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NEW RULES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITS
GO TO **PAGE 05 BUSINESS**

Task force in place to ensure food supplies



Check points in all parts of the sultanate

Travellers to furnish tickets on the way to and from airport

One person to drop off or receive travellers

Avoid last minute shopping

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has formed teams to take necessary steps to ensure adequate supplies of foodstuff in all parts of the sultanate, according to Mubarak bin Mohammed al Dohani, director general of commerce in the ministry.

In an interview with Oman TV, Dohani said, "We assure the availability of basic food items and consumer goods in all the governorates. The ministry has

formed a task force to constantly monitor and ensure foodstuff requirements are met in all parts of the sultanate."

He, however, warned against stockpiling of foodstuff and asked consumers to rationalise consumption.

"MoCIIP is cooperating with Royal Oman Police to allow the transit of trucks weighing three tonnes and more during the night closure period. I urge all residents and citizens to choose the right time for shopping and not rush at the last minute," said Dohani.

Movement between gover-

norates will be prohibited in addition to movement between wilayats and villages of the same governorate, informed Maj Mohammed bin Salam al Hashami, head of Directorate of Public Relations, Royal Oman Police (ROP).

"There will be intense monitoring of movement during the overnight shutdown period. The ban on movement and closure requires everyone's support. Check points will be set up to control movement of citizens and residents between governorates during the night closure," Maj Hashami said.

Travellers must furnish flight tickets while commuting to and from airport. "They are allowed only person to drop off or receive them."

Maj Hashami also called on commercial establishments to stop activities at an appropriate time to ensure that their customers and employees can return home in time.

The ROP has appealed to citizens and residents to continue adhering to the directives and to report violators of the decisions of the Supreme Committee by calling 1099.

CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER ARRIVES IN OMAN



Wang Yi, State Councilor and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, and his accompanying delegation arrived in Muscat on an official visit to the sultanate on Sunday. Wang and his accompanying delegation were received upon their arrival by Dr Khalid Said al Jaradi, head of the Protocols Department in the Foreign Ministry (ONA)

National programme for organ transplant hailed

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a move to establish guidelines in the field of transplantation of human organs and tissues, H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, has issued a ministerial decision to develop a national programme to regulate human organ and tissue donations.

The programme will contribute to clinical scientific research and implementation of the Technical Committee's recommendations in regulating the practice of human organ and tissue transfer and transplantation. The National Programme for Regulating Transplantation of Human Or-

Organ transplantation is the only option available for patients with organ failure

gans and Tissues is also proposing priority standards for performing human organ and tissue transplantation, control mechanisms and inspection of medical practices in this area, besides developing a plan to enhance community awareness about the significance of tissue donation and encouraging organ donation.

Regulating human organ and tissue transplantation is com-

plex and difficult, and is one of the biggest challenges faced by the health system. The programme will allow coordination among concerned parties and specialists to deal with the challenges and find appropriate solutions to these.

'Organ transplantation is the only option available for patients with organ failure. Organs can be donated either through living organ donation for kidney and liver, or by a deceased donor for other organs,' a Ministry of Health statement said.

According to the ministry, 'The list of patients awaiting organs is long due to severe scarcity of donors.

Continued on Page 04



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MESSAGE IN A BAG

Printed images on eco-friendly bags bolster effort to spread environmental awareness

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To spread awareness on the importance of using environmentally friendly bags for shopping besides giving them an element to readily identify with Oman's traditions and culture, artist Abdulaziz al Shehhi has embarked on making bags with creative images printed on them.

A resident of Khasab, Shehhi painted a series of images featuring Omani men and women and objects quintessential of the country's heritage which are printed on the eco-friendly bags.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, the 33-year-old said, "I have been doing graffiti art since childhood. The idea for bags came to me after the Environment Authority issued the decision to ban single-use plastic bags from January 2021. I thought of painting images of our heritage, like our traditional dance forms, for this purpose."

Shehhi teamed up with a company called Zaree Khasab to print his art on the multiple use bags. "The idea is to spread awareness on the importance of preserving the environment and encourage people to use eco-friendly bags. I believe that art has a purpose, and my message here is that everyone should cooperate with the authorities to limit damage to the environment."

"Reusable bags, made of cloth, paper or other organic materials, are the ideal alternative. These bags can be used over and over again, while plastic shop-



The idea is to spread awareness on preserving the environment and encourage people to use eco-friendly bags. I believe art has a purpose and my message is that everyone should cooperate

ABDULAZIZ AL SHEHHI

ping bags are used only once and take more than a thousand years to degrade."

Shehhi uses various mediums to create art, including pencil, watercolours and digital art, but particularly enjoys graffiti.

"I created portraits of the Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said at different sites in Khasab for five years. I have also painted His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on a rock face of the Hajar Mountains range, also in Khasab, with an image of Sultan Qaboos on a mountain facing it," he informed.

Shehhi's graffiti of His Majesty Sultan Haitham on a mountain in pop art style in September 2020 created over two months received much attention.

About his latest project in efforts to save the environment, he said, "I urge all members of society to cooperate with the authorities to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags. Use eco-friendly bags to protect the environment from pollution and to protect natural life in Oman."

Despite COVID-19 challenges OCA continues to serve needy

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The year 2020 was tough for most people and organisations and it was the same for Oman Cancer Association (OCA). However, there were a few achievements for the association which were shared with the media virtually on Sunday.

The second Mobile Mammography Unit (MMU) was opened for women for regular check-ups and Occidental Oman stood by their commitment for the same. The Mobile Mammography Unit is for the ladies over 40 years and until now has served over 24,000 of various nationalities. The 10th anniversary for Dar al Hanan was also successfully observed and OCA did not receive any single case of COVID-19 there.



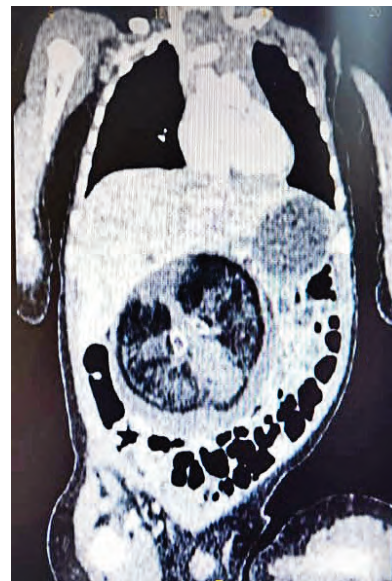
Dr Wahid Ali al Kharusi

Speaking during the virtual meeting, Dr Wahid Ali al Kharusi, president of Oman Cancer Association, said, "The association was badly impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic. But with the grace of God and the support of our sponsors, the community, our hard-working staff and our valued volunteers we managed to continue with our work serving cancer patients, their families and the community at large."

He added, "Through the pandemic we continued with our programmes of MMU and Dar al Hanan supporting the patients with their needs and in some instances with medications. We made sure that all the running programmes met the COVID-19 protocols laid down by the government in order to abide by the rules and regulations and importantly to protect our patients and our staff."

OCA was to host the Union International Cancer Control (UICC) World Summit and Congress in October 2020. This was cancelled due to the COVID-19.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow board members for their hard work, understanding and excellent cooperation. I am blessed for their support and diligence," Dr Kharusi added.



Royal Hospital performs rare surgery

Muscat - A surgical team from The Royal Hospital's Paediatric Surgery Department has succeeded in performing a rare surgery for an eight-month old baby with 'Foetus in Fetu' condition - a developmental abnormality in which a mass of tissue resem-

bling a foetus forms inside the body.

The surgical team was led by head of Paediatric Surgery, Dr Mohammed al Sajwani, along with three paediatric surgeons Dr Saeed Bani Oraba, Dr Mahmood Ibrahim, and Dr Mo-

ammed Hamed, and with the cooperation of anaesthetists and nurses.

The patient's post-surgery examinations and vital signs showed success and was discharged after three days.

'Foetus in Fetu' is a rare med-

ical phenomenon that is estimated to occur in 1 in 500,000 live births.

A foetus in fetu can be considered alive, but only in the sense that its component tissues have not yet died or been eliminated.

1. Boil noodles in boiling water (400ml) for 3 minutes
2. Mix the Seasonings into a serving bowl while noodles are being cooked
3. Take out noodles from water and drain well
4. Put the noodles into the serving bowl and mix it well

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NIGHT LOCKDOWN ENFORCED



Views of Ruwi at two locations on Sunday, the first night when the night movement ban came into effect (Muscat Daily)

2,249 new COVID-19 cases, 11 deaths

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Sunday announced 2,249 new cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the last three days, taking the total number of infections to 156,087 in the sultanate.

The number of deaths during the same period has been reported to be 11, while the number of those who have recovered also increased by 1,654.

'The number of recoveries has increased to 142,420, while the number of deaths has reached 1,661,' an MoH statement said, adding that the rate of recovery now stands at 91 per cent.

As of Sunday, a total of 466 patients were admitted in health institutions, including 145 in intensive care units (ICUs).

Only basic services at primary healthcare centres

Given the sudden change in the scenario, MoH held a meeting on Sunday to discuss the epidemiological situation updates and the surge in COVID-19 cases as well as cases of hospital admissions particularly in ICUs.

Presided over by H E Dr



Ahmed bin Mohamed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, the meeting reviewed challenges and their

possible solutions during the current phase of pandemic that requires pooling of health sector

resources to take care of the increasing number of COVID-19 patients.

It was decided that only basic services at primary healthcare centres and specialised care units will be provided, in addition to returning to the plan that was adopted during the peak of the pandemic last year.

The ministry calls on everyone to understand the importance of measures taken and cooperate with the health sector, while strictly adhering to preventive measures such as wearing masks, physical distancing and maintaining hand hygiene.

Muscat Municipality closes service centre

Following the spike in the number of infections, Muscat Municipality in Seeb has stopped receiving customers and cancelled all appointments at the service centre for a period of two weeks.

'Muscat Municipality in Seeb draws the attention of the public to a halt in receiving customers and cancellation of appointments at the Customer Service Centre, starting today, Sunday, March 28, for a period of two weeks. Transactions can be cleared electronically,' it said in a statement.

Temperature set to touch 40°C in many areas

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The mercury touched 40°C in many areas of Oman on Saturday with a further rise in temperature expected in coastal areas along the Sea of Oman and the coast of Musandam.

'A remarkable rise in temperatures of up to 40°C is expected in the coastal areas of Sea of Oman and the coasts of Musandam,' the Met Department stated.

The highest temperature on Saturday was recorded in Dima Wa al Tayeen (40.8°C), followed by Hamra ad Duru (39.9°C), Qabil (39.6°C), Jaloni



(39.6°C) and Fahud (39.6°C).

The Met Department also warned of high sea waves in Musandam. 'Sea waves are expected to rise on the coast of Musandam to 2.5m, coinciding with active southwest winds. Waves on the coasts of the Sea of Oman may rise to 1.75m, co-

inciding with northwest winds starting Sunday evening,' it said.

Additionally, the Met Department predicted formation of low clouds and fog on Sunday night and Monday morning in parts of the governorates of the South Sharqiyah, Al Wusta and Buraimi.

Protection of rights creates new markets: MoCIIP

Muscat - The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has urged Omani companies to use names reflecting the country's cultural heritage in their trademarks and products. Branding contributes to strategic integration and encourages creativity and innovation in all industries, it said.

The ministry affirmed that protection of intellectual property plays a role in enhancing the importance of domestic products and their value.

MoCIIP also emphasised that protection of intellectual property is related to the identification of the source of goods, while trademarks and geographical indications are considered one of the forms of intellectual property relating to the origin of goods and products.

Towards this end, the ministry seeks to preserve and protect

various forms of intellectual property, including patents, industrial models, trademarks, geographical indications and literary property rights. It also calls on all relevant authorities to protect and enhance local and traditional production methods, besides registering the origin of products and the characteristics of their geographical environment.

According to Fatima bint Khalfan al Balushi, biotechnology patent specialist in the Intellectual Property Department at MoCIIP, national and international legislations aim to protect intellectual property, while trademarks contribute to increasing and enhancing the sultanate's exports and stimulating creative activity of individuals, small and medium-sized enterprise owners and entrepreneurs.

Oman's natural resources are its property, which the

country protects and preserves in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Fatima informed that there are three multilateral treaties administered by World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) with provisions related to the protection of geographical indications, which the sultanate has acceded to - the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, the TRIPS Agreement, and the Lisbon Agreement for the Protection of Appellations of Origin and their International Registration.

She clarified that use of geographical indications protect against confusion or false or misleading claims, while Article 3.22 of the Paris Agreement stipulates that countries who joined it are obligated to ensure effective protection against unfair competition.



Muscat to Salalah route resumes

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Mwasalat has announced the resumption of operations on its Muscat and Salalah route starting Sunday, March 28.

In a statement, the transport company said, 'We would like to inform you that we are going to operate a round trip of route 100 - Muscat-Salalah at 6am starting from March 28 until April 8.'



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Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tenders documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	No E-Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
PRE/20/092	2020/MM/QS-45 (Re Call 2)	Supply of Road Marking Materials for Road Maintenance 2020 (E- Tender) (Re Call 2)	Rial 25	04/04/2021	11/04/2021	Excellent First
PRE/20/116	2020/MM/QS-58 (Re Call)	Maintenance of Water Falls at Hill near Qurum Natural Park (E- Tender) (Re Call)	Rial 25	24/04/2021	06/05/2021	Specialized

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission.Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Original Tender Bond envelope should be sealed with red wax and entiteld to His Excellancy/ Head of Intrmal Tender Committee and to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Third Floor, before 10:00 am as per the date Mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+96824166670).



Over 12,000 industrial licences issued in 2020

Muscat - The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) said it registered 12,176 industrial licences in 2020. MoCIIP also stated that it issued 465 exemption decisions along with 17 decisions to grant tax exemption.

A total of 5,775 Type B permits were issued for exemptions on imported materials for industrial establishments.

MoCIIP received 119 applications for land to be utilised under

the usufruct system in industrial projects.

Ibtisam bint Mohammad al Alawiya, secretary of the Industrial Registry at the ministry, said, "Based on Ministerial Decisions No 65 and 66/2009 issued by the Ministry of Finance regarding the controls of customs exemption for industrial establishments, these will adhere to all provisions of the decisions regulating customs exemptions and ensure that the exempted materials are used

for the purpose for which they were exempted."

She added that in order to implement the customs exemption controls properly and to avoid any problems the companies may face in obtaining customs exemption incentives in future, industrial establishments should submit their requests for exemption for each industrial licence separately, and should use the exemption decision for each branch separately.

45,853kg of precious metal stamped

Muscat - The total quantity of bullion, gold, silver, and platinum artefacts that were stamped during the year of 2020 was 45,853kg according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

MoCIIP said that the jewellery and ornaments that were imprinted in the Precious Metals Laboratory of the Directorate General for Standards and Metrology during 2020 included precious and semi-precious



stones, precious metals and ordinary metals with a crust of precious metals, and natural or

industrial pearl products, traditional jeweller and coins.

MoCIIP plays a major role in controlling precious metals and precious stones in order to curb illegal practices and to protect consumers and merchants from fraud, whether by foreign parties or by workshop workers.

It also encourages the manufacture of precious metals and preservation of traditional designs as part of the sultanate's legacy.

Pandemic restrictions break backbone of fitness business

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The year-long pandemic and frequent lockdowns have badly impacted health enthusiasts, gym owners and instructors. Though innovative ideas like online sessions, workout apps and telephonic guidance have helped, more and more challenges including restricted hours, limited people and the additional precautions have made gyms run at losses.

For martial arts practitioners, physical contact is necessary and this is a challenge for many.

Baqar Haidar, a coach from Oman Kickboxing Club, said, "COVID-19 has dramatically affected the health and fitness business. We operate a martial arts gym and the idea of close contact training is impossible these days because of social distancing norms. We cannot accommodate many students in a given time.

"Most people prefer to train between 5pm and 9pm. Restrictions in number of people and also time limits are adversely affecting us."

Many clubs have tried out online sessions.

Shan B N, a karate instructor for children, said, "I did online classes during the lockdown and the response was not that great. Karate is a physical contact sport and we need sparring partners for good training. Having a virtual class is very challenging."

