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Vaccination hours extended

MoH forms mobile teams to immunise more people

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With more awareness on efficacy and safety of vaccines, large numbers of people are heading to vaccination centres across the country. This has led the Ministry of Health (MoH) to announce extended vaccination hours.

MoH confirmed that besides extending working hours of vaccination centres, it has formed mobile teams to immunise the maximum number of people possible and speed up the whole process.

Dr Fatima Ahmed al Hinai, head of the vaccination centre in Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex Basher, said, "We covered



(Supplied photo)

around 2,000 people on Sunday who were eligible for the second dose. The centre will also receive target groups during official holidays from 9am to 4pm."

Citizens and residents have praised the smooth conduct of procedures at the vaccination centre in Basher, starting from entry, completion of documenta-

tion, awaiting their turn to being administered the vaccine, according to Dr Fatima.

In some governorates, the ministry has started vaccinating private sector healthcare workers with the Sputnik V vaccine. "The Directorate General of Health Services in South Batinah governorate announces com-

mencement of administration of the first dose of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine to all health workers in private health institutions in the governorate, as of today, June 7, 2021," a statement said.

"The Sputnik V vaccine will be given to private sector healthcare workers in the wilayats of

Rustaq and Al Awabi, at the Golden Medical Complex in Rustaq between 8am and 4 pm. For those in the wilayats of Barka, Mussanah, Nakhl and Wadi al Maawil, they will receive the vaccine in Badr al Samaa Hospital in the wilayat of Barka from 8am to 8 pm."

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(Supplied photo)

Pact signed to set up Alibaba cloud centre

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's DataMount and International Emerging Technology Company (ETCO) have signed a cooperation agreement with the Chinese firm Alibaba Cloud to establish a regional centre for cloud computing in the sultanate.

Held in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology, the signing of the agreement, which was held at COMEX 2021, stipulates that DataMount and ETCO will manage, operate and market the Alibaba centre for cloud computing, which will enhance Oman's position as a regional gateway for cloud computing services and technologies.

Under the agreement, Alibaba will invest about US\$10mn during the initial stage, which entails providing central devices and modern technologies, while DataMount will invest nearly US\$4mn in preparing the infrastructure for the regional centre.

The project is expected to generate many direct and indirect job opportunities in the technical sector in the sultanate. The agreement was signed by Selina Yuan, business vice-president of Alibaba, Abdulhakeem Amer al Maslahi, CEO of DataMount, and Abdulaziz Jafar, CEO of ETCO.

In a statement, Selina said Alibaba plans to deliver highly secured and reliable cloud services in Oman and the region at large through the two Omani firms, which will join hands with Alibaba by managing and operating its data centre and hosting its cloud programme.

The signing ceremony was attended by H E Dr Ali Amer al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology in the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and H E Aseela Salim al Samsamiyah, Undersecretary for Investment Promotion in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

MoSD sets up new foundation to support women, people with disabilities

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a move to support women, people with disabilities and individuals with limited income, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has issued Ministerial Decision No 106/ 2021 to set up Ahad Foundation.

The foundation will be estab-

lished with capital of RO1mn which may be invested in any business venture that reaps profits.

"The headquarters of the foundation will be in the Governorate of Muscat and branches can be established in other governorates," MoSD stated.

"The foundation will also promote the values of citizenship,

The foundation will be established with capital of RO1mn which may be invested in any business venture that reaps profits

identity, heritage, culture and patriotism, and support initiatives and social welfare services for families and individuals. It will help community and humanitarian work to serve the elderly and orphans. Further, it will support NGOs that provide rehabilitation and social care services for families."

Speaking to Muscat Daily, vol-

unteer teams hailed the decision. Sakina al Hosni, head of the Ethar Volunteer Team, said, "We need such charitable institutions. They will help volunteer teams play their role."

Souad al Alawi, head of the Yanqul Charitable Team, described setting up of Ahad Foundation as a major shift in supporting social solidarity.

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Making a living out of trash

Ragpickers have become a common sight in Muscat

Muscat - Everyday tonnes of waste is generated by shops and supermarkets in the country, most of which end up in landfills. However, a lot of it is collected and recycled thanks to an army of workers who sift through garbage bins and shop storage areas to collect used cartons, soda cans and clothes.

People rummaging through trash bins in search of something worth reselling or transporting piles of used cartons on a handcart is a common sight in Muscat.

Waste contract

While some ragpickers are employed by waste management companies, others resort to it to earn extra money.

Fazal Ahmed (name changed on request), who is employed by a waste management company based in Dubai that has a collection centre in Barka, said, "My colleagues and I used to cover a bigger area earlier. Since I am alone now, I cannot cover the area like before."

In Ahmed's estimate, he collects three tonnes of used cartons every week with the support of a few offices and restaurants.

Arranging cartons on his



I never felt shy of picking through trash bins. I am here to work. If I feel ashamed, how will I survive? Work is work!

NARENDRA

handcart in the parking lot of an office near a juice shop in Ruwi, Ahmed said, "The staff of the juice shop hide the cartons in the parking area. If they leave it in the open, it will be picked up by other collectors."

Some ragpickers, like Narendra (name changed on request) are employed by waste management companies which have annual contracts with supermarkets and shops to collect their

waste for recycling.

Narendra's company has contracts with two supermarkets in the same area where Ahmed operates. While he needn't go searching for used cartons himself, he does so anyhow for a few extra rials. "This part of Ruwi has so many offices and commercial establishments; we are lucky to be posted here as we get a lot of cartons."

Jehangir, a construction

labourer, injured his right leg when he was struck by a brick falling out of the second floor leaving him out of work for three months. The accident compelled him to stay away from strenuous work.

"I looked for some light work and collecting clothes from garbage bins seemed easy and convenient. Also, this work didn't involve commitment or contractual requirements," he said.

the COVID-19 pandemic leaving him with fewer cartons.

For Narendra too, the heat is the only problem. "I never felt shy of picking through trash bins. I am here to work. If I feel ashamed, how will I survive? Work is work!"

Jehangir, however, thinks differently. "I feel bad at times that I am making a living out of trash. But what should I do? Since my accident, I am unable to do any construction work and I have the responsibility of my mother, my wife and two children."

Saving environment

Ahmed takes pride in his work for another reason - the environmental aspect of it. "I feel happy that due to my hard work, these cartons are getting recycled into something useful. Otherwise, they would simply go into landfills."

Jehangir sometimes finds clothes in fairly good condition. These are sold at very low prices. "Many of my friends buy these clothes which gives me a sense of satisfaction. I believe God is going to reward me for helping other poor people like myself."

Narendra says his service is important to others. "If a small company needs to get rid of its trash, it may cost them. But because of me, they can dispose of their trash for free as I pick it up from their doorstep. I am helping them and the environment, too."

(Text and photo by Syed Fasiuddin)

Meeting to boost Omani products

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To integrate efforts between the public and private sectors and develop manufacturing industries, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion's National Industries Development and Omani Product Support Committee held its first meeting on Monday.

Chaired by H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the meeting was attended by members of the committee, representatives of the Tender Board, the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates, Oman Invest-



ment Authority, Industrial Innovation Centre, the Omani Industrialists Association, Royal Oman Police and private sector firms.

The committee aims to develop and support national industries, supervise the implementation of the Industrial Strategy 2040, develop manufacturing industries, keep pace with technological advance-

ments, and promote a culture of industrial innovation, besides setting programmes and mechanisms to enhance the contribution of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to the industrial sector.

The committee also aims to formulate strategies, policies, procedures and principles to implement in the industrial sector,

and find new investment opportunities in order to replace imports and enhance exports. Additionally, it aims to develop programmes and mechanisms to raise the quality of the Omani products to increase their volume of sales in the local and international markets.

The meeting focused on the integration of efforts to promote

Omani products and enhance their presence in markets, and an exhibition of Omani products to be held in the last quarter 2021.

The ministry, in partnership with the public and private sectors, recently launched a campaign - titled Made in Oman - to support and promote Omani products locally and regionally, and to find marketing outlets for local products. The campaign is also supporting SMEs display their products in various shopping centres across the sultanate.

The campaign has achieved increased sales of Omani products in some participating commercial centres, and raised awareness among consumers on the significance of purchasing Omani products, besides launching Omani products in a local electronics market.



Pregnant women can be vaccinated: MoH

Muscat - According to the Ministry of Health (MoH), vaccines can be given to women who are planning to conceive if they are among the target groups and have no other contraindications to vaccination.

'There is no need to leave any time between the vaccine and conceiving,' it stated.

The ministry added that vaccines can also be given to lactating mothers if they are among the target groups and have no other contraindications to vaccination. 'Stopping breastfeeding in not recommended before or after vaccine.'

1,216 new cases of COVID-19

The number of daily COVID-19 cases continues to top the 1,000 mark with the MoH reporting

1,216 new cases and 11 related deaths on Monday.

With the rising number of cases, the pressure on the healthcare sector is increasing as 966 patients are currently in hospitals, including 297 in intensive care, the highest so far since the outbreak of the pandemic. One hundred and fourteen patients were admitted to hospitals in a 24-hour period on Monday.

The total number of cases registered in the sultanate has now reached 225,095, including 2,424 deaths. The total number of recoveries is 205,305, accounting for a recovery rate of 91.2 per cent.

The ministry has also stated that it received over 400,000 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine between May 31 and June 6.

Pact signed to support SMEs in telecom sector

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) signed a memorandum of understanding with Global Computer Services on Monday to establish an electronic platform to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the telecom sector.

The agreement aims to attract talented Omanis with specialisa-

tion in telecommunications and the postal sector to the labour market while enabling them to upgrade their skills.

The agreement was signed by Ahmed bin Hassan al Hadabi, executive director of Strategic Planning Unit in TRA, and Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Noamani, general manager of Global Computer Services.

"The platform targets SMEs and companies operating in the



sector providing services and solutions to telecommunications

companies and postal services. The platform will facilitate exist-

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Rare Oman photos restored by National Museum team

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The National Museum has finished restoring a historic album of photographs of Oman, Iraq and India that Louis Maguire, United States Consul in Muscat, presented to Lt Col S B Miles, the British Political Agent in the Gulf, on September 6, 1885.

The photo album contains historically significant images, including the second-oldest known photograph of Muscat, photos from inside the US Consulate at the time, and the oldest known photo of Muttrah.

'Not only important to Oman, but these significant photos also illustrate the long, historical ties between the United States and Oman,' the National Museum stated.

The project named 'Oman: Conservation of 19th-century Photographs in the Collection of the National Museum of Oman' had got the coveted grant of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the US Department of State under its Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) for 2019.

H E Leslie M Tsou, the US Ambassador to Oman, visited the National Museum on Monday to view the album, and was greeted by Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, secretary general of the National Museum.

The album dates back to 1885 and consists of 88 pages and 93 albumen print. The album contains approximately 65 photographs of Oman, nearly all taken in and around Muscat, including Muttrah. Many of the photos are attributed to Louis Maguire, with at least three photographs taken by S B Miles in 1885.

'The album contains the earliest



H E Leslie M Tsou and Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi (Supplied photos)

Historically significant photos of the 19 century include the second-oldest known photograph of Muscat, photos from inside the US Consulate at the time, and the oldest known photo of Muttrah

est ever-known photographs of Muttrah, Rustaq Fort, Jabreen Castle, and Jabal Misht.'

It's worth mentioning that since 2001, the AFCP has supported more than 750 projects to preserve sites, objects, and forms of traditional cultural expression in over 120 countries.

Conservation status

'The photo album showed an acc-

centuated oxidation of both text block and bound and dust deposit. The improper storage conditions and the past water intake resulted in an accentuated planar distortion of pages, water stains, chromatic alterations and mechanical damage,' the National Museum press release stated.

Mechanical damage like tears, losses and folds were localised



on edges and angles.

'The album was restored after painstaking work that included cleaning the cover with non-chemical vulcanised rubber

sponges, mechanical removal of dirty deposits with a scalpel, and then cleaned with a hydroalcoholic solution.

'The pages and photos were cleaned with soft brushes and a vinyl eraser, recto and verso, mechanical removal of dirty deposits.

'The photos were restored by infilling losses through Japanese paper and conserved folds through Japanese tissue for both sides. The photo

edges were reattached, and pictures went through a chromatic restoration of emulsion losses with watercolour.'



Ministry gives away laptops to National University students

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following a Royal Grant, the Ministry of Social Development in coordination with the National University of Science and Technology (NU), recently handed over laptops to all eligible students of the university coming from low-income families.

Fifty-two personal laptops were given to students in the university campus at the Airport Heights, said a statement.

The Royal Grant aims to enhance students' abilities and skills in dealing with modern technologies and contributes to increasing the number of users of computers and the Internet among members of the Omani society and encourages them to seek knowledge, digitally communicate, access information and electronic services, and keep abreast of everything new.

University and college stu-

dents benefit from this grant, especially in the current circumstances where the world is witnessing the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, the statement added.

Dr Ali al Bimani, vice chancellor of the National University, valued this generous gesture from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to provide laptops to all new students belonging to social security and low-income families who joined higher education institutions for the academic year 2020/2021.

The vice chancellor affirmed that "this grant comes in support of this category to continue their education in all educational institutions at the university level without incurring additional financial burdens in light of the current conditions that the whole world is going through, which necessitated that students receive distance education".

Royal Office Minister receives Yemeni FM

Our Correspondent
Muscat

H E Gen Sultan Mohammed al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, on Monday received Dr Ahmad Awad Mubarak, Minister for Foreign and Expatriates Affairs in the Republic of Yemen, at the former's office and exchanged "cordial conversations" binding the two countries.

The meeting reviewed the fields of cooperation and means of promoting them to serve the common interests of the two countries.

It also touched upon several other matters, particularly the sultanate's efforts to help re-



solve the Yemeni crisis by coordinating with all international parties concerned.

H E Dr Khalid Saleh, Ambassador of the Republic of Yemen to the sultanate, also attended the meeting.

Minister tours city

Dr Mubarak on Monday visited the National Museum and the Grand Mosque, within the framework of his current official visit to the sultanate.

The Yemeni minister and his



accompanying delegation toured the halls of the National Museum, which epitomise important aspects of the Omani cultural heritage.

The guests were briefed about the historic manuscripts in the

museum and Omani and Islamic architectural designs of the Grand Mosque. They also toured facilities of the mosque, such as the Institute of Islamic Sciences, the library and the lecture hall.

ONA



MoH, ROP visit Salalah Airport

Muscat - The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Monday organised a field visit to Salalah Airport for the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Health officials to take stock of the safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CAA said, 'The visit was made to ensure that the airport complies with all internationally applicable health and safety requirements and provides safety to all travellers and workers in the civil aviation sector.'

Real estate transactions go past RO990mn in first quarter of 2021

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The total volume of real estate transactions in the sultanate till the end of the first quarter (Q1) of 2021 crossed RO990mn, according to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said that the number of sales contracts registered during the period was 24,816, while there were 4,873 mortgage contracts and 582 swap contracts signed during the first three months of 2021.

'The number of title deeds is-



sued till the end of Q1 of 2021 reached 92,779 in the various governorates of the sultanate among which 270 were for non Omanis,' the statement added.

The total number of plots sold during the period was 616 spread

across various governorates, the ministry said adding that 'the plots of land for residential use were highest at 362, followed by 142 plots for government use, 110 for commercial and two for industrial use.'

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Enhancing reality of remote learning using technology

Just before the pandemic affected the way we live and work, our children used to wake up and go early to school. They would attend classes physically, learn and engage with the teachers face-to-face, work and collaborate with other students while truly benefitting from a focused quality education away from home.

Today unfortunately due to COVID-19 and the necessary requirements and precautions of staying safe from the pandemic, the reality of quality education is a great challenge. Parents who send their children to private schools continue to pay huge amounts of money to only receive less-than quality education in comparison to pre-COVID-19 era. My article today will shed light on the factual reality of remote learning; yet also share some ideas on how the different stakeholders from the government, solution providers, schools (teachers and students), apart from families can play an integral role to help enhance the delivery of quality education.

Let's not deny that the coronavirus pandemic has led to significant disruption to education in school. Millions of children across the sultanate were taken out of the classroom because of school closures which as a result forced the adoption of remote learning technologies. The government continues to lay framework policies and employs comprehensive set of recommendations for technology-assisted instruction across the schools and for the education bodies to follow for the COVID-19. Solution providers continue to introduce, enhance and provide solutions that the education bodies can use to deliver education. Schools continue to utilise the various technological solutions to deliver sessions remotely while the parents try to accommodate the changes and requirements to ensure their children get the quality education required to prosper in their lives.

