celebrating supporters swept onto the streets.

However, many Afghans are terrified of a repeat of the Taliban's initial rule from 1996-2001, which was infamous for their treatment of women and girls, as well as a brutal justice system.

"We want to have good relations with the US and the world. We welcome good diplomatic relations with them all," he said.— AFP

SEE ALSO P7

WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 34°C Min 27°C SALALAH: Max 27°C Min 24°C NIZWA: Max 38°C Min 25°C

PRAYER TIMINGS

SUNRISE: 05:49 FAJR: 04:32 DHUHR: 12:12 ASR: 15:39 MAGHRIB: 18:30 ISHA: 19:42

1st September 2021
12:00 PM

الافتتاح الكبير

١ سبتمبر ٢٠٢١
١٢ ظهراً

كارفور مول عمان OPENING Carrefour MALL of OMAN



تلفزيون [نابرو] ٥٨ بوصة
Napro UHD TV ANPR5818

SAVE 47.59%
188 RIAL .900
99 RIAL .000

alcatel



كمبيوتر لوحي [ألكاتيل] + لوحة مفاتيح
Alcatel tablet 1T + keyboard

2GB RAM
32GB Memory
Android 10"

SAVE 30.78%
57 RIAL .650
39 RIAL .900

HUAWEI



هاتف ذكي [هواوي]
HUAWEI Smartphone Y6P

3GB RAM
64GB Memory
6.3" 13MP Camera

SAVE 24.57%
55 RIAL .550
41 RIAL .900



شاي أسود [ليببتون] ٧٠٠ غرام
Lipton loose tea 700g

MyCLUB points +10
SAVE 50%
1 RIAL .000
0 RIAL .500



زيت الذرة [المنارة] ١.٥ لتر X ٢ + ٥٠٠ مل
Minara corn oil 1.5L x2 + 500ml

SAVE 45.88%
5 RIAL .340
2 RIAL .890



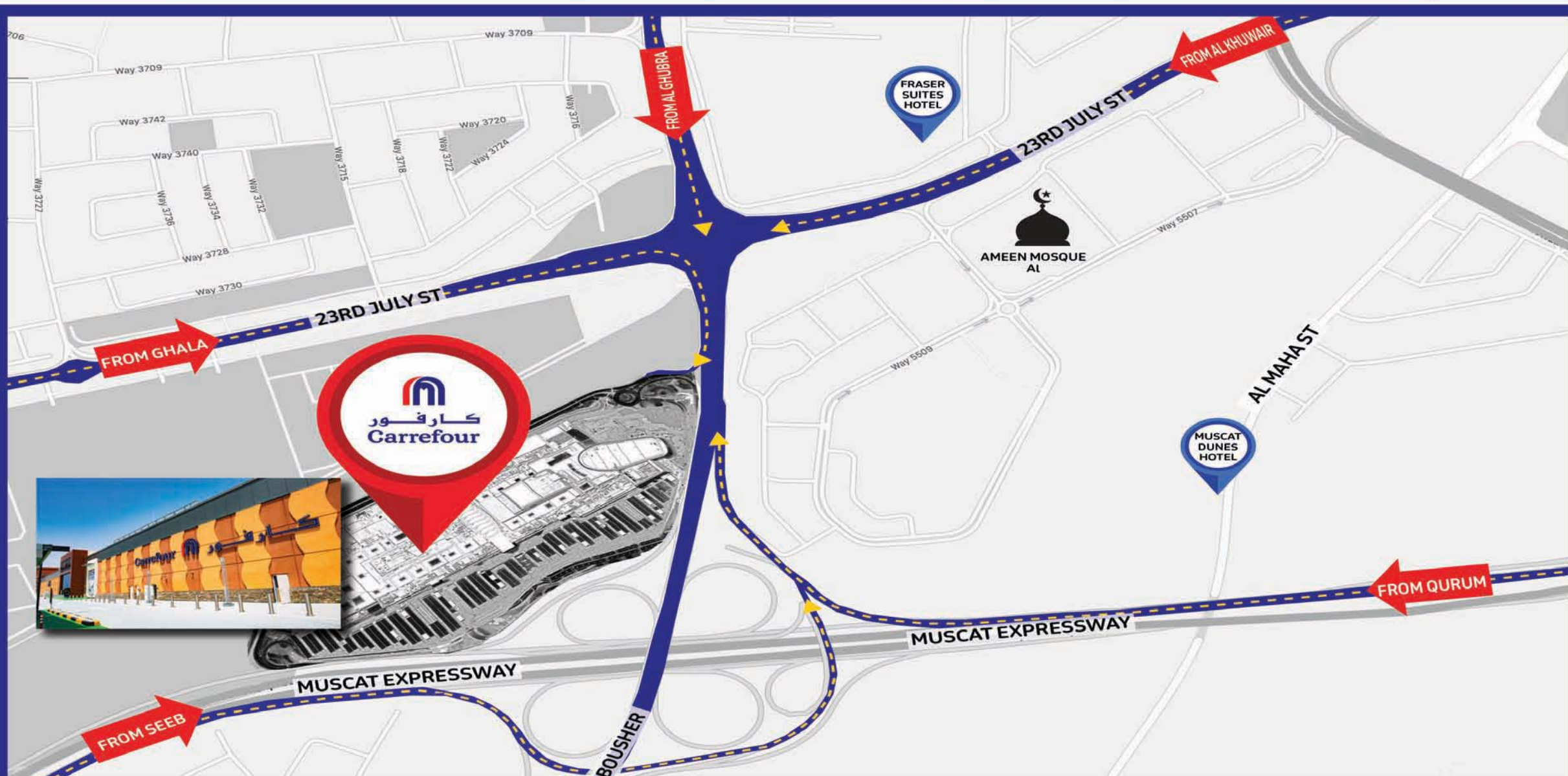
مبيض أقمشة [كلوركس] ٤٧٣ مل
Clorox bleach 473ml

4 Pieces
MyCLUB points +10
SAVE 60.36%
1 RIAL .892
0 RIAL .750



أرز بسمي [تيلدا] ٥ كيلو
Tilda basmati rice 5kg

SAVE 40.61%
6 RIAL .550
3 RIAL .890



Get our weekly offers straight to your Whatsapp!

احصل على عروضنا الإسبوعية من خلال الواتساب الخاص بك!



امسح رمز الاستجابة السريعة للاشتراك
Scan the QR Code to subscribe

or Whatsapp us at

71926574

Oman, Saudi explore tourism cooperation

MUSCAT: Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, received Khalid Abdulaziz al Falih, Minister of Investment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Muscat on Monday.

They explored areas of joint investment in projects that attract GCC tourists in general and citizens of the KSA in particular. They also stressed the importance of providing necessary facilitations and exchanging expertise in the heritage and tourism sectors, as well as stimulating and promoting intra-tourism after recovery from Covid-19.

The meeting underscored the importance of a timetable to implement and activate programmes and enhance cooperation between the two countries.

They also discussed the memorandum of understanding to be signed soon between the two



countries' ministries of tourism, which will establish a framework and basis for cooperation between the two sides.

The MoU will cover many aspects related to exchanging experience, promoting tourism, exhibitions and joint tourism activities, as well as developing human resources in the fields of training and rehabilitation. The next phase will witness the start of holding joint workshops to agree on areas of implementation according to priorities.

The meeting was attended by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Ahmad Arab, Deputy Minister for Strategy and Business Intelligence at the Ministry of Tourism of Saudi Arabia, Hashel bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of Oman Tourism Development Company "OMRAN" and specialists from both sides. — ONA

Major carmakers use brakes made in Oman



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 31

A number of international auto companies have contracted with the sultanate-based Dunes Oman to manufacture the brakes for cars they produce and distribute around the world.

Saeed bin Mohammed al Shehri, Deputy Director-General of Dunes Oman operating in the Salalah Free Zone, said, "The company's production capacity is 36,000 metric tonnes annually from its two production lines, and it plans to increase production in parallel with the increase in demand for its products.

He pointed out that the company is fully committed to the environment and it depends on electricity in all its production processes, noting that the use of electricity reduces the hazardous emissions that can result from such factories.

He stated that the production process in the factory depends on two main components: silica sand, which the company imports from outside the Sultanate due to its unavailability locally, and scrap iron, which it imports from car factories in Asia and Europe.

He added that Omanisation currently is 20 per cent, which is higher than the percentages set for free zones.

Dunes Oman started its operations in 2008 at Salalah Free zone and has been supplying systems and components to clients such as VW, BMW, Ford and Daimler among others.

All set for full unlock as Covid cases fall

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

Come September, Oman is on course to fully open up after tamping down coronavirus infections. The fall in the number of deaths and rise in vaccination have prompted the Supreme Committee to take measures like unlocking and lifting of air travel curbs for expats after nearly 127 days.

Government and private establishments are preparing to allow entry to vaccinated people. Staff strength will now be 100 per cent at public offices which was limited to 50 per cent. This will enable quicker work and better service to stakeholders.

The Passports and Residency Department at the Royal Oman Police (ROP) will start issuing visas of all types to those who have applied online from Wednesday. This will result in more visitors as well as employees resuming duty at their respective organisations.

The Supreme Committee has also announced September 12 to be the opening day for Oman's schools when hundreds of thousands of children are expected to return to their classes. International schools are allowed to follow their local counterparts or open according to their decisions.

"It is indeed good news that the land borders between the UAE and Oman are open from September



1 as this will be a shot in the arm for smooth and free movement of people between various cities in Oman and the UAE," said CM Najeeb, representative of a private company.

All travellers coming to the Sultanate are required to present a medical certificate with QR Code of taking two doses or the first dose of Oman approved Covid-19 vaccines. The second dose is to be taken before 14 days prior to the scheduled time for arriving to the Sultanate

Omani citizens & foreigners coming to the Sultanate on long

The fall in the number of deaths and rise in vaccination have prompted the Supreme Committee to take measures like unlocking and lifting of air travel curbs for expats after nearly 127 days

international flights (with a period of no less than 8 hours) with a pre-travel negative PCR test (within 96 hours) are exempt from

quarantine as well as travellers on shorter flights with a negative PCR test.

All travellers coming to the Sultanate on long international flights (with a period of no less than 8 hours) with a pre-travel negative PCR test (within 96 hours) are exempt from quarantine as well as travellers on shorter flights with a negative Covid-19 PCR test (within 72 hours).

Those who come to the Sultanate without a pre-travel PCR test are required to take a PCR test upon their arrival at the airport, wear Tarassud+ bracelet and

adhere to quarantine until the PCR test result is negative. If the result is positive, 10 days quarantine is required.

Travellers below 18 and passengers with medically confirmed health conditions that prevent them from taking the vaccination are exempt from presenting Covid-19 vaccine certificate and PCR test.

Omani citizens and their families who departed from the Sultanate before the issuance of this circular are exempted from the vaccine requirement for maximum two months.

More airlines needed to meet surge in demand

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

With India extending the ban on commercial international flights, scheduled services between Oman and the South Asian country will continue to be limited. It means fewer seats and sky-high ticket rates for inbound flights.

The demand for seats is expected to go up following lifting of ban on expats from September 1. Travellers and travel agents expect authorities to allow more airlines to meet the surge in demand.

Airlines now fly under an air bubble agreement with only

The demand for seats is expected to go up following lifting of ban on expats from September 1

national carriers and without other airlines from India such as Indigo, GoAir, and SpiceJet. There are no daily flights even on popular routes due to restrictions.

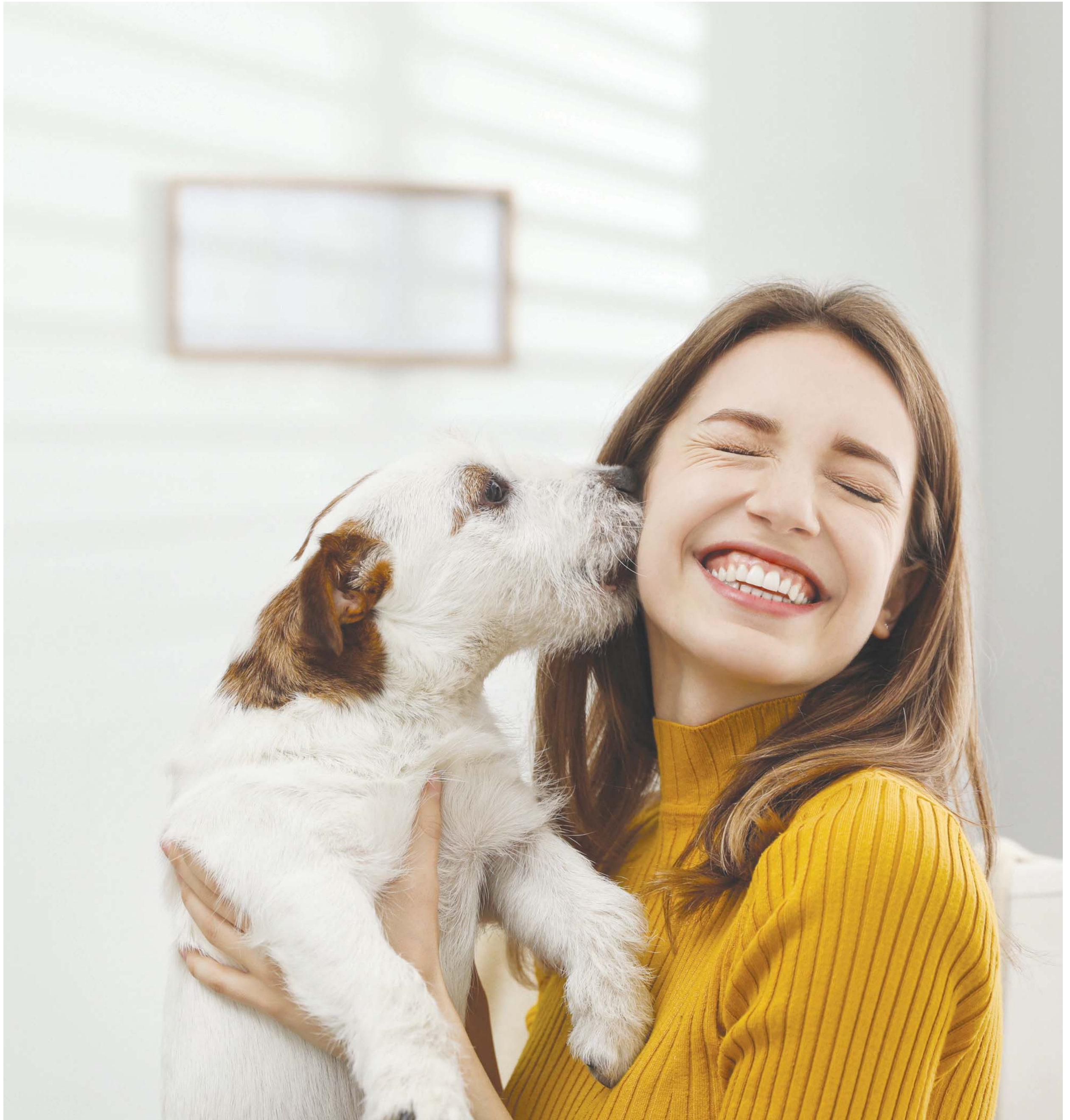
"With Oman to issue all types of visas, including tourist visas, from Wednesday, and more people are likely to travel between both

countries in the coming days. Hopefully, some changes will be noticed as travel becomes regular and easy," said sources in the aviation sector.

