

Quarantine for arrivals from Iran, Iraq

The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the developments resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, has decided to apply institutional quarantine for all arrivals to the Sultanate from Iran and Iraq including citizens with effect from 12 noon on August 17, until further notice. This committee reviewed the developments of the pandemic, epidemiological surveillance reports at the global level, and these reports indicated a serious outbreak of the disease and a sharp rise in the number of infections in some countries.

– ONA



Established 1981. Editor-in-chief: Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili

OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.om editor@omanobserver.om

P12

PACERS HELP INDIA SCRIPT LORD'S MIRACLE



P13

WIND POWER PROJECTS PLANNED IN 7 LOCATIONS IN OMAN



P20

ROSSINI OPERA FESTIVAL REOPENS IN ITALY WITH ROHM COLLABORATION



MUSCAT

600 APPEAR FOR JOBS IN PUBLIC UNITS

Within the context of directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to provide employment for job-seekers and, pursuant to the government's efforts in this respect, the Ministry of Labour on Tuesday conducted interviews and tests for applicants to jobs in government units in the governorate of South Al Sharqiyah. More than 600 candidates from the governorate appeared for the interviews and tests.

DETAILS ON P3

OMRAN LAUNCHES WITHIN OMAN 2021

Omrans Group, the executive arm of the Sultanate for tourism development, launched its revamped 'Within Oman 2021' campaign with a selection of carefully curated offers and packages on thousands of hotel rooms at the group's diverse hospitality assets nationwide. The campaign to promote domestic tourism aims to connect nationals and residents of Oman with the beauty of the country.

DETAILS ON P15

SAYYID FATIK BIDS FAREWELL TO AMBASSADORS



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

DETAILS ON P2

Oman to unveil RO 6 bn tourism revival plan

MUSCAT: The Sultanate has embarked on implementing the greatest portion of a recovery plan in the aftermath of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic which has impacted the tourism sector, said Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

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

The minister made the statement during his meeting with tourism developers and the business community in the Governorate of Dhofar. He affirmed the ministry's resolve to press ahead with nationalizing jobs in the tourism sector, an objective that falls within the shared national responsibility.

He added that the ministry has a plan to develop tourism destinations in Dhofar and that it is bracing to launch an investment management programme to the tune of RO 6 billion.

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

The minister unveiled a "Comprehensive Tourism Development Plan" to be undertaken by the ministry. A number of workshops will be organised shortly to unleash the details of the plan, said the minister, noting that the workshops cover seven main axes, including the challenges, enablers and proposed solutions to handle issues relevant to all tourism-related sectors.

DETAILS ON P3

READ IN OPINION P9

Spare children from bearing the brunt of wars

Samuel Kutty

Laughter therapy during pandemic

Dr Yousuf Ali Al Mulla

INSIDE



ALGERIANS GRAPPLE WITH WILDFIRE AFTERMATH

P6



INDIA COVID-19 VACCINATIONS NEAR RECORD

P7

22.6% RISE IN HEALTH EXPENDITURE

LIFESTYLE DISEASES ACCOUNT FOR MOST COVID DEATHS



Total number of workers in the Ministry of Health reached **38,566** by 2020

Number of outpatient clinic visits in 2020 dropped to **10.5 MILLION**



Mortality rate among children under 5 fell to 9.3 per 1,000 live births



Number of malaria cases dropped to **276 CASES** in 2020



Health expenditure at **RO 972.5 MILLION** in 2020 **22.6% RISE**

Average number of visits per person to outpatient clinics at **3.7 DURING 2020**

ZAINAB AL NASSRI @zainabalnasseri

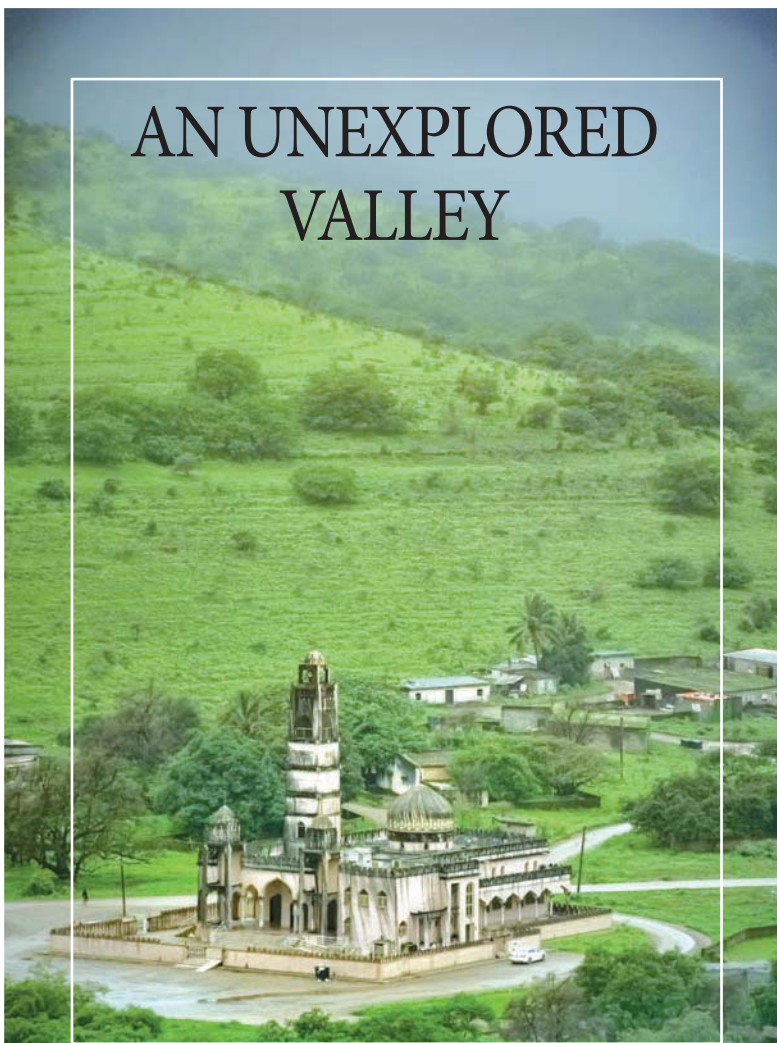
Chronic health problems such as diabetes and hypertension have played a crucial role in amplifying the effects of Covid-19 and causing fatalities among the people of Oman.

The pandemic has posed a greater challenge to health systems in the Sultanate and other countries around the world, according to the annual health report of the Ministry of Health.

The health infrastructure, said the report, along with all other state agencies, has confronted this challenge with efficiency and competency, relying on the strong foundation that was built over the years. The report hailed the role of medics and support staff who adopted international standards and embraced best practices to fight against the pandemic.

TURN TO P2

AN UNEXPLORED VALLEY



Wadi Nahiz is about 12 km drive from Salalah and full of spectacular views during the khareef season. Wadi Nahiz is one of the gems which remains unexplored by most of the tourists visiting khareef Salalah.

PHOTO BY DR SACHIN SINGH

Revised electricity bills for May, June to be issued in September

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

Citizens will get revised power bills in September as electricity distribution companies are yet to finish recalculating the tariffs.

"We are currently working on recalculating the monthly citizen account bills in May and June as per the changes to the tariff structure,"

said Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (MEDC) in a statement.

The recalculation process will result in cancelling the invoices issued in May and June 2021, and instead new bills for these months will be issued.

The process will take more time and the notification is expected to be issued during the second week of

September.

The discounts shown in the bills shown in the electronic payment channels are not the final amount, it added.

Each subscriber will receive a notification showing the value of the bills for the months of May and June, 2021, according to the new calculation mechanism.

Mazoon Electricity Company, too, said it is working on recalculating the citizen's bills.

The Authority for Public Services and Regulation (ASPR) had recently said that electricity tariffs will be fixed at 12 baisas during summer months between March and September. The new tariffs are 12 baisas (0-4000 kWh), 16 baisas

(4001-6000 kWh) and 27 baisas for over 6000 kilowatt-hours. The tariff will be revised in October for non-summer months.

ASPR also said there will be no cut in electricity service during the summer months due to non-payment of dues after it received around 7,000 complaints on inflated electricity bills.

WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 34°C Min 27°C SALALAH: Max 27°C Min 24°C NIZWA: Max 43°C Min 28°C

PRAYER TIMINGS

SUNRISE: 05:44 FAJR: 04:24 DHUHR: 12:16 ASR: 15:42 MAGHRIB: 18:43 ISHA: 19:57

Sayyid Fatik bids farewell to ambassadors

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

During the meetings, the two ambassadors expressed their thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to them during their duties in the Sultanate from His Majesty, the Government and the Omani people, which had enabled them to carry out their tasks.



They wished His Majesty good health, happiness and a long life and the Sultanate further progress and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

HH Sayyid Fatik expressed his utmost thanks to the ambassadors for the efforts they exerted in serving the relations between their countries and the

Sultanate, wishing them success in their future assignments, and the friendly people of their respective countries further progress and prosperity. — ONA

22.6% rise in health expenditure

FROM PAGE 1

The annual health report shows an increase in the expenditures of the Ministry of Health compared to the previous three years (2017-2019). The report indicated that the total recurrent expenditures in the ministry amounted to approximately RO 972.5 million during 2020 compared to approximately RO 793.3 million in 2019, reflecting an increase of 22.6 per cent. In contrast, development expenditures decreased from RO 21.6 million in 2019 to RO 15.7 million in 2020.

There was a decrease in the use of health services in 2020 mainly due to the impact of pandemic.

The average number of visits per person to outpatient clinics reached 3.7 during 2020, which led to a decrease in the total number of discharged patients from the ministry's health institutions to reach about 25,700 in 2020, with an average period of hospitalisation 3.7 days of stay and 47.8 per cent of bed occupancy rate.

"The number of outpatient clinic visits to ministry's institutions in 2020 dropped to 10.5 million compared to about 15.7 million in 2019," the report said.

It also stated that the mortality rate among children under five years of age fell to 9.3 per 1,000 live births in 2020 compared to 10.2 per 1,000 live births in 2019. The infant mortality rate (less than one year) per 1,000 live births decreased from 8.0 to 7.6 for the same period.

According to the report, the Sultanate recorded zero cases of measles in 2020 and it remained free of polio since 1993 and diphtheria and neonatal tetanus since 1991. The incidence rates

of other communicable diseases have fallen. For instance, the number of malaria cases dropped to 276 cases in 2020 compared to 1,338 cases in 2019.

The report showed that the total number of workers in the Ministry of Health reached 38,566 by the end of December 2020, with an Omanisation rate of 73 per cent. "Omanisation rate in doctors category reached 39 per cent, dentists and pharmacists 95 per cent, nurses 66 per cent, other paramedical jobs 85 per cent"

The total number of health centres and polyclinics operated by the Ministry reached 211, including (54) health centres with a capacity of (84) beds, and (21) polyclinics, in addition to (51) hospitals comprising (5,262) beds by the end of 2020. Many services were also added to these institutions in order to improve the quality of health services provided at all levels. A field hospital for Covid-19 cases was designated, equipped with 202 beds.

Many services were also added to these institutions to improve the quality of health provided at all levels. A field hospital with 202 beds for Covid-19 cases was set up to accommodate more patients and ease the burden of the medical institutions.

The report also showed the various surgical operations that were performed at the theatre rooms of health institutions, where the total number of surgeries reached about 52,000 surgeries in 2020, at a rate of 11.4 surgery per 1,000 population. The report includes further plenty of statistics on health services use such as admissions, radiology and dialysis services and others.

ICU patients at five-month low

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

The number of coronavirus patients in the intensive care units (ICUs) in hospitals hit a five-month low of 98, thanks to the lockdown measures of the Supreme Committee as well as the cooperation of the people. The death toll also fell significantly on Tuesday,

"The reduction in the number of patients in the ICU was possible because of the four-day total lockdown and other measures, including evening ban on commercial activities and movement of people," said Dr Faryal al Lawati, Senior Consultant of Infectious Diseases and Head of the Contagious Diseases Unit at Royal Hospital.

"The surge we experienced until recently was due to the people's lax precautionary measures like reluctance to wear face masks properly, sanitise hands and to avoid gatherings



during funerals and shopping and least importance to social distancing which caused rise in cases," she said.

The Sultanate has experienced an unprecedented rise in Covid-19 infection cases until a month ago, causing an influx of patients admitted to various

hospital wards and ICUs. As many as 173 new cases of coronavirus were registered in the Sultanate during the past 24 hours.

This brings the total number of positive Covid-19 cases to 300,581 in the Sultanate.

The total number of Covid-19-related deaths reached 4,007,

the Ministry of Health said. The ministry added that 220 new cases have recovered, bringing the total number to 288,922 recoveries. 96.1 per cent of people have recovered from the virus. The ministry said 7,652 people are infected with Covid-19 in the country.

TWO INJURED IN FIRE MISHAP



The firefighting teams of the Directorate of Civil Defence and Ambulance in Muscat Governorate extinguished a fire that erupted at a commercial store in Al Seeb market. Two people were injured in the fire and were rescued by the civil defence team. The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority advises all owners of commercial stores to apply safety measures and to comply with the safety standards to avoid fire incidents.



UAE armed forces chief tours MTC, MSC

MUSCAT: Lt Gen Hamad Mohammed Thani al Rumaithi, Chief of Staff of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces, and his delegation on Tuesday visited the Military Technological College (MTC).

Upon the guest's arrival, he was received by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), as well as the Dean of the college and several senior officers from the college.

Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the college's education and service facilities, in addition to its general curriculum, technical specialisations and the various educational levels. They also toured several departments and training workshops in the college.

Lt Gen Hamad Mohammed Thani al Rumaithi and his delegation also visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

During the visit, the UAE military official was accompanied by Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF).

Upon their arrival at the MSC, they were received by Commodore Tarik Issa al Raisi, Acting Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) and Commodore Mohammed bin Hamoud al



Zadjali, Head of the MSC. The guest toured the center's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies.

He was also briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the center within its national

duties, as it coordinates with relevant authorities in search and rescue missions and the safety of the maritime environment. Later, Lt General Hamad Mohammed Thani al Rumaithi and his delegation left the Sultanate after

an official several-day visit. The guest was seen off at Al Seeb Air Base by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), and UAE's Ambassador to the Sultanate. — ONA



RO 6bn tourism investment programme envisaged

SALALAH: The Sultanate has embarked on implementing the greatest portion of a recovery plan in the aftermath of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic waves that impacted the tourism sector, said Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

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

The minister made the statement during his meeting with tourism developers and the business community in the Governorate of Dhofar. He affirmed the Ministry's resolve to press ahead with nationalising jobs in the tourism sector, an objective that falls within the shared national responsibility.

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

He added that the Ministry has a plan to develop tourism destinations in Dhofar and that it is bracing to launch an investment management programme to the tune of RO 6 billion.

The minister unveiled a "Comprehensive Tourism Development Plan" to be undertaken by the Ministry. A number of workshops will be organised shortly to unleash the details of the plan, said the minister, noting that the workshops cover seven main axes, including the challenges, enablers and proposed solutions to handle issues relevant to all tourism-related sectors.

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

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



Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, meeting with tourism sector partners in Dhofar focuses on recovery plan.

Plan aims to overcome the pandemic crisis and bring the tourism sector back to its previous levels as soon as possible

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

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

The minister hoped that foreign investments would enter the scene and enhance national investments and investments from local partners.

In reply to a query about "integrated tourist services" in Dhofar, the minister said that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is following up services in the governorate in collaboration with other departments concerned. In particular, he urged petrol filling station operators to rise to the level of their responsibilities and provide consistent and high quality public services to support the tourism sector, society and the national economy at large. — ONA

Unlicensed tourist accommodation providers warned

VINOD NAIR

[@vinot_nair](#)

The authorities have warned of some individuals or companies taking advantage of the surge in demand for hotel accommodations this year, especially in popular destinations.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) warned that some individuals or companies are operating villas, apartments, guest houses, which are advertised and promoted through various social media channels without obtaining legal licenses from the ministry.

"Based on Article (12) of the Tourism Law declared by Royal Decree No 33/2002, states: "No natural or a juristic person may occupy a tourist site or region, or a part of it, or utilise, or exploit or dispose of it, without a license from the ministry. Nor may a hotel or tourist establishment be set up, utilised, or managed without a license from the ministry."

"There is nothing wrong in such businesses, but they should be regulated to ensure the image of the tourism industry in Oman is not at stake in the eyes of tourists, both domestic and international," said Sultan al Hinai, who prefers such stays during his foreign leisure trips



compared to 'star' hotels.

The ministry urged businesses to obtain a tourist license to establish and operate these units according to the rules specified by the tourism law and the executive regulations stated to avoid penalties in case of violation.

Sources in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism have told the *Observer* that the government is preparing a masterplan for the development of various types of tourism accommodations across various governorates.