Haidar added, "We did free online classes for more than six months during the first lockdown last year; we were getting up to 70 people logging in for training. It's a convenient option for some



I did online sessions during the lockdown and the response was not that great. Karate is a physical contact sport and we need sparring partners for good training. Having a virtual class is very challenging

SHAN B N

but the training environment is very important. For dedicated students, training at home may work, but those numbers dropped as time went on."

Restrictions in timing, number of people and no shower facilities

have also impacted the gyms.

Mohammad Ayman, an instructor at Millennium Gym, said, "Many of the trainees are office-goers and they travel long distances to work in Ruwi. It is impossible for them to take a

break from work and come to the gym. In the past, people used to come here either before or after work. They used the facilities well but now it is indeed tough for them to come after work as there are restrictions in number of people and shower facilities."

New ideas are being mooted to overcome challenges.

"We are planning at some point to take the classes outdoors," Haidar said.

"Outdoor classes with the correct spacing will allow us to get higher student numbers and also allow us to cover our costs."

National programme for organ transplant hailed

Continued from Page 01

There are approximately 3,000 patients with end-stage renal failure and currently relying on dialysis. Consequently, all efforts are being made to encourage the community to donate organs when alive or in death. A living donor can save eight lives."

The ministry's efforts to establish guidelines for the regulation of organ transplantation evoked reactions from citizens.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, veteran blood donor Ahmed bin Hamad al Kharusia, who has donated 164 times, said, "The decision is a very important step towards providing human organs and saving lives. The sultanate

finds it difficult to provide human organs for donation and has to rely on imports. The guidelines will regulate the process of organ donation and aid scientific and medical research related to it."

Welcoming the move, citizen Saeed al Habsi said it will help save lives. "I urge the community to accept the idea of donating organs."

Describing the ministry's efforts in this regard as 'excellent', Abdullah al Balushi said organ transplants outside Oman are expensive as these involve the cost of searching for a donor and accommodation abroad for extended durations of time during the operation and recovery.

Qatar Airways supports agri, environmental expos

Muscat - Qatar Airways has announced its role as Official Airline Partner of the 8th Qatar International Agricultural Exhibition (AgriteQ) and the 2nd Qatar International Environmental Exhibition (EnviroteQ) 2021.

Held under the patronage of Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al Thani, from March 23 to 27, AgriteQ and EnviroteQ highlighted innovation in agricultural techniques, and set the road map to achieving food security and sustainable development in Qatar.

As per a statement, Qatar Airways has always been at the forefront of the national efforts towards achieving sustainability. The carrier has demonstrated environmental leadership through its global airline and airport operations, as well as through aviation and catering services, retail outlets and hotels.

Qatar Airways group chief executive, Akbar al Baker, commented, "We are pleased to partner with AgriteQ and Envi-



roteQ - an initiative that enables local and international agriculture stakeholders to exchange expertise and seize business opportunities in this vital sector. Through these exhibitions, we are proud to reaffirm our commitment to supporting the local agriculture sector, achieving national food security and promoting environmental sustainability."

In 2019, Qatar Airways partnered with Qatarat Agricultural Development Company to supply Qatar Aircraft Catering Company with fresh produce to be served onboard Qatar Airways flights from Doha as well as across the lounges in Hamad International Airport.

The two-year agreement demonstrates Qatar Airways' commitment to contributing towards Qatar's self-sufficiency goals in support of the Qatar 2030 Vision.

Qatar Airways' focus on sustainability also extends to its home and hub, Hamad International Airport, which was recently voted 'Third Best Airport in the World' and 'Best Airport in the Middle East'.

Qatar Airways also has a zero-tolerance policy for illegal transportation of endangered wildlife. Qatar Airways was an inaugural signatory to the United for Wildlife Transport Industry Declaration.

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OPAZ issues controls for environmental permits

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, chairman of Oman’s Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), issued a decision regarding the controls for organising and issuing environmental permits in the special economic zones and free zones in the sultanate.

Lubna bint Hamoud al Sabari, environmental specialist at OPAZ, in a press statement pointed out that the new decision applies to all projects developed in the special economic zones and free zones in Oman. The decision specified the procedures for obtaining environmental permits and identified the projects that require preparing a detailed environmental assessment study for their potential impacts.

“Through this decision, OPAZ is intending to facilitate the procedures for investors and accelerate the issuance of environmental permits,” Lubna said.

According to the decision, the projects established in the special economic zones and free zones have been classified into three categories based on their impacts to the environment and health of human beings.

The first category includes ‘high-risk projects’ as identified in Annex No (1) of the decision. These projects are required to



Lubna bint Hamoud al Sabari

submit their environmental and social impacts assessment study. Among the most prominent projects of this category are those related to the development and management of industrial plans, logistics storage sites, fishing ports and fish industries complexes, tourist villages with an area of 10 hectares or more, chemicals and oil storage tanks of around 5 hectares and more, heavy industries, oil refineries, chemical and petrochemical industries, power plants, seawater desalination plants with a production capacity of over 1mn cubic metres per year, and fish farming projects with a production capacity of more than 500 tonnes per year for the localised fish and any quantity of unusual species.

The second category includes projects with ‘medium environmental risk’, which require to submit their environmental management plan. However, the third category is for projects with

OPAZ's new decision applies to all projects developed in the special economic zones and free zones in Oman

‘low environmental risk’, requiring compliance with the specified general and technical environmental requirements, while submitting an environmental and social impact assessment study or an environmental management plan is not required.

Lubna said, “The environmental permits for projects falling into the second and third categories are issued prior to establishing the projects. These permits will be issued in five working days for the third category projects, while it takes ten working days for the second category projects.”

“However, for the projects that require developing an environmental assessment study, it takes a maximum of 30 working days for reviewing the environmental permit applications. This process serves to avoid the negative impacts of such projects, which require a thorough evaluation before granting the environmental permit,” she added.

In accordance with the new decision, the concerned environ-

mental regulatory department at OPAZ shall categorise all chemicals based on the international classifications, including the global system for classification and labeling of chemicals. The department also develops guidelines for all phases of the chemicals safe management procedures and compiles an inventory of banned and restricted chemicals and those dealing with these chemicals. Moreover, this OPAZ department collects data and information related to the conditions of using, transporting, storing, handling and disposing chemicals.

“The projects must register the hazardous materials used, manufactured or produced as waste with the concerned department. As well, projects shall obtain the necessary permits to deal with chemicals as per the defined legal standards and controls and procedures of Basel Convention. Further, projects are required to provide the concerned department with information, maps and plans of the sites allocated for storing and using radioactive materials, which are approved by the concerned authorities,” Lubna said.

She also stressed that OPAZ’s new decision prohibits the import or export of hazardous materials and any hazardous waste listed in the Basel Convention without obtaining a permit from the concerned department at OPAZ.



Madayn and Environment Authority to facilitate permits

Muscat – The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) signed a cooperation programme on Sunday with the Environment Authority to facilitate procedures for the investors and business owners in all industrial cities to obtain the necessary environmental permits for their projects.

As per the agreement, investors and business owners will be able to obtain the environmental permits through Madayn’s Masar Service Centre in accordance with the provisions of the regulations organising the issuance of environmental permits.

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, chairman of the Environment Authority, and Hilal bin Hamad al Hasani, CEO of Madayn.

H E Amri said that the cooperation programme with Madayn aims at facilitating and simplifying procedures for the investors through providing a spe-

cialised environmental team of the Environment Authority who will be present on an ongoing basis in all the industrial cities.

He said, “The team will be responsible for issuing and renewing environmental-related licenses and requirements. Moreover, the cooperation programme aims at providing a number of job opportunities for specialists in the environmental field, as Madayn will provide them with the financial resources while administratively they will be employees of the authority.

“We hope to see more of these cooperation programmes signed in order to enhance the investment climate in the sultanate through facilitating the procedures for the investors.”

On her part, Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Farooji, director general of investor services at Madayn, said that the cooperation programme comes along the lines of the objectives of Madayn Vision 2040 to manage and op-

erate world-class business cities with an emphasis placed on the environmental standards.

“One of the key objectives of this cooperation programme is to reduce the operating cost for the investors by ensuring their compliance to the environmental standards in all production stages. Representatives of the Environment Authority at Masar Service Centre will ensure that the standards are applied by the investors before commencing with the inspection operations at the industrial units,” Ibtisam said.

Madayn has established Masar Service Centre to enhance flexible, easy and transparent dealings between the business community and the government, and provide a reliable and secure environment for the companies to conduct day-to-day transactions with the concerned bodies.

Madayn inaugurated Masar Service Centres in Al Rusayl and Suhar Industrial Cities last year.

Milagrow Robots enters Middle East

Dubai, UAE – Milagrow Robots, a global leader in consumer robots, on Sunday announced its expansion into the Middle East region with the opening of its new office in Dubai.

Milagrow’s Middle East office will help the company develop its global operations and strengthen its regional footprint to serve the growing service robot market. The robotics leader also signed a distribution agreement with Blue Ocean Global to promote and distribute its innovative floor, window, pool and lawn robots across the Middle East region.

In a press statement, Rajeev Karwal, founder and chairman of

Milagrow, said, “The robotics market in the Middle East continues to see increased growth, with rapid adoption of the technology across sectors such as healthcare, education, aviation, facilities management, hospital-ity and infrastructure. Milagrow is on a global mission to eliminate humans serving humans for menial tasks or domestic chores.”

In the first phase of its strategic expansion, Milagrow and Blue Ocean Global will focus on the company’s consumer robot range, with the distributor facilitating operations across the United Arab Emirates for all retail channels.

Mideast growth seen picking up in second half of 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat



Scott Livermore

Most of the Middle Eastern economies will benefit from higher oil prices and stronger external demand in the second half of 2021, according to a report.

A new report, Economic Update: Middle East Q1 2021, compiled by Oxford Economics and commissioned by ICAEW, predicts the rollout of coronavirus vaccines should allow a return to relative normality in the Middle East in the second half of 2021.

According to the report, the Middle East’s GDP forecast for this year stands at 2.5 per cent, similar to the average pace from 2010 to 2019 (2.6%). This follows the unprecedented decline

down, imposing restrictions on travel and their domestic economies to curb the spread of the virus.

The vaccine rollout has been uneven but has progressed particularly well in the UAE and Bahrain, where a relatively large percentage of the population has been vaccinated compared to neighbouring countries and global peers. Overall, according to ICAEW, GCC GDP will grow by 1.4 per cent in 2021, after an estimated 5.4 per cent contraction in 2020.

Expectations of strengthening activity and rising demand have lifted sentiment, pushing oil prices up to US\$66 per barrel in late February. The oil price outlook has also been supported by

ongoing supply restraint from OPEC+ producers.

‘While the current oil price level is still much lower than the GCC has been used to, it provides a reprieve to budgets and eases the pressure for further fiscal consolidation. However, some governments such as Oman and Saudi Arabia will cut expenditure against the backdrop of continued low oil revenue,’ the report said.

Although deficit financing needs will decline in 2021, most countries will continue to borrow in international debt markets to fund diversification programmes or refinance maturing debt at low rates, it said.

Scott Livermore, ICAEW economic advisor and chief econo-

mist at Oxford Economics, said, “In the first quarter of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought Middle East economies to a temporary standstill. Today, we are encouraged by the steps regional governments are undergoing to bring back normalcy. However, the continued uncertainty in the global market puts more pressure on the oil-reliant economies to increase their non-oil revenues.”

Michael Armstrong, ICAEW regional director for the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, said, “While COVID-19 vaccine roll-outs are underway, Middle Eastern governments must continue to develop sectors and industries that generate net value for the economy.”

Guarded optimism as megaship still stuck in Suez Canal

Suez, Egypt – Hope rose on Sunday salvage efforts would free a mammoth container ship blocking the Suez Canal for six days, crippling international trade and causing losses worth millions of dollars.

The MarineTraffic and VesselFinder applications said two tugboats were on their way to the vital waterway to help the salvage operation, while experts pinned hope on a high tide to dislodge the vessel.

The Italian-flagged *Carlo Magno* and the Dutch-flagged *Alp Guard* were in the Red Sea en route to the Suez Canal, the ship-tracking websites said.

Russia’s Ambassador to Egypt also on Sunday offered the country ‘any possible assistance’, as efforts continue to free a megaship that has been blocking the Suez Canal for nearly a week.

In comments to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency, Russian Ambassador Georgy Borisenko said that Moscow is ready to help any way it can.

“We hope that this problem will be overcome in the very near future, that the work of the channel will be restored, and, naturally, we are ready to provide our Egyptian friends with any possible assistance from our side,” the ambassador said.

Borisenko added that Egypt has not reached out to Moscow for support, but said Russia ‘empathises with what’s happening now in the Suez Canal’, describing it as ‘an important waterway for the whole world’.

The *MV Ever Given*, which is longer than four football fields, has been wedged diagonally across the span of the canal since Tuesday, blocking the waterway in both directions.

The crisis has forced companies to reconsider re-routing vessels around Africa’s Cape of Good Hope, a longer and more expensive way to travel between Asia and Europe.

Billions of dollars of cargo are now stalled at either end of the Suez Canal and each passing day



Tugboats are seen by the Panama-flagged *MV Ever Given* container ship on Saturday (AFP)

results in millions of dollars in losses for Egypt and commercial enterprises around the world.

Several notes of optimism were struck on Saturday, including from Suez Canal Authority chief Osama Rabie, who told a

news conference that the megaship could be afloat by Sunday night.

‘We could finish today or tomorrow (Sunday), depending on the ship’s responsiveness’ to high tides, he said, adding that 14

tugboats were deployed around the stricken vessel.

Rabie later told an Egyptian news channel the ship ‘moved 30 degrees from left and right’ for the first time late Saturday.

“It is a good sign,” he said.

Hopes have been pinned on the spring high tide expected to start Sunday night.

“If they don’t manage to dislodge it during that high tide, the next high tide is not there for another couple of weeks, and that becomes problematic,” Plamen Natzkoff, an expert at VesselsValue, has said.

Despite some predictions that the megaship could be refloated soon, *Lloyd’s List*, a shipping data and news company, said on Sunday there was a ‘surge’ in the number of vessels opting to go around Africa.

‘Most major container lines are now diverting ships round Cape of Good Hope and warning of supply chain disruption ahead. Some are starting to reject bookings,’ it said on Twitter.

Richard Meade, an editor at *Lloyd’s List*, added, “Sources close to the salvage operation told me this morning that optimism within the team of experts on site was rising and they were hoping that the vessel could be moved

within the next 24-48 hours. But the lines have clearly made their call already.”

The 400m long, 200,000-tonne *MV Ever Given*, veered off course in the Suez Canal on Tuesday, with officials blaming 40-knots gusts and a sandstorm for the accident.

But Rabie on Saturday said ‘technical or human errors’ could be behind the grounding of the Taiwan-run, Panama-flagged container ship near the southern end of the canal.

Almost as long as New York’s Empire State Building is high, the ship is diagonally blocking the 193km long canal, and more than 320 ships are stalled at either end, Rabie said.

Egypt is losing some US\$12-14mn in revenue from the canal for each day it is closed, Rabie added, while *Lloyd’s List* has said the blockage is holding up an estimated US\$9.6bn worth of cargo each day between Asia and Europe.

AFP

COMMENTARY

Adjusting value of VAT: Goods returned and bad debts

Businesses witness many situations where goods are returned or rejected or the supply is cancelled due to various reasons like when the goods get damaged, goods with wrong specification are received, excess quantity is received and so on. The VAT Executive Regulations issued recently have given the procedures and conditions for adjustment in the value of tax in the VAT return on account of such returns of goods.

In the case of goods returned after the date of supply, the VAT payable can be adjusted by the taxpayer if the cancellation, return or rejection occurs after the tax due date and the taxable person has to issue a credit note to

make such an adjustment in the VAT return and the accounting records. Further, the regulation have specified that the goods and the value of consideration should be returned within three months from the date of supply and none of the parties should earn any benefit from such returned transactions. If the goods are returned after three months of the date of supply, adjustment to VAT return is not possible.

Under the VAT Law when the taxable person raises a tax invoice, he has the responsibility to collect and pay VAT upfront to the Tax Authorities for the tax period. Taxable person may face a situation of non-recovery of receivables as part and parcel of doing

business in Oman.

There can be various reasons for non-recovery or bad-debts like inability

conditions are met;

►The value of supplies excluding VAT should be more than RO5,000.

►The tax should be adjusted within three years from being written off.

►The taxable person must notify in writing to the customer of the amount being adjusted.

