

Oman's first 3D concrete printing facility launched

The Sultanate's first 3D Concrete Printing Facility was formally opened at Ghala Industrial Area in Muscat on Tuesday. The facility is jointly supported by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), local technology firm Innovative Technology Company for Educational Solutions (Innotech) and Galfar Engineering and Contracting. It follows the signing of a memorandum of collaboration (MoC) in May 2021 for the research and development of 3D concrete printing technology in Oman to encourage In Country Value (ICV) and private sector partnership. 3D concrete printing is a step change in the construction sector, providing a sustainable alternative to traditional construction method. **DETAILS ON P13**



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RUSSIAN WOMEN TRIUMPH AFTER BILES EXIT

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ICONIC DESIGNER LAUNCHES COLOURING BOOK FOR AUTOMOTIVE ENTHUSIASTS

MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO CANADA AND PERU

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Governor-General Mary Simon of Canada on the occasion of her being sworn-in as Canada's Governor General. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of success to the Governor-General. His Majesty also wished the people of Canada further progress and prosperity, and the existing relations between the two countries to develop and grow further. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Francisco Sagasti of the Republic of Peru on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Sagasti and the friendly people of his country. — ONA

OMAN, US EXPLORE COOPERATION

An official session of talks between the Sultanate and the US was held at the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday. The talks explored areas of cooperation between the two countries and reaffirmed their keenness to continue promoting them in various fields. The two sides also exchanged views on international and regional matters of common concern. **SEE ALSO P2**

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Treat Covid-19 on time, take vaccine

SULTANATE REPORTS 491 NEW CASES AND 17 DEATHS

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

The Sultanate continues to see drop in Covid-19 cases, hospital admissions and deaths due to lockdown and other restrictions, but people should take vaccines and treat coronavirus infections on time to avoid complications or extended medications, according to a senior doctor.

Dr Zaid bin Al Khattab al Hinai, Assistant Professor at the College of Medicine, and an infectious diseases consultant at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, said severe infections result in multiple organ failure, clots in the lung, brain or heart.

"A Covid-19 patient who is admitted in the intensive care unit is usually due to severe lungs failure, despite being given oxygen and medication. At this point, the patient's life should be supported by a ventilator to keep him alive," said Dr Al Hinai.

In a series of tweets, he said that Covid-19 is often the direct

cause of pulmonary failure. The intensive care team strives to support basic functions, reduce inflammation, and treat any other infection, if present.

Dr Al Hinai confirmed that a patient continues in this critical condition and consequent complications for a long time. The average stay is usually two weeks.

"Many of these potential complications are directly related to the coronavirus. But some of them are related to bacterial infections. Despite protocols to counter these emergencies, they do not always work in hospitals because at times the system is overwhelmed or swamped by cases.

"No hospital in the world has

succeeded in eliminating all complications completely. But it should always strive to improve performance".

The pandemic graph continued its downward trend on Tuesday with 491 new cases and 17 deaths over the past 24 hours. The total number of cases registered in the Sultanate has now reached 295,017, including 3,788 deaths.

Fifty patients were

admitted in hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of in-patients to 666 including 281 in intensive care units. The total number of recoveries stood at 277,010 and the recovery rate was up at 93.9 per cent.

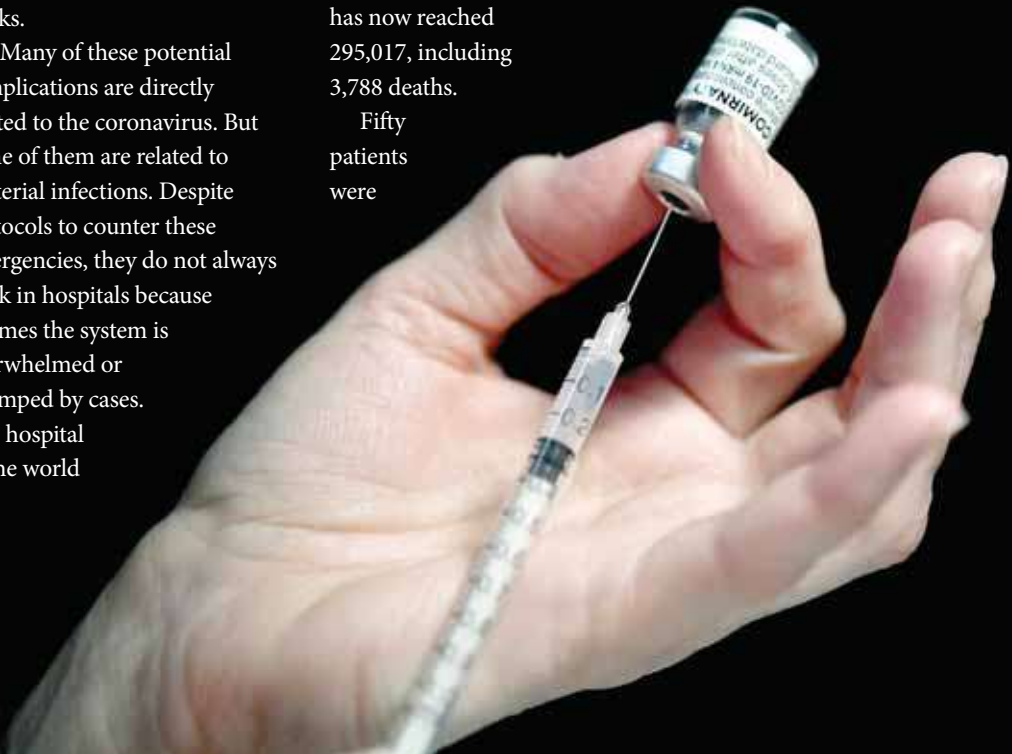
Covid jabs for kids after successful trials

Covid-19 vaccines for children may take longer than expected and not before successful trials, according to senior consultants and doctors.

"Vaccinating children in Oman will begin after the international reports approve the right vaccines for children and after we reach 70 per cent of the ongoing vaccination drive," said Dr Mahmoud bin Nasser al Rahbi, Senior Consultant of Emergency Medicine at Al Nahda Hospital.

"Currently, Pfizer is doing clinical trials in children to find out the correct and effective dose of vaccine in the age group of 6 months to 5 years, and 5 years to 11 years," said medical head of a private hospital in Muscat. "The resultant data is expected to be available between September and November so that we can expect authorisation for vaccination in these groups by the end of the year." Getting children vaccinated has been a question asked by many a parent who got their shots and vaccinating children is seen as crucial step to end the pandemic.

DETAILS ON P3



Liquidation of firms is part of legal status correction: Ministry

VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

Businesses are merging multiple companies and winding up inactive companies, which have recently led to the liquidation of several companies in the Sultanate.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion said that more companies are using the package it has announced earlier to merge multiple commercial activities and full liquidation or removal from the commercial register.

The ministry has been trying to address the issue of multiple commercial records which have negative repercussions on the economy.

The ministry said that publishing the announcement of the liquidation of companies in the Official Gazette is a binding legal procedure and a natural procedure to keep pace with global economic changes and technological developments which require restructuring and development

of institutions. It said that there is an increase in the number of new commercial registrations (10,934) between January 1 and July 30 this year compared to 7,910 in the same period in 2020.

A package was announced by the ministry for commercial companies wishing to liquidate or merge their commercial records starting from June 15. The facilities provided to companies wishing to liquidate their commercial records for a period of one year mandated that the liquidator must be one of the partners and authorised signatories, or whoever the company deems appropriate.

A fee of RO 50 will be levied for all liquidation procedures, there will be an exemption from all government fines resulting from the liquidation of commercial companies.

The process of liquidation can be initiated through Invest Easy by self or through Sanad service centres.



THE QURAYAT'S SALT BASINS

The discovery of salt basins in the Wilayat of Qurayat was by an accident and while nobody can point the exact date when it was first developed as a salt-producing field, the Khor Al Malh in the wilayat has proved to be an essential source of livelihood for some of the residents in the area. People noticed the water that springs from the ground fills the basins and then the salts are formed as soon as the water evaporates due to the temperature. While salt is produced in different parts of Oman, the Wilayat of Qurayat is famous for extracting natural salt which traces its origin to ancient times. **DETAILS ON P18**

Record-shattering heatwaves caused by pace of warming: Study

PARIS: Heatwaves that obliterate temperature records as in western Canada last month and Siberia last year are caused by the rapid pace, rather than the amount, of global warming, researchers said. The findings, reported in *Nature Climate Change*, suggest that humanity is likely to see a lot more deadly scorchers in the coming decades.

"Because we are in a period of very rapid warming, we need to prepare for more heat events that shatter previous records by large margins," head author Erich Fischer,

a senior scientist at ETH Zurich and a lead author of the UN climate science assessment currently under review, said.

The heatwave that ravaged British Columbia saw temperatures hit 49.6 degrees Celsius, more than five degrees above the hottest day recorded in Canada up to that point. Current rates of warming — about 0.2 degrees Celsius per decades — are likely to continue for at least another 10 to 20 years no matter how quickly humanity reduces the carbon pollution that drives global

heating, the study warns.

But efforts to curb greenhouse gases over the next decade will pay off later.

"The future probability of record-shattering extremes depends on the emissions pathway that gets us to a given level of warming," Fischer said.

Up to now, research on how global warming will affect heatwaves has focused mostly on how much temperatures have risen compared to some reference period rather than on how quickly. — AFP

Oman and US hold official talks session



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The session explored areas of cooperation between the two countries and reaffirmed their keenness to continue promoting

them in various fields. The two sides also exchanged views on international and regional matters of common concern.

The Sultanate was represented by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs at the Foreign Ministry,

while the US was represented by Wendy Sherman, Deputy Secretary of State. The session was also attended by the American Ambassador accredited to the Sultanate and a number of officials from both countries foreign ministries. — ONA



Sayyid Shihab receives invitation to attend Seoul ADEX 2021

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence, on Tuesday received a written message from Suh Wook,

Minister of the National Defence of the Republic of Korea, inviting HH Sayyid Shihab to attend Seoul International Aerospace & Defence Exhibition to be held in Seoul from October 19-24, 2021.

This came when Dr Al Za'abi received in his office at Muaskar

Al Murtafa, Kim Chang-Kyu, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Sultanate.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and discussed several matter of mutual interest.

— ONA



Majlis Ash'shura reviews performance measurement and excellence systems



MUSCAT: A number of specialists from the Ministry of Labour presented a visual display before Majlis Ash'shura about the individual performance measurement and institutional excellence systems which will be implemented in all government units from the beginning of next year, on Tuesday.

The presentation, attended by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura, dealt with the general framework of the individual performance measurement system, change management, and the general

framework of the institutional excellence system. The individual performance measurement system aims to develop the human resources system by building a culture of proficiency in job performance, improving performance appraisal systems, and linking productivity with incentives.

The ministry's specialists indicated that the initiative to accelerate the implementation of the individual and institutional performance measurement system aims to review operating expenses and control spending.

The presentation touched on

THE INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM AIMS TO DEVELOP THE HUMAN RESOURCES SYSTEM BY BUILDING A CULTURE OF PROFICIENCY IN JOB PERFORMANCE, IMPROVING PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS, AND LINKING PRODUCTIVITY WITH INCENTIVES

the benefits of the system on the society, the unit, officials and the employees as well as its features and tools, and the stages of measuring individual performance, in addition to the governance of system management.

The presentation dealt with the issue of change management to ensure a smooth transition from the existing job performance evaluation system to the individual performance measurement system.

The experts spoke about the institutional excellence system in terms of its cycle, criteria and expected output.

MoU signed to provide support to the disabled



MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Asas Muscat regarding the council's strategic partnership at the second edition of Kaderoon Forum, an initiative designed to extend support to the disabled.

The MoU was signed by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura and the CEO of Asas Muscat.

The council worked on studying and approving a number of agreements and draft laws related to the disabled

SHAIKH AHMED AL NADABI
Secretary-General,
Majlis Ash'shura

The presence of Majlis Ash'shura as a strategic partner alongside a number of government establishments, comes as part of its continuous initiatives to provide support to the disabled and allow them chances for social participation and enable them to contribute to the sustainable development process in line with the Oman Vision 2040.

Regarding the council's partnership and its role in supporting the disabled, the secretary-general of Majlis Ash'shura said that the council pays great attention to this important segment of the society. He noted that the council worked on studying and approving a number of agreements and draft

laws related to the disabled. The council came up with recommendations that aimed to enhance the provision of care, attention and support to the disabled. Besides, he said, Majlis Ash'shura recently issued a braille book on the competencies of Majlis Ash'shura.

Kaderoon Forum aims to integrate the disabled into society in various fields by working to realise their ideas and aspirations, through establishing projects that are suitable with their abilities and skills after providing them with appropriate training and qualification. The initiative, in its second edition, targets to set up 250 sustainable projects dedicated to the disabled.

Covid jabs for kids after successful trials



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KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

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out the correct and effective dose of vaccine in children in the age group of 6 months to 5 years, and 5 years to 11 years,” said Dr Benny Panakkan, medical head of a private hospital in Muscat. “The resultant data is expected to be available between September and November so that we can expect authorisation for vaccination in these groups by the end of the year.”

Getting children vaccinated has been a question asked by many a parent who got their shots and vaccinating children is seen as crucial step to end the pandemic.

“Any nation is unlikely to achieve herd immunity as long

Vaccinating the children in Oman will begin after the international reports approve the right vaccines for children and after we reach 70 per cent of the ongoing vaccination drive,

DR MAHMOUD AL RAHBI

Al Nahdha Hospital

as enough people in a given community have antibodies against the coronavirus and until children can get vaccinated,” Dr Dilip Singhvi, an internal medicine specialist, said.

Many countries are administering Pfizer-BioNTech shots to children aged 12 years and above since May while Moderna's vaccine is expected to be authorised for children as young as 12 soon.

Reports suggest that Moderna, the US drugmaker, is expanding the size of its clinical trial testing its Covid-19 vaccine among kids aged 5 to 11 years to find the likelihood of side effects.

Symposium highlights historic role of Musandam



AHMED AL SHUHI
BUKHA, JULY 27

The Musandam branch of the Cultural Club, in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, organised a symposium themed ‘Musandam Prior to 1970, Historic Dimensions on Trade and Industry’.

The Symposium was aimed

to highlight the historical role played by Musandam with its unique and strategic geographical location as a linking ring between East and West in terms of maritime trade through the Strait of Hormuz.

The symposium shed light on the historic and civilisational achievements of Musandam particularly in the field trade and industry.

FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS



Muscat Municipality continued its efforts to follow up various activities related to public health to ensure compliance with the health and safety standards and to detect and take action against any violations to the health and hygiene rules as well as ensure the quality of products and foodstuff in the market. – ONA

Hotel revenues reach RO 37m till June 2021

MUSCAT: The total revenues of Omani hotels in the 3-5-star category fell by 35.8% to RO 37,013,000 until the end of June 2021, compared to RO 57,670,000 during the same period of the previous year.

Hotels occupancy rates increased by 3.7% to reach 34.0%, compared to 32.8% for the same period in 2020, according to the statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Meanwhile, the total number of guests in hotels went up by 22.6% to stand at 522,329 guests compared to 425,905 in June 2020.

Among the nationalities, the Omani guests constituted the maximum number of visitors to stand at 369,666 guests compared to 139,798 during



the same period of the previous year, comprising a surge by 164.4%. This was followed by 74,127 Asian guests compared to 42,722 in June 2020, comprising a rise by 73.5%.

The number of Arab guests (from non-GCC countries) reached 21,630 while the

European guests stood at 21,215 and the Americans at 8,993.

The number of GCC guests reached 6,318 followed by the Oceanians with 2,956, the Africans with 1,966, and 15,458 guests from other nationalities.

— ONA

One of the largest business groups in Oman, with diversified business interests, has the following immediate requirement:

ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

Job: To be responsible for Repair & Maintenance of Electrical jobs and also liasoning with contractors for execution of Facility Management works within residential buildings.

Qualification: Diploma holder in Electrical or Electronic Engineering from a recognised institute.