The Ministry of Education, for instance, signed a partnership agreement with Microsoft to accelerate digital transformation in education across the sultanate for empowering teachers with the necessary technological skills to improve learning and prepare students for jobs of the future. Both Omantel and Ooredoo have also partnered with



solution providers to support the government by offering remote learning solutions. Omantel has announced a new partnership with the Ministry of Education to introduce Google's GSuite for Education to all schools in the sultanate, while Ooredoo launched an e-learning platform linked to Oman's Educational Portal that create virtual classrooms for students to learn from distance.

Private companies

Private companies like Huawei have also jumped in, helping to ensure the stability of telecom networks as data traffic has spiked during the pandemic. The company has shown a high level of commitment to building a healthy ICT ecosystem in Oman through collaborative efforts with public and private sector partners. This has included hosting their last annual Huawei ICT Competition online to continue providing training opportunities for Oman university students despite the pandemic. The company also has in place partnerships with various universities and colleges through its Huawei ICT Academy to improve the digital skills of students and academics alike, along with global programs like Learn ON, offering more than 300 courses and resources for free, 57 online open lectures, and organising more than 700 classes. In fact, more than 60,000 teachers and students from over 200 schools worldwide had benefited from Huawei's TECH4ALL digital inclusion initiative by the end of 2020.

Most of the heavy weight technology solution providers of the likes of Microsoft, Google, Cisco, Huawei and Zoom have enhanced their solutions to offer better educational learning experience

that offer video conferencing, discussion boards, collaborative tools, interactive virtual sessions for the schools. Namely, Microsoft with its teams, Google with the Classroom, Cisco with WebEx Education, Huawei with its Ideahubs and finally Zoom with its video conferencing application. Though the ultimate goal is to ensure students are engaged with the faculty and staff members for learning, yet the reality of the actual experience and quality of the education is not yet par to the pre-COVID-19 experience. I'm basing this fact from majority of the students who are attending schools remotely, so as myself personally having attended a couple of practical sessions remotely.

Different tools

Teachers, across the sultanate, are making a lot of efforts to follow government's advices and recommendations by utilising digital technology for remote learning and teaching to lessen the impact of the COVID-19 disruption on their students. Nevertheless, not all schools, use the same technology to deliver education to the students. For instance, some schools use Microsoft Teams, others use Google Classroom and the remainder use Zoom for education. While most of the solutions offer basic communication abilities yet the outcome of a quality focused education is yet to be truly achieved.

Students are required to use different tools or application, depending on the school, to attend a class remotely. They would either use a desktop, laptop, tablet and/or mobile phone to log in virtually to the classroom. Most of these devices run on batteries that needs to be recharged unless are always plugged-in to the electricity for power; most of these devices carry many applications that run in the background where they constantly send notifications distracting the teacher and the students as a whole; most of these devices are not controlled, monitored and administered allowing the student to control how he or she is represented in class; all of these devices depend on quality and dedicated Internet connectivity to remain in class from the telecom providers.

Last but not the least, staying home as op-

posed to being school will always have its share of distraction.

Ideally, improving online's form of teacher and student eye contact can help bring focus back; yes video conferencing is a technology feature but avoiding manipulation from either of the side is yet to be perfected. Students can easily cheat so as copy and paste contents faster. Administering, controlling and managing student's device functionalities from and by the school, being it their desktop, laptop, mobile phone or a tablet, would help reduce too many distractions emanating from the non-related educational applications. Ensuring some form of constant engagement and participation virtually by students will help replicate the value attained from a physical classroom interaction. Utilising big data to understand students behaviour and consequently offer best methods of learning while reducing routine and intensive tasks. Lastly, offering dynamic and personalised reports to parents on their children's performance (attendance and participation) will help build respect and trust for remote learning as an added educational value. Teacher-student relationship will only be improved if teachers are supported with the necessary knowledge to operate and adjust the technology in question that are utilised by the school.

In conclusion, one cannot deny that a physical classroom cannot be replaced by a virtual classroom, at least not today and from the experience shared out of the last year operation till date. In a physical classroom, all the students' focus is there; while in a remote classroom, dependency is scattered around many layers that include but is not limited to different technology providers, telecom providers, teachers experience with the technology and last but not least, families' commitment and acceptance to adhering to virtual education. The need for standardisation from technology providers, dedicated undivided high-speed quality Internet connection from telecom providers, and the necessary commitment from students and family is paramount for the remote learning to succeed, or even be an accepted norm to delivering quality education virtually.

Fixed Internet subscriptions rise by 13.5%

Muscat - The sultanate's total fixed Internet subscriptions increased by 13.5 per cent to reach 514,512 till the end of April 2021, compared to the same period of 2020.

Fixed telephone lines rose by 0.8 per cent to 593,802 at the end of April, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Analogue fixed telephones comprised 292,768 subscribers whereas the number of fixed telephones connected to the Internet reached 244,953.

Digital network lines for integrated services declined by 4.8 per cent to reach 47,971 subscriptions. The number of fixed wireless subscriptions went down by 16.8 per cent to 1,309.

The total number of mobile subscriptions fell by 3.3 per cent to 6,031,325 until the end of April 2021. Prepaid mobile connections fell by 9.3 per cent to 4,915,485. Out of those, the number of subscribers in service operators stood at 3,904,632, and the number of subscribers in resellers stood at 1,010,853.

Fixed broadband Internet connections, which have more than 256Kb speed, increased by 4.6 per cent to reach 512,466 compared to the same period in the previous year. The number of low-speed Internet connections, which have less than 256Kb speed, increased by 1.1 per cent to reach 2,046 subscriptions.

The number of active mobile broadband subscribers reached 5,107,856 until the end of April. The international Internet capacity rose by 29.5 per cent to reach 1,441,777Mb.

The number of national leased lines reached 6,456, while the number of telex lines was 116.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Press & Publishing. The writer can be reached at www.tariq.net

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MUSCAT DAILY

Trusta Omani surgical masks achieve 97% efficiency rating

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman-based Al Farsi National Enterprises has achieved a landmark recognition of 97 per cent VFE (virus filtration efficiency) rating for Trusta surgical face mask. The company is the first and only Omani manufacturer of healthcare N95 particulate respirators.

The test results were confirmed by UK headquartered independent testing laboratory Intertek Testing Services. In addition, the masks scored a 98 per cent PFE (particle filtration efficiency) and 99 per cent BFE (bacterial filtration efficiency) during the tests.

Issam al Farsi, chairman of Al Farsi National Enterprises, said, "Our team is really proud of this achievement. This additional virus filtration test results position Trusta surgical masks among the best engineered masks for protection and company available in the market. We have now 97 per cent VFE rating, 98 per cent PFE rating and 99 per



cent BFE rating - but it is the recognition of being a 100 per cent Omani product which is dearest to us."

Trusta surgical masks are available at pharmacies across Oman and can also be purchased online for home delivery through www.healthsouq.me

The company started manufacturing surgical masks last year in response to the pandemic and is the first and the only Omani manufacturer of healthcare N95 particulate respirators and tie-on type surgical masks under the brand name Trusta. The company is also exporting personal protective equipment to the GCC, Europe and India.

sifir
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- 10 SIFIR 5 GALLON WATER COUPONS 200 NOS.
- LULU GIFT VOUCHERS WORTH RO 10 80 NOS.

Offer valid from 1st May 2021 to 31st July 2021. Total of 3 raffle draws will be held at Oasis Water Company, Azaila, Dhow Dates: 1st June 2021, 1st July 2021 and 2nd August 2021. Winners will be intimated directly. Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Gifts shown are for illustrative purposes only. Actual may vary.

OASIS WATER COMPANY SAOC
PO Box 87, Rusayl 124, Sultanate of Oman.
www.omanoasis.com

CALL TOLL-FREE 800 71 222
or GSM: 9275 5522

MARKET WATCH

MSM30	3,967.11
BSE Sensex	52,328.51

FOREX RATES

(RO1 equals)	
Indian Rs	189.18
Pakistani Rs	401.30
Bangladeshi Taka	220.23
Philippine Peso	123.77
Sri Lankan Rs	512.95

*Rates as on June 07
Source: xe.com

BRIEFS

Nissan delays launch of electric car

Japanese carmaker Nissan said it will delay the planned summer launch of its flagship new electric Ariya model to this winter over the global chip shortage plaguing automakers. Announced in July 2020, the new 100-per cent electric model was initially supposed to go on sale in Japan from mid-2021, before arriving in Europe, North America and China by the end of the year.

But in a press release, Nissan said customers in Japan could now order the limited-edition B6 model for 'this winter,' with no set date for those in other markets.

A Nissan spokeswoman confirmed that the semiconductor shortage affecting carmakers around the world was hampering the rollout. The model is particularly important for Nissan, which sees it as key to opening a 'new chapter' for the firm.

Insurance premiums drop 4.3% to RO466mn due to pandemic

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The coronavirus pandemic and decline in business activity have had a negative impact on the growth of Oman's insurance market.

Total premiums of insurance companies in Oman decreased by 4.3 per cent to RO465.9mn in 2020 compared with RO486.6mn recorded in 2019, according to a report released by the Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Monday.

Gross direct premiums for general insurance decreased by 3.2 per cent to RO412.14mn in 2020 compared to RO425.88mn in 2019, while gross direct premiums of life insurance fell 11.4 per cent to RO53.75mn compared to RO60.7mn in the previous year, the CMA statistics showed.

However, the insurance sector's contribution to the sultanate's GDP increased to 1.87 per cent in 2020 compared to 1.66 per cent in 2019.

"Oman's insurance sector demonstrated its ability to rapidly respond to the exceptional circumstances such as the pandemic. Insurance companies expanded their insurance umbrella for the holders of health insurance policies to cover all tests and treatment costs of COVID-



(Muscat Daily)

19 patients, in line with the real objective of the insurance industry to protect the community from unexpected risks and consequent financial loss," Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, executive president of the CMA, said in his statement in the annual report.

Gross direct premiums of national insurance companies decreased by 4.4 per cent to RO384.63mn in 2020 compared to RO402.25mn in the previous year.

Health insurance segment represented the highest market share in total premiums of na-

tional insurance companies at about 36 per cent of the gross direct premiums. The market share of motor insurance stood at 25 per cent of gross direct premiums.

In contrast, gross direct premiums of takaful companies increased by 1.1 per cent to RO64.48mn in 2020 compared to RO64.16mn in 2019. Takaful insurance now represents 14 per cent of the gross direct premiums of insurance companies in Oman.

Despite a decline in total premiums, insurance companies in Oman received a profit boost for

the year 2020, thanks to fewer motor and medical claims because of strict coronavirus-related lockdowns that cut the amount of traffic and accidents last year. Most of the Omani insurance firms reported robust growth in their profitability for 2020 versus 2019.

Total number of insurance policies (general and life) issued by insurance companies in Oman decreased by 15.1 per cent to 1.640mn in 2020 against 1.932mn policies in 2019, the statistics showed.

The number of general insurance policies fell by about

Total number of insurance policies (general and life) issued by insurance companies in Oman decreased by 15.1 per cent to 1.640mn in 2020 against 1.932mn policies in 2019

200,000 to 1.508mn at the end of 2020 compared to 1.708mn policies in the previous year, while number of life insurance policies dropped at 131,676 from 224,115 policies in the previous year.

According to the CMA report, retention ratio of insurance companies in 2020 stood at 56.5 per cent in Oman, decreasing from 60.5 per cent retention ratio in 2019. Retention ratio for motor insurance was highest at 87.3 per cent compared to other segments within the national insurance companies.

The report indicated that the overall Omanisation level in national insurance companies stood at 79 per cent at the end of 2020 while Omanisation within foreign insurance companies came at 81 per cent.

Aramco debuts Islamic bond sale

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Aramco on Monday began its first dollar-denominated Islamic bond sale, state media said, as the energy giant seeks to raise cash to fund its hefty dividend payments.

The sale of sukuk, or Islamic bonds compliant with the Muslim faith, will end on June 17, the official Saudi Press Agency said, without specifying how much cash Aramco is seeking to raise.

The sale comes after two previous bond offerings that were not compliant with Islamic law - a debut US\$12bn sale in 2019 and an US\$8bn offering in November last year.

The company is raising money to help pay an annual dividend of US\$75bn, a key revenue source for the Saudi government, Aramco's biggest shareholder.

Aramco, the kingdom's cash cow, pledged to pay the dividend when it sought to generate interest in its debut initial public offering on the Saudi bourse in December 2019.

But company finances came under pressure last year, when crude prices tanked as the coronavirus pandemic sapped global demand. Last month, Aramco declared a 30 per cent jump in first quarter profit, thanks to a recovery in oil prices.

AFP

Amazon's Jeff Bezos to go to space

Washington, US - Amazon founder Jeff Bezos announced Monday he will fly into space next month on the first human flight launched by his Blue Origin rocket firm.

"Ever since I was five years old, I've dreamed of traveling to space. On July 20th, I will take that journey with my brother," Bezos said on his Instagram account.

Blue Origin said Bezos and his brother Mark will travel on the first crewed flight of the company's New Shepard capsule.

The company is auctioning off the third spot, and that bidding is already at US\$2.8mn with nearly 6,000 participants from 143 countries.

The trip will last a total of 10



Jeff Bezos

minutes, four of which passengers will spend above the Karman line that marks the recognized boundary between Earth's atmosphere and space.

After lift-off, the capsule separates from its booster, then spends four minutes at an altitude exceeding 60 miles

(100km), during which time those on board experience weightlessness and can observe the curvature of Earth from space.

The booster lands autonomously on a pad two miles from the launch site, and the capsule floats back to the surface with three large parachutes that slow it down to about a mile an hour when it lands.

New Shepard has successfully carried out more than a dozen uncrewed test runs launching from its facility in the Guadalupe Mountains of West Texas.

The reusable suborbital rocket system was named after Alan Shepard, the first American in space 60 years ago.

AFP

5G changing smartphone use in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A new report by Ericsson ConsumerLab has highlighted the impact that 5G is already having on smartphone users worldwide including Oman and what they expect the technology to deliver in the future. The report - Five Ways to a Better 5G - is the result of the largest global 5G consumer study to date.

Covering consumer sentiment and perception in 26 markets - including Oman, the Ericsson ConsumerLab study methodology is representative of 1.3bn smartphone users globally, including 220mn 5G subscribers.

One of the key report finding highlighting the broader con-



Jasmeet Singh Sethi

sumer readiness for 5G reveals that 20 per cent of respondents in Oman affirm having a 5G phone but are still on a 4G network. It further finds that 35 per cent of 5G potential users in the sultanate are expecting innovative data offerings from a 5G plan. Indoor coverage is one of the focus areas to emerge from the consumer research, with

one-in-five 5G users already reducing Wi-Fi use on their phones indoors because of the benefits of 5G mobile connectivity.

The report explores key trends behind the adoption, use and perception of consumers with and towards 5G. It also highlighted how 5G is already beginning to trigger new use behaviors. In addition to reducing Wi-Fi use, early adopter 5G users also spend an average of two hours more on cloud gaming and one hour more on augmented reality (AR) apps per week compared to 4G users.

As per the report, the COVID-19 lockdowns and movement restrictions mean that the vast majority of 5G early adopters' regular experiences with the

technology have been indoors. As a result, early adopters indicate that indoor coverage is two times more important than speed or battery life in delivering satisfactory 5G experiences.

The report also outlined five ways for communications service providers (CSPs) to meet consumer expectations both in the immediate and longer terms.

Jasmeet Singh Sethi, head of ConsumerLab at Ericsson Research, said, "So far, analyses of 5G network experiences have mostly focused on 5G speeds and availability based on independent network measurements. But it is equally important to understand how 5G early adopters perceive that experience."

COVID-19 far worse for work than 2008 financial crash: UN

Geneva, Switzerland - The United Nations said Monday that the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the world of work was four times worse than the 2008 economic crisis.

The UN's International Labour Organization said the pandemic had had a 'devastating' and even 'cataclysmic' effect, as it sought to tackle an uneven recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

The ILO on Monday kicked off its annual International Labour Conference (ILC), being held virtually for the first time, and this year focused on fostering a 'human-centred' recovery from the pandemic.

"The working experience of this pandemic for some has been of inconvenience, tedium, stress, and frustration. For others it has been about fear, poverty, and survival," ILO director-general Guy Ryder said as he opened the conference plenary.

The crisis has pushed more than 100mn more workers into poverty, the ILO said in its annual



ILO director-general Guy Ryder

World Employment and Social Outlook report ahead of the conference. It said working hours plummeted and access to good-quality jobs had evaporated.

The report showed that global unemployment could affect 205mn people in 2022 - far higher than the 187mn in 2019. Employment was not expected to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels until 2023 at the earliest, it said.

"Taken as a whole, this repre-

sents a world of work crisis four times as severe as the one triggered by the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009," said Ryder.

The ILO chief said the world of work was just as ill-prepared for a pandemic as health systems were, and added that the recovery would be uneven if it continued on its current trajectory.

