

IPR protection sought for 30 Omani innovations

MUSCAT: Since the start of the pandemic early last year, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has received more than 30 applications for registration of Intellectual Property Rights in fields of Covid-19 prevention, sterilisation, disease surveillance devices, treatment methods, personal protective clothing and other proposed solutions. While some of the innovations were the work of SMEs and student companies, others were invented by large organisations. **DETAILS ON P17**



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P10

FANS ECSTATIC AFTER OMAN WINS BID TO HOST HOCKEYS



P14

SHAPING DETAILS OF THOUGHTS WITH ART



P17

SOLAR-POWERED BIOMETHANE PROJECT PLANNED



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO SWEDEN, DENMARK

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Carl XVI Gustaf of the Kingdom of Sweden on the occasion of his country's National Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to the king and the friendly Swedish people further progress and prosperity. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of greetings to Queen Margrethe II of the Kingdom of Denmark on the occasion of her country's National Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to the queen and the friendly Danish people more progress and prosperity. — ONA

YEMEN FM ARRIVES ON OFFICIAL VISIT

Dr Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, Yemen's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and his accompanying delegation arrived here on Saturday on a several-day official visit to the Sultanate. The guest was received by Dr Khalid bin Said al Jaradi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry and Dr Khalid bin Shitaif, Ambassador of Yemen to the Sultanate, and a number of officials at the foreign ministry. On Friday, US Secretary of State Dr Anthony Blinken, in a phone call with Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, appreciated the Sultanate's efforts in support of the American envoy to Yemen Tim Landerking and UN envoy Martin Griffiths. Both sides stressed the importance to intensify efforts to reach a cessation of war and military operations through peace talks. The need to provide humanitarian aid to the Yemeni people also figured in their talks. — ONA

INSIDE



LEBANON CRISIS CANCELS SCHOOL FOR MANY

P6



INDIA EASES LOCKDOWN IN DELHI, MUMBAI

P7



MASS VACCINATION DRIVE BEGINS

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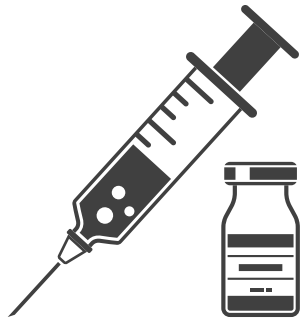
The Ministry of Health will begin phase one of the mass vaccination from Sunday, covering the new target groups that were notified last week.

The new target groups will cover Haj pilgrims, all citizens of Musandam Governorate, people above 45 years of age, health workers (including private hospitals and clinics), all government employees, Royal Oman Police (ROP), Sultan Armed Forces, high diploma students and their supervisors, employees in oil and gas and airports.

All citizens and resident above 45 years of age will receive the vaccine from the third week of this month.

Meanwhile, several private health institutions, including Badr al Samaa and Oman International Hospital, have started vaccinating medical personnel, employees of companies and even foreign missions who have registered on the MoH portal.

Employees of the Brazil Embassy were vaccinated on Saturday at Oman International Hospital, including the counsellor and head of the trade promotion department, Lindolpho



Citizens and resident above 45 years of age will receive the vaccine from the third week of this month

Cademartori Araujo.

The medical staff in private hospitals will be vaccinated free of charge with the Russian vaccine Sputnik. MoH said the vaccination period would continue for up to two weeks, both in the morning and evening.

The ministry also activated the immunisation centre helpline number 1144 for Muscat, operational all days of the week except Friday and Saturday, between 8 am and 2 pm.

The second dose of Covid-19 vaccines will also be administered

from Sunday as per the timings and locations announced by the government.

A campaign will be launched to immunise the employees of the administrative apparatus units in the governorate at the Sports Complex in Rustaq between June 6 and 10, the directorate general of health services there said.

The General Directorate of Health Services in North Al Batinah invited all targeted groups to receive the vaccine in various immunisation centres.

TURN TO P3

Oman pays attention to natural habitats and environment

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

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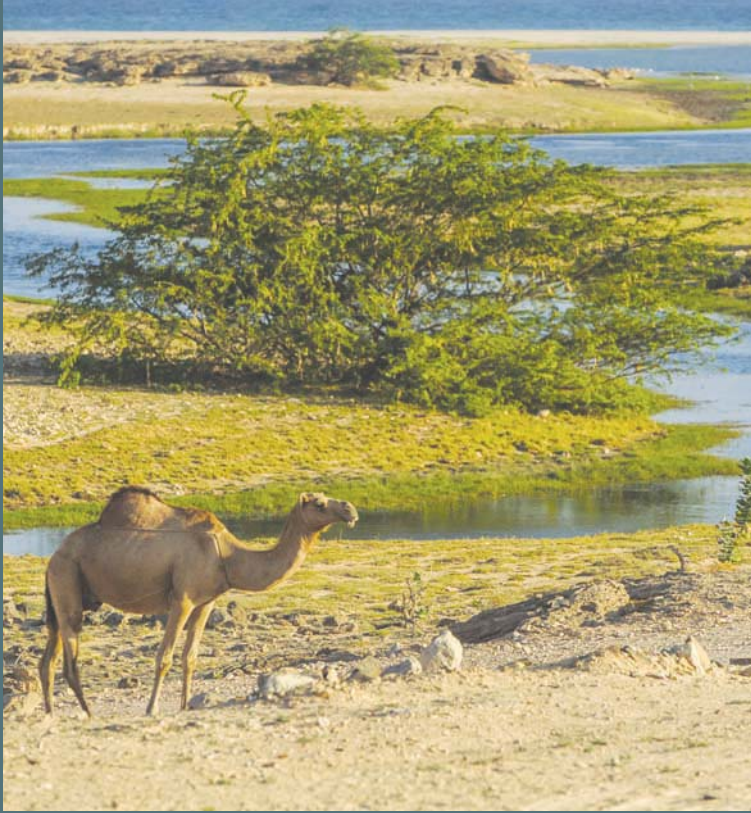
The Sultanate observed World Environment Day on June 5 with the rest of the countries where the global message has been, "Together we can be #GENERATIONRESTORATION". The theme for this year is 'Reimagine, Recreate, Restore' with the focal point on 'Ecosystem Restoration'.

The day kicked off the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

(2021-2030), which is a global mission to revive billions of hectares, from forests to farmlands, from the top of the mountains to the depth of the sea.

This year's celebrations come amid calls for taking urgent measures to revive and restore the affected ecosystems to enable the people to get food, clean water, livelihood and to save the endangered animals and plants.

TURN TO P3



Temperature nears 50°C in some parts of Sultanate

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 5

MUSCAT: The extreme heatwave continued in various parts of Oman with temperatures reaching 49°C in Al Sunainah and Hamra al Duru and 48°C in Ibri and Qarn Al Alam, according to Oman Meteorology.

The highest and lowest temperatures recorded on Saturday morning were in Fahud (50.3°C) and Dhalkout (20.4°C).

Sea-goers and fishermen were warned of the turbulence in the Arabian Sea, reaching its maximum height between 3-3.5 metres with expectations of a high sea wave on the coasts of Musandam and the Sea of Oman, reaching a maximum height of between 2.0-2.5 metres, starting from Sunday, until Tuesday.

Oman Meteorology urged people to take measures to reduce and avoid sunstroke.

Workers are not to be employed at construction sites and open areas between 12.30 and 3.30 pm in the peak summer months of June, July and August.

As per Article 16 on the regulations for occupational safety and health, "The workers shall be not employed in the construction sites or high-temperature locations during afternoon hours from 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm throughout June, July and August every year.

G7 signs pact to make tech giants pay fair taxes

LONDON: The G7 finance ministers have agreed to make big tech companies like Apple and Google pay at least 15 per cent taxes worldwide, in a major step towards a global tax reform.

"I am delighted to announce that today after years of discussion G7 finance ministers have reached a historic agreement to reform the global tax system", British Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak tweeted on Saturday.

In addition to the minimum corporation tax of 15 per cent, large companies are to pay taxes in



the country where they generate revenue, and not in the location of their headquarters, according to a statement of the ministers.

The agreement is a blow to countries with low corporate taxes such as Ireland, where Google and

The world's richest countries signed a landmark agreement on Saturday committing them to confronting corporate tax avoidance and making sure that giant tech companies pay their fair share. — AFP

Facebook are headquartered. Instead, tech giants are to pay taxes where their users and customers are located — all around the globe.

The rules would apply to international firms with a profit margin of at least 10 per cent, and

20 per cent of the profit above that margin would be taxed in the country where it was made.

Sunak said the "historic" decision would make the global tax system "fit for the global digital age."

German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz described the breakthrough as a "tax revolution."

"The seven most important industrialised nations today backed the concept of minimum taxation for companies", Scholz told dpa. "This is very good news for tax justice and solidarity, and bad news for tax havens around the world." — dpa

WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 34°C Min 30°C SALALAH: Max 31°C Min 25°C NIZWA: Max 48°C Min 30°C

PRAYER TIMINGS

SUNRISE: 05:20 FAJR: 03:53 DHUHR: 12:11 ASR: 15:29 MAGHRIB: 18:57 ISHA: 20:18

■ YEMEN'S FOREIGN MINISTER ARRIVES



MUSCAT: Dr Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, Yemen's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, and his accompanying delegation arrived here on Saturday on a several-day official visit to the Sultanate. The guest was received by Dr Khalid bin Said al Jaradi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry, and Dr Khalid bin Shitaif, Ambassador of Yemen to the Sultanate, and a number of officials at the Foreign Ministry. – **ONA**

OCEC gets SC
nod to resume
services

MUSCAT: The Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) is preparing to resume services by hosting a range of events following the approval from the Supreme Committee on Covid-19.

Eng Saeed al Shanfari, CEO, OCEC, said that the centre will offer an appropriate venue for holding events in partnership with local, regional and international event organisers.

He stressed that the OCEC will be committed to ensuring the safety of attendees and guests by adopting strict health and safety standards in all operations, and preventive measures will include temperature checks before entering, and social distancing in waiting and meeting places.

He pointed out that the reopening of the centre will be accompanied by the introduction of a wide range of new services and facilities for customers, including a set of new and improved audio-visual equipment and processes to give a new touch to the activities of the centre's customers. There will be also live broadcasting of events.

43 per cent of Omani
population under 18 years

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

The number of Omani children under 18 years is 1,185,059, according to the data of the electronic census 2020, which is 43 per cent of the total Omani population.

The governorates of Muscat and North Al Batinah accounted for 39 per cent of the total child population, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data indicated that the total number of nurseries in the Sultanate in 2020 was 326 nurseries with 933 boys and girls, which is a drop of 89 per cent compared to 2019 when the number of enrolment was 8,301 boys and girls.

The number of children enrolled in pre-school education (kindergarten stage) is 37,939, of which 71 per cent are in private schools and 29 per cent in public schools. The data for the academic year 2020/2021 also indicated that the number of students enrolled in school education in public and private schools is 695,771 male and female

students.

This number does not include kindergartens, international schools and schools foreign communities.

The number of children with disabilities in the Sultanate reached 10,880 (one per cent of total students), of which 58 per cent are males.

The data showed that the largest number of disabilities among children was hearing impairment (2,601), followed by 2,436 physical disabilities.

The results of the opinion poll on measuring access and use of information technology:

It was revealed that 14 per cent of the children under 13 years old use at least one social media platform, with YouTube used by 76 per cent of the total children in that category, followed by WhatsApp (28 per cent), Instagram (14 per cent), and Snapchat (8 per cent).

According to the data, 11,062 children under the age of 18 own land or land plots, of which 55 per cent are men.

The governorates of Muscat and North Al Batinah accounted for the highest number of children who own land at 42 per cent.

Enjoy relief, yet follow
norms to fight Covid-19

People welcome and rejoice over easing of restrictions

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Both citizens and residents welcomed the withdrawal of restrictions, so they can venture out to the beaches and parks, visit shopping malls with their children, and dine out at their favourite joints at night.

Mohammed Shareef, Senior Sales and Marketing Manager at Mazoon Diary, finds the measure a big relief but feels people should still follow social distancing norm.

“Life has now become adjusted to a closed door scenario and takes time to fully come back to previous lifestyle. Though children are allowed to go out, daughters prefer shopping, while boys still prefer to play video games and stay indoors,” he said.

People in general are of the opinion that everyone should follow the laid down pandemic protocols as the virus has not yet gone completely:

Ajay Khimji: “As long as all maintain Covid protocol it's fine and people should follow guidelines given by the Supreme Committee. Self-care is important. Children are understanding since a year has passed for this new normal.”

Abeer al Balushi, Assistant Manager Corporate Communications, Governance Risk Management and Compliance, Oman Air: “Easing restrictions is important for the well-being of individuals and helping businesses return to normal. However, while significant progress has been made so far in Oman on the vaccination programme, individuals and companies must continue to take a cautious approach and continue adhering to the Covid-19 measures.”

Ajay Ghanti, SARCO: “Now with the restrictions being removed, it would have a good positive impact socially, psychologically and economically on society as a whole and specially when it comes to children it would be a welcome news because the restrictions had confined them to their houses hence impacting their temperament and mental health which would now have a respite.”

Jinachandran, senior HR official: “In fact, people were eagerly looking forward to getting this big relief. However, as the numbers are still not contained,



a bit more waiting would fetch better results in terms of curbing the spread, and people should be aware of this.”

Dr Rohil Raghavan, CEO, Burjeel Hospitals: “I am sure the children will welcome a life outside this literal home imprisonment. As long as they are aware of the modus of the spread of this virus, and are well educated on the Covid norms, it really is a welcome decision.”

