



HIS MAJESTY SENDS CONDOLENCES TO PRESIDENT OF ZAMBIA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Edgar Chagwa Lungu of the Republic of Zambia on the death of Kenneth Kaunda, former president of Zambia. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy to President Lungu, the bereaved's family and the Zambian friendly people. - **ONA**

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MOVEMENT BAN: DELIVERY SERVICES FACE SHORTAGE OF DRIVERS

With no curbside pickup available, the only way to order is through food delivery firms

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Are you having trouble ordering food from your favourite restaurant after 8pm? If so, you are among many in Oman who are facing the same difficulty.

Although restaurants and cafes are allowed to run home delivery operations after the lockdown

comes into effect at 8pm, orders placed with many restaurants through food delivery apps do not go through.

Furthermore, people employed in essential roles that require them to travel even after 8pm say they are being turned away from restaurants when they go to pick up food. This is because the only way

to place orders are through these delivery services.

"I was leaving work and wanted to pick up food for my family around 9pm," said Faisal, an Omani living in Qurum. "I tried ordering through a delivery app, but my requests kept getting rejected, despite trying from many restaurants. My kids were hungry, so I decided to order food from the restaurant directly, and planned to collect it myself."

Faisal was told by the restaurants, however, that there is no curbside pickup available: the only way to order is through food delivery companies.

Thomas, another Muscat resi-

dent who attempted multiple orders through food delivery apps after 8pm, was also unsuccessful in his efforts.

Concerning

"This will be quite concerning for many families, as many eat food only after 8pm," he said. "There is a certain enjoyment you get when you order in, but it is not always going to be possible for people to place orders, or even get them completed, before 8pm."

A major food delivery company that operates in Oman and the rest of the Middle East said they were facing driver shortages because they only hired freelance operators

from licensed manpower companies. Freelance jobs can at present only be done by Omani nationals, which means there is a shortage of people willing to take up the required roles.

"If there are more manpower companies that are licensed under government organisations to provide drivers who deliver food, and are willing to offer us people who can do the job, we will be happy to cooperate with them," said a company spokesperson. "All of our drivers are freelance operators sourced through hiring agencies. Unfortunately, some of them do not have enough Omani drivers for hire." **>A5**

HM issues Royal Decree

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik on Wednesday issued a Royal Decree, No. 47/2021, on promulgating the System (Bylaw) of University of Technology and Applied Sciences.

Article (1) stipulates that the provisions of the System of University of Technology and Applied Sciences, attached to this decree, shall be enforced.

Article (2) states that the Chairman of the Council of University of Technology and Applied Sciences shall issue the organizational regulation of the University, as well as other regulations and decisions necessary for the application of the System attached. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to be enforced without prejudice to the provisions of the System attached (to this decree).

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on the day following its date of publishing. - **ONA**



INITIATIVE

Oman to launch 10-year residency visas for investors

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman announced on Wednesday a renewable five and ten-year extended residency permit to foreign investors to attract quality investments.

The new Investment Residency Programme (IRP), to be launched in September 2021, targets sectors like industry, tourism, mining, logistics, agriculture, fisheries, education, health and information technology (IT).

The major announcement was made to attract investments, create jobs and enhance growth during a meeting held at the ministry under the chairmanship of Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The IRP is a clear demonstration of Oman's strong commitment under the wise leadership of His Maj-



esty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik for opening up new routes for investment in the wealth of opportunities presented by Oman Vision 2040.

This programme comes alongside other enhancements to the Sultanate's commercial environment, such as the provision of quality digital services and the streamlining of procedures and processes.

This landmark programme

shows Oman's determination to become globally competitive, increase trade, strengthen industry and empower its business community.

The new IRP also targets the enabling sectors represented by the green and circular economy.

The green economy is defined as a system of economic activities connected with the production, distribution and consumption of

goods and services that results in a better human well-being in the long term, to avoid exposing the future generations to significant environmental risks.

The programme targets the sectors of industry, tourism, mining, logistics, agriculture, fisheries, education, health and information technology, as well as the enabling sectors represented by the green and circular economy.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN New flights to Jordan

1 Jordan Aviation has received landing rights to operate 2 weekly Muscat-Amman flights. **>A3**

WORLD Setback for Biden

2 US President Joe Biden and his party faced an unsurprising setback as Republicans blocked sweeping voting rights legislation. **>A6**

MARKET Sohar Port inks pact

3 Sohar Port and Freezone has signed a memorandum of understanding with Port of Pecém of Brazil. **>B1**

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Isha.....8:25pm

Fajr (Tomorrow).....3.54am

Over 200 personnel, and 3 days of untiring efforts douse Al Hamra fire

Because of the rugged mountainous terrain and lack of water sources close to the area, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority took the help of police aviation and the Royal Air Force of Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Though the cause of fire in a mountainous area of the wilayat of Al Hamra is not known, it is believed that it might have started due to a cooking fire left by some tourists, or due to the friction of Alaalan trees with olive trees, which sometimes causes blazes.

Over the course of three days teams of more than 200 people, with the support of police aircraft and the Royal Air Force of oman, cooperated to put out a fire that broke out in a mountainous area in the wilayat of Al Hamra.

Jamal Al Abri, a Shura member said, “The cause of the fire has not yet been determined. It may be due to a cooking fire left by some tourists, or due to the friction of Alaalan trees with olive trees, which sometimes cause fires.”

“The area is important, as it is a pasture for livestock, and tourists practice hiking there. A number of perennial trees in the area were burned by the fire,” Al Abri,



the representative of wilayat Al Hamra added.

“The fire spread over an area of four square kilometres, and locals and volunteers cooperated with the fire fighting teams to put out the fire.”

Ahmed bin Salem Al Naabi, a legal researcher at the Environment Department in Dakhliyah, said, “The report was dealt with immediately, in coordination with concerned authorities. The next day, the fire fighting teams managed to control about 70 per cent of the fire, but in the evening the fire reappeared in some areas in the woods.”

The fire broke out in the Ras Haraq area on Wednesday, June 16, at 10:30 in the morning, and



brought under control on Saturday, June 19, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority announced the end of field operations.

Because of the rugged mountainous terrain and lack of water

sources close to the area, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority took the help of police aviation and the Royal Air Force of Oman. Since they had to deal with the fire, the helicopters were unable to carry out combat operations.

An official from CDAA stated, “Five planes participated in extinguishing the fire, three from the Royal Oman Police, in addition to two planes from the Royal Air Force of Oman, where more than 200 personnel of firefighting teams with volunteers were able to put out the fire.”

Al Nabi from the Environment Authority said, “The specialists visited the site in order to monitor the operations, and they have made subsequent visits in order to

determine the environmental impact resulting from the fire.”

EA noted that the site is rich in distinctive and dense wild trees, such as Alaalan, Albota, Al Atm and Sidr and other types of wild trees, and the Commission is working to monitor the impact and make plans for the rehabilitation of this damaged area.

The Omani Sidr Society also announced that it will, through the seed bank and the association's nurseries, and in cooperation with the rest of the authorities, exert its efforts to restore the environment of the fire site in the wilayat of Al Hamra and Jabal Shams to make it better than it was before by growing wild trees such as Alaalan, Albota, Al Atm and Sidr.

475 MILLION CUBIC METRES

Water production rises 6.5% in 2020

MUSCAT: Water production in the Sultanate increased by 6.5 percent to reach 475 million cubic metres until the end of 2020, compared to 446.8 million cubic metres in the same period in 2019.

In the Governorate of Muscat, the water production rose by 41.7

percent to reach 205.2 million cubic metres, compared to 144.7 million cubic metres in 2019.

The water per capita reached 79.8 cubic metre.

The distributed water through water delivery systems increased by 3.2 percent to cover 718,009 subscribers. -ONA

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OMAN



AVIATION

FLYOVER BRIDGE

Omani builds suspension bridge at Wilayat Dhank

DHANK—Al Mahan bin Said Al Zaidi from Wadi Fada, a young man from Wilayat of Dhank has managed to establish a flyover bridge of 40 metres in length and 13 metres in height using wires of almost one kilometre to ensure safety measures.

The bridge establishment was self-financed and was established under high engineering standards based on a research which lasted for three years in the Internet, he said adding that it was established under his supervision and with the support of his brothers. “The purpose for establishment of the bridge was to reach our farm at the other side as it was established in our own property,” he said.

