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Wear a mask... always!

TUESDAY, 03 AUGUST 2021
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No one is safe till everyone
is vaccinated

GET VACCINATED

Last update: 27 July 2021
TOTAL VACCINATED

2000072

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New Hijri Year holiday announced

Muscat - On the occasion of Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) Hijra Anniversary and the advent of the new Hijri year 1443AH, it has been decided that the first day of Muharram 1443AH will be an official holiday for employees of ministries, public authorities, other departments of the state's administrative apparatus, and employees in the private sector.

The Muharram moon-sighting will be announced by the concerned authorities.

The Ministry of Labour has stated that the decision allows employers and employees to agree on compensating this holiday if necessary.

On the blessed occasion, the Ministry of Labour extended its greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, praying to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty the Sultan, grant him good health, happiness and a long life and for the return of this and similar occasions on HM the Sultan for many years to come, and further progress and welfare to the Omani people and the country under His Majesty's wise leadership.

ONA

Electricity bills to be re-evaluated

Citizens' residential bills will be calculated based on a new three-tier tariff structure

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) has stated that it will re-evaluate electricity bills for the months of May and June for all those who complained of inflated bills. In case of an error, the excess amount will be adjusted in the bills in the following month.

The authority also stated that residential electricity bills of all citizens will be calculated based on a new three-tier tariff structure - 12bz/kW for consumption between 0kW to 4,000kW; 16bz/kW for consumption of 4,001kW to 6,000kW; and 27bz/kW for more than 6,000kW.

Twelve baizas is fixed tariff for summer months (March to September).

Following APSR's intervention last week, electricity supply was restored to users whose connection was cut due to late payment of bill. "High electricity bills are due to the subsidy redirection programme launched earlier this year. A decision has been taken not to disconnect power supply during the summer months," Dr Mansoor al Hinai, chairman of APSR, said on Monday.

"Citizens will not be required to pay bills in full and can pay in installments. The tariff for the months of March to September will be recalculated in line with the newly approved structure," he said.

Hinai noted that smart digital meters will help solve the prob-



lem of estimated meter readings. "There is an effort to switch to digital meters and the distribution companies are currently working on implementing it in order to solve the problem of estimated meter readings," he said, adding that the authority has received 5,000 to 7,000 complaints on inflated bills.

"There will be a delay in issuing the invoice for July due to implementation of the decision issued on the new tariff. We assure those who paid their bills be-

fore implementation of the decision that these will be re-evaluated," he added.

Hinai also underscored the importance of electricity firms adhering to high standards of service. "The authority imposes fines on non-abiding companies, one of which got a RO10mn fine."

Comprehensive programme for electricity subsidy

The authority has conducted a

comprehensive programme aimed at re-orienting electricity subsidy to certain sections of society in coordination with the departments concerned.

The assessment comes within the government's vision and keenness to ensure the success of the programme of re-orienting electricity and water subsidy to 'entitled segments' as approved in the Medium Term Fiscal Plan (2020-2024) that was announced in December 2020.



Teachers exempted from institutional quarantine

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Teaching staff and their families are exempted from institutional quarantine, according to the Civil Aviation Authority.

In a circular to airlines, the authority said, "Starting August 1, the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic excludes institutional quarantine for teaching faculty working in government, private and international educational institutions and their families. They should adhere to home quarantine guidelines and wear a electronic bracelet."

Exemption from mandatory institutional quarantine for health workers and their families, and diplomats and families is already in place.

Reacting to the news, individuals who Muscat Daily spoke with hailed the decision.

Fathi Hamdi, a teacher, said, "I am very happy with the decision because it will save me the extra expense of institutional quarantine for my family. I am currently on annual vacation and I was contemplating how we would manage institutional quarantine on our return."

While thanking the Supreme Committee for its decision, he urged all to follow the approved preventive measures to control the spread of COVID-19.

Ibrahim al Sayed, also a teacher, said, "I thank the Supreme Committee for this decision, because it will help families go on annual leave and

46,543 individuals have been in institutional quarantine since the beginning of March 2021

be together on their return."

3,454 under institutional quarantine

According to the Ministry of Social Development's Relief and Shelter Sector, there were 3,454 individuals in institutional quarantine on August 1 in 607 approved centres across the sultanate. A total of 46,543 individuals have been in institutional quarantine since the beginning of March 2021.

Hammoud bin Muhammad al Mandhari, coordinator of the Relief and Shelter Sector, said, "All arrivals to the sultanate are subjected to the decisions of the Supreme Committee for pre-examination procedures, PCR test at the airport, institutional isolation and another PCR test on the eighth day."

With regard to exempting individuals who have received two doses of vaccine, Mandhari said, "A study is under way to exempt people who got both doses from institutional quarantine."

He informed that for teachers arriving from countries on the travel ban list, owners of educational institutions in the sultanate where they are employed can submit a request to the Supreme Committee to allow them entry to Oman.

NEWS BRIEFS

REQUESTS FOR PROMOTIONAL OFFERS FROM TODAY: MOCIIP

Muscat - The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has announced that it will start accepting requests for promotional offers, discounts and advertising publications starting Tuesday, August 3, 2021.

"The ministry also emphasises the need for all commercial and industrial establishments to abide by the decisions issued by the Supreme Committee to limit the spread of COVID-19," it stated.



Helios Towers sets up hub in Salalah Free Zone



Sultanate's campaign ends with a whimper

Oman passport 49th most powerful, 4 places down since 2020

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With several countries now re-opening their borders following a largely cautious easing of COVID-19 restrictions through H1 2021, the passport rankings of many nations have been improving.

However, in the Gulf Cooperation Council, with the exception of the United Arab Emirates, the passport rankings of all other five states has gone down few notches since 2020 end.

Oman's ranking has gone down from 45th in 2020 to 49th

in the Q3 2021 passport power rankings announced by the Passport Index, the real time interactive resource for individuals and government agencies on global mobility.

In the GCC, only the UAE moved up 11 places to third, while other GCC nations showed a decline in rankings: Bahrain (-5/45), Kuwait (-7/42), Qatar (-6/40), and Saudi Arabia (-5/50).

Overall, while the increase in global mobility was up by 6.5 per cent, the US is one of the biggest gainers and Germany and New Zealand top the list.

In the GCC, only the UAE moved up 11 places to 3rd, while the other five showed a decline in rankings



A previous, pre-COVID holder of the No 1 passport ranking (1st in 2019), the UAE has moved up from 14, at the end of 2020, into joint third place -

the highest-ranking country of any Arab and MENA nation and the only one in the global top ten.

Oman's passport allows visa-

free travel to 28 nations and visa on arrival to 39. In comparison, UAE's passport facilitates visa-free travel to 84 nations and visa on arrival to 48.

The Passport Index's Mobility Score (MS) is based on adding two key figures - the number of countries for which a passport has visa-free entry (VF) and the number it can obtain a visa on arrival (VOA). These totals determine the passport rank, with New Zealand (92-VF/44-VOA) ranked top, going into Q3 with a mobility score of 136.

Over H1 2021, the top performing passports on the index

often show a correlation between a commitment by governments to openness or swift diplomacy between nations, as well as those who are better managing the global COVID-19 crisis, within their borders. These include the UAE (+11), Israel (+13), and the US (+16), according to the index.

"It is safe to say that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, as we see more and more countries safely opening up their borders," said Armand Arton, founder and president of Arton Capital, and the creator of The Passport Index.

MAFWR to set up shops in malls to support beekeepers

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To support beekeepers, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) will set up outlets to sell honey in two commercial centres in Muscat from August 24 to 31.

The objective of this initiative is to popularise local agricultural products and offer new marketing avenues to citizens.

This will be the second time around the ministry provides marketing outlets to support beekeepers. This year, the outlets are located in Muscat Grand Mall and Oman Avenues Mall.

According to an official of MAFWR, beekeepers must display their honey in glass containers with the production and expiry dates written on it.

For inspection of the honey, beekeepers have to deliver samples to the ministry's warehouse in Ghala, in the wilayat of Bausher, from 8am to 1pm from August 4 to 9.

The business hours of the outlets will be 10am to 8pm. The ministry has decided to limit the number of honey sellers to 50 per cent of 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

MAFWR urged all participating beekeepers to follow preven-



This will be the second time around the ministry provides marketing outlets to support beekeepers. This year, the outlets are located in Muscat Grand Mall and Oman Avenues Mall

tive measures, such as wearing mask and providing customers hand sanitisers.

Honey sales jumped by 15.7 per cent in 2019 over 2018. Sales from the 13th Omani Honey Market, which was held in December 2019 at Muscat Grand Mall, ac-

counted for RO142,026, while a market organised in June 2019 saw sales of RO99,000, taking the total for 2019 to RO241,026.

There were 5,336 beekeepers in the sultanate with 112,068 honeycombs that produced 672,208kg of honey in 2018.



Omani publications corner opens in Brunei

Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei - Al Khalil bin Ahmed al Farahidi Corner for Omani Publications was inaugurated at the Library of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in Brunei Darussalam on Monday.

The inauguration ceremony was held in cooperation with the sultanate's embassy in Brunei Darussalam under the patronage of Dato Aminuddin Ehsan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports. The corner aims to strengthen the cultural cooperation between the two countries.

H E Sheikh Ahmed Hashel al Maskari, Oman's Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam, said the move is part of the embassy's endeavour to continue strengthening the outstanding relations of cooperation and friendship between the sultanate and Brunei Darussalam in culture and related fields.

It also aims to support the ini-

tiatives launched by the Bruneian government to encourage young people to adopt a culture of reading, by enriching public libraries in Brunei with different types of books covering various fields of knowledge.

The ceremony also included a cultural exhibition that displayed pictures of important heritage, cultural and tourist sites in the sultanate, as well as prominent landmarks of the Omani Renaissance.

The event is a result of the embassy's efforts exerted throughout the past few years, as six corners of Omani publications were launched in public libraries affiliated to higher education institutions and other official bodies in Brunei Darussalam. The six corners include over 2,000 publications that highlight contributions of Omani scholars, thinkers and researchers.

ONA

OMAN, US CONDUCT JOINT MILITARY DRILL



Royal Army of Oman and the United States Army have started a joint exercise called 'Valley of Fire 2021'. The exercise will continue till August 12 at the Royal Air Force of Oman Thumrait Airbase in Dhofar governorate (Supplied photo)

Agreement signed to boost smart cities concept in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has signed a cooperation agreement with National Energy Center (NEC) to introduce smart cities and the experience of Internet of Things (IoT) in the sultanate.

The agreement was signed by H E Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaidani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology, in the ministry, and Eng Abdullah al Badi, CEO of NEC.

The agreement includes a joint cooperation to promote



knowledge transfer between the government and business and academic sectors.

The ministry said, 'The agreement covers several fields, including smart public services,

smart infrastructure and environmental solutions such as managing waste water and smart road lighting system, as well as electricity and water meter reading solutions.'

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7 people rescued from fire in Seeb

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Firefighting teams managed to put out a fire that broke out in a house in South Ma'abala and rescue seven people, according to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority.

A statement issued by the authority said, 'Rescue teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority in the Governorate of Muscat dealt with a fire in the Al Sharadi area in the wilayat of Seeb on Sunday. The teams were able to control the fire and rescue seven people, all of who are in good health.'

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Expatriates in Dhofar, Duqm get free vaccines

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To achieve broad immunity across population, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has been running a free vaccination campaign for expatriate workers in Dhofar and Duqm since June, an official at the ministry said.

"Now the ministry has started giving them the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine," the official said, adding that the campaign "aims to vaccinate even those, who can't afford it".

"The campaign is meant to speed up the vaccination process among the largest possible number of the sultanate's population," he said.

With the khareef season on, the official added that a lot of tourists were coming to Dhofar.

"The free vaccination programme specially for the expats has been started so as to safeguard everyone."

Vaccines for over 12

The Ministry of Education, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Health, will start vaccinating students aged 12 years and over,



starting Tuesday, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, the official said.

"The educational portal will send a text message to the guardian about the date of child's vaccination. Student must present the booking appointment at the immunisation centre. They need to bring birth certificate or passport for age verification," the official said.

On July 27, H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, said that plans are

afoot to vaccinate 320,000 students in the age group of 12 to 18 years in a joint effort by the ministries of Health and Education to help them return to classrooms next semester.

"Oman has so far received 2,623,180 doses of COVID-19 vaccines and it is expecting 3.3mn more doses of vaccines in the next two months and another 1.4mn doses from October to December. Oman has already booked 7,698,940 doses of vaccines," he said.

Muscat Municipality chairman checks progress of Muscat Bay

Muscat - Eng Issam al Zadjali, chairman of Muscat Municipality, on Monday visited Muscat Bay, Oman's bespoke luxury lifestyle destination to learn more about the progress and development.

The visit was an extension of the partnership between private and public sectors on the development initiatives that are aimed at fulfilling the Oman Vision 2040.

Muscat Bay CEO Sheikh Hamood bin Sultan al Hosni, its VP Abdullah al Nasri and the other senior members of the management team welcomed Eng Zadjali and the delegation at the Experience Centre.

This was followed by a progress overview presentation which highlighted the handing over of the completed phases and the proposed plans to reach completion in a phased manner,



(Supplied photo)

a statement said.

"The presentation was followed by a tour across the property to witness the transformation with an emphasis on the completed phases, amenities, facilities and conveniences forming a cornerstone of the premium lifestyle experience," it added.

This included the Zaha zone,

comprising villas, apartments, parkland and swimming pool and sports amenities; Nameer zone comprising 33 exquisite villas; Wajid zone with its 22 prestigious hilltop villas overlooking the bay; and Village Square, a commercial area with restaurants, cafes, supermarket, gym and other facilities.

The delegation also toured the upcoming Jumeirah Muscat Bay Hotel, and the exclusive staff accommodation.

Summarising his visit, Eng Zadjali said, "The development at Muscat Bay is impressive and we observed it provides a well-balanced eco-system of natural resources, amenities and lifestyle. We wish continued success and look forward to the completion of the next phase."

Sheikh Hosni said, "It was an honour to share Muscat Bay's transformation journey with H E Eng Issam al Zadjali and the senior delegation on their visit. We have been committed to deliver a premium lifestyle experience while preserving our natural heritage and we have been successful with that."

Muscat Bay is on schedule for the opening of the Jumeirah Muscat Bay Resort Hotel soon.

CPA officials confiscate 4,300 electronic cigarettes in Muscat

Muscat - The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has seized 4,300 illegal electronic cigarettes, the authority said.

The authority in Muscat seized 4,300 electronic cigarettes which are prohibited from being circulated in the sultanate.'

The CPA said the arrests were made following the ban on the circulation of electronic cigarettes and hookahs. This comes within the framework of the efforts being made by the authority to prevent such harmful items from circulation.



MoH reports 287 new COVID-19 cases

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has on Monday reported 287 new cases of COVID-19 and 18 deaths over the past 24 hours.

The total number of cases registered in the sultanate has now reached 297,122, including 3,868 deaths.

"Thirty-eight patients were admitted to hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients to 505 including 215 in intensive care units," the MoH said.

Active cases as well as hospitalisations are decreasing as number of recoveries is going up.

"The total number of recoveries is now 280,423 after 531 recoveries were reported on Monday. The recovery rate is now at 94.4 per cent," it added.

