



**SUNDAY, 27 JUNE 2021**  
**www.muscatdaily.com**  
Email: muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om  
To subscribe, call toll free no: 80076000

**41°C/33°C**

**VERSTAPPEN ON STYRIAN GP POLE**  
GO TO **PAGE 16 SPORTS**

## 'Total closure last option'

**Shaddad al Musalmey**  
Muscat

H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, said on Thursday that if a complete lockdown is announced, it would be for the safety of citizens. However, he said total closure is the last option the state will resort to.

"The government's priority is the health of citizens and residents. Decisions will be based on the pandemic situation," H E Dr Sa'eedi said, adding that currently there are no plans to close airports.

Asked about the tourism season in Dhofar governorate, H E Dr Sa'eedi said that a technical team tasked with studying the matter will submit a report to the Supreme Committee shortly. "A decision will be taken accordingly on whether or not to allow visitors to Dhofar."

Implementation of a full lockdown would depend on the epidemiological situation in the sultanate, the minister informed, noting that a partial closure imposed earlier in Dhofar yielded



*The government's priority is the health of citizens and residents. Decisions will be based on the pandemic situation*

H E DR AHMED AL SA'EEDI

### 32 deaths, 1,866 cases

Muscat - The Ministry of Health registered 1,886 new cases of COVID-19 and 32 related deaths on Thursday, taking the total number of positive cases in Oman to 256,542 and deaths to 2,848. A ministry statement said 1,733 COVID-19 patients recovered on Thursday, accounting for a total of 224,077 recoveries.

positive results. According to H E Dr Sa'eedi, infection numbers in the ongoing wave are "the worst since the outbreak of the pandemic" in Oman.

"The health sector has become saturated. Most deaths during the month of April were of individuals over 60 who refused to be vaccinated. Our aim is to vaccinate all target groups with a dose of the vaccine before the end of August."

H E Dr Sa'eedi reiterated that Oman will only allow the use of vaccines and medical equipment

after ensuring safety and effectiveness. "Those spreading rumours about vaccines will be held accountable," he said, adding that Oman will not exclude anyone from the National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19. The minister also refuted rumours about a shortage of oxygen devices.

The Ministry of Health has added pregnant women to the list of target groups for vaccination. "Forty pregnant women were in ICUs until Wednesday," he said.

@shaddadm

## Various mutant strains in Oman

Muscat - Dr Saif bin Salim al Abri, director general of Disease Surveillance and Control in the Ministry of Health, has informed that the presence of mutated strains of the novel coronavirus - including Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta strains - in Oman is resulting in the current spike in cases.

"The spread of cases has increased by about 80 per cent in the current wave due to mutated strains," Dr Abri said. "The Delta



*The spread of cases has increased by about 80 per cent in the current wave due to mutated strains*

DR SAIF BIN SALIM AL ABRI

variant is the most dangerous because of its rapid spread."

A new target group for immunisation is set to be announced this week, the Ministry of Health stated on Thursday.

isation is set to be announced this week, the Ministry of Health stated on Thursday.

## Oman one of 6 countries in region seeing spike in cases

**Our Correspondent**  
Muscat

Oman, along with six other countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, is seeing a surge in COVID-19 cases which is in contrast to the remaining nations in the region where infections have been declining for over two months.

"The number of cases is declining for the tenth week in a row, with the number of deaths stabilising or declining slightly. While this is good news, six countries in the region reported an increase in new cases last week, compared to the previous week," Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, WHO's regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean, said on Thursday.

"The case increase in Oman and Yemen exceeded 20 per cent, and Afghanistan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen have reported a more than 20 per cent increase in the number of deaths. We believe there are several reasons for these increases, including the spread of variants of concern, lack of adherence to preventative measures, and vaccine inequity, which, along with vaccine hesitancy, is being witnessed globally and across our region," he added.

According to WHO, 2.4bn vaccine doses had been administered globally as of June 21, of which approximately 83mn were administered in the region, as of June 20, covering only 11 doses per 100 people. While a handful of countries have high vaccination rates, eight of 22 countries in the region have vaccinated less than one per cent of their population.

"The region still needs over 400mn doses to vaccinate priority groups - who make up 40 per



*The region still needs over 400mn doses to vaccinate priority groups by the end of the year*

DR AHMED  
AL MANDHARI

cent of the region's population - by the end of the year. If countries immediately share doses with COVAX and if manufacturers prioritise COVAX orders, we will be in a better position to achieve WHO's targets to vaccinate at least ten per cent of the population of every country by September and at least 40 per cent by the end of the year," Dr Mandhari said.

WHO is continuing to provide support to boost vaccine production in the region to overcome the shortfall in vaccination rates. "We welcome the advancements and technology transfer agreements made by vaccine production companies in Egypt, Iran, Pakistan and the UAE and anticipate potential ventures by Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia."

Variants of concern continue to circulate across the region. "We continue to observe how vaccine efficacy is affected by these new variants, but so far, vaccines are still proving effective against all new variants," Dr Mandhari said.



## Saudi keen to develop industrial zone in Oman

**Our Correspondent**  
Muscat

Saudi Arabia has shown interest in developing an industrial zone in Oman as officials from the two countries met last week in Riyadh discussing investment opportunities in both the countries.

The two sides discussed studying the possibility of establishing a Saudi industrial zone in Oman, so that the Saudi side could develop, operate and manage the zone, and build logistical infrastructure to transport goods between the Saudi and Omani special economic zones. "This will benefit both the countries, and help exchange experiences in the field of development and supervision in the special economic zones," the Saudi state new agency SPA said.

The Omani delegation, led by H E Aseela Salim al Samsamiyah, Undersecretary for Investment Promotion in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, visited Saudi Arabia last week, and discussed various investment opportunities



H E Aseela Salim al Samsamiyah

in real estate, industry, tourism, fisheries, renewable energy and petrochemicals sectors to the tune of RO1.5bn.

Nabil Khoja, secretary general of Special Economic Cities and Zones Authority, Saudi Arabia, met H E Aseela and her accompanying delegation in Riyadh and discussed prospects for cooperation and opportunities in the special economic zones.

H E Aseela informed that the visit aimed to achieve integration between Saudi Vision 2030 and Oman Vision 2040. The two share many goals, including economic diversification and the formation of strong economic entities and companies to support the respective economies.

## ICC T20 World Cup: Oman all set to co-host with UAE in mid-Oct

**Ashok Purohit**  
Muscat

A formal announcement may still be a couple of days away but if sources at Oman Cricket (OC) are to be believed, 'the moment is about to arrive - co-hosting 2021 ICC T20 World Cup'.

Thousands of Oman cricket fans and officials are awaiting the official announcement with bated breath though there is already excitement in the air following various media reports.

The 2021 men's T20 World Cup cricket tournament is set to be shifted from India to the United Arab Emirates with the first round qualifiers split between the UAE and Oman.

According to media reports on Friday and Saturday, the 2021 edition will likely be held from mid-October soon after IPL 2021, which has already been shifted to the UAE, with the final scheduled in mid-November.

Reacting to the reports, OC chairman Pankaj Khimji told *Muscat Daily* on Saturday that



the official announcement on the T20 World Cup being shifted to the UAE and Oman was awaited but that he was 'positive and hopeful'.

OC chief development officer and national team chief coach Duleep Mendis echoed a similar

view when asked to comment.

"It is a matter of getting the official endorsement but we are gearing up for it," said Mendis, a former Sri Lanka cricket captain.

While Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is yet to officially announce the switch to

the UAE, sources have confirmed that International Cricket Council (ICC) has written to the UAE and Oman cricket governing bodies to begin preparations to host the event.

The 16-team tournament includes Oman, which will feature in the preliminary rounds along with seven other teams.

Oman is expected to co-host the first round of the tournament at its main ground in Amerat. The opening round, which will include 12 matches, will comprise eight teams from which four (top two from each group) will qualify for the Super 12s. Four teams from the eight - Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Netherlands, Scotland, Namibia, Oman and Papua New Guinea - will progress to the Super 12s, joining the top eight ranked T20I teams.

According to a top OC official, the upgrade of ground infrastructure at the OC facility in Amerat will begin on Sunday. "Oman is ready for the challenge in all respects," he added.

Continued on Page 03

# MoH working with private hospitals to vaccinate blue-collar workers

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Ministry of Health is working with private hospitals to vaccinate blue-collar workers at the earliest in its efforts to immunise the entire population of the sultanate.

Speaking about the initiative, Dr Mazin al Khabouri, director general of Private Health Establishments in the Ministry of Health (MoH), informed that blue-collar workers in the special economic zones of Duqm, Sohar, Salalah and Mazyona are already being vaccinated free of charge.

"We will also start vaccinating them in Dhofar as the khareef season will start soon. Private healthcare institutions have taken a huge vaccination load; they have been to various places which are not quite accessible. We understand the role of everyone, including blue-collar workers, in society and everyone's life is important," Dr Khabouri said.

According to Dr Khabouri, the ministry is in talks with various



Dr Mazin al Khabouri (Supplied photo)

private hospitals to vaccinate labourers and "action will be taken very soon".

He added that private healthcare institutions are working

shoulder-to-shoulder with the public sector to vaccinate the entire population in the country.

"We will have more sectors, more opportunities and outlets

*Private healthcare institutions have taken a huge vaccination load; they have been to various places which are not quite accessible. We understand the role of everyone, including blue-collar workers*

DR MAZIN AL KHAPOURI

for private organisations to vaccinate the people, including blue-collar workers.

"Our vaccination programme is going on at full steam and everyone, irrespective of nationality and community, is being given the opportunity to get vaccinated."

Jacob Oommen, chief operating officer and project head for COVID-19 vaccinations at Badr

al Samaa Group of Hospitals, said, "Being the largest private healthcare provider in Oman, we have got the majority of companies and corporates that registered with MoH enrolled for vaccinations. Since we are present everywhere in Oman, we have already covered many blue-collar workforce intensive companies in sectors like construction, oil and gas, manufacturing, sanitation, etc."

Oommen informed that the group has multiple teams visiting labour camps everyday to expand vaccine coverage safely and conveniently. "Labour camps are high risk zones since a large number of people stay together. These are on our priority list and in association with MoH, we aim to cover all such companies immediately which have chosen us for their vaccination programme."

An official of Aster al Raffah also confirmed that a team from the hospital will visit labour camps to conduct vaccination drives in the coming days.



(For illustrative purpose)

## People with special needs to receive vaccine at home

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Ministry of Health will start a home vaccination service for people with special needs in Muscat starting Sunday.

Dr Thamra bint Said al Ghafriyah, acting director general of health services in Muscat governorate, stated the same on Thursday.

Additionally, the drive-through vaccination service at Oman Automobile Association

Seeb that was suspended due to the night lockdown will resume from Sunday. The new timings are from 3pm to 7pm.

"For others in the Governorate of Muscat, Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) has been set up for COVID-19 vaccination. The smooth conduct of this vaccination centre is remarkable," she said.

According to Dr Thamra, the waiting period at OCEC is less than 30 minutes, despite its huge capacity.

## ROP urges people to report violations

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has registered violations against commercial establishments and people for gathering in private and public places, according to Brig Gen Mohammed bin Nasser al Kindi, director general of operations, ROP.

"We have also detected some forged COVID-19 examination certificates at Muscat Airport from travellers outside the sultanate. They were dealt with in line with the decisions of the Supreme Committee.

"Some offenders organised gatherings in farms, which are available across the sultanate, but the police monitors these lo-

cations to prevent gatherings," Brig Gen Kindi said.

He added that ROP has implemented modern technologies to facilitate services for the public.

He called on all to report any gatherings on 1099. Buraimi Governorate Police Command recently arrested a group of people for violating the decisions of the Supreme Committee.

## Commerce ministry suspends sales and promotional discounts

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has suspended approvals for all sales and promotional offers.

"The service for granting promotional offers, discounts and advertising these has been suspended until further notice," MoCIIP said in a statement issued on Saturday.

The ministry stressed the need for all commercial centres, shops and industrial establishments to abide by the preventive measures to limit the spread of coronavirus.

### Inspection teams

Based on the directives of the



Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the impact of COVID-19, the ministry has formed a technical team in corporation with a number of government agencies to keep an eye on violations in

commercial establishments.

According to Mubarak bin Mohammed al Dohani, director general of Commerce in the ministry, the team consists of personnel from Royal Oman Police,

Ministry of Interior and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority. "The team aims to monitor the extent to which commercial establishments adhere to the implementation of precautionary measures."

He added that MoCIIP has registered violations against some commercial establishments and released their names through the media.

"We call on all commercial establishments to abide by the precautionary measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to avoid a complete closure. We also thank citizens and residents for reporting violations that occurred at some institutions and urge them to report any violations in the future too," Dohani said.

OMAN'S 1<sup>ST</sup> EXCHANGE

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE

شركة برشوتام كانجي للتسرافة

**SEND MONEY TO UAE TO BANK ACCOUNTS**

**Corporate and Individual**

99101314, 99849289 customersupport@pkexchange.net

www.pkexchange.com pkexch @pkexchange1

## CDAA issues COVID-19 guidelines for workplaces

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 at workplaces, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has issued safety guidelines.

CDAA has stated that proper preventive measures at workplaces will safeguard people from getting infected with the novel coronavirus.

"Encourage employees to follow proper procedures for respiratory diseases, including covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing,



and washing hands with soap and water regularly and properly, or using sanitiser," it stated.

"Avoid handshakes and ensure social distancing at work of no less than 2m, wearing face

masks in case a safe distance cannot be maintained between employees. Advise employees to stay home if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 to prevent spreading the virus at the

workplace. Post and distribute awareness posters and leaflets among employees explaining the proper way to wash hands and use sanitiser."

To ensure employees' safety at work, companies should provide thermometers and check employees' temperature prior to entering the workplace and set up a place to wash hands or a dispenser for hand sanitiser of no less than 60 per cent alcohol content.

"Employees should continuously clean and disinfect desktops, telephones and key-boards," CDAA stated.

You love delicious food.  
*So do we.*

Distributed by:

**CATERING SOLUTIONS TRADING LLC**

Please contact +968 22060236/237

We live for Muesli. **familia**

# Ministry of Information holds COVID-19 vaccination drive for staff, media personnel

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Media personnel in Oman on Thursday got a shot in the arm - literally. They were part of a COVID-19 vaccination campaign organised by the Ministry of Information, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health (MoH), where they got the first dose of the vaccine along with the ministry employees.

The Ministry of Information stated that it launched the campaign to protect its employees and media personnel working in various outlets in the sultanate.

The ministry added that media professionals are making great efforts in covering daily events as well as working to spread awareness on COVID-19 and vaccination.

Mohammed Obaid Ahmed al Mamari, head of staff welfare in the Ministry of Information, said, "Today we are administering over 1,000 Pfizer-BioNTech jabs to private media company staff



H E Dr Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al Harrasi (right) in conversation with the vaccination team at the ministry premises where employees and media personnel received the first COVID-19 jab (Syed Fasiuddin/ Muscat Daily)



along with the staff of the ministry. The second dose will be given after eight weeks."

H E Dr Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al Harrasi, Minister of Information, was present at the venue and was seen interacting with MoH's vaccination team.

Lamis bint Hamad al Kiyumi, head of the mobile team vaccinating state administrative staff against the COVID-19, said, "We began the campaign on June 7 to cover institutions of the state's administrative apparatus, and nearly 9,000 have been vac-

nated so far in eight institutions. "The vaccination campaign at the Ministry of Information witnessed a great turnout from employees and media personnel." She added, "I urge all target groups to speed up taking the vaccine, not paying attention to

rumours." Nurse Ghalia bint Ali al Balushi from Al Shadi Health Centre explained that the nursing staff in the mobile team evaluates the receivers before giving the vaccine and finds out if they have been in contact with in-

fectured persons or have an excessive sensitivity to certain drugs. "Then they are registered electronically in a surveillance programme, only after which they are given the vaccine," she said. "I urge people to hurry up to

take the vaccine in order to reduce pressure on hospitals, especially ICUs." The Ministry of Information conducted the vaccination drive from 8am to 2pm at the ministry's premises in Madinat al Alam.

## ESO contest aims to spread awareness on environment among youth

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

As part of its efforts to spread environmental awareness among young people, Environment Society of Oman (ESO) in cooperation with Shell Oman has launched the 'Wa'ai' competition.

ESO said, 'The Wa'ai competition aims to encourage individuals between the ages of 15 to 25 to be creative at developing informative environmental content to encourage sustainable behaviours and lifestyles through short films, short stories, and infographic in support of the ESO.'



The competition themes will include recycling, eLittering and single-use plastics. The participant can choose one theme or 'allow your creativity to take you further and combine more than one theme', ESO stated.

A short film should not be longer than 120 seconds; a short story - creative story not exceeding 2,000 words, and infographic - raising awareness about the competition themes. Registration deadline for the competition is June 30. ESO stated that the public will have the opportunity to vote and determine the winner. Interested participants can select only one competition category and should fill out the registration form via <https://forms.gle/CcJhgr-DamimKqt8> For further information, contact 91216439 or [education@eso.org.om](mailto:education@eso.org.om)

## New fish market opens in Barka

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

A new fish market in the wilayat of Barka was opened to public on Thursday.

