

P12

THE TOUR 2021
GEARING UP FOR
RETURN TO OMANI
SHORES



P16

ITALY'S
JET-SET HIT
BY 'EMERALD
COAST CURSE'



P20

INDIA OPEN TO
RAISING DUTIES
TO BOOST LOCAL
PRODUCTION



OMAN

HM sends cables to Sudan, Brazil

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Lt Gen Abdel Fattah al Burhan, Chairman of the Sovereignty Council in the Republic of Sudan on victims of floods which swept the country. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy to Lt Gen Al Burhan, families of the victims and the brotherly people of Sudan, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest their souls in peace and grant their families patience. His Majesty has sent a cable of greetings to President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, on the occasion of his country's National Day. — ONA

REGION

Jordan to resume regular flights

AMMAN: Jordan will resume regular international flights from Tuesday to help revive an economy badly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, after delaying the move several times over the past month, officials said. Government spokesman Amjad Adallah told a news conference that passengers entering Jordan would need proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of travel, alongside a compulsory test on arrival. He said the rules would include a minimum of one week of self-isolation to a maximum two weeks of quarantine for foreign travellers depending on the severity of the pandemic in countries they came from.

INSIDE



POWERFUL TYPHOON SLAMS JAPAN WITH HEAVY RAIN



UK LAUNCHES MURDER PROBE AFTER MASS STABBING

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 34°C
MIN: 28°C

SALALAH
MAX: 30°C
MIN: 26°C

NIZWA
MAX: 40°C
MIN: 23°C

SUNRISE 05.51 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR: 04:34

DHUHR: 12:10

ASR: 15:37

MAGHRIB: 18:24

ISHA: 19:35



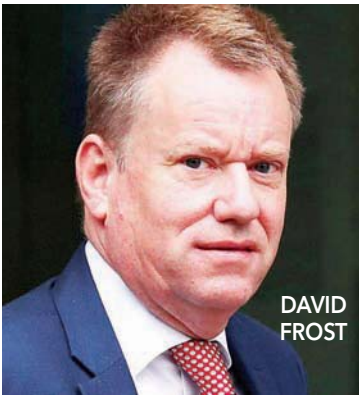
DECLINE IN
POLLUTION
LEVELS

The Environment Authority conducted a study to measure the variation in air quality in three areas in the Governorate of Muscat as a result of conditions brought about by coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The study found a positive impact on the environment. DETAILS ON P2



We won't blink first; UK tells EU on Brexit

LONDON: Britain will not blink first in Brexit trade negotiations with the European Union and is not scared of a no-deal exit at the end of the year, the country's top Brexit negotiator warned the bloc on Sunday. Britain left the EU on January 31 but talks have so far made little headway on agreeing a new trade deal for when a status-quo transition arrangement ends in December. "We came in after a government and negotiating team that had blinked and had its bluff called at critical moments and the EU had learned not to take our word seriously", negotiator David Frost told the Mail on Sunday. "So a lot of what we are trying to do this year is to get them to realise that we mean what we say and they should take our position seriously", he was quoted as saying. Talks are due to resume in London on Tuesday but they have stalled over Britain's insistence that



it have full autonomy over state aid and its demands over fishing. Britain says the EU is dragging its feet in talks and has failed to fully accept that it is now an independent country. "We are not going to be a client state. We are not going to compromise on the fundamentals of having control over our own laws", Frost told the Mail. "We are not going to accept level playing field provisions that lock us in to the way the EU do things." — Reuters

LICENCE NORMS EASED FOR CIVILIAN DRONES

TO BOOST E-COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, SEPT 6

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has simplified the process of issuing licenses for the use of unmanned aircraft (drones) for various purposes. The new rule will benefit young Omani entrepreneurs who use this technology in businesses such as e-commerce, agriculture and photography, etc. As per the decision No 147/2020 issued on July 16, 2020, the age limit of the applicant should be minimum 18 years. The drone has to be insured for civil liability for the benefit of others throughout the licence period. The licence is issued for one year and is renewable, and it may not be waived except after written approval from the Authority. The licence fee varies according to the type of use and the user. A fee of RO 25 has been set for individual licenses for civil use with the aircraft weighing no more than 5 kg. The licence fee for aircraft weighing 25 kg and more for commercial purposes for large companies or institutions will be up to RO 500. The use of remote control aircraft, drones or any other flying object, without approval from the competent authority, is not allowed



in the Sultanate and is seen as a criminal offence. According to Public Prosecution, the offenders will be liable for one-year imprisonment and a fine of RO 10,000. It may be noted that Muscat Airport had to suspend operations temporarily twice last December and January due to suspected drone activity. The Oman Logistics Centre (OLC) and ASYAD recently experimented

parcel delivery and inventory stock counting using drones. The first experiment saw packages delivered in Nizwa and Muscat. The drone in Nizwa transported a parcel weighing approximately 1.5 kg nearly 3 km in just over four minutes. The Muscat drone transported a parcel weighing approximately 5 kg in less than four and a half minutes before returning, a round trip of over 3 km.

BIG FALL IN TURTLE NESTING!



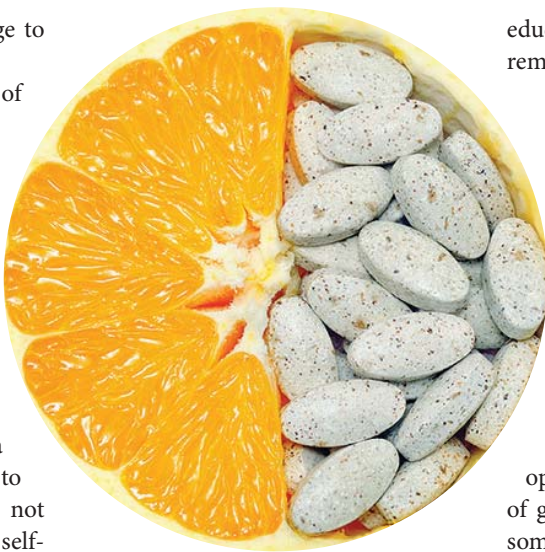
A study conducted over a period of 30 years has evaluated the long-term population trend and management priorities of the globally-important loggerhead turtle population nesting on Masirah Island. The significant discovery found a 79 per cent decline in the nesting population on the island, which has historically been one of the largest nesting grounds of loggerhead turtles in the world. DETAILS ON P14

Overdose of immunity boosters could have side effects

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 6

Precautionary measures against COVID-19 are fine, but an overdose of immunity boosters may cause other health issues. Medical experts are wary of people getting obsessed with personal protection and overdosing their intake of paracetamol or vitamin tablets and immunity boosters which are seen in many countries today. Reports suggest that people who are taking medicines overly or too much of turmeric, methi and vitamin D, have chances of many

other diseases, including damage to internal organs. "The cases of overdose of medicines are likely to be high among those who are excessively worried about COVID-19 and addicted to anti-COVID measures", Dr Mizun Tufail al Rahman, Senior Consultant Family Physician at the Ministry of Health, said. "Although in Oman we have not come across such a phenomenon, people tend to over-consume if moderation is not maintained, and one is not self-



educated about the causes and remedial measures", she added. In some countries, a patient with Type 2 diabetes had vitamin D toxicity while a spike in blood and urine calcium levels were found resulting in nausea, vomiting, dehydration, dizziness, confusion and drowsiness among other changes in other countries. Dr Raman, Chairman and Senior Consultant Cardiologist, opines that people are in the habit of going overboard when they read some reports that something is good

for health. "I know for sure taking excess of vitamin D is bad because it increases calcium in the blood to dangerous levels which can harm the heart and kidneys". He further said a case of water poisoning was brought to his clinic who was brainwashed by some reports that drinking two litres of water as soon as he wakes up in the morning will wash away all the accumulated body toxins in urine. "There is a lot of misconception among the people", says Dr Dilip Singhvi.



TRADE MINISTER RECEIVES INDIAN AMBASSADOR



MUSCAT: Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, received Munu Mahawar, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate, in his office on Sunday. During the meeting, they touched on the upcoming meeting of the Oman-India Joint Committee, the importance of joint action to support bilateral relations between the two countries and the means to attract more investments in various promising sectors.

Real estate deals hit RO 1.21 billion

MUSCAT: The total value of property transactions in the Sultanate at the end of July 2020 fell 18.8 per cent to reach RO 1.21 billion from RO 1.49 billion for the same period of 2019, as indicated by the preliminary statistics issued by National Centre for Statistics and information (NCSI).

The number of plots issued at the end of July 2020 was 92,929, which is a decline of 27.6 per cent compared to the end of July 2019, when 128,336 plots were issued. Of the total traded value at the end of July 2020, RO 442.9 million worth transactions were sales contracts, while RO 719.8 million transactions were mortgage deals.

As many as 26,878 sales contracts were executed in July 2020 against 34,637 contracts during the same period of 2019. However, the total number of mortgage contracts fell by 31

per cent to reach 6,706 contracts against 9,714 contracts in 2019.

The government collected RO 35.7 million as real estate transaction fees at the end of July 2020, which is a drop of 30.4 per cent compared to the same period of 2019.

NCSI data reveal a significant fall in traded value of exchange (barter) contracts by 246 per cent at the end of July 2020 to RO 48.8 million, as against RO 14.1 million posted in the comparable period of 2019.

The number of barter contracts witnessed a fall of 9 per cent to a total of 916, compared to 1,007 contracts in 2019. The number of plots allocated to GCC citizens fell by 60.9 per cent to reach 220 plots compared to 563 plots during the same period of 2019, the data showed.

— ONA

Civic body acts to tackle vector hotspots in Dhofar

People told to identify those areas to rule out the possibility of vector-borne diseases, which are reported from the areas where there is scope for waterlogging and subsequent breeding of mosquitoes

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
SALALAH, SEP 6

The civic body in Salalah has called upon people to take utmost care in removing vector hotspots that emerge generally during and after the monsoon season due to the accumulation of water in congested areas.

It has formed a committee along with the health authorities and has exhorted residents and citizens to identify those areas to rule out the possibility of vector-borne diseases, which are reported from the areas where there is scope for waterlogging and subsequent breeding of mosquitoes.

“We have been impressing upon the community members to adhere to all possible precautionary measures to avoid the formation of insects breeding areas by using household pesticides, closing overhead water tanks and not neglecting and storing unused materials randomly and incorrectly,” said Munir Awad al Jidiani, Director General of Salalah Municipality.

He reiterated the civic body’s commitment to making full use of available capabilities

to work on eliminating the vectors that cause disease and expressed appreciation to the General Directorate of Health Services for extending support. He is hopeful of achieving desired goals.

To create awareness among people the joint teams of the civic body and health services visit individual houses, give the dwellers all possible instructions on self-protection against the vectors and avoid the homes becoming breeding grounds for insects’ breeding.

Used cars and old tires have been found as major breeding grounds for vectors in factory areas in west of Salalah.

The team of specialists, according to the civic authority, is monitoring the vector hotspots and spraying pesticides in densely populated areas, where the gaps between two houses have been found with moisture, vegetation, and subsequent breeding grounds for the vectors.

Dr Salem bin Saeed Habash al Kathiri, Director of Control of Infectious Diseases at the General Directorate of Health Services in Dhofar, emphasised periodic monitoring activities and assured to be a committed partner of the campaign launched by the civic body

He called for harnessing all material and human capabilities to achieve the goals set for this campaign and also called for community support in achieving the desired results.

LOCKDOWN LED TO LESS POLLUTION IN MUSCAT



Muscat: Lockdown measures to control the spread of COVID-19 in Oman led to a significant decrease in air pollutant levels, a new study revealed. The study, aimed at analysing the air quality in Al Khuwair, Mawaleh, was conducted by the country’s Environment Authority, which was represented by the Directorate General of Environmental Affairs.

Upon the outbreak of the pandemic months ago, the Supreme Committee issued Stay-at-Home directives which largely confined people to their homes. Lockdown conditions were imposed and Command and Control Checkpoints were activated, restricting movement and suspending social activities.

This has had a positive impact on the environment, according to preliminary findings of the study

based on readings from the stations of Al Khuwair, Al Mawaleh and Al Wattayah where population density, automobile traffic and economic and commercial activities were taken into account. According to interational organisations, similar global corona-related measures helped the environment to restore its centuries-old status.

The study compared data of July 2019 (pre-corona period) with April 2020 (corona period). It detected common pollutants like sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, ozone (trioxigen) and suspended particles of 2.5-micron and 10-micron diameters.

Readings of gas emissions from moving air quality detection stations were also taken. The results showed big decline in the concentration of pollutants resulting from the Supreme

The study said decline in pollutants is not permanent. Efforts should focus on programmes and projects that keep pollution rates under control and help safeguard natural resources of the Sultanate

Committee’s decisions to lock down Muscat Governorate, close schools and suspend commercial activities.

Public transport constitutes 23 per cent of global carbon emissions, automobile traffic 72 per cent and air traffic 11 per cent. In this study, sanitation of the environment includes the above-mentioned pollutants, as well as carbon emissions and greenhouse gases, which, according to international reports, have dropped immensely.

The study concluded that not much hope can be pinned on the stated levels of decline in pollutants because the factors are not permanent. But it asserts that efforts should focus on programmes and projects that keep pollution rates under control and help safeguard natural resources of the Sultanate.

— ONA



Second fishermen's village to come up in Masirah



ZAINAB AL NASSERI
@zainabalnasseri
MUSCAT, SEPT 6

A second fishermen's village in the Sultanate is coming up in Masirah Island in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. Spread over an area of 4,537 metres, the location of the new fishermen's village is known for its richness in marine wealth.

The fishermen's village includes residential units, mosque, ice-making unit, and cold stores.

The first fishermen's village is in Duqm, Al Wusta Governorate, built on an area of 4,573 square metres.

Al Wusta was chosen due to its variety of marine wealth and abundant fish production, as it is rich in shrimp, abalone, kingfish, and sardines due to its vast coastline overlooking the Arabian Sea.