Gayathri Narasimhan, special education expert: “I feel the government has taken into account the interests of everybody and has rightly lifted the ban in a phased manner. While we can enjoy visiting the shopping mall or the beach or the park, with the children, we should adhere to the advice given by the government to wear mask, sanitise hands and maintain social distancing.”

Dr J Retnakumar, insurance expert, and artist: “The great feeling of freedom that easing of restrictions brings in should be exercised with prudence. The whole family and society should be made aware of the importance of continuing

precautions. Unnecessary travel and visits should be avoided even when rules are relaxed.”

Jose, Khimji Shipping: “This decision (lifting restrictions) will create momentum in the consumer market, which gives hope. Moving forward, when the government allows visitors with vaccination certificates to visit Oman, there will be a huge influx of tourists in Oman during school summer vacation.”

Dr George Leslie: “What we all took for granted is now what we are most grateful for. There is great joy for families and children to return to normal life. As a famous Seamus Heaney quote ‘if we can winter this now, we can summer anytime’ now is the time to enjoy life.”

Dr Baby Sam Samuel: “It is a positive step towards recovery that the government has lifted restrictions, and families are now allowed to visit malls and public spaces like beaches and parks. Also, as a step towards achieving new normalcy for all, we must support local businesses and communities.”

■ RAFO EVACUATES CHINESE SHIP CREW MEMBER

MUSCAT: An aircraft belonging to the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) evacuated a crew member after he became sick on board a Chinese commercial ship 40 nautical miles south of Salalah in Dhofar Governorate. The crew member, suffering from a critical health condition, was airlifted from the ship and transferred to Salalah to receive medical treatment. The move comes within the context of the national and humanitarian efforts provided by the Sultan's Armed Forces and the other departments of the Ministry of Defence alongside the other government's institutions. – **ONA**



New expatriate permit fees needed to fix the imbalance

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

The General Federation of Oman Workers (GFWO) has welcomed the ministerial decision to amend fees for issuing and renewing recruitment permits of the expatriate workforce in the senior and middle-level positions in technical and specialised professions and added that it will have a positive impact on the job

market and Omani economy.

Nabhan bin Ahmed al Battashi, Chairman, GFWO, said that the decision comes in line with Oman Vision 2040, which aims at Sultanate figuring among the top countries of the global competitiveness index.

He added that this decision will help create opportunities to replace the expatriates with the national workforce, which will open new horizons for them and

Nabhan bin Ahmed al Battashi said the decision comes in line with Oman Vision 2040, which aims at Sultanate figuring among the top countries of the global competitiveness index

develop their skills in new jobs and sectors.

Al Battashi said the decision will tip the scales in favour of the national workforce when employers compared the cost of providing manpower to citizens and bringing the non-Omani workforce, and the decision can be reviewed later if the situation calls for it, so as to achieve a greater balance in the labour market.

He added that in the coming

period, there will be a greater role for national labour at the leadership levels.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labour said that its specialists are ready to listen to the demands of the business owners on their manpower needs and prepare a replacement plan supported by the government so that operating cost is less and work is carried out efficiently.

The ministry said the decision

aimed at raising the cost of hiring expatriates in professions that have a demand from a large number of citizens with practical experience in different fields. The ministry has also been offering support through wages, training and rehabilitation.

The ministry added that the replacement of Omani cadres will reduce the operational costs of any organisation and it will be reflected positively on the services provided to the public.



Oman pays attention to natural habitats and environment

FROM PAGE 1

In addition to protecting the ecosystem, Oman is also looking into policies to maintain preservation and sustainability.

The Environment Authority is currently amending the law on Conservation of the Environment and Prevention of Pollution by adding some chapters that are required locally, regionally and internationally during this period.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, said that the Sultanate is among the countries that have gone a long way in the environmental field and has paid attention to the natural habitats and the conservation of ecosystems. The Sultanate was among the first countries that established dedicated authorities within the government

formation for the environment conservation and protection, which indicates the attention accorded by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the apparent attention being paid by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the environmental issues.

In an interview with Oman News Agency (ONA), the chief of the Environment Authority announced that the authority is now preparing to roll out several sites within the nature reserves for environmentally-friendly investments, including tapping environmentally friendly materials in construction and the use of renewable energy, Al Amri said.

Regarding the private firms' commitment to the environment specifications, Al Amri said that the authority



is working to raise awareness about environmental issues. He noted that the Environment Authority is preparing a strategy for the private sector which aims to increase ecological awareness among the decision-makers and stockholders in the private sector. He added that the Environment Authority is also

including Oman Environmental Services Holding which set up engineered landfills in different governorates with more than 90 per cent of the conventional landfills closed and the company is working to close the remaining landfills.

According to the United Nations, resetting humanity's relationship with nature is the focus this year as the world continues to go through the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Just as we caused the climate crisis, the biodiversity crisis and the pollution crisis, we can reverse the damage that we have done, we can be the first generation to reimagine, to recreate and to restore nature to kickstart action for a better world," said Inger Anderen, Executive director of the United Nations Environment

Programme (UNEP).

According to the UN, ecosystem restoration can help protect and improve livelihoods, regulate disease, reduce the risk of natural disasters and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

As per UN statistics, every three seconds, the world loses enough forest to cover a football pitch and, over the last century, half of the wetlands. As much as 50 per cent of the coral reefs have already been lost and 90 per cent of coral reefs could be lost by 2050, even if global warming is limited to an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Ecosystem restoration means preventing, halting and reversing the damage and to go from exploiting nature to healing it.

Follow summer mid-day break, employers told

KABEER YOUSUF

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Employers and companies with outdoor operations have been told to follow the mid-day break order because of the excessive heat and follow the Sultanate's rule on protecting the labourers' health and rights.

Accordingly, workers should be not employed at construction sites and open areas between 12.30 and 3.30 pm in the peak summer months starting June 1 and through July and August, an online statement issued by the Ministry of Labour said.

"Employees and workers of companies with outdoor operations shouldn't be asked to work outdoors during these



times and anyone violating this rule will be subjected to punitive action," an official from the Ministry of Labour told the *Observer*.

As per Article 16 on the regulations for occupational safety and health, "The workers shall not be employed in the construction sites or high-

temperature locations during afternoon hours from 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm throughout June, July, and August every year."

Oman Company Law stipulates that in the event of the existence of any danger which threatens the safety and health of the workers, the ministry shall take necessary measures to stop the work wholly or partially or to stop the operation of one or more machinery until the elimination of the causes of such danger.

Section 118 of the law further states that anyone who breaks the mid-day break law shall be punished with a fine ranging from RO 100 to 500 or imprisonment of upto one month or both, depending upon the severity and frequency of the offence.

that arrived last week will be followed by more than 100,000 doses of Pfizer and 148,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines.

The selection process of the vaccines in the Sultanate is based on a scientific basis after being licensed by the organisational bodies adopted in the country of origin and other international organisations, the senior MoH official has reassured.

The Ministry of Health seeks to cover the entire target population with the Covid-19 vaccine aged 12 years and over, which is equivalent to 70 per cent of the population, and it will be implemented in phases according to vaccine supplies in accordance with the national strategy for immunisation against the Covid-19 disease developed by the ministry.

Samriddhi centre for excellence in learning and teaching

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 5

The Board of Directors (BoD), Indian Schools in Oman, maps out a dynamic path that reaffirms the importance of learning and teaching in the context of the 21st century skills and dispositions by establishing a virtual Centre for Excellence named 'Samriddhi Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching' for the Teachers and Students of Indian Schools across the Sultanate, a BoD press release said.

The logo, name and the tagline of the Centre was unveiled by Dr Joseph Emmanuel, Director — Academics, CBSE and the website was launched by Dr Biswajit Saha, Director — Training and Skill Education, CBSE on Saturday.

In his address Dr Joseph Emmanuel lauded the yeoman service of the Board in exploring all opportunities to get the teachers connected to the students despite the pandemic restrictions. "Teachers play multiple roles to cater to the educational, social, psychological and emotional needs of the students. The initiative of the Board in establishing the Centre for Excellence will help in reaching out to the students by addressing their multifarious needs," Dr Joseph said.

By exalting the initiatives



of the Board among the best educational practices in the world, Dr Biswajit Saha, Director — Training and Skill Education, CBSE, commented that Indian schools in Oman were equipped with the technology and expertise for online education of students and managed to continue curriculum transaction and assessments despite the closure of schools. "Centre for Excellence is a marvelous initiative of the Board for honing the pedagogical resources and CBSE is committed to help every educational endeavour of Indian Schools in Oman," Dr Saha said.

The Samriddhi Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching promotes a vibrant educational culture for both the teachers and students. It will provide quality education based on contemporary needs and will empower students to become lifelong learners. It will serve as a common repository for teachers to develop their professional

and digital literacy skills with numerous transformational academic programmes. The Centre can be accessed at <https://samriddhi.center/>

In his introductory address Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools said the Samriddhi Centre for Excellence is aimed to "place Indian Schools from great to world-class with the best teaching and learning practices and it will serve as a central resource to provide professional assistance, to encourage mutual support and to facilitate collaborative learning."

The Board of Directors, in its mission to provide quality education for the students, is committed to ensure that educators engage in continuous professional learning and apply that learning to increase student achievement. The Samriddhi Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching will help the teachers to figure out new ways to engage students for better learning outcomes.

The ceremonious function was moderated by Vinoba MP, Education Adviser and was attended by the Members on the Board, Presidents and Members on the Management Committees, Principals, Vice Principals and Assistant Vice Principals of all Indian Schools across the Sultanate.

Mass vaccination drive begins

FROM PAGE 1

The Ministry of Health has refuted reports that companies with less than 60 people will not receive the vaccines. MoH assured all companies that their dues from the doses would be disbursed to the licensed health institutions contracted with them to carry out the vaccination process.

The 205,000 doses of vaccines

COMMERCIAL TENANTS AT THE RECEIVING END

THE BIGGEST
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FACE REMINDERS
FROM THE
LANDLORDS



KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

The business community across the country is facing numerous challenges due to Covid-19. Apart from feeling the pinch of global slowdown and its impact, businesses face complete closure or negligible activity to meet even day-to-day expenses.

The biggest challenge most of the small business units are facing is in the form of monthly rent. Most of such commercial tenants cannot meet this monthly obligation and face reminders from the landlords or their commercial agents that are proving to be strenuous for most of them.

An Omani woman entrepreneur admitted that she had been keeping the licence, and all possible documents up to date to avoid any penalty and run the business when things get normal post-Covid.

“It is almost one-and-a-half years since my training institutes are closed, but the landlords are insisting on rent. We have cut down all other



expenditures and sent some employees home... I may have to close if there is too much pressure even though I will end up losing big money that I invested to start my business,” she said on the condition of anonymity.

She called for some intervention from the business consortium like Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industries (OCCI) or any other agency so that there is some relief to businesses that are either facing closure

or not in a position to sustain due to closure of their premises or often facing effectively shutting down of the business.

Abdulaziz, an electronic accessory shop owner, had to close his shop

located in a mall due to a rent issue. Luckily he had a branch in the city and was able to shift all his items there.

“It is not that you have to stop business activity due to the given situation, you have to save your commercial and municipality licence, and since you already have entered into a rent agreement with your landlord, it is not easy to vacate without clearing the pending rent,” Abdulaziz said.

He cited the OCCI’s intervention last year when the virus started spreading in the country and asked for some measure that can relieve small commercial tenants.

Yet another SME owner, who deals in frankincense, ‘bakhour’, perfume and Omani handicraft, complained of negligible footfall in his shop during the permissible business activity time. Yet, he has the obligation of paying full rent to the owner.

He admitted to have not paid rent for the last four months and expecting some negotiation with the landlord to get some relief. He, however, is not sure about the outcome.

E-learning produces good results for mature learners rather than the young

STAFF REPORTER

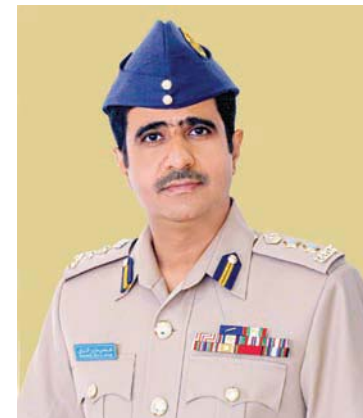
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

"A study of the e-learning system efficiency during the Covid-19 pandemic in a higher education context in Oman" by Dr Mohammed al Siyabi, Dean of the Military Technological College, is among the research projects funded by the Covid-19 Research Programme of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation that explores the e-learning format in the Sultanate during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The aim of the project was to determine the difficulties, complications and potential solutions of the e-learning system implemented in the Omani higher education context during the pandemic. Principal investigator Dr Mohammed al Siyabi and his team, which consisted of Hussain al Rashdi, Dr Abid Khan and Dr Tariq Hussain from the Military Technological College, used both quantitative and qualitative approaches

that subsequently lead to an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach in which a questionnaire, interviews and an experiment were used. As for participants, they consisted of academic faculty, students, administrative and technical support staff from four different higher education institutions: the Military Technological College, Sultan Qaboos University, Dhofar University and the University of Buraimi.

According to Dr Mohammed al Siyabi, the main findings of the research project revealed that "e-learning is more prevalent to produce good quality results for mature learners and that the alertness and concentration level among young learners during online lesson delivery adversely impacts its outcomes". He added that there is still a long way to go to adapt to the e-learning mode of study with higher confidence in Oman despite all the efforts, new teaching techniques and advanced tools. He further stated that the research showed that assessment, which is an integral



Dr Mohammed al Siyabi

part of learning, is far behind to replace the conventional methods of supervised assessments and build a higher confidence level in the process.

