

Sultanate's condolences to India over flood victims

The Sultanate, through the Foreign Ministry, expressed its condolences and sympathies to the friendly Republic of India and its people and the families of the victims of the floods which hit the state of Maharashtra. The Sultanate wished the injured speedy recovery. – ONA



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JAPAN CELEBRATES GOLD RUSH ON DAY OF UPSETS



P15

GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS BUCKLE AS VIRUS AND DISASTERS STRIKE



P18

ALL EYES ON SALALAH'S BELOVED KHAREEF



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO MALDIVES PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of the Maldives Republic on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Solih. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Maldives further progress and prosperity.

— ONA

RIYADH

SIXTH SAUDI SITE IN UNESCO LIST

A sixth site in Saudi Arabia has been added to Unesco's world heritage list, the UN organisation announced. Hima, in the Gulf state's southwest, is home to one of the largest rock art complexes in the world. "New site inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List: cultural area of Hima, Saudi Arabia. Mabrouk (congratulations)!" Unesco announced. Hima features more than 34 separate sites including rock inscriptions and wells along the route of the ancient Arabian caravans. Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan al Saud, Saudi Culture Minister, welcomed the listing, the official SPA news agency reported. The kingdom has a "rich heritage (of) human civilisations. Efforts have borne fruit in making it known to the world," it quoted him as saying.

DETAILS ON P19

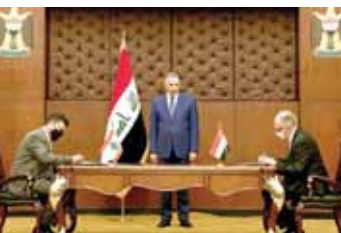
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Observing low-spirited celebration! ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

The adventures of a blonde and a very old car Rachael MacIver

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PUTIN WARNS OF STRIKES AT RUSSIAN WARSHIP PARADE P8

64%

DROP IN COVID INPATIENTS

National Campaign for Immunisation resumes

VINOD NAIR @vinot_nair

The much-anticipated 10-day Covid figures released on Sunday offered a breather to the population who were confined to their homes during the Eid al Adha holidays.

The Ministry of Health on Sunday reported 4,912 new cases and 255 deaths over the past 10 days. The total number of cases registered in the Sultanate has now reached 293,954, including 3,753 deaths.

The number of inpatients at various hospitals in Oman dropped by nearly 64 per cent to 786, including 315 in intensive care units, from 1,215, including 444 in ICUs, on July 15. Sixty-eight patients were admitted to hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours.

The recovery rate has improved to 93.8 per cent, while 18,194 infected are still sick.

The Sultan Qaboos

University Hospital in Muscat reported a decline in the bed occupancy rate to 57 per cent with 52 inpatients, while the total bed capacity is only 91.

There are 27 patients who require assisted ventilation, 11 on invasive medical ventilation, 15 on non-invasive medical ventilation, and 25 in Covid-19 wards without the need for assisted ventilation.

Meanwhile, the authorities have warned that the decision to reduce entry to complexes, shops, restaurants, and cafes to 50 per cent of its capacity is still in effect and those violating the decision will invite strict action and penalties.

"The decision to reduce the entry of visitors to complexes, shops, restaurants, and cafes to no more than 50 per cent of capacity. Children under 12 years of age will be allowed to enter malls and other commercial establishments," an official statement said.

The Ministry of Health resumed the national campaign for immunisation against

Covid-19 in all governorates of the Sultanate.

SEE ALSO P2

FAREWELL TO AMBASSADORS OF EGYPT, NETHERLANDS



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received separately at his office at Al Murtafaa Camp on Sunday Mohammed Ahmed Fahmi Ghoneim, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Sultanate and Laetitia van Asch, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Sultanate, to bid them farewell at the end of their tour of duties in the Sultanate. DETAILS ON P2

Oman shooting team arrives at Olympic Village today

ADIL AL BALUSHI TOKYO, JULY 25

Oman's experienced marksman, Hamed al Khatri, will arrive in Tokyo on Monday as second athlete from the Sultanate's delegation after Issa's arrival last week in the Olympic Village. This will be second successive Games participation for Al Khatri after his debut in Rio Olympics 2016.

The national shooting team will comprise Al Khatri's head coach, Sultan al Rushaidi and the administrative member Sulieman al Hinai. The arrival of all Oman's athletes will be completed on Wednesday as sprinters Barakat al Harthy and Mazoon al Alawi and weightlifter Amer al Khanjari will join the delegation in the Olympic Village.

An intensive training programme will be arranged for Al Khatri at Asaka Shooting Range ahead of his action on August 2 in the 50-m rifle three



position men's qualification round. The preparatory programme for shooter Al Khatri will be for six days under full technical supervision of the experienced national head coach Sultan al Rushaidi.

The national shooting team's efforts succeed to obtain a special permit from the organising committee and the technical team organisers to have more training sessions for a period of six days ahead of the official competition. These few days will assist Al Khatri to fully adapt

with the shooting range which is new for him. He will seek to register new records and raise the Sultanate's flag in this top showpiece event.

The national team swimmers, head coaches and the technical experts in the Oman Swimming Association (OSA) encouraged swimmer Issa to show his best on Tuesday. Issa's teammate swimmers, through virtual meeting held remotely, congratulated him for being the flag bearer during the opening ceremony. DETAILS ON P11

Beware of heatstroke as mercury set to soar in Muscat

ZAINAB AL NASSRI @zainabalnasseri

A rise in day temperatures across Muscat and Al Batinah on Monday may increase risk of heatstroke, the Oman Met has warned on Sunday.

"A noticeable rise in the apparent temperature (the actual temperature as a result of high humidity) on Monday in Al Batinah and Muscat, which may lead to heat exhaustion and the possibility of heatstroke," a statement from the weather



agency said.

Authorities urged people working outside to exercise caution and drink sufficient water to avoid heatstroke, which is most common in summer months.

The Ministry of Health said that heatstroke can affect anyone who stays in hot weather for a long time, when sweating fails to cool the body and the thermoregulator in the brain temporarily stops working. So, the body temperature rises to 40

degrees Celsius with redness in skin, fatigue accompanied by a headache.

Heatstroke requires emergency treatment. Untreated heatstroke can quickly damage your brain, heart, kidneys and muscles. The damage worsens the longer treatment is delayed, increasing your risk of serious complications or death.

Confusion, agitation, slurred speech, irritability, delirium, seizures and coma can all result from heatstroke.



Sayyid Shihab bids farewell to ambassadors

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received separately in his office at Al Murtafaa Camp on Sunday Mohammed Ahmed Fahmi Ghoneim, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Sultanate, and Laetitia van Asch, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Sultanate,

to bid them farewell at the end of their tour of duties in the Sultanate. The ambassadors expressed their thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to them during their tour of duties in the Sultanate from His Majesty, the Government and the Omani people, which had enabled them to carry out their duties. They wished His Majesty good

health, happiness and a long life, and the Sultanate further progress and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty. On his turn, HH Sayyid Shihab expressed his utmost thanks to the ambassadors for the efforts they exerted in serving the relations between the Sultanate and their countries, wishing them success, and the peoples of their countries further progress and prosperity. — ONA

Book your appointment online, people urged as vaccination resumes

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Sunday resumed the National Immunisation Campaign against Covid-19 for the target categories (18 years and above). The vaccination centres in all governorates witnessed a good turnout from the target groups. The ministry has emphasised the importance of booking an appointment through the website <https://covid19.moh.gov.om> or through Tarassud Plus application before heading to government vaccination centres to ensure a safe and smooth vaccination process.

Fatima al Hinaiyah, a nursing supervisor at the vaccination centre at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, said that the centre witnessed an increased turnout of citizens willing to get the Covid-19 vaccine since early morning on Sunday. She noted that the vaccination centre comprises 60 vaccination chambers and it starts receiving citizens from 7:30 am until 2:30 pm.

Dr Thamra al Ghafriyah, Director-General of Health Services in Muscat Governorate, affirmed that the vaccination process at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre is going on seamlessly amid tight precautionary measures and that there is a large turnout of the targeted groups.

In Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, the Directorate-General of Health Services on Sunday resumed vaccination with the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine for eligible citizens aged 18 years and older. The Directorate-General of Health Services has allocated health centres for the vaccination in coordination with government and private institutions.

Dr Salem bin Hamad al Busaidy, Director of the Primary Healthcare Department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said that the directorate has resumed the second phase of vaccination against Covid-19 for people aged 18 years and older as the nationwide vaccination campaign continues.

Dr Salim bin Musa al Abri, Director-General of Health Services in Al Dhahirah Governorate, said that the vaccination process will continue at the same centres as before at the Al Muhalab Ibn Abi Safra Hall in the Wilayat of Ibri, Hamra Al Duroa Health Centre, Maskan Health Centre, Wadi Al Ein Health Centre, Kahnat Health Centre and



Bilad Al Shahoum Health Centre.

As for the Wilayat of Dhank, vaccination will be conducted at the sports hall in addition to Al Qamira Health Centre, the Wali's offices in the Wilayat of Yanqul and Al Waqba Health Centre.

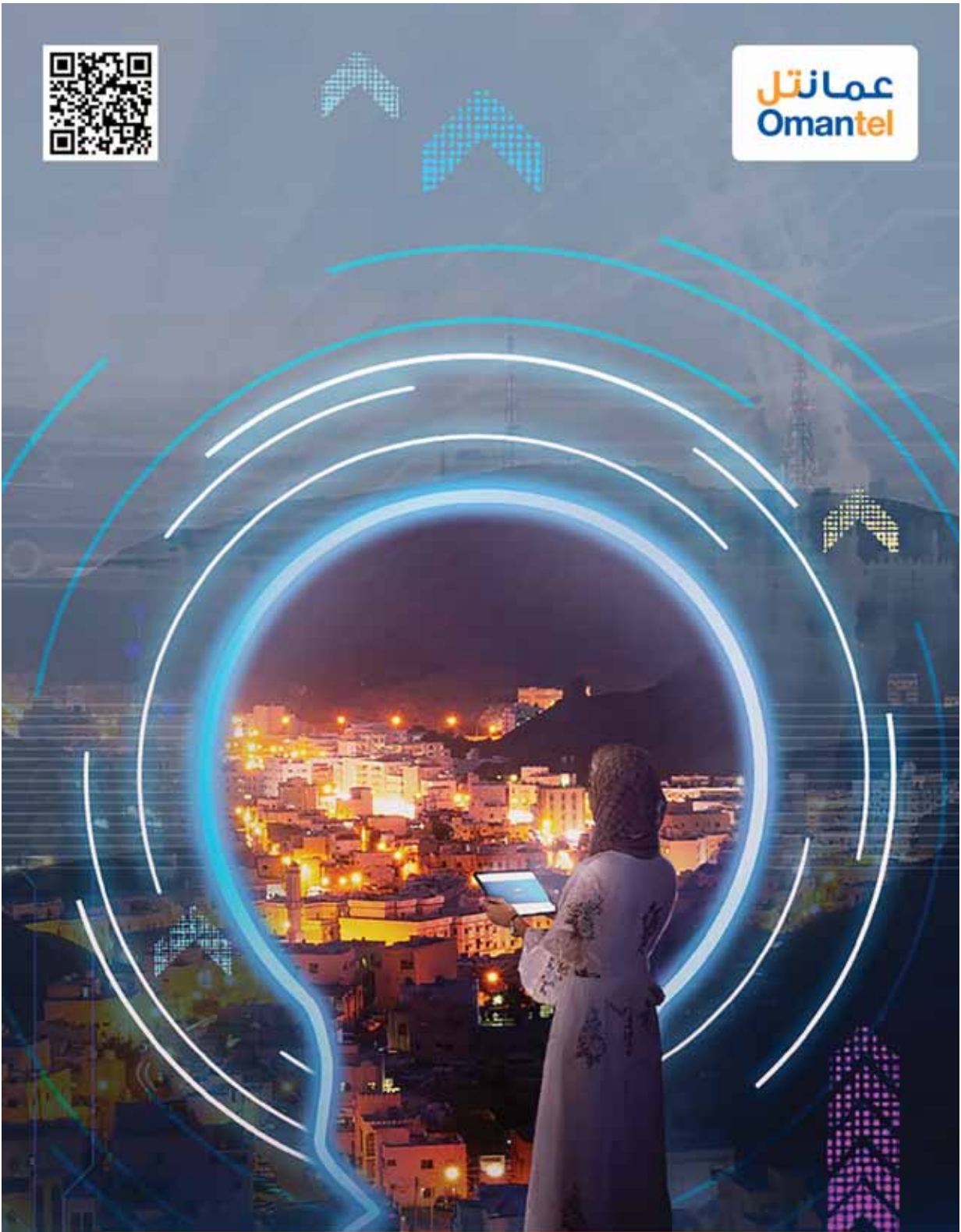
Al Abri noted that the Director-General of Health Services in Al Dhahirah aims to provide Covid-19 vaccines for citizens to contain the virus and curb the pandemic. He added that the directorate targets to vaccinate 2,500 citizens a day in order to cover 50 per cent of the Omani

population by July-end and 100 per cent in August.

A number of supervisors at vaccination centres in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, said that the vaccination process went smoothly on the first day after the Eid holidays amid a good turnout of the targeted group. North Al Sharqiyah Governorate has 9 vaccination centres three of which are in Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, 2 centres in the Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen and one each in the wilayats of Ibra, Bidiya, Al Qabil, and Wadi Bani Khalid. — ONA







Looking for the bravest and boldest start-up in Oman.

Introducing the Omantel Innovation Labs. Here's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to kick-start your technology start-up with Omantel. The intensive -6month program, held as part of the Omantel Innovation Labs, is designed to give you the tools, mentorship, networks and fundraising support to become the next big thing...the pride of Oman. Register at <https://www.omantel.om/Innovation>

Over 2,155 jobs announced in public sector



SHAMSA AL RIYAMIYAH
MUSCAT, JULY 25

Despite great economic challenges experienced by most world countries including the Sultanate due to the Covid-19 pandemic and unstable oil prices, the Ministry of Labour has managed to roll out more than 2,155 in the public sector in June and July this year.

Additionally, over 500 job

vacancies have recently been announced in the private sector where 4,800 joined the sector since the beginning of the year beside 4,400 job-seekers currently doing work-related training.

The Ministry of Labour announced that it will provide 32,000 jobs in both the public and the private sector including 12,000 jobs that will be created through replacement in the private sector

of which 8 per cent are in the jobs of directors, specialists and technicians. This is in addition to 9,000 jobs that will be created by training in the human resources management sector and 5,000 jobs that will be generated through replacement in the public sector and 2,800 jobs to be generated through the initiatives launched by many entities last January.

