

Ramadhan working hours

Official working hours for units in the state's administrative apparatus and other legal entities during the holy month of Ramadhan for 1442 AH will be from 9 am to 2 pm. For private sector companies and establishments working hours for Muslims during Ramadhan will be reduced to six hours per day, equivalent to 30 hours a week. – ONA



P10

OMANI DUO TOPS ON SECOND DAY



P14

THE POWER OF FLOWERS TO MAKE ONE'S DAY



P20

LG TO SHUT DOWN ITS MOBILE BUSINESS



MUSCAT

SWISS OFFICIAL BEGINS VISIT

Ignazio Cassis, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, arrived in Muscat on Monday on an official two-day visit to the Sultanate. The guest will meet a number of state officials and will also conduct an official session of talks. He was received upon his arrival by Dr Khalid bin Said al Jaradi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry.

DETAILS ON P3

BIDS FOR AMPHIBIOUS AIRCRAFT SERVICES

To promote tourism and related activities in the region, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has called for requests to establish and operate amphibious aircraft services. The CAA said that a detailed offer shall be attached with the application which includes economic feasibility study, the company's business plan and proof of financial ability. The application form for a Class (B) operating licence 'for aircraft with a capacity of 19 seats or less, or with a maximum take-off weight of fewer than 10 tonnes can be obtained from the authority's website. The application will cost RO 300. After the initial acceptance of the application, the applicant is obligated to complete all requirements.

DETAILS ON P3

Movement ban from 9 pm to 4 am during Ramadhan

Entry restricted to citizens and residents

MUSCAT: The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic held a meeting on Monday under the chairmanship of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, to discuss updates on the pandemic, protection procedures and measures to curb the spread of the virus and deal with its different impacts.

As the holy month of Ramadhan is approaching, the Supreme Committee sent greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and expressed its best wishes to Omani people and the Arab and Islamic nations. It prayed to the Almighty Allah to bestow plentiful health, bounty and blessings on Oman and the whole world.

During the meeting, the Supreme Committee noted the widespread prevalence

**Closure of commercial activities extended**

**Ban on movement between 9 pm and 4 am during Ramadhan**

**No Taraweeh prayers at mosques during Ramadhan**

**Social, sports and cultural activities suspended**

**No gatherings including mass iftars at mosques**

of the pandemic in different governorates of the Sultanate and the outcome of daily statistical reports during the current period, indicating that the health sector is under heavy pressure from the sharp rise in number of infections and cases of patients admitted to hospital wards and intensive care units (ICUs).

To limit the scope of gatherings, which proved to be a basic factor in the spread and intensity of the pandemic, the Supreme Committee took the following decisions.

Extending the decision on closure of all commercial activities while at the same time allowing the movement of people and vehicles in all governorates of the Sultanate between 8 pm and 5 am from Thursday (April 8), till the morning of the first day of Ramadhan.

TURN TO P2

OVER 150,000 VACCINATED IN OMAN



The Ministry of Health has said that the total number of vaccinated people in the Sultanate stood at 152,036, including 2,559 in the past 24 hours. As per the contract signed with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), the Sultanate received the first batch of Covid-19 vaccines on Saturday night.

SEE ALSO P2

40% people with insomnia have mental disorders

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Studies have revealed that 40 per cent of people with insomnia have mental disorders due to psychological factors, including depression, anxiety, family and job pressures, and others, the Ministry of Health has revealed.

It explained that mental disorders do not mean that the person is mentally ill. Still, the change in modern civil lifestyle has resulted in many psychological pressures that may affect sleep. An average person needs 4-9 hours of sleep every 24 hours to feel energised the next day.

However, the number of sleep hours that one needs varies from person to person. "The more hours of sleep, the healthier it is", is a misconception, said the ministry.

TURN TO P3



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Supreme Committee issues new decisions



FROM PAGE 1

Imposing a nighttime ban on all commercial activities and prohibiting the movement of people and vehicles between 9 pm and 4 am throughout the holy month of Ramadhan.

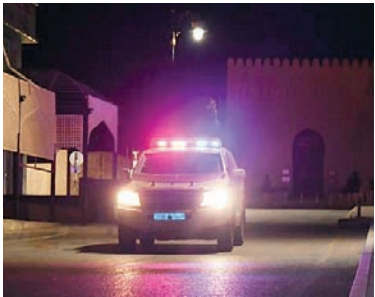
Prohibiting the performance of Taraweeh congregational prayers in mosques.

Imposing a total ban on all types of gatherings, like Iftar-Sa'im, in mosques, tents or public assembling places.

Imposing a ban on all social, sports and cultural activities and any other group activities throughout the holy month of Ramadhan.

Restricting entry to the Sultanate only to Omani citizens and resident cardholders with effect from 12 noon from Thursday (April 8).

The Covid-19 Supreme Committee advises all citizens and residents to avoid travelling abroad during the coming period, except under extreme necessity, bearing in mind that many countries are



likely to restrict movement and travel. The Supreme Committee recommends limiting travel for official missions abroad or for participation in external events.

The Supreme Committee will assess and revise these decisions in accordance with developments in the general situation of the pandemic in the Sultanate during the holy month of Ramadhan.

In pursuance of the Supreme Committee's efforts to protect society from this pandemic and the risks it entails and, to stem the spread of the virus in the workplace, the Supreme Committee urges private sector companies and establishments to implement plans that guarantee the accomplishment

of tasks through online work and to downsize the number of employees needed to attend at the workplace, taking the example of units of the State's Administrative Apparatus in this respect.

The Supreme Committee would like to stress that all the procedures undertaken so far have been made, in the first place, to protect society and alleviate Covid-19 patients' health impacts that might lead to death. The Supreme Committee hereby reaffirms that the above-mentioned procedures will not achieve the desired success unless all — individuals and establishments — abide by the instructions. Full compliance, the Committee said, will diminish, in the medium-term and long term, the negative impacts of the pandemic on public health and commercial activities.

At the conclusion of its statement, the Supreme Committee prayed to the Almighty Allah to protect everyone against all harm. — ONA

Virus death toll continues to rise

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The country's pandemic situation continues to be unrelenting and critical, with 10 more deaths reported on Monday. At the same time, the country crossed the milestone of vaccinating around 150,000 people.

Citizens and residents have been urging the government to speed up the vaccination drive and large society segments.

"People should be given travel permits to take vaccination during night hours or there should be intensified home visits," said a citizen who felt mass vaccination is the only solution to overcome the current crisis.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 1,117 new cases, bringing the total number of cases registered in the Sultanate to 164,274.

MoH reported 10 new Covid-19-related deaths, bringing the total death toll to 1,722.

The total recovery cases reached 147,539, which is 90 per cent of the total cases reported.

Also, 98 patients were hospitalised during the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of inpatients in hospitals to 606, including 189 in Intensive Care Units (ICUs).

The Supreme Committee has said the period between April 1 and May 31, 2021, will be critical. It will take a series of comprehensive measures that may include complete closure or a ban on movement. MoH said that the total number of vaccinated people in the Sultanate is 152,036 people, including 2,559 in the past 24 hours.

Of these, Muscat Governorate topped the list with 35,567, Al Buraimi 3,771, Al Dakhiliyah

14015, North al Batinah 17, 620, North al Sharqiyah 6,262, Al Wusta 516, Musandam 10,259, Al Dhahirah 8,769, Dhofar 6,084, South al Batinah 12,006 and South al Sharqiyah 7,013.

Meanwhile, as per the contract signed with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), the Sultanate received the first batch of Covid-19 vaccines at Muscat International Airport on Saturday.

Vaccination roll out in the region faces several challenges, including public hesitancy against vaccines, major inequalities as vaccines are rolled out, said the WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. It urged countries to boost awareness about vaccine uptake, tackle misinformation, and ensure that vulnerable groups aren't left behind when developing national deployment vaccination plans.

'Overbooked' hotels leave inbound air travellers in lurch

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Travellers to Oman are facing a difficult time as they are unable to get a hotel room of their budget or choice for quarantine.

This is in addition to the current sky-high airfares.

According to the regulations, travellers entering Oman must now book a hotel for a mandatory seven-day quarantine through the 'Sahala' platform.

The regulations also stipulate that they should take a PCR test on arrival and need to isolate themselves in a pre-booked hotel room for seven days and take another test on the eighth-day to confirm that they are free of the virus.

As per the notification from the Civil Aviation Authority, all inbound airlines should ensure that incoming passengers are holding a confirmed booking via the Sahala platform, which is an initiative of the Ministry of Social Development in collaboration with other competent authorities.

The decision to impose isolation in hotels listed on the e-platform for inbound travellers came due to the lack of compliance regarding home quarantine, and in the wake of



rising Covid-19 cases.

But the incoming travellers find the financial requirements of the mandatory hotel stay very exorbitant, especially those in the low and middle-income bracket, when it comes to a date on which they need to travel.

"Most hotels in the affordable brackets are found to be overbooked. Those available are all high net-worth with higher rates which we cannot afford to", said Firoz Ahmed, who wants to travel back to Muscat from a South Indian state.

Stay in big hotels costs more than RO 45 a day even as there are many on the Sahala platform with reasonable rates but they are not available for an early or convenient date of one's choice. A look at the portal shows that most hotels in the lower rate category have

already been 'sold out'.

But despite bookings, there are incidents that travellers do not get their rooms on arrivals.

John Mathew is one among the travellers, who arrived at the Muscat airport and could get the room even though they had their valid advance bookings in different hotels.

"I was told at the counter that the hotel with which I had booking was full. But the officials at the airport allowed me to undergo quarantine at my home with a promise that the fund against my booking will be reimbursed", he said.

Adding to the hotel booking blues are the higher airfares that empty the wallets.

"When an affordable hotel booking is available, ticket fares need not be in a suitable level. Anyone who wants to make an

urgent trip will have to spend more", said Augustin George, who wanted to bring his family back to Muscat.

People in the middle-income group, especially those with family, are the worst hit by the high fares. According to travel agents, the reasons for the non-availability of hotel rooms and higher fares are many.

"Many passengers bound for Saudi Arabia are using Muscat as a transit hub to stay in quarantine. This has led to overbooking of hotel rooms and rise in the airfares on some days", said a travel agent in Ruwi.

Another reason, he pointed out are fears arising out of rumours that the authorities may opt for a full lockdown in the Sultanate.

"With a spike in the number of Covid-19 cases, people fear that the government may resort to more serious steps like lockdown and closure of airports. This has spelt a panic among people", said an official with a leading travel agency in the capital.

There has been a big rush from people who are on vacation to come back at the earliest as possible. This has led to the ticket price rise, he added.



SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers in the following Tender

NO	Tender Ref	Tender Title	Tender Fee OMR
1	SIPC 21/077	Landscaping Maintenance Services	RO 25/-
2	SIPC 21/026	Bathymetric Survey of basin and approach channels	RO 25/-
3	SIPC 21/016 A	Rip-Rap Protection of Flood Protection Channel (FPC)	RO 100/-
4	SIPC 2021/016 B	Sea Water Channel Enhancement at SIPC (SWC)	RO 250/-

Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Tuesday, 6/04/2021 until 4:00 pm on Sunday, 18/04/2021. Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

Account Name	Sohar Industrial Port Co
Account Number	3101-007970-500
Bank Name	Oman Arab bank SAOC – Main Br
SWIT	OMABOMRXXX

Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted

Step 2: Tenderers to send the following documents:
A request for the electronic tender documents
Scanned bank transfer
The firm's commercial registration documents
All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address:
sipc.procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

Step 3: Tenderers will receive the electronic tender documents
Due to the COVID-19 situation, the below procedure is still valid as of today for the submission of the bids.
The Technical and Commercial proposals must be in separate, marked "Technical and Commercial" addressed to:
SOHAR Port and Freezone
Secretary of Tender committee
Tender Reference No. **2021/**
Tender Name:
• SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons.
• All SMEs are requested to provide their Green Card along with the required documents.
• For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to:
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■ SWISS FOREIGN MINISTER ARRIVES ON OFFICIAL VISIT



MUSCAT: Ignazio Cassis, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), arrived here on Monday on an official two-day visit to the Sultanate. The guest will meet with a number of state officials. He will also conduct an official session of talks. He was received upon his arrival by Dr Khalid bin Said al Jaradi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry. The Swiss guest visited the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat later in the evening. — ONA

Slaughterhouses to apply pre-order system from Wed

MUSCAT: The Muscat Municipality, represented by Seeb and Al Amerat slaughterhouses, affirmed its preparedness to meet the expected rise in meat demand for the holy month of Ramadhan.

The municipality is currently applying a special working system to ensure the safety of workers and consumers amid the Covid-19 pandemic by avoiding consumers' crowding and panic buying as well as reducing time and effort.

The Muscat Municipality started preparing the slaughterhouses to ensure the enforcement of the preventive measures and health controls against coronavirus by applying a pre-order system to avoid crowding at the slaughterhouses. The municipality directed the operating company to take the precautionary measures including disinfecting the facilities on a daily basis, observing social distancing between the workers and consumers and abiding by general requirements of hygiene



and safety standards.

The Muscat Municipality announced the pre-order system for individuals will begin on Wednesday until the first day of Ramadhan and the consumers

will be receiving their pre-ordered slaughtered animals between 7:30 am and 11 am on Thursday.

Pre-slaughtering system will be applied for meat companies and butcheries who will be receiving

their orders in the evening. The reservation will be done through the Mawashi Oman application or through buying from the livestock traders at the slaughterhouses between 8 am and 3 pm.

Sultanate implements investment plans in clean, renewable energy

ABU DHABI: The Sultanate has reaffirmed that it began to execute investment plans in the fields of clean and renewable energy, covering projects in solar energy and wind power whose feasibility was proved in studies.

This was stated by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, during the first regional dialogue on climate change held here in the presence of John Kerry, US envoy for climate affairs.

The dialogue comes within the context of preparations for the 6th round of the UN convention on climate change (COP26), a virtual conference scheduled to be held in November in the Scottish city of Glasgow.

Dr Abdullah said in his speech that the Sultanate strives to

exert more efforts in the fields of diversification of sources of income, to benefit from energy substitutes and devise the necessary strategic plans to attain those goals.

As Oman Vision 2040 charted out clear targets, the authorities concerned in the Sultanate are embarked on implementing the goals through a set of programmes and plans, among them investment in clean energy and cutting down the levels of greenhouse gases.

During his visit to Abu Dhabi, Dr Abdullah took part in a ministerial GCC meeting with the US envoy to discuss ways to realise concord among GCC states in following up investments in nascent markets.

— ONA

CAA invites bids for amphibious aircraft services

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, APRIL 5

To promote tourism and related activities in the region, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has called for requests to establish and operate amphibious aircraft services.

CAA said that a detailed offer shall be attached with the an application that includes the economic feasibility study, the company's business plan, and proof of financial ability.

The application form for a Class (B) operating licence 'for aircraft with a capacity of 19 seats or less, or with a maximum take-off weight of fewer than 10 tonnes can be obtained from the authority's website. The application will cost RO 300.

After the initial acceptance of the application, the applicant is obligated to complete all requirements for the issuance of the Air Operator Certificate (AOC) with the Authority

according to a specific timetable.

"Initial acceptance of the application does not mean approval of it, and in the event that more than one application fulfils the requirements and established procedures, CAA will choose between applications and consider licensing only two operators maximum for a period of seven years from the date of issuing the second licence," the statement said.

Earlier, Omran invited local companies for retail activities at the Al Inshirah Center (AIC) at Muttrah waterfront Muscat as part of the efforts to boost the leisure market in the Sultanate.

"Omran has invited local companies (including SMEs) to register their interest in leasing a range of Commercial and retail outlets at Al Inshirah Center, which includes Café Lounge a souvenir, and handicraft shop, tourism-related recreational services and activities (such as tourist water taxi berthing).

40 per cent of people with insomnia have mental disorders

FROM PAGE 1

"Insomnia is the difficulty of getting a comfortable sleep, which affects the patient's activity during the day. In fact, it is not a disease but is seen as a general symptom of another medical problem," the ministry clarified.

Insomnia can be divided into three — first is sleep difficulty when one starts to sleep. Falling asleep becomes problematic while going to bed. Soon after the sleep, it usually continues.

