



MONDAY, 21 JUNE 2021
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OMAN'S SQUAD FOR OLYMPICS NAMED
 GO TO **PAGE 16 SPORTS**

197 DEATHS IN A WEEK

Oman has witnessed a disturbing spike in COVID-19 infections, hospitalisations and related deaths. A total of 197 deaths were reported in the last seven days, including 84 from Thursday to Saturday, taking the death toll to 2,710. A total of 365 deaths were reported this month till Sunday, or 18.3 deaths per day - the highest since the outbreak. The Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 1,436 inpatients on Sunday - the highest during the pandemic - including 414 in ICUs. MoH reported 5,320 new cases in a three-day period ending Sunday.

Weddings, gatherings banned

Our Correspondent
 Muscat

The Supreme Committee has decided to close wedding and banquet halls and stop activities related to renting tents, starting June 20 until further notice.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) stated that meetings, celebrations and gatherings of any kind in hotels and tourist establishments in the sultanate are also banned.

MHT has called on hotels and tourism establishments to close all public facilities on their premises from 8pm to 4am, except restaurants, provided food is served through room service during the closure period.

The Government Communication Centre (GCC) stated that



the Supreme Committee has allowed a few activities to continue during the night lockdown from 8pm and 4am.

The GCC said that emergency vehicles (electricity/water and communications), garbage and sewage trucks, ambulance and

civil defence vehicles, trucks for food supply and consumables, fish transport vehicles, oil/gas and water tankers and trucks transporting containers for import and export through ports and official border posts (truck drivers only) are exempted.

Media houses, construction and contracting companies (workers should not move out of the workplace), medical staff and pharmacists are allowed to function.

24-hour food delivery

The GCC confirmed that restaurants and cafes will be allowed to deliver round the clock from Sunday until further notice. 'For Muscat governorate, food delivery should be carried out through an authorised delivery company or through an establishment, which has a valid licence,' it stated.

'For other governorates, a request should be submitted to the concerned municipality, provided that the authorised person works in the establishment or its owner. Only one licence will be given.'



Mussanah Sports City

Oman to host 2021 youth sailing worlds

Ashok Purohit
 Muscat

Oman's reputation as one of the world's best sailing destinations received a big boost when World Sailing awarded the prestigious 2021 Youth Sailing World Championships to Oman.

The youth sailing worlds is one of the most sought after events with the best young talent from around the world vying for top honours.

The event will be hosted by Oman Sail at Mussanah Sports City from December 11 to 18.

Confirming the development, a top Oman Sail official said, "We are proud of hosting such a big event."

The 2021 event is the first youth worlds since the 2019 event in Hempel, Poland, as the scheduled 2020 worlds in Salvador, Brazil, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Oman edition of the youth worlds will be a milestone as it will mark the 50th event of the youth sailing competition, which was first held in Sweden in 1971. The competition has been

The 2021 edition will be hosted by Oman Sail at Mussanah Sports City from December 11-18

held annually since, with 2020 being the first time the event was not staged during a calendar year.

World Sailing had scheduled the 2021 edition in The Hague, the Netherlands, for July but the cancellation of the Salvador worlds pushed back the event to August 2023 due to the pandemic.

Awarding of the youth worlds to Oman in December means that a hectic season awaits Oman Sail, starting with the Asian Windsurfing Championships in Musandam in October followed by the 49er, 49erFX and Nacra 17 World Championships in November at Mussanah Sports City.

Hosting the Youth World Championships makes the sul-

tanate the sailing capital of the world in 2021.

Over 350 of the world's best young sailors from more than 60 countries are expected to arrive for the youth worlds and compete in Laser Radial, 29er, 420, Nacra 15, Techno293 Plus and Kite Boarding classes.

The youth worlds venue will be the Millennium Mussanah Resort at the Mussanah Sports City.

The inaugural Youth Sailing World Championship was held in Angelholm, Sweden in 1971 where 16 nations competed for titles in the two-person dinghies, 420 and Flipper.

The worlds are open to sailors aged 19 and under and is a platform where the stars of the future are born.

Past notable winners include America's Cup skippers Chris Dickson, Russell Coutts and Dean Barker (all from New Zealand); Olympic medallists Ben Ainslie of Great Britain and Robert Scheidt of Brazil; and Volvo Ocean Race sailors like Stuart Bannatyne of New Zealand and Richard Clarke of Canada.

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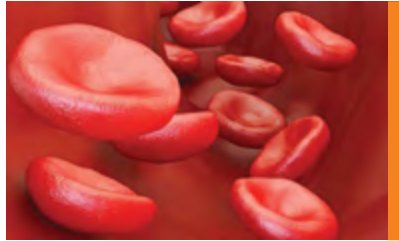
Early examination only way to limit spread of genetic diseases

WORLD SICKLE CELL DAY

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Commemorating World Sickle Cell Day observed on June 19 every year, experts have reiterated that early medical examination is the only way to limit the spread of genetic blood diseases.

The day aims to raise awareness about sickle cell disease, a type of blood disorder that is passed down from parents to children. It is primarily a group of disorders which affects red blood cells and haemoglobin. Those diagnosed with sickle cell disease have haemoglobin S, an atypical haemoglobin molecule that has the tendency to distort the shape of red blood cells to sickles.



The latest studies conducted by the Ministry of Health and Sultan Qaboos University on the prevalence of hereditary blood diseases showed that 5.7 per cent of Oman's population carries the gene for sickle cell anaemia, and 2.61 per cent carries the gene for Beta-thalassemia. A little more than one per cent carries a gene for other sickle cell diseases.

Around ten per cent of the population carries a gene for ge-

Consanguineous marriage is among the reasons for the increase in prevalence and many people being carriers of these diseases in different regions

DR THORAYA BINT SAIF AL HOSANI

netic blood diseases which are serious conditions.

The study also indicated that 48 per cent of the population carries a gene for Alpha-thalassemia and about 60 per cent carries a gene for blood diseases.

According to Dr Thoraya bint Saif al Hosani, chairperson of Board of Directors of Omani Society for Hereditary Blood Diseases, early medical examination is the basic and only way to limit the spread of these diseases.

She explained that genetic blood diseases are transmitted from parents to children and prevalent in many countries of the world.

"Consanguineous marriage is among the reasons for the increase in prevalence and many people being carriers of these diseases in different regions. Even marriages not with relatives have the risk of these diseases in children. There are also reports of transmission of these diseases

from one region to another," Dr Thoraya said.

"What society needs is to spread awareness on these diseases, how they are transmitted and how to prevent them by holding events, awareness programmes and educational forums in cooperation with government and private health institutions focused on cultivating a culture of early medical examination."

Dr Salam bin Salem al Kindi, professor and senior consultant of hematology at Sultan Qaboos University, informed that patients with genetic blood diseases are given priority when administering COVID-19 vaccines as they are among the groups most vulnerable to infections.



Vaccination of SQU students, staff begins

Muscat - A two-month campaign to immunise students and staff members of Sultan Qaboos University against COVID-19 will begin on Monday at the SQU Cultural Centre's grand hall, where 20 vaccination stations have been set up.

Vaccines will be administered by a team comprising 20 nurses, two doctors and five students from SQU's College of Medicine and Health Sciences.

As many as 20 Scouts have volunteered to regulate move-

ment in the immunisation hall, while 20 SQU staff members will help process the drive's data via the Tarassud + app.

All precautionary measures are in place to tackle any emergency, with an ambulance on standby. SQU students and staff members are required to electronically book their appointments. The vaccination unit at SQU will receive applicants between 8am and 1pm on all days of the week, except weekends. ONA

Artificial reef project in Dibba completed

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a move to boost fisheries resources in the sultanate, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has completed an artificial coral reefs project in Dibba in Musandam governorate.

Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, an official in the ministry informed that the Musandam Fisheries Department started the project in January 2019 with funding from the Agricultural and Fish-



(Supplied photo)

eries Development Fund.

The final stage of the industrial reef construction project is

complete with the landing of four

units of artificial reefs in the sea. The project included design-

ing, manufacturing and deploying artificial reef units.

"The project is part of strategic plans to develop the fisheries sector. The ministry aims to enhance fish stocks and biological diversity in the sultanate's waters," the ministry official said.

In 2019, the ministry launched its largest artificial coral reef off the coast of Suwaiq spread over an area of 20km x 7km.

The project, called Suwaiq Marine Farm Artificial Reef Complex, has 4,280 coral reef units.

OIA CHAIRMAN RECEIVES MALTESE FM



H E Abdulsalam Mohammed al Murshidi, chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), received in his office Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Malta, on Sunday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed ways of boosting cooperation in investment fields and benefiting from available opportunities in the two countries (ONA)

Omran and PDO sign agreement to share expertise, enhance ICV

Muscat - Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran) - the executive arm of the sultanate for tourism development - has signed a Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to share knowledge, benefit from PDO's expertise in various fields, including In-Country Value (ICV), and explore collaboration opportunities to implement initiatives in the tourism sector.

The agreement also aims to look into potential opportunities to implement strategies and programmes to enhance ICV in order to secure sustainable long-term commercial benefits. Furthermore, it aims at maximising the use of local content, encouraging knowledge sharing to improve the capacity and capability of the local businesses and vendors in the tourism sector, and exploring opportunities to establish local community tourism companies.

In addition, the MoC covers the potential collaboration to support high-potential investment opportunities and related projects in the tourism sector, as well as sharing best practices and experiences in the fields of health, safety and environment (HSE) and Lean methodology.

The terms of the agreement also include enhancing co-operation in providing training and secondment opportunities for Omanis and supporting PDO's efforts in the 'National Initiative for Plantation of 10mn Trees' and



(Supplied photo)

other environmental related initiatives. It further establishes a potential strategic partnership between Omran Group and PDO in the development of geo-tourism in Oman and the implementation of community programmes to develop tourism experiences with the National Travel Operator 'visitoman.om'.

Chief executive officer of Omran Group Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi said, "This agreement is in line with Omran Group's directions and efforts to enhance the tourism value chain through activities and initiatives aimed at maximising ICV in the sultanate, which reflects the objectives of the comprehensive ICV strategy that aims to focus on domestic supply chains, empower the national product, and develop local suppliers and contractors, as well as boosting opportunities for local companies and small and medium enter-

prises (SMEs) in the tourism sector. These also include increasing Omanisation, developing and training national cadres, and activating areas of social investment."

PDO managing director Raoul Restucci, who signed the MoC with Omran, said, "The MoC is an example of the continuous collaboration efforts between PDO and its key partners. We look forward to working with Omran on enhancing ICV in the tourism sector as it is vital that we sustain partnerships across different fields to create benefits for Oman's workforce and economy."

ICV is a prominent modern economic concept as it is mainly concerned with the circulation of local capital within the country by directing procurement departments in various major companies to local markets, and working to keep investment expenditures within the country.

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Ihssan Association distributes medical devices

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Ihssan Association - a charitable organisation engaged in supporting people with health issues in the sultanate - has recently handed over nearly 500 medical devices to elderly patients and needy families as the country battles the COVID-19 pandemic, an association official said.

Nasser al Maliki, vice president of the association in North Sharqiyah, said, "Altogether 475 medical devices have been handed over to elderly patients and needy families through Ihssan Association in North Sharqiyah governorate."

"The number of oxygen ma-



(Supplied photo)

chines delivered to patients through the association reached 65, along with 182 electric beds, 197 regular wheelchairs, and 31 sputum suction devices, in addition

to a number of other medical supplies," he added.

Maliki explained that the association "seeks to relieve the pressure that hospitals are facing

from the COVID-19 pandemic", while underscoring the role played by the association in co-operation with the private sector during this period of crisis.

The Ihssan Association vice president said that the services that his organisation was providing "are targeted to the elderly and people with low in-

Mitsui E&P Middle East BV on Sunday signed an agreement with Ihssan Association giving them 100 medical beds for distribution to those who can't afford them

come through coordination with hospital specialists, who are helping the Ihssan members to select the right devices and with knowhow on how to use

them".

"The association is continuing with humanitarian efforts to support the hospitalised patients in the governorate in particular with medical equipment during this pandemic," Maliki said.

Given the organisation's continuous involvement with various social activities in the health sector, Mitsui E&P Middle East BV on Sunday signed an agreement with Ihssan Association giving them 100 medical beds for distribution to those who can't afford them.

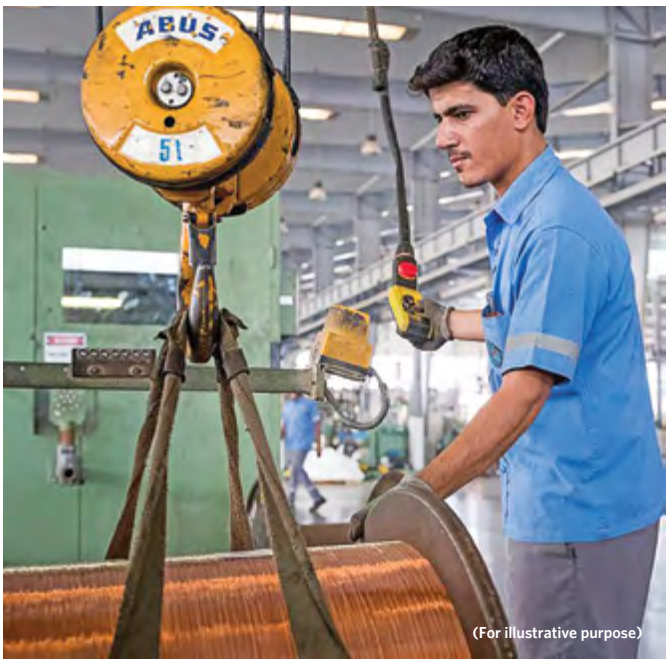
The agreement was signed in the presence of H E Sheikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development.

MoCIIP reports over 566,000 business transactions in 2020

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has reported having as many as 566,020 business transactions during 2020, nearly six per cent jump from the transactions it received during 2019.

According to the latest report of the MoCIIP, the total number of transactions submitted through the electronic portal 'Invest Easy' at the ministry's various front offices, the directorate's concerned department, self-service facilities, the free zones at Sohar, Duqm and Al Mazyona, various law offices and



(For illustrative purpose)

through Sanad offices across the sultanate reached 566,020, up by 5.6 per cent, compared to 535,759 transactions in 2019.

The Statistics Department at MoCIIP clarified that the total number of transactions at the ministry's front offices reached 27,395, while transactions submitted through the departments and directorates affiliated to the MoCIIP were 213,562.

A total of 122,522 transactions were received through self-service portals, 4,858 transactions through the free zones at Sohar, Duqm and Al Mazyona, 1292 transactions through law firms and 196,391 transactions were submitted through various Sanad offices.

Omani doctor becomes chairperson of MENATOX

Muscat - Dr Badria Ali al Hatali, head of Toxicology Section at the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health of the Ministry of Health's Directorate General of Disease Surveillance and Control, has been selected for the post of chairperson of the Middle East and North Africa Clinical Toxicology Association (MENATOX).

Dr Badria said MENATOX has, since its establishment in 2010 in the US state of Massachusetts, strived to raise social and global awareness about poi-



Dr Badria Ali al Hatali

sons and ways to avoid them and protect society and individuals.