"Gross inequities in vaccine distribution, and vastly different fiscal firepower will inject a double-dose of more inequality into

the world of work, with a booster from uneven digital connectivity," Ryder said.

"That is, unless deliberate action is taken to prevent 'Long Covid' taking hold in the world of work - making it more unequal, more unjust, less resilient, less inclusive and ultimately less sustainable."

ILO's annual conference was not held last year due to the pandemic. This year's conference is the 109th ILC, with the first half, focusing on pandemic recovery, running until June 19.

The second half is to look at inequalities, skills and life-long learning, and run from November 25 to December 11.

The conference crafts international labour standards, through conventions that countries then ratify, or through recommendations that guide national action.

The gathering also monitors how those conventions and recommendations are being applied.

AFP



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tender :-

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
187/2021/MA FWR/HQ-20	Routine maintenance to all the pontoon jetties and quay wall furniture at fishery harbours in various governorate of the Sultanate of Oman	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 20/6/2021	Monday 12/7/2021

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24166670 or etenderhd@ita.gov.om
- Note: Bid Submission will be online only. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system .

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

MSX inches up as volumes rise

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Monday inched up by 0.04 per cent to close at 3,967.11 points.

The MSX30 Index witnessed continuous increases during past few days amid increased economic optimism and rising oil prices.

Industrial Index dropped 0.52 per cent on Monday, while Financial Index and Services Index rose 0.18 per cent and 1.0 per cent, respectively. MSX Sharia Index increased 0.30 per cent to close at 567.06 points.

Trading activity increased on Monday as volumes were up by 4 per cent at 27.87mn shares compared with 26.79mn shares traded on Sunday. Market turnover rose 34.7 per cent to RO4.66mn compared with RO3.46mn in the previous trading session.

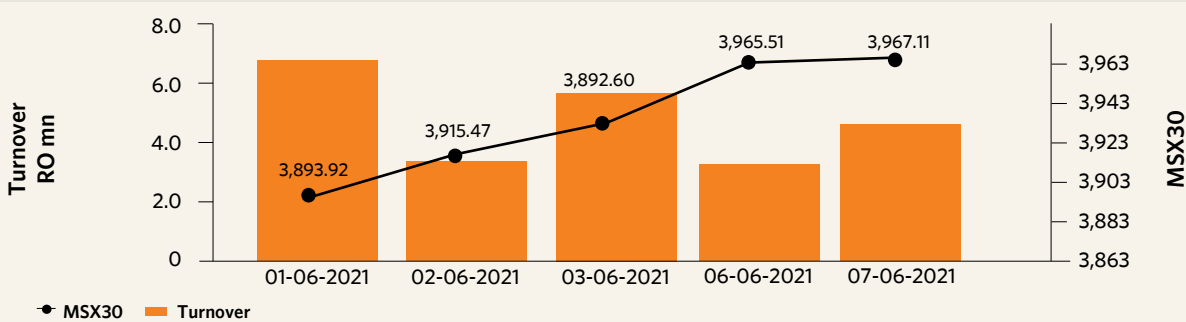


Market breadth at the MSX remained positive with 25 advancing stocks to eight decliners. As many as 21 traded stocks remained flat for the day.

Top gainers were Al Maha Petroleum (6.67 per cent), Muscat Finance (3.77 per cent), Oman and Emirates Invest-

ment Holding (3.39 per cent) and Taageer Finance (2.74 per cent). Top losers were Voltamp Energy (-5.37 per cent), Oman Cables Industry (-2.02 per cent), Al Anwar Ceramic (-1.71 per cent and Renaissance Services (-1.40 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



China's exports up 28%, imports hit decade-high

Beijing, China - China's exports rose 27.9 per cent in May while imports grew at the fastest pace in more than a decade as the global economy powers back from the pandemic crisis, official data showed Monday.

Demand for China's goods has bounced after economically painful lockdowns last year due to the COVID-19 crisis, and as vaccines are rolled out across much of the world.

The figures are also boosted by last year's low base of comparison when the coronavirus was spreading rapidly.

Exports from the world's second largest economy posted strong growth but came in lower than expectations of 32 per cent.

"To be honest, that is a cracking number by anybody's standard and show that global demand remains robust," said OANDA's Jeffrey Halley.

In May, import growth hit its highest rate since January 2011, coming in at 51.1 per cent on-year, also slightly below expectations of a Bloomberg poll of analysts.

But still, imports and exports to China's major trade partners including Southeast Asia's ASEAN bloc, the European Union and the United States have risen in the first five months this year, said customs authorities.

"It's still a fairly healthy set of numbers," Jonathan Cavenagh,



This file photo shows a cargo ship loaded with containers berthing at a port in Haikou, in China's Hainan province (AFP)

senior market strategist at Informa Global Markets, told Bloomberg TV.

"We know that global demand is still recovering and that trend is likely to continue towards the end of the second quarter and into the third quarter as the major developed economies open up."

The lower-than-expected export figure was likely due to port disruptions due to tighter COVID-19 control measures in late May after the coronavirus was detected among staff.

"I think there was some disruption in May from ports," ING chief economist for Greater China Iris Pang said, referring to recent congestion at southern China's Yantian port.

Pang added that the Suez Canal incident - when a stranded mega-ship blocked the critical

maritime artery for six days in March - had also affected China's export and import trade.

Electronics shipments have bolstered Chinese exports, rising 31.9 per cent on-year in the January to May period, although growth in demand for textiles - including masks to guard against the virus spread - have eased, dropping 10.3 per cent.

Nomura chief China economist Lu Ting noted that factors behind import growth include rising commodity prices and strong yuan appreciation.

Authorities said Monday that the volume and prices of iron ore, crude oil and soybeans imports have risen.

China's overall trade surplus came in at US\$45.53bn in May, an on-year decrease of 26.5 per cent.

AFP

France imposes €220mn fine on Google

Paris, France - France's competition regulator on Monday fined Google €220mn (US\$267mn) after finding it had abused its dominant market position for placing online ads, as US tech giants face growing pressure in Europe. The penalty is part of a settlement reached after three media groups - News Corp, French daily Le Figaro and Belgium's Groupe Rossel - accused Google of effectively having a monopoly over ad sales for their websites and apps. The competition authority determined that Google gave preferential treatment to its own ad inventory auction service AdX and to Doubleclick Ad Exchange, its real-time platform for letting clients choose and buy ads.

"It is the first ruling in the world to scrutinise the complex algorithmic processes for the auctions that determine online 'display' advertising," the authority's president Isabelle de Silva said.

Media groups looking to sell ad space on their internet sites or mobile apps using rival platforms often found that Google's serv-



ices were unfairly competing against rivals, using a variety of methods.

For example, regulators found that Doubleclick would vary the commission it took when making a sale based on prices offered by other so-called ad servers.

At the same time, Google arranged for AdX, its own supply-side platform (SSP), to give preferential treatment to offers emanating from Doubleclick - effectively squeezing out competitors such as Xandr or Index Exchange. 'The practices are particularly serious because they are penalising Google's competitors in the SSP market as well as the editors of websites and mobile apps,' the regulator said in a

statement.

'First in the world'

Media groups saw their online ad revenues crimped 'even as their business model has been strongly undermined by the decline in paper subscriptions and the associated drop in advertising revenue,' it said. Le Figaro eventually dropped its complaint. Google did not contest the findings, and the regulator said the company has committed to operational changes including improved interoperability with third-party ad placement providers.

"We are going to test and develop these changes in the coming months before deploying them more broadly, including

some on a global scale," Maria Gomri, legal director at Google France, said in a statement.

The fine represents just a tiny fraction of the US\$55.3bn in revenue booked by Google in the first quarter of this year alone, mainly from online ad sales.

The ruling comes as American technology firms are drawing closer scrutiny from European authorities, which are giving themselves new resources to better understand the complex workings of fast-evolving markets.

Last week, Germany's competition regulator said it was expanding an antitrust investigation into Google and its parent company Alphabet to include Google News Showcase, a service aimed at increasing revenue for media publishers.

Facebook also found itself targeted last week by parallel competition inquiries from the European Union and Britain, into whether the social media giant uses data from advertisers to unfairly dominate the online classifieds market.

AFP

Taiwan tech sector hit by virus

Taipei, Taiwan - A leading Taiwanese chip testing and packaging company said Monday that all its migrant employees have been suspended from working for around two weeks to contain a coronavirus outbreak.

At least 206 employees, mostly migrant workers, at facilities run by King Yuan Electronics Company (KYECC) in northern Miaoli county have tested positive, according to the government.

The cluster is the first major outbreak in Taiwan's semiconductor industry, which is operating at full capacity to meet a worldwide shortage.

KYECC employs more than 7,000 people, including around

2,100 migrants, and counts some top international tech firms as clients, such as Intel, Qualcomm and Nvidia.

KYECC said in a filing to the Taiwan Stock Exchange that its June output and revenue are expected to drop 30-35 per cent due to the suspension of work.

Local media raised concerns that the suspension could impact the global chip shortage as KYECC's business is a key final step in the semiconductor supply chain. Two other tech firms in Miaoli have also reported infection clusters and suspended migrant workers.

Taiwan's semiconductor factories have been struggling to plug a pandemic-driven shortage

of chips that power essential electronic devices.

The water-intensive facilities are running at full capacity, even as Taiwan suffers its worst drought in decades, although recent heavy rains have brought some temporary relief.

Taiwan emerged largely unscathed from the pandemic last year with just a few hundred cases and single-digit deaths thanks to one of the world's best coronavirus responses.

But it is now battling a sudden outbreak. Infections have jumped to more than 11,000 with 286 deaths in over a month after a cluster initially detected among airline pilots spread.

AFP

Steam rises as India and Pakistan take basmati battle to EU

Lahore, Pakistan - From biryani to pilau, Pakistan and India's shared culinary landscape is defined by basmati, a distinctive long-grain rice now at the centre of the latest tussle between the rivals.

India has applied for an exclusive trademark that would grant it sole ownership of the basmati title in the European Union, setting off a dispute that could deal a major blow to Pakistan's position in a vital export market.

"It's like dropping an atomic bomb on us," said Ghulam Murtaza, co-owner of Al-Barkat Rice Mills just south of Lahore, Pakistan's second-largest city.

Pakistan immediately opposed India's move to gain Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) from the European Commission.

India is the largest rice exporter in the world, netting US\$6.8bn in annual earnings, with Pakistan in fourth position at US\$2.2bn, according to UN

figures. The two countries are the only global exporters of basmati.

"(India) has caused all this fuss over there so they can somehow grab one of our target markets," said Murtaza, whose fields are barely five kilometres from the Indian border. "Our whole rice industry is affected," he added.

From Karachi to Kolkata, basmati is a staple in everyday diets across southern Asia.

It is eaten alongside spicy meat and vegetable curries, and is the star of the endlessly varied biryani dishes featured at weddings and celebrations across both countries, which only split following independence from British colonial rule in 1947.

'Very important market'

Pakistan has expanded basmati exports to the EU over the past three years, taking advantage of India's difficulties meeting



stricter European pesticide standards.

It now fills two-thirds of the region's approximately 300,000-tonne annual demand, according to the European Commission.

"For us, this is a very, very important market," says Malik Faissal Jahangir, vice-president of the Pakistan Rice Exporters Association, who claims Pakistani basmati is more organic and better in quality.

PGI status grants intellectual property rights for products linked to a geographic area where at least one stage of production, processing, or preparation takes place.

Indian Darjeeling tea, coffee

from Colombia and several French hams are among the popular products with PGI status.

It differs from Protected Designation of Origin, which requires all three stages to take place in the concerned region, as in the case of cheeses such as French brie or Italian gorgonzola.

Such products are legally guarded against imitation and misuse in countries bound by the protection agreement and a quality recognition stamp allows them to sell for higher prices.

India says it did not claim in its application to be the only producer of the distinctive rice grown in the Himalayan foothills, but attaining PGI status would nevertheless grant it this recognition.

"India and Pakistan have been exporting and competing in a healthy way in different markets for almost 40 years... I don't think the PGI will change that," Vijay Setia, former president of the Indian Rice Exporters Association,

told AFP.

A joint heritage

As per EU rules, the two countries must try to negotiate an amicable resolution by September, after India asked for a three-month extension, a spokesman for the European Commission told AFP.

"Historically, both the reputation and geographic area (for basmati) are common to India and Pakistan," said legal researcher Delphine Marie-Vivien.

"There have already been quite a few cases of opposition to geographical indication applications in Europe, and each time a compromise has been found."

After years of procrastination, the Pakistani government in January demarcated where basmati can be harvested in the country. It also announced it would assign similar protected status to pink Himalayan salt and other valued agricultural products.

AFP

OAB announces winners of Hasaad savings draw for April

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recently announced the names of the winners of its Hasaad Savings Scheme for April. The draw saw 101 customers winning prizes of OMR 500 each.

As for Elite account holders, two customers won RO10,000 each from the Batinah and Muscat branches.

Commenting on the results of the April draw, Rashad al Shaikh, head of Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "The current conditions have encouraged our customers to increase their savings in order to ensure that they have finances to rely on. This, in turn, enables them to improve their chances of winning several exciting prizes that can be availed as part of the Hasaad Savings scheme.

"We are proud that through the implementation of Hasaad, we have enabled our customers to embrace the need to save for unprecedented situations, which has proved beneficial, especially during these difficult times. To



showcase our appreciation, we continue to offer them incredible rewards until the end of the year."

The Hasaad Savings Scheme 2021 will see 101 lucky winners

each month from the 54 branches winning RO500 each.

This is in addition to a Big Prize draw which will see two winners of RO10,000 each, every quarter.

The Elite Draws will see two winners every month of RO10,000 each.

This is replaced by an Elite grand prize draw conducted every three months with one

lucky winner of RO25,000.

"On behalf of everyone at OAB, I extend a warm congratulations to all the winners of the April Hasaad Savings Draw. For those of you that did not win, I encourage you all to continue saving so that you can increase your chances of winning for the remainder of the upcoming draws in 2021. Wishing everyone the best of luck," Shaikh added.

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the sultanate.

Today, the bank operates a nationwide network of 54 branches and representative offices with 160 ATMs spread across Oman.

OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App.

Customers can now digitally open an account and benefit from several other services, directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.

Increase your savings to win big in Meethaq Hibati draw

Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, invites all its Hibati savings account customers to increase their savings to get more chances to win cash prize in its upcoming Mid-Year draw, which will be held in July.

In line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday' and with its commitment to promote a healthy savings culture in Oman, Meethaq is offering a total cash prize money of RO300,000 for the Hibati Mid-Year draw to be won by Hibati savings account customers. The draw will be broadcast live on social media channels of the bank to further increase the excitement and engagement of the bank's customers.

The Hibati Mid-Year draw is one of the two Grand draws in the Hibati scheme in addition to the End-of-Year draw. By simply maintaining a quarterly average balance of RO30,000, Hibati account holders shall be entitled to one entry to the Mid-Year draw and for every incremental RO30,000 average balance, customers would be getting an additional entry to the draw, thus increasing the chances of winning. Four grand prizes of RO50,000 each and one attractive grand prize of RO100,000 will be given away during the Hibati Mid-Year draw, which will see a total of RO300,000 being given away to five winners.

Amor Said al Amri, Meethaq head of Retail Branches, said, "We are delighted to announce the Hibati Mid-Year draw for 2021 and we invite all our valued customers to increase their savings to get more chances to win. The Hibati prize scheme has been constantly updated taking into account customer feedback from across the sultanate over the last few years. It must be noted that the scheme now provides more chances to win valuable prizes compared to previous years."

He thanked customers for their strong confidence in the Hibati scheme and the various products and services offered



by the bank.

Since its launch in 2018, the Hibati Savings Scheme has grown rapidly to become one of the biggest cash prize scheme in Oman offering special quarterly, National Day and Omani Women's Day cash prizes. The Hibati scheme also features weekly draws which rewards 100 winners every week. In total, cash prizes worth more than RO1.5mn are being given away to a record number of 5,331 winners in 2021.

Based on the Sharia'a concept of unrestricted Mudarabah, the cash prizes offered under Hibati's 2021 prize draw scheme are 'Hiba' (gift) from Meethaq to its customers and are paid out of Mudarib's (shareholders') own sources. The cash prizes are in addition to the profit share of Investment Account Holders (IAHs) in the General Mudarabah Pool as per the declared profit rates.

Customers with Hibati Savings Accounts enjoy the largest number of benefits in Oman which include competitive Mudarabah indicative profit rates, attractive cash prizes through draws, Visa Debit Card, no minimum balance charges and digital banking facilities. Meethaq ensures that each and every Meethaq product goes through the process of Sharia'a-compliance certification by the Sharia'a Supervisory Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

Please visit <https://www.meethaq.om/en/depositproducts/Pages/details.aspx#hibati> or call on 24656666 to get more details about Meethaq Hibati.



