

**QUEST FOR PEACE DOESN'T
WARRANT KILLING AND
DESTRUCTION: OMAN**

The Sultanate has said that the road towards peace does not follow a course of killing and destruction, but rather comes through dialogue and negotiations that seek to preserve the supreme interests of the parties concerned. **>A5**



GUESTS IN OMAN HOTELS FALL 7.3%

The total number of guests in the 3 to 5 star category in the Sultanate fell by 7.3 percent till the end of April 2021 to stand at 373,035 guests compared to 402,581 guests for the same period of 2020, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The total revenues of these hotels also fell to OMR27,409 million by April 2021, compared to OMR 55.174 million during the same period of the previous year, comprising a decline by 50.3 percent. **>A5**



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IMPLEMENTATION OF HM DIRECTIVES BEGINS

Ministry of Defence
will receive job
seekers who meet
the conditions for
recruitment at
Sultan's Armed Forces

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In implementation of the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, on expediting the execution of employment initiatives, the Ministry of Defence will begin to receive job seekers who meet conditions set for recruitment at the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) on Thursday. The jobs will be announced in succession by the Royal Army of Oman, the Royal Air Force of Oman, the Royal Navy of Oman and other administrations of the Defence Ministry.

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has also urged SME owners and entrepreneurs to take advantage of the on-the-job training initiative signed by ASMED with the Ministry of Labour.

Business owners are encouraged to register their establishments' data and benefit from training programmes to help support their establishments. The initiative provides training for 3,000 Omani job seekers. **>A5**



*Adhere to
law and
order, say
citizens*

MUSCAT: A number of Omani citizens yesterday expressed their rejection and dismay about actions undertaken by persons who joined youth gatherings in the city of Sohar, North Al Batinah.

The sit-ins were held with the purpose of tackling the issue of employment, but some of the participants assaulted policemen, by-passers and road users. They blocked roads and vandalised public and private properties in violation of the Basic Law of the State, which states that "Safe life is a guaranteed right for every human being and that the State has a duty to establish law and order and provide tranquillity for all". The citizens affirmed that the action of saboteurs counteract and contradict the benign values of Omani society and constitute a breakaway from the state of calm and commitment that prevailed over the past days. **>A5**

SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES AMBASSADOR OF SPAIN

His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs received in his office at Al Murtafaa Camp here yesterday Maria Luisa, Ambassador of Spain to the Sultanate. The meeting reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries and exchanged views on matters of common concern. — ONA



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

No loss of lives and property in quake

1 The earthquake monitoring centre at Sultan Qaboos University yesterday reported a low magnitude earthquake, measuring 3.4 degrees on the Richter scale, in the Wilayat of Ja'alan Bani Bu Ali, Governorate of South A'Sharqiyah. The tremor, which hit a depth of 10 kilometres in the sea, occurred at 11.23 am. Dr Issa Al-Hussain, Director of the SQU Earthquake Monitoring Centre,) that the earthquake epicentre is located 250 km from Muscat city. **>A5**



SPORTS

Bangladesh secure series win against SL

2 Mushfiqur Rahim smashed a gutsy ton before Mehidy Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman picked three wickets respectively to help Bangladesh win the second ODI against Sri Lanka. **>A7**

MARKET

GCC deficits expected to register sharp fall

3 The aggregate Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) government deficit is expected to fall sharply to about \$80 billion in 2021 (5 per cent of GDP) from \$143 billion in 2020 (10 per cent of GDP), S&P Global Ratings said in its latest report. The lower deficits will be supported by higher crude oil prices, fiscal consolidation measures, and a higher level of economic activity as COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions are gradually lifted, the rating agency said. **>B1**

INITIATIVE

Three-fold plan to raise mental health awareness in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Important landmarks in Oman and neighbouring Saudi Arabia will be lit up, as part of the 'Not Alone' campaign, which aims to promote awareness about mental health, and encourages people to come forward and talk about the problems they're facing.

Organised by the Whispers of Serenity clinic, which offers counselling services and runs psychology workshops for people in the country, the 'Not Alone' initiative aims to achieve its objectives through three means. The first is the Light of Hope: From Oman to the World campaign.

This involves "lighting several prominent landmarks in the Sultanate and abroad, such as the



Royal Opera House, the German University in Muscat, the Oman-tel head office, and the Kingdom Tower in Saudi Arabia courtesy Al Waleed Philanthropies, in green, with this particular colour symbolising the continuous need to spread mental health awareness, and combat the stigma associated with it," said a statement from the clinic.

The second is the Candle of Hope Challenge, which sees people light a candle signifying hope with the participation of several volunteers and influencers from around the world.

"This is seen as a symbol of re-viving hope in the souls of those who've lost it, and bringing them back to life," added the clinic. "It also includes support for everyone who needs psychological support

and help, to spread awareness of the importance of mental health."

The third angle of awareness generation includes setting up psychological support lines to support the families of Palestinians in the Sultanate, also to support them during these difficult circumstances.

"During this pandemic, many of us have experienced issues that have affected our mental health, or have witnessed a loved one suffer," explained the clinic. "We have seen that despite the support all of us provide, it is not enough. Likewise, every year in May - which is Mental Health Awareness Month - the team strives to deliver its message of awareness around mental health and seeking psychological help to alleviate the suffering of individuals around us."



**Oman named
cyclone Yaas hits
India**

A3

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ADVERSE WEATHER

Oman named cyclone Yaas tears through east India

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Cyclone Yaas made landfall in India on Wednesday evening, battering the coastlines of the eastern states of Odisha and West Bengal, and neighbouring Bangladesh.

Named by Oman, as part of a cyclone identification system between 13 countries connected by the northern section of the Indian Ocean, Yaas intensified into a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm on Wednesday, before reducing in intensity to become a Cyclonic Storm.

It is named after an aromatic tree, found in some areas of Oman, including the Jabal Akhdar. It is used to make perfume, and hair and body oils. Yaas comes just days after India's western coastline was rocked by Cyclone Tauktae, which was named by Myanmar.

Over 1.5 million people were evacuated ahead of Cyclone Yaas in India. Television showed rough seas and strong winds and rains lashing Odisha, while shops and homes were boarded up.

The "very severe cyclonic storm" has sustained winds of 130-140 kilometres per hour (up to 87 mph) that are gusting up to 155 kph (97 mph), the India Meteorological Department said, adding that the storm would cross the two affected states by noon.

Weather authorities said that landfall began around 9:00 am (3:30 GMT) and warned that it would generate waves higher than rooftops in some areas. The storm's winds were expected to weaken to 75 kph by Wednesday evening, the meteorological department said.

Homes destroyed, airports shut

The storm destroyed tens of thousands of homes and forced the closure of the busiest regional airport in Kolkata, as well as the Bhubaneswar airport. The Kolkata airport was closed to flights until Wednesday evening. Train services were also cancelled ahead of the storm.

West Bengal's chief minister, Mamata Banerjee, told reporters that about 20,000 mud houses and temporary shelters had been damaged in the state.

"I have not seen anything like this before," said another state minister, Bankim Hazra. "Successive high tides battered the coastline. There is inundation all around and villages are cut off."

He made the comments after seawater flowed into the low-

lying areas of Sagar Island in the Bay of Bengal and the tourist town of Digha, where a police station was flooded. Police said they had rescued 10 people after their boat capsized near shore in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district on Tuesday. The naval base Chilka was also monitoring ships in the area and was prepared for rescue operations, the Indian Navy said.

Meanwhile, thousands of emergency personnel have been deployed to monitor the situation, said S.N. Pradhan, director of India's National Disaster Response Force.

Second cyclone in a week

Yaas is the second storm to hit India within a week, after Cyclone Tauktae pummelled the western coast, resulting in mass evacuations and over 150 deaths.

Cyclones in the Bay of Bengal are common at this time of year, but experts say that they are becoming more severe in conjunction with global warming. Both Yaas and Tauktae halted regional COVID-19 prevention efforts, as mass evacuations took precedence. Odisha officials said they had suspended testing, vaccination and a door-to-door health survey in three districts in the path of Yaas.



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WADI AL HAWASNAH IS FULL OF SURPRISES

IF YOU TRAVEL to Khabourah in the North Batinah governorate do visit Wadi Al Hawasnah. Known for lush, green oases, Khabourah is located about 176 km from Muscat.

Khabourah stretches from the borders of Wilayat of Saham in the north to the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq southward for 20 km and extends to the Governorate of Al Dhahirah in the west. Al Khabourah is bounded on the east by the Sea of Oman for almost 90 km, and is divided by (Muscat-Khatmat Milaha) main road.

“Wadi Al Hawasnah impresses with its mix of natural water pools, ancient forts and geological surprises such as mountains of ophiolite rock,” says Oman’s Ministry of Tourism. Set between the coastal Wilayat of Al Khabourah and Ibri, Wadi Al Hawasnah impresses the tourists.