Dr Badria pointed out that the MENATOX contributes to most of the research featuring clinical toxicology with a view to upgrad-

ing this type of medical study, facilitate the mission of the association's members and researchers in the field and provide the best possible standards of healthcare to patients.

Dr Badria obtained BSc in Health Sciences and PhD in Medicine from SQU. She also obtained Oman Medical Speciality Board's accreditation in Emergency Medicine in 2012 and clinical toxicology fellowship from the University of Emory, Georgia, United States in 2014. ONA

MAFWR bans fish import from Stouby in Denmark

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources issued Ministerial Resolution No. 117/2021 on banning the import of live fish from the Danish region of Stouby.

A statement issued by the ministry said, 'H E Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, issues a decision banning the import of live fish - according to Chapter 10/1/2 of the Aquatic Animals Code issued by the World Organization for Animal Health - and their products, derivatives and offal from the Danish region of Stouby until the reason for the ban is resolved.'

The decision was issued on June 13 and takes effect from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

Badr al Samaa's 13th branch to open in Ma'abala on Wednesday

Muscat - Badr al Samaa Group of Hospitals will launch its 13th state-of-the-art branch in Ma'abala, Muscat on Wednesday, at 6pm.

Badr a Samaa Medical Centre, Ma'abala will be inaugurated by H E Sheikh Nasar Amer Shuwain al Hosni Undersecretary, Ministry of Labour. Dr Mazin bin Jawad al Khabouri, director general, Directorate of Private Health Establishments, Ministry of Health, will be the guest of honour of this event.

'Ma'abala is a developing commercial and residential city in Seeb which needs the best quality healthcare services and availability of all major specialities, saving money and time of the patients who have to travel distances. Looking at the needs and demands of the local population and following our vision of taking quality and affordable healthcare services to every part of Oman, the management of Badr al Samaa Group decided to dedicate this advanced medical centre to the people of Ma'abala and surrounding areas,' a statement read.



(Supplied photo)

Abdul Latheef and Dr P A Mohammed, managing directors of Badr al Samaa Group of Hospitals in a joint statement said, "The advanced infrastructure of this medical centre is benchmarked with the best. The patients and attendants will appreciate the services and ambience of this state-of-the-art facility. We have employed best doctors, nurses, support staff and advanced technology to ensure extraordinary experience for our patients.

"Looking at the demand of the people, we may convert this facility into a hospital soon. We

have enough space and infrastructure in this huge nine-storey building."

This state-of-the-art facility will deliver healthcare services in the specialities like General Medicine, Internal Medicine, Cardiology, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Urology, Paediatrics, Dental, Dermatology, ENT, Orthopaedics, General Surgery, etc. This centre has most advanced machines for radiology and pathology diagnostics.

This medical centre will have facilities for COVID-19 vaccinations and RT-PCR sample collection.



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specialized Companies in the field of tender shown below and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees until the end of deadline stipulated below.

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PRE/21/031	(31/2021/QS-1)	Annual Maintenance Contract For Ups System At Muscat Municipality - Various Location (E- Tender)	Rial 25	12/07/2021	29/07/2021	Specialized
PRE/21/030	(32/2021/QS-2)	Connecting irrigation water to Hayy AlMuna Park at Bousher (E- Tender)	Rial 25	12/07/2021	29/07/2021	First

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- Tender Bonds shall be placed in the Tender Bond Box for E-Tendering in the Ground floor at Muscat Municipality Building, Ruwi, before 10:00 am as per the date Mentioned in the above table. All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Tender being presented and no other marks.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
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A RACE AGAINST TIME

How can the government speed up the COVID-19 vaccination campaign? Would it be a good idea to extend vaccination hours to around the clock to speed up the process?



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Muna Basheer al Zadjali
Private sector employee

With cases increasing, we hope the government speeds up vaccinations. We need to have more centres for the population to get vaccinated. Overcrowding and long queues at vaccination centres make them potential superspreaders of the virus.



Amin al Sabbagh
Banking sector employee

COVID-19 vaccines should not be charged because this is a pandemic. All governments should come together to help each other. By making immunisation free, eventually the speed of vaccination coverage will increase.



K M Gurnani
Businessman

The vaccination drive has been sped up by involving private hospitals and companies against payment. Now for individuals who are 45 +, the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre will be a big facility. Extending vaccination hours will, of course, be a good idea, subject to availability of nurses.



Dr Dharmendra Gulani
Pathologist

Vaccines should be charged at a cost-effective price. Government and private health establishments should work hand-in-hand and try to import reasonably priced vaccines which can be given without extra administering charges. To help the low-socioeconomic status population, charitable organisations and embassies should come forward.



C M A Siddhique
Private sector employee

A nip-it-at-the-bud approach must be adopted. Vaccination campaigns must be carried out at the potential point of spread - the highly populated areas - to reduce the probability of spread. Additionally, extending the work hours at vaccination centres will decelerate the spread of infection.



Jay Prakash
Private sector employee

Vaccinating the population requires collective action involving all - the Ministry of Health, public authorities, volunteer groups, private sector companies and the public. The government should look into vaccinating all in order to prevent the spread of the virus. An around-the-clock mass vaccination drive is welcome.



Mohan Anandan
Banking sector employee

To speed up the immunisation drive, vaccination centres must be opened at malls, private clinics and on the premises of big corporate houses which have large workforce. Timings of government approved vaccination centres must be increased besides ensuring that vaccines do not run out of stock midway.



Shafi al Zadjali
Commercial agent

The government should give 50 per cent of the responsibility to private hospitals, so anyone wanting the vaccine can get it sooner and vaccination coverage increases.



Harish Danani
Senior manager

Oman is grappling with a mammoth task of vaccinating as many of its eligible population in the shortest possible time. We need to create more vaccination centres to ensure the target population is vaccinated faster, once we have enough vaccines. Around-the-clock vaccination hours will definitely help speed up the process to fight COVID-19.



? NEXT ON YOUR SAY

How effective are night lockdowns in controlling the spread of virus? Does the decision affect your daily affairs?

The views stated here are those of the respondents and not endorsed by *Muscat Daily*. If you feel strongly about the issues discussed here, you can email your comments to muscatdaily@apexmedia.co.om Log on to our Facebook page or tweet us your comments on the issue

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Offer valid from 16th May 2021 to 15th August 2021. Total of 3 raffle draws will be held at Oasis Water Company, Aziba. Draw Dates: 16th June 2021, 19th July 2021 and 15th August 2021. Winners will be intimated directly. Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Gifts shown are for illustrative purpose only. Actual may vary.

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MUSCAT DAILY

Registration for National Research Award 2021 opens

Muscat - The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation opened registration for the National Research Award 2021 on Sunday. Registration for the eighth edition of the award will remain open until 2pm, August 19.

The National Research Award (NRA) is presented in two broad categories - Best published research led by a PhD holder or equivalent (senior specialist or higher in the medical field) and Best published research led by a young researcher (a non-PhD holder). The six fields of research included in the award are Education and Human Resources, Information Systems and Communication Technologies, Health and Community Service, Cultural and Social Sciences, Energy and Industry, and Environmental and Biological Resources.

Those interested can apply through home.trc.gov.om/NRA/SubmissionForm.aspx. Some of the general criteria for the award

include relevance of the research article to Oman and in one of the six listed fields, it must not have won any other award nationally or internationally, it must be an original research, only one application is allowed from an individual/team every year, and applicants must provide written consent from each team member to prove their approval to participate in the competition.

Only complete applications submitted electronically on NRA's website and supplemented with all required documents as attachments will be considered for evaluation. The research must have been published after March 15, 2018, in a refereed journal, indexed in either Scopus or Web of Science or in one of the Arabic periodicals listed on the award's website.

Applicants can find additional information regarding criteria on NRA's official website - www.trc.gov.om

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Offer valid from 1st May 2021 to 31st July 2021. Total of 3 raffle draws will be held at Oasis Water Company, Aziba. Draw Dates: 1st June 2021, 1st July 2021 and 2nd August 2021. Winners will be intimated directly. Oasis Water Company employees are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Gifts shown are for illustrative purpose only. Actual may vary.

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OPAZ launches one-stop shop for Sohar, Salalah free zones

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) on Sunday launched the electronic One-Stop Shop for Salalah Free Zone and Sohar Free Zone, continuing the digital transformation march that began earlier this year by automating the services of One-Stop Shop in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

In the coming period, the procedures will be completed to launch Al Mazunah Free Zone's electronic portal for the One-Stop Shop services, OPAZ said in a press statement.

The launch of electronic One-Stop Shop services aims to support the OPAZ's efforts in attracting investments to the free zones under its supervision, accelerating the completion of investor applications, facilitating starting business and transforming paper applications to electronic applications.

The One-Stop Shop services for the special economic zones and free zones can be obtained through the link: <https://eoss.opaz.gov.om>.



Throughout the past months, OPAZ has unified the procedures for obtaining the services offered by special economic zones and free zones through their electronic portals.

The electronic One-Stop Shop allows investors access to many services, most notably: applying for land usufruct, demarcation of plots, EIA service, appointment of project consultant, appoint-

ment of project contractor, project plans submission, building permit submission, commencement of construction, and building completion certificate request. Other services will also be added in the coming period, OPAZ said.

Investors in the special economic zones and free zones can apply through the electronic services portal of each zone and

follow up their applications through the dashboard.

The portal also allows the feature of attaching required files and the feature of e-payment, OPAZ said. These features enable employees of the One-Stop Shop in each zone, receive applications and give necessary approvals, starting from receiving the application and ending with application completion.

Tanweer and Marafiq sign deal for power generation in Duqm

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer), a member of Nama Group, and the Centralised Utilities Company (Marafiq) signed a power purchase agreement on Sunday to set up a new power generation facility at Duqm.

This power purchase agreement is for a new gas-based power generation facility at Duqm. It is in line with Tanweer's key strategic objective to reduce the cost of generation, in particular, diesel fuel consumption, and secure electricity ca-



capacity in the high growth area of Duqm, the company said in a press statement.

The agreement will provide the Duqm area with a gas-based generation capacity until the OETC interlinking project is completed and Duqm is connected to the main 400kV grid.

The project will be provided a gas allocation by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Tanweer said in its statement. The power purchase agreement was signed by Ahmed bin Said al Harthy, acting CEO of Tanweer, and Hamed al Wehibi, general manager at Marafiq.

Tethys Oil's production in Oman hits 347,000 barrels in May

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Swedish energy company Tethys Oil announced that its share of the production, before government take, from Blocks 3 and 4 onshore Oman amounted to 346,890 barrels of oil in May 2021, corresponding to 11,190 barrels per day. Oil production in

Oman is currently subject to production limitations under the OPEC+ agreement.

As a consequence, production from Blocks 3 and 4 is subject to limitations but is likely to fluctuate on a monthly basis, Tethys Oil said in a production update statement.

It said the official selling price for Oman export blend crude for

the month of May 2021 amounts to US\$64.43 per barrel.

Tethys Oil, through its wholly owned subsidiary Tethys Oil Block 3 & 4 Ltd, has a 30 per cent interest in Blocks 3 and 4. Partners are Mitsui E&P Middle East with 20 per cent and the operator CC Energy Development (Oman branch) holding the remaining 50 per cent.

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tenders:

Sr.No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Documents	Closing Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	30/2021	Upgradation and Enhancement of Power Quality Monitoring PQ Secure Software	05/07/2021	03/08/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	36.750
2	31/2021	Firefighting System Equipment's Refurbishment at Dhofar Region Grid Stations	05/07/2021	03/08/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	65.630
3	32/2021	Supply and Installation of IT Infrastructure Monitoring Solution with 3 Years AMC	28/06/2021	12/07/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	39.380
4	33/2021	Supply, Installation, Configuration, and Maintenance of IT Facilities in OETC Grid Stations	05/07/2021	03/08/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate.	157.500
5	36/2021	Replacing of 415V LVAC Board with the essential board panel at South Mawalleh Grid station and supply of 415V (CB) incomer for Bousher Grid Station	05/07/2021	03/08/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate, DCRP certificate and OETC registration certificate.	105/=
6	37/2021	Supply & Installation of DC-DC Power Convertors for Telecommunication Panels	05/07/2021	03/08/2021	Local companies with experience in same field, Have a valid tender board registration certificate	65.630

Participation:	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity of sending a valid Tender Board certificate in the same required field.
Buying the Tender:	The documents required for the purchase of the tender are sent by e-mail to the Tenders, Procurement and Contracts Department, to ensure the authenticity of the documents before purchasing the tender through the official working days of the hour from 8.00 am - 01.00 pm .
Fees:	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document.(Payment Through Bank Transfer)
The deadline for clarification:	Before (21) Days from closing date.
Submission:	Each bid should be submitted in a separate sealed envelope addressed to The Chairman of tender committee mentioning Tender Number and Name on the top of the envelope.
Terms and conditions:	- No other writing or any reference thereto should be mentioned on the envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from closing date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from closing date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted. - OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.
Offer:	The complete bid documents should be deposited in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address:	Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 423 O Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 91777378, 99105413, 93515198, 93201558
Email Website:	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com



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إعلان طرح مناقصات

تعلن الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء عن طرح المناقصات التالية :

م	رقم المناقصة	عنوان المناقصة	آخر موعد للحصول على مستندات المناقصة	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات	الدرجة	لنيل الوثيقة (شامل ضريبة القيمة المضافة) (ر.ع.)
١	٢٠٢١/٣٠	تطوير و تحسين برنامج مراقبة أجهزة قياس جودة الطاقة	٢٠٢١/٠٧/٠٥	٢٠٢١/٠٨/٠٣	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول.	٣٦/٧٥٠
٢	٢٠٢١/٣١	تأهيل معدات نظام مكافحة الحرائق بمحطات نقل الكهرباء الرئيسية بمحافظة ظفار	٢٠٢١/٠٧/٠٥	٢٠٢١/٠٨/٠٣	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول.	٦٥/٦٣٠
٣	٢٠٢١/٣٢	توريد وتركيب نظام مراقبة البنية التحتية لتكنولوجيا المعلومات مع عقد صيانة لمدة ثلاث سنوات	٢٠٢١/٠٦/٢٨	٢٠٢١/٠٧/١٢	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول.	٣٩/٣٨٠
٤	٢٠٢١/٣٣	توريد وتركيب وضبط وصيانة مرافق تكنولوجيا المعلومات في محطات الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء	٢٠٢١/٠٧/٠٥	٢٠٢١/٠٨/٠٣	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول.	١٥٧/٥٠٠
٥	٢٠٢١/٣٦	استبدال لوحة المفاتيح بجهد ٤١٥ فولت مع اللوحة الأساسية في محطة الموالح الجنوبية وتوريد ٤١٥ فولت قاطع كهربائي لمحطة بوشهر	٢٠٢١/٠٧/٠٥	٢٠٢١/٠٨/٠٣	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول.	١٠٥/=
٦	٢٠٢١/٣٧	توريد وتركيب محولات الطاقة DC-DC لأجهزة الاتصالات	٢٠٢١/٠٧/٠٥	٢٠٢١/٠٨/٠٣	الشركات المحلية العاملة في هذا المجال المسجلة لدى مجلس المناقصات وتسجيلها ساري المفعول.	٦٥/٦٣٠