India on Sunday extended the ban on regular international commercial flights till September 30 due to the pandemic. India's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said that international cargo flights and those approved by the regulator will continue to operate.

Regular international flights have remained suspended since March 23, 2020, to check the spread of Covid-19.





BEYOND THE CUDDLE

ZAINAB AL NASSRI

[@zainabalnasseri](#)

Pets are great stress busters especially during lockdowns when people are cooped up at home. They can increase opportunities to exercise, get outside and socialise. Regular walking or playing with pets can decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels and triglyceride levels.

Pets can help manage loneliness and depression by giving us companionship. A recent study found pet ownership increased manifold during pandemic

But one must take note of the health risks and carefully study the requirements of pets instead of treating them as live toys just for fun. We should let them live their best lives.

For the majority of families in the Sultanate, birds are the pet of first choice as they are easy to deal with. Like fish, birds are perfect for those who do not have enough space in the house. Before deciding to bring the birds home, make sure the type is compatible with the members of the house.

Some people miscalculate the abilities of birds, which are intelligent creatures.

Breeding birds requires special care. One must provide a balanced diet, clean water and periodically clean the cage. Ensure that the cage is large enough so that the bird can spread its wings and fly around.

The same rules about cleanliness and feeding applies to other pets. Don't give your puppy an opportunity to soil in the house; keep an eye on them whenever they're indoors. They must be given proper potty training.

BEING A RESPONSIBLE PET OWNER MEANS TAKING NOTE OF THE HEALTH RISKS AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF PETS INSTEAD OF TREATING THEM AS LIVE TOYS JUST FOR FUN

When allocating a new place for new animals, preferably keep it away from the old animals until they get used to each other, because the animals take time to get to know each other.

Animal experts say the pet owners and their family members must understand how to deal with the pet,

how to carry it and play with it, in addition to knowing the laws related to it, to avoid disturbing or confusing it. One should learn about the maintenance of pets by reading books, watching videos or talking to fellow pet owners.

Al Wahaibi, a puppy breeder, says "Before bringing a pet home, make sure that no one in the house suffers from allergies. This is because you can't lock the animal in a separate room. So everyone should be compatible with the new guest"

He adds "Dogs are creatures full of vitality, energy and love towards their owners. They must be taken out for a walk at least three times a week. It should be noted that dogs must be trained to urinate in specific places and given periodic vaccinations. They must be bathed because they do not clean

themselves, unlike cats."

Cats are ideal pets for those who work long hours. Cats are independent creatures, and they sleep about 16 hours a day. But they also need attention such as food on time and clean sandboxes.

Fish, however, are different. The advantage of fish is that it can be kept in any house no matter what the size is. It is a great companion if you do not have enough time to spend with a pet or are allergic to furs and feathers.

Sarah Murad, who is passionate about ornamental fish, says "Although raising fish does not require much effort daily, we need to feed it regularly and make sure that the water is suitable for the fish... In stores that sell pet supplies, there are modern devices that help to provide food and ensure clean water. These devices make the job much easier."



Oman Sail set to host seven major events



Al Musannah Sport City



RSX World Championships

MUSCAT: Oman Sail is gearing up for a packed winter season as competitive sailing is back on the agenda with seven major tournaments taking place between October and December. The return of sport to the Sultanate will be a welcome boost to the national tourism economy which has faced an incredibly challenging period during the pandemic.

The influx of sailors, coaches, race officials and media from around the world is expected to exceed 2400 arrivals into Oman, delivering a multitude of socio-economic benefits to the country.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "The Sultanate of Oman has gained a strong reputation as a world class venue for high profile events. We are excited to use all of our expertise to deliver a series of memorable and impactful championships at marinas across the country in what promises to be the busiest period for sport that Oman has ever seen. After such a long period of enforced down time this is a spectacular way to show that



Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO Oman Sail

Oman is ready to welcome the world for authentic experiences, famed warm hospitality and perfect conditions for high level sailing."

Dermot Birchall, General Manager at Barceló Musannah Resort, said, "The entire hospitality industry is acutely aware of how difficult the past 18 months have been and we are all looking forward to welcoming guests back to Oman from around the world. The mild winter here in Musannah is perfect for visitors and with such an impressive festival of top-class



Laser World Championships 2013

sailing about to begin, we welcome the revival of tourism to Oman once again."

The packed calendar kicks off on October 11 with the Asian Windsurfing Championships in Musannah, before the focus shifts to Musannah Race Week returns from October 20 to November 5 and the Asian 49er, 49er FX and Nacra 17 Championships kicks off straight afterwards on November

5. The stakes are raised even higher a week later when the 2021 49er, 49er FX and Nacra 17 World Championships also in Musannah, then Sailing Arabia — The Tour makes a comeback, beginning once again in Musannah before heading south to Sur before finishing up in Muscat.

While the sailors are battling it out on the water in Sur at Sailing Arabia — The Tour, Musannah

once again plays host to a world championship as the 2021 ICLA Radial World Championships gets underway on November 29. Oman was chosen as a late replacement host when Houston, Texas, in the United States had to withdraw.

The final event of the season is the most prestigious as the 50th edition of the Youth Sailing World Championships come to Oman for

the very first time. Regarded as a blue-chip event by World Sailing, the Youth World Championships are a highlight of the global sailing calendar and the perfect way to bring an action-packed winter season to a close.

Oman Sail has also secured the World Race Walking Team Championships, which will take place in Muscat in March 2022 as sports and adventure tourism looks to provide a boost to tourism operators, hotels, local restaurants and communities. Oman Sail lends its support to Oman Hockey Association (OHA) in presenting the bid to the International Hockey Federation (FIH) to host the Hockey5s World Cup in 2024, which the Sultanate proudly won. Each event has the potential to showcase the country to new audiences and attract new visitors to the country when full international travel becomes possible again. Previous international events that Oman Sail hosted were popular running events Al Mouj Muscat Marathon and Oman by UTMB.

■ ITALIAN CHIEF OF DEFENCE VISITS NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE



MUSCAT: General Enzo Vecciarelli, Chief of the Defence of the Italian Republic, accompanied by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), visited the National Defence College (NDC) on Tuesday. Upon the guest's arrival, he was received by Air Vice Marshal Saleh bin Yahya al Maskari, NDC Commandant. The guest and his accompanying delegation were briefed on the college's facilities and equipment, as well as various departments and halls designed according to the latest specifications and equipped with the best educational systems, training aids and multi-purpose electronic network systems. — ONA

■ SULTANATE, SAUDI EYE DIGITAL ECONOMY TIES



MUSCAT: Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary for Communications and Information Technology, received Dr Ibrahim Mahmoud Babelli, Deputy Minister for Planning and Vision Realization of Saudi Arabia in Muscat on Tuesday. They reviewed spheres of cooperation in the digital economy field and the joint projects and initiatives. They also explored means of benefiting from the experiences of the two countries in the digital economy field. They also discussed matters of common interest and means of enhancing them for the good of the two countries. — ONA

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology
In AL Khuwair invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NO	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MOTs/HQ-21/25/2021	ROAD MARKINGS AND ROAD STUDS WORKS AT (TANUM/AL RUB AL KHALI) ROAD IN WILAYAT IBRI AL-DHAHRA GOVERNORATE	01-09-2021	13-09-2021	30-09-2021	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES IN THE SIMILAR WORKS (FIRST CLASS)	(35/-) THIRTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE
MOTs/HQ-22/26/2021	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR SUPERVISION OF REPAIR DAMAGED AREAS ON (SUHAR – YANQUL) EXISTING ASPHALT ROAD	01-09-2021	13-09-2021	30-09-2021	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES IN THE SIMILAR WORKS (FIRST CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with General Secretariat of the Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by local bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (1%) of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to (Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee). And hard copy of the same should be submitted manually to the Tenders Section, Tenders and Contracts Department (1st Floor), Ministry of Transport Building at Al Khuwair before 11:00 am on submission date.

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://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@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE

@mtcitoman

www.mtcit.gov.om



A worker prepares soap in a traditional way in Koura. — Reuters

Lebanese millers warn of production halt

BEIRUT: The Lebanese flour millers' association said on Tuesday fuel shortages were threatening bread production and mills would gradually stop working after supplies ran out.

Lebanon's financial melt-down has translated into crippling fuel shortages that have paralysed many aspects of daily life.

The state power generator has barely supplied any electricity, leaving Lebanese households and businesses increasingly reliant on private generators powered by fuel oil, which in turn is in short supply.

"The association is calling out to all concerned offi-

cials to work quickly before it is too late, fuel oil supply for all the mills has run out and they may stop working gradually starting today", a statement from the association said.

Despite efforts, alongside the economy and trade ministry, to communicate concerns to several officials, "no positive results have been reached", the statement said.

Lebanon's economic crisis, described by the World Bank as one of the deepest depressions of modern history, has seen its currency lose more than 90pc of its value and propelled more than half of its population into poverty. — Reuters

380,000 affected by heavy flooding in South Sudan

JUBA: Heavy flooding has affected about 380,000 people in South Sudan, with overflowing rivers submerging homes and displacing families in the impoverished country, the UN's humanitarian agency OCHA said on Tuesday.

Nearly three-quarters of those affected are in two states — Unity and Jonglei — OCHA said in a briefing note, warning of "more heavy rains and flooding expected in the coming months".

"Access is a major challenge, with the majority of flood-affected areas inaccessible by road", the agency said, with aid workers struggling to deliver supplies to displaced populations.

Michael Wai, who fled with his family to Jonglei's capital Bor, said many people were unable to move to safer areas.

"The flooding is coming from all directions — east south, north and west", he said.

"Many people have left some of the flooded areas but there are some people who have been behind because of vulnerability, they cannot move out of the place", he said, adding that elderly



Rising waters triggered by early seasonal rainfall have deluged farmland, killing livestock and destroying flimsy thatched huts, a year after record floods affected some 700,000 people. — Reuters

residents were in a particularly precarious condition.

Rising waters triggered by early seasonal rainfall have deluged farmland, killing livestock and destroying flimsy thatched huts, a year after record floods affected some 700,000 people.

Around 100,000 of those

displaced in last year's disaster have still not returned home, while the relentless rainfall has left some agricultural land submerged for well over a year, OCHA said.

The young nation is still struggling to cope with the aftermath of a five-year civil war that left nearly 400,000 people

dead.

Four out of five of South Sudan's 11 million people live in "absolute poverty", according to the World Bank in 2018, while more than 60 percent of its population suffers from severe hunger from the combined effects of conflict, drought and floods. — AFP

Drought diplomacy helps boost Israel-Jordan ties

JERUSALEM: As scientific warnings of dire climate change-induced drought grow, many in Israel and Jordan cast worried eyes at the river running between them and the critical but limited resources they share.

This month the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change showed unequivocally that the climate is changing faster than previously feared, heaping pressure on finite water supplies even as demands grow greater than ever before.

But experts say that instead of provoking argument, Israel and Jordan could be poised for an unprecedented boom in water cooperation amid technological advancements, climate pressures and stronger ties. Warnings about looming "water wars", including in the Middle East, were often inflated, said Duke University professor Erika Weinthal.

"Water is a resource that allows for adversaries to actually find ways to cooperate", said Weinthal, a specialist in global environmen-



An aerial picture shows a section of the Jordan river flowing through the Beteha (Bethsaida Valley) into the northern part of the Sea of Galilee, or Lake Tiberias, one of the main water sources in Israel. — AFP

tal politics, who has worked extensively on Israel-Jordan issues.

"If you look at the data, you see more cooperation over water than conflict, and where there is conflict, it is usually verbal," Weinthal

added, a leader in the emerging academic field of environmental peace-building.

Jordan is one of the world's most water-deficient countries, suffering from extreme droughts,

and water cooperation with Israel long pre-dates a 1994 peace deal between them.

The issue came to prominence in 1921, when Pinhas Rutenberg, a Russian engineer who had moved

to Palestine, convinced British authorities and Hashemite royals to approve a hydropower station where the Yarmuk tributary meets the Jordan River. It continued after Israel's founding in 1948, through decades when the nations were officially at war.

SOLAR POWER FOR WATER SWAP?

Water deals, like all bilateral ties, suffered in recent years under former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

But there have been signs of progress since Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's government took office in June, with the countries agreeing to their largest-ever water transaction.

New technologies reducing costs have made seawater desalination "a profitable concern", with investors from Israel, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates — which just normalised ties with the Jewish state — showing interest, said Gidon Bromberg, Israeli director at EcoPeace Middle East. — AFP

Drone attack on southern Saudi airport wounds 8

RIYADHI: A drone attack on Saudi Arabia's Abha airport wounded eight people on Tuesday, said the Saudi-led coalition battling rebels in neighbouring Yemen.

Following an earlier reported attack, "a second drone attempting to attack Abha International Airport was intercepted and shot down", the coalition said in a statement.

"Eight people were wounded and a civilian aircraft was damaged, according to initial information," it added.

The coalition said the second attack on the airport "constitutes a war crime" after it intercepted a booby-trapped drone earlier in the day.

In a second statement, the coalition said that those injured included one Saudi national, a Nepalese, three people from India and three from Bangladesh — one of whom was in critical condition. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

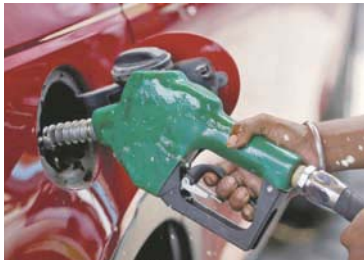
NAIROBI

UN lauds end of the leaded fuel era

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced that after a 19-year campaign against the use of leaded petrol, the last stocks of the once-standard fuel were used up in Algeria in July.

At an event in Nairobi to mark the occasion, UNEP head Inger Andersen called the news a "huge milestone for global health and our environment."

Leaded petrol, which was standard around the world in the 1970s, has been proven to



pollute air, soil and drinking water and can cause heart disease, strokes and cancer. The tetraethyllead contained in the fuel is also believed to negatively affect human brain development, especially in children.

TOKYO

Japan seeks \$50 bn defence budget

Japan's defence ministry on Tuesday unveiled a \$50 billion budget request as the country keeps military spending at record levels in the face of growing threats.

The military budget has been rising steadily for about a decade, and the defence ministry's latest request warns that "the security environment surrounding our country is increasingly severe."

The ministry is asking for 5.48 trillion yen (\$50 billion) in the fiscal year from April 2022,



up from the 5.3 trillion yen that was eventually approved for the ongoing year to March.

The figure is slightly down though from the amount the ministry initially requested last year, a record 5.49 trillion yen.