While all the wadis in Oman are known for their lush greenery, Wadi Al Hawasnah is known for its unique geological formations. One can actually see those rock formations that were originally found on the bottom of the ocean. The other prominent wadis at Khabourah are Wadi al Sarmi, Wadi Shafan, Wadi Halhal, Wadi Miha Bani Kayoum and Sanaa Bani Ghafir.



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UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Quest for peace doesn't warrant killing and destruction: Oman

NEW YORK The Sultanate has said that the road towards peace does not follow a course of killing and destruction, but rather comes through dialogue and negotiations that seek to preserve the supreme interests of the parties concerned.

This was stated in Oman's speech before the UN General Assembly's emergency session on Palestine, following the recent developments in the region. The speech was delivered by Adviser Ahmed Dawood Al-Zedjali, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Sultanate at the UN.

Al-Zedjali said that Palestinian lands held by Israel since 1967 in the West Bank, Jerusalem and



Adviser Ahmed Dawood Al-Zedjali, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Sultanate at the United Nations (UN). -ONA

Gaza are, from the point of view of the international law, "occupied lands" and that the escalation, which has been taking place until recently, occurs on occupied lands. The Sultanate said that the incidents in the Palestinian lands are typical forms of occupation, a fact affirmed by more than 700 UN General Assembly resolutions and more than 80 decisions issued by the Security Council.

"None of the resolutions have been implemented by the Israeli occupation authorities. To maintain the credibility of the Security Council—this major institution in the international relations system, it is time the resolutions were put to action," he said. -ONA

APRIL 2021

Guests in Oman hotels fall by 7.3%

MUSCAT: The total number of guests in the 3 to 5 star category in the Sultanate fell by 7.3 percent till the end of April 2021 to stand at 373,035 guests compared to 402,581 guests for the same period of 2020, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total revenues of these hotels also fell to OMR27,409 million by April 2021, compared to OMR 55,174 million during the same period of the previous year, comprising a decline by 50.3 percent.

Meanwhile, the occupancy rate went down by 16.4 percent as it reached 35.9 percent compared to 42.9 percent during the same period in 2020.

Among the nationalities, the Omani guests constituted the highest number of visitors with an increase rate of 109.2 percent to stand at 254,466 guests com-



pared to 121,648 guests last year. This was followed by Asian guests who reached 60,646 compared to 40,911 guests in 2020.

The number of Europeans stood at 16,590 guests, Arab guests (excluding GCC countries) with 15,802, American guests with 6,605, GCC guests with 4,749, Oceanian guests with 2,346, African guests with 1,446, and 10,384 guests from other nationalities.

-ONA

NEW INITIATIVE

FROM A1 Ministry of Labour offers monthly training dues

The initiative's subsidy, offered through the Labour Ministry, includes bearing the monthly training dues. Accordingly, the first year covers 100 percent of the bursary payable to trainees as follows: bachelor's degree holders will receive OMR500 a month, university diploma holders OMR400 a month and general education diploma (GED) holders OMR300 a month. In the second year, the Ministry bears 50 percent of the training grant.

ASMED explained that on-the-job training packages offered to SMEs have been launched in the Sultanate in response to SMEs demands to receive subsidised-pay. The packages also aim to provide employment for the largest segment of job seekers and earn them the required vocational skills. The initiative is offered to all owners of SMEs. The job seekers will be selected either from the registers of the Ministry of Labour, or through SMEs'

nomination of those deemed fit for employment.

The government is also pressing ahead with its Appointment and Replacement Programme, which generates as many as 12,000 jobs for Omanis as specified in the Employment Plan 2021, said a government official today, noting that the placements will be made at a rate of 1,000 jobs a month, until the end of this year, in the government sector's civil and military services.

IN RIYADH

Tourism meet

MUSCAT: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, is taking part in the 47th session of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Regional Commission for the Middle East and the inauguration ceremony of the UNWTO's Middle East Bureau, as well as a conference on Tourism Recovery in the Region, being held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Oman's delegation is headed by Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

-ONA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Forum held for teachers of information technology

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The first virtual forum for teachers of information technology (IT) in private schools began on Wednesday.

The event was held by the Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Private Schools, under the patronage of Dr Ali bin Salim Al Shukaili, Director-General of the Directorate General of Private Schools, in the presence of Dr Khadija Bint Ali Al Salamiyah, Assistant Director-General for Educational Affairs at the Directorate General of Private Schools.

The two-day forum targets information technology teachers in private schools in all the governorates, of which about 100 participants attended the first day.

The virtual forum was held with the aim of presenting scientific papers on e-learning, blended learning, and distance education, in addition to presenting the most important initiatives, programmes and applications employed by teachers of information technology for private schools.

This is to contribute to raising the students' achievement level, to move forward in harmonising the current educational work, exchanging technical expertise and skills, spreading the culture of self-learning.

The forum also aims to keep pace with the skills of the twenty-first century and the Fourth Industrial Revolution and raise the efficiency of IT teachers in line with Oman Vision 2040.

CITIZENS' APPEAL

FROM A1 Respect the law

Similar views and pleas for calm and respect for the law echoed across social media networks, requesting the gathering youth not to get involved in action that target those tasked with maintaining law and order or transgressing properties or hampering public liberties of citizens and residents. "Such actions are an

unacceptable means of staging demands or attaining goals," said the citizens in their social network messages.

Meanwhile, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) performed its duties in keeping law and order, securing the safety of citizens and residents and ensuring normalcy and respect for freedoms. -ONA



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COVID-19 VACCINE

Half of American adults fully vaccinated against COVID-19

WASHINGTON: United States President Joe Biden on Tuesday informed that half of the country's adults are completely vaccinated against COVID-19.

Taking to Twitter, Biden said: "As of today, 50 per cent of American adults are fully vaccinated. That's a big deal, folks," Biden tweeted. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data, vaccinating half of

the adult Americans has marked significant progress since the vaccines were first authorized in December.

"This is a major milestone in our country's vaccination efforts," White House senior COVID-19 adviser Andy Slavitt said at a press briefing on Tuesday (local time), noting that one per cent of adults were fully vaccinated when the Biden administration came into

office, reported The Hill.

It further reported that the achievement symbolises a step closer to President Biden's next goal of getting 70 per cent of adults to have at least one vaccine dose by the fourth of July. Currently, 61.6 per cent of American adults, or almost 159 million people, have reached this point.

These updated numbers mean that half of adults are cleared

under CDC guidelines to not wear a mask in most indoor and outdoor settings.

The agency still recommends those who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask indoors.

The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines were first given emergency authorisation in December about a month before former President Trump left office. **ANI**



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LEGAL COMPLAINTS

EU, AstraZeneca face off in court over COVID-19 vaccine delays

BRUSSELS: A Belgian court on Wednesday heard legal complaints by the European Commission against the pharmaceutical group AstraZeneca.

The European Union is suing the British-Swedish drugmaker over COVID jab delivery delays that hampered efforts to kick-start vaccination across the bloc.

The EU has accused AstraZeneca — which worked with Oxford University in developing its vaccine — of favoring the United Kingdom in its deliveries. Lawyers for both sides appeared before a judge in a French-speaking court in Brussels. The EU's lawyers began their opening statements, while lawyers for AstraZeneca were expected to address the court later Wednesday.

Delivery delays: What are the arguments?

AstraZeneca had initially committed to deliver 300 million doses from December to the end of June. But due to shipment delays, only 30 million doses arrived in the first quarter. According to the Commission, the company is set to provide only 70 million doses

in the second quarter of this year, as opposed to the 180 million it had promised.

With this lawsuit, the EU is hoping to pressure AstraZeneca to deliver 90 million more doses of its coronavirus vaccine before July.

The EU accused AstraZeneca of misleading the Commission by providing data lacking clarity on the delivery delays.

"The information provided by AstraZeneca did not allow us to fully understand the situation before mid-March 2021," the EU lawyer, Rafael Jafferli, told the court on Wednesday.

Jafferli said AstraZeneca expects to deliver the total number of doses by the end of December. "With a six-month delay, it's obviously a failure," he said.

AstraZeneca has repeatedly denied having failed in its commitments and denounced the lawsuit as "unfounded." According to the company's lawyer, AstraZeneca was not obliged to deliver the entire volume of doses, claiming it had only committed to doing its "best reasonable efforts." **DW**

Cyclone Yaas batters India's eastern states

The state governments with the help of Army and National Disaster Response Force are working together to rescue people stuck due to a surge in water levels



MIDNAPORE EAST (West Bengal): After cyclone Yaas made its landfall and left behind a trail of destruction in West Bengal, the state government with the help of Army and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) are working together to rescue people stuck due to a surge in water levels. Several villages in East Midnapore have been submerged in water due to the overflow of seawater and heavy rains.

