

**GREECE BATTLES NEW
BLAZES AS FIREFIGHTERS
MAKE PROGRESS IN SPAIN**

Firefighters in Spain started to get the upper hand in a blaze afflicting the centre of the country on Monday while Greece struggled to fight off two blazes that started up in opposite sides of the country. **>A6**



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**PRODUCTION OF M-95 PETROL IN
OMAN EXCEEDS 6 MILLION BARRELS**

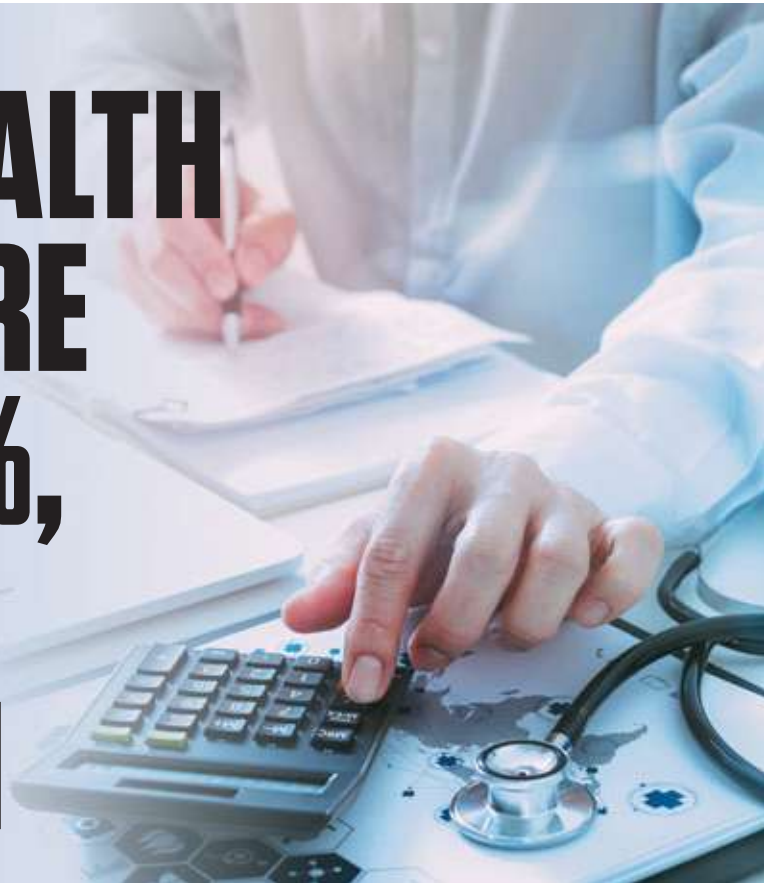
The Sultanate recorded a rise in the production of super grade petrol (M-95) by 26 per cent to reach 7,327,300 barrels at the end of June 2021 compared to 5,793,700 barrels at the end of June 2020, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCISI). **>A3**



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OMAN'S HEALTH EXPENDITURE GROWS 22%, REACHES OMR972MN



The total number of workers in the health ministry reached 38,566 by December 2020 end, with an Omanisation rate of 73%

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The total expenditure by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Oman rose 22.6 per cent to OMR972.5 million in 2020 compared to OMR793.3 million in 2019, a new report reveals.

The total number of health centres and polyclinics operated by the Ministry reached 211, the

annual health report 2020 shows. This includes 54 health centres with a capacity of 84 beds, and 21 polyclinics, in addition to 51 hospitals having 5,262 beds at the end of 2020.

Also, a field hospital was designated exclusively for COVID-19 cases with 202 beds. Many services were also added to these institutions in order to improve the

quality of health services provided at all levels, the report added.

The total number of workers in the Ministry of Health reached 38,566 at the end of December 2020, with an Omanisation rate of 73 per cent.

In contrast, development expenditure of the Ministry of Health decreased to OMR15.7 million in 2020 from OMR21.6 million in 2019.

With regard to other vital indicators, the report said that the birth rate among Omanis was 28.6 per 1,000 population in 2020 while the death rate among Omanis was 3.2 per 1,000 population in 2019. The death rate among children under five years of age decreased to 9.3 per 1,000 births in 2020 compared to 10.2 per 1,000

births in 2019, and the infant mortality rate (less than one year) per 1,000 live births decreased from 8.0 to 7.6 for the same period.

The report also showed the control of measles, where no case of the disease has been recorded in 2020. Oman has remained free of many diseases such as polio since 1993, diphtheria and neonatal tetanus since 1991. The incidence rates of other communicable diseases have decreased to lower levels. For instance, the number of malaria cases dropped to 276 in 2020 compared to 1,338 cases in 2019.

COVID-19 pandemic has posed a great challenge to all health systems, whether in the most or least developed countries in the world, the report said. **>A5**

MEETINGS

Sayyid Fatik bids farewell to French, Brazilian envoys



MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar Al Said received separately in his office on Tuesday Renaud Salins, Ambassador of the French Republic to the Sultanate and Jose Marcos, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Sultanate, to bid them farewell at the end of their tour of duties.

During the meetings, the two ambassadors expressed their thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to them during their duties in the Sultanate from His Majesty, the Gov-

ernment and the Omani people, which had enabled them to carry out their tasks. They wished His Majesty good health, happiness and a long life, and the Sultanate further progress and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty. On his turn, Sayyid Fatik expressed his utmost thanks to the ambassadors for the efforts they exerted in serving the relations between their countries and the Sultanate, wishing them success in their future assignments, and the friendly people of their respective countries further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**

CRICKET



Oman's T20 Cricket World Cup campaign begins on October 17

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's national cricket team is all set to play its first World Cup game on home soil, when they take on Papua New Guinea on 17 October.

With the Twenty20 Cricket World Cup being jointly held in Oman and the UAE, the home side's preliminary round match against PNG will take place at 2pm GST. Bangladesh will play Scotland at 6pm at Amerat Cricket Ground on the same day.

Oman's crunch match will come three days later against Bangladesh, who are also with them in Group B. The men in red will take to the field at 6pm, after Scotland play PNG earlier that afternoon. Should Oman win their first two games, they will seal qualification to the next round of the tournament, the Super 12.

Group B's final match-ups see Oman play Scotland at 6pm, following the game between Bangladesh and PNG.

"We are quite confident of making it to the Super 12," said Oman head coach Duleep Mendis. "We have defeated both Scotland and PNG in the past and there is no reason to believe we cannot do it again. Although you can't take any side lightly in a T20 game, playing on our own soil certainly adds to our confidence."

Ahead of the World Cup, Oman has invited India's domestic giants Mumbai, who will travel to the country for a series of 20 and 50-over games.

The occasion is certainly not lost on right-hand batter Aqib Ilyas, who has struck two centuries and six fifties in his international



TWENTY20 WORLD CUP MATCHES IN OMAN

SUNDAY, 17 OCTOBER

2PM: OMAN VS PAPUA NEW GUINEA

6PM: BANGLADESH VS SCOTLAND

TUESDAY, 19 OCTOBER

2PM: SCOTLAND VS PAPUA NEW GUINEA

6PM: BANGLADESH VS OMAN

THURSDAY, 21 OCTOBER

2PM: BANGLADESH VS PAPUA NEW GUINEA

6PM: OMAN VS SCOTLAND

career thus far. He understands the scale of the tournament, especially as an opportunity for the game's emerging stars to stand up.

"The T20 World Cup is one of the most popular sporting events taking place on the planet," he said. "It's one of the best platforms for all associate players and associate teams to compete

against the best playing nations. All the teams are really competitive and they will try to give their best to secure their spot in the Super 12 phase."

"We welcome all visitors to our country," added Aqib. "It will be our pleasure to have you here. We will make sure that you like our hospitality."

Although the weather has made the team's preparations physically demanding, he is determined to not use that as an excuse for taking training lightly.

"We're really committed under the coaching of Duleep Mendis," said Aqib. "The boys are working really hard as the weather is not supportive, it's really hot, around 45 degrees."

While Group B's matches will be held in Oman, Group A qualifiers are pencilled in for the UAE, where the rest of the tournament will also take place.

Ireland play the Netherlands at 2pm GST on 18 October at Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, followed by a 6pm encounter between Sri Lanka and Namibia.

Namibia then play the Dutch on the 20th, as do Sri Lanka and Ireland later that evening. Group A's final round of fixtures will pit Namibia against Ireland and Sri Lanka against the Netherlands. Both games will take place at Sharjah Cricket Stadium.

The two teams that finish at the top of each group will make it through to the Super 12, where eight of cricket's higher-ranked teams are already present. These include Australia, South Africa, England, the West Indies, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and New Zealand. **>A3**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Maximum cases of drowning

1 At two each, Muscat and South Sharqiyah reported the highest number of drowning accidents, during the first six months of the current year, officials said. **>A3**

WORLD

Death toll in Turkey floods climbs to 70

2 The death toll in wake of this month's devastating floods in Turkey has risen to 70, the country's disaster management authority (AFAD) announced on Monday. **>A6**



MARKET

FOS Energy completes well test of Block 61

3 Following a major contract award in August 2020, Fahud Oil Services and Energy (FOS Energy) has successfully completed its first well test at Block 61 with zero flaring. The contract was previously held by a large, international service provider. Its award to FOS Energy underlines BP's commitment to generating in-country value across the Sultanate. Mohamed Najwani, BP VP wells commented, "Khazzan was the first field in Oman to introduce 'green completions' – a zero flaring concept. In 2020, we safely reduced over 148,000 tonnes of CO2e. **>B1**



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OMAN



PRAYER TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....	12:16pm
Asr.....	3:42pm
Maghrib.....	6:43pm
Isha.....	7:57pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:25am

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1991 - the Year of Industry



On other pages

Burmese junta denies drug trafficking charge - Page 4

S. Varasan slipped dragnet in Italy, says magazine - Page 5

BUSINESS TIMES

OCS offers latest IBM products - Page 7



A portable car-testing dynamometer - Pages 8

The international arms business binge ends - Page 10

Weather

Overcast skies and intermittent drizzle will continue over Dhofar coast and over northern Oman. The coastal areas will experience low clouds in the morning. While some cloud developments are likely over the mountains in the afternoon/evening. Mainly clear skies will prevail over elsewhere of the Sultanate.

Fresh to strong southerly/southwesterly winds are likely over Jambha and along Dhofar-Sharqiyah coasts. Interior will have light to moderate southerly winds. Winds over coastal areas of northern Oman will be light to variable at night and light to moderate northerly during day.

Sea will be rough along the southeastern coast with a maximum wave height of 3.0 metres and slight to moderate with a maximum wave height of 1.5 metres along elsewhere of the coast.

Maximum temperature for the Muscat area is 32°C and minimum temperature is 25°C. Relative humidity is 60%-90%.

Title will be low at 09:31 p.m. and high at 05:19 a.m. It will be low again at 09:49 a.m. and high at 2:28 p.m.

For the Salalah area, maximum temperature is 26°C and minimum temperature is 23°C. Relative humidity is 85%-100%.

Title will be low at 09:03 p.m. and high at 01:00 p.m.

Temperatures recorded in other countries: Abu Dhabi 37, Dubai 34, Riyadh 41, Jeddah 38, Bahrain 37, Kuwait 44, Amman 28, Doha 41, Karachi 32, Bombay 29, Paris 20 and London 22.

TEMP	MAX	MIN
Seef	32	25
Mina Qabon	32	26
Buraimi	45	27
Khasab	35	30
Babi	42	29
Nawa	41	20
Sohar	32	28
Saig	32	21
Sir	32	27
Masrah	29	23
Thumra	38	22
Jabal Dhofar	21	19
Haima	42	25
Marmul	41	25
Fahad	44	28
Al-Halanyim	28	24
Madha	31	28

RO 4,097 M IN FOURTH PLAN

Public and private investments to jump 39%

MUSCAT - Total public and private sector investments are to be increased by a whopping 39 per cent during the Fourth Five-Year Plan period, compared with the last plan, high-ranking Government source said yesterday.

Investments will rise to RO 4,097 million during the Fourth Plan against RO 2,943 million in the Third Plan, the source added. Of the sum of RO 4,097 million, the share of Ministerial investments is RO 1,285 million, up by 80 per cent as compared with RO 713 million in the Third Plan.

By Oswald Pereira

Total public sector investments during the plan period will reach RO 2,778 million against RO 2,047 million in the Third Plan, a rise of about 36 per cent.

Private sector investments will rise by 47.2 per cent to RO 1,319 million in the Fourth Plan against RO 896 million in the last plan. The source said that during the Fourth Plan period major projects are being undertaken to boost industry, agriculture and fisheries, for the development of the petroleum and mineral sectors and enhancing of water production and electricity generation.

