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SHAMSI INSPIRES PROTEAS TO ONE-RUN WIN



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SHIPPING, HEATING AND CARS TARGETED IN EU CARBON MARKET REVAMP



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AL KHABOURAH FORT: THE COMPASS OF SHIPS AND A CIVILISATION



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO CANADA, BURUNDI

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Richard Wagner, acting Governor General of Canada, on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiment and best wishes of good health and happiness to the acting Governor General and the friendly people of Canada further progress and prosperity. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Evariste Ndayishimiye of the Republic of Burundi, on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Ndayishimiye and the friendly people of Burundi. — ONA

HM GREETINGS TO SOMALIA, RWANDA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo of the Federal Republic of Somalia on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Farmaajo, and the brotherly people of Somalia further progress and prosperity. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to President Kagame and his country's friendly people. — ONA

NEW YORK

UN CHIEF URGES US TO LIFT IRAN SANCTIONS

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appealed to US President Joe Biden's administration to lift or waive all sanctions on Iran as agreed under a 2015 deal aimed at stopping Tehran from developing a nuclear weapon. In a report to the UN Security Council, Guterres also urged the United States to "extend the waivers with regard to the trade in oil with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and fully renew waivers for nuclear non-proliferation projects." "I appeal to the United States to lift or waive its sanctions outlined in the plan," said Guterres, who also appealed to Iran to return to full implementation of the deal. — AFP

INSIDE



TOP NORTH KOREAN OFFICIALS SACKED AFTER COVID-19 INCIDENT | P7



AFGHANS SIFT THROUGH LEFTOVERS OF US OCCUPATION | P9

INCREASE IN JOB-SEEKERS DUE TO SMALL LABOUR MARKET

Acquire latest skills to compete in job market

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
[@zainabalnasseri](#)

The increase in the numbers of job-seekers is not only due to the quality of higher education, rather due to the small labour market and lack of opportunities.

This was stated by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, when Majlis Ash'shura hosted her on Wednesday.

The Majlis discussed the ministry's statement during the fourteenth regular session of the second annual sitting of the ninth period.

Speaking on the occasion, she said: "The results of the 2019 survey showed that higher education outcomes suffer from weakness in possessing some skills of the 21st century, and consequently, lack of access to job opportunities indicating that the small size of the Omani labour market, poor orientation to investment in the knowledge-



“

Surveys showed that women employment rate is lower than men and stands at 8.8 per cent

DR RAHMA AL MAHROUQIYAH
Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation

based economy sector, and failure to activate modern technologies, all led to lack of growth in demand for skilled Omani labour, and rather continued demand for unskilled labour which does not require any university degree."

According to the statement, the number of male and female graduates from higher education institutions reached 23,816 during the academic year (2019-2020), of which females constituted 60 per cent.

However, studies of higher education graduate surveys carried out by the ministry since 2015 showed that female employment rate is lower than male's as female employment rate was 8.8 per cent, while the male employment rate was 39.5 per cent, according to graduates survey 2019.

The percentage of Omanisation among academic staff during the 10th Five-Year Plan increased by 1.2 per cent.

TURN TO P3

Oman third best Arab country in global cybersecurity index

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

Oman ranked third in the Arab world and 21st globally out of 193 countries in the Global Cybersecurity Index 2020, according to a report issued by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

The Sultanate moved up from 0.86 points in the 2018 index to 0.96 points in the 2020 index (12 per cent increase). Despite the progress, the Sultanate fell five ranks in the global ranking compared to the last version of the report.

The cybersecurity index focuses on information security, ensuring privacy and protecting the confidentiality of personal information, and taking all necessary measures to protect citizens and users from the dangers of cyberspace. The ITU indicator is based on five standards: legal, technical, regulatory, capacity building and cooperation standard.

The Sultanate scored 20 points in the legal standard for cybersecurity, 16.64 points in the technical standard, 20 points in the regulatory standard, and 20 points in the capacity building

standard and 19.40 points in the cooperation index.

The findings further show that the European region performs well in matters related to child online protection, with 89 per cent having fully implemented child online protection-related laws.

In addition, 101 reporting mechanisms were recorded globally, including hotlines, websites, e-mail addresses, and social media, and 81 countries went further, sharing their child online protection strategies and broader initiatives.

Coastal cities face their mortality on the climate 'frontline'

PARIS: For thousands of years, people have built their great metropolises right up against the contours of coasts, in estuaries and deltas, confident of the ebb and flow of the tides. Domination of the seas allowed many coastal cities to become trading powerhouses and cultural melting pots.

But now that strength is becoming a liability as climate change swells the oceans, redrawing the map and putting hundreds of millions at risk.

That's the warning of an unpublished draft report by the UN's

climate science advisory panel, seen exclusively by AFP, which outlines the vast and urgent climate threats facing the planet. From the air, you can see the problem.

In city upon city, office towers, warehouses and homes crowd the water's edge as if they are jostling to take a dip, major roads hug the shore, landing strips jut dauntlessly into the frothing waves.

These cities are on the "frontline", the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report says.

"Difficult choices will need to be



made as sea level continues to rise, floods and storm surges become more frequent and intense, warming

increases ocean acidity and intensifies heatwaves," it adds.

Rising seas will likely spark mass

migration and eventually force whole cities to be abandoned to the flood.

But profound consequences for megacities, small islands, arctic communities and deltas will come long before that — well within the lifetimes of most alive today.

In some places, people already know all too well the destructive power of water.

"I once was a bride of an affluent family," Yasmin Begum said in the bare corrugated metal hut she now shares with her relatives in the Bangladesh capital Dhaka. — AFP



VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

The Ministry of Health on Wednesday reported 44 deaths, 2,009 new cases over the past 24 hours.

The number of active cases (sick patients) also increased to 30,584 from 30,193 on Wednesday.

Around 183 patients were admitted to hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients to 1,597 including 519 in intensive care units (ICUs).

Meanwhile, the ministry has warned that the Sultanate is currently seeing a worrying rise in the number of Covid-19 infections, which has led to an increase in the number of inpatients in health institutions, including those in ICUs.

The ministry analyst Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Maimani said that June 2021 saw the highest number of new infections of over 50,274 since the beginning of the pandemic in

the Sultanate. The recovery rate has also dropped to 87.5 per cent.

He said that Oman has reported 25 deaths on average daily in June, which is the highest rate since the beginning of the pandemic, while 344 deaths were recorded in April this year, on an average of 11.5 deaths per day.

Al Maimani said the number of inpatients in hospitals doubled by 98 per cent, compared to 808 at the end of May, bringing the cases until the end of this month to 1,597, an increase of 789 cases.

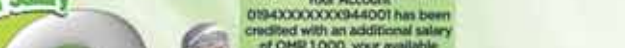
He said that the intensive care cases also doubled, as their numbers increased from 247 at the end of May this year to 519 cases, at a rate of 110 per cent.



A MAN OF KHANJARS!

The silverware industry in Oman is one of the most important and diversified metallurgical industries. Abdullah al Farsi is one of the most popular in this industry and his love for the dagger-making profession is exceptional, as he came from a prominent family which has passed on this craft from generation to generation. Abdullah shared that he has made more than 100,000 daggers, and each dagger has its own story.

DETAILS ON P18



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■ SAYYID THEYAZIN RECEIVES AMBASSADOR OF HUNGARY



MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, received in his office on Wednesday Dr Tibor Szatmari Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary. The meeting touched on several topics of common interest. It also reviewed the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries. The meeting further discussed aspects of the existing cooperation in the cultural and youth fields and means of developing them to serve the two sides. – **ONA**

Spanish group to run Mussanah Resort

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30



Barceló Hotels Group to operate the Mussanah Resort

Barceló Hotels of Spain will operate the Mussanah Resort from July 1, Oman Tourism Development Company (Oman) said on Wednesday. The property was under the management of Millennium Hotels after it took over from Oman.

"The decision is in line with the group's plan to enhance tourism experiences and activities and operate and manage the resort facilities in a new concept," Omran said.

The Barceló Group, founded in 1931 by Simón Barceló in the island of Mallorca (Spain), is a vertically integrated tourism group that is made up of the Barceló Hotel Group, which

has more than 250 hotels and more than 55,000 rooms in 22 countries; and by the travel division Ávoris, which has more

than 700 travel agencies on 4 continents, several tour operators and receptive operators, and even an airline.

Panel to oversee application of vocational training in post-basic education

MUSCAT: Within the framework of the implementation of the Royal directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to take whatever procedures necessary to introduce vocational and technical training in the post-basic education, Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, has issued a ministerial decision to form the main committee for applying technical and vocational training in the post-basic education under the chairmanship of the minister of education. The committee's membership comprises the two under-secretaries of the Ministry of Education and a



number of experts.

As per the decision, the main committee shall oversee the technical and vocational education project in post-basic education, and the procedures for analysing the needs and requirements necessary to implement the project, identifying the necessary expertise and human

resources, and adopting a methodology and an action plan according to which the project implementation mechanism is determined in line with the requirements and needs of the labour market and the futuristic and basic skills required in different jobs and professions.

The committee shall adopt the general frameworks of the master plan of the project and the procedural executive plans that will be submitted by the competent technical team, approve the proposed study plans based on future needs, and supervise the follow-up and evaluation of the progress of work in the executive plans of the project.

Omanisation of more professions

VINOD NAIR
 @vinot_nair

The Ministry of Labour has asked private sector establishments, especially in the North Al Batinah Governorate, to implement the decision on Omanisation of some professions from July 20.

Article 1 of the Ministerial decisions 8/2021 and 9/2021 states that professions and activities listed below in private sector establishments will be restricted to Omanis.

The ministry asked companies to follow the decisions issued in January this year to localise

the administrative and financial professions in insurance companies and companies operating in brokerage activities, selling and accounting in money exchange, management, and arranging goods in operating stores in malls, accounts auditing professions in auto agencies, all professions related to the sale of new and used vehicles, all accounting professions related to selling new and used vehicles in agencies, selling spare parts for new vehicles in auto agencies, professions of driving vehicles - of any kind - such as fuel transportation, transportation

of agricultural materials and foodstuffs.

Article 2 states the issuance of non-Omani workforce recruitment licenses and issued work permits for professions and activities specified in Article 1 of this decision will continue until its expiry date.

The Ministry of Labour had earlier reaffirmed that shopping malls and supermarkets would have to adhere to ministerial decision No 8/2021, which stipulates that some professions in shopping malls and supermarkets will be restricted to Omanis from July 20, 2021.

Oman's GDP value improves, shows UN calculation method

MUSCAT: The result of the expanded economic survey and the application of the new method of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) calculation shows that the value of the GDP increased generally in Oman, with variation in contribution of economic activities in the GDP's composition.

The Sultanate's GDP stood at RO 7,389,500,000 by the end of the first quarter of 2021, down by 2.5% by comparison to the corresponding period in 2020 (7,580,700,000), according to preliminary statistics released by the National Statistics and Information Centre.

Oil activities dropped by 20.6% by the end of the first quarter in 2021 to RO 1,927,800,000 as against RO 2,428,300,000 by the end of Q1 in 2020. Crude oil activities went down by 22.4% to RO 1,607,000,000 by the end of Q1 in 2021 as against RO 2,070,100,000 during the

corresponding period last year.

Natural gas activities by the end of Q1 this year also declined by 10.4%, registering RO 320,800,000 as against RO 358,200,000 by the end of Q1 in 2020.

Non-oil activities by the end of the first quarter in 2021 increased by 5.7% to RO 5,728,300,000, compared to RO 5,418,900,000 by the end of Q1 in 2020.

Service activities led the growth of non-oil activities, posting RO 4,081,100,000 — up by 6.6% over their standing by the end of Q1, 2020 (RO 3,829,600,000).

However, by the end of March 2021, telecom activities decreased by 1.1% and public administration and defence by 2.3%, while wholesale-retail trade activities rose by 16%, transport and storage by 12.7%, residency (tenancy) by 7.7%, other service activities by 7.4%, finance and insurance by 6.3% and real estate activities,



occupational, technical and administrative serve by 2.2%.

As for industrial activities, they

registered an increase of 5.7% to RO 1,479,400,000 by the end of the first quarter of this year, compared

to RO 1,399,000,000 by the end of Q1, 2020.

Of this, the value of basic

chemical products activities rose by 24.8%, while the industries sector's activities went up by 23.3% and electricity and water supply by 8.5%. The contribution of mining and quarries went down by 37.7% and construction activities by 6.8%.

Agriculture and fisheries-related activities went down by 11.9% at the end of the first quarter of this year to RO 167,800,000 (compared to RO 190,300,000 by the end of Q1, 2020).

The Sultanate is processing its statistical data in accordance with international practices and standards.

Key aspects of this modernisation include the endorsement of the United Nation's National Accounts System for 2008 and the UN "National Classification for Economic Activities (ISIC4).

— ONA



Acquire latest skills to compete in job market

FROM PAGE 1

LABOUR OUTPUT

On the reasons for lack of alignment of outputs with the labour market, the minister said: "Surveys were conducted to determine specialisations the market needs, and accordingly, they were identified. But, unfortunately, the information we received from the labour market is inaccurate. So, we spoke to Omani Investment Authority, which includes 170 companies, to explore the future of the required specialisations."

The number of higher education institutions in the Sultanate during the current academic year (2020/2021) stood at 47. Nineteen among them are government institutions, 28 private, in addition to 416 private vocational training institutions supervised by the ministry and distributed over various governorates of the Sultanate, according to the statement.

Moreover, the number of students enrolled in higher education in the Sultanate and abroad stood at 29,619 during the academic year 2019-2020, distributed in public and private institutions and missions abroad.

The data indicate that 65,457 students, equivalent to 50.5 per cent, study in government institutions, 55,827 students (43.1 per cent) in private institutions, and 8,335 (6.4 per cent) went for scholarships abroad. Females made up more than half of the total enrollments.

GRADUATES

It should be noted that the Sultanate ranked first among 129 countries in the percentage of graduates in engineering and



science disciplines out of the total graduates in the Global Innovation Index.

"Within the framework of the ministry's continuous keenness to harmonise the academic programmes of higher education institutions and scholarship programmes, and to keep pace with the changes taking place in the field of technology and various scientific aspects and changing

the needs of the labour market, the ministry has approved a set of policies and procedures to bridge the gap in the outputs of higher education and the labour market requirements of different disciplines and skills.

This is done while keeping in mind that a significant proportion of the majors needed by the labour market often do not require labour specific academic fields but can

accommodate several outputs if accompanied by on-the-job training after graduation.

"The policies included institutional and programme licensing controls, periodic reviews and updates of programmes, conducting periodic graduate surveys, representation of the private sector in boards of trustees, cooperation with labour sectors, training at work labour, the support

provided by career guidance centres, enhancing orientation centres small and medium enterprises and the promotion of the concept of entrepreneurship," the statement said.