"We want to tell the hoteliers and investors about the strategy in the accommodation sector. Many opportunities are available, and we are working on a masterplan for each governorate — villas, townhouses, hotels, apartments," they said.

In places such as Musandam, the government is looking at alternatives like lodges on boats, accommodation near the sea and on the mountains as per the demand.

The government has been planning a working group that will also develop a bed

and breakfast (B&B) and F&B incubators dedicated to SMEs.

A bed and breakfast are a small lodging system that offers overnight accommodation and breakfast, operated by private family homes.

A senior official at the Ministry of Tourism told the *Observer*, "The B&B system is a popular trend in the travel industry but there must be proper licensing and rating systems and regulations so that some unscrupulous players do bring bad names to the industry and the country."

More than 600 vie for 35 Govt jobs in South Al Sharqiyah



SUR: Within the context of directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to provide employment for job-seekers and, pursuant to the Government's efforts in this respect, the Ministry

of Labour on Tuesday conducted interviews and tests for applicants to jobs in government units in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah.

More than 600 citizens from

the governorate appeared for the interviews and tests held at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Sur branch), to fill 35 vacancies at units belonging to four government departments:



The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and the Environment Authority.

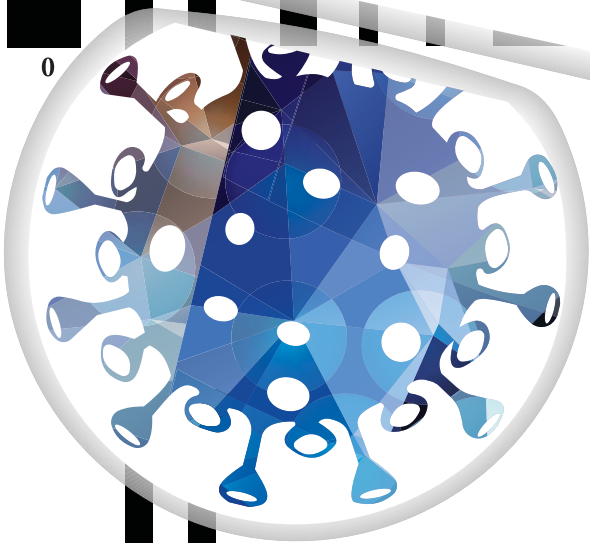
Commenting on this, Salim

bin Khalfan al Wahaibi, Head of Tests and Interviews Management Team, Ministry of Labour, said that the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate is the last station for the Job Announcement No

5/2021 to fill 1,003 vacancies. As many as 16,318 applied for the job vacancies. Within 25 working days, applicants from all governorates of the Sultanate were assessed. — ONA



For whom the wedding bells never tolled



Wedding planners were among the worst hit after the pandemic shrunk the big fat weddings to small events at home. Many went out of business and those are who remain are struggling to pay bills

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

For Alia al Balushiya, it was one of the big fat weddings that she could ever dream of. The venue was a beach resort, a marquee wedding destination, with guests to be flown in from across the world. She was given a heavy advance in January 2020 for the event to be held in June the same year and she started roping in the people, things and accessories to make the event colourful. Local companies were contacted, videographers and lensmen were arranged, DJs/bands and florist were booked And then Covid-19 struck. The world cooped up inside homes

and travel was banned. Alia had to refund much of the money and she also lost the money she paid to the sub-contractors who had already spent on the materials for the event. Similarly, her wedding bookings for the rest of the year too got cancelled indefinitely. Alia is not the only one. Scores of Omani wedding planners have been affected, along with others associated with event management. Many of them pink-slipped their employees and some of them are doing odd jobs to stay afloat. “We are perhaps the biggest losers due to the pandemic as everyone cancelled their weddings and asked for refunds whereas we had spent on arrangements. We haven’t received any bookings yet. Even today, it’s still the same”, said Ali al Ajmi, one of the prominent wedding planners. Hussam bin Harith bin Ahmed al Sulaimani, another wedding planner, said those who had cancelled their pompous weddings pared down the ceremony to small events at homes with just the

immediate family members during the peak pandemic days. “All weddings planned for the past few months after the pandemic got cancelled and they asked for refunds. Majority of them conducted a small, official wedding ceremony at home where the groom takes the bride’s hand and that’s all”, Al Sulaimani said. “Of course, we have been affected since January last year and I am still paying rent for the space where I stored the wedding decor. Although I have reduced the staff to 40 per cent, many of my operational expenses are still being paid and that’s putting a hole in my wallet. I don’t know how far I can pull on like this”, said Khaila al Balushi, another wedding planner. The wedding planners whom this reporter contacted said many of their friends have closed their companies while some are facing issues with the banks as they have loans to be repaid. However, these wedding planners in the country are among the people who are hopeful of better days after nearly 17

“Of course, we have been affected since January last year and I am still paying rent for the space where I stored the wedding decor. Although I have reduced the staff to 40 per cent, many of my operational expenses are still being paid and that’s putting a hole in my wallet. I don’t know how far I can pull on like this’

KHAILA AL BALUSHI
wedding planner

months of uncertainty. As coronavirus cases and lockdowns are being eased, some clients are expressing interest in wedding ceremonies. “Yes, there are some signs of weddings to take place in future as we started receiving calls. I’m afraid losses will again go high if things don’t improve or we receive support from some corners”, Ali said.



M95 grade petrol sales exceed 6 million barrels

MUSCAT: The Sultanate recorded a rise in the production of super grade petrol (M95) by 26% to reach 7,327,300 barrels at the end of June 2021 compared to 5,793,700 barrels at the end of June 2020, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The sales of M95 grade petrol reached 6,287,500 barrels compared to 5,234,700 barrels in the same period of the previous year, comprising a rise

by 20%, while the exports reached 1,422,200 barrels compared to 370,100 barrels, constituting a surge by 284%.

The output of standard grade petrol (M91) went up by 18% to reach 6,013,600 barrels at June 2021 compared to 5,090,100 barrels in June 2020. The sales of M-91 grade petrol stood at 4,020,300 barrels compared to 3,859,600 barrels in the same period of the previous year, comprising an increase by 4%, while the exports

reached 2,367,400 barrels compared to 2,208,300 barrels in June 2020, comprising a rise by 7%.

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

barrels compared to 9,024,200 barrels.

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

SALE OF USED CONCRETE PLACER BOOMS

A leading construction company in Oman intends to sell their following used equipment located at Seeb Heights, in 'as-is-where-is' condition. The Details of the equipment are as under:-

1.	Schwing Concrete Placer Booms 32 Meter-2 Nos.
2.	Schwing Concrete Placer Booms 35 Meter-1 Nos. with 500 meters delivery pipes, cross base, accessories and foundation anchors. 2016 make in good condition and ready to use.

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

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

Ratification of GCC Accreditation Centre lauded



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

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

The aim, he said, is to develop the infrastructure of quality building and contribute to the realisation of Oman Vision 2040.

Other objectives of the GAC include:



Enhancing the role of the private sector in product safety guarantee for some services, facilitating commercial exchange among GCC states, ameliorating the quality of

national products to facilitate their access to global markets, empowering human resources in key sectors and lending support to small and medium enterprises, according to Eng Ahmed Maati.

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

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

— ONA



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Public Auction No. (34/2021)

Muscat Municipality, represented by the Auction Committee, announces an auction (in closed envelopes) for the sale of different materials as per the following details:

SN	Materials and Movables to be Sold.	Location	For inspection, please contact:
1	Steel Scrap (Roadblocks and Signboards)	Landfill Area, Sinub, Bausher	Rashid Al-Housi 92359848
2	Electrical and Agricultural Materials, Plumbing Materials, Water Pumps, Lawn-cutting Machine	The yard of the Directorate General of Afforestation and Parks, Ghala, Bausher	Saif Al Batashi 99225586
3	Steel structures for children's playground constructions and steel scrap		
4	Caravan Structures (Mobile Homes)		
5	Air- conditioners and Water Coolers	Labor Camp in Al Seeb	Mohammed Al-Hatali 92269653
6	Various materials (iron scrap, Ac covers, office furniture, steel beds, steel locker)		

Those interested participating in the Auction must comply with the following conditions:

- Bids shall be submitted in closed envelopes sealed with red wax, addressed to the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of Sale by Auction) bearing the name and number of the auction from the outside with no indication to the name of the bidder.
- Those wishing to take part in the Auction shall pay a non-refundable fee of RO 2/- (Two Omani Riyals Only) and an interim warranty of RO 500/- (Five hundred Omani Riyals only) (refundable). The payment shall be made electronically to the Committee Cahier at the Directorate General of Financial Affairs at the Head Office of Muscat Municipality, Darsait.
- Movable items shall be sold on an "As Is" basis, and the Muscat municipality is not responsible for the loss or damage of any item once payment is done. Muscat Municipality in no way can guarantee the condition of the movable materials sold. The bidders should do the prior inspection before making the bids on the day specified by Muscat Municipality.
- The materials and movables once sold shall not be returnable nor can any claim for reimbursement of the cost will be entertained.
- The buyer is bound to dismantle and load the purchased materials after paying their full value within a period not exceeding one week from the date of purchase. The buyer shall bear full responsibility for any delay in transporting the materials within the specified period, and in the event the materials are not shifted from the site within the specified period, Muscat Municipality may resell such items at the expense of the buyer.
- The date and location set for inspecting the movables and submitting the bid are specified as follows:

Location	As stated above.
Inspection Date	From 22/8/2021 to 26/8/2021
Inspection Time	From 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
For Further enquiries and coordination	Communicate with the concerned persons whose details are shown above.
Bid submission Date	From 29/8/2021 to 2/9/2021
Place for bid submission	Auction Box located in Muscat Municipality Head Office, Darsait
Other conditions	- The materials shall be sold at wholesale level not retail level and as per the quantity specified on the site. - The VAT specified in the law will be applied to successful bidder. - A bid that does not meet the required advance payment guarantee will not be considered. - Payment of the auctioneer fees shall be 3% of the purchases value. - The payment receipt shall be enclosed with the bidding documents. - Muscat Municipality may cancel or defer the sale without providing any justification. - The security deposit will not be refunded in the following cases:- - If the purchaser does not pay the value of the movables. - If the purchaser does not transfer the movables from the site within the specified period.

MOORE STEPHENS LLC

NOTICE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF LIQUIDATION OF WHITE GLOSSY WAVE LLC

(AS APPEARED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE NO 1403)

Moore Stephens LLC, announces the liquidation process of White Glossy Wave LLC, bearing commercial registration number 1329329, in accordance with the decision taken by the Company's Members on 27 July 2021. The liquidators alone have the right to represent the Company under liquidation before third parties, and all parties are to confirm with the liquidator for all matters concerning the company's business at the following address:

Office No.41, 4th Floor, Building No.1022, Way No.1013; Al Walaj Street, Al Qurum P O Box 933, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman Tel: 24061000, Fax: 24061099

By this announcement, the liquidator calls the company's creditors to submit their claims against the company, together with the supporting documents, to the above address within 180 days from the date of publishing this announcement for the first time, and any debtors should settle the company's rights with the liquidator on the address above.

Moore Stephens LLC
Official Liquidators of White Glossy Wave LLC
(Under voluntary liquidation)

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the Observer classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.

RE-TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Shared Services Company LLC (NSS), invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
RE NSS/2021/5	Legal Services for Nama Shared Services Company (2021-2024)	23-AUG-2021	1-SEP-2021	25 / Plus VAT Value (1.250 OMR)

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax, addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee", and must write on the envelope the tender name & number.
- 3 separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these 3 envelopes must be marked with a tenderer name & tender no. as per the below:
 - Commercial Proposal
 - Technical Proposal
 - Bid Bond
- Bids should be dropped in the tender box at NSS reception before 1.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on Wednesday, 1 September 2021.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers, addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee". Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered.
- NSS is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- Registration of the bidders to be done through the company Tender website (www.nama.om).
- Interested party to deposit Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) on: Account Name: Nama Shared Services, Bank Muscat: 0423-048027270-017 Corporate Branch (Bidder name and Tender Number to be clearly mentioned). Tender Documents will be received by email.
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 1.00pm.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.


نماء للخدمات المشتركة
Nama Shared Services

Al Muzn Mall
R-Floor, Al Mawalleh North, Al Seeb
P.O Box C9740, Post Code 900, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559200/246
E-Mail: Sharifa.AIShukaili@holding.nama.om



مواصلات
MWASALAT

Tender Announcement

Tender Number: Re-T-11-2021

"Mwasalat" invites professional firms for the following tender:

Tender Name: Call-Off Agreement for the provision of Low Bed Trailers Services

Project Summary: Within the framework of this tender, MWASALAT would like to have a qualified contractor to provide all services required to transport, loading and unloading of MWASALAT low floor city Buses from Muscat to Salalah and vis versa.

Tender Fee: Nil

Grade & Specialty: Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field

Start date for tender document distribution: WED, 18th August 2021

Last date for tender document distribution: WED, 25th August 2021

Last date for submission: WED, 1st September 2021

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00 A.M - 2:00 P.M.
Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email: tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email.

All Tenderers shall submit with their offers a Tender Bond of OMR 400, valid for (120) days from the date of Tender Submission obtained from a locally registered Bank, drawn in favor of The Chairman of Procurement Committee, Oman National Transport Company S.A.O.C. "MWASALAT". Any bid without tender bond will be rejected.

The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.

Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head- quarter of Oman National Transport Company SAOC (MWASALAT) at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor). Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.

"Mwasalat"
Head Quarter, Ghala Tel: +968 24121500/24121555
P.O.Box: 911, Al Khuwair, PC: 133, Sultanate of Oman

For more information please send to: tenders@mwasalat.om

24 121 500
24 121 555



A man carries water containers as he works with others to douse hotspots in an area hit by a wildfire in El Bir village, Bejaia province, on Tuesday. — Reuters

Algerian villagers grapple with wildfire aftermath

BEJAIA: When Algeria's deadly wildfires tore through the forest around their village, brothers Khelaf and Lyazid Tazibt could only hustle their families out of the door and abandon the home they shared to the flames.

The two men, both retired, and their wives and children, are now among hundreds of Algerians left homeless by the country's worst fires in memory, which have burned swathes of the northeast over the past week, killing dozens of people.

"Like anyone else who saw those flames, it was impossible to do anything. We all gave up," said Khelaf Tazibt, 55, standing in one of their single-storey home's damaged rooms, its walls cracked and black with soot.

He held up cracked plates and other belongings misshapen by the inferno. "The firefighters arrived a little late and there was

nothing they could do," he said.

His brother, Lyazid simply said "the fire reached the sky".

Their village of Ait Sid Ali, in the northeastern Bejaia province, sits in rocky hills and was previously surrounded by forest. The Tazibt house was on the village edge, close to the trees and one of many there lost to the flames.

This month, a European Union atmosphere monitor said the Mediterranean had become a wildfire hotspot as massive blazes engulfed forests in Turkey, Greece and North Africa, aided by a heatwave.

The fire that suddenly engulfed Ait Sid Ali killed four people, they said. The surrounding hills are now a mass of scorched trunks but beyond the village another hillside is dark with smoke above the raging flames. — Reuters

Lebanon hospitals struggle with power, telecom outages

BEIRUT: Hospitals struggled on Tuesday to operate amid life-threatening power cuts and telecom outages in the north Lebanon region of Akkar where a fuel tank explosion killed at least 28 people this week.

Lights and phone lines went out across the impoverished and marginalised region that has long suffered from an ailing power grid but that is now grappling with an unprecedented crisis amid severe diesel shortages.

The outages come less than two days after a fuel tank exploded in the village of Al Tleil, scorching people clamouring to fill petrol that the army was distributing.

Around 80 people, including several soldiers, were injured, many of them with severe burns, which overwhelmed hospitals.

Fuel shortages since the start of summer have aggravated hardship in Lebanon, a country of more than six million that is in the throes of an economic crisis branded by the World Bank as one of the worst since the mid-19th century.

Without the diesel fuel needed to power private generators, businesses, hospitals and even the country's main telecom operator have been forced to scale back operations or close entirely in light of outages lasting



People push their cars due to a lack of fuel, near a gas station in Dora, Lebanon, on Tuesday. — Reuters

up to 22 hours a day.

In Akkar, hospitals still storing corpses of victims charred in Sunday's fuel tank blast were left without power, Internet, and working landlines, as health officials pleaded for help from the authorities.

"We have a stock of 700 litres (almost 185 gallons) of diesel fuel which will last for only one day," said Riad Rahal, the director of Rahal Hospital in the Akkar town of Halba.

The nearby El Youssef Hospital

also had enough stock of diesel to last until Wednesday morning and no working phone lines, said Nathalie El Chaar, assistant to the director.

"Since yesterday landlines have been out of service... and we are trying hard to secure diesel," she said.

She said the hospital's diesel provider had delayed deliveries fearing attacks on a north Lebanon highway where incidents in recent days have seen angry

groups seize fuel from trucks.