Fish production in the governorate in 2019 touched 720,669 tonnes, which is the highest among the governorates, with a value of RO 74,961 million.

The fishermen's village includes residential units, mosque, ice-making unit, and cold stores. The first such village is in Duqm, Al Wusta Governorate, built on an area of 4,573 square metres

Besides, the ministry is currently carrying out advisory studies to establish another fishermen's village in the Wilayat of Mahout, Sarab.

Usually, coastal land in the Sultanate is allocated for tourism investment. However, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has pursued a path by allocating land close to the coasts to create villages for fishermen with complete facilities to

serve fishermen in a better way.

The goal of establishing private villages for fishermen is to attract young people to work in the profession, replace unauthorised expatriate labour by Omani fishermen, and to raise the economic returns of fishermen.

To ensure quality, the ministry monitors fishermen's licenses as well as the marketing process of fish production. It also organises training courses for fishermen and guiding programmes to develop their capabilities and efficiency of their work to increase fish production and availability in local markets.

Care for the artisanal fishing sector in the Sultanate is in line with the boost to the sector as it is one of the important sectors because of its actual contribution to the national income. Its contribution to the total catch is at least 80 per cent annually.

The current efforts of the ministry are focused on the continuity of this sector and the provision of appropriate conditions for its workers.

FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVES CREDENTIAL COPIES



MUSCAT: Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy received credentials copies of Ambassadors of Iran, the Philippines and Spain to the Sultanate at the ministry premises on Sunday. According to the twitter handle of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran's Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Spain's Maria Luisa Huidobro, the Philippines' Imelda Macapundag Panolong, submitted the copies credentials to the foreign Minister. The Minister wished them success in performing their duties and progress in bilateral relations.

Overdose of immunity boosters could have side effects

FROM PAGE 1

"Many home remedies which have been advised on various platforms and tried by people especially in India and elsewhere without any supervision such as turmeric, vitamin D3, vitamin C, zinc, ginger, 'kadhas', many herbal, and other ones for boosting immunity, have been taken by many people can have side effects."

However, our researches show that turmeric is good for general health, for immunity, but to be taken in moderation, with milk once a day. Vitamin D3 should be replaced if

levels are low as they also help in boosting immunity, but if the level is above 30 then there is no need to replace. And especially avoid self-medication. Vitamin C although is very popular, but doesn't have any proven role.

"Herbal medicines and related products are sometimes used without any proper knowledge of their side effects," says Dr Abood al Sawafi, Buraimi University.

"I advise every one to be cautious while using such home remedies, some may work but over usage could be a source of serious side effects."

692 new COVID-19 cases, 23 deaths

MUSCAT: The Sultanate reported 693 new COVID-19 cases and 23 deaths in the past 24 hours. The total number of positive COVID-19 cases in the Sultanate has reached 87, 072, while the number of recoveries stood at 82, 406, which is 94.6 percent of cases reported. The total number of coronavirus death cases stood at 728. The ministry also pointed out that 58 cases were hospitalized over the past 24 hours, adding that the total number of hospitalised patients stands at 447, of whom 155 are in intensive care units (ICU).

Two held for stealing money

MUSCAT: Two people have been arrested for stealing money from several vehicles in Muscat Governorate, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) reported on Sunday. "Muscat Governorate Police Headquarters arrested two people for committing crimes of theft from several vehicles parked in front of their owners' homes in Qurayat. Legal procedures are being completed against them," ROP said in a statement. ROP urged citizens and residents to take precautions when stopping and closing their vehicles and not to leave cash and other valuables to avoid being stolen.



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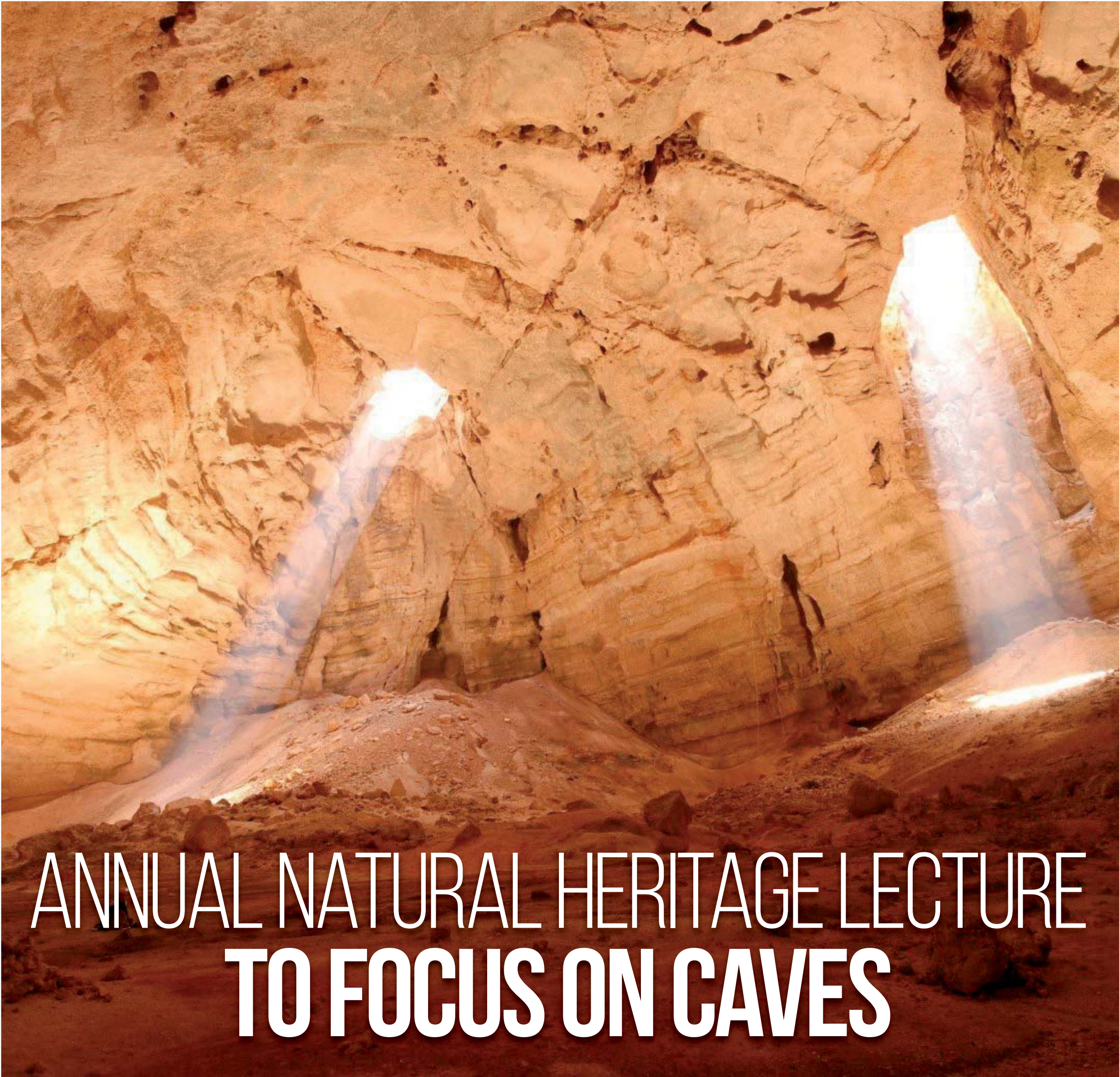
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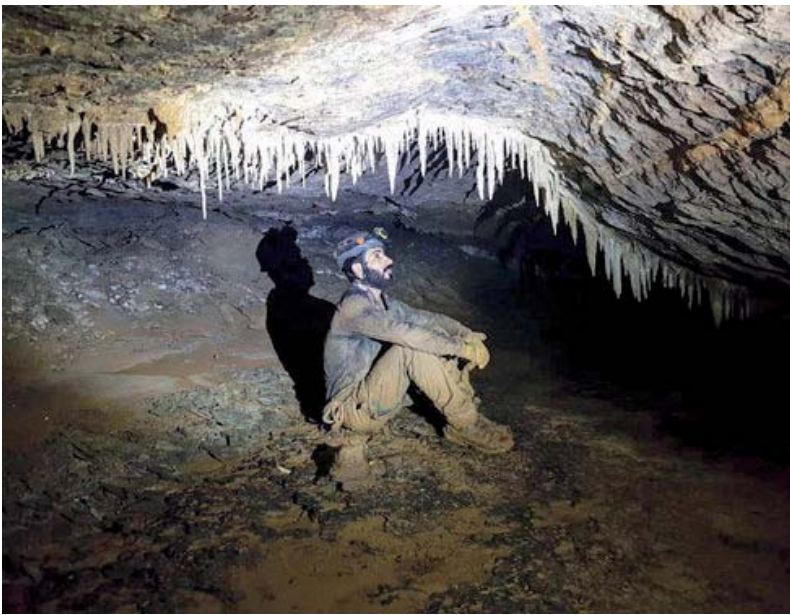


ANNUAL NATURAL HERITAGE LECTURE TO FOCUS ON CAVES

RAY PETERSEN
NIZWA, SEPT 6

Oman’s natural heritage, conservation and environment will again take the stage at the prestigious Royal Geographical Society in London. The topic of this year’s online lecture will be the 800-million year story of Oman’s unique geology and caves, featuring Omani experts Dr Mohammed al Kindi, and Nabil al Saqri of the Geological Society of Oman. The session will be chaired by Abdulmunem al Zakwani. The previous four Oman Natural Heritage lectures have featured marine conservation, the Aflaj, the Arabian Leopard, and

the National Botanical Gardens of Oman. Due to COVID-19 the event will be broadcast simultaneously from Muscat and the Royal Geographical Society in London. Early registration is encouraged by Dr Nigel Winsor of the RGS, a key member of the organising group, as the staged events in London have, in the course of the four years, proven increasingly popular, attracting praise for the knowledge and experiences of the various Omani participants, all expert and enthusiastic in their presentation of the natural wonders of the tiny Middle Eastern nation. Other key organisers in



addition to Dr Winsor include Dr Rod Dutton, Sean Nelson, and Dr Rob Baldwin, while this year the lecture is presented in association with the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the UK; Anglo-Omani Society, UK; the National Field Research Centre for Environmental Conservation; the Oman Cave Exploration Group; the Geological Society of Oman; and the *Geographical Magazine*. The Sultanate’s fascinating geological features never fail to attract visitors from near and far, and with the rocks, fossils, meteorites, and continental structures offer proof of 800 million years of geological evolution and

interaction. As the surrounding ocean currents and wave activity have carried many different life forms, so have the heavens rained meteorites on the land, and fossil evidence of plant and animal evolution are also proof of the mammoth and the dinosaurs of prehistoric times. The Majan and Mazoon civilisations have flourished here, and the caves of Oman too exemplify the beauty and wonder of the Sultanate’s rich heritage and history. All in all, this is a never to be missed event, a mix of science and romance for all ages, promoting Omani academia, science, research, and natural beauty.

TRIBUTES POUR IN FOR VERSATILE INDIAN ARTIST

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 6

People from different walks of life offered tributes to Muscat-based popular Indian artist, Unni Krishnan, who passed away on Saturday. “It is really a very unfortunate incident that we lost such a talented artist. He was a social worker too. Indeed, his death is a big loss,” Munu Mahawar, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate said. Unni was highly talented artist,

graphic designer, art director of many of the short and long films shot in Oman. “Unni left his footprints behind and the art lovers and the art community in Oman are saddened by his sudden departure. May his soul rest in eternal peace and he be given a very special place in the heavenly abode,” Ammujam Raveendran, an active environmentalist and social worker, said. Hailing from Chavakkad in Kerala, Unni had been liked not

just by members of Indian fraternity in Oman but by Omanis also for his extensive contributions to art, culture and dance and drama within the diaspora and beyond. “May he be blessed. Unni was a good soul who was seen with a smile,” Ahmed al Wuhaibi, one of his friends, said. “Very disheartening to hear the sad news. I had a brief talk with him when I met him two weeks back. He was so pleasant and welcoming. May God give him eternal peace,”

Vishal, an artist said. “Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and loved ones. May the dear departed soul rest in peace. His death has come as a shock for the Indian community,” said Mini Mary John. “A great loss to Oman’s cultural scenario and art. Unni will be truly missed in the days to come as he had been a part of all the stage shows, short films, and other cultural settings,” said Hari Kumar Acharath.



Ousted Mali president Keita leaves country

BAMAKO: Ousted Mali President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita left the country for medical treatment in Abu Dhabi, an adviser said, as talks about a transition back to civilian rule following last month's military coup got off to a chaotic start.

Keita, 75, was hospitalised in the capital Bamako last Tuesday, six days after he was released from detention by the ruling junta, which seized power on August 18.

His former chief of staff, Mamadou Camara, told Reuters that Keita left Bamako on Saturday evening aboard a plane chartered by the United Arab Emirates at the request of Mali's ruling junta.

"It is a medical visit of between 10 and 15 days", Camara said.

Keita's medical condition is unclear. He had a benign tumour removed from his neck in 2016.

West African leaders, fearing the coup could set a precedent that would undermine their power and an international fight against militants in the wider Sahel region, initially insisted Keita be restored to power.

But they have since dropped

that demand and are now calling for elections within a year: A timeline the junta, the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), has not committed to.

Talks about the shape of the transition period opened on Saturday with hundreds of representatives from the junta, political parties and civil society groups attending an opening ceremony in Bamako.

But less than an hour after it began, supporters of the M5-RFP coalition, which led mass demonstrations against Keita before the coup, began to protest, accusing the junta of excluding them from most working groups.

M5-RFP supporters in the conference hall shouted down the moderator onstage, bringing proceedings to a halt.

The moderator later announced that the M5-RFP would be able to participate in all of the working groups, which calmed the coalition's supporters and allowed the event to resume.