Talgachhari-ii village in East Midnapore is completely submerged in water. Army, NDRF and State administration are working together to rescue people who are stranded in their houses due to the overflow of water, the government officials said. The NDRF is using three boats to evacuate people.

Souvik Ghosh, a Panchayat Development officer, told ANI, "We have never experienced such a situation. We had warned people about the cyclone and rescued those living in kutchha houses...

People are still stuck inside their houses and we are rescuing them."

Operations still underway

Pradeep, Sub-Inspector of NDRF (2nd battalion), said, "The NDRF has joined hands with the administration and rescued hundreds of villagers. The operations are still underway."

The severe cyclonic storm Yaas will gradually weaken into a cyclonic storm during the next three hours, informed the India Meteorological Department on Wednesday.

"It is likely to move North-westwards and weaken gradually into a cyclonic storm during the next three hours," the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said at 5 pm.

Meanwhile, Odisha shifted 5.8 lakh people to safer places, while West Bengal moved 15 lakh people ahead of the cyclone. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that 10 million people were affected by the cyclone in the state and 3 lakh houses were damaged due to the cyclone. — **ANI**



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SPORTS



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BIRMINGHAM: The second Test between England and New Zealand at Edgbaston will be the first pilot event within the second phase of the government's world-leading Events Research Programme and have crowds coming in for the June 10 to 14 encounter.

As per a report on [edgbaston.com](https://www.edgbaston.com), the stadium will be able to accommodate around 18,000 spectators each day, 70 per cent of total stadium capacity. Each individual ticket holder must present a negative COVID-19 result from an NHS Rapid Lateral Flow Test, completed within 24 hours in advance of the day they are attending, and give consent to take part



ENGLAND VS NZ: As per a report on edgbaston.com, the stadium will be able to accommodate around 18,000 spectators each day, 70 per cent of total stadium capacity.

in the programme.

The pilot event will have fans following all COVID-19 protocols and the programme will be used to collect information on the risk of transmission of coronavirus at mass participation events.

Taking to Twitter, the England Cricket wrote: "We CANNOT wait to have you back with us!"

As per the report, the process has been agreed by Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden and supported by Public Health England, the

England & Wales Cricket Board,
Birmingham City Council and
Edgbaston's own Safety Advisory
Group.

“Whilst public health is the priority, the first stage pilots have shown how people can safely start

to enjoy the things they love; live sport and music. It will be great to welcome cricket fans to Edgbaston and give the England team a huge boost as nothing beats the atmosphere that crowds create here," Stuart Cain, Chief Executive at Edgbaston, said.

“Edgbaston is unique as a cricket venue in having such a large stadium footprint, but we also have a vastly experienced operational delivery team, which has hosted many major events and a spectator pilot last summer. We have always been hopeful of featuring in the pilot programme and are delighted for the thousands of ticket holders who will now be able to attend.

"The city's authorities have worked with us to make this happen so I would like to thank Cllr Ian Ward and his team for their support and also Andy Street, Mayor, for his help along the way."

Tom Harrison, Chief Executive of the ECB, said: "Having crowds back into cricket grounds is so important for the game and for our fans too. The last 15 months have shown just how big a role cricket plays in many people's lives, and we cannot wait to welcome a growing number of fans back to our stadia over the coming months." **ANI**

Australia to play 5 T20Is against Bangladesh

MELBOURNE: Keeping an eye on preparations for the T20 World Cup in October-November, Australia will play five T20Is against Bangladesh in August. The series is set to take place after the white-ball series against West Indies.

As per a report in cricket.com.au, the five-match series will follow the tour of West Indies wherein Aaron Finch and boys will play five T20Is and three ODIs. The tour had originally been slated for three matches, but has been extended to five games across nine days. Dates and venues are yet to be confirmed.

Earlier, Cricket Australia named Jason Behrendorff and Tanveer Sangha in Australia's 23-member preliminary squad for the upcoming limited-overs tour of West Indies. Australia and West Indies are set to lock horns in five T20Is and three ODIs in July this year.

Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, David Warner, Moises Henriques, Alex Carey, and Pat Cummins return to the squad after missing the recent white-ball tour of New Zealand. -ANI

Mushfiqur, bowlers shine as Bangladesh secure maiden series win over Sri Lanka

DHAKA: Mushfiquir Rahim smashed a gutsy ton before Mehidy Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman picked three wickets respectively to help Bangladesh win the second ODI against Sri Lanka on Tuesday. Bangladesh defeated Sri Lanka by 103 runs (DLS method) and took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the ODI series. With this win, Bangladesh also went on top of the World Cup super League table. This was also the first time that Bangladesh defeated Sri Lanka in a bilateral series.

Mushfiqur's resilient 125 off 127 balls had helped Bangladesh post 246 in the 50 overs despite being seven down in the 39th over with just 184 runs on board. In reply, Sri Lanka fell 104 runs short of the target. Chasing 247, Sri Lanka got off to a slow start scoring just 53 runs in the first 14 overs. The visitors also lost two wickets which dented Sri Lanka's chances in the chase.

If Mustafizur dismissed Danushka Gunathilaka, Shoriful



Islam sent skipper Kusal Perera back to the hut. Sri Lanka kept losing wickets at regular intervals and was soon found reeling at 89/5 in the 25th over.

Five overs later Sri Lanka slipped to 106/6 and the required rate kept climbing due to visitors' sluggish approach.

Sri Lanka needed 135 runs from the last 17 overs and had four wickets in hand. Wanindu Hasaranga, who had scored successive ODI fifties, failed to get going as he was cleaned bowled by Mehidy.

When Bangladesh was one wicket away from the winning match, rain interrupted the play and the target was reduced to 245 from 247 in 40 overs which brought down the equation to 119 runs in 12 balls. In the end, Sri Lanka was only able to score 141/9 in the 40 overs

Earlier, Mushfiquir's excellent knock had set Sri Lanka a target of 247 despite Bangladesh witnessing a horrific batting collapse. **ANI**

Williamson has earned his stripes to be recognised as a great player: Hadlee

DUBAI: New Zealand legend Richard Hadlee has said former skipper Martin Crowe's prediction in 2015 that current skipper Kane Williamson would become one of the country's best was spot on.

"Martin Crowe was a great player and thinker of the game. He was the best New Zealand batsman in my time -- a touch of class. Greatness is a word that is often misused or overused. No one becomes a great player in just a few years. Players need to perform and excel against the best opposition in different conditions all over the world over an extended period of time.

"There are many average players, some good players, some very good ones, but greatness is earned from your peers and astute judges of the game and is bestowed on only a few. Martin's assessment of Kane is absolutely right. Kane has earned his stripes to be recognised as a great player now and in all formats of the game. By the time he ends his career, he will have all the New Zealand batting records for most runs scored, most hundreds and a world-class batting average," he said in an ICC media release.

With 24 Test centuries and 7,115 runs, Williamson sits in the top bracket when it comes to New Zealand players' records in the longest format of the game. He trails teammate Taylor (at the top with 7,379 runs) by just 264 runs. Hadlee believes Williamson's understanding of his own game is what sets him apart.

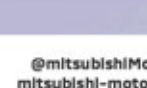
"Kane has worked on his game and handles pressure extremely well -- his temperament is outstanding -- he knows his limitations and thrives on his strengths. He keeps his batting game simple, and he has a proven method that is effective. He collects his runs and then he can use his power game by playing proper and at times innovative cricket shots."

Hadlee has praised Williamson for constantly evolving as a player and captain. "Through one-day cricket he has expanded his shot selection capabilities -- there does not appear to be any obvious weaknesses in his game. His leadership has also grown -- his body language suggests he is calm and in control of what he is doing, and his personality appears to be unflappable and consistent." **ANI**



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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by July 2021 reaching \$66.85, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 31 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$66.54. - **ONA**

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 3,836.28 points, down 0.04 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down 0.01 per cent at 552.90 points. Renaissance Service, up 2.50 per cent, was the top gainer while Ahlia Insurance, down 5.88 per cent, was the top loser.

GCC deficits expected to fall sharply to about \$80bn in 2021

The lower deficits will be supported by higher oil prices, fiscal consolidation measures, and a higher level of economic activity as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The aggregate Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) government deficit is expected to fall sharply to about \$80 billion in 2021 (5 per cent of GDP) from \$143 billion in 2020 (10 per cent of GDP), S&P Global Ratings said in its latest report.

The lower deficits will be supported by higher oil prices, fiscal consolidation measures, and a higher level of economic activity as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, the rating agency said.

