



MONDAY, 14 JUNE 2021
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43°C/31°C

NETANYAHU GOES AFTER 12-YEAR RULE
GO TO **PAGE 09** WORLD

INFECTIONS RISING DUE TO DELTA VARIANT

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman confirmed that it has recorded Indian, British and South African variants of the coronavirus.

In an interview with Oman TV, Dr Mohammed Saeed al Toubi, a medical laboratory specialist, said that laboratories in the sultanate have monitored the spread of these mutated strains of the virus.

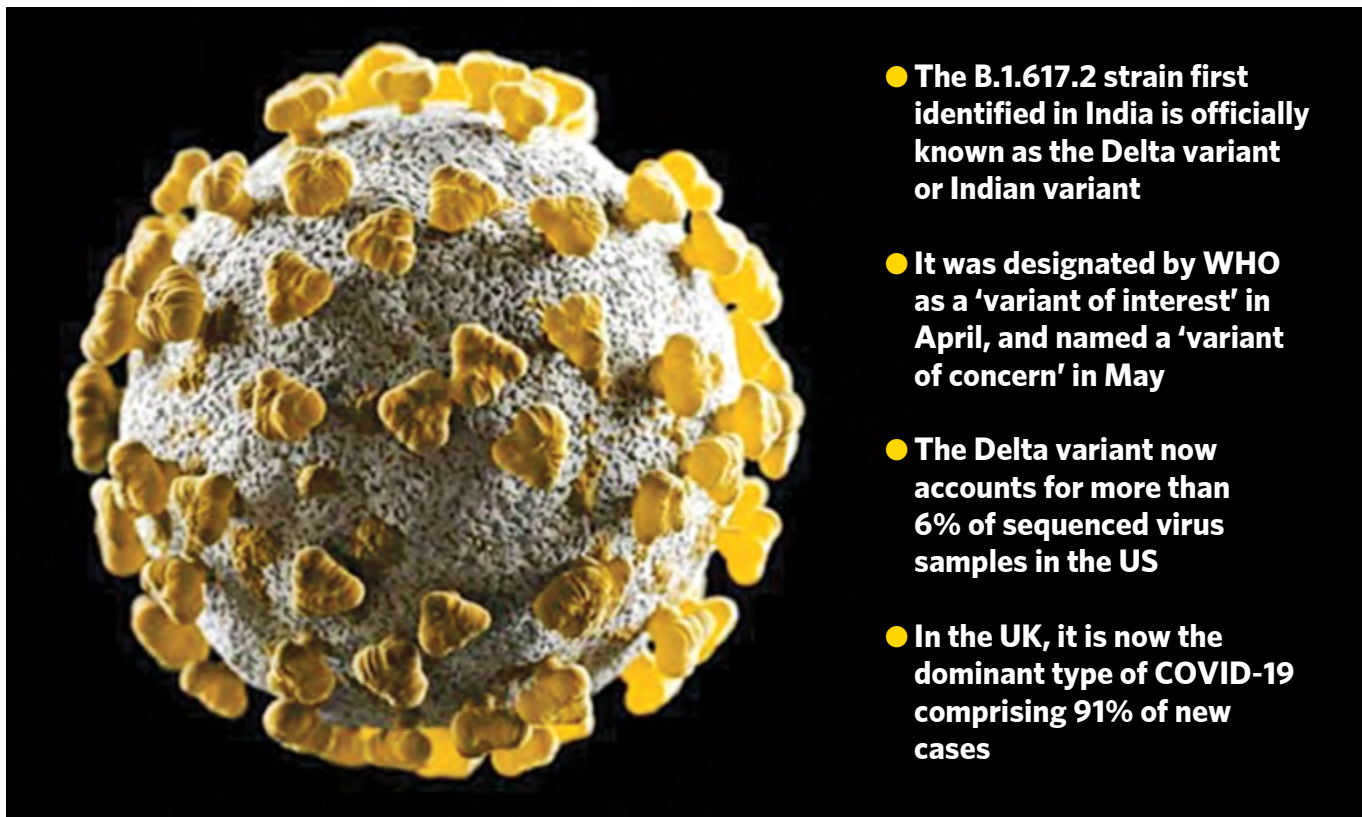
"There is an increase in infections due to the Indian strain, or the Delta variant, which spreads 60 per cent faster than the original," Dr Toubi said.

He added that Oman has conducted about 2mn tests for COVID-19 since the outbreak of the pandemic. "The sultanate conducts up to 10,000 tests daily, with a positive rate of 26 per cent."

435,090 people vaccinated

The Ministry of Health stated on Sunday that 435,090 individuals in the sultanate had been administered COVID-19 vaccines till June 12, accounting for 12 per cent of the population.

The number of people who received the first dose was 264,335, or 61 per cent of the total vaccinated, while 170,755, or 39 per cent, received both doses.



● **The B.1.617.2 strain first identified in India is officially known as the Delta variant or Indian variant**

● **It was designated by WHO as a 'variant of interest' in April, and named a 'variant of concern' in May**

● **The Delta variant now accounts for more than 6% of sequenced virus samples in the US**

● **In the UK, it is now the dominant type of COVID-19 comprising 91% of new cases**

Health system under pressure with rising cases

Muscat - Oman continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic with daily cases going up considerably again. The sultanate recorded 4,415 new cases for a three-day period over the weekend, which is highest till date. The country also recorded the highest number of deaths - 45 - for the three-day period that ended on June 12.

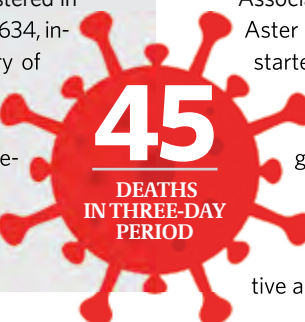
With the rise in new cases, hospitals are reeling under pressure. The sultanate currently has the highest number of inpatients and intensive care

admissions - 1,180 and 374 respectively.

"The total number of cases registered in the sultanate has now reached 234,634, including 2,513 deaths," the Ministry of Health (MoH) said in statement on Sunday. The total number of recoveries is 210,952, taking the recovery rate down to 90 per cent.

"In a 24-hour period on Sunday, 153 were admitted to hospitals."

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Health Services of Muscat Governorate, in cooperation with Oman Automobile Association (OAA) and Aster al Raffah Polyclinic, started a drive-through vaccination facility on Sunday for target groups eligible for the second dose. Employees of the state's administrative apparatus are also eli-



gible for vaccination in this facility in Seeb.

The directorate directed individuals in target groups to carry their ID and employment cards for documentation and vaccination from June 13 to June 18, 4pm to 9pm.

3,551 people still in 599 quarantine centres

As many as 3,551 individuals are still in 599 institutional quarantine centres, according to Hamoud bin Mohammed al Mundhiri, official spokesman for the Ministry of Social Development's Relief and Shelter Sector.

Speaking to Muscat Daily, Mundhiri said, "We registered 43,986 people in institutional quarantine centres in various shelters across different governorates since January 2021. There are 3,551 currently in institutional quarantine."

Asked about the likelihood of a change in travel policy for those who received two doses of vaccine, he said, "On their return to the sultanate, travellers will be subjected to institutional quarantine as well as need to furnish a negative PCR test report. There is discussion between Gulf countries to issue a certificate of exemption from these procedures, but nothing has been finalised so far."

Mercury rising, may touch 50°C again

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Many wilyats in the interior saw temperatures nearing 50°C on Sunday with the Directorate General of Meteorology predicting the heat to continue over the next couple of days.

The Met department said in a statement, "A noticeable rise in temperatures, as the maximum is expected to reach high 40s and nearing 50s over the desert areas due to northwest winds starting from Sunday, for the next two days. Northwest winds may also cause dust storms over the desert and open areas of Oman."

Data from the Met office on Sunday showed Fahud and Qarn Alam witnessing 49°C temperatures, while Ibra, Mudhaibi and Ibra saw the mercury rising to 48°C and 47°C in Adam, Bahla and Nizwa.

The department also issued an advisory for dust and sandstorm for Adam, Fahud, Jaaloni, Ibra, Sunaynah, Haima, Hamra ad Duru, Marmul, Muqshin, Al Mazyunah, Thumrait, Qarn Alam, Zamaim, Buraimi and Yanqul.

The presence of northwest winds, the Met office said, has also led to 'weak condensation of low clouds (khareef clouds) over the coasts of Dhofar'. This might result in late start of the khareef season in Dhofar which officially begins on June 21 and lasts till mid-September.

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Ministry announces new facilities for mergers and liquidation of companies

Muscat - The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) will begin on Tuesday providing a package of facilities for all commercial establishments which are interested in liquidating their commercial records for a year or merging for a period of six months.

The facilitation aims at supporting the concerned companies to correct their legal status, encouraging owners of multiple commercial records to liquidate or merge their businesses, and enhancing the government's efforts to combat the phenomenon of hidden trade.

These also aim at improving the business environment, maintaining market competitiveness, supporting small and medium enterprises' development plans, and facilitating entrepreneurs to cancel old inactive commercial registries through a package of

facilities and fee exemptions.

MoCIIP stressed that hidden trade always leads to negative economic and social consequences, contributing to inefficiency in proposing general and micro economic policies, creating disruption for the labour market and Omanisation policies, as well as causing the emergence of an unfair competitive environment that affects the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises.

MoCIIP pointed out that the number of new commercial records during the period from January 1 to June 10 reached 8,447 registries.

'The new facilities for companies interested in liquidating their commercial registries include allowing the company's liquidator to be one of the partners and authorised signatories or whoever the company deems appropriate, defining only RO50 as liquidation



(For illustrative purpose)

fees covering all the required procedures, and offering exemption from all government fines resulting from the liquidation of commercial companies.'

The liquidation request can be submitted electronically through the Invest Easy portal or through Sanad Service Centres, attaching the required documents, which

include the form of the announcement of the commencement of the liquidation procedures which will be approved by the liquidator, and a

copy of the approved minutes of the company's partners' meeting.

MoCIIP also pointed out that in accordance with the Commercial Companies Law issued by Royal Decree No 18/2019, the interested company can submit its request for the completion of liquidation procedures after six months from the date of publishing the announcement in the Official Gazette, which is considered as objection period.

The liquidation request must be attached with the liquidator's approval, the liquidator's report, which will be approved by the company's partners, along with the announcement of the end of liquidation procedures, a copy of the approved cancellation of the commercial registration by the Ministry of Labour and the Royal Oman Police, in addition to a copy of the tax clearance from the tax authority.

'As for the merging proce-

dures for the commercial registries which will be exempted from government fees and fines, while the merging request can be submitted electronically through the Invest Easy portal or through Sanad Service Centres, attaching a copy of an announcement of merging which has been published in a daily newspaper.'

The application for a company's merger approval will wait for 30 days, considered as the objection period, following which the request will be approved.

MoCIIP also pointed out that among the facilities in transferring the ownership of the commercial registry from one owner to another and transferring the residency of expatriate labourers to the same registry of the new registry's holder or partner, only RO200 needs to be paid per the commercial registry regardless of the number of labours, compared to RO316 paid previously.



H E Nu'amani receives Saudi envoy

Muscat - H E Gen Sultan Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Sunday H E Abdullah Saud al Anzi, appointed Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the sultanate.

H E Gen Nu'amani welcomed the ambassador, who expressed his appreciation for the sultanate's efforts in the region. He underscored the strong relations binding Oman and Saudi Arabia. The meeting touched on sev-

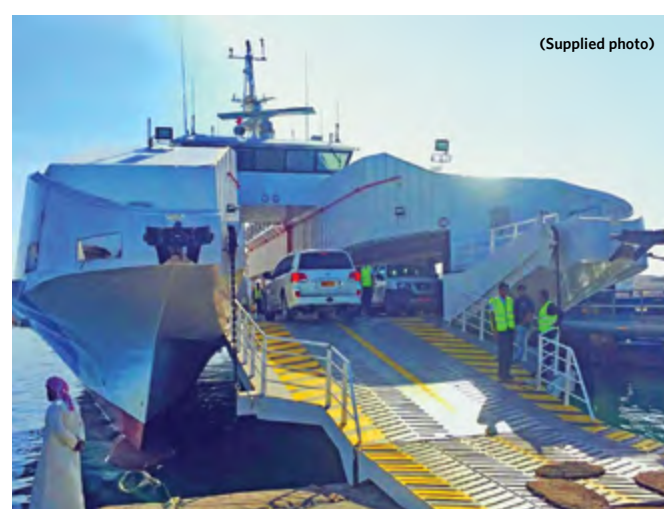
eral topics of common interest and the current developments in the region. It also discussed means of enhancing joint cooperation in respect to regional and international issues. ONA

Mwasalat keeps Masirah Island connected with ferry service

Muscat - Mwasalat Ferries service between Masirah Island and Shannah Port has contributed greatly to facilitating the movement of passengers between the island and the mainland, and enhancing economic activities and services.

It has also made continuous efforts to transport passengers, cargo and vehicles to and from Masirah Island. It has transported more than 210,000 passengers and 65,000 vehicles and trucks through which more than 9,100 tonnes of cargo were transported since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic until the end of the first quarter of 2021.

'Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic to public transport services in the sultanate, Mwasalat was keen to sustain its operations on the Shannah-Masirah route, and operate more than 2,800 trips, while emphasising the provision of its services under a safe and healthy environment by implementing a number of preventive and precautionary measures, including compliance with the restrictions set by the concerned authorities to confront the pandemic,'



(Supplied photo)

Mwasalat has transported more than 210,000 passengers and 65,000 vehicles and trucks through which over 9,100 tonnes of cargo were transported since the beginning of the pandemic

Mwasalat said.

Ferries services were also characterised to meet the needs of the island's residents by responding to various circumstances and challenges, by reducing the capacity of each trip up to 50 per cent in a way that ensures social distancing between passengers and reducing

movement inside the cabin during trips, in addition to implement a number of precautionary measures, including temperature check for all passengers, sterilisation measures in the cabin before and after each trip, in addition to setting trip departure dates according to the needs of people and vital sectors on the

island.

'This growing demand for the ferries service to Masirah reflects the effectiveness and efficiency of the ferry fleet, and its achievement of many social, tourism and economic roles, by providing multiple, simplified and new travel options for travellers according to the highest standards of safety and hospitality, and marketing them on all media platforms, believing that success is linked to customer satisfaction.'

In order to enhance its efforts to provide integrated public transport services for citizens, residents and tourists in the land and sea sectors, Mwasalat launched the Muscat-Shannah-Masirah route in April 2018 by using buses from Muscat to Shannah, then taking ferries to cross to Masirah Island, in addition to integration of customer service outlets for bus and ferry services in various governorates.

National Ferries Company started operating the Shannah-Masirah route in August 2014 using its new ferries *Jawharat Masirah* and *Shannah*, which constituted a qualitative leap in the development of local maritime transport.

Tender Announcement



The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Type of work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
5/2021/PEIE/HQ-5	Construction Of Roads And Associated Infrastructure & Utilities Works At Mahas Industrial City, Khasab, Musandam, Sultanate Of Oman	28-06-2021	22-07-2021	Construction	Excellent	3000

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.
2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@ita.gov.om and +968 24166670, 24166409 Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

No Document can be accepted as Manual except Original Tender Bond. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system and original needs to be deposited before Bid Opening.

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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Municipality closes cafe for violating COVID-19 decisions

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality announced on Sunday that it closed Huqqa Restaurant and Cafe in Al Mouj Muscat for violating the decisions of the Supreme Committee.

The municipality said, 'Inspection teams of the municipality have taken legal measures against the Huqqa Restaurant and Cafe for violating the decisions of the Supreme Committee dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.'

The municipality calls on all commercial establishments to abide by the decisions of the Supreme Committee and follow precautionary measures.



(Supplied photo)

Tanker carrying oxygen overturns in Bausher killing driver: CDAA

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A driver died after a tanker carrying oxygen overturned in Bausher on Sunday, according to

the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA).

'Specialised teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority dealing with accidents of hazardous materials in Muscat

responded to a report of oxygen leak from a tanker transporting oxygen at Bausher. The teams managed to contain the leakage. The accident resulted in the death of the tanker driver.'

