



TUESDAY, 29 JUNE 2021
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'OMAN DELIGHTED TO HOST T20 WORLD CUP'
 GO TO **PAGE 13 SPORTS**

46 DEATHS

Deadliest day of the pandemic

Oman recorded a new high in COVID-19 related deaths on Monday with 46 succumbing to the virus. The previous high of 41 single-day deaths was recorded on June 22. With rising deaths, the sultanate finds itself among countries with the highest COVID-19 daily deaths. There were 2,243 new cases on Monday, the second highest since June 21 when 2,529 were reported. With these figures, the total number of cases registered in the sultanate goes to 264,302. According to the Ministry of Health, the total number COVID-19 deaths now stands at 3,013.

Oman is currently among the worst-hit countries witnessing a surge in daily COVID-19 deaths

Namibia	13.44
Columbia	13.32
Argentina	11.14
Brazil	7.83
Tunisia	7.45
Oman	7.19
Russia	3.78
US	0.92
India	0.89
UK	0.26

GCC FIGURES

Oman	7.19
Bahrain	3.27
Kuwait	2.11
UAE	0.56
Saudi Arabia	0.40
Qatar	0.25

New daily deaths per million people
Source: Our World In Data

According to scientific online publication Our World In Data, Oman is witnessing a surge in COVID-19 infections. Mongolia, Namibia, Columbia and Argentina top the list with 782.38, 648.87, 599.56 and 431.38 daily new cases/mn population respectively, while Oman's daily new cases currently average at 392.1/mn.

The Ministry of Health reported 1,720 recoveries on Monday. The number of hospitalisation for COVID-19 related complications is also at an all-time high with 197 individuals hospitalised in a 24-hour period on Monday, taking the total number of inpatients to 1,650, including 506 in intensive care.

506
IN ICUs



The situation is quite exhausting for everyone, especially for the health sector, as the pandemic continues to wreak havoc. We don't know when this will end

H E DR AHMED AL SA'EEDI



The current wave is 80 per cent more infectious than last year. Epidemiological investigations attribute this spike to family gatherings and non-adherence to precautionary measures

DR SAIF BIN SALIM AL ABRI

Rising COVID-19 cases among children

Our Correspondent Muscat

More children are getting infected in the current spike in COVID-19 cases and related deaths.

According to Ministry of Health statistics, the number of children infected with COVID-19 has crossed the 10,000 mark; 5,008 in the 0-4 age group and 5,199 aged five to 14 years.

Considering the changing demographics, medical experts and parents are calling for immunisation of children to protect not just them but the whole population.

Addressing the pressing matter, Dr Zakaria bin Yahya al Balushi, infectious diseases consultant at The Royal Hospital, tweeted, "My tweets are mostly positive, but now we are at war with the coronavirus in every sense. What do we see in hospitals? Young people without any disease, but their health deteriorating rapidly. Cases in the wards are mostly serious; in the past, most were moderate and recovering quickly."

Urging caution to prevent the spread of COVID-19, he said, "If you are infected or in contact with others infected, please do not contribute to spreading the virus by mingling with others. Remember, the virus is transmitted from one person to another. If we break the chain, the cases will decrease, so do not allow it to be transmitted by gathering and mixing. We can't afford to lose even one more person to the virus."

Continued on **Page 04**

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Agreement signed to develop Qalhat

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) signed an agreement with Oman Liquefied Natural Gas (Oman LNG) on Monday to develop the Unesco World Heritage Site of Qalhat.

The agreement was signed by H E Ibrahim Said al Kharousi, Undersecretary for Heritage in the ministry, and Dr Amer Nasir al Mataani, CEO of Oman LNG.

A statement issued by MHT said, 'The ministry signed an agreement with Oman LNG to finance the first phase of a rehabilitation project of the ancient city of Qalhat in the wilayat of Sur. The project entails establishing management and preservation offices for the site, walking paths, signboards, viewing platforms and other basic facilities. The agreement is worth RO311,067.'

On the occasion, H E Kharousi said, "This funding represents a model for strengthening partnership between the heritage and cultural sector and the private sector to finance and support projects. It will help achieve economic and social sustainability,



This funding represents a model for strengthening partnership between the heritage and cultural sector and the private sector to finance and support projects

H E IBRAHIM
AL KHAROUSI

dian Ocean while functioning as a centre of trade with India and presenting a gateway between the east and west.

Qalhat flourished between the 11th and 16th centuries under the rule of the princes of Hormuz who exported horses, dates, incense and pearls. Following Portuguese attacks, Qalhat was abandoned in the 16th century and has since been preserved as an archaeological site. The remains and monuments at the site comprehensively represent a port city of the Kingdom of Hormuz, reflecting its legacy and architecture.

Izki records 38mm rainfall in two days

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Heavy to moderate rains lashed several governorates on Sunday, according to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

'Wadis overflowed; low cloud and fog spread over parts of Dakhliyah and Buraimi,' CAA said.

Izki recorded 38mm rainfall in two days (June 26 and 27), the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) said.

Data collected from the rain monitoring stations of MAFWR from Sunday till Monday morning, showed that Hamra received 28mm of rainfall, Ibra 26mm, Bahla 25mm, Buraimi 25mm, Samil 18mm, Yanqul 13mm and Dima Wa al Taien 2mm.

ROP has urged people to avoid venturing into wadis.

SAYYID THEYAZIN RECEIVES ITALIAN ENVOY



H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, received in his office on Monday H E Federica Favi, Ambassador of the Italian Republic to the sultanate. The meeting reviewed bilateral relations as well as several topics of common interest. It also touched on aspects of existing cooperation in the fields of culture, sports and youth, and means of developing these

(Supplied photo)

Commercial firms in Batinah found breaking COVID-19 protocol

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ten commercial establishments in North and South Batinah were served notice and one was closed for not following precautionary or preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19.

A statement issued by the Government Communication Centre (GCC) said, 'North Batinah Municipality registered violations against four commercial establishments in the wilayat of Saham for not complying with the precautionary requirements to prevent the spread of coronavirus. This is in addition to closing a commercial establishment.'

The municipality put three other commercial establishments in Liwa on notice for not adhering to precautionary requirements.

'Two commercial establishments were also served notice in the wilayats of Khabourah and



The municipality put three other commercial establishments in Liwa on notice for not adhering to precautionary requirements

Suwaiq in North Batinah for the same reason. South Batinah Municipality too issued a notice against a commercial facility in

the wilayat of Rustaq for not complying with the measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus,' GCC added.

Embassy of Italy announces scholarships for Omanis

Muscat - The Government of Italy has called for applications for grants from Omani students who intend to study or pursue research and training programmes in Italian universities for a period of study of six or nine months.

The scholarships also give candidates the opportunity to apply for three-month Italian language courses in Italy.

The initiative comes within the framework of the ever-growing cultural and academic cooperation between Italy and the sultanate, aiming to foster international cooperation in scientific and technological fields and promote Italian language and culture.

For the academic year 2021-2022, Oman has been included in the list of beneficiary countries with scholarships for Omani students for a total of 18 months. Grantees will receive a monthly allowance of 900. Deadline for applications is July 13.

Details of the application procedure are available online at <https://studynitaly.esteri.it>, which also includes other useful information on Italy's ed-



(Supplied photo)

ucational system and life for students.

Italy offers a broad variety of top-class universities, covering all sectors of research, from medicine, engineering, architecture and physics to literature,

arts, music and social sciences. Italy attracts thousands of international students every year thanks to courses fully held in English, opening doors to students who are not familiar with Italian yet.

MoL suspends work in its general office

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) will temporarily suspend work in its general office in Airport Heights from today.

In a statement MoL said, 'The ministry will not receive customers at the ministry's general office at the Airport Heights, starting from Tuesday, June 29, till Thursday, July 8. This is based on the decisions of the Supreme Committee dealing with COVID-19 and due to some employees being infected with the virus.'

It added that customers can benefit from the services provided by the ministry through its website www.mol.gov.om and for any inquiries they can contact its call centre at the toll-free number 80077000.

'Communicate with the ministry's agencies directly through the phone numbers listed in www.mol.gov.om/ContactUs and official correspondence will be received via the email of the Documents Department - doc@mol.gov.om'

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Oman, WHO sign Country Cooperation Strategy



Muscat - The sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Health (MoH), on Monday signed a Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) with the World Health Organization (WHO) to support the country's national policy, strategy and plans in order to promote and improve health for all people.

The sultanate is the first country in the Eastern Mediterranean Region that has completed the improvement of the strategy by following a new consultation methodology, which is considered as an example to the rest of the world.

The strategy clarifies the technical cooperation aspects to respond to the sultanate's priorities and needs and addresses its national health policy and health-related sustainable development goals and targets.

H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, and Dr Jean Jabbour, WHO representative to the sultanate, signed the strategy in the presence of the MoH's under-secretaries and senior officials.

The Minister of Health pointed out that this fourth strategy is coming in line with Oman's tenth five-year health development plan 2021-25, and after the national strategic programmes for the Oman Vision 2040.

"The strategy supports the national health priorities and augments the ongoing projects and plans. Therefore, the CCS will be the guide of collaboration with the WHO in the coming five years," he added.

H E Dr Sa'eedi stressed that wide consultation and the heavy involvement as well as the well-made alignment of the CCS with the five-year plans and the 2040 strategic health objectives make the CCS a model for all countries in the region.

The CCS aims to strengthen and guide cooperation between the WHO and the MoH as the steward of all stakeholders operating in the health sector in mutually agreed priority areas and support the country's national health policy and help promote the health of all people living in Oman.

It aims to contribute to health and wellbeing in the EMR and beyond, in line with the EMR Health Vision for All by All and GPW13.

The WHO official said that the CCS for Oman is a result of the WHO reviews and consultative interventions of the concerned experts with the MoH officials over the past two years.

Dr Jabbour thanked the MoH leadership and the WHO office in the sultanate for their contributions in developing the strategy in line with Oman's five-year health development plan.

Tender Announcement

Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG invites Bidders to submit their proposal for the below detailed tender:

Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee (Nonrefundable)	Tender Purchase deadline	Clarification deadline	Tender Submission Date
PDEN/2021/06/07	Construction of New Filling Station, Service Centre and Commercial Buildings at Al Ansab - 2 in Muscat Governorate	200.000	04.07.2021	08.07.2021	15.07.2021
Bank Name & Account Number		Bank Muscat (0319005687760012)			

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tenders:** Interested, specialized companies and establishments registered under grade 3 and above (in C.R) with minimum of 3 years' experience in the same field. Bidders can collect the tender documents from the procurement department by sending a copy of the payment slip to procurement@almaha.com.om The tender may be collected on any working day between 08:00 AM - 03:00 PM.
- Bank Guarantee:** The bidder should enclose a 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 Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company SAOG.
- Offer Submission:** Tender bid should be submitted a sealed envelope and addressed to the **Chairman of Tender Committee**, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG marked with tender number and subject. Other marks or any reference must not be printed outside the envelope. The exterior of the envelope containing the tender document must not reveal the identity of the bidder.
- Submission Location:** The bid should be deposited in the tender box at Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing SAOG head office located in Ghala before 01:00 PM on the submission date.
- Any bid received after the specified date or if it does not meet the conditions will not be considered.
- Each bid shall be signed and stamped with the signature of the authorized person.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel the tender without giving any reasons.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG reserves the right to add or cancel some of the works mentioned in the tender if necessary.
- Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without giving any reasons.
- For any enquiry email us at (procurement@almaha.com.om) or by calling 24610289/24610287/24610355

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NBO

MAFWR combats beetles using drones in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has launched a campaign to combat coconut beetles in Dhofar governorate employing modern technology such as drones to spray pesticides and control the pests.

According to Saeed bin Suhail bin Mahad Qatan, director of Department of Agricultural Development in Salalah, coconut beetles were reported in several plantations in the wilayat of Salalah following a survey.

Dr Amin Abdullah Ali Bazambour, head of Plant Protection Department in the General Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Dhofar governorate, said, "The campaign started at the end of May and will continue for one and a half month. It aims to preserve coconut trees in the governorate. Besides spraying pesticides on the ground, specialists use drones in pest control



(Supplied photos)

activities in some locations. This insect is active during the summer and causes losses to coconut plantations."

An estimated 172,000 co-

conut trees in Dhofar, or 30 to 40 per cent of the total, are infected.

Prior to pest control activities, specialists from MAFWR advise

farmers to remove beehives, cover water sources and warn against harvesting fruits until five days have passed since the spraying, Bazambour said.

Knowledge Oman to host 8billionideas founder

Muscat - With the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and the economy, Knowledge Oman will host international speaker, author and founder of the 8billionideas organisation, David J Harkin, in a free webinar specifically organised to shed light on what it takes to turn ideas into action.

The event, 'Turning ideas into action' will be broadcast virtually over Knowledge Oman webinar platforms free for all jobseekers, fresh graduates and entrepreneurs.

"Many people have ideas but turning them into action is a challenge. We are pleased to bring and host David Harkin, international speaker with proven experience of turning ideas into action. Our aim with this free webinar is to equip participants with



David J Harkin

the necessary skills and insights needed for their ideas to grow," said Balqees al Hassani, president of Knowledge Oman.

Harkin is an international and renowned TEDx speaker, established entrepreneur and an author who has dedicated his life to connecting people with their own ideas.

As the founder and CEO of the ideas company 8billionideas, Harkin will explore on how ideas can take off and share strategies that individuals and businesses can follow to succeed in personal and professional lives.

Harkin inspires organisations in adopting a mindset of relentless innovation and entrepreneurship through a people centric bottoms-up approach for radical in-house innovation and growth. The webinar will be moderated and coordinated by Nabila al Barwani, a public speaking educator.

Knowledge Oman will broadcast the event on its social media platforms on June 30 for all the registered members.

Registration is available at www.knowledgeoman.com/register

In-house vaccination service for the disabled launched

Muscat - The Directorate General of Health Services of Muscat governorate (DGHS-Muscat) has launched an in-house vaccination service against COVID-19 for disabled persons.

The directorate said family members or relatives of the patient need to visit the nearest health centre to book an appointment to get the vaccine.