Khedmah adopts strict measures during pandemic

Committed to maintain the safety of its clients and employees, Oman Investment and Finance Company's (OIFC), Khedmah, has adopted a set of procedures and precautionary measures in the wake of the ongoing pandemic.

These efforts came in line with the directives of the Supreme Committee entrusted with undertaking measures to tackle developments resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The measures taken by the company, with the objective of ensuring the continuation of its business with high efficiency; included updating many of the services provided to clients, to meet their needs and ensure their safety.

Seeking to create a safe working environment, OIFC was keen to implement many procedures such as introducing a new branch sitting layout in the waiting halls in order to maintain social distancing. Furthermore, measuring customers' temperature while entering the branches, arranging the flow of people during entry and exit, providing hand sanitizers and carrying out periodic sanitisation of the branches.

In order to maintain social distancing and avoid public places, OIFC encourages its clients to utilize its hassle-free Khedmah app and benefit from the plethora of services it provides with a push of a button. Through Khedmah app, users can pay and check electricity, water and telecommunications bills as well as making payment to the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI).

Additionally, top-up phone, pre-paid electricity, and entering

electricity meter reading. The company also provides self-service machines available in many places across the sultanate that deliver timely and seamless services.

Harith Khamis al Hinai, HSSE manager at OIFC, said, "The health and safety of our clients and employees are our first priority. Hence, we at OIFC adhere to the highest standards of safety in our operations and services provided to customers. The applied measures and procedures had a positive impact on the public and employee's safety as well as the smooth running of operations."

"The company aspires to enrich customers experience by delivering easy and flexible services to them despite of the current challenges. It seeks to meet their expectations by providing various effective digital solutions, including the electronic channels available around the clock. Through these channels, clients will be able to avail the services anywhere and at any time. Ultimately, avoiding visiting branches in order to maintain public safety," he added.

Seeking to encounter the challenges triggered by the pandemic and curb its spread, the company launched COVID-19 Prevention Guidelines Protocol with an aim to raise employees' awareness about the virus and methods of dealing with it. In this regard, OIFC provided bulletins and conducted virtual awareness sessions.

Additionally, the administration organised periodic field visits to branches in order to ensure the safe operation of business and provide guidance to employees.

Air Arabia marks regional first with new service to Phuket

As part of its network expansion plans, Air Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC), has announced the introduction of a new service to Phuket, Thailand, with direct flights from Sharjah International Airport starting on July 2. Air Arabia is the first low-cost carrier in the region to launch a direct route to Phuket.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand has confirmed that travellers who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 from low-risk countries will be allowed to fly direct to the popular

holiday destination without having to quarantine from July 1. Visitors will only need to stay in the area they landed for seven days before they can visit other destinations in the country.

Air Arabia is offering its customers a competitive fare to Phuket, starting from AED1,799 return per value fare booking. Located in the south of Thailand, Phuket is the largest and one of the most fun of all islands. Phuket has it all: diverse entertainment options, top-class shopping venues and some of the most gorgeous beaches.



Last few days to avail offers on Nissan Kicks

Nissan Oman from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) is offering a Dream Offer for the patrons of youth centric and stylish Nissan Kicks. The offer, which is available on all models purchased for personal use, will end on June 13.

The embracing stance, provocative lines, attractive exterior styling, refined interior, enhanced connectivity and others features make Nissan Kicks clearly out beats many other models in its segment. The crossover demands attention for its dynamic styling and nimble performance and the Nissan Intelligent Mobility feature ensures seamless connectivity and advanced driver assistance features.

A spokesperson for Nissan Oman, said, "With an attractive offer available, this is the ideal time to buy Nissan Kicks. The dream benefits for customers of Nissan Kicks includes zero per cent interest for three years on specific models, cash gift, free service, insurance and more."

He added, "It is a perfect vehicle for people located in urban areas, and looking for a vehicle

which provides technology, best-in-class fuel economy, and an overall great value proposition. It is a vehicle perfect for people located in urban areas, and looking for a vehicle which provides technology, best-in-class fuel economy, and an overall great value proposition. Nissan Kicks is easily accessible, and highly flexible. From 60/40 split rear seat to a lift gate that opens high enough for customers to stand under it's never been easier to make the most of every day."

Special interest rate

A special interest rate is available for MY20 Nissan Kicks and customers can get zero per cent up to three years or 1.99 per cent for four years or 2.49 per cent for five years or 2.99 per cent for six years

on the model. For all tenures beyond six years, normal interest rates will apply for the full tenure of the loan.

This rate is applicable for individual purchase with private registration only and is subject to finance/credit approval. This benefit will be applicable for financing through select finance companies only. Customers purchasing in cash, LPO, credit will not be eligible for special interest rate benefit.

EMI

Customers of Nissan Kicks can avail low EMI rate of RO119. These EMI are calculated on basis 2.99 per



cent rate of interest for six years loan tenure.

Service package

Customers of Nissan Kicks can enjoy free periodic maintenance service package for three years/60,000km. This offer is valid for 10,000km service intervals.

Assured cash gift

Under the special promotion, customers can avail assured cash gift ranging from RO1,700 to RO2,000 on Nissan Kicks.

Free insurance

Customers of Nissan Kicks can enjoy free insurance in Oman & UAE for first year for private registration

tion. Customers can enjoy free registration on Nissan kicks for the first year.

'Favourite' reputation

Nissan Kicks has established a 'favourite' reputation among the youth in Oman by offering an impressive array of features along with stylish and contemporary design. Nissan Kicks continues to be popular since its introduction due to its stylish design and "Excellent" Rated GSO Fuel efficiency of 17.8km/lt.

Nissan Kicks' Dual Tone further augmented the style quotient of the innovative, stylish, and functional crossover.

The range of Dual Tone available in SV and SL grades has created a new standard of design, driving enjoyment and technology within the segment.

Nissan Kicks guarantees a top-quality driving experience with its expressive style, personal technology, intelligent safety, efficient powertrain and strong value positioning. Nissan Kicks is a great hit with all age group of car buyers.

Madayn academy conducts event on EFQM Excellence Model, Kaizen strategy

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates – Madayn, represented by Madayn Industrial Academy, organised a workshop on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model and the Japanese Kaizen strategy as part of a series of workshops held along the lines of the agreement signed by Madayn with the European Business Centre for Training and Development to lay the groundwork for Madayn to obtain ‘Committed to Excellence – C2E’ certification.

Dr Khamis al Muniri, director general of Madayn Industrial Academy, stated that the programme aims at disseminating continuous improvement concept and practices (Kaizen) and enhancing comprehensive quality and application of EFQM standards in Madayn.

“Achieving these shall qualify Madayn to obtain EFQM Certification through organising a series of workshops to spread awareness on Kaizen and EFQM within Madayn and gear Madayn



up for the excellence award,” Dr Muniri pointed out. Delivered by Dr Munthir al Qaderi of the European Business Centre, a workshop was delivered to highlight several related topics including an introduction to the project, its components and the action plan. The workshop also reviewed

the theoretical background related to quality, development, change, continuous improvement, maintenance management, and waste management at the work environment.

This workshop came as part of an extensive programme that will continue for one year to dis-

seminate advanced awareness on the EFQM Excellence Model and the Japanese Kaizen strategy within Madayn.

The academy earlier organised a meeting with the director generals at Madayn’s head office and the industrial cities on these models.

Nexthink selects Atos as Mideast strategic partner

Nexthink, the leader in digital employee experience (DEX) management announced that it is partnering with Atos in the Middle East.

The global digital transformation market size is expected to reach an approx. total of US\$7.8tn by 20241 with higher demand for data analytics and enhanced employee experience. To target the growing global digital transformation market - Nexthink has signed a strategic partnership with Atos. Expanding upon its global success of serving 1 million endpoints with Nexthink’s award-winning technology in just two and a half years; Atos plans to accelerate digital transformation for organisations in the Middle East.

“The shut down and shift to remote work has accelerated the need for digital transformation, forcing companies to rethink their approach on how they can transform their existing business processes to drive new levels of customer engagement, employee productivity, and business resiliency,” said Maged Eid, area VP – META, Nexthink.



Hesham Fayed



Maged Eid

“Together with Nexthink’s technology and Atos’ expertise, we are uniquely positioned to help organisations transform their businesses. We are confident that Atos will help us expand our reach and better serve our customers in the region.”

Hesham Fayed, VP - head of Sales Middle East at Atos, said, “Today digital transformation is on top of an organisation’s agenda to improve productivity, scale and reduce costs. Nexthink’s advanced technology allows us to support our clients by delivering data-driven, automated and proactive end user support,

enabling them to be more proactive, transform the workplace and achieve their digital transformation initiatives.”

Nexthink technology revolutionizes the digital employee experience, so IT teams can shift from reactive problem solving to proactive experience management. With an employee-centric view across their IT infrastructure, organisations can provide enhanced employee engagement and automated remediation. As a result, they lower IT costs, increase employee productivity and satisfaction, and improve the success of transformation projects.

Dabur Amla hair oil - superfood for strong and healthy hair

Amla, the superfood in Ayurveda, earned its popularity for a reason. With eight times more Vitamin C than an orange, twice the antioxidant power of acai berry, and about 17 times, that of the pomegranate; it is the ‘nectar of life’ to tackle the underlying cause of numerous ailments but most obviously, it is that haircare and skincare essential you can’t afford to miss.

A Vitamin C powerhouse, Amla is for everyone looking to improve hair growth and scalp health. Its treasure of fatty acids strengthens the hair follicles to nourish and add lustre. It is no wonder that in modern times the Indian Gooseberry has found favour in hair care products and has become the hero ingredient in a range of hair care products like hair oils, shampoos, conditioners, elixirs,

and even hair masks.

Amla, the superfood

Combats hair fall: With amino acids in abundance, a regular massage with amla hair oil provides enough oxygen and nourishment to the hair follicles to reduce hair fall.

Boosts hair growth: Vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients present in amla aid in stimulating blood circulation thus, stimulating hair growth.

Protects from external damage:

Amla being calcium-rich saves the hair from external damages caused by blow-drying, ironing, and heat treatments.

Dodge dandruff: Vitamin C cures dryness and prevents the accumulation of flakes that eventually become dandruff.

Explore Amla hair oil on www.amazon.ae



Beat the heat with Starzplay’s entertainment choices

With summer upon us, Starzplay, MENA region’s leading subscription video on demand (SVOD) service, is giving you the perfect reason to stay indoors and enjoy the coolest entertainment available for anytime viewing on all your favourite devices. From brand new seasons to exclusive shows streaming the same time as the US, Starzplay’s June content roster promises unlimited entertainment for the whole family. Hit the couch, grab an ice-cold beverage and stream your way through brilliant programming anytime, anywhere and from any device.

Here’s a look at Starzplay’s June line-up:

A Starz Original Series: Blindspotting, Season 1

Lifelong friends Daveed Diggs and Rafael Casal co-wrote and star in this timely and wildly entertaining story about the intersection of race and class set against the backdrop of a rapidly gentrifying Oakland. Available only on Starzplay, the show will be streaming on the platform from June 14 with new episodes added every Monday.

Flatbush Misdeemeanors, Season 1

Flatbush Misdeemeanors is a raw



comedy of city life following Dan and Kevin, who play characters struggling to thrive in their new surroundings in the brash environment of Flatbush, Brooklyn. Bold, smart and grounded in authenticity, the show explores two longtime friends seeking to climb out of their heads and connect with others.

Available only on Starzplay and the same time as the US, the show will be streaming on the platform from June 30.

Batwoman, Season 2

When Ryan Wilder first discovers Kate Kane’s Batsuit, she has no idea how drastically her life is about to change. Ryan sees the suit as her chance for power and no longer a victim as she survives in the tough streets of Gotham.

But as she discovers the significance of the symbol, Ryan becomes a very different Batwoman than Kate Kane – her own Batwoman - but with the same understanding of what it means to be a hero.

Season 2 will be exclusively streaming on Starzplay from June 27.

DC’s Stargirl, Season 1

DC’s Stargirl follows high school sophomore Courtney Whitmore as she inspires an unlikely group of young heroes to stop the villains of the past. This new drama reimagines Stargirl and the very first superhero team, the Justice Society of America, in an unpredictable series. The project focuses on the character that started executive producer Geoff

Johns’ career as a comic book writer when he created her in 1999, lovingly inspired by his late sister, who was killed in a 1996 plane explosion.

Season 1 is currently streaming on Starzplay.

Trust, Season 1

Inspired by actual events, *Trust* delves into the trials and triumphs of one of America’s wealthiest and unhappiest families, the Gettys. *Trust* explores the complexities at the heart of every family, rich or poor.

Season 1 is currently streaming on Starzplay.

Siren, Season 3

Siren takes us inside Bristol Cove—a coastal town known for its legend of once being home to

mermaids. When the arrival of a mysterious girl proves this folklore all too true, the battle between man and sea takes a very vicious turn as these predatory beings return to reclaim their right to the ocean.

The all-new season is currently streaming on Starzplay.

A Good Day To Die Hard

Bruce Willis stars as John McClane, the heroic New York cop with a knack for being in the wrong place at the right time. Streaming on the platform from June 16, the prequels will also be available for *Die Hard* fans, all streaming in June.

Die Hard and *Die Hard 2* on June 2 while *Die Hard with Vengeance* and *Live Free or Die Hard* on June 9.

Max Payne

Mark Wahlberg delivers an explosive performance in this action-packed thriller based on the legendary, hard-hitting video game. Max Payne is a maverick cop with little regard for rules and nothing left to lose. Hell-bent on revenge, he’s determined to track down those responsible for the brutal murder of his family, but his obsessive investigation takes him on a nightmarish journey. *Max Payne* will stream on Starzplay on June 30.

Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi records 22% increase of Arabian oryx

The aerial survey for the Arabian oryx Protected Area, carried out by the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) last November, revealed a 22 per cent increase in the number of oryx in the Protected Area, in comparison to previous studies.

This confirms the success of the Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Arabian Oryx Reintroduction Programme which was launched in 2007 with a goal to relocate the Arabian oryx. Initially there was a herd of no more than 160, and today, the herd has successfully reached 946 heads.

A specialist team from EAD conducted an aerial survey study to count the number of Arabian oryx, Sand Gazelle and other species within the borders of the

largest natural reserve in the UAE, which spans an area of 6,000sq km. The survey conducted is part of EAD’s commitment to preserving biological diversity in Abu Dhabi and protecting species in their natural habitat. This project marks the second comprehensive aerial survey for the Arabian Oryx Protected Area, with the first one taking place in March 2017.

The survey also aims to increase the available information on the age and sex composition of the Arabian oryx herd. The data collected has helped EAD establish a set of technical recommendations, with the aim of improving the management of the reserves and the re-introduction programmes for the Arabian



oryx as well as other species.

Dr Shaikha Salem al Dhaheiri, secretary general of EAD, said, “This survey is a major part of our efforts to preserve the Arabian

oryx, under the hugely successful Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Arabian Oryx Reintroduction Programme. Our leadership support to establish protected areas

across the emirate has been fundamental to protecting species and biodiversity, which were once on the verge of extinction. Arabian oryx is an iconic species

of the desert landscape and a symbol of our cultural heritage and was almost hunted to extinction in the wild in the early seventies and only survived in captivity.

“Thanks to extensive captive breeding of the species undertaken by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, the species was saved. With this insight, he successfully launched a programme to help preserve the Arabian oryx, increase their numbers, and relocate them for protection. His attention to the topic, continuous support, and his farsightedness are the real reasons behind the recovery of the Arabian oryx into the wild. This project has become an example to be followed across the world and represents great suc-

cess for protection and captive-breeding programmes.”

She also attributed the next phase of conservation action and success of the programme to the leadership and directions of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, as part of the Abu Dhabi government’s vision to establish the population. Ahmed al Hashemi, acting executive director of the Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity Sector in EAD, said, “Within the framework of H H Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed’s programme to translocate the Arabian oryx in the United Arab Emirates, there are now around 100 heads in the Houbara Reserve, which is located in the Al Dhafra region and managed by EAD.”

France fines Google €220mn over online ad dominance

Paris, France - France's competition regulator fined Google €220mn (US\$267mn) on Monday after finding it had favoured its own services for placing online ads at the expense of rivals, as US tech giants face growing pressure in Europe.

The penalty is part of a settlement reached after three media groups - News Corp, French daily *Le Figaro* and Belgium's Groupe Rossel - accused Google in 2019 of abusing a dominant market position over ad sales for their websites and apps.

The competition authority determined that Google gave preferential treatment to its own ad inventory auction service AdX

and to Doubleclick Ad Exchange, its real-time platform for letting clients choose and buy ads.

"It is the first decision in the world to look into complex algorithmic auctions processes through which online display advertising works," the authority's president Isabelle de Silva said.

Media groups looking to sell ad space on their internet sites or mobile apps using rival platforms often found that Google's services were unfairly competing against rivals, using a variety of methods.