The talks, which are also being held in regional capitals across Mali, are scheduled to continue and then resume again late this week. — Reuters

KAMALA HARRIS SAYS TRUMP NOT CREDIBLE ON VACCINE

WASHINGTON: Democratic US vice presidential candidate Kamala Harris said she would not take President Donald Trump's word alone on any potential coronavirus vaccine.

In an interview excerpt broadcast by CNN on Saturday, Harris said Trump had a track record of suppressing expert opinion about the coronavirus pandemic and that she worried that might happen again in the case of a prospective vaccine.

"I would not trust Donald Trump", Harris said, saying she would be convinced of the efficacy of a vaccine only if someone credible were vouching for it as well.

"I will not take his word for it".

At least 6.2 million people have been infected in the US coronavirus outbreak, which has taken 187,833 lives, according to a Reuters tally.

With the government's handling of the world's worst outbreak of the disease under close scrutiny, Trump has dangled the possibility that a vaccine might be ready ahead of the November 3 US presidential election.

But Trump has a track record of flouting scientific advice and some experts are sceptical that vaccine trials, which have to study potential side effects on a wide range of people before they can deliver a verdict, can be completed by late this year or even early next year.

Harris suggested to CNN that Trump might seize on a vaccine — no matter how untested — to burnish his image. "He's looking at an election coming up in less than 60 days and



he's grasping for whatever he can get to pretend he can be a leader on this issue when he's not", she said.

In a written statement, the White House said Harris' suggestion that politics is influencing vaccine approvals "is not only false but is a danger to the American public".

Harris' comments come as several

drugmakers developing vaccines are working on a joint pledge not to seek government approval for the shots until they have been proven safe and effective, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on Friday. The unusual move comes amid widespread concern that Trump could seek to prod companies into making any prospective vaccine

available before it is ready.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

CNN said the full interview with Harris would be broadcast on Sunday.

— Reuters



Sultanate of Oman MINISTRY OF HEALTH ROYAL HOSPITAL



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

TENDER NO	DESCRIPTION	LAST DATE FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENT	CLOSING TIME/ DAY/DATE	ELIGIBILITY	TENDER FEE (NON-REFUNDABLE)
DGRH/158/2020	SUPPLY OF SURGICAL ITEMS	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
DGRH/159/2020	SUPPLY OF INFUSION SET FOR INFUSION PUMP	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
DGRH/163/2020	SUPPLY OF HOUSE HOLD ITEMS	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
DGRH/166/2020	SUPPLY OF OFFICE STATIONERIES	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
DGRH/164/2020	SUPPLY OF PRINTED PLASTIC BAGS	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
DGRH/167/2020	SUPPLY OF TONER & CARTRIDGES FOR PRINTER	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
DGRH/168/2020	SUPPLY & INSTALLATION OF MEDICAL EQUIPMENTS	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
DGRH/165/2020	SUPPLY OF NON MEDICAL CONSUMABLE ITEMS	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
DGRH/161/2020	SUPPLY OF SURGICAL CONSUMABLES (SHOE COVER & CAPS)	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS
DGRH/160/2020	SUPPLY OF PHARMACEUTICALS	09/09/2020	Before 9 AM on TUE 29/09/2020	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS

- All specialized and interested companies registered with tender board on the above mentioned grade may obtain tender documents from etendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Tenders should be submitted online on the given website signed and sealed. The tenderer should enclose scan copy of bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by a local bank for not less than one (1%) for the tender value validity for ninety (90) days from the tender submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee before one day of date of submission.
- The Original bank Guarantee should be submitted to the office of Director of Finance one day before the submission date for all tenders.
- The Directorate General of Royal Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offer.

Tenders



The Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC ('TANWEER') invites for the following tenders:

Tender No	Description	Tender Price (R.O)	Grade	Last Date of Buying	Last Date of Submission
Tanweer-26/2020	Feed of Power Supply to New Khasab Hospital Complex at Wilayat Khasab - Musandam Governorate	540/=	"B" and Above	16/09/2020	30/09/2020
Tanweer-27/2020	Supply & Delivery of Prime Power Mobile Containerized D.G Sets to Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer)	150/=	Specialist Companies	16/09/2020	30/09/2020

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tender:** Interested and Specialized Companies and Establishments registered with Tender Board, Tanweer and Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) may obtain the Tender documents from Procurement & Contracts Department, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. The fees for the tenders shall be deposited on Tanweer account 0423010783090041 – Bank Muscat and for more information please contact via email address i.e. tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om , or call us on phone number : 24250824.
- Bank Guarantee:** The Tenderer should enclose original bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC (Tanweer).
- Offers Submission:**
 - A- Original bids along Cover letter shall be placed by bidders inside the red waxed Tender's envelopes as communicated to bidders by Tanweer. Such documents must be serialized according to the numbers of the tender items.
 - B- Tender bids shall be provided separately on a CD Roms , along with original cover letters in each envelop. Bids and cover letters shall bear the bidder's official seal and must be signed in either blue or red ink, but not black. A true soft copy of the bids shall be provided on a CD in an inner envelope marked "Copy". Bids who do not comply with these requirements will be overlooked.
 - C- Bidders shall write the following details on the cover of CD:
 - Tender name and number.
 - Addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Tanweer.
 - Prequalification / Technical Proposal / Commercial Proposal / Bid Bond.
- Submission Location:** The Completed bids in CD should be deposited in the Tender Box at Tanweer Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 12:00 PM on the last date of submission.
- Tanweer** without mentioning the reason is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

For more information please call: 80077787
Or visit our Website: www.tanweer.nama.om



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CALL FOR CHANGE



A protester holds a placard during a demonstration against the Israeli government near the Prime Minister’s residence in Jerusalem. – AFP

Iraq warns it may ‘lose control’ after record coronavirus cases

BAGHDAD: Iraq has warned its citizens not play down the seriousness of the coronavirus as nearly 5,000 daily new infections are reported.

Iraq recorded its highest single-day rise in COVID-19 cases on Friday since the start of the pandemic, prompting authorities to warn hospitals may “lose control” in the coming days.

According to the Iraqi health ministry, 5,036 new coronavirus infections were confirmed, bringing the total number of cases across the country to over 256,000, of which 191,500 had recovered, but 7,359 had died.

The health ministry attributed the spike to recent “large gatherings” that took place without recommended safety measures, including mask-wearing or social distancing.

That included the marking on August 30 of Ashura. On that day, tens of thousands converged on the holy city of Karbala in southern Iraq.

Karbala’s authorities introduced



A worker wearing a protective suit collects garbage from hospitals of patients infected with COVID-19 to be burnt, in Najaf. – Reuters

new measures to stem the spread of the virus, including restricting access to areas of worship and widespread spraying of disinfectants.

But the health ministry warned the measures weren’t enough.

“The number of cases is expected to escalate further in the coming days, which we fear will lead our health institutions to lose control as they try to deal with these large numbers,” its statement said.

“This will lead to an increase in the number of deaths, after we made headway in reducing them over the past few weeks,” it added.

Iraq’s hospitals have already been worn down by decades of conflict and poor investment, with shortages in medicines, hospital beds and even protective equipment for doctors.

The World Health Organization had warned that COVID-19 cases in Iraq were rising at an “alarming rate” and said Iraq should take action to end the community outbreak “at all costs”.

— AFP

Policeman stabbed to death, 3 ‘terrorists’ killed in firefight

SOUSSE: Attackers with knives killed a Tunisian National Guard officer and wounded another on Sunday before three assailants were shot dead in a firefight, the security force said, labelling it a “terrorist” act.

The attack took place in the tourist district of the coastal city of Sousse, the site of the worst of several militant attacks in recent years, where 38 people, most of them Britons, were killed in a 2015 beach side shooting rampage.

“A patrol of two National Guard officers was attacked with a knife in the centre of Sousse,” 140 kilometres south of the capital Tunis, said National Guard spokesman Houcem Eddine Jebabli.

“One died as a martyr and the other was wounded and is hospitalised,” he said, adding that “this was a terrorist attack”.

The attackers had first rammed the officers of the national gendarmerie with a vehicle, said the interior ministry in a statement.

After the knife attack, security forces pursued the assailants, who had taken the officers’ guns and vehicle, through the Akouda district of the city’s tourist area of El-Kantaoui, said Jebabli.

“In a firefight three terrorists were killed,” he said, adding

that security forces “managed to recover” the car and two pistols the assailants had stolen.

British ambassador to Tunisia Louise de Sousa tweeted she was “appalled to hear of the attack on a National Guard patrol in #Sousse this morning.

“My sincere condolences to the family of the murdered officer & I wish a swift recovery to the injured. #UKsupportTunisia”

Tunisia, since its 2011 popular revolution, has been hit by a string of attacks that have killed dozens of security personnel, civilians and foreign tourists.

A suicide attack against security forces protecting the US Embassy in Tunis killed a Tunisian police officer and left several others wounded in March.

An attack at the capital’s Bardo museum in March killed 21 foreign tourists and a security guard.

Just three months later, the 38 tourists were killed in the shooting rampage at Sousse.

And that November, a bomb blast on a bus in central Tunis killed 12 presidential guards.

While the situation has significantly improved since then, Tunisia has maintained a state of emergency.

Assaults on security forces have persisted, mainly in remote areas. — AFP



Tunisian forensic police investigate the site of an attack on Tunisian National Guard officers in Sousse. – AFP

From window to jug: Lebanese recycle glass from Beirut blast

TRIPOLI: Standing in a pile of broken glass in northern Lebanon, a man heaved shovel-loads of shards — retrieved from Beirut after the massive explosion at its port — into a red-hot furnace.

Melted down at a factory in the second city Tripoli, they re-emerged as molten glass ready to be recycled into traditional slim-necked water jugs.

The August 4 port explosion ripped through countless glass doors and windows when it laid waste to whole Beirut neighbourhoods, killing at least 190 people and wounding thousands more.

Volunteers, non-governmental groups and entrepreneurs have tried to salvage at least part of the tonnes of glass that littered the streets, some of it through recycling at Wissam Hammoud’s family’s glass factory.

“Here we have glass from the Beirut explosion,” said Hammoud, deputy head at the United Glass Production Company (Uniglass), as several men sorted through a mound of shards outside the building.

“Organisations are bringing it to us so that we can remanufacture it,” said

the 24-year-old.

As workers washed and stacked jars behind him, Hammoud said between 20 and 22 tonnes of glass had been brought to the factory, a hive of rhythmic activity centred around the furnace that burns at 900-1,200 degrees Celsius.

Nearby, three men produced jars stamped out of a mold in a carefully choreographed sequence, while another two handled the more delicate process of blowing and forming the traditional Lebanese pitchers.

“We work 24 hours a day,” Hammoud said. “We can’t stop because stopping costs too much money.”

Ziad Abichaker, CEO of environmental engineering company Cedar Environmental, has spearheaded multiple glass recycling initiatives in Lebanon.

In the first days after the blast, he teamed up with civil-society organisations and a host of volunteers to come up with a plan to keep as much glass as possible out of landfills already overburdened by a decades-old solid waste crisis.

“We decided that at least part of the



A glassblower forms glass at factory, which is recycling the broken glass as a result of the Beirut explosion, in the northern Lebanese port city of Tripoli. – AFP

shattered glass... our local industries should benefit from as a raw material,” Abichaker said.

“We’re diverting glass from ending up in the landfill, we’re supplying our local industries with free raw material,” he added.

According to him, more than 5,000 tonnes of glass was shattered by the explosion.

From mid-August to September 2, almost 58 tonnes were sent for reuse at Uniglass and Koub/Golden Glass in Tripoli.

Abichaker said he hoped, with funding, to bring the total to 250 tonnes.

At the volunteer hub dubbed the Base Camp in Beirut’s hard-hit Mar Mikhael district, young men and women kitted out with sturdy shoes,

masks and heavy gloves sort the glass, pulling bits of detritus out of the piled shards under a scorching sun.

Anthony Abdel Karim, who months before the blast had launched an upcycling glass project called Annine Fadye or “Empty Bottle” in Arabic, coordinates the operations.

We have “mountains of waste that are piling up in Beirut, they’re mixed with everything. Glass and rubble and metal are mixed with organic waste... and this is not healthy,” he said.

Glass from the explosion poses different challenges from bottles, as much of it is dirty, so the initiative focuses on gathering glass from inside homes and other buildings, setting up a hotline where people can request pickup.

Abdel Karim said they aim to find other ways of recycling the glass that is not suitable to send to Tripoli, possibly by crushing it to be used in cement or other materials.

“This is the tip of the iceberg,” he said, noting just a fraction of the glass so far had been collected and repurposed. “It needs a lot of time, we know that.” — AFP

Powerful typhoon slams Japan with violent winds, heavy rain

SERIOUS CAUTION: Over 3 million evacuate homes as forecasters warn of flooding, fierce winds

KAGOSHIMA: A powerful typhoon began to lash southern Japan on Sunday, with officials warning it could bring record rainfall and winds strong enough to snap power line poles and flip cars.

Typhoon Haishen, categorised as “large” and “extremely strong”, has prompted evacuation advisories for more than three million residents, particularly in Kyushu — one of Japan’s main islands — which the storm is expected to affect overnight.

The storm has weakened somewhat, shifting west from earlier forecasts, away from the mainland, and Japan’s weather agency said it was no longer likely to issue its top-level typhoon warning.

But it urged residents to exercise “most serious caution” for possible record rain, violent winds, high waves and surging tides.

“Record-level rainfall is expected (where the typhoon approaches). It may cause landslides or it could cause even large rivers to flood,” Yoshihisa Nakamoto, director of the forecast division at the Japan Meteorological Agency, said during a televised briefing.

He added that surging tides could cause widespread flooding in low-lying areas, particularly around river mouths.

The storm passed over a string of small islands near Kyushu on Sunday afternoon, and footage showed strong gusts bending trees as walls of rain came down.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called an emergency cabinet meeting to coordinate the government’s response to the storm, and warned of flooding and landslides.