The second is frequent awakening. It is a condition where a person enters into sleep quickly but complains of interrupted sleep.

The third is waking up early, as people of this category complain of waking up in the early hours of the day unable to return to sleep. There can be many reasons for insomnia, including psychological, organic, behavioural, and environmental.

As for the organic causes, they are multiple. "A doctor may have to conduct a sleep study to diagnose these causes, the most prominent



are respiratory disorders such as snoring, sleep apnea, central respiratory arrest, acid reflux into the esophagus, unstable leg movement syndrome, and pain, whatever its causes are. There

could be other medical causes such as Parkinson's, kidney disease, thyroid disorder, diabetes, and others" the ministry said.

Moreover, insomnia may be caused by behavioural and

environmental causes such as irregular sleep and waking times, frequent use of stimulants such as tea, coffee and energy drinks, especially in the evening, besides smoking as tobacco is a stimulant

for the brain, and alcohol harms sleep, and increases breathing disorders during sleep.

SOCIAL SYMPTOMS

There are also some social symptoms or psychological

pressures which lead to severe tension and insomnia. Yet, after the disappearance of the cause that led to insomnia, the problem remains due to the patient acquiring bad habits in sleeping during the previous period, and he/she becomes preoccupied and anxious about the possibility of not being able to sleep. This creates a vicious circle that increases insomnia problems. Studies have shown that people who have inactive life sleep worse than those who lead an active life full of vitality. For this, athletes, in general, sleep better than inactive people.

Dr Hussam Emara, a consultant psychiatrist and neurologist, gave some golden tips to overcome insomnia. He said, "To fight inability to sleep, it is better to follow good habits of going to the toilet before bed, preparing the bedroom for sleep by keeping it quiet, temperature suitable, and turning off the lights to stimulate the brain to secrete hormones that stimulate sleep".

Fashion in the time of corona pandemic

LIJU CHERIAN
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Today's world has taken on new concepts like 'social distancing' and 'lockdown' due to the coronavirus pandemic. How well are we dressing up, and what are people choosing to wear? Do people dress up even while at home during the pandemic?

The *Observer* spoke to a few fashion designers and women social media influencers to know their views, and how best they view the pandemic.

Fashion designer **Sahar al Aufi** says the best solution would be to go in for elegant and simple comfortable clothes, making us feel good about ourselves. "During corona times, we do not really need party wear but always need to be comfortable at home, and it is beautiful and yet simple."

Sahar, who launched brands like Melis and Sahar al Aufi, says she would prefer going out with matching clothes, colours, or style for sure. "I would go to a designer to find for me the good fabric for the mask and the colours and styles needed."

A former SQU English teacher, **Faryal Ahmed**, mentions comfort, inertia, depression and expanding waistlines becoming the norm. Hooks and zips gave way to

elastics and spandex (lycra), with kaftans and pyjamas becoming new trends.

"Fear, anxiety, stress and frustration took precedence and 'fashion' was a forgotten word. The pandemic posed dual challenges towards getting the jabs or slipping back into jeans. "Joggers and trainers were pulled out to replace loungers and kaftans. Browsing the Internet for Covid relief was replaced by quick-fix diets and stay fit programmes," she adds.

The fashion industry opened doors to an endless variety of masks from embroidered, printed, ethnic, pop art, or the fun types. She further adds the ever-ready promises of 'not buying more', 'less is more', and 'I don't need anything' being revisited.

"The masks are here to stay for a while so let us make the most of it. If we cannot wear lipstick, we can wear a double coat of mascara," she points out.

Padmini Atal, Ladies Wing Coordinator of Indian Social Club (ISC), says there is hope for fashion and is confident of beating the pandemic by dressing up.

"Women still look in the mirror and hope still exists. Just like the trench coat of World War I became the inspiration for Burberry's famous trench coat, the ubiquitous mask may well be the



THE FASHION INDUSTRY OPENED DOORS TO AN ENDLESS VARIETY OF MASKS DURING THE PANDEMIC. 'FEAR, ANXIETY, STRESS AND FRUSTRATION TOOK PRECEDENCE AND 'FASHION' WAS A FORGOTTEN WORD.

fashion accessory of the future," she adds.

With nowhere to go and no one for whom they need to impress, Padmini feels leisure is becoming important in one's life. "Comfort is key and sweatsuits, tracksuits, and performance wear in interesting textures take centre stage. Top brands like Gucci, Fendi and Tom Ford are imitating this trend," she reasons.

Christine Karan, a fashion content creator for social media, says yoga pants and track trousers are now workaday. "Zoom calls just required a work shirt as most of the millennials and the GenZ looked for a reason to dress to the nines."

TikTok and Instagram gave birth to many creative fashion 'challenges' such as '#pillowchallenge', '#Dontrush' challenge, '#10seconds' and the recent '#whatwouldiwear'

challenge.

A lifestyle contributor to magazines, Christine (@the.christinekaran) says formal work trousers or jeans with a shirt and some make-up brought positive energy and confidence to her that reflected in her work.

"I was able to work longer and more efficiently which boosted my morale and an interest in work or study with the fun of a quick posting of #myOOTD before starting the day's work," she adds.

Artist **Sushmita Gupta** who designs clothes during the pandemic, says her overall fashion sense is way more driven by comfort now than before. "All of a sudden, everybody faced a grave situation of a wardrobe overflowing with clothes but nowhere to go."

She says a trip to the grocers became equivalent to meeting with friends in casual clothing, trendy and nicely matched, never over the top.

Finding it hard to handle this long confinement, she now has gone in for palazzos or loose linen pants.

"What took a beating were the wedding clothes, the statement-making jewellery and the high heeled shoes. They did not get to see the light of the day for over a year now," she regrets.

Toyota Debuts Stylish & Sophisticated New Camry

Further strengthening the appeal of one of the Middle East's best-loved vehicles, Toyota has launched the latest version of its iconic Camry model in the region. Featuring an imposing yet elegant silhouette and spacious, high-quality interior, the new Camry combines engaging performance with thoughtful technology to help drivers and passengers get the most out of every journey.

Since its debut in 1982 and evolution over eight generations, the Toyota Camry has been embraced around the world for its outstanding performance, alluring coupe-inspired design and renowned quality and value. As one of the Middle East's most popular vehicles, it has established an unshakeable presence in the mid-size sedan market and a special place in the hearts of people in the region. The new model introduces a level of refinement that exceeds expectations, further cementing the Camry's reputation as a class-leading vehicle that offers an unparalleled driving experience.

"We are excited to bring drivers in the Middle East a refreshed version of the Toyota Camry, a vehicle they already know and love," said Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "From the sleek new design and premium interior to its impressive performance and fuel efficiency, the new Camry adds excitement to every trip while maintaining its exceptional quality, durability, and reliability. I would like to thank all of our customers for their cherished support, which continues to inspire us on our path to developing ever-better cars."

The new Camry provides a comfortable and stable ride with superior handling characteristics thanks to the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA), the company's ground-breaking strategy in terms of how it designs, engineers, and packages its vehicles. TNGA retains all of Toyota's traditional values of superlative build quality and safety while injecting a fun driving experience.

The latest evolution of the Camry's



styling gives the vehicle a bold look that engages the senses more strongly than ever. A new front fascia incorporates a more defined lower-intake area, with grille bars extending dynamically to the sides creating a refined look that is enhanced by chrome-plated ornamentation for a premium feel. The sportier grades wear a noticeably different body style than the premium grades, with a bold redesigned lower fascia shape featuring a powerfully expressive gloss black mesh grille and larger side vents. This athletic look is further emphasised with new 18-inch bright machined-finish alloy wheels. A subtle rear spoiler lip is paired with a unique rear bumper with distinctive corner lines, as well as new-look combination lamps.

The new Camry's interior melds functionality, elegant styling, and impeccable craftsmanship. The dash design has a sporty, cockpit-like feel, while treating both the driver and the front passenger to wider visibility. The exciting interior's distinctive design offers comfort and convenience with a layer of luxury and hosts a range of advanced features. These include a panoramic moonroof, a floating 7-inch or 9-inch multimedia touch screen that comes integrated with Apple CarPlay® and Android Auto™, a wireless charging system for smartphones, dual-zone automatic air conditioning, a six-speaker or nine-speaker JBL sound system, multi-adjustable power front seats, and 60/40 split rear seats.

The new Camry is available with a choice of three powertrain options, including a new 2.5-litre four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine that produces 204 hp and 243 nm of torque and is paired with an eight-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission; a 3.5-litre V6 engine with D-4S fuel injection system that produces 298 hp and 356 nm of torque and is mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission; and an electrified hybrid system, which combines a petrol engine and two electric motors. The combined power of the two power sources is 208 hp. It is also paired with an Electronically Controlled Continuously Variable Transmission (ECVT), delivering heightened driving pleasure.

The class-leading hybrid-electric

vehicle (HEV) model can be driven entirely by electrical power with zero-fuel consumption and carbon emissions, or with a combination of the petrol engine and two electric motors depending on the vehicle speed and customer's driving behaviour. The batteries in the hybrid electric drivetrain are automatically charged by either the petrol engine or when braking and decelerating, eliminating the need to plug in a power cord. The Camry HEV does not require special fuel, yet drives like any conventional vehicle. Visits to petrol stations will also be significantly reduced thanks to its top-class fuel efficiency.

As with any other Toyota model, safety remains a top priority for the new Camry. The vehicle's advanced safety system is complemented by Toyota Safety Sense, an advanced safety technology package that includes Pre-Collision System (PCS), Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), Lane Tracing Assist (LTA), and Automatic High Beam (AHB). In addition, the vehicle features a comprehensive array of safety features to protect its occupants such as Driver + Passenger + front side and curtain SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Traction Control (TRC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brake Force Distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA), Hill-start Assist Control (HAC), and a rear-view camera, among many others.

The new Toyota Camry allows customers to express their individuality through a choice of eleven distinctive exterior colours. The sporty grade with a V6 engine is also available in two-tone colour schemes that accentuate the Camry's sculpted shape, setting it apart from the competition. The interior comes in a range of four complementary colour schemes including Grey, Black, and Beige, while customers of the V6 sporty grade can also opt for the exclusive Red colour. In addition, the new Camry can be available with 17-inch or 18-inch alloy wheels that feature two intricate designs, with a special bright machined and black finish available exclusively for the sporty grade.



People stand near roads damaged by floods after heavy rainfall in Dili, East Timor. — Reuters

Landslides, floods and volcanic ash ravage Indonesia, East Timor

JAKARTA: More than 100 people were killed and dozens were missing after floods and landslides hit East Nusa Tenggara province in eastern Indonesia, officials and media reports said on Monday.

Flooding also killed 21 people in neighbouring East Timor, the tiny country's official news agency reported.

Volcanic debris from Mount Lewotolo made matters worse on Sunday by engulfing homes following the heavy rains. Twenty people were killed and more than 60 were missing, said Thomas Ola, the head of Lembata district in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara province.

"Fourteen villages are still totally isolated, with roads inaccessible", Ola said by phone.

The death toll is likely to increase as information was still being gathered from the villages,

he said.

Mount Lewatolo has erupted intermittently since December.

In another part of the province, the death toll after flash floods and landslides hit villages on Adonara island on Sunday rose to 73, Metro TV news channel reported.

Access to the island had been difficult because of high seas, said Raditya Jati, spokesman for the National Disaster Management Agency.

"The only way to get there is by sea and strong winds and storms mean that we can't sail", he said.

Furthermore, interruptions to internet access mean limited information is available and the death toll could be higher.

Meanwhile, on nearby Alor island, similar disasters killed at least 11 people, according to the disaster agency.

It said more than 100 homes

damaged and five bridges collapsed. The climatology and meteorological agency predicted that some parts of Indonesia could face extreme weather, with heavy and torrential rain, strong winds and large waves during the week ahead.

The tropical cyclone Seroja may intensify over the coming day and is expected to move south-west away from Indonesia, it said.

President Joko Widodo said he was deeply saddened by the disasters.

"I understand the plight of our fellow citizens affected by the disasters", he said.

"I'm calling for immediate provision of healthcare, food and other basic needs to the affected people and restoration of infrastructure", he said.

Indonesia has recorded nearly 1,000 disasters since January,

mostly hydro-meteorological hazards, including flooding and landslides, according to the disaster management agency.

At least 337 people have been killed, 55 are missing and 4.3 million have been affected, with many displaced, it said.

Meanwhile, East Timor President Francisco Guterres expressed grief over the 21 lives lost in the country, once an Indonesian province before voting to separate from Jakarta's rule in a UN-backed referendum in 1999.

"This disaster is similar to Covid-19 in Timor-Leste and it caused lots of suffering to the entire population", Guterres was quoted assaying by the Tatoli news agency.

"I want to express my condolences to the families who lost their loved ones during the catastrophe", he said. — dpa

Bulgarian PM's party tops vote, but no clear coalition partner

SOFIA: Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov's centre-right GERB party came first in the weekend's parliamentary elections, partial results showed on Monday, but with protest parties surging it has no clear partner to form a governing coalition.

With GERB undermined by scandals and protests after nearly a decade in power, it won just 25.9 per cent of Sunday's vote.

After it became clear that Borisov faced a difficult task ahead to form a government, he pitched himself as a leader representing stability.

"You won't make it on your own... let's unite", he said in a live broadcast on Facebook Sunday night. "Do you have someone more experienced than me?" he asked.

He also suggested a cabinet of experts "to get out of the pandemic" after an election held at the peak of the country's third coronavirus wave.

Analysts predicted an uphill battle for Borisov to cobble together a new coalition after an unexpectedly strong performance by new populist and anti-government protest parties.

"The results show the profound fragmentation of society", political analyst Antony Galabov

said. "No clear majority is in view and GERB owes its win only on voters' concern for stability."

The new populist party There is Such a Nation of entertainer-turned-politician Slavi Trifonov came in a surprise second with 18.4 per cent of the vote, according to Monday's official partial results.

The traditional main opposition Socialist party received a mere 14.9 per cent.

Several other parties appear set to enter the 240-seat parliament, including two which led massive anti-government protests last summer, accusing Borisov of protecting oligarchs.

They are the right-wing Democratic Bulgaria coalition, which won around 10 per cent of the vote, while new leftist coalition Stand up! Mafia out! — which is close to President Rumen Radev, a sharp critic of Borisov — took nearly five per cent.

The kingmaker in a number of previous Bulgarian governments, the Turkish minority Movement for Rights and Freedoms party, came fifth with nine per cent.

GERB's current coalition partners VMRO meanwhile failed to pass the four-per cent threshold to enter parliament.

— AFP



Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov casts his ballot during the parliamentary election in Sofia. — Reuters

Greece allows shopping again, with safety restrictions

ATHENS: Shops in parts of Greece were permitted to reopen again on Monday following several weeks in lockdown, although store visits were subject to tight health regulations.

The easing did not apply in the northern cities of Thessaloniki and Kozani, or the city of Patras as case numbers there remain high.

Also, shoppers have to make appointments and are subject to further restrictions, Greek media reported on Monday.

People first have to send a text message with their name to the Greek Civil Defence.

The text message is valid for three hours and can only be used once a day.

Only shoppers who have made appointments can enter stores, and only card payments are allowed. Retailers may admit one shopper per 25 square metres of space, with a maximum of 20 shoppers at a time.

Larger shops have already said they did not plan to reopen as it was not worth their while, but that customers could collect goods bought online. — dpa

Social media influencer is 49th victim of Taiwan derailment

TAIPEI: A male social media influencer was identified on Monday as the 49th victim of a fatal train accident which killed at least 50 people in eastern Taiwan last week, state-run media reported.

Prosecutor Yu Hsiu-duan in Hualien said that the identification was based on DNA profiling, the official Central News Agency said Monday.

The derailment in Hualien County, in eastern Taiwan, involved a maintenance truck which slid from a slope near a construction site above the tracks, according to the Taiwan Railways Administration.

The front of an eight-carriage train with nearly 500 people on board travelling from Taipei to eastern Taitung County hit the vehicles shortly before entering a tunnel.

