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WORLD PAYS TRIBUTE TO PRINCE PHILIP
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HM reviews economic and social schemes

Muscat - His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq presided over a meeting of the principal committee of the National Programme of Fiscal Balance, held at Al Barakah Palace, on Thursday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed financial and economic developments in the country as a result of efforts made in implementing programmes and initiatives of the Fiscal Balance Plan (2020-2024). His Majesty the Sultan expressed his satisfaction over procedures carried out by the government in this regard.

His Majesty the Sultan gave his Royal directives to all officials of the government to follow up on livelihood conditions of citizens in order to secure fair standards of decent living for them.

His Majesty the Sultan reaffirmed that the realisation of decent living for citizens now

and in the future is a lofty goal in all government actions in different sectors. He instructed all officials of the government to undertake all procedures deemed necessary for addressing any negative impacts that might affect citizens' livelihood during this stage impinged by various challenges, on top of which comes the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse repercussions, particularly at economic and social levels.

His Majesty the Sultan blessed all initiatives presented by the departments concerned within the context of regulating the Social Security Scheme. The Royal gesture came as part of the continuous attention that His Majesty

the Sultan accords to social aspects of citizens' life and in implementation of the national priorities of Oman Vision 2040, notably its strategic approaches aimed to secure decent, sustainable life for all and to provide social security for the target segments.

Along with members of the principal committee of the National Programme of Fiscal Balance, the meeting was attended by the Head of the Private Office, the Minister of Economy, the Minister of Social Development and representatives of the programme's team.

ONA

Finance Ministry unveils social security package endorsed by HM

Muscat - The cost of the Social Security Scheme (SSS) package endorsed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq stands at over RO100mn, said the Ministry of Finance in a statement on Thursday.

Economic and social initiatives endorsed by His Majesty the Sultan earlier will continue to apply until the finalisation of the SSS that the government is establishing to serve as a durable scheme sustaining all current and past services, programmes and networks of social security.

The package also directs

the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (acting in coordination with other government departments concerned) to study and rectify the status of companies adversely affected by the current economic challenges.

The step also enhances the stability of the labour market and ensures the contribution of companies to the role to be undertaken by the private sector in supporting balanced economic growth in accordance with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

ONA

WHAT THE PACKAGE OFFERS

- **Enhances support** given to programmes of Ministry of Social Development related to handling of insolvent cases.
- **Absolves all citizens** whose monthly income is less than RO350 from debts of the soft housing loans programme of the Ministry of Housing

and Urban Planning.

- **Writes off all** outstanding dues of all citizens benefitting from two programmes known as 'Sanad Programme' and 'Livelihood Resources Programme'.
- **Provides interest-free** financial incentives through Oman Development Bank for those self-employed, including sales and mobile services, household chores,

owners of taxis licensed to work in hotels and airports, women's projects, workers in the field of fishing - all in accordance with the principles to be announced by the bank.

- **Launches an** emergency financing programme for entrepreneurs holding Riyadh cards, via the Small and Medium Enterprises

Development Authority, in accordance with the regulations to be announced by the authority.

- **Extends the period** of disbursing the 'Job Security Benefit' for applications that meet the prescribed terms and conditions while at the same time accepting belated applications that are received beyond the deadline. The

extension continues till the end of 2021.

- **Expands the list of** basic food commodities charged zero per cent value-added tax (VAT) from 93 to 488.
- **The government** bears the cost of the VAT charged against electricity and water services for all citizens who own two accounts or less of the residential category. This includes families

that were previously eligible for government support for the two services.

- **Increases the volume** of subsidised fuel to be consumed by holders of the National Support Card from 200lt to 400lt per month. The government bears the cost of the VAT towards that amount so that it remains at the same subsidised price of 180bz/l.



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Health institutions under pressure as cases rise

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Thursday reported 1,320 new COVID-19 cases, the highest daily count this year. The number of deaths also rose - to 1,747 - after 12 deaths were reported on the day.

According to MoH data, health institutions are under pressure as cases continue to increase. A total of 652 patients were admitted in health institutions on Thursday, including 204 in intensive care. The total number of cases in the country now stands at 168,005. 'There were 920 recoveries on Thursday, taking the total number of recoveries to 149,969,' an MoH statement said, adding that the rate of recovery has further dropped to 89.2 per cent.

Meanwhile, vaccine is now regarded as an effective weapon against COVID-19 in all countries of the region. "The rapid distribution and rollout of vaccines across the region shows the commitment and efforts by countries, WHO and COVAX partners to use this unique tool



MoH to obtain 3mn doses by Aug

Muscat - The Ministry of Health (MoH) is seeking to import around 3mn doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of August.

'The Ministry of Health is seeking to bring 2.82mn doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of August 2021. Remaining doses will be administered in batches before the end of

this year,' MoH said.

As part of the national immunisation plan, Oman seeks to vaccinate 3.2mn people, equivalent to 70 per cent of the population, except those under the age of 18 years. Currently, those who have had COVID-19 earlier, will be given one dose as it has been deemed sufficient.

available to protect populations," said Dr Ahmed al Mandhari, WHO's regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

To date, more than 25mn doses of COVID-19 vaccine have

been administered across the region, with countries like the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Morocco administering more than 20 doses per 100 population.

A sigh of relief as expatriate families exempted from hotel isolation

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a step towards easing restrictions on expatriate families travelling to Oman, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has exempted them from institutional health quarantine.

"Expatriate families coming to the sultanate with their children aged 18 and below are exempted from institutional health quarantine; however, they should abide by home isolation. Families must register their names in Tarassud app and wear an electronic tracking bracelet," said an official at MoH.

The authorities on April 6 announced exemption for all Omani citizens from institutional quarantine.

The official added, "There is



no need for institutional quarantine for all citizens and expat families. The latest circular was issued on April 7 from the Ministry of Health and has been sent to the Civil Aviation Authority."

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Hisham Talaat, a teacher said, "The best decision was made as the expatriates who have fami-

lies were in a serious problem regarding the high cost of hotel reservation, as well as the presence of children with them stuck in a hotel room for over seven days. This decision will allow a lot of expatriate families to travel to their home countries and spend the vacation well without thinking of financial burdens."

Dr John Philips Mathew, an educational officer, said, "This is a wise decision."

Welcoming the move, Abdul Hadi Mustafa, a private sector employee, said, "The decision will help many families, especially large families. Some families have been postponing travel to their home countries because of the added financial burden of booking a hotel on their return. They must also commit to home quarantine and adhere to health measures."

Fathy Najm, a private sector employee, said, "I think that everyone understands the seriousness of COVID-19, and there is a great awareness among residents and citizens about the need to adhere to measures to limit the spread of the virus. The decision is very good and fair."

REGIONAL WEATHER

	Max	Min
Abu Dhabi	38	25
Doha	33	22
Kuwait City	31	20
Manama	31	22
Riyadh	37	20

Oil spill reaches Sohar port, beaches

Our Correspondent
Muscat

An oil slick spread over an area of eight nautical miles north of South Batinah that was spotted on Friday and had potential to cause pollution within Sohar port and adjoining areas, was contained on Saturday, the Environment Authority said.

Sohar Port stated that an 'ocean oil spill' from an unknown source was been observed just north of South Batinah governorate in the sultanate's territorial waters.

'As soon as the oil spill was detected, it was tracked as it was coming closer and washing

ashore on beaches of North Batinah governorate as well as within Sohar port. Accordingly, the emergency response plan was activated and the concerned departments began the process of cleaning the port and the ships affected by the unexpected ocean oil spill,' it said.

The port stated that for vessels coming into the port the risk for pollution was very limited as there were only a few areas where the oil slick was observed.

'A mariners notice has been sent out to warn ships not to sail through the oil spills in the ocean. Therefore, nautical operations and vessel movements are not affected,' it said.

'Sohar Port assures that it will make all efforts in reducing the environmental damage and safeguarding operational continuity in collaboration with all related local authorities,' added the statement.

The Environment Authority said in a statement on Friday that the specialists at the Pollution Operations Control Centre at the authority received a report from the Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre stating the presence of a slick of petroleum products north of Sohar Port, covering an area of eight nautical miles.

It was expected to reach Sohar port and the adjacent beaches, the authority added.

INDUS NOVATEUR PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE IT SOLUTIONS IN OMAN FOR OVER A DECADE

Indus Novateur has been providing comprehensive IT solutions in Oman for over a decade. With presence across the Middle East, India and USA, Indus brings a unique perspective and skillset, developed through its large-scale customer base across multiple verticals. The diverse experience, know-how and successful deployments over the years enables Indus to apply industry best practices to any SAP implementation requirement. Indus also has had the honour of being awarded SAP Best Partner Award for three consecutive years.

Indus Novateur partnered with Osool Poultry for a greenfield implementation program that involved a fully integrated and comprehensive ERP solution. This relationship started with Osool Poultry way back in 2016 when they established the organization with the aim to produce 150 million hatching eggs per year to meet the needs of the project's shareholders and bridge the gap in the sultanate & Gulf market. This visionary thought process of Osool Poultry needed commendation in selecting Indus Novateur which required a lot of due diligence as they had the plan to start the Operation in Jan 2021. A long-lasting relationship was sought by Osool Poultry and their conscious choice of SAP Business one and Indus Novateur, an SAP Gold Partner with nativity of Oman shall supplement their growth had been right in all aspects.

The shareholding capacity of Osool Poultry comes from a varied set of investment companies pooling together 28.86 Million RO out of the total project investment of 61.5 Million RO.

Dr. Hadi Mohsin Al-Lawati, Chief Executive Officer of the company noted, "Osool Poultry decided to implement



SAP Business One ERP to build capabilities in finance, Poultry Farming, sales and distribution. We wanted our partner to align with our varying objectives - updates to the investors followed by betterment of operational efficiency and part of our continual growth. As the project contributes significantly to achieving the government's efforts and goals targeting economic diversification, development of governorates, and creating job opportunities for Omani citizens in various fields and specializations, we required the transparency, efficiency, and ease of reporting to the diversified stakeholders". He continued, "There were a lot of choices and we chose Indus Novateur for this project as they possessed the skill, expertise in conjunction with flexibility".

It was not about providing a software; it was all about a solution combined with Agility that builds the confidence. The Indus Novateur team can proudly say they had done their contribution in a strategic project like this aiming largely to achieve high self-sufficiency and enhance food

security in the Sultanate.

Ms.Raji Sriram, General Manager of Indus Novateur noted "The experienced team at Indus understood the goals quickly and was able to contribute towards fulfilling the requirements. The team at Indus had to modify the deployment process. Collaborative working while providing technological advancement was an essential part of this project. The complete project was done in an agile method with quick turn-around on the activities and showing results".

Thanking the Osool Poultry Management for the faith imposed on Indus Novateur, she concluded "This success is once again a beginning and Indus would continue to be a technology partner in the future roadmap as well as ensuring the vision of Osool Poultry is converted into reality. Already a dedicated resource has been provided in supporting the regular production activities of Osool Poultry. The testament to our commitment and expertise does not stop here and would continue in the success story of Osool Poultry".

Adventorial



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Sahala platform creates confusion among travellers

Shaddad al Musalmay
Muscat

Travellers to Oman who must book their hotel for institutional quarantine via Sahala - <https://covid19.emushrif.om> - have been left in the lurch as the app shows the majority of approved hotels as 'Sold out' or 'No available rooms'. Those using the app have also been unable to find hotel options to suit their needs or prepone and postpone bookings leading to confusion and inconvenience.

According to eMushrif, which operates Sahala and oversees institutional quarantine processes in the country, passengers need to complete traveller registration and hotel booking details through the platform before travel.

However, after the recent decision by the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the COVID-19 pandemic to limit entry to the country to citizens and residents only from 12 noon on Thursday, April 8, many people who had booked their flights earlier needed to either prepone or postpone their hotel bookings but were unable to do so.

"I went through a very difficult time trying to find a hotel that suits my budget for my cousins visiting me. I know in Oman, we have thousands of hotel rooms but on Sahala, there is only a handful. And that's not all. A majority of the approved hotels on the app show they are 'Sold out' or have 'No available rooms'. But when you call the hotel directly, you are told there are plenty of rooms available," said Samya al Nuurmani, a resident of Seeb.

She observed that most of the available hotels are four- and five-star which many can't afford for an eight-night stay.

"Moreover, when I tried contacting Sahala, I started calling at around 10am and my call was finally answered around 6.30pm. I also tried their WhatsApp number, but I haven't got a response until now. So, I was forced to book an expensive hotel which was a burden for me just to make my cousins' visit possible," Samya said.

Ali Khalfan, who was supposed to reach Oman on Friday for a family visit, rebooked his ticket to make sure he was here before Thursday. However, he could not find a way to prepone



Connecting hotels and travellers

Muscat - The Sahala platform was developed to connect travellers to hotels so that the whole process is 'legit and hassle free', according to Adnan al Shuaili, founder and CEO of eMushrif.

"During the time of COVID-19, we wanted to support the government through a digital medium. Sahala connects travellers to hotels in an easy way," Shuaili said.

"Our call centre has been activated now to help those with queries. We have also activated live chats in the system. We had not expected a large number of queries before."

On refunds, Shuaili said, "A refund process is already there in the system in case travellers want to cancel their hotel stays. It's up and running fine."

As for hotel price options, Shuaili said, "We do not have any control over prices. We are a platform to regulate the process and monitor it to

make sure people go to hotels, not to regulate prices and hotel capacity."

He said that prices depend on supply and demand. "In Oman, we have around 500 hotels. On Sahala, around 400 hotels are registered and we expect more in the coming days which will make prices more affordable."

For the hotels that show 'Sold out', Shuaili said, "Rooms are actually not sold out. Once people check out, hotels need to update in the system. If that is not done, the system will continue to show as 'Sold out.'"

He said Sahala tracks information beginning from landing in the airport to bracelet attachment to hotel quarantine.

"We take this data and give it to the concerned authorities. We work closely with the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Royal Oman Police and Oman Airports."

his hotel booking on the app.

"On the app, it states that one will be refunded no later than a month. It takes just a click to pay for the booking, but when it comes to refund, why does it take so long? Let there be a convenient call centre 24/7 because there is a flight every hour flying into the country," Khalfan said.

Airlines are responsible for ensuring that their passengers get confirmed hotel bookings via Sahala, giving travellers options to book hotels of their choice.

"Hoteliers in Oman are law abiding citizens. With the introduction of the Sahala app, not

only are expats facing the problem by way of the additional cost of hotel quarantine but also the app's operators who are pressured by desperate expats looking for affordable hotel rooms," said Wadi Kabir-based resident Mohammed Shakir. "The people most affected in this situation are ones like me who earn paltry monthly salaries. I couldn't go to Hyderabad when my mother passed away as airfares were too high. Add to that the cost of multiple PCR tests and hotel quarantine. I was forced to shelve my programme," Shakir added.

@shaddadn



Sultanate of Oman Government Development Bonds

On behalf of the Government of Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Oman announces an issue of Government Development Bonds to be sold by auction. The 67th Issue of Government Development Bonds will be issued on Thursday, 22/04/2021, carrying a coupon rate of 5.50% per annum for a maturity period of 7 years (maturing on Saturday, 22/04/2028). These Bonds will be auctioned on Tuesday, 20/04/2021. Investors may apply for these Bonds through competitive bidding only.

Security of Capital

Total security is offered as the Bonds are registered and transferable only by means of a document evidencing the transaction between a buyer and a seller through Muscat Securities Market. The Bonds are direct and unconditional obligations of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman.

Steady and Attractive Returns

Interest of 5.50% per annum is payable half-yearly during the life of the Bond, commencing from the date of issue (i.e. 22nd April 2021). The interest will be paid semi-annually on 22nd October and 22nd April, every year till maturity of the Bond on Saturday, 22/4/2028. The first interest payment will be on 22/10/2021.

Liquidity

The Bonds can be liquidated before maturity by trading in Muscat Securities Market at the prevailing market price.

Collateral Advantage

The Bonds can be used as a collateral security to obtain loans from any commercial licensed bank.