Part of the Barka Port Development Project (Barka Marina), one of the most promising projects in the wilayat that serves fisheries and tourism sectors, the fish market has 72 shops for sellers, 21 for fish cutting, and selling sites for fishermen and fish transporters, in addition to logistics infrastructure necessary for fishermen.

The opening ceremony was held in adherence with the precautionary measures set by the departments concerned.



The opening included operating all facilities related to the fish market, regulating the entry of fish transport vehicles and transporting fish from boats to the auctioning area, as well as operating the auctioning system at

the designated site. Authorised vendors received the outlets designated for fish selling and cutting according to the regulations of fish markets issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water

Resources. The Barka Marina project is coming up at a cost of RO55mn spread over 115,200sqm. The building area is 105,000sqm, the leasable area is 40,000sqm, while the number of commercial units stands at 450.

## Oman all set to co-host ICC T20 World Cup

Continued from Page 01

Earlier, the ICC gave BCCI time till June 28 to finalise the schedule and announce the details of the T20 World Cup. While the T20 World Cup will be co-hosted by the UAE and Oman, the hosting rights will be retained by BCCI.

Indian news agency ANI tweeted on Saturday quoting BCCI secretary Jay Shah, "Due to the COVID situation in the country, we may shift the T20 World Cup scheduled in India to UAE. We are monitoring the situation closely. Health and safety of players are paramount for us. We will take the final call soon."

With the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting the global cricket calendar last year, the ICC postponed the 2020 World Cup, originally scheduled to be held in Australia, and decided India would host the tournament in 2021 with Australia hosting the 2022 edition.

@ashokmuscat

### PRAYER TIMINGS

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| Fajr    | 3.52am  |
| Sunrise | 5.22am  |
| Duhr    | 12.09pm |
| Asr     | 3.27pm  |
| Maghrib | 6.57pm  |
| Isha    | 8.27pm  |

**Sporty, comfortable and sounds good too!**

BOSE FRAMES TEMPO

Designed for sports, these high-performance audio sunglasses beat all others with its stability, comfort, a water-resistant IPX4 rating, and a battery life of up to 8 hours.

**OHI ELECTRONICS**

**Bose Showroom at Qurum City Centre**  
Tel: 24470497

Also available at Lulu (Bowsher, Markaz Al Bahja, Mall of Muscat & Salalah), Emax, Sharaf DG, Virgin & Dubai Optical.

**MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY**

**Advertisement No.( 27 /2021)**

Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

| Tender No. | No E- Tender         | Description of Tender                                           | Tender Fee | Last date to collect the tender | Tender return date | Grade     |
|------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| PRE/21/029 | ( 33/2021/MM/ HQ-27) | Supply and Laying of Asphalt for Muscat Governorate (E- Tender) | Rial 100   | 17/07/2021                      | 02/08/2021         | Excellent |

**Tender Conditions :-**

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of a bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be ( 1% ) of the tender value valid for ninety ( 90 ) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Original Tender Bond envelope should be sealed with red wax and entitled to His Excellency/ Head of Internal Tender Committee and to be placed in the Tender Box at Muscat Municipality HQ, Third Floor, before 10:00 am as per the date mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to ([etenderhd@ita.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@ita.gov.om)) or call (+96824166670).

(Supplied photo)



## EA conducts mangrove plantation drive in Masirah

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Environment Authority (EA) last week conducted a campaign to plant 1,000 mangrove seedlings in Masirah in South Sharqiyah governorate.

The campaign was conducted in Khor al Har in the wilayat of Masirah.

The campaign was a part of a project which started in 2001 and aims to cultivate 1mn seedlings of mangrove trees on sultanate's coasts within 20 years. The authority has already planted over 680,000 saplings in 30 khors in various coastal areas.

"The continuity of work in

preserving environmental systems in accordance with internationally approved standards and measures will have a significant positive impact in creating a sound environmental balance," an EA official said while emphasising the importance of community participation and solidarity in preserving these ecosystems.

In January 2020, EA in co-operation with Petroleum Development Oman, launched an initiative to plant 10mn wild tree saplings in the next ten years.

The authority said that the wild tree species will include ghaf, al samar and sidr, for which nurseries are being set up.

# Graffiti artist pays tribute to healthcare workers



Our Correspondent  
Muscat

A young Omani graffiti artist is putting the spotlight on the sacrifices the healthcare personnel are making during the COVID-19 pandemic through his elaborate paintings and portraits displayed in the wilayat of Rustaq in South Batinah.

Ahmed Hamid Nasser al Ghafri, a nurse, sheds light on many issues through his graffiti. Over the past four years he has found himself atop hills or standing in front of large canvases and walls making eye-catching paintings and portraits, thereby adding to the beauty of the sultanate.

To express his love for Oman and pay rich tributes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and to the Late Sultan Qaboos, Ghafri took great pains to make their portrait.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ghafri said, "I have been doing graffiti since childhood. In 2018, I started work on the portraits on the walls and some old houses in



(Supplied photos)

*I will continue to make paintings in the valleys, mountains and various regions to promote tourism. I hope my art reaches a wider audience*

AHMED HAMID NASSER AL GHAFRI

Rustaq. I completed work on the portrait of His Majesty Sultan Haitham and the Late Sultan Qaboos in 2020."

Ghafri feels that his art adds value to a site, helping promote tourism, and encouraging people to conserve the environment.



"The portrait of His Majesties is 2m high and 4m wide. I painted it on a bridge in Wadi Bani Ghafir in the wilayat of Rustaq," he said, adding, "It was not an easy task as I worked for several hours a day during intense heat."

Ghafri has recently painted a portrait of an Omani doctor to highlight the efforts of healthcare personnel in combating coron-

avirus. "I will continue to make paintings in the valleys, mountains and various regions of Oman to promote tourism. I hope that my art reaches a wider audience and helps promote my country," Ghafri said.

"I hope to provide special places for graffiti artists to help them show their talent and their humanitarian messages. I also want to host an exhibition."

**oman OASIS**  
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

**WIN GOLD**

**Total 1061 PRIZES!**

- Buy Oman Oasis 1.5L or 500ML Carton
- Scratch the coupon to find your unique code
- Register the code at [www.omanoasis.com/wingold](http://www.omanoasis.com/wingold)

|                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 22 Carat 100 GM Gold Bar 1 No. | 22 Carat 50 GM Gold Bar 2 Nos.   |
| 22 Carat 25 GM Gold Bar 8 Nos. | 22 Carat 4 GM Gold Coin 250 Nos. |

Shopping Voucher worth RO 10 300 Nos.

24 pieces of 500ML Oman Oasis Water 500 Nos.

Offer valid from 16th May 2021 to 15th August 2021. Total of 3 raffle draws will be held at Oasis Water Company, Asabi. Draw Dates: 16th June 2021, 18th July 2021 and 15th August 2021. Winners will be intimated directly. Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Gifts shown are for illustrative purpose only. Actual may vary.

**OASIS WATER COMPANY SAOC**  
PO Box 87, Rusayl 124, Sultanate of Oman.  
[www.omanoasis.com](http://www.omanoasis.com)

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

Scan QR Code to Register

CR.No: 1365452 RM.No: 06/49/2021

## Our WhatsApp number has changed

Get your latest news update on WhatsApp

**91953774**

Save this number to your contact list.  
Send 'start' to receive news update

MUSCAT DAILY



## Housing minister ends Saudi, Qatar visit

Muscat - H E Dr Khalfan bin Saeed al Shuaibi, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, concluded his visit to Saudi Arabia and Qatar on Saturday.

During the visit, H E Shuaibi met with a number of ministers and senior officials. In both the countries he toured several projects related to housing and urban planning and was briefed on the Saudi experience in residential suburbs and the Qatari experience in urban and development projects.

Officials and specialists in the two countries praised the sultanate's experience in housing

and urban planning, and the successes it has achieved in housing projects, organisational programmes, and city planning, among others. They stressed that such meetings contribute to the exchange of expertise and experiences in order to achieve the directions of the leaders of the countries and meet the aspirations of their peoples.

The visit also came to reflect a mutual interest in learning about the various experiences of the GCC countries in the sectors of housing, real estate development and urban planning.

ONA

**sifr**  
SODIUM FREE DRINKING WATER

**Eid Offer**

**BUY & WIN 310 Prizes**

Get 1 Raffle Coupon for every RO 20 spent. Buy from any of the offers (RO 50 or RO 20) or buy a coupon book worth minimum of RO 20.

|                                         |                                        |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 10 NOS. 22 CARAT 8 GMS GOLD COIN        | 20 NOS. 22 CARAT 4 GMS GOLD COIN       |
| 200 NOS. 10 SIFR 5 GALLON WATER COUPONS | 80 NOS. LULU GIFT VOUCHERS WORTH RO 10 |

Register your raffle coupon number at [www.omanoasis.com/eid2021](http://www.omanoasis.com/eid2021) to win.

**Oasis Water Co. SAOC**  
PO Box 87, Rusayl 124, Sultanate of Oman.  
[www.omanoasis.com](http://www.omanoasis.com)

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

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

# MSX board appoints Haitham al Salmi as CEO

Muscat - The board of directors of Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) announced the appointment of Haitham bin Salem al Salmi as the new chief executive officer of the exchange.

Salmi previously served as the general manager of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (MCD).

Salmi's 18 years of experience serving in the capital market sector, has helped him get the opportunity to work directly with the regulatory authorities, investment institutions, listed companies and mediators operating in the market and set exemplary service records while achieving several business development milestones, according to a press release.

Mohammed bin Mahfoud al Ardhi, chairman of the MSX board of directors, congratulated the new CEO on his appointment and wished him the best in all his future endeavours.

He also expressed happiness on this appointment and showed confidence in capabilities of Salmi to lead the MSX in an era of development, which began with the transfer of the exchange from a government owned entity into a private company.



He mentioned that, Muscat Stock Exchange is now a closed joint stock company operated under the umbrella of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) with plans to develop the securities sector and enhance its role in the economic development of the sultanate while providing a diversified investment climate with opportunities for local and inter-

national investors.

Ardhi emphasised that Salmi will have full support from the board of directors in performing his duties in-line with the board and management unilateral market development strategy, underway.

Salmi thanked the board of directors for their confidence and the appointment.

He also mentioned that Muscat Stock Exchange is currently going through a crucial transformation phase which requires all capital market sector institutions and individuals to work together affectively towards the initiative of placing MSX on the regional and global investment map as an efficient and developed stock exchange.

# Alshawamikh signs deal with Highwood Global

Muscat - To meet the high-level of service qualities for different operating companies in the oil concession areas, Alshawamikh Oil Services, one of the super local community contractor companies (SLCC), recently signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Highwood Global, a technological Canadian leader in the design and metal fabrication industry.

The agreement will enable Alshawamikh Oil Services to include high quality equipment and modern technologies for their clients and meet their high-level standards and expectations for upcoming projects in different areas.

The partnership will enhance the quality, speed and automation of services using the best modern technologies in the country's energy sector as per international standards, keeping pace with the aspirations, mission, vision, objectives and core values of Alshawamikh Oil Services, stated a press release.

"The strategic partnership with Highwood Global will develop the local expertise and enhance the performance of Alshawamikh in the energy sector," said Dr Aflah bin Saeed al Hadhrami, CEO of Alshawamikh Oil Services.

"By using the latest technology, we will be able to undertake projects that enhance the local added value in the energy sector and enable local companies to enhance their role in this vital sector," he added.

"Our partnership with Highwood Global will contribute to the development and achievement of the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 in the oil and gas



sector in order to reach self-sufficiency level in total dependence on local companies," he said.

Alshawamikh Oil Services is a private national shareholding company with 100 per cent Omani ownership. It was established in 2011 by a Royal directive of the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in order to create investment opportunities for citizens residing in the oil concession areas in the wilayats of Bahla and Adam which is on par with the sultanate's endeavours to enhance the local added value by empowering local companies in the oil and gas sector.

Dr Hadhrami expressed his gratitude to the shareholders of the company for their continuous support that led to the progress of the company during the past period, which motivated it to do more to achieve its goals in line with the Oman Vision 2040.

# Alpha Dhabi Holding to list on Abu Dhabi bourse with AED10bn capital

Abu Dhabi, UAE- International Holding Company (IHC) subsidiary, Alpha Dhabi Holding, one of the fast-growing investment holding companies in the Middle East, is all set to announce its intention to proceed with an initial public offering (IPO) and listing of its ordinary shares on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) with AED10bn paid-in capital on Sunday.

The offering is expected to comprise a sale of existing shares to individuals and other



investors in the UAE (as part of the UAE retail offering) and to qualified institutional and other investors (as part of the qualified investor offering).

Mohamed Thani Murshed al Rumaithi, chairman of Alpha Dhabi Holding, said, "We have made the journey to become a public company in a way that's going have a positive reflection on our growth plan, and as a public company we will have a stronger capital structure to invest in additional verticals, ex-

pand commercially and accelerate growth both organically and through acquisitions."

Syed Basar Shueb, CEO and managing director of IHC, said, "We invested in Alpha Dhabi in early 2021 and we have used our sector experience to reorganise, integrate and transform Alpha Dhabi into a leading UAE holding company with special focus on construction and hospitality."

"The business is growing fast, highlighted by the 30 per cent jump in first quarter revenue and

gaining a listing on a major stock exchange will enhance its already strong platform and reputation. We are delighted to have supported its management team to deliver on its Abu Dhabi Stock Exchange IPO."

Incorporated in 2013, Alpha Dhabi operates across five main verticals: Industries, healthcare, investments with partners, construction and hospitality.

The company's investment portfolio, local and international, includes 25 subsidiaries and

40,000 employees active in different fields, including, but not limited to: Energy, engineering consultancy, operation and maintenance services; operation of commercial services, real estate, contracting, mining and industrial investment; dredging and marine construction; forest management, landscaping, animal feed and tourism; and onsite and digital healthcare management, occupational health solutions and health assessment.

WAM

# Oil up as demand growth aligned with supply ahead of OPEC+ meet

Ankara, Turkey - Oil prices increased on Friday over greater hopes of better demand at the onset of the summer driving season and on expectations that major oil producers will take a cautious approach to output increases. International benchmark Brent crude was trading at US\$75.72 per barrel at 07.39 GMT for a 0.21 per cent increase after closing on Thursday at US\$75.56 a barrel.

American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at US\$73.47 a barrel at the same time for a 0.23 per cent rise after ending the previous session at US\$73.30 per barrel.

The acceleration of vaccination campaigns against the COVID-19 pandemic, the easing of travel restrictions, and the increasing rate of domestic and international travel with the start of the summer driving season are raising oil demand and reflecting positively in higher oil prices.

British Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced updates on Thursday to the UK's 'traffic light system' for overseas travel that divides countries into red, amber and green lists.

From June 30, Malta, Madeira, the Balearic Islands, several UK overseas territories, and Caribbean islands (including Barbados) will be added to the government's green list.

The full list of countries to be



added to the red list includes Eritrea, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Mongolia, Tunisia and Uganda.

Investors are now focused on the meeting of OPEC and non-OPEC oil-producing nations, like Russia, a grouping dubbed OPEC+, on their production cut strategy after July.

The group had previously agreed to gently raise production until the end of July.

The market expectation is a cautious increase in output that is intended to avoid any serious price fluctuations.

"The next two weeks ahead of the OPEC+ policy meeting on July 1, 2021 will be extraordinarily tight for the oil market. OPEC+ is expected to loosen supply, either officially with a higher production target or unofficially with compliance slippage," said Rystad En-

ergy's Oil Markets Analyst Louise Dickson.

Dickson said the group's current target production level of 36.2mn barrels per day (bpd) for July this year would likely be surpassed by at least 1mn bpd of OPEC+ crude supply, and perhaps even more.

"If OPEC+ wants to keep the market in a theoretical equilibrium, the group could boost production as high as 39.5mn bpd in August 2021, but then needs to scale it down back to 36.8mn bpd for October during the shoulder demand season," she said.

She further warned that such an increase would be a supply swing risk that OPEC+ would want to avoid, especially as once countries are allowed to increase production, it is harder to back-

step and again tighten supply.

Positive demand sentiments were also helped by the administration of US President Joe Biden's much-awaited US\$1.2tn expenditure on an infrastructure framework.

Biden had announced his agreement earlier to support a bipartisan infrastructure framework that was formed by a group of senators. The framework involves the expenditure of US\$1.2tn over eight years, including US\$579bn in new spending for the first five years.