The newly-identified victim, named as Wu Hsiang-chen, was

The newly-identified victim, named as Wu Hsiang-chen, was on the way to a competition held by Taitung County Government for social media influencers to promote the scenic east coast

on the way to a competition held by Taitung County Government for social media influencers to promote the scenic east coast, local media reported.

He reportedly won the competition and was on his way to meet local government officials.

Transportation and Communications Minister Lin Chia-lung said on Monday in Hualien that he would certainly



Damaged railroad tracks are seen at the location where a packed train collided with a vehicle on the tracks and then derailed inside a tunnel in the mountains of Hualien, eastern Taiwan. — AFP

shoulder political responsibility, hinting that he might resign when everything has been dealt with.

"It will be a long road for family of the victims and the injured. We will be with them", Lin told reporters, adding that the ministry will address issues including compensation and medical bills.

The accident left more than 200 injured.

A construction site manager believed to have failed to engage the maintenance truck's brake properly was taken into custody by court order late on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Taiwanese rescuers were trying on Monday to retrieve the last body of a passenger from wreckage of a deadly train crash last week. Fifty people have been confirmed dead after a packed express train carrying almost 500 passengers and crew slammed into a truck near the eastern city of Hualien on Friday, causing

it to derail and the front end to crumple. It was the island's worst rail accident in seven decades.

The truck had slid down a sloping road from a building site onto the tracks just outside a tunnel. Officials suspect the truck's brakes were not properly applied and are investigating the manager of the site.

Hualien's fire department said that the remaining body was trapped under a 15-tonne train bogie. It did not provide details on the identity of the passenger.

"The rescue is difficult, and we are currently discussing how to overcome these difficulties, so the time it takes may be delayed", the department said.

Transport Minister Lin Chia-lung said late on Sunday that he took responsibility for the accident and would step down once initial rescue and recovery work was complete. — dpa/Reuters



Palestinian students walk at a university in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. – Reuters

Young Palestinians express little faith in first elections

JERICHO/GAZA: Facing the first elections they have ever been able to vote in, young Palestinians are demanding reforms in the parliamentary and presidential polls later this year.

Initially many were sceptical about whether the Palestinian elections - the first for 15 years - would even take place after they were announced by President Mahmoud Abbas in January.

Many saw the timing as a bid to reset relations with Washington under President Joe Biden, and as a long-overdue response to criticism of Abbas's legitimacy given that he was elected in 2005 and has ruled by decree for more than a decade since his mandate expired.

The May 22 parliamentary election moved a step closer to reality last week when the

main parties - Abbas's secular nationalist movement Fatah and Hamas - registered party lists.,

But it was thrown into turmoil by internal Fatah splits as jailed West Bank leader Marwan Barghouti and Yasser Arafat's nephew Nasser al Qudwa registered a rival slate of candidates in a direct challenge to their leader.

Both are in their sixties but still a generation younger than 85-year-old Abbas, who flew to Germany on Monday for medical checks.

Young Palestinians say the stagnation of the democratic process has marginalised their generation in a society in which more than half the 5.2 million Palestinian population are under 29.

No Palestinian under 34 has

voted in national elections and no election has taken place in the social media era - the last parliamentary ballot was in January 2006.

"We call ourselves the ignored generation because we have not been given the space within the political system to participate and have our voices heard," said Salem Barahmeh of the youth movement Jeel Al Tajdeed Al Democracy, or Generation for Democratic Renewal.

"We come from a generation that has never elected its representatives," Barahmeh, 31, said in Jericho.

His group urges reform of laws that require parliamentary candidates to be at least 28 and for lists to pay \$20,000 to register, measures they say block youth participation. — Reuters

Israel coalition talks ramp up, Netanyahu faces court

TEL AVIV: Israel's legal and political dramas converged Monday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced court in his corruption trial while his bid to form a government after another inconclusive election reached a critical phase.

The 71-year-old veteran premier — who last month contested his fourth election in less than two years — arrived at the Jerusalem courthouse where he was met by supporters but also opponents who called him Israel's "crime minister".

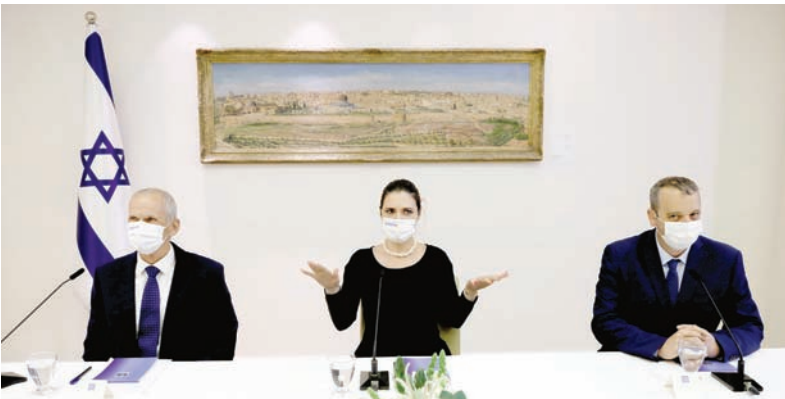
Israel's first premier to be indicted in office was ordered to appear in person at Jerusalem's District Court for opening arguments in a case where is charged with bribery, fraud or breach of trust.

As court proceedings got underway, President Reuven Rivlin began two days of talks to determine which party leader has the best chance of forming a stable government following the March 23 election.

Israel remains mired in the worst political crisis in its 73-year history, with voters and the 120-member parliament bitterly split over whether Netanyahu deserves to extend his record tenure of 12 consecutive years.

Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party finished first in the polls almost two weeks ago, winning 30 seats, but his path to a 61-seat absolute majority is precarious.

The anti-Netanyahu camp, however, lacks a clear leader, is ideologically divided and will also struggle to forge a majority



Omer Bar-Lev, Emilie Moatti and Gilad Kariv from the Labour party, headed by Merav Michaeli, attend a consultation with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin on who might form the next coalition government, at the President's residence in Jerusalem. – Reuters

President Reuven began two days of talks to determine which party leader has the best chance of forming a stable govt

coalition. Netanyahu, wearing a black face mask and a dark suit, sat in court as lead prosecutor Liat Ben-Ari told judges that the premier was involved in "a serious case of government corruption".

He has been charged with accepting improper gifts and seeking to trade regulatory favours with media moguls in exchange for positive coverage — allegations which he denies.

Ben-Ari said Netanyahu had "made illegitimate use of the great governmental power entrusted to him," in his dealings with media executives "in order to advance his personal affairs".

With permission from judges, Netanyahu left the courtroom before the prosecution called its first witness, the former chief

executive of the Walla news site, Ilan Yeshua.

Yeshua testified that he had regularly received instructions from Netanyahu's allies to post articles favourable to the prime minister and information that smeared the premier's rivals.

"It was clear that we were a website that did what the prime minister's office asked us," Yeshua told the court.

According to Yeshua's testimony, a key target of Netanyahu's alleged smear campaign was Naftali Bennett, the prime minister's estranged former protege who now leads the religious-nationalist Yamina party. That fact now spells a political problem for Netanyahu, who will likely need Bennett's support in order to form a government.

Meanwhile Rivlin, whose presidential residence was also the site of an anti-Netanyahu protest, was meeting with party officials throughout the day.

— AFP

EU chief vows support to Libya's interim government

TRIPOLI: European Council President Charles Michel offered support to Libya Sunday on a visit to Tripoli, as the North African nation seeks to end a decade of chaos following a Nato-backed 2011 revolt.

"We will work with the new government and support it," Michel said after meeting with interim Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, who was selected in a UN-sponsored process to lead Libya to December 24 elections.

Libya's parliament confirmed Dbeibah's new transitional government last month.

"The European Union actively supports the process of national

reconciliation," Michel said. "Economic recovery, elections, the fight against illegal immigration... are areas in which the EU can help."

Oil-rich Libya has been torn by conflict since the toppling and killing of ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The latest unity government push is hoped to bring together rival forces, especially the two main camps in the east and west, each supported by foreign powers.

Some 20,000 mercenaries and foreign fighters remained in Libya in early December, according to the United Nations, and a January deadline for their withdrawal



European Council President Charles Michel and Libyan Foreign Minister Najla el Mangoush speak as she and Michel deliver a joint statement in Tripoli, Libya. – Reuters

passed without any sign of them leaving.

Calls for them to depart have grown in recent weeks, and



Michel urged "all mercenaries and foreign soldiers to quickly leave".

Foreign Minister Najla al Mangoush on Sunday repeated

Libya's call for their withdrawal.

The country is also a major route for migrants trying to reach Europe across the Mediterranean, and traffickers have thrived in the lawlessness that followed Gaddafi's overthrow.

Michel said migration was a "major theme" in the relationship between Libya and the EU.

Last month, the foreign ministers of France, Germany and Italy visited Tripoli in a show of support for the war-torn country's newly formed government.

France reopened its embassy in Libya last month, and next week Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis is expected

to visit Tripoli to reopen the country's embassy there, in a visit coinciding with that of Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi.

Michel said an EU ambassador would return to the Libyan capital in the coming weeks.

He also said the EU would donate 50,000 Covid-19 vaccines, which would add to the delivery earlier Sunday of 100,000 doses of the Russian Sputnik V jab, the first batch to arrive.

Libyan authorities have officially reported over 160,000 cases of the coronavirus among its seven million population, with more than 2,700 dead. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BEIRUT

Lebanon to swap medical expertise for Iraqi oil

Officials from Beirut and Baghdad signed a preliminary agreement that would see Lebanon trade its medical expertise for Iraqi fuel supplies, Lebanese state media reported.

Lebanon's state-run electricity company faces dire cash shortages as the country grapples with its worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war.

Caretaker health minister Hamad Hassan and his Iraqi counterpart Hassan al



Tamimi signed "a framework agreement... that includes (the supply of) oil in exchange for medical and hospital services," Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA) said. — AFP

ANKARA

Turkey detains 10 retd admirals over open letter

Turkey detained 10 retired admirals after a letter signed by more than 100 of them warned against a possible threat to a treaty governing the use of Turkey's key waterways. Turkey's approval last month of plans to develop a ship-ping canal in Istanbul comparable to the Panama or Suez canals has opened up debate about the 1936 Montreux Convention.

In their letter, 104 retired admirals said it was "worrying" to open the Montreux treaty up to debate, calling it an agree-



ment that "best protects Turkish interests". The Ankara chief public prosecutor's office said arrest warrants were issued for the 10 and ordered four other suspects. — AFP

DAMASCUS

Assad and wife Asma are coronavirus-free

Syrian President Bashar al Assad and his wife, Asma, have recovered from the coronavirus and have returned to their duties, the presidency said.

"After the end of the quarantine period, the disappearance of Covid-19 symptoms, and the negative result of the PCR (polymerase chain reaction) swabs, President Bashar al Assad and Mrs Asmaal Assad returned starting today to their work normally," the presidency said in a statement.



On March 8, the presidency announced that Al Assad and Asma had tested positive for the virus, but were in good health. Syria has so far officially recorded 18,638 coronavirus cases and 1,247 deaths. — dpa

In brief

■ SINGAPORE



BLOGGER CROWDFUNDS TO PAY PRIME MINISTER DEFAMATION DAMAGES

A Singaporean blogger said he had crowdfunded almost \$100,000 that he was ordered to pay as damages for defaming the prime minister by sharing an article on Facebook. Leong Sze Hian was sued by Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong after sharing the piece, which linked Lee to the money-laundering scandal at state fund 1MDB in Malaysia.

The case is the latest example of the government seeking to silence dissent online in the tightly regulated city-state.

A court last month found in Lee's favour and ordered the blogger to pay the prime minister Sg\$133,000 plus costs, which are yet to be determined.

■ HANOI



VIETNAM SWEARS IN FORMER PM AS NEW PRESIDENT

Vietnam's ruling Communist Party confirmed that Nguyen Xuan Phuc, the nation's prime minister since 2016, will take up the largely ceremonial role of state president. Party members voted in Phuc during a 12-day National Assembly session that will see the party elect 25 key leadership roles, including a new president, prime minister, and head of the National Assembly.

Phuc, a member of the all-powerful Vietnamese Politburo, served as prime minister of Vietnam from 2016 and deputy prime minister from 2011. As prime minister, he played a key role in ratifying major trade deals. — dpa

■ KABUL



SECURITY PERSONNEL KILLED IN TALIBAN CAR-BOMBING

A car bombing near Kabul on Sunday killed at least three Afghan security personnel and injured 12 others, officials said, in an attack claimed by the Taliban. While attacks have continued unabated in Afghanistan, the insurgent Taliban has rarely taken responsibility since the formal start of peace talks and an agreement with the US last year.

Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz confirmed the casualties in Sunday's bombing in the Paghman district of Kabul and said the numbers could rise. The Taliban, in a statement, claimed that 45 Afghan security force members had been killed or injured in the blast. — AFP

Bangladesh ferry sinks, 26 dead

NARAYANGANJ: The death toll from a ferry disaster in Bangladesh jumped to 26 on Monday after rescuers pulled the vessel out of the water and found more bodies inside, officials said on Monday.

The sunken ferry was extracted from the heavily polluted Shitalakshya River in the central district of Narayanganj as hundreds of onlookers and relatives of the missing watched from the shore.

"We have found 21 bodies today after the ship was pulled out of the water," local official Mustain Billah said.

The one-and-a-half storey *Sabit Al Hasan* sank after it collided with a bigger cargo vessel on Sunday.

The vessel had departed less than an hour earlier from Narayanganj, 20 kilometres from Dhaka, officials said.

A local police inspector said the ferry was packed with passengers after the government confirmed it would impose a seven-day lockdown across the country to combat the recent rise in coronavirus cases.

Billah said the ship was carrying at least 46 people when it left.

"Some 20 people swam to safety after the vessel sank," he said, adding several people could still be missing. "We have ordered a probe into the accident," he said.



Onlookers and relatives gather after the authorities recovered the capsized boat in Shitalakshya River in Narayanganj. — AFP

Local police chief Dipak Saha said rescue efforts were hampered for hours by a powerful storm that hit after the accident.

Under the lockdown, all domestic travel services — including buses, ferries, trains and flights — will be suspended from Monday.

Shops and malls will be shut for a week and a night curfew in effect.

Public and private sector businesses were told to only have a skeleton crew in their offices.

Ferry accidents are common

Rescue efforts were hampered for hours by a powerful storm that hit after the accident

in Bangladesh, a delta nation crisscrossed by hundreds of rivers.

Millions of people are heavily reliant on ferries for transport, particularly in the country's southern coastal region, but the vessels have a poor safety record.

Experts blame poor maintenance, lax safety standards at shipyards and overcrowding for many of the accidents.

In June last year, a ferry sank in Dhaka after it was hit from behind by another ferry, killing at least 32 people.

In February 2015, at least 78 people died when an overcrowded ship collided with a cargo boat in a central Bangladesh river.

The number of accidents has dropped sharply in recent years as authorities crack down on unseaworthy vessels. — AFP

Phuket in mass vaccination drive ahead of the rest of Thailand

PHUKET: In Thailand, it's the all-important tourism sector that has jumped to the head of the Covid-19 vaccination line, with the country's most popular resort island embarking on a mass inoculation programme two months ahead of the rest of the country.

The island of Phuket aims to deliver shots to at least 460,000 people — most of its population — as it gears up for July 1, when vaccinated overseas visitors will no longer be required to quarantine.

Phuket also has its own international airport and tourists would be able to roam the island freely without posing any coronavirus risk to the rest of Thailand's population.

"If we can build immunity for 70-80 per cent of the population on the island, we can receive foreign tourists who have been vaccinated without the need for quarantine," Phuket's Vice Governor Piyapong Chooowong said.

While medical workers, members of the cabinet and the elderly were the first to be vaccinated, Thailand's decision to prioritise Phuket over other parts of the country underscores the central role of tourism to the economy.

Spending by foreign tourists accounted for 11-12 per cent of GDP pre-pandemic and the sector has been devastated by the virus with 1.45 million jobs lost since last year.

Just 6.7 million foreign tourists visited Thailand in 2020, spending some \$11 billion. That compares with nearly 40 million in 2019,



People receive the Sinovac vaccine as the Thai resort island of Phuket rushes to vaccinate its population amid the coronavirus outbreak in Phuket. — Reuters

Strict quarantine requirements for overseas visitors have helped Thailand limit coronavirus infections

when they spent \$61 billion.

