



P10

OMAN EDGE
QATAR CLUB
IN FRIENDLY



P14

CHINA FACTORY
OUTPUT, RETAIL
SALES FALL



P20

SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS
KNOCKING ON MISFAT
AL ABRIYEEN



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO INDONESIA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Joko Widodo of the Republic of Indonesia on his country Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Widodo. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Indonesia further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**

HM GREETINGS TO GABON PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Ali Bongo Ondimba of the Gabonese Republic on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Ondimba. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Gabon further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**

READ IN

OPINION P9

Swift Taliban takeover leaves US image in tatters

Shaun Tandon

Transcending ideological affiliations

Dr Khalid Mohammed Al Balushi

INSIDE



MALAYSIAN PM QUILTS AFTER 17 MONTHS IN OFFICE

P7



NEW COVID VACCINE SHOWS PROMISE IN TRIAL

P8

Royal Decree amends provisions of Motor Insurance Law

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued four Royal decrees.

Royal Decree No 53/2021 amends some provisions of the Motor Insurance Law, after presenting the same before the Council of Oman. Article (1) introduces the amendments attached (to this Decree) to the aforesaid Motor Insurance Law promulgated under Royal Decree No 34/94. Article (2) cancels all that contradicts the attached

amendments or contravenes their provisions.

Article (3) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No 54/2021 implements the GCC Unified Law (System) on Combating Commercial Deception, after presenting the same before the Council of Oman.

Article (1) states that the provisions of the GCC Unified

Law on Combating Commercial Deception shall be implemented, while at the same time consulting the provisions of this Decree.

Article (2) stipulates that, when implementing the provisions of this attached law (system), the phrases listed below shall have the meanings indicated against each: The specialised "Authority" concerned: Consumer Protection Authority; The "Minister" concerned: The official tasked with implementing the provisions of the

attached law/system (Chairman of the consumer Protection Authority).

Employees designated as "Judicial Inspectors": Employees of the specialised "Authority" and the ministries of "Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion", "Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources", "Health" and other departments concerned, in accordance with the laws and Royal Decrees awarding such officials the designation/mission of 'judicial

inspection' as regards crimes stated in the attached law/system that are related to their job tasks.

Article (3) states that the provisions of the attached law/system are deemed complementary to the provisions of the Food Security Law (promulgated under Royal Decree No 84/2008).

Article (4) cancels all that contradicts this Decree or the attached law/system or contravenes their provisions.

TURN TO P3

OMAN VISION 2040 FOCUS ON JOB MARKET, ADVENTURE TOURISM

VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

The Follow-up Unit for the Implementation of Oman Vision 2040 says that the labour market and employment are the key sectors and the main objectives. It added that over the past year, the Ministry of Labour's policy has changed from "Omanisation as a target to Omanisation as a rule, and expatriates as an exception of the rule."

The annual report issued on Monday identifies the sectors which are key to promote economic diversification and projects under the Tanfeedh programme, which was launched in 2016.

The key initiatives highlighted by the report include providing part-time work opportunities in the private sector for Omani employees and job-seekers.

It also seeks to enhance the flexibility in movement of non-Omani workforce among establishments registered under the same entity. "There are plans to allow recruitment of non-Omani workforce with temporary licences in some specialised professions", the report added.

Also, the former Implementation Support and Follow-up Unit (ISFU), in cooperation with the former Ministry of Labour,

TURN TO P3

OMANISATION AS A TARGET TO OMANISATION AS A RULE

ENHANCE FLEXIBILITY IN MOVEMENT OF EXPAT WORKFORCE

TOURISM CLUSTER PLANS FOR MUSCAT, AL DAKHILIYAH, SOUTH AL SHARQIYAH

REGULATORY MEASURES FOR ADVENTURE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN OMAN

SULTANATE RECEIVES DUBAI EXPO PAVILION



Mohsin bin Khamis al Balushi, Adviser to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Commissioner-General of the Sultanate at Expo 2020 Dubai, officially received the National Pavilion of the Sultanate of Oman at "Expo 2020" Dubai from the main contracting company. **DETAILS ON P4**

Gap between 2 doses of vaccine cut

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

The Ministry of Health on Monday said the gap between two doses of covid-19 vaccines has been reduced to six weeks in the Sultanate, starting today (August 17). Earlier, the gap between two doses of vaccines was 10 weeks. The ministry has requested all those who received the first dose of vaccine over the past period (and completed 6 six weeks since then) to register for the second dose via



We are still away from the 70 per cent target. In fact, in response to the mutating virus, it is best to vaccinate 80 per cent of the total population

DR ZAID AL HINAI

A consultant

Tarassud app.

As many as 2,155,932 people have been vaccinated against Covid-19 in the Sultanate since the launch of the National Immunisation Campaign till Sunday, reaching 61 per cent of the targeted population.

The number of those who took the first dose of vaccine stood at 1,360,206 comprising 63 per cent, while the number of those who are fully vaccinated (two doses) stood at 795,726 comprising 37 per cent.

TURN TO P3

UN chief urges Taliban to show 'restraint'

NEW YORK: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres urged the Taliban to show "the utmost restraint to protect lives" and demanded that anyone who wanted to leave the country must be able to do so.

All countries should be willing to take in Afghan refugees and stop deportations to Afghanistan, added the chief of the United Nations at a special session of the UN Security

Council in New York on Monday.

Guterres also said that humanitarian organisations needed to be allowed to continue their work after the Taliban took power in Afghanistan. The Taliban seems for the most part to have respected the UN staff and facilities in several places in Afghanistan that are now under the group's control, the UN chief said.

The UN's continued presence in Afghanistan would depend on how the situation developed, added Guterres.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden will break his silence on the US fiasco in Afghanistan with an address to the nation from the White House, as a lightning Taliban victory sent the Democrat's domestic political fortunes reeling. **SEE ALSO P7**



Shihab receives UAE Armed Forces chief

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafa'a on Monday Lt General Hamad Mohammed

Thani al Rumaithi, Chief of Staff of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces, and his accompanying delegation. The two sides reviewed the fraternal relations binding the two

countries and exchanged views on matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). — ONA

Bilateral ties with UAE, France reviewed

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of Royal Office, received in his office on Monday Lt Gen Hamad Mohammed Thani al Rumaithi, Chief of Staff of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces and his accompanying delegation.

The meeting reviewed the fraternal relations between the two brotherly countries and aspects of the existing cooperation in several spheres between them to serve the joint interests. The two sides also exchanged views on issues of common interest.

Al Numani also received ambassador of France to the Sultanate at the end of his tour of duty as his country's ambassador to Oman. The ambassador expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the care extended to him by officials in the Sultanate.

On his turn, the Minister of Royal Office thanked the ambassador for his efforts exerted during his duty in the Sultanate to enhance the existing bilateral relations between the two countries in various fields.

He wished the ambassador continued success. — ONA



New batch of air officers to join Royal Air Force of Oman

MUSCAT: In response to the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, to speed up the process of recruitment of nationals, and in continuation to the national

efforts exerted by the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) to open the door for citizens to join the military service and get the honour of serving the dear country, the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), in

coordination with the Ministry of Labour, on Monday continued to receive citizens who will undergo the applied recruitment procedures required for joining RAFO as air officer candidates after passing the

evaluation stage.

RAFO employed its expertise and administrative capacities as well as its means of transportation in order to provide a suitable environment for conducting the

necessary procedures for the new batch of air officers in a speedy and seamless manner.

These vigorous efforts made by the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) to recruit citizens are in line with

the plans and programmes for the employment of nationals at SAF and the other departments of the ministry of defence to enable them to serve the country, its leader and the Omani people. — ONA



HUAWEI FreeBuds 4

Studio-quality Sound | Open-fit Noise Cancellation | Air-like Comfort



*Product color, shape, interface and functions are for reference only.
The actual product may vary.
CBG1219999H4C19

ROYAL DECREE AMENDS MOTOR INSURANCE LAW

FROM PAGE 1

Article (5) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No 55/2021 ratifies the agreement on establishing the GCC Accreditation Centre and its Annex-1.

Article (1) ratifies the aforesaid

agreement and its Annex-1 as per the version attached to this Decree.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date

of issue.

Royal Decree No 56/2021 ratifies the agreement between the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the GCC Secretariat

General pertaining to the headquarters of the GCC Statistical Centre, signed in Muscat on June 8, 2021. Article (1) ratifies the aforesaid agreement as per the

version attached to this Decree.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

SAF CHIEF OF STAFF RECEIVES UAE COUNTERPART



Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Tuesday Lt General Hamad Mohammed Thani al Rumaithi, Chief of Staff of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces and his accompanying delegation. The two sides exchanged views on military matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by senior officers from both sides. — ONA

Gap between two doses of vaccine cut



FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, the ministry of health continues vaccinating target segments in all governorates of the Sultanate.

On Monday, vaccination centres in all governorates witnessed a good turnout from the target segments.

TARGET

Dr Zaid al Hinai, a consultant on Paediatric Infectious Diseases, commented: "We are still away from the 70 per cent target. In fact, in response to the mutating virus, it is best to vaccinate 80 per cent of the total population (95 per cent of which are aged 12 and over). Perhaps we can reach more if we include children in the campaign."

Meanwhile, the ministry

on Monday reported 214 new cases and 6 deaths in the last 24 hours. The total number of cases registered in the Sultanate has now reached 300,408, including 3,999 deaths.

According to the news release, 28 patients were admitted to hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients to 244 including 107 in intensive care units.

Dr Zaid urged people not to hesitate to take the vaccine, as there is an abundance of doses.

"The sooner we get the vaccine, the sooner we can control the disease," he said. The doctor stressed that precautionary measures must continue even after taking the vaccine.



Stranded expats hope to return amid fall in cases

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samkuttyvp

Expatriates who are stranded at home are hopeful that travel restrictions imposed by the Gulf countries including Oman will be lifted soon.

Their expectations are brightened by a decline in the number of coronavirus cases in their respective countries and government-level talks in this regard. In addition, many of their employers want them back for their exclusive expertise in certain jobs that they handle.

Fights have been suspended for travellers from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and some other countries by Oman and other GCC states as part of the Covid-19 precautionary measures.

Before Qatar and the UAE reopened, many stranded residents in the Indian subcontinent and other red-list countries, had been flying to Balkan countries, southern Europe, and Russia to quarantine 14 days there, before hopping on to a flight to the countries of their destinations.

Scores of expatriates are stuck in their home countries due to the suspension of flights. Those who wish to visit their families back home, even in emergencies, have also put off their travel plans.

"Please try to operate flights between India and Oman... it's a request to the respected governments in Oman and India..." reads a social media post by Rajender Singh Kanwar in New Delhi.

Many expatriates are afraid now that they may lose their jobs as their job licences and residency permits would expire if their stay extended beyond the permitted 180 days in their native countries.

Mehboob ul Haq, a Pakistani citizen, in a WhatsApp message to



Observer said, he reached Karachi at the end of March following the death of his father.

"My resident card will get cancelled on August 24 if I do not travel back to Muscat. I hope flights from Pakistan to Oman will resume soon as there is a drop in the number of coronavirus cases and the momentum in the vaccination campaign," he said.

Peter Pius, a Sri Lankan national, expressed his optimism that the Oman government will soon lift the travel curbs as the Supreme Committee has managed to tackle the Covid-19 situation prudently.

"With the cases coming down at a steady and stable rate, the authorities will take decisions that will pave the way for the return of the residents," he said.

Experts in the travel and airline industry expect that the authorities in the Gulf countries will soon ease the travel restrictions.

"With government-level talks and the pace at which

Experts in the travel and airline industry expect that the authorities in the Gulf countries will soon ease the travel restrictions

vaccinations are provided to the citizens in many of the South Asian countries and decline in the number of cases, it is likely that skies will open towards the end of this month", said Alkesh Yagnik, an aviation expert.

India has already raised the issue of easing travel restrictions imposed by Gulf countries on its nationals at the ministerial and official levels in recent weeks, Indian foreign ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi, was quoted by Indian newspapers as saying.

It is learnt that India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Minister of State V Muraleedharan had held meetings

with Indian ambassadors in the Gulf countries, where they were requested to take up the issue of the resumption of flights with their host countries.

However, travel agents both in Oman and India confirmed that enquiries and bookings for package trips to Muscat via Qatar and other countries have increased in recent weeks.

"We are getting a lot of enquiry calls in this regard. Many of them want to travel urgently as their work permits are expiring or businesses halted", said Afzal Ahmed, an official with a travel agency in Kochi, in the Indian state of Kerala.

Experts, however, warn that expats should wait for confirmation on resumption of flights before making any flight bookings.

"At the moment, some airlines are selling non-refundable tickets and it is better to wait for official approval before making any flight booking in order to avoid loss of money," cautioned Alkesh.

Focus on job market and adventure tourism

FROM PAGE 1

worked on providing solutions in line with the economic situation, such as activating the former National Centre for Employment and establishing the Job Security Fund. In addition, it supported the growth of SMEs through an initiative that lists the job-seekers in the logistics sector, and finding entrepreneurship opportunities.

The 2020 report touches on the progress of the programme and the efforts made by stakeholders before and after the government restructuring, particularly considering the economic impact and challenges of the pandemic. These challenges disrupted work at various economic projects and initiatives, due to closures, lockdowns and other restrictions on work, travel, and supply.



The tourism sector witnessed a direct impact due to the spread of the pandemic, which caused a big loss, not only on the local front but also to the whole world. The

economic and financial impact of the pandemic has led to a decline in the level of employment, as well as a decrease in travel, tourism traffic, and investments in the

sector.

The sector is rapidly recovering, as the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism prepared a recovery plan for the sector in the last quarter of 2020, which will help speed up the recovery.

The ministry has managed to finalise three tourism cluster plans for Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah and South Al Sharqiyah with a focus on planning, current and future investment opportunities.

Another key focus area has been on developing regulatory measures for the adventure tourism industry in Oman. It also aims to prepare and promote guidelines for the Adventure Safety Guide (ASG) Management System and create a system for issuing permits to conduct adventure activities.

Oman mulls temporary work permits for expats

MUSCAT: The follow-up Unit for the Implementation of Oman Vision 2040 has issued its annual report of the sectors that are key to promoting economic diversification and projects under the Tanfeeth programme, which was launched in 2016.

The annual report released on Monday said that the labour market

and employment is one of the key sectors and the main objectives have been to provide part-time work opportunities in the private sector for Omani employees and job-seekers.

It also seeks to enhance the flexibility of non-Omani workforce movement among establishments registered under the same entity.

Over 400 Omani SMEs to participate in Expo 2021

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

More than 400 Omani Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have been selected to take part in the Expo 2021 which will be held from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 in Dubai, according to the General Commission for Oman's participation at Expo 2020 Dubai at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

The Sultanate will participate in Expo 2021 which will be held under the slogan "Connecting Minds and Creating the Future", alongside more than 190 countries with the pavilion.

Besides showcasing the products and services of these companies at the Omani Pavilion, these companies will be taking part in other events including the Omani Investment Week which will be held as part of the six months' long Expo.

"As many as 400 small and medium enterprises including craftsmen, owners of small scale family businesses and rural women with their more than two thousand types of products and services are participating in the Expo 2021. However, numbers are not yet finalised", Mohsin al Balushi, Commissioner General, Expo 2021, Under-Secretary at the MoCIIP told the Observer.

"We have been receiving an overwhelming response from across the sectors and SME representation will be



one of its kind. So far, we have received more than 500 SME registrations and these SMEs are registered and classified with the support of the SME, section at the Ministry", Al Balushi added.

Additionally, international visitors to the Oman pavilion will be issued with a free visit visa to the Sultanate automatically. Thus will enable them to pass through Oman and spend some time here. As many as eight ministries and the Royal Oman Police are involved in the implementation of the Oman

pavilion at the Expo 2020.

"This visa facility will help attract more tourists to the various attractions of the Sultanate and that will be a reciprocal arrangement with the UAE which is hosting the Expo 2020", Al Balushi said.

