



Wear a mask... always!

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MALL OF OMAN TO OPEN IN SEPT
GO TO PAGE 02 NATION

Royal Decree appoints envoys



Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq issued Royal Decree No 46/2021 on Tuesday appointing non-resident ambassadors, which reads as follows:
Article 1 appoints Ibrahim Ahmed Mohammed al Mu'aini, Oman's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the sultanate's extraordinary and plenipotentiary non-resident ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan.

Article 2 appoints Ali Sulaiman Said al Darmaki, Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of Sudan, as the sultanate's extraordinary and plenipotentiary non-resident ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan.
Article 3 states that the decree will be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.
ONA

Ministry of Sports to promote marathons



Muscat - H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, issued a decision on Tuesday forming the main committee of a first-of-its-kind Governorates Marathon (district marathon) covering all parts of the sultanate.
The decision comes within the context of H H Sayyid Theyazin's attention and keenness to encourage various types of sports and adoption of a healthy lifestyle.

A statement issued by the ministry said, 'Collective sports cement social ties, with professional performers engaging with members of society opening avenues of communication.'
The ministry will organise the marathon in cooperation with Oman Athletic Association.

The marathon will focus on the concept of social partnership and build awareness on various types of sports, open up opportunities for owners of related projects and businesses, and allow sportsmen and sportswomen more scope to practise their chosen discipline of sport.
ONA

666,000 vaccinated

Citizens hail brisk pace and smooth conduct of National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre



3.7mn

PEOPLE TARGETED IN NATIONAL IMMUNISATION CAMPAIGN

18%

OF TOTAL TARGET POPULATION COVERED

71%

RECEIVED ONE DOSE (473,000)

29%

RECEIVED TWO DOSES (193,000)

Shaddad al Musalmey
Muscat

The vaccination drive at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) targeting the 45 + age group that commenced on Sunday has been running smoothly. The first day saw as many as 3,000 individuals being vaccinated.

The Ministry of Health announced that 666,000 individuals have so far been vaccinated in the sultanate.

Dr Ambarin al Balushi, field manager of the OCEC vaccination centre, described the arrangements and conduct of the drive a "success".

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, she informed that the centre only administers vaccines to those who have registered in advance. "Currently, we are only receiving those registered who are 45 years and older irrespective of their medical conditions. The arrangements are smooth, involving minimal steps when registered persons arrive. These involve confirming their registration, taking a token number and waiting for their turn. We have separate sections for women and men. They receive their vaccination certificate after being administered the shot," Dr Ambarin said.



She called on those in the target group of 45 + to register and await their call for vaccination.

"We are here for you. We have to vaccinate because we are in a dangerous situation right now and the only thing we can do is to vaccinate and, of course, practise good hygiene. We are open from 8am to 6pm."

Those who came for the job at OCEC praised the smooth conduct of the campaign. "The whole process involving a few steps took only a few minutes. They are

doing a great job to preserve the health of the people," said Jumaa bin Salim al Subhi who came to get vaccinated at OCEC.

Aiman al Balushi, senior staff nurse, who administers vaccines at the centre, said, "We do this job with pride and I make sure those who come to me leave with a smile. After vaccinating them, I just advise them to take paracetamol if they experience fever or

headache, and to take rest the first day."

Those walking out of the injection rooms wore smiles and appreciated the staff. "One of the main features of the centre is the friendliness of the staff. They are kind and helpful; the whole process is very smooth. It did not take much time from the moment we arrived at the centre," said Khalid al Zadjali.

"With the exception of the entrance of OCEC, which was crowded with cars, I enjoyed the whole process. Once inside, you feel good. The place is cool and calm, making the wait for your turn relaxed," Zadjali added.

Scan to view video report on YouTube



Record high deaths

Muscat - The number of daily COVID-19 deaths climbed to an all-time high on Tuesday with the sultanate recording 41 deaths, taking the toll to 2,782.

Daily case count dropped from 2,529 on Monday to 2,037 on Tuesday. According to Ministry of Health data, the total number of COVID-19 cases registered in the country now stands at 252,609.

The ministry stated that 1,079 new cases have recovered, accounting for a total of 221,250 COVID-19 recovered patients.

Two hundred and nine individuals were hospitalised in a 24-hour period on Tuesday accounting for a total of 1,517 inpatients, including 443 in ICUs - record high figures during the pandemic in Oman.



Oman offers investments worth RO1.5bn to Saudi

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To attract foreign investments and increase national income, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) announced 150 investment opportunities worth RO1.5bn during a recent visit of an Omani delegation to Saudi Arabia.

A statement issued by the ministry said that the Omani delegation, led by H E Aseela Salim al Samsamiyah, Undersecretary for Investment Promotion in MoCIIP, began the Saudi visit on June 20, and included government and private agencies.

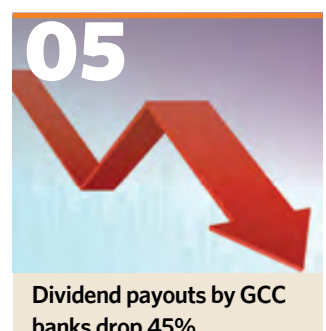
'The investment opportunities include several sectors - real estate, industry, tourism, fisheries, renewable energy and petrochemicals.'

H E Aseela informed that the visit aimed to achieve integration between Saudi Vision 2030 and Oman Vision 2040, adding that the two share many goals, including economic diversification and the formation of strong economic entities and companies to support the respective economies.

The delegation suggested formation of a joint team to discuss investments to develop petrochemical industries and highlight the challenges facing investors in both countries.

Meanwhile, MoCIIP has launched several initiatives to attract investments, including Fast Track for investment projects. Its technical committees have dealt with 63 investments that were suspended, while problems of 20 other projects were resolved. These include projects in the tourism, energy and mining sectors.

The ministry has also launched an automatic licence approval service via the Invest Easy platform for local and foreign investors.



Mall of Oman to open in Sept, create 3,500 jobs

(Supplied photo)



Muscat - Majid al Futtaim's Mall of Oman will open its doors to the public in September 2021 boosting the local economy by creating 3,500 jobs. The company recently held a virtual event that brought over 200 retailers together, giving the future tenants an opportunity to explore a transformational development for the future of retail in Muscat.

Husam al Mandhari, director of shopping malls at Majid al Futtaim Properties in Oman, welcomed partners and updated the tenants on the latest developments. It was the first time Majid al Futtaim showcased the exterior and interior of the mall for tenants to explore virtually. Tenants were also given additional information about how they will be supported by the retail design and delivery team to deliver best-in-class store fit outs.

Mall of Oman will become Majid al Futtaim's fifth and largest shopping and entertainment destination in Oman, with 140,000sqm of retail space. Comprising over 350 retail outlets, including 55 dining options (from restaurants to cafes), the

largest indoor snow park in the sultanate spread over 14,000sqm; and the largest Magic Planet in the country, featuring rides, games and attractions for the whole family.

As a premier shopping destination, the mall will feature

SMYK from the Apparel group; and brands by the Al Shamsi group.

In addition, Mall of Oman will include outlets of Homes R Us, Matalan, Sharaf DG, and a 12,200sqm Carrefour Hypermarket, as well as new and exclusive concepts such as Dior Boutique, Under Armour, Decathlon, 2XL Furniture, Lefties, L'Occitane en Provence, New Yorker and more.

On the occasion, Mandhari said, "Through the launch of Mall of Oman, customers will be immersed in engaging shopping and entertainment experiences. And for the first time ever, the largest indoor snow park, VOX Cinemas and Magic Planet will all be found in one location, bringing everyone closer to creating lasting memories. We also look forward to pairing our incredible Tamheen

graduates with our latest retail partners in time for the grand opening, providing new job opportunities to many."

The mall will play a significant role in supporting local communities by enhancing the sultanate's retail and entertainment offerings for both residents and tourists.

As part of its economic contribution to the country, Majid al Futtaim will also support with the upskilling of Omani nationals by preparing them for a potential career in the retail industry through Tamheen - an initiative in collaboration with The Retail Academy. The academy will provide numerous opportunities such as screenings and recruitment events, tailor-made training programmes, along with after-care services, counseling and mentorship for new Omani recruits.

For the first time ever, the largest indoor snow park, VOX Cinemas and Magic Planet will all be found in one location, bringing everyone closer to creating lasting memories

HUSAM AL MANDHARI

mall will house a range of entertainment and leisure offerings for all ages. These include Oman's largest VOX Cinemas with 15 screens, the first GOLD experience in Oman, a 3D cinema, KIDS and IMAX experiences; the

world-class brands from leading regional retail companies such as Max Fashion and Centrepont from the Landmark group; Hollister from Majid al Futtaim; Marks & Spencer from Al Futtaim Group; LC Waikiki, R&B and



'Seeb market only for Omani traders'

Our correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality has announced that non-Omanis are prohibited from engaging in commercial activities in the Seeb Central Market.

A statement issued by the municipality said that a decision in this regard has been taken considering the Omanisation programme enacted by the government to replace expatriate workers with trained Omani personnel and based on the Muscat Municipality's pursuit to enhance

the business environment for Omani youth.

As per the decision, the municipality will be limiting the engagement of people in Seeb Central Market (belonging to Muscat Municipality) to Omanis only from January 1, 2022.

"All holders of contracts with Muscat Municipality must correct their situation as of the date thereof," it stated.

Muscat Municipality and the Ministry of Labour called on everyone to cooperate fully to support Omani cadres by implementing the decision.

Agricultural, fisheries fund finances 28 projects

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund (AFDF) has financed a number of projects at a total cost RO3.5mn, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Hanan Saeed al Sulaimiya, executive director of the AFDF, said that the fund is implementing 28 projects, distributed across all sectors, including ten in agriculture, three in animal husbandry and 15 fisheries projects, at a total cost of RO3.5mn.

"In 2020, the fund financed four projects in the agricultural and fisheries sectors, at a total cost of more than RO680,000. Of the four projects, two projects were implemented, one in the agricultural sector, at a cost of RO408,000 and another in the animal husbandry sector at a cost of RO73,000," Hanan said.

She said that since the establishment of the AFDF in 2004 until the end of 2020, it financed and implemented 246 projects at a cost of RO42.187mn.



Hanan Saeed al Sulaimiya

"Hundred fisheries projects have been funded at a cost of RO20.51mn," she said.

"The agricultural sector came second with 99 projects at a cost of RO15.961mn, followed by the animal husbandry sector with 47 projects and a total cost of RO5.716mn."

Talking about projects in 2021, she said, "The AFDF has agreed to finance one project so far related to agricultural control. The project aims to implement control and inspection campaigns on farms and shops selling and trading in pesticides and fertilisers to ensure their compliance with health requirements."

Housing Ministry works in three wilayats stalled

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said it's suspending works in three wilayats to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

The projects in the wilayat of Mussanah in South Batinah, in the wilayat of Sur in South Sharqiyah, and in the wilayat of Rustaq in South Batinah have been stalled until June 24, it said.

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Guest of Honour
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DG - DGPHE, Ministry of Health, Oman

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PTSD IN THE TIMES OF COVID-19

Awareness on Post-traumatic Stress Disorder has been rising, more so in the last year as a result of COVID-19

Tridwip K Das
Muscat

June was designated PTSD Awareness Month in the USA in 2014. In Oman, awareness on Post-traumatic Stress Disorder has been rising, more so in the last year as a result of COVID-19.

Thanks to Hollywood, most of us associate PTSD with military personnel who survived distressing trauma at war but continue reliving the experience. Now, COVID-19 victims are experiencing a similar set of negative emotions, flashbacks and nightmares.

Dr Hamed al Sinawi, senior consultant in the Department of Behavioural Medicine at Sultan Qaboos University, informed that recent scientific studies show high prevalence of PTSD among patients infected with COVID-19, those experiencing severe symptoms being at higher risk.

H H Sayyida Basma al Said, mental health specialist and founder of Whispers of Serenity Clinic, noted that "PTSD wasn't talked about much before" in Oman but with COVID-19, it has become more relevant now. While she has been employing the therapy used in PTSD treatment in her clinic, she decided to study it further and recently trained in Harvard University. "Especially with COVID-19, I needed more tools to work with it."

Describing the pandemic and its impact, psychotherapist Nutaila al Kharusi of Al Harub Medical Center, said, "Just over a year ago, everyone's world was upended by COVID-19."

Worry, anxiety, isolation, loneliness and depression became "collective experiences" shared by literally everyone. "This collective experience of living with emotional and psychological impacts brought on by the pandemic helped cultivate more awareness of mental health issues," Nutaila said.

PTSD studies in Oman

All three Muscat-based mental health professionals rue the fact that there are no published reports on the disorder in the sultanate. "Currently there are no systems for recording and reporting prevalence of mental illness, in general, and I have not come across any studies focusing on PTSD in Oman," Dr Sinawi said.

"I would say not many people are aware of the condition, especially considering the fact that symptoms can mimic other types of mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression," he said with reference to the level of awareness on PTSD in the country.

Defining PTSD, Dr Sinawi said it's a psychiatric disorder that may occur in individuals who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, war, been sexually abused or threatened with death, violence or serious injury. In most cases the symptoms follow the traumatic event within days, weeks or months but in some people it can happen years after the event.

Further simplifying the condition in layman's terms, H H Sayyida Basma said, "It's something very traumatic that happened to the person in the past which is hard for them to get over."

Gender specifications

H H Sayyida Basma doesn't attribute any gender specifications to PTSD. It affects both men and women in "nearly the same way". Men don't deal with it any better; it depends on the intensity of the trauma, the psyche of the person, their mental stability and their environment, she observed.

Citing studies conducted in the USA, however, Dr Sinawi said



Studies show high prevalence of PTSD among patients infected with COVID-19, those experiencing severe symptoms being at higher risk

DR HAMED AL SINAWI

women are twice as likely to develop PTSD. This, owing to the fact that women are more likely to be exposed to specific stressful life events such as rape and domestic violence that can eventually lead to developing PTSD.

Additionally, several communities have traditional gender roles where men have more social power than women leading to emotional vulnerability. Women also deal with stressful situations differently, tending to depend on support from friends



In some cases, the individual may not remember the event, because it was so traumatic, until they go to the therapist and it's all put together

H H SAYYIDA BASMA AL SAID

and family members to overcome stressful situations. "So if their social network does not give the support they need, they are more likely to feel rejected and abandoned," Dr Sinawi said.

Expats more at risk

He considers expatriates at a higher risk of developing PTSD since individuals with the condition often rely on social support to overcome their symptoms of distress. "Many expats have no family in Oman. Some need to be at work for longer hours, leaving them less time to process their feelings and deal with the trauma that caused the PTSD symptoms in the first place."

According to Nutaila, most people who have experienced traumatic events have difficulty adjusting and coping with it, which is natural. However, if the symptoms of PTSD, such as flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety, depression, dissociation (out of body experience), and intrusive/uncontrollable thoughts

persist for an extended period of time and impact the individual's daily functioning, then they should seek professional help.

Elaborating on the symptoms, the manifestation of which is indicative of the need for help, H H Sayyida Basma said, "Not being able to eat well, sleep well, or function in daily life, being scared of leaving home, scared of certain people who look a certain way, certain colours... If the traumatic event was an accident, the individual may develop a fear for cars or certain locations. It depends on the event that happened."

"In some cases, the individual may not remember the event, because it was so traumatic, until they go to the therapist and it's all put together. It's a lot of fear, stress, uncertainty and difficulty in functioning. There's fear of something that's not there. It happened in the past, but there's fear that it might recur. These would be the key symptoms of PTSD."

The normal course of treatment for PTSD, Nutaila outlined, is confronting the painful memories and desensitising the individual to the traumatic event. The person must process the trauma which then reduces emotional reactivity to triggers of the event.

If left untreated...

If left untreated, the individual may try to avoid being reminded of the traumatic event, go out of his/her way to avoid certain people or places that remind them of the experience. Some may also engage in distraction techniques to avoid experiencing the difficult emotions that arise from remembering the trauma. "However, this may give the person short-term temporary relief. Over time, it is not conducive to our health, leading the person to be isolated and

withdraw," Nutaila explained.

"When we deny or try to avoid uncomfortable emotions, they bury deep within us. Left without any channel for expression, they fester until they eventually express themselves in destructive ways such as lashing out or inflicting pain on others and ourselves, or growing an ulcer or even worse."

The inability to lead a normal life can result from being "paralysed mentally, even psychically sometimes", H H Sayyida Basma added. "Some people start doing weird things with their body; they start scratching continuously. Self-harm and substance abuse, too, are serious outcome of PTSD if left untreated."

Asked if people readily seek help for their mental health, she spoke from her experience of 21 years. "They do. They just need to trust the person. When we talk about mental health, it's something very personal. All over the world, some stigma will always be there."

In Dr Sinawi's observation, PTSD -



The normal course of treatment for PTSD is confronting the painful memories and desensitising the individual to the traumatic event

NUTAILA AL KHARUSI

like other forms of mental illness - is often stigmatised in Oman and many other countries. "What makes PTSD more stigmatised compared to other types of mental illnesses is the fact that it often follows a stressful event that an individual is unable to cope with, so those around him may think he is weak or has less religious faith which makes him hide his symptoms or avoid seeking help." The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has brought on a significant change to attitudes, raising overall awareness and compassion for mental health issues.