Tender Announcement

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company S.A.O.C Invites Interested Companies To Participate In The Following Tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (R.O)
MEDC- 13/2021	Provide Legal Service for Muscat Electricity Distribution Company	19/8/2021	07/9/2021	Specialized	157.500

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5 % VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - For payment procedure and to obtain the tender document, please contact us via e-mail Contract@medcoman.com 24588600 – Ext: 8577 - 8726
Purchase timing	Tender documents can be purchased at the official working time between 08:00 – 13:00 hours
Enquiries	Any inquiry can be sent using clarification available in the tender documents , one week before bid submission date
Tender Submission	- Tenders should be submitted in a sealed and stamped envelope addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION CO. marked only with tender number and the subject - Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER mentioned in clause 20.0 in Prime Document
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of 960 OMR valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY S.A.O.C. - Any bid that does not meet the bank guarantee will not be considered Any bid that does not meet the bank guarantee will not be considered
Terms and Conditions	- The name of the bidder, other marks or any reference must not be specified on the envelope - Tenders received after the deadline stated in the Invitation to Tender, including any extension thereof, for any reason whatsoever will not be considered - The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date - MEDC is not bound to consent the lowest Bid or any other Tenders. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - Muscat Electricity Distribution Company gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - For projects whose value is less than OMR 10K, the priority to award will be given to registered companies that hold a valid certificate Of Rayadah
Bid Placement	The Completed Tender should be deposited in the Tender Box No. 1 in the ground floor of MEDC Head Office building at Airport Heights, before 10 a.m. on the assigned date of tender submission



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YOUR SAY

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Deepak Nair
CEO

Like the large majority of people, I am not satisfied. Utility bills are draining our extremely limited funds in the wake of the pandemic. It's like rubbing salt into the wound. And the worst part is that there doesn't seem to be a proper, prompt and transparent redressal system. Prepaid meters would help mitigate the issue.



Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private Sector employee

Sometimes we get a bill or have a meter reading which is higher than we expected because of incorrect capture of meter reading or increase in electricity tariff. It's a good idea to submit self-read regular meter readings to help make bills more accurate.



MD Moniruzzaman
Teacher

The electricity and water billing system needs to be streamlined. Moreover, distribution companies should not disconnect supply without verbal intimation. They must be more customer-friendly. However, customers should pay bills regularly and use electricity and water more carefully.



Deepa Punjabi
Homemaker

During the pandemic, consumption has increased since many have been working from home. To avoid inflated bills and enhance savings, turn off electrical devices when not in use, take short showers, wash full load of clothes, air dry clothes, and use energy efficient products.



Ruskeen S
Sales manager

As a consumer, I can't do anything other than be more judicious in the use of water and electricity. Companies should upgrade their billing system. I am not satisfied with the billing system which is based on calculation of averages. Prepaid meters are the solution.



Mohammad Hidayatullah
Building maintenance supervisor

Not at all! I am now rationing and making quotas for every thing. We are rationing water for all household works - washing, cooking, cleaning and even bathing.



Naishadh Suresh Panchal
Accounts and operations manager

As a consumer, I am worried about the increasing utility bills. These are almost 3-4 times more than the earlier bills. Using energy efficient products, such as LED bulbs and solar powered equipment, can save money. Also, water must be used wisely without wastage.



Jasper Bright
Student

With the new electricity and water billing system, utility bills are a lot higher making lives of expatriates difficult during the pandemic. These high bills can't be cleared regularly, which leads to debt.



Imran Manna
Private sector employee

No, we are not satisfied with the current electricity and water billing system. Paying electricity bill has become a huge burden on consumers who are badly affected due to the pandemic and economic crisis. I urge the authorities to revise the present billing system and support consumers in this difficult situation.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

Following formation of Oman Transplantation Society, how can awareness and acceptance of organ donation and transplantation be raised?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om Log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue

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MUSCAT DAILY

H E Sa'eedi and Iranian envoy discuss health sector cooperation



Muscat - H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, received H E Ali Najafi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the sultanate, in his office on Monday.

The meeting exchanged cordial conversations and reviewed

aspects of bilateral cooperation in the health sector.

The two sides discussed the latest developments in the COVID-19 pandemic and the global efforts to limit the spread of the virus. The meeting was attended by some senior officials.

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	42	29
Doha	43	31
Kuwait City	44	34
Manama	46	32
Riyadh	45	28

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.13am
Sunrise	5.37am
Duhr	12.13pm
Asr	3.37pm
Maghrib	6.48pm
Isha	8.18pm



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Helios Towers sets up its Middle East distribution hub in Salalah Free Zone

Our Correspondent
Muscat

After its recently signed deal to acquire Omantel's passive tower infrastructure portfolio, Helios Towers, a leading independent telecommunications infrastructure company, has established its first distribution hub in the Middle East in Salalah.

Helios Towers signed an agreement with Omantel in May 2021 to acquire Omantel's passive tower infrastructure portfolio of 2,890 sites, for a cash consideration of US\$575mn. It is anticipated that the transaction will close by the end of 2021.

"We are glad to announce that Helios Towers has established its first distribution hub in the Middle East in Salalah Free Zone, becoming a leading telecommunication tower infrastructure provider in Oman," Salalah Free Zone announced in a tweet on Monday.

Through its transaction with Omantel, Helios Towers will establish its presence in the Middle East region and become a leading independent tower infrastructure provider in Oman with 2,890 sites.

Upon closing the transaction, Helios Towers and Omantel will enter into a long-term service contract for an initial period of 15 years.

Helios Towers has also committed to build at least 300 new towers in Oman over the next



We view Oman as a very attractive and supportive market for foreign investments, with strong growth and exciting future prospects

KASH PANDYA

seven years.

"We view Oman as a very attractive and supportive market for foreign investments, with strong growth and exciting future prospects. We will be further investing capital in Oman as we add to the tower count through greenfield build-to-suit site development and colocations, enhance the current tower portfolio and develop a

talented local Omani team," Kash Pandya, chief executive officer of Helios Towers had said in a press statement in May.

"We look forward to working with Omantel and other mobile network operators over the coming years to further develop next generation mobile infrastructure solutions and services in Oman," Pandya said.

Helios Towers said, similar to its other markets, Oman represents a compelling market for telecoms with its combination of a growing and urbanised population.

"It is forecasted that 3,000 new points of service will be required over the next six years, driven by the incumbent operators Omantel and Ooredoo and also new entrant, Vodafone partner Oman Future Telecommunications, who received their license in January 2021. In addition to these strong growth dynamics, the Omani market benefits from a hard-currency dollar-pegged environment," the company said.

Real estate prices may have bottomed in GCC

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Residential real estate prices in the GCC countries may have bottomed and total value of transactions for the year 2021 is on course to eclipse 2019 levels, Kuwait-based Kamco Investment said in a report on Monday.

Total value of real estate transactions in the GCC in the first half of 2021 reached US\$64.9bn and have approached within 26 per cent and 32 per cent of the full year figures of 2020 (US\$90.5bn) and 2019 (US\$96.5bn), respectively.

"The higher transaction activity year-on-year in the first half of 2021 was largely due to opportunistic buying of bargain-priced properties, as property prices reached multi-year lows from the impact of COVID-19 in early 2020," the report said.

Moreover, it said, a higher average value per transaction was achieved in the first half of 2021 for key markets, when compared to pre-pandemic levels of the first half of 2019, pointing towards the investment appetite for attractively priced real estate.

"While our view on the residential real estate market in the GCC has become more constructive than from our previous update (December 2020), we still require rents to move towards a late-stage recovery phase in the cycle, before establishing the segment as the clear leader amongst real estate segments," Kamco Investment said.

It said Saudi Arabia contributed to over 44 per cent of the aggregate value transacted in the GCC real estate market,



while the UAE added 26 per cent to the region's first half 2021 transactions.

Total number of transactions in the first six months of 2021 reached to 321,936 from 568,586 for the full year 2020, according to Kamco Investment.

Real estate equity indices in all the GCC markets barring Qatar witnessed strong double-digit percentage gains in the first half of 2021. The Refinitiv GCC Real Estate Total Return Index gained 22 per cent, while the MSCI GCC Index moved up by 22.6 per cent over the same period.

"At the current market levels, we believe that GCC real estate equities prices are not just pricing in a cyclical recovery from COVID-19, but a more broader structural rebound. Real estate rents and prices in all sub-segments remain in different stages of recovery, and would need significant growth in fundamental performance indicators from here on to warrant a further re-rating in the stock prices of developers and real estate investment trusts," the report

said.

For markets such as Dubai and Saudi Arabia, transactions in the first half of 2021 surpassed both first half 2020 and normalized first half 2019 figures.

Recovery for Saudi Arabia's real estate prices was driven by government support mainly, in the form of mortgage financing and housing initiatives to support the Vision 2030 objective of increasing the home ownership rate to 70 per cent by 2030, Kamco Investment said.

"Moreover, government initiatives such as new visa schemes in Dubai, and initiatives to increase home ownership such as witnessed in Saudi Arabia, should support the residential segment in the region going forward."

A rebound in off-plan residential transactions and a pick-up in core-plus and core commercial properties could signal the confirmation beginning of the next real estate cycle, before which rents would need to stabilize and recover in all real estate segments, the report added.

US manufacturing growth slows sharply

Washington, US - US factory activity slowed sharply in July amid ongoing supply shortages and bottlenecks, according to an industry survey released Monday.

While manufacturing continues to grow, the reopening of the economy has hit speed bumps that have posed challenges to industry, including rising material prices and difficulties in hiring workers, according to the Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) monthly report.

Its manufacturing index fell 1.1

points to 59.5 per cent, the lowest level since January, although that remains above the 50 per cent threshold indicating growth.

Companies "continue to struggle to respond to strong demand due to difficulties in hiring and retaining" workers, ISM survey chief Timothy Fiore said.

He noted that "all segments of the manufacturing economy are impacted by near record-long raw-material lead times, continued shortages of critical basic materials, rising commodities

prices and difficulties in transporting products."

The indexes for new orders, production and deliveries all fell, while the order backlog measure increased slightly, the report said. However, the employment index jumped three percentage points and prices fell 6.4 points, indicating a slight improvement in the factors holding back manufacturing.

"Labor challenges across the entire value chain and transportation inefficiencies are the

major obstacles to increasing growth," Fiore said.

Oren Klachkin of Oxford Economics said the survey indicates growth in the sector likely has peaked. "The manufacturing outlook remains quite bright, with hearty goods demand, rising business investment and firming global activity set to keep factories churning at a solid pace," he said. "But manufacturers will have a tough time meeting robust demand."

AFP

Luxury looks homeward as pandemic curtails travel

Paris, France - The luxury sector has flashed back from the COVID-19 pandemic but the crisis is still putting a crimp in travel, a key part of the market.

Industry giants have reported results that show the world's well-heeled are splurging on luxury goods as sales surpass even pre-pandemic levels.

LVMH - home to Louis Vuitton, Moet, Fendi, and Kenzo brands among others - saw first-half sales climb by 11 per cent above their pre-pandemic level to E28.7bn as it reported a profit of E5.3bn, a whopping 64 per cent increase from 2019.

Rival Kering - which owns the Gucci and Balenciaga brands - bested its pre-pandemic level by 8.4 per cent with a record E8bn in sales. Hermes reported a 29-per cent jump to E4bn in sales.

Both recorded profits of more than a billion euros, beating expectations.

The Swiss luxury group Richemont - Cartier, Piaget, and Montblanc - beat its pre-pandemic level in the second quarter by 18 per cent, while Italy's Prada bested 2019 first-half sales by 8 per cent.



It is the "upper middle class, the rich and ultra-rich untouched by the crisis" who could not travel or eat out and instead bought luxury goods, said Arnaud Cadart at asset manager Flornoy. The Chinese, "who represent 35 to 40 per cent" of luxury customers, are still crucial, he added. But while Chinese buyers previously made a lot of their purchases while visiting Europe, they are now making them at home.

In fact, "what was surprising was not so much the recovery in China but the violent rebound in the United States," remarked Erwan Rambourg a sector analyst and author of "Future Luxe: What's Ahead for the Business of Luxury".

Compared with previous cri-

sis recoveries, after the September 11 terror attacks or the 2008 economic crisis for example, "the feeling of guilt, the idea that it is inappropriate to buy luxury goods, disappeared," Rambourg told AFP.

"There is a young generation in the United States that feels comfortable with luxury purchases," in particular among the African-American, Hispanic and Asian populations, he explained.

Hermes chief executive Axel Dumas told a telephone news briefing: "We've seen a very strong rebound in activity in the United States from our loyal clients as well as a new clientele that came to us thanks to digital" marketing by the company.

Hermes's sales in the US jumped by a quarter from their

pre-pandemic level.

Citigroup analyst Thomas Chauvet noted that the fact that a roaring US stock market had made many Americans more wealthy, on paper at least, had also provided an important psychological boost to consumption.

In Europe, the sector's performance was better than might be expected given the absence of tourists who normally generate half of sales, because local clients turned out.

"Europeans had to a considerable extent deserted this market" but this year the trend was reversed, said Flornoy's Cadart.

Rambourg added: "To everyone's surprise, the brands discovered that by stimulating the local clientele" via social networks "the French, Italians, Spanish turned out more than hoped".

Chauvet cautioned that "the rebound in local demand doesn't compensate for the loss of tourists."

The luxury market will nonetheless "remain dominated by local buyers for at least another year," Rambourg forecast.

AFP

Sultanate gets its first biodiesel and biofuel plant



The first Biodiesel Plant in Oman has opened in Samail Industrial Estate. The plant commissioned by Synergy BioFuels successfully produced its first batch of 30 tons of Biodiesel from Used Cooking Oil (UCO) that complies with EN14214 international standards.

Making the breakthrough announcement, Anthony Helou, CEO of Synergy said, "This is a significant milestone in our journey to support Oman's green economy and Oman Vision 2040. Being able to establish a state-of-the-art Biofuels plant and produce the first batch of Biodiesel in Oman is an incredible achievement and we would like to thank Be'ah for its support in our journey."

The Biodiesel plant is only one part of Oman Bio-

fuels Hub that has been established by Synergy. The Biofuel hub includes in addition to the Biodiesel manufacturing plant, a research center that is focusing on Biofuels and renewable fuels in collaboration with local researchers and universities. "Our team has a grand vision for the biofuels project. The Biodiesel plant is only the beginning, we have established the first and only Biofuels hub in Oman and the region. We are working with a great team to innovate in this whole space. Expect great announcements on the hub's various projects very soon," added Anthony Helou.

Furthermore, in collaboration with Sarooj Construction, the biodiesel from the plant will be used

to power the construction of the first Oil & Gas well head for PDO. Within three weeks, Sarooj Construction would complete the construction of an Oil & Gas well-head in Saih Rawl in Oman using Biodiesel fuel for the heavy equipment. This will be the first Oil & Gas well-head in Oman and the Middle East where Biodiesel was used as a fuel to power the construction equipment.

"Construction equipment has a huge carbon footprint, by using Omani-produced Biodiesel we are helping in de-carbonizing the construction business and assisting Oman's Oil & Gas sector in its mission towards net zero emission oil," indicated Simon Karam, Chairman of Sarooj Construction.

ADVERTORIAL

MSX drops 0.76% on weak activity

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Monday fell 0.76 per cent to close at 4,007.18 points. Trading activity continued to remain weak on the bourse.

All the sectoral indices closed in red with Industrial Index falling the most by 1.02 per cent. Financial Index dropped 0.79 per cent and Services Index also closed 0.54 per cent lower. MSX Sharia Index decreased 0.58 per cent to close at 584.31 points.

Trading activity further decreased on Monday as volumes fell 42 per cent at 8.95mn shares compared with 15.35mn shares traded in the previous trading session. Market turnover declined more than 31 per cent to RO1.45mn compared with RO2.11mn in the previous session.