The national infrastructure will be strengthened and completed and

beautification and development of interior towns will be intensified, during the plan.

The share of national projects in the outlying wilayahs is being increased in the Fourth Plan and the emphasis is on regional development.

Regional development is being undertaken by using 60 per cent of new Government investment funds for the development of areas outside Muscat compared with 34 per cent for the purpose during the Third Five-Year Plan.

During the Fourth Plan, projects are being undertaken to improve the communications network and services, to build roads, schools, hospitals, low-cost houses, youth complexes and social development centres.

High priority is being given to investment programmes in national manpower in pursuance of the goal of Omanisation in both the public and private sectors.

It is not only the physical but also the social infrastructure that needs to be developed to meet the challenges of modernisation, the source pointed out.

The investment programmes include apart from schools, a new faculty of arts building, a faculty of commerce and economics, and financial support for a business school.

60 bodies found at IA crash site

NEW DELHI - Rescue workers struggled through dense jungle and driving rain to a hill in north-east India, where an Indian Airlines Boeing 737 crashed but found no survivors from the 69 people aboard, officials said yesterday.

They said 60 bodies had been recovered by yesterday morning.

It took rescuers, including police and paramilitary troops, about eight hours to get to the hill where the plane crashed and burned in poor weather on Friday minutes before it was due to land at Imphal, capital of Manipur state near the Burmese border.

All Indians

It was only early on Saturday that the first teams arrived at the crash site about 45 km (30 miles) from Imphal and they worked through the night recovering bodies, the officials said.

All 63 passengers and six crew members aboard the plane, on a flight from Calcutta, were Indian, airline officials said.

Among the dead was the Manipur head of the Congress party, who is in power in New Delhi.

The Boeing went down as it came in to land at Imphal, a city of some 130,000 people in one of the world's rainiest regions.

The body of a Croatian journalist, who had been seized by Serbian nationalist earlier this month, was found in Delhi, 120 kilometres north-west of Zaire, he said.

The killers poured petrol over the body of reporter Sigitas. Panic and set it alight, the radio said.

Panic is the third journalist to have been killed since fighting broke out in Croatia, following the deaths of German reporter Egon Scholten and Croatian cameraman Gordana Zec.

Cannibal is recaptured

MOSCOW - A man who escaped from a psychiatric hospital two years ago later killing and eating seven women has been captured in the Central Asian Republic of Uzbekistan, a newspaper reported yesterday.

Nikolai Dzhumagaliev was sent to the Tashkent Psychiatric Hospital in 1980 after being found guilty of murder and cannibalism, the weekly newspaper "Kavkaz" reported, quoting the independent news agency Interfax.

While being transported from Tashkent to an airport in another city in 1989, he fled from two escorting medical personnel, the Interfax report said.

Dzhumagaliev was apprehended and arrested in the city of Fergana in eastern Uzbekistan, according to a report put out by local police, Interfax said. - AP

The mail is filled with small restaurants and shops.

The bodies remained in the shopping centre for hours after the assault at the corner's office and police investigators sought to piece together the sequence of events.

The incident was the worst mass slaying in Australia since December 1987, when Frank Vukovic shot dead eight people in a downtown Melbourne building, and plunged to his death from the 11th floor. - AP



POTSDAM - The remains of King Frederick the Great of Prussia and his father Frederick Wilhelm I being brought to Potsdam yesterday for reburial at Sanssouci. - Reuter Wirephoto See report on Page 2

Seven killed as fighting flares anew in Croatia

ZAGREB - Fierce fighting between Serbs and Croats in the breakaway Yugoslav republic of Croatia yesterday left at least seven people dead, while the body of a missing journalist was found, Croatian Radio said.

Two Croatian policemen were killed and at least 10 people were injured in clashes near the town of Okucani, about 100 kilometres southeast of Zagreb, in Croatia's Slavonia region.

Fighting there eased Friday night but resumed the next day, forcing authorities to close the Belgrade-Zagreb highway and railway.

Croatian Radio said federal Yugoslav Army delivered ammunition to Serbian militiamen in the Okucani area and air force jets flew over the fighting area. The Belgrade-based daily "Veceenje Novosti" described the clashes as "the battle for Okucani".

Four civilians were apparently killed by crossfire in Petrij, 30 kilometres southwest of Zagreb, Croatian Radio said.

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WESTERN HOSTAGES IN LEBANON Captors silent despite UN bid to end saga

BEIRUT - Lebanese kidnappers maintained their silence yesterday despite a week of United Nations-led efforts to arrange an exchange of Western hostages and missing Israeli soldiers for hundreds of Arab prisoners.

The kidnappers' last statement was an announcement of their release of American Edward Tracy last Sunday as British John McCarthy, freed three days earlier, handed over a letter from his captors to UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

Shiite Muslim sources said the Lebanese hostage-holders and Tehran were weighing their responses to the UN initiative and Israel's demand for word on the fate of its missing servicemen before any Arab prisoners could be freed.

In an unprecedented request for help, the Islamic Jihad (Holy War) letter asked Perez de Cuellar to arrange a swap of the hostages for the nearly 400 Lebanese and Palestinian captives from Lebanon by the Jewish state.

Israel sent emissaries to meet the UN chief in Geneva but said any deal must include its seven soldiers and airmen missing in Lebanon, or their remains if they had died. It ruled out making any possible gestures, including the release of some of Arab prisoners, before receiving evidence of their fate.

Those holding the Israelis or their remains know Israel will pay for the information, a pro-Israeli political source said. "They are being very discreet. They want to see some kind of return before giving out the information."

The source said such information might be made available soon through diplomatic channels or by a statement, photograph or videotape delivered to the media. "It all depends on the assurances the captors receive," the source said.

Jihad leader

Imad Moughanyeh, a founder of Islamic Jihad who masterminded the kidnapping of Westerners, returned to Beirut from Iran just before McCarthy's release and helped write the letter to Perez de Cuellar, militant and security sources reported.

Imad and his associates are now following up the various requests to their move, one source said. "They will soon come up with something indicating how they think things are going."

Perez de Cuellar, starting a holiday in Portugal, said on Friday he hoped the hostage problem could be solved within two weeks after behind-the-scenes negotiations.

"All sides are interested in a settlement. I am referring to the Israelis... the captors... the Iranian Government and to all other Governments who are trying to help," he told reporters.

At least nine Western hostages are believed held by Moughanyeh and his associates. They are five Americans, two Britons and two Germans. The longest-held Americans Terry Anderson and Thomas Sutherland, were kidnapped in 1985.

Italian Alberto Melinari was said by a senior security source to have been killed after his abduction in September 1985.

In Germany, Iranian Ambassador Seyyed Hossein Mousavian said the German hostages could be freed as part of an international exchange even if they failed to release two jailed Lebanese brothers whose family is believed to hold them.

Mousavian gave no explanation why he had changed his earlier position that German aid workers Heinrich Struening and Thomas Kemper would be freed only if Germany released Mohammad Ali Hamadi and his brother Abbas. Mohammad Ali Hamadi is serving a life sentence for murder and arson and Abbas 13 years for his role in the kidnapping of two German business. - Reuter

Kashmir paralysed

SRINAGAR - Workers in the embattled Kashmir Valley stayed home for the second day yesterday in a strike called by Muslim rebels to protest the killing of at least 27 civilians by paramilitary troops.

The strike crippled normal life in the northern region where Muslim militants have been fighting for independence from India.

Shops, Government offices and schools were closed throughout the valley, according to residents contacted by telephone.

Buses, trucks and other public transport remained off the road. Authorities imposed a curfew in the town of Sopore where officials said 17 criminals were killed last Thursday in a cross-fire between rebels and paramilitary troops. - AP

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Bishara in Qatar for discussions on Summit

DOHA - Abdullah Yaquob Bishara, Secretary-General of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), met in Doha yesterday with Qatari Interior Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa Al-Thani to discuss preparations for a GCC summit conference scheduled in Kuwait in December.

Bishara also reviewed with the Qatari Minister cooperation among GCC states - Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates - in the post-Gulf war era, reports said.

Bishara told the Qatari News Agency that the GCC Foreign Ministers are scheduled to meet in the Saudi capital of Riyadh on September 14 to discuss, among other things, relations between GCC states and the international community during the covering of the United Nations General Assembly in New York next month.

The GCC was set up in 1981, one year after the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war, to coordinate economic and defence policies of the six states. At their forthcoming summit on December 23, GCC leaders are expected to approve a formula for postwar security arrangements in the Gulf. - DPA

Albanians deported

ROME - Hundreds of Albanian asylum-seekers were rounded up before dawn yesterday by police and were being flown back to their impoverished homeland, news reports said. The roundup came about 10 days after many of them had sailed illegally to Italy.

About 18,000 Albanians arrived in Italy earlier this month, the latest wave of immigrants hopefuls, this year. After a chilly welcome, most had agreed to return home, and went back in the past few days.

But about 1,000 of them refused to go and only three days earlier, Interior Minister Vincenzo Scotti had said they could stay in Italy temporarily while their cases were examined to see if they qualified for political asylum. Many of them were moved from the Adriatic port of Bari to other cities.

In the Milan area, about 500 Albanians were hustled out of hotels at about 5 a.m. and put aboard Air Force C-130 planes for the flight across the Adriatic Sea, the Italian state television RAI reported. - AP

Cable for HM

MUSCAT - His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said received a cable of thanks and appreciation from King Hussein of Jordan in reply to His Majesty's cable of congratulations on the occasion of the accession of King Hussein. - GNA

Gunman runs amok in Sydney shopping plaza

SYDNEY - A masked man with an automatic rifle and a machete went berserk in a crowded shopping centre yesterday shooting or hacking at least seven people to death before he killed himself, police said.

At least eight more people were wounded by gunfire when the man began firing a Soviet-designed AK-47 in the Southfield Shopping Plaza, which was filled with afternoon shoppers, police said.

At least four of the wounded were in critical condition, police were quoted as saying.

"There doesn't appear to be any rhyme or reason for it," local police chief Doug Kelly said when asked about a possible motive. "It was a horrendous killing."

He said it was unclear whether the 33-year-old gunman, who was

not immediately identified, knew any of his victims.

Police said the man used a machine to stab one woman to death in a coffee shop in the enclosed mall, west of downtown Sydney.

The mall was packed with shoppers as the attack began at 3:30 p.m. (0530 GMT), a half-hour before most shops close.

Stocking cap

The gunman, who wore a stocking cap, then used a high-powered rifle to shoot four more people in the coffee shop and another in the mall before going to an upper-level parking garage where he fired more shots toward the ground level.

He fired a number of indiscriminate shots at the people below, Kelly said.

"He used the machine on one of the victims. It looked like a young

girl. It's a terrible scene in there... terrible," Kelly said.

"There was a Chinese man laying on the ground with a bullet in his stomach," said Constable George Kothalia.

Blood was everywhere. People were running frantically around. It was total chaos."

Kelly said the dead included five women and three men, including the assailant.

One shopper told Australian Associated Press she was having lunch across the mall from the coffee shop at the time of the attack.

"It sounded like people were arguing, very loud," she said. "So I stuck head out and I saw these people looking all of a sudden... they were jumping over a railing."

"Witnesses described a scene of carnage and confusion. "There were bodies everywhere," said one unidentified television interviewer by the national television network. All of a sudden I

hear people scream and the bang. I grabbed my two sons and my mother-in-law," said the witness, who was not identified by the news agency.

"Panic-stricken shoppers fled as the shooting began. One woman shopping in a discount grocery store said she thought the gunman was coming straight for her."

Carnage

"I grabbed a lady's baby and we jumped over the railing," said Carolyn Healey, 38. "We were running through here but we could still hear the shooting as if he was coming after us."

Witnesses described a scene of carnage and confusion. "There were bodies everywhere," said one unidentified television interviewer by the national television network. All of a sudden I

Said another: "He was running past, shooting at anyone he could see."

Earlier, a police spokesman had said the gunman began shooting from the upper level of a parking garage, but said the confusion had made it difficult initially to piece together events.

The mall is filled with small restaurants and shops.

The bodies remained in the shopping centre for hours after the assault at the corner's office and police investigators sought to piece together the sequence of events.

The incident was the worst mass slaying in Australia since December 1987, when Frank Vukovic shot dead eight people in a downtown Melbourne building, and plunged to his death from the 11th floor. - AP

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The strike crippled normal life in the northern region where Muslim militants have been fighting for independence from India.

Shops, Government offices and schools were closed throughout the valley, according to residents contacted by telephone.