“The search for suitable materials for the project was one of the challenges we faced,” he said. “It took us time to decide on the best material. we used anti-rust steel for the bridge. The bridge can bear up to 35 tonnes, he said adding that it was established at the cost of OMR 2000.” —**ONA**



The village of Bat is located in Ibri, in the governorate of Al Dhahirah. It is about 30 kilometres away from the centre of Ibri in the east. Here burials of semi-pyramidal shapes built of stones were found. There are also large numbers of burials surrounding the town from all sides, except that the largest concentration of them is located about half a kilometer away north of Bat town.

According to Oman's Ministry of Tourism: “A must-see attraction in the Al Dhahirah region, the Al Ayn and Bat Beehive Tombs are not only recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but also boast the title of the most complete collection of necropolises and settlements in the world, dating back to the 3rd millennium BC. More than 100 tombs stand definitely on the hilltops of Northern Oman, all shaped like beehives. Little is known about the tombs, or the culture that constructed them, but they are thought to date from 3000 to 2000 BCE. All together they form one of the largest proto-historic necropolises in the world. It is a bit difficult to spot the tombs at first, since they merge harmoniously with the hills they were built on, but upon closer inspection they are easily spotted. The tombs are arranged in three main clusters, the one in Bat, which is argu-



ably the most famous, as well as the sites of Al-Ayn and Al-Khuttm. The best preserved tombs of the site are the ones of the Al-Ayn grouping.”

Some pottery and bracelets were found at the excavation site. It has been observed that archaeological burials are similar to their counterparts in Umm al-Nar cemetery, which is expected to have commercial relations between Oman and other countries in the pre-Islamic era. The city also has a number of other larger buildings that look like palaces. These palaces were built of larger stones. Most of them are more than a metre and a half long, and among them Qasr al-Rjum is the largest. It consists of eight rooms arranged around a well in the middle. There are many fortress-like the Al Wardi Fort, which was built on top of a high hill in the middle of the town, which consists of four rooms surrounded by a wall and a fortress.





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Muscat ranked third cheapest city in the GCC

Overall, the costs of living in the major GCC cities dropped because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and its economic fallout



affordability. Among the list of 209 cities, Kuwait City was listed 115th, becoming a bit cheaper as it dropped two places from last year. It was a similar situation for Doha, which is ranked 130th and fell 21 places. Muscat dropped 12 places from 96th position last year, to 108 this year. Overall, the costs of living in the major GCC cities dropped because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and its economic fallout. Saudi Arabia, however, was the exception.

Riyadh most expensive

Riyadh (29) is the most expensive city in the region, having risen two places. Dubai (42) is second,

although it has dropped 19 places since last year. Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, is 56th. Manama, the capital of the island nation of Bahrain, is ranked 71st, having fallen 19 places as well.

The three most expensive cities in the world are Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, Hong Kong, and Beirut in Lebanon. At the other end of the list are Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, Lusaka in Zambia, and the Georgian capital of Tbilisi.

Ashgabat, Hong Kong, and Beirut aside, the top 10 most expensive cities in the world are Tokyo, Zurich, Shanghai, Singapore, Geneva, Beijing, and Bern.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani capital of Muscat has been named the third-cheapest city to live in among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The 2021 Cost of Living City Ranking, issued by Mercer, places Muscat behind Kuwait City and Doha, when it comes to

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Prime Minister of Sri Lanka receives Madayn delegation

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa received an Omani delegation from Shumookh Investment and Services which is the investment arm of Madayn (Public Establishment for Industrial Estates) of the Sultanate of Oman, at Temple Trees, the Official Residence of the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, on Monday in Colombo.

The Shumookh delegation comprised of Chief Executive Officer Eng. Musallam Juma Al Hadaifi, Executive Director Abdullah Al Bulushi, and Shumookh Legal Counsel Robin Mande. Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Sri Lanka Al Sheikh Jumah Hamdan Al Shehhi and First Secretary Mohammed Al Mukhaini of the Omani Embassy in Colombo also joined the delegation during the meeting.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and the Omani delegation discussed on ways and means to



enhance economic cooperation between Sri Lanka and Oman including investment opportunities in particular.

Omani delegation

The Omani delegation also met with State Minister of Finance, Capital Markets and State Enterprise Reforms Ajith Nivard Cabraal at the Ministry of Finance in Colombo and explored areas for economic collaboration.

They also held a series of meetings including with officials of different Ministries, Central Bank of

Sri Lanka and with the Chairman of the Board of Investment (BOI) of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka Embassy in Muscat jointly with the Embassy of Oman in Colombo organised the above visit to Sri Lanka from Shumookh Investment and Services of Madayn Oman under the investment bubble corridor.

Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman Ameer Ajwad stated that the above visit of a delegation from Madayn Oman to Sri Lanka, would open new vistas for economic cooperation between the two countries.

VIRTUAL FORUM

Council of Oman attends forum

MUSCAT: The Council of Oman, represented by the State Council and Majlis Al Shura participated in the International Forum of Global Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The virtual two-day forum is organised by the Oliy Majlis (parliament) of the Republic of Uzbekistan. — **ONA**

COVID-19

<FROM A1 Delivery services hit by shortage of drivers

She added: "It is important that we follow the law and work very closely with government directives in this regard. We do have a strong demand for Omani freelancers, so if companies do have any for hire, please approach us."

Restaurant owners in Muscat say that this has further impacted their business, which was already hit by the economic effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Some are able to send out a few orders at a time, because they employ full-time drivers that are part of their staff and have received clearance to travel after 8pm.

"We did ask the food delivery companies why they were unable to assist us here, and there are many reasons for this: we were told that drivers' licences are no longer being provided for lower range bikes, which is what many food delivery riders use to drop off their orders," said the owner of a restaurant in Ruwi.

"Secondly, it is difficult to receive clearance to travel after 8pm, so that's another issue that is affecting them."

The owner hoped that clearances would be given to more delivery drivers soon, so that restaurants and other services that rely on deliveries can get business that will help them offset to some level the impact of the pandemic. Although he does employ a company driver, he is forced to cancel five out of every 10 orders he receives, because there is no one to deliver them on time.

"A few days ago, I received a call from a lady who lived nearby, asking us to deliver food to her family because they had run out of cooking gas," recalled the restaurant owner.

"My driver was out delivering other orders, so I decided to deliver the food myself, because she needed dinner. There was no other alternative but for me to go."

Another restaurateur said he had hired two staff drivers after the pandemic had started, so that he could guarantee his customers hot food, after he had received complaints from people who had ordered from his establishment through food delivery services.

"We were told that their food used to arrive after an hour or even two, by which time it would be cold

Restaurant owners suggested that the rule on allowing only locals to take up freelance driver jobs be temporarily lifted, to cope with the increased demand on delivery services

and unappetising," he said.

"Our objective is to provide hot food, on time, and we decided to take the responsibility of delivering this ourselves. The feedback since then has been really positive, because people now receive their food inside 20 minutes."

However, Gaurav Nahar, the CEO of Omani food delivery firm Akeed, said they have about 150 Omani drivers working in rotation, which means they are able to provide food to customers during the lockdown as well.

"We do get many Omanis coming to us who are willing to work as food delivery drivers, and we often hire them after putting them in touch with a registered manpower company," he said.

"These Omanis, as well as the expatriate drivers we have on visas, have helped us deliver food to people. The current challenges have actually provided us the opportunity to push Omanisation among food delivery services, and as a local company, it's a responsibility we take seriously."

Restaurant owners suggested that the rule on allowing only locals to take up freelance driver jobs be temporarily lifted, to cope with the increased demand on delivery services during the current situation, until such time that Omanis are trained to take up such jobs in the coming months. "The current situation can help Omanis to learn on the job, and they will be readily available to take on such roles in future, even after the lockdown ends," said a café owner.



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US Senate Republicans block Democrats' voting rights legislation

Members of the Senate chamber voted along party lines with the GOP employing the filibuster to prevent a debate on the proposed bill

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden and Democrat lawmakers faced an unsurprising setback on Tuesday after Republican Senators blocked sweeping voting rights legislation. Members of the evenly divided Senate chamber voted along party lines with the GOP employing the filibuster to prevent a debate on the proposed bill.

Democrats have held up the For the People Act as a key legislative goal that aims to remove hurdles for voters and limit the influence of money in politics. But they face the challenge of finding a compromise with the stubbornly opposed Republican party.