For example, regulators found that Doubleclick would vary the commission it took when making a sale based on prices offered by

other so-called ad servers.

At the same time, Google arranged for AdX, its own supply-side platform (SSP), to give preferential treatment to offers emanating from Doubleclick - effectively squeezing out rivals such as Xandr or Index Exchange. "These very serious practices penalised competition in the emerging online advertising market, and allowed Google not only to maintain but also to increase its dominant position," De Silva said.

'First in the world'

Media groups saw their online ad revenues crimped 'even though their economic model is also

strongly weakened by the decline in sales of print subscriptions and the decline in associated advertising revenue' in the shift to online news, it said.

Le Figaro eventually dropped its complaint last November, but News Corp, owner of *The Wall Street Journal*, and Rossel pressed ahead.

"We need regulation because today we are not defending ourselves with the same weapons," Rossel's commercial and marketing director Thierry Hugot told AFP last week.

Google did not contest the findings, and the regulator said the company has committed to operational changes including

improved interoperability with third-party ad placement providers.

"As part of these commitments, we are reaffirming our promise not to use data from other SSPs to optimise bids in our exchange in a way that other SSPs can't reproduce," Maria Gomri, legal director at Google France, said in a statement.

"We will be testing and developing these changes over the coming months before rolling them out more broadly, including some globally," she added.

The fine represents just a tiny fraction of the US\$55.3bn in revenue booked by Google in the first quarter of this year alone,

mainly from online ad sales.

The ruling comes as American technology firms are drawing closer scrutiny from European authorities, which are giving themselves new resources to better understand the complex workings of fast-evolving markets.

Last week, Germany's competition regulator said it was expanding an antitrust investigation into Google and its parent company Alphabet to include Google News Showcase, a service aimed at increasing revenue for media publishers.

Facebook also found itself targeted last week by parallel competition inquiries from the

European Union and Britain, into whether the social media giant uses data from advertisers to unfairly dominate the online classifieds market.

Google had already been fined €150mn by the French regulator in December 2019 over 'opaque' operating rules for its advertising platform, which were deemed to be applied in 'an unfair and random manner'.

And in December last year, Google as well as Amazon were fined a total of €135mn by France's privacy watchdog for placing advertising cookies on users' computers without consent.

AFP

Express trains collide killing at least 40 people in Pakistan



Security personnel carry out rescue operation at the site of the accident in Daharki area of the northern Sindh province on Monday (AFP)

Daharki, Pakistan - At least 40 people were killed and dozens injured Monday when a packed Pakistani inter-city train ploughed into another express that had derailed just minutes earlier, officials said.

Several people were still trapped in the mangled wreckage near Daharki, in a remote part of rural Sindh province, which took rescue workers with specialist equipment hours to reach.

The double accident happened around 3.30am (2230 GMT) when most of the 1,200 passengers aboard the two trains would have been dozing.

"We tumbled upon each

other, but that was not so fatal," Akhtar Rajput, a passenger on the train that derailed, told AFP.

"Then another train hit us from nowhere, and that hit us harder. When I regained my senses, I saw passengers lying around me, some were trying to get out of the coach."

The Millat Express was heading from Karachi to Sargodha when it derailed, spilling carriages onto the track carrying the Sir Syed Express from Rawalpindi in the opposite direction.

Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said the incidents were just minutes apart.

"I was disoriented and trying to figure out what happened to

us when the other train hit," Shahid, another passenger, told AFP at the site.

Senior Daharki police officer Umar Tufail said 40 people were killed and dozens injured.

"One coach is under the engine, and we can see three bodies trapped inside," he told AFP.

"Two other bodies have been reported elsewhere too, so we fear that the death toll will rise," Tufail added.

A clip aired on a local channel showed medics giving an intravenous drip to a conscious passenger whose lower torso was trapped between crushed carriage benches.

Local farmers and villagers

were the first at the site, with huge crowds gathering around the carnage of several overturned Pakistan Railways carriages - some clambering on top in an attempt to reach survivors.

The dead were laid out in rows on train seat benches and covered in traditional scarves.

Communication problems

The accident happened on a raised section of track surrounded by lush farmlands.

Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid, a former railways minister, said the track where the accident occurred was built in the

1880s and described it as 'a shambles'.

A senior police official said he had already warned authorities about the 'dangerous condition' of the tracks and carriages.

The Pakistan army and paramilitary rangers from nearby bases were at the site to help.

Prime Minister Imran Khan said he was 'shocked' by the accident and promised a full inquiry.

Gul Mohammad, who works with the Edhi Foundation ambulance service which was helping move dead bodies away from the site, said communication problems were hindering the coordination of the rescue efforts.

"I am talking to you as I stand on the rooftop of my ambulance for better signal," he told AFP.

Rail accidents are common in Pakistan, which inherited thousands of kilometres of track and trains from former colonial power Britain.

But the network has seen decades of decline due to corruption, mismanagement and lack of investment.

More than 300 people were killed and 700 injured in 1990 when an overloaded 16-carriage inter-city train crashed into a stationary freight train near the city of Sukkur in Sindh.

More recently, at least 75 people died when a train caught fire while travelling from Karachi to Rawalpindi in October 2019.

AFP

Organisers cancel Jerusalem march planned this week

Jerusalem - Rightwing pro-settler groups scrapped a controversial march that was to take place this week in Jerusalem, a spokesperson said, as Hamas warned of renewed violence if the event took place.

The so-called March of the flags was due to take place on Thursday and proceed through flashpoint spots in Israeli-occupied east Jerusalem.

News of its cancellation came as Khalil Hayya, a senior Hamas figure of the Palestinian group Hamas, warned the march could spark new violence. It was not clear if the cancellation was linked to his remarks.

"Police refused to give us authorisation," a spokesperson for one of the groups organising the march said, prompting a cancellation of the event.

Israeli police said in a statement that 'the current route at this time is not approved', without adding that the march had been scrapped.

"We warn the occupation (Israel) against letting the march approach east Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque compound on Thursday," Hayya said.

"We hope the message is clear so that Thursday doesn't become (a new) May 10," he said, in about the start of last month's 11-day war between Israel and Hamas, the group that rules the Gaza Strip.

Rightwing organisers described the march as a routine demonstration of free expres-



Senior Hamas official Khalil Hayya takes part in a conference, in Gaza City on Monday (AFP)

sion, but many critics feared it could set a match to already inflamed tensions.

Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz had urged police to cancel it over concerns it could reignite fighting.

Thursday's march was set to pass through the Damascus Gate, where May clashes between anti-settlement demonstrators and Israeli security forces were a factor in fuelling the war.

A flag march scheduled for May 10 was quickly broken up that day after Hamas began firing volleys of rockets at Israel which responded with deadly air strikes.

That march was to mark 'Jerusalem Day' and commemorate what Israelis consider as the "reunification" of disputed city following the 1967 Six-Day War, when it seized east Jerusalem before annexing it.

From May 10 to May 21 Israeli strikes on Gaza killed 260 Palestinians, including 66 children.

AFP

2 dead, 5 injured in Libya car bomb

Tripoli, Libya - Two members of Libya's security forces were killed and five others wounded Sunday evening in a car bomb blast at a checkpoint in the country's south, a police source said.

"A car bomb exploded as it was crossing a roadblock set up by the security forces" in the city of Sebha, a police official in the city said.

Sebha is around 750km south of the capital Tripoli.

"Two security officers were killed, five others were wounded and heavy material damage [was caused]," the source said.

Local media showed images of badly damaged security force vehicles surrounded by debris.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

Interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah wrote on Twitter that it had been a 'cowardly terrorist act', offering condolences to the families of the two 'martyrs' killed.

"Our war against terrorism continues," Dbeibah added.

Sebha, capital of the southern province of Fezzan, is controlled by forces loyal to eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar and has been the scene of several extremist attacks in recent years.

Libya is seeking to extricate itself from a decade of chaos and conflict that followed the toppling of dictator Moammar Gadhafi in a 2011 NATO-backed uprising.

A political crisis in the wake of Gadhafi's overthrow saw the oil-rich country split between rival authorities in the east and west and the disintegration of security apparatuses, creating fertile ground for extremists like the Islamic State group to take root.

A formal truce signed last October between rival camps set in motion a UN-led process that led to the creation of an interim government tasked with preparing the country for December polls.

AFP

Yemen rebels call for probe into civilian deaths

Sanaa, Yemen - Yemen's Huthi rebels acknowledged on Sunday that they targeted a military base in strategic northern city Marib, a day after the internationally recognised government said the attack killed 14 civilians at a nearby petrol station.

Huthi political commander Mohammed Ali al-Huthi tweeted a call for an independent investigation into the attack, promising to pay 'compensation' if his group were found responsible.

It is rare for the Iran-aligned rebels to admit attempting to strike a target near where civilians have died.

"We asked the brothers in the Ministry of Defence (in the unrecognised Huthi government) and they said that they only bombed the base," said the Huthi leader.

"We welcome and demand that independent committees investigate the matter," he added.

On Saturday, state media said a strike killed 14 civilians at the petrol station in the city of Marib, the government's last northern



A destroyed vehicle at the scene of a missile strike at a petrol station in Yemen's city of Marib on Saturday (AFP)

stronghold, and blamed the rebels for the attack.

According to two residents, the petrol station is located

about a kilometre from the military base and soldiers often go there with members of their families to refuel their cars.

Huthi said that the rebels 'will be obligated to pay compensation' if the investigation finds them guilty of killing the 14 civil-

ians.

The Huthi rebels launched an offensive in February to seize Marib and its surrounding oil fields - the last significant pocket of government-held territory in the north.

Heavy battles between the Iran-backed Huthis and forces of the internationally recognised government have exacerbated what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The attack came as a diplomatic push to secure a ceasefire in Yemen's long war intensifies.

Marib's loss to the Huthis would be a major blow for Yemen's government, which is backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, and could unleash a humanitarian disaster for the region's civilians.

Yemen's years-long conflict has killed tens of thousands of people and pushed millions to the brink of famine.

Human rights organisations accuse warring parties of committing war crimes in the impoverished country.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Indian cities relax lockdowns as crisis eases

New Delhi, India - India's capital New Delhi and financial hub Mumbai began a gradual easing of restrictions on Monday as coronavirus infections in the country fell to a two-month low.

Hospitals in the cities - which have a combined population of some 40mn - were overwhelmed by a deadly COVID-19 wave in April and May.

The huge spike saw India report record-breaking numbers of cases and deaths to become the second worst-hit nation after the United States with just under 29mn infections.

Authorities in Delhi and Mumbai, as well as other cities and states, had imposed restrictions on movement and activities to combat the surge.

'We have to stay safe from coronavirus infections and also bring the economy back on track,' Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted on Monday as some shops and malls reopened.

The city's metro services were operating at 50 per cent capacity and roads quickly filled up with vehicles, but local shopping areas remained quiet.

The northern city was reporting an average of 25,000 daily cases during its peak.

It fell to 381 infections on Sunday, officials said. Kejriwal also announced that



Commuters at a metro station after the services were allowed to operate at 50 per cent capacity as India's capital begins gradually easing restrictions after the coronavirus infections across the country fell to a two-month low, in New Delhi on Monday (AFP)

city officials would conduct door-to-door visits to enrol people aged over 45 for vaccinations.

Maharashtra, India's richest state of which Mumbai is the capital, eased restrictions based on infection rates and hospital

bed occupancy.

'Welcome step'

In Mumbai - where the caseload soared to 11,163 in early April - there were just 794 new infections on Sunday.

Malls were reopened in the

city with restrictions, but were fully operational in cities with lower infection rates such as Nagpur and Aurangabad.

"This is a step in the right direction," said Rajendra Kalkar of Phoenix Mills, which manages three shopping centres in Maha-

ashtra. "Businesses at our malls are coming back slowly. This is a very welcome step for thousands of mall staff and retail employees."

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India estimated that more than two

million jobs were lost during the Maharashtra lockdown.

"We are very happy to open our doors again today," the restaurant manager of the Mumbai branch of popular eatery Social, who gave his name as Malay, told AFP.

Experts warn that while the crisis has eased in Delhi, Mumbai and other major cities, the disease is still spreading in rural areas and in some southern and northeastern states.

The death toll - which usually lags infection figures by several weeks - was still at elevated levels, they added.

"Currently, the states with high test-positivity rates like Kerala and Tamil Nadu need to maintain the restrictions as any major easing can be risky," community health expert Rajib Dasgupta told AFP.

India on Monday reported just over 100,000 fresh infections - after several days of 300,000-plus cases in May - and nearly 2,500 deaths.

The Health Ministry said total deaths were just under 347,000 so far.

India has administered just under 233mn vaccine shots against COVID-19 so far, but experts say the mass inoculation drive needs to be stepped up to combat the spread of the virus in the nation of 1.3bn people. AFP

Uganda tightens curbs after cases rise

Kampala, Uganda - Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni further toughened virus curbs on Sunday night, including ordering the closure of schools, to stem a worrying rise in local transmissions.

Schools will be closed from Monday for six weeks and most gatherings, save for weddings and funerals in small groups, were banned.

Non-essential travel between districts was suspended and a 9.00pm to 4.00am curfew will remain in force until mid-July.

Most shops and markets remain open, provided they comply with government health regulations, but bars remain closed.

Uganda had kept its COVID-19 cases relatively low and was spared the worst of the pandemic after adopting one of Africa's tightest lockdowns, but it eased the measures as cases dropped.

However, infections have soared in recent weeks with a sharp increase in severe cases.

Hospitals have been overwhelmed as all intensive care and high dependency beds are occupied, threatening to collapse the fragile healthcare system.

"In this wave, the intensity of severe and critically ill COVID-19 patients, and deaths is higher than what we experienced in the first wave of the pandemic," Museveni said in a televised address.

Museveni explained that the East African country had recorded as many severe and critical cases of COVID-19 in a fortnight as it did in a three to four month period during the first wave. "We are concerned that this will exhaust available bed space and oxygen supply in hospitals, unless we constitute urgent public health measures," said Museveni.

The country has counted 52,935 cases of coronavirus, of which 383 have been fatal. AFP

Tourist-hungry Thailand launches mass vaccination drive

Bangkok, Thailand - Thailand launched a mass COVID-19 vaccination drive on Monday as it seeks to beat a third wave of infections and reboot its vital tourism industry, which has been devastated by pandemic travel curbs.

The kingdom plans to give out some 6mn jabs in June, initially focusing on Bangkok - where the country's current third wave began - and the tourist island of Phuket.

The push comes as the government faces criticism over the slow pace of its vaccination strategy - less than 3mn of the 70mn population have got a shot - and concerns over

supplies.

Shopping malls and supermarkets were among the 25 vaccination sites in action around the sprawling capital, which is aiming to inoculate up to 70,000 people a day, mostly with locally produced AstraZeneca shots.

Thailand managed to keep infections low through most of 2020 thanks to draconian travel restrictions and swift isolation for positive cases.

But an outbreak that began in a Bangkok nightlife district last month has seen overall cases rise sharply to nearly 180,000, with more than 1,200 deaths.



A nurse administers a dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine at a hospital in the southern province of Narathiwat on Monday (AFP)

The kingdom plans to give out some 6mn jabs in June, initially focusing on Bangkok - where the country's current third wave began - and the tourist island of Phuket

"They (the government) were caught off guards, couldn't prepare or come up with anything in time, and they were careless," a

37 year old man said after receiving his first jab at Bangkok's Siam Paragon mall.

Thailand's crucial tourism sector has been hammered by tight travel restrictions, including two weeks' hotel quarantine for all visitors, as tourist numbers have dwindled to a trickle.

Officials hope the vaccination drive will let them forge ahead with plans to ease travel curbs later in the year, starting with Phuket next month.

The aim is to jab 70 per cent of the Phuket population and allow fully vaccinated tourists to stay on the island without going through quarantine. AFP

Taliban ask interpreters to show 'remorse'

Kabul, Afghanistan - The Taliban said on Monday that Afghans who worked with foreign forces in the past have nothing to fear once international troops leave, as long as they 'show remorse'.

Thousands of Afghans have received visas to live abroad after serving alongside US and NATO troops - particularly as interpreters - but hundreds more are scrambling to leave before US President Joe Biden's September 11 withdrawal deadline.

In recent weeks many interpreters have demonstrated in Kabul, demanding foreign forces and embassies that they worked with help them relocate.

'They shall not be in any danger on our part,' the Taliban said in a statement.

'The Islamic Emirate would like to inform all the above people that they should show remorse for their past actions and must not engage in such activities in the future that amount to treason against Islam and the country.'

AFP

Rohingya in Bangladesh feel trapped, fear monsoons: HRW

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Rohingya refugees kept on a Bangladesh island fear they will be exposed to torrid conditions during the upcoming monsoon season, and are struggling with 'inadequate' health and education facilities, a Human Rights Watch report said on Monday.