Buses, trucks and other public transport remained off the road. Authorities imposed a curfew in the town of Sopore where officials said 17 criminals were killed last Thursday in a cross-fire between rebels and paramilitary troops. - AP

Tributes paid to Zia

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, paid tribute yesterday to his former mentor Gen. Mohammad Zia ul-Haq, the last military dictator to rule this Islamic nation.

Thousands of Pakistanis waving brightly-colored posters of Zia gathered at the huge Faisal Mosque to offer prayers for the fallen dictator on the third anniversary of his death.

Speaking from a platform near Zia's colorfully decorated grave, Sharif described the former dictator as "a soldier of Islam."

Zia died on August 17, 1988, when his plane spun out of control and smashed into a desolate forest in Pakistan's populous Punjab province.

The cause of the crash is still not known although a technical report said it was sabotage. About a month ago, Sharif launched a criminal investigation into Zia's death.

No one ever claimed responsibility for the plane crash that killed all 31 people aboard, including several top Pakistani generals and the U.S. Ambassador Arnold L. Raphael.

KARACHI - Pakistan police said yesterday they had smashed an eight-strong Karachi gang involved in kidnapping a dozen people and stealing 200 cars and motorcycles.

A spokesman said the gang belonged to the clandestine Al-Zulfikar group which authorities say is led from exile in Syria by Mortaza Bhutto, brother of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Officials have often blamed Al-Zulfikar for sabotage. - AP/Reuter





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South Al Sharqiyah, Muscat see maximum incidents of drowning

Those between the ages of seven and 30 are among the most commonly involved in drowning cases

Times News Service

MUSCAT: South Sharqiyah and Muscat governorates reported the highest numbers of drowning accidents, with two taking place in each of the governorates during the first six months of 2021.

Coast Guard police added that Dhofar and North Batinah reported one drowning each, while there were no accidents seen in Musandam, Al Wusta, and South Al Batinah. Rescue teams have dealt with the drowning incidents as professionally and accurately as possible, thanks to which they were able to save a number of people. Those between the ages of seven and 30 are among those most commonly involved in drowning cases.

“To avoid and reduce such accidents, beachgoers must have the necessary safety equipment while visiting the beach,” advised the Coast Guard Police Command. “Please also avoid swimming near strong currents or prohibited areas. Stay away from deep water, ensure that children are monitored while they are swimming, and avoid the risk of swimming for long distances without adequate physical fitness.”

NOTE OF CAUTION: The most common areas where drownings occur are beaches, wadis, irrigation canals, dams, pools of water, wells, and open water tanks.

“Furthermore, avoid swimming after sunset due to the lack of visibility and the difficulty of tracing missing persons after dark,” added the ROP, as reported by Oman News Agency (ONA).

High risk

Lack of awareness is the number one cause behind drowning accidents on the beach and by the seashore.

When beachgoers swim in dangerous places, and during unsuitable weather that leads to high waves, they increase the risk of drowning.

Swimming in areas of strong backlash is also one of the main causes of drowning, as these are caused by flow of water from the shallow areas of the sea, to the shore.

These waves are about 10 metres long, three metres wide and can reach speeds of up to 9 km/hr.

People might be excessively confident of swimming for long distances without taking into account the limits of their energy and fitness, making them vulnerable to such accidents.

With the Khareef season in Salalah currently underway, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority has asked people to not swim in wadis, pools of water, and the sea.

“Do not swim along the beaches due to the turbulence of the sea and the associated currents,” said the CDAA in its Safety in the Khareef advisory. “Do not swim in the water springs.”

“Drowning accidents are considered very painful and frequent, and normally take place in areas in the wadis and beaches where people try to take comfort from hot weather and enjoy the beauty of nature,” added the CDAA in a statement.

“The victims are normally people who do not know how to swim, as well as small children.”

Safety tips

Safety measures that can be taken to minimise drowning including swimming in designated areas, providing safety rings and jackets to swimmers, not filling swimming pools up to capacity, and ensuring your children have exited the pool when you leave the area.

Pools must also be fitted with fixed metal ladders as well as safety handles throughout. It is also important that a person who knows how to swim watches the children while they are in the water.

The most common areas where drowning occur are beaches, wadis (particularly during flash floods), irrigation canals, dams, pools of water, wells, and open water tanks.

M-95 grade petrol production rises by 26% in Oman

MUSCAT: The Sultanate recorded a rise in the production of super grade petrol (M-95) by 26 per cent to reach 7,327,300 barrels at the end of June 2021 compared to 5,793,700 barrels at the end of June 2020, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The sales of M-95 grade petrol reached 6,287,500 barrels compared to 5,234,700 barrels in the same period of the previous year, comprising a rise by 20 per cent, while the exports reached 1,422,200 barrels compared to 370,100 barrels, constituting a surge by 284 per cent.

The output of standard grade petrol (M-91) went up by 18 per cent to reach 6,013,600 barrels at June 2021 compared to 5,090,100 barrels in June 2020. The sales of M-91 grade petrol stood at 4,020,300 barrels compared to 3,859,600 barrels in the same period of the previous year, comprising an increase by 4 per cent, while the exports reached 2,367,400 barrels compared to 2,208,300 barrels in June 2020, comprising a rise by 7 per cent.

Gas oil (diesel) output increased by 15 per cent to 18,013,600 barrels at the end of June 2021 compared to 15,711,700 barrels at the end of June 2020. Sales of diesel declined by 1 per cent to reach 6,654,200 barrels compared to 6,727,800 barrels sold at the end of June 2020. Meanwhile, exports of diesel saw a rise by 26 per cent to stand at 11,350,800 barrels compared to 9,024,200 barrels.

Aviation fuel oil production went down by 30 per cent to reach 3,121,900 barrels in June 2021 compared to 4,454,900 barrels in June 2020. Sales of aviation fuel oil also fell by 46 per cent to reach 638,700 barrels compared to 1,190,200 barrels in the same period of the previous year, while exports stood at 2,458,300 barrels compared to 3,286,900 barrels in June 2020, comprising a drop by 25 per cent.

Production of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) went up by 27 per cent to reach 3,579,900 barrels in June 2021 compared to 2,827,600 barrels in the same period of the previous year. Sales of LPG stood at 3,550,000 barrels compared to 1,441,000 barrels, constituting a surge by 146 per cent, while exports fell by 79 per cent to reach 362.7 thousand barrels compared to 1,769,300 barrels in June 2020.

As far as petrochemicals are concerned, production of benzene saw an increase by 10 per cent to reach 103.3 metric tonnes (MT) at the end of June 2021 compared to 105.1 MT in June 2020. The production of Paraxylene reached 280.6 MT at the end of June 2021 and exports reached 284.2 MT. Moreover, the production of polypropylene declined by 9 per cent to reach 92,000 MT. Sales of polypropylene also went down by 2 per cent to reach 18.5 MT and exports fell by 20 per cent to stand at 63.5 MT in the same period of the previous year. -ONA

Trending

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

MOST READ ON FACEBOOK

32,640 REACH

The US State Department eased its travel advisories for India, taking it to its second-lowest level, as the country reportedly has a "moderate level of COVID-19"



A story on US eases travel advisory for India reached 32,640 people and had 2,848 engagements on Facebook.

MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK

5,100 VIEWS



MIDDAY UPDATE

The Midday update video had 5,100 views and reached 15,700 people on Facebook.

MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM

2,266 VIEWS



Over 2.15 million vaccinated across Oman

The Morning Minute video on vaccination in Oman had 2,266 views and 138 likes on Instagram.

CRICKET

< FROM A1

Super 12 stage to start on October 23

The first match of the Super 12 takes place between Australia and South Africa on 23 October at 2pm in Abu Dhabi, with England and the West Indies playing against each other at 6pm that evening at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

India and Pakistan face off against each other at 6pm at the same venue a day later.

The final takes place at 6pm on Sunday, 14 November, in Dubai.

Pushed forward

The ICC Twenty20 Cricket World Cup was set to take place last year during approximately the same time period in Australia, but was pushed forward by a year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

It was then given to India to host, but owing to the epidemiological situation there, the tournament had to be moved to the Middle East, although the Board for Control of Cricket in India, the country's cricket governing body, remain the hosts.

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OMR6bn plan to develop tourism destinations in Dhofar: Ministry

Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, unveiled the 'Comprehensive Tourism Development Plan' on Tuesday



SALALAH: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is planning to develop tourism destinations in Dhofar and is bracing to launch an investment management to the tune of OMR6 billion.

Unveiling the 'Comprehensive Tourism Development Plan' to be undertaken, Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, said on Tuesday that a number of workshops will be organised shortly to elaborate the details of the plan.

The minister further noted that the workshops cover seven main

axes, including the challenges, enablers and proposed solutions to handle issues relevant to all tourism-related sectors.

The Sultanate has embarked on implementing the greatest portion of a recovery plan in the aftermath of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic waves that impacted the tourism sector.

The plan includes the implementation of safety procedures, health protocols and directives issued by the departments concerned to overcome the crisis and bring the tourism sector back to its previous levels as soon as possible.

The minister made the statement during his meeting with tourism developers and the business community in the Governorate of Dhofar.

He affirmed the Ministry's resolve to press ahead with nationalising jobs in the tourism sector, an objective that falls within the shared national responsibility.

The minister laid emphasis on the importance of training which, he said, "is accorded attention by the departments concerned with a view to furnishing grounds for employment of citizens in this vital sector."

The plan envisages building capacities that are capable of dealing with the next stage, albeit by tackling requirements and upgrading performance when taking decisions, the minister observed.

The minister also spoke about winter tourism in Dhofar Governorate.

He said that plans have been approved to finance this type of tourism and that agreements to this effect will be concluded shortly with travel and tourism operators to ensure opening direct and regular airline routes between Dhofar Governorate and



other parts of the world. This, he explained, will contribute to sustaining tourism activity throughout the year in Dhofar.

Speaking about the investment programme, currently being drafted in coordination with Oman Vision 2040 follow-up office, the minister said that this programme has been accorded massive financial investments through initiatives of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Oman Investment Authority and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The minister hoped that for-

eign investments would enter the scene and enhance national investments and investments from local partners. In reply to a query about 'integrated tourist services' in Dhofar, the minister said that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is following up services in the governorate in collaboration with other departments concerned.

In particular, he urged petrol filling station operators to rise to the level of their responsibilities and provide consistent and high quality public services—to support the tourism sector, society and the national economy at large. —ONA

SUPPORTING NATIONAL PROJECTS



Royal Decree ratifying establishment of GCC Accreditation Centre praised



MUSCAT: Eng. Ahmed Maati Al Mutairi, Director-General of the GCC Accreditation Centre (GAC), has lauded the issuance of Royal Decree No. 55/2021 ratifying the establishment of the GAC.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Eng. Ahmed Maati stressed the GAC's mandate to activate accreditation activity in the Sultanate in coordination with the departments concerned.

Oman Vision 2040

The aim, he said, is to develop the

infrastructure of quality building and contribute to the realisation of Oman Vision 2040.

Other objectives

Other objectives of the GAC include: Enhancing the role of the private sector in product safety guarantee for some services, facilitating commercial exchange among GCC states, ameliorating the quality of national products to facilitate their access to global markets, empowering human resources in key sectors and lend-

ing support to small and medium enterprises, according to Eng. Ahmed Maati.

He pointed out that GCC institutions' rating can be improved in global indices of competition, market fairness and foreign investment with the collaboration of efforts of the ministries and national authorities.

Eng. Ahmed Maati affirmed that the GAC would spare no effort in supporting national projects and initiatives in Oman through its presence within the Sultanate. —ONA

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

More than 600 job aspirants take exams in South Al Sharqiyah

SUR: Within the context of directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik to provide employment for jobseekers and, pursuant to the Government's efforts in this respect, the Ministry of Labour on Tuesday conducted interviews and tests for applicants to jobs in government units in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah.

More than 600 citizens from the governorate appeared for the interviews and tests—held at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Sur branch), to fill 35 vacancies at units belonging

to four government departments: The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and the Environment Authority.

Commenting on this, Salim Khalfan Al Wahaibi, Head of Tests and Interviews Management Team, Ministry of Labour, said that the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate is the last station for the Job Announcement No. 5/2021 to fill 1,003 vacancies. As many as 16,318 applied for the job vacancies. Within 25 working days, applicants from all governorates of the Sultanate were assessed. —ONA



ANNUAL HEALTH REPORT 2020

<FROM A1> Health sector met challenges with efficiency and competency

The decrease in the use of health services in 2020 is attributed mainly to the effect of COVID-19 pandemic. The number of outpatient clinics visits to MOH institutions in 2020 dropped to 10.5 million visits compared to about 15.7 million visits in 2019.