“Maximum caution is needed as record rain, violent winds, high waves and high tides are possible,” he said.

“I ask the Japanese people,



People undergo a temperature check before boarding an evacuation bus in Hitoyoshi. — AFP

including those who live in high-risk areas for flooding rivers or high tides to stay informed and take action immediately to ensure their safety.” Haishen was packing gusts up to 216 km per hour on Sunday evening — strong enough to overturn vehicles

and snap wooden power line poles.

The storm was forecast to move north-northwest and travel off the western coast of Kyushu from the evening through early on Monday before reaching South Korea, according to the weather agency.

BLACKOUTS

Authorities across Japan’s southern Kyushu island have issued evacuation advisories for nearly 2.5 million residents, particularly in Kagoshima and neighbouring Miyazaki, according to the Fire and Disaster Management

Agency.

Across the country, non-compulsory evacuation orders and advisories covered some 3.5 million residents, according to national broadcaster NHK.

Evacuation orders in Japan are not compulsory, though authorities strongly urge people to follow them.

Local officials have asked people, however, to avoid crowded shelters if possible to reduce the risk of coronavirus infections, so in many places residents have checked into hotels.

“I live near a river, and I wanted to go to a safe place and thought about the coronavirus too,” a woman in Miyazaki told NHK after bringing her family to a local hotel.

The storm has forced the cancellation of nearly 550 flights and disrupted train services, NHK said.

And power outages were reported in parts of Okinawa, as well as Kagoshima, where some 30,000 homes were without electricity even before the storm arrived.

Toyota said it would suspend operations at three plants in Kyushu until Monday evening, while other companies, including Canon and Mitsubishi Electric, reportedly planned to take similar measures.

Haishen has forced the Japanese coast guard to suspend its search for dozens of missing sailors from a cargo ship that sank in an earlier storm.

Two survivors were rescued before Haishen approached, as well as the body of a third crew member.

The Gulf Livestock 1, carrying 6,000 cows and 43 crew, issued a distress call on Wednesday near Amami Oshima as Typhoon Maysak passed through the area. Patrol ships have remained in the sea so that the search can resume after Haishen leaves the region, a duty officer said. — AFP

Rush to assess damage by fire-stricken tanker off Lanka



COLOMBO: An international team of salvage experts arrived in Sri Lanka on Sunday to assess damage to a fire-stricken oil tanker off the east coast, officials said, as fear mounted for an environmental disaster if there is a leak.

The Panamanian-registered New Diamond, carrying over 270,000 tonnes of crude and diesel, was en route to the Indian port of Paradip when it issued a distress call on Thursday after an engine room explosion that killed a Filipino crew member.

The Sri Lankan navy and Indian coastguard got the blaze under control on Friday, preventing it from spreading to the flammable cargo.

“Ten British and Netherlands professionals with expertise in rescue operations, disaster evaluation and legal consultation will be arriving in the island this morning,” the navy said in a statement.

Dutch firm Smit Salvage had commissioned the experts and was also sending two tug boats from Singapore and Mauritius, the navy added.

The Indian coastguard, which has deployed numerous ships, an aircraft and a helicopter, added on Sunday that its pollution control vessel had arrived at the site in the Indian Ocean.

The rescue vessels continued to douse the blaze with water on Sunday as a large plume of smoke rose from the ship. The 330-metre vessel was towed to deeper waters some 75 kilometres away from the island’s coast.

The tanker had suffered a crack of its hull some 10 metres above the waterline as a result of intense heat from the fire, officials said.

Authorities said there has been no oil slick and the crack was not considered a catastrophic structural failure.

Sri Lanka’s Marine Environment Protection Agency has said that legal action could be taken against the owners, Liberian-registered Porto Emporios Shipping Inc, “should the worst happen and the ship breaks up”.

The vessel is larger than the Japanese bulk carrier MV Wakashio, which crashed into a reef in Mauritius in July leaking more than 1,000 tonnes of oil into the island nation’s pristine waters. — AFP



A medical staff takes a sample from a woman for a COVID-19 test at a temporary test centre in New Delhi. — AFP

Germany sends COVID-19 assistance to India

BERLIN: Germany is sending 330,000 coronavirus test kits and 600,000 sets of protective gear for health care workers to India to help the country cope with the pandemic, Development Aid Minister Gerd Mueller said in remarks to Funke media group newspapers published on Sunday.

In addition, the ministry is providing short-term loans worth 460 million euros (some \$ 544 million) for food and for bridging aid to people in

India who lost their jobs due to the coronavirus crisis.

“This is one of the largest [coronavirus] support measures worldwide,” said Mueller.

The novel coronavirus is spreading faster in India than anywhere across the world, with 1 million new COVID-19 cases reported over the past two weeks, taking the total well past 4 million, according to government data released on Saturday.

India is the third country after the United States and Brazil to record 4 million cases.

It looks set to soon overtake Brazil, which has so far recorded 4,123,000 cases, according to the country’s Health Ministry.

Experts say the rate of increase in India, a country of 1.3 billion, was to be expected as it gradually lifted a lockdown that had been in place since mid-May.

— dpa

Melbourne lockdown extended despite drop in cases

MELBOURNE: Australian officials on Sunday extended a strict virus lockdown of the country’s second-biggest city by two weeks, saying new cases had not dropped enough to prevent another spike.

Melbourne residents were due to exit a harsh six-week lockdown next weekend but face continued restrictions for months to come, with Victoria state premier Daniel Andrews saying the current lockdown would remain in place until September 28.

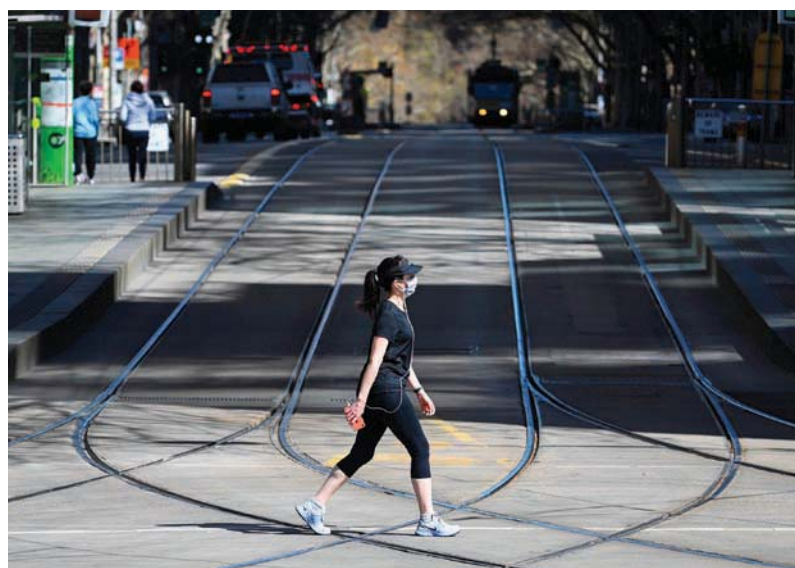
“If we open up too fast then we have a very high likelihood that we are not really opening up at all — we are just beginning a third wave,” he told a press conference.

“And we will be back in and out

of restrictions, coming in and out of lockdown, before the end of the year.” Just 63 new cases and five deaths were recorded in Victoria on Sunday, after peaking above 700 at the height of the outbreak, but health officials are taking a cautious approach.

Hopes of a return to normality this month have been dashed, with an overnight curfew, restrictions on visitors to homes and a limit on travelling more than five kilometres set to remain in place until at least October 26.

Announcing the roadmap for the easing of restrictions, Andrews said that rushing to experience a “brief period of sunshine” would likely lead to the virus again spiralling out of



A woman takes a walk in Melbourne on Sunday. — AFP

control.

The toughest rules will be eased in Melbourne from September 13, with an overnight curfew beginning an hour later at 9 pm, daily exercise increased to two hours and small “social bubbles” created for people living alone.

Under the government’s plan, childcare centres will reopen and up to five people will be able to gather outdoors from the end of September — but only if cases fall below an average of 50 per day.

Rules for people living in regional and rural Victoria will be relaxed more quickly, due to small numbers of active cases in those areas.

The announcement comes a day

after more than a dozen anti-lockdown protesters were arrested in Melbourne during clashes with police.

Hundreds attended the illegal gathering organised online by conspiracy theorists, labelling the government’s response to the pandemic overblown or an outright “scam”.

Australia has been relatively successful in containing the virus, with the country recording just over 26,000 cases and 753 deaths in a population of 25 million.

The vast majority were reported in Melbourne over the past two months, while other regions have rolled back restrictions after largely bringing the virus under control. — AFP



Pope: Gossiping is ‘plague worse than COVID-19’

ROME: Gossip and chatter are a “plague more awful than COVID-19,” the pope said during his Sunday Angelus prayers, delivered from the window of the Vatican on St Peter’s Square.

“When we see a brother or sister make a mistake or with a defect, the first thing we do is go tell others about it. We gossip,” the pope said.

He said that gossip hurts the community of the church, comparing it to the devil, the liar “who wants to divide the church.”

The pope called on the faithful to make an effort and to avoid gossip.

He called instead for people to follow church guidelines on fraternal correction and discreetly correct others when they do make mistakes or do something wrong, the Vatican News reported.

Francis’ comments came as he elaborated on a Gospel

passage about the need to correct others privately when they do something wrong. The Catholic hierarchy has long relied on this “fraternal correction” among priests and bishops to correct them when they err without airing problems in public.

Survivors of abuse have said this form of private reprimand has allowed abuse to fester in the church and let both predator priests and superiors who covered up for them escape punishment.

Earlier Pope had urged people to use the pandemic-induced time to increase silence in their lives and learn how to listen.

“There is a lot of silence in this period. You can even hear the silence,” which may be something very different from what people are used to, he said. “May this silence,” he prayed, “teach us to listen, make us grow in our ability to listen.” — dpa

BELARUS CRISIS



Belarusian riot police block a street during a rally to protest against the disputed August 9 presidential elections results in Minsk on Sunday. Tens of thousands of Belarusians continued to stage demonstrations, keeping the pressure on the government. – AFP

UK police launch probe after mass stabbing

DEEPLY CONCERNING: Number of knife offenses has risen 6 per cent in England and Wales

BIRMINGHAM: One man was killed and two people were critically injured during a “random” stabbing attack lasting several hours in Britain’s second city of Birmingham, police said on Sunday.

Detectives said they were hunting one suspect after being called to reports of stabbings at four separate locations in the city centre between 12:30 am (2330 GMT Saturday) and 2:30 am.

But they ruled out hate crime, gang violence and terrorism.

“It does appear to be random in terms of the people that were attacked,” said Chief Superintendent Steve Graham of West Midlands Police, adding that it was being treated as

homicide.

Britain has been on high alert after two mass stabbings in London in the last year, which saw both perpetrators — convicted extremists released early from prison — shot dead by armed officers.

In June, a man was charged with murder after three people were killed in a park in Reading, west of London, in an attack investigated by counter-terrorism police.

Six people were then injured, including a police officer, at a hotel housing asylum seekers in the Scottish city of Glasgow. Armed police shot dead the suspected attacker.

The latest incident comes amid



Police forensic officers gather evidence inside a cordon on Hurst Street, following a major stabbing incident in the centre of Birmingham on Sunday. – AFP

concern about levels of knife crime in Britain, particularly in the capital, London.

The number of stabbings in England and Wales increased six per cent in the year to the end of March, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Birmingham is one of Britain’s most ethnically diverse cities with a population of more than one million, and has had an explosive recent history of gang violence.

In January 2003, one gang opened fire with an illegal semi-automatic sub-machine gun at a rival group. Two teenage girls who were bystanders were killed in the hail of bullets.

No details were immediately released

about the identity of the victims other than the two people critically injured were a man and a woman.

Five other people were taken to hospital with minor injuries, as police declared a “major incident” and said the incidents were linked.

Eyewitnesses earlier said about violence in one of the four locations, in and around the Arcadian Centre, a popular venue filled with restaurants, nightclubs and bars.

Cara Curran, a nightclub promoter who was working at the Arcadian Centre on Saturday night said she saw “groups upon groups” of people fighting in and around the venue and heard the use of “racial slurs”. — AFP

Virus-hit Berlusconi ‘responding well’ to treatment

MILAN: Italy’s former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi is responding well to treatment after he was taken to hospital with coronavirus, his doctor said on Sunday, but warned his condition was “delicate”.

The 83-year-old media tycoon is being treated for a lung infection at San Raffaele hospital in Milan where he was admitted on Thursday night.

“The patient is calm and is responding optimally to treatments,” his doctor Alberto Zangrillo said.

“I am cautiously optimistic, which I reiterate, we must not claim victory since (Berlusconi) belongs in the category defined as the most fragile.” Berlusconi tested positive for coronavirus earlier this week after returning from a holiday at his luxury villa in Sardinia.

Two of his children — daughter Barbara, 36, and son Luigi, 31 — have also contracted the virus, as has his companion Marta Fascina.

Following a check-up at his home, Zangrillo insisted that Berlusconi go to the hospital the same night.

On Friday, the doctor said that the billionaire was “a patient at risk because of his age and previous illnesses”, including open-heart surgery.

Zangrillo said Berlusconi had a lung infection that had been diagnosed early but was not on a ventilator.

Berlusconi had said he would continue his political activities despite the positive test.

Regional elections are due to take place in Italy in two weeks as well as a referendum on reducing the number of Italian parliamentarians. — AFP

100 nights of protest: Portland protest a ‘riot’

PORTLAND: Police arrested dozens of people and used tear gas against hundreds of demonstrators in Portland late on Saturday as the western US city marked 100 days since Black Lives Matter protests erupted against racism and police brutality.

Police quickly declared the rally a “riot” after protesters hurled Molotov cocktails at them, and they responded with a barrage of tear gas to disperse the crowd.