The official National News Agency on Tuesday said diesel fuel shortages and power outages at the Ogero telecom provider forced it to cut Internet, landlines and mobile phone services in several parts of Akkar, effectively paralysing banks, businesses, and state offices.

Ogero head Imad Kreidieh warned other regions in Lebanon would follow suit if the situation does not improve. — AFP

IAEA reports Iranian progress on uranium metal

VIENNA: Iran has made progress in its work on enriched uranium metal, the UN nuclear watchdog said in a report to member states on Monday seen by Reuters, despite Western warnings that such work threatens talks on reviving the Iran nuclear deal.

"On 14 August 2021, the Agency verified... that Iran had used 257g of uranium enriched up to 20 per cent U-235 in the form of UF4 (uranium tetrafluoride) to produce 200g of uranium metal enriched up to 20 per cent U-235," the International Atomic Energy Agency said, adding that this was step three in a four-step plan by Iran.

The fourth includes producing a reactor fuel plate. — Reuters

Blinded by wartime blast, Gaza boy dreams of school

BEIT LAHIA: Eight-year-old Mohammed Shaban dreamed of returning to the classroom in Gaza for the start of the school year. But after an exploded missile blinded him in May, he is staying home.

Mohammed used to attend school with his cousins and neighbours in the town of Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip.

He is one of hundreds of children the United Nations says were injured during fighting in May between Israel and Hamas who control the Palestinian enclave.

From May 10 to 21, the Israeli army pummelled the Gaza Strip in response to rocket fire by Hamas.

Mohammed said he was walking to a market to buy clothes during the conflict when a missile



Mohammed Shaban (L) sits alongside classmates at school in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. — AFP

exploded.

As a result of the blast, his father Hani said, "Mohammed was injured in the eyes, which led to the loss of his eyes, and Mohammed became completely blind."

The Shabans say Mohammed was injured by a missile fired by the Israelis, although AFP could

not independently verify it.

The boy still hoped to return to school, Hani said, and his new disability left him moody and unpredictable.

"He sometimes asks me, 'When will I see, or 'When will I go back to school with the children', or 'When will I go out to the street alone,'" Hani said. — AFP

Egypt rushes to build housing for new capital employees

BADR CITY: Just outside a new capital in the desert east of Cairo, the Egyptian government has been racing to ready new homes for thousands of mid-level civil servants who are expected to move to the city.

Egypt turned to private developers to build pricier residential districts within the grandiose new capital, which is designed for more than six million people to live in over 168 square kilometres beyond Cairo's outer reaches.

The city is the most prominent of a series of mega-projects and infrastructure schemes pursued by President Abdel Fattah el Sisi, who has said that its opening planned for later this year would mark the birth of a new republic.

Though government ministries are largely complete, other areas of the new city and transport links are still under construction. Some Egyptians worry it will be inaccessible and



An inside view of residential units where mid-level civil servants of Egypt's new Administrative Capital will be housed, in Badr City, outskirts of Cairo, on Monday. — Reuters

unaffordable for them.

The government began building public housing in Badr City, close to the new capital's borders, ahead of the arrival of the first civil servants, officials told reporters on a tour of the site on Monday.

On Saturday, Sisi inaugurated 9,024 housing units in the now-completed first phase.

Another 4,704 units are under construction in a second phase. — Reuters

BAGHDAD

Iraq former air chief escapes custody

Former Iraqi air force chief General Anwar Hamad Amine escaped custody armed with a handgun after being convicted in court of corruption on Monday before giving himself up several hours later.

Judiciary and security sources said the general was tried in Karkh, western Baghdad, for corruption and squandering public funds. He was sentenced to two years in prison, and while being escorted from the courtroom he asked to retrieve



personal items from his car, a security source said.

"He got into the car, where his nephew Colonel Arshad Saleh Mohammed Amine was behind the wheel," the source said.

TEL AVIV

Israel seeks help to fight forest fires

Israeli firefighters battled flames for a second day on Monday in the hills west of Jerusalem, forcing the evacuation of five communities and prompting the government to ask for international help.

"The Greek foreign minister already said he will help as much as possible," Foreign Minister Yair Lapid wrote on Twitter.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lior Haiat said Greece and Cyprus had agreed to send firefighting planes to Israel.



Italy, France and other countries were also being contacted, the foreign ministry said. Nearly 20,000 dunams or 2,000 hectares had burned over two days, National Fire and Rescue Commissioner Dedi Simchi told reporters.

NIAMEY

At least 64 dead in floods in Niger

At least 64 people have died in floods in the West African country of Niger.

Heavy rains had flooded 63 communities in the country, the Ministry of Disaster Management announced on Monday evening. Around 70,000 people were affected by the flooding and at least 5,000 houses collapsed, it said.

According to the ministry, the heavy rain had started on August 11 and continued for several days.



Weather experts expect further heavy rainfall with the risk of flooding in the coming days.

The government should evacuate people in vulnerable areas, they said.

In brief

■ TOKYO



JAPAN EXTENDS COVID LOCKDOWN AS CASES SURGE

Japan on Tuesday extended its state of emergency in Tokyo and other regions and announced new measures covering seven more prefectures to counter a spike in Covid-19 cases threatening the medical system.

The current state of emergency, the fifth of the pandemic so far, was due to expire on Aug. 31 but will now last until Sept. 12. Tokyo announced 4,377 new cases on Tuesday, after a record 5,773 on Friday.

"The Delta variant raging across the world is causing unprecedented cases in our country," Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said.

■ KUALA LUMPUR



MALAYSIAN KING MEETS PARTY LEADERS

Malaysia's king met political party chiefs Tuesday as the hunt began for a new prime minister, a day after the last leader quit. Muhyiddin Yassin resigned Monday after a turbulent 17 months in office.

The king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, has ruled out elections due to the outbreak, meaning it will likely be up to him to pick the next premier based on who commands most support.

Opposition chief Anwar Ibrahim (pictured) and leaders from other parties headed to the national palace in Kuala Lumpur for a meeting with the monarch to chart a way forward.

■ YANGON



ROHINGYA TO GIVE FIRST TESTIMONY IN COURT

Rohingya refugees expelled from Myanmar in a bloody crackdown are to testify in court for the first time Tuesday to urge a full judicial investigation into allegations of war crimes committed against them.

A military campaign in Myanmar in 2017 is believed to have killed thousands and forced some 750,000 members of the Muslim minority to flee to refugee camps in Bangladesh, bringing accounts of rape, murder and arson.

The witnesses will testify remotely to a court in Argentina, which is considering invoking the principle of "universal jurisdiction" to bring a case against Myanmar's leaders for genocide and crimes against humanity.

Evacuation flights restart from Kabul

KABUL: US military flights evacuating diplomats and civilians from Afghanistan restarted on Tuesday after the runway at Kabul airport was cleared of thousands desperate to flee following the Taliban's sudden takeover of the capital.

The number of civilians had thinned out, a Western security official at the airport told Reuters, a day after chaotic scenes in which US troops fired to disperse crowds and people clung to a US military transport plane as it taxied for take-off.

"Runway in Kabul international airport is open. I see aeroplanes landing and taking off," Stefano Pontecorvo, NATO's civilian representative, said on Twitter.

At least 12 military flights had taken off, a diplomat at the airport said. Planes were due to arrive from countries including Australia and Poland to pick up their nationals and Afghan colleagues.

As they rush to evacuate civilians, foreign powers are also assessing how to respond to the new rulers in Kabul and also how to deal with refugees trying to flee the country.

Former US President George W. Bush, who launched a "war on terror" in Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, said the United States must move quickly to help Afghan refugees.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said the country was in talks with all parties in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, and was positive on their statements since they took control.



Taliban fighters patrol along a street in Kabul on Tuesday. — AFP

Under a US troops withdrawal pact struck last year, the Taliban agreed not to attack foreign forces as they leave.

US forces took charge of the airport — their only way to fly out of Afghanistan — on Sunday, as the militants wound up a week of rapid advances by taking over Kabul without a fight, 20 years after they were ousted by a US-led invasion.

Flights were suspended for much of Monday, when at least five people were killed, witnesses said. The media reported two people fell to their deaths from the underside of a US military aircraft after it took off.

US troops killed two gunmen



I stand squarely behind my decision...After 20 years I've learned the hard way that there was never a good time to withdraw US forces. That's why we're still there

JOE BIDEN

US President

who appeared to have fired into the crowd at the airport, a US official said.

US President Joe Biden de-

fended his decision to withdraw US forces after 20 years of war - the nation's longest - which he described as costing more than \$1 trillion.

But a video of hundreds of desperate Afghans trying to clamber on to a US military plane as it was about to take off could haunt the United States, just as a photograph in 1975 of people trying to get on a helicopter on a roof in Saigon became emblematic of the humiliating withdrawal from Vietnam.

Biden said he had to decide between asking US forces to fight endlessly or follow through on a withdrawal agreement negotiated by his predecessor, Republican Donald Trump. — Reuters

Unicef says some Taliban support girls education

GENEVA: Taliban representatives in some parts of Afghanistan have expressed support for educating girls after they seized control of the country, the UN children's agency (Unicef) said on Tuesday.

Unicef is still delivering aid to most parts of Afghanistan and is quite hopeful for cooperation with Taliban representatives, Mustapha Ben Messaoud, Unicef's chief of field operations in Afghanistan, told a UN briefing in Geneva.

"We have ongoing discussions, we are quite optimistic based on those discussions. We have not a single issue with the Taliban in those field offices," he said, adding that 11 out of 13 field offices were currently operational.

The Taliban ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001. They did not allow women to work, girls were not allowed to attend school and women had to cover their faces and be accompanied by a male relative if they wanted to venture out of their homes.

UN chief Antonio Guterres warned on Monday of "chilling" curbs on human rights under the Taliban and mounting violations against women and girls. — Reuters

India vaccinations near record, new Covid cases at five-month low



A health worker inoculates a man with a dose of the vaccine against the coronavirus in Mumbai on Tuesday. — AFP

NEW DELHI: India administered more than 8.8 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines in the past 24 hours, government data showed on Tuesday, close to its all-time record and speeding up a campaign to inoculate all eligible adults by December.

The surge in inoculations came alongside a sharp decline in daily new infections that fell to 25,166, the lowest since March 16, the health ministry said.

India has undertaken one of the world's largest Covid-19 vaccination drives and has so far administered 554 million doses, giving at least one dose to about 46 per cent of its estimated 944 million adults. Only about 13 per cent of the population have had the required two doses.

After hitting a record high of 9.2 million doses on June 21, the pace of daily inoculations had dropped to around 4.2 million on an average in July, according

to data compiled from the government's CoWIN website.

In the first two weeks of August, India administered about 5 million doses on an average every day.

Experts have said India needs to administer 10 million doses a day to achieve its aim of inoculating all adults by December.

"For each day we fall short of it, the required target goes further up," Rijo John, health economist and a professor at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences in the southern city of Kochi.

"Realistically, I do not think we will be able to cover all adults fully by this year's end."

India's overall Covid-19 case-load on Tuesday reached 32.25 million, the second-highest globally behind the United States. The country reported 437 deaths over the last 24 hours, taking the toll to 432,079, the government said. — Reuters

Lockdown in New Zealand after 1 case

WELLINGTON: New Zealand imposed a snap three-day lockdown Tuesday after identifying a single case of locally transmitted Covid-19 suspected to be the Delta variant, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (pictured) said.

Ardern said New Zealand, which had not recorded any infections in the community for six months, could not take any chances with the "game-



changer" Delta strain.

"We have seen what can happen elsewhere if we fail to get on top of it. We only get one chance," Ardern said in a televised national address.

The New Zealand leader cited Australia's struggles

to contain the highly transmissible variant for her "short, sharp" response after a 58-year-old Auckland man was diagnosed with coronavirus from an unknown source.

"We are better to start high and be cautious, then move out as soon as we are comfortable doing so, than to start low and be in that phase (lockdown) for much, much longer," she said. — AFP

Filipino nurses leave job over Covid workload, poor pay

MANILA: Exhausted by the Covid-19 workload, Loui quit her job as an intensive care unit nurse at a private hospital in the Philippines earlier this year.

The 30-year-old, who declined to give her last name for fear of reprisals, is among thousands of medical workers who have resigned during the pandemic, complaining of low pay and poor working conditions. Others have sought better jobs abroad.

"We can't even take a proper day off because we are often called back to cover for other staff who were in quarantine or resigned," said Loui, who was earning 20,000 pesos (\$394) a month, including overtime, before she quit in March. Hospitals fear the desertions have reached a critical point just as the Delta variant sends the number of cases soaring, as it has done elsewhere in Southeast Asia and worldwide.

The Private Hospitals Asso-



Hospitals fear the desertions have reached a critical point just as the Delta variant sends the number of cases soaring, as it has done elsewhere in Southeast Asia and worldwide

ciation of the Philippines (PHAP) estimated that 40 per cent of private hospital nurses resigned last

year, but more followed new waves of infections this year. Public hospitals are facing similar challenges.

"If we want to increase bed capacity, that is easy, but the problem is the nursing component," PHAP's president, Jose Rene de Grano, said.

More than a year and a half into the pandemic, reported coronavirus infections in the Philippines have soared to more than 1.75 million, the second-highest in Southeast Asia, while deaths have exceeded 30,000. — Reuters

France battles wildfire near Saint-Tropez

GRIMAUD: French firefighters hampered by strong winds were battling to contain a fast-spreading wildfire in the hills behind the coastal town of Saint-Tropez on Tuesday as campsites packed with holidaymakers were evacuated. Planes carrying water and 900 firefighters were tackling the blaze, which began late on Monday at a highway service area, according to local media.

Waves of extreme heat have hit much of the Mediterranean region in recent weeks, with wildfires from Spain and Greece to Turkey raising uncomfortable questions over global warming and countries' preparedness. The French fire, which hit several villages in the southern Var region, spread quickly overnight as high winds propelled the blaze across 5,000 hectares (12,350 acres) of land, burning through some 3,500 so far.

"We were completely surrounded by the flames", said Stephane Gady, Mayor of the village of La Mole, which is nestled near pine forests close to the French Riviera. Gady and his team were almost stranded after being caught by the blaze on the village outskirts on Monday night, he said. No lives were lost in the area, according to Gady and local authorities in the Var, but around 100 homes were destroyed. A campsite in Grimaud was razed to the ground. Charred mobile homes were scattered across the site.



A Canadair CL 415 drops water to extinguish a fire in Gonfaron, in the French department of Var, southern France, on Tuesday. — AFP

At least six other campsites in the Var region were evacuated, the Var prefect's office said. Another local mayor, Philippe Leonelli, said his seaside town of Cavalaire was spared, and was now sheltering some 2,000 people from nearby campsites in gyms and events halls. "This time the fire spread in three hours through an area that would normally be covered in

48. It's crazy, that's how quickly it all went", Leonelli said, adding several colleagues had lost their homes. Cavalaire is normally home to some 10,000 people, but the population swells to 90,000 during the summer months. The villages of La Croix Valmer and Grimaud were also hit. Alexandre Jouassard, an emergency services spokesman, said

some locals were being told to stay indoors with wet sheets under the door instead of fleeing, to prevent chaos on the roads. Authorities warned that more fires could break out in surrounding areas. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said he would visit Gonfaron and that any reinforcements needed would be sent. Authorities urged people

not to drive around the area, known for its beaches and coastal towns. They were also advised to avoid the axis between Bormes-les-Mimosas, where President Emmanuel Macron is for his summer retreat, to Saint-Tropez. Elsewhere in the region, two wildfires, also fanned by strong winds, raged out of control near Athens on Monday, forcing the evacuation of villages. — Reuters

Portugal face blaze and heatwave

LISBON: Hundreds of Portuguese firefighters on Tuesday struggled to control a blistering blaze that broke out in southern Portugal the day before, forcing the evacuation of around 80 people. Portugal is the latest European nation to face extreme weather and fierce fires, which climate scientists warn will become increasingly common due to man-made global warming.

Firefighters initially managed to control the wildfire that broke out in the early hours of Monday near the Spanish border in the tourist region of Algarve, but the blaze picked up again in the afternoon, spreading across around 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres). It started in the municipality of Castro Marim, in the hinterland near the Spanish border.

