

HM SENDS
CABLE OF
CONDOLENCES
TO SAUDI KING

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia, on the death of Prince Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Ibn Turki al Saud. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy to King Salman, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest the deceased's soul in peace and grant his family patience. — ONA

PLANS TO ATTRACT TOURISTS



Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, visited Fatah al Khair Centre in the Wilayat of Sur to review rehabilitation and maintenance works. The official also visited the archaeological site of the city of Qalhat. He along with the director of World Heritage Sites were briefed on the site's restoration and renovation works. This comes in line with the ministry's plan to convert the site into an archaeological park and a tourist destination, after it was included in the World Heritage List in 2018. **DETAILS ON P2**

SECOND PHASE OF
SURVEY FROM TODAY

FIRST PHASE RESULTS OF NATIONAL SEROLOGICAL SURVEY SOON

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The second phase of the National Serological Survey will be launched from today. "To help determine the prevalence of COVID-19 infection in the community as part of the national strategy for the next period to chalk out the response to the pandemic, the survey was launched on July 12," a statement from the Ministry of Health said. The survey is being conducted in stages, consisting of four cycles - each will last for five days where the time between each cycle and the other is two weeks over 10 weeks. The teams have overcome



the challenges at the field level and found effective solutions to ensure that the survey process continues smoothly as planned. The collection of samples has been completed as per the numbers required for the first cycle, and the necessary diagnostic tests

are carried out and the work is under way to finalise the analysis of the results. The Directorate-General of Disease Surveillance and Control will prepare a detailed report on the results of the first phase soon, and the next phases of the sero-survey will be completed to assess the trend of the disease spread. It is worth mentioning that the time plan for the start of the second phase, which was scheduled last week, was changed to avoid obstruction of work as the previously planned phase coincided with Eid al Adha vacation, and the subsequent lockdown between the governorates. **TURN TO P3**

Right to treatment
guaranteed to all

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health has issued a statement on reports regarding the refusal to deny medicines to a child. The ministry affirms that it is committed to its ethical, professional and legal duty in providing medicines to patients completely without any discrimination or favouritism. It will ensure that the right to treatment is guaranteed to every citizen and resident on the land of Oman as per the Basic Law of the State and the regulatory laws. The ministry said it refrained from issuing the aforementioned medicine to the Yemeni, not any reason related to the cost, and instead the treatment was replaced with another drug that was more expensive and safer.

Oil output falls 4.6% in June

CHINA TOP IMPORTER OF SULTANATE'S CRUDE

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's oil production, including condensates, stood at 177.30 million barrels at the end of June 2020, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Of the total production, crude oil production was down by 4.6 per cent at 147.76 million barrels while condensates production rose by 41.8 per cent to touch 29.54 million barrels.

Oman recorded a daily average crude oil production of 964,200 barrels at the end of June 2020, against 970,600 barrels over the same period of 2019, the NCSI report added. However, the average price of Oman crude fell by 20.6 per cent to reach \$51.1 per barrel at the end of June 2020, from \$64.3 per barrel in the same period of 2019.

The Sultanate exported 146.4 million barrels of crude oil at the end of June



2020, against 145.5 million barrels for the same period of 2019, rising by 0.6 per cent. China retained its position as the leading destination for the Sultanate's crude oil exports at the end of June 2020, with the country importing 129.75 million barrels of crude oil from Oman.

This was followed by South Korea (4.99 million barrels), India (3.43 million barrels) and Japan (608.2 million barrels). The Sultanate

produced 354.3 million barrels of oil and exported 310.3 million barrels in 2019. Besides, the country's daily oil production stood at 970.9 million barrels last year.

Oman's natural gas production and imports fell 2.1 per cent to 22,046 million cubic metres (MNCM) at the end of June 2020, from 22,520 MNCM for the same period of 2019. Of this, non-associated gas and imports rose 0.6 per cent to 18,622 MNCM and associated gas production fell 14.8 per cent to 3,424 MNCM, added the NCSI report.

The use of natural gas in industrial projects fell by 5.2 per cent to reach 13,573 MNCM at the end of June 2020, against 14,312 MNCM for the same period of last year. As much as 5,068 MNCM of natural gas was used in oil fields, against 4,515 MNCM units consumed for the same period of 2019. — **ONA**

OFFICIALS REVIEW FATAH AL KHAIR CENTRE PROJECT



MUSCAT: Ibrahim bin Said bin Khalaf al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture for Heritage Affairs, visited Fatah Al Khair Centre in the Wilayat of Sur last week to review rehabilitation and maintenance works.

The under-secretary also inspected Bibi Maryam Mausoleum and the Great Mosque, which are undergoing restoration.

The under-secretary along with the director of World Heritage Sites and the director of the Heritage and Culture Department in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate were briefed on the site's restoration and renovation works.

In line with the ministry's plan to convert the site into an archaeological park and a tourist destination that would attract visitors, especially after it was included in the World Heritage List in 2018, a number of future projects were reviewed and discussed. It should be noted that the ministry is nearing the completion of rehabilitation and maintenance works of Fatah Al Khair Centre, which began in May 2019. — **ONA**

دليل النفط ش.م.م.
DALEEL PETROLEUM L.L.C.

AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Daleel Petroleum LLC would like to announce an open invitation to the general public to participate in a sealed auction described in the table below.

Auction No.	Subject	Location	Site Visit Date	Bid Closing Date	Bank Guarantee Amount
PRCR-20-081	Scrap Steel Materials	Daleel Field	18 th August 2020 to 26 th August 2020	27 th August 2020	OMR 5,000

- Interested bidders or individuals who would like to view and inspect the scrap "As it is - Where it is" at Daleel field, coordinate with the warehouse supervisor (92726844 / 25218644).
- Tender documents can be obtained from the reception at Daleel Head office during office hours. Interested bidders or individuals must submit their bids in a closed envelope sealed with red wax addressed to Senior Supply Chain Manager at Daleel Petroleum LLC. The tender number and title shall be written on the envelope with nothing that might indicate the identity of the tenderer. Tender submission will be at Daleel Petroleum reception during working hours.
- Bidders or individuals shall submit a bid bond or certified cheque of OMR 5,000 value for the Scrap Steel Materials addressed to "Daleel Petroleum LLC" with the tender document valid for 120 days as stated in table above. This is refundable amount and shall be returned to the non-successful bidders after bid evaluation.
- The successful bidder shall pay full bid amount for the awarded scrap within ten (10) working days from the date of notification of award. In the event that awarded bidder fails to pay the outstanding amounts within the specified period, the bidder shall be disqualified and the guarantee provided as part of the bid will be forfeited.
- The successful bidder is responsible to follow Daleel's instruction & QHSE procedure and to provide all the necessary arrangement for loading and transporting the Scrap materials from Scrap yard outside Daleel concession area.
- The successful bidder shall have a maximum of 60 calendar days from notification date to make the necessary arrangement to collect the scrap and transport it outside Daleel concession area. Failing to do so will result in paying penalty charges of 50 OMR for each day of delay beyond the above period.
- Bidders or individuals wishing to inspect the materials must abide by the decisions of the Supreme Committee in charge of dealing with the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), which are as follows:
 - Only a maximum of two persons from each interested company are allowed to inspect the displayed materials as per the dates shown above.(More than two people from each company will not be allowed to enter and participate in the inspection)
 - It is necessary to maintain physical spacing (at least two meters), wear protective face masks and gloves at all times during inspection time, and adhere to wearing personal protective equipment such as safety shoes, helmets and coats.
 - Body temperatures will be measured for all participants before entering Daleel field.
 - Those wishing to inspect must come with authorized diesel vehicles for oil fields until the scrap yard.
 - Due to pandemic night stay is not allowed and visitor must return in the same day before evening
- For any further details regarding the auction, please contact auction coordinator via land line 24995421 / 24995469 / 24394255 / 99236145 during working days (Sunday – Thursday).

12% RISE IN CONSUMER RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: The number of consumer violations rights cases registered a significant rise of 12 per cent across all the governorates in Oman during the first half 2020.

According to a report from Consumer Protection Authority, the total number of cases reached 2,425 against 2,169 during the period.

“The increase in the number of violations is mainly due to mounted inspections and field visits by officials following the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic in the Sultanate,” the report said.

As many as 47,900 shops and commercial establishments covering an area of 1,314,605 kilometres were visited by the officials.

The report, prepared by General Directorate of Studies and Development at the Authority, pointed out that Seeb in the Governorate



THE AUTHORITY REPORT POINTED OUT THAT SEEB IN THE GOVERNORATE OF MUSCAT TOPPED THE LIST OF VIOLATIONS WITH 716 CASES

of Muscat topped the list of violations with 716 cases.

The lowest number of cases were in Khasab with one and Daba with two violations.

While North Al Batinah recorded 472 violations,

Dhofar, South Al Batinah (Barka) and Al Dhahirah registered 125, 112 and 84 cases, respectively.

Meanwhile, the total administrative fines imposed by the Consumer Protection Department in

Barka amounted to RO 3,950 for violating the Consumer Protection Law issued by Royal Decree No (66/2014).

According to a statement from the authority, the administration’s judicial officers were able to seize a petrol station while it was selling vehicle fuel at a higher price than the price approved by the competent authorities.

“An administrative fine of RO 800 was imposed on the erring company,” it said.

Two expatriates were booked for storing and selling chewing tobacco while action was taken against a call centre that projected higher commodity prices in a commercial centre.

The hotline number of the authority received 48,415 complaints, reports and inquiries between February and June this year.

One can report any trade malpractice or unfair pricing by calling toll free numbers 80079009 or 80077997.

Second phase of survey from today

FROM PAGE 1

The first phase has contributed in clarifying the survey mechanism, during which individuals (citizens or residents) of different age groups from all governorates participated.

However, some of the things which have raised questions among individuals should be emphasised, including the selection of people to participate in the survey will be randomly based to avoid bias in selection in the collection of samples, and therefore increase the possibility of generalising the results later.