The plan will cover investments in clean transportation, universal broadband, clean power, rebuilding roads and bridges, modernising transit and rail networks while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Anadolu Agency

المدينة تكافل  
Al Madina Takaful  
التأمينات الإسلامية

**TAKE A SMALL STEP TO MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN YOUR CAREER.**

We are hiring for the following positions:

|               |                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Position      | : Branch In-Charge                                                                                                                   |
| Nationality   | : Omani National                                                                                                                     |
| Experience    | : Minimum 8 years' experience in sales with at least 2 years' experience as Branch In-Charge in Insurance Company.                   |
| Qualification | : Bachelor's degree in Marketing.                                                                                                    |
| Skills        | : Good bilingual (English and Arabic) verbal and written communication skills, good presentation skills and should be a team player. |
| Job Location  | : Sohar                                                                                                                              |

|               |                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Position      | : Assistant Manager – Life & Medical Underwriting                                                                                    |
| Nationality   | : Omani National                                                                                                                     |
| Experience    | : 2-3 years' experience in Life & Medical Underwriting.                                                                              |
| Qualification | : Bachelor's degree in Pharmacy is preferred                                                                                         |
| Skills        | : Good bilingual (English and Arabic) verbal and written communication skills, good presentation skills and should be a team player. |
| Job Location  | : Muscat                                                                                                                             |

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Position      | : Executive – Sales                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Nationality   | : Omani National                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Experience    | : 1-3 Years' of experience in Sales. Freshers can apply.                                                                                                                                              |
| Qualification | : Diploma or Graduate in Sales or Marketing                                                                                                                                                           |
| Skills        | : Good bilingual (English and Arabic) verbal and written communication skills, good presentation skills and should be a team player. Salary package shall be a combination of Fixed and Variable Pay. |
| Job Location  | : Muscat                                                                                                                                                                                              |

To be a part of our growth story, send your CV to [careers@almadinatakaful.com](mailto:careers@almadinatakaful.com)

# US inflation spike unlikely to rattle Federal Reserve: Analysts

Washington, US - Prices have indeed spiked in the United States, government data released on Friday said, but analysts believe the increase isn't enough to change minds at the Federal Reserve, which is planning to keep rates low to help the economy recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Commerce Department's personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index in May rose 3.9 per cent from the same month in 2020, its largest year-on-year increase since August 2008, the data said.

However much of the increase was in energy prices, which a year ago were languishing after business restrictions to stop the virus from spreading caused a sharp downturn in demand.

The dynamic - a big price spike relative to 2020 in sectors hit hard by the pandemic - was what Fed officials led by Chair Jerome Powell had bet would happen as the US economy reopens, and is unlikely to change minds at the central bank.

"From the Fed's perspective, price pressures are transient and will abate as reopening effects fade and supply constraints ease," Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics said.

Economists have debated for months over whether the Fed's zero interest rates and the US government's trillions of dollars in stimulus spending will cause inflation to soar when COVID-19



vaccines allow business to return to normal.

The PCE data is particularly closely watched because it is what the Fed uses to gauge inflation, which it aims to keep around two per cent.

'Core' inflation with volatile food and energy prices excluded was at 3.4 per cent year-on-year last month, and Gregory Daco of Oxford Economics predicted it would run around three per cent for the second half of this year.

'We don't foresee runaway inflation,' he said in a note.

**Rates cut**  
As the severity of the COVID-19

crisis became clear, the Fed cut interest rates to zero in March 2020, then announced a new framework that would keep them lower for longer to help the economy achieve maximum employment, particularly for less-educated people and racial minorities.

But with the country rebounding strongly from the record downturn the pandemic caused that year, some economists say the Fed will have to raise rates sooner than expected.

There is evidence of agreement on the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee. At its meeting earlier this month, a ma-

jority of members predicted rates will increase in 2023, a change from March, when members didn't see rate hikes until at least 2024.

In testimony before a House committee earlier this week, Powell downplayed recent inflation data, predicting it would be temporary.

"Look at the categories where these prices are really going up, you'll see that it tends to be areas that are directly affected by the reopening. That's something [they] will go through over a period that will then be over," he said.

Friday's PCE data supported

# India's Reliance unveils \$10bn green energy push



Mukesh Ambani

Mumbai, India - Indian oil-to-telecom giant Reliance Industries unveiled plans to invest US\$10bn in renewable energy over the next three years as Asia's third-largest economy struggles to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels.

In a virtual address to shareholders, Reliance chairman and Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani said the new business aims to 'bridge the green energy divide in India and globally'.

The conglomerate's multi-billion-dollar fortune is powered by oil and petrochemicals businesses, but Reliance has aggressively diversified into areas including telecoms and retail in recent years.

As part of its push towards renewable energy, Ambani said the company had begun work on a 5,000-acre manufacturing facility in India's western state of Gujarat. The project will produce solar energy and green hydrogen that 'will put Gujarat and India on the world's solar and hydrogen map', Ambani said.

"I envision a future when our country will be transformed from a large importer of fossil energy to a large exporter of clean solar energy solutions," the billionaire added.

Reliance aims to produce 100 gigawatts of solar power by 2030, nearly a quarter of the 450-gigawatt target set by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

But in a sign of its continued focus on its core fossil fuel businesses, India's most valuable company also told shareholders that Saudi Aramco chairman Yasir al Rumayyan would join its board.

The appointment will strengthen Reliance's 'strategic partnership' with Saudi Aramco, Ambani said, with the two firms working to finalise a US\$15bn deal that will see the energy giant buy a 20 per cent stake in the Indian company.

India is the world's third-largest emitter of carbon dioxide with rising air pollution levels resulting in an estimated 1.7mn deaths in 2019, according to a study by medical journal *The Lancet*.

Reliance, which operates the world's biggest refining complex in Gujarat, has a market capitalisation of more than US\$187bn.

The company's shares closed down 2.6 per cent in Mumbai following Ambani's announcements.

AFP

# German business morale 3 year high

Frankfurt, Germany - German business confidence rose to a near three-year high in June, a key survey showed, buoyed by reopenings and falling coronavirus infection rates in Europe's top economy.

The Munich-based Ifo institute's monthly confidence barometer, based on a survey of 9,000 companies, climbed to 101.8 points from 99.2 in May.

The reading was slightly better than analysts had predicted and reached its highest level since November 2018.

"The German economy is shaking off the coronavirus crisis," said Ifo president Clemens Fuest. Businesses were both more optimistic about their current situation and about the outlook for the second half of the year, the survey found.

The services industry was particularly upbeat as hotels and restaurants stir back to life after months of shutdowns, while the



retail sector recorded the largest jump in sentiment since German reunification in 1990.

In manufacturing and construction the sunny mood was clouded by ongoing production bottlenecks blamed on shortages of key supplies including semiconductors and timber.

"The general outlook for the German economy has improved," said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski.

"The vaccination programme has picked up speed and with currently more than 50 per cent

of the population having had a first jab, the reopening of the economy has gained momentum," he said. "New variants of the virus, however, could still spoil the reopening party."

The pandemic-induced downturn saw the German economy shrink by 4.7 per cent in 2020.

But the export powerhouse is expected to bounce back strongly, with Economy Minister Peter Altmaier forecasting up to four per cent growth in 2021.

AFP

# Egypt signs non-disclosure deal over Suez Canal blockage compensation

Cairo, Egypt - Egypt has signed a non-disclosure agreement with the Japanese owner of a megaship that blocked the Suez Canal in March as it finalises a compensation agreement, the canal authority chief said.

Egypt has been seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation from Japanese firm Shoei Kisen Kaisha for lost canal revenues and the costs of salvaging the ship and repairing the damage to the canal.

It slashed its initial claim for US\$900mn to US\$550mn late last month but the final amount has been the subject of tough negotiations between the two sides.

'What we signed is a non-disclosure agreement' regarding the amount of the compensation, Suez Canal Authority chief



Osama Rabie told Egypt's DMC television channel.

'A final deal is expected to be reached and announced in the middle of this week.'

One of the vessel's insurers, UK Club, said an agreement in principle had already been reached and the two sides were now working to finalise a signed

agreement as soon as possible.

The 200,000-tonne *MV Ever Given* got stuck diagonally across the canal during a sandstorm on March 23, blocking the vital trade artery for six days before salvage teams could dislodge it.

Egypt lost between US\$12mn and US\$15mn in revenues for each day the waterway was closed, according to the canal authority.

The grounding of the ship and the intensive salvage efforts needed to refloat it also resulted in significant damage to the canal, which Egypt wants to be compensated for.

Last month, President Abdel Fattah al Sisi approved a major expansion of the canal to avoid future blockages.

AFP

# China's crypto-miners look abroad as regulators tighten noose

Beijing, China - When a prefecture in northwestern China's Xinjiang region ordered a halt on cryptocurrency mining projects this month, Chris Zhu scrambled to move clients' machines southward, spending over a week to reassemble in Sichuan.

But after the shift, he received another notice - authorities in southwestern Sichuan were also putting a stop to the industry, in a turbulent year that has lost his company millions.

"We're thinking of ways to go abroad," said Zhu, whose company handles the maintenance of mining machines.

He is among businessmen and miners now planning to seek their fortunes overseas - in countries ranging from the US to Kazakhstan - as Beijing tightens the screws on the industry.

Crypto-mining is the process by which computers generate a

series of complicated hexadecimal number sequences needed to mint new virtual currency and validate financial transactions - a task that requires massive amounts of processing power.

Chinese mines power nearly 80 per cent of the global trade in cryptocurrencies despite a domestic trading ban since 2017, relying on the competitive advantage of cheap access to power and hardware.

But several provinces have recently ordered the closure of mines. Mountainous Sichuan was China's second-biggest bitcoin mining province, according to data compiled by Cambridge University that tracked the world's largest digital currency.

Authorities have also ordered shutdowns in the coal- and hydropower-rich regions of Inner Mongolia and Qinghai, with citizens encouraged to report illegal



operations. More than 90 per cent of the country's bitcoin mining capacity has now been shut down, according to estimates published by state media tabloid *Global Times*.

**Major relocation**  
Zhu estimates that 10 to 20 per cent of miners in China have started their move abroad.

"We spent around ten days getting to Sichuan, only for oper-

ations to stop there too," he said.

"It's going to be tough to continue here."

Zhu's company INBTC handled a 260MW site in Xinjiang before being forced to pull the plug.

"With the hit on Sichuan, we had nothing left," he said.

On Monday, US-listed Chinese firm BIT Mining announced it had delivered its first batch of 320 mining machines to Kaza-

khstan, after Sichuan authorities ordered power companies to stop supplying electricity to crypto-miners.

It will also ship its remaining mining machines abroad.

Nic Carter, general partner at Boston-based venture fund Castle Island Ventures, considers the situation 'an effective terminal shutdown on mining in the country'. He said that 50 to 60 per cent of the bitcoin hashrate - a measure of the overall computing power used in the bitcoin network - could be relocated out of China.

"Everyone I've talked to, in China as a miner, is looking for hosting outside of the country," said Carter.

Industry players say Central Asia and North America are popular destinations Chinese miners are considering.

"When you could mine in China, many people were not

willing to go abroad," said a Chinese miner surnamed Li, who has three mines in Kazakhstan.

He said he moved his operations out in 2018 for cheaper electricity, and is now helping friends export 'several thousand' bitcoin mining machines.

But Alan Dorjiyev, president of the Association of Blockchain and Data Center Industry of Kazakhstan, said that while interest is growing, Canada and the United States are more likely destinations.

He cited 'stronger cultural ties' through local Chinese communities, but said that Kazakhstan had a 'less attractive' tax regime and jurisdiction.

Carter said upstate New York is another popular destination, while Texas is often cited as a mining location. The southern state's governor also has an accommodating stance to mining.

"Historically, the biggest risk to (miners) is not power prices... it's political risk," he said.

For now, industry players say many are still looking for suitable destinations.

**Financial concerns**  
Analysts have pointed to financial risks and energy goals as reasons behind China's crypto clampdown.

Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies cannot be traced by a country's central bank, making them difficult to regulate.

Beijing is also believed to fear the proliferation of illicit investments and fundraising, with crypto transactions threatening controls.

On Monday, China's central bank said it told five major banks and payment giant Alipay to halt crypto-related transactions.

AFP

# Meethaq's digital account opening brings convenience

Meethaq's digital account opening process for savings accounts continues to be a big attraction with its customers as evidenced by the increasing number of its customers opening accounts via the digital mode. In line with the bank's vision 'To serve you better, everyday', Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat launched this service earlier this year, enabling digital onboarding of customers with a fast processing time.

This initiative also supports the implementation of social distancing whilst allowing customers to conduct their banking transactions conveniently with minimal need to visit a branch. As the pioneer of Islamic banking in the sultanate, Meethaq is committed to investing in state-of-the-art technology aimed at increasing efficiency, enhancing customer satisfaction and maintaining its leadership in providing high technology solutions in line with the Sharia'a rules and principles.

To apply online for a savings account, customers need to download Meethaq's electronic account opening form from its website, fill in the relevant details and email the completed appli-



cation to Meethaqaccservices@bankmuscat.com along with the supporting documents. With customers not being required to print out or sign physical forms, the end-to-end account application process is completed digitally. Once the account is opened, customers need to visit their selected branch as per their convenience only once to have their original documents verified and collect their debit cards.

Meethaq also provides several value-added services and exclusive lifestyle privileges to its customers, complementing a world-class banking experience. Meethaq customers may use its mobile banking application to

perform their financial transactions '24/7 anytime, anywhere' with convenience and ease. Meethaq's mobile banking application offers a number of novel features such as 'Tap and Pay' - NFC based transfers, which allows customers with Android smartphones to transfer funds by just tapping their phones, thereby creating a unique customer experience.

Customers may also use the app to perform their daily banking transactions, which include payment of utility bills online, accessing of account balance, viewing statements, transfer of funds to their own accounts or other account holders within Meethaq, transfer of funds to ac-

counts domestically or outside of Oman, blocking their debit card or requesting for a cheque book. The Meethaq Mobile Banking App can be downloaded from Play Store or App Store and activated instantly.

Meethaq has adopted 'best practices in Islamic banking and finance' to provide a robust model that benefits its customers. Every Meethaq product goes through Sharia'a-compliance certification by the bank's Sharia'a Supervisory Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

To find out more, please visit <https://www.meethaq.om> or call 24656666 for more information.

# Mahfoudh al Rawahi – A successful career story at OAB

Mahfoudh al Rawahi spent over three decades at Oman Arab Bank (OAB), moving from one position to another until he reached his current position as head of Central Operation at the bank's headquarters.

Rawahi began his career with OAB in 1988 as a teller, following his graduation from the Institute of Vocational Training, Accounting Division. Over the course of the following years, he proved himself as one of the most prominent national competencies, showcasing sincerity and determination to achieve success. He maintained this position while completing his academic career, graduating from Waljat College with Bachelor's degree in Business, while still working as a teller. This drew the attention of the bank's management, who paved the way for his career advancement.

With regard to his experience at OAB, Rawahi said, "Ever since my first days at the bank, I have found support from the management, who were keen on enabling the young national workforce to enhance in the banking sector. Work was challenging and we, as Omanis, had to prove our ability to perform well in a sector that was the backbone of the economic devel-



opment in that particular period. Thankfully, I was able to demonstrate my capabilities and within only two years I moved up to manage Customer Service and Remittances, for two years. After which, I was positioned at the Accounting Department and worked there for three years."

Following this, the bank's management decided to send him to Jordan to study for a specialised banking diploma at the Arab Academy for Banking and Financial Sciences (AABFS).

"Upon completion of seven years at the bank, the management decided that I was qualified to take on a higher position and greater responsibilities. This led to the decision of my appointment as an assistant branch manager at one of the bank's branches. I worked in that position for four years, during which

I moved to two different branches to gain more experience. Following this, I was promoted to branch manager and performed my duties for 11 consecutive years, shifting between four major OAB branches. With the establishment of the new branch structure, I was then appointed as the deputy regional manager for OAB branches in the Governorate of Muscat. I held this position for three years before moving into the Department of Retail Banking to be responsible for the Branch Operations Section for a period of two years. And this is where it has led me, to my current position as head of Central Operations."

Rashad al Musafir, CEO of OAB, said, "Since its establishment nearly four decades ago, the management has been determined to enhance the bank's workforce. This is possible with the introduction of qualified national competencies who are capable of enhancing their performance by complementing the human resources growth and development strategy set by the OAB management. It includes the implementation of programmes and plans that utilise scientific techniques and various learning methods."

# OTC introduces short courses in hospitality held in Arabic

Oman Tourism College (OTC) announced the launch of a number of short courses in hospitality provided in Arabic during the summer. This is part of its commitment to encourage Omani youth to join work in the hospitality sector for the promising opportunities and enriching experiences that it offers.

Ahmed Sulaiman al Mahrazi, director of Training and Professional Development Unit at OTC said, "The tourism and hospitality sectors have become attractive industries for Omanis, especially with the provision of several different job opportunities and various related activities. With the sultanate being a global tourist destination due to its unique tourism potential, it has been able to attract major brands in the sector to operate hotels and tourist facilities that are of international standards and deliver a pioneering experience.

"This makes these sectors an attractive environment to work in, gain relevant experiences and enable career advancement. Our role at OTC is to qualify and em-



power young Omani competencies to work in this promising sector by offering various training courses and programmes that contribute to supplying the sector with qualified manpower."

Oman Tourism College offers several training courses in the field of hospitality, including Etiquette and Protocol, which will be held on Monday, July 5, Fine Dining Service, which will be held on Wednesday, July 7, and Buffet Table Set-up, which will be held on Monday, July 12.

The cost of each course is RO20 per person and will last for

one day for a period of 4 hours, from 9am to 1pm at OTC premises located at Airport Heights.

Those wishing to register can apply through the following link [www.otc.edu.om/portal/course-registration](http://www.otc.edu.om/portal/course-registration). For more details, please contact the following email [tpd@otc.edu.om](mailto:tpd@otc.edu.om) or numbers 24512313 and 24512312 or Whatsapp number 71524702.