NICOSIA

N Cyprus braces for Syrian oil slick

The divided Mediterranean island of Cyprus braced on Tuesday for an approaching oil slick from a power plant in Syria that threatened a pristine coastal stretch of the breakaway north.

Environmental officials in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) — internationally recognised only by Ankara — said that 20,000 tonnes of fuel oil had spilled from the Syrian plant. "It is a complete disaster for the marine ecosystem", the head of the North's chamber of environ-



mental engineers, Cemaliye Ozverel Ekinici, told the local TAK news agency.

"This problem is not just a problem that concerns Northern Cyprus", Ekinici said. "We should act together with the south."

In brief

NEW DELHI



INDIA HOLDS FIRST TALKS WITH TALIBAN OFFICIAL

India's ambassador to Qatar held talks with a top Taliban leader on Tuesday, the Indian foreign ministry said, the first formal diplomatic engagement since the group took over Afghanistan.

The envoy, Deepak Mittal, met Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai, the head of the Taliban's Political Office in Doha, at the request of the Taliban, the foreign ministry said. The foreign ministry said the two sides discussed the safety of Indians left behind in Afghanistan.

Mittal also conveyed India's fears that anti-India militants could use Afghanistan's soil to mount attacks, the foreign ministry said.

BANGKOK



THAI PM FACES GRILLING AS PROTESTS PERSIST

Thai lawmakers began a censure debate against Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha on Tuesday, as opponents threatened to intensify street protests fueled by frustration at his government's handling of a Covid-19 crisis.

The political opposition accuses the former army chief and five of his cabinet ministers, including deputy prime minister and health minister Anutin Charnvirakul, of corruption, economic mismanagement and of bungling the coronavirus response. Prayuth has weathered two previous censure motions and is expected to survive a no-confidence vote scheduled for Saturday, owing to his coalition's clear parliamentary majority.

BUNIA



11 KIDA ABDUCTED BY MILITANTS IN DR CONGO

Eleven children aged nine to 17, including five girls, have been kidnapped by presumed rebels in northeastern DR Congo, a local official said on Tuesday.

The rebels, thought to be members of the IS-linked Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), abducted the group in a village in Ituri province on Sunday evening, according to Dieudonne Malangayi, acting chairman of the chiefdom of Walese Vonkutu.

The rebels erupted into the Bundingili area where the village is located, and kidnapped "all the civilians who were there, men, women and children," he told AFP by phone.

Taliban hails victory with gunfire after last US troops leave Afghanistan

KABUL: Celebratory gunfire resounded across the Afghan capital on Tuesday as the Taliban took control of the airport following the withdrawal of the last US troops, marking the end of a 20-year war that left the group stronger than it was in 2001.

Shaky video footage distributed by the Taliban showed fighters entering the airport after the last US troops flew out on a C-17 aircraft a minute before midnight, ending a hasty exit for Washington and its Nato allies.

"It is a historical day and a historical moment," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told a news conference at the airport after the departure. "We are proud of these moments, that we liberated our country from a great power."

An image from the Pentagon taken with night-vision optics showed the last US soldier to step aboard the final evacuation flight out of Kabul - Major General Chris Donahue, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division.

America's longest war took the lives of nearly 2,500 US troops and an estimated 240,000 Afghans, and cost some \$2 trillion.

Although it succeeded in driving the Taliban from power and stopped Afghanistan from being used by Al Qaeda as a base to attack the United States, it ended with the militants controlling more territory than when they last ruled.

During those years, from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban brutally



Members of the Taliban Badri 313 military unit take a position at the airport in Kabul. — AFP

enforced their strict laws, and the world watches now to see if the movement will form a more moderate and inclusive government in the months ahead.

Long lines formed in Kabul on Tuesday outside banks shuttered since the fall of the city as people tried to get money to pay for increasingly expensive food.

There was a mixture of triumph and elation on the one side as the Taliban celebrated their victory

and fear on the other.

"I had to go to the bank with my mother but when I went, the Taliban (were) beating women with sticks," said a 22-year-old woman who spoke on condition of anonymity because she feared for her safety.

She said the attack occurred among a crowd outside a branch of the Azizi Bank next to the Kabul Star Hotel in the centre of the capital.

"It's the first time I've seen something like that and it really frightened me."

Thousands of Afghans have already fled the country, fearing Taliban reprisals.

More than 123,000 people were evacuated from Kabul in a massive but chaotic airlift by the United States and its allies over the past two weeks, but many of those who helped Western nations during the war were left

behind.

A contingent of Americans, estimated by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at fewer than 200, and possibly closer to 100, wanted to leave but were unable to get on the last flights.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab put the number of UK nationals in Afghanistan in the low hundreds, following the evacuation of some 5,000.

— Reuters

Bangladeshi vaccine scientist wins Asia's 'Nobel Prize'

MANILA: A Bangladeshi scientist who helped develop a cheap oral vaccine against cholera, a Pakistani microfinance pioneer and a Filipino fisherman were among Tuesday's winners of Asia's equivalent to the Nobel Prize.

Firdausi Qadri, 70, was one of five recipients of the Ramon Magsaysay Award — named after a Filipino president killed in a plane crash — for her "life-long devotion to the scientific profession" and "untiring contributions to vaccine development".

Working at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka, Qadri had a "key role" in creating more affordable vaccines to combat cholera and typhoid, the Manila-based award foundation said in a statement.

Qadri was also cited for her leading role in a mass vaccination effort in Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh's southeastern district of Cox's Bazar in recent years that prevented a cholera outbreak.

The disease causes acute diarrhoea and spreads through

contaminated food and water.

Qadri was also cited for her efforts to build up Bangladesh's scientific research capacity.

"I'm overwhelmed, extremely delighted but also humbled," Qadri said in a video message shared by the foundation.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award was established in 1957 to honour people and groups tackling development problems.

It was held virtually this year after the event was cancelled in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Pakistani development worker Muhammad Amjad Saqib, 64, was also a winner for his "first-of-its-kind" interest- and collateral-free microfinance programme that has helped millions of poor families.

Nearly two decades after its launch, Akhuwat has grown into the nation's largest microfinance institution, distributing the equivalent of \$900 million and boasting an almost 100 per cent loan repayment rate, the award foundation said. — AFP

S Korean lawmakers vote on cameras in operating rooms

SEOUL: South Korean lawmakers voted on Tuesday to require hospitals to place surveillance cameras in operating rooms after a series of medical accidents involving unqualified staff who stood in for surgeons.

With the bill's passage, South Korea will be the first developed country to require closed-circuit cameras to record surgical procedures.

The push for having cameras in operating theatres intensified after a case in 2016 in which surgeons at private clinics were accused of assigning nurses or underqualified doctors to perform procedures, sometimes with fatal results.

Kwon Dae-hee, then a university junior, died of haemorrhage in October 2016 after 49 days in a coma as a result of a jawline surgery in Seoul, his mother Lee Na-geum, 61, told Reuters.

Lee, who has been holding a one-person protest in front of the parliament since January 2018, said her son was traumatised by bullying in high school for his prominent chin, and he was determined to undergo the 6.5 million won (\$5,600) cosmetic surgery.

Lee obtained CCTV footage of her son's surgery, but she said there are hundreds of parents who



Lee Na-geum, whose son died after undergoing jawline plastic surgery reacts during an interview in Seoul. — Reuters

will never know if their children's death on the operating table was the result of malpractice.

She also said she had reviewed the seven-and-a-half hour-long footage of Kwon's surgery more than 1,000 times and was able to prove that it was performed in part by an unqualified nursing assistant and an intern doctor, not by the chief plastic surgeon as promised.

This led to Kwon losing over 3.5 litres of blood and he died of excessive bleeding.

With the video evidence she collected, Lee sued the hospital and the head surgeon, who was later found guilty of involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to three years in prison.

"It is a medical crime when someone else - 'a ghost' - performs the surgery and not the surgeon hired without patient's consent," Lee said.

"There are so many unfortunate bereaved families who cannot reveal the truth because they don't have physical evidence when a healthy person dies in an operating room."

Multiple attempts had been made to amend the Medical Services Act to require surveillance cameras, primarily to stop doctors from delegating surgeries to unlicensed personnel, an act which is subject to a maximum of five years in prison or 50 million won (\$43,000) fine. — Reuters

Merkel takes aim at SPD’s Scholz over far-left coalition option

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose conservatives have fallen behind in polls for an election to replace her later this month, took aim on Tuesday at the Social Democratic candidate for declining to rule out a coalition with the far left.

After 16 years in power, Merkel’s conservatives are facing defeat, with a poll this week showing the centre-left SPD with a five point lead. A separate snap poll showed the SPD candidate for chancellor, Olaf Scholz, beat other candidates in a televised debate on Sunday.

Polls suggest Scholz could have several possible paths to form a coalition. However, when pressed during Sunday’s debate, Scholz did not categorically rule out forming a coalition with the far-left Linke party. Conservatives say this would mean a big lurch away from Germany’s centrist mainstream.

“With me as chancellor there would never be a coalition in which the Linke is involved, and whether this (stance) is shared by Olaf Scholz or not remains open”, Merkel told a joint news conference with Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. “In this context, there is simply a huge difference for the future of Germany between me and him”, she added of Scholz.

Merkel, in power since 2005, plans to stand down after the election. Her conservatives’ candidate for chancellor, Armin Laschet, has failed to capture voters’ imagination.

Meanwhile, dpa reports that with four weeks to go until the



Election posters of Germany's top candidates for chancellor North Rhine-Westphalia's State Premier and CDU leader Armin Laschet and Olaf Scholz, German Minister of Finance of the SPD are seen in Hamburg. — Reuters

German elections, outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel has made a rare attack on the centre-left candidate to be her successor, Olaf Scholz.

Merkel added her voice to what has become a common line of argument against Scholz, who is also her current finance minister: That he is not ruling out a possible coalition with the hard-left Die Linke (The Left) party after the elections.

Die Linke are polling at around 6 or 7 per cent, and they could help form a majority as part of a left-wing coalition.

Merkel’s centre-right Christian Democrats (CDU) have rejected the idea of a coalition with Die Linke on the grounds that the party has incompatible foreign



German Chancellor Angela Merkel attends a news conference with Austria's Chancellor Sebastian Kurz at the chancellery in Berlin. — Reuters

policy aims. Die Linke sees the Nato military alliance — of which Germany is a member — as a relic of the Cold War and describes it as a “war alliance.”

The CDU’s candidate for chan-

cellor, Armin Laschet, emphasised in Sunday’s televised debate that he would not work with Die Linke: “I. Won’t. Do. It. Full stop”, he said. On Tuesday Merkel also weighed in, saying: “With me as chancellor there would never be a coalition in which Die Linke plays a part. And it’s not clear whether Olaf Scholz is able to say the same thing... This is a huge difference between me and him (Scholz) when it comes to Germany’s future.”

The unflappable SPD candidate’s solid campaign has seen his poll numbers rise above Laschet’s in the past week, putting huge pressure on the centre-right as they fear losing the chancellorship after Merkel’s decade and a half in power. — AFP/dpa

Greek PM sacks public order minister after wildfires

ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis (pictured) replaced his public order and tourism ministers on Tuesday and created a new civil protection post following sharp criticism of the government’s response to a spate of summer wildfires.

More than a quarter of a million hectares of pine forests were destroyed in August by blazes that burned for several days across Greece, with flames reaching the outskirts of Athens. Homes and businesses were destroyed, two people were killed and thousands were forced to evacuate.

Mitsotakis, whose conservative government took office in July 2019, has apologised publicly for delays and breakdowns in the official response to the fires, and promised to rectify mistakes.

On Tuesday, he replaced Public Order Minister Michalis Chrysochoidis with Takis

Theodorikakos, a political analyst and former interior minister.

He switched Health Minister Vassilis Kikilias, who last year oversaw Greece’s successful containment of the first wave of Covid-19 infections, to the country’s key tourism post in place of Harry Theoharis.

Mitsotakis’ spokesperson also announced the creation of a civil protection ministry to be headed by Evangelos Apostolakis, a retired admiral and former defence minister. But Apostolakis, who served as defence minister under a previous Syriza leftist government, did not accept the post on grounds that an interparty consensus regarding his appointment had not been reached.

The prime minister’s office confirmed the rejection by Apostolakis and plans to look for a replacement for the post. — Reuters



REMEMBERING DIANA



A person looks at a floral tribute to Princess Diana on the 24th anniversary of her death, at the gates of Kensington Palace in London. — Reuters

Ida inflicts ‘catastrophic’ destruction on Louisiana

NEW ORLEANS: Rescuers on Monday combed through the “catastrophic” damage Hurricane Ida inflicted on Louisiana, a day after the fierce storm killed at least two people, stranded others in rising floodwaters and sheared the roofs off homes.

New Orleans was still mostly without power more than 24 hours after Ida slammed into the Louisiana coast as a Category 4 storm, exactly 16 years to the day that Hurricane Katrina made landfall, wreaking deadly havoc.

While search and rescue missions focus on those who sheltered in place, local officials urged people who had evacuated not to return yet as there was a lack of services and trees, debris and

downed power lines continue to pose a hazard.

“I know people are anxious to get back home, but I am urging you to wait until you get the all clear from your local officials. The storm may have passed but dangers still remain”, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards said at televised a press conference.

Two deaths have been confirmed as crews began fanning out in boats and off-road vehicles to search communities cut off by the hurricane. A man was also missing after apparently being killed by an alligator.

Images of people being plucked from flooded cars and pictures of destroyed homes surfaced on social media, while the damage in



People look at debris damage in Laplace, Louisiana after Hurricane Ida made landfall. — AFP

New Orleans itself remained limited.

New Orleans Airport said all incoming and outgoing flights slated for Tuesday were cancelled, while airlines had scrapped 197 flights scheduled on Wednesday.

Ida — which was downgraded to a tropical depression on Monday — knocked out power for more than a million properties across Louisiana, according to outage tracker PowerOutage.US.

“I was there 16 years ago. The wind seems worse this time but the damage seems less bad”, said French Quarter resident Derek Terry, surveying his neighbourhood in flip-flops and a T-shirt, umbrella in hand.

“I have a broken window. Some

tiles from the roof are on the streets and water came inside”, the 53-year-old retired pharmacist added.

According to Edwards the levee system in the affected parishes had “really held up very well, otherwise we would be facing much more problems today”.

In the town of Jean Lafitte, just south of New Orleans, Mayor Tim Kerner said the rapidly rising waters had overtopped the 7.5-foot-high levees. “Total devastation, catastrophic, our town levees have been overtopped”, Kerner told ABC-affiliate WGNO.

“We have anywhere between 75 to 200 people stranded in Barataria”, after a barge took out a bridge to the island. — AFP

MADRID

Around 30 missing as boat rescued off Canary Isles

Around 30 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa were believed lost at sea trying to cross to the Canary Islands, while more than 30 others were rescued by the coastguard, Spanish officials said. Rescuers from Salvamento Maritimo said they had found 32 migrants on board a dinghy off the island of Fuerteventura in the early hours of the morning, as well as the body of one person.