TRANSFORMATION PLAN

Regarding the digital transformation plan, the minister added: "We have drawn up a plan for digital transformation in cooperation with the Ministry

of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and with the Investment Authority. We expect that within a year from now, all systems will be electronic. All procedures are done electronically," confirming that private universities and colleges have been directed to introduce the disciplines of the fourth artificial revolution (4IR) and artificial intelligence, in the current universities.

About the strategic plan for government vocational education and training (2016-2025), the minister said: "The strategic plan relied on several pillars namely expanding the number of people enrolled in vocational education and training, providing and developing leadership, supervisory and executive human resources for the vocational education and training sector, providing and developing material resources for vocational education and training to comply with the needs of students, trainees, employees of vocational colleges and the needs of the labour market and finally ensuring the quality of vocational colleges in accordance with national and international standards and to develop the quality of education and training."

The statement indicated that the contribution of the government sector amounted to 42 per cent of the total expenditure on scientific research and development, while the private sector contributed 31 per cent, followed by the academic sector 27 per cent, noting that the private sector in countries with a knowledge-based economy spends amounts equivalent to 70 per cent of what countries spend on scientific research and development.

People urged to adhere to Covid norms as hospitals are full and ICUs fully occupied

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

With private hospitals running short of beds and ICUs occupied with Covid-19 patients, the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the hospitals in the private sector have urged people to follow precautions before it's too late.

The whole healthcare system in the country in private and government sector, are overwhelmed with the increasing number of Covid-19 cases. Getting a sick patient admitted to a private hospital is nearly impossible these days.

"Private healthcare system is a close associate of the Ministry of Health and the hospitals in this sector are doing an exemplary work catering to the Covid-19 patients," said Dr Mazin al Khabori, Head of Private Hospitals at the Ministry of Health.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Sameer PT, Chief Executive Officer at Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals, said they are receiving an enormous number of critically sick Covid-19 patients daily.

"We get calls in all of our hospitals across Oman from primary healthcare facilities for shifting of patients to our advanced ICUs for critical care and ventilator support. However, not every time is it possible for



us to help such patients due to 100 per cent occupancy rates in Covid-19 beds."

"In such scenario, people deteriorate at homes or succumb at primary care hospitals," adds Sameer.

In the early days of Covid-19, there were 41 Covid-19 beds, including 16 ICU's and eight ventilators, with the hospital group that has a large number of outlets. Owing to rising demand, it stretched ourselves, and the

number stands at 142 Covid-19 beds, including 29 ICU beds and 19 ventilators. But it has been proved that this number is also not sufficient in the current scenario.

Shinu Simon, Assistant Manager-Operations at Abeer Hospital, pointed at the fact that the availability of skilled and trained medical staff is a stumbling block these days besides the lack of infrastructure.

"We know the scenario is getting worse across the world. But

the shortage of trained medical staff is hampering some of us in the private sector, and immediate requirement of critical healthcare workers is a big hassle," he said.

He indicated that there are lots of asymptomatic patients who don't show symptoms but can be carriers of the virus. Precaution alone can save each one's life these days.

"I earnestly request everyone who feels symptomatic to take precaution and maintain social

distancing and to avoid going to the hospital so that the chances of spreading the virus is less."

Dr Hemant of Aster Hospital admitted that the hospital is in its full capacity at the moment.

"We are triaging patients, trying to accommodate serious ones, and it is clear that the facilities are under a lot of pressure. We need to expand our ICU and HDU (High Dependency Unit) beds, but skilled manpower is a major obstacle."

He added strategy has to be multi-pronged... at the government level, we need to provide the necessary facility for express recruitment of nurses and doctors and continued vaccination drive, while at the hospital level, they must expand the beds available for Covid-19 patients and if the need is, create field hospitals.

At the community level, all precautions are strictly enforced, especially regarding proper wearing of a mask, avoiding crowding and getting together, and most importantly, being vigilant for symptoms and consult physicians for early detection and treatment rather than when they get very sick.

"It is a war against a clever, unseen adversary and only with discipline and knowledge can we win over it."

Royal Hospital imposes visitor restrictions



MUSCAT: The Royal Hospital noted the prohibition of visits to all inpatients, with the exception of parents accompanying their children, due to the high number of people infected with the Covid-19 virus.

As of Tuesday, 181 patients were admitted to hospitals across the country in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of inpatients to 1,613 including 525 in intensive care units.

According to figures from Sultan Qaboos University, 106 people have been admitted for Covid related treatment, of which 45 require assisted ventilation (ICU), 18 require invasive mechanical ventilation (IVM), 30 on invasive mechanical ventilation, and 58 in Covid wards that do not require assisted ventilation.

MoH has warned that the Sultanate is currently seeing a worrying rise in the number of Covid-19 infections, which has led to an increase in the number of inpatients in health institutions, including those in intensive care departments.

VACCINES CAN'T TARGET ALL AT ONCE, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE RISK GROUPS



THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION HAS URGED FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE TO CONTINUE TO WEAR MASKS, MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE AND PRACTICE OTHER SAFETY MEASURES AS THE HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS DELTA VARIANT SPREADS RAPIDLY ACROSS THE GLOBE

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Vaccines will be complementary to other preventive measures as the jabs will not target all populations at once, and there will always be risk groups who are not vaccinated thus not prevented unless they comply with preventive measures, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has said.

"In addition, information is not yet available as to how long the vaccine will be protective to vaccinated people, and

when this protection will disappear. Therefore, the person still has to wear the mask, apply physical distance and obligate to isolation when indicated", MoH has said.

"It is too early to tell whether Covid-19 vaccines will provide long-term protection, or how long the vaccine will last to protect the body, and further research is needed to answer this question, but it is known so far that the vaccine prevents the disease symptoms and reduces complications", the MoH said.

Most deaths during April were people over 60 years old who refused to receive the vaccination, Dr Ahmed Mohammed al Saeedi, the Minister of Health, said.

The World Health Organization has urged fully vaccinated people to continue to wear masks, social distance and practice other safety measures as the highly contagious Delta variant spreads rapidly across the globe.

"People cannot feel safe just because they had the two doses. They still need to protect themselves", Dr Mariangela

Simao, WHO Assistant Director-General for access to medicines and health products, said during a news briefing from the agency's Geneva headquarters. "Vaccine alone won't stop community transmission", Simao added. "People need to continue to use masks consistently, be in ventilated spaces, hand hygiene... the physical distance, avoid crowding.

This still continues to be extremely important, even if you're vaccinated when you have a community transmission ongoing."



■ PRESENTING CONSULAR PATENT



Said bin Salim al Sinawi, Consul General of the Sultanate of Zanzibar, has presented the Consular Patent to Liberata Mulamula, Foreign Minister of Tanzania, when she received him in Dodoma on Tuesday. The two sides discussed bilateral relations and means of developing them in different spheres. Liberata welcomed the Sultanate's Consul General, wishing him success in performing his mission. — ONA

SalamAir to start Sarajevo flights

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

SALAMAIR announced direct flights from Muscat to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo is one of the world's emerging tourist destinations with an East meets West modern culture and is also designated as a Unesco Creative City.

With the launch of direct services to Sarajevo, SalamAir has introduced its fourth summer destination for 2021 giving its passengers from the Sultanate, apart from its three other summer destinations announced as Istanbul, Trabzon and Shiraz.

The airline will initially operate once a week to Sarajevo on Monday, departing Muscat at 4:15 pm local time and arriving in Sarajevo at 8:25 pm local time. The flight will depart Sarajevo at 9:10 pm local time arriving



in Muscat at 5:10 am local time. Return fares start from RO198.

Captain Mohamed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir, said: "With visa-free entry for Omani and other GCC nationals, plus with no quarantine requirements, I believe Sarajevo as our other three summer destinations Istanbul, Trabzon and Shiraz are extremely appealing for travel."

SalamAir currently operates

six new Airbus A320Neo aircraft making it the first Omani carrier to utilise that type of single-aisle aircraft. SalamAir flies to domestic destinations including Muscat, Salalah, and international destinations to Dubai, Doha, Shiraz, Istanbul, Alexandria, Khartoum, Multan, Sialkot, Karachi, Dhaka, Chattogram, Calicut, Jaipur, Trivandrum and Lucknow.

CBO board of governors hold meeting

MUSCAT: The Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Wednesday hold its second meeting of the year.

During the virtual meeting, the Board stressed the importance of the banking and financial sector's continuous and swift response by applying CBO's directives on reliefs, relaxations and stimulus packages to minimise repercussions of Covid-19 pandemic on the national economy.

The Board proceeded by taking stock of the meeting agenda and reviewed the progress of the "Know Your Customer" project, an e-platform that enables the relevant licensed financial institutions to verify and identify clients online, which in turn enhances efforts towards digital transformation and financial inclusion in the Sultanate.

The Board also reviewed CBO's financial position as of the end of April 2021. — ONA

Opportunities in renewable energy explored

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in collaboration with the Sultanate's Embassy in The Hague organised a meeting between business owners and companies in Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The virtual meeting themed: "Connecting the Netherlands

with Business and Investment Opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman"

The meeting saw the participation of Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, the ministry's Under-Secretary for Investment Promotion, and a number of officials from the public and private sector.

In addition, several Dutch

companies operating in the Sultanate and the Netherlands Business Council (NBC) for the Middle East also took part in the meeting.

The meeting underscored the economic potential of the Omani-Dutch partnership in renewable energy, which covers solar power, hydropower and wind energy. — ONA

Recall Campaign for KIA Cadenza (YG) & Sportage (QLe) for Junction Box HECU Multi-Fuse Replacement

Date of Campaign : 01/07/2021
Recall Segment : Body Electrical System
Product Description : Junction Box HECU Multi-Fuse Kit

Division	Vehicle Model	Affected Vehicle Production Range	VIN Range	No. of Affected Vehicles
KIA	Cadenza (YG)	08th Oct. 2015 – 10th Feb. 2021	KNALB4123H5000181 – KNALC4135M5245046	517
	Sportage (QLe)	27th Oct. 2015 – 05th Oct. 2020	U5YPK81C4GL000191 – U5YPG81C5ML966322	7448

Description of Defect:

Some of the above affected range vehicles might experience the electrical short circuit within Hydraulic Electronic control Unit (HECU). This electrical short circuit may increase the risk of an engine compartment fire in very rare cases. A new fuse kit will be installed to avoid the short circuit on all the affected vehicles.

Procedure:

Verify affected vehicles as per VIN and Replacement of Junction box HECU Multi Fuse Kit.

For More Information:

Customers, who own Cadenza (YG) & Sportage (QLe) models, may please contact M/s. Reliable International Automotive LLC for details / booking appointment etc from 01/07/2021 onwards for installations.

Contact Details:

Toll free No. 80073222 on all working days (Sunday to Thursday) between 08.30 to 17.30hrs.

C.R. 1707183

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender:-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
17/2021	General maintenance works of Social care building at AL - RUSTAQ	Companies specialized in building contracting And registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the third degree	Tuesday 20-7-2021 02:00 PM	Tuesday 10-8-2021 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On Thursday 1/7/2021.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ The original (1%) bank warranty to be submitted at same day of submitting at tender box located in Directorate of Finance & Administration at MOSD HQ.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402222 or 24166670).

"The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry"

www.mosd.gov.om

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

MAZOOON ELECTRICITY COMPANY (MZEC) WOULD LIKE TO MENTION THE EXTENSION TIME OF PURCHASING AND AMENDMENT THE TENDER TO BE AS FOLLOWING:

Tender No	Description	Last Date of Purchasing	Last Date for Submission	DCRP GRADE	Type of Participation	Tender Price R.O
MZEC/29/2021	CONSTRUCTION OF 33KV DOUBLE CIRCUIT TOWER LINES FROM IZKI GRID TO AL JABAL AL AKHDHER PRIMARY SUBSTATION THE SITE VISIT WILL BE ON 11/07/2021 AT 10:00 AM IN NIZWA OFFICE	07/07/2021	03/08/2021	B	Local	2,165
Tender No	Description	Last Date of Purchasing	Last Date for Submission	Tender Board Grade	Type of Participation	Tender Price R.O
MZEC/30/2021	UNITE RATE CONTRACT TO TOP-UP SMS CREDIT TO MZEC SMS GATEWAY.	07/07/2021	03/08/2021	Specialist	Local	90

- Specialized companies registered with the DCRP and the Tender Board and their valid registration can subscribe and obtain technical specifications and tender conditions by submitting an application with all company documents attached via e-mail: scm.tenders@mzec.co.om during working hours. The official time is from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. In return for paying the amount specified above for one copy (non-refundable) via bank deposit to the company's account.
- The tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of tender price valid (90) days as a bid bond and addressed to the chairperson of the (Internal Tender Committee) of Mazoon Electricity Company S.A.O.C and **any offer is not including the bond will be rejected immediately.**
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic conditions, offers will be submitted by sending offers to the e-mail: mzec-offerssubmission@MZEC.co.om and that the offers are valid for a period of not less than (90) days from the date of bid submission.
- Bids must be sent before (10:00 am) from the date specified as the last day for bid submission.
- The priority of the awarding will be given to those bidders who assure recruitment of the maximum numbers of Omani staff and utilizing Omani products.
- **All Clarifications are to be sent to the email address: MZEC-Clarification@mzec.co.om. and the Last date for receiving vendor's clarifications will be on 28/07/2021.**
- Mazoon Electricity Company S.A.O.C. is not bound to accept the lowest tender.
- We would like to inform you that above documents prices do not include VAT 5% and it will be charged if purchase invoice issued.

(WE LIGHT...WE CARE)

TENDERS & CONTRACTS SECTION: (+968) 72722787 / 97292777 / 92858543

Israeli govt and settlers reach deal over outpost

TEL AVIV: Jewish settlers have agreed to quit a remote outpost that has become a flashpoint for clashes with Palestinians who also claim the land, officials said, under a deal aimed at addressing an awkward political test for the new Israeli government.

Under the agreement with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, the settlers will leave Givat Eviatar outpost in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

But it seemed likely that at least some of the outpost's new buildings would remain, locked and under military guard, an outcome that is certain to anger Palestinian protesters who demand it be removed.

The hilltop settlement outpost near the Palestinian city of Nablus was established without Israeli government permits in May and is now home to more than 50 settler families.

The Israeli military ordered it to be cleared, presenting an early challenge for the new prime minister. Bennett was once a leader of the settler movement and heads a pro-settler party, putting him at odds with some of his own voter base if the settlers were forcibly



Jewish settlers sit together in Givat Eviatar, a new Israeli settler outpost, near the Palestinian village of Beita in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on June 23. — Reuters

evicted.