Age: 30-32 years

Experience: Over 5 years of experience in the above field, including experience in maintenance of Residential Complexes is a requirement. Previous experience in Facility Management company, executing similar jobs for Electrical & Mechanical works, will be an added advantage.

ELECTRICIAN

Job: To carry out and supervise all Mechanical / Electrical jobs in the residential building.

Qualification: ITI (2 Years – NCVT approved) with Electrical / Mechanical works

Age: 25-30 Years

Experience: 3 - 5 Years relevant experience

Applicants meeting the above requirements and able to submit NOC may respond within a week along with a detailed resume, copy of passport and recent passport-size photograph to:

jobsatoman@gmail.com

THIS IS

THEIR

HOME

TOO

WHEN INDIVIDUALS
ARE CONNECTED
TO THE WILDLIFE
AND MADE AWARE
OF THEIR
IMPORTANCE AT A
VERY EARLY AGE
AND THE NEED TO
PROTECT THEM,
THEN
CONSERVATION
BECOMES EACH
PERSON'S
RESPONSIBILITY



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Office for the Conservation of the Environment, Royal Diwan of Court has been bringing the public closer to the wildlife in unique ways.

For example, to mark the Eid Al Adha, there were special digital postcards featuring different animals such as the Arabian Oryx, Ibex etc.

And this week the office has a special treat for youngsters.

The tweet from the Office for the Conservation of the Environment extended an invitation to the young ones, “For our little heroes, story lovers - Tomorrow at 2 pm Via the Instagram account @oce_man to watch the cartoon ‘Journey of the Little Adham Falcon’- from Oman to Madagascar. It is a public invitation to all.”

The message is to the young environmentalist and the promising generation, saying, “We wish you a happy and useful school holiday, and we are pleased to present you with a cartoon ‘Little Adham Falcon.’”

It was in December 2020, the Environment Conservation Office at the Diwan of Royal Court had declared a new list of animals as endangered and added new sets of “rare” wild birds and animals to the Centre of Breeding at live organisms and fungi sanctuary in the Governorate of Al Wusta.

The Oman News Agency reported



that the step came in pursuance of support accorded to wildlife by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, as well as national efforts exerted by various parties to increase specialist research in environmental fields.

The report had quoted Dr Qais bin Abdullah al Rawahi, Director of Environment Affairs and Arabian Oryx Department at the Environment Conservation Office, saying that since 2013, the Environment Conservation Office has been promoting its programme of rearing sand gazelles and other Arabian gazelles.

He had added that, with effect from that year, the Environment Office had begun to diversify its stocks by adding different types of animals from the Arabian Peninsula, like the striped hyena, the genet, the mongoose, honey badger and a long list of bucks, wild



sheep, ostrich and wild dogs. The establishment of nature reserves has been one of the keys to the success stories of conservation in Oman by not only protect the animals from

being hunted, but also prevented encroachment of natural habitats.

The success story of the Arabian Oryx being introduced to the wilderness in Jiddat Al Harasis was the beginning, and the current trend is the Arabian Leopard. But it was the conservation measures taken for turtles that had a direct contribution to tourism and established Ras Al Hadd on the world map for nature enthusiasts looking out for ecotourism.

Protection of the natural habitats of the wildlife in Oman began in the early years of Oman's modern Renaissance highlighting the importance of environment protection and conserving the biodiversity of Oman.

Oman's list of nature reserves have been growing with Daimaniyat Islands, Ras Al Hadd, Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, Saleel Nature park, Jabal Samhan

Nature Reserve and Khawrs (lagoons) Reserve of Dhofar Coast, but soon the interests grew on Barr al Hikman for its wetlands, coral reefs and birds, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar for the indigenous plants and trees, Masirah Coastal Area for loggerhead turtles and Jabal Ghahwan for Arabian Tahr, gazelles, leopards and birds.

The community involvement sees the recruitment of rangers from within the regions of the protected areas. However, the rangers have had challenges with poaching.

But when individuals are connected to the wildlife and made aware of their importance at a very early age and the need to protect them, then conservation becomes each person's responsibility.

According to experts, some of the rare animal species that need protection in addition to Arabian Oryx, the Arabian Leopard, Muscat and Reem Gazelles are the Masirah Hare, Nubian Ibex, the Arabian Tahr, Grey Wolf, the Sand Fox, the Caracal and the striped Hyena, where as in marine mammals the ones that need protection are Sperm Whales and Humpback Whales. Amongst birds, experts say the ones that need protection are Ferruginous Duck, Great Spotted Eagle, Imperial Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Sociable Plover, Slender-billed Curlew, White-eyed Gull and Golden -Winged Grosbeak.

Conservation is an education, earlier done the better.



OCCI opens outlet for SME products in Ibri



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 27

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate has opened an outlet for owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at Lulu Hypermarket in Ibri.

Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of OCCI, said that such free outlets in major commercial complexes will provide an opportunity for SMEs.

He added that this initiative will support the products and services of small and medium-sized enterprises by introducing and marketing them and educating the owners of these enterprises of the importance of presenting their products and services to the consumer.

OCCI has called on commercial centres to join the government's efforts to support small and medium-sized enterprises, as per the economic stimulus plan approved by the Council of Ministers.

Reports of insurance claims denial untrue, says CMA

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 27

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has denied reports that insurance companies refused to compensate or accept accident claims during Eid Al Adha lockdown.

"The reports about insurance companies refusing to compensate traffic accident claims during the full lockdown are not true."

The authority stated the provisions that regulate the relationship between

the policyholder and the insurance company and identified exceptional cases in which the company has the right to refrain from paying compensation resulting from traffic accidents.

It also clarified that the policyholder has the right to file an online complaint in the event of a refusal by any company through the website or application.

CMA called on the public to verify the accuracy of the news from official sources before spreading rumours," the statement said.

Foreigners allowed to enter Kuwait: Oman Embassy

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 27

Non-Kuwaitis will be allowed to enter from August 1, provided the proof of immunisation is submitted electronically, the Sultanate's Embassy in that country said.

"The conditions include submission of a valid residency, two doses of approved vaccinations, PCR tests 72 hours before travel, in addition to another examination during the first three days of the home," it added.

The Kuwait Cabinet had decided to allow all commercial activities to operate without restrictions from Tuesday,

The government spokesman said all commercial activities will operate as per the decisions and regulations of the Municipality and ministry of commerce and industry, which was the case before the pandemic.

The cabinet continued to ban large gatherings including conferences, weddings, and other social events, including gatherings at diwanis, according to the government spokesman Tareq al Mazrem. Vaccinated are allowed to enter all places, but unvaccinated people can only enter pharmacies, cooperative societies, food markets, local reports said.



شركة ظفار لتوليد الكهرباء ش.م.ع
Dhofar Generating Company SAOG

PO Box: 1571, PC: 211, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman.
www.dgcoman.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

We are pleased to present the Board of Directors' Report of Dhofar Generating Company SAOG (the "Company" or "DGC") for the six months ended 30 June 2021.

Overview
Your Company is very proud to announce that it has achieved 6 years without LTI on 4 June 2021. Managing safety is never an easy task, and unless you have a fully committed team it is not possible to achieve such excellent results. During the past 6 years, the business has faced many challenges the latest including abnormally heavy rainfall coupled with the pandemic coronavirus. The team has never given safety a day off, always remaining proactively vigilant. The entire team under the guidance of the Board has worked hard to maintain the Company's safety principles and ambitions.

The plant performance indicators continue to be excellent with almost perfect reliability factors which is essential for the financial health of the business. As highlighted earlier, the contractual revenue is highly seasonal during the calendar year, with higher revenue in the summer period compared to the winter period. Summer months include April, May, June, September and October.

The Annual Performance Test for both 273MW Plant and 445MW Plant for the Contract Year 2021-2022 completed in March and the Guaranteed Net Contracted power was demonstrated. A key achievement during this quarter was the completion of interconnection project to connect two blocks of 445MW Plant to optimize the power import cost. The project achieved go-live on 15th March 2021.

The off-taker has paid all capacity payments on time throughout the reporting period. Fuel payments, which are pass through in nature, continue to be held however there is no payment to the fuel supplier. As reported earlier, this payment status is common to the entire power sector and business earnings are dependent on the capacity revenues and not the fuel revenue.

On 6 July 2021 at 13:00 hours external grid disturbance occurred on Dhofar grid resulting in plant trip. Consequently, a blackout occurred at 13:00 hours in the Dhofar grid. Subsequent to the Blackout the power units were restored and were available to export.

There were no environmental exceedances during the period.

COVID19 Risks faced by the business and mitigation actions

The team at DGC and NOMAC Oman have continued to deal with the risks posed by COVID19 in a proactive and responsible manner. Taking every precaution possible, only essential staff is allowed in the plant while operations and maintenance teams working on 2 shifts per day, 4 persons per shift, with staff returning to home at night to minimize the risk business disruption due to infection.

The operator has implemented a formal COVID19 risk management plan which includes assessment of key maintenance requirements and inventory levels for the next six months on a rolling basis, medical consumables and staff testing requirements and stakeholder engagement.

The Company continues to work closely with all stakeholders and is following the guidance issued by regulatory authorities to manage the risks faced by this pandemic virus.

Plant performance during the period

30 June	273MW		445MW	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
Reliability Factor	99.94%	99.94%	99.84%	99.90%
Load Factor	3.24%	3.90%	36.65%	41.39%
Energy Exported (GWh)	38	46	705	802

Forced outage factor of both plants remained very low with performance similar to the corresponding prior period. Load factors are dependent on the grid demand and based on load despatch centre instructions.

Maintenance activities during the period
The second quarter of the year falls within the summer period during which the business is required to be fully available. The Annual Performance Test for the Contract Year 9 was conducted in March 2021 successfully. The team kept its focus on preventive and predictive activities during the quarter to ensure high availability of equipment. These activities included various initiatives such as fire protection system inspections, housekeeping initiatives and awareness trainings for team members and contractors. The operator has ensured that all required permits were valid during the period.

All activities were routine in nature and there was no major maintenance during the quarter.

Travel restrictions due to COVID19 are severely restricting planned maintenance activities during the upcoming winter period. No major maintenance is planned in this outage season however there are some routine OEM recommended activities which are deferred to the latter part of the year. The operator will perform all activities which can be performed in house.

Cash Sweep mechanism
DGC's financing arrangements provide for a cash sweep obligation to take effect from or after 31 July 2021. The cash sweep mechanism requires that after operating costs and debt service payments have been accounted for, 95% of the free cash flows shall be paid to the lenders towards prepayment of the loan amount ("Cash Sweep Mechanism"). The Company may disapply the Cash Sweep Mechanism if it opts to provide letters of credit ("LC") for amounts that increase over time as specified in the financing agreements. If the Cash Sweep Mechanism is not applied, the Company will not be able to distribute dividend as envisioned due to the application of the Cash Sweep Mechanism. The Cash Sweep Mechanism has been described in detail in DGC's Prospectus issues in relation to the Initial Public Offering ("IPO"). Chapter XII Project Cost and Sources of Financing - Cash Sweep Mechanism (Page 64), Chapter XIII Risk Factors and Methods of Mitigation - Dividend policy may not be fulfilled (Page 73) and Chapter XV Dividend Policy Page 97 explain the Cash Sweep Mechanism and associated risks in detail.

Due to various reasons including but not limited to the country credit rating and other issues prevalent in the local power sector, external banks have refused to provide the required Backstop DSRA LC to disapply the Cash Sweep Mechanism. However, a local bank has offered the LC subject to certain conditions which the Company is endeavouring to meet.

The Company envisions that this process will require further time to satisfy other conditions imposed by the local bank for issuance of the LC. In this regard, the Company has requested its lenders for an amendment to the loan agreement that is to change the Cash Sweep Start Date from 31 July 2021 to 31 October 2021.

In case the date from which the Cash Sweep Mechanism becomes effective is not amended and the conditions of the local bank who has been requested to issue the LC are not met, the Company will not be able to disapply the Cash Sweep Mechanism.

Financial highlights

Income Statement in OMR '000	Six Months Ended	
	30-Jun-2021	30-Jun-2020
Total revenues	19,715	21,477
Operating costs	(13,751)	(15,230)
Gross profit	5,964	6,247
Other costs	(3,239)	(4,741)
Net profit after tax	2,725	1,506
Earnings per share – Bz/share	12	7

Revenues
The revenue for the six months period has reduced by OMR 1.7m mainly due to OMR 1.3m lower fuel revenue on account of lower load compared to the corresponding period in 2020, OMR0.3m lower major maintenance revenue, OMR0.04m lower capacity revenue 2020 being a leap year and finance lease amortization of OMR 0.09m.

Operating Costs
Operating cost has reduced by OMR 1.4m mainly due to lower fuel cost on lower load compared to the corresponding period in 2020.

Other Costs
Other costs have reduced by OMR 1.5m primarily due to deferred credit on carried forward tax losses of 2020. The government of Sultanate of Oman allowed to carry forward 2020 tax losses to an unlimited period to be adjustable against future taxable income.

Net profit after Tax
The Company has posted a net profit due to the Company's contractual revenue structure which is highly seasonal, i.e. lower in the winter period and higher in the summer months.

The net profit after tax for quarter two of 2021 is consistent with the prior period quarter as explained above.

Balance Sheet OMR '000

	Period Ended 30-Jun-2021	Year Ended 2020
Total assets	219,116	239,349
Net shareholder's equity	41,138	37,556
Paid up capital	22,224	22,224
Cash	4,421	4,649
Current ratio	1.22	1.08
Gearing ratio	3.5	3.9
Net assets per share – OMR	0.185	0.169

Cash flow and cash equivalents, at the end of the Period
Cash balances at June 2021 is lower than December 2020 due to debt service and interest repayments on 31 January 2021 and 30 April 2021, routine operational payments and the dividend pay-out. The next debt service is due on 31 July 2021.

Future outlook
Two months of the upcoming quarter fall in the winter period and one month will be included in the summer period under the PPA. Routine recommended planned maintenance activities are being deferred to latter part of the year due to COVID19 related travel restrictions. The team is keeping a close watch on all critical systems to avoid any reliability issues. The business continues to focus on the EPC Warranty close out process.

The company is working with its lenders and the credit facility providers to arrange a Backstop DSRA LC for disapplication of the Cash Sweep Mechanism to commence from 31 July 2021. Based on the feedback received during the Eid holidays, certain international lenders have expressed their reluctance in accepting an LC from any local bank due to the current credit rating of the country risk. Any approvals in this regard require unanimous decisions from all the lenders. If the lenders do not agree to an extension to the date from which the Cash Sweep Mechanism is applicable (as noted above) or if the Company is unable to secure an acceptable Backstop DSRA LC for the lenders, then DGC will not be able to distribute dividends as envisioned. If the Company does not elect or is unable to disapply the cash sweep obligations provided for by the CTA, this means that the Company's ability to pay dividends will be impacted during the period of cash sweep as operating revenues may only be paid into the dividend distribution account once the Company's prepayment obligation from the cash sweep has been satisfied. The Company will continue to keep its shareholders updated in the coming period with respect to the Cash Sweep Mechanism.

Acknowledgement
Finally, the Board of Directors would like to conclude by expressing their immense gratitude for the privilege of the vision, guidance, wisdom and crucial support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Government.