The persons selected for the survey will be receiving text messages from the Ministry of Health that he/she had been selected, this message will be followed by a phone call to receive the initial verbal approval, then the person is directed to the nearest health institution where written approval will be taken with the compilation of the participant’s demographic data that



will be collected through Tarassud+ application and then taking a blood test sample and not a nasal swab sample.

Thirdly, that the person will not be

subjected to isolation after taking the sample during the waiting period of the result, and will not be obliged to wear the electronic tracking bracelet, fourthly to emphasise the availability of members of the public health staff and medical staff who are able to communicate in different languages for non-Arabic speakers.

It should be emphasised here that there are no legal consequences for not participating in the survey as the process of participating is voluntary, but public awareness should be raised of the importance of this survey in assessing the prevalence of COVID-19 infection according to age group and monitor undiagnosed laboratory cases, assessing the level of infection in different governorates in Oman as well as the rate of infection in those who have not shown symptoms and assessing the effects of closure of the governorates to stop the spread of the epidemic.

OMAN

Don't forget the elderly

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

MUSCAT: Whether it is the weekends or holidays, the elders were usually busy catching up with their family members or friends. It is rather quiet in the year of coronavirus. It is better to avoid visiting the elderly during the pandemic. But let us connect with them.

"Loneliness is a big issue even without the pandemic. At the onset of COVID-19, the general message that was conveyed was that the senior citizens are at risk and this caused such panic and anxiety to the elderly and also for the people who are looking after them. Gradually the message became clearer and the fact is this virus can affect everybody as well as the elderly when they have diabetes, hypertension, asthma, heart problems," said Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist, Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

Dr Hamed explained, "They missed the grandchildren and birthdays as well as other family occasions like graduations, anniversaries etc. The daily routine of the elderly such as going out to the mosques, meeting up with neighbours and friends were taken away because



of the COVID. All this meant they were not only under stress and anxiety from catching the virus but they were also deprived of the social interactions and contacts," he said.

The advice Dr Hamed and team have for the elderly is; "Try to cut down on news. It is important to stay informed but do not overdo it."

Taking up hobbies and staying has been a piece of advice given to most people, but what about the senior citizens?

"The elderly are at a disadvantage slightly because

some of them do not have access to social media and may not be technology savvy and do not have WhatsApp groups. Before COVID-19 people who have had mental health issues used to have their caregivers. In some families a person with dementia would have been looked after by different family members or someone would visit to relieve the caregiver because it can be a consuming job. So when this happened and when people started practising social distancing the advice was not to move houses or

switch caregivers so this again was taxing on caregivers," he pointed out.

But families soon began to get creative with activities that would suit the person concerned.

"In Oman we have senior citizens who were teachers, doctors and other professionals who could be interested in talking about their life journeys. This has given them joy in expressing themselves — even participating in cooking and doing the minimum. It could be colouring — they would enjoy it and is not just meant for kids," he said.

UNCTAD Youth Action Club launched in Oman

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT: Youth Action Hub Oman (YAHO) has become the first UNCTAD Youth Action Hub in the GCC and is a part of the UNCTAD youth network supported by UNCTAD Youth Geneva. UNCTAD Youth Network works towards the raising of awareness and attainment of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) aims to engage, empower and inspire youth by providing them with a platform from where their voice can be heard. The UNCTAD Youth Network's motto is 'Thinking Globally Acting Locally'.

مداين

madayn

Tender Announcement

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

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Fee (R.O)
10/2019/PEIE/HQ-10-Recall	CONSTRUCTION OF RING ROAD AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES WORKS IN KNOWLEDGE OASIS MUSCAT	30-08-2020	23-09-2020	Construction	3000

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

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

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

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

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

madayn.om

@madaynoman

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Indian Embassy celebrates 74th Independence Day

STAFF REPORTER

Muscat: Embassy of India, Muscat, celebrated the 74th Independence Day of India on Saturday with great gusto and patriotic fervour. This year due to COVID-19 restrictions, the event was limited to embassy officials and staff. However, it was telecast live, enabling Indian community to join the celebration virtually.

The event started with unfurling of the Indian Flag by Munu Mahawar, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, followed by singing of the National Anthem.

The ambassador gave a brief speech and read out excerpts from the address



of the President of India. He greeted the Indian Community in Oman and thanked them for their proactive contribution in helping the embassy and Indian community in the

wake of COVID-19. He expressed his appreciation for Indian Social Club, other community organisations, volunteers and social workers, as the embassy was able to distribute 15,000 food kits and repatriate more than 60,000 Indian nationals with their support.

The ambassador also spoke about Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self Reliant India), which seeks to make India a more resilient nation and at the same time strengthen our global linkages. He invited Indian community to contribute to Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan through their skills, knowledge and experiences.

Platform a boost for Smart City projects

MUSCAT: To create a professional knowledge community for smart city ambassadors to exchange knowledge and experience, and work on different projects in smart cities that fall within their interests, the Smart City Platform (SCP) launched the Professional Initiative for the Ambassadors of Smart City Platform (SCP) last week.



عمان كلورين ش.م.م.
OMAN CHLORINE S.A.O.G.

VEHICLE FOR SALE

MAKE	MODEL	ENGINE CAPACITY	KM Clocked	COLOR
Mitsubishi Pajero	2014	3.5 L	53,221	Silver
Toyota Yaris	2012	1.5 L	269,126	White
Toyota Camry	2008	2.4 L	162,606	White
Honda CRV	2012	2.4 L	191,446	Brown

For vehicle inspection appointment please contact Mr. Mohammed Al Siyabi at (99572790) The vehicles can be inspected at our Head Office (Madinat Sultan Qaboos) Muscat at the following date and time:

Tuesday (18/8/2020) & Wednesday (19/8/2020) from 3 PM to 4 PM
(No other timing will be accepted)

The quotes should be submitted at the head office in Muscat in closed envelope, marking attention: Purchase Committee, Oman Chlorine with the contact details for further action.

The company reserves the right not to accept any quote.

The last date for submission of offers 26 August 2020

شركة المطاحن العمانية (ش.م.ع.)

Oman Flour Mills Co. (SAOG)

P.O. Box 566, P.C. 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman Tel: 24714300, Fax: 24714711

E-mail: info@omanflourmills.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

RESPECTED SHAREHOLDERS,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present Oman Flour Mills Company SAOG (the Parent Company) along with its subsidiaries (The Group's) un-audited financial statements for the six months ended 30 June 2020.

GROUP PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS:

Revenue: The Group has witnessed a 4% decline in the total consolidated revenue. Major decrease (value-wise) was observed in the Bakery segment. And also because sale of MPF is not considered in group revenue. The total revenue recorded is RO 46.4m as compared to RO 48.5m recorded in the same period of previous year.

Expenses: Group total expenses decreased by 6% compared to the same period in 2019, from to RO 44.3m to RO 41.6m. The main decrease was driven by the decrease in the overall cost of input materials (price factor) and elimination of MPF expenses from the consolidation.

Net Profit: As a result of the above, the net profit recorded for the period is RO 6,049,326 as compared to RO 3,483,414 recorded in corresponding period in 2019.

PARENT, SUBSIDIARY AND ASSOCIATES COMPANIES:

The performance of our subsidiaries and associate is as follows:

- Oman Flour Mills SAOG (OFM):** OFM recorded a profit totaling RO 6.56m as compared to previous year profit of RO 3.84m. Sales volume were up by 1.7% and this resulted in an overall increase in the revenue recorded by 1.15%. On the other hand, the raw material cost per ton decreased by 7%, this resulted in an overall increase in the profit.
- Atyab Food Industries LLC (AFI) (100%):** The bakery made a profit of RO 465 K as compared to previous year profit of RO 536 K. The bakery profitability has been affected due to decrease in sale due to the recent circumstances.
- Atyab FoodTech LLC (AFT) (100%):** AFT made a profit after tax of RO 192 K as compared to the previous year profit of RO 385 K. The decrease in profit is due to decrease in revenue and increased administration overheads. Staff count has increased in anticipation expansion of activities.
- Atyab Technical Services LLC (ATS) (100%):** ATS earned a net sponsorship fee of RO 79K as compared to RO 69 K in the previous year.
- Sohar Flour Mills LLC (SFM) (60%):** SFM In the current period SFM has incurred a loss of RO 1.2m compared to a loss of RO 0.911m in the same period last year. SFM commenced commercial production in March-19 and hence last year the operating loss was lower. The Grain Silo project (160Mt capacity) is progressing, this important addition will help improve the SFM position.
- Oman Oilseeds Crushing Company (30%):** is on schedule in implementing the project (Q1-2022), the project will be a good addition to the Group once the project is operational. In the current period the company has incurred RO 227K in administrative expenses of which OFM Group's share is RO 68K.
- Atyab IFFCO Poultry (50%):**
 - Sohar Poultry Co SAOC (SPC):** SPC made a profit of RO 168K (previous year loss of RO 354K). The improved performance is due to better production performance and reduction of feed cost and own production.

Unaudited group statement of comprehensive income For the six months ended 30 June 2020

	Group		Parent Company	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Revenue	46,467	48,490	39,814	39,360
Cost of sale	(36,601)	(39,444)	(32,705)	(34,054)
Gross profit	9,866	9,046	7,109	5,306
Selling & distribution expenses	(2,038)	(2,212)	(196)	(165)
Administration & general overheads	(2,477)	(2,267)	(1,445)	(982)
Profit from operations	5,351	4,567	5,468	4,159
Finance cost - net	(527)	(391)	(18)	-
Net investment income	1,778	33	1,778	33
Other income	286	323	182	259
	6,888	4,532	7,410	4,451
Share in Profit/(Loss) of subsidiary	-	-	44	50
Share in net Profit/(loss) of associates	53	(290)	(73)	-
Net profit before tax	6,941	4,242	7,381	4,501
Tax expense	(893)	(758)	(845)	(663)
Net profit for the year	6,048	3,484	6,536	3,838
Net profit for the period attributable to:				
Shareholders of the parent company	6,536	3,838	6,536	3,838
Non controlling interest in the subsidiary	(487)	(355)	-	-
Net profit for the period	6,049	3,483	6,536	3,838
Net profit margin	13.02%	7.18%	16.42%	9.75%

- Osool Poultry:** The project is in an advance stage, it is expected to be delivered Q1-2021
- Arabian Food Production Company SAOC (AFPC) (33.33%):**
 - Modern Poultry Farms SAOC (MPF):** MPF has made a profit of RO 279K as compared to previous year profit of RO 184K. The increase in profit is due to higher sale and lower cost of sales. Following the resolution by the shareholders in the Ordinary General Meeting held on 13-Feb-2020, OFM's entire shareholding in MPF has been transferred to Arabian Food Production Company SAOC (an associate of Atyab Investments LLC) under a wider plan of investing in the poultry project in partnership with Gulf Japan Food Fund and IFFCO Group of UAE. Profit realized on transfer of the shareholding is included in the income of OFM.
 - Emirates Poultry Farms (EPF):** The group (AFPC), completed the acquisition of EPF on 18th March 2020.
 - Gulf Poultry Farms:** The new farm site section is under finalization

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

Several new initiatives were undertake by the group featuring introduction of new products/ solutions.