But his ruling coalition only survives with the support of left-wing and hardline Arab parties, making sensitive policy decisions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict difficult.

An official with Israel's Defence Ministry, which administers the settlements, said the Givat Eviatar families had agreed to leave voluntarily by the weekend.

Troops would stay on and a land survey conducted to determine if

a government-backed settlement can be established there, the official said.

Settler leader Yossi Dagan said the families would leave on Friday under the deal. The structures serving as their homes would be

locked, he said, suggesting they would not be dismantled. The Defence Ministry official did not confirm that.

On Wednesday, Moussa Hamayel, deputy mayor of the nearby Palestinian village Beita,

Under the agreement with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, the settlers will leave Givat Eviatar outpost in the Israeli-occupied West Bank

said: "We will continue our popular activities (protests) until the settlement is removed and our land is returned to us." Beita's residents claim ownership of the area on which Givat Eviatar sits.

Most world powers deem all of the settlements, built on land Israel captured and occupied in a 1967 Middle East war, to be illegal. Israel disputes this, citing historical ties to the land on which they sit, and its own security needs.

Israeli soldiers have shot dead five Palestinians during stone-throwing protests since the outpost was set up, Palestinian officials said. The military did not comment on fatalities, but said troops used live fire only as a last resort.

— Reuters

Worsening power cuts show depth of Sudan's economic challenge

KHARTOUM: For 17-year-old Waad, frequent power cuts in Sudan's capital have meant struggling to revise for secondary school exams by candlelight on many nights.

The increasingly frequent blackouts which often last all day are hitting families and businesses in Khartoum and other Sudanese cities already facing 380 per cent inflation and shortages of petrol, bread and other imports.

They have piled pressure on a transitional government that has won international praise for economic reforms and on Tuesday secured a deal for extensive debt relief, even as living conditions have continued to deteriorate.

After inheriting an economy in crisis with extremely low foreign reserves, the government has no immediate solution for the problem, one official said.

Authorities cannot import enough fuel or pay for maintenance and spare parts for power stations, said the government official, who asked not to be named.

Sudan's poorly resourced hospitals have not been spared as they battle the Covid-19 pandemic.



Sudanese protesters take part in a demonstration in the capital Khartoum on Wednesday, urging the government to step down over delayed justice and recent harsh economic reforms. — AFP

Officials have acknowledged that outages have caused oxygen shortages and deaths.

Only about one third of Sudan's nearly 45 million population has access to power, but demand for highly subsidised electricity is growing by an average of 11 per cent yearly, faster than most African nations, according to a 2019 World Bank report.

The country faces an average deficit of 1,000 megawatts, said Osman Dawalbeit, general manager at the government-owned Sudanese Electricity

Holding Company, noting rising fuel costs.

The energy minister said in March that Sudan's power stations, designed to produce 4,000 megawatts, were operating at just 45 per cent capacity.

About half of Sudan's electricity comes from burning fuel and half from hydropower.

This year the government reduced subsidies for higher energy consumption levels as part of economic reforms monitored by the International Monetary Fund.

But Dawalbeit said the price of power remained far below production costs, contributing to problems in financing fuel supplies, maintenance and new power stations.

Uncertainty surrounding the dam Ethiopia is completing on the Blue Nile has meant that Sudan has had to reduce its hydropower production, contributing to the deficit, he said.

The debt relief deal announced on Tuesday means Sudan should be able to unlock several billion dollars in new financing that could help ease the foreign currency crunch.

Sudan last year signed a deal with General Electric aimed at increasing power generation by up to 470 megawatts. It is also seeking to increase imports from neighbours Egypt and Ethiopia.

Longer term, renewables may provide an answer.

"The future of electricity production in Sudan is in renewable energy, particularly solar and wind," said Dawalbeit, adding a five-year plan to launch renewables had received funding to start in six months. — Reuters

Lebanon parliament approves cash subsidy



Gebran Bassil, leader of the biggest Christian bloc, gestures as he talks with Mohamed Raad, Head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, as he arrives to attend a legislative session at Unesco Palace in Beirut, on Wednesday. — Reuters

BEIRUT: Lebanon's parliament on Wednesday approved cash payments for poor families, to cost \$556 million a year, planned as a step that would allow the curbing of a \$6-billion subsidy programme for basic goods.

Lebanon is battling a deep financial crisis, dubbed by the World Bank as one of the worst depressions of modern history.

The government introduced a subsidy programme last year to finance the import of basic goods such as wheat, fuel and medicine through drawing down on foreign reserves.

Shortages of essential items

such as medicine and fuel have worsened in the past month as the central bank all but ran out of funds to finance the programme.

Some hospitals have been postponing elective surgeries to save on vital medical supplies such as anaesthetics, and fuel shortages have forced motorists to queue for hours to get barely any gasoline.

The government last week effectively cut fuel subsidies by using a weaker exchange rate of the Lebanese pound to the dollar to finance new imports through the central bank's mandatory reserves. — Reuters/AFP

SHORT TAKES

OSLO

Syrian teenager sentenced over terror plot

A Norwegian court has sentenced a 16-year-old Syrian to five years in prison for plotting an attack in the Scandinavian country and pledging allegiance to the IS group. Three of the years would be suspended, the Oslo district court said in the verdict handed down late on Tuesday.

The court said in its judgement that the suspect "despite his young age, had made a deliberate decision to carry out a terrorist act even if the plans had not materialised into a concrete



project".

The teenager, whose identity cannot be published due to his young age, arrived in Norway in 2018 and was arrested in Oslo in early February of this year.

SANAA

Trial of Yemeni model unfair: HRW

A model held for months by Ansar Allah fighters in Yemen has gone on trial, according to Human Rights Watch, which called the process "unfair" and riddled with "irregularities and abuse". Entisar al Hammadi was arrested in February in Sanaa controlled by the group. Born to an Ethiopian mother and Yemeni father, the 20-year-old had been pictured online in traditional dress as well as leather and denim jackets, and sometimes she went without a Muslim headscarf.



With her high cheekbones and green eyes, Hammadi had several thousand followers on Instagram and Facebook where she posted sessions with stylists and designers.

DUBAI

Israel seeks to extend new Gulf ties: Lapid

Israel's foreign minister said on Wednesday his visit to the United Arab Emirates was just the start of a road to peace with other Middle East countries, signalling an offer of friendship with Arab states still wary of normalising ties.

Yair Lapid, the first Israeli cabinet minister to visit the Gulf state since the countries forged ties last year, also reiterated Israel's concern about the Iran nuclear deal being negotiated in Vienna.

"This visit isn't the end of the road to peace, it is just the



beginning," he told reporters. "Our hand is outstretched... I hope this visit is the first of many and that together with our new friends we continue to make history in the entire region."

In brief

■ PHUKET



THAILAND REOPENING HOLIDAY HOTSPOT DESPITE SURGE

Thailand prepared on Wednesday to reopen the holiday hotspot of Phuket to tourists quarantine-free, even as the country registered its highest single-day death toll from Covid-19. High hopes have been pinned on the so-called “Phuket sandbox” — a model that will allow vaccinated travellers to visit without a quarantine period in an effort to revive Thailand’s battered tourism industry.

But the lead-up to its July 1 launch has been plagued with uncertainty amid delays to government approval.

Thailand has been trying to contain a third wave of the coronavirus by imposing restrictions in the capital Bangkok and its suburbs, which have seen the Alpha and Delta variants spreading.

■ YANGON



MYANMAR TO FREE 700 PRISONERS FROM INSEIN JAIL

Myanmar’s authorities were to free around 700 prisoners from Yangon’s Insein jail on Wednesday, prison chief Zaw Zaw said, in a release that was expected to include some of the thousands of people detained for opposing military rule.

The prison chief said he did not have a list of those being released, but BBC Burmese language news reported it would include people accused of incitement after speaking out against the coup.

■ NEW DELHI



BAR ON ACTION AGAINST TWITTER BOSS CHALLENGED

An Indian state has challenged in the Supreme Court a bar on police action against Twitter Inc’s country head, after a lower court protected him against arrest over an accusation that the platform was used to spread hate.

The tussle, coupled with discontent over increasing regulatory scrutiny of other US tech firms such as WhatsApp and Amazon, has soured the business environment in a key growth market.

Police in northern Uttar Pradesh, ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s party, issued a summons this month to the official, Manish Maheshwari, over a video they said incited “hate and enmity” between two dominant communities.

German, Italian troops pull out of Afghanistan



German Bundeswehr soldiers are seen at a camp in Afghanistan. — Reuters file photo

B E R L I N / R O M E / WASHINGTON: The last soldiers of Germany’s mission in Afghanistan were expected to arrive back at the Wunstorf air base in Lower Saxony later on Wednesday while Italy has completed its troop pull-out from the Asian country.

The US military appeared just days away from completing its withdrawal, well ahead of the September 11 deadline. The final contingent of troops were flown out from the field camp in Mazar-i-Sharif in the north of the country on Tuesday night, ending 20 years of German military involvement in Afghanistan.

Germany’s Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer said that “a historic chapter” was coming to a close. She said it had been “an intensive deployment that has challenged and shaped the Bundeswehr, in which the Bundeswehr has proven itself in

combat.”

Fifty-nine German soldiers lost their lives in Afghanistan, 35 of them in attacks or in combat. The mission cost more than 12 billion euros. Most recently, the core mission of the Nato force was to train Afghan forces.

The leader of Germany’s Left Party, Susanne Hennig-Wellsow, said on Wednesday that the Afghan deployment had failed in her view. “Measured against goals such as stability, the building of a democratic state and the protection of fundamental rights, the mission can only be described as a failure,” she said.

ITALIAN MISSION

Meanwhile, Italy has completed its troop pull-out from Afghanistan, Rome announced on Wednesday, ending a 20-year deployment there.

Members of the US-backed alliance agreed in April to wrap

up their 9,600-strong mission in Afghanistan after US President Joe Biden made the call to end Washington’s longest war.

“Last night, the Italian mission in Afghanistan officially ended,” Defence Minister Lorenzo Guerini said in a statement, after dozens of soldiers landed at Pisa’s international airport from Herat.

US WITHDRAWAL

The US military appears just days away from completing its withdrawal from Afghanistan, well ahead of the September 11 deadline set by President Joe Biden to end America’s longest war, US officials said on Tuesday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The withdrawal of troops and equipment from Afghanistan would not include forces that will remain to protect diplomats at the US embassy and potentially assist securing Kabul airport.

— Agencies

Australia’s outback hub goes into lockdown

BRISBANE: The outback town of Alice Springs became the latest Australian population centre to lockdown on Wednesday, as anger mounts over the country’s slow coronavirus vaccine rollout.

The usually busy streets of Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Darwin have fallen quiet, with millions of Australians under stay-at-home orders as the country battles multiple small outbreaks of the highly contagious Delta variant.

Australia relied heavily on border closures and mandatory hotel quarantine for overseas arrivals to curb the spread of the virus, but has recently struggled to contain the strain.

Alice Springs, in the central Australian desert, was the latest place ordered to lockdown as an “extreme precautionary” measure designed to protect a large Indigenous population feared more vulnerable to Covid-19, a state official said.

The 72-hour restrictions came after it was revealed a man linked to a cluster at a nearby gold mine spent several hours at the local airport.

Northern Territory Chief Minister Michael Gunner said the man was probably not infectious but “we cannot take any chances”.

State health officials have lashed out at the federal government over an increasingly confused inoculation drive, calling for clarity on supplies and who is eligible to receive the jabs.

About five per cent of Australians are reported to be fully vaccinated, and the pace of the rollout is causing growing frustration in the community.

“It is disgraceful that the situation in Australia has essentially not changed in the last year,” locked-down Perth resident Robert Binczyk said.

“The slow vaccine rollout from the federal government is to blame.”

In response to the backlash, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced on Monday that the AstraZeneca jab will be available to all people.

Doctors have since pushed back against the decision, saying it went against expert advice about the risk of extremely rare blood clots associated with AstraZeneca.

Queensland state chief health officer Jeannette Young said she did not understand Morrison’s “thought process”, saying it was an unnecessary move in a country without widespread community transmission. — AFP



A woman walks in front of the Opera House in Sydney on Wednesday. — AFP

Top N Korean officials sacked after ‘crucial’ Covid-19 incident

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un replaced several senior officials after a “crucial” coronavirus incident, state media reported on Wednesday, potentially signalling a breach in the country’s epidemic defences.

Pyongyang closed its borders in January last year to try to protect itself against the virus that first emerged in neighbouring China.

It has not publicly confirmed any cases of the disease at any point, either in state media or in the test statistics it has disclosed to the World Health Organization.

But analysts said the latest development was a clear indication there had been infections in the isolated North, which is under international sanctions for its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

Officials had neglected their duties and caused a “crucial” incident, “creating a great crisis in ensuring the security of the state and safety of the people and entailed grave consequences”, Kim told a politburo meeting, according to the state Korean Central News Agency.

It did not specify any details



of what had happened. But Kim added that cadres’ “lack of ability and irresponsibility” had hindered important work, accusing them of “self-protectionism and passiveness”.

Footage on state broadcaster KCTV showed a stream of officials entering the central committee building, and Kim pointing angrily as he addressed the meeting on Tuesday. His sister and key adviser Kim Yo Jong was also among the speakers.

The impoverished country’s ramshackle health system and lack of medical supplies would leave it struggling to cope with a major Covid-19 outbreak.

Members of the presidium of the politburo — the highest decision-making body of the ruling Workers’ Party — and the politburo were recalled and new ones named at the meeting, KCNA reported, adding that government officials were “transferred and appointed”.

It did not name names, but the KCTV footage culminated in a near-unanimous show of hands on the podium — when one previously-occupied seat was empty, and marshal Ri Pyong Chol, among the most senior officials in the country, did not take part in the vote, as Kim turned to stare at him. — AFP

Bangladesh to deploy army amid virus curbs



People board an overcrowded ferry as they go home a day before imposing a countrywide lockdown in Munshiganj, outskirts of Dhaka, on Wednesday. — Reuters

DHAKA: Bangladesh is deploying army troops from Thursday to enforce a strict lockdown amid a record spike in coronavirus cases driven by the Delta variant first detected in India, the government said on Wednesday. Most restrictions imposed as part of a strict lockdown introduced in April have since been lifted, but a record spike in cases this week of the highly contagious Delta variant has prompted the government to order a week of tight controls.

“No one will be allowed go out except in case of an emergency

during this period,” the government said in a statement, adding army troops alongside law-enforcement agencies would be deployed to enforce the lockdown.

