

MUSCAT DAILY

AN APEX MEDIA PUBLICATION

42°C/34°C

TUESDAY, 27 JULY 2021
www.muscatdaily.com



Join the national campaign to
make Oman a healthier country

GET VACCINATED

ISSUED IN PUBLIC INTEREST BY APEX MEDIA AND MHD-ITICS

Last update: 26 July 2021
TOTAL VACCINATED

1926307

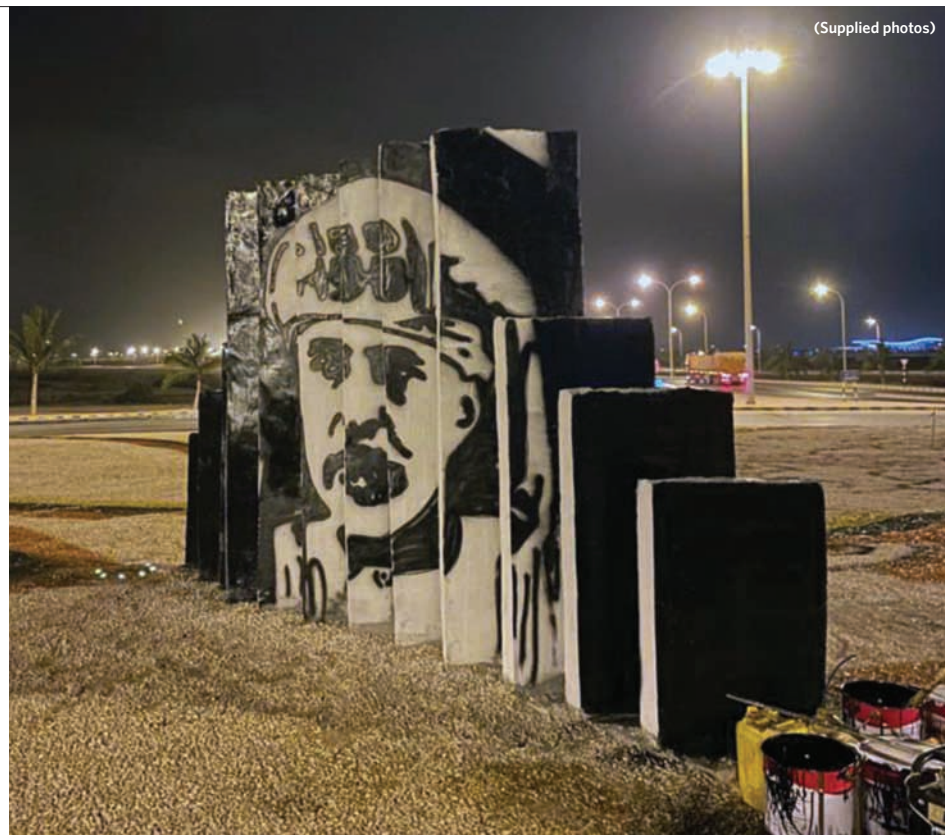


GRAFFITI ARTIST CREATES HM'S IMAGE IN SALALAH

Salalah - Musab Abdulrahman al Shahri has painted portraits of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and the Late Sultan Qaboos bin Said in Itteen Roundabout in Salalah, Dhofar, as an expression of his love for the sultanate and the two leaders. Speaking to Muscat Daily, Shahri said, "I did the two portraits in a project in cooperation with Dhofar Municipality. It took a week to complete the portraits."

In the past eight years, Shahri, 26, has found himself atop mountains or standing in front of large canvases, including walls, making eye-catching paintings and portraits, adding to the visual attractions of the sultanate. His portraits express his love for his country, but he also creates images of global personalities and events that touch his conscience.

Shahri believes that his art created in several prominent locations around Salalah add value to the sites and help promote tourism.



(Supplied photos)

NEWS BRIEFS

LEBANON PICKS BILLIONAIRE NAJIB MIKATI AS NEXT PM-DESIGNATE

Beirut, Lebanon - Lebanese lawmakers on Monday tasked ex-premier and billionaire Najib Mikati with forming a government and ending one year of political deadlock that has crippled the economy.

Mikati, seen by many as a symbol of Lebanon's corrupt oligarchy, will pick up where Saad Hariri left off earlier this month, after failing to broker a deal despite intense international pressure.

A new government would face the daunting task of steering Lebanon through one of the worst phases in its history, and to polls slated for next year amid unprecedented popular distrust.

Mikati, a 65-year-old telecom mogul who was last in power in 2014, is the third PM-designate to be named since the caretaker government of Hassan Diab resigned in the wake of last August's monster port blast.

Nearly 2mn vaccinated



(Supplied photo)

CASES DROP

Muscat - The number of COVID-19 daily cases dropped to 572 on Monday. The Ministry of Health also stated that 18 deaths were reported in a 24-hour period on Monday. 'The total number of cases registered in the sultanate has now reached 294,526, including 3,771 deaths,' MoH said.

Fifty-three patients were admitted to hospitals in a 24-hour period on Monday, taking the total number of inpatients to 723, including 292 in intensive care units. The total number of recoveries now is 276,483 and recovery rate 93.9 per cent.

53 per cent of target population vaccinated till Sunday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Nearly 2mn people in Oman have been vaccinated against COVID-19, according to the latest figures released by the Ministry of Health (MoH).

A total of 1,926,307 people, representing 53 per cent of the target population, had been vaccinated till Sunday.

Of the total vaccinated, 1,587,784 have got the first dose, which is 45 per cent of the target population, while 338,523 people

have received two doses, covering ten per cent of the target population.

The Governorate of Muscat has the highest vaccination rate, with a total of 618,264 people vaccinated and a coverage of 55 per cent of the target population,

followed by North Batinah with 234,808 people (39 per cent) and South Batinah 153,277 people (45 per cent).

The vaccination campaign in Oman started in December 2020 for those above the age of 65. The campaign has since been ex-

panded to include all over 18.

MoH encourages all to get vaccinated. 'There is more demand for vaccine now than in the past,' it said in a statement.

Around 3mn doses of vaccines are expected in August and September, MoH has stated.

E-payment option mandatory in shops starting 2022: MoCIIP

Our Correspondent
Muscat

As part of its efforts to achieve digital transformation in the sultanate under Oman Vision 2040, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has called on commercial establishments, including restaurants, cafes and gold shops, to provide electronic payment options to consumers in 2022.

In a statement, it said, 'The ministry, in cooperation with competent authorities, makes electronic payment option mandatory in commercial activities starting from January 1, 2022.'

MoCIIP stated that the directive for electronic payment cov-



ers all activities in industrial areas and complexes, commercial centres, gift markets, food sales, gold and silver shops, restaurants and cafes, fruit and vegetable vendors, building materials, tobacco as well as transactions involving electronic items in the first phase of its implementation programme.

'The Central Bank of Oman, in coordination with banks and service providers, has provided point-of-sale devices to merchants without installation fees or monthly or annual fees to private sector institutions. Only fees for merchant transactions specified by CBO will be applicable,' the MoCIIP stated.

The fees must not exceed 15 per cent of the transaction amount or a maximum of RO10 for payment via debit cards or exceed 0.75% for mobile payments via QR code. The Consumer Protection Authority, in coordination with banks, will receive complaints related to electronic payments through the authority's communication channels.

MoCIIP urged all businesses and companies to commit to providing electronic payment options in their shops and outlets before the end of 2021 for application starting January 1, 2022. 'Establishments will be required to place a notice stating the availability of electronic payment facility.'

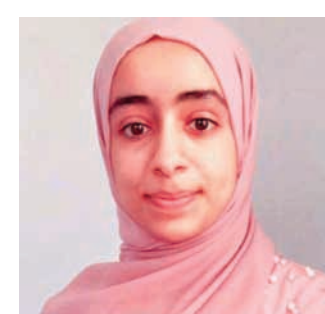
Schoolgirl's app for GCC culture wins MoE contest

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Education (MoE) announced winners of the Junior Developers - Smart Applications Award for 2020-2021 via a virtual event recently.

The first place was claimed by Arab Gulf Country Culture App developed by Khadija bint Salim al Adawiyah from Aisha al Riyamiyah School for Basic Education (Grade 10-12) in Dakhliyah governorate. The app enables a better understanding of Arab culture in Gulf Cooperation Council states through interesting stories and information all packaged in a user-friendly way.

Following the announcement, Khadija said, "I felt proud when I heard the news of my win. I faced numerous programming chal-



Khadija bint Salim al Adawiyah

lenges in developing the final application for the competition."

The app offers reading material and video content on the culture of the Gulf states from fanack.com. Users can explore sites in the six countries displayed on a map. Information provided include how to reach there, details about the heads of state, and fun quizzes to test users' knowledge.



Private health sector
champions COVID-19 fight



Oman swimmer Adawi set
for 'dream' debut

'Shawarmas taste best in evenings'

Small business owners in the city pray for an end to evening lockdown

Shaddad al Musalmi
Muscat

The 5pm lockdown has impacted several small and mid level businesses in the city with mobile phone repair shops, shawarma stalls, fruit and vegetable shops, barber shops being among the affected. They are hoping that the movement ban will not be extended.

According to such business owners that *Muscat Daily* visited, their activities start in earnest in the evening when people finish work and are on their way home.

"Before people go home after finishing their office jobs they come and buy things or avail most of the services that are offered by us. I just hope that the authorities don't extend the lockdown," Majid al Tauqi, owner of a fruit and vegetable shop in Amerat, said.

K P Mathew who runs a mobile phones repair shop, said he is in a dilemma now as most of his customers come less than one hour before 5pm but need their work done.



(Muscat Daily)

"Sometimes it takes time, ranging from 30 minutes to a few hours, it is best when they leave the phones and come back after some work. With the lockdown this is very tough. People need to rush back home and also they cannot come in the morning due to their work pressure," he said.

Barber shops too do much of their businesses in the evenings.

"Before the lockdown, most of the customers came in the evenings. In the past few days, I have mostly been sitting idle the whole day with just a few people who walk in during the day," Zaeheer Khan, a barber in Ruwi, said.

The closure of business activities in the evening is also affecting the way people enjoy evening bites. As shawarmas taste best in evenings, assured by the stall owners selling them in Qurum,

Before the lockdown, most of the customers came in the evenings. In the past few days, I have been sitting idle with just a few people walking in

ZAHEER KHAN

their businesses too have been affected.

"Our businesses used to start as the sun set. Shawarmas are often eaten as snacks as well as dinner. Most of our customers are often office people and prefer to pass by in the evening to have a bite or even have shawarmas

as dinner. But, these past days have been dull because very few people like to have them during the day," Mohammad Rafiq, a shawarma maker in Qurum, said.

Not only the businesses but also the customers are affected.

"I am always so busy with my office work during the day and the only time I get to go to the barber shop or for buying fresh fruits and vegetables is after my office timings. These days have been so uncomfortable for me. I just wish things get back to normal soon," Omar Abdullah, an Azaiba resident, said.

The lockdown that runs from 5pm to 4am will continue until July 31. During this period, people are not permitted to move outside their homes, while commercial activities are prohibited.

@shadadm

Dhofar Municipality honours environmental activist, researcher

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Honouring the people who spread environmental awareness among the community, Dhofar Municipality has launched the third hashtag under its campaign 'We are all responsible'.

The municipality launched the campaign on July 10, under which a hashtag bearing the name of a person or a volunteer team whose work comes to light in the governorate, is launched every week.

The hashtag for the week from July 24 to 30 is #Thank you environmental activist, Ali Akaak.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ali Salim Akaak said he started spreading environmental awareness among community members in Dhofar in 2017.

"With a number of volunteer teams I planted perennial trees to preserve wildlife," he said.

Akaak said they organise about 40 volunteer campaigns a year to urge members of the community to preserve the Omani environment.

Rare tree discovered

Akaak, who is a wildlife specialist at the Environment Authority (EA), has discovered and documented a rare species of tree in Oman and in the Arab world. It is a pasture tree that plays a major role in the ecosystem in the region.

"It is a flowering tree that at-



Ali Akaak (right) with a Ghudoot plant in Dhofar (Supplied photo)

tracts bees. The tree is locally called Ghudoot," he said.

Talking about the tree, he added that communication was established with Professor Tony Miller, an expert on plants in the Royal Edinburgh Gardens in the United Kingdom who is interested in documenting wild plants in the Arab countries. He affirmed that it is a new species in the Arab world. It was earlier registered in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Akaak pointed out that EA's specialists are in contact with international organisations to register this tree. A research is being

conducted to study the tree to be classified officially as the first tree of its type in the Arab world.

Talking about Parathinium plant, he said, "I discovered the presence of this plant in Dhofar. Parthenium, a noxious plant, has plagued vast stretches of Dhofar's plains and farm fields."

Campaigns are conducted in some places such as Dhalkoot and Mrabet to get rid of the weed, which is responsible for severe human and animal health issues, such as dermatitis, asthma and bronchitis, and agricultural losses, besides being a threat to biodiversity, he added.

OCCI opens outlets for SMEs in Dhahirah



(Supplied photo)

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) opened marketing outlets to support owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Dhahirah governorate at Lulu Hypermarket Ibri on Monday.

The opening was held under the patronage of Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI, in

the presence of Saif bin Saeed al Badi, head of the chamber's branch in Dhahirah.

At the opening, Saleh informed that these outlets are free. The initiative aims to support products and services of SMEs by introducing these to the market.

"We call on all commercial centres to join this initiative in light of the government's efforts to support SMEs. The initiative is part of the Economic Stimulus

Plan approved by the Council of Ministers, which will mitigate the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and revitalise business activities of private sector institutions," Badi said.

Said bin Salah al Abri, an SME owner, said, "This initiative is a positive step that benefits owners of SMEs in marketing their products. OCCI's branch in Dhahirah is exerting great efforts to overcome the difficulties and challenges faced by SMEs."



RAFO airlifts patient from Masirah

Sur - The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) carried out a medical evacuation of a critically ill citizen from Masirah Hospital to Sur Hospital in South Sharqiyah governorate on Monday.

A statement issued by ONA said that one of the helicopters of RAFO carried out the medical evacuation for a seriously ill woman from Masirah to receive the necessary treatment in Sur Hospital.

"This comes within the framework of humanitarian services provided by the Sultan's Armed Forces and other departments of the Ministry of Defence to citizens and residents along with the rest of the other governmental institutions," added the statement.

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE
شركة برشوتم
كانجي للصرافة

SEND MONEY TO UAE
TO BANK ACCOUNTS
Corporate and Individual

99101314, 99849289 customersupport@pkexchange.net
www.pkexchange.com pkexch @pkexchange1

new

Move over mayo!

PERinaise has arrived!

Distributed by

Please contact
+968 22060236/237

Championing fight against COVID-19

The private health sector in Oman responds proactively to shoulder its responsibility in fighting the pandemic

Muscat - Private hospitals in Oman have grown from strength to strength and adapted to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic alongside the public health sector. To reduce the burden of the pandemic on public hospitals, the Ministry of Health inaugurated the first Field Hospital on the premises of what was the earlier Muscat Airport in Seeb in October 2020.

However, before the Field Hospital was set up, in May 2020 AdLife Hospital in Amerat offered its entire new facility to Omani Medical Association to establish a COVID-19 hospital. Following its inauguration, H E Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Sa'eedi, Minister of Health, said, "We have excellent proof in Oman that the private sector has been a very effective partner in the fight against the pandemic." The hospital was run between May 2020 and August 2020.

In an example of community support, Aster al Raffah Hospital, under its CSR programme Aster Volunteers Mobile Medical Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, set up a free mobile health camp and screened more than 3,000 patients. The initiative won an award from International Hospital Federation in a category called 'Beyond the call of duty for COVID-19 response recognition programme'.

Dedicated COVID-19 care

The onslaught of the pandemic necessitated private healthcare institutions in Oman to adapt, and adapt fast. Speaking to Muscat Daily during the spike in cases prior to the Eid al Adha lockdown, Jacob Oommen, chief operating officer, Badr al Samaa Group of Hospitals, said, "We are continuously increasing bed capacity for COVID-19 patients in our hospital. Being the largest private healthcare group in Oman, our share of responsibilities is proportionately big."

In the beginning, the hospital dedicated 25 normal beds, 16 ICU beds and eight ventilators for COVID-19 patients. "The number has grown to 113 normal beds, 29 ICU beds and 19 ventilators. In the private sector, Badr al Samaa's contribution of beds in the Muscat region is 37 per cent and in the rest of Oman, it is 90 per cent. Since the onset of COVID-19, we have expanded our capacity 3.5 times to 142 COVID-19 beds or 35 per cent of the total available in the private healthcare sector," said Oommen.

AdLife, a new entrant in Oman's private healthcare sector, dealt with the pandemic even before starting full fledged operations. "We decided to open our 24-bed facility exclusively for COVID-19," Viji Varghese, CEO of AdLife Hospital, informed. "For us, it was an advantage



The ICU facility in Badr al Samaa Ruwi

Badr al Samaa being the largest private healthcare group in Oman, our share of responsibilities is proportionately big

JACOB OOMMEN

HFNO is very important in managing COVID-19 patients with low oxygen saturation. No other hospital has these in Oman

DR DILIP ABDUL KHADAR

because inpatient facilities were not operational for other medical streams. We could mobilise all our existing skilled manpower in managing the COVID-19 dedicated ward."

AdLife's ICU facility is awaiting approval following which its three intensive care beds will be dedicated to COVID-19 patients. "We used to find ICU beds for critical patients in another hospital within six hours to a day. Sometimes, it took longer depending

on demand of ICU beds in the city," Varghese said.