67th ISSUE
OPENS ON SUNDAY, APRIL 4th, 2021.
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Tender Announcement

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company S.A.O.C Invites Interested Companies To Participate In The Following Tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (R.O)	Pre-Bid Meeting
MEDC-06/2021	Advanced Distribution Management System (ADMS) Software and Implementation Services: SCADA, OMS, Mobile, Advanced Applications, Integration, and Ongoing Support	15/4/2021	25/5/2021	Specialized	150	21/04/2021 at 8:00 AM (Oman local time) Online Meeting

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents online. - Against the amount specified above. Non-Refundable payment - For fees payment procedure and to obtain the tender document, please contact us via e-mail Contract@medcoman.com 24588600 – Ext: 8577 - 8726
Purchase timing	Tender documents can be purchased at the official working time between 08:00 – 13:00 hours
Enquiries	Any inquiry can be sent using clarification available in the tender documents , one week before bid submission date
Tender Submission	- Tenders should be submitted in a sealed and stamped envelope addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION CO. marked only with tender number and the subject - Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER mentioned in clause 20.0 in Prime Document
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY S.A.O.C. - Any bid that does not meet the bank guarantee will not be considered
Terms and Conditions	- The name of the bidder, other marks or any reference must not be specified on the envelope - Tenders received after the deadline stated in the Invitation to Tender, including any extension thereof, for any reason whatsoever will not be considered - The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date - MEDC is not bound to consent the lowest Bid or any other Tenders. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization
Bid Placement	The Completed Tender should be deposited in the Tender Box No. 1 in the ground floor of MEDC Head Office building at Airport Heights, before 10 a.m. on the assigned date of tender submission



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MUSCAT DAILY

Challenges of working from home...

Our Correspondent
Muscat

It has been a year since the world, including Oman, seriously implemented the culture of work from home (WFH). As the pandemic affected the country leaving all in confusion, WFH too has taken its toll on professional and personal lives. There have been challenges and stress in shedding the boundaries of work and life and maintaining a balance.

Zoom, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp and other online meeting places flourished in the initial periods of WFH as professionals met the challenge with vigour and enthusiasm. Since March last year, Zoom and Netflix have been part and parcel of virtually everyone's lives. Bedrooms were turned into office corners and dinner tables into workstations.

P Chandrasekr, group general manager at Jawad Sultan Group said, "The outbreak of the pandemic and its effects are creating deleterious impact on all sectors of economy. Before WFH, our interactions were on human connect basis and hence, all electronic medium of connection were purely secondary.

"However, the new normal has altered the equation so much, that it has created tensions and anxiety. WFH infringes on home environment and creates unwanted tensions. Psychologists the world over are opining that this can lead to serious relationship hassles and mental stress. At a personal level too, this has brought about unavoidable changes in work-life



As the days pass by it becomes hard to maintain it. It's hard to establish trust and develop relationships with colleagues and clients when you don't have a daily face-to-face connection

ABDUL RAZIQ KAZI

balance. After all as the Greek philosopher Aristotle rightly said 'Man is a social animal', and it is profoundly true even today."

WFH with online dependency has also affected recruitments.

Chandrasekr said, "Many of the organisations are ramping up digital interviews but one is not sure how efficacious it is since a digital presence cannot reveal everything about the candidate."

Many have struggled with the new remote lifestyle while some have successfully executed plans.

Abdul Raziq Kazi, head of Production at Choice Advertising Agency said, "Work from home culture was good at the initial stage but now as the days pass by it is hard to maintain it. It's hard to establish trust and develop relationships with col-

leagues and clients when you don't have a daily face-to-face connection. Moreover, working at home with kids and family together creates distractions as we cannot have dedicated schedules and space to work which makes it challenging to work from home."

Students and young children too have faced severe crisis with online classes. Many parents complain that children have undergone frequent mood swings and changes in behaviour. Online classes do not always keep them engaged.

Balqees al Hassani, head of Well-Being and Student Support Services of Al Sahwa School said, "It is true that with online studies,

many of my students are undergoing challenges. There are many who do miss their friends and teachers; and I have had parents also who sought help. Real physical communication cannot replace the virtual typing or voice-note communication."

Dr Nashat Shams, a psychologist and physician from the Ministry of Health said, "We are now approaching one year since the coronavirus pandemic hit us following with the WFH culture. As per research, WFH has indeed repercussions on mental health or productivity. According to research, those who work from home tend to report high levels of stress.

"Forty-one per cent of employees who more often worked from home considered themselves highly stressed, opposed to 25 per cent of those who worked only on-site. Employees who work from home might experience more of a blur in personal life and work boundaries, especially smart devices.

"Work from home employees might grapple more with the concept of unplugging and ending their workday as opposed to those who work in an office setting."

She added that challenges are more for people with children.

"Depending on their age, you may need to deal with childcare, working around their school schedule, and generally balancing your work and family life. When working from home, you may face challenges setting boundaries with people and children who forget that working from home is still working."

Dr Nashat Shams gives a few tips for managing the stress of working from home

Create a routine

Whether you set your schedule or have specific hours you need to be working, creating a routine can help you manage your time and concentrate better on your work. Create a ritual that indicates the start of your day: This might include taking a walk before you start working, taking a few minutes to stretch, or having a coffee or tea at the start of your day. Set a regular lunchtime: Taking lunch at a particular time every day provides you a much-needed break and grants you time to refuel before getting back to work. Be sure to unplug during your lunchtime so you can enjoy your break fully.

Create a dedicated workspace

Even though it may be alluring to curl up in bed and work, try to create a dedicated workspace where you can only concentrate on your job. Creating specific work and home boundaries can help you mentally shift from home life to work, even if you're using a tiny corner of your home.

Reduce distractions

When you are ready to start working, be sure to silence your phone and switch off any computer notifications you might receive that aren't work-related.

Connect with friends

If you feel isolated working from home, it's crucial to make an effort to connect with the support system of your life. Because everyone may have varying schedules, set up a fixed time to video chat or call each other and add it to your calendar as a reminder.

Reward yourself

To keep your motivation up, break down tasks into smaller, more controllable steps, and reward yourself for finishing them. The reward can be an easy task.

Protect your sleep

Getting quality sleep at night directly affects your overall well-being, including your ability to work from home productively. Even though it may be tempting to do so, using a screen late at night can modify your sleep patterns and make it challenging to fall asleep.

Practice self-care

When you work from home, it's essential to prioritise self-care. Doing so may help you stay connected to yourself and better learn what you need in terms of a work-life balance. Take your time understanding how you can best take care of yourself. There are many ways you can do this, including prayer rituals, exercise, yoga, meditation, etc.

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Regional PCR lab inaugurated in Sohar

Muscat - A regional molecular Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) laboratory was inaugurated at Sohar Port and Free Zone in North Batinah on Thursday under the patronage of H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health.

As per a statement, the PCR laboratory has been funded with approximately RO500,000 in an initiative adopted by Sohar Port and Free Zone with partnership of six major companies in the free zone as a joint venture under corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Omar Mahmoud al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone and deputy CEO of Sohar Port said, "We believe that it is a shared responsibility for entities across all sectors to join hands towards enhancing healthcare services and contribute towards improving the quality of services that are provided to safeguard the well-

being of citizens."

Sultan Saif al Sa'adi, director general of Health Services in North Batinah, said, "With the increase in the number of COVID-19 cases across North Batinah in the recent weeks, the demand for testing facilities has also arisen."

The lab is equipped with the latest polymerisation apparatuses, approved by the Ministry of Health, to conduct the required tests for COVID-19.

The tenant companies have contributed to the enhancement of the lab, through the provision of eight of the latest polymerase testing devices.

This will enable the lab to conduct 600-800 tests a day, as compared to 80-100 tests previously done, in addition to analysing other infectious diseases, positioning it at the same capacity as the public health centre in Darsait, Muscat.

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr	4.30am	Asr	3.35pm
Sunrise	5.49am	Maghrib	6.26pm
Duhr	12.08pm	Isha	7.56pm

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MSM is now Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's stock market, the Muscat Securities Market (MSM), will now be known as the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) as the Omani bourse has completed its transformation and converted into a closed joint stock company under the umbrella of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

In accordance with the Royal Decree No 5/2021 issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on January 5, 2021, an Omani closed joint stock company has been established under the name of Muscat Stock Exchange SAOC, to takeover and undertake all activities and functions of the Muscat Securities Market.

From April 10 (Saturday), all assets, liabilities, activities, rights and functions of the MSM stand transferred and assigned to the MSX, according to a press statement issued by the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The transformation of Oman's stock market into a closed joint stock company will enhance the investment development process, both by providing an effective platform full of opportunities for listing and trading securities, as well as supporting diversity in economic development plans and ensuring the sustainability of financial instruments.

With this transformation, the MSX aspires to take a leading role in the regional and international securities arena through various innovative initiatives aimed at developing the stock exchange with transparency, governance, improved companies performance, increased op-



The transformation of Oman's stock exchange into a joint stock company is the first step towards the transition of the MSX into becoming a publicly listed company on our securities platform in the future, keeping in line with the global best practices

SHEIKH ABDULLAH AL SALMI

erational effectiveness and the issuance of new investment opportunities and instruments.

In his statement, Sheikh Abdullah bin Salem al Salmi, executive president of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), said, "Today's date will be recorded in the history as an important milestone in Oman's capital market journey. We are certain that this

step will help improve the market further and provide a platform for market forces to flourish in order to derive desired results necessary for the development of the investment climate and provide us with a more diversified market."

Sheikh Salmi said that the transformation of Oman's stock exchange into a joint stock com-

pany is the first step towards the transition of the MSX into becoming a publicly listed company on our securities platform, in future, keeping in line with the global best practices.

New board of directors

The Oman Investment Authority on Thursday announced the for-

mation of a new board of directors for the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Mohammed bin Mahfoudh al Ardhi has been appointed as the chairman of the newly-formed board of directors of the MSX. Ardhi is the executive chairman of Investcorp, a global financial institution specialising in alternative investments.

He has been leading the firm's assets since 2015 and has been a director on Investcorp's board since 2008.

Prior to Investcorp, Ardhi's positions included Commander of the Royal Oman Air Force at the rank of Major General, chairman of Sohar International Bank and chairman of National

Bank of Oman.

Abdullah Saleh al Suweilmy, former CEO of the Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul), and Roland Schwinn, managing director and shareholder at Sygnum Bank (Singapore and Switzerland), have been named as the two international board members at the MSX board.

OIA has also appointed Imad Kamal Sultan and Dr Hatim Bakhit al Shanfari as the board members of MSX. Sultan has held various positions within the WJ Towell Group and its subsidiaries and is currently the group's vice-chairman, managing director and chairman of the executive committee.

Dr Shanfari has diverse experience that spans academia, business and civil society in Oman. He is currently a faculty member in the department of economics and finance at Sultan Qaboos University.

Additionally, the Oman Investment Authority will be represented at MSX's board of directors by Samra Sulaiman al Harthy, director of investment and economic research at OIA, and Mathla Saleh al Shaqsi, a senior associate of investments at OIA.

Ardhi stated that this is a historic milestone in the march of the securities sector in Oman, a new start for the sultanate's financial market and a next stage of growth and development.

The chairman of the MSX board affirmed that the Muscat Stock Exchange has sufficient resources that it will work on to develop the stock market sector by offering and presenting new investment products and services that meet the aspirations of investors.

"We expect that this step of transformation will be followed by another step, which is the transformation of the stock exchange into a public joint stock company listed on the stock exchange itself," Ardhi said.

He indicated that the new entity will work under the umbrella of the Oman Investment Authority as one of its companies, and this in turn will push the work process according to a commercial method aimed at raising the efficiency of operations in the stock exchange and applying the principles of governance.

Saudi Aramco strikes \$12.4bn oil pipeline deal

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Energy giant Saudi Aramco said it has struck a US\$12.4bn deal to sell a minority stake in a newly formed oil pipeline business to a consortium led by US-based EIG Global Energy Partners.

The deal underscores how Aramco - the kingdom's cash cow - seeks to monetise its once-untouchable assets to generate revenue for the Saudi government as it accelerates efforts to diversify the oil-reliant economy.

'Upon closing, Aramco will receive upfront proceeds of around US\$12.4bn, further strengthening its balance sheet through one of the largest energy infrastructure deals globally,' the company said in a statement late Friday.

'As part of the transaction, a newly-formed Aramco subsidiary, Aramco Oil Pipelines Company, will lease usage rights in Aramco's stabilised crude oil pipelines network for a 25-year period.'

The EIG-led consortium will hold a 49 per cent stake in the subsidiary, Aramco said, adding that it will retain 'full ownership and operational control'.

In a separate statement, EIG, a Washington-based energy investment firm, said the new venture is valued at approximately US\$25.3bn.

The deal covers all of Aramco's 'existing and future stabilised crude pipelines' in the kingdom, an elaborate network that connects oil fields to downstream facilities, EIG said.

"We are proud to partner with Aramco in this marquee global infrastructure asset," said EIG chairman R Blair Thomas.



Neither company said which other firms were part of the consortium.

The announcement comes as Aramco faces pressure to maintain hefty dividend payments to the Saudi government, its biggest shareholder, despite posting consecutive falls in profits since it began disclosing earnings in 2019.

In the statement announcing the deal with the EIG-led group, Aramco chief executive Amin Nasser said the company was 'capitalising on new opportunities that also align strategically with the recently-launched Shreef programme'.

Last month, Aramco posted a 44.4 per cent slump in 2020 net profit due to lower crude prices, piling pressure on government finances as Riyadh pursues multi-billion dollar projects to diversify the economy. Even so, Aramco said it stuck by its commitment to pay shareholders dividends worth US\$75bn in 2020 - an amount that exceeds the declared profit and available cash flow.

AFP



صندوق مزون الأول
The First Mazoon Fund

P.O. Box 1137, PC 111 - CPO, Sultanate of Oman, CR No. 1279406, Tel: +968 24949001, Fax: +968 24949099, Email: fm@u-capital.net, Web: www.u-capital.net

Invitation for Extraordinary General Meeting

The First Mazoon Fund takes the pleasure in inviting all the unitholders to attend the Extraordinary General Meeting to be held at 3 pm on Thursday April 22, 2021 via the electronic platform to hold general meeting which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum to convene the annual General Meeting is not complete the second general meeting will be convened at 3 pm on Thursday 29 April 2021, to decide on the following:

- 1) Review and approval to amend the Article of association.

According to the Fund Article of Association, and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- a. A legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the general meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MDCD.
- b. Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than 3 days before the date of the general meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meetings. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the general meeting.

For any inquiries please contact Iman Nasser Al Wahaibi 24949030

Chairman

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MARKET ANALYSIS - OMAN

MSM posts weekly gains on positive outlook

MSM30 index, the benchmark index of the Muscat Securities Market, ended last week up by 1.15 per cent as trading activity picked up as compared to the previous week. All sub-indices closed higher during the week, led by the Industrial index at 2.03 per cent, followed by the Financial index at 1.03 per cent and Services index at 0.24 per cent. The MSM Shariah index was lower by 1.05 per cent.

Local news

►S&P Global Ratings has affirmed Oman's 'B+/B' long and short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings, while maintaining its stable outlook for the sultanate. 'We affirmed our ratings on Oman because we consider that the authorities have outlined a more solid path to reduce the historically-high fiscal deficits, backed by stronger political will to implement the related reform measures. The Omani government has embarked on a 2021-2025 fiscal plan to improve public finances and has implemented several reforms since last year,' S&P noted in a statement.

►According to a Bloomberg News report, Oman is studying options for state energy company OQ, including a potential initial public offering. The Omani government has been speaking with potential advisors as it considers alternatives for OQ, which could also include selling a stake in the business or one of its subsidiaries, according to people with the knowl-

edge of the matter who spoke to Bloomberg. OQ could be valued in billions of dollars if it decides to pursue a listing, the people said, asking not to be identified because the information is private. OQ is an integrated energy company with oil and gas exploration and production operations, refineries, a retail network and a large petrochemical business. It was formed through the merger of Oman Oil Company with several companies including state-owned Oman Gas Co, refining group Orpic and chemical producer Oxea.

►The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has issued an administrative decision specifying the credit rating for investment of the assets of insurance and takaful companies outside the sultanate. The decision obliged the companies to limit the investment of their assets outside the sultanate to the countries, financial institutions, and instruments with a credit rating not less than 'BBB' in accordance with S&P rating or an equivalent.

►NBO announced that it has successfully concluded the issuance of US\$300mn additional tier 1 Basel III compliant capital securities to certain shareholders of NBO (and/or their nominees). NBO mandated Citigroup Global Markets Ltd, The Commercial Bank Qatar and NBO as joint lead managers for the issuance. The capital securities will carry an initial coupon rate determined by reference to US treasuries



(Muscat Daily)

with a maturity of five years plus a margin of 7.144 per cent and are listed on Euronext Dublin.