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Thu 17	Sat 17	Sat 21	Thu 16
Sat 19	Sat 24	Sat 28	Sat 25

October	November	December
Sat 09	Sat 06	Thu 02
Thu 14	Thu 11	Sat 04
Sat 23	Sat 20	Sat 11
Sat 30	Sat 27	Sat 18

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Book lovers miss out on arrival of new titles

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Book lovers are eagerly waiting to get their hands on their favourite titles as consignments are indefinitely delayed. Due to the pandemic there are a few or almost no new books reaching book stores.

Satish Verma, an ardent reader, said, "Though the world has gone from paperbacks to online reading, I am an old-school individual and love to hold books in my hands. I have been waiting long to read the new releases from Booker winners. The available stocks are old."

An official from the Borders bookstore said, "There has been a delay of a few months for the books to come. We are unable to take new orders from book lovers. Our main office in Sohar is closed due to the pandemic and our supplier based in Dubai is unable to get down new stocks."



I am an old-school individual and love to hold books in my hands. I have been waiting long to read the new releases from Booker winners. The available stocks are old

SATISH VERMA

Favourite titles including *Tintin* and works of authors like Gibran and Rumi are not on the shelves of Al Bhaj Books.

One staff member said, "There have been no new deliveries for the last few months owing to the pandemic. No new

titles will be coming in the next few weeks too and we are unable to meet the demand.

"Right now, school text books are available and so are some classics. But some popular ones are yet to come," he said.

He added that however some works of popular writers like Paulo Coelho and Chetan Bhagat are available and people still look forward to them.

Arabian leopard spotted in Salalah region: OEC

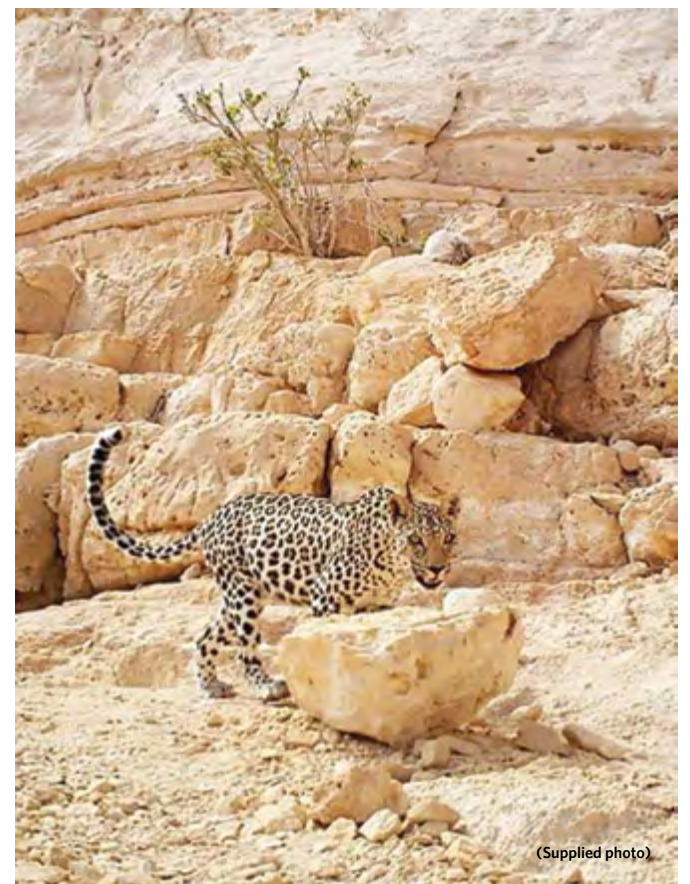
Our Correspondent
Muscat

A recent survey carried out by the Office for Environmental Conservation (OEC) at the Diwan of Royal Court, represented by the Environmental Affairs Department in Salalah, revealed the presence of Arabian leopard in the Najd region in the wilayat of Salalah in Dhofar governorate.

"This recent documentation came as a result of an ongoing project for the conservation of the Arabian leopard," OEC said.

The Arabian leopard is a rare breed of tigers that inhabits the Arabian peninsula and has been classified by the IUCN as being critically endangered. This animal is found in the sultanate in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The field studies carried out by the OEC at the Diwan of Royal Court for 23 years confirmed the presence of the Arabian leopard along the mountains of Dhofar from Hasik in the east to the wilayat of Dhalkut in the west, in addition to spotting it in the previous years in some Najd areas, north of the Dhofar Mountains.



The sultanate, represented by the Diwan of Royal Court, is making great and continuous efforts to preserve and protect the Arabian leopard from extinction.

These relentless efforts have contributed to the stability of its numbers and the preservation of the sustainability of its natural habitats in Dhofar.



450 scouts, guides leaders placed at job centres

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The General Directorate for Scouts and Guides, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, is assisting the health workers at COVID-19 immunisation centres by deploying some 450 Scouts and Guide leaders as vol-

unteers for smooth conduct of vaccination.

Dr Yaqub bin Khalfan bin Abdullah al Nadabi, director general of the General Directorate of Scouts and Guides, said, "The directorate is keen to support the great efforts made by the General Directorates of Health Services at the Ministry of

Health in various governorates in its campaign to vaccinate the targeted groups by organising entry and exit operations, receiving people and getting their information, making sure of the electronic registration of the vaccination, and directing them to take the vaccine."

Dr Nadabi praised the volun-

teers' efforts in ensuring a smooth workflow through daily rotation in the vaccination centres. He added that cooperation with the Ministry of Health continues through raising awareness and educating members of the community about the necessity and importance of taking vaccines.

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MUSCAT DAILY



3-5 star hotel guests rise by 7.5% in May

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Guests in three to five-star hotels in Oman rose by 7.5 per cent in May this year, according to the statistics shared by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

According to the NCSI, the number of guests occupying three to five -star hotels last month was 439,182; 7.5 per cent

higher occupancy compared to the same period in 2020.

The maximum number of guests in this category of hotels were Omanis (303,383), followed by the Asians (68,388) and Europeans (19,009).

Arab guests from outside the Gulf countries were 18,468; 7,818 from America, 5,772 from the GCC, 2,537 from Oceania, 1,652 from Africa and 12,155 guests of other nationalities.

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SR No: 06/070/2021 CR No: 1365452

Dividend payouts by GCC banks drop 45%

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Shareholders of the GCC banks have received significantly less cash dividends for the financial year 2020 as the banks in the region were either virtually barred from paying dividends due to the regulatory relaxations for COVID-19 or made a much smaller dividend payments.

The GCC banks, according to a recently released report, slashed total cash dividends by 45.4 per cent to US\$8bn for the financial year 2020 from US\$14.6bn dividend payouts recorded in the previous year.

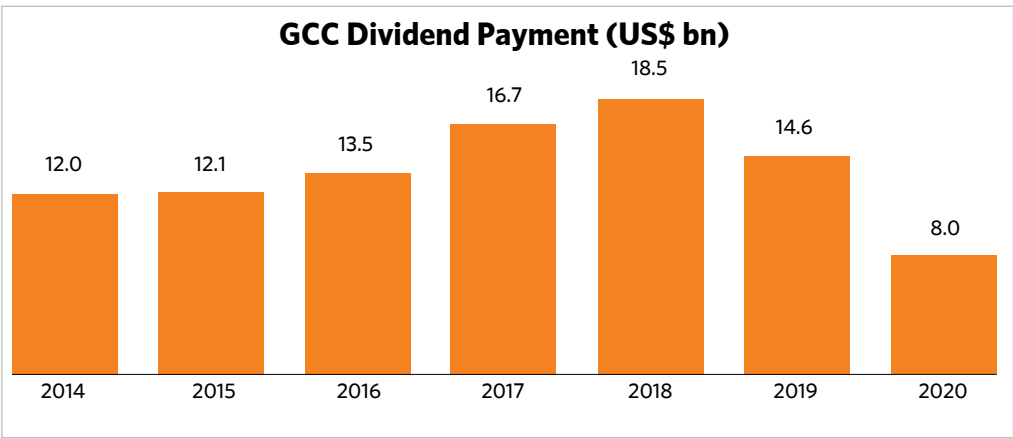
The impact of COVID-19 was apparent on the GCC banking sector that recorded record high provisions during the fourth quarter of 2020. As an ongoing effect of the pandemic, banks

slashed cash dividend payments by almost half for the year 2020. This was also the second consecutive year of dividend cuts, one of the first since the financial crisis, after 2019 dividends were cut by US\$3.9bn,' Kuwait-based Kamco Investment said in its GCC banking sector report.

The cuts in dividend payouts, it added, also came as a result of restrictions from regulators in exchange for relaxations on the capital front.

The decline in cash dividend payments was seen across the board in the GCC with banks in all the countries slashing dividends.

Bahraini banks made the biggest percentage cuts to dividends at 72.4 per cent. Saudi Arabian banks were next slashing cash dividends by 64.1 per cent to US\$1.3bn as payments



for 2020, while UAE-listed banks slashed dividends by 36.4 per cent to US\$3.3bn, the highest absolute payments in the GCC during the year.

On the other hand, Qatari and Omani banks witnessed the smallest declines in dividend payments for the year 2020, the report said.

Profitability improves

After a tough year 2020, the GCC banking sector's net profits witnessed remarkable recovery during the first quarter of 2021 backed by growth seen across the region. Total profits reached US\$8.4bn for the first quarter of this year, up 62 per cent year-on-year and 14.2 per cent on

quarter-on-quarter basis, according to Kamco Investment.

Out of 59 banks in the region, merely six reported a quarter-on-quarter decline in profits during the first quarter of 2021 while 17 banks reported year-on-year decline.

The improvement in profits was mainly led by a 41 per cent

or US\$2.5bn quarter-on-quarter drop in loan-loss provisions that reached a six-quarter low level of US\$3.6bn in the first quarter of 2021.

Aggregate net loans of the GCC banks grew by 1.8 per cent quarter-on-quarter to reach US\$1.52tn, Kamco Investment said.

Meanwhile, customer deposits at the GCC banks showed growth across the board reaching US\$1.89tn at the end of first quarter with a quarter-on-quarter growth of 2.3 per cent.

Assets hit US\$2.5tn

Total banking sector assets in the GCC region continued to climb for the fourth consecutive quarter reaching a new record high of US\$2.51tn as of March 31, 2021.

'Growth in assets was seen

across the board with Omani banks reporting the biggest quarter-on-quarter percentage increase in total assets at 3.2 per cent, although the sultanate remains the smallest banking industry in terms of listed banks' total assets of US\$81bn at the end of the first quarter of 2021,' Kamco Investment noted in its report.

The UAE banks continued to account for the biggest share of regional banking balance-sheet with total assets of US\$818bn followed by Saudi Arabia at US\$673bn.

Meanwhile, the stability in oil prices at over US\$65 per barrel level has somewhat alleviated concerns related to government revenues and estimates now point to a much lower funding requirements, Kamco Investment said.

INTERVIEW

CÉSAR HABIB, REGIONAL DIRECTOR - MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, ROLLS-ROYCE

'Middle East is one of the strongest markets for Rolls-Royce vehicles'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

César Habib is the regional director of Rolls-Royce Middle East and Africa. He joined Rolls-Royce from BMW in 2015 as general manager of ownership services where he was responsible for global customer retention and developing service products with the objective of increasing brand loyalty and customer satisfaction.

Habib has been the regional director for Middle East and Africa since 2018 with a focus on performance and development of the Rolls-Royce Motor Cars brand in the region. In an interview with Muscat Daily, Habib talked about Rolls-Royce's presence and clients in the Middle East and said the region is one of the strongest markets for Rolls-Royce bespoke vehicles.

Can you briefly tell us about the history of Middle East's love affair with Rolls-Royce Motor Cars and how this market has developed over the years?

The region is one of the strongest markets for Rolls-Royce bespoke vehicles which demonstrates the love affair of our clients with Rolls-Royce Motor Cars.

A decade ago, the product range consisted of chauffeur driven models targeted at specifically royals and presidents. But in more recent times, the brand has introduced newer and more forward-thinking models such as the Dawn, Wraith, Cullinan and Ghost. These have been really appealing to the younger market of high-net-worth individuals as well as female drivers and those who want to reward themselves with Bespoke commissions.

How important is the Middle East region in Rolls-Royce's global markets? And how significant is Oman market within the region for you?

The Middle East is a very important market to Rolls-Royce Motor Cars. Every car that is



ordered to the region has Bespoke features. No Rolls-Royce that arrives in the Middle East is the exact same as another model.

Rolls-Royce is a profitable company where the first quarter of 2021 was the best in the marque's history. All markets contributed to this success and the Middle East, including Oman, is no exception.

Who are the main customers of Rolls-Royce cars in this region? Do you feel the younger generation is as loyal to the brand as the older generation?

Rolls-Royce clients are the leaders in their field, royalties and achievers, men and women who reward themselves for their success. The average age of Rolls-Royce clients is 43 and with growing demand and interest from the younger generation, the brand has taken steps to cater to that market. For example, Rolls-Royce launched the marque's new visual identity in September last year, appealing to a younger generation.

Rolls-Royce is not about just selling cars, Rolls-Royce is a lifestyle, a journey and exceptional client experience that extends for decades, the relationship between Rolls-Royce and our clients is a personal relationship; we talk to them, we travel to them and listen carefully to their needs and wishes. This is loyalty, this is luxury that no other car manufacturer can offer to a client,

the loyalty between Rolls-Royce and our clients is a mutual relationship.

What about new business growth versus existing client retention in the Middle East? Are the majority of your clients new to the brand?

There is now a good balance between new and current customers due to our exceptional model lineup throughout Phantom, Ghost, Wraith, Dawn and Cullinan, and not to forget the Collection cars.

This range of choice maintains the desire for our clients to keep on adding to the garage, above and beyond their first Rolls-Royce.

How was the Rolls-Royce's super-luxury model Cullinan received in the Middle East?

Rolls-Royce Cullinan and Black Badge Cullinan are both doing exceptionally well since they were launched in 2018 and 2019, respectively. The booking orders extend well into 2022.

How has been the past one year for your business in the Middle East? As the pandemic drags on, do you see a substantial regional growth this year and in the coming years?

It was certainly a new challenge, no one could have foreseen the pandemic nor the unprecedented times it brought with it, and the significant impact it had across all sectors. The business was affected at the beginning, but we

took the bold move in September 2020 to launch the new Rolls-Royce identity and the new Ghost, and it was a very successful move. Ghost as well as the rest of the marque's models are doing considerably well with a healthy order book extending into 2022. As for growth in the coming years, usually we don't speculate but I can confirm that we are doing well. Rolls-Royce is a profitable company and we have already achieved great results in the first quarter of this year; as a matter of fact, the last quarter was the most successful quarter in the marque's history.

In recent years, have you seen any changes in consumer behaviour and attitudes towards Rolls-Royce cars in the Middle East?

The Middle East market has always been important and inspirational for Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, in light of our clients who always strive to own the best and the most beautiful Rolls-Royce designs.

We noticed in recent years that the average age of our clients is getting younger and that more women are driving our cars which underlines our efforts to make our brand more appealing to the younger generation. It also reflects on our craftsmanship, designs, variety of colour and inspiration that are in line with their taste.

How do you see the future of Rolls-Royce cars globally?

I see the future of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars to be as bright and prosperous as its heritage.

We have always been and will always be in a different league providing our clients with the best products, hand built at the Global Centre of Luxury Manufacturing Excellence in Goodwood, West Sussex. In our recent global announcement on the hand-built masterpiece that is Boat Tail, our master artisans of Coachbuild, envisioned and crafted an entirely unique motor car, that honours its owner's lifelong reverence for life at sea.



Oman Oil signs deal with Asyad for bunker fuel supply

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) has signed a memorandum of strategic collaboration (MSC) with Asyad Group through its ship management arm for the provision of bunker fuels.

The agreement, under which OOMCO will supply Oman Ship Management Company (OSMC) with different grades of marine fuels in all ports of Oman, marks a long-term strategic business collaboration that seeks to cement the sultanate's position as a global logistic hub.

As a key player in Oman's fuel supply chain, OOMCO said it continues to expand its commercial services, while building a reputation for high quality, secure

and reliable solutions.

In a press statement, Hussain Jamaa Bait Ishaq, OOMCO's acting CEO, said, "OOMCO is already active in bunker supply in all major ports of Oman and this collaboration, with the major player of the country's marine transportation sector, marks another critical milestone in our journey towards creating long-term relationship and develop a sustainable maritime business in Oman.

Through it, we will be able to provide high quality fuel to vessels calling at all Oman ports, while contributing to the strategic growth of the bunker business in Oman and in particular in Duqm Port."

Dr Ibrahim Bakht al Nadhairi, CEO of Asyad Shipping and Drydock, said, "It is our aim to place

Oman as an effective player in the global maritime industry, contribute to the logistics sector by strengthening the connectivity between Omani ports and global ports.