Ahmed Syahrani Sulaiman
Chairman

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2021

	30-Jun-2021 RO	31-Dec-2020 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Plant, equipment and capital work in progress	148,292,299	150,093,406
Finance lease receivable	41,977,990	43,222,248
Right-of-use assets	1,821,860	1,855,736
Major maintenance accrued revenue	2,132,499	2,307,738
Prepaid connection charges	513,602	453,753
Total non-current assets	194,738,250	197,932,881
Current assets		
Inventories	5,689,543	5,670,405
Finance lease receivable	2,430,389	2,333,129
Major maintenance accrued revenue	480,626	584,735
Trade and other receivables	10,918,309	27,754,835
Advances and prepayments	437,105	424,626
Cash and cash equivalents	4,421,387	4,648,738
Total current assets	24,377,359	41,416,468
TOTAL ASSETS	219,115,609	239,349,349
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
EQUITY		
Share capital	22,224,000	22,224,000
Legal reserve	439,457	439,457
Retained earnings	25,388,956	24,663,590
Cash flow hedge reserve	(6,914,281)	(9,770,973)
Net equity	41,138,132	37,556,074
Non-current liabilities		
Long term loan	135,752,290	138,578,204
Fair value of the cash flow hedge	6,751,592	9,541,667
Provision for decommissioning costs	4,840,746	4,722,679
End of service benefits payable	105,498	92,490
Lease liabilities	2,101,077	1,919,068
Deferred tax liability - net	8,418,463	8,580,746
Total non-current liabilities	157,969,666	163,434,254
Current liabilities		
Long term loan	7,226,040	6,957,669
Fair value of the cash flow hedge	1,382,856	1,954,195
Lease liabilities	19,579	152,716
Trade and other payables	11,344,014	29,259,119
Income tax payable	35,322	35,322
Total current liabilities	20,007,811	38,359,021
Total liabilities	177,977,477	201,793,275
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	219,115,609	239,349,349
Net assets per share	0.185	0.169

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2021

	Quarter ended 30-Jun-2021 RO	6 months ended 30-Jun-2021 RO	Quarter ended 30-Jun-2020 RO	6 months ended 30-Jun-2020 RO
Revenue	12,451,167	19,715,454	13,979,950	21,476,789
Operating costs	(6,958,771)	(13,751,040)	(8,399,550)	(15,229,766)
GROSS PROFIT	5,492,396	5,964,414	5,580,400	6,247,023
General and administrative expenses	(215,405)	(409,998)	(296,454)	(501,973)
Finance costs	(1,807,950)	(3,609,194)	(1,744,841)	(3,457,008)
Finance income	55,639	113,899	63,782	126,619
PROFIT BEFORE TAX	3,524,680	2,059,121	3,602,887	2,414,661
Income tax expense	1,016,759	666,405	(457,218)	(908,410)
Net profit for the period	4,541,439	2,725,526	3,145,669	1,506,251
Other comprehensive income / (loss)				
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss				
Fair value loss arising during the year on cash flow hedge - net of tax	117,519	2,856,692	2,353,759	(5,534,508)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME/(LOSS) FOR THE PERIOD	4,658,958	5,582,218	5,499,428	(4,028,257)
Basic and diluted earnings per share	0.020	0.012	0.014	0.007

The financial statements were approved by a resolution of the Board of Directors on 26 July 2021.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. 30/2021

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link:
(https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)

against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/21/054	39/2021/MM/HQ-30	Supply of Batteries for Traffic Light (E- Tender)	Rial 25	07/08/2021	12/08/2021	Specialist

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat Municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be placed in the Office No (B3 - 040) in the Third Floor at Secretariat of Interior Committee for Tenders in Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsait.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: **(https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)**.
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to **(etenderhd@ita.gov.om)** or call **(+968 24166670)**.

Pact to end US combat mission in Iraq

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi sealed an agreement late on Monday formally ending the US combat mission in Iraq by the end of 2021, but US forces will still operate there in an advisory role.

The agreement comes at a politically delicate time for the Iraqi government and could be a boost for Baghdad. Kadhimi has faced increasing pressure from some parties and paramilitary groups who oppose the US military role in the country.

Biden and Kadhimi met in the Oval Office for their first face-to-face talks as part of a strategic dialogue between the United States and Iraq.

“Our role in Iraq will be ... to be available, to continue to train, to assist, to help and to deal with IS as it arises, but we’re not going to be, by the end of the year, in a combat mission,” Biden told reporters as he and Kadhimi met.

There are currently 2,500 US troops in Iraq focusing on countering the remnants of IS. The US role in Iraq will shift entirely to training and advising the Iraqi military to defend itself.

The shift is not expected to

“Our role in Iraq will be ... to be available, to continue to train, to assist, to help and to deal with IS as it arises, but we’re not going to be, by the end of the year, in a combat mission

JOE BIDEN
US President

have a major operational impact since the United States has already moved towards focusing on training Iraqi forces.

Still, for Biden, the deal to end the combat mission in Iraq follows decisions to carry out an unconditional withdrawal from Afghanistan and wrap up the US military mission there by the end of August.

Together with his agreement on Iraq, the Democratic president is moving to formally complete US combat missions in the two wars that then-President George W Bush began under his watch nearly two decades ago.



US President Joe Biden greets Iraq’s Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi during a bilateral meeting in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, on Monday. – Reuters

A US-led coalition invaded Iraq in March 2003 based on charges that then-Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein’s government possessed weapons of mass destruction. Saddam was ousted from power, but such weapons were never found.

In recent years, the US mission

was focused on helping defeat IS militants in Iraq and Syria.

“Nobody is going to declare mission accomplished. The goal is the enduring defeat of IS,” a senior administration official told reporters ahead of Kadhimi’s visit.

The reference was reminiscent of the large “Mission Accomplished”

banner on the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier above where Bush gave a speech declaring major combat operations over in Iraq on May 1, 2003.

“If you look to where we were, where we had Apache helicopters in combat, when we had US special forces doing regular operations, it’s

a significant evolution. So by the end of the year we think we’ll be in a good place to really formally move into an advisory and capacity-building role,” the official said. US diplomats and troops in Iraq and Syria were targeted in three rocket and drone attacks earlier this month. Analysts believed the attacks were part of a campaign by militias.

The senior administration official would not say how many US troops would remain on the ground in Iraq for advising and training. Kadhimi also declined to speculate about a future US drawdown, saying troop levels would be determined by technical reviews.

Kadhimi, who is seen as friendly to the United States, has tried to check the power of Iran-aligned militias. But his government condemned US airstrikes against fighters along its border with Syria in late June, calling it a violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

In remarks to a small group of reporters after the talks, Kadhimi stressed that his government was responsible for responding to such attacks. He acknowledged that he had reached out to Tehran to address them. — Reuters

Lebanon’s new PM-designate begins bid to form cabinet

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s new prime minister-designate Najib Mikati started consultations with leading political parties on Tuesday with a view to forming a long-awaited government.

The billionaire politician, already twice a prime minister, was designated on Monday, days after Saad Hariri threw in the towel.

The government of Hassan Diab resigned following a deadly port explosion in Beirut last August and efforts to agree on a new lineup have proved fruitless.

The institutional vacuum is holding up a potential financial rescue plan for Lebanon, which defaulted on its debt last year and has since sunk into what the World Bank has described as one of the world’s worst crises since the mid-19th century.

On Tuesday, Mikati met with top political parties, including the powerful Hezbollah movement and the Free Patriotic Movement founded by President Michel Aoun. Following their meeting, Hezbollah MP Mohammad Raad said his party is ready to “seriously cooperate” with the new PM



Prime Minister-designate Najib Mikati gestures as he talks at the presidential palace in Baabda, on Monday. – Reuters

designate.

“What is required is speedy cabinet formation and cooperation from all parties towards that end,” Raad told reporters.

FPM chief Gebran Bassil, accused by critics of repeatedly obstructing efforts to form a new government, said his party has decided “not to participate in the next cabinet, which means we will not get involved in the formation process”.

In an interview with the An-Nahar newspaper, Mikati vowed his lineup would be “purely

technical” and tasked with bridging the gap to elections due next year.

Several lawmakers, including deputy speaker Elie Ferzli, on Tuesday, backed this push.

“The government will consist of specialists,” Ferzli said. “As for the nominating process, it will rest on Mikati and his agreements with the president.”

The designation of the 65-year-old Mikati, Lebanon’s richest man and to many a symbol of its corrupt oligarchy, was met with general scepticism. — AFP

Tunisia’s Ennahda party urges dialogue to resolve political crisis

TUNIS: Tunisia’s biggest party, the moderate Ennahda, on Tuesday called for a national dialogue to get the country out of crisis after it accused the president of a coup when he dismissed the prime minister and suspended parliament. In a reversal of a call early on Monday to its supporters to take to the streets against President Kais Saied’s actions, Ennahda urged dialogue and efforts to avoid civil strife.

“The movement ... calls on all Tunisians to increase solidarity, synergy and unity and to confront all calls for sedition and civil strife,” it said in a statement.

Ennahda had already told supporters through party branches not to resume a sit-in outside parliament and to avoid protests.

Though some senior party members wanted to retain a street presence, its leaders decided to avoid any further escalation and allow a period of calm, two Ennahda officials said earlier on Tuesday.

The area outside the parliament building, the site on Monday of confrontations between hundreds



Tunisian police barricade the Habib Bourguiba avenue in Tunis on Tuesday. – AFP

of supporters of Ennahda and Saied, was empty on Tuesday morning. Ennahda’s supporters left on Monday evening and have not returned.

Tunisia is facing its biggest crisis since the 2011 revolution that introduced democracy. Saied said his move — with help from the army — was in line with a constitutional clause allowing extraordinary measures during an emergency.

It followed months of squabbles with Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi and parliament as Covid-19 exacerbated an economic decline and raised the spectre of major street confrontations or a slide back from the democratic gains won a decade ago.

Ennahda and the next three largest parties in parliament have all denounced the move as a coup. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

GENEVA

57 migrants die in shipwreck off Libyan coast

At least 57 people drowned on Monday after a boat capsized off the Libyan coast near Khums, the latest tragedy in the Mediterranean where more than 1,100 have perished this year, the UN’s International Organization for Migration (IOM) said.

Bodies have not been recovered from the shipwreck, but survivors included migrants from Nigeria, Ghana and Gambia, IOM spokeswoman Safa Msehli told Reuters. “According to survivors brought



to shore by fishermen and the coast guard, at least 20 women and two children were among those who drowned,” she said earlier by tweet.

KHARTOUM

Thousands of Ethiopians cross into Sudan

Three thousand Ethiopian asylum-seekers crossed into Sudan late on Monday, according to a government report seen by AFP, hailing from the Amhara region which borders the conflict-hit Tigray region.

The two regions, which both border Sudan, are locked in a decades-old land dispute that has become central to an eight-month-old war in Tigray.

“Three thousand people from the Qemant tribe crossed the border late today (Monday) into



Taya village” in El-Gedaref state, the Sudanese government report said. More asylum-seekers from the war-torn region were pouring in, it added.

TELAVIV

Over 2,000 new Covid infections in Israel

The number of new coronavirus infections in Israel continues to rise significantly: The Ministry of Health reported 2,112 cases on Tuesday — the highest number since mid-March.

According to Israeli television, about every 10th new case is a returnee from abroad.

The number of Covid-19 patients with a severe infection rose to 138, up from 61 on Monday a week ago.

Most of the new cases are linked to the Delta variant of the



virus, according to official figures. Among the newly infected are many younger people and also those who have been vaccinated twice.

In brief

■ ISLAMABAD



PAKISTANI, 19, BECOMES YOUNGEST PERSON TO SUMMIT K2

A 19-year-old Pakistani has become the youngest person to summit K2, the world's second highest mountain, the Alpine Club of Pakistan said on Tuesday. Shehroze Kashif reached the 8,611-metre summit at 8:10am on Tuesday.

Kashif, who began climbing in his early teens, scaled the world's 12th highest mountain, 8,047-metre Broad Peak, at the age of 17. In May, he became the youngest Pakistani to scale Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain. He now holds an additional record as the youngest person to have summited K2 and Everest.

■ NEW DELHI



WILL MEET END-JULY DOMESTIC VACCINE SUPPLY TARGET: INDIA

India will meet its target of supplying more than half a billion Covid-19 vaccine doses to states by the end of this month, the health ministry said on Tuesday, but added not all doses may be administered by then.

The government told the country's highest court last month that 516 million doses would be made available by end-July, an important milestone for its goal of inoculating all of India's estimated adult population of 944 million this year. Reuters reported on Monday that India would not be able to administer all those shots unless authorities more than tripled daily vaccinations to 14 million doses. Daily inoculations hit a national record of 9.2 million doses on June 21 but has fallen since.

■ HONG KONG



HK COURT CONVICTS MAN IN FIRST NATIONAL SECURITY TRIAL

A Hong Kong court convicted a former waiter of terrorism and inciting secession on Tuesday in the first trial conducted under a national security law.

Tong Ying-kit, 24, was charged with terrorism for driving a motorbike into three police officers and secession for flying a protest flag during a rally on July 1 last year, the day after the national security law was enacted.

The flag read "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times", a ubiquitous slogan during the huge and often violent pro-democracy protests that convulsed the city two years ago.

Olympic host Tokyo hits record 2,848 virus cases



Women in traditional costumes and wearing protective masks amid Covid-19 outbreak make their way in Tokyo, on Tuesday. — Reuters

TOKYO: Tokyo's 2,848 Covid-19 infections on Tuesday were the Olympic host city's highest since the pandemic began, officials said, as media reported that authorities had asked hospitals to prepare more beds for patients as the Delta variant drives the surge.

The rise in cases threatens to further erode support for Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, whose ratings have slid to their lowest level since he took office last September, in large part because of his haphazard handling of the pandemic.

It also spells trouble for the Olympics, as many Japanese fear the influx of athletes and officials for the event could add to the surge. About 31 per cent in a survey by the *Nikkei* daily on Monday said the Games should be cancelled or postponed again.

"Refrain from going out unnecessarily and I want you to watch the Olympics and Paralympics on TV," said Suga addressing the citizens after a meeting of ministers overseeing the coronavirus response convened.

"As we have seen a decline in the flow of the people, there is

Authorities ask hospitals to prepare more beds for patients as the Delta variant drives the surge

no such option," said Suga, when asked whether there is an option to cancel the Olympics.

Japan has avoided the devastating outbreaks suffered by other nations such as India, Indonesia and the United States, but the fifth wave of the pandemic fuelled by the Delta variant is piling pressure on Tokyo's hospitals.

As Delta has spread, the number of severe Covid-19 cases in the city over the last month roughly doubled to 78 as of Monday, government data showed. Coronavirus hospitalisations have also jumped at a similar clip, reaching 2,717.

By Sunday, only 20.8 per cent of the Japanese capital's 12,635 Covid-19 patients had been able to obtain hospital treatment, the data showed. A government advisory panel says that if the ratio falls below the threshold of 25 per cent, a state of emergency

should be triggered.

In anticipation of the surge and considering the tough hospital situation, Tokyo has already declared a fourth state of emergency this month to run until after the Olympics.

"It's the Delta variant," said Kenji Shibuya, a former director of the Institute for Population Health at King's College London, explaining the recent surge.

Shibuya added it was impossible to quantify to what extent the Olympics contributed to the increase but blamed the global sports showpiece as "one of the major driving forces".

"The government has sent signals that people are supposed to stay home at the same time they celebrate the Games. It's a totally inconsistent message," said Shibuya, who is now running the vaccine rollout in a town in northern Japan.

Doctors have said that because the rollout has started with the elderly, most people affected now were in their 40s and 50s and many recovered. Tokyo most recently recorded one death on July 19, a sharp drop from the January 31 peak of 38 deaths. — **Reuter**

South, North Korea reopen hotlines as leaders seek to rebuild ties

SEOUL: South and North Korea have restored hotlines that Pyongyang severed a year ago when ties deteriorated sharply, and the two countries' leaders are renewing efforts to rebuild relations, Seoul's presidential office said on Tuesday.

The decision on the hotlines was made by South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un who have exchanged multiple letters since April when they marked the third anniversary of their first summit, said Moon's press secretary, Park Soo-hyun.

North Korea's state news agency, KCNA, also said all inter-Korean communication channels resumed operation at 10 am Tuesday (0100 GMT) in line with an agreement between Moon and Kim.

The hotlines are a rare tool to bridge the two Koreas, but it was unclear whether their reconnection would expedite any meaningful restart of negotiations aimed at dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programmes.

"The two leaders have explored ways to recover relations by exchanging letters on several occasions, and agreed to restore severed hotlines as a first step for that process," Park said in a statement. "They have also agreed to regain trust as soon as possible and foster progress on relations again."

