

Appraisal test for job applicants

Within the framework of the directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to employ job-seekers and in continuation of the government's employment efforts in various units, the Ministry of Labour on Tuesday conducted tests and interviews for a number of government jobs at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Ibra in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate. **DETAILS ON P2**



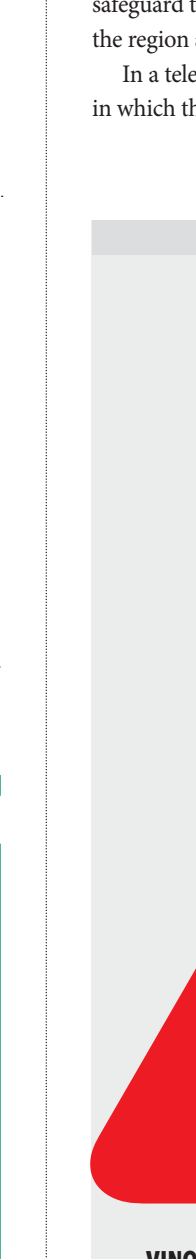
P12

OMAN TO HOST MUMBAI TO PREPARE FOR T20 WORLD CUP



P15

ASIAN AIRLINES OFFER PERKS TO KEEP GROUNDED ELITE FLYERS ON BOARD



P20

GRAZING AND FORAGING IN PROTECTED SITES OF OMAN'S GARDEN CITY



MUSCAT

CONDOLENCES TO ALGERIAN GOVT

The Sultanate, through a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, expressed its condolences and sympathy to the government and people of the brotherly People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, on the victims of forest fires witnessed by several states, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. At least seven people were killed in Algeria as forest fires spread in the North African country, the civil defence authority said on Tuesday.

CRUDE PRICES AT \$68.87 A BARREL

Oman crude oil for October delivery traded at \$68.87 on Tuesday, \$1.54 higher than Monday's price which was \$67.33. The average price of Oman oil for August delivery settled at \$71.66, thus \$5.26 per barrel higher than the July delivery. Meanwhile, US crude oil futures were trading at \$67.66 per barrel, up \$1.17 or 1.76 per cent. Brent crude was at \$69.98, 1.36 per cent higher. US oil was up 1.7 per cent, at \$67.56 a barrel.

READ IN

OPINION P9

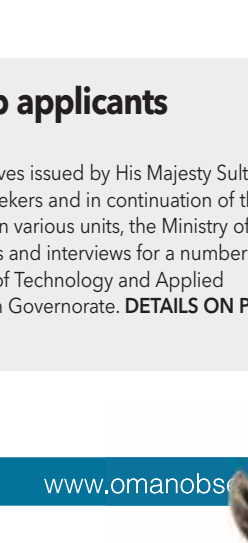
Not even a deadly virus can spoil the spirit of festival

SAMUEL KUTTY

Welcome to the Delta game (Covid-19)...

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla

INSIDE



UN REGAINS ACCESS TO REFUGEE CAMPS IN TIGRAY P6



WATER RECYCLING BATTLES SCARCITY P8

US commends Oman's role in resolving Yemen crisis

MUSCAT: The United States lauded the central role that the Sultanate, led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, has undertaken to resolve the Yemeni crisis by bringing disputing factions to the negotiations table to help reach a peaceful solution and safeguard the stability of Yemen and the region at large.

In a telephonic press briefing, in which the Oman News Agency

participated, the US Special Envoy to Yemen Tim Lenderking, said, "The Sultanate is keen to reach an end to this crisis. Oman is working passionately on this file with all parties."

Speaking about the visit of His Majesty the Sultan to Saudi Arabia last month and his meeting with the Saudi King, Lenderking said that the summit

tackled "pivotal issues", the most important of which was the Yemeni file and ways to reach a peaceful solution to the existing crisis.

The United States and key countries in the region, represented by Oman and Saudi Arabia, are working to reach tangible solutions, said Lenderking, who noted the parties' support for a ceasefire aimed to lend a gleam of hope to the Yemeni crisis.

Lenderking also reaffirmed that his country offers \$165 million to the Yemeni people to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis witnessed by the country and its people. He explained that such aids will help those most needy segments meet their basic needs.

Meanwhile, Sarah Charles, Assistant to the Administrator to USAID (the US Agency for

International Development), said that the United States presented around \$3.6 billion as aids aimed to provide medical treatment, welfare, healthcare, prevent malnutrition and furnish basic needs for the Yemeni people.

She added that 20 million Yemenis are struggling to survive and that many families were forced to quit the country as a result of the war.

— ONA



DHOFAR TOURISTS TOLD TO STICK TO RULES

VINOD NAIR @vinot_nair

Three people were killed following a collision between two vehicles on Muscat-Salalah road, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) said on Tuesday.

The accident took place on the Adam-Haima road towards the Dhofar Governorate.

According to eyewitnesses, traffic was disrupted on the main road as the police aviation also carried out the transfer of three people in critical condition to Nizwa Reference Hospital.

3 KILLED AS VEHICLES COLLIDE ON SALALAH ROAD

It may be noted that speed has been the reason for 198 of the 371 deaths due to road accidents reported in 2020, followed by negligence (56), according to ROP.

With airfares to Salalah from Muscat hovering around RO 34, more people are travelling by road to Salalah with their families.

Visitors are flocking to Dhofar Governorate to enjoy the khareef season with Salalah clocking temperatures in the twenties.

TURN TO P5

FULL DOSE FOR 32% OF TARGET GROUPS



Decline in daily Covid-19 cases after lockdowns and full vaccination of 32 per cent of the target population, may prompt authorities to revisit some of the restrictions, especially air travel ban on expats. The number of those who took the first dose of the vaccines stood at 1,359,622 comprising 68 per cent, while 648,518 (32 per cent) were double jabbed. **DETAILS ON P3**

Taliban control 65% of Afghanistan: EU

KABUL: Taliban tightened their grip on captured Afghan territory on Tuesday as civilians hid in their homes, with an EU official saying the group now controlled 65 per cent of the country after a string of sudden gains as foreign forces pull out.

President Ashraf Ghani called on regional strongmen to support his government, while a UN official said advances made in human rights in the 20 years since the group was ousted from power were in danger of being erased.

In the capital Kabul, Ghani's

aides said he was seeking help from regional militias he has squabbled with over the years to rally to the defence of his government. He had also appealed to civilians to defend Afghanistan's "democratic fabric".

In the town of Aibak, capital of Samangan province on the main road between the northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul, Taliban fighters were consolidating their control, moving into government buildings, residents said. Most government security forces appeared to have withdrawn.

SEE ALSO P7

UN report ignites fight for funds to build climate defences

GENEVA: The United Nations climate panel's report on Monday alerted wealthy nations to a lesson many of the world's most vulnerable countries have already learnt through bitter experience: they must adapt quickly to a world with more extreme weather.

The report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change made clear the planet will get warmer for at least the next few decades, and seas will rise for

centuries — trends that have already triggered weather disasters across the globe.

"The fact that some changes are going to continue to play out for a long, long time, underscores the importance of paying much more attention to making communities more resilient," Jane Lubchenco, Deputy Climate Director at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, said.

As rich nations strain to curb



their climate-warming emissions, experts say they will need to prepare for higher sea levels, which can turn storm surges into floods.

Societies will also need to ready for heat waves by creating public health infrastructure to cope with those who become ill, while regions must rethink urban planning and development to steer communities away from high-risk zones, such as wildfire spots.

— Reuters

Sultanate participates in Universal Postal Congress



MUSCAT: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, is taking part in the 27th Universal Postal Congress held during August 9-27 in Abidjan in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

The Sultanate's delegation is headed by Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary for Communications and Information Technology at the Ministry of Transport, Communications Information Technology.

The member states are

expected to adopt the new World Postal Strategy, a roadmap for the new work cycle commencing in 2022. The Congress will also decide on new rules and set policies on the international exchange of postal items.

As part of the proceedings, member states will elect the next director-general and deputy director general of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), and decide on the membership of the UPU's Council of Administration and Postal Operations Council for the period of 2021-2024 period.

— ONA

CDAA: Don't play in wadis during rains



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Civil Defence and Ambulances Authority has cautioned the people, especially those in South Al Sharqiyah, against drowning in wadis amid forecast of rains in the next 24 hours.

South Al Sharqiyah has reported more flash floods and drowning incidents in wadis after the recent rains around Hajar mountains.

“In view of the sudden rush of rainwater and overflowing wadis, citizens and residents should take care of themselves”, a senior CDAA official said. “A number of calls for rescue have been received following the rains majorly from people affected by floods.”

Parents have been urged to be watchful of their kids, especially those below 12 years of age,

as many drowning incidents involving children were reported in the previous days from many wilayats.

“In all the cases of drowning in several wilayats, the victims were children as a result of negligence and lack of supervision by parents. Many of them either were playing in the wadis or pools without knowing the danger.”

CDAA statistics show an average of 400 drowning incidents were reported a year in the past mostly during rains.

The major reasons behind drowning deaths are crossing flooded wadis, swimming in undesignated areas such as dams and water-logged areas, leaving children unattended near water surfaces, non-compliance of safety instructions, lack of swimming ability and amateur rescue operations which result in casualties.



Mazoon Dairy continues qualitative steps towards sustainability

MUSCAT: Athar programme witnesses a diversity of initiatives and adopts ambitious initiatives to ensure growth with best sustainability practices.

Since its inception in 2015, Mazoon Dairy has been adopting qualitative initiatives to ensure the achievement of the company's strategic objectives, with an emphasis on reducing any possible negative impacts on the environment, as well as adopting the best modern practices in all its operations and commercial activities.

Yousuf bin Khamis al Fazari - Corporate Affairs Manager - said: “Believing in the importance of promoting the concept of sustainability and its applications in the company's operations, Mazoon Dairy continues its activities aiming at adopting the best methods to reduce any potential impacts on the environment, as well as developing modern and innovative solutions for the efficient management of resources and waste recycling. It also continues to work actively to build strategic partnerships through (Athar) programme that includes all initiatives aiming at maximizing the social and economic impact of the company”.

Al Fazari added, “The biogas production plant project, the most important step in the establishment phase, is the first plant of its kind in the Sultanate and the region. It relies on cow waste in the biogas production processes. The company also signed an agreement to convert biogas into electrical energy



in cooperation with the Oman Liquefied Gas Company and Ejad Corporation, to take advantage of modern technologies in converting biogas generated from organic waste into electrical energy to be a sustainable source of renewable power.”

The corporate affairs manager also indicated that the afforestation is one of the company's projects. It includes planting the company's site in the Wilayat of Al Sunaynah with about 8,000 trees as a first stage, along with ornamental trees, fruit trees, windbreaks trees, and others. However, the afforestation continues in parallel with the increase of the quantities of water extracted from the wastewater treatment plant which is used in irrigation and cleaning works. The company is yet working on increasing the green area like grassy yards, playgrounds, etc.

Regarding solid waste recycling, Mazin bin Abdullah al Saadi – HSE Manager – indicated that Mazoon Dairy has embraced the solid waste recycling project by



signing an agreement with the service company for recycling. By adopting such projects, Mazoon Dairy seeks to recycle a percentage of 90% of its waste. This agreement is the first of its kind in the Sultanate, where the company owns spaces dedicated to sorting and classifying waste of all kinds and recycling them within its facilities. The project expands the company's waste recycling scope to include more types and quantities of waste that goes to other activities, like plastic and solid waste as part of the company's social responsibility and its commitment to efficiently manage the waste generated from its operations. The recycled and reused quantities are estimated from 5 to 10 tonnes per day. Organic waste is transferred to the biogas production and solid waste plant for recycling. The amount of recycled plastic is about 250 tonnes.

ECO-FRIENDLY

Al Saadi also highlighted the eco-friendly bags initiative by

the company during mid-2019. “Mazoon Dairy is the first company to implement the use of eco-friendly bags and to ban the use of plastic bags at its site as well as in the local community. That is, Al Sunaynah was the first wilayat to commit to shifting to eco-friendly bags as the company distributed those bags in coordination with the office of the wali of Al Sunaynah” he said.

Al Saadi elaborated “Mazoon Dairy applies strict control over trucks to ensure lower fuel consumption, adopts the idea of using liquified gas instead of diesel fuel for boilers in the factory, and ensures continuous periodic maintenance of the fleet of vehicles”.

Besides, the initiative to recycle wood and turn it into furniture, in partnership with a local company, is a big addition to qualitative interventions in this field. The initiative aims, in its first phase, to convert waste wood into 100 pieces of furniture such as tables, chairs, and others. The company, however, designed integrated decorations and furniture for an on-site café from the recycled wood, in addition to designing umbrellas and outdoor seating.

He added that Mazoon had taken the lead in forming a national team for the circular economy, looking into finding innovative and environmentally friendly solutions, the most important of which are currently initiatives related to water recycling, as well as the solar energy project.

Ministry of Labour conducts appraisal for job applicants

IBRA: Within the framework of the directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to employ job-seekers, and in continuation to the government's employment efforts in various government units, the Ministry of Labour on Tuesday conducted tests and interviews for a number of government jobs at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Ibra in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

In comments to Oman News Agency (ONA), Salim bin Khalfan al Wuhaibi, head of the



team tasked with conducting tests and interviews, said that the process will last for two days with 385 applicants holders of bachelor's degree and post-GED

contending for 54 job vacancies in the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and the Environment Authority.



Al Wuhaibi added that the evaluation of the vacancies rolled out according to advertisement No 5 published on June 13 is of two types with the first evaluation

being a 30-minute electronic test containing 30 questions in the fields of specialisation, general culture and mental abilities.

The test results are announced

soon after the end of the test and the high achievers qualify for the job.

He added that the e-system was designed by national cadres from the Ministry of Labour as well as specialists from the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and other higher education institutions.

The second type of appraisal is dedicated to interview-based jobs where the applicants undergo online interviews and the results appear immediately and the successful applicants qualify for the job. — ONA

Full dose for 32 pc of target groups

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Decline in daily Covid-19 cases after lockdowns and full vaccination of 32 per cent of the target population, may prompt authorities to revisit some of the restrictions, especially air travel ban on expats.

The number of those who took the first dose of the vaccines stood at 1,359,622 comprising 68 per cent, while 648,518 (32 per cent) were double jabbed.

Only 3,085 new daily cases, including 978, on August 1, were reported this month so far.

The lockdowns not only contributed to limiting the spread of Covid-19, but it also reduced hospitalisation of patients, especially those in intensive care units. At present there are only 344 inpatients, including 158 in intensive care units.

The Supreme Committee to tackle Covid-19 had imposed four days total lockdown before the Eid al Adha and evening or night lockdowns between 5 pm and 4 am for two weeks between July 16 and July 29.

A decision is also awaited on the attendance of government



employees in offices, which has been limited to 50 per cent of the total workforce.

Employees of government institutions who refuse to take vaccination doses without a convincing medical reason, will face legal action in the future. The private sector companies may take the same approach, official sources say.

Currently, home delivery of food is allowed by the SC during night lockdown and malls, shops,

restaurants and cafes can receive customers only to 50 per cent of their capacity.

Several private businesses have been urging authorities to allow the return of their expatriate workforce with valid visas as some projects have been affected due to manpower shortage.

One of the eagerly awaited decisions is the lifting of restrictions on expatriates from countries that are on the travel ban list, especially from India, the

Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the UK.

The Sultanate had suspended entry to visitors in May from Sudan, Lebanon, South Africa, Brazil, Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and those coming from any other country if they had passed through any of these countries during the 14 days prior to requesting entry to the Sultanate.

Essential to link content with curiosity

DR MOHAMMED SHAFIUDDIN

One of the biggest casualties of the Covid-19 pandemic is education. Many educational institutes all over the world are closed and have gone online. In fact, online teaching is not a new concept in the world, but it is popularised by this pandemic stage.

Even KG classes are now online. But still, most of the parents doubt whether it can replace traditional learning.

Being an educationist, I also have a few doubts. Is the teaching faculty able to cope up with the technology? What about staff who graduated 10 or 15 years back? Secondly, the curriculum which is mostly prepared by keeping in mind the traditional teaching as the prime methodology can be satisfied by the online teaching?

One of the million dollar questions comes to the people is, how long can the student pay attention to the online teaching? At the beginning it is amazing for students to get new experience but will it last till the last chapter? Many educational institutes introduced online teaching without thinking about the sociological and psychological educational concepts.

Before introducing online education to the students, it is better to form a team of teaching and technical experts. In online education technology plays equal importance in pedagogy. In fact these two have to run simultaneously. Bringing attention to the student, it is essential that content is linked with curiosity. Many institutions are failing miserably in this shifting phase.

Let me explain how Croatia is managing online education.

- For grades 1-4 of primary school, classes are being organised via public television TV. (Actual teachers are filmed holding classes, given the lack of pre-existing content)
- Teachers send additional exercises for students to parents. (Given their age, it



A teacher gives a live streaming online class from her home

is not expected that these children do use the Internet directly themselves, but rather they communicate with their teachers via their parents.)

- For children aged 6-10, no special resources have been foreseen, since classes are delivered via TV and teachers communicate with parents via phone.
- For grades 5-8 of primary school, video lessons are being filmed for everyday, 15 minutes per subject, according to the national schedule. In addition, each school has organised a virtual teachers' room and virtual classrooms on various platforms (Loomen, Microsoft Teams, Yammer) where teachers communicate daily with their pupils, give them instructions, check their activity and completion of tasks.
- For children with special needs and disabilities, the ministry made a recommendation to pedagogical staff at schools to design online classes adapted to such children.