All offices and transportation will be shut during this period while factories, including the country’s prime garment export sector, will be allowed to remain open if they follow health protocols, it said. Bangladesh sealed its border with India in April as a precaution against infection, although trade continues. — Reuters

Scores dead as heat wave grips Canada, US

VANCOUVER: Scores of deaths in Canada’s Vancouver area are likely linked to a gruelling heat wave, authorities said on Tuesday, as the country recorded its highest ever temperature amid scorching conditions that extended to the US Pacific Northwest.

At least 134 people have died suddenly since Friday in the Vancouver area, according to figures released by the city police department and the Royal Canadian Mounted police.

The Vancouver Police Department alone said it had responded to more than 65 sudden deaths since Friday, with the vast majority “related to the heat.”

The deaths came as Canada set a new all-time high temperature record for a third day in a row on Tuesday, reaching 121 degrees Fahrenheit (49.5 degrees Celsius) in Lytton, British Columbia, about 155 miles (250 kilometres) east of Vancouver, the country’s weather service, Environment Canada, reported.

Climate change is causing record-setting temperatures to become more frequent. Globally, the decade to 2019 was the hottest recorded, and the five hottest years have all occurred within the last five years.

The scorching heat stretching from the US state of Oregon to Canada’s Arctic territories has been blamed on a high-pressure



Smoke and flames are seen during the Sparks Lake wildfire at Thompson-Nicola Regional District, British Columbia, Canada. – Reuters

ridge trapping warm air in the region.

Temperatures in the US Pacific Northwest cities of Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington reached levels not seen since record-keeping began in the 1940s: 115 degrees Fahrenheit in Portland and 108 in Seattle on Monday, according to the National Weather Service.

Vancouver on the Pacific coast has for several days recorded temperatures above 86 degrees Fahrenheit (or almost 20 degrees above seasonal norms). Inland along the Fraser River delta, due to high humidity, climatologists said it felt like 111 degrees Fahrenheit on Tuesday.

The chief coroner for the province of British Columbia, which includes Vancouver, said that it had “experienced a significant increase in deaths reported where it is suspected that extreme heat has been contributory.”

The service said in a statement it recorded 233 deaths between Friday and Monday, compared to 130 on average.

The US National Weather Service issued a similar warning, urging people to “stay in air-conditioned buildings, avoid strenuous outdoor activities, drink plenty of water, and check on family members/neighbors.”

— AFP

Covid tourism impact could top \$4 trillion

PARIS: The economic impact from the plunge in tourism since the pandemic emerged last year could top \$4 trillion, a UN report said on Wednesday.

The joint report by the UN’s World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) found that the lack of widespread vaccination in developing countries was leading to mounting economic losses.

“Tourism is a lifeline for millions, and advancing vaccination to protect communities and support tourism’s safe restart is critical to the recovery of jobs and generation of much-needed resources,” UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said in a statement.

He noted that many developing countries are highly dependent on international tourism.

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic brought international air travel to a near halt for much of last year as many countries refused to allow non-essential travel.

That punched a \$2.4 trillion hole in the tourism and related sectors last year, and the report warns a similar loss may occur this year depending on the distribution of Covid-19 vaccines.

— AFP

FLORIDA CONDO COLLAPSE

Search enters 7th day with 12 dead and 149 missing



Search and rescue teams look for possible survivors in the partially collapsed 12-story Champlain Towers South condo building on Tuesday in Surfside, Florida. – AFP

SURFSIDE: Rescue crews toiling into a seventh day on Wednesday combed through shattered ruins of a collapsed Miami-area condominium tower where 12 people were confirmed dead as hope faded for 149 people missing and believed trapped in the rubble.

Authorities have left open the possibility that survivors might be found in the debris after a major section of the 12-floor, 136-unit complex caved in on itself early last Thursday as residents slept.

“The way I look at it, as an old Navy guy, is that when somebody is missing in the military, you’re missing until you’re found, and we don’t stop the search,” Florida Governor Ron DeSantis told a news briefing.

“Those first-responders are breaking their back, trying to find anybody they can.”

But nobody has been pulled alive from the mounds of pulverised concrete, splintered lumber and twisted metal since the early hours of the disaster nearly a week ago, and prospects of further rescues fade by the hour.

Investigators have not concluded what caused nearly half of the 40-year-old Champlain Towers South condo to crumple, in what could rank as the deadliest accidental structural failure in US history.

But a 2018 engineer’s report prepared ahead of a building safety recertification process found structural deficiencies now at the focus of inquiries into what triggered the disaster.

As recently as April, the condo association’s president warned residents in a letter that severe concrete damage identified by the engineer around the base

of the building had since grown “significantly worse.”

Miami-Dade County State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle said she would convene a special grand jury, apart from any potential criminal investigation, to examine building safety and “what steps we can take to safeguard our residents” from similar disasters in the future.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said search teams had extricated the remains of a 12th victim on Tuesday, leaving 149 people unaccounted for.

A day earlier she used dire terms in relating how families of the missing were “coping with the news that they might not have loved ones come out alive and still hoping that they will.”

“Their loved ones may come out as body parts,” she said.

President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill Biden, planned to pay a visit on Thursday to the scene of the tragedy in the oceanfront town of Surfside, adjacent to Miami Beach, the White House said.

Few if any signs of life have been detected in the wreckage since last Thursday.

Fire officials have spoken of hearing faint sounds from inside the rubble pile — they acknowledged such noises could come from settling of the ruins — and finding voids deep in the debris large enough to possibly sustain life.

But Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Chief Alan Cominsky said on Tuesday that search-and-rescue personnel faced a daunting task while working in 12-hour shifts in the heat and humidity, hampered by intermittent showers and thunderstorms. — Reuters

112-year-old Puerto Rican becomes world’s oldest living man

LONDON: Emilio Flores Marquez from Puerto Rico has become the world’s oldest living man at an age of 112 years and 326 days old, *Guinness World Records* announced on Wednesday.

Marquez, who was born in Carolina, east of the Puerto Rican capital of San Juan in 1908, was recognised by Guinness and awarded a certificate at his home just a few miles (kilometres) from his birthplace.

Asked about his longevity, Marquez — known as “Don Milo” to his friends — said the secret to his advanced years lay in compassion.

“My dad raised me with love and taught me to love everyone. He always told me and my brothers

“
My dad raised me with love and taught me to love everyone. He always told me and my brothers and sisters to do good, to share everything with others

EMILIO FLORES MARQUEZ

and sisters to do good, to share everything with others. Besides, Christ lives in me,” Guinness quoted him as saying.

The second oldest child of 11 siblings and his parents’ first-



born son, Marquez worked on the family’s sugarcane farm and received only three years of formal schooling.

He wife of 75 years Andrea Pérez De Flores, with whom he

had four children, died in 2010.

The previous oldest living man was recognised by Guinness World Records as Romania’s Dumitru Comanescu, who died on June 27, 2020, at the age of 111 years 219 days.

After Comanescu’s death, the record-breaking authority received evidence Marquez had been born three months earlier than the previous record holder.

“It’s always an honour to celebrate these remarkable human beings, and this year we’ve processed applications from not one but two contenders for the title of oldest living man,” Craig Glenday, Editor-in-Chief at Guinness World Records, said.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

BERLIN

First US woman envoy to Germany

US President Joe Biden has nominated University of Pennsylvania president Amy Gutmann as ambassador to Germany, German government sources said on Wednesday, after tumultuous years with Donald Trump’s envoy.

Gutmann, 71, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, would be the first woman appointed to the post.

The German officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, confirmed a report in *Der Spiegel*



magazine.

Gutmann’s appointment must be confirmed by the US Senate and approved by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

MOSCOW

Putin accuses UK, US of ‘provocation’

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused to United States and Britain of a “provocation” in the Black Sea.

Last week, the Russian Black Sea Fleet stationed in Sevastopol said it had forced the British warship HMS Defender, which had sailed close to Crimea, to change course by firing warning shots and dropping bombs.

Putin said on Wednesday that a US reconnaissance aircraft was also present during the incident,



which was observing the Russian reaction to the actions of the HMS Defender.

Speaking on state television, Putin defended the Russian forces’ move.

ADDIS ABABA

‘Tigray no longer centre of conflict’

The Ethiopian army pulled out of the Tigray regional capital of Mekelle because it was no longer a “centre of gravity for conflicts”, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said, as a government official added that troops could return within weeks if needed.

It was the first public statement by a federal government official since Mekelle was taken by Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) forces this week in a major turn of events after eight months of conflict in which thousands have



been killed.

People in Mekelle, where communications were down on Wednesday, said two days earlier that incoming Tigrayan fighters had been greeted with cheers.

Hosting world journalists in Oman...

The Sultanate of Oman will be hosting the meetings of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in 2022. It has huge national, regional and international significance. The arrival of journalists from around the world will help introduce the civilisational, cultural and historical aspects of the country for which it is known everywhere. There will be 180 journalist associations from around the world present in the country. They will get an opportunity to learn about the Oman's Vision 2040 and its future ambitions. Since these associations are impartial and non-governmental entities, what they would tell the world would be seen with interest and will get due importance. These journalists will represent print and audio-visual media of the world which speak all major languages.

The government and all its organisations should utilise this opportunity. It should plan a comprehensive and attractive programme to showcase all its civilisational, economic and cultural life of the country to its guests from the international media fraternity. After their meetings when they go back to their homeland, they should carry along with them first-hand information and clear image about the country. This will help build bridges with the world.



Ali Al Matani
ali.matani2@gmail.com

THE
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CULTURAL LIFE
OF THE COUNTRY

There is no doubt that it is a matter of honour and privilege for Omani Journalists Association (OJA) that it has got the opportunity to host the meetings of the IFJ. There was huge competition to win this opportunity. It shows that the OJA is playing regional and international role as part of its efforts to introduce the Sultanate of Oman to the world. In just 17 years of its existence, it has got international recognition. The opportunity to host the IFJ shows the trust and confidence the Omani Journalists Association enjoys in the world.

This is not happening all of a sudden. The IFJ, for its meetings, selects countries which are trusted for their politics, have good record of rights and liberties as well as where there is respect for other's culture and unity in diversity. This is why one can say that the decision to hold IFJ meetings in Oman was not taken randomly. This is a well-thought about decision. The IFJ works for strengthening of rights and freedoms of journalists. It has always stood against suppression of opinions and views. The credit goes to the OJA which spared no effort in presenting a clear and transparent picture of Oman to the world.

The IFJ has more than 600,000 members across the world. It's meeting in Oman has international significance. It serves the objectives of the Vision

2040 meant for the development of the country, which is aspired to achieve by creating appropriate environment for investments and encouraging investors from around the world. It has its traditions rooted in its ancient history. Therefore, these meetings can be a huge and unique tourism event. The tourism in Oman is always a meeting point of old and new, tradition and modernism. This is the characteristic of Oman which is oldest empire in the Arabian Peninsula.

Therefore, the government, with all its organs, should seize this opportunity, which has been brought to this country by OJA. It should prepare for making the event a huge success in a way which serves the cultural, tourism, developmental and economic interests of the country.

The Sultanate of Oman enjoys respect and outstanding position at international forums. The hosting of these meetings will add value to its efforts at the international level. This country has always been open to attend and host international conferences which serves any aspect of human development. The upcoming IFJ meetings to be held on Oman would be as convergence of the world's soft power in the Sultanate. This can serve the objectives of both, the guests and the host. The opportunity should not be lost at any cost.

RUSH OF CULTURE

Americans return to Paris as tourism opens

GUILLAUME BONNET

They're back! After vanishing from Paris for a year and a half, American tourists have returned, Covid vaccination certificates in pocket, as part of a grand reopening of the country's tourist sector.

France, which was the world's top tourism destination before the coronavirus pandemic, began welcoming back Americans on June 9.

"It's amazing! We've been wanting to come back since last year", said Padmini Pyapali, an engineer on a tour of Greece and France with five friends, who were having a drink on a cafe terrace in the Montmartre district.

"It's just a rush of culture and we really missed it", she said.

The United States was France's biggest source of non-European tourists before the virus struck, with over four million visiting the country each year.

Americans are also among the biggest spenders, making them a welcome sight for retailers and tour operators in Paris, where English is again echoing around the feet of the Eiffel Tower and the Sacre-Coeur basilica.

The US has the top "green" rating on France's Covid map of the world, meaning visitors need

to show only that they have been fully vaccinated or present a clean PCR test. Crystal McDaniel from Dallas, with her husband Brandon, made a beeline on arrival for the Eiffel Tower with their two daughters, who came away clutching miniature models of the Iron Lady. Crystal expressed

It's amazing! We've been wanting to come back since last year. It's just a rush of culture and we really missed it

PADMINI PYAPALI
An engineer

joy at being able to roam Europe again.

"It was expensive to get the test, but it's worth it, just to be out (of the US)", she said.

Bad weather for much of June failed to dampen the mood of the returnees, who for the moment represent a trickle, not a flood.

John Sivak, a real estate agent from Atlanta who took a four-hour bike tour of Paris with his wife Kristin, was delighted to find tourists still thin on the ground in the city less than a month after France reopened to tourists.

"I guess we're one of the first ones to come from the US and it's exciting!" he said.

"All of our friends back home are jealous, they're seeing the pictures on Facebook and Instagram and Snapchat," he added during a stop at the Flame of Liberty, a gold-leaf-covered replica of the flame from the Statue of Liberty's torch, on the banks of the Seine river. Kristin too was smitten.

"It's wonderful! I see why people call it the city of love or the city of lights", she said.

"We went to the Eiffel Tower last night and all the lights were twinkling when the sun went down. Everybody was out on the grass having some drink on a blanket and just talking with their family and friends, so it was very relaxing."

France decided on Wednesday to delay the unwinding of Covid-19 restrictions in a southwestern region of the country, while the government's leading scientific adviser said a fourth wave of the virus was likely to the emergence of the Delta variant.

Scientific and medical experts say the Covid Delta variant, first found in India, is more transmissible than other forms of the virus, and the Delta variant's rapid spread around the world has led some countries to reimpose travel restrictions. — AFP

JUNKYARD OF EMPIRES

Afghans sift through leftovers of US occupation at biggest airbase

ANNE CHAON AND MUSHTAQ MOJADDIDI

Squatting in the dust by the main road to Afghanistan's biggest air base, Mir Salam sifts through a pile of broken electronics in front of him, salvaged from departing US troops. All around are heaps of junk and scrapped equipment — ranging from telephones and thermos flasks to computer keyboards and printer cartridges.

"This is what the Americans do", the 40-year-old said. "They destroy absolutely everything."

The Pentagon is vacating Bagram air base as part of its plan to withdraw all forces by this year's 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks on the United States, and it could be completed by the end of the month. Military gear is being taken home, or given to Afghan security forces, but tons of civilian equipment must be left behind.