Based on the results, Dr Mohammed al Siyabi suggested to continue online education even after the pandemic ends through hybrid mode of education and find alternative e-learning assessment tools which can make the online assessment system more reliable and effective. Moreover, he also recommended providing more technical support to teachers and students, making available

all the necessary e-learning materials, developing students' self-learning motivation, enhancing the ways of informing and communicating with students, and enhancing senior management's awareness in crisis management.

As for giving more aid to teachers when it comes to e-learning, Dr Mohammed al Siyabi suggested to build up teachers' knowledge and professional experience on how to integrate pedagogy with technology in the learning and teaching process and to develop teachers' ability to share knowledge, collaborate, coordinate and support each other within the organisation. He recommended providing effective and user-friendly e-learning technology and infrastructure as well as making more investment on virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technology to find innovative and effective e-learning tools for practical courses delivery in the Sultanate.

'Breathing techniques and sun salutations boost immunity'

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Aida bint Ahmed al Busaidy, who has mastered the breathing techniques and sun salutations (surya namaskar) from yoga expert Dr Kavitha Ramakrishna, enunciated its benefits.

Dr Kavitha, an expert practitioner of surya namaskar, taught Aida the intricacies of sun salutations which is a series of 12 yoga poses done in a continuous flow while synchronising breathing with body movement. Dr Kavitha, who holds the record of performing 648 surya namaskars at a stretch, has inspired Aida to practise the yoga technique every day.

Aida said, "Covid-19 has brought attention around the world to many yoga practices that promote and sustain good exercise for mental and physical health. Practices such as surya namaskar or sun salutations have become especially relevant as Covid-19 is a respiratory infection that attacks lungs. Hence, along with meticulously practising preventive measures like washing our hands, wearing a mask and social distancing, we also need to work on practices that can keep the lungs healthy and strong.

"Sun salutations, a dynamic combination of breathing and exercises, gives us mental and physical benefits. Since we alternate forward and backward bending movements along with breathing while doing sun salutations, we enhance our oxygenation levels and boost our respiratory muscles.



Practices such as surya namaskar or sun salutations have become especially relevant as Covid-19 is a respiratory infection that attacks lungs

AIDA BINT AHMED AL BUSAIDY

Practice of sun salutations also benefits muscles, ligaments and joints and increases suppleness of vertebral joints."

She added, "I am thankful to Dr Kavitha for inspiring me to take up the practice of sun salutations. I have benefited immensely from her style of teaching. Since she is an expert, I was able to master the technique quickly. This yoga practices have boosted my immunity and improved my metabolism too. I urge everyone to take up the practice of sun salutations. It is a great way to

energise your body first thing in the morning. It is easy to do. Not only your lungs, digestive system, muscles and joints will benefit from practising sun salutations, your cardiovascular health will benefit too."

Dr Kavitha also presented Aida with her comprehensively researched book *Tamoghna* which articulately explicates the science behind surya namaskar. The book traces the history of yogic philosophy, crux of yoga practice and deals specifically with vast benefits of surya namaskar. The book inspires yoga practice with a deeper understanding of the elaborate connection of mind, body and spirit.

Fastidiously grounded in yoga's philosophical foundations, Dr Kavitha's book *Tamoghna* balances applicable and relevant information on surya namaskar which is an important and dynamic technique within the yogic repertoire. The book also focuses on the significance of performing sun salutation 108 times and how it can invigorate the body physically and hone the mind mentally.



CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Hutchison Ports Sohar invites Omani talent for below positions

No	Positions	Qualification	Nationality
1	2 x Mechanical Technician	Diploma in Mechanical Engineering	Omani
2	3 x Maintenance Engineer	Bachelor of Engineering	Omani
3	1 x Commercial Officer	Bachelor in Logistics or Business Management	Omani
4	1 x HR Analyst	Bachelor in Human Resources or Business Administration	Omani
5	1 x Procurement Officer	Bachelors in Supply Chain Management	Omani
6	2 x Trainee	Bachelors in Logistics or Maritime Industry	Omani

TERMS:

- The positions are based in Sohar, Sultanate of Oman.
- If you are interested in above positions and are looking for a challenging & rewarding career, kindly send in your detailed English resume with current and expected salary to careers@hutchisonportssohar.com or visit our website at hutchisonportssohar.com (vacancies) to apply.
- Applications with no indication of the expected salary may not be considered.
- Application Deadline: **20 June 2021.**
- The information provided by the applicants will be treated as confidential and used only for the consideration of application to the above positions.



A member of CK Hutchison Holdings



Hutchison Ports Sohar

hutchisonportssohar.com

Egypt sends equipment for Gaza rebuilding

CAIRO/GAZA: Egypt has sent a convoy of engineers and building equipment to Gaza to begin reconstruction in the Palestinian enclave after the recent Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Egyptian state television reported on Friday.

Dozens of bulldozers, cranes and trucks flying Egyptian flags lined up along the border to begin crossing into the Gaza Strip, television pictures showed.

Palestinians lined the street on the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing to welcome the convoy as it rumbled into the small coastal enclave. A Palestinian border official said 50 vehicles had crossed.

“We rushed with all our money, equipment, and what we owned to join the Palestinians in the rebuilding. Every Muslim and every Egyptian wishes to take part in (the reconstruction),” Egyptian truck driver Mahmoud Ismail said in Gaza.

Eleven days of conflict between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian activist rulers of Gaza, erupted on May 10. More than 250 Palestinians were killed in hundreds of Israeli air strikes in Gaza. Rockets fired by Gaza activists killed 13 people in Israel.

Egypt played a major role in



Bulldozers provided by Egypt arriving at the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Palestinian Gaza Strip enclave. — AFP

brokering a ceasefire between both sides and has said it would allocate \$500 million to fund the rebuilding of devastated areas in Gaza.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem on Friday reiterated the group’s appreciation of Egyptian contributions to the rebuilding efforts.

Gaza Housing ministry official put the cost of rebuilding at \$150 million

Gaza’s housing ministry said 1,500 housing units were destroyed during the fighting, another 1,500

housing units had been damaged beyond repair and 17,000 suffered partial damage. A ministry official put the cost of rebuilding at \$150 million.

Egypt in February opened the Rafah crossing until further notice after Palestinian factions moved towards reconciliation following talks in Cairo. — Reuters/AFP

Morocco’s FM holds talks with senior Libyan officials

RABAT: Morocco’s foreign minister met on Friday with two senior Libyan officials as part of ongoing efforts to find a political solution to the crisis in the war-torn country, his ministry said.

Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita met separately with Khalid al Mishri, head of the High Council of State based in the Libyan capital Tripoli, and eastern powerbroker Aguila Saleh, speaker of Libya’s parliament, as part of “Morocco’s efforts to resolve the Libyan crisis”, a statement said.

The two men arrived on Thursday to take part in a new round of talks on key institutional appointments in Libya, according to Morocco.

Previous discussions hosted by Morocco have centred on positions including Libya’s central bank governor and the heads of

the electoral commission, the anti-corruption commission and the supreme court.

The talks in Rabat are the latest in several inter-Libyan dialogues held in the North African kingdom since September.

Libya is seeking to extricate itself from a decade of chaos and conflict that followed the toppling of ruler Muammar Gaddafi in the 2011 Nato-backed uprising.

A formal truce signed last October set in motion a UN-led process that led to the creation of an interim government tasked with unifying the country’s divided institutions, launching reconstruction efforts and preparing for December polls.

Germany will host a new set of peace talks later this month in Berlin, with Libya’s transitional government due to attend.

— AFP



Morocco’s Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita with the speaker of Libya’s parliament Aguila Saleh in Rabat. — AFP

Lebanon economic crisis cancels school for many

BEKAA VALLEY: In a camp for Syrian refugees in east Lebanon, Mohammad and his three sisters fear they will be out of school for a third consecutive year because remote learning is out of reach.

“Look at my phone. How do you expect my son to study on it?” asked his father Abdel Nasser, sitting cross-legged inside the family’s tent in the Bekaa Valley. “The screen is cracked... and I have no Internet.”

Eleven-year-old Mohammad and his siblings are among tens of thousands of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian children who have been left for months without schooling due to coronavirus restrictions.

An accelerating economic crisis means they may never return to school in what rights groups are calling an “education catastrophe”, especially affecting refugees who already struggled to access learning before the pandemic.

“We can’t afford to buy a cellphone for everyone. We must



Syrian refugee Sarah, shows the broken screen of her telephone at her family’s tent in a refugees camp in the area of Tebrol in Lebanon’s eastern Bekaa valley. — AFP

first be able to feed our children,” said their mother Shamaa.

Mohammad arrived in Lebanon from Syria in 2012 — a year into an ongoing conflict that has killed 388,000 people and displaced millions.

But he wasn’t enrolled in school

until 2019 because Lebanon’s public school system didn’t open its doors to Syrian refugees until 2013, and even then only to a limited number.

Mohammad’s first school year coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, which brought all



Syrian refugee Mohammad shows his Arabic writing notebook inside his family’s tent at a refugee camp in the area of Tebrol in Lebanon’s eastern Bekaa valley. — AFP

Education for thousands of children in Lebanon is hanging by a thread as Lebanon’s economic crisis is at its worst since the 1975-1990 civil war

classes to a halt by the second term.

“He doesn’t even know how to multiply one by one,” his father said.

Mohammad’s older sisters Hind, Sarah and Amal — aged 12 to 14 — had already been in school for four years when the education

ministry in March 2020 said it was shifting to online learning.

“I was happy before,” 14-year-old Amal said, sobbing. “I was studying Arabic, English, science and geography.

“But now my parents can’t afford to give me an online education.”

More than 1.2 million children in Lebanon have been out of school since the country’s coronavirus outbreak began last year, the UK-based charity Save the Children says.

It warned last month that a large number of children may never get back into a classroom, either because they have already missed so much school or because their families can’t afford to enrol them.

“Education for thousands of children in Lebanon is hanging by a thread,” it said.

Lebanon’s economic crisis is at its worst since the 1975-1990 civil war, with more than half the local population now living in poverty.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

RIYADH

Saudi holds first concert since Covid-19

Hundreds gathered last week for the first concert in the Saudi capital since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic to watch performances by Syrian diva Assala Nasri and Kuwaiti crooner Nabeel Shuaib. Before stiff rules were brought in a year ago to stem the spread of coronavirus, the kingdom had started to ease decades-long restrictions on entertainment, as part of efforts to improve its image and attract tourists.

“This is the first concert to



take place in Saudi for a very long time,” said one spectator at the concert, held in a restaurant of a large Riyadh hotel. — AFP

TUNIS

French PM pledges to help Tunisia reform

French Prime Minister Jean Castex pledged to help Tunisia forge ahead with reforms, as the North African country grapples with a deep economic crisis compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. Castex said Paris was ready to help Tunisia, a former French colony he described as a “friend”, carry out economic and social reform that could improve conditions, with unemployment rates standing at 18 per cent.

“These reforms are important for Tunisia, for the Tunisian



people and for the Franco-Tunisian partnership,” Castex said after talks with his Tunisian counterpart Hichem Mechichi.

MOSCOW

Russian charter flights to Egypt to resume

Russian charter flights to Egyptian resorts are expected to resume in the coming days after a years-long hiatus, Interfax news agency cited the boss of Aeroflot as saying. “We understand that there is a high degree of readiness for the reopening of two more destinations (to Egypt), Hurghada and Sharm el Sheikh, but we do not know yet when and how this will happen,” Aeroflot CEO Mikhail Poluboyarinov said.

Flights to resort destinations Sharm al Sheikh and Hurghada



were suspended after a Russian passenger plane crashed in Sinai in October 2015, killing 224 people. — Reuters

In brief

■ MUMBAI

CLOWN HELPS
MUMBAI KIDS
FIGHT COVID

Volunteer social worker Ashok Kurmi is helping an army of young fans fight the coronavirus in Mumbai's slums using an unusual accessory: A clown costume. Dressed in a bright red clown suit, complete with face paint and a rainbow-hued wig, the 37-year-old executive spends his days off disinfecting public spaces, distributing face masks and spreading awareness about Covid-19.

"The municipal workers wear PPE kits that scare slum dwellers, particularly children", Kurmi said. "With the help of different costumes, I can spread awareness without scaring people. I am able to help them a little." — AFP

■ WASHINGTON

US SENDS COVID
VACCINE DOSES TO
SOUTH KOREA

The United States is shipping one million doses of Johnson & Johnson's one-shot Covid-19 vaccine to South Korea, a US State Department spokesman said, one day after President Joe Biden laid out his plan to share vaccine doses globally. "One million J&J vaccines are headed to our partners in the Republic of Korea. With these doses we're ensuring the safety and readiness of ROK and US forces. The friendship between our two countries runs deep, especially in times of great need", spokesman Ned Price said in a post on Twitter.

Reservations for the incoming US doses — nearly double the amount initially promised by Washington — have already been taken, Seoul officials said. — Reuters

■ KABUL

TALIBAN CAPTURES
ANOTHER DISTRICT IN
AFGHANISTAN

Taliban militants have captured another district in Afghanistan's eastern province of Nuristan, adding to recent military gains, officials said. Provincial councillor Saidullah Nuristani said that government forces had abandoned Doab district of the province after 20 days of resistance.

According to Nuristani, the militants had blocked all the supply routes to the district, forcing the government forces to evacuate the district after being unable to receive any food supplies or ammunition from the central government for nearly a month. — dpa

India eases lockdown in Delhi, Mumbai

NEW DELHI: Markets and shopping malls in New Delhi will be allowed to reopen from Monday in a further easing of the Covid-19 lockdown, the chief minister said as infections fall in major Indian cities after weeks of restrictions.

Delhi Metro will also resume services at 50 per cent capacity, the city's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday.

Markets and malls will operate on alternate days, with half of them open on any given day.