Fanned by winds, it progressed "like lightning towards the municipalities of Tavira and Vila Real de Santo Antonio", reaching a perimeter of about 40 kilometres and ripping through an estimated area of 9,000 hectares, regional civil protection force commander Richard Marques told a press conference. A police official reported the evacuation of 81 people from around a dozen hamlets. — AFP

■ WATER TAKES TRACKS



A train is stuck after flooding in Wald im Pinzgau near Salzburg, Austria, on Tuesday. Storms have battered large parts of Austria with landslides and flooding hitting especially Austria's western regions of Pinzgau and Pongau in the state of Salzburg, bordering Germany. Some 100 people stuck in cars as landslides hit roads had to be rescued, while three people have been injured. — AFP

Father of Sudoku dies at 69

TOKYO: Maki Kaji, a puzzle enthusiast and publisher who was known as the "Godfather of Sudoku" — the number puzzle played daily by millions around the world — has died, his company said. He was 69. A university dropout who worked in a printing company before founding Japan's first puzzle magazine, Kaji took hints from an existing number puzzle to create what he later named "sudoku" — a contraction of the Japanese for "every number must be single" — sometime in the mid-80s. The logic puzzle challenges people to fill a grid of 9X9 blocks, with nine boxes in each block so that all columns, both vertical and horizontal, contain the numbers 1 to 9 without repetition. The number of filled-in figures for a grid at the start of the puzzle determines how difficult it is. "Known as the Godfather of Sudoku, he was adored by puzzle



lovers around the world and we would like to express our gratitude to all of you", his company, Nikoli, said on its website on Monday. The cause of death was bile duct cancer. Sudoku became popular outside Japan around two decades ago after overseas newspapers began printing it. Praised as a way to keep mental faculties sharp, more than 100 million people around the world are estimated to try the puzzles regularly. A world championship has

been held annually since 2006. Kaji continued to create and refine puzzles with the help of readers of his quarterly puzzle magazine. He stepped down as head of his company in July due to ill health and died on Aug. 10. "I get really moved when I see a new idea for a puzzle which has lots of potential", he told the BBC in 2007, adding that the secret to inventing a good puzzle was to make the rules simple. — Agencies

SHORT TAKES

BERLIN

Merkel condemns Belarus' treatment of refugees

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Tuesday condemned the way Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko treats refugees, adding that Germany would consult closely with its European partners on a coordinated response. "President Lukashenko is using refugees, for example from Iraq, in a hybrid way to undermine security, and of course we condemn this in the strongest possible terms", Merkel said at a news conference with the Esto-



nian prime minister. The European Union accuses Lukashenko of using the refugee crisis to pressure the bloc to reverse sanctions it imposed on Belarus over a disputed presidential election.

LUSAKA

Zambia's new president vows 'better' democracy

Zambian president-elect Hakainde Hichilema on Monday slammed the southern African country's outgoing "brutal regime" while promising a "better democracy" in his debut address to the nation, hours after winning the top job in a landslide. Speaking shortly after his predecessor Edgar Lungu conceded defeat, the business tycoon and veteran opposition leader said his camp had been victims of a "brutal regime that



is exiting". "I will be a president of all Zambians, of those that voted for me and of those that did not", he pledged.

OTTAWA

Mail-in voting could undermine Trudeau

Mail-in voting in Canada is set to soar ahead of the September 20 election amid fears of Covid-19, and the complex registration process could deter voters, possibly undermining Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's bid for a majority government. Pollsters say mainly Liberal and left-leaning voters would like to use mail-in balloting, while Conservatives prefer to vote in person. But Liberal strategists are concerned the sign-up process for casting ballots by mail could



discourage their supporters from using it and lead them to not vote at all. Trudeau launched the campaign on Sunday, hoping that post-pandemic economic rebound would help him rebuff a challenge from the opposition.

Libya political
upturn boosts
migrant exodus

JIHAD DORGHAM

As violence in Libya has waned this year, the number of would-be migrants to Europe intercepted so far has doubled compared to the same period of 2020, experts say.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) says 20,257 people have been intercepted at sea and returned to Libya so far this year.

The North African country remains one of the main departure points for tens of thousands of migrants, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, hoping to attempt the dangerous Mediterranean crossing. Most try to reach the Italian coast around 300 km away.

A Libyan navy official, speaking on condition of anonymity, also said of a “100 per cent increase in departures from January to July” compared with the same period last year, without giving figures.

Lawyer Anwar al Werfalli, a specialist in migration law, attributes the rise in migrant numbers “in particular to the end of the fighting” in Libya.

The 2011 uprising that brought about the downfall and death of Moamer Gaddafi plunged the country into chaos and years of infighting between militias.

But a UN-brokered ceasefire in October 2020 has been generally respected, and a transitional government was installed this year.

Werfalli said this has created some “stability which, though relative, encourages migrants to undertake the crossing”.

The central Mediterranean crossing between Libya and Italy or Malta is by far the deadliest in the world, according to IOM figures.

The most recent tragedy was last month, when at least 57 migrants drowned. According to UN refugee agency the UNHCR, more than 10,000 migrants and refugees made landfall in Italy in the first four months of 2021, an increase of about 170 per cent over the same period of 2020.

— AFP

“
People smugglers have now boosted operations to compensate for the shortfall during the many months of lockdown for the Covid-19 pandemic. Many migrants who had to put their plans on hold are now back on the road

ANWAR AL WERFALLI
A Lawyer



CLIMBING FOR THE PRIZE

A man climbs to the top of a pole on which prizes and other items are attached as part of festivities celebrating Indonesia's 76th Independence Day in Denpasar on Bali island, on Tuesday. — AFP

Spare children from bearing
the brunt of wars



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

THE
INTERNATIONAL
LAWS AND
AGREEMENTS
SHOULD
FURTHER BE
ARMED TO
ENSURE THAT
WARRING
GROUPS PROTECT
KIDS AND END
VIOLATIONS
AGAINST THEM

People of all ages are affected when a country comes under armed conflicts or other cataclysms. But children are the more susceptible to the majority civilian casualties as violence and bloodshed become a daily occurrence in these countries.

Of all the saddest is that even when the world has been fighting the coronavirus pandemic, warring parties in war-torn countries did not spare even innocent children and continued maiming and killing them.

Despite warnings from health experts and social organisations about the lasting impact on the emotional, cognitive, behavioural and physiological health of children, wars take a brutal toll on children, denying them of their basic rights.

We cannot forget the harrowing tale of a young boy living in the Afghan province of Mazar who lost his hand after opening an item that he found in front of his school and brought it home. When he tried to open it, the item exploded, wounding him and his cousin. After days in a hospital, he found he lost his hand.

There are thousands of children like this boy who have come under either direct attack, killed, disfigured or recruited to be groomed as a fighter or even used as human shields. There are thousands more who are sexually assaulted or subjected to forced marriage or abduction. Many orphaned children even simply do not know who they are or where they are from!

No doubt, the world has made incredible progress as far as the security and rights of the children are concerned. Still much more is required to be done to prevent wars, and to end the many disastrous armed conflicts devastating children's lives.

Look at Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Syria, Nigeria, DRC, Mali, CAR, Iraq and Sudan — the most perilous countries which are embroiled in either internal or international conflicts. The futures of millions of children living in these countries are at risk. But children living through these crises-hit countries are among the least likely to be guaranteed their rights.

It is a repeat of history that countries in

conflicts, even groups in that matter, have been committing atrocities on children without any impunity. And the fact is that it is only getting worse.

Afghanistan, where, reports indicate that children were the worst hit in the first few days of the resurgence of fighting when nearly a dozen of them lost their lives.

Yet even as the war game continues in many parts of the world, world leaders fail to hold perpetrators accountable. Global bodies including the United Nations should ensure that bombarding or use of weapons that can kill people en masse should be avoided in thickly-populated areas.

The international laws and agreements should further be armed to ensure that warring groups protect children and end violations against them.

If the world keeps a Nelson's eye towards the children, their families and their communities, they will continue to suffer the devastating consequences, not only for now but for years to come. And the attacks on children must end and their rights should be protected.

Laughter therapy is gaining popularity during pandemic



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

WHEN WE
LAUGH, WE
GENERATE
ENDORPHINS,
DECREASING
LEVELS OF
THE STRESS
HORMONES

The on-going stress associated with the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted various aspects of emotional and mental health around the world. Hence, depression is on the rise during the pandemic. Besides specific pharmacological interventions, which if prolonged will have adverse health results. Of course, non-pharmacological interventions are needed to reduce the emotional burden associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

We do need to go back to laugh again in life and sense its effect on our body. Laughter therapy is really non-pharmacological approach to reducing stress and anxiety. Therapeutic laughter is a non-invasive and easy-to-implement intervention that can be used during this pandemic as a useful complementary therapy

to reduce the mental health burden. What is clear in various studies that laughter therapy can physiologically reduce pro-stress factors and increase mood-elevating anti-stress factors to reduce anxiety and depression?

So, when I look to the topics of laughter that circulate during coronavirus pandemic, it enables us to understand the imbalances caused by this small being in ourselves, the extent of anxiety, fear and obsessions that it has transmitted in us, which has revealed the weakness of humans and its inability to understand the course of things clearly and its failure to give meaning to what the world is experiencing today!

When we laugh, we generate endorphins, decreasing levels of the stress hormones. Could you imagine with me that

pleasant sensation after having a chocolate ice cream. How will be this with laugh as they're fat free? Interestingly when we laugh unconditionally for at least 10 minutes, we generate enough endorphins to benefit our health. The giggles and laughter can be simulated, but the brain doesn't really differentiate between fake or real, or even spontaneous laughter.

As such this long time during the pandemic has created a fertile field for the production of what unites groups of society and reassures individuals as well, that they are not alone in the crisis and what they think about is not related to them alone, but the common denominator among the general people in the time of such crisis is laughter.

Nevertheless, with such pandemic laughter therapy is

gaining popularity, in workplaces and hospitals. Currently laughter therapy complements traditional cancer treatment and psychotherapy in some countries. Therefore I encourage people always around me to laugh or even getting in the act, because simply everyone can laugh.

Therefore, it is ideal if we could consider laughter or humour therapy, where the power of smiles and laughter aid healing. It appears that laughter changes brain chemistry and may boost the immune system. So, while staying within confines home or even work, people can boost their immunity by doing laughter yoga for 15 to 30 minutes. Truly, the laughter exercise is not very technical, but easy to perform. In the current scenario, everyone should work to strengthen his

immune system and I believe laughter is a wonderful treatment.

Perhaps when our expectations clash with unpleasant reality and when it seems to us that we have done a mistake, we absolutely need humour and laughter to minimise the impact of failure. Laughing and sense of humour, something none of us should lose especially now, as the world has been turned upside down with such pandemic and other events.

At the end, go ahead and try it out. Turn the corners of your mouth into a smile and then laugh. Once you get a chuckle, assess how you feel. Are your muscles less tense? Do you feel more relaxed or refreshed? This is the natural wonder of laughter at our life.

(The author is a physician, medical innovator and a witter)

sport



CONFIDENCE HIGH AS OMAN PLAN PASSAGE TO SUPER 12

SHAHZAD RAZA
MUSCAT, AUG 17

Playing on their own turf, Oman feel they can go through to the Super 12 phase of the ICC T20 Cricket World Cup 2021 after doing well in Group B of Round 1 the Sultanate will co-host along with UAE in October.

After their experience of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2016 first round in India, Oman are targeting a top-two spot to enter the Super 12 stage in this year's edition which is officially hosted by the BCCI.

Buoyed by playing games on home soil at the Al Amerat facility, Oman will host Bangladesh, Scotland and Papua New Guinea in an open Group B, looking to go one better than their one-victory effort five years ago.

With confidence running high in the team, Oman aims to go deep in this year's tournament.

"We are quite confident of making it to the Super 12. We have defeated both Scotland and PNG in the past and there is no reason to believe we cannot do it again.

ICC T20 World Cup 2021

ROUND 1 FIXTURE

Group A: Sri Lanka, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Namibia
Group B: Bangladesh, Scotland, Papua New Guinea, and Oman

(Top two teams from each group advance to Super 12).
Oct 17: Oman v Papua New Guinea, Muscat (2 pm); Bangladesh v Scotland, Muscat (6 pm)
Oct 18: Ireland v Netherlands, Abu Dhabi (2 pm); Sri Lanka v

Namibia, Abu Dhabi (6 pm)
Oct 19: Scotland v Papua New Guinea, Muscat (2 pm); Oman v Bangladesh, Muscat (6 pm)
Oct 20: Namibia v Netherlands, Abu Dhabi (2 pm); Sri Lanka v Ireland, Abu Dhabi (6 pm)
Oct 21: Bangladesh v Papua New Guinea, Muscat (2 pm); Oman v Scotland, Muscat (6 pm)
Oct 22: Namibia v Ireland, Sharjah (2 pm); Sri Lanka v Netherlands, Sharjah (6 pm)

Although you can't take any side lightly in a T20 game, playing on our own soil certainly adds to our confidence," said Oman coach Duleep Mendis.

Oman have practice games planned against top teams including India's domestic giants Mumbai, who are due to arrive here for a string of T20 and 50-over games.

The occasion is certainly not

lost on right-hand batter Aqib Ilyas, who has struck two centuries and six fifties in his international career thus far. Likely to play an important part in Oman's campaign, the middle-order player was not a member of their 2016 campaign, though understands the scale of the tournament, especially as an opportunity for the game's emerging stars to stand up.

"The T20 World Cup is one of



the most popular sporting events taking place on the planet. It's one of the best platforms for all Associate players and Associate teams to compete against the best playing nations," said Aqib.

CO-HOST OMAN WELCOMES VISITORS

Oman's legendary hospitality will be on display as teams prepare to arrive in October.

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

On paper, Bangladesh will provide Oman with the biggest test in their group, though the collective experience of Scotland and Papua New Guinea's heavy T20 focus means Oman's bid to progress, even in home conditions, will be no easy task in the eyes of Aqib.

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

Building from the last campaign and after a solid qualification campaign, coach Mendis is once again at the helm, keeping a tight

ship alongside a unified team of support staff. As the mercury climbs during the day in Muscat, Oman's preparation at home has been physically demanding, though Ilyas and the team are not using the conditions as an excuse.

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

Oman were the last team to enter the tournament, beating Hong Kong by 12 runs in the play-off stages of the ICC T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019.



Sultanate of Oman

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects:-

Tender No.	Project Category	Location	Grade In Tender Board Registration
8/2021	Services	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING & GARDENING SERVICES TO HORSE RIDING CENTRE AT BARKA FROM 01/01/2022 TO 31/12/2023	First Grade
9/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO SOHAR SPORTS (INCLUDING DIRECTOR OF CULTURE AT SOHAR) COMPLEX FROM 01/01/2022 TO 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
10/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO NIZWA SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING NIZWA CULTURE CENTRE & SPORTS CENTRE AT IZKI) FROM 01/01/2022 TO 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
11/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO BURAIMI SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING ART ASSOCIATION AT BURAIMI & SPORTS CENTRE AT SUNAINA) FROM 01/01/2022 TO 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
12/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO RUSTAQ SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRES AT NAKAL & AWABI AND BEACH GAME FACILITY AT MUSANNAH SPORTS CITY) FROM 01/01/2022 TO 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
13/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO SUR SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING ANNEX SPORTS CENTRE AT SUR & SPORTS FACILITIES AT TIWI, KHALHAT AND RAS AL HAAD) FROM 01/01/2022 TO 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
14/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE, OPERATING SERVICES TO SAADAH SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRES AT THUMRAIT, MUGHSHIN & SADAH) DHOFAR GOVERNORATE FROM 01/01/2022 TO 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until 27/08/2021.

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site at 09:00am 31/09/2021

A Tender Bond equivalent to 1% of the tender sum issued from a registered bank, in the prescribed form, in Sultanate of Oman and valid for 90 days should enclosed with the tender.

Any tender without the bond will be reject and the tender committee is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender received.

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24166670 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

India-Pakistan set for Oct 24 clash

NEW DELHI: Fierce rivals India and Pakistan will clash on October 24 at this year's Twenty20 World Cup, the International Cricket Council said on Tuesday as the delayed tournament's fixtures were announced.

The 16-nation tournament — to be held in the United Arab Emirates and Oman — will begin on October 17 with Oman taking on Papua New Guinea in the opener followed by an evening match between Scotland and Bangladesh in round one of the competition.

The top two teams from both group A and group B in the first round will advance to the so-called Super 12 stage, where the game's heavyweight nations join the tournament.

Australia will play South Africa and holders West Indies meet England in Group 1 matches on October 23 at the start of the Super 12, which will



ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2021

INDIA FIXTURES

24 OCT, 2021 | 19:30 IST, DUBAI

 IND v  PAK

31 OCT, 2021 | 19:30 IST, DUBAI

 IND v  NZ

3 NOV, 2021 | 19:30 IST, ABU DHABI

 IND v  AFG

5 NOV, 2021 | 19:30 IST, DUBAI

 IND v  B1

8 NOV, 2021 | 19:30 IST, DUBAI

 IND v  A2

BCCI.TV

eventually decide the four semi-finalists. But the spotlight will be on the Group 2 India-Pakistan contest in Dubai, with the two rival nations only meeting in multi-nation events.

The two Asian giants last met at the 2019 50-over World Cup in England, where India won — maintaining their unbeaten record against Pakistan in World Cups.

England, the 2009 winners, will take on Australia in another key clash on October 30 in Dubai.

The tournament, which will be hosted by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), was originally meant to take place in Australia at the end of 2020. But it was called off as the coronavirus pandemic swept across the globe.