►Oman Arab Bank had also recently announced approval of shareholders at its annual general meeting (AGM) for the issuance of Basel III compliant additional Tier 1 Capital Securities of up to RO977mn, in one or more tranches and to be listed on international exchange. These capital issuances of banks are expected to provide a boost to their capital adequacy ratios.

►United Power announced that it has received the CMA's preliminary approval for conversion of the legal form of the company from SAOG to SAOC. Majority shareholders support the company's conversion from SAOG to SAOC.

►National Aluminum Products

Company announced reduction in the company's operations in its recently established subsidiary in the UAE. The company decided to reduce the production capacity by 50 per cent gradually therefore reducing the operational expenses by approximately 50 per cent to prepare the lines to be shifted to the new company after getting the required approvals. Taking into consideration that the above mentioned lines and their derivatives will be considered as an asset contribution in the new subsidiary company. It is worth mentioning that the new investment will bring positive results that will be disclosed in the due course.

►Oman & Emirates Investment Holding Co disclosed court ruling on case of the company's former CEO. After submitting his resignation, the former CEO

filed a lawsuit against the company demanding for his unfair dismissal. The case was deliberated during several sessions in the primary court and the judgement was recently received by the company stating to pay him over RO417,000 as compensation. However, the company has appealed against the ruling.

GCC markets

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued growth estimates for the GCC countries. Some of the estimates were revised in the middle specially for Saudi Arabia and Oman while the estimates for other GCC countries are as of October 2020. The IMF forecasts the GCC region's real GDP to increase by 2.7 per cent in 2021 after estimating a decline of -4.9 per cent for 2020. As

per the estimates, Bahrain and the UAE will be leading the growth in the region with GDP growth of 3.29 per cent and 3.09 per cent in 2021, while the GDP growth in 2022 would be led by Oman with a growth of 7.40 per cent. Inflation in GCC is expected to remain higher in 2021 at around 2.9 per cent compared to 1.5 per cent in 2020. Except Oman and Bahrain, all countries in the GCC are estimated to report current account surplus to GDP in 2021.

The GCC region recorded net foreign inflows of US\$1.06bn in March 2021 compared to outflows of US\$192mn in February 2021. Year to date, the inflows recorded by the region amounted to US\$2.20bn. Foreign flows in the region were led by Saudi Arabia, which recorded net inflows of US\$1.53bn followed by US\$360mn in Qatar and US\$177mn in Abu Dhabi.

Global news

The IMF upgraded its global growth forecasts. The IMF said the vast amount of fiscal support in a few large economies and the vaccine rollout are behind the new and improved forecasts, but it warned that they are still 'highly uncertain' given new strains of the virus and high infection rates in some countries.

The IMF is projecting a stronger recovery in 2021 and 2022 for the global economy compared to their previous forecast, with growth projected

to be 6 per cent in 2021 and 4.4 per cent in 2022. Nonetheless, the outlook presents daunting challenges related to divergences in the speed of recovery both across and within countries and the potential for persistent economic damage from the crisis.

Recommendation

Financial regulators around the world are striving to balance their response to the COVID-19 pandemic with economic recovery, and the US Federal Reserve is also not ready to withdraw its support just yet. The Federal Open Market Committee said the US economy was doing much better in March compared to January, but policymakers will continue to help the recovery because 'the economy remained far from the longer-run goals and that the path ahead remained highly uncertain'.

Regional markets were supported by global and regional growth outlook upward revisions estimated by the IMF. Also, UAE and Saudi announced multiple economic and growth plans during the week, which were taken positively by the investors.

Locally, earnings season will kick-off this week. We expect some industrial names to bounce back in terms of performance buoyed by the upward commodities price cycle. Banks' results will also remain under focus over the extent of expected credit losses.

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Joe Biden aims \$1.5tn US budget at health and social services

Washington, US - US President Joe Biden's administration unveiled a more than US\$1.5tn budget proposal that would see funding for health, education and social services eclipse defence spending, in a reversal of his predecessor's policies.

The discretionary spending request for fiscal year 2022 would allocate US\$769.4bn to non-defence programmes, surpassing the US\$753bn apportioned for defence, which was prioritised under Donald Trump but only slightly increased under Biden's proposal.



US President Joe Biden speaks during the weekly economic briefing in the Oval office of the White House in Washington, DC on Friday (AFP)

The Biden administration characterised the increase in non-defence spending as necessary to help the country recover from the COVID-19 downturn and create a more equitable economy in the years ahead.

"The President's funding request makes things fairer," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement.

"It injects capital into communities where capital is usually hard to come by. It will make paying taxes a more seamless process for millions of Americans. And it makes sure that corporations actually pay what they owe."

The nearly 16 per cent increase in non-defence spending would total to 3.3 per cent of GDP, about equal to its historical average over the past three decades, Shalanda D Young, acting director of the Office of Management and Budget, said in a letter to lawmakers.

Outside of the Defense Department, Health and Human Services would receive the most funding at US\$133.7bn, a jump of more than 23 per cent from the prior fiscal year, which runs from October to September. The Education Department would get a 40.8 per cent funding increase that would bring its budget to US\$102.8bn.

'Over the past decade, due in large measure to overly restrictive budget caps, the nation significantly underinvested in core public services, benefits and protections,' Young wrote, saying the plan would be a reversal of that austerity.

The budget is a yearly undertaking for US presidents, signalling their major funding priorities, but must be approved by Congress.

The plan also proposes a funding increase of more than 10 per cent to US\$13.3bn for the US

tax authority, Treasury's Internal Revenue Service, which would help it improve its services and better monitor corporations and high earners.

It also aims US\$36.5bn at schools serving poor populations, US\$6.5bn for federal health research and US\$10.7bn to fight the opioid epidemic.

The spending bill will be considered by a Congress where Democrats hold small majorities in the House and the Senate, and where lawmakers currently are debating the US\$2tn jobs and infrastructure bill Biden unveiled last week. Patrick Leahy, Democratic chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, called the proposal's spending 'necessary and urgent', and tied caps in federal spending over the last decade to the terrible toll wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States.

AFP

China hits Alibaba with record \$2.78bn fine for market abuses

Shanghai, China - Chinese regulators hit e-commerce giant Alibaba with a record 18.2bn yuan (US\$2.78bn) fine on Saturday over practices deemed to be an abuse of the company's dominant market position.

Alibaba, the Jack Ma-founded Chinese e-commerce leader and one of the world's most valuable companies, said it accepted the penalty and pledged to outline plans on Monday for bringing its operations in compliance.

The fine appeared to cap a government crackdown on major Chinese tech platforms, and Alibaba in particular, over allegations of anti-competitive behaviour and misuse of consumer data. The State Administration for Market Regulation said it assessed the fine after concluding an investigation into Alibaba that began in December.

The probe centred on Alibaba's practice of forbidding merchants who wish to sell their



wares on its popular online marketplaces from simultaneously offering them on rival e-commerce sites. 'Since 2015, Alibaba Group has abused its dominant position in the market' with the exclusivity requirement, the regulator said. The requirement harmed competition, innovation, and the interests of merchants and consumers, it added.

The fine was a record and nearly three times the almost US\$1bn levied against Qualcomm in 2015, Bloomberg said.

The size of the penalty was

determined after the market watchdog decided to fine Alibaba 4 per cent of its 2019 sales of 455.7bn yuan.

Shortly after the decision was announced Alibaba issued a contrite statement that used many of the government's recent talking points on the issue, pledging to make changes to safeguard fair competition.

'We accept the penalty with sincerity and will ensure our compliance with determination,' it said. The company added that it would hold a conference call

with investors on Monday to share its 'thoughts and plans for the long-term healthy development of our business in the future'. 'We are committed to ensuring an operating environment for our merchants and partners that is more open, more equitable, more efficient and more inclusive in sharing the fruits of growth,' it said.

Alibaba and JD.com, along with Tencent, became hugely profitable on the back of growing Chinese digital lifestyles and government restrictions on major US competitors in the domestic market.

But as the platforms amassed hundreds of millions of regular users, concern has risen over their influence in China, where tech-savvy consumers use them to communicate, shop, pay bills, book taxis, take out loans and perform a range of other daily tasks.

AFP

White House convenes CEO summit on global semiconductor shortage

New York, US - The White House will hold a virtual summit with leading CEOs on Monday to discuss the global semiconductor shortage that has crimped automakers and electronics companies.

Executives from General Motors, Intel, Northrup Grumman and Alphabet/Google will attend, according to a White House pool report that listed 19

big companies.

The session will focus on 'steps to strengthen the resilience of American supply chains for semiconductors and other key areas', the White House said. Hosting the event will be Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, National Economic Council director Brian Deese and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. Biden admin-

istration officials also intend to make a case for the President's US\$2tn infrastructure package.

A White House handout on the infrastructure plan endorsed US\$50bn for a new Commerce Department office to support production of critical goods and backed congressional legislation to invest another US\$50bn in semiconductor manufacturing and research.

The crunch in semiconductors has badly dented US auto manufacturing, with GM, Ford and other carmakers temporarily shuttering some factors or reducing production.

The shortage has also raised worries throughout the personal electronics universe, generating potentially higher prices for popular gadgets like game consoles.

AFP

OAB receives K2 Middle East Workflow Hero Award 2020

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) was recently bestowed with K2 Middle East Workflow Hero Award 2020. The award is a testament to the bank's efforts towards ensuring continuous dedication towards its key objective of enhancing overall customer experience and overcoming challenges within its business environment through innovative platforms, such as K2.

Asma al Zadjali, head of Banking Operations Group, said, "OAB has always strived to maintain itself as pioneers within the industry, by keeping up to date with the latest financial trends and constantly adapting to meet the needs of the market. With the onset of the pandemic last year, we decided to make our products and services available on our OAB Online App, to provide customers with convenient banking options.

"On behalf of the OAB management, I would like to thank the organisers of the event for awarding us with this accolade,



which further affirms our commitment towards continuously developing innovative solutions and ensuring a high-quality customer experience."

Launched in the last quarter of 2020, OAB's 'Step to the Future 3.0' set the stage for the bank's next level of digital evolution. It included various AI-driven e-payment solutions and facilities,

aimed at providing superior customer experience and convenience within the local banking industry.

"While many of our internal processes were already automated, with prevalence of the pandemic brought in new challenges like 'work from home'. The combination of our Transformation journey using Agile

methodology, robust K2 system and people skills set we possess in this area, we were able to launch many new services in a very short timeframe taking the level of automation of our internal processes to a new level which in turn facilitated work from home and bringing in further efficiencies and productivity improvements. We also

launched an array of new services for our customers to facilitate them to interact with the bank from the convenience of their homes, including a loan deferment and digital onboarding facility, making us the first bank to do so. This reduced the need to be physically present at the Bank and submit paper-based forms," Asma added.

The K2 Awards identify outstanding achievements of entities and organisations that have delivered world-class automation solutions via its K2 platform. Despite the challenging year and dynamic conditions, several businesses in the region have risen to the task to operate efficiently and maintain business continuity.

OAB is a proud achiever of one of the highest percentages of Organisation in the banking sector, currently at 96 per cent.

The bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the sultanate.



HMD Global launches six new Nokia phones

HMD Global, the home of Nokia phones and accessories, announced its biggest launch to date featuring six new smartphones - Nokia X20, Nokia X10, Nokia G20, Nokia G10, Nokia C20 and Nokia C10 - that have been streamlined into three distinct lines.

Top of the range Nokia X-series, intermediate G-series and entry-level C-series all deliver the quality experience that consumers have come to expect from the European mobile company. Products that are built to last inside and out thanks to industry-leading security, superior durability, and the promise to provide the latest software, so you can keep your phone for longer.

Florian Seiche, CEO, HMD Global, said, "Today is more momentous than a regular product launch. The past 12 months have no doubt been challenging, yet they also gave us a moment to pause, think and prepare for the next big step in our start-up journey. As a Finnish company, our approach to technology and business is human-first and that is reflected in this new smartphone range. We want people love their phones. The launch of HMD Mobile - a milestone in our journey to a holistic provider of all things mobile - amplifies this, and it is only the beginning. We want you to trust that we put security at the heart of everything we do - Nokia smartphones come with security and software updates for extra peace of mind."

Stephen Taylor, CMO, HMD Global, said, "For our team, innovative thinking is about unlocking high-value experiences to those who may have not had access to them before. Millions of people rely on a Nokia device for their everyday needs, from basic connectivity, to payments and creativity. We care about people trusting their phone. That's why our industry-leading security offering runs across the new X, G and C ranges - everyone deserves to feel safe. We care about people keeping their phone for longer. These products are built to last inside and out, thanks to our upgrade promises and superior durability. And we want people to continue to love their phone.

"The X-series allows us to offer the benefits of our high-end partnerships with Qualcomm and ZEISS Optics. Finding that perfect balance between specs and affordability is what the G-series is all about. The C-series, meanwhile, thrives on delivering ultra-high value tech to the smartphone market. I'm proud of the niche we've carved within this extremely

competitive market."

X-series launches with Nokia X20, X10

Sitting proudly at the top of the new portfolio are the Nokia X20 and Nokia X10. Pushing the boundaries of the mid-range, these smartphones provide experiences and quality far above their price tag. Both powered by the latest Qualcomm Snapdragon 480 5G Mobile Platform which delivers series-defying performance and truly global 5G.

The signature Nordic design that inspires all Nokia smartphones, is matched with three years of security and software updates for extra piece of mind. Presented on the clean Android One interface, these handsets come with Android 11 straight out of the box. Renowned ZEISS Optics and innovative AI solutions are at the heart of the impressively versatile imaging options. With a wide 6.67" Full HD+ punch-hole display, all of your content will be delivered on a crisp, eye-catching screen. Nokia X20 and Nokia X10 also come with a 100 per cent compostable case in the sales box - designed to be tough on the ground but soft on the earth.

G-series launches with Nokia G20, G10

The G-series represents the perfect balance of delivering on all your daily needs through straightforward problem-solving technology. Featuring on both phones in the G range is the three-day battery life - the longest yet on a Nokia smartphone. The Nokia G20 is supported by the signature Android promise available on Nokia smartphones. That's three years of monthly security updates to help keep your data as secure as possible and two years of OS updates. The first members join the G-series with signature longevity, improved security thanks to face and side fingerprint unlock and an impressive 6.5" teardrop display with a handy brightness boost.

C-series adds C20, C10

Bringing amazing value, the C-series makes high-quality smartphone technology accessible to everyone. The latest additions to the popular range bring forward much-loved features like the wide 6.5" HD+ display, at amazing price points.

With Android 11TM (Go edition), adding up to 20 per cent faster speeds, and improved security features, as well as Nokia smartphone durability with quarterly security updates for two years.

Cavendish Maxwell expands offerings

Cavendish Maxwell, a leading chartered surveying practice and property consultancy in the Middle East and Africa, has launched end-to-end property management services for the Oman market. Under this new service line, the team will provide bespoke, strategic property management services while overseeing the financial, leasing, marketing and maintenance aspects of clients' properties and portfolios.

For a real estate asset to be profitable in the long term, property management strategies and solutions are required to extract value at the various stages of asset ownership, whether it is securing tenants, collecting rents or ensuring upkeep of the property. The new department at Cavendish Maxwell will ensure efficient day-to-day management while working towards achieving the longer-term goals for the property investment.

The team's remit includes the full spectrum of property management services: lease management covering the complete lease transaction cycle from new tenant contracts to rent reviews; asset-specific financial management including budget planning, reporting and collections; building and facilities management; contract management; tenant management and other services such as life cycle costing and insurance procurement.

The new department will be led by Zak Harper. In his seven years in the Middle East real estate industry, Zak has built an impressive property management portfolio.

Nigel Armstrong, CEO, said, "In our 12-year history, we have become known for our superior and personalised services, which has been made possible through our dedication, market knowledge and agility."

Higher education minister explores cooperation in Sur Industrial City

H E Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and H E Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion visited recently Sur Industrial City, which falls under the umbrella of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates - Madayn.

The visit aimed at highlighting the efforts made to link the academic and industrial sectors, bridge the outputs of higher education institutions with the needs of the investing companies



in the industrial cities of Madayn, encourage cooperation in the fields of scientific research and innovation between the ministry and the industrial cities, and facilitate training opportunities for higher education students

in the companies and factories based in Madayn's industrial cities.