Offices can also reopen at half capacity but Kejriwal urged people to still try to work from home.

The easing comes after Delhi allowed construction sites and factories to reopen last week.

"They have been open for a week but the Covid-19 situation is still under control, and we have less than 500 fresh cases in the last 24 hours", Kejriwal said.

"It is important to bring the economy back on track now that the Covid-19 situation improving. We pray that the situation remains the same."

The government of Maharashtra state, which includes India's economic powerhouse Mumbai, announced a five-level plan to ease restrictions depending on infection rates and hospital bed occupancy.

In level-one areas — with infection rates below five percent and hospital bed occupancy below 25 per cent — all shops, restaurants and malls will be allowed to reopen.

But level-five districts — with infection rates over 20 per cent — will remain under severe movement restrictions.



People make their way through a wholesale food grain market during a lockdown imposed as a preventive measure to curb the spread of the coronavirus in New Delhi. — AFP

The surge was blamed on new virus variants and the government having allowed most activity to return to normal including mass religious and political gatherings

Daily infections reported across India have dropped to about 120,000 from more than 400,000 in May, according to official statistics.

Deaths have also fallen, with 3,380 reported in the previous 24



A health worker inoculates a woman with a dose of the Covishield vaccine against the coronavirus at a vaccination camp in Amritsar. — AFP

Indonesian women take on plastic waste brick by brick

JAKARTA: Alarmed by the mountains of plastic waste leaching into Indonesia's waters, two best friends are taking on the environmental menace by turning crisp bags and shampoo packets into paving bricks.

Ovy Sabrina and Novita Tan launched Rebricks after their country drew headlines as the second-biggest producer of marine waste in the world, behind China.

Indonesia has pledged to reduce plastic waste by some 75 per cent over the next four years — a mammoth task in the Southeast Asian nation of nearly 270 million people.

The pair got their start two years ago visiting food stalls across the capital Jakarta on the hunt for discarded instant coffee sachets, dried noodle packs and shopping bags.

Thanks to a viral social media campaign, the pair now receive reams of plastic waste packaging from donors across the country.

That rubbish flows in daily and is piled high at the little firm's Jakarta-area factory.

"It shows how Indonesians have a strong awareness of recycling plastic waste, but they don't know where to do it", 34-year-old Sabrina said.

Rebricks staff mulch the packaging into tiny flakes that are then mixed with cement and sand and moulded into building blocks.

They make look like



Rebrick founder Novita Tan at a brick-making factory in Jakarta. — AFP

The two entrepreneurs say their method diverts waste that will have otherwise ended up in a landfill or the ocean — about four tonnes so far

conventional bricks, but break one open and it is dotted with flecks of plastic.

The two entrepreneurs say their method diverts waste that would have otherwise ended up in a landfill or the ocean — about four tonnes so far and counting.

"Everyday, we can stop about 88,000 pieces of plastic sachets from littering the environment", Tan said, adding that the company has produced more than 100,000 bricks.

Some Indonesian cities have banned single-use plastics, but waste recycling is still rare. The problem was underscored in 2018 by the discovery of a dead sperm whale that washed ashore in a national park with nearly six kilogrammes of plastic waste in its stomach.

The Rebricks pair spent two years trying to perfect their method, and picked up hints from a building materials business run by Sabrina's family. Some Indonesian entrepreneurs are molding plastic waste into flower vases, umbrellas or purses.

But the two women decided to focus on bricks so they could reach more customers.

"If our approach was to sell expensive decorative goods, there would only be a few people buying our products", Sabrina said. — AFP

Several killed as clashes spread to Myanmar's delta

YANGON: At least three people were killed in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady river delta region on Saturday as the military junta's forces clashed with villagers, local media and residents said, while fighting was also reported in northern and eastern Myanmar.

The army has struggled to impose control since the army returned to power on February 1, overthrowing elected leader Aug San Suu Kyi after a decade of democratic reforms had opened up the once isolated Southeast Asian state.

Anti-junta protests take place daily in many parts of a country that has been paralysed by strikes, while conflicts with ethnic army groups that oppose the junta have flared in Myanmar's borderlands.

On Saturday, clashes spread to the Ayeyarwady region, an important rice growing area that

has large populations of both the Bamar majority ethnic group, from which much of the army draws much of its strength, and the Karen minority.

Clashes broke out before dawn at Kyonpyaw, some 150 km northwest of Yangon, when soldiers came to arrest a man suspected of harbouring weapons and were met by a bomb blast, a resident said.

"The people in the village only have crossbows and there are a lot of casualties on the people's side", said the resident, who asked not to be identified for fear of retribution. Khit Thit Media and BBC Burmese language news said three people had been killed.

Reuters was unable to reach a junta spokesman for comment on that or reports of fighting elsewhere in Myanmar.

— Reuters



Anti-coup protesters flash the three-finger salute during a flash mob protest in Yangon. — Reuters

Facebook suspends Trump until 2023

WASHINGTON: Facebook Inc on Friday suspended former US president Donald Trump until at least January 2023 and announced changes to how it will treat world leaders who break the rules on its site.

Facebook had suspended Trump's account the day after the deadly January 6 Capitol Hill riot, determining he had incited violence. That suspension will last at least two years from the date of the initial block and would only be lifted if the risk to public safety has receded, Facebook said on Friday.

Trump criticised the decision as a form of censorship and an insult to his voters.

This new timeline denies Republican Trump a major social media megaphone ahead of the November 2022 congressional elections. However, it means he may be able to return to Facebook well before the next presidential election in late 2024.

Trump has been permanently banned by Twitter and remains suspended by Alphabet's YouTube after the riot. Trump, who this week shut down his recently-launched blog, has teased plans to start his own platform.

"Given the gravity of the circumstances that led to Mr Trump's suspension, we believe his actions constituted a severe violation of our rules which merit the highest penalty available under the new enforcement protocols," Facebook's head of global affairs Nick Clegg said in the post.

Facebook's oversight board, an independent group funded by the



Former US president Donald Trump and Facebook Chairman and CEO Mark Zuckerberg. – AFP File Photo

company who rule on a small slice of controversial content decisions, in May upheld the company's unprecedented block on Trump. However, the board ruled it was wrong to make the ban indefinite and called for a "proportionate response."

In a statement on Friday, Trump slammed the decision and repeated false claims of voter fraud: "Facebook's ruling is an insult to the record-setting 75M people, plus many others, who voted for us in the 2020 Rigged Presidential Election. They shouldn't be allowed to get away with this censoring and silencing, and ultimately, we will win. Our Country can't take

A Facebook spokesman confirmed politicians' posts will remain exempt from third-party fact-checking

this abuse anymore!" Several investigations have not found evidence of election fraud.

Trump added, "Next time I'm in the White House there will be no more dinners, at his request, with Mark Zuckerberg and his wife. It will be all business!"

Facebook said it would work with experts to decide when the public safety risk had subsided

for Trump to be restored to its platforms. It said it would evaluate factors including instances of violence, restrictions on peaceful assembly and other markers of civil unrest.

It also said there would be a set of escalating sanctions that would be triggered if Trump broke further rules that could lead to his permanent removal.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki, speaking to reporters, said of Facebook's decision on Trump that it felt "pretty unlikely that the zebra is going to change his stripes over the next two years, we'll see."

Social media companies have grappled in recent years with

how to handle world leaders and politicians who violate their guidelines.

On Friday, the Nigerian government said it had indefinitely suspended Twitter's activities in the country, two days after the company removed a post from President Muhammadu Buhari that threatened to punish regional fighters.

In a major reversal that also came as part of Facebook's responses to its oversight board, Facebook said it was "removing the presumption we announced in 2019 that speech from politicians is inherently of public interest."

— Reuters



About 100 killed in deadliest Burkina Faso attack

OUAGADOUGOU: Around 100 civilians were killed overnight in the deadliest attack in Burkina Faso since violence erupted in the country in 2015, security and local sources said on Saturday.

The attack occurred during the night of Friday to Saturday when "armed individuals staged an incursion" into the northern town of Solhan, a security source said.

"The toll, which is still provisional, is about 100 dead, men and woman of different ages", the source said.

The government confirmed the attack and the death toll.

Assailants struck around 2 am against a position of the Volunteers for the Defence of the Motherland (VDP), an anti-fighter civilian defence force which backs the national army, before attacking homes and carrying out "executions," a local source said.

The VDP was set up in December 2019 to help Burkina's poorly-equipped military activists but it has suffered more than 200 fatalities. The volunteers are given two weeks' military training, and then work alongside the security forces, typically carrying out surveillance, information-gathering or escort duties.

"In addition to the heavy human toll, the worst recorded to date, homes and the market were set on fire," another security source said, voicing concern that the "still temporary toll of a hundred dead may increase."

— AFP

French 'paparazzi queen' charged in Sarkozy probe

PARIS: A major figure in France's paparazzi world has been charged with witness tampering in a case involving former president Nicolas Sarkozy, her lawyer said on Saturday.

Mimi Marchand, who runs the BestImage agency, had also been charged with criminal association, said lawyer Caroline Toby. "She firmly denies the charges against her," she added.

Marchand was arrested on Thursday along with several other suspects on the orders of magistrates investigating alleged corruption by Sarkozy, who has been accused of taking money from former Libyan ruler Muammar Gaddafi.

Sarkozy denies the charges.

Francois de Labarre, a journalist from *Paris Match* who was also arrested on Thursday, was released without charge later the same day.

Marchand and de Labarre

were instrumental in organising an interview in November with one of the main witnesses against Sarkozy, Ziad Takieddine, in which he withdrew his allegations against the former head of state.

Afterwards, speaking to French investigators, Takieddine changed his story again, retracting what he had told *Paris Match* and saying his words had been "deformed".

Marchand's lawyer Toby insisted on Saturday that her client had "acted in her capacity as a journalist who had this exclusive interview with Takieddine.

"All she did was organise the photos and the interview, within the parameters of her job," she added.

Marchand, known widely as "Mimi", works closely with a host of rich and powerful figures from the worlds of politics and entertainment, including President Emmanuel Macron and



'Mimi' Marchand smiles as she arrives in Le Touquet, on the eve of the first round of the presidential election. – AFP File Photo

his wife Brigitte.

The investigative website Mediapart, which first reported the detention of Marchand and de

Labarre, said they were suspected of "underground negotiations with Mr Takieddine" to convince him to withdraw his allegations against

Sarkozy.

Before retracting his claims in the *Paris Match* interview, Takieddine had always alleged that he delivered suitcases stuffed with €5 million (\$6 million) in cash from Tripoli to Sarkozy's chief of staff in 2006 and 2007.

Marchand's arrest is the latest twist in years of extraordinary claims and investigations against pugnacious right-winger Sarkozy, who served one term as president, from 2007-2012.

In March, Sarkozy was found guilty of influence-peddling and handed a three-year prison sentence for attempting to influence a judge to obtain information in a separate case.

Most of the sentence was suspended and he is appealing, meaning he is unlikely to go to jail, but he faces other charges including in the cash-from-Libya case. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

GOMA

Goma airport reopens weeks after volcanic eruption

The international airport in DR Congo's Goma reopened on Saturday, two weeks after a devastating volcanic eruption near the eastern city, with the arrival of a plane carrying the prime minister. A journalist said Prime Minister Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde's plane touched down shortly after 2 pm at the airport, closed since May 23.

Lukonde is heading a ministerial team to "take stock of the situation by meeting local officials and reinforce state



intervention for humanitarian aid", said a government spokesman. The prime minister left straight for Goma's city centre after arriving, the journalist said.

— AFP

AMSTERDAM

Netherlands reopens cultural venues in further easing

Cinemas, museums, theatres and restaurants opened again in the Netherlands on Saturday, in further moves towards normality since the pandemic began. Local media reported that people greeted the easing with enthusiasm. Many restaurants — where people may now dine indoors again — were fully booked, while tickets sold out in other venues, also as visitor and customer numbers are still limited.

The traditional cinema



Tuschinski opened with the film *The Slag omde Schelde*, which premiered in December 2020, one day before cinemas had to close due to a new lockdown.

— dpa

ROME

Italy sets record for daily Covid vaccinations

A record 600,000 doses of Covid vaccine were administered in Italy, authorities said, putting the country in second place in Europe for the number of people fully vaccinated. "Yesterday was marked by a record number of injections in 24 hours which touched the 600,000 mark while the number of doses administered crossed the 37-million mark," the government body in charge of vaccinations said on Saturday.

"Italy is in second place in Europe in terms of the number



of people fully vaccinated, just behind Germany and ahead of France and Spain," it added.

It said Friday's record vaccinations were in part due to an increase in the number of vaccination centres. — AFP

SPORT



Hockey fans ecstatic after Oman wins bid to host FIH Hockey5s World Cup



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Hockey lovers in the Sultanate expressed their joy after the announcement from FIH that Oman's capital city Muscat will host the first ever FIH Hockey5s World Cup (Men and Women) in January 2024. It was a special day for everyone as this mega event will map the Sultanate's hockey globally.

Oman Olympic Committee Chairman, Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidy, congratulated Oman Hockey family and appreciated their top efforts as he tweeted in his personal twitter

account after unveiling the host nation for the world-class event and said: "Great appreciation to FIH and Asian Hockey Federation for granting Oman the honour of hosting the FIH Hockey5s World Cup in 2024. My sincere congratulations to Oman Hockey Association (OHA) and the hockey family for this prestigious achievement that Oman deserves for its long lasting Hockey heritage."

Oman's hockey legend and the ambassador of Oman's bid for the world event, Tarmah Abdul Hussain al Ajmi, congratulated the whole domestic sports family for hosting this prestigious event.