Through this important collaboration, we are creating a strategic platform which will encourage ship owners to call Omani ports, as well as maximizing the returns of the shipping sector in the national economy."

OOMCO provides a complete range of bunker fuel supply and services in all major ports of Oman, including in the Port of Duqm.

The company is currently constructing a greenfield bunker terminal at the Port of Duqm to support in providing competitive bunker fuel for all customers calling Duqm Port.



Post Box – 1610, Ruwi, Postal Code - 112, Sultanate of Oman

Inviting Application

Bank of Baroda, Oman Operations invites applications for the appointment of Statutory Auditor for the year ended Dec 2021 (January 2021 to December 2021) & FY 2021-22 (April 2021 to March 2022) for the statutory audit of it's branches/Offices in Sultanate of Oman.

Last Date of submission of application is 15/07/2021 up to 2.30 p.m.

For detailed advertisement, log on to the tender section of the Bank's [website www.bankofbarodaoman.com](http://www.bankofbarodaoman.com)

Date: 21.06.2021

Place: Sultanate of Oma

Country Head, Oman Operations

MSX rises 0.31%; volumes up

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Recovering from losses recorded on Monday the benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Tuesday rose 0.31 per cent to close at 4,035.49 points.

The gains in main index on Tuesday were supported by all sectoral indices led by Industrial Index which surged 2.19 per cent. Financial Index and Services Index increased 0.32 per cent and 0.09 per cent, respectively. MSX Sharia Index increased 1.56 per cent to close at 583.76 points.

Trading activity increased on Tuesday as volumes rose 31.6 per cent at 16.66mn securities compared with 12.66mn securities traded on Monday.

Market turnover rose nearly 60 per cent to RO3.32mn compared with RO2.07mn in the previous trading session.



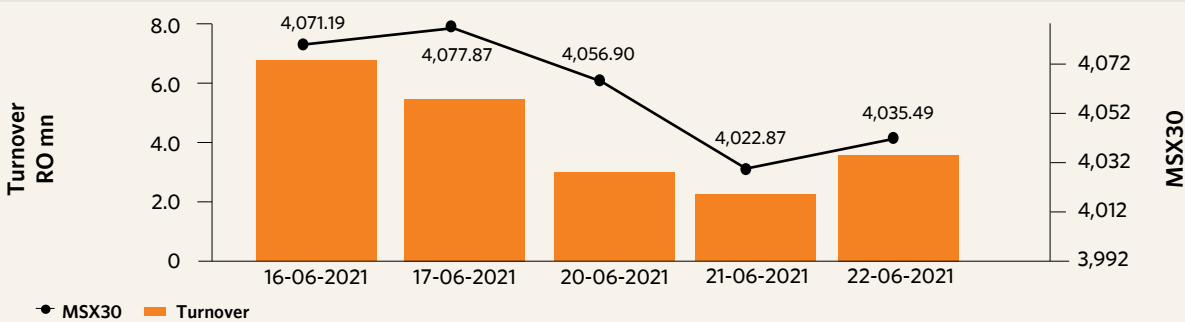
Market breadth at the MSX remained positive with 19 advancing stocks to nine decliners. As many as 23 traded stocks remained flat for the day.

Top gainers were Oman Education and Training Investment (10 per cent), Salalah Mills (9.71 per cent), Oman Flour

Mills (6.95 per cent), Oman Cables Industry (4.31 per cent) and Oman Qatar Insurance (3.70 per cent).

Top losers were Sharqiyah Desalination (-8 per cent), Muscat Insurance (-6.93 per cent), Ahlibank (-2.63 per cent) and Vision Insurance (-1.27 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



EU launches antitrust probe against Google over online advertisements

Brussels, Belgium - The EU launched a wide-ranging antitrust probe against Google Tuesday over concerns that it is using its technology to keep out rivals in the lucrative online advertising market.

The case opens yet another front by the European Commission against the search engine giant, which has already received US\$9bn in fines for its anti-competitive practices.

The investigation will 'assess whether Google has violated EU competition rules by favouring its own online display advertising technology services', a statement from the EU executive said.

The probe narrows in on an important component of Google's profit-making machine: more than 80 per cent of the giant's revenue in 2020 came from advertising, or US\$147bn.

"We are concerned that Google has made it harder for rival online advertising services to compete" in display ad technology, said EU competition chief Margrethe Vestager.

At issue is Google's largely



This file photo taken in Brussels on February 14, 2020 shows Google logo behind a European flag (AFP)

unnoticed, but highly dominant technologies that serve as an intermediary or broker between advertisers and publishers online.

Google owned technologies include services such as AdX, Doubleclick or AdSense that power much of the EU's display advertising market for web pages and apps, which the commission estimated to be worth about 20bn euros in 2019.

The business was at the heart of a recent case in France - brought by News Corp, French daily Le Figaro and Belgium's

Groupe Rossel - that saw Google fined 220mn euros.

It is also central to blockbuster cases in the US where state prosecutors accuse the company of rigging the ad-tech market and snuffing out rivals.

As in the other cases, the EU will try to determine whether Google gave preferential treatment to its own ad inventory technologies AdX and Doubleclick, but will also look at other aspects of the ad-tech business.

Crucially, the probe will also look into Google's announced

plans to prohibit the placement of third party 'cookies' on its Chrome browser, a move that has angered some publishers and advertisers.

Critics fear that the project - known as the 'Privacy Sandbox' - will only increase Google's dominance since the giant holds mountains of data on consumer behaviour that will be denied to others.

The probe will also look into ads on YouTube, Google's video platform, and whether advertisers there are forced to channel their business through Google's ad technology.

A Google spokesperson said the company "will continue to engage constructively with the European Commission to answer their questions and demonstrate the benefits of our products to European businesses and consumers."

The in-depth look into Google's online ad-tech is not unexpected as it follows a broader inquest launched in 2019.

AFP

Fed offers assurances on economy despite increasing inflation

New York, US - The US economy remains on a positive trajectory even as it contends with higher inflation, according to congressional testimony released Monday by the head of the Federal Reserve.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell, in prepared remarks ahead of a House hearing Tuesday, reiterated that the central bank will continue its supportive stance to ensure that the 'sustained improvement' since the depths of COVID-19 pandemic is extended.

The labour market has improved, but progress has been 'uneven,' said Powell, in remarks consistent with his response to questions at a news conference last week.

"We at the Fed will do everything we can to support the economy for as long as it takes to complete the recovery," Powell said in the testimony.

Powell acknowledged that inflation has increased notably in recent months due in part to higher oil prices and the hit from supply chain disruptions.

But he restated that higher prices are due to transitory factors, adding that inflation is expected to drop back toward our longer-run goal.

Powell's appearance before the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis comes



Jerome Powell

less than a week after the US central bank moved up its timeframe for lifting interest rates to 2023. The Fed's monetary policy committee said it will not begin to withdraw the stimulus measures implemented at the start of the pandemic until progress is made on reducing unemployment and keeping inflation above their two percent goal.

At last week's news conference, Powell warned that the recovery is incomplete and improvement has been uneven, with employment in hard-hit sectors well below pre-pandemic levels. Powell last week again tried to assuage fears of rising US inflation, even while a majority of central bank officials now believe interest rates will increase in 2023.

While widespread vaccina-

tions have allowed the United States to rebound faster than previously expected from the COVID-19 pandemic downturn, the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) cautioned that 'risks to the economic outlook remain' in a statement following its two-day meeting.

But amid the accelerating rebound, Fed officials appeared to have grown more hawkish, with 11 of the 18 committee members now expecting at least two hikes of the benchmark lending rate in 2023, according to updated quarterly economic projections.

The March forecasts showed only seven officials expecting rate liftoff in 2023, but seven now expect one as soon as next year.

AFP

Abu Dhabi's non-oil trade reaches AED201bn in 2020

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Rashed Lahej al Mansouri, director general of the General Administration of Abu Dhabi Customs, has said that Abu Dhabi possesses a solid logistical infrastructure and advanced digital technologies that enhance its trade globally.

In an interview with the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Mansouri said that Abu Dhabi's non-oil foreign trade through the emirate's customs ports achieved more than AED201.2bn during the past year. Imports were worth AED92.5bn while exports stood at AED73.46bn and re-exports stood at AED35.26bn. He added that Abu Dhabi

Customs completed more than one million digital customs transactions during 2020. This achievement came in line with the automation of all customs services and the digital completion of customs clearance processes and transactions.

Mansouri added that during 2020, Abu Dhabi's foreign trade maintained the diversity of its global and regional markets. Hence, Saudi Arabia was Abu Dhabi's first trading partner, with trade worth more than AED44.43bn.

Regarding the number of narcotic and drug seizures made by Abu Dhabi Customs in cooperation with its part-

ners in 2020, Mansouri said that the number of narcotic seizures amounted to 515 seizures in all customs ports of the emirate, compared to 1,790 seizures in 2019. The seizures included many customs violations such as narcotics and prohibited and restricted substances.

Regarding the importance of automating the services of the General Administration of Abu Dhabi Customs and how it facilitates the movement of goods, Mansouri said that the automation of services contributed to reducing the service time for customers and encouraged financial savings.

WAM

Electric auto startups hit speed bumps after heady debuts

New York, US - Several electric auto start-ups that raised large sums from investors in the wake of Tesla's ascent are hitting pot-holes as they pursue next-generation vehicles. The most recent crisis occurred at Lordstown Motors, which announced Monday the sudden departure of two top executives after warning last week it needed more capital to keep operating.

Company officials plan a series of events dubbed 'Lordstown Week' later this month to shore up investor support.

But local government officials are not sure what to make of the company, which had discussed adding more than 2,000 jobs in a region plagued by plant closures.

"Am I confident? Not as much as I was a week ago," Lordstown Mayor Arno Hill said earlier this week. "We're waiting and seeing what the next step is."

There have been similar leadership shakeups in at least two other electric auto companies that recently went public, raising questions about the transactions and underscoring the difficulties start-ups face in competing in the capital-intensive industry.

"It's definitely more challenging for a small company," said Jessica Caldwell, executive director of insights at Edmunds.com, pointing to heavy spending needed to build and maintain factories and obtain key components. "It does seem like Tesla is an overnight success story, which is not really the case," she told AFP. "But they came in and disrupted the space amongst automotive companies that have been around for decades. Everyone wants to believe that the dream could happen." Lordstown's woes come in the wake of significant electric vehicle (EV) announcements



since the November US presidential election from Ford, General Motors and other auto giants, intensifying competition.

Rising costs

Lordstown Motors was launched by Steve Burns in November 2019 after the acquisition of a recently-shuttered Ohio auto plant owned by GM.

The company raised US\$675mn following an October

2020 merger with DiamondPeak Holdings, a special purpose acquisition company (SPAC) - essentially a shell company set up to merge with an operating business. Lordstown Motors unveiled its flagship 'Endurance' all-electric pickup truck in June 2020 when then-vice president Mike Pence visited its Ohio factory, nearly a year before Ford would present its all-electric F-150 pickup.

Lordstown's share price topped US\$30 in February of this year, but the company's fortunes began shifting in March, when short-selling firm Hindenburg Research released a damning report that called Lordstown a 'mirage'.

On Monday, Lordstown announced the resignation of Burns and chief financial officer Julio Rodriguez after an investigation concluded Hindenburg's appraisal was 'in significant re-

spects, false and misleading,' while acknowledging that some of its own statements about vehicle pre-orders were 'in certain respects, inaccurate.'

That followed Lordstown's June 8 disclosure that it lacks sufficient capital to begin commercial production, and warned about its ability to keep operating.

The company's capital spending had swelled in part from 'stress that the COVID-19 pandemic has put on the global automotive supply chain,' according to a securities filing.

Lordstown shares tumbled after Monday's leadership shakeup, but rallied Tuesday after its executives reaffirmed plans during a Detroit event to begin production in September, pointing to 'firm' orders from clients, according to news reports.

In a securities filing Thursday,

Lordstown clarified some of those remarks, saying that purchase agreements 'provide us with a significant indicator of demand but do not represent binding purchase orders.'

Unfair advantage?

Lordstown is hardly the only EV prospect to stumble after going public through a SPAC. These types of transactions - which allow companies to enter markets more quickly than with a traditional initial public offering (IPO) - have soared over the last year.

Usha Rodrigues, a professor at the University of Georgia School of Law, has described SPACs as a 'Vegas wedding IPO' because a legal loophole gives them protection from lawsuits if their forecasts are not met - which traditional IPOs do not enjoy.

AFP

Benefit by transferring salaries to Bank Muscat's accounts

In line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and commitment to offering innovative banking services and products, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate has invited its personal banking customers and the general public to transfer salaries to their accounts at Bank Muscat.

Customers can enjoy a number of unique and 'best in class' benefits and features including free entry into Al Mazyona draws, the widest range of financing and investment options in the country and access to the largest branch and ATM/CDM network in Oman.

Salary transfer draws are an important category within the Al Mazyona 2021 scheme and all customers who transfer their salaries to the bank are automatically entered into the various salary transfer draws, which are held regularly with as many as 20 prizes being given away every month. Al Mazyona rewards 10 winners every month from among customers having salaries ranging between RO500 and RO999.

These winners are paid a monthly salary prize of RO500



each for a whole year as a reward. Similarly, 10 winners with salaries of RO1,000 or more are chosen from amongst the bank's Al Jawhar Privilege banking customers.

These winners will also receive RO500 every month for a whole year. It must be noted that in 2021, as many as 240 Salary Transfer winners will receive a total of over RO1.4mn through Al Mazyona's monthly salary transfer draws.

Expressing his happiness at the strong customer confidence with the bank, Abdullah Tamman al Maashani, deputy general manager - Institutional Sales & Product Development, Bank

Muscat, said, "All customers who transfer their salaries to the bank will be able to make use of a comprehensive set of banking products and facilities to meet their varied banking needs.

"The 20 cash prizes of RO500 each, which are given to lucky winners for a whole year in the monthly draws, are another star attraction for customers, amongst the different innovative services and facilities offered by the bank."

Other benefits include access to a wide range of financing options at highly competitive rates including personal financing, Sayyarati auto financing and education financing.

For example, Omani customers looking for the best home finance deals in the sultanate will find Baituna with its maximum tenor of 25 years a particularly attractive option. Similarly, Sayyarati auto financing and personal financing options are available to customers at very competitive rates.

It must be specially noted in this regard that the bank's financing products have highly flexible payment options, quick turnaround times while requiring

only simple documentation.

The bank also offers a number of excellent savings and investment options to its personal banking customers including the Themaar Savings Plan, Term Deposits and Bank Muscat Mutual Funds.

The Themaar Savings Plan allows customers to put aside a fixed amount every month for a fixed period of time while Term Deposits allow them to save a lump sum for a specified period of time. Customers can choose the amount that they plan to save and the period according to their future financial goals.

The Themaar Savings Plan and Term Deposit allow for safe investments with a guaranteed rate of return.

The bank also offers mutual fund investments for investors with a higher risk tolerance to have a chance of earning good returns from equity markets through lump sum investments or systematic investment plans (SIPs).

In particular, SIPs offer the convenience of investing a small sum at regular intervals over a long time period to take advantage of rising markets, but at a

lower risk than investing directly in equity markets.

Over time, the cost of purchase of mutual fund units averages out on the lower side despite any volatility, and a long-term investor will be able to benefit from rising markets.

Bank Muscat customers can also benefit from the advantage of being part of the largest bank network in Oman with access to 174 branches and 794 devices including 469 Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), 129 Cash Deposit Machines (CDMs), 167 Full Function Machines (FFMs), 19 statement printers and 10 Business Cash Deposit Machines (BCDMs) spread across all governorates of the sultanate.

The bank's highly versatile Internet Banking and Mobile banking platforms help customers bank 24/7 from the safety and comfort of their homes and offices and are able to handle a large number of personal banking needs.

For more details about Bank Muscat accounts, please call 24795555 or go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/accounts/Pages/default.asp>

A'Safwah's fresh juices now come in 1.5lt bottles

A'Safwah, the oldest dairy and beverage company in the sultanate, continues to offer its versatile range of products in newer packaging and sizes, based on its extensive research and a deep understanding of consumer needs. The company has announced the launch of new 1.5lt bottle packs of its natural juices range, to cater to everyday refreshment needs of a family, to beat the summer heat with a daily dose of fruit goodness.

With the beginning of summer vacation for school students, A'Safwah invites mothers and kids to try their favourite fruit flavours, packaged with great taste, in a family sized 1.5lt bottle. The company offers a wide choice of juices with a single fruit flavour, 100 per cent no-added sugar juices, fruity blended juices, and other fruit-mixed juices with a variety of distinctive flavours. A company spokesperson said, "We always strive to create products of different sizes and flavours, reflecting our interest to achieve our customers' requirements through all seasons during the year. Our continuous communication with them seeks to take first-hand feedback, so we are able to implement



their suggestions for their best interest and convenience of usage. This helps to enhance the level of service satisfaction by offering them products and healthy choices that add value to their diet and make their snacking occasions tastier with natural ingredients and an unmatched taste."