During the current period the OFM has successfully completed two projects initiated last year. Implemented new ERP system and Lean Management.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR):

On the **Society** and **Environment** fronts, the Group has initiated several project as part of its CSR program.

These projects covered a wide range of activates/beneficiaries such as sponsoring schools, youth training, sporting events, SME development, Ramadan initiatives, and other humanitarian aids.

Unaudited group statement of financial position as at 30 June 2020

	Group		Parent Company	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	39,973	43,497	11,954	12,562
Investment property	37	37	37	37
Investment in Subsidiaries	-	-	17,306	17,852
Investment in associates	8,492	2,441	2,319	-
Intangible assets	173	153	-	-
Biological assets	-	1,469	-	-
Right to use asset	3,776	168	75	75
Investment available for sale, non-current	355	355	355	355
Total non-current assets	52,806	48,120	32,046	30,881
Current assets				
Inventories, net	21,841	26,457	18,346	22,884
Receivables and prepayments, net	22,943	15,900	16,008	11,426
Amounts due from subsidiaries-1	-	-	7,253	6,790
Amounts due from related parties	3,414	782	2,953	321
Investments available for sale	1,491	1,944	1,491	1,944
Short term deposits	5,000	6,000	5,000	6,000
Cash on hand and at bank	5,543	3,001	3,411	1,529
Total current assets	60,232	54,084	54,462	50,894
Total assets	113,038	102,204	86,508	81,775
Current liabilities				
Payables and accruals	6,918	2,087	5,530	1,941
Payable to related parties	-	154	146	-
Taxation	949	819	894	712
Interest bearing loans	6,640	7,464	4,000	4,250
Total current liabilities	14,507	10,524	10,570	6,903
Non-current liabilities				
Interest bearing loans	17,260	13,911	-	-
Lease Liability	4,018	146	77	77
End of service benefits	984	1,043	482	430
Deferred tax	810	860	462	497
Total non-current liabilities	23,072	15,960	1,021	1,004
Minority Interest	407	1,714	-	-
Total liabilities	37,986	28,198	11,591	7,907
Net assets	75,052	74,006	74,917	73,868
Shareholders' equity				
Share capital	15,750	15,750	15,750	15,750
Legal reserve	6,021	6,263	5,250	5,250
General reserve	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Fair value reserve	105	105	105	105
Retained earnings	50,676	49,388	51,312	50,263
Total shareholders' equity	75,052	74,006	74,917	73,868

FUTURE OUTLOOK:

Macro factors that are affecting the globe, such as the outbreak of COVID-19 and the historical drop in the oil prices, caused extra turbulence on the overall Grain market which is going through a vortex.

Shifts in both demand and supplies balances also played a role in the overall market situation.

While raw material prices are flattening, managing the transportation and logistics still pose the key aspect to maintain smooth operations.

On the product offering front, OFM's plans to launch new products are progressing well, we expect these new product to hit the market in the upcoming months. In particular, the new rice line and, healthy breakfast and snacks are at an advance stage of finalizing the product design.

THANKS AND APPRECIATIONS:

The Members of the Board of Directors would like to extend their most sincere appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq and his Government for their support to the Company.

Best Regards,

Salah Hilal Al Maawali
Chairman, Oman Flour Mills Board of Directors

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be sent by mail within 7 days to any shareholder who requests for them.
P. O. Box 566, P. C. 112, Ruwi, Oman.Tel: 24717300, Fax: 24714711, E-mail: info@omanflourmills.com

WORLD



California went over 603,000 novel coronavirus cases on Friday, according to a Reuters tally. – Reuters

California encouraged by trends even as it passes 600,000 cases

LOS ANGELES: California became the first US state to surpass 600,000 cases of COVID-19 on Friday and the Midwest saw several record one-day rises as some states struggled to contain the pandemic even as a few welcomed students back to school campuses.

California went over 603,000 novel coronavirus cases on Friday, according to a Reuters tally, although Governor Gavin Newsom said he was encouraged to see that hospitalisations have declined 20 per cent over the past two weeks and admissions to ICU wards were down 14 per cent in the same period.

“The number that really matters to us is that positivity rate,” he said when asked about the 600,000 case-milestone at a news conference on Friday. The positivity rate - the number of confirmed infections as a percentage of tests done - has declined from 7 per cent to 6 per cent statewide over the past 14 days, Newsom said.

“I’m not going to back off on more tests because I fear (more cases),” Newsom said.

More testing may be one reason the US Midwest saw some record one-day increases in cases on Friday, including Michigan, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana, according to the Reuters tally.

At least 5,271,000 people have

contracted the coronavirus in the United States since late January, killing at least 167,278, both figures the most in the world, according to the tally.

HEALTHCARE INEQUITIES

Coronavirus hotspots in the United States had disproportionately high numbers of cases among communities of colour, according to an analysis on Friday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The report adds to a growing body of evidence that long-standing health and social inequities have resulted in increased risk for infection and death from COVID-19 among communities of colour, the CDC said.

One of those hotspots is California’s Coachella Valley, home to many Hispanic migrant farmers and whose surrounding Riverside County has recorded the state’s second highest number of infections.

For the farmworkers, no work means no food but they are also frightened of spreading the virus back to families often living in multi-generational homes.

So their local congressman, Raul Ruiz, partnered with Coachella Valley Volunteers in Medicine to bring pop-up testing sites to the fields. — Reuters

IRAN HAILS UN ARMS VOTE REJECTING US BID

TEHRAN: Iran on Saturday hailed a UN Security Council vote rejecting a US bid to extend an arms embargo on the Islamic republic, saying its foe has “never been so isolated”.

President Hassan Rouhani said the US had failed to kill off what he called the “half alive” 2015 deal with major powers that gave Iran relief from sanctions in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme.

“The United States failed in this conspiracy with humiliation,” said Rouhani.

“This day will go down in the history of our Iran and in the history of fighting global arrogance.”

Only two of the Council’s 15 members voted in favour of the US resolution seeking to extend the embargo, highlighting the division between Washington and its European allies since President Donald Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear accord in 2018. Washington’s European allies all abstained, and Iran mocked the Trump administration for winning the support of just one other country, the Dominican Republic. — AFP

Afghan women’s rights trailblazer survives gun attack

K A B U L :

Trailblazing Afghan women’s rights campaigner Fawzia Koofi (picture), a member of the negotiating team that will hold peace talks



with the Taliban, has been wounded in a gun attack near Kabul, officials said on Saturday.

Gunmen opened fire on Koofi, 45, and her sister on Friday when they were returning from a meeting in the province of Parwan near the capital, interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said.

Koofi, a former member of parliament and strong critic of the Taliban, was shot in her right hand, he said, adding that she was in a stable condition. The Taliban denied they were involved in the attack on Koofi.

The attack drew strong condemnation from Afghanistan’s President Ashraf Ghani - who described it as a “cowardly attack”, according to his spokesman Sediq Seddiqi. — AFP



The opposition is gaining momentum after days of protests over last Sunday's disputed presidential vote. — AFP

Belarus leader reaches out to Russia as pressure grows

MINSK: The opposition in Belarus kept up the pressure on President Alexander Lukashenko with a fresh demonstration in Minsk on Saturday, as the strongman reached out to Russia in an apparent plea for help. Some 5,000 opposition supporters gathered near a metro station in the capital where a demonstrator died during this week's police crackdown on protests against Lukashenko's claim to have won re-election last Sunday.

With the opposition gaining momentum after days of demonstrations, Lukashenko's main election challenger Svetlana Tikhanovskaya had called on supporters to rally again over the weekend. Demonstrators laid flowers at the site where Alexander Taraikovsky, 34, died on Monday, with many chanting "Leave!" and some holding up pictures of protesters with severe bruises, after accounts emerged of detained demonstrators

being beaten and tortured. Facing the biggest challenge to his rule since taking power in 1994, Lukashenko made an unusual public plea to speak with Russian President Vladimir Putin. "The aggression against Belarus is developing. We need to contact Putin, the President of Russia, so that I can talk with him now. Because this is already a threat not only to Belarus", Lukashenko told government officials in a televised meeting. — AFP

Russia produces first batch of virus vaccine: Ministry

MOSCOW: Russia said on Saturday that it has produced the first batch of its coronavirus vaccine, after President Vladimir Putin announced it had been first in the world to approve a vaccine. Putin's announcement on Tuesday about the vaccine was met with caution from scientists and the World Health Organization who said it still needed a rigorous safety review. "The first batch of the novel coronavirus vaccine developed by the Gamaleya research institute has been produced", the health ministry said in a statement quoted by Russian news agencies. Putin said the vaccine was safe and that one of his own daughters had been inoculated, though clinical trials were not yet complete and final stage testing involving more than 2,000 people only started this week. Western scientists were sceptical, with some warning that moving too quickly on a vaccine could be dangerous, but Russia denounced criticism as an attempt to undermine Moscow's research. — AFP

Japan's Abe, on WW2 anniversary, vows not to repeat war

TOKYO/SEOUL: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, speaking on the 75th anniversary of Japan's World War Two surrender, pledged never to repeat the tragedy of war and Emperor Naruhito expressed "deep remorse" over the wartime past, which still haunts East Asia. "Never to repeat the tragedy of war. We will continue to remain committed to this resolute pledge", said Abe, wearing a face mask at an official ceremony for war dead on Saturday that was scaled back because of the COVID-19 outbreak. Abe, who did not echo



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe lays a wreath at the cenotaph for the victims of the 1945 atomic bombing, at Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima. — Reuters

Naruhito's reference to remorse, sent a ritual offering to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine for war dead. But he

avoided a personal visit that would anger China and South Korea. South Korean President Moon Jae-In said in a speech Seoul was always ready to discuss history disputes with Tokyo. At least four Japanese cabinet ministers paid their respects in person at Yasukuni, which honours 14 Japanese wartime leaders convicted as war criminals by an Allied tribunal, as well as Japan's war dead. The shrine is seen by Beijing and Seoul as a symbol of Japan's past military aggression. — Reuters

WORLD

Modi talks of vaccines, infrastructure push on Independence Day



Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivers a speech to the nation during a ceremony to celebrate the 74th Independence Day at the Red Fort in New Delhi on Saturday. — AFP

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked of vaccines, further health digitalisation and an infrastructure push on Independence Day on Saturday as the country struggles with the coronavirus pandemic.