KCNA touted the reopening



The decision on the hotlines was made by South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un who have exchanged multiple letters since April

PARK SOO-HYUN

Moon's press secretary

of the hotlines as "a big stride in recovering mutual trust and promoting reconciliation."

North Korea cut the lines in June 2020 as cross-border ties soured after a failed second summit in February 2019 between Kim and former US president Donald Trump, which Moon had offered to mediate.

Then the North blew up a joint liaison office, launched on its soil in 2018 to foster better ties with the South, plunging relations to the lowest ebb under Moon.

Seoul's defence ministry confirmed that twice-daily regular communication was resumed via a military hotline on Tuesday.

The Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, also said telephone lines installed at the border truce village of Panmunjom were restored. — **Reuters**



This file photo taken on September 16, 2020 shows South Korea's Unification Minister Lee In-young (R) looking at the inter-Korean "hotline" during a visit to the south side of the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) dividing the two Koreas. — **AFP**

Curbs to end in Australian state, stay in Sydney

CANBERRA / SYDNEY: Australia's Victoria state said on Tuesday it will end lockdown after curtailing the spread of Covid-19, but neighbouring New South Wales faced a four-week extension of restrictions according to media reports after new cases hit a 16-month peak.

More than half of Australia's near 26 million population has been in lockdown in recent weeks after an outbreak of the highly infectious Delta variant took hold in the New South Wales capital of Sydney and spread to three states.

New South Wales reported 172 Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours, up from 145 a day earlier, with at least 60 spending time in the community while infectious.

New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian said a decision whether to lift the five-week lockdown will be taken this week, and local media later reported the state would announce a four-week extension of the order on Wednesday. With less than 13 per



Mounted police officers patrol at Bondi Beach during a lockdown to curb the spread of a Covid-19 outbreak in Sydney, on Tuesday. — **Reuters**

cent of the state's population fully vaccinated, curbs are expected to stay.

"We know we've put in the hard yards for five weeks and we don't want to waste all the good work that we've done by opening too early and then having the virus

spread again," Berejiklian told a media conference.

A spokesperson was not immediately available to confirm the media reports about the planned lockdown extension.

In contrast, Victoria state said most restrictions imposed on

July 15 will be removed from Wednesday after recording just 10 infections of people already in quarantine.

"All in all, this is a good day," Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews told reporters in Melbourne.

Victoria's 5 million residents will be allowed to leave home freely and schools will reopen, though households will not be permitted to have visitors.

South Australia said it will also lift a lockdown on Wednesday after it recorded zero Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours.

Lockdowns have raised the prospect of Australia recording its second recession in as many years, though Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said on Tuesday talk of this was premature.

Frydenberg said last week the country's A\$2 trillion (\$1.5 trillion) economy is expected to shrink in the latest GDP figures, with lockdowns costing about A\$300 million daily.

Easing lockdowns will soften the economic toll, but New South Wales is Australia's biggest state economy and accounts for about a third of national output.

VACCINE ROLLOUT CRITICISED

Swift contact tracing, tough social distancing rules and lockdowns have helped Australia to keep its Covid-19 numbers low, with just under 33,100 cases and 920 deaths since the pandemic first appeared in early 2020.

The outbreak in Sydney, however, has seen a wave of hospitalisations and 10 deaths in recent weeks. New South Wales said 169 people are in hospital with the virus, of which 46 are in intensive care.

Amid heightened concerns about hospitalisations of younger people, Australia has urged people to take AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine after struggling to secure enough supplies of Pfizer's inoculations. — **Reuters**

US Capitol riot featured ‘medieval’ violence, says police officer

WASHINGTON: The January 6 US Capitol attack by a mob of then-President Donald Trump’s supporters trying to overturn his election loss featured harrowing violence resembling a medieval battlefield, a police officer hurt in the melee told a congressional panel on Tuesday.

At the Democratic-led House of Representatives investigatory committee’s first hearing, the officer, Aquilino Gonell, described in prepared testimony being pummelled by rioters fired up by Trump’s false claims that the election was stolen from him through widespread voting fraud.

“What we were subjected to that day was like something from a medieval battlefield. We fought hand-to-hand and inch-by-inch to prevent an invasion of the Capitol by a violent mob intent on subverting our democratic process,” added Gonell, one of four police officers called to testify. “The physical violence we experienced was horrific and devastating.”

The nine-member panel was formed after Senate Republicans blocked the creation of an independent commission to investigate the attack. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, named the committee’s members. Its chairman is Democrat Bennie Thompson.

In his opening remarks, Thompson pledged that the panel’s work will be “guided solely by the facts” and that there is no place for politics or partisanship. He also showed a video of the violence.



US Capitol Police sergeant Aquilino Gonell wipe tears prior to testifying before the opening hearing of the US House (Select) Committee investigating the January 6 attack on the US Capitol, on Tuesday. — Reuters

Gonell and Harry Dunn, officers with the US Capitol Police, and Michael Fanone and Daniel Hodges, officers with the District of Columbia police, were the panel’s first witnesses.

The four officers sat at the witness table wearing their police uniforms, with photographers snapping pictures as panel members shook their hands.

Dunn, who is Black, said in prepared testimony that rioters called him a racial slur while he was trying to defend the Capitol after he challenged their claims that no one had voted for Biden by telling them that he himself was a Biden supporter.

Fanone was pulled into the

crowd of rioters, beaten, attacked with a Taser device and robbed of his badge, police radio and ammunition. As one rioter tried to pull his gun from its holster, Fanone could hear him saying he planned to take it and kill him.

Four people died on the day of the violence, including one rioter fatally shot by police and three others who died of natural causes. A Capitol police officer who had been attacked by protesters died the following day. Two police officers who took part in the defence of the Capitol later took their own lives. More than a hundred police officers were injured.

Police were overwhelmed when hundreds of Trump supporters intent upon stopping Congress from formally certifying now-President Joe Biden’s 2020 election victory stormed the Capitol, smashing windows, fighting with officers and sending lawmakers and then-Vice President Mike Pence scrambling for safety.

The riot followed Trump’s speech to supporters in which the Republican repeated his false claims about voting fraud. Pelosi has called the attack “an attempt to overthrow the government.”

Most House Republicans have fiercely opposed the creation of the committee, saying it is politically motivated by Democrats.

In his opening remarks, Thompson took aim at Republicans and Trump allies who have sought to minimise the riot.

— Reuters

“What we were subjected to that day was like something from a medieval battlefield. We fought hand-to-hand and inch-by-inch to prevent an invasion of the Capitol by a violent mob intent on subverting our democratic process

AQUILINO GONELL
Police officer

One dead, 16 hurt in blast at German chemical park

LEVERKUSEN, Germany: One person died and 16 people were injured on Tuesday following an explosion at a chemical park in Leverkusen, Germany, the site operator said as residents were urged to stay indoors because of black smoke rising from the area.

The blast happened at around 09:40 am (0740 GMT) “for still unknown reasons”, Chempark operator Currenta said.

At least two of the injured were in a serious condition, and four workers were missing, it added.

The explosion prompted Germany’s NINA warning app to send an “extreme danger” alert to residents, telling them to close their doors and windows and keep emergency numbers free as much as possible.

Currenta said the incident occurred at Chempark’s landfill and waste incineration area in Leverkusen’s Buerrig district.

The area is separate from the main industrial park that houses numerous chemical companies including Bayer, Lanxess and Evonik Industries.

“We are deeply saddened



Smoke billows following an explosion in Leverkusen, Germany, on Tuesday. — Reuters

by this tragic accident and the death of an employee,” Currenta said in a statement, adding that “rescue efforts continue at full speed” to find the four missing employees.

The city of Leverkusen said on Facebook that the blast triggered a fire at a solvent storage tank that took several hours to put out, with firefighters from nearby Cologne called in to help with the efforts. — AFP

French city of Nice wins Unesco world heritage status

NICE, France: The United Nation’s cultural organisation said on Tuesday that it had added the French Mediterranean city of Nice to its world heritage list.

Unesco made the announcement in a tweet calling Nice, famous for its mild climate, the “Winter resort town of the Riviera”.

Nice joins France’s more than 40 world heritage sites which include the banks of the river Seine in Paris, the Amiens cathedral, the Mont Saint Michel and stretches of the Loire valley.

“The history of Nice, which is at the same time deeply rooted and open, Mediterranean and Alpine, European and cosmopolitan, has produced an architecture and a landscape that are unique, a model for many other cities in the world,” Nice’s mayor Christian Estrosi said



A general view of the beach and the Promenade des Anglais in the French riviera city of Nice. — AFP

in reaction to the announcement.

With close to one million inhabitants, greater Nice is the second-biggest city on the French Mediterranean coast after Marseille, and the fifth-biggest in France.

It is a tourist hotspot with several million visitors per year, and its airport is one of the country’s busiest.

Nicknamed “Nice the Beautiful”, the city attracted European aristocracy from the 18th century, starting with British royalty who had the seafront “Promenade des Anglais” (“Promenade of the English”) named after them.

Painters including Marc Chagall and Henri Matisse also stayed there, as did writers Anton Chekhov and Friedrich Nietzsche.

The seafront walk became the

scene of a murderous attack on July 14, 2016, when a 31-year-old Tunisian drove a truck into crowds gathered for fireworks to celebrate France’s national holiday.

Eighty-six people, including 15 children, were killed in the attack for which the IS claimed responsibility.

The UN cultural body awards world heritage status to sites judged to be of special universal value to humanity.

Top heritage sites include the Great Wall of China, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Machu Picchu in Peru and the Acropolis in Greece.

The sought-after distinction brings intangible benefits, but also often boosts tourism, and can help secure funding for the preservation of sites. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

GENEVA UN calls for Covid-closed schools to reopen ASAP

Schools closed due to the coronavirus pandemic must reopen as soon as possible, the United Nations insisted on Tuesday, estimating that the education of more than 600 million children was at stake.

“This cannot go on,” James Elder, spokesman for the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), told reporters in Geneva.

While acknowledging the difficult choices that governments have to make when facing the Covid-19 crisis and



the possible spread of the disease, “schools should be the last to close and the first to reopen,” he said, calling it a “terrible mistake” to reopen pubs before schools.

LONDON UK PM urges caution as virus cases fall

Prime Minister Boris Johnson called for caution on Tuesday after Britain registered nearly a week of lower coronavirus case numbers, a decline that has surprised officials and experts.

Recorded infection rates across the UK have dropped for six consecutive days, with 24,950 new cases announced Monday compared to 46,558 last Tuesday — a fall of 46 per cent.

The reversal after weeks of rising rates has coincided with



the removal on July 19 of nearly all pandemic rules in England, including legal requirements for social distancing wearing a mask in public indoors.

PARIS Cuban embassy attacked with petrol bombs

Cuba’s embassy in Paris said on Tuesday it had been attacked overnight with petrol bombs that caused some damage but no injuries to its staff, in an incident that prompted French authorities to beef up security around the building. Three petrol bombs were thrown by two unnamed individuals, causing a fire on the facade and the entrance of the building, the embassy said in a statement.

Cuba has been rocked by protests against a deep economic



crisis, the government’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic and curbs on civil liberties, prompting the Communist-run country to restrict access to social media.

India's poor face outsized air pollution death risk

PATRICK GALEY

The poorest 10 per cent of Indians face a risk of dying from air pollution that is nine times higher than for the richest 10 per cent, according to research released on Monday. Fine particles (PM2.5) generated from burning fossil fuels, farming practices and wood-burning stoves contribute to a host of health problems and are behind most of the eight million air pollution-related deaths worldwide each year.

Previous research has shown that the richest individuals bear an outsized responsibility for air pollution due to their consumption-heavy lifestyles.

Researchers based in Europe and the US wanted to see how wealth is linked to air pollution exposure in Earth's second most populous nation.

They examined data expenditure for different income groups and used a sophisticated computer model to estimate the pollution that such spending habits were likely to have produced. They produced a map of anticipated air pollution then used it to generate the estimates of related health impacts.

Unsurprisingly, the team found that while higher net-worth individuals contributed most to air pollution levels, it was poorer individuals who suffered the most from it.

The study, published in the journal *Nature Sustainability*, estimated that air pollution from outside and inside sources contributed to the deaths of 1.19 million people in 2010, the last year for which emissions and expenditure data were directly comparable.

"A single intervention that would effectively address air pollution-related deaths, especially for the poor: offering cheap, clean cooking stoves and fuels," Fabian Wagner, lead study author from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Austria, said.

With millions of Indians moving from rural areas to cities in search of work since 2010, Wagner said it was hard to quantify the net effect air pollution was having on that migration.

"Urbanisation leads to higher population densities — i.e. more people getting exposed to the same bad air," he said.

"Hence, total exposure may go up." — AFP

A single intervention that would effectively address air pollution-related deaths, especially for the poor: offering cheap, clean cooking stoves and fuels

FABIAN WAGNER
Lead study author



A BALANCING ACT

An Afghan man pushes a wheelbarrow loaded with plastic water pipes along a road in Kabul on Tuesday. — AFP

Learn to work together not fight at home...



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

THANK TECHNOLOGY FOR ALLOWING US TO WORK FROM HOME DURING THE PANDEMIC. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONTINUE WORKING FROM HOME TO EARN A LIVING

In a recent conversation, my friend told me that he was increasingly under stress as he was not finding a pleasant atmosphere at home, not caused by the coronavirus pandemic, but due to its consequent remote working culture.

"Work from home was exciting for me in the beginning. Now it is not that great. Leave alone that my daily routines and lifestyles have been disrupted", he said, continuing, "it has become a potential source of quarrels".

To quell my curiosity, he clarified, "think of a couple working side by side in the same room, attending webinars or teleconferencing and talking official matters over phones. Even children, unaware of boundaries, interrupt my work!"

To my question as to why he couldn't shift to another room to avoid the conflict, he quipped, "all rooms are occupied. It is pandemic time and all are in the home mode".

For many others, it has jeopardised their routines affecting their health. Having a proper routine even when you are at home is important. Giving too much time to work can be extremely stressful and exhausting, which can take a toll on one's health.

As experts point out, when either of

the spouse disrupts the other's work or prevents them from accomplishing his or her goals, then negative emotional responses can ensue and pose a real threat to the household harmony.

Couples who had their daily routine disrupted by their partners felt negative emotions towards them, and perceived the marriage to be turbulent, suggests a study published in Communication Research Reports.

According to the study, the situation can be turned around to create positive emotional responses. To do this, partners should support each other's goals, accommodate routines, respect the others' timings, take a step back to catch their breath during the day, and learn to work together.

Work from home can lead to employees' difficulty in differentiating between work-life and home-life.

This may put them in a difficult situation to understand when to switch off from work, resulting in longer hours of work, increased stress and inevitable burnout.

Here what employers should do is to encourage their staff to take regular breaks and find alternatives to help them to take their leave.

The fact is that spending the entire

working day at home can lead to a stressed-out life. When you work from home, you have to take care of your parents, the house, and, of course, give equal attention to work as well.

While you are in office, all you have to do is work in the specified period of time, except for occasional additional work. But, when you are at home, you end up giving more hours to work than required. Unplugging from work gets difficult!

It is true that remote working has both pros and cons. Think of a pandemic and the subsequent lockdown period when all of us have been secluded to our homes!

I cannot imagine or even think of it, because, like many of my contemporaries, I belong to a group that has been fortunate and privileged enough to witness the steady pace at which technology has grown over the years.

Due to modern technology, however, our experience with Covid-19 has been different. If the technology we enjoy now was not available for many, work would have to be shut down completely or people would be working in offices risking their lives.

It is because of this technological growth that we have been able to continue working from home to earn a living and educate our children online.

Wearing mask a Covid insurance policy



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla
dryusufalmulla@gmail.com

The pandemic is entering a new phase which appears to be more dangerous and more volatile, even for people lucky enough to receive vaccinations. In spite of this, it is very heartening to note that the vaccination rate in the Sultanate reached 53 per cent of the total targets until few days ago.

Maybe now one's chances of getting severely sick is low, even with a single dose. In fact, vaccines are astonishingly effective in preventing long periods in hospitals or death. But realistically there is no perfect vaccine.