"Nevertheless, still-high Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) gov-



LATEST ESTIMATES: The S&P Global Ratings estimates that government deficits will reach about \$355 billion cumulatively between 2021 and 2024. - Photo used for illustrative purpose only

ernment deficits will result in continued balance sheet deterioration in most cases," it added.

That said, GCC sovereigns have demonstrated ready access to international capital markets and many have substantial pools of external liquid assets available to fund their fiscal deficits and support their economies in the face of external shocks, S&P Global said in its report.

The rating agency estimates that government deficits will

reach about \$355 billion cumulatively between 2021 and 2024. About 60 per cent of this relates to Saudi Arabia, the GCC's largest economy, followed by Kuwait with 25 per cent, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with 7 per cent, and Oman with 4 per cent.

The aggregate GCC government deficit did not deteriorate by as much in 2020 as it did in 2016, the rating agency said. This is despite a slightly lower average Brent oil price of \$42 per barrel (/bbl) in

2020, compared with \$44/bbl in 2016, and the GCC economies being hit by the additional shock of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The data indicates that while Kuwait's fiscal deficit was much larger in 2020 and Bahrain's deficit was broadly in line with 2016, other GCC countries experienced stronger budgetary performance.

Many GCC states have shown spending restraint in response to the double external shocks of 2020, given their already large

fiscal deficits going into the year, S&P Global said in its report. Some have also made inroads to diversifying their government revenue streams away from hydrocarbons.

Value added tax (VAT) was introduced in Saudi Arabia and the UAE in 2018, in Bahrain in 2019, and Oman in 2021. The stronger regional outturn in 2020 compared with 2016 was significantly driven by Saudi Arabia, where the VAT rate increased to 15 per cent from 5 per cent to shore up

government revenue.

"We expect that Kuwait will register the highest central government deficit-to-GDP ratio of 20 per cent in 2021, followed by Bahrain and the UAE at 6 per cent, Saudi Arabia at 5 per cent, and Qatar at 1 per cent," the rating agency said.

"We expect fiscal deficits will reduce over 2021-2022 and widen again in 2023-2024 given our oil price assumptions, as well as the gradual tapering of oil production cuts in line with the May 2021 OPEC+ agreement, S&P Global said.

"In our forecasts, we assume an average Brent oil price of \$60/bbl for the remainder of 2021, \$60/bbl in 2022, and \$55/bbl in 2023 and beyond," it further added.

Since the structural decline in oil prices, many GCC sovereigns have posted sizable central government deficits, the rating agency said. These increased funding needs to be prompted a total GCC government debt issuance in local and foreign currency of \$90 billion in 2016 and close to \$100 billion in 2017, it added.

GCC government debt increased by much less in 2020 (\$70 billion), due to fiscal constraints and more diversified government revenue sources.

"Looking ahead, we expect total annual debt issuance to average about \$50 billion over 2021-2024, with higher borrowing in the outer years, when we assume lower oil prices," S&P Global said in its report.

CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY

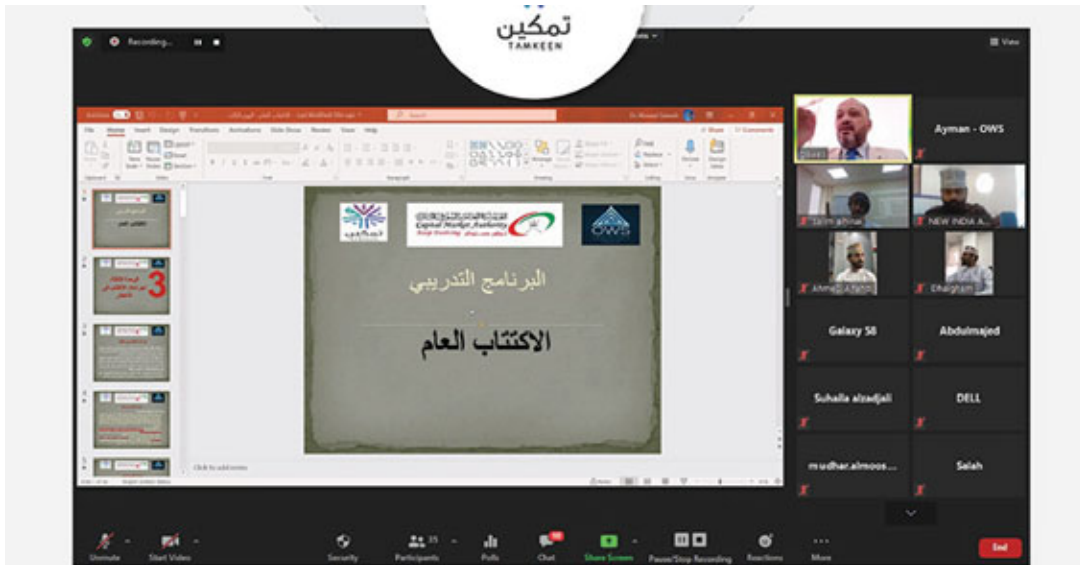
CMA provides training to Omanis on basics of general underwriting

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) continues providing training programmes for the national cadres working for the insurance sector and commenced a training programme on the basics of general underwriting in collaboration with OWS Training Consultancy Institute.

The programme which began on May 23 will continue until May 27 and is part of the 2021 training programmes related to the Tamkeen initiative which aims to empower the national cadres working for the insurance sector and will be organised through ZOOM.

Basics of general underwriting is a significant training programme and aim to acquaint the participants with the basics of underwriting such as the roles of insurance underwriters with the participation of the employees of operational departments in insurance companies. The participants will be acquainted with underwriting practices and procedures in addition to using statistical data in underwriting operations besides



SIGNIFICANT: The training programme aims to acquaint the participants with the basics of underwriting such as the roles of insurance underwriters with the participation of the employees of operational departments in insurance companies. - Supplied picture

introducing pricing principles and practices, the factors affecting the underwriting profitability and the impact of employing information technology in underwriting.

CMA has annual training plans

including short term and long term programs to achieve the Tamkeen vision in the insurance sector.

The 2021 plan is based on the quality of the programmes to furnish specialised cadres. Omanisa-

tion ratio in the insurance sector at the end of 2020 was 79 per cent with 51.7 per cent in senior positions, 72.4 per cent in medium positions and 85.7 per cent in the operational roles.

EQUITY BENCHMARK

India's Sensex jumps 380 points as realty and IT stocks surge

MUMBAI: Equity benchmark indices closed higher on Wednesday as worries about an increase in inflation were largely offset by a continuous decline in COVID cases.

At the closing bell, the BSE S&P Sensex was up by 380 points or 0.75 per cent at 50,018 while the Nifty 50 advanced by 93 points or 0.61 per cent to 15,301.

Sectoral indices at the National Stock Exchange were mixed with Nifty metal dipping by 1.8 per cent on profit-taking by traders. Nifty PSU bank also dipped slightly but Nifty realty gained by 2.8 per cent and IT by 1.7 per cent.

Among stocks, DLF Ltd moved up by 4.6 per cent to close at Rs 291.65 per share while Parsvnath Developers gained by 4.9 per cent to Rs 9.60.

The Bajaj twins were stars of the day with Bajaj Finserv surging by 4.6 per cent and Bajaj Finance by 2.6 per cent. Infosys was up by 2.4 per cent, Wipro by 1.8 per cent and Maruti Suzuki by 1.6 per cent.



However, metal scrips lost shine with Hindalco cracking by 2.5 per cent to Rs 381.40 per share, JSW Steel by 2.4 per cent and Tata Steel by 2.2 per cent.

Meanwhile, Asian shares were mixed. Japan's Nikkei stock index rose 0.31 per cent but key resistances loomed.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index was up by 0.88 per cent as tech and real estate firms shined. But South Korea's Kospi fell by 0.09 per cent as LG Chem's sharp decline offsets early gains. -**ANI**

SIGNIFICANT UPDATE

Microsoft CEO says next version of Windows to be unveiled very soon

WASHINGTON: On the opening day of the Build developer conference on Tuesday, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said that the next generation of its Windows operating system will be unveiled 'very soon'.

As per The Verge, although he didn't give away key details, Nadella stated that his company is planning "one of the most significant updates of Windows of the past decade".

"Soon we will share one of the most significant updates to Windows of the past decade to unlock greater economic opportunity for developers and creators. I've been self-hosting it over the past several months, and I'm incredibly excited about the next generation of Windows," Nadella said during his keynote speech at the virtual developer conference.

He added, "Our promise to you is

this: we will create more opportunity for every Windows developer today and welcome every creator who is looking for the most innovative, new, open platform to build and distribute and monetise applications. We look forward to sharing more very soon."

New app store

Microsoft has been working on a new app store for Windows in recent months, alongside some significant UI changes to the operating system. Nadella appeared to reference the store changes, with a promise to unlock a better economy for developers and creators within Windows itself.