The result is a booming scrap business that is making money for some, but leaving many resentful.

"They blow it up or are burning it", says Salam of the equipment being discarded.

"There were lots of new things in this base — enough to rebuild Afghanistan 20 times — but they destroyed everything."

For two decades, Bagram served as the nerve centre for US operations in Afghanistan.

A sprawling mini-city visited by hundreds of thousands of service members and contractors, it boasted swimming pools, cinemas and spas — and even a boardwalk featuring



A girl carries a metal box she collected from a junkyard near the Bagram Airbase in Bagram. — AFP

A SPRAWLING MINI-CITY BOASTS OF SWIMMING POOLS, CINEMAS AND SPAS — AND EVEN A BOARDWALK FEATURING FAST-FOOD OUTLETS SUCH AS BURGER KING AND PIZZA HUT

fast-food outlets such as Burger King and Pizza Hut. It also has a prison that held thousands of Taliban and other inmates over the years.

Bagram was built by the United States for its Afghan ally during the Cold War in the 1950s as a bulwark against the Soviet Union in the north.

Ironically, it became the staging point for the Soviet invasion of the country in 1979, and the Red Army expanded it significantly during their near decade-long occupation.

When Moscow pulled out, it became central to the raging civil war — it was reported that at one point the Taliban controlled one end of the 3 km runway and the opposition Northern Alliance the other.

In recent months, Bagram has come under rocket attacks claimed by the IS. If the Taliban capture the base, it would be a significant step — perhaps even the decisive one — towards seizing control of Kabul itself.

— AFP



STERLING, KANE HIT TARGET AS HOSTS MAKE EURO QUARTERS

ENGLAND HAIL LONG-AWAITED WIN

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, JUNE 30

A crowd of 42,000, the highest number allowed in the stadium during the pandemic, roared with delight on England's performance. Ever since England's memorable World Cup victory five-and-a-half decades ago, a fixture between these two sides holds special status and is awaited with much anticipation. England's 2-0 win, the first against Germany in the knockout stage of a major tournament since 1966, puts them in the quarterfinal of Euro 2020.

Gareth Southgate, England manager, said: "The players were immense right the way through the team. And the fans were behind every challenge, every time we pressed the ball, every run. The energy in the stadium was incredible. The level of



England's Harry Kane celebrates after scoring the second goal against Germany at Wembley Stadium in London. — AFP

performance was really important. We were playing a team with four World Cup winners. We know there have always been questions about us against big nations. We knew Germany would dictate certain parts of the game."

He added: "We will always have passion and heart, but what pleased me most was that we

QUARTER-FINALS		EURO 2020	
all times in GMT			
	Friday, July 2	1600	
Switzerland - Spain			
St-Petersburg Stadium			
	Friday, July 2	1900	
Belgium - Italy			
Allianz Arena, Munich			
	Saturday, July 3	1600	
Czech Rep. - Denmark			
Olympic Stadium, Baku			
	Saturday, July 3	1900	
Ukraine - England			
Olympic Stadium, Rome			
Source: UEFA		AFP 	

played with brains. Today is a big result. These players keep writing history and we've got the chance again. What this group of players have been able to do



England's Sterling celebrates the first goal. — AFP

is give a lot of people some very happy memories. This is another afternoon where we've made a bit of history. The players don't need to feel the burden of the past. It's a fresh outlook for them."

England took a bit of time to settle with Germany quicker on the attack at first and looked slick. There were near misses by both sides. England did find a way in

and after 16 minutes Raheem Sterling had their first chance but his firm shot after moving in from the left was tipped away by Manuel Neuer. Then a header from Harry Maguire went over the bar after a lovely cross from the right by Calvin Phillips.

Germany too missed chances the best of which came in the 32nd minute. Kai Havertz sent Timo Werner racing through who should have scored with this great opportunity but Jordan Pickford, who has kept a clean sheet in this tournament, came out to save with his legs.

There were further wasted chances in the second half. Three minutes into it, a powerful drive from Havertz was superbly tipped over. England eventually took the lead in the 75th minute with Sterling starting and finishing the move. He passed to Harry

Kane who found substitute Jack Grealish who, in turn, saw Luke Shaw overlapping on the left. Shaw's cross was perfect for Stirling to find the net.

The best chance for Germany in the entire game came to Thomas Muller in the 81st minute. Sterling had lost the ball and Muller broke away, for a one-on-one with the England goalkeeper, but inexplicably put his shot wide of the left post and held his head in his hands in disbelief.

Five minutes later, England completed their task with the second goal. Shaw, on receiving the ball, fed Grealish on the left whose wonderful cross was headed home by the usually prolific scorer Kane, surprisingly for only his first goal of the tournament which, no doubt, brought him great relief. This was an England victory for the fans to savour.

Last-gasp Dovbyk header puts Ukraine in last 8

GLASGOW: Artem Dovbyk's header in the 121st minute sent Ukraine through to a Euro 2020 quarterfinal clash with England as they beat Sweden 2-1 after extra time in Glasgow on Tuesday.

Ukraine squeezed through to the last 16 despite taking just three points in the group stage, qualifying in part because Sweden beat Poland to top Group E ahead of Spain.

But Andriy Shevchenko's side were determined to show they deserved their place in the knockout phase as Oleksandr Zinchenko fired them into an early lead.

Emil Forsberg's deflected strike brought Sweden level before half-time and the RB Leipzig midfielder twice hit the woodwork in the second half.

However, a red card for Marcus Danielson nine minutes into extra time left Sweden hanging on for penalties until Dovbyk latched onto Zinchenko's inviting cross to spark wild scenes of celebration among the small band of Ukrainian fans at Hampden Park.

"With this performance and commitment, our team has deserved the love of the whole country," said Shevchenko, who in the last eight will return to Italy where he enjoyed the best years of his stellar playing career with AC Milan. Shevchenko said before the game his side had already achieved their objective by making it through the group.

But the former Ballon d'Or winner got the reaction he desired after a disappointing 1-0 defeat to Austria in their final group game



Ukraine's Artem Dovbyk celebrates after scoring his team's second goal against Sweden in Glasgow. — AFP

with a fast start.

Andriy Yarmolenko has been his country's driving force all tournament, scoring or assisting in all but two of their six goals.

The West Ham United winger's teasing cross with the outside of his

left foot fell kindly for Zinchenko on 27 minutes and the Manchester City man drilled in a low shot that had too much power for Olsen.

Zinchenko will come up against a number of his club team-mates in the quarterfinal, and he urged

Ukraine to believe they can make history by reaching the semifinals of a major tournament for the first time as an independent nation.

"I know a lot of those players personally," said Zinchenko. "They have a really good set of players, their substitutes bench probably cost the same as three Ukrainian teams."

"This should not scare us, this should motivate us. I sense myself that everything is possible in this life and we will try everything for it."

RED CARD COSTS SWEDEN

Forsberg has been just as influential for Sweden as Yarmolenko for Ukraine and he equalised two minutes before the break with his fourth goal of the tournament.

He then hit the woodwork twice

after the break, curling a shot onto the base of the post before a more powerful effort from the edge of the box cannonned back off the bar.

In between times, Georgiy Bushchan produced a stunning save to tip over Dejan Kulusevski's dipping shot.

"In the second half we had four great chances, hitting the post and crossbar," said Sweden boss Janne Andersson.

"It felt like we would score eventually, but unfortunately we didn't and in the extra time it went the way it did. The red card really decided the game."

Danielson won the ball but followed through with a dangerous challenge on Artem Besedin that forced the Dynamo Kiev striker to come off with a serious knee injury. — AFP

SHAMSI INSPIRES PROTEAS TO ONE-RUN WIN

SOUTH AFRICA NOW TAKE A 2-1 LEAD GOING INTO FOURTH MATCH

ST GEORGE'S, Grenada: Tabraiz Shamsi enhanced his reputation as the top T20 bowler in the international game by inspiring South Africa to a thrilling one-run victory over the West Indies in the third of their five-match series at the National Cricket Stadium in Grenada on Tuesday.

Defending another moderate total of 167 for eight after they were put in to bat for the third time in the series, the left-arm wrist spinner bowled his most economical four-over spell in conceding just 13 runs for the important wickets of Evin Lewis and Shimron Hetmyer.

Yet as well as he bowled, and as much as the vaunted West Indies power-hitters stuttered for the second consecutive match, the duel still came down to the final over bowled by Kagiso Rabada with 15 runs needed.

Fabian Allen struck an early boundary and then a six off the last ball of the match but the pacer had held his nerve in between those wayward deliveries to limit the home side to 166 for seven.

South Africa now take a 2-1 lead going into the fourth match at the same venue on Thursday.

Lewis and Nicholas Pooran were the joint-topscorers for the West Indies with 27 while Andre Russell contributed 25.

"We faced a lot of criticism after we lost the first match so badly so I am really proud of how we have fought back in the last two matches," said Shamsi after receiving the man-of-the-match award.

"These pitches are getting harder and harder to score runs and while I would have obviously liked a bigger total to defend, I felt we had a good chance once we stuck to our plans, and on this occasion, it all worked out well for us in the end."

Earlier, Obed McCoy and veteran Dwayne Bravo combined for seven wickets as South Africa faltered from a promising position.

Quinton de Kock, playing in his 50th T20 International, led



Tabraiz Shamsi of South Africa celebrates the dismissal of Shimron Hetmyer of West Indies. — AFP

the Proteas batting effort once again with a top-score of 72 while Rassie van der Dussen contributed 32 and Aiden Markram, brought into the middle order at the expense of Heinrich Klaasen, chipped in with 23.

However, it was the 24-year-old Vincentian McCoy who stole the show with his assortment of cleverly-disguised deliveries earning the seamer the impressive figures of four for 22, bettering his haul of three for 25 just two days earlier.

Bravo, again charged with the responsibility of bowling in the final overs of the innings, made his experience under pressure count in taking two late wickets to finish with three for 25.

After McCoy removed opener Reeza Hendricks and captain Temba Bavuma in the fifth over, de Kock put on 43 with Markram and 60 with van der Dussen to put South Africa in position for a total closer to the 180-run mark. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA	
Q de Kock c Simmons b Bravo	72
R Hendricks c Allen b McCoy	17
T Bavuma c Hetmyer b McCoy	1
A Markram c Allen b Bravo	23
R van der Dussen c Hetmyer b McCoy	32
D Miller c Simmons b Bravo	2
G Linde b McCoy	0
K Rabada not out	4
A Nortje run out	0
T Shamsi not out	0
Extras (b-4, lb-2, w-9, nb-1)	16
Total (20 overs, 8 wkts)	167
Fall of wickets: 1-42, 2-44, 3-87, 4-147, 5-150, 6-151, 7-161, 8-164	
Bowling: O McCoy 4-0-22-4, J Holder 3-0-18-0, A Russell 2-0-25-0, K Sinclair 3-0-29-0, F Allen 2-0-23-0, D Bravo 4-0-25-3, K Pollard 2-0-19-0	
WEST INDIES	
E Lewis c van der Dussen b Shamsi	27
L Simmons c De Kock b Linde	22
S Hetmyer c Rabada b Shamsi	17
J Holder c Markram b Holder	15
N Pooran lbw Nortje	27
K Pollard b Rabada	1
A Russell c Markram b Nortje	25
F Allen not out	14
D Bravo not out	0
Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-14)	17
Total (20 overs, 7 wkts)	166
Fall of wickets: 1-55, 2-57, 3-90, 4-97, 5-104, 6-140, 7-153	
Bowling: G Linde 3-0-33-1, A Markram 2-0-24-0, A Nortje 4-0-29-2, L Ngidi 3-0-23-1, K Rabada 4-0-41-1, Shamsi 4-0-13-2	

Al Mouj Golf offers exciting opportunities

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Golf has introduced new opportunities for golf enthusiasts to enjoy play at the award-winning signature, oceanfront course for the summer months.

Al Mouj Golf is a World Top 100 course that hosts the European Tour - Oman Open and is consistently ranked the second-best course in the Middle East. The newly launched membership packages are a chance to play over the summer without golfers having to commit to a full year-round membership.

The first package is for four weeks of unlimited play for RO 99 plus VAT, and the second invites golfers to play for five months for the price of four at RO 399 plus VAT.

Al Mouj Golf was designed by golf legend Greg Norman and features a 72-par championship course as well as a 9-hole Academy Course, attracting players of all standards from top level to beginners.

The lush, links-style course boasts a magnificently scenic setting on the Indian ocean coastline against the backdrop of the Hajar Mountains. It is 7342 yards long with the 9th, 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th holes all situated on the sea side and so boast breath taking

sea views.

Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat says: "These are great value membership options and a fantastic opportunity to experience what play is like here. We are looking forward to welcoming new players who might only be in Oman for a short time or simply want to try us out before making a commitment to full membership."

"The summer months are a great time to play as set on the coast, the sea breeze helps to keep golfers cool whilst, of course, presenting challenges given it changes both speed and direction."

Any new members signing up for Al Mouj Golf's summer membership packages can also enjoy a range of exclusive member-only benefits and perks including discounts at the Pro Shop.

As well there is an Academy Restaurant with a unique setting overlooking the floodlit driving range and is the perfect spot to relax after a round or meet up with family and friends.

Al Mouj Muscat, Oman's premier lifestyle and leisure destination is on the doorstep with its mix of shops and restaurants, pristine beaches and landscaped parks as well as a spectacular 400-berth marina.



U-23 team undergoes training camp in Salalah

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

Oman Olympic (U-23) football team is undergoing a camp in Salalah since Sunday. The 15 days preparatory camp is part of the team's preparation for the Asian Olympic Qualifiers that will take place in October. The finals of the AFC Asian U-23 Championship will be held in Uzbekistan from September 6 to 25, 2022.

The coaching staff of the Olympic team headed by Croatian coach Dario Basic and assisted by Mohammed bin Khamis al Orami preferred Salalah for camp due to the pleasant weather condition these days in Dhofar governorate with monsoon season from June to September every year.

Oman's senior national team player Zahir al Aghbari and his teammate Mohammed al Buraiki joined the squad on Tuesday



after the former completed his participation with the national team in the second round of joint qualification matches in Qatar and qualifying match of 2021

Fifa Arab championship against Somalia.

Coach Dario focused on different technical and tactical sides including players' endurance

and speed during the sessions.

The 27-member squad featured new faces who were absent in the last external camp in Bahrain including Mohammed Said

(Dhofar), Waleed al Musalami (Al Mudhaibi) Omar al Salti (Al Oruba) and Faraj al Noubi (Al Khabourah). Many other members in the squad who took part in Bahrain camp are not available in Salalah camp including: Essam al Makhzoomi, Faisal al Harthy, Fahad Bait Obaidani and Marwan al Abdulsalam.