Biden pleaded for the bill to be passed and sent to his desk, saying in a tweet that "democracy is in peril" and "we urgently need the For the People Act."

Republicans reject voting rights reform

The proposed legislation is a response to the scenes of intimidation towards electoral workers witnessed during the 2020 elec-



VOTING RIGHTS: Democrats have held up the For the People Act as a key legislative goal that aims to remove hurdles for voters and limit the influence of money in politics.

tion as well as attempts by several Republican-controlled states to enact their own reforms deemed by civil rights advocates as infringements on voting rights — especially those of minorities who tend to vote Democrat.

Democrats were forced to agree to consider certain amendments to the bill to win the acceptance of several of their own Senators on the right of the party, including national voter ID requirements and dropping proposals to publicly fund election campaigns.

Nevertheless, Republicans re-

fused to budge. GOP leader Mitch McConnell called the bill "a solution looking for a problem" and said he would "put an end to it."

Senate Republicans defended their stance by calling the federal bill an infringement on the authority of individual states to carry out their electoral duties.

Democrat bills continue to hit a wall

Democrats have faced continued opposition in the Senate with the Republicans repeatedly using the filibuster — requiring 60 out of 100

votes to overcome — to leverage their minority position.

The same right-leaning Democrat Senators who forced amendments to the For the People Act have also said they would not vote for changes to the Senate voting rules that could remove the filibuster. Following the failure to pass the legislation, Senator Bernie Sanders called for the filibuster to be scrapped: "Now is the time for majority rule in the Senate. We must end the filibuster, pass sweeping voting rights legislation, and protect our democracy." **WV**

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APPLICATION REJECTED

UK court rejects Nirav Modi's appeal against extradition to India

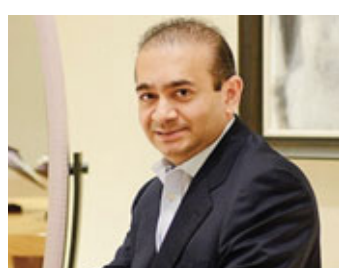
LONDON: The UK High Court has rejected a plea by fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi seeking permission against his extradition to India to face charges of defrauding Punjab National Bank (PNB) of more than Rs 13,000 crore. In a major blow to the fugitive diamond billionaire, the court refused to consider Modi's written application to overturn a lower court, meaning that Modi's lawyers will now have to make oral submissions to the court.

London's Westminster Magistrate's Court in February ruled that there were sufficient grounds for Modi to be sent back to India to face charges brought by the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

UK Home Secretary Priti Patel signed off on his extradition on April 15.

Modi is currently held at Wandsworth prison in South London where he has been lodged since his arrest in London in March 2019 in connection with the largest bank fraud perpetrated in India.

The 50-year-old, once the jew-



eller to some of the biggest and glamorous names in Bollywood and Hollywood, along with his uncle Mehul Choksi are accused of colluding with officials at PNB for the issuance of fraudulent lines of credit.

Modi is also accused of subsequently intimidating witnesses and tampering with evidence.

The UK High Court's decision comes after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) revealed that it had seized assets worth thousands of crores belonging Nirav Modi and Choksi in India. The ED on Wednesday transferred seized assets worth Rs 9,371.17 crore in the cases related to Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, and Mehul Choksi, to Public Sector Banks and central government. **ANI**

100 DAYS TO GO

Dubai ruler announces the countdown for Expo 2020

Times News Service

DUBAI: His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai, announced the countdown for Expo 2020 Dubai, the world's largest cultural event to convene the global community towards creating solutions for a better future.

In 100 days, the UAE will be the first country in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) region to host a World Expo in the largest global gathering since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expo 2020 Dubai, set to begin on October 1, is expected to attract more than 25 million visitors from all over the world to discover life-changing innovations. The mega event aims to drive collaboration and innovation to develop real-life solutions as the world heads into a post-pandemic economic recovery.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum tweeted, "100 days to go for Expo 2020 Dubai, the world's largest cultural event. 100 days to go for the gathering of 192 nations in Dubai in the biggest global event since the outset of the pandemic to usher in a new phase of recovery."

"50,000 employees have set up 192 pavilions and 30,000 volunteers are ready to welcome the world at Expo 2020 Dubai."

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum added, "Expo 2020 Dubai will provide the space for the largest and most inclusive cultural and knowledge exchange in the world." He noted that "Expo 2020 Dubai will pave the roadmap for key economic, development and cultural trends of the post-COVID-19 era."

"Our success in hosting the world's largest cultural event reflects the power of human solidarity in overcoming the pandemic."

He added, "the global community is preparing for a new stage of collaboration by harnessing science and technology to combat the pandemic. Expo 2020 Dubai



provides the platform for sharing knowledge and innovations."

"Through Expo 2020 Dubai, the UAE is bridging cultures and galvanizing efforts and aspirations towards creating a better future for everyone."

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, "people from every corner of the globe are welcome to join the once-in-a-lifetime inspiring and enlightening experience that pays testament to human creativity. We will meet at Expo 2020 Dubai."

Expo Dubai: Global Milestones

Expo 2020 Dubai sets multiple milestones as the first World Expo to be held in the MEASA region in the 170-year history of the mega events. It will also be the first global event since the advent of the coronavirus outbreak.

In another first, every participating nation will have its own pavilion. Countries will be clustered not by their geography, but under Expo 2020's three sub-themes of Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability— areas seen as essential to building a better future for humanity. More than 200 nations, multilateral organizations, businesses and educational establishments will come together to develop innovative solutions to pressing challenges facing the world. The diversity of participating nations and organizations

makes Expo 2020 Dubai the most inclusive and international World Expo ever to be organized.

The UAE will host the mega event with tight COVID-19 precautionary measures and a safe environment where about 90% of the population have been vaccinated against COVID-19, positioning the country among the top five nations in the vaccine distribution rate.

Connecting Minds, Creating the Future

Expo 2020 Dubai will run from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 under the slogan "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future." The mega event gains exceptional significance amid the COVID-19 outbreak as the call for collaboration and knowledge exchange has never been more urgent to drive action and develop practical solutions to pressing challenges. It will galvanize the global community under the vision that true prosperity for people stem from collaboration.

Expo 2020 Dubai coincides with the UAE's Golden Jubilee, presenting an excellent opportunity to share the UAE's successful experience and inspiring story with the world. Through the event, the UAE will forge new partnerships with multinational and international corporations to drive its development journey of the next 50 years. **WAM**

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WORLD



Hong Kong pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily to shut down on Saturday

Earlier on

Wednesday, Hong Kong police carried out more arrests at Apple Daily, widening the scope of the operation against the tabloid



CLOSURE: Police action against the paper was the first time the sweeping national security law had been used against journalists for something they had published

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily is closing its print and digital edition on Saturday, publishing company Next Digital said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Due to the current circumstances prevailing in Hong Kong, Apple Daily in its print form will come to an end no later than the last edition on Saturday 26 June 2021 and the digital version will no longer be accessible no later than

11:59 p.m. on Saturday 26 June 2021," Next Digital said in a press release. Earlier on Wednesday, Hong Kong police carried out more arrests at Apple Daily, widening the scope of the operation against the tabloid.

Police announced the arrest of a 55-year-old man "on suspicion of colluding with foreign forces to

endanger national security."

While a senior executive at Next Digital said a lead writer for editorials and a reporter had been arrested, a police representative told the media that there was no immediate information on a second arrest.

Police action against the paper was the first time the sweeping na-

tional security law had been used against journalists for something they had published, signalling an intensifying crackdown by authorities in Hong Kong.

How did it come to this?

Hundreds of police had raided Apple Daily last week in a national security probe in which senior

executives of the newspaper were arrested over allegations of "collusion with a foreign country."

Five Apple Daily executives were arrested, making it the first time a new national security law was used to arrest top editors of a media agency.

Editor-in-chief Ryan Law Wai-kwong, chief operating officer (COO) as well as publisher Cheung Kim-hung, who is also CEO Next Digital, were among those arrested.

Authorities also froze Apple Daily's assets worth HK\$18 million (roughly \$2.3 million, or €1.9 million) under the national security law imposed on the Chinese-ruled city via Beijing in 2020.

Hong Kong freedoms being eroded

The contentious security law broadened the definitions of crimes like secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces.

Critics say it was designed to stifle dissent and free speech in the semi-autonomous city.

The Apple Daily's sudden shutdown serves as a warning to all media outlets on the reach of a new

national security law.