During the visit, Eng Abdulqadir bin Salim al Balushi, director general of Sur Industrial City, stated that the industrial

city is situated on a strategic location on a total area of 36,100,000sqm and is home to major projects as well as Small and Medium Enterprises in various sectors. Sur Industrial City also enjoys the presence of several service projects such as Sur Gate, Hay al Sharooq Residential Complex, and Hay al Sharooq International School.

The delegation was introduced to Nano City project which will comprise nanotechnology related industries on an area of 1mn sqm focusing on 11 sectors. The delegation then visited several companies in Sur Industrial City. H E Dr Rahma hailed the efforts undertaken by the companies.

Meethaq offers credit card fees waiver

In line with the bank's vision 'To serve you better, everyday', Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has announced that customers can avail of a special offer of waiver of annual fees on all primary and supplementary credit cards for the first year.

The offer will be available for a limited time only and is open to all current and new customers who would like to apply for primary and supplementary credit cards for their family members. Meethaq presently offers 4 different credit cards to its customers including the Hafawa Visa Signature credit card, the Titanium Mastercard credit card, Meethaq-Lulu co-branded credit card and the Standard Mastercard credit card.

All Meethaq credit cards are



based on the concept of Ujrah as per Sharia'a rules and principles. These cards have a number of features and benefits, which include wide acceptance, contactless payments, 24/7 customer service, OTP service for online transactions, SMS alerts for transactions and up to 52 days of payment grace period. Meethaq credit cards have proven to be an attractive option for customers who seek banking products based on Islamic principles and

at the same time provide convenience and flexibility in making day-to-day transactions at shopping malls, restaurants or at international destinations.

Meethaq is also a pioneer in offering innovative digital banking products and services that are aligned to the best practices of Islamic banking and finance worldwide. Its robust Internet Banking and Mobile Banking platforms along with the extended reach of 764 Meethaq

and Bank Muscat ATMs and CDMs across the sultanate make daily financial transactions a breeze for Meethaq customers.

Meethaq has recently debuted a new online account opening process for savings accounts wherein customers can submit the completed account opening form together with supporting documents by email and visit the selected branch only to collect their debit cards. The digitisation of a large part of the account opening process minimises customer visits to branches and waiting times. Meethaq adopts the highest standards of professionalism conforming to Sharia'a principles.

For more information, visit <https://www.meethaq.om/en/meethaq-cards/Pages/cards-new-landing-page.aspx>

Zayed Sustainability Prize 2022 submission deadline on May 6

With one month to go until the May 6 submissions deadline, the Zayed Sustainability Prize, the UAE's pioneering global award for rewarding impact, innovation, and inspiration, has issued a final call to small-to-medium sized enterprises, non-profit organisations and high schools, around the world, to submit their entries for the 2022 edition.

Inspired by the sustainable development and humanitarian



legacy of the UAE's founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, the prize is now in its 14th submissions cycle after officially opening on November 18 2020. The prize has since recog-

nised 86 winners whose solutions or school projects have, directly and indirectly, positively transformed the lives of more than 352mn people, worldwide. Small-to-medium sized enter-

prises and non-profit organisations must enter an existing sustainability solution in one of the Health, Food, Energy, or Water categories, and demonstrate results across three core criteria: impact, innovation, and inspiration. The Global High Schools category invites student-led projects or proposals, based on one or more of the four sustainability sectors, and provides funding to help develop or enhance their school or local community.

Dr Sultan bin Ahmed al Jaber, UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Director General of the Zayed Sustainability Prize said, "The Zayed Sustainability Prize focuses on contributing to the vision of the UAE's wise leadership in terms of encouraging and driving innovation to develop practical solutions that enhance the quality of

life for communities throughout the world. The prize also announced that the 2022 cycle would be placing notable emphasis on innovation as one of the key drivers for COVID-19 response and recovery, creating synergies between vital sustainable solutions and their ability to play a role in empowering communities, while alleviating the socio-economic implications of the pandemic."

OIFC's Khedmah mobile application surpasses half a million downloads

Oman Investment and Finance Company's (OIFC) Khedmah mobile app has accomplished a new milestone by surpassing half a million downloads within a short period of time. This benchmark underscores the trust bestowed upon the company by the beneficiaries due to the variety of its seamless and top-notch services. It also reinstates the company's leading position in the field of billing, collection and debt factoring for electricity, water and telecom services.

During the past period, the number of Khedmah users witnessed a noticeable rise due to the increased societal awareness about the application's various effective and beneficial services. Ease of use, flexibility, along with paying all bills at the push of a button through a mobile phone, were paramount factors for the growing demand.

Furthermore, it is considered



as a safe option to pay bills using the app instead of visiting the branch during these unprecedented times in the sultanate.

The company's constant effort to employ technologies in its services resonates with the sultanate's objectives to encourage digital transformation within the community, government and private entities.

Adopting such approach would be a necessary to keep up



with the latest technological advancement emerging in the world. Digital transformation is an essential requirement for modern lifestyles as it will improve the operational efficiency of companies and facilitate the services provided to beneficiaries in all fields.

Speaking on the achievement,

Said Ahmed Safar, chief executive officer of OIFC said, "We are delighted to achieve this milestone which serves as a testament to our continuous endeavours toward providing full-fledged and user-friendly services that is in line with the latest developments in the sector.

"This accomplishment will certainly reinforce our determination to continue our journey toward excellence and development through the utilisation of the best technological advancement in this field."

"Our desired objective is to provide a unique experience to our clients that meets their expectations. This is by improving the efficiency of our operations and enhancing the effectiveness of the provided services by making them safe, fast and easy. In the near future, a number of effective services will be further introduced to enrich the user's experience and cement the company's prestigious position in the market," he added.

Khedmah app was launched in 2016 as part of OIFC efforts to enhance its services and deliver an easy experience for all stakeholders across the sultanate.

The application provides an

integrated and seamless platform that offer electronic payment solutions for establishments, citizens and residents.

Through the application users can pay and check electricity, water and telecommunications bills as well as making payment to the Public Authority for Social Insurance. Additionally, top-up phone, pre-paid electricity, and other services, through smartphones without the need to visit the company's branches to pay or follow up on monthly bills.

Established in 1979, OIFC is one of the leading Investment and Services Company and specialises in billing, collection and debt factoring for electricity, water and telecom services in the Sultanate of Oman.

The company's various payment channels allow customers to easily pay their electricity, water and telecommunications bills.



Adam Deverson

Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC gets GM

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) appointed Adam Deverson as the general manager of Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC effectively from March 7, 2021 to support the hotel's team with his extensive expertise in the hospitality industry over the years.

Before joining Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC, Deverson served as the director of Food and Beverage at Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley. With his solid experiences in the industry, Deverson served as the director of Food & Beverage in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and exceeded the topline GOP and RevPAR.

Deverson also completed taskforce positions at Voco Kirkton Park and InterContinental Haymon Island. IHG Oman's area general manager Anna-Marie Dowling said, "Adam is an energetic and self-motivated leader with a proven track record of successful hotel management."

InterContinental Hotels Group has seven properties across three brands in Oman including InterContinental Muscat, Crowne Plaza Muscat, Crowne Plaza Oman Convention and Exhibition Center, Crowne Plaza Sohar, Crowne Plaza Duqm, Crowne Plaza Salalah and Holiday Inn Seeb.

IHG is a global organisation with a broad portfolio of 17 hotel brands, including InterContinental Hotels & Resorts, Hotel Indigo, Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts, Holiday Inn Hotels & Resorts, Holiday Inn Express, Staybridge Suites, Candlewood Suites.



MAX rejoins Flydubai's fleet

The first five of Flydubai's 14 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft have completed their operational readiness flights and have been approved by the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) to return to service. They join other MAX aircraft that returned to service in the fleets of operators in Europe, the UK, North and South America.

On Thursday, Flydubai operated its first flight with its Boeing 737 MAX aircraft from Dubai International (DXB) to Sialkot International Airport (SKT).

The flight FZ 327 departed at 6.30am and landed at 10.12am. The four additional Boeing 737 MAX aircraft will operate flights to Karachi, Multan and Tehran during the course of the day.

Ghaith al Ghaith, chief executive officer of Flydubai, said,

"With the return to service for the Boeing 737 MAX this marks the end of 22 months of diligent work undertaken by the global community of regulators and the uncompromising efforts of the Flydubai team in preserving and returning the aircraft to passenger service. Now is the time for our MAX aircraft to fly once again."

The remaining nine MAX aircraft will continue to join the fleet with one aircraft scheduled to re-join the fleet every 10 days.

The aircraft will supplement and support the existing flight schedule serving Flydubai's network of 76 destinations.

Hamad Obaidalla, chief commercial officer of Flydubai, said, "The primary objective for everyone involved has been to safely return the aircraft to passenger

service and we were pleased to see our passengers once again enjoy the exceptional product on our MAX fleet. They offer unrivalled comfort on a narrow-body aircraft in both our Business and Economy cabins."

In addition to the enhancements and modifications to the aircraft and its systems, the GCAA has mandated additional pilot training as part of the stringent requirements for the aircraft's return to service.

233 of Flydubai's pilots have now completed the additional classroom and simulator training and are now ready to fly the MAX aircraft.

The training programme continues as every one of Flydubai's pilots will receive this regulator-approved MAX aircraft training.

TII appoints renowned experts to board of advisors at ARRC

Technology Innovation Institute (TII), the applied research pillar of Abu Dhabi's Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC), announced the appointment of leading international experts to the Board of Advisors at its Autonomous Robotics Research Centre (ARRC).

The appointments follow a series of rapid announcements at Technology Innovation Institute since the first Advanced Technology Research Council board meeting in August 2020.

Autonomous Robotics Research Centre is one of the initial seven specialised centres at the Technology Innovation Institute. Members of the new Board of Advisors are renowned experts in various fields of intelligent autonomy, autonomous systems and robotics, robotics and perception, among others. The centre's researchers are engaged in exploring the latest advances in robotics that will help build hybrid societies made up of biological and artificial systems. The distinguished Board of Advisors will guide efforts to develop breakthrough technologies that have global impact.

The Board of Advisors includes Prof Ian F Akyildiz, the Ken Byers Chair Professor, direc-



tor of the Broadband Wireless Networking Lab and chair of the Telecommunications Group at the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology in the United States; Prof Luca Benini, chair of Digital Circuits and Systems at the Department of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich and professor of Electronics at Italy's University of Bologna; Prof Marko Bertogna, professor at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in Italy, where he leads the High-Performance Real-Time Systems Laboratory; Prof. A E Eiben, Professor of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Collective Systems at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands

and visiting professor at the University of York in the UK; Prof. Giuseppe Loianno, assistant professor of Robotics and Perception at New York University in the United States, and Prof Martin Saska, founder of the Multi-Robot Systems Group at the Department of Cybernetics of Czech Technical University in Prague.

Speaking about the new appointments, Dr Najwa Aaraj, acting chief researcher at Autonomous Robotics Research Centre, said, "The board members will facilitate scientific collaborations that will enable verifiable, rigorous, systematic, and empirical scientific investigation and research in advanced technology, putting Abu Dhabi and the wider UAE in a prime position to shape future capabilities in autonomous robotics across all dimensions - air, land, water, underwater, and even in space."

Technology Innovation Institute (TII) is the dedicated 'applied research' pillar of Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC). TII is a pioneering global research and development centre that focuses on applied research and new-age technology capabilities. For more information, visit www.tii.ae

Rosberg X Racing makes history in Saudi Arabia as first Extreme E winner

Rosberg X Racing duo Johan Kristoffersson and Molly Taylor were the pace-setters from the outset in Extreme E's inaugural race weekend in the historic city of Al Ula in Saudi Arabia, but the pair still had to dig deep in the desert to battle their way to victory and carve themselves out a piece of motorsport history.

Broadcast by 90 broadcasters across 180 countries, there has been feverish anticipation in the build-up to the Desert X Prix, and the event delivered in every aspect.

Following Qualifying time trials on the first day, the drivers on the second day went wheel-to-wheel for the first time, generating some of the most spectacular images ever seen in the sport and drawing widespread acclaim from competitors and fans alike.

Saudi Arabian Minister of Sport Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki al Faisal said, "We are overjoyed with the success of the first-ever Extreme E race, held here in the

kingdom. Al Ula gave a mesmerising backdrop to what was a new dawn for motorsports and the latest grand-scale sports event in the kingdom's continuing efforts to inspire Saudis through live sport.

"Extreme E also shone a spotlight on the world's combined efforts to help reduce damage to the climate, which under the ambitions of both Vision 2030 and the Saudi Green Initiative, the kingdom seeks to play a major role in. We would like to once again thank Extreme E for choosing Saudi Arabia for their first race weekend and look forward to watching the series continue across the globe."

Prince Khalid bin Sultan al Abdullah al Faisal, chairman of the Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation (SAMF), said, "The Desert X Prix has been everything we could have hoped for and beyond, with a group of the world's best drivers giving their all in a spellbinding race



weekend through one of the world's truly unique and awe-some terrains here in Al Ula.

"For us as SAMF, this weekend was also a deeply proud day, hosting the world's first ever Ex-

treme E race in Saudi Arabia.

"We have such a strong history of motorsports in our coun-

try and today - to be ushering in the future of racing with Extreme E - once again illustrates the kingdom's standing in global motorsport. It has been our pleasure to host, and we are thrilled by the success of the event and its future."

The deserts of Saudi Arabia were chosen to highlight a number of environmental issues - increasing temperatures, more frequent and longer periods of drought, deforestation and desertification - which are all in part instigated by human behaviour and our carbon-intensive lifestyle. The kingdom is already taking measures to reduce its carbon impact via Vision 2030, a programme with many aims including increased usage of renewable energy.

Alejandro Agag, founder and CEO of Extreme E, said, "We've worked so hard on this for many years, and finally everything has come together this weekend. It really has been beyond my

wildest expectations.

"If I had written a script for the perfect weekend, I could not have come up with anything better than what we have witnessed these past two days - I've never seen such extreme racing in my life. Ultimately, nothing could stop Kristoffersson and Taylor from storming to the top step of the podium - not a 60-second penalty for exceeding the 30km/h limit in the driver switch zone, nor less favourable grid slots in both the Semi-Final and Final. It was a virtuoso display of speed, skill and superhuman car control in the most challenging of conditions."

Result

1 Rosberg X Racing (Johan Kristoffersson / Molly Taylor) 2 laps

2 Andretti United (Timmy Hansen / Catie Munnings) +23.73s

3 X44 (Sébastien Loeb / Cristina Gutiérrez) +1m38.09s

PRINCE PHILIP DIES

WORLD PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE PRINCE

Seven-decade union to the monarch: Britain’s press bid farewell to the husband of Queen Elizabeth II

London, UK - Britain’s famously partisan press were unusually united on Saturday, as they led tributes to Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth II, the day after his death at the age of 99.

Most focused on the importance of their seven-decade union to the monarch, with *The Times* and *The Guardian* calling him the Queen’s ‘steadfast support’, while the *Daily Star* called him ‘her rock’ and the ‘man who made Lilibet (his pet name for the queen) laugh’.

Scotland’s Press and Journal bid ‘Farewell to the ‘royal rock’ too, alongside an old photo of a younger royal couple with their children wearing kilts; and *The Times*’ Scottish edition carried an old quote from the Queen, ‘my strength and stay’.

Tabloids the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Mail*, normally found on diametrically opposite ends of the political spectrum, saw a rare convergence of front pages, both running full page pictures of the Queen and Philip with the headlines ‘Farewell, my beloved’, and ‘Goodbye, my beloved’ respectively.

The *Daily Mirror* reported that the Duke of Edinburgh’s death had ‘united (the royal family) in grief’, with Prince Harry putting aside recent tensions ‘as he scrambles to return home’ for the funeral.

A bumper issue *Daily Mail* contained an account of the Duke’s final days, ‘the sun on his face and a rug on his lap... with his ‘Lilibet’.

‘We’re all weeping with you, Ma’am,’ ran *The Sun*’s headline,



The front pages of British newspapers reporting on the death of Britain’s Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, as pictured in Brighton, south England on Saturday (AFP)

paired with a picture of the couple on their wedding day, as well as more recent photos of the two.