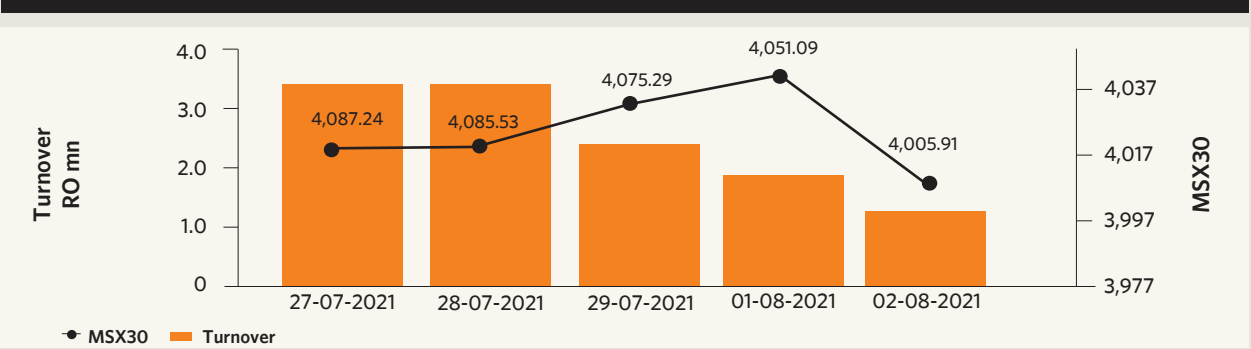
Market breadth at the MSX remained highly negative with only two advancing



stock to 25 decliners. As many as 15 traded stocks remained flat for the day. Two gainers at the MSX were SMN Power Holding (3.23 per cent) and Dhofar Generating Company (1.59 per cent). Top losers were Oman Cables Indus-

try (-4.62 per cent), Al Anwar Investment (-4.10 per cent), Voltamp Energy (-3.85 per cent), Oman Investment and Finance Company (-3.05 per cent) and Oman & Emirates Investment Holding (-2.78 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Dorsey's Square to buy Australian fintech firm Afterpay for \$29bn

Sydney, Australia - Twitter founder Jack Dorsey's Square unveiled a record US\$29bn deal to snap up Australia's fast-growing buy-now, pay-later firm Afterpay, in a major bet on the burgeoning sector, sending its share price soaring Monday.

The Australian fintech was founded six years ago and allows consumers to buy everything from laptops to flights in staggered payments without interest.

"Square and Afterpay have a shared purpose," Dorsey - who made his billions through Twitter - said announcing the deal on Sunday. "We built our business to make the financial system more fair, accessible and inclusive."

Afterpay makes money by taking a commission from retailers and charging fees to late-paying customers. It currently boasts 16mn customers in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States. Consumer advocacy groups have long voiced concern that buy now, pay later services could encourage people - especially the young - to spend beyond their means.



Australian industry watchdog the Australian Securities and Investments Commission has reported that one in five such customers are missing payments. The Square-Afterpay deal is expected to close in the first quarter of 2022, and at Aus\$39bn would be the largest deal in Australian corporate history. Afterpay's share surged more than 20 per cent on Monday as Sydney's ASX stock market rallied to an all-time high. Afterpay's shareholders will own 18.5 per cent of the new company. Afterpay co-founders Anthony Eisen and Nick Molnar said the deal was "an important

recognition of the Australian technology sector as home-grown innovation continues to be shared more broadly throughout the world".

The deal will create one of the world's largest digital payments companies, and set Dorsey up to challenge established rival PayPal, as well as Apple, Amazon, Google and other tech behemoths who are eyeing the sector.

In Australia, less than half of all retail transactions under US\$10 are made in cash, according to the latest figures from the country's central bank, and the pandemic has only accelerated the shift toward mobile pay-

ments worldwide.

Square plans to integrate Afterpay into its existing Seller and Cash App products, making Afterpay available for in-person transactions. Cash App has around 70mn active users per year. Square also announced in early July it was working on a real-world wallet for safely pocketing bitcoin. Hardware wallets can be used to store digital currency offline, synching with applications for transactions on the internet as needed.

Another option for cryptocurrency owners is to use 'virtual' wallets, essentially trusting third parties to keep money safe and using passwords to access funds.

Dorsey reasoned on Twitter that bitcoin is a currency for the masses, and that it is important to provide ways for people to hold it that do not involve entrusting it to outside parties.

He envisioned a bitcoin wallet that makes it easy for people to use some of it for shopping, for example through smartphones, while protecting the rest of the cryptocurrency.

AFP

HSBC profits surge to \$8.4bn in first half

Hong Kong, China - HSBC on Monday said it would resume paying dividends to shareholders after first-half profits more than doubled as an ongoing restructuring and pivot to Asia continues to pay off.

The results beat analyst estimates and are a shot in the arm for the Asia-reliant lender after a tumultuous 2020 saw its fortunes take a hammering from the coronavirus and simmering geopolitical tensions.

Reported profit before tax rose US\$6.5bn to US\$10.8bn while reported profit after tax increased US\$5.3bn to US\$8.4bn.

The bank also announced an interim dividend of seven cents per ordinary share for the first half of the year.

British regulators last year ordered banks to suspend payouts as the coronavirus tore through the global economy to shore up liquidity. But last month they relaxed those 'temporary guardrail' measures.

HSBC is one of the biggest dividend payers in European banking, and after a year of restrictions is expected to set aside more than any of its rivals this year and next, according to estimates collated by Bloomberg Intelligence.

"We definitely feel more confident," chief financial officer Ewen Stevenson told Bloomberg. "We will keep buy-backs under review" together with dividends, he added.

Like all banking giants HSBC was battered by the coronavirus last year, with a 30 per cent



plunge in 2020 profit.

Under CEO Noel Quinn, it has embarked on a dramatic restructuring, rolling out plans to cut its workforce by about 35,000 to drive down costs and to refocus on its most profitable areas - Asia and the Middle East.

Asia reliant

HSBC makes 90 per cent of its profit in Asia, with China and Hong Kong the major drivers of growth.

In February it published a new strategy laying out plans to redouble its attempt to seize more of the Asian market.

Weighed down by low interest rates, it is planning to seek out more fee-based income, especially wealth management for Asia's increasingly affluent.

Earlier this year the bank sold its 90 branches in the United States and completed a long-running disposal of its unprofitable French retail business.

"We are focused on executing the growth and transformation plans we announced in February," Quinn said, noting all geographical regions of the global bank were currently returning a profit.

HSBC's results struck a cautiously optimistic note for the future but noted that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic continued to weigh on the global economy.

There were signs borrowing was on the up, with the bank predicting mid-single-digit lending growth for the full year while credit losses for the year were 'expected to be materially lower than our medium-term range'.

'Uncertainty remains as countries emerge from the pandemic at different speeds, government support measures unwind and new virus strains test the efficacy of vaccination programmes,' the bank added.

AFP

US lawmakers finish \$1tn infrastructure proposal

Washington, US - US senators on Sunday finalized a historic, trillion-dollar infrastructure proposal that is expected to be approved within days, Democratic Senate leader Chuck Schumer said.

If passed by Congress and signed into law, the bill would pump historic levels of federal funding into fixing US roads, bridges and waterways, ensuring broadband internet for all Americans and expanding clean energy programs.

A bipartisan group "finished writing the text of the infrastructure bill," Schumer told the Senate, which met for an extended weekend session in Washington.

"I believe the Senate can process relevant amendments

and pass this bill in a matter of days."

The bill, a cornerstone of President Joe Biden's sweeping domestic agenda, is about 2,700 pages long and provides for US\$1tn in funding.

The Democratic leader succeeded in rallying a few elected officials from the opposite camp to work on the proposal.

The group released a joint statement saying the goal of the bill was to invest in infrastructure and create jobs without raising taxes.

"This bipartisan bill and our shared commitment to see it across the finish line is further proof that the Senate can work," the statement said.

The group consisted of Re-

publicans Rob Portman, Susan Collins, Mitt Romney, Lisa Murkowski and Bill Cassidy, and Democrats Kyrsten Sinema, Joe Manchin, Mark Warner, Jeanne Shaheen and Jon Tester.

The bill would allow the largest-ever federal investments in public transit, as well as drinking and waste water infrastructure; the largest funding of passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak; and the largest investment in bridges since the nation's highway system was developed.

It would also help tackle the climate crisis by investing in energy projects, such as electric buses and a cleaner electricity grid.

AFP

The chips are down: Why there's a semiconductor shortage

Paris, France - A shortage of semiconductors has sent shockwaves through the global economy, squeezing supplies of everything from cars to head-phones. The dearth of chips has exposed the modern world's reliance on these minuscule components, the basic building blocks of computers which allow electronic devices to process data. Why is the shortage happening, and what can be done about it?

Is shortage linked to pandemic?

The start of the COVID-19 crisis in early 2020 prompted a global spending spree on electronic items - from extra monitors as people rushed to set up home offices, to televisions and games consoles for beating lockdown boredom. Temporary factory closures due to the pandemic

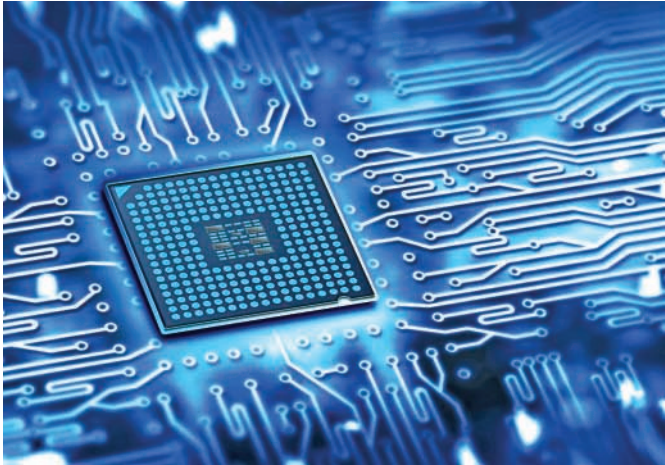
also put pressure on supplies.

And as plants reopened, electronic goods producers continued to place orders - creating an ever-increasing backlog for the chips, which can be just a fraction of a millimetre long.

The pandemic isn't the only factor. A storm briefly halted production at several plants in Texas in February, and a fire ripped through a Japanese factory in March.

US-China tensions are also part of the story. Last August, the US banned foreign companies whose chips use American technology from selling to Chinese tech giant Huawei, over espionage allegations.

Huawei began stockpiling semiconductors ahead of the sanctions coming into effect, and other companies followed their lead, further straining supplies.



Which industries have been hit?

The car industry has been the most visible victim so far, with many brands forced to slow their output in recent months.

As automakers slashed production early in the pandemic, their chip suppliers turned to clients from other sectors -

namely the makers of electronic goods in high demand due to the pandemic.

That has left car brands, from Volkswagen to Volvo, scrambling to get hold of semiconductors now that sales are revving up again.

Smartphone makers had been relatively protected so far as they

had existing stockpiles of chips, but they too are starting to suffer.

Apple CEO Tim Cook warned this week that the shortages are set to hit the production of iPhones and iPads. Smaller phone-makers are likely to be worse affected, analysts say.

Games consoles like the PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X have also been in short supply.

So great is the clamour among gamers to get hold of chip-powered graphic cards needed for their playing, that they have been resorting to increasingly unusual strategies.

The die-hards are tuning into live-streams on YouTube and Twitch, which ring an alarm every time a card is listed for sale online.

When will this end?

Governments are hurrying to

boost their chip-making capacities, meanwhile.

In May, South Korea announced a whopping US\$451bn investment in its bid to become a semiconductor giant, while the US Senate last month voted through US\$52bn in subsidies for chip plants, known as 'fabs'.

The European Union is seeking to double its share of global chip-manufacturing capacity to 20 per cent of the market by 2030.

But factories cannot open overnight - particularly those that make semiconductors, a delicate process that involves pressing layers of chemicals into silicon.

"Building new capacity takes time - for a new fab, more than 2.5 years - so most expansions that are starting now will not increase the available capacity until 2023," said Ondrej

Burkacky, senior partner and co-leader of the global semiconductors practice at consultancy McKinsey.

He added that long-term factors also meant global demand was in "hyper growth", such as the trend towards companies storing their data in the cloud, requiring more and more data centres to be built - sites that use huge quantities of chips.

Jean-Marc Chery, CEO of Franco-Italian chip-maker STMicroelectronics, said orders for next year have already outstripped his company's manufacturing capacities.

There is a broad acknowledgement within the industry that the shortage "will last up to next year minimum," he said.

Analysts say the continuing squeeze could lead to higher prices for consumers.

AFP

OMREN calls for more national and regional research and education networks

Oman Research and Education Network (OMREN) of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) in collaboration with the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) has announced a call for action to recognise and foster the role of National Research and Education Networks (NREN) across the Arab regions during their annual conference.

The call of action focused on addressing the official authorities in the Arab countries, including related ministries and stakeholders, in addition to joint Arab action institutions led by the League of Arab States to work on developing and improving the infrastructure for research and education at the national and regional levels in the Arab region.

The set of recommendations, as announced in the conference, stressed the necessity and urgency for developing an NREN in each of the countries that currently are without NREN.

This should be associated



with governance and sustainability plans and actions. It also called for supporting existing NRENs in the Arab countries by providing them with the required capacities, capabilities and fund-

ing following successful NRENs models in some Arab countries. The conference also called for the necessity and urgency for supporting the development of a regional Pan-Arab Research and

Education Network to facilitate research and education (R&E) collaborations across the Arab countries and beyond by endorsing the ongoing mission of the Arab States Research and Edu-



cation Network. The set of recommendations also called upon NRENs in the Gulf region to join forces among each other and with ASREN for optimised national/international Internet capacity deployment, for creating an Arab-wide sharing and learning community and for ensuring participation in discussions and activities of the global R&E networking community.

Asserting on the importance of this call of action, H E Dr Saif al Haddabi, Undersecretary for Research and Innovation in MoHERI, said, "We are proud of OMREN's achievements and

what it has provided for the development of research and education in the sultanate and beyond. This confirms how the sultanate recognises the importance of supporting and developing the infrastructure for research and education, enhancing its capabilities and providing it with the necessary resources. We call on all the Arab countries to work on developing their infrastructure. We are pleased to share the experience of Oman for those who wish to benefit from."

Dr Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, chairman of ASREN, praised the co-operation with OMREN.

"There are Arab countries that have achievements in the field of research and education infrastructure, and we call on other Arab countries to build research and education networks and strengthen them with the necessary resources and equipment to ensure their sustainability and development, especially in the fields of open science, open access and

achieving the Sustainable Development Goals."

During the conference, the Ministry and ASREN recalled the role of the late Dr Abdulmonem al Kharusi, director of OMREN (2014-2021), with his significant contribution to OMREN and to the Arab NRENs as well.

It is worth noting that OMREN conducted its annual OMREN Technology Summit (OTS) on May 31 under the patronage and support of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and with the participation of ASREN.

The event attracted more than 500 participants from 20 countries, featuring 26 speakers. The focus of the discussions was primarily on enhancing research and education, through the development of a robust, sustainable and reliable research and education infrastructure typically provided by the Research and Education Networks at both regional and national levels.

Anantara Jabal Akhdar Resort embraces pomegranate season

Anantara al Jabal al Akhdar Resort celebrates the pomegranate harvest from mid-August until October, with exclusive experiences both at and beyond the resort for guests and visitors alike.

Pomegranate season is almost upon us, the mountains in bloom, fragrant and colourful. Jebel Akhdar is home to 27,000 pomegranate trees, as well as orchards of peach, grape and pear, due to its enticing cool climate.