It was meant to be held in India this year, but was moved to the United Arab Emirates and Oman after the South Asian giant was hit by a massive surge in virus cases in April and May.

The matches will be held across four venues — the Dubai International Stadium, the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the Sharjah Stadium, and the Oman Cricket Academy Ground. The final will be in Dubai on November 14 with a reserve day kept aside on November 15. — AFP

In brief

ROME



ROMA SIGN STRIKER ABRAHAM FROM CHELSEA

AS Roma have signed striker Tammy Abraham from Premier League team Chelsea on a five-year deal, the Italian Serie A club said on Tuesday.

Roma confirmed the 40 million euro (\$47.08 million) deal for the 23-year-old, who joins Jose Mourinho's team in search of game time.

Abraham ended last season as Chelsea's joint-top scorer with 12 goals in all competitions, but found himself on the periphery of the first team at the London club since Thomas Tuchel replaced Frank Lampard as a manager in January.

"Tammy will always be welcomed back at Stamford Bridge as one of our own."

LONDON



LUKAKU BACK AT CHELSEA AS COMPLETE PLAYER

Belgium international Romelu Lukaku said he has evolved since he last played in the Premier League two years ago and has returned to Chelsea as a more complete player.

The 28-year-old striker moved to Chelsea from Inter Milan last week for a reported sum of 97.5 million pounds (\$135 million), earning him a second spell at the London club where he spent three seasons from 2011 to 2014.

"I just feel more complete. I've tried to master all the facets that a striker needs and I just want to keep improving on the small details all the time," Lukaku told the club's website.

NEW YORK



US GREAT LLOYD CALLS TIME ON CAREER

Two-time Women's World Cup winner Carli Lloyd, one of the greatest women's soccer players to ever grace the game, has announced her retirement, US Soccer said on Monday.

The 39-year-old Lloyd, who was twice named the Fifa Women's Player of the Year, became the second-most capped player in world soccer history (312) during a career that also includes two Olympic gold medals.

"When I first started out with the national team in 2005, my two main goals were to be the most complete soccer player I could be and to help the team win championships," said Lloyd.

"Every single day I stepped out onto the field, I played as if it was my last game."

Oman all set for Beach Soccer World Cup



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 17

Oman beach soccer team is all set for the 2021 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup which is scheduled to take place from Thursday until August 29 in Russia. This is the fourth presence for the national beach soccer team in the top beach soccer showpiece tournament.

Oman's campaign in the prestigious championship will begin on Friday as the team will face Portugal. Two days later, the Sultanate will meet Uruguay while the concluding group fixture is against Senegal on August 24.

The long-serving national coach, Talib Hilal, supervised the training sessions as part of the short overseas camp in Russia. Oman had played three friendly matches in Russia and the first preparatory fixture ended in favour of Talib Hilal's men 3-2. The goals were scored by Khalid al Oraiimi, Salim al Oraiimi and Nouh al Zadjali. The Sultanate's team managed to register a second successive win against Paraguay 3-1 in the second friendly game. The third friendly encounter ended in a 2-2 draw against Edirnespor FC club.

The head of the Sultanate's delegation in Russia, Mohammed



Oman's campaign will begin on Friday as the team will face Portugal. Two days later, the Sultanate will meet Uruguay while the concluding group fixture is against Senegal on August 24

al Shehi, OFA board member, accompanied with the technical staff represented by coach Talib Hilal and Nabil al Balushi, team manager, attended the coordination

meeting on Tuesday ahead of the start of the championship.

During the meeting, which was held virtually, the organising committee discussed the participating teams' training session schedules and the deadline of submitting the starting list besides other technical related points.

Also, the organisers highlighted the medical protocol against spreading of Covid-19 and which will be implemented during the championship. Later, coach Talib attended another technical meeting which addressed other technical details related to the

tournament. Post the meeting, the Oman coach received the official award of Sultanate's participation in the 2021 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup.

Oman men's beach soccer team will be looking for a different show with an aim of advancing to the next round in the fourth attendance at Beach Soccer World Cup. The Sultanate had participated in Beach Soccer World Cup in Ravenna city in Italy in 2011 and in Portugal in 2015. The third participation of the team was at the Beach Soccer World Cup in Paraguay in December 2019.



Murray returns with win over Gasquet in Cincinnati

CINCINNATI: Andy Murray returned to the ATP Tour on Monday after last competing at Wimbledon, reaching the second round of the Cincinnati Masters with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Frenchman Richard Gasquet. The three-time Grand Slam champion, who owns two titles here and played the 2016 final, has been struggling over the summer with a groin strain.

Murray, with 15 aces among his 38 winners, was pleased with his effort.

"I thought I did well. I moved pretty well for my first singles match in a while on hard courts," he said. "(I was) certainly, a little bit more confident in my movement than when I played him a couple of years ago (2019)."

"He uses all the angles on the court really well and makes you move a lot. I served well (and) got a lot of free points on my serve."

"I thought I was taking control of the rallies when I had the opportunities so it was a good match."

Wild card Murray and Gasquet, a longtime rival whose 53rd ranking meant he had to qualify, first played 15 years ago.

The Scot, who reached the Wimbledon third round, leads their series 9-4. They last met in 2019 here.

Murray hammered 14 aces and broke three times in the win lasting



ATP/WTN CINCINNATI RESULTS

Men (first round)

Andy Murray (SCO) bt Richard Gasquet (FRA) 6-4, 6-4; Dominik Koepfer (GER) bt Jan-Lennard Struff (GER) 7-6 (7/2), 5-7, 6-3; Jannik Sinner (ITA x11) bt Federico Del Bonis (ARG) 6-2, 7-5; Fabio Fognini (ITA) bt Nikoloz Basilashvili (GEO) 7-6 (7/3), 6-3; Diego Schwartzman (ARG x10) bt Daniel Evans (GBR) 6-2, 4-6, 6-3; Lloyd Harris (RSA) bt Yoshihito Nishioka (JPN) 6-3, 6-4; Albert Ramos (ESP) bt Taylor Fritz (USA) 4-6, 6-4, 6-4; Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x12) bt Márton Fucsovics (HUN) 7-6 (7/0), 6-3; Alex De Minaur (AUS x14) bt Filip Krajinovic (SRB) 0-6, 6-4, 6-4; Karen Khachanov (RUS) bt Kevin Anderson (RSA) 6-2, 6-4; Mackenzie McDonald (USA) bt Brandon Nakashima (USA) 7-5, 6-2

Women (first round)

Barbora Krejickova (CZE x9) bt Darya Kasatkina (RUS) 6-3, 6-2; Jelena Ostapenko (LAT) bt Tamara Zidansek (SLO) 7-5, 6-1; Petra Kvitova (CZE x11) bt Madison Keys (USA) 7-5, 6-4; Jil Teichmann (SUI) bt Sorana Cirstea (ROM) 6-2, 6-0; Heather Watson (GBR) bt Aliaksandra Sasnovich (BLR) 6-2, 3-6, 6-1; Yulia Putintseva (KAZ) bt Zhang Shuai (CHN) 6-2, 6-0; Elise Mertens (BEL x15) bt Nadia Podoroska (ARG) 6-3, 6-4; Paula Badosa (ESP) bt Petra Martic (CRO) 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (11/9); Shelby Rogers (USA) bt Danielle Collins (USA) 6-4, 2-1 retired; Angelique Kerber (GER) bt Maria Sakkari (GRE) 6-2, 6-2; Alison Riske (USA) bt Leylah Fernandez (CAN) 6-2, 6-2; Jennifer Brady (USA x13) bt Ekaterina Alexandrova (RUS) 6-3, 7-6 (7/3)

just under two hours.

After three games which lasted for a total of 20 minutes to start, Murray grabbed a 5-3 lead, which he lost a game later before re-breaking to win the first set 6-4.

Gasquet was broken in the final game of the match after saving a match point before Murray prevailed.

Also, birthday boy Jannik Sinner turned 20 on a rain-interrupted day and celebrated with a win.

The young gun was joined in the second round after a delayed start by 34-year-old Italian compatriot Fabio Fognini.

Sinner erased memories of a disheartening first-round loss a week ago in Toronto when he went down in his opening match to Australian qualifier James Duckworth.

The youngster, ranked 15th, came good in Cincinnati as he defeated Argentine Federico Delbonis 6-2, 7-5. Fognini joined the party with a 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 win over Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia in a first-time meeting.

"I gave myself the best present possible," Sinner said. "I played and won a match on my birthday at a big tournament." Sinner later posted pictures on social media of himself and his team enjoying a celebratory pizza.

Argentine Diego Schwartzman turned 29 on the day, defeating British number one Dan Evans 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 after more than two hours.

The South American welcomed the return of full crowds at the event, saying they give him optimism amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Right now, I'm happy. In the US where the tournaments are almost 100 per cent people and 100 per cent normal."

South African Lloyd Harris earned a place in the second round against Tokyo Olympic gold medallist Alexander Zverev as he beat Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 6-3, 6-4 with the help of 11 aces. — AFP



India's Virat Kohli celebrates winning the second Test with team-mates. – Reuters

PACERS HELP INDIA SCRIPT LORD'S MIRACLE

LONDON: India's pacemen impressed with both bat and ball as Virat Kohli's side thrashed England by 151 runs in the second Test at Lord's on Monday.

Victory gave India a 1-0 lead in a five-match series after just their third win in 19 Tests at the 'home of cricket' followed a rain-marred draw at Trent Bridge.

England, set 272 to win in a minimum of 60 overs on the last day, were dismissed for 120.

They were in dire straits at 1-2 after Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami removed openers Rory Burns and Dom Sibley for nought apiece.

Fellow paceman Mohammed Siraj then followed up with 4-32 — a return that saw him end the match by bowling No 11 James Anderson to seal an India win that followed their 1986 and 2014 Test triumphs at Lord's.

Earlier, Shami, with 56 not out, and Bumrah (34 not out) both hit their highest Test scores and shared an unbroken ninth-wicket stand of 89, during India's second innings 298-8 declared.

'SUPER PROUD'

"I feel super proud of the whole team", said India captain Kohli. "The pitch didn't offer much in the first three days.

"The way we played this morning with Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah with the bat was important.

"We believed we could get them out in 60 overs and the bowlers were outstanding."

The hosts appeared to fire India up during some tense verbal exchanges, with opener KL Rahul



I feel super proud of the whole team. The pitch didn't offer much in the first three days. The way we played this morning with Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah with the bat was important

VIRAT KOHLI
Indian captain

— player of the match for his first-innings 129 — saying: "If you go after one of our guys, all 11 of us will come at you."

England captain Joe Root blamed himself for the reverse despite his superb first-innings 180 not out and a top score of 33 in the hosts' second innings.

'LOT OF LEARNING'

"A lot of it falls on my shoulders", he said. "We went from a very strong position where we looked like we would go on and win to the game to being behind and making it very difficult for ourselves.

"I've got to do a lot of learning and that if we find ourselves in a similar position that tactically I am better."

Bumrah had Burns out for nought when the left-hander was caught off a leading edge at wide mid-off.

The struggling Sibley followed soon afterwards when he nicked a superb Shami leg-cutter to wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

It was the first time in 141 years of Test cricket in England that both home openers had been out for a duck in the same innings

The recalled Haseeb Hameed, in on a pair, was dropped in the slips on four before his nine off 45 balls ended when lbw to an Ishant Sharma nip-backer.

New batsman Jonny Bairstow, was out for just two when lbw to Ishant on review.

And England's 67-4 at tea became 67-5 three balls afterwards when Root was caught by Kohli at first slip off Bumrah for 33.

Siraj struck twice in successive balls to leave England 67-5, with Moeen Ali caught by a gleeful Kohli before Sam Curran completed a king pair when edging to Pant.

New batsman Ollie Robinson, in an England side without Ben Stokes, taking a break from all cricket due to mental health issues and fellow all-rounder Chris Woakes (heel injury), gamely

resisted for 35 balls. But Robinson was eventually lbw on review to Bumrah, who finished with fine figures of 3-33 in 15 overs.

His exit started a collapse that saw England lost their last three wickets all on 120, with Buttler caught behind for 25 before Anderson fell.

India resumed Monday on 181-6.

Robinson struck with the new ball to have dangerous Pant caught behind for 22.

Shami and Bumrah scored steadily against England's quicks before Bumrah was dropped on 22 by first slip Root off spinner Moeen.

Shami went to his second fifty in 53 Tests in stylish fashion, driving successive Moeen deliveries for four and six off to reach the landmark in just 57 balls.

This innings surpassed his 51 not out against England at Nottingham's Trent Bridge in 2014.

Bumrah also topped his highest Test score for the second time this series after his 28 at Nottingham.

— AFP

India's Jasprit Bumrah celebrates taking the wicket of England's Joe Root, caught by Virat Kohli. – Reuters



SCOREBOARD	
India first innings: 364	
England first innings: 391	
India second Innings (O/n: 181-6)	
KL Rahul c Buttler b Wood	5
R Sharma c Moeen b Wood	21
C Pujara c Root b Wood	45
V Kohli c Buttler b Curran	20
A Rahane c Buttler b Moeen	61
R Pant c Buttler b Robinson	22
R Jadeja b Moeen	3
I Sharma lbw Robinson	16
M Shami (not out)	56
J Bumrah (not out)	34
Extras: (B-2, LB-12, NB-1)	15
Total: (for 8 wks dec, 109.3 overs)	298
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-27, 3-55, 4-155, 5-167, 6-175, 7-194, 8-209	
Bowling: Anderson 25.3-6-53-0, Robinson 17-6-45-2, Wood 18-4-51-3, Curran 18-3-42-1, Moeen 26-1-84-2, Root 5-0-9-0	
England second Innings	
R Burns c Siraj b Bumrah	0
D Sibley c Pant b Shami	0
H Hameed lbw Ishant	9
J Root c Kohli b Bumrah	33
J Bairstow lbw Ishant	2
J Buttler c Pant b Siraj	25
M Ali c Kohli b Siraj	13
S Curran c Pant b Siraj	0
O Robinson lbw Bumrah	9
M Wood (not out)	0
J Anderson b Siraj	0
Extras: (B-17, LB-7, NB-4, W-1)	29
Total: (all out, 51.5 overs)	120
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-1, 3-44, 4-67, 5-67, 6-90, 7-90, 8-120, 9-120	
Bowling: Bumrah 15-3-33-3, Shami 10-5-13-1, Jadeja 6-3-5-0, Siraj 10-5-3-32-4, Ishant 10-3-13-2	

business

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

4,002,342

CRUDE
OIL PRICE

Oman Crude \$68.53

Brent Crude \$69.21

Light Crude \$66.68

OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.om

follow us: @oman.biz

Prizes of more than
OMR 2,000,000

#WinningsYours

with BankDhofar Savings Account!

Open Savings Account today!

Be a winner with
BankDhofar Savings Account

Guaranteed prizes for every branch • Bigger prizes • More winners

For more information: <http://bit.ly/BD SavingsEn>

BankDhofar

the best bank for you

24/7/11 | www.bankdhofar.com

Wind power projects planned in 7 locations in Oman

CLEAN ENERGY:

Pre-development phase commences for next wind-based Independent Power Project dubbed 'Wind 2025'

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Authorities overseeing the rollout of new renewables-based electricity generation capacity in the Sultanate have identified seven locations for the establishment of wind power projects. These locations comprise Sur and Jaalan Bani Bu Ali (South Al Sharqiyah), Duqm-1, Duqm-2 and Al Jazir (Al Wusta), Shaleem and Sadah (Dhofar Governorate), according to a new report by the



With Oman’s coastline consistently receiving strong winds throughout the year, the decision was taken to establish wind power projects. These projects are expected to provide energy benefits in addition to further boosting the government’s commitment to reduce greenhouse gases emissions

Implementation Follow-up Unit of Oman Vision 2040

Implementation Follow-up Unit of Oman Vision 2040. “With Oman’s coastline consistently receiving strong winds throughout the year, the decision was taken to establish wind power projects, with varying capacities, in (these) 7 key locations,” said the report, published on Monday. “These projects are expected to provide energy benefits in addition to further boosting the government’s commitment to reduce greenhouse gases emissions,” it noted. Helping accelerate the approvals process necessary to drive the early implementation of Oman’s wind power programme is a committee of officials representing a number of government and public sector organisations.

TURN TO PAGE 15



شركة المطاحن العمانية (ش.م.ع.)
Oman Flour Mills Company (S.A.O.C)
P.O Box 566, P.C 112, Jibroo, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman



BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

RESPECTED SHAREHOLDERS,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present Oman Flour Mills Company SAOG (the Parent Company) along with its subsidiaries (The Group's) financial statements for the six months period ended 30 June 2021.

GROUP PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS:

Revenue: The total revenue recorded is RO 48.6m as compared to RO 46.5m recorded in the previous year's same period i.e. an increase of 4.7%. All sectors achieved an increase in the volume of revenues, except for the bakery sector, which witnessed a slight decrease by (0.34%).