The average number of visits per Omani person to outpatient clinics reached 3.7 visits in 2020, which led to a decrease in the total number of discharged patients from MOH's health institutions to reach about 257,000 in 2020, with an average period of hospitalisation of 3.7 days of stay and 47.8 per cent of bed occupancy rate.

The health system in the Sultanate, along with all state apparatus, has confronted this challenge with efficiency and competency, relying on the strong infrastructure that was built over the years and on the competencies of its human resources for health, implementing simultaneously all international standards and policies set for the



fight against this pandemic, the report said.

The MOH, represented by the Information & Statistics Department of the Directorate General of Planning and Studies, issued the Annual Health Report 2020.

The report highlights the main services provided by the health sector in 2020 along with health and vital indicators and the sustainable development goals. The reports contains as well a brief for the most important MOH studies and researches over the past years.

The annual health report 2020 started with an introduction

about the demographic and geographic features of the Sultanate in addition to the administrative structure and organisation of the Ministry.

Most of the health indicators are revealed in this report in a time series of the past years.

The report shows description and development of the indicators related to various health fields of the Ninth Five-Year Plan and the achievements that have been made within the five years of the plan, in addition to an overview of the Tenth Five-Year Plan, its objectives, and related indicators.

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RAMPS UP PRESSURE

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam warns law society to stay out of politics

HONG KONG: Authorities in Hong Kong continue to ramp up pressure on civil society and professional organisations.

On Tuesday, Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam said that ties would be severed if a professional legal association got involved in politics. Speaking at a news conference Lam said: "If the Law Society's professionalism is trumped by politics, the government will consider cutting ties with it."

Hong Kong's Law Society is a professional association for solicitors in the city. It performs a regulatory role and monitors the conduct of those in the legal profession.

Why the warning?

The Hong Kong Law Society has over 12,000 members. It is able to issue attorneys with certificates and is able to investigate instances of malpractice, along with its im-



portant oversight role.

In a week's time the legal body will hold elections for five of its 20 council members.

There appears to be concern from Hong Kong's leadership that potential candidates with liberal and pro-democracy views may get elected.

In April, another of the city's legal organizations, the Bar Asso-

ciation, was warned by Lam. The territory's leader said it would intervene after the association's chair, Paul Harris, spoke out about prison sentences given to pro-democracy politicians.

Civic groups warned against crossing 'red line'

Lam also has civic organizations in her crosshairs. She said that

groups who disregard national security should be disbanded.

"In the past we have seen organizations and individuals crossing these red lines. In my opinion, the only choice is at this time is disbandment," Lam said. "So it's nothing to do with exercising your right or your freedom."

The comments were made after the Civil Human Rights Front, a pro-democracy group responsible for organizing some of the city's largest protests, was forced to close due to political pressure. The group said it could no longer operate following the imprisonment of its leader, Figo Chan, along with a decline in membership.

Dozens of civil society groups have shut down with the increased pressure from government.

Authorities have been conducting a crackdown on dissent in the city after months of major anti-government protests in 2019. **mw**



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DEVASTATING FLOODS

Death toll in Turkey floods climbs to 70

ISTANBUL: The death toll in northern Turkey has risen to 70 in the wake of this month's devastating floods, the country's disaster management authority (AFAD) announced on Monday.

Torrential rains battered the country's northwestern Black Sea provinces on August 4, causing flash floods that demolished homes and bridges, swept away

cars, and blocked roads.

Officials confirmed that rescuers recovered more bodies over the weekend. AFAD, said at least 60 people were killed in the province of Kastamonu, nine more in Sinop and one in Bartin. The death toll may rise further still as emergency crews said 47 people were still missing in Kastamonu and Sinop on Monday. **mw**

EVACUATION

Greece battles new blazes as firefighters make progress in Spain



TWO BLAZES IN GREECE: While winds had dropped off in Spain, contrary was the case in Greece, where strong winds were fanning two wildfires at opposite ends of the country.

ATHENS: Firefighters in Spain started to get the upper hand in a blaze afflicting the centre of the country on Monday while Greece struggled to fight off two blazes that started up in opposite sides of the country.

Winds dropped and temperatures fell on Monday in the Castilla y Leon region of Spain, allowing forestry employees to stop the spread of a fire that had forced the evacuation of around 1,000 people.

How are they doing in Spain?

About 1,000 firefighters, including military teams, have been fighting the Spanish fire in Navacruz, which is part of the Avila province of Castilla y Leon, located 120 kilometres (75 miles) west of capital city Madrid.

An exploding car ignited the fire on Saturday, and, fueled by winds of 70 kilometres per hour (55 miles per hour), forced emer-

gency services to evacuate eight villages.

The accident has been the cause of 12,000 hectares (30,000 acres) of scorched land after record-breaking temperatures of 47.4 degrees Celsius (117 F) on Saturday.

With the help of 15 water-dropping aircraft, the wildfire was brought under "a certain control," said Juan Carlos Saurez-Quinones, environmental minister of the Castilla y Leon regional government. He said that, if the cooler, less blustery conditions continued, firefighters could finally stabilize the blaze on Monday.

But State Meteorological Agency (AEMET) spokesman Ruben del Campo warned that it was not over yet. "After several days of heatwave, the vegetation has dried up more," said del Campo.

What about Greece?

While winds had dropped off in Spain, the contrary was the case in

Greece, where strong winds were fanning two wildfires at opposite ends of the country.

Police are investigating reports an arsonist started the first blaze in Keratea by setting fire to a dumpster in southeast of Athens, which was now headed toward a national park in the Sounion region.

Before evacuating their homes, residents in the area watered down their homes as the professionals started to arrive.

Volunteers used hoses and branches to beat off the flames while 91 firefighters and six planes and six helicopters dumped water on the growing blaze.

Another 60 firefighters supported by eight water-dropping planes and five helicopters dealt with a fire in the Vilia area to the northwest of the country.

Three villages were on evacuation alert as strong winds started to make extinguishing the flames difficult. **mw**

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WORLD

Taliban warned of swift response if US personnel attacked, says Biden

Biden said he authorised 6,000 US troops to deploy to Afghanistan for the purpose of assisting in the departure of US and allied civilian personnel

WASHINGTON: It has been made clear to Taliban that if they attack US personnel or disrupt the process of evacuation of American citizens still in Afghanistan, the response will be swift and forceful, US President Joe Biden said on Monday. Addressing the nation a day after Taliban takeover of Kabul, Biden said US military mission will be short and focused on “getting our people and our allies to safety as quickly as possible.”

“As we carry out this departure, we have made it clear to the Taliban: If they attack our personnel or disrupt our operation, the US presence will be swift and the response will be swift and forceful. We will defend our people with devastating force if necessary. Our current military mission will be short in time, limited in scope, and focused in its objectives: Get our people and our allies to safety as quickly as possible,” he said.

“And once we have completed this mission, we will conclude our military withdrawal. We will end America’s longest war after 20 long years of bloodshed,” he added.

Biden said he is the President and the buck stops with him. He staunchly defended his decision to withdraw troops.

“I will not mislead the American



BIDEN RESPONDS: Addressing the nation a day after Taliban takeover of Kabul, Biden said US military mission will be short and focused on getting Americans out.

people by claiming that just a little more time in Afghanistan will make all the difference. Nor will I shrink from my share of responsibility for where we are today and how we must move forward from here. I am President of the United States of America, and the buck stops with me,” he said.

Biden said he authorised 6,000 US troops to deploy to Afghanistan for the purpose of assisting in the departure of US and allied civilian personnel from Afghanistan, “and to evacuate our Afghan allies and vulnerable Afghans to safety outside of Afghanistan”.

He said the US has shut down its embassy and is taking over air traffic control.

“Our troops are working to secure the airfield and to ensure continued operation of both the civilian and military flights. We’re taking over air traffic control. We have safely shut down our embassy and transferred our diplomats. Our diplomatic presence is

now consolidated at the airport as well. Over the coming days, we intend to transport out thousands of American citizens who have been living and working in Afghanistan. We’ll also continue to support the safe departure of civilian personnel -- the civilian personnel of our Allies who are still serving in Afghanistan.

“Operation Allies Refugee [Refugee], which I announced back in July, has already moved 2,000 Afghans who are eligible for Special Immigration Visas and their families to the United States. In the coming days, the U.S. military will provide assistance to move more SIV-eligible Afghans and their families out of Afghanistan,” he said.

Biden said there are concerns about why the US did not begin evacuating Afghans -- civilians sooner.

“Part of the answer is some of the Afghans did not want to leave earlier -- still hopeful for their country. And part of it was because

the Afghan government and its supporters discouraged us from organizing a mass exodus to avoid triggering, as they said, “a crisis of confidence.”

“American troops are performing this mission as professionally and as effectively as they always do, but it is not without risks. The events we’re seeing now are sadly proof that no amount of military force would ever deliver a stable, united, and secure Afghanistan -- as known in history as the “graveyard of empires.”

He said what is happening now could just as easily have happened 5 years ago or 15 years in the future.

“We have to be honest: Our mission in Afghanistan has taken many missteps -- made many missteps over the past two decades. I’m now the fourth American President to preside over war in Afghanistan -- two Democrats and two Republicans. I will not pass this responsibly on -- responsibility on to a fifth President.” **ANI**

Taliban announces ‘general amnesty’ for govt officials in Afghanistan

KABUL: The Taliban on Tuesday announced a “general amnesty” for all Afghan government officials and urged them to return to work, including women corresponding with Sharia law.

The comments by Enamullah Samangani, a member of the Taliban’s cultural commission, represent the first comments on governance in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of the country on Sunday, reported France24. “You should restart your routine life with full confidence,” Samangani said in announcing the amnesty.

Women were also allowed to join the government in accordance with Sharia law, he said, “They should be in the government structure according to Shariah law.”

Afghanistan’s leading TV station, Tolo News, on Tuesday broadcast a news programme with a female anchor interviewing a member of the Taliban’s media team.

“The structure of government is not fully clear, but based on ex-

perience, there should be a fully Islamic leadership and all sides should join,” he added.

Samangani remained vague on other details, however, implying people already knew the rules of Islamic law the Taliban expected them to follow, reported France24.

Taliban have been vague in pronouncements on how they would rule Afghanistan, apart from saying it would be in accordance with Islamic “principles”.

Older generations remember the ultraconservative Islamic regime that saw regular stoning, amputations and public executions during Taliban rule before the US-led invasion that followed the September 11, 2001, terror attacks.

Under the Taliban, which ruled in accordance with a harsh interpretation of Islamic law, women were largely confined to their homes. The insurgents have sought to project greater moderation in recent years, but many Afghans remain skeptical, reported France24. **ANI**



COVID CASES

India reports 25,166 new COVID-19 cases, lowest in 154 days



NEW DELHI: India reported 25,166 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, the lowest single-day rise in 154 days, informed the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Tuesday.

India’s cumulative tally has reached 32,250,679, and the number of active cases has declined to 369,846, the lowest in 146 days. The active cases constitute 1.15 per cent of total cases, which is the lowest since March 2020.

Meanwhile, the daily positivity rate was recorded at 1.61 per cent. It has been less than 3 per cent for the 22nd consecutive day, the ministry said, adding that the weekly positivity rate has also declined to 1.98 per cent.

According to the health ministry, 31,448,754 people have recovered from the disease so far, out of which 36,830 recovered in the

last 24 hours.

The country’s reported highest ever recoveries since March 2020 and it currently stood at 97.51 per cent.

The COVID-19 death toll climbed to 432,079 with 437 new deaths. The case fatality rate is at 1.34 per cent.

As per the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), a total of 49,66,29,524 samples were tested up to August 15 of which 1,563,985 were tested on August 16.

The health ministry further said that more than 88.13 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the last 24 hours, which is the highest ever vaccination achieved in a single day. 55,47,30,609 COVID vaccine doses have been administered so far. **ANI**

BOOSTER DOSE

Pfizer, BioNTech submit initial data to US FDA to support COVID-19 booster dose

NEW YORK: Pfizer and BioNTech announced that they have submitted Phase 1 data to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to support the evaluation of a third, or booster dose of the companies’ COVID-19 vaccine for future licensure.

In a statement on August 16, Pfizer said that the data also will be submitted to the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and other regulatory authorities in the coming weeks. “Vaccination is our most effective means of preventing COVID-19 infection - especially severe disease and hospitalisation - and its profound impact on protecting lives is indisputable. Still, with the continuing threat of the Delta variant and possible emergence of other variants in the future, we must remain vigilant against this highly contagious virus,” Albert Bourla, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Pfizer said in the statement.

“The data we’ve seen to date suggests a third dose of our vaccine elicits antibody levels that significantly exceed those seen after the two-dose primary schedule. We are pleased to submit these data to the



FDA as we continue working together to address the evolving challenges of this pandemic,” he added.