Established in 2001, Oman Tourism College (OTC) is the leading institution in Oman specialising in tourism and hospitality.

# Renaissance rolls out vaccination programme

Renaissance Services, Oman's leading services solutions company, has deployed a mega COVID-19 vaccination programme for its employees. The initiative is one of the large-scale healthcare efforts in Oman, covering over 8,800 employees serving at over 100 locations across the country.

Since the arrival of the pandemic, Renaissance has implemented several initiatives under a comprehensive strategy of 'In Service to the Nation', a determined campaign supporting the Government of Oman and the Supreme Committee for COVID-19 to meet the challenge.

Commenting on the initiative, Samir J Fancy, chairman - Renaissance Services, said, "This extensive vaccination drive undertaken by Renaissance reflects our core values of safety, service and care for our employees, clients and the community. The programme will ensure that our people are protected and substantially reduce the pressure on public health systems and help Oman return to normalcy by countering the challenges caused by the pandemic more effectively. We are extremely



grateful for the valuable support of the Ministry of Health, SEZAD, our esteemed clients, and our healthcare partners."

Adil Bahwan, COO - Renaissance Services, said, "Ninety-eight per cent our workforce delivers essential services that cannot be performed from home or any remote location, and their wellbeing is at the heart of our organisation. Keeping our people safe is vital to ensure that we can continue delivering essential services to our clients and their workforces confidently while being cautious and mindful of the ongoing impact of the pandemic. This vaccination drive gives equal access to all our employ-

ees across the organisation to get their vaccine safely and securely."

Since the arrival of the pandemic, Renaissance has worked collaboratively with its clients to scale up and sustain its services to support business continuity in vital industries and projects such as ports and oil & gas fields. Teams working alongside Ministry of Health doctors and medical workers have delivered repetitive sanitising and cleaning services to protect the health and safety of patients and frontline heroes at the height of the outbreak.

Renaissance has also provided hundreds of thousands of

freshly-prepared meals daily to Outbreak and Quarantine Centres across the sultanate, free of charge.

The company also continuously engaged with all stakeholders to raise awareness and promote healthy practices. Last year, Renaissance had developed safety guidelines that were openly shared and downloaded by many SMEs, corporates and public sector entities.

"Good communication has been the cornerstone of our response to COVID-19, keeping all stakeholders well informed, updated and guiding them with respect to safety protocols," Bahwan added.

# Changan Eado family sedan now available at low monthly installment

Changan Eado, the C-segment refined family sedan is now available at EMI starting from RO110 for six years. The incredible model, which offers popular features such as electric sunroof, leather seats, Navigation, Rear parking camera has surprised many families in Oman.

A spokesperson for AGAE said, "We are pleased to offer low EMI on Changan Eado which continues to impress auto enthusiasts in Oman with its composed performance, tasteful interiors, uncompromising safety, smart technology and great fuel economy."

Eado, with its appealing exterior, luxurious and spacious interior, interactive dashboard, driver-assist features for utmost safety, is more than just a saloon. Under the hood OF Changan Eado is a 1.6lt engine which produces 126 hp and 168 Nm of torque mated with a 6 speed AT

for one of the most comfortable rides. With a boot space of 500lt and 35 storage spaces inside the car, EADO is always ready to give you the comfort of your home anywhere you go. The charismatic Changan Eado's inherent design language integrates style with function and practicality.

Eado is stylish, energetic, and practical and has a perfect design that integrates fashion with function. The C-segment Sedan is equipped with Changan's new Blue Core powertrain that ensures efficiency and reliability. Designed by Changan global R&D team, it is manufactured to meet and exceed international standards. Changan Eado is truly about extraordinary action dominating outcome.

## Comfortable space

The sedan has plush and spacious interior creates a comfort-



able space for both driver and the passengers.

It also allows them to feel safe in the comprehensive protection offered with forward-thinking in-

telligent technology. Its Blue Core Powertrain Technology based on the principles of power, clean and quiet provides owners a highly efficient and energy sav-

ing performance.

## Multitude features

Under the hood, it has a 1.6lt 4-cylinder engine, mated to a six-

speed automatic transmission. Features in the Eado Smart are top of the range includes Leather Seats, 17" Alloy wheels, 10" Infotainment Touch Screen, Cruise Control, Push start button, LED DRL's, Rear View Camera and Navigation.

The Standard safety features include like Electronic Parking Brake, Rear Parking sensors, Front dual airbags, ESP, ABS, Electronic brake force distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA) Traction control and Hill assist as well as 10" inch Infotainment Touch Screen, Mirror link, USB ports, Keyless Start , Keyless Entry and LED DRL's.

## Specifications

Changan Eado's vehicle specifications includes length x width x height of 4710mm x 1820mm c 1505mm, a 1.6lt GDi Blue Core engine, output of 116 HP, maximum torque of 168 Nm, wheel-

base of 2700mm, and a fuel tank capacity of 53lt.

The Premium Automotive Brand Changan recently launched by Bahwan international Group in Oman has received overwhelming response among the customers. Changan Automobile boasts of a comprehensive portfolio of range of products including Sedan, Crossovers and SUVs like Changan Alsvin - Entry Level sedan, EADO- Family Sedan, CS35 Plus Crossover, CS75 4WD Crossover, CS85 Coupe & CS95 7seater 4WD.

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC (AGAE), which is part of Bahwan International Group, recently announced a partnership with leading international automotive group Changan Automobile Co. Ltd to bring its range of passenger vehicles to Oman including Changan Eado.

# Most powerful collection from Maserati arrives

Alfardan Motors, official Maserati importer in Sultanate of Oman, has announced the arrival of the most powerful collection from Maserati, the Trofeo Collection, in the sultanate. The collection is available for private previewing and test drive. Following the 2018 launch of Levante Trofeo, the SUV's most extreme, most powerful version, the new Quattroporte and Ghibli Trofeo are now available, achieving the pinnacle of performance, sportiness and luxury.

A special preview for the Trofeo Collection was held at the Alfardan Motors showroom where a number of top VIPs, guests and media were treated to an exclusive one-to-one private viewing session.

The activity followed a thorough COVID-19 safety protocol, in line with Oman's Supreme Committee advisories on the pandemic.

Maserati reinterprets its sedans by introducing the V8 engine. The heart of Ghibli and Quattroporte Trofeo is the 3.8lt



V8 Twin Turbo with power output of 580 hp at 6,250 rpm and peak torque of 730 Nm.

Ghibli and Quattroporte Trofeo can proudly claim to be the fastest Maserati sedans ever, with a top speed of 326km/h. Levante Trofeo's maximum

speed is 302km/h.

The engine, which has already revealed all its power on Levante Trofeo, is built at the Ferrari plant at Maranello to Maserati's specifications, and has been modified and developed to deliver equally impressive performances on the

rear-engine sedans.

While the unique signature of every Maserati is the sound of its engine, now the Trofeo collection will be even more unmistakable in looks, thanks to special stylistic touches that characterise these high performance models.

These include the front grille with twin vertical bars in Black Piano finish, and the introduction of carbon fibre on the front air duct trims and rear extractor, for an even more aggressive effect.

The whole Trofeo collection is distinguished by the red details

that characterise the bottom profiles of the side air vents and the lightning bolt on the Trident badge on the C-pillars.

There are major changes at the rear of the car, where the light clusters have been completely restyled, with a

boomerang-like profile inspired by the 3200 GT and the Alfieri concept car.

The Trofeo characterisation continues in the interior, with a new on-board panel that displays an exclusive interface at switch-on, while the headrests bear the Trofeo badge with the name in three-dimensional relief. The exclusivity also extends to the interior upholstery, in full-grain Pieno Fiore natural leather.

New technologies also appear in MIA (Maserati Intelligent Assistant) and thanks to the Maserati Connect programme, now the Trofeo collection is always connected, with a full set of services to simplify its use.

The Trofeo Collection is now on display at the Maserati Oman showroom located in Azaiba.

Opening hours are from 9am to 8pm from Sunday to Thursday, 9am to 1pm, 4pm to 8pm on Saturdays.

The collection will be available for private viewing in the Maserati Oman showroom, located in Azaiba.

## Dubai Expo: Metro stations get LED screens

The Dubai Expo 2020 is scheduled for October 2021 and is likely to attract over 25mn visits. Gearing up to make this event a success, Pixcom Group of Companies has installed LED digital signages across new metro stations enroute 2020.

Pixcom has successfully implemented the LED digital signages at strategic and user-friendly locations of the modern metro station enabling maximum visibility. The Expo stations have ample capacity and can serve 29,000 riders per hour during peak times and around 522,000 riders per day.

The Dubai Investment Park Station is an underground station.

The station is vast and spans over 27,000sqm in area and 226m in length. This metro station can serve 13,899 riders per hour during peak times and 250,000 riders per day.

Keeping in line with the current and upcoming technology trends, Pixcom has taken it a step further with its new digital signages that have futuristic designs, energy-efficient screens, more brightness, and lesser power consumption.

The signages will add value by providing information to visitors. Pixcom LED signages serve as information boards with its dynamic content in multiple languages.

Marketing opportunities are available with various types of advertising options.

Besides marketing opportunities, the LED signages also support educational and informative videos at the local areas.

## MG Motor Oman opens showroom, service centre in Nizwa

After the successful opening and running of its Ibra and Sur showrooms, MG Motor has now opened its state-of-the-art facility in the historic city of Nizwa. There is a showroom as well as a full-fledged service centre to cater to the convenience of MG Motor customers.

The showroom and the service center were inaugurated by Areej Mohsin Darwish - chairperson MHD ACERE, and Mohsin Hani al Bahrani - CEO MHD ACERE, under the patronage of H E Hilal bin Said bin Hamdan al Hajri, Governor of Dakhliyah.

Bahrani said, "We feel honoured and delighted on the opening of our ninth outlet in Oman. Our growth and expansion is a result of our commitment to Do More for our customers. It will



not be wrong to say that MG Motor is carving a niche for itself not only in Oman, but around the world for its rich legacy, innovative technology and iconic designs.

"The Nizwa showroom will be

hosting some of our latest 2021 cars at affordable prices and our well-equipped service centre in Karsha Industrial Area will ensure utmost comfort and peace of mind especially to our customers in and around Nizwa."

At this newly opened Nizwa showroom, customers can choose from the latest 2021 range of MG's stylish, exceptionally well-equipped, and great value cars.

In this range, MG Motor

proudly presents the sleek and stylish MG 6 and the lively and exciting MG5 sedan. In the SUV segment, MG Motor offers the power-packed performer MG ZS, the seven-seater perfectionist MG RX8, the smart and practical MG HS, and the versatile and highly capable MG RX5.

Apart from having state-of-the-art showrooms in Muscat, Al Manuma, Bidaya, Sohar, Salalah, Sur, Ibra, Ibri, and now in Nizwa, MG Motor Oman also has an e-commerce platform to help enhance its customers' purchase experience from the comfort and safety of their homes. The platform <https://mg-om.com/buy-online/> allows customers to select vehicles from the available stock, to reserve vehicles, to conduct online payments and to schedule home delivery of cars.

Additionally, customers can also book test drives and connect with MG Motor customer service team for any query or information.

MG is a British-born automotive brand established in 1924, known for its historic models, awards, and achievements throughout the past 97 years.

MG was founded by William Morris and Cecil Kimbers and has one of the oldest car club in the automotive industry. Best known for its two-seater open sports cars, MG also produced saloons and coupes. Since its acquisition of MG, SAIC Motor, as a Global Top 500 company, has opened a new chapter for this British icon. MG is at the forefront of the introduction of innovative technologies and new energy vehicles for car buyers.

## SeaPearls supports blood donation camp

Oman's trusted brand seaPearls Gold and Diamond Jewellery supported the blood donation camp organised by One India One Pension (OIOOP) and Oman National Committee at the Central Blood Bank in Bausher recently. Employees of seaPearls participated in the blood donation camp.

The blood donation drive was held in honour of the OIOOP Foundation Day which falls on July 30.

Riyas, general manager of seaPearls Gold and Diamond Jewellery, said, "We were honoured to be one of the sponsors of the blood donation drive. seaPearls likes to be in the forefront of serving the community through social initiatives.

"We are happy that seaPearls employees came forward to participate in this noble cause and donated their blood voluntarily. Every year millions of lives are saved because of donation of blood and blood products."

All COVID-19 safety protocols and precautionary measures were followed during the blood donation drive.

For more information about the seaPearls brand visit its official Facebook/Instagram pages ~@seapearlsjewelleryom.

The page, which carries information and photographs on the wide range of gold and diamond collection available at the stores, is updated on a daily basis.

Contests are also organised on the page to engage with the fans.



participate in this noble cause and donated their blood voluntarily. Every year millions of lives are saved because of donation of blood and blood products."

All COVID-19 safety protocols and precautionary measures were followed during the blood donation drive.

For more information about the seaPearls brand visit its official Facebook/Instagram pages ~@seapearlsjewelleryom.

The page, which carries information and photographs on the wide range of gold and diamond collection available at the stores, is updated on a daily basis.

Contests are also organised on the page to engage with the fans.

ation and photographs on the wide range of gold and diamond collection available at the stores, is updated on a daily basis.

Contests are also organised on the page to engage with the fans.

## Digital marketing agency Adventz gets Google partner badge

Adventz, the most prominent 360 degree digital marketing agency and a subsidiary of Prime Business Solutions, a prominent IT organisation in Oman, announced that it has been awarded with Google partner badge.

Achieving partner status means that the company has been able to demonstrate Google AdWords skills and expertise, managed clients' profiles, delivered desired revenue growth, and sustained their growth. With technology playing an increasingly critical role in every aspect of business, companies recognise that they need to accelerate the development of digital solutions to ensure they remain on the competitive vanguard. The Google partner badge brings together deep skills in business and advertising strategy and help clients through successful digital transformations and insightful data.

"The Google partner badge is a powerful asset to the company at times like these. We believe this will give us an upper edge in digitalisation. Partnering with Google to deliver transformation for our clients will allow us to provide the very best business and advertising strategies on which we'll conceive, design, and build the next generation of transformative digital products.



Together, working as one team, we will unlock the full potential of digital transformations and place our clients on the best path for success in the new digital business landscape," said Zahir al Busaidi, Group CEO, Prime Business Solutions.

Adventz, was founded in 2009 with a singular goal in mind: to offer local, regional and international clients a full menu of services at par with global standards, leaving no stone unturned to ensure that our clients stay ahead of the future.

Adventz has been awarded the Digital Marketing Service Provider Customer Satisfaction & Happiness Oman 2020 award by Global Banking & Finance. It takes pride in delivering a comprehensive gamut of development services and executing superlative solutions to suit your explicit market goals.

## Radisson Hotel Group launches vaccination campaign

Radisson Hotel Group has begun the process of vaccinating its employees. The initiative, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, falls in line with Radisson Hotel Group's vision and mission of responsible tourism, which is centered in the care of its staff and guests. The vaccination process began last week at Park Inn by Radisson Hotel & Residence Duqm and is expected to be completed for all five hotels by the end of this quarter.

RHG Oman continues to reinforce its commitment to protecting the well-being of its employees, customers and partners. This initiative is the latest measure to be implemented by RHG Oman in its efforts to ensure safety for its guests. With the Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol in place, the group meets the highest cleanliness, disinfection and safety measures with the implementation of the 20-Step and 10-Step protocols.

Panos Panagis, district director of RHG Oman, said, "In order

force its commitment to protecting the well-being of its employees, customers and partners. This initiative is the latest measure to be implemented by RHG Oman in its efforts to ensure safety for its guests. With the Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol in place, the group meets the highest cleanliness, disinfection and safety measures with the implementation of the 20-Step and 10-Step protocols.

Panos Panagis, district director of RHG Oman, said, "In order



to add a layer of safety, this is an important step for us to protect our team members and is a part of our strong commitment to the country to safeguard all our guests against COVID-19. The vaccination drive will cover all qualified team members at our five properties- Hormuz Grand Muscat, A Radisson Collection Hotel; Radisson Blu Hotel, Sohar; Radisson Blu Hotel, Muscat; Park Inn by Radisson Muscat; and Park Inn by Radisson Hotel & Residence Duqm."

# Anger as 159 missing in US building collapse

Hundreds of firefighters and rescuers were deployed to find survivors from the debris of the 12-storey building

Surfside, US - From his balcony overlooking the rubble of what used to be Champlain Towers, Maurice Wachsmann lambasts the pace of the recovery operation after the building's collapse.

"It is absolutely not a rescue operation," he says.

His best friend Chaim Rosenberg - who had an apartment on the second floor - is missing along with his son and daughter-in-law.

The feeling of anger is shared by other friends and family of people feared trapped in the rubble, who wonder whether neglect may have played a role in the disaster in Surfside, near Miami Beach.

The death toll is so far four dead and 159 missing.

Local authorities say they have deployed hundreds of firefighters and rescuers to find survivors among the remains of the twelve-storey building overlooking the sea, which collapsed during Thursday's early hours.

On Friday, nearly 40 hours after the tragedy, teams searched the piles of concrete and scrap metal, while firefighters pierced the walls hoping to free survivors.