Survivors said the boat had been carrying around 60 people when it set sail, a source at the



Spanish government delegation said. Caminando Fronteras, a Spanish NGO that monitors SOS calls from migrants at sea, said two boats had gone missing and there was some confusion as to which one had been found. —AFP

MOSCOW

Putin gives cash to police ahead of polls

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday ordered law enforcement officers and army staff receive \$200, as he seeks support for his unpopular United Russia party ahead of parliamentary elections next month. The cash handouts follow earlier one-time payments for pensioners of \$135 ahead of Lower House State Duma polls in September, with United Russia’s ratings hit by rising prices coupled with falling wages. Russia’s legal information portal



showed Putin had signed decrees ordering one-time cash payments of 15,000 roubles (\$200) for members of the military and law enforcement bodies to be handed out in September for their ‘social protection’. — AFP

RIGA

Alar Karis elected as Estonia’s new president

Scientist Alar Karis is to be Estonia’s next president, after he was backed by two-thirds of lawmakers in a second round of voting. Karis, the former director of the Estonian National Museum, won the support of 72 of the 101 lawmakers in Estonia’s parliament, the Riigikogu.

He replaces current President Kersti Kaljulaid, with his inauguration scheduled for October 11. The president of Estonia is a largely ceremonial role and involves mainly



representative duties. The president of Estonia is a largely ceremonial role and involves mainly representative duties. Estonia’s current president is Kersti Kaljulaid. — dpa

US election curbs: A bumpy road ahead for liberals

ANDREW CHUNG & LAWRENCE HURLEY

During the bitter legal battles over the 2020 presidential election, conservative US Supreme Court justices signalled an embrace of a once-marginal legal doctrine that largely gives state legislatures power to set election rules.

If applied aggressively by the court, the “independent state legislature doctrine,” could further empower states to limit voting rights at a time when Republicans, emboldened by former president Donald Trump’s baseless claims of election fraud after his loss to Democratic President Joe Biden, are enacting new restrictions.

“It is a ticking time bomb,” said Rick Hasen, a professor at the University of California, Irvine School of Law.

The doctrine could limit the ability of courts to block voting rules that violate state law. It could also make it harder to challenge the drawing of electoral districts to entrench one political party in power, known as gerrymandering, and factor into lawsuits that arise in the heat of an election.

The doctrine threatens another avenue for challenging election restrictions and maps as plaintiffs and voting rights advocates have increasingly turned to state courts for relief. Unlike the US Constitution, which implies the right to vote but does not explicitly grant it, most state constitutions expressly protect the right to vote.

“It would give the legislatures the authority to pass any voting rules they want without meaningful oversight, particularly under the state constitution,” said Josh Douglas, a voting rights expert at the University of Kentucky Rosenberg College of Law. This can undermine voting rights by letting legislators craft rules that help them win re-election, he added.

The doctrine is based in part on language in the US Constitution that the “times, places and manner” of federal elections “shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof.”

Four of the Supreme Court’s six conservative justices appeared to lend weight to the doctrine during the flurry of litigation around the 2020 election, when Republican lawmakers or officials sought to block lower court decisions allowing or requiring changes to election deadlines and other rules to account for the coronavirus pandemic.

— Reuters

The doctrine would give the legislatures the authority to pass any voting rules they want without meaningful oversight, particularly under the state constitution

JOSH DOUGLAS
A voting rights expert



VIEW FROM THE TOP

A picture taken from the top of Al Hamra Tower shows a view of other high-rise buildings in Kuwait City. The Al Hamra Tower is the tallest skyscraper in Kuwait and one of the top 10 tallest towers in the world. — AFP

Online to offline with Covid protocol



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

AFTER FACING THE BIGGEST EVER CHALLENGE DURING THE RECENT MONTHS, POLICYMAKERS AND AUTHORITIES ARE SLOWLY REOPENING ACTIVITIES WITH EXPECTATIONS OF INJECTING LIFE INTO THEIR ECONOMIES SHATTERED BY THE PANDEMIC

For most of us, as soon as we roll out of the bed, the day starts with checking smartphones or laptops to keep up with the news, placing an order for breakfast, setting up online classes for children or connecting with our colleagues.

In short, what passes for normal life now happens almost entirely online. Developers both in public and private sectors have been mobilised and engaged in designing new apps and services to suit work from home.

More and more activities including communications, entertainment, and social interaction — all have gone online. Educational institutions around the world have had to adjust their teaching to be carried out through remote learning.

All these are happening as a result of Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent movement restrictions including lockdowns!

After facing the biggest ever challenge during the recent months, policymakers and authorities are slowly reopening activities with expectations of injecting life into their economies shattered by the pandemic. So are the decisions to open educational institutions, even though it is a new integration of residential and online learning in countries including Oman.

Everyone in the education system, especially our children who have been missing the classroom for several months,

up to a big extent, will savour again the experience of face-to-face classes. Parents, on the other hand, are anxious and apprehensive.

And for teachers, they have to balance teaching with a virus-familiar behaviour!

While experts are of the opinion that the long closure of schools has adversely affected the learning abilities of children, my friend, who has two high school level children, reacted by saying, “seclusion of months is going to end soon. It is a relief for us the parents and children although the Covid-19 scare still persists”.

While schools are set to reopen even as the education system will be blended, all measures must be taken to prevent transmission of Covid-19. Reopening of schools must be guided by careful risk analysis and epidemiological factors.

Although a section of the parents and teachers support reopening of school, we should not forget the fact that a lot of parents are opposed to the idea.

Schools may adopt one or more approaches during the course of the school year and pandemic. Being prepared for a variety of schooling environments can empower you and your child and reduce anxiety.

It’s important to make sure that managements are proactively implementing every plan and measure needed to keep the children safe while

at school. They should take all necessary steps, if need be, a parents-teachers committee should be formed to ensure that precautionary measures are followed in the compounds.

Social distancing is still very important. The most likely way for Covid-19 to spread is from person to person — primarily between people who come into close contact with one another.

Wearing a mask helps contain any potentially infectious respiratory droplets that may be released while breathing, talking or coughing — especially when social distancing is more challenging and even if the person doesn’t yet know they’re sick.

Although surface-to-person transmission isn’t the primary way the virus spreads, parents, on the other hand, must encourage their wards to practice hand-washing at home and explain why it’s important to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before and after eating.

Covid-19 symptoms must be monitored and antigen tests must be conducted at schools. When it comes to how we work and how we learn, I don’t think we will return to the pre-pandemic status quo. Still, we can win and feel assured that our children are safe provided we follow the precautionary measures – both at home and school!

Stay positive for the sound health of body and mind



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Laugh, and the world laughs with you; weep, and you weep alone. Imagine you are suddenly in the grip of cancer. You thought you knew how the world worked or at least the parts of it. When cancer cells slowly started eating your cells, you stopped trusting your thoughts and beliefs.

Perhaps you realised too late that you should have listened to people when they talked about steps to avoid getting sick.

Patients who beat cancer have a great positive attitude and this is what really differentiates the survivors from the dead. Terminally ill patients are told umpteen times about staying positive. Not all can keep smiling in the face of nerve-wracking pain

and tedious treatments.

Cancer is diagnosed in different ways. Some have a family history and their doctors monitor them for years. Others show persisting symptoms and a definitive diagnosis is more of a terrible confirmation than a shock. Another group goes on with their busy lives till one day they check in for a routine appointment to receive the bad news.

All these people must have had the common symptoms of cancer like pain, weight loss without reason, fatigue, recurring fever, changes in skin tones, sores that don’t heal, cough or hoarseness that doesn’t go away.

According to WHO, cancer is a leading cause of death

PATIENTS WHO BEAT CANCER HAVE A GREAT POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND THIS IS WHAT REALLY DIFFERENTIATES THE SURVIVORS FROM THE DEAD. NOT ALL CAN KEEP SMILING IN THE FACE OF NERVE-WRACKING PAIN AND TEDIOUS TREATMENTS

worldwide, accounting for nearly 10 million deaths in 2020. The most common in 2020 were breast (2.26 million cases), lung (2.21 million cases), colon and rectum (1.93 million cases), prostate (1.41 million cases), skin (1.20 million cases) and stomach (1.09 million cases).

Tobacco use, alcohol use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and air pollution are risk factors for cancer (and other noncommunicable diseases).

We should have more hospitals, medical researchers, doctors, nurses and nutritionists to keep us safe from cancer.

This is what I want to tell a terminally patient with no hopes and life is a daily grind of pain and

fear. Keep telling your body that you want to live, perhaps not very impossible. Repeat the same to your doctor who tells you to start the final countdown. You have to remember the simple fact that generally happy people do not get sick. Even anger or frustrations can turn into cancer. So you need to get rid of those feelings, or they will kill you.

It is hard to imagine the life of a person who loses father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister to cancer after suffering for long. Only time can heal the wound. We should get on with life to let nature take its course.

(The author is physician, medical innovator and writer)

sport

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om
follow us: @observersportz



NEW YORK: Defending champion Naomi Osaka stretched her Grand Slam win streak to 16 matches on Monday at the US Open while Greek third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas struggled past Andy Murray in five sets.

Osaka, seeking her third US Open crown in four years, defeated 87th-ranked Czech Marie Bouzkova 6-4, 6-1 at a packed Arthur Ashe Stadium to book a second-round match-up with Serbian qualifier Olga Danilovic.

"It feels kind of crazy to play in front of everyone again", Osaka said. "I feel really comfortable here. I'm just glad I won."

Osaka beat Bouzkova in their only prior meeting in the first round of this year's Australian Open on the way to her fourth Grand Slam title.

The 23-year-old Japanese star could become the first back-to-back US Open women's champion since Serena Williams, out this year with a torn hamstring, won her third in a row in 2014.

Osaka's major win streak includes her most recent US and Australian Open wins and a first-round win at this year's French Open before withdrawing over mental health issues.

Osaka, who lit the cauldron at the Tokyo Olympics, gave an Olympic pin to a young girl in the same venue where she won last year's title when fans were banned due to Covid-19.

"It felt quite lonely for me", she said. "So, I'm quite glad to see little kids in the audience and grown-ups too. The energy here is unmatched."

Osaka broke Bouzkova in the 10th game of the first set when the Czech netted a backhand, the broke for a 2-0 lead in the second set on the way to victory in 93 minutes.

Tsitsipas outlasted Britain's Murray, a three-time Grand Slam champion, by 2-6, 7-6 (9/7), 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 after four hours and 49 minutes in surroundings more like an intense second-week showdown than a curtain-raiser for the fortnight.

"To have an electric atmosphere out here is something we've been waiting for", Tsitsipas said.

Two-time Olympic champion Murray, ranked 112th lost for the first time in 15 first-round US Open matches.

"It didn't come easy", Tsitsipas said.

Tsitsipas, this year's French Open runner-up, took a long break before the final set, frustrating Murray, who surrendered a break in the opening game. Delay tactics brought a frosty reception at the net after the match.

"I have zero time for that stuff at all and I lost respect for him", Murray said. "It's nonsense. And he knows it, as well."

Tsitsipas, who plays Frenchman Adrian Mannarino next, said he followed ATP rules on breaks and medical timeouts, even as Murray questioned the length and timing.

"I'm playing by the rules and sticking to what the ATP says is fair", said Tsitsipas. "Then the rest is fine."

— AFP



Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas hits a return to Britain's Andy Murray. — AFP



USA's Sloane Stephens hits a return to USA's Madison Keys. — AFP

TSITSIPAS EDGES PAST MURRAY AS
CROWD RETURNS AT US OPEN

OSAKA OFF TO CONFIDENT START



Japan's Naomi Osaka serves to Czech Republic's Marie Bouzkova in the 2021 US Open in New York. — AFP



Mumbai go 2-0 up in ODI series

OMAN SKITTLED OUT FOR 69 AS JAFFER SMASHES 122

SHAHZAD RAZA
MUSCAT, AUG 31

Arman Jaffer smashed a scintillating 122 as Mumbai inflicted a crushing 231-run defeat on Oman in the second one-day to take the unassailable 2-0 lead in the four-match series here at Oman Cricket Academy Ground One in Al Amerat on Tuesday.

Mumbai appear to be batting better as the tour progresses and Arman's century was the highlight of their 300 for 8 that included a superb unbeaten 73 from all-rounder Sujit Naik.

Oman pacer Mohammed Nadeem picked up 4 for 67, while spinner Nester Dhamba bagged 2 for 30.

Concerned over a string of low scores during the series, Oman surprised everyone with another batting low, getting dismissed for an embarrassing 69 all out in just 22.5 overs, only Nadeem holding his ground amid the ruins with a patient 35.

Mohit Avasthi was the pick of Mumbai bowlers, claiming 4 for 31. Drumil Matkar was equally impressive, taking his 3 wickets for 21.

Man of the match Arman said he felt in great touch throughout his 114-ball knock.

"I am happy to have scored a century. It was long overdue and it feels great to have contributed to my team's win," he said.

Mumbai captain Shams Mulani was delighted at his young team finally finding its groove in Oman.

"Our batting really flourished today. We needed somebody to



Arman Jaffer hitting a boundary against Oman.



Arman Jaffer receives MOM award from Anil Khimji.

come out and put a big score on the board. I am happy that Arman and Sujith batted brilliantly and laid the foundation for today's win," he added.

After Wednesday's rest day, the two teams will play the third game on Thursday before winding up the series with Friday's last one-day match.

Brief scores: Mumbai 300 for 8 in 50 overs (Arman Jaffer 122 – 11x4, 3x6, Sujit Naik 73 not out – 6x4, Chinmay Sutar 37 – 2x4, 1x6, Yashasvi Jaiswal 27 – 2x4, 2x6. Mohammed Nadeem 4-67, Nester Dhamba 2-30) thrashed Oman 69 all out in 22.5 overs (Mohammed Nadeem 35 – 3x4, 1x6. Mohit Avasthi 4-31, Dhruvil Matkar 3-21, Deepak Shetty 2-09) by 231 runs.

All-time leading SA Test wicket-taker Steyn retires

JOHANNESBURG: Dale Steyn, South Africa's all-time leading Test wicket-taker, announced his retirement from all cricket on Tuesday.

Steyn, 38, made the announcement on social media, saying he was "bittersweet but grateful."

"It's been 20 years of training, matches, travel, wins, losses, strapped feet, jet lag, joy and brotherhood.

"Thank you to everyone, from family to team-mates, journalists to fans, it's been an incredible journey together," he added.

Steyn took 439 wickets in 93 Test matches before announcing his retirement from the five-day format in 2019.

He said at the time that he wanted to continue playing white-ball international cricket and was selected for the 2019 Cricket World Cup in England.

But he had to withdraw from the tournament without playing a match because of a shoulder injury and failed to add to his 196 one-day internationals wickets.

He played in a T20 international series against Australia in February 2020 and was expected to play in the T20 World Cup later that year before it was postponed because of Covid-19. He took 64 wickets in the short format.