Ministry of Labour launches engineering accreditation system

Our Correspondent
Muscat

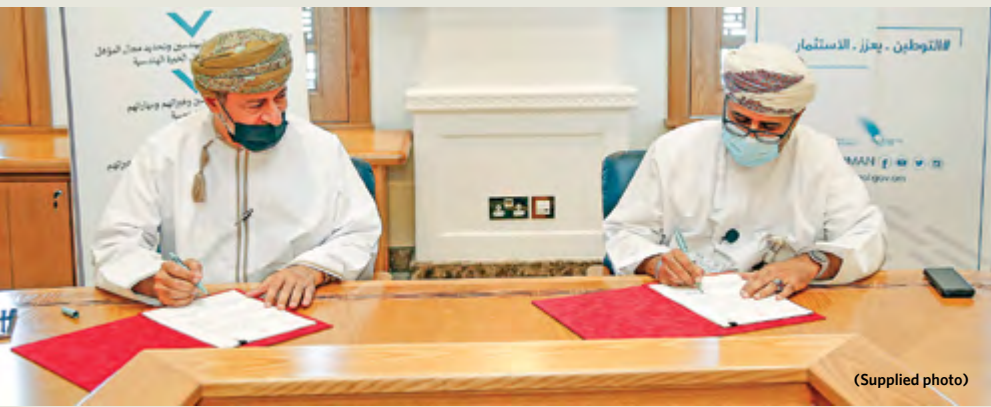
The Sultanate of Oman has launched its own accreditation system for the engineers, which the Ministry of Labour (MoL) believes would bolster the Omanisation process which is in full swing in various fields.

The MoL signed an agreement with the Oman Society of Engineers on Sunday, a state-

ment from the ministry said.

'The cooperation programme includes three parts - regulating the practice of engineering work in the sultanate, raising the rates of Omanisation in the engineering profession, and empowering the Omani engineers by developing their competitive capabilities,' the MoL said.

The Oman Society of Engineers will issue the engineering professional accreditation.



(Supplied photo)

It will review the certificates of engineering qualifications and engineering experience, evaluate the capabilities, expertise and technical and personal skills of engineers and ensure that there are no court rulings on applicant engineers.

'The system aims to issue the appropriate permits for engineers to engage in engineering professions according to the requirements of the degrees. The

system will not allow any engineer to practise the profession until after obtaining the engineering professional accreditation. The system also aims to create a unified national registry for engineers documenting their qualification level and their professional experience and updates,' the MoL said. The system will protect society from wrong practices and support career substitution policies.

Maskni: Ministry taps into charity team's know-how

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a move to seek community cooperation to meet families' needs for housing, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning held a meeting with Nizwa Charity Team on Sunday.

Yaqoub Rashid al Shuraiqi, a member of the team, said the ministry invited them to present the team's experience in launching an initiative called 'Maskni' (My house).

The meeting was attended by H E Eng Hamad bin Ali bin Sulaiman al Nazwani, Undersecretary for Housing in the ministry, the team leader and committee officials.

"The meeting aimed to identify the mechanism for selecting families that deserve to benefit from the initiative, the method of collecting funds to build those



(Supplied photo)

houses, and the challenges we faced in building them," Shuraiqi said.

"The meeting is a good step

for cooperation between volunteer teams and government agencies. The meeting motivated us to work more and continue to

help needy families and build and maintain houses for them," he added.

Talking about Maskni, he said,

"We launched the initiative in the first week of Ramadan. The initiative saw the collection of RO90,000 within 24 hours to build three houses. So far, we have built six. We also work on the maintenance work."

The team also sponsors 280 orphans, looking after their nutritional needs, and help 134 needy families, he said.

Started in 2018, the team conducts charity works with the help of 120 volunteers.

The team provided assistance to needy families to the tune of RO85,116 during Ramadan.

"As part of our community initiative in the summer, we launched a new package of assistance amounting to RO42,176, which included the purchase of air conditioners and refrigerators, and the payment of electricity and water bills," Shuraiqi said.



(File photo)

Churches, temples open after 2 months

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Temples and churches in Muscat reopened on Saturday and Sunday, respectively, following permission by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

Announcing the opening, the authorities of the Shri Krishna Temple in Ruwi and Shri Shiva Temple in Muttrah listed guidelines as per instructions from the ministry.

The guidelines include entry to only a limited number of faithfuls, besides the standard preventive measures of temperature check before entry, sanitising hands, wearing face masks and maintaining set social distance. The guidelines disallowed prostration in front of idols, touching idols and distribution of prasad.

Circulars issued by the Sts Peter and Paul Catholic Church Ruwi and Holy Spirit Catholic Church Ghala both announced 'limited resumption of Holy Masses' starting June 13.

Entry is strictly limited to those who register in advance to attend specific services. 'A special online link created on our website (<https://holyspiritchurchoman.org>) allows parishioners to register their details. Every individual of ages 12 to 65 years is required to register online to gain

The new guidelines say only a limited number of faithfuls would be allowed after following all set protocols to prevent spread

entry into the church,' the Holy Spirit Catholic Church Ghala announced.

Registration for services in Sts Peter and Paul Catholic Church Ruwi can be done at <https://massregistration.ruwiparish.org/loginmno.php>

The church in Ghala called on faithfuls to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to service time, while Sts Peter and Paul Catholic Church Ruwi asked parishioners to arrive 30 minutes early.

Both churches prohibited touching of images of saints, Bibles and hymn books. Additionally, there will be no choir and air conditioning during services, and footwear will not be allowed inside the church.

Both churches will follow the standard health protocols.

Churches and temples have been shut since April 3, 2021, following a decision to tackle a spike in COVID-19 infections.

MOHSIN HAIDER DARWISH PARTICIPATES IN MUSCAT DAILY'S RECYCLING DRIVE



Areej Mohsin Darwish, chairperson of the Automotive, Construction Equipment & Renewable Energy (ACERE) cluster of MHD LLC, and the MHD team, recently participated in Muscat Daily's recycling campaign to spread environmental awareness. As part of the initiative, MHD has placed paper recycling boxes at its offices to raise awareness and encourage recycling activities in Oman. Muscat Daily has so far joined forces with over 560 organisations, including ministries, corporate firms, schools and colleges for the recycling campaign. There are co-branded recycling boxes available from Muscat Daily to be prominently displayed at reception areas. Muscat Daily's recycling team empties the boxes placed at these locations on a regular basis. As part of Apex Media's corporate social responsibility, the paper is collected and recycled for free. (Supplied photo)

Oman, France sign MoU in military cooperation

Muscat - Oman and France signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of military cooperation between the two countries on Sunday.

The MoU aims to regulate aspects of military cooperation between the sultanate and France in a way that enhances the existing cooperation relations and

serves the joint interest.

The MoU was signed at the Ministry of Defence's headquarters in Al Murtafa'a Camp by Dr Mohammed Nasser al Zaabi, secretary general at the Ministry of Defence, and H E Renaud Salins, Ambassador of the French Republic to the sultanate. ONA

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YOUR SAY

NOBODY IS SAFE UNTIL EVERYONE IS VACCINATED

How can fears and rumours about vaccines be put to rest so that vaccine acceptance increases in Oman?



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Md Moniruzzaman
Teacher

The government can arrange an awareness camp to let people know about the planning and strategy of how the country is conducting its vaccination programme. It can eliminate all fears and rumours using social media platforms to raise awareness of citizens and residents about vaccines.



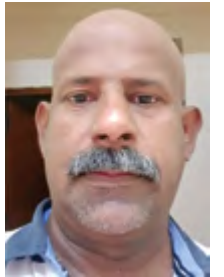
Govind Arjan
Communications and media consultant

Effective communication is key to dispel scepticism, counter misinformation, build trust and help people make informed decisions. Celebrities, sports personalities, social media influencers, business leaders, doctors, etc should be roped in as 'vaccine ambassadors' to spread the message that vaccines are safe, effective and necessary.



Ruskeen S
Sales manager

Most fears have been allayed but fake doctors and WhatsApp specialists continue to spread rumours through messages and forwards. People must be made to understand that vaccines reduce the complications of COVID-19. Vaccination saves lives.



Maanoj Agarwala
Employed

Fears and rumours about vaccines can only be put to rest by asking vaccinated people to share their positive experience and creating public awareness through all media channels including electronic, print and social media.



Ramasekar Madurai Venkat
Engineer

Be an example and start spreading a message about the benefit of vaccines. Speak with all, backed with facts and figures of infection and hospitalisation among vaccinated and non-vaccinated people, so that they are convinced that vaccination is for their safety and others around them.



Mohan Anandan
Banking sector employee

Images of prominent public personalities receiving the vaccine must be widely published in the media to instil confidence and combat vaccine hesitancy. Besides, the message must be made very clear that nobody is safe until everyone is vaccinated and that to achieve herd immunity at least 70 per cent of the population must be vaccinated.



Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

Elderly and senior citizens in every family should shoulder the responsibility of ensuring all members get vaccinated. All drugs have side effects and limitations; we have to think of COVID-19 vaccines as life-saving drugs.



Arvind Toprani
Businessman

Research scientists around the world have data to prove that vaccines help avoid hospitalisation for COVID-19. There is nothing to fear except COVID-19 which with every new variant gets harder to beat. Getting vaccinated is the best way to defeat COVID-19.



Jayatee Choudhury
Student

In today's fear-filled, rumour-driven environment, the importance of awareness has increased manifold. Local statistics can be used to convince people about the safety of vaccines. Respected members of society and heads of reputed institutions can contribute to the same and set an example for society.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

How can the government speed up the COVID-19 vaccination campaign? Would it be a good idea to extend vaccination hours to around the clock to speed up the process?

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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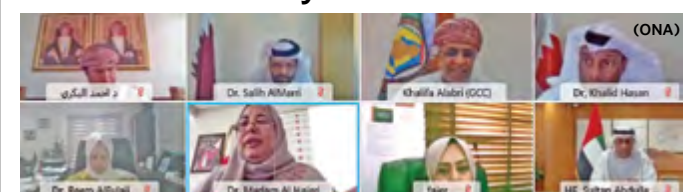
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MUSCAT DAILY

Oman participates in meeting of GCC food safety committee



Muscat - The sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, participated in the fifth meeting of the GCC

Preparatory Committee on Food Safety and Quality on Sunday. Oman was represented by H E Dr Ahmed al Bakri, Undersecretary for Agriculture in the ministry.

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*Rates as on June 13
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Trip to space with Jeff Bezos sells for \$28mn

A mystery bidder paid US\$28mn at auction for a seat alongside Jeff Bezos on board the first crewed spaceflight of the billionaire's company Blue Origin next month.

The Amazon founder revealed last week that both he and his brother Mark would take seats on board the company's New Shepard launch vehicle on July 20, to fly to the edge of space and back.

The Bezos brothers will be joined by the winner of Saturday's charity auction, whose identity remains unknown, and by a fourth, as yet unnamed space tourist.

'The name of the auction winner will be released in the weeks following the auction's conclusion,' tweeted Blue Origin following the sale.

'Then, the fourth and final crew member will be announced - stay tuned,' Blue Origin said.

Relaxation of restrictions, higher oil price trigger economic rebound

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Business confidence in the GCC countries, including Oman, has strengthened in recent months as the COVID-19 restrictions eased, vaccination rollouts progressed and oil price reached pre-pandemic levels, according to a new report released on Sunday.

The latest Economic Insights report for the Middle East, compiled by Oxford Economics, has found that the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions are triggering a strong rebound in the region's economies. However, while there are positive signs for recovery in the second half of this year and beyond, the economies still remain far from their pre-pandemic levels.

The strong Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) readings, the report said, indicate growth accelerating in the coming months, boosted by rapid vaccine rollouts that will help domestic activity move back towards normality.

The overall GCC GDP will grow by 2.1 per cent this year, after a 5 per cent contraction seen in 2020, the report commissioned by ICAEW said.

'The region's economies are in a good position to capitalise on the surge of travel demand when



the rest of the world opens up.'

After plunging into a recession triggered by the twin-shock of the COVID-19 pandemic and lower oil prices last year, Oman is expected to see a rebound in economic growth this year. The Ministry of Economy earlier this year predicted the sultanate's real GDP to grow by 2.3 per cent in 2021.

The World Bank recently said Oman's economy is expected to grow by 2.5 per cent in 2021 and bounce back strongly next year with 6.5 per cent growth, the fastest growth forecast among

the GCC countries.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) too recently said that Oman's real GDP will grow by 1.8 per cent this year and 7.4 per cent in 2022, the highest growth forecast for any GCC country.

Scott Livermore, ICAEW economic advisor and chief Economist at Oxford Economics, said, "The rise in the oil price has boosted revenue prospects for GCC producers, which derive 40-90 per cent of total fiscal income from oil. Higher oil revenue gives governments more scope to support post-pandemic

recoveries without undermining efforts aimed at improving medium-term fiscal sustainability." According to the Oxford Economics and ICAEW report, the wider Middle East region's GDP will grow by 2.4 per cent this year, a similar rate to the region's average growth trajectory in the last decade, and an improvement from the 4.4 per cent it shrank by in 2020.

Although global COVID-19 cases are still high and new outbreaks are being reported daily, the pandemic looks to be under control in China, Europe and the

US. And with the summer tourist season approaching, oil demand is increasing, the report said.

'This, alongside ongoing supply reductions from OPEC+ producers, has stabilised the oil price at above US\$65 per barrel, and US\$64.4 for Brent crude in 2021, up from US\$62.'

However, given the continuously fragile demand outlook and plentiful scope for stronger supply growth, the upside for oil prices will remain limited through 2022 and 2023 and the Oxford Economics report forecasts Brent to average US\$61

per barrel during that period.

Michael Armstrong, FCA and ICAEW's regional director for the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, said, "The outlook for most Middle Eastern economies looks positive this quarter, but keeping coronavirus levels low will be essential to ensure economies can return to growth. Governments across the region must keep developing sectors and industries that foster innovation, and continue implementing reforms to diversify economies and accelerate them into the post-Covid era."

Saudi sovereign fund to invest in Investcorp-Aberdeen fund

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Public Investment Fund (PIF), which is Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, has committed to become an anchor investor in a new GCC infrastructure fund recently created by Investcorp and Aberdeen Standard Investments.

Investcorp and Aberdeen Standard Investments have formed a joint venture to launch Aberdeen Standard Investcorp Infrastructure Partners' (ASIIP), a new infrastructure fund which will invest in sustainable infrastructure projects in the GCC region.

In a press statement, Investcorp announced that ASIIP has received a capital commitment from the PIF for up to 20 per cent of the total size of the fund in advance of its anticipated first clos-



Hazem Ben-Gacem

ing. The fund has also received board approval from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to commit US\$90mn. It is expected that the fund will be joined by other global institutional investors, including: pension funds, insurance companies, endowments, family offices and private clients, Investcorp said.

The PIF is the engine driving the economic transformation of Saudi Arabia as part of its Vision 2030 objectives.

This investment is in line with PIF's mission of building strategic economic partnerships, unlocking promising economic opportunities, and deploying patient capital to support sectors with significant long term growth potential.

ASIIP aims to participate in the economic transformation in the GCC and the wider Middle East and North Africa region by investing in sustainable core infrastructure projects.

With environmental and social governance (ESG) and United Nations sustainable development goals at the heart of its philosophy, ASIIP's mission is to deliver solutions in healthcare, education, water, mobility and digital infrastructure that will

have a positive impact on communities and future generations.

Hazem Ben-Gacem, co-chief executive officer of Investcorp, said, "Today's uncertain and challenging economic environment has created a gap between the need to develop or upgrade critical infrastructure and the resources available for such projects. For nearly 40 years, Investcorp has served as a trusted partner to our clients and communities in pursuit of our vision to enrich the lives of future generations."

"We believe that investing in infrastructure is critical for supporting long-term economic growth and we are proud that our joint venture with Aberdeen Standard Investments has secured this commitment from PIF and will now look to drive sustainable value for all stakeholders."

Omantel tests enhanced 5G

Muscat - Omantel on Sunday announced that it has successfully tested the 5G High Band at its headquarters in Madinat al Irfan under the supervision of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA).

The 5G test using the mmWave, which successfully concluded recently in association with Ericsson, demonstrated enhanced network capabilities with mmWave bandwidth more than multiple times higher than existing 5G speed.