Expenses: The group total expenses COGS, selling and admin have increased slightly by 2.6% as compared to the previous year's same period. The main reason for its increase is attributed to the general increase in sales volume compared to last years' same period.

Investment income: The group earned total investment income of RO 409k as compared to RO 1.8m which included a onetime profit of RO 2.0 million from the sale of the company's stake in MPF Company in 2020. If we exclude one-time income of MPF stake, group's investment income has increased by almost RO 300k mainly due to a major increase in the value of the company's investment in the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Net Profit: The net profit after the tax recorded for the period is RO 5.3m as compared to RO 6.1m in 2020. The group's net profit increased by 30% compared to the previous year's same period after excluding the onetime gain from the sale of the company's stake in MPF Company.

PARENT, SUBSIDIARY AND ASSOCIATES COMPANIES:

The parent company performance (after tax) along with our subsidiaries and associates is as follows:

- Oman Flour Mills SAOG (OFM):** OFM recorded a profit (before tax) of RO 5.5m as compared to previous period's profit (before tax) of RO 6.5m. Sales revenue has decreased by 2.2% as compared to last year mainly due to decline in sales volume of RO segment and wheat grains, which is partially compensated by increase in sales prices. Further, Raw material cost has decreased by 6.5% mainly due to decline in sales volume in Flour segment. This has led to an overall increase in the operating profit by 9.2% as compared to last years' same period.
- Atyab Food Industries LLC (AFI) (100%):** The bakery made a profit (before tax) of RO 484k as compared to previous year's same period profit of RO 465K. The bakery has sustained its profitability, even under the current down trend in demand attributable mainly to the recent circumstances (COVID-19).
- Atyab FoodTech LLC (AFT) (100%):** AFT made a profit (before tax) of RO 239K as compared to the previous year's same period profit (before tax) of RO 226K. The increase in profit is due to increase in revenue for the 6 months period.
- Atyab Technical Services LLC (ATS) (100%):** ATS earned a net sponsorship fee (before tax) of RO 98K as compared to RO 93K in the previous year's same period.
- Sohar Flour Mills LLC (SFM) (60%):** The Company's performance has improved significantly as compared to same period of last year. The company has reported a net loss of RO 564k as compared to loss of RO 1,218k for the same period last year. The decline in loss for the period is mainly due to change in product mix with average sales price increased from RO 111PMT to RO 142 PMT in 2021. The main reasons for the loss are still due to the slow build-up of the sale book.
- Oman Oilseeds Crushing Company (30%):** The share of A's in the company was sold and an amount of RO 389k have been recovered in the month of February 2021. The carrying value of the investment was RO 323K. Accordingly, a gains of 65 thousand Omani Riyals was recorded from the sale of the investment.

- Oman Fisheries Company SAOG (OFC):** The share of OFM amounted to 25.1% of the Company's capital as of June 30, 2021.
- Atyab IFFCO Poultry (50%):**
 - Sohar Poultry Co SAOC (SPC):** SPC has reported a loss of RO 412K as compared to a profit of RO 168K for the same period of last year. The main reason for the decrease in profitability is due to a one-time provision of RO 652k in relation to an ongoing legal case. Otherwise, the Company's operations have remained stable as compared to last year's same period.
 - Osool Poultry:** The project commenced commercial activities in the second quarter of this year. The company made a pre-operating loss of RO 329K compared to losses for the same period last year, which amounted to RO 78K.
- Arabian Food Production Company SAOC (AFPC) (33.33%):**
 - Modern Poultry Farms SAOC (MPF):** MPF has reported a net loss of RO 211K as compared to a loss of RO 278K in last year's same period. The decline in profits is primarily due to decline in sales by 9.8%, due to the impact of the pandemic on the sector, and in turn, the corresponding cost of sales increased by 100 thousand Omani Riyals (2.2%).
 - Emirates Poultry Farms (EPF):** The group (Arab Company for Food Production SAOC) completed the acquisition of EPF on March 18, 2020, and the company achieved revenues of OMR 1.9 million during the period, an increase of 18% compared to the same period last year, and EPF has incurred a net loss of 162k Omani riyals.
 - Gulf Poultry Farms:** The project is progressing as per schedule. GIF has incurred pre-operating loss of RO 38k in the current period.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

Oman Flour Mills in early 2021 has been awarded the HM cup for industrial excellence in the Category of Corporate social responsibility. The company in Feb 2021 commissioned a barley flaking line. This has enabled the company offer value added flaked barley products to its customers.

To support local growers in Oman, the company has signed an agreement to procure wheat from growers at harvest. The company will add value to this wheat and offer 100% Omani wheat bur flour, to customers.

To ensure plant availability, The Company also successfully succeeded in shutting down the mill for maintenance as per the specified schedule.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR):

In the last AGM held on 31-March-2021, the shareholders have approved a budget of RO 200,000 for CSR activities. Appropriate projects covering a wide range of activities/ beneficiaries such as sponsoring schools, youth training, sporting events, SME development, Ramadan initiatives, and other humanitarian aids will be taken up to achieve the objectives of the shareholders.

FUTURE OUTLOOK:

Multiple projects are being evaluated across the group. The projects focus on integration across the value chain as well diversification into new ventures.

OFM FUTURE PLANS ARE:

- Oman Flour Mills is in the process of conducting a trial shipment with growers from Australia. The trial is expected to be executed in H2 of 2021.
- A detailed technical study was completed to understand the opportunities in producing corn starch and its value added derivatives. A detailed business and market study will be commissioned in H2 of 2021.

OTHER GROUP COMPANIES

AFT is progressing in the setting up a fully integrated laboratory in Uzbekistan, Agriculture is one of the main sectors in Uzbekistan. Further, an investment is made in a project namely Food Techno park. The aim of the project is to develop an innovation Centre for food related activities

Atyab Food Industries (AFI) is looking to install new product lines for Donuts, Samosa Leaves and Variety products. In H1 2021 new products like Samoon bread with potatoes and Jumbo Croissant were introduced.

Sohar Flour Mills is making good progress on the construction of Sohar Silos. Ship Unloader installation was completed at Port Sohar in Q1 2021.

THANKS AND APPRECIATIONS:

The Members of the Board of Directors would like to extend their most sincere appreciation and gratitude to the wise government for the continuous support under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, may God protect and preserve him.

Best Regards,

Salah Hilal Al Maawali
Chairman, Board of Directors

Unaudited group statement of comprehensive income

For the Six months ended 30 June 2021

	Group	2020	Parent Company	2020
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Revenue	48,632	46,468	38,950	39,813
Cost of sale	(37,091)	(36,385)	(30,670)	(32,487)
Gross profit	11,541	10,083	8,280	7,326
Selling & distribution expenses	(2,134)	(2,038)	(289)	(196)
Administration & general overheads	(2,942)	(2,694)	(2,023)	(1,662)
Profit from operations	6,465	5,351	5,968	5,468
Finance cost - net	(416)	(527)	5	(18)
Net investment income	409	1,778	344	1,778
Other income	313	286	210	182
	6,771	6,888	6,527	7,410
Share in Profit/(Loss) of subsidiary	-	-	64	44
Share in net Profit/(loss) of associates	(539)	53	(184)	(73)
Net profit before tax	6,232	6,941	6,407	7,381
Tax expense	(978)	(893)	(928)	(845)
Net profit for the year	5,254	6,048	5,479	6,536
Net profit for the period attributable to:				
Shareholders of the parent company	5,481	6,536	5,479	6,536
Non controlling interest in the subsidiary	(226)	(487)	-	-
Net profit for the period	5,255	6,049	5,479	6,536
Net profit margin	10.81%	13.02%	14.07%	16.42%

Unaudited group statement of financial position

as at 30 June 2021

	Group	2020	Parent Company	2020
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	48,197	39,973	11,731	11,954
Investment property	37	37	37	37
Investment in Subsidiaries	-	-	18,303	17,306
Investment in associates	9,095	8,492	1,632	2,319
Intangible assets	7	173	-	-
Biological assets	-	-	-	-
Right to use asset	3,568	3,776	65	75
Investment available for sale, non- current	355	355	355	355
Total non-current assets	61,259	52,806	32,123	32,046
Current assets				
Inventories, net	15,541	21,841	12,136	18,345
Receivables and prepayments, net	24,786	22,943	8,254	16,009
Amounts due from subsidiaries-1 (OFM)	-	-	6,210	7,253
Amounts due from related parties (associates)	3,075	3,414	3,045	2,953
Investments available for sale	1,834	1,491	1,834	1,491
Short term deposits	5,220	5,000	5,000	5,000
Cash on hand and at bank	11,872	5,543	9,751	3,411
Total current assets	62,328	60,232	56,230	54,462
Total assets	123,587	113,038	88,353	86,508
Current liabilities				
Payables and accruals	12,363	6,918	7,609	5,530
Payable to related parties	120	-	-	146
Taxation	1,052	949	977	894
Dividend payable	-	-	-	-
Interest bearing loans	6,459	6,640	3,500	4,000
Total current liabilities	19,994	14,507	12,086	10,570
Non-current liabilities				
Interest bearing loans	22,241	17,260	-	-
Lease Liability	3,953	4,018	71	77
End of service benefits	541	984	37	482
Deferred tax	851	810	373	462
Total non-current liabilities	27,586	23,072	481	1,021
Minority Interest	241	407	-	-
Total liabilities	47,821	37,986	12,567	11,591
Net assets	75,766	75,052	75,786	74,917
Shareholders' equity				
Share capital	15,750	15,750	15,750	15,750
Legal reserve	6,540	6,021	5,250	5,250
General reserve	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Fair value reserve	105	105	105	105
Retained earnings	50,871	50,676	52,181	51,312
Total shareholders' equity	75,766	75,052	75,786	74,917

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

FCA spends on morale boosting in ‘challenging’ year



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

THE UK’S MARKETS
REGULATOR SPENT
ABOUT £12,304 IN THE
YEAR TO MARCH 2021 ON
INITIATIVES DESIGNED
TO BOOST MORALE, UP
FROM £6,477 IN THE 12
MONTHS TO MARCH 2020

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) doubled its spending on initiatives to boost employees’ morale in the first year of a pandemic that has prompted a spike in mental ill-health amongst workers in the financial district of London, known as the ‘City’.

The UK’s markets regulator spent about £12,304 in the year to March 2021 on initiatives designed to boost morale, up from £6,477 in the 12 months to March 2020, according to its response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

The FCA also boosted their spend on initiatives to support its employees’ well-being by 50 per cent to around £22,118 in the year to March 2021, up from a spend of about £15,636 in the previous

year, the response said.

These included adding a “well-being hub” to its intranet with resources designed to help FCA staff manage stress, isolation and anxiety, running mental health awareness sessions, well-being sessions and training employees at the regulator as “mental health first-aiders”, the FCA said.

The chairman of FCA, Charles Randell, said last month alongside the release of the regulator’s latest annual report, that the past 12 months had been “a challenging year for everyone — the people we serve, the industry we regulate, and all of us at the Financial Conduct Authority.”

It was reported back in June that the Bank of England, the UK’s central bank, spent just over £2,000 on three bank-wide initiatives to support its employees’ well-being

over the same time period.

A Bank of England spokesperson said in June that its employees well-being had “long been an extremely important priority for the Bank, and no less so during the Covid-19 pandemic.”

The FCA said in its Freedom of Information (FOI) response: “As we all moved to working from home during the pandemic, we recognised that there would be a considerable impact on peoples’ mental health and well-being.”

The numbers of FCA staff receiving free counselling for “work or external stress” tripled over the same period from 21 in the year to February 2020 to 59 in the 12 months to February 2021, according to the response to a separate FOI request.

The percentage of FCA

employees citing stress when calling in sick dropped slightly over the same period from 11.4 per cent of 24,293 sick days in 2020 to 9.7 per cent of 321 sick days in the first two months of 2021, according to that same FOI request.

A spokesperson of FCA said: “We have invested, and continue to invest, in this area. The pandemic has posed a number of challenges for our people.” He added: “Our interventions to support them during this period are helping to decrease stress-related absence.”

The Covid-19 crisis has prompted a spike in mental ill-health among workers in the financial district of London, with many reporting longer hours at work.

In a February survey of senior finance executives, 60 per cent of

respondents said Covid-19 has made their lives more stressful, while 42 per cent said the crisis, as well as Brexit, has made them reconsider their careers.

City firms have been forced to give renewed focus to the mental well-being of their junior ranks in recent months in the wake of a stinging presentation by a group of Goldman Sachs analysts in march, outlining 100-hour weeks and declining physical and mental health.

Data analytics company PQ, meanwhile, found that more than 50 per cent of senior executives averaged more than 10 hours of stress a day. However, they had less than two hours of daily recovery or downtime, including weekends and meal times.

(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)



Ahlibank offers home and personal loans at attractive interest rates

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

Under a limited time period offer, ahlibank’s personal loan of up to RO 200,000 can be availed at an average interest rate starting from 4.85 per cent per annum and a home loan of up to RO 350,000, at an average interest rate starting from 4.83 per cent per annum.

Aligned to industry best practices, the bank ensures a speedy loan processing for its new and existing customers, providing them a benchmark service experience.

With ahlibank’s comprehensive loan programme, customers can fulfil their dreams and aspirations, as the bank enables them to

expand their business, or buy a home, or give their children a better education, amongst many such needs.

It also creates the possibility of enjoying a special holiday with loved ones, and buying advanced technical devices for children without having to tolerate the load of paying large premiums.

On this offer, Muneer al Balushi AGM – Head of retail distribution at ahlibank, said, “We are keen to provide financial solutions tailored to the diverse banking needs of individuals in Oman, and we encourage our customers to maintain good levels of savings and financial stability for the same.

“At the same time, the bank’s retail solutions are innovative and are structured to cater to their needs — be it for business, leisure, a better life or for an emergency.”

Lexus RX: Spacious & luxurious



MUSCAT: The Lexus RX with its sharp and stylish looks, makes quite an impression. Powered up to take you and your family places, the RX stands out when it comes to making every journey an enriching experience.

The Lexus RX makes every drive power-packed with its choice of two powertrains. The RX 350 model comes with a 3.5-litre V6 petrol engine, which produces 296 HP and 37.7 Kg.M of torque and is paired to an eight-speed automatic transmission.

Meanwhile, the RX 450h hybrid variant is equipped with a 3.5-litre V6 petrol engine and two electric motors and produces a combined system output of 308 hp. The RX Hybrid is available with a hybrid battery warranty of 8 years or 160,000 kms, whichever is earlier.

The Lexus RX 450h can be driven in EV drive mode to reduce noise while driving in

residential areas and to reduce exhaust gas in indoor parking lots and garages or through a combination of its petrol engine and two electric motors, depending on the vehicle’s speed and customer’s driving behaviour.

The batteries in the hybrid electric drivetrain are automatically charged by either the petrol engine or when braking and decelerating, eliminating the need to plug in a power cord.

A host of advanced technologies ensure the RX 450h drives like any other conventional vehicle, while not requiring special fuel. The Lexus RX is available in 5 and 7-seater configurations. The Lexus RX embraces Lexus’ reputation for engaging performance.

The engineering team has scrutinised every part of the vehicle and has made significant

enhancements to the rigidity of the body and suspension system, as well as shock absorber and brake-control system.

The result is a vehicle with outstanding handling, which enables drivers to trace their desired driving line with incredible precision.

The 12.3-inch high-resolution, split-screen Lexus Multimedia System touchscreen positioned closer to the driver, offers control of both audio and climate systems. The touchscreen also includes a rear-view camera to assist the driver in reversing.

Furthermore, the Lexus RX’s advanced smartphone integration offers access to in-car connected technology applications from Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, together with a designated phone storage area and USB ports to ensure occupants always remain connected on the go.

OAB appoints new chief audit executive



MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recently announced the appointment of Hamza Moosa Baqer (pictured) as Chief Audit Executive, as of August 1, 2021.

Commenting on the appointment, Rashad al Musafir, the CEO of OAB, said, “Hamza Moosa Baqer has extensive experience across various major organisations, in key positions over the last two decades. Working in internal auditing has helped him build a robust experience in the field, alongside having expertise across other areas, including corporate governance, risk management and compliance.

“His expertise and hard work earned him previous positions on Board Audit Committees and we believe that he will bring a high degree of proficiency to OAB.”

“On behalf of the Board of Directors of Oman Arab Bank and members of the Executive Management, I am pleased to welcome Hamza as a new OAB family member and wish him the best of luck and success in his new position,” Rashad added.

Hamza Moosa Baqer said, “I believe that this is truly a unique opportunity and the next step of my career. Internal Audit is an important component of corporate governance and supports the development of an effective organisational strategy. I am delighted to be a part of this dedicated team and look forward to working with them. Together, we can collectively align the objectives of the Bank to position it at the forefront of the banking industry.”

Hamza has over 20 years of experience in internal auditing and has held key positions across several major entities.