Ugur Sahin, MD, CEO and Co-founder of BioNTech said: “We continuously strive to stay at least one step ahead of the virus. This is why we aim to expand access to our vaccine for people around the world and are working on various approaches as part of our comprehensive strategy to address the virus and its variants today as well as in the future.”

“This initial data indicate that we may preserve and even exceed the high levels of protection against the wild-type virus and relevant variants using a third dose of our vaccine. A booster vaccine

could help reduce infection and disease rates in people who have previously been vaccinated and better control the spread of virus variants during the coming season,” he added.

The statement further said that Pfizer and BioNTech have submitted Phase 1 data - part of their Phase 1/2/3 clinical trial program - evaluating the safety, tolerability, and immunogenicity of a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in US adult participants from the Phase 1 trial of the two-dose series.

Participants received a 30-ug booster dose of BNT162b2 8 to 9 months after receiving the second dose. Results from this participant group show that the third dose elic-

ited significantly higher neutralizing antibodies against the initial SARS-CoV-2 virus (wild-type) compared to the levels observed after the two-dose primary series, as well as against the Beta variant and the highly infectious Delta variant.

Phase 3 results evaluating the third dose are expected shortly and will be submitted to the FDA, the EMA and other regulatory authorities worldwide. In the US, Pfizer and BioNTech plan to seek licensure of the third dose via a supplemental Biologics License Application (BLA) in individuals 16 years of age and older, pending FDA approval of the primary BLA submitted in May 2021.

A third dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is not currently authorized for broad use in the US.

However, under the current amended Emergency Use Authorization, it has been authorized on August 12 for administration to individuals at least 12 years of age who have undergone solid organ transplantation, or who are diagnosed with conditions that are considered to have an equivalent level of immunocompromised. **ANI**

FIRST CASE OF EBOLA

Ivory Coast scrambles to vaccinate after Ebola case

YAMOUSSOUKRO: The Ivorian Health Ministry on Tuesday said priority groups would receive the Ebola vaccine, including health workers and the relatives and contacts of the victim.

An 18-year-old woman who arrived in the country last week from Guinea was identified as having Ivory Coast’s first case of Ebola since 1994.

Where did the case come from?

The single identified case was

recorded over the weekend in Abidjan, the country’s capital.

The woman arrived by bus from the city of Labe in Guinea last Wednesday and arrived in Abidjan on Wednesday. She was admitted to hospital with a fever, and is said to be in a stable condition.

The WHO said genetic sequencing of a virus sample would determine whether the case was linked to a recent outbreak in neighboring Guinea.

According to the WHO, 12 Ebola deaths have been recorded

in Guinea since February 14, although the country was declared free of the disease on June 19.

What is being done?

The Ivorian Health Ministry said it was hoping to vaccinate 2,000 people by Wednesday. Some 5,000 doses supplied by Guinea are available.

The ministry said it had identified some 70 people who had traveled on the same vehicles as the woman.

About 200 health workers,

many from the hospital where the woman was admitted, were being vaccinated.

“This is a situation that is under control,” Health Minister Pierre Dimba told reporters.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said it had identified one other possible case and nine contacts who were being monitored.

Outbreaks of the disease are combated by tracing and isolating the contacts of those who have been in contact with those who have tested positive. **AW**



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India to meet Pakistan in T20 World Cup match on October 24

The group will conclude on November 8, with India taking on the second-placed Round 1 qualifier from Group A

DUBAI: India and Pakistan will be locking horns on October 24 in a group-stage encounter of the upcoming T20 World Cup, the International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed on Tuesday.



T20 WORLD CUP: The top two teams in each group will proceed to the Super 12 stage of the tournament, beginning on October 23.

2021 in UAE and Oman will get underway from October 17, with the final to be played in Dubai on November 14.

Ireland, Netherlands, Sri Lanka, and Namibia - making up Group A - will be in action in Abu Dhabi the next day, with Round 1 matches running till October 22. The top two teams in each group will proceed to the Super 12 stage of the tournament, beginning on October 23.

The second round of the tournament - the Super12 stage - will get underway in Abu Dhabi on October 23, with the Group 1 contest between Australia and South Africa.

This will be followed up with an evening clash between England and West Indies in Dubai.

Old rivals England and Australia will lock horns in Dubai on Octo-

ber 30. The group will conclude on November 6 with matches between Australia and West Indies in Abu Dhabi, and England and South Africa in Sharjah.

Group 2 will commence with a heavyweight clash between India and Pakistan in Dubai on October 24. Pakistan then takes on New Zealand in Sharjah on October 26, in a tough start for the 2009 champions.

Afghanistan begin their campaign on October 25 at Sharjah, taking on the winners of Group B from the first round.

The group will conclude on November 8, with India taking on the second-placed Round 1 qualifier from Group A. The first semi-final will be held in Abu Dhabi on November 10. The second semi-final will be hosted by Dubai on November 11. Both semi-finals have reserve days. **ANI**

ENGLAND VS INDIA

Kohli and team
jumped on to
something that gave
them edge: Root

LONDON: England skipper Joe Root has denied using the short ball tactic a bit too much in the second innings, but admitted that India jumped on to something that emotionally gave them an edge.

England was in the box seat in the second innings after reducing India to 209/8, but the hosts lost the plot when Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami came to the crease. England used the short ball a bit too much, and the Indian duo played sensibly to form an 89-run stand for the ninth wicket. "Fair play to Virat Kohli and his team. They jumped on to something that emotionally gave them an edge. I think a lot falls on my shoulders as captain," he said. "Tactically I could have done things slightly differently." cricket.com.au quotes Root as saying.

"The Shami and Bumrah partnership was the pivotal moment of the game, without question and I don't think I dealt with that well enough tactically. It put us in a difficult position. Looking back I'd look at some of the field placements and the way that we bowled. We could have looked at maybe attacking the stumps a little bit more frequently and using the short ball as more of a surprise," he added.

India and England provided an intense spectacle on the fifth day as players from both sides engaged in verbal duels and in the end, it was Kohli's team wh



emerged triumphant in an engaging match. In the second innings, India was struggling at 209/8 and it was then that Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami got together to stitch an unbeaten 89-run stand for the ninth wicket. Shami and Bumrah remained unbeaten on 56 and 34.

"We have to give them some credit. They scored in unusual areas and made it hard to set conventional fields and (we) were trying to manage taking wickets but not letting the game get away from us. But I would have taken a little bit more time and probably brought more modes of dismissal into the game sooner," said Root.

"When the ball got softer, it didn't seem to move as much laterally as with the newer ball but we probably underestimated how useful challenging a lower-order player's defence can be. Credit to India but I don't think there is any hiding from the fact we need to get better," he added. **ANI**

CRICKET

Want to re-establish Pakistan's superiority in T20Is, says Babar Azam

DUBAI: Pakistan skipper Babar Azam wants to re-establish the team's "superiority" in the shortest format of the game by winning the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup.

Pakistan, the T20 World Cup champions in 2009, will open their campaign in the 2021 event against India at the Dubai International Stadium on October 24. "All the players are excited, motivated and enthusiastic, and view this tournament as an opportunity to showcase our prowess and re-establish our superiority in the shortest format of the game in conditions that suit us best," said Babar in an ICC release.

The Babar Azam-led side will also face New Zealand and Afghanistan in Group 2 of the Super 12s stage, along with two qualifiers from Round 1. They will play New Zealand at the same venue on October 27 and take on Afghanistan in Dubai on October 29.

Talking about the Pakistan campaign in the T20 World Cup 2021, Babar said: "The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 schedule announcement brings us one step forward in our preparations for this

much-awaited global tournament.”

"We will utilise the build-up period by playing in home series against New Zealand and England and will not only aim to fine-tune our final outlook but also win as many matches as possible so that we can carry that winning form and momentum to the United Arab Emirates," he added.

The Pakistan skipper remains "focused" on inspiring the Green Army with his performances in the T20 World Cup.

"From a personal point of view, this will be my first ICC Major Event as Pakistan captain. I tasted success in 2017 and suffered disappointment in 2019 when we missed out on a semi-final spot by a fraction of a point despite beating both the finalists in league matches," said Babar.

"I remain focused in inspiring my side with my performances so that we can become the first Pakistan side to win an ICC Major

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 in UAE and Oman will get underway from October 17, with the final to be played in Dubai on November 14. **ANI**



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 0.750 Sambar Mix (Approx. 1 kg) per pack	 0.290 Beetroot per kg	 0.175 Coconut Whole (India) per pc	 0.390 Carrot per kg	 0.340 Suran (Yam) per kg
 0.100 Pumpkin Red (Iran) per kg	 0.390 Orange Navel (South Africa) per kg	 0.875 Anar Red (India) per kg	 0.035 Banana Leaf (Oman) per pc	
 0.990 Double Horse Matta Rice 5 kgs	 0.325 Fair Banana Jaggery Chips 200 gms	 0.325 Fair Banana Chips Four Cut 200 gms	 0.440 Eastern Sambar Powder 165 gms	 0.430 Double Horse Rasam Powder 200 gms
 0.440 Eastern Pickle 400 gms Assorted per pc	 0.325 Fair Banana Chips Plain 200 gms	 0.790 Lulu Pure Cow Ghee 200 ml	 1.890 Nambisan's Pure Ghee 2 x 200 ml	 0.325 Shahi jaggery 500 gms
 0.480 Almaral Fresh Yoghurt Full Cream / Low Fat 1 kg Assorted per pc	 0.290 Royal Mark Rice Ada 200 gms	 0.390 Royal Mark Palada 200 gms	 0.990 Parachute Coconut Oil 1 Ltr	 1.590 Lulu Coconut Milk Powder 2 x 300 gms
 1.900 Palada Payasam per kg	 6.900 Cheffline Aluminium Pressure Cooker 5 Ltrs + Pressure Pan	 4.900 Cheffline Granite Frypan + Tawa (24 + 28 cms)		

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by October 2021 reaching \$68.53, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 41 cents from the price of Monday, which was at \$68.94. - OMA

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,002.34 points, down 0.22 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index up 0.13 per cent at 592.37 points. National Gas, up 3.62 per cent, was the top gainer while Sharqiyah Desalination, down 3.33 per cent, was the top loser.

FOS Energy carries out its first successful well test at Block 61

Fahud Oil Services and Energy (FOS Energy) will support the provision of well testing and cleanout services at Block 61 for the next five years, testing around 50 wells throughout the contract

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Following a major contract award in August 2020, Fahud Oil Services and Energy (FOS Energy) has successfully completed its first well test at Block 61 with zero flaring. The contract was previously held by a

large, international service provider. Its award to FOS Energy underlines BP's commitment to generating in-country value across the Sultanate.

Mohamed Najwani, BP VP wells commented, "Khazzan was the first field in Oman to introduce 'green completions' - a zero flaring concept. In 2020, we safely reduced over 148,000 tonnes of CO2e. By developing and upskilling FOS Energy in well testing and the green completions concept, sharing knowledge and expertise, we hope to support them in becoming globally competitive players in this field."

FOS Energy will support the provision of well testing and cleanout services at Block 61 for the next five years, testing around 50 wells throughout the contract.

Before work began, equipment suitability and crew competency was tested by modelling different well flow situations. Adopting a new equipment design, BP and FOS Energy worked together to decrease the time taken to test a well from 25 days to 20.

Once complete, wells are typically tested by flowing hydrocarbons which is then flared. In green

completions, the hydrocarbons are re-routed to the production facility and flaring is eliminated.

Green completions concept

Tariq Al Kasbi, CEO of Fahud Oil Services and Energy commented, "Throughout this contract, we have developed and upskilled our team to test wells using the green completions concept - this actively helps us support BP's journey towards becoming a net-zero company by 2050 or sooner."

"Working with BP helped us improve our systems, processes and standards which will enable us to grow and expand our services in a competitive international space."

BP is committed to supporting the sustainable development of Oman's economy and society through encouraging the development of Omani skills and capabilities; and generating employment and training opportunities.

In 2020, BP spent \$610 million with Omani registered companies - 90 per cent of its total spend - \$28.6 million with small and medium enterprises either through direct contract awards or through the third party contracted services.



EQUIPMENT SUITABILITY: Before work began, equipment suitability and crew competency were tested by modelling different well flow situations. - Supplied picture

LIMITED TIME OFFER



ahlibank offers personal and home loans at attractive interest rates

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Offering convenience and steadfast processing, ahlibank continues to stay committed to fulfilling customer needs, through its attractive packages of loans across various segments.