The government seeks to

activate the policy of replacement in the public and private sectors, including in the health, education, electricity and water, universities of technology, and the military. The number of job-seekers appointed through replacement reaches 7,000.

The ministry's efforts were culminated in the appointment of 3,010 nationals in the private sector at the end of last March, including 677 citizens with lower

qualification than the general education diploma (GED), 909 citizens with GED qualification or its equivalent, 390 citizens who hold a university diploma, and 1,011 citizens who have university degrees and 23 citizens with master's and doctorate degrees.

In the electricity sector the work is under way to recruit 800 nationals by means of replacement at Nama Group which will possibly

raise the Omanisation rate in the sector from 47 per cent to 90 per cent.

The Oman Investment Authority seeks to replace 9,000 expats by nationals in government-owned companies where Omanisation rate currently stands at 76 per cent.

As a result of the ministry's efforts, the number of expat workforce declined by 12.2 per cent to 1.4 billion as of April-end.

Wadi Darbat awaits full glory

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

There is one place in Dhofar that comes alive with waterfalls, streams making the wadi wind its way to Khor Rori, the lagoon and then onto the sea — all because of the influence of the monsoon from the Arabian Sea.

Traditionally it occupies a special place often inspiring poets but ever since Salalah has been established as a regional and international destination, Wadi Darbat has become one of the most popular tourism attractions — always on the list of visitors.

Cattle and camels enjoy grazing in the lush grassland, which is also a haven for birds, especially migratory birds that go through the region as a summer stopover and others during winter.

Over the years, Wadi Darbat has become a destination for all ages because of the boat rides and other attractions laid out by Dhofar Municipality.

This summer too local tourists from other parts of Oman have



At some parts Wadi Darbat looks like a river, then yet in another area it is like a small lake, of course the highlight is the waterfall. There are caves with old inscriptions and drawings, but to explore the caves it is better to visit Wadi Darbat before or after khareef

MOHAMMED AL AWAIID
nature photographer



khareef because during that time it is easier to drive up to the exact locations of the caves. The tourists may not know too well about the caves." The wooded highlands rises to 1,500 m on either side of the wadi and makes Darbat uniquely attractive with intriguing patterns formed by wind erosion.

Mohammed has been photographing Darbat Waterfalls since 1996 and he shared some of his photographs of the falls.

"This year khareef 2021 the water had just begun to fall slowly from the cliff just before the Eid holidays and we are sure it is going to be good because the monsoon is strong this year," he noted.

Birdwatchers from around the world visit Darbat throughout the various seasons and have recorded sightings of KingFishers, Tree Pipit, Eagles, Little Egrets, Wagtails, Ortolan Bunting, African Bunting, Pallid Harrier, Greenshanks, Common Sandpipers, Snipes, Bruce's Green Pigeon, Abyssinian White Eye, Tristram's Grackle, African Paradise Flycatchers, Hoopoe and the list goes on.



IN THE MATTER OF THE EXEMPTED PARTNERSHIP ACT 1992 OF BERMUDA and IN THE MATTER OF PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS (the "Partnership")

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 13B(2)(f) of the Exempted Partnership Act 1992 of Bermuda that the Partnership intends to de-register under the laws of Bermuda and continue in the Dubai International Financial Centre as if the Partnership had been incorporated under the laws of the Dubai International Financial Centre.

Dated: 27 June 2021 at the Sultanate of Oman

For and on behalf of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC



Together for an inclusive society

Two initiatives launched for children with special needs to bring them closer to the mainstream and cultivate their skills to groom them as productive citizens

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The ministries have launched two initiatives for children with special needs to bring them closer to the mainstream and build an inclusive society.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in association with the Omani Down Syndrome Society, has initiated a project for children with special needs to improve their ability to recite and memorise the Holy Quran.

According to the project with the slogan 'rehabilitation is a blessing' for students with Down syndrome, the Awqaf is aiming at improving their recitation skills.

"This project is aimed at caring for the children with special abilities and to improve their skills in understanding and reciting the Holy Quran according to the highest standards of education and planning," said Dr Mohammad bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

In his speech, he stressed the interest of the ministry in teaching the Quran and spreading its related sciences, which is in line with the strategic directions of the ministry and in accordance with the Oman 2040 vision.

This initiative is aligned with

national priorities of education and learning, national capacities, health, citizenship, identity and others. The memorisation of Holy Quran will improve communication abilities of children with Down Syndrome and help learn more words," said His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Chairman of the Oman Down Syndrome Society.

Another project launched by the Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Special Education and Continuous Learning, aim to equip the children with special needs with the necessary skills for learning.

The project with the theme

"We continue for you", under the auspices of Dr Ali al Shukaili, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Private Schools at the ministry, discover and refine talents of differently abled children and develop their various skills.

Dr Fathia al Sidiyah, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Special Education and Continuous Learning at the Ministry further added that the summer programme is part of the efforts of the Ministry of Education to present its educational mission to the children with special needs.

The Sultanate of Oman has always been promoting

an inclusive society and the Ministry of Social Development has been sparing no efforts in supporting the specially-abled children.

According to a report released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) there are about 42,304 people with disabilities in Oman, out of which 10,880 are children. One in four disabled citizens in the country is under the age of 17 of which 66.9 per cent of disabilities were diagnosed as congenital and another 23.8 per cent developed complications during birth that led to disability. On the other hand, 4.7 per cent of disabilities were contracted

through illness, and two per cent were from hereditary conditions.

Down's Syndrome constitutes 10.2 per cent of the cases while 15 per cent are autistic, 13.9 per cent with multiple handicaps, and 11.4 per cent are mentally retarded.

The report further says that 23.9 per cent of disabled children have hearing impairments, 22.4 physically challenged, and 1.2 per cent with visual impairments , 1.2 delayed growth, and 0.2 per cent are afflicted with epilepsy. As many as 58 per cent of disabled children are boys, while girls constitute 42 per cent and their educational levels vary as their grasping power varies.



Results of total Covid lockdown to be visible soon: Experts



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The results of the total lockdown of last week and the extended lockdown will only be visible in the coming weeks, according to experts associated with the Ministry of Health (MoH).

They said it will speed up recovery and

nobody is safe from the coronavirus as long as everyone is safe.

"One cannot expect the results of any preventive measure immediately. The results of the lockdown will only be visible after two weeks from now," said Dr Mahmood al Rahbi, Head of Emergencies at Al Nahda Hospital.

"The result of the lockdown will begin

to show only after 2 weeks and expecting any positive outcome so soon is not rational," said Dr Ramla al Qassabi, a senior consultant.

The common sentiment among the people is that lockdown was a timely step and hoped that the situation would come under control soon.

"I think we have already started seeing the results. Our hospital admissions and ICU occupancy due to Covid started declining last week," said Dr Benny Panakkan, head of a private hospital in Ruwi, adding that "hopefully in the coming weeks we'll see more reductions in cases provided the lockdown is not withdrawn."

"I feel the result of these measures will be visible in the coming days. However, in case the people have not followed the decisions of the Supreme Committee then the results will surely be seen with or without testing," said Dr Viresh Chopra, Oman Dental College.

According to Dr Dilip Singhvi, Specialist Internal Medicine, total lockdown would curb the transmission of virus as partial lockdown causes a lot of crowding in malls, public places and the like. "The fall in the number of admissions and the number of critical care patients will take time provided viral transmission is controlled."

Plea to allot NEET exam centre in Muscat

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Parents of over 500 MBBS aspirants in Oman have requested the Indian authorities to allow a centre for their children to take NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test) in the Sultanate.

At present, students can appear for the Joint Engineering Examination in Muscat for admission into the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology.

Parents and students have sent a memorandum to India's Minister of State for External Affairs & Parliamentary Affairs, V Muraleedharan to consider the request for a similar centre for admission in medical colleges in India.

Hailing the positive approach upon which the government of India has allotted NEET exam centres in Kuwait and Dubai recently, the representatives said a centre in Oman would only help hundreds of students to take a shot at the exam here instead of flying home during the pandemic and travel restrictions.

"The NRIs welcome the decision to allot such centres in other countries as they can alleviate the troubles of the Indian diaspora over there, especially during a pandemic," said Anil Ezhuthachan, a parent.

According to the parents, such a decision would help the students to attend this examination with confidence and without exposing themselves to the pandemic.

Parents Mushtaq Banbey, Shaji N T, and Pradeep, and students Kevin Samuel and Ishaq, were present at the press briefing.

Malls, restaurants must operate at 50% capacity



MUSCAT: The authorities have warned that the decisions to reduce entry to complexes, shops, restaurants and cafes to 50 per cent of its capacity is still in effect and that violating these decisions will lead to strict action and penalties. "The decision to reduce the entry of visitors to complexes, shops, restaurants and cafés to no more than 50 per cent of the capacity. Children under 12 years of age will be allowed to enter malls and other commercial establishments," the Government Communication Centre said in a statement.

MOORE STEPHENS LLC

NOTICE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF LIQUIDATION OF KNOWLEDGE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES FOR AQUACULTURE LLC (AS APPEARED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE NO 1400)

Moore Stephens LLC, announces the liquidation process of Knowledge Advanced Technologies for Aquaculture LLC, bearing commercial registration number 1200761, in accordance with the decision taken by the Company's Members on 16 June 2021. The liquidators alone have the right to represent the Company under liquidation before third parties, and all parties are to confirm with the liquidator for all matters concerning the company's business at the following address:

**Office No.41, 4th Floor, Building No.1022, Way No.1013;
Al Walaj Street, Al Qurum
P O Box 933, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24061000, Fax: 24061099**

By this announcement, the liquidator calls the company's creditors to submit their claims against the company, together with the supporting documents, to the above address within 180 days from the date of publishing this announcement for the first time, and any debtors should settle the company's rights with the liquidator on the address above.

Moore Stephens LLC

Official Liquidators of Knowledge Advanced Technologies for Aquaculture LLC (Under voluntary liquidation)



Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

The operational committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center announces to retender the following Medical Equipment

Tender	Tender Fee	Codes	Equipment	Quantity
CCCC/T/258/2021	25 R.O	[MEO-MEQ-0021]	Jet Ventilation Device	1
		[MEO-MEQ-0109]	Hand lift table Hydraulic Lifter	1
		[MEO-MEQ-0085]	Automated Medication Roller Mixer	2
		[MEO-MEQ-0087]	Abdomen Compression Belt	2
		[MEO-MEQ-0089]	Alloy Melter with Cabinet	1
		[MEO-MEQ-0088]	Shoulder Traction for Head & Neck Patients	3
		[MEO-MEQ-0084]	Patient Transfer Platform	3
		[MEO-MEQ-0083]	Troop Elevation Pillow	2

Qualified companies interested in participating in this Tender shall collect the Tender specifications from the date of this advertisement till 09/08/2021 from the following address:

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre
Biddings that meet the above requirement should be submitted on or before 16/08/2021 in a sealed envelope by an Omani National from your company addressed to the head of Purchase Committee in the tender box located at:

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre

Please note:

- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/ clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than one week before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries you may Contact us via e-mail: purchase@ccrc.gov.om
- The committee is not obliged to accept the lowest price of the bid or any other bid.



{Advertisement for e-Auction for Sale of Vehicles and Movables}

The Royal Court Affairs, represented by the Directorate General of Supplies, announces it is electronically auctioning vehicles and movables through Mazad Oman Platform (www.mazad.om) as per the following:

Sr.	Type of Auction	Place of Inspection	Date & Time of Inspection	Date of e-Auctioning
1	Auction of Vehicles	Auction's Yard in Al Khoud (Muscat)	Sunday-Tuesday 1-3/8/2021 8:00 am - 4:00 pm	Wednesday - Thursday 4-5/8/2021
2	Auction of Vehicles and Movables	Auction's Yard in Sahlanout (Salalah)	Sunday-Monday 1-2/8/2021 8:00 am - 4:00 pm	Tuesday 3/8/2021

Entry of people for the purpose of inspection shall be organized as per the regulations in order to avoid crowding and the adherence of precautionary and preventive measures issued by The Supreme Committee tasked with handling the developments of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic shall be emphasized.

For acquainting with terms and registration, kindly visit (www.mazad.om)
For further inquiries, please communicate through (info@mazad.om)

media@rca.gov.om @Oman_rca www.rca.gov.om



Demonstrators gather in front of police officers standing guard during an anti-government protest in Tunis. – Reuters

Protests across Tunisia as Covid cases surge

TUNIS: Hundreds of protesters rallied in the Tunisian capital and other cities on Sunday demanding the government step down after a spike in Covid-19 cases that has aggravated economic troubles.

In Tunis, police used pepper spray against protesters who threw stones and shouted slogans demanding that Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi quit and parliament be dissolved.

Witnesses said rallies numbering several hundred also gathered the cities of Gafsa, Sidi Bouzid, Monastir and Nabeul. Demonstrators in Sousse tried to storm the local headquarters of the biggest party in parliament, the moderate Islamist Ennahda. In Touzeur, protesters set fire to the Ennahda headquarters.

The protests raise pressure on a fragile government that is enmeshed in a political struggle with President Kais Saied, who is trying to avert a looming fiscal crisis amid a weeks-long spike

in Covid-19 cases and increased death rates.

The pandemic has hit Tunisia as it struggles to lift an economy that has suffered since its 2011 revolution, undermining public support for democracy as unemployment surged and state services declined.

“Our patience has run out... there are no solutions for the unemployed,” said Nourredine Selmi, 28, a jobless protester. “They cannot control the epidemic... They can’t give us vaccines.”

Last week, Mechichi sacked the health minister after chaotic scenes at walk-in vaccination centres during the Eid al Adha holiday, where large crowds queued for inadequate supplies of vaccine.

After a year of wrangling with Mechichi and the leader of Ennahda, Rached Ghannouchi, who is also parliament speaker, President Saied declared the army would take over the pandemic response. — AFP

Iraq, Lebanon sign deal to swap fuel oil for medical services

BAGHDAD: Iraq will provide Lebanon with one million tonnes of fuel oil for its power plants in exchange for medical services, under a deal signed on Saturday in Baghdad.

Both countries are suffering from major energy crises, with electricity shortages impacting hospitals.

A statement from the Iraqi authorities said that under the deal, Lebanon would receive one million tonnes of fuel oil in exchange for “goods and services”.

Lebanon’s energy minister, Raymond Ghajar, said the deal would allow “the purchase of one million tonnes of Iraqi state fuel oil on behalf of Electricite du Liban (EDL)” over the course of a year.