HOW TO TEACH ONLINE

First of all the teacher should break his content into small pieces and every part should have an assessment scheme. If the teacher is teaching managerial statistics, let us assume he is giving the introduction to the students.

Then not only the outcome is to be mentioned but also what changes the teacher is expecting after the teaching should be mentioned very clearly. What the teacher wants to achieve is to be mentioned very clearly and the questions should be based on the same to be posed to the students.

Vaccination continues for school students in South Al Batinah and South Al Sharqiyah governorates

SUR, AL AWABI: The vaccination campaign against Covid-19 for students aged 12 years and older continued in South Al Batinah and South Al Sharqiyah governorates, on Tuesday.

Ali bin Khalifa al Kalbani, Director of the Department of Educational Measurement and Evaluation in South Al Batinah governorate, said the vaccination centres are seeing an excellent turnout by students who are taking the initiative to come to the vaccination centres and take the jab which reflects a conviction of the importance of the vaccines in curbing the Covid pandemic and mitigating the symptoms of the disease.

Al Kalbani praised the administrative and teaching staffs



and the medical professionals at various vaccination centres for the great efforts they are exerting to make the vaccination campaign successful.

The Governorate of South Al Batinah has eighteen vaccination centres distributed across the

governorate's 6 wilayats targeting to vaccinate 42,444 students of public and private schools.

The Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah has 19 vaccination centres rolling out Covid-19 vaccines for students aged 12 years and older.

The vaccination campaign for students in the governorate continues till August 19 according to the schedule.

Mubarak bin Salim al Farsi, Acting Director-General of Education in South Al Sharqiyah said that the campaign targets to roll out vaccines for 29,756 of public and private schools.

He added that all the vaccination centres are witnessing an excellent turnout by students and the vaccination process is running seamlessly due to the early preparations taken by the directorates of health and education in the governorate and that also reflects the community awareness about the importance of taking the Covid-19 vaccine.

— ONA

Expo 2020 Dubai reveals an extraordinary schedule of events

MUSCAT: Expo 2020 Dubai has revealed the calendar for its Programme for People and Planet, an extraordinary schedule of events, experiences thought leadership and public conversations that aims to find solutions for some of the most pressing problems facing our world.

Designed with and for the global community, the Programme for People and Planet will harness the connecting power of World Expos to catalyse a legacy of transformative change.

The Programme for People and Planet will run across the entire six months of Expo 2020, anchored by 10 Theme Weeks and 18 International Days, each of which explore key issues of global significance.

Through the Theme Weeks, participants will investigate solutions to critical global challenges, ranging from mitigating climate change and biodiversity loss and making human habitats more sustainable, to bridging the digital divide and ensuring equal access to



The Programme for People and Planet reflects challenges and opportunities facing not just the decision-makers of today, but all 7.8 billion people living on this planet

education and healthcare.

More than 220 events will take place as part of the programme, from large forums and public conventions to seminars and workshops. Expo 2020's signature platform for connecting minds, the World Majlis series will play a prominent role, with 53 individual sessions set to engage visitors over the course of the six months.

Unlocking bold aspirations to shape a healthier, safer, cleaner and more equitable future for all, the programme will demonstrate that each and every

one of Expo 2020's partners, participants and visitors, whether attending Expo physically or participating remotely via virtual and digital channels, can — and must — become an agent of change.

Nadia Verjee, Chief of Staff, Expo 2020 Dubai, said: "Sitting at the heart of our World Expo, and taking place at a moment in time that could not be more urgent or opportune, the Programme for People and Planet is the manifestation of our theme and purpose, 'Connecting Minds, Creating The Future'.



**Sultanate of Oman
Public Prosecution**

TENDER NOTICE

The Public Prosecution invites interested companies to the following tender(s):

Tender Number	Description	Deadline for obtaining tender	Deadline for tender submission	GRADE (Group)	Tender Document Cost (Non-refundable)
31/2021	SUPPLY OF LAPTOP COMPUTERS	18/08/2021	29/08/2021	Specialized	25

- Companies that are specialized in such works and who have a valid registration certificate from the Tender Board can participate and obtain technical specifications and tender documents from the website: <https://etending.tenderboard.gov.om>
- The bidder shall submit their offers electronically via the mentioned website.
- Each tender shall be accompanied by an electronic copy of the temporary insurance in the form of bank guarantee or check certified by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate at a rate of (1%) of the value of the bid valid for 90 days from the date of submission.
- To help the contestants contact the technical support center at 24166670 and email: etenderhd@ita.gov.om.
- Public Prosecution is not bound to consent the lowest bid or any other tenders.



The government is going ahead with plans to restart schools. Parents are ready to send children to school if the conditions are conducive and safe



Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority

فَيْرْتْرِيد أوتو
Fairtrade Auto



Campaign Vehicles

LAMBORGHINI



Date of the Campaign : 11 / 08 / 2021

Campaign section : Safety

Campaign type : Vehicle body

The number of affected vehicle	VIN Number	The year of production	Vehicle model
5 Vehicles	From ZHWEM6ZD1KLA08820 To: ZHWEM6ZDXKLA08573	2019 – 2021	Lamborghini Aventador SVJ

Description: Because of the weak torque of the hood joints screws and the insufficient fixation of the hood, which leads to the opening of the engine hood due to the force of the wind and high speed in light of strong vertical and longitudinal acceleration.

Actions: Replacement of the engine hood hinge screws is required.

Contact Dealer: Service Center - Phone - 22579822 during the office working hours.

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

With Covid cases declining and the vaccination campaigns gaining momentum, the opening of schools will be a matter of time of months and days in the Sultanate.

The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (Unicef) has warned that the closure of schools has affected more than 156 million students and the losses children and young people incur from missing out on school may never be recouped.

The Sultanate has started taking initiatives to vaccinate school students in the age group 12 and above, including expatriate children from international schools.

The government aims to restart schools at the start of the new semester. But schools have added that vaccination is not compulsory for the students, but rather voluntary, according to the consent of the parent or the guardian.

Speaking to Observer, several

parents expressed their willingness to send children to school if the conditions are conducive and safe.

“As we have seen with the results of board exams for students at Indian schools this year, that Covid has compromised the educational life of all students. While safety is paramount to all of us, the conventional school must return at the earliest,” Sidheshwar, whose child will appear for grade 10 exams this year.

It is not just the senior students who are affected, the younger ones are also missing out a lot on the development of communication skills, sports, physical activities, and dealing with the competition and challenges posed by other students. “Online schools did serve their purpose well, but the time has come for the ‘real school.’ I think parents should also accept the assurances from the authorities when they say schools are safe,” said Nadia, an Egyptian expatriate who teaches a number of Omani students.

She added, “Compromising on

classroom education for health safety was the need of the hour in 2020, but as we near 2022 the need of the hour is back to school.”

“From learning loss, mental distress, exposure to violence and abuse, or reduced development of social skills, the consequences for children will be felt in their academic achievement and societal engagement as well as physical and mental health,” Unicef said.

“Remote learning has been a lifeline for many children around the world during school closures. But for the most vulnerable, even this was out of reach. It is urgent that we get every child back into the classroom now,” said Robert Jenkins, Unicef Global Chief of Education.

They pointed to evidence that shows that schools are not among the main drivers of coronavirus transmission, and the decision on whether to open or close them should be based on risk analysis and the “epidemiological considerations” in communities where they are located.



Dhofar tourists told to stick to rules

FROM PAGE 1

While it is an ideal time to head to the governorate to beat the stress of the pandemic, one should take note of the timings of night lockdown, follow Covid protocol and ensure safe driving while enjoying the season.

Lt Col Sulaiman bin Saeed al Jabri (pictured), Director of Operations at the Dhofar Governorate Command, says police have activated control points in the wilayats of Thamrait, Hasik and Harit area to regulate the entry of citizens and residents into the governorate.

He added that only vaccinated tourists are requested to enter the governorate according to the decision announced by the Supreme Committee.

Lt Col Al Jabri said there have been issues such as gathering of a large number of motorcyclists in residential neighbourhoods and rural areas in some locations, and some of them even resorted to drifting and indulging in vandalism on the grass.



The ROP said it has been taking all preventive measures to regulate traffic on roads leading to tourist sites and urged the public not to gather and crowd at any place.

Once in Salalah one has to bear in mind to be careful and maintain distance between vehicles while driving through fog, mist or drizzle.

What drivers must remember is the daily traffic Salalah experiences that has been defined as heavy due to tourists in town trying to wrap up the day tips before the lockdown time.



20th summer camp for Girl Guides begins



MUSCAT: The activities of the 20th Winter Camp for Girl Guides kicked off last week. The camp was held under the slogan “Committed to a Healthy Society”, and was organised by the Directorate-General of Scouts and Girl Guides from August 9 to 11. The camp saw the participation of 78 Girl Guides and 11 leaders from various governorates of the Sultanate.

The opening ceremony began

with the flag-raising ceremony of the Sultanate, marking the launch of the activities.

The inaugural speech was delivered by Nazira bint Ahmed al Harthiyah, Assistant Director-General for Girl Guides, in which she welcomed the attendees and stressed the importance of continuing meetings and camps via video communication with the aim of visual communication. — ONA



OMAN CHLORINE S.A.O.G. عمان كلورين ش.م.ع.م

P.O. BOX 193, POSTAL CODE 134, MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN TEL: 24695839 - FAX: 24695768

Chairman's Report For the six months period ended 30 June 2020

Dear Shareholders,

After greetings,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the unaudited result of parent and group for the six months period ended June 30, 2021.

The summarized operating result for the above period is as under:

Details	Parent			Consolidated		
	30-06-21	30-06-20	Variance % YOY	30-06-21	30-06-20	Variance % YOY
	RO'000	RO'000		RO'000	RO'000	
Sales	4,499	3,495	29%	8,383	7,963	5%
Cost of sales	(2,583)	(1,938)	-33%	(6,162)	(5,436)	-13%
Gross profit	1,916	1,557	23%	2,221	2,527	-12%
Selling and distribution expenses	(472)	(404)	-17%	(997)	(730)	-37%
General and administrative expenses	(527)	(442)	-19%	(946)	(834)	-13%
Operating profit	917	711	29%	278	963	-71%
Finance charges	(32)	(35)	9%	(1,363)	(1,574)	13%
Other income	110	142	-23%	98	230	-57%
Share of loss of Joint Venture	0	-	-	(158)	(7)	-
Profit before taxation	995	818	22%	(1,145)	(388)	195%
Taxation	(142)	(123)	-15%	(142)	(123)	-15%
Profit for the period	853	695	23%	(1,287)	(511)	152%
Profit attributable to parent co. shareholders				(318)	48	-763%
Share of profit/loss attributable to minority shareholders				(969)	(559)	-73%

1. Performance Overview of Parent Company:

- The company consistently maintained the capacity utilization of the plant at high level and the company achieved the over 101% capacity utilization during first 6 months of 2021 (2020-101.7%).
- The higher capacity utilization enabled to optimize the selling price to key customers wherever possible and this is likely to lead higher customer retention and improved billing in the coming years especially after commencement of commercial operations of our brownfield expansion.
- During first six months of 2021, the higher sales volume to a greater extent compensated the lower selling price as compared to the similar period of 2020 which resulted in higher net profit during first six months of 2021.
- The overall sales volume increased during first six months of 2021 by 26.5% owing to improved demand mainly for Caustic lye, Hydrochloric Acid and Calcium Chloride.
- Selling prices were marginally declined during first six months of 2021 for all the products due to the fluctuation in global caustic price and Oil prices.

Taking into the account the competitive environment and continued COVID-19 pandemic, the profitability of the parent company is to be considered satisfactory.

2. Performance overview of Subsidiaries

2.1 Union Chlorine LLC (UAE)

For the first six months of 2021, the company posted a positive EBITDA of RO 140K. After interest, depreciation, the net loss was RO 879K. The parent company's share of loss including its 100% subsidiary (OIDC) is RO 526K. The decrease in revenue was because of lower volume in our caustic soda lye, Hypo and calcium chloride pills. Also, COVID-19 Pandemic impacted our ability to meet the targeted revenue.

Particulars	Parent		Consolidated	
	30/06/2021	31/12/2020	30/06/2021	31/12/2020
Revenue	2,660	3,097		
EBITDA	140	863		
Loss after Tax	(879)	(350)		

Management is taking all measures to enhance sales to end-users as well increase

Unaudited condensed interim Separate and consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021

	Parent		Consolidated	
	30/06/2021	31/12/2020	30/06/2021	31/12/2020
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Goodwill	-	-	74	74
Property, plant and equipment	15,104	12,208	77,437	75,452
Investment in subsidiaries	12,809	12,809	-	-
Subordinated Loan	767	767	-	-
Investment in Joint Venture	-	-	2,760	2921
Right of use assets	778	643	2,467	2274
Total non-current assets	29,458	26,427	82,738	80,721
Current assets				
Inventories and consumables	913	910	2,177	2515
Trade and other receivables	2,916	3,018	6,514	5,514
Cash and bank balances	2,337	2,553	2,633	3,657
Total current assets	6,166	6,481	11,324	11,686
Total assets	35,624	32,908	94,062	92,407
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Capital and reserves				
Share capital	6,810	6,810	6,810	6,810
Statutory reserve	2,848	2,848	2,848	2,848
General reserve	800	800	800	800
Cashflow hedge reserve	-	-	(387)	(170)
Retained earnings	16,743	16,741	10,928	12,097
Equity attributable to the Parent Company's shareholders	27,201	27,199	20,999	22,385
Capital contribution from Non-controlling interest	-	-	6,355	6355
Non-controlling interest	-	-	(1,039)	75
Total equity	27,201	27,199	26,315	28,815
Non-current liabilities				
Term loan	3,659	1,433	47,593	43,929
Liability on land lease non current	789	630	2,488	2207
End of service benefits	153	141	278	254
Retentions due to contractors	-	-	-	-
Cashflow hedge reserve	-	-	646	183
Deferred tax liability	627	641	627	641
Total non-current liabilities	5,228	2,845	51,632	47,214
Current liabilities				
Trade and other payables	2,763	2,217	9,312	6,392
Liability on land lease current	54	58	98	100
Retentions due to contractors	-	-	-	1494
Current portion – Term Loan	165	245	5,736	5821
Short term borrowings	-	-	756	2127
Cashflow hedge reserve	-	-	-	100
Provision for income tax	213	344	213	344
Total current liabilities	3,195	2,864	16,115	16,378
Total liabilities	8,423	5,709	67,747	63,592
Total equity and liabilities	35,624	32,908	94,062	92,407
Net asset per share	0.399	0.399	0.386	0.329

value added products. Continuous improvement in the cost of production due to the adopted cost cutting measures taken by the management and the continuous reduction of electricity tariff among all.

The company is mainly focusing on long term supplies to the government, major oil and gas producer and private companies. Recently a major contract for supply of Hydrochloric Acid was awarded by the major Oil and gas producer in UAE for five years, this will significantly improve the revenue, EBITDA and Net profit of the company upon the commencement of the deliveries expected in Q4 2021.

2.2 Gulf Chlorine LLC (Qatar)

For the first half of 2021, the company posted a positive EBITDA of RO 171K. After interest, depreciation, and Joint venture share of loss, the net loss was RO 1,258K. The parent company's share of loss is RO 642K

Particulars	Amount RO ('000)	
	H1 2021	H1 2020
Revenue	1,656	1,717
EBITDA	171	451
Loss after Tax	(1,258)	(855)

The projected commissioning of the Calcium Chloride Plant by Q3 2021 by the joint venture "United Chemicals", will help us to enhance the plant capacity utilization and improve performance. By end of June the plant started operating at 100% capacity.

The Company entered a non-breakable sole supply contract with major MNC in oil & Gas sector for supply of our products for 18 months starting from June 2021. Also, the company has further strengthened its long-term agreements and position with the major players in Qatar and targeting more governmental bodies and leading entities in the market for a sustainable products supply. Furthermore, we are striving to further widen its export market in the region. In Q2 – 2021 we already started exports to Spain, Sudan, Ethiopia, Peru. The management has signed a new contract for supply of 3,000MT of HCL per month to Saudi, execution of which will start once the land border with Saudi opens.

2.3 Oman Industrial Development Company SAOC

Oman Industrial Development Company is fully owned by Oman Chlorine and the company holds an 11.1% economic interest in Union Chloride LLC – Abu Dhabi.

3. Outlook:

a. Parent:

The parent company awarded the contract for the brownfield expansion of the existing Chloro Alkali plant from 45 TPD to 75 TPD and for new Calcium Chloride plant with the capacity of 85 TPD. The required project finance has been provided by a leading Islamic bank based on long-term loan of 65% and the balance 35% is equity contribution from internal accruals.

The Chloro Alkali Plant expansion is in the final stages of completion and we expect commercial production of the project to commence during Q3 2021 for Chloro Alkali Plant and Q1 2022 for Calcium Chloride Plant.