Nearby, pictures of those missing have been hung on a chain-link fence, which has been



A couple (right) comforts each other looking at the partially collapsed 12-storey Champlain Towers (left), in Surfside, Florida on Friday (AFP)



lems are to blame for what happened. According to a 2020 study, the building suffered a 'very subtle' sag in the 1990s.

Janette Agüero (46) was staying with her husband and two children on the 11th floor of the building, on the street side, on the night of the tragedy.

Awakened by what she says felt like an earthquake, she and her family ran down the stairs to escape. "You hear the rumors about the building, the structure, there's anger if it was something preventable," she tells AFP.

Agüero, who arrived last Friday, said she heard cracks and 'a couple of weird sounds' in the days before the disaster. Improvement work on the building had been under way.

"Was it something from the building trying to give you a sign that this was going to happen?" she wonders.

"I was fortunate enough to have survived but my family could be going through what people are going through right now, and to watch them is heart-breaking," she says.

"I want answers for them. They deserve it, and someone needs to be held responsible if it's neglect. Someone has to pay," Agüero said.

AFP

turned into a makeshift shrine with flowers and candles.

Among the candles and flowers placed on the beach a short walk from the building, one mourner had left a small statue of the Virgin Mary.

But the more the hours pass, the more impatience and anger grow.

"This site over here, where we

are being told that there were hundreds of workers evacuating people and trying to rescue people - this is absolutely not a rescue operation, this is nothing," says Wachsmann.

Wachsmann left New York a few hours after the disaster - along with Rosenberg's nephew, Mike Salberg - and rented an apartment in the building adja-

cent to Champlain Towers, with a direct view of the operation.

"My uncle's apartment's right there, where that purple pillar is by the screen door," says Salberg.

"There hasn't been one rescue worker trying to actually take off debris, little by little, even by hand, without machines to actually get people potentially re-

moved," he says.

"Now there are a ton of air pockets where potentially there could be survivors hopefully."

## 'There is still hope'

The authorities say they understand the frustration.

"To the families who are waiting for news of their loved ones, we are giving them twice-daily

briefings, with details of exactly how the search is being conducted," said Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava on Friday evening.

"There is still hope," she said, noting that victims in similar tragedies had been found alive a week later.

Others are demanding to know whether structural prob-



French President Emmanuel Macron (centre) greets US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the Elysee Palace, in Paris on Friday (AFP)

## Time running out to revive deal: US, France warn Iran

Paris, France - The United States and France on Friday warned Iran that time is running out to return to a nuclear deal, voicing fear that Tehran's sensitive atomic activities could advance if talks drag on.

On the first high-level visit to Paris by President Joe Biden's administration, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his French hosts saluted a new spirit of co-operation after four years of turbulence under Donald Trump.

But the two sides said that one key Biden promise - to return to the 2015 Iran accord that was trashed by Trump - is at risk if the clerical regime does not make concessions during talks that have been going on for more than two months in Vienna.

Blinken warned that the United States still has 'serious differences' with Iran, which has kept negotiating since last week's presidential election won by hardliner Ebrahim Raisi.

"There will come a point, yes, where it will be very hard to return back to the standards set by the JCPOA," Blinken told reporters, using the acronym for the accord's formal name.

"We haven't reached that point - I can't put a date on it - but it's something that we're conscious of."

Blinken warned that if Iran 'continues to spin ever more sophisticated centrifuges' and steps up uranium enrichment, it will bring nearer the 'breakout' time at which it will be dangerously close to the ability to de-

velop a nuclear bomb.

But Blinken said that Biden still supports a return to the accord, under which Iran had drastically scaled back its nuclear work until Trump withdrew in 2018 and imposed crippling sanctions.

"We have a national interest in trying to put the nuclear problem back in the box that it was in the JCPOA," Blinken said.

## Stalling as strategy?

France - which like Britain, Germany, Russia and China had stayed in the 2015 accord despite pressure from Trump - also ramped up pressure on Iran to move ahead.

"We expect the Iranian authorities to take the final decisions - no doubt difficult ones - which will allow the negotiations to be concluded," Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said at the joint news conference with Blinken.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in a statement in response: 'The opposing sides are the ones who must take the decisions.'

The UN nuclear watchdog said on Friday it had received no reply from Tehran over the possible extension of a temporary agreement covering inspections at Iranian nuclear facilities which expired on Thursday.

Iran's envoy to the IAEA said that the data recording was 'a political decision' to facilitate the political talks and 'shouldn't be considered as obligation'.

AFP

## UN Syria envoy says cross-border access must stay open

United Nations - The UN's special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, on Friday added his voice to calls to keep open the only border crossing through which humanitarian aid reaches the insurgent Idlib region, a move opposed by Moscow.

Aside from being the sole point through which aid can reach some three million people, the fate of the crossing is seen as a test of the new Russia-US relationship under the leadership of President Joe Biden.

It is due to close on July 10, and will require a UN vote to stay open.

But Russia, which is allied with Syrian President Bashar Assad and has made clear its opposition to a move which it says

threatens Syrian sovereignty, may use its veto power on the UN Security Council to block it.

"Civilians across the country desperately need life-saving assistance and help building resilience. It is absolutely vital to maintain and expand access, including cross-border and cross-line operations," Pedersen told the Security Council.

"A large-scale cross-border response is essential for an additional 12 months to save lives," he said. The authorisation has been in force since 2014.

But last year, Moscow - using its veto repeatedly - implemented a drastic reduction on the number of crossing points, from four to the one which remains, at Bab al-Hawa on the



UN special envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen in Geneva (AFP)

Turkish border.

Ireland and Norway, non-permanent members of the Security Council, presented a draft resolution Friday that seeks to keep Bab al-Hawa open for one year and to reopen a second crossing point, Al-Yarubiyah, which al-

lows supplies to reach Syria's northeast from Iraq.

The United States, France and Britain - all permanent members of the council - had wanted the reopening also of the Bab al-Salam crossing point in the northwest on the Turkish border, which was among those closed last year, diplomats have said.

Biden discussed the subject with Russian President Vladimir Putin at a recent summit in Geneva, and US media has suggested that keeping the crossings open could signal a shift in the relationship between Washington and Moscow, which has turned frosty since Biden came to power.

In a statement on Friday, Diana Semaan of Amnesty Inter-

national stressed that stopping cross-border aid would have 'catastrophic humanitarian consequences'.

"We call on the Security Council to reauthorise humanitarian access through Bab al-Hawa, and to reopen the crossings at Bab al-Salam and Al-Yarubiyah," she added.

Louis Charbonneau, the UN director at Human Rights Watch, echoed her call for the reopening of the closed border crossings.

'Anything less than full reauthorization risks condemning many of the millions of Syrians in the north to misery or death, whether through malnutrition or COVID-19,' Charbonneau said in a statement.

AFP

## German investigators seek motive in deadly knife attack

Wuerzburg, Germany - Investigators were racing on Saturday to pinpoint the motive of a man who went on a knife rampage in the German city of Wuerzburg, killing three people and leaving five seriously injured.

The suspect, a 24 year old Somali who arrived in Wuerzburg in 2015, staged the attack in the city centre on Friday evening, striking at a household goods store before advancing to a bank. He was later overpowered by police after they shot him in the thigh, Bavaria's Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann said.

Investigators found records showing that the man had been treated at a psychiatric institution, and police said he was not a known radical.

"The police investigation will determine if this was an Islamist act or if it was due to the psychiatric state [of the man]," said Herrmann.

Far-right party AfD's co-chair Joerg Meuthen lamented the latest 'knife murders in the middle of Germany', adding that it was a 'tragedy for the victims, who have my sympathy and another manifestation of Merkel's failed migration policy'.

The AfD has railed that Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to allow in more than one million asylum-seekers - many fleeing



A woman places flowers at a makeshift memorial in tribute to the victims of a knife attack, at the city centre of Wuerzburg in southern Germany, on Saturday (AFP)

Iraq and Syria - since 2015 has contributed to a heightened security risk.

## 'Sad and shocked'

Residents of the Bavarian city woke up in shock at the news, some bringing flowers and candles in the morning to the scene of the stabbing.

"It's terrible. I'm extremely sad and shocked and that's why I'm here. I find that's the least one can do - show sympathy," said Wuerzburg resident Franziska, who together with a friend, brought candles.

Others were asking police officers stationed at the site what had happened.

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier voiced shock at the 'extreme brutality' of the crime.

"He will be held to account by the rule of law for this inhumane act," the President said.

"We are mourning in all of Germany today with the relatives of the victims," he said, also wishing the injured a swift recovery. Video footage circulating online showed passers-by trying to stop the suspect using folded chairs. A crowd of people gave

chase before a police car arrived on the scene, one video showed.

Praise poured in from political leaders thanking the civilians for their courage.

'My great respect goes to the brave citizens who quickly intervened,' tweeted Armin Laschet, the leader of Merkel's CDU party, sending his condolences to relatives of the victims.

## A target

While the perpetrator's motive remains unclear, Germany has been on high alert after several extremist attacks.

Wuerzburg was itself hit five years ago by an axe-wielding man who seriously wounded four people on a train.

The suspect, an Afghan, sought to attack a passerby as he fled before being shot dead by police. The attack was claimed by the Islamic State group.

The deadliest attack in Germany happened in December 2016, when a extremist rammed a truck into a Berlin Christmas market killing 12 people. The Tunisian attacker, a failed asylum-seeker, was an IS supporter.

More recently, one man was killed and another seriously injured in a knife attack in Dresden in October.

A 20 year old Syrian extremist in May received a life sentence for the homophobic attack.

The number of extremists considered dangerous in Germany rose sharply between 2015 and 2018, according to security services. But the numbers have declined since then, with 615 considered dangerous by the latest count compared with 730 in January 2018.

Germany remains a target for extremist groups, in particular because of its involvement in the coalition fighting IS in Iraq and Syria, and its deployment in Afghanistan since 2001.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

# Australia faces Delta surge; Europe eases curbs

**Sydney, Australia** - Australia's largest city Sydney entered a two-week lockdown on Saturday to contain a sudden COVID surge, but several European nations lifted restrictions despite the global spread of a highly contagious form of the disease.

While vaccination drives have brought down infections in numerous - mostly wealthy - countries, the rise of the Delta variant which first emerged in India has stoked fears of new waves of a virus that has already killed nearly four million people.

Sydney's normally bustling harbourside centre was nearly deserted after its lockdown took effect, with officials bracing the public for a spiralling crisis.

"We do need to brace ourselves for a potentially large number of cases in the following days," said Gladys Berejiklian, the Premier of New South Wales state. "When you have a contagious variant, like the Delta virus, a three-day lockdown doesn't work - if we're going to do this we need to do it properly," she added.

The new restrictions apply to some five million people across



A man walks along an empty road in Sydney, as Australia's largest city entered a two-week lockdown, on Saturday (AFP)

Sydney, along with hundreds of thousands of others living in nearby population centres.

Many are reeling from the shock of the sudden onset of the outbreak in a city that had returned to relative normality after months with very few cases.

"We've been struggling to get

back from the lockdowns of last year," said Chris Kriketos (32), who works at a family-run bakery in central Sydney. "Today just feels like another kick while you're slowly getting up."

Globally, the pandemic is still slowing down, with the World Health Organization (WHO) re-

porting the lowest number of new cases worldwide since February and decreasing deaths attributed to the coronavirus.

But concerns over the Delta variant have prompted new restrictions in countries that had previously managed to control their own outbreaks.

"There is currently a lot of concern about the Delta variant," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press conference on Friday.

"Delta is the most transmissible of the variants identified so far, has been identified in at least 85 countries and is spreading

rapidly among unvaccinated populations," he added.

Spain nonetheless brought an end to mandatory outdoor mask-wearing on Saturday, a year after the rule was first introduced in the wake of the devastating first wave of the virus through Europe.

The decision came despite the announcement of a major coronavirus cluster in the capital Madrid, traced to an end-of-school-year student trip to the holiday island Mallorca, with more than 2,000 people ordered to self-isolate.

The Netherlands ended its rules on outdoor mask-wearing, also easing some restrictions on indoor dining and reopening discotheques to patrons who tested negative for COVID.

Businesses were also allowed from Friday to broadcast the Euro 2020 football tournament, provided customers kept socially distanced.

And Switzerland scrapped most of its remaining coronavirus restrictions on Saturday, after Health Minister Alain Berset said this week that the country's use of Pfizer-BioN-

Tech and Moderna vaccines gave adequate protection against the Delta variant.

## Challenging target

But Delta is so contagious that experts say more than 80 per cent of a population would need to be jabbed in order to contain it - a challenging target even for nations with significant vaccination programmes.

While several studies have shown that vaccines are slightly less effective against Delta, they are still highly effective - but only after the second dose.

Israel, which has one of the world's most successful vaccination campaigns, has seen infections linked to the variant surge since dropping a requirement to wear masks in enclosed public places ten days ago.

After four days of more than 100 new cases a day - including 227 on Thursday - the Health Ministry reversed the decision.

The head of Israel's pandemic response taskforce, Nachman Ash, said the rise in cases was not yet matched by a parallel rise in hospitalisations or deaths.

AFP

# 'Alarming' virus surge prompts fresh lockdown in Bangladesh

**Dhaka, Bangladesh** - Bangladesh has announced it will impose a tough new lockdown starting from Monday, after a 'dangerous and alarming' surge in Delta variant cases of coronavirus.

All government and private offices will be shut for a week and only medical-related transport will be allowed, the government said late on Friday.

'No one can step out of their



A man gets a dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine at a premier hospital, in Dhaka on June 22 (AFP)

*It is a dangerous situation. If we don't contain it now, we will face an India-like situation*

ROBED AMIN

homes except in emergency cases," a statement added.

Health department spokesman Robed Amin said police and border guards would be deployed to enforce the lockdown and the army may be involved if needed.

"It is a dangerous and alarming situation. If we don't contain it now, we will face an India-like situation," Amin told AFP, referring to a surge in cases in neighbouring India in April and May.

Infection rates have been ris-

ing sharply since mid-May in Bangladesh, home to around 170 million people.

On Friday the government recorded almost 6,000 new cases and 108 fatalities, the second-highest death toll yet in the pandemic. Authorities say the situation in districts near the Indian border is catastrophic, with hospitals in the cities of Khulna and Rajshahi overwhelmed.

Infection numbers in India

have fallen sharply in recent weeks, with fewer than 50,000 new cases reported on Friday, down from more than 400,000 daily in early May.

But authorities in the western Indian state of Maharashtra on Friday tightened restrictions because of concerns about a new variant, Delta plus, around 50 cases of which have been reported nationwide.

AFP

# Afghan President Ghani meets President Joe Biden

**Washington, US** - US President Joe Biden promised Afghan leader Ashraf Ghani strong support during a White House meeting on Friday but made clear he was not planning to slow the US withdrawal after nearly two decades of fighting.

Less than three months before his deadline for the removal of all troops, Biden told Ghani that Afghans had to determine their own fate even as they face a mounting offensive by Taliban insurgents.

"The partnership between the United States and Afghanistan is not ending," Biden said in the Oval Office.

"Our troops may be leaving, but support for Afghanistan is not ending."

Even so, Biden told the Afghan president, "Afghans are going to have to decide their future, what they want."

"The senseless violence, it has to stop. It's going to be very difficult."

## Deal with Taliban pushed

Ghani was in Washington along with Abdullah Abdullah, who oversees Kabul's peace negotiations with the Taliban, amid rising uncertainty over the group's recent gains and the possibility of their return to power.

The extremists subjected the population to a brutal version of Islam when they ruled from 1996-2001.

Sitting next to Biden, Ghani acknowledged that Biden was not going to change course from his April announcement ordering the



US President Joe Biden (right) hosts Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani in the Oval Office at the White House, in Washington, DC, on Friday (AFP)

end to America's longest war.

"President Biden's decision has been historic, it has made everybody recalculate and reconsider," Ghani said.

"We are here to respect it and support it."

But he also said not to count his government out, amid reports that an internal US intelligence assessment says the Taliban could possibly take over Kabul within six months of the US departure.

Ghani said Afghan government forces retook six districts, in the north and south, on Friday, reversing recent Taliban gains.

"You will see that with determination, with unity and with the partnership, we will overcome all odds."

Ghani met with top members of Congress, the CIA, and US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on his two-day visit to Washington.

With the US military's on-the-ground support for Afghan security forces about to disappear completely, Washington is expecting him to reach a negoti-

ated settlement on power sharing with the Taliban before it is too late.

"The Department of Defense is deeply invested in the security and stability of Afghanistan and in the pursuit of a negotiated settlement that ends the war," Austin told Ghani and Abdullah at the Pentagon.

The top Democrat in Congress, Nancy Pelosi, also indicated that there was no turning back. Meeting Ghani, she stressed future humanitarian assistance to the country 'as we enter a new phase of that relationship'.

The US pullout, of some 2,500 troops and 16,000 civilian contractors in the country earlier this year, could be mostly completed next month.

The situation was being compared to the US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, which saw the South Vietnamese government that Washington had backed fall to North Vietnamese troops within two years.

AFP

# Hong Kong police chief calls for fake news law

**Hong Kong, China** - Hong Kong's new police chief called for a fake news law on Saturday and blamed the media for plunging trust in his officers in the politically polarised finance hub.