The Iraqi oil cannot be used directly by Lebanon’s power stations, so Beirut will continue to buy compatible fuel from other providers which will receive the Iraqi oil in exchange, Ghajar said. The mechanism is “a bit complicated”, he told a news conference at Beirut airport on his return from Baghdad.

The deal will cover a third of EDL’s fuel needs, he said, expressing the hope that EDL could provide “up to nine or 10 hours of electricity (daily) over four months”.

In exchange, Lebanon will provide “services and assistance to Iraq in the hospitals sector”, he said.

Amid a dire financial and economic crisis, the Lebanese state is



Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi (C) looks on as Lebanon’s energy minister Raymond Ghajar (L) and Iraq’s Finance Minister Ali Allawi sign bilateral agreements in Baghdad. – AFP

struggling to buy fuel for its power plants, increasing electricity cuts to up to 22 hours a day in some areas.

Health services already struggling with shortages of medicine and an exodus of staff abroad are now also having to contend with almost round-the-clock power cuts.

Iraq is the second largest producer in the OPEC oil cartel, but decades of conflict, poor maintenance and rampant corruption have battered its energy sector.

Much of Iraq’s health infrastructure is dilapidated, and endemic corruption has a hamstrung investment in public services.

According to the deal signed in Baghdad, Iraq will sell 1m tonnes of heavy oil fuel to Lebanon to be paid in ‘services and goods,’ the Iraqi premier’s media centre stated

Meanwhile, dpa agency adds that, according to the deal signed in Baghdad, Iraq will sell 1 million tonnes of heavy oil fuel to Lebanon to be paid in “services and goods,” the Iraqi premier’s media centre stated without pro-

viding details.

Iraqi Finance Minister Ali Al-law and Lebanese Energy and Water Minister Raymond Ghajar co-signed the agreement in the presence of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi.

Lebanese officials have said the Iraqi supplies will ease the situation at home.

Lebanon is experiencing its worst economic crisis since its 15-year civil war ended in 1990.

Lebanon’s state-run electricity provider has been severely cutting power supplies in the past few weeks, prompting people, businesses and hospitals to rely on private generators. — AFP/dpa

Lebanese shooter hoping to raise spirits back home with Tokyo success

SAFRA, Lebanon: Lebanon’s trap shooter Ray Bassil says she is off to the Tokyo Olympics on a mission to win a medal and spread a little joy among Lebanese struggling amid an economic crisis.

All hopes are pinned on the 32-year-old athlete in the Mediterranean nation, which has not brought home a medal in decades since a bronze in Greco-Roman wrestling in Moscow in 1980.

At a practice range north of the capital Beirut, she took aim with her shotgun, focused, and waited for the clay plate to be flung across the sky. Lebanon’s famed cedar tree emblazoned on almost every part of her outfit, she took part in one of her last practice sessions ahead of the competition on July 28 and 29.

“My goal is to win an Olym-

Even getting the bullets hasn’t been easy. Supporters in Italy and some Lebanese had to help me get them shipped to Beirut

RAY BASSIL

Lebanon’s trap shooter

pic medal, not just take part,” she said at the shooting club in Safra. I want to “bring some joy to the people of my country”. Bassil started out in the sport aged 14, accompanying her father Jack on shooting trips.



Lebanese trap shooter Ray Bassil trains for Tokyo Olympics at the Safra shooting range north of Beirut. – AFP

By the age of 16, she was taking part in her first competition abroad in Algeria.

She has since climbed up the rankings in the region and inter-

nationally, winning gold in one event of the World Cup circuit in 2016. She finished 18th in the trap shooting at the London Olympics, and then 14th at the last Summer

Games in Rio.

For the upcoming competition in Japan, Bassil has been training hard despite some setbacks.

After catching Covid-19, she sprang back into training earlier this year despite the around-the-clock coronavirus curfew in Lebanon, at first practising in the car park below her building.

She then headed off to a shooting range in the town of Massa Martana in Italy, far from the “negative distractions” at home.

“I needed more appropriate surroundings to perfect my skills and prepare for the Olympics,” she said. Lebanon is mired in its worst economic crisis in history, and poverty has soared to more than half the population.

Hundreds of thousands are struggling to make ends meet

amid spiralling inflation, fuel and medicine shortages, and endless power cuts.

Those who can afford it have left the country for better lives abroad, while at home the country has been without a fully functioning government for more than 11 months.

A probe into a deadly port blast last summer has failed to hold any officials to account, sparking ever-growing popular discontent.

Bassil says she needs to focus.

“I know the situation in Lebanon is really bad. People are tired and we’re all mentally exhausted. But I don’t want that to affect me,” she said.

“I want to change our outlook and help Lebanese breathe a bit. Maybe sports can help bring hope to Lebanon.” — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BAGHDAD

Iraq says fighters planned attacks during holiday

The fighters believed to be behind last week’s deadly bombing of a Baghdad market had planned more attacks during the Eid al Adha festival, Iraq’s interior ministry said. The ministry released photos of five suspects arrested, including three brothers, after last Monday’s attack that, according to the official toll, killed 30 people and was claimed by the IS group.

Iraqi security forces have dismantled “two terrorist networks in the provinces of



Anbar and Kirkuk responsible for the July 19 attack in Sadr City”, a poor district of Baghdad. “They were planning other attacks in other parts of Baghdad and other provinces during Eid,” a ministry statement said. — AFP

TRIPOLI

Libya steps up jab drive as virus caseload rises

Libyan authorities last week Saturday stepped up their vaccination campaign around the capital Tripoli, as coronavirus cases rise across the country. The health ministry has set up temporary centres in six districts of the capital, and journalists saw long queues outside the tents on Saturday.

“The campaign will continue until all the available doses are used,” doctor Rawad Behelille said in central Tripoli. Earlier this month, Prime Minister



Abdulhamid Dbeibah issued a decree instructing cafes and restaurants to close due to rising infections, while also suspending university lectures and weddings. Daily reported cases have reached several thousand. — AFP

TELAVIV

Israel launches direct flights to Morocco

Israeli carriers on Sunday launched the first direct commercial flights between the Jewish state and Morocco since the countries normalised diplomatic relations in a US-brokered deal last year. About 100 passengers were on an Israir flight that departed from Tel Aviv to Marrakesh, airline spokeswoman Tali Leibovitz said, adding that two to three flights per week were planned on the route.

National airline El Al later announced it too had launched



its service to Marrakesh on Sunday, and planned five flights per week there and to Casablanca. At a ceremony sending off the El Al flight attended by Moroccan envoy and Israel’s tourism minister. — AFP



In brief

■ KABUL

AFGHAN FORCES
CAPTURE FOUR TALIBAN
FOR ROCKET ATTACK

Afghan forces have captured four Taliban fighters including a militant commander for carrying out rocket attack targeting the presidential palace in Kabul during the Eid al Adha prayers, officials said. At least three rockets landed near the palace last week as President Ashraf Ghani and his top officials performed outdoor prayers to mark the start of the holiday.

The interior ministry said police had arrested four Taliban fighters in an operation in Kabul who were behind the attack, which was claimed by the IS group. "A Taliban commander, Momin, along with his three other men, have been arrested. — AFP

■ MANILA

NEARLY 25,000 DISPLACED
IN PHILIPPINE
MONSOON RAINS

Three people have been killed and five injured in accidents caused by heavy monsoon rains and strong winds in the Philippines, officials said. Nearly 25,000 people were also displaced by floods and landslides amid days of continuous torrential rains since last week, the national disaster agency said.

A 39-year-old woman died in the northern city of Baguio when a tree fell and crushed a taxi she was riding in, the agency said. Two people were also injured in the accident. In the northern province of Ilocos Norte, a farmer and a 15-year-old boy were killed when they were struck by lightning, police said. — dpa

■ JAKARTA

INDONESIA PREPARES
MORE ICU UNITS

Indonesia is preparing more intensive care units after logging several days of record-high Covid-19 deaths last week, while the country waits to see whether the government will extend or loosen tough restrictions due to expire on Sunday. Buckling under a Delta variant-driven wave of the virus, Indonesia has become Asia's Covid-19 epicentre with hospitals deluged, particularly on the densely populated island of Java.

"Deaths have risen due to a number of factors: full hospitals, patients admitted with low saturation, or dying unmonitored in self-isolation," Senior Minister Luhut Pandjaitan said in a statement. — Reuters

INDIA MONSOON DEATH TOLL
CLIMBS TO 127, DOZENS MISSING

MUMBAI: The death toll from flooding and landslides triggered by heavy monsoon rains in India climbed to 127 on Sunday, officials said, with rescuers searching for dozens more missing. The country's western coast has been inundated by torrential rains since Thursday, with the India Meteorological Department warning of further downpours over the next few days.

Flooding and landslides are common during India's treacherous monsoon season, which also often sees poorly constructed buildings buckle after days of non-stop rain.

Experts say climate change has caused the annual deluge to increase in frequency and intensity.

In Maharashtra state, 117 people have been killed, including more than 40 in a large landslide that hit the hillside village of Taliye some 250 kilometres southeast of Mumbai on Thursday.

Villager Jayram Mahaske, whose relatives remained trapped, said that "many people were washed away as they were trying to run away" from the landslide.

Another villager, Govind Malusare, said his nephew's body had been found after the landslide hit his family's home, but that his mother, brother, sister-in-law and niece were still missing.

The landslip flattened dozens of homes in a matter of minutes, leaving just two concrete structures standing and cutting off power, local residents said.

In Posare village 210 kilometres



People gather along a section of highway partially washed away from the rain at Mahad with nearly 100,000 others evacuated in Maharashtra. (Inset): A damaged truck lies on the side of a road following a downpour at Mahad. — AFP

south of Mumbai, the National Disaster Response Force said four bodies were found overnight.

In parts of Chiplun, water levels rose to nearly 20 feet on Thursday after 24 hours of uninterrupted rain. The water levels have since started to recede.

Eight patients at a local Covid-19

hospital also reportedly died after power supply to ventilators was cut off.

"The water level reached the ceiling of my shop, there was so much water inside," a shopkeeper told Indian news broadcaster NDTV, pointing to sludge and debris around him.

"All the shops in this area have been completely damaged. The flood has left so much soil behind, we can't even resume work."

Rescuers were working in waist-deep mud to search for 100 people still missing in the state with the help of excavators.

In neighbouring Goa, a woman

was feared to have drowned from the flooding, officials said, in what Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said were the "worst floods since 1982".

North Goa official Ajit Roy said floodwaters have since receded with people who were evacuated returning to their homes. — AFP

Australians may face longer
lockdown after mass protests

MELBOURNE: Australia's New South Wales logged its second-highest daily increase of the year in locally acquired Covid-19 cases on Sunday amid fears of a wave of new infections after thousands of people joined an anti-lockdown protest.

"In relation to yesterday's protests, can I say how absolutely disgusted I was. It broke my heart," Gladys Berejiklian, the premier of the country's most populous state, told reporters. "I hope it won't be a setback, but it could be," she said.

There were 141 Covid-19 cases reported, down from 163 a day earlier. The outbreak, which began in June, is being driven by the highly contagious Delta variant of the virus, and has now infected 2,081 people in New South Wales. There are 43 people in intensive care, up from 37 a day earlier.

Under fire for a slow vaccine rollout, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said more vaccine supply was not going to ensure New South Wales gets out of lockdown, but what was needed was an effective, properly enforced lockdown.

"Let me be clear - there's not an alternative to the lockdown in New South Wales to get this under control. There is no other magic bullet that's going to do that," Morrison told reporters at a televised media conference.

He called the anti-lockdown protests in Sydney reckless and self-defeating.

While Berejiklian and other



Police officers detain a protestor during a rally in Sydney as thousands of people gathered to demonstrate against the city's month-long stay-at-home orders. — AFP

Australia secures
85 m Pfizer booster
shots as Victoria on
track to ease curbs

state leaders have blamed Canberra for the slow vaccine rollout, critics have said NSW did not enforce its stay-at-home orders, which has led to Delta variant leaks to other states.

At least 38 of the new cases in NSW had spent time in the community while infectious, state health authorities said.

Numbers of such cases have stayed stubbornly high even after four weeks of lockdown in Sydney, now expected to be extended

beyond July 30.

The state reported two deaths overnight, including a woman in her 30s with no pre-existing conditions.

Despite its struggle with spikes of infections, Australia has managed to keep its epidemic largely under control with a total of about 32,600 cases and 918 deaths.

To help speed up vaccinations in Sydney, the government's official adviser, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), on Saturday changed its advice on the Astra-Zeneca vaccine, urging anyone in the city under the age of 60 to strongly consider getting vaccinated with it. — Reuters

Shanghai braces for typhoon
after flooding central China

NINGBO, China: Typhoon In-Fa uprooted trees and drenched communities in knee-deep water in parts of eastern China, but there were no reports of major damage as it made landfall on Sunday.

Sea, air and rail traffic had been shut down across a swathe of the coast centred on the major shipping port of Ningbo, where the weakening typhoon rumbled ashore around midday packing winds of up to 38 metres per second, according to the China Meteorological Administration.

Response teams in Ningbo cleared away fallen trees in the city centre, while residents in some neighbourhoods waded through floodwaters and merchants piled up sandbags in front of their businesses to keep out water.

The typhoon hit as the central province of Henan was

still cleaning up after torrential downpours dumped a year's worth of rain in just three days last week. Government officials on Sunday added another five dead to the toll from the freak flooding in Henan, raising the total to 63.

In-Fa's effects were also felt on Sunday in the metropolis of Shanghai, China's largest city, with strong gusts of wind and steady but not heavy rainfall.

All inbound and outbound flights were cancelled on Sunday for the city's two international airports, as were dozens of scheduled trains, while activity at the ports of Shanghai and Ningbo — two of the world's largest — was also shut down. The government announced that it would extend a suspension of railway services in and out of Shanghai through midday on Monday. — AFP



A team puts sandbags next to the Yuyao river in Ningbo, eastern Zhejiang province as Typhoon In-Fa lashes the eastern coast of China. — AFP

French lawmakers seek deal on vaccine passports after protests

PARIS: Lawmakers from France's upper and lower houses of parliament were on Sunday seeking to agree a deal to allow the adoption of legislation making vaccine passports vital for French daily life in the battle against Covid-19.

The talks between members of the National Assembly and Senate come a day after France was again shaken by nationwide protests against the rules that saw over 160,000 rally and dozens arrested.