However, the Executive Regulation have laid down a stringent procedure to be followed for collection of the consideration before writing it off as bad debts.

The Regulation stipulates that there should be a court judgement for the debtors to pay the consideration. The taxable person should obtain a debt performance order from a competent judge.

There should be proof of death, liquidation, bankruptcy of customer for

claiming a bad-debt. The objective of the law is to ensure that the taxable person takes care of necessary steps for recovering the consideration and should not simply write-off.

The Tax Authority will assess the adjustments made to VAT payable amount and will levy hefty penalties in the case of incorrect adjustments to the returns.

(Reader questions can be directed to davis.kallukaran@apexmedia.co.om)

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Media Publication



AASTHA RANGAN

The writer is the director - VAT advisory at Crowe Oman

of the customer to pay, fraud or bankruptcy. As the VAT is timely paid by the taxable person, in the case of bad-debts, the taxable person can adjust the value of the tax due if the followings

►The adjustment is allowed after 12 months from the tax due date mentioned on the invoice.

►The amount should be written off as bad-debts in the accounting records.

MSM rises 0.62%; volumes down

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) rose 0.62 per cent to close at 3,701.07 points on Sunday.

Trading activity deteriorated from the previous session as turnover declined 57.71 per cent to RO1.26mn and volumes fell 30.61 per cent to 8.09mn shares.

While Financial index rose 0.49 per cent, Industrial and Services indices fell 0.14 per cent and 0.01 per cent, respectively. The MSM Shariah index closed down by 0.9 per cent at 534.91 points.

Market breadth remained positive as 13 companies closed up, while ten companies closed down. The rest 19 traded stocks closed flat for the day.

Top gainers were Oman & Emirates Investment Holding Company (4.55 per

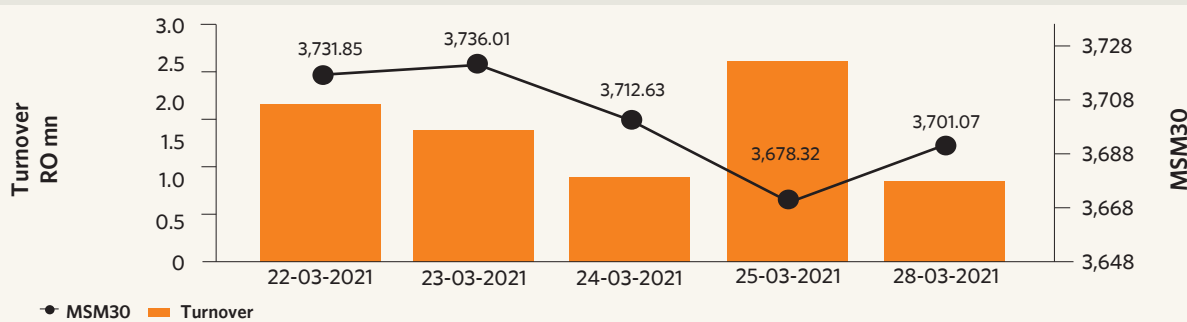


cent), Ahli Bank (2.8 per cent), BankDhofar (1.94 per cent) and Al Anwar Investment (1.24 per cent).

Top losers were Al Madina Takaful

(-10.0 per cent), Muscat Gases (-9.5 per cent), Muscat Finance (-2.5 per cent) and Galfar Engineering & Contracting (-2.27 per cent).

MSM INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Virus upsurge hits Europe's recovery

Paris, France - An upsurge in new coronavirus cases is forcing governments across Europe into new, damaging lockdowns that threaten to delay a much hoped-for return to growth, economists say.

The plan was that mass vaccination programmes would turn the tide on the pandemic, allowing locked-down consumers free rein after months penned up at home.

Instead the virus has embarked on a third wave which is proving more difficult to bring under control.

French President Emmanuel Macron warned that the European Union (EU) would have to do more and beef up its already massive €750bn virus recovery fund as a result.

The EU had made a major effort after the first wave last year, Macron said, but 'following the second and third waves... we will no doubt have to add to our response'.

In September, as the economy picked up sharply after a rapid reverse in the first wave, expectations were high that by the middle of this year it would be solidly back on track, thanks especially to the vaccine rollout.

€123bn delay

Just a couple of weeks ago, European Central Bank head Christine Lagarde was even talking about a 'firm rebound in activity in the second half of the year'.

Now the EU's strongest



A woman walks past souvenir shops in a deserted street in Lourdes, France on Friday (AFP)

economies - Germany, France and Italy - have reimposed restrictions and the vaccine programme in Europe is mired in a blame game over supplies.

Credit insurer Euler Hermes estimates that the EU is now seven weeks adrift of its target to have 70 per cent of the population vaccinated by the end of the summer, compared with five weeks in February.

It estimates the delay will cost the bloc's 27 member states some €123bn this year.

"If you compare us with the US, where the outlook is so much more positive, we are falling further behind on the recovery because of this third wave," said Charlotte de Montpellier, economist with Dutch bank ING.

ING now expects eurozone

growth of 3 per cent this year, down more than half a percentage point from its previous estimate.

Most of the growth will also come from the third quarter, slightly later too, ING added.

Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist at Capital Economics, said he does not expect the bloc to return to pre-pandemic activity levels before the second half of 2022, a year behind the US.

"We are revising down our forecast for eurozone GDP growth due to the resurgence of virus cases, slow pace of vaccination and extension of lockdowns," Kenningham said.

"The outlook has deteriorated," said Chris Williamson, chief economist at IHS Markit.

The key Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) compiled by IHS Markit for March showed Germany, Europe's strongest economy, doing better than France and the northern countries generally doing better than their southern partners - Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal - which risk seeing their key tourist industries shackled for yet another year.

Standard and Poor's however has decided to keep its eurozone growth forecast unchanged at 4.2 per cent for 2021, citing the positive factor of cheap credit.

At the same time, the economy and Europe's people have adapted to the restrictions, lessening the impact, said Sylvain Broyer, chief S&P economist for Europe.

AFP

Gulf Capital invests \$30mn to expand its ART clinics in India

New Delhi, India - Gulf Capital, a leading growth markets alternative investment firm, on Sunday announced that it is investing US\$30mn for the expansion of ART Fertility Clinics in India. ART Fertility Clinics is the fastest growing provider of fertility treatment services in GCC states.

With increased awareness coupled with the technological advancements in the field, the fertility sector in India is forecasted to continue to grow at 12 per cent plus annual growth over the next five years.

The new chapter of ART Fertility Clinics will see the implementation of an ambitious two-year rollout of 18 IVF clinics across India. The first two clinics in Gurgaon and New Delhi have commenced medical operations. They are to be followed by clinics in Ahmedabad and Hyderabad (April), Mumbai and Chennai (May), Bangalore and Kolkata (July). The rest of the rollout will be announced in September 2021, according to a press release.

Dr Karim el Solh, CEO of Gulf Capital, said, "We are thrilled to back the strongest management and medical team within the IVF sector for its ambitious expansion in India. ART Fertility Clinics is the fastest growing IVF service provider in the GCC, and we are excited to be collaborating with ART Fertility's management to take this platform to the next level.



Our investment in ART Fertility Clinics is Gulf Capital's largest equity investment to date and includes the first corporate carve-out in our Firm's history (Gulf Capital invested over US\$100mn to acquire a controlling stake in ART Fertility Clinics in January 2020). The rapid expansion of Art Fertility Clinics across Asia cements Gulf Capital's long track record of building global leaders out of the GCC."

Suresh Soni, Global CEO of ART Fertility, said, "We are excited to launch the most advanced IVF clinics in India as we embark on our next phase of expansion and growth. We share a common vision: 'Cogito, Ergo Sum.... I think, therefore I am... The cornerstone of our success is good science and technology, which translates into the best medical outcomes for our patients. We have world-renowned IVF specialists and embryologists working in state-of-the-art facilities. We shall continue to deliver the best treatments and services to our patients so that they receive the best value for their money."

Launched in early 2015 in collaboration with IVI RMA Global, ART Fertility clinics is now a leading provider of fertility treatments with the highest success rates internationally.

Revenues of global oil giants decline 35.4% in 2020

Ankara, Turkey - The collective revenues of the world's top 14 publicly traded oil companies declined 35.4 per cent in 2020, according to data compiled by Anadolu Agency from their financial results.

The COVID-19 pandemic and following mobility constraints, along with macroeconomic risks and global geopolitical instability, crippled demand, which dropped from 99.76mn barrels per day (bpd) in 2019 to 90.01 bpd in 2020, according to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Monthly Oil Report in January 2021.

In February 2020, the global oil market was dealt its first blow when COVID-19 began to spread worldwide, necessitating major oil producers, OPEC and its allies to step in to take the market under control. However, they failed to find common ground due to divisions between Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Oil prices crashed due to this disagreement and after the two major oil producers opened the taps and suspended production cuts from April. The oil market

then had to contend with oversupply and historic low demand, severely affecting oil prices.

Amid a coronavirus-induced supply glut, storage problems also played a significant role in exerting pressure on prices. In April, the lack of storage meant that even traders were reluctant to take physical delivery, which caused oil dumping at all costs and plummeted WTI into negative territory on April 20.

Brent crude oil dropped to as low as US\$17.51 a barrel on April 21. In 2019, Brent averaged US\$64 and fell further by 32.8 per cent in 2020 to average US\$43, which negatively affected many companies' balance sheets.

As a result, the revenues of major oil companies, including American ExxonMobil, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Halliburton, Schlumberger, Baker Hughes and French Total, Royal Dutch Shell, British BP, Italian ENI, Norwegian Equinor, Russian Lukoil, Rosneft, and Saudi Aramco decreased year-on-year in 2020.

Due to low prices, the revenue of these 14 firms declined by

US\$716.5bn, or 35.4 per cent, to US\$1.3tn last year, down from approximately US\$2.02tn compared to 2019, calculations from the financial results data showed.

Shell recorded the highest year-over-year decline in revenue. While the company posted revenue of US\$352.1bn in 2019, this amount fell to US\$183.2bn in 2020, marking a US\$168.9bn, or 48 per cent, decrease.

Other firms that posted high revenue declines were BP with a 35 per cent loss, equating to US\$99.1bn, Saudi Aramco with a 31 per cent fall, equivalent to US\$90bn, and ExxonMobil with an US\$83.4bn contraction, corresponding to nearly 31 per cent.

In 2020, Royal Dutch Shell, ExxonMobil, BP, Total, ENI, Baker Hughes, ConocoPhillips, Chevron, Equinor, Halliburton, and Schlumberger posted a cumulative net loss of US\$119.2bn.

Among the 14 oil firms, ExxonMobil posted the largest loss at US\$22.4bn, followed by Royal Dutch Shell with a loss of US\$21.7bn and BP with a loss of US\$20.3bn.

Anadolu Agency

Oman Oil opens new Ahlain store at Al Khoudh 6 station

Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) has inaugurated a brand new Ahlain store at its soon-to-be completed mega service station at Al Khoudh 6, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). To celebrate the opening, OOMCO held a special lucky draw for customers who shopped through the OOMCO World App, giving away prizes that included an iPhone 12, iPhone 11, Play Station 5 & 4 and gold bracelet.

The new branch opening is part of a new concept for the company's popular convenience store, which is being rolled out at flagship OOMCO fuel stations across the country. With a modern new look and an enhanced customer experience, the fuel marketing company continues to set benchmarks in the sultanate's fuel marketing industry.

"We're thrilled to have opened our newest Ahlain store, strategically located at Sultan Qaboos University. It also marks the next level of completion of our mega service station, which is part of our long-term strategy to transform the fuel marketing



industry," said Ramzi al Mejri, manager - Shop Food and Services Marketing at OOMCO.

"Ahlain is more than just a convenience store, it's a whole lifestyle concept. Offering a warm and friendly environment, fresh food and beverages, excellent service and attractive offers, it's all part of our aim to energize the customer journey, while raising the bar for standards of care and services."

The company's first mega service station in the sultanate is set to open soon.

Catering to SQU students and staff in addition to Al Khoudh 6th residents, the 10,000m² project will comprise a fuel service station, coffee shops, a car care centre, convenience store, shopping complex with global brands.

Today, OOMCO maintains a network of 230 service stations and 60 Ahlain convenience stores located throughout all regions of the sultanate.

Zubair SEC gets new Omani director



In line with its continuous strategy and vision to encourage Omanis to take up higher management positions, The Zubair Corporation (Z-Corp) has announced the appointment of Said al Sahib as director of one of Z-Corp's major initiatives - Zubair SEC. He brings a profound understanding of business development, as well as a wealth of experience in managing complex business systems, which will help address the diverse changes and challenges that are affecting the SME sector.

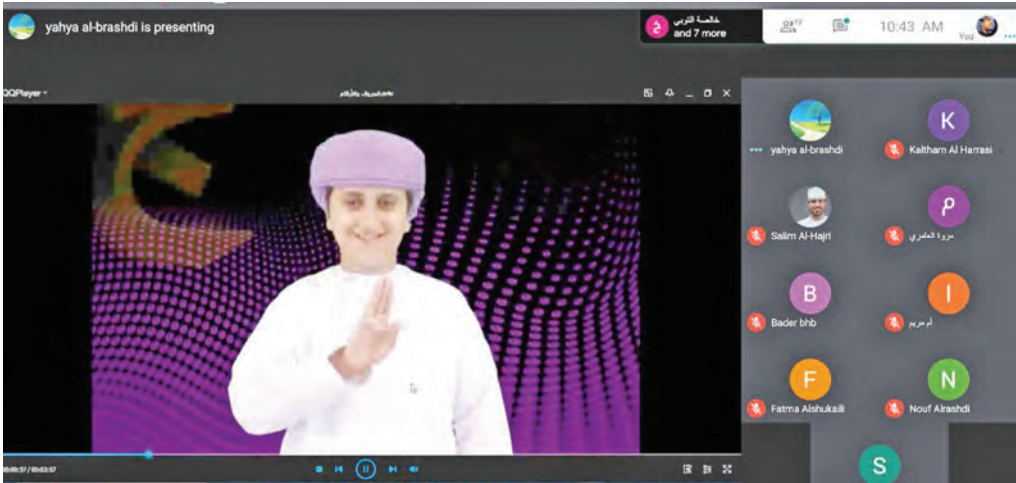
"I am convinced that his leadership and experience will serve to drive Zubair SEC's continued success and help aspiring and young Omani entrepreneurs succeed. His appointment emphasises our commitment, vision, and goal to contribute to the national effort to promote Omani talent. Before joining Z-Corp 13 years ago, Said held management positions with several other private and public sector institutions. We are proud that he has contributed his vast experience and perspectives to the growth of the organisation and thank him for the same."

Sahib, who previously served as general manager, Corporate Development at The Zubair Corporation, has a rich experience of over 25 years. He has handled business development roles, dealing with leading national and international organisations.

Rashad bin Muhammad al Zubair, chairman of the Board of Directors at Z-Corp, said, "We are pleased to appoint Said al Sahib as director of one of Z-Corp's major initiatives - Zubair SEC. He brings a profound understanding of business development, as well as a wealth of experience in managing complex business systems, which will help address the diverse changes and challenges that are affecting the SME sector.

"I am convinced that his leadership and experience will serve to drive Zubair SEC's continued success and help aspiring and young Omani entrepreneurs succeed. His appointment emphasises our commitment, vision, and goal to contribute to the national effort to promote Omani talent. Before joining Z-Corp 13 years ago, Said held management positions with several other private and public sector institutions. We are proud that he has contributed his vast experience and perspectives to the growth of the organisation and thank him for the same."

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Ooredoo boosts inclusion with sign language webinar

In line with Ooredoo's core value of caring, the telecoms company recently hosted a first-of-its-kind sign language webinar, for employees at the Omani Association for the Hearing Impaired. Sign language specialist Yahia bin Mohammed al Brashdi delivered three online workshops, teaching participants the basics of sign language, including the alphabet and numbers, as well as its history.

Through this and similar initiatives, Ooredoo aims to spread awareness about those with disabilities, and the importance of creating a more inclusive and accessible world for them.

Raed Mohammed Dawood, director of Branding, Communications and Corporate Affairs at Ooredoo, said, "We are delighted to be able to support these workshops, which aim to facilitate better communication between the hearing impaired and the rest of society.