Three vaccines were in various stages of testing and could go in for mass production as soon as scientists gave the green light, Modi said during his speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort in New Delhi. India gained independence from British rule on August 15, 1947. Celebrations marking the day are muted this year, with regional lockdowns and social distancing in place to contain the virus. India, a country of 1.3 billion, is among the worst-affected globally by COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. More than 2.5 million infections have been reported so far and 49,036 deaths.

“Not one, not two, we have three vaccines being tested,” Modi said. “We have prepared the infrastructure to provide the vaccine to every person in the country.”

“Our priority is to get the country out of this cloud of corona,” Modi said addressing a less than usual crowd of officials, diplomats and media representatives, all seated following the norms of

social distancing.

Each of them had to undergo a thermal test before entering the venue and wore a mask.

Modi wore his trademark colourful Independence Day turban, this time in white and orange with a flowing train. He used a matching scarf instead of a mask to cover his face when anyone came close. In his lengthy speech,

Modi touched on a host of issues including the border stand-off with China and the need for India to become a bigger economic power globally by increasing exports and becoming self reliant.

“How long are we going to sell raw materials to the world and buyback finished goods? This has to change, we have to move forward,” Modi said, urging Indians to support local manufacturing.

Without mentioning the names of China or Pakistan, Modi said: “Those who challenge India’s sovereignty, be it LoC or LAC, our soldiers have replied in the same language... What India can do, the world has seen in Ladakh.”

Modi said there would be an investment of Rs 100 trillion (\$1.3 trillion) in the National Infrastructure Pipeline Project, which has already been announced. — dpa

“

Not one, not two, we have three vaccines being tested. We have prepared the infrastructure to provide the vaccine to every person in the country. Our priority is to get the country out of this cloud of corona

NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

Britons rush home as second virus wave threatens Europe

LONDON: Thousands of UK holidaymakers scrambled to get home to beat new restrictions on arrivals from European countries as a second wave of virus infections threatened more disruption and economic chaos on the continent. France and the Netherlands were removed from a list of quarantine-exempt countries on Friday, sparking a rush for plane, train and ferry ticket by Britons hoping get home before 4am (0300 GMT) on Saturday, after which arrivals will have to self-isolate for 14 days.

France is facing a resurgent wave of the disease that emerged in China late last year and has so far infected over 21 million people and killed more than 750,000 around the world. Authorities in France have reported more than 2,500 new cases for the past three days — levels not seen since May. — AFP

Pentagon to set up new unit to investigate UFOs

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon said on Friday it was setting up a new task force under the US Navy to investigate UFO sightings.

With the creation of the Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force (UAPTF), the Defence Department hopes “to improve its understanding of, and gain insight into, the nature and origins of UAPs,” spokeswoman Susan Gough said in a statement.

Rather than little green alien invaders, the US military is actually concerned about “unidentified aerial phenomena” connected with its terrestrial adversaries. — AFP

Thousands protest against S Korea’s Moon

SEOUL: A spike in new coronavirus cases in South Korea has prompted authorities to reimpose tighter social distancing curbs in Seoul, but that didn’t stop thousands of demonstrators from protesting against President Moon Jae-in’s policies.

For the second day in a row in over four months, the country has reported a sudden jump in locally transmitted cases, the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said. — Reuters

Trump visits ill brother at New York hospital

NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump on Friday visited his younger brother Robert at a hospital in New York, where he is being treated for an undisclosed illness. The US leader, who was wearing a face mask upon arriving at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, entered through a back door and stayed about 45 minutes, according to a reporter.

US media reports say the president’s brother is seriously ill, although there were no details.

Trump, who was stopping in New York on the way to his golf club in nearby Bedminster, New Jersey for the weekend, told reporters only that “he’s having a hard time.” — AFP



French Defence Minister Florence Parly speaks with a Lebanese army brigadier general upon disembarking from the French Navy amphibious assault helicopter carrier Tonnerre at Beirut port on Friday. — AFP

Diplomatic flurry in Lebanon as aid effort expands

LAYAL ABOU RAHAL AND ACIL TABBARA

Top diplomats criss-crossed Beirut to supervise growing aid efforts and weigh in on Lebanon's political future, following a deadly port explosion blamed on state corruption.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of Iran, which backs Lebanon's Hizbullah, met officials in the capital ahead of a speech by the powerful movement's chief Hassan Nasrallah calling for the formation of a national unity government.

Zarif's visit coincided with those of the top career diplomat of the United States, David Hale, and French Defence Minister Florence Parly.

Both Hale and Parly have joined calls from the international community for a reform-oriented government that would coordinate aid flooding into the crisis-hit country after the resignation of Prime Minister Hassan Diab's cabinet last Monday.

"For the longer run, we cannot accept more empty prom-

ises and more dysfunctional governance," said Hale after meeting the head of the Maronite Church, Patriarch Beshara Rai.

"America is ready to support a Lebanese government that reflects and responds to the will of the people and genuinely commits to and acts for real change."

Zarif said it was for the Lebanese to decide what government they wanted.

"Others should not condition their aid on any change in Lebanon during this emergency situation," he said.

The Iranian foreign minister echoed Lebanese officials in rejecting an international probe into the blast, saying "Lebanon, as an independent country, must be in charge of the investigation".

Protesters filled the streets and clashed with security forces in the days after the August 4 explosion, blaming their political leaders for the negligence they say led to the disaster that killed 171 people and wounded at least 6,500. — AFP

“You want answers?” “I want the truth!”



RAY PETERSEN
petersen_ray@hotmail.com

Colonel Nathan R Jessep, played by Jack Nicholson, is being cross-examined by a youthful Tom Cruise, playing Lt Daniel Kaffee, in the Rob Reiner classic, 'A Few Good Men.' It's Jessep who asks the question, and Kaffee responds, to which Jessep replies, "You can't handle the truth!"

Well, the truth about COVID-19 is something that mankind is not handling well either, as globally the same issues are arising, or reoccurring, and we are not learning the lessons! Really. How many times do we have to stub our toes on a piece of furniture before moving it? How many times do we leave the ice-cream on the bench and it melts before we remember to put it back in the freezer? How many times do we need to be told to practice social-distancing, wear masks and gloves, and stay at home?

We are, collectively and individually, showing no more respect for each other than a toddler, with the big difference being, the toddler doesn't know! We are not wearing masks for any other reason than, "We don't want to."

We celebrate, meet socially, play together, and do all these things because, "We want to." Regardless of the risks, all over the world it doesn't come down to the 'common good,' but our innate selfishness.

On social media, a discussion about opening of religious places for prayers, saying, "Why not, the shopping malls are open?" But the malls are open so people can buy food! I am certain God will understand if we are not in his house. All of us are of a faith, and we all feel the same need to worship together, however now is not the time.

Surely, we are better than what we have shown thus far, by not wearing masks, or wearing them as chin 'masks?' And don't even think for a moment to tell me you have not, and 'are not' visiting family and friends... I see it all around me, and I barely go outside my gate. We are not doing enough, and are not doing it well enough, either here, or anywhere else in the world. Me? I'm an asthmatic, I detest wearing a mask, but it's not all about me is it? And needs must!

Don't like what you are reading? Then you "can't handle the truth," but COVID-19 is not going away without you/us recognising the truth, that if we don't respond effectively, this curse will never end!

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this page are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of the *Observer*.

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Grand Prizes

Maisarah Anniversary Prizes April	Monthly Grand Prizes	Yearly Grand Prizes		
5,000 OMR for 1 winner/ per branch	2,000 OMR for 1 winner per month	25,000 OMR For 1 winner	50,000 OMR For 1 winner	100,000 OMR For 1 winner

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Sinyar set to roll out Mwasalat's smart transportation system

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT: Sinyar — the newly integrated identity of Oman National Transport Company (Mwasalat) and National Ferries Company (NFC) — says it is gearing up to unveil its much-heralded Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), an initiative designed to enhance safety, efficiency and comfort levels across the Sultanate's public transportation network.

The Intelligent Transportation System — an integrated platform comprising, among other features, a passenger information system, vehicle information system, app for passengers, e-ticketing services, live tracking and monitoring of buses and coaches — is proposed to be launched in stages as part of Mwasalat's plan for the "reactivation" of services following the current suspension that came into effect at the start of the pandemic in March.

Details about Mwasalat's reactivation plan and the imminent rollout of the Intelligent Transportation System were shared by a senior company executive during a webinar organised recently by Muscat University College.

Presenting on the theme, 'Future Plan for the Transportation Sector in Oman', Mohammed Said al Yousefi, Head of Intercity Routes Planning at Sinyar, said the reactivation plan envisions a significant reduction in the passenger capacity of buses, trip frequencies and route performance when services



eventually resume.

The timing of the relaunch of operations, he noted however, is essentially a "management decision".