The trial demonstrated Omantel's ability to deliver multi-gigabit speeds to end-users with eight cell carrier aggregation functionalities using Ericsson's state-of-the-art street macro mmWave solution and advanced 5G software features. The trial used a carrier bandwidth of 800MHz at 26GHz, Omantel said in a press release.

Omantel's successful 5G test paves the way for enhanced 5G capabilities for consumers and



businesses across the sultanate. The next step may see 5G greatly enhanced user experience at mobile broadband hotspots when using the fixed and mobile internet especially in crowded spaces such as during festivals and events. The technology will also enable low-latency industry applications like Augmented Reality (AR), its applications, robots and other future technologies.

Dr Ali al Hashim, general manager, Network, Omantel, said, "mmWave 5G technology

is a cornerstone of upcoming 5G networks, allowing for faster data speeds and much higher bandwidth than ever before. The success of 5G test with Ericsson paves the way for many more applications as 5G has opened up possibilities of newer, smarter solutions in every area of daily life and business. Omantel is happy to have partnered with Ericsson for this and look forward to exciting new applications as Oman Vision 2040 opens a new chapter in Oman's ICT landscape."

Tax or no tax, UAE aims to remain magnet for investors

Dubai, UAE - Tax advantages paired with a life of luxury have long drawn foreigners and multinationals to the UAE, which is aiming to remain attractive whether or not it signs up to a global tax initiative.

The Group of Seven (G7) wealthy powers this month endorsed an 'unprecedented' agreement on a global minimum corporate tax targeting major companies seen as not paying enough, especially tech giants. The objective is a minimum tax of at least 15 per cent.

While the agreement is the first step in a long process before it can become a reality, caught in the crosshairs are tax havens that attract firms such as Amazon, Apple, Google and Facebook.

The UAE entered the world's top 10 tax havens for the first time in March, according to the

Tax Justice Network.

Modestly called 'jurisdictions with no or insignificant taxes' by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the havens include the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, Guernsey, Jersey, the UAE and many others. Both the UAE capital Abu Dhabi and free-wheeling Dubai, the biggest draw for investors out of the UAE's seven emirates, are home to thousands of companies that have set up regional offices there.

UAE officials have yet to issue a statement on the G7 agreement and did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

But this week Dubai announced plans to reduce in the coming months government procedures as 'part of efforts to reduce the cost of doing business and further boost economic



A restaurant cruiser sails by the Dubai Marina Beach in Dubai, UAE on Wednesday (AFP)

growth in the emirate'.

'Consolidate and simplify'

Hard-hit by the coronavirus pandemic, the UAE has already launched a series of reforms, including to allow foreigners full

ownership of businesses, whereas before it was capped at 49 per cent unless based in certain free trade zones.

Economy Minister Abdulla bin Touq al Marri said the changes were a bid to boost the competitive edge of the country, cur-

rently 16th in the World Bank's ease of doing business rankings.

The UAE, which relies on its image as an international hub, "will be keen to be seen as part of the global system rather than a tax haven," said Scott Livermore, chief economist of Oxford

Economics Middle East.

"The upsides of remaining on the outside of the agreement is limited, especially if approved by the G20 and OECD countries," the Dubai-based economist told AFP. According to Livermore, even if businesses in the country see an increase in tax burden, the government was likely to 'consolidate and simplify fees', as is the case in Luxembourg and Malta, where multiple exemptions lower the final bill considerably. "Already the authorities have realised the importance of broader business and social environment for attracting and retaining foreign investment and talent," he said.

"This has been demonstrated by the raft of visa and business reforms announced over the past year." Many foreign executives are attracted to the lifestyle in Abu Dhabi and especially Dubai.

The two emirates are air hubs and offer a variety of luxury services that depend on a migrant labour force largely from South Asian countries.

The UAE's low tax regime has been a 'major carrot to dangle' before investors from abroad, said Robert Mogielnicki, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. "Emirati policymakers will have to get creative and consider restructuring various business-related fees," he told AFP.

"But even with the envisioned impact of a minimum global corporate tax, the UAE will remain a relatively low-tax environment." And regardless of new taxes introduced in Gulf countries in the past years amid an economic slump due to a drop in oil prices, Mogielnicki believes the Emirates will remain competitive.

AFP

MSX: The bullish trend continues

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Continuing its upward trend the benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Sunday rose 0.26 per cent to close at 4,040.49 points. The MSX30 Index has been witnessing continuous increases since the beginning of this month amid positive economic outlook and rising oil prices.

The gains in main index on Sunday were supported by all sectoral indices led by Industrial Index which rose 0.45 per cent. Financial Index and Services Index increased 0.31 per cent and 0.35 per cent, respectively.

MSX Sharia Index increased 0.35 per cent to close at 5569.36 points.

Trading activity decreased on Sunday as volumes dropped 86 per cent at 13.66mn securities compared with 96.1mn securities traded on Thursday. Market turnover fell 16.6 per cent to



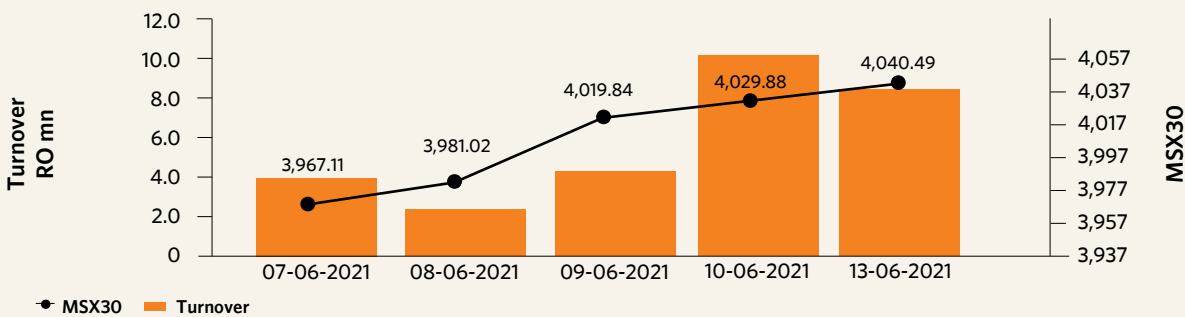
RO9.75mn compared with RO11.7mn in the previous trading session.

Market breadth at the MSX remained positive with 20 advancing stocks to nine decliners. As many as 22 traded stocks remained flat for the day.

Top gainers were Global Investment Holding (9.62 per cent), Gulf Interna-

tional Chemicals (7.58 per cent), Al Omani Financial Services (2.36 per cent) and Al Jazeera Services (2.33 per cent). Top losers were Muscat Gases (-5.24 per cent), Al Batinah Power (-3.7 per cent), Al Suwadi Power (-3.57 per cent) and Oman & Emirates Investment Holding (-1.61 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



President Biden drops plan to ban Chinese-owned apps TikTok, WeChat

Washington, US – US President Joe Biden has revoked executive orders from his predecessor Donald Trump seeking to ban Chinese-owned apps TikTok and WeChat from US markets on national security concerns, a move receiving a cautious welcome from Beijing. Trump had claimed the apps posed national security risks and sought to force a sale to US investors of TikTok, which is owned by China-based ByteDance and remains one of the world's most popular social media apps.

A statement Wednesday said that instead of banning WeChat and TikTok, the Biden administration would carry out a 'criteria-based decision framework and rigorous, evidence-based analysis to address the risks' from internet applications controlled by foreign entities.

WeChat, part of Chinese tech giant Tencent, is a 'super app' which includes social networking, messaging, e-commerce and more.

Biden issued a new executive order calling for a four-month re-



In this file photo the logo of TikTok is seen on the side of the company's office in Los Angeles, US (AFP)

view of 'the continuing effort of foreign adversaries to steal or otherwise obtain United States persons' data.'

Trump's claims had prompted a series of legal challenges which delayed the efforts to ban or force the sale of the applications – further heightening tensions between Washington and Beijing. The two companies did not respond to a request for comment.

University of Texas law professor Bobby Chesney called the Biden order 'a good middle path.'

"They affirmed the nature of the threat and the propriety of using sanctions to address it, and they have held the door open for reimposing some version of these sanctions... but likely with a far stronger and more defensible record," Chesney tweeted.

China's commerce ministry spokesman Gao Feng on Thursday called Biden's decision a 'positive step in the right direction.' Gao said he hoped Washington would 'treat Chinese companies in a fair and just manner, and avoid politicizing eco-

nomics and trade issues.'

The same day, Beijing approved legislation to fight foreign sanctions, state media reported, building defences against US pressure. The full text was not released.

Biden's order seeks to identify any apps that 'may pose an unacceptable risk to US national security and the American people' including 'applications that are owned, controlled, or managed by persons that support foreign adversary military or intelligence activities, or are involved in malicious cyber activities, or involve applications that collect sensitive personal data.' The new order calls for the Commerce Department and other federal agencies to develop guidelines 'to protect sensitive personal data... including personally identifiable information and genetic information' from misuse. TikTok is believed to have one billion users worldwide including more than 100mn in the United States, and is especially popular with young smartphone users.

AFP

US Fed expected to stand its ground despite rising inflation

Washington, US – Even in the face of rising inflation, the lackluster progress on restoring jobs lost during the pandemic means the US Federal Reserve is unlikely to budge on monetary policy when it meets next week.

Central bank chief Jerome Powell has made it clear the Fed will hold the line on its massive bond buying program and rock-bottom lending rates until data reflect lasting improvement in employment across all economic strata.

But the recent surge in inflation in the world's largest economy is ramping up the pressure on policymakers to begin to pull back on stimulus programs.

Hints of whether central bankers will buckle may be seen next week when the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Markets Committee (FOMC) holds its two-day policy meeting.

"No good deed goes unpunished and that is the case with the rapid reopening of the economy," economist Joel Naroff said in an analysis. "The upside is that growth is soaring. The downside is that consumer inflation is surging, and labour problems are pressuring businesses."

Focus on jobs

With widespread vaccinations in recent months and massive government aid, the US economy has come roaring back from the COVID-19 crisis as businesses rushed to reopen. But the process has been bumpy and



US Fed chief Jerome Powell

other countries have not kept pace, creating a shortage of supplies and workers.

That in turn has sent prices surging, with the consumer price index hitting a 13-year high of five per cent in May compared to the same month in 2020.

While Fed officials have repeatedly offered reassurances that the increase is mostly due to temporary issues – used car prices alone make up the bulk of the rise – some financial market players have begun to sound the alarm, as have Republicans opposed to President Joe Biden's spending plans. "We should all be very concerned," Republican Senator Pat Toomey tweeted last week. "It's long overdue for the Fed to begin the process of normalizing its monetary policy."

Omari Swinton, chair of the Howard University economics department, said with businesses finding it hard to fill open positions as they reopen, or competing with the US\$1,000 signing

bonus offered by major US employer Amazon, wage and price inflation are legitimate concerns.

But the 'systemic' issue of the worker shortage is the more important target of the Fed's policy deliberations, he said, especially if the labour pool shrinks permanently in the wake of the pandemic. "No one knows if people are going to go back to work or not," Swinton told AFP. "So their focus on making sure the employment recovery is strong is more important than inflation."

That has been Powell's stance: downplaying inflation fears while stressing the importance of allowing the economy to grow fast enough that even low wage workers can find jobs.

While the official unemployment rate fell to 5.8 per cent in May, unemployment for Black Americans remains much higher at 9.1 per cent, and more than 7mn of the jobs lost during the pandemic still have not been restored. Even if the Fed's policy remains unchanged, Powell could reassure the world that the central bank will be vigilant about inflation, and he might signal they are 'talking about talking about' the right time to begin to slow purchases of assets, which have pumped cash into the economy throughout the crisis.

Many economists expect Powell to give clearer hints about the taper plans in August at an annual central bank conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

AFP

Facebook working on smartwatch

San Francisco, US – Facebook has confirmed it is working on a smartwatch that might one day connect with augmented reality (AR) glasses being developed by the leading social network.

Facebook Reality Labs is investing in ways to make AR glasses more useful, unit head Andrew 'Boz' Bosworth said in a tweet responding to a Verge report that the social network is aiming to unveil a smartwatch next year.

Smartwatch features will include cameras, and it will integrate with Facebook apps such as image-centric social network Instagram, according to the Verge.

"We've said we want AR glasses to be truly useful – we're investing in technologies across



the board that will make that interaction feel more natural and intuitive," Bosworth tweeted.

He cautioned that research doesn't always result in a finished product. "We'll share more when we're ready."

"And just like with our glasses work, we will consult third party experts to help us get these right," Bosworth said.

Facebook went public a while ago with plans for a launch this

year of smart glasses which connect to smartphones as part of an alliance with eyewear titan EssilorLuxottica.

The Ray-Ban branded eyewear, a move by Facebook into wearable tech, is an early step in a project to create futuristic eyewear that augments real-world views with data or graphics from the internet, according to chief executive Mark Zuckerberg.

AFP

Norway sees oil in its future despite warnings over climate

Oslo, Norway – Norway, Western Europe's biggest oil producer, plans to continue exploration and drilling in coming decades, the government said Friday, despite concerns about its impact on the climate.

In a white book on its energy future, Oslo said it wanted to 'extend the current practice with regular concession cycles on the Norwegian continental shelf to give the industry access to new prospecting zones.'

The Norwegian position contrasts sharply with that of the International Energy Agency (IEA), which recently warned that all future fossil fuel projects must be scrapped if the world is to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

"We will supply energy to the world as long as the demand exists," Petroleum and Energy Minister Tina Bru told a press conference.

"The government will there-

fore maintain an oil policy that facilitates profitable oil and gas production in the framework of the Norwegian climate policy and our climate goals," she said.

Keen to present itself as a role model with its efforts to fight deforestation in the tropics and being a world leader in electric car sales, the Scandinavian country aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by between 50 and 55 percent by 2030, and to almost nothing by 2050.

But it is regularly criticised for the carbon emissions generated abroad by the oil it exports.

While Oslo regularly cites the need for a 'green transition', it still relies heavily on oil and gas revenues for its public finances, trade balance (accounting for 42 per cent of exports of goods), employment (more than 200,000 jobs are either directly or indirectly linked to the sector) and to keep rural Norway populated.



This file photo shows Johan Sverdrup oil field in the North Sea west of Stavanger in Norway (AFP)

The black gold is also the reason Norway's 5.4mn inhabitants today have the world's biggest sovereign wealth fund, worth a whopping US\$1.36tn.

This week, Norway also

opened new areas for oil exploration and production of petroleum, despite the IEA warning.

'Backtracking'

Neighbouring Denmark has

meanwhile vowed to end all of its oil production in the North Sea by 2050.

"The countries that say that are those that are done" exploiting their oil and gas resources,

Prime Minister Erna Solberg retorted on Friday. "It doesn't cost them anything, not a single job."

Norway nonetheless expects oil output to diminish significantly in the coming years. In its defense, the oil sector argues that its oil is 'one of the cleanest', at least in the production stage.

For instance, connecting a growing number of offshore platforms to the land-based electricity grid has made the industry greener, by eliminating the need for onboard diesel generators.

International observers have criticised the Norwegian position however.

"The Norwegian government and industry cannot ignore science," said Sandrine Dixon-Delecle, co-president of international think tank The Club of Rome.

"We look to Norway for leadership and ambition on the energy transition – not

complacency and backtracking," she said in a statement.

The head of climate and energy issues at the WWF, Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, said that "by standing on the side of fossil fuel interests, Norway risks having stranded assets."

"Norway's position will increase the risk of the world reaching fragile climate tipping points, which in turn will cause devastating impacts on the natural world on which we depend," he said.

Not surprisingly, Norway's oil lobby organisation Norsk olje og gass said it was "very happy that the government will keep the main parts of its oil and gas policy."

In 2018, Norway was the world's 14th biggest producer of oil and eighth biggest producer of natural gas, according to data from the US Energy Information Administration.

AFP

Alizz Islamic Bank provides vaccines to employees, families

Alizz Islamic Bank, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, started its vaccination campaign for the bank employees and their families against coronavirus. This comes as part of the bank's mission to provide a healthy environment for employees and provide everything that would ensure their safety and the safety of their families. Ahead of campaign, health awareness drives were made internally about the importance of taking the vaccine and following the necessary precautionary measures.