The Sultanate Olympic team had concluded recently the first overseas training camp in Bahrain. The external camp which lasted for 19 days featured two preparatory matches against Bahrain Olympic team. Oman suffered 1-0 defeats in both friendlies with the goal scored in the dying minutes.

U-23 head coach Dario Basic said in a previous statement that the doors are open for any talented players to be in the squad.

"The squad for Bahrain camp included new faces who joined recently in the national Olympic

team and the players were playing together for the first time," he said.

The Croatian coach pointed out that the Sultanate Olympic team delivered good show in both warm-up fixtures. The reason of the defeat in both games could be attributed to less technical experience and fitness levels of the players. Furthermore, improving players' fitness level should become as priority for the team as it was the significant reason for the loss," he said.

OMAN U-23 SQUAD: Yusuf al Shiyadi, Islam al Hinai, Essa al Naabi, Yahya al Hudaifi, Zaher al Aghbari, Al Nawras al Farsi, Al Baraa al Mawlai, Qasim Mubarak, Yusuf al Malki, Arshad al Alawi, Mohammed al Buraiki, Fahad al Hajri, Awadh al Shari, Hani al Qartoubi, Hani al Nuaimi, Hussain al Shari, Jasim al Noubi, Mohammed Said, Musab al Maamari, Abdullah al Balushi, Waleed al Musalami, Omar al Salti, Saud al Habsi, Najeeb al Shujaibi, Al Faraj al Noubi and Ibrahim al Rajhi.

DJOKOVIC SURVIVES FALLS TO ENTER LAST 32



Serena Williams of the US reacts after sustaining an injury before retiring from her first-round match against Belarus' Aliaksandra Sasnovich. – Reuters



France's Alize Cornet celebrates winning her first-round match against Canada's Bianca Andreescu. – Reuters

LONDON: Defending champion Novak Djokovic survived a series of falls on Centre Court to reach the Wimbledon third round on Wednesday with a straight-set win over Kevin Anderson.

World number one Djokovic, chasing a sixth Wimbledon and record-equalling 20th Grand Slam title, won 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 over the 102nd-ranked South African.

However, he slipped and fell on at least five occasions on Centre Court, the day after Serena Williams suffered a tearful, tournament-ending injury on Tuesday due to similar slips.

Each time, 34-year-old Djokovic dusted himself down to set up a clash against either Italian veteran Andreas Seppi or American qualifier Denis Kudla.

Despite the tumbles, the Serb cruised to victory over the man he defeated in the 2018 final without facing a single breakpoint and committing just six unforced errors.

"I have a nice connection with the crowd," said Djokovic.

"I also seem to be having a really nice connection with the grass. I don't recall falling so much in the first two matches at Wimbledon previously."

On Tuesday, seven-time champion Serena retired with a right leg injury after twice falling over in the first set of her opener against Aliaksandra Sasnovich.

The 39-year-old American left the arena in tears as her dream of equalling Margaret Court's record of 24 majors was again thwarted.

'METICULOUS STANDARD'

"I was heartbroken to have to withdraw," she said.

Her fall came not long after French player Adrian Mannarino had slipped and hurt himself on the same part of Centre Court.

He too had to retire with his match against Roger Federer level at two sets apiece.

"I do feel it feels a tad more slippery maybe under the roof," said Federer.

Despite the criticism, the All England Club insisted that the courts are up to standard.



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates after winning against South Africa's Kevin Anderson. – Reuters

- * WIMBLEDON COURTS SPARK CONCERN
- * TEARFUL SERENA RETIRES INJURED
- * CORNET KNOCKS OUT ANDREESCU

"The preparation of the grass courts has been to exactly the same meticulous standard as in previous years," the club said.

"The weather conditions on the opening two days have been the wettest we have experienced in almost a decade, which has required the roof to be closed on Centre Court and No 1 Court for long periods."

Djokovic had also struggled to keep his feet on Centre Court on Monday when he faced Jack Draper in his first-round tie.

The tournament has been hit by heavy rain over the first two days.

As a result, 50 first-round matches remained unfinished at the start of Wednesday's schedule.

Fifth-seeded Bianca Andreescu of Canada was knocked out 6-2, 6-1 by France's Alize Cornet who famously defeated Serena

Williams on her way to the last 16 in 2014.

Andreescu, the 2019 US Open champion, is still to win a main draw match at Wimbledon having lost in the first round as a qualifier in 2017.

100 WINS FOR NISHIKORI

Italian seventh seed Matteo Berrettini, the champion at Queen's and tipped to go deep at Wimbledon, edged Argentina's Guido Pella 6-4, 3-6, 6-4, 6-0.

Japan's Kei Nishikori, a two-time quarterfinalist, claimed his 100th Grand Slam match win by seeing off Australia's Alexei Popyrin 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

Britain's Andy Murray won his first singles match at the tournament in four years when he saw off 24th seeded Nikoloz Basilashvili two days ago.

The three-time champion and

former world number one, now down at 118 in the rankings, tackles qualifier Oscar Otte of Germany for a last-32 place later Wednesday.

Murray, 34, has overcome a career-threatening hip injury to still be playing at the highest level.

Both Djokovic and Murray would have been buoyed by seeing world number four Stefanos Tsitsipas removed from their half of the draw in the first round.

In the women's tournament, Belarus second seed Aryna Sabalenka, yet to make the last-eight of a Slam, faces British wild card Katie Boulter, the world 219.

Sabalenka won their only previous meeting at the Australian Open in 2019.

Venus Williams, the 41-year-old five-time champion who made her tournament debut in 1997, takes on Ons Jabeur who is hoping to become the first Tunisian to make the third round.

Frances Tiafoe, who knocked out Tsitsipas, plays Vasek Pospisil of Canada. — AFP

WIMBLEDON RESULTS	
MEN (SECOND ROUND)	
Denis Shapovalov (CAN x10) bt Pablo Andújar (ESP) – walkover	
FIRST ROUND	
Christian Garin (CHI x17) bt Bernabé Zapata Miralles (ESP) 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2; Matteo Berrettini (ITA x7) bt Guido Pella (ARG) 6-4, 3-6, 6-4, 6-0;	
Botić van de Zandschulp (NED) bt Gregoire Barrere (FRA) 6-2, 6-7 (4/7), 6-1, 7-6 (7/3); Aljaz Bedene (SLO) bt Corentin Moutet (FRA) 6-4, 6-4, 6-0; Yoshihito Nishioka (JPN) bt John Isner (USA x28) 7-6 (7/5), 2-6, 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4; Jérémy Chardy (FRA) bt Aslan Karatsev (RUS x20) 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (8/6), 6-3; Ilya Ivashka (BLR) bt Jaume Munar (ESP) 6-1, 7-5, 7-6 (7/5); Kei Nishikori (JPN) bt Alexei Popyrin (AUS) 6-4, 6-4, 6-4; Gianluca Mager (ITA) bt Juan Ignacio Londero (ARG) 7-6 (7/3), 6-0, 4-6, 6-3; Cameron Norrie (GBR x29) bt Lucas Pouille (FRA) 6-7 (6/8), 7-5, 6-2, 7-5; Sam Querrey (USA) bt Pablo Carreno-Busta (ESP x11) 7-6 (8/6), 6-4, 7-5	
WOMEN (FIRST ROUND)	
Anastasija Sevastova (LAT) bt Zarina Diyas (KAZ) 6-4, 6-1; Ajla Tomljanovic (AUS) bt Greet Minnen (BEL) 6-2, 7-6 (7/5); Alize Cornet (FRA) bt Bianca Andreescu (CAN x5) 6-2, 6-1; Elina Svitolina (UKR x3) bt Alison Van Uytvanck (BEL) 6-3, 2-6, 6-3; Magda Linette (POL) bt Amanda Anisimova (USA) 2-6, 6-3, 6-1; Yulia Putintseva (KAZ) bt Tsvetana Pironkova (BUL) 6-3, 6-1; Paula Badosa (ESP x30) bt Aliona Bolsova (ESP) 6-2, 5-7, 6-2; Karolina Muchova (CZE x19) bt Zhang Shuai (CHN) 6-3, 6-3; Camila Giorgi (ITA) bt Jil Teichmann (SUI) 6-2, 6-2; Kristyna Pliskova (CZE) bt Astra Sharma (AUS) 3-6, 6-4, 6-4; Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS x16) bt Ana Bogdan (ROM) 6-2, 6-2; Nao Hibino (JPN) bt Bernarda Pera (USA) 6-1, 5-7, 6-3	

Current oil price levels ‘fair’: Rumhy



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

International oil prices currently hovering at around \$75 per barrel are “fair” and reflective of a global recovery that has been under way following the devastating slump triggered by the pandemic last year, Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals, was quoted as saying on Tuesday.

In an interview to Energy Intelligence, a leading Singapore-based portal for global energy related data and analysis, Dr Al Rumhy, commented: “I think from my point of view the market is fair.”

He further added: “Don’t forget where we came from... I’m talking about two or three years ago when [the price of oil] was \$100. Today \$75, it’s 25 per cent less than what it was.”

The comments came ahead of Thursday’s keenly anticipated meeting of ministers from the Opec+ alliance, which includes non-Opec Oman, which will review their production policy amid calls by some producers to lift output curbs.

Energy Intelligence also cited Dr Al Rumhy as stating that it’s “safer” to have global oil prices at current levels to help ensure sustained investments in the upstream activities.

“We producers believe a healthy oil price is a healthy world economy. And when the oil price is very low, it’s not just us who suffer, the whole world suffers. There’s a clear correlation between world GDP growth... and the oil price movement.”

He added however that Oman, among several other producers, is not keen to see prices returning to pre-pandemic peak levels. “I think many of us don’t wish to go back to \$100”, he stated.



BP ramps up gas output from Block 61

LONG-TERM RETURNS:
Production increase will generate value for Oman and the Block 61 partnership: BP

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

Energy major BP, in partnership with OQ, PTT Exploration and Production Public Company Limited (PTTEP), Petronas and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, has announced that it has significantly increased production from the Block 61 gas field in central Oman.

Gas production has increased to 1.5 billion cubic feet per day (bcf/d), from its current level of around 1bcf/d. Associated condensate production is also expected to rise. The increase will generate value for the Oman government and Block 61 partnership.

BP-operated Block 61 was developed in two stages — Khazzan, that began production in 2017, and Ghazeer, that started up last year. It is a high-quality, highly efficient development, designed from the outset to incorporate a number of lower emissions technologies.

BP Oman President Yousuf al Ojaili commented: “BP is building



a balanced portfolio that will continue to generate both cash and value as we transform from an international oil company to an integrated energy company.

A core part of this strategy is our resilient and focused hydrocarbons business, of which Block 61 is an excellent example, offering stable, long-term returns.”

“We are committed to supporting the sustainable development of Oman’s economy and are proud of our strategic

partnership with the Sultanate. Gas from Block 61 is a key part of the integrated energy value chain and will play a core role in Oman’s future development. We appreciate the collaborative support we have received from the Oman government and our partners in delivering this increase in production.”

With an estimated 10.5 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas resources, Block 61 supplies over 30 per cent of Oman’s total

gas demand. Gas from Block 61 is distributed for domestic consumption — industrial and power — through Oman’s national gas grid and is used as fuel for power plants and feedstock to industries and to Oman LNG.

BP prioritises in-country value throughout its operations. During the development of Block 61, BP has worked closely with local vendors to develop their capabilities and help them be competitive both in Oman and

globally, resulting in a number of contracts and technical scopes moving from international to local Omani contractors. Updated, industry-leading policies and procedures on workers’ welfare and human rights have also been embedded throughout the development.

At the end of 2020, Omanisation in BP Oman reached around 85 per cent and Block 61 spend with Omani-registered companies exceeded \$610 million.

3D printed construction set to take off in Oman

PROMOTING INNOVATION:
OPAZ SIGNS COOPERATION PROGRAMME TO POPULARISE 3D PRINTING CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed a cooperation agreement on Wednesday with Innovative Technology Company for Educational Solutions (Innotech) to collaborate in the use of 3D printing techniques in construction.

The pact follows a decision by OPAZ Board of Directors approving the use of modern building practices, including 3D printing techniques, in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and the other free zones. Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), signed the agreement with Eng Othman bin Maktoum al Mandhari, CEO of Innotech Company.

The cooperation programme stipulates that the Company shares with OPAZ expertise and insights in construction with 3D printing techniques, which would provide a suitable and attractive environment for these projects in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

The programme allows OPAZ to establish projects using 3D printing techniques in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm for the Company as part of its efforts to support research and development while localising modern construction techniques in the zones supervised by OPAZ, especially the Special Economic Zone



at Duqm. Accordingly, Innotech shall comply with all HSE standards in the projects assigned to the company by OPAZ.

Eng Manal bint Humaid al Abriyah, Senior Architect at OPAZ, pointed out that the cooperation programme with Innotech, the only company of its kind in the field, is part of OPAZ’s efforts to support innovation, research and development in using modern technologies and 3D printing in construction. It also aims to localise these techniques in the special economic zones and free zones in particular and the local market in general. Further, introducing such techniques mirrors OPAZ objective to accelerate the pace of construction in the Duqm SEZ in the initial stages, before it is rolled out to other zones as well.

“OPAZ welcomes any initiatives from the private sector companies related to construction with 3D printing technology. The Board of Directors approved in its meeting last week to provide packages of facilities and incentives to companies that use 3D printing in construction, including exemption from rental fees for up to five years”, she said. 3D



printing will enable the construction of tourist and entertainment projects in the first phase of its piloting, she stated.

“The newly-introduced modern building techniques bring the artificial intelligence technology to construct buildings and establish engineering projects. These techniques include various spheres; using robots as 3D printers for buildings or other constructions, drones or reality simulation applications are to name a few. Such techniques aim as a whole to simplify the construction process, starting from the design phases and construction afterward,

until operating and managing buildings, facilities or infrastructure networks. Most importantly, these techniques contribute to minimising the construction duration, reducing the total cost of projects and offering environment-friendly buildings”, Eng Manal al Abriyah explained.

Eng Othman al Mandhari, CEO of Innotech Company, commented, “This cooperation programme with OPAZ paves the way for the Company to use 3D printing building technology in the special economic zones and free zones. Similarly, it brings opportunities for the Company to expand its services

The newly-introduced modern building techniques bring the artificial intelligence technology to construct buildings and establish engineering projects. These techniques include various spheres; using robots as 3D printers for buildings or other constructions, drones or reality simulation applications are to name a few

by implementing 3D printing in architecture and construction sector.”

Established in 2012 by a group of Omani engineers, Innotech is specialised in various fields of 3D printing, including education, medicine, architecture, engineering and others.