He had not played any cricket since March this year when he made the last of three appearances for the Quetta Gladiators in the Pakistan Super League in Karachi.

At his peak, Steyn was a master of late away swing with the new



South Africa's Dale Steyn.

ball and reverse swing with the old ball, delivered at high pace.

He spent six years as the number one bowler in Test cricket according to the International Cricket Council's rankings.

Arguably his greatest performance was when he made his highest Test score of 76 and had match figures of ten wickets for 154 runs in helping South Africa beat Australia in Melbourne in 2008/08 to clinch their first series win in Australia.

Steyn's announcement drew immediate tributes on Twitter.

"Great player, great man, amazing memories," former Proteas team-mate AB de Villiers said.

England's James Anderson described Steyn as "The Best", while Australia's Pat

Cummins wrote Steyn had "set the standard" for fast bowlers "for 20 years". — AFP

Afghan Paralympian beats the odds to compete in Tokyo

TOKYO: After a dramatic evacuation from Taliban-held Kabul and a secret operation to fly him to Tokyo, Afghan Paralympian Hossain Rasouli beat the odds on Tuesday to compete in the long jump.

It was not the event he had been expecting to contest, after qualifying for the 100m T47, but then just about everything in his world was turned upside down with the insurgents' capture of his homeland.

After the militant group overran the capital, he and fellow Afghan Paralympian Zakia Khudadadi found themselves trapped, with no way to get to Tokyo.

At first, it seemed their Paralympic dream was over. A Tokyo 2020 volunteer symbolically carried the Afghan flag during the Games opening ceremony, with no athletes on the ground to take part.

Over the weekend though, officials revealed the Afghan pair had been successfully flown out of the country.

After a stop in Dubai, they were taken to Paris and spent a week at the French sports ministry's high-performance training centre before flying to Tokyo, where they arrived on Saturday evening.

The pair are being kept away from the media, with the International Paralympic



Afghanistan's Hossain Rasouli competes in the final of the men's long jump -T47. — AFP

Committee saying the athletes needed space to focus on their sport.

But IPC spokesman Craig Spence said on Tuesday that Rasouli was "super excited to be competing today".

The Afghan emerged from the athletes' entrance on Tuesday with a wave to team officials dotted around the mostly empty Olympic Stadium.

Rasouli, whose left hand was amputated as the result of a mine explosion, then proudly pointed towards the Afghanistan Paralympic Committee logo on his vest. — AFP

Storey clinches record 16th Paralympics gold

TOKYO: Cycling queen Sarah Storey said she had to conquer a "race of truth" Tuesday as she claimed a British record-equalling 16th Paralympics gold medal.

The 43-year-old, who won 3,000m pursuit gold on the track six days ago, blew away a high-class field in the women's road C5 time trial at Fuji International Speedway to secure her 27th medal overall.

"It's the race of truth," said Storey, who was born without a functioning left hand.

"It's you against the clock, and trying to pick off your competitors as you see them.

"I love watching time trials, I love putting it all together so when you get to race them and they go so well, they feel amazing."

It was a repeat of last week's pursuit one-two for Britain at the velodrome as Crystal Lane-Wright again took the silver.

But she was more than a minute-and-a-half behind Storey's winning time of 36 min 08.90 sec for her three laps of the eight-kilometre circuit. Germany's Kerstin Brachtendorf was third.

"Every corner felt really quick and really smooth," said Storey.

"I got caught up in a bit of traffic in certain parts of the course so I just had to navigate my way around that but apart from that it was super quick."

Storey can win a 17th gold and become the greatest ever British Paralympian on Thursday if she retains her C4-5 road race title for a Tokyo golden hat-trick.

She is tied on 16 golds with swimmer Mike Kenny, who



Sarah Storey of Britain competes in the women's cycling road individual C5 time trial. — Reuters

competed from 1976 to 1988.

Storey's longevity is remarkable. She began her Paralympic career in the swimming pool as a 14-year-old at Barcelona in 1992.

Twenty-nine years later, she looks unassailable having broken her own world record in the pursuit and taken her third successive C5 time trial gold.

'EXCITING OPPORTUNITY'

"I've been preparing for this race for such a long time. The time trial is probably one of my favourite events," Storey said.

"You bring this enormity to the line with you each time, but that also means that your competitors

know how prepared you are and how much work you've put in to perfect it."

After winning five swimming gold medals from 1992 to 2004, Storey switched to cycling at Beijing 2008, and now is on the brink of surpassing Kenny's record, which has stood for 33 years.

She became Britain's most successful female Paralympian at London 2012 when she overtook Tanni Grey-Thompson's 11-gold record.

But she would not be taking for granted winning a third successive road race on Thursday, after taking gold in London 2012 and Rio five

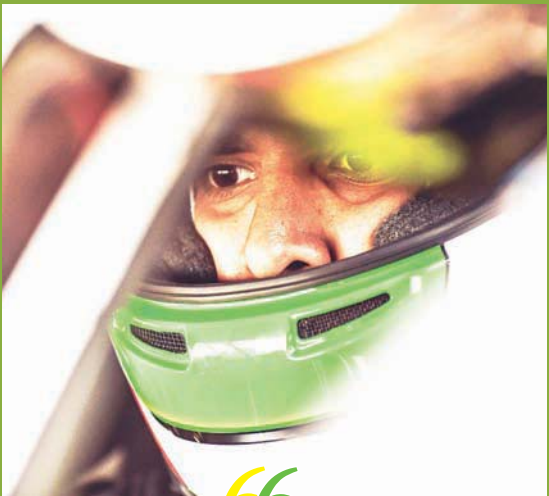
years ago.

"Road races are so unpredictable, they really, really are," she said.

"So Thursday morning I'll come out and try to have some fun and see which way the cookie crumbles.

"There are so many good girls who have also prepared for the road race so I'm really looking forward to seeing what comes out of that.

"It's an exciting opportunity. It's nerve-racking, absolutely — I have as many butterflies as anyone — but it's also so exciting to take that opportunity and put it all down there on a race day." — AFP



I'm really looking forward to coming back to the championship previously known as Blancpain, where we had so much success and such great achievements in the past

AHMAD AL HARTHY
Omani race driver

AL HARTHY CONFIRMS GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE RETURN

MUSCAT: Championship winning Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Powered by AWS Endurance Cup racer Ahmad al Harthy will make a welcome return to the ultra-competitive GT3 category this weekend, 4th/5th September, for the penultimate event of the season at the Nurburgring in Germany.

Oman Racing's Al Harthy, a double Pro-Am class title winner in the huge pan-European series, will appear in GT World

Challenge Europe for the first time since wrapping-up his second championship victory in the category back in September 2019.

For the coming weekend's three-hour race at the Nurburgring, the Aston Martin Vantage GT3 driver will be partnered by Northern Ireland's Charlie Eastwood — with whom Al Harthy won the 2019 Pro-Am crown — and Italian racer Giacomo Petrobelli.

Fresh from podium success in the recent Road To Le Mans races,

as support to the world-renowned Le Mans 24 Hours in France, and race victory in the Intelligent Money British GT Championship in August, Al Harthy cannot now wait to be back in GT World Challenge Europe Endurance.

"I'm really looking forward to coming back to the championship previously known as Blancpain, where we had so much success and such great achievements in the past", said Al Harthy, "I'm also looking forward to coming back into GT World Challenge Europe

Endurance with our fantastic new look and livery and, of course, our wonderful new partnerships.

"It's one of the strongest GT3 championships in the world and I'm really looking forward to teaming with Giacomo for the first time and also reuniting with Charlie, back racing at this level as part of a category Oman Racing has won twice before in the Pro-Am class."

He added: "It's a very strong field, it always is in this championship, but we're aiming

to make a strong and competitive challenge as we always do. Nurburgring is a very special circuit and Oman Racing is delighted to be back racing in Germany for the first time since 2016. Hopefully Charlie, Giacomo and I, and the TF Sport guys who prepare the car, can enjoy a successful weekend."

Supported by partners Omantel, OQ and the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Al Harthy's return to action in GT World Challenge is

something he is relishing as he seeks to once again proudly fly the flag of Oman in competition against the premier drivers and teams in Europe.

Following testing at the Nurburgring on Friday, 3rd September, additional free practice will be held on Saturday, 4th September, ahead of pre-qualifying at 12.55 local time. Final qualifying is set to get underway at 08.30 local time on Sunday, 5th September, with the three-hour race following at 14.45 local time.

Ronaldo dedicates United move to former boss Ferguson

MANCHESTER, England: Cristiano Ronaldo declared he was back where he belonged after he re-joined Manchester United from Juventus on a two-year deal on Tuesday, with the forward dedicating the move to his mentor Alex Ferguson.

United announced that they had agreed a deal with Juventus to bring the 36-year-old back to Manchester last week, with the transfer now complete after the Portuguese forward passed a medical, secured a visa and agreed personal terms.

"Everyone who knows me, knows about my never ending love for Manchester United. The years I spent in this club where absolutely amazing and the path we've made together is written in gold letters in the history of this great and amazing institution," he wrote on Instagram.

"It's like a dream come true, after all the times that I went back to play against Man. United, and even as an opponent, to have always felt such love and respect from the supporters in the stands."

Juve said the transfer fee agreed was 15 million euros (\$17.74 million) plus eight million euros in performance-related add-ons as Ronaldo returns to the club where he won eight

major trophies from 2003-2009.

"My first domestic League, my first Cup, my first call to the Portuguese National team, my first Champions League, my first Golden Boot and my first Ballon d'Or, they were all born from this special connection between me and the Red Devils," added Ronaldo, who spent the last 12 years winning a glut of trophies at Real Madrid and Juventus.

"History has been written in the past and history will be written once again! You have my word!"

"I'm back where I belong. Let's make it happen once again... Sir Alex, this one is for you."

Ferguson signed Ronaldo when he was a teenager in 2003 and British media had reported last week that the Scot convinced Ronaldo to return to United.

Ronaldo has often spoken in glowing terms of his time at the club and has previously described Ferguson as his "father in football".

The club responded to the post, saying: "Welcome home, Cristiano."

Ronaldo is set to join up with the squad after the international break and could make his first start on Sept. 11 when they host Newcastle United, if he returns unscathed from

his duties with Portugal.

He spent six seasons at Old Trafford between 2003 and 2009, where he won the Ballon d'Or as the world's best player in 2008 alongside his team accolades, before sealing a then world record £80 million (\$110 million) move to Real Madrid.

During his first spell in Manchester he scored 118 goals and won the Premier League Golden Boot in the 2007-08 season, the year Ronaldo helped United claim their last Champions League title.

He then went on to capture two LaLiga and four Champions League titles with Real Madrid, as well as four further Ballon d'Or awards, ending his stint at the Spanish club as their all-time top scorer with 451 goals.

JUVE'S 100 MILLION EURO SIGNING

Ronaldo was signed by Juventus in 2018 for 100 million euros from Real Madrid in the hope he could help the Italian team secure their first Champions League title since 1996.

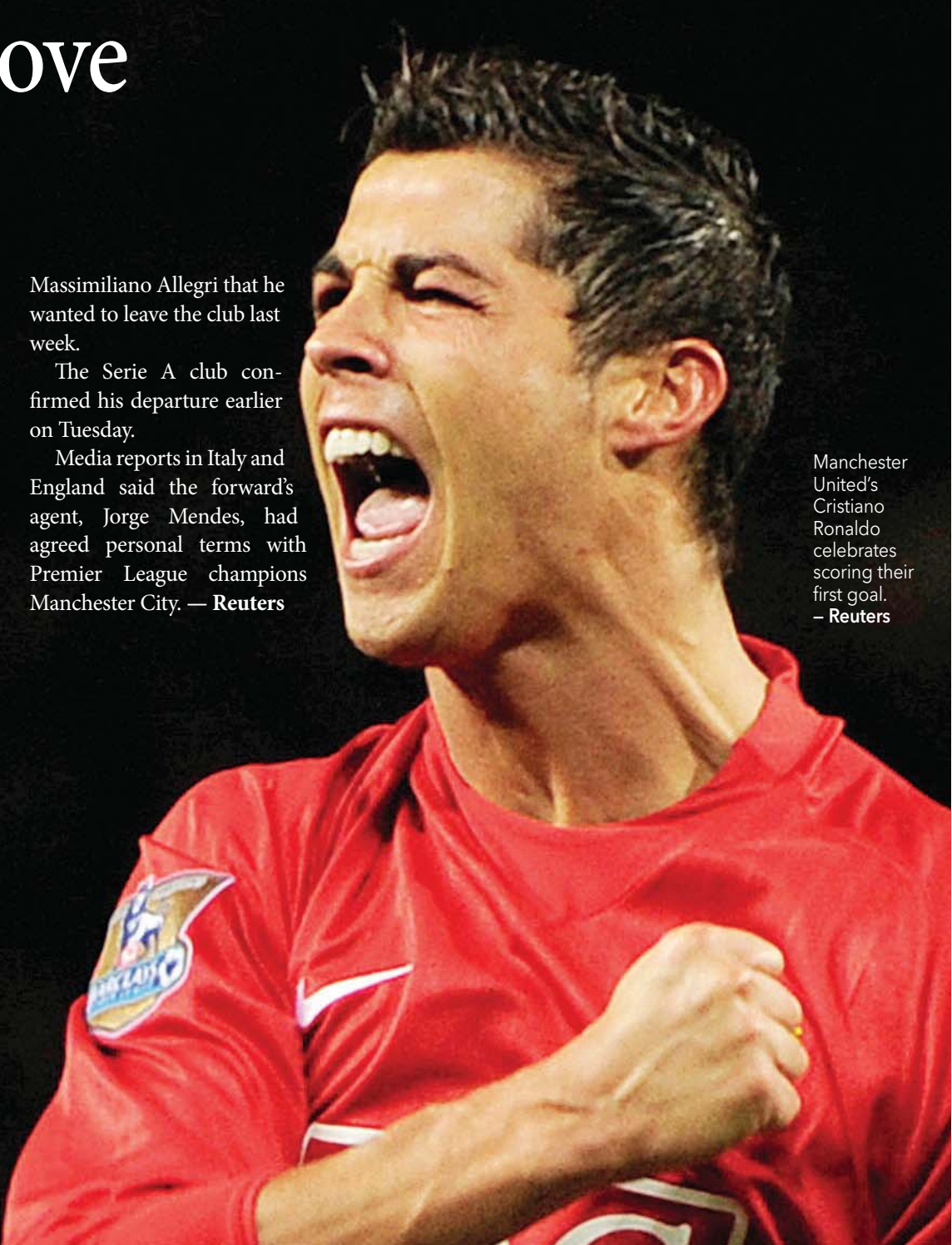
While that goal never came to fruition, Ronaldo leaves Turin with 101 goals, two league titles and a Coppa Italia triumph.

He informed Juventus coach

Massimiliano Allegri that he wanted to leave the club last week.

The Serie A club confirmed his departure earlier on Tuesday.