Innovation Factory for R&D, which is the winner of the entrepreneurship award 2017, has been appointed as project lead in developing the first package of Oman pavilion in expo 2020 Dubai which includes creating the preliminary pavilion and detailed design and

supervision of contractor of the construction at the site.

Oman's pavilion, which bears the look and feel of a frankincense tree, has been given a virtual environment with advanced technology designed and manufactured by Omani youth from the Innovation Factory. To get a realtime feel, a 30-year-old frankincense tree was specially brought from the Sultanate to Dubai which will be the main emblem on which the Sultanate's pavilion is being built.

The design, development, and installation of the pavilion with the state-of-the-art technology, multimedia and the like is delivered by a consortium of Omani SMEs from different sectors to maximise the In-Country Value from the project", said Shaima al Gheilaniyah, Lead — Commercial Affairs, Innovation Factory.

Virtual sessions on Value Added Tax from today



MUSCAT: The Tax Authority will today launch a series of virtual sessions on the Value Added Tax (VAT), which come as part of the awareness campaign themed "With You, For You".

The campaign aims to introduce VAT and the mechanism of applying it. It also aims to rise the social awareness on the legal regulations for applying the tax in a manner that maintains the right of the consumer and the merchant.

The sessions will be broadcasted every Tuesday through the official channels of the Tax Authority in different social media platforms at 5 pm. The first session will be titled "Value Added Tax, its Application Mechanism and Method of Submitting Tax Declaration". The second and third sessions will discuss the mechanism of calculating VAT, invoices and tax records.

It should be noted that the Tax Authority started applying the VAT on July 16 as the number of those registered with the tax till the mid of 2021 stood at (17,500) merchants and service performers. — ONA



Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Heritage & Tourism

ADVERTISEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL TENDERS

Tender No.	Tender Name	Tender Document's Fees (Non Refundable)	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Bid Submission	Grade
12/2021	Assignment of a tourism representative company for the Sultanate in the Federal Republic of Germany, Nordic countries and Netherlands (Tourism Representative bureau)	RO 25	6/9/2021	29/9/2021	Excellent
13/2021	Assignment of a tourism representative company for the Sultanate in the United Kingdom and Ireland (Tourism Representative bureau)	RO 25	6/9/2021	29/9/2021	Excellent
14/2021	Assignment of a tourism representative company for the Sultanate in the Republic of India (Tourism Representative bureau)	RO 25	6/9/2021	29/9/2021	Excellent
15/2021	Assignment of a tourism representative company for the Sultanate in the Italian Republic (Tourism Representative bureau)	RO 25	6/9/2021	29/9/2021	Excellent

- International companies and establishments non-registered in the Sultanate may sign up to the international tenders through the digital portal of the e-tendering of the Tender Board via the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) whereupon they must register in accordance with the laws applicable in the Sultanate within 30 working days from being informed of the acceptance of their bids.

- Bids are submitted in line with the technical specifications and requirements and attached thereto a temporary bank bond issued by a local bank at a sum not less than 1% of the bid's amount and valid for 90 days from the date of submitting it electronically. The original receipt of the temporary bond is to be submitted one day before the submission's date at the Ministry's Tenders and Contracts Department, 2nd floor.

- The period for submitting the bids begins after the inquiry periods mentioned in the e-tendering system ends immediately and is to continue till the last date for bid submission before 10:00 am.

Help and inquiries:

www.omanotourism.gov.om
For further details, kindly communicate through sofic@omanotourism.gov.om or telephone nos. 22088085- 22088348

1. For inquiries related to the tender, kindly communicate electronically through the e-tendering system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

2. For inquiries related to the technical support of the etendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ita.gov.om or 24166670.

The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.



Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Tender Advertisement for the supply of Medical Equipment

The Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Centre announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Code & Name of Equipment	Quantity	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing	Tender Specification Fees
CCCRC/T/ 281/2021	{MEQ-MEQ-0129} Liquid Chromatography and Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS/MS)	1	30/08/2021	06/09/2021	OMR 70.000

Qualified companies interested in participating in this tender shall collect the tender specifications from the date of this advertisement from the following address:

Operational Committee of the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre, SQU Street Al Khoud, Sultanate of Oman, Procurement Department, Ground Floor.

Biddings that meet the above requirement should be submitted in a sealed envelope by an Omani National from your company addressed to the head of Purchase Committee in the tender box located as mentioned above.

Please note:

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



Muscat based artist feted at Dubai art expo



LIJU CHERIAN
@lijucherianoman

Dr Hafsa Banu Abid, a dentist turned artist who specialises in unique patterns of nail and string art, was honoured at an art exhibition titled 'Freedom' in Dubai recently.

She was the only artist from the Sultanate to get this unique honour and her work was mentioned in the art book 'Artnartisans' which was launched at the art exhibition.

Details of her unique art was mentioned in the first of its kind coffee table book that featured the artists and their journey with artworks.

The book also showcased senior and emerging artists in a single platform showing their style of art, journey and accomplishments.

The idea of the book was initiated by the Paintbrush Art Community comprising Sonal Purohit and Dr Romit Purohit and Vikas Bhargav based in Dubai.

The book was released to be circulated at the embassies, galleries, business houses, government and cultural sectors to create a significant reach of the artistic world in the society locally and internationally. The

book is also available in online versions on Kindle and Amazon.

Says an enthusiastic Dr Hafsa who runs White Smile Dental Specialty, "I was able to exhibit two nail and string artworks on Mother Teresa and a prayer and Islamic calligraphy named 'Kun Fayakun' which was well received and was known as the most unique art to be exhibited at the exhibition. I was praised especially by the guests of honour who referred to it as a never seen before art."

Dr Hafsa received the certificates and the book from Mrs Ruby Sajan and Anis Sajan, Vice Chairman, Danube Group.

A galaxy of prominent personalities from different fields attended the event along with 36 artists with 55 of their artworks including Dr Hafsa. The event also consisted of an act by the doctors of Gulf Medical University, Ajman, UAE, and a live painting by Sugat Priyadarshini, a famous artist based in Dubai.

Well-known gallery curators, critics, celebrities and media persons namely Peter Gressman, Shiba and Farah Khan (*Funun arts*), Pari sagar (*Be Attractive world*), Saju Nair (*iltelevisionario2*), Dolly Bindra and Isha Farah Quraishy graced the event.

Dibba harbours Sultanate's second largest fishing port

MUSCAT: The fishing port at Dibba in the Governorate of Musandam rates as the second largest fishing port in the Sultanate after Duqm Fishing Port.

Ahmed bin Ali al Aqbi, Head of Dibba Fishing Port, said that it is the foremost harbour at the national level that deals with the fishing sector, as well as the commercial and tourism sectors. It is a key hub in attracting investments, activating economic activity in the Governorate of Musandam and promoting the national economy.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Aqbi said that steps are under way to expand and develop the Port of Dibba through the construction of piers for fishing, business and tourism activities. These include one set up at a cost of RO 40 million for express ferries and the security sector, he added.

After the completion of expansion works by December 14, 2023, the area of the port will grow from 97,000 sqm to 779,000 sqm, said Al Aqbi, adding that the hub will provide enough open space to meet the expectations of local and foreign investors. A number of buildings will be floated for investment by owners of shopping outlets, restaurants and workshops.

Al Aqbi pointed out the new phase of the port's expansion will constitute a great transformation of projects at Musandam Governorate.

The projects will contribute to attracting tourists and investors, besides facilitating the traffic of cargo and passengers on a



daily basis. This includes the activities of the ferries company, cargo ships, loading and unloading vessels, which might be privately-owned or chartered by cargo firms from Musandam and other governorates.

During the period of pandemic lockdown and closure of borders, the Fishing Port of Dibba played a major role in the Wilayat of Dibba, being a gateway to the transport of passengers and goods.

During 2020, there were 140 voyages of cargo ships and loading and unloading vessels while express ferry voyages (Oman Ferries Company) ranged between 3 to 5 per

The new phase of the port's expansion will constitute a great transformation of projects at Musandam. The projects will contribute to attracting tourists and investors, besides facilitating cargo traffic and passengers on a daily basis

week, said Al Aqbi, noting that the traffic helped provide coastal areas in Dib ba, Lima and Khasab with foodstuff and building materials.

Al Aqbi explained that, by the end of 2020, 47 fishing ships were licensed to operate at Dibba Port. This is in addition to 972 fishing boats that benefited from the port, said Al Aqbi, adding that the volume of exported fish stood at 11,209 tonnes.

Al Aqbi pointed out that the government mulls adding Dibba Port as a support line to the logistic services facilities. It can be accorded the mission of receiving cruise liners and cargo vessels from abroad. — ONA



Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Tender Advertisement for the Therapeutic Nutritional Products

The Operational Committee of Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Centre announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing	Tender Specification Fees
CCCRC/T/283/2021	Therapeutic Nutritional Products	19/08/2021	23/08/2021	OMR 50.000

Qualified companies interested in participating in this tender shall collect the tender specifications from the date of this advertisement from the following address:

Operational Committee of the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre, SQU Street Al Khoud, Sultanate of Oman, Procurement Department, Ground Floor.

Biddings that meet the above requirement should be submitted in a sealed envelope by an Omani National from your company addressed to the head of Purchase Committee in the tender box located at:

Operational Committee of the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre, SQU Street Al Khoud, Sultanate of Oman, Procurement Department, Ground Floor.

Please note:

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

CPA raids shop selling e-cigarettes in Al Dakhiliyah



MUSCAT: The directorate of Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate raided a shop selling electronic cigarettes and hookahs.

The move comes within the framework of the efforts made by the CPA in all governorates to monitor the markets and curb violations committed by some vendors and suppliers and prevent the spread of illicit or banned products that affect people's health.

As per the details, the CPA's inspectors, during a routine field visit on the market, observed a shop selling electronic cigarettes and hookahs in violation to decision No 698/2015 banning trading and dealing in electronic cigarettes and hookahs. The CPA's inspectors seized 385 boxes and are working to complement legal procedures.



ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Environment Authority invites all specialized companies and establishments to submit their offers to the following tenders:

Tender No	Tender Title	The tender document value (non-refundable)	Date of purchase of tender documents	Last date for purchasing tender	Last date for submission of tender
1/2021	Cleaning works of the Authority building in Al-Khuwair and its warehouses in Al-Seeb for 2022	R.O 25/-	17/8/2021	15/9/2021	29/9/2021
2/2021	Cleaning works of Environment Administration in Al Batinah South Governorate and its annex buildings for 2022				
3/2021	Establishing two protective barrier for turtles nesting sites at Masirah Island				
4/2021	Building fences to protect perennial trees in Taqah in the Governorate of Dhofar				
5/2021	Building fences to protect perennial trees in (Salalah, Thumrait, Al-Mazyona, Dhalkoot and Mirbat in the Governorate of Dhofar				

Companies registered with the Secretariat General of the Tender Board wishing to purchase the tenders can apply through the e-tendering website (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) provided that an original copy of a bank guarantee (1% of the tender value) valid for (120) days from the date of tender submission shall be submitted to the Financial Affairs Department at the Authority's main building in Al-Khuwair before bids opening.

For assistance in tender purchase and tender submission, please contact 24166670, e-mail: etenderhd@ita.gov.om

President Aoun hopes for Lebanon govt in days

BEIRUT: Lebanon's President Michel Aoun said he hoped a new government to be formed within the next couple days, as the country's descent into chaos spurred by a financial meltdown prompted renewed efforts to come to an agreement.

The two-year crisis hit a new crunch point in the past week, with shortages of imported fuel forcing hospitals, bakeries and other essential services to scale back or shut down.

At least 28 people were killed over the weekend when a fuel tanker exploded as people desperate for gasoline scrambled to get a share.

President Michel Aoun, the Maronite Christian head of state, is due to meet Najib Mikati, the prime minister-designate, on Monday.

"We are about to form a new government," Aoun said in an audio statement on Monday, specifying later it would be "within a couple days, God willing."

"It's evolving positively. (There are) some issues to be tackled, mainly names," a senior political source said. "The whole situation is deteriorating, the whole system is collapsing," the source added, explaining the impetus.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, on Sunday urged the government to be formed in two or three days, saying this was the only way to prevent anarchy which had already begun.

He also said Hezbollah would begin bringing diesel and gasoline from Iran and the timeline would be announced soon.

Speaking after meeting Aoun, US Ambassador Dorothy Shea said basic services had "reached the precipice of collapse".

"Everyday that goes by without an empowered government committed to and able to implement urgently needed reforms is a day in which the already dire situation slides further into humanitarian catastrophe," she said.

The culmination of decades of state corruption and misman-



Lebanon's Prime Minister-Designate Najib Mikati speaks after meeting with Lebanon's President Michel Aoun, at the presidential palace in Baabda, Lebanon on Monday. — Reuters

The two-year crisis hit a new crunch point in the past week, with shortages of imported fuel forcing hospitals, bakeries and other essential services to scale back or shut down

agement, the crisis entered a new phase last week when the central bank said it would no longer finance fuel imports at subsidised exchange rates.

With its currency reserves depleted, the bank has said new legislation is needed to allow use of the mandatory foreign reserve for such imports. The government demanded prices be left unchanged. There has been no resolution to the standoff.

The crisis has sunk the currency by more than 90 per cent and sent more than half the population into poverty.

Despite that, the ruling elite has failed to agree a rescue plan, or to form a new government since Prime Minister Hassan Diab's cabinet quit last August after the Beirut port explosion.

Mikati, a businessman-politician, was designated to form the government after Saad al-Hariri abandoned his attempts, saying he could not agree with Aoun. Each blamed the other.

— Reuters

Iran's daily Covid deaths hit record high of 655

TEHRAN: Iran on Monday reported a record 655 Covid-19 deaths over the past 24 hours as the government started imposing tougher restrictions to combat a surge in coronavirus infections led by the highly contagious Delta variant, state TV reported.

The health ministry said the total number of cases had reached 4,467,015 with 41,194 new cases in the past 24 hours, while total fatalities had increased to 98,483, state TV reported.

All non-essential businesses and public offices across the Middle East's worst-hit country will be closed until August 21, state TV said.

Authorities have also imposed a travel ban between all Iranian cities from Sunday until August 27, except for essential vehicles.

Health authorities have warned that daily deaths might reach 800 in coming weeks if Iranians fail to respect health protocols.

The sharp surge in cases and deaths has forced the clerical establishment to allow imports of vaccines made by U.S. and British companies, which Iran's top authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had



Iranians at Valiasr square in the capital Tehran on Monday. — AFP

forbidden in January.

A health ministry official, Kianoush Jahanpour, said there was no ban on importing any approved Covid-19 vaccines into Iran "including AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer, other than those produced in the US and the UK", Iranian media reported on

Sunday.

Social media users, inside and outside Iran, have accused the government of being slow to vaccinate people, with only over 4 per cent of the 83 million population fully inoculated. Officials have blamed US sanctions for hampering efforts

to buy foreign vaccines and for delays in deliveries.

The vaccination campaign for the more-than 83 million people in the country is therefore making slow progress.

So far, only 5 per cent of Iranians have been fully vaccinated.

— Agencies

Firefighters evacuate towns outside Jerusalem after fire



A firefighting plane works on extinguishing a forest fire at the Jerusalem mountains near Shores on Monday. — AFP

JERUSALEM: Firefighters battling a wildfire in wooded hills outside Jerusalem evacuated more small communities on Monday as planes and crews fought flames for a second day.

The blaze some 10 km (six miles) west of Jerusalem sent clouds of smoke billowing east but there appeared to be little danger the fire would reach the city. No serious injuries have been reported.

Israel's Fire and Rescue Authority said 45 crews and eight

planes were battling the blaze, which the country's internal security minister said burned around 4,200 acres (17,000 hectares) on Sunday, forcing hundreds to evacuate.

Several more communities were evacuated on Monday afternoon, the Fire and Rescue Authority wrote on Twitter, while others were given evacuation orders. The authority's commissioner announced a general mobilisation for personnel to help stop the blaze.