“The Company, which records 100 per cent Omanisation, has contributed over the past three years, in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman and Galfar Engineering and Contracting, to develop this technology locally, striving to meet the needs of the Omani market. Innotech had earlier developed many projects using 3D printing technology for the public, private and military sectors, in addition to individual projects. However, this is the first experience for the Company to implement this technology in construction”, Al Mandhari stated.

He added that the Company is currently working on developing several small buildings using this technology.

The future of remote work and online learning

One receives many invitations to join training courses that deal with the labour market and distance learning. These courses show how employees and workers in institutions can work remotely using modern technologies and digital tools. Today everyone foresees that with the continuation of this pandemic, the use of tools for remote work has become urgent and necessary in light of the approaches adopted by commercial and educational institutions in response to the ongoing pandemic.

The current situation requires institutions to develop their training and educational resources to suitably equip their employees with the skills necessary to enable them to carry out their assigned responsibilities remotely while keeping themselves safe from the virus. Likewise, parents need to equip their children for distance learning.

Today, life does not require the presence of employees in person at the workplace. Indeed, many marginal jobs can either be dispensed with or deferred temporarily. But in all cases, it is important for companies



HAIDER ALLAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

TODAY, LIFE DOES NOT REQUIRE THE PRESENCE OF EMPLOYEES IN PERSON AT THE WORKPLACE

and institutions to ensure their workers enjoy a safe and healthy environment supported by the requisite digital tools to perform their tasks virtually. Indeed, schools, colleges, and universities have all embraced this new virtual reality as well, thus contributing to continuity of business and education.

However, it is also imperative that a capable back office technical team is available to ensure that the platforms and technologies deployed to enable remote working or online teaching to respond swiftly to any technical glitches or unforeseen

developments.

With many countries still some way to go before they fully vaccinate their local populations against the coronavirus, any early return to normal life or business as usual is not likely.

Remote virtual work will continue to remain a feature of our daily existence until we eradicate the virus behind the pandemic, which has killed more than 4 million lives around the world, while exposing millions of others to the disease. Employers and institutions must continue to support the training, rehabilitation and development

of workers who need to adapt to the new reality that requires them to work remotely.

At the same time, experts have called for organisations to continue to focus on prevention and precaution in the face of the ongoing threat from the virus epidemic in terms of promoting hygiene, use of sanitisers, safe distancing, and other protocols necessary to keep their staff safely. It is this combination of modern technologies and safety precautions that can help businesses and their staff continue to play a productive role amid the ongoing pandemic.

MEC announces admissions for Fall 2021



MUSCAT: Middle East College (MEC) announces the opening of admissions for the Fall 2021 semester to its academic programmes in Engineering, Science, Technology, Management and Business, Logistics Management, and Archives and Records Management.

The admission process can be completed fully online for the Fall semester which will commence at the beginning of October this year.

The college is accredited by the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance for Education and has achieved high accreditation ratings in Teaching Quality and Research Performance.

The undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are offered in academic partnership with Coventry University in the United Kingdom and Breda University of Applied Sciences in

the Netherlands.

The college is well known for its vibrant campus life, offering over 350 extracurricular and co-curricular programmes throughout the year.

The college organises research conferences, symposiums and many other academic events to support student learning and offers students the best support services to enhance their educational journey.

Faculty members and students are encouraged to use a wide range of innovative and technology-supported teaching and learning practices.

Middle East College has been keen to provide students with an enriching and exciting learning environment during the Covid-19 pandemic with its e-learning mode, whereby teaching and learning are effectively undertaken remotely through interactive digital platforms.

Enjoy the roads less travelled in the luxurious Lexus GX

MUSCAT: Lexus GX is a powerful and versatile luxury 4WD SUV that takes you places and enhances experiences. Built to maximise every moment, the Lexus GX raises the bar on expectations on every opportunity.

A dual-purpose luxury vehicle, GX 460 can go from a short work commute in the city, to a long family vacation deep in the Rocky Mountains. The engine is a 292-horsepower 4.6-litre V8 producing 44.7 Kg.M of peak torque. Combine that with a 2500 kg towing capacity, and you've got an ideal boat hauler. Towing is aided with Trailer Sway Control, a function of the Vehicle Stability Control that enhances straight-line tracking.

Utilising the technology of the Kinetic Dynamic Suspension System (KDSS), the GX 460 enhances handling and ride comfort by helping to keep the vehicle level in both on and off-road conditions. When the GX encounters an uneven surface, one compressed cylinder causes fluid to flow to the other cylinder, helping the



vehicle to keep all four wheels on the ground. The system works without any action needed by the driver.

Thanks to an Off-Road Package featuring Multi-Terrain Select, tackling tough terrain is equally as easy. Adding extra peace of mind is GX's Lexus Safety System+, completing Lexus' milestone of equipping models with active

safety equipment.

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(A-TRAC), Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) and available Crawl Control, the GX can roam unpaved roads, trails, and steep inclines with confidence.

In Oman, every Lexus vehicle comes with special benefits and privileges such as Manufacturer's Warranty of 4 years/100,000 Kms (whichever is earlier) and 24 hours on-road assistance from AAA.

Ooredoo, Sadara join hands for advanced B2B ICT solutions

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its role as the digital partner of choice for the Sultanate's leading companies, Ooredoo has joined hands with Omani ICT solutions provider, Sadara (Prime Business Solutions). The collaboration will enable Ooredoo to expand its range of competitive services including Enterprise Resource Planning for Internet of Things, software development, robotic process automation, data management and connectivity and telecommunication services, and more, as it continues to provide its business customers with the tools to help them grow in the modern world.

Sultan Ahmed al Wahaibi, Chief Business and Wholesale Officer at Ooredoo, said, "Our agreement with Sadara is reflective of our continuous commitment to enhance our B2B offerings, as well as our efforts to support the Sultanate's digital transformation and Oman's 2040 Vision to be a knowledge-based and technologically-advanced society."

NBC discusses legal implications of Covid-19 for entrepreneurs

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 30

The National Business Centre (NBC), which falls under the umbrella of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), organised a discussion session on the legal impact and challenges posed by Covid-19 on entrepreneurs.

Moderated by Rihab Fadhal, Director of Councils and Committees at Madayn, the session featured the lawyer Nasser al Riyami, Law Lecturer — K&Co LLP, who highlighted several topics related to types of companies, e-commerce, lease agreements, insolvency litigation, partial versus complete lockdown, the variation between liquidation and bankruptcy, Covid-19 pandemic and the judiciary, and amicable settlement of disputes.



The series of discussion sessions organised by the National Business Centre aim at exchanging viewpoints and expertise on a variety of topics of interest and benefit to the

entrepreneurs.

NBC is an initiative launched by Madayn at the Knowledge Oasis Muscat with the aim of offering promising Omani entrepreneurs a platform to develop their

NBC is an initiative launched by Madayn at the Knowledge Oasis Muscat with the aim of offering promising Omani entrepreneurs a platform to develop their business ideas and advance them into growing ventures

business ideas and advance them into growing ventures.

The centre offers a premier platform for Omani entrepreneurs by providing business development support and guidance, training and mentoring, access to markets and industry experts, and state-of-the-art and fully-equipped office spaces, meeting rooms, and presentation facilities.

Two customers to win RO 250,000 in NBO's Al Kanz Mega Draw

MUSCAT: With more chances than ever to win, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Al Kanz Savings Scheme Draw is one of banking's biggest events.

In one week, the bank will be holding its half yearly Mega Draw, where two customers will be given RO 250,000 each.

With eligibility being as easy as maintaining an average balance of at least RO 100, it is one of the most exciting ways for customers to build the savings.

The event will also include the monthly Mazaya Exclusive draw, which will give RO 10,000 each to four winners, and the Salary Transfer draw, with RO 500 each for 50 winners. Al Kanz Savings Scheme continues to reward more customers each year across the Sultanate with monthly prizes ranging from RO 100 to RO 250,000.

**France inflation rises in June**

French consumer price inflation rose in June driven by the rebound in manufactured goods prices, the provisional estimate from the statistical office Insee says on Wednesday. — dpa

**German unemployment drops**

Unemployment in Germany has dropped more sharply in June. The number of people without a job fell significantly by 73,000 to 2.6 million compared with May. — dpa

**Swiss leading indicator falls**

A leading indicator of the turning points in Switzerland's economy fell unexpectedly in June. The Swiss Economic Barometer dropped to 133.4 from 143.7 in May. — dpa

US Farm Belt lawmakers introduce bills to boost biofuel industry



An ethanol plant with its giant corn silos is seen next to a cornfield in Windsor, Colorado. — Reuters

WASHINGTON: A bipartisan group of US Farm Belt lawmakers will introduce a trio of bills on Tuesday aimed at boosting public investment in biofuels as the industry tries to combat a White House push for electric vehicles, according to copies of the bills seen by Reuters.

The bills, which include billions of dollars in grants and tax credits, could get swept into broader infrastructure or spending bills snaking through Congress. Democrats hold a thin majority in both houses, and individual Democratic lawmakers are likely to leverage that position to extract regional benefits from the broader bills.

The biofuel industry is trying to position itself as lower-carbon bridge to an electric car future. Biden is counting on a surging electric car market to hit his target for net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

One funding bill would provide \$1 billion in grants to pay for pumps and storage tanks with higher gasoline blends of biofuels like corn ethanol. — Reuters

Shipping, heating and cars targeted in EU carbon market revamp

BRUSSELS: The European Union wants to overhaul its carbon market to cut planet-warming emissions faster and put a price on pollution from shipping, road transport and heating systems in buildings, a draft document seen by Reuters on Wednesday shows.

The bloc's executive European Commission will next month propose the biggest revamp of its emissions trading system (ETS) since the policy launched in 2005. The ETS forces power plants, factories and airlines running European flights to buy CO2 permits, creating a financial incentive to pollute less.

The reforms are part of a package of EU policies Brussels will propose on July 14 as it strives to meet the EU's target to cut net emissions by 55 per cent by 2030, from 1990 levels. Most EU policies are designed to comply with an old climate target and need updating.

A draft of the ETS proposal, first reported by Bloomberg News, said the supply of CO2 permits in the ETS will face a one-off reduction.

The amount of permits entering the EU carbon market each year will also decrease at a faster rate, starting the year after the reforms apply, the draft said, without specifying how quickly



A Cosco Shipping Cargo leaves the EuroFos terminal at the Fos-Sur-Mer harbour while a wind turbine is seen in the background in Marseille, France. — AFP

The reforms are part of a package of EU policies Brussels will propose on July 14 as it strives to meet the EU's target to cut net emissions by 55 per cent by 2030, from 1990 levels

the cap will fall.

The proposal would strengthen the ETS "market stability reserve",

a mechanism designed to avoid a build-up of excess permits that could depress EU carbon prices.

The price of CO2 permits in the EU ETS has soared to record highs this year and is currently trading at roughly 56 euros per tonne.

When the ETS contains more than 1.096 billion spare permits, the reserve would absorb 24 per cent per year until 2030. When there are 833 million to 1.096

billion permits in circulation, the reserve would absorb enough permits to bring that down to 833 million.

Member states must negotiate the final reforms, a process that could take roughly two years.

Free carbon permits will end for industries covered by the EU's planned carbon border levy, the draft said, a proposal manufacturing sectors are expected to resist. — Reuters

EU wants stronger product safety and credit rules for consumers

BRUSSELS: The European Commission on Wednesday proposed beefing up product safety and consumer credit rules for consumers, prompted by the surge in online shopping by people during Covid-19 lockdowns and the increasing digitalisation of everyday life.

Existing rules known as the General Product Safety Directive came into force in 2001 while rules on consumer credit to safeguard consumers were implemented in 2008.

The EU executive said 70 per cent of consumers shopped online last year, with new technology products making up the bulk of their purchases.

"We are making it easier for consumers to avoid risks related to having a credit and we are putting even stronger rules for product safety in place," Commission Vice President Vera Jourova said.

"It will also put more responsibility on market players and make it more difficult for bad actors to hide behind complicated legal jargon," she said.

The proposals seek to address cybersecurity risks and require online marketplaces to adopt product safety rules.

— Reuters

Oil steady as US stockpiles fall, Opec warns of 2022 glut

LONDON: Oil prices were broadly steady on Wednesday, heading for monthly and quarterly gains, after some data suggested US crude stockpiles were shrinking while an Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries' report warned of a possibly significant glut building by the end of next year.

Brent crude was up 6 cents, or



A man inspects oil barrels at Pertamina plant in Kalimantan, Indonesia. — Reuters

0.08 per cent at \$74.82 a barrel. US crude was up 30 cents, or 0.4 per cent at \$73.28 a barrel.

Both contracts are just below highs last reached in 2018, and are set to record their seventh monthly gain in the past eight months.

While the highly contagious Delta coronavirus variant is taking hold in many countries, prompting new lockdowns or

restrictions on movement from Australia to Portugal, hopes of a broader recovery in demand for fuel remain intact.

"Futures have been trading on a one-way ripper to the upside ever since the November 2 headline declaring a Covid-19 vaccine had been developed," said Bob Yawger, director of energy futures, at Mizuho Securities.

— Reuters

Pandemic leaves emerging Asia's consumer recovery behind



People shop at a crowded wholesale vegetable market after authorities eased coronavirus restrictions in New Delhi, India. — Reuters

TOKYO: Asia's once fast-growing economies are struggling with weak domestic demand that

is keeping a lid on inflation in contrast to some developed markets, heightening the chance

many central banks will forgo interest rate hikes this year.

For investors and policymakers in Asian emerging markets, high and sometimes destabilising inflation has always gone hand in hand with strong growth underpinning their development.

That has changed markedly, as slow vaccinations and a new wave of coronavirus infections delay economic recoveries in countries like Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and India.

While some Asian nations have seen inflation perk up, reflationary growth remains a higher priority for them even as rising inflation draws increasing attention in western nations like the United States, Britain and Canada.

To be sure, higher commodity prices are affecting Asia, as with

the rest of the world, by raising the cost of raw materials. South Korea is also preparing for rate hikes as soon as this year as its economy and the housing market run hot.

But soft demand will keep inflation distant from red zones and take immediate pressure off most Asian central banks to respond with tighter monetary policy, analysts say.

"Resurgence in infections is forcing some Asian nations to reimpose curbs on activity that are weighing on inflation, a trend that will continue for some time," said Makoto Saito, an economist at Japan's NLI Research Institute.

"Given weak domestic demand, many Asian economies won't see inflation accelerate sustainably. That means their central banks likely won't hike interest rates

until next year," he said.

Thailand's central bank maintained record low interest rates this month and projected headline inflation of just 1.2 per cent this year, as the tourism-dependent country struggles with a third wave of coronavirus infections.