Under a limited time offer, ahlibank's personal loan of up to OMR200,000 can be availed at an average interest rate starting from 4.85 per cent per annum and a home loan of up to OMR 350,000, at an average interest rate starting from 4.83 per cent per annum. Aligned to industry best practices, the bank ensures speedy loan processing for its new and existing customers, providing them with a benchmark service experience.

With ahlibank's comprehensive loan programme, customers can fulfil their dreams and aspirations, as the bank enables them to expand their business, or buy a home, or give their children a better education, amongst many such needs. It also creates the possibility of enjoying a special holiday with loved ones and buying advanced technical devices for children without having to tolerate the load of paying large premiums.

On this offer, Muneer Al Balushi AGM - Head of retail distribution at ahlibank said, "We are keen to provide financial solutions tailored to the diverse banking needs of individuals in Oman, and we encourage our customers to maintain good levels of savings and financial stability for the same. At the same time, the bank's retail solutions are innovative and are structured to cater to their needs - be it for business, leisure, a better life or for an emergency. Our aim is to make them a part of and entrench them in an unmatched experience from start to finish. The

bank's flexibility and seamless processes to meet critical customer requirements is a remarkable achievement in the sector."

He added, "We understand that our customers need to plan properly for their future, especially under the current conditions and challenges. Through MyLoan and MyHome loans programme, customers will be able to balance between their daily commitments and providing for their necessary needs. This will ultimately lead to establishing a secure future for themselves and their family."

ahlibank's personal loan programme (MyLoan) helps customers get everything they need and more. The Bank guarantees them a hassle-free experience with convenient repayment options of up to 10 years at competitive interest rates.

Recognising the importance of helping people own their property, ahlibank aspires to make a person's dream home a reality with its MyHome loan plan. The bank offers a home loan programme of up to OMR 350,000, which is the most suitable for its customers' needs and includes many attractive features including comfortable monthly premiums.

ahlibank is eager to enhance the customers' satisfaction by providing them with a comprehensive range of banking services and using innovative solutions in its branch network across the Sultanate. Through all its banking products and services, the bank aims to achieve a better level of financial stability among its customers. As part of its dynamic and ambitious vision that enhances its position as a banking centre, the bank continues to make every effort to achieve the best-specialised banking solutions with a high level of efficiency and quality.

GREEN FINANCE MARKET

Times News Service

MUSCAT: HSBC Oman now offers green personal loans for its retail customers in the Sultanate, marking a significant milestone in the development of the country's green finance market.

Green personal loans offer an interest rate discount compared to regular personal loans and are applicable exclusively for the purchase of solar panels for homes and related installation expenses.

Abdul Qader Al Sumali, General Manager and Head of Wealth and Personal Banking at HSBC Oman, said, "We recognise the importance of individuals having access to competitively priced green finance. HSBC has set out an ambitious plan to unlock climate solutions that can

Green personal loans offer an interest rate discount compared to regular personal loans

support all of our customers in their energy transition and our green personal loans are designed to support the efforts of our customers to build a more sustainable future."

HSBC is committed to helping lead the transition to a global net-zero economy and expects to provide between \$750 billion and \$1 trillion in sustainable financing and investment by 2030 to support its clients in their transitions. Green

personal loans are part of that commitment. They also dovetail with the Oman government's ambitious goal of meeting 30 per cent of its electricity demand from renewable energy projects by 2030.

HSBC has stated its ambition to align financed emissions from its portfolio of customers to the Paris Agreement goal of net zero by 2050 or sooner. The bank aims to be net-zero in its own operations by 2030.

In January 2021, HSBC formed a dedicated Sustainable and Transition Finance Team in the Middle East to help institutions, corporates and individuals transition to a more sustainable economy. The team leverages deep technical knowledge of ESG opportunities, the challenges facing customers, and the evolving regulatory environment.



Abdul Qader Al Sumali

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MARKET

MSX index ends lower

National Gas, up 3.62 per cent, was the top gainer while Sharqiyah Desalination, down 3.33 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,002.34 points, down 0.22 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index up 0.13 per cent at 592.37 points. National Gas, up 3.62 per cent, was the top gainer while Sharqiyah Desalination, down 3.33 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of HSBC Bank Oman was the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while National Bank Oman were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 401 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR1 million, with more than 6 million shares changing hands.

Out of 45 traded stocks, 6 advanced, 15 declined and 24 remained unchanged. At the session close, local investors were net sellers for OMR87,000 while foreign investors were net buyers for OMR46,000 followed by GCC

& Arab investors for OMR40,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 6,369.35 points, down 0.28 per cent. The price of Ominvest was up by 0.64 per cent. While Oman & Emirates Holding, Al Anwar Investment, Bank Dhofar, United Finance and Muscat Finance were down 2.70 per cent, 2.52 per cent, 2.44 per cent, 1.69 per cent and 1.59 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,935.39 points, up 0.30 per cent. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics, Raysut Cement and Oman Flour Mills were up 1.87 per cent, 1.12 per cent and 0.50 per cent respectively. National Aluminum Product was the only loser by 0.81 per cent.

Services Index was down 0.21 per cent, closing at 1,703.37 points. Prices of National Gas and Ooredoo were up 3.62 per cent and 0.52 per cent respectively. — United Securities

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES							
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%	
MSX 30 INDEX	4,010.74	4,002.30	4,002.34	4,011.16	-8.82	-0.22	
FINANCIAL INDEX	6,385.62	6,369.35	6,369.35	6,386.94	-17.59	-0.28	
Industry Index	5,953.39	5,933.59	5,953.39	5,935.51	17.88	0.30	
Services Index	1,706.96	1,700.54	1,703.37	1,706.96	-3.60	-0.21	
MSX Shariah Index	592.37	591.06	592.37	591.58	0.79	0.13	
MSX TR INDEX	4,912.88	4,902.54	4,902.59	4,913.39	-10.80	-0.22	
Trading Summary							
Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
6,128,692	967,948	401	21,656,853,939	6	15	24	45

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, AUGUST 17

SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PDA VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET															
OM0000001160 NATIONAL GAS	100,000	14,300	1	0.143	0.143	0.143	0.143	0.138	0.005	3.623	0.143	0.132	0.144	0.100	12,155,000
OM0000005005 ALMAHA CERAMICS	37,378	16,291	22	0.434	0.440	0.432	0.436	0.428	0.008	1.869	0.440	0.440	0.442	0.100	23,980,000
OM0000001418 HSBC BANK OMAN	15,096	4,950	2	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.267	0.003	1.124	0.270	0.261	0.270	0.100	54,000,000
OM0000001533 OMINVEST	21,000	6,636	2	0.316	0.316	0.316	0.316	0.314	0.002	0.637	0.316	0.316	0.318	0.100	255,256,056
OM0000003968 OOREDOO	10,000	3,840	1	0.384	0.384	0.384	0.384	0.382	0.002	0.524	0.384	0.384	0.386	0.100	249,962,584
OM0000001400 OMAN FLOUR MILLS	12,154	9,772	3	0.804	0.804	0.804	0.804	0.800	0.004	0.500	0.804	0.000	0.804	0.100	126,630,000
OM0000001707 OMAN CABLES INDSTR	10,000	10,300	1	1.030	1.030	1.030	1.030	1.030	0.000	0.000	1.030	0.988	1.030	0.100	92,391,000
OM0000001749 OMAN CEMENT	48,000	10,944	3	0.228	0.228	0.228	0.228	0.228	0.000	0.000	0.228	0.228	0.232	0.100	75,438,978
OM0000002077 AL OMANIYA FIN.S	520	62	1	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.119	0.119	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.116	0.120	0.100	34,740,285
OM0000002168 AL ANWAR CERAMIC	10,000	4,700	1	0.470	0.470	0.470	0.470	0.470	0.000	0.000	0.470	0.454	0.470	0.100	103,400,000
OM0000002200 AHJI BANK	502,528	55,275	4	0.110	0.110	0.108	0.110	0.110	0.000	0.000	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.100	214,462,321
OM0000002796 BANK MUSCAT	393,771	175,560	25	0.446	0.446	0.444	0.446	0.446	0.000	0.000	0.446	0.444	0.446	0.100	1,594,215,757
OM0000003000 AI MAHA MARKTING	1,000	760	1	0.760	0.760	0.760	0.760	0.760	0.000	0.000	0.760	0.732	0.772	0.100	53,820,000
OM0000003026 OMAN TELECOM	20,603	15,967	7	0.780	0.780	0.772	0.776	0.776	0.000	0.000	0.772	0.772	0.788	0.100	8,100,000
OM0000003620 VISION INSURANCE	99,252	8,039	6	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.000	0.000	0.081	0.081	0.082	0.100	8,100,000
OM0000001525 OMAN INVST&FIN	409,954	51,364	30	0.125	0.126	0.125	0.125	0.126	-0.001	-0.794	0.126	0.126	0.128	0.100	29,625,000
OM0000002226 ALJAZEERA SERVICES	124,683	49,792	35	0.400	0.400	0.398	0.400	0.404	-0.004	-0.990	0.398	0.398	0.398	0.100	24,481,709
OM0000002440 AL SHARQIA INV.	68,000	6,732	9	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.100	-0.001	-1.000	0.099	0.099	0.100	0.100	8,910,000
OM0000001590 MUSCAT FINANCE	230,659	14,230	8	0.062	0.062	0.061	0.062	0.063	-0.001	-1.587	0.061	0.061	0.062	0.100	19,043,072
OM0000001772 ALANWAR INVESTMENT	235,060	27,207	7	0.117	0.117	0.115	0.116	0.119	-0.003	-2.521	0.115	0.116	0.118	0.100	23,200,000
Total	20	2,349,562	485,822	169											
Parallel Market															
OM0000001152 OMAN NAT. ENG.	20,646	1,899	2	0.092	0.092	0.092	0.092	0.092	0.000	0.000	0.092	0.092	0.094	0.100	11,960,000
OM0000001301 DHOFAR CATTLE	1,722	138	1	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.072	0.088	0.100	6,468,000
OM0000001483 NATIONAL BANK OMAN	937,784	176,300	70	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.000	0.000	0.188	0.187	0.190	0.100	305,677,915
OM0000001517 HSBC BANK OMAN	988,796	92,940	40	0.274	0.274	0.274	0.274	0.264	0.004	0.000	0.274	0.264	0.274	0.100	188,029,402
OM0000001962 AL MADINA INV.	5,000	320	1	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.065	0.065	0.000	0.000	0.064	0.059	0.067	0.100	4,550,000
OM0000002275 SHELL OMAN MRK	18,150	15,972	6	0.880	0.880	0.880	0.880	0.880	0.000	0.000	0.880	0.880	0.900	0.100	83,600,000
OM0000003521 GALFAR ENGINEER	35,517	2,806	4	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.000	0.000	0.079	0.074	0.080	0.100	16,035,929
OM0000004420 BANK NIZWA	3,596	356	2	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.099	0.098	0.100	0.100	148,500,000
OM0000004776 TAKAFUL OMAN	3,000	270	1	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.100	9,650,000
OM0000004925 ALBATINAH POWER	265,617	13,282	25	0.051	0.051	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.050	0.051	0.100	33,744,372
OM0000004933 AL SUWADI POWER	52,357	2,723	8	0.053	0.053	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.000	0.000	0.052	0.052	0.053	0.100	37,149,130
OM0000007084 MCT DESALINATE	3,531	294	3	0.084	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.084	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.083	0.092	0.100	13,068,234
OM0000007407 DHOFAR GENERATING	15,745	2,031	3	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.000	0.000	0.129	0.127	0.130	0.100	28,698,960
OM0000002272 OMAN OIL MARKETING	10,000	9,960	1	0.936	0.936	0.936	0.936	0.940	-0.004	-0.426	0.936	0.900	0.936	0.100	57,353,400
OM0000001319 ALUMINIUM PROD.	485,431	59,009	23	0.122	0.123	0.120	0.122	0.123	-0.001	-0.813	0.121	0.119	0.123	0.100	4,095,717
OM0000004768 MADINA TAKAFUL	87,593	8,997	10	0.103	0.103	0.102	0.103	0.104	-0.001	-0.962	0.102	0.102	0.103	0.100	18,025,000
OM0000004735 SEMBICORP SALALAH	15,200	1,237	4	0.081	0.082	0.081	0.081	0.082	-0.001	-1.220	0.082	0.082	0.083	0.100	77,320,328
OM0000003281 TAGEMER FINANCE	99,000	7,940	7	0.080	0.081	0.080	0.081	0.081	-0.001	-1.235	0.081	0.077	0.081	0.100	20,287,200
OM0000002374 UNITED FINANCE	25,500	1,479	2	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.059	-0.001	-1.695	0.058	0.057	0.059	0.100	20,250,376
OM0000005963 PHOENIX POWER	58,332	2,630	9	0.045	0.046	0.045	0.045	0.046	-0.001	-2.174	0.046	0.045	0.046	0.100	65,817,066
OM0000002549 BANK DHOFAR	538,642	64,676	2	0.121	0.121	0.120	0.120	0.123	-0.003	-2.439	0.120	0.120	0.121	0.100	359,562,172
OM0000001681 OMAN EMIRATES HO.	24,000	1,728	2	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.074	-0.002	-2.703	0.072	0.069	0.073	0.100	8,775,000
OM0000004669 SHARQIYAH DESALIN.	75,500	8,675	4	0.118	0.118	0.116	0.116	0.120	-0.004	-3.333	0.116	0.116	0.118	0.100	11,345,051
Total	23	3,771,829	475,269	230											

REPORT

HR teams emerge as key targets for cyberattack

DUBAI: HR professionals have been thrown into the deep end due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff furloughs, remote working has become more frequent, and significant changes in the way people work have all become challenging, testing the traditional working formulas.