This will likely include some significant changes to the Windows Store, allowing developers to submit any Windows application - including browsers like

Chrome or Firefox.

Rumours have suggested that the tech giant may even allow third-party commerce platforms in apps, so developers could avoid Microsoft's own 15 per cent cut on apps and 12 per cent cut on games.

Nadella's specific mention of a "next generation of Windows" is interesting, too. Microsoft typically refers to everything as 'Windows 10', and this mention could suggest the company is preparing a more significant shift with Windows branding than just the user interface alone.

Microsoft confirmed last week that Windows 10X, its OS originally built for dual-screen devices, will no longer ship. The software maker is now bringing the best bits of Windows 10X, a simplified version of Windows, into the main version of Windows 10 instead. -**ANI**

AIR OPERATIONS

'Signs are pointing to recovery in air travel demand in second half of 2021'

DUBAI: Saif Al Suwaidi, Director General, UAE General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), said signs are pointing to a significant air travel demand in the second half of 2021 and sustainable recovery in air operations.

Sustainable recovery

In his welcome address at the Air Traffic Control (ATC) Forum and Global Airport Leaders Forum (GALF) co-located with the three-day Airport Show 2021 in Dubai, Suwaidi said, "I am confident that together we will continue our efforts to make 2021 to be a year of transition for sustainable recovery and growth."

Today, despite the catastrophe and the vaccination rollout and increase in the supply of vaccines globally more passengers are expected to return to travel and the UAE expects even more. Al Su-

waidi said the UAE was able to retain the supply chain of essential and non-essential goods to other nations. By June 2021, we expect passenger numbers to recover globally and to 49 per cent recovery of their 2019 level.

"We foresee only a 49 per cent recovery - 26 per cent international and 66 per cent domestic. As against 4.5 billion travellers in 2019, only 1.8 billion passengers took to the skies last year. The coronavirus pandemic led to a 50 per cent drop in domestic passenger traffic globally and 74 per cent in international traffic in 2020."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the UAE has immediately communicated with airports and airlines and formed several internal and national bodies to adjust and adopt safety certification to maintain acceptable safety and security standards and support our

industry, its personnel and passengers from the COVID-19 spread.

Aviation safety

"On the aviation safety and security front, we have adapted publishing and adopting unprecedented facilities and provisions and techniques to ensure continuity of services to maintain safe operation of our aircraft, airports and air navigation infrastructure.

From the time the total suspension of the non-essential operations was started in March 2020, we have started working and planning for the recovery during the peak of the pandemic, he added.

Ismail Al Balooshi, Assistant Director-General Aviation Safety Affairs, UAE GCAA, said the UAE community is back to normalcy thanks to an effective vaccination strategy. -**WAM**

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Renaissance Service, up 2.50 per cent, was the top gainer while Ahlia Insurance, down 5.88 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 3,836.28 points, down 0.04 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down 0.01 per cent at 552.90 points. Renaissance Service, up 2.50 per cent, was the top gainer while Ahlia Insurance, down 5.88 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Nizwa were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Renaissance Service was most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 535 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR2.4 million, with more than 11 million shares changing hands. Out of 44 traded stocks, 8 advanced, 11 declined and 25 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for OMR184,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for OMR116,000 followed by Local's

investors for OMR68,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 5,931.34 points, down by 0.17 per cent. Oman & Emirates Holding, Oman Arab Bank, Ominvest and Oman United Insurance were up 2.13 per cent, 1.31 per cent, 1.31 per cent and 0.53 per cent respectively. Ahlia Insurance, National Life Insurance, Al Omaniya Financial Service, Al Anwar Investment and Bank Dhofar were down 5.88 per cent, 5.00 per cent, 2.70 per cent, 1.12 per cent and 0.86 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,451.11 points, down 0.57 per cent. National Aluminium Product was the only gainer by 0.82 per cent. Jazeera Steel Product, Oman Fisheries and Al Maha Ceramic were down 3.83 per cent, 3.61 per cent and 0.63 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.16 per cent closing at 1,618.65 points. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	3,840.73	3,825.12	3,836.28	3,837.91	-1.63	-0.04
FINANCIAL INDEX	5,943.12	5,914.17	5,931.34	5,941.35	-10.01	-0.17
Industry Index	5,483.09	5,451.11	5,451.11	5,483.09	-31.98	-0.58
Services Index	1,620.71	1,615.38	1,618.65	1,616.07	2.58	0.16
MSX Shariah Index	552.97	551.80	552.91	552.97	-0.06	-0.01
MSX TR INDEX	4,609.68	4,590.95	4,604.34	4,606.31	-1.97	-0.04

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
10,708,929	2,449,679	535	21,140,312,699	8	11	25	44

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, MAY 26

SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET															
OM0000003234 RENAISSANCE SER.	2,143,542	880,209	68	0.406	0.414	0.406	0.410	0.400	0.010	2.500	0.410	0.410	0.414	0.100	96,928,100
OM0000001533 OMINVEST	200,000	61,875	13	0.306	0.312	0.306	0.310	0.306	0.004	1.307	0.312	0.300	0.316	0.100	250,409,422
OM0000002236 ALJAZEERA SERVICES	177,000	61,144	10	0.356	0.360	0.352	0.358	0.356	0.002	0.562	0.360	0.360	0.362	0.100	21,911,130
OM0000001087 OMAN UNITED INSUR.	55,000	21,000	3	0.380	0.382	0.380	0.382	0.380	0.002	0.526	0.382	0.382	0.382	0.100	38,200,000
OM0000001418 BAYSUT CEMENT	1,166	337	2	0.288	0.291	0.288	0.291	0.291	0.000	0.000	0.291	0.285	0.291	0.100	58,200,000
OM0000001590 MUSCAT FINANCE	75,600	3,326	9	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.043	0.044	0.100	13,514,438
OM0000002200 AHLI BANK	395,617	42,629	14	0.108	0.108	0.107	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.000	0.108	0.100	210,563,006
OM0000002440 AL SHARGIA INV.	415,024	36,290	38	0.089	0.089	0.086	0.087	0.087	0.000	0.000	0.087	0.087	0.088	0.100	7,830,000
OM0000003000 AI MAHA MARKTING	200	114	1	0.570	0.570	0.570	0.570	0.570	0.000	0.000	0.570	0.570	0.574	0.100	39,330,000
OM0000003026 OMAN TELECOM	191,979	151,445	52	0.790	0.792	0.790	0.798	0.788	0.000	0.000	0.792	0.772	0.792	0.100	591,000,000
OM0000003398 SOHAR INT. BANK	576,056	50,693	8	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	214,236,593
OM0000003968 OOREDOO	1,191	476	1	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.400	0.390	0.398	0.100	260,377,692
OM0000006920 VISION INSURANCE	21,650	1,516	4	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.100	7,000,000
OM0000002796 BANK MUSCAT	819,619	320,891	50	0.390	0.396	0.388	0.392	0.394	-0.002	-0.508	0.390	0.390	0.400	0.100	1,401,194,118
OM0000005005 ALMAHA CERAMICS	113,830	35,951	28	0.314	0.318	0.310	0.316	0.318	-0.002	-0.629	0.310	0.310	0.310	0.100	17,380,000
OM0000001772 ALANWAR INVESTMENT	739,897	64,454	47	0.089	0.089	0.087	0.088	0.089	-0.001	-1.124	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.100	17,600,000
OM0000001525 OMAN INVST & FIN.	75,000	7,425	7	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.101	-0.002	-1.980	0.099	0.098	0.098	0.099	0.100	23,463,000
OM0000002077 AL OMANIYA FIN.	331,000	35,793	16	0.109	0.109	0.107	0.108	0.111	-0.003	-2.703	0.108	0.108	0.109	0.100	31,528,998
OM0000002176 JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	71,000	24,943	14	0.364	0.364	0.350	0.352	0.366	-0.014	-3.825	0.350	0.350	0.360	0.100	43,964,082
Total	19	6,392,281	1,800,512	385											