But in conjunction with the reactivation of Mwasalat bus services, the keenly awaited Intelligent Transportation System will be launched in stages as well, said the official. "We are currently - as part of the reactivation plan - working on implementing the Intelligent Transportation System. We can track our buses live, so we can get the whole data and give a proper trip timing to improve the efficiency of trips for our services", said Al Yousefi.

"We will also do the soft launch of the e-ticketing system and monitor it for the first three month, following which we will analyse the system to see how it's working.

TURN TO PAGE 11

INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM:

The integrated platform comprises, among other features, passenger and vehicle information systems, app for passengers, and e-ticketing services, while enabling live tracking and monitoring of buses and coaches.



الخليجية بادر للأسواق المالية ش.م.ع.م.
GULF BAADER CAPITAL MARKETS S.A.O.C.

Merger Notice

Gulf Baader Capital Markets SAOC (GBCM) registered with commercial registration number (1025584) announces that it is in the process of dissolution and merger by way of incorporation with **Ubhar Capital SAOC (U Capital)** registered with commercial registration number (1279406) pursuant to a resolution passed at an Extraordinary General Meeting of U Capital held on 28/7/2020 and a Merger Agreement dated 13/8/2020 entered into between U Capital and GBCM. Any creditor who has an objection to this merger is invited to submit their objection or claim with the supporting documents to the following address:

Attention: Hamad Yaseen Moosa, Legal and Compliance Department
Ubhar Capital SAOC
Penthouse, OMINVEST Business Center, Airport Heights, Muscat, Oman
PO Box: 1137, PC 111. Tel: +968 2494 9018

Attention: Sakina Al Lawati, Compliance Officer
Gulf Baader Capital Markets SAOC
Ghazal Tower, Ruwi, Muscat, Oman
P.O Box 974, PC 112 Tel: +968 2494 9042

A copy of any objection must be filed with the commercial register at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry within 30 days from the date of notice.

Chairman of the Board of Directors

OCCI to host sector wise virtual sessions



KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has urged all business entities across diverse sectors in the country to come online and talk to the officials of the Chamber about their issues, concerns, aspirations and challenges and solutions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, people representing companies specialised in Oil & Gas to travel and tourism, from exhibition, insurance and real estate to IT, from shipping and logistics to industries can have a face to face chat with OCCI officials. The outcomes of the meetings will be relayed to the Supreme Committee tasked with planning and implementation of policies in response to the pandemic.

“This unique e-podium for all businesses in the country is to listen to your concerns during this testing times the

result of which will be communicated to the Supreme Committee to take it forward and offer relief to the suffering sectors”, a senior official from the OCCI told the Observer.

Accordingly, companies specialised in Oil & Gas will be able to talk to the OCCI on August 18; while companies in travel and tourism, exhibitions sector can interact with the authority on August 23. August 30 is set aside for insurance and financial services while August 24 is reserved for industries and allied sectors.

The OCCI will talk to health and education sectors on Aug 26 whereas Aug 25 is for logistics. IT sales and services will be hosted on August 31. real estate on September 1, and food supply companies on September 2.

All meetings are from 5pm to 7pm and companies will be given opportunity to ask for their challenges as well as what sort of help they need from the government.

SINYAR SET TO ROLL OUT MWASALAT’S SMART TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

FROM PAGE 10

Once we see how it is performing and (evaluate) its efficiency – and (after assessing) the need for a system update – we will have a relaunch”.

The Intelligent Transportation System has been an integral part of Sinyar’s vision to operate a world-class urban passenger transportation network in the Sultanate. In addition to augmenting safety and efficiency of bus travel, the new platform promises to unleash an array of benefits to commuters as well. Travellers will be able to access Mwasalat services via a mobile app, apply for seasonal passes, and pay for

services online.

Last year, Japanese-based multinational IT giant NEC Corporation announced that it had been awarded the contract to install an Automated Fare Collection System (AFCS) as well as an Automated Vehicle Location System (AVLS) on Mwasalat’s fleet. The AFCS features contactless electronic payments through the use of a mobile application which will enable cashless, accurate and reliable fare collection.

As many as 200 buses will be equipped with NEC’s high-tech Intelligent Transportation System, benefitting an estimated 20,000 passengers daily.

Bank Nizwa net profits jump 37 per cent

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa registered a 37 per cent increase in net profits to RO 5.8 million for the six-month period ended June 30, 2020 compared to RO 4.2 million during the same period in 2019. Bank Nizwa’s total assets also increased to over RO 1 billion against RO 933.1 million in 2019 registering a growth rate of 14 per cent.

The Bank’s financing to customers rose by 14 per cent to RO 898.2 million for the period ending June 30, this year compared to RO 785.6 million in the same period last year. Customer deposits also climbed 14 per cent to RO 838.9 million against RO 733.2 million on a year-on-year basis.

Shaikh Khalid Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of Bank Nizwa, said, “This year has been a milestone year in our success journey. We have recorded the highest growth in net profits in the banking sector in Oman. This further strengthens our leadership status in Islamic banking in the Sultanate. The impressive performance has also enabled us to wipeout the accumulated losses with a healthy balance sheet. This major achievement is credited to the partnership of our customers and stakeholders, the dedication of our team and the prudent strategy.”

The operating income increased by 15 per cent to RO 18.5 million for the period ending June 30 this year. This reflects Bank Nizwa’s accomplishment in maintaining sustainable growth across a number of operational revenue segments, despite the extreme economic slowdown. Total shareholders’ equity increased by 9 per cent to RO 154.1 million compared to RO 141.7 million on a year-on-year basis.



BUSINESS

Al Mazunah Free Zone launches e-payment service

MUSCAT: Al Mazunah Free Zone, administered by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), has announced the activation of an electronic payment service using the Eddah System (bailment) for companies and bodies operating at the free zone.

Said bin Abdullah al Balushi, Director General of Al Mazunah Free Zone, said tenants and service providers can use the service to finalise all of the transactions related to remote logistics services.

“This will greatly contribute in accelerating the completion of these transactions and facilitating commercial operations in the free zone”, Al Balushi said, adding: “The transactions can now be completed from any location without the need of approaching the concerned department at the free zone. Besides, the activation of this particular service



comes in coincidence with a number of key projects at Al Mazunah Free Zone such as the launch of operations at the Mazunah Dry Port and the construction of Facility Building at the free zone, which will present integrated services and facilities required by investors, business owners and clients under one platform”.

Eddah system of Al

Mazunah Free Zone represents an electronic system that incorporates the application of all rules and regulations related to operational controls in the free zone and entry of investors' data as well as information related to the entry/exit of goods to and from the free zone. This system targets investors based in Al Mazunah Free Zone, investors from outside the

free zone, clearance companies, shipping companies, employees at the free zone, and visitors to the free zone.

Al Mazunah Free Zone has witnessed notable growth during the first half of 2020. The total value of incoming goods into the free zone amounted to RO 334.4 by end of June this year compared to RO 143.4 million during the same period in 2019, marking a growth rate that exceeds 133 per cent.

In volume terms, incoming goods totalled 210,160 tons during the first half of 2020 compared to 129,170 tonnes during the same period in 2019, representing a growth rate of 62 per cent. Incoming vehicles into the free zone totalled 19,384 during the first half of 2020 against just 945 vehicles during the same period in 2019, recording a growth rate of 1,951 per cent.

Modest decline in MSM weekly performance

MUSCAT: The MSM30 Index ended the week down by 0.08 per cent and its main sub-indices have posted mixed performance. The Industrial index was the only gainer up by 0.47 per cent while both the Financial Index and the Service Index closed down by 0.31 per cent and 0.06 per cent respectively.

A project for implementing the XBRL disclosure platform for the reporting of financial and non-financial information by all issuers listed on the Muscat Security Market (MSM) and other companies operating under any licence from the Capital Market Authority (CMA) has been commissioned. XBRL, or extensible Business Reporting Language, is an XML standard for tagging business and financial reports

to increase the transparency and accessibility of business information by using a uniform format. The project has been commissioned by CMA in cooperation with the Muscat Security.

With the third telecom operator expected to enter the Oman market in the coming period, the Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued a decision that will help regulate anti-competitive behaviour in the sector. TRA issued decision 59/2020 amending some provisions of the earlier decision 70/2013, regarding the rules for post-market regulation (anti-competitive behaviour).

National Life & General Insurance (NLGIC) announced that the board approved to apply for a

branch licence for life and general insurance business in Qatar. NLGIC is the biggest insurance company in Oman and has also operations in Kuwait.

Gulf Invest Services Holding board resolved to implement the following restructuring programme: To reduce the capital from RO 15.0m to RO 5.0m by writing off RO 6.58m worth of accumulated losses and repayment of RO 5.95m to shareholders; Statutory reserves will be reduced from RO 4.18m to RO 1.66m and the surplus of RO 2.51m will be utilised partly towards the aforesaid payback to shareholders.

Malt drinks, non-alcoholic beers, ready-to-drink coffees, teas and beverages containing artificial sweeteners are among a wide array of products

that are liable to 50 per cent Excise Tax when the new levy comes into force in the Sultanate on October 1, 2020. Barring a few exceptions, potentially hundreds of different types of sweetened beverages and their variants will be brought under the purview of the new levy — part of an effort by member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council including Oman to disincentivise excessive consumption of products deemed potentially harmful to health.

CMA Oman recently issued the detailed report for the insurance sector of Oman. As per the report, overall premiums of the sector rose by 5 per cent to RO 486m in 2019 compared to RO 463m in 2018.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

DLA Piper, LCM collaborate to offer funding support for clients

MUSCAT: Global law firm DLA Piper has entered into a non-exclusive arrangement with publicly listed disputes financier Litigation Capital Management (LCM), and a newly formed litigation funder, Aldersgate Funding Limited to offer clients of DLA Piper access to £150 million (RO 75m) for funding large-scale litigation and arbitration.

This will be offered on a financial risk-free (non-recourse) basis with a streamlined approval process embedded within the offering.