About 18,800 refugees have been moved from the Cox's Bazar region - where around 850,000 people live in squalid and cramped conditions after fleeing Myanmar - to the low-lying silt island of Bhashan Char in the Bay of Bengal.

A spokesman for the Prime Minister's office told AFP that another 80,000 Rohingya would be shifted to the island soon.

The Bangladesh government has insisted the relocation is voluntary, with the island safe from cyclones and its facilities far better than the Cox's Bazar camps.

But Human Rights Watch said, after interviewing 167 refugees, that they had been moved 'without full, informed consent' and prevented from returning to the mainland.

The refugees also spoke of a shortage of health facilities and education for their children, the



Buildings that are accommodating Rohingya refugees on Bhashan Char - an island in Bangladesh designated for the refugees from Myanmar (AFP)

58-page report said.

Others feared the monsoon season starting in June could expose them to high winds and flooding on the island.

Human Rights Watch acknowledged that Dhaka had been 'generous and compassionate' in sheltering the Rohingya - many of whom fled Myanmar after a brutal military crackdown in 2017 - but that their rights should be protected.

"The Bangladesh government is finding it hard to cope with over a million Rohingya refugees, but forcing people to a remote island just creates new problems," Bill Frelick, HRW's director of migrant and refugee rights, said.

"International donors should

assist the Rohingya, but also insist that Bangladesh return refugees who want to return to the mainland or if experts say island conditions are too dangerous or unsustainable."

Bangladesh Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen hit back at the report, telling AFP that 'whatever resources we have, we have tried to provide the best of services to these people'.

"Their nations are very developed... If they have so much sympathy, let them take them back to their country," Momen said of the New York-based Human Rights Watch. "I am sorry we cannot have better facilities because we are not a rich country."

AFP

17 killed, thousands homeless as floods wreak havoc in Sri Lanka

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Army relief workers in aluminium dinghies handed out rice and other food to residents in submerged parts of the Sri Lankan capital as the death toll from monsoon floods across the country rose to 17 on Monday.

The monsoon hits the South Asian country twice a year, bringing vital rain for irrigation and hydro-power generation, but it can be deadly and destructive.

At least 17 people have died since Friday, after heavy downpours inundated ten of the country's 25 districts.

"Our kitchen is still flooded and we managed thanks to cooked food distributed by the military," Kusuma Dahanayake told AFP by telephone from Gampaha, the worst-affected district, just outside Colombo.

The 73 year old said it was the worst flooding she had experienced at her home since she moved there in 1995.

Officials said floodwaters in the area were receding, but about 161,000 people were still unable to return to their homes.

The flooding in the area was exacerbated by the illegal filling of low-lying lands reserved for



People wade through floodwaters after heavy monsoon rains inundated Kelaniya, on the outskirts of Colombo on Sunday (AFP)

stormwater retention, they added.

Residents of Kelaniya, on the outskirts of Colombo, waded through waist-deep waters, while some used makeshift rafts and oars to get around on streets which now resembled canals.

In Malwana, just northeast of Colombo, Hassen Maulavi said he had to move through flooded streets for an urgent medical appointment on Monday, from his partially submerged two-storey home.

Soldiers on Monday rescued 27 people marooned in a region north of Colombo, after earlier

operations to pluck hundreds of people from their flooded homes over the weekend.

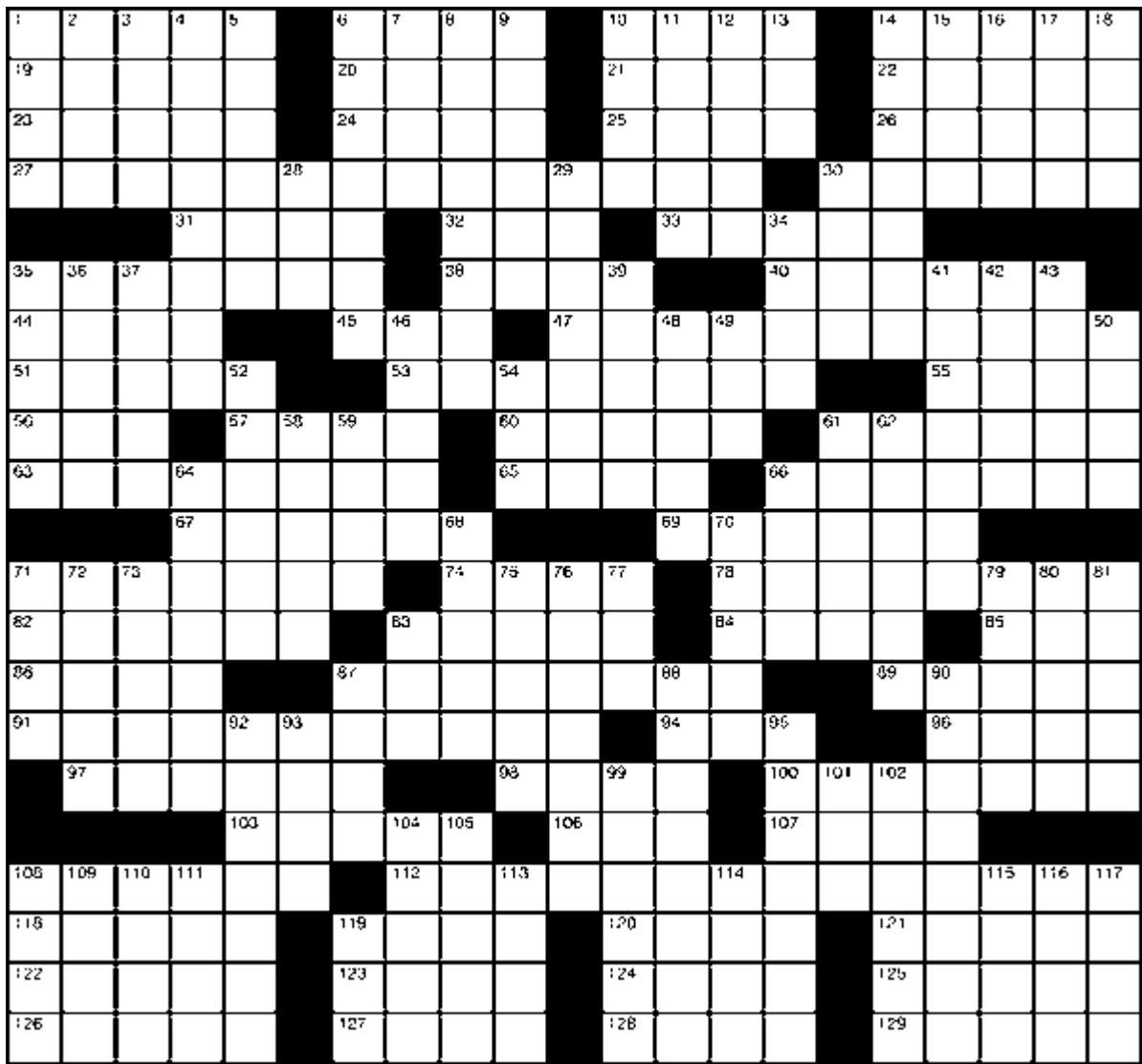
The Disaster Management Centre said conditions overall appeared to be improving Monday, although a mudslide warning remained for the ten districts.

In the central Kegalle district, rescuers said they were guided by a pet dog to a home where four members of a family had been buried by a mudslide on Sunday.

All four - aged between 23 and 57 - had died, the officials added.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 Lots
6 In short supply
10 Back up
14 Brooded
19 ___ out!
20 Barcelona bravos
21 Food fish
22 Lyric poem
23 Wake up
24 Casino calculations
25 Exasperated
26 Jessica of films
27 Start of Lincoln quote
30 More unmanageable
31 Lotion ingredient
32 "One ___ million"
33 Soupy
35 Clothes holder
38 Offer for sale
40 Put out of office
44 Rave's partner
45 Fr. holy woman
47 More of quote
51 "Four Jills in ___"
53 Church musician
55 Satiated
56 Where many hope to go
57 Bus. school subj.

- 60 Verbal tests
61 Regal perch
63 More of quote
65 Silesian river
66 Poet Geoffrey
67 In a tidy way
69 Cropped slacks
71 Broad grinners
74 ___ boy!
78 More of quote
82 Eye shape
83 Extort
84 "... ___ forgive..."
85 Thespian Wallach
86 Bon ___!
87 "Love ___": Elvis
89 Water transport
91 More of quote
94 Morns
96 White-tailed eagle
97 Burstyn and Page
98 Russ. units
100 Outbursts
103 Storage area
106 Oriental holiday
107 Foamy brews
108 Mississippi explorer
112 End of quote
118 "Bell" town
119 Thompson of "Family"
120 Perry's penner

- 121 Type of management
122 "Mack the Knife" singer
123 "Mama ___"
124 Legal degs.
125 Casals's forte
126 Jimmy of "NYPD Blue"
127 High-flying Sally
128 Org. procedure
129 Secret meeting
DOWN
1 Sign of healing
2 Make well
3 Fighting
4 Aversion
5 Foundry products
6 Fans
7 Actor Ray
8 "... ___ Valley"
9 Early ascetic
10 Global area
11 President Yeltsin
12 "Maria ___"
13 "CSI" Danson
14 "Little House" Gilbert
15 Milky stone
16 Swimming hole
17 Rim
18 Bambi's kin
28 ___ vs. Wade

- 29 Sloped roof
30 Departed
34 Fontanne's other half
35 Preliminary sketch
36 Hindu prince
37 Madrid's first month
39 100 paras
41 Set with stones
42 At the place
43 Steak choice
46 Sound-related
48 Spring bloom
49 Road curve
50 Peeping Tom
52 Radio's Fitzgerald
54 Sticky stuff
58 Swiss ___
59 Mel's family
61 Hurl recipients
62 Greeted
64 Beyond ethical bounds
66 Naval noncoms
68 Summit meeting site
70 "Old MacDonald had ___"
71 Fish or fiddle
72 Wed in haste
73 Swiss poet Henri
75 Restless age

- 76 Looks after
77 Use an abacus
79 Listened to
80 Skirt shape
81 Near perfect scores
83 Wager
87 Has to
88 Wind type
90 Newsman Harry
92 Diane and Buster
93 Aware of
95 Most dried out
99 Celebrations
101 Under the weather
102 Edit
104 Teheran native
105 Granted
108 June tie
109 Red-coated cheese
110 Rani's wrap
111 Step ___!
113 Labyrinth
114 Charity
115 Like Andersen's duckling
116 10 decibel units
117 Jog
119 Knightly address

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

It's been a long time since you've been in the mood to go out and socialise, and you're worried. Could this be a permanent thing for you? Nah. This, too, shall pass. At that point, the stars slip out of the comfy-cozy jammies they've been wearing in your house of secrets and are ready, willing, and able to make up for any lost time. So, as per usual, expect to be burning the candle at both ends.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It's time to dig deep. Meet each and every person with an eye toward getting to know them on a profoundly personal level. So if you found yesterday to be a bit on the tricky side people-wise, you can relax and forget all about that now. The storm is officially over. It's time to enjoy your surroundings and all those particularly wonderful treats life and all these folks have to offer.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You might need to spend a bit of time talking a family member off the ledge, but if you stay calm, it will rub off on them and they'll do just fine. If the situation seems to be a bit more than you can handle, don't be afraid to ask for outside help. Of course, since the stars are all about compassion and understanding, you won't fail to bring out the best in people.



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

No one is fonder than you of being connected with kindred spirits and of the weekly routines that bring you all together. So if you don't already have a posse that you hang out with regularly, it's time to get out there and find one. You know they're out there, and with the sensitive stars tuning up your people skills, you can't help but find them. All you have to do is show up!



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Ready for a little rest and relaxation? Some well-deserved time off, far away from the madding crowd? You're certainly due, and thanks to the stars, well, let's just say you won't be looking for company for long. You may, however, be reported as missing by your worried friends. Let them know you won't be surfacing for a few days. It's only polite.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Sure has been a hectic time, hasn't it? Lots of work, lots of emotional matters, you name it. So aren't you due for some serious recreation time? You bet you are. It's time to forget your woes, put all those household projects on the back burner and go all out indulging yourself. Start work on this project tonight. A bubble bath or massage is definitely in order.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

That mission you've been on for what seems like forever? Your desire to impress the higher-ups with your ability to take charge of any and all situations? Well, you may not see it coming, but they're preparing to have a chat with you even as we speak. At that point, you'll discover just how indispensable you've made yourself to them. Ready or not, here come the kudos!



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You're almost done with this project, but then it's on to that little pet project you've been eyeballing. Keep that in mind when someone waltzes in late this afternoon with a bunch of overdue items, and do what you do best. Smile and handle it. If worse comes to worst, you can always ask a co-worker for a favour. It's not like it's impossible to find someone there who owes you one.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You're usually the very soul of objectivity, but not today. You're in an extremely unusual mood. You're feeling nostalgic. What's up with that? Well, look at it this way: even you are entitled to gush a little every now and then. It's simply your turn. Besides, there's someone out there who'll be delighted by this temporary lapse. It's called "romance" in some tribes, by the way.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Bet you're ready for a vacation. A nice, long one. The universe has decided to take your side on this one, so if you're ready to get away, choose your partner and just plan it. You might not be able to do it right away, but within a few weeks it will all come together. Just don't ignore the phone, no matter what. One never knows what might be coming up next.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

The stars are busy in your house of romance. The good news is that soon you'll be free to pursue some totally hedonistic time in the company of someone in an equally decadent mood. In the meantime, get all your work done and done well. That way, there won't be any pesky guilt or worry hanging over your head while you're trying to think up some new and delicious activity.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

If you're convinced that you're right about an issue, how far are you willing to take it? Defending your position is admirable, but you should stop short of getting into any power struggles. Someone might have something up their sleeve, and you can't afford to lose any ground to them even if they gain it by cheating. Refuse to play dirty with someone else.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Most modern TVs draw power even if turned off. The circuit the power is used in does what function?

- a. Sound
b. Remote control
c. Color balance
d. High voltage

2. Which is a type of Electrically-Erasable Programmable Read-Only Memory?

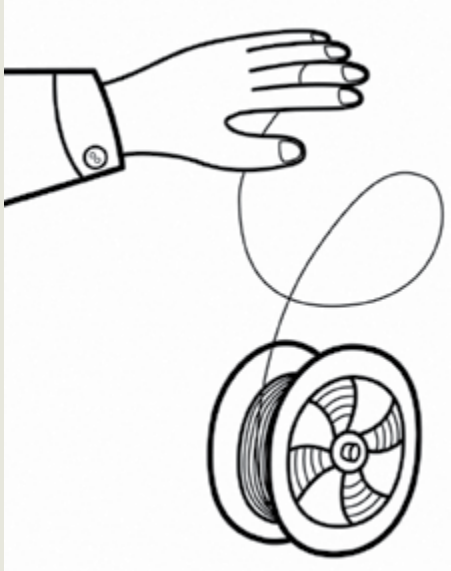
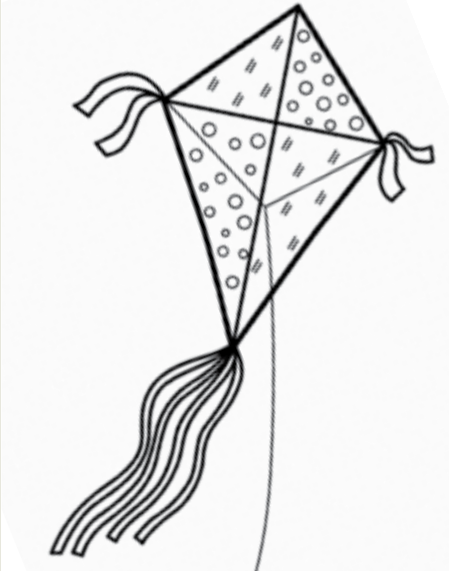
- a. Flash
b. Flange
c. Fury
d. FRAM

3. The purpose of choke in tube light is ?

- a. To decrease the current
b. To increase the current
c. To decrease the voltage momentarily
d. To increase the voltage momentarily

Answers: 1.b 2.a 3.d

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

BOGGLER

M	S	R	L
P	P	S	O
P	E	L	R
I	A	A	R

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JUNE 07)

ERGO	ALAMO	WADAN	ALLOA
AUGO	SELAN	FOGOT	RAIN
RIVER	SPALOS	GENUICHT	ANIO
ANDIA	TOOS	BARIN	PALETH
YES	CAUCUS	ENDIAN	WILL
AUG	OTTER	ETTS	EDWARD
GREEN	IRRE	CHER	WILL
THIEF	BOA	DUNN	NAMAS
REPTILES	COMBING	GOITET	AND
ANY	DOPE	ALONG	BEGER
ALCOOL	REITER	BOUS	MAIR
GERMATE	LOGGIST	MAGSIVE	ANANDA
PITS	AMONG	PEDOT	DODGE
FOURPIN	BOB	ARHAT	SNIP
PAKEGNI	LOGGIST	ONE	FOURPIN
SPOOK	VITAL	SNAP	FOUR
GLORIOUS	TRAIL	RAIP	ETITA
TEEN	RENEE	METAL	ASIN
SHAB	DETH	PATERS	STETT

WORD BUILDER

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

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



SKINCARE

SUMMER

Secrets

Summer is at its peak and you simply cannot escape it. Neither can you choose to stay indoors all day to maintain your skin tone as well as temperament. But you surely can take some easy steps to ensure that you are able to take the heat wave in your stride without letting it adversely affect your complexion and composure. Here are seven time-tested beauty secrets for summertime. Follow them to the 'T'.

