



Wear a mask... always!



Employment tops government agenda

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik presided over a meeting of the Council of Ministers at the Cabinet's premises in Muscat on Tuesday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to Almighty Allah for the bounties He has bestowed on Oman and its noble people. He prayed that these bounties be eternalised for all people in Oman and that the

His Majesty the Sultan laid emphasis on the integration of efforts of state departments, exhorting them to cooperate for concrete results and enabling youth to contribute to the march of development and nation building

coronavirus pandemic be lifted from all humanity.

His Majesty the Sultan then reviewed the local and regional situation. He said that the issue of employment of Omani jobseekers tops the government's priorities, and underscored the significance of exerting maximum efforts to help the unemployed find jobs or professions across different sectors.

In this context, His Majesty the Sultan laid emphasis on the integration of efforts of state departments, exhorting them to cooperate for concrete results and enabling youth to

contribute to the march of development and nation building.

His Majesty the Sultan commended the package of initiatives unveiled recently to provide employment opportunities for jobseekers. His Majesty the Sultan blessed the launch of the National Employment Programme (NEP), which stems from Oman Vision 2040, as it is accorded continuous attention. The NEP targets the development of sustainable solutions for the issue of employment in all state sectors (civil, military and security), as well as private sector companies.

The NEP analyses data of jobseekers on a regular basis till they join the labour market. It also seeks other options to fill the gap of knowledge and skills needed by the labour market so that the unemployed immediately get jobs when they are available.

The NEP is implemented in accordance with a specific executive plan and timeframe linked to performance indicators that are monitored on a regular basis to ensure the fulfillment of the desired goals.

Continued on Page 03

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Health and wellness through yoga and ayurveda



H E MUNU MAHAWAR
Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman

Yoga and ayurveda are gifts of ancient India to the world. Yoga has become a way of life for millions across the world and is immensely popular among all communities in Oman. Its popularity in Oman can be attested by the enthusiastic participation in various yoga events organised by the embassy.

Yoga connects body, mind and soul. It is well established that yoga poses help in improving blood circulation, activate internal organs and help in detoxification, thereby improving immunity levels. Experts also say that transmission of chemicals in the body known as ‘happiness hormones’, is

drastically improved through correct yoga postures, alleviating stress and anxiety. Calming and mindfulness practices that are an integral part of yoga are a natural way of fighting depression.

Ayurveda is generally defined as ‘the science of life’ and is based on developing harmony between soul, senses and intellect, which leads to optimal health. The principles of ayurveda are well aligned with the definition of health propagated by the World Health Organization (WHO), which also defines health as a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Every year in June, the world cele-

brates International Day of Yoga (IDY) with great enthusiasm. In 2019, IDY celebrations in Oman witnessed participation of over 6,000 individuals under one roof. However, last year, due to COVID-19, the celebrations had to be done virtually. This year too, we are celebrating IDY under the shadow of COVID-19.

There have been positive developments in humanity’s fight against COVID-19, most notably the discovery and administration of vaccines. However, the threat to public health by COVID-19 still remains high. The pandemic has affected millions of lives, with mental and psychological impact being as grave as the physical ailment. In such times, along with vaccination

and precautions, having strong immunity and sound mental health are key to fighting this disease effectively. Yoga can help develop a strong immune system, and provide an effective, accessible and affordable means to fight the negative impacts of COVID-19.

This year, the theme of IDY is ‘Be with Yoga: Be at Home’. The theme encourages us to follow COVID-19 precautions, stay motivated and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, in his letter addressed to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of the seventh IDY, stated that “yoga is good for community, immunity and unity” and this

year’s theme “reflects the concern for the good health and well being of people across the globe”.

The Embassy of India has organised a series of events virtually in association with various yoga organisations to celebrate IDY this year. I would like to thank all the yoga organisations for their initiatives and support as well as all the yoga enthusiasts who have actively participated in these events.

The embassy will organise the main celebration on Saturday, June 19, 5pm onwards which will be streamed live on our social media platforms.

I invite all the people in Oman to join us and celebrate the International Day of Yoga with their families.

EA conducts pest control campaigns in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Environment Authority has conducted campaigns to combat stem borer larvae in order to preserve rare and perennial trees in Dhofar in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

In a statement, the Environment Authority (EA) said, ‘Our inspection teams in Dhofar, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, carried out two campaigns in the Hashir area in Tawi Ateer in the wilayat of Mirbat and the Jabjat area in the wilayat of Taqah.’

The two campaigns saw the spraying and pest control treatment of perennial trees that were infected with stem borer larvae.

‘The inspection teams visited the sites and met citizens in the two areas to assess the extent of damage caused to the trees and



study a control plan. The authority confirms that the inspection teams will complete spraying pesticides, and carry out damage assessment in other locations in the governorate,’ the EA stated.

Expats fined RO5,000 for selling tobacco

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Consumer Prosecution Authority has arrested expatriate workers for selling chewing tobacco in two separate cases and fined them a total of RO5,000.

Regarding the first case, the authority stated that an expat

was arrested after a tip-off. ‘Officers in Rustaq in South Batinah raided a coffee shop in the wilayat of Mussanah after it received information and arrested an expatriate worker who was selling chewing tobacco inside sandwiches.’

Officers seized quantities of chewing tobacco and imposed a

fine of RO2,000 in accordance with provisions of the law (No 301/2016) relating to the prohibition of sale of chewing tobacco.

In the second case, inspection teams raided an apartment in the wilayat of Sur in South Sharqiyah and seized a quantity of chewing tobacco and fined the expats selling these RO3,000.

Qarn Alam records highest temperature of the year

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Qarn Alam in Dakhliyah governorate recorded 50.3°C on Monday, the highest temperature this year. Mudhaibi in North Sharqiyah too saw the mercury crossing 50°C.

According to the Directorate General of Meteorology, Mudhaibi and Adam in Dakhliyah were expected to see temperatures touching 50°C on Tuesday.

Earlier on June 5, Sunaynah in Buraimi saw the mercury touching 50.1°C.

The Met office predicted clear to partly cloudy skies on the coast of Dhofar governorate and the surrounding mountains with intermittent rain for Wednesday. For most other governorates, the Met office expects a noticeable rise in temperatures, except for the areas around the Hajar Mountains which are likely to see cloud development.

‘There are chances of dust rising winds over deserts and open areas and late night to early morning low level clouds

along parts of Arabian Sea coasts,’ it stated.

The seas will be rough along the Arabian Sea coast with

maximum wave height of 4m and moderate along Musandam governorate coasts with maximum wave height of 2m

and slightly rough along the rest of the sultanate’s coasts with maximum wave height of 1.25m.



Qarn Alam recorded 50.3°C on Monday, while Mudhaibi too saw the mercury crossing 50°C

Madayn invites bids to build infrastructure in Musandam Industrial City

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In efforts to develop Musandam governorate, Madayn has invited bids for construction of roads and related infrastructure and utility works at Mahas Industrial City in the wilayat of Khasab, Musandam governorate.

A statement issued by Madayn said that the deadline for

submission of bids is July 22, 2021.

These efforts are in line with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s directive to develop Musandam governorate.

Following Royal Directives, the Council of Ministers approved a package last week aimed at the development of Musandam governorate, including a decision to declare the area



of Mahas an economic zone with the objective of establishing and regulating light and medium industries, along with building storage facilities to bolster Port of Khasab’s activities.

Other measures approved include establishing an integrated system and a strategic reservoir to achieve security in food and medicinal drug stocks, convert Port of Khasab into a logistics

hub in a bid to provide services and facilities that stimulate imports, exports and open direct export routes, and setting up specialised economic and tourism zones to promote investment in tourism and related logistics activity.

These are in addition to the establishment of a branch of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Musandam.

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Single-day death toll at record high

Our Correspondent
Muscat

COVID-19 numbers rose to a record high as the Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 2,126 new cases and 33 deaths on Tuesday. The daily infection count was second only to July 13, 2020, when 2,164 cases were reported, while Tuesday's death toll is the highest in a single day.

With these figures, the total number of cases registered in the sultanate has now reached 238,566, including 2,565 deaths. 'The total number of recoveries is 212,064, taking the recovery rate down to 89 per cent,' an MoH statement said.

Hospitalisations are also increasing every day, with 164 COVID-19 patients being admitted in a 24-hour period on Tuesday across the country, taking the total number of inpatients to 1,247, including 374 in intensive care units, the MoH statement said.

The ministry called on all citizens and residents to continue cleaning hands with soap and water, avoid touching the face, nose, mouth and eyes, follow healthy habits when sneezing and coughing, besides following the instructions for social and



**2,126
NEW
CASES**

physical distancing issued by the Supreme Committee and MoH. Meanwhile, the National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 continues with large numbers of people thronging

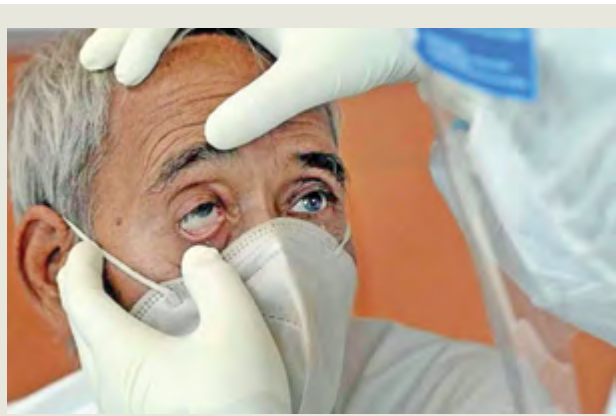
vaccination centres.

Badr bin Saif al Rawahi, director of the Department of Infectious Diseases Control at MoH, reiterated in a TV interview recently that the ministry only pro-

cures vaccines which have proved safe.

3 arrested for forging PCR test reports

Three expats have been arrested



MoH confirms 3 cases of 'black fungus'

Muscat - The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced three confirmed cases of mucormycosis, commonly called 'black fungus', in Oman on Tuesday.

In a statement, MoH said, 'Three cases of mucormycosis have been registered among patients who tested positive with COVID-19.'

Mucormycosis is a complication caused by a fungal infection. Patients get mucormycosis by coming in contact with fungal spores in the environment. The disease is increasingly being detected among patients who are recovering or have recovered from COVID-19 when they have reduced immunity.

for forging PCR test certificates, according to Royal Oman Police (ROP).

A statement issued by ROP said, 'Muscat Governorate Police Command, in cooperation with

the Directorate General of Airport Security, arrested three expats for fake PCR test certificates. Legal action has been taken against the perpetrators.'

OCCI calls for review of MoL decision on new expat recruitment fee

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has called for a review of Ministry of Labour's Decision No 12/2021 regarding the new fee for recruitment of non-Omani workforce.

As part of its efforts to create jobs and discuss the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sultanate's economy, the chamber held a meeting with a number of ministers and businessmen on Monday.

"Implementation of Decision No 12/2021 regarding the new fee for work permits for non-Omani workforce for higher and middle-level positions, and technical and specialised professions, and the new fee for work permits for small and medium enterprises requires review and further study to enhance the partnership between the public and private sectors," said Eng Redha bin Juma al Saleh, chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI.

The OCCI hosted Dr Saeed bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Qais bin Mohammad al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, Sheikh Nasr bin Amer al Hosani, Undersecretary for Labour in the Ministry of Labour, and Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

"The chamber's Board of Directors, in its meeting, decided to form work teams in the Governorate of Muscat and the rest of the governorates in coordination with the governors and the Ministry of Labour and private sector institutions to create around 7,000 job opportunities, so that there would be 500 job opportunities in each governorate and 2,000 jobs in the governorate of Muscat," Eng Saleh said.

The meeting focused on the



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ENG REDHA BIN JUMA AL SALEH

need to encourage attracting investments in various economic sectors and the transfer of technology and information technology that will have a positive effect on the national economy.

The meeting also stressed the need to link foreign investments and the residency of foreign investors to encourage investments within the sultanate.

"The meeting aimed to discuss the challenges facing private sector institutions and owners of small and medium enterprises, the impact of some decisions on these institutions, and finding appropriate proposals and solutions to these challenges in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these institutions," Eng Saleh said.

He further explained, "The GDP of Oman declined by 15 per cent in 2020 compared to 2019 due to the pandemic. The pandemic also affected the owners of SMEs, which led to a decline in the activity of many commercial establishments and others that were closed due to losses.

"Many national cadres working in the private sector also lost their jobs, which led to an increase in the number of jobseekers, which would affect the growth of the national economy, societal stability and human capital."

He stressed the need to form a committee to follow up the implementation of incentives and facilities in all government agencies provided to the private sector, that have membership of OCCI. The incentives and facilities are an important opportunity to overcome crises and obstacles.

"We appreciate the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to employ 32,000 citizens in the public and private sectors this year, and to reduce the number of jobseekers in order to preserve the sustainability of comprehensive national development, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in cooperation with the private sector, will support the government sector in providing job opportunities."

Employment tops government agenda

Continued from Page 01

His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to the departments concerned to empower NEP and provide all means of support to the programme so that it can achieve its objectives.

In the context of His Majesty's Royal Attention to develop education, upgrade the quality of school education and adapt to the needs of the labour market in accordance with Oman Vision 2040, His Majesty the Sultan underlined the importance of accelerating procedures necessary for analysing the requirements of

technical and vocational education for the post-basic education stage to fit labour market needs. His Majesty the Sultan stressed the importance of devising a comprehensive plan to realise this objective and determine the expertise and human resources required to achieve it.

His Majesty the Sultan pointed out that the next stage requires the collaboration of efforts of all state institutions towards rendering top quality services and eliminating any obstacles that might impede the march of comprehensive devel-

opment. This involves the formulation of a new, efficient mechanism of action to ensure the smooth operation of all sectors, to refine and accelerate output, His Majesty said.

His Majesty the Sultan also commended the efforts made to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. He thanked all health workers and expressed his appreciation for their valuable contribution to curb the pandemic.

His Majesty the Sultan also stressed the significance of pressing ahead with the national immunisation campaign and the

importance of raising the awareness of citizens and residents about commitment to adhere to measures set by the departments concerned in this respect.

Speaking about regional issues, His Majesty the Sultan laid emphasis on the continuation of the Gulf Cooperation Council's economic cooperation programmes. He also reaffirmed the sultanate's permanent stance and principles advocating rapprochement among countries to achieve security and establish stability for all.

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Registration for Upgrade programme extended till Aug 5

Muscat - The registration for the fifth edition of the Upgrade programme, a programme that transforms the best graduation projects in the 4th Industrial Revolution technologies into successful ICT startups to bring socio-economic benefit to Oman, has been extended to August 5.

Upgrade is a competition-based programme in which the winners will be assisted to transform their graduation projects into startups in the Information and Communication Technology sector on topics such as Smart Cities, Internet of Things, Information Security, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and Blockchain.