The hospital employs its in-house anaesthetist and facilities to take care of serious patients in an ICU setup. "We are able to provide intensive care, including non-invasive ventilation, till we find an ICU bed in another hospital," Varghese said.

Aster al Raffah Hospital has dedicated a special floor to COVID-19 patients. It has a separate entry and exit and is run by

specially trained staff. "We started this facility with six beds and later added four more. In all, we now have ten normal beds, including four high-flow nasal oxygen (HFNO) units, and two dedicated ICU beds. This floor has the maximum number of negative pressure rooms with dedicated split ACs, which makes it safe from any kind of cross-infection," said Dr Dilip Abdul Khadar, head of Quality & Patient Safety at Aster al Raffah Hospital.

"HFNO is very important in managing COVID-19 patients with low oxygen saturation. No other hospital has these in Oman," he claimed.

Adapting and upgrading

From shortage of medicines to critical healthcare staff, private hospitals have dealt with exigencies of the pandemic judiciously. "One of the first steps we took at the start of the pandemic was

We quickly adapted to the supply chain dynamics of medicines and were able to manage the shortage

VUJI VARGHESE

have a pharmacy committee meeting. We decided to have a good stock of life-saving medicines required to manage COVID-19 patients. Due to advance planning, we did not face any shortage despite supply disruptions," Dr Abdul Khadar said.

As Badr al Samaa increased its COVID-19 bed capacity, manning these required skilled and experienced staff. "Though we are aggressively identifying skilled resources locally, due to a temporary suspension in visa processing and travel restrictions, we are unable to recruit new doctors," said Sameer P T, CEO, Badr al Samaa Group of Hospitals.

Besides skilled manpower, the hospital is also facing a scarcity in life-saving drugs. "Due to increased demand, the shortage sometimes affects at a critical stage of treatment. The available substitute drugs are not so effective and special imports will increase the cost of treatment," Sameer added.

AdLife too faced a shortage of medicines used mainly for COVID-19 supportive therapy. "However, we quickly adapted to the supply chain dynamics of medicines and were able to manage the shortage," Varghese said. (Text and photo by Syed Fasiuddin)

Symposium on Musandam starts today

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and the Cultural Club in Musandam will hold a national symposium on the governorate starting Tuesday.

The virtual event will address the historical dimensions of commerce and industry in Musandam prior to 1970.

sandam prior to 1970.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Saadi, head of the research team in the governorate, said, "A number of researchers and specialists in the historical affairs related to commerce and industry in Musandam will participate in the symposium. It will include many working papers on trade and economy and the role crafts in industries have played in building

societies in the past in the governorate."

Dr Hamid bin Saif al Nawafli, director of the Culture Sector in the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, said, "The National Commission supervises and encourages activities to raise awareness on personalities involved in trade and industry throughout Oman's history."

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Sit Visit	Attendee	Tender Price (R.O)
MEDC-10/2021	Supply Of 33kv, 20 Mvar Capacitor Banks	12/8/2021	07/09/2021	Specialized	Not required	N/P	55.125
MEDC-11/2021	Upgrading of Mawaleh North PSS (P069) from 2x20MVA to 3x20MVA Primary Substation	12/8/2021	07/09/2021	A	16/08/2021 @9:00 AM at MEDC head office	One Electrical, Civil Engineer & One Protection Engineer with Full PPE.	65.600

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5 % VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - For payment procedure and to obtain the tender document, please contact us via e-mail Contract@medcoman.com 24588600 – Ext: 8577 - 8726
Purchase timing	Tender documents can be purchased at the official working time between 08:00 – 13:00 hours
Enquiries	Any inquiry can be sent using clarification available in the tender documents , one week before bid submission date
Tender Submission	- Tenders should be submitted in a sealed and stamped envelope addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION CO. marked only with tender number and the subject - Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER mentioned in clause 20.0 in Prime Document
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY S.A.O.C. - Any bid that does not meet the bank guarantee will not be considered Any bid that does not meet the bank guarantee will not be considered
Terms and Conditions	- The name of the bidder, other marks or any reference must not be specified on the envelope - Tenders received after the deadline stated in the Invitation to Tender, including any extension thereof, for any reason whatsoever will not be considered - The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date - MEDC is not bound to consent the lowest Bid or any other Tenders. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - Muscat Electricity Distribution Company gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - For projects whose value is less than OMR 10K, the priority to award will be given to registered companies that hold a valid certificate Of Reyadah
Bid Placement	The Completed Tender should be deposited in the Tender Box No. 1 in the ground floor of MEDC Head Office building at Airport Heights, before 10 a.m. on the assigned date of tender submission

HIGH ENERGY EFFICIENCY SERIES

BIG BIGGER BIGGER

BIG COMPRESSOR, BIGGER COOLING.

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

THE LARGEST AIR CONDITIONER MANUFACTURER IN THE WORLD.

Genetco (جيتكو) GENERAL ELECTRIC & TRADING CO. LLC

50 YEARS OF SUCCESS

MUSCAT 97693496, 96742452 | SALALAH 79011363

Available at Major Hypermarkets & Electronics Retailers



80070008
www.medcoman.com

TARIQ ONLINE

TARIQ HILAL AL BARWANI IS A POPULAR ICT EXPERT AND FOUNDER OF LARGEST COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE-SHARING PLATFORM, KNOWLEDGE OMAN

China's 'soft power' of digital knowledge exchange

Trade between Oman and China has risen substantially in recent years. That trend reflects Beijing's priority in developing its economy in part through foreign trade and investments. In the past few decades, China has enhanced relations with not only Oman, but also with countries across the Middle East, Asia, Africa, South America, and others.

In particular, China has succeeded in using 'soft power' to develop relationships internationally. A principal way it has done this is through knowledge exchange in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT). Access to advanced solutions from Chinese companies has helped countries like Oman to create a more connected and intelligent society, whereby digital transformation has increased overall national competitiveness as part of the Oman Vision 2040.

Understanding how China has cultivated its technological capabilities in a relatively short period of time is important to anticipate the future development of Oman's own digital economy. It also puts into perspective recent geopolitical



Access to advanced solutions from Chinese companies has helped countries like Oman to create a more connected and intelligent society

headwinds that threaten to impact organisations' access to cutting-edge solutions over the next decade.

China continues to heavily invest in technology research and development, increasing its share of global technology spending from 5 per cent in 2000 to more than 23 per cent by 2020. In China's latest Five Year Plan announced this spring, it has put technology as a national priority, and worked to unify the country's efforts to build scientific capabilities. China continues to set technological benchmarks that other countries are inspired to adopt,

from Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, 5G technology to others.

Huawei, for example, is currently leading on 5G technology around the world. The US sanctions did affect the company's business by restricting semiconductor access and other companies from working with Huawei. However, the company continued to grow in 2020, and has proceeded with more than 3,000 innovation projects in 5G technology in more than 20 different sectors including coal mining, steel production, ports, and manufacturing.

The company has continued to inject large investments in research and development, bringing its total spending during the past 10 years to US\$110bn. The company is also a member of more than 600 standards organisations, and has recently entered new fields like the electric vehicle industry.

Whether from the East or the West, the success of any technology company in the modern era ultimately comes down to transparency. It is why companies like Huawei have announced opening their largest Global Cyber Security and Privacy Protection Transparency Centre in Dongguan, China, earlier this year, which will serve as an open platform to support cybersecurity testing and joint innovations from across the world. Establishing a global ICT ecosystem for future generations is dependent on these open collaborations with local, regional, and international entities, regardless of their country of origin.

As innovation becomes a more global, fact-based, and collaborative effort, Oman will be in a better position to reap the benefits, spurring its own socio-economic development through digitisation.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Muscat Daily or Apex Press & Publishing. The writer can be reached at www.tariq.net

Al Ahlia launches online platform for motor insurance

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Continuing its commitment to digital excellence, Al Ahlia Insurance Company has launched its Online Motor Insurance Platform, which is set to simplify the way people conduct everyday business and make purchasing or renewing insurance policies simple.

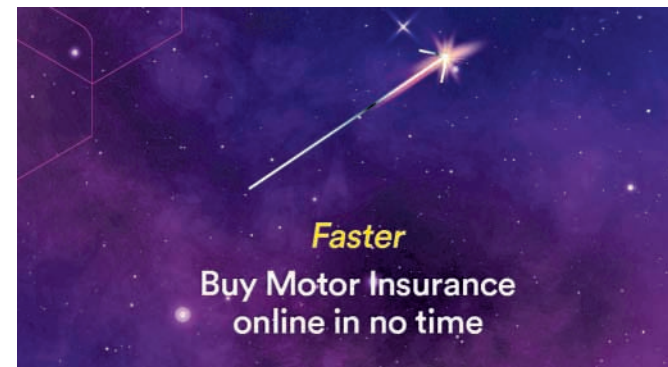
Captured in the tagline 'Together, we go further', Al Ahlia on Monday unveiled the latest addition to its digital bouquet in an online ceremony.

Highlighting the significance of this new platform, Sheikh Khalid bin Abdullah al Khalili, chairman of Al Ahlia, pointed out that it fulfils the need of the hour, as the ongoing pandemic has placed the onus on companies to stay ahead of the game through digitisation.

"Ongoing digital transformation has set the tone for both old and new companies around the world. And as is perceptible, traditional retail modules have, for a while, been disrupted by the advent of digital technology," Sheikh Khalili said.

"Although the pandemic has brought along its own social and economic challenges, it has, in a way, orchestrated the demand for digitisation," the Al Ahlia chairman said.

"It has not only thrown the spotlight on the importance of digital adoption and augmentation, but it has also bolstered confidence among customers in Oman to adopt digital as a safe and convenient option," he said.



Although the pandemic has brought along its own social and economic challenges, it has, in a way, orchestrated the demand for digitisation

SHEIKH KHALID
AL KHALILI

Praveen Kumar, CEO of Al Ahlia, stated that the new online platform is a reflection of the company's status as a digital leader.

"We have established ourselves as digital leaders, and this new venture is a testimony of the several planned improvements on our agenda; it is a validation of our belief that the future is, indeed, digital," he explained, pointing out that the leverage behind the ongoing digital venture has been the unwavering spirit of leading the industry into tomorrow.

Congratulating Al Ahlia on

this milestone, Sheikh Aimen bin Ahmed bin Sultan al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports and chief guest for the launch event, said, "This platform will empower customers by giving them easy and convenient access to the company's products, whilst they stay safe at home, which is the need of the hour."

Over the years, Al Ahlia has been amplifying its investments with additional inputs of time, effort and the latest technologies to strengthen its digital platform and thereby enhance online experience of its customers, whether it is to buy or renew their motor insurance from the comforts of their homes/offices.

The enhanced platform is seamlessly integrated with the IT system of Royal Oman Police, so that customers only need to fill out some basic information about themselves as well as their vehicles and the system will retrieve all the necessary details to make the purchase process seamless.

Arif al Zedjali, IT director, Al Ahlia, noted that the enhancements were introduced to make insurance an easy and hassle-free process.

oman OASIS
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

WIN GOLD

Total 1061 PRIZES!

Buy Oman Oasis 1.5L or 500ML Carton. Scratch the coupon to find your unique code. Register the code at www.omanoasis.com/wingold

22 CARAT GOLD

100 GM (1 No.), 50 GM (2 Nos.), 25 GM (8 Nos.) & 4 GM (250 Nos.)
AND OTHER PRIZES

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

Offer valid from 16th May 2021 to 15th August 2021. Conditions apply.

CR.No: 1365452 MM No: 06/43/2021

Scan QR Code to Register

Our WhatsApp number has changed

Get your latest news update on WhatsApp

91953774

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



MUSCAT DAILY

Never abandon parents in hospitals

Since 2019, my father who is battling cancer, has been an on-and-off in-house patient at The Royal Hospital. While there with him, I see joyful as well as painful moments experienced by the patients.

Recently, I saw a patient in pain and fatigue, but there was no one from his family or relatives with him. In another incident, I saw someone who brought his father and left him there for days and weeks without anyone to support him.

A gentleman there spoke to me with tears in his eyes. "I have three sons, but none of them likes to stay with me even though they are not busy," he said. "No matter what happens, never leave your father and mother alone," he told me while sobbing. Something I will keep in my mind till my death.

On the other hand, the most joyful moment is when you see a patient being always sur-

rounded by his kith and kin. It's a good sight.

Also, while at the hospital, some of the patients make you feel as if you are their guest. Every time you pass by, they greet you, ask about your health and ask if you need anything.

Most of the time they themselves can't take a step without support. But they have a good heart.

During the past three years, I have seen and learnt a lot. What I gathered from all of these is we should never leave our sick parents and relatives alone. We should not abandon them when they really need us. We have to be with them regardless of what it takes.

We should always remember that their health and life struggle is only for the sake of making us stand on our feet.

Hussam Samir al Musallami
Ghubra

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

oman OASIS
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

Eid Offer

RO 50 ONLY

- HOT & COLD DISPENSER
- 2 FULL BOTTLES
- 25 REFILL COUPONS

RO 20 ONLY

- WHITE TAP DISPENSER / TAP DISPENSER / MANUAL WATER PUMP / CRADLE WITH TAP
- 2 FULL BOTTLES
- 15 REFILL COUPONS

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

BUY & WIN 310 Prizes

10 NOS. 22 CARAT 8 GMS GOLD COIN

20 NOS. 22 CARAT 4 GMS GOLD COIN

AND OTHER PRIZES

Register your raffle coupon number at www.omanoasis.com/eid2021 to win.

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

Offer valid from 1st May 2021 to 31st July 2021. Terms and conditions apply.

Energy giant Halliburton wins major contract in the sultanate

Our Correspondent
Muscat

US energy giant Halliburton Company announced that it won a major contract to provide production chemicals and associated services for a large international oil company (IOC) in Oman.

Under the seven-year contract, Halliburton will supply a full suite of customised products along with specialised services to support the in-field chemical treatments, the company said in a statement recently posted on its website.

The statement, however, did not mention the name of the international oil company which has awarded the contract to Halliburton in the sultanate.

"We are excited to provide



our production chemical expertise and management services to help our customer maximise their asset value in Oman," said Miguel Gonzalez, vice president of Halliburton Multi-Chem.

"This collaboration aims to improve operational efficiencies and reliability by applying tailored solutions and close alignment between parties," he

added.

The company said that Halliburton's facilities in Oman will support the project. Additionally, it will manufacture key raw materials for the contract's portfolio at the new Halliburton Saudi Chemical Reaction Plant. Opening at the end of 2021, the facility increases Halliburton's capabilities to support Oman and the re-

gion.

Halliburton also expects to hire and develop local personnel to deliver the contract's scope of work, the statement said.

The plant, it said, will have capabilities to manufacture a broad slate of chemicals for stimulation, production, midstream, and downstream engineered treatment programs.

"Halliburton's global laboratory and team in Dhahran Techno Valley and local manufacturing uniquely position the company to accelerate the production of next generation speciality chemical solutions while developing local employees and capabilities," the company said.

Halliburton is one of the world's largest providers of products and services to the energy industry.

Oman Fisheries CEO resigns

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman Fisheries Company announced that its chief executive officer Dr. Khalid Mansour bin Sabeel al Zadjali has resigned from his position due to personal reasons.

"Oman Fisheries advises the Capital Market Authority, the Muscat Stock Exchange and the investors community that Dr. Zadjali has resigned due to personal reasons from the position of chief executive officer of the



Khalid Mansour al Zadjali

company with effect from July 25, 2021," the company said in a

disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The board of directors of Oman Fisheries has approved and accepted the CEO's resignation accordingly with effect from July 25, 2021, the disclosure added.

Dr. Zadjali was appointed as the CEO of Oman Fisheries in January 2017. Prior to joining Oman Fisheries he was director general of fishing ports and director general for planning and development at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Abu Dhabi slashes business registration costs by 90%

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Abu Dhabi will slash the cost of establishing new businesses by 'more than 90 per cent' from today to increase the 'competitiveness regionally and internationally' of the emirate, already a magnet for commerce.

In recent weeks authorities have ramped up efforts to woo new business to Abu Dhabi, one of seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates.

Corporate taxes are practically zero in the UAE as it seeks to diversify its previously oil-based economy. 'Business setup fees in Abu Dhabi emirate have been reduced to AED1,000 (US\$272) - a reduction of more than 90 per cent,' the Abu Dhabi Government Media Office said in a statement.

The new tariff will see the scrapping of some fees that were previously payable to different



public bodies and the reduction of others, and will come into force from Tuesday July 27, it added.

'The move will significantly enhance ease of doing business in the emirate and increase Abu Dhabi's competitiveness regionally and internationally,' the statement said.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UAE is among 'jurisdictions with no or

insignificant taxes'.

However, the UAE on Monday welcomed the historic deal to overhaul the way multinational companies are taxed, saying it supports the global consensus to combat tax avoidance and profit shifting.

More than 130 countries have already agreed to reforms on international taxation, including a minimum corporate rate of 15 per cent.

AFP

CMA to conduct workshops for XBRL portal

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) on Monday announced that it will conduct trial sessions in preparation for the launch of the XBRL portal for filing financial and non-financial information in August.

The CMA will organize a second set of introductory workshops on the XBRL system from August 3 until August 5. The workshops aim to ensure the representatives of the targeted

companies are aware of the system and will be acquainted with detailed knowledge on how to enter and file the data and reports.