The government wants to see at least 100,000 tourists come to Phuket in the third quarter. It also hopes that as vaccinations worldwide progress it will see a spike in demand in the fourth quarter and that nationwide some 6.5 million visitors will have spent 350 billion baht (\$11 billion) by the end of the year.

"It's a challenge. But that will contribute to GDP to some extent," said Tourism Authority of Thailand Governor Yuthasak Supasorn.

"We don't expect tourists will come in like a broken dam but we

More doctors to join vaccine roll-out in Australia

SYDNEY: Hundreds more doctors in general practice are to join Australia's national coronavirus vaccination programme as the roll-out begins to gather pace, according to reports on Monday.

The number of clinics involved will double from 1,500 to 3,000 by the end of this week, the Australian Associated Press (AAP) news wire reported.

The moves follow criticism that the country's vaccination programme is moving far slower than planned.

"Australia's vaccine roll-out has so far been an unmitigated disaster," economists Steven Hamilton and Richard Holden wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper on Monday.

In February, Australian health authorities said they aimed to vaccinate the entire population against Covid-19 by October.

Health Minister Greg Hunt has blamed the slow start of the countrywide vaccination drive on supply chain issues.

Hunt now says the government is maintaining its commitment to have every Australian receive their first shot by the end of October, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. — dpa



Matthew O'Kane and Christa Avery

Australian couple released from house arrest

YANGON: An Australian couple was released from house arrest in Myanmar and allowed to leave the country, as protests against the military junta continued on Monday.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since a February 1 coup ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and derailed the country's experiment with democracy.

Business consultants Matthew O'Kane and Christa Avery, a dual Canadian-Australian citizen, tried to leave the country on a relief flight in late March but were barred from departing and placed under house arrest.

"I am of course incredibly relieved to have been released and to be on my way home with my husband Matt," Avery said in a statement.

"Even though I knew that I had done nothing wrong it was very stressful being held under house arrest for two weeks, not knowing what was going to be the outcome of the questioning."

The couple said they were incredibly sad to leave Myanmar, which was their

home for eight years, and hope the country stabilises soon.

A spokesperson for Canberra's foreign affairs department said Australian diplomats had "provided support for their departure from Yangon on 4 April." The couple ran a bespoke consultancy business in Yangon.

A third Australian, economist Sean Turnell, was arrested a week after the putsch and remains in custody.

The university professor and adviser to Suu Kyi was the first foreign national arrested following the coup.

He has been charged with a violation of state secret laws, along with Suu Kyi late last month.

More than 2,500 people have been detained since the coup, according to local monitoring group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

It also recorded the death toll as 564 as of Sunday, as security forces continue to use lethal force against protesters. — AFP

— Reuters

United Kingdom announces new international travel rules

LONDON: Britain will on Monday set out plans to restart international travel, using a “traffic-light” system as the country cautiously emerges from lockdown.

The UK has set a tentative date of May 17 to relaunch foreign travel, currently banned except for a handful of permitted reasons. This has created massive pent-up demand for summer holidays abroad.

Travel destinations will be ranked green, amber or red according to virus risk, Downing Street said late on Saturday, with the government to provide more details on Monday.

“We are doing everything we can to enable the reopening of our country... as safely as possible,” Prime Minister Boris Johnson said. The government said the new system “will help ensure the UK’s vaccine progress isn’t jeopardised and provide clear guidance for travellers”.

People heading to low-risk “green” countries will simply take a virus test before and after they travel, the government said.

But those going to amber or red countries will have to self-isolate or quarantine afterwards.

Health minister Edward Argar said as cases surge on the European continent, Britain would have to



Passengers wearing face masks or covering due to the pandemic, have their temperature taken as they queue at a British Airways check-in desk at Heathrow airport, west London. — AFP

be “very careful” as it considered further restrictions.

“One of the things we don’t want to see — and just as the vaccination programme is working so well — is getting new variants or risking new variants getting imported into this country,” he said.

Currently people arriving in the UK from abroad are required to self-isolate for 10 days.

British nationals who arrive from a banned “red list” of high-risk countries face costly quarantine in government-approved hotels.

The government urged people not to book summer holidays,

saying it was “too early to predict” which would be the green-lighted countries.

The government has announced it will allow a number of people to attend public events such as football matches from this month in trials of a virus certification system. But it has not made clear whether it will issue “virus passports” for international travel, an idea backed by many tourism-dependent countries and airlines but opposed by more than 70 UK MPs.

Argar said the government was still considering measures like Israel’s green passes, which allow

People heading to low-risk ‘green’ countries will have to take a virus test before and after they travel

Covid-vaccinated people access to hotels, bars and other services.

“I think it is right that we look at this and see if there is a way that, while balancing all of those practical, ethical and fairness considerations... could in the short-term, speed up our reopening of the country,” Argar said.

The UK has already given out more than 31 million first vaccine doses and over 5 million second doses. The rollout has far outstripped popular holiday destinations such as France.

This has boosted the public mood after more than 126,000 people died from the virus in the United Kingdom, the highest toll in Europe.

On Monday in Scotland, where the devolved government in Edinburgh has set its own coronavirus restrictions, hairdressers and some non-essential retail were allowed to reopen for the first time in four months. — AFP

Afghan president to unveil new peace proposal

KABUL: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has drawn up a new proposal for peace with the Taliban ahead of an international conference aimed at jump-starting faltering talks between the two warring sides, official sources said.



Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani.

It comes after the United States — backed by Russia and other stakeholders — said in its own leaked proposal that it wants to see some form of transitional government involving the Taliban, although Ghani has insisted leaders can only be chosen at the ballot box.

According to official sources, Ghani intends to present his three-stage plan at a United Nations-backed conference in Turkey to be attended by the United States, Russia and other key regional countries. A date for the event has not been finalised.

The United States is just weeks away from a May 1 deadline to withdraw all foreign troops from Afghanistan as part of a deal agreed with the hardline group last year — a date US President Joe Biden has said will be tough to meet.

Ghani’s three-stage

proposal, key elements of which have been obtained, includes reaching a political settlement with the Taliban and announcing an internationally monitored ceasefire. He then proposes holding an early presidential election in which the Taliban could take part to form a “government of peace”.

That would lead to a slew of development programmes across the country, followed by rebuilding the constitutional framework.

Ghani has already shared his plan with several international diplomats, officials said.

Afghanistan’s High Council for National Reconciliation said on Sunday it would pull together its own proposals after collecting 30 documents from different political parties and civil society members, as well as from Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, who heads the council. — AFP

Inquiry in France over ‘clandestine’ Covid-defying dinners

PARIS: A report by a French television channel alleging “clandestine” luxury dinners in Paris despite the pandemic has sparked an investigation and a political furor over the claims the elite were brazenly ignoring rules they themselves had set.

The M6 private channel on Friday broadcast a reportage based on footage recorded with a hidden camera purportedly from a clandestine restaurant in a high-end area of Paris where neither the staff nor the diners were wearing masks.

All restaurants and cafes remain closed in France for eating in and the country this week began a new limited nationwide lockdown to deal with surging Covid-19 infections.

The hashtag #OnVeutLesNoms (We Want the Names) went viral on Twitter, as speculation swirled over who may have attended such dinners. Paris prosecutor Remy Heitz said on Sunday that a criminal

The prosecutor said that a criminal probe had been opened after the reportage into putting the lives of others at risk

probe had been opened after the reportage into putting the lives of others at risk.

The investigation would assess “if these evenings were organised in defiance of health rules and to determine who were the possible organisers and participants.” One source interviewed by M6, whose identity was not revealed and whose voice was distorted, told the channel that such evenings had taken place and guests present had even included ministers.

The source was later identified by media and bloggers as Pierre-Jean Chalencon, who runs the luxury Palais Vivienne event venue in the centre of Paris.



Police officers control people enjoying a sunny spring day along the banks of the canal Saint-Martin to enforce lockdown regulations, as country enters a third national lockdown amid the coronavirus pandemic in Paris. — Reuters

In statement sent to AFP through his lawyer late on Sunday, Chalencon implicitly acknowledged he was the source

but also appeared to retract the claim ministers were involved, saying he was only showing “humour” and the “sense of the

absurd”.

But the report was no laughing matter for members of the government, days after President

Emmanuel Macron ordered new restrictions including a brief closure of schools to keep cases down before the effects of the vaccine drive kick in.

Chalencon had been recorded saying in February that government spokesman Gabriel Attal, a rising cabinet star, would be attending such a dinner. Attal vehemently denied the claim.

But deputy interior minister Marlene Schiappa told French TV that if ministers or lawmakers were involved “they should be fined and penalised like any other citizen”.

Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire insisted: “All the ministers, without exception, respect the rules.” Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said those involved in such dinners should be prosecuted if the allegations in the report were true.

“There are not two types of citizens — those who have the right to party and those who do not,” he said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

LISBON

Portugal reopens museums, cafe terraces and schools

Portugal reopened museums, cafe terraces and secondary schools nearly two months after tightening Covid-19 curbs following a wave of cases early this year. There was an explosion of cases following Christmas and New Year festivities which led to overstretched hospitals and the government imposed a general lockdown in the middle of January and closed schools a week later.

There have been nearly 16,900 coronavirus deaths and 823,335



cases so far, according to an official tally on Sunday.

Primary schools reopened on March 15.

Monday’s easing comes with some guidelines. — AFP

KYIV

Ukraine, Britain to hold joint military drills

Ukraine and Britain will conduct joint military drills this summer involving Nato member troops, Ukrainian defence officials said on Saturday, a step that could irritate Moscow.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said in a statement that the drills would involve more than 1,000 military personnel from at least five states in the transatlantic Nato military alliance.

Nato voiced concern over what it said was a big Russian



military build-up near eastern Ukraine after Russia warned that a serious escalation in the conflict in Ukraine’s Don-bass region could “destroy” Ukraine. — Reuters

MOSCOW

Russia extends punitive Twitter slowdown

Russia said it would extend a punitive slowdown of Twitter until May 15 though it acknowledged the US social media company had speeded up deletion of banned content. Moscow has traditionally taken a more hands-off role in policing the Internet than neighbouring China.

But as friction has grown this year over the arrest and jailing of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, it has signalled a tougher line.

Russia has since March im-



peded the speed of Twitter for not removing content it deems illegal, and threatened to block it entirely. Photos and videos take longer to load for some users. — AFP

Life is all about strategies...

In life there are strategies to be applied at different stages of life. This statement might sound manipulative, but the fact is they work. Ask the grandparents because they have gone through all of these stages we are going through now. Have they gone through a pandemic? They might have had similar experiences.

Most important strategy is mental health, said a friend from the medical field but not a psychiatrist or a psychologist. “Especially now as we go through the pandemic period; we must not panic”, he said. According to him currently mental health needs more care and that is even more than physical fitness.

Was coming out of a supermarket when I came across an expatriate sitting cross legged on the pavement across the road murmuring and gesturing. It seemed he had given into stress or an underlying mental health issue had popped up now. Authorities had arrived on the scene to help. But could not help wonder if there could not have been any other way to have helped him before he had reached this stage.

From anger outbursts to emotional trauma everything seems to be larger than real most probably due to the pandemic as the main backdrop in everyone’s life.

In the fear of corona many overlooked the fear — the fear of the



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FROM ANGER
OUTBURSTS TO
EMOTIONAL
TRAUMA
EVERYTHING
SEEMS TO BE
LARGER THAN
REAL MOST
PROBABLY
DUE TO THE
PANDEMIC
AS THE MAIN
BACKDROP IN
EVERYONE’S LIFE

virus, fear of job loss and uncertainty about the future. The fear itself had become the problem. And somehow most of us disconnect mind from health in general. By the time we realise the fact it is a bit too late and the only possible way is to go under treatment.

On the other hand maybe expatriates do not have many options as mental health issues continue to be shunned and at the same time many might not believe that help is available because the awareness is almost nil.

A conversation with a leading psychiatrist brought out the reality of the problems expatriates go through as many are away from families and counseling is not an option.

This is where the topic of strategy comes up. Life is never filled with happiness all throughout. When you are young it is easy to bounce back because there are so many distractions. By the time you are distracted and come back to the problem the difficulty in handling the situation would have diminished because that is why the people say time is the best healer.

Distraction can be a useful strategy. While many might argue that this might make one lose focus, it might be still good to take a break and reanalyse the scenario. At least this strategy gives you the power. This however does not mean running away from responsibilities but at times individuals may not be able to

handle it and at this moment it is better he/she switches off than to reach a breaking point.

To live in fear is living halfway through because we would miss out on most of the details. Have you ever wondered why some people are never at the boiling point? Maybe they are practising distraction and buying time.

With all the talk of mental health one thing is for sure — there is a need for more services where individuals need not shy away thinking of the cost or reputation. This would require volunteers who also have experience in handling mental health issues and the expert themselves.

This too will pass, and that is the pandemic. Sleepless nights and worrying about the increasing number of cases can only add to one’s stress. So the solution is to keep the mind at ease and increase immunity by eating and drinking right and wait for the turn to get vaccinated, while at it ensuring one maintains distance and wears a mask in public as well as washing hands frequently.

Not too forget are the people who lost the battle against the Covid-19 and the pain their loved ones are going through. All of this screams the need for mental health support so the individuals themselves can create their own strategies after they overcome the loss and fear.

WRITE FOR US

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BEFITTING RESPONSE

India grapples with rising Maoist violence

RUPAM JAIN

India’s Home Minister Amit Shah cut short an election rally in the east on Monday to head to the mineral-rich central state of Chhattisgarh, where Maoist guerillas at the weekend killed 22 security force members, officials said.

In addition to the fatalities, 30 other members of the Indian police and paramilitary forces were wounded in a four-hour gun battle with Maoist rebels on Saturday, the deadliest ambush of its kind in four years.

On Monday, Shah travelled to Chhattisgarh to meet the injured pay tribute to those killed.

Also known as Naxals, the Maoists have waged an armed insurgency against the government for decades. Their leaders say they are fighting on behalf of the poorest, who have not benefited from the economic boom in Asia’s third-largest economy. Shah told reporters the government will “not tolerate such bloodshed and a befitting response will be given to put an end to the ongoing battle with Maoists”.

AMIT SHAH
Home Minister

Security experts said the latest attack by Maoist rebels, considered India’s biggest internal security threat, has forced Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government to re-evaluate counter-insurgency operations against the ultra left-wing fighters, who have been able to increase new followers during the pandemic.

“In the last few years the Maoists have had opportunity to regroup themselves in their core region of dominance”, said Uddipan Mukherjee, a joint director for government agency, the Ordnance Factory Board. He has been researching the Maoist strategy for more than a decade.

Mukherjee and others with expert knowledge said the pandemic had allowed the insurgency to recruit more to its cause. “We have intelligence reports that the Maoist leaders during the pandemic have managed to recruit hundreds of new foot soldiers, including women, living in the forests who leak details about security force patrols”, a New Delhi-based bureaucrat who oversees country’s internal security said.

“The pandemic has made the intra-state movement of Maoist leaders much easier”, the senior official said on condition of anonymity as he is not authorised to speak to the media.

Chhattisgarh, one of the fastest-developing states in India, has 28 varieties of major minerals, including diamonds and gold, a government website said.

The state has 16 per cent of India’s coal deposits and large reserves of iron ore and bauxite. — Reuters

CONCRETE RESULTS

EU heads seek ‘new chapter’ with Erdogan on Turkey visit

MAX DELANY AND
CHRISTIAN SPILLMAN

The EU’s top two officials head to Turkey on Tuesday to lay out to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan the bloc’s conditions for improved ties after a dip in tensions.

European Council president Charles Michel and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen will hold out the prospect of key economic and diplomatic gains for Ankara, including more funding for Turkey’s hosting of millions of Syrian refugees. But the roadmap for relaunching cooperation — agreed by EU leaders at a summit last month — depends on Erdogan acting constructively and continuing to de-escalate tensions over Turkey’s gas exploration in the eastern Mediterranean. An EU official said Tuesday’s meeting in Ankara “will not be the moment for negotiations, but will provide a framework” on the way forward. The bloc has been encouraged by conciliatory moves from Ankara over the past few months, including the resumption of talks with Greece over a disputed maritime border and steps to restart UN peace efforts for divided EU member state Cyprus.