الاشتراك	يمكن للشركات والمؤسسات المتخصصة الحصول على مستندات المناقصة مع ضرورة ارسال شهادة مجلس المناقصات سارية المفعول وفي نفس المجال المطلوب.
طريقة الشراء	يتم إرسال المستندات المطلوبة لشراء المناقصة عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني الى دائرة المناقصات والمشتريات والعقود . وذلك لتأكد من صحة المستندات قبل شراء المناقصة وذلك من خلال أيام العمل الرسمية من الساعة ٨:٠٠ ص - ١:٠٠ م .
الرسم	مقابل دفع المبلغ المحدد أعلاه للنسخة الواحدة - لا ترد . (الدفع عن طريق التحويل البنكي)
آخر موعد للإستفسارات	قبل (٢١) يوم من تاريخ آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات
تقديم العروض	تقدم العروض في مظاريغ مغلقة ومعنونة بإسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات مع تحديد رقم وعنوان المناقصة فقط
الشروط و الضمانات	- عدم تحديد اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه على المظروف. - أن تكون العروض سارية المفعول لمدة لا تقل عن (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . - إرفاق تأميناً في صورة ضمان مصرفي من أحد البنوك العاملة في البلاد قدره (X) من قيمة العطاء ساري لمدة (٩٠) يوماً من تاريخ تقديم العطاء . ومعنونة بإسم الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء . - كل عطاء لا يستوفي التأمين المطلوب لن ينظر فيه . - الشركة العُمانية لنقل الكهرباء غير مقيدة بقبول أقل العروض أو أي عطاء آخر
العرض المقدم	يجب وضع العروض في صندوق المناقصات رقم (١) بمبنى الشركة قبل الساعة ١١ صباحاً من التاريخ المحدد لتقديم العطاءات .
عنوان الشركة	عنوان الشركة: محافظة مسقط - الموالح رقم السكة ٢١٥٣ ميني رقم ٤٢٣٠ - تفاصيل التواصل - ٩١٧٧٧٣٧٨, ٩٩١٠٥٤١٣, ٩٣٥١٥١٩٨, ٩٣٢٠١٥٥٨
البريد الإلكتروني	tenders@omangrid.com
الموقع الإلكتروني	www.omangrid.com



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Why is inflation rising worldwide?

Paris, France – Inflation is surging worldwide, making markets nervous that it could derail a post-pandemic economic recovery by putting pressure on central banks to consider pulling stimulus measures sooner than planned. Central bankers say the inflationary pressure is temporary and due to the low base of comparison to a big drop in prices during the first year of the pandemic in 2020.

Oil prices have returned the pre-pandemic levels while the economic recoveries in the US and China have led to growing demand in commodities.

There have been shortages in a variety of goods.

"The rise in inflation so far has largely reflected a combination of a rebound in commodity prices and what we have termed 'reopening' inflation – that is to say, a rebound in prices caused by the unwinding of pandemic-era distortions," said Neil Shearing, analyst at Capital Economics. The consumer price index in the United States hit 5 per cent in May, the highest rate in 13 years.

British inflation has soared to its highest level since before the pandemic last month, with clothing, fuel and oil prices rebounding as the economy reopens.

The consumer prices index in the UK hit 2.1 per cent in May, breaching the Bank of England's 2.0-per cent target for the first time since July 2019. The rate compared with 1.5 per cent in April, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

Germany's inflation also jumped in May to its highest level in a decade, mainly driven by surging energy prices.

In China, the world's second biggest economy, the cost of goods at the factory gate rose to its highest rate in over a decade last month, though consumer prices were stable. Emerging countries with chronic inflation such as Nigeria and Turkey have seen double-digit increases.

How is it affecting economies?

The effect is being felt around the world.



Customers shop for produce at a supermarket on June 10 in Chicago. US inflation rose 5 per cent in the 12-month period ending in May (AFP)

High inflation driven by soaring food prices has pushed seven million Nigerians into poverty, according to the World Bank.

In the United States, the price of pork is 51 per cent higher than a year ago.

New home construction in the US has been affected by shortages of material and the high price of lumber.

The rising prices of metals have been a problem for automakers.

China announced Thursday that it was going to tap its national reserves of copper, aluminium and zinc to curb commodity prices.

How long will it last?

Is it a temporary issue or a long-term problem?

"The risk that the initial spike in inflation would trigger second round effects leading to inflation staying high for longer seems low," said William de Vijlder, chief economist at BNP Paribas, in a note last month.

De Vijlder said labour market

slack – or unmet demand for paid labour – and competitive pressure will prevent long-term price increases.

But Susannah Streeter, analyst at financial firm Hargreaves Lansdown, said "the shortage of staff in key industries could also put a rocket under wage inflation which could linger for a lot longer".

What are central banks saying?

President Joe Biden's huge stimulus programme has fuelled a massive recovery but bond yields have risen as markets predict that the US Federal Reserve will act to stop the economy from overheating earlier than planned.

Top Fed officials on Wednesday maintained their ultra-easy monetary policy and repeated their belief that the temporary sharp spikes in inflation were expected as businesses reopen and people return to their daily lives.

But they brought forward their timeline for a possible rise in interest rates, with a majority of central bank policymakers expecting at least two rate hikes by the end of 2023, a year sooner than in their previous outlook.

Yields rose in Europe, too, putting pressure on the European Central Bank.

Analysts say a tightening of central bank policy could derail the post-Covid recovery.

"That would result in higher rates of interest on home loans and credit cards and there are concerns it could dampen consumer demand too quickly and set back the overall economic recovery," Streeter said.

"Companies which need to borrow money to expand may be put off from that course of action if interest rates increase too rapidly, which could drag on economic growth."

ECB chief Christine Lagarde said just last week that it was "too early" to consider winding down pandemic support.

But central banks in Iceland, Brazil and Russia have already raised their rates to counter inflation.

AFP

Japan's central bank announces first green investment fund

Tokyo, Japan – Japan's central bank Bank of Japan has announced its first investment fund for efforts to address climate change, as the government works towards its new target of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.

The scheme, likely to start this year, will be a successor to an existing programme aimed at promoting economic growth more generally, the Bank of Japan said after a two-day policy meeting.

"Climate change issues could exert an extremely large impact on developments in economic activity and prices as well as financial conditions from a medium- to long-term perspective," its policy statement said.

"The bank considers that supporting the private sector's efforts on the issues from a central bank's standpoint will contribute to stabilising the macroeconomy in the long run."

Financial support measures for pandemic-hit businesses were also extended by six months to the end of March 2022, a day after the government approved lifting a virus state of emergency in nine prefectures including Tokyo.

Slightly looser 'quasi-emergency' restrictions will be set in the capital and six other areas until July 11, less than two weeks before the postponed Tokyo Olympics begin.

The extension of business support had been widely expected, said Naoya Oshikubo, senior economist at SuMi TRUST. "Many companies are continuing to suffer financially from the COVID-19 state of emergency in a number of Japanese prefectures, as well as from the country's low vaccination rates," said Oshikubo ahead of the policy decision.

"The extended financial support package will be very effective in helping hard-pressed small and medium-sized businesses in Japan as demand for business support loans is high," he added. Japan's vaccine rollout started comparatively slowly, but has picked up pace in recent weeks. Just over six per cent of the population is currently fully vaccinated.

The Bank of Japan left its



monetary easing policy unchanged, reiterating that it 'will closely monitor the impact of Covid-19 and will not hesitate to take additional easing measures if necessary'. But Haruhiko Kuroda, the central bank's governor, sounded a note of optimism as vaccinations speed up.

"Vaccinations are rapidly advancing," he told reporters on Friday afternoon.

"With vaccinations advancing at this rate, I think there is a possibility that face-to-face service consumption will recover faster than we previously expected.

As a whole, I think we are heading to a brighter outlook than before."

Earlier Friday, official data showed Japan's consumer prices rose slightly in May for the first time in 14 months, largely because of a rebound in energy prices. Japan has long struggled to hit a 2 per cent inflation target seen as key to kickstarting the world's third-largest economy, despite a barrage of stimulus and monetary easing packages.

AFP

IMF urges world's top polluters to adopt carbon price floor

Washington, US – The IMF on Friday issued a report calling for the world's top polluters to adopt an international carbon price floor, arguing it offered a 'realistic prospect' to combat climate change.

The multilateral agency said that carbon pricing was now widely accepted as the most important policy tool to achieve the drastic emissions cuts required to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius by 2050.

But right now, four-fifths of emissions remain unpriced and the global average carbon price is just US\$3 a ton – far below the level needed to incentivize energy efficiency and redirect innovation towards green technologies. The report modeled different scenarios and said that a three-tier price floor of US\$75, US\$50, and US\$25 per ton for advanced, high, and low-income emerging markets respectively could help achieve a 23 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030.

That example would involve just six participants: Canada, China, the European Union, India,



the United Kingdom and the United States.

The report suggested the scheme could be launched by the G20 before being expanded to others. The initial goal would be to meet the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's target of reducing emissions between one quarter to a half by the end of this decade.

"Simultaneous action among large emitters to scale up carbon pricing would deliver collective action against climate change while decisively addressing competitiveness concerns," said Victor Gaspar, director of the IMF's fiscal affairs department and Ian Parry, a co-author of the report.

"There is no time to waste in putting in place such an arrangement. Imagine us in 2030. Let us make sure that we will not look back at 2021 just to regret the missed opportunity for effective action," they added.

Eventually the scheme would look like a scaled-up version of a Canadian law which requires provinces and territories to implement a minimum carbon price, rising progressively from CAN\$10 per ton in 2018 to CAN\$50 in 2022 and CAN\$170 in 2030.

Jurisdictions meet these goals either through taxes or emissions trading schemes.

AFP

Retail sales in UK decline in May

London, UK – British retail sales fell last month on easing lockdown curbs, as people dined at bars and restaurants instead of buying food at supermarkets, data showed Friday.

Sales by volume declined 1.4 per cent in May after a 9.2-per cent bounce in April, the Office for National Statistics said.

Food stores were the hardest hit, with sales sinking 5.7 per cent as Britons took advantage of reopening hospitality.

Under the phased reopening of Britain's battered economy, bars and restaurants restarted outdoor dining in April and indoor services in May.

"Instead of eating every meal at home as we all did during lockdowns, we were able to dine outside at cafes or restaurants," said Capital Economics analyst Paul Dales.

"Spending just shifted from the shops to social activities," he said, but warned however that "soft retail sales data could mean May was not as strong for the economy as we had thought".

Overall UK retail sales in April and May were nevertheless 9.1 per cent higher than the pre-pandemic level in February 2020.

The UK also reopened non-essential retail in April, allowing the broader British economy to recover further from pandemic fallout on the rapid vaccines rollout.

The economy is now expected to fully reopen on July 19, after the government this week delayed the date by four weeks due to surging Delta infections.

Britain's business lobby predicted Friday that the economy is on course to reach its pre-Covid level by the end of 2021.

The Confederation of British Industry, the nation's biggest employers' organisation, now expects the economy to surge 8.2 per cent this year and 6.1 per cent in 2022.

The Covid-ravaged economy had collapsed by almost 10 per cent last year in Britain's biggest slump in three centuries – and the worst performance among the G7.

Stubborn Brexit worries also fester after Britain formally exited the EU single market at the start of 2021.

Industry data showed Friday that UK food and drink exports to the bloc almost halved in the first quarter as a result of both Brexit and pandemic fallout.

The Food and Drink Federation (FDF) said EU sales slumped 47 per cent from the same period a year earlier.

The industry body blamed 'the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and changes in the UK's trading relationships' after Brexit.

Non-EU sales accounted for 55 per cent of all UK food and drink exports in the first quarter, it added.

"The loss of exports to the EU is a disaster for our industry," said Dominic Goudie, head of international trade at the federation.

The news "is a very clear indication of the scale of losses that UK manufacturers face in the longer-term due to new trade barriers with the EU", he added.

AFP

Toyota targets carbon-neutral plants by 2035

Tokyo, Japan – Toyota, the world's biggest automaker, said Friday it aims to make its production carbon-neutral by 2035, replacing the previous target date of 2050.

The Japanese firm's chief production officer Masamichi Okada made the pledge during an online presentation on Friday, as the G7 leaders meet in Britain to discuss tackling climate change and other pressing issues.

"We are striving to achieve green factories. Carbon neutrality provides us with an opportunity to fundamentally rethink manufacturing," Okada said.

"Toyota will take on a variety of challenges to make its factories carbon neutral by 2035," he added.

One of the ways the company hopes to realise its goal is by introducing new technologies for painting vehicles – one of auto production's most power-gobbling procedures – such as replacing paint with adhesive film.

Toyota is a pioneer of hybrid



vehicles and autos using hydrogen fuel. It is also stepping up its development of battery-powered electric cars.

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga in October set a 2050 deadline for the world's third-largest economy to become carbon neutral, significantly firming up the country's climate-change commitments.

The nation has struggled to cut carbon emissions after shutting down reactors after the 2011 meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

In November, engineering giant Toshiba said it would stop constructing new coal-fired power plants and shift to renewable energy in a bid to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Suga is currently in southwest England for the G7 summit, the leaders' first in-person talks in nearly two years.

AFP

Alizz Islamic Bank announces launch of Sharia'a-compliant credit cards

Alizz Islamic Bank, in collaboration with Mastercard, announced the launch of Sharia'a-compliant corporate credit cards to provide corporate clients with enhanced efficiency, flexibility, and convenience in managing their business expenses.

The new premium offering from Alizz Islamic Bank enables customers to seamlessly track and organise business related expenditures online. Additionally, the service offers cardholder level, department level, and company level statements for monitoring and accountability. The cards come with a minimum limit of RO1,000 and a maximum limit of RO25,000 for the Executive Card and a minimum limit of RO1,000 and a maximum limit of RO15,000 for the World card.

The corporate credit card products have been designed with business' needs in mind. The offering enables corporates, businesses, and SMEs to effectively manage their expenses, payables, and overall cash flow. This will also drive better visibility and efficiency into corporate purchasing decisions and general expenditures.

The Executive and World Mastercards will give corporate



customers a number of unique privileges and services, including access to airport lounges in several major cities. Customers can also avail special offers ranging from dining and shopping to exciting travel and entertainment experiences.

Sulaiman al Harthi, chief executive officer of Alizz Islamic Bank said, "Alizz Islamic Bank is Oman's first full-fledged Islamic Bank to offer Sharia'a-compliant credit cards for retail customers

and we are proud to announce this new strategic product, which is in line with our objective to cross sell new products to our corporate client- based and further strengthen our relationships by providing innovative business solutions."

Harthi added, "We are constantly striving to provide the right foundation and tools for companies and corporate entities, whether large, medium or small, to operate their business

with maximum efficiency through our suite of products that we provide in order to help them to grow. Our business relationships go beyond simply offering products. At Alizz Islamic Bank, our vision is to partner with businesses to help them identify the areas for growth and efficiency while recommending practical, cost-effective ways to make the most of the opportunities that arise."