In a meeting with fire and rescue officials late on Sunday, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said he was concerned the blaze could reach Jerusalem's western localities, including the area of Ein Kerem, home to Israel's Hadassah Medical Centre.

"Fire brigades are preparing a defensive position there," Bennett said, warning that while he was hopeful crews would bring the blaze under control, "fires and winds have a capricious dynamic." — Reuters

4 Palestinians killed in West Bank town

RAMALLAH: Four men were reported dead on Monday, a day that saw a renewed leap in Palestinian-Israeli tensions, including a new missile launch towards Israel and a ban on chocolate imports for fear they were being used to finance violence.

The four men died during an Israeli anti-terrorism operation in the occupied West Bank, according to Palestinian sources.

According to the Israeli Border Police on Monday, security forces had entered a refugee camp in Jenin to arrest a person for activities.

In the process, the border police officers came under heavy fire, the agency said. Security force members returned fire on the attackers. There were no injuries on the Israeli side.

According to Palestinian sources, the men were shot by snipers. Additionally, Palestinians fired a rocket from the Gaza Strip towards southern Israel on Monday, Israeli sources said later. This was the first rocket fire from the coastal area since a conflict in May. — dpa

SHORT TAKES

ISTANBUL

Toll rises to 70 from Turkey floods

Flash floods that swept through towns in Turkish Black Sea provinces have killed 70 people and emergency workers continue to search for 47 missing people, authorities said on Monday. The floods last week brought chaos as torrents of water tossed dozens of cars and heaps of debris along streets, destroyed buildings and bridges, closed roads and damaged electricity infrastructure.

Sixty people died as a result of floods in Kastamonu province. Another nine people died in Si-



nop and one in Bartın, the Disaster and Emergency Management Directorate (AFAD) said.

Forty-seven people were reported missing in Kastamonu and Sinop, it said.

KHARTOUM

'To keep pushing for peace in Ethiopia'

Khartoum will press ahead with efforts to ensure stability in Ethiopia, the Sudanese premier said on Sunday, as its neighbour grapples with grinding conflict in its northern Tigray region.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said Sudan had reached out to all sides as part of a push to end the conflict. "We will continue to exert all efforts for Ethiopia to become stable, unified and secure," Hamdok told a press conference in Khartoum.

Northern Ethiopia has been



wracked by fighting since last November, when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops to topple the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the region's then ruling party.

CAIRO

Sisi and CIA director discuss tensions

US Central Intelligence Agency chief William Burns met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Sunday for talks on the situation in the Palestinian territories, Libya and Afghanistan, the president's office said.

The talks in Cairo covered "a number of regional issues of common interest especially tensions in the Middle East as well as Afghanistan, the Renaissance Dam (in Ethiopia) and the crisis in Libya", Egypt's western neighbour, it said in a statement,



without giving details. Egypt, the second largest recipient of US aid in the world after Israel and a key regional ally, brokered a Gaza ceasefire in May after 11 days of strikes between the Jewish state and Palestinians.

In brief

■ COLOMBO



MINISTER WHO ENDORSED COVID MAGIC POTION AXED

Sri Lanka's president on Monday demoted the health minister who publicly endorsed sorcery and magic potions to battle Covid-19, as coronavirus infections and deaths hit record highs.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office said Pavithra Wanniarachchi's health portfolio had been given to Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella who is also the government spokesman.

Wanniarachchi (pictured) was in intensive care in January after contracting the virus despite publicly consuming and endorsing a "magic potion" against Covid-19 made by a sorcerer.

■ MUMBAI



INDIAN MEDIA CHEER HIGH COURT ORDER

Some Indian media on Monday cheered a court order over the weekend which put on hold a part of new rules seeking to regulate content on digital news websites, calling the move significant for press freedom in India.

The Bombay High Court put on hold the implementation of rules that digital news media would have to compulsorily follow the code of conduct laid down by the Press Council of India, a self-regulating press watchdog, and the country's cable TV code.

The court ruled following petitions filed by a news website and a journalist.

■ BEIJING



RESCUERS RUSH TO FREE 19 TRAPPED MINERS

Rescuers in northwestern China worked on Sunday to free 19 trapped coal miners, hours after their site was flooded by mud in an accident that has already killed one worker.

The flooding happened around noon on Saturday at the Chaidai coal mine in Qinghai province, state media reported.

Mining accidents are common in China, where the industry has a poor safety record and regulations are often weakly enforced.

At Chaidai, 21 people were working underground at the time of the accident, and one person was rescued with injuries, China's emergency management ministry said. Another was found dead, with the remaining trapped in the mine.

Desperate Afghans throng Kabul airport, 5 killed

KABUL: Thousands of Afghans desperate to leave the country thronged Kabul airport where five people were killed on Monday after Taliban insurgents seized the capital, prompting the US military to suspend evacuations to clear the airfield.

Crowds converged on the airport seeking to escape, including some clinging to a US military transport plane as it taxied on the runway, according to footage posted by a media company.

The United States temporarily halted all evacuation flights from Kabul to clear people who had converged on the airfield, a US defence official said.

It was not immediately clear how the five people died at the airport. A US official said troops had fired in the air to deter people trying to force their way on to a military flight that was set to take US diplomats and embassy staff out of the city.

One witness, waiting for a flight out for more than 20 hours, said it was unclear if the five had been shot or killed in a stampede. US officials at the airport were not immediately available for comment.

In a social media video, three bodies could be seen on the ground near what appeared to be an airport side entrance. Reuters could not verify the footage. Another witness said he had also seen five bodies.

People are desperate to flee the country although Taliban officials have said no one will be harmed.

"Everyone is worried," a former government employee now in hiding in Kabul said. "They're not targeting people yet but they will, that's the reality. Maybe in two or three weeks, that's why people are



Afghan people climb atop a plane as they wait at the Kabul airport on Monday. — AFP

QATAR AIDS EVACUATION EFFORTS

AMMAN: Qatar said on Monday it was doing its utmost to help evacuate diplomats and foreign staff in international organisations seeking to leave Afghanistan.

Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani, whose country has been playing a key role in trying to reach a political settlement in Afghanistan, told a news conference in the Jordanian capital that Doha was also

seeking a peaceful transition after the withdrawal of US troops.

"There is international concern about the fast pace of developments and Qatar is doing its utmost to bring a peaceful transition, especially after the vacuum that happened," Al Thani said.

Qatar, which has hosted a Taliban office since 2013 for peace talks, was also working to ensure there would be a

complete ceasefire across the country and that stability prevailed, he added.

Other Gulf Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have yet to comment on the Taliban taking control of Afghanistan.

Bahrain, the current chair of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council, said on Monday it would initiate consultations with fellow Gulf states regarding the situation in Afghanistan, state media reported. — **Reuters**

fighting to get out now."

Suhail Shaheen, a spokesperson for the Taliban, said in a message on Twitter that their fighters were under strict orders not to harm anyone.

"Life, property and honour of no one shall be harmed but must be protected by the mujahideen,"

he said.

Earlier, Mohammad Naeem, spokesman for the Taliban's political office, told Al Jazeera TV that the Afghan people and the Taliban had just witnessed the fruits of their efforts and sacrifices over 20 years.

"Thanks to God, the war is

over," he said. It took the Taliban just over a week to seize control of the whole country after a lightning sweep that ended in Kabul as government forces, trained for years and equipped by the United States and others at a cost of billions of dollars, melted away. — **Reuters**

‘Suicidal reproducer’ mammal survives Australia fires

SYDNEY: A rare, shrew-like Australian marsupial, whose males die en masse from stress after a "frenetic" mating season, has survived devastating wildfires that scorched one of their few habitats, researchers said on Monday.

Scientists had feared for the future of a key population of silver-headed antechinus, only formally identified eight years ago, when wildfires in 2019 swept through much of their habitat in the Bulburin National Park in Queensland, eastern Australia.

It is one of only three known habitats in Australia for the species, which survives largely on insects and spiders.

"We found 21 individuals across burnt and unburnt habitat which is great. It means they are persisting," said Andrew Baker of the Queensland University of Technology who led the search with PhD candidate Stephane Batista.

With a third of their habitat burned, Baker said he had feared finding none of the animals.

The male silver-headed antechinus already lives a precari-



The male silver-headed antechinus already lives a precarious life, dying before one year of age from the effects of an intense two-week mating season

ous life, dying before one year of age from the effects of an intense two-week mating season. Females rarely survive to a third breeding season.

"With the males, high testosterone levels from super-sized testes causes a failure of the switch that turns off the stress hormone cortisol. So they get flooded with cortisol during

Airlines avoid Afghan airspace

PARIS: Airlines are avoiding flights over Afghanistan as the local aviation authority on Monday urged them to reroute after it gave Kabul airspace to the military.

British Airways, Lufthansa, Singapore Airlines, Air France and Virgin Atlantic announced they were no longer flying over the country after the Taliban took over Kabul.

The Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority said in a "notice to airmen" that "Kabul airspace has been released to the military".

It advised airlines to reroute as "any transit through Kabul airspace will be uncontrolled".

Lufthansa, whose group includes Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, Eurowings and Swiss, and Air France said they would no longer use Afghan airspace until "further notice".

Lufthansa said its group's India-bound flights would suffer delays of up to an hour. The company said the announcement was made to ensure "flight safety".

Air France is rerouting flights headed to Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, New Delhi and Singapore.

British Airways said in a brief statement that it is "not currently using Afghanistan's airspace".

Singapore Airlines said it was avoiding the airspace "in view of the latest development in Afghanistan". — **AFP**



A man watches a television on display at a shopping mall store as Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin announces his resignation as he addresses the nation during a live telecast in Kuala Lumpur on Monday. — **AFP**

Malaysian PM quits after turbulent 17 months

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's prime minister resigned and his government collapsed on Monday after just 17 months in office, throwing the country into fresh political turmoil as it battles a serious coronavirus outbreak.

Muhyiddin Yassin's tumultuous period in office came to an end after allies withdrew support, and he becomes the shortest-serving premier in Malaysian history.

With an election unlikely and no obvious successor on the horizon, Malaysia is set for a period of intense political horse-trading before a workable coalition takes shape.

After submitting his resignation to the king, the 74-year-old

took a parting shot at enemies within his coalition.

"I could have taken the easy way out by casting aside my principles to remain as prime minister — but that is not my choice," he said in a televised address.

"I will never work with kleptocrats." He has claimed that several MPs who pulled support from his coalition — including scandal-plagued ex-leader Najib Razak — had been angered that he refused to get corruption cases against them dropped.

The national palace confirmed the monarch, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah — who formally appoints the premier — had accepted Muhyiddin's resignation. — **AFP**

the breeding season and ultimately it poisons them."

"The males suffer internal bleeding, their hair falls out, sometimes they go blind. Even then, they may stumble around looking for females to mate with until they die," Baker said.

Scientists trapped the surviving marsupials from late May to early June this year, using detection dogs to sniff out the best areas to place traps or sensor cameras in an operation funded by World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia.

Baker said the outlook for the silver-headed antechinus was clouded by the impact of climate change creating more frequent droughts and fires.

In addition, they were threatened by non-native predators such as cats and the destruction of the undergrowth they live in by animals including cows, horses and feral pigs.

WWF-Australia's Daniel Grover, who took part in the search, said it was important to conduct research into the species after the fires. — **AFP**

Fresh fires force evacuations in Greek villages

ATHENS: Greek firefighters battled to control two new fires around Athens on Monday, forcing the evacuation of several villages after blistering blazes scorched swathes of land in the country.

Greece's prime minister has linked the devastating blazes to the "climate crisis", speaking last week as wildfires swept across the Mediterranean, engulfing parts of Greece, Italy and Spain.

Scores of firefighters battled fresh blazes on Monday near the Greek port city of Lavrio, as helicopters and planes dropped water from the air, a firefighting official told AFP.

Locals from three nearby villages southeast of Athens were ordered to evacuate.

"The fire front is large and the winds in the area are very strong," Thanasis Avgerinos, the deputy regional governor of East Attica told AFP.

"This is a very flammable pine-covered area."

Meanwhile, another forest fire broke out in Vilia, Attica, some 60 kilometres (37 miles) northwest of Athens, prompting



A firefighter extinguishes fire in the village of Markati, near Athens, on Monday. — AFP

the mobilisation of air and ground forces.

Authorities have called for the evacuation of two nearby villages, while another 40 firefighters were battling the blazes, according to a firefighting official.

The fires come on the heels of blazes in recent weeks that have destroyed homes, properties, pine forests, beehives and livestock across more than 100,000 hectares of the affected land.

The island of Evia, 200

kilometres northeast of Athens, has paid the heaviest price with more than half of the hectares burned there.

The Peloponnese peninsula, 300 kilometres west of Athens, but also the northern suburbs of the

Spain evacuates people from path of wildfire

MADRID: Spanish authorities have evacuated nearly 1,000 people from their homes to protect them from a wildfire that has destroyed at least 12,000 hectares (29,652 acres) of land since Saturday, spurred on by a severe heatwave.

The blaze in Navalacruz, a rural area about 120 km (75 miles) west of Madrid in the central region of Castilla y Leon, began when a car burst into flames on a highway on Saturday and forced the evacuation of eight villages.

Regional environment chief Juan Carlos Suarez-

Quinones said on Monday a combination of strong winds, high temperatures and low humidity created perfect conditions for the fire to spread, but firefighters were gradually bringing it under control.

"If there is no change in the wind conditions, we should be able to stabilise the fire today," he said.

Around 1,000 firefighters, including 140 emergency military personnel, have been deployed to tame the blaze, as well as helicopters and planes, he said. — **Reuters**

capital, were also heavily affected by some 600 fires.

The blazes were finally brought under control Friday.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has said the fires offered a dire warning.

"The climate crisis tells us everything must change," he said.

As global temperatures rise, heatwaves are predicted to become more frequent and intense, and their impacts more widespread, scientists say. — **AFP**

Medics, aid workers rush to reach Haiti quake zone before storm

PORT-AU-PRINCE: Doctors and aid workers rushed to get flights or transport to southwestern Haiti ahead of a storm on Monday to reach areas flattened by a major earthquake that killed at least 1,297 people and injured thousands more in the Caribbean nation.

Saturday's 7.2 magnitude quake brought down thousands of homes and buildings in the deeply impoverished country, which is still recovering from another major temblor 11 years ago and the assassination of its president, Jovenel Moise, last month.

The areas in and around the city of Les Cayes suffered the biggest hit, putting enormous strain on local hospitals, some of which were badly damaged by the quake.

Prime Minister Ariel Henry said there was no time to lose.

"From this Monday, we will move faster. Aid provision is going to be accelerated," he wrote on Twitter. "We will multiply efforts tenfold to reach as many victims as possible with aid."

Port-au-Prince airport on Monday was bustling with medics and aid workers, with domestic



People drive past the remains of the "Sacré coeur des Cayes" church in Les Cayes on Monday. — AFP

and private charter flights filled with humanitarian teams and supplies headed south.

Access to the area has been complicated by months of political turmoil in Haiti, which has left gangs in control of key access routes to parts of the country.

The United Nations called for a "humanitarian corridor" to enable aid to pass through gang-held territories.

Aid workers were hurrying to beat the arrival of Tropical Depression Grace, which early on Monday was moving west-northwest off the southern coast

of Hispaniola, the island that Haiti shares with the neighbouring Dominican Republic.

According to projections by the US National Hurricane Center (NHC), Grace will pass right through areas directly hit by the quake, and could douse them with heavy rain. Skies over Port-au-Prince were still clear early on Monday.

Many Haitians who lost their homes have been sleeping outdoors, many traumatised by memories of a magnitude 7 quake 11 years ago that struck far closer to Port-au-Prince, the capital.

— **Reuters**

UK gun applicants to face social media checks

LONDON: Britain's interior ministry on Monday asked police to review the social media accounts of people applying for gun licences and revisit existing permits, after the country's worst mass shooting since 2010.

On Thursday Jake Davison, 22, shot and killed five people — including his mother and a three-year-old girl — in Plymouth in southwest England before taking his own life.