Brussels’ approach entails the possibility of modernising a customs union, liberalising visa rules, more money for Syrian refugees and a resumption of high-level dialogues on topics from security to health.

But any steps would be “phased, proportionate and reversible”, and if Ankara backtracks then the EU has



European Council President Charles Michel speaks during a press conference at the European Council headquarters in Brussels, on March 30. — AFP

EUROPEAN
COUNCIL PRESIDENT
CHARLES MICHEL
AND EUROPEAN
COMMISSION CHIEF
URSULA VON DER
LEYEN WILL HOLD
OUT THE PROSPECT
OF KEY ECONOMIC
AND DIPLOMATIC
GAINS FOR ANKARA

warned it could slap painful sanctions on the country. “If Erdogan does not show himself to be cooperative then everything will be blocked”, the official warned.

Convincing the Turkish leader to accept the conditions will not be easy and he has already pressed the EU to move faster towards “concrete results”.

But analysts and diplomats say Erdogan has become more pliant in the face of economic woes at home and a toughening line from Washington after his ally Donald Trump was voted out of the White House.

EU members have been split over how to handle Turkey, with Cyprus, Greece and France urging a tough line while others, led by economic powerhouse Germany, want more engagement.

Ankara formally opened talks to join the bloc in 2005 but that process has become frozen as Erdogan tightened his grip over the country. The bloc’s foreign policy chief Josep Borrell insists the latest offer of cooperation from the bloc’s leaders “could be a new chapter in EU-Turkey relations” after last year’s nadir. — Reuters

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OMANI DUO TOPS ON SECOND DAY

MUSAB AL HADI, WALEED AL KINDI NOTCH TWO WINS AND A SECOND-PLACE

MUSANNAH: It was all-change at the top of the rankings after a pulsating second day of sailing in Musannah with the early leaders in the 49er, Laser Radial and Laser unable to maintain their advantage. Consistency was key over the three rounds of racing, and in good conditions with clear skies, temperatures between 31c and 35c, and wind between 15-16 knots throughout the day, several sailors were able to put their disappointing starts behind them and surge up the rankings heading into a crucial third day.

In the 49er class, Omani duo of Musab al Hadi and Waleed al Kindi notched two victories and a second-place to end the day in the top spot with yesterday's second-placed team, the Chinese crew of Hong Wei and Chao Xiang retaining second and the Indian team of Ganapathy Chengappa and Varun Thakkar finishing third.

Hashim al Rashdi, coach of the Oman 49er team, said, "today was a very good day for us, after a difficult day yesterday, and the performance puts us back in contention. There are still four more days to go and we are looking forward to racing again tomorrow."

Musab al Hadi, Oman's 49er team Helmsman, said, "our goal is to remain competitive until the last second of the last race on the last day. It will be a test of mental strength and tough for all teams and close right to the end with a lot of racing still to take place and we must stay calm and safe, on and off the water."

The 49er FX class saw China's Ye Jin and Chen Shasha remain in the first position with the team of Molly Highfield and Sandy Wing Chi Choi from Hong Kong taking second and the Thai pair of Kamonchanok Klahan and

Nichapa Waiwai claiming third.

The Laser class has seen four different round winners so far as Singapore's Ryan Lo Jun Han leads Keerati Bualong of Thailand and India's Vishnu Saravanan at the end of racing today.

Laser Radial has been dominated by the Indian sailors, who occupy three of the top four spots. Nethra Kumanan leads Dutch sailor Emma Savelon with Indian teammates Ramya Saravanan and Harshita Tomar in third and fourth respectively.

Tomasz Januszewski, Chief National Coach of Indian Sailing, said, "Our team is improving day by day, and I am very proud of the sailors. We have prepared well for this event; individually, as a team, and some members were sailing with a larger fleet in Mumbai before coming to Oman, and we have spent the time between events preparing as best we can

and we are showing a good sailing performance so far. We have definitely improved since last year and I am confident that we have not finished showing our ability on the water."

In the RS:X Class, the men's competition is currently led by Thai sailor Natthapong Phonoppharat from Yancy Kaibigan in second and Geylord Coveta in third, both representing the Philippines. In the women's competition, Charizanne Napa of the Philippines maintained her excellent form from day one to stay top of the rankings ahead of Amanda Ng Ling Kai from Singapore and Ishwariya Ganesh of India.

The first two days of racing have been an excellent exhibition of sailing as the competitors in all five classes battle to secure their place at the forthcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Atletico's title bid falters again with loss at Sevilla

SEVILLE, Spain: Sevilla recovered from missing an early penalty to beat La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid 1-0 at home on Sunday and hand a lifeline to title challengers Barcelona and Real Madrid.

Atleti's Jan Oblak saved a penalty for the second game in a row when he repelled Lucas Ocampos' spot-kick in the eighth minute while Sevilla's Joan Jordan hit the bar moments later in a rampant start by the hosts as the visitors looked rattled.

Sevilla finally found a breakthrough in the 70th minute when left-back Marcos Acuna headed in a cross from fellow full-back Jesus Navas and the referee ignored Atletico's claims that Ocampos handled the ball at the start of the move.

Spanish La Liga results on Sunday:

Alaves 1 (Lejeune 87) Celta Vigo 3 (Nolito 8, Aspas 14, Lorenzo 20)
Elche 1 (Milla Pena 36) Real Betis 1 (Iglesias 14-pen)
Cadiz 2 (Cala 14, Mauro 88)
Valencia 1 (Gameiro 19)
Sevilla 1 (Acuna 70) Atletico Madrid 0

Atleti still top the standings on 66 points but third-placed Barcelona can move within a point of them with a win at home to Real Valladolid on Monday. Real Madrid are second on 63 after beating Eibar 2-0 at home on Saturday.

Atletico captain Koke criticised the referee for not reviewing Acuna's goal.



Sevilla's Marcos Acuna scores their first goal – Reuters

"It was a clear handball for the goal and there was another handball (by Diego Carlos) which should have been a second yellow card," he said.

"We have VAR which has to be there to help out. Today wasn't our day. On other days it has favoured us, today it didn't go our way."

He added: "This is a tough

defeat but we tried everything. We struggled in the first half but in the second we had chances."

Atletico had only scraped a 1-0 win over struggling Alaves in their previous fixture thanks to a late penalty save from Oblak and they again failed to offer much in attack, barely threatening Bono's goal in the first half.

They carved out a clear chance moments after Acuna had broken the deadlock when Marcos Llorente got to the byline and found an unmarked Mario Hermoso, but the defender blazed well over the bar from inside the area.

Forward Angel Correa had another chance to level in the final minutes but saw his shot saved by Bono.

To make matters worse,

Atletico's two top scorers - Luis Suarez and Llorente - both earned yellow cards which will see them suspended for next week's trip to Real Betis.

But Koke said his side still fully believed they could go on and win the title. "We don't doubt ourselves at all, this is always a difficult place to go to and anything could have happened. It's football, we still have our fate in our own hands," he said.

Coach Simeone added: "We need to keep on working and increase our intensity levels as that's what got us to this stage. La Liga's title race is always tough right until the end of the season but we have to find a way to get the players playing like they were at the start of the season."

— Reuters

In brief

JOHANNESBURG



PAKISTAN'S SHADAB OUT OF SOUTH AFRICA, ZIMBABWE TOURS

Pakistan all-rounder Shadab Khan will miss the rest of the tour of South Africa and the tour of Zimbabwe due to a toe injury, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said on Monday. The 22-year-old spinner will be sidelined for up to four weeks after sustaining the injury while batting during the second one-dayer in Johannesburg. "X-rays conducted following the match revealed an 'intra articular communicated fracture' though there is neither any displacement nor angulation," the PCB said.

"The injury will be treated conservatively and Shadab will undergo a four-week rehab."

The third ODI takes place in Centurion on Wednesday.

BANGALORE



DEVDUUTT THIRD IPL PLAYER TO TEST COVID-19 POSITIVE

Royal Challengers Bangalore batsman Devdutt Padikkal has become the third player to test positive for Covid-19 ahead of the new Indian Premier League season, which begins on Friday. Bangalore said Padikkal returned a positive result on March 22 before he was due to join the squad, which is in a bio-secure bubble in Chennai.

"He has been in mandatory quarantine at his residence in Bengaluru since then," the team said. "Devdutt will be fit to join the RCB bio-bubble once his RT-PCR tests are negative."

Delhi Capitals' Axar Patel and Kolkata Knight Riders' Nitish Rana tested positive earlier.

CHRISTCHURCH



NO EASING UP FOR RECORD-BREAKING AUSTRALIANS

Australia captain Meg Lanning has promised there will be no let up from her team as they look to extend their winning run after securing a world record 22nd consecutive ODI victory over New Zealand on Sunday. Lanning's side claimed a six-wicket win at Mount Maunganui to move beyond the mark they shared with Ricky Ponting's illustrious 2003 side.

And with her team due to pad up again on Wednesday for the second ODI of the series, Lanning said they will stick to their tried-and-tested formula.

"We like to play an aggressive brand of cricket. That's natural for a lot of our players," she said. "We don't want to put any hand brakes on at all. We want to go out there and enjoy ourselves."

South Africa survive Fakhar's 193

JOHANNESBURG: Pakistan opening batsman Fakhar Zaman's astonishing innings of 193 could not prevent South Africa winning the second one-day international by 17 runs in Johannesburg on Sunday.

Pakistan seemed to have no chance when they slumped to 205 for seven in the 38th over in reply to South Africa's 341 for six at the Wanderers Stadium. But Fakhar's assault took them to 324 for nine.

With only his team's bowlers to keep him company, the left-handed Fakhar, who was on 97 when Faheem Ashraf was the seventh man out, went on all-out attack.

In all, he hit 18 fours and ten sixes in a 155-ball innings before being run out in the last over by a direct hit from long-off as he was trying for a second run.

With wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock seemingly gesturing for Aiden Markram to throw to the bowler's end, Fakhar slowed down and was surprised when the ball hit the stumps at the batsman's end when he was a metre or more short, ending his bold counter-attack. "It was one of the best innings I have seen in my life," said Pakistan captain Babar Azam. "It was an incredible innings, probably the best I have come across," said South African captain Temba Bavuma. "Everything he tried came off."

Fakhar, who made a ODI double century against Zimbabwe in 2018, was named man of the match. "I tried my level best," he said. "That's my game."

"The wicket was really good, the boundaries were very short and the run rate was going up. I was just hitting the ball."

Fakhar admitted he was taken by surprise by his dismissal. "I



Fakhar Zaman plays a shot during the second ODI against South Africa at Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg. -- AFP

was looking at Haris Rauf because I thought the run-out would be at his end. It was my own fault," he said at the post-match press conference.

PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

South Africa's win levelled the three-match series.

The hosts will be without five of their Indian Premier League-contracted players for the deciding match in Centurion on Wednesday.

De Kock, Bavuma, Rassie van der Dussen and David Miller hit half-centuries after South Africa were sent in.

The South African innings was

"I tried my level best. That's my game. The wicket was really good, the boundaries were very short and the run rate was going up. I was just hitting the ball."

FAKHAR ZAMAN,
Pakistan opener

in dramatic contrast to their effort in the first match at Centurion, when they lost four wickets inside the first 15 overs, with Pakistan

going on to win by three wickets off the last ball.

Early moisture in the pitch again made batting tricky but South Africa put together a succession of productive partnerships.

De Kock (80) and Aiden Markram (39) put on 55 for the first wicket before Bavuma (92) and De Kock added 114 for the second wicket.

It set a platform for Van der Dussen to hit a blistering 60 off 37 balls as he and Bavuma put on 101 for the third wicket.

Given the freedom to play his shots from the start, in contrast to his century in Centurion when he had to rebuild the innings, Van der Dussen hit six fours and four sixes.

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA	
Q de Kock b Haris	80
A Markram c Asif Ali b Faheem	39
T Bavuma c Babar b Haris	92
H van der Dussen c Faheem b Hasnain ..	60
D Miller not out	50
H Klaasen c Haris b Shaheen Afridi	11
A Phehlukwayo c Faheem b Haris	3
K Rabada not out	1
Extras (lb 1, nb 1, w 3)	5
Total (6 wks, 50 overs)	341
Fall of wickets: 1-55, 2-169, 3-270, 4-306, 5-317, 6-322	
Bowling: Shaheen Shah Afridi 10-1-75-1, Mohammad Hasnain 10-0-74-1, Faheem Ashraf 9-0-62-1, Haris Rauf 10-0-54-3, Shadab Khan 9-0-64-0, Danish Aziz 2-0-11-0	
PAKISTAN	
Imam-ul-Haq c Markram b Ngidi	5
Fakhar Zaman run out (Markram)	193
Babar Azam c Bavuma b Nortje	31
Mohammad Rizwan c Klaasen b Nortje ..	0
Danish Aziz c De Kock b Nortje	9
Shadab Khan lbw b Shamsi	13
Asif Ali c Markram b Phehlukwayo	19
Faheem Ashraf c De Kock	
b Phehlukwayo	11
Shaheen Shah Afridi c and b Rabada	5
Haris Rauf not out	1
Mohammad Hasnain not out	12
Extras (b 1, lb 8, nb 1, w 15)	25
Total (9 wks, 50 overs)	324
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-70, 3-71, 4-85, 5-120, 6-186, 7-205, 8-273, 9-312	
Bowling: Rabada 10-2-43-1, Ngidi 9-0-66-1, Phehlukwayo 10-0-67-2, Nortje 10-1-63-3, Shamsi 7-0-60-1, Markram 4-0-16-0	

Miller slammed an unbeaten 50 off 27 balls.

Babar, who made a century in the first match, again looked in sublime form as he cruised to 31 off 33 balls after the early loss of Imam-ul-Haq.

But he was undone by the pace of Anrich Nortje, mistiming a pull shot off Nortje's fourth ball.

Nortje followed up with two more quick wickets as Pakistan slipped to 85 for four.

Shadab Khan, Asif Ali and Faheem Ashraf offered brief support but the match looked to be well beyond Pakistan's reach when Faheem was seventh out, with 137 runs still needed.

But that was without reckoning on Fakhar. — AFP

Rosberg's team triumphs in Extreme E opener

AL ULA, Saudi Arabia: The 2016 Formula One world champion Nico Rosberg's team won the inaugural race of the new Extreme E championship in Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

Former Australian rally champion Molly Taylor and Swede Johan Kristoffersson, a three-time world rallycross winner, shared driving duties in the Rosberg X Racing electric SUV. "Sooo happy about what @rosbergxracing managed to achieve this weekend. @molly_rally, @JohanKMS88, and the rest of Team RXR, you guys rock," Rosberg said on Twitter.

In second came the American Andretti team with Catie Munnings and Timmy Hansen behind the wheel, with the team created by seven-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton, Rosberg's former Mercedes teammate and title rival, in third.

Driving for Hamilton's X44 team were nine-time rally world champion Sebastien Loeb and Cristina Gutierrez.

They had set the fastest time in qualifying on Saturday.

"It's been pretty cool to be part of the journey, of the very start of what I think has an amazing future," said Taylor.



"It's an incredible opportunity for us (female drivers). If you look at the field, the drivers we have here are the best in every motorsport category."

Extreme E is seeking to highlight the environmental dangers posed to some of the world's most remote regions.

After this weekend's Al-Ula round, the competition will switch to Senegal's Lac Rose, Greenland, the Amazon in Brazil and the glaciers of Tierra del Fuego in Argentina.

Four-time Dakar Rally winner Carlos Sainz, with his team-mate Laia Sanz, and the team of 2009 F1 world champion Jenson Button exited at the semifinal stage.

"We had a little contact with Sebastien (Loeb) and from there

it was over. It's impossible to follow, once we are in the dust we immediately lose 15 seconds," Sainz said.

BUMPY DEBUT

In the Saudi desert, the debut of Extreme E was bumpy.

The qualifying format — eventually a time-trial — was changed at the last moment and spectacular accidents on Saturday and Sunday raised concerns for the safety of the drivers, even if there were no serious injuries.