President Emmanuel Macron last week ordered that the health pass — proof of a double vaccination or a negative test — would be required for the French to visit venues such as a cinema or nightclub and ultimately bars and restaurants.

The announcement was a move by Macron to make vaccinations the number one weapon against Covid-19 as new variants emerge, essentially requiring people to become vaccinated if they want to continue daily routines.

But it has encountered fierce opposition from some who believe the vaccine passports erode civil liberties, while the ruling party has faced a tough task pushing the legislation through parliament. While pro-Macron MPs control the lower house National Assembly the upper house Senate is dominated by the opposition right.

The Senate approved the legislation overnight by 199 votes to 123 but added numerous amendments that the government fears



Police forces walk on the Champs Elysees Avenue after clashes on the sidelines of a demonstration against France's restrictions to fight the coronavirus disease outbreak in Paris. — Reuters

risk limiting the impact of the rules.

The two sides were on Sunday afternoon to hold talks at a parliamentary commission to find a compromise, with the government hoping an agreement can be found for its definitive adoption later on Sunday.

In an extra step requested by Prime Minister Jean Castex, the legislation then needs to be approved by France's highest administrative authority, the Constitutional Council, before becoming law.

Some 161,000 people, includ-

Macron's move to make vaccinations the weapon against Covid as new variants emerge has encountered fierce opposition from some who believe the vaccine passports erode civil liberties

ing 11,000 in Paris had protested on Saturday against the health pass, with demonstrators brand-

dishing slogans including "freedom is being trampled on".

Seventy one people were arrested, including 24 in Paris, and 29 members of the security forces were injured, the ministry of the interior said.

On a visit to the France's Pacific territory of French Polynesia, Macron scoffed at how slogans of freedom were being brandished at the protests.

"Everyone is free to express themselves calmly with respect for the other," he said. "But freedom where I owe nothing to someone else does not exist". — AFP

Belgian town hit by worst floods in decades

BRUSSELS: The southern Belgian town of Dinant was hit by the heaviest floods in decades on Saturday after a two-hour thunderstorm turned streets into torrential streams that washed away cars and pavements but did not kill anyone.

Dinant was spared the deadly floods 10 days ago that killed 37 people in southeast Belgium and many more in Germany, but the violence of Saturday's storm surprised many.

"I have been living in Dinant for 57 years, and I've never seen anything like that," Richard Fournaux, the former mayor of the town on the Meuse river and birthplace of the 19th century inventor of the saxophone, Adolphe Sax, said on social media.

Rainwater gushing down steep streets swept away dozens of cars, piling them in a heap at a crossing, and washed away cobbles

stones, pavements and whole sections of tarmac as inhabitants watched in horror from windows.

There was no precise estimate of the damage, with town authorities predicting only that it would be "significant", according to Belgian RTL TV.

The storm wreaked similar havoc, also with no loss of life, in the small town of Anhee a few kilometres north of Dinant.

Meanwhile, renewed storms washed away several cars on Saturday, just a week after the country was faced with deadly flooding.

Vehicles in the city of Dinant were swept away by floodwaters, blocking a rail crossing, Belga news agency reported on Saturday evening, citing railway company Infrabel.

However, rail traffic had already been suspended because of the flooding earlier this month. — dpa



This picture taken in Dinant, near Namur shows a wrecked car after the heavy rainfall of July 24. — AFP

Putin warns of 'lethal' strikes at Russian warship parade

SAINT PETERSBURG: President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday that Russia's navy was capable of delivering lethal strikes against underwater and aerial enemy targets during a parade of warships in the port city of Saint Petersburg.

The Russian leader's boast comes days after military officials announced tests of advanced new weapons, some of which come from an arsenal Putin has described as "invincible."

"The Russian navy today has everything it needs to guarantee the protection of our country and our national interests," he said.

"We can detect underwater, surface or aerial enemies and target them if a lethal strike is necessary," Putin said according

The Russian navy today has everything it needs to guarantee the protection of our country and our national interests

VLADIMIR PUTIN
Russian President

to a broadcast on state television.

The Russian leader was speaking on the sidelines of an annual parade of military vessels, flanked by naval officers in white, and also Russia's Defence



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu (2R) attend the Navy Day parade in St Petersburg. — AFP

Minister Sergei Shoigu.

Putin said Russia had secured its place among the world's leading naval powers, including

by developing "the latest hypersonic precision weapons still unrivalled in the world".

The United States, China,

France and other major powers have announced plans to develop their own hypersonic weapons and are expected to soon catch up.

With the second-largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the world and a huge cache of ballistic missiles, Russia already has more than enough military capacity to deter its enemies.

"We are capable of detecting any underwater, above-water, airborne enemy and, if required, carry out an unpreventable strike against it," Putin said speaking at a navy day parade in St Petersburg.

Putin's words follow an incident in the Black Sea in June when Russia said it had fired warning shots and dropped bombs in the path of a British

warship to chase it out of Crimea waters.

Britain rejected Russia's account of the incident, saying it believed any shots fired were a pre-announced Russian "gunnery exercise", and that no bombs had been dropped.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 but Britain and most of the world recognise the Black Sea peninsula as part of Ukraine, not Russia.

Putin said last month Russia could have sunk the British warship *HMS Defender*, that it accused of illegally entering its territorial waters, without starting World War Three and said the United States played a role in the "provocation".

— Reuters/AFP

SHORT TAKES

ATHENS Greek police arrest anti-vaccination protesters

Greek police reported 25 arrests at the weekend after they had to break up a protest by vaccine sceptics in central Athens on Saturday.

Several thousand people had initially gathered in Syntagma Square in the Greek capital, protesting against new Greek laws requiring people to be vaccinated in certain cases.

Police stepped in when the protest turned violent.

Police reported that protesters threw rocks and incendiary



devices at officials, prompting the police to respond with water cannon and teargas.

Many of the protesters are either right-wing extremists or from particularly religiously devout groups. — dpa

MADRID Forest fire out of control in Spain

A forest fire about 100 kilometres west of Barcelona has destroyed 1,100 hectares of forest and farmland, Catalonia's Forestry Commission said on Twitter on Sunday. There are concerns that the wind, which usually starts around midday in the region, will further fuel the fire, due to high temperatures of around 30 degrees and severe drought.

Up to 5,000 hectares are directly threatened. It is the biggest forest fire of the year so far in the densely forested region of



Catalonia. The ashes have already reached parts of Barcelona. In addition to the local fire brigades and forest firefighting units, soldiers of the Spanish armed forces have been in action to put out the flames. — dpa

MANAGUA Presidential hopeful arrested in Nicaragua

Another presidential candidate was arrested in Nicaragua on Saturday, police said — the seventh potential contender detained by Daniel Ortega's government in the lead-up to elections on November 7. Noel Vidaurre was put under house arrest, accused of "undermining the sovereignty" of the country, police said, in the latest of a series of arrests condemned by the United States and European Union.

Nicaragua's long-term leader Ortega will seek a fourth con-



secutive presidential term at the elections, a senior ally said last week.

Ortega, 75, will be the ruling Sandinista National Liberation Front's candidate for the November 7 presidential vote. — AFP

Donations seek to save Tunisia from Covid catastrophe

KAOUTHER LARBI

With Tunisia’s health system close to collapse after being overwhelmed by a surge of Covid-19 cases, other countries and even individuals have stepped in to stem the crisis. European and Gulf nations, Tunisians abroad and ordinary citizens have organised equipment and vaccine donations that are now helping to battle the pandemic.

The small North African nation of 12 million people had been struggling to come up with the necessary vaccine doses even before Covid-19 really began to hit hard.

Now more than three million doses, most of them donated, have been sent, with the number set to reach five million by mid-August, the health ministry says.

China and the United Arab Emirates have each supplied 500,000 doses, while neighbouring Algeria gave 250,000.

Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne at the French ministry for Europe and foreign affairs said that France last week alone sent more than one million AstraZeneca and Janssen doses, enough to vaccinate “a tenth of the adult population”.

Tunisia has received just a sixth of the number of doses promised under the Covax programme, set up to ensure a fairer distribution of Covid-19 vaccines to lower-income countries. It now has one of the world’s highest coronavirus death rates.

According to an AFP count last Wednesday based on official reports, Tunisia recorded 1.4 daily deaths per 100,000 population over the previous seven days, placing it second-worst globally on this metric after Namibia.

Tunisian Internet users have shared videos of panicked families unable to find beds for loved ones, of medics worrying about oxygen shortages and of bodies crammed into swamped morgues. — AFP

Donations will mean the vaccination programme can speed up, and thus reduce the spread of the virus. Tunisia could achieve our goal of vaccinating about 50 per cent of the population by mid-October

DR HECHMI LOUZIR
Pasteur Institute



CLEAN-UP IN PROGRESS

A man walks as he cleans his house which was affected by heavy rainfall in Dinant, Belgium, on Sunday. — Reuters

Observing low-spirited celebration!



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
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REVIVING THE SPIRIT OF JOY AND HAPPINESS COULD BE MARKED FOR THE SAKE OF REFRESHING ONESELF, MIND AND SPIRIT OF COURSE

Celebrations and festivities mark another way of enjoying the various moments and blessings of life with friends, relatives, family and loved ones. Likewise, on such occasions, people share unforgettable moments and experiences with the whole society and not only with their smaller families. Being in this kind of celebration mood is very inspiring and encouraging to refresh one’s mind and spirit alike. As well, living a moment of happiness with one another helps strengthening relations with others and breaking the daily routine of one’s life.

Different occasions are already marked in people’s annual calendar wherein they all enjoy their time and joyous moments. Regardless of the reason behind every occasion, people strive not to miss enjoying its spirit, fun and excitement. As Oprah Winfery said: “The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate”. Therefore, the mood of celebration should be the unconditional attitude of all, regardless of what life brings.

It has been said that celebration happens when the mind unites with the spirit. That is why everybody needs to get into such an attitude very often, even if there is no occasion to celebrate or commemorate. Reviving the spirit of joy and happiness could be marked for the sake of refreshing oneself, mind and spirit

of course. Certainly, getting together with your loved ones in joyous gatherings will help people to be more relaxed, satisfied and encouraged to do more, especially at work. Living moments of fun and enjoyment could be a differently effective remedy for both mind and soul.

Among the key annually booked occasions in the calendar is Eid al Adha - a religious ritual observed by all Muslims worldwide on the last month of the Islamic calendar. This occasion stands as the second of two Islamic religious celebrations commemorated every year and is considered the holier of the two. This Eid is called Festival of Sacrifice or Feast of Sacrifice instead and linked with the ritual of performing Haj (pilgrimage), which is regarded the fifth pillar of Islam. It presents a high religious significance to all Muslims around the world.

This Eid is marked because it honours the willingness of the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH), to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to the command of the Almighty Allah. Before the Prophet sacrificed his son, Allah provided a male goat to sacrifice instead. In commemoration of this, an animal shall be sacrificed and divided into three parts - one-third of the share is given to the poor and needy people; another third could be given to relatives, friends and neighbours; and the remaining third is

retained by the family. This represents the animal that Ibrahim sacrificed in the place of his son.

The story of Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) as preparing to offer his son Isma’il as a sacrifice to Allah is not simply offering flesh and physical body, but more so of spiritual sacrifice and submission to Allah. Here is the verse of Holy Quran, “And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead, We called to him. “O Ibrahim, you have fulfilled the vision”. Indeed We thus reward the doers of good. Indeed, this was the clear trial. And We ransomed him with great sacrifice, and We left for him favourable mention among later generations. Indeed he was of our believing servants”.

As a much-awaited and must-to-celebrate religious occasion, people have observed Eid al Adha differently this year due to the full lockdown that the Sultanate had during Eid holiday. Therefore, it was unfortunately not observed with full delight and spirit, unlike the past years. People have commemorated the occasion at home with their smaller families. Instead, they have virtually congratulated and shared Eid greetings with their relatives, friends and neighbours with phone calls, text messages and on social media.

Hence, Eid was somehow observed in low-spirited celebrations.

The adventures of a blonde and a very old car



Rachael MacIver
Instagram: @rachael_maciver

WE SOON HIT THE MAIN ROAD TOWARDS NIZWA. AND HOW DID WE KNOW THAT? WELL, THE FIRST CLUE WAS THAT EVERYBODY ELSE SEEMED TO BE GOING TO NIZWA

“Are we there yet?” Mrs J winked at me as soon as we merged on to the Expressway just after Qurum. We had both lived through kids and road trips and remembered only too well what it was like. I winked back “We can always play ‘I Spy With My Little Eye.’ for the 1 millionth time, if you like. Mrs J didn’t even reply. It was going to be a looong drive to Salalah.

We cruised along in Ol’ Martha; my Pajero stuck in 3rd gear, at a steady speed of 75 km/h. This was the max speed the Pajero could go without sounding like a hysterical wasp caught in a bottle or indeed the engine melting the pistons.

“Isn’t there a minimum speed limit here?” Mrs J asked. I ignored her and just hoped she didn’t notice the moped driver overtaking us on the inside, his shopping bags dangling from the

handlebars. We were on our way, which was all that mattered.

We soon hit the main road towards Nizwa. And how did we know that? Well, the first clue was that everybody else seemed to be going to Nizwa this Thursday afternoon. And secondly, because everybody seemed to want to reach Nizwa as fast as they could, we got stuck in the inside lane.

You know which lane I mean. The lane, which makes your car feel as though you are on a plane running into turbulence and the pilot is urging you to fasten your seatbelt in a worried tone of voice. Everything in the car shakes, rattles and moves around. Potholes, ripples and grooves left by hundreds of trucks over time. Mrs J opened her mouth to say something, but got interrupted by the Pajero’s glove compartment

which sprung open and slammed right into her kneecaps. Biting her lip in pain, she busied herself trying to catch a flurry of old carwash receipts, warranties for tires discarded long ago and a lost slip for dry cleaning, which had escaped from the glove compartment. “Ohh, I have been looking for that one, I hooted triumphantly. “Since 2010..?” Mrs J asked sarcastically whilst studying the laundry receipt. Oh yes, it was definitely going to be a long drive to Salalah.

“Fanja! Let’s have a tea break in Fanja Souq”, Mrs J suggested through the noise. Seeing as we had only just left home an hour earlier, I was pretty sure it wasn’t tea she was after. Mrs J smelled a shopping opportunity like a bloodhound smells prey.

We pulled into the packed

carpark in front of the souq, and I went off to find a karak place. Knowing that Mrs J didn’t speak a word of Arabic I felt pretty confident leaving her to roam the souq on her own. What could go wrong?