The directorate has resumed the drive-through vaccination service at Oman Automobile Association in Seeb to cover the maximum number of community members in a short time, a statement said.



(File photo)

Virtual meet enhances Oman-Saudi cooperation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Said bin Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, held a meeting via video conferencing on Monday with Abdullah bin Amer al



(Supplied photo)

Sawaha, Saudi Minister of Communications and Information Technology.

The meeting aimed at enhancing joint cooperation in the field of digital economy, besides addressing matters of common interest between the two brotherly countries.

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MUSCAT DAILY

Rising COVID-19 cases among children

Continued from Page 01

Citizen Hamad al Sulaimani learnt the hard way when his children, aged five and nine, were infected and pleaded with parents to adhere to the precautionary measures - to avoid family gatherings in particular - issued by the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the impact of COVID-19. "They had symptoms like persistent cough and high temperature."

According to Majlis A'Shura member Mohammed al Hina, the responsibility of preventing transmission lies with both individuals and the government. "Children, youth and elderly - all are victims of the virus. Do we still need awareness on prevention? Each individual responsible for his family should avoid gatherings and non-emergency visits outside. The government should provide vaccines and vaccinate all as soon as possible."

The current wave is 80 per

cent more infectious than last year, informed Dr Saif bin Salim al Abri, director general of Disease Surveillance and Control in the Ministry of Health. "We have observed an increase in infections across all age groups, in the 30-50 age category in particular. But cases are also increasing in the under-12 age group."

He noted that epidemiological investigations attribute this spike to family gatherings and non-adherence to precautionary measures.

On Thursday, H E Dr Ahmed Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health and member of the Supreme Committee, described the current COVID-19 daily case count and fatality as "very alarming; this wave is the worst so far".

"The situation is quite exhausting for everyone, especially for the health sector, as the pandemic continues to wreak havoc. We don't know when this will end."

Send your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

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MARKET WATCH

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BSE Sensex	52,735.59

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	193.11
Pakistani Rs	409.84
Bangladeshi Taka	220.60
Philippine Peso	126.55
Sri Lankan Rs	517.80

*Rates as on June 28
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Amazon buys messaging app Wickr

Amazon said it was acquiring the encrypted messaging app Wickr which offers secure communications for businesses, government agencies and individuals.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed. Amazon said in a statement it would incorporate Wickr in its Amazon Web Services (AWS) division which offers cloud computing and other services.

AWS will continue to offer Wickr services including end-to-end encrypted communications which meet certain regulatory requirements.

"The need for this type of secure communications is accelerating," said AWS vice president Stephen Schmidt

Wickr has touted its 'military grade' encryption for business and government users, and was among the apps reportedly used to leak information from the White House during the Trump administration. Other apps offering encrypted communications include Facebook-owned WhatsApp, Apple's iMessage and foundation-operated Signal.

Bank lending in Oman rises 3% in April; deposits up 4.1%



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Total outstanding credit extended by Oman's banking sector grew by 3.0 per cent year-on-year to reach RO27.2bn at the end of April 2021, according to the latest statistics released by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

Bank credit to the private sector showed a relatively moderate growth of 1.2 per cent at RO23.3bn in April this year compared to the same period of 2020, the data showed.

The shares of non-financial corporate sector and household sector (mainly personal loans) in total private sector credit stood at 46.7 per cent and 45.1 per cent, respectively, at the end of April 2021.

The share of financial corporations was 4.8 per cent and

Total assets of Islamic banks and windows increased by 11.6 per cent to RO5.5bn and constituted about 14.6 per cent of the banking system assets in April 2021

other sectors received the remaining 3.4 per cent of total private sector credit.

The combined balance sheet of Oman's conventional banks showed a year-on-year growth of 1.5 per cent in total outstanding credit as of end-April 2021.

In contrast, Islamic banking entities provided financing of RO4.5bn at the end of April 2021, recording an year-on-year growth of 11.2 per cent.

Total assets of Islamic banks and windows increased by 11.6 per cent to RO5.5bn and constituted about 14.6 per cent of the banking system assets as of

end-April 2021. On the deposits side, the CBO data indicated that total deposits held with the Omani banks (conventional and Islamic) registered an year-on-year growth of 4.1 per cent to reach RO24.9bn at the end of April 2021.

Total private sector deposits increased by 6.8 per cent to RO17.3bn. In terms of sector-wise composition of private sector deposits, the share of households deposits stood at 50.9 per cent, followed by non-financial corporations at 32.4 per cent and other sectors at 14.2 per cent and other sectors at 2.5 per cent.

Aggregate deposits held with the conventional banks increased by 2.3 per cent to RO20.9bn at end-April 2021 compared to a year ago period.

Government deposits with conventional banks witnessed a decrease of 8.9 per cent at RO4.4bn and deposits of public enterprises declined by 2.2 per cent to RO1.3bn.

Private sector deposits, which accounted for 70.6 per cent of total deposits with conventional banks, increased by 6.1 per cent as of April 2021 to reach RO14.7bn, the CBO data showed.

Total deposits held with Oman's Islamic banks and windows increased by 14.7 per cent to RO4.1bn in April 2021 compared to the same period of 2020.



Oman and Egypt review investment opportunities in energy sector

Cairo, Egypt - H E Abdullah Nasser al Rahbi, Oman's ambassador to Egypt and its permanent representative to the Arab League, and Eng Tariq al Mulla, Egyptian Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, reviewed means of promoting cooperation between Oman and Egypt in the fields of energy and oil sector as per the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the two countries.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, H E Rahbi said the meeting discussed prospects of joint cooperation and investment opportunities in the oil and gas sector in the sultanate and Egypt.

He added that the meeting touched on the developments in different economic fields in Oman and the investment opportunities which were announced by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in the field of oil and gas and related industries.

The meeting also discussed

The meeting discussed prospects of joint cooperation and investment opportunities in the oil and gas sector in the sultanate and Egypt

the joint cooperation between the two countries.

H E Rahbi further said that the meeting explored the investment climate and incentives offered by the sultanate to allure investments and achieve the joint interests of both sides.

The meeting reviewed the activities of different companies working in Egypt which are currently conducting more research and exploration in the oil and gas sector.

ONA

BankDhofar wins 'Best Business and Corporate Bank' award

Muscat - BankDhofar was recently named as Best Business and Corporate Bank in Oman 2021 by *World Economic Magazine Awards*.

The award recognised bank's exceptional services, inclusive products and enhanced solutions provided to its corporate customers.

Hussain Ali Ibrahim al Lawati, acting chief corporate banking

officer at BankDhofar said, "We are proud to be recognised with this prestigious award, despite market challenges and current pandemic situation of COVID-19.

As a team we continue our commitment to support our corporate customers and fulfill their financial and investment needs in these specific circumstances."

"I take this opportunity to



Hussain Ali al Lawati

thank our customers who have chosen BankDhofar to be their business partners and to thank our corporate and business banking team for the great achievement," he added.

As one of the leading banks in the sultanate, BankDhofar has always contributed to the growth of the national economy, by financing several projects of national importance.

These awards recognise BankDhofar's vision to deliver service excellence to its customers with best experience through its full-fledged corporate centre and through a vast array of digital channels, including corporate internet banking and B2B platforms.

Recently, BankDhofar successfully raised a US\$250mn syndicated term facility.

Investcorp acquires Italy-based CloudCare

Manama, Bahrain - Investcorp, a leading global provider and manager of alternative investment products, on Monday announced that it has acquired the leading Italian tech-enabled platform CloudCare.

However, terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Established in 2011, CloudCare is a leading tech-enabled platform active in the energy, telecommunications and insurance markets where it operates as a channel partner and digital broker, connecting consumers and service providers through both its own proprietary online platform and clients' web platforms.

CloudCare's website, Comparasemplice.it, is a leading online platform for consumers in Italy to compare prices for energy, telecommunications, motor insurance and personal finance products. The company's differentiated proposition is underpinned by a proprietary customer relationship management software fed by a large internally developed data base and a unique customer service platform powered by artificial intelligence.



Nicola Ferraris

Over the past three years, CloudCare achieved an average annual revenue growth in excess of 40 per cent.

CloudCare's founder and CEO, Andrea Conte, will continue to lead the company, having retained a meaningful stake in CloudCare alongside Investcorp.

Nicola Ferraris, managing director of Investcorp's European Private Equity Group, said, "We are delighted to be partnering with Andrea Conte and CloudCare as the company moves into its next phase of growth. We have an ambitious plan to support the company as it continues to grow within its core verticals and expand into new market segments."

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MSX rises 0.31%; volumes up

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Monday rose 0.31 per cent to close at 4,057.5 points.

The gains in main index on Monday were supported by all sectoral indices led by Industrial Index which rose 0.62 per cent. Financial Index and Services Index increased 0.42 per cent and 0.05 per cent, respectively. MSX Sharia Index increased 0.19 per cent to close at 590.79 points.

Trading activity increased on Monday as volumes rose nearly 72 per cent at 34.5mn securities compared with 20.09mn securities traded on Sunday. Market turnover rose by 45.5 per cent to RO4.09mn compared with RO2.81mn in the previous trading session.

Market breadth at the MSX remained positive with 25 advancing stocks to five decliners. As many as 25 traded stocks

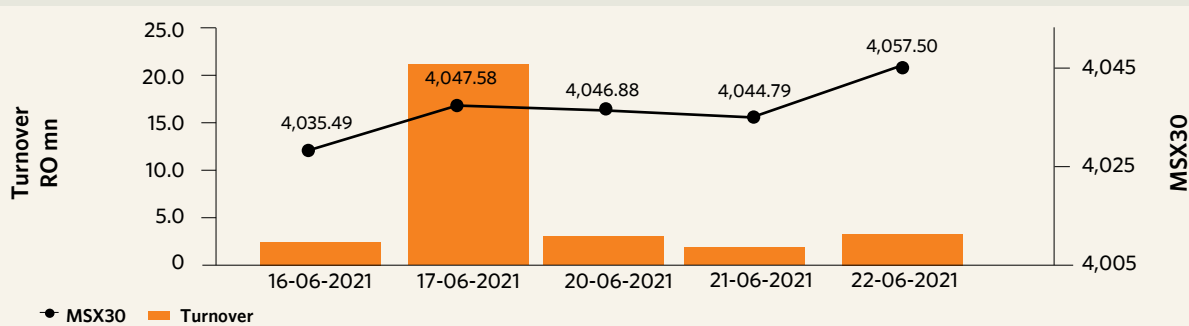


remained flat for the day.

Top gainers were Oman Aluminium Production (9.59 per cent), Taageer Finance (7.41 per cent), Oman & Emirates Investment Holding (7.14 per cent), Muscat Finance (5.0 per cent) and Oman

Qatar Insurance (4.14 per cent). Among top losers were Sharqiah Desalination (-4.17 per cent), Al Madina Investment (-4.0 per cent), Sembcorp Salalah (-1.19 per cent) and Vision Insurance (-1.15 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



China starts operations at world's second-largest hydropower project

Beijing, China – China began operating the world's second-largest hydropower station on Monday in what officials hailed as a milestone towards Beijing's carbon neutrality goals, despite warnings of environmental damage.

The 289m (948 feet) high Baihetan Hydropower Station in southwest China, second in the world only to the country's Three Gorges Dam in terms of power generation, began partial operation Monday morning, state media reported.

Baihetan was built with a total installed capacity of 16,000MW, which means it will eventually be able to generate enough electricity each day once to meet the power needs of 500,000 people for an entire year, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The country has been on a hydropower building spree in recent years as it races to meet the ever-growing energy needs of the world's largest population.

The dam spans a deep, narrow gorge on the upper section of the Yangtze, China's longest



This aerial photo shows the 289m tall Baihetan Hydropower Station in Zhaotong, in China's southwestern Yunnan province (AFP)

river, on the earthquake-prone border between Yunnan and Sichuan provinces.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said he hoped the plant would be able to "make greater contributions toward achieving the goals of carbon peaking and carbon neutrality," in a congratulatory message published by the government.

The Baihetan dam's trial run on Monday coincides with cele-

brations of the Communist Party's centenary this week.

Xi's pledge last year to reach carbon neutrality by 2060 has added urgency to the construction.

But environmental groups have warned for years that dam-building disrupts the habitats of rare plants and animals, including the critically endangered Yangtze Finless Porpoise.

Dam construction on the river

has changed the composition of sediment in the water, causing 'large-scale hydrophysical and human health risk affecting the Yangtze River Basins downstream,' scientists wrote in a paper published in Elsevier's Science of the Total Environment journal this month.

The massive engineering projects have also displaced hundreds of thousands of local communities and prompted concern in neighbouring countries.

China's planned mega-dam in Tibet's Medog County, which is set to surpass the Three Gorges Dam in size, has been described by analysts as a threat to Tibetan cultural heritage and a way for Beijing to effectively control a substantial portion of India's water supply.

The impact of dams on China's portion of the Mekong has also raised fears that irreversible damage is being inflicted upon a waterway which feeds 60 million people downstream as it winds through to the Vietnamese Delta.

AFP

Spain, Italy get biggest slice of €750bn EU fund

Madrid, Spain – Spain and Italy will receive the lion's share of the €750bn EU rescue fund but opinions vary over whether it will help their economies roar back to life or go to waste.

In Rome, analysts are confident the funds will be put to good use in the plan outlined by Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi whereas in Spain, the same issue raises many questions.

The two countries will receive almost half of the €750bn earmarked by Brussels to relaunch Europe's economies that have been devastated by the COVID-19 epidemic, funded through an unprecedented joint borrowing mechanism.

Italy will receive just over €191bn in the form of grants and loans while Spain will get up to €140bn.

"We are aware that the EU is staking its future on the successful use of these funds," said Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez.

Italian counterpart Mario Draghi had a similar message.

"We all have a responsibility to Europe's taxpayers who are funding our national plan," he said on Tuesday.

Both countries have put forward recovery plans that have been approved by Brussels and which pledge to invest the funds into the green transition, digitalisation and infrastructure projects.

But in Spain, there has been a lot of criticism.