"It's been beyond my expectations. It's been the best weekend I could think of," said Alejandro Agag, the entrepreneur behind the project.

"As for accidents, it's part of motorsport." — AFP



IT WAS A DESERVED VICTORY FOR THE 24-YEAR-OLD FROM WROCLAW, WHO CLAIMED HIS SECOND TITLE OF THE SEASON AS SINNER’S CHALLENGE UNRAVELLED WITH A SERIES OF UNFORCED ERRORS

MIAMI: Poland’s Hubert Hurkacz defeated Italian teenager Jannik Sinner in straight sets to win the Miami Open and claim the first ATP Masters title of his career on Sunday. The 26th-seeded Hurkacz, who had eliminated four higher-ranked players en route to the final, held his nerve at Miami’s Hard Rock Stadium to win 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 in 1hr 43min.

It was a deserved victory for the 24-year-old from Wroclaw, who claimed his second title of the season as Sinner’s challenge unravelled with a series of unforced errors.

“It feels unreal, so happy that I was able to play a good match today,” Hurkacz said.

“Jannik is an amazing competitor. I’m so proud of myself that I was able to beat him.”

Hurkacz, whose win earned him a message of congratulations Polish President Andrzej Duda, said he hoped the tournament win would be a launchpad for more victories.

“It gives me extra motivation and extra belief in myself, that I’ve won a really big title,” he said. “It motivates me to be a better player so I can win even more.”

Sinner meanwhile expressed disappointment that he had been unable to take full advantage of the absence in Miami of the men’s ‘Big Three’ — Novak

Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer — by crowning a successful tournament with victory in the final.

“Today is a tough day, to be honest, because losing the final here for me is not easy,” Sinner said.

“I came here with the mentality to win. We knew that Rafa, Roger, Novak were not playing,” he said. “I think it was a big opportunity for many players.”

Sinner had started slowly, being broken with his first service game to quickly find himself trailing 3-0 in the opening set.

However the talented 19-year-old grew in confidence as the set progressed, working Hurkacz around the court with some pinpoint forehands into the corners.

The Italian broke back in the fifth game and then held to make it 3-3, before another break of Hurkacz’s serve gave him a 6-5 lead and the chance to serve for the set.

Sinner appeared to tighten on serve, though, and another unforced error, sending a backhand long, allowed Hurkacz to break back at 6-6 and force the tie-break.

Hurkacz quickly raced into a 6/2 lead in the decider and although Sinner clawed it back to 6/4, another missed forehand handed Hurkacz the first set. Hurkacz carried that momentum into the second set, sprinting into a 4-0 lead with a double break.

With the match slipping away from him, Sinner rallied to pull the score back to 4-3 but was unable to break an increasingly jittery Hurkacz in the eighth game to leave the Pole 5-3 up.

After Sinner held for 5-4, Hurkacz once again benefited from unforced errors by his opponent at key times as he served for the championship.

An overhit forehand by Sinner set up match point, and on the next point the Italian’s attempted forehand down the line drifted wide to seal Hurkacz’s win. — AFP

HURKACZ

holds nerve to claim Miami Open

Man Utd strengthen top-four grip, others stumble

LONDON: Manchester United took a giant stride towards securing a top-four finish as they battled back to beat Brighton & Hove Albion on Sunday after several other sides in the race stumbled.

United grafted to a 2-1 victory thanks to second half goals by Marcus Rashford and Mason Greenwood after their former striker Danny Welbeck had given Brighton an early lead.

It left second-placed United on 60 points, 14 behind runaway leaders Manchester City but crucially 11 ahead of fifth-placed Tottenham Hotspur, Liverpool and West Ham United.

“It’s always difficult to play Brighton. We have had good results and we’ve earned them the hard way. We managed to find a way in the second half,” manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said.

United proved the old adage that winning when playing poorly can reap great rewards — a lesson Spurs would do well to take on board after being held to a 2-2 draw at Newcastle United.

Manchester United recover to down Brighton 2-1

Tottenham held to 2-2 draw at battling Newcastle

Fulham lose 3-1 at Villa, Saints beat Burnley 3-2

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS ON SUNDAY:	
Newcastle 2 (Joelinton 28, Willock 85)	Tottenham 2 (Kane 30, 34)
Southampton 3 (Armstrong 31, Ings 42, Redmond 66)	Burnley 2 (Wood 12-pen, Vydra 28)
Aston Villa 3 (Trezeguet 78, 81, Watkins 87)	Fulham 1 (Mitrovic 61)
Manchester United 2 (Rashford 62, Greenwood 83)	Brighton 1 (Welbeck 13)



Manchester United’s Marcus Rashford scores their first goal at Old Trafford. — Reuters

Chelsea’s shock 5-2 defeat by West Bromwich Albion on Saturday had opened the door for Tottenham to move above their

London rivals into fourth spot and they looked poised to do so as they led 2-1 with Harry Kane’s 18th and 19th league goals of the

season after Newcastle had gone in front. But Joe Willock, on loan from Arsenal, equalised for the hosts in the 85th minute to secure

his side a point that by the end of the day looked valuable in their relegation battle.

Spurs have now dropped 11

points due to goals conceded in the final 10 minutes of games this season, the most of any Premier League side. — Reuters

features



The power of flowers to make one's day

When Siham al Jabri launched 'The Wow Gifts,' it was a fulfilment of a lifelong dream. Siham has always believed that where flowers bloom, so does hope which is why she worked hard to have a flower shop. Successfully running the shop since 2017, Siham believes that with every single gift and bouquet delivered, she is creating a distinguished experience for her customers and help create memorable moments for their loved ones... **P14**

INSIDE STORIES

CHANGING WORLD



GREENLAND'S INUIT YOUTH IN SEARCH OF NEW IDENTITY

Her traditional hand and face markings a sign of Inuit pride, Seginninguaq Lynge Poulsen is part of a new generation in Greenland seeking a fresh cultural identity with an eye to independence one day... **Story on P16**

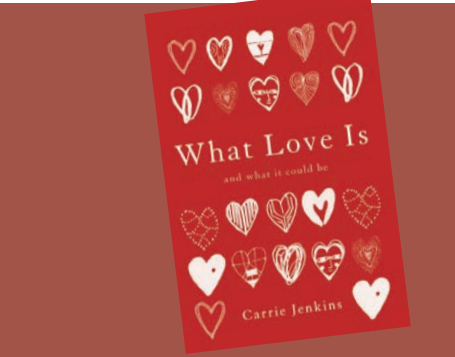
LOCAL SCENE



TUFOUL SHOWCASING THE PAST THROUGH HANDMADE SILVERWARE

The craftswoman Tufoul Ramadhan, from the Wilayat of Taqah, Dhofar has mastered the silver industry for ages now and believes that this craft is part of her personality... **Story on Page 15**

READ



WHAT LOVE IS AND WHAT IT COULD BE

BY CARRIE JENKINS

A rising star in philosophy examines the cultural, social, and scientific interpretations of love to answer one of our most enduring questions What is love?

ART



CCTV SHOWS COUPLE IN SEOUL DAUBING OVER \$500,000 GRAFFITI ARTWORK

A couple in South Korea accused of damaging artwork by American graffiti artist JonOne said they had mistakenly thought they were allowed to daub paint on the piece as "participatory art", the head of the exhibition said on Friday... **Story on P15**

STRANGEST PLANT



HYDNORA AFRICANA IN SADAH: ONE OF THE TEN STRANGEST PLANTS IN THE WORLD

The wadis of Sadah are famous for the presence of Hydnora Africana plant, locally called "Khumlaj", which intrudes on tree roots and grows under the surface of the ground except in the flowering stage... **Story on P14**



The power of flowers to make one's day

BY ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

Flowers are a gift to the earth as every flower is a soul blossoming in nature. Usually, flowers paint contrasting colours and bring joy to people. That is why flowers are seen as loving gifts for the special and loved ones in our life; their reaction post-receiving an elegant bouquet is priceless indeed. It marks a sort of lovely mix of therapy and meditation. Here comes the significance of flowers arrangement as an art that revives one's sense of inner harmony. When you think of sending a gift or a token of caring to someone special, just think of flowers as a fantastic gift for every occasion. Flowers can provide you with countless ways to

express yourself to another; from picking their favourite colour to designing floral arrangements that unite complexity under the skilful arm of the florist, to sharing a simple souvenir as well. The Wow Gifts, owned by Siham al Jabri, could easily and uniquely express your feelings and deliver your present to the doorstep of loved ones in a record time! Once upon a time, Siham dreamed of having a flower shop and she believed in where flowers bloom so does hope! Accordingly, she made her mind and worked on making her dream come true. Out of her belief that success comes to only those believing in their dreams, Siham started stepping her foot on the ladder, leaving no stone unturned to reach the top of her dream. In 2017, she celebrated her success of

starting her business, Wow Gifts, while she was still an undergraduate at the Higher College of Technology. As an Accounting Graduate, she was very concerned about budget and financing to run her project. However, she never let go of her dream and started the business from home. Over the years, Siham managed to succeed in sustaining her dream business, which kicked off out of a personal passion for gift-wrapping and a love of flowers. The vision of her dreams are no longer blurred as now, it is closer to reality. Yes, Siham loves roses and flowers, but she never thought of working in a flower arrangement business! She has never assumed that flower arrangement would be her cup of tea someday for it requires skilful hands and creative imagination and intuition. Matching colours and selecting the type of flowers and other decorative plants to bring out an attention-grabbing bouquet is never an easy task that everyone can manage! Shedding light on her story, Siham pointed out, "Making a dream come true will not happen overnight. It took me all the way of sacrifice and hard work to fulfil my ambition and bring up my business. Thanks to the firsthand, insightful experience obtained from an Egyptian florist whom I learned a lot. With his support and online intensive self-learning and searching, I could acquire essential know-how of mastering the flowers arrangement art". With her firm passion and persistence in learning and doing all what it takes, Siham could master this art and become a skilful young Omani

florist. Distinctively, she is not only arranging gorgeous flower bouquets for her customers, but she is providing gift-wrapping, as well as supplying them with gifts and souvenirs options for their loved ones. Moreover, she handles flower arrangements for special occasions and celebrations. Hence, she is bearing her customers' headache of looking for the appropriate gift for a certain occasion. What really distinguishes Siham from others is her unmatched proposal of delivering a full-fledged service to customers. Just let her shoulder your responsibility of thinking of the right gift that you want to present to a friend, husband, wife, mother, father or whoever it is. Then she takes the burden of presenting gift's options, buying the gift, charmingly wrapping it and delivering it with a bouquet of flowers to your loved ones. In other words, her business serves as a one-stop-shop for customers who would like to celebrate their various occasions or commemorate others' different anniversaries. "Flowers are a different world, which not everyone can explore unless s/he has the thrill to do so. Whoever intends to make flowers blooming in other's hearts and glitter in their eyes should have a good taste and sense of creativity. Most importantly, one shall meet the different expectations and interests of people, especially when selecting a present. Therefore, with every single gift and bouquet delivered, I create a distinguished experience to my customers and bring memorable moments for their loved ones", commented Siham al Jabri.

STRANGEST PLANT

Hydnora Africana in Sadah: One of the Ten strangest plants in the world



THE WADIS of Sadah are famous for the presence of Hydnora Africana plant, locally called "Khumlaj", which intrudes on tree roots and grows under the surface of the ground except in the flowering stage. It has underground creeping stems covered with solid, wart-like protrusions linked to the roots of the host-type plant and its flowers appear on the surface of the ground after heavy rainfall. The plant comes in the form of a tube at the bottom with four lobes at the top, the length of the tube is about 6 centimetres. The lobes are broad, thick and fleshy, which extend when ripe or remain attached at the ends. The plant is found in some desert areas in Africa,



especially in South Africa, western coastal areas, Namibia, Swaziland, Botswana, KwaZulu-Natal and Ethiopia, where it is ranked among the ten strangest plants in the world. The Scottish researcher "Miranda Morris" and the botanist "Anthony Miller" mentioned in their book (The Dhofar Plants: Traditional, Economic and Medicinal Uses) that this plant belongs to the Hidnuriat family, which is a genus that contains 12 species spread in Africa, where only two species were recorded in the Arabian Peninsula. They are: Hidnora Johannis discovered in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Hidnora Africana which was registered so far in the Dhofar Governorate.



The researchers explained that this parasitic plant appears after rainstorms in the drier parts of the Dhofar Governorate, as well as in the desert areas where the species of acacia plants are found. This plant grows widely in the wadis of Sadah, and in particular near the brown trees. It can also be seen on the sides of the steep canyons caused by the rain. The plants that appear above the soil level in the local dialect are called "Nakhri", meaning the nose. These plants are a bright red colour and they open from the top to become in the form of a flower with four yellow edible petals. When the plants dry up and die, the fruits below the surface of the soil swell after 6 months and usually reach the size of a large potato, and at that time the demand for the fruits increases. They make group trips to search for the fruits of this plant in the wadis, relying on their previous knowledge of the places where the flowers of this plant appeared, and they dig between 30 to 60 centimetres under the soil to reach the fruit of the plant. When this fruit is fully grown, it becomes from the inside like a ripe fig. It has a sweet taste and is a rare and delicious food.

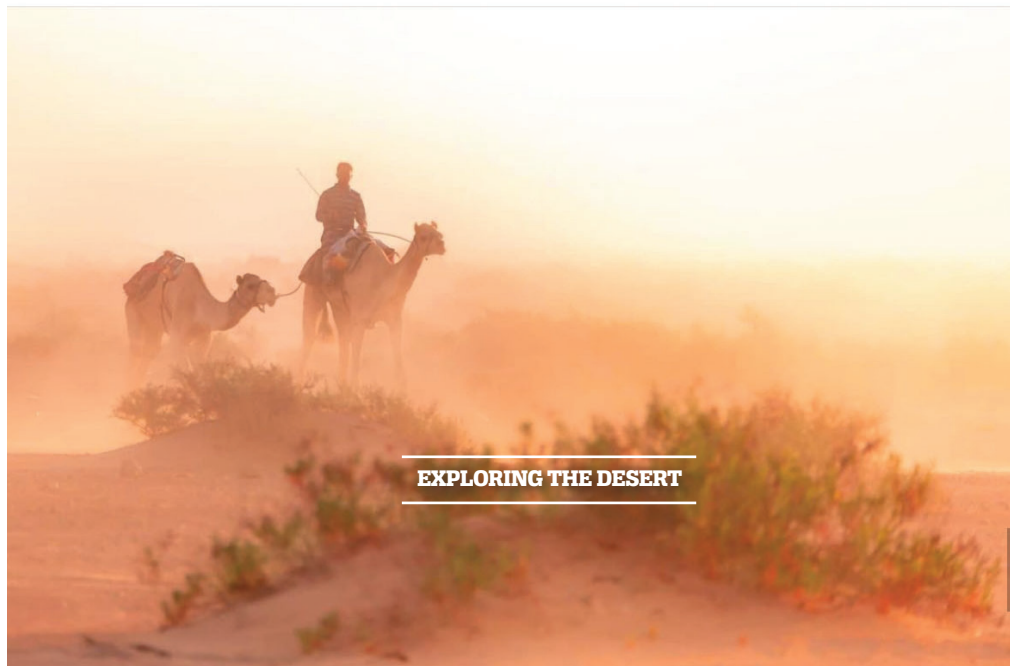


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LOCAL SCENE

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ART

CCTV shows couple in Seoul daubing over \$500,000 graffiti artwork



A COUPLE in South Korea accused of damaging artwork by American graffiti artist JonOne said they had mistakenly thought they were allowed to daub paint on the piece as "participatory art", the head of the exhibition said on Friday.

The 240cm by 700cm untitled artwork is estimated to be worth as much as \$500,000 and was painted by JonOne in

up some of the paint and splattering and rubbing it on the artwork.

Police reviewed the CCTV footage before arresting the couple at the mall. They were later released, said the head of exhibition Kang Wook, adding that the gallery had decided not to file charges because it appeared to be an honest mistake.

"They thought they were allowed to do that as par-

Tufoul showcasing the past through handmade silverware

The craftswoman Tufoul Ramadhan, from the wilayat of Taqah, Dhofar has mastered the silver industry for ages now and believes that this craft is part of her personality.