Nadia Ghissassi, country

manager - Qatar, Oman, Qatar Kuwait & Iraq, Mastercard said, "Islamic banking business solutions are becoming increasingly popular among consumers in the GCC and as a result, we have been working closely with numerous financial institutions to develop products and solutions that cater to discerning consumer tastes. We are pleased to collaborate with Alizz Islamic Bank to introduce Sharia'a-compliant corporate credit cards to the Omani market and remain committed to supporting local businesses by delivering advanced and innovative services that make everyday payments simple, safe, and convenient."

All credit cards at Alizz Islamic Bank are based on the Sharia'a principle of 'Qard Hasan,' which is adopted by numerous leading Islamic banks all over the world and applied to all credit card products.

Alizz Islamic Bank's Wholesale Banking department provides a comprehensive range of Sharia'a-complaint solutions to corporate, commercial, and government institutions. The bank's highly experienced team can help the organisation achieve optimum efficiency, reliability, and above all, customer satisfaction.



Bank Nizwa joins AAOIFI, Fingel Global to launch webinars

Bank Nizwa's ability to innovate and introduce new Sharia'a-compliant financial services has earned it commendable recognition and established it as the leading Islamic bank in the sultanate.

The bank has been at forefront of progressive change in the Islamic banking industry, building awareness around the sector's products and service offering. Continuing with this commitment, Bank Nizwa has partnered with Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) and Fingel Global to host a series of webinars under the name iFnovation (Islamic Banking Knowledge Series).

The agreement was signed virtually between the organisations as they announced the

commencement of the programme.

The virtual signing ceremony was attended by Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa along with other members from the executive management of the bank.

Other distinguished guests included Omar Mustafa Ansari, secretary general at AAOIFI, Mughees Shaikat, chairman Advisory Board Fingel Global Inc, Canada, Dr Muhammad Fuad, president of ASAS, Malaysia as well as Mukhtar Abdullah, CEO of ASAS Malaysia.

The entire programme, which will be conducted on virtual platforms, will be attended by top Islamic banking and finance veterans and experts who will shed light on innumerable related topics through the course of expert lecture series.



Al Mouj Muscat shows its community spirit on World Blood Donor Day

World Blood Donor Day took place this week and was very well supported by the Al Mouj Muscat community as part of a global initiative to help boost supplies and raise awareness of the importance of giving blood.

Thanks to the Ministry of Health's Department of Blood Banks Services, the Al Mouj Blood Donation Drive was one of many across the nation to be set

up to encourage more people to donate blood regularly, helping to save lives and contribute to better health.

Now in its 16th year and with the slogan 'Give blood and keep the world beating', World Blood Donor Day has never had more significance as COVID-19 has resulted in a sharp decline in blood donations worldwide. Restrictions in travel, fear of contracting

the virus in crowded hospitals as well as guidelines that prevent some vaccinated people from giving blood are all contributory factors.

Commenting on Al Mouj Muscat's 'Celebrate Life, Donate Blood' campaign, Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "It was humbling to see that so many people from our community came together to

give blood in support of this extremely important initiative.

"There is a constant need for safe blood and blood products for transfusion, and voluntary blood donors are critical to the replenishment of resources and supplies, particularly during the pandemic. Everyone's efforts are hugely appreciated and we know will make a difference to those who need it most."

Indian embassy celebrates International Day of Yoga

Embassy of India, Muscat, organised a special event on June 19, to celebrate the 7th International Day of Yoga (IDY). The event was held virtually due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on public assembly. The event saw enthusiastic participation of many Yoga lovers in Oman.

Theme of this year's IDY celebration is 'Yoga for Wellness'. The event was graced by Mohammed Ahmed al Shanfari, chief of West Asia Department, Foreign Ministry, as chief guest and Dr Hansaji J Yogendra, renowned yoga guru, author, and researcher as guest of honour.

The official event started with a brief introduction on IDY, followed by speech of Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, Shri Munu Mahawar. The ambassador welcomed everyone and spoke on the wellness benefits of yoga and ayurveda.

He expressed his gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Government of Oman for their constant support. The ambassador also thanked all



the yoga organisations in Oman for their continuous contributions for promoting yoga.

The chief guest, Mohammed Ahmed al Shanfari conveyed his wishes on the occasion.

Dr Hansaji J Yogendra delivered an engaging talk on yoga and wellness.

Short compilation of video messages by Omani and other dignitaries was played during the event.

The embassy organised a total 37 sessions online in association with various yoga organisations in the run up to the main IDY event. The sessions were

held on diverse themes including, Yoga for Immunity, Holistic Health, Mental Health, Women Well-being, Child Health & Youth, Surya Namaskar, Yoga at workplace, etc which saw enthusiastic response.

The videos of entries received by the embassy for yoga demonstration video contests were played towards the end of the event, after which the names of winners of all the contests were announced. The event concluded with Common Yoga Protocol, with all participants performing various yoga postures in complete harmony.

KERALA PRAVASI ASSOCIATION, ADHIPOOLS OMAN JOINTLY CONDUCT BLOOD DONATION CAMP



Kerala Pravasi Association and Adhipools Oman jointly conducted a blood donation camp on June 18 at Central Blood Bank in Bausher. A total of 62 people donated blood. Ahmed al Kharusi (right), with highest number of donations in Oman, too was present at the camp

GAC awarded for after-sales excellence

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributors for Mitsubishi vehicles in Oman, was recently awarded the '5 Star Gold Award' in the After-Sales Business Excellence Program for the year 2020 by Mitsubishi Motors Middle East and Africa. GAC received this award for its outstanding after-sales service and customer care. GAC was presented with this award at the recently held MMMEA Regional After Sales Conference.

On receiving the award, Ashraf Mustafa Osman, national service manager of GAC, said, "We are truly honoured to have been selected for this prestigious award by Mitsubishi Motors MEA.

"This prestigious award is a testament to our commitment towards achieving after-sales excellence in Oman. Moreover, this award reflects the consistent



hard work and dedication put in by our staff here at GAC. Even more so this year, when you consider that we managed to climb from a rank of 3-Star Silver in 2019 to a 5-Star Gold, despite the current market conditions."

The Mitsubishi brand enjoys one of the largest and most loyal

customer bases in the sultanate, and for good reason. As its official distributor, GAC is committed to excellence and continues to invest heavily in its employees. As a result, GAC boasts a highly motivated and qualified workforce, dedicated to maximising customer satisfaction, right from

the moment they walk into the showroom for the first time all the way through every stage of the ownership experience.

"At GAC we don't consider every car sold as just a number. We consider it as a new member being inducted into the Mitsubishi family here in Oman. We take it as our responsibility to ensure they have a trouble and stress-free ownership experience for as long as they own their vehicle. This is why, earning this award is such a great source of pride for us, as well as an incentive to do even better next year," added Osman.

For more information on the award or the Mitsubishi range of vehicles, visit GAC's Mitsubishi showrooms in Azaiba, Barka, Sohar, Nizwa or Salalah or follow 'MitsubishiMotorsOman' on Facebook or @mitsubishiomani on twitter.

Feature-rich Changan CS75 4WD is now available on low EMI in the sultanate

Changan CS75 the SUV with stylish looks, distinctive agility and all terrain capability is now available at EMI starting from RO150 for six years. Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE), which is part of Bahwan International Group announced that the EMI includes 5 per cent Value Added Tax (VAT). Comprising popular features such as spacious interiors with leather seats and 360° view camera, the model delivers a greatly satisfying driving experience to the as-tute consumer.

A spokesperson for AGAE said, “We are delighted to offer Changan CS75 on a low EMI. The vehicle is a perfect combination of dynamism and intelligence for professionals, families or avid travellers who want to explore new places every day.”

Its intelligent all-wheel drive system helps conquer different terrains since the Changan CS75 4WD comes with a 1.8lt turbocharged engine which produces 170 hp and 245 nm of torque and is mated with a 6 speed AT. It delivers an excellent fuel economy of 12.2km per litre as per GSO rating.

Changan CS75 makes everyone explore new territories with its exceptional on-road performance and all-terrain capabilities. Along with the off-road prowess, CS75 is also instilled with everyday practicality, form and function to be prepared for all kinds of weekend adventure.

Its features includes Push Start Button, 10” Infotainment Touch Screen, Navigation, 360°View Camera, Blind Spot Detection, Side Assist, Side Airbags, Leather Seats, Cruise control, Panoramic sunroof, electronic parking brake and Rear Vehicle approaching alarm, etc.



By seamlessly integrating luxurious interior with thoughtful technologies, Changan CS75 creates a level of ride comfort, even on rough roads. with range of innovative driving technologies, the Changan CS75 gives the driver the confidence to control the vehicle in challenging situations. Its Blue Core Powertrain Technology, based on the principles of power, clean and quiet, provides owners a highly efficient and energy saving performance.

Exterior

Among its exterior features are 19-inch alloy wheels, LED headlights with auto headlamps, panoramic sunroof, roof rails, LED taillights, twin exhaust pipes, electrically adjustable, folding ORVMS with heating, puddle lamps.

Interior

Its interior boasts of Leather seats, Navigation, Multi-function steering, wheel, Cruise control, Bluetooth, Keyless entry with

Push button start and 10” Infotainment Touch Screen.

Safety

Its safety and security features front, side and curtain airbags, ESP (ABS+TCS) + EBD, hill hold and hill descent control, auto hold function, front and rear parking sensors, 360° view camera, electronic parking brake.

Technical Specifications

Changan CS75’s technical spec-

ification includes engine of 1.8lt Turbo Power – a torque of 245Nm, transmission of 6 Speed AT, drive type 4WD. Dimensions include length x width x height of 4650x1850x1705mm, wheelbase of 2700mm and fuel tank of 58lt.

The Premium Automotive Brand Changan recently launched by Bahwan international Group in Oman has received overwhelming response among the customers. Changan Automobile boasts of a compre-

hensive portfolio of range of products including Sedan, Crossovers and SUVs like EADO- Family Sedan, CS35 PLUS Crossover, CS75 4WD Crossover, CS85 Coupe and CS95 7 Seater 4WD.

AGAE

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment, which is part of Bahwan International Group, has set up a spacious and state-of-the-art showroom in Qurm and service centre in Ghala, Muscat.

AGAE has already tied up for Periodic Maintenance Services in many cities including Salalah, Sohar, Sur, Nizwa, Ibra and Barka etc. Changan Oman offers five years or 150,000km manufacturer warranty on all passenger vehicles in Oman. For more information, call Changan Oman Toll free number 80050800, WhatsApp on 94641010 or visit our showroom in Qurm. Also you can visit and register at www.Changanoman.com to book test drives and call back.



Bank Muscat’s Al Mazyona conducts monthly draws

As part of its commitment to promoting a strong savings culture in Oman, Bank Muscat recently conducted a number of draws under its Al Mazyona scheme 2021 for the month of May. As many as 451 winners won a total of RO610,000 in the different draws, which included the monthly mega draw as well as the Asalah, Al Jawhar and governorate draws, with the special spotlight being on the Governorate of Dhakhliyah this time around.

With 18 branches, 51 ATMs, 11 CDMs and 17 FFM’s (Full Function Machines), the governorate enjoys excellent coverage from the largest financial services provider in Oman.

The monthly mega draw saw one lucky customer win the top prize of RO50,000. Bank Muscat Premier Banking customers were the other big winners in the draws with 10 Asalah customers winning RO25,000 each and 20 Al Jawhar customers winning RO5,000 each in the monthly

draws for their respective categories. The monthly draws for all the governorates including the Governorate of Dhakhliyah saw 420 winners being rewarded with RO500 each.

The bank congratulated all the winners for their excellent savings habit, which resulted in them winning exciting prizes in the monthly draws.

Bank Muscat customers having Al Mazyona savings accounts are eligible and are automatically entered into the draws if they maintain the balance required for the different draws.

All customers maintaining a balance of RO100 are entered into the monthly draw for different governorates while those maintaining a balance of RO1,000 were entered into the Monthly Mega Draw. It must be noted that all Asalah customers who maintain a minimum balance of RO30,000 and Al Jawhar customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO10,000

are automatically entered into the monthly draws in their respective categories.

In 2021, the Al Mazyona scheme will give away over RO11mn to 7,470 winners compared to 6,677 winners in the previous year, with the number of winners going up by 12 percent. It features several special draws including a National Day draw, a Mid-year draw and an End-of-Year draw, apart from the regular monthly draws for different customer segments.

Al Mazyona draws, which are livestreamed on the bank’s social media channels on Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, are well known for their transparency and are keenly followed by the bank’s customers and the general public.

Bank Muscat has invited all its customers to save more so as to get more chances to win in the upcoming Mid Year draw, which will be held later in July, and will give away over RO1.5mn across different segments.

Oman Data Park wins four awards at COMEX

Oman Data Park, the first and leading provider of cloud and managed services in the sultanate, won four awards within the COMEX Awards for Excellence in Technology for the year 2021, in which many Omani and international companies participated. The four awards received by Oman Data Park included the Data Centre Award, Cyber Security Award, Comex Star Exhibitor Award, and Best of Best.

Oman Data Park’s winning of the Data Centre award is a testament to its commitment to offering the best and the largest choice of data centre services in Oman and the company dedicates the award to the 800+ customers who have placed their trust in them. Similarly, the winning of the Cyber Security Award



recognises their efforts in Cyber Security Threat Intelligence, Detection, and Preventive services to keep Oman’s business entities safe from cyber criminals and to reduce cyberattacks.

Eng Maqbool al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park, said, “Winning these awards within the COMEX Technology Excellence

Awards 2021 further confirms our role in supporting the digital transformation efforts made by the government and the private sector.”

Eng Wahaibi added, “The COMEX star exhibitor award recognises the efforts made by our Sales & Marketing teams who kept the various visitors of

over 1,000 visits to our stand engaged with our products and services while the Best of Best award recognises us as one of the two who won three awards at the virtual ceremony.”

He pointed out that winning the data centre award within the Comex Awards confirms Oman Data Park’s contribution throughout its journey of over nine years in providing integrated solutions under one umbrella in the field of cloud computing services including, Application as a Service (AaaS), Backup as a Service (BaaS), Data Centre as a Service (DCaaS), Infrastructure as a service (IaaS), Network as a Service (NaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), Professional Services as a Service (PSaaS), Software as a Service (SaaS), etc.

Tuatara, ETCO enter into strategic partnership

Tuatara, an innovative business solutions provider, and ETCO, an International Emerging Technology Company, have signed a framework agreement to create a strategic partnership, developing technologically advanced solutions to support Omani society. This exciting combination of expertise will help to accelerate Oman into the digital age.

The global pandemic has forced us to change the way that we live and work. With many people staying at home, companies have increased their online business services; the huge uptake by the public demonstrating how important new technologies are for people. This trend has been recognised by entrepre-



neurs who have moved much of their business online, especially customer services. Digital transformation in the public and private sector has become invaluable, helping to cut costs, save time and minimize the needs for personal contact, making a range of services easily accessible.

Tuatara and ETCO will inno-

vate Oman’s public and commercial sector, assisted by Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) technologies. This partnership is strategically strong, both companies’ experience contributing to improving Oman’s businesses with innovative solutions.

“I believe that the strategic

cooperation between ETCO and Tuatara will continue building the foundations of e-government in Oman and improving people’s lives in the digital space of public administration and commercial services,” said Krzysztof Goworek, chief innovation officer at Tuatara.