Experts say the deep-seated



Mario Draghi poses with the NextGenerationEU recovery plan, handed to him by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (left) (AFP)

problems within Spain's economy lie elsewhere: in job insecurity, youth unemployment, a fragile pension scheme and an education system in need of an overhaul.

"These funds have been oversold: it is not that much money, nor are they going to have a big impact on the economy," said Fernando Fernandez, an economist at the IE Business School.

The first payments are expected in July but the bulk of the funds for 2021 aren't likely to arrive until the end of the year when the economic recovery will already be under way.

Despite Sanchez's repeated claims that Spain's recovery plan includes 100 structural reforms, these are 'marginal' in essence, said Toni Roldan, director of EsadeEcPol, which specialises in economic policy research.

"While they are certainly good enough to get the European Commission's green light, they

are not enough to stimulate a real change in competitiveness in Spain."

Spain is planning to channel the investment into housing rehabilitation, electric cars and 5G.

"That's all well and good, but it only creates jobs in the short term, not in the long term," said Fernandez. Critics also point to the lack of political consultation around the plan, which was put together by Sanchez and his economy minister with virtually no input from other political forces.

In Italy, however, experts have taken a completely different view.

Draghi, who is known as 'Super Mario' for helping save the euro during the debt crisis, was called in earlier this year to help Italy implement a recovery plan that had sparked political tensions that brought down the previous government in January.

AFP

UK to limit junk food ads to tackle child obesity

London, UK – The British government said it will bring in an evening watershed for junk food ads in a move to tackle the nation's obesity problem.

The state-funded National Health Service (NHS) estimates that some 10 per cent of four- and five-year olds are obese, a figure that climbs to 20.2 per cent for those aged 10 and 11, or one in five.

It adds that one in four adults are obese, with cheap, high-calorie foods blamed in part.

From the end of next year, television and on-demand channels will not be allowed to advertise food high in fat, sugar and salt before 9:00 pm.

Public health minister Jo Churchill said the new policy

aimed to protect children from 'unhealthy advertising' and 'wipe billions off the national calorie count'.

It cited analysis of advertising from 2019 that found that almost 60 per cent of ads on the main commercial TV channels between 6:00 pm and 9:00 pm were for foods high in fat, sugar and salt.

There will be some exceptions for foods that fall in these categories but are relatively unprocessed and healthy – such as marmite or honey – and for small and medium-sized food businesses.

The new rules do not ban all junk food promotion online, despite calls for this from campaigners including celebrity chef

Jamie Oliver.

Junk food companies will be able to put out content that is not paid-for, such as on their brands' social media pages and blogs.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government is seeking to 'level up' health inequalities in more disadvantaged regions of the country.

The likelihood that overweight people will suffer worse outcomes from COVID-19 infection has focused attention on the problem.

Johnson himself has struggled with his weight, blaming it for contributing to his battle to shrug off COVID-19 last year, which saw him spend several days in intensive care.

AFP

Business group urges Biden to lift Europe travel ban, revive economies

Washington, US – The Biden administration is under pressure from a major business group and diplomats to scrap a travel ban on Europeans, as investment from the continent in the United States plunged by nearly a third last year.

While countries in the European Union have reopened their borders to Americans who are vaccinated or test negative for COVID-19, the United States has not reciprocated, to the frustration of the business world.

The US Chamber of Commerce on Friday urged Washington to allow the return of European travelers 'as soon as possible'. "The resumption of safe transatlantic travel is critically important for our nation's economic recovery, as in-person business engagements and

international tourism will help drive economic growth and job creation for Americans across the country," said Marjorie Chortlins, the chamber's senior vice president for European affairs.

Travelers from the Schengen zone, Britain and Ireland have been banned from entering the United States since March 2020. Also banned from entry are travellers from South Africa, Brazil, China, India and Iran.

'Interconnected'

The EU ambassador to the United States, Stavros Lambrinidis, told AFP that Brussels is "pushing" for reciprocity, and emphasizing the positive impact such a move would have on both economies.

"Our economies and people are deeply interconnected, and



US President Joe Biden steps off Air Force One upon arrival at Raleigh-Durham Airport in Morrisville, North Carolina on June 24 (AFP)

our vaccination rates are the highest in the world – it would be crucial to safely open up this side of the Atlantic too as we both kick-start our economies,"

he said.

During President Joe Biden's visit to Europe last week, the EU stressed that the bilateral economic relationship is the largest

in the world, making up a whopping 42 per cent of both global GDP and global trade in goods and services.

But beyond trade, huge investments are at stake.

'Backbone'

'Mutual investment dwarfs trade and is the real backbone of the transatlantic economy,' noted a 2021 joint report from the US Chamber, AmCham EU, Johns Hopkins University and the Wilson Center think tank.

Mutual investment 'has become essential to US and European jobs and prosperity,' it added.

Europe accounted for more than 60 per cent of foreign direct investment flowing into the United States in the first three quarters of 2020.

But compared to the same

period from the previous year, investments from the continent plunged to US\$81bn in 2020 from US\$120bn in 2019, a drop of 32.5 per cent.

On Friday, during a visit to France, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed hope that Europeans will soon be able to visit the United States again.

"I hope that this will happen quickly. We really want to. I hope it will be a matter of weeks rather than months," he told an online forum in fluent French.

But he pointed to the rise of the Delta variant, which first emerged in India and has caused renewed concerns in Western countries.

"We are of course worried about the Delta variant and following its movement closely," Lambrinidis noted.

He pointed out that vacci-

nated people are "well protected" against the variant. Instead of closed borders, he called for speeding up inoculation campaigns, masking and social distancing.

For their part, airlines insist travelling by plane remains safe.

"Numerous scientific studies have validated that air travel presents a low transmission risk," a United Airlines spokeswoman said. "As the vaccine becomes more widely available, now is the time to implement a reopening strategy for the benefit of both the economy and the travelling public," she added.

In a sign that United is optimistic about the reopening of US borders, it recently added flights to destinations in France, Italy, Greece, Croatia, Iceland and Portugal.

AFP

Sohar International with MoL commits to onboard 200 Omanis

In a bid to continue its endeavour of enhancing the employability of Omani college and university graduates in line with the national agenda, Sohar International has collaborated with the Ministry of Labour (MoL), committing to onboard 200 Omanis, for a two-year training and development programme in organisations from various sectors.

Providing the sultanate's youth a stepping stone into the professional world, the programme will entail extensive experience, along with an attractive monthly pay. Committed to support and empower the youth of Oman, Sohar International places strong belief in building a foundation and journey that creates ample opportunities for the youth, who will take on professional and senior roles in the future.

Ahmed al Musalmi, chief executive officer of Sohar International, said, "Laying a strong foundation for future development, Oman attaches prime importance to national manpower development initiatives. In line with Oman's Vision 2040 strategy, professional development of competent young Omanis continues to be in focus across all major sectors. The bank recognises its social commitment to empower youth and is focused on further equipping existing employees and attracting potential aspirants to benefit from ongoing



talent development initiatives. "The training and development programme reflects the bank's commitment to promote a qualitative shift in national workforce through relevant training and internship programmes. Sohar International is renowned for providing rewarding career growth opportunities for competent employees and this programme is designed to further energise the market's human resources development initiatives in line with the sultanate's quest for youth empowerment."

Committed to deliver with the sole purpose of enabling people to grow and prosper, Sohar International believes that the collab-

orative efforts with Ministry of Labour, to provide on-the-job training to 200 Omanis in various fields and sectors, will not only contribute towards the enrichment of their individual personalities, but also contribute towards developing the socio-economic scene within the country, thus supporting the various local industries to evolve and thrive in the coming years.

Shedding light on training programme in advancing skills and capabilities and encouraging eligible graduates to apply, Mahira Saleh Alraisi, chief human resource officer at Sohar International, said, "Through the launch of this training and development programme, we are inviting am-

bitious graduates who can optimise this opportunity to develop their practical skills while creating a world-class experience. Through this programme, our aim is to develop graduates by giving them the required ingredients to enhance their knowledge and get hands on working experience to maximise their job opportunities after the programme and build successful careers."

The criteria to apply for this one-of-a-kind opportunity entails that the applicants must be Omani graduates holding a bachelors' degree with a minimum of 2.75 GPA and registered as job seekers with the Ministry of Labour. To apply, eligible candidates need to visit Sohar Inter-

national's official LinkedIn page and look for the Training and Development Opening Post.

As per the details enlisted within the post, candidates are to submit all the necessary documents for the bank to review and shortlist in accordance with the Ministry of Labour. Shortlisted candidates will then enter into various rounds of tests and screening to finally identify the 200 applicants that would make the cut.

Sohar International has been involved with a number of initiatives contributing to larger national goals - educating and skilling the youth being one of them. For this purpose, Sohar International had also offered in the past a one-year internship program under the title Tomohi, which aims at enhancing skillsets of the Omani youth to better their chances of employability.

A first of its kind initiative in the sultanate to make young Omanis future ready, the batch 2 of the programme was successfully on-boarded in 2020, reasserting Tomohi's role in advancing skills and capabilities to Omani college and university graduates in line with the national agenda of making Oman a knowledge-based society. Moreover, the bank takes pride in its Integrated Performance Management and Capability Development System - Erteqaa.

Omantel launches Capabilities Academy

Believing in the importance of constantly developing and enhancing employees and leaders and equipping them with the skill for the future, the Learning and Development Department at Omantel's Human Resources Unit has established and recently launched the Capabilities Academy initiative.

It is a combination of skills, knowledge and expertise needed by employees to achieve ongoing successes.

Typically, such competencies are exclusive to the company as they go beyond technical and job skills and focus on investing in employees' capacity building to boost the transformation process in the world of learning and development today.

The new Capabilities Academy provides the competencies required for Omantel to take the lead in the telecommunication sector in a consistent manner

and alignment with its strategy through partnering with a several of international institutes to build the Technology, Business, Digital, and Data School led by the foundation of the Leadership Academy

Commenting on the initiative, Saif bin Sultan al Abri, senior manager of Learning and Development at Omantel, said, "We are pleased to announce our partnerships with some prestigious universities and institutes to implement programmes that aim to enhance the knowledge, competencies and skills of our employees.

"In this regard, Omantel linked a partnership agreement with Stanford University, one of the leading US academic institutions that comes third internationally in computer and information sciences and support services. It also participated in conducting various creativity researches in the field of information technology (IT).

"Moreover, Omantel signed a partnership agreement with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), one of the most prestigious educational institutions in the US and the world. Established in 1861, MIT ranks first in the area of technology and computer sciences, information systems and operations researches.

"As far as leaders' training is concerned, Omantel entered into a partnership agreement with the leading US Georgetown University founded in 1789."



OPPO debuts new RAM expansion technology for smartphones in MEA

Global technology brand OPPO has introduced RAM expansion technology to MEA users for the first time on its Reno5 series of smartphones from June 2021. The innovative technology, RAM+, operates as an auxiliary function that allows OPPO Reno5 series users to temporarily convert a small portion of their smartphone's read-only memory (ROM) into virtual random-access memory (RAM), maximising the phone's efficiency and processing capabilities.

Designed with simplicity and convenience in mind, users can easily enjoy up to 7GB of expanded RAM memory with a single click in the smartphone's settings. Depend on the phones memory specifics, the RAM storage on Reno5 series phones can be expanded up to 7GB. Users will experience optimised performance through the enlarged RAM that supports increased data processing capability and reduces frame loss rate and fragmentation. RAM+ ensures



smoother switching between apps that are running simultaneously in the background, allowing the phone's configuration to be used to its fullest. In addition, OPPO supports three levels of adjustments in this function, providing users the flexibility to temporarily adjust the size of their RAM according to their needs.

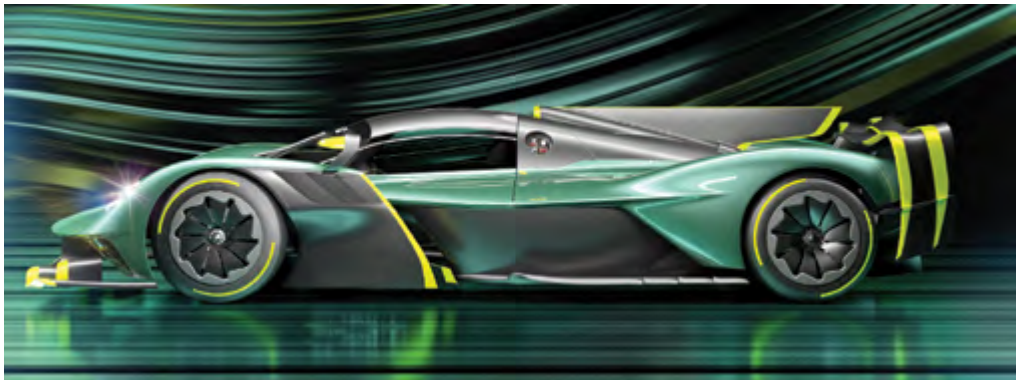
"Smartphones today are a constant companion in our ultra-connected lives, used for everything from communication and photography to intense gaming, social media and web browsing. They are expected to cope with varying usage patterns across a wide range of consumers and provide a seamless experience at all times. Users get easily frustrated when their smartphone slows down. RAM+ can alleviate the issue by temporarily increasing RAM during data-heavy tasks such as sharing images or gaming, ensuring a smoother and more stable system running," said Tarek Zaki, senior product manager.

RAM+ will be available to OPPO Reno5 Series, OPPO A94, OPPO A74.

Valkyrie AMR Pro: No rules hypercar

First came the revolutionary Aston Martin Valkyrie road car. Now comes the radical evolution, in the sensational form of the new Valkyrie AMR Pro: a machine which takes a car designed to win the Le Mans 24 Hours as its starting point, then pushes further to explore extremes of performance unconstrained by racing regulations or registration for road use.

In 2019, Aston Martin, Adrian Newey, Red Bull Advanced Technologies (RBAT) and engineering partner Multimatic worked intensively on an Aston Martin Valkyrie race car design, aimed at winning the 24H Le Mans race in the new Hypercar class. That well advanced design has now formed the basis of the radical new Valkyrie AMR Pro. Where the original concept proposal - first seen at the 2018 Geneva Motor Show - was very much an exercise in squeezing as much performance from the road legal Valkyrie platform, the new Valkyrie AMR Pro benefits from the Le Mans project's pure, race



optimised chassis, aerodynamic and powertrain developments.