I couldn’t say exactly how long I was gone for, but I know it was only for as long as it takes to order and carry two cups of karak from the coffee shop to the car.

“How did you..? When did you..? How long have I been gone for..???” I stared in disbelief at Mrs J and her loot stacked next to the car. Baskets, clay pots and a bag of very smelly, dried, shark. “They are bringing the firewood in a minute”, she announced proudly. “But where are we going to put it all?” I cried and opened the boot to prove my point. “Aww, it will fit” she purred and started adding

her unnecessary purchases to our essential camping gear. “If not, there is always the roof rack”.

We slowly rolled out of the souq carpark in third gear, packed to the brim. I had to admit that there was a lot less rattling now that every square cm was filled with stuff. Nothing could move. We made it as far as Samail before we had to throw the towel in the ring, so to speak. The smell of dried fish was so strong that I had tears in my eyes, making it difficult to drive, even in 3rd gear. “Are we there soon?” Mrs J enquired, as we continued our journey with the dried shark safely secured on the roof rack. Oh yes, it was going to be a looong drive to Salalah. I needed to find the guy who said that ‘it doesn’t matter how slow you move as long as you move forward’. I planned to sue him.



Medals		TOKYO 2020			
Table by country		Gold	Silver	Bronze	TOTAL
Ranking					
1	China	6	1	4	11
2	Japan	5	1	0	6
3	United States	4	2	4	10
4	South Korea	2	0	3	5
5	ROC*	1	4	2	7
6	Italy	1	1	3	5
7	Australia	1	1	1	3
-	France	1	1	1	3
9	Hungary	1	1	0	2
-	Tunisia	1	1	0	2
11	Austria	1	0	0	1
-	Ecuador	1	0	0	1
-	Iran	1	0	0	1
-	Kosovo	1	0	0	1
-	Thailand	1	0	0	1
-	Uzbekistan	1	0	0	1
17	Canada	0	2	0	2
-	Netherlands	0	2	0	2
19	Brazil	0	1	1	2
-	Britain	0	1	1	2
-	Indonesia	0	1	1	2
-	Serbia	0	1	1	2
-	Taiwan	0	1	1	2
24	Belgium	0	1	0	1
-	Bulgaria	0	1	0	1
-	Colombia	0	1	0	1
-	Spain	0	1	0	1
-	Georgia	0	1	0	1
-	India	0	1	0	1
-	Romania	0	1	0	1
31	Germany	0	0	2	2
-	Kazakhstan	0	0	2	2
-	Turkey	0	0	2	2
-	Ukraine	0	0	2	2
35	Estonia	0	0	1	1
-	Israel	0	0	1	1
-	Mexico	0	0	1	1
-	Mongolia	0	0	1	1
-	Slovenia	0	0	1	1
-	Switzerland	0	0	1	1

*Russian athletes

AFP

— AFP



Oman shooting team to arrive today

ADIL AL BALUSHI
TOKYO, JULY 25

Oman's experienced marksman, Hamed al Khatri, will arrive in Tokyo on Monday as second athlete from the Sultanate's delegation after Issa's arrival last week in the Olympic Village. This will be second successive Games participation for Khatri after his debut in Rio Olympics 2016.

The national shooting team will comprise Al Khatri's head coach, Sultan al Rushaidi and the administrative member Sulieman al Hinai. The arrival of all Oman's athletes will be completed on Wednesday as sprinters Barakat al Harthy and Mazoon al Alawi and weightlifter Amer al Khanjari will join the delegation in the Olympic Village.

An intensive training programme will be arranged for Al Khatri at Asaka Shooting Range ahead of his action on August 2 in the 50m rifle three position men's qualification round. The preparatory programme for shooter Khatri will be for six days under full technical supervision of the experienced national head coach Sultan al Rushaidi.

The national shooting team's efforts succeed to obtain a special permit from the organising committee and the technical team organisers to have more training sessions for a period of six days ahead of the official competition. These few days will assist Khatri to fully adapt with the shooting range which is new for him. He

Intensive preparatory
camp for shooter Hamed

Shoaib al Zadjali in
his fourth consecutive
Olympics as Anti-doping
station officer

Oman swimmers
encourage Issa ahead of
his debut tomorrow



Shoaib al Zadjali

will seek to register new records and raise the Sultanate's flag in this top showcase event.

OSA CHEERS FOR ISSA
The national team swimmers, head coaches and the technical experts in the Oman Swimming Association (OSA) encouraged swimmer Issa to show his best on Tuesday. Issa's team-mate swimmers, through virtual meeting held remotely, congratulated him for being the flag bearer during the opening ceremony. Also, they wished good luck and all the best for the Sultanate's delegation and athletes to show their best performance in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Mohammed al Sahli, technical expert in OSA, appreciated the top efforts made by Issa and his Japanese coach Kusanagi Kenta at Chukyo University to prepare for the Olympics Games.

"Reaching to the Olympics requires hard work from any athlete. Daily attendance in the trainings, learning from mistakes, continuous development on the personal technical level and registering new records will act as supporting tools to qualify in the top swimming events and to accomplish top achievements for the nation," he said.

ANTI-DOPING OFFICER
Shoaib al Zadjali, acting Secretary-General of Oman Anti-Doping Committee, is one of the active Sultanate delegation member in Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games as he was appointed as anti-doping station officer in different Olympic venues. Shoaib's selection for this position came after long experience and hard work from his side during the past years. This is the fourth presence of Suhar man in the



Olympic Games after successful attendance in Beijing 2018, London 2012 and Rio 2016. Besides to that, Al Zadjali also attended the 2018 Fifa World Cup in Russia and he took part in Olympic Winter Games in South Korea and Asian Games in Qatar and Indonesia.

The national experienced man in anti-doping has huge technical experience in this field due to his various participations in different international courses, programmes and workshops organised through the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada). He managed to enhance his experience in the required expertise after continuous attendance at tournaments and sporting events. Earlier, Shoaib was the officer for anti-doping in many top sports events and then he progressed as supervisor for the officers of the sample

collection. Commenting on his responsibilities in Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Shoaib said: "I am very glad to attend in this top global event for the fourth consecutive time. Attending in these world-class sporting events will assist to enhance the right technical experience and learn more from the top expertise who are available from different part of the world. Reaching to this position was not an easy step and I was among many candidates and we all competed through written exams and virtual interviews. Then, I have been selected for the Olympics and Paralympics Games as well," he added.

Mentioning his main duties, Al Zadjali said: "We are having a lot of responsibilities and tasks especially during this exceptional period of Covid-19 pandemic. Writing daily reports,

supervising all the anti-doping officers, monitoring the athletes and adherence to all the anti-doping regulations and taking precautionary measures and circulating the tasks among the team are the main responsibilities. I will be in Tokyo for 49 days and it is a proper period to gain the required experience for the experts," he said.

Shoaib al Zadjali concluded his statement by sending special thanks to the Oman Olympic Committee and Oman Anti-Doping Committee for their support to him in attending in these top sporting events. "I would like to thank as well all the international, regional and continental anti-doping agencies for their confidence in me and I hope to deliver the required performance in my position," he ended.

POORAN

POWERS WEST INDIES PAST AUSTRALIA IN ODI SERIES



Nicholas Pooran (R) of West Indies hits 6 and Alex Carey (L) of Australia watch during the 2nd ODI. – AFP

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados: Half-centuries from Nicholas Pooran and Jason Holder guided the West Indies to a series-levelling four-wicket win the second One-Day International of the three-match series against Australia at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Saturday.

Replying to the visitors’ modest total of 187 all out, the home side slipped to 72 for five before Pooran, who earned the “Man of the Match” award for his unbeaten 59, and former captain Holder, who contributed an invaluable 52, put on 93 for the seventh wicket to tilt the balance of the match decisively in their team’s favour.

They reached the target at 191 for six with 12 overs to spare. This result sets up the final match on Monday at the same venue as the series decider.

Earlier the Australians were required to engineer their own recovery from an even more desperate situation.

With the decision to bat first made on Thursday before the match was suspended due to a positive Covid 19 test by a non-playing member of the West Indies staff, Australia slumped to 45 for six as spinner Akeal Hosein snared three quick wickets following the

“We know it is never easy against a team like Australia and while we didn’t help our own cause with some of our earlier batting, I really want to credit the support of Jason in helping to take us over the line

NICHOLAS POORAN
West Indies batsman

early successes of the Caribbean seamers.

Matthew Wade then found a resilient partner in Mitchell Starc in putting on 51 for the seventh wicket before Adam Zampa was overshadowed by number ten Wes Agar as they put on 59 for the ninth wicket.

Agar, left out of the original eleven for the match but only included after Josh Hazlewood complained of a calf strain aggravated by being in isolation in his hotel room for 48 hours due to the Covid 19 scare, topscored with

an entertaining 41 while Wade and Zampa contributed 36 runs apiece.

Starc warmed up for his work with the new ball with a useful innings of 19 and then reinforced his ever-present threat to a fragile West Indies top order by dismissing Evin Lewis and Darren Bravo in quick succession. Spinners Adam Zampa and Ashton Turner then combined for three wickets and a complete capitulation, similar to the first match of the series, seemed inevitable.

But Pooran, who was dropped twice, and Holder made the most of the good fortune and eventually wrested the initiative from Alex Carey’s team.

“This was all about putting in the hard work,” said Pooran in reflecting on his own contribution to the result. “We know it is never easy against a team like Australia and while we didn’t help our own cause with some of our earlier batting, I really want to credit the support of Jason in helping to take us over the line.”

For Carey, it was a case of leaving his bowlers with too much work to do.

“We did well to come back from the situation we were in earlier in the match and that’s something

we are going to have to look at heading into the final match,” he acknowledged. “It should make for a really great occasion after that Covid scare that the series now comes down to a virtual final.” — AFP

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA

J Philippe c Lewis b Joseph	16
B McDermott c Hope b Cottrell	0
M Marsh c Hope b Holder	8
M Henriques c Holder b Hosein	4
A Carey b Hosein	10
A Turner b Hosein	1
M Wade c Pooran b Joseph	36
M Starc lbw Walsh	19
A Zampa b Cottrell	36
W Agar c Lewis b Joseph	41
R Meredith (not out)	0
Extras (LB-6, W-11, NB-1)	16
Total (all out, 47.1 overs)	187
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-23, 3-26, 4-41, 5-44, 6-45, 7-96, 8-128, 9-187	
Bowling: S Cottrell 8-1-29-2, J Holder 7-0-41-1, A Joseph 8-1-0-39-3, A Hosein 10-0-30-3, H Walsh 10-0-32-1, J Mohammed 4-0-12-0	
E Lewis lbw Starc	1
S Hope b Turner	38
D Bravo b Starc	0
J Mohammed b Zampa	11
N Pooran (not out)	59
K Pollard b Zampa	2
J Holder lbw Starc	52
A Joseph (not out)	5
Extras (LB-6, W-15, NB-2)	23
Total (For 6 wickets, 38 overs)	191
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-11, 3-47, 4-69, 5-72, 6-165	
Bowling: M Starc 10-1-26-3, W Agar 5-0-24-0, R Meredith 5-0-36-0, A Zampa 9-1-43-2, A Turner 6-0-37-1, M Marsh 3-0-19-0	



Podium finish for Al Zubair and Soucek in first GT Open Race at Imola



IMOLA (ITALY): Al Faisal Al Zubair and Andy Soucek maintained their impressive start to the International GT Open Championship season with a hard-earned third place in the first of two races at the Imola circuit in Italy on Saturday afternoon.

The duo qualified the Lechner Racing Team’s Porsche 911 GT3 R in fourth for the 70-minute race and managed to pass the Audi Sport Italia R8 of Lorenzo Ferrari and Riccardo Agostini to claim third place and add to their championship points’ tally.

Race win victory fell to Loris Spinelli’s Mercedes AMG from pole position, with Michele Beretta and Frederik Schandorff finishing second in the Vincenzo Sospiri Racing Lamborghini, 4.407 seconds behind the Italian after 41 laps of racing.

Omani Al Zubair said: “Andy qualified the car today in fourth place, which was an alright result considering the balance of performance of the Mercedes seems a little unfair. Going into the race, Andy started and managed to get into third place and this is where we finished. This was a great result. It was another podium in the championship that we should be really happy about.

“The car feels good, the

balance and the set-up are good. Hopefully we can have a good starting position in the next qualifying session and get another podium or a win.”

The Lechner Racing Team’s Porsche 911 GT3 R finished the first of the two free practice sessions in second place with a best lap of 1min 42.085sec after a 22-lap stint. The fastest time fell to Lorenzo Ferrari and Riccardo Agostini in their Audi R8. Al Zubair’s title rivals, Beretta and Schandorff were third in the baking hot conditions.

Ferrari and Agostini again topped the times in the second free practice session, with Al Zubair and Soucek coming home in third place behind Loris Spinelli’s Mercedes.

Attention then focused on the first 30-minute qualifying session on Saturday morning.

Spinelli claimed pole position with a best lap of 1min 39.511sec, with Michele Beretta guiding the VSR Lamborghini to second place and Lorenzo Ferrari coming home in third place. Soucek ran for 10 laps and a best tour of 1min 40.105sec put the Lechner Porsche in fourth place on the starting grid.

There will be a second qualifying session and one hour race on Sunday.







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MAISARAH

Oman mulls maiden Vertical Farming project

Sustainable agriculture: Subsidiary of Oman Food Investment Company explores foray into tech-driven multi-level, indoor cultivation

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Sultanate is weighing plans to set up its first Vertical Farming project — a landmark initiative which, when eventually implemented, will mark the country’s maiden foray into what is billed globally as ‘the future of sustainable agriculture’.

Vertical farming refers to the practice of cultivating all kinds of fruits, vegetables and other crops in vertically stacked layers, such as in buildings or skyscrapers, shipping containers and even repurposed warehouses.

It allows for optimisation of cultivation using various kinds of soilless farming techniques such as hydroponics, aquaponics, aeroponics and so on — an enterprise that is seen as promising for Oman’s arid climate.

The initiative is being spearheaded by Oman Food Investment Holding Company



SAOC (OFIC), the government’s food sector investment and development arm. A portfolio of new projects slated for implementation over the 2021 – 2026 time frame includes a first-ever commercial-scale Vertical Farming project, which will be planned to come up at Al Khoudh in Muscat Governorate.

OFIC, an affiliate of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), is currently overseeing the development of a substantial portfolio of food-related projects and initiatives aimed primarily at strengthening the Sultanate’s long-term food security.