"Congratulations to the Sultanate and OHA board of directors for hosting FIH Hockey5s World Cup. I hope there should be a proper and extensive plan for the national team's preparation for the top-ranked event," he said in a tweet.

Tayyab Ikram, Chief Executive and Secretary-General of Asian Hockey Federation (AHF), affirmed that the Sultanate has full capability and ability to deliver a unique inaugural edition of FIH Hockey5s World Cup.

"In this occasion, it is my pleasure to congratulate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of

“
Congratulations to the Sultanate and OHA board of directors for hosting FIH Hockey5s World Cup. I hope there should be a proper and extensive plan for the national team's preparation for the top-ranked event

TARMAH ABDUL HUSSAIN AL AJMI
Oman hockey legend and bid ambassador



Culture, Sports and Youth, and hockey and sports lovers in the Sultanate. At personal level, I am very proud that Oman took the responsibility for this high profile event and hosting of 16 teams per gender (Men and women)," he said.

The commission member at International Olympic Committee (IOC) pointed out that everyone is assured that the Sultanate's government will work hard for

the success of the prestigious championship.

"Oman had managed to host many top hockey events in the years ago successfully. I am assured that the FIH Hockey5s World Cup will be a great success and will be organised with the utmost professionalism," he concluded in a statement to asiahockey.org website.

Oman's hockey sports will take a giant stride through hosting the first ever FIH Hockey5s World Cup (Men and Women) earlier in 2024. It is expected

that the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth will unveil the main organising committee members for this mega event. This committee will have members from different government and private sector entities and it will be responsible for facilitating all the needs and requirements towards organising this world-class event including construction of the new stadium which will be built at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex with the existing venue which will be used as a training pitch for the participating teams.

Taha al Kishry to continue as FINA board member

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Oman's Taha al Kishry remained in his position as a board member in the world swimming governing body, FINA, bureau for the second successive term while Kuwait's Hussain al Musallam elected as the first Gulf, Arab and Asian president of the International Swimming Federation during the general congress of FINA in Doha on Saturday.

Al Kishry's triumph in the election came due to his huge sporting expertise at domestic, regional and international levels. Taha al Kishry has huge exposure in the sports and swimming field with

an experience of more than 40 years in sports.

Oman Swimming Association (OSA) president and Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) secretary-general stated that FINA will do the required support to the national member associations. "We will utilise our presence in FINA to provide full assistance to all the member associations and enable them to organise and host different aquatic activities and programmes according to the approved calendar and agenda of FINA every year," he added

The secretary-general of Asian Swimming Federation appreciated all the positive efforts made by Qatar Swimming Association to



Taha al Kishry with new FINA president

host the General Congress of FINA in Doha. "A dedicated thanks to Qatar Swimming Association for the organisation of the top FINA meeting under robust and safe Covid-19 protocol and implementing all the precautionary measures against Covid," he concluded.

As many as 221 national associations took part in the General Congress of FINA. A 119 national associations attended the meeting physically in Doha, respecting a robust and safe Covid-19 protocol, while another 102 national federations attended virtually through advanced communication platforms. Oman's delegation in the meeting was represented by Tariq

bin Salim al Hashmi, the VP of Oman Swimming Association.

With an experience of more than 40 years in sports, Taha had served in different positions in many sporting associations and committees at domestic, regional and international levels. He is currently the secretary-general of OOC since 2013 and chairman of OSA since 2009.

He was the secretary-general of Oman Football Association (OFA) from 2008 to 2009. In the swimming field, he is a member of the Executive Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) since 2019, the director-general of AASF since 2016 and Arab Swimming chairman since 2013 till today.



In this file photo taken on April 17, 2021, Boca Juniors' forward Carlos Tevez drives the ball during the Argentine Professional Football League match against Atletico Tucuman at La Bombonera stadium in Buenos Aires. — AFP

Southee runs amok as English wickets tumble before lunch



New Zealand's Tim Southee celebrates with team-mates after taking the wicket of England's James Bracey. — Reuters

LONDON: English wickets tumbled early on day four of the first Test on Saturday, leaving the home side on 164-6 at lunch, 214 runs behind New Zealand after fast bowlers Tim Southee and Kyle Jamieson tore through their middle order.

Opener Rory Burns was unbeaten on 72 with debutant Ollie Robinson at the other end on 16 at the break.

England had resumed their first innings on 111-2 after rain washed out day three, and Jamieson gave

New Zealand the perfect start when he dismissed Joe Root with the first delivery of the day.

He forced the England skipper into a defensive shot, and the ball flew off a thick outside edge into the hands of Ross Taylor in the slips.

Ollie Pope (22) was the next to go after a solid start, missing an angled delivery from Southee which rapped him on the pads. The umpire demurred, but New Zealand successfully reviewed and overturned the decision.

Southee then dismissed Dan Lawrence and James Bracey in quick succession with both batsmen returning to the pavilion for ducks.

Lawrence played a loose drive to nick the ball to Colin de Grandhomme at third slip while Bracey, on his test debut, saw his off stump uprooted.

New Zealand posted a first innings total of 378, with debutant Devon Conway scoring a double ton.

— Reuters

TEVEZ

QUITS ARGENTINA FOOTBALL, KEEPS QUIET ON RETIREMENT

BUENOS AIRES: Veteran Argentina great Carlos Tevez announced on Friday he was quitting Boca Juniors and would no longer play football in his homeland, but stopped short of officially retiring.

The 37-year-old said he was leaving Boca, his beloved home club — he said “my blood isn’t red, it’s blue and yellow” — to spend more time with his family.

“My career in Argentina is finished. I always said the only club I would ever play for (here) is Boca, without a doubt,” said Tevez at a press conference at the club’s head office.

The former Manchester United, Manchester City and Juventus forward lost his adoptive father Segundo Tevez in February after he contracted Covid-19 at age 58.

“Boca asks you to give the maximum and mentally I’m not in a condition to do so. I didn’t even have time to mourn my father and already I was playing again — that’s what Boca demands,” he said, breaking down in tears.

When asked if he could find a new club abroad, Tevez merely replied he didn’t know what he would do next.

“I never thought this moment would arrive, but I’m here to tell you that I won’t continue with the club. It’s not a goodbye to this

“**My career in Argentina is finished. I always said the only club I would ever play for (here) is Boca, without a doubt**

CARLOS TEVEZ
Boca Juniors

shirt but a see you soon because I will always be here, just not as a player,” he said.

Boca president Jorge Ameal seemed unconvinced he would never see the “Apache” in a Boca shirt again.

“We’d like him to keep playing. For us, the ‘never again with Carlitos’ doesn’t exist,” he said.

Tevez’s contract runs until December but a clause allows him to end it six months early.

TROPHIES GALORE

One of the most popular Argentine players of his era, Tevez is the latest of Boca’s great idols, a group that also includes Diego Maradona, Juan Roman Riquelme and Martin Palermo.

Born in the poor Buenos Aires neighbourhood of Fort Apache — from where he gets his nickname

— Tevez started his career at Boca as a 17-year-old in 2001, winning the Argentine Primera Division and Copa Libertadores two years later.

In 2005, he began a 10-year hiatus away from Boca, first with Corinthians in Brazil, where he won the Brazilian league, and then at West Ham in England.

A dream move to Man United followed in 2007, where he won back-to-back Premier League titles and the Champions League before making a shock switch across town to City, where he won the league again in 2012.

A move to Juventus brought two Serie A crowns before he returned home in 2015.

He left for a year in 2017 to take up an astonishing financial offer from Shanghai Shenhua in the Chinese Super League — making him one of the best paid players in the world — before returning home again.

His second and third spells with Boca would bring another four Argentine titles.

He played 76 times for his country, scoring 13 goals but never won anything despite reaching the Copa America final three times.

He played in two World Cups and was part of the Argentine under-23 team that won Olympic gold in 2004. — AFP

Oman Cricket invites teams to register for new season

BY SHAHZAD RAZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

With a lot of international and domestic activity in the pipeline, Oman Cricket has called on Senior Division teams to register for the new cricket season that is set to see an early start.

Premier Division League will start first in August followed by A and lower division games in September.

The online registration of Premier and A Division teams with payment of fee will begin on June 15 and end on June 30. The deadline for players registration has been set as July 10. Premier Division will see 50-over and T20 games (season starts on August 13) while A Division will consist of 40-over and T20 tournaments on turf pitches, starting on September 10.

The 30-over B Division and 20-over lower Division leagues will also start simultaneously on September 13, all on astro-turf pitches across the capital.

Last date for B and lower division teams registration is August 10 while deadline for



player registration will be August 15.

While the Covid-19 pandemic left the last season crippled and curtailed around the globe, cricket authorities are expecting a better 2021-22 calendar to make up for the lost time. With International Cricket Council (ICC) likely to announce new schedule of Men’s World Cup League 2 games, Oman Cricket has decided to begin preparations by starting the season in August, two months earlier than last year.

Oman may also be asked to host T20 World Cup matches if the event is moved to the UAE later this year. An early start to the

season will also see its world-class cricket infrastructure in full gear and up to the task.

Dates for Junior League and Women’s League teams registration will be announced later.

Close to a hundred teams are likely to be in action across various formats this season though the exact number of teams will only be known after the registration process is over.

Further information can be had from Oman Cricket’s Iqbal Ariwala during working hours from Sunday to Thursday (8.30 am to 5.30 pm) by calling on OC office number 24970018.

STEPHENS OUSTS MUCHOVA TO REACH FOURTH ROUND



I took the time
to get myself
together, find what
makes me happy
on court, and kind
of find my groove
back

SLOANE
STEPHENS

Former US Open champion

Sloane Stephens eyes the ball as she serves the ball to Karolina Muchova during their women’s singles third round match. – AFP

PARIS: Former US Open champion Sloane Stephens overcame an attacking Karolina Muchova at the French Open on Saturday, ousting the Czech 18th seed with a 6-3 7-5 victory and progressing to the fourth round.

Former world number three Stephens, who reached the final at Roland Garros in 2018, has slipped down the rankings and currently sits in 59th place.

But the 28-year-old’s experience and consistency helped her fend off the challenge from Muchova, four years her junior, who kept rushing to the net to unsettle Stephens but without much success.

Australian Open semifinalist Muchova won just 36 per cent of her net points as Stephens landed 84 per cent of her first serves and broke the Czech four

times in all.

In her first round match against Carla Suarez Navarro, Stephens came within two points of defeat. After fighting back for the win, she notched up her first victory over a top-20 opponent since the end of 2018 when she upset ninth seed Karolina Pliskova.

“I took the time to get myself together, find what makes me happy on court, and kind of

find my groove back,” Stephens told reporters.

“Obviously results didn’t happen right away, but I knew eventually things would connect, and it’s nice that obviously since Charleston (where she reached the quarterfinals) they have started to come together.”

Muchova had plenty of problems on her serve early on, and a lone break in the

fourth game was enough for her American opponent, who won her home major in 2017, to take the opening set on the Simonne Mathieu court.

After a double exchange of breaks in the second set, Stephens then took a third break to seal the win and set up a clash against another Czech, Barbora Krejckova, who ousted fifth-seeded Ukrainian Elina Svitolina 6-3 6-2.

Stephens credited her recent turnaround to the hard work she put in following a first-round exit at the Australian Open at the start of the year.

“I think it all happens in practice,” she said. “Like leading up to the tournament I’m a big believer in everything happens before you get here, and then when you get here it’s just time to get down to business.”

— Reuters

features



The old man, the hungry cats and Oman's storied sea

Kicking off our photographer's series, an afternoon encounter led this shutterbug to capture one of Oman's many touching moments: when an elderly gentleman went to catch fish in the sea to feed the hungry cats that have become his friends... **P16**

HERITAGE

READ



LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL

BY MARTIN LUTHER KING

The book is written in response to criticism of the nonviolent protests in Birmingham, Alabama in April 1963. ... Beyond that, he argues that he is in Birmingham "because injustice is here," and like the Apostle Paul and other early Christians, he must answer the call for aid.

Al Obbad Mosques in Bahla dates back to ancient eras

THE WILAYAT of Bahla in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah is famous for its many ancient sites that tell of an ancient civilisation dating back to as old as the third millennium BC. The wilayat has the archaeological fortress of Salut, the majestic Bahla Fort and its Great Wall. The mosques and the cemetery also bear witness to the nobility of this site that the visitor to this wilayat sees after passing through Bahla Castle heading to the Wilayat of Al Hamra. On the

right side of the road, you find these three mosques on two hills of mountains to stand tall and steadfast over the years. Researcher Khamis al Adawi said: "By tracing the history of the construction of these mosques, we find that they are very old, and there are some documents that indicate that they existed at the time of the Nabhani era. we found some texts dating back to the Nabhani era in the jurisprudence books that were written in that period like

"Minhaj al Adl" book for Sheikh Al Ma'di. we also have some antiquities and some indications that they were present in the fourth century AH, so these mosques are very old, and the Al Marjaba area in which these mosques are located is a very old area and dates back to the third millennium BC. Before these mosques existed, there were temples and they were built in the mountains where people used to go there for worship. Al Adawi explained that the



mosques of Al Obbad are located after the Bahla fortress heading to the Wilayat of Al Hamra to the right of the main road track after Aqaba. The three mosques are built on the extensions of the existing mountains and can be seen from the main road. two of which are connected beside each other and the other is independent in another hill. This hill contains many monu-

ments and remains of temples, and there is a water well on the site. The researcher indicated that Al Obbad mosques are all located in a single rocky extension within a mountain chain extending from east to west and from south to north. there are ancient monuments dating back the third millennium BC and has traces indicating that it was on ancient temples.