The workshops will be conducted for the listed companies and funds who disclose their financial statements through the website of the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The workshops will also be attended by insurance companies, brokers and reinsurance companies which are not listed on the stock exchange as well as the

companies operating in the field of securities and investment funds which disclose their financial data through the CMA's portal.

The workshops will be conducted via video-conferencing.

The XBRL is considered a standard language used globally for disclosure of both financial and non-financial information and data of the listed companies and funds, which would reflect positively on the standards of transparency and efficiency of the financial markets.

The XBRL portal would provide safe and fast technology for disclosure reports as it standardizes the concepts of financial information and disclosure elements for easy access by all the parties to furnish accurate, reliable and timely financial information.

The CMA earlier had conducted ten introductory workshops for the capital market and insurance sector institutions as well as meetings to acquaint all the stakeholders with the XBRL portal.

Electric car sales surge in Europe

Paris, France - Electric cars - key to reducing emissions and meeting climate change goals - have boosted their market share in Europe, data showed, as the region prepares to abandon petrol and diesel. Battery electric vehicles more than doubled their share of new car sales in Europe in the second quarter, according to the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) which groups together major car firms.

All-electric vehicles accounted for 7.5 per cent of new car sales in Europe in the three months from April through June, against 3.5 per cent during that period last year.

In absolute terms, sales of battery electric vehicles more than tripled across Europe to reach 210,298 cars. The ACEA said there were substantial gains in the region's top four markets, led by sales more than quadrupling in Spain and Germany.

The publication of the data comes a week after the European Commission unveiled plans for what amounts to an effective ban on sales of new petrol and diesel vehicles from 2035.

The ACEA also found sales jumped of different types of hybrid vehicles, which are seen by some as a transitional technology as they can reduce emissions from standard petrol or diesel vehicles.

'Plug-in hybrid electric vehicles had an even more impressive second quarter of 2021, with registrations jumping by 255.8 per cent to 235,730 units,' said the ACEA. That took their market share to 8.4 per cent.

Sales of hybrids which cannot be recharged from power mains also more than tripled to 541,162 vehicles.

AFP

SETTLE DOWN IN THE COUNTRY OF YOUR CHOICE

Choose the best. Choose M-J Global...

Get Permanent Residency of Canada through Express Entry/ Provincial Nominee Program in 6-12 months OR Get Permanent Residency through Owner operated LMIA within 12 months with minimum Investment of CAD 150,000 OR Start your business in British Columbia with minimum CAD 250,000 and get residency in 11 to 13 months.

USA EB-3 Visa: Direct employment and US Green Card for you and your Family. Processing Time 15 months. Occupation in Demand: Caregiver, Janitor, Production Helper, General Laborer

Germany Business Immigration with minimum Euro 25,000 capital investment in business, Processing time is only 5 months, Resident Visa for entire family, Get Passport on the 5th year.

Invest in real estate of minimum Euro 280,000 and get the Portugal Golden Visa in 6 months. Get Portugal Passport in 5 yrs with access to 177 countries visa free travel. Stay requirement only 7 days per year in Portugal. Excellent returns on investment

Hungary Business Immigration • Euro 50,000* Minimum Investment • Temporary Resident Visa for entire family • Processing time only 4-5 months • 2yrs Business experience/Senior Management role preferred

Cyprus: Get a Permanent Residency in 3 months by investing in Real Estate with investment worth Euro 300,000

Dominica Citizenship by Investment • Starting from USD 100,000* • Direct Citizenship • Visa free travel to over 120 Countries • Processing time 4-5 months • No need to stay in Dominica

Grenada Citizenship by Investment • Starting from USD 150,000* • Direct Citizenship • Visa free travel to over 130 Countries • Processing time 6 months • Tax advantages

Turkey: Get your citizenship in 5 months by investment of USD 250,000 in Real Estate. Smooth and Fast processing with excellent returns.

M-J Global, Office no. 204, 2nd Floor, Jasmine Complex, Al Hadija Street, Al Khuwair, Muscat Sultanate of Oman, Landline: +968 24478383
Office Timing: Saturday to Thursday 10 am to 6:30 pm
Email: cs@m-jglobal.com , Phone: +968 93671122, +968 93899424
www.m-jglobal.com

Send your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om

الشركة العالمية لإدارة الفنادق ش. م. م

Hotel Management Company International SAOG

THE CHEDI, MUSCAT شيدى ، مسقط

ص.ب: 964 الخوير - الرمز البريدي 133 سلطنة عمان P. O. Box 964, P.C. 133, Al Khuwair, Sultanate of Oman

BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I hereby present the second quarterly report ending 30 June 2021 of the Hotels Management Company International SAOG.

The company achieved the following financial results during the period :

- The company has generated total revenue of RO. 0.856 million (vs. related period previous year RO. 2.563 million) which is a decrease of 66.6% as compared to the corresponding period of previous year in total revenue.
- The company has Net loss of RO. 1.192 million vs. related period previous year net loss of RO. 0.066 million. It shows a decline of (1,700.9%) as compared to the previous year of the same period.

Achievement

- The Chedi Muscat is among the first hotels worldwide to be Sharecare-VERIFIED™ with Forbes Travel Guide, which means they follow a list of more than 360 global health security standards, including health and hygiene protocols, cleaning products and procedures, masks and PPE, ventilation, and communication with guests and employees. First hotel in Oman to achieve this accreditation.
- First dose of vaccination given to more than 50% of the total staff.
- Finalized and signed a contract with Jaguar Land Rover – MHD for the new fleet of cars and exclusive rental services.

Outlook

Supreme Committee is very cautious and preemptive to control the covid surge by imposing stricter lockdown measures from 16th of July to 31st. Complete lockdown during Eid holidays could be beneficial for hotels as people cannot travel or go around anywhere but inside resorts. The vaccination campaign has gained momentum and if the authorities maintain the same pace, Oman will soon be taken out of red list in most of our main source markets. From July 19th UK is lifting quarantine for fully vaccinated travelers who are returning from amber list countries. Once the border is open in Oman and when it starts allowing tourists, this will help the return of British tourists to Oman. Oman is cohosting ICC Twenty Twenty Cricket world cup, which will help the destination have more business in terms of room nights and ancillary revenues and a lot of good PR in cricket playing nations around the world. With having most of the target group being vaccinated, looking forward to the opening of Borders soon and travel to resume.

Appreciation.

The members of the Board of Directors join me in acknowledging sincere thanks to our valued guests and shareholders for their continuous confidence in our hotel.

We wish to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Capital Marketing Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange and the Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Tourism for their prudent supervising and guidance on our endeavors.

We also thank the Supreme Committee Oman for the enormous work of handling the COVID-19, and the Hotel's management and staff for their dedication and commitment.

We salute and pledge our allegiance to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said as he takes the country on continued progress and prosperity.

The Chairman

Hotels Management Company International SAOG

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 June 2021

	30st Jun 2021	30st Jun 2020
Non-current Assets	6,901,691	7,380,757
Property, plant and equipment	6,441,486	7,340,206
Deferred tax Asset	460,205	40,551
Current Assets	5,496,694	4,198,727
Inventories	439,105	412,866
Debtors and Prepayments	272,487	424,575
Due from related parties	54,907	33,082
Bank and cash	4,730,195	3,328,204
Total assets	12,398,385	11,579,484
Current Liabilities	1,047,701	1,240,178
Creditors and Accruals	926,946	1,064,981
Due to related parties	120,755	175,197
Non-current liabilities	3,909,860	585,640
Term Loan	3,500,000	0
End of service benefits	409,860	585,640
Total liabilities	4,957,561	1,825,818
Net assets	7,440,824	9,753,666
Equity		
Share capital	3,000,000	3,000,000
Legal reserve	1,000,000	1,000,000
Retained earnings/(accumulated losses)	3,440,824	5,753,666
Total equity	7,440,824	9,753,666

UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME For the Period ending 30 June 2021

	30st Jun 2021	30st Jun 2020
Turnover/ Revenue	855,973	2,563,274
Operating costs	(2,139,763)	(2,374,771)
Operating profit	(1,283,790)	188,503
Administration & selling expense	(132,531)	(236,515)
Management & licence fees	(9,046)	(82,021)
Net Operating Profit	(1,425,367)	(130,033)
Interest expense	(19,199)	0
Interest income	42,013	63,834
Profit for the period	(1,402,553)	(66,199)
Provision for taxation	210,383	0
Profit after tax provision	(1,192,170)	(66,199)
Earnings per share	(0.397)	(0.022)

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request.

MSX falls 1.1% amid thin trading

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Monday fell 1.12 per cent to close at 4,005.91 points. Trading activity continued to remain weak at the bourse.

All the sectoral indices closed in red with Industrial Index falling most by 1.22 per cent. Financial Index dropped 1.13 per cent while Services Index also closed 1.13 per cent lower. MSX Sharia Index decreased 0.97 per cent to close at 582.06 points.

Trading activity further decreased on Monday as volumes fell 5.04 per cent at 13.82mn shares compared with 14.56mn shares traded in the previous trading session. Market turnover declined more than 77 per cent to RO3.27mn compared with RO1.85mn in the previous session.

Market breadth at the MSX remained highly negative with only one advancing



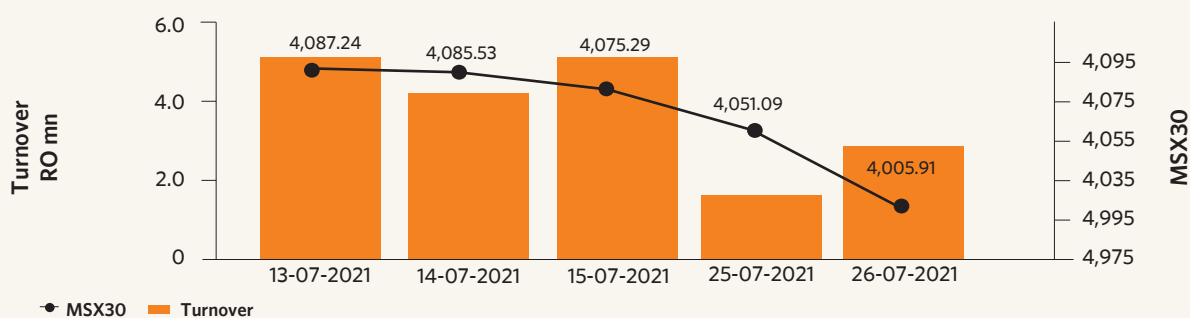
stock to 32 decliners.

As many as 16 traded stocks remained flat for the day.

The sole gainer at the MSX was National Gas Company which rose 0.71 per cent on Monday.

Top losers were National Aluminium Products (-9.63 per cent), Global Investment Holding (-4.29 per cent), Phoenix Power (-4.26 per cent), Aman Real Estate Investment Fund (-4.21 per cent) and Oman Qatar Insurance (-4.14 per cent).

MSX INDEX AND TURNOVER OF FIVE TRADING DAYS



Israel freezes oil deal with UAE

Jerusalem - Israel's environmental protection ministry said Sunday it was delaying implementation of a proposed oil transport deal with the United Arab Emirates, freezing a project that has angered environmentalists.

The agreement, which followed the UAE and Israel establishing diplomatic ties last year, would see Gulf oil brought to the Red Sea port of Eilat by tanker, then moved by pipeline through mainland Israel to the Mediterranean port of Ashkelon, from where it would be shipped to Europe.

The oil deal, involving Israel's state-owned Europe-Asia Pipeline Company (EAPC) and an Israeli-Emirati company called MED-RED Land Bridge Ltd, has not launched.

But activists have sounded the alarm about potential threats to the northern Red Sea corals off Eilat's coast.

Israeli environmental organisations challenged the plan in court, citing the risks of a devastating leak or spill, with tens of millions of tonnes of crude expected to be brought through Israel each year.

EAPC submitted its response in court last week, providing a risk assessment, which it claimed



A file photo shows oil storage containers near Israel's port city of Eilat

that the risk from the increased flow of crude was miniscule.

But on Sunday, Israel's environmental protection ministry said the risk assessment 'did not meet the conditions' stipulated by the ministry, and was therefore not valid.

The ministry told EAPC in a letter it was 'delaying the evaluation of your preparations to increase activity in the Eilat port, until the government has a discussion and reaches a decision' on the project.

The decision to freeze the deal's implementation was made by recently sworn-in Environmental Protection Minister Tamar Zandberg of the left wing

Meretz party, who has been an outspoken opponent of the EAPC-Emirati agreement.

A spokesman for the government of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, whose ideologically diverse coalition was sworn in last month, said his office had "asked the court for an extension of time, in order to respond to the petition filed by the environmental organisations."

A spokeswoman for EAPC had no comment.

Activists argue the deal evaded tough regulatory scrutiny because of EAPC's status as a state-owned firm working in the sensitive energy sector.

AFP

ECB vows longer support as virus risks grow

Frankfurt, Germany - European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde on warned of growing economic "uncertainty" caused by the fast-spreading Delta variant of the coronavirus, as the bank pledged to keep support for the eurozone in place for longer.

"The euro area economy is rebounding strongly," Lagarde said. "But the pandemic continues to cast a shadow, especially as the Delta variant constitutes a growing source of uncertainty."

The highly contagious variant - which has forced renewed restrictions in several countries - could dampen the recovery "in services, especially in tourism and hospitality," she added.

Lagarde said the ECB would show "patience" in helping the 19-nation currency club through the health crisis, signalling that key interest rates would stay lower for longer.

Thursday's meeting of the ECB's 25-member governing council was the first since the



ECB chief Christine Lagarde

bank unveiled a new inflation target of two per cent, ditching the previous goal of 'close to, but below two per cent'.

In a revamped forward guidance statement released after the meeting, closely scrutinised by markets for hints on future policy moves, the ECB said rates would stay at record-low and even negative levels until inflation is seen 'durably' reaching the new target.

Governors also made no

tweaks to their 1.85tn-euro (US\$2.2tn) pandemic emergency bond-purchasing programme (PEPP), the bank's main tool to counter the virus impact.

The ECB's ultra-loose monetary policy measures are aimed at keeping credit cheap in the eurozone to encourage spending and investment.

Lagarde said the "easier to understand", updated guidance underlined the ECB's "commitment to maintain a persistently accommodative monetary policy stance".

Some disagreement has emerged among ECB governors about when to start weaning the euro area off the massive stimulus.

But concerns about the increase in coronavirus infections appears to have hit pause on the debate, with Lagarde saying "none of us would want to tighten prematurely" and risk derailling the rebound.

She said the PEPP purchases

will remain in place until at least the end of March 2022, or until the ECB "judges that the coronavirus crisis phase is over".

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Thursday warned of "exponential growth" in COVID-19 infections, after a period of relatively low numbers allowed the country to ease curbs on hotels, restaurants, shops and other businesses.

During her press conference, Lagarde was grilled about the ECB's new inflation target, which she has described as a more "simple" and "symmetric" goal, meaning the bank will allow inflation to temporarily overshoot or undershoot before stepping in.

The tweaked inflation goal is the main outcome of an 18-month strategic review at the ECB - its first since 2003. Eurozone inflation has been stubbornly low for years despite extraordinary stimulus efforts from the ECB.

AFP

Electricity demand growing faster than renewables: IEA

Paris, France - Demand for electricity is growing faster than the roll-out of renewable energies, leading to a surge in the use of heavily polluting coal and undermining efforts to reach carbon neutrality, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has warned.

Global electricity demand is expected to grow by 5 per cent this year, much more than the 1 per cent drop it experienced last year as the global economy tumbled into recession thanks to restrictions to stem the coronavirus pandemic.

"Renewable electricity generation continues to grow strongly - but cannot keep up with increasing demand," the IEA said

in a semi-annual report on the electricity market.

Renewable power production expanded by 7 per cent in 2020 and the IEA expects it will grow by 8 per cent this year and by more than 6 per cent next year.

"Despite these rapid increases, renewables are expected to be able to serve only around half of the projected growth in global demand in 2021 and 2022," it said.

That will leave fossil fuel power stations to cover around 45 per cent of extra demand this year.

Coal-fired power stations whose emissions are particularly harmful to the environment and

contribute to global warming, are expected to exceed pre-pandemic levels this year. The IEA believes they could hit a record high in 2022.

That will drive a rise in emissions of CO2, a gas that contributes to global warming, which could hit a record level in 2022. While nations are increasingly committed to reaching net-zero emissions by mid-century in order to limit climate change, the IEA calculates that in order to reach that goal emissions from the power sector need to be falling now. Use of coal needs to fall by more than 6 per cent a year.

AFP

India's pandemic-hit dabbawalas battle food delivery start-ups

Mumbai, India - After the pandemic shut offices and put Mumbai's renowned lunchbox deliverymen out of work, the 130-year-old 'dabbawala' network has tied up with a trendy restaurant chain to take on India's billion-dollar start-ups.

For two decades, neither terror attacks nor monsoon deluges could stop Kailash Shinde from delivering hot lunches to Mumbai office workers, until lockdowns put the father-of-two on a forced hiatus for a whole year.

"It's been very difficult," the 42-year-old said. "I had to sell what I could and work odd jobs to get by."

Instantly recognisable in his traditional Gandhi cap and white Indian attire, Shinde is one of 5,000 dabbawalas - or 'lunchbox men' in Hindi - who have gained global recognition for delivering home-cooked food with clockwork precision.

An intricate system of alphanumeric codes helps the largely semi-literate or illiterate workforce collect, sort and distribute 200,000 meals across Mumbai each day via bicycles, hand carts and a sprawling local

train network.