The participating projects will be sorted and filtered by a jury consisting of the programme partners through three stages of evaluation to choose the best

three winning projects. The process of incubating and developing the winning projects will start after choosing the three winning projects. The winning teams will be provided with incubation services, business and marketing consultation, networking and mentoring opportunities, as well as educational awareness programmes that include a group of workshops and lectures in various universities and colleges in the sultanate.

Upgrade is a collaborative partnership between the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Omantel, Oman Technology Fund (OTF), Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sas Centre for Entrepreneurship of the Ministry of Technology and Communications, and the Authority for SME Development.



(Supplied photo)

One injured in tanker collision

Our Correspondent
Muscat

One person was injured when a tanker transporting bitumen collided with a heavy vehicle in Muttrah, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said.

CDAA said, 'The authority's

teams in Muscat dealt with a report of petroleum substance leakage as a result of a collision of a tanker transporting bitumen with a heavy vehicle in Muttrah. The teams were able to contain the leakage. The accident resulted in moderate injury to one person.'

Conservation efforts for ocean's threatened species in focus

WORLD SEA TURTLE DAY

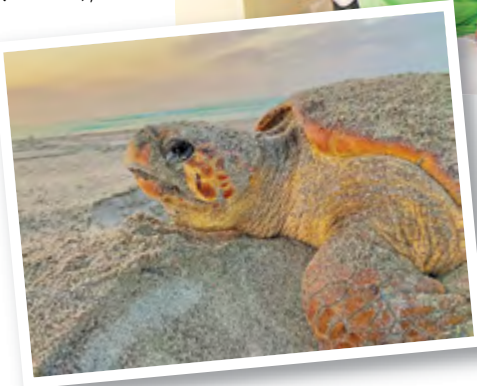
Muscat - With its pristine beaches and balmy waters, the sultanate offers the ideal home for sea turtles. In fact, it hosts the second largest population of loggerhead sea turtles in the world. It is one of the most important nesting areas for green turtles across the northern Indian Ocean, in addition to two other species - hawksbill and olive ridley - that return annually to nest on its long stretch of coastline.

'As we celebrate World Sea Turtle Day today (June 16), our attention is drawn to this remarkable species, which has lived in the world's oceans for over 100mn years, and which faces various threats,' stated Environment Society of Oman (ESO).

A combination of disturbances like coastal development and beach driving, by-catch (accidental capture of turtles in fishing nets), ghost fishing, light pollution, plastic pollution and climate change are negatively impacting the sea turtles habitat and ecosystem. Each of the four species found in Oman is now listed as threatened (either vulnerable or in some cases critically endangered) on the IUCN Red List, a global repository that categorises the conservation status of different species. Last year, researchers published the dis-



(Supplied photos)



heartening finding that there has been a 79 per cent decline in the nesting population of loggerhead turtles on the island of Masirah, a traditional stronghold over the past few decades.

For the last 13 years, the ESO, in collaboration with the Environment Authority has been trying to counteract this loss, for the sake of conserving the species, of maintaining a healthy marine environment, and of preserving the socio-economic balance of communities. This long-term programme has been funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and implemented with the help of

Sea turtles play an important role in maintaining healthy ocean ecosystems, as well as being integral to delicate food chain

SUAAD AL HARTHI

local collaborators including Five Oceans Environmental Services and Future Seas SPC.

"Sea turtles play an important role in maintaining healthy ocean ecosystems, as well as being integral to the very delicate food chain. This of course has huge implications for fishing communities, not to mention those who rely on income from turtle-related tourism," said Suaad al Harthi, ESO's executive director.

"The situation is extremely worrying, yet it is these communities who are now helping us to rectify it. This is why, we put significant effort into engaging locals, to raising their awareness of the importance of marine turtles, and garnering their support on key conservation actions. Through a holistic community approach, we aim to work together to reverse the declining trend."

As such, ESO has spearheaded a range of activities including dedicated net clean-ups, awareness videos, community outreach programmes, and several publications.

On the ground, it has assembled a field team of Masirah Island residents to monitor and protect populations, part of its mandate to train and hire Omanis in conservation strategies, community engagement and NGO management, as well as

supporting the livelihood of local communities.

The field teams are also supplemented with graduates from ESO's capacity building programme. These efforts are growing year on year, as ESO focuses on engaging and inspiring the next generation. It continues to accelerate knowledge and understanding of turtle biology, ecology and conservation needs, as well as raising the international profile of Oman's turtles.

"ESO will advocate for marine turtle populations, but our challenges are far from over. We have to continue this momentum and we know it is only with the involvement of the local community, and by promoting this culture among young people, that we can be successful in conserving our natural resources and ensuring that they are still around for future generations."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pandemic is not a game

The pandemic is still around us and its impact will be more severe unless we cooperate and get united to save ourselves. The rate of the infections is on the rise again in Oman that has led to our hospitals being overwhelmed.

With the rise in cases, this gives an indication of the negligence of some who do not care about themselves and others by neglecting precautionary measures and undermining the severity of the pandemic around us.

Lifting the lockdown doesn't mean by any way that we are safe from infection. So, in this particular time, we should be more serious and alert about precautionary measures and unify to minimise infections.

What is currently happening in social events and commercial activities - not wearing masks and not keeping distance - will prompt the pandemic to spread again and destroy efforts by the government.

The pandemic is not a game. It's a killer that shows no exception to any country or individual around the world. The government is doing its best to protect the individuals and is providing vaccination to every one.

The question is are we really appreciating what the government is doing to protect us from the pandemic? Why are we still taking it lightly? We all need to be aware of the dangers of this virus and abide by guidelines in order to protect ourselves and others.

Ahmed Barham
Salalah

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Moody's, Fitch place NBO's ratings on review for upgrade

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Credit rating agencies Moody's and Fitch Ratings have placed National Bank of Oman's (NBO) ratings on review for upgrade. The rating agencies' decision comes ahead of the completion of The Commercial Bank of Qatar's (CBQ) acquisition of an additional stake in NBO.

Moody's placed on review for upgrade NBO's ba3 adjusted baseline credit assessment, Ba3 long-term deposit ratings, Ba3 senior unsecured ratings, Ba2 long-term local currency counterparty risk ratings and Ba2(cr) long-term counterparty risk assessment.

At the same time, Moody's affirmed NBO's ba3 baseline credit assessment, Ba2 long-term foreign currency counterparty risk ratings and all its short-term ratings and assessments at NP and NP(cr). On the other hand, Moody's affirmed CBQ's bank deposit ratings at A3/Prime-2 and maintained the stable outlook on the long-term ratings.

The review for upgrade on NBO's long-term ratings and adjusted baseline credit assessment reflects CBQ's recent purchase offer to the other shareholders of NBO to acquire an additional 15.2 per cent stake, which would increase its shareholding in NBO to 50.1 per cent, Moody's said in a statement.

The CBQ's offer period to the



shareholders of NBO opened on June 10 and will close on July 11.

Moody's estimates that following a potential consolidation of NBO, CBQ's exposure to Oman will account for approximately 18 per cent of assets, based on year-end 2020 figures.

Following the increase in shareholding, CBQ will consolidate NBO as a subsidiary.

'This would lead to an increase in our assumption of affiliate support to High, and exert positive pressure on the bank's adjusted baseline credit assessment, given CBQ's management control of NBO, combined with the strategic fit and brand name association of NBO with CBQ Group,' Moody's said.

Should the review conclude with an upgrade, NBO's ratings would likely be placed on negative outlook to reflect the negative outlook on Oman's sovereign rating, Moody's noted.

Fitch Ratings on Tuesday too affirmed CBQ's long-term issuer default rating at 'A' with a stable outlook, and placed NBO's 'BB-' long-term issuer default rating

and '4' support rating on 'rating watch positive'.

The rating watch positive reflects Fitch's belief that as a result of the planned acquisition of a controlling stake in NBO by CBQ, this would strengthen CBQ's propensity to support NBO, should this be required.

'CBQ has stated - on gaining majority control - its intention to provide capital to NBO as and when needed for planned growth initiatives and to meet minimum regulatory requirements.

We would expect synergies and integration between the two banks to grow over time,' Fitch noted in a statement.

Fitch noted that the 'rating watch positive' will be resolved once the offer to NBO shareholders has been agreed and completed, and CBQ's stake increases, in line with current plans.

Fitch's base-case expectation is that NBO's long-term issuer default rating would be upgraded to 'BB' with a negative outlook, and placed NBO's 'BB-' to '3' from '4'.

Ministries join hands to draft budget estimate rules

Muscat - The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy on Tuesday jointly issued a circular on the rules for drafting the state budget 2022.

The ministries will draft budget estimate rules in a manner that fits with Oman's Vision 2040 and programmes listed in the Strategic Programmes Ledger of the 10th Five-Year Development Plan. The rules will also take into account the initiatives of the Mid-Term Fiscal Balance Plan through which the

government seeks to achieve financial sustainability and improve business climate.

A new service has been initiated to allow for the preparation of government units' budget estimates electronically, using a link in the e-government transformation network.

The aim is to streamline procedures related to dealing with ministries, government departments and public authorities and establishments.

The circular requires all min-

istries and government entities to prepare their (current and developmental) budget estimates in line with the rules stated in the circular.

It urges all ministries and government entities to present their respective budget estimates for 2022 on or before July 29, 2021. A brief of the required budget allocation has to be approved by the head of unit and sent to the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economy.

ONA

Emirates posts \$5.5bn annual loss, first in over 30 years

Dubai, UAE - Dubai-based Emirates airline on Tuesday posted a US\$5.5bn annual loss, its first in more than three decades, after the coronavirus pandemic devastated the aviation industry.

The carrier said it received a capital injection of US\$3.1bn from its owner, the government of Dubai, to help it survive the crisis.

"The Emirates group was hit hard by the drop in demand for international air travel as countries closed their borders and imposed stringent travel restrictions", said chairman and chief executive, Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al Maktoum.

"No one knows when the pandemic will be over, but we know recovery will be patchy," he said in a statement.

The Middle East's largest carrier said that the fallout triggered a loss of AED20.3bn (US\$5.5bn) over the financial year to March, after last year's AED1.1bn (US\$288mn) profit.



The airline, which was forced to temporarily suspend operations last year, saw revenue fall 66 per cent to US\$8.4bn.

Over the fiscal year Emirates carried 6.6mn passengers, down 88 per cent from the same period in the previous year.

"The COVID-19 pandemic continues to take a tremendous toll on human lives, communities, economies, and on the aviation and travel industry," Sheikh Ahmed said. "Economies and companies that entered pandemic times in a strong position,

will be better placed to bounce back."

The last time the airline reported a loss was in the 1987-88 financial year, when it was starting up its operations.

Like other major carriers, Emirates began announcing heavy layoffs when its fleet of A380 superjumbos and Boeing 777s was grounded.

In Tuesday's statement, it said the Emirates Group's employee base - which includes ground-handling firm Dnata - was slashed by 30.8 per cent to 75,145 employees.

Before the virus hit, Emirates alone employed some 60,033 staff, including 4,300 pilots and nearly 22,000 cabin crew. The workforce has now shrunk to 40,801 staff.

Emirates is currently flying to 157 destinations, almost its full travel network of 158 destinations in 85 countries before the pandemic.

AFP



FLOATING TENDERS

Oman Airports Company announces the following tenders:

Tender REF. NO	TENDER TITLE	DOCUMENTS FEES (OMR)	LAST DATE FOR DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTION	TENDER SUBMISSION DATE
ITC-210506	Provision of Support Services and Renewal Licenses for Internet and Network Security	100	22 nd June 2021	08 th July 2021
PC-210601	Supply and Installation of Batteries for UPS System at Salalah Airport			
RFQ-210201	Provision of Consultancy Services for Comprehensive Analysis for Underground Water Pipelines Network At Muscat International Airport	50		

Tenders Collection: Specialized companies may obtain Tender Documents/ Specifications from Procurement Department upon receipt of complete payment of tender fees by credit card and receive scanned copy of deposit Receipt along with a copy of Company Commercial Registration Certificate to Email: (finance.oamc@omanairports.com) provided with company name, tender number & contact person as a mandatory.

OAMC Bank Account Details:

Account Name: Oman Airports Management Co. S.A.O.C.
Account No: 0423-01084918-0012
Name of Bank: BANK MUSCAT S.A.O.G.
Branch: Corporate Branch, CBD Area, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
SWIFT Code: BMUSOMRXXX

Required Bond: All participating Companies must provide a bank guarantee, issued by locally registered bank, for the sum of not less than 1% of the Tender value, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee, valid for 90 days from the date of submission of the Tenders.

Submission: All bids shall be submitted as per mentioned instructions in the Tender documents and late bids will not be entertained.

All Technical Queries shall be sent to:
oamctenders@omanairports.com

The committee is not bound to accept the lowest tender
Any payment received after last date of documents distribution will not be refunded

Headquarter Address:
Muscat International Airport
South Forecourt Building, First Floor
Oman Airports Management S.A.O.C
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

Note: All Correspondence / Clarification / Enquiries send an e-mail:
oamctenders@omanairports.com
Working hours: Sunday - Thursday, from 7:30am - 3:30pm

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

China Petroleum Pipeline Engineering Company Limited Oman Branch (CPP), as an EPC Contractor, invites companies to participate in the following tender:

Estimated Scope Description	Tender Documents Fee
INSATALLATION OF TELECOM DUCT BANK, estimated quantity: 1. Duct Bank: Excavation, Disposal, Formation layer/ Polythene, BackFilling, Pcc (16/20), Rcc (40/50), Formwork, Bituminous paint, Concrete Protection by applying self adhesive membrane, Protection boards of approved brands, UPVC Pipes	Free

Legal entities, domestic Omani and foreign companies who meet the following minimum qualification criteria are eligible to quote in Tender:

- Priority to Oman local companies, or local agent appointed by foreign companies,
- Capability to submit a performance bond of ten percent of total value.
- Complying with the CPP's project execution schedule.
- ISO 14001 and OHSAS18001 in valid period are mandatory.
- Having direct experience of similar jobs in the last five years.
- Agree to complete the further prequalification undertaken by CPP.

All interested bidders shall submit a written application letter printed on Bidder's letter head signed by the Bidder's authorized Person to rasmkazpro@cnpc.com.cn; cppomaned@cppmde.com over a period before **22nd June, 2021** stating the following details: Full name of Bidder, phone number, e-mail address, contact person, tender name and tender title. Any application received after **22nd June, 2021** shall not be entertained.

The ITB documents will be issued via email by CPP later. The bidders shall bear all cost arising from or incidental to the preparation, clarification, finalization and delivery of their bid proposal.

CPP is not obliged to accept the bid with least prices or any other bids. CPP reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids, at any time prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders or; any obligations to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground for the CPP's action.

US, EU strike Airbus-Boeing deal to better target China

Brussels, Belgium – US President Joe Biden and the EU agreed a long term truce in the 17-year-old Airbus-Boeing dispute Tuesday, as they try push past their own disputes and turn their focus to a rising China.

Negotiated in marathon talks by EU and US officials, the truce was formalised in Biden's summit with European leaders Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen, who hosted him in Brussels. Von der Leyen said the summit had delivered as she hailed a breakthrough in the long-running feud.