Shaping details of thoughts with minimalist art

By Mazoun al Ghailani
Instagram: @mazoun_alghailani

Despite its unique angles and lines, the minimalist artwork remains to be simple in its overall form but these artworks always have profound meaning and message. An outright controlled showcase of colours and aesthetic details, coming together of these simple elements make minimalist art a truly enjoyable if not a profound experience.

The exhibition "Omission" is organised by artist Matti Sirvio, who curated the works on display. It features 30 pieces of Minimalist art, including paintings, sculpture, papercut and installation.

"Minimalism is a way to express life in its original, simple form, omitting distracting elements. It is a quest for the essential. After removing all the unnecessary decorations you are left with a minimalistic shape, composition and colour in order to communicate

something valuable. In a way it is an attempt to find the truth, plain purity, clean idea and meaning," Matti Sirvio said.

Matti Sirvio pointed out that he enjoyed exploring minimalism in his works and find great pleasure in doing it.

"My latest works were going to the direction of minimalism and as I started looking around I understood that I am not alone. I got to know a lot of artists, both Omani and expats who are searching the means of minimalism as a part of their artistic journey," he said.

"Omission" has been chosen for the exhibition because it is minimalistic and meaningful title for the artworks shown.

"Most of the works have the element of spirituality and the presence of invisibility, as strange as it might sound, in them. You have to take time, quiet down and contemplate in order to enjoy this exhibition, it's not a quick, noisy nor superficial product," Sirvio said.

The exhibition involved 12 artists, six of them are Omani artists and six expat artists.

Artist Haneen al Moosawi participated with "Hilal" moonlight painting. "In the month of Ramadhan, I liked to create artwork that represents the month. And since the crescent

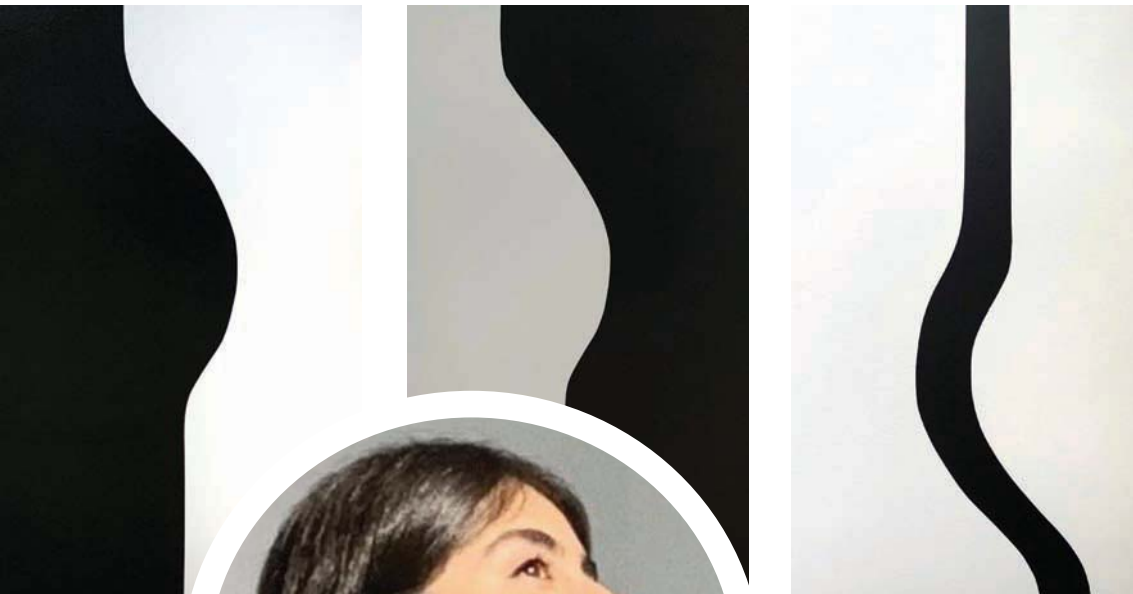
is a symbol of Ramadhan, I shaped the crescent in a simple and abstract way," Haneen said.

Artist Kawthar al Harthi on the other hand took the shape of wreckage as a place where you can find beauty.

"The message beyond my artwork, it is an invitation to contemplate in the distribution of masses that is inside the things surrounding us, some of them have their beauty in being arranged, and some retain their beauty lies in their disintegration and scattering," she said.

Sirvio shared his opinion about the artistic movement of minimalism art in Oman. "I am fascinated by the minimalism in Oman through buildings, dress-code, kumma, dishdashah, henna, desert, palm trees, sand, stones and dates. The eloquent character of the Omani people has clearly been developed in this environment. The Egyptian, Iraqi, Iranian, Indian art schools have all had their influence on the Omani art scene, but I think that they have often missed the appreciation of minimalism in the Omani soul," he shared.

The 'Omission exhibition' will run until June 30 in the Fikra Gallery in Old Muscat City.





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TRAVEL TALES



Fishermen's Village: A unique marine model for workers in the fisheries sector

THE FISHERMEN'S VILLAGE in Ras Madrakah and Al Khaluf Coast in the Wilayat of Duqm is one of the successful models of the Ministry of Agricultural and Fisheries and Water Resources represented by the Fisheries Department in Al Wusta Governorate to support Omani fishermen from all governorates of the Sultanate. It is one of the development projects in the fisheries field in Al Wusta Governorate.

Saleh al Sunaidi, Head of the Fisheries Resources Development in Al Wusta Governorate, said, "The project of the fishermen's village in the Khaluf and Ras Madrakah coasts has been well received by citizens and those interested in the fish sector because of the benefit it provided to Omani fishermen from the governorates of South Al Sharqiyah, North and South Al Batinah, and boat owners from the people of the Wilayat of Duqm, owners of transport and marketing vehicles and ice factories."



He explained that the aim of the project is to increase fish production, provide high quality fish in local markets, increase the income of Omani fishermen working in the fishing sector, and encourage the people of Al Wusta Governorate to practice the fishing profession.

The total number of beneficiaries from this project is about 50 fishermen in Ras Madrakah, 25 from Al Sharqiyah and Al Batinah, 25 vehicle owners and five companies working in the field. As for the fishermen's village on Al Khaluf Coast, the number of beneficiaries from the artisanal fishermen who own boats is about (80), and the artisanal fishermen who practice the profession from other governorates are about (220), and several (60) owners of transport and marketing vehicles in the fishery field, and (7) companies working in the fishing profession.

COMMUNITY WATCH

The economic benefits of honeybee keeping



THE PROFESSION of beekeeping is one of the ancient Omani professions that are of great interest to beekeepers in the Wilayat of Manah, especially with the availability of the environment, nature and climatic conditions that the Sultanate enjoys that are suitable for honey breeding.

Muhammad al Busaidi, one of the honeybee breeders in the Wilayat of Manah, began his interest in raising honeybees more than 30 years ago and has sufficient experience to deal with the bee world. He says: We started raising honeybees and taking care of them since childhood, so we used to go with our father to the apiary, and day after day the interest grew up. Our attachment and passion for bees increased until we got to know everything that bees and beekeepers need and we got enough experience to deal with bees.

"Raising honeybees requires attention, care and practical experience in this field. Without experience, the beekeeper will not succeed, because there are different seasons that the beekeeper must deal with, such as the dry season, and there are diseases that affect bees that need treatment, and there is special nutrition for bees. the beekeeper had to be familiar with everything, the pastures and the atmosphere have an important role in the productivity and quality of honey. A good breed of bees must also be selected, the best of which is the authentic Omani breed that coexists with the atmosphere of the Sultanate.

Concerning the seasons of honey and the stages of its production, Al Busaidi said that there are several honey seasons in the Sultanate, including the Sumur (Al-Baram) season, which is one of the best seasons in Oman, usually in the middle of April to the end of June, and the Sidr season, which is usually in November and is distinguished by its flavour. It is a little sweeter than Sumur honey. The season of Al Sarh is not popular much due to the unavailability of this tree in the Sultanate and because of the short period of its fruit and the season of the Tharmad tree, which is one

of the desert trees and usually produces its honey in the middle of February, and there is also honey of harmal, honey of Shua, and honey of frankincense.

"Honey has great economic benefit, especially before the last five years, compared to these years in which the number of bees and beekeepers increased, which led to a sharp decline in the value of bee colonies (hives). It has a great nutritional value,



as mentioned in the Holy Quran : (There comes forth from their bellies, a drink of varying colours, wherein is healing for men.) and therefore honey is a cure for very many diseases, and it is also one of the most powerful antibiotics for the body as it strengthens the immune system in humans.

The department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the Wilayat of Manah plays a major role in beekeeping preservation, as it contributed to the spread of the number of hives and to the education of those interested in bees by providing them with courses and field consultations, and it also provides some beekeepers with some tools.

CONSERVATION

Ice sculptures installed on English beach to highlight climate change



ICE SCULPTURES of children which will be washed away by the sea have been created on the north-west coast of England to highlight climate change.

The 26 sculptures were installed on New Brighton beach in Wirral, Merseyside, on Monday along with a 120-metre sand drawing by artists from Sand In Your Eye, a group of artists and sculptors.

As part of the installation, designed to highlight the importance of global climate conference COP26, 26 children and their families stood alongside the ice sculptures holding plaques with the names of global leaders.

Claire Wardley, from Sand In Your Eye, said: "The 26 ice sculptures of children are a metaphor for the fragility of our young people's future in the face of climate change, for melting ice caps, and for rising sea levels as the tide comes over them."

The sand drawing surrounding the ice sculptures reads "COP26, NETZERO 2050, make a plan for our future," with drawings of the future the children and their families would like to see featured within the letters.

One hundred volunteers helped to create the artwork, funded by Sand In Your Eye and supported by Bezmond films.

It was due to stay in place until 1:30 pm (1230 GMT), when it was expected to be washed away by the tide.

Jamie Wardley, from Sand In Your Eye, said: "I think that from Covid-19 we have learnt that the human race is indeed very sensitive and vulnerable to disturbance. At the moment we are the cause of climate change and have the opportunity to stop it."

"However, there are tipping points such as the Arctic permafrost defrosting and releasing tonnes of carbon that will accelerate climate change and cause a chain reaction that will be unstoppable.

"Measures can be taken that will stop climate change and it is evident that this is what young people want."

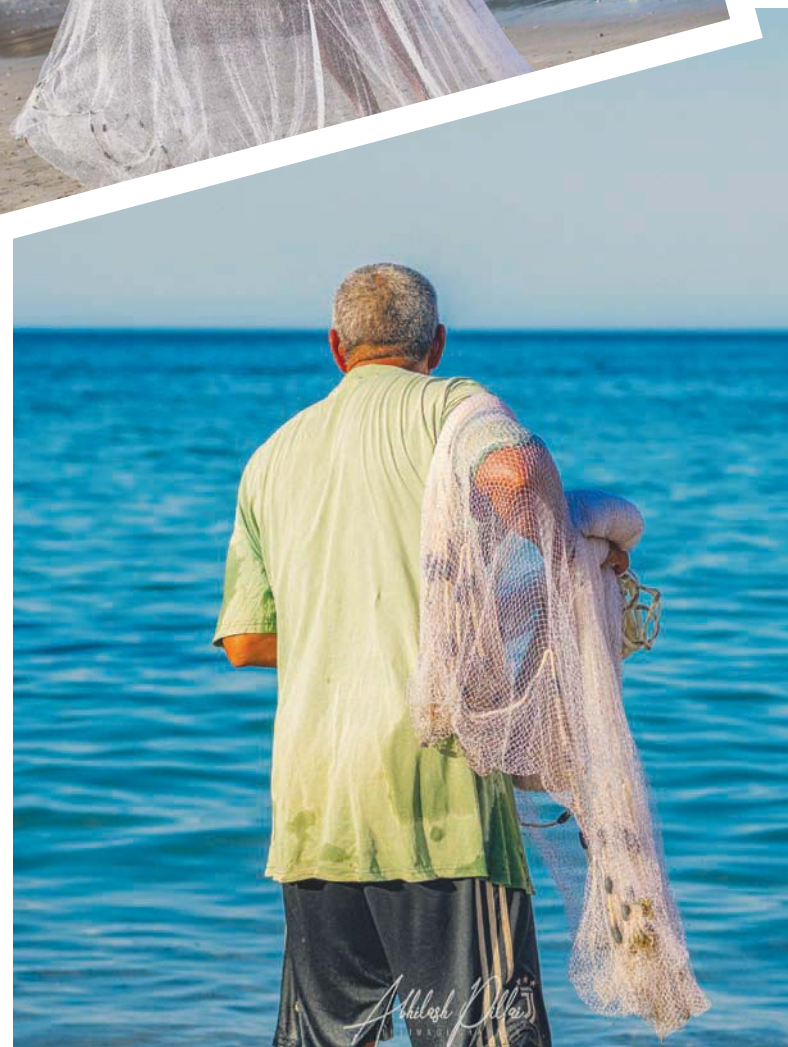
COP26 is the 26th UN Climate Change Conference and will be held in Glasgow in November. — **dpa**



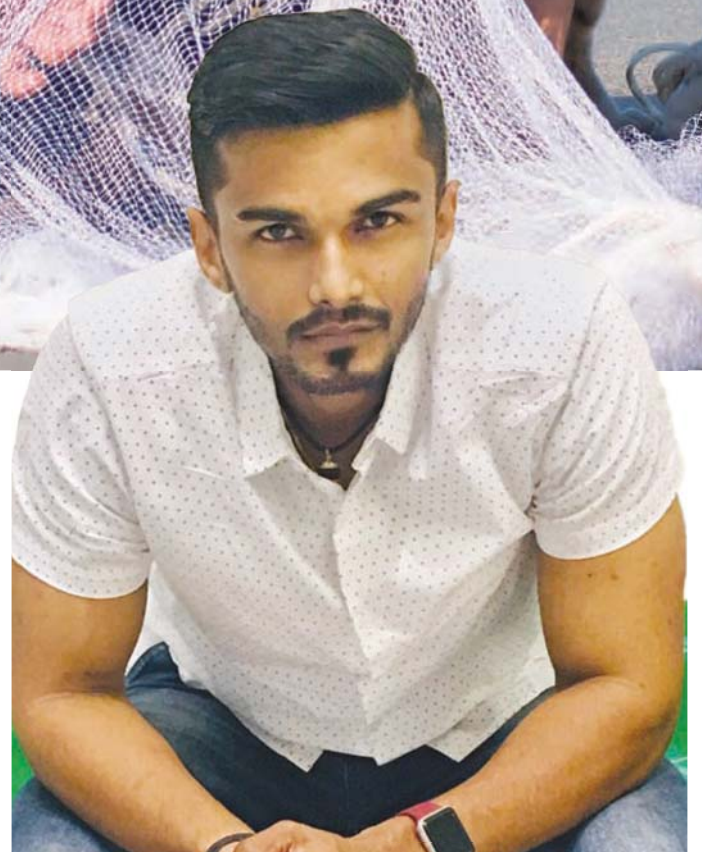
PHOTOGRAPHER'S SNAPSHOT

The old man, the hungry cats, and Oman's storied sea

By Abhilash Pillai
Compiled by Yeru Ebuén



Are you a photographer?
To be featured, send an email to yeru.ebuen@gmail.com introducing yourself with a link to your portfolio or Instagram account.