At least one person was injured by the fire bombs, police said.

Officers arrested dozens of protesters in an ensuing game of cat-and-mouse through a residential district of east Portland.

“It was Day 100 for Black Lives Matter protests in Portland since George Floyd’s murder and they wanted to prevent us from marching,” said 20-year-old protester Jay, her eyes red from the tear gas.

“It’s our constitutional right to be here and to express ourselves.” Police said people were “engaging in tumultuous and violent conduct thereby intentionally or recklessly creating a grave risk of causing public alarm.” “This is a riot. Police are giving announcements to disperse. People are throwing Molotov cocktails,” Portland Police said on Twitter.

The nightly protests were sparked by the death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis in May.

Floyd’s death triggered similar protests nationwide, but it is in Portland — a city of 650,000 that is more than 70 per cent white — that activists have remained on the streets practically every night, demanding racial justice and police accountability.

President Donald Trump has cast the city as being under siege by “thugs” engaged in “domestic terrorism,” though the



An Oregon police officer fires rubber bullets at protesters during the 100th day and night of protests against racism and police brutality in Portland. – AFP

demonstrations have been peaceful for the most part.

Tensions escalated again last weekend after a man identified as a supporter of a right-wing group was shot and killed.

On Saturday, hundreds of people gathered in a park near Portland in a memorial for Aaron “Jay” Danielson, a supporter of the far-right group Patriot Prayer.

The 39-year-old was fatally shot after he joined pro-Trump supporters who descended on Portland, sparking confrontations with Black Lives Matter counter-protesters.

displayed for the occasion.

“The evil is the liberals who are letting these cities be destroyed by Antifa, BLM, whoever you want to call them,” he said.

Apart from the homage to the victim and the groups of men with assault rifles or pistols, the atmosphere at the park in Vancouver, just north of Portland, was almost partylike.

But Dann was gloomy about the run-up to the presidential election.

“The next two months are going to be terrible. There’s going to be more violence. There’s going to be more atrocities. There’s going to be more name calling,” he predicted.

Carrying a skateboard and with a pistol on his belt, Daparu De Crusha, 51, said BLM protesters were trying to destroy the American family.

The former publicist was convinced that Danielson was not killed by chance.

“I believe it was orchestrated, it was a hunting,” he said. “There was going to be a human sacrifice that night and Jay Danielson was their victim,” he said.

After citing conspiracy theories about China and Bill Gates, De Crusha said Trump’s victory or defeat on November 3 would not change the country’s problems. “It’s not going to end with the election,” Dann agreed.

“The only thing that’s going to stop it is if we the people stand up for our rights and are not intimidated,” he said, wearing a “Make America Great Again” cap and sporting a “We the people” tattoo on his arm.

In his tribute to Danielson, Patriot Prayer founder Joey Gibson, who denies advocating white supremacy, insisted they rejected hatred and violence. “I don’t want to see anybody encourage any acts of violence in the name of Jay,” he said. — AFP

Save a penny for a rainy day...

Making a living is not an easy matter in life, especially nowadays as many people are struggling to get a job. Being an employee is as significance as other life necessities, which people cannot live without. Probably, it comes on top of the list of life requirements. Having a job is more than just about making a living; it is crucial to one's dignity and sense of self-respect. It is a means to justify an end, which is making a living for people and their families.

Getting a job nowadays is becoming a big challenge for many young graduates though there are thousands of vacancies, but the competition among job-seekers is extremely high. Most employers claim that priority is accorded to job-seekers and fresh graduates rather than experienced cadre. Undoubtedly, it is fair enough to offer job-seekers a priority when conferring job openings.

The job-hunting journey can be quite frustrating, especially as the possibilities are limited and job opportunities are on shortfall too. Although having a job is a blessing, what is maddening more is not having a job security and being under a threat to lose your only source of income at any moment! For different reasons, many people have lost their



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

THE JOB
SECURITY
FUND WITH
A GRANT OF
**RO 10
MILLION**
BY HIS MAJESTY
WAS SET UP TO
SUPPORT THE
LAID OFF AND
THOSE WHO
LOSE JOBS

jobs, which have been serving for years. Accordingly, they have started over their journey of job seeking to make a living.

Among the major reasons behind people have lost their jobs is the outbreak of coronavirus worldwide. The ups and downs of economic hardship due to coronavirus pandemic have affected economies of most of the countries in the world. The pandemic has forced many corporates to remove their employees due to the impact on businesses.

Many companies have lost their contracts while some were affected by the lockdown, so their business have collapsed. Others have opted to sacrifice their employees for the sake of saving their budget and sustain their businesses. Different scenarios are being seen in the fight between employers and employees. Probably, some corporates believed in the saying of Benjamin Franklin, "A penny saved is a penny earned". They understood that not all days are same, so they decided to save their pennies for a rainy day.

As this job crisis risks has turned into a social crisis, the government in the Sultanate has taken a step ahead of time early this year. Last March, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued an order to establish a 'Job Security Fund' in Oman. His

Majesty has granted RO 10 million to establish the fund, which will be used to support the laid off and those who lose their jobs for different reasons. The establishment of Job Security Fund reflects His Majesty's concern to provide a social protection for its beneficiaries.

This Job Security Fund marks a step for a wide community contribution to the fund. It is financed by employees of both government and private sectors with every employee contributing one rial out of every RO 100 of his monthly salary. This fund will be implemented through two phases; the first phase will start in November 2020, benefits will be granted to Omanis whose services have been terminated.

The second phase will start after three years of the establishment of the fund, where a subvention will be paid to the job-seekers.

The establishment of the Job Security Fund will open the door for the youth for employment in the private sector, provide them with confidence in terms of their career and ensure them the job guarantee. Setting a motivational work environment and reassurance, would always empower employees with a sense of well-being, so they will not need to question their job security. Employers shall not allow job insecurity to become the shovel which buries employees' dreams.

CORONAVIRUS

Every person you meet could be a potential carrier

DANISH SIDDIQUI

Every person you meet is a potential carrier of the disease, a doctor said to me when I visited the town of Bhagalpur and its nearby villages to cover the raging coronavirus pandemic in India's countryside.

Dr Kumar Gaurav, a psychiatrist who conveyed that warning, was put in charge of the main hospital in Bhagalpur after the epidemic struck down some of his colleagues and others refused the job.

Infections in India now total over 3.5 million, rising from two million in just over three weeks — the third highest number of coronavirus infections in the world. The disease is rampant in rural India, where

The healthcare system here was close to breaking point. One of the points of constant strain is to limit the visit of families

DR GAURAV
Psychiatrist

people often have to rely on the most basic health facilities.

We wanted to show the human toll of the disease in the countryside, home to two-thirds of India's 1.3 billion people. So, I headed out to one of the country's most poverty-stricken regions — Bihar state in eastern India. The area I went to was not easy to reach.

Wary of the risk of infection from using public transport, I and a driver travelled for four days by car across India's northern plains from New Delhi, through floods and along rutted roads. We carried full personal protection suits, masks, goggles and sanitisers — which was far more than hospital staff I encountered had.

In Bhagalpur, I found patients and their families desperate for help and medical staff struggling with a shortage of manpower and equipment that left them at risk of infection. Often, even the equipment they did have did not work. Gaurav's hospital was dedicated to treating patients with COVID-19, serving a population of about 10 million people, and it still received other patients. Most COVID-19 patients came in with relatives, who accompanied them to the intensive care wards.

After trying to care of the sick — sitting with them, massaging and feeding them, these relatives would go home for the night. Gaurav said the healthcare system was close to breaking point. One of the points of constant strain, he said, was trying to limit the visits from relatives to patients in the ICU given the risk that they could spread the infection. That underlined his warning to me that everyone I meet could be carrying the disease — it wasn't a casual comment.

The town was under a strict lockdown, but most of the residents were not wearing masks or following any social distancing rules. Traffic was frenetic.

After four days in Bihar, we were on the road back to New Delhi. Gaurav remained behind, the last doctor standing in his hospital on the banks of the Ganges River. When we saw him, he was making the rounds with armed guards to try to enforce rules in the hospital. He told me he felt compelled to step up to take charge.

"A lot of my colleagues refused", he said. "I had to take up the responsibility". — Reuters

DEADLY EXPLOSION

One month on, still question marks hang over Lebanon blast

ROUBA EL HUSSEINI

A month after a deadly port explosion killed over 190 people and destroyed swathes of Lebanon's capital, the government's account of the blast remains pockmarked with questions.

An initial explosion shook Beirut's port area at around 6:08 pm (1508 GMT) on August 4, resulting in a fire, several small blasts and then a colossal explosion that flattened the docks and surrounding buildings.

Seismologists measured the event, which blew out windows at the city's international airport 9 km away, as the equivalent of a 3.3-magnitude earthquake. The blast, heard as far away as Cyprus, left a crater 43 metres deep.

Hassan Diab, who quit along with his government in the wake of the blast, said 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate had blown up. The fertiliser had been stored in a portside warehouse for seven years, without precautionary measures.

But experts believe that the quantity that ignited was substantially less than declared by authorities.

Even in relatively low quantities, ammonium nitrate creates a potent explosive when combined with fuel oils and has caused numerous industrial accidents around the world over the years.

Regulations in the United States were tightened significantly after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, which used two tonnes of ammonium nitrate and killed 168 people. US facilities that store more than 0.9 metric tonnes of ammonium nitrate are subject to inspections.

The ammonium nitrate is widely



A member of the French military carries a bag of rice as he works at the damaged site of the massive blast in Beirut's port area on August 31. — AFP

THE BLAST
HAS LEFT
43M
DEEP CRATER

understood to have arrived in Beirut in 2013 on board the Rhosus, a Moldovan-flagged ship sailing from Georgia and bound for Mozambique.

According to Lebanese law firm Baroudi & Associates, which represents the crew, the vessel had faced "technical problems".

Several security officials said that it was seized by authorities after a Lebanese company filed a lawsuit against its owner.

Port authorities unloaded the ammonium nitrate and stored it in a run down port warehouse with

cracks in its walls, the officials said. The Rhosus sank in Beirut port several years after it was impounded.

An investigation by the Organised Crime And Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) found that the vessel's owner was Charalambos Manoli, a Cypriot shipping magnate. Manoli denies the claim.

The report said a Mozambican factory — Fabrica de Explosivos de Mocambique — had ordered the ammonium nitrate, but did not attempt to retrieve it after the Rhosus was seized. — AFP



NUGGETS THUMP CLIPPERS, RAPTORS DOWN CELTICS TO EVEN SERIES

MIAMI: The Denver Nuggets bounced back with a vengeance on Saturday, powering to a 110-101 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers to even their NBA playoff series 1-1.

It was all-square between the Toronto Raptors and Boston Celtics, too, after the Raptors notched a second straight win, 100-93, to knot their Eastern Conference semi-final series 2-2 in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida.

The Nuggets, routed 120-97 in game one of the Western Conference series on Thursday, turned the tables with a blistering first half in which they led by as many as 23 points.

"Game one, we were tired. I hate to admit it, but we were tired," said guard Jamal Murray, who led Denver with 27 points. "We came out sloppy, came out exhausted, fatigued. We didn't make any shots, we didn't get back on defence.

"Tonight we just upped the energy and that's all it took to win."

Nikola Jokic added 26 points and 18 rebounds for Denver, who had rallied from a 3-1 deficit to beat the Utah Jazz in seven games in the first round. The two — who combined for 27 points in game one — had a total of 26 between them by the end of the first quarter as the Nuggets took a 44-25 lead.

It was 72-56 at half-time, and the Nuggets were up by 12 going into the final quarter.

The Clippers managed to cut the deficit to five early in the fourth and they got it to seven on Marcus Morris's three-pointer with two and a half minutes remaining. Murray promptly answered with a three-pointer and the Nuggets were away again.

"I thought tonight we were a noticeably different team than we were in game one," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said.

Paul George scored 22 points for the Clippers and Ivica Zubac added 15. Toronto 'starting over'

Two-time NBA Finals MVP Kawhi Leonard finished with 13 points on four-of-17 shooting with 10 rebounds and eight assists.

"They were the aggressor



tonight," Leonard said. "A few easy ones didn't fall early, and that was it from there."

The NBA champion Raptors, who won game three against the Celtics on Thursday on OG Anunoby's buzzer-beating three-pointer, clamped down defensively to win again, holding the Celtics to 20 per cent shooting from three-point range while draining 17 three-

pointers themselves. Pascal Siakam shook off a slow start to score 23 points as the NBA champion Toronto Raptors levelled the series.

Kyle Lowry scored 22 points and grabbed 11 rebounds with seven assists for the Raptors, who won their second straight game and will try to gain the upper hand in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference

series for the first time in game five on Monday.

"Feels like we're starting over," Siakam said, but added: "It's a great team we're playing against. It's not going to be easy. We know that."

Lowry echoed the theme, saying the Raptors can't afford to get complacent after two straight wins.

"We just continue to focus on every possession, every game," he

said. "We know how tough those guys are."

Serge Ibaka connected on seven of nine shots from the floor to score 18 points off the bench for Toronto and Fred VanVleet added 17 points, six rebounds and six assists for the Raptors. Jayson Tatum scored 24 points and pulled down 10 rebounds for the Celtics. Kemba Walker added 15 points

But Boston connected on just seven of 35 three-point attempts. Jaylen Brown struggled mightily, making just two of 11 from beyond the arc and just four of 18 overall in a 14-point performance.

"We weren't very crisp all night," Celtics coach Brad Stevens said. "I think once we missed a few we started trying to hit home runs."

— AFP

Im makes charge but Johnson leads PGA Tour Championship

WASHINGTON: South Korea's Im Sung-jae birdied three of the last four holes but top-ranked Dustin Johnson clung to a one-stroke lead after Saturday's second round of the US PGA Tour Championship.