Changan CS85 crossover available on low EMI

MUSCAT: Changan CS85 Coupe is a sporty coupe designed SUV which reflects one’s personality.

Redefining the definition of smoothness, CS85 coupe SUV is outfitted with turbocharged direct injection engine that produces 224 HP and a maximal torque of 360 Nm, parted with an 8-speed automatic transmission, while accelerating from zero to 100 km/h in just 7.5 seconds and four driving modes. Changan CS85 Coupe with elegant looks and characteristic dexterity is now available at EMI RO 205 for six



years through Bank Muscat auto loan division (includes five per cent Value Added Tax (VAT)).

A premium coupe SUV, the model stands out from its counterparts through its lustrous appearance, focus on high quality and application of latest technology in the vehicle’s many features.

A spokesperson for Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC (AGAE) said, “Changan CS85, the luxurious crossover coupe combines the dynamic handling of an SUV with the sporty aesthetics of a coupe to give

owners the best of both worlds. Style and fashion will be the new constant in your life once you own this sporty coupe. Blue Core Powertrain Technology based on the principles of power, clean and quiet provides highly efficient and energy saving performance.”

With all the vehicles’ key parts originating from the world’s leading suppliers, the CS85 Coupe offers top grade enjoyment from every angle — visual, tactile, auditory and safety — coming together to create the perfect driving experience.



Omani firm carries out first successful well test in BP's Block 61

ICV DEVELOPMENT: Well test contract previously held by international supplier, awarded to Fahud Oil Services and Energy, mentored by BP Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 17

Following a major contract award in August 2020, Fahud Oil Services and Energy (FOS Energy) has successfully completed its first well test at Block 61 with zero flaring. The contract was previously held by a large, international service provider. Its award to FOS Energy underlines BP's commitment to generating in-country value across the Sultanate, the energy major said in a press statement.

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

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

Before work began, equipment suitability and crew competency was tested by modelling different well flow situations. Adopting



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

TARIQ AL KASBI
CEO, Fahud Oil Services and Energy

new equipment design, BP and FOS Energy worked together to

decrease the time taken to test a well from 25 days to 20.

Once complete, wells are typically tested by flowing hydrocarbons which is then flared. In green completions, the hydrocarbons are re-routed to the production facility and flaring is eliminated.

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

"Working with BP helped us

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

BP is committed to supporting the sustainable development of Oman's economy and society through encouraging the development of Omani skills and capabilities; and generating employment and training opportunities. In 2020, BP spent \$610 million with Omani registered companies — 90 per cent of its total spend — \$28.6m with small and medium enterprises either through direct contract awards or through third party contracted services.

Wind power projects planned in seven locations in Oman

FROM PAGE 13

The list includes Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) — the sole procurer of all conventional and renewables based capacity in Oman, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), Environment Authority (EA), Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

Significantly, Oman Vision 2040 targets a contribution of at least 20 per cent from renewable energy resources towards the country's electricity needs by 2030, rising to 35-39 per cent by 2040. While solar energy will account for a dominant percentage of this target, wind will make a notable supplementary contribution as well.

The first of these seven wind power projects is slated for launch in 2025. Initially envisioned for implementation by 2023, it has been pushed back to 2025, according to the report.

As a first step in the delivery of the rebranded 'Wind 2025' project, the stakeholders are focused on completing the 'predevelopment phase'.

To this end, the team worked on the commissioning of a monitoring station for the collection, assessment and publication of wind resource data, which is a prerequisite for the start of a feasibility study for

the procurement of a wind-based Independent Power Project (IPP).

Commenting on the next steps in the delivery of the wind power programme, Oman Vision 2040's Implementation Follow-up Unit said: "In 2021, the qualification process for the first round of wind IPPs is set to take place in Q3 of 2021."

Then, the RFP (request for proposals) will be issued to the qualified bidders, and the technical and bid evaluation process will start."

As was the case with most economic projects around the world, an ambitious strategy for the roll-out of large-scale solar and wind power scheme stalled in the wake of an historic slump in electricity demand in the Sultanate last year — the combined result of the economic slowdown and the pandemic.

These plans, authorities stress, are still on the table, but will be pursued based on revised delivery schedules. In recent months, Oman's overall renewables-based ambitions have received a significant boost following the recent adoption of a national strategy for the production of zero-carbon fuels, centring on green hydrogen, in the Sultanate.

A number of local and international energy firms have unveiled plans for investments in large-scale green hydrogen schemes that will harness the country's prodigious solar and wind resources to produce green hydrogen for global markets.

Omran Group launches 'Within Oman 2021' offers

DOMESTIC TOURISM: Diverse staycation offers at 19 sensational properties spanning the length and breadth of the country

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 17

Omran Group, the executive arm of the Sultanate for tourism development, launched its revamped 'Within Oman 2021' campaign with a selection of carefully curated offers and packages on thousands of hotel rooms at the Group's diverse

hospitality assets nationwide.

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

Within Oman 2021 focuses on Families, Friends &, Couples and relaxing Retreats at 19 sensational properties spanning the length and breadth of the country. Within Oman offers exciting adventure holidays surrounded by nature to the ultimate in luxury.

The packages also feature unique experiences for guests at their chosen property to bond



and help make special memories together this summer.

The 2021 edition is characterised by the provision of flexible and customised packages for various

categories, providing an array of accommodation options, hospitality services, tourism and recreational activities for everyone, whether through in-house

hospitality services or experiences provided in cooperation with small and medium enterprises outside the hotels.

The hotels and attractions participating in 'Within Oman' 2021 campaign are: W Muscat, JW Marriott Muscat, InterContinental Muscat, Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC, Atana Stay Salalah, Atana Stay Ashkara, Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah, Atana Musandam Resort, Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve, Masira Island Resort, Dibba Beach Resort, Barceló Mussanah Resort, Alila Jabal Akhdar, Alila Hinu, dusetD2 Naseem Resort, Jabal Akhdar, Hilton Salalah Resort, Sohar Beach Hotel, Crowne Plaza

Duqm and City Hotel Duqm. Booking is available with hotels and resorts via Within Oman website.

All offers will be subject to terms and conditions applicable to each hotel and resort.

To learn more about the 2021 'Within Oman' summer holiday campaign, visit <https://omran.om/withinoman> or follow Omran Group's social media accounts @OmranGroupOm and share your lifestyle experiences in the hashtag #WithinOman. Under government guidelines, all participating hotels are adhering to the precautionary measures to prevent Covid-19.

SHORT TAKES

SHANGHAI

China tightens control of technology sector

China moved on Tuesday to tighten control of its technology sector, publishing detailed rules aimed at tackling unfair competition and companies' handling of critical data.

Beijing has been firming its grip on Internet platforms in recent months, citing the risk of abusing market power to stifle competition, misuse of consumers' information and violation of consumer rights, in a reversal after years of a more laissez-faire approach.



It has issued hefty fines to companies including Alibaba Group and Tencent Holdings as part of a widening crackdown and has vowed to draft new laws around technology innovation and monopolies. — Reuters

LONDON

Oil prices weighed down by weak Asian demand

Oil prices fell on Tuesday, with both contracts heading for a fourth straight session of losses, weighed down by a weak demand picture in Asia and Opec and its allies saying the market does not need more crude.

Brent crude was down 26 cents, or 0.3pc, at \$69.61 per barrel as of 0918 GMT, after rising as high as \$69.77 earlier in the session. US West Intermediate crude (WTI) slid 31 cents, or 0.4pc, to \$66.28 a barrel, after reaching \$67.66 earlier.



On the demand side, daily crude processing in China fell to its lowest in July since May 2020 as independent plants slashed production amid tighter quotas, high inventories and weakening profits. — Reuters

BRUSSELS

Euro zone growth confirmed, employment rises

The euro zone economy grew 2pc in the second quarter, the European Union statistics office said on Tuesday, confirming its earlier reading as the easing of coronavirus restrictions spurred economic activity after a brief recession.

In a separate release Eurostat also said that employment in the 19-nation bloc grew 0.5pc in the April-June period compared to the previous quarter, in line with forecasts of economists polled by Reuters.



The healthy 2pc increase of gross domestic product compared to Q1 was paired with a 13.6pc rise from last year, when the euro zone economy suffered the worst phase of the pandemic. — Reuters

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

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

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

Work Shop For Rent

**5 room + 2 Toilet
+ 1 in the Work shop.
For Industrial
purpose Use.**

Work shop Location in Al Seeb-Al Jefnen
(1281 Sqm Area) Phase 4, Plot No: 611, CR No. 3618/1

**Contact:
71029290 - 99606116**



OMAN DAILY Observer Classified Section		WEDNESDAY AUGUST 18, 2021 MUHARRAM 9, 1443 AH	Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230 m.alrahd186@yahoo.com	Ali al Maashari: 99639264 ali.almashari@omandaily.om	Saada al Rashdi 95919344	94501166 24649593 24649595
--	--	--	---	---	-------------------------------------	---

■ SIT. VACANT

VACANCIES for the academic year 2020-2021.
1. Teachers for **General Sciences** (in English) 2. Teachers of **Physics** (in English) 3. Teachers of **Chemistry** (in English) 4. Teachers of **Biology** (in English) 5. Teachers of **Mathematics** (in English) 6. Teachers of **IT** (in English). **Application Requirements:** 1. Suitable educational qualifications, 2. At least three years of teaching experience, 3. An IELTS score of at least 6. Contact us on the following e-mail address: Tawzif24535906@gmail.com Phone: 79047969

LOOKING for male chef/cook to work in private villa. Experience in cooking Arabic, Indian and Continental food. Available in Oman for immediate transfer. Call 99892942.

ENGINEERING Coordinator, Sales Engineer, Marketing and Sales. Call 97602926

Property Leasing Manager send CV to vepervisor@gmail.com

WE need a Crusher Operator work in Crusher with experience. For more information call: 99450330/25542760.

A Patisier to work in a pastry in Wilayat of Al Hamra. Tel: 99891881

URGENTLY required **assistant HR & Admin manager** (only Omani national), oil & gas experience must. Contact: hrrecruit2828@gmail.com

■ FOR RENT

A LUXURIOUS spacious and furnished apartment in Burj al Yasameen is offered for rent in Al Khuwair. It is 200 sqm and has 3 bedrooms, spacious majlis, housemaid room and kitchen. It is offered with its quality furniture. RO 660/- Contact 98873373

FLATS in Al Khuwair. 99899273.

FOR rent: **INDUSTRIAL** land in Al Rusayl Area, 1,000 sqm, good location. 99202224, 99417541.

FOR rent: Cooling store in Al Seeb. 99202224, 94272979.

1BHK & 2 bhk flats for rent at Ruwi and Al Khoudh. 93994402, 93994403, 24834644.

2 BEDROOM flat Al Khuwair. 99322344.

3 BHK Flat & studio flat in central Ruwi & 2 BHK in Medinat Al Ilam. Call 99238012/ 24704994.

FLAT for rent in Maabela 3 master rooms. 96088926.

OMAN OBSERVER

Now get news on the go



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER
WhatsApp
-your name- to
96473232

المجرة للشحن اللوجستية
GALAXY CARGO LOGISTICS

WORLD WIDE AIR & SEA CARGO SERVICES

Location: Rex Road, Behind Modern Oman Bakery
GSM : +968 99635330 / 93569551
Email : gcloman@hotmail.com
Website : gcloman.com

Airport to Airport
Port to Port
Door to Door
FCL Services
LCL Services
Consolidation
GCC Road Transport
Professional Packing
Moving Local & International

■ SIT. WANTED

B Arch, Post graduate in Urban Management
Indian, female, (experience in Urban services planning, operations and management, Smart Cities). Looking for suitable position. Can join Immediately. Contact: 79580953

SENIOR Accountant (Indian) with 15 years experience in Oman seeks suitable opening in reputed organisation. Ready to join within one month. Please contact: 78581435 or e-mail: rediffmail.com

FINANCE Manager/ CFO. Indian Chartered Accountant and Cost Accountant with 25 years of experience in Trade Finance, MIS, Budget, Planning, Strategy, Projects, Procurement, Admin, seeks suitable placement. Contact. 99884291 / 99741875 Email vipul70@gmail.com

INDIAN male, 24 years of total experience in which 16 years in a Multinational Freight Forwarding and Logistic Co., worked under the capacity of Senior Operation Executive/Senior Accountant having thorough knowledge in Ocean Freight, Air Freight, Land Transport, Warehouse Operations and Finance & Accounting. NOC available. Contact 93587605

INVENTORY, Purchase, Sales: Indian male 30, having 8 years experience in retail, F&B operations, accounting and various other skills, NOC available. Contact: 96219904, E-mail: khanshah98@gmail.com

MECHANICAL engineer, 21, Indian male currently in Oman looking to work at any engineering field. Contact 96511338. Email: rkdhanush11@gmail.com

INDIAN male, 24, B.E. computer science, masters in GIS from UK. Seeking placement in GIS field. Having Oman driving licence. Contact: 99738614.

SMART Indian, excellent English, Arabic speaker, 17 years Oman experience in Airport, Hospital, Media EPC seeks Admin/ Hr/ Project coordinator/ Operations. 99283938.

INDIAN, male, Master Degree in Accounting, 15+ years of experience in Oman, UAE & India as Finance / Accounts Manager/ Chief Accountant. Looking for a job and have noc on visit. Contact: 79007124/ 78039524. email: kadcok@outlook.com

OMANI male, 17 years experience as driver. Looking for transporting job for nurses, office goers, sight seeing. Contact: 97947900.

FEMALE, MBA finance, 3 years experience (1.5 years in a Big Four as tax consultant), immediately available for a finance/ accounts job. Contact: +968 93213813.

YOUNG experienced Pakistani driver with Omani light vehicle driving licence seeks suitable opening. Speaks Arabic, Hindi, English and familiar with interior and Muscat areas. Contact GSM 95856719.

THREE years experienced in administration / sales and marketing seeking placement. Omani D/L, and NOC available. Gsm- 98270993

SALES/Marketing/ retail executive BMS in Marketing. 6 years experience. Contact 93920174. Rehankadri91@hotmail.com

CIVIL engineer/QS engineer, 11 years in UAE, freelance & Oman driving licence available, looking for full-time or part-time job 97299165.

MANAGER Sales and Distribution seeks suitable placement. Sales Professional with 25 years' experience in Oman, includes 12 years in Sales Management, with LEADING FMCG, Consumer Durables Companies. Currently working with a leading group as Branch Manager for Retail and Distribution. Accountable for the total business and P&L. NOC available. 99369127.

■ FOR SALE

3BHK flat for sale in Al Khoud Commercial Road with an allocated parking space. Call: 99411330.

FOR sale in SFZ, near port — 4-storey factory for Guar Gum powder, total 3,7000 square metres, warehouse 1,700 Square metres, with or without machines. Write to guargulf@gmail.com or call +968 94615439 (www.gulfguargum.com)

WE supply quantities of excellent mountainous soil in Bausher (suitable for compaction and filling) 99242445, 99327939.

■ FOR INVESTMENT

BARKA agricultural land on the highway, directly. 150,000 sqm. To invest for the purpose of raising animals and livestock and meat supplies. 99328880.

■ ACC AVAILABLE

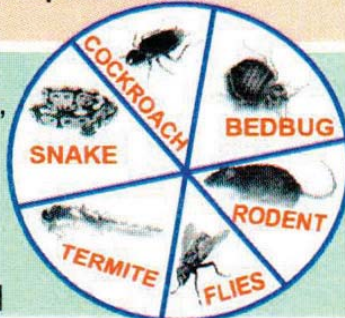
SINGLE room with attached bathroom and air-condition for executive bachelor, non- cooking, Wadi Kabir/ Al Falaj/ Ruwi High Street area. Contact 99657906

■ FOR SALE/RENT

NEW 3 storey villas for sale/rents Wadi Kabir/Al Khuwair), (Shops/offices for rent/ Al Khuwair) (Flats for rent/Wadi Kabir). 96596348.

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocroaches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA



PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

**Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309**

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

■ RENT A CAR

Buttercup Rent A Car AMAZING OFFERS
○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎972494490.

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/ annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

■ BUYING

AL Awsad Modern llc, electronic and furniture used. 99834373.

■ SERVICES

A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketeers.** Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

1. AC maintenance and servicing. 2. Fridge, washing machine and dish washer repairing. 3. Painting and cleaning services. 4. Electrical, plumbing and carpentry work 97014234, 99447257, 24290686.