Some people who get immunity may get infected by what we call breakthrough infections. The

proportion of vaccinated people who contract the coronavirus may increase as certain mutations make the virus less recognisable by immune systems and thus more difficult to eradicate. Breakthrough infections are more common when the immune system encounters a highly potent mutated virus or when a large group around you are infected.

Hence, we should continue with wearing mask and maintaining social distancing to reduce the risk of infections even if we are vaccinated.

Let us always remember that if you catch the virus, the target is not just you. Others also bear

OF COURSE, NOBODY ENJOYS WEARING MASK OR PHYSICAL DISTANCING. BUT LET US SACRIFICE OUR COMFORTS FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF THE COMMUNITY

the brunt. One should also worry about people who do not have masks or ignore to cover.

Surely you will also have to worry about the younger children in our society, who are not yet eligible for the jabs.

Unfortunately, some people do

not use the mask despite knowing that the disease is contagious. The repercussions of our behaviour affect those around us.

Perhaps the prospects of a vaccine to shoulder the burden of full protection was better a month ago, when infection rates were dropping.

But if the cases are rising and more people lose their lives, we need more than shots.

Of course, nobody enjoys wearing mask or physical distancing. But let us sacrifice our comforts for the greater good of the community.

The situation will surely change for good once we achieve

universal vaccination to keep the coronavirus away.

Interestingly, vaccines have been hailed as an alternative for physical distancing or the inconvenience of masks. But that assumption is naïve in a society where many people are neither immune or nor covered up.

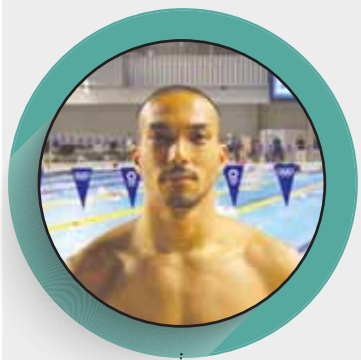
One didn't get vaccinated because one wanted to stop wearing mask. It does not work that way. We were vaccinated because we wanted to reduce our chances of getting the coronavirus infection and passing it on to others.

(The author is a physician, a medical innovator and writer)



Russian women triumph after Biles exit

OMAN CHALLENGE AT OLYMPICS



**MEN'S 100M
FREESTYLE**

July 27
(2.30 pm
Oman Time)

**ISSA BIN
SAMIR AL
ADAWI**

BORN: MARCH 20, 1999
AGE: 22

Issa bin Samir al Adawi's last result is the 85th place for the men's 50 m freestyle – heat during the World Championships 2019. He competes in 100 m freestyle and 50 m freestyle.



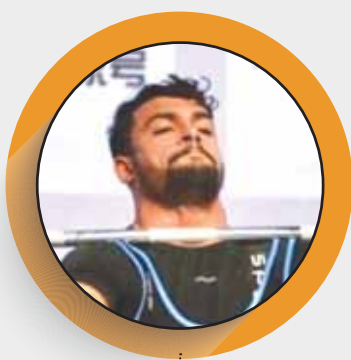
**WOMEN'S
100M SPRINT**

July 30
(6.30 am
Oman Time)

**MAZOOON
KHALFAN
SALEH AL ALAWI**

BORN: NOV 14, 1997
AGE: 24

Mazoon competed at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, in the women's 100 metres. She progressed from the first preliminary round with a time of 12.30 seconds. In the quarterfinal, she finished with a time of 12.43 seconds. She did not advance to the semifinals.



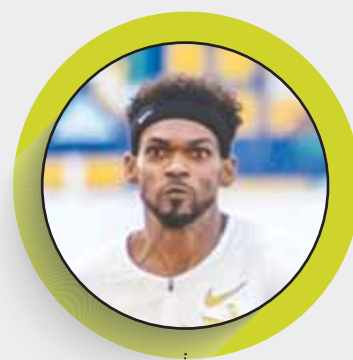
**MEN'S
81 KG**

July 31
(6.30 am
Oman Time)

**AMUR BIN
SALEM AL
KHANJARI**

BORN: OCT 16, 2000
AGE: 21

Gold in West Asian Championship 2019.
"All athletes are looking forward to the historic moment of taking part in the Olympic Games I am very proud to be one of the representatives in the Sultanate's delegation in this edition of the Olympics in Tokyo."



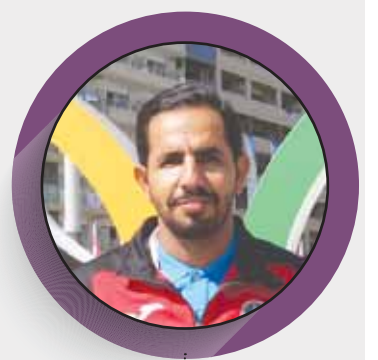
**MEN'S 100M
SPRINT**

July 31
(2.30 pm
Oman Time)

**BARAKAT BIN
MUBARAK
AL HARTHY**

BORN: JUNE 15, 1988
AGE: 33

He competed at the 2009, 2013 and 2015 World Championships and the 2010 and 2014 World Indoor Championships without reaching the final. Al Harthi won a bronze medal at the Asian Games in Guangzhou, China in the 100m, which was Oman's only medal in the Games.



**50M RIFLE
3 POSITIONS MEN**

Aug 2
(6.30 am
Oman Time)

**HAMAD BIN
SAID AL
KHATRI**

BORN: MAY 24, 1985
AGE: 36

Hamad competed at the 2016 Summer Olympics in the men's 50 metre rifle three positions event, in which he placed 43rd. He was the flag bearer for Oman at the parade of nations.
GOLD MEDALS: 50m Individual (Arab championship Doha 2014)

SPRINT STAR BARAKAT, MAZOOON TO CHECK INTO TOKYO TODAY

'OLYMPIC GAMES SUITABLE OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN RIGHT EXPOSURE AND CONFIDENCE'

ADIL AL BALUSHI
TOKYO, JULY 26

The Sultanate's fastest sprinter Barakat al Harthy and the only woman representative in Oman's delegation Mazoon al Alawi accompanied by national head coach Mohammed al Hooti will arrive in Tokyo on Wednesday. The weightlifting team represented by the teenage weightlifter Amur al Khanjari along with his technical staff represented by coach Mazin al Badri and admin member Yousef al Hasani will be in the Olympic Village on Wednesday.

With the arrival of both athletics and weightlifting teams, all of the Sultanate's athletes are together in Olympic Village to represent the Sultanate in the 32nd Summer Olympic Games – 2020 Tokyo which is underway until August 8.

Mazoon al Alawi will lead the second presence of Oman's athletes in Tokyo 2020 Olympics as she will compete in the 100 metres sprint at the Olympic Stadium on Friday.

The youngster Amur al Khanjari will be the next athlete who will make his debut in the weightlifting competitions at the 81 kg category on Saturday at Tokyo International Forum. In his third consecutive presence in Olympic Games, Barakat al Harthy will be in action on Saturday in the 100m race at Olympic Stadium.

Oman will conclude

participation in Tokyo 2020 Olympics through shooter Hamed al Khatri who will vie in the 50m rifle three positions at Asaka Shooting Range on Monday.

AMUR IN GROUP B

The talented weightlifter, Amur al Khanjari, was placed in group B for the 81 kg category. As many as 14 top ranking weightlifters were divided into two groups while group B feature only four including Erkand Qerimaj (ALB), Ramzi Bahloul (TUN), Cameron David McTaggart (NZL) beside Amur al Khanjari (OMA). The entry total for the Sultanate weightlifter is 320 Kg while it is 345 Kg for Erkand Qerimaj. Ramzi's entry is 320 kg while Cameron David is 300 kg.

The top three weightlifters will be selected who will have the total lift in both snatch and clean & jerk competitions. Each weightlifter will have three attempts in each competition.

The top attempt in each competition will be added to have the total lift figure. Group B competition will take place on Saturday during morning sessions while group A's competition will get over in the evening session. The final results will be announced after the completion of both groups competitions.

EXPOSURE

Oman's head coach of the



weightlifting team, Mazin al Badri, said that the first presence of weightlifter Amur is significant participation for him as an athlete.

"We are working to introduce Olympic culture to our athletes and to determine how tough it is to prepare for the Olympic Games. It is essential that the athlete see and compete against the world ranking weightlifters and have the

right exposure with them. Taking part in these Olympic Games will award more confidence to the weightlifter to show his best in the forthcoming events," he added.

The Iraqi coach affirmed that Amur has competed against top weightlifters in Asia. "Olympic Games is different than any other sporting event. During the Olympics, you will see all the

With the arrival of both athletics and weightlifting teams, all of the Sultanate's athletes are together in Olympic Village to represent the Sultanate in the 32nd Summer Olympic Games – 2020 Tokyo which is underway until August 8

weightlifters from different parts of the world. We are very keen to follow up the world ranking performance through youtube channels but this is the right opportunity to get closer with them," he added.

FINALS OF MEN'S 200 FREESTYLE

Oman's FINA (World's swimming international governing body) board member, Taha al Kishry, awarded the medals to the Olympic champions in Men's 200 freestyle on Tuesday.

Swimmer Tom Dean from Great Britain won the gold medal while his team-mate Duncan Scott claimed the silver medal. The bronze medal went to Brazilian swimmer Fernando Scheffer.

Shooting team began training. The experienced national shooter Hamed al Khatri began

his training after their arrival late on Monday. He will be under the supervision of his national coach Sultan al Rushaidi at Asaka Shooting Range until kick off the competition on Monday.

TAHA MET MAYOR

The Secretary-General of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), Taha al Kishry, met Olympic Village mayor, Saburo Kawabuchi, on Monday.

During the meeting, Al Kishry expressed his great appreciation to the efforts made by the organising committee of Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 in the previous period to organise this version of the Olympics under a strict medical protocol which featured precautionary and preventive measures with the aim of ensuring the safety of the participants and athletes in the Olympic Games.

OOC secretary-general praised the various facilities and services provided by the Olympic Village to all athletes and administrators participating in the Olympics, including the restaurant, fitness halls, the medical centre, transportation services, the commercial section of the village, and other facilities.

On the other hand, the former president of the Japan Football Association wishes the best and good luck to all Oman's athletes in Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

BRITISH GT RETURN AT SNETTERTON FOR AL HARTHY AND OMAN RACING

MUSCAT: More than five months since his last track outing in the final round of the 2021 Asian Le Mans Series, Ahmad al Harthy will get back behind the wheel of his Oman Racing Aston Martin Vantage GT3 car next week when he makes a welcome return to the Intelligent Money British GT Championship.

Oman's number one racing driver, who won the Silver Cup class crown in British GT in 2015, was scheduled to race a full season in the UK's premier endurance series last year before the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic halted those plans and led to Al Harthy spending a year on the racing sidelines.

Making a competitive return to action in the Middle-East based Asian Le Mans Series earlier this year, Al Harthy will now rejoin British GT for the fifth event of the championship's season at the 2.97-mile Snetterton 300 Circuit in Norfolk over the weekend

August 7, 8.

Joining Al Harthy for the pair of one-hour races will be Charlie Eastwood, with whom the Omani won the Pro-Am crown in the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup in 2019 — a season where the Oman Racing team-mates took five podiums from five races and won the Pro-Am class at the world famous Total 24 Hours of Spa. Al Harthy, of course, also won the Pro-Am crown two years prior.

"I'm delighted to be back racing in the UK, back in British GT, with Oman Racing and looking forward to racing at Snetterton once again", said Al Harthy, "It is a very challenging year still with Covid-19 continuing to cause so many difficulties globally, but I'm very proud to be able to represent Oman in British GT once more and we would love to get some good results at Snetterton. "We haven't been in the car



I'm delighted to be back racing in the UK, back in British GT, with Oman Racing and looking forward to racing at Snetterton once again

AHMAD AL HARTHY
Omani race driver

since our last round in Asian Le Mans, although we have got some testing before next weekend so hopefully we'll get back to speed very fast. I'm obviously really looking forward to teaming with Charlie [Eastwood] again as well, he's a great driver and knows our Aston Martin inside out."

The No 97 Oman Racing Aston Martin Vantage GT3 will, as always, be prepared and engineered by top British squad TF Sport which is headed by Tom Ferrier.

Along with the aforementioned success in GT World Challenge Europe, the successful partnership also won on its debut in the International GT open at Spa-Francorchamps last year.

"TF Sport have been in constant contact with us throughout these months where we've been working incredibly hard behind the scenes in Oman to put a programme together,"

continued Al Harthy. "These races in British GT are the first of several exciting outings we're planning during the remainder of 2021."

Al Harthy last raced at Snetterton 300 Circuit back in 2015 in British GT where he qualified a mere 0.026 seconds shy of pole position, and challenged hard for race victory. Unfortunately, contact from a GT4 class backmarker during the second half of the race — when then team-mate Alex MacDowall was at the wheel — ended genuine hopes of the win.

Opening practice at Snetterton for the British GT runners will take place at 09.25 local time on Saturday, August 7, ahead of session two at 12.05 and qualifying at 15.55. On Sunday, August 8, after morning warm-up race, one of the weekend will commence at 10.40 with race two getting underway at around 15.45.

Oman Sail steps in to host 2021 ILCA Radial World Championships

Oman Sail's winter sailing season is set for an unexpected extension when 160 Laser Radial sailors arrive in Musannah from November 29 to December 6 for the 2021 ILCA Radial World Championships. Originally due to be hosted in Houston, USA, the event faced cancellation until the Sultanate of Oman stepped in to ensure the championships can take place and allow the top ranked female and male sailors from 50 nations an opportunity to compete to be the best in the world in their class.

The addition of this prestigious event means that the eyes of the sailing world will be on Al Musannah Sports City towards the end of the year with the 49er, 49erFX, and Nacra 17 World Championships taking place from November 16-21, the opening ceremony and first leg of the 11th edition of Sailing Arabia — The Tour kicking off on November 24, 2021 and the 50th Youth Sailing World Championships, one of the most significant competitions in the sailing calendar, starting on December 11, 2021.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "Oman Sail is honoured to be able to offer ILCA Radial sailors from around the world an opportunity to compete against the best in the world."

"Winter will be a busy time for sailing in Oman and brings with it a welcome socio-economic impact which will benefit the community in Musannah and across the country as we begin the journey back to normality after a long period of downtime. We are excited to again show the capability of our nation to



Dr Khamis al Jabri

host a high-profile event and look forward to sharing our warm hospitality with the world once more."

Andrus Poksi of the International Laser Class Association, said, "The Sultanate of Oman has a long and proud maritime history and has gained a strong reputation as hosts in recent years."

"We are glad to be able to ensure the continuity of the ILCA Radial World

Championships with the support of such capable hosts in Oman Sail and the ideal sailing conditions offered by the country in November."

The 2021 ILCA Radial World Championships will be hosted at the Barceló Resort Musannah, a five-star beachfront resort. Both men's and women's competitions will run concurrently with competitors enjoying a day of practice before the Championships officially

start. Racing will take place each day before splitting the fleets to allow the leaders to compete for podium positions on the final day.

Registration for the event is open until October 30, 2021 through the International Laser Class Association website. Entry will be initially allocated based on ranking positions and is capped at 110 sailors in the women's competition and 50 sailors in the men's category.



Oman Cricket urges Senior Division teams to register before August 10

MUSCAT: Amid preparations to host ICC T20 Cricket World Cup, Oman Cricket (OC) has reminded the Senior Division teams to hasten the registration process for the new season along with the payment of tournament fees before the deadline expires on August 10.

Once the team registration and payment process is over, teams will be required to complete the player registration by August 15. All Senior Division teams must enrol a minimum of 15 players including at least one Omani national for the season.

"The Senior Division teams must also physically submit a duly signed

player consent form to Oman Cricket office before 5.30 pm by August 18. No scanned copies or e-mails will be accepted," advised an OC official.

Holding the biggest pool of sides in any Division of Oman Cricket's League tournament, the Senior Division comprises teams from B Division downwards while Junior Division consists of various tiers of inter-school and cricket academy competitions across different age groups.