Parallel Market															
OM0000001681 OMAN EMIRATES HO.	60,000	2,860	5	0.050	0.050	0.048	0.048	0.047	0.001	2.128	0.048	0.046	0.048	0.100	5,850,000
OM0000004925 ALBATINAH POWER	105,000	5,830	7	0.055	0.056	0.055	0.056	0.055	0.001	1.818	0.056	0.054	0.056	0.100	37,793,696
OM0000005260 OMAN ARAB BANK	103,000	15,965	9	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.153	0.002	1.307	0.155	0.155	0.156	0.100	258,758,550
OM0000001319 ALUMINIUM PROD.	323,238	39,767	29	0.124	0.125	0.120	0.123	0.122	0.001	0.820	0.121	0.121	0.123	0.100	4,129,288
OM0000001152 OMAN NAT. ENG.	4,508	394	2	0.089	0.089	0.087	0.089	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.087	0.087	0.089	0.100	11,570,000
OM0000001483 NATIONAL BANK OMAN	530,000	86,420	4	0.163	0.164	0.163	0.163	0.163	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.100	265,029,256
OM0000002374 UNITED FINANCE	39,500	1,699	2	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.000	0.000	0.043	0.042	0.043	0.100	15,013,210
OM0000002804 ASAFFA FOODS	3,000	1,464	1	0.488	0.488	0.488	0.486	0.496	0.000	0.000	0.488	0.000	0.488	0.100	59,520,000
OM0000003711 SOHAR POWER	740	36	1	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.048	0.045	0.047	0.100	10,608,480
OM0000004420 BANK NIZWA	2,145,880	293,738	20	0.094	0.095	0.094	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.100	142,500,000
OM0000004735 SEMBOORP SALALAH	100,000	8,000	4	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.080	0.082	0.100	76,365,756
OM0000004788 MADINA TAKAFUL	304,586	28,264	15	0.093	0.093	0.092	0.093	0.093	0.000	0.000	0.092	0.092	0.095	0.100	16,275,000
OM0000004933 AL SUWADI POWER	194,850	11,040	12	0.057	0.058	0.056	0.057	0.057	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.100	40,721,161
OM0000005983 PHOENIX POWER	79,897	3,679	7	0.049	0.049	0.047	0.049	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.048	0.047	0.048	0.100	71,667,472
OM0000007407 DHOFAR GENERATING	4,000	600	1	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.149	0.150	0.100	33,330,000
OM0000007910 AMAN REAL ESTATE	578	52	1	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.093	0.093	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.100	18,600,000
OM0000002549 BANK DHOFAR	48,117	5,515	8	0.114	0.116	0.114	0.115	0.116	-0.001	-0.862	0.116	0.114	0.120	0.100	36,000,415
OM0000002275 SHELL OMAN MRK.	12,230	9,792	7	0.800	0.804	0.800	0.800	0.812	-0.012	-1.478	0.804	0.800	0.804	0.100	76,000,000
OM0000001668 OMAN FISHERIES	9,000	720	2	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.083	-0.003	-3.614	0.080	0.080	0.087	0.100	10,000,000
OM0000007045 NATIONAL LIFE INS.	5,600	2,128	1	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.400	-0.020	-5.000	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.100	100,700,000
OM0000006912 AHLIA INSURANCE	14,466	4,629	2	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.340	-0.020	-5.882	0.320	0.320	0.340	0.100	32,000,000
Total	21	4,088,190	432,810	140											

MADAYN INDUSTRIAL ACADEMY

Workshop on effective communication skills held

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates – Madayn, represented by Madayn Industrial Academy, conducted a virtual workshop on 'Effective Communication Skills', which was moderated by Wafa Al Alyani, Lecturer at the University of Buraimi. The workshop highlighted the

definition and concept of communication, significance and modern means of communication, implementation and practice of effective communication skills, and practical solutions to communication challenges.

Al Alyani pointed out that the workshop aims at enriching and developing the knowledge and skills of the participants to per-

form communication processes efficiently. More than 50 employees of Madayn, as well as employees of the companies based in the various industrial cities, took part in this workshop.

Madayn Industrial Academy was established to offer training opportunities for the national cadres to enhance administrative, financial and technical skills.

Brands have a responsibility to positively impact world: EY survey

DUBAI: A total of 70 per cent of consumers in the Mena region believe brands have a responsibility to positively impact the world, with purpose mattering more than ever, according to the EY Future Consumer Index.

As Mena consumers look to the future beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, data from the index suggests that a significant amount of them intend to change their lifestyles, with 65 per cent of consumers in Mena believing that post-vaccine life will be better than before the pandemic, and 51 per cent saying that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated changes they had always wanted to make.

Sustainability and social impact

The index indicates that there is growing mindfulness from Mena consumers about the importance of sustainability and creating a

positive impact on society. More than half – 57 per cent - said they will prioritise the environment and climate change in how they live and the products they buy. Another 22 per cent said that sustainability will be their most important purchase criteria three years from now.

Around 63 per cent of Mena consumers are more likely to buy from companies that ensure what they do has a positive impact on society. In addition, 48 per cent will buy more from organisations that benefit society, even if their products or services are more expensive.

Ahmed Reda, EY Mena Consumer Industry Leader, said, "As consumers adopt new preferences and attitudes for the future, the Future Consumer Index findings show that pre-existing concerns around their health, environmental sustainability and social impact have a significantly larger influence than ever before in their purchase

decisions. Consumers are willing to engage more with brands that direct their capabilities and resources to support economic recovery in the communities they operate in. Affordability also remains a critical factor for most consumers, in addition to the overall brand experience. Brands that keep these factors in mind will be well placed for success among consumers in the coming years."

The findings also show that Mena consumers are willing to embrace data sharing if it leads to better outcomes for them, with 77 per cent prepared to share personal data for healthier product recommendations. A majority - 65 per cent - of consumers also said they want to make healthier choices in their product purchases in the longer term, with 41 per cent saying that health or "what's good for me" will be the most important purchase criteria for the three years from now.



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4.	Quantity Surveyor (Pre & Post Tender)	1	BE/Diploma in Civil Engg. - 8 years
5.	Project Manager / Coordinator	1	With 10 year experience in operation and management especially O&G area in Oman
6.	Construction / Site Manager	2	BE - Civil Engg. - 10 years
7.	Site Surveyor for Road / Earth works	1	Diploma in Civil Engg. - 6 years
8.	HR & Admin. Manager	1	PG in Management - 10 years
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Contact: 78072563

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Indian, Male. Exp10 yrs in GCC, seeking from India.
Contact +91 87787 26083
Email: leninkumar34@gmail.com

Indian female, 26 years, Software professional (MCA), having nearly 4 years exp. in India seeks suitable job in Muscat. Currently on visit. Contact 78037607

MECHANIC/TECHNIC

FOC Splicing Network Supervisor.
Indian, Male. Exp10 yrs in GCC, seeking from India.
Contact +91 87787 26083.
Email: leninkumar34@gmail.com.

LOGISTIC

Young Indian male B.com graduate, PG Diploma in logistic (Air cargo and supply chain management) and Digital Marketing Valid Oman Driving License. Looking for suitable placement. Contact 79748272
Email: shazil.sadique@gmail.com

Logistics Coordinator, Indian Male, Age 27, with 2 and a half years experience in supply chain and knowledge of ERP looking for a suitable placement. Contact: 71423342
Email: zakwansheikh@gmail.com

Logistic officer with 15 yrs experience in oman seeking for immediate placement.NOC/local release available. Contact 95271413

MANAGER

HSE Advisor/Manager With 14 yrs exp. 8 years in Oman with D/L. Expertise in Construction & COVID measures in large scale.Currently in Oman in a reputed company.Available in August. Contact 97477573.
Email hse.muscatoman@gmail.com

Senior Manager having 20+ yrs expertise in Business operations.P&L management,strategy planning& client servicing. Whatsapp 97855808, 96349110

Factory manager (carpentry & aluminum) more than 25 years' experience. D/L available. # 92691841

PURCHASE/PROCUREMENT

Inventory, Accounting, Purchase:
Indian male 31, having 8 years experience in F&B, Customer relations, H&S and various other skills. NOC available. Contact: 96219904
Email: khanshah98@gmail.com

Indian male procurement, purchase officer having Bachelor degree in Mechanical engineering,5 yrs experience in UAE in Electrical & Construction company & having UAE D/L. Looking for suitable job. Contact 98227904.
Email: nrangra@rediffmail.com

Logistics Coordinator, Indian Male, Age 27, with 2 and a half years experience in supply chain and knowledge of ERP looking for a suitable placement. Contact 71423342
Email: zakwansheikh@gmail.com

TRAVEL & TOURISM

Indian Male 26yrs, looking job for Traveling Agent in Oman, qualification Plus Two with IATA certificate experience 5year in KSA. Contact 79168215
Email: Muheenpatgar08@gmail.com

SALES / MARKETING

Indian male experience in Sales and Marketing for 12 years with D/L, looking for suitable placement. Contact 71790238

Indain male kerala 31 with 6 yrs of experience in Oman(FMCG sales and other) Oman D/L looking for any suitable placement [now on visa]. Contact 78104649

Young Indian male B.com graduate, PG Diploma in logistic (Air cargo and supply chain management) and Digital Marketing Valid Oman Driving License. Looking for suitable placement. Contact: 79748272
Email: shazil.sadique@gmail.com

Indian 25 yrs male with 2 yrs of experience in Oman seeking for immediate placement. Currently in oman ready to join immediately. Contact +968 93978831
Email faigmukri@gmail.com