His call comes as authorities carry out a sweeping crackdown on dissent and just days after outspoken newspaper *Apple Daily* was forced to fold following the freezing of its accounts under a tough new national security law.

Surveys show the police have been the least popular disciplinary service in the city since Hong Kong was rocked by huge and sometimes violent pro-democracy protests in 2019, during which allegations of police brutality emerged.

Police chief Raymond Siu said much of the blame lay with the media.

"I understand that there are residents who are still hostile



A member of the Reporters Without Borders group takes part in a demonstration in front of the Chinese Embassy, in Berlin on Friday (AFP)

against us. In this regard, I told my colleagues that many of these torn relationships and hostility against the police are due to fake news," Siu said at his first media briefing since taking office.

"There is no legal definition of fake news at the moment, but if there is any legislation that could

help us bring these people to justice, as law enforcers, we absolutely welcome it," he added.

Hong Kong's demonstrations subsided last year due to mass arrests, the coronavirus pandemic and Beijing's imposition of the security law, which critics argue has been used to curb

dissent.

Three former police officers were on Friday promoted to key positions in government, with former security minister John Lee becoming the city's new number two official and an ex-police chief stepping into Lee's security bureau role.

Last Thursday 500 police officers raided the newsroom of pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* as authorities froze the company's assets under the security law. Five executives of the paper were arrested and two were charged with conspiracy to collude with foreign forces.

*Apple Daily's* lead editorial writer was also arrested on Wednesday and the paper was forced to fold, saying it feared for the safety of staff.

Siu however said police were targeting national security offenders and not the news media.

AFP

# Over half-billion dollar drugs burnt in Myanmar

**Yangon, Myanmar** - Myanmar authorities torched over half a billion dollars worth of narcotics across the country on Saturday, sending opium, heroin and methamphetamine up in smoke as experts warn smugglers have adapted to COVID-19 travel restrictions and are back in business.

Sacks of green-brown cannabis were stacked high at a compound in the commercial capital Yangon, alongside bin-liner-sized bags of red-pink pills, marking one of Myanmar's offerings for the annual World Drug

Day burning.

Slabs of heroin, bags of ketamine and tramadol and ice were also laid out on the pyre.

Stashes were also burned at ceremonies held in Mandalay and Taunggyi in Shan State, Myanmar's anti-drugs police department said.

A total of just under US\$668mn dollars of narcotics, including 224mn meth tablets, were torched in the three cities.

As a woman gave a command over a loudspeaker in Yangon, four men in military uniform pressed buttons on tables in

front of them, and the stash went up, flames licking the early morning sky. Firefighters stood ready and well back from the noxious smoke. Despite COVID-19 travel restrictions, there has been an 'overall sustained expansion of the methamphetamine market in East and Southeast Asia' the UN said earlier this month.

Myanmar's troubled Shan State remains the main source of the drug, it added, which is often smuggled on to wealthier overseas markets such as Australia and Japan in its more potent crystallised form.

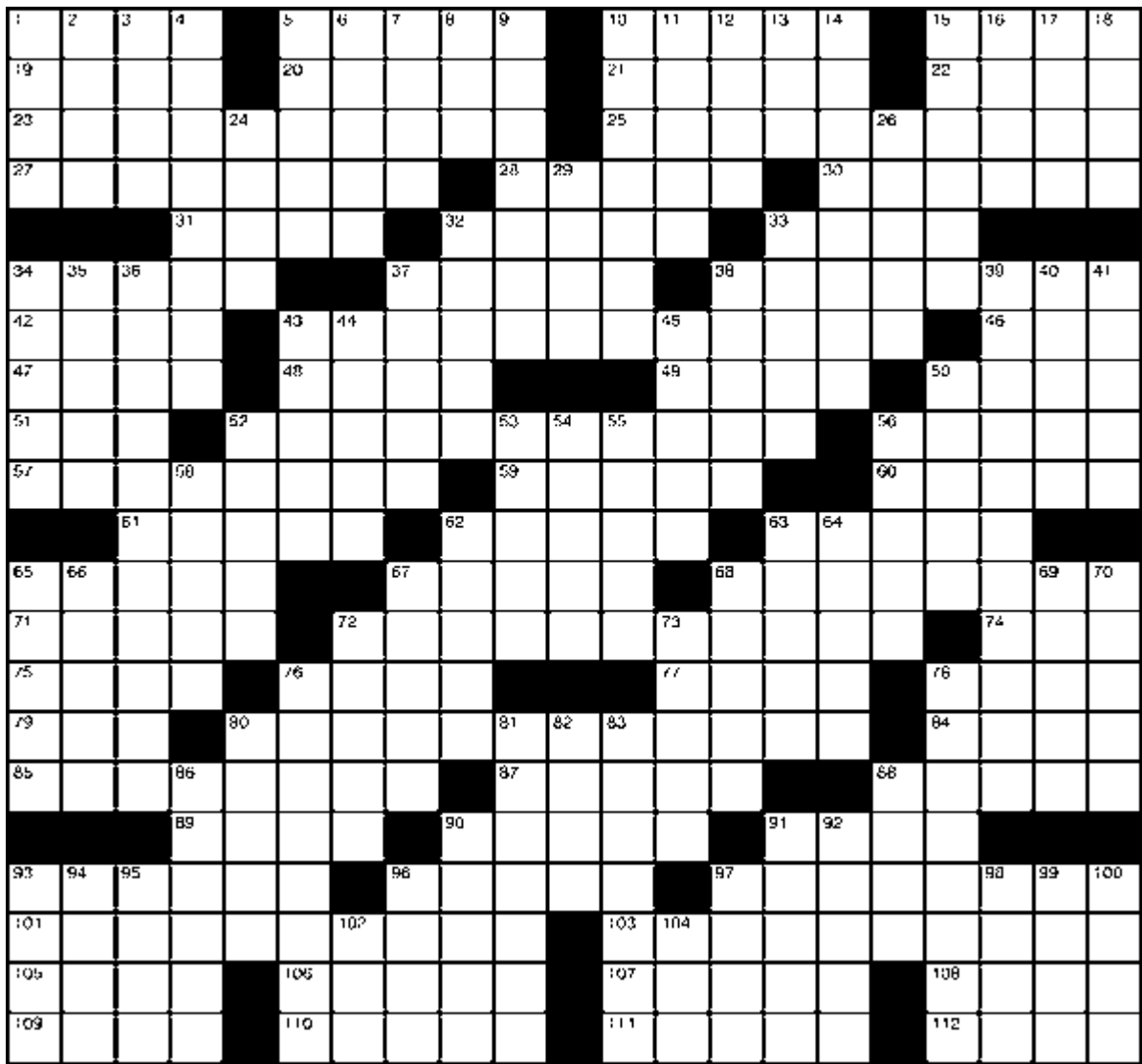
The body has warned of an even bigger deluge as Myanmar's legal economy tanks, following weeks of nationwide unrest and strike action following the military takeover.

The Golden Triangle, traversing the Myanmar, Laos and Thailand frontiers, has for decades been the hub of Southeast Asia's lucrative drug trade.

Myanmar's poppy-covered hills provide an ideal location for illicit labs, with a largely unchecked supply of precursor chemicals flooding in from China.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



©2020 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All rights reserved

- ACROSS**

1 Paint poorly

5 Gathering of bees

10 Mitchell mansion owner

15 ER order

19 First brother?

20 Chocolate bean

21 Picture puzzle

22 Impish one

23 Renowned American composer/songwriter

25 Horror tale author

27 Unsavory sights

28 Gives off

30 Martial art of Japan

31 Pastry purchase

32 Butterfingers

33 Imitate

34 Monastery superior

37 "The Most Happy \_\_\_\_": Loesser

38 Sweet, juicy orange

42 Songbird

43 "Harlow" star

46 Plus

47 Vote count

48 Bank holding

49 Secondhand

50 Lhasa \_\_\_\_
- 51 French word?

52 CORE cofounder

56 \_\_\_\_ ego

57 Lasted longer

59 Axel and Lutz

60 Proclaim

61 \_\_\_\_ up: crammed for an exam

62 Like an old joke

63 Kenyan tribe

65 Soprano Alma

67 Plover

68 Italy, poetically

71 Small amounts

72 Noted anchor

74 Dernier \_\_\_\_: latest fashion

75 Bagel or bialy

76 Santa Fe's arty neighbor

77 Raisin cake

78 Very young horse

79 Poet's monogram

80 Pulitzer composer for "Vanessa"

84 A way to learn

85 Man of great strength

87 Plains tribe

88 Wisecracked

89 Luau wear

90 Beat it!

91 \_\_\_\_ and polish
- 93 Cools one's heels

96 Vertical on a mountain

97 TV, sl.

101 "Lolita" star

103 Former manager in

Baltimore

105 Yemen port

106 Farewell, to Fidel

107 Wide-eyed

108 Apparatus

109 Lease

110 Great Dame

111 Blacksmith, at times

112 Spread

**DOWN**

1 Minnow

2 "Cash's" "\_\_\_\_ Named Sue"

3 Ubangi tributary

4 S. African antelopes

5 Look down on

6 Stock

7 Senate output

8 Actress Charlotte

9 Sour cherry

10 Like Sputnik's path

11 Mega follower

12 Arab garments

13 Sugar cane-based concoction
- 14 Lit into

15 Uttered

16 Polynesian image

17 Cut spending

18 Amateur

24 Be sullen

26 Track official

29 Ponder

32 Composer Jerome, et al.

33 Craftsman

34 Where Crockett last stood

35 Marshy place

36 "Grace Under Fire" star

37 Let go

38 Bud holders

39 English explorer

40 Map within a map

41 Idolize

43 Percussionist's stick

44 Drew a bead on

45 Far from smooth

50 Rite site

52 High \_\_\_\_: prankishness

53 Escaped

54 Eagle nest

55 Asserts wildly

56 Ancient war god

58 Nearby

62 Discontinue

63 Possibly
- 64 Go on \_\_\_\_: rampage

65 Waistline

66 Immoral

67 Reverent

68 Mops decks

69 Steaming

70 Felt poorly

72 Lords' ladies

73 Genesis name

76 Good luck charm

78 Artistic rubbing

80 Birds' feed

81 Freedom

82 Adriatic wind

83 Comes to

86 Patron

88 Agree

90 Wildlife trail

91 Decipher

92 Greatness

93 Unshut

94 Baseball's Boggs

95 Sunday sign-off?

96 \_\_\_\_ were: supposedly

97 Vivacity

98 Peeper part

99 Tuckered out

100 Slips up

102 Foofaraw

104 Exclamation of delight

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

**ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Try to share your emotions. You shouldn't divulge all your hopes and dreams to the person behind the counter at the pharmacy, but you should let your partner know how good they make you feel. Put your energy where it will do the most good and communicate what you feel. Sometimes the things that you are most afraid to say are the very things that need to be said the soonest.

**LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Your ability to read people and see beneath their surface personality has never been stronger, and this skill could come in extremely handy. Maybe you'll get a sense that a friend's new significant other is 'the one', or maybe you'll just pick up on some flirty undercurrents that a cute stranger is sending your way.

**SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Communicate your feelings today. If you're feeling good, let folks know. And if you're feeling grumpy, let them know even sooner! Keeping people informed about your every emotion might seem like a silly thing to do, but it's not. It's important to prepare people for those times when you're feeling moody and slow so that they can be ready to pick up the slack.

**TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

One of your casual friendships has been slowly moving to a deeper level of significance in your life. This is wonderful, but there could be some jealousy brewing among some of your older friends. They are turning green over the fact that someone new is taking up so much of your free time. To help everyone adjust better, try to integrate this new friend into group activities.

**VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

There will be no such thing as sensory overload for you. Every stimulation, sound, and sight will feed your mind in an exciting way. It's a great day to go exploring! Unusual food, bizarre music, and foreign movies are just the ticket for your intellectually curious mind. Do something you've never done before, eat something you've never eaten before..

**CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Being analytical may not always be easy for you, but it could help you get through this day a lot more easily. Examine any problems you're dealing with objectively, and think about whether or not they need to be solved. Once you remove your emotions from the situation, you might quickly see that certain things will fix themselves and you don't need to worry about them.

**GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

It's wonderful that you're concerned about the health and well-being of other people in your life, but isn't it about time that you focused more on your own health and needs? There is only so much you can do to help other people, and right now you need to start doing things for yourself. Let others take care of themselves. It's not selfish; it's smart. Take tiny steps toward healing yourself.

**LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

You aren't very interested in acquiring material possessions. You want to find more substance, more genuine experiences, and more profound connections with the world around you. Now is a very appropriate time to explore volunteer options or other ways that you can get involved in helping the community around you. Now is not a very appropriate time to go on shopping sprees.

**AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You are exuding a very attractive kind of confidence today, which can be very useful to you in social situations! People who are meeting you for the first time will be impressed by your sense of self, and those who know you well will enjoy being around you even more when you're in this frame of mind. It's the perfect time to host an intimate get-together at your place.

**CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

Your emotional intensity has been exhausting for you lately, so today you need to take a step back. It's the right time for you to lighten your emotional load and say farewell to the anger, the grudges, and the bad blood between you and anyone else. Let someone else make the next social plans for your group. You've been taking on too many responsibilities in this area.

**SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You are going to pass an upcoming test with flying colours! Your brilliance always shines through, so don't waste your time getting nervous or wringing your hands and doubting how things will go. They will go well, so the sooner you start telling yourself that, the sooner you'll get rid of those butterflies in your stomach. Your brain is thinking up bigger and better ideas.

**PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Being blunt can be liberating. Saying what you mean frees you from worrying about how people will react. It can be exhausting to try to craft your communication into something that you think someone wants to hear or something that you think will get you the answer you want. Give yourself a break and just speak the truth. Let the other person react however they react.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Who invented the ballpoint pen?

- a. Biro Brothers
- b. Waterman Brothers
- c. Bicc Brothers
- d. Write Brothers

2. In which decade was the first solid state integrated circuit demonstrated?

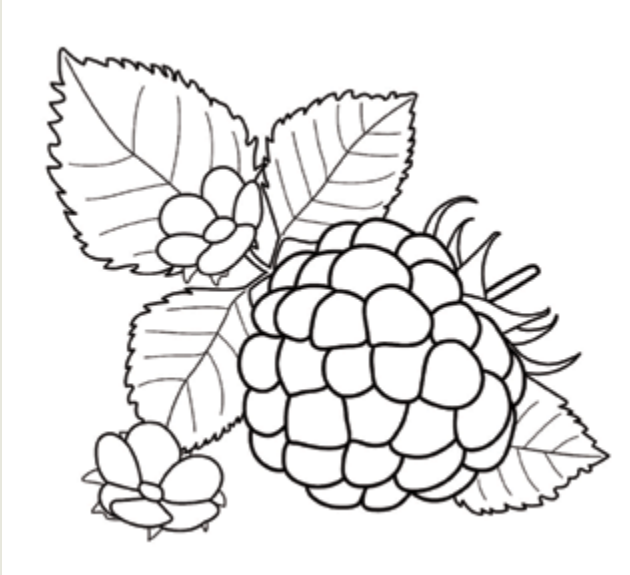
- a. 1950s
- b. 1960s
- c. 1970s
- d. 1980s

3. What did J B Dunlop invent?

- a. Pneumatic rubber tire
- b. Automobile wheel rim
- c. Rubber boot
- d. Model airplanes

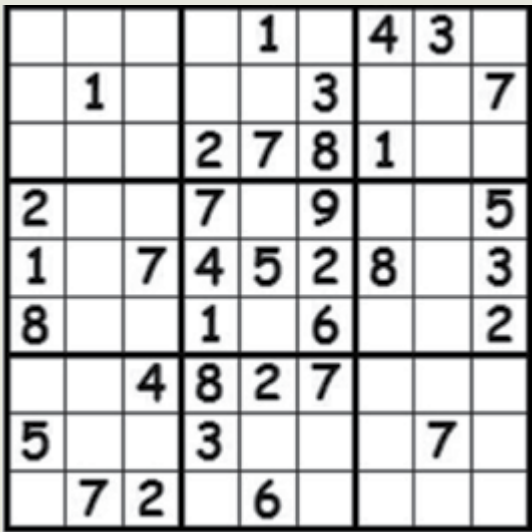
Answers: 1.a 2.b 3.a

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



BOGGLER



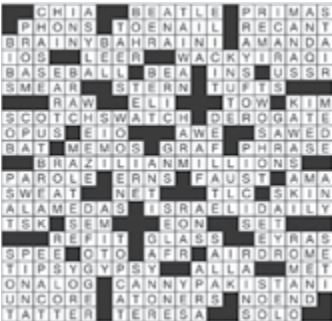
Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters.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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JUNE 24)



WORD BUILDER

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

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



# Big bucks for art by icons

A painting by British pop icon David Bowie sells for nearly US\$90,000 at an auction in Toronto (Canada) while a painting by wartime British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sold for US\$1.85mn at a Phillips auction in New York (US) last week indicating how the iconic status of social stalwarts influences the 'price' of art they've created



## Churchill painting sells for US\$1.85mn

A painting by wartime British Prime Minister Winston Churchill that was gifted to Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis sold for US\$1.85mn at a Phillips auction in New York on Wednesday.