"This really opens a new chapter in our relationship because we move from litigation to cooperation on aircraft," she added.

Earlier this year Biden and Von der Leyen – the president of the European Commission – had suspended retaliatory tariffs in the dispute over subsidies for the rival planemakers.

The punitive measures targeted European cheese and wine and American what and tobacco, among other products.

The EU said the truce was set for five years, leaving enough time to resolve the fight – while still factoring in China's growing capability in the aviation industry.

"Instead of fighting with one of our closest allies, we are finally coming together against a com-



President of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen (left) and European Council President Charles Michel give a press conference after an EU-US summit in Brussels on Tuesday (AFP)

mon threat," said US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, who also attended the meeting.

"This is a model that we will use to build on for other challenges posed by China and non-market economic competition," she added.

Biden's two-hour stopover at EU headquarters, tucked between a NATO summit and his sitdown with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva, is supposed to mark a clear break with the tumultuous four years with Donald Trump as president.

'Sweating' for deal

The Europeans are trying to clear the slate of trade disputes to

consolidate a more friendly phase and jointly tackle other issues, which also include curbing big tech and handling Russia.

A European official said both sides had been 'sweating' to find common ground on the trade issues ahead of the meeting and give a clear sign that Trump-era battles will soon be behind them.

But another, as yet unsolved, row is a tariff of 25 per cent on steel and 10 per cent on aluminium that Trump slapped on Europe and other close partners in 2018.

Brussels hit back with counter-tariffs on 2.8bn euros worth of iconic US products, including bourbon whiskey, jeans,

and Harley-Davidson motor-bikes.

US diplomats have been reluctant to write an actual end date for solving that battle, with the steel tariffs politically popular in key constituencies for Biden in the US. Trump and Brussels also quarrelled over taxing big tech platforms after France led a group of EU states by hitting Google, Facebook and others with a special levy.

Washington fought back with a wave of counter-tariffs that Biden has frozen, as both sides await a worldwide deal on how to better tax big tech companies.

'Maximum pressure' Biden and the EU chiefs are

also to agree to cooperate in something called a Trade and Technology Council that will attempt to write joint rules for artificial intelligence and other innovations over the coming years.

The senior US administration official described the council as an important initiative that would serve as a platform for cooperation for years ahead.

"The notion here is that the United States and Europe laid the foundation for the world economy after World War II and now have to work together to write the rules of the road for the next generation," a senior US administration official said.

Though unnamed, China is the important backdrop for the council, which will set rules for 'technologies based on our shared democratic values, including respect for human rights', the draft communique said.

Brussels and Washington will also set up a joint forum on Russia to exchange ideas on facing increasingly disruptive moves by Moscow, with a special focus on fighting disinformation and other flagrant misuses of technology.

The model is based on an existing forum on China that meets to find ways to more closely align the EU-US stance towards Beijing's growing global influence.

AFP



Fossil fuels still maintain grip on market: Report

Paris, France – Fossil fuels have held their share of the energy mix over the past decade, a report published Tuesday found, despite a drop in the cost of electricity from renewable wind and solar. Coal, oil and gas – fossil fuels which are the main cause of global warming, accounted for 80.2 per cent of final energy consumption in 2019, according to a report by the REN21 think tank.

That compared with 80.3 per cent in 2009.

That doesn't mean renewables didn't increase: they rose by almost 5 per cent per year. The share of modern renewables such as wind and solar power in final energy consumption rose from 8.7 to 11.2 per cent.

But consumption of fossil fuels also rose in absolute terms.

The think tank noted that while a growing number of countries have set net zero carbon emissions targets, pandemic recovery programmes have chosen fossil fuels over renewables.

'Following announcements of

funding for a green economic recovery, taking public spending to levels higher than the Marshall Plan after World War II, 2020 should have been the year when the world pushed the reset button for the global climate economy and renewables,' the group said in a statement accompanying the report.

'Instead of driving transformation, recovery packages provide six times more investment to fossil fuels than to renewable energy ... despite all the promises made during the COVID-19 crisis,' it added. The think tank's chief, Rana Adib, said the fact that at US\$555bn, fossil fuel subsidies in 2019 were double the amount of green energy investment belied governmental promises of climate action.

Considerable progress is being made in the electricity sector, where 356 gigawatts of renewable production were added in 2020, beating the previous record by nearly 30 per cent.

AFP

UK, Australia agree post-Brexit trade deal

London, UK – Britain has agreed its first major post-Brexit free trade deal with Australia, London announced Tuesday, adding that they plan to 'intensify cooperation on security, climate change and science and tech'.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the deal "marks a new dawn in the UK's relationship with Australia, underpinned by... shared history and common values".

"This is global Britain at its best -- looking outwards and striking deals that deepen our alliances and help ensure every part of the country builds back better from the pandemic," he added.

The UK government said in a statement that the deal eliminates tariffs on all British goods 'in the first major trade deal negotiated from scratch' since the country left the European Union.



UK's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (right) talks with Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison during a meeting in London on Tuesday (AFP)

A final 'agreement in principle' will be published in the coming days, it added.

The UK-Australia trade relationship was worth US\$19.4bn

last year and is set to grow under the deal, the statement said.

The deal eliminates tariffs on imported Australian goods such as wine, swimwear and confec-

tionery, it added.

Going the other way, British products including cars, Scotch whisky, biscuits and ceramics will be cheaper to sell into Australia.

It comes after the two nations addressed issues surrounding the farming sector.

British farmers will be protected by a cap on tariff-free imports for 15 years, using tariff rate quotas and other safeguards.

"We are also supporting agricultural producers to increase their exports overseas, including to new markets in the Indo-Pacific," the UK said.

The deal with Australia – Britain's former colony on the other side of the world – is seen as low hanging fruit ahead of more difficult free trade talks with the United States and major economic powers.

AFP

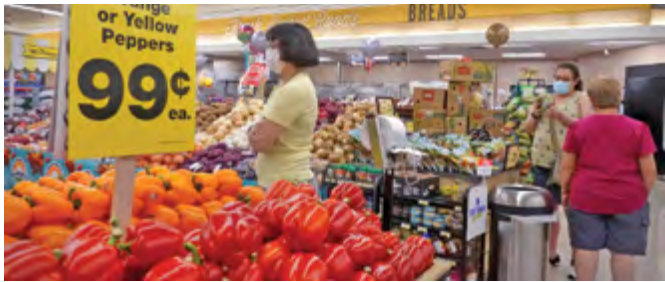
Fed sees US consumer inflation expectations at record high

Washington, US – The inflation outlook among Americans is at its highest level ever, while many are upbeat about their employment situation, a New York Federal Reserve survey released Monday said.

The report covering May showed one-year inflation expectations jumped 0.6 points to 4.0 per cent, the seventh consecutive monthly increase, while the three-year outlook jumped to 3.6 per cent from 3.1 per cent.

The recent surge in prices as the world's largest economy reopens following the COVID-19 pandemic has become a concern amid fears the Federal Reserve is too complacent, raising the risk prices will get out of control.

The Fed holds its policy meeting Tuesday and Wednesday and is expected to repeat its



message that the current wave of price increases is driven largely by temporary factors, including supply bottlenecks caused by the pandemic's global shutdowns.

In fact, the Fed wants to see inflation get above 2 per cent and stay there after more than a decade of only tepid gains, and says it has the ability to bring runaway inflation under control.

The 12-month consumer price index for May spiked to 5 per

cent, while the Fed's preferred inflation measure was up 3.6 per cent in April.

The New York Fed survey also showed consumers' views on the probability of losing a job in the coming year fell to a record low of 12.6 per cent from 15 per cent in April.

That decrease was more pronounced among younger workers and those earning less than US\$50,000.

AFP

More US financial institutions tiptoe into cryptoassets

New York, US – Investing in bitcoin and other digital currencies remains a risky game where the rules could change significantly, but the payoff could be big.

In response to this dilemma, several leading US financial heavyweights are staying on the sidelines, while an increasing number are proceeding cautiously into the growing world of cryptoassets.

"My own personal advice to people: Stay away from it," JP-Morgan Chase chief executive Jamie Dimon said recently, before adding, "That does not mean the clients don't want it."

JPMorgan, the biggest US bank by assets, is currently assessing how it can help clients transact in cryptocurrency, Dimon said last month at the bank's annual meeting.

Formerly something of an investment sideshow dominated by computer geeks, cryptocurrencies are sparking greater in-

terest among mainstream investors after a big jump in bitcoin prices in 2020 and early 2021.

On Thursday, the venerable giant State Street announced the creation of a new digital finance division.

On Wednesday, the head of online trading firm Interactive Brokers vowed to establish online trading of cryptocurrencies on the platform by the end of the summer.

Like its rivals Charles Schwab and Fidelity, Interactive Brokers does not now offer bitcoin trading on its platform, although it does give clients the option to invest in some assets that include cryptocurrencies or bitcoin futures.

Investors who want to trade bitcoin can currently turn to Robinhood or the cryptocurrency specialist Coinbase.

ForUsAll, a platform that manages retirement accounts for small businesses, last week



A banner with the logo of bitcoin is seen during the Bitcoin 2021 Convention in Miami, Florida, on June 4 (AFP)

announced an agreement with Coinbase that allows clients to invest up to 5 per cent of their balances in cryptocurrencies.

Investment bank Morgan

Stanley in March said it would allow wealthier clients to invest in bitcoin funds, while Goldman Sachs recently established a team dedicated to trading cryp-

tocurrencies.

The chief executives of Wells Fargo, Citigroup and Bank of America said at a congressional hearing in late May that they are approaching the cryptocurrency landscape with caution.

Fidelity Investments, which established a digital assets division in 2018 to execute cryptocurrency trades for hedge funds and other institutional investors, filed papers with US securities regulators for a bitcoin exchange traded fund (ETF).

The move could potentially expand cryptocurrency investments to a broader range of individual investors.

Tougher rules ahead?

Still, many financial players are reluctant to dive into an investment realm associated with black markets that has sparked interest from US and global regulators.

There is also remarkable

volatility, with bitcoin beginning 2021 at around US\$30,000 and hitting US\$63,000 in April before falling back to US\$34,000 in June.

"Speculators and those suffering from FOMO (the 'fear of missing out') will surely continue to flock to cryptos in the hopes of achieving huge returns," said Ian Gendler of research firm Value Line.

But Gendler urges clients to avoid cryptocurrency investments, citing the elevated risk and the lack of a tangible asset compared with putting money into commodities or a company. Bitcoin and other digital money is also not backed by governments, he noted.

"Cryptocurrencies are only worth what the next investor is willing to pay," he said.

Still, many in finance do not see cryptocurrency as a transient phenomenon.

"We do believe bitcoin, and

more broadly cryptoassets, are a new and emerging asset class that will likely be here to stay," said Chris Kuiper, vice president at CFRA Research.

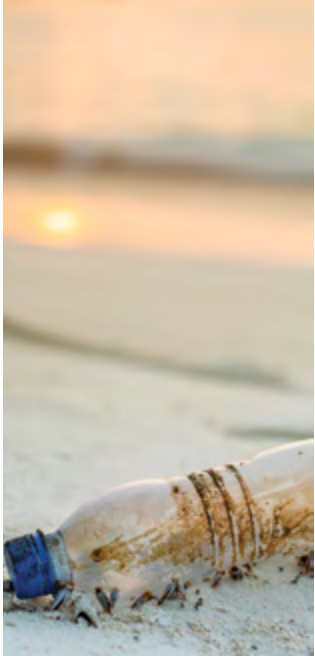
CFRA expects "the large banks as well as smaller financial institutions to continue to adopt them, particularly as the infrastructure and legal/regulatory framework continues to be built out," Kuiper added.

The Basel Committee, which coordinates regulation among central banks, this week proposed new rules that would require banks to set aside capital for cryptocurrency investments.

Gary Gensler, the new head of the Securities and Exchange Commission, has also said he wants to bolster protections for cryptocurrency investors, telling CNBC that such investors "don't have full protections that they have in the equity markets or in the commodity futures market."

AFP

ESO partners with European Union for webinar series on plastic pollution in region



The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) has partnered with the European Union (EU) Delegation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman and the European Environmental Bureau to deliver a series of virtual workshops throughout June on the issue of plastic pollution in Oman and the region.

The webinars will share European experiences of addressing environmental issues, specifically plastic pollution, with different groups and organisations across the country.

Plastic is one of the fastest-growing pollutants in Oman and measures are already being taken to address this issue, such as the ban on single-use plastic bags, which came into force on January 1, 2021.

The webinar series aim to increase public awareness of the issue and help to promote change by encouraging people to avoid plastic waste in their lives. The workshops will also explore concrete measures in sustainable production and consumption, retail and waste management.

It's Time
To Replace Plastic

ESO are pleased to be partnering with the European Union and the European Environmental Bureau to deliver a series of virtual events that aim to share the EU experience on environmental issues, specifically the issue of plastic pollution.

Webinar 1

"Let's end the plastic pollution crisis - current state and paths towards solutions"

Tuesday 22 June 2021

06:00 pm to 08:20 pm (Oman Time)

English

Webinar 2

"Policy approaches and instruments to address plastic pollution at source"

Tuesday 29 June 2021

10:00 am to 12:20 pm (Oman Time)

English

ESO - EU - EEB Webinar Series

In collaboration with

Follow us on social media to learn more and to register for these events

"We launched our 'It's Time' campaign at the beginning of the year, aiming to draw attention to the issues surrounding litter, single-use plastics and recycling. As part of a line-up of events, we are happy to collaborate on this informative series to promote the adoption of environmentally conscious community behaviours," said Suaad al Harthi, executive director at ESO.

"Oman is blessed with abundant wildlife and a diverse natural environment, and it's important that we act now to prevent it from degradation. Accepting alternatives to single-use plastics is a small step that we can take to safeguard our health and our environment for future generations to enjoy."

Finding solutions to plastic

waste is a top priority for the European Union.

Executive vice president for the European Green Deal, Frans Timmermans said, "The Green Deal aims to build a healthy planet for all. To provide a toxic-free environment for people and planet, we have to act now. This plan will guide our work to get there."

"New green technologies already here can help reduce pollution and offer new business opportunities. Europe's efforts to build back a cleaner, fairer, and more sustainable economy must likewise contribute to achieving the zero-pollution ambition."

Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevicius said, "Environmental pollution negatively

affects our health, especially the most vulnerable and socially deprived groups, and is also one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss. The case for the EU to lead the global fight against pollution is today stronger than ever.

"With the Zero Pollution Action Plan, we will create a healthy living environment for Europeans, contribute to a resilient recovery and boost transition to a clean, circular and climate neutral economy."

"Plastic pollution is a global issue that needs national and local actions. We are glad to see Oman joining the network of active countries on the topic and we hope to be helpful for the Omani society, from highest authorities to communities, to identify the best solutions to address the plastic pollution challenge," said Piotr Barczak, senior policy officer for Circular Economy and Waste at the European Environment Bureau.