A'Safwah offers juices for all tastes, which includes unique blends of lemon juice with kiwi and orange juice with carrots, as well as delicious fruit cocktail juice and mixed berry juice. Its 100 per cent, no-added sugar juices include the apple and orange flavours, which urge consumers to make 'healthy' a choice. A'Safwah also offers a range of juices to fans of concentrated fruit taste, inviting them to enjoy moments full of adventure and joy with mango juice, guava, lemon and pineapple.

Mazoon Electricity's vaccination drive

In line with its endeavour to ensure the health and wellbeing of its employees, Mazoon Electricity launched COVID-19 vaccination campaign for all its employees. The drive aims to reinforce the objectives of Oman government's national vaccination campaign launched to contain the spread of the virus.

The company is running COVID-19 vaccination campaign for its employees in direct coordination with Nama Group and cooperation with Ministry of Health.

The initiative is in line with Mazoon Electricity's ongoing efforts to get all the employees of company vaccinated and ensure their safety from the pandemic.

Eng Saleem Nasser Saleem al Mahrooqi, senior manager QHSE of Mazoon Electricity, said, "We are conducting the vaccination drive in accordance with the government's guidance so that the chain of virus transmission can be broken. The health and safety of our employees is our topmost priority at Mazoon Electricity. The key to curbing the infection is to get as many people vaccinated as early as possible. We strongly encourage all to receive



vaccination to minimise the risk of infectious disease in the workplace. By choosing to be vaccinated, they protect not only themselves and their family but the community as well."

He added, "We keep on monitoring the latest updates about the COVID-19 pandemic and take necessary actions to safeguard the health of our employees, customers and the larger community."

Mazoon Electricity continues to adhere to all COVID-19 safety and health protocols as set out by the Supreme Committee for dealing with COVID-19 and the Ministry of Health.

Ahli Islamic offers cash prize worth RO100,000 to one lucky winner in second quarterly draw

Ahli Islamic invites its customers to chase their dreams by encouraging them to save and invest more and participate in 2021 Qitaf quarterly draws. The bank will announce the winner of cash prize RO100,000 of the second quarterly draw live stream on its official social media pages.

Commenting upon the upcoming draw, Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, deputy general manager and head of ahli islamic said, "The bank has always tried to increase the categories of customers who can benefit in our 2021 Qitaf draws and double their chances to win. The Islamic Qitaf prize scheme not only supports and encourages a saving culture in the sultanate, but also helps people to invest their capital in profitable assets, in accordance with Islamic Mudaraba principles."

Being one of the most preferred Islamic windows in Oman, Ahli Islamic continues to offer innovative and attractive programmes to reward its customers, encouraging them to adopt the best financial practices and achieve their long-term goals.

The Islamic window rewards



the customers for their commitment by making quarterly, monthly, weekly and special event draws.

"The bank is committed to

help customers in achieving their goals by providing valuable offers and services while giving them opportunities to save and grow their funds with maximum

comfort. We have an innovative portfolio of products and services that meet customer's needs. We aim to enhance the financial stability of our loyal customers

and this is in line with our principles of customer-first approach," Rawahi added.

This year the bank plans to reward an increased number of customers with prizes of more than RO1,250,000 spread across its various branches through the Qitaf scheme.

The customers are automatically eligible to enter the draws the bank holds throughout the year if they maintain an average minimum balance of RO50 to 100. However, the minimum eligibility criteria for the quarterly draw is RO1,000. The Qitaf cash prize is decided through a draw system, subject to a criterion set by the bank.

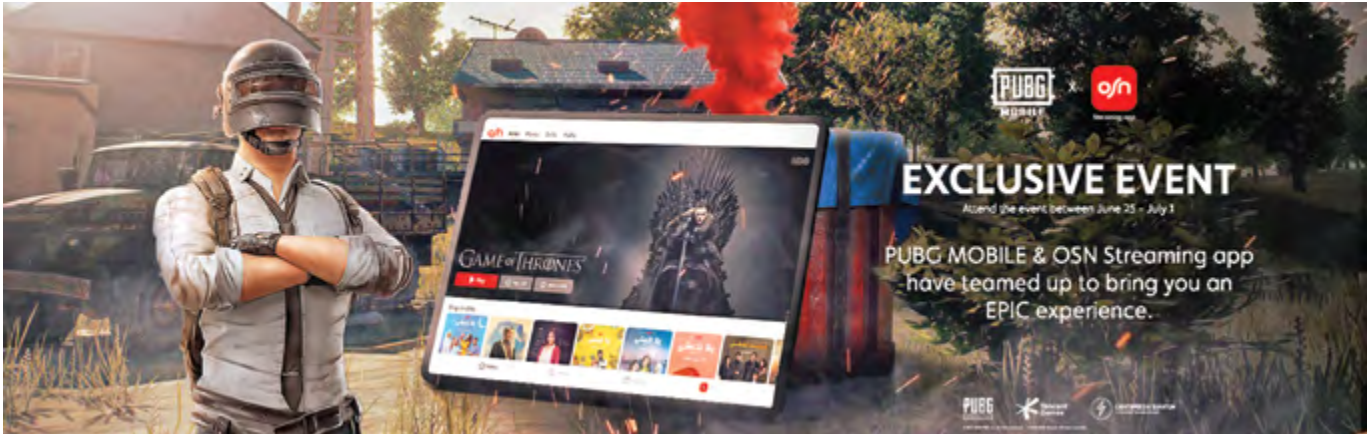
In addition to the grand quarterly prize draw in which the Bank rewards four lucky winners with a total prize of RO400,000 (RO100,000 each), Ahli Islamic also conducts monthly draws within eight months of the year and offers cash prizes totaling RO160,000, distributed equally among eight winners (RO20,000 each).

For more details related to Qitaf prize scheme, please visit the bank's website and follow its official social media pages.

OSN, PUBG Mobile join forces to offer users ultimate entertainment experience

OSN, the MENA region's leading entertainment provider, and PUBG Mobile, a record-breaking multi-player video game, are exploring synergies in a first of its kind partnership in the MENA region. Players of PUBG Mobile will be privy to an exclusive opportunity to avail access to OSN Streaming App's premium entertainment and original content.

PUBG Mobile, as the original mobile version of Playerunknown's Battlegrounds, is the record-breaking battle royale video game with one billion downloads. The game is ranked number one most downloaded game in 100+ countries. Since its launch in March 2018, PUBG Mobile revolutionised the mobile gaming experience, by bringing PUBG's Battle Royale concept to a whole new audience of mobile



players, with fun, thrilling gameplay and innovative new content.

OSN Streaming App is bolstered through rich content partnerships with the biggest names in the entertainment industry including Disney+, which launched for the first time in the region through OSN in 2020, in addition

to giants such as Paramount, HBO and Universal, to name a few. Moreover, OSN Originals' offering focuses on homegrown programs and regional talent that bring programming with resonance to viewers across the region.

The service also offers the

MENA region's largest collection of Arabic content and a broad range of children's programming with easy-to-use parental controls. Most recently, OSN Streaming App delivered an enhanced user experience thanks to new features, including multiple profiles for friends and family,

a new dedicated KIDS section with parental control and improved search and discovery.

PUBG Mobile fans and community members can look forward to earning exciting rewards on OSN Streaming App by playing their favourite video game. To start earning rewards, PUBG

Mobile players only need to click on the little present box on the right-hand side in the bottom corner, to open the events page where players can claim OSN rewards.

Zahra Zayat, senior VP, OTT Digital & Telco, OSN said, "This first step into the gaming territory with PUBG Mobile is a landmark milestone for OSN's growth ambition in the entertainment industry consolidating content, gaming and others. The MENA region is home to a highly engaged gaming audience, with gaming unlocking exponential growth, fifty times the OTT potential!"

"We are confident that the synergy exists between entertainment and gaming especially with content, movies and series, based on popular games and vice

versa. This presents a huge opportunity for both brands to bring together viewers and gamers to enjoy an immersive experience of a truly interactive way.

"The partnership between OSN and PUBG Mobile is the first of several between OSN and the leading gaming brand, cementing OSN's continued dedication to unlocking opportunities and delivering new and exciting experiences for OSN Streaming App viewers."

With homegrown programs and curated content, OSN welcomes viewers on a journey, exploring every mood, emotion, and story, wherever they are, anytime, through any connected device.

PUBG Mobile is available to download for free on the App Store and Google Play Store.

Sharia'a board's efforts help Alizz Islamic

The Sharia'a Supervisory Board of Alizz Islamic Bank continues its endeavours to research and study the bank's innovative products and services. It also reviews the monthly reports, policies, investment proposals, and Sharia'a audit reports, and provides appropriate directives in accordance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia'a. The Sharia'a Supervisory Board has already held a number of meetings recently with a full legal quorum.

The Sharia'a Audit and Compliance Department has played various important roles in achieving its objectives, such as enhancing Sharia'a compliance in all operations and services provided to the valued cus-

tomers of the bank. The Sharia'a Supervisory Board reviews the bank's product documents, processes and procedures to ensure that all the bank's transactions have been carried out in accordance with the principles and guidelines of Islamic Sharia'a. The Sharia'a Supervisory Board reviewed the periodic reports submitted by the Sharia'a Compliance Unit and the Sharia'a Audit Unit and directed appropriately in each subject to take the necessary steps to further enhance the bank's services and products to comply with the principles of Sharia'a.

The Sharia'a Supervisory Board and the Sharia'a Audit and Compliance Department con-

tinue to provide training courses and specialised workshops for the executive management and branch employees on customer service, sales and credit management in the aspects of the basics, principles, rules and guidelines of Islamic Sharia'a, and the processes and functionality of Islamic financial transactions.

Moreover, the Sharia'a Audit and Compliance Department contributed to providing Sharia'a-compliant solutions to the bank's customers, especially in terms of corporate clients' needs, where more sophisticated products were needed. In addition, the department participated in the development of various products launched during the



past year, as well as the products that are scheduled to be launched during the year 2021.

On the other hand, the Sharia'a Audit Unit continues its work by visiting various branches and departments of the bank for

Sharia'a auditing and getting hands on with the practical challenges that are faced.

Within the framework of the joint work between the Sharia'a Supervisory Board and the Sharia'a Audit and Compliance Department, Sheikh Issa al Riyami, head of the Sharia'a Audit and Compliance Department at Alizz Islamic Bank said, "Compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia'a is the cornerstone of Islamic banking, and it is the real capital of Islamic financial services, and it is the responsibility of our team to ensure that the bank's products and services are in compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia'a. To achieve this, the bank has selected a

group of prominent Sharia'a scholars who specialise in the jurisprudence of Islamic transactions and has a long experience in financial advisory and enjoys a reliable reputation and forms the Sharia'a Supervisory Board.

"In 2020, the bank remained highly focused on improving its services and products through coordination and continuous meetings between the Sharia'a Supervisory Board and various departments to provide services and products and to provide and propose possible Sharia'a solutions to the challenges arising in accordance with Sharia'a principles and provisions and finding sound Islamic alternatives to the violating transactions."



OPPO stands out from competition

OPPO's top-of-the-line, flagship Find X3 Pro invited users to celebrate World Music Day on June 21, by enjoying the performance of its Dolby Atmos-powered stereo speakers, complete with Ambient Sound Detection. Synonymous with surround-sound technology that comes alive with every beat, Dolby Atmos brings concert-worthy, quality beats to Find X3 Pro users - who can now Hear the Difference.

Offering superior precision in comparison to traditional sound capabilities typically found in smartphones, Dolby Atmos enables users to 'move' sounds across a three-dimensional space with the introduction of audio objects. Overhead speakers create an immersive sound stage, transporting listeners to a sensory realm of the highest level.

With its spirit of human-centric innovation and exploration, the Find X3 Pro maximises the unique and deep relationship between humans and music. OPPO demonstrated this impeccable attention to detail and premium quality with two ringtones and an orchestra of system sounds designed by the Grammy- and Academy Award-winning composer Hans Zimmer. Hence, there is no better device for users to enjoy their favourite tunes on World Music Day and everyday with the unmatched Dolby Atmos.



A new look for Omega Aqua Terra

As the name suggests, Aqua Terra is all about versatility. An Omega timepiece designed for adventurous individuals equally at ease in the central city as they are in the middle of the ocean. In keeping with the lifestyle of its intended wearers, the Swiss brand has taken the Aqua Terra into exciting new territory, by introducing a seconds hand that's an absolute first.

The 2021 collection consists of ten 38mm models, two of which are luxury editions; as well as nine new 41mm models, including four luxury versions.

The standout feature on all new models is a small seconds subdial at 6 o'clock, encircled by an applied subdial ring: many in 18K Sedna gold - some even set with diamonds.

The collection features new dials in subtle sun-brushed shades and two-tone teak patterns with eye-catching hour markers, including diamonds arranged incrementally from 6 to 12 o'clock and sailboat hull-shaped indexes with iridescent mother-of-pearl inlay.

To fix the new watches firmly to the wrist there are bracelets in matching metals, rubber straps in beige and blue - and leather

straps in red, burgundy, beige and green.

38 mm

At the sportier end of the 38 mm spectrum are eight watches in either stainless steel, or a blend of steel and 18K Sedna gold, powered by Omega's Co-Axial Master Chronometer calibre 8802, with new dials in dark green, light green, linen and extra white mother-of-pearl. The latest 38 mm Omega's sport matching bracelets or beautifully coloured leather straps, depending on the model.

41 mm

The 41 mm range includes four stainless steel editions and one in stainless steel and 18K Sedna gold, all powered by Omega's Co-Axial Master Chronometer calibre 8916.

Two-tone dials in blue-grey, silvery-blue and silvery-beige, add depth to the displays and contrast beautifully with the new subdials.

Aqua Terra owners can be sure their new Omega will perform perfectly every hour of the day. Each watch comes with a 5-year warranty and Master Chronometer certification card.

Lulu launches vaccination drive for staff

As part of its commitment towards the safety and well-being of the customers and staff, Lulu Hypermarket has rolled out the COVID-19 vaccination drive to cover all its employees across all hypermarkets in Oman.

As the Sultanate of Oman takes significant steps to contain the virus, Lulu has also stepped forward to do its part by launching the vaccination drive. The mass vaccination drive will administer Pfizer vaccines to all its employees.

Commenting on the vaccination drive, Nasr Mubarak Salim al Maawali, general manager - HR stated, "Vaccination for everyone is the best way to win this war against COVID-19, and our



first and foremost priority is to get all our staff vaccinated at the earliest. Lulu attaches utmost attention to the health and safety of not only its employees but also

the society at large. We have organised this vaccination drive to ensure 100 per cent employee vaccination."

"The safety and health of our

OCS Infotech wins Best Promising Partner award in the Middle East

OCS Infotech, a subsidiary of the Zubair Corporation, was recently awarded the Best Promising Partner in the Middle East at the Datamatics Awards. As a global leader in digital transformation, this accolade was presented during its participation in the Intelligent Automation Virtual Summit for the Middle East, Europe, America and India.

By organising this global summit, Datamatics aims to unify efforts, develop partnerships, consolidate international relations and exchange experiences sustainably between institutions working in this field. This summit is considered one of the most prominent international events in the field of smart automation.

Commenting on this award, Anu Cherian Philip, acting gen-



eral manager of OCS Infotech stated, "Our partnership with Datamatics was established last year and we are happy to have their full confidence in our performance during such a relatively short period. This success comes

as a direct result of our strategy aimed at attracting everything new in information and communication technology to the sultanate, especially in the field of cybersecurity. Since its establishment, we are proud that OCS In-

fotech has been able to provide the best global solutions and practices for government institutions and the business sector in Oman. As recipients of this award, we will seek to expand our services in the field of information security, both at the local and regional levels."

OCS Infotech is considered one of the leading companies in the sultanate in the field of information and communication technology specialised in the field of network storage and data management devices.

It has been lauded with multiple international awards during its continuous career of over four decades. During this time it was able to attract the latest global technologies and solutions to the local market.

Arab Health, Medlab Mideast expo opens

Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al Maktoum, president of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, chairman of Dubai Airports and chairman and chief executive of Emirates Airline and Group, officially opened Arab Health and Medlab Middle East Exhibition and Congress 2021, on Monday.

Under the show theme of 'United by business, driving the industry forward', the co-located events will welcome more than 20,000 attendees during the four-day healthcare and laboratory showcases, which take place at the Dubai World Trade Centre from June 21-24.

A total of 1,500 exhibitors from 62 countries will be present showcasing the latest innovation and new technology as the healthcare sector bounces back following the challenges of COVID-19.

Wouter Molman, executive vice president for Informa Markets, said, "As the largest exhibi-



tions for the healthcare and laboratory industry in the MENA region, we have an integral role to play in developing the healthcare sector at both a regional level and also globally.