1. Hydrate, hydrate!

Summer's the time when the need to hydrate yourself cannot be reiterated enough. The easiest way to keep yourself hydrated is by consuming ample amounts of water, and juices (not colas) on a daily basis. Not only does it cool your system but also cleanses it. It is commonsense - if you're clean on the inside, you're most definitely going to be clean on the outside. Water does wonders for your skin to naturally give you a glowing sheen all throughout the year. Give your skin and hair that added boost of hydration with products with ingredients such as ceramide, aqua and glycerine and don't forget your regular hair oil massages.

2. Use a Sunscreen

It cannot be stressed more that you should not leave your house without applying sunscreen on all exposed portions of your body. And that applies not just to ladies but men as well as kids, too. Direct sunlight on the skin causes sunburns, pigmentation and dark spots - everything we absolutely hate to have on our skin. Choose the correct formula depending on your skin type. A gel formula for oily skin types will give a mattifying look while a moisturising formula will leave your dry skin dewy.

3. Use waterproof, light makeup

Nobody loves oil creasing eyelids or an oily foundation that melts on the skin. Choose lightweight makeup formulas for a summer-friendly look without worrying about your makeup running all over. Give up liquid foundations and replace them with powder-based ones or better still a lightweight BB cream for a fresh dewy look. Use waterproof mascaras to avoid panda eyes, lip and cheek stains for the usual blushes that will allow your skin to breathe, too, while working its magic.

4. Avoid overheating your hair

Whether you've just got a haircut or have lovely hair and want to show it off, remember summer is not the time for that. No matter how perfect your locks are after your blow dry, all you're doing is draining your hair of its natural oils,

leaving them dry and lifeless. Make way for heatless curls or natural waves this season and keep the moisture locked in with natural serums for perfectly shiny hair. Experiment with different hairstyles for all lengths of hair to keep the style quotient high.

5. Cleanse, tone, moisturise

Our pores tend to enlarge during the summer months as a means for the skin to breathe easily. What this usually results in is excessive sweat and dirt clogging the pores, leading to blackheads and breakouts. The simple cleanse, tone, and moisturise beauty routine isn't just the most basic way to look after your skin but also the most effective. Based on your skin type, use a gentle cleanser, toner and moisturiser and follow it up with a mild exfoliator once a week to get rid of dry cells forming on the surface.

6. Use natural products

Even though over-the-counter products are easier to access, it is always good to understand the ingredients going inside it. Some trends may seem tempting to try but aren't always effective for your skin. Herbal products are always better alternatives, like pure rosewater to the easily available drugstore variants, or herbal hair dyes instead of the most popular ones in supermarkets. Even better, are the products found in your own kitchen that can work wonders for your skin and hair.

7. Let your skin breathe

This is definitely easier said than done but for those who do dare, going bare is the greatest things you could do for your skin. Sweat and excessive pollution can clog your pores, leaving your skin with breakouts and dark spots and nobody has the time to deal with these. By going sans makeup products on your skin, not only are you letting it breathe but also allowing yourself to soak in Vitamin D naturally.

SUMMER SKINCARE FOR MEN

It is equally important for men, as it is for women, to take special care of their complexion during summer months which bring forth heat, humidity, and a host of skin concerns. Men usually do not spend much time maintaining their skin but there are a few key things every man needs to do during summer, if he does not want his skin to age faster than it should.



Exfoliation

Exfoliation, at least once a week is important as the skin sheds skin cells all day long. If you do not, those cells sit on your skin, creating a dry and dull look. You just need to use a simple body scrub in the shower once a week.



Washing up

During summer, when the skin produces more oils than usual, it is a good idea to wash your face frequently using a gentle face wash. This will help in ridding any excess oil as well as bacteria from the skin, caused due to sweating.



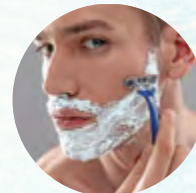
Sun protection

If you spend a lot of time outdoors in summer, using a sunscreen is elementary. A wide range of products have been designed for men, especially those that have an SPF of at least 30. Use it on your face, arms, and other exposed areas.



Lip care

This is where many men fail. Using a lip protection balm that contains SPF 30 or more is important. This can help in various ways, including helping to protect your lips from drying out under the sun's rays. Carry a lip cream in your pocket.



Shaving right

During summer months, when the skin is sensitive to heat and tends to have more bacteria buildup, shaving right is very important. Wash your face with warm water to open up pores before shaving and use soothing shaving gels.

'Mercedes display not acceptable'

Team principal Wolff 'angry' and Hamilton 'humbled' after Azerbaijan Grand Prix

FORMULA ONE

Baku, Azerbaijan - After a second disastrous race, Mercedes has been left agonising over its biggest crisis since it began dominating Formula One.

For the first time since the 2018 Austrian Grand Prix, Mercedes failed to pick up a point on Sunday as Valtteri Bottas limped in 12th in Azerbaijan while reigning champion Lewis Hamilton crawled home 15th. In the previous race, in Monaco on May 23, Hamilton was seventh and Bottas did not finish.

"We can't continue losing points like we did in Monaco and here. It's just not acceptable, for all of us," team principal Toto Wolff said on Sunday.

Despite their lack of speed compared to Red Bull, Mercedes only missed out on victory in Baku because of a slow pit stop and a braking error by Hamilton

when he was trying to regain first place at the end.

Red Bull dominated

Their Mexican driver Sergio Perez won after his teammate Max Verstappen crashed when a tyre blew out while he was leading with five laps to go. That halted racing and when it restarted, Hamilton was on the front row and in a position to reclaim the championship lead from

Dutchman Verstappen, but the Briton locked up his tyres on the first corner and the chance was gone. "A humbling experience," said Hamilton on the team website. "It's one of the toughest moments I've had for a while - one moment we had all the points and the next we had none but for sure, we'll regroup and come back."

Wolff was visibly more emotional than usual in a video press conference after the race. He said that he and Hamilton were both 'destroyed'.



'So strong, so angry'

"It's really painful," Wolff said. "We had one hand on the trophy and Max was not scoring any points. It is not only the incident at the end that frustrates, it is overall not meeting our expectations, all of us together - Lewis, the engineers, myself, everyone in the team."

"It's the frustration that dominates. For him, victory was so close and then it was gone. For me, as a leader, we just have to be the best we can be."

"In Monaco and here [Baku] we didn't have a car that was competitive, full stop. We have

In Monaco and here [Baku] we didn't have a car that was competitive, full stop

TITO WOLFF
MERCEDES BOSS

underlying issues - we are not getting the car in a happy window for the tyres. We know the deficit and we know we have gaps which we simply have to overcome," Wolff said.

"There's just so much we need to improve that I just want to get on it right now to make sure we are able to compete for this championship. Because we can't continue losing points like we did in Monaco and here. It's just not acceptable, for all of us."

Bottas was also frustrated after Baku. "Today in the race I was lacking pace," the Finn told the team website. "I was trying

everything I could but something just wasn't right with the car for me this weekend. We need to work hard to figure out why and move on quickly from this."

Hamilton and Mercedes were leading the drivers' and constructors' rankings at the end of the Spanish Grand Prix, the fourth round of the season at the beginning of May. One month and two races later, the situation has changed.

The seven-time world champion, who had a 14-point lead over Verstappen, is now four points behind and his team, which led by 29 points, are 26 points behind Red Bull with 17 rounds still left.

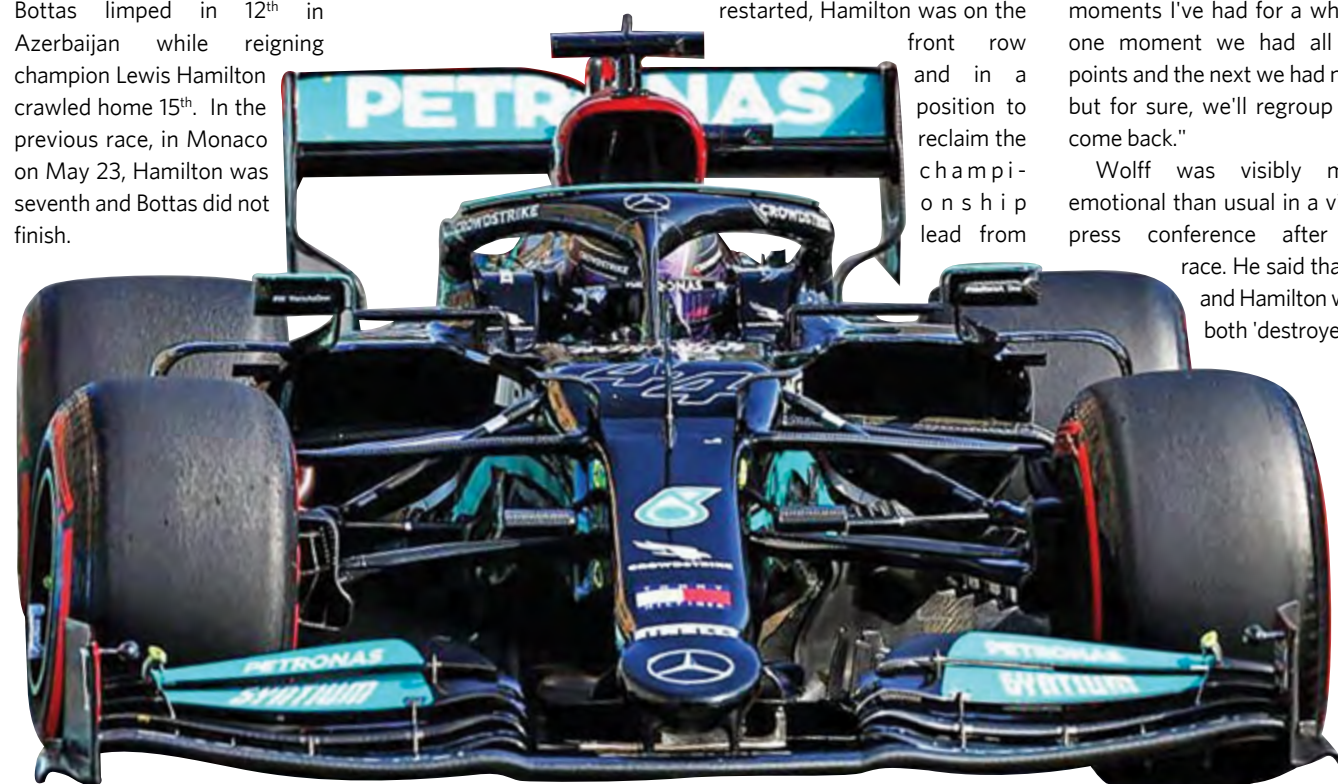
The next race is in France where practice starts on June 18 for the race on June 20.

"We have ten days," said Wolff. "The championship is very, very open, it's only the beginning. We have to make sure that the frustration passes and that the satisfaction comes."

AFP



Mercedes' British driver
Lewis Hamilton (AFP)



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FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

De Bruyne crowned PFA player of the year

London, UK - Kevin de Bruyne became just the third player to win the English Professional Footballers' Association's (PFA) player of the year for a second consecutive season on Sunday.

The Belgium midfielder follows in the footsteps of Thierry Henry and Cristiano Ronaldo as the only other players to win the award in back-to-back years.

De Bruyne was vital to City's third English Premier League title in four years and a fourth consecutive League Cup triumph. The 29 year old also

guided City to the club's first ever Champions League final, where his presence was badly missed during the latter stages of a 0-1 defeat to Chelsea last weekend as he was forced off early in the second-half with two fractures to his face.

"You want to win all the trophies with the team and then obviously if you win a trophy like this, this is probably the most important one as an individual trophy in the league," said de Bruyne.

"To be voted by your competitors who you compete

with every game, that says a lot. They are the people, in my view, who know the most about the game and they are trying to get to the best level.

"When you have these things, you can show your kids and say, 'Look, this is what daddy did when he was younger'."

De Bruyne scored ten goals and provided 18 assists in 40 appearances across all competitions for City this season.

He pipped club teammates Phil Foden, Ilkay Gundogan and Ruben Dias, who were named on a six-man shortlist alongside

Tottenham's Harry Kane and Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes.

Dias was crowned the Football Writers' Association player of the year last month.

Foden capped a superb campaign by being named PFA men's young player of the year.

Chelsea's Mason Mount, Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold, Arsenal's Bukayo Saka, West Ham's Declan Rice and Manchester United's Mason Greenwood were all on the shortlist for the young player prize.

"I'm really honoured," Foden said in a PFA video. "There have been some great players in the past that have won it and I feel really lucky to win it because there have been so many great young talents this year. It's a special moment."

Chelsea and England forward Fran Kirby scooped the women's accolade, having found the net 25 times in all competitions as the Blues retained the Women's Super League title, won the League Cup and reached the Champions League final.

AFP



A file photo of Manchester City's Belgian midfielder Kevin de Bruyne

Pulisic seals title for US

CONCACAF NATIONS LEAGUE

Denver, US - The United States (US) beat Mexico 3-2 to win the inaugural CONCACAF Nations League title on Sunday, with a wild extra-time finish featuring a penalty from Christian Pulisic and a penalty save from substitute keeper Ethan Horvath.

The US came from behind twice - from 0-1 and from 1-2 down - to force extra-time before a raucous crowd at Empower Field in Denver, US.

The score was knotted at 2-2 after regular time and in the 114th minute Chelsea striker Pulisic put the US ahead for the first time when he converted a penalty awarded after a VAR review.

Six minutes later Andres Guardado's attempt from the spot - awarded after VAR confirmed a handball by Mark McKenzie in the penalty area - was turned away by Horvath.

By then, Mexico's Argentinian coach Gerardo 'Tata' Martino had been sent off, apparently for draping an arm over Panamanian referee John Pitti as he checked the video on the tackle by Carlos Salcedo that brought down Pulisic in the box.

The decision to grant the penalty prompted Mexico fans to shower the pitch with debris.

Mexico had been quick out of the blocks, seizing a 1-0 lead in the second minute through Jesus Corona.

Gio Reyna answered for the US in the 27th - minutes after Mexico thought they had gone up 2-0 on a header by Hector Moreno that was disallowed upon VAR review because he was a hair offside.

That set the stage for Reyna, the 18 year old Borussia Dortmund midfielder, who fired in the rebound when Weston McKennie's header off a Pulisic corner kick rebounded off the post. Second-half substitute Diego Lainez restored Mexico's



US players celebrate with the inaugural CONCACAF Nations League trophy after defeating Mexico in Denver, US, on Sunday



Christian Pulisic of the US scores a penalty against Mexico at the Empower Field in Denver, US

lead in the 79th, slotting a shot past Horvath who had come on in the 67th when Steffen departed

with an apparent leg injury. Once again the US pulled level, McKennie slipping a

header past Mexico keeper Guillermo Ochoa into the side net.

The two sides remained deadlocked after regular time and the first period of extra-time.

Then Pulisic, fresh off Chelsea's Champions League triumph, went down in the box as he was challenged by two Mexico defenders.

Pitti initially didn't award the spot kick, but changed the call after a lengthy break for the review, during which tension mounted on the pitch and in the stands.

Pulisic took two steps and rifled the ball over Ochoa into the top corner.

When another VAR review confirmed McKenzie's handball, Guardado, playing in his 116th international, took it with confidence but Horvath dived to his right for the sprawling save.

"I'm kind of speechless to be honest," Horvath told a television interviewer.

"If you're on the bench as a keeper you don't expect to come in the game," he added. "It's just a whole bunch of emotion. It's a special moment for me in my hometown of Denver."

The US earned their second win in seven CONCACAF tournament finals against Mexico, its first since the 2007 Gold Cup.

For Martino, it was a first final loss since he has been in charge of *El Tri*, after winning the 2019 Gold Cup against the US.

In the third-place playoff earlier on Sunday, Honduras beat Costa Rica 5-4 on penalties after the sides played to a 2-2 draw in regular time.