The first webinar, entitled 'Let's end the plastic pollution crisis - current state and paths towards solutions' will take place on June 22 at 6pm Muscat time. Aiming to promote sustainable consumption within society, it will be open to the general public. Details of the programme and the registration link can be found at <https://bit.ly/3gm2Lc3>.

The second webinar, entitled 'Policy approaches and instruments to address plastic pollution at source' is a technical event focused mainly at corporates aiming to raise awareness about sustainable production.

It will take place on June 29 at 10am Muscat time and will bring together European and Omani experts.

Details of the programme and registration link can be found at <https://bit.ly/2ThPiud>.

A third webinar aimed at Omani government representatives will take place on June 30.



Sri Lankan products record high sale at SPAR Oman

SPAR International, in a statement, says that three-quarters of the Sri Lankan goods that were exported recently to SPAR Oman under the initiative by the Sri Lankan Embassy in Oman, have been sold after just fifteen days highlighting the demand and success of this initiative.

SPAR Oman had added 78 new Sri Lankan products under this initiative.

SPAR Oman has recently added 78 Sri Lankan SKUs to the assortment of 24 of its neighbourhood stores in the capital, Muscat. Since COVID-19 regula-

tions have curtailed travel opportunities, SPAR customers in Oman, comprising local and international residents, have welcomed the expanded international range.

Over the past years, SPAR Oman regularly purchased fresh fruit and vegetables from Sri Lanka, which have proven popular among shoppers. Based on this success, the company decided to expand the range with more processed groceries.

An invitation to participate in a business conference hosted by H E Omar Lebbe Ameer Ajwad,

Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Oman, presented an opportunity to interact with Sri Lankan companies. This event fostered closer collaboration between SPAR Oman and the SPAR operator in Sri Lanka, Ceylon Biscuits Limited, resulting in SPAR Oman placing a product order worth US\$10,000.

The launch was celebrated at an event at SPAR Madinat Qaboos, hosted by the ambassador and SPAR Oman CEO Sridhar Moosapeta on May 11. After just 15 days, three-quarters of the goods have been sold.

Oman Air Holidays joins WebBeds

Oman Air Holidays announced that it has partnered with WebBeds (a division of Webjet Limited) to enhance its digital booking experience and provide greater choice, flexibility and convenience to guests in search of innovative custom holiday packages in Oman.

WebBeds' global distribution network will be available to Oman Air Holidays as well as its outstations in international markets through seamless platform-to-platform API connectivity providing access to WebBeds' extensive inventory of accommodation and other services including tailor-made travel arrangements, transfers and guided excursions.

Mundher al Shaikhani, senior manager at Oman Air Holidays, explained how the partnership



Air Holidays and allows us to provide real-time pricing and availability when creating our fly-and-stay itineraries and tailored packages."

"WebBeds is delighted to be part of this exciting partnership with Oman Air Holidays, powering its accommodation offering, enabling travellers to access and book flights, accommodations and attractions all in one convenient site. With our extensive global inventory of over 368,000 properties, including over 150 in Oman, we are confident travellers would be able to find an accommodation best suited for their vacation needs," said Amr Ezzeldin, WebBeds' president for Middle East and Africa.

Oman Air Holidays is the preferred online destination for visitors to Oman.

More choices and endless data with Shahry Business

No contract

OMR 10 OMR 20 OMR 30

Be Digital

Ooredoo's Business Shahry offers more

Continuing to provide customers with the best possible data experience, Ooredoo's Business Shahry Endless now offers more data and more minutes without the commitment of a contract.

Valid until August, business users are spoilt for choice with a selection of tailored plans that fit all their communication needs.

Subscribers can choose from three great-value plans, like Shahry Endless 10, that comes with 14GB of data including 7GB to use locally or in the GCC, 1GB of world roaming, unlimited CUG, and 1,000 local voice minutes including 500 to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, all for just

RO10 per month.

Or, the Shahry Endless 20 with 40GB of data including 20GB to use locally or in the GCC, 5GB of world roaming, unlimited CUG, unlimited local calling, including 500 minutes to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and 75 minutes international voice minutes, all for just RO20 per month.

For only RO30 per month, Shahry Endless 30 comes with 70GB of data including 35GB to use locally or in the GCC, 8GB of world roaming, unlimited CUG, unlimited local calls with 1,000 free minutes to the GCC, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Infiniti Oman's rewarding offer ends on June 20

Infiniti Oman's Ramadan offer, which has been offering diverse benefits for customers purchasing its product range, is set to come to an end on June 20. The exclusive offer was announced in celebration of the holy month of Ramadan.

All customers purchasing Infiniti vehicles from Suhail Bahwan Automobiles LLC are eligible to participate in the campaign scheme. Vehicles purchased with commercial registration will not be eligible for the scheme.

Vehicles bought for taxi, driving school, ministries, fleet, and rent-a-car usage will not be eligible for this scheme.

A senior spokesperson at Infiniti Oman, said, "The offer announced by us for the Holy Month of Ramadan received a great response from new buyers. Continuing with the tradition of rewarding its valued customers, Infiniti Oman's offer is attractive and lucrative. With its innovative engines and premium driving pleasure, Infiniti models are a luxury worth owning and experiencing. Buyers who are interested in purchasing Infiniti must do so before June 20 to get the offer benefits. Infiniti vehicles continue to be amongst the best-selling vehicles in Oman for obvious reasons."

"They are an excellent choice for anyone looking for powerful performance, safe drive, and comfortable interiors."



Assured cash gift

Assured cash gift is applicable on Infiniti models Q50, QX50, QX60, QX80. The cash gift can be adjusted in the down payment of the car if customer opts for it.

The cash gift of RO2,500 is being offered on Infiniti Q50. The cash gift for Infiniti QX50 and Infiniti QX60 is RO3,000. Customers buying Infiniti QX80 will get a cash gift of RO4,000.

Free registration

All customers purchasing Infiniti vehicles Q50, QX50, QX60, QX80 during this scheme period

will be eligible for free first year vehicle registration. Applicable to the extent of private registration only.

For commercial registrations, additional amount including passing needs to be borne by customer.

Free window film and ceramic paint protection coat

All customers purchasing Infiniti vehicles Q50, QX50, QX60, QX80 during this scheme will be eligible for free window film (side and rear glass) and ceramic paint protection coat.

Free periodic vehicle service package

All customers purchasing Infiniti vehicles Q50, QX50, QX60, QX80 during this scheme period will be eligible for free periodic maintenance service package for three years/60,000km (whichever is earlier).

Free AAA assistance card

All customers purchasing Infiniti vehicles Q50, QX50, QX60, QX80 during scheme period will receive free AAA assistance card for first year only.

5% VAT on SBA for QX60

This is applicable on QX60 MY20 only. The 5 per cent VAT charge applicable at the time of purchase will be borne by SBA.

Reference programme

The aim of the reference program is to generate reference for further conversion to a sale and brand building. A reference can be given by any resident of Oman who is an existing Infiniti customer. The referee should own an Infiniti vehicle that was originally sold by Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (Oman) as a new vehicle.

While a reference provided cannot be for self, a referee can submit multiple references.

The referee will be eligible for RO100 gift voucher if the referee buys a new Infiniti vehicle from any Suhail Bahwan Automobiles in Oman. A pre-owned Infiniti car purchase/Infiniti purchase from any other outlet will not qualify under the Reference Program. The gift voucher can be redeemed at any SBA facility and can be used for vehicle service, purchase of consumables, parts, and accessories.

The gift voucher of the successful referee is non-transferable and cannot be redeemed for cash or exchanged for credit.

The gift voucher will be valid for six months from the date of issue of same.

ACFE board meets with CMA chief



Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, executive president of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), met in his office Jose Chacko, president, Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) Oman Chapter, Davis Kallukaran, Khalil bin Nabhan al Rawahi and Fathiya bint Salim al Maskari, members of the ACFE Board of Directors.

The meeting was also at-

tended by Mohammed bin Saeed al Abri, vice president of the Capital Market Sector, Ahmed bin Ali al Maamari, vice president, Insurance Sector and Ahmed bin Ali al Mukhaini, advisor in the CEO's office.

Several areas of cooperation between the authority and the association were discussed, including expediting the dissemination of anti-fraud awareness in

all its forms to all segments of society and to government and private institutions, and setting plans in place to increase the number of certified fraud examiners in the government institutions, banking and finance sectors.

The executive president emphasised the importance of increased anti-fraud awareness in the society to minimise this nui-

stance affecting the businesses and the economy at large.

The ACFE headquartered in Texas, United States, is world's largest anti-fraud organisation with more than 85,000 members, striving to reduce business fraud worldwide.

ACFE Oman Chapter is sponsored by the College of Banking and Financial Studies.

It is worth noting that the

Capital Market Authority has recently established the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorist Financing Department, which is responsible for monitoring and supervising and ensuring that all companies subject to its control comply with the legislation and instructions related to combating money laundering and terrorist financing, and auditing them.



SAI represents Oman in UNCAC group session

The sultanate, represented by the State Audit Institution (SAI), is currently taking part in the 12th session of the group responsible for reviewing the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

The session, which will be held from June 14-18, is being convened through video conference from the headquarter of the United Nations in Vienna.

The meeting's agenda includes a number of topics that are open for discussion, mainly assessing the performance of the review mechanism of the UNCAC implementation as well as providing implementation review group with analysis relevant to timeframes of conclusive stages of the review process including statistics of countries ,missing deadlines in order to ensure the effectiveness of

the process.

The participants will also touch upon financial matters especially those relevant to budgets, how to utilise available resources in a manner that is sustainable, efficient and neutral, in addition to exploring financing solutions to fund the review process.

During this session, aspects of the UNCAC will also be highlighted such as those relevant to information and practices exchange on executing the convention and recommendations of the country review reports taking into account the efficiency in the deliberations and decision-making processes.

The session will be providing more information on successful stories, good practices, existent challenges, technical needs as well as actions taken after finalizing the country reviews.

Ferrari appoints Vigna as CEO

Ferrari N V announced the appointment of Benedetto Vigna as chief executive officer. Vigna will join Ferrari on September 1 from STMicroelectronics (ST), where he is currently president of its Analog, MEMS (Micro-electromechanical Systems) and Sensors Group, ST's largest and most profitable operating business in 2020. He is also a member of the ST Group's Executive Committee.

Commenting on the appointment, John Elkann, chairman of Ferrari said, "We're delighted to welcome Benedetto Vigna as our new Ferrari CEO. His deep understanding of the technologies driving much of the change in our industry, and his proven innovation, business-building and leadership skills, will further strengthen Ferrari and its unique story of passion and performance, in the exciting era ahead."

An Italian national with extensive international experience working with some of the world's leading technology companies,



Vigna, 52, graduated cum laude in physics from the University of Pisa. He joined ST in 1995, founded the company's MEMS activities and went on to establish ST's market leadership in motion-activated user interfaces.

His responsibilities were expanded to include connectivity, imaging and power solutions and he piloted a series of successful moves into new business areas, with a particular focus on the industrial and automotive market segments.

Vigna commented, "It's a special honour to be joining Ferrari as its CEO and I do so with an equal sense of excitement and responsibility. Excitement at the great opportunities that are there to be captured.

"And with a profound sense of responsibility towards the extraordinary achievements and capabilities of the men and women of Ferrari, to all the company's stakeholders and to everyone around the world for whom Ferrari is such a unique passion."

In his role as CEO, Vigna's priority will be to ensure that Ferrari continues to build on its leadership position as the creator of the world's most beautiful and technically advanced cars.

His unique knowledge gained over 26 years working at the heart of the semiconductor industry that is rapidly transforming the automotive sector, will accelerate Ferrari's ability to pioneer the application of next generation technologies.

ISC SALALAH CELEBRATES WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY



Indian Social Club (ISC), Salalah celebrated World Environment Day on June 7 at club premises in the presence of chairman ISC Oman, Dr Sathish Nambiar, general secretary ISC Oman Babu Rajendran, administration secretary ISC Oman, Shakeel K M, and management committee of ISC Salalah

Nissan records Mideast market share growth in FY20, eying further growth

Nissan shared an update on the brand's business performance in the region over the past year, which saw it secure a year-on-year market share increase of 10 per cent in the Gulf in Fiscal Year 2020 (April 2020 - March 2021) - fueled by the strong sales of key SUV and Sedan models, especially the legendary Nissan Patrol.

The announcement was made at a press event, held in Dubai, hosting media representatives in person and virtually from the UAE and the region. Nissan also announced the arrival of its advanced ProPILOT technology to the Gulf, which makes its regional debut within the 2021 Nissan Altima. This new upgrade maintains the mid-sized sedan's ability to bring together sleek design, driving enjoyment and intelligent mobility technologies.

Nissan's regional market share growth has been a result of

the brand's innovative efforts to launch new products in unprecedented conditions, as well as its commitment to maintain high-quality customer satisfaction and service with a focus on enhancing its digital offering. This is expected to continue through 2021 with three new model launches for the region, the brand's presence at Expo 2020 Dubai as its Official Automotive Partner, and celebrations for the Patrol's 70th anniversary.

Thierry Sabbagh, managing director, Nissan Middle East, said, "Despite the challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are proud of our efforts to stay agile and build resilience in the past year, and remain committed to our mission of driving innovation that enriches people's lives. Our achievements in 2020 are in line with the Nissan NEXT global transformation plan to rationalise, prioritise and focus on our



strengths, while building a sustainable foundation for long-term growth - allowing us to increase our market share in the region."

"ProPILOT is another example

of how our innovative mobility experiences are making their way to our customers, and we are excited to introduce this to the region within the 2021 Nissan Altima. While 2021 will see

us continue to evolve our business and how we engage with customers, we look forward to our ongoing collaboration with trusted partners in the region, to ensure both operational excel-

lence and customer satisfaction across the Middle East," Sabbagh added.

Fiscal year 2020 performance

Nissan's vehicle line-up in the region continued to enjoy customer demand in the fiscal year 2020 (FY20), spearheaded by key models from the SUV and Sedan segments respectively. Dominating the SUV-F segment in the region, the Patrol generated a market share growth of 15.4 per cent when compared to FY19, retaining its position as a major contributor to Patrol sales globally, as well as to Nissan's overall sales in the region. The youthful yet functional Nissan KICKS continued to drive sales in the SUV-B segment with a 11 per cent year-on-year increase in market share.

Meanwhile, Nissan Maxima and Altima were the highest-selling Sedan models for Nissan

in FY20, increasing their annual market share by 33 per cent and 8 per cent within the Sedan-E and Sedan-D segments respectively.

Nissan's FY20 activity in the region began with the launch of the all-new Nissan Sunny with dramatic new design, spacious interior, new technology and safety features. The all-new Nissan X-Terra 2021 was launched virtually in November, bolstering Nissan's extensive SUV offering and addressing customer demands in the SUV-D segment. The year concluded with the highly-anticipated global launch of the 2021 Nissan Patrol NISMO. FY20 also saw Nissan dial up its digital services in the region with a range of online features and solutions under a Shop Home tab - including virtual showrooms, home test drives and maintenance, and online buying facilitated by a finance calculator.