‘What an extraordinary life. What epic and exemplary service he gave to his Queen and country. What a character. What a joker,’ began its lead article.

The Duke’s ‘life of service’ was feted by *The Evening Standard*, and *The Daily Telegraph* sported a full-page photograph of Philip in military uniform, along with articles commending the prince as ‘Britain’s most loyal servant’ and ‘guided by love and duty’.

The *iweekend* featured a photo of Philip doffing a bowler hat, taken at his last solo public engagement in 2017, with the headline ‘A life of duty’.

The Daily Express called Philip ‘the indomitable Duke’, and echoing the palace’s announcement of his death, said the nation joined the Queen in ‘deep sorrow’.

The Guardian said the coronavirus pandemic means former funeral plans - codenamed ‘Forth Bridge’ - ‘must be hastily adapted’.

‘With restrictions still in place amid the COVID-19 outbreak, the public elements of the final farewell will not be able to take place in their original form,’ it noted.

The Financial Times was one of the few mainstream titles to not dedicate its entire front page to the story, saving space for articles on the French wine harvest and Greensill Capital.

AFP

Global leaders pay tribute, hail ‘extraordinary life’ of the Duke

London, UK - World leaders joined a chorus of condolences from around the world following the death of Prince Philip on Friday at the age of 99.

Britain

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson hailed Philip’s ‘extraordinary life’, sending his condolences to Queen Elizabeth after her husband’s death was announced.

Johnson said the Duke of Edinburgh ‘earned the affection of generations’ at home, in the Commonwealth and across the world.

“We give thanks, as a nation and a kingdom, for the extraordinary life and work of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh,” he added.

Former prime minister Tony Blair hailed Philip’s public service, calling him ‘a man of foresight, determination and courage’.

US

US President Joe Biden paid tribute to Philip as a selfless servant of Britain and its people.

‘From his service during World War II, to his 73 years alongside the Queen, and his entire life in the public eye - Prince Philip gladly dedicated himself to the people of the UK, the Commonwealth, and to his family’, Biden said in a statement.

Former president Donald Trump said his death was an ‘irreplaceable’ loss and expressed his and wife Melania’s ‘heartfelt sympathies’ to the Queen and her family.

On Facebook former president Barack Obama praised Philip as someone who took his job as husband to the Queen



A pedestrian walks past a billboard with an image of Prince Philip alongside the Clydeside Expressway in Glasgow, Scotland on Friday (AFP)

with selflessness.

‘At the Queen’s side or trailing the customary two steps behind, Prince Philip showed the world what it meant to be a supportive husband to a powerful woman.’

Ireland

Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin said he was ‘saddened’ by Philip’s death, adding: ‘Our thoughts and prayers are with Queen Elizabeth and the people of the United Kingdom.’

Australia

Australia’s Prime Minister Scott

Morrison ordered flags to be flown at half-mast.

“There are many towering figures that the world has lost and known, but few have been before us in our lifetimes, for such a long time,” Morrison said on Saturday.

“Above all, he was a man who was steadfast, who could be relied upon, always standing by his Queen,” said the leader of the Commonwealth nation.

France

French President Emmanuel Macron paid tribute to Philip and sent his condolences to the



An official notice announcing the death of Prince Philip is being placed on the gates of Buckingham Palace, in central London on Friday (AFP)

Queen.

‘[Prince Philip] lived an exemplary life defined by bravery, a sense of duty and commitment to youth and the environment’, he said on Twitter.

Germany

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said his death filled her with ‘great sadness’.

“His friendship with Germany, his straightforward nature and his sense of duty will remain unforgotten,” Merkel said.

Canada

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called Prince Philip a ‘man of great purpose and conviction, who was motivated by a sense of duty to others’, in a tribute on behalf of his Commonwealth nation.

He will be ‘fondly remembered as a constant in the life of our Queen’, he said.

European Union

EU Commission head Ursula

von der Leyen said on Twitter she was ‘saddened to hear of the passing of His Royal Highness Prince Philip’.

‘I would like to extend my sincere sympathy to Her Majesty The Queen, the Royal Family and the people of the United Kingdom on this very sad day’, she stated.

India

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Prince Philip’s long career, saying his ‘thoughts are with the British people and the Royal family’.

‘He had a distinguished career in the military and was at the forefront of many community service initiatives. May his soul rest in peace,’ Prime Minister Modi tweeted.

Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed his ‘deepest condolences’.

‘Prince Philip was the consummate public servant and will be much missed in Israel and across the world,’ he wrote.

Prince Philip was the first British royal to visit Israel in 1994. His mother Princess Alice is buried in a church on the Mount of Olives.

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta said he had been a unifying figure.

“His Royal Highness Prince Philip has been a towering symbol of family values and the unity of the British people as well as the entire global community.”

Prince Philip’s wife Elizabeth became Queen in 1952 while on a trip to Kenya when her father George VI died.

Pakistan

Prime Minister Imran Khan praised the Duke for his support for Pakistan, which he last visited with the Queen in 1997.

‘Britain has lost a wise elder who was imbued with a unique spirit of public service,’ he tweeted.

Italy

Italian President Sergio Mattarella praised Prince Philip’s ‘exemplary dedication, accompanying the evolution of his country with an open and innovative spirit’.

Italians would “cherish a grateful memory of his deep admiration for Italy’s artistic and cultural heritage”, he said.

Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin praised Philip and wished Elizabeth ‘courage and mental fortitude in the face of a grievous and irreparable loss’.

‘He rightfully enjoyed respect among the British and interna-

tionally,’ a statement from the Kremlin cited Putin as saying.

Spain

Spain’s King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia hailed Prince Philip’s ‘sense of service and dedication to the crown and the United Kingdom’, in a letter to the Queen.

Japan

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said Japan felt ‘deep sadness’ at the news.

“I pay profound respect for his great contribution to further strengthening historical relations between our country’s imperial family and the British Royal family as well as promoting mutual understanding between Japanese and British people,” he added.

Malaysia

The Malaysian Prime Minister said Prince Philip would be ‘sadly missed’ after ‘a life spent in selfless service to the greater good’.

Malaysia’s King and Queen said he would be remembered for his ‘steadfast support’ of the Queen, as well as ‘his unwavering commitment to the Commonwealth of which Malaysia is a proud member and his efforts to promote stronger ties between the United Kingdom and Malaysia’.

China

President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan sent a message to Queen Elizabeth II expressing ‘their deep condolences on Prince Philip’s passing, and sincere sympathies to the Queen and her family’.

AFP

Italy to pay €1.1mn over killing of Indian fishermen by two of their marines in 2012

New Delhi, India - India will accept compensation of €1.1mn from Italy for the families of two fishermen shot dead by Italian marines in 2012, signalling an end to a long-winding case that soured relations between the two nations.

Suhail Dutt, an advocate representing Italy, told India’s Supreme Court on Friday that after prolonged negotiations with the Indian government, Rome was ready to pay ₹100mn to the families of the fishermen and the owner of the boat which was damaged in the shooting.

India’s solicitor general



Salvatore Girone, one of the marines responsible the deaths

Tushar Mehta said the victims’ families have agreed to receive the ‘determined compensation amount’.

The bench asked the Indian

government to deposit the money with the court within a week of receiving it from its Italian counterpart, according to the order. The case will be next taken up on April 19.

The latest order comes after The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague announced last July that the two marines were entitled to immunity from prosecution.

Salvatore Girone and Massimiliano Latorre spent years facing charges in India for shooting the fishermen when their boat neared the Italian oil tanker *MV Enrica Lexie* off the coast of Kerala.

Italy took the issue to the PCA in 2015, saying that the tribunal should hear the case under maritime law.

Italy argued that the marines were stationed on the tanker because the region was prone to piracy, and said they had fired on the fishing boat because it failed to heed warnings to stay away.

The panel ruled that India was entitled to compensation for ‘loss of life, physical harm, material damage to property and moral harm suffered by the captain and other crew members’ of the boat, called the *St Antony*.

AFP

Five people killed in violence during polls in Indian state

Kolkata, India - Five people were killed in fresh election bloodshed in the Indian state of West Bengal on Saturday, including four shot dead by paramilitary troops ‘in self-defence’, officials said.

West Bengal in eastern India has seen thousands killed in decades of political violence, and the current state election campaign has triggered deadly clashes between rival parties.

The latest incident in the district of Coochbehar - 700km north of Kolkata saw - a crowd of around 400 people surround troops guarding a polling station.

“Paramilitary troops opened

fire in self-defence after being challenged by over 400 people,” a senior Election Commission official said. “They also formed a ring around the troops and tried to snatch rifles... Four people were killed in the shooting.”

Addressing an election rally in Siliguri, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ‘and her goons provoked the paramilitary forces to open fire’.

Elsewhere in the state a man was shot dead on Saturday in clashes between supporters of Banerjee’s All India Trinamool Congress and Modi’s Bharatiya

Janata Party, police said.

“The victim was a BJP supporter,” state party unit chief Dilip Ghosh told AFP. “Three people who were injured in the clash were admitted to a local health facility.”

Winning power in the state of 90mn people when results are announced on May 2 would be a major victory for Modi.

Banerjee, one of Modi’s most prominent critics, has accused the BJP of attempting to import divisive sectarian politics into the state, which has a large Muslim minority.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Lockdowns around the world as vaccine efforts stumble

Mumbai, India - Fresh lockdowns and curfews were imposed on tens of millions of people from India to Argentina on Saturday, as COVID-19 infections surged again and vaccine roll-outs were hampered by shortages and scares over side effects.

In India, the worst-hit state of Maharashtra was running out of vaccines as the health system buckled under the weight of the contagion, which has killed 2.9 million people worldwide.

Having let its guard down with mass religious festivals, political rallies and spectators at cricket matches, the world's second-most populous nation has added more than a million new infections since late March.

Every weekend from Saturday until the end of April, Maharashtra's 125mn people will be confined to their homes unless travelling or shopping for food or medicine.

The crisis is being exacerbated by a shortage of vaccines.



Deserted roads in Bandra during a weekend lockdown imposed by the local government of the western Indian state of Maharashtra amidst rising COVID-19 cases, in Mumbai on Saturday (AFP)

India has so far inoculated 94mn of its 1.3bn people, but *The Times of India* reported on Friday that states on average had just over five days of stock

left, citing Health Ministry data, with some regions already grappling with severe shortages.

Stay-at-home orders were also set to come into force for the 8mn inhabitants of Bogota,

as the Colombian capital battled a third wave of infections, adding to curfews already covering 7mn across four other major cities.

Elsewhere in South America,

Argentina entered a night-time curfew on Friday running from midnight to 6.00am every day until April 30. It will be in force in the country's highest-risk areas, mainly urban centres, where bars and restaurants will close at 11.00pm.

Both Argentina and Colombia have recorded about 2.5mn coronavirus cases, numbers surpassed only by Brazil in the region.

All of France is subject to restrictions of some form, while the German government's attempts to curb movement and commerce have been stymied by several states refusing to go along with the proposals.

Now Berlin is changing the rules to centralise power, adjustments likely to usher in night-time curfews and some school closures in especially hard-hit areas.

However, some countries are in the process of opening up.

AFP

Paris police bust 100 at underground restaurant

Paris, France - Paris police fined over 100 diners late on Friday at an underground restaurant flouting coronavirus restrictions and arrested its organiser, after a week of allegations that ministers attended similar rule-breaking events.

Officers were 'called out for an excessive noise complaint about a restaurant' and 'put an end to a gathering of over 110 people', the French capital's police posted on Twitter. 'Guests fined for failing to respect applicable health measures. Organiser and manager arrested'.

Underground restaurants offering wealthy people a pre-coronavirus dining experience have made headlines in France this week.

The M6 private television channel last week broadcast a reportage based on footage recorded with a hidden camera purportedly from a clandestine restaurant in a high-end area of Paris where neither the staff nor the din-

ers were wearing masks.

Participants were shown enjoying caviar and champagne at the event costing €220 per person.

All restaurants and café have been closed in France for eating in for the last five months.

The country this week began a new limited nationwide lockdown to deal with surging COVID-19 infections.

One of the organisers of the dinner shown by M6, businessman and collector Pierre-Jean Chalencon, was briefly detained for questioning by police on Friday alongside chef Christophe Leroy.

Chalencon had claimed to have held several dinners at his luxury Palais Vivienne venue in central Paris attended by ministers. "At this stage of the investigation, there is no evidence that indicates any members of the government took part in the dinners being investigated," prosecutors said.

AFP

In Houston, a race to vaccinate its student population as cases spike

Houston, US - On the campus of Houston University, students meet in small groups, sit alone at computers and attend virtual meetings.

It appears they are taking precautions against the coronavirus, but the Texas metropolis is still rushing to get its population of about 300,000 university and college students vaccinated as quickly as possible.

"Right now, college students make up a large percentage of super spreaders," said Isaiah Martin (22), a fourth-year student in political science who is leading a campaign for students to get their shots.

With some 500 new cases a day in April, down from about 2,000 in January, the situation in Houston - the fourth-largest city in the United States - is improving, yet it remains worrying.

Where it goes from here will depend in large part on the behaviour of students, many of whom are chafing under a year of restrictions and isolation.

But a College Pulse survey in January of 1,000 US students found that only 21 per cent were not concerned about vaccine safety.

At the University of Houston, home to 47,000 students, Martin says his peers still 'go out and a lot of time they ignore the



This file photo shows health workers attending to a COVID-19 patient at United Memorial Medical Center, in Houston, Texas on July 2 (AFP)

guidance from the CDC and other health departments and so they'll go out, they'll party, they'll do things college kids normally do'.

After more than a year of the

pandemic, words of caution are increasingly difficult to heed.

That is why the city has organised its 'Take Your Best Shot' campaign, a competition between universities to see

which can get the most of its current and former students vaccinated.

The competition began on March 29, the first day the vaccine was available to all adults, after Texas decided it had sufficiently inoculated its at-risk population. Vaccinating students is deemed so important that Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner came to the University of Houston to kick off the campaign.

Rice University, the most prestigious school in the Houston area, is not participating in the challenge. It has, however, set up a vaccination center managed by hospital group St.

Luke's Health on its campus in the heart of the city.

On this April day, several dozen students received their first doses, hoping to put an end to online courses and limited social interactions.

"I think online classes have been isolating and we haven't been able to learn as well in our dorm rooms instead of the classroom," said Sarah Sowell (19) after getting her shot.

First-year students remain the most isolated, having never experienced the highlights of campus life and its close friendships.

"It's hard to make friends when you only see them on a

Zoom call, they're only little pictures on a screen," said Lillian Cui (18), who came from Pennsylvania to study planetary science.

English student Hannah Hoskins, who also came to Rice at the start of the academic year, finds it "strange to hear these really amazing stories about previous years and I think that's a little difficult to have to be like 'Man, I'm missing out', but I don't even know what I'm missing." On the other hand, older students struggle with separations they assumed would be temporary but may now be permanent.

AFP

Iran plant starts up advanced centrifuges in nuke deal breach

Tehran, Iran - Iran announced on Saturday it has started up advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges in a breach of its undertakings under a troubled 2015 nuclear deal, days after talks on rescuing it got underway.

President Hassan Rouhani officially inaugurated the cascades of 164 IR-6 centrifuges and 30 IR-5 devices at Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment plant in a ceremony broadcast by state television.

The television aired no images of the cascades but broadcast a link with engineers at the plant who said they had introduced uranium hexafluoride gas to the cascades after receiving the order from Rouhani.

Iran's latest move to step up uranium enrichment follows an opening round of talks on Tuesday with representatives of the remaining parties to the nuclear deal on bringing the United States back into the deal.

Former president Donald Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018.

The Vienna talks are focused not only on lifting crippling economic sanctions Trump reimposed, but also on bringing Iran back into compliance after it responded by suspending several of its own commitments.

All sides said the talks, in which Washington is not participating directly but has the Euro-



This screen grab shows centrifuges and devices at Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment plant, as President Hassan Rouhani speaks on Iran's National Nuclear Technology Day, in Tehran on Saturday (AFP)

pean Union as intermediary, had got off to a good start.

The IR-5 and IR-6 centrifuges allow uranium to be enriched more quickly and in greater amounts than the Iran's first generation devices, which are the only ones that the 2015 deal allows it to use.

Rouhani again underlined at the ceremony, which coincided with Iran's National Nuclear Technology Day, that Tehran's nuclear programme is solely for 'peaceful' purposes.