Its investments, pursued either directly or through partnerships

and subsidiaries, span dairy processing, poultry and eggs, milk collection and distribution, fruit and vegetables retail, food logistics, food innovation, animal feed, and veterinary vaccines and pharmaceuticals and other commodities across the entire food value chain.

According to details shared

Vertical farming refers to the practice of cultivating all kinds of fruits, vegetables and other crops in vertically stacked layers, such as in buildings or skyscrapers, shipping containers and even repurposed warehouses.

recently by OFIC of its new wave of projects, the proposed Vertical Farming initiative, which is currently in its pre-feasibility stage, will be undertaken by the Agricultural Production and Marketing Company (APMC), a subsidiary of OFIC. Initial investment in the venture is estimated at RO 10 million.

The initiative, say experts, has the potential to spark the growth a wider industry around vertical farming in the Sultanate, given the many advantages associated with this economic activity in a country like Oman. With traditional agriculture constrained by a number of factors, chiefly water availability, soil salinity, dearth of arable land, and harsh

temperatures, the Sultanate has little choice but to explore vertical farming on a commercial scale, they point out.

With vertical farming, multiple types of crops can be cultivated at the same time across different levels, while cultivation can be prioritised to give importance to, for example, organic produce or high-value crops. Furthermore, with the aid of special LED lighting and other technologies, output can be optimised by as much as 10 times the yield from traditional farming.

Unlike conventional cultivation, which is susceptible to weather-related disruptions, natural pests and climate-related vagaries, vertical farming is undertaken in temperature-controlled indoor settings and thus shielded from external factors. In place of soil as a cultivation medium, peat moss or coconut husk can be used. Water usage – typically a major challenge in countries like Oman – can be minimised to less than a tenth of the requirement, according to experts.

Success in the delivery of the Al Khoudh project could potentially position Oman as a key player in vertical farming in the region.

Salalah Free Zone unveils new warehousing capacity



BUSINESS REPORTER
SALALAH, JULY 25

Salalah Free Zone, part of Asyad Group, has announced the completion of the second phase of its logistics cluster, which offers full-fledged warehouses covering a total area of 25,000 square metres. The new facility will enhance Salalah’s appeal as a hub for global supply chain logistics and innovative storage solutions targeted at local and international investors.

Ali bin Mohammed Tabouk, CEO of Salalah Free Zone, said the construction of the second phase was expedited after Phase 1,

offering 33,000 square metres of warehousing capacity, was fully leased out.

Both phases are suitable for various kinds of local and foreign commercial and industrial activities, he noted.

Built to international specs, the warehouses are suitably fitted out to cater to a wide variety of commodities and equipment, including foodstuff and pharmaceuticals.

Their location adjoining the Port of Salalah, which is visited by leading shipping lines of the world, ensures seamless connectivity with the global supply chain.

37% of corporate users in Oman targeted by financial malware in H1

Cybersecurity: Financial phishing one of the most popular tools used by cybercriminals to make money

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 25

Corporate users in the Sultanate were the targets of roughly a third of the 2,482 financial malware attacks recorded during the first half of this year, according to a report by cybersecurity specialist Kaspersky. While attacks have fallen this year compared to the same period in 2020, they continue to pose significant concern to the corporate community, the company noted.

“As local businesses have continued to adjust to remote work scenarios and the rest of the circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to witness cybercriminals using this to their advantage, exploiting the situation however they can. When considering such statistics, we believe it is evident that cybercriminals are more commonly targeting unsuspecting corporate users in Oman as a



way to compromise corporate systems,” says Oleg Kupreev, security researcher at Kaspersky.

Simply put, organisations in the Oman have become susceptible to financial malware as more employees work outside the relative safety of the corporate network.

The normalisation of a distributed workforce makes ensuring the protection of the personal endpoint devices of people, who need to access back-end systems to continue performing their job functions, that much more critical. In addition to securing these devices, cybersecurity training

of employees remains a key component to defend against the growing scourge of financial malware that uses phishing techniques to target individual users.

“It is especially financial phishing that has become one of the most popular tools used by cybercriminals to make money. It does not require much investment or technical expertise from a hacker and can be propagated quickly.

In most cases, successful scammers win access either to the victim’s money or data that can be sold or otherwise monetised. For any business, this points to

Simply put, organisations in the Oman have become susceptible to financial malware as more employees work outside the relative safety of the corporate network

OLEG KUPREEV
Security researcher, Kaspersky

how important it is to address one of the weakest links in the cybersecurity chain – that of the individual user. It also signifies the importance of remaining vigilant from a cybersecurity perspective, especially during difficult operating conditions,” Kupreev stated.

Beyond the fundamental cybersecurity solutions and training, companies must also consider using the likes of anti-advanced persistent threat (APT) and endpoint detection and response (EDR) technologies to further shore up the defensive posture of their network environment.

Bank Muscat's CSR initiative to support SME customers

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat has signed an agreement with Morison Muscat Chartered Accountants, a leading full service audit, tax and business advisory firm, to assist Bank Muscat and Meethaq SME customers comply with the recently introduced Value Added Tax (VAT).

It was signed by Ahmed bin Faqir al Balushi, Chief Corporate Banking Officer, Bank Muscat and Nasser bin Abdullah al Khamisi, Founder and Country Partner, Morison Muscat at the bank's Head Office, in the presence of Ibrahim bin Khamis al Balushi, Assistant General Manager — Small & Medium Enterprises, Bank Muscat.

As part of the bank's continuous support to its SME customers and in order to help them navigate and adapt to this new change,



the tie up with Morison Muscat Chartered Accountants will provide the following services free of charge — VAT Registration with the Tax Authority and one-to-one advisory on VAT queries.

A service desk will be available at the bank's Head Office to receive VAT applications from

SME customers, while tax experts from Morison Muscat will provide clarifications to customers through email, phone or virtual meetings. SME applicants can register for these free services through <https://mmjs.typeform.com/to/rbxiWqHt> and submitting their CR copy, National ID Card

and bank account details.

Speaking about the importance of this step, Ahmed bin Faqir al Balushi, Chief Corporate Banking Officer, Bank Muscat, said: "The bank is focused on strategic initiatives that complement and add value to our country's progress and development in close alignment with the national objective of stimulating an entrepreneurial mind-set.

The signing of this agreement with Morison Muscat will further support SMEs in the Sultanate. The bank is committed to working hand-in-hand with the government and its partners in line with its role in supporting the national economy and putting in place those measures, which can further boost the role of SMEs in alignment with the landmark Oman Vision 2040."

NBO launches new wealth management portal on mobile app



MUSCAT: Continuing to address the ever-evolving needs of its customers, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched its new wealth management portal, available through the bank's mobile app.

As the first service of its kind available in the market, the portal offers a range of useful features for Sadara and Mazaya customers, enabling them to view their portfolio, buy and sell mutual funds, buy single-fund Systematic Investment Plan (SIPs), review and renew risk profiles, and open an investment account. It's the latest upgrade for NBO's award-winning app, as it continues to find ways to make the banking experience seamless, accessible, and altogether more enjoyable.

Maha al Raisi (pictured), Head of Products at NBO, said, "At NBO we are working hard to expand and enhance our product offerings, in particular our digital capabilities, addressing the growing demand for online services.

Complementing our comprehensive wealth management services, the new portal will provide added value to our customers, allowing them to access and manage their financial portfolio whenever they wish, in a way that suits their lifestyle and needs." NBO's mobile app is filled with an ever-expanding list of innovative products and services to make its customers' lives easier and more rewarding.

Hyundai Motor's Elantra N debuts

MUSCAT: Hyundai Motor Company's high-performance N brand today unveiled its Elantra N (sold as Avante N in Korea) in a digital world premiere (<https://www.youtube.com/hyundainworldwide>).

The hot sedan completes the N brand lineup of 'everyday sports cars.' Elantra N is a high-performance variant of the All New Elantra, released in April 2020. It adds strong, dynamic driving capability and aggressive design elements on top of the sporty standard model.

In a video released today, Hyundai Motor's N brand provides details of over 40 N elements applied to Elantra N through a story about a boy falling in love with cars, and



visually reveals the excellence of this everyday sports car, which has been tuned precisely to enhance driving performance.

At the end of the video, N brand teases that it will participate in another endurance race with a car that combines a hydrogen fuel cell and an electric battery.

"Pairing hydrogen and battery power could open up very

interesting future options for Hyundai in motorsports and beyond," said Thomas Schemera, Executive Vice-President and Head of Customer Experience Division at Hyundai Motor Company. "Hydrogen can be used as a range extender or a power booster.

We have the technology available and I am quite confident that we will make this happen."

Boeing set to face investor scrutiny as problems plague jets

NEW YORK: The aviation industry appears to finally be past the worst of the coronavirus downturn, but Boeing's to-do list remains extensive following a messy start to 2021.

The problems this year include electrical issues with the 737 MAX jet, fuselage troubles on the 787 and yet another delay in the timeframe for the 777X.

The myriad challenges reflect the changed regulatory climate facing Boeing in the wake of a pair of 737 MAX crashes in 2018 and 2019 that claimed 346 lives and led to a 20-month grounding of the aircraft.

"Unfortunately for Boeing right now, the added scrutiny is justified," said Ken Herbert, an aviation analyst at Canaccord Genuity.

Chief Executive Dave Calhoun on Wednesday will update investors on its latest set of challenges when the company reports second-quarter results.

He will likely discuss the prospects for the 787 Dreamliner following Boeing's move earlier this month to cut production after



Grounded Boeing 737 MAX aircraft are seen parked in an aerial photo at Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington, in this file photo. — Reuters

identifying another issue with the aircraft.

In May, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) formally notified Boeing that the 777X would need more than two years of additional testing and analysis before it could be certified, saying the jet was "not yet ready" to advance to the next stage of evaluation.

In April, Boeing notified 16 airlines flying its 737 MAX planes of an electrical issue, leading to the immediate grounding of more than 100 jets. Carriers resumed

service on the jets in May after regulators approved Boeing's proposed fix.

Boeing has also pushed back the timeframe for new deliveries of presidential plane Air Force One and experienced numerous setbacks on the KC46 Air Force tanker.

Boeing's efforts to get back on track have been complicated by disruptions to supply chains and personnel during the pandemic that have weighed on the broader economy.

The company's decision to

Ooredoo provides support to Covid-19 vaccination campaign



MUSCAT: Helping the community and supporting the Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate General of Health Services in Muscat, Ooredoo provided logistic and ground support during the national Covid-19 vaccination campaign that took place at the Automobile Association. Part of the company's CSR programme 'Goodwill', the initiative lives out one of their core values of 'caring'.

Raed bin Mohammed bin Dawood, Director of Branding, Communications and Corporate Affairs at Ooredoo, said, "Vaccinations are an important part of protecting our society against Covid-19 and helping to keep the economy up and running. As an integral part of Omani society, it's our duty to support and assist the community whenever possible, and more

so now.

The Ministry of Health's efforts to roll out the vaccines as fast as possible has been amazing and we're proud to see members of our Ooredoo family on the ground providing support and lifting the burden of medical teams who are working hard to keep us all safe." From the start of the pandemic, Ooredoo has supported the community in various ways, such as donating medical testing supplies to the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, revamping its award-winning app to keep customers connected and providing support to the educational sector. Ooredoo places itself at the heart of the society and promotes the advancement of the Omani people, while fostering sustainable economic and social growth.

Rosatom, DP World to join efforts on Arctic container shipments



The myriad challenges reflect the changed regulatory climate facing Boeing in the wake of a pair of 737 MAX crashes in 2018 and 2019 that claimed 346 lives and led to a 20-month grounding of the aircraft

consolidate 787 production to South Carolina and shift operations from Washington state has also led to disruption.

But experts say a good portion of the problems stem from the aftermath of the MAX crashes, including a withering September 2020 congressional report that blasted Boeing as overly focused on profit to the detriment of engineering.

The report said Boeing suffered from a "culture of concealment" from regulators at the FAA, who themselves practiced "grossly insufficient oversight" of the company. — AFP

MOSCOW: Russian state nuclear energy firm Rosatom and Dubai logistics firm DP World agreed to join efforts in developing pilot container shipping between Northwest Europe and East Asia through the Arctic, the companies said.

Rosatom is a designated sole infrastructure operator of the Northern Sea Route which it plans to develop into a fully-fledged transport corridor.

"The Northern Transit Corridor holds out the prospect of shorter transit times between East and West," Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Group Chairman and CEO of DP World was quoted as saying in the statement. — Reuters



Air Canada sees higher bookings as travel curbs ease



An aircraft is seen inside the Air Canada hangar at Pearson Toronto International Airport in Toronto. — Reuters

MONTREAL: Air Canada forecast increased bookings for domestic and US-bound flights in the winter as travel restrictions ease after reported a bigger-than-expected quarterly loss. Canada's largest carrier predicted slower cash burn as travel comes back, although bookings overall remain below pre-pandemic levels.

"We are seeing steadily increasing bookings for the domestic, trans-border and Atlantic markets and to sun destinations for the coming winter," CEO Michael Rousseau said. "In fact, for the next winter sun travel, future bookings during some weeks in June were ahead of the same period in 2019." Canada will allow fully vaccinated US tourists to enter the country from Aug 9, after a 16-month ban.

— Reuters

Global supply chains buckle as virus variant and disasters strike

Given ships transport around 90 per cent of the world's trade, the crew crisis is disrupting the supply of everything from oil and iron ore to food and electronics

LONDON: A new worldwide wave of Covid-19. Natural disasters in China and Germany. A cyber attack targeting key South African ports.

Events have conspired to drive global supply chains towards breaking point, threatening the fragile flow of raw materials, parts and consumer goods, according to companies, economists and shipping specialists.

The Delta variant of the coronavirus has devastated parts of Asia and prompted many nations to cut off land access for sailors. That's left captains unable to rotate weary crews and about 100,000 seafarers stranded at sea beyond their stints in a flashback to 2020 and the height of lockdowns.

"We're no longer on the cusp of a second crew change crisis, we're in one," Guy Platten, secretary-general of the International Chamber of Shipping, said.

"This is a perilous moment for global supply chains." Given ships transport around 90 per cent of the world's trade, the crew crisis is disrupting the supply of everything from oil and iron ore to food and electronics.

German container line Hapag



Containers are stacked up at the port in Long Beach, California. — Reuters

Lloyd described the situation as "extremely challenging."

"Vessel capacity is very tight, empty containers are scarce and the operational situation at certain ports and terminals is not really improving," it said. "We expect this to last probably into the fourth quarter – but it is very difficult to predict." Meanwhile, deadly floods in economic giants China and Germany have further ruptured global supply lines that had yet to recover from the first wave of the pandemic, compromising trillions of dollars of economic activity that rely on them.