Their work has been studied as a 'model of service excellence' at Harvard Business School, and inspired personal visits from Richard Branson, Prince Charles and executives from global delivery giants FedEx and Amazon, among others.

But with extended lockdowns forcing millions of Mumbai's white-collar professionals to work from home, many dabbawalas have been struggling to feed their own families since April last year.

"Our members have had to work as security guards and labourers, in addition to seeking jobs as deliverymen for restaurants," said Ulhas Muke of the Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Charity Trust, which represents the workforce.

'Mumbai's original deliverymen'

But delivery jobs are harder to come by in a space now increasingly dominated by mobile apps, especially for people like 39-year-old Pandurang Jadhav, who can't read or write.

Unemployed for the first time



In this photograph taken on June 22 'Dabbawala', Mumbai's famed cycle-borne tiffin delivery men, Pandurang Jadhav cycles to make a food delivery in Mumbai (AFP)

since becoming a dabbawala aged 17, Jadhav moved to his ancestral village and spent the last year farming rice. The earnings

were meagre and he desperately missed Mumbai, where he managed 30 men.

"I used to love working as a

dabbawala," he told AFP, describing it as "the best job".

Help arrived this May in the form of a tie-up with some of

Mumbai's most popular eateries, allowing Jadhav and 30 others to return to work.

Instead of handling home-cooked meals packed in stainless steel tiffin boxes, he is now delivering restaurant staples from nachos to spaghetti carbonara to time-starved professionals as they continue working from home for a second year.

The scheme offers restaurateurs an alternative to the prevailing local duopoly of delivery giants Zomato and Swiggy, whose steep discounts and razor-thin margins have slashed their profits. "We are trying to find a way out of the tyranny of the aggregators," said Riyaz Amlani, the owner of Impresario Restaurants, which operates 57 outlets across more than a dozen Indian cities.

"Of course we want to help the dabbawalas. They are the original deliverymen of Mumbai," he told AFP.

A new beginning

Amlani plans to expand his partnership with the dabbawalas, but analysts say that alone may not be enough to help the famed de-

liverymen survive the pandemic.

"It is paramount for them to be flexible at this point," said Sreedevi R, an assistant professor at Mumbai's SP Jain Institute of Management and Research.

"The dabbawalas could become delivery agents for last-mile delivery not just for restaurants but also for any e-commerce business," she told AFP.

But a lack of literacy means many of them are reluctant to take on work that requires tech-savvy skills. Muke, of the dabbawala representative group, is instead finalising plans to set up a commercial kitchen of their own, delivering inexpensive meals across Mumbai.

He has already secured millions of dollars in donations, including a hefty US\$2mn contribution from banking giant HSBC, with the kitchen due to open in the next few weeks.

"My grandfather was a dabbawala, and then my uncle and now I am," Muke said. "This is the work that I like doing. I want to keep delivering food to people."

AFP

Ahli Islamic opens new branch, conducts quarterly Qitaf draw

Ahli Islamic has celebrated the opening of its new branch in the wilayat of Amerat, by conducting its second quarterly Qitaf prize draw, and rewarding one lucky customer.

Qitaf is Ahli Islamic's popular Sharia'a-compliant Prize draw account, that offers a host of benefits and savings products to those looking for financial services under the Mudharba principles. The draw was held on July 7, under the auspices of H E Shaikh Mohammed bin Humaid al Ghabshi, Wali of Amerat, and in the presence of a limited number of bank officials and limited invitees, taking all precautionary measures under the current circumstances.

The event was streamed live



on the bank's official social media pages.

Munira Hamood al Battashi, branch manager of Amerat branch, delivered a speech in which she spoke about the many

benefits of Qitaf prize scheme and welcomed all guests and audience of the event held at the new Ahli Islamic branch in the wilayat of Amerat.

The bank is always commit-

ted to providing outstanding offers and services to customers, and to rewarding them for their loyalty. During the event, the bank announced the lucky winner of the second quarterly Qitaf draw, wherein Fatema al Wardi of Bahla branch walked away with a cash prize worth RO100,000.

On the sidelines of the event, Yousuf bin Salim al Rawahi, deputy general manager and head of Ahli Islamic, said, "We recognise the importance of continuous innovation in our Shari'a-a-compliant products, and in making these available to the people of Oman. We are pleased to open our 14th branch in Aemerat, which reflects our undeterred network expansion

approach that contributes to the bank's larger objective of bringing banking closer to our customers.

"Our strategic growth initiatives for Ahli Islamic further the bank's reach to far flung areas of the country, offering comfort and accessibility to them. Today, our bumper quarterly Qitaf draw doubled the celebrations of the opening of the new branch in Amerat."

The new branch has a state-of-the-art infrastructure, well-trained, customer centric, team of banking professionals to attend to the needs of the customers and a spacious waiting area to accommodate the requirements of physical distancing.

Zubair SEC, FAO meet discusses cooperation

In line with enhancing mutual co-operation between both parties, the Zubair Small Enterprises Centre (Zubair SEC) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations held a consultative meeting to discuss aspects of their cooperation. The meeting sought to enhance the capabilities of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) active in the fields of agriculture and food industries, entrepreneurship, and administration and finance.

The meeting was attended by Nora Ourabah Haddad, FAO representative in Oman and Said Salim al Sahib, director of Zubair SEC, alongside the presence of advisors from both parties.

Each entity expressed their satisfaction regarding the level of cooperation that currently exists and the proposed initiatives to enhance food security in the sultanate. The role played by Zubair SEC to support the directions of the FAO in this regard was also highlighted.

During the session, several key themes were reviewed including topics related to the sustainability of food ecosystems in Oman, methods to strengthen relations and establish channels of communication between various sectors in the fields of agriculture and food industries and working on developing programmes to support the role of small enterprises in the agricul-

tural and fisheries sector.

Nora said, "SMEs active in the food sector, along with associations of farmers and fishermen and other similar entities, are active contributors to the sustainable development of food ecosystems. They are considered vital stakeholders across the value chain in the sultanate."

"We consider Zubair SEC as a strategic partner. We continuously and effectively communicate with them on programmes and activities that support small farmers and small enterprises, working together to achieve food security and sustainable development goals. We look forward to furthering partnerships and towards enhancing this fruitful cooperation during the upcoming period," she added.

Sahib said, "Since its establishment, Zubair SEC has aligned itself with the objectives of the Oman Vision and the national strategy for sustainable development. The centre always focuses its efforts to enhance its economic and social impact sustainably. In this context, the importance of food security is a key area that we can work on to enhance the presence of small enterprises within this significant sector. We are proud of our co-operation with FAO to empower small enterprises and small farmers to enhance their performance and increase their contribution to the national GDP."

OAB hosts virtual graduation ceremony of 'LEAD 3'

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recently celebrated the graduation of the third cohort of the 'LEAD3' programme under the patronage of H E Sheikh Nasr Amer al Hosani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour.

The graduation ceremony was held via an online platform, where graduates were presented with their graduation certificates. The ceremony was attended by Rashad Mohammad al Zubair, chairman of OAB, Rashad Ali al Musafir, CEO of the bank and saw the presence of several executive members and guests.

Commenting on the graduation ceremony, Musafir noted,



"Today's celebration of the 'LEAD 3' graduation is a testimony of OAB's commitment to

empowering its employees to become future leaders. The previous LEAD graduates have as-

sumed management and leadership positions across various departments and divisions of the bank. Today, they are joined by their colleagues and have been prepared to be leaders, within each of their respective fields. This approach affirms our long term vision to localise knowledge resources and provide opportunities for national talent to take charge of the future."

On behalf of LEAD 3 graduates, Maytham al Zadjali said, "It was an exceptional opportunity for each of us to develop and enhance our skills and knowledge, as well as to apply it practically. I am confident that all our learn-

ings will contribute towards delivering a positive impact on the overall experience that Oman Arab Bank is keen to extend to all its customers across the sultanate. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the OAB management for giving us this great opportunity that will reflect positively on every stage of our career."

Ayman al Shehi, representative of the HRD, the supervisor of the programme said, "On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Executive Management of Oman Arab Bank, I would like to congratulate each of the 20 graduates of LEAD 3 programme."

Transform your Renault Duster with a wide selection of genuine accessories

Want to customise your Renault Duster? Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, is offering a wide range of meticulously designed genuine accessories on its popular model. Offering customer's convenience, the genuine accessories for Renault Duster serve differing needs from lifestyle, safety, technology and design.

A spokesperson for Renault Oman said, "Genuine accessories for one of our popular models is available for fitment at all Renault Oman showrooms across the sultanate. The accessories have been crafted to match owners' needs and taste. The array of genuine accessories can add to Renault Duster's attractive looks, boost its utility or augment its safety. Customers can select from a broad variety to make the ideal style statement or safety enhancement."

Among the exclusive genuine accessories available for Renault Duster are storage net (horizontal), textile floor mat (comfort, left-hand drive), side step, side step mounting support, air deflectors (front), air deflectors (rear), boot sill (stainless steel), sun visor(rear) side windows and rear screen, armrest (front, left-hand drive).

Aspirational SUV: Renault Duster

Renault brand's celebrated model the aspirational SUV Duster, is about strength, functionality, and safety. Consisting of a powerful engine, an attractive modern design, a comfortable and spacious cabin, Renault Duster is available as 1.6lt 2WD and 2.0lt 4WD or the Urban and Sports variants. Reflecting Renault's inherent characteristics of strength and



SUV capability, the Duster's variants feature a powerful engine, an attractive modern design, a comfortable and spacious cabin, in addition to strength, functionality and safety to meet the aspirations of buyers.

The SUV is characterised by powerful engines, 1.6lt 2WD and 2.0lt 4WD for off-road enthusiasts. It also has an advanced automatic transmission with outstanding performance and significant fuel economy and carbon dioxide emissions to keep pace with the current trends and needs. Renault Duster has an individually self-assured look and features a brand-new exterior styling with a more full-bodied look and boosted by a wide chrome-finish grill which extends to the headlights at the car's front corners. With a front skid plate and Renault's signature C-shaped lighting with LED daytime running lights, Renault Duster further reinforces the SUV's personality as a sturdy, yet a smart city vehicle.

One of Renault's celebrated models characterised by strength, functionality and safety, the new Renault Duster adds more splendour and elegance with its distinctive features. The sports utility vehicle offers a refreshing take on 4WD driving experience, equipped with the same off-road capability and affordability to beat the best in the market.

Renault Duster's 'Urban' and 'Sports' editions are loaded with superior SUV capabilities and enhanced features have been designed to make a statement. Equipped with multiple outstanding features and technology enhancements, it is certain to set new benchmarks in Oman. The additional features of Renault Duster's 'Urban' edition, which is a 4x2 model include a door sill, boot sill, 16" alloy wheels and side steps. Renault Duster's 4x4 model 'Sports' edition boasts of wing extension, door moulding, side bar and 16" alloy wheels along with feature

of three modes selection.

Comfortable on any terrain, Duster features roof bars that meet the highest standards in terms of solidity. On excursions with friends, bulky leisure equipment like surfboards or skis can be transported in complete safety. The Renault Duster's dashboard is modern, uncluttered and functional.

SBA commitment

SBA is largely committed to supporting Renault Oman's growth in the sultanate through major emphasis on customer satisfaction and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman. With a national network of 9 showrooms, 16 service centres & 23 spare parts outlets, SBA has further built upon its legacy of trust, excellent customer service and providing value for money to each of its customers.

For more information, visit <https://www.renault.com.om/> or call Toll Free number on 80050011.



شركة التغليف المحدودة (ش.م.ع.ع.)

Packaging Co Ltd. (SAOG)

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we present the Chairman's Report of Packaging Co Ltd (SAOG) for the half year ended on 30.06.2021.

The six months ended with revenue of RO. 4,687,810/- and net profit of RO.404,005/- (before tax) as against revenue of RO. 4,549,215/- and net profit of RO.389,533/- in the same period of previous year. The profit before depreciation was RO.646,452 compared to profit of RO.634,833/- before depreciation in the same period of previous year.

The paper availability is continue to be less and at the same time paper prices are sky rocketing. Paper prices have reached to such levels which wasn't seen before. The increased paper prices have impact over company's profitability.

We would like to place on record our thanks to all our employees for their dedication and hard work.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all of you for the patience and confidence reposed in the company. We also thank the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Muscat Securities Market for their support.

On behalf of the Board or Directors, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimur for his vision and growth oriented policies aimed at bringing about a prosperous national economy.

Chairman of the Board of Directors

Unaudited Balance sheet as at 30th June 2021

	30.06.2021 RO	30.06.2020 RO
Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	6,311,522	5,199,297
Capital Work in Progress	-	-
Available-for-sale investments	-	-
Total non-current assets	6,311,522	5,199,297
Inventories	1,657,381	1,761,791
Trade and other receivables	3,321,849	3,535,107
Insurance Claim Receivables	-	-
Cash and bank balances	4,876	121,645
Total current assets	4,984,106	5,418,543
Total assets	11,295,628	10,617,840
Equity		
Share capital	3,000,000	3,000,000
Share premium	90,811	90,811
Legal reserve	514,292	481,916
General reserve	53,378	53,378
Revaluation Reserve - Land	649,245	649,245
Cash flow hedging	-	-
Accumulated (losses)/Profit	769,161	463,300
Total equity	5,076,887	4,738,650
Liabilities		
Long Term loan from Banks	767,698	92,974
Loan from a related party	-	-
Deferred tax liability	260,688	251,763
End of service benefits	124,295	112,942
Total non-current liabilities	1,152,681	457,679
Borrowings	2,579,709	3,267,018
Term loan current portion	157,880	92,856
Trade and other payables	2,328,471	2,061,637
Total Current Liabilities	5,066,060	5,421,511
Total liabilities	6,218,741	5,879,190
Total equity and liabilities	11,295,628	10,617,840
Net Asset Per share	1.692	1.580

Unaudited Income Statement For the Half year ended on 30th June 2021

	30.06.2021 RO	30.06.2020 RO
Revenue	4,687,810	4,549,215
Cost of goods sold	(3,719,874)	(3,646,671)
Gross profit	967,936	902,544
Selling and distribution expenses	(194,902)	(241,294)
Administrative and general expenses	(295,044)	(278,000)
Other income	10,232	90,210
Profit from operations	488,222	473,460
Finance costs	(84,217)	(83,927)
Profit before taxation	* 404,005	389,533
Basic earning per share	0.135	0.130

* Income tax will be provided at the year end

Note: The Complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request them either in Arabic or English within 7 days of the receipt of the request at the company's address at PO Box No 2818, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman.

Sohar International and Al Hekmani Trading offer home loan facilities



In line with the bank’s purpose of helping people ‘win’ by delivering banking for their ever-changing world as well as supporting Omanis to achieve their dreams by making the right investments, enabling them to prosper and grow, Sohar International recently joined hands with Al Hekmani Trading to provide housing loans for the real estate developers’ properties in key locations in Oman.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed recently at the Sohar International head office located at the Waterfront, Shatti al Qurum, between Khalil Salim al Hedaifi, chief Retail Banking Officer, Sohar International and Said Ali Salim al Hekmani, chairman of Said al Hekmani Trading. According to the agreement, Sohar International will provide preferential housing loan facilities to those in-

terested in purchasing properties in the various projects developed by Al Hekmani Properties.

“Sohar International’s home financing options are designed to offer personalised services that are tailor-made to the unique needs of our customers. Our home financing options seek to support customers in making important investments and acquiring properties of their choice. By partnering with a reputable developer like Al Hekmani, we will provide our customers with a number of premium properties to choose from,” said Hedaifi.

“Real estate development is set to play a major role in the nation’s economic growth. By providing thoughtfully created home financing solutions for customers, we are committed to helping every citizen acquire their dream homes while also helping in the growth of the real

estate market.”

With the MoU in place, Sohar International will provide an opportunity for Omanis to conveniently invest in one of the many housing project developments of Al Hekmani. A reputed developer with years of experience in the industry, Al Hekmani provides premium properties at affordable prices, with a number of properties located at strategic locations, including Al Buraimi Tower in Al Hail South, Al Hekmani Tower in Mawaleh and Sharq 2 in Bausher.

Additionally, there are four properties in Al Khoudh under the names Al Thuwwara Tower, Nakhal Houses, Nakhal Towers 4 and Zuha Tower. In South Ma’abela, Al Hekmani owns three towers called Nakhal Towers 1, Nakhal Towers 2 and Numan Tower.

Emphasising on how the

strategic association complements the housing needs of the buyers with appropriate financial assistance, Hekmani said, “We pride ourselves in Al Hekmani Trading on having built our organisation based on customer trust and confidence thereby providing Omanis with an opportunity to buy real estate and in the process becoming home owners. Partnerships such as the one with Sohar International is an extension of our ongoing strategy enabling us to reach out far and wide in the market to the various customer segments making our products attainable to them through trusted financial institutions.”

Offering end-to-end services, Sohar International endeavours to support its customers every step of the way. The bank has been actively providing more and more innovative propositions to cater to customers’ evolving needs.

In addition to home financing, the bank also provides customers a range of other financing solutions to meet their varying needs. Complementing its innovative products and services are Sohar International’s dedicated team of experts who offer valuable advice and guidance to help make important financing decisions.

Through various such initiatives, tie-ups and customer-centric offers, Sohar International has grown to be a leader in the segment and a preferred banking partner for corporate companies as well as individuals.