"At Ooredoo, we continue to instil the concept of inclusion among the local community as well as within our company. It is our collective responsibility to find ways to empower those with disabilities of all kinds, who hold an equally important place in our society, and in the nation's development."

The Omani Association for the Hearing Impaired continues to spread awareness in the community, holding numerous sign language workshops among other activities.

Additionally, the organisation works hard to promote integration and inclusion for those with hearing impairments in the workplace and the wider society.

As part of Ooredoo Goodwill, the telecoms company continues to support charitable institutions in various ways, including its SMS donation service, through which nine free numbers have been activated so far.

The most recent charities added are the Omani Association for the Hearing Impaired and Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood Care. In addition, Ooredoo recently held a meeting with a number of charitable societies and institutions to find out the developments of their work and how they can help with the appropriate mechanisms needed to prosper.



Malabar Gold & Diamonds to open 56 stores

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest gold and diamond retail chains in the country, has announced that it will launch 56 stores globally with 40 across India and 16 internationally in FY21-22 to further boost its retail presence across the country. The move is expected to amount to an overall investment of US\$220mn and generate 1,750 new jobs.

In India, the expansion strategy is centered in states like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Kerala. Internationally, the expansion will further strengthen its position in markets like Singapore, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and UAE.

The move marks a major investment in expansion at a time when many gold and jewellery retailers have struggled to manage their existing operations due to challenging global economic environment. Despite the challenging market conditions, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has decided to push ahead with expansion, which demonstrates its confidence in the growth of these markets in future.

Out of the total planned expansion, 12 stores have already been earmarked for opening in the first quarter of FY21-22 itself. The brand has already secured retail spaces in key markets at competitive rates in this regard in big cities like Chennai, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune and Bengaluru as well as small towns like Eluru, Mancheril, Solapur and Ahmednagar in India.

International expansion will see the brand expand retail presence at Little India in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Penang in Malaysia, Ruwi, Bausher and Al Khoudh in Muscat, Jeryan Jenaihat and Rawdat in Qatar, Bab al Bahrain in Bahrain and Al Zahia, Silicon Oasis, Muweilah Sharjah and Dubai Gold Souk in UAE. This is expected to further strengthen the presence of the brand in various existing markets as well as help it foray into newer ones.

While commenting on the expansion plan, Malabar Group chairman MP Ahammed said, "In more than

25 years of our illustrious journey, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has grown from strength to strength and transformed from a small jewellery retail business to an international player across several verticals including gold and diamond jewellery retail, jewellery manufacturing and multi-retail concepts.

"Transparency and customer trust are the two key pillars of our business philosophy. With the launch of our expansion plan, we are taking our mission to the next level. Keeping up with our values, the stores will offer an unparalleled jewellery buying experience with design, quality and service excellence along with the Malabar Promise of incomparable quality and service assurance. The expansion is an integral part of our strategy to become the number one responsible jewellery retail brand in the world in terms of both showroom count and turnover."

"The culture of gifting lives along with human beings to express their love, affection and emotion for their loved ones. Our aim is to be No 1 in this segment and we will strengthen the gifting aspect of jewellery that is fast growing in India and other countries and use it as a growth-driver of our jewellery business." he added.

Abdul Salam KP, group executive director of Malabar Group, said, "As a responsible business, we are very mindful of our obligations to our societies. Our expansion will create additional 1,750 well-paid jobs and we are very excited about our future growth plan. We ensure our entire operation in a very transparent way. We understand the sensitivity of the industry and ensure compliance through responsible sourcing, ethical business practices, transparent and professional fund management. We associate with trade bodies, financial houses, government regulators to make sure that our operations are infallible globally."

The brand also opened 16 stores in 2020 demonstrating its commitment to customers who have believed in the brand in spite of widespread retail disruption owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oman Air marks Earth Hour with commitment to sustainable operations

Oman Air on Saturday joined individuals, businesses and organisations around the world to mark Earth Hour 2021 at 8.30pm to 9.30pm. This year's ceremony was toned down to respect COVID-19 safety measures, with lights switched off symbolically at the company's headquarters in Muscat, coinciding with network destination outstations.

"Tackling climate change is a priority issue for airlines around the world and continues to shape the future of eco-efficient air transport," said Oman Air CEO Abdulaziz al Raisi. "Oman Air has always championed the cause of climate change by prioritising a fleet of ultra-efficient aircraft, implementing fuel-saving

initiatives, and reducing waste across our business operations. As we mark Earth Hour 2021, we hereby renew our commitment to responsible travel and reducing our environmental footprint in the years ahead."

Started by WWF and partners as a symbolic lights-out event in Sydney, Australia in 2007, Earth Hour is now one of the world's largest grassroots movements for the environment. Held every year on the last Saturday of March, Earth Hour engages millions of people in more than 180 countries and territories, switching off their lights to show support for our planet.

Oman Air's participation in Earth Hour reflects the airline's



efforts in recent years toward sustainable aviation. In the last quarter of 2019, and for a second year in a row, Heathrow Airport's Fly Quiet and Green programme ranked Oman Air second place among fifty airlines for being one of the cleanest and quietest airlines serving the airport.

The programme rates airlines in 7 areas related to noise and emissions, and gave Oman Air an 'Excellent' rating for its B787 Dreamliner service on its Muscat to London route, making it the highest-ranked Middle East carrier.

In 2019, the airline saved 7.8mn kg of jet fuel, the equivalent of 24.6mn kg of emissions. The significant reductions were

achieved by making flight operations more efficient through fuel-saving initiatives and the latest aircraft technology.

Multi-award-winning Oman Air strives continuously to maintain the highest standards of performance in all aspects of its operations, including sustainable initiatives. Its fleet comprises ultra-modern, fuel-efficient aircraft renowned for their aesthetically designed interiors, with innovative in-flight service equipment delivering exceptional on-board safety and performance. Investment in the latest technologies, planning and product innovation has helped propel Oman Air to the forefront of modern aviation.

Bank Muscat Najahi strengthens partnership with MarkeetEx.com to promote MSMEs

In line with its commitment to supporting and developing the Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) sector, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate has further strengthened its partnership with MarkeetEx.com Online Marketplace, which is an eCommerce platform dedicated to promote the products and services of local MSMEs in the sultanate.

The partnership, which is being spearheaded by the bank's Retail Enterprises Unit (Najahi), has seen rapid growth as the marketplace continues to sign on new MSME customers to sell



Abdullah al Jufaili

and deliver groceries, household goods, mobiles and computers, fashion, beauty, and health products at highly-competitive prices.

MarkeetEx.com currently has over 1,000 merchants from dif-



Khalid al Hosni

ferent parts of the country registered on its online platform.

Speaking about the strong support extended to the MSME sector, Abdullah al Jufaili, head, Retail Enterprises Unit (Najahi),

Bank Muscat, said, "As a pioneer in supporting the Omani MSME sector, Bank Muscat continuously launches new initiatives in alignment with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and in line with its strong commitment to the sector.

"As part of the strategy to promote promising Omani entrepreneurs and increase their market share, Bank Muscat will bear the annual fees payable by selected Najahi customers who are using MarkeetEx.com. In addition, it will cover part of the commission fees for the sales transactions. We are greatly encouraged by the fact that this ini-

tiative is leading to increasing sales of the MSME and improving their financial performance."

Khalid al Hosni, founder and CEO of MarkeetEx.com, added that MarkeetEx.com has been greatly encouraged by the strong response from the MSME sector and the support of the bank in taking the concept to the wider MSME community.

He said, "In order to nurture the SME sector, support must be channeled to encourage creativity and innovation. The initiative offers collaboration and a supportive ecosystem for MSMEs and we hope to make a big difference to their rate of success and

innovation by offering this highly-localised digital marketplace that promotes local entrepreneurship. We are greatly encouraged by the strong response from MSMEs over the last few months."

Given current social distancing norms brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic, MarkeetEx.com is greatly helping MSME businesses reach out to customers through its online platform at <https://markeetex.com>. The strengthening of this collaboration carries on the success of the bank's annual souqs and product exhibitions of previous years. It also comple-

ments other initiatives undertaken by the bank to promote the growth and development of MSMEs in Oman in recognition of their strong economic role in Oman.

Bank Muscat supports MSMEs in the country through its Najahi and Al Wathbah units so as to further strengthen the sultanate's economy. Najahi is well known for having pioneered the availability of a number of collateral-free credit facilities for micro and small businesses in Oman. It also offers non-financial support to its customers and other entrepreneurs through a number of innovative initiatives.

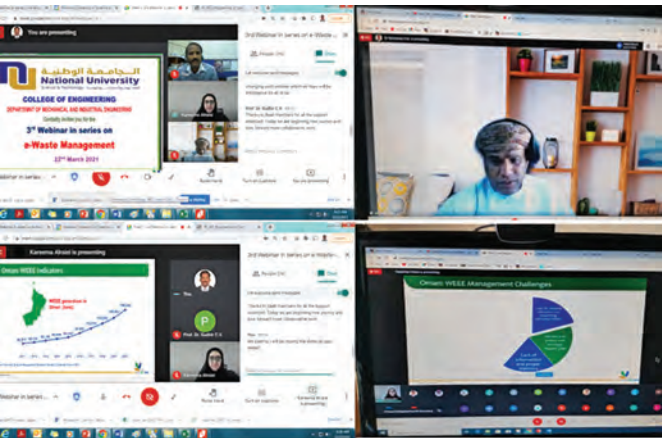
NU's College of Engineering hosts webinar on e-waste

A webinar on e-waste management was recently organised by the professional student chapters of the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering, College of Engineering, National University of Science and Technology, for the benefit of the student community.

The webinar was presented by one of university alumni engineer Karima Saud al Raaisi, projects manager at be'ah, Oman Environmental Services Holding Company. Eng Karima has vast experience in e-waste management and has worked at various positions at be'ah.

The webinar covered the various aspect of e-waste management including current and future projects related to e-waste handling in the sultanate. The webinar covered in details classification of the different types of e-wastes and the statistics on the e-waste generation in Oman for the last ten years.

Eng Karima also highlighted the hazardous nature of e-waste and the challenges involved in e-



waste management. It was a highly informative session for the benefit of the students' community and society.

More than 70 students and staff participated in the event.

Prof Ahmed al Balushi, dean of College of Engineering, inaugurated the webinar and delivered a message to the students that the disposal of e-waste is to be properly done with due care to safeguard the environment and the society.

During this event, the dean initiated and announced a cam-

paign on e-waste collection point at College of Engineering.

The campaign will drive students and staff to voluntarily drop off their e-waste in the safe and secured place designated at the college campus and the college will then take up the responsibilities to hand over the same to be'ah for further processing.

This is a joint initiative of the college taken up with be'ah and the main idea of this collection point is to enhance awareness amongst staff and students about e-waste management.

Sidra Capital's finance funds continue to achieve target returns despite pandemic

Sidra Capital, a Sharia'a-compliant asset management firm headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and regulated by the Capital Market Authority (CMA), has announced healthy annual returns on two of its US Dollar-denominated funds: the USD Income Fund, which generated above-target returns of 8 per cent, and the US Dollar Mutajara Fund, which met its targeted return of 5 per cent for 2020.

The returns are especially impressive in light of global challenges such as disruptions in supply chains in certain markets and other challenging market conditions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Performance of our trade finance funds in 2020 showcased the resilience of our private finance strategy in the face of the external shocks brought about by the pandemic," Hani Baothman, chairman of Sidra Capital, said. "Despite the challenges, our private finance transactions did not experience a single default,



and the funds offered an excellent alternative investment asset class that provides hedging to portfolios and protects investors' wealth from market fluctuations."

The Sidra Income Fund is a US Dollar-denominated private fund focused on supporting infrastructure supply chain transactions in Asia.

The fund is designed to capitalize on the infrastructure boom in Asia and aims at achieving stable, high-yield returns uncorrelated to the stock market and global commodity prices.

Specialising in natural commodities, the Sidra Income Fund offers Sharia'a-compliant, top-tier, income-generating asset

classes for risk-averse investors. It aims at achieving stable, high yield returns uncorrelated to the stock market and global commodity prices while contributing positively toward the social and economic development of the communities that the invested companies operate in.

The Sidra Mutajara Fund, also US Dollar-denominated, combines Sharia'a-compliant money market investment with structured trade finance products in order to achieve liquidity, steady performance and above-benchmark returns.

The fund is regulated by the Saudi Capital Market Authority (CMA) and provides investors with quarterly distributions and

the option of liquidity through the quarterly exit feature.

The Sidra Mutajara Fund plays an important role in financing growth in the real economy. It supports nonspeculative value-added small and midsize enterprises (SMEs), in emerging markets and focuses on agricultural commodities and metals.

Since 2012 Sidra Capital has launched four funds under the umbrella of its private finance strategy.

The four funds comprise the award-winning Sidra-Ancile Global Structured Trade Investment Fund (GSTIF); the award-winning Sidra-Ancile Debt Equity Conversion Option Investment Fund (DECO); the Sidra Mutajara Fund (SMF); and the Sidra Income Fund launched in early 2019.

To date, Sidra's disbursed capital under the private finance strategy has reached US\$1.33bn and includes the financing of more than 2,389 transactions with 64 counterparties.

Global artists meet for Art Dubai 2021

The 14th edition of Art Dubai, the region's leading art fair will be hosted across a number of purpose-built venues at the iconic Gate Building and throughout the centre.

Taking place from March 29 to April 3, Art Dubai is one of the first global in-person art events taking place since the pandemic. The DIFC event will feature a diverse calendar of activities including exhibitions from over 50 galleries representing 31 countries.

Around the Gate District, a specially curated sculpture park will have large-scale installations by eight artists including Emiratis Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim and Hussain Sharif. A new programme at Gate Avenue will present single-channel films produced by over 20 regional and international artists. The films are thematically categorised to cover Nature, Journeys, Dystopias, Conversations, Performances and Animations, among others.

Art Dubai is a joint venture between DIFC Investments and Middle East Fairs and forms part of DIFC's wider approach to developing the art and culture scene in Dubai, something that it has been doing since opening in 2004. Art Dubai will open doors to enriching experiences for visitors to DIFC, which is well known across the region as the premium leisure and cultural destination where business meets leisure.

Arif Amiri, chairman of the



Board of Art Dubai and CEO of DIFC Authority, said, "Art Dubai and DIFC are synonymous with art and culture. This year, more than ever, we are looking forward to safely bringing together artists, visitors and buyers. Being home to the fair contributes to DIFC's reputation as one of Dubai's leading lifestyle destinations and complements our ongoing art programme. The event will inspire, provide perspective, allow time for reflection and open our minds to new ideas.

"During the last year, many of us have missed seeing the creativity of artists and the opportu-

nity to meet with likeminded people. As the first major global art and cultural event to be held with a physical presence following the global pandemic, it is an opportunity to safely showcase the city as a safe destination for large events and welcome over 50 galleries from 31 countries around the world," Amiri added.

All COVID-19 safety protocols will be followed including thermal screening in addition to extra precautions to manage the capacity. Visitors can also use the newly launched Art Dubai App to book time slots in advance.

A vibrant and innovative

ecosystem with over 2,900 registered firms, several of them featuring exceptional art showcases, DIFC's lifestyle offerings include three five-star hotels, seven renowned art galleries, hundreds of culinary concepts and over 350 retail outlets.

Gate Avenue, which spans 286,000sqft has a diverse portfolio of leading lifestyle, retail, art, fashion, food & beverage brands. Gate Avenue also features South Market, a 9,000sqft urban food hall with a buzzing combination of gourmet kitchens and rotating artisan food kiosks offering cuisines from across the globe.

Do you allow apps access to mic?

Almost a quarter (18 per cent) of online users always give apps and services permission to access their microphone or webcam, according to a global study of 15,000 people conducted by Kaspersky.

However, overall awareness of webcam security is promisingly high, with nearly six-in-ten (58 per cent) worried that someone could be watching them through their webcam without them knowing, and (56 per cent) concerned that this could be done via malicious software. This points to the likelihood of more people proactively protecting their technology in the future as they adapt to remote working and the role of collaborative applications.

Over the past year, the reliance on videoconferencing has led to a colossal growth in apps such as Microsoft Teams, which as of June 2020 grew by 894 per cent, compared with its base usage in February 2020. It has also brought about a near worldwide shortage on webcams with many leading suppliers seeing vastly increased demand.