His social media accounts revealed misogynistic views and interest in right-wing politics, guns and violent video games.

But the local police restored Davison's gun licence and his weapon in July months after they had been removed following an assault allegation — a decision now being scrutinised by the police watchdog. — **AFP**

New Covid vaccine shows promise

LONDON: GlaxoSmithKline and CureVac said a study on macaque monkeys showed their jointly-developed mRNA Covid-19 vaccine candidate to be "strongly improved" in protecting against the virus compared with CureVac's first attempt.

The encouraging news on its "second-generation" vaccine gave CureVac's German-listed shares an 8 per cent lift, as the stock gradually recovers from a slump in June when the German biotech company's first vaccine candidate recorded a disappointing 48 per cent efficacy in mass testing on humans.

The companies said on Monday that a blood analysis of the animals showed that the next-generation vaccine known as CV2CoV triggered virus-fighting antibodies as well as immune cells that target infected cells faster and in greater quantities than CureVac's first-generation vaccine candidate.

The surge in antibodies and immune cells was similar to that observed after a real infection with SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes Covid-19, they



A volunteer receives a dose of CureVac vaccine or a placebo during a study by the German biotech firm CureVac as part of a testing for a new vaccine against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), in Brussels. — **Reuters**

said. Higher antibody blood counts were observed across virus variants of concern, including the Beta, Delta and Lambda lineages, they added.

When infected with the original SARS-CoV-2 virus detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan, macaques vaccinated with CV-2CoV had a better clearance of the virus in the lungs and nasal passages, when comparing the two vaccines.

The results have yet to be peer-reviewed for publication in a medical journal.

— **Reuters**

LONDON

Shots do not raise risk of miscarriage

The UK's health regulator said on Monday Covid-19 vaccines did not raise the risk of miscarriage, and that it had not found any link between the shots and changes to menstrual periods.

"There is no pattern from the reports to suggest that any of the Covid-19 vaccines used in the UK, or any reactions to these vaccines, increase the risk of miscarriage or stillbirth," the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said in a statement.



The MHRA's findings are in line with a similar review from Europe earlier this month, which showed no causal link between Covid-19 vaccines and menstrual disorders.

ABIDJAN

Ivory Coast starts Ebola jabs after first case

Ivory Coast was set to roll out vaccinations against Ebola on Monday after the country recorded its first known case of the disease since 1994, the health ministry said. "Health workers, close relatives and contacts of the victim" will be vaccinated from Monday afternoon, using 5,000 doses sent from Guinea, spokesman Germain Mahan Sehi said.

Ivorian health workers had previously said that vaccinations of "targeted groups" had already begun on Sunday. The



case was recorded in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's economic hub, in an 18-year-old Guinean woman who had arrived in the country on Wednesday after travelling by road from Labe in Guinea, the authorities said on Saturday.

NEW YORK

US opens probe of Tesla Autopilot

US safety officials opened a preliminary investigation into Tesla's Autopilot after identifying 11 crashes involving the driver assistance system, officials said Monday.

The incidents dating back to 2018 included one fatal crash and seven that resulted in injuries, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Tesla founder Elon Musk has defended the Autopilot system and the electric automaker



warns that it requires "active driver supervision" behind the wheel, but critics, including in Congress, say the system can be easily fooled and have called for NHTSA to take action.

Lebanon reels from latest deadly blast

ROUBA EL HUSSEINI

Lebanon on Monday reeled from a deadly explosion that burned alive people desperate to fill plastic containers with fuel in a country sinking ever deeper into darkness and chaos.

At least 28 people were killed when the fuel tank, which was swarmed by residents clamouring to fill their vehicles amid crippling shortages, blew up early on Sunday in the northern region of Akkar.

The latest deadly disaster comes as Lebanon grapples with an economic crisis described by the World Bank as one of the world's worst since the 1850s. Nearly 80 people were also injured in the blast, many of them with burns that further overwhelmed hospitals struggling to function without electricity, medics said.

On Monday, foreign countries and UN agencies were scrambling emergency aid to help exhausted health workers cope with the new influx of serious injuries and run DNA tests on the charred remains of the dead.

Shortages of key commodities have accelerated and compounded one another in recent days, leaving much of Lebanon struggling to source fuel, gas and even bread, with buying power pummelled by the currency losing more than 90 per cent of its value on the black market.

The country's six million inhabitants now fear the Internet and drinking water will be next to disappear.

The blast in Akkar, one of the most impoverished parts of the country, was a deadly direct consequence of a vicious cycle fast turning the region's erstwhile beacon of modernity into a failed state.

Many private and public sector employees have been told to stay home and most of the rest have often ended up doing the same for lack of transport options. Stuck in an endless queue of cars at a Beirut petrol station, Mohammed, who did not want to give his full name, said he could see no light at the end of the tunnel.

"We need to leave Lebanon. We all need to get out", said the 30-year-old engineer. "I've started working on it, and God help those who stay."

— AFP

We need to leave Lebanon. We all need to get out. I've started working on it, and God help those who stay
MOHAMMED
An engineer



A RISKY JOB

A worker cleans a dome of the Esplanade Theatre in Singapore on Monday. — AFP

Swift Taliban takeover leaves US image in tatters

SHAUN TANDON

After two decades in Afghanistan, America's longest war was ending with the image of the United States in tatters.

With the swift collapse on Sunday of the government in Kabul, the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks that triggered the US invasion will be marked with the Taliban back in control of Afghanistan, despite a cost to the United States of nearly 2,500 lives and more than \$2 trillion.

To some observers, the debacle following the withdrawal of US troops will inevitably weaken the United States on the global stage at a time when President Joe Biden was speaking of rallying democracies.

"America's credibility as an ally is diminished because of the way the Afghan government was abandoned beginning with the Doha talks", said Husain Haqqani, Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, referring to the deal

last year in the Qatari capital with the Taliban in which the United States set a pullout timeline.

Haqqani, now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, noted how US diplomats in the end could do little more than send tweets urging the Taliban to stop.

"That envoys of the mightiest nation on earth can be duped as they were in Doha, and its leaders ignored so easily as they have been in the final days, will encourage others to engage in duplicitous diplomacy", Haqqani said.

Biden faced heated criticism that the withdrawal was mismanaged, with the United States racing to evacuate its sprawling embassy just a month after he played down fears the Afghan government would crumble quickly.

"It is going to have ramifications not just for Afghanistan", said Representative Liz Cheney, a Republican hawk.

"America's adversaries know they can

threaten us, and our allies are questioning this morning whether they can count on us for anything", she said in an ABC interview.

The Biden administration is quick to point out that former president Donald Trump negotiated the Doha deal on the withdrawal and that a majority of the US public favours ending "forever wars."

Trump has repeatedly put the blame on his successor, however, calling for him to resign on Sunday "in disgrace for what he has allowed to happen to Afghanistan."

"What Joe Biden has done with Afghanistan is legendary. It will go down as one of the greatest defeats in American history!" he said in an earlier statement on Sunday.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, also speaking on ABC, said the United States had "succeeded" in its primary mission of bringing justice to the Al Qaeda perpetrators of the September 11 attacks.

— AFP

Transcending ideological affiliations | A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



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ZAHIR AL GHAFRI'S COSMOPOLITANISM IS SUCH THAT ONE CAN HARDLY FIND ANY TREATMENT OF LOCAL THEMES IN HIS ENTIRE OEUVRE

Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi Born in 1956, Zahir al Ghafri is among the first poets championing verse free poetry in Oman. Thematically, there's a marked transcendence of all manner of ideological affiliations in his poetry.

In fact, his cosmopolitanism is such that one can hardly find any treatment of local themes in his entire oeuvre. The following are translations of poems from his *Whenever an Angel Appeared in the Fort* published in Beirut in 2008.

The Stranger
Those sitting care not about the stranger.
I left my life there between the stones
Here I am
Like someone hunting dusk's glow.
Must all these years have passed
To discover I was but a cry
Returning from death

From solitude lighter than a bird's feather
Carrying regret's smell and shadows? My straying glance
Knits a snare from my distant past
And every word I utter to myself
Raises my lofty destiny Like a bow broken on a ladder.
Light rain on the window
A black cloud-clothed face
Just like that
The underground prince lands
Carrying an icon that swings
Like a copper necklace.
I say neither mind nor forest
Will be at peace
Like a sickle, truth passes by my face. From one city to another
I plunge into rivers empty of friendship
Resort to fear
To charms
To the magic of bygone days
Knowing the arrow shall never cease.

My heart is a temple for angels
And a single step
Just a single step
Over garden's grass is enough.
O God
Should I find but a white hand in the river
Whenever I peek through the window? There's no father, no mother, no bed to say to me: "Sleep beneath the sun".
My loss is but certain in what I own
I owned no home or gods' foresight.
I'm probably a lost creature
Under a star
Behind the light of a curtain.
Regret is the garment
Of those I love
My boughs are still white
Thus I raise my hand to write:
Wilderness is Iram zaat Al'imad
And my towering fruits. Those sitting
Care not about the stranger.
Beside the fountain

The pavements filled with butterflies tonight
An injured ibex with a bloody knee I walk by, hear a sound Like a breeze descending on the hand: "There's no life
Nor a mother suckling ancestors. Go there
To that forest. Your guide is a torch
In the tiger's eye. Go there
Die alone
Behind a dome buried in the fog.
Karin Boye I'll talk to you tonight I'll talk to the angel in you
The angel sleeping next to the grave.
I'll talk to you, Karin Boye
As you look with your fiery eyes
At the crystal tempest
While the gun fog covers the city's night. Femininity is a flower on a suicide bed
A flower that raises the call of

hands
To the heights. That voice is yours
It rings like an ibex chased in a wasteland
Coming from freedom's banks
Your voice digs a grave above hills.
Leave God asleep on the bough
Take a cup of wine
From the fountain's stone
For the third millennium.
Miracles are few these days
But pain usually comes
Before everybody's eyes
Here or there.
Your life was a forty year old cloud
Filled with butterflies
But remember
Either in the forest or on the river's edge
Boys stay up on your fingertips' light
Like buds opening up in the air.

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OMAN EDGE QATAR CLUB IN FRIENDLY

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT, AUGUST 16

The Oman national football team edged Qatar club FK Kolubara 1-0 in the second friendly match on Sunday as part of the team's overseas preparatory camp in Serbia. The only goal in the match was netted by Mohsin al Ghassani in the 49th minute.

The 'Red Warriors' outclassed FK Kolubara 4-0 in the opening preparatory encounter. The goals were scored by Mohsin al Ghassani (2nd minute), Abdullah Fawaz (20), Essam al Subhi (67) and Mohammed al Ghafri (83). Both games were part of the Sultanate team's preparation for the deciding round of 2022 Fifa World Cup qualifiers, 2021 Fifa Arab World Cup and Arabian Gulf Cup.

The overseas camp in Serbia will end on August 23. According to the schedule, the Red Warriors will play two more friendly games.

In the match against the Qatar club, the Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic began the match with a starting list which featured Ahmed al Rawahi as the goalkeeper. Ali al Busaidy, Juma al Habsi, Khalid al Buraiki and Saud al Habsi were the defenders.

Mohsin Jawher was positioned in the midfield besides Omar al Fazari, Zahir al Aghbari and Harib al Saadi. Al Mundher al Alawi and Abdulaziz al Maqbali were the attackers. It was the first match for Al Mundher al Alawi after returning from the injury as he completed the recovery period successfully.

Coach Branko's men will commence their campaign in the final round of the joint

qualification with a tough encounter against Japan on September 2 in Tokyo.

The following match is scheduled in Muscat on September 7 against Saudi Arabia.

AFC TEAM VISITS MUSCAT

In Muscat, the Oman Football Association (OFA) discussed the latest preparation for hosting the match of the qualification at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

A delegation from the Asian Football Confederations (AFC) visited Muscat and had discussion with the officials of OFA. A panel comprised members from Ministry of Culture and Sports, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information, ROB, Oman Airports and Mwasalat Company to finalise the arrangements of hosting the forthcoming matches in Muscat.

The main task of the committee is to secure all the necessary technical and logistics arrangements.

The AFC has ensured to provide the VAR (Video Assistant Referee) system for the match.

OMAN SQUAD FOR OVERSEAS CAMP

Mohsin al Ghassani, Jameel al Yahmadi, Zahir al Aghbari, Amjad al Harthy, Abdulaziz al Ghailani, Mohammed al Musalami, Fayez al Rushaidi, Omar al Fazari, Abdulaziz al Maqbali, Salah al Yahyae, Abdullah Fawaz, Ali al Busaidy, Juma al Habsi, Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Al Mundher al Alawi, Mohammed al Ghafri, Harib al Saadi, Arshad al Alawi, Fahmi Dorbeen, Khalid al Buraiki, Essam al Subhi, Khalid al Hajri, Mohsin Jawher, Yazeed al Maashani, Ahmed al Kaabi, Saud al Habsi and Ahmed al Khamisi.



Federer to have knee surgery, 'glimmer of hope' for return

PARIS: Roger Federer will miss the upcoming US Open and be sidelined for many months because he needs more knee surgery, an operation that the Swiss great said on Sunday will give him a "glimmer of hope" that he can resume his glittering career.

The 40-year-old Federer, speaking on a video posted to his Instagram account, said doctors told him that in order to feel better for the medium- to long-term, he would need surgery on the knee that he injured again during the grass court season.

"I'll be on crutches for many weeks and then also out of the game for many months," Federer said.

"It's going to be difficult of course in some ways but at the same time I know it's the right thing to do because I want to be healthy and I want to be running

around later as well."

Federer, who shares the men's record of 20 Grand Slam titles with Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, had knee surgery twice in 2020 which resulted in more than a year of rehabilitation before a return to action in March, some 13 months after his Australian Open semifinal exit last year.

He withdrew from the French Open in June after winning his third-round match to save himself for the grass court season and a bid to win a record-extending ninth Wimbledon title.

Federer reached the quarterfinals at the All England club but lost in straight sets to Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, failing to win a game in the third set.

Federer then withdrew from the Tokyo Olympics as well as a number of lead-up events to the August 30-September 12 US



Open. "I want to give myself a glimmer of hope also to return to the tour in some shape or form," said Federer.

"I am realistic, don't get me wrong, I know how difficult it is at this age right now to do another surgery and try it, but look, I want to be healthy and I'll go through

the rehab process I think also with the goal while I am still active which I think is going to help me during this long period of time."

Towards the end of his 97-second video, Federer thanked his fans for their support.

"You guys are always incredible, you always think of me," Federer

"I'll be on crutches for many weeks and then also out of the game for many months"

ROGER FEDERER

Tennis great

said. "Some of you suffer with me, some of you just wish me the best and want to see me back on court or see me smile. I am doing OK so I appreciate that.

"And I'll update you as I move along with my rehab. I wish you all the best and I'll check in with you soon."

Russian Daniil Medvedev, speaking to reporters after winning the Masters 1000 event in Toronto, said the absence of Federer on tour is a pity for everyone and wished him a speedy recovery.

"I mean, age takes over. Hopefully we can still see him back on tour, because I think that's what he wants. That's what everybody wants," said Medvedev.

"Of course, even if he's going to be back on tour, we're gonna try to beat him every time we play him, because even if it's Roger, I know we are still competitors on the court.

"The only thing I can wish him right now ... is health, speedy recovery, and seeing him back on tour, yeah, because we never know what's gonna happen next."

— Reuters

SHAMI, BUMRAH, SIRAJ STAR TO LEAVE ENGLAND REELING



LONDON: Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah starred with both bat and ball as India pressed for a dramatic win in the second Test at Lord's on Monday following an England collapse on the last day.

England were 97-7 at the time of going to press, post-tea, with Jos Buttler and Ollie Robinson struggling to save the game while India charged ahead for a famous win.

India, however, were now three wickets away from what would be just a third win in 19 Tests at Lord's and a 1-0 lead in a five-match series following a rain-marred draw at Trent Bridge.

Shami, with 56 not out, and Bumrah (34 not out) both hit their highest Test scores. They also shared an unbroken ninth-wicket stand of 89, during India's second innings 298-8 declared.