The above expansion will lead to cost optimization, higher margins and enable the parent company to cater local demand and compete effectively with imports in the local market and enable to offer better price to export customers.

b. Subsidiaries

Union Chlorine LLC

Management is taking all measures to enhance sales to end users as well increase value added products. The company has won major order for supply of one product from a major oil and gas producer for a period of five years and under discussion to enter medium to long term contracts with several end users for supply of various products. The management is optimistic that this major contract along with foreseen increase in caustic flakes will increase the profitability.

Gulf Chlorine WLL

With the projected commissioning of the Calcium Chloride Plant by Q3 2021 by United Chemicals (a Joint Venture), Gulf Chlorine will be able to run the existing plant at higher capacity which will enable the company to post improved operating performance. Discussion going on with other customers in the region for new acid supply agreements. This step is taken to introduce our products to the market and will enable us to establish our footprint in global market.

Oman Industrial Development Co. SAOC (OIDC)

The improved operating performance of Union Chlorine LLC will result in improved operating performance of OIDC.

The above measures will enhance the future cash flows of the company and its subsidiaries and will improve the financial leverage of the group.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Management, we wish to express our loyalty and thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik May God protect Him and guide him for the benefit of Oman and its People.

The Board records its sincere appreciation to Government Authorities for their support and encouragement in particular the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, the Capital Market Authority as well as all the employees of the company and management for their sincere efforts, leading to the continued success of the company.

Sulaiman Bin Mohammed Bin Hamad Al Yahyai
Chairman of Board of Directors

Unaudited condensed interim Separate and consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the 6 months period ended 30 June 2021

	Parent		Consolidated	
	30/06/2021	30/06/2020	30/06/2021	30/06/2020
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
Revenue	4,499	3,495	8,383	7,963
Cost of sales	(2,583)	(1,938)	(6,162)	(5,436)
Gross profit	1,916	1,557	2,221	2,527
Selling and distribution expenses	(472)	(404)	(997)	(730)
General and administrative expenses	(527)	(442)	(946)	(834)
Operating profit	917	711	278	963
Finance charges	(32)	(35)	(1,363)	(1,574)
Other income	110	142	98	230
Share of loss of Joint Venture	-	-	(158)	(7)
Profit before taxation	995	818	(1,145)	(388)
Current tax	(156)	(139)	(156)	(139)
Deferred tax	14	16	14	16
Profit for the period	853	695	(1,287)	(511)
Other comprehensive income:				
<i>Items that are or may be reclassified to profit or loss:</i>				
Currency translation difference of foreign subsidiaries	-	-	-	-
Net changes in cash flow hedge reserve	-	-	(362)	34
Total comprehensive income	853	695	(1,649)	(477)
Results attributable to:				
Parent Company shareholders	-	-	(318)	48
Non-controlling interest	-	-	(969)	(559)
	853	695	(1,287)	(511)
Total comprehensive income attributable to:				
Parent Company shareholders	-	-	(534)	68
Non-controlling interest	-	-	(1,115)	(545)
	853	695	(1,649)	(477)
Earnings per share on profit attributable to the Parent Company shareholders – Basic and diluted				
	0.0125	0.0102	(0.0242)	(0.0070)

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request them, in either Arabic or English, within 7 days of receipt of a written request.

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Disaster-struck Turkey faces toll of climate change

ANKARA: From flash floods to forest fires, drought to “sea snot”, Turkey is bearing the brunt of increasingly frequent disasters blamed on climate change, putting pressure on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to act.

Wildfires that have killed eight people since late July across southern coastal regions, ravaging forests and turning villages to ash, followed the growth of a slimy mucus in the Sea of Marmara that destroyed marine life.

Deadly floods in the northeast followed an arid spell that dried up dams, endangering water supplies. Sinkholes caused by water mismanagement are encroaching on farmers’ homes.

Experts warn the vast, geographically diverse country risks fighting rolling disasters if it does not forcefully confront climate change, which is warming sea temperatures in regions such as the Mediterranean.

A landmark UN report this week warned that global warming is occurring far faster than forecast.

The issue is turning increasingly political, with polls showing it reg-

Experts put ratifying the 2015 Paris Agreement adopted by 196 countries on top of Turkey’s to-do list. Turkey is one of only six nations, including Iraq and Libya, yet to formally approve the accord

istering highly with up to seven million members of Generation Z who will be able to vote in the next election, slated for 2023.

Experts and environmentally-conscious politicians put ratifying the 2015 Paris Agreement adopted by 196 countries on top of Turkey’s to-do list.

Turkey is one of only six nations, including Iraq and Libya, yet to formally approve the accord.

Climate Action Tracker, a think tank that evaluates national emissions reduction plans, said Turkey’s effort towards the accord’s goals was “critically insufficient”.

Ankara argues the agreement unfairly classes Turkey as “devel-



This aerial photo shows a track delimited burnt trees to a forest in Mugla district as Turkey struggles against its deadliest wildfires in decades. — AFP

oped” rather than “developing”, which would give it access to funding.

But experts say Turkey is making the mistake of failing to see critical issues such as food security and intensifying drought as linked. Fossil fuels made up 83 per cent

of Turkey’s energy supply in 2019.

The International Energy Agency this year praised Ankara’s efforts to diversify its energy mix, with “impressive” renewable energy growth.

But environmentalists raise concern over Turkey’s reliance on

polluting coal, since Ankara has plans to expand domestic coal power capacity despite targeting a greenhouse gas emissions cut of up to 21 per cent by 2030.

Turkey last month registered its highest temperature since 1961 at 49.1 degrees Celsius (120.4

Fahrenheit) in the southeastern town of Cizre.

Experts say drought will remain a critical problem with far-reaching effects not only on food production but also Turkey’s relations with its neighbours, which are fighting for water rights.

Dam levels and farmers’ production have suffered from below-average precipitation since 2019.

Levent Kurnaz, director of Bogazici University’s centre for climate change and policy studies, said the issue was directly related to food and agriculture.

“If you cannot feed yourselves then you’re in big trouble,” Kurnaz said.

Erdogan heeded the calls and organised a water council meeting in March, but specialists say the government is not taking the issue seriously enough.

Public concern for the environment is growing, with a November 2020 study showing 70 per cent of Turks worried about the issue.

For Kurnaz, no single country is prepared for the climate crisis, with both central and local authorities “underestimating” the issue. —AFP

REOPEN FOR MERCY’S SAKE



A boy looks on as employees of Sanaa International Airport, which serves the Ansar Allah-held Yemeni capital, attend a vigil on the premises on August 10, 2021, demanding the airport’s re-opening for humanitarian flights on the fifth anniversary of its closure. — AFP

Dialogue sought to ease South Sudan tensions

NAIROBI: Regional African body IGAD called Monday on rival military factions of South Sudanese Vice President Riek Machar’s movement to open the path for dialogue after deadly fighting at the weekend.

At least 30 people were reported dead in the clashes

that broke out on Saturday, just days after Machar’s foes in his SPLA-IO said they had ousted him as party leader and head of its armed forces.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) called the emergency meeting of its foreign ministers,

saying the current political situation in the young nation required “the urgent attention of the council”.

IGAD executive secretary Workneh Gebeyehu said on Twitter he had called on the warring factions to settle their differences peacefully. — AFP

UN agency regains access to refugee camps in Tigray

GENEVA: The United Nations said on Tuesday it had regained access to two Eritrean refugee camps in Ethiopia’s war-torn Tigray but warned that people living there were facing dire conditions.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, said that since July 13, violent clashes in the northern region had prevented their staff from reaching the Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps.

Some 23,000 Eritrean refugees in total live in the two camps.

Aid deliveries resumed on August 5, UNHCR spokesman Boris Cheshirkov told reporters in Geneva.

“However, access is limited by a complex and fluid security situation and refugees continue to face dire conditions,” he said.

“Basic services such as healthcare remain unavailable, and clean drinking water is running out.”

The UNHCR is calling for safe passage to let refugees from the two camps be moved to the new site of Alemwach, which is being completed some 135 kilometres (83 miles) away near the town of Dabat.



Ethiopians fleeing from the Tigray region arrive by boat to Sudan after crossing a river between the two countries, near the Hamdayet refugee transit camp. — Reuters file photo

It is also appealing for \$164.5 million (140.34 million euros) to assist 96,000 Eritrean refugees and 650,000 internally displaced people in Tigray; and up to 120,000 Ethiopian refugees in eastern Sudan.

“UNHCR teams stand ready to help these populations for whom humanitarian aid is their only lifeline, with some still out of reach as active conflict prevails,” said Cheshirkov.

“UNHCR continues to call all parties to the conflict to protect civilians in line with their

obligations under international humanitarian law and requests safe and unhindered access to reach all those in need.”

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray last November to oust the region’s ruling party, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front -- a move he said was in response to TPLF attacks on federal army camps.

Although the 2019 Nobel Peace laureate declared victory later that month, TPLF leaders remained on the run, and fighting dragged on. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

DAMASCUS

Assad approves new cabinet

Syrian President Bashar al Assad issued a decree on Tuesday approving a new cabinet headed by Hussein Arnous, following a May election that secured Assad’s grip on power in the war-torn country.

The new 29-minister government, announced less than two weeks since Assad tasked Arnous with forming it, is little changed from its predecessor.

Those at the head of the key defence, foreign affairs, interior and finance ministries re-



mained unchanged.

But new names were appointed to lead the ministries of information, social affairs and domestic trade and consumer protection.

TEHRAN

Iran rejects minister’s lockdown plea

Despite sharply rising numbers of coronavirus infections, an emergency motion introduced by the country’s health minister to put Iran temporarily back into lockdown has been rejected.

According to media reports, the committee overseeing Iran’s pandemic response voted unanimously on Tuesday against the request made by Health Minister Said Namaki. The minister had proposed a fresh two-week lockdown due to the drastically rising number of new



infections and Covid-19-related deaths in recent days.

The reasons for the decision were not given, but observers have concluded that economic considerations played a role

KHARTOUM

New ICC prosecutor arrives in Sudan

The International Criminal Court’s chief prosecutor Karim Khan has arrived in Sudan for a week of talks including on outstanding arrest warrants for genocide in Darfur, state media reported on Tuesday. Khan will hold talks on “ways to boost cooperation” on investigations into the crimes committed during the devastating civil war in Darfur, the official SUNA news agency said.

The United Nations says 300,000 people were killed and 2.5 million displaced in the conflict,



which erupted in the vast western region in 2003. Last week, Sudan’s cabinet voted to ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC, a move seen as a step towards ousted president Omar al-Bashir potentially facing trial for genocide.

In brief

■ WASHINGTON



US GIVES MYANMAR \$50 MN IN AID

The United States said on Tuesday it was giving Myanmar more than \$50 million in aid as surging Covid-19 infections worsened a humanitarian crisis in the Southeast Asian country already reeling after generals overthrew a democratically elected government earlier this year.

It is also providing Thailand with \$5 million to cope with novel coronavirus, US State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement. US Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, announced the funding during a visit to Thailand, he added. In Myanmar, the US funding will aid “those forced to flee violence and persecution” as well as help groups provide health care services in addition to essentials such as food, shelter and water, the State Department said.

■ TOKYO



JAPAN APOLOGISES FOR LANKAN'S DEATH

Japan on Tuesday apologised for the death of a Sri Lankan woman in immigration detention and pledged to reform conditions in the system. Justice Minister Yoko Kamikawa said a report on the March death of 33-year-old Wishma Sandamali concluded she received inadequate treatment as her health deteriorated.

Sandamali was detained for overstaying her visa after seeking police protection, reportedly to escape an abusive relationship.

She reportedly complained repeatedly of stomach pain and other symptoms starting in January, and campaigners allege she was given inadequate medical care.

■ SYDNEY



SYDNEY TIGHTENS LOCKDOWN RULES

Australian authorities on Tuesday vowed to crank up policing of anti-Covid lockdown rules in Sydney, but dismissed suggestions that tougher measures, including a curfew, were needed after the city reported its biggest single-day new case number yet.

With more than five million residents of Australia's biggest city now in lockdown for more than six weeks, Sydney reported 343 new infections in an outbreak stoked by the spread of the highly transmissible Delta strain of Covid-19, up 66 from the day before and topping the last one-day peak set on Saturday.

UN fears end of human rights in Afghanistan

KABUL: Taliban fighters tightened their grip on captured territory in Afghanistan on Tuesday as civilians hid in their homes and a pro-government commander vowed to fight to the death to defend Mazar-i-Sharif, the biggest city in the north.

President Ashraf Ghani called on regional strongmen to support his government after a stunning string of Taliban gains as US-led foreign forces pull out, while a UN official said advances made in human rights over the past 20 years were in danger of being erased.

In the capital, Kabul, Ghani's aides said he was seeking help from regional militias he has squabbled with over the years to rally to the defence of his government. He also appealed to civilians to defend the country's “democratic fabric”, aides said.

In the town of Aibak, capital of Samangan province on the main road between Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul, Taliban fighters were consolidating their control, moving into government buildings, residents said.

Most government security forces appeared to have withdrawn.

“The only way is self-imposed



Internally displaced Afghan families, who fled from Kunduz and Takhar province due to battles between Taliban and Afghan security sit at the Shahr-e-Naw Park in Kabul on Tuesday. – AFP

house arrest or to find a way to leave for Kabul,” said Sher Mohamed Abbas, a provincial tax officer, when asked about living conditions in Aibak.

“But then even Kabul is not a safe option anymore,” said Abbas, sole breadwinner for a family of nine. Abbas said the Taliban had arrived at his office and told work-

ers to go home. He and other residents said they had not seen nor heard fighting on Tuesday.

For years, the north was the most peaceful part of the country

with only minimal Taliban presence. The militants' strategy appears to be to take the north, as well as main border crossings in the north, west and south, and then close in on Kabul.

The Taliban, battling to defeat the US-backed government and reimpose strict Islamic law, swept into Aibak on Monday meeting little resistance.

The government has withdrawn forces from hard-to-defend rural districts to focus on holding major population centres while officials have appealed for pressure on neighbouring Pakistan to stop Taliban reinforcements and supplies flowing over the porous border. Pakistan denies backing the Taliban.

The United States has been launching airstrikes in support of government troops but said it was up to Afghan forces to defend their country.

“It's their struggle,” John Kirby, a Pentagon spokesperson, told reporters on Monday.

Taliban and government officials have confirmed that the Islamists have overrun six provincial capitals in recent days in the north, west and south. — Reuters

Rohingya refugees get Covid vaccines

DHAKA: Bangladesh began vaccinating thousands of Rohingya Muslims on Tuesday in the world's largest refugee settlement amid a surge in Covid-19 infections in the country, officials said.

Aid workers have long warned of a potential humanitarian disaster if there is a significant outbreak in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, the border district where over a million Rohingya who fled a brutal military crackdowns in neighbouring Myanmar have found sanctuary.

Around 48,000 Rohingya, aged 55 and above, will be inoculated between Tuesday and Thursday with the help of the UN agencies, Mahbubur Rahman, the chief health official in Cox's Bazar district, said.

“This is just the beginning. All adult Rohingya people will be vac-



Rohingya refugees wait to receive a dose of the Covid-19 coronavirus vaccine in Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhaia on Tuesday. – AFP

inated in phases,” Rahman told Reuters by telephone from one of vaccine centres in the camps.

There has been a recent uptick in infections in the camps, with around 20,000 cases and 200 deaths recorded among refugees since the pandemic erupted last

year.

In contrast, officials in Myanmar's Rakhine state have told media that there are currently no plans to vaccinate the Rohingya living there.

Bangladesh has been battling an alarming surge in infections

and deaths <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/bangladesh-says-astrazeneca-shot-supplies-may-resume-soon-including-india-2021-07-06> in recent weeks, recording more than 1.36 million people infected and 22,897 deaths.

“We feel really good. We only hope everyone will get the vaccine,” Sakhina Khatun, 55, said after she and her 65-year-old husband got vaccinated.

“We are only safe when we are all safe,” Khatun told Reuters.

“People in these camps are living in the shadow of the global vaccine divide. Widespread vaccinations are critical to contain this deadly virus,” Hrusikesh Harichandan, Head of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Cox's Bazar, said. — Reuters

Covid cases in China hit 7-month high

BEIJING: China's coronavirus cases hit a seven-month high on Tuesday, after a cluster at a test site helped drive up numbers as the Delta variant challenges Beijing's grip on the pandemic.

State media has described the current outbreak — which has sparked local lockdowns, mass testing and travel restrictions — as the most severe since the virus emerged in the central city of Wuhan.

Authorities had brought domestic infections down to virtually zero, allowing economic activity to rebound albeit with tight border restrictions.

But now, cases are rising. — AFP

Elephants in India enjoy fruit feast ahead of own world day

MATHURA: After an evening walk under overcast skies with rains not far away, elephants rescued from circuses and temples in India are treated to a feast of their favourite fruits and vegetables to celebrate World Elephant Day.

A lavish spread of watermelons, bananas, papayas and pumpkins is laid out for the Asian elephants at a sanctuary near the banks of the Yamuna River, on the outskirts of the ancient holy city of Mathura.

The centre observes a week of events surrounding World Elephant Day, which falls on August 12.

Most of the 28 elephants at the centre suffer from chronic illness and various ailments ranging from abscesses, cataracts, blindness and joint pain, the result of years of abuse in captivity, said conservationists with Wildlife SOS, which operates the sanctuary.