The Chinese flooding is curtailing the transport of coal from mining regions such as Inner Mongolia and Shanxi, the state planner says, just as power

plants need fuel to meet peak summer demand.

In Germany, road transportation of goods has slowed significantly. In the week of July 11, as the disaster unfolded, the volume of late shipments rose by 15 per cent from the week before, according to data from supply-chain tracking platform FourKites.

Nick Klein, VP for sales and marketing in the Midwest with Taiwan freight and logistics company OEC Group, said companies were scrambling to free goods stacked up in Asia and in US ports due to a confluence of crises.

"It's not going to clear up until March," Klein said.

Manufacturing industries are reeling.

Automakers, for example, are again being forced to stop production because of disruptions caused by Covid-19 outbreaks. Toyota Motor Corp said this week it had to halt operations at plants in Thailand and Japan because they couldn't get parts.

Stellantis temporarily suspended production at a factory in the UK because a large number of workers had to isolate to halt the spread of the virus.

The industry has already been hit hard by a global shortage of semiconductors this year, mainly from Asian suppliers. Earlier this year, the auto industry consensus was that the chip supply crunch would ease in the second half of 2021 – but now some senior executives say it will continue into 2022. — Reuters

UK watchdog warns consumers over CoinBurp crypto launch

LONDON: Crypto broker CoinBurp has no authorisation for a planned launch of its \$BURP token and initial exchange offering on Monday, July 26, Britain's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) said on Sunday in the latest crackdown on crypto trading.

CoinBurp said last week it had raised \$6 million to build a platform for buying and selling non-fungible tokens (NFTs), digital assets that are attracting interest from some investors but also scrutiny from regulators worried about the risks.

"The firm does not yet hold full FCA registration under the money laundering, terrorist financing and transfer of funds (information on the payer) regulations ... but has submitted an application for the FCA for registration," the FCA said in a statement.

Although CoinBurp is listed on the FCA's temporary registration register, this does not allow any firm to claim to be registered or authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority, the watchdog said.

"Whilst firms with this status can continue to trade, such firms and their personnel have not yet been assessed as fit and proper, and we have not yet determined their application for the purposes of the money laundering regulations," the FCA said.

— Reuters

India's economic rebound faces rising risk from virus variants

BENGALURU: India's economic rebound, already weakened in recent months, could lose further momentum as coronavirus variants pose the greatest threat and inflation rises, a Reuters poll of economists found.

The latest survey results suggest difficult policy decisions lie ahead for the Reserve Bank of India, which has already seen two consecutive months of inflation above the 6 per cent upper limit of the range it tolerates.

The RBI said last week that prospects for the economy had brightened and the inflation rise would be transitory, echoing the views of most major central banks.

But the fast spread of the Delta variant in some states — and it is becoming dominant around the world — has raised doubts as the country contends with a devastating wave of Covid-19.

The July 15-22 poll of 52 economists showed a third consecutive downgrade to the growth outlook for the current fiscal year 2021-22, but also the third such upgrade to the following year.

About two-thirds of economists, or 23 of 36, who responded to an extra question said virus variants were the biggest risk, while only a handful



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

cited high inflation.

"Resurgence in cases and (any) emergence of fresh variants are notable risks for the economy for the rest of the year, particularly at a time when vaccination coverage is short of achieving a critical mass," said DBS economist Radhika Rao.

"Reinstatement of movement curbs risks deepening the damage inflicted on the informal sector, which contributes to nearly half of

the national output and employs a majority." A separate Reuters survey of global health experts last month concluded another wave of infections and Covid-19 in India was likely by October.

After contracting in the previous fiscal year at its fastest annual pace since records began over four decades ago — one of the worst-hit in Asia, the economy was predicted to expand 9.4 per

After contracting in the previous fiscal year at its fastest annual pace since records began over four decades ago — one of the worst-hit in Asia, the economy was predicted to expand 9.4 per cent in the current fiscal year

cent in the current fiscal year.

The last time the economy grew that quickly was in 2010.

The latest consensus forecast was a downgrade from 9.8 per cent in the previous poll in May, itself down from 11.0 per cent in April, and slightly below the RBI's latest projection of 9.5 per cent.

Asked for their worst-case scenario this fiscal year, economists provided a median 7.0 per cent, in a 5.0 per cent-9.0 per cent range. Growth, in any case, was expected to slow to 6.9 per cent in fiscal 2022-23.

Although inflation was forecast to ease from 6.3 per cent at the last measure, the consensus was for it to average above the mid-point of the RBI's medium-term target of 2 per cent to 6 per cent at least until early 2023. — Reuters

US judge rules Lithium Americas may excavate Nevada mine site



A haul truck carries a full load at a mine operation near Elko, Nevada. — Reuters

HOUSTON: A US federal judge has ruled that Lithium Americas Corp may conduct excavation work at its Thacker Pass lithium mine site in Nevada, denying a request from environmentalists who said the digging could harm sage grouse and other wildlife.

The ruling marked a rare win for a US critical minerals project as environmental groups increasingly pressure courts and regulators to block mining projects, even if they produce metals key to building electric vehicles. read more Chief Judge Miranda Du of the federal court in Reno, Nevada, said late on Friday that the digging —

needed to determine whether the land holds historical import for Native Americans — may proceed while she determines the broader question of whether former President Donald Trump's administration erred when it approved the project in January. Du said she will try to publish her decision by early 2022.

Vancouver, Canada-based Lithium Americas had agreed not to dig before July 29 while Du deliberated. It was not immediately clear if the company now intends to start digging on that date. Company representatives could not be reached for comment. — Reuters



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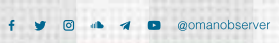


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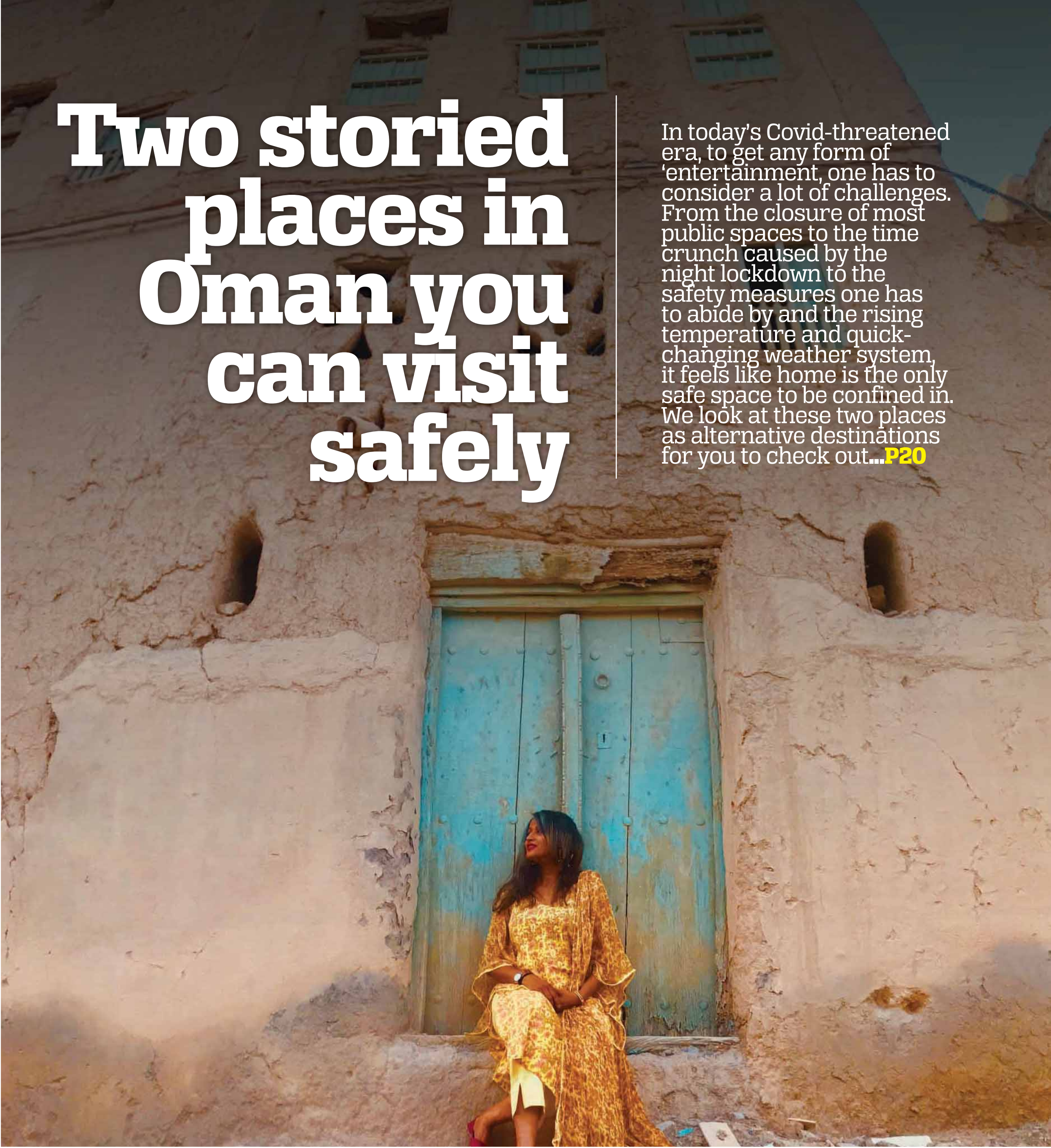
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features



Two storied places in Oman you can visit safely

In today's Covid-threatened era, to get any form of 'entertainment, one has to consider a lot of challenges. From the closure of most public spaces to the time crunch caused by the night lockdown to the safety measures one has to abide by and the rising temperature and quick-changing weather system, it feels like home is the only safe space to be confined in. We look at these two places as alternative destinations for you to check out...**P20**

MUSIC

READ

IT'S BETTER THIS WAY

BY DEBBIE MACOMBER

Julia Jones begins a new life after discovering her husband's infidelity almost six years ago.

Andrew Lloyd Webber opens Drury Lane theatre after \$80-million revamp

BRITISH MUSICAL impresario Andrew Lloyd Webber re-opens his Theatre Royal Drury Lane on Friday after a two-year \$80-million restoration, aiming to keep the historic cultural site open all day and not just for performances.

The theatre, known as The

Lane, boasts a revamped auditorium, swanky staircases, a champagne bar inspired by the Pantheon in Rome, an all-day dining area as well as a cocktail bar named after society photographer Cecil Beaton.

Composer Lloyd Webber, a veteran of London's West End,

bought the theatre in 2019 and embarked on the 60-million-pounds (\$82-million) restoration project, aimed at honouring the building's history, with his wife Madeleine.

Situated in London's Covent Garden, the venue is described as "the oldest theatre site in continuous use in the world", active since the 17th century.

"The task of restoring the Theatre Royal was threefold. How to reinstate (architect Benjamin Dean) Wyatt's glorious 'front of house' rooms, how to fix the 1922 auditorium and, third, how to make this extraordinary building a versatile, vibrant heart of the artistic soul of Covent Garden," Lloyd Webber said in a statement.

"The restoration of the Theatre Royal, uniting my two great passions of theatre and architecture, has been a colos-



sal task rendered very difficult by the covid pandemic. It simply would have ground to a halt without the dedication of our extraordinary craftsmen and the team overseeing the project in, at times, almost impossible circumstances."

Prince Charles and his wife Camilla officially opened the theatre last month. Its ground floor opens to the public on Friday while "Frozen The Musical" is scheduled to open at the theatre in late August. — **Reuters**



All eyes on Salalah's beloved Khareef

Text by Yeru Ebuen
Photos by Chris Cherian

NOW THAT the full lockdown is finally over, a lot of the online conversations happening now revolve around Salalah's hotly-anticipated Khareef season.

During the lockdown, with fewer human movements in Salalah and the continued onslaught of the monsoon, reports coming in show that fields and valleys were finally transformed into lush gardens.

"The lush greenery is not as amazing as two years back when there was more water and rain due to the cyclone but without a doubt, it's the typical khareef that gives you an escape from the seething heart of Muscat," one Dhofari citizen noted.

Numerous questions had been floated even prior to the lockdown. Will Salalah be opened for travel amongst Oman's residents and citizens? Will it be opened for tourists from abroad and other GCC states? How safe is the travel? And are we going to see the 5 pm curfew cancelled during the khareef season this August? Here are a few refreshers of where we currently stand when it comes to the Supreme Committee Decisions.

WILL SALALAH BE OPENED FOR TRAVEL AMONGST OMAN'S RESIDENTS AND CITIZENS?

The answer is both yes and no. As per the last update released by the Supreme Committee prior to the full lockdown, residents and citizens who got their first jab of the vaccine will be able to travel and visit Dhofar. If you haven't taken your jab yet, then that means that it's a no for you.

While this policy is great news for those who got their vaccine, the country is yet to fully vaccinate those below 18. Parents are awaiting clarification whether their kids who were not vaccinated yet will be allowed entry. Hopefully, a series of statements



will be made this week to clarify this matter. Our reporters will definitely be following up.

WILL TRAVEL TO DHOFAR FROM ABROAD AND OTHER GCC STATES BE ALLOWED?

While 'tourists' was mentioned in the Supreme Committee's announcement two weeks back, it wasn't specified if those tourists are the ones from abroad. With still the threat of the new variants, the most likely scenario will be a no unless a clear measure is put in place to ensure the safety of the governorate. It is anticipated that the full-lockdown will result in a lower number of Covid cases and the easing of cases in ICU, those efforts will definitely not be wasted nor the authorities will allow wanton disregard for public safety.

HOW SAFE IS IT TO TRAVEL TO SALALAH?

With our recent experience, flight-wise, with full-board planes, regardless of the measures in place, it still is an alarming sight to see. One fellow passenger noted



that airports and aeroplanes are a powder keg of Covid transmission the reason being that while measures are put in place at the airport, once you are at the boarding gate and inside the plane, all safety measures fly out of the window. The best option, as recommended not only by travel experts but also by the majority of driving enthusiasts, is to go by road. So if you have the patience for 8 to 10 hours of drive, then you can choose between the coastal drive passing through Sur towards Ashkharah

or you can opt for the shorter Adam-Thamrait road.

WILL THE CURRENT CURFEW THAT IS STILL IN EFFECT BE CANCELED?

Decisions by the Supreme Committee as explained by the Minister of Health look into the balance of overall health safety and economic movement. While a lot are praying and gossiping that it will be removed, the ultimate decision will still come from the authorities.