US asks Iran to be 'pragmatic'

Reports from Washington on Friday said that the United States offered 'very serious' ideas on reviving the Iran nuclear accord but was waiting for Tehran to reciprocate as partner nations voiced optimism following talks in Vienna.

"The United States team put

forward a very serious idea and demonstrated a seriousness of purpose on coming back into compliance if Iran comes back into compliance," a US official told reporters as talks broke for the weekend.

But the official said the United States was waiting for its efforts to be 'reciprocated' by Iran.

"We saw some signs of it but certainly not enough. There's still question marks about whether Iran has the willingness to... take the pragmatic approach that the United States has taken to come back into compliance with its obligations under the deal," he said.

Biden argues that the 2015 nuclear deal negotiated under former president Barack Obama had been successful, with UN inspectors saying Iran was meeting its promises to scale back nuclear work dramatically.

AFP

Saudi executes three soldiers for 'high treason'

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia on Saturday executed three soldiers for 'high treason', the Defence Ministry said.

The soldiers were found guilty of 'the crime of high treason in cooperation with the enemy' in a way that threatens the kingdom and its military interests, the ministry said in a statement published by the Saudi Press Agency.

The statement named the

three soldiers - Mohammed bin Ahmed, Shaher bin Issa and Hamoud bin Ibrahim - without identifying who they were accused of colluding with.

The announcement comes as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the 35 year old heir to the throne, consolidates his grip on power and as a Saudi-led military campaign intensifies in neighbouring Yemen.

Prince Mohammed is already viewed as the country's de facto ruler, controlling all the major levers of government, from defence to the economy. He holds the title of defence minister, while his younger brother Prince Khalid bin Salman is the deputy.

Over the past three years, the crown prince has mounted a sweeping crackdown on critics and rivals, with the imprison-

ment of prominent royal family members, business tycoons, clerics and activists.

In March last year, Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz al Saud, a brother of King Salman, and the monarch's nephew Prince Mohammed bin Nayef were detained, sources said, as the crown prince sought to stamp out traces of internal dissent.

AFP

Egypt to unveil 'portion' of ancient city



A worker carries a pot at the archaeological site called 'The Rise of Aten', dating to the reign of Amenhotep III, near Luxor on Saturday (AFP)

Luxor, Egypt - Archaeologists near Luxor have unearthed just a portion of the 'largest' ancient city ever found in Egypt and dating to a golden pharaonic age 3,000 years ago, officials said on Saturday.

Famed Egyptologist Zahi Hawass had announced earlier this week the discovery of the 'lost golden city', saying the site was uncovered near Luxor, home of the legendary Valley of the Kings. "We found one portion of the city only. But the city extends to the west and the north," Hawass said on Saturday.

Betsy Bryan, professor of Egyptian art and archaeology at Johns Hopkins University, had said the find was the 'second most important archeological discovery since the tomb of Tutankhamun' nearly a century ago, according to the excavation team's statement on Thursday.

Items of jewellery have been unearthed, along with coloured pottery vessels, scarab beetle amulets and mud bricks bearing seals of Amenhotep III.

The team began excavations in September between the temples of Ramses III and Amenhotep III near Luxor, some

500km south of Cairo.

Amenhotep III inherited an empire that stretched from the Euphrates River in modern Iraq and Syria to Sudan and died around 1354 BC, ancient historians say. He ruled for nearly four decades, a reign known for its opulence and the grandeur of its

monuments, including the Colossi of Memnon - two massive stone statues near Luxor that represent him and his wife.

"It's not only a city - we can see... economic activity, workshops and ovens," Mostafa Waziri, head of the country's Supreme Council of Antiquities, said on Saturday.

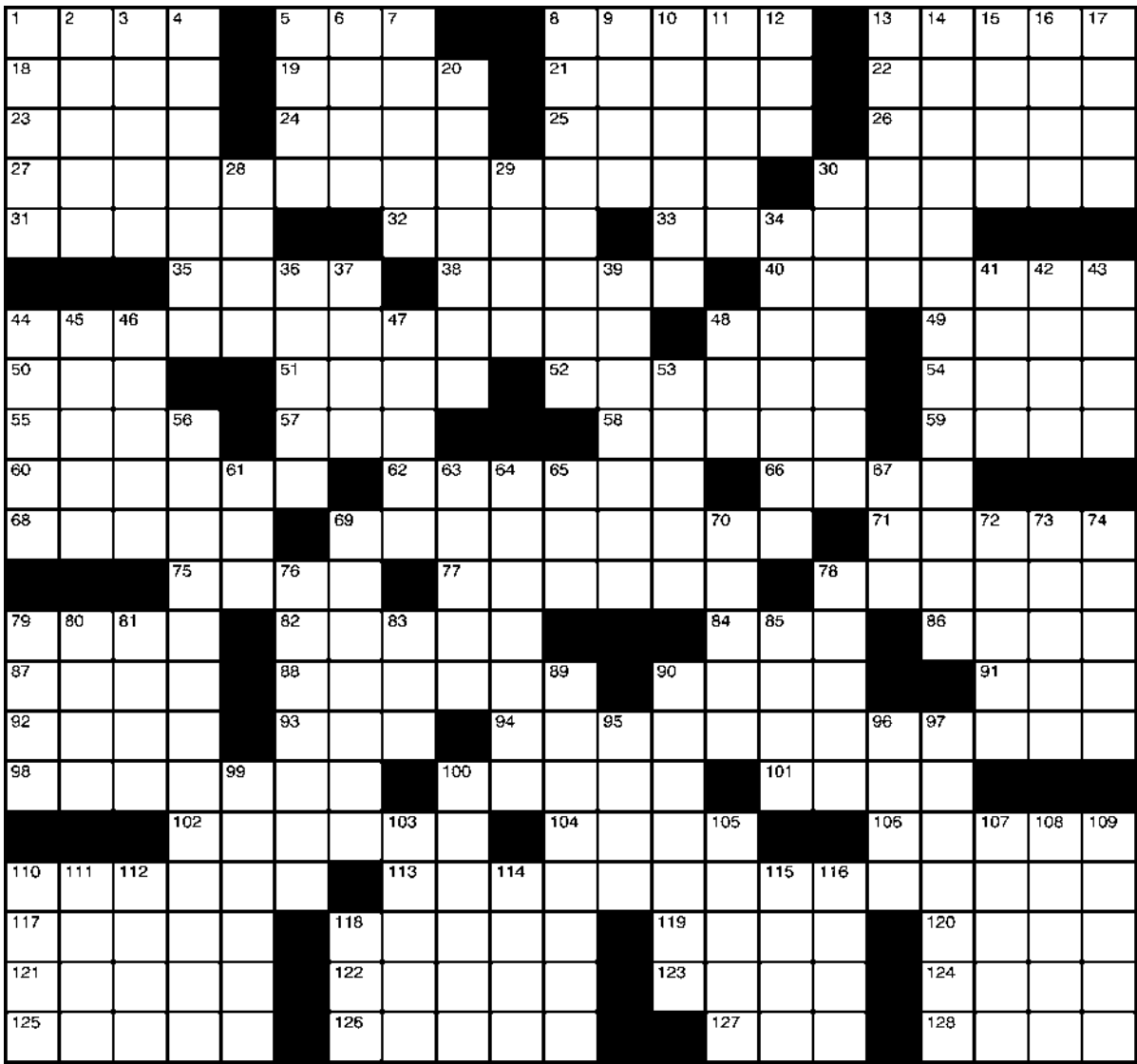
Since the announcement, some scholars have disputed that Hawass and his team have succeeded where others had failed by locating the city.

Egyptologist Tarek Farag posted on Friday on Facebook that the area was first excavated more than a century ago by a team from New York's Metropolitan Museum.

But Waziri dismissed these concerns, saying previous digs had taken place further afield to the south the site.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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A CROSS

- 1 ___-a-brac
- 5 Unusual
- 8 Parisian parent
- 13 Holy cup
- 18 "Tonight Show" host
- 19 Nonecclesiastic
- 21 Particles
- 22 Reiterative composition
- 23 "... on a wing ___ prayer"
- 24 Women's magazine
- 25 Of the ages
- 26 John Jacob ___
- 27 Floral trumpeter?
- 30 Former RNC chair Michael
- 31 Make happy
- 32 Blind feature
- 33 Respect
- 35 Regarding
- 38 ___ as a beet
- 40 Second transfers
- 44 Floral country singer?
- 48 Home celebrant
- 49 Young horse
- 50 Before, poetically
- 51 Tracy's Trueheart
- 52 Lope
- 54 Water barrier
- 55 Director Wertmuller

- 57 Busy bug
- 58 Put in a good word for
- 59 Standout
- 60 Bifocals
- 62 Not ___ you first!
- 66 "... the sparrow"
- 68 Roof topping
- 69 Floral Stepford novelist?
- 71 Puts a stop to
- 75 Home extensions
- 77 More relaxed
- 78 Dreaming
- 79 Palm reader
- 82 Belonging of value
- 84 Dew-covered
- 86 Completed
- 87 Talon
- 88 Computer pointer
- 90 Cache box?
- 91 Bird of legend
- 92 Sparkling wine
- 93 Afternoon social
- 94 Floral pop singer?
- 98 40 Across broker
- 100 Move along
- 101 Singapore's continent
- 102 ___ Antilles
- 104 Component
- 106 Steer clear of
- 110 Ex-Dodgers ace Clem

- 113 Floral "Blondie" star?
- 117 Sections
- 118 Dieter's nemesis
- 119 Prince of opera
- 120 Outer coating
- 121 Lawrence's other half
- 122 "... with Love"
- 123 Space or stat start
- 124 Stem protrusion
- 125 Good cheese or chocolate
- 126 British 9mm automatic weapons
- 127 Blustery
- 128 Geraint's beloved
- DOWN**
- 1 Knife edge
- 2 Kidney-related
- 3 Land of curry cuisine
- 4 By the sea
- 5 Designer Cassini
- 6 Spanish surrealist
- 7 Pickle herbs
- 8 Conductors
- 9 Above
- 10 Wealthy
- 11 Francois' friends
- 12 Pres. advisory gp.
- 13 Rasps
- 14 Floral mystery writer?
- 15 Poker stake

- 16 Rocker Billy
- 17 Learning
- 20 Wine storage areas
- 28 "... Can"
- 29 Where the sun rises
- 30 Planting tools
- 34 40 Across transaction
- 36 British farewells
- 37 Ready for business
- 39 Main dishes
- 41 Chop choice
- 42 Sommer of films
- 43 After lob or hip
- 44 Hollows
- 45 Shakespearean sprite
- 46 Dye plant
- 47 Up and about
- 48 Colloquial dissimilarity
- 53 "Superman" Chris
- 56 Floral aquatics star?
- 61 Moray
- 63 Records
- 64 21 Across item
- 65 Road sign
- 67 Sounds of surprise
- 69 Release sources
- 70 Author Shaw
- 72 Dana of films
- 73 Carnegie Hall performer

- 74 Tiny spot
- 76 Milk sugar
- 78 Map collection
- 79 "... Face"
- 80 "What ___ can I say?"
- 81 "I could ___ horse!"
- 83 Mexican Mrs.
- 85 Kazan of Hollywood
- 89 Preconcert musicians
- 90 Africa's most northern country
- 95 Actor Shalhoub
- 96 The sky over Paris
- 97 Shirley's pal
- 99 Gets uptight
- 100 John Travolta musical
- 103 Florida attraction
- 105 Calvin's Hobbes
- 107 Suffix for fix or flirt
- 108 Cartoon kid
- 109 Finished
- 110 Falls behind
- 111 "Pretty Maids All in ___"
- 112 Reiterative ailment half
- 114 Ken, of "Thirtysomething"
- 115 Ephron or Roberts
- 116 Mature
- 118 Aves.

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Your vision for the future is very strong today. So much so, that you could be seeing things that haven't even been invented yet! It's going to give you a certain air of mystery. People will be intrigued by you and your demeanour, and they'll be eager to strike up a conversation. Keep them guessing, and you'll be able to create at least one very interesting new friendship.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

It could be difficult to explain your ideas or yourself. Thoughts are scattered, and certain intimidating people could leave you tongue-tied. If that happens, just be patient. Give yourself time to go off and put together a script if you need it. Not only will it help you feel at ease, it will keep on you track. Other people will be envious of how organised and together you seem to be!

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You'll be charmed by foreign accents today. To you, they symbolise a different set of experiences and a type of insight you wish you had. Start a candid conversation with a new foreign person in your life and learn about their life. A short and sweet talk is all it takes to connect with someone who comes from a totally different background than yours.

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Things that stick out like a sore thumb are going to grab your attention, but they will get you thinking. Unusual combinations, unexpected directions, and any weird behaviour that you run across will all strike you as fascinating. Your mind is hungry for a puzzle to solve, and you might get a feast's worth of conundrums! Expect some brave new ideas to swarm into your head.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Anything is possible given your level of enthusiasm. This is a great time to figure out new ways of doing old things. You may find a new way of reorganising your stuff, getting to work, getting to know someone better, or just cooking your favourite dish. It's all about experimentation and trial and error. And remember that you learn more from mistakes than successes.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Keeping your style unique is important. You need to be careful that you're not getting too comfortable with your choices. Getting stuck in a rut is not an option for you. To get inspiration for a new look, check out a few websites. Do some people watching and take note of what you like and don't like. Your creativity is strong. Do you realise what a trendsetter you are?

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

The more you can surround yourself with people who look at the world from a different point of view than you do the better! If all you encounter are folks who feel the same way about things as you, how are you going to have any excitement in your life? Friction can cause great enlightenment, not just conflict, so don't be afraid of it. Stirring up a little bit of controversy is good.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

This is a wonderful day to exercise your creativity and have a little bit of fun! You should start the ball rolling this morning by dedicating some time to good, old-fashioned daydreaming. Just pick a fantasy and go for it! You'll find a way to make the time. It only takes a few moments of downtime to get your imagination going.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

There's a high level of excitement today. People are buzzing about something that you either don't know about or do know about but aren't that fascinated by. It's okay if you don't share their energy. If you don't feel it, you don't feel it. Faking it would only feel weird to you, and the forced feelings will be obvious to others. So just feel how you feel and don't second-guess yourself.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You need to curb your spending. Excessive shopping could leave you cash poor just when you need cash the most! If you're anxious to buy things, at least slow the process down. Put more time into researching the best brands or models, and try to find a way to get what you want at a lower price. You can have a very satisfying shopping experience and spend less money.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

The time you've been able to spend with your extended family has been slim to none lately, and they're starting to forget what you look like! Do what you can to get back into a closer relationship with them. Cancel whatever you need to cancel to devote time to at least one family member. They'll appreciate it. It's time to focus on what really matters.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Things that appeal to your intellect are drawing you in today. You could find that the most challenging concepts suddenly make a lot of sense, and your brain will get a new sense of its capabilities. This means it's the perfect day to readdress a project or book that you've been struggling with. Complicated ideas aren't so complicated. In fact, they're pretty fun to wade through!

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What is the circumference of table tennis ball?

a. 3.71-3.82 cm
b. 4.72-4.82 cm
c. 2.72-2.82 cm
d. None of the above

2. When did Hitler become President of Germany?

a. 1934
b. 1935
c. 1936
d. 1937

3. What is the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)?

a. Group of 53 former colonies of Britain
b. Group of 12 former republics of dissolved USSR
c. Group of 10 Latin America countries
d. Group of Islamic countries in Saudi Arabia region

Answers: 1: a 2: a 3: b

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

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

BOGGLER

M	L	I	A
N	U	I	T
L	E	N	P
U	S	E	E

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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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

DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (APRIL 08)

G	A	F	F	H	S	T	C	O	M	A	H	I	D	E
O	R	L	E	D	O	O	R	E	V	E	N	O	M	E
A	R	A	T	E	N	D	E	A	R	I	N	G	S	P
L	A	T	T	I	C	E	A	R	I	D	L	A	T	E
T	E	L	L	A	T	E	S	D	E	F	E	R		
S	T	E	R	C	I	N	G	N	E	A	R	E	L	I
E	A	R	S	N	O	I	S	A	P	O	O	R	O	I
A	P	E	C	E	D	E	D	S	T	O	W	T	U	R
S	E	D	E	R	S	E	I	N	E	P	L	E	A	S
R	O	B	D	O	N	E	E	S	A	T				
S	H	A	R	P	E	N	E	D	S	S	E	C	T	S
H	E	R	S	D	O	E	S	E	R	O	S	E	H	O
O	A	R	B	E	A	M	I	D	I	O	T	F	A	R
T	R	O	P	E	S	S	U	D	S	E	N	R	O	L
G	I	T	A	I	N	T	A	L	A	R	E	L	I	
G	R	A	N	D	E	S	P	E	T	S	A	D	N	E
A	U	N	T	S	L	A	P	S	T	I	C	K	N	E
O	N	C	E	T	A	L	E	A	D	A	I	E	G	A
L	E	E	R	S	P	A	R	R	O	T	D	E	N	T

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

ART BEATS SERIES - EPISODE 4 FEATURES SAFIA AL BAHLANI

AT EASE WITH ART

Hubert Vaz

Hands! Isn't that the basic thing we need as artists? But what if one is deprived of this basic thing? What if the world around you told you that you couldn't paint, and every person denied you of your desire to create? Today is one such story of an artist, and dear friend, who has defied every logical explanation to a conventional thinking mind of why she shouldn't be an artist."