Moreover, with its design and performance freed from race rule constraints, the AMR Pro's capabilities now exceed those of the machine designed to challenge for outright victory in the Le Mans 24 Hours. Continuing the technology partnership with Red Bull Advanced Technologies (RBAT), the Valkyrie AMR Pro is a car of unprecedented potency and mind-blowing capabilities. It uses a unique version of the Valkyrie chassis which is 380mm longer in wheelbase and 96mm wider in track at the front;

115mm at the rear. Valkyrie AMR Pro also features an aggressive aerodynamic package which adds an additional 266mm in length, and thanks to mastery of underbody and overwing airflow, generates extraordinary levels of downforce.

Comfortably delivering twice the amount of downforce than the Valkyrie road car, the Valkyrie AMR Pro will achieve lateral acceleration of more than 3G. In the pursuit of the lightest weight and fastest lap times, Valkyrie AMR Pro relies solely on a modified version of the sensational Cosworth-built 6.5lt natu-

rally aspirated V12 engine. Revving to 11,000rpm, this masterpiece of internal combustion is on-target to develop 1000bhp.

Weight savings will come from deletion of the battery-electric hybrid system, plus a host of other weight saving measures, including ultra-lightweight carbon fibre bodywork, carbon suspension wishbones and Perspex windscreen and side windows. Together with an aerodynamic efficiency that exceeds Le Mans Hypercar regulations, the Valkyrie AMR Pro promises track performance approaching that of a Formula 1 car.

Majid al Futtaim demonstrates commitment to driving sustainability agenda

Majid al Futtaim, the leading shopping mall, communities, retail and leisure pioneer across the Middle East, Africa and Asia, has released its 2020 Sustainability Report, highlighting key milestones and initiatives launched throughout the year. Despite the business and economic disruption brought about by the pandemic, the company achieved 97 per cent of the targets set out in its annual sustainability strategy, further demonstrating the company's dedication to driving the sustainability agenda forward in the region.

The audited results showcase Majid al Futtaim's progress towards its Net Positive commitment, as 2020 saw the company

record a 9.2 per cent decrease in its carbon footprint and a 17.5 per cent decrease in water usage across its operations. It also generated nearly 17mn kWh of renewable energy last year, with 63 per cent generated through its shopping malls alone - enough to power an electric car for 85mn kilometres, or the equivalent to driving over 40,000 times from Dubai to Riyadh and back.

Other important milestones included the launch of Majid al Futtaim's circular economy strategy focusing on tackling waste and moving towards a more circular business model by 2030, as well as the launch of its Responsible Procurement Policy developed to reduce business



risks and to drive positive change within the company's supply chain, with minimum sustainability standards set out for suppliers.

Ibrahim al Zu'bi, chief sustainability officer, Majid al Futtaim - Holding, commented, "The past 12 months have seen our world change beyond imagination and the importance of taking care of one another and the planet has never been clearer. Our sustainability strategy has been a top priority for the business and achieving 97 per cent of our targets demonstrates the importance we place on driving the sustainability agenda forwards within our own operations and across the region as whole."

"The launch of our circular economy strategy, which looks to tackle waste within the business and move towards a more circular business model by 2030, was a key 2020 milestone for us. Now, as we enter the final stretch before reaching our 2022 Sustainable Business Commitments, we will continue to futureproof our business, scaling up on our Net Positive efforts and embedding climate-related risk management to ensure our business resilience and reduce our impact on the environment," Zu'bi added.

As restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus came into place, Majid al Futtaim's main priority was the wellbeing and safety of its employees.

Digitalisation, sustainability top priorities for consumers in Middle East, PwC report says

PwC Middle East launched the Middle East findings of the 2021 Global Consumer Insights Survey titled 'More digital and sustainable: post pandemic priorities for Middle East consumers' which takes a look at how consumer behaviour has changed as a result of COVID-19.

Undoubtedly, confidence is rising across the region, with 58 per cent of Middle East consumers confirming that they have become more optimistic about the economy. Despite this confidence, our results indicate that the economic and social consequences of COVID-19 have impacted consumer behaviour and that those changes are here to stay.

Key consumer trends accelerated by the pandemic:

An accelerated shift to online and mobile shopping

►67 per cent of regional consumers believe they have become more digital during the pandemic, compared to 51 per cent of global consumers, particularly in Egypt where 72 per cent of consumers confirmed that.

►Mobile is now the main online channel for shopping, with 47



per cent of regional respondents saying they use their smartphones most frequently for purchases, compared with 39 per cent of global respondents.

►A major consideration for Middle East consumers shopping online continues to be fast and

reliable delivery with 38 per cent of respondents ranking this as important.

In-store shopping is still important as part of multi-channel retail strategies.

►Despite the pandemic, 56 per cent of the Middle East con-

sumers, compared with 45 per cent globally, prefer visiting physical stores.

►40 per cent of consumers who shop in-store consider increased health and safety as one of the most important attributes for a physical store. Key safety meas-

ures that regional consumers highlighted include mandatory face masks (44 per cent), social distancing (43 per cent) and hand sanitisation stations (32 per cent).

Price-sensitivity is increasing in the Middle East.

►57 per cent of Middle East consumers indicated that they have been more price oriented during the pandemic and 66 per cent said they have been focused on saving.

Middle East consumers are more health conscious

►71 per cent of Middle East consumers indicated that they have become more healthy during the pandemic. When shopping for groceries, 41 per cent of respondents also said that they are willing to pay more for healthier options.

Socially aware consumers are on the rise

►COVID-19 has reinforced the growing awareness of social and environmental sustainability with 65 per cent of regional consumers reporting that they have become more eco-friendly during the pandemic.

►75 per cent of Middle consumers say they buy from companies that are environmentally conscious, compared with 54 per cent globally; and 72 per cent, versus 55 per cent globally, say they choose products with a traceable and transparent origin.

Older consumers are more likely to be focused on sustainability

Norma Taki, Consumer Markets Leader and Transaction Services Partner, PwC Middle East commented, "Digitalisation and sustainability are firmly at the top of consumers' agendas. To prepare for the future, retailers across the region will need to be fast and agile to capture business from a rising generation of youthful, socially aware consumers who are digitally savvy."

She added, "The speed of the shift in consumer sentiment reflected by our findings is a reminder that retailers cannot afford to adopt a wait-and-see strategy as the region's shoppers emerge from the pandemic and the related economic uncertainty and emotional stress. A new, digitised market is taking shape, which already looks increasingly different from the region's pre-pandemic consumer landscape."

PwC adopted a 'pulse' approach for its 2021 Global Consumer Insights Survey in order to remain attuned to changes in the worldwide landscape and connected to the behaviours of the global consumer. The pulse surveys were put into the field in November 2020 and March 2021 and included respondents from the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

164 countries take part in ME Energy event

Organisers of Middle East Energy's debut virtual event has revealed that 164 countries took part in the month-long showcase, which featured four online energy sector weeks, between May 17-June 9.

The online event attracted 11,000 attendees from 164 countries worldwide, focusing on the latest insights, trends, and innovations across four energy industry sectors, including Renewable & Clean Energy, Transmission & Distribution, Critical & Backup Power, and Energy Consumption & Management.

During the event, 85 sessions, including tech talks, interactive roundtables, panel discussions, thought leadership sessions and remote interviews, took place. Underscoring the importance of business development and making meaningful contacts, over 7,300 connections were made by 164 exhibiting companies.

Claudia Konieczna, exhibition director, Middle East Energy, said, "The outcome of the event has supported our strategy to take Middle East Energy online and deliver a virtual showcase for the energy industry."

"Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we have been able to bring the global energy industry together. A series of insightful and thought-provoking discussions have been instrumental in supporting the sector's recovery and providing a roadmap for the future. During the four sector weeks, we heard from a series of industry heavyweights discussing everything from the adoption of clean hydrogen to automation and digital solutions in transmission and distribution. Energy access to all and the importance of green buildings and smart cities were also highlighted, giving the event broad appeal to those in the energy industry."

The highlight of the opening day was the welcome speech by Suhail al Mazrouei, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, who reiterated the UAE's commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 70 per cent and in-



crease clean energy use by 50 per cent by 2050.

Elsewhere on day one, Eng Yousif al Ali, Assistant Undersecretary - Electricity, Water and Future Energy Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, highlighted the UAE's position to become to be one of the top producers of hydrogen in the world during the session, Energy diversification and the race to meet clean energy targets - strategies to reach net-zero.

During week two, Transmission & Distribution took centre stage with discussions focused on automation, digital solutions, and artificial intelligence, with reliable generation integral to driving economic recovery post-COVID-19. The third sector week, Critical and Backup Power, saw a presentation from David Lecoque, CEO, Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE), who highlighted the need to provide electricity to 870 million people who currently don't have access and better access to the 1.5bn suffering from unreliable service.

Rounding out the sector weeks was Energy Consumption & Management, where a panel of energy industry experts underscored the importance of green buildings and smart cities in reducing energy consumption. Insights on the opening day session came courtesy of Benoit Lebot, a senior policy adviser in the French government's Ministry for the Energy Transition; Amr Salah, senior director - Head of Utilities, Emaar - The Economic City; and Ahmed Samer Elbermbali, managing director, MENA Clean Energy Business Council.

IsDB and AIM join to promote sustainable investment

The Annual Investment Meeting Africa Edition (AIM Africa), in multilateral partnership with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD) and the IsDB Group Business Forum (THIQAH), are set to work together in the first digital edition of AIM Africa.

Scheduled for June 29-30, AIM Africa, the 2nd Regional Edition of Annual Investment Meeting, will witness a prestigious gathering of top government officials and reputable speakers from different countries and international organisations, as well as major investment stakeholders for the African region to explore rewarding investment opportunities that will benefit a multitude of sectors and enhance economic cooperation and support among nations.

As multilateral partners of AIM Africa, the ICD whose key motives are private sector investments, mobilising funds in international financial markets,



and offering corporate and government consultancy services; aims to promote and sustain long-term economic growth in Africa through AIM Africa.

The event features a pillar dedicated to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which includes investment roundtable discussions. The IsDB, on the other hand, is focused on building collaborative partnerships through investments, between communities and nations, across the public and private sectors while fostering innovative and sustainable solutions to the world's greatest development challenges.

The IsDB Group Business Forum, THIQAH was established as a unique and innovative platform for effective dialogue, cooperation, and partnerships for IsDB Group and business leaders committed to joining in promising investment and trade opportunities.

Through THIQAH, the IsDB Group seeks to reinforce the effectiveness and success of the partnerships that have been forged amongst the Group and business leaders and establishments in our Member Countries.

Now, the focus will be on increasing cross-border investment along with AIM Africa, which will be aided by IsDB's financial products and services.

The Annual Investment Meeting, ICD and THIQAH, with their huge potential, will give a major boost to Africa's economic stability, sustainability, and prosperity.

Join AIM Africa; the 1st Digital Edition and find out more about investment opportunities in Africa.

Keep your hair healthy, beautiful

Come summers and we all gear up for that perfect skincare routine to keep our skin safe and healthy in the dry, hot weather. But, have we ever thought of the harmful effects it can have on our hair? This summer, treat your hair with equal priority as, Egyptian actress and Brand Ambassador for Dabur Amla Hair Oil, Heba Magdi shares her beauty secrets to keep those tresses strong and lustrous.

Summers, sun and its harmful effects:

The effects of the sun on the scalp and hair are a lot more harmful than you think. It causes dryness, while damaging the hair roots. Moreover, the sweat and dust contribute to hair problems like dandruff, split ends, and most commonly increased hair fall. Overall, it is essential to concentrate on hair care during these hot and dry months of the year.

Nature to the rescue:

Overexposure to the sun as well as chemical-laden products;



both are equally harmful for the hair. Thankfully, there are products like Dabur Amla Hair Oil and its dedicated range of haircare products that provides complete natural nourishment to the scalp and hair. The Indian Gooseberry (Amla) is loaded with Vitamin C that nourishes the hair right from its root to tip. With calcium-rich features, Dabur Amla Hair Oil also replenishes lost nutrition to keep the hair strands protected from severe damage due to sun exposure.

Working wonders on the roots, it prevents hair fall while ensuring complete hair health.

World champ Kimi Räikkönen certifies Giulia GTA

To follow the testing session on the Giulia GTA and GTAm last fall, the Finnish world champion was back at the Balocco Proving Ground a few days ago to personally evaluate the work done on the highest-performing sports sedan the Italian brand has ever produced. His words leave no doubts in the mind, "I really like it. We're looking at a car that can be used on an everyday basis, but that can also be taken onto the track, one in which you can really enjoy yourself."

Kimi Räikkönen analysed the changes made to the car, specifically in terms of the aerodynamics. He had already worked on this aspect in the first session, providing invaluable advice on the new appendages added both to the front - the new adjustable splitter built into the new front bumper - and to the rear - the addition of the new manually adjustable wing.

More general changes have



also been made to the overall balance guaranteed by the interaction of these new components with the extractor and the underbody fairing. Kimi's judgment?

"Of course, it's better at high speeds in terms of balance. It seems the front of the car is lower, making the steering faster. It's fast, easy to drive, and responsive." Once he takes off his racing suit and is away from the

spotlight, Kimi Räikkönen is back playing the role of father, taking his children to school. He therefore believes that the Giulia GTA represents the ideal mix for use every day and on the track.

The loop is therefore completed in a process of development, where the drivers lent their skills to the Alfa Romeo engineering team. This process began last October with a first testing ses-

sion, focused on the specific solutions taken up in terms of aerodynamics and handling.

Alfa Romeo entrusts Sauber Engineering with the production of most of the carbon fiber components in the GTA and GTAm, especially those that affect the aerodynamics. These include the new front bumper, the side skirts, the extractor, the GTA spoiler and the GTAm aerowing. Courtesy of

its manually adjustable front and rear wings, the Giulia GTAm can adapt its aerodynamic performance to any kind of track or road, precisely following the requests and preferences of its driver.