Guests staying at the highest resort in the Middle East can embrace the beauty of the blooming landscape with nature walks, mountain climbing and an exclusive pomegranate tour guided by the resort's Mountain Guru, whilst Anantara Spa presents a seasonally inspired spa journey that harnesses the richness of the fruit.

On the one-hour pomegranate tour, guests traverse the Saiq Plateau to witness the harvesting of the iconic fruit, interacting with local farmers who are happy



to explain how they have farmed for generations and select the perfect specimens.

Those looking to pamper themselves can indulge in the Royal Pomegranate Escape, the perfect polish for a smooth and radiant body at the resort's elegant spa. Rich in antioxidants, Jebel Akhdar pomegranates have long been revered for their ability to regenerate, nourish and protect the skin. The two-hour treatment commences with a full body pomegranate scrub, fol-

lowed by a relaxing massage and rehydrating facial.

Spectacularly secluded in the Al Hajar mountain range at 2000m above sea level, Anantara al Jabal al Akhdar Resort beckons the inquisitive traveller with an array of inspirational experiences, from mountaintop yoga and trekking to stargazing, archery and mountain biking. For more information, call +968 2521 8000, visit jabal-akhdar.anantara.com or email al-jabalalakhdar@anantara.com

Zubair Corporation begins vaccination campaign

The Zubair Corporation announced the commencement of the vaccination campaign for the second dose of the 'COVID-19' vaccine for all employees of its subsidiaries, within all the wilayats of the sultanate, on August 1.

This effort is in line with the national vaccination drive, spearheaded by the Ministry of Health. The vaccination centre at Zubair Automotive Group in Azaiba witnessed a large turnout of employees towards completing both doses of the vaccination.

The Zubair Corporation seeks to enhance the work environment in the Corporation and its subsidiaries through the implementation of several plans and programmes that contribute towards providing a healthy work-place for employees.

The corporation places significant importance and attention on the health and safety of its employees.

This is made possible through the implementation of the highest safety standards across various work environments, either at



The Zubair Corporation or any of its subsidiaries.

Commenting on the campaign, Hilal Omar al Siyabi, head of Corporate Services at The Zubair Corporation, said, "We are pleased with the large attendance of the employees from the companies affiliated with The Zubair Corporation, to be administered with the second dose of the vaccine. This reflects the team's commitment to implementing relevant measures to reduce the risk of the virus and its infection.

"We look forward to completing this campaign in the upcoming

ing days, to enable ourselves to be fully prepared for the recovery phase."

"I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the campaign team and the Human Resources departments from all the corporation's subsidiaries. Through their efforts, they were able to do everything required, necessary for the campaign's success and achievement of its goals. I would also like to thank the concerned team from the Ministry of Health for their dedication in facilitating the required procedures," Siyabi added.

From her side, Nawal Salem al

Hashemi, who is supervising the vaccination campaign, said, "Co-ordinating campaigns like this on a large scale and involving all employees, across various entities, is not an easy task. Our success in organising this campaign would not have been possible without the collective efforts of several employees, who were present, day and night, to ensure that the campaign was conducted seamlessly and without any delay or confusion. I Together, we look forward to completing the second phase and as prepare for the post-COVID era ahead.

"I would like to remind all our colleagues and emphasise the need to maintain their full commitment to all relevant precautionary measures, even after receiving the vaccine. This is as per the directives issued by the Ministry of Health, which need to be adhered to, since the administration of the vaccine does not provide complete protection from infection but helps prevents severe symptoms," Nawal added.

Oman Sail to host 2021 Asian 49er, 49er FX & Nacra 17 Championships in Mussanah in November



Oman Sail will host the 2021 Asian 49er, 49er FX & Nacra 17 Championships in Mussanah as 114 male and female sailors in the Asian Sailing Federation finalise preparations for the 49er World Championships. Taking place from November 5-9, the event will allow crews in the 49er, 49er FX and Nacra 17 to gain vital experience ahead of the World Championships while competing for the title of Asian Champion.

Maryam al Jadidi, senior project manager at Oman Sail, said, "We are delighted to be able to add another prestigious event to our growing roster of accomplishments. The Asian Championships offer an excellent



opportunity for sailors from across the continent to test themselves after a disjointed year for sport while also gaining vital training minutes on the water ahead of the World Championships. We look forward to welcoming the sailors, their coaches and officials to Mussanah in November where the perfect conditions should lead to some high class sailing."

Racing will begin on November

6 with registration and a practice session. Competition will then take place every day through to November 9 when the fleet will be split and the leaders will compete for honours on the final day.

Mussanah Sports City is becoming Oman's home of sailing and is set for an incredibly busy winter season. The purpose-built resorts and sports complex will host the 49er, 49erFX, and Nacra

17 World Championships taking place from November 16-21, the opening ceremony and first leg of the 11th edition of Sailing Arabia - The Tour kicking off on November 24 and the 50th Youth Sailing World Championships, one of the most significant competitions in the sailing calendar, starting on December 11.

Registration is open until September 30 through www.oman-sail.com/asian-championships.

Dr Kavitha advocates yoga to keep fit and boost immunity

The significance of yoga — in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic that has upended the lives of millions of people around the world — has increased markedly. While public health crisis has brought to the fore the importance of strengthening our immune systems, studies indicate that yoga contributes to improving our health since it is a combination of physical exercise, controlled breathing and meditation.

In Oman, yoga expert Dr Kavitha Ramakrishna has been encouraging people to embrace efficient yoga practices to support good health and wellbeing with COVID-19 looming large.

Dr Kavitha, who is a yoga and surya namaskar connoisseur says, "There are a number of yoga practices and breathing exercises which when practised on a regular basis helps boost immunity and proves beneficial to patients struggling with COVID-19 related complications."

She adds, "In fact, these days COVID-19 recuperation focuses on yoga and breathing techniques. Body movements and



regulated breathing by way of yoga enhances natural resistance and helps in swift recovery from COVID-19. Through poses and breath control, yoga works on relaxation, circulation, purification, and self-awareness."

By recommending a series of breathing exercises depending on the severity of symptoms, Dr Kavitha has helped many a people in Oman through online and personalised interactions.

One of Dr Kavitha's yoga students an Omani national says, "She has taught me various yoga techniques. The breathing techniques especially helped me when I was recovering from COVID-19. Breathing exercises

induces a feeling of calm — a important element of recovery and quality of life."

He adds, "The techniques strengthened my lungs and helped me deal with the uneasiness I felt."

Another Omani student says Dr Kavitha motivated her to learn yoga. She says, "As my experience goes yoga helps improve health and control stress. My advice to all is to practice yoga daily and stay healthy."

Thanking Dr Kavitha for her devoted service to promoting yoga and sun salutation (Surya namaskar) techniques, a Sri Lankan national says, "Her recently launched book, *Tamoghna* is definitely useful for yoga practitioners and will certainly help inspire others to understand how surya namaskar can change various aspects of our lives. I thank her and her book for inspiring me to learn about surya namaskar."

She added, "Practicing surya namaskar has become important specially during COVID-19 since it boosts our immunity."

Ooredoo pockets two accolades at Global Business Review Awards

In recognition of its pioneering role in the Sultanate of Oman's telecoms industry, Ooredoo has been named 'Oman's Best Telecom Company' and also scooped 'Best Employee Experience' at the Global Business Review Magazine Awards 2021.

The latest in a string of acknowledgements Ooredoo has received this year, they show the company's drive and dedication to be the operator, and employer of choice, upholding the highest standards, even in the most challenging times.

Guided by its vision to enrich people's digital lives, Ooredoo's mission to leverage the power of communications to stimulate economic and social development.

As such, it continues to provide an enhanced experience for customers and businesses across the sultanate, positioning itself as one of Oman's most



recognised and admired companies and a cornerstone of the community.

Omani Qatari Telecommunications Company SAOG (Ooredoo) was founded and registered in the Sultanate of Oman in December 2004.

Ooredoo launched its service in March 2005, originally operating under the name Nawras.

As Oman's data experience leaders, Ooredoo provides individuals and businesses with cutting edge digital products and services, so that customers can enjoy the internet.

Ooredoo generated revenues of RO285.5mn as of December 31, 2019 and is listed on the Muscat Stock Market (MSM) under the 'ORDS' ticker.

Global Business Review is an online magazine focusing on the updates and the information about emerging markets, finance, banking and technology.



Kempinski Hotel Muscat restaurants win award

Kempinski Hotel Muscat announced that Bukhara, Soi Soi and Countdown Sports Lounge have been recognised as 2021 Travellers' Choice award winners.

This achievement celebrates businesses that consistently deliver fantastic experiences to

guests from around the globe, having earned great traveler reviews on TripAdvisor over the last 12 months. As challenging as the past year was, Kempinski Muscat restaurants stood out by continuously delighting and exceeding guest expectations.

"This recognition is an incred-

ible honour and we thank our guests who trusted us and enjoyed their dining experiences with us; we thank our team for their dedication and hard work in making these awards happen by delivering the highest quality service," said Carsten Wiegandt, general manager of the hotel.

Tanweer upgrades Masirah's power grid

The Rural Areas Electricity Company 'Tanweer' - a member of Nama Group - continues its efforts to raise the electricity grid's reliability in the wilayat of Masirah in South Sharqiyah governorate with a RO186,340 project.

The new project upgrades Al Nahdha area network in Masirah by adding a 6 (MVA) transformer to the existing Dowa primary sub-station, and the related works, including the laying an 11-kilovolt underground cable to the current ring main unit (RMU) to ensure the sustainability of the electricity infrastructure.

The new enhancement was designed to reinforce the existing feeders to meet the growing demand in the area and enhance the reliability of the power supply in Masirah province, which

enjoys distinctive tourist and economic features.

Tanweer's project consists of two main components.

The first is laying a new 11kv underground cable from Dowa primary substation to the distribution substation (Al Nahdha area) with a total length of 15km.

And the second component is the supply and installation of a 6MVA transformer, 11KV PMR-1 Nos and 33kv and 11kv gantry.

Upgrading Masirah electricity grid is among the numerous projects undertaken by Tanweer to raise the efficiency and reliability of the electricity networks in its areas of operation in the sultanate to meet the increasing demand for electricity for residential, commercial and investment purposes in different governorates, the company stated.

MLS serves customers, empowers local entrepreneurs

Of all the dining experiences that people have missed during COVID-19 - no doubt one of the single most impossible experiences to recreate is a quintessential steakhouse. While you can order a braised Black Angus beef brisket burger for delivery from Marble by MLS, a just-charred strip steak does not show its best after traveling in a take out container. That's why new Arcadian Steakhouse arcadian.om, created by MLS and local entrepreneur Asaad al Breiki, has no immediate plans to offer prime beef for take out.

MLS's online ordering service allows customers to order delicious Australian and New Zealand prime, dry-aged steaks, and a range of other products at muscatlivestock.co.

"COVID-19 completely shifted our focus from business-to-business (B2B) to business-to-consumer (B2C),"



said Naveed Ahmed, managing director, MLS.

"We built a consumer-facing brand and brought our business online creating an ecommerce platform which we launched exactly a year ago," he said. "MLS has come a long way with our digital business transformation

with smarter performance. Consumers continue to look for good value but have also placed greater emphasis on corporate values and response to the pandemic. We successfully delivered over 2,000 orders during the three-day Eid al Adha lockdown safely," he said.

At Arcadian, Australian Prime, grain-fed steaks are the cornerstones of the menu, but the menu is varied and offers many options beyond the signature exemplary steaks.

A recent lunch with co-owner Nadeem Ahmed in the restaurant in Souq al Madina showed

Executive Chef Krishna Karuloka Murthy's inventiveness.

"We had an amuse-bouche of exquisite Japanese A5 Wagyu beef sushi and a starter of Wagyu Carpaccio with extra virgin olive oil. (These items are not on the menu but ask Chef Murthy to make them for you). Australian 350-day grain-fed Wagyu beef striploin served with potatoes and sautéed vegetables was excellent. With a buttery texture and intense flavour, the Wagyu was an experience to savour."

Souq al Madina is an award-winning redevelopment project in Madinat Sultan Qaboos (MQ) that is inspired by Oman's cultural heritage. The plaza features traditional souq-style architecture built upon a modern steel structure with a wooden ceiling.

For more information about why MLS is 'A Cut Above' visit <https://muscatlivestock.co/>

ISD showcases splendid performance

Indian School Darsait (ISD) is exuberant as its Grade XII students brought laurels to school with 100 per cent result in the AISSC Examination 2020-21 with an incredible all time high school average of 87.8 per cent. Braving all odds in this extraordinarily challenging year, the batch has come out with flying colours and has clinched this remarkable fete. It is indeed a magnificent culmination to an unprecedented academic year.

In the Science Stream Anushka Thumiki stood first with 99.0 per cent while Malavika Shaji bagged the second position with 98.0 per cent and Divyasri Udayakumar secured the third position with 97.8 per cent.

In the Commerce Stream, Abhirami R secured the first position with 97.4 per cent, followed by Farashil Ayath securing the second position with 97.2 per cent while Mydhili Nair secured third position with 95.8 per cent.

It is heartwarming to note that while 37.4 per cent students scored 90 per cent and above; 90.2 per cent students scored 80.0 per cent and above and 100 per cent students scored above 60 per cent aggregate marks.

The subject average for various subjects is as follows- Psychology - 94.6 per cent, English



Anushka Thumiki



Abhirami R



Malavika Shaji



Divyasri Udayakumar



Farashil Ayath



Mydhili Nair

- 93.9 per cent, Computer Science - 93.2 per cent, Chemistry- 90.2 per cent, Physics - 90 per cent, Informatics Practices - 88.6 per cent, Business Studies - 88.1 per cent, Marketing - 87.9 per cent, Mathematics - 85.9 per cent, Biology- 84.1 per cent, Economics - 83.3 per cent, Accountancy - 72.6 per cent.

Subject toppers: English (99 per cent) - Abhishek Renjith Krishnan, Akarsh Vincent, Akhila Vi-

jayan Nair, Anushka Thumiki, Arunima Suresh, Ashley Dharman, Ashoka Babu Pudusser, Divyasri Udayakumar, Farashil Ayath, Fawaz Yasin Muhammed, Malavika Shaji, Mydhili Nair, Nandika Ranjit; **Mathematics** (99 per cent) - Anushka Thumiki; **Physics** (99 per cent) - Anushka Thumiki, Divyasri Udayakumar; **Chemistry** (99 per cent) - Anushka Thumiki, Malavika Shaji; **Biology** (96 per cent) -

Aparna Anil Kumar Menon, Devanshi Sharma, Malavika Shaji; **Computer Science** (99 per cent) - Anushka Thumiki; **Psychology** (99 per cent) - Malavika Shaji, Shabiha Fathima; **Economics** (99 per cent) - Farashil Ayath, Mydhili Nair; **Business Studies** (99 per cent)- Farashil Ayath; **Accountancy** (98 per cent) - Abhirami R; **Informatics Practices** (98 per cent) - Bikhil B L; **Marketing** (99 per cent) - Farashil Ayath.

Rejuvenate your skin with Himalaya's peel-off masks

Sun Tan, clogged pores, breakouts - the summer months can be quite daunting for the skin. But let not your skincare woes dampen the spirit of your summer outdoor fun. What you need is a good face mask that treats your skin and rejuvenates it too!

Your skin does need a little extra pampering during the summer considering the harsh and extreme weather conditions it has to deal with.

While getting a professional facial done may not always be convenient or feasible, you can use a peel-off mask for basically any skin concern you may be struggling with.

Herbal experts Himalaya, has a range of peel-off masks that are infused with herbal actives to ensure your summer skin issues are kept at bay.