Understandably, with these technologies and apps helping people to navigate the events of the past year across work, social and entertainment needs, people have expressed a willingness to allow app access to their microphone and camera. These tools have served as an enricher and facilitator of everyone's sudden digital transitions, leading to 27



per cent of people aged 25-34 always permitting access, according to Kaspersky research. This is less common among older age demographics, however, with 38 per cent respondents aged 55 years and older revealing they never give apps and services such access.

The best way to balance sufficient caution, while continuing to benefit from modern means of communication, would be to exercise mindful consideration around the apps and services people are using and what permissions they request.

For example, if a video calling app has camera permissions that would make sense. But if there is an app without any relevant functionality requesting access to a person's mic for no justifiable reason, it might be better to investigate and explore permis-

sions. These findings largely strike that balance and highlight people's emerging need to feel safe in today's digital world.

"For sure, many people aren't instantly familiar with security protocols related to webcam usage and cybersecurity processes. However, what we are observing now is a strong positive trend of increased awareness around online safety and potential threats. This leads to more proactive consumer behavior like taking preventive actions and checking permissions before allowing video and microphone access. We also expect that the rise in cybersecurity consciousness will be supported by security awareness training arranged by businesses for their employees," comments Marina Titova, head of Consumer Product Marketing at Kaspersky.

European extremists’ children ‘at risk of radicalisation’

Brussels, Belgium - The children of European extremists left trapped in a Syrian camp after their fathers’ defeat on the battlefield now face radicalisation in their turn, a Belgian expert warns.

Heidi De Pauw, director of the association Child Focus, has visited orphans and widows in the Al-Hol camp in northern Syria and says it is time to bring the youngsters home.

Belgium has been one of the main sources of foreign fighters who travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight under the banner of the Islamic State extremist group.

The group’s so-called caliphate centred around Raqqa has now been overrun by western-baked forces and many militants have been slain - leaving behind their wives and children.

Belgium’s Prime Minister Alexander de Croo has recognised the need to bring the

youngest children home to prevent a new generation of extremists growing up in camps.

His decision came as Brussels marks the fifth anniversary of the triple suicide bombing that was the deadliest peace-time attack in Belgium’s history, and some here are worried.

But De Pauw told AFP that the western-backed Kurdish forces that over-ran Raqqa are losing control of the Al-Hol camp and the children held there should be protected.

Very young girls are wearing full-face niqab veils and stone-throwing youths chase off ‘infidel’ visitors.

“You’d think you were in Raqqa,” De Pauw said, warning that the Islamic State group is once again in charge, particularly among the estimated 10,000 ‘foreigners’ in Al-Hol.

De Croo has said much the same - ‘In these camps are the



Children wait for their departure, as another group of families - suspected of being relatives of Islamic State (IS) group fighters - is released from the Kurdish-run Al-Hol camp in Syria's northeast, on March 18 (AFP)

terrorists of tomorrow’ - and Belgian MP Georges Dallemagne says an ‘embryonic new Islamic State’ is growing there.

Earlier this month, Belgium decided it must do what it can to bring home the youngest - children under 12 born to Belgian parents - on a case-by-case basis.

According to agencies working in the camps, most of the 62,000 people languishing in Al-Hol are Iraqi and Syrian extremists and their families.

But for the past two years, there have been thousands of French, British, German,

Dutch and Belgian nationals - mainly women and children - driven out of former IS stronghold Baghuz.

Their section of the camp is run under the group’s interpretation of Islamic law, enforced by sharia courts.

“All the women we saw wear the black niqab, even little girls of three or four,” De Pauw told AFP. “Many women have organised Islamic schools.”

De Pauw’s group Child Focus took part in a mission in June 2019 to bring six adolescents back to Belgium - orphans or those thought to have been kidnapped by a parent.

“New tension”

But researchers estimate that there may be 40 Belgian children in the camps.

Back in 2019, just two months after Baghuz fell, the women were keen to talk to European visitors about their plight. But by last December, the mood had changed.

“We immediately felt the tension,” De Pauw said.

“At one point the children turned on us and called us *kufar*, infidels, and started throwing stones,” she said. “It’s sad to see a nine-to-ten year radicalised to this point.”

No contact was possible on the later visit with the adult women, and De Pauw fears that adolescent girls are being married off young to produce a new generation of babies.

“It’s really not a fit place for children,” she said.

“There is no access to schools, not enough food, very little drinking water. It’s hot in summer, cold in winter and not every family has a tent of their own. We need to get the children home as quick as possible.”

AFP

Washington flays China’s ‘baseless sanctions’

Washington, US - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned on Saturday that China’s tit-for-tat sanctions against two Americans in the growing dispute over Beijing’s treatment of Uyghurs were ‘baseless’ and would only shine a harsh spotlight on the ‘genocide’ in Xinjiang.

“Beijing’s attempts to intimidate and silence those speaking out for human rights and fundamental freedoms only contribute to the growing international scrutiny of the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang,” Blinken said. He spoke out after China announced sanctions against two Americans, a Canadian and a rights advocacy body, in response to sanctions imposed this week by the two countries over Beijing’s treatment of the Uyghur minority.

Blinken called the sanctions on the two members of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom ‘baseless’.

At least 1mn Uyghurs and people from other mostly Muslim groups have been held in camps in China’s Xinjiang region, according to rights groups, which accuse authorities of forcibly sterilising women and imposing forced labour. The European Union, Britain, Canada and the United States have sanctioned several members of Xinjiang’s political and economic hierarchy, prompting retaliation from Beijing in the form of sanctions on individuals from the EU and Britain.

AFP

Suicide bombers target Indonesia’s cathedral

Jakarta, Indonesia - An Indonesian cathedral was rocked by a suicide bombing on Sunday that wounded 20 as worshippers celebrated the start of Holy Week, an attack slammed by the country’s president as an ‘act of terror’.

Two suspects behind the powerful blast were killed as they rode a motorbike into the compound of the church in Makassar city on Sulawesi island, authorities said.

“A suicide bombing occurred at the cathedral in Makassar,” Indonesia’s chief security minister Mahfud MD told reporters in the capital Jakarta.

“The two (bombers) died.”

Authorities had not previously confirmed that the bombing, which happened around 10.30am, was a suicide attack.

Twenty church officials, congregants and security staff were injured by debris from the blast, authorities said.

A church security guard tried to prevent the two perpetrators - who have not been identified - from entering when the explosion occurred, they added.

One witness described hearing two ‘very strong’ blasts and then seeing plumes of smoke.

“There were several injured people on the street. I helped one woman... who was wounded and covered in blood,” Yosi, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told AFP. “Her grandchild



An Indonesian policeman stands guard outside a church after an explosion in Makassar on Sunday (AFP)

was also injured. There were body parts everywhere.”

It was not clear if the victims’ wounds were life-threatening.

“We were finishing the service and people were going home when it happened,” Pastor Wilhelmus Tulak told reporters.

Forensic investigators have been poring over body parts scattered at the scene in a bid to determine the attackers’ identities.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Churches have been targeted in the past by extremists in Indonesia, the world’s biggest Muslim-majority nation and home to several religious minorities including Christians, Buddhists and Hindus.

‘Act of terror’

Indonesian President Joko Widodo said he ‘strongly condemned this act of terror’.

“Terrorism is a crime against humanity,” he said. “I call on everyone to fight against terror and radicalism, which go against religious values.”

Amnesty International said the bombing showed ‘complete contempt’ for human rights.

The explosion at the main Catholic cathedral in Makassar - a port city of about 1.5mn - happened just after congregants finished celebrating Palm Sunday, the first day of Holy Week, which commemorates Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem.

It comes a week before Easter.

In his mass for Palm Sunday, Pope Francis said he prayed for all the victims of violence, ‘especially those of this morning’s attack in Indonesia, in front of the Cathedral of Makassar’.

Sunday’s attack follows the arrest in recent months of dozens of militants suspected of planning terror attacks.

AFP

Al Shabaab calls for attacks on US, French interests in Djibouti

Nairobi, Kenya - The leader of extremist group Al Shabaab has called for attacks on ‘American and French interests’ in Djibouti, less than two weeks before the country’s presidential election.

In a video released late on Saturday, Abou Obaida Ahmad Omar lashed out at Djibouti’s President Ismail Omar Guelleh, who has been in power since 1999 and is set to win a fifth term in elections on April 9.

The Islamist leader accused Guelleh of turning the Horn of Africa country ‘into a military base from where every war against the Muslims in East Africa is planned and executed’.

“Make American and French interests in Djibouti the highest priority of your targets,” he told followers in the video.

Djibouti’s strategic location as a gateway to both Africa and the Arabian Peninsula has made it a sought-after destination for foreign military bases. The former French colony hosts France’s largest contingent in Africa - some 1,500 troops, as well as the United States’ only permanent base, with around 4,000 troops.

Japan and Italy also have a presence in Djibouti, while China has had a port and military base in the country since 2017.

Djibouti is furthermore host to a contingent of African Union troops fighting the Al Qaeda



President Ismail Omar Guelleh

linked Al Shabaab in Somalia, where the extremists have waged a long and violent insurgency seeking to unseat the government.

In 2014 Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on a restaurant in Djibouti, killing a Turkish man and injuring around 20 other people, including seven French nationals, six Dutch citizens, four Germans and three Spaniards.

The group said it had targeted the restaurant because it was popular with ‘French crusaders and their NATO allies’. French nationals were targeted because of what the group alleged was their government’s ‘complicity in the massacres and persecution of our Muslim brothers in the Central African Republic’.

AFP

Nigeria’s Maiduguri in darkness after another extremist attack

Kano, Nigeria - The northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri has been thrown into darkness anew after extremists blew up electricity towers just days after power was restored, officials and residents said.

Residents in the city of three million people reported a new power outage had occurred before dawn on Saturday, but did not know immediately it had been caused by a new attack.

However, the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) reported Sunday that there had been a new incident of sabotage.

Electricity was on Wednesday restored to Maiduguri for the first time in two months following sabotage of a power grid by Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) extremists.

“Again, two towers along Maiduguri-Damaturu line have

been vandalised,’ TCN said in a tweet on Sunday.

“At around 5:56 am insurgents bombed tower 152 and 153 on Damaturu - Maiduguri 330 KVA line, causing another power outage,” a power company official added in a message to AFP.

Residents of Maiduguri are concerned about the impact on their livelihoods and water supplies as the TCN said it will work hard to restore power.

“Electricity went out early in the morning and I thought it was the usual power outage and power would be supplied later, only to hear it was another attack,” said Bukar Musa, a welder in the city.

“This is indeed bad news for me, my happiness over power supply resumption has been shortlived,” said Musa whose



This file photo shared on Twitter on January 21 last year shows a dark street of Maiduguri in Nigeria after Boko Haram cuts off the town from the grid

welding business has been crippled by the two-month outage.

“I have been looking forward to restarting my workshop which has been closed since January 26,” said Musa who turned to menial jobs to eke out a living.

Grema Umar, an ice-block vendor, said he was happy he could resume his trade but that hope has been dashed by the second blackout.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Countries tighten curbs

► France situation critical ► Giant lockdown in Philippines ► Chile confines over 80%

Paris, France - France, Belgium and Poland on Saturday tightened curbs as coronavirus cases surged in Europe while the Philippines prepared for a giant lockdown and Chile confined over 80 per cent of its population.

France has admitted that the situation is 'critical' and added three more departments to the 16 already under tight restrictions.

Around 20mn people in France, including those in the greater Paris region, are classed as living in high-infection zones.

They are not allowed to travel further than 10km from their home unless they have an essential reason.

Checks at train stations, airports and toll-paying motorways began Saturday to enforce the travel restrictions.

"About 10 police teams have been deployed against two in normal times [in Paris' busy Montparnasse station]," a police officer told AFP, adding that these numbers would be increased during busy hours.

Only shops selling food, and book and music stores are open and classrooms in high schools are only running at half the capacity.

Daily cases in France have nearly doubled since the start of the month and there have been



Residents queue up to enter a market, after the Philippines announced that more than 24mn people in and around Manila will go into lockdown next week as hospitals struggle to cope with a surge in COVID-19 infections, in Manila on Sunday (AFP)

more than 200,000 new cases every week.

Belgium meanwhile closed all businesses involving non-medical physical contact such as hairdressers for four weeks from Saturday.

Shops offering 'non-essential' services can only receive clients with appointments.

Poland closed creches, playgrounds, furniture and DIY stores, as well as beauty salons and barber shops.

'Virus is the enemy'

Social distancing in churches in the predominantly Catholic nation has also been tightened with one person allowed in every 20sqm instead of 15sqm earlier.

The Philippines announced on Saturday that more than 24mn people in and around Manila will go into lockdown next week. "The virus is the enemy, not the government," presidential spokesman Harry

Roque said. "While we're at home we expect the infection rates to slow."

From Monday, people will have to work from home unless they are considered essential workers, and public transport will be halted.

All mass gatherings will be banned, night-time curfews from 6.00pm to 5.00am will be enforced and non-essential businesses will be shut.

Chile also started a new and

strict lockdown for more than 80 per cent of its population, with shopping trips for even basic products banned during weekends.

The pandemic has killed over 2.7mn people since December 2019, according to an AFP tally on Saturday.

The United States is the worst-affected country with 548,089 deaths followed by Brazil with 307,112 fatalities.

AFP

Global death toll close to 2.8mn

Paris, France - The novel coronavirus has killed at least 2,777,761 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 10H00 GMT on Sunday.

At least 126,622,220 cases of coronavirus have been registered. The vast majority have recovered, though some have continued to experience symptoms weeks or even months later.

These figures are based on daily tolls provided by health authorities in each country and exclude later re-evaluations by statistical organisations, as has happened in Russia, Spain and Britain.

On Saturday, 9,829 new deaths and 576,385 new cases were recorded worldwide.

Based on latest reports, the countries with the most new deaths were Brazil with 3,438 new deaths, followed by United States with 761 and Mexico with 567.

The United States is the worst-affected country with 548,828 deaths from 30,218,688 cases.

After the US, the hardest-hit countries are Brazil with 310,550 deaths from 12,490,362 cases, Mexico with 201,429 deaths from 2,224,767 cases, India with 161,552 deaths from 11,971,624 cases, and the United Kingdom with 126,573

deaths from 4,329,180 cases.

The country with the highest number of deaths compared to its population is Czech Republic with 242 fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Hungary with 204, Montenegro 198, Belgium 197 and Slovenia 193.

Europe overall has 943,355 deaths from 42,914,305 cases, Latin America and the Caribbean 767,568 deaths from 24,382,782 infections, and the United States and Canada 571,678 deaths from 31,178,827 cases.

Asia has reported 269,736 deaths from 17,552,490 cases, the Middle East 112,735 deaths from 6,381,927 cases, Africa 111,713 deaths from 4,175,758 cases, and Oceania 976 deaths from 36,135 cases.

Since the start of the pandemic, the number of tests conducted has greatly increased while testing and reporting techniques have improved, leading to a rise in reported cases.

However the number of diagnosed cases is only a part of the real total number of infections as a significant number of less serious or asymptomatic cases always remain undetected.

As a result of corrections by national authorities or late publication of data, the figures updated over the past 24 hours may not correspond exactly to the previous day's tallies.

AFP

Britain's stately homes struggle to survive with restrictions

Bury St Edmunds, UK - The sprawling redbrick house and grounds of Kentwell Hall, built up in the time when the Tudors ruled England, have, like so many of Britain's stately homes, face an existential threat during the pandemic.

The turreted house near Bury St Edmunds in eastern England has survived over 450 years of tumultuous history but is in need of critical repairs it cannot afford after closing its doors to visitors at the start of the outbreak.

In the face of mounting financial woes, owners of historic houses like Patrick Phillips, who bought Kentwell in 1971, are calling on the government to allow them to reopen faster.

The former senior lawyer, who has been restoring the house for decades said he has had to 'cut back everything to the bone' after its £1.5mn turnover in 2019 fell by 90 per

cent in 2020. "It is hugely, hugely burdensome for us to try and operate this place without income," he told AFP.

Most of the money generated came from events and visitors. But lack of funds in the last 12 months has meant halting critical work to an 800m moat around the house.

Phillips said trying to repair the moat, which has collapsed at a sensitive point, was 'an absolute disaster' without access to funds. "This particular section supports an early building, a 15th-century building," he said.

"But until we can get in and look at it, we don't know how serious it is."

The stately home owner was unequivocal in his criticism of the government's plans to reopen the economy and said they were 'following the wrong track'.