‘Heinous crimes’: Iran election frontrunner dismays activists



Supporters of Iranian presidential candidate Ebrahim Raisi hold posters depicting him during an election campaign rally, in Tehran on Monday (AFP)

Paris, France - Ebrahim Raisi, the favourite in Iran's presidential election, has used his position at the heart of the judiciary for grave rights violations, including mass executions of political prisoners, activists say.

They say Raisi - who now has victory in his sights on Friday after even conservative rivals were disqualified in vetting - should face international justice rather than lead his country.

At 60, the mid-ranking cleric is still relatively young for a figure who has held a succession of key positions, starting almost immediately after the fall of the shah in the Islamic revolution of 1979.

At just 20, he was appointed prosecutor for the district of Karaj and then for Hamadan province, before in 1985 being promoted to deputy Tehran prosecutor.

It was in this role, campaigners allege, that Raisi played a key part in the executions of thou-

sands of opposition prisoners - mostly suspected members of the proscribed People's Mujahedin Organisation of Iran (MEK) - when, activists say, he was part of a four-man 'Death Committee' that sent convicts to their death without a shred of due process.

Raisi, seen by some Iranian media outlets as a possible successor to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has denied personal involvement in the 1988 killings, but also praised the decision to go ahead with the executions. He subsequently became chief Tehran prosecutor in 1989, and then in 2004, deputy judiciary chief, a position he held for ten years.

Since 2019, he has served as head of the judiciary.

"Raisi's only place is in the dock, not the presidency," said Shadi Sadr, executive director of London-based Justice for Iran,

which campaigns against impunity for crimes in Iran.

"The mere fact he is currently the head of judiciary and running for president demonstrates the level of impunity that the perpetrators of the heinous crimes enjoy in the Islamic Republic of Iran," she said.

'No mercy'

The 1988 killings, which took place from July to September that year allegedly on the direct orders of revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, remain a near taboo in modern Iran.

Most rights groups and historians say between 4,000 and 5,000 were killed, but the political wing of the MEK, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), puts the figure at closer to 30,000.

Last year, seven special UN rapporteurs told the Iranian government that 'the situation may

amount to crimes against humanity' and urged an international probe if Tehran did not show full accountability.

Amnesty International came to a similar conclusion in a 2018 report, which identified Raisi as a member of the Tehran 'death commission' that secretly sent thousands to their deaths in Evin prison in Tehran and Gohardasht prison in Karaj.

The vast majority of the bodies were buried in unmarked mass graves and Iran continues to conceal the fate of the victims and the whereabouts of their remains, it charged.

The rights group's Iran researcher Raha Bahreini told AFP that Raisi should be 'criminally investigated for the crimes against humanity of murder, enforced disappearance and torture', including by foreign countries under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

In 1985 Ebrahim Raisi was made deputy Tehran prosecutor. It was in this role, that Raisi played a key part in the executions of thousands of opposition prisoners without due process

ACTIVISTS

According to an audio recording that emerged in 2016, Hossein Ali Montazeri, once Khomeini's likely successor but later pushed aside, in August 1988 told members of the 'death commission' including Raisi that the killings were the 'greatest crime in the history of the Islamic Republic'.

Hossein Abedini, a member of the foreign affairs committee of the NCRI, described Raisi as a 'stone hearted killer' with a '40 year track record of repression'.

Former prisoners, now living in exile who said they had survived the massacres, testified in a conference organised by the NCRI last week that they had personally seen Raisi working as a member of the commission.

"When I entered the death commission I saw Raisi... a white shirt and Revolutionary Guards uniform," Reza Shemirani, who was imprisoned for ten years and now lives in Switzerland, told the conference.

Raisi, he said, was the most 'active member of the commission', while Mahmoud Royaei, who was jailed from 1981 until 1991, said Raisi 'made the utmost effort to execute everyone'. "He had no mercy," Royaei added.

When the US Treasury in November 2019 included Raisi in sanctions against members of Khamenei's inner circle, it said he had taken part in the 1988 death commission and also was involved in 'the brutal crackdown' on protests that followed the disputed 2009 presidential election.

AFP



This file photo shows Kurdistan parliament speaker Rewaz Faiq sitting in her office before a parliament session, in Arbil, the capital of Iraq's northern autonomous Kurdish region, on May 25 (AFP)

Iraqi Kurd woman speaker battles a man's world

Arbil, Iraq - Rewaz Faiq is just one of two women serving as parliament speaker in the Middle East, where politics is a man's world, but the Iraqi Kurdish mother of two is unfazed.

Known for her straight talk, Faiq knew she would face challenges when she was elected in 2019 to the post in the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq.

"In Kurdistan, entering politics is not easy for women," Faiq (43) told AFP, citing 'male domination, discrimination and sexual abuse' as the main hurdles.

"If a woman is not strong and does not shield herself, she will be entrapped by the personal and political gains of male politicians," she said.

Men backed by powerful tribes play an influential role both in public and private life in the region, where more than eight out of ten women are housewives.

Male politicians are seen as more influential than women in Kurdish society because they have armed bodyguards, plenty of money and the support of the media, said Faiq.

And they are in the public eye, unlike women who are banned from taking part in tribal councils where key decisions affecting the Muslim-majority, conservative society are taken.

Avan Jaff, a women's rights activist, said Faiq reminds her of Pakistan's late Benazir Bhutto, the first woman to head a government in a Muslim-majority country.

Faiq 'has self-confidence, charisma and is a true leader. She

has changed the perception of politics in Kurdistan and is giving hope to all women', said Jaff.

And she is 'strong'.

When a legislator threw a shoe at Faiq during a parliamentary session broadcast live on television in March, the speaker 'did not get upset or lose control even for a second', said Jaff.

Instead Faiq shot back telling the MP, "If you were throwing this shoe at me, I forgive you but if you were throwing it at parliament, I will not forgive you."

Faiq holds a masters degree in international law and a doctorate in civil law.

She entered politics at the age of 15, joining the communist party after her village was destroyed by the regime of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

A year later, she switched her allegiance and joined the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and was first elected to parliament in 2013.

Today there is just one other woman parliament speaker in the Middle East - Fawzia Zainal who was elected head of Bahrain's national assembly in 2018.

Late Iraqi president Jalal Talabani, founder of the PUK in which his wife Hero has long played a key role, 'truly believed in women and their abilities' in politics, Faiq said. "Unfortunately, there are fewer female politicians now in the PUK than under Talabani, although today's society is more open and tolerant towards the participation of women in politics."

AFP

Asylum-seeking Tamil family released from island detention

Brisbane, Australia - Australia's conservative government bowed to public pressure and announced the release of a Tamil asylum-seeking family from island detention Tuesday, after the youngest daughter fell ill.

The Murugappan family of four have been held at the remote Christmas Island immigration detention centre since August 2019, as they fight deportation to Sri Lanka.

The family's neighbours in the small, rural Queensland town of Biloela have been waging a vocal campaign for them to remain in Australia, giving their case national prominence.

Amid growing support for their case, Priya and Nades Murugappan along with their Australian-born daughters Kopika and Tharunicaa will now be allowed to live temporarily in Perth, Western Australia.

It comes after four-year-old Tharunicaa was airlifted to a hospital in Perth last week to receive treatment for a blood infection.

Immigration Minister Alex Hawke announced on Monday the family would stay in Perth while they exhaust their legal op-



tions, as the government faced a backlash within its own political ranks over its handling of the case.

'In making this determination I am balancing the government's ongoing commitment to strong border protection policies with appropriate compassion in circumstances involving children in detention,' he said in a statement.

Australia's headline immigration stance prohibits anyone who arrives by boat - as the Murugappans did separately in 2012 and 2013 - from staying in the country permanently, and the

couple have not been accepted as refugees.

Their lawyer, Carina Ford, said the family was 'relieved' at being reunited and leaving detention after more than three years, both on Christmas Island and in Melbourne.

The 'Home to Bilo' campaign welcomed Monday's decision, saying it was 'the first important step in getting them home' to the Biloela community.

Hawke said he had not yet decided whether to grant an exemption allowing the family to apply for alternative visas.

AFP

Far-right march tests new Israeli govt

Jerusalem - Police blocked roads in Jerusalem on Tuesday as Jewish ultranationalists prepared to march through the city's annexed east, inflaming tensions amid a fragile Gaza ceasefire and just two days after a new Israeli government took office.

Rallies by far-right Jewish groups in Arab neighbourhoods have raised tensions in recent months, prompting a police intervention in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound last month that triggered the deadliest flare-up of Israeli-Palestinian violence since 2014.

The so-called March of the Flags celebrates the anniversary of Jerusalem's 're-unification' after Israel captured the city's east in the 1967 Six Day War.

The demonstration was originally scheduled for early May, but organisers cancelled it after police redirected the route to avoid Damascus Gate, a key entrance for Arab residents of east Jerusalem. A new march was set for last Thursday but was delayed due to Israeli police opposition to the route and warnings from Gaza's rulers Hamas.

The government of outgoing prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu last week delayed the march until Tuesday, a time con-



Israeli forces detain a Palestinian youth during a protest against the March of the Flags, which celebrates the anniversary of Israel's 1967 occupation of Jerusalem's eastern sector, at Damascus Gate on Tuesday (AFP)

firmed late on Monday by the incoming government of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

The government said organisers had consulted police on the best route for the march, scheduled to begin at 1430 GMT.

It was planned to halt at Damascus Gate but not enter the Old City there, taking another route that avoids the Muslim Quarter before arriving at the Wailing Wall, a holy site for Jews.

"The right to demonstrate is a right in all democracies," said the newly sworn-in Internal Security Minister Omer Bar-Lev. "The po-

lice is ready and we will do everything in our power to preserve the delicate thread of coexistence."

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh condemned it as a provocation, while an alliance of Palestinian armed groups including Hamas called for a 'day of rage' to defend Jerusalem.

'We warn of the dangerous repercussions that may result from the occupying power's intention to allow extremist Israeli settlers to carry out the Flag March in occupied Jerusalem tomorrow,' Shtayyeh tweeted in

English on Monday.

He said it was 'a provocation and aggression against our people, Jerusalem and its sanctities that must end'.

By Tuesday afternoon, militants in Gaza had sent incendiary balloons over the border, with Israeli public radio reporting 15 fires in the Negev desert as a result.

Islamic Jihad activist Abu Hudhayfa said the balloons were aimed 'to warn the occupation against harming the Al-Aqsa Mosque or launching its march towards Al-Aqsa Mosque'.

AFP

Beijing calls for NATO to be rational, to view China's development rationally

Beijing, China - Beijing on Tuesday accused NATO of exaggerating the threat from China and 'creating confrontation', after a vow from the Western allies to work together to counter the 'systemic challenges' posed by its policies.

NATO leaders made the commitment on Monday, as US President Joe Biden renewed Washington's transatlantic ties at his first summit with the allies.

In a broad statement of intent, the leaders said China's increasingly assertive actions in building a nuclear arsenal and space and cyber warfare capabilities threatened the international order.

In an angry response, a statement from the Chinese mission to the European Union called for NATO to 'view China's development rationally, stop exaggerating various forms of 'China threat theory' and not to use China's legitimate interests and legal rights as excuses for manipulating group politics (while) artificially creating confrontations'.

It added that NATO's accusations were a 'slander of China's peaceful development, a misjudgement of the international situation and its own role, and it



US President Joe Biden addresses a press conference after the NATO Summit at organisation's headquarters in Brussels, on Monday (AFP)

is the continuation of a Cold War mentality and the group's political psychology at work'.

Military tensions have increased over the past year between

China and rival powers including the United States and India, with flashpoints like the Himalayan border, Taiwan and the South China Sea.

China's military budget - the second largest in the world after the US, though still less than a third of Washington's - is set to increase by 6.8 per cent in 2021,

the Finance Ministry announced in March.

Beijing has also poured billions into its space programme in a bid to make up ground on po-

neers Russia and the United States.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the allies would seek to cooperate with China on global issues like climate change - but decried Beijing's increasingly assertive stance on other issues.

G7 criticism

The exchange came a day after the Chinese embassy in Britain hit back at the G7 for 'political manipulation' after the group criticised China's human rights record. In a communique after a three-day summit in England, G7 leaders slammed China over abuses against pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong and minorities in the Xinjiang region.

Human rights groups say China has rounded up an estimated one million Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang into internment camps, which Beijing says is to eradicate Islamic extremism.

Biden called for China to 'start acting more responsibly in terms of international norms on human rights'. As well as human rights, tensions have soared between Washington and Beijing on a

number of fronts in recent years, including trade, technology and the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Important alliance

In the summit communiqué, NATO leaders also warned Russia's President Vladimir Putin, whom Biden will meet on Wednesday in Geneva, that his country's military build-up and provocative behaviour on NATO's eastern frontier 'contribute to instability along NATO borders and beyond'.

When he arrived at the NATO headquarters in Brussels for a summit with his 29 counterparts, Biden stressed that the alliance was 'critically important' to US security.

"I think that there is a growing recognition over the last couple of years that we have new challenges," Biden told Stoltenberg at bilateral talks just ahead of the main summit. "We have Russia that is not acting in a way that is consistent with what we had hoped, as well as China," he said.

"I want to make it clear: NATO is critically important for US interests in and of itself."

AFP

Five Afghan polio vaccinators shot dead, say officials



Relatives carry the body of a polio worker killed by gunmen following a string of attacks on vaccinators, in Nangarhar Province on Tuesday (AFP)

Jalalabad, Afghanistan - At least five polio workers were shot dead in eastern Afghanistan on Tuesday, officials said, in the area's second attacks on vaccinators in less than three months.

The workers were gunned down in three separate locations within hours in a 'coordinated attack', Nangarhar provincial police spokesman Farid Khan said.

"This is the work of the Taliban, targeting health workers to deprive people of polio vaccines," he said.

Health Ministry spokesman Osman Taheri confirmed the attacks. The Taliban denied responsibility.

Polio has been eradicated across the world apart from Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan, where distrust of vaccines and eradication campaigns is rife.

The Taliban and religious leaders often tell communities that vaccines are a Western conspiracy aimed at sterilising Muslim children, and they also suspect immunisation drives are used to spy on militant activities.

Officials say the Taliban do not allow door-to-door vaccination campaigns in areas they control.

Tuesday saw five vaccine workers killed and one wounded in a spate of attacks across Nangarhar, the local government said. Three were also wounded in the provincial capital, Jalalabad.

The inoculation drive in the province had now been halted, a health official told AFP.

"These were all targeted at-

tacks against polio vaccinators, and for now we have stopped all polio vaccination drives in Nangarhar province," the official said.

A top United Nations official, Ramiz Alakbarov, condemned Tuesday's attacks.

"Depriving children from an assurance of a healthy life is inhumane," Alakbarov, the UN Secretary General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan, said on Twitter. "Senseless violence must stop now, those responsible must be investigated and brought to justice."