One evening back in 2019, when people were wearing an invisible mask on the emotion called compassion, I saw an older man walking down the seashore. He was holding a shiny white nylon fishing net and was accompanied by a group of stray cats. It was captivating, so I decided to take out my camera.

He was calm, and his steps were gentle; he wasn't worried at all about the beach crowd. He began having a serious conversation in Arabic with those cats, who were holding onto his every word.

Being an amateur photographer, curiosity filled in my mind. I decided to take out my tele-scopic lens so that I could be silent without disturbing their realm, and I followed them through my lens.

As I watched, he threw his shining net into the sparkling waves. I could see the emotion of expectation dancing through the cats; they had seemingly seen this scene before.

He pulled back his net, bringing in some tiny fishes which had been swimming in the shallow depth of the tide. Kneeling slowly towards the sand, he tried to manage his eager customers. As I watched, he separated each little fish and fed every stranded cat.

The sweat was dripping down from his forehead, but still, I could see the smile on his face. He repeatedly fed them for another 15 minutes. Then he slowly walked away from the shore with his shiny nylon net, leaving the gang of stray cats to feast.

I was hinged at that moment for the next few hours and decided to post some of his pics on my Instagram page the very next day.

A few months later, I received a message on my Instagram from Mr Haitham al Hasani

(haythoom7), an adventurer. He shared one of the pics from my feed and said, "That is my father!"

Surprised, I immediately began asking him questions. He answered them one by one, and in gratitude, I sent him the remaining pictures I had kept in my memory vault.

Mr Masoud Suleiman Zaher al Hasani was the man in that picture. He is a retired RGO (Royal Guard of Oman) officer; what I captured that day was one of his typical evenings. He loves those street cats, and they love him too.

When I saw the feature invitation in *Oman Daily Observer*, this hinged moment immediately came to my mind.

Mr Masoud Suleiman Zaher al Hasani is a reminder to all of us of a fading sentiment; the sentiment called compassion, which we should show to all creatures which are co-existing alongside us.

Without any hesitation, I can say that he is a part of this ecosystem and one of the most extraordinary gentlemen I have ever met in my ordinary life.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Abhilash Pillai

Instagram: [theimagegrapher](https://www.instagram.com/theimagegrapher)

An engineer with deep passion for photography. Believes that every frame has a story to tell.

Photography Gears: Nikon D5300 & Tamron Lens 18-400mm.

Inspiration: Those colourful dreams which I have seen so far. And those talented photographers who taught me how to see through the lens.



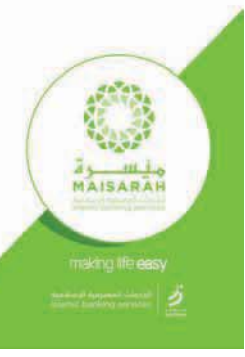


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IPR protection sought for 30 Omani innovations



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Since the start of the pandemic early last year, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has received more than 30 applications for registration of Intellectual Property Rights in fields of Covid19 prevention, disease surveillance devices, treatment methods, personal protective clothing and other proposed solutions.

According to Nidaa bint Yaqoub al Tamimiah, a patent inspection specialist at the Ministry's National Intellectual Property Office, the applications also related to technology and communications-related innovations.

While some of the innovations were the work of SMEs and student companies, others were invented by large organisations. Many of the inventions have since been put to commercial use in the Sultanate, she noted. Over the 2015–2020 timeframe, the National Intellectual Property Office received a total of 110 applications for IPR protection, she added.

The applications also related to technology and communications-related innovations

Sur shipyard and workforce township projects approved

STRONG IMPETUS: Madayn unveils new incentives to enhance investment climate in Sur Industrial City

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 5



The Board of Directors of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates – Madayn has announced new projects in Sur Industrial City to be in line with the incentives that were announced earlier this year by Madayn.

These incentives include exemption from rental value for a period of two years, followed by a reduction in the rental value for a period of three years by 50 per cent for contracts concluded during the period from 2021 to 2024, in addition to reducing all other fees listed in Annex (1) of the Investment Regulations by 50 per cent during the same period.

Madayn's Board of Directors has agreed to implement an array of investment opportunities in Sur Industrial City. This was announced during its fourth meeting this year chaired by Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, and Chairman of Madayn's Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors has approved the project of establishing an integrated workforce township by the private sector to enhance the offered services and boost business environment in Sur Industrial City.

Madayn's board has also approved the shipyard project in Sur Industrial City, which includes the establishment of a factory for modern fishing vessels, and ship maintenance and repair centre, among other related services. These efforts shall play a key role in enhancing an attractive environment for promising projects in the Sultanate's fisheries sector. The total volume of investments in Sur Industrial City has touched RO 1.5 billion by the end of 2020.

The announced incentives come within the efforts made by Madayn to mitigate the economic consequences resulting from Covid-19 pandemic and the global drop of oil prices. The incentives also support Madayn's vision to enhance Oman's position as a leading regional centre of manufacturing, ICT, innovation, and entrepreneurship excellence.

Following the meeting, Dr Saleh bin Said Masan and members of the Board of Directors of Madayn visited the project of Access Management System to Madayn's industrial cities, which is based at KOM 4 building in the Knowledge Oasis Muscat.

This project represents a key pillar of the infrastructure development strategy of the industrial cities to keep pace with the technology trends, provide value-adding services and facilitate procedures for the investors and their clients. The project features an integrated system that manages and facilitates the entry and exit of vehicles to/from the industrial cities of Madayn.

First solar-powered biomethane project planned in south Oman

CIRCULAR ECONOMY: State-owned utility in Salalah invites developers to submit proposals for biogas plant with solar PV component based on FDBOOT format

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

A state-owned utility responsible for wastewater services in Oman's Dhofar Governorate has invited proposals from investors for the development of a first-ever commercial-scale biomethane-based power plant coupled with a solar photovoltaic (PV) component.

The client is the Salalah-based Dhofar Integrated Services Company (DISC), a newly established entity created out of the integration of Salalah Sanitary Drainage Services Company (which oversaw wastewater services in Salalah until recently), Directorate-General of Water (which was responsible for potable water distribution in the governorate), and Dhofar



Power Company (which handled electricity distribution and supply in the governorate).

Dhofar Integrated Services Company now operates under the umbrella of wholly-government-owned Nama Group (formerly The Electricity Holding Company) following the recent restructuring of water and wastewater services in the Sultanate.

In addition to its potable water and power distribution responsibilities, Dhofar Integrated Services Company (DISC) also oversees a wastewater network

that covers much of Salalah City. Besides providing treated effluent for landscaping and construction activities, the utility also produces fertiliser from the sludge, which is marketed to agriculturists, farmers and other users.

Given the growing trend being witnessed across the Sultanate to utilise waste for power generation as part of a shift to greener fuels, DISC's predecessor, the Salalah Sanitary Drainage Services Company, recently invited local and international developers to submit proposals

for the establishment of a power generation plant that will harness methane gas from effluent. As a captive power project, output from the proposed project will be consumed by the utility.

However, unlike similar biogas projects — pilot and commercial-scale — that are in development and operation at various locations around the Sultanate, the proposed venture in Salalah will be procured through the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) route. Interested developers have been invited to submit proposals based

The project will be based on biomethanation — a process that converts organic waste materials into biogas and fertiliser. The biogas — which when processed becomes almost similar to natural gas — is an excellent resource for heating and even electricity generation

on the Finance Design Built Own Operate Transfer (FDBOOT) format, marking the first time in Oman that a biogas project is being procured via this delivery route. According to the client, the plant will be financed, constructed and operated by the selected bidder for a fixed contractual period, following which it will be transferred to the client in a good condition, or against a pro-rata buy-back arrangement.

Thereafter, the plant will be 'wet leased' by the client, with its electricity output consumed

internally. Interested companies have until July 25, 2021 to submit their proposals.

The project will be based on biomethanation — a process that converts organic waste materials into biogas and fertiliser. The biogas — which when processed becomes almost similar to natural gas — is an excellent resource for heating and even electricity generation.

While distinctive in terms of its FDBOOT project delivery model and the incorporation of a solar PV component, the proposed Salalah venture differs from a commercial-scale already operational in the Sultanate. In October 2019, Mazoon Dairy — the Sultanate's flagship dairy processing project — launched the region's first-ever biogas plant to produce biomethane for heating purposes.

The resource used for the production of biomethane is cow manure — some 225 tonnes of which are generated daily. Mazoon Dairy is currently collaborating with Oman LNG, among other entities, in upgrading the biogas plant to generate electricity in the first such 'Biogas-to-Power' project ever to be implemented in the Sultanate.

The weight loss industry's transformation

The weight loss industry has evolved in a long-term business relation, as such, in 2020, the market value in the US contracted to \$71 bn. In the early 2000, it was estimated that 1 in 4 people in developed countries were obese.

Now that number skyrocketed to 2 in 3 people being obese or severely overweight. The baseline of countries included in the statistic has also increased. Some of the countries that excluded 20 years ago, have now joined the pool of developed countries, often enjoying the long-term health liability of readily available fast and junk food.

In just two decades, the overweight population in the world went from a minority to the majority resulting in a drastic change of the mindset in those belonging to the category.

While 20 years ago an obese

person might have felt "different" compared to most of society, now feels more part of the same community.

In turn, this change of mindset had profound implication in the weight loss and slimming industry. We went from a mindset of "I must lose weight now" to "I need to have a healthier life style". Translated is actions, the former approach would have gone through drastic procedures, such as invasive and dangerous surgery, in order to immediately remove fat from the body.

Now there seems to be less of a sense of urgency, and people are more willing embark on a long-term life changing experience, rather than "shock and awe" their body into another shape.

But in order to see noticeable results, we know, hard work and restraint is a must and not everyone is in for it. When in February 2014, South African



STEFANO VIRGILLI
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IN JUST TWO DECADES, THE OVERWEIGHT POPULATION IN THE WORLD WENT FROM A MINORITY TO THE MAJORITY RESULTING IN A DRASTIC CHANGE OF THE MINDSET IN THOSE BELONGING TO THE CATEGORY

Dr Tim Noakes replied to a tweet of mother asking about the diet of her infant son, saying that as a general advise a Low Carbohydrates, High Fat (LCHF) diet was recommended even after breastfeeding, he was threatened to be taken medical license away. He fought in court and won.

As a result, the keto diet — studied for the first time 100 years ago — resurfaced and became extremely popular. I have tried it too, and worked like magic in my case, having lost 18kg in a year, after 10 years of weight struggle. But I must admit that diet alone is not sufficient.

Exercise is essential. But what type of exercise is a whole different story.

My personal belief is that exercise that builds up or tone muscles is inevitably going to be a better long-term investment than walking or running, which mostly dehydrates and might

damage joints over the years.

But what type of exercise is a whole different story. The bottom line is that the paradigm shift in the mindset of overweight people have impacted and transformed the weight loss industry significantly: From dieting to exercising, all sectors have transformed.

In the US, a survey in 2020 found that 77 per cent of the obese people interviewed were adopting a holistic healthier life style as opposed to 19 per cent who declared that they were dieting.

Many false promises about the effectiveness of a weight loss program have brought a sense of distrust in the industry, and with the internet available with all the information needed, more and more individuals are opting for a DIY weight loss approach.

[The columnist is a member of the International Press Association]

ACFE holds meeting with CBO Executive President

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Tahir al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) received a delegation of board members of the Oman Chapter of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE).

Jose Chacko, President of ACFE Oman Chapter, outlined the activities of the Chapter and discussed the Chapter's support for the Central Bank's efforts to raise best practices in the administration of Anti Money Laundering and Anti Bribery policies initiated by the CBO in the Sultanate. Chacko was accompanied by Davis Kallukaran, the immediate Past President; Vice President Khalil al Rawahi, Treasurer Kevin Frank; Fathiya al Maskari, Director Training; Salim al Mushaifiri, Membership Director, and Murad al Balushi, Director at Large.

The CBO Executive President emphasised the need for the professional development of accountants and fraud examiners in the financial, insurance and banking sectors in Oman to help combat money laundering, bribery and corruption. He urged the Chapter to reach out to schools and colleges in the Sultanate and encourage more Omanis to join this promising profession.