AFP

QUICK RUN

Brighton's White called up to England Euros squad

Gareth Southgate has chosen Ben White to replace the injured Trent Alexander-Arnold in England's Euro 2020 squad after an impressive performance in the 1-0 win over Romania on Sunday. The 23 year old Brighton central defender made his international debut in the 1-0 friendly win over Austria last week and backed that up in Sunday's match against the Romanians.

England kick-off their Euro 2020 campaign on Sunday at Wembley against Croatia, who beat them in the 2018 World Cup semifinals.

Hosts Japan sink Tajikistan in FIFA World Cup qualifier

Already-safe Japan conceded their first goal of World Cup qualifying but still recovered to beat Tajikistan 4-1 at the Panasonic Stadium in Osaka Prefecture, Japan, on Monday. Japan were already assured of first place in Group F ahead of the game. Tajikistan retained second place after Kyrgyzstan lost 0-1 to Mongolia on Monday.

Brazil football chief suspended after sex harassment claim

Brazil's top football official, Rogerio Caboclo, has been suspended for 30 days after being accused of sexual harassment, his federation announced on Sunday - one week before the start of the Copa America, which the country is hosting at the last minute due to the pandemic.

The Brazilian football federation 'received this Sunday afternoon the decision of the Brazilian Football Ethics Commission temporarily suspending (for an initial period of 30 days) the president Rogerio Caboclo, 48, from the exercise of his functions', it said in a statement. He has denied the accusations.

Spain captain Busquets tests positive

Sergio Busquets has left Spain's pre-Euro 2020 training camp after testing positive for COVID-19, the country's football federation (RFEF) announced on Sunday. In a statement, the RFEF said Spain captain Busquets, 32, tested positive earlier on Sunday, with the rest of the squad all testing negative. The RFEF added that those who have been in close contact with Barcelona midfielder Busquets 'will remain isolated' as a preventative measure.

AFP

Belgium, Netherlands win final pre-Euro 2020 friendlies

Paris, France - Belgium and the Netherlands completed their Euro 2020 preparations on Sunday with respective wins over Croatia and Georgia.

Belgium, the world's top-ranked side, beat the 2018 World Cup runners up 1-0 thanks to a first half goal from in-form Romelu Lukaku, fresh from winning the Serie A title with Inter Milan.

Roberto Martinez's side line up in Group B alongside Denmark, Finland and Russia.

In a tight match it was Lukaku, 28, who was the difference between the two sides in a cagey contest, and he was unlucky not to open the scoring in the 31st minute with a wonder goal.

Holding off three Croatia defenders, Lukaku unleashed a curling shot which looked to be heading in before it crashed out off the bar, with Yannick Carrasco's header on the rebound also thudding onto the woodwork. However he gave his side the lead seven minutes later when he pounced following confusion in the Croatia penalty area and lashed home his 60th international goal.

The Dutch had an easier time of it with a 3-0 win over Georgia.

Frank de Boer's team play all their Group C matches with Ukraine, Austria and North Macedonia in Amsterdam.

They took the lead in the tenth minute through a Mem-

phis Depay penalty and the Lyon forward was unlucky not to double his tally six minutes later, with Giorgi Loria pulling off a marvellous save to deny him.

Wout Weghorst did make it two 11 minutes after the restart when he collected impressive Depay's well-time through ball and lashed home from close range.

Loria continued his superb display between the sticks with another great save from Depay's drilled effort from the edge of the area, but couldn't stop Ryan Gravenberch from adding a third with 14 minutes left.

The 35 year old had again denied Depay, this time from

inside the area, but Ajax teenager Gravenberch followed up to nod home and complete the victory.

Denmark also go into the tournament on a high after seeing off Bosnia and Herzegovina 2-0 in Brondby.

Goals from Martin Braithwaite and Andreas Cornelius were enough for Kasper Hjulmand's side to grab the win ahead of their opening Group B fixture with Finland in Copenhagen on Saturday.

Austria drew 0-0 with Slovakia while Scotland scraped a 1-0 win over ten-man Luxembourg ahead of their first major international tournament appearance for 23 years.

AFP



Belgium's Romelu Lukaku scores against Croatia in Brussels on Sunday

Robinson suspended from England duty

Seamer unavailable for second Test pending disciplinary investigation into historic tweets

ENGLAND VS NEW ZEALAND TEST SERIES

London, UK - Ollie Robinson has been suspended from all international cricket pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation following historic tweets he posted in 2012 and 2013.

As a result, Robinson is unavailable for selection for the second Test against New Zealand starting at Edgbaston on Thursday.

Announcing his suspension on Sunday, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed that Robinson will leave the England camp immediately and return to his county, Sussex.

Robinson issued an apology on Wednesday after admitting to posting 'racist and sexist' comments on Twitter as a teenager.

News of the tweets emerged shortly after Robinson walked onto the field at Lord's in his Test debut earlier that day. It was also just after England and New Zealand players had stood on the side of the field shortly before the start of the first Test in a 'moment of unity' with the home players wearing T-shirts which denounced various forms of discrimination.

Speaking after the drawn first Test, in which Robinson took a total of seven wickets - with four for 75 and three for 26 - and scored 42 in England's first innings, Joe Root, the England captain, said that while Robinson's debut had been



'exceptional' from an on-field performance point of view, his historical actions off-field were unacceptable.

"He's contributed well with the bat, his performance with the ball was excellent," Root said.

"He's showed high levels of skill and he's definitely got the game that can be successful in Test cricket.

"But in regards to the stuff that's happened off the field, it's not acceptable within our game. We all know that. He addressed the dressing room straight away. He obviously spoke to you guys and other media outlets straight away, fronted up to it. He showed a lot of remorse from that point onwards. You can see it's very genuine from how he's been around the group and the team.

"I couldn't believe them [the tweets], personally. I didn't really know how to take it on the surface. I think the most important thing is Ollie is part of this dress-

ing room and we had to support him. We had to try and do everything that we could to give him an opportunity to learn and understand he has to do better.

"I think it's a great lesson for everyone within our game that we can all do more. We all have to keep looking to educate ourselves, trying to better the environment for everyone, trying to be as inclusive as we can, keep making everyone feel comfortable to play what a wonderful sport we have."

In the lead-up to the first Test, Root had said that the 'moment of unity' would mark the start of a year of action to improve inclusivity and diversity within the sport.

"It starts with us players at the top of the game," he said on Sunday.

"We set out the week with that moment of unity and we're doing a lot of work behind the cricket that we want to make big change in the game and we want

to make it more inclusive, more diverse.

"I think the most important thing is we keep trying to do everything we can to better our sport, that we keep learning and we keep finding ways of making our game as best as we can.

"We can look back about how this could have been handled better, but the fact is it shouldn't have happened. And if we continue to keep trying to better the game right now, then in years to come this shouldn't be an issue. This shouldn't be something that happens within cricket. We've got to move forward from this, learn from this and do everything we can to make sure it doesn't happen again."

The ECB promised to conduct a full investigation once the Tweets emerged.

After play on Wednesday, Robinson said, "On the biggest day of my career so far, I am embarrassed by the racist and sexist tweets that I posted over

eight years ago, which have today become public. I want to make it clear that I'm not racist and I'm not sexist.

"I deeply regret my actions, and I am ashamed of making such remarks. I would like to unreservedly apologise to anyone I have offended, my teammates and the game as a whole in what has been a day of action and awareness in combatting discrimination from our sport."

Bess added

England have added Dom Bess to their squad for the second Test against New Zealand.

Bess, the off-spinning allrounder, has effectively been called up to provide cover for Jack Leach. While Leach, England's first-choice spinner, is understood to be fully fit, current COVID-19 protocols render it complicated and time-consuming to bring players into the squad from county cricket.

Cricinfo

Suspension 'over the top': Minister

London, UK - English cricket's ruling body has gone 'over the top' by suspending paceman Ollie Robinson over historical racist and sexist tweets, culture and sports secretary Oliver Dowden said on Monday. He urged the ECB to 'think again' over the sanction for the 27 year old.

"Ollie Robinson's tweets were offensive and wrong," Dowden said. "They are also a decade old and written by a teenager. The teenager is now a man and has rightly apologised. The ECB has gone over the top by suspending

him and should think again."

Later on Monday, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's official spokesperson said, "The Prime Minister is supportive of the comments from Oliver Dowden that he made via tweet this morning. As Oliver Dowden set out, these were comments made more than a decade ago [sic] written by someone as a teenager, for which they've rightly apologised."

The ECB declined to comment on Mr Dowden's remarks.

Agencies



India's allrounder R Ashwin

Ashwin 'genuinely sorry' for Robinson

London, UK - R Ashwin, the India allrounder, expressed sympathy towards Ollie Robinson after the seamer was suspended on Monday.

While understanding the 'negative sentiments' towards Robinson, Ashwin said he felt 'genuinely sorry for him being suspended after an impressive start to his Test career'.

Ashwin also warned that the suspension was 'a strong indication of what the future holds' for a generation brought up on social media.

Chris Silverwood, England's head coach, also reflected on the incident, reiterating the view that the country's top cricketers can use their profile to 'make sure the world is a better place'. "I broke the news to Ollie and to the team as well," Silverwood said. "That's my responsibility."

"He was obviously devastated. He was embarrassed and very remorseful. He apologised whole-heartedly to the dressing room. He came out and apologised to the rest of the world too, which he had to. He had to face up to this. He showed a lot of remorse.

"There is absolutely no place in this game for any form of discrimination whatsoever. It's not what we wanted, that's for sure. And we were all very disappointed in what happened.

"What should have been one of the greatest days of Ollie's career didn't end up well for him. It was disappointing for the group. It was a stark reminder for us all the responsibilities that we hold in the position that we are in.

Cricinfo

Boult in line to play second Test at Edgbaston: Coach

ENGLAND VS NEW ZEALAND TEST SERIES

London, UK - Trent Boult is firming as a chance to play the second Test against England at Edgbaston starting June 10, having previously only been inked in for the World Test Championship (WTC) final against India.

Boult joined the New Zealand squad late last week having opted to return home after the aborted IPL rather than head straight to the UK.

Before the opening Test, coach Gary Stead indicated the turnaround for Edgbaston would be too tight for Boult but updated quarantine protocols have allowed him to train immediately after arriving which has advanced his preparations by a few days.

While a final decision on whether he plays on Thursday will not be taken for a couple more days it would now be a surprise if he did not line up.

"There's a chance, there are a few things that have changed," Stead said after the drawn first Test.

"The British government has relaxed their quarantine



Trent Boult

stipulations so Trent is out of isolation three or four days earlier than expected.

"The original plan we had in place with all the information we had at the time was we weren't going to play him in the second Test, but coming out of that isolation probably three days earlier than what we originally anticipated does put a slightly different spin on it.

"So we'll weigh up the pros and cons and work out with Trent what we think is the best course forward to make sure he is fit and raring to go for that final.

"Trent is more keen than he was a week ago and that's because he's over here now, he's part of the environment.

Probably right now it's a bit early to make that call, he's only been here 48 hours and probably still suffering a little bit of jet lag."

If Boult was available for Edgbaston somebody would have to make way from the attack that featured at Lord's and had England under pressure almost throughout.

It could present the chance to manage the workloads of Tim Southee (42.1 overs at Lord's), Kyle Jamieson (41 overs) or Neil Wagner (40 overs) ahead of the WTC final against India with Southee perhaps the frontrunner to be rotated.

"We have to manage all the bowlers," Stead said.

Overall, Stead was delighted with his team's performance at Lord's in what was their first Test since January.

"We set the pace, we were confident enough to leave England a chase on the last day and throw the option to them about whether they were prepared to take that carrot or not. Takes a confident team to do that, so said to the boys I was really proud the way we were prepared to do that."

Cricinfo

Sri Lanka players agree to tour England without contracts

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka's men's cricketers have agreed to tour England uncontracted, after Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) committed to revealing specifics about the player evaluations that form the basis of the board's new proposed contract scheme.

The cricketers have long contended that the methodology by which they had been placed in various payment categories under the proposed scheme were not transparent. Now, SLC appears to have formally promised to make player evaluation marks available to each player when they return from the tour of England.

"This is the transparency the players had been requesting from the outset," the players' lawyer Nishan Premathirathne told ESPN-cricinfo. "They will play this tour without signing any contract. They have always been committed to playing for Sri Lanka."

Sri Lanka are due to leave for the tour on Tuesday evening. Following quarantine, they will play three T20 internationals and three ODIs against England - the first of those games scheduled for June 23.

Cricinfo

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DJOKOVIC SURVIVES SCARE, EASY FOR NADAL



Novak Djokovic

Paris, France - Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal reached the French Open quarterfinals for the 15th time but took contrasting routes to reach their respective milestones on Monday.

World No 1 Djokovic battled back from two sets down to survive a rousing challenge from 19 year old Lorenzo Musetti of Italy while Nadal raced to a straight sets win over another Italian teenager Jannik Sinner.

Musetti, ranked 76 and making his Grand Slam debut, was poised to condemn Djokovic

to his earliest exit in Paris in 12 years when he captured the first two sets, 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/2). But Djokovic levelled by taking the next two, 6-1, 6-0 before Musetti, who had taken a medical time-out, retired at 4-0 down in the decider suffering from a stomach injury.

Victory for the Serbian kept him on course to become the first man in over 50 years to win all four Slams twice while Nadal is aiming for a 14th Roland Garros title and record-setting 21st Grand Slam.

Third seed Spaniard downed 19 year old Sinner 7-5, 6-3, 6-0 and goes on to face tenth-seeded Diego Schwartzman of Argentina who he defeated in the semifinals last year.

Nadal has now won 104 matches at Roland Garros against just two defeats since his 2005 debut while Monday's win extended his run of consecutive sets won in Paris to 35.

"I started well but was a little too defensive. I gave him the chance to come inside the court and play his best shots. That was a mistake," said Nadal.

The 35 year old Nadal is seeded to face Djokovic in the semifinals.

Speaking after his victory, Djokovic said, "I like to play young guys in the best of five because even at two sets down, I feel I still have my chances. I feel physically fit, I have won most of my five-setters and that experience helps. It's unfortunate for him to have to retire but I could see he was struggling physically."



Coco Gauff of the US returns the ball to Tunisia's Ons Jabeur during their women's singles fourth-round match

I like to play young guys in the best of five because even at two sets down, I feel I still have my chances. I feel physically fit, I have won most of my five-setters and that experience helps

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

It was the fifth time in his Grand Slam career that the 34 year old Djokovic has come back from two sets down to win.

Djokovic, the 2016 champion and chasing a 19th major, reeled off 53 of the last 61 points against the weary Italian as he made a quarterfinal at the majors for the 49th time.

Gauff, meanwhile, swept to an impressive 53-minute, 6-3, 6-1 win over Tunisia's Ons Jabeur.

At just 17, she is the youngest woman to reach the last-eight of a Slam since Nicole Pietrangeli who made the quarterfinals at Roland Garros in 2006.

Gauff is also the youngest American woman to book a place in the last-eight in Paris since Jennifer Capriati in 1993.

In a composed performance on Court Philippe Chatrier, the American teenager, seeded 24, broke her Tunisian opponent

three times without facing a break point herself. "I am super happy to reach my first Grand Slam quarterfinal. I played really well," said Gauff.

Gauff, who famously raced to the Wimbledon fourth round in 2019 as a 15 year old qualifier, faces Barbora Krejickova for a place in the semifinals.

The 33rd-ranked Czech also reached her first Grand Slam quarterfinal with a 6-2, 6-0 win over 2018 runner-up and former US Open champion Sloane Stephens. But Krejickova admitted she almost didn't make it to the court.

"Half an hour before the match, I didn't even want to step on the court," said the 25 year

old. "I had to lock myself in the physio room and I had to talk to my psychologist. I was actually crying."

Last year's runner-up Sofia Kenin, the fourth seed, was knocked out by Maria Sakkari 6-1, 6-3 as the Greek reached her maiden Slam last-eight. The world No 18 will face either reigning champion Iga Swiatek or Ukrainian teen Marta Kostyuk for a place in the last-four.

Sakkari broke Kenin six times as the 2020 Australian Open winner committed 32 unforced errors and served nine double faults. "I'm speechless. I love Paris. I'm having a great time and I don't want to leave anytime soon," said Sakkari.

Argentine Diego Schwartzman reached his third French Open quarterfinal with a 7-6 (11/9), 6-4, 7-5 win over Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff.

Earlier on Sunday, Alexander Zverev progressed to the quarters for the third time in four years with a 6-4, 6-1, 6-1 win over Japan's Kei Nishikori. Sixth seed Zverev will face world No 46 Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain for a place in the last-four. Zverev is the second German man in the Open era to reach three quarterfinals in Paris after Boris Becker (1986-87, 1989 and 1991).

Spain's Fokina defeated Federico Delbonis of Argentina in four sets to reach his maiden Grand Slam quarterfinal. A day after his 22nd birthday, he triumphed 6-4, 6-4, 4-6, 6-4.

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