"The forced closure of Apple Daily is the blackest day for media freedom in Hong Kong's recent history," Amnesty International said Wednesday.

A European Union spokesperson slammed the shutdown of the paper as a crackdown on the free press.

"The closure of Apple Daily's Hong Kong operations clearly shows how the National Security Law imposed by Beijing is being used to stifle freedom of the press and the free expression of opinions," Reuters quoted the unnamed spokesperson as saying.

"Its closing seriously undermines media freedom and pluralism, which are essential for any open and free society. The erosion of press freedom is also counter to Hong Kong's aspirations as an international business hub."

The Apple Daily was founded in 1995 by billionaire mogul Jimmy Lai. Lai had left mainland China for Hong Kong as a young child. He made a fortune selling clothes and increasingly became more political following the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. He later founded a media empire. **bw**

MEETING

Blinken in Germany for talks with Maas, Merkel

WASHINGTON: United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Germany on Wednesday and is scheduled to meet with Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Heiko Maas.

The visit is his second to Europe in just seven days, having accompanied President Joe Biden to leaders' meetings in the United Kingdom and Belgium.



Reviving the Iran nuclear deal

In a joint press conference, Maas said that he saw a "good chance" of concluding talks on a revival of the Iran nuclear deal — after talks with Blinken.

"Regarding the negotiations in Vienna, they aren't easy — that's been clear in recent weeks," Maas told reporters.

"Nevertheless we are moving forward step by step in every round of negotiations and we assume that in the context of the [Iranian] presidential election, there's a good chance to conclude them in the foreseeable future," he added.

Maas said there were still "several technical questions to resolve" on the 2015 deal.

"In any case we are convinced that it's worth it to maintain talks over such a long period of time in order to revive the JCPOA in this way," he added, referring to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly known as the Iran deal.

Setting red lines for Russia

During the press conference, Blinken said the Russian-German Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project undermines the security of Ukraine.

"Our goal remains to ensure

that Russia cannot use energy as a coercive tool as a weapon against Ukraine, or anyone else in Europe," Blinken said.

"Germany and the United States will keep standing together against any dangerous or provocative actions by Russia, whether that's encroaching on Ukraine's territory or imprisoning Alexei Navalny or spreading disinformation in our democracies," Blinken added, referring to the jailed Russian opposition leader.

The US recently waived sanctions against the operating company after appeals from Germany, and initial plans for a tough stance from Biden. **bw**

OVERFISHING

WWF says Mediterranean heating 20% faster than world's oceans

BERLIN: Countries fringing the Mediterranean need to turn at least 30% of its waters into Protected Maritime Areas (MPAs) by 2030 and rein in overfishing and pollution, urged the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) in a report published by its German branch Tuesday.

The 26-page WWF report also calls for "well-connected" efforts between riparian nations to save already depleted Mediterranean seagrass beds and coral clusters — home to many fish species and vital in stabilizing coastlines and capturing atmospheric carbon dioxide.

The report also warns residents they face losing fishing livelihoods and Mediterranean culture like cuisine if biodiversity is not restored and deadly



industrial impacts reduced.

"The Mediterranean is no longer the sea that we once knew," said Heike Vesper, maritime protection director at WWF Germany, which urged "resilience" strategies, including the sea's integration in the UN's biodiversity and climate

frameworks. Although it covers an area of only 1 percent compared to all world seas, the Mediterranean is home to 10% of all known maritime species, with a quarter of these creatures endemic to the enclosed sea basin between Africa and Europe. **bw**

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England beat Czech Republic to top group, Croatia reach Euro Cup last 16

The clash between England and the Czechs was to decide the winners of the group as both teams have already assured a place in the last 16 of Euro Cup

SEVILLE: England clinched the top spot of Group D at Euro 2020 with a 1-0 win over the Czech Republic on Tuesday, while Luka Modric saved Croatia with a sensational goal and an assist in their 3-1 victory over Scotland.

Thus Croatia also reached the last 16 as the runners-up of the group and the Czech Republic, despite the defeat to England, still advanced to the knock-out stages as one of the four best third-placed teams.

The clash between England and the Czechs was to decide the winners of the group as both teams have already assured a place in the last 16 into the match.

Aston Villa playmaker Jack Grealish and Arsenal teenager Bukayo



ENGLAND VS CZECH REPUBLIC: The Three Lions dominated the pitch since the start with Raheem Sterling hit the woodwork after two minutes.

Saka started for England and Manchester United defender Harry Maguire was back to the starting line-up after recovering from injury.

The Three Lions dominated the pitch since the start with Raheem Sterling hit the woodwork after two minutes.

Ten minutes later, Grealish shot

a fine cross into the box with Sterling jumping behind Saka to head home from close range.

“I thought it was a much better performance, attacking-wise,” said the Manchester City striker Sterling after the match. “I thought we had more fluid movement and we created some prob-

lems as well. Most importantly, we scored the goal we needed and kept a clean sheet.”

Sterling also scored the only goal in England’s 1-0 win over Croatia in the first round on June 13.

The Czech Republic led the group after two matches with an advantage of goal difference, but their

center forward Patrik Schick who scored three times in the first two matches failed to show his power in front of England’s defense.

The Czechs made a few threats through counter-attacks and their best chance in the first half was Tomas Holes’ long shot from the middle but was palmed away by England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford. The second half was comparatively dull. Both teams made several changes but no one could change the scoreline.

England will wait to host the second-placed team in Group F at Wembley one week later. Their next opponents could be Portugal, France, Germany or Hungary.

In Glasgow, midfield master Modric struck a stunning second-half goal, before setting up another for Ivan Perisic to help Croatia beat Scotland 3-1.

The magic of the former world player of the year came in the 62nd minute when he got the ball just outside of the penalty area and fired it to the top corner with his right foot to put the Croats in front again.

“I’d like to congratulate my team for a great match, we controlled the game very well,” said Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic.

“We let the opponents back into the game with mistakes but we managed to relax and knew we would get the second goal and then the third.”

Scotland, chasing for their knock-out stage debut at the tour-

namment, were without Billy Gilmore with Stuart Armstrong coming in for the midfielder, who has tested positive for COVID-19 in Steve Clarke’s only change to the side that drew with England on Friday night.

The Scots looked to impose a high pace on the game to stop the Croats from settling on the ball, but the visiting side soon gained control of the match and started to ping the ball around the pitch.

Croatia took the lead in the 17th minute when the impressive Perisic nodded a cross-back for Nikola Vlasic to put his side ahead. The Croats continued to control the ball, moving it around comfortably, with Perisic a constant threat down their left flank.

However, the Scots never let their heads drop for a moment and just when Croatia were starting to look comfortable, they equalized just before halftime. Croatian defender, Dejan Lovren failed to clear an Andy Robertson cross in the 42nd minute, the ball fell to Callum McGregor, who thumped it home from outside of the penalty area.

But the second half saw Modric, at the age of 35, lead the Croatian to victory.

“That’s what you’re up against at this level - it was a tough lesson,” McGregor said after the match.

The Real Madrid star’s corner was headed in by Perisic 13 minutes from time, after his stunning finish earlier, to seal the match for Croatia. **ANI**

EURO 2020

ICC RANKINGS

Wembley to host over 60,000 fans for semis, final of Euro Cup



LONDON : More than 60,000 fans will be permitted at the Euro 2020 semi-finals and final at Wembley Stadium following an announcement by the UK government, increasing attendance to 75 per cent of capacity for each game, confirmed the UEFA on Tuesday.

The semi-finals will take place on 6 July (Tuesday) and July 7 (Wednesday), with the final being held on July 11 (Sunday). All attendees must continue to follow strict COVID-19 entry require-

ments. “It is great news that so many fans will be able to watch the final three matches of EURO 2020 at Wembley. The last 18 months have taught us - both on and off the pitch - how integral fans are to the fabric of the game.”

“This tournament has been a beacon of hope to reassure people that we are returning to a more normal way of life and this is a further step along that road. I am grateful to the Prime Minister and the UK government for their

hard work in finalising these arrangements with us, to make the tournament final stages a great success at Wembley,” UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin stated in the official release.