Ford's season of generosity: Escape with exclusive benefits

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OCEC gets set to reopen its doors

MUSCAT: After a 14-month hiatus as a precautionary health and safety measure due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre are again gearing up to welcome the world through their doors.

"We're back to business, ready to fill the OCEC calendar with an exciting line-up of events, and all set to deliver enhanced operations and services to our clients and event patrons", Oman's premier events venue announced recently.

OCEC's scheduled re-opening, which follows on from Oman Supreme Committee approval, will come as welcome news to local, regional and international event organisers who'll once again be able to avail the services of a state-of-the-art events venue in Oman to host conferences, exhibitions, and social/corporate events of all kinds.

Eng Said al Shanfari, OCEC — Chief Executive Officer, explains: "The decision by the Supreme Committee to approve Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre's re-opening is for us a highly anticipated moment. We're once again excited to be able to open our doors to the world, and to provide a state-of-the-art events venue to local, regional and international event organisers. With a new, enhanced line-up of services and



facilities, we're looking forward to delivering exceptional events — and exceptional experiences to our patrons."

In terms of continuing safeguards against Covid-19, OCEC is committed to ensuring the well-being of event attendees and guests, by maintaining high health and safety standards through all operations. Health and safety precautions at the venue will include pre-entry temperature checks, social distancing in queues and meeting spaces, and wearing of appropriate health and safety attire.

Accompanying the venue's re-opening will be OCEC's rolling out of a range of new services and facilities for event organisers.

These include new and enhanced audio-visual equipment and operations to uplift any event, conference or exhibition experience. OCEC

have also added new hosting packages to their portfolio, as well as an opportunity to host hybrid-style events combining the physical presence of attendees in limited numbers with live streaming delivered to larger online audiences forming part of the same event.

Enhancing OCEC's service-related offerings is the venue's new website www.ocec.om — which includes several powerful new interactive features for event organisers, all presented in a user-friendly format that supports both desktop and mobile devices.

To celebrate Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre once again becoming the place #WhereTheWorldMeets, OCEC has also launched an online video that showcases the venue's world-class facilities and services. The video can be viewed online via www.ocec.om.

MSX WEEKLY REVIEW

MSX ends 2.63% higher, supported by all sub-indices

The MSX30 Index ended the week higher by 2.63 per cent. All sub-indices ended in green. Financial sector led gaining 3.40 per cent, the Services sector and Industrial sector closed up by 2.29 per cent and 1.87 per cent respectively. MSX Shariah Index increased by 2.72 per cent.

Commercial Bank of Qatar announced a public offer to acquire an additional 15.2 per cent of the issued share capital of National Bank of Oman (NBO), a move that will increase the former's stake in the Omani lender to 50.1 per cent. The offer opens on June 10, 2021 and closes on July 11, 2021 and closes on offer price of RO 0.200 per share which represents a (1) 36 per cent premium versus the Volume Weighted Average Price (VWAP) since January 1, 2021; (2) 28 per cent premium versus the last three months' VWAP; and (3) 18 per cent premium versus the closing price of June 2, 2021, the Commercial Bank stated.

Dhofar International Development & Investment Holding announced that in its EGM held on March 31, 2021, the company board of directors approved on May 29, 2021, a draft prospectus for the Company's capital increase by right issue at a total amount of RO 28.6m.

MSX30 announced the list of Additions & Deletions for the main index along with for sub-indices. The changes for the MSX30 are: (Included): Jazeera Steel, National Aluminium, Al Maha Ceramics, Oman Arab Bank and Oman Flour Mills;

SMEs in Oman

Source: NCISI

The total number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) at the end of April 2021 were 52,524 which is an increase by 19 per cent compared to the same period of 2020

(Excluded): Raysut Cement, National Gas, Muscat Finance, Oman Fisheries and Majan College.

The total number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) at the end of April 2021 were 52,524 which is an increase by 19 per cent compared to the same period of 2020.

Among the governorates, Al Wusta topped the list with 38.2 per cent SMEs registered in April 2021, followed by Al Sharqiyah South with 24.5 per cent, Al Batinah South with 21.7 per cent, Al Buraimi with 21.1 per cent, and the rest are from the other governorates.

The Governorate of Muscat had 17,692 SMEs registered at the end of April 2021, followed by North Al Batinah with 8,310, Al Dakhiliyah with 6,554, Dhofar with 4,388, South Al Batinah with 3,981 and North Al Sharqiyah with 3,488 SMEs registered. This

was followed by Al Dhahirah with 2,988 SMEs, South Al Sharqiyah with 3,123 SMEs and Al Buraimi with 1,123 registered SMEs.

The total number of vehicles registered in the Sultanate totalled 1.539m in April 2021, representing a small increase over the December 2020 registered vehicles at 1.557m, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCISI). Private vehicles topped the list of vehicles registered at 1.217m, followed by 0.232m commercial vehicles and 29,268 taxis. The number of vehicles with temporary registration reached 11,649 compared to 15,351 vehicles in December 2020.

Opec+ alliance said it will continue its oil output policy that was announced last April, which targets the gradual easing of curbs on supplies until the end of July. The alliance, which is comprised of Opec and other oil producers, said in a statement that the ministerial meeting held today, June 2, 2021, affirmed a plan to return 2 million barrels of crude per day of oil output during May-July.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

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ANNOUNCEMENT

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G7 agrees global minimum corporate tax of 15%

LONDON: Finance ministers from wealthy G7 nations on Saturday pledged to commit to a global minimum corporate tax of at least 15 per cent, rallying behind a US-backed plan.

“We... commit to a global minimum tax of at least 15 per cent on a country by country basis”, said a statement at the conclusion of their London meeting.

The G7 hopes to reach a final agreement at the July gathering of the expanded G20 finance ministers group, it added.

“I’m delighted to announce that G7 finance ministers... have reached a historic agreement to reform the global tax system”, said British Finance Minister Rishi Sunak, who chaired the two days of talks held in person after an easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

It was attended by counterparts from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

Sunak said the G7 had agreed to make the global tax system “fit for the global digital age and crucially to make sure that it’s fair so that the right companies pay the right tax in the right places”.

He thanked his counterparts for striking “a deal of historic significance that finally brings our global tax system into the



Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak speaks at a meeting of finance ministers from the G7 nations ahead of the G7 leaders’ summit, in London. — Reuters

21st century”.

The landmark move is aimed at getting multinationals — especially tech giants — to pay more into government coffers, which have been severely hit during the pandemic.

The talks have prepared the ground for a broader summit of G7 leaders in Cornwall, southwest England, starting on Friday.

US President Joe Biden is set to attend next week’s summit on his first foreign tour since taking office in January, while later Saturday US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will hold a press conference following the G7 meeting.

Momentum has grown behind the US-led plans to limit the ability of multinationals like tech giants to game the tax system to

boost profits, especially at a time when economies around the world are reeling from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

German finance minister Olaf Scholz on Friday told reporters it was the “right time” for a global tax deal given the vast sums spent by governments “to protect citizens, stabilise the economy and save jobs” since last year.

Biden had called for a unified

minimum corporate tax rate of 15 per cent in negotiations with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and G20.

French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire had told journalists in London that 15 per cent is “a minimum. For us, it’s a starting point”.

Along with its G7 and G20 partners, France wants “a more

ambitious level of taxation”, the minister said, with the current pandemic crisis showing that “tax evasion, the race towards the lowest possible level of taxation, is a dead end”.

At the same time, Ireland has expressed “significant reservations” about Biden’s plan.

Its 12.5 per cent tax rate is one of the lowest in the world, prompting tech giants such as Facebook and Google to make Ireland the home of their European operations.

Proponents argue that a minimum tax is necessary to stem competition between countries over who can offer multinationals the lowest rate.

They say that a “race to the bottom” saps precious revenues that could go to government priorities like hospitals and schools.

Corporate tax is one of two pillars in efforts for global fiscal reform, the other being a “digital tax” to allow countries to tax the profits of multinationals headquartered overseas.

Britain wants multinationals to pay taxes that reflect their operations, as governments seek to repair finances battered by slashed tax receipts plus vast spending and borrowing during the pandemic. — AFP

US factory orders pull back more than expected in April

WASHINGTON: A report released by the commerce Department on Friday showed new orders for US-manufactured goods pulled back by more than expected in the month of April.

The commerce Department said factory orders slid by 0.6 per cent in April after surging by an upwardly revised 1.4 per cent in March.

Economists had expected factory orders to edge down by 0.2 per cent compared to the 1.1 per cent jump originally reported for the previous month.

The bigger-than-expected decrease in factory orders came as orders for durable goods tumbled by 1.3 per cent amid a 6.6 per cent slump in orders for transportation equipment.

Meanwhile, the report showed new orders for non-durable goods inched up by 0.1 per cent in April after jumping by 1.6 per cent in March.

The commerce Department also said shipments of manufactured goods rose by 0.4 per cent in April after spiking by 2.1 per cent in March.

Inventories of manufactured goods also increased by 0.3 per cent in April after climbing by 0.8 per cent in the previous month. — dpa



A worker loads engine block castings on to the assembly line at the GM Romulus Powertrain plant in Romulus, Michigan. — Reuters

Connected worker is fundamental to post-Covid business resilience



RAVI GOPINATH

Human adaptability has been on display all through our year of lockdown. With digital transformation providing a workforce refresh, the post-Covid normal looks set to be a world where scattered teams are balanced by a strong emphasis on business continuity.

Having experimented with working from home, more workers would like the arrangement to continue — or at least, to have the flexibility to determine their own working hours. A Pew Research Center survey found that 71 per cent of US workers would keep working remotely if they had the option. At the same time, an increasing number of organisations have switched to long-term remote work, including Google and Microsoft.

But what does this new location-agnostic workforce mean for organisations across the economic spectrum? How might hitherto location-dependent industrial manufacturers and energy companies, for example, prepare for such sweeping changes — even as they work to attract and retain new talent? And what does that mean for business continuity?

BRIDGING THE GEOGRAPHICAL GAP
As business has become

Connected workers will harness the benefits of digitalisation to provide business guidance for organisations across the economic spectrum

digitalised, cloud, artificial intelligence (AI) and enhanced collaborative tools are helping create a new reality for industrial operations. Software leaders in the sector are driving this innovation by providing software, services, and digitised power and process infrastructure solutions that enable the transition to the world of virtually controlled sustainable operations and empowered, Connected Workers.

The industrial enterprise that is being created in the wake of the pandemic will have an empowered, connected workforce. As the next-generation workforce — a category of workers who do not know a life without the Internet — starts to assume their responsibilities, expertise based on years of experience will gradually be replaced by a new digital skillset.

Designers, engineers, operators, managers will all be equipped with the tools of information, analysis, automation, and guidance to ensure that they are able to accomplish their tasks efficiently and securely, in their individual capacities and as digitally linked teams. These Connected Workers comprise the beating heart of the resilient post-Covid organisation.

REBUILDING THE WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEM

As organisations build back better and stronger, then, technology will continue to play an enabling role for this new workforce. The normal workplace

ecosystem to support them over the medium- and long-term is already being radically rebuilt with cloud and AI at its core. Digital solutions will become a valuable shop floor partner, providing remote access to the physical sites that workers once occupied while simultaneously deploying the tools required to collaborate with internal and external colleagues — whether human or robot.

Applications will need to interoperate seamlessly to address complex use cases and provide workflows without boundaries. No matter how complex or domain-intensive the underlying functionality, the relevant information needs to be abstracted, contextualised, and presented simply and clearly. Automated guidance and learning aids are needed to provide digital expert assistance, and the experience of industrial software must be as good as the intuitiveness and ease of use of consumer technology.

While this new enhanced digital collaboration will be delivered over cloud-based networks, it is the acceleration of AI, combined with big data, that will support teams in elevating performance. In tandem, the development of cloud-based learning development tools will help workers align and develop skillsets specific to evolving roles and job requirements.

TWO NEW PERSONAS: THE DIGITAL TWIN AND THE CONNECTED WORKER

When addressing the business drivers that shape the new normal, two key personas emerge: The Digital Twin and the Connected Worker.

Simply defined, a Digital Twin is a data-led digital representation of a physical object. Such a digital duplicate provides the digital backbone across the key industrial disciplines of engineering, production, maintenance, and supply chain management and provides performance-based analytical predictions to enable decision making and address business requirements.

The Connected Worker leverages these elements to give them context, providing the insight, guidance and tools to ensure safe, effective, and consistent work output specific to each role. When workers all along the manufacturing value chain gain instant access to the same information, decision making is faster, more precise, and more profitable.

As digital environments become the norm across the economic value chain, the benefits of using tools such as the Digital Twin enable Connected Workers to make more informed decisions, collaborate in real-time, improve safety and efficiency, and drive sustainability throughout the operation. The result is interconnected, resilient organisations that work together seamlessly — regardless of where they are located and which time zone they operate within. That is the true promise of digital transformation.

[Ravi Gopinath is Chief Cloud Officer and Chief Product Officer at AVEVA]

Turkey announces new Black Sea natural gas discovery



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan speaks during the opening ceremony of Filizos port in the Black Sea city of Zonguldak, Turkey. — Reuters

ISTANBUL: Turkey has once again come across a large natural gas deposit in its search for natural resources in the Black Sea.

The drilling vessel Fatih recently discovered a deposit of 135 billion cubic metres in the Sakarya gas field, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday.

Turkey must import much of its needs. It is one of the biggest buyers of Russian natural gas.

Turkey has been surveying for energy resources in the Black Sea for years.

In August 2020, Turkey announced it had discovered its largest-ever deposit of 405 billion cubic metres.

The goal is to bring the gas from that deposit to the domestic market starting 2023, Erdogan said at the time, although experts cautioned it could take several years and billions of dollars in investment before production could start.

— dpa