He compared stately homes to businesses in the hospitality



Kentwell Hall owner Patrick Phillips inside his historic stately home near Bury St Edmunds on March 25 (AFP)

industry and said 'we are all suffering unnecessarily'.

Jobs under threat

The British government unveiled in February what Prime Minister Boris Johnson characterised as a 'cautious but irreversible' plan to exit a third national lockdown.

However, stately homes as well and other sectors are demanding answers as to why they have to wait until May to open parts of their businesses and until June to reopen entirely when non-essential retail is scheduled to reopen on April 12.

Historic Houses, which rep-

resents 1,500 privately owned homes around Britain, wants the government to ensure it is keeping to scientific advice and not unnecessarily burdening struggling stately homes.

"They're vital businesses and they've got vital contributions to make," said James Probert, the

organisation's director of marketing and development.

"We haven't said you must allow these businesses to open on 12th April. But we have said, can you just consider that and make sure that it's all in the light of sensible scientific advice?"

Historic Houses' members had £1.4bn of outstanding repairs to make in 2019, £400mn of which were urgent - an amount Probert said he expected had 'shot up' during the pandemic. He said stately homes were looking at a 'stored up crisis' with rot and damp that had permeated many houses.

"These are in very, very important listed buildings that are ultimately part of our national patrimony and open to the public," he added.

The cost has been harsh, not just for the homes but for the 34,400 employed by houses with ticketed visitors or for wed-

dings and conferences. Around 3,000 people face redundancy because of COVID-19, despite a national furlough scheme.

The family of Charles Courtenay, the 19th Earl of Devon, have lived at Powderham Castle in southwest England for over 600 years.

While the COVID-19 pandemic might not compare directly to the damage it suffered in the 17th century during the English Civil War, Courtenay said water damage to the roof of the castle had reached a point where it was 'almost crisis time'.

Funds like those from Historic England, a national heritage body, that funded repairs over the winter months, have helped stately homes during the pandemic and meant costs for work at the castle did not continue to spiral.

AFP

Global condemnation after bloodiest day since coup in Myanmar

Yangon, Myanmar - Defence chiefs from a dozen countries on Sunday jointly condemned the bloodbath in Myanmar a day earlier, when at least 90 people - including several children - were killed after security forces opened fire on anti-coup protesters.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the generals ousted and detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering mass protests demanding a return to democracy.

The junta on Saturday staged a major show of might for its annual Armed Forces Day as the death toll since the February 1 coup climbed to at least 423, according to a local monitoring group. The defence chiefs of 12 countries including the United States, Britain, Japan and Australia condemned the Myanmar military's use of lethal force against civilians.

"A professional military follows international standards for conduct and is responsible for protecting - not harming - the people it serves," the rare joint statement said.

"We urge the Myanmar Armed Forces to cease violence and work to restore respect and credibility with the people of Myanmar that it has lost through its actions."

Funerals were held on Sunday for some of the victims, after the bloodiest day since the putsch.

In Mandalay, the family of Aye Ko, a father-of-four, commemorated his life at a service after he was killed overnight.

"We are told by the neighbours that Aye Ko was shot and thrown into the fire," a relative told AFP.

"He was the only one who fed the family, losing him is a great loss for the family."



This photo released by the Free Burma Rangers on Sunday shows residents from the Day Pu No village hiding in a jungle, north of Hpa-pun in eastern Myanmar's Karen state after airstrikes late on Saturday (AFP)

Despite the dangers, protesters hit the streets again in parts of Yangon including Hlaing, and in the cities of Dawei, Bago and Monywa.

"One girl was shot in the head and died at the hospital meanwhile two guys were shot dead on the spot," a rescue worker from Monywa told AFP.

In Hlaing, a 16 year old boy lost a hand in a blast, trying to throw back a grenade security forces had lobbed at protesters, a rescue worker said.

'Act of inhumanity'

A day earlier, violence erupted across the country with the military using live rounds in nine regions, including the largest city Yangon, local monitoring group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) said.

By sunset, AAPP said at least 90 people had been killed. Local media, however, put the death toll higher at 114.

"Junta forces shot machine guns into residential areas, resulting in many civilians, including six children between ten and sixteen years old, killed," AAPP said. "The fact the illegitimate military regime is targeting children is a grave act of inhumanity."

Rebels in Myanmar's Karen state said they had been targeted in airstrikes late on Saturday, hours after the ethnic armed group seized a military base.

Hsa Moo, an ethnic Karen and

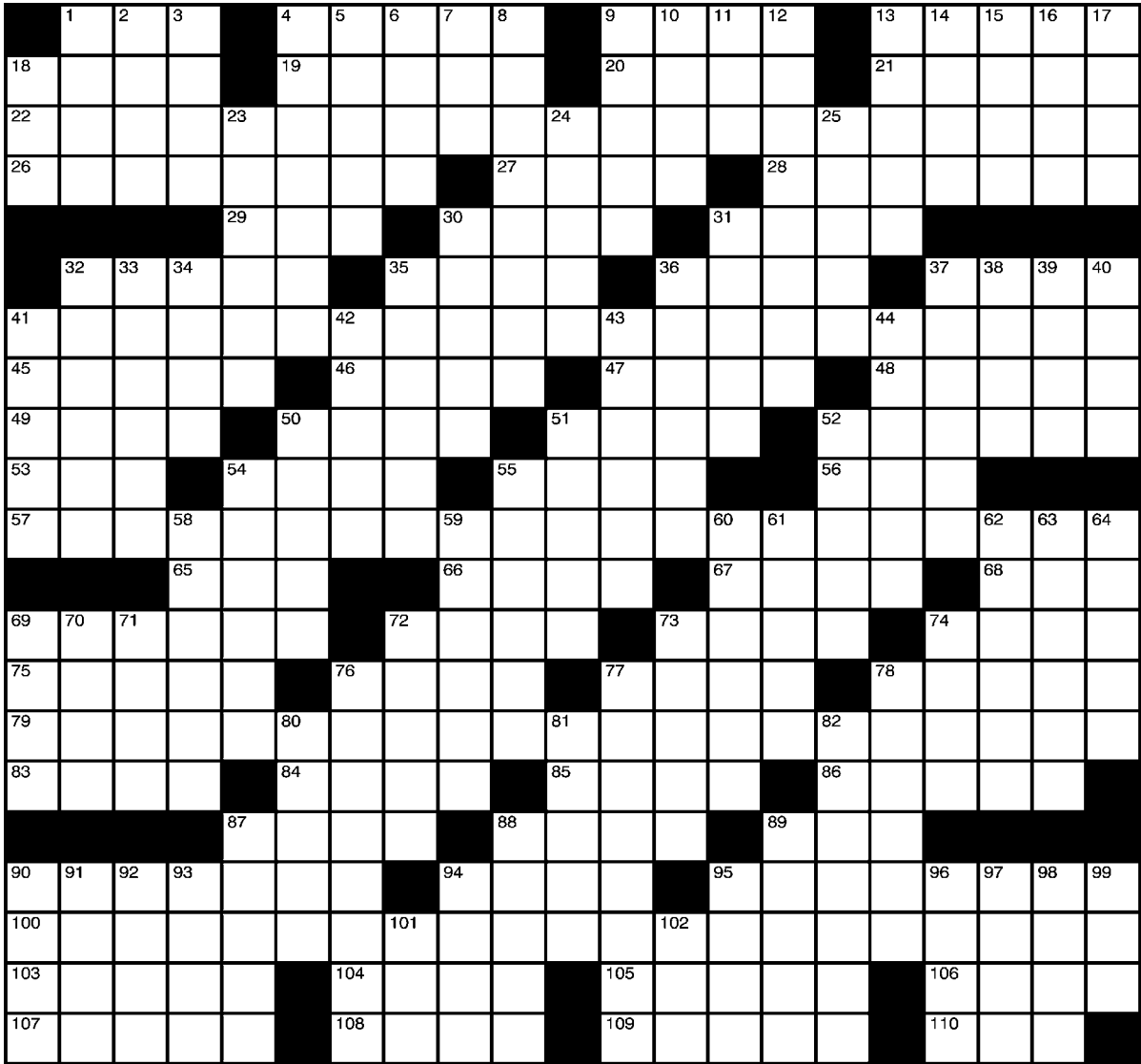
human right activist said three people were killed and at least eight were injured.

It was the first air assault in 20 years in the state, and targeted the Fifth Brigade of the Karen National Union (KNU) - one of the country's largest armed groups - which says it represents the ethnic Karen people. The junta did not immediately comment, and there was no official confirmation of any casualties.

There was a grand parade of troops and military vehicles in the capital Naypyidaw on Saturday where junta leader General Min Aung Hlaing defended the coup and pledged to yield power after new elections. But he also issued a threat to the anti-coup movement, warning that acts of 'terrorism which can be harmful to state tranquility and security' were unacceptable.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 "The ____": 1984
Uris book
4 Valetta's island
9 Steep, as tea
13 Brought down the house
18 Bean curd
19 Equip with lance and shield
20 Indie actress Taylor
21 ____ can of worms: uncover trouble
22 Lawyer's gift to Dad?
26 Popular plants
27 Jot
28 ____ camp: generals assistants
29 Conscriptio agcy.
30 Julie of "Dexter"
31 Deuce topper
32 Opera melodies
35 In one's right mind
36 "Rugrats" mom
37 Poetic foot
41 Train conductor's gift?
45 Errant golf shot
46 Loll about
47 Carson, Tim or Tyne
48 Keaton, of "Annie Hall"
49 Radames's love

DOWN

- 50 Tops
51 "Buffalo Bill"
52 Plighted vows
53 Dallas-Chicago vector
54 Tito
55 Gondolier's need
56 River isle
57 Snake-charmer's gift?
65 Treasure Island author
66 Marquand's oriental sleuth
67 Chew the fat
68 U.S. cultural org.
69 In a sparse manner
72 Superman's wear
73 "So ____": amen
74 Review briefly
75 "Nashville" singer
76 Curtain color
77 Wind's mournful sound
78 "____ Day's Night": first Beatles film
79 Jockey's gift?
83 Confined
84 Rotisserie feature
85 Pub drinks
86 Keagler's lane
87 Thine, in Rouen
88 Parched
89 Reiterative fly syllable

DOWN

- 1 New York caverns
2 Not worth ____: useless
3 Karate's cousin
4 ____ Leo, TV celeb.
5 Writer Seton's namesakes
6 Race circuits
7 Reality TV network
8 Milieu atmosphere
9 London's WW II siege
10 Costa ____: home of 32 Across
11 Yalie
12 Merlin's magic
13 McDowall, of "Planet of the Apes"
14 Altar area
15 Hera's husband
16 OK city
17 Go out with
18 Bar bill

DOWN

- 23 Sword-shaped
24 Anti-social one
25 "Old MacDonald" refrain
30 Pool table felt
31 Actress Meg ____
32 Have ____: take a shot
33 Oakland player
34 Atahualpa's empire
35 Verse division
36 Crown
37 Sherwood's "____ Delight"
38 Rat ____: drum sound
39 Ho Chi ____ City
40 Honey makers
41 Yoga position
42 Single-masted sailing ship
43 Winner of two Coty fashion awards
44 Peterson of football
50 ____-craftsy
51 British actor
52 Unspoken
54 "Swan Lake," for one
55 Bolster, in a way
58 Hemingway
59 Turkish inn
60 Oodles
61 "Slow boat" destination
62 ____ of: envelope notation

DOWN

- 63 Close at hand
64 Like 69 Down
69 Links hazard
70 No place like ____
71 Privy to the deal
72 Nero's 302
73 Gave the raspberry to
74 Cartoonist/ author Silverstein
76 Advocate
77 Aggressive
78 Alfred, Larry, Luther and Polly
80 Suffix with poly
81 Mystic playing card
82 Pasta favorite
87 Casey's place
88 Yearned
89 Energy restorer
90 Speedy Atl. flyers
91 Assiniboin Indians
92 Portent
93 Shaw, of "Pajama Game"
94 Key battle in Normandy
95 Tiny amounts
96 Completed
97 Religious image
98 KGB predecessor
99 Juliette Low's org.
101 Broadcast
102 "Hitchy ____": old-time revue

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your energy is positively bursting out of you today, shining bright light and positivity on everyone you encounter. To make the best use of all of this contagious enthusiasm, dive into projects or adventures that involve other people. The more diverse the group the better! You're especially well tuned toward other cultures and beliefs, and your mind is wide open to new concepts.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Being modest is all well and good, but it must be the first thing you toss aside today when you see an opportunity to get what you want. Whether it's some time with the boss or that certain someone's phone number, you can't be shy. Present yourself in all your glory, uninhibited and ready for praise. When you lead with your strengths, you're sure to get noticed and get the results.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Revel in all of your greatness today, especially if you're going through a phase when you don't feel so great. Take a minute early in the day to remember all the successes you've achieved and all the challenges you've overcome. Pat yourself on the back. Admit that not everyone could do what you've done! Keep going down this path. It's the right direction for you.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Whatever advice you give today will have more importance for the recipient than you might think, so be careful about how adamant you are that they follow it. They already feel like you have all the answers and know exactly what they should do. Their attachment to you is growing, and pretty much whatever you say goes. If this makes you feel uncomfortable, say so.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Beware of the people who boast about their achievements. You don't brag about how great you are. Choose to let your actions and behaviour speak for you. When people resort to tooting their own horn all the time, it's because they don't have any other way to show people what they're capable of. These people lack substance and should be avoided at all costs.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

This is a good day to have some fun. If there aren't any real business problems plaguing you and your schedule is wide open, get in touch with someone you've been missing and see if they've got time to talk. And if they don't, find out how you can help them do their business. Joining them on their errands or helping them cram for a test are all great ways to reconnect.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

If you're trying to solidify a relationship with someone, try arguing! It might sound nuts, but sometimes conflict can create a stronger bond. You two can have a lot of fun debating the issues, and in doing so you'll learn a lot more about each other than you would if you were getting along perfectly all the time. Make sure when you start a conversation that you don't focus just on safe small talk.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

If every little detail of your life hasn't been lining up quite as neatly as you'd hoped, have no fear! Take heart in the fact that you see the bigger picture. You know that by making small but consistent efforts to keep things on track, you can eventually get to where you need to be. Sure, there might be an unexpected detour or two on the way, but isn't that what makes life interesting?



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

There are clues being tossed about you, but it won't take long for you to complete the picture and solve the mystery. Try not to laugh when everyone around you is still scratching their head while you're finishing up early and off to do something more enjoyable. Their problem is that they have fixed ideas about everything. Don't ever take your open-mindedness for granted.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

It's wonderful to be giving and generous with other people, but your extravagant spirit could be out of control. Could it be putting your bank account in jeopardy? Cut back on giving gifts and spending your time with others. And by the way, do you really need to pick up the check every time you go to lunch with someone? Try letting someone else pay now and then.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

It might not be your first choice to work with a partner today, but you should put your best foot forward and try to have a good attitude. There could be one or two conflicts between the two of you, but if you can just put your ego aside for the day, you'll soon see that this other person has a lot of intelligent and creative ideas. Be humble and don't get in your own way.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Is your wallet starving right now? Money issues can create a huge amount of stress in your life, but you can get away from them, at least for a few hours. If you're worried about finances, today is a day to take a break from it all. Contact a good friend and do something fun and free. Take a walk in a nature preserve, bake some cookies, or play a board game together.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. When did US solar system probe Voyager-two discover six new moons of the planet Uranus?