“World Elephant Day is there to promote awareness about

the plight of elephants in India and around the world, and what they actually go through and why their population is declining,” said Shirina Sawhney from Wildlife SOS, which also runs India's only elephant hospital.

Elephants are an important part of Indian culture and are often seen during festivals and processions in the country's south.

They are also used in the north and west as tourist attractions at several forts and palaces.

But while revered as cultural and religious icons, elephants are also ill-treated by unschooled mahouts and often fall victim to electrocution, poaching, train accidents and poisoning.

The number of wild Asiatic elephants, primarily found in India and parts of South and Southeast Asia, has fallen to under 50,000, just 15 per cent of its historic average, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature. — AFP

China's wandering jumbos head to safety after long trek



A herd of wild Asian elephants crosses the Yuanjiang River in Yuanjiang county of Yuxi. — Reuters

SHANGHAI: Fourteen wild elephants are heading south towards their protected habitat in southwest China's Yunnan province following a 1,300-km (807-mile) trek that captured the public's imagination, provincial officials said late on Monday.

Wildlife protection officials told a press briefing the elephants safely crossed a bridge over the Yuan River, returning south towards a nature reserve administered by the city of Puer.

An emergency committee set

up to handle the wild elephants, used electric fences and bait and laid artificial roads to ensure the elephants took the correct route.

Yang Yingyong, a member of the committee, told reporters the migration route was “scientifically planned”.

The committee will “strive to allow the elephants to return to their habitat as soon as possible and thrive,” he said.

Yunnan deployed more than 25,000 police and staff and 1,500 emergency vehicles to track and

feed the elephants and guarantee public safety, said Wan Yong, head of the provincial forestry commission.

More than 150,000 people were evacuated along the migration route and more than 5 million yuan (\$771,000) in insurance funds disbursed to cover property damage, he said. A herd then consisting of 16 elephants left their home in Xishuangbanna 300 km further south in March last year and eventually settled in a protected habitat in Puer.— Reuters



Demonstrators against a military vehicles parade in front of the Planalto Palace in Brasilia, hold flowers next to an armoured carrier, on Tuesday. — AFP

Brazil military parade rattles politicians

BRASILIA: Brazil's armed forces put on an unusual display of military hardware for far-right President Jair Bolsonaro on Tuesday, ahead of a likely setback in Congress for his plans to alter the country's voting system.

Politicians of all stripes called the parade of navy tanks, armoured personnel carriers and amphibious vehicles a form of intimidation hours before lawmakers are expected to vote against a constitutional amendment backed by Bolsonaro.

The navy said the parade was planned long before the vote in the lower house of Congress was scheduled and it was meant to invite the president to an annual mili-

tary exercise on Sunday.

The presidential media office did not respond to a request for comment on the parade.

With his popularity flagging amid the world's second-deadliest Covid-19 outbreak, Bolsonaro has insisted in recent weeks on adopting paper ballots for the 2022 election, based on unproven claims of fraud in Brazil's electronic voting system.

He has threatened not to accept the results of next year's presidential election, which polls show him losing to former leftist president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Neither of them have officially announced their candidacies. — Reuters

Booster jabs may not be needed

LONDON: An autumn Covid-19 vaccine booster programme may not be needed, one of the UK's leading vaccination experts has suggested.

So far the data suggests that the vaccines are holding out against the virus which causes Covid-19 and protecting the double-jabbed from severe disease and death, Professor Sir Andrew Pollard said.

He said that any waning of protection provided by the vaccines would be "gradual" and would be picked up on quickly through UK surveillance systems.

Sir Andrew said that "there isn't any reason at this moment to panic."

And vaccine stockpiles would be better used in countries where vulnerable people are yet to be vaccinated ahead of booster programmes or vaccinating children, he suggested.

Health officials have set out a timeline for a potential booster campaign, should one be needed.

Under the plans, all over 50s and the clinically vulnerable could be offered a third Covid-19 vaccine as well as a flu shot between September and the middle of December.

The proposals are not set in stone and have been announced so that the NHS can prepare for the programme while more information is gathered on whether or not a booster campaign is necessary.

Asked about a potential autumn booster campaign, Sir Andrew told the group of parliamen-



A resident receives a dose of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine in Australia's first drive through vaccination centre in Melbourne on Tuesday. — AFP

tarians: "The decision to boost or not should be scientifically driven.

"The time which we would need to boost is if we saw evidence that there was an increase in hospitalisation or people dying amongst those who are vaccinated.

"That is not something that we're seeing at the moment.

"But we have to also have an understanding scientifically about how the vaccines work and they are providing very high levels of protection against that severe end of the spectrum, but also, even as the levels of immunity start to drop that we can measure in the blood, our immune system still remembers that we were vaccinated and we'll be remembering decades from now that we have

I have two doses, I'll be protected against serious disease and death. I don't need another booster, the data shows that I'm adequately protected against serious disease and hospitalisation. So, let's get the doses on the plane, let's move them quickly

SIR ANDREW POLLARD
Professor

those two doses of vaccine.

"So there isn't any reason at this moment to panic."

He added: "We're not seeing a problem with breakthrough severe disease.

"We have this sort of understanding of the biology that puts us in a good place to know that even if we started to see some waning of protection that would not be a complete switch-off of protection, we're not going to get to the end of September and suddenly find that the pandemic starts again.

"If there was any fall-off in protection it is something which will happen gradually, and it will happen at a point where we can pick it up and be able to respond. — dpa

Water recycling battles scarcity

PARIS: Would you take a swig of water from your faucet if it originally came from the sewer?

Treating wastewater to put it back into public use can help against water crises around the world, according to the United Nations, though the practice has to overcome the "yuck" factor among the public.

Wastewater that has been through a treatment plant is typically discharged into rivers.

But there is a push to tap recycled water — also known as water "reuse" — in order to ease pressure on sources of freshwater threatened by growing populations, pollution and climate change.

"Water reuse for sure will just increase and increase worldwide, because there's no other option", Richard Connor, editor-in-chief of the United Nations World Water Development Report published by Unesco, told AFP.

Namibia's capital, Windhoek,



A technician checks the quality of the water with a probe at the wastewater treatment plant in Saint-Jean-de-Cornies, southern France. — AFP

has been a pioneer, transforming wastewater into potable water since the 1960s, while Singapore has also developed a much-vaunted recycling system.

A potable water project is in the works in western France.

Turning recycled water — also known as reclaimed water — into

something you can drink is not the main purpose of the technology.

In Mediterranean countries as well as Texas and Mexico, reclaimed water is used for irrigation in agriculture, which consumes two-thirds of freshwater abstractions around the world.

Reclaimed water can also be

used for industries, to clean streets or cool power stations.

There are two ways to turn wastewater into potable water.

It can be treated and then blended with freshwater in a surface reservoir or groundwater aquifer before undergoing additional treatment and being distributed.

But the other, rarer method does not use such environmental buffers, as wastewater is purified and then sent directly to a drinking water distribution system.

"Water 'reuse' is definitely part of the solution. It's a way to increase our supply", Connor said.

"If you can reuse the water several times, then you don't have to extract it from the source", Connor said.

Recycling wastewater is less expensive and uses up less energy than desalinating sea water, which is considered another solution against water scarcity.

— AFP

Six EU countries warn against open door for Afghan asylum seekers

BRUSSELS: Six EU member states have sent a letter to the bloc's executive warning against halting deportations of rejected Afghan asylum seekers despite major advances of Taliban militants in their country.

The Taliban, fighting to reimpose strict Islamic law after their 2001 ouster, have made sweeping gains in their campaign to defeat the government as US-led foreign forces pull out.

"Stopping returns sends the wrong signal and is likely to motivate even more Afghan citizens to leave their home for the EU", Austria, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece and Germany said in the letter dated August 5 and seen by Reuters.

— Reuters

PROUD OF PRIDE



Arya, the Asiatic lioness is seen during a photo-opportunity to mark World Lion Day at ZSL London Zoo in London, Britain, on Tuesday. — Reuters

SOFIA

New Bulgaria elections loom

Bulgaria's largest political grouping gave up efforts to lead a minority government on Tuesday following a razor-thin victory in last month's parliamentary election, increasing the prospect of new polls later this year.

The anti-establishment There Is Such a People (ITN) party narrowly won the second 2021 election on July 11, bolstered by public anger against widespread corruption after over a decade of dominance by former centre-right premier Boyko Borissov.



But with just 65 seats it needed the support of other smaller parties in the fractured chamber of 240 lawmakers, having declined cooperation with Borissov's GERB or the ethnic Turkish MRF party.

MIAMI

Judge to probe Haiti president's murder

An investigative judge, who raised eyebrows last year when he was accused of refusing to investigate a corruption complaint against Haiti's first lady and several government officials after a controversial no-bid purchase of new identification system has been tapped to oversee the investigation into the murder of President Jovenel Moïse.

Mathieu Chanlatte was put in charge of the high-profile, multinational murder investigation on Monday, Magistrate Bernard



Saint-Vil, the dean of the Court of First Instance in Port-au-Prince, confirmed to the Miami Herald. Saint-Vil made the decision after the case was transferred from the Haiti National Police last week to the judiciary.

VIENNA

Austria plans to start Covid booster shots

Austria plans to start Covid-19 vaccine booster shots on October 17, nine months after the first group of people to get the jabs received their second dose, the country's health minister said on Tuesday.

The first wave included vulnerable people in nursing homes and medical personnel, Minister Wolfgang Mueckstein told broadcaster ORF in an interview.

"There are certain groups, for example immunosuppressed people, where it may be possi-



ble to vaccinate even earlier after consultation with the doctor", Mueckstein said.

Austria has logged 659,000 confirmed cases and more than 10,500 deaths so far.

Disaster-prone poor await bleak future

BEH LIH YI AND MICHAEL TAYLOR

At-risk communities in disaster-prone Asia are warning that they have “no hope” of coping with more climate catastrophes and some even fear “extinction” if the world does not act quicker, after the UN said global warming was close to being out of control.

Climate experts are also concerned the effects could worsen inequalities in a region where many people rely on natural resources for their livelihoods, pushing more into poverty. The UN climate science panel on Monday warned in a major report that the average global temperature will likely cross the 1.5-degree Celsius warming threshold within the next 20 years - bringing stronger droughts, heatwaves, floods and storms.

Such devastating impacts are already being felt in Asia-Pacific, the world’s most disaster-prone region which saw a record

number of climate-related emergencies in 2020, according to a Red Cross study, affecting tens of millions of people.

“Our governments are too slow in responding,” said Lidy Napcil, coordinator of the Asian Peoples’ Movement on Debt and Development, an alliance representing more than 50 groups in Asia campaigning on climate change and other issues.

Napcil said the impacts outlined in the new UN report are already a “regular feature of life” in her country, the Philippines, where over the last decade people have faced more powerful typhoons and increasingly frequent floods. “If (governments’ actions are) as slow as today, then we have no hope, no chance to be fully prepared for this,” she said by phone from Manila. “There will be unavoidable damages. Where can you relocate if you are in coastal communities and ravaged by storm surge like on many islands in the Philippines? There’s nowhere to go.”

Former Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed said the Indian Ocean archipelago on the frontline of rising seas is already grappling with severe impacts and called for action before it is too late. One of the world’s lowest-lying countries, more than 80 per cent of the Maldives’ land is less than 1 metre above mean sea level, making its population of about 530,000 people extremely vulnerable to storm surges, sea swells and wild weather.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

“**If (governments’ actions are) as slow as today, then we have no hope, no chance to be fully prepared for this. There will be unavoidable damages. Where can you relocate if you are coastal communities and ravaged by storm surge**”

LIDY NACPIL
Coordinator



BRACING FOR THE DAY

Street vendors sell Pakistan national flags and other items along a road in Lahore on Tuesday, ahead of the country’s 75th Independence Day, which marks the end of British colonial rule.

– AFP

Not even a deadly virus can spoil the spirit of festival



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

THE COVID-19 HAS CHANGED THE VERY NATURE OF ALL FESTIVITIES ACROSS THE WORLD. PEOPLE ARE CELEBRATING FESTIVALS IN THEIR HOMES, SOME CEREMONIES BEING LIVE-STREAMED

It is after a gap of almost a decade that I am getting an opportunity to join my family to celebrate our state festival back in my hometown in the Southern Indian state of Kerala.

But, alas! I will be joining them, although in virtual celebrations, with the handicap of the strain and pain left behind by the dreaded coronavirus pandemic!

The glitter, excitement and enthusiasm seem to have been subdued and mired in monochrome tones as the celebrations are submerged in social distancing due to the coronavirus spread.

The Covid-19 has changed the very nature of all festivities across the world. People are celebrating festivals in their homes, some ceremonies being live-streamed on social media platforms to maintain the very spirit of festivals.

Yet people with a penchant for wordplay have yanked an adage connected with Onam – a festival to resonate that people must celebrate it even if they have to sell their property...

Onam, like all other festivities, has taken a virtual turn. Schools, colleges, clubs, residents’ associations, companies and artists have taken to the virtual world to celebrate it in all its grandeur.

Joining the celebrations are social media groups where people who have never met in person come together for a mega Onam celebration through virtual performances and contests.

People will be participating in digital Onam celebrations, with many of them designing digital floral carpets, performing traditional art forms from their homes, preparing the feast live and organising games.

Other than celebrations, the delicious Onam dishes too are being shared as part of the festivities.

With the lockdown removed and shops were given permission to open strictly in accordance with the Covid-19 protocol, people started queuing up to buy food items and flowers.

While big celebrations will be missing due to the measures taken by the administration, tomorrow marks the beginning of the 10-day long festivities under the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic, people are still enthusiastic even though the celebrations will be subdued for the second consecutive year.

Onam is primarily a harvest festival celebrated in the month of Chingam that marks the beginning of the Malayalam calendar, Kollavarsham. On the Gregorian Calendar, it falls in the month

of August-September.

According to the legend, this is when the powerful and benevolent King Mahabali came back from hell to the earth every year to meet his people since being sent to Patal (hell) by Vaman, a dwarf Brahmin avatar of Lord Vishnu. His revisit marks the 10-day long celebration of Onam since the Sangam period in India.

Festivals like Onam revive and reinforce togetherness with kith and kin and instil a sense of camaraderie, strengthens personal bonds and helps us build a support system for life. It creates joy amidst the rush of daily life.

But the novel coronavirus has deprived us of these simple joys as well. From children to the elderly, everyone has had their routines thrown out of gear.

Of course, the washout of cheer and festivities is indeed causing worries and frustration. Yet as reasonable humans, we should not let it take over our senses. We are passing through unprecedented times of distress and pain, a situation which even our forefathers had not seen.

Our objective now is to defeat the invisible virus that has claimed millions of lives and left many ill. We have to do what it takes to keep us safe, even if it is unpleasant!

Welcome to the Delta game (Covid-19)...



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

THE INCREASING NUMBER OF CASES HAS SHARPLY SHAPED THE EXTENT OF INFECTIONS OF THE DELTA VARIANT

Do you remember with me how the number of new daily cases of Coronavirus (Covid-19) was declining when it was at its lowest level in the pandemic...? It may have been many weeks ago! Since then, people’s feelings of progress and improvement and even a sense of near-normality have dissipated. However, the increasing number of cases has sharply shaped the extent of infections of the Delta variant. It’s like a new psychological blow and even worse - a blow to the realisation that the pandemic is, basically, bad again!

While the Supreme Committee is making every effort to address the pandemic, not to mention the huge potential of the national campaign for immunisation,

some vaccinated people still find themselves worried. Of course, the pandemic may be brought under control, with the vaccination that provided high levels of protection against the disease accompanied by symptoms of the virus, especially since the target group who have been vaccinated, has now reached higher rates, are much safer than those who have not been vaccinated, even with the spread of a mutant Delta.

On the other hand, even emotionally, the immediate future seems uncertain once again. Just a few months ago, we felt that the rest of this year was easy to imagine. Now it seems that a light has descended, similar to the thicker haze which has obscured the future for the first year of the

pandemic.

Even some experts around the world were surprised by the deviation caused by the pandemic. Prior to the emergence of the Delta variant, a major resurgence of the virus was not expected. Unfortunately, it is - if I may say so - not nearly finished when it comes to the end of the pandemic! By following the pandemic from its inception until now, we may have two possibilities in the coming months - the first is something like last year, with a summer wave which recedes and wanes later by the winter - September to December - (although smaller than in 2020 because of vaccinations). The second, perhaps, is that the wave now forming was originally a

wave of winter or the coming months and was here earlier than might have been expected, but it is also possible - I may say - that it has gone earlier than had been supposed. Interestingly, with the exception of the emergence of another variant of the virus, perhaps the summer of 2022 will be like the summer months which we had hoped for this summer!

However, looking positively, let us also realise that an increase in the rate of vaccination can change the course of the pandemic for the better. It will certainly reduce infections, as well as the possibility of the emergence of another mutant or variant of the virus. It can even help remove the psychological fog that we have unfortunately

known, by alleviating the existing anxiety, lack of horizon and other problems that increase the pressures of living in light of the pandemic.

In the end, increasing the vaccination rate in societies has become essential, especially since societies with unvaccinated people are still at risk. As such the virus will cause an outbreak every time it finds an opportunity or a pocket of infection in the community. And then it will be said that the infection has occurred and the cases have increased, where I could say here: it is not a question of whether it will happen or not. It’s just that we can’t predict where and when!