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



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Oman’s first 3D concrete printing facility launched

NEW TECHNOLOGY:
PDO, Innotech and Galfar jointly develop tech-based construction workshop at Ghala in Muscat

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 27

The Sultanate’s first 3D Concrete Printing Facility was formally opened at Ghala Industrial Area in Muscat on Tuesday.

The facility is jointly supported by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), local technology firm Innovative Technology Company for Educational Solutions (Innotech) and leading Omani construction firm Galfar Engineering and Contracting.

It follows the signing of a Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) in May 2021 for the research and development of 3D concrete printing technology in Oman to encourage In-Country Value (ICV) and private sector partnership.

3D concrete printing is a step-change in the construction sector, providing a sustainable alternative to the traditional construction



methods.

“This technology will also speed up the construction process, reduce waste and empower skilled Omanis. The Company is supporting this initiative by providing its technical expertise, opportunity identification and project management,” said PDO in a press statement.

The formal launch of the facility, combined with similar 3D printing initiatives launched elsewhere in the country, will impart strong new momentum to the growth of a wider industry around this novel technology.

Recently, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) – which

This technology will also speed up the construction process, reduce waste and empower skilled Omanis. The Company is supporting this initiative by providing its technical expertise, opportunity identification and project management

PDO

oversees the operation of the country’s free zones and the SEZ at Duqm – had formally approved the use of modern building practices, including 3D printing techniques, in its jurisdiction. OPAZ also signed a cooperation agreement with Innotech to collaborate in the use of 3D printing techniques in construction.

Under the pact, Innotech will share expertise and insights in construction with 3D printing techniques, which would provide a suitable and attractive environment for these projects in the Duqm SEZ. The Authority will then leverage this expertise to establish projects using 3D printing techniques in Duqm.

OPAZ sees the potential to deploy 3D printing technology to accelerate the pace of construction activity in the Duqm SEZ before the technology is rolled out to other zones as well. In support of this technology, it has offered a package of facilities and incentives to companies that use 3D printing in construction, including exemption from rental fees for up to five years. 3D printing will also enable the construction of tourist and entertainment projects in the first phase of its piloting.



Guidelines issued for use of AI in govt units

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has issued a circular setting out policy guidelines governing the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by government ministries and state units.

The circular encourages the adoption of AI in developing innovative solutions to drive economic growth and national development based in line with broader parameters of the 4th Industrial Revolution to help achieve Oman’s Vision 2040 goals.

The policy stresses the importance of six key factors in driving AI adoption: Inclusiveness, Empathy, Accountability, Equity, Transparency and Security. AI adoption based on these

The circular encourages the adoption of AI in developing innovative solutions to drive economic growth and national development based in line with broader parameters of the 4th Industrial Revolution to help achieve Oman’s Vision 2040 goals

principles will boost trust in modern technologies and solidify governance systems, the Ministry said. They will support best practices and enhance the ideal use of AI systems while limiting any risks. — ONA

PDO commissions new ground-mounted solar PV project

GROWING PORTFOLIO:
1 MWp capacity scheme to complement existing solar PV panelled car park at Mina Al Fahal head office

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the Sultanate’s largest oil and gas producer, has commissioned a new ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) project at its Mina Al Fahal head office in Muscat.

Dubbed ‘Wahaj’, it complements the company’s existing solar PV panelled car park complex at Mina Al Fahal.

According to a senior official, Wahaj is capable of generating around 1 megawatt-peak (1 MWp) of solar-powered electricity per day, which is enough to power around 50 residential homes. Equipped with sun-tracking technology, the plant’s roughly 3,150 PV panels can track the sun throughout the day, thus



optimising electricity generation from solar energy, Zahran al Abri, In-Country Value (ICV) Development Manager, said.

Around 1,800 tons of CO2 emissions — the greenhouse gas responsible for global warming and climate change — are saved annually as a result of the plant’s carbon-neutral operations.

In contrast, the car-park mounted solar PV scheme launched a couple of years ago also at PDO’s head office, offers around 6 MWp of generation

Wahaj is capable of generating around 1 megawatt-peak (1 MWp) of solar-powered electricity per day, which is enough to power around 50 residential homes

capacity, making it the largest of its kind in the Sultanate. Its 28,900 panels generate enough electricity to power around 900 homes, effectively contributing to a saving of 7.2 million cubic metres of natural gas annually by harnessing the sun’s energy for electricity.

At Ras Al Hamra — the company’s upscale residential neighbourhood in Mina Al Fahal — PDO is close to completing a pilot scheme that will see as many as 10 houses equipped

with solar PV for much of their energy requirements.

Following the pilot’s success, PDO is now preparing to roll out solar PV systems across all 588 homes that make up the superbly designed residential complex.

The initiative is currently under design, with a tender for its implementation due to be floated before the end of this year, said Al Abri.

While small-scale in comparison, the solar PV

projects at Mina Al Fahal and Ras Al Hamra represent part of an ambitious portfolio of renewable energy-based investments that PDO has made thus far. Notable is the Miraah project — a rough 1 GW scheme that harnesses the sun’s energy to produce heavy oil from the Amal reservoir in PDO’s Block 6 license.

Last year, the company brought into operation a 100 MW solar PV scheme — procured as an Independent Power Project — to power its activities in the south of the country. When it was commissioned last year, Amin Renewable Energy project became the world’s first utility-scale solar scheme to have an oil and gas company as the sole buyer of electricity.

More recently, PDO unveiled plans to develop another 100 MW solar scheme in the north of its concession, coupled with a battery storage component. It is also looking at a 100 MW wind-based scheme in the south. Opportunities for hydrogen and other alternative energy-based green fuels are being explored as well.

UK set for EU row as it prepares to redraw NI protocol

The UK has outlined proposed changes to the post-Brexit Northern Ireland (NI) protocol, with a cabinet minister saying that “we cannot go on as we are”. NI still follows the EU’s custom union and single market rules, unlike the rest of the UK, creating a so-called border in the Irish Sea. The UK wants the EU to adopt less stringent checks on goods going from Great Britain to Northern Ireland to minimise economic and political disruption, while Brussels does not want unauthorised goods to enter its single market. The move is very likely to ignite a furious row with the EU, with one of its top officials saying there is no room for renegotiation of the protocol. NI secretary, Brandon

Lewis said the UK government believes there are grounds to trigger Article 16 of the treaty and override parts of the protocol unilaterally, but that this step will not yet be taken. A command paper written by UK-EU minister Lord David Frost instead calls for the elimination of the vast majority of checks on goods going between Great Britain and NI to ease economic and civil pressures. The proposals will put the UK on a collision course with the EU, with officials and member states saying previously they do not want to change any parts of the protocol. Lewis said: “We believe such change is necessary to deal with the situation we must face. We must provide certainty and stability for business as we do so.”



ANDY JALIL
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NORTHERN IRELAND STILL FOLLOWS THE EU’S CUSTOM UNION AND SINGLE MARKET RULES, UNLIKE THE REST OF THE UK, CREATING A SO-CALLED BORDER IN THE IRISH SEA

An EU insider has said that there is “zero chance” of Brussels agreeing to any changes. European Commission vice president Maros Sefcovic said the EU was not willing to change the terms of the protocol. He said: “We will continue to engage with the UK, also on the suggestions made. We are ready to continue to seek creative solutions, within the framework of the protocol, in the interest of all communities in Northern Ireland. However, we will not agree to a renegotiation of the protocol.” The protocol has been met with increasing anger by some sections of the NI unionist community as they say it separates the region from the rest of the UK. Frost’s plan to rewrite the post-Brexit arrangement would see

an “honesty box” approach for exporters in Great Britain, which would see them declare if their goods are intended only for sale in Northern Ireland and therefore can skip customs checks. This would be for things like agrifoods, medicines and pets. He also called for the European Court of Justice to no longer have the right to oversee the treaty and for an independent arbitration panel to instead take up this role. The UK is also calling for a “standstill” to the protocol, which will ensure new customs checks are not imposed when several grace periods end in September. “As we have sought to operate the protocol, it is clear that its burdens have been the source of considerable – and ongoing – disruption to lives and livelihoods. We have seen reductions in

supermarket product lines. We have seen more than 200 suppliers decide they would no longer sell to Northern Ireland,” Frost said. Brussels argues that it has followed the protocol to the letter of the law and that all current checks should have been foreseen. French President Emmanuel Macron said before last month’s G7 summit that “nothing is negotiable” when it came to the text of the protocol. “We have a protocol,” Macron said. “If after six months you say we cannot respect what was negotiated, then that says nothing can be respected. I believe in the weight of a treaty, I believe in taking a serious approach. Nothing is negotiable. Everything is applicable.” (The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)

MG Motor cars now available with reasonable EMIs

MUSCAT: The British-born MG Motor has come up with irresistibly low EMI options on some of its leading models. Until end of August, MG Motor Oman customers can own the lively and capable MG5 sedan at starting EMI of RO 62 only. If they are looking at SUV options, the dynamic and reliable MG HS is available for EMI of RO 130 and the bold seven-seater MG RX8 can be owned for RO 155 only. With such competitive prices, the car aficionados can look forward to enjoying class-leading performances, top in line features



and the Do More experiences offered by the vehicles of this historic brand. A senior spokesperson of MHD — the

exclusive distributors of the MG Motor vehicles in Oman — opines: “We are thrilled to be offering some of our leading models at such a price range. MG5, MG HS and MG RX8 are stylish, exceptionally well-equipped and great value cars. They are equipped with 5-star safety features and finest automotive technology available. Our endeavor is to bring the best of products and services to our customers and our customers also look forward to being a part of the MG family”. Adventure, lively and capable — the MG 5 is one of the most exciting sedans around.

Whether for work or for pleasure, you can be confident that the vehicle is always looking to do more to excite, with the three trim levels — STD, COM, and DEL for superior performance. Embracing the design concept of X-Motion, the dynamic MG HS is reliable and fun to drive, with some of the best technology providing a fully engaging motoring experience and a sense of adventure. It is equipped with 2.0L high efficiency Turbo Engine, best in class panoramic sunroof, 5-star EURO NCAP safety and Super Sport and Eco driving modes.

Two Bank Muscat customers win RO 500,000

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat conducted a special Al Mazyona Mid-year draw and gave away over RO 1.5 million in high value prizes to be given away to 92 lucky winners. The lucky winners included two customers from the Al Mudhaibi and Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos branches who won a total of RO 500,000 in the 2 top prizes. The mid-year draw rewarded Asalah and Al Jawhar customers as well as those from all the governorates of the Sultanate and was held in the presence of Abdulnasser al Raisi, Deputy General Manager — Premier Banking, Bank Muscat and Dr Fatma al Hajri, Behavioural Economics Expert. Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah bin Tamman al Mashani, Deputy General Manager — Institutional Sales and Product Development, Bank Muscat said: “We are delighted with the excellent response and feedback from our customers and congratulate all the winners for their wonderful savings habit. Since its launch, the Al Mazyona prize draw scheme has been going from strength to strength and the bank will continue to develop this scheme to further promote the concept of savings in the Sultanate.” On his part, Abdulnasser al Raisi, Deputy General Manager — Premier Banking, Bank Muscat, spoke about the high value prizes are an extra incentive for Premier Banking customers in successful financial planning and achieving their dreams.

Balancing employee health benefits and costs is key challenge for Omani firms

KEY STEPS: Firms should consider introducing cost sharing techniques like deductibles and co-payments; ideally tiered in a way that encourages best practice, cost-effective care

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 27

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has highlighted how critical employee health is for Oman’s business success. But mounting costs mean organisations must increasingly balance cost control with managing people risks. The cost of health and benefits plans across Oman is increasing rapidly and while the pandemic saw costs dip slightly, research by leading insurance firm Marsh shows that, on average, medical costs outpace general inflation by almost three times. As we emerge from the pandemic it is anticipated that many Omani businesses will face a sharp rise in costs as the cancellation of many elective procedures and a fall in preventive and emergency treatment has led to worsening health conditions in the immediate and long term. Unsurprisingly, businesses are urgently seeking ways to economise and improve efficiencies in their health-related plans and employers are looking to take quick action to modernise; optimising value to ensure programmes remain cost-effective



but still encourage and improve overall employee health. Marsh has identified three steps to make sure Omani businesses can protect their most valuable asset without breaking the bank. **1. Dealing with poor plan design (design for value)** Misdiagnoses, complications, and hospital-borne infections can frequently be a consequence of poor initial care and can add unnecessary cost and degrade the patient experience and outcomes. Oman’s employers face paying for medical wastage, disability, and absence, and employees are left worse off, with some experiencing a decrease in quality or even length of life. Firms should consider introducing cost sharing techniques like deductibles and co-payments; ideally tiered in a way that encourages best practice, cost-effective care. Establishing defined contribution approaches allow costs to be shared with employees while broadening choice. Similarly, employers should look at pre-authorisation for

possible, getting them back into productive work – an employer can deliver empathy and economic benefits simultaneously. The first step is to put your current health profile and management measures under the microscope so you determine the gaps and inefficiencies in your existing programme. **3. Eliminating inefficiencies through smart financing and placement (drive efficiencies)** Firms should look to eliminate redundant or duplicate benefits by consolidating and harmonising existing plans. At the same time, managing wastage is a critical component of cost containment, as plans can involve significant frictional costs such as administration, profit, and risk charges. A loyalty-based approach that provides price concessions in return for longer contract terms or obtaining competitive pricing through volume discount should be considered. Other solutions include more technical alternative risk transfer approaches, such as centralised underwriting, and use of captives that your insurance broker can advise on. Similarly, the use of adjudication and case-management protocols can minimise fraud, ensure expenses are medically necessary, and any claims paid are reasonable. The introduction of simplified and automated administration service level agreements and audits, can also often identify sources of fraud and provide opportunities for refunds.

NBO launches HiPotential identification programme for employee development



MUSCAT: In line with its vision and mission to create a market-leading workforce, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched its new employee-focused HiPotential identification programme. The first phase of evaluations under the programme has been completed through an assessment centre, where bank employees including its Islamic banking window, Muzn, were taken through a series of online assessments and interviews. Out of their results, a pool of HiPotential candidates has been identified, who will then be provided with customised development plans that will chart out their ongoing progression and upskill them for professional growth. In the next batch of assessments, the bank will target additional employees. “Our people are at the heart of what we do and are our most important assets, and as such, we have always strived to help them reach their development goals. The Assessment Centre has been designed using industry leading practices and strengthens our endeavours to identify, groom and grow a leadership pipeline from within,” said Nasser al Hajri (pictured), Chief Operating Officer at NBO. “We have a huge pool of talent at the bank and we are committed to equipping them with the tools and techniques to be able to contribute to a self-reliant, engaged, and future-ready workforce, while opening up greater opportunities for them in the future.”



A woman holds Indonesian rupiah and US dollar bills inside a bank in Jakarta. — Reuters

Indonesia's Q2 FDI grows 19.6 per cent

JAKARTA: Foreign direct investment (FDI) into Indonesia surged 19.6 per cent on a yearly basis in the second quarter in rupiah terms, the country's investment ministry said on Tuesday, the highest rise in over five years.

Total FDI in April-June stood at 116.8 trillion rupiah (\$8.06 billion), excluding FDI into banking and the oil and gas sector.

The second-quarter FDI growth was the strongest since the fourth quarter of 2015, according to Refinitiv data. With domestic investment, total direct invest in the second quarter stood at 223 trillion rupiah, up 16.2 per cent from a year earlier.

Minister Bahlil Lahadalia told a news conference business has become accustomed to the coronavirus pandemic, which helped spurred investment flows into Southeast Asia's largest economy.

However, Bahlil noted

rising Covid-19 cases and stricter coronavirus curbs beginning in July will likely affect the third quarter FDI numbers.

"The challenge in the third quarter will be huge, because we're seeing a surge in Covid-19 cases," he said, adding that his ministry was formulating a strategy to make sure its investment target for 2021 could be reached.

The ministry aims to attract total direct investment of 900 trillion rupiah this year, from domestic and foreign sources. In the first half of 2021, 49 per cent of the target had been reached.