Im fired a six-under-par 64 to finish on 12-under but struggling Johnson, last in the field in driving accuracy after finding only 2-of-14 fairways, closed with a four-foot birdie putt to lead on 13-under after 36 holes at East Lake in Atlanta.

"Tough one. It was up and down. Just didn't drive it straight enough," said Johnson. "Everything else feels good. I managed my game pretty well.

"I couldn't really attack the golf course being in the rough and in the bunkers. I think I was everywhere today."

Im, 22, would be the second-youngest FedEx Cup winner, two months older than Jordan Spieth when the American captured the 2015 crown.

"I was happy with my shots," Im said. "I hit a lot of fairways, so it made my approach shots a lot easier. That gave me a lot of good looks at birdie, which helped me go low."

Johnson scrambled to a 70



to hold off charging Im with American Xander Schauffele third on 11-under after a 65 and third-ranked American Justin Thomas fourth on 10-under.

"The rough is thick and nastier than I've ever seen it," Schauffele said.

Spain's Jon Rahm, PGA Championship winner Collin Morikawa and England's Tyrrell Hatton shared fifth on 9-under in

the season-ending showdown for a \$15 million playoff prize.

Johnson matched his fewest fairways hit in a PGA round, managing only two also at the 2009 and 2011 Phoenix Open.

"I need to drive it better over the weekend. Frustrated with my tee balls," Johnson said. "If I want to win this golf tournament, I've got to hit more fairways."

Johnson began the week on

10-under by virtue of his season points lead with Rahm next on 8-under, third-ranked American Justin Thomas on 7-under and other rivals up to 10 strokes adrift in the staggered start system.

World number 27 Im, last season's US PGA Rookie of the Year, began the event six strokes behind Johnson but charged with his third round of 65 of lower since the June PGA restart after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I honestly wasn't feeling very confident the last few weeks," Im said. "I feel like it's all coming back to me now."

Johnson, who began day two level with Rahm for the lead at 13-under, rolled in a 37-foot birdie putt at the third hole to seize the lead at 14-under.

At four, his tee shot went deep into the left rough and he only salvaged par thanks to a 31-foot putt. Johnson sank a six-foot birdie putt at the par-5 sixth to start a roller coaster finish to the front nine.

He missed the seventh fairway on the way to bogey, blasted out of a fairway bunker to 43 feet and holed the birdie effort at eight only to find a bunker and a bogey at the

par-3 ninth.

Johnson went from pine straw left to dense greenside rough to bogey 12, then rimmed out a horseshoe 11-foot birdie putt at 14. He made bogey at 15 and only after Im matched him did Johnson birdie the last to lead alone.

Im-pressive showing

After a run of three birdies and a bogey in four holes on the front side, Im opened the back nine with a five-foot birdie putt at the 10th.

Im dropped his approach inside eight feet to birdie the par-3 15th, his next one inside three feet to birdie 16 and sank a three-footer for birdie at 18 to briefly share the lead.

Im said a win would see him buy a US home and save money for retirement.

"I'm aware of the \$15 million on the line, but I try not to think about it when I play," Im said. "I know if I play my best the next two days, the opportunity will come. It all seems like a dream."

Defending playoff champion McLroy, who became a father Monday with the birth of daughter Poppy, fired a 71. It included a chunked shot from the rough into a lake at 18. — AFP



Shihab Al Din gets the International Coaching Scholarship

Muscat: International coach and lecturer Shihab Al Din al Riyami from Oman Volleyball Federation got the International Coaches Scholarship offered by International Olympic Solidarity in cooperation with The International support Programme to the African and Caribbean Sport (PAISAC).

The grant includes three phases. The first phase starts on September 20th and concludes by the 8th of November "remotely". The second phase will also be held remotely during the period (November 2020 - April 2021), and the third and final phase in Canada during the period 3-28 May, 2021)

Serena through to last 16 as fresh controversy hits US Open

NEW YORK: Serena Williams battled into the US Open last 16 on Saturday as the tournament endured fresh controversy after New York health officials ordered the women's top doubles pairing be withdrawn over coronavirus restrictions.

Williams, chasing a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, came from a set down to oust 2017 champion Sloane Stephens 2-6, 6-2, 6-2, in what she called an "intense" encounter on Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"In that first set I don't think she made any errors, honestly. She was just playing so clean and I just said, 'I don't want to lose in straight sets,'" said Williams.

With spectators barred from this year's Flushing Meadows event due to the pandemic, second and fourth seeds Sofia Kenin and Naomi Osaka took advantage of suites they have been assigned to check out the competition.

"It's cool us players can watch each other. It's interesting, I like it," said Williams, who will play 15th seed Maria Sakkari for a place in the quarter-finals.

The Greek player, who stunned Williams at the Western & Southern Open last month, progressed with a 6-3, 6-1 dismantling of America's 22nd seed Amanda Anisimova.

Off the court, number one seeds Kristina Mladenovic and Timea Babos were yanked from the women's doubles competition after Mladenovic was instructed to quarantine for coming in contact with French compatriot Benoit Paire, who tested positive for COVID-19 last weekend.

"All persons who were identified as having prolonged close contact with the infected player will quarantine in their rooms for the remainder of their quarantine period," the United States Tennis Association said in a statement.

The USTA said local public health authorities had issued the quarantine notices, which prevented the players commuting from their hotel to the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center.

"The USTA is obligated to adhere to government guidance at the State, City and County level," the body said.

'BRUTAL'

A spokesman for New York state's health department said the decision was "in the best interest" of health and safety.

But France's Alize Cornet described the move as "very brutal."

"It's definitely weird because she could play her first round of singles and first round of doubles, and now suddenly she's kicked out," Cornet added, after progressing to the last 16 when Madison Keys retired injured.

The shock intervention came a day after government officials tried to prevent Adrian Mannarino, who had also been in contact with Paire, from playing his last-32 match.

The health department contacted the USTA to say Mannarino should be quarantining in his hotel room.

The match got underway three hours after its scheduled start time, after authorities ruled it could go ahead following discussions with tennis officials that also included lobbying by world number one Novak



Djokovic.

Mannarino and Mladenovic were two of 11, mostly French players, put under enhanced safety protocols on Monday after Paire was withdrawn from the US Open the previous day following his positive test.

Pironkova wins again

The players signed an agreement with New York City authorities that allowed them to remain in the tournament under the enhanced restrictions, which involved daily testing and barred them from communal areas in their hotel.

Mannarino said on Friday that organisers told him that New York state authorities had taken over the case and ruled that he was now not allowed to play.

Following her first-round singles win on Monday, Mladenovic said she had been "living in a nightmare" following Paire's positive test result.

The US Open is taking place behind closed doors because of the deadly pandemic.

Players movements are tightly controlled and everyone onsite is being tested regularly to minimise the risk of infection.

Paire, who later tested negative, exited the tournament in a huff, accusing authorities of operating a "fake bubble."

The players who were in contact with him have been told they won't be allowed to fly out of New York until next week.

Back on the court on Saturday, Russian third seed Daniil Medvedev, Italy's sixth seed Matteo Berrettini and Andrey Rublev, all entered the last 16 with easy three-set wins.

Second seed Dominic Thiem also progressed to round four, overcoming 2014 champion Marin Cilic 6-2, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

And Canada's 94th-ranked Vasek Pospisil shocked eighth-seeded Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut and Australia's 21st seed Alex de Minaur upset 11th-seeded Russian Karen Khachanov.

In the women's draw, unranked Bulgarian Tsvetana Pironkova, playing her first tournament in three years, knocked out 18th seed Donna Vekic.

Second seed Sofia Kenin defeated Tunisia's Ons Jabeur 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 to set up a match against Belgium's Elise Mertens for a quarter-final place.

And former number one Victoria Azarenka said she had "a great opportunity" to end her seven-year wait for a third Grand Slam after booking a last 16 berth with a straight-sets win over Poland's Iga Swiatek. — AFP



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EFG SAILING ARABIA



THE TOUR 2021 GEARING UP FOR RETURN TO OMANI SHORES

MUSCAT: EFG Sailing Arabia — The Tour will return in 2021 for the 11th year, organised by Oman Sail, to showcase the natural beauty of Oman and take the teams and spectators on a journey from Salalah in the south to the capital city of Muscat. Kicking off on January 24, 2021, teams will be challenged at five venues with a Coastal Raid at each, three in-port races and one offshore leg to test the teamwork, tactics and endurance of each crew.

EFG Sailing Arabia — The Tour provides the perfect opportunity for talented local sailors to compete against a strong international fleet in the Sultanate's prime winter conditions. The blend of short sprints and longer campaigns require a variety of strategies which always delivers intense close quarter racing at the five diverse locations along the coast of Oman.

Saleh al Jabri, Captain of the Jewel of Muscat and Race Project Manager for EFG Sailing Arabia — The Tour 2021 said: "EFG Sailing Arabia — The Tour has become one of Oman Sail's most anticipated events each year, attracting a wide variety of sailing talent from across the globe to our shores and providing the opportunity for Omani sailors to develop. The Tour also creates avenues for vital community engagement and the chance to share our beautiful country with the world. This year marks the eleventh edition of The Tour, the third to be held solely in Oman, and another chance for the teams and spectators to experience authentic Oman on and off the water." Al Jabri added, "EFG Sailing Arabia

— The Tour has grown in stature each year to become an important part of the international sailing calendar. This year it is in a position to significantly boost domestic tourism, empower local communities all along the coast and demonstrate the Sultanate's deep-rooted maritime traditions to a growing audience. Each team will compete on identical DIAM24 crafts in a pure test of preparation and racing skill in warm conditions complete with a consistent wind which promises fast and competitive sailing."

Since its debut in 2011, EFG Sailing Arabia — The Tour has attracted some of the biggest names in sailing to experience for 15 days of fast-paced racing.

The 2021 EFG Sailing Arabia — The Tour will begin in Salalah, a lush sub-tropical city in Oman's south, where a number of teams from home and abroad will line up for the first Coastal Raid at Mirbat and the first in-port race at the Hawana Salalah Marina. Salalah has played a vital role in Oman's rich maritime tradition and has been a thriving port since 100BC and it has a rich maritime history, where the Sultanate's second largest city welcomed traders in frankincense and silk.

From there, the teams must make their way up the coast, with stopovers in Duqm, Masirah Island, two offshore legs between Sur and Ras Al Hadd, before heading towards a tense two-day finale in Muscat with a Coastal Raid and in-port race at Al Mouj Muscat where the trophy could be decided.



features

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Oman’s loggerhead turtles need urgent additional conservation actions



An extensive study on Oman’s loggerhead turtle populations conducted over a period of 30 years discovered that there is a 79 per cent decline in the nesting population of loggerhead turtles on Masirah Island prompting more actions to conserve and protect the species... **P14**

CINEMA

Australian film-maker braves double COVID quarantine for Venice festival

VENICE, ITALY: Australian director Roderick MacKay braved COVID-19 restrictions to make a “daunting” trip to the Venice film festival, where his debut feature “The Furnace” premieres on Friday.

MacKay had to get permission from Australian authorities to leave his own

country, quarantine in Rome for two weeks before travelling to Venice, and will have to quarantine again when he goes back to Australia.

“Travelling during this time in history is sort of just a little bit daunting for any purpose,” 33-year old MacKay, who filmed a video of his journey and self-

isolation on his mobile for Reuters, said in an interview.

“But to be doing so, to come to a top tier festival like Venice, to have your debut film premiere on the world stage, it’s certainly a whole other layer of dauntingness,” he said, adding he was happy and honoured to be at the world’s oldest film festival.

“The Furnace”, which is in the Horizon section outside the main competition, tells the little known story of cameleers brought to Australia by the British empire from India, Afghanistan and Persia in the second half of the 19th century and the local Aboriginal people they befriended.

The Venice film festival is the first such international event to go ahead in front of live audiences since the coronavirus pandemic shut much of the movie world down. It runs until Sept 12. — **Reuters**





Oman's loggerhead turtles need urgent additional conservation actions

STAFF REPORTER

Various collaborative partners including the Environment Society of Oman (ESO), Environment Authority in Oman, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration — National Marine Fisheries Service and Five Oceans Environmental Services LLC, have announced the publication of a scientific paper, a major milestone in an extensive study on Oman's loggerhead turtle populations. Conducted over a period of 30 years, the study evaluated the long-term population trend and management priorities of the globally-important loggerhead population nesting on Masirah Island. Its most significant discovery was a 79 per cent decline in the nesting population on the island, which has historically been one of the largest nesting grounds of Loggerhead turtles in the world. Suaad al Harthi, ESO's Executive Director, said, "Although no trend analysis was completed for the other marine turtle species in Oman, we assume they are also at risk of decline, being exposed to the same threats from land and sea-based disturbances, yet there is still hope. We must continue, as a community, to raise awareness, to carry out our outreach activities, and to advocate for the protection of our precious marine turtle populations, and make sure that the Sultanate continues to be a really important stronghold for turtles".

Dr Thuraya al Sariri, Assistant Director General of Conservation at the

Environment Authority in Oman, added, "We are grateful for the efforts of all of our partners in the study, through which we are able to build up an understanding of the factors affecting our

It is only with proper regulation, management and conservation measures, along with strong cooperation with all concerned authorities and the involvement of the local community, that we can be successful in conserving our natural resources, and ensuring that they are still around for future generations

Dr Thuraya al Sariri,
Assistant Director
General of Conservation
at the Environment
Authority in Oman

wildlife and what we can do to protect them in the long-term. It is only with proper regulation, management and conservation measures, along with strong cooperation with all concerned authorities and the involvement

of the local community, that we can be successful in conserving our natural resources, and ensuring that they are still around for future generations. The Environment Authority has a long history in turtle conservation and has a network of rangers dedicated to their protection at many sites throughout Oman, including Masirah Island. Research is vital to help us gauge progress and select where and how to focus management attention. The reasons for the current population trend are many, some of which are in the high seas beyond Oman's immediate control, but by making sure we are doing our best in Oman, at least the females will have somewhere safe to nest and the hatchlings will be given a good start in life. The Environment Authority recognises the urgency of the situation and urges everyone to redouble their efforts to save this globally important population of turtles". "Oman is home to five of the seven species of turtles found in the world, all of which are endangered to various degrees on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and face high risk of extinction in the wild. A variety of disturbances like coastal development, light pollution and beach driving, accidental capture in fishing nets (bycatch), ghost fishing, plastic pollution and climate change, all impact both the habitat and population numbers.