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

SPORT



- Barca could not afford to keep Messi under La Liga rules
- Messi set to join PSG, media say deal will be for two years
- PSG fans gather at airport to greet Messi

Messi gets hero’s welcome in Paris

LE BOURGET, France: Six-time Ballon d’Or winner Lionel Messi received a hero’s welcome after flying to France on Tuesday to join Paris Saint Germain (PSG) following his shock departure from Barcelona.

The agreement to sign the 34-year-old Argentine is a major coup for wealthy PSG, who will add one of the best soccer players of all time to an already formidable front line that includes Brazil’s Neymar and young Frenchman Kylian Mbappe.

Wearing a T-shirt that read “This is Paris,” Messi beamed and waved at scores of fans who had come to greet him at Le Bourget airport on the outskirts of the French capital after his flight from Barcelona.

Chanting “Messi, Messi, Messi”, the fans cheered and let off firecrackers.

“It’s going to be mad. After all, it’s a legend who is arriving”, said Florent Chauveau, a PSG fan who has been back and forth to the airport every day since Sunday in the hope of seeing Messi arrive.

Messi gave no details of the deal, which was reached days after Barcelona said it could not afford to keep the midfielder because of Spain’s La Liga’s fair play rules.

But his father, speaking to reporters at Barcelona’s airport, confirmed reports by French newspaper *L’Equipe* and Spanish newspaper *Mundo Deportivo* that Messi had reached an agreement with PSG, which is owned by Qatar

Sports Investment.

L’Equipe said the deal would be for two years. It also said Messi would have medical tests on Tuesday, and that a news conference to mark his arrival was likely on Wednesday.

PSG did not comment on the reports but released a short video showing scenes of Paris, a plane landing and a close-up of someone putting pen to paper. In the background, upbeat music can heard and the words “new diamond in Paris” and “mercato update” appear.

The video, seen on Twitter, does not show Messi but depicts an image of six Ballons d’Or — an annual award given to the player deemed the best in the world — by the Eiffel Tower.

Many Barcelona fans were distraught at the end of Messi’s glittering, trophy-laden career at the club he joined as a schoolboy.

But the arrival of Barcelona’s all-time record scorer with 682 goals will boost PSG’s ambitions to win the Champions League for the first time. Messi won four Champions League titles while at Barcelona, as well as 10 La Liga titles.

PSG AMBITIONS

Messi is the latest big-name arrival at PSG on a free transfer this summer after coach Mauricio Pochettino’s side snapped up Spanish defender Sergio Ramos after he left Real Madrid.

— Reuters

In brief

■ WELLINGTON



KIWI GREAT
CAIRNS ON
LIFE SUPPORT

Former New Zealand cricket star Chris Cairns was on life support in Australia following a serious cardiac problem, the Newshub website reported on Tuesday.

Cairns, one of New Zealand's all-time greats, suffered an aortic dissection — a tear in the body's main artery — last week in Canberra and is understood to have had several surgeries since, Newshub said.

However, the former Black Caps skipper "has not responded to treatment as hoped", Newshub said, adding that the 51-year-old "will be transferred to a specialist hospital in Sydney".

■ WELLINGTON



NZ MOURNS
DEATH OF OLYMPIC
CYCLIST AT 24

New Zealand's cycling federation said on Tuesday it would review its mental health support for athletes following the sudden death of Olympian Olivia Podmore at the age of 24.

Podmore cycled at the 2016 Rio Olympics and the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast but was not part of New Zealand's team at the recent Tokyo Games.

A New Zealand police spokesman said police attended a sudden death at a property in Waikato on New Zealand's upper North Island at about 4 pm (0400 GMT) on Monday.

Podmore's cause of death was not confirmed but a friend raised concerns about her mental health and sports officials said the cyclist had reached out to support services offered to athletes.

■ WASHINGTON



DJOKOVIC
WITHDRAWS FROM
CINCINNATI

Novak Djokovic, seeking to complete a calendar-year Grand Slam at the US Open, withdrew from the ATP Cincinnati Masters on Monday, saying he needed more recovery time after the Tokyo Olympics.

The top-ranked Serbian star, level for the all-time men's record of 20 Grand Slam titles, could become the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to win all four major titles in one year.

Djokovic, 34, lost at Tokyo to Alexander Zverev in a semi-final and Pablo Carreno Busta in the bronze medal match in what will be his last matches before the US Open after pulling out of the last major tune-up event.

Greece star Sakkaris advances at Montreal

MONTREAL: Maria Sakkaris, the 11th seed, advanced to the second round of the WTA Montreal Masters for the first time with a 6-4, 3-1 defeat of Marie Bouzkova on Monday.

The incomplete match made Sakkaris the first of the seeds to advance, with the top eight all receiving first-round byes.

Sakkaris is the first Greek woman to get this far here. Her ailing opponent needed a medical timeout before quitting the match after 91 minutes on court.

"It was unfortunate she had to retire. Being a break down in the first set, then finding a way to win was the key today", Sakkaris said.

"I'm very glad I gave myself a chance to play a better match in the second round."

The winner said that having fans on hand made a big difference: "It was a little bit shocking when I walked on the court and there was a crowd."

"I haven't seen that since Roland Garros. That was a very nice thing."

Latvian Jelena Ostapenko, the 2017 French Open champion, lost her opening match, falling to Katerina Siniakova, the Olympic doubles gold medalist alongside Barbora Krejickova.

The Czech posted a 6-1, 6-3 victory to reach the second round in an hour and a quarter, with Ostapenko double-faulting six times and losing her serve on seven occasions.

American teen Amanda Anisimova won a matchup of qualifiers, the world number 86 defeating Tereza Martincova 6-1, 4-3 when the Czech retired.

Anisimova has now won both of the pair's matches, the first played in 2019 at Mallorca. The tournament debutant was playing only her second match since a first-round defeat at Wimbledon.

"I'm feeling really good and it's good to have a couple matches in qualifiers", the 19-year-old said. "I was playing well today. My opponent wasn't feeling too good. I feel sorry for her."

"I'll build on the last three



Maria Sakkaris of Greece reacts after making a point against Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic in Montreal. — USA Today Sports

WTA MONTREAL RESULTS	
FIRST ROUND	Fiona Ferro (FRA) bt Ajla Tomljanovic (AUS) 2-6, 6-2, 0-0, retired; Nadia Podoroska (ARG) bt Magda Linette (POL) 6-1, 6-2; Anastasia Potapova (RUS) bt Shelby Rogers (USA) 7-6 (8/6), 6-3; Ons Jabeur (TUN x13) bt Clara Burel (FRA) 6-1, 6-3; Harriet Dart (GBR) bt Leylah Fernandez (CAN) 7-5, 7-6 (7/4); Rebecca Marino (CAN) bt Madison Keys (USA x16) 6-3, 6-3

matches and I'm looking forward to my next round."

Anisimova, who has struggled with injuries in recent seasons, said she is now fully fit.

"I feel better and I feel stronger. Hopefully I can just build on that this year. I'm looking forward to this season and the US Open."

Ons Jabeur of Tunisia needed

less than an hour to put out number 101 Frenchwoman Clara Burel 6-1, 6-3.

Spain's 31st-ranked Paula Badosa defeated Swiss Viktorija Golubic, a Wimbledon quarterfinalist, 6-2, 6-3 while France's Fiona Ferro beat Ajla Tomljanovic 2-6, 6-2 when the Australian retired. — AFP

Opelka rallies past Kyrgios in Toronto

TORONTO, Canada: A ruling from the chair rattled Nick Kyrgios on Monday, sparking the Australian's 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 first-round loss to Reilly Opelka at the ATP Toronto Masters.

Kyrgios came undone after he protested that his American opponent illegally touched the net with his foot late in the second set. When the umpire failed to act on his complaint the number 80 lost concentration.

Despite standing two points from victory in the eighth game of the set, Kyrgios slowly came undone as the towering 2.11-metre Opelka turned the tide in a comeback effort in two hours.

Kyrgios is currently saddled with his lowest standing since he stood 144th at the start of Wimbledon seven years ago.

The Australian, who has played a limited schedule during the Covid-19 pandemic, was unable to focus on his game, constantly chattering angrily to his coaching box of two.

Opelka finished with 22 aces while Kyrgios struck 16; the Aussie saved eight of nine break chances while earning just two on his opponent's serve. Opelka now faces 14th seed Grigor Dimitrov.

Fabio Fognini needed all of his skills to survive into the second round as the Italian showman beat Jan-Lennard Struff 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 6-4.

An exhausted Fognini tossed a racquet over his shoulder into the nearby crowd after his effort, lasting almost two and a half hours, against the 46th-ranked German.

Along the way, the unseeded Italian was seen by both the doctor and a physio in the second set before



Reilly Opelka of the United States acknowledges fans during a match against Nick Kyrgios of Australia. — USA Today Sports

drawing a warning for time wasting as he went off court after levelling at a set apiece.

Fognini trailed 3-1 in the final set, but fought back with a break for 4-4 after Struff saved five break points but could not manage on a sixth. A double-fault from the German two games later gave Fognini a match point, which he converted without hesitation.

Fognini finished with 26 winners while between them the pair committed nearly 90 unforced errors. Out of a cumulative total of 25 break points, only nine were converted.

The win earned Fognini a contest with fourth seed Andrey Rublev, who has won the pair's matches at the ATP Cup and Wimbledon this season. — AFP

ATP TORONTO RESULTS	
FIRST ROUND	James Duckworth (AUS) bt Taylor Fritz (USA) 7-6 (7/2), 6-3; Fabio Fognini (ITA) bt Jan-Lennard Struff (GER) 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 6-4; Marin Cilic (CRO) bt Albert Ramos (ESP) 6-2, 4-6, 6-3; Ugo Humbert (FRA) bt Lorenzo Sonego (ITA) 6-3, 6-4; Alexander Bublik (KAZ) bt Daniel Evans (GBR) 6-4, 6-4; John Millman (AUS) bt Ricardo Berankis (LTU) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4); Lloyd Harris (RSA) bt Brayden Schnur (CAN) 6-3, 6-2; Alexander Bublik (KAZ) bt Daniel Evans (GBR) 6-4, 6-4; Reilly Opelka (USA) bt Nick Kyrgios (AUS) 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4; Tommy Paul (USA) bt Vasek Pospisil (CAN) 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-3

Shakib stars as Bangladesh thump Australia

DHAKA: Shakib Al Hasan took four wickets as Bangladesh skittled out Australia for their lowest ever Twenty20 total of 62 to seal the series 4-1 on Monday.

Chasing 123 for victory, the visitors crashed out in 13.4 overs with Shakib returning figures of 4-9 with his left-arm spin in the 60-run rout in Dhaka.

Australia's previous lowest was 79 all out against England in 2005.

Bangladesh, who had secured their first series win over Australia after winning the opening three matches, bounced back from their previous loss to flatten the opposition batting.

"The boys showed a lot of character and hunger to win a series against a team like Australia", home skipper Mahmudullah Riyad said after the triumph.

"We executed our plans really well. Obviously it was hard for the batters, but we did well to keep getting 120-130. All the bowlers



Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan celebrates with his team-mates after taking the wicket of Australia's captain Matthew Wade. — Reuters

worked really well together."

He said, "We always felt that in our backyard we are a very good team. We can't let anything go past."

"Though the ranking doesn't show it, I have always felt we have very good potential to be a very

good team in T20 internationals."

Pace bowler Mohammad Saifuddin combined with Shakib to rattle Australia with twin strikes in one over and send back Alex Carey and Moises Henriques, both for three.

Shakib, who got Ashton Turner

SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH	
M Hasan c Agar b Turner.....	13
M Naim c Agar b Christian.....	23
Shakib lbw Zampa.....	11
S Sarkar c Turner b Christian.....	16
Mahmudullah c and b Agar.....	19
N Hasan b Ellis.....	8
A Hossain c Marsh b Ellis.....	10
M Hossain (not out).....	4
M Saifuddin (run out).....	0
M Rahman (not out).....	0
Extras: (B-6, LB-1, W-11).....	18
Total: (For 8 wks, 20 overs).....	122
Fall of wickets: 1-42, 2-57, 3-60, 4-84, 5-96, 6-110, 7-114, 8-118	
Bowling: Turner 2-0-16-1, Agar 4-0-28-1, Zampa 4-0-24-1, Ellis 4-0-16-2, Christian 4-0-17-2, Sweeney 2-0-14-0	
AUSTRALIA	
D Christian b N Ahmed.....	3
M Wade b Shakib.....	22
M Marsh lbw Nasum.....	4
B McDermott c and b Mahmudullah.....	17
A Carey b Saifuddin.....	3
M Henriques c N Hasan b Saifuddin.....	3
A Turner c Mahmudullah b Shakib.....	1
A Agar b M Saifuddin.....	2
N Ellis b Shakib.....	1
M Sweeney (not out).....	1
A Zampa c Mahmudullah b Shakib.....	4
Extras: (LB-1).....	1
Total: (all out, 13.4 overs).....	62
Fall of wickets: 1-3, 2-17, 3-83, 4-48, 5-53, 6-54, 7-54, 8-56, 9-58	
Bowling: Mahedi 3-0-20-0, Nasum 2-0-8-2, Mustafizur 1-0-3-0, Saifuddin 3-0-12-3, Shakib 3-4-1-9-4, Mahmudullah 1-0-9-1	

out for his 100th T20 scalp, wiped off the tail with the wickets of Nathan Ellis and Adam Zampa as Bangladesh celebrated.

The 34-year-old Shakib, a veteran of 58 Tests, 258 one-day matches and 84 T20s, said he is "still enjoying the game".

Spinner Nasum Ahmed had done the early damage when he bowled Dan Christian for three and then trapped the in-form Mitchell Marsh for four in successive overs.

Skipper Matthew Wade (22) and Ben McDermott fought back with a 21-run stand for the third wicket but Mahmudullah broke the partnership. He got McDermott caught and bowled for 17.

"I've played for a few years now, certainly the toughest conditions to play T20 cricket in", said a disappointed Wade. "Great learning for youngsters."

Earlier Mohammad Naim made 23 in Bangladesh's 122 for eight after electing to bat. — AFP

OMAN TO HOST MUMBAI TO PREPARE FOR T20 WORLD CUP

SULTANATE ALSO GETTING READY FOR WCL 2 SERIES IN SEPTEMBER

SHAHZAD RAZA
MUSCAT, AUG 10

One of India's strongest cricket teams Mumbai will be touring Oman later this month for a number of T20 and 50-over games against the country's national cricket team.

The record 41-time Ranji Trophy winners Mumbai will arrive on August 20 to play three T20 and a similar number of one-day matches against Dulip Mendis-coached Oman as part of the country's preparations for the seven-nation World Cricket League (WCL) League 2 tournament that Oman currently leads with 16 points from 10 games as well as for the ICC T20 World Cup that Oman is going to host along with UAE in October.

"The Mumbai's tour of Oman is confirmed and I am sure they will be bringing the best available squad. These matches will be ideal preparation for the WCL League 2 tri-series in September and the T20 World Cup in October. Mumbai has a strong side and we will get proper match practice," said Mendis who is also Oman Cricket's Chief Development Officer.

Oman is going to host two triangular series as part of the WCL League 2 tournament; first against Nepal and USA from September 13 to 20 followed by tri-series against Scotland and PNG from September 25 to October 2.

Sultanate's Red Brigade has been in the training mode since late June



Dulip Mendis

despite the harsh weather conditions and has played practice games to prepare for both formats.

"Both the tournaments hold immense importance to Oman Cricket and we are determined to do well. Oman are leading the WCL League 2 table and would like to stay there as the tournament progresses. We know the top three teams will go through to the 2023 ICC Cricket World Cup and Oman would do all they can to be one of them," added the former Sri Lankan great.

While Oman are currently busy boosting its infrastructure to be able to host the first round of T20 World Cup successfully, coach Mendis feels focus remains on their performance on the field.

"With all the facilities we are going to have in place before the World Cup starts what we want from our team is performing on the field. That is our main target and we are concentrating on that. We are putting our heart and soul into the preparation and discussing various ways and strategies for the tournament. Hopefully, we will get the results we want from the team," he said.

Oman will be trying a few new players who have qualified to play for the country during the games against Mumbai.

"Yes, we have two to three new players who will be tried in the practice matches to see if they are good enough to be included in the final squad," confirmed the Oman coach.



New Zealand's Mark Chapman reacts. — Reuters

Cricket bids to return to Olympics in 2028

PARIS: Cricket's world governing body said on Monday that it intends to push for the sport's return to the Olympics at the 2028 Games in Los Angeles.

The International Cricket Council said it would start preparations on an Olympic campaign to point out "the sport's inclusion in 2028 would mark the end of a 128-year absence."

Cricket has appeared once in the Olympics, at Paris in 1900, where the Devon and Somerset Wanderers, representing Great Britain, beat the only other entrants, a team of British embassy staff appearing as France, by 158 runs in a one-innings match.

ICC chair Greg Barclay said the Tokyo Games, which ended on Sunday, had been an inspiration and that cricket's large fanbase meant it should be invited to the party.

"I would like to congratulate the IOC, Tokyo 2020, and the people of Japan for staging such an incredible Games in such difficult circumstances," Barclay said in an ICC statement.