ORIENT Trading llc, Shampooing, sofa, carpet, floor polishing. Old house repairing. 99834373.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

Amsad Engineering Consultancy offers the "Best Designs at Best Rates". Our Services includes;



AMSAD ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY

- **Architecture Designing**
- **Interior Designing**
- **Landscape Design**
- **Master Planning**
- **Urban Planning**
- **Structural Design**
- **Construction Supervision**
- **Project Planning**

Location: Al Hail, Muscat

Website: **www.amsadeng.com** Office: **24533118**
Email: **mohammed.alsaadi@amsadeng.com** Ph: **96660140**
Email: **anju.sarath@amsadeng.com** Ph: **96146645**

المركز التجاري للكهرباء شي م
CENTRAL
Electrical Trading LLC

OFFICIAL ADDRESS :
P.O. Box: 397, P.C.: 117
Tel: +968 24832308 / 24832053
Fax: +968 24832309
Mob: +968 99252965 / 99491438
E-mail: sales@cetoman.com
Web: www.cetoman.com

CET SWITCHGEAR & CONTROLS

Equipment Division :- Tel. +968 24830952 Tel. +968 24830947

ABB, EATON, FUJIKU, Honeywell, SIEMENS, YUASA, OMRON, Schneider, BOSCH, NORDSON, Allen-Bradley, finder, Autotek, EXTECH, CROSSLAND, CALPAPER

AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR & SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

ALL OVER INDIA EXPRESS DELIVERY

Online Tracking
TOLL FREE NUMBER
80066766

24/7 SERVICE
FREE PICK-UP
www.alnamanicargo.com

INDIA | BANGLADESH | INDONESIA | PHILIPPINES | SRI LANKA | ETHIOPIA | ALL GCC SERVICE AVAILABLE

95587410, 99785420, 99638698, 98523831
22 YEARS OF EXCELLENT SERVICE IN OMAN
HO: RUWI - HAMRIYA, GHALA, AL AMRAT, SEEB, SOHAR

ROYAL CARGO

DOOR TO DOOR CARGO SERVICES BY AIR & SEA

- **ALL OVER INDIA**
- **INDONESIA**
- **NEPAL**

AIR EXPORT (Port to Port)
SEA EXPORT (Container Booking)

FOR MORE INFORMATION JUST DIAL
CUSTOMER CARE **93213207**

PICK UP FREE ANYWHERE IN MUSCAT 93213206



CHANGE OF NAME

I Shivram also known Reenol Ramexa Naik (holder of Indian Passport No N2966094), son of Ramexa Shivram Naik having permanent residence in Aarkay Plaza, C3, Duler Mapusa, Goa 403507 (complete postal address in Oman) and presently residing in PC 130, P O Box 519, Al Athaiba Muscat, Sultanate of Oman intend to change my name from Shivram to **REENOL RAMEXA NAIK** for all practical purpose. Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P O Box No. 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

features

OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | editor@omanobserver.om



The cobbler by the side of the road in Nizwa souq

Fifty-five-year-old Mohammed al Gharibi has been a cobbler for 25 years — a profession that happens to fall on his lap after a series of tries he did when he was young made him fall in love with the job. Now a permanent fixture in Nizwa Heritage Market, Mohammed shares the importance of what he does and his concerns for the future... **P18**

TRAVEL TALES

READ

I ALONE CAN FIX IT
BY CAROL LEONNIG AND PHILIP RUCKER

The Pulitzer Prize-winning reporters examine Trump's final year in office, with a focus on the key players around him.

The splendour of Al Mashash, the golden sand dunes among lakes

AMONG THE SAND dunes leading to Maqshan in Dhofar, you will chance upon a splendid view that will force you to stop and take a picture for memories. Lakes are scattered among the sand dunes, forming a scene that you can hardly see in another place in the world. These lakes are in fact come from artesian wells like the well Al Atfa, which is

40 km away from the centre. Al Atfa will surely make you stop for a quick picture, especially if you are a nature lover or a photographer. Al Mashash is characterized by its mild weather in the winter, which tends to be cold at night. People escaping from the high temperature in summer in most regions of the sultanate find it a perfect resort to spend some

time while enjoying hiking, trips, adventures with desert sports in the sand dunes. Al Mashash is located northwest of the Wilayat's centre and at the southeastern outskirts of the Empty Quarter desert. It is about 400 km away from Salalah. It is connected to Maqshan by a 130 km long unpaved road passing through Al Manadher area.





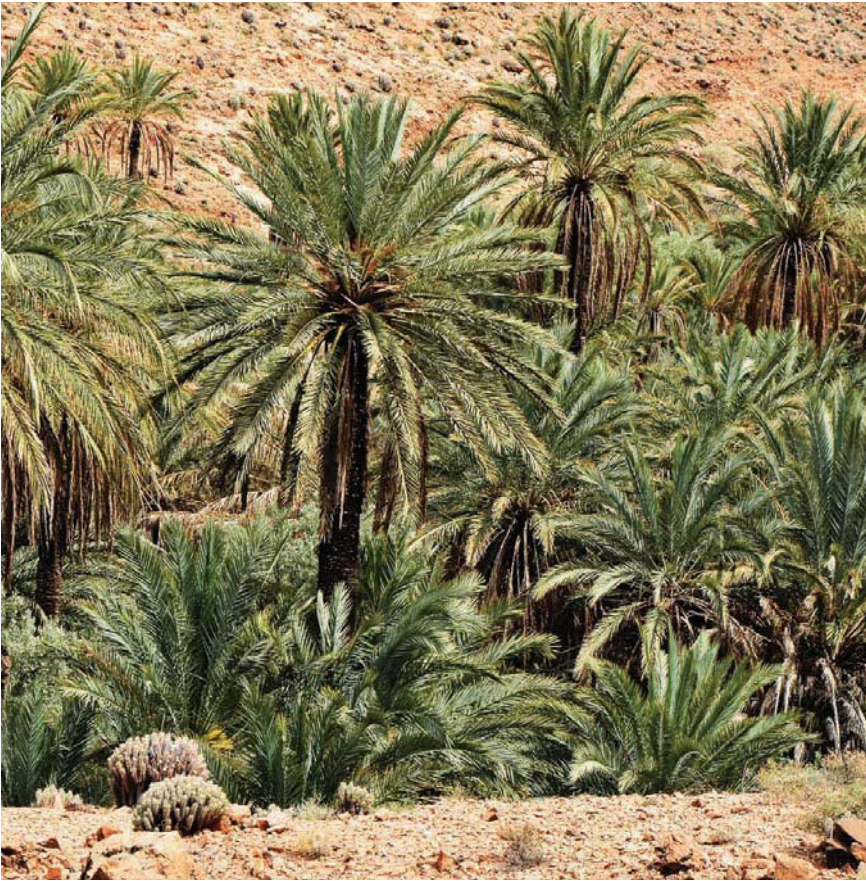
LOCAL SCENE

Al Mu'adha village invests in sprinkler irrigation system



THE PROJECT TO develop traditional farming systems in the village of Al Mu'adha in the Wilayat of Dhank in Al Dhahirah Governorate helped to provide a good agricultural environment to farmers. The project was implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and was opened in 2016.

The people of Al Mu'adha village work at the cultivation of palm trees of various kinds, as well as other agricultural crops such as fruits, vegetables and legumes. Out of the farmers' knowledge of the best ways of consuming water, they helped in the success of this project by following the instructions given to them by the concerned authorities to come up with the best results of the project.



The project aims to exploit water resources to increase agricultural areas by spreading the modern irrigation techniques as well as attracting water wasted from aflaj, raising the efficiency of its use, replacing unwanted varieties, improving agricultural productivity and reducing production requirements that contribute to horizontal expansion and utilisation of uncultivated areas and improving irrigation water management. Engineer Ali al Mandhari, Acting Director-General of the General Directorate of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Al Dhahirah, said that the project achieved its objectives as farmers were able, in more than five years of the project, to benefit and take care of the cultivation of various species such as palm trees and seasonal crops.

He explained that the project aims to rationalise, reduce water consumption, overcome the problem of water scarcity in the wilayat and preserve the existing trees and palms that remain. It also aims at encouraging farmers to pay attention to agriculture, especially since

the village of Al Mu'adha is one of the villages and places that are famous for the cultivation of various agricultural crops. The project, which depends on auxiliary wells, consists of two parts: the first is the introduction of a modern irrigation network that includes ten plots of agricultural land, each of which contains a reinforced concrete tank with a capacity of 150m3 to collect the water of aflaj and auxiliary wells. The area irrigated by each reservoir ranges between about 20 to 25 acres. There is also a control unit for each tank that includes two pumping units and several devices and accessories. These tanks are connected by the main line to refill the tanks from the auxiliary wells.

The project also works to feed the sub-pipes through valves connected to the tank on the mainline. The pipes distribute water to the plants through fountains and sprinklers scattered in the farms.

As for the second part of the project, it is represented in the replacement of low-productivity palm trees, by planting more than 13 thousand new palm trees.

Certain types of palm varieties grow widely in the village of Al Mu'adha such as Khasab, Al Khenaizi and Al Nagal, which the project focuses on in the replacement process.

Juma al Yahyai, the project supervisor, explained that the project contributed to providing water to the owners of farms. Since the opening of the project until today, owners of farms have been keen to increase the agricultural areas as they see a fair distribution to the water among farms and crops as well. The total cultivated area in the village is about 100 acres, and the village is distinguished by the cultivation of 13,000 palm trees, in addition to citrus trees and Omani wheat.

The cobbler by the side of the road in Nizwa souq

Written by Ruqaya al Kindi
Photos by Sami Al Hinai



In Nizwa Heritage Market, an old man sitting on a red carpet by the side of the alley caught my eye. He was busy repairing slippers that had worn out and in front of him, the tools of his trade were neatly arranged. They were a curious bunch — awl, scissors, knife, match or lighter, special threads of various colours, Omani leather, artificial leather, scrub, hammer and nails of various sizes.

The 55-year-old Mohammed al Gharibi has been doing this trade since he was young — 25 years by the time we met to be exact. His

shoe repair profession is something that has grown with time born out of the necessity when buying a new shoe in the past wasn't always an affordable option.

"This profession landed on my lap by chance," he said.

"One day, my slipper was damaged and I tried to repair it using a thread and needle. After a few tries, I finally succeeded. Since then, I found joy in the profession and I taught my family about it making it a family profession," he shared.

"Sometimes, my kids come and help," he shared.

Having practised the profession for years, Mohammed

already has an educated insight once a pair of shoes or slippers are handed to him for repairs.

"I have become familiar with all kinds of shoes and which one is best suited to fix them either with thread or nails. The shoes vary in terms of hardness. Some of them are soft and usually, they need sewing. Others are hard, and with those I use nails," he said.

Modernisation has caused Mohammed to worry about the future of manual shoe repairs. These days, people have become accustomed to fast fashion and disposable garments.



Photoby Ismail al Parsi

People no longer tend to repair and patch their shoes. Instead, they tend to buy new shoes once their old ones have minor damage," he said.

He also lamented the high fees for renting stores or shops. He said, with the cost and income of his profession, renting a decent space is not feasible.

"It is unreliable to make this profession the main source of income. In fact, I'm only doing it now as a hobby – something that helps me raise a little bit of money that I add on our finances to support myself and my family comprised of eight members," he said.

"What makes me keep practising it is because I still see the

demand and need for it. There are still people who prefer to repair their shoes once they're damaged especially those who cannot afford to buy new insoles due to financial reasons," he shared.

Working in the shoe repair profession has always been manual and primitive for Mohammed.

"I still use the same repair materials since I started comprised of thread, needle and wax," he said.

But there are days he hopes he will be able to afford newer machines to make it easier.

"With the advent of modern machines, working as a cobbler has become easier. Most modern cobblers with the aid of modern equipment also ventured into

repairing handbags and travel bags," he said.

"The method I use to repair shoes is still primitive and I wish I had a shoe stitching machine instead of stitching by my hand. The awl, sometimes, pierces my finger. I don't own the machine and I don't know from where to get it, but I wish I could own it," he said.

For Mohammed, one of the greatest lessons he learned as a cobbler is to have patience, to persevere and to know how to endure. It's not a profession for the lazy and while the income is not as modest as other professions, it is a job still worth doing and one that to Mohammed, doesn't deserve to be abandoned.

BOOK REVIEW

Dutch museum fills 'Blind Spot' with exhibit for visually impaired



VISITORS TO A DUTCH exhibition titled "The Blind Spot" may call it a little cheesy - but they mean that as a compliment.

Utrecht Central Museum launched the unusual project this month in a push to make its offerings more accessible and enjoyable for the visually impaired. The exhibit recreates existing paintings but with extra dimensions, such as sound and smell - including the aroma of ripe cheese. And for once, museum-goers are allowed to touch.

Sighted visitors are encouraged to wear a blindfold as they experience works including a version of the 1610 "Still Life with Fruit, Nuts and Cheese" by Floris van Dyck.

"The first thing that struck me was the smell," said Farid el Manssouri, who is visually impaired, smiling after he ran his

hands over cheese, grapes and a bread roll made into objects from Van Dyck's original canvas.

"I could really smell the cheese, and I touched it too."

El Manssouri pondered how the table was slanted yet the food did not fall off. "That was really surprising to feel ... I guess it was glued on pretty well."

Artist Jasper Udink ten Cate and designer Jeroen Prins said the idea came when they served food to accompany an artwork, and a blind woman visiting was very moved.

"That moment was the starting point," Ten Cate said.

Steffie Maas, the museum's head of inclusivity, said Blind Spot was one experiment on the way to more improvements, with better accessibility and facilities as important as the display.— **Reuters**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

khalidalmawali_ • Follow

قريات

CATCH OF THE DAY

rumpa_mitra • Follow

Wakan Village, Oman

A NEEDED BREAK

thamooooor84 • Follow

Seeb, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

TIP TOE

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.





Rossini Opera Festival reopens in Italy with ROHM collaboration

By Georgina Benison

The Rossini Opera Festival opened its 42nd season in Pesaro, Italy, on Tuesday evening with another glorious Omani collaboration, "Il Signor Bruschino".

After the 18 month cessation of all theatrical performances, the Teatro Rossini opened its doors this month to a live audience. Visitors lucky enough to have not only secured the much sought after tickets but also to have made the journey to the pretty Adriatic town of Pesaro were rewarded by a hoot of a show.

It was such a pleasure to watch live opera again after the interminable silence brought on by the pandemic that almost any performance would have brought delight. But 'Il Signor Bruschino' is one of Rossini's most charming farces. It is a vivacious and fast-moving musical comedy, composed in 1813 to a libretto by Giuseppe Foppa from the French comedy 'Le fils par hasard' (1808) by Alisan de Chazet and ET Maurice Urry. The story revolves around the love between two young people, Sofia and Florville. Sadly, Sofia has been promised to another. Her guardian Gaudenzio has decided that she will marry the son of his friend, Il Signor Bruschino. The rest is pure burlesque, involving a brawl in a taverna, swapped identity, disguise and

subterfuge! It is worth mentioning that this last of Rossini's 'farse' failed spectacularly at its premiere in Venice in 1813, but in Pesaro, it achieved a resounding success.

After a sticky opening, the one-act light comic opera (farsa giocosa) proved to be a romping success for all but the most critical of viewers.

The programme opened with Michele Spotti conducting the splendid and much-loved Overture, with second fiddles tapping their bows on their music stands to accentuate the energetic rhythm. It was played by the house orchestra, Filarmonica Gioachino Rossini.

On stage, the fixed set, by designers Barbe & Doucet featured two boats tied up by a quayside resplendent in an evocative sunset glow created by lighting designer, Guy Simard. The costumes were deliciously early 20th century and had all the colour and flair of the movies, though designed by Barbe & Doucet themselves.

Spanish coloratura soprano, Marina Monzò is known to ROHM audiences for her stunning performance as Giulia in 'La Scala Di Seta' (The Silken Ladder) in 2019. She portrayed the desirable Sofia beautifully opposite the American tenor, 29-year-old Jack Swanson as the buffa character Florville, so undeserving of her attention. Their ensemble singing, however, was convincing and developed along with their blossoming passion. The baritone Gianluca Margheri proved himself a fine Filiberto through his warm voice-colour and compelling character.

Baritone Giorgio Caoduro as Captain Gaudenzio brought a

breath of fresh air and spice to the drama with his overconfident caricature of the pompous sailor in full flow. But things really took a turn to the absurd when Bel Canto baritone, Pietro Spagnoli in the title role finally appeared and stole the show. Audience members reacted uproariously at his exaggerated parody of the buffoon-like character Bruschino, and there was no going back.

Other members of the supporting cast were tenor, Manuel Amati as Bruschino's son, mezzo-soprano Chiara Tirota as Sofia's maid, Marianne and tenor Enrico Iviglia as the robust Commissario.

The 42nd edition of the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro was dedicated to the memory of the world-renowned Director Graham Vick, who passed away just recently and created among the most memorable stagings in the history of our Festival. Muscat audiences will recall his superb production of, 'L'Inganno Felice' (The Fortunate Deception) in the 2020 ROHM Season when Omani extras had the opportunity to work with him. He is sorely missed.

The singers must have been feeling the pinch during lockdown as much as Opera goes, and the relief of being back on stage in front of a live audience was clearly palpable. The programme for 2022 is already published, and with movement opening up as a result of Coronavirus vaccination, in Europe at least, this reviewer is looking forward to attending the next Festival with eager anticipation.