Bumrah then had Rory Burns out for nought when the left-hander was caught off a leading edge at wide mid-off.

The struggling Dom Sibley followed soon afterwards when he nicked a superb Shami leg-cutter to wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

It was the first time in 141 years of Test cricket in England that both home openers had been out for a duck in the same innings.

There have only been three successful run-chases of over 200 in a Test at Lord's — West Indies' 344-1 in 1984 and England's 282-3 in 2004 and 218-3 in 1965, both against New Zealand.

And at 1-2, Root's men did not look like joining that list.

The recalled Haseeb Hameed, in on a pair, was dropped in the slips on four before his nine off 45 balls ended when lbw to an Ishant Sharma nip-backer, despite a review.

New batsman Bairstow had made 57 during a first-innings partnership of 121 with Yorkshire team-mate Root.

But on Monday he was lbw to Ishant for two, although it needed an India review to overturn the original not out decision.

Root falls for 33

Three balls after the resumption England were in even greater trouble when Root, still on his tea score of 33, edged a Bumrah delivery that angled in

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FIRST TIME IN
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to opposing captain Virat Kohli at first slip.

Bumrah, however, was denied the wicket of Buttler with whom he had exchanged angry words while batting, when Kohli dropped an edged cut with the England keeper on two.

India resumed Monday on 181-6, a lead of 154.

Ollie Robinson struck with the new ball to have dangerman

Pant — ironically misjudging a defensive shot — caught behind for 22, with India now 194-7.

England fast bowler Mark Wood, entered the fray some 30 minutes into the day's play after suffering a shoulder injury when hurtling into an advertising board diving headlong to save a boundary on Sunday.

But the express quick was unable to add to his three-wicket haul.

With Shami and Bumrah scoring steadily, Root brought off-spinner Moeen Ali back into the attack.

Bumrah, however, was dropped on 22 by first slip Root off Moeen.

Shami went to his second fifty in 53 Tests in stylish fashion, driving successive Moeen deliveries for four and six off to reach the landmark in just 57 balls.

This innings surpassed his 51 not out against England at Nottingham's Trent Bridge in 2014.

Bumrah also topped his highest Test score for the second time this series after his 28 at Nottingham. — AFP

Medvedev dominates Opelka to win Toronto Masters

TORONTO: Daniil Medvedev neutralised the attack of American serving giant Reilly Opelka on Sunday, dominating 6-4, 6-3 to win the ATP Toronto Masters.

The world number two Russian needed just 87 minutes, limiting his 2.11m opponent to just eight aces and breaking him three times while saving all four break points he faced.

Medvedev, aided by 34 unforced errors from Opelka, became the first Russian to win a Canadian trophy since Marat Safin 21 years ago.

The winner was playing a fifth career final at the Masters 1000 level.

"When I was starting I could barely have dreamed of a Masters final," he said. Now I've played five of them and won four. "I'm just happy," he added. "I want to achieve more, I want to play better."

Medvedev, who will be the top seed at next week's Cincinnati Masters, the final major tuneup



Daniil Medvedev of Russia poses with the trophy in Toronto. — USA Today Sports

for the US Open that starts August 30, had praise for Opelka, the US number one who is ranked 32nd in the world.

"It was a great week for him, he fought to the end," Medvedev said. Playing a first Masters final is never easy. My first was in Canada (Montreal, 2019) and I won just three games," he recalled of a title tilt against Rafael Nadal.

Opelka said he was outplayed from the start by the top seed.

"Daniil played great, as expected. He was flawless. I had one chance to break early and I don't think that would have changed much. — AFP

Giorgi topples Pliskova for Montreal title

MONTREAL: Italian underdog Camila Giorgi upset fourth seed Karolina Pliskova 6-3, 7-5 on Sunday to win the biggest title of her career at the WTA hardcourt event in Montreal.

The world number 71 completed a 2021 hat-trick of victories over the sixth-ranked Czech, who has now lost three finals this season.

"I was very emotional inside," Giorgi said. "Of course, I'm not the one that shows a lot.

"It's just amazing," she added. "I'm very happy for what I did this week."

Wimbledon finalist and Rome runner-up Pliskova had no answer for the inspired shotmaking of Giorgi, who also defeated Pliskova in the first round at Eastbourne and in the third round at the Tokyo Olympics.

The Czech had won 12 of her past 14 matches coming into the final, which lasted almost one and three-quarter hours.

But Giorgi's seven aces, and four service breaks, were enough



Camila Giorgi of Italy poses with the trophy in Montreal. — USA Today Sports

to again overcome Pliskova, who remained impressed with her opponent's top form.

"She played super-solid all week actually, not crazy like she can play sometimes," Pliskova said.

"I think she played really well, serving well at the important moments ... she was just a bit better today."

The first Italian winner of the prestigious US Open tuneup now owns three career titles after winning in Linz in 2018 and in the Netherlands three years earlier. — AFP

West Indies clinch one-wicket win over Pakistan

KINGSTON, Jamaica: West Indies scrambled a pulsating one-wicket victory over Pakistan on Sunday as the visitors self-destructed in the final session of the fourth day when on course to take the first Test of the two-match series at Sabina Park.

Defending a modest target of 168 after they were dismissed in the morning session for 103, Shaheen Shah Afridi led the attack with figures of four for 50 in reducing the home side to 114 for seven at tea with only wicketkeeper-batsman Joshua da Silva and the tailenders left.

However, in scenes reminiscent of a similar one-wicket loss in the deciding Test of the 2000 series in Antigua, the Pakistanis lost discipline in their bowling and composure in the field.

Three catches were missed to allow Kemar Roach and last man Jayden Seales to take their team

to the target with a last-wicket partnership of 17.

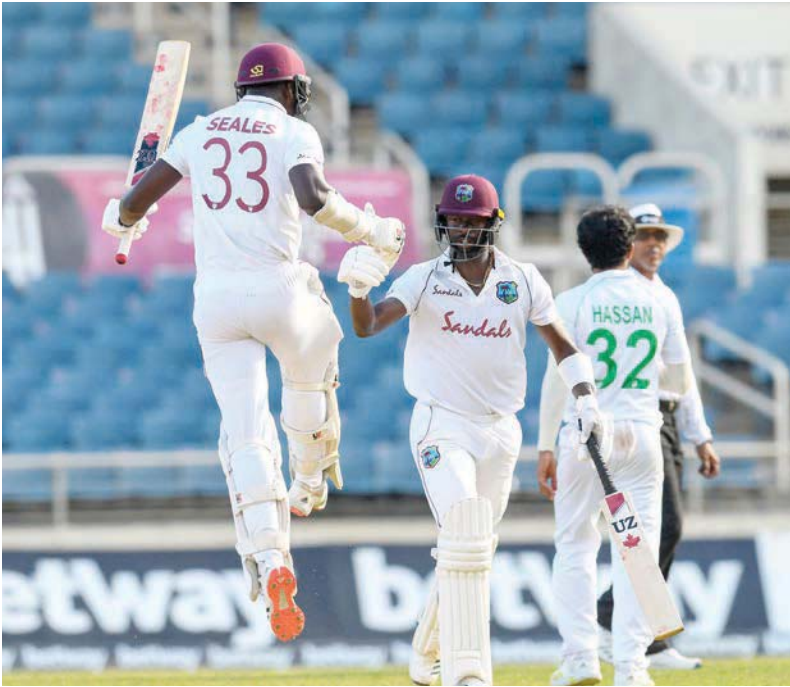
Roach, who was dropped twice, hit the winning runs off Hasan Ali to finish unbeaten on 30.

Ironically, it was Hasan who missed a straightforward catch at deep square-leg off Shaheen which allowed Roach to eventually complete the job at the end alongside a jubilant Seales.

Seales was named man of the match for his match haul of eight for 125 which included five for 55 in the second innings.

For the fast bowler, who is less than a month away from his 20th birthday, it was a historic achievement when he mopped up the Pakistan tail with the last three wickets to become the youngest-ever to take five wickets in a Test innings for the West Indies.

"I just decided to take it step by step, run by run," said a relieved Roach minutes after completing



Jayden Seales (L) and Kemar Roach (2L) of West Indies celebrate after beating Pakistan at Sabina Park, Kingston. — AFP

what looked an unlikely task when he joined da Silva at the start of play after tea.

'BEAUTY OF TEST CRICKET'
"This is easily the most important innings I have ever

played and credit to Jayden as well for holding on with me at the end and for his five-wicket haul today because he's someone really special as a young fast bowler."

Pakistan captain Babar Azam did well to hide his disappointment but could not avoid referencing the obvious costly errors when it mattered most.

"This is the beauty of Test cricket. Our bowlers were really good especially Shaheen and Abbas," said the skipper, omitting to mention the three wickets taken by Hasan in the push for victory.

"Had we taken those catches the result could have been different."

A topsy-turvy day started with Pakistan losing their last five wickets for 35 runs to leave the West Indies with what looked like a tricky target. Notwithstanding Seales' success with the ball, the key wicket of Babar was claimed by Kyle Mayers. — AFP

SCOREBOARD	
Pakistan 1st Innings – 217	
West Indies 1st Innings – 253	
PAKISTAN 2ND INNINGS	
Imran Butt lbw Roach	0
Abid Ali c Holder b Seales	34
Azhar Ali b Roach	23
Babar c Holder b Mayers	55
Fawad c da Silva b Seales	0
M Rizwan c da Silva b Holder	30
Faheem c da Silva b Roach	20
Yasir Shah c da Silva b Seales	4
Hasan Ali c Roach b Seales	28
Shaheen Afridi lbw b Seales	0
M Abbas not out	1
Extras (b4, lb2, nb2)	8
Total (83.4 overs, all out)	203
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-56, 3-65, 4-65, 5-121, 6-168, 7-170, 8-180, 9-192	
Bowling: K Roach 19-8-30-3, J Seales 15-4-3-55-5, K Mayers 15-5-33-1, J Holder 18-6-36-1, J Warrican 7-2-28-0, R Chase 6-1-12-0, K Brathwaite 3-1-3-0	
WEST INDIES 2ND INNINGS	
K Brathwaite c M Rizwan b SS Afridi	2
K Powell lbw SS Afridi	4
N Bonner b SS Afridi	5
R Chase c I Butt b F Ashraf	22
J Blackwood c I Butt b Hasan Ali	55
K Mayers c I Butt b F Ashraf	0
J Holder b Hasan Ali	16
J da Silva c M Rizwan b SS Afridi	13
K Roach not out	30
J Warrican c M Rizwan b Hasan Ali	6
J Seales not out	2
Extras (b2, lb10, nb1)	13
Total (56.5 overs, 9 wks) 168	
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-15, 3-16, 4-84, 5-92, 6-111, 7-114, 8-142, 9-151	
Bowling: Mohammad Abbas 12-5-27-0, Shaheen Shah Afridi 17-4-50-4, Hasan Ali 16-5-37-3, Faheem Ashraf 8-1-29-2, Yasir Shah 3-0-13-0	



Barcelona's Sergi Roberto scores their fourth goal. — Reuters

BARCA START POST-MESSI ERA WITH WIN

S O C I E D A D T H U M P E D 4 - 2 A T C A M P N O U A S F A N S R E T U R N



Barcelona's Sergi Roberto celebrates after scoring during the Spanish League match against Real Sociedad. — AFP

BARCELONA: Barcelona began the post-Lionel Messi era with an entertaining 4-2 home win over Real Sociedad in their first game of the LaLiga season on Sunday. A header from Gerard Pique gave the Catalans the lead in the 19th minute to the delight of 20,000 fans who returned to the Camp Nou for the first time in 17 months, and Martin Braithwaite struck either side of half-time to extend their advantage. Sociedad looked to be out of the game but substitute Julen Lobete pulled them back into contention in the 82nd minute and forward Mikel Oyarzabal scored a stunning free kick moments later to set Barcelona nerves jangling. Sergi Roberto struck in added time for the hosts, however, to make sure of the points in Barca's first match without all-time top

scorer Messi, who joined Paris St Germain last week after 21 years with the Spanish club. "We made things complicated for ourselves but we played a great game," said Pique. "We controlled it for 80 minutes and although we were on the edge after their free kick, we got the fourth goal. The new players adapted well and the fans were excited about the football we played." Barca fans chanted Messi's name at kick off while a section of supporters also booed in protest against president Joan Laporta, who had vowed to keep the Argentine at the club when he was elected in March. Just under 30,000 tickets were made available for the game at the 99,000-capacity Camp Nou due to coronavirus restrictions but only

We controlled it for 80 minutes and although we were on the edge after their free kick, we got the fourth goal. The new players adapted well and the fans were excited about the football we played

GERARD PIQUE
Barcelona midfielder

20,000 fans registered interest in attending, perhaps a sign of a lack of excitement for the new season without Messi.

But Barca dominated for most of the game with some flowing football, suggesting they could still have a promising future without their most iconic player. **PIQUE GESTURE** The fans were lifted off their feet when Pique connected with a free kick from debutant Memphis Depay to put Barca in front, a day after the club announced the defender had taken a pay cut to alleviate their financial problems so they could register the Dutchman and fellow new signing Eric Garcia. "I grew up here, I've played almost all my life here and it was a gesture I had to make and I've been speaking to the other captains and they're going to do the same too," added Pique. Braithwaite headed home a

sumptuous cross from Frenkie de Jong at the end of the first half to put Barca further at ease and the Denmark forward struck again in the second half, lashing home a loose ball after Jordi Alba's cross had been parried by visiting keeper Alex Remiro. Barca then dropped their intensity and out of nowhere Sociedad stormed back into the game with two goals in three minutes to silence the cavernous stadium. Pique made a gesture for the fans to live up and help the team over the line and his side killed the game off on the counter-attack. Antoine Griezmann led the charge through the middle before releasing Braithwaite, who crossed for Roberto to slide in at the back post and score their fourth. — Reuters

Bordeaux claim 'good point' at Marseille



Bordeaux's Timothee Pembele (L) runs with the ball next to Marseille's forward Konrad de la Fuente. — AFP

PARIS: Bordeaux's Remi Oudin said he was happy after his side came from two goals down to claim a 2-2 draw at Marseille on the weekend that Lionel Messi was unveiled to the Paris Saint-Germain crowd. The hosts led at half-time thanks to goals from in-form Dimitri Payet and Turkey winger Cengiz Under before 18-year-old defender Timothee Pembele and substitute Remi Oudin, with a well-worked volley from a corner, scored for the visitors. "Looking at the game at half-time, we were down 2-0. Then we get the draw. Here, in Marseille, it's a good point," Oudin told broadcaster Prime Video. "It's the little details that mean you win or get a draw, like tonight. It's important," he added. Home coach Jorge Sampaoli kept faith in the 11 which started last weekend's 3-2 win at Montpellier. The visitors' Yacine Adli was

named on Vladimir Petkovic's bench due to the 21-year-old attacking midfielder's expected move to AC Milan. There was a worrying sight after six minutes as Bordeaux's Samuel Kalu collapsed outside the home penalty box without any contact with an opposition player. Less than 90 seconds later Nigeria winger Kalu was back on his feet after treatment, he played on for five minutes before being substituted by Remi Oudin. Under claimed his second goal in as many games after the half hour mark after Brazilian midfielder Gerson's cut-back. Payet added his third of the campaign four minutes before the interval with a sublime effort which started near the half-way line and finished with his low shot into bottom corner. Petkovic's men were on level terms by the hour mark after Timothee Pembele, who

joined on-loan from Paris Saint-Germain last week, and first-half replacement Oudin scored to claim the point before Leo Balerdi was sent off after 89 minutes for the hosts. **MESSI MADNESS** Earlier, Lens claimed a 2-2 draw at home against Saint-Etienne despite Wahbi Khazri opening the scoring for Les Verts, record 10-time champions, after 20 seconds. Khazri's effort was Ligue 1's quickest goal since Valentin Vada after 14 seconds for Bordeaux against Toulouse in January 2017. Seven-time champions Lyon are still without a win this season after losing 3-0 at Angers and had forward Maxwell Cornet sent off for two fouls in the second half. Promoted Clermont made it back-to-back victories to start their first top-tier campaign as Guinea forward Mohamed Bayo

scored twice in the 2-0 home win over Ligue 2 champions Troyes, who are under the Manchester City umbrella of the City Football Group. On Saturday, Messi received a rapturous reception as he ran out onto the pitch along with PSG's other summer signings, with a 48,000-full house greeting the six-time Ballon d'Or winner despite the welcome ceremony taking place an hour before kick-off. The Argentina attacker watched the 4-2 win over Strasbourg from the stands alongside Neymar and Angel di Maria — the trio not yet considered match-fit having enjoyed an extended break after playing at the Copa America. Elsewhere, Christophe Galtier had a successful return to Lille, with whom he lifted the title last season, as his Nice side hammered the champions 4-0. — AFP