'The Moat, Breccles', a signed 1921 oil landscape, went for within its pre-sale estimate price of between US\$1.5mn and US\$2mn. The sale was far less than the US\$11.6mn netted by another Churchill painting sold by Angelina Jolie at Christie's last March.

Despite failing to shatter records, the landscape which Churchill mentioned in a December 1921 essay titled 'Painting as a Pastime' - appealed to both history and celebrity buffs. Churchill had kept the painting for 40 years before offering it in 1961, four years before his death, to his friend Onassis.

The tycoon was so proud of his gift that he hung it in a place of honour - behind the bar of his yacht - alongside works by Vermeer, Gauguin, El Greco and Pissarro. This super yacht, named 'Christina' after Onassis's daughter, was a former Canadian Navy

frigate, nearly 100m long. It had been a part of the Normandy landings before Onassis bought the ship post-war for US\$34,000.

Onassis had it lavishly renovated to the tune of US\$4mn, making it "one of the most incredible structures that floated," Phillips Deputy Chairman Jean-Paul Engelen told AFP.

It was a favoured gathering spot for the rich and famous, including Elizabeth Taylor, John F, and Jackie Kennedy, Richard Burton, Grace Kelly, J Paul Getty, Eva Peron and others.

When Onassis died in 1975, seven years after his marriage to Jackie Kennedy, the yacht was sold and everything on board placed in storage, until his heirs recently decided to part with the painting.

To spur interest in the canvas, Phillips has recreated the bar on the 'Christina' - known as Ari's Bar - in its New York showroom, including facsimiles of its famous whale teeth, and filled the shelves with Pol Roger champagne, Churchill's preferred bubbly.

AFP



## David Bowie painting sold for US\$90,000

A painting by British pop icon David Bowie recently discovered and purchased for about US\$4 at a Canadian store that resells donated goods, has been sold at auction in Toronto for nearly US\$90,000, the auction house said Friday.

The sale price blew past auction house Cowley Abbot's estimated US\$7,000 to US\$10,000 valuation of the diminutive artwork, which went to an American collector. Auctioneer Rob Cowley said a dozen bidders vied for the computer and acrylic collage on canvas that is part of the so-called D Head series of portraits of the Ziggy Stardust rocker himself, his friends, and others that he painted between 1995 and 1997.

The 24 by 20cm painting of a pale figure dressed in teal clothes, with teal and red hair on a crimson background, was originally sold through a website around 2001. It somehow found itself two decades later at a donations store in South River, Ontario - 300km north of Toronto. There, an anonymous buyer paid US\$4 for it.

"We were very excited to discover that the artwork was original and authentic," Cowley had told AFP at the start of the two-week online auction. Bowie's signed initials on the back, he said, were authenticated by a Bowie autographs expert. The seller is 'delighted and shocked' that the painting fetched such a high price, Cowley said on Friday.

Bowie attended art school and collected hundreds of artworks during his lifetime that were sold off for tens of millions of dollars after his death. But his own artworks, according to Cowley, rarely go on sale.

Starting with 'Space Oddity' in 1969, Bowie scored hit after hit over more than four decades, ranging from 'The Jean Genie' and 'Heroes' in the 1970s to 'Let's Dance' and 'Modern Love' in the 1980s to more recent hits like 2013's wistful 'Where Are We Now?'

Two days after the release of his 25th studio album, 'Blackstar', Bowie died of cancer, in 2016.

AFP



Leonardo da Vinci's iconic painting - Mona Lisa

## Virtual gallery showcases Leonardo's prowess

A new virtual gallery of Leonardo da Vinci's paintings that plunges the viewer into the Renaissance master's creative process opens Friday at the manor in central France where he spent the last three years of his life.

The 12-minute immersive experience envelops the visitor with the paintings and the sketches that preceded them, projected onto the walls and rounded ceiling of a darkened gallery at the Clos Luce in the town of Amboise.

Close-ups, notably of faces and hands from masterpieces such as The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne but also of fabric folds, flora and other de-

tails, deepen the viewer's appreciation of the artist's virtuosity. The Last Supper is shown in its stages, starting with the background, adding the table and finally Jesus and the Apostles.

The virtual masterclass also delves into Leonardo's trademark sfumato technique - the blurring of the edges of images that creates a 3D effect - and his mastery of perspective.

"Nothing is left to chance in Leonardo's masterpieces," said Clos Luce president Francois Saint Bris, who led exhaustive documentary research to select the drawings. The immersive experience "evokes Leonardo's power and grace," he said.

Anne Carles of Arc-en-Scene, the show's principal creator, likened it to a concerto: "an overture with the 17 works gathered in an imaginary gallery" followed by a series of themed sequences, from smiles to drapery, from background landscapes to perspective. Then, "each of the scenes is deepened by the presentation of all his preparatory drawings," Carles told AFP.

For her, Leonardo "became a very intimate subject. You enter into dialogue with the universal artist. We created this miracle of uniting them all in the same place."

The virtual show brings together

more than 200 works including all the paintings fully attributed to the Florentine, housed at 13 institutions around the world.

The two floors of the repurposed industrial building - a watermill still turns nearby - cover 500sqm, twice its original size. Four years in the making at a cost of 2.3mn euros (\$2.7mn), the overall project involved 60 companies.

"The project allowed us to support employment and maintain our staff" during the coronavirus pandemic, remarked Saint Bris, 69, whose family owned the Clos Luce for 166 years.

AFP



## Qatari world 400m medallist Haroun dies in car crash

Doha, Qatar - Qatari runner Abdalelah Haroun, who won a bronze medal at the 2017 world championships, died on Saturday in a traffic incident, according to the Qatar Athletics Federation. He was 24.

"Haroun died in a car accident in Doha," the federation's secretary general, Mohammed Issa al-Fadala, said.

"He was in a rehabilitation programme after recovering from an injury (in preparation) to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics. "Qatar sports and athletics, on a global level, lost a great hero."

The Qatar Olympic Committee also mourned the loss on Saturday.

Haroun, of Sudanese origins, first represented Qatar in 2015, stealing the spotlight in his early days by recording remarkable times over 400m.

Haroun won his world bronze in 44.48sec behind South African winner Wayde van Niekerk and Steven Gardiner of the Bahamas. He also won silver at the 2016 world indoor championships in Portland and gold at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta.

Agencies

# Farah fails to qualify for Tokyo Olympics



London, UK - Four-time Olympic champion Mo Farah's hopes of ending his track career at the Tokyo Games ended as he fell short of the qualifying mark for the 10,000m in Manchester on Friday. The 38 year old won a specially-arranged race to give him a final chance to qualify at the British Championships, but his time of 27 minutes 47 seconds was nearly 20 seconds off the time required to qualify.

Farah won the 5,000m and 10,000m double at the London Olympics in 2012 and repeated the feat four years later in Rio de Janeiro. He then turned his attention to the marathon, but after mixed results returned to the track in the hope of one final shot at Olympic glory.

"I've been lucky enough to have had the long career I've had. I'm very grateful but that's all I had today," said Farah, who

27:50.64. Despite having the help of pacemakers in Manchester, his time improved by only three seconds to remain well off the pace needed to qualify.

After his Belgian training partner Bashir Abdi peeled off the front with nine laps to go, Farah steadily started falling behind the required time and he wore a pained expression as he came down the final straight on the last lap.

That contrasted sharply to the kick Farah had in his glory years to become an Olympic great.

He famously capped 'Super Saturday' on the track for Team GB at the home Games in 2012 as Jessica Ennis-Hill claimed heptathlon gold and Greg Rutherford won the long jump in the space of 44 minutes.

Farah also won six world championship gold medals and two silvers. However, his success has been dogged by his links to banned American coach Alberto Salazar. Farah was coached by Salazar at the Nike Oregon Project from 2011 to 2017.

Salazar is serving a four-year ban for breaking anti-doping rules following a probe by the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA).

Farah has never tested positive for any banned substance, but admitted last year to have suffered 'financially and emotionally' from the backlash to his association with Salazar.

Born in Somalia, Farah arrived in England at the age of eight and was knighted in 2017 for his services to athletics.

AFP

*I've been lucky enough to have had the long career I've had. I'm very grateful but that's all I had today*

MO FARAH

refused to confirm if he had just run his final track race. "It's a tough one. I always said if I can't compete with the best I'm not just going to go there to finish in a final. Tonight it shows it's not good enough."

Farah was blighted by an ankle problem when he finished eighth at the British 10,000m Championships on June 5 in a time of

## Herath, Prince join Bangladesh cricket team coaching staff

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladesh on Saturday appointed former Sri Lanka spinner Rangana Herath and South Africa batsman Ashwell Prince as consultants for the national men's cricket team. The appointments come ahead of a tour of Zimbabwe in July when Bangladesh will play a Test, three

ODIs and three T20Is.

Herath, the most successful left-arm spinner in the history of Test cricket with 433 wickets, replaces New Zealand's Daniel Vettori. Batting consultant Prince, replacing Englishman Jon Lewis, was capped 119 times for South Africa in the three formats.

AFP

## CLASSIFIEDS

**AL AZOON UNITED PROJECTS**  
**FOR ALL TYPE OF MAINTENANCE**  
PAINTING WALL PAPER, WALL DESIGN,  
ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING TAIL FIXING,  
SAILING, A/C REPAIRING, DECOR.  
**CONTACT: AMIR ALI 96609857**  
**www.alazonunited.com**



WJ Towell Group Company

**Quality car rentals at competitive prices.**

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684  
Sohar 9731 6218 | Salalah 9429 9325

www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



### MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCES

I am looking for a suitable girl under 32 age with 5.6 Height ( BED ), muslim/ Cristain religion to marry , I am 38 with fitness, currently employed with good salary and family visa is permitted, currently residing in Muscat oman but originally from Nanded settled in Hyderabad, details call me discussed over WhatsApp and phone 0096879021843

**VAIDYARATNAM OUSHADHASALA**  
"The cradle of Ayurveda"

**ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC**  
Authorized Dealer - وكيل معتمد

**For Genuine Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Yoga, Panchakarma, Massage, Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Beauty therapy & Post Delivery care**

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A,  
Al Khuwair service road, near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King  
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

### إعلان تخفيض رأس المال

وفقاً لأحكام المادة 150 من قانون الشركات التجارية  
تعلن شركة المساندة للمشاريع اختففة ( ش م م ) المقيدة بالسجل التجاري رقم 1158777 بأنها بصدد تخفيض رأس المال  
250.000.000 إلى 150.000.000 ريال عماني .  
وكل من له اعتراض على ذلك عليه أن يتقدم بأسباب اعتراضه لأمانة  
السجل التجاري بوزارة التجارة والصناعة خلال 30 يوماً من تاريخه.

### FREE CLASSIFIED LISTING

Muscat Daily now offers free classified listings for individuals in the following categories:  
Situations Wanted/ Accommodation Wanted or Available/Sale of Household Items/ Car for Sale or Wanted/ Matrimonial Alliances (Word limit is 35)

Please email your listing to  
dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om  
or call 99104346

**EDUCATION FURNITURE**

**uniQue CITY TRADING**

**LABOUR CAMP FURNITURE**

**OUTDOOR SHADES**

Contact: 9611 5353 / 9611 5252 Email: mybusinessoman@gmail.com



# EURO 2020



## Germany's striker Mueller declares himself fit for England clash

Herzogenaurach, Germany - Germany forward Thomas Mueller insists his knee injury will not stop him facing England in Tuesday's blockbuster Euro 2020 last-16 clash at Wembley.

"If I it was a problem, I wouldn't have trained today," Mueller said on Saturday at Germany's Euro 2020 base camp in Bavaria. "The capsular injury does not hold me back and I am experienced enough to deal with it. "I'm convinced it won't be a problem for Tuesday."

Mueller is expected to start against England having been left out of the line-up for Wednesday's 2-2 draw with Hungary, in which he came on as a second-half replacement.

The 31 year old Mueller and Germany captain Manuel Neuer, 35, are the only survivors from the team which beat England 4-1 in the last-16 of the 2010 World Cup. Sunday marks exactly 11 years since that match.

"We won against England in 2010 - that has nothing to do with Tuesday, but it might give some of you a good feeling," he told reporters.

"We are looking forward to playing a big name in England. "Both teams had convincing performances in the group stages, but also had games where they were criticised. "We were hoping to play better against Hungary, but now it's a knockout game."

AFP



# DENMARK'S DREAM RUN CONTINUES



Denmark's players celebrate after defeating Wales 4-0 in their Euro 2020 round-of-16 match at the Johan Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on Saturday (AFP)

Amsterdam, Netherlands - Denmark marked the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their greatest triumph by marching on to the quarterfinals of Euro 2020 on Saturday as Kasper Dolberg scored twice in an emphatic 4-0 win over Wales before an exultant travelling support in Amsterdam.

In the city where Christian Eriksen made his name, it was Dolberg - another former Ajax player - who opened the scoring with a fizzing strike in the 27<sup>th</sup> minute.

That came after Wales had started so well but Denmark never looked back and Dolberg struck again just after the restart before Joakim Maehle and Martin Braithwaite added more goals late on.

Carried by a wave of emotion, Danish dreams are still intact in a tournament that began in such traumatic circumstances for them with Eriksen's collapse in their opening match against Finland in Copenhagen.

They now go on to a last-eight tie in Baku against the Netherlands or the Czech Republic.

Eriksen, still recovering at home after his cardiac arrest, was present in everyone's minds at the home of Ajax, and that combined with a vast Danish support inside the one-third full Johan Cruyff Arena made this occasion really like a home game for them.

European champions against all odds when they beat Germany in the final on this day in 1992, Denmark finally have their first win in the knockout phase of a Euro since then and it would be a truly extraordinary story if they could repeat the feat this time.

Nobody in Denmark will want to get ahead of themselves but Wales - who finished with ten men after Harry Wilson's late red card - could certainly have no complaints about the outcome and there will be no repeat of their run to the semifinals at Euro 2016.

### Wales up against it

They needed a moment of magic from captain Gareth Bale or Aaron Ramsey which never came, but in truth they were up against it from the outset.

Aside from the universal goodwill towards Denmark following Eriksen's collapse, a ban on travellers from the United Kingdom entering the Netherlands meant there were very few Welsh supporters inside the stadium.

Danes, in contrast, descended in their droves on Amsterdam, creating an atmosphere not far off that seen at the Parken Stadium in

Copenhagen when they beat Russia to qualify for the last-16 - even the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, was in attendance.

To their credit Wales started well, with the probing Bale leading by example in the early stages.

He crashed a shot just wide in the tenth minute, but then Chelsea's Andreas Christensen - Denmark's third centre-back - stepped up into midfield and they took control.

They were rewarded when Dolberg, now of Nice in France and selected ahead of Yussuf Poulsen in attack, collected the ball just outside the area and unleashed a superb strike into the far corner of the net.

For Wales, the signs that it was not to be their night kept coming, as right-back Connor Roberts suffered a groin injury and had to come off.

Then giant striker Kieffer Moore was booked for a foul on Danish captain Simon Kjaer, meaning a suspension for the next round if Wales made it through.

Robert Page's side would not make it through as they fell further behind three minutes into the second half.

Neco Williams, the Liverpool full-

back who had replaced Roberts, tried to clear a Braithwaite cross but only succeeded in playing the ball straight to Dolberg who seized the chance to make it 2-0.

Bale and his teammates felt there had been a foul on Moore at the start

of the move but the German referee waved away the complaints and the only surprise was that it took until the dying minutes for more goals to come.

Mathias Jensen picked out the unmarked Maehle to score the third in the 88<sup>th</sup> minute, before Wilson saw red for a foul on Maehle and Braithwaite made it 4-0, a goal given after a lengthy VAR review.

AFP



Kasper Dolberg

STUDY IN CANADA

Choose the best. Choose MJ Global...

CHOOSE ONE OF THE 150 COLLEGES AND 96 UNIVERSITIES FOR YOUR FUTURE STUDIES

GET A POST STUDY STAY BACK UP TO 3 YRS AND GET RESIDENCY! IELTS MINIMUM 6 REQUIRED\*

DIPLOMA

1. ADVANCE DIPLOMA IN COMPUTER ENGINEERING

2. DIPLOMA IN ACCOUNTING

3. DIPLOMA IN CULINARY MANAGEMENT

4. DIPLOMA IN HOSPITALITY

AND MANY MORE.....

BACHELORS

1. BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

2. BACHELOR OF INTERIOR DESIGN

3. BACHELOR OF ENGINEERING

AND MANY MORE.....

MASTERS

1. MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

2. MASTER OF ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCE

3. MASTER OF ARTS - TOURISM MANAGEMENT

4. MASTERS OF ENGINEERING

AND MANY MORE.....

\* DEPENDS ON THE COURSE ELIGIBILITY

M-J Global, Office no. 204, 2nd Floor, Jasmine Complex, Al Hadiqa Street, Al Khuwair, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, Landline: +968 24478383

Office Timing: Saturday to Thursday 10 am to 6:30 pm

Email: [cs@m-jglobal.com](mailto:cs@m-jglobal.com) - Phone: +968 92571122, +968 93899424

[www.m-jglobal.com](http://www.m-jglobal.com)

ROUND-OF-16

DENMARK VS WALES



4 - 0



# EURO2020



## Relentless Ronaldo makes Portugal believe again before Belgium tie

Madrid, Spain - Portugal felt the full range of emotions during the Euro 2020 group stage and with Cristiano Ronaldo in the groove again, they can really begin to believe.