Strict entry requirements will include having a negative COVID-19 test or proof of full vaccination (two doses received, 14 days before the fixture in question). Further details, including details of ticket sales for these matches, will be communicated in due course. **ANI**

Ravindra Jadeja becomes top-ranked all-rounder in ICC Test Rankings

DUBAI: South Africa’s wicket-keeper-batsman Quinton de Kock on Wednesday returned to the top 10 of the ICC Men’s Test Player Rankings after top-scoring against the West Indies and helping complete a 158-run victory in St Lucia for a 2-0 win in their ICC World Test Championship series.

Meanwhile, former West Indies captain Jason Holder has lost 28 rating points to slip behind Ravindra Jadeja in the list of all-rounders. The Indian left-hander, who returns to No.1 after last being there in August 2017, is on 386 rating points, two ahead of Holder. De Kock’s knock of 96 in the first innings has helped him gain two places and reach 10th position, the first time in 18 months that he is in the top 10. The 28-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman, who has a career-best sixth ranking, was last in the top 10 in December 2019.

Another left-hander progressing in the latest weekly update is captain Dean Elgar, up to one place to 19th after setting the platform for the win with a knock of 77. Rassie van der Dussen has rocketed 31 places to 43rd position after notching an unbeaten 75 in the second innings.

Among South Africa’s bowlers,



player of the match Kagiso Rabada is up to one place to sixth after taking five wickets in the match while spinner Keshav Maharaj, who completed South Africa’s first Test hat-trick in 61 years during the second innings, has reaped the benefits of his seven-wicket match haul, progressing three places to 28th. Lungi Ngidi is up to three places to 41st.

West Indies batter Jermaine Blackwood is up 12 places to 44th

after scores of 49 and 25, while Shai Hope (up to three places to 82nd) and Kieran Powell (up to six places to 94th) have also progressed in the list.

Fast bowler, Kemar Roach’s seven wickets see him close in on a top 10 place, moving up one slot to 12th among bowlers. Kyle Mayers’s useful medium-fast stuff has helped him move up 51 places to joint-53rd after finishing with three wickets in each innings. **ANI**

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP

Kiwis beat India, win inaugural World Test Championship

SOUTHAMPTON: New Zealand beat India by eight wickets in the inaugural World Test Championship at Southampton on Wednesday. New Zealand Captain Kane Williamson remained not out on 52 while Ross Taylor was unbeaten on 47.

Earlier, Tom Latham and Devon Conway stood firm at the crease as New Zealand needed more runs to win the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) final at the Ageas Bowl.

Requiring 139 to win, New Zealand openers Latham and Conway batted till the tea break, ensuring that their side does not lose any wicket before the interval. In the final session, New Zealand will require 120 runs to win from 45 overs.

Resuming the second session at 130/5, Pant and Jadeja managed



to add 12 more runs to the total before Jadeja’s (16) stint at the crease came to an end as he was sent packing by Neil Wagner. The left-arm armer angled one across the channel, and Jadeja poked at the delivery, handing an easy catch to BJ Watling behind the stumps.

Ravichandran Ashwin joined

Pant in the middle and the duo managed to add 14 more runs to the total, but this partnership too came to an end in the 70th over as Pant (41) gifted his wicket to Trent Boult. Pant decided to step out and lofted the ball in the air.

It was a casual end to what had been a fighting knock till then.

Even though he did miss quite a few balls, he was looking to apply himself till Boult got the better of him. Henry Nicholls took a stunner to send Pant back as it was the beginning of the end of the India essay. In the very same over, Ashwin (7) was dismissed by Boult, and India was reduced to 156/8.

Mohammed Shami did manage to add 13 valuable runs to the total, but in the end, it was all about waiting for the innings to end. Kyle Jamieson returned with two wickets while Boult picked three. Not to forget Wagner’s lion-hearted effort even though he had only one wicket to show for his efforts.

Brief Scores: India 217 and 170 (Rishabh Pant 41, Rohit Sharma 30, Tim Southee 4-48); New Zealand 249 and (Tom Latham 5*, Devon Conway 9*). **ANI**

INDIA VS NEW ZEALAND

Wicketkeeper Watling keeps wickets with dislocated finger

SOUTHAMPTON: New Zealand wicketkeeper BJ Watling continued to don the gloves for his side even after dislocating his finger in the first session on the Reserve Day of the ongoing World Test Championship (WTC) final here at the Ageas Bowl on Wednesday.

“BJ Watling dislocated his right ring finger in the first session and has received medical treatment during the lunch break before returning to the field. #WTC21,” the official handle of BlackCaps tweeted.

In the 53rd over of the second innings, Watling received a blow on his finger on the right hand as he was trying to collect a throw from skipper Kane Williamson. Watling ended up hurting his finger and the

physio came out to look at his finger.

Earlier, as New Zealand wicketkeeper Watling stepped out to the field in international cricket for the final time on Wednesday, India skipper Virat Kohli was quick to congratulate him on a phenomenal career.

Kohli congratulated Watling as both India and New Zealand stepped out to the field on the Reserve Day of the WTC final.

The official handle of the International Cricket Council (ICC) tweeted the moment of Kohli congratulating Watling and it captioned the post as: “A nice gesture from the Indian skipper congratulating the @BLACKCAPS wicketkeeper on the final day of his international career.” **ANI**

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by August 2021 reaching \$73.59, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil increased by 73 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was at \$72.86. - OMA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,047.58 points, up 0.30 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up 1.32 per cent at 591.48 points. Oman Education Training, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle feed, down 4.26 per cent, was the top loser.

Sohar Port and Freezone signs strategic pact with Brazilian port

The agreement will allow the entities to collaboratively advance their global maritime and logistics operations, enacting a number of shared objectives

Times News Service

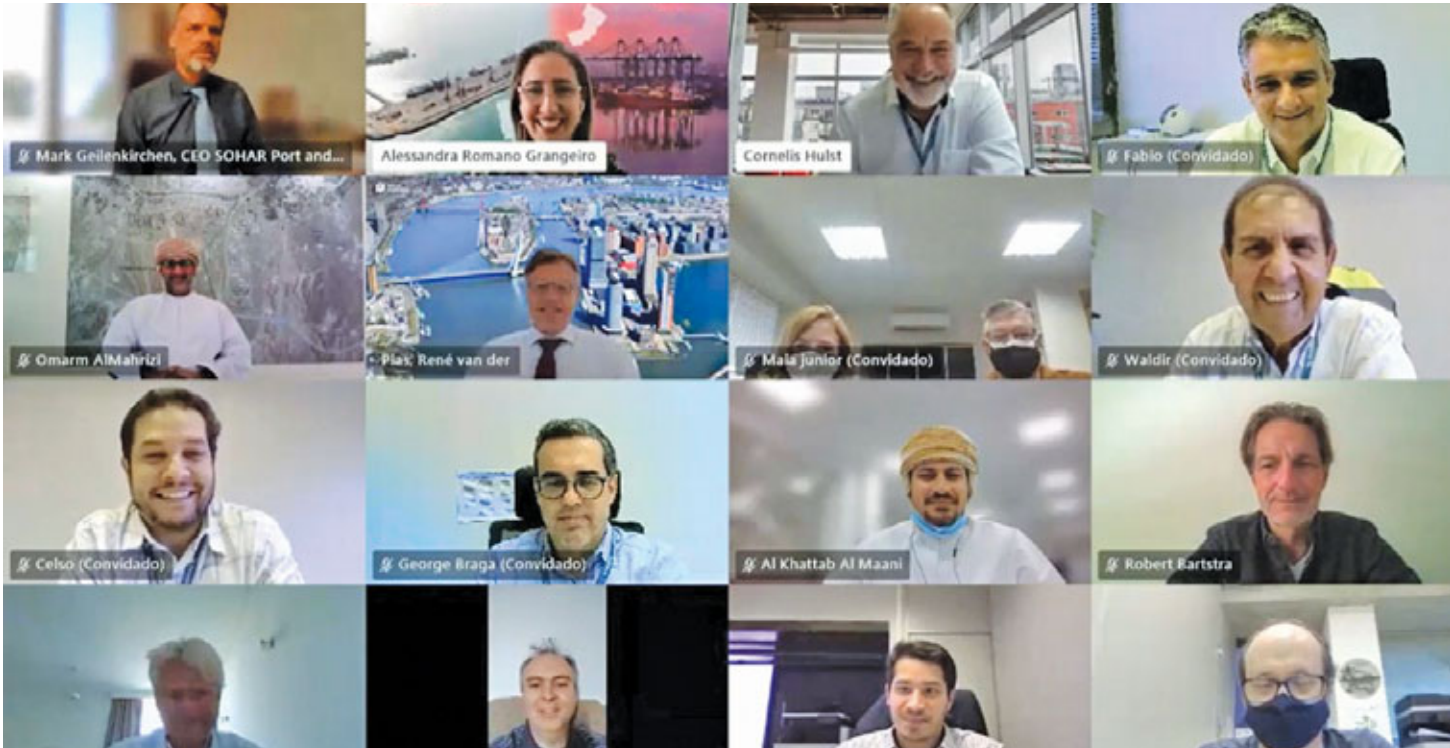
MUSCAT: Sohar Port and Freezone has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Port of Pecém, one of Brazil's top 10 major ports.