Himalaya's Tan Removal Orange Peel-Off Mask helps reduce skin tan from the very first use as it is an effective blend of natural skin lightening extracts of Orange Peel and Honey.

Orange Peel combined with

the peeling action helps to remove skin tan and lighten the skin tone while Honey soothes and moisturizes making the skin look healthy and radiant.

Prolonged exposure to air conditioning too can result in dry, itchy skin. Himalaya's

Moisturizing Cucumber & Almond Peel-Off Mask helps to peel away dead skin cells to reveal moisturized and bright skin.

Enriched with Cucumber that tones the skin, its antioxidants rejuvenate the skin making it soft and



supple. Almond helps to moisturize and cleanse the skin to leave behind well-cared and super soft skin.

Himalaya's Purifying Neem Peel-Off Mask is power packed with Neem and Turmeric, a tried and tested herbal combination, well-known for its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.

This peel off mask reduces oiliness, helps prevent pimples, and lightens pimple marks, leaving you with clear and healthy skin.

Conveniently packaged in 150g tubes, the range is available across all supermarkets and hypermarkets in the region and online on <https://himalayawellness.ae/>

EU sends help to Turkey as wildfires kill eight

The night sky glowed amber and the smoke-filled air was heavy and hard to breathe in stifling heat

Marmaris, Turkey - The European Union sent help to Turkey on Monday and volunteers joined firefighters in battling a week of violent blazes that have killed eight people and put pressure on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The wildfires tearing through the resort regions of Turkey's Mediterranean and Aegean coasts have destroyed huge swathes of pristine forest and forced the evacuation of panicked tourists from their hotels.

But they have also exposed Erdogan - facing an election in two years that could extend his rule into a third decade - to a new round of criticism over his seemingly sluggish and out-of-touch response.

The Turkish leader came under especially strong criticism over the weekend for tossing bags of tea to locals while touring one of the most badly-affected regions under heavy police escort. The government has also disclosed that it had no firefighting planes in its inventory and had to rely on foreign help to battle the flames.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu thanked Brussels on Monday for sending a plane from



People wait near wildfires in the rural area of Marmaris in the district of Mugla on Sunday, as firefighters battled blazes on Turkey's southern coast (AFP)

Croatia and two from Spain.

The European Union said it 'stands in full solidarity with Turkey at this very difficult time' - a message designed to show goodwill after more than a year of heated disputes.

Greece battling too

Firefighters on Monday also battled local blazes on the Greek island of Rhodes in the Aegean as well as parts of Italy and Spain.

Fanned by soaring tempera-

tures and strong winds - with experts saying that climate change increases both the frequency and intensity of such blazes - EU data show this year's fire season has been significantly more destructive than most.

Erdogan's office at first blamed the worst fires in Turkey in at least a decade on arsonists that pro-government media linked to outlawed Kurdish militants waging a deadly insurgency against the state.

The wildfires tearing through the resort regions of Turkey's Mediterranean and Aegean coasts have destroyed huge swathes of pristine forest and forced the evacuation of panicked tourists from their hotels

But that theory appeared to vanish as the number of fires grew, the toll mounted and the days wore on.

Turkey's forestry directorate said 105 fires had been recorded in 35 towns and cities across the country since Wednesday.

It said seven - most of them not far from the southern resort cities of Antalya and Marmaris - continued to burn on Monday.

An AFP team in Marmaris on the Aegean Sea saw flames simmer across the crests of forest-covered hills.

The night sky glowed amber and the smoke-filled air was heavy and hard to breathe in stifling heat of around 40°C.

Weather services warned locals of poor air quality and volunteers spent sleepless nights helping fatigued firefighters save lush forests from devastation that experts say may take generations to restore.

"This is a disaster," resident Evran Ozkan said at a makeshift assistance centre set up by the sides of a road leading to the burning hills.

"Like me, many inhabitants of Marmaris cannot put their heads on their pillow to sleep peacefully while these fires burn."

Firefighters with flashlights wrapped around their foreheads sat eating simple meals from containers and drinking bottled water that locals gathered from neighbouring towns.

Emergency rescue boats stood on standby by the Marmaris shoreline to evacuate anyone should the fires spread and the town be cut off.

"We must be responsible for our land to prevent our future from burning," said Ozkan, "But the situation is really bad now." AFP



This file photo shows cars sitting in floodwaters after heavy rains hit the city of Zhengzhou in China's central Henan province on July 21 (AFP)

Death toll in central China floods rises to 302

Beijing, China - The death toll from floods in central China last month is at least 302 with dozens of people still missing, officials said on Monday, after record downpours dumped a year's worth of rain on a city in just three days.

Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan province and the epicentre of the record flooding, was hardest hit with 292 people dead and 47 missing, the local government said at a press briefing.

Residents were trapped in subway carriages, underground car parks, and tunnels.

Images of passengers inundated by shoulder-height water went viral on Chinese social media on Line 5 of the city subway where 14 people died, while dozens of cars in a tunnel were tossed aside by the deluge, many with passengers still inside.

Scores were killed in Zhengzhou due to floods and mudslides, mayor Hou Hong told reporters while updating the overall toll. She added that 39 bodies were recovered from underground car parks and other below-ground spaces.

The disaster marked China's deadliest floods in a decade.

Heavy downpours that began on July 17 have affected over 14mn people, damaged thousands of homes, and caused economic losses in Zhengzhou estimated at 53bn yuan (US\$8.2bn approx).

The total losses across the province were almost double that amount.

Experts say freak weather events - heavy floods and punishing droughts - are increasingly common due to climate change.

Questions are turning to how China's bulging cities can better prepare for extreme weather.

As the water retreated, slaking roads in mud, residents counted the financial cost in lost businesses and property - and attempted to mark the human tragedy which took place there.

Angry response

City and provincial officials have faced calls for accountability, with the wife of one of the subway victims telling local media she would sue the metro operator for negligence.

News of the death tolls enraged China's social media users who demanded better disaster management protocols and criticised the government's response.

'Can we do a good check of Zhengzhou's drainage system?' a Zhengzhou resident wrote on Weibo.

'We're digging and building roads every day... change the leadership and do it all over again, all the money has been spent on superficial things!'

But criticism of the government's handling of the disaster was met with a stern response.

A large floral tribute at the subway in Zhengzhou was sealed off last week by authorities and foreign journalists covering the floods have been harassed online and on the ground.

AFP

Iran warns against any action over tanker attack

Tehran, Iran - Iran on Monday vowed to respond to any 'adventurism', its foreign ministry said, after the US and Britain joined Israel in blaming Tehran for a deadly tanker attack, claims it denies.

The MT Mercer Street, managed by prominent Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer, was attacked on Thursday.

A British security guard and a Romanian crew member were killed in what the United States, Britain and the vessel's operator Zodiac Maritime said appeared to be a drone strike.

Israel blamed Iran for the attack, accusations rejected by Tehran.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Sunday that Israel 'must stop such baseless accusations'.

The US and Britain on Sunday also then blamed Iran for the attack, with Washington vowing an 'appropriate response'.

Iran 'will not hesitate to pro-



The MT Mercer Street, managed by prominent Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer, was attacked on Thursday

tect its security and national interests, and will immediately and decisively respond to any possible adventurism', ministry spokesman Khatibzadeh said in a statement.

He dismissed US and Britain's statements as 'contradictory', and said 'if they have any evidence to support their baseless claims they should provide them'.

Khatibzadeh also accused them of effectively supporting 'terrorist attacks against and

sabotage of Iran's commercial ships' through their 'silence'.

There have been several recent reported attacks on Iranian ships that Tehran has linked to Israel.

In April, Tehran said its freighter Saviz was hit by an 'explosion' in the Red Sea, after media reports said Israel had targeted the ship.

The New York Times reported at the time that this was an Israeli 'retaliatory' attack.

UK summons Iranian ambassador

Britain on Monday summoned Iran's Ambassador to London in response to what it claims was a Tehran-ordered attack on the merchant vessel that killed a British and Romanian national, says a report from London.

"The Iranian ambassador to the UK, Mohsen Baharvand, was summoned today to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office... in response to the un-

lawful attack committed on MT Mercer Street on 29 July," said a British government statement.

"Iran must immediately cease actions that risk international peace and security," it added, saying that 'vessels must be allowed to navigate freely in accordance with international law'.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab on Sunday said that Britain 'believes the attack... was carried out by Iran and was deliberate, targeted and unlawful'.

Two crew members of the Japanese-owned, Liberian-flagged oil tanker, which is managed by a prominent Israeli businessman's company, were killed in what appeared to be a drone attack, the vessel's London-based operator and the US military said on Friday.

US Navy forces came to the aid of the crew in response to an emergency distress call and saw evidence of the attack, said a US military statement.

AFP

Commandos deployed as Afghan forces defend cities, including Kandahar from Taliban attacks

Kandahar, Afghanistan - Afghan forces battled on Monday to stop a first major city from falling to the Taliban following weekend offensives by the insurgents on urban centres in a sharp escalation.

Taliban fighters assaulted at least three provincial capitals overnight - Lashkar Gah, Kandahar and Herat - after a weekend of heavy fighting that saw thousands of civilians flee the advancing militants.

Fighting raged in Helmand's provincial capital Lashkar Gah, where the Taliban launched coordinated attacks on the city centre and its prison - just hours after the government announced the deployment of hundreds of commandos to the area.

Clashes have intensified since early May, with the insurgents capitalising on the final stages of the withdrawal of US-led foreign forces after almost 20 years.

As the country's security forces struggled to keep the Taliban at bay, President Ashraf Ghani blamed Washington on



An Afghan National Army commando stands guard along the road in Enjl district of Herat province on Sunday (AFP)

Monday for Afghanistan's deteriorating security.

"The reason for our current situation is that the decision was taken abruptly," Ghani told parliament, referring to the withdrawal of foreign forces.

Ghani said he had warned Washington that the withdrawal would have 'consequences'.

In southern Afghanistan, fighting continued in Lashkar

Gah overnight as Afghan forces beat back a fresh assault from the Taliban.

"Afghan forces on the ground and by airstrikes repelled the attack," the military in Helmand said.

Resident Hawa Malalai warned of a growing crisis in the city: "There is fighting, power cuts, sick people in hospital, the telecommunication networks are

down. There are no medicines and pharmacies are closed."

Helmand for years was the centrepiece of the US and British military campaign in Afghanistan - only for it to slip deeper into instability.

The vast poppy fields in the province provide the lion's share of the opium for the international heroin trade - making it a lucrative source of tax and cash for the Taliban.

The loss of Lashkar Gah would be a massive strategic and psychological blow for the government, which has pledged to defend provincial capitals at all costs after losing much of the rural countryside to the Taliban over the summer.

'Strategic blunders'

Fighting also surged in some districts of Kandahar province, the former bastion of the insurgents, and on the outskirts of its capital.

Kandahar airport came under attack overnight on Sunday, with the Taliban firing rockets that damaged the runway, leading to

the suspension of flights for several hours.

The facility is vital to maintaining the logistics and air support needed to keep the Taliban from overrunning the city, while also providing air support over large tracts of southern Afghanistan - including nearby Lashkar Gah.

In the west, hundreds of commandos were also defending Herat after days of fierce fighting.

"The threat is high in these three provinces... but we are determined to repel their attacks," Afghan security forces spokesman Ajmal Omar Shinwari told reporters on Sunday.

Kabul has repeatedly dismissed the militants' steady gains over the summer as lacking strategic value, but has largely failed to reverse their momentum.

President Ghani said authorities had worked out a six-month plan to thwart the Taliban, but acknowledged the insurgents were no longer a 'scattered and inexperienced movement'.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Speechless and sleepless: Joy as families reunite at Heathrow airport

Heathrow, UK - After over a year of travel restrictions, the arrival of American Airlines flight LY8051 to London's Heathrow Airport on Monday from New York marked a step back to normality for families separated by the Atlantic and COVID.

"It's amazing," Reece Wilson (31) told AFP as he was reunited with his family for the first time in 21 months at Heathrow's Terminal Five.

"It's one of those things that we take for granted and I am struggling to put into words," the British maritime worker based in New Orleans added, before his voice trailed off with emotion.

Following the relaxation of strict rules on foreign travel to England at 4.00am, the flight, arriving at 6.20am, was one of the first to touch down with fully vaccinated passengers allowed to avoid quarantine.

Before Reece passed through the double doors at arrivals with his Texan wife and two children, his parents Sharon and Ray Wilson, both 57, waited in expectation and relief with their other son and daughter.

"We just want to get back to normal as quickly as we can," Sharon Wilson said. "Sadly (COVID) has been awful for everybody." The grandmother explained that over the nearly two years the family had been apart, she had kept in touch through video calls.



People embrace their relatives on their arrival from the United States at Heathrow's Terminal 5, in London on Monday (AFP)

"Usually we go out there two or three times a year, especially since they got the children," she said. "I am just so happy that we can all get together again and start travelling again," Sharon Wilson added as the couple explained the US had become like a 'second home' to them before COVID.

Sausage roll

As they were reunited, tears streamed down Sharon's face and COVID mask.

With an arm around his quietly sobbing younger sister, Reece said he was looking forward to a British sausage roll before going back to the family's home in Surrey, southeast Eng-

land.

He added he was going to make sure he came back to the UK 'every opportunity I can'.

"You don't know when something's going to prevent you from doing that."

Ishak Mogul, a grandfather from Swindon, west of London, waited at the terminal for the ar-

rival of his daughter Nabila, whom he hadn't seen for three years after the pandemic postponed an already overdue trip home.

His grandchildren, who waited with him, carried colourful signs welcoming their American cousins from Charlotte, North Carolina, to the UK.

Iran hits record for new cases

Tehran, Iran - Iran's daily COVID caseload crossed 37,000 mark for the first time on Monday, the Health Ministry said, as the Islamic republic also recorded its highest daily fatalities in three months.

In the past 24 hours, Iran registered a record 37,189 positive cases, bringing the total number of infections since the start of the pandemic to 3,940,708.

The record caseload is Iran's fourth in two weeks as positive cases surge in what the authorities say is the country's 'fifth wave' of the virus.

The hardest-hit country in the Middle East also recorded 411 additional coronavirus-related deaths, taking the total death toll to 91,407, the ministry said.

Authorities have previously admitted that the official figures do not account for all cases. They blamed the recent spike in deaths and infections on lax observance of health protocols and the spread of the aggressive Delta variant.

Deputy health minister Iraj Harirchi warned on Monday that 'if the current situation continues, daily deaths can reach close to even 500'.

Iran has pinned its hopes on vaccinations to help combat the health crisis.

AFP

I am just so happy that we can all get together again and start travelling again. Sadly (COVID) has been awful for everybody. We just want to get back to normal as quickly as we can

SHARON WILSON

"We haven't slept. I probably slept one hour last night. We've been kind of waiting for her, getting everything ready," he said.

He explained that the time apart had been fraught, with his daughter separated from the family for so long.

"She has been struggling quite a lot. She had been waiting for us to go and then we couldn't... it's been a lot of stress on them," Mogul said.

As Nabila and her children emerged from the baggage hall, they were swept up in an emotional family embrace.

Mogul said he was looking forward to putting the strain of recent months behind them.

"It's been a really exciting day for us. We are looking forward to a lovely week," he said.

AFP

Troops to enforce lockdown in Sydney as Brisbane extends virus restrictions

Sydney, Australia - Troops hit Sydney's streets on Monday to help enforce its prolonged lockdown, as stay-at-home orders in Australia's third-largest city Brisbane were extended to curb a worsening outbreak.

About 300 Australian Defence Force personnel will be deployed to the country's largest city after New South Wales state police requested military help to enforce COVID-19 rules.