The aerodynamic research in the wind tunnel was not limited to the wing appendages, it also focused on the underbody, fully faired as in the Giulia Quadrifoglio. The GTA and GTAm also benefit from a special new air extractor capable of increasing the car's ground effect, thus guaranteeing excellent road holding at high speeds. In particular, on the Giulia GTAm the most intense aerodynamic configuration mounts double the pressure of the Giulia GTA, triple compared to the Giulia Quadrifoglio, the previous benchmark in its segment. Superb statistics that testify to the great achievements resulting from the collaboration between Alfa Romeo and Sauber technicians.

Iraq slams US strikes on pro-Iran fighters amid calls for revenge

Baghdad, Iraq - Iraq on Monday condemned overnight US airstrikes against Iran-backed armed groups on the Syrian-Iraqi border that killed at least seven fighters and sparked calls for revenge from Iraqi armed factions.

The second such raid on pro-Iran targets since US President Joe Biden took office, described by the Pentagon as 'retaliatory', led to fears of a new escalation between Tehran and Washington and came despite faltering efforts to revive a key deal over Iran's nuclear programme.

Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi condemned the attack as a 'blatant and unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty and Iraqi national security'.

'Iraq reiterates its refusal to be an arena for settling scores,' Kadhemi added in a statement, urging all sides to avoid any further escalation.

The Hashed, an Iraqi paramilitary alliance that includes several Iranian proxies and has become the main power broker in Baghdad, said the strikes killed four of its fighters in the Qaim region, some 13km away from the border.

The fighters were stationed there to prevent extremists from infiltrating Iraq, the group said in a statement, denying that they had taken part in any attacks against US interests or personnel. "We reserve the legal right to



Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi (right) with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi (left) and Jordan's King Abdullah II, who arrived for a meeting 'amid enormous regional challenges' in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on Sunday (AFP)

respond to these attacks and hold the perpetrators accountable on Iraqi soil," the Hashed said.

US defence spokesman John Kirby said in a statement that three military facilities used by Iran-backed militia had been hit overnight Sunday to Monday -- two in Syria and one in Iraq.

Kirby said the targets had been used by 'Iran-backed militias that are engaged in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against US personnel and facilities in Iraq'.

US interests

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria, said seven fighters had been killed in the strikes in the early hours of Monday.

At least six more fighters were wounded and the targets included an arms depot near Albu Kamal, a Syrian town which lies where the border crosses the Euphrates river, the Britain-based monitor said.

Syria's state-run SANA news agency said one child had been

killed in the raid but gave few details. US interests in Iraq, where 2,500 American troops are deployed as part of an international coalition to fight the Islamic State group, have been targeted in more than 40 attacks this year.

The vast majority have been bombs against logistics convoys, but rocket fire and drones packed with explosive have also been used in the assaults some of which were claimed by pro-Iran factions hoping to pressure Washington into withdrawing all its troops.

"Given the ongoing series of attacks by Iran-backed groups targeting US interests in Iraq, the president directed further military action to disrupt and deter such attacks," Kirby said.

"Specifically, the US strikes targeted operational and weapons storage facilities at two locations in Syria and one location in Iraq, both of which lie close to the border between those countries," he added.

Kataeb Hezbollah and Kataeb Sayyid al Shuhada, two Iraqi armed factions with close ties to

Tehran, were among the 'several Iran-backed militia groups' that had used the facilities, Kirby said.

Nuclear deal

Some of the militia groups that form the Hashed al Shaabi have been deployed in Syria over the years to support regime forces and to further Iran's interests in the country.

In February, US strikes on facilities in eastern Syria used by Iran-backed militia groups left more than 20 fighters dead, according to the Observatory.

The latest US strikes come two days after the United States and France warned Iran that time was running out to return to a nuclear deal, voicing fears that Tehran's sensitive atomic activities could advance if talks drag on. A return to the 2015 Iran accord has been a key Biden promise after the nuclear deal was trashed by his predecessor Donald Trump.

"We have a national interest in trying to put the nuclear problem back in the box that it was [under the deal]," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

The UN's nuclear watchdog said Friday it had received no reply from Tehran over the possible extension of a temporary agreement covering inspections at Iranian nuclear facilities which expired on Thursday.

AFP

Ukraine, US launch Black Sea drills

Kiev, Ukraine - Ukraine and the United States launched joint naval exercises in the Black Sea on Monday in a show of Western cooperation with Kiev as it faces off with Russia.

The drills come just days after the British navy's *HMS Defender* passed near Russian-annexed Crimea in the Black Sea, with Moscow saying it fired warning shots to ward it off.

The Sea Breeze drills - which have taken place 21 times since 1997 - will involve some 5,000 military personnel from more than 30 countries. The exercises will last two weeks and involve around 30 ships, including the missile destroyer *USS Ross*.

Ukrainian navy commander Olexsiy Neizhpapa said during an opening ceremony in Odessa that the exercises would send a 'powerful message to maintain stability and peace in our region'.

Russia said it fired warning shots last Wednesday at the *HMS Defender* after what it said was a violation of its territorial waters. Britain said it was making 'an innocent passage through Ukrainian territorial waters in accordance with international law'.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and claims the waters around the peninsula as part of its territory. Most countries do not recognise the takeover.

AFP

Hong Kong police arrest top writer from shuttered daily

Hong Kong, China - Hong Kong police arrested the lead opinion writer of *Apple Daily* on national security grounds as he tried to fly out of the city, local media reported, days after the pro-democracy newspaper was forced to shut down.

Apple Daily, an unapologetic backer of Hong Kong's democracy movement, put out its last edition on Thursday after its top leadership was arrested and its assets frozen under a national security law China imposed on Hong Kong last year.

Fung Wai-kong, managing editor and chief opinion writer for the paper's English website, on Sunday became the seventh senior *Apple Daily* figure detained under the law.

Hong Kong police confirmed the arrest of a 57 year old man at the airport for 'conspiring to collude with foreign countries or foreign forces to endanger national security'.



A protester lays flowers on the ground in support of *Apple Daily*, at the China's Embassy in Paris on Friday (AFP)

They did not name Fung, who wrote under the penname Lo Fung, but local media reported that he has been detained for investigation.

The prosecution of *Apple Daily* was sparked by articles and columns that allegedly supported international sanctions against China, a view now deemed illegal under the security law.

In the last two weeks, police have raided the *Apple Daily* newsroom, seized computers and servers, and arrested five senior executives.

Jimmy Lai, *Apple Daily*'s owner and an outspoken critic of the Chinese government, is currently in jail for attending a pro-democracy demonstration and also faces national security charges. AFP

US presses allies to bring back IS fighters

Rome, Italy - Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday pressed US allies to bring back citizens arrested overseas for joining the Islamic State group, warning they could not be held indefinitely in Syria.

Blinken made the appeal in Rome at a meeting of an 83-member coalition on defeating the extremist network, where he and host Italy called for greater attention to the threat in Africa.

About 10,000 suspected Islamic State fighters are being held in northern Syria by Western-allied Kurdish fighters, according to US estimates.

"This situation is simply untenable. It just can't persist indefinitely," Blinken said. "The United States continues to urge countries - including coalition partners - to repatriate, rehabilitate and, where applicable, prosecute its citizens," he said.

France and Britain, two of the closest US allies, have been major holdouts against calls to bring back their citizens, which were also made by former presi-



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at a meeting of the coalition against the Islamic State group, at the Fiera di Roma in Rome on Monday (AFP)

dent Donald Trump's administration. Both nations have painful experiences with attacks and see little incentive and plenty of political cost to bringing back radicalised citizens who are already jailed overseas.

Blinken praised Italy as one of the few Western European nations to repatriate its citizens and also hailed efforts by Central Asian nations such as Kazakhstan, which he said had brought back 600 fighters and

their family members and put them in rehabilitation programmes.

According to a Human Rights Watch report in March, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces are holding more than 63,000 women and children of suspected IS fighters from more than 60 countries in two camps surrounded by barbed wire.

The IS group has lost almost all of its territory in Syria and Iraq, where it once ran a vast self-

styled caliphate marked by an extraordinary campaign of brutality against religious minorities and women.

But the extremists still exert force in the Sahel, where France has led a military campaign that it is now winding down.

Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio called on the coalition to form a new working group to address 'the growing threat stemming from ISIS in Africa'.

The coalition's ministers are meeting for the first time in person since February 2019, with diplomacy hampered by the coronavirus pandemic.

The coalition was also rocked by Trump's abrupt decision to pull troops out of Syria, declaring that the United States had completed its mission.

He eventually kept a small force that is backed by President Joe Biden, in part to stop NATO ally Turkey from launching a new military operation against the Kurdish forces it links to separatists at home.

AFP

Iran says 'no decision' taken to erase nuclear site tapes

Tehran, Iran - Iran said on Monday it had taken 'no decision' to delete footage from surveillance cameras installed at some of its atomic energy facilities by the UN nuclear watchdog the IAEA.

The issue is part of broader talks underway in Vienna aiming to salvage the 2015 Iran nuclear deal that has been hanging by a thread since former president Donald Trump withdrew the US from it three years ago.

"No decision has been taken on the deletion of the data" recorded by the IAEA cameras, said Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh.

After Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal between Iran and major powers and ramped up punishing sanctions, the Is-



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei meets with President Ebrahim Raisi (left), in the country's capital Tehran on Monday (AFP)

lamic republic has taken steps away from its nuclear commitments.

Late last year, the conservative-dominated parliament passed a law that led Iran to restrict access to some of its nuclear facilities for International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors from February.

Iran's moderate President Hassan Rouhani advised against this step, but the government followed through on the legislature's demand.

Tehran also denied the IAEA access to video recordings from monitoring equipment that the UN agency had installed at its sites to verify its compliance.

The Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran said the cameras would keep running, but that the withheld footage would be

deleted if US sanctions were not lifted within three months.

This period was later extended by a month but expired on June 24.

Since then the IAEA has insisted on the 'vital importance' that Iran extend the period again and urged Tehran to tell it whether it intends to do so.

But Tehran's response has been slow in coming.

"I insist that no negative or positive decision regarding the cameras and the previous agreement with the agency has been taken," Khatibzadeh said on Monday.

The decision is the responsibility of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, which is not known to have held a meeting on the subject since June 24.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Moscow, Saint Petersburg post record daily virus deaths, restrictions reimposed

Moscow, Russia - Russia's main coronavirus hotspots Moscow and Saint Petersburg set new pandemic highs for deaths from the virus on Monday, an official tally showed, as the country battles a deadly third wave.

The new records come as the highly infectious Delta variant first identified in India drives a surge of new coronavirus cases that has been worsened by a sluggish vaccination campaign.

The Russian capital on Monday reported 124 deaths from COVID while second city Saint Petersburg reported 110, topping records both cities had set over the weekend.

Moscow, the epicentre of Russia's outbreak, has rushed to introduce new restrictions to brace against the new wave after life had all but returned to normal for months.

Work-from-home restrictions were reimposed on Monday in the Russian capital with exceptions for vaccinated employees.

Businesses were ordered to send home 30 percent of non-vaccinated employees, while restaurants are now only authorised to allow inside patrons who have been inoculated or infected in the previous six months.

They will also have to present a QR code to enter restaurants, certifying that they are either vaccinated, have had COVID-19 in the last six months, or have a valid negative test.

The outbreak in Russia - already one of the worst-hit nations in the world - has also caused alarm because of the ongoing Euro 2020 football tournament, which has seen thousands of fans attend matches in different countries



Passengers travel in Moscow subway as the Russian capital recorded the worst daily coronavirus death toll so far for a Russian city, on Sunday (AFP)

Despite free jabs having been available since December, just 21.2mn out of a population of about 146mn had received at least one dose of a vaccine as of Monday

GOGOV WEBSITE

across the continent.

Saint Petersburg has already hosted six matches, and is the venue for one of the quarter-finals on Friday.

Spectator numbers have

been capped at half-capacity, but still upwards of 26,000 people.

While the city has tightened some restrictions, including banning food sales at its Euro

2020 fan zones, authorities on Friday allowed high school graduation celebrations to go ahead including a packed concert that drew thousands.

Russia's latest coronavirus surge has been worsened by a slow inoculation drive.

Despite free jabs having been available since December, as of Monday just 21.2 million out of a population of about 146 million had received at least one dose of a vaccine, according to the Gogov website, which tallies

COVID figures from the regions and the media.

To counter a population sceptical of vaccines, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin earlier this month ordered mandatory vaccinations for service sector employees.

As of Monday, at least 16 of Russia's 85 regions had followed suit.

Russia, with 133,893 deaths from the virus, has the highest toll from COVID-19 in Europe. AFP

UK military top brass forced into self-isolation

London, UK - Britain's senior military commanders and the defence secretary are self-isolating after the head of the armed forces tested positive.

Ben Wallace, secretary of defence, and the heads of the Navy, the Royal Air Force and Strategic Command were all ordered to isolate for a 10-day period last week, the Telegraph newspaper reported late on Sunday.

It added that the head of the Army, General Mark Carleton-Smith, also spent the weekend in self-isolation as he awaited the results of a COVID test. They had all come into close contact with the Chief of the Defence Staff



Ben Wallace

Nick Carter at a summit in Shrivenham in southern England on Thursday.

The meeting came a day after Britain and Russia squared up over a naval incident off the coast of Crimea, as Moscow said it had fired warning shots at a Royal Navy destroyer in Black Sea waters it claims.

Brits heading to Spain islands need test or jabs

Madrid, Spain - British holidaymakers heading to the Balearic Islands will need to show a negative PCR test or proof of vaccination due to a rise in UK COVID infections, Spain said on Monday, reversing a free-entry policy.

Pointing to the 'negative evolution' of Britain's health situation as the Delta variant takes hold, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told Spanish radio that British tourists holidaying in the archipelago would need 'to be completely vaccinated or show a negative PCR (test)'.

"We will implement (this change) in 72 hours so that tour operators and British



Pedro Sanchez

tourists can adapt to the new rules," the Spanish Prime Minister added.