- a. 1986
b. 1916
c. 1946
d. 1966

2. What is the approximate area of Bihar?

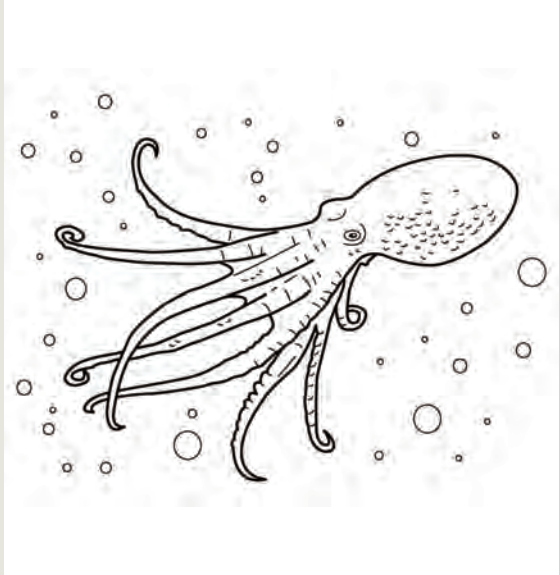
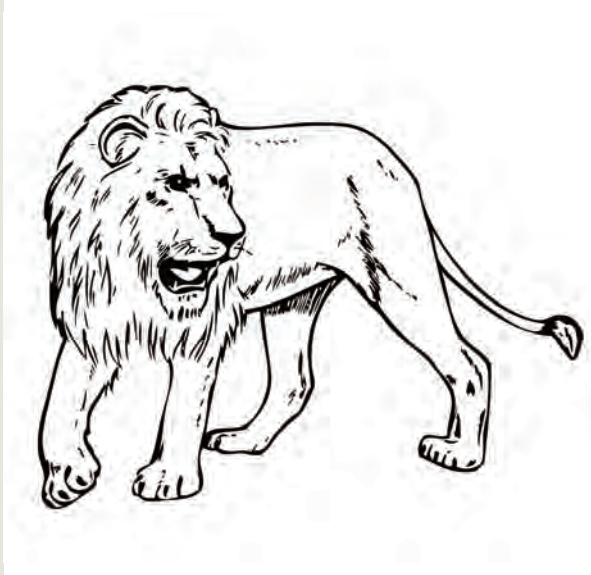
- a. 94,163 sqkm
b. 1,35,100 sqkm
c. 3,702 sqkm
d. 1,96,024 sqkm

3. When did India host the Commonwealth meeting?

- a. 1961 at Bangalore
b. 1976 at Pune
c. 1983 at New Delhi
d. None of the above

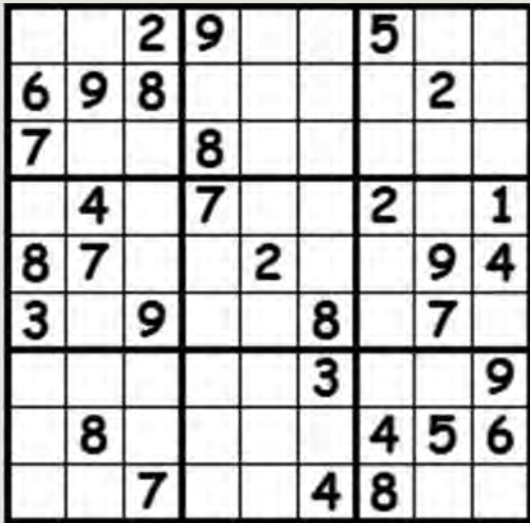
Answers: 1: a 2: a 3: c

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 (MARCH 28)



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





A file photo shows boats and houses in the city of Varenna, on Lake Como in Lombardy. Venice has turned into a ghost town, the jet-set resort of Portofino on the Ligurian coast is deserted, as is Varenna on the shores of Lake Como

‘CITY OF LOVE’ DESERTED

From Venice to Lake Como, Italy's tourist gems fight to stay afloat

Just over a year into the pandemic, Venice, internationally popular as the 'City of love', remains a ghost town. Portofino, a colourful playground for the jet-set on the Ligurian coast and Varenna, on the shores of Lake Como, are also deserted.

The coronavirus has taken a heavy toll on tourism in Italy, the world's fifth-most visited destination, and with a third wave now underway, there is no obvious end in sight.

The collapse in the number of tourists to Italy was jaw-dropping last year, with only 25.5mn foreign visitors spending at least one night in the peninsula, versus 65mn in 2019 - a drop of more than 60 per cent.

That corresponded to revenue of only 17.45bn euros (\$20.6bn), 26.85bn euros less than the prior year, according to new figures from the Bank of Italy.

"The situation is really dramatic and everything must be done to revive a sector so vital for our country," the president of the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Carlo Sangalli, told AFP.

Nearly 100,000 companies in Italy's tourism sector are at risk of bankruptcy, according to the research institute Demoskopika, with a potential loss of 440,000 jobs.

No George Clooney

"The year 2020 was catastrophic for us," said



In this file photo taken on February 07, 2021 The Grand Canal is pictured from the Accademia bridge in Venice, as the carnival is being cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Marina Denti, owner of a leather store in Varenna, a picturesque fishing village on Lake Como.

She is still sorely lacking in foreign customers, especially big-spending Americans, an absence that saw her turnover drop by 80 per cent last year.

"Even George Clooney doesn't come any more with this pandemic," she said, referring to the area's most famous homeowner, proprietor of an opulent villa on the other side of the lake, in Laglio.

Before coronavirus swept across the country and beyond, tourism accounted for nearly 14 per cent of gross domestic product for Italy, the eurozone's third-largest economy.

The collapse of this key economic driver, with hotels and restaurants closed for months on end, helped plunge the country last year into the worst recession since World War II.

To try to get things moving again, Italian railroads are offering 'Covid free' high-speed rail links between Rome and Milan beginning in early April, a first in Europe. All staff and



passengers will be tested before boarding.

The airline Alitalia launched a similar initiative last year on some domestic and international flights.

Meanwhile, the mayors of Venice and Florence, cradles of art and history, have joined forces to demand urgent aid from the government, claiming that without these two cities back on their feet, Italy will not recover.

Bleak outlook

"Deprived of tourists, Venice has become a

dead city like Pompeii, it's sad when you walk down the street," said Anna Bigai, one of the city's tour guides, who has only done a dozen guided tours over the past year.

Throughout Italy, overnight stays of foreign tourists fell by 54 per cent to 184.1mn in 2020 and the outlook for 2021 remains bleak.

"International tourism in Italy should not return to pre-pandemic levels before 2023," warned the director of the national tourism agency, Giorgio Palmucci.

Even Portofino, a popular destination for celebrities and billionaires from all over the world, has not been spared. Its Rolex and Christian Dior stores remain desperately empty, waiting for the return of rich foreign customers.

"In 2020, we had the worst year in a decade," sighed Emanuela Cattaneo, owner of a wine bar on the port, lamenting the absence of American and English customers.

Still, a few rare foreign tourists have enjoyed the unusual calm.

Rainer Lippert from Heidelberg, Germany, came to Milan, where he and his family were admiring the view from the roof of the city's Gothic Duomo. "It's fantastic to be here when there are not so many people around," he said. "Given the circumstances it's the best choice we could make."

As if to hammer home the challenges faced by Italy's tourist sites, within days of Lippert's visit, the Duomo was once again closed for coronavirus restrictions.

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إعلان عن اندماج

تعلن شركة أبناء مراد للمشاريع المتطورة المسجلة بالسجل التجاري رقم (1299221) شركة الوهج العجيب للأعمال والخدمات المسجلة بالسجل التجاري رقم (1305652) وشركة سجاد الأبيض للتجارة المسجلة بالسجل التجاري رقم (1270843) وشركة سهام الفضاء للتجارة والمقاولات بتاريخ 24/02/2021 أنها بصدر الاندماج عن طريق الضم شركة / تلال الجوري الحديثة ش.م.م محضر اجتماع الشركاء الصادر بتاريخ 24/02/2021 كل من له اعتراض من دائتي الشركات المندمجة أن يقدم بأسباب اعتراضه خلال 30 يوماً تبدأ من تاريخ صدور الإعلان .

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Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories: Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/ Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)

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VISIT SOHAR

HISTORIC HUB

'Sohar, a two-hour drive from Muscat, now houses Oman's largest port and industrial complex which handles almost 60mn tonnes of cargo. Once the capital of Oman, a new chapter is now being written for this seaside city

If you haven't visited Sohar yet, now is a good time to take a trip there as the city has come alive in many interesting hues in view of recent developments which have given it a new identity and status. Once the home of legendary sailors like Ahmed bin Majid and Sinbad, Sohar is fast developing as a hub of commerce and poised to create innumerable opportunities for jobs and new businesses.

Sohar, a two-hour drive and 230km from Muscat, now houses Oman's largest port and industrial complex which handles almost 60mn tonnes of cargo. Industrial activity in Sohar chiefly involves petrochemicals, metals, and energy, any many new expansion plans to add new industrial sectors are on the cards. Sohar Port South and Sohar Freezone are both in their second phases of development and considered one of the world's fastest-growing port and free zone developments.

The interesting sights in Sohar are many. Facing the Gulf of Oman, the centuries-old Sohar Fort houses a museum exploring the city's cultural and trading past. Sohar cor-



niche stretches along the waterfront and is close quarters with a park, restaurants and a new fish market. To the west, lies the popular camel-racing track.

A seaside city, Sohar was once the capital of Oman and legend has it that it was named after the great grandson of Noah (of the Biblical flood). Originally known as Majan, which relates to ship building activity, the city was well known for copper mining because of the huge copper deposits in the mountains of Majan.

The Sohar Fort, a major landmark, was built in the 1st century AD and has five impressive towers. Also, destinations like Wadi Heebi, around 60km from the city, is considered a gook place for hiking and picnickers. The nearby village of Heebi comprises several ancient houses while water supply comes from an old falaj that is used to irrigate local crops which includes vegetables, dates and papayas.

The old world charm of Sohar is now fast transforming into a more modern one as a new chapter is being written to give it an unprecedented status as part of the modernising strides of the sultanate.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SOHAR



Sohar Ccorniche
Sohar corniche provides a beautiful view of the Arabian Sea. One can enjoy a cool walk on the sandy beaches of Sohar before visiting popular destinations like the Sohar Fort, the Sultan Qaboos Mosque, the handicraft market, etc. A host of new hotels have come up along te corniche to provide visitors and tourists a comfortable stay in Sohar.



Sohar Fort
Said to be built as way back as the 1st century AD, the Sohar Fort is perched atop a hill and has five towers on the hill top. In the vicinity are two parks - the Silver Jubilee Park and Sohar Park which are considered ideal for people to unwind or take a break from the busy pulse of industrial activity.



Sohar Handicraft Souq
This souq is known for its explicit handicrafts which convey numerous tales about the culture and history of Sohar as well as the sultanate itself. People come to the handicraft souq to buy fancy household requisites as well as souvenirs. These include table top items as well as utilities and traditional ornaments. A visit to the souq definitely gives a true feel of the local culture and the hospitality of the populace.



Sohar Municipal Park
Located near Sohar Beach Hotel, the municipal park in Sohar is extremely clean and neat – the ideal setting for a quite meeting or for a family picnic where families can relax and children can play. With facilities for visitors, like a jogging track, a play area, restaurants/coffee shops and washrooms, this park has become very popular among local residents and citizens as well as tourists, especially on weekends.



Sohar Fish Market
Designed in a fanciful way, the new Sohar Fish Market is one of the cleanest fish markets in the country. Most visitors to Sohar make it a point to visit the fish market, even if they do not intend buying anything from there. The vendors in the market sell a variety of fish and other seafood caught straight out of the sea.



Sohar camel racing track
The camel racing track in Sohar is one of the most frequented places by tourists and visitors as it provides interesting entertainment in Sohar. Local guides provide information about camel races for visitors to assemble at the right time. Witnessing camel racing is a unique experience available in this part of the world wherein the jockeys dressed in colourful traditional attire enthrall spectators with their sheer mastery astride the camels.

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

RONALDO FUMES AS WINNER RULED OUT

EUROPEAN WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Paris, France - Cristiano Ronaldo threw his captain's armband to the ground in anger after being controversially denied an injury-time winner as Portugal blew a two-goal lead against Serbia in World Cup qualifying on Saturday, while Romelu Lukaku's 59th international goal salvaged Belgium a 1-1 draw with the Czech Republic.

The Netherlands saw off Latvia 2-0 after their opening Group G defeat by Turkey, who backed up that performance with an impressive 3-0 victory over Norway.

Portugal drew 2-2 in Belgrade, despite Ronaldo believing he had scored the winner in the third minute of stoppage time when the ball appeared to cross the goaline before Stefan Mitrovic cleared.

But without technology in use, the goal was not awarded and a fuming Ronaldo was then booked for his protests.

At the final whistle he stormed from the pitch, throwing his captain's armband to the ground.

"I always give and will give everything for my country, that will never change," Ronaldo later posted on his Instagram page.

"But there are difficult times to deal with, especially when we feel that an entire nation is being harmed."

Portugal had appeared to be cruising to three points in Belgrade when 2-0 up through Liverpool striker Diogo Jota's first-half double.



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo holds his captain armband moments before he threw it to the ground and left the pitch at the end of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification Group A match against Serbia at the Rajko Mitic Stadium, in Belgrade, on Saturday (AFP)

But Nemanja Radonjic's half-time introduction proved crucial for Serbia as he set up Aleksandar Mitrovic and Filip Kostic to net in the first 15 minutes of the second period.

Belgium, the world No 1-ranked side, sit behind the Czech Republic on goal difference in the early Group E standings.

Lukas Provod put the Czechs ahead shortly after half-time in Prague with a magnificent

long-range strike, his first international goal.

Ten minutes later, Lukaku collected Kevin De Bruyne's pass, turned his marker and drilled the ball under goalkeeper Tomas Vacklik for his 19th goal in his last 16 games for Belgium.

Luxembourg stunner

Roberto Martinez's men almost took the lead 14 minutes from time, but after Lukaku teed up De Bruyne, the Manchester City

midfielder smashed a low shot against the post.

"If you look at Czech Republic's results these last months, we knew that it would be a tough game," Belgium captain Jan Vertonghen told VTM. "They created the good chances, won almost every second ball. But at home we are stronger."

In the other Group A game, Luxembourg pulled off a shock 1-0 win over a lacklustre Republic of Ireland in Dublin.

Ireland were toothless in attack and the visitors made them pay in the 85th minute with Dynamo Kiev forward Gerson Rodrigues's winner.

It was only Luxembourg's sixth victory in World Cup qualifying since their first involvement in 1934.

Frank de Boer's Netherlands gave the 5,000 fans allowed into the Johan Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam something to cheer as Steven Berghuis's 32nd-minute



Fernando Santos, Portugal coach

Not possible: Portugal coach

Belgrade, Serbia - Portugal coach Fernando Santos said 'it isn't possible' that what he saw as a clear goal scored by Cristiano Ronaldo in Saturday's World Cup qualifier against Serbia could be ruled out.

"We scored a goal that was not given when the ball went in," Santos told Portuguese broadcaster RTP.

Portugal midfielder Danilo Pereira was equally dumbfounded at the decision to not award the goal.

"We tried to get a third goal and we managed to do it but the referee didn't allow it although in my opinion it was clearly a goal," he said.

"In any case, we can't afford to be two goals ahead and then get pegged back."

AFP

curling effort and Luuk de Jong's second-half header saw off Latvia.

"We know that goal difference will be important in these qualifiers," said De Boer, who also saw De Jong and Davy Klaassen hit the woodwork in the first World Cup qualifier to be refereed by a woman - France's Stephanie Frappart.

Human rights protest

"We deserved to win with at least five goals. We tried everything."

The Netherlands players followed Norway and Germany by protesting in support of human rights in Qatar, where the 2022 World Cup finals will be held.

Fenerbahce midfielder Ozan Tufan scored twice as Turkey beat a dangerous Norway side.

Leicester centre-back Caglar Soyuncu also enjoyed a fine performance as he netted the second goal and helped keep Borussia Dortmund striker Erling Braut Haaland quiet.

"Last year we've qualified for Euro 2020 and now we're fighting for a spot in the World Cup," Soyuncu told uefa.com. "We want to be there."

Russia, World Cup quarterfinalists on home soil three years ago, moved top of the early Group H table with a 2-1 victory over Slovenia, who had started their campaign by beating 2018 runners-up Croatia.

Croatia struggled to find their best form again, but Mario Pasalic's header five minutes before the break helped Zlatko Dalic's men edge out Cyprus 1-0 in Rijeka.

Slovakia are already struggling in their bid to qualify, after being held to a 2-2 home draw by minnows Malta.

OTHER RESULTS:

Group E

Belarus 4 Estonia 2.

Group G

Montenegro 4 Gibraltar 1.

AFP

Ireland captain Coleman seeks calm after Luxembourg 'embarrassment'

Dublin, Ireland - Ireland must pick themselves up and 'keep going through the storm' said captain Seamus Coleman after minnows Luxembourg inflicted a humiliating defeat on them in their 2022 World Cup qualifier.