Media reports in Italy and England said the forward's agent, Jorge Mendes, had agreed personal terms with Premier League champions Manchester City. — Reuters



Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters

Prizes of more than
OMR 2,000,000
#WinningIsYours
with BankDhofar Savings Account!
Open Savings Account today!
Be a winner with BankDhofar Savings Account
Guaranteed prizes for every branch • Bigger prizes • More winners
For more information: <http://bit.ly/8DSavingsEn>

OMR 100,000
OMR 300,000
OMR 120,000
OMR 59,000
OMR 708,000
OMR 2,000,000
OMR 200,000
OMR 10,000
OMR 50,000
OMR 177,000
OMR 30,000

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar
the best bank for you

SAUDI DELEGATION TOURS SOHAR INDUSTRIAL CITY, DUQM SEZ



PROMISING HORIZONS:
To consolidate and expand economic and investment relations, visiting Saudi delegation explores business opportunities in two of Oman's biggest industrial hubs

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 31

A high-profile business delegation led by Saudi Arabia's Investment Minister, Eng Khalid bin Abdulaziz al Falih, concluded its three-day visit to the Sultanate with tours of Sohar Industrial City and the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Duqm.

Arriving at Sohar Industrial City, which is part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), the delegation was received by Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Commerce and Industry Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, who is also Chairman of Madayn's Board of Directors.

Welcoming the guests, he briefed them on Madayn's mission in attracting industrial investments and providing continued support, through regionally and globally competitive strategies, good infrastructure, value-adding services, and streamlined governmental processes.

MULTIPLE PHASES
Hamad bin Hamoud al Qasabi, Director General of Sohar Industrial City, informed the delegates that Sohar Industrial City is divided into seven phases where the occupancy rate in the first four



Hamad Al Qasabi briefing the delegation on Sohar Industrial City

phases has touched 100 per cent, while the occupancy rate of phases 5 and 6 is almost 70 per cent, and the occupancy rate in Phase 7 is about 40 per cent.

"Work is in full swing in developing Phase 7 of the industrial city, which will be completed during the first half of next year and shall provide integrated infrastructure and more space to attract and localise new investments," Al Qasabi said, adding: "Phase 7 of Sohar Industrial City is being implemented by Madayn on an area of 8.5 million sqm, and incorporates road works, water and sewage networks, sewage treatment plant, rain drainage channels, water tanks in addition to security requirements."

Al Qasabi added that the investment volume in Sohar Industrial City has exceeded RO 2 billion. "A total of 380 industrial, service and commercial projects are operating in Sohar Industrial City, which employ more than 13,700 personnel. Additionally, Madayn is currently working on implementing two strategic projects in the industrial city. The first is Madayn Vehicle Complex (Motkar) and the other is the Plastic Industries Complex," he informed.

Motkar project will feature an integrated hub for car trading, spare parts, car accessories and



The two sides discussed prospects of economic cooperation and reviewed investment opportunities available in several vital sectors of the Sultanate through free and economic zones

services, and showrooms on an area touching 1 million sqm.

As for the plastics complex project, Al Qasabi explained that Madayn, in coordination with OQ and Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, is working on finalising the project's preparatory phase. An area exceeding one million sqm has been allocated for the plastics complex project in Sohar Industrial City.

MADAYN INCENTIVES
Al Qasabi also outlined the incentives offered by Madayn to woo investments which include lease period of lands and facilities for up to 30 years, renewable for the same period; right to waive



the lease right for the remaining period of the contract; right to sell constructions and buildings on the leased land; right to involve new partners in the lease contract; fair evaluation of buildings and facilities upon the termination of the lease contract; developed and equipped lands with basic services (water, electricity, telecom, roads); transparent legal frameworks illustrating rights and obligations; punctuality in service delivery; in addition to other incentives.

The Saudi business delegates were also familiarised with the objectives of Masar Service Centre in Sohar Industrial City, which acts as an ideal platform that eases investment application procedures for the investors as they are able to

obtain related approvals, permits and licences under one platform and within a specific timeframe.

Madayn established Masar to provide integrated services required by the investors to contribute in enhancing the investment climate in the Sultanate. The Saudi business delegation then toured Sohar Industrial City and visited Sohar Aluminium Company, which was established in 2004 to undertake a landmark greenfield aluminium smelter project in Oman.

MEGA ECONOMIC HUB
Later, the Saudi delegation flew to Duqm where the guests were received by Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special

Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), and a number of officials from the management of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and the companies operating in the zone.

During the visit, which aims to consolidate and expand economic relations and mutual investment and accelerate bilateral trade between the two brotherly countries, the two sides discussed prospects of economic cooperation and reviewed investment opportunities available in several vital sectors of the Sultanate through free and economic zones.

The visit programme included a number of presentations on the capabilities of the zone and its vital existing and ongoing projects and basic facilities.

The delegation was also toured around a number of projects in the Zone including Ras Markaz crude oil storage project, the multi-purpose fishing port, Port of Duqm and the Dry Dock.

STRATEGIC LOCATION
Eng Yahya bin Khamis al Zadjali, in charge of managing operations of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, said that the visit of the Saudi delegation to the zone has great importance in consolidating economic relations between the two brotherly countries, exploring investment opportunities, and reviewing projects of the Special Economic Zone, which contribute in attracting investment to these projects and to potential areas that boost businesses such as transport and import of goods through Duqm Port. He noted that Duqm Port has a strategic location that allows investors to benefit from quick and easy access to the global market.

Sohar Port and Freezone eyes Indian investment

GROWTH POTENTIAL: In 2020, India exported almost 16,000 TEU of food products to Oman – 53 per cent of which were fruits and vegetables

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 31

Sohar Port and Freezone recently held the second webinar in its series with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) designed to increase visibility in the Indian market and highlight trade opportunities between SOHAR and Indian businesses.

Conducted online, the webinar explored opportunities in SOHAR's rapidly growing food cluster, an industry that has already yielded mutual benefits for Indian exporters and Omani distributors. It also featured three local success stories from Sohar Flour Mills, Oman Oilseeds Crushing Company SAOC and Al-



Hosn Logistics and Warehousing Services.

Omar al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone, said, "India is one of the Sultanate's strongest trade partners in this cluster. The variety of high-quality produce and close proximity of producers in India to Oman makes this a sector where we can generate significant

increases in traffic.

There are already a large number of Indian companies in Sohar Freezone, 35 per cent of which are Indian, and while there is a strong will to become self-sufficient, the need for produce outstrips growth in Omani produce which stands at 6 per cent per annum.

We still have a huge trade

deficit, importing 10 times the amount exported, which creates the potential for service providers to enter the market and for more employment opportunities to be created within the sector."

India is the third-largest partner country for food imports by value, behind Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands, however,

the volume of the imports suggest India is likely to become the largest exporter.

Supplies of fruit, vegetables, cereals, rice, tea, coffee, spices, dairy, eggs and meat can be found throughout the country. In 2020, India exported almost 16,000 TEU of food products to Oman – 53 per cent of which were fruits and vegetables.

Rice, Basmati and non-Basmati varieties, accounted for a further 19 per cent of imports. India also exports a large volume of - mostly frozen - meat to Oman, mainly poultry, buffalo, sheep and goat meat.

Food imports to the GCC region are projected to grow to over \$53 billion with a surrounding market of 2.2 billion people as Oman relies on imports for up to 70 per cent of all food production. Sohar Food Cluster, at Oman's gateway to international trade, is ideally positioned at the crossroads of East-West. It also has its own dedicated agro-berth in the Port, as well as on-site processing facilities for key commodities including flour,

sugar and edible oil.

Sohar Port and Freezone's location offers functional connectivity and global market access. The container terminal, managed by Hutchinson Ports Sohar, now has a 24/7 customs clearing service, specifically for agricultural products.

The Port operates a customs clearing service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and a bonded transport corridor between Port and Freezone which allows goods to reach their destination in under 14 minutes.

The Freezone is equipped with warehousing and cold storage, logistic service providers and is a vital logistics hub to move goods within the Gulf region. SOHAR offers access to raw materials as well as attractive incentives for downstream food processing and packaging. This potentially includes the processing of cereals, bakery products, beverages, edible oils, confectionery, etc.

The food packaging industry could benefit from the existing aluminium and plastic producers operating in SOHAR.

Saudi delegation tours Sohar Industrial City, Duqm SEZ

FROM PAGE 13

Al Zadjali added that this visit will open horizons for Saudi investors to benefit from various investment opportunities available in different sectors such as oil, petrochemicals, logistics, fisheries, tourism, mining and other sectors. Also it will strengthen partnership and integration principle to achieve common national objectives of the two countries future vision.

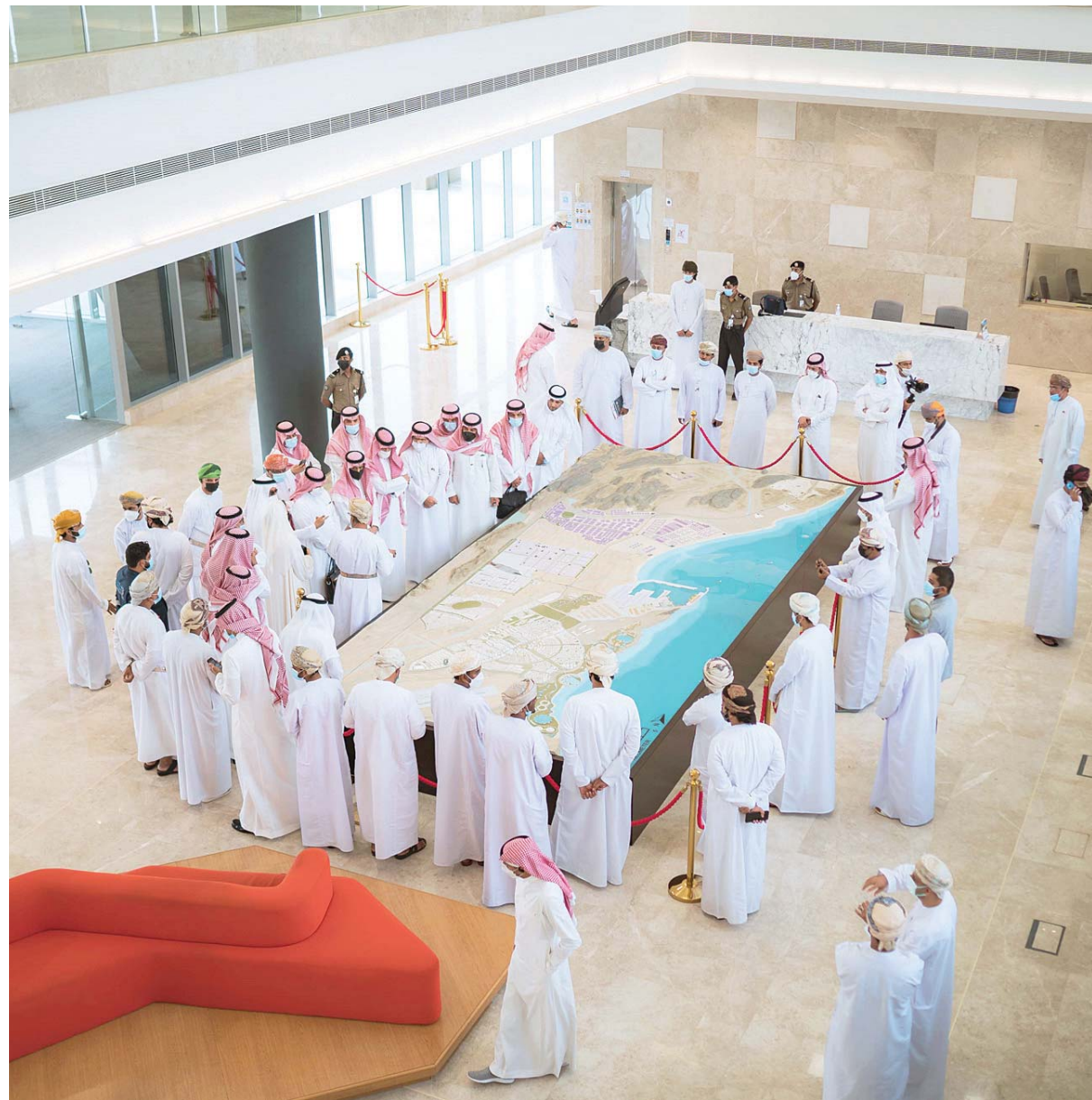
The three-day visit by the delegation of the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate included several joint meetings.

The Omani-Saudi Business Council was held on the first day and the Omani-Saudi Investment Forum was held on



the second day, which comprised an overview of several projects in industrial zones and free zones, which was organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

in cooperation with Oman Investment Authority, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones.



Bank Muscat wins Best Trade Finance Bank in Oman 2021 Award

MUSCAT: In keeping with its role as the leading financial services provider in Oman, Bank Muscat recently won the Best Trade Finance Bank in Oman 2021 from Global Trade Review magazine.

The award recognises the services provided by the bank through its Global Trade Services (GTS) division, which includes highly customised and innovative financial solutions that meet customer needs for prompt payments on exports, imports and local operations.

With its strong global network of over 500 correspondent banks, Bank Muscat offers a number of customised solutions to meet the challenging demands of exporters, importers and local traders in the Sultanate.

The bank issues Letters of Credit, various types of Guarantees, Standby LCs, handles documents under collections, checks compliance of documents under export Letter of Credits, confirms Letter of Credits and provides different financing solutions like forfaiting, receivables finance, trust receipts etc, to its exporting and importing customers.

It also caters its services to Islamic banking customers through its Meethaq unit. As part of its continuous efforts to enhance ease of banking and providing speedier services, the bank offers GTS products and services through the GTS e-application available on the bank's website for the benefit of all its customers.

The e-application offers a number of advantages over conventional processing including standardisation of processing, flexible working, ease of access, the faster turnaround time for services.



Fatma al Maskiry

Speaking about the achievement, Fatma Khalifa al Maskiry, Assistant General Manager - Global Trade Services, Bank Muscat, said: "Global Trade Services play an important role in facilitating trade and economic development across the globe. Bank Muscat has been providing international trade finance and lending solutions to the bank's institutional clients in both developed and emerging markets, making it a leading market player in the region and this award recognises the bank's efforts in

supporting the corporate sector in Oman. We are very happy and encouraged to be recognised by a top international publication for our achievements."

The Global Trade Services team at Bank Muscat blends traditional financial solutions with tailor-made packages for operations, ensuring prompt payments, managing liquidity and minimising exchange rate risk.

As a prolific innovator in the financial sector, the bank has won a number of international and local awards and accolades. It was listed by Forbes Middle East as one of the Top 50 Banks in the region as well as one of the Top 100 Listed Companies in the Middle East in 2021. The bank has been working steadily to further improve its excellent portfolio of services.

With a deep understanding of customer needs and driven by robust policies to achieve global best practices, Bank Muscat is focused on strategic initiatives to confront challenges and further increase its market share.





In brief

■ BERLIN



GOOGLE MAKES €1 B INVESTMENT IN GERMAN DATA CENTRES

Google has announced plans to invest €1 billion in the construction of two new data centres: one in Hanau near Frankfurt, and one in the greater Berlin area. The US Internet giant also plans to expand the amount of renewable energy available to power the centres, the firm announced.