The rule change comes after London put the Balearic Islands on its green list of safe travel destinations, which means Brits holidaying there won't have to quarantine on their return home.

AFP

Global death toll nears 4mn

Paris, France - The novel coronavirus has killed at least 3,925,816 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1000 GMT on Monday.

At least 181,026,780 cases of coronavirus have been registered. The vast majority have recovered, though some have continued to experience symptoms weeks or even months later.

The figures are based on daily reports provided by health authorities in each country.

They exclude revisions made by other statistical organisations, which show that the number of deaths is much higher.

The World Health Organization estimates that the pandemic's overall toll could be two to three times higher than official records, due to the excess mortality that is directly and indirectly linked to COVID-19.

A large number of the less severe or asymptomatic cases also remain undetected, despite intensified testing in many countries.

On Sunday, 6,743 new deaths and 325,186 new cases were recorded worldwide.

Based on latest reports, the countries with the most new deaths were India with 979 new deaths, followed by Brazil with 739 and Colombia with 664.

The United States is the worst-affected country with 603,967 deaths from 33,625,039 cases.



A health worker takes nasal swab from a woman for COVID-19 test, at a hospital in Johannesburg, South Africa on Monday (AFP)

The country with the highest number of deaths compared to its population is Peru with 582 fatalities per 100,000

After the US, the hardest-hit countries are Brazil with 513,474 deaths from 18,420,598 cases, India with 396,730 deaths from 30,279,331 cases, Mexico with 232,564 deaths from 2,505,792 cases, and Peru with 191,899 deaths from 2,048,115 cases.

The country with the highest number of deaths compared to its population is Peru with 582 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Hungary with

310, Bosnia-Herzegovina with 294, Czech Republic with 283, and Republic of North Macedonia with 263.

Latin America and the Caribbean overall has 1,265,383 deaths from 37,113,803 cases, Europe 1,165,834 deaths from 54,318,849 infections, and the United States and Canada 630,194 deaths from 35,038,242 cases.

Asia has reported 572,615 deaths from 39,858,735 cases, the Middle East 149,573 deaths from 9,228,238 cases, Africa 141,093 deaths from 5,415,399 cases, and Oceania 1,124 deaths from 53,523 cases.

As a result of corrections by national authorities or late publication of data, the figures updated over the past 24 hours may not correspond exactly to the previous day's tallies.

AFP

Delayed doses of AstraZeneca jab boost immunity, says Oxford University study

London, UK - Delayed second and third doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine boost immunity against COVID-19, a study by Oxford University, which developed the jab with the British-Swedish firm, said on Monday.

An interval of up to 45 weeks between the first and second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine led to an enhanced immune response, rather than compromising immunity, the study said.

Giving a third dose of the jab more than six months after the second dose also leads to a 'substantial increase' in antibodies and induces a 'strong boost' to subjects' immune response, said the pre-print study, meaning that it has yet to be peer-reviewed.

"This should come as reassuring news to countries with lower supplies of the vaccine, who may be concerned about delays in providing second doses to their populations," said lead investigator of the Oxford trial, Andrew Pollard. "There is an excellent response to a second dose, even after a ten-month delay from the first."

The researchers said the results for a delayed AstraZeneca third dose were positive, particularly as nations with advanced vaccination programmes consider whether third booster shots will be required to prolong immunity.

"It is not known if booster



This file photo shows a batch of AstraZeneca vaccines donated by the Mexican government to Guatemala is being transported at the Air Force Base in Guatemala City, on June 24 (AFP)

jabs will be needed due to waning immunity or to augment immunity against variants of concern," said the study's lead senior author, Teresa Lambe.

She explained the research showed the AstraZeneca jab 'is well tolerated and significantly boosts the antibody response'.

Lambe added results were encouraging 'if we find that a third dose is needed'.

The development of the jab,

which is being administered in 160 countries, has been hailed as a milestone in efforts against the pandemic because of its relatively low cost and ease of transportation.

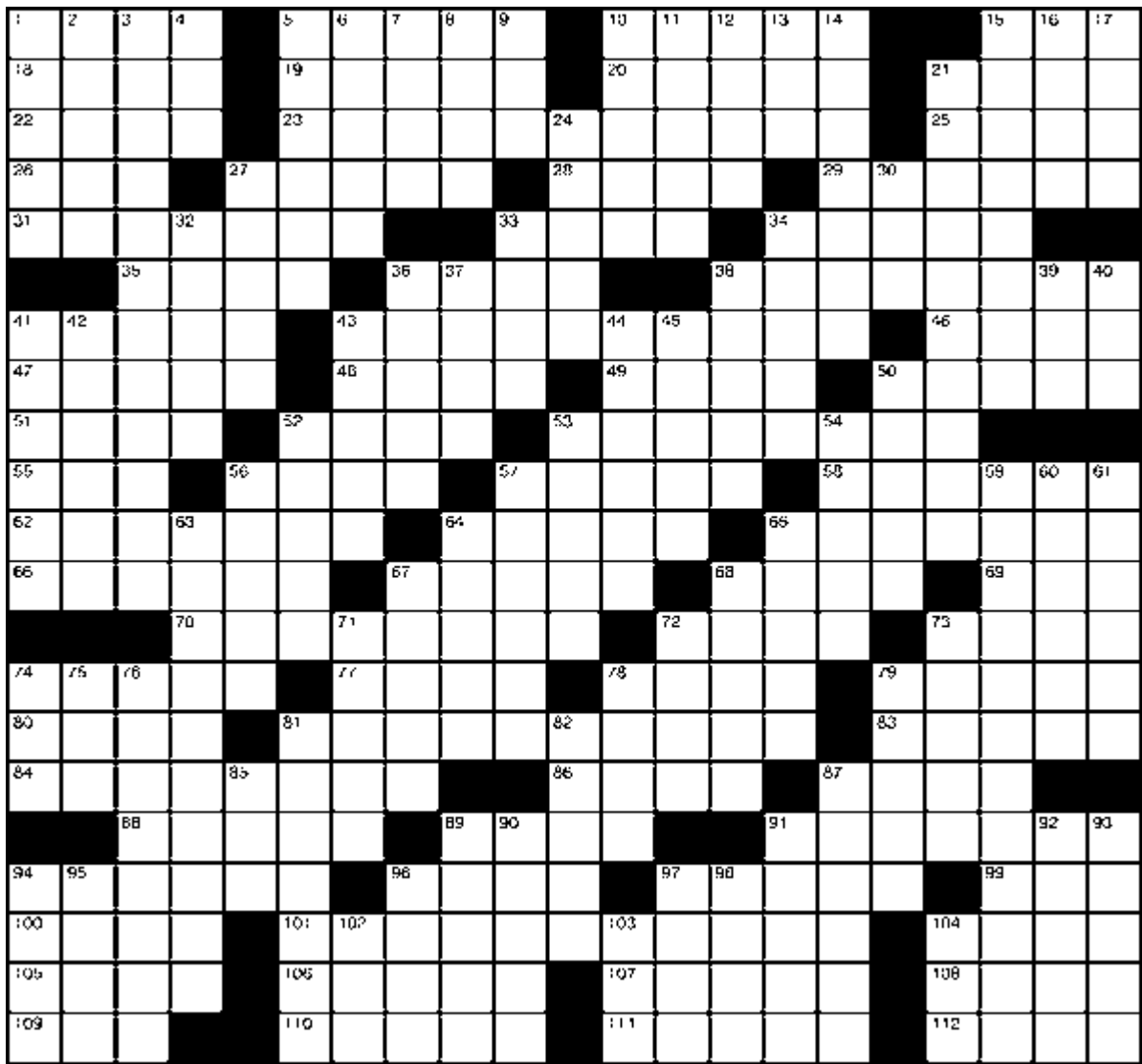
However, confidence in the jab, as with the vaccine developed by the US firm Johnson & Johnson, has been hampered by concerns over links to very rare but serious blood clots in a handful of cases.

A number of nations have suspended the use of the vaccine as a result or restricted its use by younger groups who are less at risk from COVID.

The Oxford study indicated that side effects from the vaccine in general were 'well tolerated' with 'lower incidents of side effects after second and third doses than after first doses'.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Ham in a can
5 Stage play
10 Keglers' venue
15 Small weight?
18 ___ Le Pew
19 Colorless gas
20 For all to see
21 Garr or Hatcher
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23 Herbicide used in Vietnam
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51 Get up
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- 53 Funny fellow
55 Dawn goddess
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64 Split
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70 Booth or Oswald
72 Haughtiness
73 Lhasa ___
74 Passover
77 Engineering deg.
78 SW USA holly
79 Trekker
80 Author Sholem
81 Big-bang firecracker
83 Beethoven dedicatee
84 Artist who painted his mother
86 Vintner's prefix
87 Très ___
88 Place
89 Rheas' relatives
91 Sets
94 Italians from a

- tower city
96 Medical condition:
suffix
97 Tilts
99 Architects' org.
100 Poke about
101 Finn
104 British gun
105 Concerning
106 Dined
107 Author Loos
108 Certain
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abbr.
109 Car necessity
110 Took an oath
111 Infatuated (with)
112 Territory
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2 Painter Charles
Wilson
3 State flower of
Arkansas
4 Encountered
5 Polly, of
"thirtysomething"
6 Storms
7 Yemen port
8 Blanc, for one
9 Member of an
army?
10 Actor Peter
11 To no ___:
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12 Hawaiian goose

- 13 Work unit
14 Took the helm
15 Indulgence
16 ___ Rabbit
17 Beget
21 Some comics
24 Minds
27 Rundown
30 Russian jet
32 "Common Sense"
author
33 Cut down
34 Mix well
36 Hingis rival
37 Old wives' ___
38 Dueling swords
39 Cote sound
40 Definitely not a
beeline
41 Word with sun or
silver
42 Blue Jay's rival
43 Trapper's trophies
44 Jeered
45 Ready for battle
50 Madeline and Otto
52 Plants with fronds
53 Assembly of
witches
54 Puck passers, at
times
56 Retriever
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59 Peter with wife
woes

- 60 Rubs out
61 Poe title character
63 Georgia
64 Stair part
65 Lesser Antilles
Indian
67 Son of Jacob
68 Beach near Santa
Barbara
71 Felt sore
72 "Unto us ___ is
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73 Felt poorly
74 Ferret's foot, e.g.
75 Volcanic issue
76 Salon snippers
78 Lincoln and others
79 Will principals
81 Conflicts
82 You guys,
nonstandard style
85 Gymnast's goal
87 Spreading tree?
89 Glacier ridge
90 Pooh creator
91 "Poker Flats" writer
92 Sibling's daughter
93 Seasonal symbol
94 Self-righteous one
95 Scottish isle
96 Eight: prefix
97 Horne of song
98 Composer Satie
102 AFL-CIO grp.
103 Stand at the plate
104 Mrs. in Madrid

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

A friend who has been missing in action for a really long time could pop back onto the scene today, and boy, do they have a story to tell about their adventures! Before you get all indignant about being neglected, listen to what they have to say. Be a good audience and show them that all you want is for them to feel fulfilled in their life, not obligated to you.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Every day you achieve major victories whether you realise it or not, so why are you looking for a specific excuse to celebrate? You don't have to wait for permission. Pick a date, find a hot new restaurant you want to try, and call up your friends for a fun night out. Without an official reason, you're free from the pressures of expectation, and no one will feel guilty.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Your support means more to other people than you realise. Even the toughest-talking people you know are really just soft and sweet teddy bears deep down inside, and they can be just as insecure as you, if not more so. Try to communicate the pride or admiration you feel for them today. Give them a feeling of satisfaction.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Today, you could be in an acquisitive mood and have an insatiable need for more of whatever you have right now. However, if you obey all of these extravagant impulses, you could find yourself in some extremely uncomfortable financial situations. Try to distract yourself by acquiring things that don't require money, like time with your favourite people.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

The strong current of today is set, and you can either hop into your little boat and ride this flow of energy, or stay on the shore and off the waterway altogether. Forget the notion that you can change the tide, because it's beyond your control. Be humble in the activities that are planned today, and accept the fact that other people may know what is best, at least for now.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Things are building slowly in a new relationship, but make no mistake: progress is being made. It's like that construction site you see each day. For months it's nothing but a pile of wood and a hole in the ground. Then suddenly, as if overnight, a building is standing there. Relationships can be like that.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You will become a big part of an exciting development in a friend's love life, but first you need to learn how to keep a secret! You risk ruining a pretty fabulous surprise if you start hinting around to a pal that you know something they don't know. This is one super secret that you simply can't spill, or else! Once it's over, you can talk all you want, but until then keep yourself distracted.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

A lot of expectations could be put on you today, but you should treat this day like any other. Don't let yourself feel pressured to make things perfect. There are many things beyond your control. Remember that. When something trips you up, you can regain your balance and use some fancy footwork to make it look like you meant to do that on purpose.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Today, it will be easy as pie to stay in sync with the people around you, which is a very good thing. You're going to love this communion with people who share your values. They give you energy as you give them support. Even though a few of the people you'll be working with are marching to the beat of their own drum, you should only be focusing on what you have in common.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

It could be difficult to control your energy flow today. One minute it will kick into overdrive like a blast furnace and the next moment it will fade down to a bare ember. This means that it isn't going to be a great day if you need sustained concentration. Taking a test, going on a job interview, or even going out on a date could be a challenge. But you'll get your mojo back soon enough.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Draw upon your self-discipline today when you're faced with a temptation that could send your plans way off track. A very appealing invitation could be dangled in front of you, and it's highly tempting. You want to get out and go, but do you really have the time for it? Probably not. It's much better to err on the safe side and turn this thing down.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Seek out places full of activity today. You'll get a real rush from the other people. But pay attention to your mood as the day progresses, because when you suddenly need a break, you'll really need a break right that minute! All the activity may challenge your ability to concentrate on a developing issue with a friend, but a delay in the negotiations might be a good thing.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What did James Watt invent?