Whatever the end destination is after coming through the storm it is pretty much certain it won't be Qatar for the 2022 finals which the Irish last reached in 2002.

Ireland sit bottom of Group A without a point, four behind leaders Serbia and Portugal who drew 2-2 in Belgrade.

They had opened their campaign with what was generally viewed as a decent performance in the 3-2 defeat by Serbia. Qatar are the next opposition for Stephen Kenny's side when they play them in a friendly in Hungary on Tuesday.

A win for the Irish would at least give former Ireland U21 boss Kenny his first win in 11 games. However, with his contract lasting only till the end of



Ireland's Seamus Coleman (R) vies with Luxembourg's Gerson Rodrigues during the match in Dublin on Saturday

the qualifiers and group favourites Portugal awaiting them on September 1 some are already speculating on his successor. Ireland have not won a competitive fixture since beating Gibraltar 2-0 in a Euro 2020 qualifier in June 2019.

Kenny said the loss was 'unacceptable' but added he did not fear for his immediate future. "No, I don't, no. I don't at all,"

said the 49 year old Irishman.

Their fortunes have slumped dramatically since qualifying for the Euro 2016 finals.

Coleman captained the Irish when they lost honourably 1-2 in the last-16 clash with eventual finalists France, who went on two years later to be crowned world champions.

The Everton stalwart admitted Saturday's loss was his

most embarrassing moment in football but they had to move on.

"The only thing we can do is keep your head down, keep going through the storm," he said. "You've got to be resilient in this game and you've got to take what's coming as professionals."

Coleman said it was up to him and other senior players to lift the spirits of the younger generation. "You've got to take

what's going and hope the younger lads aren't tainted by that," said Coleman.

"As senior players, we have to take it on the chin and take the deserved criticism. "But it will take a while to get over that one. It's embarrassing, full-stop."

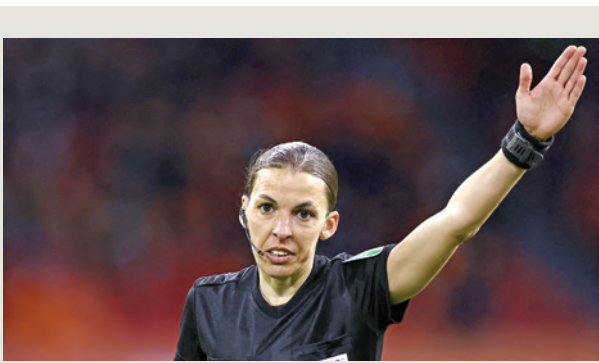
Players who enjoyed happier times with Ireland were scathing about the performance.

One of those was Kevin Kilbane, a key player in the team that reached the last-16 of the 2002 World Cup going out to Spain on penalties.

"Embarrassing. Awful. Out worked, outfought, out passed & outclassed by LUXEMBOURG. Another WC without qualification," said Kilbane.

Arguably Ireland's most embarrassing defeat was neatly summed up by the legendary Irish TV commentator George Hamilton in his sign off. "The sky over Dublin 4 (the area of Dublin where Lansdowne Road is situated) weeps tears of pain."

AFP



Frappart becomes first woman to referee men's World Cup qualifier

Amsterdam, Netherlands - Stephanie Frappart became the first woman to referee a qualifying match for a men's World Cup when she took charge of Saturday's clash between the Netherlands and Latvia in Amsterdam.

France's Frappart, 37, has been a trailblazer for women officials and in December was the first to referee a men's Champions League match, between Juventus and Dynamo Kiev. "Stephanie Frappart makes more history! Congratulations on becoming the first female to referee a

men's #WCQ (World Cup Qualifier)," tweeted FIFA.

Frappart, who also made history as the first woman to referee in the French top flight, was the lead official for the 2019 UEFA Super Cup final between Liverpool and Chelsea. She made her Europa League debut in October.

Saturday's match is the second time Frappart has refereed a match featuring Latvia as she took charge of their Nations League game with Malta in September.

AFP



A file photo of Nigeria's Paul Onuachu

Onuachu snatches victory for Nigeria to qualify

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

Johannesburg, South Africa - Paul Onuachu headed a stoppage-time winner as Nigeria followed pre-kickoff qualification for the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations by snatching a 1-0 matchday five victory in Benin on Saturday.

An earlier 0-0 draw in the other Group L match between Lesotho and Sierra Leone in Maseru meant the Super Eagles

became the 17th qualifiers for the tournament an hour before playing the Squirrels.

A fourth consecutive goalless draw in the section seemed on the cards until giant substitute Onuachu reacted quickest when goalkeeper Saturnin Allagbe blocked a Victor Osimhen shot in Porto-Novo.

A combination of the woodwork, which foiled Osimhen, wild shooting and several superb

saves by Allagbe had kept the match at Stade Charles de Gaulle goalless for 92 minutes.

The Super Eagles travelled by sea to the capital of Benin on Friday after players raised concerns about the poor road network linking the neighbouring west African countries.

A few hours later, the visitors trained at the match venue using the light of a full moon because the floodlights were not switched

on. Nigeria have 11 points, Benin seven, Sierra Leone four and Lesotho three going into the final round of qualifiers Tuesday.

While three-time African champions Nigeria host Lesotho in Lagos with only pride at stake, Cup of Nations qualification will be on the line when Sierra Leone confront Benin in Freetown.

Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Comoros, Egypt,

Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia and Zimbabwe have also qualified, leaving seven places to be filled.

The first of those will be decided on Sunday in Omdurman with Sudan needing a win and South Africa at least a draw as they battle to join Ghana from Group C.

AFP

India clinch a thriller to secure ODI series



Indian players celebrate with the ODI series trophy after defeating England in the third and final ODI in Pune on Sunday (AFP)

INDIA VS ENGLAND

THIRD ODI

Pune, India - Sam Curran's gutsy innings took England to the verge of an unlikely win before T Natarajan held his nerve to ultimately deliver India victory in Pune, in a tense and fitting finale to the ODI series that went 2-1 to the hosts.

India were out of the blocks well with bat and ball, openers Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan laying the foundation before Rishabh Pant and Hardik Pandya provided middle-order muscle when captain Virat Kohli lost the toss for the third time in the series and was asked to bat first.

But it was the bowling of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Shardul Thakur that allowed them to defend what looked like being a below-par total, especially in the face of some woeful Indian fielding, keeping England's run chase in check for the most part until Curran's fightback.

Curran, whose previous highest score from seven ODIs was 15, was reprieved on 22 when he was dropped by Hardik. He made India pay - and sweat - with a stunning 95 not out off 83 balls from No 8 under huge



India skipper Virat Kohli (L) speaks to England's Sam Curran after his heroic unbeaten knock of 95 went in vain on Sunday (AFP)

pressure as England went into the final over needing 14 to win.

Curran equalled the biggest ODI innings by a batsman

coming in at eight or lower. Natarajan, known for his ability to nail his yorkers and bowl at the death, came into the

side in what Kohli described at the toss as a 'tactical' move to replace spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

Playing just his second ODI, Natarajan conceded just six runs when his captain threw him the ball for the final over as the hosts claimed victory by seven runs.

Indian seamers Shardul Thakur and Bhuvneshwar Kumar shared seven wickets between them as England finished on 322.

Earlier, half-centuries to Pant, Dhawan and Hardik had India looking strong at times as the momentum swung more than once in their innings.

Having managed 39 for no loss and 41 for two in their previous two batting powerplays, India's openers began with greater intent and aggression. They were 16 for nought after four overs but then Curran conceded 15 runs off the fifth and they took 17 off the eighth, bowled by Reece Topley, to accelerate their cause.

The hosts lost four wickets in the first 25 overs, and four in the last 20 balls as they were bowled out with ten balls remaining for 329. That left England needing seven runs fewer than they had managed to chase down with ease in levelling the series 1-1 on Friday. Virat Kohli's India out-

SCOREBOARD		
INDIA		
Rohit Sharma	b Rashid	37
S Dhawan	c & b Rashid	67
V Kohli	b Moeen Ali	7
R Pant	c Buttler b Curran	78
KL Rahul	c Moeen b Livingstone	7
H Pandya	b Stokes	64
K Pandya	c Roy b Wood	25
S Thakur	c Buttler b Wood	30
B Kumar	c Curran b Topley	3
P Krishna	b Wood	0
T Natarajan	not out	0
Extras	(lb 1, w 10)	11
TOTAL: 329 in 48.2 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-103, 2-117, 3-121, 4-157, 5-256, 6-276, 7-321, 8-328, 9-329, 10-329		
Bowling: Sam Curran 5-0-43-1, R Topley 9-2-0-66-1, M Wood 7-1-34-3, B Stokes 7-0-45-1, A Rashid 10-0-81-2, Moeen Ali 7-0-39-1, L Livingstone 3-0-20-1		
ENGLAND		
J Roy	b Kumar	14
J Bairstow	lbw b Kumar	1
B Stokes	c Dhawan b Natarajan	35
D Malan	c Rohit b Thakur	50
J Buttler	lbw b Thakur	15
L Livingstone	c & b Thakur	36
Moeen Ali	c H Pandya b Kumar	29
S Curran	not out	95
A Rashid	c Kohli b Thakur	19
Mark Wood	run out	14
R Topley	not out	1
Extras	(lb 1, w 12)	13
TOTAL: 322 for nine in 50 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-28, 3-68, 4-95, 5-155, 6-168, 7-200, 8-257, 9-317		
Bowling: B Kumar 10-0-42-3, T Natarajan 10-0-73-1, P Krishna 7-0-62-0, S Thakur 10-0-67-4, H Pandya 9-0-48-0, K Pandya 4-0-29-0		

played England in the four Tests 3-1 and then edged out the tourists 3-2 in the T20 series. Agencies



NZ's Ish Sodhi (L) is congratulated by Devon Conway against Bangladesh

Conway and Sodhi lead Kiwis' cruise against Bangladesh

NZ VS BANGLADESH

FIRST T20I

Hamilton, New Zealand - An unbeaten 92 from Devon Conway and a four-wicket burst from Ish Sodhi ensured New Zealand romped to victory by 66 runs in the opening T20 against Bangladesh on Sunday.

Conway, whose rollicking innings included 11 fours and three sixes, shared in a 105-run stand with debutant Will Young (53), as New Zealand posted an impressive 210 after winning the toss and electing to bat.

Mohammad Naim made an enterprising start to the Bangladesh reply with two boundaries off the opening over from Tim Southee. But once the tourists reached 39 in the fifth over the innings fell apart as first Lockie Ferguson removed Naim for 27 and then Sodhi suffocated the momentum with his four wickets in eight deliveries.

At the end of their 20 overs Bangladesh were 144 for eight and Sodhi had the impressive figures of four for 28.

New Zealand went into the match without six frontline players including Kane Williamson and Trent Boult and stand-in captain Tim Southee said it was pleasing to see the new blood perform with the bat.

"Devon is just carrying on what he's done at this level, making it look extremely easy," Southee said with Conway now having four fifties and a 65.42 average from 12 Twenty20s. "It's great to be able to see guys come in and perform. If you had five or six guys out a few years ago we would be scratching around but there's a number of guys now knocking on the door."

A disappointed Bangladesh skipper Mahmudullah pointed the finger at a mediocre batting display from his side and called for a big improvement before game two in Napier on Tuesday.

"We have let ourselves down in our batting department," he said.

"Ish (Sodhi) is an experienced campaigner, he uses conditions really well, the ball was gripping a little bit here but we can't make the same mistakes again and again."

After the Sodhi rout, Aif Hossain (45) and Mohammad Saifuddin (34 not out) stretched the innings with a 63-run stand for the seventh wicket but they were unable to lift the scoring rate enough to threaten the New Zealand total.

AFP

SCOREBOARD		
NEW ZEALAND		
M Guptill	c Sarkar b Ahmed	35 (27)
F Allen	b Ahmed	0 (1)
D Conway	not out	92 (52)
W Young	c Hossain b M Hasan	53 (30)
G Phillips	not out	24 (10)
Extras	(lb 2, w 4)	6
TOTAL: 201 for three in 20 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-53, 3-158		
Bowling: N Ahmed 4-0-30-2, M Saifuddin 4-0-43-0, S Islam 4-0-50-0, M Rahman 4-0-48-0, M Hasan 4-0-37-1		
BANGLADESH		
M Naim	lbw b Ferguson	27 (18)
L Das	c Sodhi b Southee	4 (3)
S Sarkar	c & b Sodhi	5 (6)
M Mithun	b Sodhi	4 (6)
Mahmudullah	b Sodhi	11 (9)
A Hossain	b Ferguson	45 (33)
M Hasan	b Sodhi	0 (1)
M Saifuddin	not out	34 (34)
S Islam	c Guptill b Bennett	5 (7)
N Ahmed	not out	0 (1)
Extras	(lb 2, w 7)	9
TOTAL: 144 for eight in 20 overs		
Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-39, 3-43, 4-44, 5-59, 6-59, 7-122, 8-133		
Bowling: T Southee 4-0-34-1, H Bennett 4-0-20-1, L Ferguson 4-0-25-2, I Sodhi 4-0-28-4, M Chapman 1-0-9-0, G Phillips 1-0-5-0, D Mitchell 2-0-21-0		

Pakistan matches in Zimbabwe behind closed doors in Harare

Harare, Zimbabwe -Pakistan will play three T20Is and two Tests in Zimbabwe immediately after their white-ball tour of South Africa, and it has now been confirmed that all the fixtures will take place in a bio-secure bubble in Harare behind closed doors.

The series starts with the T20Is, which will be played on April 21, 23, and 25. The Test matches will follow from April 29-May 3 and May 7-11.

Pakistan will travel to Zimbabwe with the same 35-man squad they have taken to South Africa. They touched down on Saturday and began training on Sunday after clearing their COVID-19 tests. This is the second time Zimbabwe and Pakistan are meeting since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared last March. Zimbabwe made a trip to Pakistan to play three ODIs and three T20Is in October-November last year.

The teams have not played Test cricket against each other since Pakistan visited Zim-

babwe in September 2013.

"The Pakistan Cricket Board has been at the forefront of the revival of international cricket in the post-COVID-19 world and the tour of Zimbabwe is another step in that direction," Zakir Khan, PCB director of international cricket, said in a statement.

"We have always maintained that cricket and COVID-19 can co-exist in a safe and secure environment, and we continue to demonstrate this to ensure the game develops and flourishes in these difficult and challenging times.

"The tour of our men's side at the back of our women's team first-ever visit of Zimbabwe is a testimony that the two boards - the PCB and Zimbabwe Cricket - enjoy excellent relations and are always ready to lend support to each other. Our cricket sides have always enjoyed visiting and playing cricket in Zimbabwe."

Cricinfo

ACT, Zawawi Powertech, ARTT and EY triumph



L-R: EY's Essa al Balushi, Krishnan Karthik, Omar Sarfraz, Amir Hussain

LOCAL CRICKET

ACT upset leaders SARCO by 15 runs on Saturday to open up the title race in the Oman Cricket A Division T20 League.

Following the win, ACT and three other teams have six points after four games each and only the net run-rate (NRR) separating them. Along with ACT, SARCO, Zawawi Powertech, and Arabian Region Travel and Tourism (ARTT) have all won three matches each.

BRIEF SCORES

ACT 176-8 (Qasim Ali 47, Ghufuran Anjum 31; Jeethesha Shridhara 5-25) beat SARCO 161-7 (Ajay Menon 74, Toseef Ul-Hassan 3-24).

Zawawi Powertech 153-9 (Dharvesh Asath 52; Shihab Said

2-25) beat Basta CT 124 in 19.4 overs (Shahid Mehmood 40; Vijeesh Channengadan 3-10, Yagnik Ashwin 3-18).

Awtad International 140-7 (Vijayanand Dhayanandan 74 n.o., Nidhin Mohan 31; Mohammed Moshin 2-13) lost to ARTT 145-6 in 19.1 overs (Shehbaz Nasar 31, Aqil Khan 27; Mohammed Irfan 2-20, Sunil Baby 2-25, Sujithkumar Rajagopalan 2-26).

Ernst & Young (EY) 120 in 19.5 overs (Krishnan Karthik 38, Omar Sarfraz 30 n.o.; Mohammed Aslam 3-11, Majid Hussein 2-32, Arif al Balushi 2-18) beat OCT Muscat 88-8 (Rashad Mohammed 35, Essa al Balushi 3-12, Amir Hussain 3-20).

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