"Last year, Arab Health and Medlab Middle East generated more than AED3.7bn worth of business during the 2020 edition of the show, denoting a 3.7 per cent year-on-year increase. The exhibitions also contributed millions to the Dubai economy through direct and indirect spending from visitors and ex-

hibitors. The past 18 months have impacted every sector of business in the world, none more so than the healthcare industry. Having the opportunity to return to a live, in-person event will be instrumental in supporting recovery."

Companies showcasing their latest innovations, including Arab Health's official artificial intelligence (AI) partner Canon Medical, the event's official AI sponsor, will highlight a range of solutions, including a new Automation Platform for HIT, the latest ultrasound technologies,

and the company's Advanced Intelligent Clear-IQ Engine for both CT and MR.

Kentaro Suzuki, medical division manager, Canon Middle East, said, "Canon Medical will continue to invest in the UAE and the Middle East, as it is a key region for our business, and we have already built a range of important and high-profile partnerships in the region.

"Participants who attend Arab Health will get to see firsthand the evolution of diagnostic imaging technologies."

Grand Millennium Muscat introduces Weekday, Weekend Summer Escape

Grand Millennium Muscat has launched Weekday and Weekend Summer Escape starting from RO32 net inclusive of taxes. The offer is on a room-only basis and includes a 20 per cent discount on all Spa Treatments and Food & Beverage outlets. The hotel has a breathtaking view of the city and the Arabian Sea from their Rooftop Infinity swimming pool that you can take advantage of when you book this promotion. The offer is valid until June 30 and is subject to availability.

Grand Millennium Muscat hotel also offers a Dine & Stay package for RO50 net per night for two adults. Stay in one of their well-appointed classic rooms with breakfast and the option to choose between lunch or dinner at their all-day dining Taybat restaurant.

The offer is valid until June 30



and is subject to availability.

And to elevate more of your Weekend Grand Experience, the hotel has recently launched 52 hours of relaxation and tranquility for RO52.500 inclusive of applicable taxes. This offer is available on weekends from Thursday to Saturday, on room only basis with a minimum of two nights' stay to get you to experience your most awaited City staycation.

Valid until July, and terms and conditions apply.

"Our main focus is to provide an excellent guest experience and ensuring our guests are happy; and as such, this kind of amazing offers allow us to keep bringing special moments to our guests at Millennium," said Luca Medda, cluster general manager, Grand Millennium Muscat and Millennium Executive Apartments Muscat.

For more information or to book, dial +968 2230 2330 or email reservations.gmm@millenniumhotels.com.

Hashed armed alliance rising to dominate Iraq

Hashed al Shaabi was created 7 years ago to fight IS and was later integrated into the state armed forces

Baghdad, Iraq - With the second-biggest bloc in Iraq's parliament, powerful friends in Iran and vast financial assets, the Hashed al Shaabi paramilitary alliance has become the predominant force in Iraqi politics, experts say.

In a boost for the alliance, largely made up of pro-Tehran armed groups, neighbouring Iran on Friday elected ultraconservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi as president.

Hashed commander Abu Ala al Walai welcomed the judiciary chief's election win as a victory for the 'axis of resistance', Iran and its allies across the region from Yemen to Syria.

The Hashed was created seven years ago to battle the extremist Islamic State group which had seized almost a third of Iraq in a lightning offensive.

Later, the Hashed was integrated into the armed forces of the state. Then it moved into politics. The alliance 'is not an anomaly but an example of how power works in Iraq', said Renad Mansour, a Senior Research Fellow at Chatham House.

The lack of oversight and rule of law in Iraq allows non-state actors to gain power without being held accountable 'to either the people or the system', he said.

In a demonstration of its clout, the Hashed this month secured the release of one of its com-



A billboard depicting the late commander of the Iranian-backed Hashed al Shaabi paramilitary forces Abu Mahdi al Muhandis (centre), who was assassinated in January last year with a caption in Arabic reading 'the grand martyr of Islam', on display along a street in Iraq's capital Baghdad (AFP)

manders after he was arrested on suspicion of ordering the killing of Ihab al Wazni, a pro-democracy activist.

'Better connected than PM Khademi'

The judiciary said it had found 'no proof' of Qassem Muslah's involvement in the murder.

His release was also a blow to Prime Minister Mustafa al Kad-

hemi's efforts to win over Iraq's pro-democracy protest movement, which has seen more than 70 activists targeted in assassinations or attempted assassinations since 2019.

Authorities have consistently failed to publicly identify or charge the perpetrators.

The commander's release 'shows the connectivity of the Hashed to state power, it show

that in some ways the Hashed have more connection to state power than (Kadhemi)', Mansour told AFP.

The Hashed also has agents throughout the country's regular armed forces, which they 'no longer fear', one senior military official said.

"Armed groups within the Hashed are working to fragment what remains of the security

forces of the state to weaken them and break them up," he said, adding that there are 'a few loyal commanders who are trying to resist these efforts'.

'Pallets of cash'

Experts have also linked the Hashed to previously unheard-of groups which have claimed attacks against US targets in recent months.

Creating murky proxies would allow the alliance to act against its arch-enemy without being directly implicated in operations - although some of its top commanders have hailed rocket and drone attacks on American targets, without ever claiming responsibility.

Having one foot inside the state and one foot outside allows the coalition to maximise its room for manoeuvre, experts say.

Hashed members run some of Iraq's main ports and land border crossings, where bribes help fund their operations.

But none of that is needed to pay their fighters' wages: Since they are integrated into the state, they are paid from the public purse.

The profits are instead used to support multiple allies, including Iran, whose economy has been battered by American sanctions, and its regional allies such as Hezbollah.

One leading Iraqi bank official said some US\$60bn had been transferred to Lebanon by politicians and militiamen who have spent the last 18 years loading aeroplanes with pallets full of cash'.

'Toxic system'

With such a strong financial base and powerful friends across the region, the Hashed has less and

less need for a popular base.

The alliance's popularity took it to second place in 2018 parliamentary elections, the first time it took part as a political force.

In forthcoming elections in October, Hashed officials admit they are expecting a lower score.

Many Iraqis suspect the alliance of links to targeted killings and the bloody repression of the pro-democracy movement, which mobilised hundreds of thousands to join mass protests against government corruption and incompetence in 2019.

But the vote may count for little.

"This is the design of the system, the parties put out a compromise candidate who could sort of present the face of reform but in reality he is covering up and masking what is a very toxic political system," Mansour said.

Ironically, the Hashed's main rival today is none other than Moqtada Sadr, himself leader of an armed group.

Equally rich and well-armed, the firebrand Shiite cleric is 'a thorn in the feet of pro-Iran factions', the Iraqi officer said.

For some observers, if it were not for Sadr, Iraq would have already fallen under the rule of an ideological army modelled on Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

AFP

Singapore woman jailed 30 years for killing maid

Singapore - A Singaporean woman who starved, assaulted and ultimately killed her domestic worker was sentenced to 30 years in prison on Tuesday, with the judge describing the case as 'among the worst types of culpable homicide'.

The affluent city-state is home to about 250,000 domestic workers who mostly come from Asian countries, and stories of mistreatment are common.

But the abuse inflicted on Myanmar national Piang Ngaih Don (24) was particularly awful and captured on CCTV installed



Police officers escorting Gaiyathiri Murugayan (AFP)

in the family's home. The domestic worker was stamped on, strangled, choked, battered with brooms and burnt with an iron,

according to court documents.

The domestic worker died in July 2016, after her employer, Gaiyathiri Murugayan, repeatedly assaulted her over several hours. Gaiyathiri (41) pleaded guilty in February to 28 charges including culpable homicide.

Another 87 charges were taken into account in sentencing.

She appeared in court on Tuesday wearing glasses and a black mask, and sat silently as the judge read his decision.

After hearing an additional plea of mitigation submitted by Gaiyathiri in a bid to avoid the life

sentence sought by the prosecution, Justice See Kee Oon sentenced her to 30 years in prison starting from the date of her arrest in 2016. See cited the 'abject cruelty of the accused's appalling conduct' in his sentencing, which he said must signal 'societal outrage and abhorrence' at the crime. But taking into account the defendant's obsessive compulsive disorder and the depression she developed around the time she gave birth, See said he did not think that life imprisonment was 'fair and appropriate'.

AFP

French prosecutors charge 4 over Libya, Egypt cyber-spying

Paris, France - Prosecutors have charged four executives at two French companies accused of aiding Libya's former strongman Moammar Gadhafi and Egyptian authorities to spy on opposition figures who were later detained and tortured, a rights group said.

The former chief of Amesys, Philippe Vannier, was charged in Paris last week with 'complicity in acts of torture', according to the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), which was

confirmed by judicial sources.

Olivier Bohbot, head of Nexa Technologies, and two other executives were charged with 'complicity in acts of torture and forced disappearances'.

The firms are suspected of selling Internet surveillance gear to Libya and Egypt, respectively, that was used to track down regime opponents.

"This is a considerable step that demonstrates that what we see every day on the ground - the

links between the activities of these surveillance companies and violations of human rights - can be considered criminal and lead to complicity charges," Clemence Bectarte and Patrick Baudouin, lawyers for FIDH, said.

The FIDH filed suit and investigations were opened after the deals were reported by *The Wall Street Journal* in 2011 as the Arab Spring protests raged in several Middle East countries.

AFP

Elephant in the room: Thailand family gets mammoth visitor

Bangkok, Thailand - Some families living in a jungle may be fearful of things going bump at night, but for one household in Thailand, the sight of an elephant rummaging through their kitchen was not a total shock.

"It came to cook again," wrote Kittichai Boodchan sarcastically in a caption to a Facebook video he shot over the weekend of an elephant nosing its way into his kitchen.

Likely driven by the midnight munchies, the massive animal pokes its head into Kittichai's kitchen in the early hours of Sunday, using its trunk to find food.

At one point, it picks up a plastic bag of liquid, considers it briefly, and then sticks it in its mouth - before the video cuts out.

Kittichai and his wife live near a national park in western Thailand, by a lake where wild elephants often bathe while roaming in the jungle.

He was unperturbed by the mammoth mammal, recognising it as a frequent visitor as it often wanders into homes in his village where it eats, leaves and shoots off back into the jungle.

The elephant had actually destroyed their kitchen wall in May, he said, creating an open-air



This videograb shows an elephant searching for food in the kitchen of a house in Pa La-U, Hua Hin (AFP)

kitchen concept reminiscent of a drive-through window.

This weekend, its sole task was to find food.

Kittichai said a general rule of thumb in dealing with unwelcome visitors crashing is not to feed them.

"When it doesn't get food, it just leaves on its own," he told AFP.

"I am already used to it coming, so I was not so worried."

Wild elephants are a common sight in Thailand's national parks and its surrounding areas, with farmers sometimes reporting incidents of their fruits and corn crops being eaten by a hungry herd.

AFP

Crackdown brings resignations at embattled Hong Kong pro-democracy paper Apple Daily

Hong Kong, China - Hong Kong's embattled pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* has been hit by a wave of resignations as authorities push to silence the outspoken tabloid and staff mull whether to leave or stay until the bitter end.

Late on Monday afternoon, *Apple Daily*'s 1,000-odd staff got the news they had long expected given Hong Kong's hardening political climate: The 26 year old paper was on its last legs.

The board had met that day and announced the paper was almost certainly going to close unless they found a way to unfreeze its assets, with a final decision to be made on Friday.

Section heads then gathered staff and told them they could decide whether to resign immediately or stay until the final day - whenever that might be - according to three employees who were present.

"I hastily decided to hand in my resignation letter after my team meeting," a reporter who asked just to use the name Joanne, told AFP.

"I believe the risk of being arrested is real... I do not want to see anyone else being rounded up anymore," she added.

Apple Daily has long been a thorn in Beijing's side, with unapologetic support for the city's



The logos of Next Media and *Apple Daily* are seen on their headquarters in Hong Kong on Tuesday (AFP)

pro-democracy movement and caustic criticism of China's authoritarian leaders.

Those same leaders have made no secret of their desire to see the paper shuttered.

Its owner Jimmy Lai is in jail, among the first to be charged under a new national security law Beijing imposed on Hong Kong last year to root out dissent after the financial hub was rocked by huge and often violent democracy protests in 2019.

Asset freeze

Then came last week's hammer blow - the charging of two more executives under the powerful

security law and the freezing of *Apple Daily*'s assets by the city's security chief.

The latter left the paper unable to pay staff, vendors and suppliers. Advertisers and supporters who tried to deposit money into its accounts were unable to do so.

Authorities say the police action was sparked by articles over the last year that allegedly supported the imposition of sanctions on China and Hong Kong.

Lai, the paper's editor Ryan Law, and its CEO Cheung Kim-hung have been charged with colluding with foreign forces to undermine China's national se-

Is it allowed or not in today's Hong Kong for me to say something I truly believe in and I have facts to support?

JOANNE

curity. They face up to life in prison if convicted.

Authorities reject suggestions that the prosecution is an assault on press freedoms. They have not identified which articles were illegal but say the paper's content pointed to a 'conspiracy'.

It is not clear how many *Apple Daily* staff have resigned but several were filmed carrying boxes out of the paper's headquarters on Monday evening and the departures have already impacted the paper's coverage.

On Monday night, the anchor of a half-hour daily evening news show broadcast online announced she was hosting her final episode.

"Take care Hong Kongers," Tse Hing-yee said in her swansong broadcast. "We will meet again, should fate allow."

The paper's financial news desk and its English edition have also announced they have

ceased publishing.

Another reporter who only gave her first name, Peggy, said colleagues spent Monday afternoon bidding farewell to those who had decided to leave, and taking group photos.

"It felt like a graduation ceremony, but there was the constant sound of someone crying," she said, adding she had quit and lined up a job in another industry.

'No shame'

"I will stay till the last," Kitty, a third reporter, told AFP. "The risk of staying for a few more days is nothing more than the risk of staying here for the past year."

All three spoke of the pride they felt working for the paper.

But Joanne said she felt local reporters were no longer allowed to do their job unimpeded.

"Is it allowed or not in today's Hong Kong for me to say something I truly believe in and I have facts to support?" she asked rhetorically.

Kitty (40) said she has yet to decide whether to remain in the industry. "Even when I find a new job in a different newspaper, I suppose the newsroom will be much more cautious," she said, referring to the self-censorship that has crept into the local media scene in recent years.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19 death after liver disease may reveal difference in care: Study

Paris, France - A survey of people hospitalised for COVID-19 found those with chronic liver disease and a history of alcohol abuse were 80 per cent more likely to die from the virus and less likely to receive life-saving intubation.

In research to be presented this week at the International Liver Congress, researchers based in France analysed the national database of 259,000 COVID patients admitted to hospitals in 2020.

Some 16,300 of those had been previously diagnosed with chronic liver disease.

The average rate of death among all patients hospitalised with the virus was 15 per cent. Among those with chronic liver disease, however, the rate jumped to nearly a quarter.

But while previous studies had looked at liver failure as a factor in the severity of COVID, this study found that mortality could be linked to which patients were placed on ventilation.

According to the study, patients who suffered alcoholism, advanced cirrhosis or liver cancer and showed higher COVID-19 morbidity and were less likely to have been intubated.

Patients with milder liver problems - from chronic liver disease unrelated to alcohol abuse, organ transplants and viral hepatitis for example - were not at heightened risk for COVID-19 mortality but received ventilation at a greater rate.

‘Our results suggest that a limitation of the therapeutic effort may have contributed to the excess mortality of patients with a liver-related complication and of patients with alcohol use disorders,’ the study said.

Thomas Berg, incoming president of the European Association for the Study of the Liver said that the findings reflected a trend in care for liver patients that pre-dates the pandemic.

“There is already some public data showing that having a liver-related complication and an alcohol-abuse disorder reduces the likelihood of being mechanically ventilated by 20-25 per cent,” he said.

‘Important study’

A 2013 US survey of 300 people with mild and advanced liver diseases found the majority of respondents perceived a stigma against their diagnosis.

“Most patients are willing to talk about if they have a cardiac disease or cancer,” Berg said, “but when it comes to liver disease there is always the perception it is self-inflicted, related to drugs or alcohol.”

The national survey is the largest that has looked at the question of how likely chronic liver disease patients are to survive a coronavirus infection.

France’s universal access to hospital care means a wide range of COVID patients were represented, and analysts could look back at ten years of records from the national discharge database to determine comorbidities.

“It’s an important study because the data is coming from a natural registry and the data is quite robust,” said Berg.

Other studies to be presented at the conference look at how the pandemic has affected alcohol use in general. Last month figures from Britain’s Office of National Statistics (ONS) showed there had been 7,423 deaths directly caused by misuse of alcohol in 2020 - a 20 per cent rise from 2019.

AFP

India tests longer-range drone flights, eyes vaccine deliveries

Bangalore, India - An aviation firm has carried out the first tests in India of longer-range drone deliveries, as hopes grow that they could deliver medicines as well as COVID-19 vaccines to remote areas.

Greater use of drones could be a game-changer for medical services in the South Asian nation’s hard-to-reach rural areas where healthcare is limited and roads often poor, experts say.

Throttle Aerospace Systems is among 20 organisations granted permits by the government since May to conduct experimental flights beyond the current limit of 450 metres.