The country has faced a devastating wave of targeted attacks on politicians, activists and journalists which the Afghan government and United States have blamed on the Taliban, who routinely deny responsibility.

"We have reached a situation where systematically employees of demining, doctor, nurse, vaccinator, human rights defenders and anyone seeking to save our lives and our children are killed," said Shaharзад Akbar, the head of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission.

"There is neither an effective prevention mechanism nor a punishment for the perpetrators."

Last week ten people working for the HALO Trust mine-clearing organisation were shot dead in northern Afghanistan.

The government said the Taliban were behind the attack, but the UK-based charity said the local militants actually stepped in to help.

AFP

'Pandemic worsened corruption in EU'

Berlin, Germany - The pandemic has worsened corruption across the European Union, Transparency International said on Tuesday, with citizens at times needing personal connections to get medical care and some governments using the crisis for their own gain.

The anti-graft watchdog surveyed more than 40,000 people in the EU's 27 member states between October and December 2020. On average, it found that 29 per cent had relied on favours or well-connected friends and family to access public sector health services last year.

Six per cent of respondents resorted to paying an outright bribe.

"Healthcare, in particular, has been a corruption hotspot as governments struggled to manage the COVID-19 pandemic," Transparency said in its annual report of people's experiences and perceptions of graft in the EU. Bribery rates in the health sector were highest in Romania (22 per cent) and Bulgaria (19 per cent), while leaning on personal connections happened most often in the Czech Republic



People gather on the banks of the Seine River in France to defying the COVID-19 curfew. Over 60% of those interviewed in France feel that their governments are not handling the pandemic in a transparent manner (AFP)

(54 per cent) and Portugal (46 per cent).

Many respondents also said their governments weren't handling the pandemic in a transparent manner.

In France, Poland and Spain, 60 per cent of respondents or more felt that way.

Transparency International called the findings 'particularly worrying in the current context'.

'Not only are COVID-19 sufferers in need of medical support, but governments across the EU are rolling out vaccinations to protect those most vulnerable to the virus and are creating plans

to allocate billions of euros for post-pandemic recovery.

'Corruption threatens all these activities,' it said, urging EU governments to 'redouble their efforts to ensure a fair and equitable recovery from the ongoing pandemic'.

The report's authors singled out Hungary and Poland as countries using the crisis as 'an excuse to undermine democracy' by imposing regulations that weaken democratic institutions. Other politicians saw it 'as a chance to make a profit', they said, pointing to lobbying for face-mask procurement and lobbying scandals

that have ensnared several German lawmakers.

Looking beyond the health crisis, the survey found that a third of EU residents think corruption as a whole is getting worse in their country, although there were huge regional differences.

Overall, almost half said their government is doing a bad job at tackling the problem.

Respondents were especially wary of the 'cosy relationships' between governments and the private sector, and the apparent ease with which companies can trim their tax bills.

AFP

India drops all charges against Italy marines

Rome, Italy - All legal proceedings have been dropped in India against two Italian marines who shot and killed two fishermen off the coast of Kerala in 2012, Italy's Foreign Minister said on Tuesday.

'All legal proceedings in India against our two marines... have been closed,' tweeted Luigi Di Maio. 'It definitively brings this long episode to an end.'

The shelving of the case comes two months after India said it was prepared to accept compensation of ₹100mn from Italy for the families of the two fishermen, following prolonged negotiations.

Salvatore Girone and Massimiliano Latorre were accused of murder for shooting the unarmed fishermen while protecting an Italian oil tanker as part of an anti-piracy mission off the southern Indian coast.

This long-running case has soured relations between both countries.

AFP

Vietnam's pangolin defender wins 'Green Nobel'

Hanoi, Vietnam - A Vietnamese conservationist working to save pangolins from the devastating multi-billion-dollar wildlife trade won a prestigious award on Tuesday for his role in rescuing over a thousand of one of the world's most endangered creatures.

Highly prized in China and southeast Asia for their flesh, pangolins are seen as a delicacy for the mistaken belief that they can cure anything from impotence to cancer.

Nguyen Van Thai, director of Save Vietnam's Wildlife (SVW), has been at the forefront of efforts to raise the alarm internationally about the serious problems Vietnam faces as a major hub for wildlife trafficking.

He was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize - known colloquially as the 'Green Nobel' - which honours grassroots envi-



Nguyen Van Thai (right), director of Save Vietnam's Wildlife (SVW), has been at the forefront of efforts to raise the alarm internationally about the serious problems Vietnam faces as a major hub for wildlife trafficking (AFP)

ronmental leaders who have made 'sustained and significant efforts' to protect and enhance the natural world.

"Helping people to understand these problems will be an opportunity to attract young people and the Vietnamese

community to join the work in protecting the forest, wildlife and the environment," Thai (39) told AFP in an interview ahead of the announcement of the six winners of the prize.

Pangolins - often described as 'scaly anteaters' - are defence-



less in the wild, curling up into a ball when they are frightened, allowing poachers to easily gather them up.

"Based on figures from investigations and images from camera traps, we can say that pangolins in the wild in Vietnam

have decreased more than 90 per cent in the last 15 years," Thai said.

At SVW's rescue centre in Vietnam, a team of staff and volunteers work long hours nursing pangolins back to health, before releasing them back into the wild. They have now saved nearly 1,600 of the vulnerable creatures.

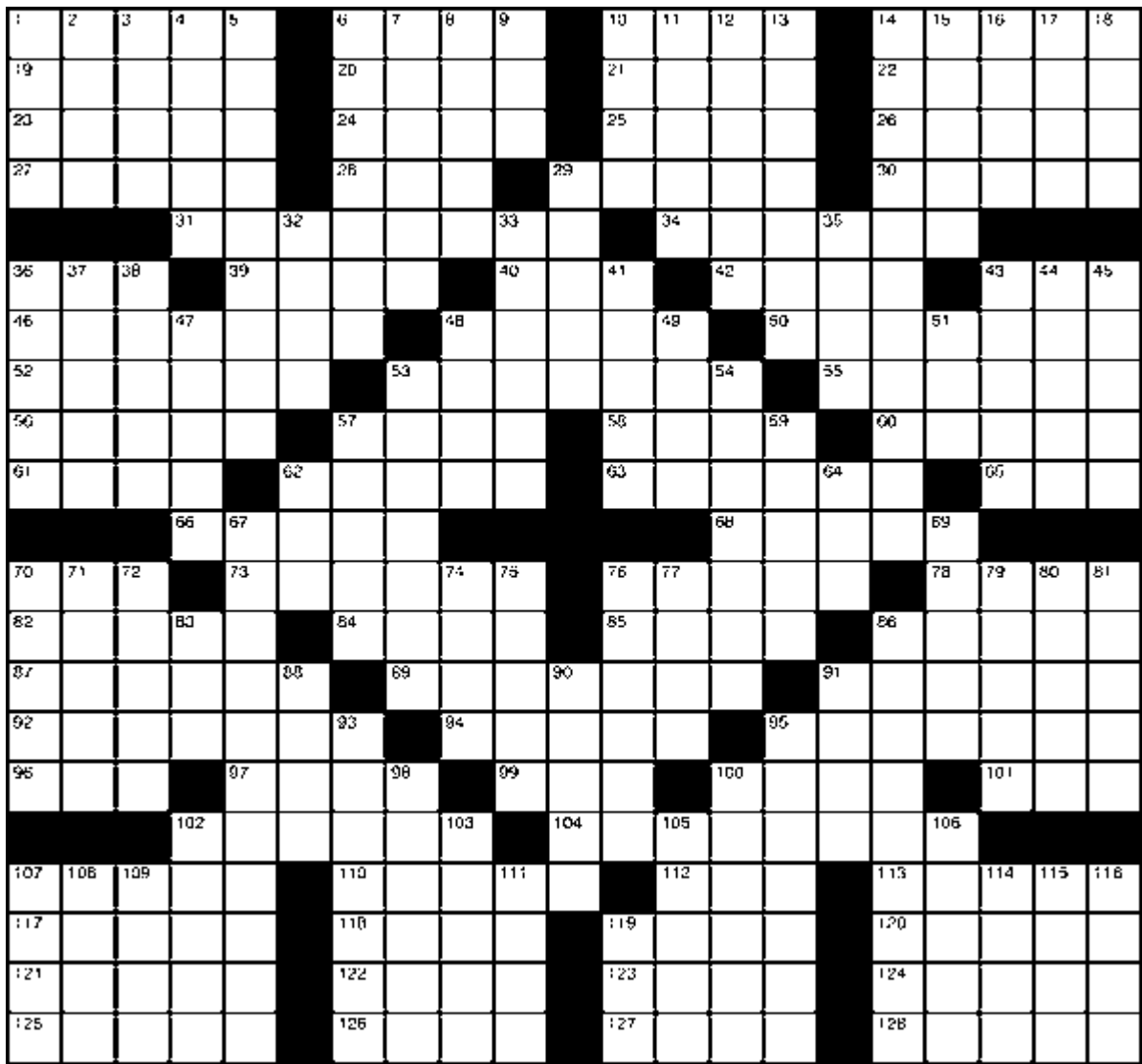
Of the two types - Sunda and Chinese - the latter is faring worse, and faces a 'high risk of extinction' in Vietnam, according to Thai.

But his centre is developing a breeding programme for the Chinese pangolin, with the hope that they can later be released into the wild.

The Goldman Environmental Prize's recognition of SVW's work could go a long way in helping boost the rescue centre's work, he said.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

- ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

If you've been doing some personal improvement work, you know, the kind where you take a look at yourself and figure out where you need an attitude adjustment or a new outlook, or maybe you'd benefit from daily painting projects, then you're now well on your way toward successful completion of the project. Take stock of what you've done so far and give yourself a pat on the back.
- LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Some time before lunch you could very well sense a mind-altering wave of creativity creeping over you. It's an inspirational kind of moment (that lasts, as a matter of fact, all day long) and there's not much you can do other than welcome it and do your best to listen to whatever intimations of new, great ideas it's whispering to you.
- SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You could start the day lending an ear to a friend who has a crisis on their hands. Then, after providing a strong shoulder and the emotional equivalent of a cup of tea, your energies shift to your own emotional arenas in the afternoon. You will be taking a long, hard look at what you're getting and what you still need. Then ask yourself how you can get those needs met.
- TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

Take care of any chores around the house before you leave for the day, because you're going to want to have the rest of the day worry-free to make room for a few fantastic, highly creative ideas. As soon as you get home, write all your inspirations down before you forget them. In all the excitement, you'll be glad you don't have to do any of those dirty dishes!
- VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You usually aren't shy about expressing your feelings. So why has the cat got your tongue? Maybe the nature of what you have to communicate is tricky. Or maybe you really care about how your message will be received. If you're feeling sensitive now, take it slowly. Spend a little time reassuring yourself that you're great, and then tell them whatever it is you have to tell them.
- CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You like to make butterflies out of origami paper. You like to make dioramas out of shoeboxes. You like to make sculptures that express your ideas about life and growth and beauty out of toothpicks and soda cans. Or something along those lines. Yes, you're a creative person, whether you express yourself in watercolours or heartfelt videos. Have fun!
- GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

A sense of ease pervades your thoughts and feelings. A sense of ease also pervades your expressions of those thoughts and feelings. It's a kind of gliding, airy sensation. This is a nice space to be in, and you should do your best not to fight it. Instead, go with it and see what comes out of this easy, breezy momentum. It could be surprising even for you!
- LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

If there's a banjo, chances are you're going to be strumming it. If there's a drum set, you're going to be banging on it. If there's a synthesiser, you're going to be synthesising. If there's a flute, you're going to use it to whistle a little tune. You are a creative person, and you love to make noise, especially if it's harmonic, beautiful, and musical noise. Have fun!
- AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You have a knack for putting intangibles into words. This will come in handy when some nebulous tension builds at work. Who'll step in to save the day by telling the boss that nobody's happy about some change? You will. Who will suggest that maybe you're all due for overtime pay? You will. It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it.
- CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

If there's one thing you're not lacking today it's patience. That's good, to a point. With patience, as with all things, you shouldn't overdo it. Moderation in patience is a virtue too, and if somebody is trying your patience too much, try a little impatience with them in the afternoon. You might even try downright annoyance if impatience doesn't get results.
- SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You've come to a fork in the road. Though this fork might look more like a starfish, with choices leading in nearly every direction. Which way do you go? You can always turn around and go back down the road you came on. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by all the possibilities, embrace them. Each path you could choose holds its own joys and sorrows.
- PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

When you feel sad, mad, bad, or frustrated, you create. The same is true when you feel happy, pleased, ecstatic, or content. Making things up is the way that you say, 'Here I am' in this world. You're on a roll. What are you making? What kind of pleasure is it bringing you? What's the mood behind it? See if you can answer some of those questions.