According to IHS Markit, Dubai's Purchasing Managers' Index has jumped to 53.2 in July

from 51 in June.

A number greater than 50 implies that the economy is expanding, while a reading of less than 50 indicates that it is contracting.

With such a positive outlook, it is not surprising to see that the index also states that the employment growth of the emirate has picked up to a 20-month high, posing yet another challenge that HR

representatives need to overcome.

As more hires are needed, the computers of Human Resources (HR) professionals are especially at risk of cyberattacks, as they remain to be easily accessible, and in contact with a wide range of individuals. Their contact details are often present on the business website and professional networking platforms.

ELECTRIC-CAR MAKER

Tesla expands legal, external relations workforce in China

BEIJING: Tesla Inc is hiring managers for legal and external relations teams in China, according to a job post on its Wechat account, as the electric-car maker faces public scrutiny in the country over safety and customer service complaints.

US-based Tesla, which is making electric Model 3 sedans and Model Y sport-utility vehicles in Shanghai, is hiring external relation managers in several Chinese cities including Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, according to a media report.

The job advertisement did go into details of external relation positions, but separate posts showed the managers will handle government relations as well.

The media reported in May, citing people familiar with the matter, that Tesla was boosting its engagement with mainland regulators and beefing up its government relations team.

The company is hiring lawyers



SPORT-UTILITY VEHICLES: US-based Tesla, which is making electric Model 3 sedans and Model Y sport-utility vehicles in Shanghai, is hiring external relation managers in several Chinese cities including Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. - BNA

specialised in construction, anti-monopoly and data privacy protection areas, while also looking for public relations managers.

In April, Tesla was targeted by state media and regulators after a customer, angry over the handling of her complaint about mal-

functioning brakes, climbed on top of a Tesla car in protest at the Shanghai auto show. Videos of the incident went viral. Last month, the automaker sold 32,968 China-made vehicles July, including 24,347 for export, industry data showed. -BNA

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MULTIPLE MEASURES

China to roll out measures to stabilise manufacturing investment

BEIJING: China will adopt multiple measures to stabilise manufacturing investment, the country's top economic planner said.

The country will boost green investment by encouraging investment in technological upgrading and stepping up policy support for the traditional manufacturing industry to reduce carbon emissions, said Meng Wei, spokesperson for the National Development and Reform Commission. The country will also support investment in advanced manufacturing and improving weak links in the industrial and supply chain, Meng added.

Comprehensive measures will be taken to ease the upward pressure on commodity prices and strengthen investment incentives for middle and downstream manufacturing enterprises while implementing various cost reduction policies, the spokesperson said.

China's fixed-asset investment amounted to 30.25 trillion yuan (about \$4.67 trillion), up 10.3 per cent year on year in the first seven months of this year, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed. Specifically, investment in manufacturing gained 17.3 per cent year on year during the period, the data showed. -Xinhua

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The above machines are presently located at construction site near Seeb Heights adjacent to Express Highway Bridge No 10 and will be offered for inspection during project working time.

Interested parties may contact:

Mr. Shibumon Hameed, Mob: 99857115 at site for inspection of the machines and submit closed quotation at their Al Khoud office (Tel: 24525345) on or before 31st August 2021.

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Contact No: 93910079, 93817042, 99321944 • Address: Wadi Al Lawami, Nursery, after NMC medical, Seeb, Muscat

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Valid Oman D/L & release available for immediate recruitment.
Contact: 96497864
Email: taranrajpal@gmail.com

Indian Chartered Accountant
With 6 years of experience (Oman) in Accounts, Audit, Taxation, VAT, Investment, Budgeting seek suitable placement.
Contact 79848875

ACCOUNTANT
Indian Male B. Com, MBA having 14 yrs Exp in Accounts/Finance & Admin, upto finalisation, OOOD, ERP, Tally & Online Softwares. Oman D/L, Noc/Release Available. Can join immediately.
Email: mq_199820@yahoo.co.in
GSM: 99279626

Senior Manager
Indian male, 42, MBA, 12yrs' experience in Senior management role with international exposure in many countries including Europe, worked as HR and Admin Head of company in Qatar. Previously worked as Director of Admission and Administration at college in Bangalore seeks for Senior management role in company or educational institutions in Muscat. Presently in Muscat (family visa).
Contact: 94326527
Email: sreekanth.kerala987@gmail.com

JOB WANTED

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Indian male B.Com with 12+ yrs of experience in Accounts upto finalisation, is looking for a suitable placement. Oman D/L & NOC available. Contact 95089869. Email: annchanda@gmail.com

Senior Accountant, B.Com with MBA Finance, with 15 years experience in accounts in Oman seeks immediate placement. NOC available. Contact 78581435 or career4727@gmail.com

Sr. Accountant Srilankan 20+yrs Oman experience seeks suitable placement. Contact 99630192

Indian MBA Finance with 3 years Oman experience in accounting. NOC & D/L available. Contact 79396446. Email: sheroofsabu@gmail.com

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Indian Male, 24, B.com having 1 year six month experience in accounts, seeking suitable post from reputed companies, NOC available. Contact 78167102.
Email: alexpsojan@gmail.com

ADMIN/HR

Indian male having 21 years' experience in Oman seeks job for **Hr/ Admin**. Contact 95425764

Lebanese Female, MBA, looking for an executive job, experienced in project coordination, management and logistics, bilingual Arabic, English, D/L. Contact 98103298

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Email: hizbullah626@gmail.com

BE Civil Engineer with PMP having experience more than 21 years looking for a suitable job. NOC available. Contact 98522059, prakashrathi7707@gmail.com

MEP Mechanical Engineer, 9+ years GCC experience, with valid D/L (Oman & UAE) and NOC available. Can join immediately. Contact 96706269
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Female, Btech in computer science and engineering, worked as Software Developer, adequate knowledge in Angular.HTML,MS SQL,MS EXCEL,ASP.NET, seeking suitable job. On residence visa. Contact 94002988

BE Civil engineer, 12 years gulf experience with valid visa 2 years. Seeking consultant & contracting job. Contact 92351318

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CHANGE OF NAME

I **Ayub Khan** holder of Indian passport no. T3959385 son of Ali Mohammed having permanent residence in Ward No. 17 Muridan Mohalla Kabuter Khane ke pass Ramgarh Shekhawati (331024) Dist. Sikar Rajasthan India and presently residing in P.O. Box 157 code 100 Muscat (Sultnate of Oman) intend to change my name from **Ayub Khan** to **Ayub Ansari** for all practical purpose. Any objection toward my name change may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat Diplomatic Quarter, Al Khuwair, P.O. Box no. 1727 postal code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

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A 15yr old trading company looking for an **Electrical items Sales Executive**. 3yrs minimum experience in Electrical item distribution. Driving license is a must. Eligible candidates drop your CVs to Email: candidate@fatahill.com, GSM: 99837447



Great ways to keep your mind sharp as you age



September, which is World Alzheimer's Month, is an excellent reminder to keep your mind and body healthy through the years. Experts say that doing so can reduce your risk for cognitive decline. Try taking on these new hobbies to keep your mind sharp as you age:

Cooking

Not only can the development of a new complicated skill such as cooking improve cognitive functions like problem-solving and concentration, but having the ability to create your own nutritious meals at home has the added benefit of being good for brain health. From TikTok tutorials to online classes taught by master chefs, today, there are more avenues for picking up culinary know-how than ever before.

Music

Learning to play a musical instrument has countless benefits for brain health, helping

improve memory, hand-eye coordination and more. It's also a mood booster, which is important, as depression is considered a risk factor for dementia. Check out instruments designed to build skills quickly. Whether you're a total novice or taking up the piano after a long hiatus, Casiotone Keyboards, for example, are portable, easy to use and connect to an app that features lessons and more.

Exercise

The mind-body connection is strong. For ultimate brain health, stay physically active; and if you can do so outdoors, all the better. Research suggests that connecting with nature is good for one's mental well-being, reducing stress, anxiety and depression. Support your journey with tools that track your activity and inspire you to delve further into adventures, whether that be hiking, fishing or rock climbing. The watches in the Pro Trek line feature Quad Sensor technology to provide you with temperature and barometric pressure so you can keep your eye on the weather conditions while out

and about, as well as sunrise and sunset times, an app for anglers and much more.

Camaraderie

Having an active social life can improve brain function. Unfortunately, if you aren't proactive about it, there are not always that many opportunities to make new friends in adulthood. Whether it's a sewing circle or a bowling league, consider joining a club or team for camaraderie and fun.

Fast fingers

Did you know that you can use your calculator to keep your mind engaged when there's downtime or you're on-the-go? Calculator games can build math skills, improve memory and keep your mind nimble.

Just as it is important to maintain physical fitness as you age, it's also critical to exercise your mind. Stay mentally active by trying new hobbies, building new skills and seeking out new experiences.



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ROUND-UP

DHOFAR AUTOMOTIVE LAUNCHES SUMMER OFFER ON POPULAR MODELS



Through the launch of this amazing summer offer, customers purchasing any one of the selected models can enjoy exceptional prices and valuable cash gifts. In addition, they can avail of other services that provide peace of mind experience for years to come

MUSCAT: Dhofar Automotive, the official distributor of Jeep, Dodge, RAM, Chrysler, Fiat and Alfa Romeo vehicles in the Sultanate, has announced its summer offers on a wide range of its popular models from Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler and Alfa Romeo.

As part of these offers, customers will enjoy exceptional prices, cash gifts as well as many amazing benefits during this offer period.

Hatem El-Naggar, General Manager at Dhofar Automotive, said, “Dhofar Automotive is al-

ways keen on extending incredible offers to its valued customers, to encourage them to own their favourite car from the range of famous brands that it represent in the Sultanate. Through the launch of this amazing summer offer, customers purchasing any one of the selected models can enjoy exceptional prices and valuable cash gifts. In addition, they can avail of other services that we provide our valued customers to ensure peace of mind experience for years to come. Therefore,

I would like to invite everyone to visit the Dhofar Automotive showrooms and learn about the current offer. This way they can own the car of their dreams, together with a package of services and exceptional prices and enjoy a unique ownership experience with Dhofar Automotive.”

As part of the offer, the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon starts at OMR16, 690, Compass Trailhawk at OMR 9,990, Gladiator Limited Edition at OMR18,990, Dodge Charger SXT at OMR9,500

and Chrysler Pacifica Touring at OMR11,990. The Alfa Romeo Giulietta is available at OMR9,990, while the Giulia and Stelvio are available at OMR18,990 and OMR19,990, respectively. This is in addition to a package of valuable services and benefits. All the above-mentioned prices post-reduction of the cash gift.

In the Sultanate, Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Fiat, Alfa Romeo and RAM models are available at Dhofar Automotive showrooms with different equipment classes.

HEALTHCARE

COVID positive patient brought back to life by Kimshealth Duqm doctors

MUSCAT: The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been throwing some of the most extreme medical challenges for practitioners, who have been braving complex situations in managing conditions emanating from the corona virus and its mutations.

Song Dong Ming, a 51-year-old Chinese resident, arrived at the COVID field hospital in late June 2021, managed by Kimshealth Duqm. He had tested positive for corona virus and had developed fever, cough and shortness of breath. His oxygen saturation was low and his condition progressively deteriorated over the next three days. On the fourth day, Ming was shifted to the ICU facility and was provided with intensive treatment over the next two weeks.

The doctors at Kimshealth slowly started to wean off the patient from the ventilator and reduced the time on the ventilator and increased the time on the non-rebreathing mask.

After 12 days, Ming was successfully taken off from the ventilator support as he started to maintain an adequate oxygen level with an O2 support mask.