Speaking on this occasion, Mohammed al Balushi, DGM - Chief Human Resources officer of Alizz Islamic Bank, said, "The safety of our staff as well as the safety of their families is our highest priority. Our precautionary actions demonstrate a firm commitment to deploying appropriate resources to help maintain a healthy environment for both."

Balushi added, "Following the protocols that have been advised by the Ministry of Health is a national responsibility that we all



need to adhere to, I would also emphasise that information and news should only be taken seriously from the relevant authorities' communications channels; we need to work together to ensure the safety of everyone in Oman."

Alizz Islamic Bank is continuously monitoring the ever-changing circumstances surrounding the coronavirus, and all Alizz Islamic Bank branches have been fully briefed on essen-

tial preparatory and prevention measures. These ranges from hygiene measures, including increased cleaning and sanitising frequency, as well as guidelines on how to handle suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in cooperation with the local authorities.

The bank is following all the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and the Supreme Committee tasked with the mechanism to tackle with the

developments of coronavirus, and all relevant authorities to ensure the actions taken are comprehensive and suitable.

The bank has already taken a preventive measure ahead of time by implementing the Business Continuity Plan (BCP). As part of the plan, a secondary team was transferred on March 15, 2020 to the bank's business continuity site to ensure that services are not interrupted, in case of any adverse situations.

Khedmah app: Best option to recharge electricity meter

As part of its ongoing efforts to meet clients' aspirations and enhance the quality of its services, Oman Investment and Finance Company (OIFC)'s Khedmah app constantly seeks to enrich its customer experience by providing hassle-free and flexible services that can be availed with a push of a button, such as the recharge of prepaid electricity meter.

Over the past period, prepaid electricity meters have been gaining acceptance within consumers. In order to meet the high demand on this service, Khedmah provides easy electricity recharge solutions to customers that can be obtained easily without the need to travel outside to get the vouchers.

"Khedmah always endeavours to keep pace with community needs by providing comprehensive and easy services that meet people's requirements such as prepaid electricity meter recharge and many more. Customers can benefit from these solutions anytime and anywhere from various e-channels that include Khedmah phone app and company's website. Utilising these channels save time, efforts and maintain public safety especially during these unprecedented circumstances that the sultanate is going through," said Mohammed al Ghabshi, regional manager of Khedmah



Branches in Muscat.

Ghabshi further indicated that Khedmah provides the recharge service for prepaid electricity meters of all the electricity companies across Oman.

To avail the service, consumers only need to download Khedmah app and follow simple steps that take less than a minute until obtaining the recharge code.

This service is also available in all Khedmah branches and kiosks, which gives people multiple easy options to benefit from the service.

Established in 1979, OIFC is one of the leading investment and services company and specialises in billing, collection and debt factoring for electricity, water and telecom services in

the Sultanate of Oman.

The company's various branches and e-payment channels allow customers to easily pay their electricity, water and telecommunications bills, recharge phone, electricity prepaid meter bills as well as making payment to the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI).

Through its various branches across the sultanate, the company also provides customer support related to these services.

Customers can download Khedmah phone app from Google Play on Android, and App Store on iOS. For more information on the services or other clarification customers can visit OIFC' website <https://www.oifc-oman.com/>, or contact the call centre on 24727272.

NBO's safety deposit boxes offer peace of mind 24/7

An ideal solution for keeping life's most valuable items, National Bank of Oman (NBO)'s safety deposit boxes combine state-of-the-art security and unparalleled convenience 24/7.

Available at its head office in Azaiba, this month the bank is offering up to 60 per cent off of its annual rates, exclusively for its Mazaya and Sadara customers. NBO account-holders can now obtain a safe deposit box for as little as RO75, while new customers can avail one from just RO50, with a limited number of boxes available.

Available in medium and large sizes, the safety deposit boxes offer the ultimate protection



through a combination of card access, PIN and biometric authentication. Accessible around the clock, 365 days a year, and conveniently located at the bank's headquarters in Azaiba, the boxes also offer a joint ownership option, making them per-

fect for families.

Committed to providing an enhanced and seamless banking experience, NBO continues to bring compelling and innovative financial solutions closer to its customer-base across the sultanate.

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles to host blood donation drive on June 23, 24

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC (AJIA), the official importer of BMW Group vehicles in Oman will be hosting a Blood Donation Drive on Wednesday, June 23 and Thursday, 24, between 9am and 2pm, at its Muscat showroom.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused challenges to the Sultanate of Oman's blood supply, with donor centres suffering a reduction in donations due to the implementation of social distancing and the cancellation of blood drives.

A spokesperson for Al Jenaibi International Automobiles LLC said, "AJIA deeply cares for the community, therefore we always



ensure we go above and beyond when it comes to integrating corporate social responsibility into our operations.

"Donating blood is one of the

easiest, most rewarding ways to give back in a time of need, and we hope to see as many people as possible take part in this initiative of human solidarity."

To stand by one another in these challenging times, the dealership is encouraging members of the public to join a good cause and make the difference between life and death for someone else. The activity will be held in strict guidelines of the safety guidelines and will be monitored by personnel from the Ministry of Health.

To reserve your donation spot, kindly visit BMW Oman's Instagram profile (@bmwom-anofficial) and follow the registration instructions.

For more information, please call 9617 8383, 9617 9393, 800 50008 (toll-free) or visit www.bmw-oman.com.

Renault Koleos impresses social media influencers with its features

Renault Oman has launched a mini-series campaign on social media in association with local Omani influencers to promote its popular brands.

Participating in this campaign Oman's popular social media influencers @zakoorr and @_budoorr have given rave reviews for the Renault Koleos praising it for its varied attractive features. Lauding its superior performance, local Omani influencers husband and wife duo of @zakoorr and @_budoorr described Renault Koleos as a distinctive and advanced car.

They particularly liked features such as the all mode 4x4-i transmission, 8.7" touchscreen tablet with R-Link 2, roomy cabin, best-in-class rear knee room, wide door opening and drive assistance technology.

Extolling the all mode 4x4-i transmission available on Koleos, the influencers praised the all-wheel drive system for its uniqueness. Commending the roomy cabin, they applauded the best-in-class rear knee room and wide door opening.

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, said, "We are delighted to hear great commendations for Renault Koleos.

Emphatic, charismatic, features rich and packed with safety attributes, Renault Koleos has been capturing everyone's attention in Oman. With its athletic profile, robust front end, roomy seats, taut lines underscored with chrome, Renault Koleos allows owners to take their journey with confidence. The Koleos is considered a strong SUV contender with premium style and plenty of safety tech on board."

Renault Koleos particularly amazes car enthusiasts who value distinctive design, advanced technology, high reliability and superior performance. Koleos exudes elegance with its strong lines and signature Renault design cues. The carefully sculpted bonnet on the Koleos flows seamlessly from the stylish, chrome-highlighted grille to the sweeping taillight design.

Featuring efficient engines, safety attributes and on-board technologies, Renault Koleos has been winning the hearts of customers in Oman. The SUV is marked for its fuel efficiency and infotainment options too.

Renault Koleos LE model has LED fog lamps with chrome borders, new 19-inch Kavea alloy wheels and resplendent new front grill. The Renault Koleos SE



has been augmented with Sand Grey leather seats, tilt adjustment front headrests, one touch easy folding rear seats with two step reclining and power seats, electric power seats for driver

and passenger, 18-inch Argonaute two tone alloy wheels, auto folding rear view mirrors with door lock, auto-dimming rear view mirror. It also supports Apple car play and android auto.

At the rear, Renault's trademark style is again prominently on display. The wide, horizontal tail lights amplify the impression of width (1,843mm) and draw the eye to the Renault logo on the tailgate. Chrome inserts set into the lower part of the rear bumper take the shape of twin exhaust tail pipes, a detail that is complementary with Koleos' overall exterior design.

Powerful styling

Featuring a powerful and efficient new engine and more on-board technologies, Renault Koleos fully embodies the values of the top of the Renault line-up. Its high-performance attributes, assertive design and sophisticated interior, makes it one of the most popular vehicles ever. Its elegant appearance, muscular shoulders and stylish bodywork fully meets its customers' expectations and requirements. The spacious SUV known for its elegant design and unparalleled four-wheel drive technology has been completely structured to offer powerful styling, unique features and full SUV capability.

Super interiors

The Koleos' interior subtly blends robust SUV cues with the ex-

pression of quality expected of a large family saloon thanks to the use of attractive, scratch-resistant materials such as satin-finish chrome for the steering wheel, gear lever and air vent inserts. The centre console is covered by a protective film that is hardy and pleasing to the touch. The cushion-backed materials selected for the dashboard and door panels also contribute to the cabin's restful ambience, while leather upholstery and leather-trimmed armrests feature contrasting top stitching.

4x4-i transmission

The all mode 4x4-i transmission available on Koleos features technology has been proved on millions of alliance vehicles worldwide. This all-wheel drive system permanently monitors grip levels to guarantee optimal traction in any condition.

Very easy to use, a control switch situated to the left of the steering wheel enables the driver to select one of the three modes: 2WD, 4WD Auto or 4WD Lock. The combination of high ground clearance (210mm) and approach and departure angles of respectively 19 and 26 degrees ensures go-anywhere ability. The stylish body colours and wheel

designs selected for Koleos ensure elegance. It is available in seven metallic body colours.

Safety excellence

Koleos benefits from Renault's vast experience in the realm of safety and targets excellence in the independent NCAP tests. The following features are standard equipment: Two adaptive front airbags that inflate according to the type of impact and the occupant's position in the car, two lateral thorax/shoulder airbags for the front occupants, two curtain airbags, anti-whiplash front and rear head rests, anti-submarining front seats, rear Isofix anchorage for child seats. All the seat belts are equipped with pretensioners and load limiters.

At the same time, the use of very high elastic limit steel for the engine frame and of high-strength steel for the passenger safety cell was specified to protect the cabin in the case of a major impact. When it comes to active safety, Koleos provides the latest-generation Electronic Stability Control (ESC), traction control, braking assist, electronic brake force distribution, and hill start assist as standard equipment.

Mazda takes lead in We Rate the Car Brands

In the We Rate the Car Brands, an annual report card for the year 2021, Mazda outshone and took the first spot. There were some changes in the report compared to the previous years. Some brands went to the top and some took the plunge. These changes can be accredited to the brands which consumers find the most reliable. The reliability was added up by asking people taking part in the surveys to mention the problems they had faced with the said vehicles.

It is a proud moment for Mazda as it landed the top spot with Subaru and Porsche coming in second and third respectively. Honda improved up to ten brands and made it to the top five list. BMW also leaped to become one of the top five.

Chrysler and Buick showcased a betterment in their product line and did better than their



competitors, which led to them securing a place in the top ten. The brands which experienced the most significant drops were luxury car brands Genesis and Lincoln due to mediocre reliability. Mazda rose to the topmost position by ticking all the boxes of the criteria.

The report card was accumulated by looking at the total score achieved by each model in road-test performance, predicted reliability, owner satisfaction, and safety. Then an average was

made to find out the total brand score.

To be included in the report card, the brand had to have at least two models to be tested. Fiat, Maserati, and Ram missed the mark since they didn't have the minimum number for this year. Fiat was the lowest brand last year with Alfa Romeo coming in at last.

The marking criteria was not an easy feat with the vehicles being put through more than 50 tests and evaluations for the road test only.

For the predicted reliability ratings, the members reported problems in 17 trouble areas in CR's auto surveys. In the owner satisfaction category, members mentioned whether they would buy the same vehicle again or not if they had the chance.

The safety test included an assessment of crash test results with extra points given to the brands that had proven safety features standard on all trims. The most refreshing criterion out of all was how environmentally friendly the vehicles were. It went by the name of green choices and the vehicles that were the cleanest and least pollution emitting took the crown.

Mazda has raised the bar higher by coming on top of this prestigious ranking along with the likes of the best brands in the world.

This comes off as no surprise since Mazda has always kept the consumer first and worked tirelessly to achieve the highest standards to date. With this win in the bag, the future is indeed bright for Mazda.

For more details: http://reprints.theygsgroup.com/cr/reprints/C112964_Car-Brands_Final.pdf

University of Wollongong in Dubai offers students three-year bachelor degrees

University of Wollongong in Dubai (UOWD), the first international university and the highest-ranked Australian university in the UAE, announced its bachelor degrees will align seamlessly with those offered at the University of Wollongong (UOW) Australia. This alignment allows students who have excelled academically at select high school curricula, to complete their bachelor's degree in three years instead of four. Upon graduation, students will receive a world-wide-recognised degree from UOW Australia that is accredited by the UAE's Ministry of Education.

This change is in line with the UAE's National Strategy for Higher Education 2030 that aims to shape an innovative educational system and provide future generations with the necessary technical and practical knowledge and skills to contribute proactively to driving the economy. The opportunity to complete bachelor degrees in three years is available to all students who have excelled academically in curricula such as CBSE, GCE A level, IB Diploma, and American High School Diploma for all UOWD bachelor degrees excluding the Bachelor of Engineering, which is four-year honours program.

Professor Mohamed Salem,



President of UOWD, said, "As a future-focused higher education institution, we aim to continuously improve and tailor our offerings to meet today's dynamic labour market requirements. This important restructuring of our Bachelor Degrees recognises the differences between needs of students from different secondary education systems allowing, thus, many UOWD future students to graduate faster and at a lower cost.

"To achieve greater flexibility, the bachelor degrees curriculum was structured to allow either a direct entry to standard Australian three-year bachelor de-

grees or indirectly through an additional bespoke University Freshman Year. Doing so allows students more time to prepare to enter the workforce and plan their future career paths, giving them a head start in the world of work. Furthermore, to ensure a competitive edge, all UOWD students will all receive an international, world-class degree from UOW Australia that is accredited both locally and globally."

The University Freshman Year allows prospective students who do not directly qualify for a three-year program, to enrol in any UOWD bachelor's degree by providing them with strong foundational knowledge to succeed in their preferred areas of specialisation.

All UOWD bachelor degrees are accredited by the UAE Ministry of Education through the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA).

The CAA accreditation offers assurance to prospective students, their families, employers, and other interested parties by ensuring the programmes meet standards of quality consistent with current international practice, and is universally recognized for credit transfer and further education abroad opportunities - a major boon for students who are looking to confidently start a life abroad.

The eligibility for direct admission into three-year bachelor programs is subject to the student's high school curriculum, grades achieved and English proficiency level.

- CBSE students require a score of 65 per cent and above
- British GCE (A level) students require a minimum grade of 'CDD' in A levels
- American High School Diploma students require an overall SAT score of 1,100
- International Baccalaureate Diploma students need to achieve 25 points overall

UOWD offers more than 40 degrees spanning 10 industry sectors that have been meticulously designed to address future global workforce demands, and boasts a strong placement rate with 77 per cent of its graduates finding employment within six months of receiving their degree certificates. The new announcement comes on the back of the Australian university's recent 200,000sq ft 'Campus of the Future' launch, featuring a mix of traditional and innovative creative learning spaces that provide students with an educational experience that enables them to thrive in tomorrow's workplace environment.



Wolf Air Mask creates safe, secure environment

Wolf Air Mask which sterilises the air and surfaces in real time and creates a safe and secure environment where people can breathe fear free is being introduced to Oman market.

The Wolf Air Mask using German technology and produced with uncompromising quality has a predicted life of approximately 60,000 hours, (spanning almost 9 years).

Once switched on the system will generate trillions of negative ions to the space which will combine with the surface protein/spike protein of the coronavirus or any other microorganisms and neutralise it. The product requires no consumables, service or replacement of parts. Wolf Air mask can neutralise 99 per cent of the novel coronavirus in 15 minutes according to the test held with support from ICMR and has the capacity to deactivate the influenza viruses bacteria, airborne molds allergens pollens, etc; facilitating purification of air up to a space of 1000sq feet with single unit.

When switched on it will provide 360 degree 24x7 protection by sterilising the air. The negative ions also have proven to enhance health and vitality. The new device will be a of immense benefit in the contemporary world where household routine and office work are subject to pandemic induced protocols.