The agreement will allow the entities to collaboratively advance their global maritime and logistics operations, enacting a number of shared objectives including the exploration of joint business opportunities, the exchange of knowledge and best practices, and developing technologies for green hydrogen and other renewables, in cooperation with its shareholders, Port of Rotterdam and Asyad. As one of the world's fastest-growing ports, the tie-up reinforces Sohar's growth strategy while strengthening its position as a key logistics hub in the region and beyond.

"International partnerships, like the one with Pecém, allow us to consolidate expertise that helps us strengthen and expand our world port network and foster economic competitiveness," said Mark Geilenkirchen, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar Port.

"Particularly with Brazil being such a strong player in food exports, Pecém is a welcome addition to our flourishing food cluster. At the same time, by showcasing the incredible success Vale has achieved in Oman over the last 10 years, it will enable us to demonstrate to Brazilian companies the vast opportunities Sohar has to offer," Geilenkirchen said.

Danilo Serpa, CEO of Complex of Pecém said, "Our relationship with the Port of Rotterdam, who has been our partner since 2018, has opened up many new oppor-



KEY LOGISTICS HUB: As one of the world's fastest-growing ports, the tie-up reinforces Sohar's growth strategy while strengthening its position as a key logistics hub in the region and beyond. - Supplied picture

tunities for us, including our latest with the Sohar. Strategically located on a global trade route connecting Europe and Asia, it presents us with unrivalled con-

nectivity, helping us to tap into the tremendous potential of the region. We look forward to linking both ports and bringing value to our shared customer base."

As the closest Brazilian terminal to both the USA and Europe, the Port of Pecém is becoming the main hub for North and Northeast Brazil. Considered to have the best

port and hinterland infrastructure connectivity in the region, it is one of just a few Brazilian terminals capable of handling ultra-large container vessels.

SPECIALISED SERVICES

Industrial Innovation Centre extends support to Oman's industrial sector

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Through financing of companies in various fields the Industrial Innovation Centre seeks to support the industrial sector in the Sultanate.

The centre, to activate its role in industrial innovation and enable Omani innovations, aims to set up a number of innovative emerging companies in various industrial sectors such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Artificial Intelligence (AI), food and beverages, metals and other vital industrial sectors.

The centre also works to support existing companies and factories through a package of facilities it provides, such as financial support and financing, supervision of production processes and improving their efficiency.

It also provides specialised technical and technical advisory services to individual innovators and entrepreneurs and contributes to the registration of intellectual property (IP) for them in cooperation with the Intellectual Property Department of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

These efforts come in line with Oman's 2040 vision and keep pace with what the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is doing and promoting investment in developing the industrial sector, especially after it announced 50 initiatives in the industrial sector. The quality of competition locally, regionally and globally.

The centre also seeks to achieve self-sufficiency and maximise the economic value of the natural resources that the Sultanate abounds in. It promotes scientific research and innovation steps that employ innovative Omani youth initiatives in projects with economic returns.

The centre is keen to implement its annual training programme 'Qualifying an Industrial Innovation Specialist', which is concerned with the rehabilitation and development of human capital by qualifying 100 Omani youth annually as specialists in industrial innovation. So they become effective competencies in the knowledge economy through a series of qualification programmes that the Industrial Innovation Centre worked to be prepared and developed with various international organisations.

"The aspects of consultations received by the centre vary,



PACKAGE OF FACILITIES: The centre will support existing companies and factories through a package of facilities it provides, such as financial support and financing, supervision of production processes and improving their efficiency. - Supplied picture



whether at the level of developing new products, improving existing products, raising the efficiency of production processes, solving production problems, transferring technology and modern technologies and supporting intellectual property registration," Ghassan Al Rushdi, Acting Director of Communication and Capacity Building at the Industrial Innovation Centre, said.

"This is to enhance the performance of companies and raise their competitiveness, as the Center cooperates with the Intellectual Property Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and to promote investment in the registration of intellectual property," he added.

The centre provides advisory services to innovators and entrepreneurs in various sectors and fields such as food and beverages, minerals and marble, artificial intelligence, renewable energy, waste management and recycling, Al Rushdi said.

"The centre also helps to train in the field of developing innovations and trading through entrepreneurship, and support in laboratory analyses. Necessary to ensure quality, conform to specifications, and provide specialised workshops for innovators, private sector companies, and government institutions," he added.

Importance of packaging

The importance of packaging for Omani products Al Rushdi explained that product packaging is of great importance in the process of product marketing and promotion.

According to the site Inc, It is estimated that approximately 95 per cent of new products introduced each year fail. The reason is that most consumers do not have enough time to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of products while they are shopping, he said

"Therefore, their purchase decision is quick depending on the method of product packaging, and the Industrial Innovation Centre is keen to educate innovators, producers and entrepreneurs on the need to choose packaging materi-

als that suit the nature of the product, ending with the establishment and registration of the trademark and building the product are marketing strategy."

As for the Omani industrial sectors most in need of consultations, Al Rushdi said that the value-added manufacturing sector is the most vital sector that needs guidance and guidance, especially since it is one of the most popular sectors during the past few years and the most sectors that small and medium enterprises have begun to turn to.

Product development

Al Rushdi said the centre works with many international institutions to ensure the upgrading of advisory, technical and training services. The centre also works cooperatively with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to promote the export of local Omani products.

"The centre is working on developing various products starting with providing initial consultations for product development, and soon it will start providing prototype production services to innovators and entrepreneurs through the central innovation units that it is working to establish in the fish and animal feed industries, in addition to the innovation unit in food and beverages and another specialised unit in metals," Al Rushdi added.

OPAZ BOARD



MEETING: To cope with the world's modern construction techniques, the Opaz Board of Directors approved the construction by using 3D printing techniques while complying with safety standards. - Supplied picture



Construction using 3D printing techniques in special economic and free zones approved

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Opaz Board of Directors approved construction with 3D printing techniques in all special economic and free zones in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad) on Wednesday.

This was announced at the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) second meeting for 2021, chaired by Dr Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, the Chairman of the Board.

During the meeting, the board discussed a mechanism that stimulates introducing long-term housing solutions and providing residential properties under long-term contracts.

To cope with the world's modern construction techniques, the Board of Directors approved the construction by using 3D printing techniques while complying with safety standards.

Also, the board affirmed promoting the new techniques in the various free zones and Sezad in particular. Different packages of

facilities and incentives will be offered for companies that prefer to use the 3D-printed building technology, with an exemption from the leasing fees for 5 years.

The meeting touched on the actions taken to attract clean energy projects in Duqm and Sohar and highlighted what has been accomplished in activating the services of a one-stop-shop in both Salalah Free Zone and Sohar Free Zone, taking into account the one-stop-shop experience in Duqm.

Further, the Board of Directors was briefed about the latest updates regarding the procedures for providing gas for several projects in the chemical material sector in Salalah Free Zone, steel and mining industries in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

They were also updated on the procedures implemented for registering the green hydrogen production project company in Duqm, and the programme for installing experimental equipment for the project.

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Indian Male, BBA, With 8 Yrs Experience in Property Maintenance & Management with DL. Contact 95865329

Indian female, 8 years experience coordination, exe secretary, admin asst. Contact 92243552

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GREAT



ARE GERMANY

better with a back three or a back four? Do they suffer from the lack of a proper striker? Why can't they defend set-pieces? And why did they seem so short on offensive ideas in the final third?



TURNAROUND

There was no shortage of tactical talking points in the wake of Germany's defeat to France in their Euro 2020 opener, as a panicking nation discussed what Joachim Löw needed to change for Portugal game.

The answer from the Bundestrainer? Nichts – nothing. The same 11 players took to the field, in the same 3-4-3 formation, with the same intention of attacking down the wings. And when, after 94 exhilarating minutes in Munich, the score line read Portugal 2-4 Germany, no-one could argue that it hadn't worked.