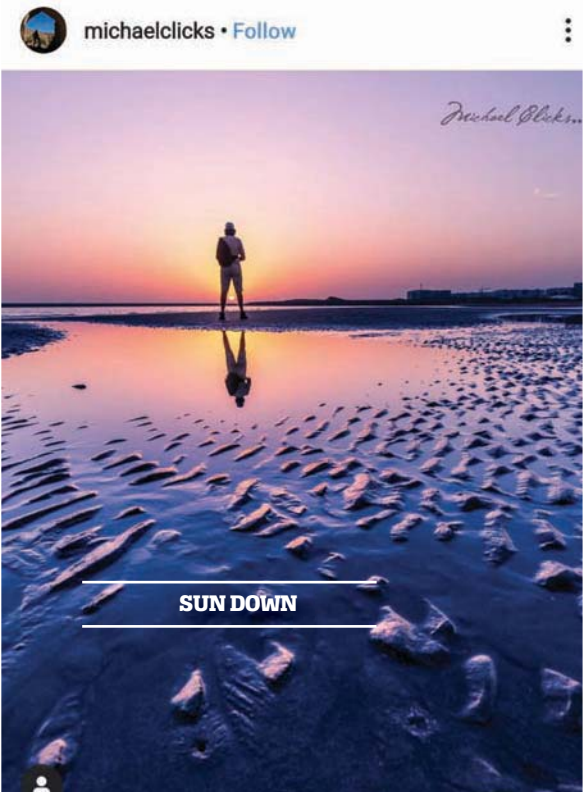


Through our research, monitoring, and satellite tracking, we are starting to build up a better idea of how the loggerheads from Masirah are being affected and this will help the authorities to develop plans for protected areas and strategic conservation management action moving forward", added Andrew Willson, Senior Marine Consultant at Five Oceans Environmental Services LLC. The scientific paper is published in the journal Frontiers in Marine Science and can be accessed through this link: <https://tinyurl.com/y3x26l79> As the country's only non-profit organisation dedicated to environment, ESO has spent the last 16 years working to protect Oman's environment through

education, awareness and conservation. Its Marine Turtle Research and Conservation project has been central to the protection of the Sultanate's various species that feed in Oman's waters, nest on its shores or migrate past. In addition, its annual net removal campaign, which takes place ahead of turtle nesting seasons, helps to mitigate the threat of entanglement and ingestion during critical nesting and hatching times. Various funds will support ESO to carry out a dedicated net clean-up campaign in 2021 on Masirah Island. But it needs much more support to continue its vital work. To make a donation, or to find out other ways to get involved, visit www.eso.org.om.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



ENTERTAINMENT

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How Disney should handle 'Black Panther 2' after Chadwick Boseman's death

Soon after learning that "Black Panther" star Chadwick Boseman had died at age 43, fans urged Marvel Studios not to recast the role, setting up a dilemma for the studio planning a sequel to Hollywood's first major superhero film with a predominantly Black cast. Writers, academics and activists — speaking to Reuters about the film's cultural impact and Boseman's performance — believe Marvel and its parent company, Walt Disney Co, should honour Boseman's legacy with a storyline that anoints a new Black Panther from the film's existing cast or elsewhere in the Marvel Universe. "They should really consider following the storyline of the comic book and advancing Letitia Wright (who plays Shuri, the tech genius sister of Boseman's character) into that central role," said Jamil Smith, a senior writer at Rolling Stone. "We've seen her in action. We've seen her in the middle

of these fights. Why would we not think she'd have the courage and strength to become the next Black Panther?" That strategy could help ease in fans who would have a hard time seeing a different male actor continue the role. "Maybe the answer, for those of us who aren't yet ready to see someone else in that suit, is to pass the reins a little earlier than they had expected and allow Shuri to take on the mantle maybe for a 'Black Panther 2,'" said April Reign, #OscarsSoWhite creator and vice president of content strategy for Ensemble, a content studio. Other approaches could celebrate Boseman's legacy. "Does (his character) come back as little Black Panther?" said Nicol Turner Lee, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "Does Disney honor the imagination of the young boys and girls who looked up to him?" Disney and Marvel declined to comment. The studio has focused on paying tribute to Boseman, broadcasting the film commercial-free last Sunday on Disney-owned ABC,

Writers, academics and activists - speaking to Reuters about the film's cultural impact and Boseman's performance - believe Marvel and its parent company, Walt Disney Co, should honour Boseman's legacy with a storyline that anoints a new Black Panther from the film's existing cast or elsewhere in the Marvel Universe.

followed by an ABC News special about the actor. According to a report in the Hollywood Reporter, executives were caught by surprise and few people were aware of Boseman's battle with cancer. **WAKANDA FOREVER** "Black Panther," based on the pioneering Marvel Comics character that first appeared in 1966, generated \$1.35 billion in box-office sales, three Academy Awards and a best

picture Oscar nomination, and acclaim for its titular star, who died on August 28. Marvel was planning to begin production of "Black Panther 2" in March, according to the Hollywood Reporter, for a scheduled May 6, 2022, release. Although other studios have experienced the sudden deaths of franchise stars - and have recast, for other reasons, titular roles like Batman and Spider-Man — Marvel's decision holds more weight

because "Black Panther" was a much-celebrated Black superhero movie, starring an actor beloved by fans for the dignity he brought to the role. The 2018 film broke new ground with its predominantly Black cast, helmed by a Black director. Boseman played the character of King T'Challa, who presides over the futuristic African nation of Wakanda. Produced with a \$200 million budget, it was praised for its diversity, after years of criticism about the lack of actors and filmmakers of colour in Hollywood. "It shattered at that time for Disney just the myth that you cannot package and distribute feature films with Black people as the starring roles," said Lee. "For me, 'Black Panther' represents the fact that inclusivity sells." "Black Panther" also hit theatres at a time of rising US racial tension. President Donald Trump had recently questioned why the United States would want to have immigrants from Haiti and African nations, referring to some as "shithole countries." The previous August, he had

said "both sides" were to blame for violence between white nationalists and counterprotesters at a rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Then came Wakanda. "Black Panther" the film was a huge cultural landmark," said Alan Jenkins, a professor of practice at Harvard Law School. "One part of what made the film so important was the world of Wakanda and the idea of an African nation unchained by colonialism, slave trade, exploitation. It had dignity, brilliance and technology." Today "Black Panther" is even more relevant, as Black Americans disproportionately suffer from COVID-19 and die at the hands of police, cultural experts say. The aspirational Wakanda provides an antidote to that suffering. "The film certainly didn't cause the activism of today — that was from the tragic killing of George Floyd and others," said Jenkins. "But it contributed to an environment where we can see new realities and imagine a world that is more just and equitable than the one in which we live."



Italy's jet-set hit by 'Emerald Coast curse'

Fiercely opposing restrictions imposed by Rome after the coronavirus pandemic hit Italy, some of the country's super-rich including ex-premier Silvio Berlusconi have now fallen prey to the COVID-19 "curse of the Emerald Coast."

Berlusconi and two of his children tested positive for the virus on Wednesday, the latest among Italy's jet-set to be hit after holidaying along Sardinia's exclusive coastline, often called the country's "most glamorous vacation resort."

Speaking via telephone to an election rally in Genoa on Thursday, Berlusconi reassured activists of his centre-right Forza Italia party that he had "no fever, no pain".

"I want to reassure you: I'm doing pretty well," he added, saying he had been moved by all the messages of support he had received.

Taking its name from the beautiful waters that surround the Mediterranean's second-largest island, the Emerald Coast has recently built a reputation as a place where the super-rich often flouted Rome's strict face-mask policies, local papers said on Thursday.

Italy was one of the first countries in Europe to be hit hard by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and Rome insists on people wearing face-masks when entering enclosed spaces such as restaurants.

"The curse of the Emerald summer doesn't forgive," wrote Milanese daily *Corriere della Sera*, while *La Repubblica*

called it "the August curse of the Emerald lifestyle".

The coastal region is dotted with luxury homes, exclusive restaurants, and discotheques, and Italian news reports often abound with stories about parties there with glamorous models, top-class champagne, and expensive caviar.

One of the best-known hangouts for the rich and famous is the "Le Billionaire" nightclub which belongs to Italian businessman and former managing director of the Benetton Formula One racing team Flavio Briatore.

The nightclub was closed down in August after Briatore and employees tested positive for the coronavirus.

Ten days before, Briatore met Berlusconi at his home along the same coastline, according to local news reports.

Several other celebrities spotted at the nightclub also tested positive for COVID-19, including Bologna football club manager Sinisa Mihajlovic — who underwent treatment for leukaemia last year — reports said.

Local television personalities, some 10 footballers, a boxer, and one politician were also infected, the *Corriere della Sera* reported.

'CONTAMINATED VIAGRA'

Berlusconi's doctor Alberto Zangrillo told *La Repubblica* on Wednesday the politician was "asymptomatic" and Briatore was discharged late last month after a brief stay in a Milan hospital.

Both tycoons are regular critics of Rome's restrictions to fight the pandemic which



Taking its name from the beautiful waters that surround the Mediterranean's second-largest island, the Emerald Coast has recently built a reputation as a place where the super-rich often flouted Rome's strict face-mask policies, local papers said on Thursday.

has so far killed more than 36,000 Italians.

Briatore, 70, recently accused the government of "wanting to criminalise young people."

Berlusconi was first tested late August after returning from Sardinia.

The result was negative, but he was tested again after Briatore and others showed

signs of COVID-19.

Briatore visited Berlusconi at his sumptuous villa on northeastern Sardinia, which the Italian politician, now 84, bought decades ago and several years ago was estimated to be worth between 450 million euros (\$532 million) and 470 million euros.

He has continued to enlarge the estate, estimated to be

twice the size of the Vatican in Rome, and said to feature an artificial volcano, seven swimming pools, and a greenhouse stocked with orchids, palm trees, cacti, and rare plants.

Messages of support on Wednesday came in from all side's of Italy's political spectrum.

But news of Berlusconi contracting COVID-19 also elicited sarcasm from the Italian press, quick to latch onto a series of sex scandals plaguing the media tycoon.

"After Briatore, Berlusconi also has COVID-19," Italian daily *Il Fatto Quotidiano* said in an editorial on its front page.

"It seems obvious that there is a batch of contaminated Viagra around," the paper joked.

— AFP

IN BRIEF

OPAZ will oversee the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, free zones in Suhar, Salalah and Al Mazunah and any other special economic zone or free zone that may come up in the Sultanate.



Capitalising on oil in today's forex market

MUSCAT: Over the past year, the oil market has seen peaks, valleys, and extreme volatility. The pillar of so many economies has shaken like never before, and traders have made millions. Black gold has long been one of the world's most sought after assets.

Currently international oil quotes hover between approximately \$40.00 & \$47.00. This is far off from the Energy Information Administration's (EIA) 2015 projection that the average oil prices will hover around \$70 per barrel in 2020. Traders across the Middle East recognise oil is a major influence in the regional and global economy.

Oil is the perfect commodity to watch for Forex traders in the Middle East. Influencing so much throughout the region and the world, halal traders can capitalise on a number of assets by focusing on black gold.

Gone are the days of unrelenting oil consumption; as tides around the world change so must the industry and its traders. Through 2019 the industry saw a notable increase in the amount of oil that was being stored, but not used. As inventories rose dramatically throughout the prolonged US/China trade dispute, global demand began to diminish.

The pandemic initially amplified the amount of stored supply despite the efforts of Opec+ and other producers caused WTI futures to drop into negative territory because there was additional storage space for growing inventories of oil. Demand slowly rose and the



oversupply shrank and the market began to rebound.

Looking toward the future of oil, it is cloudy. Demand had been projected to fall for years and the coronavirus took a chunk of time out of those estimates. Quarantine dropped demand and it has yet to return to pre-2020 numbers.

While countries work together to keep the price relatively stable, but without a huge increase in demand from the developed world, namely the US, Europe, and Japan, the price

The pandemic initially amplified the amount of stored supply despite the efforts of Opec+ caused WTI futures to drop into negative territory because there was additional storage space for growing inventories of oil

of oil is not going to rise to historic highs anytime soon.

Countries have worked together to prop up the price in the face of decreasing demand and an increased

acceptance of alternative energy. However, Brent and the rest of the market have plateaued recently.

Quotes will need a massive increase in demand to break above

the current resistance level around \$50.00/barrel. A second wave is projected to hit the developed world, and if it does, prices could plummet again.

Swings in the value of oil affect several currencies such as the Canadian dollar, Norwegian Krone, and Saudi Arabian Riyal as well as the stock value of many companies. Previous drops in price have impacted these and many other currencies.

Monitoring the oil market means

that traders are also monitoring the main driver for several currencies and companies at once. Some Forex trading platforms offer Brent and other oil companies to be traded without swaps.

While oil trades horizontally, short trades lasting 1-10 minutes will be the best method of profiting without a clear trend. News of inventory increases and production reductions will cause large shifts in quotes. Quotes will likely continue to test the resistance level around \$50 a barrel but will be unlikely to break through it without drastically increased demand.

A sustained rise in the price of oil will increase the value of numerous other assets. If oil prices begin to rise and the trend appears strong, get a jump start on long positions for USD/SAR, AUD/AED, USD/RUB, EUR/RUB, USD/CAD, and stocks related to oil production. The opposite goes for large prolonged drops in quotes.