Intended to be available in all applicable international jurisdictions, Aldersgate Funding has been structured to provide DLA Piper clients “best-in-class” funding terms, fast decision-making and enhanced due diligence that will allow actions to be pursued without any finan-



cial downside to claimants. With access to funding secured from LCM and Aldersgate Funding, DLA Piper will be able to provide the firm's clients with non-recourse finance for 100 per cent of the costs of bringing a claim and additionally the ability to 'source in' adverse cost cover and security for costs as necessary.

Aldersgate Funding will be led by former DLA Piper Corporate partner Jim Holding. Jean-Pierre Douglas Henry and Jamie

Curle (DLA Piper Co-Heads of Global Litigation & Regulatory and UK Litigation & Arbitration respectively) have spearheaded the portfolio funding initiative which has ultimately led to the creation of Aldersgate Funding.

They will continue to lead DLA Piper's engagement in this area and for this offering in particular. Former Global Co-Chair of Litigation & Regulatory at DLA Piper, Stephen Sly, has retired from the Firm and will also serve as Chairman of the

Investment Committee of Aldersgate Funding, bringing decades of disputes experience to the table.

DLA Piper will be offering this funding service as part of its enhanced legal offering named “Law&”.

Speaking on the collaboration, Bruce Mullins, Managing Partner, DLA Piper Oman, commented: “We are working at pace to develop a stream of bold and innovative products and services as part of our enhanced legal offering “Law&”, that will allow clients to seize opportunities.

As part of this mission, our collaboration with Aldersgate Funding and LCM gives clients access to capital to fund claims with a speed, ease and at a quantum hitherto unheard of and represents a sea change in the traditional approach to litigation and arbitration funding.”

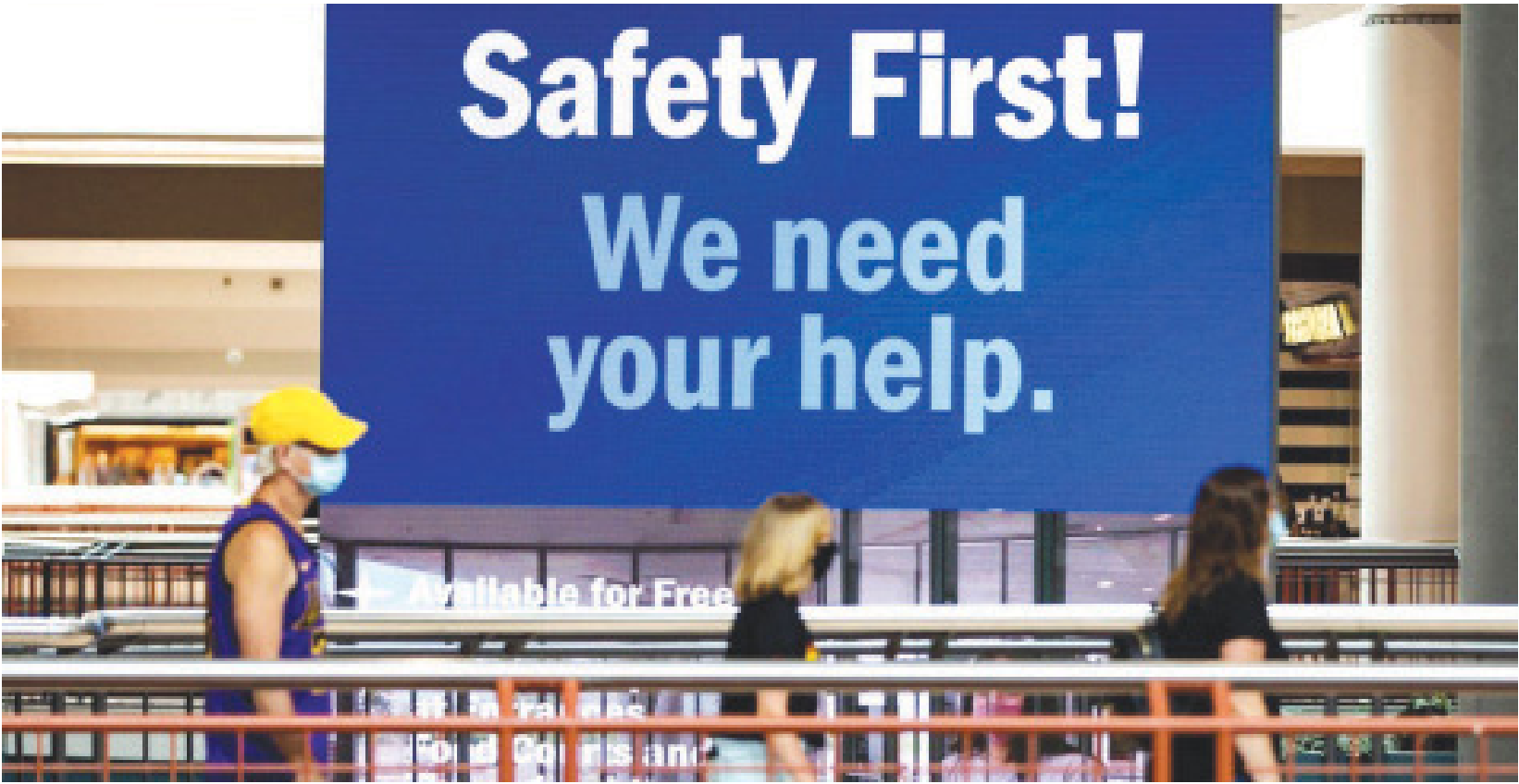
US retail sales slow in July

WASHINGTON: US retail sales increased less than expected in July as consumers cut back on purchases of motor vehicles, and could slow further in the months ahead amid spiralling new COVID-19 infections and a reduction in unemployment benefit checks.

Despite the moderation in retail sales reported by the Commerce Department on Friday, sales have recouped losses suffered when businesses were shuttered to slow the spread of the coronavirus. The third straight monthly gain lifted retail sales to their highest level since the government started tracking the series in 1992. It supported the view that consumer spending would rebound this quarter after a record collapse in the second quarter.

Economists attributed the increase in retail sales over the past three months to a \$600 weekly unemployment benefits supplement from the government, which amounted to almost \$75 billion in July. The supplement ended on July 31, leaving economists to expect a decline in retail sales in August.

“It looks like the skies are darkening



People visit the Destiny USA mall during the reopening, as the COVID-19 restrictions are eased, in Syracuse, New York. — Reuters

once again as the second-wave shutdowns clamp down harder on economic activity and the federal government stops sending \$600 weekly checks to the unemployed”, said Chris Rupkey, Chief Economist at MUFG in New York. “The pandemic isn't over yet and the recession won't be either if Congress and the president can't

come to an agreement on how to best support the nascent recovery in a hurry”.

Retail sales rose 1.2 per cent last month after advancing 8.4 per cent in June. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast sales would rise 1.9 per cent in July. Sales increased 2.7 per cent from a year ago in July. — Reuters



A VLCC oil tanker is seen at a crude oil terminal in Ningbo Zhoushan port, Zhejiang province, China. — Reuters

China ramps up US oil purchases ahead of trade deal review

NEW YORK: US crude oil shipments to China will rise sharply in coming weeks, US traders and shipbrokers and Chinese importers said, as the world's top economies gear up to review a January deal after a prolonged trade war.

Chinese state-owned oil firms have tentatively booked tankers to carry at least 20 million barrels of US crude for August and September, the people said, moves that may ease US concerns that China's purchases are trending well short of purchase commitments under the Phase 1 of the trade deal.

China had emerged as a top US crude buyer, taking \$5.42 billion worth in 2018 before trade tensions brought flows to a near halt.

In January, China pledged to buy \$18.5 billion of energy products including crude oil and natural gas over its 2017 level, implying total value of about \$25 billion this year.

Its US crude purchases through June 30 amounted to \$2.06 billion, according to data from the US Census Bureau, reflecting the COVID-19 pandemic downturn and the limited impact of the Phase 1 deal.

CHINESE STATE-OWNED OIL FIRMS HAVE TENTATIVELY BOOKED TANKERS TO CARRY AT LEAST 20 MILLION BARRELS OF US CRUDE FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER, MOVES THAT MAY EASE US CONCERNS THAT CHINA'S PURCHASES ARE TRENDING WELL SHORT OF PURCHASE COMMITMENTS UNDER THE PHASE 1 OF THE TRADE DEAL.

However, there has been a recent spike in purchases by China's state-owned oil and gas firm PetroChina and its largest refiner Sinopec Corp, the people said.

A review of the US-China trade deal initially slated for Saturday will be delayed due to scheduling issues, and no new date has been agreed yet, Reuters reported.

Already, a monthly record 32 million barrels of US oil are set to reach China in August, according to Refinitiv Eikon data.

New tanker fixtures, or tentative bookings, to China have jumped even

as current oil pricing in other parts of the world may be more favourable for its buyers, said the people, who could not be identified because they are not authorised to speak with the media.

The two Chinese companies each have booked five to six supertankers, that each can hold 2 million barrels of oil, for August and September loadings. US crude exporters Occidental Petroleum, Equinor and Vitol, each chartered one or two vessels, shipping sources said.

PetroChina plans to buy 3 million tonnes (about 22 million barrels), or nearly \$1 billion worth, of US crude by year-end, according to a person briefed on the matter.

"The demand in China has strengthened since COVID-19 restrictions started to be lifted", an Equinor spokesman said, declining to comment on volumes or bookings.

Sinopec, PetroChina and Occidental did not respond to requests for comment. Vitol declined to comment.

The new deals are intended to show China still aims to meet its purchase target, the people familiar with the matter said. — Reuters



Dovizioso to leave Ducati, says manager

MILAN: Italian rider Andrea Dovizioso will not be with Ducati in 2021, bringing to an end his eight-year association with the team, his manager Simone Battistella said on Saturday.