So, what had changed? Ahead of kickoff, Löw had demanded more "dynamism," more "intensity," more "risk." What he got was organized chaos.

What Löw desired are inquantifiable qualities but, if the opportunities around the opposition box continued to seem as scarce as they had against France, he didn't want his players to retreat from those areas, admitting defeat and going in search of another opening, but to continue to attack them with even more purpose than before.

Try, try and try again
The best example came in the buildup to Germany's second goal. Thomas Müller's initial attempt at a cross bounced back off Pepe but Müller immediately lofted it in again. Kai Havertz initially failed to make contact and the danger may have passed, but Joshua Kimmich wouldn't let the attack die out and immediately turned the ball back into the danger zone, where Raphael Guerreiro put the ball into his own net.

In the space of four minutes, Germany had turned a 0-1 deficit into a 2-1 lead. It was just reward for their electric start to the game, and vindication of Löw's decision to stick to his plan A and pursue it with even greater intensity. "Fantastic mentality and great morale in a difficult situation," praised Löw at full-time. "We had a lot more pace in our attacks right from the start."

Neither the frustration of seeing his spectacular volley ruled out by VAR after just five minutes, nor the shock of Cristiano Ronaldo's breakaway goal to give Portugal a shock lead, affected his confidence in his ability to carry out Löw's instructions.

The next time he received the ball in behind, picked out by Kimmich with a crossfield ball, he fired it into the box where Ruben Dias also put the ball past his own goalkeeper.

Two Portuguese own goals in the space of four minutes, both brought about by Germany's sheer persistence in attacking those areas around the edge of the box, the defense eventually succumbing in the face of the Germans' organized chaos.

Often in international tournaments, coaches simply don't have the time to lay out highly detailed tactical plans. Some of the best, like Didier Deschamps of France, keep it simple and conservative despite the talent at their disposal. Others, like Gareth Southgate's England, over-complicate matters.

On Saturday, Löw and Germany opted for organized chaos. It paid off spectacularly, and it bodes well for the rest of the tournament.



BY GERMANY

ROUND-UP

be'ah unveils employee volunteering programme

The programme “#YourSpace” will be implemented over four months through initiatives linked to UN Sustainable Development Goals

MUSCAT: As part of the company's efforts to encourage and promote the culture of volunteerism among its employees, the Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) announced the launch of “#YourSpace” a volunteer employee programme which covers all employees of the company across various governorates of the Sultanate.

The programme will be implemented over four months with the main objectives of enabling be'ah staff to spread their knowledge and experience through community



interactions, instilling a culture of volunteerism among employees, improving staff performance, and raising their awareness about the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, also called as Global Goals.

Under the programme, be'ah employees will interact with communities and spread knowledge and share experiences related to environmental conservation for future generations. The program will also enable them to participate in various awareness campaigns and initiate the development of new and

innovative voluntary campaigns, as well as develop aspects of their personality through interaction with different segments of society. Each of the activities under the “#YourSpace” programme is linked to one or more of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Activities of the programme's first phase include the Hydroponic Initiative, the Women's Empowerment Initiative, the Renewable Energy Initiative (Solar) and the Circular Economy Awareness Initiative. The programme is expect-

ed to be expanded to cover other initiatives in the coming phases.

Commenting on the launch of the program, Hafsa Hamoud Al Harasia, Community Awareness programme Lead at be'ah, said, “We at be'ah believe in the importance of volunteering and seek to promote the culture of volunteerism among our employees as a key component of their performance and because they are the cornerstone of implementing the company's vision and strategy.

“The launch of “#YourSpace” Volunteer Employee programme is a translation of the company's efforts to engage and integrate employees further with the community so that we can contribute effectively to achieving the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals aimed alleviating poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring that all the planet's population enjoys peace.”

Hafsa added, the initiatives chosen for the programme's first phase have been chosen carefully as we believe that they assume significance at the current stage. After studying similar global experiences, we plan to extend the programme into further stages and include other important objectives.”

Al Maha Petroleum signs agreement with Oman International Hospital

MUSCAT: Al Maha Marketing Company signed a memorandum of cooperation with Oman International Hospital (OIH) in Al Ghubra, where it was signed on behalf of Al Maha Company by Engineer Hamed Al Maghdari - CEO of the Oil Company - and by Marcelo Pereira, CEO of OIH.

Engineer Hamed bin Salem Al Maghdari, CEO of Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company, expressed his happiness with this agreement which aims to provide important additional services to Al Maha prepaid cardholders, as the cardholder will receive a 15% discount in a comprehensive healthcare screening and General Practitioner consultation. Oman International Hospital also offers the Membership Bronze Card to 150 e-rial Card holders.



There are several additional services that Al Maha prepaid cardholders will benefit from by Oman International Hospital.

Eng. Al Maghdari added that Al Maha Oil Products Marketing Company seeks to launch a num-

ber of important projects and valuable additional services that will impress and satisfy the company's customers and provide them with comfort, and which will be announced during the coming weeks.

Marcelo Pereira, CEO of Oman

International Hospital, highlighted, “We are pleased with this cooperation and partnership with Al Maha Oil Products Marketing Company and our full readiness to provide discounts and health care at Oman International Hospital, which is one of the largest private hospitals, which will be officially opened in the coming months. The hospital includes local and international medical staff, up to date medical devices and equipment's, 4 operating theatres and 200 beds.”

Marcelo Pereira also added, “We have launched a number of bronze, silver and gold membership health cards, which are characterised by a number of unique services and features for the hospital's patients. Thanks to this partnership they will be available at some Al Maha's filling stations - in Muscat and Salalah.”

Sohar Aluminium recognises its department and excelling employees

MUSCAT: Sohar Aluminium (SA) recently held a virtual ceremony to recognise its excelling employees and departments as part of the 2020 Mumtaz Recognition Scheme. The event was attended by the CEO of the company, members of the executive committee, and the management team.

The achievers, including top nominees and winners in the company's six strategic objectives, were thanked and applauded by the leaders of the company for their outstanding work and dedication.

Engineer Said Al Masoudi, SA's CEO praised the nominees and winners for their exceptional efforts and hard work and reiterated the importance of sustaining the benefits and results that were



achieved last year.

In 2020, the company witnessed great achievements in its environment, health and safety, productivity and incremental improvements, people and community, innovation and growth, financial

strength, and customer satisfaction strategic objectives.

One of the major achievements was the outstanding results of the value creation programme that saw savings above-set targets. Also, the injury rate, sig-

nificant potential incidents, and hydrogen fluoride emissions witnessed a substantial decrease throughout the year. The company sustained its high level of primary aluminium quality in the 396,929 tonnes that were produced in 2020, the highest production record in its history.

It continued the successful deployment of the Lean Six Sigma methodology by implementing several key projects through its Green and Black Belts. All these achievements were crowned by winning the 1st position for His Majesty the Sultan's Award for Industrial Excellence 2021.

As one of the major projects in Oman, Sohar Aluminium has and will always pursue excellence in its operations and business.

Omantel sweeps four categories at Comex Excellence in Technology Awards



MUSCAT: Omantel has done it once again showing the world that it is not without reason that it is Oman's leading integrated telecom service provider.

Omantel has been named winner in four categories of the Comex Excellence in Technology Awards 2021 announced at a virtual ceremony in Muscat on June 14. The judging panel declared Omantel a winner in the Mobile Application, Big Data, and Telecom categories, and also presented the Company with a special jury award that names it 'Best of Best' in integrated telecom service solutions. The award measure achievements made by contending companies during the last two years in terms of innovation, customer service, sustainable approaches, vision and strategic manoeuvres that have led to enhanced service delivery.

Expressing happiness on the awards, Talal Said Al Mamari, CEO, Omantel said, “Looking at the investment we have made in terms of service delivery solutions, digital solutions for business continuity and economic recovery besides enhanced product portfolio for all customer categories, we were confident of winning several categories of the Comex Excellence in Technology Awards 2021. These awards are an acknowledgement that Omantel is on the right path to Digital Transformation. Omantel is an innovation-centric company and will strive to promote the same culture for national development. Such recognitions encourage us to do better than the best.”