The current market has shown the resilience of the oil industry as quotes rallied from nearly twenty-year lows. However, it is not impervious to all factors. Diminished demand and a world in turmoil have shown how fragile this commodity can be.

Tied to a plethora of currencies and other assets, oil is an asset and driver to keep an eye on. Understanding the market well enough to capitalise on its movements and its influences upon others will help improve any trader's profitability.

[Courtesy: Olymp Trade]

Harnessing Geographical Indications for national growth

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 6

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in cooperation with the concerned authorities, wants to discuss intellectual property policies for the protection of Geographical Indications (GI), traditional knowledge, protection of marine and animal products and everything which helps in advancing the national economy. Part of the goal is to increase social awareness about the importance of GI as well as need to register them under names which suit their characteristics, whether they are natural or industrial, national or international registration, as stipulated in the concluded international agreements.

Fatima bint Khalfan al Balushi (pictured), a biotechnology patent specialist at the Intellectual Property Department of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said: "The term geographical data is the one which is included in the patent law as a geographical indication of a commodity which originated in a geographical area and had quality, features and identity of that region through its connection and attachment to that region. This is why it attributed to that place in which it grew naturally or was produced.

Fatimah al Balushi added: The Omani Industrial Property Law 67/2008 gives legal rights to the applicant for protection of the geographical indication. Article 48 of the Industrial Property Rights Law on Geographical Indications stipulates the protection of products as a geographical indication according to the definition contained in the article, whether it is natural, agricultural, or any handicraft or industrial craft product.

Article 48 allows producers, who were engaged in activities in a geographical area with a geographical



AWARENESS BUILDING: MOVE TO REGISTER AND SAFEGUARD GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AS PART OF NATIONAL HERITAGE

indication, to prevent others from using and producing those goods which have a geographical indication. The right granted by geographical indications is limited only to preventing competitors outside the geographical area from using of the products such as for manufacturing or as a trade name symbolising the product which has obtained protection. It does not need any renewal other than patents and trademarks which require renewal according to the specified period for each of them.

The Ministry is holding discussions with the concerned authorities to protect products which deserve protection as geographical indications for fear of being attributed to other countries or manufactured by hands other than the hands of their real owners who are distinguished by skill

and experience in manufacturing, which may result in misleading the consumer thus loses its identity. She said that the consumer looked for the quality of products which reflect their original environment from where they came, whether they are foodstuffs whose owners are same since long and are still with the same features and quality or handicrafts preserved by the hands of the ancestors from extinction and globalisation or natural products of a particular climate and soil of the land on which it grew, so it took on the characteristics of the land and the climate.

She also emphasised that there are protected products and unprotected in the Sultanate of Oman needed to be designated as per origin such as Omani frankincense, Omani mountain thyme plant with different characteristics, lemon which is famous for its cultivation in some Wilayats in the governorates of the Sultanate due to the quality of its climate suitable for these trees and also for trees of different taste, shape and size such as pomegranates of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in addition to Al Safailah which is considered one of the animal wealth for which Omani seas are known and is different from anywhere in the world.

The forefathers excelled in weaving the Saidi turban, of which Omani origins have not been reduced since ancient times, and which acquired the heritage character of sobriety and spinning in a way which makes it distinct. Then there is the Omani dishdasha, Omani sweets, mixtures and the method of making Omani barbecue and other artisanal and traditional products.

Oman Container Line ranked 55th among global operators

MUSCAT: Oman Shipping Company's container service, better known as Oman Container Line (OCL), at Asyad Group is ranked 55th globally by the international database platform, Alphaliner, for the capacity it offers as well as its reliable services in the Gulf and globally.

This global ranking enhances the leading status of the Sultanate in maritime transport among the best countries in the world. It also reflects the government's efforts to develop the essential infrastructure in logistics services — aiming towards achieving the National Logistics Strategy 2040 to make the Sultanate a global logistics centre and to improve its classification in international economic indices.

The importance of this ranking lies in the fact that it was issued by Alphaliner, an internationally recognised database platform providing updated ranking of the 100 largest container and liner operators based on capacity. The platform is used by liner shipping executives, container ship owners, shipbrokers and other shipping professionals. Alphaliner is also the knowledge base of first choice used by port authorities, terminal operators, logistics companies, shippers, research companies

and banks and other financial institutions.

Commenting on this ranking, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Oman Shipping Company Ibrahim al Nudhairi, said, "OCL's global ranking at 55th is a testament to the efforts the company has put over the years to link Oman to the world through providing our customers with reliable services globally. It is also a reflection of the hard work of the entire team working in this shipping company at all levels."

The OCL's global ranking has brought the name of the Sultanate of Oman among top countries in the sector. This has become possible only due to the focus of the country's leadership on the development of the infrastructure and logistics' sector, said Al Nudhairi.

For his part, Wasam al Najjar, General Manager, corporate planning at the Oman Shipping Company said, "There is no doubt that OCL entering Alphaliner index among 100 global companies is a highlights the company's role in linking Omani ports to the main global trading routes through its Oman Express Line, in addition to its role in linking the Sultanate's ports with UAE's through its Gulf Express line."

BUSINESS ALERT

OAB launches online competition in support of local charities

MUSCAT: To commemorate the International Day of Charity, celebrated on September 5, Oman Arab Bank launched a special competition on its social media platforms for all its followers. The competition aimed at increasing awareness of the need to contribute to charitable foundations and organisations, which in turn will have a positive impact on society.

Hilal al Siyabi (pictured), Head of Corporate Communications at Oman Arab Bank, said, "We believe that individuals play an integral role in helping out people who are in need. This is why the Bank has tied up with several active charities and charitable associations over the years to instil a culture of giving. With the OAB App customers can easily make donations to their local charity of choice within seconds. This competition reaffirms our efforts to encourage and promote a spirit of charitable contribution among all members of the OAB family."



SWITCHREPLACEMENT

US rural telecom networks need \$1.8 billion to remove Huawei, ZTE equipment



The US flag and a smartphone with the Huawei and 5G network logo are seen on a PC motherboard in this illustration. — Reuters

WASHINGTON: US rural telecommunications networks, which have relied on inexpensive network equipment from China's Huawei Technologies Co and ZTE Corp, have told the government that it would cost \$1.837 billion to replace those switches and routers, the Federal Communications Commission said.

In June, the FCC formally designated Huawei and ZTE as threats to US national security, a declaration that bars US firms from tapping an \$8.3 billion government fund to purchase equipment from the companies.

The US telecommunications regulator voted last year to propose requiring rural carriers to remove and replace equipment from the two Chinese companies from US networks.

FCC commissioners said the report shows the need for Congress to approve funding to replace that equipment. Congress has authorised reimbursements but has not approved the money.

The FCC said it believes the carriers would be eligible for reimbursements of about \$1.62 billion.

"By identifying the presence of insecure equipment and services in our networks, we can now work to ensure that these networks — especially those of small and rural carriers — rely on infrastructure from trusted vendors," FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said, urging Congress "to appropriate funding to reimburse carriers for replacing any equipment or services determined to be a national security threat so that we can protect our networks."

The FCC identified more than 50 mostly smaller telecom companies with ZTE or Huawei equipment or using services from the companies, as well as a few larger companies like CenturyLink and Verizon Communications Inc. — Reuters

India open to raising duties on auto imports to boost local production

NEW DELHI: India is open to raising duties on auto imports in a phased manner in a bid to boost domestic production, a minister said, as the country's car industry set a target to halve imports of components within five years.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said raising duties was "not a bad idea" to discourage automakers from importing car kits, comprised of partially or completely knocked down vehicles, and using India only as an assembly base to get market share there.

"We may look at something like a phased manufacturing plan. I will be open to suggestions," he said during an event organised by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government wants companies to reduce imports, increase domestic production and play a bigger role in the global supply chain in an effort to make the country more self-reliant.

India's auto sector imports \$13.7 billion worth of components annually.

Pawan Goenka, managing director of Mahindra & Mahindra, one of India's biggest automakers, told the same event that SIAM and the Auto Component Manufacturers Association of India had agreed to set a target reduce the total value of imported components by half in the next four to five years.

The focus will be to reduce imports of electronic auto components, which are sourced



Workers assemble a Tata Tiago car inside the Tata Motors car plant in Sanand, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. — Reuters

mainly from China and other Asian countries, as well as steel, Goenka said, adding these two together account for around \$5 billion of total auto parts imports.

India's auto sector, which was already reeling from a slowdown in demand last year, has been further

India's auto sector imports \$13.7 billion worth of components annually

hit by the pandemic and carmakers

are seeking government support to push sales.

Automakers want the government to defer the introduction of stricter fuel efficiency and emission norms and are seeking a temporary 10 per cent cut in taxes on vehicles.

India's heavy industries minister Prakash Javadekar told the event that while the government may not agree immediately to a tax cut he would take up the request with other ministers. He also reiterated that a long-due vehicle scrappage policy would be out "very soon". — Reuters

Italy can be clean energy hub with hydrogen imports from Africa

MILAN: Italy could become a clean energy hub for Europe by importing hydrogen produced in North Africa from solar power at 10-15 per cent less than it costs to produce locally, a study by consultancy The European House-Ambrosetti and Italian gas group Snam said on Saturday.

Presented at a conference in Cernobbio, the study said Italy is well-placed to benefit from hydrogen developments thanks to its location and extensive gas network.

"Italy can become the infrastructural bridge between Europe and the African continent, thus enabling greater hydrogen penetration in other European countries," it said.

Hydrogen could account for 23 per cent of Italian energy demand by 2050, cutting harmful climate emissions by 28 per cent from current levels, the study said.

The industry could generate revenues over 30 years worth up to 1.5 trillion euros and create up to 540,000 new jobs by 2050.

Green hydrogen, produced using solar and wind power, is seen by many as a possible replacement for fossil fuels.

The European Commission is looking to scale up renewable hydrogen projects and deploy it in sectors where carbon emissions may otherwise remain high or where electrification is difficult.

Hydrogen's promise as a fuel to help power vehicles and energy plants has long been a talking point but it is currently too expensive for widespread use.

Proponents say infrastructure investment and more demand from transport, gas grids and industry can reduce costs.

"In 2000, the price of hydrogen from renewables was 40 times higher than oil. Today we estimate that it will become competitive with some current fuels within five years," Snam CEO Marco Alvera told the conference.

Snam, Europe's biggest gas pipeline operator, has been experimenting with a 10 per cent mix of hydrogen in its 33,000-kilometre natural gas network and has said 70 per cent of its natural gas grid is already made up of "hydrogen ready" pipes. — Reuters

Volkswagen's labour chief rules out four-day week to save jobs

BERLIN: Volkswagen sees no need for a four-day week at its plants to secure jobs despite a growing shift to electric cars that are easier to build and require fewer workers, the company's head of labour relations was quoted saying on Sunday.

Germany's largest trade union IG Metall on August 15 proposed negotiating for a transition to a four-day week across industry to help secure jobs, against the backdrop of economic fallout from the coronavirus crisis and structural shifts in the auto sector.

But VW labour chief Bernd Osterloh (pictured) told *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper that VW's existing cost-cutting plan, that includes reducing the workforce

by up to 7,000 through the early retirement of administrative staff at its Wolfsburg headquarters, was enough to help it overcome the coronavirus crisis and other issues.

"At the moment we are not talking about less work," Osterloh said. "With the Golf we had the (production) levels of last year in June and July and introduced extra shifts," he added, referring to one of the company's most popular models.

"The four-day week is not an issue for us."

Demands by IG Metall are potentially significant in Germany because they often set benchmarks for wage negotiations in those industries and beyond. — Reuters



Spanish bank deal is model for battered EU lenders



A couple take a selfie next to the logo of Spanish Caixabank outside one of its branches in central Madrid, in this file photo. — Reuters

THOUGH DETAILS ARE SCARCE, THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT EXPECTS THAT ITS 62 PER CENT STAKE IN BANKIA — THE CONSEQUENCE OF A STATE BAILOUT IN 2012 — WOULD SHRINK TO AROUND 14 PER CENT OF THE COMBINED ENTITY

LONDON: Spanish banks are taking a lead where many European Union rivals have feared to tread. Caixabank and state-backed Bankia

on Thursday evening announced they were in talks about a deal that would create the country's largest domestic lender with 664 billion euros of assets.

The in-market union offers the best way to protect earnings from the effects of negative interest rates and pandemic-induced bad debts.

Though details are scarce, the Spanish government expects that its 62 per cent stake in Bankia — the consequence of a state bailout in 2012 — would shrink to around 14 per cent of the combined entity, sources with knowledge of the matter said.

That implies the much bigger Caixabank is offering little, if any, premium for what would effectively be a takeover.

The move looks opportunistic given Spain's bruising recession. Even after a one-quarter surge on Friday

morning, Bankia shares are valued at just 0.3 times the bank's tangible book value, well below Caixabank's at 0.6 times.

Still, the deal makes eminent sense. The combined Caixa-Bankia would have 30 per cent of the Spanish market according to analysts at Jefferies, leapfrogging Banco Santander. Closing overlapping branches and ripping out other duplicated costs would bolster profitability.

Assume Caixabank could cut Bankia's 2019 operating expenses by 40 per cent.

Taxed and capitalised, those synergies would have a present value of around 4 billion euros, according to a Breakingviews calculation which assumes 1.8 billion euros of integration costs. That's roughly equivalent to Bankia's current market

value. As of Friday morning, Bankia was worth 8.5 billion euros less than its tangible book value at the end of June.

A deal struck at that price would create a capital gain that could help cover integration costs and — if regulators permit — boost Caixabank's 12.3 per cent common equity Tier 1 capital ratio.

Given the Spanish government's involvement, Caixabank Chief Executive Gonzalo Gortazar will face a tricky task pushing through branch closures and job losses.

But the pandemic's ongoing fallout makes the pressure for consolidation hard to resist. Spain has tended to lead the European countries in encouraging domestic bank mergers. Other European Union countries should take note. — Reuters