After scoring three late goals to beat Hungary, Portugal were shaken by a 2-4 loss to Germany, only for a 2-2 draw against France to restore morale and ensure they snuck out of Group F in third place.

The result is a last-16 clash with Belgium in Seville on Sunday, when one of the tournament favourites will bow out in what is surely the blockbuster tie of the round.

One of the frontrunners for the Golden Boot will fall too, with Ronaldo and Belgium's Romelu Lukaku both in contention. Ronaldo leads the scoring charts on five goals with Lukaku not far behind on three.

Portugal may have taken only a point from a sweaty contest with France at the Puskas Arena in Budapest but the belief and confidence gained from going toe-to-toe with the world champions could be pivotal for the rest of their tournament.

After chaos against Germany came concentration against the French, a committed, organised and aggressive performance which was a reminder of what carried Portugal to success at Euro 2016 and in the Nations League three years later.

"We were strong and consistent. The players helped each other, we had possession, we attacked well. We improved a lot from the game against Germany," said Portugal's coach Fernando Santos afterwards.

Santos had responded too, reacting by making some bold changes to his starting line-up.

### 'We can beat anyone'

William Carvalho and Bruno Fernandes, who both struggled in the first two games, made way for the young Renato Sanches and the veteran Joao Moutinho, who both rose to the challenge against Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante.

Sanches brought some much-needed dynamism to the team while the 34 year old Moutinho's surgical passing gave Portugal the guile they had lacked against Germany.

"We can fight against the best teams," said Santos. "Either we believe or we don't because we can beat anyone and I'll keep saying it - no team thinks they will have an easy time against Portugal."

The principal threat for Belgium will be Ronaldo who, at 36, is sparkling again on the biggest stage, delivering goals and breaking records from the start.

Ronaldo had never previously scored in six meetings with France but his two penalties means he has already achieved his best Euro tally. He has pulled five clear of Michel Platini's previous record of nine goals in total at European Championships and became the first ever to score in five different editions of the competition.

Against France, Ronaldo also equalled the world record for interna-

tional goals held since 2006 by Ali Daei, who has 109 for Iran.

There may be an added personal incentive for Ronaldo to outshine Lukaku, who pipped the Juventus striker to Serie A's player of the season award last season despite scoring five fewer goals.

Lukaku's 24 goals were fundamental to Inter Milan's Scudetto success but the 28 year old's work rate, pressing and link-up play meant he was more of an overall contributor than Ronaldo. In contrast, Ronaldo is all about the end-game - the goals, the victories and the trophies, with Portugal hoping to follow his lead.

AFP



Romelu Lukaku

Cristiano Ronaldo

### SUNDAY'S MATCHES (ROUND-OF-16)



**NETHERLANDS VS CZECH REPUBLIC**  
(8pm, Oman time)



**BELGIUM VS PORTUGAL**  
(11pm, Oman time)



### Czechs miss training in Budapest over bizarre plane defect

Prague, Czech Republic - A plane door defect involving an inflated evacuation slide stopped the Czech Republic on their way to a Euro 2020 knockout game against the Netherlands in Budapest, the team said on Saturday. The Czechs, who qualified as the third best team in Group D, are facing the Netherlands at the Puskas Arena in a last-16 tie on Sunday.

The players were already sitting on the special plane on Saturday morning, but they had to get off over the defect. "I have experienced delayed flights, postponed flights, even cancelled flights because of the coronavirus," tweeted midfielder Alex Kral.

"But this is my first flight that didn't happen because of an evacuation slide inflated by mistake," said the Spartak Moscow player. He added photos of the slide from inside and

outside the plane, complete with a hashtag 'slidesandjumpingcastles'.

National team spokesman Petr Sedivy said later the flight was 'not cancelled over an evacuation slide inflated

BY MISTAKE but over technical problems with the plane door'.

Based in Prague after having to move its base camp from Edinburgh over strict coronavirus rules in Scotland, the team held the official training session at a local stadium. The winners of Sunday's game will face Denmark in the quarterfinals on July 3.

AFP

*The players were already sitting on the special plane on Saturday morning, but they had to get off over the defect*

## Czechs face Netherlands with history on their side

Prague, Czech Republic - The Czech Republic will enter Sunday's last-16 game against the Netherlands at Euro 2020 as the odds-on favourites, at least when it comes to the history of their head-to-head encounters.

Since the Czech Republic emerged as an independent state in 1993, its national team has won five games and lost three against the Dutch, on top of three draws.

Before that, Czechoslovakia memorably beat the Netherlands on the way to their only European Championship title in Belgrade in 1976, having edged Johan Cruyff and company 3-1 after extra time in the semifinal. Czechoslovakia were not there to stop the Dutch when they won the 1988 title in West Germany.

But Czech fans cherish above all the memory of an epic battle at Euro 2004 in Portugal, won by the Czechs who came back from 2-0 down to win 3-2.

"People still remember that one best," says Vladimir Smicer, the former Lens and Liverpool winger, who scored the decider after a selfless pass from Karel Poborsky.

Aside from those two, the star-studded Czech team comprised Petr Cech, Pavel Nedved, Tomas Rosicky, Jan Koller, Milan Baros and Tomas Galasek, who spent a decade



Czech Republic's players take part in a training session in Prague on Friday, ahead of Sunday's last-16 match against the Netherlands, in Budapest

playing in the Netherlands.

Galasek is now an assistant to Czech coach Jaroslav Silhavy, who was in turn an assistant to coach Karel Bruckner in Portugal.

"The team was really fantastic. We all played in top clubs. It was the most total football we ever played," said Smicer, who now works as a Euro studio pundit for Czech Television.

Both teams went on to reach the last-four at the 2004 tournament, with the trophy lifted by Greece who beat the Czech Republic on a silver goal in the semifinals.

The latest sweet memories are as recent as the Euro 2016 qualifying

campaign. The Czech Republic beat the Netherlands twice, 2-1 at home and 3-2 in Amsterdam, the latter when Robin van Persie scored a bizarre own goal to help the ten-man Czechs advance to the finals while the Dutch stayed at home.

Assistant coach Jiri Chytrý said the Czechs would go into the game as the underdogs, as so often in the past against the Dutch.

"We consider the Netherlands one of the top teams, one of the favourites of the tournament," he said. "But if we give our best, we are able to face anyone."

AFP

**HIGH ENERGY EFFICIENCY SERIES**

**BIG BIGGER BIGGER**

**BIG COMPRESSOR, BIGGER COOLING.**

- Heavy duty reciprocating compressor
- High power saving
- Turbo cooling
- Auto restart
- 4-Way air outlet
- Gold Fin

**R-410A REFRIGERANT**

**THE LARGEST AIR CONDITIONER MANUFACTURER IN THE WORLD.**

**Genetco** جينتكو  
GENERAL ELECTRIC & TRADING CO. L.L.C.

**50 YEARS OF SUCCESS**

**MUSCAT** 97693496, 96742452  
Available at Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers

**SALALAH** 79011363  
C.R. No. 1009680



Julian Alaphilippe of France celebrates on the podium on Saturday

## Alaphilippe emerges from crash carnage to take Tour lead

### TOUR DE FRANCE

Landerneau, France - Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe dusted himself off from a fall to claim the first yellow jersey of the Tour de France on Saturday, winning stage one by a clear margin on a crash-marred opening day.

World champion Alaphilippe shot up the early section of the final 3km climb taking ten bonus seconds at the finish line and ended another 12 seconds ahead of his nearest challenger.

Australia's Michael Matthews is second at 12 seconds while Slovenia's Primoz Roglic came third and is fourteen seconds down on the leader in the overall standings.

Crossing the line in his world champion's rainbow jersey Alaphilippe put his thumb in his mouth in honour of his newborn son with his

partner Marion Rousse, a former professional cyclist and now commentator

Ineos Grenadiers leader Geraint Thomas and defending champion Tadej Pogacar were just behind this group on a hugely stressful finish with major time gaps at stake that almost certainly led to the second of two mass falls on the day. Thomas and Pogacar emerged unscathed and are just 18sec down in the overall standings.

The first was caused by a fan brandishing a cardboard banner trying to get on television, the second by a technical error at high speed as riders jostled for position at the foot of the final slope.

Alaphilippe is no stranger to the yellow jersey having spent much of the 2019 Tour in the lead before finishing fifth overall.

AFP

# Malan shines as England complete series sweep

### ENGLAND VS SRI LANKA THIRD T20I

Southampton, UK - England completed a 3-0 clean sweep over Sri Lanka in the T20I series with a crushing 89-run victory at the Ageas Bowl on Saturday.

It was the fourth-largest victory margin in terms of runs England have achieved in the format.

Despite the loss of both regular openers to injury, England posted a century stand for the first wicket to grasp a firm hold on the match which they were never to relinquish.

Dawid Malan was named Player of the Match for a fluent innings of 76 that belied the slow nature of the pitch. Jonny Bairstow made 51. Nobody in the rest of the match passed 20.

England lost their way a little towards the end of their innings.

An excellent spell of death bowling from Dushmantha Chameera, a bright spot amid the rubble of a bitterly disappointing Sri Lanka performance, saw England lose five wickets for 19 runs between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> overs. Chameera finished with career-best figures of four for 17.

Chris Jordan, however, helped England plunder 17 from the final over of the innings to take them to a total that was always likely to prove beyond the reach of a side that had failed to reach 130 in either of the first two games in the series.

So it proved as England's seamers, gaining a degree of lateral movement that is unusual with the white kookaburra ball, combined to bowl Sri Lanka out for just 91. It was the fourth



England's Dawid Malan plays a shot during his knock of 76 against Sri Lanka in third T20I on Saturday

lowest score Sri Lanka have made from a completed T20I innings. Chris Woakes, Sam Curran and Chris Jordan took four for 36 from their 12 overs combined, while David Willey picked up three wickets.

With Jason Roy suffering from a tight hamstring, Moeen Ali was recalled to the T20I side for the first time since September 2020.

But he was consigned to a peripheral role by the dominance of England's opening batters and the excellence of their seamers.

Sri Lanka also made a couple

of changes. But Oshada Fernando, who took 27 balls over his 19 runs and seemed preoccupied with trying to hit almost everything through the leg side, underwhelmed and Lakshan Sandakan was unable to make any inroads with his left-arm leg-spin. Avishka Fernando was absent through injury.

Given that England went into this series without two first-choice players (in Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer) and lost Jos Buttler to a calf injury along

the way, this result would seem to confirm their place among the favourites for the T20 World Cup in a few months.

It is harder to find room for optimism for a Sri Lanka side that succumbed to their first clean-sweep defeat in any limited-overs series (of at least three matches) against England.

Top heavy With Jos Buttler (calf) and Jason Roy (hamstring) absent through injury, England went into this game without either of their first-choice T20 openers. But such is their

| SCOREBOARD                                                                                                                                              |                                |         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|
| ENGLAND                                                                                                                                                 |                                |         |
| J Bairstow                                                                                                                                              | b Udana                        | 51 (43) |
| D Malan                                                                                                                                                 | c Shanaka b Chameera           | 76 (48) |
| L Livingstone                                                                                                                                           | c Shanaka b B Fernando         | 14 (10) |
| S Billings                                                                                                                                              | c Shanaka b Chameera           | 2 (3)   |
| E Morgan                                                                                                                                                | c Gunathilaka                  |         |
|                                                                                                                                                         | b Chameera                     | 1 (2)   |
| Moeen Ali                                                                                                                                               | c de Silva b Chameera          | 7 (7)   |
| S Curran                                                                                                                                                | not out                        | 9 (5)   |
| C Jordan                                                                                                                                                | not out                        | 8 (2)   |
| Extras                                                                                                                                                  | (lb 3, w 9)                    | 12      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                                                                                                            | <b>180 for six in 20 overs</b> |         |
| <b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-105, 2-143, 3-148, 4-151, 5-162, 6-162                                                                                        |                                |         |
| <b>Bowling:</b> D Chameera 4-0-17-4, B Fernando 4-0-26-1, I Udana 4-0-55-1, L Sandakan 4-0-28-0, W Hasaranga 3-0-42-0, D Shanaka 1-0-9-0                |                                |         |
| SRI LANKA                                                                                                                                               |                                |         |
| D Gunathilaka                                                                                                                                           | c Malan b Willey               | 4 (2)   |
| K Perera                                                                                                                                                | c Livingstone b Woakes         | 3 (4)   |
| O Fernando                                                                                                                                              | c Willey b Curran              | 19 (27) |
| K Mendis                                                                                                                                                | c Bairstow b Willey            | 6 (4)   |
| N Dickwell                                                                                                                                              | c Jordan b Curran              | 11 (10) |
| D Shanaka                                                                                                                                               | run out                        | 7 (15)  |
| W Hasaranga                                                                                                                                             | c Malan b Jordan               | 1 (8)   |
| I Udana                                                                                                                                                 | c Moeen b Willey               | 0 (4)   |
| B Fernando                                                                                                                                              | b Livingstone                  | 20 (4)  |
| L Sandakan                                                                                                                                              | not out                        | 3 (10)  |
| D Chameera                                                                                                                                              | lbw b Moeen                    | 1 (4)   |
| Extras:                                                                                                                                                 | (b 1, lb 7, nb 1, w 7)         | 16      |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>                                                                                                                                           | <b>91 in 18.5 overs</b>        |         |
| <b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-4, 2-23, 3-29, 4-46, 5-61, 6-64, 7-64, 8-64, 9-88, 10-91                                                                      |                                |         |
| <b>Bowling:</b> D Willey 4-0-27-3, C Woakes 4-0-9-1, C Jordan 4-1-13-1, S Curran 4-0-14-2, A Rashid 1-0-9-0, L Livingstone 1-0-8-1, Moeen Ali 0.5-0-3-1 |                                |         |

strength in depth in top-order limited-overs batting at present that Malan and Bairstow were still able to provide the perfect platform for them.

Malan, who has been batting at No 3 of late, and Bairstow, who has been at No 4, put on 105 for the first wicket in 11.4 overs. Their stand was 14 more than the entire Sri Lanka side managed.

It was England's first century opening stand against Sri Lanka in this format of the game and their fifth in total.

Cricinfo

## Verstappen on Styrian GP pole

### FORMULA ONE

#### STYRIAN GRAND PRIX

Spielberg, Austria - World Championship leader Max Verstappen of Red Bull claimed pole position for the Styrian Grand Prix on Saturday as Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas complained of getting 'screwed over'.

Bottas was second quickest but dropped to fifth on the grid because of a three-place penalty imposed on Friday, leaving teammate Lewis Hamilton to start on the front row with Verstappen.

"It has been a very good weekend," said Verstappen.

"The car was very good to drive in qualifying. It was not easy to deal with the traffic, the fifth lap in Q3 was good enough in the end.

"Super happy to be on pole here at home. It's always nice to see a Red Bull car first here."

McLaren's Lando Norris produced the performance of the day, pushing the front runners all the way and finishing fourth, meaning he will start from third.

Norris was followed by the second Red Bull of Sergio Perez



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates his pole position on Saturday

and the Alpha Tauris of Pierre Gasly and Yuki Tsunoda who were split by Charles Leclerc's Ferrari in seventh.

Fernando Alonso in the Alpine and Lance Stroll's Aston Martin rounded out the top-ten with George Russell just missing out in his Williams.

Tsunoda, however, was later given a three-place penalty for impeding Bottas, moving Russell up to the fifth row.

Verstappen had been the standout performer in practice on Friday and looked in supreme control as he claimed his third pole position of the season,

clocking a fastest time of 1min 3.841secs.

Bottas made a late dart and finished 0.194secs behind Verstappen. The Finn, however, was penalised on Friday for 'dangerous driving' after spinning in the pit lane and will start from fifth on the third row of the grid.

That penalty opened the door for his teammate Hamilton to keep up the pressure on Verstappen who leads him by just 12 points after seven rounds of the championship. Hamilton, who topped Saturday morning's third and final practice, was 0.2sec behind Verstappen and banked on a blistering final lap. But the Briton struggled to challenge the pace of the Dutchman and when he ran wide at turn nine, he has to cede pole to his rival.

Daniel Ricciardo, in the McLaren, and former world champion Sebastian Vettel in the Aston Martin both failed to qualify for Q3 and were outperformed by Russell who missed out in his Williams on a place in Q3 by just 0.008secs.

AFP

## Vinales on pole for Dutch MotoGP

Assen, Netherlands - Maverick Vinales, riding a Yamaha, will start in pole position for Sunday's Dutch MotoGP after dominating all three free practices and qualifying. The Spaniard, who had been fastest in all three practice sessions, clocked 1min 31.814sec, a new track record at Assen.

Vinales' French teammate and championship leader Fabio Quartararo was second, at 0.071sec, with Ducati's Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia in third (+0.302). It will be Vinales' first pole since the 2020 Emilia Romagna race, and marks a turnaround after finishing last in last week's German MotoGP.

Italian Valentino Rossi, the former seven-time world champion who has won ten times at the Assen track, will start in 12<sup>th</sup>.

Six-time world champion Marc Marquez of the Repsol Honda Team, who had a crash on Friday, will start in 20<sup>th</sup> position.

AFP

Every day, all day!