At the same time, physiotherapy was also started to make him stand first and then to take few steps and later walk around the bed with O2 support. All the blood parameters,



x-ray and ABG showed marked improvement and after the 27th day in ICU, Ming was successfully shifted to the inpatient facility.

Then the next task for the team

was to reduce the requirement of O2. The doctors at Kimshealth carefully monitored his vitals, oxygen saturation level and reduced the oxygen support. After

two weeks of rigorous titration, monitoring and graded increase of physiotherapy, the continuous oxygen support was stopped and the patient was discharged.

INDIAN SCHOOL DARSAIT

ISD commemorates 75th Independence Day of India

MUSCAT: Indian School Darsait commemorated the 75th Independence Day of India with virtual celebrations on Sunday, 15 August 2021 at 7:30 am with patriotic fervour, zest and zeal.

Afroz Ahmad, Treasurer, Head of Finance & Planning Subcommittee, and Head of Staff Welfare & Grievances Subcommittee, School Management Committee was the chief guest on the occasion. Sebastian Chungath, President and other esteemed members of the School Management Committee; Amar Srivastava, Principal along with Team ISD, parents, students and a

good number of well-wishers of the school attended the celebration.

The event started with a melodious rendition of the National Anthem of India. It was followed by a welcome address by the principal who extended a cordial welcome to the chief guest, dignitaries and all invitees. He recalled the sacrifices of great freedom fighters and those of unsung heroes of the nation and urged everyone to be mindful of placing India first, in their thoughts, words and actions and to rededicate our lives for the progress of our nation.

He implored the future citizens

of this great country – the students, to pledge their devotion and contribution in giving back to society and their Motherland.

Addressing the gathering, the chief guest congratulated everyone on this great occasion. He said, “India has achieved respect by taking the path of democracy and everyone is a stakeholder and is responsible.” He urged all to uphold unity in diversity, practice virtues and principles of the nation with service to the motherland as their foremost duty. He concluded by reciting the Indian National Pledge – an oath of allegiance to

the Republic of India.

Sebastian Chungath, President of School Management Committee greeted everyone and read out the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind’s message on the eve of Independence Day of India.

The other highlights of this Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav were a patriotic melody, which was a soulful tribute to the great freedom fighters and ignited the spirit of love for our motherland. This was followed by Vande Mataram, a dazzlingly spectacular fusion dance that was an impressive show of the rich and varied culture of India.

BOD of Indian Schools launches India@75 celebrations with a bang

MUSCAT: The Indian Diaspora in Oman witnessed a ceremoniously solemn event that launched ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’ – India@75 celebrations, a virtually synchronised programme organised by the Board of Directors under the aegis of the Embassy of India on August 12.

Syed Salman, Vice Chairman of the Indian School Board and Head of India@75 celebrations committee, welcomed the dignitaries and all invitees and set the tone for the programme by rekindling the patriotic fervour with his felicity of expression. “Celebrating India’s Independence is an occasion for the Indians living on foreign soil to reconnect with the culture and heritage of their motherland, and simultaneously connect other nationals with India,” Salman said highlighting the concept of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ which means ‘the whole world is one family’.

Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman of the Indian School Board who was the Guest of Honour for the evening recalled the phenomenal progress India has achieved. “As we are celebrating the 75th Anniversary of our Nation’s Independence, we need to appreciate the phenomenal achievements our nation can be proud of; and how as Indians we should hold our head high as true citizens of this great nation,” said Dr Manickam.

Chairman exhorted the audience to “rededicate, reorient, refocus our commitment to serve our Motherland and see her becoming the most sought after country in the world. As we are launching the India@75 celebrations, it is an apt occasion to salute the freedom fighters and follow the Gandhian principles.”

Munu Mahawar, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, attended the occasion as the chief guest. In his inaugural address, the ambassador extended greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and the government and people of Oman for the continued peace, progress and prosperity of this beautiful



land. He greeted all members of the Indian community on the occasion of the 75th Independence Day of India. “It is an important milestone in the journey of our beloved nation. I am sure all students and faculty members of Indian Schools will participate enthusiastically in all the events scheduled to celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav,” he said.

He released the tagline ‘My India, My Pride’ and an e-book containing 75 art forms of India, “The e-book containing 75 shades of Indian Art tells the story of the rich civilization and culture that India is known for. Every child whose artwork finds a place in this book is an ambassador of our rich culture and traditions,” Mahawar remarked.

A number of activities have been planned to make ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’ - Indian@75 celebrations meaningful for the students as well as the members of the Indian community in Oman. Anuj Swarup, Second Secretary - Embassy of India listed out a few of the programmes during his address.

“The board has already floated a logo design contest to commemorate the momentous occasion. Besides, all programmes organised both at the school and Board level will incorporate themes pertaining to ‘India@75’. Socially impactful activities such as blood donation, beach cleaning drive and tree plantation in addition to organizing 75 education programmes by all 21 Indian Schools in Oman will be a fitting tribute to our Motherland,” Swarup said.

ROUND-UP

Omran launches ‘Within Oman 2021’ with great value staycation offers

For the third successive year, the campaign to promote domestic tourism aims to connect nationals and residents of Oman with the beauty of the country and offer new experiences at destinations across the country

MUSCAT: Omran Group, the executive arm of the Sultanate for tourism development, launched its revamped ‘Within Oman 2021’ campaign with a selection of carefully-curated offers and packages on thousands of hotel rooms at the group’s diverse hospitality assets nationwide.

For the third successive year, the campaign to promote domestic tourism aims to connect nationals and residents of Oman with the beauty of the country and offer new experiences at destinations across the country.

Within Oman 2021 focuses on families, friends and couples and relaxing retreats at 19 sensational properties spanning the length and breadth of the country.

‘Within Oman’ offers exciting adventure holidays surrounded by nature to the ultimate in luxury. The packages also feature unique experiences for guests at their chosen property to bond and help make special memories together this summer.

The 2021 edition is characterized by the provision of flexible and customised packages for vari-

ous categories, providing an array of accommodation options, hospitality services, tourism and recreational activities for everyone, whether through in-house hospitality services or experiences provided in cooperation with small and medium enterprises outside the hotels.

The hotels and attractions participating in ‘Within Oman’ 2021 campaign are W Muscat, JW Marriott Muscat, InterContinental Muscat, Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC, Atana Stay Salalah, Atana Stay Ashkara, Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah, Atana Musandam Resort, Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve, Masira Island Resort, Dibba Beach Resort, Barceló Mussanah Resort, Alila Jabal Akhdar, Alila Hinu, dusicD2 Naseem Resort, Jabal Akhdar, Hilton Salalah Resort, Sohar Beach Hotel, Crowne Plaza Duqm and City Hotel Duqm.

Booking is available with hotels and resorts via Within Oman website. All offers will be subject to terms and conditions applicable to each hotel and resort. Under government guidelines, all participating hotels are adhering to the precautionary measures to prevent COVID-19.



VALUE ADDED TAX



Customers hail free VAT registration and advisory services by Bank Muscat

MUSCAT: The free VAT registration and advisory desk at Bank Muscat’s head office has been well received by the bank’s many SME customers who have been making use of the facility.

Earlier in July 2021, the bank partnered with leading full-service audit, tax and business advisory firm, Morison Muscat Chartered Accountants, to help Bank Muscat and Meethaq SME customers comply with the newly introduced Value Added Tax (VAT).

As part of the bank’s continuous support to its Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) customers and to help them navigate and adapt to this taxation concept, which is new for many local businesses, particularly those from the SME sector, the following services are being provided free of charge for a limited time - VAT Registration with the Tax Authority and one-to-one advisory on VAT queries. Customers who would like to register or utilise these services are requested to register at the following link with a copy of their CR, National ID Card and bank account details: <https://mmjs.typeform.com/to/rbxiWqHT>.

Thanking the bank for the excellent support to the SME sector, Qais Bin Said Al Saidi, Owner, Lu-luwat Al Afrad Modern Trading & Contracting said, “We are very happy to receive this timely support from the largest financial services provider in Oman. Many SMEs do not have access to these kinds of

resources like big corporates, and hence find it very helpful when their bank offers assistance, which helps them ensure that their business is tax compliant. We thank Bank Muscat for continuing to support SMEs with innovative financial and non-financial services and for guiding us in a fast-changing and dynamic environment.”

Nasser Hamed Al Jabri of Diamond Root Trading said, “We thank Bank Muscat for offering this VAT registration and advisory service free of charge to SMEs like ours. The importance of the bank’s continuous support in the backdrop of the government’s top priority to develop the SME sector in Oman cannot be emphasised enough. Being a pioneer of corporate social responsibility in Oman, Bank Muscat has always supported the sector with many financial and non-financial services to help it grow to its full potential.”

Bank Muscat continues to come up with new initiatives regularly to build up the SME sector which has been identified as an essential part of the Omani economy. It is expected that the bank’s vast portfolio of SME customers will be able to leverage this new initiative for ensuring that they are compliant with the laws and regulations in the Sultanate of Oman. This will help further strengthen the SME sector in the country and also lead to more development and job opportunities for Omani youth.

CATERER MIDDLE EAST AWARDS 2021

Youssef Al Abri shortlisted from Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah for Restaurant Manager of Year award

MUSCAT: Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, Muscat recently announced its latest entry into the 12th Annual Caterer Middle East Awards 2021, with the nomination of Youssef Al Abri for the ‘Restaurant Manager of the Year’ category. Established under Caterer Middle East, the largest magazine for catering industry professionals in the Middle East, the annual event celebrates dedicated professionals who make the culinary scene in the Middle East amongst the most exciting in the world.

Youssef was selected among the final 10 nominees who got short-listed from hundreds of submissions for the ‘Restaurant Manager of the Year’ award within the Middle East. He is the only individual from the Sultanate across all categories and holds the honour of being the only employee on the final list of nominations from Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts in the Middle East Region.

Youssef Al Abri started his career at the Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah as a waiter, 15 years ago, making his way to the top, where he now works as a Restaurant Manager. Over the years, he has progressed and developed the full spectrum of his skillset to introduce the renowned warmth of Omani hospitality into Shangri-La’s stellar service record. Youssef continues to achieve milestones through consistent guest engagement, ensuring satisfaction, campaigning innovative initiatives and always going the extra mile to support business requirements.

Seasoned professional

Commenting on the occasion, René D. Egle, Area General Manager for Shangri-La Resorts in Muscat noted, “Youssef is everything we seek in a Shangri-La ambassador. He brings kindness, originality and creativity to every aspect of the business while elevating the guest experience. Not only is he a seasoned professional but also a talented individual and a gentleman at heart. Even during these unprecedented times, Youssef worked effectively and diligently to meet and exceed his targets. We



offer our heartiest congratulations to Youssef on this well-deserved nomination and we wish him all the best at the awards ceremony.”

“Out of 210 Omani colleagues at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, Youssef was one of the 30 top talents who were chosen to take part in our Omani Development Programme. The programme is designed by professional learning and development experts to help our Omani colleagues grow, acquire external

exposure and develop their leadership skills to become leaders of the future. Within just a few months through the program, Youssef got promoted and has succeeded to become one of our key F&B leaders and prominent role models,” René D. Egle added.

Fuelled by the desire to do more, Youssef has championed several initiatives that solidify his position as an exemplary leader.

The Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah team has highlighted his key achievements as increasing his financial performance target from 200% to 400% and introducing safe social experiences like ‘Majlis by the Beach’, where he uplifted the ambience and setup of private dining by the beach. Youssef also drove the initiative to celebrate the hard work and dedication of teachers on Omani Teachers Day, showcasing the hotel as a trendsetter by offering special discounts to teachers and their families, which has driven massive business results.

From his side, Youssef Al Abri said, “I am sincerely humbled by the praise and warmth bestowed upon me. I hope to continue making a difference in the hospitality landscape of the Sultanate with innovation and integrity so that each guest is given a memorable experi-

ence. I would also like to thank my supervisors and my team at the Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah for the opportunities given to me and the relentless support to put my ideas into action. It is truly an honour to be nominated for the Caterer Middle East Awards 2021 and I can not wait to pass my experience and knowledge to develop more Omani colleagues of mine.”

This year has seen the Food and Beverage sector face challenges like it has never had before with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the slow road to recovery starts, the Caterer Middle East Awards strives to bring the region’s culinary community together to celebrate the excellence as well as the resilience that the region’s restaurants exhibit daily.

The Caterer Middle East is the sister magazine for Hotelier Middle East magazine which is the leading destination for hospitality industry professionals covering hotelier news, hospitality news, hotel, and events. Last month, Sarah Khaled, Director of Marketing and Communications for Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah and Shangri-La Al Husn was selected amongst the Top 50 Hotel Marketing Talents in the Middle East and she was the only one on the list from Oman’s hospitality landscape.

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