Investors have made commitments for later this year, including a 5.2-trillion rupiah investment by US agribusiness giant Cargill with ground breaking expected in October or September, Bahlil said. The minister did not respond to request for comment.

— Reuters

Global growth to stay strong but virus the top risk, say economists

BENGALURU: Global economic growth prospects are holding strong for this year and next, despite a significant majority of economists in Reuters polls warning new variants of the coronavirus pose the biggest risk to that outlook.

A global survey of nearly 500 economists taken this month also concluded recent rising inflation in key economies around the world would be transitory.

The global economy was now forecast to expand a sizzling 6.0 per cent this year, which would be its fastest in nearly half a century, followed by a still-robust 4.5 per cent in 2022. Both were marginal increases from the April poll. Slightly more than half the 48 economies polled on each quarter were upgraded for both years.

But a surge in the latest variant of the virus, which has kept the delayed Tokyo 2020 Olympics an event without spectators, is a reminder vaccinations may have improved but the pandemic has not gone away.

"In recent weeks, financial markets have caught up to the idea that the Covid crisis is not entirely over. The Delta variant adds to the challenge, raising the number of cases and the threshold for herd immunity," said Ethan Harris, global economist at Bank of America Securities. "Overall, we see the Delta surge as a moderate headwind to global growth, but as new information comes in, we can be persuaded otherwise."

Financial markets are on edge ahead of the US Federal Reserve's meeting this week, where policymakers are grappling with



Workers build a pillar at the site of the metro railway flyover under construction in Ahmedabad, India. — Reuters

The global economy is now forecast to expand a sizzling 6.0 per cent this year, which would be its fastest in nearly half a century, followed by a still-robust 4.5 per cent in 2022

increased coronavirus infections and a disrupted global supply chain that could induce more price pressures.

As for risks to the global economy, nearly 80 per cent of economists, or 160 of 202 responding to an extra question, said the biggest was a spread of new coronavirus variants.

Over 70 per cent of economists, or 152 of 209, said the current uptrend in global inflation was transitory.

But respondents upgraded their 2021 inflation forecasts for 35 of 48 economies polled on and 31 of them for next year. At the same time, there were 29 economies with growth upgrades for this year and 26 for next, suggesting some price stickiness.

"What makes market pricing in the US more instructive is that they clearly rate the (Fed's) policy willingness to look through higher inflation as being credible. This is at a time when US inflation has surprised to the upside again, and is leading a spate of upside surprises across DMs and some EMs," said Christian Keller, head

of economics research at Barclays.

While economists expected the Fed to end its bond-buying programme by end-2022, with a few more analysts now predicting a rate hike as early as next year, the Bank of Japan and the Bank of England were predicted to keep policy unchanged through to the end of next year.

The European Central Bank, meanwhile, will start tapering its pandemic-related asset purchases sometime after its September meeting and stop buying them by the end of March.

While developed economies have handled the pandemic with massive vaccination drives, emerging ones are still dealing with shortages of doses.

— Reuters

China's industrial profit growth slows on high raw material prices

BEIJING: Profit growth at China's industrial firms slowed for the fourth straight month in June, as high raw material prices weighed on factories' margins, pointing to some weakness in the recovery of the world's second-biggest economy.

Industrial firms' profits rose 20 per cent year-on-year in June to 791.8 billion yuan (\$122.27 billion), data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed, after a 36.4-per cent increase in May.

The Chinese economy has largely recovered from disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, but it has faced new challenges in recent months such as higher raw material costs and

global supply chain crunches.

"The unevenness in the recovery of corporate profitability still exists, with private firms and small businesses facing a slow rebound," said Zhu Hong, a senior statistician at the NBS.

"Commodity prices continue to stay at high levels, squeezing the profitability of enterprises, and there are still weak points in supply chains and industrial chains."

In the first half of 2021, industrial firms' profits grew a hefty 66.9 per cent from a pandemic-induced slump in the same period a year earlier. Profits in January-June increased 45.5 per cent from the same period in 2019, before the global pandemic started.



A worker welds wheels at a factory in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China. — AFP

"The profit margin of upstream industrial enterprises improved further while downstream profit margin edged down slightly," said

analysts from Goldman Sachs.

China's factory activity slowed in June on a resurgence of Covid-19 cases in the export province of Guangdong, with epidemic prevention and control efforts curbing port processing capacity.

Metals processing, as well as chemicals and pharmaceuticals industries, drove profit growth in June, according to NBS data.

Chinese policymakers have stepped up efforts to curb surging commodity prices that have squeezed manufacturers' margins to prevent the price increases from being passed on to consumers.

While China's producer price inflation eased in June after

the government crackdown on runaway commodity prices, the annual rate continued to hover at an uncomfortably high level. Some analysts expect the factory gate inflation to stay elevated in the second half of this year.

China's economy grew slightly more slowly than expected in the second quarter. Officials have warned that the recovery remains uneven. Liabilities at industrial firms were up 8.5 per cent year-on-year at the end of June, versus the 8.2 per cent growth seen at the end of May.

The industrial profit data covers large firms with annual revenues of over 20 million yuan from their main operations. — Reuters

MUNICH

German industry expects rising exports

The continuing pandemic and a persistent shortage of integrated circuits, or chips, are failing to dampen export expectations in Germany's manufacturing sector, the Munich-based Ifo economic research institute reported on Tuesday.

While Ifo's export index recorded a marginal decline to 24.5 in July from 25 in June, the figure remains at a high level and well above the minus figures posted a year ago.

Virtually all sectors are



expecting to boost their exports, with electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and the food sector leading the way.

By contrast, the automotive sector is anticipating only modest gains. — dpa

SEOUL

Starbucks to exit S Korea venture valued at \$2bn

Starbucks Corp is exiting its joint venture in South Korea, the US coffee giant's fifth-largest market, selling a part of its stake to local partner E-Mart Inc and the rest to Singapore's sovereign wealth fund, GIC.

E-Mart, one of the largest retailers in South Korea that currently owns half the JV, will buy an additional 17.5 per cent stake for \$411 million, it said in a filing on Tuesday. It will operate the Starbucks stores. GIC will own the remaining 32.5 per cent.



This suggests a \$2.3-billion valuation for the entire business, and that GIC will pay more than \$700 million for its stake. Starbucks said the deal is expected to be completed over the next 90 days. — Reuters

CALIFORNIA

Tesla posts record profits on higher EV sales

Tesla Inc posted a bigger Q2 profit than expected on Tuesday thanks to higher sales of its less-expensive electric vehicles, as it raised vehicle prices and cut costs.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk, however, said a global chip shortage that led to temporary factory shutdowns for the automaker, remains serious, and offered no details on the timing of its Cybertruck and next-generation batteries.

For the first time since late



2019, Tesla profits did not rely on sales of environmental credits to other automakers, a sign of increasing financial health for the manufacturing operation. Tesla shares rose nearly 1 per cent in extended trade. — Reuters

features



The historical and economic importance of Qurayat's salt basins

Brothers Omar and Jafeer al Balushi had been working the salt basins of Qurayat, one of the country's top natural salt producers, since they were 12 years old. It's an ancient practice passed down to them by their father. In this feature, they share some key details about the profession and the challenges they have to contend with... **P18, 19**

GASTRONOMY

READ



THE SEVEN HUSBANDS OF EVELYN HUGO

BY TAYLOR JENKINS REID

A movie icon recounts stories of her loves and career to a struggling magazine writer.

New York's \$200 french fries offer 'escape' from reality

FEDERAL RESERVE CHAIR Jerome Powell, always on the look-out for signs of inflation, might want to drop by Manhattan's Upper East Side, where a \$200 plate of french fries stretches the definition of haute cuisine.

The restaurant Serendipity 3 already claims world records for the most expensive burger (\$295) and ice cream sundae (\$1,000), so if the question is, "You want fries with that?" its

answer is a resounding yes.

Guinness World Records certified the feat. As of July 13, the fries are officially the most expensive on earth.

"Serendipity is really a happy place," said Creative Director and Chef Joe Calderone. "People come here to celebrate, to really escape the reality of life sometimes."

The Crème de la Crème Pomme Frites start out as Chipperbec potatoes. They are blanched – or scalded – in vin-

egar and champagne. Then they fry in pure goose fat, not oil, and not once but twice, so they are crispy on the outside and fluffy on the inside.

Sprinkled with edible gold and seasoned with truffle salt and truffle oil, they are served on a crystal plate with an orchid, thin-sliced truffles, and a Mornay cheese dip. The sauce, too, is infused with truffles, a rare seasonal mushroom.

"Truffle is the main star here," said Corporate Executive Chef Frederick Schoen-Kiewert.

Like many restaurants, Serendipity was closed during the Covid-19 pandemic and Calderone and Schoen-Kiewert thought the fancy fries would be a good way to announce its return.



It's working. There is an eight- to 10-week wait list for the fries.

"It's been a rough year and a

half for everyone, and we need to have some fun now," said Calderone.

— Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

Britney Spears files to replace her father as guardian



BRITNEY SPEARS has launched a legal bid to remove her father from a controversial guardianship controlling her finances and replace him with an independent accountant, according to court documents filed on Monday.

Mathew Rosengart, who was appointed as the pop star's attorney this month, had pledged to move swiftly to remove Jamie Spears after the singer delivered two emotional testimonies to a Los Angeles court labelling the conservatorship as "cruelty".

"If the court doesn't see this as abuse... I don't know what is," said Spears, 39, telling the court via telephone earlier this month that she wanted her father removed and to "press charges" against him.

The Los Angeles Superior Court website on Monday listed a new petition to "Appoint Conservator of Estate (Successor)", and California-based accountant Jason Rubin is listed as "Nominee".

Rosengart argued in the petition that as a recent judge's ruling found "Ms Spears has sufficient capacity to choose her own legal counsel, she likewise has sufficient capacity to make this nomination," The New York Times reported.

At a brief hearing later Monday, Judge Brenda Penny said she will rule in late September on the bid to remove Jamie Spears from the control of an estate estimated to be worth \$60 million.

Jamie Spears' removal has been a longstanding demand of devoted

global fans campaigning under the #FreeBritney slogan.

Spears was placed under a unique legal guardianship largely governed by her father after she suffered a highly public 2007 breakdown.

But the "Toxic" singer has become increasingly vocal and public in opposing the conservatorship since emotional court testimonies and social media posts in which she slammed the system as "cruelty" and accused her father and others of profiting from the system.

Spears alleged in court that she had been prevented from having a contraceptive IUD removed, despite wanting more children, and forcefully put on medication that made her feel "drunk".

She recently wrote on Instagram that she was "not gonna be performing on any stages anytime soon with my dad handling what I wear, say, do, or think."

Following a July 14 hearing, Rosengart told AFP his team would be "filing a petition as soon as possible to move Mr Spears," while also calling on the singer's father to step down voluntarily.

But Jamie Spears' lawyer told the court he would not be standing down and disputed Britney Spears' account of the conservatorship.

A previous petition to remove Jamie Spears from his role last year was rejected by the judge.

A court hearing has been set for September 29. — **AFP**

ANIMAL PLANET

Feline okay? The app that tells you if your cat's happy



CAT OWNERS WHO love to take pictures of their furry friends now have a new excuse to pull out their smartphones and take a snapshot: it may actually help the cat.

A Calgary, Alberta, animal health technology company, Sylvester.ai, has developed an app called Tably that uses the phone's camera to tell whether a feline is feeling pain.

The app looks at ear and head position, eye-narrowing, muzzle tension, and how whiskers change, to detect distress. A 2019 study published in peer-reviewed journal *Scientific Reports* found that the so-called 'feline grimace scale,' or FGS, is a valid and reliable tool for acute pain assessment in cats.

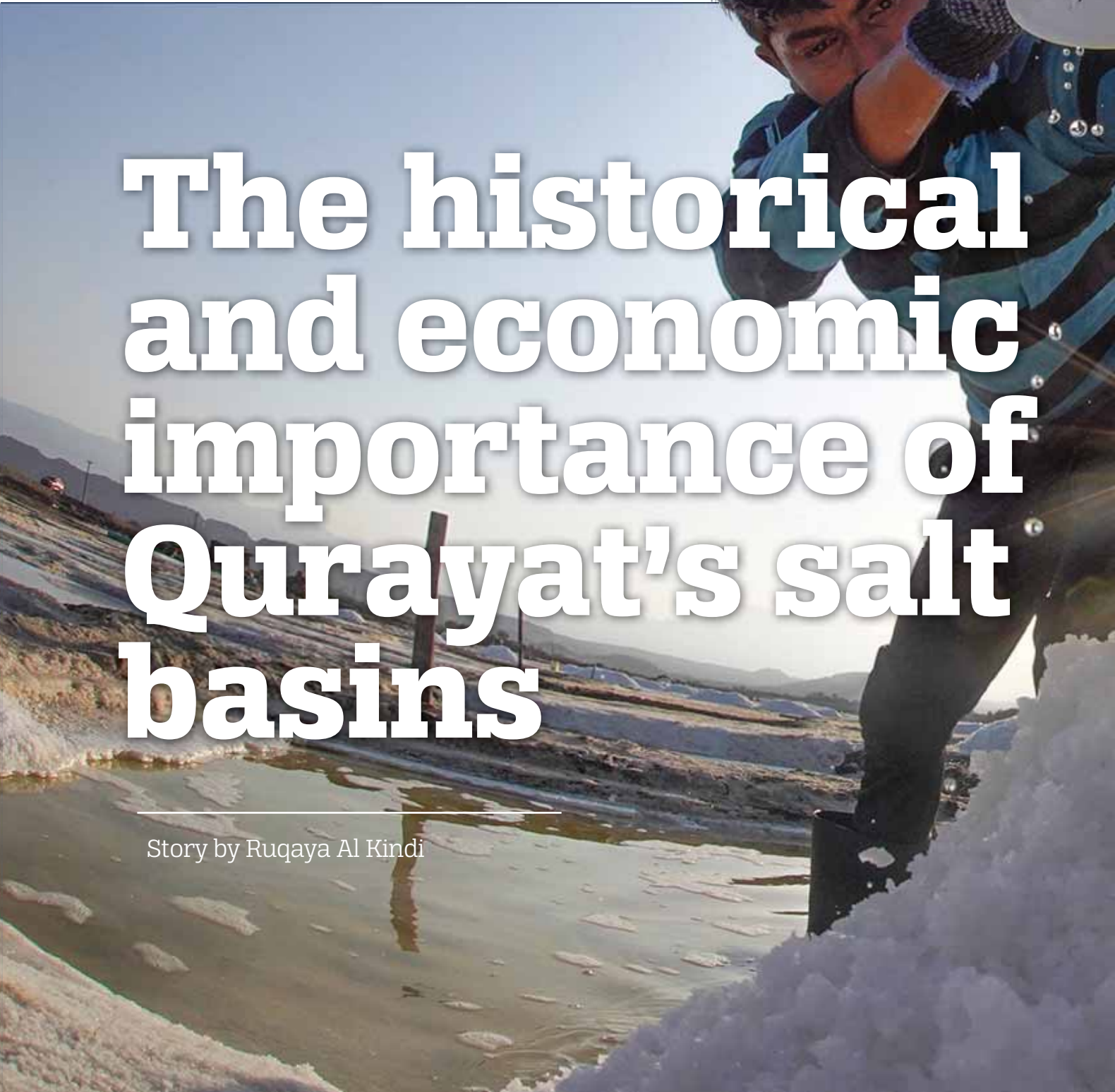
"It helps human-cat owners know if their cat is in pain or not," said Miche Priest, Sylvester.ai's venture lead. "We were able to train a machine using machine learning and a series of images."

The app could help young veterinarians, said Dr Liz Ruelle of the Wild Rose Cat Clinic in Calgary, where developers trained the algorithm.

"I love working with cats, have always grown up with cats," she said. "For other colleagues, new grads, who maybe have not had quite so much experience, it can be very daunting to know - is your patient painful?"

An app that learns patterns from images of cat faces can be helpful but cat owners should also look at their pet's whole body, including the tail, for clues about their well-being, said Alice Potter from British animal charity the RSPCA.