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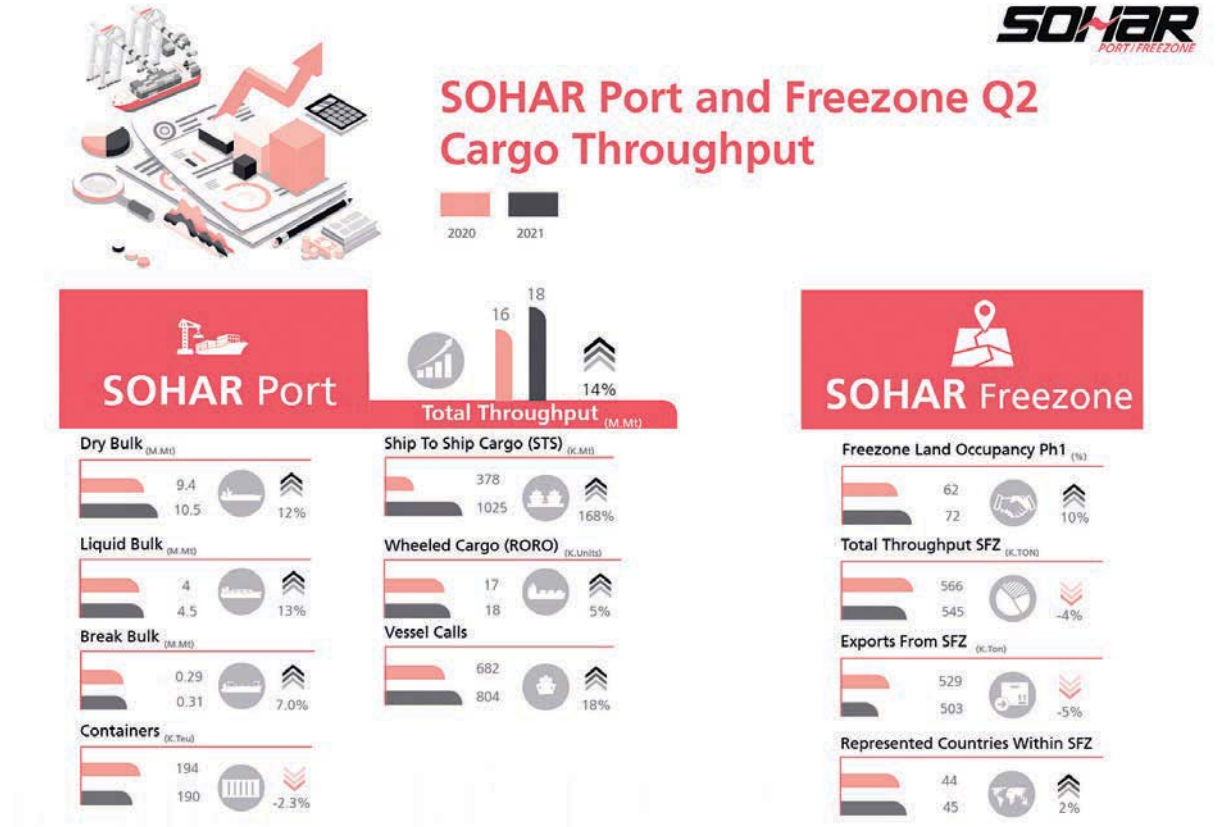
Sohar Port posts 14% growth in Q2 cargo throughput

STRONG GROWTH: 190,000
TEUs of containers handled in
second quarter of 2021

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 16

Building on its positive momentum, Sohar Port and Freezone has announced encouraging results for the second quarter of 2021. Among them, it reported that the Port's handling of goods in and out of the Sultanate (throughput) increased by 14 per cent over the same period in 2020 and Ship-to-Ship cargo increased by an impressive 168 per cent.

Meanwhile, the number of handled containers came in at 190,000 TEU in addition to 804 vessel calls, up by 18 per cent from the same period in 2020. The land occupancy at the freezone has also shown a rise of 10 per cent since the same time last year. With a number of planned



projects underway and coming up, SOHAR's strategy to position itself as a central logistics hub in the region is well on track.

"Although the global economy is beginning to show signs of recovery, there is still a fair amount of uncertainty due to the ongoing

pandemic. Given these dynamics, our efforts to refine our business scenarios in order to emerge more resilient and adaptive have shown

The port's continual growth is a testament to the long-term value that we provide to our clients as we operate safely and efficiently to serve the industrial and economic sectors

MARK
GEILENKIRCHEN
CEO, Sohar Port

themselves to be well-placed and projections indicate that we are on course to exceed the amount of cargo that passed through in 2020. The port's continual growth is a testament to the long-term value that we provide to our clients as we operate safely and efficiently to serve the industrial and economic sectors," said Mark Geilenkirchen, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar Port.

Omar bin Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone, Deputy CEO of Sohar Port, added, "SOHAR's rise to prominence has been extremely gratifying, but for us it's still only the beginning. In alignment with the port's impressive growth, we continue to make major investments in the freezone, while promoting it, and Oman in general, as a favourable business destination.

The strategic location and an amenable trade environment presented huge potential for our stakeholders and partners. The vision to become a prosperous global trading hub is coming to fruition." SOHAR's abundance of energy, raw materials and world-class logistics, coupled with generous incentives for local and international partners and the One-Stop-Shop system for all government clearances, provides a significant advantage for business that is sure to attract major players in the industry.



14 million malware attacks in 6 months

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 16

Oman has been the target of an estimated 14 million malware attacks over the past six months, according to experts from global cybersecurity firm Kaspersky. Malware is widespread across the Middle East, accounting for 161 million of attacks and growing by 17 per cent when compared to the last year figure – 138 million, research from the firm has indicated.

The growth in each country in the region varies. Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain and Egypt have seen a large spike in malware attacks, increasing by 67 per cent, 64 per cent, 45 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) show lower increases of 16 per cent and 7 per cent — however increases none the less.

"Even though the scourge of malware has always been of concern, the past 12-months have highlighted how hackers are refocusing their efforts to compromise consumer and

corporate systems and gain access to critical data and information," said Maher Yamout, Senior Security Researcher for Middle East, Turkey and Africa at Kaspersky.

"Given the growth in digital transformation since last year and considering the increase in remote working resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, countries of the Middle East have become an attractive target for those looking to exploit a lack of user education or cybersecurity understanding."

With so many people working remotely and accessing corporate networks from their personal devices, companies must contend with a rapidly expanding attack surface.

These devices might not have an adequate level of protection meaning that once they are compromised and an employee logs into the network, hackers can potentially get access to sensitive data and cripple the organisation.

VALUE CREATION: Used cooking oil, wood waste, glass waste and end-of-life tyres added to list of recyclable waste streams restricted for export

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Locally generated used cooking oil (UCO), waste motor oil and wood waste, have been added to as many as 11 different waste streams that are subject to export restrictions — part of a measure by Oman's authorities to support the growth of a thriving recycling industry in the Sultanate.

According to Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah), the government-owned entity overseeing the management of the solid waste sector in the Sultanate, the list of "restricted" waste streams includes: Lead Acid Battery (LAB) waste, plastic waste, End-of-Life tyres, paper waste and cardboard, glass waste, ferrous waste, non-ferrous metal waste, and waste electrical and electronic equipment.

It follows the adoption of the 'Circular Economy' model in the management of all solid waste streams. This model advocates the application of the 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' philosophy for all recyclable types of waste aimed



at, on the one hand, stimulating the growth of economic activities around waste segregation, recycling and reuse, and on the other, reducing the amount of waste ultimately ending up in landfills.

With a view to retaining commercially valuable waste streams in-country, be'ah says it has been working with the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and other government agencies to "regulate and streamline the import and export of waste". Last November, be'ah announced a successful collaboration with the ROP's online customs system Bayan to "digitalise and streamline the process of obtaining approvals" from both be'ah and the Environment Authority (EA).

"The system will also provide be'ah the opportunity to collect and maintain real and accurate data on waste quantity and its movement. As most recyclable

waste of value was exported in the past, the data collected will unlock further opportunities for the Company by allowing it to assess the economic potential for local industries that can recycle this waste," be'ah — part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — noted.

Following the restrictions on exports of recyclable waste streams, small-scale investments in recycling activities have begun to flourish in the Sultanate. The most striking example is that of used cooking oil (UCO), which has led to the emergence of a handful of plants designed and equipped to convert the waste into valuable biodiesel.

Likewise, recycling activities are proliferating around paper and cardboard waste, Lead Acid Batteries, and End of Life tyres.

Significantly, be'ah has also identified an array of other waste streams that, it says, hold

The Circular Economy advocates the application of the 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' philosophy for all recyclable types of waste aimed at, on the one hand, stimulating the growth of economic activities around waste segregation, recycling and reuse, and on the other, reducing the amount of waste ultimately ending up in landfills

"immense economic potential through recycling."

The list includes green waste, End-of-Life Vehicles, scrap metal and fish waste, among others. "be'ah continues to study their recyclable value and is working on developing strategies for their efficient collection, transportation and recycling. Over the coming years, be'ah will detail plans which, will ensure that optimal value is derived from these waste streams, while minimising their environmental impact and achieving overall sustainability. For this, be'ah is looking to collaborate with local as well as international partners," the company added.

Move to establish Madayn Industrial Innovation Academy

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUG 16

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has decided to merge the Industrial Innovation Centre, National Business Centre and Madayn Industrial Academy into one entity, branded as 'Madayn Industrial Innovation Academy'.

The decision came at a meeting of Madayn's Board of Directors chaired by Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, and Chairman of Madayn's Board of Directors.

The move is in line with efforts to streamline Madayn's organisational structure, rationalise operating expenses, explore and study value-added investment opportunities in various sectors, enhance the



performance of factories based in Madayn's industrial cities, optimise the efficiency of national capabilities through training efforts and provide consultancy services to Madayn and its companies.

Madayn Industrial Innovation Academy focuses on three pillars: Namely local content and opportunity development; industrial incubators and innovation and training and rehabilitation.

To elaborate, the local content and opportunity development path concentrates on studying existing supply chain management in various economic sectors, developing associated investment opportunities, and providing enablers that contribute to better achieve the expected outcome such as offtake agreements and any other enablers required by the projects.

The industrial enterprises

resulting from the first pillar will qualify to the second path and be localised/incubated, and the existing industries will be improved and developed by focusing on the innovation aspect.

Being the key incubator for the Omani industries, Madayn plays a significant role in providing the necessary support to the industries to contribute to their advancement.

The third pillar, which focuses on training, rehabilitation and consultancy studies, shall provide training opportunities to the national cadres to benefit from the investment opportunities resulting from the local content.

This pillar also takes into account the significance of providing consultancy services to Madayn and its companies to achieve strategic partnership between the Academy and Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

Ahlibank sponsors 'Not Discovered Yet' documentary



MUSCAT: Recognised as a leading bank in the Sultanate, ahlibank has gained increasing popularity not only as a bank that offers premium financial services but also as an organisation that has played its part as a responsible corporate citizen.

With ongoing corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in place, ahlibank has demonstrated utmost commitment to contribute towards the social, cultural and environmental progress of the country.

In a recent development, ahlibank has signed an agreement with Oman InFocus to sponsor the first of its kind exploration project, 'Not Discovered Yet', which promotes the wildlife and natural beauty of Oman.

The agreement was signed between Najla al Lawatiyah, AGM, Head of Private Banking and Wealth Management, ahlibank and Maisa bint Fahaad al Hootiyah, Founder and CEO, Oman InFocus on

August 3, 2021 at ahlibank's head office.

On the occasion of signing the agreement, Najla said, "ahlibank is proud of its well-established experience in Corporate Social Responsibility. Community welfare makes up an integral part of our operations. In line with the same, ahlibank endeavours to support such initiatives that not only help talented Omani individuals follow their passion but also aids in the country's overall progress."

"Not Discovered Yet" is a noble initiative aimed at strengthening Oman's tourism sector and highlight its environmental and tourism features in line with Oman Vision 2040, which in turn supports the country's economic growth and development in many areas.

By supporting Omani youth and targeted national projects, we are seeking innovative ways to strengthen cooperation between the bank and the community", she added.

Japan economy rebounds despite virus surge



Pedestrians wearing protective face masks walk past a show window of a department store in Tokyo. — Reuters

TOKYO: Japan's economy grew slightly in the second quarter, recovering from a slowdown at the start of the year despite continuing virus surges and restrictions, data showed on Monday.

The world's third-largest economy contracted at the beginning of the year as a new wave of infections forced the government to impose virus restrictions that slowed consumption.

But despite continued virus worries and restrictions that have lasted most of this year, Japan's economy grew a better-than-expected 0.3 per cent in the three months to June, data from the cabinet office showed.

It exceeded the expectations of economists surveyed by Bloomberg, who had forecast just 0.1 per cent quarter-on-quarter growth. — Reuters

Bank Muscat boosts stake in Bahraini investment bank

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUG 16

Bank Muscat has announced that it has obtained regulatory approval to acquire a further 1.38 per cent shareholding in SICO BSC, a Bahrain-based investment bank, via a secondary market purchase.

With this new acquisition, Bank Muscat's shareholding in SICO now rises to 10.38 per cent.

The announcement follows a disclosure by the Omani lender last December with regard to a 72.71 per cent stake sale in Muscat Capital Company cjs, based in the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia, to SICO BSC. As part of the same transaction, Bank Muscat acquired 9 per cent of the shareholder in SICO.

The net worth of SICO BSC as of June 30, 2021 was BHD 66.965 million, Bank Muscat added in a filing to Oman's Capital Market Authority on Monday.

Kia's globally popular SUV all-new Sorento now in Oman

MUSCAT: Get set to transform every experience with the stylish and powerful all-new Sorento SUV now in Oman. Powerful, progressive and versatile, the exciting new model nimbly pairs cutting-edge tech features with family-friendly practicality. This distinguishes it as one of the most efficient and comfortable sport utilities ever made.

The first vehicle to be based on Kia's new-generation midsize SUV platform, the Sorento is equipped with a larger body; enabling drivers to maximise cargo and luggage space. The Sorento's redefined exterior and attractive cabin set it apart as much more than a work of



engineering efficiency.

Its innovative design catches the eye, adding a new layer of luxury to the Kia driving experience. The Sorento stands

out with 19" alloy wheels, LED headlamps, LED daytime running lights, LED front and rear fog lamps, LED rear combination lamps, remote engine start and

panoramic sunroof.

The interiors of the Sorento is enlivened by a modern suite of leading-edge features that firmly establish the Sorento as Kia's most high-tech car ever.

The features include smart phone wireless charger, mood light, Android auto and car play, 8" audio display, audio remote control, power passenger seat, power driver seat, leather seats, dual full automatic A/C, 3rd row AC vents and more.

Powering the all-new Sorento SUV is the 3.5L engine with 268 hp and 33.8 kg.m. torque. This is paired to an 8-speed automatic transmission for smooth driving experiences.