Authorities have been struggling to stop the spread of the highly infectious Delta variant in Sydney - and ensure that residents follow containment rules - with more than 3,600 cases recorded since mid-June.

With thousands of close contacts of COVID cases told to test and stay at home for 14 days, police said they lacked the



Residents queue up for their dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in Sydney on Monday (AFP)

manpower to make sure everyone was complying.

Troops are expected to help police deliver food parcels, conduct 'welfare door-knocks' and check people are complying with self-isolation orders.

"I want to stress up front again that we will be under control of the NSW police," said Brigadier Mick Garraway. "We are not a law enforcement agency and we will do tasks that are supportive in nature."

More than five million people in Sydney and surrounding areas are entering their sixth week of a lockdown set to run until the end of August.

Residents are only allowed to leave their homes for exercise, essential work, medical reasons, and to shop for necessities such as food.

But compliance has been patchy and police have increasingly been doling out fines to

those violating the restrictions.

The defence force said the latest deployment was in addition to the 250 military personnel already working at hotels and airports in New South Wales.

In Brisbane and several surrounding regions, millions of people will remain under lockdown until Sunday after an 'escalating' outbreak grew to 29 cases. Those stay-at-home orders had been scheduled to lift on Tuesday.

"That will make it an eight-day lockdown. And we desperately hope that that will be sufficient for our contact tracers to get into home quarantine absolutely anyone who could have been exposed to the Delta strain," acting Queensland state premier Steven Miles said.

AFP

Millions under virus lockdown as China battles Delta outbreak

Beijing, China - Millions of people were confined to their homes in China on Monday as the country tried to contain its largest coronavirus outbreak in months including seven positive tests found in Wuhan, where the virus first emerged in late 2019.

China reported 55 new locally transmitted cases on Monday as an outbreak of the fast-spreading Delta variant reached over 20 cities in more than a dozen provinces.

The Wuhan cluster came after the official daily tally was released, but it was confirmed by state media which said the infections had been traced to a train station.

"The seven were identified as migrant workers," Xinhua reported, citing COVID-19 prevention and control officials.



People queue up for COVID-19 test at a voluntary nucleic acid test clinic at Chaoyang hospital, in Beijing on Monday (AFP)

Major cities including Beijing have now tested millions of residents while cordoning off residential compounds and placing close contacts under quarantine.

Over 1.2mn residents were placed under strict lockdown for the next three days in the central city of Zhuzhou in Hunan province on Monday, as authorities roll out a citywide testing

and vaccination campaign, according to an official statement.

"The situation is still grim and complicated," the Zhuzhou government said.

Beijing had previously boasted of its success in bringing domestic cases down to virtually zero after the coronavirus first emerged in Wuhan, allowing the economy to rebound.

AFP

Get vaccinated or pay for two tests a week: Hong Kong rules for key sectors

Hong Kong, China - Hong Kong civil servants, teachers and healthcare workers must get vaccinated against the coronavirus or pay for regular testing, the city's leader announced on Monday, as her administration adopted a push into mandatory inoculations.

The finance hub is one of the few places in the world to have secured ample supplies of the coronavirus vaccine, but public take up has been lacklustre.

After six months, only 36 per cent of the city's 7.5mn residents are fully vaccinated with two jabs while 48 per cent have received one dose.

But infections have remained low as Hong Kong has been all but closed to non-residents for

most of the last 18 months and all arrivals must undergo lengthy quarantine in designated hotels.

On Monday, chief executive Carrie Lam announced a new push to raise the city's vaccination rate by making jabs compulsory for four sectors: Civil servants, healthcare workers, care home staff and school teachers. Vaccination rates vary between those sectors - from 70 per cent among civil servants to just 47 per cent among teachers.

"There is much room for improvement," Lam said.

Those who refuse vaccinations will have to be tested twice a week and pay for the cost out of their own pockets unless they have a valid medical reason not to be inoculated.

"If people are refusing to get vaccinated for reasons that are not health related, I don't think a responsible government should tolerate that," Lam said.

The city's virus measures have kept infections down with around 12,000 cases and 200 deaths.

No local infections have been recorded for over 50 days.

But the zero COVID strategy has imposed tough economic costs on the city, once a major international transport hub, and added to a sense of complacency among the public.

Swirling distrust of the government as authorities carry out a sweeping crackdown on dissent has also compounded poor vaccine take up.

Steered by Beijing, Hong Kong's government has swung authoritarian in response to huge and often violent democracy protests two years ago.

Public gatherings and protests have been banned throughout the pandemic while scores of critics have been jailed.

Wearing masks in public has already been made compulsory.

Relations with some of the sectors affected by Monday's announcement are also tense.

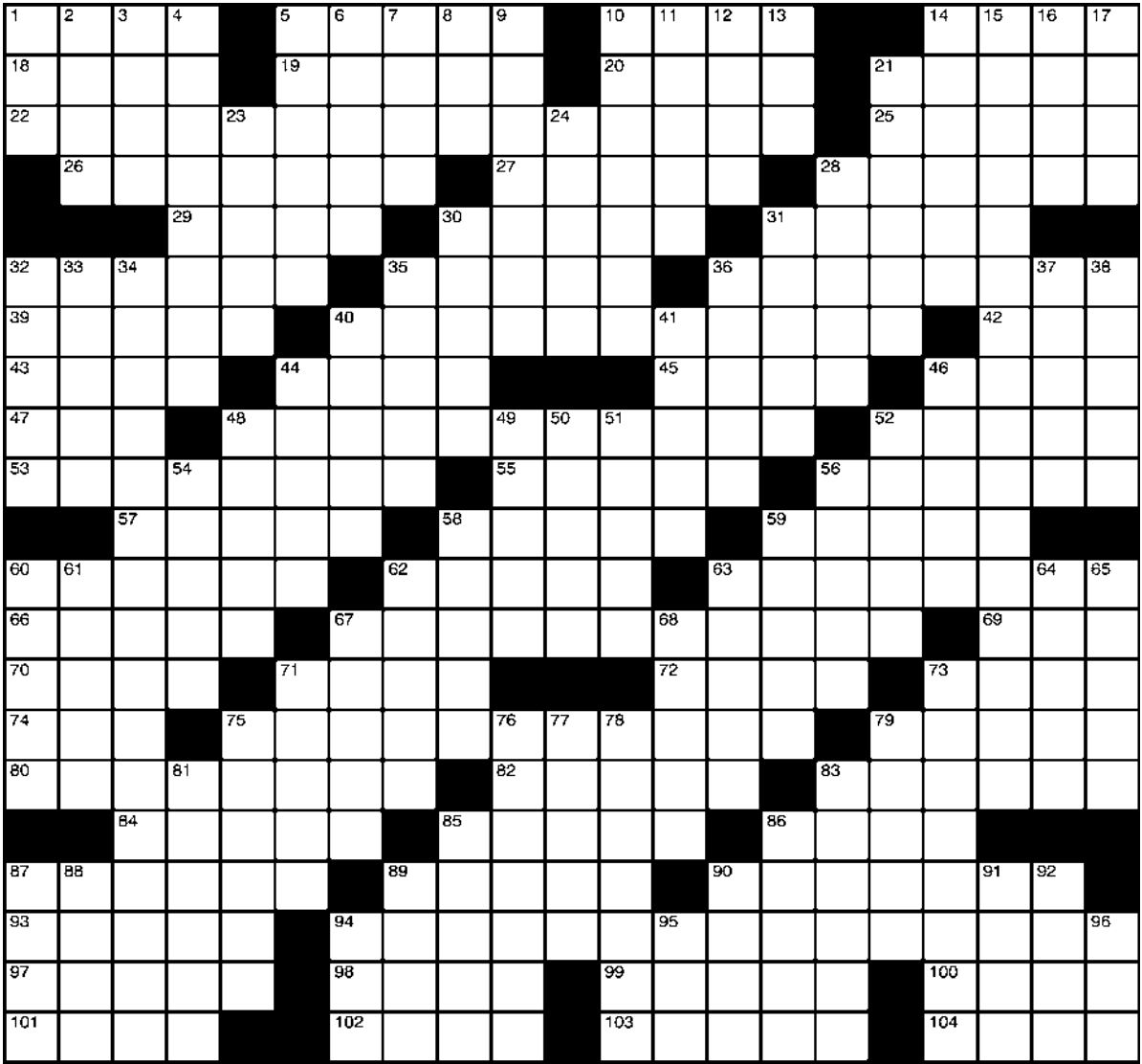
The mandatory vaccines for teachers come two days after the government said it was severing all ties with the city's largest teaching union because its members supported the democracy movement.

AFP



This file photo shows people receiving vaccines at a community centre in Hong Kong on February 23 (AFP)

DAILY CROSSWORD



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Pasha
19 Fuming
20 Alaska's gold rush city
21 Distinct
22 Scary 1965 film
25 Make happy
26 Grandstander
27 "____ville Horror"
28 Wave tops
29 Bird's abode
30 Mezzo Frederica von ____
31 Hollywood's Eastwood
32 Nehru's daughter
35 Fry lightly
36 More brazen
39 No ____!
40 Fright film, 1972
42 FDR measure
43 Part of USNA: abbr.
44 Painter Mondrian
45 Does a hatchet job
46 Telegram period
47 Former atomic control org.
48 Gory 1960 film
52 Muslim messiah
53 Holy Land wars
- 55 TV western
56 Go ____:
deteriorate
57 Nocturnal lemur
58 "The Three Musketeers" author
59 Songlike
60 Peloponnesian War winner
62 Blunder
63 Resemblance
66 Social stratification form
67 Scary slasher film: 1982
69 Where cattle loll
70 A year ____ day: legal period
71 Close up one's eyes: arch.
72 Nasty sister of 17 Down
73 Tense a muscle
74 Stephen of "The Crying Game"
75 Spooky Karloff-Lugosi film: 1934
79 "From ____ Shining..."
80 Compound good for teeth
82 Emblematic garden herbs
83 Mosque
massacre site: 1994
84 Verdon's namesakes
85 Briny-sounding
- Uruguay hub
86 Henry VIII's sixth
87 TV's Carson
89 Pianist Frankie
90 Corpse's wrappings
93 Fed the pot
94 Creepy film: 1932
97 Common thrush
98 Weather indicator
99 Nicholas Gage bestseller
100 Social reformer Jacob
101 Broadcasts
102 Helped: abbr.
103 More than satisfies
104 Good Grief!
- DOWN**

1 Branch of Buddhism
2 Writer Kingsley
3 Sorrowful sound
4 Not sweetened, as words
5 Haunting fragrance
6 "... no home like ____": Twain
7 Levant cup-holder
8 Somme summer
9 1812 naval hero
Stephen
10 Unethical kind of trading
11 Night, in Naples
12 Little ____:
Peggoty's niece
- 13 Zuider ____
14 Steve and Woody
15 "The ____": hairy 1970 film
16 Sheet of matted cotton
17 Belligerent god
21 Cherry red
23 "... ____ well it were done ...": Shak.
24 N.Y. Senator
Alfonse D' ____
28 Elegance, inelegantly
30 Artist Andrea del ____
31 Like Legree
32 Violinst Stern
33 More pleasant
34 Chiller movie: 1936
35 Crystal gazers
36 Man in the ring
37 Eat away
38 Kind of transit
40 Whitewalls
41 Loathes
44 Conductors' platforms
46 Black buck
48 Ah Sin's creator, Bret
49 One kind of robin
50 Biz expert Gary
51 Eared seal
52 Law-like folkways
54 Kinda
56 Little shavers
58 Factotem
- 59 The sky, sometimes
60 Eat voraciously
61 Jury body
62 Journalist Lucius
63 "____ Theme"
64 Tend
65 Anglo-____
67 Gary Cooper's millionaire role
68 Tropical lizard
71 Like a new penny
73 Shortest month
75 Faddish
76 Frightened
77 Rostropovich's instrument
78 Pungent toxic gases
79 Asian goat antelope
81 Possessors
83 Julie, Phil or tweed
85 Composer
Saint-____
86 Genetic characteristic
87 Morning drink: sl.
88 "The ____ love belongs ..."
89 Cartoonist
Addams, briefly
90 Printer's let stand
91 Half of MCIV
92 Jump rope
94 TN power project
95 Patty Hearst's kidnapping gp.
96 Chicago-Louisville dir.

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

 **ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19
You've tried patience, you've tried understanding and you've even tried silence. You're not sure what else to do. It's obvious that someone you've been friends with for a long time has bent the truth in a really big way -- but there is something even more serious going on that you don't know about yet. Before you giving anyone the boot for good, try talking about what's really going on.

 **LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22
No matter what is going on at work or in your public life, you still need to plan for private time now. You need some time off, you need it soon and, most likely, you need it together with someone special. Be sure your sweetheart (or crush, or friend) is just as adamant. You both have at least one favour out there that's coming due soon, so make that call or pull those strings.

 **SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
Aren't you glad you've been socialising lately? You may not realise it just yet, but someone you ran into recently -- the one you haven't been able to stop thinking about -- may end up becoming a major part of your life for a good long time. Get to know them better. though it will take a bit of time. If that doesn't convince you to give yourself more evenings off, nothing will.

 **TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20
You do love the best things in life, so much so that you just don't settle for less unless reality stares you down. You were born with a knack for finding the best, too, so life is pretty good. At the moment, though, you need to muster up some of that patience and persistence to get what you want. Fortunately, you don't mind waiting when you know it's going to be worth it.

 **VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You're feeling an extraordinarily strong craving for adrenaline, and you have a sneaking suspicion that you can't rest until you get it. Still, try your best to keep the melodrama to a minimum when you're dealing with those close to you. If you've still got the urge to stir things up, just remember all the time and energy you've put into your relationships.

 **CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Stop squirming and get moving. When you're this restless, there's usually just one reason: There's something you know you need to do, but you feel unable to do it. In this case, it may be that you want to make some big changes around the house, but they're so epic that you're not sure you can handle them alone. Make a few calls and see what happens.

 **GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21
You've been on a roll for days, and you have a gut feeling that things are only going to get better. You're probably right, so if you see an opportunity that looks good, go ahead. Just don't waste your time or energy on anything related to money. Take a chance on a relationship or a move, and rest assured that if that charming gift of gab holds up, you're sure to end up a winner.

 **LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You're due for some romantic excitement soon -- the kind that will keep you smiling for at least the next 24 hours, if not a lifetime. The individual responsible for putting a flush in your cheeks is arranging a lovely surprise for you -- something you'd never see coming. You are sure to reward them far beyond their expectations. Your gratitude really knows no bounds.

 **AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
You can't seem to shut up, even if you desperately want to -- and you thought you'd said too much yesterday! You're so ridiculously chatty, in fact, that even people who know you well may end up exchanging bewildered glances. You simply love to surprise, startle and amaze the masses, and there's nothing wrong with that. You need to find a reason for all this verbal energy.

 **CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22
You need to flee the world every now and then, and the safety and security of your home nest is exactly what you need, especially when you know you've earned it. If you're especially eager to get home today, just ask the powers that be for a few hours off and head out early. Get into your jammies and whip up some of that comfort food that fills the gap so well. All good!

 **SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
Your senses go far beyond the merely physical, though you're most likely no one's psychic friend. Still, you can sense a storm by simply taking in the air -- and that goes for all kinds of storms. Expect some serious vibes coming from a coworker today, and even though you have nothing concrete, you'll still know you were right soon enough.