That's how Ibrahim Gailani, self-taught contemporary artist of Iraqi and Pakistani descent living in Muscat described and introduced Omani artist Safia al Bahlani in the fourth episode of Art Beats. "With no hands, an overwhelming desire and ambition, overpassing hurdles which said 'you can't do it', she has started her own art gallery, a painting studio, and runs a successful art business. Let's meet this inspiring person - Safia al Bahlani," Gailani said as she responded with a smile that seemed to say mischievously, 'Oh, is that me?'

Born with multiple physical disabilities - no hands, a deformed left knee, and a short right leg stump, impaired hearing, and a speech as well as learning disability, Safia, nevertheless, came across as cheerful and totally optimistic. In fact, to Safia, reeling out the list of her disabilities seemed only a theoretical reference to herself, something which only needs to be put on record. For, in reality, none of these proved to be hurdles that took a toll on her indomitable spirit and her unflinching zeal to succeed against all odds - quite literally.

Having collaborated with Safia for a number of projects in the past, Gailani took note of the fact that she has always been a source of inspiration to varied audiences in the past, despite having a string of disabilities, most of which aren't quite evident. However, to Safia, recounting these for the benefit audiences of Art Beats, wasn't a disturbing exercise, and she went on to identify them



Ibrahim Gailani with Safia al Bahlani in her art gallery

with profound ease.

Art, my best friend

Safiya, who had been adopted at the age of three by Sabah al Bahlani, a single mother, had proceeded to the United States for her early education and therapy, and had found herself excelling in arts. As a teenager, she discovered a strong urge to become a professional artist, so, after graduating from the American International School of Muscat, she studied graphic design.

When asked by Gailani how she decided to become an artist in spite of having a host of disabilities, Safia said, "Art has always been my best friend, my therapy, and it really helped me to get on, day to day. Since I also had a learning disability, I learnt to memorise

things through colours and shapes. So, art was the best tool for me," she said, adding that colours were her greatest inspiration, as they set her at ease, not only with art, but with life itself.

Today, Safiya has successful business in art-related merchandise. She also runs an art studio and community art gallery - Safiya Arts Gallery and Studio - where she holds classes and workshops in arts. Alongside this, she continues to paint and find varied expression to her feelings and her own take on different issues of modern living through art.

Safia has won numerous awards in art as well as has been a motivational speaker. She has participated in TED Talks as well as delivered motivational speeches to youth in different forums to inspire them to take on

challenges and fulfill their ambitions with hard work and determination.

Three-hour battle

Recalling her own experience as a small child when people viewed her with skepticism and always ticked her off as unfit for many tasks, Safia stated that more than facing the difficulties of a challenge, what often weighed her down was the negative attitude of some people who often seemed to think - she can't - without first giving her a chance. She often had to prove her abilities and that, too, seemed to take a toll on her mental wellbeing.

To exemplify, Safia shared her ordeal of securing an Omani identity card (which needed a mandatory fingerprint), which was 'three-hour battle' of convincing the con-



Art has always been my best friend, my therapy, and it really helped me to get on, day to day

SAFIA AL BAHLANI

cerned authorities - a demonstration of her never-day-die attitude and her unsurmountable spirit which are the forces that keep her going every single day.

"I realised that I cannot get frustrated. It is very easy to switch off and say, 'why me?' I have gone through that journey and I have learnt that I am here to educate and advocate, and give others an opportunity, not just think of myself," she asserted.

Sharing an episode when she visited Bahrain in 2014, at the behest of British Council, for a workshop conducted by another disabled British artist, Safia said she came forth mesmerised and convinced that she did not need to conceal the fact that she was disabled. "I learnt how to connect with your body and figure out where your strength lies. When we think of strength, we think of hands, but it is not so. It was a journey within your mind, to find your true strength."

Hosted by Gailani, Art Beats, shot by Studio.t in Safia Arts Gallery, is dedicated to showcasing art across various media. Via interviews with popular artists in Oman, this series conveys not just the challenges that artists have gone through in their respective journeys but also provides tips and insights for budding artists and art enthusiasts to understand, appreciate, as well as propagate, artistic endeavours in Oman. It is being done for a worth cause of pledging support towards the work of the Oman Cancer Association.

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DIFFERENT STROKES

ART FEST

Two exhibitions featuring international artists light up the art scene in Oman

Hubert Vaz

Artists in Oman have recently come forth, literally, with a gusto of colour and vibrance that has not just revved up the art scene in Oman but also given artists ample opportunity to express themselves.

Currently, two art exhibitions are running simultaneously at different art galleries – Spring Salon 2021 at Matti Sirvio's Art Gallery (Jawharat al Shatti) and CalligArt (Art & Soul Gallery, Water Front mall). CalligArt will be on till April 13 while Spring Salon 2021 continues till April 30.

While both exhibitions have totally different themes, there seems to be some invisible chord that binds them in some way and brings about a synergy in artistic expression. Viewers are spoilt for choice while those looking to purchase art for their homes or establishments have a wonderful spread to choose from.

The theme of the Spring Salon 202, curated by Matti Sirvio, Finnish artist and proprietor of the gallery, is My Homeland. In this exhibition, mixed media artworks of artists from different parts of the world convey varied aspects of their own homelands with thought provoking messages. With an abstract approach, this exhibition, which showcases the works of 23 artists, brings forth diverse messages that range from the depiction of cultural realities to supernatural perceptions.

On the other hand, CalligArt, curated by Mohammed al Rawahy has a very traditional and Arabic theme. This is a mixed artists exhibition with over 16 Omani artists, comprising a mixture of calligraphy, acrylic, water-colour, nail and string art, and photography. Some very renowned artists like Dr Ibrahim Noor, Tahira Fida and Madny al Bakry are participating in this exhibition alongside some budding Omani artists like Jood al Hinai who has displayed her eco-friendly bags and paintings in the exhibition. There also is some artistic resin art, as part of a Ramadan collection from Hayat al Lawati and Namariq, on display.

**SPRING SALON 2021
PARTICIPATING
ARTISTS INCLUDE:**

- Alaa Mohammed – Egypt
Clive Gracey – Ireland
Davina de Beer – South Africa
Dr Shalini Kumar – India
Elizabeth Davis – India
Emmanuel Peralta – Philippines
Estelle Kenyon – South Africa
Forugh Ansari – Iran
Harini Kumar – India
Hind Said al Balushi – Oman
Hubert Vaz – India
Kawthar al Harthi – Oman
Majid – Oman
Marcia Mallick – USA
Matti Sirvio – Finland
Mohammed Khalifa Mohammed – Oman
Nandana Kouli – India
Need Francis – India
Ney Bombeo – Philippines
Safa Sheikh – India
Saleem Sakhi – Oman
Sandra Bruttomesso – South Africa
Yehong Shen – China



'My Homeland' exhibits at Matti's Art Gallery



Matti Sirvio - Finland



(Right) Harini Kumar, India, with Rashmi Dauria



HM Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - Charcoal art by Bita Charosi



Sultan Qaboos - Bita Charosi



Muttrah - Abdul Majid Karo



Nail & String art - Dr Hafsa Banu



Art by Jokha al Shekaili



Mohd al Rawahy

**CALLIGART
PARTICIPATING
ARTISTS INCLUDE:**

- Hafsa Banu
Namriq al Rawahi
Abdul Majid Karo
Bita Charosi
Fahad al Mamari
Dr Zahra Akbari
Fatima al Lawati
Hayat Salman
Tahira Fida
Mawia al Bahri
Khalil al Amri
Wedad al Mamarai
Jokha al Shekaili
Jood al Hinai
Yafa
Mohammed al Rawahy
Dr Ibrahim Noor Bakry
Madny al Bakry



Tahira al Fida



Dr Zahra Akbari

Oman duo misses out, Indians script history

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

2021 MUSSANAH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

A bronze medal in the 49er class was a little consolation for Oman's Musab al Hadi and Waleed al Kindi, as the pair's dreams of making it to the Tokyo Olympics were dashed on the concluding day of the 2021 Mussanah Open Championship, an Asia and Africa Olympic Qualifier, at the Millennium Resort Mussanah, on Thursday.

Expectedly, the Indian pair of KC Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar, who were consistent on the top for majority of the days in the competition claimed the top honours and a spot in the Tokyo Games.

Hadi and Kindi were left with an improbable task to achieve as they chased a historic maiden spot in Olympics for Oman after they trailed the leaders, Ganapathy-Thakkar, by 26 points on the penultimate day on Wednesday.

With their Olympic hopes virtually over ahead of the final day, they did well to claim a podium finish by finishing third in the double-point medal race on Thursday.



The podium finishers in the 49er class on the podium at the awards ceremony in Mussanah on Thursday

Ganapathy and Thakkar recorded eight points on the final day but that was enough to seal their spot for Tokyo while Hong Kong's Akira Sakai and Russel Aylsworth came second after winning the medal round.

The final day witnessed Indian team script history as four sailors sealed their spots for Tokyo

Olympics. This is the maximum number of sailors qualified from India for a single edition of the Olympics and also the first time that India will compete in three sailing events.

Joining Ganapathy and Thakkar for Tokyo were Nethra Kumaran (Laser Radial) and Vishnu Saravanan (Laser Stan-

dard). Nethra became the first Indian woman sailor to qualify for the Olympics.

Nethra finished sixth in the medal race on Thursday but still ended at second overall with 30 points to confirm the Olympics spot. Guest sailor and Dutchwoman Emma Savelon (29 points), who finished fourth in the medal race on Thursday, topped the standings but she couldn't be considered for the Asian qualifying spot. So, Stephanie Norton of Hong Kong, who finished third overall, qualified.

Saravanan was third till the penultimate day on Wednesday but won the medal race on Thursday to jump to second

place overall with 53 points. The Indian pipped Thailand's Keerati Bualong (57 points), who was second till Wednesday. Singapore's Ryan Lo Jun Han (31 points) was first overall in the class and made it to Tokyo.

China's Ye Jin and Chen Shasha sealed victory in the 49er FX class and booked their place for the Games with a narrow win over Molly Highfield and Sandy Wing Chi Choi from Hong Kong. India's Ekta Yadav and Ritika Dangi ended the tournament in third place.

In the men's RS:X medal race, Thai windsurfer Natthapong Phonoppharat led from the first to the last day and claimed gold in impressive style to qualify. Yancy Kaibigan from the Philippines claimed silver and fellow Thai surfer Navin Singsart edged out Geylord Coveta of the Philippines by a single point to take the bronze.

The women's RS:X class saw Amanda Ng Ling Kai of Singapore and Charizanne Napa from the Philippines trade places back and forth. The Singaporean eased to gold and qualified for the Olympics this summer, her second appearance at the Games after representing Singapore at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Charizanne Napa took the silver and Ishwariya Ganesh of India claimed the bronze.

Later, the chief guest, Mohammed al Busaidi, Chairman of Omran, presented the awards in the presence of Khamis al Jabri, the Oman Sail CEO, competitors, coaches and race officials.

@ashokmuscat

LOCAL CRICKET



Kail Khalid of Al Turki NMC



Shakeel Ahmad of IT Works

Knockout finals: Joint winners named after season called off

Khalid, Ahmad adjudged Premier Division's best batsman and best bowler

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following the instructions of the Supreme Committee in charge of dealing with COVID-19 to suspend sports activities in the sultanate, Oman Cricket (OC) decided to call off their 2020-21 domestic season recently.

The OC decision meant that the A Division T20 league, Senior and Junior Cup knockout finals remained incomplete and the planned Ramadan T10 tournament was cancelled.

Orient Travels and Maniz Azad were named Senior Cup joint winners while Aflag Group and Pitspot were declared Junior Cup joint winners. The OC also announced the season's best performers in different divisions.

In the Premier Division, Kail Khalid of Al Turki NMC was adjudged the best batsman while left-arm spinner Shakeel Ahmad of IT Works bagged the best bowler award. Khalid scored 526 runs in nine games at an average of 75.1 and struck three hundreds while Ahmad picked 20 wickets at an average of 9.1.

The A Division honours were shared by ARTT duo - Zeeshan Siddiqui, (best batsman) and Aqil Khan (best bowler. Siddiqui scored 323 runs in six matches at an average of 80.8 and Khan bagged 21 wickets in seven games at an average of 8.2, with two five-wicket hauls.

Elsewhere, Rahul Chadha of Vanderlande claimed a dream double for his exploits with bat and ball as he was declared the best bowler and best allrounder in the D Division. He took 14 wickets in seven matches and scored 271 runs at an average of 45.2.

Among the Omani players, Shuaib Ismail stood out while playing for two teams- OCT Ruwi and Maniz Azad - as he was named the best allrounder. OCT Al Hail-B's Khalid Rahim and Samir Faizu were named best batsman and bowler among Omanis playing for one team.

OTHER WINNERS

B Division:

Best batsman:

Arif Hussain (Orient Travels/Gitacs)

Best bowler:

Naushad Haneefa (LC Tech).

Best Omani players:

Best allrounder:

Shoaib Ismail (OCT Ruwi and Maniz Azad)

Best batsman:

Rafeeq Mohammed (OCT Al Nahdha, Orient Travels)

Best bowler:

Zubair Ali Akbar (OCT Ruwi, Y Horizon)

Best Omani players (one team):

Best batsman:

Khalid Rahim (OCT Al Hail-B)

Best bowler:

Samir Faizu (OCT Al Hail-B)

Best allrounders:

Warith al Balushi (OCT Mabela), and Suhaib Abdul Ghani (OCT Al Hail-A)



L-R: Zeeshan Siddiqui, Aqil Khan, Arif Hussain and Naushad Haneefa



L-R: Shuaib Ismail, Khalid Rahim, Samir Faizu and Rahul Chadha

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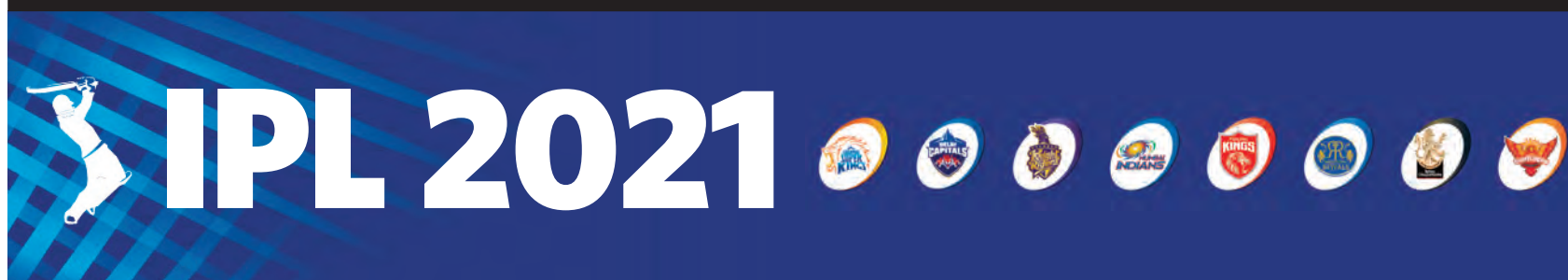
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QUOTE OF THE DAY

You're a captain when you're fielding, not when you're batting

Sanju Samson

Rajasthan Royals skipper, ahead of their opening match against Punjab Kings, on Monday



DELHI DRUB CHENNAI

Dhawan-Shaw share 138-run opening stand, Pant opens his captaincy stint with victory

CHENNAI VS DELHI

Mumbai, India - On a night of comebacks, Prithvi Shaw's return to IPL form trumped Suresh Raina's homecoming at Chennai Super Kings.