Omantel App due to its convenience and service options made the Company the favourite among contenders in this category. As strict health protocols like lockdowns and physical distancing became a norm in early 2020, the Omantel App continued making customers' access to its services easier, quicker and safer from the comfort of their homes. Omantel App users grew from around 300,000 in early 2020 to 1 million by the end of 2020, attracted by its ease of use and excellent service delivery through improved user experience, intuitive design and Artificial Intelligence.

The App has become Omantel's virtual outlet bringing instant access to services like top-ups, bill payments, other than the purchase of eSIMs, devices and mobile and home internet plans. With the addition of Noor, the AI-powered chatbot to the App, customer engagement levels have grown manifold.

Big Data has come to form the backbone of large industrial and commercial operations as IoT and other smart technologies create massive data volumes. Omantel was the first to launch a highly capable Big Data platform in Oman called TASIL, placing unprecedented real-time analytics in the hands of clients to better serve their respective customers by anticipating their needs and likes. The platform has been playing an important role in Omantel's vision of building data-rich connected communities.

As a telecom services provider, Omantel successfully rose to the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown in Oman's path by making network upgrades, boosting cybersecurity, launching MC1, the world's first-ever carrier-neutral hub in Oman and most importantly, the 5G roll out which happened in late 2019 with fixed home broadband service. This year, Omantel introduced 5G for mobile phones, becoming Oman's first network operator to do so as it foresaw opportunities in digital initiatives, cloud computing and security services, unified communication solutions, Big Data and analytics and IoT. By the end of 2020, Omantel's 5G coverage rose to over 500 sites from 100 in 2019, even as it diversified its 5G product portfolio. These are only a few of the numerous achievements Omantel listed in its contention for the awards.

It is worth mentioning that Oman Data Park, a wholly-owned Omantel subsidiary, has too won awards in the Data Centres and Cyber Security categories besides being presented with the Comex Star Exhibitor Award and the Best of Best Award. The awards citations have been presented by the Arabian Research Bureau/OITE in collaboration with relevant government entities.

COVID VACCINE DRIVE

Al Mouj vaccination programme contributes to national drive

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat, Oman's leading lifestyle and leisure destination, has initiated a COVID-19 vaccination programme for all staff as part of a nationwide drive to combat the impact of the pandemic.

All employees plus one family member have been offered a vaccination appointment as part of the rollout, which follows the Oman Ministry of Health's recent announcement that it will have achieved 1.5 million vaccinations by the end of June.

Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat says:

“The health and wellbeing of our staff and our community are our priority and, as a key private sector employer, we appreciate that the government gave us the opportunity to roll out the vaccinations to support them with their national effort.

“The take up amongst our staff has been truly impressive. Whilst a return to business as usual is what we would all like to see, we are mindful that a great deal of caution is still needed and so we will continue to put in place precautionary measures to help ensure the safety of all.”



ROUND-UP

All-new 2022 Toyota Land Cruiser now available in Sultanate of Oman

Throughout its 70-year history, it has served as an indispensable tool that supports people’s livelihoods in remote destinations, contributes to humanitarian aid and disaster relief efforts, and enriches people’s lives through experiences only the Land Cruiser can provide

MUSCAT: Reinforcing the legendary status of one of the Omans’ best-loved vehicles, Toyota has launched the new generation iconic Land Cruiser in Oman.

Throughout its 70-year history, it has served as an indispensable tool that supports people’s livelihoods in remote destinations, contributes to humanitarian aid and disaster relief efforts, and enriches people’s lives through experiences only the Land Cruiser can provide.

A cumulative total of approximately 10.4 million units have been enjoyed by customers in 170 countries all over the world, and particularly in the Middle East where the Land Cruiser has attained a loyal following thanks to its reliability, durability, and superlative off-road performance.

Takami Yokoo, Chief Engineer in charge of development, commented, “The Land Cruiser must remain true to its roots. The launch of the all-new Land Cruiser is a celebration of its 70th year as an icon, and I sincerely hope it can be a source of vitality and support for our customers around the world.”

“We are excited to introduce the all-new Land Cruiser, an iconic vehicle that has earned its place in the hearts of drivers around the world and remains one of the region’s most popular SUVs,” said Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. “The Land Cruiser’s go-anywhere capability truly delivers the joy of mobility, bringing unrivalled performance, safety, and comfort to drivers and passengers alike.”

The 2022 Land Cruiser is



equipped with a choice of three powertrain options, including two newly developed V6 twin-turbo engines. The V6 twin-turbo 3.5-litre petrol engine achieves class-leading performance that surpasses that of a conventional V8, producing 409 hp and up to 650 nm. Meanwhile, the V6 twin-turbo engine 3.3-litre diesel variant, which will be available to buy in the region soon, is capable of 302 hp and up to 700 nm.

Both of these newly developed engines are mated to a 10-speed automatic transmission. The vehicle is also available with a naturally aspirated 4.0-litre V6 petrol engine that produces 271 hp and up to 385 nm mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission.

Additionally, the vehicle is

available with Adaptive Variable Suspension System (AVS), the All-Wheel Drive Integrated Management (AIM) concept, which delivers integrated control of the vehicle’s drive force, AWD, suspension, braking and steering systems according to driving conditions to enhance driving pleasure.

The all-new Land Cruiser is equipped with the latest off-road driver assistance features, including the new 3D-Multi Terrain Monitor (3D-MTM) assists the driver in determining the road conditions around the vehicle, a first for Toyota that facilitates safer and more confident low-speed manoeuvring. A new AUTO mode enhances the capabilities of Multi-Terrain Select by adjusting according to road conditions such

as sand, rock, dirt, and mud. The vehicle also features crawl control and turn to assist functions.

The all-new interior cocoons passengers in a sophisticated and comfortable space unaffected by the external environment. The cabin offers a range of advanced features such as wireless charging for smartphones, Active Noise Control, and a 4-zone automatic air conditioning system with rear control switches. The cluster gauge features a 7-inch colour Multi-information Display (MID) and a 12.3-inch Multimedia display. Additional features available include a 14-speaker JBL sound system, Rear Seat Entertainment (RSE) system with 11.6-inch touch-screen displays that are Wi-Fi and HDMI connection enabled,

ventilation for the first and second-row seats, a multi-adjustable power driver seat, 40:20:40 split-folding second-row seats, fully flat-folding third-row seats, a kick-sensor operated power tailgate, and smart entry and start systems.

Safety remains a top priority for the all-new Land Cruiser, which comes with an advanced safety system. This is complemented by Toyota Safety Sense, an advanced safety technology package that includes a Pre-Collision System (PCS) that introduces new features including Emergency Steering Assist (ESA) and Intersection Turn Assistance to help prevent collisions with vehicles, and pedestrians. The package also includes Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC) with Full-Speed

Range, Lane Tracing Assist (LTA), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), and Automatic High Beam (AHB).

In addition, the car features a comprehensive array of safety features to protect its occupants, such as SRS airbags, including side-curtain airbags for all three rows, Blind Spot Monitor, Multi-terrain Monitor (MTM) including Panoramic View Monitor, Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA), Drive Start Control (DSC) and a clearance sonar featuring eight sensors located in the front and rear bumpers.

In Oman, the nationwide parts and service network of Saud Bahwan Automotive supports Toyota’s outstanding product quality. No wonder that today, Toyota is one of the most trusted and well-known brands.

WELLBEING OF EMPLOYEES

Ominvest starts COVID-19 vaccination for its staff and families

MUSCAT: Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) started COVID-19 vaccination for its employees and their families. 80 per cent of staff members have so far received the first dose of the vaccine. Second doses will be provided in a few weeks.

In collaboration with Burjeel Hospital, the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was administered at Ominvest’s premises, while adhering to all protocols approved by the Ministry of Health.

“The wellbeing of our staff has always been part of our top priorities. By raising awareness on the importance of vaccination and making it available for our employees and their families, we contribute to the national effort to fight COVID-19. Through vaccination, we also see a glimpse of hope to regain some normalcy in the near future. We do so while maintaining all needed health and safety measures to ensure the wellbeing of our staff and to serve the needs of our stakeholders with greater

efficiency,” said AbdulAziz Al Balushi, Group CEO, Ominvest.

This initiative by Ominvest is in line with its corporate citizenship, and in support of the government’s efforts to limit the spread of the COVID-19. Since the start of the pandemic, Ominvest has worked diligently to raise health awareness amongst its people and apply all necessary measures at the workplace. Remote work protocols have been in place across Ominvest to make sure employees’ safety, work productivity, and business continuity are maintained.



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