She mainly worked with silverware in addition to being a member of the Omani Women Association since its inception. She was responsible for technical affairs in the association until the year 2020, and her passion for heritage work began by getting to know the tools involved in the industry.

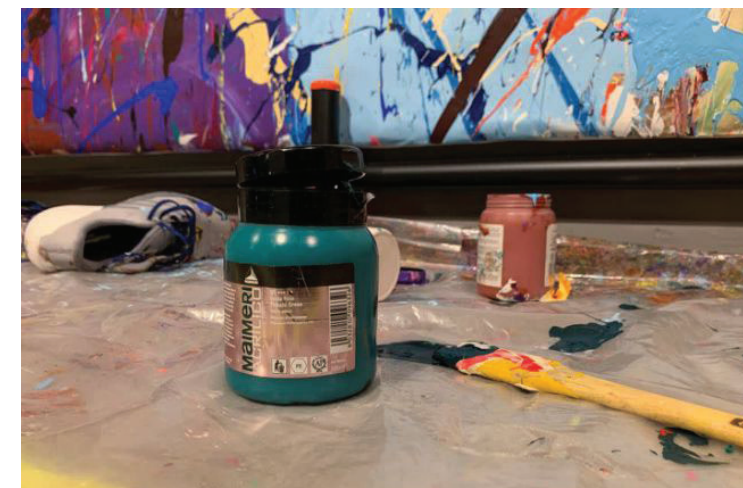
Tufoul manufactures several handicrafts, including clothes and ornaments for the head, nose and neck for women, and some silver crafts for men. She plays a notable role in the Association for her contribution to training women in silver crafting. Her mission is to introduce authentic Omani heritage to the world.

She is also interested in collecting heritage items and has a private museum in her home

that includes many rare artefacts, the most famous of which is an ancient sword dating back to the Ya'arubi period, Umayyad and Abbasid coins, and currencies of Sultan Faisal bin Turki.

Tufoul participated in many exhibitions for the Omani Women Association in Taqah and the Salalah Tourism Festival, in addition to its outside participation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in Yemen and some GCC countries. She has also helped at furnishing the Taqah Fort in 1996 as part of the "Year of Omani Heritage."

Tufoul believes that through these exhibitions, she helps to spread a message to the world about the Omani heritage. "Lots of tourists from different segments visit these exhibitions and they get the chance to know about our history. They aim to be a link between the past and the current generation, in addition to shedding light on heritage holdings and helping researchers and academics in this field," she shared.



2016 in front of an audience in Seoul.

Paint cans and brushes from the live performance are moved with the artwork, including to its current location at a gallery in Lotte World Mall, and are displayed on the ground in front of the painting and considered part of the artwork.

According to the exhibition staff, on Sunday CCTV cameras captured a young man and woman picking

ticipatory art and made a mistake," he said. "We are currently in discussions with the artist about whether to restore it."

After the incident, the gallery put up a wire fence and additional signs saying "Do Not Touch".

Some visitors were seen taking pictures of the damaged artwork on Friday and Kang said that inquiries about the show had increased after the incident. — **Reuters**



Greenland's Inuit youth in search of new identity



Her traditional hand and face markings a sign of Inuit pride, Seqininnguaq Lynge Poulsen is part of a new generation in Greenland seeking a fresh cultural identity with an eye to independence one day.

In Greenland, a Danish autonomous territory in the Arctic holding legislative elections on Tuesday, almost 40 per cent of the 56,000 inhabitants are under the age of 25.

Young people here have long struggled with high rates of sexual abuse, violence, suicide and alcohol addiction.

Inuits — who comprise 90 per cent of Greenland's population — have grappled with identity issues as the modern world has affected their traditional way of life during and after Denmark's colonisation, which ended in 1953.

Poulsen, 19, is an indigenous activist who has represented Greenland in various international forums, including UN summits on indigenous youth, and is part of what researchers have termed an Inuit "revival".

The dotted lines sweeping across her cheeks and chin are tattoos which before colonisation signified an Inuit's coming of age. The lines and geometric symbols on her hands and forearms are also traditional Inuit markings.

She had hers done about a year ago to honour her culture and ancestors.

"I wanted to show the rest of the world how proud I am of being Inuit," Poulsen, whose first name Seqininnguaq means 'lovely sun', tells AFP in Nuuk, Greenland's capital of 18,000 people.

"I think we need more empowerment to get mentally ready for independence. The mindset needs to change," says the teen, who has been open about her own struggles with substance abuse, suicide attempts and an abusive relationship.

"We really want to decolonise the system, to adapt it to our way of doing and thinking, especially with the school system."

- 'NOT ENOUGH EDUCATED PEOPLE' -

Only one in two Greenlanders has a high school diploma.

In the election campaign, "the education system should be the number one topic. It's not adapted to the Greenlandic youth," echoes Morten Boller.

The 21-year-old from the western town of Kangerlussuaq recently graduated from

Inuits — who comprise 90 per cent of Greenland's population — have grappled with identity issues as the modern world has affected their traditional way of life during and after Denmark's colonisation, which ended in 1953.

high school and will soon begin training in Nuuk to work at an airport.

Like him, most youths who want to continue their studies have to leave their villages, often for Denmark.

"We don't have enough educated people in Greenland and people come from Denmark for work. That's why we have this victim-helper mentality," laments Poulsen, who also wants to study abroad but plans to return to Greenland.

University of Greenland economist Birger Poppel says the school system ought to address the special needs of Greenland's youths.

Among other things, it should "incorporate knowledge from research about learning disabilities among kids with traumas from neglect and abuse," he says.

More than one in three people in Greenland are victims of sexual abuse, usually during childhood, according to a 2018 government report.

- RECLAIMING INUIT HERITAGE -

These crimes, often linked to alcohol and drug consumption, have started to decline thanks to a new campaign launched three years ago.

But they still occur far too frequently in the poorest homes, often in small remote communities, says Peter Berliner, a professor of social sciences at the University of Greenland.

"Inequalities in Greenland are getting bigger and bigger, and the gap between rich and poor is at the level of the United States, far from the level in other Nordic countries," he says.

The island also has one of the world's highest suicide rates — an average of one per 1,000 inhabitants — with youths most at risk, according to a report by the Nordic Welfare Center.

"With the modernisation of Greenland, a lot of Greenlanders got lost. Smaller towns and settlements were closed... people were moved from their homes, placed in a new industry (such as fisheries), thus acting less and less like hunters or gatherers," notes Greenlandic political scientist Nauja Bianco.

Climate change has now spurred the younger generation to look to their roots. "We're facing a cultural revival in the wake of the challenges of climate change... The philosophy, the life values of the indigenous culture have become very popular," says Berliner.

The younger generation is also "more eager and open to discuss... the impact of Denmark's colonisation," adds Bianco. "There is an enormous potential for transformation on how you are seen and see yourself, and it's important to show and reclaim our Inuit heritage," she says.

Morten Boller is however sceptical. "I'm tired of people crying about Danish oppression. I understand a bit but they don't look at the benefits the Danes give us. The Danes, they pay for our corona vaccine and give it (to us) for free." — AFP

business

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CBO cautions against scammers



MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has reiterated its advisory to banking customers warning any phishing attempts and others seeking to steal their private banking information.

In a statement, the banking sector regulator said: “The Central Bank of Oman would like to highlight that it does not ask/require the disclosure of any banking or personal information to any source/entity.”

It further added: “The Central Bank would also like to state that all licenced banks or exchange companies operating in the Sultanate do not request the disclosure of any banking information such as the password, card number or account number, by calling or contacting through various social media programmes or by sending text messages requesting direct access via links.

Thus, whoever is exposed to such messages or communications must inform the authorities represented by the Royal Oman Police or their respective bank through the official contact details of such entity,” it stressed.

Residential rentals VAT-exempt in Oman

KEY PROVISOS: Exemption applies only if the rental contracts are registered with the competent authorities (Muscat Municipality, for example) and if the contract duration exceeds three months

CONRAD PRABHU
[@conradprabhu](#)

Rentals earned on residential properties in the Sultanate will not be subject to Value Added Tax (VAT) when the new levy becomes effective from April 16, 2021, tax experts have clarified.

According to professional business advisory services firm MMJS Consulting, residential rentals will be VAT-exempt subject to two key provisos: firstly, the rental contract should be registered with the competent authority concerned (Muscat Municipality, for example, if the residential rented property is located in the capital region), and secondly, the rental contract should be for a period of not less than three months.

The impact of VAT on real estate was the theme of a webinar hosted by MMJS Consulting with the support of Tibiaan Properties, a leading Omani real estate company, on Sunday.



Under the VAT Law, real estate is broadly divided into two categories: Bare land – any undeveloped property bereft of any manmade or engineering structure, such as piping, building, cabin and so on; and Developed Land – any property that has some engineering structure on it.

“VAT rates differ for these categories,” said Jay Duseja, Senior Manager. “Bare land is VAT exempt when leased or sold, but developed land attracts 5 per cent VAT when leased or sold.”

Commercial properties when sold or rented are subject to five

per cent VAT, according to the tax expert. In fact, VAT becomes a recurring feature whenever the commercial property is rented or sold regardless of the number of times it has changed hands. “It means the landlord has to charge 5 per cent VAT to the tenant on commercial properties,” Duseja noted.

Exempt from VAT however are rentals on residential properties. These are defined as any building or part of a building designed and intended for use as a permanent place residence.

Not covered in this category

of VAT-exempt properties are, for example, hotels or hotel apartments, tourist compounds, bed & breakfast style outlets, hospitals, tourist holiday homes, and Airbnb style lodgings, he said.

Significantly, the first sale of residential property is subject to five per cent VAT provided such properties are constructed by professional real estate developers. The same property, if sold onward to another buyer, and so on, will not be subject to VAT again.

VAT on residential property sale is applied only when the transaction is organised by a

Under the VAT Law, real estate is broadly divided into two categories: Bare land – any undeveloped property bereft of any manmade or engineering structure, such as piping, building, cabin and so on; and Developed Land – any property that has some engineering structure on it

professional developer. However, if a landowner builds a home for his own use, but later decides to sell it, the sale is VAT exempt, said the tax expert.

The expert urged individuals and businesses that are covered by the definition of the VAT Law to register themselves with the Tax Authority. Non-compliance within the stipulated deadlines can attract penalties ranging from RO 5000 to RO 20,000 with the possibility of penal terms as well. Besides, landlords are required to issue tax invoices to commercial tenants, file their returns on a quarterly basis, and maintain their records for a minimum period of 15 years, he added.

Duqm power and water project commences trial operations

STRONG UNDERPINNINGS: Integrated power generation and water desalination complex will primarily meet requirements of OQ8 (Duqm Refinery)

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

The integrated electricity and water station in the Special Economic Zone of Duqm begins trial operation tests after receiving the first quantities of natural gas designated for its operation. The station's production capacity is 326 megawatts of electricity and 36 thousand cubic metres of water per day.

The complex is owned by Duqm Power Company, a joint venture between the Central Utilities Company (Mawafiq), which forms part of the OQ (the Sultanate's global integrated energy group), and Gulf Pacific Holding Company. Total investment in the



integrated project is estimated at \$480 million.

Construction work on the complex was 90 per cent complete by the end of last month, with five gas turbines installed alongside 5 steam turbines at the site. The plant will supply power and water to the OQ8 starting from later this year.

According to an official of OQ Gas Networks, the pipeline from central Oman was laid at a cost of around RO 98 million. It will provide gas as feedstock for Duqm's industries, as well as support power generation and water desalination. A Gas Supply Station built at the Duqm end of the pipeline will regulate supply at 15 million cubic metres/day initially, rising to 25 million cubic metres in the future.

At full capacity, the plant will produce 326 MW of electricity and 36,000 cubic metres per day of desalinated seawater. A 132-kilovolt high voltage transmission line also supplies power to the Crude Oil Storage Park at Ras Markaz, located 80 km south of the SEZ. **(With inputs from ONA)**

Tesla's market value set to gain \$50 bn on record EV deliveries

CALIFORNIA: Tesla Inc was set to add about \$50 billion to its market value as the electric car-maker's shares surged on Monday, after it posted record deliveries on strong demand in China that helped it offset the impact of a global shortage in auto parts.

The stock jumped nearly 8 per cent in pre-market trading and it was on track to hit its highest in over a month.

The company said on Friday it was encouraged by the strong reception of its Model Y crossover in China and it was quickly progressing to full production capacity.

Analysts remained hopeful as despite a global chip shortage that has slammed the entire auto sector, various supply chain issues and rising competition, Tesla still managed to produce roughly the same amount of vehicles in the first quarter as in the fourth quarter.

At least three brokerages raised their price targets on



Tesla Inc CEO Elon Musk dances onstage during a delivery event for Tesla China-made Model 3 cars in Shanghai. – Reuters

Tesla's stock. Brokerage Wedbush was the most aggressive, increasing it by \$50 to \$1,000, much higher than the median price target of \$712.50, as per Refinitiv data.

“Tesla is executing impeccably. I am not surprised by the strong deliveries,” said Roth Capital Partners analyst Craig Irwin, even as he added that the stock is “egregiously overvalued.”

“Great work by Tesla team!” Musk tweeted on Monday. “Special mention of Tesla China,” Musk added.

— Reuters

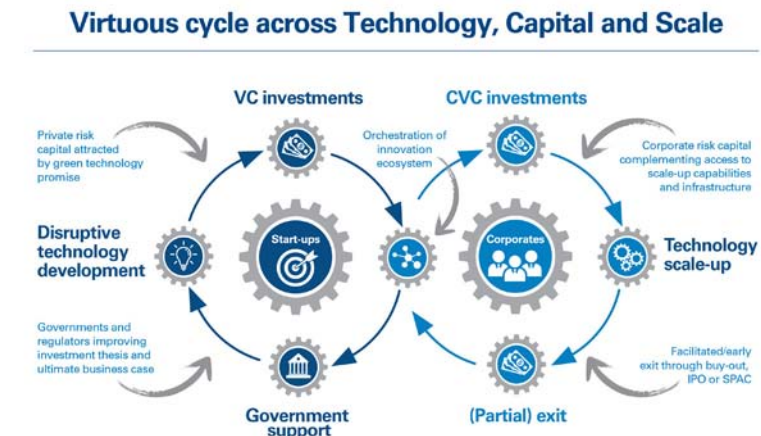
Post-pandemic landscape ushers in era of green investment

SALIENT FEATURES:
Report by Arthur D Little assesses how the crisis has transformed the green investment environment and stresses that now is time for organisations to pursue bold green transformation strategies previously considered too risky

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

In pre-pandemic times, progress towards transformational change remained remarkably slow, despite climate change and sustainability rising higher than ever before on large companies' strategic agendas. Although Covid-19 may have temporarily pushed climate change off daily newfeeds, 2020 was a year in which political ambitions towards addressing climate change started to look much more robust.

Arthur D Little (ADL), the leading management consultancy firm, expounds this viewpoint in their latest report entitled "The Green Gambit:



Investing for corporate strategic advantage in the post-Covid-19 world'. The report assesses how the crisis has transformed the green investment environment and stresses that now is time for organisations to pursue bold green transformation strategies previously considered too risky.

As per the report's findings, industrial companies should be well-positioned to capture success in this direction and contribute to the ecosystem as it addresses mega challenges based on three building blocks — winning technology on which breakthrough solutions critically depend, scale and scale-up capabilities to create lasting value, and capital to sustain rapid and successful development.

Crucially, this cycle was far from perfect in pre-pandemic times but key players are now conducting comprehensive re-

evaluations and pursuing new or improved strategies.

"Recent events stemming from the pandemic have encouraged governments, corporates, and investors to take a fresh look at their priorities, and we are now seeing new drivers for green growth emerge", said Adnan Merhaba, Partner and Energy practice Lead at Arthur D Little MEI.

"Governments are exploring green investments as they transition to cleaner economies, investors are advancing their strategies through sustainability targets, and private equity firms are allocating more funds and monitoring the carbon footprints of companies they work with. These are encouraging signs, with many examples and proof-points indicating a successful long-term transformation that the Middle East will witness in

due course."

The report urges companies to focus on two imperatives as they strive to take advantage of greater volumes of better-connected investment funding.