This product is ideally suited for closed environments like classrooms, shops, offices, cinemas, etc according to Transasia Trading and Business LLC a Hygiene care company based in Muscat who are the local agents.

Saudi's Prince Sultan University to set up VMware IT academy

VMware and Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan University, announced they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop plans to establish the first regional VMware IT Academy in the Gulf, supporting youth digital skills development and the aims of Saudi Vision 2030.

VMware IT Academy is a public-private partnership to help individuals gain the foundational digital knowledge they need to compete in today's workforce by providing access to undergraduate certifications and ongoing skills education. PSU, the first private university in the Kingdom, already offers select VMware courses and now plans to expand this with more tutors and the comprehensive range of courses to its more than 6,000 undergraduate students.

As the regional hub, the university will also be responsible for implementing the IT Academy programme across other higher educational institutions



and training the new tutors to further enhance Saudi Arabia's skill sets.

Demand for IT skills in the Kingdom is surging as investment in technology grows, especially as organizations accelerate their digital transformation. Saudi Vision 2030 also aims to transform the Kingdom into a globally competitive ICT hub and boost local content, particularly local participation, employment and foreign direct investment in manufacturing and services.

Spending on IT in Saudi Arabia is set to grow more than \$6bn through 2024, according to a recent report by Technavio.

The regional VMware IT Academy will help students to develop advanced IT skills in areas including modern apps, cloud and automation, and digital workspace. Courses will initially be delivered online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

All-new BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé to build on the success of its predecessor

Signature BMW driving pleasure and sporting elegance brought together with modern functionality: The new BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé is poised to build on the success of its predecessor with this blend of qualities plus well-conceived enhancements to its inherent attributes and product substance.

With the original BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé having enjoyed significant success, a second-generation model is now being added to the latest 4 Series range. The new four-door coupé captures the imagination with its noticeably enhanced driving dynamics, a sharper design following the BMW brand's new design language, a refined premium feel for its interior and a host of innovations in the areas of operation and connectivity. In addition to the driving pleasure and sporting elegance for which BMW is renowned, modern functionality is central to this gran coupé concept for the premium midsize



segment. Comfortable access to the rear compartment, five full-size seats, a large tailgate and a variable-usage load compartment ensure the new BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé retains its model-specific skillset in everyday driving and on longer trips.

This time around, a performance version of the new BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé courtesy of BMW M GmbH will be available from the car's market launch

(due to get underway in November 2021) alongside four other model variants. All will be built under a flexible manufacturing process at BMW Group Plant Munich on the same line as the all-electric BMW i4 and the BMW 3 Series Sedan and BMW 3 Series Touring models.

The standalone character of the new BMW 4 Series Gran Coupé is clearly expressed in its exterior design. Measuring 4,783mm in exterior length, 1,852mm in width and 1,442mm in height, it has distinctive proportions combined with dynamically stretched coupé lines. It is 143mm longer, 27mm wider and 53mm taller than its predecessor, while the track widths have also grown - to 1,595mm at the front (+50 mm) and 1,623mm at the rear (+29 mm). The wheelbase of 2,856mm is 46mm longer than the predecessor's.

Bye Bye Bibi: Netanyahu era comes to end

Jerusalem - Cheers erupted in the Knesset chamber of Israel on Sunday night as Yamina leader Naftali Bennett became the prime minister after his new government was sworn in ending the 12 year rule of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The 'change' coalition - a motley alliance of eight parties - ousted the country's longest-serving prime minister in a seismic shift in the country's turbulent politics.

The development assumes significance as this alliance includes an independent Arab party in the government for the first time blowing up fault lines in Israeli politics.

Bennett, a rightwing Jewish nationalist and former tech millionaire, took over at the helm of the eight-party bloc, united only by their shared disdain for the hawkish rightwing leader known as Bibi.

Netanyahu (71) in typically combative style, vowed shortly before his defeat that 'if it's our destiny to be in the opposition, we'll do so with our heads high until we take down this bad government and return to lead the country our way'.

Called 'King Bibi' by his rightwing supporters and condemned as the 'crime minister' by his critics, Netanyahu has



Israeli demonstrators (left) celebrate in support of a new coalition government in front of the Knesset, while Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (right) attends the special session at the Knesset, in Jerusalem on Sunday (AFP)



long been the dominant, and increasingly divisive, figure in Israeli politics.

But on Sunday, a vote in the Knesset legislature following weeks of intense political drama ended his government with a razor-thin majority of 60 to 59 in the 120-seat chamber.

In Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, Netanyahu's opponents broke out in cheers and launched into an evening of joyous celebrations, having rallied in recent days with 'Bye bye Bibi' placards.

One of the demonstrators, Tal Surkis (19) confessed to 'mixed feelings' about the incoming change coalition, but said 'it's something Israel needs'.

Bennett (49) in a Knesset speech before the vote, promised the new government, a coalition of ideologically divergent parties, 'represents all of Israel'. He said the country, after four inconclusive elections in under two years, had been thrown 'into a maelstrom of hatred and in-fighting'.

"The time has come for different leaders, from all parts of the population, to stop, to stop this madness," he said, to angry shouts of 'liar' and 'criminal' from right-wing opponents.

'Iran is celebrating'

Bennett, a former defence minister, also vowed to keep Israel safe from what it considers its arch foe, Iran, promising that 'Israel won't let Iran have nuclear weapons' - a goal the Islamic republic denies pursuing.

Netanyahu, true to his reputation as Israel's 'Mr Security', charged that 'Iran is celebrating' the prospect of what he labelled a 'dangerous' and weak leftwing government.

The diverse anti-Netanyahu bloc was cobbled together by the secular centrist Yair Lapid, a former TV presenter, and includes rightwing and leftwing groups as well as Arab-Israeli lawmakers.

'A morning of change,' promised a Sunday tweet by Lapid, who would serve as foreign min-

ister under the coalition deal before taking over the premiership in 2023, provided the wobbly alliance survives that long.

Netanyahu, who is battling corruption charges in an ongoing trial he dismisses as a conspiracy, has been the dominant Israeli politician of his generation, having also served a previous three-year term in the 1990s.

Being ousted from the top job will leave Netanyahu more exposed to his legal woes, because it denies him the chance to push

through parliament changes to basic laws that could give him immunity.

The improbable alliance emerged weeks after an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas, the group that rules the Palestinian enclave of Gaza, and following inter-communal violence in Israeli cities with significant Arab populations. Netanyahu's opponents accused him and his allies of stoking tensions in a 'scorched-earth' campaign.

Agencies



This file photo shows newly-arrived Rohingya migrants at a refugee camp at Kuala Simpang Ulim village in Indonesia's Aceh province on June 5 (AFP)

Anti-junta people of Myanmar wear black for Rohingya

Yangon, Myanmar - Anti-junta protesters flooded Myanmar's social media with pictures of themselves wearing black on Sunday in a show of solidarity for the Rohingya, a minority group that is among the most persecuted in the country.

Since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power in a February 1 coup, an anti-junta movement demanding a return to democracy has grown to include fighting for ethnic minority rights.

The mostly Muslim Rohingya - long viewed as interlopers from Bangladesh by many in Myanmar - have for decades been denied citizenship, rights, access to services and freedom of movement.

Activists and civilians took to social media on Sunday to post pictures of themselves wearing black and flashing a three-finger salute of resistance, in posts tagged '#Black4Rohingya'.

"Justice must (be) served for each of you and each of us in Myanmar," said prominent rights activist Thinzar Shunlei Yi on Twitter. Local media also showed a small protest in Myanmar's commercial hub Yangon, with black-clad demonstrators holding signs in Burmese that said they were 'protesting for the oppressed Rohingya'.

By afternoon, the #Black4Rohingya hashtag was trending on Twitter in Myanmar, with more than 180,000 mentions.

Sunday's show of support from the mostly Buddhist, ethnic Bamar-majority population is a far cry from previous years, when

even using the term 'Rohingya' was a lightning rod for controversy. In 2017, a bloody military campaign in Myanmar's west sent some 740,000 Rohingya fleeing across the border into Bangladesh carrying accounts of rape, mass killings and arson.

The military has long claimed the crackdown was justified to root out insurgents, and Suu Kyi also defended the army's conduct by travelling to the Hague to rebut charges of genocide at the UN's top court.

The Myanmar public was largely unsympathetic to the Rohingya's plight, while activists and journalists reporting on the issues faced vitriolic abuse online. Prominent Europe-based Rohingya activist Ro Nay San Lwin said the online campaign is a yearly effort to raise awareness - but Sunday was 'the first time' he had seen it go viral in Myanmar.

"I am so happy to see those inside Myanmar joined this campaign. I am more hopeful to have a stronger solidarity from them," he said.

A recent announcement from the shadow 'National Unity Government' - made up of ousted lawmakers working to topple the junta - has also extended an olive branch to the minority group, inviting them to 'join hands... to participate in this Spring Revolution'. The NUG has been branded as 'terrorists' by the military regime, while junta leader Min Aung Hlaing has dismissed the word 'Rohingya' as 'an imaginary term'.

AFP

No nuclear deal this week, says Iran negotiator Abbas Aragchi

Vienna, Austria - Iran's chief negotiator at international talks on its nuclear programme said late on Saturday that he did not think they could conclude this week, ahead of the country's June 18 presidential election.

Russia's representative at the talks made a similar point after emerging from talks in the Austrian capital Vienna, saying a few more weeks were required to finalise the existing text, according to a statement on Twitter.

'Personally, I don't think that we can manage to reach a conclusion this week,' Iran's Abbas Aragchi told the Iranian state broadcaster after the sixth round of talks resumed in Vienna.

Iranians will vote on June 18 to elect a successor to President Hassan Rouhani, who has served



Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Sayed Abbas Aragchi (AFP)

the maximum two consecutive four-year terms allowed by the constitution.

Several analysts have already said it was unlikely any deal would be concluded before the election was over.

Representatives from Britain,

China, France, Germany, Russia and Iran are meeting in Vienna to bring the US back to the Iran nuclear deal and Tehran back into compliance with it.

The 2015 landmark accord has been hanging by a thread since US President Donald Trump took the United States out of the deal in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions.

That led Tehran to step up its nuclear activities, long curtailed by the deal.

US President Joe Biden has indicated a willingness to rejoin the agreement once it is sure Iran is willing to respect its commitments.

Negotiators from the US are taking part indirectly in the EU-chaired discussions in Vienna.

AFP

Lebanon stops Syrians attempting illegal sea crossing

Beirut, Lebanon - The Lebanese army on Sunday said it intercepted a small boat carrying 11 people, mostly Syrians, attempting an illegal sea crossing out of the crisis-hit country.

A statement said a naval force spotted the boat off the northern port city of Tripoli and that its passengers were all detained and referred for investigation, the army added.

The boat was carrying '10 people of Syrian nationality and a Lebanese national', it said.

Their journey's end was not specified but neighbouring Cyprus, a member of the European Union, has been a popular sea smuggling destination in recent months.

In May, the Lebanese army intercepted a boat near Tripoli carrying 60 people, including 59 Syrians.

Lebanon, home to more than six million people, says it hosts more than a million Syrian refugees. They have been hit hard by widening poverty rates and growing food insecurity brought on by the country's economic crisis.

In a report released this month, the World Bank warned that Lebanon's economic collapse is likely to rank among the world's worst financial crises since the mid-19th century.

AFP

Clashes after Tunisia rally against police violence

Tunis, Tunisia - Youths clashed with officers again on Saturday evening, hours after a demonstration in the Tunisian capital, Tunis, to protest police violence following the latest death of a man arrested by police.

In the working class district of Sidi Hassine, several dozen young people threw projectiles, including fireworks, at police near the station, an AFP reporter witnessed. Police responded with tear gas.

The district has been rocked by angry protests since Tuesday, when the man died after being arrested by police on suspicion of dealing drugs, according to local media.

His family has accused the police of having beaten him to death and the authorities have opened an investigation, but the interior ministry denied Thursday that he had died from ill treatment following his arrest.

Earlier on Saturday, several dozen leftwing activists and residents of working-class districts demonstrated in front of the Interior Ministry in protest at the death.

Among them were the mothers of three youths who have died over the past three years



Tunisian security forces fire tear gas as protesters block a street in the Sidi Hassine suburb on the outskirts of Tunis on Saturday (AFP)

after having been arrested. They say they are campaigning to get justice for their children.

At the beginning of the demonstration, protesters also threw chairs at police on the avenue Bourguiba, in the city centre, and police arrested several

people.

The authorities are also investigating a separate incident, which came to light after a video of what seems to be officers in civilian clothes beating a naked minor came to light.

This incident also took place

in the Sidi Hassine district.

Ten years since a revolution that overthrew the police state of dictator Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, Tunisia's security forces have yet to see meaningful reform.

Officers very rarely face pros-

ecution for alleged abuses.

Tunisia's independent High Human Rights Commission said Thursday that incidents such as those in Sidi Hassine risked undermining 'confidence in the state and its institutions'.

AFP

G7 to agree climate, conservation targets as summit ends

Carbis Bay, UK - G7 leaders were on Sunday urged to take urgent action to secure the future of the planet, as they finalised new conservation and emissions targets to curb climate change, and wrapped up a three-day summit where revived Western unity has been on show.

Veteran environmentalist and broadcaster David Attenborough told the gathering of the world's richest nations the natural world was 'greatly diminished' and inequality was widespread.

"The question science forces us to address specifically in 2021 is whether as a result of these intertwined facts we are on the verge of destabilising the entire planet?" he said.

"If that is so, then the decisions we make this decade - in particular the decisions made by the most economically advanced nations - are the most important in human history."

The leaders, holding their first in-person gathering in nearly two years due to the coronavirus pandemic, will agree to protect at least 30 per cent of both land and ocean globally by the end of

the decade.

The 'Nature Compact' struck to try to halt and reverse biodiversity loss is also set to see them commit to nearly halve their carbon emissions by 2030, relative to 2010.

It includes mandating the use of 'unabated coal' - fuel whose emissions have not gone through any filtering - 'as soon as possible', ending most government support for the fossil fuel sector overseas, and phasing out petrol and diesel cars.

Hailing the pact, host Boris Johnson said the G7 wanted to 'drive a global Green Industrial Revolution to transform the way we live'.

"There is a direct relationship between reducing emissions, restoring nature, creating jobs and ensuring long-term economic growth," the British Prime Minister added.

Climate change was a key G7 priority for Britain at the summit in Carbis Bay, southwest England, as it tries to lay the groundwork for hosting the UN COP26 environment summit in November.

But before the pledges had



Extinction Rebellion environmental activists attach a banner calling on G7 leaders to act on climate change on the beach in St Ives, Cornwall during the G7 summit on Sunday (AFP)

even been formally adopted, environmental campaigners blasted them as lacking enforcement and the necessary scope.

"Despite the green soundbites, Boris Johnson has simply reheated old promises and peppered his plan with hypocrisy, rather than taking real action to tackle the climate and nature emergency," said Greenpeace UK's executive director John

Sauven. He also noted wealthy nations had a 'dismal track record' over the last decade honouring international climate finance commitments.

Ties renewed

The G7 - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and United States - were eager to renew ties after the discord of Donald Trump's four years in power.

Joe Biden has sought to turn the page on his predecessor's international isolationism, seeking to open a new chapter in the Western alliance after Trump alienated and exasperated it at every turn.

The UK government turned to its royals to add a dash of grandeur to the G7 detente, with Queen Elizabeth II and her son Prince Charles hosting a Friday

night reception with G7 leaders and European Union chiefs also attending.

Joined on Saturday by counterparts from Australia, South Africa and South Korea - with India also taking part remotely - they then enjoyed an evening beach barbecue around fire pits, featuring a sea shanty band and toasted marshmallows.

Overall, the summit was largely consumed with the tough task of forging a more comprehensive response to the pandemic.

One billion doses

Leaders agreed a declaration to help prevent future pandemics and are expected to commit to donate one billion COVID-19 vaccine doses to poor countries.

However, there they also faced pushback, with critics arguing it provides just a fraction of what is needed to inoculate the world against the virus, which has claimed nearly four million lives globally and is still spawning new variants.

Britain's former prime minister Gordon Brown called the summit

'a missed opportunity' and an 'unforgivable moral failure'.