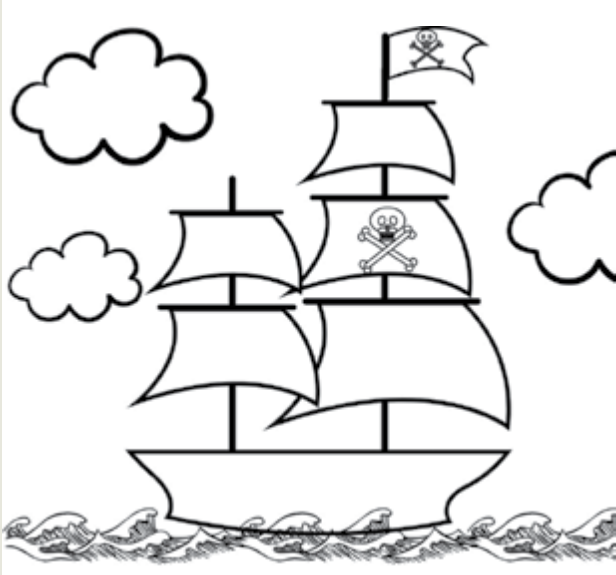


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Who declared that his ultimate aim was to wipe 'every tear from every eye'?
- a. Rajendra Prasad
b. Sardar Patel
c. Jawaharlal Nehru
d. Mahatma Gandhi
2. Who among the following is a social activist campaigning against child labour?
- a. Baba Amte
b. Shabana Amzi
c. Mira Nair
d. Swami Agnivesh
3. Pandit Jasraj has established his reputation in which of the following fields?
- a. Music
b. Literature
c. Sanskrit
d. Dance

Answers: 1.c 2.d 3.a

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

			9	8		1		
7	3	8	1	6		5		
			3			6		
1						7	2	
	7	9		2		5	8	
8	5							4
	1			8				
	8			4	2	6	9	1
2		7		6				

BOGGLER

T	S	P	C
L	E	E	E
A	I	E	R
G	U	A	S

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

6	4	8	9	1	7	3	2	6
1	6	9	2	4	3	8	7	5
7	2	3	6	8	5	4	1	9
4	3	1	7	6	9	2	5	8
9	8	5	1	2	4	6	7	3
2	7	6	3	8	9	1	5	4
8	9	7	5	3	2	1	6	4
6	5	2	4	9	1	8	3	7
3	1	4	7	8	7	6	9	2

CLASH	ALLEG	BOLIA	MAIGOO
HONOR	DEITH	ADORE	
RETHUS	REDEBROU	NORTIA	
LEH	SALIS	RADE	SPAN
ANADIA	WADIS	PAULIS	FRANITIS
ANENIA	WADIS	GUIS	SWART
ATINA	BLAUM	DEMIST	STOIA
ANT	MORTIA	DEWOTED	FLUE
NEGATIA	BLAUM	LAVER	GENITIS
MITURE	DAVITS	HUMAN	
RIADORE	DEPTIT	DELENT	
ROH	BERG	DIAS	LOG
REIB	PERFEN	DETER	SEVIL
DIGOR	BERG	DETER	SEVIL
SEMINAR	GRINS	ARETORAS	
STIA	PODE	ONG	ARETORAS
SEINIA	GRINS	ARETORAS	
ANGIE	SEINIA	DIGOR	TIGONIS
SEERS	OTIC	GAWE	DEINES

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JUNE 15)

WORD BUILDER

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

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



MANGO MANIA

GOLDEN GREATS

Mangoes have hit town rather late this year and you can find a wide variety of mangoes in different supermarkets these days. These, juicy, tangy, seasonal fruit are suited for a range of recipes, if you want to go a step beyond relishing the golden fruit as it is. Here are a few recipes to try out with these tropical fruit:

MANGO CHICKEN SKEWERS

- Ingredients
- 500g chicken breasts - chopped

1 cup mango chunks, salt to taste

1 bell pepper - chopped

1 cup mango nectar

¼ cup barbecue sauce

¼tsp red chilli flakes

1tsp sesame oil

Method

Cut the chicken to chunks, rinse and pat dry. Season with salt, to taste. In a bowl, combine mango nectar, barbecue sauce, and chilli flakes. Stir well and add chicken

chunks. Marinate in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours or overnight. When ready to grill, drain from marinade, reserving liquid. In a saucepan over medium heat, simmer marinade until reduced to about half cup. Add sesame oil and stir to combine. Set aside. Then, thread 2 to 3

chicken slices, mango chunks, and peppers into each skewer and grill on a hot grill for about 2 to 3 minutes each side. When the meat starts to lose its pink, baste with sweet mango mixture. Continue to grill and baste, turning on sides, until cooked through. Serve hot.



MANGO SALSA

- Ingredients
- 1 mango – peeled and cut to small chunks

1 red bell pepper, 1 avocado – diced

1 red onion – diced

2-3 jalapenos - diced

2 sprigs of cilantro - chopped

2tsp lemon juice

A pinch of salt

Method

Making mango salsa is so easy and only requires a few simple steps. Prep all the ingredients by chopping them up suitably. Make sure not to have large chunks as this will transform a salsa into a salad. Finely dice the bell pepper, jalapeno, and onion as you don't need large bits of these in a salsa. Remove jalapeno seeds if you don't like the extra heat. In a large bowl, combine the mango, red pepper, avocado, onion, jalapeno and cilantro, add a pinch of salt, and the lemon juice. Toss all ingredients well. Chill and serve.

STICKY RICE WITH FRESH MANGO

- Ingredients
- For the rice:

2 cups Thai sticky rice

2 cans coconut milk

150g sugar

½ cup sugar

1tsp salt

For the toppings

200 ml coconut cream

½tsp salt

1 sweet alphonso mango

100g yellow mung beans

Method

Rinse the sticky rice well, soak in water for two hours, then steam the rice for about 15 minutes until fully cooked. Set aside.

In a pot, add coconut milk on medium heat, and stir in one circular direction gently. Add sugar and salt, and keep stirring and cooking until fully dissolved. When the

coconut cream mixture comes to a boil, turn off the heat.

Put the fresh sticky rice into a mixing bowl, and begin to slowly add in the coconut cream and sugar mixture. Combine all of it, but add it spoon by spoon and work it slowly into the rice. Once all combined you should be left with shimmering sticky rice that is like a grainy pudding in texture.

In a separate sauce pan, add the coconut cream and salt, and stir on low heat. Bring it to a boil, then turn off the heat, and set aside in a bowl. This will be served as a topping.

In a frying pan, using low heat, dry fry the yellow mung beans for a few minutes until they turn golden and crispy. Set aside as a topping.

Peel the mango and cut into neat slices or chunks. On a plate, first add a portion of sticky rice, top it with mango, sprinkle on some mung beans, and serve the extra coconut cream on the side.



BEEF AND MANGO SALAD

- Ingredients:
- 2 striploin or sirloin steaks

For the marinade

3tbsp fish sauce

1tbsp soy sauce

2 stalks of lemongrass

1 red chilli

3 cloves of garlic

Juice of half a lime

1tbsp dark brown sugar

- For the dressing
- 3tbsp fish sauce

1tbsp rice wine vinegar

Juice of half a lime

1tbsp dark brown sugar

1 clove of garlic, ½ a shallot

1 red chilli

- For the salad
- 1 portion of rice noodles

1 mango, peeled and diced

1 small carrot - julienned

1 cucumber – sliced thin strips

A handful of

- beansprouts
- 2tbsp chopped coriander/mint/basil

Method

Trim the steak of fat and slice it thinly. Next blitz all of the ingredients for the marinade in a mini processor or pound with a mortar and pestle. Put the beef into a ziploc bag and pour over the marinade. Keep it in the fridge for a few hours or leave it at room temperature for 30 minutes. Next make your dressing to allow time for the flavours to develop. Mix the wet ingredients and sugar together until the sugar dissolves. Crush the clove of garlic and finely chop the chilli and shallot and add them to the rest of the ingredients and set aside.

Then, prepare the mango and vegetables for the salad and cook the rice noodles as per packet instructions. Remove the beef from the marinade and stir fry quickly over a high heat. Dress the noodles while still warm in half of the dressing which will allow them to absorb the flavours better. Place the noodles onto a plate and top with the veg, the herbs and the beef and pour over the rest of the dressing.

Gently toss the salad and top with chopped peanuts for crunch. Serve immediately.



Messi's magic not enough

Dominant Argentina held to a 1-1 draw by Chile; Paraguay rally to down Bolivia

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - Argentina superstar Lionel Messi scored a stunning free kick but Chile hit back to earn a 1-1 draw in the Copa America on Monday.

Messi's magical left foot gave dominant Argentina a deserved first half lead but Eduardo Vargas equalised in the second half after Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez saved veteran midfielder Arturo Vidal's penalty.

Despite Argentina's dominance, Messi lamented that 'we weren't calm, we didn't have control of the ball'.

His coach Lionel Scaloni said things differently, though.

"We deserved to win but in the end we drew. In any case, it's only the start of a very tough tournament," said Scaloni.

Before the Group A game started in the Nelson Santos stadium in Rio de Janeiro, there was a light and effects tribute to Argentina legend Diego Maradona, who died in November aged 60, although the ground was empty due to coronavirus restrictions.

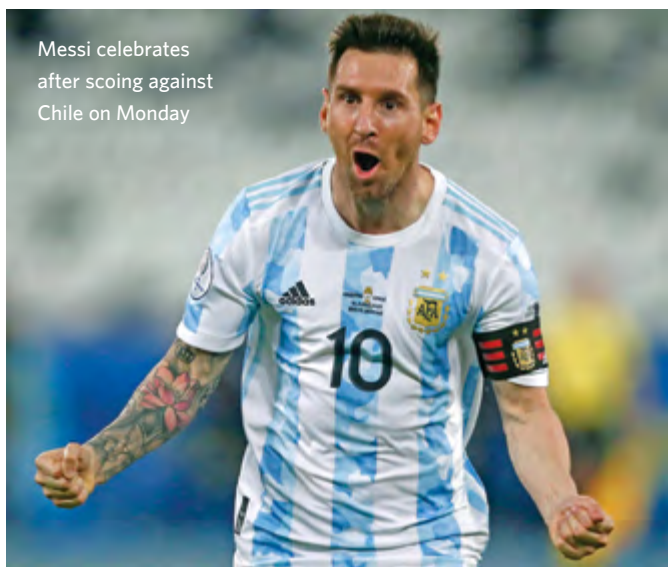
The first chance fell to Messi on eight minutes as Leandro Paredes picked out Nicolas Tagliafico on the left and the fullback nodded the ball down for his captain, who sent a volley wide.

Minutes later, Giovanni Lo Celso crossed from the left but a sliding Lautaro Martinez could only spoon the ball over the bar from inside the six-yard box.

Argentina were in total command and Lo Celso picked out Nicolas Gonzalez to shoot from 20 yards but goalkeeper Claudio Bravo got down well to his right to tip the ball around the post.



Messi celebrates after scoring against Chile on Monday



From Messi's corner Gonzalez headed over the bar and moments later he was released by Lo Celso but shot straight at Bravo. It would be a frustrating night for Gonzalez.

Argentina got the goal their domination deserved on 33 minutes, and inevitably it was Messi who scored, curling a free-kick from 25 yards out just beyond Bravo's dive.

They should have had a second soon afterwards but teed up by Gonzalo Montiel ten yards

out, Martinez screwed his shot horribly wide.

'Defiant' Chileans

Chile started the second half with more intent and Erick Pulgar played Vargas into the area but his shot on the stretch was saved by Martinez.

However, Vidal stormed in to try to fire home the rebound and was caught by Tagliafico as he shot. Referee Wilmar Roldan consulted VAR and then

awarded a penalty. Martinez tipped Vidal's effort onto the crossbar but Vargas was quickest to the ball to head home the equaliser.

Twenty minutes from time, Messi created space in the box but Bravo was down well to save his low shot. Argentina kept pushing but Messi headed over the bar in injury time as Chile held on for a point.

"This team didn't want to be beaten, even though they didn't play well. This group of players are defiant," said Chile coach Martin Lasarte.

Angel Romero scored twice

as Paraguay bounced back to beat ten-man Bolivia 3-1 in Goiania and top Group A. Erwin Saavedra gave Bolivia the lead from the penalty spot on ten minutes after a long VAR review.

Paraguay dominated throughout but the game changed deep into first half stoppage time when Bolivia's Jaime Cuellar was sent off for a second booking. Alejandro Romero Gamarrá restored parity just past the hour mark and Romero put Paraguay in front three minutes later.

Romero sealed the win ten minutes from time.

AFP

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BIRTHDAY WISHES



ANAND
June 16

Happy Birthday to you dear Anand. This birthday wish for you is that each year brings you more wisdom, more dreams, more laughter, and more wishes. With love: Bhagwatiba, Kaushal, Sanat, Yashica, Bhurnica, Vishal, Tapan, Prahar and Garvit

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EURO2020



STALEMATE

Scrappy Spain frustrated by stubborn Sweden

Seville, Spain - Spain's new team struggled with the familiar problems on Monday as a string of missed chances allowed Sweden to hang on for a goalless draw in their Euro 2020 opener in Seville.

Alvaro Morata wasted the best opportunity of a dominant first half, in which Spain churned out 419 passes, the most of any team on record in the opening 45 minutes of a European Championship fixture.

Morata was whistled by his own fans when substituted with 25 minutes left, with Luis Enrique now facing questions over his decision to leave out Gerard Moreno, the Villarreal striker who scored 23 goals last season.

Spain lost their rhythm after the interval and Sweden might even have won it, the excellent Alexander Isak hitting the post before his strike partner Marcus Berg missed a sitter from two yards out.

"They decided to defend, defend and defend. It was a very unfair result," said Enrique, who also complained about the pitch. "The players struggled to control the ball," he said.

A goalless draw leaves Spain playing catch-up in Group E after Slovakia earlier pulled off a shock 2-1 victory over Poland, raising the stakes for the game between Spain and Poland on Saturday.

Another failure to convert possession into chances was reminiscent of recent disappointments for Spain, most notably when they were frustrated by Russia at the 2018 World Cup, before going out on penalties.

Enrique's players were impressive in the first half, a far cry from some of the ponderous passing displays that made Spain look out of date in recent major tournaments.

But the second half drifted, perhaps through a lack of confidence or even sharpness, given



Sweden's Marcus Danielsson (L) challenges Spain's forward Alvaro Morata during their match in Seville on Monday (AFP)



Sweden's forward Alexander Isak

absent, and Diego Llorente tested positive for COVID-19.

Sweden coach Janne Andersson, meanwhile, promised on Sunday his team would 'run like hell' and they not only defended resolutely but carved out arguably the two best chances of the match.

Impressive Isak

Isak, the 21 year old, who scored 17 goals for Real Sociedad last season, showed why he is one of the most rated young strikers in Europe and Spain would have been relieved when Andersson took him off with 20 minutes left. "It wasn't raining chances even though they had a lot of possession," said Andersson.

"We could have lost the game, we could also have won it."

The Spanish host city was switched to Seville after Bilbao was unable to guarantee UEFA's desired number of fans and with 12,517 supporters inside La Cartuja, the atmosphere was as warm as the weather, with the temperature over 30°C.

Enrique's team swarmed all over Sweden in the opening ten minutes, racking up 100 passes to their rivals' 13. Twenty minutes was up before Sweden found a foothold in Spain's half, a throw-in up the pitch prompting Andersson to leap off the bench and applaud.

But Spain kept passing and the chances kept coming, Koke steering wide after another tired Sweden touch in the area and then ballooning over after he met Jordi Alba's ball in. The best opportunity though fell to Morata,

the ball finding him in the box after Alba's clip, but with the goal gaping he curled his finish wide. Already, Spain seemed to feel the weight of their misses and Sweden almost landed a sucker-punch, Isak's finish diverted by Marcos Llorente onto his own post.

The game drifted after the break and Spain faded, their earlier urgency fizzling into something much less convincing. Sweden should have taken the lead as Isak twisted and turned in the box, making enough space to drag a ball to the back post where somehow Berg failed to score.

Both teams made changes for the last 20 minutes, among them Isak going off and Morata departing for Spain, replaced by Moreno. Spain surged in the final minutes and Moreno almost grabbed a winner, his flicked header flying towards goal but kept out by the right foot of Robin Olsen, who intervened again in injury time to deny Pablo Sarabia.

AFP

QUICK RUN

UEFA probes Arnautovic's incident

UEFA on Tuesday opened a disciplinary inquiry into Austria's Marko Arnautovic for insulting North Macedonian players in Sunday's Euro 2020 game. Arnautovic netted Austria's third goal in a 3-1 win in Bucharest and then launched into an ill-tempered celebration, his teammate David Alaba having to intervene to calm him down. Media reports suggested he had insulted Leeds United's Ezgjan Alioski, referring to the defender's Albanian heritage. He issued a wide-ranging apology on Monday but that was not enough to stop UEFA from appointing an ethics and disciplinary inspector to look into 'the incident involving the player Marko Arnautovic'.

"Further information on this matter will be made available in due course," European football's governing body added.