"It truly was fantastic to watch and captured the imagination of the world and we would love for cricket to be a part of future Games."

"We see the Olympics as a part of cricket's long-term future. We have more than a billion fans globally and almost 90 per cent of them want to see cricket at the Olympics," said Barclay.

"Clearly cricket has a strong and passionate fanbase, particularly in South Asia where 92 per cent of our fans come from, whilst there are also 30 million cricket fans in the USA," Barclay said. "The opportunity for those fans to see their heroes competing for an Olympic medal is tantalising."

Barclay pointed out that cricket will be returning to the Commonwealth Games in 2022 in Birmingham which will include a women's T20 competition. The sport previously appeared in the Commonwealth Games in 1998 in Malaysia, when South Africa won a 50-over competition.

"The sport will feature in the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games next year, which shapes as a perfect showcase for what the sport can bring to the Olympics, as well as being a momentous occasion on its own," the ICC statement said.

"We know it won't be easy to secure our inclusion as there are so many other great sports out there wanting to do the same. But we feel now is the time to put our best foot forward and show what a great partnership cricket and the Olympics are," Barclay said. — AFP

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Gulf region unlikely to escape climate change effects

KEY FINDING: The IPCC report cites “significant increases in the intensity and frequency of hot extremes and significant decreases in the intensity and frequency of cold extremes” in the Arabian Peninsula

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Countries of the Arabian Peninsula, which includes the Sultanate of Oman on its southeastern edge, will unlikely be spared any of the dire weather-related predictions made by the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its report published earlier this week.

In essence, it warns that global median temperatures are projected to rise by an average of 1.5 degrees Centigrade within two decades, accelerating disruptions in weather patterns that sustain human, animal and plant life on the earth.

The resulting weather extremes will be associated with, among other perils, alternating periods of severe flooding, drought, hurricanes and supercyclones, melting ice-caps, rising sea levels and coastal flooding, with disastrous consequences for agriculture, farming, food security, safety from disease and pandemics, and a host of other hazards.

In its mammoth report, based on gleanings from an estimated 14,000 scientific papers, the IPCC also looks at potential impacts for the Arabian Peninsula once the atmosphere warms by 1.5 degrees C over pre-industrial levels – a level likely to be reached by around 2040.

There is worse in store at 2 degrees C of global warming, with critical tolerance threshold levels for human health and agriculture expected to be breached. The IPCC report cites “significant increases in the intensity and frequency of hot extremes and significant decreases in the intensity and frequency of cold extremes” in the Arabian Peninsula.

Further, there is “strong evidence of changes from observations that are in the direction of model projected changes for the future”, the report warns. The magnitude of projected changes increases with global warming, it further notes.

The landmark report cites “medium” confidence that human activity contributed to the observed increase in the intensity and frequency of hot extremes and decrease in the intensity and frequency of cold extremes in the region.

Significantly, Oman-based environmental experts have long warned that climate change resulting from global warming can have potentially severe consequences for the Sultanate.

In particular, rising seawater levels can potentially imperil cities and towns in North and South Al Sharqiyah, as well as North and South

High temperatures across the world have resulted in unprecedented cooling demand, driving greater thermal generation. Droughts are impacting crops and hydroelectricity stocks while in other regions floods impact production. Heat waves were exposing the vulnerability of low-carbon energy systems to climate change

CHRIS MIDGLEY
Global Director of Analytics, S&P Global Platts

Al Batinah governorates, among other areas, with grave implications for tourism, real estate, infrastructure and industry.

Climate change will also cause upheavals for Oman’s agriculture and fisheries sectors. Prolonged periods of drought are likely to spur the ingress of saline water into groundwater, particularly near the coast, driving up the demand for fresh water for agriculture and irrigation.

In the Arabian Sea, changes in the chemical characteristics of the water are beginning the impact the reproductive cycles of certain fish species, notably tuna and sardine.

But according to a key energy expert, use of fossil fuel — one of the principal contributors of greenhouse gases responsible for climate change — has been on the increase in response to extreme weather brought about by global warming. Chris Midgley, Global Director of Analytics, S&P Global Platts, warned that high temperatures across the world have resulted in unprecedented cooling demand, driving greater thermal generation.

Droughts are impacting crops and hydroelectricity stocks while in other regions floods impact production. Heat waves were exposing the vulnerability of low-carbon energy systems to climate change, Midgely said. Renewables have been hit by low water levels and low wind, with load factors in the UK dropping to just 10 per cent recently, requiring thermal power generation to fill the gap.

Meanwhile some companies and countries are attempting to do their bit by buying nature-based carbon credits, even as forests themselves “right now are literally going up in flames, adding more carbon to the atmosphere than all the new electric vehicles are saving,” Midgely said.

“While the energy transition may be a marathon and not a sprint, there is no doubt we need to set the bar higher for technologies like CCS, Hydrogen and Nuclear if we really want to go for gold and win the battle against temperature rise,” he added.



DIRECTORS REPORT
For 2nd Quarter (Jan-Jun) Results – Year 2021

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to present the Company’s unaudited consolidated results for the six-month period ended on 30th Jun 2021.

Our key results are annexed below:

Key Results:

Key Indicators	Group (Oman Fisheries Co.)			Parent Company (Oman Fisheries Co.)		
	Jan-Jun 2021	Jan-Jun 2020	Percentage Change	Jan-Jun 2021	Jan-Jun 2020	Percentage Change
	Total revenue	6,020,217	6,756,636	-12%	5,832,561	6,591,321
Total Costs	(6,869,390)	(7,304,569)	-6%	(6,661,758)	(7,246,041)	-9%
Profit before tax	(849,173)	(529,355)	38%	(829,197)	(654,720)	21%
Tax Income	118,662	0		118,662	0	
Profit after Tax	(730,511)	(529,355)	28%	(710,535)	(654,720)	8%

Turnover and summary of results:

The unaudited results of the second quarter represent the consolidation of Oman Fisheries Co. SAOG(Parent), Al Ameen Stores and Refrigeration LLC and Oman Fisheries Co. Sharjah (FZE). Your company has achieved the consolidated turnover of RO 6.020 Million in 2021 up to Quarter two compared to the previous year turnover of RO 6.756 Million for the same period last year. The group made a net loss of RO.730,511/- compared to the net loss of RO.529,355/- during the same period of previous year.

Following are the key operational highlights for the second quarter:

- The company had performed reasonably well during this period, despite of unabated havoc of COVID-19 pandemic in Oman which continues to lead to internal and external movement restrictions, with vaccinations proceeding at a slow pace.
- Export sales had been 91% of the total sales while domestic sales occupied remaining 9% of the total sales in terms of volume and value. Your Company managed to secure more than 36 new customers during the first half of 2021 despite continued slump in the world market due to impact of COVID pandemic. On average the total volume of sales clocked during first half was 5579 tons compared to 6,466 tons during the same period in 2020.
- On the procurement side the Co. managed to procure 3,071 tons of fish both from its own sources as well as partner SMEs compared to 4,440 tons during the same period in 2020.

Apart from the key factors mentioned above there had been series of challenges faced during the first half of 2021, some of which are:

- Steep rise in fuel charge which had drastically impacted the transportation charges which could not be passed to the customers in order to remain competitive. Alongside ocean freight also increased substantially both to the far east destinations as well and East and West African belts.
- Further, the entire GCC region phased shortage of outbound containers, which had forced Oman Fisheries to accept further orders within the scheduled period.
- Metaphorical rise in delta variant of COVID worldwide as well in Oman had forced the authorities to impose frequent lockdowns and restrictions in movement which had harshly impacted both processing as well as revenues.

The administrative costs were lower than the overall budget as well as respective period of the previous year due to stringent control over the expenses and right sizing of the divisional costs. The selling and distribution expenses were lower than the forecasted limit, principally due to abolishment of inter-branch/direct transfer and transfer of processed fish to principal warehouse. Further, management ensured direct loading from the branches thereby reducing the warehousing charges and also improving inventory turnover ratio to a significant extent.

Due to lower demand for warehousing of food products, the average volume of storage for Al-Ameen shrunk from 85%(April to June 2020) to 70%(April to June 2021), thereby reducing the overall occupancy by 15% as compared to same quarter of preceding year.

The logistics division of Al-Ameen is more or less consistent and had been principal service provider for its parent company.

Debtors and cash collection cycle has been consistent in relation compared to the volume of sales both in the domestic and export market

Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Management of the Company, I wish to acknowledge and expressed my sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq and his Government for establishing good working environment in the fisheries sector and for taking good steps for food security in the Country.

Further, we are extending our thanks to, government bodies, suppliers, service providers, banks, customers, consultants and employees of the Company for their continuous efforts and we are wishing them all the success for the remaining period of the year.

Chairman

OMAN FISHERIES

Interim condensed consolidated and separate statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021

	Group (Unaudited) 30 June 2021 RO	(Audited) 31 December 2020 RO	Parent Company (Unaudited) 30 June 2021 RO	(Audited) 31 December 2020 RO
ASSETS				
Non-current assets:				
Property, plant and equipment	5,565,380	5,760,906	3,311,576	3,417,131
Right-of-use assets	265,718	289,942	227,172	250,558
Finance lease receivables	-	-	305,997	314,088
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	515,750	515,750
Deferred tax assets	633,403	514,740	614,038	495,376
Non-current assets	6,464,501	6,565,588	4,974,533	4,992,903
Current assets:				
Inventories	1,222,358	2,097,948	1,221,880	2,097,948
Current portion of lease receivables	-	-	15,895	15,526
Trade and other receivables	934,268	1,662,135	699,020	1,508,997
Amounts due from related parties	-	-	783,409	705,311
Financial assets at FVTPL	105,787	78,529	105,787	78,529
Fixed deposit	1,100,000	1,121,888	1,100,000	1,121,888
Cash and cash equivalents	331,668	737,836	54,744	534,636
Current assets	3,694,081	5,698,336	3,980,735	6,062,835
Total assets	10,158,582	12,263,924	8,955,268	11,055,738
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity:				
Share capital	12,500,000	12,500,000	12,500,000	12,500,000
Legal reserve	3,480,985	3,480,985	3,314,319	3,314,319
Capital reserve	29,269	29,269	29,269	29,269
Accumulated losses	(9,475,787)	(8,745,276)	(11,010,596)	(10,300,061)
Total equity	6,534,467	7,264,978	4,832,992	5,543,527
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities:				
Term loans	394,009	532,599	244,046	282,634
Lease liabilities	231,770	251,975	231,401	251,975
End of service benefits	104,145	105,178	80,959	80,865
Non-current liabilities	729,924	889,752	556,406	615,474
Current liabilities:				
Current portion of term loans	276,609	275,473	76,605	75,469
Current portion of lease liabilities	45,901	46,270	46,270	46,270
Short term loans	1,543,233	2,500,000	1,543,233	2,500,000
Trade and other payables	1,024,005	1,237,262	900,300	1,154,291
Amounts due to related parties	2,043	5,030	999,462	1,120,707
Income tax payable	2,400	45,159	-	-
Current liabilities	2,894,191	4,109,194	3,565,870	4,896,737
Total liabilities	3,624,115	4,998,946	4,122,276	5,512,211
Total equity and liabilities	10,158,582	12,263,924	8,955,268	11,055,738
Net assets per share	0.052	0.058	0.039	0.044

Interim condensed consolidated and separate statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 June 2021

	Group (Unaudited) Period ended 30 June 2021 RO	(Unaudited) Period ended 30 June 2020 RO	Parent Company (Unaudited) Period ended 30 June 2021 RO	(Unaudited) Period ended 30 June 2020 RO
Revenue	5,825,545	6,684,283	5,575,186	6,455,368
Direct costs	(5,254,130)	(5,581,578)	(5,004,750)	(5,302,729)
Gross profit	571,415	1,102,705	570,436	1,152,639
General and administrative expenses	(982,987)	(1,031,553)	(827,089)	(881,527)
Selling and distribution expenses	(550,148)	(590,266)	(768,984)	(1,006,999)
Loss on fair value of financial assets at FVTPL – net	(21,702)	(1,723)	(21,702)	(1,723)
Other income	194,672	72,353	257,375	135,953
Operating loss	(788,750)	(448,484)	(789,964)	(601,657)
Finance income	18,479	18,586	26,507	27,006
Finance costs	(78,902)	(99,457)	(65,740)	(80,069)
Loss before tax	(849,173)	(529,355)	(829,197)	(654,720)
Income tax	118,662	-	118,662	-
Loss for the period	(730,511)	(529,355)	(710,535)	(654,720)
Other comprehensive income for the period	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive loss for the period	(730,511)	(529,355)	(710,535)	(654,720)
Basic and diluted earnings per share	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.005)

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request them, either in Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

Ireland manufacturing bounce-back continues



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

IN SPITE OF A SLOW-DOWN FROM RECENT MONTHS, THE PACE OF GROWTH WAS AMONG THE FASTEST EVER RECORDED, ACCORDING TO THE LATEST PURCHASING MANAGERS INDEX (PMI) FROM ALLIED IRISH BANK (AIB)

Despite inflation, a sharp rebound in Irish manufacturing activity continued in July held back only by some limits on access to raw materials and ongoing lack of access to shipping capacity — both of which are feeding into costs. Demand from domestic and international markets ultimately drove the rise in activity and jobs.

In spite of a slow-down from recent months, the pace of growth was among the fastest ever recorded, according to the latest Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) from Allied Irish Bank (AIB).

The number of manufacturing jobs has now risen for 10 consecutive months.

New order growth hit a record high for the third month running, leading to unprecedented increases in both purchasing and

back logs of work, according to the AIB research.

However, what are described as “wide-ranging raw material shortages” as well as a lack of adequate shipping capacity continued to drive up input prices in July and fed into manufacturers passing that higher cost on to customers.

The manufacturing PMI registered a three-month low reading of 63.3 in July, down from 64.0 in June and May’s all-time high of 64.1. But even the lower figure reflects a rapid pace of growth.

The index takes a mix of information on orders, employment, costs and output from a survey of private sector managers and turns them into a simple one number index — where a figure above 50 means growth and decline is tracked from 50 down.

The latest figure signals a

rapid overall improvement in Irish manufacturing business conditions at the start of the second half of 2021, and stronger growth than in any preceding period since the survey began in 1998, according to AIB.

Chief economist at AIB, Oliver Mangan said the Irish data remains broadly in line with strong PMI’s from other key advanced economies including the UK, eurozone and US, with access to materials and inflationary pressure a notable concern.

“Not surprisingly, against a backdrop of shortages and insufficient shipping capacity, price pressures continue to build in the sector.

Input prices rose at their third highest pace ever and the passing on of these higher costs to customers saw output prices register another big jump”, Mangan said.

Data from the US showed

manufacturing there expanded at a softer — yet still solid — pace in July as producers also grappled with persistent bottlenecks and input shortages.

The US Institute for Supply management’s (ISM) gauge of factory activity eased for a second month, to 59.5 from June’s 60.6 according to data released last week.

Chairman of the ISM’s manufacturing business survey committee, Timothy Fiore, said in a statement: “Companies and suppliers continue to struggle to meet increasing demand levels.”

Meanwhile, the UK’s manufacturing growth gathered pace in the second quarter as production increased for the 13th consecutive month in June with demand particularly strong from the EU, the US and China.

The IHS Markit/CIPS UK Manufacturing Purchasing Managers’ Index rose from 60.9

in April to 63.9 in June and then dipped to 60.4 in July, but still signalling a strong expansion.

The growth was driven by increased new orders, helped by stronger client confidence and the reopening of more parts of the economy. Employment in the sector also rose due to the increase in business.

However, delays related to supply chains due to Brexit and Covid-19 and input shortages pushed prices up again, leading to fears of inflation.

Director at IHS Markit, Rob Dobson, said: “Growth is being boosted by the unlocking of economies from Covid restrictions and ongoing vaccination programmes.

This is being felt across the globe, as highlighted by a record rise in new export business during the latest survey month.”

(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)

OTC students join in vaccination campaign



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 10

Students from the Event Management course at the Oman Tourism College (OTC) are part of the organisational team that is participating in the National Vaccination Campaign against Coronavirus (Covid-19), recently launched by the Ministry of Health.

The campaign is taking place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre and the students’ participation is part of efforts towards contribution towards national efforts to combat the pandemic in the Sultanate.

It is also part of the practical internship requirement for Event Management Diploma students towards the completion of their Bachelor’s degree.

The training, which began in June 2021, has seen the participation of 15 students and will continue throughout the summer till September 2021.

Commenting on the participation, Mu’a’az al Raisi, a student at OTC said, “I am in charge of organising and supervising my colleagues. Our presence here is to help citizens and provide guidance on what needs to be done to complete the vaccination process.

Moreover, we strive to ensure that everyone follows the relevant precautionary measures and instructions for immunisation. It was truly an amazing experience and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers for their efforts and dedication towards serving the country and all its citizens.”

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 10

Local Omani electrical equipment manufacturer Voltamp Power SAOC, a subsidiary of the Voltamp Energy Group, has signed a deal with Bahwan Engineering Company to manufacture and supply of 500 MVA/400kV class power transformers for installation within the network of Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC).

The agreement was signed by Eng Ali bin Said al Hadabi, Vice Chairman of Voltamp Power SAOC, and Ajay Jhavar, Adviser to Vice Chairman and Business Units Head — Projects and Products at Bahwan Engineering



Company.