"We needed 11bn vaccines, we've only got offered a plan for one billion. We needed US\$50bn allocated to the vaccination of the world, and (have) only US\$5bn," he told Sky News on Sunday. 'Millions of people will go unvaccinated and thousands of people, I'm afraid, will die.'

The allies also unveiled US-led plans to counter China in infrastructure funding for poorer nations, promising to 'collectively catalyse' hundreds of billions of investment.

The 'Build Back Better World' (B3W) project is aimed squarely at competing with Beijing's trillion-dollar Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, which has been widely criticised for saddling small countries with unmanageable debt.

The leaders will publish further details on the B3W in the traditional end-of-summit communique, alongside issuing the Carbis Bay Declaration on health policy.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

South Africa pulls 2mn doses of 'contaminated' J&J vaccine



This file photo shows a healthcare worker getting a dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at the Klerksdorp Hospital in South Africa (AFP)

Johannesburg, South Africa - South Africa, which is struggling to roll out its inoculation programme as it enters a third wave of the coronavirus pandemic, said on Sunday it will pull two million of doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine following contamination concerns at one of the US drugmaker's sites.

On Friday, the US Food and Drug Administration told J&J that millions of doses produced at the group's Emergent BioSolutions facility in the city of Baltimore were not suitable for use.

Following a review of the FDA decision, the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) said in a

statement that it had decided 'not to release vaccine produced using the drug substance batches that were not suitable'.

J&J's Emergent plant was or-

A new delivery of around 300,000 doses of the J&J jab that have been cleared by the FDA for meeting the requirements and will subsequently be shipped to South Africa

SOUTH AFRICAN (HP) REGULATORY AUTHORITY

dered to pause production in April several weeks after it was determined that batches of a substance used to produce the vaccine were cross-contaminated with ingredients from an-

other jab made by Anglo-Swedish pharma giant AstraZeneca.

J&J did not reveal the precise number of doses in each batch,

in South Africa's vaccination programme, Health Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane said on Saturday that the country had two batches - representing some two million doses - that were stored in a high-security laboratory in Port Elizabeth belonging to drugmaker Aspen.

South Africa is one of the countries campaigning for a waiver of patents on COVID-19 vaccines in order to allow every nation to produce generic versions at low cost.

"If we are to save lives and end the pandemic, we need to expand and diversify manufacturing and get medical products to treat, combat and prevent the

pandemic to as many people as quickly as possible," President Cyril Ramaphosa told the G7 group of wealthy nations meeting in Britain on Sunday.

South Africa is counting on a delivery of 31mn doses of the single-shot J&J vaccine to help inoculate its population of 59mn.

One per cent vaccinated

It has also secured 30mn doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, but that jab must be stored at extremely low temperatures and requires two shots.

SAHPRA said that a new delivery of around 300,000 doses of the J&J jab 'that have been cleared by the US FDA that meet the requirements and will subsequently be released and shipped to South Africa'.

The government already temporarily suspended vaccinations in April after rare cases of blood clots were reported in the US.

And in February, South Africa turned down more than 1.5mn doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine because of doubts about its efficacy on the local coronavirus variant.

Lagging behind many other countries, South Africa has only vaccinated just over one per cent of its population. It is the hardest hit African country by the pandemic, with more than 1.7mn infections and nearly 58,000 deaths. More than 9,300 new cases were registered in the past 24 hours.

AFP



This file photo shows a nurse about to vaccinate a man at a clinic in Russia's capital Moscow on December 5, 2020 (AFP)

Moscow announces car raffle to boost vaccination drive

Moscow, Russia - Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said on Sunday that residents of the Russian capital who get their first coronavirus jab will now take part in a lottery to win a car.

The move comes as authorities seek to speed up Russia's vaccination drive that has stagnated while new infections in Moscow and across the country are on the rise.

'From June 14 until July 11, 2021, citizens who get their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine will become participants in a car lottery,' Sobyanin announced on his website.

Every week five cars will be raffled out, each worth around 1mn rubles (US\$13,900 approx).

"But of course the main gain for those who get vaccinated cannot be compared to any car - it is their own health and peace of mind," Sobyanin said.

The mayor - who was vaccinated with Russia's Sputnik V in May last year - added that two days ago he got a booster jab and 'feels well'.

Later on Sunday, authorities in the Moscow region announced that they will be raffling out a three-bedroom apartment among those who get their first jab between June 15 and June 25.

Sobyanin sounded the alarm over the spike in cases earlier this week and announced the reopening of field hospitals and introduced a 'non-working' week until June 20.

All non-essential workers

will be out of office but will retain their salary.

However, they have not been ordered to stay at home.

The mayor also reintroduced a curfew for bars and restaurants that bans them from serving customers between 11.00pm and 6.00am.

A government tally reported 7,704 new virus cases in Moscow on Sunday, a six-month high.

Despite introducing a strict lockdown after the pandemic swept across Russia last spring, authorities lifted most restrictions by mid-summer in an effort to protect the struggling economy.

Russia started its mass vaccination campaign in December, with the homegrown vaccine Sputnik V - touted by Russian President Vladimir Putin as the best in the world - that is free and widely available in Moscow.

Since the registration of Sputnik V in August, Russia has approved three more vaccines for public use - EpiVacCorona, CoviVac and the one-dose Sputnik Light.

Foreign-made vaccines are not available in Russia.

So far, 18mn people or 12 per cent of the population has received at least one dose of a vaccine with polls showing that a majority of Russians do not plan to get immunised.

The Kremlin said Putin was vaccinated against the coronavirus in private but did not reveal which jab he used.

AFP

Partying youths defy Paris police for third night running

Paris, France - Paris police said on Sunday that three people were detained after officers used tear gas to disperse hundreds of youths gathered for a street party in defiance of COVID social distancing limits and an 11.00pm curfew.

The so-called Project X gatherings, a reference to an American film from 2012, on the vast lawns in front of the Invalides war museum on Sat-

urday was the third since Thursday.

Videos on social media showed largely maskless youths surrounding a car and then climbing and jumping on its roof, while others bombarded police vans with bottles.

Other parties were broken up in the Tuileries gardens near the Louvre and on the banks of the Seine river, police said, as people enjoying warm

evenings outside found it difficult to respect the coronavirus curfew.

Many bars across the city remained open after 11.00pm over the weekend, the first since the curfew was pushed back from 9.00pm last Wednesday, according to AFP reporters.

"We had our 'bac' [high school exit exam] this year and we really needed to let loose," said Cedric, 17, who came with

friends from the nearby 15th district of the capital.

Officials have urged people to continue respecting social distancing limits as the country emerges from its third COVID lockdown.

Since Wednesday, bars and restaurants are allowed to serve patrons indoors for the first time since October, and the government plans to drop the nationwide curfew entirely

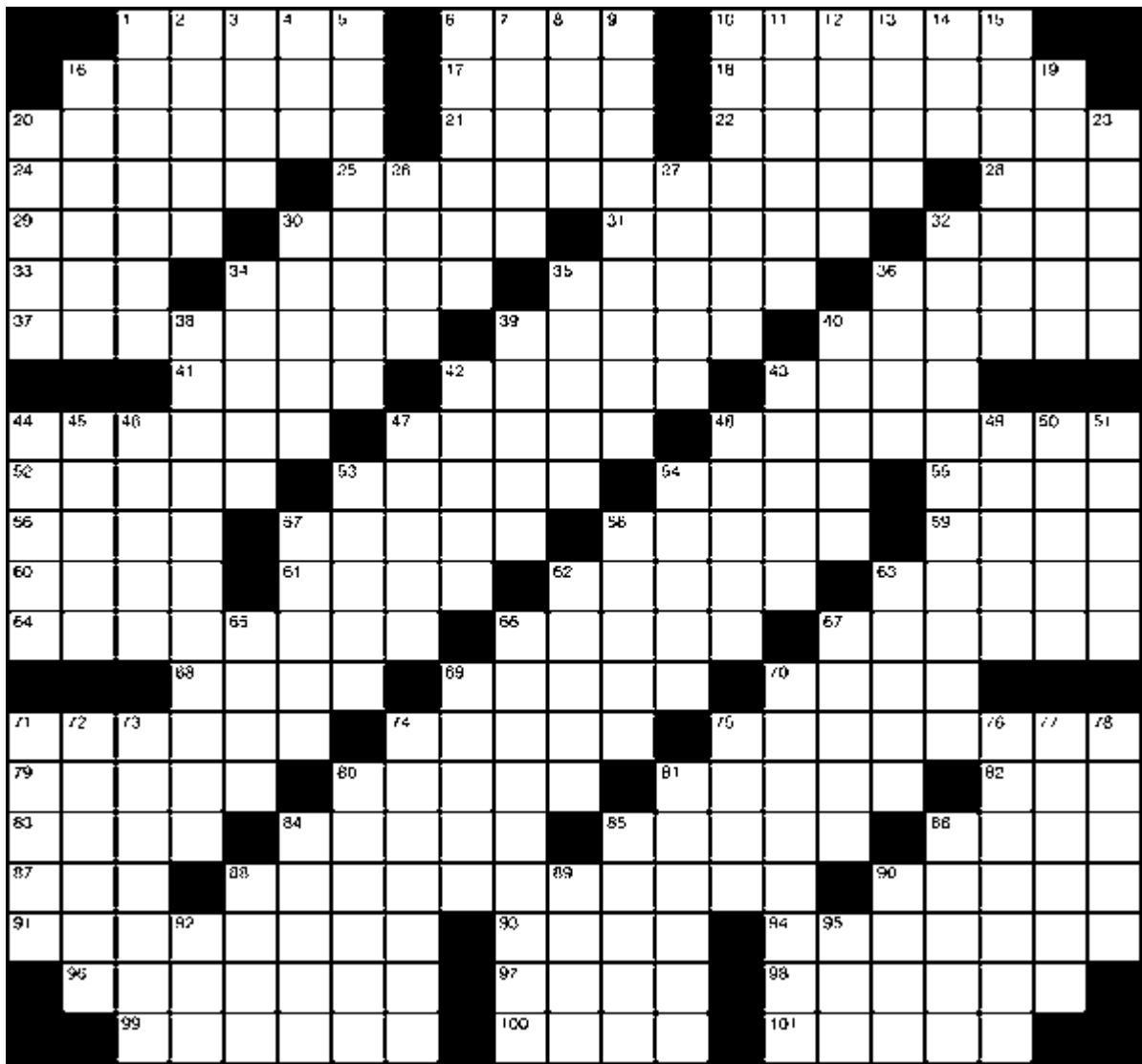
on June 30.

Health authorities reported 3,972 new cases over the previous 24 hours on Saturday, while the number of patients in intensive care fell to 2,110, far below the peak of nearly 6,000 during the third wave of cases that began in March.

Thirty-four deaths were reported, bringing the French total to 110,407.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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- ACROSS**
1 Leftover item
6 The two of them
10 Socks
16 Protein acid
17 Land expanse
18 More concise
20 Arson fighter
21 Adjacent to
22 Blessed with holy oil
24 Assumed name
25 Presidential New Yorker?
28 New Deal power agcy.
29 Stitch together
30 Stormed
31 Rude wagons
32 Large number
33 Explosive initials
34 Better quality
35 Pith helmet
36 Pick up leftovers
37 Star shaped
39 Cared deeply
40 Fingerprint markings
41 Feels unwell
42 Coniferous growths
43 Versifier
44 Indian warriors
47 Upwardly mobile person
48 First
52 Lemur
53 Stonehenge worshiper
54 Character
55 Culture medium
56 Residents: suffix
57 Respond
58 British tar
59 Indicator
60 Erstwhile caterpillar
61 Solemn promise
62 Spelunker's habitats
63 Sharpens
64 Cause of stress
66 Carried
67 Wedding participants
68 Attila's men
69 French cap
70 Dustin Hoffman's "___ Man"
71 Affirm
74 Printed communication, for short
75 Annoyed
79 Declares openly
80 Shouted
81 Domesticates
82 Definitive period
83 TV staple
84 Chinese weight unit
85 Nimbuses
86 Scheme
87 Printing measures
88 Classic talkshow host
90 Muslim ruler's decree
91 Dependence
93 Mine entrance
94 Lowered in rank
96 Purify by evaporation
97 Fifi's father
98 Obliterated
99 Wood dressers
100 Pay attention to
101 "March of ___"
DOWN
1 Arrange in a series
2 Top echelon
3 Edges
4 Collection
5 Some ornaments
6 Large headline
7 Mountain nymph
8 Blue-green
9 Book type
10 Skirmished
11 Tiny
12 Matter units
13 Small piece
14 Relatives
15 Homesteader
16 Movies of old?
19 Show off
20 Abstinences
23 Early mornings
26 Molding type
27 Records
30 Coins of Iran
32 Casino feature
34 Fruit or house pests
35 Tinted
36 Liquid butter, in India
38 Casino entertainment
39 Restrain
40 Ponderous
42 Bag
43 Tiny openings
44 Dirigible's relative
45 Revolving machine part
46 Mountain crest
47 Carton
48 Renowned
49 Stared at
50 Fry lightly
51 Hank of hair
53 Loved ones
54 Wild cat
57 In-the-___: theater
58 Elastic material
62 Removed the center
63 Legal papers
65 Sits for a tan
66 Morse code vehicle
67 Foundations
69 Person
70 Ordered back
71 Steadier
72 Made equal
73 Wild plant
74 Tours
75 Mutuel lead-in
76 Empathizes
77 Eaten away
78 Obsolete
80 Ring
81 Trimmed with feathers
84 Ulyanov
85 Burning
86 Poetry's partner
88 ___ Hari
89 ___ fixe
90 Muslim priest
92 Elba, e.g.
95 Silk worm

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Still chatting away? Dashing around and having fun? Bet you are. The good news is that it's officially time to play. Now you can do it with a clear conscience. Get yourself dressed, get out there and enjoy the company of dear ones you haven't seen in far too long. With the heavens as full as they are of spontaneous, impetuous energies, you'd better not take the night off.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
That ordinarily charming way you have with words is even more lethal now, so you should definitely be careful about flinging those casual comments around. You might think you're kidding around, not really flirting, just teasing a little. But to them, you could be the best thing that's come their way since ice cream. Think before you speak, even if you're just being nice.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
You've never been one to refuse playtime, have you? And you've been good for ages, extra good, in fact. You're probably thinking about treating yourself to something extra special to celebrate, like maybe a little trip. Even if it's just a day trip or an overnighter with friends, you really should let go and just do it. Nothing makes you happier than a change of scenery.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
Your day looks to be starting on a terrific note, and it's all because of you. You've been hitting it hard for a while now, doing your job and someone else's too, at least one someone else, if not more. But now, finally, the recognition you deserve is en route. Don't worry if it doesn't happen immediately. It's in the works. The higher-ups have been watching you, and they're well pleased.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Did you wake up in the mood to spend some money on either your home or your family? Well, whether you're redecorating, adding a room, or just planning a surprise for a dear one, you'll want to do it up right. That's fine, but don't spend what you can't afford. Remember, it's the thought behind what you do that counts, not the price tag.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
For days you've been dreaming about your spare time and spending it all alone at your place. Well, that's a nice dream, but it's not going to happen. When you least expect it, shortly before quitting time, you'll get your second wind. So now what? Do you call everyone you turned down and say you changed your mind, or do you stay in because you said you would?



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
Oh, this is going to be fun. The world is finally in the same mood you're always in, ready to let go, let loose, chat, and laugh, and you've got plenty of interesting invitations to extend and accept. One in particular may involve a long-distance friend or lover. Whether you'll be doing the traveling or the entertaining won't matter. You'll have a terrific time.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You're so happy you're bubbling over. It's a wonderful feeling, but if it's because you're in love, try to go easy on the rest of the world. You know how irritating it is to hear about the love of someone's life over and over again? You know how you just want to stuff a sock in their mouth when they keep bringing the conversation back to their wonderful sweetheart over and over again?