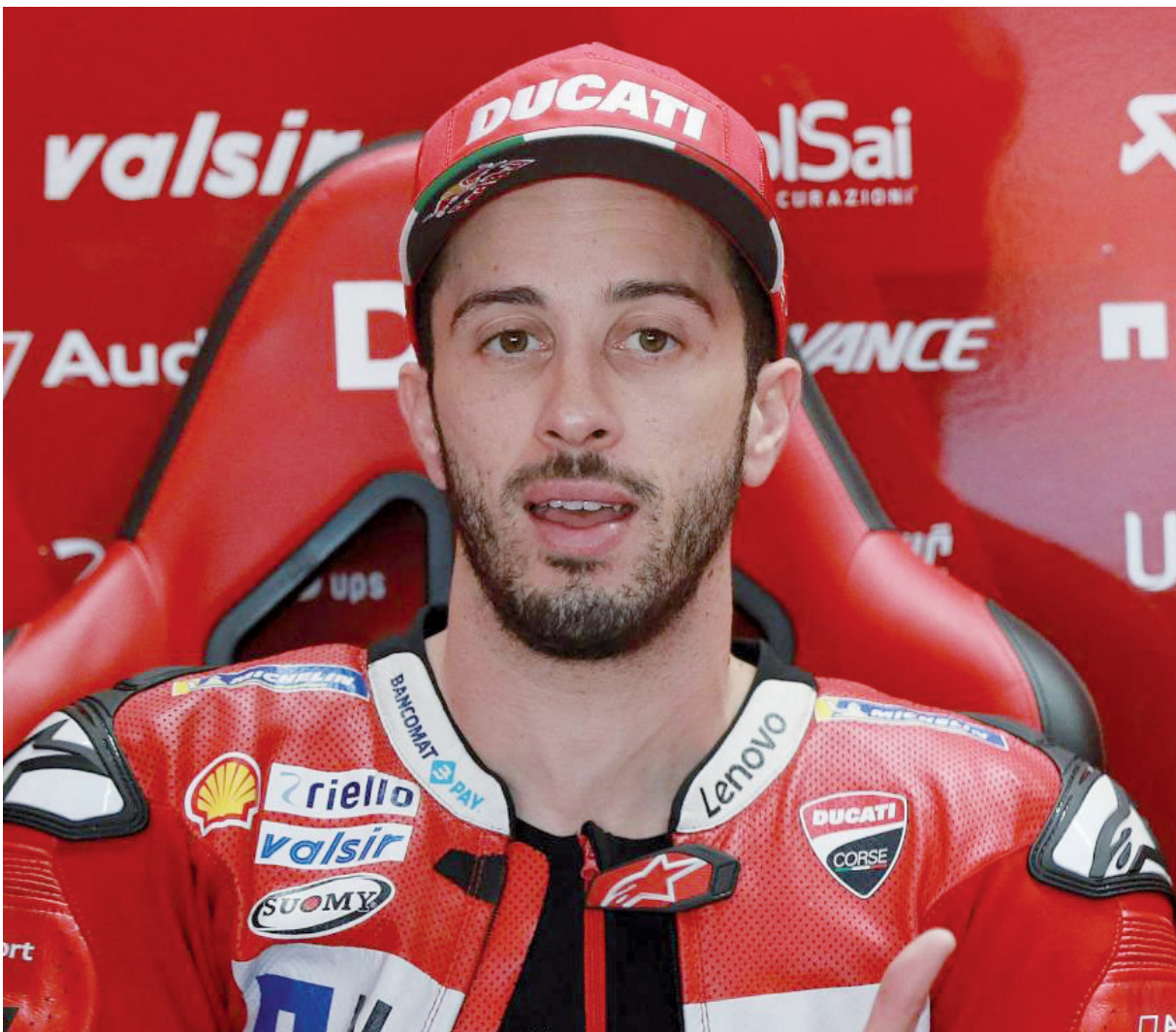
Dovizioso, 34, has won 13 races since joining Ducati in 2013, finishing runner-up in the championship in the last three seasons, but talks over a new contract had stalled this year.

Team manager Davide Tardozzi said on Friday that Dovizioso's future with the team would be decided after next weekend's Styrian Grand Prix, before Battistella met Ducati on Saturday.

"We communicated today to Ducati that Andrea does not intend to continue for the next few years," Battistella told Sky Italia.

"He now wants to focus on this championship, on these races, and let's say we don't feel the conditions are right to continue in the future."

"In practice we've never



talked about the economic part... There have been no proposals or negotiations (for next year)."

Ducati Corse sporting director Paolo Ciabatti said he met Battistella on Saturday at the Red Bull Ring ahead of the

weekend's Austrian Grand Prix but could not come to an agreement to renew Dovizioso's contract.

"We met Simone... and realised that unfortunately there are not the conditions to continue our relationship with Dovi beyond the end of



We communicated today to Ducati that Andrea does not intend to continue for the next few years. He now wants to focus on this championship, on these races, and let's say we don't feel the conditions are right to continue in the future."

SIMONE BATTISTELLA,
DOVIZIOSO'S MANAGER

the current contract," Ciabatti said.

Five-times world champion Jorge Lorenzo, who retired last year and signed as a Yamaha factory test rider in January, has been linked with a return to Ducati.

"Jorge is an important rider for us. He won with us and we keep him in our hearts. We will see," Tardozzi said.

Meanwhile, Pramac Racing's Francesco Bagnaia, who won the Moto2 title in 2018, is also in the mix to partner Jack Miller next year.

— Reuters

SPORTS

SHELBY STUNS SERENA AT TOP SEED OPEN

NEW YORK: Serena Williams' run of third-set magic ran out on Friday, as the top-seeded player at the Top Seed Open in Lexington, Ky, was bounced by Shelby Rogers in the quarterfinals, 1-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5).

After dropping the first set before winning the next two in each of her first two matches in the hard-court tune-up for the US Open, the ninth-ranked Williams appeared heading for an easy win.

But down a set and serving 0-30 with the second set tied 4-4, Rogers — who is ranked No 116 in the world — answered to win the next four points, then break Williams two sets later to even the match at a set apiece.

"It's every kid's dream, growing up watching (Williams) play," Rogers said in her post-match interview, per tennis.com. "Weird circumstances, weird setting. But a win is a win. It's great to see everyone fit and playing well. I was definitely overwhelmed in the first with the pace and heavy spin. I tried to make a few more balls. The serve was a struggle for me today, but the second serve came through for me when I needed it."

In the third set, both players held serve through the first 12 games. But service breaks dominated the tie-breaker, where only five of the 12 points were won on serve. Rogers' fourth break of Williams allowed her to go up 6-4 and ultimately win.

Rogers advances to the semis to face Switzerland's Jil Belen Teichmann, who beat Catherine Cartan Bellis 6-2, 6-4.

Also on Friday, 16-year-old American Coco Gauff stopped eighth-seeded Ons Jabeur of Tunisia, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1, a day after knocking off the

tournament's second seed in Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka.

Gauff will face fellow American Jennifer Brady in the other semifinal, after Brady swept Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic, 6-1, 6-2. Gauff and Brady have never faced one another on tour.

Prague Open

Top-seeded Simona Halep of Romania had little trouble advancing to the semifinals of the clay-court tournament in the Czech Republic, downing Magdalena Frech of Poland in 59 minutes, 6-2, 6-0.

Halep needed three sets to advance in each of the first two rounds. The 28-year-old will meet the winner of the quarterfinal between fellow Romanian Irina-Camelia Begu and Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo. Their match was suspended by weather with Begu up 6-2, 0-1. It will be completed on Saturday.

In the other half of the draw, third-seeded Elise Mertens of Belgium knocked off Canada's Eugenie Bouchard 6-4, 1-6, 6-4, setting up a semifinal against Kristyna Pliskova of the Czech Republic. Pliskova advanced when Romania's Ana Bogdan retired with a left foot injury after grabbing a 5-2 lead in the first set. — Reuters



“

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SHELBY ROGERS



OFA board to decide on footballing season today

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT: The Oman Football Association (OFA) board will decide on Sunday the status of the remaining domestic competitions for the footballing season 2019/2020. The meeting which will be chaired by Salim al Wahaibi, the chairman of OFA, and begin at 10:00 am at OFA headquarters in Seeb Stadium will feature a review of all the possible scenarios for completion of the season which stopped in mid March due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The OFA chairman met with Omantel League rep-

resentatives on July 1 and agreed to continue the season with the three remaining matches of top tier domestic league as per the previous confirmation issued by OFA board in mid March. However, based on the previous OFA plans and scenarios, the preparation to resume the season was set from July end and early August to begin with COVID-19 test for the players. However, the plans were derailed with some changes due to the latest rise of positive



cases registered in the Sultanate in the past few weeks. Today's meeting of the OFA board may decide the upcoming status of the domestic season and it includes different scenarios. The list of possible scenarios can feature the cancellation of the league, crowning Seeb as the champion of the league, allowing the relegation teams to stay for a new season, dropping the last three teams in the table order to the first division league, the first team in both

groups with the best second place to advance to the top-tier league and compete in the league. All the football and sports fans are awaiting the decisions of the Supreme Committee for resumption of the sporting activities. According to the Supreme Committee's decision in March, the sporting season will be back in September and most of the sports associations and committees planned their agenda accordingly. However, it is not clear whether the suspension of the sporting activities will be extended or it will be back in the coming few days.

SPORTS



PACERS TOP HEAT TO CLAIM NO 4 IN EAST

ORLANDO, US: The Indiana Pacers earned the right to be the “home” team to begin their first-round Eastern Conference playoff series against the Heat by beating Miami 109-92 on Friday in the both teams’ regular-season finale near Orlando.

The Pacers and Heat will next play in a best-of-seven playoff series, beginning on Tuesday. Indiana will enter the postseason as the fourth seed in the East, while Miami will be No 5.

With a majority of the teams’ best players sitting the game out — including the Pacers’ T J Warren and Domantas Sabonis, and the Heat’s Jimmy Butler and Bam Adebayo — the loosely played game saw Indiana’s Doug McDermott and Miami’s Kendrick Nunn share game-high honours with 23 points.