 **PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You've been in a somber mood, but it finally seems to be passing. You're officially free to let loose and have some fun. The way you see it, you've earned it! Before you pull out the plastic and hire an army of clowns and minstrels, though, think about all the free or inexpensive ways there are to have fun. The best things in life may be free, but everything else is negotiable.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- 1. Which of the following is used as a lubricant?**
- a. Graphite
b. Silica
c. Iron Oxide
d. Diamond
- 2. The gases used in different types of welding would include**
- a. oxygen and hydrogen
b. oxygen, hydrogen, acetylene and nitrogen
c. oxygen, acetylene and argon
d. oxygen and acetylene
- 3. The property of a substance to absorb moisture from the air on exposure is called**
- a. osmosis
b. deliquescence
c. efflorescence
d. desiccation

Answers: 1.a 2.d 3.d

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

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

BOGGLER

D	O	N	K
D	E	U	I
S	D	E	C
C	E	L	A

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

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

ERASE	ALPACA	AGORAS	
BETTIS	REELITY	GIROLET	
OUTOFTHEMOUTH	SOFBABES		
PLANT	ENORM	LOOTS	IRA
ALARE	GRANT	TERNIS	DOER
RTD	HUMS	AGATES	BINDS
TESSERA	GOLES	ARA	
STATINI	GHOS	AMALGAM	
ASHORE	HEMAN	HEAD	BLUE
YEARS	REMIT	BITDS	SENS
TAKE	THEBITTIN	NONEXISTENT	
TLER	ABET	NINES	WANNITE
REE	ONUS	GHANA	CLOSED
EDMONDS	ORAL	HARER	
DOVE	ARITH	PARAPIET	
TAPES	AMENDS	MOSS	AVE
ALLS	CLANS	PEELS	APER
PIA	BULTI	COORAL	ARENS
INTHETWINKLING	OFANEVE		
RETIREE	GOALNIE	ARETIE	
DESERT	SORTIER	RESEIT	

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





Green Salon Collective co-founder Fry Taylor demonstrating the use of a boom to clean oil spill - AFP

UK HAIRSTYLISTS JOIN ECO-DRIVE

At an east London salon, Fry Taylor, one of the founders of the Green Salon Collective, demonstrates spare hair being used in depolluting filters. He shows how a cotton net stuffed with hair, swept across the surface of a tank of water contaminated with motor oil, instantly cleans up the pollutant.

"The hair just naturally will absorb the oil and hold on to the oil, that's the important factor," Taylor, a former hairdresser, told AFP. A kilo of hair can absorb up to eight litres (two gallons) of oil, according to experts.

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

Britain was lagging behind in recycling unwanted hair when the collective formed last summer, according to Taylor. "There are, in other countries around the world, recycling systems for hairdressing salons. In the UK and Ireland, they just don't have the infrastructure. We're not going to wait another five or 10 years for governments and councils to have these systems in place, let's just do it ourselves," he said.

Green tax

The waste produced by the hairdressing industry in the UK each year could fill 50 football stadiums, the collective said. Most rubbish, including aluminium foil, coloured tubes and 99 percent of cut hair, is sent to a landfill site, it added. Another big problem is chemical waste such as dyes and bleaches.

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

The collective is encouraging salons to save these

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



Co-founder of Green Salon Collective, Fry Taylor prepares a boom with hair collected from hairdressers to demonstrate the use of human hair to clean oil spills, at a hair salon in east London - AFP

products in a small bin, which it then collects and sends to a facility to produce electricity.

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

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

The salon, which pays a £120-fee (\$192, 140 euros) to be a member of the collective, also recycles leftover dye product. Reed charges clients a 'green tax' of one or two pounds, and has so far received a very positive response.

Super food

Composting is another green use of hair, whose rich nitrogen content makes it an ideal fertiliser supplement. Collective member Ryan Crawford, owner of a salon in the town of Milton Keynes, northwest of London, has experimented with hair on his vegetables in the garden. On a sunny day, he showed AFP two young cabbage shoots - one, surrounded by hair, intact; the other, planted without hair, skeletal.

"It's like a protective barrier around the base of the new seedlings. It's definitely worked keeping things like slugs or snails off," he said, adding that putting hair directly into the soil also helps retain moisture and acts as "a super-food for the earth," replenishing nitrogen levels.

Last year, around 600 salons in the UK and Ireland joined the collective, which gathered around 500kg of hair. It has been used to clean up waterways, an oil spill in Northern Ireland in May, and for composting.

AFP

USES OF SNIPPED HAIR



Wigs, extensions, beards

This is one of the most ancient and currently the largest of the human hair based industries, with a constantly increasing scale due to global expansion of the fashion industry. The oldest known wigs are from 1400 BC Egypt, some of which are still intact today after 3400 years. This application predominantly uses good quality, long hair of almost all colours.



Test material for hair care products

Human hair swatches are used as test materials for new formulations of shampoos, oils, conditioners, dyes, etc. The users include hair care researchers, product manufacturers, hair stylists, and trainees in both labs and salons. These tests use hair of different colours, range of curliness, and different levels of damage.



Cosmetic brushes

Scales on hair can hold cosmetic powder particles and apply it uniformly on skin or a surface. Therefore, human hair is used in making cosmetic brushes. Almost all kinds of straight hair can be used for brushes.



Pest control

Human hair is also known to address problems arising from many animals as well as insect pests by different mechanisms. Among large animals, it has been used to repel rabbits in Mauritius, rodents and wild boar in India, and deer in the USA. Typically, the hair is spread along the boundary of the fields/farms or near rat holes in the field.



Lille's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the French Champions' Trophy (Trophee des Champions) against Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Sunday (AFP)

LILLE EDGE PAST PSG IN SEASON CURTAIN RAISER

FRENCH FOOTBALL

Tel Aviv, Israel - Surprise French champions Lille beat Cup winners Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) 1-0 in France's Champions Trophy season curtain raiser in balmy Tel Aviv on Sunday.

Portuguese midfielder Keka scored the winner just before half-time with an unstoppable strike from outside the penalty area that left PSG stopper Keylor Navas no chance.

"We showed who we are and we deserve this trophy," said Keka.

"A few months after the league title we can all celebrate this new one. Work pays, and that's how we intend to continue."

Having won the previous eight

Champions Trophy matches, PSG arrived in Tel Aviv Saturday without Kylian Mbappe, Neymar, Angel di Maria as well as new star signings Spanish defender Sergio Ramos and Italian 'keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

A positive test for COVID-19 ruled out PSG midfielder Idrissa Gueye.

"I think overall, we were the better side tonight," said PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino.

"But we didn't score when we had great chances, we dominated the game.

"I think the attitude was good and the performance of the team was good."

There was a lively debut for Georginio Wijnaldum signed from Liverpool on a free transfer

PSG play an amazing technical game, but our lads were ready athletically and our collective play was tight. The team knows what it's doing

JOCELYN GOURVENNEC, LILLE COACH

and who came on with twenty minutes to play.

PSG had their chances and Mauro Icardi had the ball in the Lille goal on 76 minutes, twisting a deft clip from close range, but what would have been a peach of an equaliser was ruled off side.

Lille brought a strong side and took the game to the Parisians, who they pipped to the French title last season by a

single point in a tense run-in.

New Lille coach Jocelyn Gourvennec thanked his predecessor Christophe Galtier for his work and said the new title was partly his too.

"PSG play an amazing technical game, but our lads were ready athletically and our collective play was tight. The team knows what it's doing," he said.

The match was the first

domestic football aired in France by streaming giant Amazon.

Some 27,500 fans were on hand to see the game at Bloomfield Stadium, home of Hapoel and Maccabi Tel Aviv, on a baking evening with regular water breaks for players with the temperature at 29°C.

Israeli billionaire Sylvan Adams brought the French season-opener to Israel.

The entrepreneur who runs the cycling outfit Israel Start-Up Nation said the host nation would emerge a winner from staging the contest.

The French Ligue 1 season gets underway next weekend with PSG away at Troyes and Lille travelling to Metz.

AFP



Matthew Wade of Australia

Australia appoint Wade captain for Bangladesh T20Is

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Australia on Monday named wicket-keeper-batsman Matthew Wade captain for the five-match Twenty20 series against Bangladesh in the absence of the injured Aaron Finch.

Finch aggravated a knee injury in the lead-up to the recent T20 series in the West Indies that Australia lost 4-1, and did not travel to Bangladesh.

Wade led Australia against India in December when Finch was injured. He has also captained Victoria, Tasmania and the Hobart Hurricanes.

He said he was optimistic after Australia recovered from the T20 drubbing to beat the West Indies 2-1 in the one-day international series. "We haven't changed focus too much, coming with not a lot of cricket probably

took us a few games to get going against West Indies. I am expecting good results over here," Wade told reporters on Monday.

Wade will lead a depleted side that is missing Steve Smith, David Warner and Glenn Maxwell. Australia will also be without fast bowler Riley Meredith, who suffered a side strain and was ruled out of the series on Monday. Young Tasmanian paceman Nathan Ellis has been brought into the squad.

Batsman Ben McDermott, however, has recovered from the ankle injury he suffered having crashed into sideline advertising boards in Barbados. Australia will play five T20Is against Bangladesh at Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla national stadium starting on Tuesday behind closed doors.

AFP

India's Agarwal out of first England Test

London, UK - India opener Mayank Agarwal will miss the first Test against England after showing signs of a concussion.

Agarwal was hit on the helmet while batting during India's nets session at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on Monday.

The BCCI Medical Team assessed the 30-year-old and concussion test was conducted.

"Agarwal has shown signs of concussion and is ruled out of the opening Test against England," a BCCI statement said. "He is stable and will remain under close medical observation."

It was reported that Agarwal's India teammate Mohammed Siraj was the bowler when he was hit. The first of five Tests be-



Agarwal (C) gets treatment after getting hit on the head on Monday

tween England and India starts in Nottingham on August 4, with KL Rahul and Abhimanyu Easwaran in contention to replace Agarwal in the openers' slot.

AFP

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TOKYO 2020



MEDALS TABLE

(Only selected nations)



	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
China	29	17	16	62
USA	22	25	17	64
Japan	17	6	10	33
Australia	14	4	15	33
ROC	12	21	17	50
Great Britain	11	12	12	35
France	6	10	7	23
Germany	6	6	11	23
South Korea	6	4	9	19
Netherlands	5	7	6	18
Italy	4	9	15	28
New Zealand	4	3	4	11
Czech Republic	4	3	1	8
Canada	3	4	7	14
Switzerland	3	4	5	12
Croatia	3	2	2	7
Chinese Taipei	2	4	4	10
Brazil	2	3	5	10
Cuba	2	3	3	8
Hungary	2	2	2	6

(ROC* - Russian Olympic Committee)



China's Bao Shanji (L) hugs Zhong Tianshi after winning gold on Monday

China clinch first velodrome gold

TRACK CYCLING

Shizuoka, Japan - China clinched the first track cycling gold medal of the Tokyo Olympics in the women's team sprint on Monday and set a new world record as Germany took silver on a dramatic first day at the Izu Velodrome. Australia's Alexander Porter also suffered a nasty crash during qualifying for the men's team pursuit after his handlebars snapped off, while Germany smashed a world record in the women's event to advance as favourites for gold on Tuesday.

It meant some consolation for the German team, who were edged out in the women's team sprint final by Chinese pair Bao Shanju and Zhong Tianshi.

Bao and Zhong had earlier broken China's own world record with a time of 31.804sec in the heats and they were too quick in the final, their 31.895 just ahead

of Germany's 31.980. The Russian Olympic Committee beat the Netherlands to take bronze.

China retain their Olympic crown after winning gold in Rio and bronze in London.

Germany's Emma Hinze and Lea Sophie Friedrich pushed them close but fell short of the gold medal they won at the world championships last year.

Hinze will be a contender for more medals in the women's individual sprint and keirin later in the week while Germany will be favourites in the women's team pursuit on Tuesday.

Their quartet of Franziska Brausse, Lisa Brennauer, Lisa Klein and Mieke Kroeger smashed the world record, with their time of 4min 07.307sec almost three seconds faster than the previous mark set by Great Britain in 2016.

AFP



Canada's Jessie Fleming (L) celebrates with teammates after scoring against the US during the women's football semifinal at Ibaraki Kashima Stadium in Kashima, Japan, on Monday (AFP)

CANADA SHOCK US, TO FACE SWEDEN IN FINAL

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Kashima, Japan - Jessie Fleming scored a second-half penalty as Canada stunned four-time Olympic women's football champions the United States 1-0 on Monday to reach the final for the first time.

Fleming's nerveless 74th-minute spot-kick earned Canada a first win over their neighbours since 2001 and set up a clash with Sweden, who beat Australia 1-0 in the second semifinal.

Defeat ended the Americans' 36-match unbeaten run against Canada. The world champions will face Australia for the consolation of a bronze medal.

"It sucks, obviously, you never want to lose," said US forward

Megan Rapinoe. "You never want to lose, you never want to lose in a world championship, you never want to lose to Canada, obviously, and you never want to lose playing the way we did."

"There's 100 things we'd all want to do better. I think that's the most frustrating thing for all of us," she added. "It's a tough one to swallow."

The US and Canada combined for seven goals the last time they met at the Olympics, a memorable 4-3 semifinal win for the US after extra-time at Old Trafford in 2012.

Canada ultimately finished with bronze nine years ago and ended third at Rio 2016 as well.

"There's some veterans on the team that still feel that hurt from 2012. I'm just over the moon for that group of players," said Canada coach Bev Priestman.

"Winners win and we're going into this final to absolutely go and get a gold medal."

It wasn't until the introduction of Rapinoe, Carli Lloyd and Christen Press on the hour that the US recorded a first shot on target, a curling strike from Lloyd tipped over by Stephanie Labbe.

By that point the US had lost goalkeeper Alyssa Naehrer, the hero of their quarterfinal win over the Dutch on penalties, to injury. Naehrer, who saved a

spot-kick in normal time and two more in the shootout against the 2019 World Cup runners-up, required lengthy treatment to her right knee after landing awkwardly in the first half.

She battled on for a few minutes but was eventually replaced by Adrianna Franch.

The US had advanced to every Olympic final aside from at Rio 2016, where they lost to eventual runners-up Sweden on penalties in the last-eight. Yet they had won just once in four matches over 90 minutes in Japan, and fell behind when Canada were awarded a soft penalty following a VAR review.

Fleming tucked the penalty beyond Franch, and there would be no comeback from the Americans - Lloyd's header clipping the bar in the final minutes as their Olympics came to a tame end.

Sweden will get the chance to make amends for their loss to Germany in the 2016 final after getting the better of Australia in Yokohama.

Fridolina Rolfo, who hit the crossbar in the first half, struck the decisive goal just after the break.

Ellie Carpenter was sent off deep into stoppage time for Australia after hauling down Lina Hurtig.

AFP



Krystsina Tsimanouskaya

Poland offers humanitarian visa to Belarusian athlete

Tokyo, Japan - Poland on Monday granted a humanitarian visa to Belarusian athlete Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, who claimed her team tried to forcibly send her back to her authoritarian homeland from the Olympic Games in Japan.

The sprinter was in 'direct contact' with Polish diplomats in Tokyo, said Deputy Foreign Minister Marcin Przydacz,

adding that Warsaw would do 'whatever is necessary to help her to continue her sporting career'.

Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko has been cracking down on any form of dissent since mass protests erupted against him after an election last year.

Tsimanouskaya was one of

more than 2,000 Belarusian sports figures who signed an open letter calling for new elections and for political prisoners to be freed.

The 24-year-old athlete is expected to stay at the Polish embassy in Tokyo until her departure to Warsaw, possibly as soon as Wednesday, Poland-based dissident Pavel Latushka

wrote on Twitter on Monday.