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
You've been meeting some really interesting people lately. And that roll you're on isn't going anywhere just yet. Someone who's recently been introduced to you by a friend could turn out to play a major part in your life starting as soon as today. You might end up traveling with them, taking a class together, or joining a group you've been curious about. Do something different.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
You've had your suspicions for some time, and now you've got more. What you're wondering about isn't a bad thing, however. You have the feeling that someone is planning something delightful for you, and you're probably right. Just don't do anything to ruin the surprise. This has probably been some time in the making, and it may not quite be ready for you.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
You've been far too good for far too long. For months, you've been watching every penny. So isn't it time to stop being quite so neurotic about your budget and have some fun? Sure it is. Start tonight. Call the dearest of your dear ones and suggest an outing. It doesn't have to involve a limo or champagne. Just do something that's fun that's also outside the house.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Making someone's day has always been one of your favourite things to do, and you'll have your chance to do it again now. A certain person who really needs a break and a smile could come your way. The good news is that without them even having to mention it, you'll be able to use that ultra-sensitive antenna of yours to figure out exactly what they need.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which of the following was Satyajit Ray associated with?
- a. Classical music
 - b. Commercial art
 - c. Film Direction
 - d. Classical dance
2. Dr Joon Lew of Korea, the recipient of international Gandhi Award is known for his service in the?
- a. Eradication of leprosy
 - b. Campaigning against AIDS
 - c. Against Drugs
 - d. Against child labour
3. Guru Gopi Krishna was a maestro of which of the following dance forma?
- a. Kuchipudi
 - b. Kathak
 - c. Manipuri
 - d. Bahratanatyam

Answers: 1. c, 2. a, 3. b

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

	4					5	
3	6	5				7	8 2
		1				6	
		8	7		5	4	
		3	8	6	1	9	
		9	2		4	5	
		6				2	
5	9	2				8	3 4
	7						9

BOGGLER

K	R	E	N
V	S	O	S
A	O	E	T
U	E	Y	T

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

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JUNE 13)

GOORE	BOOSTED	NAMAR
AUDIORA	RUNAWAY	ALLOPOL
MYSTONS	BAIT	HARSHY
ESOTHERIC	ANK	ALENEAD
CRAB	BOY	WIL
SLUG	RAIN	SACK
MYWARD	ESSE	EMTOW
BOLE	ERIN	STICAT
WELSHIA	PAITION	SIFERIA
POINT	BOOTH	ACTIONS
CHWON	SHOOT	GLITTER
ALALA	NARON	SATO
ANDVERT	MARKS	SOVING
ISLE	KAWAS	HATZ
RAND	REN	SPARE
IN	SHIMA	ONT
BOODW	PIATA	SEACORAL
STYOVOR	MOBIL	ANG
GUERSU	OKINAWA	SURRIV
USERS	TENTING	PAIO

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





COLLISION

ROCKS CRUISE CAPITAL

Leila Macor

US-based cruise lines are chafing to resume voyages from Florida ports in July as the pandemic wanes - but for vaccinated passengers only - yet the state and its governor won't let them demand proof of inoculation.

So far, neither side has blinked, even as two guests on one of the first cruise ships to sail from North America since the COVID pandemic tested positive on Thursday.

Florida 'is the cruise capital of the world', with billions of dollars of revenue and thousands of jobs at stake, said Doug Parker, editor of the Cruise Radio website.

"It would be a big blow if they couldn't come to terms."

If neither side gives in, Parker said, cruise ships 'would have to start sailing out of other ports that would accept them... because these ships are trying to do the right thing'.

The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention currently requires that more than 95 per cent of passengers and crew be vaccinated in order for cruise lines to bypass a requirement for trial voyages.

The two guests who tested positive on Thursday were sailing on the *Celebrity Millennium*, which had departed from the

Caribbean island of St Maarten on Saturday with everyone on board fully vaccinated.

The pair, who were sharing a stateroom and are asymptomatic, were placed in isolation, Royal Caribbean said in a statement.

The chief obstacle now for cruises departing from Florida comes from Republican Governor Ron DeSantis, who made his tourism-dependent state one of the first to drop its pandemic restrictions.

Last month he signed into law a bill barring businesses from demanding vaccination 'passports', stopping them from requiring that employees provide proof of vaccination - and threatening fines for noncompliance that could amount, for cruise lines, to US\$5,000 per passenger.

The measure takes effect on July 1, just when cruise lines hope to resume operations after a year in which COVID played havoc with their industry.

"While the governor, on the one hand, wants to see jobs back and tourism back... (he) is kind of his worst enemy, because he's also saying, you can't ask for that same proof," Parker said.

The governor's terse response: "Our state policy is our state policy."

To DeSantis' critics, his is a political



decision aimed at winning the votes of Donald Trump sympathizers - many of them vaccine skeptics - ahead of a possible re-election campaign in 2022.

A confused picture

With the world's three biggest cruise lines all based in Miami, the coming months offer a calendar of confusing and shifting health requirements, with conflict a near-certainty.

Carnival Cruise Line will require vaccination on cruises leaving from Texas - another Republican-led state that has been quick to drop COVID curbs - but Carnival has provided no detailed information on a cruise set to leave Miami on July 4.

This Monday, Norwegian Cruise Line -

While the governor, on one hand, wants to see tourism back... (he) won't let cruise liners demand proof of inoculation
DOUG PARKER

which has threatened to abandon Florida ports altogether - directly defied the governor by saying it would demand proof of vaccination on all its cruises.

"We are currently in communication with his (DeSantis') staff and legal counsel to ensure that we can offer the safest cruise experience for our passengers departing from the cruise capital of the world," the company's CEO, Frank Del Rio, said.

The third big cruise line, the Royal Caribbean Group, meantime reversed itself. Having initially announced that it would demand proof of vaccination, it said on Friday that passengers and crew were only 'strongly recommended' to get the vaccine, and that anyone unvacci-

nated would face 'other protocols'.

Celebrity Cruises (part of Royal Caribbean) will launch the first trip from Florida, sailing out of Fort Lauderdale on June 26. A 'test' cruise six days earlier will depart from Miami.

"It's confusing," Jim Walker, a maritime lawyer, told AFP. His Cruise Law News blog last year provided daily updates on the distress of those on cruise ships stranded at sea by the pandemic.

Now, he said, there's 'different companies trying to solve a problem differently'.

Infections in the Caribbean

"The impression that the public have is that the cruise line is not taking appropriate steps to send out a message that their ships are safe," said Walker, pointing to a survey by CruiseCritic.com that found that 80 per cent of potential passengers would prefer to travel on ships that demand vaccination proof.

He also pointed out that ships making Caribbean port stops could spread COVID to islands lacking the vaccine access enjoyed by the US - 'although quite frankly', he added, 'very few cruise lines seem to express concern about that potential'.

AFP

Mauritius to open for international travel on July 15

Port Louis, Mauritius - Mauritius will be welcoming international travellers from July 15, said a statement, adding that the island will be opening in phases this year. During the first phase, that runs from July 15 to 30 September, only the vaccinated people will be able to enjoy a resort holiday on the island, while the unvaccinated travellers would have to undergo 14 days of in-room quarantines.

Holidaymakers will be able to enjoy facilities within their chosen resort premises, including the swimming pool and beach. If guests stay over 14 days and have negative PCR tests during their stay in the resort, they will be able to explore the island's attractions. However, for shorter stays, they may leave the resort earlier and travel back home.

A list of pre-approved COVID-19 safe resorts will be



available from June 20, 2021 at www.mauritiushow.com

Travellers to Mauritius aged 18 years or over must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. They must undergo a PCR test between five and seven days before departure and a negative re-

sult is required to travel to the island. Travellers will also have a PCR test on arrival at the airport in Mauritius and on day seven and 14 of their resort holiday, as applicable.

In the second phase, from October 1, vaccinated travellers will

be allowed entry without restrictions upon presentation of a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours before departure.

Unvaccinated travellers will be subject to 14 days in-room quarantine for both the phases until further notice.

The announcement follows the acceleration of the vaccination campaign and the progress made towards herd immunity by the end of September. Frontliners of the tourism industry were prioritised during the vaccine rollout. This enables a prompt

and safe restart of the Mauritius tourism industry.

The country's response to the pandemic ranked among one of the best in the world, as the Mauritian government responded promptly with stringent control measures and protocols.

NZ CLINCH SERIES



New Zealand players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Test series against England at Edgbaston, UK, on Sunday

ENGLAND VS NEW ZEALAND SECOND TEST: DAY FOUR

Edgbaston, UK - The first ball said it all, really. Trent Boult sent it down with a scrambled seam, it found the edge and Tom Blundell's waiting gloves leaving Olly Stone, England's last man out, visibly exhaling in deflated resignation to his side's fate. And the Edgbaston clock hadn't even ticked over to 11am on the fourth day yet.

The man at the other end, James Anderson, was into the changing room and straight back out again, producing a maiden first up. He wasn't going down without a fight, even with a target of 38 to defend.

Nor was his old mate, Stuart Broad, who struck with the last ball of the following over when he removed Devon Conway, the man who had racked up 306 runs at 76.50 this series in the only two Tests of his career. Broad enticed Conway to nibble at one that pitched outside off

and found an edge which James Bracey took behind the stumps.

With the visitors only needing 32 more for victory, it was all a bit of a moot point but England could rely on their two elder statesmen, who had bowled so well against stiff opposition in this match and who are consummate professionals, to keep competing to the last.

And they did, doing their best to make scoring slow-going for New Zealand but the tourists had all the time in the world, a tiny target and wickets in hand - everything - on their side.

It was England's batters who had let them down, the second-innings capitulation for 122 could have been worse. They were 76 for seven before an eighth-wicket stand worth 44 between Stone and Wood (who top-scored with 29).

Stone came into the attack in the tenth over of the morning and struck with his sixth ball. Having had a wider delivery pun-

ished to the fence by Will Young two balls prior, he had Young out chopping onto his stumps with just five runs needed.

Stand-in captain Tom Latham sealed the result in the next over with a four clubbed through square leg off Wood followed by another two balls later, guided through third man. It was New Zealand's first Test series win in England since 1999, moving them back to the top of the ICC rankings as a consequence, and consigned England to their first home Test series defeat since 2014.

It all left England needing with huge selection concerns ahead of the August Test series against India, even allowing for the return of such shoo-ins as Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler in that middle-order. It also left New Zealand with selection headaches of a different kind.

Matt Henry's devastating opening spell to remove England's top three either side of

tea on the third day cracked this game wide open and gave him six wickets for the match for Player of the Match honours.

But Henry was among six changes made to the side who drew the first Test at Lord's. Along with Neil Wagner, who took seven wickets across the two matches this series including three for 18 in England's second innings at Edgbaston, he is among a host of New Zealand seamers jostling for a place in next week's World Test Championship final against India.

Of the top three contenders, Trent Boult took six wickets for the match at Edgbaston upon his return from post-IPL quarantine while Tim Southee and Kyle Jamieson were rested.

One thing looks assured though, given New Zealand's bench strength and dominance in this series, they should pose formidable opposition for a long time to come.

Cricinfo

SCOREBOARD		
England 1 st Innings 303		
New Zealand 1 st Innings 388		
ENGLAND 2 ND INNINGS		
R Burns	c Latham b Henry	0
D Sibley	c Mitchell b Henry	8
Z Crawley	lbw b Henry	17
Joe Root	c Blundell b Patel	11
O Pope	lbw b Wagner	23
D Lawrence	c Blundell b Wagner	0
J Bracey	b Patel	8
O Stone	c Blundell b Boult	15
M Wood	c Blundell b Wagner	29
S Broad	b Boult	1
J Anderson	not out	0
Extras	(b 5, lb 4, nb 1)	10
TOTAL:	122 in 41.1 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-17, 3-30, 4-58, 5-58, 6-71, 7-76, 8-120, 9-121, 10-121		
Bowling: M Henry 12-2-36-3, T Boult 10.1-2-34-2, N Wagner 10-1-18-3, A Patel 9-4-25-2		
NEW ZEALAND 2 ND INNINGS		
T Latham	not out	23
D Conway	c Bracey b Broad	3
W Young	b Stone	8
R Taylor	not out	0
Extras	(b 4, nb 2, w 1)	7
TOTAL:	41 for two in 10.5 overs	
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-33		
Bowling: J Anderson 5-1-11-0, S Broad 4-1-13-1, O Stone 1-0-5-1, M Wood 0.5-0-8-0		

Mankad, Flower, Sangakkara among ten new inductees

ICC HALL OF FAME

Dubai, UAE - India's Vinoo Mankad, Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara and Zimbabwe's Andy Flower were among ten cricket icons to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame on Sunday as the governing body announced a 'special edition intake' to coincide with the first ever ICC World Test Championship Final. The ICC Hall of Fame now has 103 cricketers.

Aubrey Faulkner (South Africa), Monty Noble (Australia), Sir Learie Constantine (West Indies), Stan McCabe (Australia), Ted Dexter (England), Desmond Haynes (West Indies) and Bob Willis (England) are the other seven players to have been inducted on Sunday.

Mankad had played 44 Tests for 2,109 runs at an average of 31.47. He also took 162 wickets at 32.32, being an opening batsman and left-arm spinner. One of India's greatest allrounders, he scored 72 and 184 against England at Lord's in 1952.

Mankad bagged 12 wickets against England in Chennai in 1952 to give India their first-ever Test win. Mankad was also the first bowler to run out a non-striker at the bowler's end before delivering the ball, a dismissal that has since been informally named after him.

Andy Flower meanwhile became the first Zimbabwe player to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

"He played 63 Tests, scoring 4,794 runs at 51.54, took 151 catches with nine stumpings as a left-handed



Vinoo Mankad



Andy Flower



Kumar Sangakkara

wicketkeeper batsmen. His grit, determination and will to succeed meant at one point he was ranked No 1 batsman in the world," the ICC said in a release.

"Kumar Sangakkara of Sri Lanka played 134 Tests, scored 12,400 runs at 57.40, took 182 catches and 20 stumpings, and was grace personified at the crease. Sangakkara ended his career as the most prolific run-scorer his country had ever known. In 2014 he struck 319 and 105 in the same Test match against Bangladesh," the ICC added in its release.

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EURO2020



ENGLAND'S STERLING START



England's striker Raheem Sterling (second from right) scores against Croatia during the UEFA Euro 2020 Group D match at Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday (AFP)

London, UK - Raheem Sterling ignited England's Euro 2020 campaign as the Manchester City forward's clinical finish sealed a 1-0 win against Croatia in their Group D opener on Sunday.

Gareth Southgate's side were struggling to break down Croatia until Sterling struck in the second half at sun-baked Wembley. The 26 year old's first goal at a major tournament - in his 13th game - was the perfect riposte to critics who questioned Southgate's decision to select him instead of Jack Grealish.

Days after he was given an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for his anti-racism campaigning, Sterling enjoyed a perfectly-timed moment of redemption.

In a rematch of the 2018 World Cup semifinal won by Croatia, England were hampered by a lack of cutting edge until Sterling came

to the rescue. Sterling's winner eased the tension at Wembley and got fans bellowing 'Football's coming home' in the hope England can emulate their run to the semifinals when they hosted Euro 96, and maybe even win a major tournament for the first time since the 1966 World Cup.

In truth, this was a far from convincing performance, but Southgate will take heart from the way his team kept their nerve on a pressure-packed occasion.

After England were booed for taking the knee in support of the Black Lives Matter movement before their friendlies against Austria and Romania, there were fears fans at Wembley would turn

on the team as well. There were a smattering of boos from sections of the 22,500 crowd, but the majority cheered the gesture this time.

It was Southgate's surprise decision to select Calvin Phillips that attracted most pre-match attention. But it proved an inspired move as, along with Sterling, the Leeds midfielder was England's most accomplished performer.

England hold firm

Manchester City forward Phil Foden, his hair bleached blond, has drawn comparisons with England legend Paul Gascoigne, who sported the same eye-catching hair cut during Euro 96. Foden was inches away from giving England

the perfect start in the sixth minute with the kind of magic that made Gascoigne so beloved. Collecting Sterling's pass on the edge of the area, Foden worked space to curl his left-footed shot off the far post.

Phillips was quickly into his stride and forced Dominik Livakovic to make a scrambling save with his strike from the edge of the area.

England was still struggling to unhinge Croatia into the second half. But Sterling quelled the mounting anxiety as England struck in the 57th minute.

Phillips was the catalyst as he burst forward past two Croatians and slipped a deft pass behind the defensive line.