"Cats that are worried or scared will hold that tail really tight and tense to them. And then aside from that, there's also just thinking about their behaviour in terms of are they eating, drinking, toileting, sleeping like they usually do?" — **Reuters**



The historical and economic importance of Qurayat's salt basins

Story by Ruqaya Al Kindi



Photo by Abdulrahman Al Hinai



Photo by Abdulrahman Al Hinai



Photo by Abdulrahman Al Hinai



Its discovery was reported to be an accident and while nobody can pinpoint the exact date of when it was first developed as a salt-producing field, the Khor Al Malh in the Wilayat of Qurayat has proven to be an essential source of livelihood for some of the residents in the area.

"People noticed the water that springs or come out from the ground fills the basins and then the salts are formed as soon as the water evaporates due to the temperature," Omar al Balushi shared.

Omar with his brother Jeffer are sons of Juma al Balushi and their family is one of the pioneers in extracting salt from the khor. In fact, as both brothers shared, both of them had been working in the profession since they were 12 years old.

Salt is an essential ingredient in preparing daily food and has

many uses in various aspects of life. While salt is produced in different parts of Oman, the Wilayat of Qurayat is the most famous Omani state known for extracting natural salt that traces its origin since ancient times.

The Balushi brothers, just like the other salt field producers in the area, still preserve the traditional methods of extracting it from "Khor Al Malh".

The traditional way they are talking about uses "either an Al Shafta, which is an animal bone (the shoulder of cow or sheep), or with a traditional plastic tool." Some people also use round plates.

"After the salt has been collected, we keep it for two days outside and near the basins in a place called (Al Bind), which is a passage between the basins. By leaving it there, we give the salt ample time to dry or remove the remaining water," they shared.

Once dried, the heaps of salt are shovelled into large bags called "gawani" and are delivered to different markets in the Sultanate.

PASSED DOWN FROM THEIR ANCESTORS

Extracting natural salt is an old profession practised by grandparents and was passed on to fathers and sons.

"In the past, the salt was carried through a "Qafeer" (baskets made of palm fronds) which were transported on the donkey's backs and then to the markets, but today the salt is collected in the "Gawani" and transferred by cars to the various governorates," Jeffer shared.

Jeffer added that even in the olden days, salt that exceeds the local needs was exported through ships that dock on the coast of Qurayat, next to the "Al Sira" fortress. These were delivered to

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Photo by Ismail al Farsi



Photo by Ismail al Farsi



Photo by Ismail al Farsi



Photo by Ismail al Farsi

India and other countries.

"It is, also, transported from Khor Al Malh to many markets, including the traditional markets scattered in the Sultanate, as well as fish markets, and other shops," he added.

Today, he and his brother have utilised modern tools in order to accept orders and deliver the products. He confirmed that social media platforms played a prominent role in marketing natural salt and they are happy that there is a great demand for it by many families.

"We receive the orders in our Instagram account "quriyat.salt" or our number "90666021," he said.

The increasing demand for salt, as he shared, "is due to the fact that it is healthy, natural, free from chemicals and manufactured materials, and it has many uses, starting with adding it to foods and not ending with generating electric power."

Working with difficult conditions

Managing the salt ponds and overseeing salt production had their own sets of challenges. One of the main issues they have to contend with is the weather and Oman's dry, hot temperature.

"The Khor Al Malh is located close to the sea. The unstable weather that causes heavy rain usually inundates the valley. Once the salt ponds are flooded, it takes time to dry, some extending for several months," Jafeer said.

For people in their profession, summer is their best friend as the quick evaporation process helps them extract more salt. The hot weather however can be very challenging for the workers as they have to work under direct sunlight.

"In the summer, we extract from one basin about 120 kg every 10-15 days, where the value of one large bag of salt is RO 1,200 to 1,600," he said.

In the winter, the amount of extracted salt drops but the prices

usually go up due to low supply. "We extract from one basin 120 kg every 20-25 days and the value of salt increases about RO 1,800-2,000," he added.

Khor Al Malh, located close to the sea, extends about 4 square kilometres, while the salt sources (basins) are about 2 square kilometres.

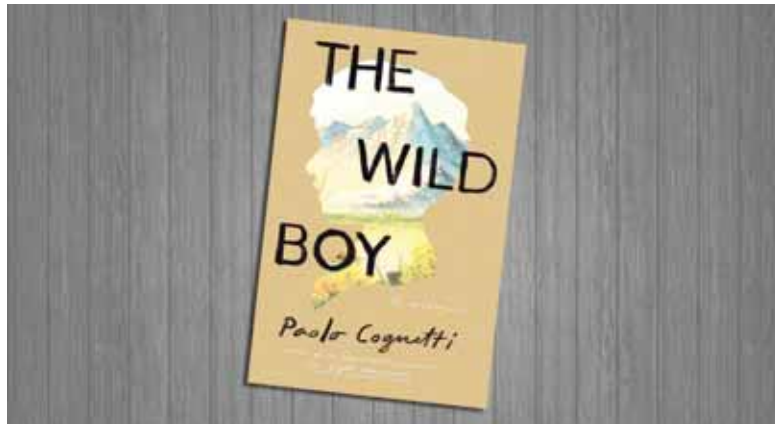
"These basins are divided amongst citizens who inherited them from their ancestors or bought them," Omar said.

Omar added, "The number of basins that people own varies. It may reach 200 basins per person, and this means more effort and time spent to extract the salt. The size of the basins varies, and the least size is one and a half metres long and one and a half metres wide."

Jafeer stressed that the place welcomes visitors every day, "and we are always ready to teach visitors about the history and process of salt extraction, and its benefits as well," he said.

BOOK REVIEW

Italian memoir "The Wild Boy" spotlights adapting with nature



"**THE WILD BOY**" is a memoir by the Italian writer Paolo Cognetti about a young man who escapes his painful past by retreating to the rustic comfort of the Italian Alps. The book, translated to French by Anita Rushdie, has the fragrance of mountains, echoes of sounds and the purity of air.

Cognetti shares his experiences in returning to live for a year on the slopes of the Valle d'Aosta in the Western Alps of Italy, where he often wandered as a boy.

Cognetti flees the rigors of urban living that have robbed him of his joie de vivre — in addition to his desire to write — to try and reconnect with something vital that he perceives he had as a child but the tether to which he has

lost as an adult.

Taking up residence in an abandoned cabin, Cognetti spends a few months in near-total isolation from other humans, spending much of his time observing the animals as they navigate the cycles of the seasons.

While seeking a path back into the wilderness this place represented for him when he was younger, the older Cognetti recognises that these places, albeit distant from the world he inhabits now, were always human-inhabited, always human-mediated. The people, and the way of life that they carved out on these austere mountain slopes, are now largely gone, and he finds himself inhabiting not wilderness but ruins.

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



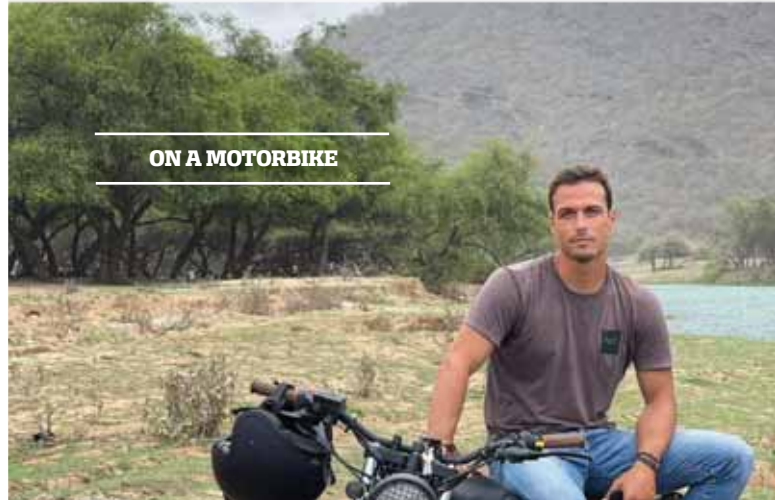
mj_photographer • Follow
Mirbat



SAND IN YOUR TOES



hugo_lopez_9 • Follow
Salalah, Oman



ON A MOTORBIKE



khibiny_travmatolog • Follow
Kassab Sultanat d'Oman Détroit d'Ormuz



OLD BOATS

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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





Promising a more family-friendly, adventure-filled and food diverse Jabal Akhdhar

If the goals will happen as planned and designed, Jabal Al Akhdhar will not only be an outdoor getaway from the sweltering heat especially during the summer, but will be a full-360 degree family adventure destination and the next food haven escape.

With over 30 years in the hospitality industry, Gerhard Stutz has set his eyes on transforming the family and individual experiences of everyone going to Jabal Al Akhdhar.

As the general manager of dusitD2 Naseem Resort, he is banking on his wealth of cultural experiences from around the globe, his keen eyes and taste for amazing food and with a property that boasts the biggest Adventure Park in Jabal Al Akhdhar, an experience that will make it worth going to Oman's Green Mountain.

Oman Daily Observer reached out to Gerhard to understand what people can expect from the opening of this new property.

OMANISATION AND 'GOING LOCAL' MEANING USING PRODUCTS PRODUCED IN OMAN HAD BEEN KEY CONVERSATIONS AS OF LATE. CAN YOU TELL US MORE REGARDING YOUR MAN-POWER MAKEUP AND HOW ARE YOU SOURCING THE PRODUCTS (MAY THEY BE FOR HYGIENE OR FOOD PURPOSES)? WHY IS THIS STRATEGY IMPORTANT TO THE OVERALL HEALTH OF THE PROPERTY AND ITS OPERATIONS?

Omanisation is an important aspect at the core of this property - wherever possible, be they materials or ingredients, we aim to source

locally to maintain the authenticity of the culture of the surrounding area that our hotel is in. The same goes for our staff – while we do have international staff members, we have placed a focus on hiring from within Oman. The Omani people are incredibly welcoming and hospitable people, and the Dusit culture of graciousness is well embodied within the Omani culture. Omanisation is less a strategy, but rather a necessity, in order to respect the land and the culture we are in and to ensure harmonious prosperity. Moreover, it is our way of giving back to the country and its people in whatever manner possible.

WHO IS GERHARD STUTZ AND HOW IS HE GOING TO TRANSFORM FAMILY OR INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF GUESTS GOING TO JABAL AL AKHDHAR THROUGH THE DUSITD2 NASEEM RESORT?

It is easy to describe myself as a hotelier considering I have over 30 years in the industry, however, it is much more than that – having lived with my family in Asia, Europe, the US and the Middle East, I have a true wealth of cultural experiences from around the globe in hospitality that has shaped and taught me in everything I do. That amount of experience has given me the understanding of the touches that make any guest stay unique and memorable – be that the big things like hotel activities that we have on sites like our Adventure Park, or small but noticeable details such as local Omani art throughout the property. I myself am also a father to two daughters, so I understand the importance of catering to the whole family, big and small, in order to make any stay truly special.



CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THE BRAND AND WHAT DOES ITS ENTRY TO OMAN MEANS?

At the core of the Dusit brand is the dedication to gracious, personalised, timeless service with the essence of hospitality central to its culture. Part of this is shining light onto hidden gems and Dusit's entry into Oman is an example of that – the Omani culture, the people, and the incredible scenery that this country has to offer is the perfect platform for Dusit to further embody its values and provide guests with not only a memorable stay but an incredibly memorable destination as well.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE STRONGEST ASSETS OF THE PROPERTY THAT PEOPLE SHOULD DEFINITELY CHECK OUT?

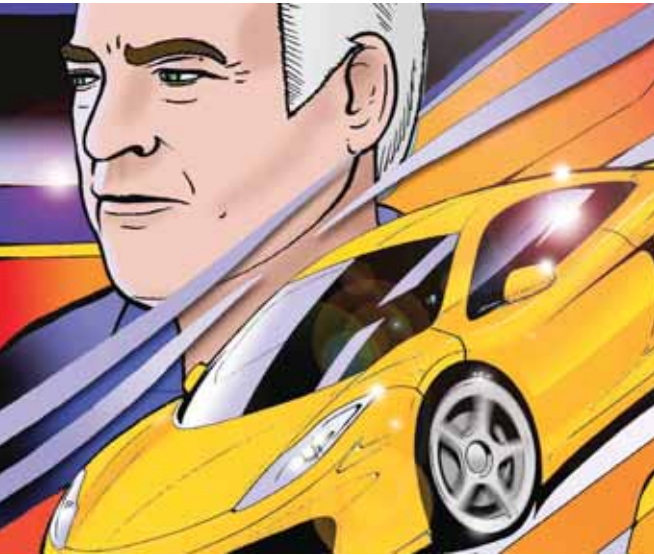
The dusitD2 Naseem Resort in Jabal Al Akhdhar is a truly unique property – not just for the Dusit brand but as a whole. Located at an altitude of 2,000m in Oman's highest mountain range, we are within 5-minute proximity of the Rose gardens and the well-renowned ancient terrace plantations. Our property boasts 52 unique builds with four rooms each and a dedicated suite building hosting an array of rooms, studios, and 1, 2 and 3 bedroom suites, as well as extensive grounds and a pool with a swim-up refreshment bar. The unique properties of this resort include our restaurants – we

proudly serve Thai and international cuisine, as well as Arabic delicacies with a focus on local specialities and their key ingredients. For our younger guests, one of the highlights of the property will definitely be our 8,000 square metres Adventure Park! Undoubtedly, our strongest assets are our people! Our gracious hospitality intimately coupled with a sense of well-being and sustainability all entwined in our local culture is what separates us from the rest and you will feel this when you visit our hotel.

AS A MICHELIN-STAR CHEF, IS THAT BACKGROUND COMING INTO PLAY WITH HOW THE CUISINES WILL BE PREPARED AT THE HOTEL? CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE DINING OPPORTUNITIES AND WHAT'S GOING TO MAKE DUSIT'S OFFERING DIFFERENT?

Absolutely – one of the best things about the years of experience I have gained around the world, is understanding that one of the true pillars of guests' stays is the quality of the meals available to them. The dining opportunities at the hotel will not only feature dishes that are popular from around the world but will also take local specialities from both Oman and the wider Middle East to truly marry the Dusit brand with the local Omani culture. Dusit's offering here is different as we take the authenticity of the recipes and ingredients very importantly, as they are the core of the flavour and soul of any dish. I have a very talented culinary team who embody the balances and cultures of any dish they create, of any cuisine.

DIGITAL TRENDS



Iconic designer launches colouring book for automotive enthusiasts

FRANK STEPHENSON Design announces the launch of its first official colouring book, complete with some of the most iconic designs from Frank Stephenson's acclaimed career.

Aimed at automotive enthusiasts of all ages, the official colouring book has been created in collaboration with renowned Hollywood Movie Car Designer, Fireball Tim Lawrence, and includes 19 of Frank's most celebrated designs, complete with cars such as the Ferrari F430, Maserati MC20, McLaren P1, as well as a special race maze.

Fireball Publishing has worked alongside many well-known automotive personalities and has created official colouring books for Magnus Walker, Spike Feresten and Tony Dow amongst others.

Frank Stephenson, Frank Stephenson Design: "I am delighted to share that my official colouring book is now available to purchase in most countries around the world. Who doesn't remember drawing their favourite cars as a young child? Now with this, the next generation of petrol heads can nurture their passion, channel their inner artistry and colour some of the most iconic car designs from across my career."

Fireball Tim Lawrence, Fireball Publishing Group: "We are super grateful to be publishing a book with one of our hero car designers, Frank Stephenson. His inspirations and design advancements have made millions passionate about cars and the journeys we take with them, plus will inspire families to enjoy this world as we do. It's an honour and certainly an amazing book!"

With the aim of engaging with those who have purchased the colouring book, Frank Stephenson will also be launching the Colouring Book Challenge whereby those who want to can show off their prized pieces of artwork on Instagram tagging #FrankStephensonChallenge. Frank will then personally feature the best pieces on his official YouTube channel to an audience of over 160,000 subscribers.

The colouring book is available to customers globally and can be purchased directly from Amazon.