Firstly, they should adopt new approaches to nurturing disruptive ventures that may be outside the normal core business. Secondly, they should work collaboratively to shift the entire business ecosystem, which is often needed to successfully deliver green initiatives.

The report also explores the positive benefits that organisations can capitalise upon through innovative funding options, for e.g. Special Purpose Acquisition Company (SPAC) route, which is an alternative way to raise capital and access public equity markets.

"To date, the majority of corporates to set-up innovative transformation programs have experienced varying outcomes, and the SPAC route is an effective way to invest in public ventures and overcome associated risks", added Merhaba. "From our perspective here at ADL, SPACs will offer vast opportunities to experience notable results whatever the scenario, propelling corporate ventures to greater heights and boosting their appeal both internally and to public investors."

Bank Nizwa holds AGM, approves dividend per share

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa held its Annual Ordinary General Meeting at 5:00 pm on Sunday, March 28, 2021, via the electronic platform for general meetings on Muscat Clearing and Depository Company's website.

The Board of Directors of the Sultanate's flagship Islamic bank disclosed and approved critical material and information for the year 2020, including its exceptional financial performance. Bank Nizwa's conscious and consistent efforts rightfully manifest its most trusted position within Oman's Islamic banking sector.

The AGM, chaired by Shaikh



Khalid bin Abdullah bin Ali al Khalili (pictured), Chairman, Bank Nizwa, approved the Director's Report for the financial year ending December 31, 2020, the Bank's Corporate Governance Report, and the Bank's Audited Financial Statements, including the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account, for the same fiscal year.

The AGM also disclosed the Sharia Supervisory Board's Report for the year ending December 31, 2020. The shareholders also approved the distribution of cash dividend for the shareholders of 1.25 baisas per share.

VAT compliance diploma launched in Oman

MUSCAT: As Oman gears up for VAT implementation, organisations are facing a skills shortage of qualified tax professionals. To support businesses in implementing the nation's new tax regime, PwC's Academy, the talent and skills development business of PwC, has launched the Oman VAT Compliance Diploma.

Designed for professionals to navigate the new tax legislation, this globally recognised diploma, awarded by the Association of Taxation Technicians (ATT), covers the principles of VAT and in-depth knowledge and application of the GCC framework. Run in partnership with Tolley, the leading

worldwide provider of practical tax training, the programme will deliver comprehensive training for finance managers and tax professionals responsible for administration of VAT, and for those in a VAT regulatory role in both public and private sectors.

Amanda Line, Partner, PwC's Academy said: "Our role at PwC's Academy is to facilitate the upskilling needs in the region, particularly during this time of rapid change in tax policies. We have helped businesses prepare for VAT introductions across the UAE and KSA, and the diploma has played a key role in ensuring professionals have a clear understanding of the requirements."

MAJAN ELECTRICITY COMPANY ADAPTS RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT MANUAL



Majan Electricity Company has adopted the Records and Archives Management Manual which consists of the records' retention schedules and the records classification in the company. The signing ceremony was enacted by Dr Hamed bin Mohammed al Dhawani — Chairman of National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), Adil bin Ismail al Raisi — CEO of Majan Electricity Company, in presence of Engineer Omar bin Khalfan al Wahaibi — CEO of Nama Group.

This agreement shows the diligence of the National Records and Archives Authority to implement a modern system of managing records of companies in which the government contributes towards the capital by 25 per cent.

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Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 250 outlets spread across 10 countries, has announced attractive instore offers for customers to ensure savings before the implementation of VAT in the country. This campaign gives customers the opportunity to get free gold coins on diamond jewellery purchase worth RO 300 and above. As part of a Royal Decree, VAT is expected to be implemented in the country from April 16, 2021.

Customers can get a free 1 gm gold coin on diamond and precious gem jewellery purchase worth RO 500 and free ½ gm gold coin on diamond and precious gem jewellery purchase worth RO 300.

OAB CONCLUDES ITS FIRST-EVER VIRTUAL INNOVATION HUB



Upon the completion of the 24-hour virtual hackathon, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced the final results of the Innovation Hub 2.0, which was organised virtually, for the first time in the Sultanate.

Rashad al Musafir, CEO of OAB, said, "Each of the participants showcased immense passion for innovation and were eager to take part, despite the circumstances. We are extremely proud of their determination and innovative spirit. I strongly believe that many of the participants will play a significant role in shaping the future of the banking sector in the Sultanate. We, are delighted to pave the way for them to in shape the future."

BANK MUSCAT STRENGTHENS ITS E-CHANNEL NETWORK ACROSS OMAN



In line with its vision "To serve you better, everyday", and commitment to promoting financial inclusion across the Sultanate, including the remotest parts of the country, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, is continuously undertaking new measures to improve financial inclusivity amongst all demographic segments.

This drive for financial inclusion is closely aligned with national growth and development goals as envisaged by Oman Vision 2040. The bank's electronic and digital channels are playing a key role in facilitating this.

Remote, hybrid work fuelling growth of devices per person

STRONG GROWTH: Users' confidence is returning in the smartphone market

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

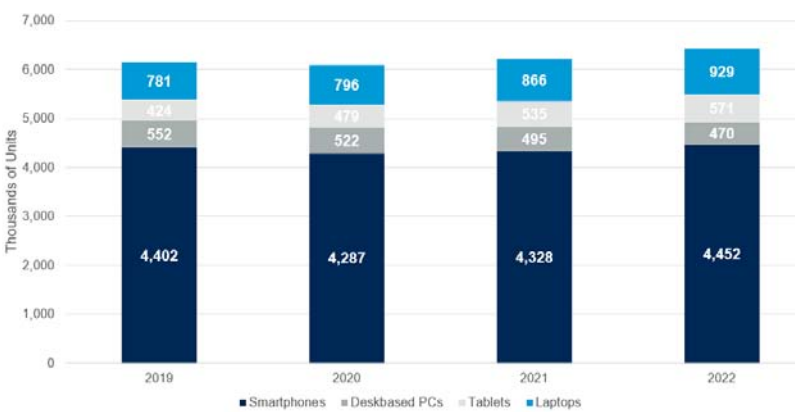
The number of devices (PCs (laptops and deskbased), tablets and mobile phones) in use globally will total 6.2 billion units in 2021, according to Gartner, Inc. In 2021, 125 million more laptops and tablets are expected to be in use than in 2020.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has permanently changed device

usage patterns of employees and consumers", said Ranjit Atwal, Senior Research Director at Gartner. "With remote work turning into hybrid work, home education changing into digital education and interactive gaming moving to the cloud, both the types and number of devices people need, have and use will continue to rise."

In 2022, global devices installed base is on pace to reach 6.4 billion units, up 3.2 per cent from 2021.

While the shift to remote work exacerbated the decline of desktop PCs, it boosted the use of tablets and laptops. In 2021, the number of laptops and tablets in



use will increase 8.8 per cent and 11.7 per cent, respectively, while the number of deskbased PCs in use is expected to decline from

522 million in use in 2020 to a forecasted 470 million in use in 2022.

Users' confidence is returning in

the smartphone market. Although the number of smartphones in use declined 2.6 per cent in 2020, smartphone installed base is on pace to return to growth with a 1 per cent increase in 2021.

"With more variety and choice, and lower-priced 5G smartphones to choose from, consumers have begun to either upgrade their smartphones or upgrade from feature phones", said Atwal. "The smartphone is also a key tool that people use to communicate and share moments during social distancing and social isolation."

The integration of personal and business lives, together with

a much more dispersed workforce requires flexibility of device choice. Workers are increasingly using a mix of company-owned devices and their own personal devices running on Chrome, iOS and Android, which is increasing the complexity of IT service and support.

"Connectivity is already a pain-point for many users who are working remotely. But as mobility returns to the workforce, the need to equip employees able to work anywhere with the right tools, will be crucial", said Atwal. "Demand for connected 4G/5G laptops and other devices will rise as business justification increases."



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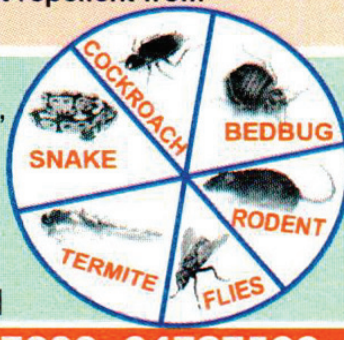
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Turkey inflation
above 16 per
cent in test for
new central
bank chief



A Turkish lira is seen through a magnifying glass in this illustration picture. — Reuters

ISTANBUL: Turkey’s annual inflation climbed above 16 per cent in March for the first time since mid-2019, data showed on Monday, piling pressure on new central bank governor Sahap Kavcioglu to maintain tight policy after his surprise appointment. Consumer prices were up 16.19 per cent year-on-year, higher than 16.11 per cent in a Reuters poll and 15.61 per cent in February. Inflation remains well above a 5 per cent official target and has been in double digits for most of the past four years. Month-on-month CPI inflation was 1.08 per cent. — Reuters

LG to shut down its mobile business

SEOUL: South Korea’s LG Electronics Inc will wind down its loss-making mobile division after failing to find a buyer, a move that is set to make it the first major smartphone brand to completely withdraw from the market. Its decision to pull out will leave its 10 per cent share in North America, where it is the No 3 brand, to be gobbled up by Samsung Electronics and Apple Inc with its domestic rival expected to have the edge. “In the United States, LG has targeted mid-priced — if not ultra-low — models and that means Samsung, which has more mid-priced product lines than Apple, will be better able to attract LG users,” said Ko Eui-young, an analyst at Hi Investment & Securities. LG’s smartphone division has logged nearly six years of losses totalling some \$4.5 billion. Dropping out of the fiercely competitive sector would allow LG to focus on growth areas such as electric vehicle components, connected devices and smart homes, it said in a statement. In better times, LG was early to market with a number of cell phone innovations including ultra-wide angle cameras and at its peak in 2013, it was the world’s third-largest smartphone manufacturer behind Samsung and Apple. But later, its flagship models



A man checking his mobile phone walks past LG logo in central Seoul. — Reuters

suffered from both software and hardware mishaps which combined with slower software updates saw the brand steadily slip in favour. Analysts have also criticised the company for lack of expertise in marketing compared to Chinese rivals. While other well-known mobile brands such as Nokia, HTC and Blackberry have also fallen from lofty heights, they have yet to disappear completely. LG’s current global share is only about 2 per cent. It shipped 23 million phones last year which compares with 256 million for Samsung, according to research

provider Counterpoint. In addition to North America, it does have a sizeable presence in Latin America, where it ranks as the No 5 brand. While rival Chinese brands such as Oppo, Vivo and Xiaomi do not have much of a presence in the United States, in part due to frosty bilateral relations, their and Samsung’s low to mid-range product offerings are set to benefit from LG’s absence in Latin America, analysts said. LG’s smartphone division, the smallest of its five divisions accounting for about 7 per cent of revenue, is expected to be

wound down by July 31. In South Korea, the division’s employees will be moved to other LG Electronics businesses and affiliates, while elsewhere decisions on employment will be made at the local level. Analysts said they were told in a conference call that LG plans to retain its 4G and 5G core technology patents as well as core R&D personnel, and will continue to develop communication technologies for 6G. It has yet to decide whether to licence out such intellectual property in the future, they added. — Reuters

Japan’s BoJ kicks
off experiments
on issuing digital
currency



The Japanese flag is seen in front of the Bank of Japan headquarters in Tokyo. — Reuters

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan (BoJ) began experiments to study the feasibility of issuing its own digital currency, joining efforts by other central banks that are aiming to match the innovation in the field achieved by the private sector. The first phase of experiments, to be carried out until March 2022, will focus on testing the technical feasibility of issuing, distributing and redeeming a central bank digital currency (CBDC). The BoJ will thereafter move to the second phase of experiments that will scrutinise more detailed functions, such as whether to set limits on the amount of CBDC each entity can hold. If necessary, the central bank will launch a pilot programme that involves payment service providers and end users, BoJ Executive Director Shinichi Uchida said. — Reuters

Manufacturing in SE
Asia returns to growth

BANGKOK: Manufacturing in violence-wracked Myanmar dipped to a record low in March even as neighbouring countries saw “return to growth,” according to a survey of factory managers. While “both output and new orders increased” across the region, according to IHS Markit, “another severe decline” was recorded in Myanmar “as factories remained closed amid political turmoil.” The findings were published as part of IHS Markit’s monthly Purchasing Managers’ index, which canvasses around 2,100 factory bosses across seven South-east Asian countries. Elsewhere in the region, the “strongest upturn” in March



A woman works in a garment factory in Thai town of Mae Sot. — Reuters

factory output was in Vietnam, which was one of the few countries to record GDP growth last year. Growth was also reported in Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore in March, while output in Thailand and Malaysia hovered slightly below expansion, according to the index’s metrics. — dpa

Oil slips to \$64 as rising Opec+ output weighs

LONDON: Oil slipped to around \$64 a barrel on Monday as rising supply from Opec+ and higher Iranian output countered signs of a strong economic rebound in the United States and hopes for a wider demand recovery in 2021. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, known as Opec+, agreed on Thursday to monthly production hikes from May to July. Iran is also boosting supply. Brent crude for June fell 96 cents, or 1.5 per cent, to \$63.90 a barrel by 0905 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude for May dropped 62 cents, or 1 per cent, to \$60.83. “The Opec+ decision, perhaps nudged along by increasing



Two men are seen working in Iraq’s southern Nassiriya oilfield. — Reuters

Iranian production heading to China, probably means we have seen the best of the oil rally now for the next few months,” said Jeffrey Halley of brokerage OANDA. Oil has recovered from

historic lows last year due to record Opec+ cuts, most of which will still remain after July, and some oil demand recovery that is expected to gather pace in the second half of the year. While a slow vaccine rollout

and return to lockdown in parts of Europe have weighed on the rebound, figures on Friday showed the US economy created the most jobs in seven months in March, with all industries adding jobs. “The seemingly invincible accelerating US recovery has offset Opec+’s announcement on Thursday,” Halley said. In another development that could eventually lead to more supply, investors are focused on indirect talks between Iran and the United States as part of negotiations to revive the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and global powers. Iran has already boosted exports to China despite the sanctions. — Reuters

Malaysian ex-PM Najib starts appeal over 1MDB conviction

PUTRAJAYA: Former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak began an appeal on Monday at the Court of Appeal in Putrajaya against his corruption conviction and 12-year jail term over the multibillion-dollar 1MDB scandal, which contributed to his government’s downfall in 2018. Najib was found guilty on all counts last year in the first of several trials he is facing related to the looting of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad sovereign wealth fund. The 67-year-old — who remains free on bail — and his cronies were accused of stealing billions of dollars from the investment vehicle and spending



Former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak (C) arrives at Court of Appeal in Putrajaya, Malaysia. — Reuters

it on everything from high-end real estate to pricey art.

On Monday, the former prime minister began his first challenge

During the appeal, set to run until April 22, Najib’s lawyers will argue he had no knowledge of the transactions into his accounts, according to documents submitted to the court

at the Court of Appeal.

“There was a miscarriage of justice,” defence lawyer Muhammad Shafee Abdullah told reporters after proceedings wrapped up for the day. He argued the judge in the original trial did not have sufficient experience in handling criminal cases. “This alone should make this appeal successful and the court can reverse the (earlier) judgement,” he said. Anger at the plunder played

a large part in the shock loss of Najib’s long-ruling coalition at elections in 2018, and he was arrested and hit with dozens of charges following his defeat. Following a lengthy trial, he was found guilty of abuse of power, money-laundering and criminal breach of trust over the transfer of 42 million ringgit (\$10.1 million) from a former 1MDB unit to his bank accounts. As well as the jail term, he was fined almost \$50 million. He denies any wrongdoing.

At the start of the appeal, his lawyer sought to get proceedings delayed by a month, saying he wanted to obtain additional documents from overseas to add to the evidence. But the three judges hearing the case dismissed the bid. During the appeal, set to run until April 22, Najib’s lawyers will argue he had no knowledge of the transactions into his accounts, according to documents submitted to the court. They are seeking to portray him as a victim and blame financier Low Taek Jho — a key figure in the scandal who has been charged in the United States and Malaysia — as the mastermind. — Reuters