Adding to driving delights is the auto cruise control, drive mode select offering the driver choices to enjoy exciting driving experiences on varied terrains. The all-new Sorento is built to take you places with confidence. A range of advanced safety features in the all-new Sorento include anti-lock braking system (ABS), electronic stability programme (ESP), vehicle stability management (VSM), tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS), driver and front passenger airbags, smart cruise control, blind spot collision avoidance assist (BCA), lane keeping assist (LKA), forward collision avoidance assist (FCA) and lane following assist (LFA).

China's factory output, retail sales growth slow sharply



Workers check rolls of sheet aluminium at a factory in Wuhan, China. — AFP

BEIJING: China's factory output and retail sales growth slowed sharply and missed expectations in July, as new Covid-19 outbreaks and floods disrupted business operations, adding to signs the economic recovery is losing momentum.

Industrial production in the world's second largest economy increased 6.4 per cent year-on-year in July, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Monday. Analysts had expected

output to rise 7.8 per cent after growing 8.3 per cent in June.

Retail sales increased 8.5 per cent in July from a year ago, far lower than the forecast 11.5 per cent rise and June's 12.1 per cent uptick. China's economy has rebounded to its pre-pandemic growth levels, but the expansion is losing steam as businesses grapple with higher costs and supply bottlenecks.

New Covid-19 infections in July also led to fresh restrictions, disrupting the country's factory

output already hit by severe weather this summer.

Asian share markets slipped on Monday after the data showed a surprisingly sharp slowdown in the engine of global growth.

Data earlier this month also showed export growth, which has been a key driver of China's impressive rebound from the Covid-19 slump in early 2020, unexpectedly slowed in July.

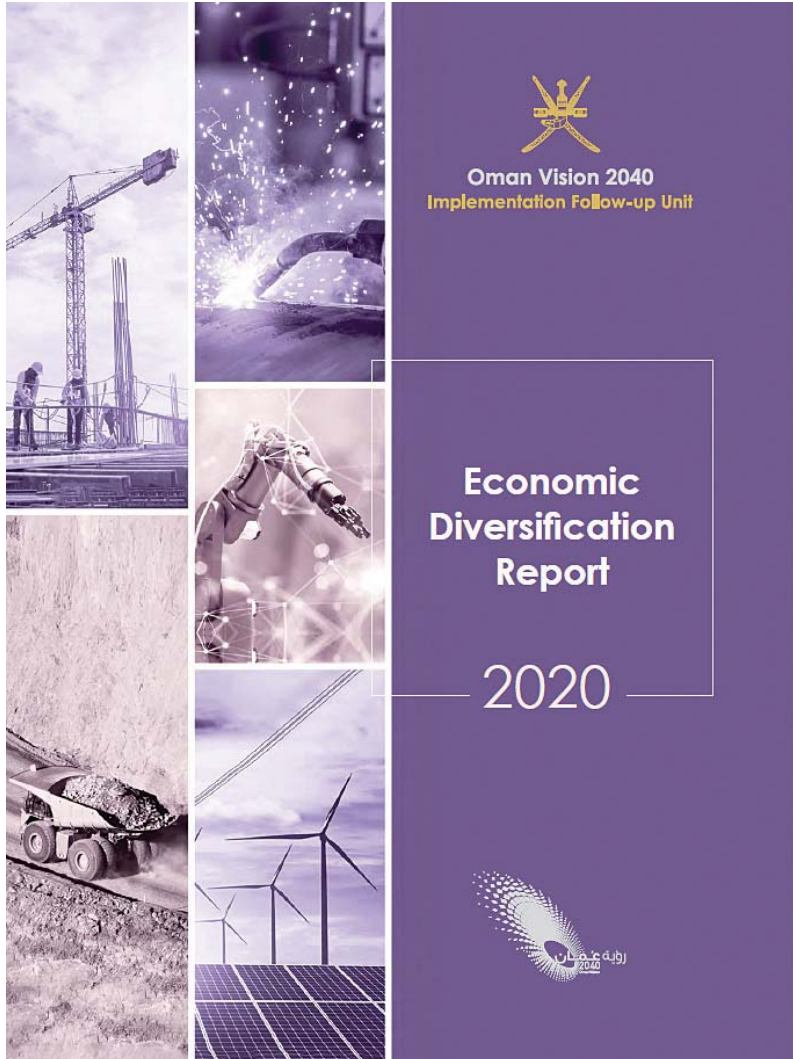
Consumption, industrial production and investment could

all slow further in August, analysts from Nomura said in a note, due to Covid-19 controls and tightening measures in the property sector and high-polluting industries.

Production controls sent crude steel output to the lowest monthly level since April 2020 in July. Meanwhile China tightened social restrictions to fight its latest Covid-19 outbreak in several cities, hitting the services sector, especially travel and hospitality in the country. — Reuters

OMAN'S ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION:

Major strides made in delivery of 130 projects



PROJECT FACILITATION: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit outlines progress in advancing strategic initiatives across eight economic and enabling sectors

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The latest 'Economic Diversification Report 2020' produced by the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit — the successor of the Implementation Support & Follow-up Unit (ISFU) — provides a detailed account of the major strides achieved by the unit in advancing the delivery of strategically important projects and initiatives across eight key thrust economic and enabling sectors: Manufacturing, Tourism, Logistics, Labour Market, Business Environment, Fisheries, Energy and Mining.

A dashboard of as many as 130 projects and initiatives distributed in these eight sectors shows progress achieved in either advancing or completing the delivery of these targeted objectives over the course of 2020. A further 25 projects and initiatives, added to the dashboard in 2020, are making headway in their delivery, according to the report.

The *Observer* looks at the strategic and socioeconomic significance of the sectors identified by the Omani government for active hands-on follow-up and intervention at the highest levels of authority:



MANUFACTURING

Designated as one of the main contributing sectors to the Omani economy, Manufacturing faced significant challenges

stemming from the pandemic over 2020 in the face of, among other factors, border closures and flight suspensions which held up suppliers of manpower, equipment and raw materials.

Of 23 projects and initiatives listed on the manufacturing dashboard in 2020, 61 per cent were delivered, effectively boosting the sector's contribution to the GDP to 10.8 per cent in 2020.

Key highlight: Industrial Strategy 2040

A notable addition to the sector dashboard is a plan for a new 20-year Industrial Strategy. It envisions a well-developed manufacturing base in the Sultanate by 2040 leveraging modern technology, local Omani talent and the latest innovations.

Spearheaded by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Industrial Strategy 2040 blueprint seeks to: diversify manufacturing activities and turning them into technology and knowledge-based activities; develop unique and varied products that focus on improving the health and well-being of citizens; expand the Omani manufacturing industry geographically to enter new regional and international markets; advance technology in Omani manufacturing; and establish a culture of innovation.

TOURISM

Devastated by the pandemic, the sector is "rapidly recovering" in line with a recovery plan charted by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) in Q4 2020.

Programme stakeholders were focused on advancing five key KPIs for the sector: Delivering an exceptional tourism experience; Attracting more and higher-yielding tourists; Attracting private investments; Developing better plans to attract investors; and Creating job opportunities for Omanis.

Key highlight: Al Kasfah Spring and Al Ashkhara Beach projects

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is collaborating with the Ministry of Finance

and Environment Authority in facilitating approvals for the development of tourism sites centring around the Al Kasfah Spring in Al Batinah South Governorate and Al Ashkhara Beach in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. The shortlisted investors undertaking further studies at the request of the authorities before final approvals come through.

LOGISTICS

A key sector that helped alleviate the adverse effects of the pandemic, the logistics sector posted a 23 per cent jump in the handling of containers and general cargo in Q1 2020, compared with figures for the corresponding quarter of 2019. A total of 18 projects and initiatives were listed for delivery on the sector's

gate and cold terminal extension, has been finalised.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The team overseeing this portfolio began 2020 with as many as 21 projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing the investment environment, as well as facilitating services within the sector.

In addition to 'Invest Easy' and 'Lean Principles' added in 2019, a new sub-dashboard, focusing on 'Doing Business' was introduced in 2020 due to its importance and the nature of the report's indicators.

Key highlight: Mega Sales

This initiative, added to the dashboard in 2020, aims to enable the implementation of major discount campaigns for a period of 3 days (ends in November) coinciding with the global



dashboard last year.

Interventions by the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, helped in facilitating the movement of goods held up by pandemic-related lockdowns. The Unit also worked closely with the stakeholders of key projects listed on the dashboard.

Key highlight: Development of Airport City

Billed as a key enabler for Oman's air cargo industry, the Airport City initiative has elicited interest from a number of players and potential investors who see the benefits of setting up operations in a free zone located in close proximity to air cargo terminals.

Overseen by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the initiative is also backed by Asyad-Marafi, Oman Shipping Company and Oman International Container Terminal. A detailed masterplan, featuring a logistics

discount by brands in the same period.

"It aims to influence consumer behaviour in Oman (localise spending) and enhance the percentage of sales of brands and the number of visitors and tourists going to shopping centres in Oman," said the Implementation Unit. Through changes in regulations, malls and entities with multiple retailers can apply for one license, allowing all of the stores operating in the mall to conduct sales at the same time.

"This enables the retail sector to conduct for example "Black Friday" like mega sale at their own discretion, but it was capped at one time per year as year-round sales seemed problematic," it noted.

Stakeholders in the initiative include the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Consumer Protection Authority, Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, and the Doing Business Report unit.



FISHERIES

While the pandemic impacted progress in the implementation of a number of projects listed in the sector dashboard for 2020, a few successes were nevertheless recorded during the year. Last year, the first Commercial Abalone Aquaculture Project was launched in December.

State-owned Al Wusta

for Public Services Regulation (APSR), calls for a cluster of government buildings to be fitted with solar panels while at the same time subject to energy auditing and retrofitting — moves aimed at enhancing energy efficiency and their dependence on electricity from the grid.

According to a survey, energy audits can deliver an average of

Company, a subsidiary of Fisheries Development Oman, also maintained its fishing trips rate despite the challenging environment.

Key highlight: Feed algae farm in Al Sharqiyah

British algae farming firm Feed Algae is a key player in the Al Sharqiyah Algae Farm which, with a capacity of 100,000 tons of algae per year, is set to be the biggest of its kind in the world when operational.

Investment in the project is estimated at RO 167.5 million. Land allocated for the farm is currently the subject of some legal issues which are being resolved at the moment, according to the report.

ENERGY

A dramatic slump in electricity demand stemming from the pandemic and wider economic downturn adversely impacted the overall performance of the 14 projects and initiatives listed in the sector's dashboard for the year. Nevertheless, commitments towards renewable energy, energy conservation and efficient use, and so on, will continue to be adhered to.

Oman Vision 2040 targets the contribution of renewable energy resources in providing 20 per cent of the Sultanate's electricity needs in 2030, rising to 35-39 per cent by 2040.

Key highlight: Green Zone

An initiative of the Authority

30 per cent savings in energy consumption through the implementation of the Energy Service Companies (ESCO) model. In the first phase of its roll-out, 14 buildings will be covered in this initiative.



MINING

Offering great potential in diversifying the national economy, the mining sector witnessed many challenges in advancing the 12 projects and initiatives listed on the dashboard for the year.

Key highlight: Shaleem Project

Several ministries are working together to help unlock the massive mineral potential of this block, which covers an area of 3314 sq km in Dhofar Governorate.

Minerals found in the found include gypsum, limestone, attapulgit and dolomite. Stakeholders include the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Ministry of Defence, Royal Oman Police, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Environment Authority.

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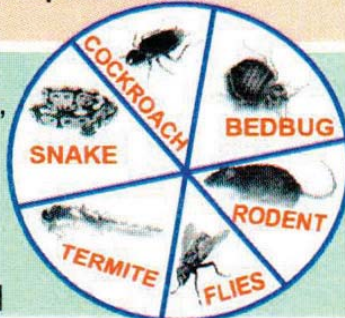
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Sustainable progress is knocking on Misfat Al Abriyeen

Misfat al Abriyeen is home to astounding heritage and over the years has become one of the many jewels in the crown of Oman. The construction and renovation boom in the area has remained vigorous during the last seven years transforming not only the wilayat but the village itself. Here's what can be found here...**P20**

LOCAL SCENE

READ

AGENT SONYA

BY BEN MACINTYRE

Ursula Burton, who resided in the English Cotswolds in 1942 with her family, turned out to have been a high-ranking Soviet intelligence officer seeking scientific secrets to build the bomb.

Adding value to the historical destinations

A NUMBER OF ANCIENT towers are spread over the hills of the mountains in various villages of the wilayats along the mountainous strip on both sides of Wadi Dima W'attayeen. Al Hammam Fort in the village of Al Hammam is one of the most important archaeological monuments in the wilayat, which is located on a

mountainous hill more than 90 metres above sea level. The length of the fortress is 250 metres, and its average width is 30 metres. The fortress is in the middle of the village houses, surrounded by agricultural oases of the village of Al Hammam, and overlooking the main stream of the Wadi of Dima W'attayeen.

The fort is surrounded by three main towers on its edges, which served as defence towers for the fort. Inside the fortress there are 25 rooms. The fortress was restored by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in the period from 2013 to 2017. It is one of the important touristic destinations in the wilayat. Yahya bani Oraba said "hopefully the restoration of fortress will be a good addition to the wilayat as a whole because it will be receiving visitors and activating the tourism of the wilayat in general". The same traditional means of building materials were used for the restoration process like the rocks, clay, candle wood and others".





Walk with us through Incredible India

FOOD IN SANSKRIT means 'Bhojana'- that which is to be enjoyed. With a history of more than 10,000 years, Indian cuisine has heavy influences from all over the world. Every settler, invader or visitor that came by this vast sub-continent left their mark on the hearts and food bowls of the

Indian populace. If you think Indian, you think strong aromas and heavily spiced food, but the Indian diet has so many flavours that it boggles the mind. The aesthetic ways of knowing food; of being a gourmand and deriving pleasure from it as well as ascetic responses to it are lauded even in ancient scriptural texts such as

the Dharmaśāstras. Celebrating Oman Restaurant Review's 7th year on August 18, we decided to check something close to our hearts. Our quest for that mouth-watering and sense-tin-gling gastronomy led us to seek the perfect Indian meal. However, that cannot exist unless we work our way from the top to the

bottom of this enormous nation. Starting right at the top, we picked North Indian food as our go-to for this time. Biryani Rasoi, a small, quaint restaurant tucked away in the lanes of Ghubra serves up traditional North Indian food with a slight twist. We picked two appetisers, two mains and a dessert for our meal.

HE SAID: My pick was the Mushroom Kurkure or crispy stuffed mushrooms. This succulent dish is cheese and veggie stuffed mushrooms that are batter fried to a crisp. Imagine biting into a crunchy shell and a world of flavours oozing out. Our other appetiser could have been a meal in itself. An offering of 18 pieces of kebabs with 9 choices, served with Naans (Indian flatbread) and a mint coriander chutney. A multitude of scrumptious flavours all rolled into one.

SHE SAID: The kebab platter remains a firm favourite. Juicy chicken tikka, Reshmi Kebabs and melt in the mouth fish and don't miss their Hara Bhara Kebabs – a veggie lover's delight. Truly luscious. The best part? The spice levels can be customized to suit your taste buds. The platter does true justice to its price and is well worth it. The Mushroom Kurkure was another great choice; soft yet crisp – the dish was served piping hot and was well flavoured. Thank you, Sami!

HE SAID: My main was the Chicken Patiala. Even though I am an ardent Indian food lover, this was my first time trying this dish. Moist chicken tikka pieces wrapped in an egg omelette and topped with a classic tomato, onion, and cream-based gravy. I was pleasantly surprised; the dish was every bit tasty, and the textures went well together, especially with the different types of Naans and Rotis that were served in a bread-basket. Our second main was the aromatic Mutton Biryani. The Biryani was well made but the chicken Patiala had already stolen my



heart.

SHE SAID: Served with a tangy Raita, the Mutton Biryani was aromatic, each grain capturing the essence of the spices and mutton was tender and literally melted in the mouth. My only issue was the rice felt a tad bit overcooked – easily remedied I would say. The Chicken Patiala was the clear winner of the day – a tangy, tomatoey, buttery sauce that left you wanting more.