Two drones - one that can carry up to one kilogramme for 20km or nearly an hour, and another that can lift two kilos for 15km - were tested on Monday in the southern state of Karnataka.

“Medicines were the payload here and... 2.5km were covered in seven minutes and it delivered the medicines at the designated point and the drone returned,”

Technicians fly a drone belonging to the Throttle Aerospace Systems, which flies BVLOS to deliver life saving medical supplies, during a flight testing at Gauribidanur, about 80km from Bengaluru on Monday (AFP)

Throttle’s co-founder, Sebastian Anto, told AFP at the test site in the southern state of Karnataka.

The government this month also invited bids from drone operators to help set up a pilot project for the delivering of medical supplies as it seeks to bolster its faltering coronavirus vaccination drive.

The closing date for expressions of interest was Tuesday, although the government has yet to announce when such projects would become operational.

The epidemiology chief of the Indian Council of Medical Research, Samiran Panda, told *The Hindu* daily newspaper that the technology could help vaccinate priority groups in hard-to-reach places.

“We need smart vaccination instead of mass vaccination to stem an epidemic,” Panda told the newspaper last week.

India lags behind many other nations when it comes to drones - or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles - both in terms of their uses and the regulatory framework.

Under current regulations, they have to be flown in full view, or within 450 metres, of their operators on the ground.

In Germany, researchers are reportedly testing drone prototypes that can track down disaster victims by their screams.

In Australia, drones using artificial intelligence algorithms are being used to spot crocodiles and count koalas in rugged terrain.

India, home to 1.3bn people spread across some 3.2mn square kilometres, is the world’s seventh-largest country by land mass.

“Drone technology would have a huge impact in those areas where emergency medicines and vaccines could be supplied,” co-founder of lobby group the Drone Federation of India, Vipul Singh, told AFP.

“Where it takes a few hours to travel 20-30 kilometres by road, whereas a drone can actually travel that distance in 10 to 15 minutes,” said Singh, also the co-founder of Bangalore-based Aarav Unmanned Systems.

AFP



An operator works during the cremation of a COVID-19 victim at the Campos de Paz cemetery, in Medellin on Saturday (AFP)

Colombia virus death toll crosses 100,000 mark

Bogota, Colombia - Colombia’s death toll from COVID-19 passed the 100,000 mark on Monday with a new 24-hour record of almost 650 deaths, the Health Ministry said.

After three weeks of demonstrations that have brought thousands of people into the streets to protest the government of conservative President Ivan Duque, the South American country of 50mn is suffering its worst moment since the pandemic began.

It has now recorded 100,582 dead, including 648 in the past 24 hours, the ministry said.

In proportion to its population, Colombia is reporting the fourth worst death toll in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the sixth for the number of infections, according to an AFP count.

‘More than 10,000 deaths could have been avoided if we had not had these gatherings in the past six or seven weeks,’ Duque said in a statement.

The health authorities identified a resurgence of the virus in early April, and brought in restrictive measures such as a nightly curfew in the main cities.

But since April 28, thousands of Colombians have turned out to protest in the street, spurred on by a heavy-handed police response, even after the government scrapped the controversial tax hike that sparked the demonstrations.

On Monday, authorities in Bogota reported that one person had died during fresh clashes between police and demonstrators.

Government secretary of Bogota Luis Ernesto Gomez identified the victim as Jaime Alonso Fandino (32) saying in a video posted to Twitter that the doctor who treated him said Fandino ‘was hit in the chest with a blunt object most likely at very close range’.

Images released by local authorities showed members of the riot police using stun bombs to disperse protesters armed with stones.

According to civilian authorities and the ombudsman’s office, at least 63 people have been killed in clashes since the start of the protests.

AFP

Thailand greenlights quarantine-free model for Phuket

Bangkok, Thailand - Thai authorities on Tuesday greenlighted a pilot model for quarantine-free travel to ultra-popular beach destination Phuket, a first step towards the tourist-hungry kingdom’s goal of resuscitating its pandemic-battered economy.

Thailand has imposed strict restrictions on visitor arrivals in order to stem the coronavirus, but discouraging visitors has led to its economy recording the worst performance since the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

The hugely important tourism industry has been on tenterhooks since March, when the government floated the so-called ‘Phuket sandbox’ scheme, which would have allowed vaccinated tourists to enter the country without undergoing the usual two week’s quarantine.

But after a third wave of COVID infections engulfed the country in April, the scheme appeared to be on the back burner, thanks to muddy messaging from authorities.

Tourism officials and members of Thailand’s COVID taskforce announced on Friday the sandbox scheme was set to begin on July 1. On Tuesday - eight days before its launch - government spokesman Anucha Burapachaisri said the cabinet of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-cha had officially given the scheme its blessing.

Besides Phuket, the other destinations include Koh Samui, Koh Phangan and Koh Tao - all sun-soaked islands renowned for clear waters and sandy beaches.

But tricky caveats to ensure the sandbox goes ahead without any disruptions include keeping infection rates low - in Phuket the number of weekly COVID cases cannot exceed 90.

“As of today, the number of (infection cases) in Phuket can still ensure that the Phuket sandbox scheme will go on,” said COVID-19 taskforce spokesman Taweessin Visanuoyothin on Tuesday.

AFP



A man walks along an empty Patong beach in Phuket (AFP)

US military could slow pullout from Afghanistan: Pentagon spokesman

Washington, US - The US military could slow down its withdrawal from Afghanistan due to the gains made by the Taliban insurgents, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said on Monday.

Kirby stressed that President Joe Biden’s deadline of a full withdrawal by September remains in place, but added that the pace could be adjusted based on conditions.

“The situation in Afghanistan changes as the Taliban continue to conduct these attacks and to raid district centers as well as the violence, which is still too high,” he told reporters.

“If there needs to be changes made to the pace, or to the scope and scale of the retrograde, on any given day or in any given week, we want to maintain the flexibility to do that,” he said.

“We’re constantly taking a look at this, every single day: what’s the situation on the ground, what capabilities do we have, what additional resources do we need to move out of Afghanistan and at what pace.”

“All of these decisions are literally being made in real time,” he added.

Pentagon officials said last week that the withdrawal, ordered by Biden in April after nearly two decades fighting Al Qaeda and helping government forces battle the Taliban, is around half completed.

At the time of Biden’s order around 2,500 US troops and 16,000 contractors, mostly US citizens, were in the country. The Pentagon has already turned over several of its key bases to government security forces, and has removed hundreds of cargo plane-loads of equipment.

Kirby said US forces continue to support Afghan troops in fighting the Taliban.

“So long as we have the capability in Afghanistan, we will continue to provide assistance to Afghan forces,” he said.

“But as the retrograde gets closer to completion, those capabilities will wane and will no longer be available.”

US officials to visit Turkey over Kabul

US defence officials will visit Turkey on Thursday to discuss the future of Kabul’s airport, a Turkish defence ministry source said, after Ankara promised to secure the strategic site, a report from Ankara said.

Turkey committed to providing security for the airport after US forces complete their troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in September, in a move hailed as a mark of improving ties between Ankara and Washington.

The US defence delegation will hold talks with Turkish officials, the source said on Tuesday,

This file photo shows a US soldier walking along a road near Bagram, about 60km from Afghan capital Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, on January 11, 2010 (AFP)



This file photo shows a US soldier walking along a road near Bagram, about 60km from Afghan capital Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, on January 11, 2010 (AFP)

without providing details.

The visit will come ten days after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and US counterpart Joe Biden met in Brussels on the sidelines of a NATO summit.

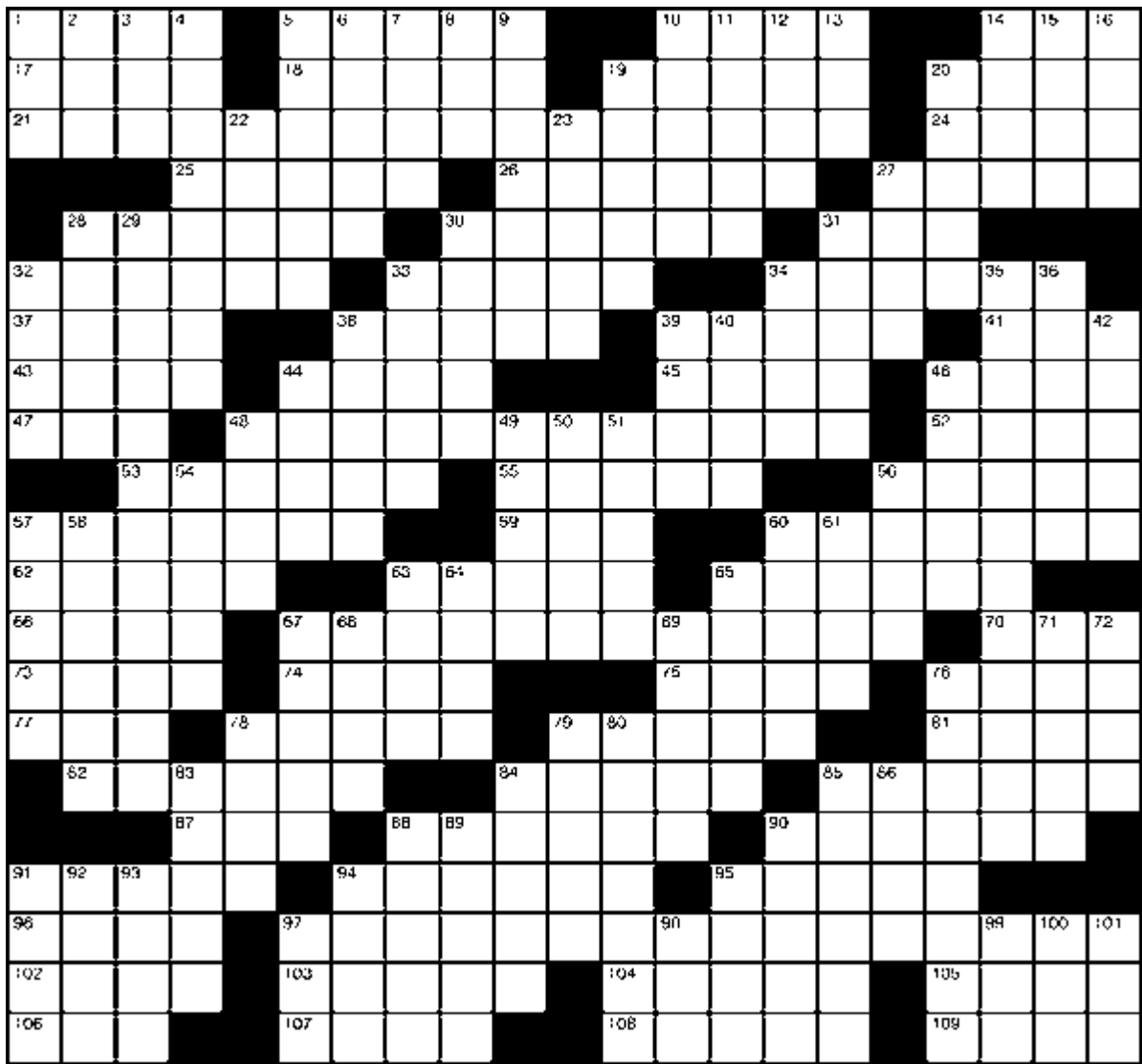
The airport was among several issues discussed during the two leaders’ first encounter since Biden’s election victory over Donald Trump, who enjoyed a personal friendship with Erdogan.

Turkey, a NATO member, has played a key role in Afghanistan since 2001, including by deploying troops in non-combat roles.

Turkey offered to host talks on Afghanistan’s future with Taliban and government officials earlier this year, but there were multiple delays and Taliban opposition.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

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22 Actress Skye
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90 Wed
91 Young stud
92 Rara ___
93 Ooze
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95 Brown of publishing
97 Prudential's product: abbr.
98 Corporate abbr.
99 DC artistic support
100 ___-guzzler
101 Beaver St

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Are you going to be meeting some new people? You need to take them at face value. Drawing conclusions or making any type of assumption about who they are or what they are about or what motivates them could take you a long way down the wrong track! Regard these other people as folks who have no hidden agendas and everything will be fine. Give them the benefit of any doubt.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

You have a good combination of positive energy and free time. This means that some fun times are on the way. Try to be open-minded and up for anything that a friend might suggest. The fewer times you say no, the more good times you'll have. If you've been waiting for a big change to come into your social life, today is the day when a new person of interest could appear.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

When you give a compliment or positive feedback to someone, be enthusiastic about it. Your laughter, applause, or cheerful words will be key in helping this person keep going down such a positive path. You're filled with pride, and you should be. Plus, you can definitely take credit for part of their success. They know that and will always remember your kindness.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

The embers of your social life have been glowing slowly but steadily for weeks, and today they're about to explode into a fiery festival of fun! Your people have tons of good things going on, and they want to make sure you're as involved as possible. Try to get boring tasks and errands out of the way early today. Save the afternoon and evening for last-minute parties.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You're searching for a place to get some peace and quiet so you can reflect on your own thoughts and feelings today. Don't give up if it takes a while to find it. Your patience will be rewarded! This is a wonderful time in your life to look for answers deep inside yourself, and you could make some meaningful decisions about where to go next in a relationship.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Are you ready for an experiment today? Share your thoughts with the person who intrigues you most and see how they react to what you have to say. Total honesty is required if you want to do this right, so don't be afraid to fully disclose how you're feeling about them. If you're ready to trust them with your heart, you have to start trusting them with your feelings.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

One of the toughest co-workers you've ever had has become a bit of a sofite lately thanks to the new romance they just started. But have they gotten too distracted by their personal life? Are they falling short of their usual quality and focus? If so, you'd better let them know today. Be diplomatic, though, and don't tell them you think their personal life is interfering with their professional life.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Push yourself to be bolder in social situations, and you'll win people over in a very big way! Instead of just smiling at someone cute, try flirting a little. Instead of beating around the bush with the compliment you want to give, come right out and tell them how hot you think they are! Sure, you might shock a few people here and there, but you'll definitely get their attention.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Regardless of whether they're from a different culture, famous or very powerful, other people will be fascinating. You'll love starting conversations with strangers and old friends alike, and they'll be just as excited about sharing a bit of themselves with you. This gift of gab is going to help you make connections that last, even with someone you normally wouldn't find very interesting.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Pay special attention to the people who aren't speaking today, because they're the people who have the most to say. Your intuition will lead you to people who you know are important. But because they are shy or intimidated by other people in the room, they might not have the courage to speak up. You're going to miss out on a valuable idea unless you engage them.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

A gift or opportunity you've been waiting for is about to come your way. Your patience is finally paying off! Run right out and show the world how deliriously happy you are about it. Grab every opportunity you can to share your joy and organise some kind of celebration. Your friends and family will be delighted to hear your exciting news, so send a few e-mails.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You have a fresh perspective right now, and it's giving you a much clearer outlook on whatever problems you've been struggling with lately. Take one more look at things that you don't like, and suddenly you'll see a way to make them better. Once you've taken care of your own issues, see what problems you can help solve for friends and family members.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Metals are good conductors of electricity because

- a. they contain free electrons
- b. the atoms are lightly packed
- c. they have high melting point
- d. All of the above

2. Let a thin capillary tube be replaced with another tube of insufficient length then, we find water

- a. will overflow
- b. will not rise
- c. depressed
- d. change its meniscus

3. Pick out the scalar quantity

- a. force
- b. pressure
- c. velocity
- d. acceleration

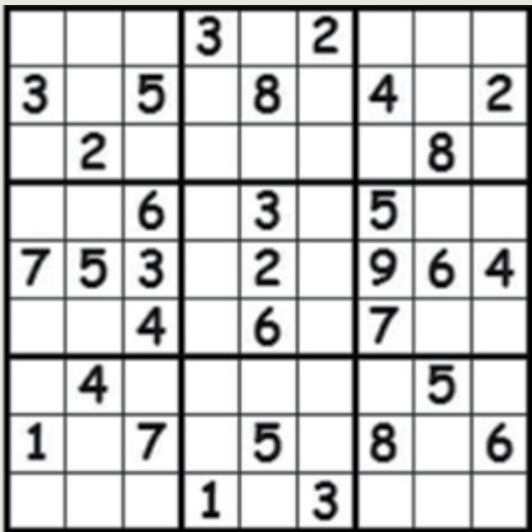
Answers: 1.a 2.b 3.b

KIDS COLOURING

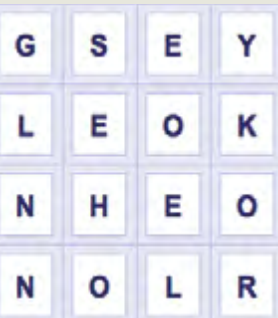


DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



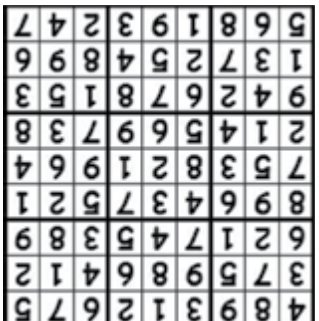
BOGGLER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JUNE 22)



WORD BUILDER

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

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



VEGETARIAN FARE

Meatless
'meaty'
meals

VEGETARIAN 'BEEF'
BOURGUIGNON

Ingredients

3tbsp extra virgin olive oil
250g smoked tofu
400g extra firm tofu - cut into cubes and salted
250g cremini mushrooms - sliced
250g small button mushrooms - halved
2 yellow onions - chopped
1 leek - sliced
3 large carrots - cut into large sticks
4 stalks celery - cut into large sticks
500g tomato juice
2 cups mushroom stock
2tbsp nutritional yeast
2 bay leaves
1½tsp dried thyme
2tsp cracked black pepper
1tsp salt
1tsp coriander seeds
3tbsp margarine
3tbsp all-purpose flour
Roasted potatoes and
onions – to serve

Method

Heat half the olive oil over medium heat in a dutch oven. Preheat the oven to 120° C. Add the smoked tofu and fry for several minutes. Once the tofu has started to brown, remove from the pan with a slotted spoon and set aside. Add the mushrooms to the pan in small batches and let them brown. Remove and set aside with the smoked tofu. Add the remaining olive oil and the extra firm tofu, and brown it. Remove from heat and keep aside.