Headline inflation in the Philippines hit 4.5 per cent in May from a year earlier, though its central bank kept record low rates this month and projected inflation to return to within its 2 per cent -4 per cent target band by the second half of the year.

Indonesia's annual inflation accelerated to 1.68 per cent in May from 1.42 per cent in April to mark its highest level since December, but remained below the central bank's 2 per cent -4 per

cent target range.

Even in India, where retail inflation spiked to 6.3 per cent in May, the central bank is unlikely to react with tighter policy to cushion the blow to growth from a deadly second wave of the pandemic, sources have said.

Asia's situation contrasts with emerging markets in other regions such as Latin America, where inflation and capital flight risks have triggered rate hikes or talk of tightening.

While a US tightening remains a risk for Asia central banks, the lessons of the region's financial crisis in 1998 and the 2013 "taper tantrum" have made them more resilient to the risk of a huge capital outflow triggered by the United States Federal Reserve.

— Reuters

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m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

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99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office
Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office
Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Sohar Office
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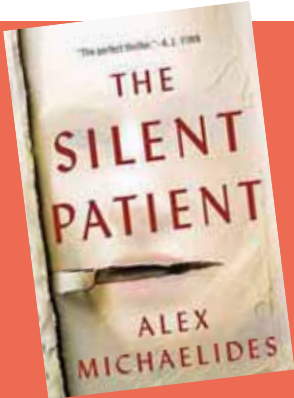
The man who made more than 100,000 khanjars

Abdullah al Farsi is one of the most popular and creative jeweler in Oman. His love for the dagger-making profession is exceptional, as he came from a prominent family that has passed on this craft from generation to generation. He shares with *Oman Daily Observer* how the dagger is made... **P18**



LOCAL SCENE

READ



THE SILENT PATIENT

BY ALEX MICHAELIDES

Theo Faber looks into the mystery of a famous painter who stops speaking after shooting her husband.

A successful mini-tilapia fish farming project

THE TILAPIA FISH is one of the suitable species for aquaculture due to its ability to live in basins with low oxygen concentration and feed on many types of natural and artificial foods. It is distinguished by its ability to resist diseases and parasites, and it is one of the many types of crustaceans, including blue, white, black, indigo, and others. It is considered one of the seafood that contains high amounts of proteins and a low

percentage of calories and fats and is useful for bodybuilding as it contributes to food security projects. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is also concerned with such projects and provides technical and advisory support and always seeks to develop them. By his personal efforts, Ahmed bin Khalaf al Maawali, a resident of the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil in the South Al Batinah

Governorate, succeeded in his own project for fish farming by raising (tilapia fish) in a fresh-water basin in one of the wilayat's farms. The project aims to take advantage of the fresh water on the farm and exploit some space available on the farm for the production of tilapia fish. The water of fish farming is also used to irrigate crops that contain some fertilisers that are useful for agriculture. Ahmed says that this private and mini-experiment was established with personal efforts so that he can gain sufficient experience in this field, and then he will open an integrated project in coordination with government and concerned agencies. Such projects contribute to strengthening and diversifying sources of income and creating suitable job opportunities for citizens in



addition to exploiting water to grow vegetables and to achieve integration, especially the production of high-quality fish. He added that it is necessary to gain experience and full knowledge of the methods, types and basics of fish farming and to exchange experiences before starting the project. "Through this experience, I

seek to gain knowledge of the nature of work, the cost, as well as providing appropriate feed and nutrition, whether from farm plants or buying some special grains, maintaining water quality and cleanliness of fish basins to study their effects on fish growth, and the control of pests or diseases that may affect them," he said.



EDUCATION

Tackling the learning loss of students during the pandemic

By Dr Zainab Alajmi



DURING THE PANDEMIC, the educational institutions were closed, therefore all students got their learning through distance education. While learning loss already exists under normal circumstances, distance learning caused more challenges especially in information retention among students.

The Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman has considered this. To this end, the virtual symposium titled "Learning Loss in the Coronavirus Pandemic: Effects and Solutions" was organised by the Ministry of Education on May 24-25, 2021.

In his paper, Prof Dr Abdullah Ambusaidi said: "The Omani educational system must work in the coming phase to find answers to the questions raised by educators, specialists and stakeholders regarding education post-Covid-19. The educational system also needs to make applicable policies and measures to solve the issue of the learning loss".

Covid-19 caused major issues in the educational systems not just in Oman but all over the world. Data needed to study this issue in education is limited so far, and as such, educators and professionals are working harder than ever.

Hence, it's also necessary to provide teachers, institutional heads and those who must manage the educational consequences of this crisis with the needed preparations including the areas of students' needs at different levels and stages, reassurance to students and parents, extended learning time and blended learning, curricula analysis, as well as assessment and a diverse flexible resource (Daniel, 2020).

The out-break of Covid-19 has meant that preparation intended to occur over months or years had to be implemented a few days after or before the school year started.

Students' needs: While distance learning approaches differ between school and higher education, knowledge and skills programmes require special attention (different students, different needs), and the graduates of such institutes (schools and higher education) will require special arrangements. To help the families, "the schools and educational systems should make special efforts to assist those students whose parents are unsupportive and whose home environments are not conducive to study" (Daniel, 2020).

Extended learning time and blended learning: It is known that the classroom is the best place for students, therefore most countries seek to return students to schools or strengthen blended learning to compensate for learning wastage. While this seemed to be a good solution, what is most important is ensuring a secure and permanent solution to overcome the learning wastage.

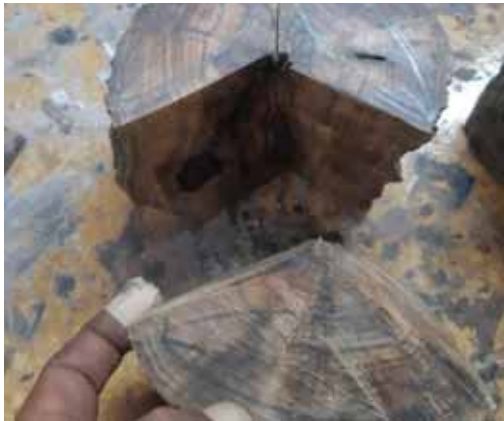
Curricula analysis: To determine the content of knowledge and skills of each subject to teach, analysing the curriculum being taught to students is also important to create strategies that would work with the intended target audience.

Assessment and a diverse flexible resource: To provide a useful tool of assessments for teachers to evaluate the basic knowledge and skills for their students.

To conclude, it is crucial to compensate for the learning loss of students both from the qualitative and quantity side. Cooperation among all parties of the educational process is needed to analyse and evaluate the consequences of school closures, and assess the long-term impact of learning loss and prepare an action plan at the national level.

The man who made more than 100,000 khanjars

Story by Ruqaya Al Kindi



The silverware industry in Oman is one of the most important and diversified metallurgical industries. The current generation excels in producing a lot of metal products and the most important of which is the Omani dagger or khanjar.

Abdullah al Farsi is one of the most popular and creative jeweler in Oman. His love for the dagger-making profession is exceptional, as he came from a prominent family that has passed on this craft from generation to generation. Abdullah, therefore, did not choose this profession, but it chose him.

"Like any child, I was sitting with my father and grandfather and I could see them working with the tools of this craft (it was visual nourishment for me as I grew up in this environment) and I smell glue and smoke. As I get older and when my father got sick and passed away, I was thrown into the frontline and

started working in my passion", he shared.

The Omani khanjar is consists of eight parts that are closely tied to each other. Finishing one khanjar can take two to five weeks. It is also a laborious process that usually involves about five people each taking part in the khanjar-making process and each process requires mastery and different skillset including sewing, sculpting and carpentry.

The upper part of a khanjar is called "The head" or what the locals called the "Muqbad". It is made of different materials such as wood, sandalwood, precious stones and the horns of cows or buffaloes. This part is made by bringing a rectangular piece of material (about the size of the palm of the hand), then sculpting and decorating the piece with silver nails", he shared.

The "knife" or what is locally known as "Nassel" is the second part of the dagger. "We hammer iron and shape it as a sharp

crescent", he explained.

The third part where the knife is kept is called "Sudder" which is the middle part of the khanjar. "It is made of two pieces of silver and decorated symmetrically. Both of which are formed in a rectangular shape and hollow from the inside to allow the entry of the knife", he said.

As for the "Tammass" part, it is a strip of leather that wraps in the middle of the dagger, specifically below the "Sudder". It is covered and decorated with silver wires. We glue it so it would stick the leather in the khanjar. On the ends of Tammass, from the right and the left, two silver rings are installed to hold the belt that the Omani man uses to wear the dagger and tie it to his waist.

There are many forms and qualities of the belt. "It may be the leather belt (embroidered or which is sewn with soft silver wires) or the Zari belt (it is a local material and worked on it with cotton threads and fabrics", he shared.



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"The lower part of the dagger, which is in the shape of a crescent, is called the "qataa" and is made, also, to be a keeper of the knife (the traditional Omani weapon). "It is a piece of leather that is cut in a crescent shape. It is decorated by stitching it with soft silver wires (just like the Omani kumma stitching or the Omani traditional women's clothing) and in an attractive and harmonious way. Then we stick the piece of leather in a piece of wood that is made in a crescent shape and hollow from the inside to allow the knife to enter," he explained.

At the end of the "qataa" is the "qaba". "It is a small silver piece and it is hollow from the inside and decorated with the same inscriptions and decoration of the "sudder" (the middle part of the dagger). This is to make the dagger coordinated with the engravings and decorations from the top and the bottom. It is the last piece to give the dagger a beautiful, attractive shape," he added.

Abdullah shared that he has made more than 100,000 daggers,

and each dagger has its own story. "I spend my time with love to produce silver pieces of art, some with precious stones, different animal horns and beautiful wood with a fragrant smell. It also includes gold, copper, iron, as well as leather and fabrics. I hope that all these unique daggers will be collected in an exhibition," he said.

When you order a khanjar from him, you determine the size you would like and the type you need. "There are about 8 types of daggers, and they are often distinguished by the shape of the engravings, the size and the type of metal it is made of or painted with," he said.

Dagger prices start from RO 400 and it could go up to thousands. "Pricing is based on the weight of the silver used, the accuracy of the stitching (fine stacked stitching or light stitching), the type of "The head" (animal horn, wood or plastic) and the type of material used in the belt.

You can visit A Sayegh shop in Sur to see these different types or contact him via his Instagram account ([abdullah_alsayeghl](#)).

"This workshop was inherited by my father from his father who inherited it from their ancestors. Now it is under my care. I seek to pass this profession to my children," he pointed out.

Perhaps what makes this traditional industry survive and compete in the market till today is the importance of it for the state and for the Omanis as well.

"It is the emblem of the country. It is, also, an essential element of the Omani men's formal wear where it is also worn in all social and official occasions as a part of the traditional Omani costume like wedding, Eid and funerals and meeting officials," he mentioned.

Despite the progress made by the Omani society in all aspects of life and despite the tremendous development in the tools and means of production, the preservation of the authentic Omani heritage (such as the traditional national crafts) formed a basic pillar of the modern state and a feature of the distinctive features of the Omani society.

ENTERTAINMENT

Delia Fiallo, "mother of the telenovela," dies in Miami



CUBAN SCREENWRITER Delia Fiallo, widely seen as "the mother of the telenovela" and the writer behind international hits like the soap opera "Crystal", died on Tuesday in Miami at the age of 96, her daughter-in-law confirmed to AFP.

A pioneer of the wildly popular romantic soap operas in Latin America, Fiallo, whose career began in the middle of the last century, said in an interview in 2018 that she wanted to be remembered "as a person who loved a lot and who was very loved."

Her daughter-in-law, Odalis Baez, confirmed her death.

Adored by her fans, Fiallo left

her mark on US Hispanic popular culture in the second half of the 20th century. She started her career in Cuba in 1950 with radio soap operas before writing her first television screenplay in 1957.

She then worked with Venezuelan television stations after leaving Communist Cuba for Miami in 1966, scripting popular shows like "Lucecita" in 1967, or global hits like "Esmeralda", "Leonela", "Cristal" and "Kassandra."

In all, she wrote more than 40 works for radio and television during her long career. The cause of her death was not immediately made public. — AFP

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Al Khabourah Fort: The compass of ships and a civilisation that tells the authenticity of history



Presenting the glory of the past and authenticity of ancient history, Al Khabourah Fort stands proud with its majestic view of the sea coast and its beautiful architecture with an archaeological character and the history of the ancient civilisation. The fort is located in the village of Hilat Al Hosn in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah in North Al Batinah Governorate, two kilometres northeast of the Al Khabourah roundabout.

Its history dates back to the nineteenth century AD to be a witness to the historical legacy left by ancestors across the various eras, as it witnessed many restoration operations since the beginning of the blessed Renaissance. The Khabourah Fort was restored in 1994, and the restorations remained to this day. All are carried out by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to ensure the splendour of its engineering designs and its archaeological nature.

The main entrance to the

fort is located on the northern side, and in front of it, there are two cannons. The fort is 53 metres long and 24 metres wide, surrounded by high glorious walls, which were built with mud bricks.

The fort also consists of several rooms. There are rooms for the guards, visitors, a room for storing foodstuffs and weapons, and two rooms for the governor's residence. There are also two towers, one of which is circular, with a diameter of 7.5mt, and is located in the southeastern corner, and there is a rectangular tower, 7.5mt wide located in the circular corner. Its walls include some holes that are used to use guns to confront all the aggressors in the past. It contains also two wells and a place called (Al Barza) designated for meetings and another place like jail, to detain violators.

In the fifties and sixties of the past centuries, there was a berth for ships in the old yard located in front of the fortress that used to receive goods from Iraq (Basra), Iran, India, Mombasa, Zanzibar and the Gulf states and other countries. With the dawn of the blessed renaissance of late Sultan Qaboos — peace be upon his soul — development and moder-

nity, a fishing port was established and the site of the majestic fort was a compass for ships to guide them to the port.

The strategic and geographical location also gave it beauty and splendour, as it is located near the old Al Khabourah market, which was a destination for many commercial caravans from various wilayats, and it played an important commercial role at that time.

The visitor to the fort is attracted by the prestige of the historical place from which the late Sultan Qaboos delivered his lofty speech to the people of Al Khabourah at the beginning of the blessed renaissance to add to this place a depth of history and civilisation.

Al Khabourah Fort, with its archaeological architectural character, is one of the treasures of the wilayat and is one of the important tourism destinations. Visitors to the fort can meditate and evoke history in its courtyard and towers, discover storage rooms and living spaces, and learn about the lifestyle of the Omani man in that era, and his glories. The visitor can also enjoy this charming view of the sea and the blue waters, which reflect the image of the fort and the surrounding natural scenes.