HE SAID: Our dessert was the Malai Kulfi. An Indian version of ice cream packed with thick cream and nuts. The flavour of this Kulfi was a one-way ticket to the streets of India. So very creamy, cold, and sweet. Extra points – it had no ice crystals in it, something we have experienced many times at different places.

SHE SAID: What's not to love about creamy sweet desserts. The Kulfi is a perfect dessert for these summery days. The dish tasted good, was well presented, and was an instant hit for both of us.

WE SAID: Though each member of the staff was wearing a mask, Biryani Rasoi truly embodied the notion of service with a smile. The restaurant was full, and they still managed to make everyone happy. The dishes were well worth their prices, and we rate this restaurant as total value for money. Would we go back? Yes, definitely!

OVERALL RATING

Ambience: 3.5/5
Taste of food: 4.5/5
Presentation: 5/5
Service: 4.5/5
Value for money: 4.5/5

DISCLAIMER: The ORR team reviews anonymously and pays for their own meals.

LOCAL SCENE

Harmony of colours in one place



THE VILLAGE OF WAL in the Wilayat of Yanqul in Al Dhahirah Governorate is one of the villages of the Western Hajar Mountains, which is located in the far north, about 55 kilometres from the centre of the wilayat. The village is characterised by its beautiful Bedouin nature. It is bordered to the north by rugged mountain ranges and mountain villages adjacent to Suhar, to the south by the village of Al Masra, Wadi Al Arshi and Al Nuss, and to the west by the village of Al Waqba.



In the village, there is a mountain peak called Al Shwira or Jabal Al Shwira, at an altitude of about 1500 metres above sea level. The population centres are also distributed along the banks of the wadi. the population is only about 250 people distributed over five residential areas. The village is characterised by a large number of agricultural lands, which have been used since ancient times in the cultivation of wheat. Today, the harvest has grown varied. The farmers of the village now plant various types of seasonal agricultural crops, citrus, palm trees, mangoes, grapes and animal fodder, garlic and onion, says Humaid al Badi, the man in charge of the community affairs.



He added that the people in the village are keen on raising camels. They used to use them for their transportation. There are many Aflaj in the village as people depend on them to irrigate their crops, animals and their source of fresh water as well. These Aflaj are Al Aqool, al Hail, al Baidha, Hail Najd, al Mahdooth, al Muhaidna, and Hail bin Omran. The Aflaj have stopped flowing in the village for years until 2015 when the rains lashed the whole parts of the Sultanate and the farms flourished again. The farmers rushed to replant their lands and the greenery scenes covered the whole village. Not only the green lands that attract the eye of visitors to the place, but also the harmony between the old houses, the water and the green spaces that form a unique alluring image.



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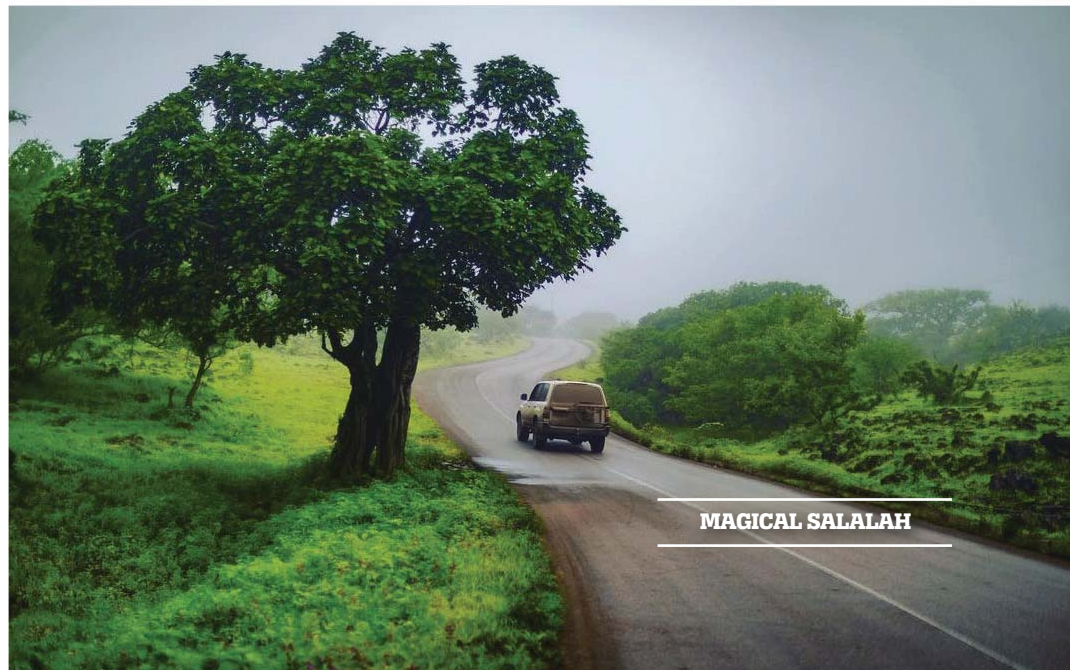
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AROUND THE WORLD

BOOK

Renowned photographer Deanne Burch shares life-changing memoir in new book



DEANNE BURCH made her mark as an internationally renowned photographer who taught and lectured through the United States and Canada, but few know that during her younger days, she survived an ordeal that changed her life forever. She decided to tell the whole story in a new memoir, *Journey Through Fire and Ice: Shattered Dreams Above the Arctic Circle*.

At the age of 23, Burch accompanied her husband, Ernest "Tiger" Burch, to the Inuit village of Kivalina, Alaska, a barrier island 23 miles above the Arctic Circle. Tiger was conducting a study of the natives, but Deanne, a naive city girl, was completely unprepared for what she was about to experience.

In Kivalina, she lived on the edge of two worlds — the one she left behind and the one where she reluctantly participated in all aspects of the women's lives. Skinning seals, cleaning and drying fish, and cutting beluga and caribou to store became her way of life. Plumbing, running water and electricity were not available. Loneliness was a constant companion until a few women befriended her.

During a span of six days, Deanne and Tiger narrowly escaped death during a camping trip, and Tiger suffered severe burns from a fire in their house. He spent three months in the hospital receiving treatment for seared lungs and horrific burns on his face and hands. His lungs never recovered from this ordeal. When he was finally released from the hospital, he returned to the village with Deanne to complete the study. The life-threatening and harrowing experiences in Alaska transformed Deanne into a woman of strength who learned how to embrace challenge.

Over 50 years later, she remembers that young girl who left on an unknown journey that will live in her heart forever.

Author Deanne Burch was born and raised in Canada and attended the University of Toronto, obtaining B.A. degrees in liberal arts and social work. After the Alaska journey, she and her husband eventually settled in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, where they lived until his death. Deanne spent 30 years as a professional international photographer who taught and lectured in the US and Canada. She published several articles in photography magazines and journals. Since retiring in 2014, she devoted herself to writing short stories and children's stories. *Journey Through Fire and Ice: Shattered Dreams Above the Arctic Circle* was published in March 2021. For more information, visit www.DeanneBurch.com.

FILM

Box Office: 'Free Guy' debuts at #1 with surprisingly strong \$28.4 million



DESPITE CONCERNS the Delta variant would keep moviegoers at home, Ryan Reynolds' sci-fi action comedy "Free Guy" had a better-than-expected start at the domestic box office.

The movie, from Disney and 20th Century Studios, collected \$26 million from 4,165 North American theatres. Given its production budget above \$100 million, those ticket sales wouldn't be much to celebrate in pre-pandemic times, but isn't a bad result as a plague sweeps the globe.

Overseas, "Free Guy" amassed \$22.5 million for a global tally of \$51 million.

"Free Guy" marks an interesting test for the film exhibition industry because it's playing exclusively in theatres, which is a rarity these days. Many high-profile films that premiered during the pandemic, such as Marvel's "Black Widow" and "The Suicide Squad", were available on streaming platforms on the same day as their theatrical debuts. The few films offered only in theatres, like Universal's "F9", Emily Blunt and John Krasinski's follow-up "A Quiet Place Part II" and Paramount's "G.I. Joe" origin story "Snake Eyes", were each sequels in popular film franchises, unlike "Free Guy", which is based on an original concept and isn't part of an existing movie universe.

Though Covid-19 is undoubtedly deterring people from visiting their local multiplex, "Free Guy" — which is directed by Shawn Levy ("Stranger Things", "Night at the Museum") and co-starring Jodie Comer and Taika Waititi — had several factors working in its favour.

Thanks to strong reviews and an "A" CinemaScore from audiences, it enjoyed positive word-of-mouth over the weekend. The PG-13 film also benefited because it appealed to older males, a demographic that has appeared to be less wary about returning to the big screen. In the case of "Free Guy," \$9pc of opening weekend ticket buyers were male and nearly 80pc were above the age of 18. Movies geared towards younger crowds, like Disney's "Jungle Cruise", "Space Jam: A New Legacy", have been harder sells because families, especially those with unvaccinated children, have been more reluctant to go to theatres.

David A Gross, who runs the movie consulting firm Franchise Entertainment Research, says "Free Guy" had "a very good opening under difficult conditions." Still, he points out, the movie business isn't close to returning to normalcy because Covid-19 cases continue to surge and vaccination efforts have slowed.

"Moviegoing has shown flashes of strength during the summer, but the Delta variant has dampened any sustained improvement above 50pc", Gross says. "In a healthy market, movies would be opening considerably higher and holding better."

This weekend's other new nationwide releases, Sony's thriller "Don't Breathe 2" and MGM's Aretha Franklin biopic "Respect", each arrived in line with expectations, though neither did much to galvanise ticket buyers.

The sequel to "Don't Breathe" secured second place on box office charts, earning \$10.6 million from

3,005 venues in its first three days of release.

With a budget of \$15 million, it's a decent start for the R-rated movie that takes place after a deadly home invasion. However, it's a steep decline from its predecessor, 2016's "Don't Breathe", which debuted to \$26.4 million and ended its run with \$89 million in North America and \$157 million globally.

"Respect" notched the No 4 spot, with \$8.8 million in ticket sales from 3,207 screens in the US and Canada.

The film, starring Jennifer Hudson as the Queen of Soul, received good but not great reviews, and it may struggle to achieve profitably in its theatrical run given its \$55 million price tag. However, "Respect" has resonated with audiences, landing a strong "A" CinemaScore, which could give the film a long life on the big screen.

"Respect" finished the weekend behind Disney's "Jungle Cruise", now in its third weekend of release. The family friendly tentpole, led by Dwayne Johnson and Emily Blunt, added another \$9 million to its domestic tally, which currently sits at \$82 million. Globally, "Jungle Cruise" has grossed \$154 million to date.

Rounding out the top five is "The Suicide Squad" with \$7.7 million from 4,019 locations, representing a brutal 72pc decline from its inaugural weekend.

The comic book adaptation, based on a band of less-than-desirable super-villains, is currently on HBO Max and has made \$42 million at the domestic box office so far.

— **Variety.com**

ENTERTAINMENT

Nicole Kidman calls TV's 'Nine Perfect Strangers' 'trippy and 'crazy'



DON'T ASK THE cast to describe "Nine Perfect Strangers", the new Hulu TV series based on the 2018 best-selling book by Liane Moriarty.

"It is so trippy and crazy. ...I dare you to ask any of us what genre this is. We have no idea", Nicole Kidman told reporters.

Kidman leads a cast that includes Melissa McCarthy, Bobby Cannavale and Michael Shannon in the tale of nine wealthy, stressed people who go on a retreat to a remote boutique resort.

The series is partly a satire on the wellness industry. Kidman plays a mysterious health guru who promises a life-changing experience using unconventional methods that go way beyond massages and yoga.

Filmed in rural Australia, the eight-episode series launches on Hulu on Wednesday.

It is co-written and produced by David. E Kelley, who with Kidman was also in the team behind the 2017 hit TV adaptation of Moriarty's murder mystery "Big Little Lies."

"I certainly thought about horror and certainly thought about thrillers but at the end of the day, even though we're playing with those tropes, it was about character", said Jonathan Levine, Director of "Nine Perfect Strangers."

McCarthy, who plays a romantic novelist suffering from a broken heart and a declining career, said the show brings up big philosophical questions, including "what will be changed when you're gone? Who will care? What have you left behind?"

"It brings up pretty big questions — and I was terrified of being attacked by bull ants", McCarthy said. — **Reuters**

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Sustainable progress is knocking on Misfat Al Abriyeen

Story by Ray Petersen
Photos by Lena Petersen

MISFAT AL ABRUYEEN is named after the ancestral inhabitants of the Al Abri family, and the perpetual running water from the falaj. What an astounding heritage has been built here in yet another of the many jewels in the crown of Oman. It is a cool, refreshing, green oasis, a hidden valley, to be appreciated. The township is just a short diversion from the foothills of the mighty mountain of the Sun, Jebel Shams, on a sealed road that winds its way through and around the ever-changing landscape of a valley that is becoming more and more popular as a place to live.

The housing construction boom in the area has remained vigorous during the last seven years, and the diversity of architecture from that which pays homage to yesterday, through to the minimalist architectural lines and influences currently popular throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. Following the signs, whether Misfat al Abriyeen, Misfah al Abriyeen, Misfat al Abriyyin, Misfat Al Abriyen... all roads lead to the same place, not Rome, but this Omani delight, where you will find frequent laybys that offer magnificent views of the wider Al Hamra Wilayat, a panorama of date palms, farms, and startling rock formations.

Tourist parking is at a premium as you get to the village itself and is very much reliant upon the goodwill and consideration of the locals. Take my advice and park on the roadside verges near the village and soak up the atmosphere as you walk towards the tourist destinations and farms. It is something of a 'free tourism' experience where you can wander freely, of course, with

consideration for the local inhabitants. Signage clearly indicates private 'no-go' zones, and otherwise, you can pretty much follow whichever pathways you feel the most tempting. In recent years, there has been significant government, and private tourism investment in the township with some impressive results in terms of tourist accommodations and cafeterias, the latter providing great scenic views down the valley. The village is constructed entirely on the rock base, and the different types of construction all imply strength and stability.

The way residents have maintained a symbiotic environment with largely traditional buildings in its centre, narrow pathways, streets, and alleyways that have been worn smooth by the elements and centuries of foot traffic, ensures the need for good footwear, and the walks are accompanied by the ever-present sound of the cool mountain water in the falaj system.

Today's generation of the Al Abri clan includes local Mathematics teacher and entrepreneur Yussuf Al Abri, who can see no better way to perpetuate his family's heritage than to invest in their unique geographic location by maximising its tourist potential with coffee shops in Al Hamra and Misfat Al Abriyeen, where his coffees, cakes, and ice-creams, "make every journey worthwhile."

The Misfah Old House is another family-owned business venture and offers an authentic Omani experience in their twelve overnight accommodation rooms, and provide traditional Omani breakfast fare, which, taken on the terrace is an organic experience, and well worth repeating according to Chris and Alex, tourists from the UK.

Another is Ahmed al Abri and partner's Rogan Cafe, named after the nearby Rogan Castle, which overlooks the town's farms. The café

is part of the University of Liverpool's ARCHIAM plan for developing the tourism potential of the town, which has seen three local houses transformed to maximise their tourism potential with retail food and beverage outlets, a civic space 'Harat ash Shua', and an artisanal and training bakery.

Professor Soumyen Bandyopadhyay, Head of the Liverpool School of Architecture, said recently on the university's website, "The implementation of the Misfat Tourism Development Plan has pioneered a community-led partnership approach to heritage tourism. This project integrates heritage management with development and aims to sustain the livelihood of the local community through key revenue-generating initiatives and has contributed to economic diversification and has increased the tourism potential of the wider region.

It is the first reuse proposal for historic settlements in Oman to be realised, integrating both modernising aspirations and conservation imperatives."

This impressive development, followed closely by the United Kingdom's Prince Charles since its inception, has of course hindered by the pandemic to date, but could well provide an important template for the Omani tourism sector, a transfusion of those European, Asian and Mediterranean architectural bloodlines, to reinvigorate the Omani landscape.