Sterling arrived just ahead of his lunging marker and slotted a low shot past Livakovic from ten yards.

Sterling destined to score in Wembley 'back garden'

London, UK - Raheem Sterling said he knew he would break his duck for England in major international tournaments when given the chance at Wembley after netting the winner in a 1-0 victory over Croatia on Sunday.

Sterling grew up in the shadow of Wembley and scored the only goal just before the hour. "I always said if I played at Wembley in a major tournament, I'm scoring. I had to score

in my back garden and delighted to do that."

On his disappointing end of the season with Manchester City, the 26 year old said, "There is a lot of different reasons why I haven't scored with my club, but that's irrelevant now, I'm here with my country now."

"It's been a long season for me, but I couldn't wait to get here."

AFP



Austria see off debutants North Macedonia



Austria's Marko Arnautovic (L) and Konrad Laimer celebrate after a goal

Bucharest, Romania - Substitutes Michael Gregoritsch and Marko Arnautovic scored late goals as Austria sealed a 3-1 victory over major tournament debutants North Macedonia in their Group C opener at Euro 2020 on Sunday.

Stefan Lainer put the Austrians ahead early on in Bucharest, but 37 year old captain Goran Pandev levelled before the half-hour mark to become the second-oldest scorer in Euro history and delight the vocal Macedonian fans.

But Gregoritsch diverted home the deciding goal 12 minutes from time and Arnautovic added a third to ensure Austria claimed their first-ever European Championship win and struck first blood in a group also containing the Netherlands and Ukraine, who meet in Amsterdam later in the day.

Austria next visit the Dutch on Thursday, while North Macedonia

stay in the Romanian capital to face Ukraine.

After a bright start by Igor Angelovski's Macedonians on Sunday, Austria struck against the run of play in the 18th minute as right-back Lainer met Marcel Sabitzer's cross at the back post to volley past goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski.

Lainer celebrated by holding up a shirt with the words 'Eriksen stay strong' after Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen suffered a cardiac arrest in their game against Finland on Saturday.

It was the first time Austria had taken the lead in a European Championship game.

They quickly threatened a second goal as Sasa Kalajdzic

turned Sabitzer's pass too close to Dimitrievski.

But North Macedonia continued to press and levelled in the 28th minute as Austria goalkeeper Daniel Bachmann lost the ball as he slid out to collect it after some comical defending, and Pandev gleefully accepted the gift to slot into an empty net.

It was a record-extending 38th goal for the former Inter Milan forward for his country, making him the second-oldest player to net in a tournament after Austrian Ivica Vastic at the age of 38 against Poland in 2008.

Austria coach Franco Foda sent on Arnautovic and Gregoritsch as his side dominated the early stages of the second half, but North

Macedonia remained a danger on the break and Boban Nikolov was denied on the hour mark by an onrushing Bachmann.

Minutes later it was Austria who almost forged ahead, but Gregoritsch's header was excellently palmed away by Dimitrievski.

Neither side sat back to protect their point, but it was the underdogs who continued to look threatening and Ezgjan Alioski and Eljif Elmas both had efforts well blocked.

Austria's quality shone through in the closing stages, though, as Gregoritsch nipped ahead of Dimitrievski to stab home David Alaba's low cross.

In the 89th minute, Shanghai Port forward Arnautovic ran clear, rounded the goalkeeper and tapped in to give the scoreline a slightly flattering complexion.

AFP

GROUP C

AUSTRIA VS NORTH MACEDONIA



3 - 1

STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
GROUP A								
Italy	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
Wales	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Switzerland	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Turkey	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
GROUP B								
Belgium	1	1	0	0	3	0	3	3
Finland	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
Denmark	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
Russia	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
GROUP C								
Austria	1	1	0	0	3	1	2	3
Netherlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ukraine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Macedonia	1	0	0	1	1	3	-2	0

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
GROUP D								
England	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
Czech Republic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Croatia	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0



EURO2020



Lukaku in goal tribute to Eriksen as Belgium win



Belgium's Romelu Lukaku celebrates after scoring against Russia in Saint Petersburg on Saturday (AFP)

Saint Petersburg, Russia - Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku sent a message of support to his stricken Inter Milan teammate Christian Eriksen after scoring, as his double helped the Red Devils open their Euro 2020 campaign with a 3-0 win over Russia on Saturday.

Lukaku gave Belgium an early lead, then shouted 'Chris, Chris, stay strong - I love you' into a pitchside camera during the celebration for his opening goal.

"I am really happy with the win, but it was hard for me to play because my thoughts were with Christian Eriksen," said Lukaku, who revealed he cried tears of concern before kick-off for his Inter teammate.

Belgium coach Roberto Martinez admitted other members of his squad were also affected after seeing Eriksen suddenly slump to the turf.

"We were watching the game live and five minutes after Christian collapsed, we went into a team meeting. As you can imagine, the last thing we wanted to do was talk about football," said Martinez.

Substitute Thomas Meunier doubled Belgium's lead on 34 minutes before Lukaku put the result beyond doubt with a late second goal.

The hosts got off to a bad start when Andrei Semenov

TODAY'S MATCHES

GROUP D



SCOTLAND VS CZECH REPUBLIC (5pm)



GROUP E



POLAND VS SLOVAKIA (8pm)



GROUP E



SPAIN VS SWEDEN (11pm)



(All kick-offs are Oman time)

failed to deal with a cross by Dries Mertens in the build-up to the opening goal. The ball fell to Lukaku, who span away and drove his shot into the bottom far

GROUP B

BELGIUM VS RUSSIA



3 - 0

corner on ten minutes. Belgium's Timothy Castagne and Russia's Daler Kuzyaev had to be helped off following a nasty clash of heads which saw both players substituted. Meunier, Castagne's replacement at right-back,

grabbed Belgium's second by slotting home the rebound after his Dortmund teammate Thorgan Hazard swung in a cross which Anton Shunin failed to hold.

Russia raised the tempo in the second half as Roman Zobnin fired over the Belgian goal. Real Madrid star Eden Hazard replaced Mertens for the final 18 minutes to lift the Belgian attack.

With two minutes left, Lukaku swept Meunier's pass into the Russian net to claim his 20th goal in his last 15 international games.

Before kick-off, the Belgium team were booed for taking a knee to highlight racial injustice, while their Russian opponents stood. AFP



Belgium's Timothy Castagne (C) is escorted off the pitch on Saturday

Belgium's Castagne out of Euro 2020

Saint Petersburg, Russia - Belgium defender Timothy Castagne, who suffered two facial fractures early in the victory over Russia at Euro 2020 on Saturday, has been ruled out of the rest of the tournament, coach Roberto Martinez said.

The Leicester full-back clashed heads with Russia's Daler Kuzyaev in the 26th minute and was replaced by Thomas Meunier, who then starred with a goal and an assist. Taken to hospital, Castagne had tests which revealed a 'double eye socket fracture', according to Martinez. It was the 25 year old's first major tournament.

But Martinez did say the ankle injury which forced centre-back Jan Vertonghen off late on was 'less serious'. "I caught my studs in the pitch," said Benfica's Vertonghen. "I've got a history of ankle injuries, so that's why I always tape my ankles well. It's going to be fine."

Also on Sunday, Portugal's Joao Cancelo tested positive for COVID-19 and has been ruled out of Euro 2020, Portugal federation announced. Manchester United's Diogo Dalot, on loan to AC Milan, has replaced the Manchester City right-back in the Portuguese squad with the titleholders opening their Group F campaign against Hungary in Budapest on Tuesday. AFP

Eriksen suffered cardiac arrest, says team doctor

Copenhagen, Denmark - Christian Eriksen suffered a cardiac arrest when he collapsed in Denmark's Euro 2020 match against Finland, said Danish team doctor Morten Boesen.

Earlier, officials said the midfielder was stable in hospital and had sent his greetings to his national teammates. Eriksen collapsed shortly before half-time in Denmark's opening Euro 2020 game against Finland on Saturday. "He was gone. We did cardiac resuscitation, it was a cardiac arrest," said Boesen.

"How close were we to losing him? I don't know, but we got him back after one defib [defibrillation] so that's quite fast. The examinations that have been done so far look fine. We don't have an explanation to why it happened."



Denmark Christian Eriksen

The 29 year old Inter Milan player had emergency medical treatment on the pitch before being taken to hospital. "His condition is stable and he continues to be hospitalised for further examination," said a statement from Danish officials on Sunday morning.

"This morning we have spoken to Christian, who has sent his greetings to his teammates. The team and staff of the national team

has received crisis assistance and will continue to be there for each other after yesterday's incident. We would like to thank everyone for their heartfelt greetings."

Head coach Kasper Hjulmand said Eriksen told him he did not remember much from Saturday's collapse.

He quoted the midfielder as saying, "I think you are feeling worse than I am. I feel as if I'm about to go training now, boys."

Hjulmand added, "Christian is in good spirits and it's a huge relief for the players after all this uncertainty. There is no doubt that we have been on the ropes."

Saturday's incident happened as a throw-in was played towards Eriksen near the end of the first half.

Boesen said Eriksen was unconscious when he reached the player on the pitch. "When I got to him he

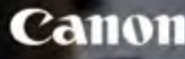
was on his side, he was breathing. I could feel a pulse, but suddenly that changed and we started to give him CPR," he said.

Only once informed that Eriksen was awake in hospital did the players agree to resume the match, with Finland going on to win 1-0.

Hjulmand told reporters after the game, "It was a traumatic experience. We talked about those feelings and it would've been OK to say 'no' if they didn't want to play. Some of them were not able to play, some were ready. It's not normal to play such a game when one of your friends is suffering with a heart issue."

Hjulmand said he regretted resuming the game. "I honestly don't think that we should have been on the pitch again," Hjulmand told reporters.

(With inputs from BBC, AFP)





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DJOKOVIC MAKES HISTORY

- Serb is the first man in Open era history to claim all four Grand Slams twice
- World No 1 clinches 19th Grand Slam title in epic French Open final against Greek Tsitsipas

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic claimed a 19th Grand Slam title and became the first man in 52 years to win all four majors twice when he came from two sets down to beat Stefanos Tsitsipas in a gripping French Open final on Sunday. The world No 1 triumphed 6-7 (6/8), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 over the Greek 22 year old who was playing in his first Slam final.

Djokovic is now just one major away from equalling the all-time record of 20, jointly held by Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. It was a second French Open crown for Djokovic after his 2016 victory and adds to his nine Australian Opens, five Wimbledon titles and three at the US Open. The 34 year old is the first man since Rod Laver in 1969 to win all four Slams on multiple occasions and just the third in history.

Djokovic had also spent more than four hours on court on Friday to knock out defending champion Rafael Nadal. "It was an electric atmosphere. I want to thank everyone who has been with me on this journey," said Djokovic after the four-hour 11-minute final. "I have played almost nine hours over the last 48 hours against two great champions, it was really tough physically over the last three days, but I trusted in my capabilities and knew I could do it."

Djokovic is the first man ever to win a Slam title by twice coming back from two sets down in same the tournament. "I can relate to what Stefanos is going through but he will come back stronger and win many Grand Slams."

Djokovic now has 84 career titles in total while Sunday's win pushed him to the brink of US\$150mn in prize money. "I had good run here so I am happy with myself," said Tsitsipas.

"Novak has shown what a great champion he is and I hope one day have half of what he has achieved. "I tried my best. I had a good run and I'm happy with myself."

Tsitsipas survived a nervy opening service game, having to save two break points. Djokovic, by contrast, didn't concede a point in his first three service games.

But suddenly he faced a set point in the tenth game courtesy of an ugly shank but saved it after a 26-shot rally.

Fired up by a time violation, Djokovic broke for the first time for a 6-5 lead but was unable to serve out the opener as a series of razor-sharp returns put Tsitsipas back on level terms. In a dramatic tie-breaker, Tsitsipas saw a 4/0 and 5/2 lead disappear.

He had to save a set point before claiming the opener after 70 minutes when Djokovic fired

a forehand wide. Tsitsipas, 12 years junior to his rival, broke again in the first game of the second set as the 2016 champion looked increasingly weary in the 30-degree afternoon heat. The Greek edged ahead 5-2 and pocketed the second set with his eighth ace of the contest.

But the top seed wasn't finished, breaking in the fourth game of the third set to cut the deficit. Tsitsipas then called the trainer to treat a back problem which also gave him the opportunity to change the clay-covered shirt he'd worn since a first set tumble. Thirty minutes later, it was two sets apiece after Djokovic secured a double break.

As the shadows swept across Court Philippe Chatrier, Tsitsipas' mood also darkened as he slipped 3-1 down in the decider.

As the clock ticked past four hours, he fought off two more break points in the seventh game but Djokovic was not to be denied his latest slice of history taking the glory on his second championship point.

Grand double for Krejčíková

Barbora Krejčíková became the first player since Mary Pierce in 2000 to win the singles and doubles titles at the French Open on Sunday. Krejčíková teamed with fellow Czech Katerina Siniakova to defeat Bethanie Mattek-Sands and Iga Swiatek 6-4, 6-2 for their third Slam title together.

AFP



LIST OF RECENT CHAMPIONS

- 2021: NOVAK DJOKOVIC
- 2020: RAFAEL NADAL
- 2019: RAFAEL NADAL
- 2018: RAFAEL NADAL
- 2017: RAFAEL NADAL
- 2016: NOVAK DJOKOVIC
- 2015: STAN WAWRINKA
- 2014: RAFAEL NADAL
- 2013: RAFAEL NADAL
- 2012: RAFAEL NADAL

2021-22 Omantel League to start on October 16

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Following intense discussions with different clubs recently, the Oman Football Association (OFA) announced the schedule for the upcoming 2021-22 season on Sunday. The announcement comes as a relief to clubs and fans after the 2020-21 season was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic on April 1.

In his remarks to *Muscat Daily* on Sunday, Sheikh Shabib al Hosni, Deputy CEO of the OFA, said, "We are happy to announce the schedule for the new season (2021-22) and have sent the relevant details to the clubs.

"We will kick off the top-flight league, involving the 14 clubs, on October 16 while the prestigious His Majesty's Cup will be played between November 2-March 17, 2022.

The Association Cup, which was launched couple of years ago as Mazda Cup, will be held between November 9-January 29, 2022 while the First Division League will be played between October 23-April 22, 2022."



A file photo of a 2020-21 Omantel League match between Seeb and Suwaiq

Hosni said that clubs have also been informed about players' registration dates with the first window opening between August 7-October 29. The next window will be between January 16-February 12, 2022.

Hosni confirmed that the new season will feature the same clubs in both the top-flight and first division leagues that took part in the cancelled 2020-21 leagues.

The top-flight Omantel League will conclude on May 26. When the 2020-21 season was called off, the clubs had played ten games each with Dhofar leading the table and Seeb at second spot.

Besides these two, the other teams that will feature in new Omantel League season are Mussanah, Al Nasr, Al Suwaiq, Bahla, Rustaq, Al Nahda, Al Ittihad, Oman, Sohar, Nizwa, Saham and Muscat.



Hosni said that as the season was cancelled there would be no relegation and promotion of teams for the new season.

The First Division League had witnessed 17 clubs and Hosni hinted that there may be few more teams in the upcoming season.

Al Arouba and Samail were leading the respective groups in the First Division when the season was called off.

The top OFA official said that the 'OFA is committed to organising leagues for juniors, youth, women futsal and beach soccer' but their schedules are yet to be finalised.

It may be mentioned that the

2021-22 OMAN FOOTBALL SEASON
OMANTEL LEAGUE October 16-May 26, 2022
FIRST DIVISION LEAGUE October 23-April 22, 2022
HIS MAJESTY'S CUP November 2-March 17, 2022
ASSOCIATION CUP November 9-January 29, 2022

national team, under Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic, is expected to have a hectic season with the Red Warriors featuring in the 2021 FIFA Arab Cup later this year and the Gulf Cup in early 2022.

Oman will play Somalia in an Arab Cup qualifier on September 1 with the winner qualifying for the main tournament in Qatar in November-December. A win for Oman will take them into Group A that features hosts Qatar, Iraq and winner of Bahrain and Kuwait.

Iraq's Basra city will host the 25th edition of the Gulf Cup in January 2022.

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