“Through this partnership, we aim to provide modern and high-tech solutions based on Natural Language Processing that will facilitate citizen affairs in the digital space of public government and commercial services sector,” said Tariq al Bulushi, vice president - Technology ETCO. Both Tuatara and ETCO are focused on improving user experience through cutting-edge technologies.

Former UK speaker Bercow denounces Johnson

Defects to the Labour, calling the Conservative ‘reactionary, populist, nationalistic and even xenophobic’

London, UK - The colourful former speaker of Britain's House of Commons John Bercow said he has left the Conservatives to join the opposition Labour Party, saying the country is 'sick of lies' under Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In an interview with *The Observer* newspaper published on Sunday, the former MP said the Conservative Party under Johnson was 'reactionary, populist, nationalistic and sometimes even xenophobic'.

Bercow, who stepped down as speaker in October 2019 after ten years, said he joined the Labour Party a few weeks ago because he shared its values.

"I am motivated by support for equality, social justice and internationalism. That is the Labour brand," he told *The Observer*.

"The conclusion I have reached is that this government needs to be replaced. The reality is that the Labour Party is the only vehicle that can achieve that objective. There is no other credible option."

In an interview with Sky News,

Bercow insisted his decision was 'not personal against Boris Johnson'.

But in scathing comments, he said Johnson had 'only a nodding acquaintance with the truth in a leap year' and the way he treated parliament 'with contempt' was 'lamentable'.

Bercow also told *The Observer* the prime minister was 'a successful campaigner but a lousy governor', criticising policies such as cutting the international aid budget.

'Sick of lies'

"I don't think he has any vision of a more equitable society, any thirst for social mobility or any passion to better the lot of people less fortunate than he is. I think increasingly people are sick of lies, sick of empty slogans, sick of a failure to deliver," he told *The Observer*.

Bercow also directed a jibe at health minister Matt Hancock, widely criticised for his handling of the pandemic, telling Sky: "I would buy him at my valuation and sell him at his and realise a



This file photo shows the then UK Parliament speaker John Bercow speaking in the House of Commons on the European Union (EU) Withdrawal Act 2018 Motion, in London on October 21, 2019 (AFP)

healthy profit in the process."

On the other hand he described Labour leader Keir Starmer as 'an honest, decent person'. He denied suggestions that he was angling for a peerage

from Labour after the Tories denied him this. "There has been no barter, no trade, no deal whatsoever," he told Sky News.

Bercow served as a Conservative MP for Buckingham for 12

years before being elected speaker in 2009, becoming the youngest person to hold the role for 100 years.

The post of speaker is politically impartial and the holder is

expected to resign from their party on appointment.

Bercow told Sky News he did not rejoin the Conservative Party afterwards.

Famed for his shouts of 'Order, order!' to bring raucous MPs in line, Bercow found himself as the man in the middle of more than three years of fiery parliamentary debates on Britain's withdrawal from the European Union.

He enraged the ruling Conservatives with a series of decisions they saw as trying to stymie Brexit and favouring the 'Remain' side.

The 58 year old vehemently denied ever taking sides but earned praise from pro-Europeans and a global following with his rulings and outsized personality.

His later years as speaker were overshadowed by allegations of bullying parliamentary staff, accusations he denies.

Bullying claims

"I think the suggestion that I presided over that culture (of

bullying) is quite wrong," he told Sky News, saying that a complaint by one person against him was rejected.

Labour's former shadow chancellor John McDonnell said Bercow had been 'scrupulously fair' in his treatment of MPs.

'He won our respect, especially for his fight to protect the rights of Parliament. I wholeheartedly welcome him into the Labour party,' McDonnell tweeted. Conservatives sought to downplay the significance of Bercow's defection.

Justice Minister Robert Buckland told Sky News: "To be fair to John Bercow, I think he left the Conservative Party a long time ago."

Pensions minister Guy Opperman said, "Labour are welcome to Bercow."

Nigel Farage, the populist British politician who helped lead the campaign for Brexit, tweeted that 'Bercow backed the Remain sabotage campaign in Parliament and now joins the Labour Party. He loves a sinking ship.'

AFP



Electoral officials carry voting material at a polling station in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, on Sunday (AFP)

'Confident' election board of Ethiopia ready for votes today

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - Twice delayed, hobbled by the coronavirus pandemic, violent insecurity, and planning chaos, Ethiopia's electoral board says it is ready for Monday's crucial vote and assures it will be credible.

"We're actually very confident about it," the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) spokeswoman Solyana Shimeles told AFP.

It is not optimism shared by all, with serious doubts remaining over the vote Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed promised would be the most competitive yet in Africa's second-most populous nation.

Voting will not proceed on June 21 in about one-fifth of the country's 547 constituencies due to unrest and logistical problems.

Those constituencies will mostly vote in September, but no ballot is scheduled in Tigray, a war-torn region of six million.

In some areas where voting will proceed, opposition boycotts have further undermined claims of inclusivity and competition.

The majority of national parliamentary seats up for grabs in Abiy's native Oromia - the country's most populous region - are being contested by a single candidate, election data shows.

Solyana said just three of Ethiopia's 49 registered parties were not contesting the poll, and about 9,500 candidates were running at a national and regional level - more than any previous ballot.

"We hope this is going to be a better one, a participatory one, and a credible one," she said.

Setbacks

NEBE was overhauled when Abiy rose to power in 2018 on the back of anti-government protests, vowing to open up political space after years of iron-fisted rule.

The appointment of Birtukan Mideska - a high-profile former judge and exiled opposition leader - to head a revived, independent board was seen as evidence of Abiy's commitment to democratic reform.

Nationwide elections were delayed almost year due to the coronavirus pandemic, and rescheduled for June 5.

But organising a smooth election is a tall order at the best of times in Ethiopia, a vast and rugged country of 110mn hamstrung by poor infrastructure.

NEBE lacked resources and needed tens of thousands of staff. The timetable fell behind and a new date was scheduled for June 21. But problems still linger just days before the vote, observers say.

On Friday, Birtukan wrote to Abiy saying federal assistance with transport and other logistics would be needed to ensure the election went off without a hitch.

'NEBE is working 24 hours in full capacity,' she wrote.

One diplomat in Addis Ababa said, "NEBE is committed and willing, but it is challenging. Whether this translates into being ready for sound elections is another matter." Analysts say the logistical problems that have dogged preparations could prove troubling when it comes to counting the ballot.

AFP

Lebanon's Hezbollah hails Raisi's election win in Iran

Beirut, Lebanon - The head of Lebanon's powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah on Sunday congratulated ultraconservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi on winning Iran's presidential election, describing him as a 'shield' against Israel and other 'aggressors'.

Raisi, a former judiciary chief, won nearly 62 per cent of the vote in Friday's election on turnout of 48.8 per cent, after his most prominent rivals were either disqualified or pulled out of the race.

'Your victory has renewed the hopes of the Iranian people and



A woman holds a photo of Iran's newly-elected president Ebrahim Raisi as supporters celebrate his victory, in Tehran on Saturday (AFP)

the people of the region who see you as a shield and a strong supporter... for the resistance against aggressors,' Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said in a statement.

Hezbollah, long designated a terrorist organisation by the United States, forms an 'axis of resistance' against Israel together with Iran and Syria.

The Lebanese movement fought a devastating war with Israel in 2006, and its fighters have also battled against rebels trying to oust the regime of Syria's President Bashar Assad.

Assad, whose government

counts Iran as one of its top allies, wished Raisi 'success in his new responsibilities... and steering the country in the face of external pressure'.

Hezbollah, a powerful force in Lebanese politics, also has close ties with the Palestinian group Hamas which rules the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said, "Iran has always been a main, strong and real supporter of the Palestinian resistance and our national cause" as he congratulated Raisi.

AFP

Squatters fill Moammar Gadhafi compound as Libya faces housing crisis like never before

Tripoli, Libya - Before Moammar Gadhafi's ouster, Libyans steered well clear of the Bab al-Aziziya compound from where the dictator ruled, but a housing shortage in Tripoli has forced squatters to move in.

Satellite dishes and water tanks now fill the grounds of the once feared fortified complex in a southern suburb of the capital, as young boys kick balls and cars drive in and out of the main gate.

Much of the sprawling compound was destroyed in NATO bombardments during the 2011 uprising against Gadhafi and then rebels went on the rampage, ransacking it.

Now dozens of families have moved into the small houses once allocated to soldiers and the villas that were home to high-ranking army officers.

Bashir (68) has been squatting in a 400sqm villa since 2012, one year after Gadhafi was captured and killed by rebels in Sirte, the coastal Mediterranean city that was his hometown.

"Hundreds of Libyans have come to live here," he said.

"The villa had been set ablaze and it took me a year to renovate it, at great expense," said Bashir. "But I'm not complaining."

The complex, complete with bunker and a warren of underground tunnels, was Gadhafi's home and the site from where he ruled Libya for four decades.

Built in the 1980s, it was reinforced following a US airstrike in 1986 in response to an attack on US servicemen at a Berlin nightclub, for which Washington held



This file photo shows homeless Libyan children inside the compound of slain leader Moammar Gadhafi at Bab al-Aziziya in Tripoli (AFP)

Tripoli responsible. In its heyday, Bab al-Aziziya, which covers six square kilometres, housed a zoo, an indoor pool, countless murals and a fairground in its gardens.

'I will not leave'

Gadhafi had expanded the grounds by knocking down adjacent neighbourhoods.

After the uprising, Libyan authorities considered turning Bab al-Aziziya into a 'green zone', an amusement park or a memorial for the 'martyrs', who had fallen in the conflict to oust Gadhafi.

None of those projects has materialised.

But according to information obtained by AFP, authorities are planning to turn Bab al-Aziziya into a park as part of a wider

campaign to beautify Tripoli.

If so, the new residents of the once feared Gadhafi headquarters could face eviction.

"I will not leave my house," said a man who gave his name as Hassan, declining to reveal his true identity for security reasons.

His squat 'was in an appalling state, there were no doors or windows', said Hassan, who claims to have spent the equivalent of US\$32,100 on repairs.

'Decent housing'

Ten years since the uprising that toppled Gadhafi's regime, many Libyans who used to receive government grants and subsidies are struggling to make ends meet.

The oil-rich country descended into chaos after the dic-

tator's fall and still faces a host of political and economic crises, including chronic power cuts, petrol shortages and derelict infrastructure.

Years of conflict in post-Gadhafi Libya have resulted in tens of thousands of people being displaced, with many seeking refuge in big cities like Tripoli, creating a housing shortage.

"Before the revolution, you could find houses and there were less people (in Tripoli). But now finding an affordable house is rare, prices have skyrocketed," said Bashir.

"Today, a small apartment costs around 400,000 dinars (US\$83,000 approx). Where can I find money like that?"

The minimum monthly salary

ranges between 450 and 600 Libyan dinars (US\$90 and US\$120 approx), civil servants often go months without pay, and bank loans are almost impossible to obtain.

Economist Kamal al Mansouri said insecurity has forced 'foreign construction firms to pack up and go, leaving behind 200,000 unfinished homes'.

"Population growth and the displacement of Libyans due to conflict, with many people moving to big cities, means that finding decent housing is hard," he said.

"And rents have doubled in the past ten years," said Tripoli-based real estate agent Ali Kelfat.

AFP

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

China gives one-billionth vaccine shot as Brazil's death toll crosses 500,000 mark

Beijing, China - China on Sunday announced it had administered its one-billionth shot in the world's biggest coronavirus inoculation drive as Brazil's death toll from the pandemic passed 500,000.

The global death toll from COVID-19 is now more than 3.8mn and many nations are still battling outbreaks, but vaccine drives in some countries are allowing activities that were unthinkable a few months ago.

China's vaccine milestone comes after the number of shots administered globally passed 2.5bn on Friday, according to an AFP count from official sources.

But the Asian giant's vaccination efforts initially got off to a slow start after a successful fight against the virus left little sense of urgency to get jabbed.

A lack of transparency and previous vaccine scandals have also led to resistance among many residents.

Authorities have set an ambitious target of fully vaccinating 40 per cent of China's nearly 1.4bn people by the end of this month.

Some provinces are offering



This file photo shows university students queueing up to receive the vaccine at a university in Wuhan, in China's Hubei province on April 28 (AFP)

vaccines for free to encourage people to roll up their sleeves. Residents in central Anhui province have been given free eggs, while some living in Beijing have received shopping coupons.

China's success against the virus stands in stark contrast to

Brazil, which on Saturday became the second nation after the United States to surpass half a million COVID-19 deaths. Vaccination efforts have been slow with only 11 per cent of the Brazilian population inoculated, as a third wave of infections spreads through the nation.

Far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who previously hit out at vaccines, has promised to immunise the entire population by the end of the year - something specialists consider unlikely.

He has been criticised for downplaying the illness from the outset, opposing lockdown

measures and plugging unproven medical treatments.

On Saturday, thousands of Brazilians again took to the streets to protest against his handling of the pandemic.

"His position on COVID and his denialism are absurd. He has abandoned reality and common

sense," said Robert Almeida, a 50-year-old photographer marching in Rio.

"There is no explaining this, it is surreal."

Emirates to fly from India again after ban

Aviation giant Emirates said on Sunday it will resume flights from India from next week, after Dubai lifted a ban imposed when coronavirus cases spiked, a report from Dubai said.

The United Arab Emirates, which includes Dubai, suspended all flights from India - including for transit passengers - in April in an effort to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus.

'We will resume carrying passengers from South Africa, Nigeria and India... from June 23,' Emirates said in a statement.

Dubai said on Saturday that only passengers from India 'with a valid residence visa and who have received two doses of a UAE-approved vaccine' would be allowed to travel to the emirate. They would also need a negative PCR test taken within 48 hours of departure, a rapid

test four hours before departure, and another PCR test on arrival with 'institutional quarantine' required until the results are received.

Dubai authorities did not specify the rules for transit passengers and Emirates did not say whether transit passengers were allowed to fly through Dubai en route to third nations.

Some 300 flights a week were operating between the UAE and India before the ban was announced in April, according to local media, making the air corridor one of the busiest in the world.

The UAE is home to some 3.3mn Indians who make up a third of the population - most of them in Dubai.

Some Indians who had been stranded in their homeland during a coronavirus surge had hired private jets to take them back to the UAE, which had exempted private jets from the ban.

Authorities in many countries continue to wrestle with crowds flouting virus rules on social distancing and mask-wearing.

AFP

Indians throng malls and markets

New Delhi, India - A few weeks ago, India was battling almost an insurmountable surge in COVID-19 cases. Now the Indian capital's shopping malls and markets are buzzing again.

But doctors are worried that India is letting its guard down again, just like in January and February before a devastating coronavirus surge.

Clutching a bag of clothes as she shopped with her new husband at Delhi's busy Select City Walk mall, Surili Gupta said she was 'fed up being cooped up inside'. "I needed this break, for how long you can remain locked up?" the 26-year-old sales executive said as she waited for a table at the mall's food hall.

"The coronavirus is not going any time soon, so one has to learn to live with it. I am sure with the vaccinations and all, we will be fine."