The data facility in Hanau is only 20 kilometres away from the world's largest Internet hub DE-CIX, said Philipp Justus, Google's head of Central Europe. The four-storey building with a usable area of around 10,000 square metres will be fully operational next year, he added.

■ COLOMBO



LANKA DECLARES FOOD EMERGENCY AS FOREX CRISIS WORSENS

Sri Lanka declared a state of emergency over food shortages as private banks ran out of foreign exchange to finance imports. With the country suffering a hard-hitting economic crisis, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said he ordered emergency regulations to counter the hoarding of sugar, rice and other essential foods.

Rajapaksa has named a top army officer as "Commissioner General of Essential Services to coordinate the supply of paddy, rice, sugar and other consumer goods". The move followed sharp price rises for sugar, rice, onions and potatoes, while long queues have formed outside stores because of shortages of milk powder, kerosene oil and cooking gas.

■ BANGKOK



PORSCHÉ TO OPEN FIRST FACTORY OUTSIDE EUROPE

German sports car maker Porsche will from next year build vehicles for the Malaysian market at its first factory outside Europe. In a statement, the iconic fast car manufacturer said the plant "will be responsible for the final assembly of specific models for the local market from 2022 onwards" and "will operate alongside Porsche's established European network of production sites."

The cars will be built by Sime Darby, which began assembling cars locally in 1982 for BMW and Land Rover, and has since added brands such as Hyundai and Mazda. Porsche said the arrangement will help strengthen its position "in the emerging markets of Southeast Asia."

Investments in UK fintech companies break record

ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

INVESTORS HAVE BOUNCED BACK FOLLOWING THE SLUMP AT THE OUTSET OF THE PANDEMIC, AS VENTURE CAPITAL FIRMS ARE EAGER TO CAPITALISE ON ACCELERATED ADOPTION OF FINTECH PRODUCTS

for Starling Bank.

Anne Boden, Starling Bank's founder and chief executive, said

LONDON fintech firms have received record attention from venture capital investors so far this year, bringing in \$5.3 billion in investments. Data from Dealroom and the City of London's promotional agency London & Partners showed that the City fintech sector's total venture capital intake so far this year is higher than for all previous full years since it started collecting figures.

The previous record was set in 2018, when fintech firms brought in \$4.8 billion across the whole year. Investment in the UK's capital accounted for more than a third of all European fintech funding, with London ranking as the top European city for fintech investment, beating New York to come second globally behind San Francisco's \$7.2 billion.

Mega funding rounds – those that raise more than \$100 million – jumped in 2021, with standouts including \$478 million for SaltPay, \$450 million for Checkout.com and \$322 million

the figures represent "a vote of confidence for the UK fintech sector". She added: "London is a unique place for fintech companies."

The data comes as London celebrated its first major listing of a fintech company, with money transfer business Wise floating its shares on the City bourse recently. Wise attracted a valuation of around £8 billion – much higher than its private valuation of \$5 billion last summer.

Investors have bounced back following the slump at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic, as venture capital firms are eager to capitalise on the accelerated adoption of fintech products by consumers and banks.

Global investment in fintech reached \$54.1 billion between January and June, the research published last month showed, narrowly surpassing the previous \$54 billion record set during the entirety of 2018.

Eileen Burbidge, partner at Passion Capital and special fintech envoy for the Treasury, said:

"These new investment figures show that that London's fintech is as strong as ever." She added: "A record first half of the year for European fintech also indicates investors are increasingly looking at what is going on across the pond from the traditional tech hubs in Silicon Valley."

Later-stages businesses continued to take the lion's share of deals, accounting for almost two-thirds of London's \$5.3 billion total. London is now home to 29 fintech unicorns – start-ups with a private valuation in excess of \$1 billion – and is second only to San Francisco's 37.

On a separate issue – it is interesting to note that Revolut, the digital bank, has launched a tool that will allow workers to get paid a portion of their salary as they earn it, rather than waiting until the end of the month.

Companies can connect their payroll system to Revolut to allow staff who bank with the firm to draw down a percentage of their salary early for a flat fee, as well as see how much they've earned so

far that month.

An interface in the Revolut app will enable users to choose how much they want to withdraw from their earned salary and deposit the funds into their Revolut account. The tool will not affect their credit scores.

Chief and co-founder Nik Storonsky, said: "We believe in the importance of making financial well-being accessible to all, and this includes focusing on the impact of financial stability on employees' mental health."

He added: "After the difficulties of the past year, the last thing employees need now is financial uncertainties and stress. It is important to move away from a situation where many are dependent on payday loans and expensive short-term credit, a reliance that is exacerbated by the monthly pay cycle."

Revolut's Payday feature will be available to UK businesses before a wider roll-out to the EU and America.

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

S Korea bans app payment monopolies in world's first

SEOUL: South Korean MPs on Tuesday passed a law banning Apple and Google from forcing app developers to use the tech giants' payment systems, effectively declaring their lucrative App Store and Play Store monopolies illegal.

The bill was approved by 180 votes to nil in the National Assembly, making South Korea the first major economy to pass legislation on the issue, in a move that could set a precedent for other jurisdictions around the world.

In the United States, three senators this month introduced a bill to loosen the tech firms' grip on their stores, while in Europe lawmakers are debating legislation that could force Apple to bring in alternatives to the App Store.

The South Korean measure comes as Apple and Google face global criticism for charging up to 30 per cent commission on app sales and requiring their own payment systems to be used that collect a share of the transactions.

The Korean law – locally dubbed the "Anti-Google Law" – will offer users a choice of app payment providers, allowing them to bypass charges set by the store owner.

"This law will certainly set a precedent for other countries, as well as app developers and content creators worldwide," Kang Ki-hwan at the Korea Mobile Internet Business Association said.

It is expected to come into force in September, according to reports.

Later this year Google plans to enforce globally a requirement for developers to use its payment system – with its 30 per cent



The South Korean law comes as Apple and Google face global criticism for the commission they charge on app sales. - AFP

commission above a certain threshold – for in-app purchases.

In South Korea, it is also planning to charge commission on all content payments from October, ending an exemption where commissions were only payable for online games.

That announcement prompted an angry response from South Korean artists and creators, with web fiction writers and webtoon artists accusing Google of "power abuse" and campaigning fiercely for the new law.

"Without this law, our working environment – where creators are guaranteed of full rewards for their efforts – would've been destroyed," Seo Bum-gang, a webtoon artist who heads the Korea Webtoon Industry Association, said.

"We need this law to protect the diversity of our industry, where artists and creators of all economic backgrounds can share

their content without having to worry about the commission fees."

Apple and Google have maintained that commissions charged are standard in the industry and fair compensation for building safe marketplaces where developers can reach people around the world.

Ahead of the debate, Apple said that it would put digital purchasers at risk of fraud, undermine their privacy protection and render parental controls less effective.

"We believe user trust in App Store purchases will decrease as a result of this proposal --leading to fewer opportunities for the over 482,000 registered developers in Korea who have earned more than 8.55 trillion won to date with Apple," it said in a statement.

Google Korea did not respond to requests for comment from AFP. — AFP

Stocks sit near record highs after August surge

LONDON: Stock markets headed for their seventh consecutive month of gains on Tuesday with investors largely convinced that an economic rebound and plentiful stimulus will keep the rally going for now.

After an initial surge to new record highs, however, stocks were down by 1130 GMT after higher-than-expected eurozone inflation data and reports that a European Central Bank policymaker said the bank was in a position to think about paring back its pandemic-era stimulus -- reminders that stocks are vulnerable to signs of reduced policy support.

The pan-European STOXX 600 index initially gained 0.2 per cent but fell after media reported the comments by ECB Governing Council member Robert Holzmann and was last down 0.3 per cent.

The German DAX dipped 0.1 per cent while France's CAC 40 was 0.24 per cent lower.

Adding to the nervousness was data showing eurozone inflation surged in August to a 10-year-high, significantly above the ECB target, with further rises likely to come.

Wall Street futures clung to positive territory ahead of the US open and after hitting record

European stocks slip but head for 7th straight monthly gain as Wall Street hits new records overnight

highs on Monday.

The MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in 50 countries, rose 0.21 per cent as gains in Asia and the US overnight offset the European weakness. Many investors remain bullish.

"While risks remain, and investors should reflect this in their portfolios, we believe the backdrop for equities remains positive, and we advise investors to position for reopening and recovery. We advise investors to position in stocks that should benefit from strong economic growth," said Mark Haefele, Chief Investment Officer, UBS Global Wealth Management.

Rising cases of the Covid-19 Delta variant have hurt Asian shares in recent weeks but have mostly been ignored by European and US markets. Outside of stocks, the dollar, a safe-haven currency and barometer of risk sentiment, fell to a three-week low, down 0.3 per cent on the day at 92.424. — Reuters



The floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) is seen after the close of trading in New York. — Reuters File

Classifieds

**Now get news
on the go**



To receive news updates
from **OMAN OBSERVER**,

WhatsApp
<your name> to
96473232

features



Don't miss Salalah's waterscapes

When visiting Salalah during the khareef season, the waterscapes of the governorates are the perfect markers that it's a magical season. If you get to see waterfall here that means khareef is amazing this year. Check out these recommendation waterscapes to visit... **P20**

ART

READ

THE PIGEON HAS TO GO TO SCHOOL!

BY MO WILLEMS

Pigeon deals with the anxieties of going to school for the first time.

Thinking out of the box: Japanese artist makes life-like cardboard sculptures

USING A LONG PAIR of tweezers, Monami Ohno delicately places tiny cardboard "scales" on the legs of her sculpture of Godzilla, the giant reptile from the classic Japanese movie. Over the past decade, the Japanese artist has used the unlikely medium of cardboard to create artwork inspired by popular culture, from anime robots to models of tanks and fighter jets, a life-sized gun to a full McDonald's meal.

It all started when the 29-year-old made a "bike-like thing" out of card-

board for a college assignment ten years ago. "When I first tried folding the paper, gluing and putting them together, the people around me praised me, saying things like 'Wow, you can make this,'" she said. "That made me so happy that I have continued doing this until now."

Ohno's intricate sculptures have since gained popularity, with her work exhibited in galleries in Japan and overseas.

Rather than relying on a precise

blueprint, Ohno simply draws a rough sketch on the cardboard to get an idea of the measurements before cutting out the design and moulding it, using glue and sometimes a little water.

"I make the things I would really like to decorate my house with," she said in her studio filled with her creations, including a child-sized Lego Batman sculpture.

Ohno's commissioned pieces have sold for 100,000 yen (\$909.42) to 1,500,000 Japanese yen, according to her press officer.

Although her art is entirely made from used cardboard boxes, Ohno said her work has no underlying environmental message.

"Eventually if it makes that point, it would be nice if people can see my work, which is made out of cardboard and recycled materials rather than plastics, and realise that there are these kinds of people who are involved in recycling," she said. — Reuters



SKINCARE

Aspiration to launch biggest skincare platform in Oman



ENTREPRENEUR MAHMOUD al Shandoudi, the co-founder of Vonza London, which specialises in skincare products, aspires to launch the largest electronic platform for skincare products (vonza.om), hair, dental and beauty products in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of this year in the form of an application for ISO and Android phones.

The founders of the company were inspired by the idea of launching “Fonza London”, a trademark registered with Sorouh Al Dar International, during their scholarship in Glasgow, Scotland, in the United Kingdom, after trying a vitamin serum from the mother company Fonza in London, and achieved good results. Some friends in the Sultanate wanted to try this product for its visible results on the skin.



Al Shandoudi adds: There were many requests for the company's products, which prompted me and my partners to display the products on a special account on Instagram, and then market it for an amount not exceeding RO 30.

Al Shandoudi says, the project started small, but with determination, the team continued to promote Fonza products through social media platforms, and with the help of “Social Media” celebrities, which made the difference in the demand for products.

He explained that after hard work, the market value of the company exceeded RO 70,000. The company succeeded in opening 12 branches in 10 wilayats across the Sultanate and registered one of the products with the Ministry of Health. Al Shandoudi indicated that the company provides a free consultation service under the supervision of a specialised pharmacist, to help customers choose the right products for them, and to treat their skin problems, using environmentally friendly products.

We have faced many difficulties. Shipping products from London to Oman during the last period wasn't easy due to the decrease in the number of flights between the two countries resulting from the conditions of the Covid-19 epidemic, as well as the high shipping prices for the same reason.

The most important products of the “Fonza London” company are the vitamin C serum, which consists of five essential ingredients to nourish the skin and its distinctive packaging that prevents the oxidation of the contents of the package for a long time. The current trend is to provide specialised products to treat common problems in the Sultanate, such as acne, pigmentation and facial lines.

Al Shandoudi explained that after work and persistence to reach success and excellence, Fonza London achieved great success in opening 16 branches in 12 wilayats in the various governorates of the Sultanate.

Saeed al Shandoudi, a partner, confirms that the “Fonza London” company continues to expand its branches in the Sultanate and in the Arab Gulf countries and develop its products and services to be the leading company in the Sultanate specialised in the field of skincare and cosmetics.



THE AUTHOR, SHAIKH Abdullah bin Saif al Kindi, from Wilayat Nakhl, South Al Batinah Governorate, is one of the first educators who experienced the pre-Renaissance periods of education up to the mid-nineties. He was among the first generations who received education in the late sixties and early seventies.

After the age of retirement, he dedicated himself to reading, research and writing. He combined the love of knowledge with his constant keenness on reading, investigating, categorising information, research and continuous reading.

Shaikh Abdullah said that he learned the basics of reading and writing from his mother who was keen on teaching him since childhood with great interest, especially with his father's travel to Zanzibar. He left him in Nakhl to seek knowledge at the hands of Shaikh Judge Suleiman

A teacher from the old days

bin Ali al Kindi, who raised him and taught him the sciences of language and religion at his home. He even accompanied him to Barzah (community gatherings at the time) and judicial sessions to learn the basics of social communication and Sharia sciences.

Shaikh Al Kindi spoke about his scientific journey, saying that after receiving the basics of jurisprudence and grammar, he moved to Nizwa, where he studied under the supervision of Shaikh Saud bin Suleiman al Kindi and Shaikh Suleiman bin Salem al Kindi, who were teachers in the Makhliid mosque in Alayah Nizwa.

He added that he had learned from Shaikh Salem bin Hamoud al Siyabi the sciences of rhetoric, as Shaikh Al Siyabi was at that time a judge and governor at the same time in Nakhl. His workplace and residence were in the Nakhl Castle. He used to walk the distance from Al Gharidh to the Nakhl Castle immediately after the Fajr prayer to learn, read books and

understand issues and various kinds of sciences.

Regarding his transfer to teaching at the Saidia School in Muscat, he explained that this came upon the recommendation of Shaikh Abdulrahim bin Saif al Kharousi, who was appointed in 1954 at the Saidia School as a teacher of Islamic education.