The manufacturing of this category of transformers is considered the first of its kind in the Sultanate and the region, while the signed deal comes within the framework of the contributions made by the OETC

in strengthening the fundamentals of infrastructure and supporting the energy industry sector in the Sultanate.

Commenting on this deal, Eng Abdullah bin Said al Badri, CEO of Voltamp Energy, said: “We are extremely delighted by signing

Oil prices recover after hitting three-week low

TOKYO: Oil prices rose on Tuesday, edging up from a three-week low in the previous session, but gains are likely to be limited on worries that rising Covid-19 cases and restrictions in China will dent fuel demand.

Brent crude was up by 29 cents, or 0.4 per cent, at \$69.33 a barrel by 0359 GMT, after falling 2.3 per cent on Monday.

US oil was up by 46 cents, or 0.7 per cent, at \$66.94 a barrel, having fallen by 2.6 per cent in the previous session. China on Monday reported more



A gas pump is seen hanging from the ceiling at a petrol station in Seoul, South Korea. — Reuters

Covid-19 infections in the latest outbreak of the disease that was first detected in the country in late 2019, in what analysts said was

the biggest test of Beijing’s zero-infection strategy.

Some cities in China, the world’s top crude oil importer, have stepped up mass testing as authorities try to stamp out locally transmitted infections of the highly transmissible Delta variant of the coronavirus.

“There is still plenty of uncertainty about how the Covid-19 situation in China will evolve and what this means for oil demand and prices”, ING Economics said in a note, adding that a stronger US dollar was also

weighing on prices.

In the United States, the Senate is set to vote on the passage of a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill later on Tuesday, which, if passed would boost the economy and demand for oil products, analysts said. But surging cases of Covid-19 are blighting the outlook for economic growth and overall consumption.

“Investors are also questioning the recovery in the US amid rising case numbers. US air travel has plateaued for almost two months amid ongoing travel restrictions”, ANZ Research said. — Reuters

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MUSCAT: From city streets to countryside roads and off-road too, trust the powerful and impressively capable Prado to get you there without a worry. Toyota’s powerful Prado is engineered to make even the smallest journeys an absolute delight.

Equipped with Toyota’s inspiring off-road DNA, the Prado’s capability and strength is advanced in every sense. Visually stunning, the new Prado features a unique design which appears even more dynamic, yet maintains three core strengths essential to the Prado’s celebrated



‘go-anywhere’ credentials. These are ‘Total Practicality’

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both protection and wading depth; ‘Total Durability’ — with the powertrain and all functional parts well-protected and ‘Total Capability’ — with the tight turning circle and generous ground clearance essential for even the most demanding off-road driving.

The Prado’s class-leading features complement its thrilling power and performance. Presently Prado has two petrol engine variants — 4.0 litre delivering 271 HP and 2.7 litre delivering 163 HP. It offers 6-speed Automatic Transmission on Petrol models along with Full-Time 4WD with

Centre Differential Limited Slip Differential.

Available in either 17” or 18” Alloy Wheels, the Prado has LED Type Headlamp & Clearance Lamps and Moonroof.

Toyota Prado’s refined interior has plenty of room to comfortably accommodate up to seven adults. It is also equipped with a host of High-end Luxury features — Chrome Side Protection Moulding, Cool Box. Cushioned Seats offer wonderful Under-thigh Support.

Second-row Seats fold in a 60:40 Split offer Enhanced Utility with a Slide Function and Walk-in

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The Third-row Seats, fold in a 50:50 Split. The Prado also offers Power Tilt & Telescopic Steering Column, Smart Entry & Push-button Start & Retractable Outer Mirrors (With Turn Signal).

The Prado also has Front Sensors and Rear Parking Sensors, 9” Navigation System, Leather Seats, Ventilated Front Seats, Cruise Control, Rear View Camera and Steering with Audio & Bluetooth Switches.



Asian airlines offer perks to keep grounded elite flyers on board

SYDNEY: From wellness workshops to dinner with a celebrity chef and flights to nowhere, Asia's big international airlines are working hard to keep their most lucrative customers engaged as the pandemic-related travel halt stretches beyond 18 months.

While flights are starting to rebound in the United States and Europe, international travel is still down 96 per cent in Asia due to tough travel restrictions, making it harder to maintain a relationship with grounded premium clients.

Elite frequent flyers, many of them business travellers, are coveted by full-service carriers like Australia's Qantas Airways Ltd, Singapore Airlines Ltd and Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd, and the airlines want them back when travel resumes.

Before the pandemic, around 5 per cent of international passengers globally flew in premium classes, but they accounted for 30 per cent of international revenue, data from airline industry group IATA shows.

Asian airlines have given status extensions of at least two years to elite tier customers who have earned access to airport lounges and other perks such as priority access to seats and upgrades to higher flight classes.

Qantas Loyalty CEO Olivia Wirth said customers had made clear to the airline that such extensions were important. "They work in many cases for years to achieve these high statuses and high tiers, so it was really important for us that we were going to continue to be loyal to them just as they had been loyal to us in the years gone



A Cathay Pacific Boeing 777-300ER plane lands at Hong Kong airport, in this file photo. — Reuters

Asian airlines have given status extensions of at least two years to elite tier customers who have earned access to airport lounges and other perks such as priority access to seats and upgrades to higher flight classes

by," she said.

For airlines, the extensions come at the relatively little cost given the potential future reward. Grounded elite members are not accessing airport lounges stocked with fine wines, made-to-order

meals and day spas, although Qantas did host a dinner in Sydney for a few of them with celebrity chef Neil Perry and CEO Alan Joyce in June.

Singapore Airlines, which lacks a domestic market, said it has hosted virtual wine tastings, wellness workshops and online courses such as miniature clay art and coffee-brewing and offered a first-class dine-at-home experience. Some other engagement initiatives are paid for by the flyer.

Michael Dean, a Qantas Platinum One flyer, said his status enabled him to secure his preferred business class seats on a 747 joy flight from Brisbane last year — for A\$747 (\$550) a seat — just before Qantas retired the jumbo jet.

"It was not cheap, but great fun," he said.

With flights grounded, airlines globally have also boosted engagement with another lucrative group — customers who fly less often but spend large amounts on co-branded credit cards that earn users air miles they can redeem for flights. Airlines earn money from such cards by selling frequent flyer miles to credit card issuers to use as rewards for cardholders.

Consumers have kept spending on co-branded cards at a similar rate to the broader credit card market during the pandemic, Qantas data and American Express Co data on its co-branded Delta Air Lines Inc cards show. — Reuters

Job openings in US surge to fresh record high

WASHINGTON: US job openings jumped to a fresh record high in June and hiring also increased, an indication that the supply constraints that have held back the labour market remain elevated even as the pace of the economic recovery gathers momentum.

Job openings, a measure of labour demand, shot up by 590,000 to 10.1 million on the last day of June, the Labour Department said in its monthly Job Openings and Labour Turnover Survey. Economists had forecast job openings would rise to 9.28 million in June.

Vacancies increased in all four regions and the job openings rate rose to 6.5 per cent from 6.1 per cent. Employers have struggled to quickly rehire workers to keep up with the

speed from which the economy has emerged from the depths of the Covid-19 pandemic, which upended many businesses as restrictions and fears of the virus kept people home.

The ratio of openings to hires, despite easing in June, remained at historically elevated levels," JPMorgan analyst Peter McCrory said.

Acute labour shortages have been reported, particularly in leisure and hospitality. Generous unemployment benefits, childcare issues and lingering worries about the virus have also been cited as factors holding back people returning to the workforce.

The largest increases in vacancies in June were in professional and business services, retail trade and accommodation and food services. — Reuters

Philippine economy rebounds in Q2 but faces 'speed bumps'

MANILA: The Philippine economy grew in the second quarter at its fastest pace in more than three decades, but an official warned Tuesday of "speed bumps" as coronavirus restrictions were tightened to combat surging infections.

Gross domestic product (GDP) expanded 11.8 per cent on-year, the statistics agency said, after five straight quarters of contraction. The increase — the best since the last three months of 1988 — was driven by a rebound in construction activity and consumer spending.

But it came off a 17 per cent slump in the same period last year when the country endured its first crippling lockdown that wiped out

The robust performance is driven by more than just base effects — it is the result of a better balance between addressing Covid-19 and the need to restore jobs and incomes of the people

KARL CHUA

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary

millions of jobs.

"The robust performance is driven by more than just base



A worker installs steel rods at a construction site in Manila, Philippines. — Reuters

effects — it is the result of a better balance between addressing Covid-19 and the need to restore

jobs and incomes of the people," Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua told a briefing.

But Chua warned hopes for "continuous positive growth" could be erased by the current two-week lockdown in the national capital region — which accounts for a third of the economy — and other areas aimed at slowing the spread of the hyper-contagious Delta variant.

"There are speed bumps given the ECQ (enhanced community quarantine) in Metro Manila and other parts of the country," Chua said. "The longer we have ECQ then the higher the risk that we may not achieve our target."

The tightened restrictions, which include a ban on restaurant dining and an eight-hour nighttime curfew, are expected to

cost the Philippine economy about \$3 billion a week in lost output.

The second quarter — which overlapped another lockdown in April — contracted 1.3 per cent from the first three months of the year, the data showed. ING senior economist Nicholas Mapa predicted "a similar setback" in the third quarter because of reduced mobility.

The number of coronavirus infections in the Philippines has exceeded 1.6 million — the second-highest caseload in Southeast Asia. Authorities fear the more contagious Delta strain could tear through the nation as it has in neighbouring countries and overwhelm its health care system.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

TOKYO

SoftBank Group net profit tumbles 39 per cent

Japanese investment giant SoftBank Group said on Tuesday net profit plunged 39 per cent in the first quarter, following big gains in the same period last year related to the US merger of T-Mobile and Sprint.

The corporate behemoth has poured money into some of Silicon Valley's biggest names and hottest new ventures, from AI to biotech, through its \$100-billion Vision Fund.

It reported Japan's biggest ever annual net profit in 2020-



21, driven by tech share rallies as people moved their lives online during the coronavirus pandemic. Net profit in the three months to June 2021 was 761.5 billion yen, compared with 1.26 trillion yen in the Q1 of last year. — AFP

LONDON

InterContinental Hotels profits from travel rebound

InterContinental Hotels Group on Tuesday announced a return to first-half profits as vaccination rollouts and the lifting of lockdowns boosted travel demand.

InterContinental, whose brands also include Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn, reported a net profit of \$48 million (40.5 million euros) compared with a loss after tax totalling \$210 million in the first half of the previous year.

"Trading improved



significantly during the first half of 2021, with travel demand returning strongly as vaccines roll out, restrictions ease, and economic activity rebuilds," IHG chief executive Keith Barr said in the earnings statement. — AFP

TOKYO

Japanese corporate bankruptcies at 50-year low

The number of corporate bankruptcies in Japan fell at the fastest rate this year to hit the lowest in 50 years for a July, thanks to funding support from the government and banks, a private-sector credit research firm said on Tuesday.

There were 476 company bankruptcies in July, down 40 per cent from the same month a year ago, Tokyo Shoko Research showed, pointing to government help for corporate financing amid a resurgence of the Covid-19

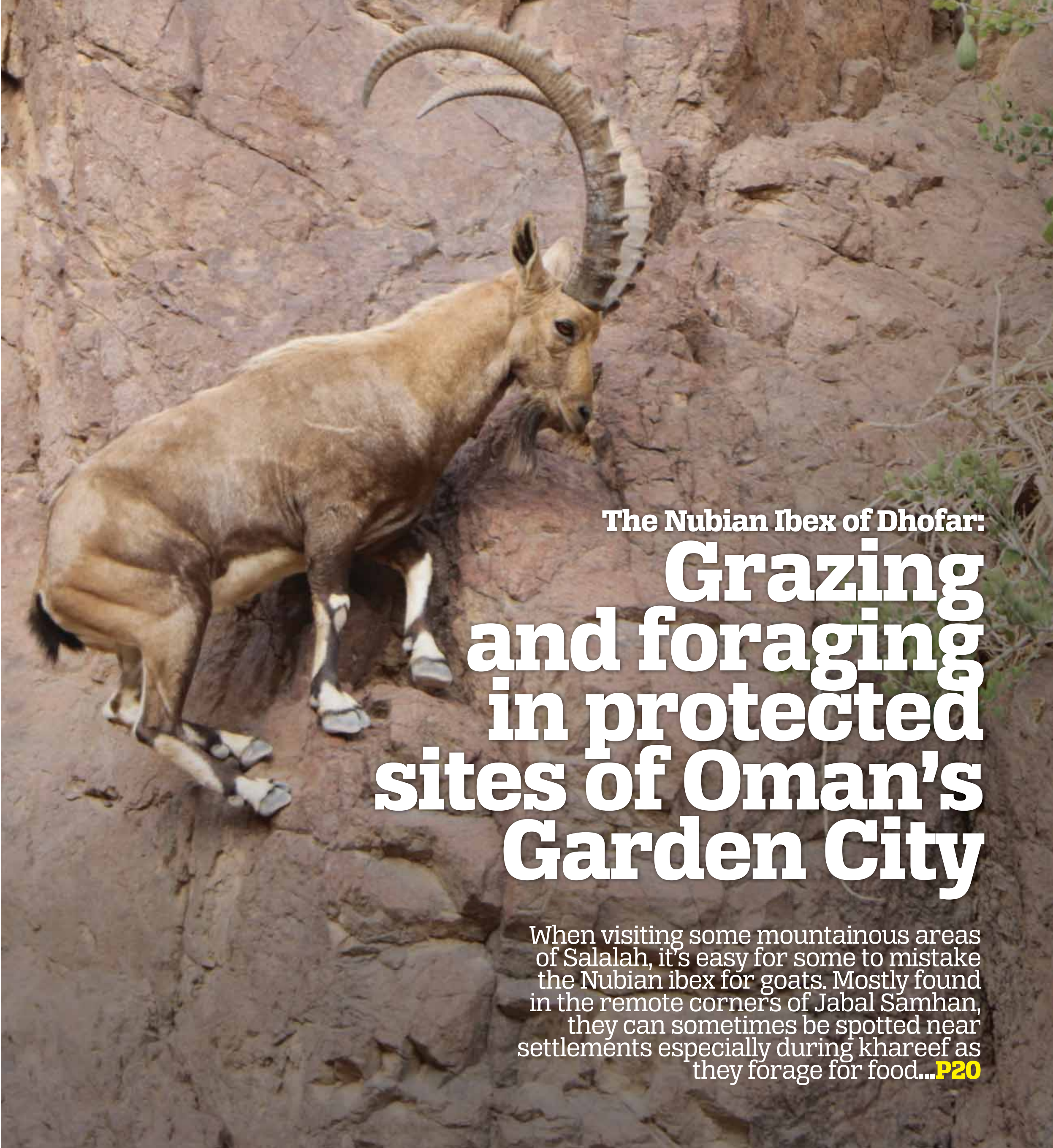


pandemic.

That was less than the previous July low of 482 in 1990, during the peak of Japan's asset bubble economy, based on comparable data available since 1972.

— Reuters

features

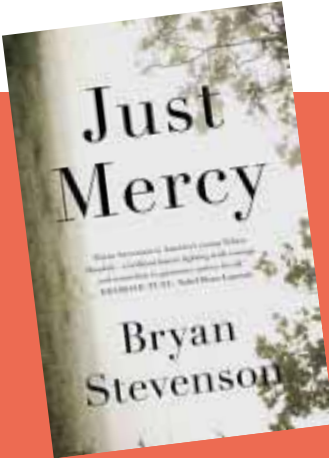


The Nubian Ibex of Dhofar: Grazing and foraging in protected sites of Oman's Garden City

When visiting some mountainous areas of Salalah, it's easy for some to mistake the Nubian ibex for goats. Mostly found in the remote corners of Jabal Samhan, they can sometimes be spotted near settlements especially during khareef as they forage for food...**P20**

LOCAL SCENE

READ



JUST MERCY

BY BRYAN STEVENSON

A civil rights lawyer and MacArthur grant recipient's memoir of his decades of work to free innocent people condemned to death.

The 250 years of history of Bait Bahar

The walls of Oman's ancient forts keep a record of the secrets of the past. While many of these walls were not meant to live forever, those that survive records the identity of Oman. Bait Bahar is one of the ancient heritage sites in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi, located in the centre of the Wilayat in Sa ra. It was named after a person called "Bahar."

The age of the construction of

the fort is estimated to be approximately 250 years. This archaeological landmark consists of three floors and was the headquarters of the sheikh of the region. It contains several rooms used for various purposes, in addition to the prison, which is locally called "Al Tamoura." Between the wall that surrounds the fort from the northern side and the main fort building, there is a

palm groves that are watered by the falaj, and the area currently cultivated has shrunk due to the weak flow of the falaj. As for the eastern side of the fort, small houses were built of cement and bricks only half a metre from the wall of the fortress, which made this part besieged by cement walls. One of the secrets of the fort is a mysterious pathway that leads to somewhere not yet discovered due to the deterioration of the building. At present, the "Bait Bahar" is among the ancient archaeological sites and is the third archaeological landmark in the Wilayat Centre. The Department of Heritage and Tourism in Al Buraimi was assigned to submit a detailed report and study the possibilities of restoration. The restoration of the fort will lead to many historical discoveries that will enrich the Omani touristic scene.