Indian male (30) MBA with Oman experience (FMCG and other) in Sales and Marketing valid Omani D/L on visit. Contact +968 7975 5795

Indian, BA, looking for a placement 12 yrs Experience in FMCG with Oman DL. Contact 97898905
Email karthilchy@gmail.com

1 year experience in SM Management, Marketing and Content Writing. Looking for opportunities in Marketing (Digital), Brand Development. Advertising, HR. # 92866372

Procurement, Warehouse & Logistics
Pakistani Male, Graduate, Over 15 years experience includes 3.5 Years GCC Experience, Over 7 Years in Managerial Positions. Valid Omani D/L, Looking for Suitable Placement.
Contact: 91257663 E-Mail: waqasmehar1@gmail.com

Senior Accountant
Indian Male 34 years Bcom having 13 yr exp as Accountant and Senior Accountant looking for suitable placement. Having Valid Visa, NOC & Oman driving licence.
Contact no: 95516352 Email: jerry_4985@yahoo.com

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FEATURES

Demand for lumber soars in Germany, and so do prices

The

coronavirus crisis has hit many sectors of the economy in Germany, but the lumber industry certainly isn't one of them. Prices for wood products have gone up markedly in recent months. But why? Andreas Melzer runs a sawmill in Rüdersdorf just outside Berlin. The fact that a lot more people have engaged in DIY projects at home during the coronavirus pandemic means his order books are full. Asked about media reports suggesting a severe shortage of wood on the market, the entrepreneur insists he hasn't had to worry about timber supplies. There's never been so much unprocessed wood around in Germany, he says. Backing up his claim, Germany's Federal Statistics Office (Destatis) in 2020 confirmed a national logging record, the highest level since German unification in 1990. Such an increase in logging is partly due to rising demand in various key markets. But about half of it is a result of the damage done to trees due to the effects of climate change.

"The vast scope of logging last year can at least partly be attributed to the need to remove so many more trees damaged by storms or infested by bark beetles," Holger Weimar from the Hamburg-based Thünen Institute of International Forestry and Forest Economics told DW. He said the logging figures provided by Destatis were indicative of recent trends in their own right, but did not fully include logging activities last year. "It needs to be said that the official logging figures are up to 25 per cent lower than the real figures as official stats do not include logging activities in privately owned forest areas," Weimar pointed out. Can the domestic market absorb it all? So where is all that timber going? For the moment, quite a bit of it is going nowhere. Huge wood stacks are piling up in forests across the country as they wait their turn to be processed at a sawmill. Mills in Germany haven't had a dull moment in recent months, trying their level best to handle the increased workload. "The sector says sawmills across the nation have long been working at full capacity. They just can't cope with more timber," Weimar

reason not to, insists Peter Aicher, owner of the Aicher Holzbau family-run business in Bavaria and chairman of the Association of German Carpenters. "Storm-damaged or infested timber is by no means an inferior resource," Aicher told DW. "Products from it have about the same properties as non-infested lumber. Apart from some blemishes, the material keeps its original load-bearing capacity when used in construction." Demand and supply in sync? Mercer Timber's Carsten Merforth concludes it would therefore be inaccurate to speak of a general scarcity of lumber products. Domestic demand has risen, he agrees, but so has supply from the sawmills. He doesn't understand calls by some German policymakers for export restrictions. "In 2020, the German sawmill industry exported just 600,000 cubic metres of sawn lumber more to the US. That's almost negligible," Merforth pointed out, adding that the US still gets the bulk of its imports from

said. "That's partly a technical issue as there are not enough sawmills around, but there's also a lack of skilled labor." The expert said the problem was brought to the fore as demand for lumber products soared even as the coronavirus crisis raged on. Timber house construction has gained momentum and so have DIY projects in private households, as more and more people have been forced to stay at home. In addition, there's also been growing demand in key overseas markets. "In the US, building activities already went up tangibly last spring, but wood-processing capacities are limited, especially since many sawmills were shut down during the global financial crisis," Weimar elaborated. His view is echoed by Carsten Merforth, managing director of Mercer Timber Products, a Thuringia-based company specializing in softwood lumber products. "There's a wood construction hype in the US right now, fueling lumber demand as the economy is in catch-up mode. And the large-scale investment programs announced by the Biden administration are also contributing to higher demand and a spike in prices," Merforth told DW.

Lumber scarcity or not?

Against the backdrop of this multifaceted situation, many German buyers and end users of lumber products feel there might not be enough left for them on the home market. There's no lack of media reports on people failing to get their hands on enough lumber for their businesses. "The current hype in the US has been spilling over to Germany, and some market participants are hoarding lumber, filling their storehouses beyond their own needs, speculating on further price hikes and thus making that excess wood unavailable for others," Merforth commented. Added to the tense situation is the fact that many carpenters in Germany are arguably making unjustifiably high demands on the quality of sawn lumber. "The standard they ask for cannot always be met, with so much timber infested by bark beetles — other customers abroad gladly use this same material for construction projects." And there's no

Canada and only 4 per cent to 5 per cent from Germany. "In the case of China, we're mostly talking about the export of storm-damaged or infested timber that no one here in Germany wants to use," he added. A large part of the 2020 exports to China were whole shiploads of logs from forest owners trying to relieve local markets. Roughly 6.1 million cubic metres of logs were exported from Germany, but only 900,000 cubic metres of lumber. While not neglecting customers in other regions and at home, Merforth makes no bones about his company currently doing brisk and lucrative business with the US where clients are willing to pay a lot more now.

Tough times not forgotten

"There was a period of 15 years when sawn lumber prices were extremely low, and nobody back then thought of supporting us so that we'd be better off," he said, stressing that his company had invested a lot in improving productivity and efficiency during that time. Merforth pointed out that log prices at the time were very high by

international standards, meaning his firm had to diversify in various markets, including internationally, to survive that trying period. "For about six months now, prices have finally been going up, and some folks are immediately making a fuss about it," Merforth complained. The price level wouldn't stay that high for long anyway, he added. Forest economics expert Holger Weimar agrees. He doesn't think the price rally for lumber will continue long into the future, although, he concedes, there's little experience with such extreme spikes. "The US is about to expand its own capacities again to produce more at home," Weimar said. "Timber house construction may slow down a bit in Germany, and some bigger projects here may be postponed, but that's mere speculation for the time being." DW

ROUND-UP

be'ah signs agreement to collect fishing nets waste

Wakud and be'ah joined hands to preserve the environment and sustain marine life in the Sultanate

MUSCAT: The Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) signed an agreement to collect, store, and treat fishing nets waste with 'Wakud', to preserve the environment and sustain marine life in the Sultanate.

The agreement was signed by Kumayl bin Ahmed al Lawati, Department Head of Business Development at be'ah, while 'Wakud' company was represented by Talal Hasan, the chairman of the company's Board of Directors.

Kumayl bin Ahmed Al Lawati, Department Head of Business Development at be'ah, said, "We are pleased with this cooperation with 'Wakud' which is a continuation of the efforts made for the proper and safe disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous waste items in order to preserve the Omani environment. We aim through this partnership to work jointly in reducing the impact of waste on the environment and the sustainability of its resources.

Kumayl added, "Recycling fishing net wastes, which in turn will contribute to the sustainability of resources, and the extraction of materials of economic value to benefit from them; by adopting the circular economy model, in addition to that, diverting them to the engineered landfills where be'ah will provide an area of 1000 square metres in the Duqm engineered



landfill, in which 'Wakud' will be storing the waste of fishing nets in partnership with various parties.

On his part, Talal Hasan, Chairman of 'Wakud' said, "This partnership with be'ah comes from our firm belief in the importance of social responsibility and the constructive role it plays in preserving our environment, and the beautiful and picturesque beaches of the Sultanate."

Talal added, "Wakud will collect fishing nets waste from the coasts of Masirah and Duqm, then transfer it to the engineered landfill in Duqm in Al-Wusta Governorate, to collect and store sufficient quantities in the area allocated by be'ah and subsequently, it will be transported to North Al-Batinah for cleaning and sorting before being shipped abroad for recycling and utilisation of their value."

Talal pointed out, "This agreement comes within the framework of social responsibility for non-

profit companies and in collaboration and partnership with the Environment Society of Oman and the Port of Sohar.

"The initiative will also provide additional income for collectors and Omani fishermen to motivate them to collect the fishing nets waste from the coasts and contribute to the cleanliness and sustainability of Omani beaches."

It is noteworthy that the Environment Society of Oman have removed an estimated 615 tonnes of abandoned fishing gear from Masirah Island in a series of dedicated net removal campaigns carried out since 2017.

be'ah works on harmonising the environment, and each of its strategies, initiatives and projects related to waste management go in accordance with the best local and international practices. In this regard, be'ah signed agreements with various partners, which will contribute to supporting the Sul-

tanate's economy by adopting a sustainable approach to reduce the environmental impacts resulting from waste disposal operations and support their economic value to achieving the goals of Oman 2040 Vision.