- a. Diving bell
b. Steam boat
c. Hot air balloon
d. Rotary steam engine

2. Where is the village of Branston, after which the famous pickle is named?

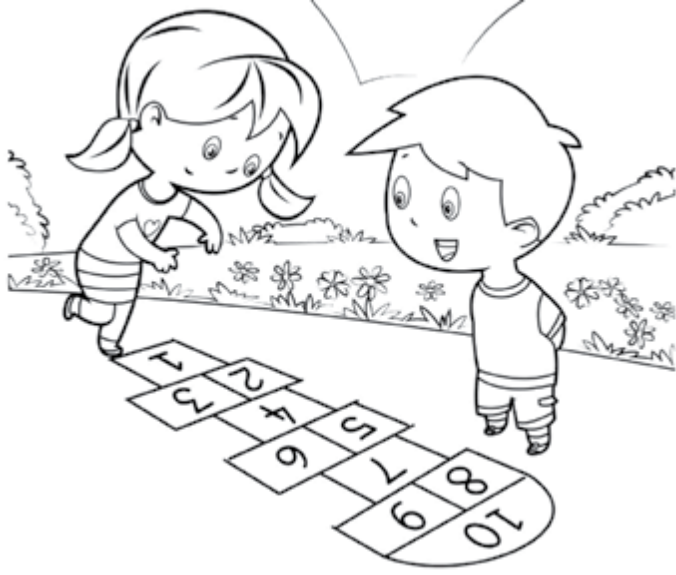
- a. Yorkshire
b. Lancashire
c. Staffordshire
d. Norfolk

3. Who invented Jet Engine?

- a. Sir Frank Whittle
b. Gottlieb Daimler
c. Roger Bacon
d. Lewis E. Waterman

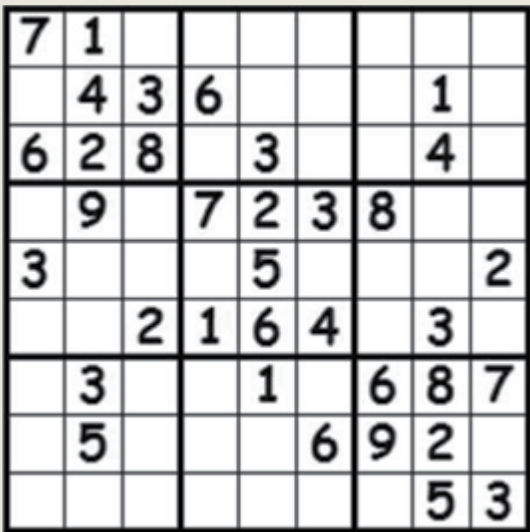
Answers: 1.d 2.c 3.a

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



BOGGLER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JUNE 28)



WORD BUILDER

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

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



ECUADOR HOLD BRAZIL TO DRAW

Goiania, Brazil - An Ecuador side fighting to keep their Copa America hopes alive managed to hold a previously perfect Brazil - playing without a resting Neymar - to a 1-1 draw on Sunday and reach the quarterfinals.

Peru meanwhile defeated Venezuela 1-0 in the other Group B match to send the COVID-19 decimated 'Vinotinto' team packing from the South American championships.

Seeking to extend a ten-match winning streak, Brazil came out pressuring in Goiania on the group's final match day. Coach Tite opted to rest Paris Saint-Germain star Neymar, but the 'Selecao' still dominated the first half.

A free-kick in the 37th minute set up Eder Militao, who headed the ball at a sharp angle into the top right corner of the net, well clear of Ecuador keeper Hernan Galindez's outstretched arm. But facing the specter of an early exit, Ecuador came out fighting in the second half.

They got the equaliser in the 53rd minute, as Brazil tried to clear a corner kick.

Enner Valencia managed to head it back the other way, setting up

Angel Mena, who sprinted in to fire the ball past Brazil's Alisson.

Peru meanwhile finished the group stage on a high note after a spectacular turnaround.

The Incas opened the tournament with a 4-0 thrashing by Brazil. But they went on to defeat Colombia, then battle back

from 0-2 down against Ecuador on Wednesday to secure a draw.

They added three more points on Sunday thanks to Andre Carrillo, who capitalised on Venezuela's clumsy failure to clear a corner in the 48th minute in Brasilia.

Brazil finished the group stage as heavy favourites with ten points from four matches - three points clear of runners-up Peru in Group B.

Colombia finished third with four points and Ecuador fourth with three. Venezuela joined Group A side Bolivia as the two teams eliminated from the group stage.

AFP



Ecuador's Angel Mena celebrates after scoring against Brazil in Goiania, Brazil, on Sunday. The match ended in a draw (AFP)

Sri Lanka suspends three players over bubble breach

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka suspended three players on Monday, including vice-captain Kusal Mendis, and withdrew them from the upcoming one-day international (ODI) event in England over a breach of their bio-secure COVID-19 bubble. Mendis and Niroshan Dickwella were seen smoking in the streets of Durham, where they are based ahead of this week's first ODI at Chester-le-Street on Tuesday.

In a second video on social media, opening batsman Danushka Gunathilaka is seen joining the pair, violating the coronavirus rules of their stay in England, where they are not allowed to roam freely.

Sri Lanka Cricket said the three players were suspended from all forms of the game until an inquiry was completed.

"This decision was taken following a preliminary inquiry conducted over a video posted on social media in which the said three players can be seen outside their designated hotel," the board said.

A cricket board source told AFP that none of the players were supposed to go out of their hotel unescorted.

"The three players have been asked to return home today," the cricket board source said.

AFP

Linde, Shamsi lead SA to 16-run victory



Kagiso Rabada (L) of South Africa celebrates the dismissal of Andre Fletcher of West Indies during the second T20I on June Sunday (AFP)

WEST INDIES VS S AFRICA SECOND T20I

St George's, Grenada - South Africa's spinners starred as they rebounded from a hammering in the first encounter of the five-match T20 International series to defeat the West Indies by 16 runs in the second fixture at the National Cricket Stadium in Grenada on Sunday.

Defending what appeared to be another modest total of 166 for seven, George Linde and Tabraiz Shamsi combined for three vital wickets in eight economical overs to limit the home side to 150 for nine in reply.

It leaves the series locked at 1-1 going into the third match at the same venue on Tuesday.

Opening batsman Andre Fletcher top-scored for the home side with 35 but it was a late assault by Fabian Allen, who smashed five sixes in 34 off just 19 balls, which caused the only anxiety for Temba Bavuma's

team.

With 36 required off the final over from Lungi Ngidi, Allen crashed sixes off the first two balls.

However the pacer held his nerve and dismissed the danger man to put smiles back on South African faces after they saw the West Indies top-order power-hitters at their best in the first match a day earlier when they reached a target of 161 with five overs to spare for the loss of only two wickets.

Linde, who earned the man of the match award, dismissed Nicholas Pooran and Andre Russell for a spell of two for 19.

Shamsi's wrist-spin accounted for West Indies captain Kieron Pollard through four testing overs in which he conceded 16 runs.

It was their efforts which deprived the Caribbean side's vaunted batting line-up from developing any momentum in the vital middle overs of their

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA		
R Hendricks	lbw b Sinclair	42 (30)
Q de Kock	c Pooran b Sinclair	26 (20)
T Bavuma	b Holder	46 (33)
D Miller	c Fletcher b McCoy	11 (10)
R van der Dussen	b Russell	2 (4)
H Klaasen	c Lewis b McCoy	10 (11)
G Linde	lbw b McCoy	3 (3)
K Rabada	not out	7 (7)
A Nortje	not out	0 (2)
Extras:	(b 4, lb 6, w 9)	19
TOTAL:	166 for six in 20 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-73, 2-96, 3-122, 4-139, 5-149, 6-152, 7-165		
Bowling: K Sinclair 4-0-23-2, F Allen 4-0-35-0, J Holder 3-0-26-1, A Russell 2-0-18-1, O McCoy 4-0-25-3, D Bravo 3-0-29-0		
WEST INDIES		
E Lewis	b Nortje	21 (16)
A Fletcher	c Klaasen b Rabada	35 (36)
C Gayle	c Linde b Rabada	8 (6)
N Pooran	c Miller b Linde	9 (11)
K Pollard	c Hendricks b Shamsi	1 (4)
A Russell	c Klaasen b Linde	5 (4)
J Holder	run out	20 (20)
F Allen	lbw b Ngidi	34 (12)
D Bravo	c Hendricks b Rabada	10 (6)
O McCoy	not out	1 (5)
K Sinclair	not out	0 (1)
Extras:	(lb 2, nb 1, w 3)	6
TOTAL:	150 for nine in 20 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-31, 2-40, 3-62, 4-65, 5-70, 6-104, 7-105, 8-129, 9-150		
Bowling: G Linde 4-0-19-2, L Ngidi 4-0-49-1, K Rabada 4-0-37-3, A Nortje 4-0-27-1, T Shamsi 4-0-16-1		

innings.

Earlier, Obed McCoy's pace variations proved a handful for the South Africa who faltered after a bright start from openers Reeza Hendricks (42) and Quinton de Kock (26), who raced along at better than ten runs per over before they were separated in the seventh over with the score on 73.

At 95 for one halfway through the innings South Africa were well poised for a total closer to the 200-run mark.

But they could only manage to get another 71 runs in final ten overs despite a top score of 46 from Bavuma.

AFP

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TURNING POINT IN OMAN'S CRICKET HISTORY: PANKAJ

Oman to host T20 World Cup qualifiers after BCCI moves the event to the UAE

A file photo of Oman's Khawar Ali during an ODI match at OC's Amerat ground

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Jubilation filled the air in Oman after the Indian cricket board chief Sourav Ganguly announced on Monday that the 2021 ICC T20 World Cup, which was scheduled to be hosted in India, has been shifted to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with Oman set to co-host the tournament.

Muscat Daily had earlier reported that the T20 World Cup was all set to be shifted to the UAE with preliminary round games to be staged in Oman.

Oman Cricket (OC) chairman Pankaj Khimji was ecstatic on hearing the news that Oman will be one of the venues and called it 'a turning point in Oman's cricket history'.

In his remarks to Muscat Daily, Pankaj said, "I've heard from the BCCI and ICC officials that Oman will be the venue. However, we are still awaiting the official letter."

"I'm delighted and overwhelmed by the decision taken by the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) and the ICC (International Cricket Council) to make Oman as one of the venues for the T20 World Cup. It is a turning point in Oman's cricket history."

"It can't get brighter than this. We must roll out the red carpet

for the entire world to take notice of Oman and its glorious culture and heritage. It is a great opportunity to showcase Oman to the world."

The BCCI said on Monday that it had informed the ICC, the sport's world body, of its decision to host the event in the UAE in October and November.

BCCI president Ganguly was quoted in the Indian media on Monday saying that 'the dates are still to be finalised but the qualifiers will be held in Oman while the main group matches will be played in the UAE'.

The BCCI will retain the hosting rights and it said that 'the decision has been done in view of the COVID-19 situation in India'.

The ICC had given the BCCI a deadline of June 28 to decide the host country for T20's showpiece event due to the high number of COVID-19 cases in India. The BCCI had already moved the suspended Indian Premier League (IPL) to the UAE in September-October after the T20 tournament was halted on May 4 due to a number of players and team officials being infected with COVID-19.

In his remarks to Muscat Daily on Monday, Madhu Jesrani, OC's secretary said, "This is the biggest, biggest day in Oman's cricket. To be the host of the T20 World Cup for the



A file photo of OC chairman Pankaj Khimji (left) and OC chief development officer Duleep Mendis



The blessings of former Oman Cricket chairman Late Kanakbhai Khimji laid the foundation of our journey and it is great to see his son, Pankaj, the present president, carry forward that strong legacy

MADHU JESRANI, OC SECRETARY

first time is a real honour. Hosting a World Cup is one of the greatest achievements for us. We feel proud of being awarded the chance to co-host.

"It is a big opportunity for Oman Cricket, players, fans and our well-wishers. The announcement is like a dream, even more than a dream. I had to pinch myself to believe that we will host the T20 World Cup. This

will put Oman in the spotlight across the world."

Jesrani, who is also the team manager, said his players will have an 'added motivation to play at home' and it would be a double delight with Oman hosting and taking part in the event.

'Superman Pankaj'

The long-serving official gave full credit to OC chairman Pankaj

Khimji for making this happen.

"All this has been possible due to the untiring efforts of our chairman, Pankaj. He is like a superman for us."

"The blessings of former Oman Cricket chairman Late Kanakbhai Khimji laid the foundation of our journey and it is great to see his son, Pankaj, the present president, carry forward that strong legacy."

"OC would like to thank H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, sports ministry, other stakeholders and OC board for their support and belief in our capabilities. We hope to make Oman proud," added Jesrani.

OC's chief development officer Duleep Mendis, who is also the national team coach, said, "It is a great honour to co-host the T20 World Cup. Oman has made great strides in the past few years and the result is that BCCI and ICC have given us a chance to stage the T20 World Cup qualifiers of which our team is also a part of."

"My sincere thanks to OC board, in particular to Pankaj, Madhu [Jesrani], OC directors, who all worked hard to make this happen. We will put our best foot forward and make it a success. Oman will be the centre of attraction as the event will have interests from across the world. It is a great honour," he added.

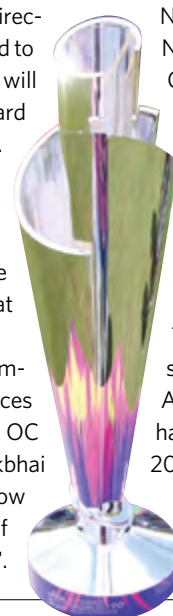
Mendis also remembered the yeoman services rendered by former OC chairman Late Kanakbhai and said that 'we are now reaping the rewards of his vision and hard work'.

The venue, OC's Amerat ground, has in the past hosted many international matches, be it the T20Is or even the ODIs. The ground had earlier this year received the nod to host a Test match by the ICC. Since 2018 the venue has hosted nearly 90 international games, including the T20Is and the ODIs. These included ICC World Cricket League (WCL) Division Three, ICC CWC Challenge B, ACC Western Region T20Is and Quadrangular T20I series.