Tsimanouskaya spent the night in a Japanese airport hotel after asking Tokyo Olympics officials to help her avoid being put on a flight back to Belarus.

She was supposed to be in the Olympic Stadium on Monday to compete in the 200m heats but was instead the subject of intense diplomatic wrangling.

AFP



Sultanate's campaign ends with a whimper

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Oman's campaign at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics ended with a whimper on Monday with shooter Hamed al Khatri failing to advance from the qualification round of the men's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the Asaka Shooting Range.

Khatri, an experienced marksman, was competing in his second successive Olympics and could record only a total of 1,148 to finish a disappointing 35th among the 39 competitors.

The score on Monday for the 36-year-old was way below his personal best score of 1,176 but better than his score recorded at

the 2016 Rio Olympics, where Khatri finished 43rd among 44 shooters after scoring a total of 1,138 (374- kneeling, 397-prone, 367-standing).

In Tokyo, Khatri scored 382 in kneeling, 392 in prone and 374 in standings positions for an average of 9.567.

Russian Olympic Committee's Sergey Kamenskiy topped the qualification round with 1,183.

The top-eight qualified for the final round with the eighth shooter, Belarus' Yury Shcherbatsevich, advancing with 1,176 score. Later in the final, China's Changhong Zhang claimed the gold with a world and Olympic record score of



Hamed al Khatri (C) in action at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics on Monday

466 to edge Kamenskiy (464.2). Serbia's Milenko Sebic won bronze with 448.2.

Speaking after later on Monday, Khatri said, "I learned a lot with my participation

today. It has boosted my confidence to compete against the best and I hope to use this experience in future for better results. My aim was to better my personal best score but with a

world-class field, it was a big challenge. I failed to achieve it but I will try to work on my weak areas. I am hopeful that I will be able to come up with much improved results in future."

Following Khatri's exit, Oman's campaign concluded without any noteworthy achievements. A total of five athletes were part of Oman's campaign in four sports - athletics, weightlifting, swimming and shooting.

All the five had failed to achieve the qualification marks for the Tokyo Games and were selected after receiving IOC's 'invitation cards'.

While debutant Amur al Khanjari, aged 20, managed to

better his personal best (combined lift of 317kg) in the 81kg weightlifting event, another debutant and Oman's flag bearer at the opening ceremony, Issa al Adawi, aged 22, bowed out in the opening round of the 100m freestyle swimming event with a time of 51.81s, far below his personal best of 51.69s.

The two sprinters had contrasting fortunes with Barakat al Harthi recording his season-best time of 10.27s in the preliminary heat but finishing sixth in the first round heat with a time of 10.31s to bow out. The 33-year-old Barakat had clocked 10.37s earlier this season during a meet in Turkey.

His personal best is 9.97s,

achieved in 2016 and is now Oman's only second three-time Olympian after participating in the London Games (2012), Rio de Janeiro (2016) and Tokyo.

The other Omani athlete to have participated in three Olympics is Asian Games gold medallist and legendary 400m athlete, Mohammed al Malki. Malki competed at the 1984, 1988 and 1992 Olympics.

The only woman sprinter at Tokyo 2020, Mazoon al Alawi, clocked 12.35s in the preliminary 100m heat to make an early exit. At the Rio Olympics, Mazoon had managed to advance to the first round but failed to repeat in Tokyo.

@ashokmuscat



TOKYO 2020

MAIDEN SEMIS SPOT FOR INDIA WOMEN



India players celebrate after defeating Australia 1-0 in their women's quarterfinal hockey match of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, at the Oi Hockey Stadium in Tokyo, on Monday

To meet Argentina in last-four, Netherlands take on holders Great Britain in other semifinal

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

Tokyo, Japan - India women produced the performance of their lives to claim a stunning 1-0 quarterfinal victory over three-time Olympic champions Australia on Monday to reach the semifinals for the first time in Olympics history. India's win secured a last-four date with Argentina on Wednesday.

Gurjit Kaur scored the only goal of the game as India, who finished 12th in the standings at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, ensured their ambition of a medal in Tokyo was kept alive and kicking.

Argentina defeated the much-fancied Germany in the

day's first quarterfinal. Goals for Agustina Albertario, Victoria Granatto and rising star Valentina Raposo earned Las Leonas a 3-0 win.

It is the fifth time that Argentina's women have reached the final four of the Olympic Games, having won a medal on each of the four previous occasions (silver - Sydney 2000, London 2012; bronze - Athens 2004, Beijing 2008).

The semifinal line-up for the women's hockey competition was completed later on Monday with the Netherlands and Great Britain joining Argentina and India. The Netherlands - the reigning World, European and

FIH Hockey Pro League champions - powered to their sixth win on the bounce in Tokyo with a 3-0 quarterfinal victory over New Zealand.

Lidewij Welten, Frederique Matla and Lauren Stam were on target as the *Oranje* confirmed a seventh successive appearance in the medal matches.

The Dutch will face Rio 2016 gold medallists Great Britain in the semifinal, after the latter sealed their place with a drama-filled shoot-out victory against Spain.

As she did against the Netherlands in that famous final in Rio de Janeiro five years ago, goalkeeper Maddie Hinch produced a sensational goalkeeping performance to save all of Spain's shoot-out attempts as Great Britain won 2-0 after the teams ended the regulation time in a 2-2 stalemate.

Highest-ever finish

India's women are now certain to at least match their highest-ever finish at an Olympic Games after recording the biggest shock of the competition.

A fourth-place at Moscow 1980, which was played in a round-robin format, was India's previous best.

India, who lost their first three matches of the competition and finished fourth in Pool A, matched runaway Pool B winners Australia throughout the first two quarters, and came closest to breaking the deadlock when captain Rani Rampal's angled deflection rattled the right post as lively Indian attackers caused real problems for the Hockeyroos' defence.

Australia certainly had their chances, with India goalkeeper Savita Punia being tested numerous times before the Asians

snatched a shock lead when Gurjit Kaur's penalty corner drag-flick found its way into the bottom right corner.

The Hockeyroos won numerous penalty corner chances during the latter stages. However, India - with goalkeeper Savita in truly inspired form - stopped them from getting the goal, matching the achievement of their men's team who also reached the final-four.

An elated India captain Rani said, "I don't know what to say because emotions are too high at the moment, and we all are very happy because it was not an easy game to win from Australia."

"But I'm super proud of my team; each one of them really worked so hard throughout the game. And we just said one thing to each other, 'Just believe in ourselves, we can do this well.'"

Agencies



Gold medallist Viktor Axelsen of Denmark celebrates on the podium

Denmark's Axelsen wins gold to break Asian stranglehold

BADMINTON

Tokyo, Japan - Denmark's Viktor Axelsen convincingly won Olympic badminton gold on Monday in Tokyo, becoming the first non-Asian man to claim the singles title since 1996.

The world No 2 beat China's defending champion Chen Long 21-15, 21-12, taking control early and never loosening his grip in a relentless performance.

"I still have to take this all in," said Axelsen, 27, who didn't lose a single game in Tokyo.

"This is the biggest achievement you can have as a badminton player and this means the world to me."

Axelsen, who won bronze at the 2016 Rio Games, followed in the footsteps of compatriot Poul-Erik Hoyer-Larsen, the Atlanta Games champion and the last winner from outside Asia.

Hoyer-Larsen, now world badminton's president, was in the arena to watch Axelsen match his achievement.

World No 6 Chen was bidding to emulate legendary Chinese player Lin Dan in retaining his Olympic title.

But Axelsen held his nerve with the prize in sight, then broke into disbelieving sobs when Chen hit the final shot long.

"When you win an Olympic final in straight games like this against Cheng Long, I think you can say that you've been at least really, really close to your best,"

added Axelsen, who can speak Chinese. World No 1 Kento Momota of Japan had exited the competition in the group stage, opening the way for the Dane.

Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting took bronze, beating gutsy Guatemalan world No 59 Kevin Cordon 21-11, 21-13.

Ginting's win gave Indonesia two medals on the final day of badminton, after Greysia Polii and Apriyani Rahayu claimed gold in the women's doubles.

It was Indonesia's first Olympic title in women's doubles, and the country's first gold medal of the Tokyo Games.

The 33-year-old veteran Polii and partner Rahayu beat China's Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan 21-19, 21-15.

The win marked an incredible turnaround for Polii, who was ready to quit the sport five years ago when her partner Nitya Krishinda Maheswari needed knee surgery following the pair's quarterfinal defeat at the Rio Games.

It also helped wipe away the bitter memory of London in 2012, when she and partner Meiliana Jauhari were thrown out for deliberately losing a group match to secure a more favourable draw in the knock-out round.

South Korea's Kim So-yeong and Kong Hee-yong won the bronze, beating compatriots Lee So-hee and Shin Seung-chan 21-10, 21-17.

AFP



DOUBLES DELIGHT!



Indonesia's Apriyani Rahayu and Indonesia's Greysia Polii (L) celebrate after winning their women's doubles badminton final at the Musashino Forest Sports Plaza in Tokyo on Monday. The title was Indonesia's first Olympic title in women's doubles and the country's first gold of the Tokyo 2020

Australian rider Hoy, 62, oldest Olympic medallist since 1968

EQUESTRIAN

Tokyo, Japan - Australian Andrew Hoy became the oldest medallist at the Olympics since 1968 when he took silver in the equestrian eventing team competition at the Tokyo Games on Monday.

It was the 62-year-old's fifth Olympic medal in total - three of them gold - but his first since Sydney 2000. Hoy was not done there, following up soon after with bronze in the eventing individual competition. Germany's Julia Krajewski won the gold in the individual event while Great Britain's Tom McEwen won a silver.

In the team competition, Great Britain team of McEwen, Laura Collett and Oliver Townend won the gold ahead of Hoy's Australia that included Kevin McNab and Shane Rose. France's trio of Nicolas Touzaint,



Australia's rider Andrew Hoy in action during the equestrian eventing team competition in Tokyo on Monday

Karim Florent Laghouag and Christopher Six picked bronze.

"I'm actually grateful people can still say how old I am because when I started in the sport I used to be really proud of being the youngest person in the

team," said Hoy, whose first Olympic medal stretches back to 1992.

"When people meet me in the village they say, 'Hey, so what do you do? Are you an official?'"

"And I say, 'Well, I'm an

athlete," said Hoy on Monday.

Hoy is still not old enough to trump Switzerland's Louis Noverraz, who won silver in sailing at age 66 at the 1968 Mexico City Games.

AFP



TOKYO 2020



New Zealand's Laurel Hubbard reacts in the women's +87kg weightlifting

Olympic history for transgender lifter; Biles set for return

Tokyo, Japan - Transgender weightlifter Laurel Hubbard of New Zealand made Olympic history on Monday as the US team confirmed gymnastics star Simone Biles is to make a dramatic return to action after her well-publicised struggles with mental health issues.

After a storm of publicity surrounding Hubbard's involvement as the first transgender woman at a Games, she failed to make a successful lift in the +87kg competition won by China's Li Wenwen.

Hubbard, 43, who was born male and competed as a man before transitioning to woman in her 30s, was allowed to compete after meeting IOC guidelines on testosterone for transgender athletes. Her presence on the biggest stage has reignited debate about transgender athletes in women's sport.

Before a low-key exit from the

arena, she made a brief statement to reporters expressing gratitude to the IOC and the International Weightlifting Federation for supporting her.

Biles takes last chance

After pulling out of her first events with the 'twisties', a disorientating mental block, Biles was included on the list of eight finalists for Tuesday's beam event, her last chance to win gold at Tokyo where she had been expected to dominate.

"We are so excited to confirm that you will see two US athletes in the balance beam final tomorrow - Suni Lee AND Simone Biles!! Can't wait to watch you both!" tweeted USA Gymnastics.

Biles came to Tokyo seeking five more gold medals to equal the Olympic all-time gymnastics record of nine, but her struggles have wrecked those plans.

AFP



HASSAN ON COURSE FOR A RARE TREBLE



Netherlands' Sifan Hassan crosses the finish line to win the gold in the women's 5,000m final on Monday (AFP)

Camacho-Quinn claims first track and field gold for Puerto Rico; Kenya's 37-year dominance in 3,000m steeplechase ends

ATHLETICS

Tokyo, Japan - Dutch runner Sifan Hassan stayed on course for a historic Olympic treble with a brilliant victory in the 5,000m on Monday as sprint hurdler Jasmine Camacho-Quinn claimed a first track and field gold for Puerto Rico.

Ethiopia-born Hassan put on a masterclass in distance running to claim gold, surging clear of the field with around 250m to go in a time of 14min 36.79sec. Kenya's Hellen Obiri took silver while Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay collected bronze. The win means Hassan's dreams of claiming three gold medals in Tokyo - the 1,500m, 5,000m and 10,000m - remain very much alive.

Monday night's stirring 5,000m victory capped a remarkable day for Hassan, who

only 12 hours before had produced an improbable comeback to advance from her opening 1,500m heat. Her treble hopes looked to be in jeopardy after she dramatically tumbled to the track after a heavy collision at the start of the last lap.

But she picked herself up and produced a devastating turn of speed over the final 350m to finish first and advance.

"It has been an amazing day," said Hassan after her 5,000m win. "When I fell down and had to jump up I felt like I was using so much energy.

"I can't believe it. I used all my energy this morning and I was kind of tired. I felt terrible afterwards. I was so tired. Without coffee I would never be Olympic champion. I needed all the caffeine!"

Hassan's victory was one of five gold medals decided on day four of the Olympic track and field competition.

Fairytale redemption

In the women's 100m hurdles, Puerto Rico celebrated the country's first ever athletics gold at the Olympics as US-born Camacho-Quinn upset world



Greece's Miltiadis Tentoglou competes in the men's long jump final

record holder Keni Harrison to win in 12.37sec. It completed a fairytale redemption story for Camacho-Quinn, who had exited the 2016 Olympics in tears when she crashed out in the semifinals after falling at the last hurdle.

"For such a small country it gives little people hope," Camacho-Quinn said. "I wanted to be a gold medalist and I manifested that. I spoke it into existence."

Harrison claimed silver in 12.52sec while Jamaica's Megan Tapper took bronze in 12.55sec.

In the men's long jump, Miltiadis Tentoglou became Greece's first gold medalist in the event after snatching victory from Cuba's Juan Miguel Echevarria with his final leap. The 23-year-old soared 8.41m to equal Echevarria's best mark but the Greek had a superior second-best jump (8.15m to 8.09m).

Moroccan gold

In the men's 3,000m steeplechase, Morocco's Soufiane el Bakkali ended Kenya's 37-year dominance of the event to take gold in 8:08.90.

Kenyan runners had won

every Olympic steeplechase gold medal since the 1984 Olympics. Lamecha Girma of Ethiopia was second in 8:10.38, while Kenya's Benjamin Kigen claimed bronze in 8:11.45.

The women's discus saw the US bag their first track and field gold of the Tokyo Games with Valarie Allman's throw of 68.98m enough to secure victory. Germany's Kristin Pudenz took silver with a throw of 66.86 while Cuba's Yaima Perez the bronze (65.72). India's Kamalpreet Kaur finished sixth (63.70) after becoming only the second Indian woman to qualify for the discus final.

In other track action on Monday, newly minted 100m champion Elaine Thompson-Herah signalled she is ready to claim the sprint double for a second straight Olympics with a personal best 21.66sec in the 200m semifinals.

In the men's 400m, defending champion and world record holder Wayde van Niekerk's reign came to an end after the South African could only finish fifth in his semifinal.

AFP



ONLY
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Omani



Puerto Rico's Jasmine Camacho-Quinn (C) wins the women's 100m hurdles final at the Olympic Stadium on Monday

Every day, all day!