The scary moment occurred when Heat swingman Derrick Jones Jr took a hard fall in the

THE PACERS AND HEAT WILL NEXT PLAY IN A BEST-OF-SEVEN PLAYOFF SERIES, BEGINNING ON TUESDAY. INDIANA WILL ENTER THE POSTSEASON AS THE FOURTH SEED IN THE EAST, WHILE MIAMI WILL BE NO 5

third quarter and had to be tended to on the court for several minutes. Fearing a neck injury, he was taken off the floor on a stretcher. Jones was diagnosed with a strained neck.

Philadelphia 76ers 134 - Houston Rockets 96

Tobias Harris paired 18 points with seven rebounds in 24 minutes

while Joel Embiid added 14 points and six rebounds in limited action as Philadelphia turned a blistering first-half shooting display into a runaway victory over Houston.

The 76ers shot 60 per cent prior to the intermission, including a robust 10 of 16 on 3-pointers, in cruising to a 24-point half-time lead.

James Harden recorded his 22nd double-double for the Rockets, posting game-highs in points (27) and assists (10). With a pair of free throws at the 5:39 mark of the first quarter, Harden passed Hall of Famer centre Walt Bellamy (20,941 points) for 36th in NBA career scoring.

Toronto Raptors 117 - Denver Nuggets 109

Stanley Johnson scored a season-best 23 points to lift Toronto past Denver in the final regular-season game for both teams. — **Reuters**

FEATURES

Salut's rock drawings and the stories they tell about the Bronze or Iron Age

Salut is an impressive historical site that continues to excite archaeologists even to this day. As the dig continues, more is also known about this treasure of Bisya. Recently, the spotlight is also focused on the rock drawings attributed to the Bronze or Iron Age... **p20**

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FEATURES



Salut’s rock drawings and the stories they tell about the Bronze or Iron Age

TEXT BY RAY PETERSEN
PHOTOS BY LENA PETERSEN

Salut Archeological Park was unveiled last year, and the subject of a visit by an inspectorate group from ICOMOS (international Council of Monuments and Archaeological Sites), and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), who assessed the site against specific criteria for addition to the Sultanate's prestigious World Heritage list. The VIP group including Dr Miechtild Rossler, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, HRH Princess Dana Firas of Jordan, and Dr Christopher Young, was hosted by the Supervisor of Salut Park, Walid Bin Sultan Al



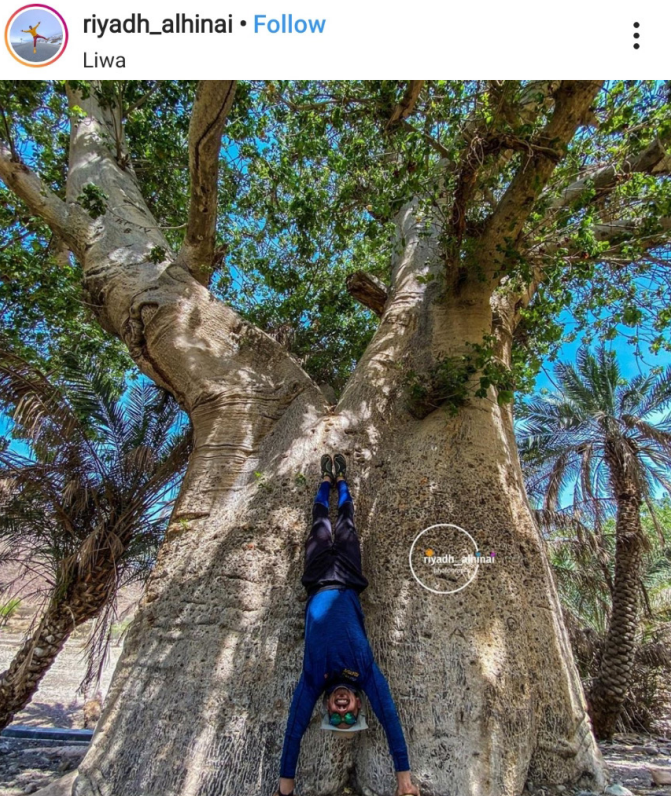
Muzaini and Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan, HE Abdul Aziz Bin Mohammed Al Rowas. Of genuine interest among the multitude of archeological discoveries, were rock drawings attributed to the Bronze or Iron Age in a paper pub-

lished by Andrea Zerboni, of Italy, and a team of mainly Italian researchers from the University of Pisa. Excitement was created as “well-dated rock art is virtually absent,” throughout the region according to the research. In addi-

tion, they suggest that there is sufficient evidence to indicate a significantly more temperate climate during that period of history. We can either accept the geologists' explanations that they have symbolic or religious functions, related to ideas, beliefs and cultural practices, or we can take a rather more passionate and artistic perspective, and perhaps see each one as its artist's interpretation of what they have seen, as different as a Picasso, a Michaelangelo, an Andy Warhol, or a 'Banksie.' All art, you see, is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as, “the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.” Thus, we see in it, what it tells us, personally. Other notable ‘rock art’ sites around Oman include petroglyphs at Qida, near Khasab in Mussandam, which were once part of a cave system affected by soil erosion. In Samharam, Dhofar, is a panel marking the founding of the town by an early Yemeni King possibly Abu Karim or Asadum Talan, while near Bilad Sait, Hasat bin Sait bas-relief sculptures, portray a local legend from 4500 years ago. Wadi al Ayn, and Wadi Tanuf also have excellent examples of this ancient form of storytelling and recording history. Rock art then, is a window to the past, one worth opening.

FEATURES

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Serbian musicians battle the coronavirus blues

IN A STUDIO embedded deep inside an old Belgrade printing factory turned artists' space, the rock group Dingospo Dali rehearses for a show they are not sure will come to pass.

Like musicians around the world, the group's plans have been disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, which has silenced the concert scene in Serbia and thrown Balkan artists into an even more precarious existence.

"I lost a lot of work, as a

musician and also as a sound engineer," Nikola Vidojevic, the band's 33-year-old drummer, said.

"The pandemic stopped everything."

The six rockers still jam in their studio in the former BIGZ printing and publishing house on the Sava river which has become a mecca for independent musicians and artists in the Serbian capital.

Built in the 1930s, the building housed one of the largest

printing works in the region before Yugoslavia's collapse.

Over the past 15 years, its rooms have been reclaimed as a hub for independent rock and alternative art.

music wafts through the building's huge network of graffiti-streaked hallways, with rooms occupied by dozens of bands, nightclubs and art studios, helping cut the loneliness of the pandemic.

But today the moody neon-lit corridors carry a new heaviness, with many artists

now in dire financial straits.

"Most of the tens of thousands of musicians in Serbia have no other source of income than music," said Nikola Jovanovic, owner of a music publishing house and concert organiser.

EXIT OUT

The loss of Serbia's popular summer festivals, including Exit, one of Europe's biggest events, as well as Beer Fest and the Nisville Jazz Festival, have spread the anguish across a whole economy of entertainment workers.

Sreten Kovacevic, 63, who runs a company that builds stages for Exit and Nisville, has had to let go of seven of his eight employees.

"The people who used to work for us -- technicians, sound and lighting people, sound engineers -- are now probably also looking for alternative ways to make money. It's all stopped. The future is very bleak," he said.

Previously graced by the likes of Manu Chao and The Cure, the Exit festival was initially postponed to August and then cancelled altogether due to the resurgence of coronavirus.

"For the first time in its 20 years of existence, the festival won't be taking place," lamented Exit manager Zdravko Vulin.

A thousand jobs are ultimately threatened, he said.

"It's an absolute catastrophe for the industry as a whole," added Ivan Blagojevic, 60, director of the Nisville festival, which has previously hosted global stars like Candy Dulfer and Tony Allen.

He's wishing for the festival to be able to go ahead in September but the worsening course of the pandemic leaves little room for hope, with hundreds of new cases recorded daily. — AFP

Captive beluga whales released into Iceland sea sanctuary

TWO BELUGA whales from a Shanghai aquarium have returned to the sea in an Icelandic sanctuary, conservationists said Monday, expressing hopes of creating a model for rehoming some 300 belugas currently in captivity.

Little White and Little Grey, two 13-year-old females, left behind their previous lives entertaining visitors at the Changfeng Ocean World in June 2019 when they were flown to Iceland's Klettsvik Bay in the Westman Islands, in specially tailored containers.

On Friday, they were moved from their landbased facility to care pools in the sea at Klettsvik Bay -- the first time the two belugas have been in the sea since they were taken from a Russian whale research centre in 2011, the conservation charity Sea Life Trust said in a statement on Monday.

They will stay in the care pools "for a few weeks" before they are released into the bigger sanctuary, a 32,000-square-metre (344,445-square-foot) sea pen that will become their home, organisers said.

Little Grey and Little White "will

need a short period of time to acclimatise to their new natural environment and all the outdoor elements before they are released into the wider sanctuary in Klettsvik Bay," the statement said.

After having been cared for by humans for so many years, it is unlikely the belugas would survive in the wild.

The pen is thus sealed off by nets that still allow sea life, such as fish, to swim through.

'AMBASSADORS'

Andy Bool, the head of Sea Life Trust, said the belugas' release "was as smooth as we had hoped and planned for."

"We are carefully monitoring Little Grey and Little White with our expert care team and veterinarians," he said.

Bool said the whales were "ambassadors for the 300 other belugas that are in human care across the world."

"We hope to show that Little White and Little Grey thrive in this bay, and we're conducting a research study ... that will hopefully show that there's a welfare benefit to being in a natural envi-

ronment like this.

"We hope that can then persuade others that maybe their beluga whales might be better off in a different environment," Bool said.

Ahead of their sea transfer, the whales were trained to hold their breath longer, become physically stronger to cope with tides and currents, and put on blubber to help them cope with colder water temperatures.

The whales each weigh 900 kilogrammes (2,000 pounds) and measure four metres (13 feet).

Originally from Russian Arctic waters, it is thought they were two or three years old when captured.

Belugas typically live for 40 to 60 years.

According to Sea Life Trust, Klettsvik Bay is the world's first open water beluga sanctuary.

Klettsvik is also where Keiko, the killer whale in the 1993 film "Free Willy", was flown in 1998. The orca was fully released in 2002 but did not manage to adapt to life in the wild and died 18 months later in a Norwegian fjord.—**AFP**