MHD adds Blackline’s G7 safety wearables

To help keep workers safe through connected safety wearables and gas detection, Mohsin Haider Darwish (MHD) announced that it has entered into a distribution agreement with Blackline Safety. Armed with Blackline’s line-up of G7 safety wearables that feature a modular approach to gas detection; Union Supply makes it easy for businesses to adopt the latest in connected worker technology.

“Employees and workers are an integral part of any company and their safety is a top priority. Our tie-up with Blackline Safety will ensure that our clients get the best possible safety solutions for the well-being of their staff,” said Mohsin al Bahrani, CEO – MHD ACERE.

“This distribution agreement with Blackline Safety is a natural extension to our portfolio of services. By expanding our focus on

safety solutions, we are helping businesses elevate their safety program through practical and easy to manage cloud-connected safety technologies.”

“Combining MHD’s expertise with our cloud-connected safety technology, we are making it easy for businesses to modernise their approach to gas detection,” said Samy Karam Gerguis, regional sales manager with Blackline Safety.

“We’re also increasing their competitiveness through automated compliance reporting and the option for affordable team collaboration with push-to-talk built into each of our G7 safety wearables.”

Blackline Safety’s G7 line-up of cellular-connected safety wearables automatically connect to the Blackline Safety Cloud, allowing businesses to monitor the wellbeing of field and facility per-

sonnel easily and seamlessly, including lone workers. Should an incident occur — a gas leak, health event or injury — cloud-hosted emergency response management software makes it easy for a control room or Blackline’s in-house 24/7 Safety Operations Centre to respond to any incident in seconds.

As businesses transform digitally through adoption of connected technologies, Blackline’s G7 gas detection lineup automates regulatory compliance reporting through online, interactive reports. Adding further value, Blackline’s G7 wearables connect teams through push-to-talk that includes 100 channels of communication, working like a traditional two-way radio. One G7 safety wearable converges three devices into one — a traditional gas detector, a lone worker monitor and a walkie-talkie.

Indian Social Club, Sohar conducts vaccination drive

Indian Social Club, Sohar has organised the phase 1 of its COVID-19 vaccination drive. The president of India Social

Club, Sohar, Kondala Rajesh thanked all the members and the Ministry of Health for making this happen.

The drive was conducted on July 18. Indian Social Club also thanked Mazoon Dairy, Byjus,

Sohar Star Digital, Badr al Samaa and Muscat Daily for their support in the vaccination drive.



Infiniti Oman greets customers on the occasion of Eid al Adha

Infiniti Oman has extended greetings to its customers and members of the community on the occasion of the Eid al Adha, one of the most important festivals in the Islamic calendar.

A senior spokesperson at Infiniti Oman, said, “We hope this festival brings health, peace, harmony, and happiness in the lives of all our customers and community. We wish everyone a jubilant celebration while following the precautionary pandemic guidelines issued by the public health authorities.”

He added, “This Eid al Adha we would like to reiterate Infiniti Oman will remain committed to providing premium vehicles and quality service to its customers. Delivering a truly exceptional luxury experience — from the

moment a customer walks in the door, throughout the entire ownership cycle — is our top priority. We take this a opportunity to convey our deep gratitude and appreciation to our customers for their dedication to the brand.”

SBA commitment

SBA is largely committed to supporting Infiniti Oman’s growth in the sultanate through major emphasis on customer satisfaction and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman.

With a national network of more than 40 showrooms, service centres and parts outlets, SBA has further built upon its legacy of trust, excellent customer service and providing value for money to each of its customers.



MG Motor cars now available with reasonable EMIs

The British-born MG Motor has come up with irresistibly low EMI options on some of its leading models. Until end of August, MG Motor Oman customers can own the lively and capable MG5 sedan at starting EMI of RO62 only. If they are looking at SUV options, the dynamic and reliable MG HS is available for EMI of RO130 and the bold seven-seater MG RX8 can be owned for RO155 only.

With such competitive prices, the car aficionados can look forward to enjoying class-leading performances, top in line features and the ‘Do More’ experi-

ences offered by the vehicles of this historic brand.

A senior spokesperson of MHD – the exclusive distributors of the MG Motor vehicles in Oman – said., “We are thrilled to be offering some of our leading models at such a price range. MG5, MG HS and MG RX8 are stylish, exceptionally well-equipped and great value cars. They are equipped with 5-star safety features and finest automotive technology available. Our endeavor is to bring the best of products and services to our customers and our customers also look forward to being a part of

the MG family.”

Adventure, lively and capable – the MG 5 is one of the most exciting sedans around. Whether for work or for pleasure, you can be confident that the vehicle is always looking to do more to excite, with the three trim levels – STD, COM, and DEL for superior performance. Embracing the design concept of X-Motion, the dynamic MG HS is reliable and fun to drive, with some of the best technology providing a fully engaging motoring experience and a sense of adventure.

It is equipped with 2.0lt high efficiency Turbo Engine, best in

class panoramic sunroof, 5-star EURO NCAP safety and Super Sport and Eco driving modes. The seven-seater MG RX8 is a bold and capable SUV built to be noticed. The vehicle provides incredible style with off-road capability and luxurious comfort. All these cars come with best-in-region manufacturer warranty of six years or 200,000km.

MG is a British-born automotive brand established in 1924, known for its historic models, awards and achievements throughout the past 97 years. MG was founded by William Morris and Cecil Kimbers and

has one of the oldest car club in the automotive industry.

Best known for its two-seater open sports cars, MG also produced saloons and coupes. Since its acquisition of MG, SAIC Motor, as a Global Top 500 company, has opened a new chapter for this British icon. MG is at the forefront of the introduction of innovative technologies and new energy vehicles for car buyers. MG Motor showrooms in Oman are located in Watayah, Azaiba, Al Manuma, Bidaya, Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah, Sur, Ibra and Ibri. For more information, visit <https://mg-om.com/>

Clashes in Tunisia after President ousts PM

Saied also orders parliament closed for 30 days, a move the biggest party Ennahdha decried as a 'coup'

Tunis, Tunisia - Street clashes erupted on Monday outside Tunisia's army-barricaded parliament, a day after President Kais Saied ousted the prime minister and suspended the legislature, plunging the young democracy into a constitutional crisis.

Saied sacked Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi and ordered parliament closed for 30 days, a move the biggest political party Ennahdha decried as a 'coup', following a day of angry street protests against the government's handling of the COVID pandemic.

Soldiers from early Monday blockaded the assembly in Tunis while, outside, the President's supporters hurled stones and insults at backers of Islamist-inspired Ennahdha, whose leader staged a sit-in to protest being barred entry to the complex.

Saied's dramatic move - a decade on from Tunisia's 2011 revolution, often held up as the Arab Spring's sole success story - comes even though the constitution enshrines a parliamentary democracy and largely limits presidential powers to security and diplomacy.

It 'is a coup d'etat against the revolution and against the constitution', Ennahdha, which was the biggest party in Tunisia's fractious ruling coalition, charged in a Facebook post, warning that its members 'will defend the revolution'.



Tunisian President Kais Saied walks past a military vehicle after ousting the Prime Minister, in Tunis on Sunday (AFP)

The crisis follows prolonged deadlock between the president, the premier and Ennahdha chief Rached Ghannouchi, which has crippled the COVID response as deaths have surged to one of the world's highest per capita rates. 'I have taken the necessary decisions to save Tunisia, the state and the Tunisian people,' Saied declared in a statement on Sunday, a day that had seen COVID street protests flare in multiple cities.

The President's announce-

ment sparked jubilant rallies by many thousands of his supporters who flooded the streets of the capital late on Sunday to celebrate and wave the national flag, as car horns sounded through the night and fireworks lit up the sky.

'Most delicate moments'

Before the President's announcement, thousands had marched in several cities protesting against Ennahdha, criticising the lead

party in Tunisia's government for failures in tackling the pandemic.

A senior Ennahdha official alleged that the protests before Saied's announcement, and the subsequent celebrations, had all been choreographed by the president.

"We are also capable of organising large demonstrations to show the number of Tunisians who are opposed to these decisions," this official said.

Since Saied was elected in 2019, he has been locked in a

showdown with Mechichi and Ghannouchi, who is also house speaker. The rivalry has blocked ministerial appointments and diverted resources from tackling Tunisia's many economic and social problems.

"We are navigating the most delicate moments in the history of Tunisia," Saied said on Sunday.

He said the constitution did not allow for the dissolution of parliament, but did allow him to suspend it, citing Article 80 which permits it in case of 'immi-

World reacts to turmoil

Turkey

The foreign ministry said it was 'deeply concerned' by the latest development in Tunisia and called for the restoration of 'democratic legitimacy'.

"The preservation of Tunisia's democratic achievements, which is a success story in terms of the democratic process conducted in line with the expectations of people in the region, is of great importance for the region as well as for Tunisia," the ministry said.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, tweeted: 'We reject the suspension of the democratic process and the disregard of the people's democratic will in friendly and brotherly Tunisia.'

Germany

A spokeswoman for the foreign ministry, Maria Adebahr, told reporters that Germany hoped Tunisia would return 'as soon as possible to constitutional order'.

"Democracy has taken roots in Tunisia since 2011," Adebahr said, referring to the year of the popular revolution that toppled dictator Zine el Abidine Ben Ali.

Germany was 'very worried' she said, adding however: "We don't want to speak of a coup d'etat."

"It is important to return to constitutional order as quickly as possible," Adebahr said.

"We will certainly try to discuss (the situation) with the Tunisian ambassador in Berlin, and our ambassador in Tunis is ready to engage in discussions."

Russia

Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Pskov, in brief comments, said Russia was monitoring developments in Tunisia.

"We hope that nothing will threaten the stability and security of the people of that country," he told reporters at a daily phone briefing.

AFP

nent danger'.

In a later Facebook post, he clarified the suspension would be for 30 days.

Saied said he would take over executive power 'with the help'

of a government, whose new chief he would appoint himself.

He also said that parliamentary immunity would be lifted for deputies.

AFP

UN warns of 'unprecedented' civilian deaths in Afghanistan

Kabul, Afghanistan - The United Nations warned on Monday that Afghanistan could see the highest number of civilian deaths in more than a decade if the Taliban's offensives across the country are not halted.

Violence has surged since early May when the insurgents cranked up operations to coincide with a final withdrawal of US-led foreign forces.

In a report released on Monday documenting civilian casualties for the first half of 2021, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said it expected figures to touch their highest single-year levels since the mission began reporting over a decade ago.

It also warned that Afghan troops and pro-government forces were responsible for a quarter of all civilian casualties.

"Unprecedented numbers of Afghan civilians will perish and be maimed this year if the in-



US Central Command head Gen Kenneth McKenzie speaks a press conference in the US Embassy in Kabul on Sunday (AFP)

creasing violence is not stemmed,' UNAMA head Deborah Lyons said in a statement released with the report. "I implore the Taliban and Afghan leaders to take heed to the conflict's grim and chilling trajectory and its devastating impact on civilians."

During the first half of 2021,

some 1,659 civilians were killed and another 3,254 wounded, the UNAMA report said - a 47 per cent increase compared with the same period last year.

The rise in civilian casualties was particularly sharp in May and June - the initial period of the Taliban's current offensives - with 783 civilians killed and 1,609 wounded, it added.

'Particularly shocking and of deep concern is that women, boys and girls made up of close to half of all civilian casualties,' the report said.

UNAMA blamed anti-government elements for 64 per cent of civilian casualties - including some 40 per cent caused by the Taliban and nearly nine per cent by the Islamic State group.

About 16 per cent of casualties were caused by 'undetermined' anti-government elements.

But Afghan troops and pro-government forces were responsible for 25 per cent, it said.

UNAMA said about 11 per cent of casualties were caused by 'crossfire' and the responsible parties could not be determined.

The Taliban's ongoing assault has seen the insurgents capture half of Afghanistan's districts and border crossings as well as encircle several provincial capitals.

The fighting is largely in the rugged countryside, where government forces and insurgents clash daily.

The Taliban rejected the UN report.

"In the past six months, the Mujahideen of the IE (Islamic Emirate) have not deliberately killed civilians anywhere or carried out attacks that could have resulted in civilian casualties," the Taliban said in a statement.

Last week, Human Rights Watch said there was 'growing evidence' that the Taliban were committing atrocities against civilians.

AFP

India begins cleaning up landslide, flood debris as deadly rains ease

Mumbai, India - Rescuers waded through waist-deep mud in western India on Monday to reach injured residents and start a massive clean-up after heavy monsoon rains triggered landslides and floods that killed 159 people.

India's western coast was hit by severe rainstorms over several days, with a quarter of a million people evacuated from their homes in three states and power cut across vast areas.

Experts say climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of the annual deluge - which is critical to replenishing rivers and groundwater but also causes widespread death and destruction.

"The focus has now shifted to evacuating the injured and restoring electricity as water levels recede," a National Disaster Relief Force spokesperson said.

"The rainfall has stopped in most places and water levels have receded. We are helping with clean-up, relief and restora-



India's National Disaster Response Force personnel distribute food and relief materials to people in inundated areas after floods in Maharashtra's Sangli district, in western India on Monday (AFP)

tion," the spokesperson said.

In the worst-hit state Maharashtra, where the toll rose to 149 on Sunday, officials said search operations were halted in the hillside village of Taliye, southeast of Mumbai.

Some 53 bodies have been recovered in the village so far, with 17 people still missing, after a large landslide washed away people and homes on Thursday.

In the neighbouring district of Satara, 29 people were killed in multiple landslides.

And in Chiplun, 24 hours of uninterrupted rain caused water levels to rise by nearly six metres on Thursday.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday described what happened in that district as 'unimaginable'.

AFP

Beijing urges Washington to stop 'demonising' China as US official visits

Beijing, China - Beijing urged Washington to stop 'demonising' China and issued an exhaustive list of demands to repair relations on Monday, as rancour marked the start of talks with the highest-level US envoy to visit under President Joe Biden's administration.

Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman's visit to the northern city of Tianjin is the first major meeting between the world's leading economies since March discussions in Anchorage between the countries' top diplomats collapsed into mudslinging.

The preamble to Sherman's trip said she aims to seek 'guardrails' as ties deteriorate on a range of issues from cybersecurity and tech supremacy to human rights in Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

But the tone was set early in the day in statements published by Beijing.

"The hope may be that by demonising China, the US could somehow... blame China for its own structural problems," Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng told Sherman, in a readout issued by China's Foreign Ministry early on Monday.

"We urge the United States to change its highly misguided mindset and dangerous policy," the statement quoted Xie as saying, adding that Washington views China as an 'imagined enemy'.

He claimed that Chinese people view the United States' 'adversarial rhetoric as a thinly veiled attempt to contain and suppress China', in comments reminiscent of the fiery exchange between



US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman (left) with Mongolia's Culture Minister Chinbat Nomin at the Chojin Lama Temple Museum, in Mongolia's capital Ulaanbaatar on Saturday (AFP)

Washington and Beijing's top diplomats Antony Blinken and Yang Jiechi in Alaska in March.

Beijing also issued a list of demands to the US, which include

lifting sanctions on Chinese officials and visa restrictions on Chinese students as well as stopping the 'suppression' of Chinese firms, Foreign Ministry

spokesman Zhao Lijian later told reporters.

Calls for a renewed probe into the origins of the coronavirus must end, Zhao added, in a

sweeping warning to 'stop stepping on red lines'.

The United States said last week it was hoping to use the 'candid' talks as an opportunity to show Beijing 'what responsible and healthy competition looks like', but wanted to avoid the relationship veering into conflict.

Sherman will also meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

The July 25-26 trip is shorn of the trappings of a full-fledged official visit. Sherman will not go to Beijing, but instead spend two days starting Sunday in Tianjin, a northeastern port city.

The visit is widely viewed as a preparatory step for an eventual meeting between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, as US-China ties continue their freefall with little sign of improvement.

Rocky start

A day prior to Sherman landing in China, Foreign Minister Wang Yi vowed to 'teach the US a lesson' in treating other countries equally, foreshadowing a rocky start to talks. 'China will not accept any country's self-proclaimed superiority,' he said.

John Kerry, the former secretary of state turned US climate envoy, is the only other senior official from the Biden administration to have visited China.

The two sides pledged to cooperate on climate change, despite their numerous differences. Biden has largely kept the hawkish stance on China of his predecessor Donald Trump as Washington has sought to build a united front of democratic allies against Beijing.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COUNTRIES START LIFTING CURBS

Sydney, Adelaide likely to loosen restrictions soon

Melbourne, Australia - Several countries across the globe have started loosening restrictions after gaining control over the spread of the virus, besides registering a substantially high rate of vaccinations in many of them.

Lockdowns are likely to be lifted in two major Australian cities this week, authorities said on Monday, as outbreaks of the Delta variant were brought under control.

Small shops, streetside restaurants and some shopping malls reopened in Indonesia after the government loosened a shutdown in the virus-battered country on Monday.

Malaysia's government decided against extending the state of emergency beyond August 1 following mounting public anger and pressure from the King.

Around half of Australia's 25mn largely unvaccinated residents are currently under stay-at-home orders.

But while the largest city Sydney struggled to bring its outbreak to heel, the states of Victoria and South Australia re-



Police officers detain a protestor during a rally against the month-long stay-at-home orders, in Sydney on Saturday (AFP)

ported progress.

South Australia premier Steven Marshall said on Monday that a week of stay-at-

home orders would 'most likely be lifted' in the early hours of Wednesday.