This agreement is considered tangible efforts to achieve the fundamentals of Oman 2040 vision for a sustainable environment and a competitive economy by applying the principles of the circular economy. It is noteworthy that the Oman Vision 2040 focuses on activating the role of the circular economy so that the Sultanate will shift from relying on the linear economy (extraction, manufacturing, disposal), to move to a more circular approach that preserves the value of resources which will lead to creating economic benefits and secondary industries that result in new job opportunities and contribute in reducing health and environmental problems.

BANK MUSCAT

Al Mazyona monthly draw for April showcases banking services in Musandam and Buraimi

MUSCAT: In line with its vision "To serve you better, everyday" and commitment to partnership in promoting a strong savings culture in Oman, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, recently conducted a number of draws under its Al Mazyona scheme 2021 for April at the head office.

The draws were live-streamed on the bank's social media channels on Twitter, YouTube and Instagram keeping in mind the great public interest in the various prize draws conducted by Al Mazyona. As many as 451 winners won more than OMR600,000 in the draws, which included the monthly mega draw as well as the Asalah, Al Jawhar and governorate draws.

The event, which also showcased the bank's services across different governorates, saw Al Mazyona monthly draws being held for customers from Buraimi, Musandam and other governorates in Oman. As many as 420 lucky winners won OMR500 each in the draw for governorates while the mega draw saw a lucky winner walk away with the top prize of OMR 50,000. Also, 10 Asalah customers won OMR 25,000 each and 20 Al Jawhar customers won OMR 5,000 each in the other draws. It must be noted that all Asalah customers who maintained a minimum balance of OMR 30,000 and Al Jawhar customers maintaining a minimum balance of OMR 10,000 were automatically entered into these monthly draws.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah Tamman Al Mashani, DGM - Institutional Sales and Product Development, Bank Muscat, said: "We are pleased with the excellent response and follow up from our custom-



ers for the Al Mazyona savings scheme, which is the most popular and offers the highest prizes in Oman. I take this opportunity to congratulate all the lucky winners for their good savings habit, which has resulted in them winning these excellent prizes. Al Mazyona provides numerous opportunities to all our customers across the Sultanate to win excellent prizes for their savings habit. We promise to continue our focus on customers from governorates across the country in the coming months. I call upon everyone to take maximum advantage of the scheme by saving more and getting more chances to win."

Al Mazyona is the longest-running savings scheme, offering the largest prizes in the country. In 2021, the scheme will offer OMR 11 million to 7,470 winners, with the number of winners going up by 12 per cent compared to last year. Recently Bank Muscat held its special Eid Al Fitr draw, where 25 lucky winners were rewarded with OMR 2,000 each.

The bank has also announced a number of special draws to be held during the year including the Mid-Year draw, the National Day draw and the End of the year draw. Bank Muscat has called on its customers to increase their savings to get more chances to win exciting prizes in the Al Mazyona savings scheme.

CARBON-NEUTRAL MOBILITY SOCIETY



Toyota accelerates hydrogen engine technologies through motorsports

MUSCAT: Toyota has been leading the way in environment-friendly technology for a long time. The Hybrid Electric Vehicle paved the way for lesser dependence on petrol, with the increased use of the electrical motor.

Now, underlining its commitment to achieving a carbon-neutral mobility society, Toyota Motor Corporation (Toyota) has announced that it is developing a new hydrogen engine. The engine has been installed on a racing vehicle based on Toyota's Corolla Sport, which will participate in competitive motorsports under the ORC ROOKIE Racing banner.

The vehicle is powered by a 1.6 litre in-line 3-cylinder turbo engine that uses compressed hydrogen as its fuel source.

Its first race event will be the Round 3 NAPAC Fuji Super TEC 24 Hours Race, which takes place on May 21-23 as part of the Super Taikyu Series 2021 Powered by Hankook. By honing its hydrogen engine in the challenging environment of motorsports, Toyota aims to contribute to the realisation of a sustainable and prosperous mobility society.

"We are excited to put our new hydrogen engine technologies to the test during this year's Su-

per Taikyu Series," commented Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "Our participation underlines Toyota's commitment to achieving carbon-neutral mobility by exploring diverse technology options. I am especially excited as I believe there is a huge opportunity for the uptake of hydrogen in the Middle East. The region has a strong potential to produce clean hydrogen from both renewable energy and fossil fuel through the technology of Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS)."

Fuel Cell Electrified Vehicles (FCEVs) such as Toyota's Mirai use a fuel cell in which hydrogen chemically reacts with oxygen in the air to produce electricity that powers the motor. Meanwhile, hydrogen engines generate power through the combustion of hydrogen using fuel supply and injection systems that have been modified from those used with gasoline engines, emitting zero CO2 in the process.

Combustion in hydrogen engines occurs at a faster rate than in gasoline engines, resulting in a characteristic of good responsiveness. While having excellent

environmental performance, hydrogen engines also have the potential to relay the fun of driving, including through sounds and vibrations.

Toyota has long engaged in the innovation of engine technology and is applying the technologies that it has continued to refine through its participation in motorsports in production vehicles, with the GR Yaris launched last September being one example. In addition, Toyota intends to apply the safety technologies and know-how that it has accumulated through the development of fuel cell vehicles and the commercialisation of the Mirai.

The hydrogen-powered race vehicle will be fuelled using hydrogen produced at the Fukushima Hydrogen Energy Research Field in Namie Town, Fukushima Prefecture. Toyota has been strengthening its efforts toward achieving carbon neutrality by promoting the use of hydrogen through the popularisation of FCEVs and numerous other fuel-cell-powered products. By further refining its hydrogen-engine technologies through motorsports, Toyota is targeting the realisation of an even better hydrogen-based society.

TALABAT ANNOUNCES REGION-WIDE INITIATIVE IN SUPPORTING HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IN PALESTINE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

Dar Al Atta'a to facilitate local donations in Oman

MUSCAT: talabat, the region's leading food and grocery delivery app, today announced an initiative to raise awareness and funds for humanitarian needs in Palestine.

This Thursday 27th May, the organisation will use its platform as a vehicle for support. Through its initiative, every order placed on its app across all talabat markets, will contribute towards humanitarian relief efforts in Palestine.

In addition, through its employee giving back program, talabat employees can choose to voluntarily give up a portion of their salaries, topped up by talabat.

Customers can participate by donating directly through the talabat app - by searching for Dar Al Atta'a Charity and choosing the "For Palestine" menu option.

talabat Chief Executive Officer, Tomaso Rodriguez states: "The world has been witnessing the current humanitarian crisis and we believe it is our duty, as people and as an organization, to stand for humanity and lend a helping hand to the Palestinians. With support from our long standing regional partner, the World Food Programme and local partner Dar Al Atta'a, we are

talabat

talabat launches initiative on Thursday 27th of May.

On this day, talabat will donate earnings to help provide humanitarian relief efforts in Palestine.

The donations will be made through the World Food Programme and will encourage its employees to take part in the campaign. Local donations can directly be made through **DAR AL ATTA'A**



raising awareness and together - with our community - we are enabling financial support towards humanitarian relief efforts for Palestine.'

talabat Oman Managing Director, Tataian Rahal states: "This is the time where we need to stand hand in hand to support a humanities cause. We are committed to support Middle Eastern communities in urgent need of food and supplies. The recent events in Palestine have led to the need for humanitarian relief efforts, that we as talabat want to support where we can. We are proud to partner and collaborate with our local partner Dar Al Atta'a and the World Food Programme, knowing that the donations will bring relief to those who need it the most."

All proceedings will go towards primary supplies, such as food parcels, medical aid and essentials to the communities on the ground.

Customers can participate by ordering on the talabat app on Thursday 27 May or by donating directly through the app - on any date - by searching 'Dar Al Atta'a' Association and choosing the "For Palestine" menu option. The talabat app can be downloaded from the App Store, Google Play or from the Huawei App Gallery.

PHOTO FEATURE

HEALTH, EDUCATION MINISTRIES BEGIN VACCINATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST COVID-19 FOR GED STUDENTS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education today began vaccinating general education diploma (GED) students in all governorates of the Sultanate against Covid-19.

The two-week campaign came as per a decision of the Covid-19 Supreme Committee's ministerial team concerned with vaccination against Covid-19.

The target segment of GED students is estimated at 75,725 from both the government and private education institutions.

The vaccination will also cover members of exam committees, observers, graders, staff at exam centres, educational assessment centres and correction centres. -ONA





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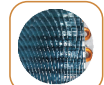
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