Behind her, a big weekend crowd chatted and laughed over Indian dosas and Chinese noodles, paying scant regard to public announcements reminding them about social distancing



A health worker inoculates a person with disability during a special drive to vaccinate people with disabilities, in Mumbai on Sunday (AFP)

and wearing masks.

A couple queueing up at a popular burger joint squabbled, masks hanging from their faces.

Mall staff performed perfunctory temperature checks and reminded people to sanitise their hands.

Not far away, shoppers thronged the open-air warren of shops and stalls at Lajpat Nagar market, bargaining for scarves,

bangles and cheap cosmetics.

There was lively trade for food vendors, who sold kulchey-chholey - flatbread served with spicy chickpeas - and other favourites to punters, masks dangling as they ate.

"I would not have come today but it was very urgent," Prerna Jain (21), a college student who had come with her mother, said. "My cousin is get-

ting married and I needed to buy some stuff. I know it's not yet safe but what can I do? This (event) is equally important."

Delhi, a megacity of 20mn people, saw horrendous scenes in April and May when coronavirus cases went through the roof, as they did across the country.

India's death toll more than doubled to more than 330,000, according to official figures.

The surge was blamed on new virus variants and also on the government having allowed massive religious festivals, state elections and crowds at cricket matches.

Now, the surge is over and Indian authorities are loosening lockdowns, letting people work and shop again.

On some days in Delhi now, there are no funerals for COVID-19 victims, down from 700 a day during the recent peak.

Sandeep Budhiraja, medical director at Max Healthcare in the capital, said he was surprised at people's short memories.

AFP

Russian employees rejecting vaccines risk unpaid leave

Moscow, Russia - Russian workers who refuse COVID-19 vaccinations in areas where they are compulsory could be forced to take unpaid leave, the labour minister has warned as infections spike and inoculation drives slow.

Anton Kotyakov's comments come as Moscow and other cities introduce an array of curbs, including for the Euro 2020 football tournament.

'If the health authorities in a region make vaccination mandatory for some categories of workers, an unvaccinated employee could be suspended,' Kotyakov said in comments posted on Telegram on Sunday.

He added that the suspension would last as long as the decree for mandatory vaccination is in effect.

Russian capital Moscow has ordered mandatory vaccination for residents working in the service industry, saying some 60 per cent would have to be fully inoculated by August 15.



Medics escort a man into a hospital for COVID-19 patients, in the settlement of Kommunarka outside Moscow on Thursday (AFP)

Seven other cities and areas, including the second city of Saint-Petersburg, have imposed similar rules, according to Russian media.

Although free jabs have been available to Russians since De-

cember, just 19.5mn out of a population of some 146mn have received at least one dose of a vaccine, according to the Gogov website which tallies COVID figures from the regions.

AFP

Islamic system only way to Afghan peace, women's rights: Taliban

Kabul, Afghanistan - The Taliban said on Sunday they remain committed to peace talks but insisted a 'genuine Islamic system' in Afghanistan was the only way to end the war and ensure rights - including for women.

Talks between the militants and the Afghan government have been deadlocked for months and violence has surged across the country since May when the US military began its final withdrawal.

Fears are also growing that if the Taliban return to power they will reimpose their harsh version of Islamic law, under which girls were banned from school and women accused of crimes such as adultery were stoned to death in stadiums.

Despite the rise in violence, Taliban co-founder and deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani

Baradar said on Sunday that the group was committed to the peace talks.

'Our very participation in the negotiations... indicates openly that we believe in resolving issues through (mutual) understanding,' Baradar said in a statement.

He said the only way to end the conflict in Afghanistan was to establish an Islamic system after the departure of all foreign forces.

'A genuine Islamic system is the best mean for solution of all issues of the Afghans,' Baradar said.

His statement acknowledged the fears in Afghanistan and abroad about the kind of system that would emerge - and its impact on women - saying that fell 'within the ambit of the intra-Afghan negotiations'.



This file photo shows Mullah Misbah, Taliban commander and director of the public health for Ghazni on the Taliban-controlled side, at a hospital in the Andar district of Ghazni province on June 3 (AFP)

Baradar also assured that the rights of all Afghans including women would be accommodated in that system, according

to 'the glorious religion of Islam' and Afghan traditions.

But many fear that the Taliban's interpretation of rights will

clash with the changes that have happened in Afghan society since 2001.

In May, a US intelligence re-

port said the gains made over the past two decades on women's rights would be rolled back if the militants returned to power.

As the US military presses ahead to meet the September 11 deadline to complete the troop withdrawal, the Taliban have fought daily battles with government forces and claim to have captured 40 districts.

The growing fear and uncertainty about the future have forced many Afghans to try and leave, including thousands of men and women who fear reprisals because they worked with foreign forces.

Baradar called on Afghan youths to not leave the country, and also stressed that the Taliban would ensure that minorities, humanitarian organisations and diplomats had nothing to fear.

The recent losses faced by

government troops have forced President Ashraf Ghani to change his defence and interior ministers.

On Saturday, he announced the changes and called on the Taliban to make a choice between peace and enmity with the government.

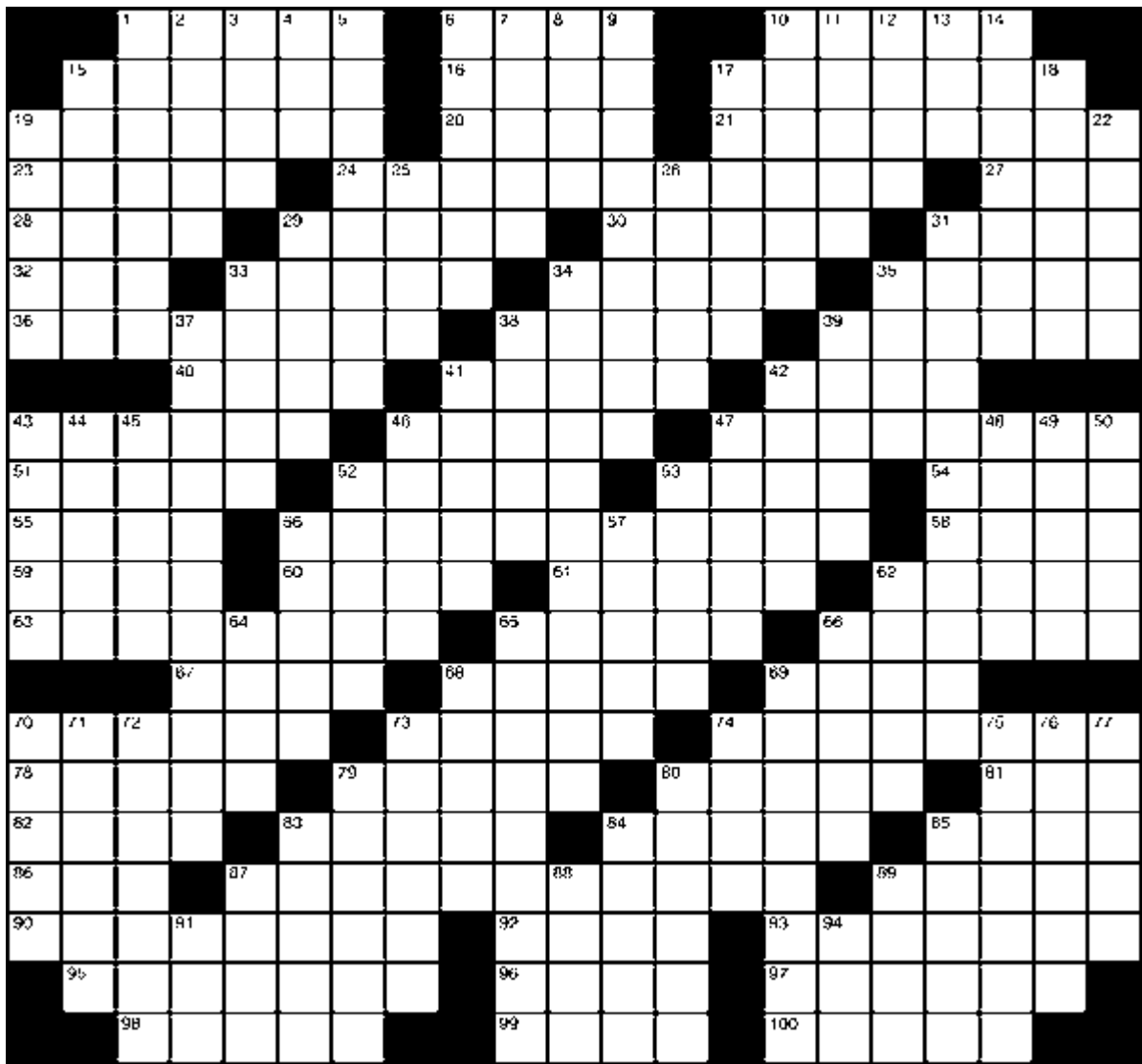
'If they choose enmity then the people will respond to them decisively,' he said late on Saturday in a statement issued by the palace.

Ghani blamed the Taliban for starting the war and accused them of failing to come up with a plan to establish peace.

'As officials of a legitimate government, we are committed to all the humanitarian laws in the war, but the Taliban are violating these laws and are destroying Afghanistan,' he said.

AFP

DAILY CROSSWORD



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- ACROSS**

1 Weight monitor

6 Guardian's charge

10 Leavings

15 Pollen producer

16 Sheltered

17 Romps

19 Merciful

20 Meander

21 "Dangerous ____"

23 Pitches in

24 Canape

27 Afternoon pick me up

28 Snakelike swimmers

29 Desert hills

30 Algonquin speakers

31 Editor's notation

32 Zsa Zsa's sister

33 Einstein-____ bridge

34 Across: Prefix

35 North American food staple

36 Adds fragrance to

38 Crow

39 Riverbanks

40 "____ Three Lives"

41 Dern or Willis
- 42 El ____ TX

43 Wept openly

46 Aflame

47 Think over

51 Zodiac sign

52 Stymied at chess

53 Actor McClure

54 Great review

55 Transmitted

56 Lively mood

58 Power source

59 Gossip column piece

60 Long time

61 Flight prices

62 Tropical herb

63 Lees

65 French bridges

66 "... ____ bang, bang"

67 Trudeau or Carter

68 Shelley's name

69 Glide

70 Brags

73 Smidgeon

74 Admires

78 No longer exists

79 "____ porridge hot"

80 Talents

81 Intemperate

82 Astound
- 83 Turner's ex Jane

84 Puts in place

85 Neck area

86 "... ____ longa"

87 Life's purpose

89 Christmas drop-in

90 Sweet wine

92 Tinge

93 Took heed of

95 Rodeo gear

96 Caroline's daughter

97 Cowardly

98 Swing step

99 Belgian river

100 Marine fliers

DOWN

1 Top-rated

2 Bivouacs

3 CIA's Aldrich

4 ____ Cariou

5 Excited

6 Rabbit's home

7 At ____ for words

8 Try for a part

9 Type of government

10 Tees off

11 Bellows

12 Nobelist Wiesel

13 US soldiers

14 Caledonian
- terrier

15 Tubular bearing

17 Glib

18 Sound before gesundheit

19 Chick's sound

22 Indulges fully

25 Individuals

26 Eradicate

29 Rounded

31 Know-how

33 Robert's "____ of Order"

34 Feat of skill

35 Army meal

37 Choice portion

38 Propagate

39 Jessica or Hope

41 Nibbles

42 Decants

43 Foundation

44 Mountain ridge

45 ____ and dined

46 Indistinct

47 Inlets

48 Intimide

49 Happening

50 Pass along

52 Dreamy

53 "____ Dancing"

56 Mocks

57 Sec'y of State:
- 1977-80

62 Blokes

64 Actor Damon

65 Certain country folk

66 Expenses

68 Madrid museum

69 Something to parse

70 Travel documents

71 Of the stars

72 Off the beaten path

73 Stiffens up

74 Raise

75 Lottery tickets

76 Popular list

77 In place of

79 Conical

80 Improve on

83 Electrical unit

84 Intuit

85 Unsophisticated

87 Control line

88 "Vaya con ____"

89 Ollie's partner

91 Pod or plane

lead-in

94 Hockey Hall of Famer

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

- ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Other people's challenges are just that: other people's! Don't take on the burdens of the people you care about. It's not the best way to show them you support them. At best, you will deprive them of an opportunity to learn something valuable. And at worst, you could make them think that you don't trust them to run their own lives. So step back and have faith that they know what they're doing.
- LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Your mind is going to wander today, and sometimes at very inopportune times. This is most likely a sign that you're moving into a phase when you're going to be more introverted than usual. You're not quite connecting with other people at the level you'd like to, so it's appealing to just go off on your own for a while. But late in the day you could receive an invitation.
- SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You can appreciate a practical joke as much as anyone, but today all of the goofing around could drive you crazy. Your focus is squarely on making progress and getting things done, but everyone else around you might be more concerned with the latest celebrity gossip and fashion trends. If you can separate yourself from this group, then do.
- TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20

Don't be surprised if your road to romance takes a little bit of a detour today, but you can't let yourself become disheartened about it. Just roll with it. The changes you will be going through over the next several days are for the best, no matter how icky they feel at the time. Stay hopeful and stay cheerful. The image you project to the outside world will eventually come back to you.
- VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Your wacky new plans are the hottest topic among your friends right now. Some think you can pull it off while others aren't so sure. Try not to take it personally. It's not that they don't have faith in you, it's just that they don't want you to get your hopes too high. Find out what these pessimistic folks are worried about, and encourage them to tell you the truth.
- CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You're definitely in the thick of things right now, but you're still not going to feel totally in sync with your friends. This social dissonance could be distracting, but it's unavoidable. Your empathy skills are growing weaker and you just don't have the patience to deal with the insecurities of one particular person who is always fishing for compliments.
- GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21

Communicating with your family might be difficult right now either emotionally or technically. Maybe your phone reception konks out in the middle of a conversation, or maybe your feelings are so complicated that you don't feel like sharing them. Either way, this is not a good day for any major talks with family members. Scheduling a visit is not advised.
- LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Being the good listener that you are will come in extremely handy today. The person you really want to impress right now is tossing out clues about what they want left and right. You'll figure out the secret in no time. If you're struggling over trying to decide on a gift to buy a friend, a conversation with them today could trigger an idea that sends you straight to the store.
- AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

Nothing in your life is a sure thing, and especially in terms of any business deals. When it comes to business, people are often more interested in what they can gain for themselves than in what they can achieve in the world. They have a different agenda than you, although that doesn't mean they wish you ill. Just remember to push back when you feel pushed.
- CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22

You could be stuck in the middle of a juicy conversation today, but not everyone is aware that you can hear what they're saying. This unintentional eavesdropping could make you privy to some very exciting information, but you'll need to keep all the details to yourself. You'll know when the time is right to come forward with what you know. Resist the urge to start a rumour.
- SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Your energy is so powerful that it can separate the good people from the bad. The good folks are the ones who are attracted by all the good vibes you're putting out, and the bad folks are the ones who are intimidated by it. Now you'll know who to include on your team and who to disregard. If they can't play in your league, then you certainly don't need them.
- PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your eagerness to get a new project going is so strong that it's almost tangible, so get started with it as early as you can today. Push other things aside and let yourself joyfully right in to whatever has got you so excited! That is the best way to catapult yourself through this day with a big, bright smile on your face, and it's the best way to ensure that you make a lot of progress.