The state, which includes

the city of Adelaide, reported one new infection on Monday, a case already in isolation.

Some restrictions will re-

main in place.

"We won't be going directly back to where we were," said Marshall, outlining lingering

Since the pandemic began, Australia has recorded about 33,000 infections and 918 COVID-related deaths. Just 13% of Australians have been vaccinated, with poor supplies of Pfizer-BioNTech shots and scepticism about AstraZeneca

rules on social distancing and mask-wearing. Restaurants will be seated-only and a ban on shisha pipes, dancing and singing will remain.

Similarly, authorities in Victoria - which includes Australia's second city Melbourne - said the state was 'on the right track' to also lift its lockdown early on Wednesday.

Victoria reported 11 new cases on Sunday, but all were in quarantine.

But the state's Health Minister Martin Foley cautioned that a final decision had yet to be made and the situation has been fast-changing.

Melbourne began its fifth lockdown earlier this month.

In Sydney, the picture was less rosy.

The city is struggling with its most serious COVID-19 outbreak to date, recording 145 new cases on Monday as the outbreak grew to 2,226 cases.

Sydney's month-long lockdown is almost certain to be extended on Friday.

Last week, the New South Wales state premier suggested restrictions could remain in place for another month or more, fuelling a thousands-strong protest on Saturday that was widely condemned.

Since the pandemic began, Australia has recorded about 33,000 infections and 918 COVID-related deaths.

Just 13 per cent of Australians have been vaccinated, with poor supplies of Pfizer-BioNTech shots and scepticism about the AstraZeneca jab.

AFP

40mn vaccinated with at least one jab in France

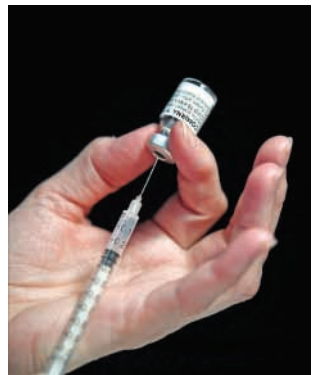
Paris, France - The number of people in France who have received at least one jab has crossed the 40mn mark, President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday.

After four million people received vaccines over the past two weeks, some 60 per cent of the population are now partly or fully vaccinated, Macron tweeted during an official visit in French Polynesia.

"All together, we will beat the virus. We will carry on," he said.

The Health Ministry added on Monday that some 33.2mn people in France, close to 50 per cent of the population, are now fully vaccinated.

The announcement comes a day after France's parliament voted to make vaccine passports a key part of daily life in



A nurse prepares a shot of the vaccine, in Garlan, France (AFP)

the battle against COVID-19.

Macron last week ordered the health pass - proof of full vaccination or a negative test - mandatory for visits to venues such as cinemas or nightclubs.

His government has made vaccinations the top weapon against COVID-19 as new vari-

ants emerge, essentially requiring people to become inoculated if they want to continue daily routines.

Vaccine passports have encountered fierce opposition from some, who believe they erode civil liberties. At weekend protests against the rules, over 160,000 people rallied and dozens were arrested.

Commenting on the demonstrations at the weekend, Macron said people who refused COVID jabs were 'selfish' and 'irresponsible'.

Prime Minister Jean Castex has said that 50mn people will be vaccinated with at least one jab by the end of August.

France recorded over 16,000 new cases on Sunday after almost 23,000 on Saturday.

AFP

Indonesia loosens curbs despite warnings

Jakarta, Indonesia - Small shops, streetside restaurants and some shopping malls reopened in coronavirus-battered Indonesia on Monday after the government loosened a shutdown despite warnings it could unleash another COVID-19 wave.

President Joko Widodo said on Sunday that a partial lockdown imposed in early July would continue until August 2 even as the highly infectious Delta variant tears across the vast archipelago nation, which has overtaken India and Brazil to become the global pandemic epicentre.

But restrictions on many small businesses, including traditional markets and ubiquitous open-air eateries known as warungs, were loosened even in the worst-hit areas. "We're opening for dining in again," Syaifurrohmah, a seafood eatery



Soldiers deliver oxygen to a hospital in Bandung on Monday (AFP)

owner who like many Indonesians goes by one name, said.

"I hope Jakarta recovers quickly because this busy place is where we make a living."

Shopping malls and mosques in less affected parts of the Muslim majority nation also got the green light to open their doors to limited crowds and shorter hours.

Offices were still under shut-

down orders, although there have been widespread reports of employers flouting earlier lockdown rules.

Papua eyes lockdown

Tens of millions live hand to mouth in the nation of about 270mn, making the strict lockdowns seen in some countries next to impossible.

But Widodo's government has been widely criticised over its handling of the pandemic and policies that critics say prioritised Southeast Asia's largest economy over public health.

The government announcement on Sunday came just days after Indonesia saw its 24-hour death toll hit a record 1,566, and as the World Health Organization called on the country to impose tighter curbs.

Widodo has pointed to falling daily infection and hospital occupancy rates as justification for the easing. Official case rates are down, but testing rates have also declined and the number of positive results remains high - suggesting the virus was still spreading quickly.

Authorities on the holiday island warned that oxygen supplies were running low.

AFP

Malaysia decides to end emergency as parliament convenes after shutdown

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Malaysia's government will not extend a controversial coronavirus state of emergency beyond August 1, a minister said on Monday, as parliament convened after a months-long suspension that sparked widespread anger.

The king in January declared the country's first nationwide state of emergency in more than half a century to fight COVID-19, following the advice of Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

It allowed the government to rule by decree and suspend parliament, prompting critics to accuse Muhyiddin of using the crisis to avoid a no-confidence vote and shore up his weak coalition.

Despite the emergency and a nationwide lockdown, the outbreak only worsened, fuelled by the highly infectious Delta variant. Malaysia's caseload breached the one million mark at the weekend, and there have been around 8,000 deaths.



Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin addresses a special session of the parliament, in Kuala Lumpur on Monday (AFP)

Facing mounting public anger and pressure from the king, Muhyiddin agreed to reconvene the legislature for a five-day sitting before the state of emergency officially ends next month.

However, the opposition has slammed the short session as a sham that will not truly test the embattled premier's support.

As lawmakers gathered in the 222-seat lower house Monday wearing masks and separated by transparent screens, Law Minister Takiyuddin Has-

san announced the government would not request an extension of the state of emergency.

Muhyiddin also defended his handling of the pandemic in an address to the legislature, saying he understood 'the public's anxiety amid the spike in COVID cases'.

"The government is not sitting back and watching the public suffer - (we are) acting to save lives."

Other ministers are due to brief MPs on matters related to

the pandemic.

But opposition lawmakers expressed anger at not being able to debate or vote on anything during the session, pointing out the king himself had called for important issues to be scrutinised.

"The Prime Minister has acted as a traitor for not adhering to the wishes of the King," opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim told the legislature.

Muhyiddin, who seized power in March last year without an election after the collapse of a reformist government, has seen his administration riven by infighting.

The biggest party backing him, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), announced it was withdrawing support for his coalition earlier this month.

But UMNO itself is split - some of its MPs still back Muhyiddin - and his position seems secure in the short term.

AFP

Iran's daily caseload exceeds 30,000 in new high: Ministry

Tehran, Iran - Iran's daily COVID caseload crossed the 30,000 mark for the first time on Monday, its Health Ministry said, marking a second record daily high within a week.

In the past 24 hours, the Islamic republic registered a record 31,814 new infections to bring its total number of positive cases since the start of the pandemic to 3,723,246.

It also recorded 322 additional coronavirus-related deaths, taking the total to 89,122.

Iran's daily infections had hit a record of 27,444 last Tuesday, prompting the national virus taskforce to close down government offices and banks in Tehran and nearby Alborz provinces for several days.

Those strict measures, a first since the pandemic began, ended on Monday

In the past 24 hours, Iran registered a record 31,814 new infections; total cases rise to 3,723,246

HEALTH MINISTRY

morning. Iran has so far avoided imposing a full nationwide lockdown, employing instead limited measures such as temporary travel bans and business closures.

Authorities have previously admitted that the official figures do not account for all cases but those numbers still make Iran the hardest-hit country in the Middle East.

Earlier this month, outgoing President Hassan Rouhani warned of a 'fifth wave' of in-

fection fuelled by the highly contagious Delta variant of the virus.

Iran has pinned its hopes on vaccinations to help with the health crisis but its inoculation campaign since early February has progressed more slowly than authorities had planned.

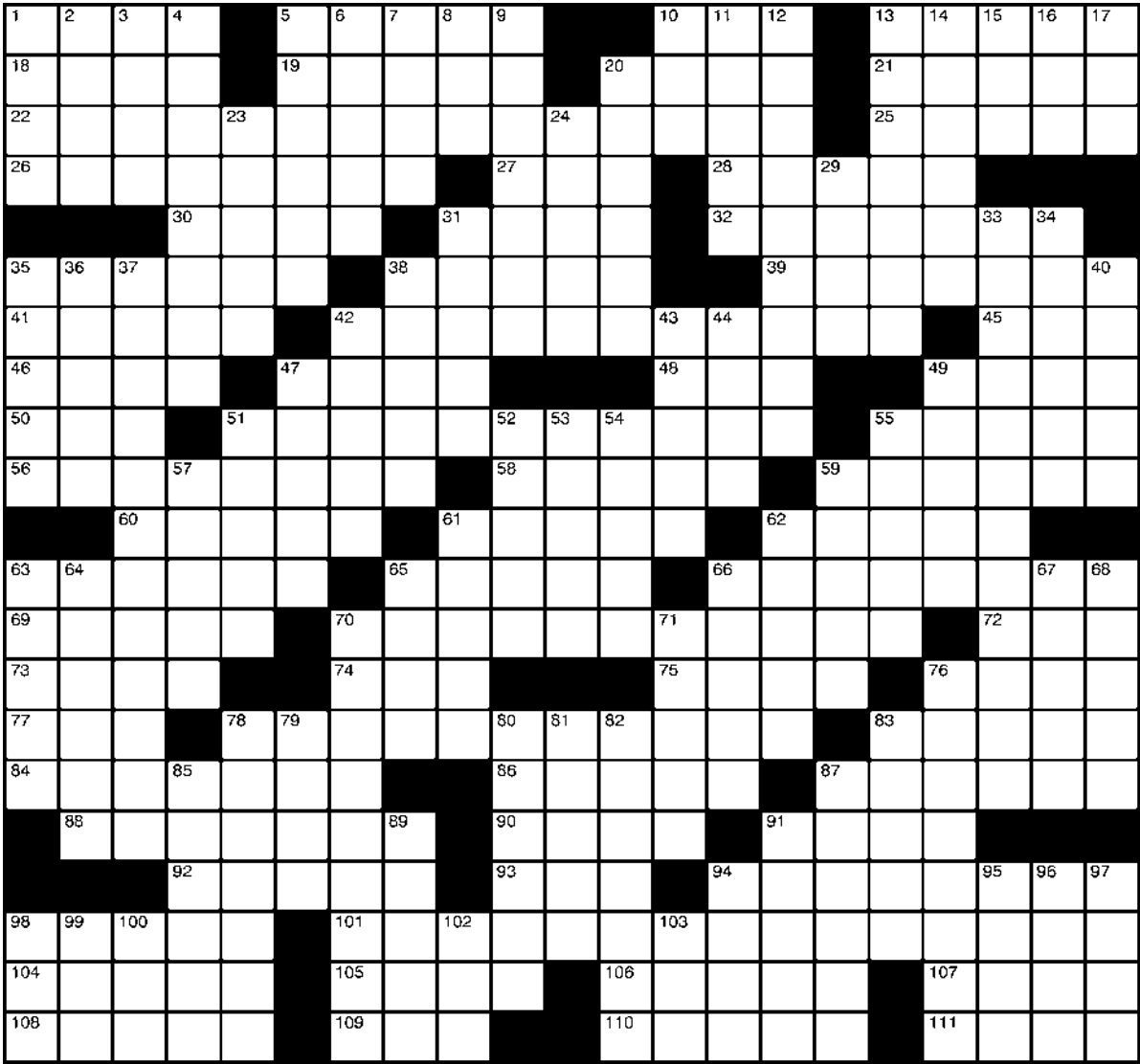
Iran, strangled by US sanctions that have made it difficult to transfer money to foreign firms, says it is struggling to import vaccines.

The authorities have approved the emergency use of two locally produced vaccines, with the only mass-produced one, COVIran Barekat, still in short supply.

Just over 8.1mn people have received a first dose, and 2.4mn have received the necessary two jabs, the Health Ministry said on Monday.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



©2020 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All rights reserved

ACROSS

- 1 ___ Off
5 Stove setting
10 Moray
13 Disconcert
18 Join forces
19 1944 Tierney hit
20 Pedro's wave
21 Composer/teacher
Boulanger
22 Pour?
25 Composer Philip
26 Visionary
27 Actress Ruby
28 Billie Sol ___
30 ___-war bird
31 Marshy area
32 Wildlife museum
display
35 Seek after
38 Pub game
39 Shaking: pl.
41 Food portion
42 Indulge in
frivolous activity
45 Defense org.
46 ___ along
47 Luxuriant hair
48 Olden times, in
olden times
49 Related by
blood
50 Manipulate
fraudulently
51 Capsizes
55 Relate
harmoniously
56 Flavored liqueur
58 "Mignon" or

"Manon"

- 59 French Lacoste
co. city
60 Hawaii's state
birds
61 Try
62 Hideouts
63 Straggled
65 Argosy
66 Redeeming
place
69 Left, looking
ahead
70 Fitting together
compactly
72 Highest mountain
in Crete
73 Pouting grimace in
Paris
74 100 square
meters
75 Vatican or Dodge
76 1957 Nabokov
novel
77 Model/actress
Carol
78 Speaks bluntly
83 Eskimo language
kin
84 Somewhat dull
86 Wickerwork
willow
87 Fits
88 Type of shopping
90 Prospector gear
91 Auricular
92 Jack or Lash
93 Hen's gift
94 Shooting script

- 98 Street urchin
101 Secretly faithless
friend?
104 Century plant
105 Van Druten's "___
Camera"
106 Land-locked
African republic
107 Vilth century
date
108 1992 French
Open champ
109 E. England isle
110 Hollywood's Will
and Ellen
111 "My sun ___ to
rise again":
Browning

DOWN

- 1 ___ passu: at an
equal rate
2 "When I was
___ . . .": W.S.
Gilbert
3 Netman Nastase
4 Kinetics
5 1884 loser to
Cleveland
6 Hoffman's Rizzo
7 Eject
8 George's sib
9 Van Buren's kin
10 "Talking Heads"
producer
11 Trimmmed the lawn
12 Languor
13 Aroused wrath in
14 Type of fir
15 Act to protect the

- disabled: abbr.
16 Bro's rel.
17 Possesses
20 Black Sea port
23 Galway neighbor
24 Al ___: chewy
29 Divided with doubt
31 Bus passengers
33 Playful trickery
34 Flammable poison
gas
35 "Ad ___ per aspera"
36 Terminated
37 Eating excessively
38 Poetic clergyman
John
40 Moments of time
42 Adult male red
deer: pl.
43 Sample a second
time
44 Earthen cooking
pot
47 Deadened the
sound of
49 Then, in Thiers
51 Group's principle
52 "We're off ___ the
wizard . . ."
53 Distressed
54 Lariat
55 Take along
57 1959 American
Nobel physicist
59 Golden brown
61 Fairy-tale folk
62 Clergy's
counterpart
63 Actor Fernando

- 64 Greek god of light
65 Branch
66 Steady worker
67 Intense hatred
68 Trousers
70 Town in Canada
or India
71 Roosevelt Cabinet
member
76 Public notices
78 Herbal infusions
79 Heavenly sci.
80 City on the
Kansas River
81 Established
practice
82 "Bells Are ___"
83 Imitating
85 " . . . the human
heart by which
___": Wordsworth
87 Directs
89 Type of colony
91 Redish-brown
paint pigment
94 Elec. battery type
95 Rapid current of
water
96 Mr. Mister's "___
Love"
97 Medical suffix
98 Radon, for one
99 Mature
100 ___ de mer
102 Carter or Lowell
103 Never, in Berlin

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

You'll have to do a bit of selling today -- either for yourself or for a project you want other people to pitch in on. If all you do is focus on what you want out of them, folks may find you a bit insensitive. But if you focus on what's in it for them, you can get their attention and get them on board! Put yourself in their position and think how they would think. Keep communication simple.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Nothing short of intense, meaningful conversation will do, and anyone who deliberately tries to avoid the issue via pointless, trivial chitchat will receive their just desserts: A chilly stare and a fleeting glimpse of the back of your head. By the same token, if you've been deliberately avoiding a topic your sweetheart has tried to bring up for weeks, you'll change your tune in a hurry.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Every picture tells a story, so go ahead and dig out those old snapshots of you and that long-lost someone you haven't talked to in forever. Wow -- look how much fun you guys had together! Isn't it a shame you drifted apart and lost touch? Wouldn't it be great to get in contact and see how they're doing now? And isn't it funny that these are all questions you can answer?