The T20 World Cup Qualifiers comprise eight teams from which four (top-two from each group) will qualify for the Super 12s. Besides Oman, the other seven teams are Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Netherlands, Scotland, Namibia and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Oman is placed in Group A along with Sri Lanka, Ireland and PNG and would need two wins to hope to advance to the next round.

It may be recalled that the ICC had postponed the T20 World Cup originally scheduled to be held in Australia in 2020. India was handed the hosting rights in 2021 and Australia was chosen as host for the 2022 edition.

@ashokmuscat



Tsitsipas upset, Djokovic off to a winning start

London, UK - Third seed Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas became the first big name to exit Wimbledon on the first day of play on Monday, losing 4-6, 4-6, 3-6 to American Frances Tiafoe while rain brought havoc to the schedule, one year after the tournament was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was quite a contrast in fortunes for the Greek who only a fortnight ago lost in five sets to Novak Djokovic in the French Open final.

Earlier, Djokovic overcame an early scare before getting his bid for a sixth Wimbledon and record-equalling 20th Grand Slam title off to a winning start.

Defending champion and world No 1 Djokovic, looking to become just the third man in history to complete a calendar Grand Slam, claimed a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 win over Britain's 253rd-ranked Jack Draper.

However, the 34 year old Serb struggled on the slippery Centre Court surface with the roof closed above it due to the rain.

Djokovic finished with an impressive 25 aces and 47 winners as his 19 year old opponent, who grew up just six miles (9.5km) from the All England Club, wilted.

"He's a youngster and I hadn't seen him play too much prior to Queen's and he played pretty



Stefanos Tsitsipas waves to the crowd after his first round loss on Monday

well, won matches against high-ranked players," said Djokovic. "Walking onto Wimbledon Centre Court for the first time, he's done extremely well."

Next up for Djokovic will be either former runner-up Kevin

Anderson or Chilean qualifier Marcelo Tomas Barrios Vera while Tiafoe, the world No 57, goes on to face either Canada's Vasek Pospisil or Roberto Carballes Baena for a place in the last-32.

Wimbledon looks very different with COVID-19 protocols in place and a 50% capacity until finals day, but one familiar feature was the summer rain. Play on the outside courts started five hours late with 16 of the day's scheduled 64 matches cancelled until Tuesday.

Belarus second seed Aryna Sabalenka had the honour of being the first winner at the tournament in two years when she downed Romanian qualifier Monica Niculescu 6-1, 6-4 under the roof of Court One.

OTHER RESULTS

(only seeded players, x denotes seeding)

Women's first round:
Garbine Muguruza (x11) beat Fiona Ferro 6-0, 6-1.

AFP

Falls again mar race as Merlier wins stage

TOUR DE FRANCE

Pontivy, France - Race favourites Primoz Roglic and Geraint Thomas, as well as ace sprinters Peter Sagan and Caleb Ewan were all involved in nasty crashes before Tim Merlier won a drama-filled stage three of the Tour de France on Monday.

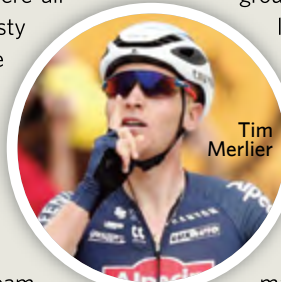
Merlier's team-mate Mathieu van der Poel kept hold of the overall lead on a brutal day of racing peppered with falls on the rain-slick, narrow winding roads in Brittany with Thomas dislocating a shoulder and 2020 runner-up Roglic losing valuable time.

On the seafront at the Plage de Testel, Thomas lost his concentration and hit the ground so hard he dislocated a shoulder before making it back to the peloton with the help of teammates.

Slovenia's Roglic hit the tarmac hip first with ten kilometres to go and he also limited his losses with the help of teammates.

Although his Tour is not finished, he now has time to make up on Tadej Pogacar.

AFP





EURO2020

TODAY'S MATCHES
(ROUND-OF-16)



ENGLAND VS GERMANY
(8pm, Oman time)



SWEDEN VS UKRAINE
(11pm, Oman time)



SIZZLING SPAIN PREVAIL OVER CROATIA IN CLASSIC

Copenhagen, Denmark - Spain reached the quarterfinals of Euro 2020 on Monday after an epic 5-3 extra-time win over Croatia which sets up a potential clash with world champions France.

Spain had looked to be cruising into the quarterfinals at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen thanks to goals from Pablo Sarabia, Cesar Azpilicueta and Ferran Torres which had put Luis Enrique's side 3-1 ahead with 13 minutes remaining in normal time.

However substitute Mislav Orsic pulled one back following a goal-mouth scramble in the 85th minute and then supplied the cross from which Mario Pasalic headed Croatia level in the second minute of stoppage time to take the match to the additional half-hour.

Spain eventually prevailed in a thrilling contest with a finish from under-fire forward Alvaro Morata and Mikel Oyarzabal's breakaway strike giving Luis Enrique's side the win their overall play deserved.

Disaster struck for Spain through Pedri's own goal in 20th

minute, which came after goal-keeper Unai Simon allowed his bobbling backpass to bounce over his foot and gently roll into the net.

Spain got a deserved leveller seven minutes before the break through Sarabia, who lashed home on the rebound after Jose Gaya's shot was well saved by Croatia goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic.

The second half saw Spain had the lead in the 57th minute through Azpilicueta. And with 13 minutes remaining Torres put Spain two ahead with a classy finish.

With the match looking as good as over Orsic prodded home following confusion in the Spain penalty area.

And then with time running out for Croatia the stands erupted as Pasalic scored to take a match to extra-time.

After the restart Morata, put Spain back in front nine minutes into extra-time as he lashed a rocket of a shot past Livakovic. Oyarzabal then made sure of Spain's win three minutes later with a close-range finish.

AFP



Spain players celebrate their fifth goal against Croatia during their round-of-16 match at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen, Denmark, on Monday (AFP)

Ignore the past, Southgate tells his England stars

London, UK - Gareth Southgate has urged his England players to make their own history rather than worry about past failures when they face Germany in the Euro 2020 last-16.

Southgate's side host Germany at Wembley on Tuesday in the latest chapter of a long-running rivalry with the Germans. England won the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany at Wembley, but since then major tournament success against *Die Mannschaft* has been hard to come by.

Knocked out of the 1970, 1990 and 2010 World Cups by the Germans, England were also beaten by them in the Euro 96 semifinals at Wembley. Southgate missed a crucial penalty in that shoot-out loss 25 years ago and the possibility of another

defeat to their arch-rivals could weigh heavily on his players.

But the England manager wants the team to focus on their own qualities, rather than fear history repeating itself.

"I don't need to demystify it," Southgate said of the rivalry with Germany.

"The history is an irrelevance for them.

"We've got boys born into the 2000s. It's of no consequence to them what we did in, you know, Peter Bonetti in 1970 and what happened in 1990 and so on.

"Of course, they're watching

that stuff and getting a bit of an understanding of it but it's not something we're speaking to them about.

"This team have put down lots of historical performances in the last couple of years, made their own history, made their own stories and this is how they should view this game.

"It's an opportunity. We've only won one knockout match in a European Championship as a country, so they've got a great chance to go and be the first team since 1996 to do that."

"We have to be good enough to beat Germany and a very good German team," Southgate told ITV.

"I think they've got at least four World Cup winners, innumerable Champions League winners in that team, so although everybody's dismissing them, very, very experienced big game players."

AFP



England boss Gareth Southgate



Germany's players joke with midfielder Kai Havertz (C) during a training session on Sunday

Germany ready for another penalty shoot-out: Havertz

Herzogenaurach, Germany - Chelsea midfielder Kai Havertz says Germany are once again ready for another penalty shoot-out against England if Tuesday's last-16 clash is decided by spot-kicks.

Joachim Loew's side head to Wembley looking to extend England's miserable run of 55 years since they last beat Germany in the knockout stages of a major tournament.

"You always have to be prepared for a penalty shoot-out," Havertz said on

Sunday. "That's why you shoot one or two penalties after training to see who the best takers are."

The 22 year old's goal sealed Chelsea's win in last month's Champions League final, and he also scored in Germany's Euro 2020 win over Portugal and draw with Hungary.

He insists a potential shoot-out 'is not the biggest pre-game issue' for the Germans, but said "I would definitely take a penalty if I were on the field."

Germany have won their last four knockout matches against England, but so far have struggled for consistency at Euro 2020.

To preserve the pitch, UEFA have said Germany are not allowed to train at Wembley on Monday.

A crowd of around 40,000 is expected on Tuesday after the British government raised the capacity for the last-16 game despite the decision to delay the final easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

AFP

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EURO2020



HOLDERS DETHRONED

Thorgan Hazard stunner enough for Belgium to oust Ronaldo's Portugal

Seville, Spain - A rocket from Thorgan Hazard knocked reigning champions Portugal out of Euro 2020 on Sunday and earned Belgium a blockbuster quarterfinal with Italy. Hazard's swerving shot before half-time sealed a 1-0 win for Belgium and settled a scrappy contest in Seville that never really lived up to its billing as the stand-out tie of the last-16.

Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo tested Thibaut Courtois with a dipping free-kick in the first half but the 36 year old neither broke the international goals record nor added to his five for the tournament.

Raphael Guerreiro went closest to a late equaliser when his shot came back off the post, one of 29 shots Portugal had, six of them on target.

For all the superstar names on the pitch, it was Eden Hazard's less heralded brother Thorgan who proved decisive, the Borussia Dortmund winger who Eden once said had even more talent than him.

"In these games if you have a chance you have to have a go,"



Belgium's Thorgan Hazard (R) celebrates after scoring against Portugal at La Cartuja Stadium in Seville on Sunday (AFP)

Thorgan said. "It went in, with a bit of luck and it was the goal that got us through. It's a dream for me."

Portugal, meanwhile, stuck to the defensive approach that served them so well in France five years ago but has perhaps been outgrown by a side that now boasts some of the most creative technicians in the world. "I think it's an unfair result but they scored and we didn't," said Portugal coach Fernando Santos.

Ronaldo cut an isolated figure up front, his every touch booed early on by the Belgian fans, who then cheered when he was robbed of the

ball before being bumped to the ground by Thomas Meunier.

The closest Ronaldo came to an all-time record 110th international goal was a dipping free-kick from 30 yards which Courtois parried away while at the other end, Lukaku was a more dynamic force.

An untidy game found its moment of clarity in the 42nd minute. It started with Courtois coolly evading Ronaldo's press before more excellent work from Lukaku allowed De Bruyne to switch left to Thorgan Hazard. He cut in and ripped a swerving shot that rocketed towards

the centre of the goal before swerving right and past Rui Patricio, who was too slow to adjust.

Belgium played with more verve after half-time and looked set to take charge. But De Bruyne's injury checked their rhythm and Portugal came again, Jota firing over and Joao Felix, on as a substitute, heading into the hands of Courtois.

Portugal finally had to push and in a wild last ten minutes, Guerreiro went closest to an equaliser, his shot hammering against the post. Belgium did just enough.

AFP

Belgium face nervous wait over Hazard, De Bruyne

Seville, Spain - Belgium coach Roberto Martinez said Eden Hazard and Kevin De Bruyne will both undergo scans on Monday to diagnose the extent of their injuries suffered in Sunday's 1-0 win over Portugal at Euro 2020.

De Bruyne was taken off just after half-time with an ankle injury while Hazard departed in the 87th minute due to a muscle problem, with Belgium now facing an anxious wait ahead of the quarter-final against Italy on Friday. "We need 48 hours to find out the extent of the injuries," said Martinez. "KDB is his ankle, it was a really bad tackle. Eden is more of a muscle feeling. We will go back to Belgium tonight and do scans tomorrow."

Martinez said his team showed an ability to 'suffer' and reserved special praise for his defensive trio of Toby Alderweireld, Jan Vertonghen and Thomas Vermaelen. "There were a lot of question marks about our centre-halves but I never had any worries about players like Alderweireld, Vertonghen and Vermaelen," Martinez said. "They are the masters. The talent they have makes defending an art, it was a joy to see those three. It was a game they should show to the all the academies in Belgium of how to defend in a team."

AFP



Belgium's Eden Hazard is substituted against Portugal on Sunday

Ronaldo 'proud' of Portugal's efforts

Lisbon, Portugal - Captain Cristiano Ronaldo said on Monday he was 'proud' of holders Portugal's efforts despite bowing out of Euro 2020 after the weekend's last-16 loss to Belgium.

"We did not get the result we wanted and we leave the competition sooner than expected," the 36 year old Juventus star and five-time Ballon d'Or winner admitted as his side failed to match their 2016 exploits.

"But we are proud of our showing. We did everything we could to retain the title of European champions and this group proved it could still give the Portuguese people much joy," the former Manchester United and Real Madrid attacker posted on social media after Sunday's loss.

"Congratulations to Belgium and good luck to all the teams left in. As for us, we shall return stronger," vowed the veteran who at least could console himself with having matched the 109 international goals record of Iran's Ali Daei during the tournament.

Ronaldo scored five times during the competition to take his European Championship tally to a record 14,



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo reacts after the defeat to Belgium in their round-of-16 match at La Cartuja Stadium in Seville on Sunday

matching Daei's achievement with his goal in the 2-2 group game draw with world champions France.

Portugal players gutted: Santos

Portugal coach Fernando Santos said his players were crying in the changing room after their 'unfair'

defeat by Belgium. "I think it's an unfair result but they scored and we didn't," said Santos after the game.

"They had six shots, one on target. We had 29 and couldn't score even once. They had a shot from nothing.

"We came back and thought we



could turn it around. My players tried their best but the ball wouldn't go in, that's football.

"We're very disappointed, we thought we could win this tournament again after 2016. Some of my boys are crying in the changing room. All of Portugal should be proud of what they did today."

Ronaldo was restricted by Belgium's experienced back three, the 36 year old going closest in the first half with a long-range free-kick pushed away by Thibaut Courtois.

"He scored five goals in the tournament and, OK, he didn't score today but he was a true captain in every sense of the word," said Santos. "He tried to turn the game around. There is no issue with Ronaldo."

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