Now, add the onions to the pan and saute until they've browned, too. Add the leeks, carrots, and celery and saute to mix. Add the smoked tofu, mushrooms, and tofu and saute to heat. Add the tomato juice and stock and stir. Season with yeast, bay leaves, thyme, pepper, salt, and coriander. Stir again and cover with a tight lid. Place in the oven and bake for an hour. Just as you're ready to serve, in a small saucepan, melt the margarine, and whisk in the flour. Cook for a couple of minutes and add to the stew, whisking well. Taste and adjust seasoning. Serve hot with roasted potatoes.

When you want to stay away from non-vegetarian food, yet retain the aura and aroma of it on your dinner table, how about trying some meatless meaty meals? You read that right, meaty meals do not necessary have to include meat or poultry. Vegetarians can, indeed, enjoy the best of non-vegetarian recipes without including any meat among the ingredients. Try these purely vegetarian 'meaty' recipes and see if you did miss your regular fare:



PANEER SEEKH KEBABS

Ingredients

1 cup paneer (cottage cheese)
¼ cup boiled-mashed potato
2tbsp rice flour or all-purpose flour
3tbsp breadcrumbs
1tsp finely chopped ginger
1 onion - minced
2tbsp minced capsicum
½tsp cumin powder
1tsp chaat masala
Salt and chilli flakes, to taste
2tbsp chopped coriander leaves
Oil for deep frying

Method

Mash paneer, add grated potato, finely chopped onion, capsicum, chaat masala, cumin powder, salt and chilli flakes. Taste, and adjust spices accordingly. Now add rice flour or wheat flour and breadcrumbs and mix well. Add chopped coriander leaves and mix well. Take skewer sticks and form long sausages around them (around 10-12cm long). Heat oil to medium level, deep fry and serve hot. You can also avoid deep frying and instead shallow fry them on a hot plate or brush with oil and grill in an oven or air-fryer.



CRISPY SEITAN 'CHICKEN' STRIPS

Ingredients

200g store-bought seitan
1/2 cup milk
2-3tbsp flour
1 cup oil to deep fry
Any favourite dip – to serve

For bread crumb
mixture

1 cup bread crumbs
½tsp paprika
½tsp salt
½tsp pepper
1tbsp nutritional yeast

Method

Slice the seitan into strips. Heat oil for

deep frying into a pan. Let it warm up while you prepare the rest. Prepare three separate bowls - add the milk to the first bowl, the flour to the second, and the breadcrumb mixture to the third.

Start by dipping each piece of seitan in the milk, then coat in the flour on both sides, finally, press each side firmly down in the breadcrumb mixture.

Drop the seitan into the hot oil and fry until both sides are golden brown. Take the seitan strips out with tongs and place on a plate to cool. Serve with a salad or any favourite dip.

VEGETARIAN 'MEATLOAF'

Ingredients

2 cups of lentils (green or brown) - rinsed
2tbsp ground flaxseed, plus 5tbsp water
2 medium carrots - peeled and cut in half length-wise
1 large red onion - peeled, cut into 8 pieces
6 to seven large portobello mushroom caps - stems removed
2 cloves of garlic - peeled
1½ cups bread crumbs
1 can (400g) sun-dried tomatoes
2tbsp of dry Italian seasoning
Ground sea salt and pepper, to taste
Olive oil

Method

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Combine the flax seed and the water until creamy. Let it sit for at least 15 minutes. In a medium saucepan, cover the lentils with water and



cook till soft. Drain the excess water and pulse slightly in a blender, just to break up the grains. Put the carrots and onion on a rimmed baking sheet with a drizzle of olive oil and roast for five minutes. Add the mushrooms and continue to roast until the vegetables are caramelised and easily pierced.

Remove and cool. Now, place the vegetables and the garlic cloves in a food processor and pulse until they are cut into small pieces. Add to the lentils in a bowl along with bread crumbs, flax paste, two chopped sun-dried tomatoes, and Italian seasoning. Stir until well combined. Taste the mixture and add salt and pepper to taste. Line a one pound loaf tin with parchment paper, and put the lentil loaf mixture in the pan. Bake for 55 minutes. Remove the loaf from the oven, cut two slices, then evenly drizzle the juice of the sun-dried tomatoes on the entire loaf. Then continue to roast for 5 more minutes. Remove from the oven and let it cool for ten minutes, before slicing.

Argentina, Chile in quarters



Argentina's Alejandro 'Papu' Gomez (second from right) celebrates with his teammates after scoring against Paraguay during their Copa America match in Brasilia, Brazil on Monday

Brasilia, Brazil - Argentina and Chile on Monday booked their places in the Copa America quarterfinals, ending top of Group A after low-scoring matches that left the other two spots up for grabs.

Argentina logged its second win in three group matches played, beating Paraguay 1-0, with Alejandro 'Papu' Gomez scoring the sole goal of a lacklustre match in Brasilia in the ninth minute.

The win placed Lionel Messi's La Albiceleste top of Group A with seven points - enough to

secure its spot in the next phase of the tournament being played in empty stadiums in coronavirus-battered Brazil.

The match marked a personal milestone for Messi, who tied Javier Mascherano's record for the most games played for Argentina - 147.

But it was not a night of glory for Messi or his team, who in the second half seemed to resign themselves to defending a spirited, but ultimately fruitless, Paraguayan attack.

In the other match on Monday, Chile drew 1-1 with



Chile's Eduardo Vargas (R) celebrates with Ben Brereton after scoring

Uruguay to end the day with five log points. With four matches left to play in Group A, Paraguay

have three points, Uruguay one, and Bolivia zero, meaning they all still stand a chance to go to

the quarterfinals. Brazil have already qualified from Group B.

The build-up to Monday's Chile-Uruguay game had been overshadowed by controversy in the Chile camp after revelations the team had breached COVID-19 protocols by bringing a local hairdresser into the team hotel. CONMEBOL said it would fine those involved US\$30,000.

However there was no sign of the controversy affecting their play, with Eduardo Vargas firing Chile ahead on 26 minutes from a tight angle after latching onto a clever pass from English-born Ben Brereton.

Uruguay grabbed a share of

the points in the second-half when Luis Suarez bundled in the ball from close range during a tangle with former Barcelona teammate Arturo Vidal at the far post following a corner.

Manchester United striker Edinson Cavani almost snatched victory for Uruguay in the 85th minute, but his glancing header flashed just wide of the post.

Vargas's first-half strike saw him draw level with Peru's Paolo Guerrero on 14 goals in the Copa America's all-time goalscoring rankings, three behind the record of 17 held by Brazil's Zinho and Argentina's Norberto Mendez.

AFP

Ugandan Olympic side quarantined in Japan

Tokyo, Japan - Eight members of the Ugandan Olympic team have been quarantined in Japan until early July, a local official said on Tuesday, after a coach tested positive for coronavirus on arrival last week. The nine-member delegation including boxers, coaches and officials, arrived on Saturday just over a month before the pandemic-postponed Games.

But despite being vaccinated and testing negative before travel, a coach tested positive during screening at Tokyo's Narita airport. The coach was isolated, and the rest of the squad was allowed to leave for their training base in Izumisano, southern Osaka. "But our local healthcare centre questioned the eight members and designated them as close contacts with the person who tested positive," a city official said.

"Now we are requiring them to stay inside the hotel until July 3," the official said, adding that the city was still looking into the possibility of allowing training outside the hotel.

The eight members have so far tested negative and are in good condition, the official said. They have not left the hotel since arriving or had contact with others, he added.

The team, which is the second to arrive in Japan for the Games after Australia's softball players, was originally due to arrive in Japan on June 16. But their flight was cancelled following a surge in COVID-19 cases in Uganda, local media said.

The coach was the first positive virus case among officials and other Olympic participants arriving in recent days, local media said.

AFP

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BIRTHDAY WISHES



SHREERAJ DOLARE
June 21

No matter Where You Go,
No matter How Old You are,
You will always be Our
Loving Son and Superstar.
Best Birthday Wishes &
Blessings Forever !!!
With Love - Aai & Baba

BIRTHDAY WISHES



ASHWIN JEYAKUMAR
June 23

Wishing you a very
happy birthday
and many more
to come dear .
with Lots of Love Ajay,
Mom & Dad.

EDUCATION FURNITURE

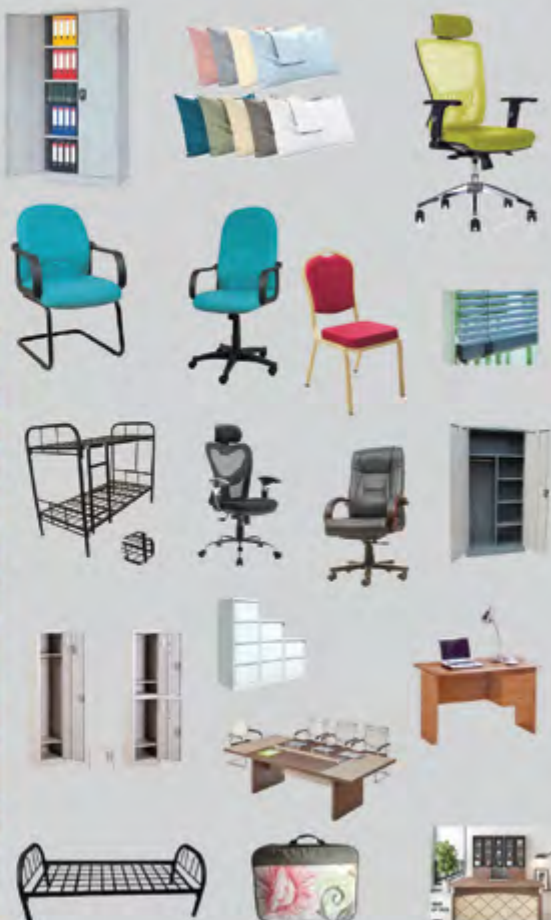


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EURO2020



DOUGHTY DANES



Denmark's Andreas Christensen (centre) celebrates after scoring his team's third goal against Russia at Parken Stadium in Copenhagen, Denmark, on Monday (AFP)

Denmark rout Russia to enter last-16 in a stunning way

Copenhagen, Denmark - Denmark made it through to the last-16 of Euro 2020 on Monday after a convincing 4-1 win over Russia which alongside Belgium's victory against Finland meant they finished second in Group B.

Goals from Mikkel Damsgaard, Yussuf Poulsen, Andreas Christensen and Joakim Maehle gave the Danes their first win of the tournament on a joyous evening at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen.

Delirious fans showered each other with drinks as Denmark rattled in the goals that allowed them to end the

group stage in party mood after the trauma of Christian Eriksen's mid-match collapse in their opener against the Finns.

Kasper Hjulmand's team will face Wales in the last-16 in Amsterdam on Saturday.

"I've never experienced anything like this. The atmosphere gets better every time we are here at Parken," said Maehle to Danish broadcaster DR.

Hjulmand praised the 'amazing' team spirit and friendship after revelling in the on-pitch celebrations. "If anyone deserves this it's our players. I can't imagine how they managed to come back from what they went through," he told reporters.

"I think it helps the team and hopefully it gives the whole country some good moments."

The Danes came into the match with no points from their first two matches but knowing a win over Russia by two goals or more and defeat for Finland would guarantee them passage from the group.

During the match's opening ceremony, a huge Denmark shirt with 'Eriksen 10' written on it was unfurled to deafening cheers, after which a rousing rendition of *You'll Never Walk Alone* was belted out from the stands.

Once the match got underway, Denmark continued with the same aggression as in their defeats to Finland and Belgium

but initially struggled to create chances against a Russia team who were content to keep things tight.

However it was the Russians who had the first chance of the game, Aleksandr Golovin driving towards the goal and fashioning a great scoring opportunity only to shoot straight at Kasper Schmeichel from close range. They were left to rue missing that chance six minutes before the break when Damsgaard showed why he was picked to replace Eriksen as Denmark's playmaker.

The Sampdoria winger, who only turns 21 early next month, looked like he had all the time in the world when he unleashed a curling strike that whipped passed Matvei Safonov and caused an eruption in the stands. Denmark continued to press after the restart but their

second came in almost comical circumstances on the hour mark. Poulsen could hardly believe his luck when Daler Kuzyaev's miscued back-pass rolled straight to him in front of the Russian goal, leaving him the simple task of stroking into an empty net and giving Denmark the two-goal lead.

Soon after, Russia was awarded a penalty which was slotted home by Artem Dzyuba. With 15 minutes remaining, Denmark were charging forward and Safonov had to pull off three incredible saves in quick succession before Christensen rammed home a superb long-range strike in the 79th minute. Denmark ended the group stage in style when Maehle slotted home the fourth three minutes later to complete a perfect evening.

Damsgaard hails 'insane' passage to knockouts

Copenhagen, Denmark - Mikkel Damsgaard heaped praise on his Denmark teammates on Monday after their win over Russia helped them into the last-16 of Euro 2020 following a rocky start to the tournament.

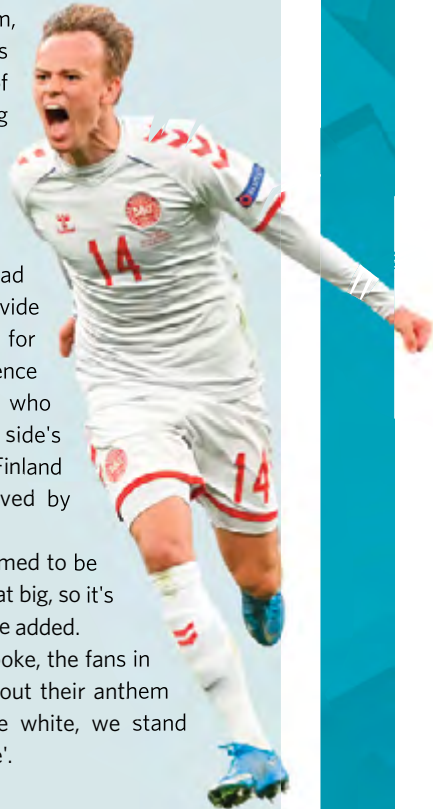
"It's insane that we're through. That team, these players... It's fantastic to be part of this, Totally amazing to hear people get crazy," Damsgaard told Danish broadcaster DR.

The 20 year had been selected to provide creative spark for Denmark in the absence of Christian Eriksen, who collapsed during his side's opening match with Finland and had to be revived by medics on the pitch.

"I had never dreamed to be part of something that big, so it's a fantastic feeling," he added.

As Damsgaard spoke, the fans in the stadium roared out their anthem 'we are red, we are white, we stand together, side by side'.

AFP



TODAY'S MATCHES

GROUP E		
	SWEDEN VS POLAND	
	SLOVAKIA VS SPAIN	

(Both games kick-off at 8pm, Oman time)

GROUP F		
	GERMANY VS HUNGARY	
	PORTUGAL VS FRANCE	

(Both games kick-off at 11pm, Oman time)

STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
GROUP A								
Italy	3	3	0	0	7	0	7	9
Wales	3	1	1	1	3	2	1	4
Switzerland	3	1	1	1	4	5	-1	4
Turkey	3	0	0	3	1	8	-7	0
GROUP B								
Belgium	3	3	0	0	7	1	6	9
Denmark	3	1	0	2	5	4	1	3
Finland	3	1	0	2	1	3	-2	3
Russia	3	1	0	2	2	7	-5	3
GROUP C								
Netherlands	3	3	0	0	8	2	6	9
Austria	3	2	0	1	4	3	1	6
Ukraine	3	1	0	2	4	5	-1	3
North Macedonia	3	0	0	3	2	8	-6	0
GROUP D								
Czech Republic	2	1	1	0	3	1	2	4
England	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
Croatia	2	0	1	1	1	2	-1	1
Scotland	2	0	1	1	0	2	-2	1
GROUP E								
Sweden	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
Slovakia	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	3
Spain	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	2
Poland	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	1
GROUP F								
France	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	4
Germany	2	1	0	1	4	3	1	3
Portugal	2	1	0	1	5	4	1	3
Hungary	2	0	1	1	1	4	-3	1

LIST OF TEAMS QUALIFIED FOR THE LAST-16



Clinical Belgium put Finland on brink of exit

Saint Petersburg, Russia - Belgium scored two late goals to see off a valiant Finland 2-0 on Monday, pushing their opponents to the brink of a group-stage exit from Euro 2020 and sending Denmark through to the last-16.