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You're happy with yourself. You always have been, and there's no reason to think that you won't continue to be. You have, however, been thinking about introducing a new and improved you to the world. The thing is, you'll have to create this person before you throw his or her coming out party. That's the easy part. Believe it or not, it's deciding when to do it that takes the real work.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your chance to turn one of your dreams into a goal and tackle that goal with your usual meticulous attention has now officially arrived -- and if you're dealing with the department of long-distance travel, higher education or spiritual quests, you'll have all the heavenly help you could ever ask for to get the show on the road. Go for it.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

Fasten your seatbelt and put your tray table in its upright position. You're about to take flight -- and that applies to every possible corner of your life, but most especially to affairs of the heart. So if you've been seeing someone casually, that won't be the case any longer. One or both of you will either want to make a commitment or say your goodbyes.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

You're due for the type of experience that includes the urge to take yourself somewhere you've never been. If you have a spontaneous travel companion who's prodding you, that urge may be especially irresistible. Oh, well. Put your nose to the grindstone and spend the evening immersed in a pile of brochures and maps -- for a future time.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your sign's skills as negotiator, mediator and go-between have been famous for what seems like forever, and with good reason. You can talk anyone into anything, so long as you believe in your heart that it's the right thing to do. So when you're approached by someone who needs you to help them deliver the unvarnished truth, you won't just accept the job -- you'll volunteer for it.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

If anyone accepts change easily, it's you -- regardless of what type of change it happens to be, or how or when it's due to arrive. So being told that a major shift in your life's circumstances is just around the corner won't frighten you at all. You'll be exhilarated. If a family member doesn't greet the news with that same degree of enthusiasm, however, do what you can to help them adjust.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

You've always been known as a private person. That's the way you were born and the way you'll always be. So when someone approaches you with a smirk and a not-so-subtle question about what you have up your sleeve at the moment, don't feel obligated to let them in on your secret -- and make sure you know that's how you feel.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

After days of heavy conversations, you've finally reached a compromise of sorts. You'll keep talking, but there will be absolutely no arguing. If you can't see eye to eye, you'll agree to disagree. Initially, that might not sound like progress. But if you think of where you've come from, you'll realise that it's not just progress -- it's the beginning of a new style of communication.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Donating time, energy or resources to a cause you care about has never been a problem. You're amazingly generous. So when you're approached by someone who needs something from you, you definitely won't argue about it. But if someone who loves you gently asks to look things over before you max out the cash limit on your card, don't argue.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which day is observed as World No Smoking Day ?

- a. July 15
b. December 31
c. January 1
d. May 31

2. The birthday of which of the leader in India is observed as Children's day?

- a. Mahatma Gandhi
b. S Radhakrishnan
c. Rajiv Gandhi
d. Jawaharlal Nehru

3. The United Nations declared 1993 as a year of the

- a. disabled
b. forests
c. girl child
d. indigenous people

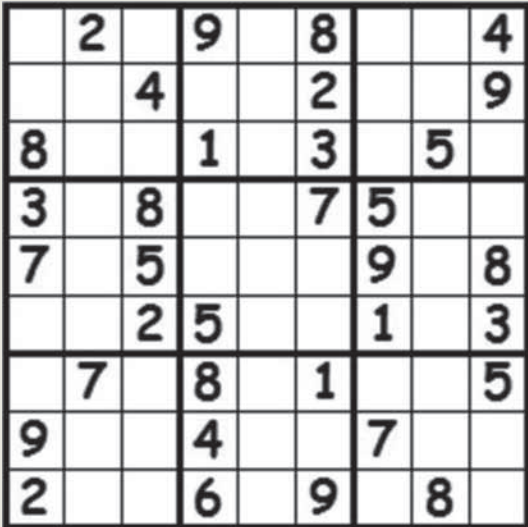
Answers: 1. d 2. c 3. d

KIDS COLOURING



DO YOU SUDOKU?

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



BOGGLER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER



DAILY CROSSWORD ANSWERS (JULY 26)



WORD BUILDER

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

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



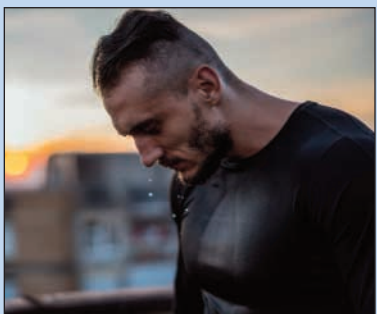
AVOID
HEATSTROKE

With the rising temperatures and humidity levels in Oman, heat exhaustion is something which most people experience while doing routine tasks each day. However, a heatstroke is a more serious condition caused due to prolonged exposure to high temperatures which may raise the body temperature more than the normal body temperature - 37° C. And, if your body temperature rises above 40° C it can lead to serious consequences, and so, immediate medical attention would be necessary.

Heatstroke can occur in two forms – as a consequence of exposure to a hot environment for prolonged periods (non-exertional heatstroke) and one caused due to strenuous activity in a hot environment (exertional heatstroke). While the former is a classic condition experienced by adults as well as those suffering from chronic illnesses, the latter is experienced by those exercising or doing hard work in a hot weather, especially if one is not used to high temperatures.

During heatwave conditions, infants and young children are also at risk because they need someone to watch out for them to detect abnormal signs and symptoms which might point towards heatstroke. Hence, leaving children alone in hot cars, while adults do shopping, is a very risky proposition, even if the windows are left open.

The increased risk for heatstroke, however, is not limited to young children and old



Key signs and symptoms

- High body temperature of 40° C (104° F) or higher.
- Altered mental state or behaviour (Confusion, agitation, slurred speech, irritability, delirium, and seizures).
- Alteration in sweating - your skin will feel hot and dry to the touch.
- Nausea and vomiting - you may feel sick to your stomach or vomit.
- Flushed skin - your skin may turn red
- Rapid or shallow breathing
- Racing heart rate - heat stress places a tremendous burden on the heart.
- Headache – throbbing headache for some.

people. Young adults exposed to heat for long periods of time, as in those waiting in long queues in the hot sun or at public transport junctions or unshaded areas, without

adequate skin protection, can also develop heatstroke. Those taking up outdoor exercises such as jogging, running, cycling, etc when the heat is on are also exposed to the risk of suffering from heatstroke. In particular, people with chronic diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, congestive heart failure, and coronary artery disease, are at higher risk.

Prevention

Heatstroke is, however, preventable if you take the right precautions during hot weather:

Always wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing. Wearing excess or tight outfits prevents the body from cooling down.

Protect against sunburn. Sunburn affects your body's ability to cool itself, so protect yourself outdoors with a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses and use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Apply sunscreen generously every two hours, especially if you are swimming or sweating.

Drink plenty of fluids. Staying hydrated will help your body sweat and maintain a normal body temperature.

Take extra precautions with certain medications. Be on the lookout for heat-related problems if you take medications that can affect your body's ability to stay hydrated and dissipate heat.

Never leave anyone in a parked car. This is a common cause of heat-related deaths in children. When parked in the sun, the temperature in your car can rise by over 10 degrees in 10 minutes.

HYDRATION
OPTIONS

Low fluid levels in your body are conducive to heatstroke symptoms. If you are not drinking enough water or juices to replenish fluids lost through sweating, you tend to expose yourself to the risk. Your body needs to be hydrated all the time to be able to respond to the heat. Consider the following home remedies to stay hydrated:

Onion juice

This is one of the best remedies for treating a heatstroke. Ayurvedic practitioners suggest that this should be the first thing that you must reach out for. Applying onion juice behind the ears and on your chest can help bring down your body temperature. You can roast some raw onions with cumin and honey and have it. Raw onions in salads are also good.



Raw mango drink

A refreshing drink made with raw mangoes and spices helps cool your body. You may drink raw mango juice two to three times in a day for a better effect. Raw mango pulp mixed with a little cumin, fennel, pepper and rock salt provides your body with energy and electrolytes to fight heatstroke.



Tamarind drink

Tamarind is rich in vitamins, minerals and electrolytes. Soak some tamarind in boiling water. Strain it and drink it with 1tsp of sugar. This decoction lowers your body temperature.



Plums

Plums are a great source of antioxidants and are known to be very hydrating. These antioxidants lend anti-inflammatory properties that help in soothing internal inflammation that may be caused due to a heatstroke. Soak some plums in water till they are soft. Eat them as a fruit or prepare a refreshing juice to calm the body.



Apple cider

Add few drops of apple cider vinegar in your fruit juice or mix it with plain cool water and honey. This helps in replenishing the minerals and electrolytes that are lost in hot climates.



Buttermilk

The most refreshing drink in summer, buttermilk is a good source of probiotics and helps in replenishing your body with essential vitamins and minerals that may be lost due to excessive sweating. Similarly, coconut water rehydrates your body by naturally balancing the electrolytes in your body.



Mint and coriander

Extracting the juice of coriander or mint leaves and drinking it with a pinch of sugar is an easy home remedy to bring down the body heat. According to Ayurveda, these herbs have a cooling effect on the body. Coriander juice can also be applied for soothing hot itchy skin.



BE COOL



TOKYO 2020

HOSTS DOMINATE

Japan top medals table; Britain's Daley finally strikes gold in diving

Tokyo, Japan - Japan topped the medals table at the Tokyo Olympics after the host nation won three golds on Monday and British diver Tom Daley was finally crowned an Olympic champion at his fourth Games in an emotional triumph.

Heading the Japanese charge was 13-year-old skateboarder Momiji Nishiya who took gold while Shohei Ono, one of Japan's biggest judo stars, won his second straight Olympic title with a victory over Georgian world champion Lasha Shvdat-uashvili at the Nippon Budokan, the spiritual home of the sport.

Japan's third gold, and eighth of the Games so far, came in a table tennis shock as mixed doubles pair Jun Mizutani and Mima Ito claimed their country's first ever Olympic title in the sport.

China had won every Olympic table tennis gold medal since the 2004 Athens Games, but the reigning world champions, Xu Xin and Liu Shiwen, blew a two-game lead in a thrilling final as the Japanese won 5-11, 7-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-9, 6-11, 11-6.



Japan's Jun Mizutani (R) and Mima Ito celebrate after winning the mixed doubles table tennis final on Monday (AFP)

Tribute to dad

Tears flowed at the diving venue as Britain's Daley claimed a surprise first Olympic gold in the men's synchronised 10m platform event with Matty Lee.

The 27-year-old Daley is hugely popular in Britain, where he has spent half of his life in the public eye and become an LGBT figurehead. His Olympic journey began as a 14-year-old at the 2008 Beijing Games and he won bronzes at the 2012 and 2016 Rio Olympics, but a gold medal had remained frustratingly elusive.

However on Monday, Daley and Lee capitalised after a rare



Gold medalists Thomas Daley (L) and Matty Lee of Great Britain pose after winning the men's synchronised 10m platform diving final on Monday (AFP)

blunder by China's Chen Aisen and Cao Yuan to snatch gold.

A tearful Daley paid tribute to late father Rob, who died of cancer in 2011 at the age of 40. "He never saw me win an Olympic medal, get married, have a child, teach me to drive, have a pint down the pub," said Daley.

"He took me to every training session, every competition, he was always there."

Elsewhere on Monday, Tom Pidcock won the mountain bike cross-country title for Britain's third gold of the day.

Monday's action got under way with chaotic scenes at the men's triathlon, eventually won by Norway's Kristian Blummenfelt. In a farcical false start, around two-thirds of the 56 competitors dived into the water and set off on the swimming leg only to be hauled back. The bungled start was caused by a media boat filming the competitors before they dived in for the swimming leg.

NBA star Luka Doncic made a sensational Olympic debut, hitting 48 points as Slovenia routed Argentina 118-100.

COVID-19 continued to stalk the Games however, with Dutch tennis players Jean-Julien Rojer and Wesley Koolhof pulling out of the men's doubles after Rojer tested positive for coronavirus.

AFP



Belgium's Alexander Robby Hendrickx (R) celebrates with Thomas Briels after scoring against Germany on Monday (AFP)

Second successive wins for Belgium and Great Britain

HOCKEY

Tokyo, Japan - Belgium and Great Britain were on joint top of men's Pool B hockey event after both recorded second successive victories at the Oi Hockey Stadium on Monday.

Cedric Charlier hit a double as reigning World and FIH Hockey Pro League maintained their 100% winning start with a 3-1 victory over European rivals Germany. Great Britain moved level on points with Belgium by claiming their second win on the bounce, beating Canada 3-1.

In the women's competition, world and European champions the Netherlands produced a dominant display to record a 4-0 victory over Ireland, making it two wins from their two matches in Pool

A. The Hockeyroos routed China 6-0 in a Pool B game.

In other women's games, New Zealand and Germany claimed their second successive wins while Argentina kick-started their title challenge with a 3-0 win over Spain in Pool B.

Germany made it a maximum six points from two games, courtesy of a 2-0 win over India. The result moved Die Danas on

points with the Netherlands at the top of Pool A. New Zealand joined Oceania rivals Australia at the top of Pool B with six points as they overcame hosts Japan 2-1. In Pool A, defending champions Great Britain got their title defence underway, fighting back from a goal down to beat South Africa 4-1.



CLASSIFIEDS

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

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

- 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

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

MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCES

Proposals are invited for a very pleasing Muslim boy. He is 27 years and 179cm tall. He is qualified in MBA-Marketing from Mumbai University. He is employed in Ruwi, Oman. We are looking for a Muslim girl, under 25 years of age, speaking Hindi/Urdu. She should be employed in Oman. Contact: 99762681

نورة مسقط للتجارة والمقاولات
Nawara Muscat Trading & Contracting

OUR FIRST PRIORITY IS YOUR LIFE
we offer special rates
specialized sterilization services for places and sites where cases of coronavirus appear

our services includes
COMPANIES- HOME- SHOPS

phone: 96691225 - 97722215 - inst: @nawara_muscat_cleaning
email: info@nawaraco.com - web: www.nawara.com

uniQue CITY TRADING

EDUCATION FURNITURE

LABOUR CAMP FURNITURE

OUTDOOR SHADES

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

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

MUSCAT DAILY

R024 1 YEAR (Actual price: R052)
R015 6 MONTHS

Toll free no: 80076000
E-mail: customercare@apexmedia.co.om

an apex media | منشور PUBLICATION | القبة للإعلام

www.apexmedia.co.om

TOKYO 2020



Djokovic, Osaka cruise; women's seeds tumble



Serbia's Novak Djokovic serves to Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff during their second round match on Monday (AFP)

TENNIS
Tokyo, Japan - Novak Djokovic strolled into the third round of the Tokyo Olympics tennis tournament on Monday as Japanese star Naomi Osaka's path to gold opened up further after a host of leading women's seeds exited at Ariake Tennis Park.
Djokovic smacked 14 aces in a 6-4, 6-3 win over Germany's 48th-ranked Jan-Lennard Struff and will play Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina for a place in the quarterfinals.
"I was struggling with certain things in the first round, but today was far more pleasant to play, just a higher level of tennis on my side," said world No 1 Djokovic.
Osaka raced into the last-16 as she powered past Switzerland's Viktorija Golubic 6-3, 6-2 in just over an hour, playing her second match in as many days after lighting the Olympic cauldron on Friday.

Sabalenka, Swiatek and Kvitova lose
The second seed is the highest-ranked player left in the women's draw following the shock first-round exit of world No 1 and Wimbledon champion Ashleigh Barty.
Third seed Aryna Sabalenka

was beaten by Donna Vekic in the second round Monday.
Sabalenka lost 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/3) to Vekic, while 2020 French Open champion Iga Swiatek was left in tears after going down in straight sets to Spain's Paula Badosa.
Belgium's Alison Van Uytvanck knocked out Czech tenth seed Petra Kvitova in three sets as Sara Sorribes Tormo backed up her defeat of Barty with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Fiona Ferro.
Elina Svitolina was in danger of joining the exodus of top players, but the Ukrainian scrapped her way past Ajla Tomljanovic 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.
French Open champion Barbora Krejickova beat Canadian teenager Leylah Fernandez 6-2, 6-4 and two-time Grand Slam winner Garbine Muguruza beat China's Wang Qiang.
Alexander Zverev is a potential semifinal opponent for Djokovic. The German strolled past Colombia's Daniel Elahi Galan 6-2, 6-2 and second seed Daniil Medvedev thrashed India's Sumit Nagal 6-2, 6-1.
Medvedev will play the volatile Fabio Fognini in round three, with Spanish sixth seed Pablo Carreno Busta getting the better of Marin Cilic 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.



Japan's Naomi Osaka in action against Switzerland's Viktorija Golubic

MEDALS TABLE

(Only selected nations)



	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Japan	8	2	3	13
USA	7	3	4	14
China	6	5	7	18
ROC*	4	5	3	12
Great Britain	3	3	1	7
South Korea	3	0	4	7
Australia	2	1	3	6
Kosovo	2	0	0	2
Italy	1	4	4	9
France	1	2	2	5
Canada	1	2	1	4
Hungary	1	1	0	2
Tunisia	1	1	0	2
Croatia	1	0	1	2
Slovenia	1	0	1	2
Austria	1	0	0	1
Ecuador	1	0	0	1
Hong Kong, China	1	0	0	1

(ROC* - Russian Olympic Committee)

Russian men edge Japan for gold

ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS

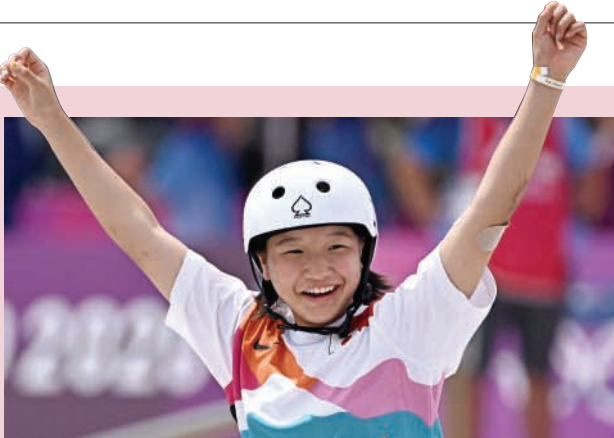
Tokyo, Japan - Nikita Nagornyy led the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) team to the men's artistic gymnastics gold at the Tokyo Olympics on Monday to add to their world title. The Russians turned the tables on Japan, who had pipped them to the title in Rio 2016. China had to settle for bronze.
Nagornyy joined Artur Dalaloyan - who was competing after recovering from an Achilles tendon injury in April - David Belyavskiy and Denis Ablyazin. The Russians last won the men's team title in 1996.