The education in the Saidia School was a strict and intensive educational system for six semesters and stages from the first to the sixth grade. The level of students was very superior, as the scientific level taught in the sixth grade was higher than the general certificate stage currently.

He added that the school system consisted of 8 classes per day, including 6-morning classes and two evening classes, then it was later changed to 5 classes, all morning, at a rate of 45 minutes per class. Each subject is evaluated separately at a rate of 100 points per month, after which the subject is evaluated quarterly in the middle of the school year.

ESO launches Unique Atlas on the Sultanate's Whales and Dolphins

A NEW E-BOOK ‘Marine Mammal Atlas of Oman’ has been released by the Environment Society of Oman (ESO). Produced by Five Oceans Environmental Services LLC, with sponsorship from Renaissance Services SAOG and supported by the Environment Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Natural History Museum, this full-colour photographic book is the culmination of 20 years of scientific research, providing a thorough geographical representation of the Arabian whales and dolphins that call the Northern Indian Ocean their home.

Making an important contribution to our understanding of Oman's unique marine and coastal wildlife, the Atlas offers a rare insight into the Sultanate's 20 species of cetaceans, including a description of the taxonomy, distribution, habitat preferences, feeding and breeding status, seasonality, sightings history, population status and conservation status for each species. The Atlas also provides an overview of the natural and human activities that are threatening the species and what we can do to help protect them. Photographs and maps complement the well-researched text and as a digital e-book, readers can interact and navigate through the pages without many of the limitations imposed by printed materials.

Suaad al Harthi, ESO's Executive Director, said, “Our marine environment is one of the things that make Oman a must-visit destination, but today, it is threatened by a combination of factors. This Atlas serves as an important reference for studies on environmental diversity, but more than that, it is a great way to raise awareness and get people interested in the cause. We hope people will enjoy the beautiful photos, maps and information on whales and dolphins of Oman that have been collected over thousands of hours of research in the field, and that it also serves as a reminder of how we must prioritise the needs of the environment and remain diligent stewards of Oman's biodiversity.”

Cetaceans, comprising whales, dolphins and porpoises have been populating the oceans for millions of years. They are long-lived, reproduce slowly and spend the majority of their lives hiding below the water's surface. Of the 89 species of cetaceans recorded worldwide, 20 are known to occur in the highly productive waters of Oman. Divided into five chapters, the ‘Marine Mammal Atlas of Oman’ provides in-depth profiles on the species commonly found in Oman's waters, a global overview of the threats facing cetaceans, organisations and conservation frameworks surrounding ceta-

ceans from a multilateral and regional perspective, and the threat of specific mitigation strategies related to ship strike, noise, fishing, and whale and dolphin watching.

Stephen Thomas, Chief Executive Officer at Renaissance Services, said, “Renaissance is committed to the communities in which we serve. We have accomplished many valuable initiatives through our ongoing long-term relationship with ESO. We are proud of this Atlas, which celebrates these wonderful and endangered marine mammals, for wildlife enthusiasts to enjoy. It reminds us that we all need to play our part to protect these beautiful creatures and conserve Oman's biodiversity.”

“Arabian whales and dolphins are among the most fascinating of the world's cetaceans, yet also among the least understood. This e-book is the product of our years of gathering evidence, information and photographs, yet it remains one of few books on the subject of marine life in the region. The Atlas has been conceived as a tool to support resource management and unpacks a wealth of referenced information from sci-

entific studies. Our hope is that the evidence it unveils will help marine mammals to be more fully integrated as part of Oman's future prosperity which is tied, as it has been throughout history, to the sustainable use of the oceans,” added Rob Baldwin, CEO of Five Oceans Environmental Services LLC and one of the scientists central to whale and dolphin research in Oman over the past 30 years.

As the Sultanate's only non-profit organisation dedicated to the environment, ESO has spent the last 17 years working to protect Oman's environment through education, awareness and conservation. Through a variety of awareness campaigns, it has helped provide thousands of local communities with information on the principles of environmental consciousness and how they can make a positive impact around them.

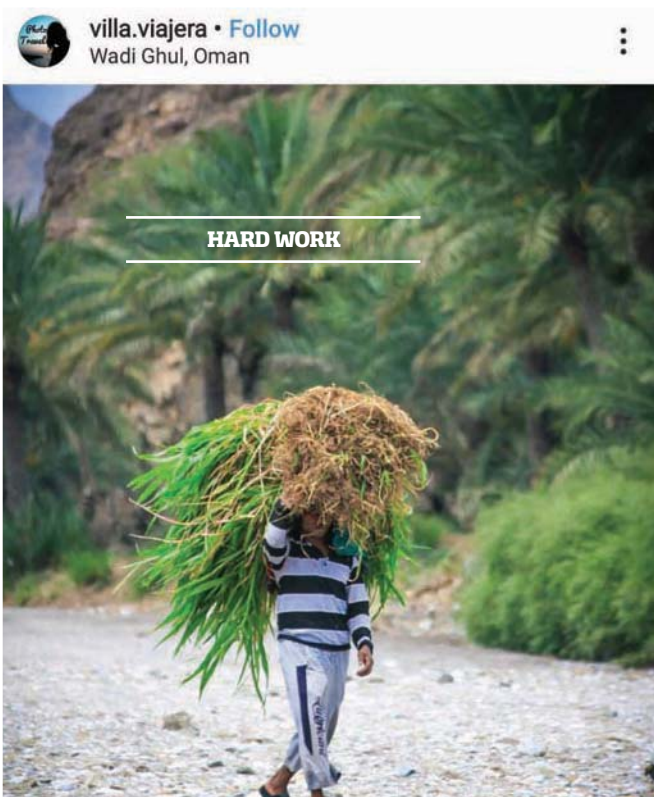
‘Marine Mammal Atlas of Oman’ is freely available online on the following link: www.eso.org.om/index/images/file/2021-08/MarineMammal_2_.pdf





find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.



AROUND THE WORLD

Get full stories online at www.omanobserver.om

ENTERTAINMENT

Kanye West finally releases album 'Donda' after months of delays



KANYE WEST HAS finally released his long-awaited album "Donda" after months of delays.

The rapper, 44, launched the 27-track record on to streaming services after a number of promotional events that did not culminate in the release of new music.

The album, which was initially promised a year ago and has suffered multiple delays, features material from controversial figures Marilyn Manson and DaBaby.

West had said the record would arrive in July, then spent time living at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, where he had held a listening party, while working on completing the record.

At the most recent listening event in Chicago, his estranged wife Kim Kardashian West made a show-stealing cameo, emerging from the audience in a wedding dress months after filing for divorce from the rapper. West's 10th studio record is named after his late mother.

The album, a follow-up to 2019's "Jesus Is King", features collaborators including Jay-Z, The Weeknd, Lil Baby, Playboi Carti, Kid Cudi and the late rapper Pop Smoke. The track "Jail", which is the second on the album, features Jay-Z.

At the recent listening event, West had replaced his verse on the track with one by DaBaby, who was recently criticised for homophobic comments made at a music festival.

West appeared to offer an explanation for DaBaby's absence from the track with screenshots of text messages shared on Instagram.

One screenshot appears to be of a text conversation with one of his representatives, in which West is told that DaBaby's manager has not cleared the cameo on "Jail". Another screenshot appears to be of text messages between West and DaBaby, in which West tells him the delay is preventing the album from coming out.

Another track, "Jail pt 2", does feature a verse by DaBaby.

Both "Jail" and "Jail pt 2" give co-writing credit to Brian Warner, the real name of shock rocker Marilyn Manson, who has denied multiple allegations of sexual assault and who made a surprise appearance alongside West and DaBaby at the recent event in Chicago.

Donda West was an English professor at Chicago State University who died in 2007 aged 58 following complications from cosmetic surgery. Her death had a devastating impact on West, who as well as his latest album also named a creative content company after her. — **PA Media-dpa**

TRAVEL TALES

Benin's rare swamp forest 'at risk of disappearing'



IN THE FRESHWATER swamp forest of Hlanzoun in southern Benin, majestic trees hum with chirping birds and playful monkeys.

Home to once bustling flora and fauna, experts now warn that the fragile environment, one of the last of its kind in the West African country and accessible only by canoe, is at risk of disappearing.

The 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) of forest, which takes its name from the river Hlan, is home to 241 plant and 160 animal species including the rare red-bellied monkey, the marsh mongoose and the sitatunga, a swamp-dwelling antelope.

Perched at the top of a gigantic tree squawks a hornbill — a big bird known for its long, down-curved and colourful bill, similar to toucans.

"Hornbills feed on insects and fruits. They like to follow monkeys around because they force insects to come out when they move around, making it easier for hornbills to catch", explains Vincent Romera, a French ornithologist and photographer.

With his binoculars, Romera admires a family of monkeys jumping from tree to tree, while keeping a clear distance.

"The animals here have become fearful", he says. He's considering using camera traps to try to photograph them, but also to

count the forest's animal population.

"The numbers are in freefall", he says.

Sometimes, the forest's noisy concert is interrupted by gun shots, he says, probably from poachers.

LOGGING

Communities living around the forest "need money, so those who can shoot go and kill animals", explains Roger Houkanrin, a local tourist guide.

Despite steady economic growth in recent years, poverty is widespread in Benin, especially in rural areas, and 40 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line according to World Bank data.

On the side of the road that lines Hlanzoun forest, lizards, crocodiles and snakes killed by hunters are sold and bought. Monkeys, too, are sometimes sold for meat.

But even more than poaching, excessive logging threatens the forest.

Between 2005 and 2015, Benin's forest cover was slashed by more than 20 per cent according to the World Bank, and the deforestation rate continues to be high at 2.2 per cent annually.

Trees are cut down for firewood, and the fermented sap of palm trees is used to make a local alcohol, sodabi.

The damaging practice

of slash-and burn agriculture has also become more prevalent, warns Josea Dossou Bodjrenou, Director of Nature Tropicale, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that works on environmental issues in Benin.

The destruction of the forest habitat reduces areas where animals can thrive, forcing them towards farms to find food and exposing them to poachers.

"This is a location that is at risk of disappearing", says local agricultural economist Judicael Alladatin.

"It's a poor area and we can't blame people for wanting to feed themselves", Alladatin says, urging authorities "to create conditions for alternative sources of income."

The government does not officially recognise Hlanzoun forest despite the lobbying efforts of several NGOs and scientific papers on the forest since 2000.

But it has started to recognise the importance of safeguarding forests in general, according to the World Bank.

In Hlanzoun, the state "must act quickly" said Bodjrenou, and "support forest communities so that they can continue to make profit... but in a different way" by developing agriculture, trade and sustainable tourism. — **AFP**

DISCOVERY

Danish researchers find what is likely world's northernmost island



FOR A LONG TIME, the island of Oodaaq at the northernmost tip of Greenland was considered the closest piece of land to the North Pole.

But that may now have to be corrected — at least temporarily: According to researchers at the University of Copenhagen, they have discovered a small island that lies even further north, albeit only about 800 metres.

The discovery of the as yet unnamed islet, measuring about 30 by 60 metres, was therefore pure coincidence.



"We were convinced that the island we were standing on was Oodaaq, which until then was registered as the world's northernmost island", said research leader Morten Rasch. He had travelled to the north coast of Greenland with a team to collect samples. He only learned of his mistake when he posted pictures and coordinates on the Internet.

"[A] number of American island hunters went crazy and said that it couldn't be true", the head of the Department of Earth Sciences and Natural Resource Management said. Island hunters are people whose hobby is to discover previously unknown islands.

A check of the coordinates revealed that Oodaaq is actually about 800 metres south of where Rasch and his team went ashore. "In reality, we had discovered a new island further north, a discovery that just slightly expands the kingdom [of Denmark]", Morton said.

The scientist suggested that the newly discovered island might not last long. It consists mainly of small accumulations of mud and gravel — probably the result of a storm, he said. "No one knows how long it will remain. In principle, it could disappear as soon as a powerful new storm hits", says Rasch. — **dpa**



Don't miss Salalah's waterscapes

Dr Upasana Venaik Malhotra

As a resident of Salalah for the last five years, there is no better way to describe Salalah during khareef but the season when God decided to turn everything green with one tap of his finger.

Out of all the seasons that Salalah is gifted with, khareef has always been the most famous as it is not just a season but a celebration — an occasion to celebrate the beauty of Mother Nature.

During this season, especially before corona, tourists from all over the world come to witness this magical moment in the Gulf. When the rest of the countries in the Middle East are suffering under temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius, Dhofar, the southernmost region of Oman, not only enjoys a temperature of below 20 degrees Celsius, it also some of the most frequent rains and the mesmerising fog covering the mountains.

At its peak, the once barren mountains will be covered by vegetation becoming a lush green paradise. The continuous "perfume rain" is itself an instant source of happiness. Imagine walking in the rain and still not getting wet — that's the beauty of this season as if the governorate is suddenly enveloped in powerful magic.

Khareef is not only a celebration for humans but also animals and birds as the season is the perfect opportunity to spot them in plenty all over the governorate. Flowers of all colours bloom, be it next to the mountains or in the main city. If you plan to go for a long drive, you will find camels walking next to your car. Witnessing this annual camel parade will make you feel grateful for the little blessings Dhofar enjoys.

When visiting during the khareef season, the waterscapes of the governorates are the perfect markers that it's a magical season. If you get to see waterfall here that means khareef is amazing this year.

Through the different initiatives of the government and tourism sector of Oman, there has been lots of improvisation

taking place that made many of the attractions accessible particularly Wadi Darbat.

The way to cascade waterfalls have been revamped and it is so convenient to witness these magnificent waterfalls now.

With the opening of lockdown, you will witness people enjoying and celebrating with family and friends just next to the road. Camps are also set up almost in every corner while kites become the kings of the sky.

As a recommendation, these are the waterscapes or places you should not miss this year:

Ayn Khor Waterfalls — It involves a 40-minute trek but the view will be mesmerising.

Wadi Darbat — The best place to watch nature unfolds and come alive. One of the best family-friendly adventures to do here is to go boating next to the waterfall cascades.

Ayn Tabrook — While this waterfall may be smaller in size and length, it's the perfect place to refresh and nature bathe.

Ayn Athoum — As the most famous waterfall, Ayn Athoum usually doesn't need an introduction. Expect quite a large volume of tourists coming here.

Ayn Humran — If you're looking for a bit of off-the-beaten-path location, the view here is just so serene.

Ayn Razat — While the pools here are shallower, they can be best for your aching feet. Make sure to dip your toes and then visit one of its popular features — the gorgeous cave overlooking the pools.

Mughsayl — From the blowholes to one of Oman's breathtaking seascapes, this is a must-not-miss. Enjoy the picturesque walks and enjoy the breeze while sitting under the shade of the cliff canopies.

As a bonus, don't forget to pass through and stop by Ittin. This is where you can find the best barbecues. Don't forget to try Fatira.

We can all relate to the challenging Middle Eastern sun. But a travel down south into the welcoming embrace of the lush green paradise of Salalah will make you appreciate the beauty of God's creation.