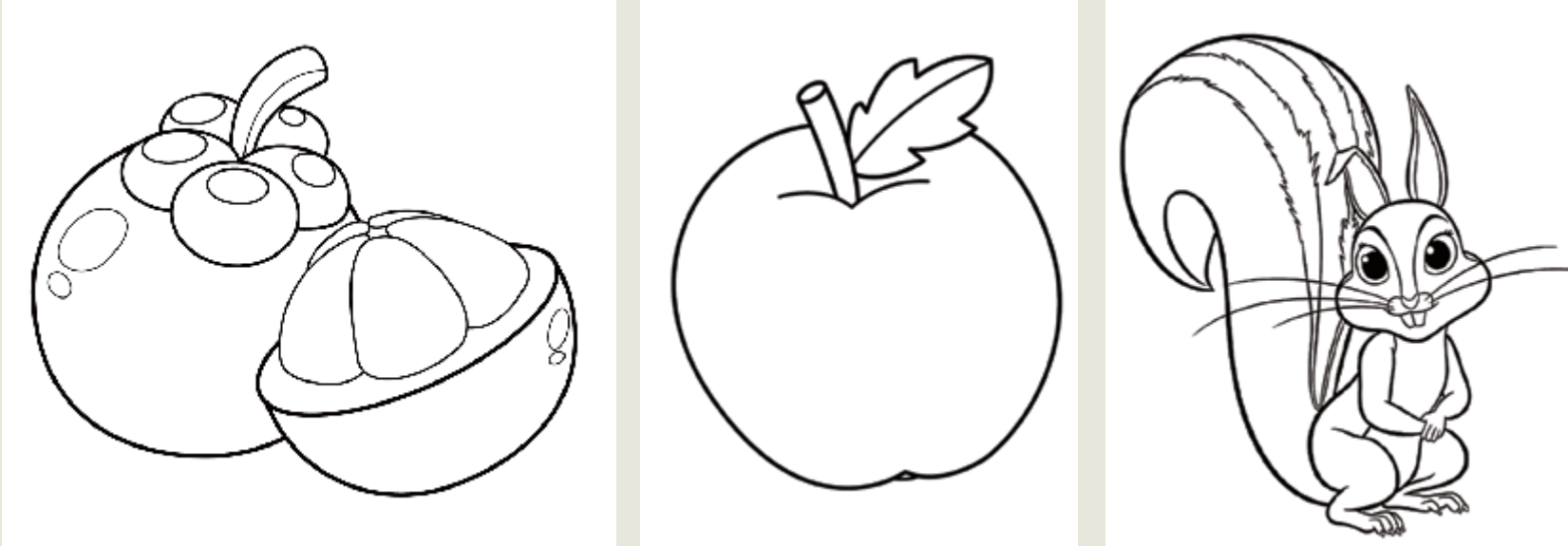


TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Nuclear sizes are expressed in a unit named
- a. Fermi
- b. angstrom
- c. newton
- d. tesla
2. Light year is a unit of
- a. time
- b. distance
- c. light
- d. intensity of light
3. Mirage is due to
- a. unequal heating of different parts of the atmosphere
- b. magnetic disturbances in the atmosphere
- c. depletion of ozone layer in the atmosphere
- d. equal heating of different parts of the atmosphere

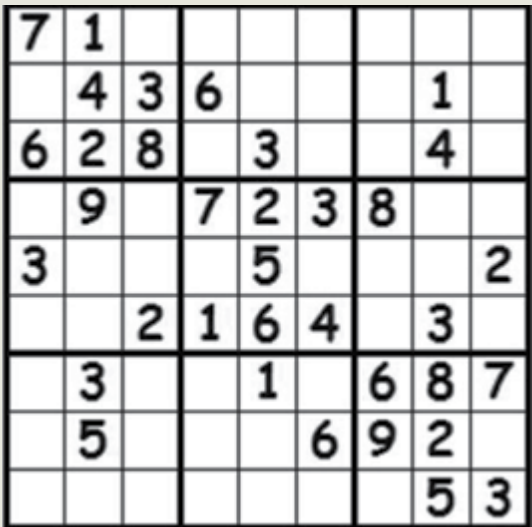
Answers: 1.a, 2.b, 3.a

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 (JUNE 20)



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



INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

YOGA

FOR WELLNESS

Today, the 7th International Yoga Day is being observed all over the world under the theme 'Yoga for Wellness' in view of the current unrelenting COVID-19 pandemic. This fitness discipline, which originated in India over 5000 years ago, was developed as a way to achieve harmony and balance between the heart and soul, and to achieve divine enlightenment. Subsequently, the practice of yoga was seen to have a host of medical benefits. On this occasion, **Kavitha Ramakrishna**, an avid yoga practitioner in Oman, spells out the efficacy of yoga as 'a skillful science of gaining mastery over the mind'.

Yoga is becoming popular in all parts of the world. For the restless mind, it offers solace. For the sick, it is a boon. Yoga helps to develop memory, intelligence, and creativity. With its multi-fold advantages, it is also becoming a part of education.

Specialists use yoga to unfold deeper layers of consciousness in their move towards perfection. The promotion of positive health is being nurtured by many who do not want to be the victims of modern ailments. Hence, yoga plays a vital role in this aspect in the new millennium. It transforms a narrow-minded, egoistic personality into an all-pervasive person with a blissful state of reality.

Yoga is a systematic, conscious effort towards the self-development of potentialities. It emphasises all-round personality development at the physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual levels. It is a process by which limitations and imperfections can be washed away, resulting in a superhuman race. Thus, Yoga is a systematic process for accelerating the growth of a human being in its entirety.

The key to this all-round personality development and growth is culturing of the mind. This yogic technique of 'mind control' is prescribed by Patanjali wherein it is considered a skillful trick to calm down the mind. Knowledge is the key. Similarly, in mind control, yoga provides the necessary techniques to operate at the right place at the right time to gain complete mastery of the mind.

This is the month of International Yoga Day. It has been celebrated annually on June 21 since 2015 as it is the longest day of the northern hemisphere and shares a special significance in many parts of the world. International Day of Yoga was first proposed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a total of 177 nations had co-sponsored the resolution.

This year, the virtual celebrations for 100

days have started from 14th March 2021. Eighteen prestigious yoga institutions have made a syllabus for 35 minutes; so, they are planning to have 300mn participants for this year's celebrations. As a yoga practitioner, I am trying to spread awareness to my Omani brothers and sisters by showcasing the importance of yoga - the science of life.

The pandemic has created a significant impact on the mental and physical wellbeing of people. This, in turn, has caused stress, breathing imbalances and deficiencies, and subnormal tendencies deep within, which are manifest in breathing imbalances.

Correction of breathing patterns is the most effective way to harness the energies for systematic development of the physique and psyche. The respiratory system is the bridge between the conscious and the subconscious, the voluntary and the involuntary, or in general, the body and mind. So, I

am trying to teach the 'king of asanas' - the Sun salutation and breathing techniques which work on the physiology of the body, the endocrine system, respiratory system, all the chakras, and finally for the health of our body and emotions.

Yoga is said to be dexterity in action, and the dexterity is in maintaining relaxation and awareness in action. Relaxed action is a process while efficiency in action is an outcome.

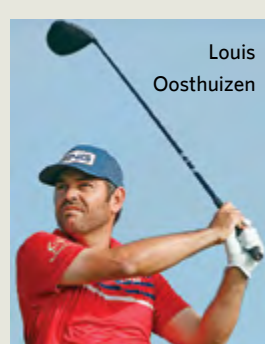
Yoga is a skillful science of gaining mastery over the mind. It is also described as the power of all creative endeavours and creation itself. When your mind remains steadfast and unperturbed, even on hearing confusing and conflicting statements, then you would have attained the state of yoga. So, by practicing yoga, one can achieve a state of excellent steadiness at an emotional level, a balance of concentration, detachment at the mental level, and homeostasis at the body level.

Yoga integrates the personality by bringing about body and mind coordination in a well-balanced way. Practice yoga and enjoy the benefits. Happy 7th International Yoga Day!



Kavitha Ramakrishna
'Yoga is the science of life.'





Louis Oosthuizen

Oosthuizen, Hughes and Henley share lead

US OPEN GOLF

La Jolla, US - South Africa's Louis Oosthuizen closed with a stunning 52-foot eagle putt to grab a share of the lead with Canada's Mackenzie Hughes and American Russell Henley after Saturday's dramatic third round of the US Open.

Oosthuizen, the 2010 British Open champion, fired a one-under par 70 to stand on five-under 208 after 54 holes at Torrey Pines with Hughes, who fired a 68, and Henley, who saved par from a bunker at 18 to shoot 71.

Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy and defending champion Bryson DeChambeau shared fourth on 210. World No 3 Jon Rahm of Spain, fired a 72 to share sixth on 211 with Americans Scottie Scheffler and 2020 US Open runner-up Matthew Wolff. England's Richard Bland, a 36-hole co-leader with Henley, fell back with a 77 to stand on 214.

Phil Mickelson, a six-time US Open runner-up, staggered to a 76 to end his dream of a win to complete a career Grand Slam as he finished on 220. AFP

Verstappen denies Hamilton in thriller



Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium with the trophy at Le Castellet in France on Sunday (AFP)

FORMULE ONE FRENCH GRAND PRIX

Le Castellet, France - Max Verstappen won the French Grand Prix on Sunday to extend his lead over Lewis Hamilton in the Formula One drivers' title race.

The Red Bull driver hunted down and overtook the Mercedes world champion with over a lap to go at a gusty Le Castellet to claim his third win out of seven races this season.

"Towards the end I enjoyed it! At the beginning it was super

difficult out there with the wind," said Verstappen. This was a massive statement by the Dutch driver and his resurgent Red Bull team who won their third successive race after Monaco and Baku. It pushed Verstappen 12 points clear of Hamilton ahead of back-to-back races on Red Bull turf in Austria. Sergio Perez in the other Red Bull came in third with Valtteri Bottas in the second Mercedes finishing fourth.

Things got off to a bumpy beginning for pole sitter Verstap-

The whole race me and Lewis were fighting each other, so it will be like this the rest of the season

MAX VERSTAPPEN

pen, who went off the track in a horror start coming out of turn one, Hamilton accepting the un-

expected gift to take the lead. "I couldn't keep the car under control," complained Verstappen.

Hamilton had led 105 of the 106 laps for his wins here in 2018 and 2019, and he set about extending his near total stranglehold at the Provençal track.

Approaching a third of the 53-lap race Hamilton had established a near three second gap back to Verstappen, with Bottas and Perez in pursuit. With drivers starting to complain of tyre wear Charles Leclerc was the first to come into the pits for a change of footwear for his Ferrari.

Verstappen wasn't far behind, with Hamilton coming in for a slick stop on lap 20, coming out as Verstappen flashed past with Perez, still to pit, the new leader.

The Mexican, winner in Baku last time out, was hauled in on lap 25, leaving Verstappen in the lead and Hamilton half a second behind. "We can't keep this up until the end of the race that's for sure" Verstappen told his pits over the team radio referring to tyres on lap 29.

And on lap 32 in he came in again, resuming in fourth, 25sec behind Hamilton, but with better grip he was only seven seconds behind in third by lap 40.

With nine laps to go Verstappen muscled past Bottas, the gap ahead to Hamilton just five seconds. Hunting his prey down it made for an epic end and he duly picked off the Silver Arrows on the penultimate lap to trigger wild celebrations in the Red Bull garage. "The whole race me and Lewis were fighting each other, so it will be like this the rest of the season," Verstappen said. AFP



Honda Spanish rider Marc Marquez celebrates on the podium after winning the German MotoGP at the Sachsenring circuit on Sunday (AFP)

Marquez takes first victory since 2019

GERMAN MOTOGP

Sachsenring, Germany - Marc Marquez banished 18 months of struggles on Sunday as he dominated in the rain at the Sachsenring to win the German MotoGP.

The six-time world champion, who returned this season after crashing in the opening race last year, escaped early and stayed clear of in-form Portuguese Miguel Oliveira and championship leader Fabio Quartararo. Marquez started on the second row of the grid but burst through at the start and was battling for the lead with fellow Spaniard Aleix Espargaro of Aprilia when rain started to fall.

While other riders grew more cautious, Marquez reacted by attacking harder.

"The victory was a low possibility, but when I saw a few drops on laps four and five I thought: 'this is my race'," he said. "When more drops fall, I pushed more. I take a risk. Then the second race started with Oliveira."

Catalonia GP winner Oliveira emerged from the pack to give chase but was more than a second back.

The laps followed a consistent pattern. Marquez, who is still

recovering from the complicated break to his right arm, gained time turning left and lost time on right-handers. But he managed to preserve a cushion of more than a second.

"It was a little cat and mouse all race," said Oliveira. "He was faster in some sectors, I was faster in others. We battled at a distance."

It was his 11th straight victory for Marquez at the Sachsenring, which like him was off the MotoGP circuit last season, but it was the first for him and the Honda team since Valencia in November 2019.

Quartararo, meanwhile, increased his lead in the championship on a track that does not suit his Yamaha in contrast to Assen, home of the Dutch MotoGP next weekend.

Quartararo now holds a 22-point edge over compatriot Johann Zarco who was eighth on his Pramac Ducati. South African Brad Binder was fourth on a KTM. The factory Ducatis of Italian Francesco Bagnaia and Australian Jack Miller were next and remain fourth and third in the standings. AFP

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NAME CHANGE

I, ABOBKAR (holder of Indian Passport No. P0047917) son of / daughter of MOHAMMAD ISMAIL having permanent residence in MOHALLA GADAN ARZANI POST SADAR PS KOTWALI JAUNPUR/ ROOM 320, 3/5 EBBACHAWL, NARAYAN NAGAR GHATKOPAR (WEST) MUMBAI (complete postal address in India) and presently residing in PO BOX NO. 1866, PC 111, AL KHOUD, AL SEEB, MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN (complete postal address in Oman) intend to change my name ABOBKAR (Old name) to ABUBAKAR MOHAMMAD ISMAIL SHAH (New name) for all purpose. Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to Embassy Of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P.Box No : 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

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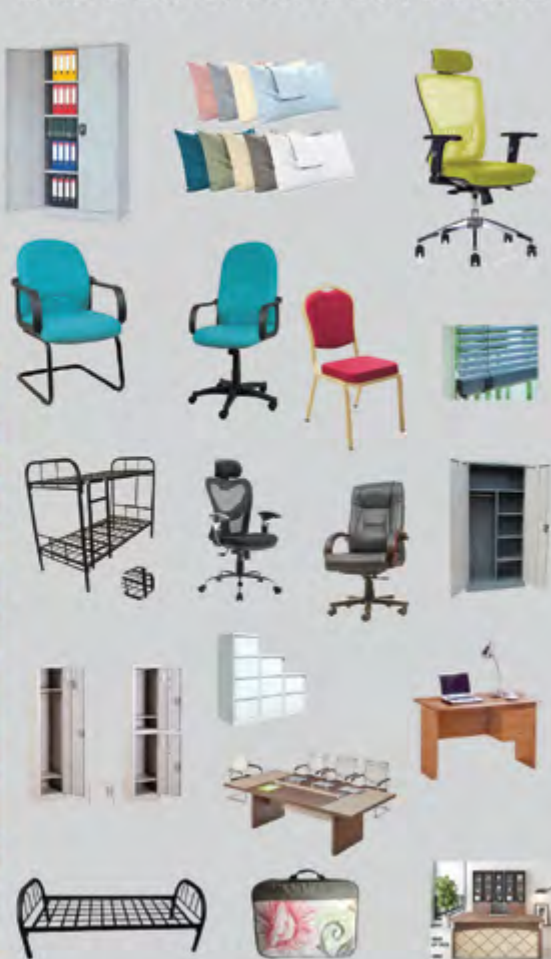


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EURO 2020



IMPRESSIVE ITALY

Mancini's men seal top spot; beaten Wales qualify for last-16

Rome, Italy - Matteo Pessina scored as Italy made it three wins out of three at Euro 2020 by beating ten-man Wales 1-0 to finish top of Group A on Sunday with both teams advancing to the last-16.