A walk through the streets of Bel Paese

EVERYONE LOVES ITALIAN food. PERIOD. Pizza, pasta, gelato, cheese and coffee are well-loved the world over. Italian cuisine is generally characterised by its simplicity, with many dishes having only two to four main ingredients. Chefs rely heavily on the quality of the ingredients rather than on

elaborate preparation. While ingredients and dishes vary by region, many dishes that were once regional have proliferated with variations throughout the country. With culinary traditions from Rome and Athens, a cuisine developed in Sicily that some consider the first real Italian cuisine. Did you

know that Arabs invaded Sicily in the 9th century, introducing spinach, almonds, and rice? Our quest for good food led us to discover a restaurant tucked away in Shatti, Melenzan . The restaurant claims to serve reinvented Italian food, a fusion of authentic Sicilian dishes which reflect

Melenzan 's original inspiration – To remain faithful to established Italian cooking traditions and techniques and using them to produce dishes that have a unique and modern twist. The food looked excellent on the menu, so we went ahead and ordered 2 appetisers, 2 mains and a dessert.

HE SAID: We started with the Formaggi Oregano Fries. A fancy version of dynamite fries. The well-cooked fries were drizzled with a creamy yet tangy sauce, pepperoni slices and cheese. We couldn't really taste any cheese. The fries could have been crispier and cheesier. Our second appetizer was clearly the winner of the two.

SHE SAID: The Carne Arancino is a game-changer. These slow-braised short rib and cheese stuffed risotto balls were served on a bed of creamy mushroom sauce. That sauce is a killer. It elevated the dish from good to excellent. However, the Arancino could have been seasoned better.

HE SAID: After the appetisers, we were a little unsure of how our mains would be. The restaurant wowed us hereafter. We picked the Tartufo Pizza, a truffle ricotta pizza with mozzarella, provolone, and parmesan. A cheese and mushroom lover's dream come true. Each bite of the pizza was a mix of great dough, creamy cheeses, and the umami flavour of mushroom. This was probably one of the top two pizzas we have had here in Oman. Mind blown.

SHE SAID: Mushrooms and cheese, do you see a trend here? Our taste buds were fascinated with yet another dish. The Funghi Risotto – delicate yet creamy, a dish that can be defined as perfection. Topped with beaten-thin slices of grilled chicken, this Risotto is the best I have had here.



HE SAID: With great portion sizes, we couldn't think of attempting two desserts, however, there's always a place for Tiramisu. A twist on the regular hints of coffee, cream, and sponge - this one was served with a caramelised crumb and served with a decadent chocolate sauce. A perfect end to a perfect meal.

SHE SAID: The Espresso Tiramisu was a drool-worthy choice! The crumb gave the dish a defined texture and character while the cream left you wanting more. The best part? It was not cloyingly sweet and did not leave you feeling nauseous.

WE SAID: This meal was a pleasure. We enjoyed the quick and efficient service as well as the ambience but wished it was a bit brighter in there. The portions are rather good, and we believe the food is value for money if you consider the quality of each dish. Their drinks are overpriced like any other gourmet fine dining. Would we go back? Yes definitely! If you crave Italian food with a heartwarming twist, then this is your next epicurean destination.

OVERALL RATING:
Ambience: 3.5/5
Taste of food: 4/5
Presentation: 5/5
Service: 5/5
Value for money: 4/5

DISCLAIMER: The ORR team reviews anonymously and pays for their own meals.

CULTURE

Egypt papyrus makers keep tradition alive despite tourism slump



IN THE LUSH GREEN fields of Egypt's fertile Delta Valley, farmers and artisans are struggling to make a living as they keep alive the Pharaonic-era tradition of making papyrus. In the 1970s, an art teacher in the village of Al-Qaramus taught farmers the millennia-old techniques for transforming the plant into sought-after paper decorated with ornate drawings and text. The village and its surrounds, located about 80 kilometres (50 miles) northeast of Cairo, now make up the largest hub of papyrus production in the country, experts in the sector say. Once used by ancient

tion for decorating the columns of ancient Egyptian temples. To make paper, workers use wire to cut the stems into thin strips, which are immersed in water and then layered on top of each other to create sheets. The sheets are placed into a compressor to compact them, and the resulting paper is left to dry in the sun before being decorated with writing or colourful designs. Papyrus workshop owner Abdel Mobdi Mussalam, 48, said his staff has dwindled from eight a decade ago to just two. "Papyrus is our only source of income. It's what feeds me and my children,"



Egyptians as writing paper, local artists now decorate the papyrus with hieroglyphics, Arabic calligraphy and representations from antiquity and nature to create souvenirs for eager visitors. But tourism in the North African country has taken a battering since its 2011 revolution, and after a Russian airliner was downed by the Islamic State group in 2015. The Covid-19 pandemic has further debilitated the sector: Egypt earned just \$4 billion in tourist revenues last year, a quarter of what it had anticipated before the global health crisis.

he said. Tarakhan said he was trying to branch out into other papyrus products such as notebooks and sketchbooks. A few months ago, his son Mohammed launched an online store to sell their new range. "At first, we were just selling locally to those who came to us, but after Covid, we thought that we could reach more people, and even foreigners, through the Internet," the 30-year-old said. "We are trying to think differently so that we can carry on," said the elder Tarakhan,



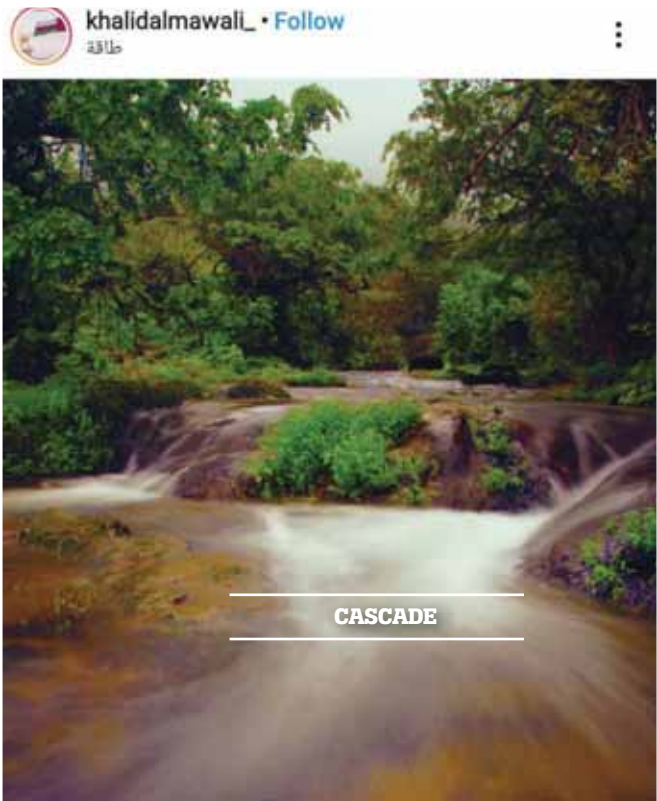
Today, Al-Qaramus has 25 farms trying to make ends meet by selling papyrus, compared to around 500 prior to the revolution, according to farmer and artist Said Tarakhan. "I lost about 80 per cent of my total income – I used to earn nearly \$1,000 a month and now it's almost zero," the 60-year-old said as he showed off his replica Tutankhamun paintings. **- 'IT WILL RETURN' -** The papyrus plant, with its fan-shaped foliage, grows in water and can reach four meters (13 feet) in height. Its form has served as inspira-

who in 2014 founded a local association for papyrus craftspeople. "I thank Covid-19 for locking us in our homes and forcing us to improve our business model." Near the famous Giza Pyramids around 100 kilometres away, Ashraf al-Sarawi displays papyrus paintings in his large shop, devoid of tourists. He said he lost most of his income last year due to the pandemic, but expressed hope that tourism would pick up soon. "Tourism never dies," the 48-year-old said. "It may get sick for a while, but it will return." – AFP



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DISCOVERY

Bees find refuge from perilous world in robotic hive



THE BUZZ OF the bees drowned out the hum of the robotic arm, which worked with an efficiency no human beekeeper could match.

One after another the machine scanned stacks of honeycombs that together could house up to two million bees — inspecting them for disease, monitoring for pesticides and reporting in real time any hazards that threatened the colony.

The next-generation hive was developed by Israeli start-up Beewise, which says that this kind of around-the-clock care is what is needed to minimise the risk of colonies collapsing.

There has been a drastic fall in bee numbers



around the world, largely due to intensive agriculture, the use of pesticides, pests and climate change.

Companies have been pursuing different technologies to try to slow down mass colony collapse, like placing sensors on traditional wooden bee hives, or methods to cope with the loss of bees, like artificial pollination.

At roughly the size of a cargo trailer, Beewise's hive houses 24 colonies. Inside, it is equipped with a robotic arm that slides between honeycombs, computer vision and cameras. Colour-coded openings on the sides allow bees to come and go.

"Anything a beekeeper would do the robotic mechanism can mimic and do it more effectively without ever getting tired, without going on vacation and without complaining", said CEO Saar Safra.

This includes harvesting honey, applying medicine and combining or splitting hives.

Beewise already made \$40 million worth of deals with private investors and over 100 of its systems are in use in Israel and the United States. — **Reuters**

CULTURE

The dirndl: A dress for past and present



THE HUMBLE Alpine "dirndl" dress, with its distinctive white blouse, full skirt and apron, has won new fans among Austrians and foreign fashionistas alike in recent years.

Its folksy appeal has now made the historic dirndl and other traditional outfits a key part of Austria's clothing industry, about 70 per cent of which is exported, according to the Chamber of Commerce.

Even British style icon Vivienne Westwood, better known for her provocative punk designs, has been charmed by the dirndl, which also features a close-fitting bodice.

Now the enduring garment is the star of a new exhibition which traces its journey through the years from the countryside to the catwalk.

The show is being held in the Austrian spa town of Bad Ischl, the former summer residence of Emperor Franz Josef and his wife Elisabeth, known popularly as Sissi.

It lies in the Salzkammergut, a spectacular region of mountains and lakes which was one of the original homes of the dirndl, along with neighbouring Tyrol and Bavaria in southern Germany.

Thekla Weissengruber, the exhibition's curator, says the dirndl "is to Austria what the kilt is to Scotland or the kimono is to Japan".

PRESTIGIOUS PATRONS

It was women living on the land who initially adopted the cheap, practical dress, whose

name derives from a dialect term that can also mean "girl".

But by the end of the 19th century, it was also being worn by women at the imperial court when they flocked to the countryside in summer.

"Everything was very corseted in Vienna", Weissengruber told AFP.

"On holiday they were able to free themselves, with these lighter, brighter styles", she added.

Hosted in the Marmorschloessl, the "cottage" given to Sissi by her husband, the exhibition shows how the dirndl has evolved through some 50 examples.

The early, no-frills versions quickly give way to more elaborate outfits fit for those seeking an audience at the imperial villa.

Angelika Schauer runs a family dirndl-makers in Bad Ischl that traces its history back to 1895.

She recalls that her grandfather counted visitors at court among his clients.

"When he was taking measurements he was under close watch" from the bodyguards who came with the well-heeled clients, she said.

"He had to refrain from making certain movements".

'NO MORE UGLINESS'

During the Nazi period, while women were encouraged to wear similar traditional dress, the word "dirndl" itself was banned, the regime finding it too redolent of the "Jewish-run" clothing industry.

But the dirndl never disappeared, with the patrons of the prestigious Salzburg Festival having sported it from the 1920s onwards.

Abroad it was popularised by "White Horse Inn", a musical set in the Salzkammergut that reached Broadway in 1936. It also had a fan in screen icon Marlene Dietrich, according to Weissengruber.

Along with other traditional Austrian clothing, the dirndl has experienced a revival in recent years, especially at beer festivals.

Women today "wear the dirndl at any occasion", said Schauer, with men donning the famous "lederhosen" leather breeches.

Despite often cheaper dirndl being produced in Asia, Schauer's husband Johannes Topizopoulos says that many dirndl fans prefer to buy local, especially in an age where people want long-lasting, environmentally sustainable clothing.

"The fact that it's hard-wearing fits in with the times very well", he said.

High-end versions are certainly a pricey investment: a made-to-measure dirndl can cost between 650 and 1,000 euros (\$767 and \$1,180), not to mention the versions turned out by fashion houses like Westwood's.

But, as the exhibition proudly cites the designer as having said during one visit to Austria, "if every woman wore a dirndl, there would be no more ugliness in the world". — **AFP**

FASHION

Greta Thunberg on cover of *Scandinavian Vogue*, slams fast fashion



CLIMATE ACTIVIST Greta Thunberg is using her cover appearance on the first issue of *Vogue Scandinavia* to criticize fast fashion.

The young Swede posted a picture of the front page of the new Scandinavian edition of the fashion magazine on her social media on Sunday evening.

Thunberg wears an oversized trench coat and is pictured in a wooded area stroking a horse.

"The fashion industry is a huge contributor to the climate and ecological emergency, not to mention its impact on the countless workers and communities who are being exploited around the world in order for some to enjoy fast fashion that many treat as disposables", Thunberg wrote in posts on Instagram and Twitter.

Some in the industry are using costly campaigns to give the impression they are sustainable, climate-neutral and fair, she wrote.

It is almost always "greenwashing", Thunberg said, referring to measures taken by companies to present a green image without really doing anything positive for the environment.

"You cannot mass produce fashion or consume 'sustainably' as the world is shaped today. That is one of the many reasons why we will need a system change", she wrote.

Thunberg told *Vogue* in an interview she had not bought new clothing for years.

"The last time I bought something new was three years ago and it was second-hand. I just borrow things from people I know", she said.

The magazine itself said in a press release it shared Thunberg's values on sustainable living and environmental protection, the *Expressen* newspaper reported.

The clothes Thunberg wore in the magazine photoshoot were made from sustainable, recycled materials, the magazine said. — **dpa**



The Nubian Ibex of Dhofar: Grazing and foraging in protected sites of Oman's Garden City

by Yeru Ebu
With details from Oman Arabic

JUST AS TOURISTS are enjoying the monsoon-showered Salalah, the different fauna and flora that calls Oman's Garden City home are also benefitting from the lush greenery popping up all over the wide expanse of the governorate.

With camels travelling en masse to forage the rich, luxurious gift of the season, the different, usually-fog covered mountains of Dhofar also reveals some of its seldom-seen inhabitants.

The Nubian ibex, along with dozens of other protected species, inhabits the Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve in Dhofar. Wild animals are thriving in Oman's protected mountains primarily because of the lack of human settlement, the difficult terrain, the abundance of vegetation cover and water sources such as water springs and rainwater ponds.

Mostly found in the remote corners of Jabal Samhan, Nubian ibex, however, can sometimes be spotted near settlements especially during khareef as they forage for food. They also frequent in some wadis of the western region of the governorate.

Some scholars believe that the Nubian ibex is just a breed of the European alpine ibex, while others classify it as an independent spe-

cies. This ibex has a long history in human civilisation and Arab civilisation in particular, as it appears in the traces of civilisations and their heritage in the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula.

The Nubian ibex's names vary according to the region and dialect, although all sources mention it with the term "ibex".

Suhail al Mashikhi, a specialist in nature reserves at the Environment Agency, explained that as a species, the Nubian ibex prefers to live in places that are far from human settlement, especially in the depth of the Samhan Nature Reserve, which has the largest concentrations of Nubian ibex.

Herds of Nubian ibex may migrate to the southern slope of Samhan Mountain overlooking the wadis of Sadah and Mirbat, especially during rainy times when grazing is abundant in these areas, as well as during the winter season in search of warmth due to the dry northern winds.

Having studied their foraging and grazing cycle, Suhail said that the presence of the Nubian ibex had been reported in some places including the Wilayat of Sadah, which is inhabited seasonally, such as the Jashim and Nusairah mountains in the Hadbeen region, and the Janjari mountain west of Sadah, in addition to the peaks of Wadi Shalioun.

Al Mashikhi said, "The Nubian ibex lives in herds led by an alpha male and walks long distances in the high mountainous areas. They however, are fond of their watering holes and

they usually hang around these water sources for replenishment. Whenever they are in these locations, there are often exposed to high risk of poaching and predation."

He shared, "These groups are usually active during the early morning and evening periods to avoid exposure to the hot sun and usually spread in the form of small gatherings or scattered flocks ranging from 10 to 20. Males have large and thick horns as well as the presence of a tuft of hair under the chin in the form of a long dark beard, and the front legs contain black or sometimes white stripes scattered around the leg.

Regarding the life span and method of ibex reproduction, Al Mashikhi said: "Autumn season is the mating period of the Nubian ibex and the new ibexes are born during the spring period after a gestation period that lasts for five months."

He added, "The female Nubian ibex usually gives birth to one ibex, except in rare cases, it may give birth to twins, and the lifespan of the Nubian ibex is estimated to be an average of 30 years give or take a few more years."

When visiting some mountainous areas of Salalah, it's easy for some to mistake the Nubian ibex for goats. When you spot one in Jabal Samhan mountains or areas they frequent for grazing or drinking water, just make sure not to harm them and let them be on their way as they too are enjoying the temporary temperature relief and rich grassland provided by the khareef season.