Ramsdale replaces injured goalkeeper Henderson

Manchester United goalkeeper Dean Henderson has been forced to withdraw from England's Euro 2020 squad due to a hip injury, the Football Association announced on Tuesday.

Aaron Ramsdale of Sheffield United will take his place in Gareth Southgate's 26-man squad. "The Manchester United goalkeeper will now return to his club for further assessment and rehabilitation ahead of the 2021/22 season," the FA said in a statement. "Ramsdale was originally a member of Gareth Southgate's pre-tournament group in Middlesbrough, having played for England at this year's UEFA U21 Euro in Slovenia in March.

Ramsdale, 23, who is uncapped at senior level, joins fellow goalkeepers Jordan Pickford and Sam Johnstone in the squad.

Capacity for finale raised to 40,000

The Euro 2020 semifinals and final will be played in front of 40,000 fans at Wembley, while a capacity crowd will witness the Wimbledon finals as part of a series of new pilot events in England. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday announced a four-week delay in England to the full lifting of coronavirus restrictions - which were due to end on June 21 - because of a surge in infections caused by the Delta variant.

However, the final four matches at Wembley of the European Championship will be able to nearly double the crowd that saw England win their opening match against Croatia 1-0 on Sunday.

England will also face Scotland and the Czechs in front of 25 per cent capacity at Wembley next week.

AFP

Eriksen 'fine under the circumstances'

Copenhagen, Denmark - Christian Eriksen, the Danish football player who collapsed on the pitch in his country's opening Euro 2020 game, said that he was doing 'fine' in an Instagram post from hospital on Tuesday. "I'm fine - under the circumstances, I still have to go through some examinations at the hospital, but I feel okay," he wrote in a post accompanying a photo of him smiling and giving a thumbs-up while lying in bed.

In a scene that shocked the sporting world and beyond, the 29 year old Inter Milan midfielder

suddenly collapsed on the field in the 43rd minute of Denmark's Group B game on Saturday against Finland in Copenhagen.

Medical personnel administered CPR as he lay motionless on the field for about 15 minutes before being carried off the pitch and rushed to hospital.

He was later confirmed to have suffered cardiac arrest.

"Big thanks for your sweet and amazing greetings and messages from all around the world. It means a lot to me and my family," he wrote in Tuesday's post.



Christian Eriksen

"Now, I will cheer on the boys on the Denmark team in the next

matches. Play for all of Denmark."

Denmark play their second Group B game against Belgium on Thursday, also in Copenhagen.

Head coach Kasper Hjulmand said, "I have said that Eriksen is the heart, the pulse, the rhythm of our team. He has an incredible ability to perceive time, space and rhythm in a football match, [but] he won't be there on Thursday.

"We have a lot of other players who can contribute, and skilled players who can also find the rhythm of the match. We are putting something together that will be

difficult for Belgium - I'm sure of that."

On the rest of the team, he added, "It's totally OK if someone does not have the emotions needed to not give everything in the game. We need to prepare for an emotional trip to Parken.

"It will be a special atmosphere. We have to prepare mentally, the players are used to that. What are some of the emotions that can hit us? It's going to be weird to come back, we're going to be met with a lot of emotions."

Agencies



EURO2020



GOAL MACHINE

Ronaldo becomes all-time top scorer in Euro history as Portugal win

Budapest, Hungary - Cristiano Ronaldo netted a double to become the European Championship's all-time leading scorer as Portugal struck three times late on to beat a stubborn Hungary 3-0 in their Euro 2020 opener at a packed Puskas Arena on Tuesday.

The holders, who appear to have a much stronger squad than when they won their first major title five years ago, laboured for long periods in Budapest. But Raphael Guerreiro made the vital breakthrough in the 84th minute and Ronaldo slammed in a penalty shortly afterwards before tapping home in injury time.

The Juventus striker has now scored 11 goals in the tournament, two more than French great Michel Platini, who netted nine times when he led France to glory in 1984.

The 36 year old is also just three goals away (106) from seeing a downward header well saved by Gulacsi.

Santos' men continued to press despite Hungary growing in confidence, with Fernandes drawing Gulacsi into another fine stop with a dipping strike from long range.

Ronaldo created an oppor-

tunity for Bernardo Silva in the 28th minute by winning the ball back high up the pitch, only for the Manchester City winger to delay his shot too long and see the opening snuffed out by an excellent tackle from Hungary centre-back Willi Orban.

Hungary offered very little from open play, although they sent Portugal a warning shortly before half-time when Adam Szalai headed a free-kick too close to Rui Patricio. Jota continued to be Portugal's most dangerous player, but his shot on the turn was beaten away by Gulacsi.

The best chance of the opening period fell to Ronaldo in the 44th minute, only for the Portugal captain to plant the ball over from six yards out after meeting Guerreiro's cross.

Portugal came out of the blocks quickly after the break, knowing failure to win would put them in trouble in such a difficult group, with Pepe matching Iranian Ali Daei's all-time international scoring record of 109.

Portugal coach Fernando Santos opted to play Liverpool forward Diogo Jota and Bernardo Silva alongside Ronaldo ahead of Joao Felix. It almost paid instant dividends, as Jota forced Hungary goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi into a smart save with a left-footed drive in the fourth minute, although he perhaps should have squared the ball for an unmarked Ronaldo.

Ronaldo created an oppor-



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring his team's third goal against Hungary on Tuesday (AFP)

Bernardo Silva. Portugal's increasing frustration in the closing quarter of an hour was shown when Ronaldo begged for a penalty for handball against Attila Fiola.

Hungary thought they had snatched a shock lead through substitute Szabolcs Schon, but he was denied by a late linesman's flag for offside.

Rafa Silva played a key role

in the opening goal, though, as his deflected cross was met by Guerreiro, whose shot also took a huge deflection and dribbled agonisingly into the corner of the Hungarian net.

The home side's resistance was totally over three minutes later, as Orban pulled back Rafa Silva when he was clean through on goal.

Ronaldo stepped up and

made no mistake, sending Gulacsi the wrong way to add another record to his collection on the day he became the first player in history to play at five European Championships.

There was more to come from Ronaldo, as he danced through after a one-two with Rafa Silva and rolled in his 106th goal for Portugal.

AFP

GROUP F
HUNGARY VS PORTUGAL
 
0 - 3

TODAY'S MATCHES

GROUP B



FINLAND VS RUSSIA
(5pm)



GROUP A



TURKEY VS WALES
(8pm)



GROUP A



ITALY VS SWITZERLAND
(11pm)



(All kick-offs are Oman time)

STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
GROUP A								
Italy	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
Wales	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Switzerland	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Turkey	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0
GROUP B								
Belgium	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
Finland	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
Denmark	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
Russia	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0
GROUP C								
Austria	1	1	0	0	3	1	2	3
Netherlands	1	1	0	0	3	2	1	3
Ukraine	1	0	0	1	2	3	-1	0
North Macedonia	1	0	0	1	1	3	-2	0
GROUP D								
Czech Republic	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	3
England	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
Croatia	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
Scotland	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0
GROUP E								
Slovakia	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	3
Spain	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Sweden	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Poland	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
GROUP F								
Portugal	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
France	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Germany	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hungary	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0

Fans 'thrilled' to be back in packed Puskas Arena

Budapest, Hungary - Hungarian and Portuguese fans were thrilled on Tuesday to return to a packed football stadium, the Puskas Arena in Budapest the only Euro 2020 tournament venue not to limit fan capacity as a COVID-19 health precaution.

"I can't wait to get back inside a full stadium, we're thrilled to be back after more than two years," Bence, 24, a Hungarian ultra fan in a black T-shirt emblazoned with 'Magyarország', said in the centre of the Hungarian capital before entering the stadium. "We'll create an atmosphere that will make the legs of the Portuguese players tremble," he said before setting off with thousands of other ultras on an organised march to the ground. "We are happy that the



Hungary fans light a flare during the match against Portugal at the Puskas Arena in Budapest on Tuesday (AFP)

match is a full house and that we are the only ones to do that at the Euro," said another fan, Rajmund Javori, 34. "It is now up to us to show that this is how it can be done," he told AFP. The Magyars also face world champions France (June 19) in Budapest, before taking on Germany in Munich (June 23) in their last group game.

Opened in 2019 but mostly empty since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the Puskas Arena holds almost 68,000 fans. Eduardo Lopes, 57, one of several thousand Portuguese fans who made the trip said he had 'really missed the big-game atmosphere'. Taking in a quick look at

the River Danube before calling a taxi to the game, he said he was 'not worried' about the virus.

"Statistically I am more worried about the next bicycle hitting me when I am crossing the road, than catching the virus," he said.

"Of course we are not crazy, we are normal people, so we are also taking precautions," he added, while showing his mask.

His son Guilherme, 21, said he had to show a negative PCR test at the border, but the 'hassle' was 'worth it' to get back to a full stadium and follow Portugal.

According to the Hungarian newspaper Nemzeti Sport the crowd of around 65,000 was the biggest at a game in Hungary since a World Cup warm-up against Brazil in 1986.

AFP

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'KNOCKOUT BLOW'

Tendulkar tips India quicks to stun New Zealand in WTC final

New Delhi, India - Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar said New Zealand will be well prepared for this week's World Test Championship (WTC) final but warned that India's fast bowlers could deliver the 'knockout blow'.

In an interview with AFP, the record-breaking Indian batsman said India can draw on their stunning Test win in Australia as they prepare to meet the in-form Kiwis. While New Zealand thumped England by eight wickets to clinch a 1-0 Test series win on Sunday, Virat Kohli's team last played in March and are coming out of a stint in quarantine.

But India upset the odds to beat Australia in January, and Tendulkar pointed to their wealth of pace options for the inaugural championship's title clash starting on Friday in Southampton.

Swing bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar did not make the squad, but India can call on Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma. "All these guys are talented bowlers and successful bowlers," Tendulkar said on Tuesday.

"They would go out and do their best and are fully capable of launching a knockout blow."

Tendulkar said it would be a toss-up between the veteran Ishant and the up-and-coming Siraj, who starred in Australia, for a place in the starting XI.



A file photo of India skipper Virat Kohli (left) with Mohammed Shami and Ishant Sharma (right)



India pacers Umesh Yadav (L) and Mohammed Siraj



Sachin Tendulkar

We (India) are also confident... We have a very well-balanced team and so does New Zealand

SACHIN TENDULKAR
CRICKET LEGEND



Yadav among five pacers in India's 15

WTC FINAL

INDIA VS NEW ZEALAND

Mumbai, India - India's opening combination for the WTC final against New Zealand has possibly been finalised, with Shubman Gill and Rohit Sharma the only regular opening batters in the final 15, named on Tuesday.

Hanuma Vihari, who India have often turned to for batting insurance on overseas tours, has made the cut, but there is no place for Mayank Agarwal or KL Rahul.

Meanwhile, the five pace options are Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj and Umesh Yadav, the last being preferred over Shardul Thakur. Only two spin options in R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, with Washington Sundar and Axar Patel, who performed exceedingly well on the tours of Australia and in the home series against England respectively, part of the reserves.

Also on Tuesday, Ajaz Patel's impressive performance against England at Edgbaston earned him the spin-bowling position ahead of Mitchell Santner in New Zealand's final 15-player squad for the WTC final.

India's squad: Virat Kohli (capt), Ajinkya Rahane, Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant (wk), Hanuma Vihari, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Jasprit Bumrah, Umesh Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Siraj.

New Zealand's squad: Kane Williamson (capt), Tom Blundell (wk), Trent Boult, Devon Conway, Colin de Grandhomme, Matt Henry, Kyle Jamieson, Tom Latham, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Neil Wagner, BJ Watling (wk), Will Young.

Cricinfo

"It will be a nice challenge for the team management to have in front of them where you have more bowlers who are capable of playing and delivering," he said.

"All these bowlers are terrific bowlers. I have not seen their practise sessions and don't know who is in good rhythm or not. I feel it is going to be between Ishant and Siraj."

Siraj, 27, played a key role in India's triumph in Australia as

they recovered from a heavy loss to win the four-match series 2-1, sealed with a memorable victory by their second-stringers in Brisbane. But despite India's pace stocks, Tendulkar also expected spinners R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja to make the team with their ability to bat in the middle order.

"I see a high probability there because both spinners can bat," Tendulkar said, when asked

about India's chances of playing two spinners. "And if the wicket starts assisting spinners they can win the game. And if the wicket does not offer much to fast bowlers, for some reason, then we have the option of spinners who can bat."

'Number of challenges'

While the difference in preparations between the two teams is

stark, he said the final would be an equal match-up between the top two in the Test rankings.

"New Zealand will be high on confidence and better prepared for the World Test Championship final after having played two matches in England and won. "We (India) are also confident... We have a very well-balanced team and so does New Zealand." Preparation-wise New Zealand have had that

advantage of playing two Test matches. India has done whatever best they could due to number of challenges posted by COVID-19."

'Winner to take home US\$1.6mn

Dubai, UAE - The winners of the India vs New Zealand WTC final will take home US\$1.6mn, as well as the Test Championship Mace, while the losing team will

get US\$800,000, the ICC announced on Monday.

In case there is a stalemate, or weather prevents a winner from being identified despite the reserve day, the two teams will split the total prize money of US\$2.4mn.

The final will be played in Southampton, and will be played from June 18-22, with June 23 slotted as a reserve day

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WHAT'S
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Oman meet Somalia in FIFA Arab Cup qualifier in Doha on June 20

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

FIFA ARAB CUP 2021

Oman will take on Somalia in their FIFA Arab Cup 2021 qualifying match in Doha on June 20.

The match will be played at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium, the same venue where the Red Warriors played their 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup Group E second round matches, which concluded on Tuesday.

Branko Ivankovic's Oman will be favourite to get past minnows Somalia, who are placed 197th in the latest FIFA World Ranking.

Oman are placed 80th in the FIFA ranking and will go into the match high on confidence after securing their place in the third round of the FIFA World

Cup qualifiers and securing their spot in the 2023 Asian Cup finals.

The match against Somalia will kick-off at 9pm, Oman time.

A win over Somalia will take Oman into Group A, where it has been placed along with hosts Qatar, Iraq and the winner of Bahrain vs Kuwait qualifier.

Oman is one of the 14 teams who feature in the upcoming qualifiers, and the seven winners will join the nine highest-ranked teams in the final tournament that will take place later this year (November 30-December 18) - during a similar timeslot to the FIFA World Cup 2022.

The seven qualifying matches will be held from June 19-25 at two venues - Khalifa International Stadium and Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

The leading nine nations, according to the FIFA World Ranking, have qualified for the tournament directly are Qatar (hosts), Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE and Syria.

The tournament is seen as a vital opportunity to test operations and facilities exactly a year before Qatar hosts the first World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world.

Meanwhile, the organisers of the FIFA Arab Cup announced that the sale of tickets for qualifiers began on Tuesday.

Both stadiums that are hosting the qualifiers have innovative cooling technology for the benefit of fans and players. In line with COVID-19 protocols, a maximum 30 per cent capacity will be permitted for each match at the venues.

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