ENVIRONMENT

Hair today, green tomorrow: UK stylists join eco-drive



HAIRDRESSERS across Britain are being urged to do their bit for the environment by recycling snipped-off hair to help clean up oil spills, make compost or generate energy.

At an east London salon, Fry Taylor, one of the founders of the Green Salon Collective, demonstrates spare hair being used in depolluting filters.

He shows how a cotton net stuffed with hair, swept across the surface of a tank of water contaminated with motor oil, instantly cleans up the pollutant.

"The hair just naturally will absorb the oil and hold on to the oil, that's the important factor," Taylor, a former hairdresser, told AFP.

A kilo of hair can absorb up to eight litres (two gallons) of oil, according to experts.

The idea of using hair filters originated in the United States and has already been tested in real disasters, such as when a Japanese tanker sank off the coast of Mauritius a year ago.

Britain was lagging behind in recycling unwanted hair when the collective formed last summer, according to Taylor.

"There are, in other countries around the world, recycling systems for hairdressing salons," he said.

"In the UK and Ireland, they just don't have the infrastructure.

"We're not going to wait another five or 10 years for governments and councils to have these systems in place, let's just do it ourselves," he added.

GREEN TAX

The waste produced by the hairdressing industry in the UK each year could fill 50 football stadiums, the collective said.

Most rubbish, including aluminium foil, coloured tubes and 99 per cent of cut hair, is sent to a landfill site, it added. Another big problem is chemical waste such as dyes and bleaches.

"There are currently approximately 30,000 salons and another 100,000 freelancers" who are pouring hydrogen peroxide and ammonia into water systems, Taylor said.

The collective is encouraging salons to save these products in a small bin, which it then collects and sends to a facility to produce electricity.

Hairstylist Adam Reed, who owns a salon in London's trendy Spitalfields neighbourhood, is a recent convert to the recycling mission and proudly explains his system to customers.

Saying he was "blown away" by what the Green Salon Collective had taught him, the internationally-renowned hairdresser added he "didn't quite realise the enormity of it" beforehand.

"It made me realise that sustainability in salons is something that had been missing and it's really easy to bring into the salon," he said.

"We have our bins, all labelled, so it's easy to navigate."

Hair, protective equipment, metals, papers and plastics each have their own bin.

The salon, which pays a £120-fee (\$192, 140 euros) to be a member of the collective, also recycles leftover dye products.

Reed charges clients a "green tax" of one or two pounds, and has so far received a "very positive response".

SUPER FOOD

Composting is another green use of hair, whose rich nitrogen content makes it an ideal fertiliser supplement.

Collective member Ryan Crawford, owner of a salon in the town of Milton Keynes, northwest of London, has experimented with hair on his vegetables in the garden.

On a sunny July day, he showed AFP two young cabbage shoots: one, surrounded by hair, is intact; the other, planted without hair, is skeletal and gnawed.

"It's like a protective barrier around the base of the new seedlings," he said.

"It's definitely worked keeping things like slugs or snails off," he added, saying that putting hair directly into the soil also helps retain moisture and acts as "a super-food for the earth," replenishing nitrogen levels.

Over the last year, around 600 salons in the UK and Ireland have joined the collective, which has amassed around 500 kilos of hair.

It has been used to clean up waterways, an oil spill in Northern Ireland in May and for composting.

The collective has also gathered 3.5 tonnes of metal, which is being recycled.

It now hopes to export the model on a large scale across Europe. — AFP



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ENTERTAINMENT

Lizzo, Lenny Kravitz named among PETA's 'Most Beautiful Vegan Stars'



EATING CLEAN is a beautiful thing.

And the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals is shining a light on some of their favourite celebrities for doing so.

Lizzo and Lenny Kravitz are among the 20 bold-faced names on PETA's Most Beautiful Vegan Celebrities of 2021. The Norfolk, Virginia-based non-profit organisation unveiled its annual list on Thursday in honour of its 20th anniversary.

"Vegan options are now on every menu and in every grocery store, and you can't go to a basketball or football game these days without spotting a vegan champion," PETA Senior Vice-President Lisa Lange said with the announcement.

"We've come so far in 20 years, and that's thanks in large part to PETA's 'beautiful vegan celebrities,'



who have inspired millions of people to leave animals off their plates."

Lizzo, who went vegan last year, was credited for encouraging fans to go vegan by sharing her favourite vegan restaurants and recipes on TikTok and Instagram.

Kravitz, known for eating fruits and vegetables from his Bahamian garden, says being vegan is "the right thing for yourself and the planet and animals."

Grammy-winning "Leave the Door Open" singer Anderson .Paak made the list for ensuring he only ate vegan chicken during his 2018 appearance on the popular First We Feast YouTube series, "Hot Ones."

Others make the cut — for cutting out animal proteins — include Grammy-nominated singers Chloe x Halle, NBA star Chris Paul, activist and former football player Colin Kaepernick, Formula 1 champion Lewis Hamilton and Pinky Cole, owner of the Black-owned vegan restaurant chain Slutty Vegan.

PETA — whose motto reads, in part, that "animals are not ours to eat" — opposes speciesism, a human-supremacist worldview.

A global shift towards a vegan diet is necessary to combat the worst effects of climate change, according to the United Nations. — **dpa**

CONSERVATION

Sixth Saudi site makes UNESCO heritage list



A SIXTH SITE in Saudi Arabia has been added to UNESCO's world heritage list, the UN organisation announced on Saturday.

Hima, in the Gulf state's southwest, is home to one of the largest rock art complexes in the world.

"New site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List: cultural area of Hima, Saudi Arabia. Mabrouk (congratulations)!" UNESCO announced.

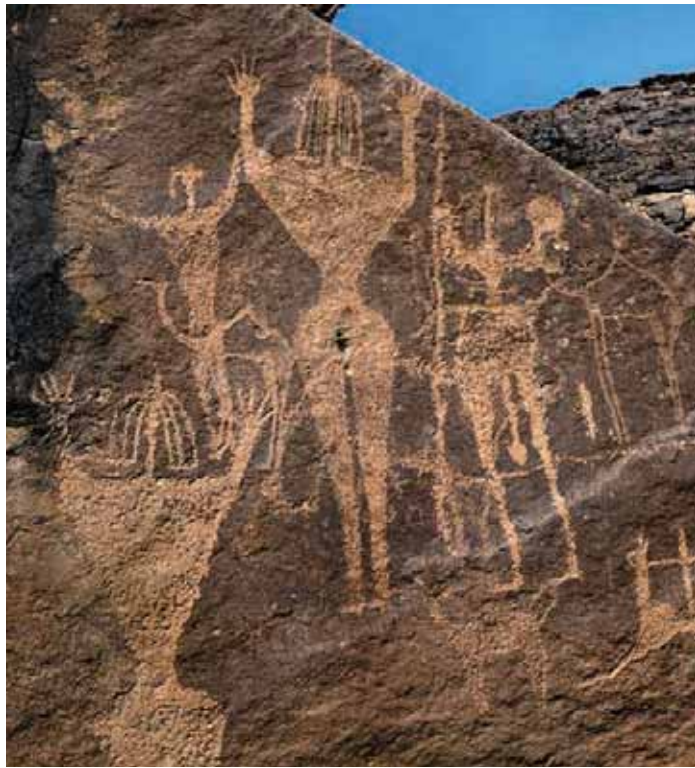
Hima features more than 34 separate sites including rock inscriptions and wells along the route of the ancient Arabian caravans.

Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan al Saud, the Saudi Culture Minister, welcomed the listing, the official SPA news agency reported.

The kingdom has a "rich heritage (of) human civilisations. Efforts have borne fruit in making it known to the world," it quoted him as saying.

SPA said Hima was a conduit for caravans on the trade and Haj routes to and from the southern parts of Arabia.

"People who passed through the area between pre- and post-historic times have left behind a substantial collection of rock art depicting hunt-



ing, wildlife, plants, symbols, and tools used at the time, as well as thousands of inscriptions," the news agency said.

The site covers 557 square kilometres (215 square miles).

SPA said the wells in the area are more than 3,000 years old and were considered a vital source of fresh water in the vast desert of Najran province.

"They still serve fresh water to this

day," it added.

Other UNESCO sites in Saudi Arabia include rock art in the Hail region and historic Jeddah.

In 2019, Riyadh announced that for the first time it would grant tourist visas for those wishing to visit Saudi Arabia.

Previously, the country was open only to businessmen and Muslim pilgrims visiting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. — **AFP**

TRAVEL TALES

Purified: Japan's hikers return to Mount Fuji



FOR A YEAR, the peak of Japan's iconic Mount Fuji has been off-limits because of coronavirus, but now hikers are flocking back to catch the spectacular sunrise above the clouds.

The active volcano's symmetrical slopes were closed to the public last summer due to the pandemic, and only reopened this month.

In the early hours of a recent morning, more than 100 people were gathered at the summit of the sacred mountain, which is capped with treacherous ice and snow for most of the year.

"Fuji has always been revered. It is a mountain that is an object of worship," said Takeo Tokunari, a 34-year-old hiker.

"Even though I am not particularly religious, I do feel purified by coming here, somehow."

Fuji-san, as it is known in Japanese, is the quintessential symbol of the country currently hosting the virus-postponed Tokyo Olympics.

Cycling events are taking place on and around its slopes, with the steep climbs of the long-distance road race challenging even the fittest athletes in Japan's sweltering summer heat.

The 3,776-metre (12,388 foot) mountain is about two hours from central Tokyo by train.

But it can be seen for miles around, and has been immortalised in countless Japanese artworks, including Hokusai's world-famous "Great Wave".

Just after 4:30 am, after a long night of climbing and a short rest on the mountain-side, hikers were treated to the majestic sight of the sunrise.

Climbers at the summit can watch it breaking through the clouds behind a traditional "torii" gate on the mountainside.

"I have already climbed other mountains, but Mount Fuji is special," said Haruka Fujimori, a 23-year-old flight attendant.

"It is a volcano not connected to any other mountain range, it stands alone majestically on the landscape, I find it beautiful."

Mizuki Ogawa, also 23, said at the summit that climbing Fuji had been a personal challenge.

Fuji last erupted in 1707, and while it has not shown any signs of life in recent decades, experts say an eruption could shower Tokyo in ash and force hundreds of thousands to evacuate.

But right now, it's the preserve of early-morning adventurers like Chikako Kubo, 29.

"There is something fresh and divine: a sunrise is a start, an opportunity to take stock and start something new," she said. — **AFP**



Two storied places in Oman you can visit safely

By Rumpa Mitra
Instagram: @rumpa_mitra



FOR A LOT of us, it is mentally exhausting to think of creative ways to engage in safe entertainment both indoor and outdoor. I have office mates who are noticeably not their usual self just because being stuck at home has severely affected their mental health.

To get any form of 'entertainment, one has to consider a lot of challenges. From the closure of most public spaces to the time crunch caused by the night lockdown to the safety measures one has to abide by and the rising temperature and quick-changing weather system, it feels like home is the only safe space to be confined in.

As an outdoor lover, I know for a fact that Oman has much captivating natural beauty. I've hiked different mountains, wadis and deserts and most, if not all of them, have taken my breath away.

Seeing how defeated my office mate in the face of surmounting Covid challenges inspired me to be on the lookout for places that would quench my thirst for being in nature without risking my health and that of others.

A few weeks later, I explored two lovely places in Oman. Having considered nearly all the challenges I've mentioned, I felt that this will be a good option for families to get refreshed and rejuvenated during the weekends without risking their health. Both of these places are beautifully maintained by the local authorities and residents and offer an insight into the history of Oman. But rather than elaborating about the history and tradition of the place which is already available on the Internet, I would like to share why these places can be visited at this time.

These places are also within a 2-hours drive from Muscat and do not require four-wheel drives. Leaving Muscat at six in the morning would allow you to have a comfortable drive minus the searing heat of the midday sun. Considering the lockdown timings, these kinds of short, pocket-friendly trips are ideal getaways for families and also offer a glimpse into Oman's storied past. Most importantly since there is no crowding, the places are relatively safer to visit in the present scenario.

ABANDONED RUINS AT AL HAMRA VILLAGE

This is a 400-year-old town in the northeastern part of Oman. The Al Hamra ruins are estimated to be between 700-1000 years old. You can stroll through the lanes of neatly lined mud-brick houses, walk into the gloomy rooms through the half-broken yet pretty doorways, some of those houses have stairs through which you can access the upper floors. But you need to be very careful while moving through these stairs considering their age and condition. While some houses are partially broken, some are still standing tall with

pride and charm. The village is abandoned as all the residents have moved elsewhere to more comfortable dwellings. This place gives an essence of Oman in the olden days and the lifestyle of the people at that time. The place is picturesque and for people with an interest in photography, it's a must-visit.

Bait Al Jabal Hospitality Inn is located in one of the oldest houses of Al Hamra. They have renovated the building and converted it into a hotel which gives you a feel of the traditional Omani style of living. This is the only option available for a stay-in in this village. They also have a beautiful terrace restaurant with an amazing view from the top.

JABREEN CASTLE

Approximately 185 km from Muscat towards Bahla, Jabreen Castle is one of the most beautiful historical monuments in Oman that I have seen. The castle is very nicely preserved and well maintained by the Government. According to the website they are open from Saturday to Thursday 9 am to 4 pm and on Friday 8 am to 11 am. I visited this place on a Saturday. There is an entry fee of 500 baizas and also an optional audio-guided tour is available with very minimal charges. I didn't opt for the audio tour as most of the sections had information about its history and significance very nicely displayed.

The Jabreen Castle was built in 1675 by Imam Bil-Arab bin Sultan. The castle is three-storey tall and has three wings featuring decorated windows, wooden balconies, different rooms like an armoury, women's sitting area, numerous reception halls, library, rooms for storing food and dates, toilets/bathing areas, gender-wise separate jails, etc. One of the very interesting parts is that the ceiling of each room is uniquely and breathtakingly painted. The utensils used during that time are also preserved and neatly displayed for visitors.

The architecture, history and surroundings are so well blended and undoubtedly this is one of my favourite spots as of now.

Oman has a lot to offer, even during these critical times. Following the rules handed by the authority, there are also safe ways to navigate into different places in Oman. When we visited these two places, we stayed for almost 3 hours per location. During those visits, there was almost no other visitor.

LOCATION :

Al Hamra - GPS: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/6GyxkrMivUPULuYK9>

Jabreen Castle - GPS: <https://goo.gl/maps/WHhYss6yjjMQYxEt8>