The outcome of the first gold on offer at the gymnastics competition was in the balance until the final tumble on the floor.
China were within less than a point of the Rio silver medalists going into the sixth rotation, with Japan set for third.
But a brilliant last throw of the dice on the horizontal bars from Tokyo teenager Daiki Hashimoto, earning a high 15.100 points, propelled the Games' hosts back into at least second. With the pulses racing,



ROC's Nikita Nagornyy competes in the vault event on Monday

Nagornyy chalked up his feet and hands and took to the floor to try to get the ROC team over the line.
And the world all-around champion pulled it off superbly, his score of 14.666 securing the ROC a memorable win. They finished with a total of 262.500 points, with Japan on 262.397 and China with 261.894. Britain finished fourth ahead of the United States, Switzerland and Ukraine.
AFP



Japan's Momiji Nishiya celebrates her gold medal win on Monday (AFP)

Battle of teens! Olympic champ at the age of 13

SKATEBOARDING

Tokyo, Japan - Japan's Momiji Nishiya became one of the youngest individual Olympic champions in history when she won the inaugural women's skateboarding gold at the age of 13 years and 330 days on Monday.
Nishiya finished ahead of Brazil's Rayssa Leal - who at 13 years and 203 days could have become the youngest ever individual Olympic champion - and Japan's Funa Nakayama, 16.
Nishiya starred in the tricks section to score 15.26 and give

the hosts a clean-sweep of the street discipline as skateboarding makes its Olympic debut. Skateboarding is one of four sports making their debut in Tokyo, along with surfing, sport climbing and karate as part of an attempt to bring the Olympics to younger audiences.
US diver Marjorie Gestring remains the youngest individual Olympic champion after winning the 3m springboard at the 1936 Berlin Games at 13 years and 268 days.
AFP



EYE-BALL BASKET



Spain's Marc Gasol goes to the basket past Japan's Rui Hachimura (2L) in the men's preliminary round Group C basketball match during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Saitama Super Arena in Saitama on Monday. Spain won the match 88-77 (AFP)



TOKYO 2020



OMAN AT OLYMPICS

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

On Tuesday, when the starting gun goes off at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Tokyo, Japan, at 3.06pm (Oman time), a dream will come true for Oman's talented swimmer Issa al Adawi, who will be making his debut at the Olympic Games in the 100m freestyle race.

It will be a culmination of a decade long journey for 22 year old Adawi, that saw him go through rigorous training sessions and compete in hundreds of competitions.

His talent saw him dominate in age-group competitions at domestic and at Gulf events and it was not long before the Oman Swimming Association (OSA) realised that they had a swimmer who could do the nation proud.

As a teenager, Oman's Issa al Adawi, dreamt of participating at the world's biggest sporting stage - Tokyo Olympics - and his pursuit to achieve was strengthened by his determination and desire to excel.

And Adawi's love for Japan is no surprise as his mother, Hiroko Jimbo, hails from Kanagawa Prefecture, south of Tokyo.

For the past three years, Adawi, with the support of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) and the OSA, has been training after receiving a scholarship at the Chukyo University in Nagoya, Japan, under the supervision of his Japanese coach Kusanagi Kenta.

With his career-best timing of 51.69s, Adawi is placed in Heat No 3 in lane one, along with seven other competitors. A total of nine heats are scheduled in the 100m freestyle on Tuesday with 16 of the 72 swimmers in fray

ADAWI SET FOR 'DREAM' DEBUT



Issa al Adawi (L) and Ayman al Kulaibi at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre on Sunday



L-R: Kazem al Balushi, Taha al Kishry, Issa al Adawi and Ayman al Kulaibi at the Olympic Village in Tokyo, Japan, on Monday

advancing to the next round.

Ahead of his debut, Adawi said, "My aim is to give my best. This is the biggest sporting stage and I am proud to represent Oman here. It was my dream to take part in Olympics and what

better stage and place than in Japan, the country of my mother's birth."

Adawi's mother, Hiroko, hails from a small seaside town of Zushi, next to medieval Samurai capital of Kamakura in

Kanagawa Prefecture.

Among the eight swimmers in Heat 3, Adawi's timing is seventh best. "For me, to improve my personal best would be an achievement. I am confident of doing it and I am looking forward

to the race," he said on Monday.

Training for the Games was hampered for him as COVID-19 restrictions caused disruptions but Adawi is focused and is set to make a splash, literally, for Oman, on Tuesday.

Prior to the Olympics, Adawi had participated at the FINA World Championships in Gwangju, South Korea, in 2019 and the Asian Games in Indonesia in 2018.

He also took part in the Pan Pacific Championships in Tokyo in 2018, the same year when he competed at the FINA World Short Course Championships in Hangzhou, China.

Adawi was also one of Oman's participant at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Earlier on Friday, Adawi carried the sultanate's flag at the opening ceremony and said 'it was a memory that will last forever'.

Meanwhile, OSA chairman and OOC secretary general Taha al Kishry met Adawi and the national swimming team coach Ayman al Kulaibi in the presence of Oman's chef-de-mission Kazem al Balushi at the Olympic Village on Monday.

Kishry wished Adawi the very best and congratulated him on making his debut. He said, "We are confident that Adawi will represent the sultanate in an honourable manner and achieve his personal best."

Lifter Khanjari to compete on July 31

Oman's other Olympic Games debutant, Amur al Khanjari, 20, will be competing in the 81kg class of the weightlifting event, on July 31. Experienced marksman Hamed al Khatiri, who will be taking part in his second Games, will be in action on August 2 in the 50m rifle three position men's qualification round.

Oman's only women participant Mazoon al Alawi will make her second Olympic appearance when she runs in the 100m round one heat on July 30.

The sultanate's fastest sprinter, Barakat al Harthi, will feature in the 100m heat on July 31. For Harthi, this will be his third consecutive Olympic Games, equalling the record of legendary Omani athlete, Mohammed al Malki, who too, took part in three successive Games (1984, 1988 and 1992).

@ashokmuscat

Bonus prize for medal: 30 seconds mask-free photos!

Tokyo, Japan - Olympic athletes have received an extra incentive for winning a medal after organisers said they could remove their masks for 30 seconds for photos on the podium.

Medal-winners were urged not to abuse the relaxation in the rules at the Tokyo Games, which have been marked by their strict anti-coronavirus measures after opening a year late.

"The idea is to give those athletes who have been competing, when everyone else has stepped back, the chance to remove their mask for 30 seconds, staying on those steps for photos," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said on Monday.

"I think everyone appreciates, one, that the risk is very, very, very, low, and two, completely understandable."

Athletes are under orders to wear their masks unless training, competing, eating, drinking or sleeping, and are being tested daily.

When standing on the podium, they are now shown a sign telling them to remove their masks briefly for the photographers.

However, Adams urged athletes not to abuse the rules and to keep their masks in place unless told to take them off. "We are making a really special effort today again to remind all of our groups and all of our people that they need to wear their masks," he said.

So far this month, 153 people connected with the Games have tested positive. About 85 per cent of athletes are vaccinated, according to the IOC.

AFP

Titmus topples Ledecky as Peaty, Dressel claim titles

SWIMMING

Tokyo, Japan - Ariarne Titmus toppled decorated American great Katie Ledecky to clinch the 400m freestyle gold medal on Monday as untouchable breaststroke king Adam Peaty became the first British swimmer to successfully retain an Olympic title.

Ledecky came to Japan on the back of winning four gold and a silver at Rio in 2016, but Titmus has been snapping at her heels, ousting her as world champion in 2019 and topping the timesheets this season. And when it came to the crunch at the Tokyo Aquatics Center, it was the Australian who prevailed, hitting the wall in 3mins 56.69secs, the second fastest ever swum.

Only Ledecky has gone better, when she set the 3:56.46 world record at the Rio Olympics. She had to settle for silver this time in 3:57.36 with China's Li Bingjie third.

Ledecky is attempting a gruelling programme - also swimming the 200m, 800m and 1,500m, which has been added to the Games for women this year.



Australia's Ariarne Titmus competes to win the final of the women's 400m freestyle event on Monday (AFP)

Peaty, arguably the best 100m breaststroke ever, was also on fire. After setting sub-58 second times in the heats and semifinals, he successfully defended his crown, powering home in 57.37. Dutchman Arno Kamminga, the only other swimmer besides Peaty to ever go under 58, took silver with Italy's

Nicolo Martinenghi third.

US superstar Caeleb Dressel made his Tokyo bow with a scintillating opening leg of the 4x100m freestyle relay to lead his team to gold in what could be a Michael Phelps-style medal haul for him in Japan. Dressel, whose 13 world titles have prompted inevitable comparisons with Phelps - winner of

eight golds in 2008 and 23 in total - is targeting seven titles.

Meanwhile, the reign of Swedish defending champion and world record holder Sarah Sjostrom was brought to a halt in the women's 100m butterfly by Maggie MacNeil of Canada who won in 55.59 secs, the third fastest in history.

AFP

'Haidee' Diaz clinches first ever gold for the Philippines

WOMEN'S WEIGHTLIFTING

Tokyo, Japan - Weightlifter Hidilyn Diaz made history on Monday when she became the first athlete from the Philippines to win an Olympic gold medal.

The 30-year-old Rio 2016 silver medalist from the southern city of Zamboanga realised her dream in the women's 55kg class at the Tokyo International Forum, smashing her personal best to see off world record holder Liao Qiuyun of China who had to settle for silver.

With Liao setting a target of 223kg, just four kilograms shy of her own world record, Diaz was faced with a final clean and jerk of 127kg to win - fully 5kg more than she had ever achieved in competition. With a massive effort she hoisted the huge Olympic record weight and the tears of joy began to flow even before she dropped the bar to the floor after a triumphant effort.

Liao took the silver, with Kazakhstan's Zulfija Chinshanlo the bronze 10kg adrift of the top two.

"It's unbelievable, it's a dream, come true," Diaz said moments



Philippines' Hidilyn Diaz stands on the podium holding her gold medal after winning the women's 55kg weightlifting event in Tokyo on Monday (AFP)

after the Philippines Air Force woman shed more tears on the podium as she saluted her flag and sung the national anthem. "I

want to say to the young generation in the Philippines, 'You can have this dream of gold too.' 'This is how I started and finally I was able to do it.'"

Diaz was already assured a place in her country's sporting folklore, alongside the likes of boxing icon Manny Pacquiao, as the only woman from the

sprawling archipelago ever to win an Olympic medal - her surprise silver five years ago breaking a 20-year medal drought for the Philippines.

Diaz became just the second athlete from her country to win multiple Olympic medals, joining swimmer Teofilo Yldefonso who won bronze in the men's 200m breaststroke in 1928 and 1932. Diaz, known as 'Haidee', has a huge social media at home which is set to grow.

AFP

Kumar stars in India triumph



Bhuvneshwar Kumar
4
WICKETS
22 RUNS

SRI LANKA VS INDIA FIRST T20I

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Seam bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar led a disciplined bowling performance as India hammered Sri Lanka by 38 runs in the opening Twenty20 international after a COVID-19 scare at the stadium on Sunday. Chasing 165 for victory, Sri Lanka were bowled out for 126 in 18.3 overs with Kumar returning figures of four for 22 in Colombo. India lead the three-match series 1-0.

Earlier skipper Shikhar Dhawan (46) and Suryakumar Yadav (50) guided India to 164 for five after being put into bat first. "I thought we were 10-15 runs short but we felt it was still a good total," said Dhawan.

"Surya is a great player and we enjoy watching him bat. He was taking pressure off me as well. Sri Lanka were playing well but we knew our spinners will get some turn."

A ground staffer at the R Premadasa Stadium tested positive for COVID-19 following a rapid antigen test, Sri Lanka Cricket said, before the hosts won the toss.

Kumar struck with opener Avishka Fernando's key wicket for 26 before the pace spearhead returned to wipe off the tail.

Pace partner Deepak Chahar took two wickets in one over including debutant Charith Asalanka for 44 to derail Sri Lanka's chase. But it was Dhawan and Yadav who set up the win with their 62-run third-wicket stand.

Brief scores: India 164 for five (S Dhawan 46, S Samson 27, S Yadav 50; D Chameera 2-24, W Hasaranga 2-28) beat Sri Lanka 126 in 18.3 overs (A Fernando 26; B Kumar 4-22, D Chahar 2-24).

Shaw, Yadav to join squad in England

New Delhi, India - Prithvi Shaw and Suryakumar Yadav will bolster India's batting lineup for their Test series in England after being named as injury replacements on Monday. Shaw and Yadav are currently in Sri Lanka. They will switch because of injuries to Shubman Gill, Avesh Khan and Washington Sundar, the BCCI announced on Monday. AFP



SENSATIONAL WIN

Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair and Spain's Andy Soucek claim impressive victory in the second race of round four of the 2021 International GT Open Series at Imola circuit in Italy

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

It was one of the days that Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair will remember for a long time in his motorsports career.

A sensational run by the 23 year old Omani and his Spanish teammate, Andy Soucek, ensured their second race win of the season in the second race of the fourth round of the 2021 International GT Open Series at the Imola circuit in Bologna, Italy, on Sunday.

During the 2021 season, there have not been many occasions when drivers have rallied from a sixth spot in qualifying to a race win. But on Sunday, this is what the Lechner Racing duo did to seal an amazing victory in their Porsche 911 GT3 R car at the Autodrome Enzo e Dino Ferrari motor racing circuit.

The victory was sealed by Soucek in a perfect race, clinching the one-hour 35-lap race by 1.507secs, ahead of Vincenzo Sospiri Racing Lamborghini's duo of Michele Beretta and Frederik Schandorff.

Beretta and Schandorff's second-place meant the pair kept a slender championship lead over Soucek and Al Faisal.

Loris Spinelli's Mercedes AMG came home in third place and Yuki Nemoto brought the second of the Lamborghinis home in fourth.

For Al Faisal, it was a successful comeback to the series after missing the third round in Hungary due to illness. The Omani-Spanish duo had claimed a third-place in the opening race of the fourth round on Saturday.

Speaking after the thrilling victory, cheered by his father Khalid al Zubair at the circuit, Al Faisal said, "Qualifying for me didn't go the best way as I qualified in sixth. But in the race, in the first stint, I overtook the Mercedes to go to P5 and there was a bit of contact ahead and then I moved into P4.



Al Faisal al Zubair (L) and Andy Soucek celebrate on the podium

"From there, I maintained the gap and came into the pit early for a perfect pit stop for Andy [Soucek] to go on new tyres.

"Andy then did a great job. I think we struggled for pace a little bit as compared to the Mercedes and the Lamborghini. Nonetheless to come with a third on Saturday and a win in race two was way more than we expected for the weekend. It was the best way to get into the summer break."

Al Faisal and Soucek had won their first race of the competitive series at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit in June.

On Sunday, Al Faisal, managed to push up to P4 from his P6 start behind Schandorff, Spinelli and Ollie Millroy after three laps. The quartet held station through the next 11 laps with the Lamborghini heading the Mercedes by 2.723s heading into lap 16 and Millroy's McLaren by 7.227s.



Soucek (L) greets teammate Al Faisal after the win in the fourth round



Al Faisal (R) and his father Khalid al Zubair after the race in Imola, Italy

INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN SERIES STANDINGS (After four rounds, eight races)

- 1 Frederick Schandorff/ Michele Beretta (91 points)
- 2 Andy Soucek (86 pts)
- 3 Al Faisal al Zubair (68 pts)
- 4 Baptiste Moulin/ Yuki Nemoto (63 pts)
- 5 Ollie Millroy/ Brendan Iribe (54 pts)

Al Faisal was replaced by Soucek for the final 32 minutes of the race and secured a thrilling victory for Lechner Racing by the margin of 1.507s.

Spinelli's pit stop enabled Millroy to snatch the lead and Soucek found himself in fourth behind the McLaren, Spinelli

and Agostini's Audi R8.

Soucek took further gain on his rivals' pit stop strategies and stormed into second place on lap 19 at the expense of Beretta and Spinelli. He then went for the leading McLaren into the final 25 minutes of the race and snatched the lead when Millroy pitted and was replaced by Brendan Iribe.

Al Faisal's teammate then headed into the last five minutes of the race, with 31 laps completed, defending a slender lead of 1.893s. The Spaniard managed to hold on to pass the chequered flag and secure a thrilling victory for Lechner Racing by the margin of 1.507s.

Earlier, Schandorff had qualified in pole position for the second of the weekend's races with a best lap of 1min 40.121s. Al Faisal ran for ten laps in dry conditions and posted a best lap of 1min 41.436s for P6.

Action resumes in the series at Austria's Red Bull Ring in September.

@ashokmuscat

ONLY
PURE
WATER

AND
PERFECT
TASTE

ONLY
WHAT'S
ESSENTIAL

Omani

Every day, all day!