Pessina's goal means Italy will play the runner-up from Group C in the next round, with Wales facing the team that comes second in Group B.

In his 35th game in charge of the Azzurri who failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, Roberto Mancini's side also matched an 80-year Italian record.

Italy extended their unbeaten run to 30 games - 25 wins and five draws - a feat last achieved under two-time World Cup winning coach Vittorio Pozzo between 1935 and 1939.

It was also an 11th consecutive win with a clean sheet for Italy who had already booked their ticket to the knockout rounds with a game to spare.

As four-time world champions and former winners of this competition, they are used to being among the favourites - but this team is different. At Euro 2020, they won both their opening fixtures 3-0 against Turkey and Switzerland, playing with a newfound panache.

Italy will play Ukraine or Austria at Wembley on June 26 for a spot

in the quarterfinals.

Wales, semifinalists in 2016, suffered in a game they played a man down for most of the second half after Ethan Ampadu was sent off for a foul on Federico Bernardeschi.

Real Madrid's Gareth Bale, Wales' all-time leading scorer with 33 international goals, could not add to his tally missing a chance for the equaliser in the final quarter of an hour.

Wales coach Robert Page made three changes to his starting line-up, Ben Davies, Chris Mepham

minutes but Wales goalkeeper Danny Ward held firm with Emerson Palmieri then missing a chance from a distance.

Rafael Toloi fired another which took a deflection off his Atalanta teammate Pessina, into the arms of Ward, while Chiesa missed an opportunity to latch on a Belotti shot across goal. But Pessina broke through six minutes before half-time with a flick off a Verratti free-kick leaving Ward with no chance.

It was the first goal for Italy in a major competition for the Atalanta player who had been called up as a late addition after Stefano Sensi's injury. Francesco Acerbi replaced Leonardo Bonucci at half-time with an eye towards the knockout rounds. Bernardeschi missed a chance for a second after the break with a free-kick from distance hitting the post.

And Wales' task got even more difficult when Ampadu was sent off ten minutes after the break for a late challenge which caught Bernardeschi's ankle.

Cardiff City striker Moore came off the bench after an hour in place of Joe Morrell with Bale reverting back to midfield.

Bale missed a golden chance to level after 75 minutes with Moore crossing for the unmarked skipper who volleyed over.

AFP



Italy's Matteo Pessina celebrates after scoring against Wales in Rome, Italy, on Sunday (AFP)

GROUP A	
ITALY VS WALES	
1	0

and Kieffer Moore dropping to the bench with the trio one booking away from suspension.

Mancini also brought in fresh players for their final group game with eight changes, and a three-man frontline with Federico Chiesa, Andrea Belotti and Federico Bernardeschi.

Paris Saint-Germain's Marco Verratti proved decisive on his return from injury after a six-week layoff. Belotti threatened after 12



Spain's coach Luis Enrique reacts during the match against Poland (AFP)

I was expecting more: Enrique

Seville, Spain - Luis Enrique admitted he expected more from Spain at Euro 2020 after a 1-1 draw with Poland on Saturday left his team facing a fight to reach the last-16. Gerard Moreno missed a penalty and Alvaro Morata squandered the rebound as Spain's scoring woes struck again, with Robert Lewandowski's header earning Poland a valuable point in Seville.

After starting with a stalemate against Sweden, Spain sit third in Group E and may well now have to beat Slovakia in their final game on Wednesday to avoid an early exit.

"I was expecting more," said Luis Enrique. "I was expecting six points and zero goals conceded. But this is the situation."

"We're coming into the crunch match now and if we want to progress we need to win. If we win, we'll go through. If not, we'll be out. That's the reality."

Morata poked in from close range to put Spain in front but Lewandowski's 60th goal of the season pulled Poland level before Moreno's penalty hit the post.

The rebound came quickly to Morata but with Wojciech Szczesny committed down to his right, the goal was open for the striker to score his second.

Instead, the whistles that accompanied Morata against Sweden last week were saved for the

whole Spanish team at the final whistle. Poland, meanwhile, formed a huddle on the pitch before going to over to salute their supporters, after the deadly Lewandowski

came up trumps again to keep his own team's hopes of progress alive. "If it was a boxing match we would have won on points but Poland could have won too," said Luis Enrique. "They had chances, they caused us problems."

AFP

GROUP E	
SPAIN VS POLAND	
1	1

TODAY'S MATCHES

GROUP C	
NORTH MACEDONIA VS NETHERLANDS	
UKRAINE VS AUSTRIA (Both games kick-off at 8pm, Oman time)	

GROUP B	
FINLAND VS BELGIUM	
RUSSIA VS DENMARK (Both games kick-off at 11pm, Oman time)	

STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
GROUP A								
Italy	3	3	0	0	7	0	7	9
Wales	3	1	1	1	3	2	1	4
Switzerland	3	1	1	1	4	5	-1	4
Turkey	3	0	0	3	1	8	-7	0

GROUP B								
Belgium	2	2	0	0	5	1	4	6
Russia	2	1	0	1	3	-2	3	3
Finland	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	3
Denmark	2	0	0	2	1	3	-2	0

GROUP C								
Netherlands	2	2	0	0	5	2	3	6
Ukraine	2	1	0	1	4	4	0	3
Austria	2	1	0	1	3	3	0	3
North Macedonia	2	0	0	2	2	5	-3	0

GROUP D								
Czech Republic	2	1	1	0	3	1	2	4
England	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
Croatia	2	0	1	1	1	2	-1	1
Scotland	2	0	1	1	0	2	-2	1

GROUP E								
Sweden	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
Slovakia	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	3
Spain	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	2
Poland	2	0	1	1	2	3	-1	1

GROUP F								
France	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	4
Germany	2	1	0	1	4	3	1	3
Portugal	2	1	0	1	5	4	1	3
Hungary	2	0	1	1	1	4	-3	1



Switzerland's Xherdan Shaqiri celebrates after scoring against Turkey in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Sunday (AFP)

Shaqiri shines in Swiss win to keep hopes alive

Baku, Azerbaijan - Switzerland secured third place in Group A at Euro 2020 with a 3-1 win over Turkey in Baku on Sunday, thanks to Liverpool's Xherdan Shaqiri two superb goals.

The victory gave the Swiss a good chance of qualifying for the last-16 as one of the best four third-placed teams from the six groups.

The Swiss finished level on four points with Wales but behind on goal difference. They now have to wait for the other group games to be completed to see if they can advance.

Turkey finished fourth with three defeats and will head home after a dismal effort in the group stage. The game encapsulated Turkey's tournament, as they began full of fire

and fury and started at a scintillating pace, only to collapse quickly as Switzerland outmanoeuvred them tactically to take an early lead.

The Swiss took the lead when Haris Seferovic received a pass from Steven Zuber on the edge of the area before rifling the ball into the bottom right corner in the sixth minute.

Turkey regrouped and tried again, but they went 2-0 when Zuber found Shaqiri in a similar position, and he curled an exquisite shot beyond the despairing dive of Ugurcan Cakir 20 minutes later.

Turkey had their chances,

but Swiss keeper Yann Sommer made a string of superb first-half saves.

Irfan Kahveci salvaged some pride for the Turks in the 62nd minute with a spectacular strike from distance to

reduce the deficit, but their shortcomings were shown up again when Shaqiri fired home to complete a surging counter-attack four minutes

later. With Shaqiri withdrawn, Granit Khaka hit a post with a free-kick as Switzerland continued to chase the goals that might have enabled them to take second spot, but to no avail.

Agencies

GROUP A	
SWITZERLAND VS TURKEY	
3	1

'A DREAM RESULT'

Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair thrilled after race win at Spa with his teammate Andy Soucek

Lechner Racing duo leads the championship standings after three races of the 2021 International GT Open Series

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The thrill and excitement in his voice over the phone spoke volumes of his happiness on the race victory in the opening race of the second round of the 2021 International GT Open Series at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Belgium on Saturday.

Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair and his teammate, Spain's Andy Soucek, came up with a thrilling performance to claim the top honours at the famed circuit.

"A dream, dream result. Honestly, I couldn't be more

happier as we came up with a victory in only our second race weekend of the highly-competitive GT Open Series," a delighted Al Faisal told *Muscat Daily* over phone from the venue on Saturday night.

The 23 year old Omani racer added, "The car felt great. Honestly, we did not have any complaints from the start of our practice session.

"Andy [Soucek] was great during the qualifying session as he secured P2. I was quite comfortable and confident in the car while racing and we achieved a deserving win. Overall, I and



Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair (R) and Spain Andy Soucek celebrate after winning the first race of the second round of the 2021 International GT Open Series at Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium on Saturday



Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair of Lechner Racing wins the race in his Porsche 911 GT3 R car at Spa on Saturday

the team are very happy with the perfect result."

The duo's win in the Ardennes also ensured that the Lechner Racing duo took the overall lead in the championship standings.

Driving the Porsche 911 GT3 R, Al Faisal began the first of the weekend's two races from second place on the qualifying grid and managed to overhaul Brendan Iribe's McLaren with around 20 minutes of the race remaining to snatch a stunning victory.

In dry and sunny conditions, the Omani opened up a gap of over five seconds with 17

minutes of the race to run.

Robbie Foley managed to pass Iribe in the TF Sport Aston Martin GT3 and claim second place with 14 minutes on the clock but Al Faisal had extended the Lechner Racing Porsche's advantage to over nine seconds heading into the final ten minutes.

Al Faisal held on over the closing laps to pass the chequered flag 7.181 seconds in front of Foley, with Iribe finishing third in the Inception Racing McLaren after the 24-lap race.

Yuki Nemoto brought the Vincenzo Sospirri Racing

Lamborghini home in fourth place to keep his and Baptise Moulin's title challenge alive. Michele Beretta (Lamborghini) and Adam Carroll (Audi R8) were fifth and sixth after Loris Spinelli (Mercedes AMG) slipped down the leader board to eighth in the closing minutes.

Soucek qualified the Porsche on pole in the Pro category for the first of the weekend's two races and second on the entire grid behind the McLaren of Iribe and Ollie Millroy. A lap of 2min 17.235sec was sufficient to claim the spot ahead of the Schandorff/Beretta Lamborghini

and the Aston of Michael Dinan and Foley.

Al Faisal and Soucek also enjoyed a solid first practice session on Friday. They were classified fourth in the entire field and first in the Pro class after running for 19 laps and posting a best tour of 2min 19.176sec.

The duo faired even better in the second practice session and a best tour of 2min 19.377sec put them in second place in the entire field and again on top in the Pro class.

The second race of the second round of the seven-leg series will be held on Sunday.

Swimmer Adawi to debut at Tokyo Olympics

Sprinter Barakat al Harthi, shooter Hamed al Khatri in three-member Oman squad

Ashok Purohit
Muscat

Issa al Adawi, a 22 year old Omani swimmer, will make his debut at the Olympics later this year after he was named in a three-member national squad for the Tokyo Olympics.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which were postponed last year due to the coronavirus pandemic, will now be held from July 23-August 8.

A top Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) official confirmed to *Muscat Daily* on Sunday that a 'three-member squad has been finalised'.

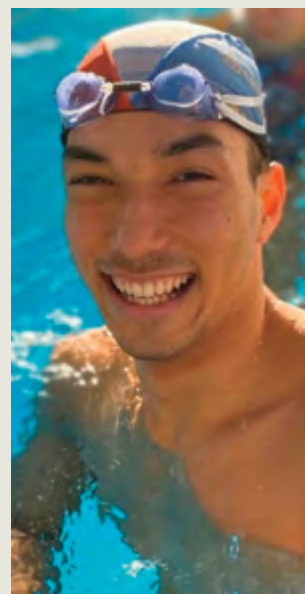
"All the three participants have been handed invitation cards from the IOC after we

approached them to increase our quota. We are happy that we are able to send three of our best athletes to the showpiece event," he said.

With just over a month before the Games begin, the OOC announced that besides Adawi, the other two athletes are former Asian Games bronze medallist Barakat al Harthi in 100m and Hamed al Khatri in shooting. Both Barakat and Khatri had represented Oman at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

For Barakat, who won a bronze at the 22nd Arab Athletics Championship in Tunisia on Friday, this will be his third successive Olympics after competing at the 2012 London Games and 2016 Olympics.

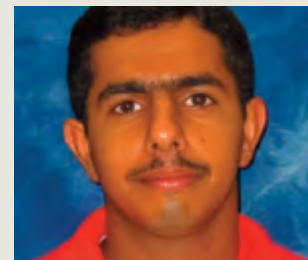
The 33 year old Barakat clocked 10.43s at the Arab meet, nowhere near the Olympic qualifying mark of 10.05s, but with the OOC managing three invitation cards, he made the cut based on his display over past two years.



Issa al Adawi



Barakat al Harthi



Hamed al Khatri

Barakat's personal best in 100m is 9.97s, recorded in Amman, Jordan, in 2018 and his best this season has been 10.37s, achieved during a camp in Bursa, Turkey, in May.

Khatri, 36, had competed in the men's 50m rifle three positions event and was also the sultanate's flag-bearer at the

opening ceremony in Rio.

Adawi has been training in Japan for the past three years as a student of Chukyo University in Tokyo.

Adawi is expected to take part in 50m and 100m freestyle, the two events he had competed at the 2019 FINA World Championships in South

Korea. He is the current national record holder in 50m, 100m and 200m freestyle event.

Adawi had previously represented Oman at the 2018 Buenos Aires Youth Olympic Games (YOG), when he took part in the 100m freestyle event.

Meanwhile, the OOC official informed that Kazem al Balushi will be the chef-de-mission and OOC chairman Sayyid Khalid al Busaidi will be the leader of Oman delegation.

Busaidi will be accompanied by Taha al Kishry, OOC secretary general, and Adil al Balushi, will travel as OOC media officer.

This will be also the first time that no woman athlete will be taking part since Oman first fielded a woman athlete (Buthaina al Yaquobi) at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China. Sprinters Shnoona al Habsi (2012), Mazoon al Alawi (2016) and shooter Wadha al Balushi (2016) were the other women who represented the sultanate at the Olympics.

@ashokmuscat

Every day, all day!