The Delhi Capitals' fast bowlers did enough damage with the new ball and the old to make sure the Super Kings' fabled-already depth had to stretch itself - Raina scored a fifty himself - to get themselves to a strictly competitive total.

Shaw and Shikhar Dhawan pretty quickly took out any competitive sting out of that total with 65 in the powerplay, only a brief slowdown after, and a 138-run opening stand at over ten an over.

Dhawan played his part to perfection, getting off to a quick start to allow Shaw some time at the top and then carrying on at a high strike rate even after Shaw got out. These are two important ticks for Capitals' plans.

About the depth...

All the talk going into the match was around the Super Kings' batting depth, with Dwayne Bravo batting at No 9, and it was to put to test immediately. The new ball swung for Chris Woakes and Avesh Khan, and they both bowled full enough to make use of it. Khan got Faf du Plessis lbw, Woakes got rid of Ruturaj Gaikwad, and suddenly the depth didn't seem to matter.



Delhi Capitals' Shikhar Dhawan (right) and Prithvi Shaw during their opening partnership of 138 against Chennai in Mumbai on Saturday

But thanks to Raina and Moeen Ali, the Super Kings went from seven for two at 2.1 overs to end up with 33 in the powerplay.

However, the middle overs were unlike what Chennai are used to. Especially when both the left-hand batsmen started taking on the off-spinner, R Ashwin. It was mostly Moeen, though, with successive fours in Ashwin's first over followed by successive sixes in his next. By the time Moeen got out reverse-sweeping Ashwin, he had set Super Kings

on their way. Raina grabbed hold of the baton and ran at Amit Mishra and Ashwin. The Capitals were forced to go back to pace, but Raina welcomed Marcus Stoinis with two sixes to bring up his fifty.

Wickets and brakes

Tom Curran and Khan, though, managed to slow Chennai down enough before the death overs. Curran got Rayudu out with a slower ball, MS Dhoni played Khan on for a duck. Add a Raina

run-out in the middle with Ravindra Jadeja running into the bowler and turning down the second, and you had 38 runs in five overs starting with the 14th. It wasn't just the wickets, it was good defensive bowling, handcuffing the batsmen. Sam Curran got the better of his brother Tom in the 19th over to provide Chennai the finishing kick.

No late drama

Ricky Ponting might be in for

some throwdowns to Shaw between games. Before the start of this IPL, Ponting revealed Shaw doesn't like batting when out of form but is difficult to keep away from training when he is in the runs. And he has been in the runs for a while. However, Vijay Hazare Trophy runs came with no one watching. Shaw would have wanted to show everyone he was back. And he announced it with the second ball he faced, whip-pulling Deepak Chahar for a four.

SCOREBOARD				
CHENNAI SUPER KINGS				
R Gaikwad	c Dhawan b Woakes	5	(8)	
Faf du Plessis	lbw b Khan	0	(3)	
Moeen Ali	c Dhawan b Ashwin	36	(24)	
S Raina	run out	54	(36)	
A Rayudu	c Dhawan b Curran	23	(16)	
R Jadeja	not out	26	(17)	
MS Dhoni	b Khan	0	(2)	
S Curran	b Woakes	34	(15)	
Extras	(lb 7, nb 1, w 2)	10		

TOTAL: 188 for seven in 20 overs
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-7, 3-60, 4-123, 5-137, 6-137, 7-188
Bowling: C Woakes 3-0-18-2, A Khan 4-0-23-2, R Ashwin 4-0-47-1, T Curran 4-0-40-1, A Mishra 3-0-27-0, M Stoinis 2-0-26-0

DELHI CAPITALS				
P Shaw	c Moeen b Bravo	72	(38)	
S Dhawan	lbw b Thakur	85	(54)	
R Pant	not out	15	(12)	
M Stoinis	c Curran b Thakur	14	(9)	
S Hetmyer	not out	0	(0)	
Extras	(nb 1, w 3)	4		

TOTAL: 190 for three in 18.4 overs
Fall of wickets: 1-138, 2-167, 3-186
Bowling: D Chahar 4-0-36-0, S Curran 2-0-24-0, S Thakur 3.4-0-53-2, R Jadeja 2-0-16-0, Moeen Ali 3-0-33-0, D Bravo 4-0-28-1

TODAY'S MATCH

CHENNAI, 6PM



SUNRISERS HYDERABAD



KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

POINTS TABLE

TEAMS	P	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
DC	1	1	0	0	2	+0.779
RCB	1	1	0	0	2	+0.050
MI	1	0	1	0	0	-0.050
CSK	1	0	1	0	0	-0.779
KKR	0	0	0	0	0	
PBKS	0	0	0	0	0	
RR	0	0	0	0	0	
SRH	0	0	0	0	0	

P: Played, W: Won, L: Lost,

NR: No Result, PTS: Points,

NRR: Net Run-Rate

CSK: Chennai Super Kings

RCB: Royal Challengers Bangalore

DC: Delhi Capitals

KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders

PBKS: Punjab Kings

MI: Mumbai Indians

RR: Rajasthan Royals

SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad

Harshal rises from bit-part roles to being main man

Chennai, India - When Harshal Patel stood with arms aloft, looking at the skies, after getting his fifth wicket in the innings on Friday against Mumbai Indians, it felt like a release. Indian players who haven't played international cricket yet do have their moments to shine in the IPL, but it's rare for someone who hasn't been a regular in IPL XIs to have a moment quite as stunningly successful as Harshal did.

Since 2016, he had played a total of only 18 IPL games. And yet, traded back to the Royal Challengers Bangalore after three years with the Delhi Capitals, Harshal responded by taking five for 27, the IPL's first-ever five-wicket haul against the best T20 side in the business - the Mumbai Indians.

What made Harshal's feat impressive was not just the rivals it came against, but the manner it was achieved in and the batsmen he conquered. Together, Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya, Kieron Pollard and Krunal Pandya form



Harshal Patel of Bangalore

the most lethal middle order in the IPL. Not only he dismissed each one of them, but did it in ways that left no doubt that the bowler had won the battle against them. He did it by bowling yorkers that tailed in late with reverse swing, by changes of pace that the batsmen failed to detect and thus hit the ball where he wanted them to.

"When we gathered for the first camp there was a very clear instruction to me that I'm going to bowl at least two overs at the death," Patel said on Friday. "That gave me a lot of clarity and confidence to work on my skills and develop plans against the

batters I'm going to face in the death overs in various teams. It made my preparation a lot more concise."

"My slower balls have been my biggest strength for almost ten years now and the yorker is something I've been working on," he said. "If you need to bowl in the death overs you definitely have to rely on the yorker. You can't just keep bowling length balls and slower balls, people are going to line that up. It's important to have that one delivery which can get the batsman off strike. It gives you options at the death."

The overwhelming riches of talent that gather at the IPL mean that you will most likely be considered for bit-part roles, that Harshal had. Until you break through with that blockbuster season which drags you from the footlights to the limelight. Harshal is not there yet, but with his first game, he's given himself the chance of rising beyond bit-part roles.

Cricinfo

OUTSIDE IPL

Rizwan shines in Pakistan win

SOUTH AFRICA VS PAKISTAN FIRST T20I

Johannesburg, South Africa - Mohammad Rizwan took inspiration from teammate Fakhar Zaman and steered Pakistan to their highest winning run chase as they beat South Africa by four wickets in the first T20I in Johannesburg on Saturday.

Rizwan made an unbeaten 74 as Pakistan chased down a target of 189 with one ball to spare. Their previous highest T20 chase was 188 against Australia in Harare in 2018.

Rizwan captain Babar Azam got the side off to a quick start before Babar was out with the total on 41 in the fifth over. He was then joined by Fakhar, who made 27 off 19 balls before he was caught on the boundary off left-arm spinner Tabraiz Shamsi, who took two for 29.

Rizwan said he modelled his innings on the way Fakhar played in the second ODI when the latter hit 193. "Fakhar's innings was on my mind today, the way he played on this surface," said



Mohammad Rizwan in action against South Africa on Saturday

Rizwan. "I was taking my time knowing I could score later on."

Rizwan hit nine fours and two sixes during his unbeaten 74.

The match swung in the last four overs of the two innings. South Africa could score only 29 in their last four overs, while Pakistan thrashed 52 off the last 3.5 overs.

South Africa captain Heinrich Klaasen rued the poor finish to his side's innings. The slide started when he was caught at short leg off Hasan Ali off the

second ball of the 17th over after he had raced to 50 off 28 balls.

"We were ten to 15 runs short," said Klaasen.

Five South African players were missing because of IPL commitments and Klaasen was a stand-in captain after Temba Bavuma was one of three players to miss out because of injuries.

Opening batsman Aiden Markram, who made 51, was a late inclusion after regular T20 opener Reeza Hendricks took paternity leave and the hosts had

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA				
J Malan	lbw b Nawaz	24	(16)	
A Markram	c Rizwan b Nawaz	51	(32)	
W Lubbe	c Afridi b Ali	4	(3)	
H Klaasen	c Zaman b Ali	50	(28)	
P van Biljon	c Nawaz b Afridi	34	(24)	
G Linde	lbw b Rauf	6	(7)	
A Phehlukwayo	not out	9	(5)	
S Magala	not out	9	(5)	
Extras	(lb 1)	1		

TOTAL: 188 for six in 20 overs
Fall of wickets: 1-31, 2-36, 3-98, 4-159, 5-168, 6-171

Bowling: S Afridi 4-0-45-1, M Nawaz 4-0-21-2, H Ali 4-0-28-2, H Rauf 3-0-37-1, F Ashraf 2-0-18-0, U Qadir 3-0-38-0

PAKISTAN				
M Rizwan	not out	74	(50)	
B Azam	c Williams b Hendricks	14	(14)	
F Zaman	c Malan b Shamsi	27	(19)	
M Hafeez	st Klaasen b Shamsi	13	(11)	
H Ali	lbw b Hendricks	14	(8)	
M Nawaz	c Klaasen b Hendricks	0	(1)	
F Ashraf	b Williams	30	(14)	
H Ali	not out	9	(3)	
Extras	(lb 2, nb 1, w 5)	8		

TOTAL: 189 for six in 19.5 overs
Fall of wickets: 1-41, 2-86, 3-110, 4-132, 5-132, 6-180

Bowling: G Linde 3-0-31-0, L Williams 3.5-0-39-1, B Hendricks 4-0-32-3, S Magala 3-0-35-0, T Shamsi 4-0-29-2, A Phehlukwayo 2-0-21-0

three new caps and only four players with more than ten caps.

AFP

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Leeds stall City's title march; Liverpool win

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

London, UK - Manchester City's march to the English Premier League title stalled on Saturday as ten-man Leeds beat the runaway leaders 2-1, while Liverpool climbed into fourth place after Trent Alexander-Arnold's late strike sealed a 2-1 win against Aston Villa.

City are counting down to their third title in four seasons, but Stuart Dallas's stoppage-time strike leaves them still needing 11 points from their last six games to clinch the crown.

Their first defeat in seven matches in all competitions came after Pep Guardiola made seven changes following their midweek Champions League quarterfinal first-leg win over Borussia Dortmund.

With Kevin De Bruyne on the bench at the Etihad Stadium, City were below their best against lively Leeds and now turn their attention to cup competitions next week. They have a 2-1 lead to defend in the second leg at Dortmund on Wednesday before Saturday's FA Cup semifinal against Chelsea at Wembley.

Leeds took the lead against the run of play three minutes before half-time. Helder Costa broke down the left and passed inside to Patrick Bamford. Northern Ireland midfielder Dallas took Bamford's lay-off on the edge of the area and hit a low shot that left Ederson rooted to the spot as it rebounded in off the post.



Leeds's Stuart Dallas (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Manchester City on Saturday (AFP)

Moments later, Leeds defender Liam Cooper was dismissed for a foul on Gabriel Jesus.

City equalised in the 76th minute when Bernardo Silva flicked the ball into the path of Ferran Torres and the Spaniard clipped his shot past Illan Meslier. But in the first minute of stoppage time, City were caught by brilliant Leeds counter.

Dallas raced onto a fine through ball from Ezgjan Alioski and guided a cool finish past Ederson. It was Leeds' first victory against one of the English Premier League's 'big six' clubs since their promotion last season.

Liverpool late show

Liverpool are desperately trying to salvage their troubled campaign by qualifying for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish. Beaten 3-1 by Real Madrid in the Champions League quarterfinal first-leg on Tuesday, Jurgen Klopp's side knocked West Ham out of fourth place in the most dramatic fashion at Anfield.

Liverpool had lost their previous six home league matches, but Alexander-Arnold clinched their first success in front of the Kop since December as the Reds avenged their humiliating 7-2 defeat at Villa in October.

Villa striker Ollie Watkins

scored a hat-trick in that rout and he was back on the scoresheet after 43 minutes. Taking a touch from John McGinn's pass into the Liverpool area, Watkins hit a low shot that squirmed under Alisson Becker's attempted save.

Liverpool were denied an equaliser moments later when Roberto Firmino's close-range finish was chalked off by VAR for an extremely tight offside call against Diogo Jota in the build-up. But Mohamed Salah levelled in the 57th minute with a close-range header after Andrew Robertson's shot was parried into his path by Emiliano Martinez. Villa winger Trezeguet hit the post in the second half, but

Alexander-Arnold won it in added time when he blasted home from the edge of the area.

Earlier on Friday, Wolves defeated Fulham 1-0 at Craven Cottage.

GERMAN LEAGUE
Bayern held

Berlin, Germany - Bayern Munich were held to a 1-1 home draw by Union Berlin in the Bundesliga on Saturday, three days before their crunch Champions League return-leg at Paris Saint Germain.

Teenager Jamal Musiala beat three defenders to give injury-hit Bayern the lead midway through the first half only for Marcus Ingvartsen to equalise for Union four minutes from time. In Paris on Tuesday, European champions Bayern need to overturn a 3-2 first-leg defeat.

OTHER RESULTS:

Saturday: Hertha Berlin 2 Borussia Moenchengladbach 2, Eintracht Frankfurt 4 VfL Wolfsburg 3.

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Saturday: Spezia 3 Crotone 2

SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP

Saturday: Celtic 6 Livingston 0, Hamilton Academical 0 Dundee United 1, Kilmarnock 2 Ross County 2, Motherwell 1 St Mirren 0, St Johnstone 0 Aberdeen 1.

AFP



Justin Rose of England plays a shot on the second hole on Friday (AFP)

Rose leads by one stroke

AUGUSTA MASTERS

Augusta, US - Justin Rose squandered a four-shot advantage, then birdied three of the last six holes to seize a one-shot lead after Friday's second round of the 85th Masters.

The 40 year old Englishman overcame a nightmare start to fire a level par 72 and stand on seven-under 137 after 36 holes at Augusta National. "Today, ultimately, was a fairly good result in the end," Rose said. "To be honest, I felt comfortable and fairly confident all day."

Rose, twice a Masters runner-up, fired a 65 on Thursday to lead by four, matching the largest 18-hole Masters edge since 1941.

But the reigning Olympic champion began on Friday with four bogeys in his first seven holes, briefly losing the lead before a sparkling late fightback restored him to the top.

Will Zalatoris, who could become the first Masters debutant winner since Fuzzy Zoeller in 1979, and Brian Harman shared second on 138. Zalatoris birdied the last three holes to shoot 68

and likely put himself in Saturday's last group, while Harman birdied 17 and 18 to shoot 69.

Three-time major winner Jordan Spieth shared third on 139 with Australian Marc Leishman.

A pack three back on 140 included second-ranked Justin Thomas, fellow Americans Tony Finau and Cameron Champ, Austrian Bernd Wiesberger, Japan's Hideki Matsuyama and South Korean Kim Si-woo.

Reigning US Open champion Bryson DeChambeau birdied three of the last four holes to stand on 143, finally finding form with his long-driving style.

Top-ranked defending champion Johnson made bogeys on three of the last four holes to finish on 149 and miss the cut, which came at three-over 147 and left 54 players for the weekend. Also missing the cut were four-time major winners Brooks Koepka and Rory McIlroy and England's Lee Westwood.

American Matthew Wolff was disqualified for returning an incorrect scorecard.

AFP

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