Finnish goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky's 74th-minute own goal and Romelu Lukaku's third strike of the tournament ensured Roberto Martinez's Belgium finished top of Group B.

The world's No 1-ranked side will face a third-placed team in the next round on Sunday in Seville. "We're making good progress and we'll be ready," Belgium midfielder Kevin De Bruyne told RTBF.

Finland finish third in the group, but appear unlikely to be



Belgium's Romelu Lukaku (C) celebrates after scoring against Finland

one of the four best third-placed teams. "We received tremendous support from the Finns," said Finland coach Markku Kanerva.

Finland knew they would only need a point to go through if the Danes won, but despite

holding off Belgium for more than 70 minutes, they couldn't keep it up in the Saint Petersburg heat. "There were no spaces, it was a little bit difficult," De Bruyne said.

Strong Belgium

This was arguably the strongest XI Belgium have fielded in the tournament so far, with captain Eden Hazard, De Bruyne and Axel Witsel all starting after recent struggles with injury.

The first half was largely played at a slow pace, but Belgium always looked dangerous when they moved the ball more quickly, with two such moves ending in Witsel and Hazard blasting over the crossbar.

Finland showed a little more

adventure at the start of the second half, which left them more open at the back.

Hradecky pulled off a magnificent save to deny Hazard, but was beaten by Lukaku in the 65th minute. However, the goal was ruled out by VAR for the tightest of offside decisions.

But Finland did fall behind, in agonising circumstances, as Thomas Vermaelen's header from a corner struck the post and crossbar before being nudged over his own line by Hradecky.

And with nine minutes from time, de Bruyne's clever pass into the area found Lukaku, who turned and slammed home a right-footed shot to score his 63rd international goal.

AFP

GROUP B	
2	0



EURO2020



Germany target last-16; Portugal at risk of exit

Budapest, Hungary - Germany can secure a place in the last-16 of Euro 2020 on Wednesday, but holders Portugal are at real risk of crashing out despite a prolific start to Group F by Cristiano Ronaldo. France top the section with four points heading into their final game against Portugal, a repeat of the Euro 2016 final, despite an underwhelming 1-1 draw with bottom side Hungary in Budapest.

Germany and Portugal are locked on three points apiece but Joachim Loew's side crucially have the head-to-head edge following a thrilling 4-2 win in Munich on Saturday that shifted the pressure onto Ronaldo and Co.

Portugal began their campaign with a 3-0 win against Hungary as Ronaldo became the leading scorer in European Championship history, but Fernando Santos watched his team ripped apart by Germany last Saturday. "We will have to look at this game and now what we have to do is clear our heads as we have a very important game against France," Santos said after the loss to Germany.

Ronaldo scored for the third time in two games after starting and finishing a lightning counter-attack against Germany, taking his European Champi-



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo (R) speaks to Germany's Toni Kroos after their match on Saturday

onship tally to 12 goals at a record fifth tournament appearance. But a fifth defeat in as many meetings with the Germans left Portugal needing to avoid defeat against world champions France to be guaranteed a spot in the last-16.

A draw would likely send Portugal through as one of the four best third-placed teams, just as when they went on to win the title five years ago in France.

An opening loss to France had left

Germany in trouble, contemplating the prospect of another group stage failure after their 2018 World Cup flop. They responded by delivering arguably their best performance since winning the 2014 World Cup, but Loew has tried to temper expectations.

"Nothing of significance has happened, we have only won a game, but now come further challenges which will be just as testing," he said.

Germany will go through with a draw, but would be guaranteed a top-two finish if they beat Hungary.

The lack of goals from France's superstar attack of Karim Benzema, Antoine Griezmann and Kylian Mbappe has become the talking point back home - against Germany it was a Mats Hummels own goal that decided the game.

Griezmann, the Euro 2016 Golden Boot winner, defended Benzema, who is under the spotlight after firing blanks in his first two games at the tournament.

"He wants to score just like Kylian and I, and as a player you need it to feel relaxed and liberated," Griezmann said.

"He has been really important in our link-up play and I am sure when he gets one goal the tap will open and it will keep running.

Ronaldo is two goals shy of the all-time international record, set by Ali Daei who scored 109 times for Iran. However the Portugal captain has never scored in six previous attempts against France.

As for Germany, they could be without Hummels, Thomas Mueller and Ilkay Gundogan for the clash with Hungary, after the trio picked up knocks against Portugal.

AFP



A view of the Allianz Arena in Munich, Germany

Munich to deck city in rainbow colours: Mayor

Berlin, Germany - Munich's mayor hit back at UEFA's refusal to allow the Allianz Arena to be lit in rainbow colours for Wednesday's Germany-Hungary Euro 2020 match, saying they will decorate other key landmarks instead.

"I find it shameful that UEFA forbids us to send a sign for cosmopolitanism, tolerance, respect and solidarity with the people of the LGBTIQ community," said Munich mayor Dieter Reiter on Tuesday. He said he planned to put up rainbow-coloured flags at the Munich town hall and illuminate a huge wind turbine located close to the stadium and other locations to protest at a controversial law passed by the Hungarian government last week.

UEFA said in a statement that it is 'a politically and religiously neutral organisation'. "Given the political context of this request - a message aimed at a decision taken by the Hungarian national parliament - UEFA must refuse," it said.

AFP

Must-win tie for Enrique's Spain against Slovakia



Spain's coach Luis Enrique (R) at a training session on Monday

Madrid, Spain - Spain are bracing themselves for a test of nerve in their last group game against Slovakia on Wednesday, with Luis Enrique's side needing victory to guarantee their place in the last-16.

After leaving out Sergio Ramos, Luis Enrique has left himself open to questions about a lack of leadership in his squad. A bright start against Sweden fizzled out in the second half while a missed penalty against Poland turned a decent display into one paralysed by anxiety and tension.

"This country has won the Euro and the World Cup but in this squad there are many youngsters," Cesar Azpilicueta said on Monday.

"There are several captains in our team, we know how to act and everyone is going to give their all on Wednesday."

Captain Sergio Busquets is expected to return after rejoining the group on Friday following his negative COVID-19 test. Busquets has not played in either of Spain's first two matches. "He's an important player, with his experience on and off the pitch," Azpilicueta said. "He's an incredible captain and we know the dominance he can bring in midfield. We're very happy he's back."

Azpilicueta said Spain can draw inspiration from Chelsea's triumph in the Champions League last season. He

lifted Chelsea's second European Cup after the team changed gear under new coach Thomas Tuchel, a superb finish culminating in a surprise victory over Manchester City in the final.

Not about 'how you start'

Spain are pinning their hopes on a similar transformation after two disappointing draws against Sweden and Poland mean they currently sit third, a point behind Slovakia and two behind Sweden in Group E.

"It's not how you start, it's how you finish," said Azpilicueta. "I have seen it this year in the Champions League. Before January we weren't very good, and after that we did very well."

"A lot of people gave us up for dead last season, they thought we were out of the Champions League, out of the race for top four. People write you off but you never give up."

Despite his excellent form for Chelsea, Azpilicueta has rarely been favoured by Luis Enrique and has started on the bench for both of Spain's opening two games.

Azpilicueta's experience might be a valuable addition to a youthful Spanish team, who now find themselves under pressure to make it out of what looked a straightforward group.

AFP

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Kishry pledges to raise Oman’s profile in world swimming



H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham



Taha al Kishry

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Weeks after being re-elected as a member of the elite bureau of the world swimming body, FINA, Oman Swimming Association (OSA) chairman, Taha al Kishry, has pledged to raise the profile of the sultanate’s swimming at the global stage.

In his remarks to *Muscat Daily*, Kishry, who is also the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) secretary-general, expressed his thanks and gratitude to H H Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY), for his and the ministry’s full-hearted support during the FINA Congress in Doha, Qatar, on June 5.

Kishry said that he had received a congratulatory letter from H H Sayyid Theyazin on his re-election to FINA Bureau for a four-year term, the second time in a row for the Omani official to be in the world’s swimming’s top panel. Kishry was one of the three Asians nominated and a total of 16 members were elected to

the FINA Bureau, which also saw Kuwait’s Hussain al Musallam being elected as the new FINA president.

Kishry said, “H H Sayyid Theyazin’s support and letter of congratulations underlines his full backing to Omani officials to excel at the world stage. I am honoured and privileged as an Omani to be re-elected to the FINA Bureau for the second time. “The re-election also brings in new responsibilities for me and I pledge to raise the profile of Oman’s status in the swimming world and see that our swimmers reach better standards under top-class coaches and also get more opportunities to compete with the world’s best.”

Kishry is also the director-general of the Asian Swimming Federation and has served for more than three decades in sports administration in various capacities. He said, “I believe that my presence in the FINA Bureau will help Oman’s swimming and boost the sultanate’s role in world of sports.”

@ashokmuscat

TEST ON KNIFE-EDGE

Southee claims both India openers; WTC final heads to reserve day

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP
FINAL: DAY FIVE

Southampton, UK - All results remain possible in the final of the World Test Championship (WTC) after an engrossing fifth day between India and New Zealand in Southampton on Tuesday.

Tim Southee removed both India openers late on Tuesday to give New Zealand hope of an unlikely victory as the showpiece match headed into the reserve sixth day. India were 64 for two in their second innings at stumps on the fifth day, a lead of 32 runs.

SCOREBOARD			
India 1 st Innings 217			
NEW ZEALAND 1 st INNINGS			
T Latham	c Kohli b Ashwin	30	
D Conway	c Shami b Ishant	54	
K Williamson	c Kohli b Ishant	49	
R Taylor	c Gill b Shami	11	
H Nicholls	c Rohit b Ishant	7	
BJ Watling	b Shami	1	
C de Grandhomme	lbw b Shami	13	
K Jamieson	c Bumrah b Shami	21	
T Southee	b Jadeja	30	
N Wagner	c Rahane b Ashwin	0	
T Boult	not out	7	
Extras	(lb 4, lb 16, nb 6)	26	
TOTAL: 249 in 99.2 overs			
Fall of wickets: 1-70, 2-101, 3-117, 4-134, 5-135, 6-162, 7-192, 8-221, 9-234, 10-249			
Bowling: Ishant Sharma 25-9-48-3, J Bumrah 26-9-57-0, M Shami 26-8-76-4, R Ashwin 15-5-28-2, R Jadeja 7.2-2-20-1			
INDIA 2 nd INNINGS			
Rohit Sharma	lbw b Southee	30	
S Gill	lbw b Southee	8	
C Pujara	not out	12	
Virat Kohli	not out	0	
Extras	(lb 4, nb 1, w 1)	6	
TOTAL: 64 for two in 30 overs			
Fall of wickets: 1-24, 2-51			
Bowling: T Southee 9-3-17-2, T Boult 8-1-20-0, K Jamieson 10-4-15-0, N Wagner 3-0-8-0			



New Zealand’s Tim Southee (R) celebrates taking the wicket of India’s Shubman Gill on the fifth day of the WTC final in Southampton, UK, Tuesday (AFP)

Southee had Shubman Gill lbw for eight, playing across the line before Rohit Sharma, playing no stroke to a ball that cut back, was leg before for 30. And there was still time late in the day for Southee to hit India captain Virat Kohli flush on the helmet.

Kohli survived to be eight not out, with Cheteshwar Pujara unbeaten on 12 off 55 balls after veteran paceman Southee had taken two for 17 in nine overs.

That a positive result was still possible after both Friday’s opening day and Monday’s fourth had both been washed out without a ball bowled was something of a minor success for the ICC following two years of qualifying series to determine the finalists.

Earlier, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson made 49 out of a total of 249 in reply to India’s first-innings 217. Such was the control exerted by India’s quicks in a match where pacemen on both sides have dominated in helpful conditions, that Williamson made just seven from 77 balls faced before lunch.

Mohammed Shami led the way for India with four for 76 in 26 overs after yet more rain delayed Tuesday’s start by an hour.

Officials decided to activate the reserve day midway through Tuesday’s play, creating the first six-day Test since the 2005 Super Series between Australia and the Rest of the World and the first in England since the

fourth match of the 1975 Ashes at the Oval.

Williamson and Ross Taylor, their two most experienced batsmen, added just 16 runs in the first 13 overs. Shami then had Taylor out for just 11 when a mistimed drive was caught by Gill at short extra-cover. Ishant Sharma (3-48) followed up by having Henry Nicholls well-taken by Rohit at second slip.

And there were huge cheers from the India fans when New Zealand’s 134 for four was transformed into 135 for five as Shami clean bowled BJ Watling, playing his last match before retirement, with a superb delivery that hit the top of middle and off stumps.

Kyle Jamieson, who took five

wickets in India’s innings, drove Shami, armed with the new ball, for a magnificent straight six only to fall to the very next delivery when a top-edged hook was well caught at fine leg by Jasprit Bumrah.

Williamson, in sight of joining New Zealand opener Devon Conway (54) in making a fifty this match saw his painstaking 177-ball innings end when he steered Ishant to second-slip Kohli with New Zealand 221-8.

Southee and fellow tailender Trent Boult both hit sixes, however, before the innings finished when Southee played on to left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja for 30.

AFP

Maharaj hat-trick seals South Africa series sweep

WEST INDIES VS S AFRICA
SECOND TEST: DAY FOUR

Gros-Islet, Saint Lucia - Keshav Maharaj completed just the second hat-trick by a South African in Test history as the Proteas completed a 158-run victory over the West Indies on the fourth day of the second Test of the two-match series at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground in St Lucia on Monday.

In the penultimate over before lunch the left-arm spinner removed Kieran Powell, Jason Holder and Joshua da Silva in successive deliveries to join fast bowler Geoff Griffen, who achieved the feat at Lord’s in 1960, in the record books.

Maharaj then followed up with two of the last three to fall in the afternoon to finish with figures of five for 36 as the West Indies were dismissed for 165.

Following a comprehensive innings and 63-run victory inside three days in the first Test a week earlier at the same venue, the result gave South Africa the series 2-0, their first away series triumph since 2017 in New



South Africa’s Keshav Maharaj celebrates a West Indian dismissal

Zealand. “This is huge for us because we haven’t won on the road for quite some time,” said South African captain Dean Elgar. “There will be teething years as captain but this is a good, important step on the way forward.”

The home side began the day on 15 without loss looking at a victory target of 324. It was unlikely but given they had chased

down 395 to beat Bangladesh in February, the West Indies were not without hope.

At least not until the 13th over by which stage Shai Hope had joined skipper Kraigg Brathwaite back in the pavilion, both dismissed by pace bowler Kagiso Rabada who then persuaded Kyle Mayers into an ugly hoick which spliced to Dean Elgar.

Maharaj then stole the head-

SCOREBOARD			
South Africa	1 st Innings	298	
West Indies	1 st Innings	149	
South Africa	2 nd Innings	174	
WEST INDIES 2 nd INNINGS			
K Brathwaite	c Elgar b Rabada	6	
K Powell	c Nortje b Maharaj	51	
S Hope	c Markram b Rabada	6	
K Mayers	c Elgar b Rabada	34	
J Blackwood	c de Kock b Ngidi	25	
J Holder	c Petersen b Maharaj	0	
J da Silva	c Mulder b Maharaj	0	
K Roach	c Ngidi b Maharaj	27	
J Seales	c Nortje b Maharaj	7	
S Gabriel	not out	2	
R Chase	absent hurt		
Extras	(b 4, lb 3, nb 2, w 2)	11	
Total: 165 in 58.3 overs			
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-26, 3-90, 4-107, 5-107, 6-107, 7-147, 8-158, 9-165			
Bowling: K Rabada 16-3-44-3, L Ngidi 10-2-29-1, K Maharaj 17.3-7-36-5, A Nortje 11-3-35-0, W Mulder 4-0-14-0			

Holder prodded at his first delivery for Keegan Petersen to take the sharp catch at short-leg and then Wiaan Mulder pulled off a superb snare low to his right at leg-slip when wicketkeeper-batsman da Silva attempted a leg-side glance to the hat-trick ball.

“I just decided to bowl normally and it was a brilliant catch by Wiaan,” said Maharaj.

“I really didn’t know what to do after that because the excitement of the occasion overtook all of us.”

Until the Maharaj intervention, South Africa had relied on the excellence of Rabada who bowled beautifully to remove Brathwaite, caught at slip by Elgar, and Hope who fended at a spiteful delivery angled into his body, a faint touch off his left glove carrying through to wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock.

Rabada, who also chipped in with 61 runs, earned the Player of the Match award. Roston Chase, hampered by a thigh strain sustained in the field on the third afternoon, did not bat.

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